

2023 아르코미술관 기획초대전

《노원희: 거기 계셨군요》

2023. 8. 11 — 11. 19

아르코미술관 제1, 2전시실

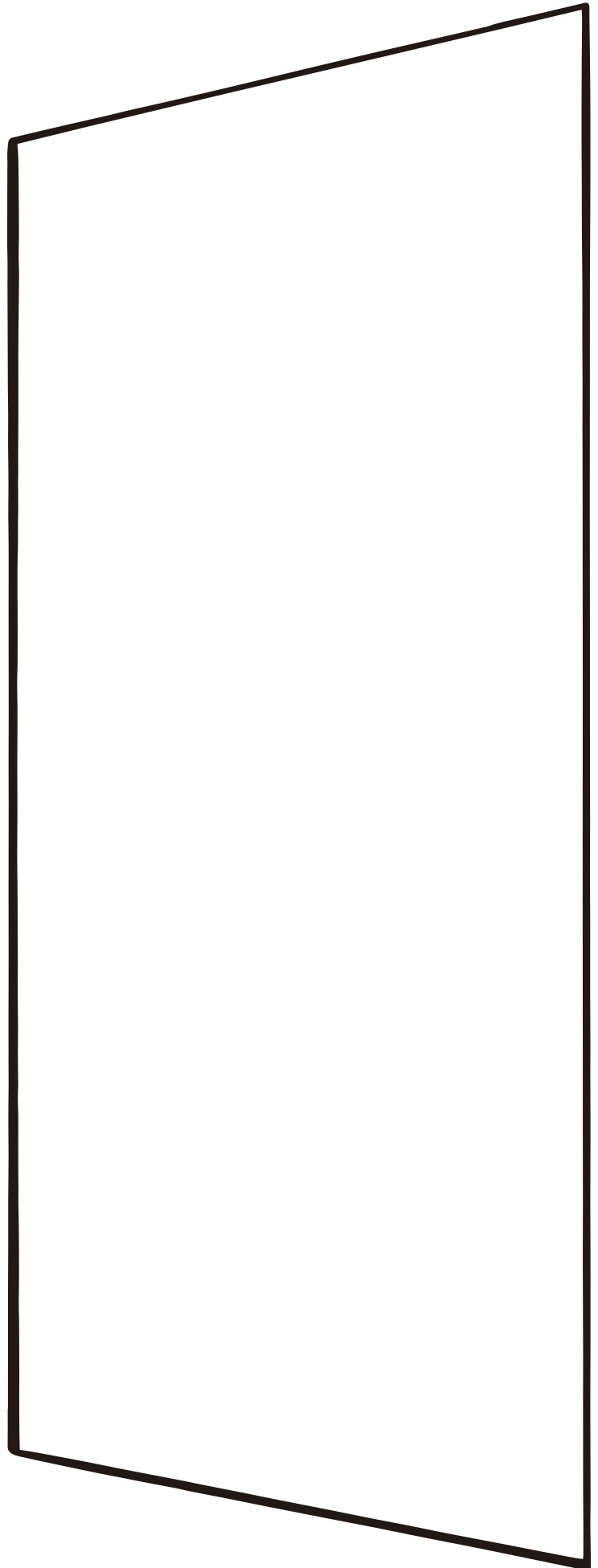
2023 ARKO Art Center

Invitational Exhibition

Nho Wonhee: You were there

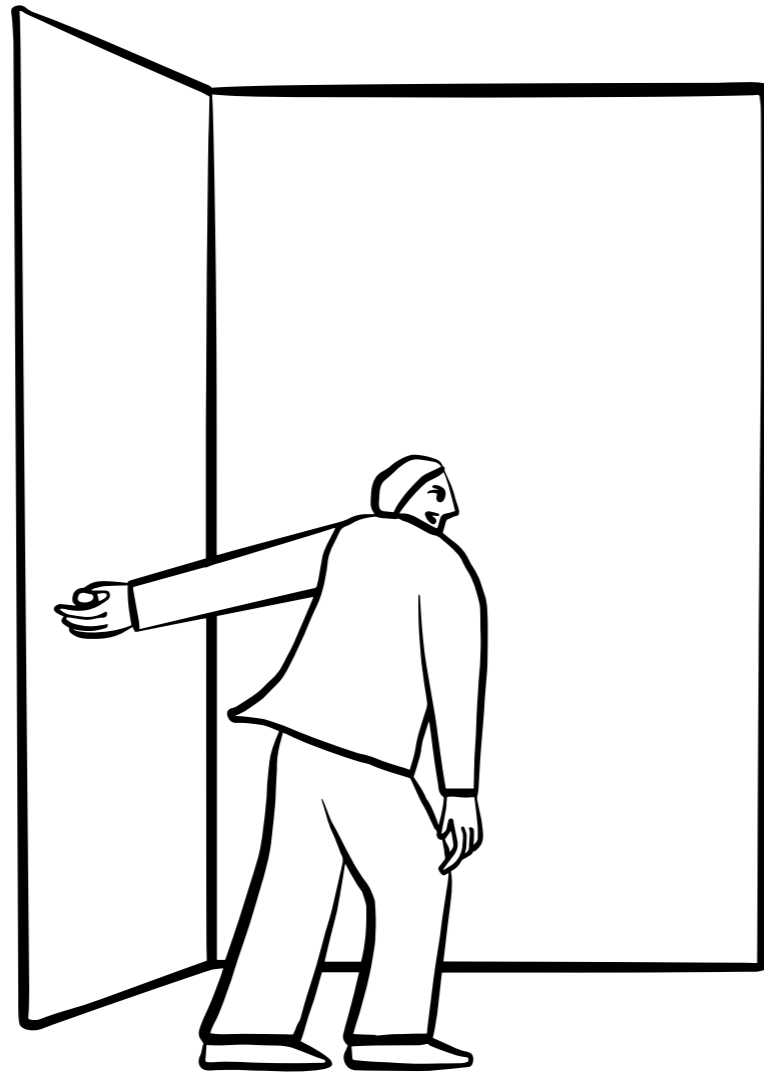
August 11 — November 19, 2023

ARKO Art Center, Gallery 1, 2



Nho Wonhee

Nho Wonhee was born in Daegu, Gyeongsangbuk-do in 1948 and earned her bachelor's and master's degree in painting at the College of Fine Art, Seoul National University. She held her first solo exhibition at Munheon Gallery in 1977. As a founding member of Reality and Utterance, she participated in various group exhibitions until the group disbanded in 1990. From 1982 to 2013, Nho remained active as an artist while also serving as an educator, holding a professorship at Dong-Eui University in Busan. Nho's painting captures the psychological landscape of how society, politics, and culture are shaped through the individual's and communities' perception of history and reality that shifts over time. She has held seventeen solo exhibitions, including *On Thin Land* (Hakgojae, 2019), *Documentary Persistence: Human Affairs, Ways of Living, and Crisis* (Art Space Pool, 2017), *Remaining Scenery: Nho Wonhee, After 1991* (Moonshin Museum of Art at Sookmyung Women's University, 2006), and an exhibition at Geurim Madang Min in 1986. Her group exhibitions include *Minimalism-Maximalism-Mechanism Act 1-Act 4* (Art Sonje Center, ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, 2022-2023), *2020 Busan Biennale: Words at an Exhibition - an exhibition in ten chapters and five poems* (Museum of Contemporary Art, Busan, 2020), *Art and Words 2020* (Hakgojae, 2020), *Awakening: Art in Society in Asia, 1960s-1990s* (National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, Gwacheon, 2019), *From Vietnam to Berlin* (Asia Culture Center Creation, 2018), *Art Toward Society: Realism in Korean Art 1945-2005* (Fuchu Art Museum, Otani Memorial Art Museum, Miyakonojo City Museum of Art, 2007-2008), *Women's Art Festival 99: Patjis on Parade* (Seoul Arts Center, 1999), *Gwangju Biennale Special Exhibition - The Spirit of Gwangju Resistance in May* (Gwangju Museum of Art, 1995), and *The 15 Years of Korean Minjoong Art: 1980-1994* (National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, 1994).



¹⁾ The phrase "You were there" is from Nho's artist statement. She quotes the line "You're still there, huh?" from the film *The Last Waltz* (1978), uttered by a band member to someone in the audience after the band's final performance finishes and the curtain closes. The artist rewrote this line as "You're not there," reflecting that Reality and Utterance is now part of the history of a bygone era—that is, it is part of the historical record. It also indicates that the meaning of their manifesto has changed. The exhibition title, "You were there," reflects one's personal place called upon in Nho's painting and the time when human life continues, representing the arrival of the next society that one is dreaming of.

Nho Wonhee: You were there

The 2023 ARKO Art Center Invitational Exhibition—which seeks to encourage mid-career and earlier generations of artists to produce new works, support their artistic pursuits, and highlight their oeuvres—presents a solo exhibition by Nho Wonhee (b. 1948). Nho embarked on her creative journey in 1977 when she held her first solo show. She was also a founding member of Reality and Utterance, a small art group movement that began in 1980. The group's inaugural exhibition, *Reality and Utterance*, was scheduled to be held at the Misul hoegwan(now ARKO Art Center) in 1980; however, it was canceled because the show was considered overly political in the conservative social atmosphere of the time. ARKO Art Center, which will soon celebrate its 50th anniversary, has invited Nho to put on a solo exhibition to reflect on her history as an artist from a contemporary perspective and carefully trace her outlook on individuals and society through her many years of artistic practice.

Nho Wonhee: You were there consists of approximately 130 artworks and archive materials that exemplify her career as an artist, including her paintings from the 1980s, new paintings, large-scale fabric paintings, participatory artworks, and illustrations from a novel serialized in a newspaper. Her work is often associated with the terms, Minjung Art (People's Art), Busan Figurative Art, and Critical Realism. However, when examining her creative journey, one discovers aspects that cannot be completely explained with reference to any specific movement or the existing vocabulary of art history. When following her speaking with wordless painting, her empathy and compassion for human beings and the world, and her attitude towards reality and history, one encounters the psychological figuration of the era, which the artist senses and recognizes through her brushstrokes. Therefore, this exhibition serves as an opportunity to examine Nho's artistic endeavors to document the personal and social aspects of human affairs that she has witnessed and undergone as an artist and a human being, which she expresses through the visual language of painting.

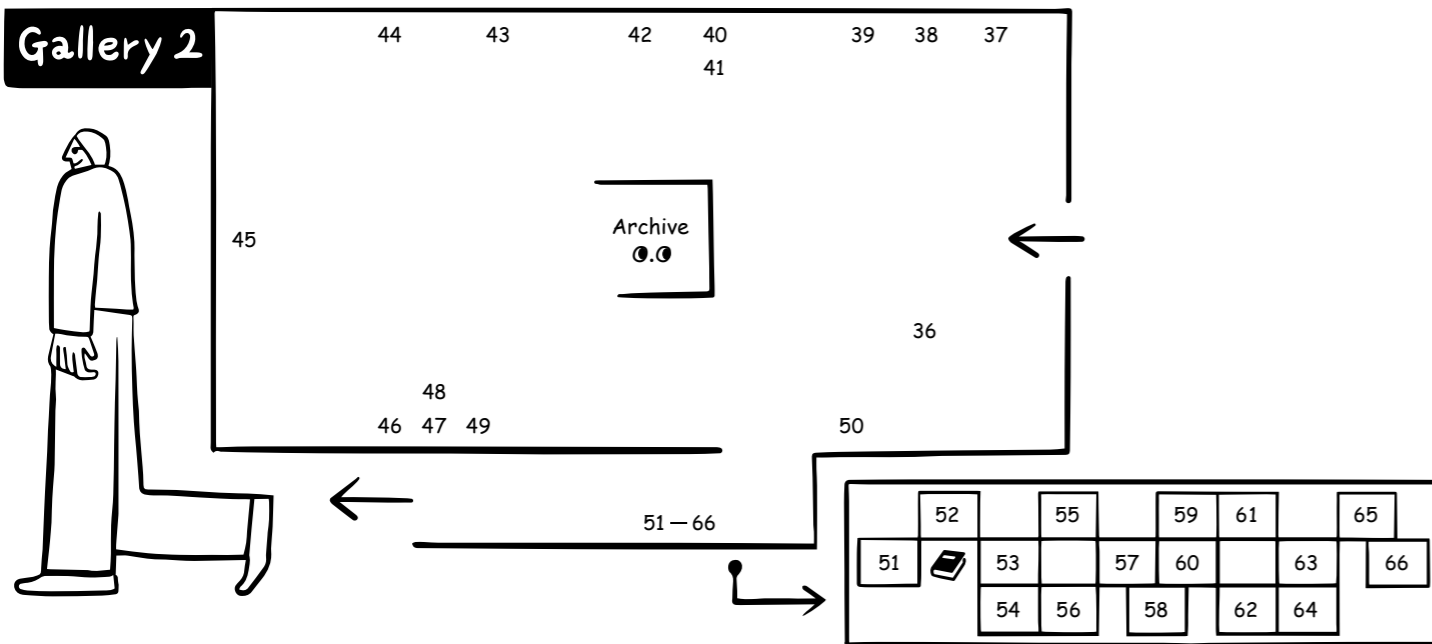
Nho's work testifies to the social circumstances and psychological hardships that individuals and communities have been subjected to. Beginning in the 1980s, which was marked by the tension between intensifying political repression and the growth of the pro-democracy movement, Nho dedicated herself to recording the zeitgeist of the time. After the front lines of the social movement collapsed, politico-social disorder and structural violence in the capitalist society cast shadows over everyday life

that appeared calm. Society subsequently transitioned into an era where inequality, contradiction, and alienation penetrated deep into personal life. Facing reality, Nho strived to contemplate the systemic paradox between society and human conditions. Her artistic practice is about understanding reality in detail and communicating it through the language of painting. It is also related to her determination to document the real world in a composed manner with an awareness of history, which is her way, as a critical realist, of examining the true shape of reality detached from the conventional veneer of truth. For those who can only vaguely recognize the structures of the cleverly obscured repression and violence generated by the real-world micropolitics that surrounds them, Nho's work provides a clear vision for seeing reality as it is, as it serves as a window onto the truth beyond reality.

This exhibition is structured to reveal her utterances and determination to address social issues at the intersection between the public and private sectors. **Gallery 1** presents Nho's new works that focus on industrial disasters caused by the structural problems of Korean capitalism and the resulting suffering of individuals. These works are an extension of her portrayals of workers and state power that she began in the 1980s. These stories of victims develop into narratives about young people, workers, and protesters whose dignity is repeatedly threatened in the current era. **Gallery 2** attends to the artist's interest in female narratives, which she has had first-hand experience of. These narratives deal with the violence and repression that permeate everyday life and private spaces, as well as the artist's meditation on the shared story of humankind. The social oppression and alienation that infiltrate one's life and places like the home and the kitchen confront the individual and make them aware that personal spaces are social spaces and sites of political resistance.

The artist aims to transcend simple representations to visualize underlying personal and social circumstances. In this way, the exhibition allows audiences to discover images of solidarity painted by social others and beings through the portrayals of labor and body concealed behind public and private sectors. The exhibition title, "You were there"¹⁾ speaks to alienated members of society. This phrase, which directly addresses the listener recognizes the person's place and has the potential to develop into a dialogue. It prompts a conversation and foreshadows a story that will follow. Social changes begin when one stands in solidarity with those suffering and acknowledges their place in society by calling their names. This is the power of "images and words" that Nho strives for.

Gallery 2



At a time when a whirlwind of high-profile events had urged South Korean society to be more aware of gender issues, Nho had an awakening as a woman and became more inclined to female narratives. Witnessing the politics of violence and repression that permeate daily life and the private sphere, Nho reflected on her concerns and anxiety regarding social conditions and future generations. Her works dealing with women's personal stories raise questions about the social and cultural norms of a male-centered society. Her works that are based on the stories she encounters in the media—such as stories about immigrant women, and those abused by their Vietnam War-veteran husbands who suffer from defoliant exposure—confirm that women's rights are closely entwined with political and social issues. A female's work—which is the sustaining force of social reproduction—tends to be invisible or easily dismissed as a taken-for-granted part of life. *Old Household Goods* (2001) features an individual balancing on top of household objects, a metaphor for the pressure the artist feels regarding housework. *Taking up a Weapon* (2018) was inspired by the “Wages for Housework campaign” led by American feminist movements in the 1970s. Nho's work depicting women protesters holding household objects as if they were weapons is meant to represent the women supporting the Korean #MeToo Movement at the time.

Archive 0.0

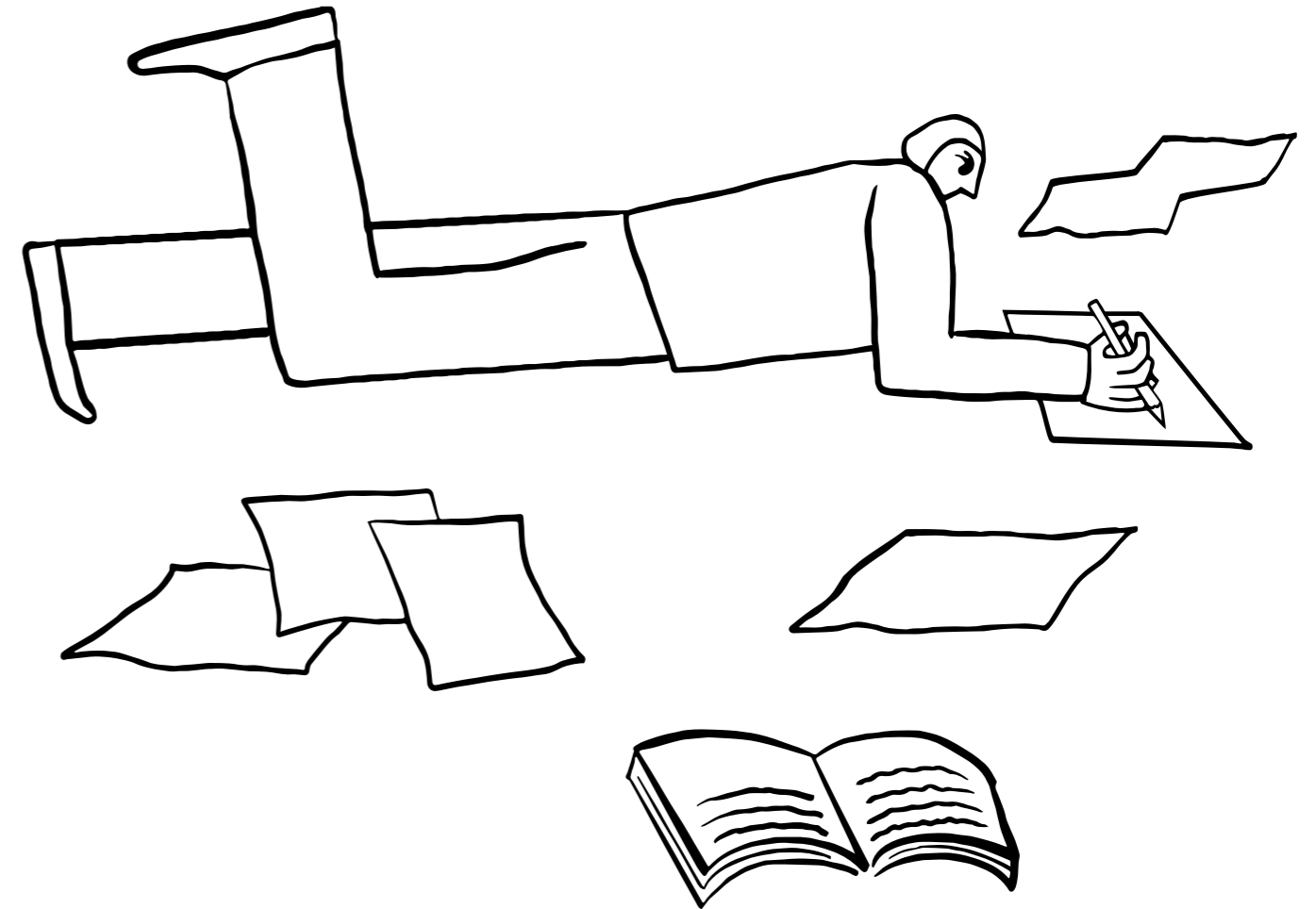
The archive section presents documents representing the career and thoughts of Nho Wonhee, who is an artist, educator, and former member of the group Reality and Utterance. This section features catalogs for Nho's first solo exhibition at Munheon Gallery in 1977 and the inaugural exhibitions of Reality and Utterance at Misul hoegwan and DongSanBang Gallery, along with photographs of the Reality and Utterance members. Also on display is a document of the Reality and Utterance workshop on the art of third-world countries and happiness; a leaflet and photographs from her solo exhibition held at Geurim Madang Min in 1986 amidst the ongoing fierce popular resistance against President Chun Doo-hwan; a statement demanding the reversal of the dismissal of her fellow professor who participated in a collective declaration on the then current government, as well as the democratization of educational institutions; and a newspaper article on the punishment of students who participated in the May 3 Dong-Eui University Incident and the dismissal of professors who supported them. Furthermore, Nho's writings about communicating with the public and her political arguments about activist art in public enable audiences to better understand her aspirations as an artist and the foundational ideas of her practice.

In Nho's paintings, there are a plethora of human bodies of various shapes making a variety of poses. She took photographs of her family members and herself to study the human body. Some of these photographs are featured in this section, providing a glimpse into the artist's painting process. These photographs reveal the joy of artmaking and daily living.

- 36 *Time to Enjoy Sewing*, 2020 (installation completed in 2023), thread on fabric, silkscreen, video comprised of photographic documentation, dimensions variable
**Art and Words 2020* (Hakgojae, 2020), a collaborative piece for exhibition-related programs, reproduced and installed for the exhibition *Nho Wonhee: You were there*.
- 37 *Life 2*, 2010, acrylic on canvas, 130.5×162cm
- 38 *At Hongjecheon Stream 1*, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 73×91cm
- 39 *Fundamental Anxiety*, 2022–2023, acrylic and oil on canvas, 162×130cm
- 40 *Story from the War 1 – Man Breaking the Dinner Table*, 2018, acrylic and oil on canvas, 80.5×100cm
- 41 *Story from the War 2 – My First Daughter is Sick*, 2018, acrylic and oil on canvas, 112×145cm
- 42 *Human Agony*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 91×116.5cm
- 43 *Taking Up a Weapon*, 2018, oil on canvas, 162×130.5cm (2)
- 44 *Forum*, 2017, acrylic and oil on canvas, 130.5×162cm
- 45 *Body 53*, 2023, gesso on fabric, 337×955cm
* Assistant | Yoon Gyeol, Jeong Deokhyeon
- 46 *Old Household Goods 2*, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 100×80.5cm
- 47 *Puzzle*, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 71.5×91cm
- 48 *While Housecleaning*, 2003, acrylic and oil on canvas, 71.5×91cm
- 49 *Old Household Goods*, 2001, acrylic on canvas, 91×117cm
- 50 *'95 Self Portrait (Self Portrait 2)*, 1995, acrylic on canvas, 73×100cm

Illustrations for *Princess Bari*, a novel serialized in the newspaper

This exhibition features a scrapbook of newspaper cut-outs and original illustrations by Nho Wonhee for the novel, *Princess Bari*. Written by Hwang Sok-yong, this piece was serialized in the newspaper, *Hankyoreh*, from January 3 to June 20, 2007. Nho drew an illustration daily for the series while it was being written, and completed the final 121st painting to correspond with the final installment in the story. Her illustrations that accompanied Hwang's distinctive descriptions of crossing between reality and fantasy present unusual and surreal sights. Nho's painting for the 105th installment portrays Ali, Bari's husband, who is lost in Bari's dream, curled up inside a crate resembling a chicken coop. This character's pose became the starting point for another series titled *Body*. Nho's paintings for *Princess Bari* are technically distinctive from her usual works, but her thematic interest in individual lives persists in the narrative of Bari, living her eternal life solemnly and diligently.



Scrapbook of illustrations from a novel serialized in a newspaper

- 51 *Episode 3: Let's Call This Abandoned Child Bari*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 38×45.5cm
- 52 *Episode 10: At Age 60, Whitey Gives Birth to Seven Pups*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 38×45.5cm
- 53 *Episode 19: I Almost Died, Bari*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 30×45cm
- 54 *Episode 17: Famine Begins When the King Passes Away*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 30×45cm
- 55 *Episode 29: Smoke-like Thing above Hyun-Yi*, 2007, crayon and pencil on canvas, 30×45cm
- 56 *Episode 31: The Water Used for Washing Rice and Clothes Is Mineral Water*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 30×45.5cm
- 57 *Episode 37: Crawling through Burning Hell on the Mountain*, 2007, acrylic and crayon on canvas, 30×45cm
- 58 *Episode 27: I Set Up a Shack for Avoiding Police Crackdowns*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 30×45cm
- 59 *Episode 40: Running Errands at the Foot Massage Shop*, 2007, acrylic and crayon on canvas, 30×45cm
- 60 *Episode 54: Sagging Bodies Thrown into the Sea*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 30×45cm
- 61 *Episode 68: A Group of Black Women Went Down in Black Smoke but Floated Back Up*, 2007, acrylic and crayon on canvas, 30×45cm
- 62 *Episode 85: We Lived in Jammu and Kashmir*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 33×45.5cm
- 63 *Episode 89: Dear God, Please Bless These Two*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 33×45cm
- 64 *Episode 90: The Newlyweds Are Blessed by the Guests*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 33×45cm
- 65 *Episode 91: Child, There Is Only One Universal Truth*, 2007, acrylic and pencil on canvas, 33×45cm
- 66 *Episode 99: Haven't You Met Your Brother? We Parted as Soon as We Saw Each Other*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 33.5×45.5cm

2023 ARKO Art Center

Invitational Exhibition

Nho Wonhee: You were there

August 11 - November 19, 2023

ARKO Art Center, Gallery 1, 2

ARKO Art Center

3 Dongsung-gil, Jongno-gu Seoul,

South Korea 03087

Tel. 02-760-4850

www.arko.or.kr/artcenter

Instagram @arkoartcenter

Facebook ARKOArtCenter

Twitter @ArkoArtCenter

YouTube @arkoartcenter

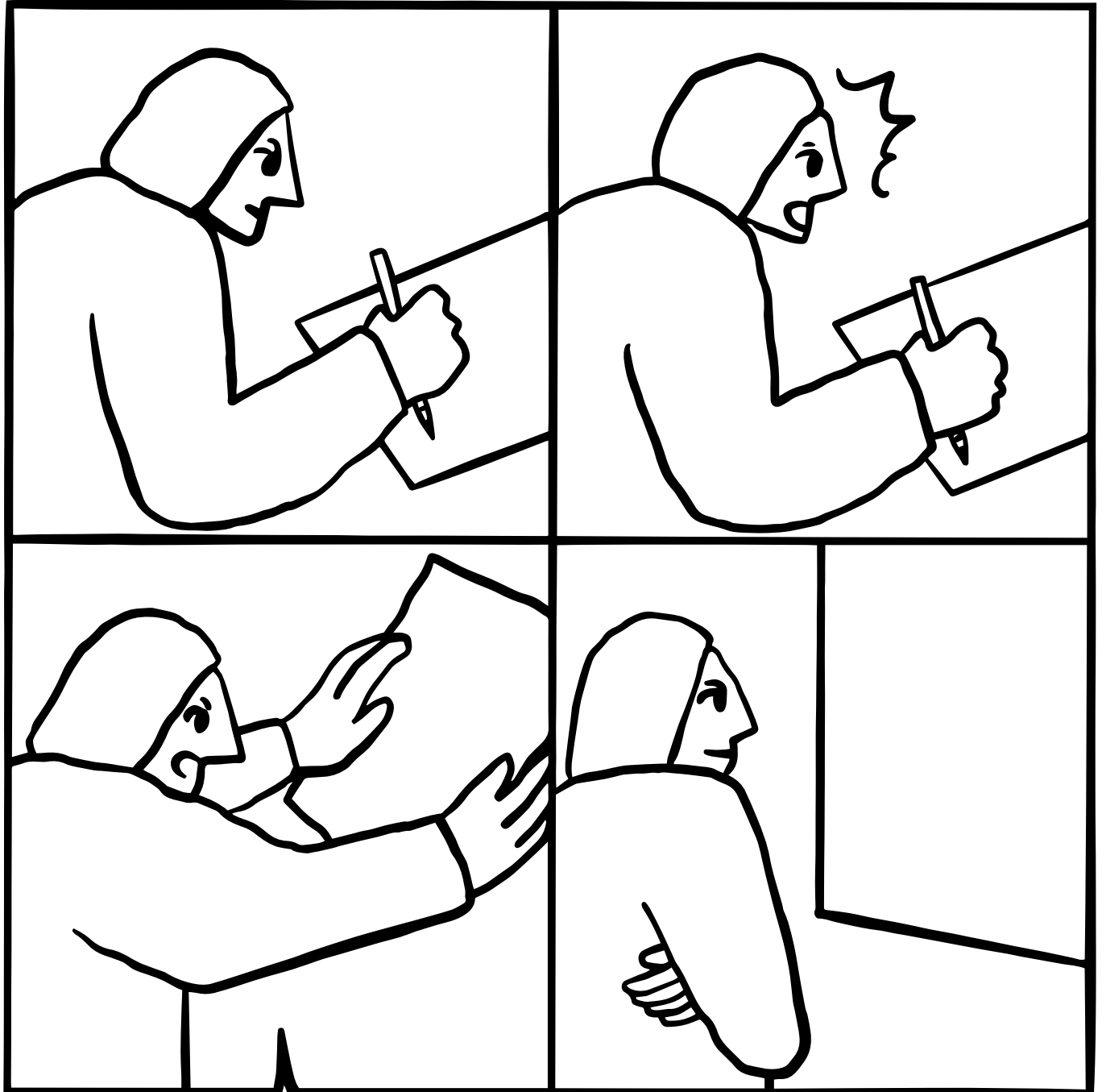
Hours:

11:00 AM - 7:00 PM

Closed on Mondays and
Korean Thanksgiving Day

Admission Free

Artist: Nho Wonhee



거기 계셨군요 YOU were there