

Site & Stone

Kim Soonim



about Kim Soonim

Kim Soonim, as an artist, has been continuously presenting her work for over 20 years since her debut in 2002. However, the majority of her works are the results of her ongoing interest in the uniqueness of nature and the stories of people within both large and small regions or places.

Growing up in Punggi, Gyeongbuk, Kim spent her childhood and school years in an environment surrounded by mountains. She fondly recalls nature as her most familiar and enjoyable playground during her early years, as her surroundings were enveloped by mountains. When she entered college in Seoul, she began urban life, and after graduating, she started her career as an artist. During this phase, she traveled more extensively than almost any other artist globally. She resided in over 20 domestic and international residency programs, both short and long-term. The new living environments, nature, people, and many other elements she encountered and experienced in these places have become invaluable assets to her artistic activities.

Kim Soonim's artistic world can be briefly summarized as an art practice based on site-specificity and immediacy, eco-art emphasizing natural forms and processes derived from nature, and the value of art discovered through experiences of the environment and people, as well as diverse recording methods.

Art Works

〈I Am Stone (Naneun Dol)〉 (2013)

Kim Soonim's series "I Am Stone" consists of artworks bearing titles that encompass both the meaning of "I am stone" and the notion of stones being born. This series took its inception in 2010, when the artist collected stones along the Tae-hwa River and suspended them using anonymous stitching, creating installations on elevated platforms.

Collecting stones encountered within various places where the artist stays, the amassed stone objects become integral to the locale, simultaneously serving as materials that generate new spaces. This ongoing series assigns sequential numbers and regional names before and after the titles of the artworks, revealing the sequential and regional identities of the pieces.

The stone, a hallmark material in the artist's works, appears not only in 〈I Am Stone〉 but also in numerous other works such as 〈I Meet with Stone〉 and 〈Flowing Stones〉.



〈Naneun Dol 2013 Hangzhou - The Space 58〉 1337 stones from Hangzhou, Silk threads, feathers, variable installation in Zhejiang Art Museum Hangzhou, 2013

〈Oyster Land〉 (2015)

During her experience of residing in the new area, Kim Soonim has been collecting and incorporating both large and small natural objects that represent the unique identity of each area as part of her artwork. The main material of "Oyster Land" is oyster shells, which are the chosen objects from Manseok-dong. The artist explains that, while spending time calmly observing Manseok-dong, she noticed that many discarded oyster shells remained after oysters were sold. In fact, these oyster shells were materials that had been used for years to reclaim the sea into land in this area, filling the ground they now tread upon. This work highlights the story of the people living on the land reclaimed by oyster shells, which are their livelihood, and the sea that gave them of itself.

The artist meticulously cleaned the mud off the oyster shells obtained from Manseok-dong, repeatedly washed and dried them over an extended period. Eventually, the oyster shells regained their pristine forms and colors. Through this laborious process, the artist created a work by making holes in the cleaned oyster shells and weaving them together, forming a vine-like installation.



〈Oyster Land - The Space69〉 oystershells, wire, paper tapes, variable installation, 2015

<Dancing Microbes> (2019)

"In our eating, everything is life, has been life, or will be life; things that are self-made, in other words, 'nature' - from the artist's note." Kim Soonim, the artist, focuses on the situation where life in the form of food, which naturally comes from the environment we eat, drink, and discard in our daily lives, is treated as if it had no life. Through her artwork, she presents the cyclical nature of life.

"Dancing Microbes" (2019) is a work created by the artist by collecting traces of the food we eat and drink in our daily lives over a certain period and documenting them in her unique way. Various remnants of food consumed over a month, such as fruit peels, leftover tea leaves, sweet potato and cucumber peels, pepper seeds, coffee, wine, cigarette ash, and other various residues, were used as materials to form an artistic piece on the canvas.

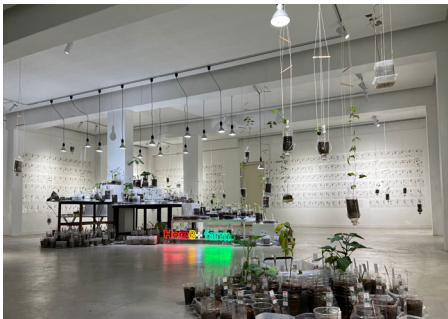
The process of observing, combining, and dismantling traces like peels and seeds left after consuming a series of foods results in the creation of this artwork. The artwork brings forth the traces of discarded life in the form of another life, revealing a new perspective.



<Dancing Microorganisms> food scraps on the paper, 139x76(12pcs), 126x76(4pcs), OCI Museum, 2019

<HomE+Farm> (2017~2022)

"HomE+Farm" is a collection of stories of life encountered in various markets. Through our daily lives, we acquire ingredients for food from various markets and markets, and in this process, the remnants of food and a variety of recycling containers that are left behind become the main materials of the artwork. Artist Kim Soonim captures the life cycle of our consumption and the intricate ecosystem that goes beyond our expectations and thoughts, as vegetables, fruits, grains, and more are cultivated, harvested, and brought to us through established distribution systems, only to gain new life in the aftermath. Artist Kim Soonim reveals the intricate vitality of an impressive and robust ecosystem, far more complex and formidable than our expectations, through the process of vegetables, fruits, grains, and other produce being cultivated, harvested, and brought to us via the established modern distribution system. This journey continues as these elements regain life in the subsequent stages.



<HomE+Farm 2022> food scraps, mixed materials, variable installation, Gallery Sowon, Incheon, 2022

<Where Stones Roll and Meet(I meet with stone)> (2003~)

This ongoing project, initiated in 2003 and continuing to the present day, involves the collection of numerous stones encountered along the

journey of life. The artist records and remembers the places and times where these encounters with stones occur. Stones encountered under specific conditions of time and place undergo a distinct process to be transformed into artworks.

Each stone is recorded along with the date and location where the artist encountered it. These gathered stones are then arranged within a specific location to form a cluster, which is revealed as an artwork. Additionally, photographs of the location where the stones were encountered, the stones themselves, and the landscapes seen from the perspective of the stones are captured and framed in a combination of two-dimensional and three-dimensional displays. Through this process, stones that have undergone this journey become a special presence for the artist.

Through imbuing inanimate stones with the gaze and subjectivity akin to the artist's own, rather than seeing them as subordinate to nature, a fundamental reflection on the relationship between humanity and nature is evoked.



<I meet with stone.>, variable installation, 2012

<Flowing Stones> (2020~)

The "Flowing Stones" series explores the original locations where the stones are found, while simultaneously weaving or stacking the stones within those spaces to create a dynamic landscape-like effect.

"Flowing Stones" is a series of works that began in 2020. It involves the collection of specific stones from particular regions and using these stones as the primary material to create both a part of nature and simultaneously an artwork. The project started with the installation of stones at the coast of Gotjawal on Jeju Island, where Jeju's red volcanic rocks were woven onto wire to create a flowing arrangement. This allowed the common sight of red volcanic rocks found throughout Jeju's soil to float in the air, forming a unique spatial presence.

In 2022, another "Flowing Stones" installation was placed in Anyangcheon. This artwork featured a circle made of stones that formed on a bridge and then descended into the waters of Anyangcheon. The circular pattern, reminiscent of ripples, was built up using stacked stones. The process of arranging the uneven stones in a circular pattern was done entirely by the artist's movement. Once the arrangement was complete, the circular pattern made of stones would flow on the water's surface and gradually disappear. Each step of this process contributes to the composition of the artwork.



<Flowing Stones_Anyangcheon stream> stones, time of artist, variable installation, 2022



〈Flowing Stones_Sanji-stream-The Space87〉 stones, time of artist, variable installation, 2021

〈The People 14 - Lee Ok Lan〉 (2008)

Kim Soonim's series "The People" is a collection of delicate sculptures that she has been creating over a decade starting from the early 2000s. Using materials such as hanji (Asian paper), gwangmok (cotton cloth), sil (thread), and wool, she has employed her artistic approach to bring to life the images of those who have been part of her life journey.

"The People 14 - Lee Ok Lan" is a piece meticulously crafted by sewing cotton stuffing into cotton cloth. Gwangmok and cotton stuffing stem from the artist's childhood memories, where her mother would remove the cotton from the inner layers of cotton bedding, wash it, and then dry it in the sun. These were simple daily memories that became intertwined with the materials that constitute the artwork and its subjects. The choice of materials, which also serve as both the substance making up the work and the subject of the work, stems from the artist's personal memories.

The inception of "The People 14 - Lee Ok Lan" began with the image of the artist's grandmother. It was a memory of her grandmother's worn-out body, bent over and resting on the floor during holidays after handling various household chores. This image merged with the surroundings, such as the small mattress she rested on, creating a deep impression in the artist's memory. Through the materials of cotton cloth and cotton stuffing, this memory of the artist's grandmother has been vividly brought to life.



〈The People 14-Lee Ok Lan〉, Cotton, Cotton cloth, Cotton Threads, 70x185x135, 2006

〈The Face 7 - Satto Miuky〉 (2008)

Kim Soonim's ongoing series "The Face" is an artistic endeavor that captures the essence of faces she encounters in life—faces that exude both gentleness and strength, expressing them through drawing in a way that warms people's hearts. Utilizing materials like cotton stuffing and cotton cloth, and employing the technique of anonymous stitching, "The Face" series is an extension of her "Cotton Drawing" series initiated in 2000, which primarily features artworks created with wool as the main material.

While the materials might be light as the artist embarks on a new journey, she packs bundled wool, thread, needles, and other materials—much like one would carry paper and pencils for drawing. Similar to sketching with a pencil on paper, she meticulously sews thread into the wool, crafting her drawings stitch by stitch. "The Face 7 - Satto Miuky" portrays the image of an elderly grandmother afflicted by dementia, whom the artist met in Japan. The artist is said to have made the work in memory of this grandmother, who resembled the village.



〈The Face 7-Satto Miuky〉 wool felt, 2008

〈Sea Rainbow〉 (2020)

"Sea Rainbow" is an artwork in which plastic fragments collected from the seashore are sorted by color and suspended in the air, creating a display reminiscent of a rainbow. Kim Soonim, who predominantly employs materials sourced from nature in her work, viewed plastic as a human-made catastrophe that has also become an integral part of the landscapes shaped by human influence. She believed that we should at least acknowledge and reflect upon the discomfort caused by our excessive reliance on plastic in our lives.

The discarded plastics used in the artwork were collected during the artist's stay in Busan, including areas like Dadaepo and Molundae, as well as along coastal regions during her stay in Kyushu, Japan. Just as one might gather stones while staying in a specific area, the process of collecting plastics starts by staying near the seashore and gathering traces of the sea – a result of both our misguided actions and the representation of the sea's flow. The artist cleans, categorizes, and installs the collected plastics in a single space, showcasing a part of human life while simultaneously imbuing life and meaning into the plastics themselves, thereby creating the final artwork. 〈The Space12〉



〈Sea-scape〉 beach plastics, mixed materials, variable installation, 2020

〈Dove Boy〉 (2020)

Created using wool as its primary material, the boy depicted in the artwork originated from the story of a young individual the artist encountered during her time in New York. Using wool, which is her representative material, and natural elements such as bird feathers collected from the environment, the artist realized the image of an urban dweller. The artist places great importance on encountering new spaces, new people, and elements of nature. She maintains the original form and color of the natural materials without altering them artificially, allowing the materials themselves to take on the role of the protagonist.

She seeks to uncover the significance that often overlooked or discarded elements of daily life might carry. This artwork, too, encapsulates a story that can be understood within such a context. In the artist's eyes, "Dove Boy" symbolizes a presence similar to the overlooked yet undoubtedly existing space within the city of New York. The artist believes that just like herself, the boy is present but unnoticed, marginalized within the cityscape. The boy, almost

Kim Soonim

Born in 1975 in Punggi of Sobek Mountain South-Korea

EDUCATION

2007 Ewha Woman's University, M.F.A. in Sculpture, Seoul, South Korea
2002 Ewha Woman's University, B.F.A. in Sculpture, Seoul, South Korea (Second major: Painting and Print Making, History of Art)

Solo Exhibition

2023.03.23-06.18 Streamy Space, Samgaksan Geumam Art Museum, Eunpyeong-gu, Seoul, South Korea
2022. 11.3-2023.1.10 Nature in Food, Gallery Sowon, Incheon South Korea
2022. 8.25-9.28 The Unknown Edible Beauty, OCI Museum, Seoul, South Korea
2020 6.25-7.7 Sea-scape, Hongti Art Center, Busan, South Korea
2020 3.18-27 Sea Rainbow, Kyushu Geibunkan, Chikugo-si Japan
2018 8.24-10.28 The Forest of Flowing Lives, SangGwang9 Gallery, THAV_Treasure Hill Art Village, Taipei Taiwan.
2018 7.20-8.15 Leaves Leave, KdMofa_Kwandu Museum of Fine Art 1/2 Gallery, Taipei Taiwan
2018 4.7-26 Home+Farm/ 2017-2018, Alternative Art Space Sonamoo, Ansung South Korea
2018 3.23-7.31 On the Road 2018, Valencia Gallery, Incheon South Korea
2017 10.20 Moon on Lavoir_ Kim Soonim Screening Night, Incheon Art Platform G2, Incheon South Korea
2017 6.17-7.13 Nomad Nature, Gallery Nomad, Yeosu South Korea
2017 1.6-1.22 The Memory of Dream, Alternative Space Dum, Incheon South Korea
2016 8.26-10.30 Landed Ocean, Incheon Art Platform, Incheon South Korea
2014 Kim Soonim-Drawings, Kawagoe Sanbachou Gallery, Tokyo Japan
2014 'Residency to Move', Youngeun Museum of Contemporary Art, Gwangju South Korea
2012 'On the Road', Soma Museum Drawing Center, Seoul South Korea
2012 'Nanun Dol-I meet with stone.' KAIST Research&Art, Seoul South Korea
2012 'The Wild Seeds', Space Noon, Suwon South Korea (Invite)
2011 'Mind Space', OX Warehouse, Macau China
2010 'The Forest of Strayer', Open Space Bae, Busan South Korea
2009 'The Threads The Memory', ISCP gallery, New York USA.
2008 'Etherial', Gallery Grimson, Seoul South Korea (SeMA 2')
2008 'I meet with stone', Alternative Space Beam, Incheon South Korea (IFAC Grant)
2008 'I meet with stone', Alternative Space Noon, Suwon South Korea (Selection)
2007 'The Face of unknown god', Gallery Dam, Seoul South Korea (Selection)
2007 'The Etherial Space', Red Mill Gallery, Vermont USA. (Freeman Award)

Selected Collections

2017 Seoul Museum of Art
2017 Incheon Foundation for Art&Culture
2015 Seoul Museum of Art,
2015 Youngeun Museum of Art South Korea
2014 AIR Vallauris Collection France,
2014 Atelir Turning Seoul Korea
2011 Jeju Museum of Art Korea,
2009 IFAC_Incheon Foundation for Art & Culture, Art Bank of Incheon Korea,
2009 Open Space Bae, Busan Korea
2008 Jeju Contemporary Art Museum Korea,
2007 AAAC-Asian American Art Center, New York U.S.A. etc.

blending with the passersby, doesn't shine or stand out. He has become a part of the landscape, embodying the space itself. The feathers extending from his back are not grand wings; they are lines, drawings that allow him to lightly overcome gravity and traverse the wind. Lines resembling tree roots or vines connect the feathers with the boy and the space. The inconspicuous urban pigeon, transformed by the city into a sacred bird within his own world, is why the artist named him "Dove Boy."



(Dove Boy_Daniel-The People 19) Soma Museum, 2012

(2007) / <The Space17> (2008)

"The Space12" and "The Space17," presented respectively in 2007 in Vermont, USA, and in 2008 at Seoul's Nanji area, are artworks that depict the appearance of fluffy clouds spread out like mountaintops in the early dawn, with stones hanging below them. The audience is enticed to lie on the soft woolen clouds. Moreover, the stones seemingly hanging through the clouds and reaching towards the ground sway with the movement of the audience, responding to the breeze and gentle gestures, offering a new experience to the viewers. For the artist, stones are one of the most essential materials that can describe his art. Whenever he moves to a new place, stones of various shapes and colors, found everywhere, can be seen as a part of that specific location and a pathway for the artist to understand that place. These stones, bearing traces of the places they were picked from, might not solely belong to the exact spot. Within each stone, layers of time, memories, and traces from different spaces accumulate, resembling the essence of human presence.



(The Space 17-Nanji) cotton wool, 167 of stones from Nanji, cotton thread, variable installation, gallery Grimson, 2008

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