

THE INAUGURAL EXHIBITION OF BB&M

LEE BUL: NEW AND SELECTED WORKS | OCTOBER 15 - NOVEMBER 27, 2021

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Established as an art consultancy in 2009 by James B. Lee, BB&M initially worked in partnership with PKM Gallery, Seoul, to create an exhibition program which quickly positioned the gallery at the forefront of the contemporary art sector in Asia.

BB&M was responsible for bringing into PKM and cultivating the careers of such prominent and critically relevant contemporary Korean artists as Lee Bul, Bae Young-whan, Minouk Lim, Park Chan-kyong, Bek Hyunjin, and Ham Jin. BB&M was also the first to organize shows in Korea of Hernan Bas and Katie Paterson, two of the most acclaimed artists of their generation.

BB&M's newest incarnation as an independent gallery is a collaborative effort between James B. Lee and Si Young Hur, who brings decades of experience in the commercial sector as Director at Gallery Hyundai and PKM Gallery and as Partner at Gallery Baton. In her previous posts, Ms. Hur was responsible for organizing and overseeing exhibitions of such artists as Liam Gillick, Olafur Eliasson, Thomas Struth, Robert Rauschenberg, and Yun Hyong-keun, a key figure in *Dansaekhwa*.

Encompassing over 2,500 square feet (233 square meters, 70 pyeong) of exhibition space over two levels, including a double-height space with a 17.5-foot (5.4 meters) ceiling, BB&M is located in the culturally storied district of Seongsu-dong, in the vicinity of Gansong Art Museum, the first private modern art museum in Korea established in 1938.

BB&M inaugurates its gallery space on October 15, 2021, with a solo exhibition dedicated to Lee Bul, widely recognized as the foremost Korean artist of her generation and among the most internationally prominent contemporary artists to emerge from Asia. Notable forthcoming exhibitions include solo presentations of other artists represented by BB&M: Bae Young-whan, recognized as a central figure in contemporary Korean art for his incisive melding of vernacular Korean beauty with neo-conceptual strategies and a social consciousness informed by the legacy of *Minjoong Misool* (a politically charged genre that emerged amid the pro-democracy movement in the 1980s); and Heecheon Kim, a young artist whose meteoric rise has been fueled by video works that appropriate the post-Internet language of online video games, identity-altering apps, and augmented and virtual reality to delve into the blurred boundary between reality and pseudo- and parallel realities in the technologically-charged urban environment of Seoul.

ABOUT THE PRINCIPALS

James B. Lee, Founding Principal, brings decades of varied experience in the art world, as a writer for such international magazines as *ARTnews* (New York), *Flash Art International* (Milan), and *Art AsiaPacific* (Hong Kong); in institutions, as the Head of Exhibitions at Artsonje Center, Seoul, and the Director of Exhibitions at the Gwangju Biennale Foundation; and in the commercial sector as Partner at PKM Gallery, Seoul. Mr. Lee was trained in finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, before earning a master's in writing from Columbia University, New York.

Si Young Hur, Principal, earned a BFA in painting from the Rhode Island School of Design and an MFA from Hong Ik University, Seoul, where she studied with major figures in the *Dansaekhwa* movement, notably Park Seo-bo. Ms. Hur went on to study art management at ICART, Paris, and embarked on a career in the commercial art world, first working at a Paris gallery that exhibited Lee Ufan. Upon returning to Seoul, she served as Director at Gallery Hyundai and subsequently at PKM Gallery.

ABOUT THE INAUGURAL EXHIBITION

The solo exhibition of Lee Bul at BB&M marks the long-awaited Korean gallery presentation of the artist, her first since 2015. In the interim six years, Lee Bul has been the subject of solo shows at major international institutions, including Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2015); Hayward Gallery, London (2018); Martin Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2018); and Manege, St. Petersburg, Russia (2020); she also contributed large-scale projects to the 20th Sydney Biennale (2016) and the 58th Venice Biennale (2019).

For the first time in Korea, the exhibition at BB&M features a selection of works from the artists's sought-after *Perdu* series, created with mother-of-pearl inlaid amid layers of acrylic paint repeatedly applied and sanded down to varying depths to bring forth sensuous, vibrant forms. At once painterly and dimensional, these wall works echo and elaborate on visual motifs seen in Lee's early biomorphic sculptures.

A remarkable example of such early work, *Still* (2004), is on view in the present show. A rare, freestanding sculpture (the only other similar work is in the collection of the Los Angeles Country Museum of Art), it occupies a transition between the artist's celebrated *Cyborg* sculptures and the fantastic fusion of organic and mechanical forms in the subsequent *Anagrams* series.

An additional sculpture in the show is a scaled-down version of a 4-meter-tall work that was featured in the main exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 2019. *Study for Aubade V (1/5 Scale)*, made of cast steel collected from a demolished DMZ checkpoint, continues Lee's artistic inquiry into the fractured tropes and narratives of utopian modernity, evoking the metal-lattice structures of Eiffel and Tatlin as well as the complex Cold-War history of Korea.

In her recent work Lee Bul's imaginative topography of utopian aspirations and failures has evolved into richly detailed and captivating scenes rendered in a collage of mother-of-pearl with other mixed media on velvet panels. Works in this series, *Untitled (Willing To Be Vulnerable)*, constitute a mode of "landscape painting" decidedly of our age: sublime yet melancholic, dystopian yet enchanting, expansive yet fractured.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Widely acknowledged as the foremost Korean artist of her generation, Lee Bul has been the subject of solo shows at major museums throughout the world, including the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2002); Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney (2004); Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris (2007); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012); Hayward Gallery, London (2018); and Martin Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2018).

Born in 1964, Lee Bul came of age in Seoul during a period of turbulent political and social transformation. Radical from the outset, she made a break with her academic training (BFA in sculpture from Seoul's Hong-ik University) to establish her early reputation with provocative works that crossed genres and disciplines, exploring themes of beauty, corruption and decay. Now in the fourth decade of her artistic career, she is a pioneering figure to a younger generation of artists in Korea and beyond, influenced by the sensibility and method of her early work, the iconoclastic performances and multi-sensory installations that pushed the formal and conceptual boundaries of visual art.

Some of Lee Bul's now-iconic works were integral to the emergence of a global contemporary art in the 1990s advocated by influential curators and supporters of her work such as Harald Szeemann, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Okwui Enwezor, culminating in the inclusion of both her karaoke installation and her installation of decomposing fish adorned with sequins in Szeemann's 1999 Venice Biennale.

Through the mid-2000s, Lee Bul continued to explore the experiential and ideological dimensions of the body in a culture increasingly permeated by technology. Alongside new versions of the electronically-mediated karaoke installation, she produced her signature sculptural hybrids of machine and organic forms that drew upon a range of references, from highbrow theory to the dystopian worlds of speculative fiction and cinema. The *Cyborgs* and the subsequent *Anagrams* series of sculptures explore our fascination with, and anxieties about, the techno-utopian promise of perfectibility, while also recalling the mutable, extracorporeal soft sculptures she wore in her early performances.

In 2005, an artistic residency in remote New Zealand gave rise to Lee Bul's inquiry into the ruins of historical projects to build a better civilization. She embarked on a series of sculptures and related works on paper and canvas under the rubric *Mon grand récit*—a self-conscious tweaking of the term made famous by Jean-François Lyotard. In 2007, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, mounted a large-scale solo exhibition of major sculptural works from the series.

In her current practice, Lee Bul has continued to delve into this expansive theme, or what she sees as the "melancholic traces of the collapse and disintegration of progressivist projects to reinvent the world." For an exhibition in 2020 organized by the Manege Central Exhibition Hall in St. Petersburg, Russia, she brought together works produced after 2005—immersive installations, architectural sculptures, studies and drawings—that continue her engagement with the historical avant-garde in art and architecture, and exhibited them alongside iconic archival works by the Russian avant-garde and Constructivists.

ABOUT THE ARTIST (Continued)

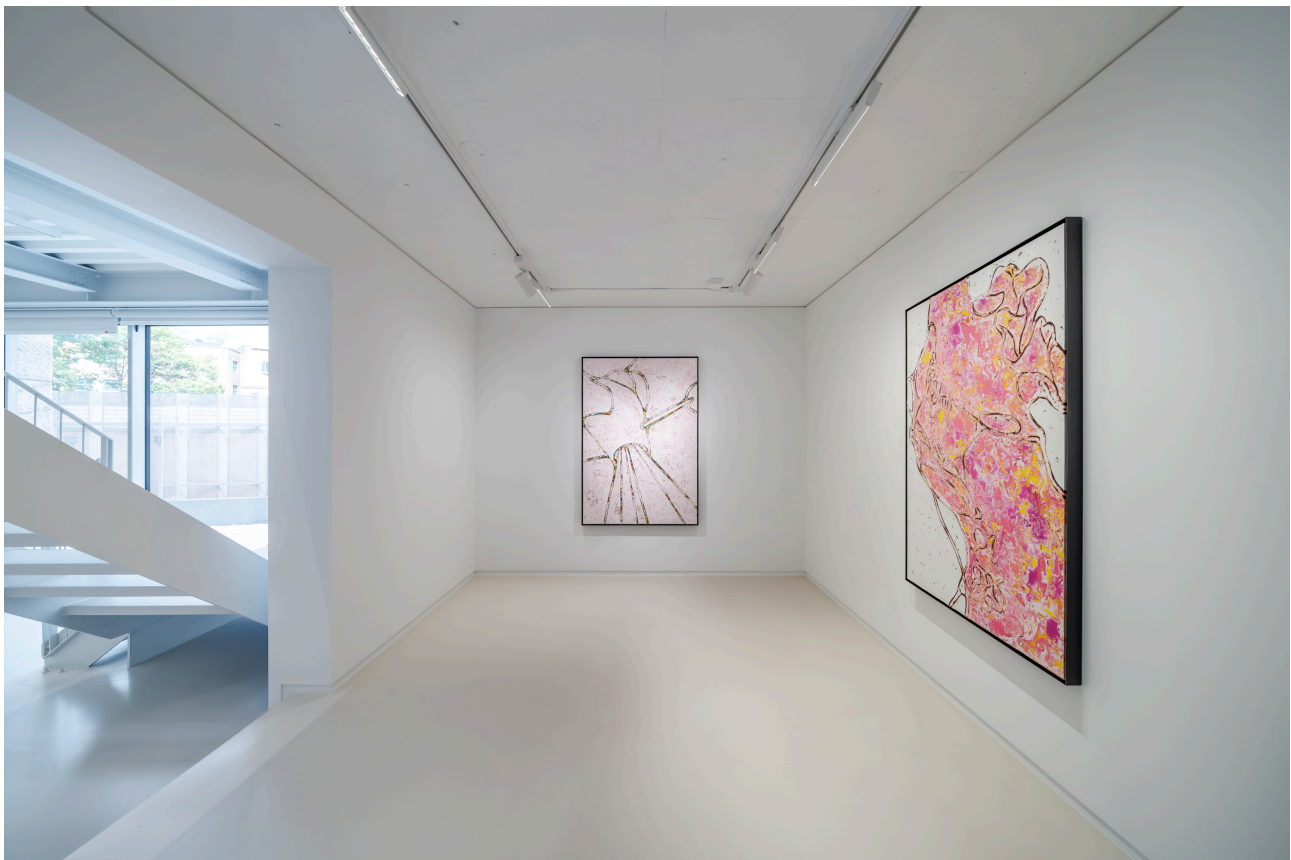
Lee Bul's work is held in prestigious private collections as well as prominent public collections throughout the world, including: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Tate Modern, London; British Museum, London; Musee d'Art Moderne Grand Duc Jean, Luxembourg; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; M+, Hong Kong; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa; Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul; Amorepacific Museum of Art, Seoul; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul.

Lee Bul is the recipient of the Ho-Am Prize in the Arts (2019), established by Kun-Hee Lee, the late Chairman of Samsung, to recognize individuals who have "furthered the welfare of humanity through distinguished accomplishments in their respective professional fields"; Officier, Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (2016), presented by the Ministry of Culture, France; and the Noon Award (2014), presented by the Gwangju Biennale Foundation to an established artist from that year's edition of the Biennale "whose work particularly embodies its spirit and theme." Lee Bul was also awarded a Menzione d'Onore (1999) for her contribution to the 48th Venice Biennale and was selected as a finalist for the Hugo Boss Prize in 1998.

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Exhibition views, *Lee Bul: New and Selected Works*, BB&M, Seoul, 2021



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