

RAIN.

You see a head covered by hairs. On top of the hairs, water drops are falling down such as pearls. The water falls down from the mid long hairs and hold in a white basin. You can turn around and around you will not see the face of the head. This image-sculpture is coming from a drawing that I've done with lines finishing by dots. It is thus important to see the water drops falling down from the extremity of the hairs. I'm interested in shaping this state of in-between, transformation of the heap (amas) of hairs like vegetative mass, into a liquid state. I'm trying to keep this state in suspense, the water flows as much as it can, it is a fountain functioning in a continuous loop. The sound of the water blurs our perception of time in a repetitive movement, leading us in an endless time. Or even restful, introducing a grotesque dimension on a head without voice.

In the popular imaginery, the association of hairs and of water is not rare. In the movie directed by Charles Laughton, *The Night of the Hunter* (1955), one can see the corpse of the murdered wife of the priest floating on the bottom of the river, the corpse in a car, hairs waving in the sens of the seaweed. One can see some resemblance with *Gui-chine*, the Korean ghost wearing in white, generally represented by a female figure with long black hairs waving in the wind hiding her face. But everyone who has been following the story knows who it is, to haunt the weak spirits.

To come back to the *RAIN*, this cut head has somehow a meditative aspect as I said, thanks to the sound of falling water, such as on the edge of the fountain in a garden. The name *RAIN* is coming from this visible movement from top to bottom, and it is a fountain emphasizing the transfigured link. I take the rain for a fountain, I like to imagine things being upside down, such as the relationship with others...

LE MAUGE.

One hour from Nantes in France, there is a countryside called Le Pays des Mauges. Since almost 30 years, locals have been fighting to have their own public high school. This collective dream became true in 2015 in a small city called Beaupréau. A very ambitious school project opened 24 hours, with huge garden place and residency for students and professors, an education focused on agriculture and hygiene products, and a future program for adults in the frame of lifelong learning. Since LE MAUGE has been produced in response to so called *1% artistique* as public commande, the context is more than political.

As you enter to the high school domaine by walking on the slightly climbing path for about 300 meters, as you approche to the entrance of the main building constructed in the respect of environment, you are face to a huge manlike rock fountain. 8 meters high, nevertheless from the upside, it is not that huge since the monster is raised up in between two different levels of terrace. In the region, there is a legendary rock called *The rock which drinks* where the hight of the cliff from the water is same than the hidden part of the river.

The monster fountain has already hairy mosses. We built the fountain to encourage the environment to grow mosses which can be the ancestor of humain kind. The bryophyte is one of the most ancien form of life appeared on our land. It has the seaweed in memory still, it has a very primitive structure of plant. Because of the multitude of surfaces, it is used by scientists to mesure the pollution in the air. Its name, LE MAUGE, is coming from the interpretation of its etymology. It can be the deformation of *metallica*, of the metallic soil or of the *mauvais gens* meaning *bad people*.

Now its more green and hairy with its new humid microcosm overwhelming the giant monster. The power of water brings nature raising a local mythology. We can ask if the water brings the rock alias monster or the monster brings the moss...

This photo is taken during the construction site showing the process of making with projected concrete and its hydraulic system. It was late in the afternoon on Saturday after a long and tough labor with all our team. On site you can actually see two faces, front and back.

PLASTIC CUP.

This is a disposable cup laid down on a plastic tray, fast food style, with a straw coming out of the cup. This cup spits out the transparent drink through the straw, this is a fountain as well. Or a permanent object. Here, the cup is on strike by rejecting its function, task that is given to it at some point, so as to better think about. One might find several works that I have done in form of objects in movement. What I'm interested in might be to give a chance for those objects to talk, a voice, which is a vibration, a movement.

This fountain is very different than the *RAIN* except that both have a recognizable form, a head, a cup. This recognizable form, in other words, these *popular* forms allow me to pass through the other side of *the immediate reality* so as to organize an experience of linguistic form which invites us to reverse our roles against our environment.

IDO.

Pronounced *IDO* in French, close to *hideux* which means *hideous* or *ugly*.

During Evento, contemporary art Biennale in Bordeaux, I have been interested in common transport.

The bus is the place where ephemeral community is forming.

I took it as a furtive brief monument in the city. To do that, I have disguised the public city bus with hairy mask, on the level of its head, the hairs at the scale of the vehicle. We had to figure out how to weave for it.

The bus covered like that was marking its everyday itinerary from the down town to the periphery of Bordeaux with its usual public bus driver. And since we see a bus most of time in movement, its wide furs in the wind, one can have impression to see a monster.

Most of time, even though the furs are dark, people were smiling while seeing it. As soon as the bus passed by, the back of the bus is uncovered, one can ask if what has been seen is true or not.

AN AFGHAN IN CORSICA.

I have been walking in Cap Corse in Corsica, dressed up and hooded, all made in a flowery fabric, reminding the little flowers of the Mediterranean Sea where the island is situated. Some would talk about *liberty* pattern. I was hanging around like this for a whole week, becoming invisible while in a flower field outdoors. It was in 2001. The so called *Island of Beauty* was famous unfortunately for its extremists of independence movement becoming terrorist hiding their face.

K.

The individuals of the *CLAMOUR*. Face, mask with two little holes so as to see through and two lumps more or less long like the nose, tongue, penis or horn. The faces change but it can be the matter of one and only character such as Klamm in *The Castle* of Kafka. Klamm is known from all village but according to the person who describes him, he changes physical appearance.

Each of them is called *K* for a moment. They can be presented alone or together. The group is named *CLAMOUR* as the sound that a crowd can make. The first time, I presented eleven of them next to the four striped columns turning on site slowly. Near a mask with two stripes drawn by the outline of the shadow of protuberances.

Each face has a different noise. K. K K K K, K K K K K K K K K K K K K K K K ...
When presented in an exhibition, visitors can try on it so as to hear them.

MAGNETOLOGIA CURIOSA.

Like the illustration in the very scientific work of Joachim Dalencé, end of XVIth century, I set a giant egg but hairy, like as much as folds, in the Kitchen Garden of the King (Potager du Roi) of Louis XIV in Versailles, with the principle of Roly-poly toy (round-bottomed doll, tilting doll, tumbler, wobbly man). The hemispherical basis helps it to put up again whenever one topples it over. *MAGNETOLOGIA CURIOSA* can be manipulated by all means. But it stands up all the time all again.

BIBIKI.

Rubbing. A battery of performers are carrying out a simple sound-producing activity. A group of hairy household objects such as broom or brush are falling down on the stage of the concert hall. Slowly. The important thing for me was to see the vertical lines of the brush enter to friction with the horizontal line of the ground producing sound. I like the expression of the curator saying that these nondescript objects suddenly release new potential identities just as they fall to their destruction. The duration of the performance of hairy objects was 45 minutes.

STICK.

is made up of a group of 17 long sticks, sheathed (covered) by colorful silk, put against the wall. Each one has a different color. Red, blue, yellow, magenta, bright Granny Smith apple, carmine, vanilla, teal (bleu sarcelle/ bleu canard/ turquoise), white, fuchsia, green, light pink, ultramarine, lavender, violet, orange-red, Tiffany blue (turquoise clair) are laid out side by side. These straight sticks of more than 5 meters long and thick of 5 centimeters put therefore against the wall, in other words, almost standing up. Their colorful silk case is closed on both sides by stitching, hiding the material which constitute the interior. Also, one can hardly distinguish the other end of the sticks despite of the careful stitching work in order to close the form. One may carry out the stick/s before it/they fall/s over us. The weight, the rigidity of these poles tell us the material of the structure. Lined up together, this group can evoke some waiting strike banners or a parade to come of the confraternity Sainte-Barbe.

I consider my sculptures as tools which can be used by the one who is nearby. The form of sculptures are coming from everyday belongings as well as masks. They all have this in common that they are recognizable calling a precise situation.

Jochen Dehn, my colleague writes *Seulgi Lee shows us the potential of things. With her things are never under stress. ... I like the idea of being accompanied by someone or something. When [Seulgi Lee] crosses Chicago, I have the impression that she's the one who's out walking with the knife, whereas watching a film I always have the impression that it's the knife that is out walking with the murderer.*

U.

Since several years, I am working on a re-interpretation of Korean traditional blankets, each blanket recalling a proverb in a certain way. I took the traditional Korean blanket format produced till the '80s. Quilted in *Nubi* technique line by line by artisans of Tong-Yeong, the direction of sewing participates in the construction and the meaning of the geometrical forms.

For exemple, in *Even Monkeys Fall from Trees = Even agile persons can make mistakes*,

here, the two circles represent a head of monkey, a direct reference to *Two circles No 127* of the Russian constructivist Alexandre Rodtchenko (1920). Situated in between 2 diagonal branches in gray. Since the monkey is falling down, the direction of sewing is vertical as well as the background from upside down. Like in a comic to signify the sens of falling.

In Asia, the colors are related to the cosmology and the directions.

For exemple, Black - North, Red - South, Bleu - East, White - Ouest and Yellow - Center.

People say that sleeping the head toward the north is good for health, this, in Asia as well as in Europe.

Whoever sleeps under this blanket can dream like a proverb, spinning like a compass.

When presented on a low pedestal, it reminds of the position of bed. When presented on th wall, the physical impact of colors or of contours is slightly more important.

The blanket is sort of frontier between reality and dream. In that very intimate place I imply a collective dream. I imagine that the collective story containing in the pattern of the blanket can influence the dream of the person who uses it.

The proverbs I've been working with are as following,

Choose the red shirt = Take the best

Show a duck's foot = Lie

Even before a beauty such as Mount Diamond, if you have an empty stomach you won't see it

Swim on the ground = Easy

Blood of the bird's foot = Very small quantity

Eat the rice cake lying down = Easy

Until the black hairs turn into white as leek root = Longtime couple

Lick the watermelon = Rush job

The fake apricot is shinier = Useless

The pumpkin rolls in with all its branches = Unexpected wealth

Pressed down by scissors = Cannot wake up after a nightmare

The darkest place is under the oil lamp = One does not see the thing which is too close

The calf has a horned butt = Insolent

One ignores the first Korean letter ㅋ [kijak] next to a sickle = Very ignorant

Even the egg has bones = A series of bad luck

As the crow flies, the pear falls = Two bad events occur at the same time

Cut the water with knife = Couple's quarrel never last

I will put my finger on the boiling fermented bean = I swear it is (not) true

Be crushed in the foot by a trusted axe = Betrayed by someone you believed in

If your tail is too long, it would be trampled upon = Bad behavior will be known soon or later

The empty cart creaks most = The hypocrite talks a lot

The ghost would sing (wailing) = Very rare event, incredible

If you see a hen laying eggs you get lucky

Even monkeys fall from trees = No one is perfect

There is no smoke without fire in the chimney

Even a straw sandal has its pair = Each person has a soulmate

To be accompanied by a jang-gu (drum) = To agree

Out of jealousy, to dig one's finger into somebody else's kaki fruit

The cloud and the rain = Carnal love

Words from salivating lips = A lie

At sea, a turtle reaches a plank with a hole in it to put his head through so as to breathe = A rare event

Multitude of sesame seeds are falling = A young couple having fun

Gayageum (zither) and Bipa (lyre) = A harmonious couple

Through this project I called *U*, the capital letter whose form is a container,

I try to explore the relationship between the oral culture and the handicraft to find out a certain primitive gesture that people adopted to be independent.

Parallel lines sewed line by line... That reminds me of the landscape of rice field.

Or the parallel lines which symbolized the water bringing life in the prehistory.

PETITE DENT.

The Gobelins Manufactory of the Mobilier National in France asked me to do a collaboration. After visiting their different sites with artisans such as tapestry or furniture, I decided to work with lace makers of bobbin lace (dentelle aux fuseaux) in Puy-en-Velay.

I re-interpret a later sixteenth century pattern to construct a folding screen (paravent) miniature. The pattern upside down is multiplied and the form is readable in big size by differentiation of colors.

In addition to that, the object will filter electromagnetic radiation which can provoke new disease related to the utilisation of electronic device such as cell phone with wifi...

DUSK SOUP.

When I was invited to realize a solo project in a space equipped with a kitchen behind a library in Marseille called HO like Histoire de l'Oeil, reference to George Bataille coincidentally the same name of the caterer in front of that place, I proposes to do a continuous party project with soup served all day long during the period of the show. We painted one wall in yellow, the other in pink. Then we put a big pot (marmite) on hotplate full of yellow vegetable soup and pink soup in front of the other. When asked why these colors, I answered that those two colors was that of sunset. In Altkirch, we painted all walls of one room in violet and served violet soup made out of organic purple carrot pourpre of the region. A ceramist neighbor made the bowls.

Maybe we can become transparent by eating a violet soup in a violet space by the time of violet sunset ?

PPR.

People used to call PARIS PROJECT ROOM as PPR, like, Pinault-Printemps-Redoute. But it sounds more like pé-père, meanging tranquil in French.

Arlène,

You told me you were interested in the story of the rabbit in the moon. I've been dwelling on this. Seulgi has never directly used myths. But they feed her motivations, quite acutely, and clarify somewhat her work process. Identifying figures in abstract shapes and revealing these figures in languages are the two actions that come together in her work and that are found in the tale and interpretation of the lunar geography.

To me, the blanket series is particularly well achieved. What I find the most pleasing is that they are appreciated by all, those accustomed to contemporary art, or to graphic design and design in general, or simple visitors, whether they are Korean or not, and... artisans themselves (who discover a new meaning in their work). This is rare. It's a work that is about current folklore, rather than traditions. It's popular. A few years ago in Gwangju, I witnessed a fresh and enthusiastic audience. Undoubtedly because they all played along at the two-step interpretation. Step 1 : Appreciating the geometrical composition, the enjoyment of the colours, the fine silk, the meticulous craft, etc. Step 2 (after reading the title) : The emergence of the figure (which is, for some, well anchored in spoken language). As for these two dimensions to not rule each other out, Seulgi transcribes the expression graphically, by simplifying it, contradicting it with different colours, pushing it to the limit of its potential interpretation. She stops the process on this fine line, at the very edge of abstraction, without the compositions ever becoming abstract per se. And in fact, it may not even be abstraction.

The new basket series also plays with language and craft. But their encounter is very different and I wouldn't know how to explain it without describing the situation. Ixcatlan is a very poor village, lost in the mountains of north Oaxaca, two hours away from tarmac roads. Before the Spanish arrived, it was a town of 30 000 inhabitants, with their own language, Ixcateco. Now, there are only 400 in the registers, and less than 10 speak Ixcateco. They all know how to weave palm leaves. It's custom to pay with straw hats. In the streets and on the mountain paths you can see people weaving as they walk. A community of women (I believe the feminist aspect to be important here) form a cooperative and execute challenging commissions (baskets, mezcal bottle claddings...). It's quite a scene : eight women meet in a breezeblock 9m² room, and sit on chairs with their back against the walls, weave, chat and joke. Seulgi spent two weeks with them, drawing what she understood of their weaving methods, shapes that simultaneously animated the conversation. Only very few people know how to build a sentence in Ixcateco, but words crop up everyday. Designating the shapes that they were weaving became a game and brought memories back to life. They named their collective Xula (Ixcateco in Ixcateco). Inventing new shapes so as to name them, to allow an ancient language to resurface, an unusual mission for an artist, but not for a linguist : Evangelia Adamou, inalco, Ixcateco specialist claims to use stimuli during her interviews.

More loosely, the common point between the two projects : the artist's position, playful and curious, halfway between the intellectual and the artisan. Finally, relocating our spiritual activities in our artisanal activities, and the other way round, is an ordinary posture for an artist. The shortcut may be somewhat awkward, but with these two bodies of work, Seulgi positions herself by offering figures that allow encounters.

Concerning the current installation, I don't want to insist on the on the dreamlike landscape that the blankets connote, on the nightmares and oblivious images in our expressions, but Seulgi has nonetheless imagined their vertical hanging in one room, and horizontal in the other. She reminds that : up and down / across are the two weft types used for making petates ; that there is only a small step from thanatos to tenates ; that the baskets are used to wrap tortillas, but also the dead in Mexico, and also hid widows in Korea at a certain point, but I'm starting to drift off...

S. 2017

What happens when you're following the full moon rabbit, and you come upon a language that is almost dead, or dying? Furthermore, what difference does this make, and then what is this vanishing dialect? A myth from the pre-Hispanic period (similar to a Korean belief) relates that the Mexicans were quite sure that there was a rabbit lying on the moon. For them, it was the reason behind the moon's craters, and it obscured the moon's brightness so that it would be less dazzling than the sun. In addition to the contrast between the two stars, the animal here signifies our obsessive desire to want to see a shape in any kind of (abstract) landscape coming before our eyes.

With eight capital letters and an invented word inspired by votive expressions, DAMASESE invites us to discover animated signs and their opposites. It plays with our vague desires to recognize (or not) a letter and a language in its most primitive attire. Starting with Ixcatēc, hailing from the Oaxaca region of Mexico. Of pre-Hispanic origin (and thus contemporary with the above-mentioned allegory), this Oto-Manguéan language has become extremely rare, being spoken by less than ten people. It has the specific feature of having no written form, and is as a result associated solely with the present, and its recording. Intrigued by this immaterial legacy, Seulgi Lee took this starting point to set up an exchange with a community of women basket-makers based in Santa Maria Ixcatlán, called XuLa (meaning Ixcatēc in Ixcatēc = a nice tautology). To do this, for days on end she observed their techniques for weaving baskets, while she simultaneously discovered this unknown language. This experiment and acclimatization in turn gave rise to hybrid (as well as hybridized) *tenates* (baskets), extending at the same time to a pronounced word, or its association with a line.¹ In the same way as the disappearance of the lexicon, sentences have become rare because few inhabitants actually communicate in this language; some of them know a word or two, thus creating a stammering effect, and sentences with no agreements, and even without verbs. A little like when you learn sign language (bear in mind that it differs in every country) and you only know how to sign letters, which makes it hard to have a conversation!

The basket's shape is dictated by a force field that is, to be sure, in dialogue with the material, but also the word. In this respect, Tim Ingold states that : *"the action [read, the weaving] has a narrative quality, in the sense that all movement, like a line in history, is rhythmically developed based on the previous movement, while anticipating the next movement."*² In an earlier book, the British anthropologist analyzed the relation between line, weaving and text. According to him: *"The line formed on an already existing surface [...] is the trace of a movement, the one we see on a surface which has been woven using threads-like that of the blanket—develops in an organic way in one direction, through the repetition of crosswise and to-and-fro movements which go in the other direction. This distinction also offers a key for understanding the relation between weaving and writing. Because the shared derivation, [...] of the words "text" and "textile" comes from tax and "weave", the writing that is usually defined by the inscription of traces on a surface has been inspired by the weaving model,"*³ The "neo-tenates" also propose an autonomous "neo-dialect" (or a "neo-currency" of exchange) like woven palm fronds before them), whose primary syntax is these anthropomorphic structures whose typology is related to certain exotic flowers.⁴ In particular those tropical carnivorous plants with the name *Nepenthes*, existing in the form of different varieties and especially in the mountains of the State of Meghalaya in India.⁵ Set on structures made of metal rods, these gregarious baskets (like pink flamingoes) propose new signs constructed on a shrewd game of inside-outside, containing-contained, horizontal and vertical alike. New generation urns, in a way! And why not the other meaning of *Nepenthes*, referring to Homer by way of the memory of the potion which Paris gave to Helen to drink after her kidnapping, to make her forget about the land of her birth? Through the ensemble of their dots, angles and almost body-like attitudes, these "neo-petates" (woven palm fronds) are furthermore akin to astronomical constellations with powerful imaginative potential: *"Ndanga (soft as a telephone), Uburo (here and there pink horses neigh), Tundu (the madman has a blue/green broken nose) and Guashunga (a girl with neat hair)."*⁶

Here are adages that have become poems, just like in the "nubi(s)" brought together in the syllabary unit "U" with a sound somewhere between a Chinese ideogram and a Korean phonogram.⁷ These votive sculptures composed of bright, flamboyant and multi-hued colours from front to back, or else black and white (tending to interpret ambiguous and negative beliefs, as well as nightmares), are cleverly orchestrated in accordance with Chinese geomancy (called *wuxing*).⁸ They thus potentially establish a system of links and correlations based on a liaison between the cosmic order of things and the social order of people. In this pictorial sequence, they stimulate our powers of free association between image and language, a process in which the image becomes as right (and not just an image) as a fully-fledged proverb. See for yourselves! *"U: like a ghost singing by uttering shrill cries. =An unbelievable event"* and *"U: Out at sea a blind tortoise comes upon a plank with a hole in it, where it puts its head in order to breathe. =a very rare fact"*. But isn't the most surprising event, today, language that has become as performative as reading?

[DAMASESE, galerie Jousse Entreprise, October 19 - November 25, 2017, Paris]

Arlène Berceliot Courtin 2017

1 The "tenate(s)" lie at the heart of the lives of the Mexicans of Santa Maria Ixcatlán.

They are also used to wrap foodstuffs, protect heads in the form of sombreros, and protect the bodies of the deceased.

2 Tim Ingold, *Marcher avec les dragons*, p. 216, ed. Zones Sensibles, 2013.

3 Tim Ingold, *Une brève histoire des lignes*, p. 89, ed. Zones Sensibles, 2011.

4 The prefix "neo" is used in its various qualities and in particular the one that describes a new fact, but also a constructed language, i.e. created in record time by several people.

5 Among the attractions of Mawlynnong, chosen as Asia's cleanest village in 2003.

6 The "petate(s)" are weavings made of palm fronds (and in particular mats made using this technique) which appeared in the pre-Hispanic period.

7 The "nubi(s)" are traditional Korean blankets made using the "Tongyeong Nubi" quilting technique (the equivalent of the Japanese Sashiko, the Provençal Boutis, and the Piqué of Marseille) in the city of Tongyeong in the extreme south of South Korea

8 The system is based on five phases : wood, fire, earth, metal and water, each corresponding to a cardinal point in space (knowing that north is represented below and the earth in the middle), but also a season, a colour, a taste, and even a day of the week.

Blanket Project U (우, 柔)

The simplified geometrical shapes in the vividly colourful fabrics present fresh and vigorous images. The bold contrast and subtle chroma of the primary colours with the various directions of the stitches, vertical, horizontal and diagonal, rhythm the vitality of the forms. Dreamlike images, these abstract forms of intimate colours and shapes trigger the reminiscence of something vague and yet not so unfamiliar. The ambiguous objects are eventually manifested by their titles. These Korean proverbs stimulate an association between image and language, process in which the image is a proverb in itself.

Seulgi Lee transforms a selection of Korean proverbs into simplified forms and primary colours. These metaphors vary in their composition and colour scheme. For instance the proverb, "a pumpkin and its vine roll in all at once", becomes a rudy and round form simplifying the shape of a pumpkin. The orange shape is fully expanded to the edge of the frame, contoured by a bright blue background. Dynamic motion is evoked through the vertical lines of the pumpkin and the horizontal lines of the background. The meaning of the proverb, that great fortune will unexpectedly appear, is not understood through the image, but generated as a direct perception of the proverb in a visual and tactile sense.

Significantly, this direct perception is mediated by the originality of the colours and the forms in the image. Seulgi Lee devised to maintain an identical consensus of language by transforming the proverb into an image using the traditional Korean five cardinal colours and basic geometrical shapes. The cardinal colours (blue, red, yellow, black and white) stem from the five cardinal elements of Yin and Yang as symbols of basic principles of creation and existing order of nature as a universe. Based on the perception of a non-objectified nature, they reflect a primitive language of spiritual communication between Man and universal nature. The basic geometrical forms, also originating from the image of nature, are an emblem integrating the essence of natural things and the basic formative language, thus allowing space to the onlooker's own perception.

The proverb-image is inscribed on the blanket, similar to a quilt using the Korean traditional craft, Nubi. In this craft, the material is not just a tool, as the artisan needs to fully understand the materiality of the fabrics, to then use skills according to the material itself. Seulgi Lee invites a master craftsman of Korean Nubi, Seongyeon Cho (Tongyeong Nubijang) to make the quilts with his skilful hands. The process of quilting, as a meeting point between hands, cloth and needle, engenders the proverb-image through conscious directions of straight sewing lines. The image directs the way of stitching, the stitches form the image and the cloth includes vigour to the forms enveloping the coldness of geometrical shapes. Finally, it's through contact of the body and the proverb quilted into the blanket that the body can perceive its sense.

In this process, the blanket regains the original identity of universal nature accepting the body as a small universe. Not just in its function or as a tool for the protection of the body, the image on the blanket becomes a language to communicate beyond the level of ornament or decoration. The stitch lines on the quilted blanket seem to reflect the comb-pattern carved on the prehistorical earthenware as a conjuring language praying for life's fullness through abstract images of nature, such as the ceaseless flow of water or rain fertilizing the land. This is associated to the U in the title, originating from the wave pattern of water and the curving sign of both grapheme and utterance. Further still, Seulgi Lee plays with the shape of the U, its hollow or its bridge, associating the image of the blanket surrounding a body. She then develops the title in relation between the cover and the body, adding the Korean (우) and the Chinese (柔) that have the same sound as U. As a phonogram, Korean 우 gives its meaning by an ideogram, the Chinese 柔 that stands for softness and mildness as the most ideal to force to overcome the powerfulness of nature, to not be overwhelmed by nature. As a result Blanket Project U (우, 柔), in the process of making the covers, hand combining the natural fabrics creates a "performative language by conjuration" as a communication between Man and nature.

Usually exploring her inner communication with everyday objects, Seulgi Lee searches for the inherent identity of the individual object. Here however, she seems to seek for the collective identity of her community of origin through one of its everyday objects. The blanket grafts together the oral culture of the proverb and the traditional craft of quilting. Her proverb-image evoking the fundamental essence of language originated from the potential of primitive language, latent in a collective unconscious, awoken by the image as a raw experience. Through proximity and contact, the blankets tell descended stories of wisdom and humour of the proverb in primitive language stored in our unconscious. In this relationship, the symmetrical lines of the stitches on the cover seemingly imply the primitive condition, the equal relationship between human beings and any other beings, not as a fixed image but as a conjuring language to recover the asymmetrical distorted relationship of instrumentation of nature. It awakens our primitive senses in our daily lives. In the realm of art, Blanket Project U (우, 柔) also awakens the primitive essence of art itself, its forgotten and yet intrinsic mode, conjuration.

Sara Oh 2015

When asked what art means to her, Seulgi LEE replies, 'It is the skull from the story of Monk Wonhyo. Wonhyo is a Korean Buddhist monk from the seventh century. During his pilgrimage to China, Wonhyo looks for something to drink in the dark, finds a bowl containing liquid and relishes it. The next morning, he realises that the container was a skull and what he drank was putrid water. I think art is a container like this skull. Robert Filliou said, « Art is what makes life more interesting than art. » Art is like a bowl that contains life.' Born in Seoul in 1972 (her parents were both painters), Lee relocated to Paris in 1992, later graduating from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. Following exhibitions in major museums in Paris, her first solo exhibition in Seoul was presented at Ssamzie Space (2004). One of her key contributions to the Parisian contemporary art scene was the co-operative project space Paris Project Room, which she managed with Simon Boudvin (2001-3). Appointing an imaginary Frenchman called Marcel Wallace as their director, they mounted more than 250 highly experimental shows. Since then, Lee has participated in Elastic Taboos, the Korean group show at Kunsthalle Wien (2007); the 7th Gwangju Biennale (2008) and the Triennale d'Art Contemporain, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2012).

Lee has developed a practice characterised by vibrant colour, gesture, simple yet elegant forms and performance. Assembled out of everyday belongings, masks and pedestrian objects, her works explore a vocabulary more appropriate to craft, challenging the usual distinctions between sculptural syntax and a design aesthetic. Their often political nature is apparent in such actions as An Afghan in Corsica (2001), which documents the artists wandering the streets of Corsica dressed in a bright floral veil suggestive of a burqa or hijab. 'When I went into a bar run by a separatist,' she elaborates, 'a man was furious at my performance. I told him that it was for the liberty of Afghan women, who are forced to wear the burqa. I tried to incite confusion and a redefinition of the situation...' In another show of solidarity, Lee metaculously embroidered large pink strike banners for French protesters to use while marching against proposed legislation to restrict employment. Meanwhile Bâton (2009) comprises a group of seventeen long sticks sheathed in silk. Playful yet slightly ominous, they lean against the wall in various configurations, evoking banners, parades and ritualistic displays.

'Depending on the project, my work is an object or a performance. That is to say, the idea can be expressed as a person or a thing,' Lee explains. 'Rain/Fountain' (2005) is a fountain where water falls on a life-sized head... One looks for the face underneath the hair but cannot find it. The water drops follow the hairs until they reach the tips and then fall on the floor... and make a clear sound. The constant sound makes the viewer attentive to the slowing of time...' Lee is also avidly interested in 'the popular appeal of decorative arts'. U (2012), for example, 'is a traditional Korean bedcover made in the original technique'.

Collaborating with bedding craftsmen, Lee decorated bed linen with colourful images of Korean proverbs, calling the results 'communicative bed sheets'. Though they are abstract, they become legible 'once the viewer understands the proverb...

One of the reason why Korean bed sheets are colourful is that, unlike the Japanese, who put them away in closets after use, Koreans folded them neatly and put them on the side of the room for decoration.'

[In « The Power of Now : Korean art », Thames & Hudson / TransGlobe Publishing, London.]

Chairs can walk

I was there to see friends and because of an invitation card with a red/yellow/purple/pink photo showing a glass and a straw with water running out of it. From the inside to the outside.

A fountain - and a perfect example of communication. I found other friends there too: a cardboard box practising flying, and three (maybe two) cables put together to boost an adapter plug.

I'm attracted to marvels. And to write the most beautiful thing I can write about Seulgi Lee, I write: Seulgi Lee shows us the potential of things. With Seulgi Lee things are never under stress.

Today I saw two photos of popular festivals, one in Viterbo in Italy and the other on the island of Menorca, in the Mediterranean. These are two festivals I like a lot. In Viterbo the Macchina di Santa Rosa -a 35-metre tower- is paraded by a hundred people who have been training for this for a year. In Menorca groups of twenty villagers each carry a stallion and its rider, and the winning team is the one that holds out longest. When I compare these celebrations with others that feature throwing tomatoes or oranges, I realise that it's simple things that make me happy.

The big ball of clothes is the best means of storage and transport. Putting things together and then rolling them along seems to me one of the things that can make me happy.

For the moment I'm wondering what I can do and can't do with my friends: how can you empty an ostrich egg without making a hole in it? (There are women who dive thirty metres down without scuba gear, and androids who commit suicide by holding their breath - it creates a short-circuit, I guess)

I couldn't go out walking on fish, but I could throw them in the air hoping something would catch them before they fell. On the other hand, I like the idea of being accompanied by someone or something. When Seulgi Lee crosses Chicago, I have the impression that she's the one who's out walking with the knife, whereas watching a film I always have the impression that it's the knife that is out walking with the murderer.

I don't know yet what all this means. But I'm sure it's something you could build marvels on. [In *IDEM (DITTO)*, book published at the same time than the eponymous exhibition of Seulgi Lee at the Contemporary art centre of la Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel, East-Paris, 2009]

Jochen Dehn 2009