



1. Information

- Title: *Touch*
- Artist: Seung Yul Oh
- Exhibition Dates: 22 September - 25 October 2020
- Opening Hours : Tuesday - Sunday, 11am - 6pm (Closed on Monday)
- Venue: ONE AND J. Gallery (31-14 Bukchon-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul, 03055, Korea)
- Website: <http://oneandi.com/>
- High resolution images are available for download via the link:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_Kn2q8JwGnbsoojA0ttwKkOzBF-AK0lr?usp=sharing
- Press Contact: Seoyeon Yang (sy@oneandi.com)
- Due to the COVID-19 situation, we will not host an opening reception.

2. About the exhibition

ONE AND J. Gallery is pleased to announce “Touch” a solo exhibition from September 22nd to October 25th by Seung Yul Oh, who is based in New Zealand. Born in Seoul, the artist studied fine arts at the University of Auckland, and is currently living in New Zealand. In Korea, Oh gained domestic attention with solo show “Solo Group Show” (2011) at ggool (currently Amado Art Space/Lab). Since then, he has held several solo and group shows, traveling between New Zealand and Korea.

Since the beginning of his career, his consistent interest is to regain an extended sensation beyond fixed recognitions. His works are often read as ‘humor,’ because the artist uses ‘laughter’ and ‘joke’ as a device to instantly break down the frame of concrete perceptions. ‘Humor’ is also a ‘distancing’ device that keeps you from being overwhelmed from infinite senses you experience at moments of rupture. Rather than being helpless in faces of the vastness of phenomena, his attitude of gazing and keeping them along with life can also be applied to the attitude of accepting situations of the pandemic we are experiencing. Oh focuses on sensing all these phenomena, to create flooding moments through his works. He produces cycles, which are once again experienced and observed by audiences.

This exhibition “Touch” presents a large-scale installation of an enlarged molecular structure for more than three meters and two pieces of *Pou Sto*, mouse-shape sculptures that have been produced in a series since before. The installation, which seems to have been built with a huge enlargement of an invisible molecular structure, provides an opportunity for audiences to sense the invisible with an experience to walk among the structure. Meanwhile, ‘Pou Sto’ is derived from an ancient Greek word, meaning ‘foothold’ or ‘foundation.’ It can also be found from a famous aphorism of a Greek physicist Archimedes, “*Dos moi pou sto kai Kino ten gen* (Give me a place to stand and I will move the earth).” It also has a hidden meaning of ‘a basis of operation’ or ‘cause’. Oh emphasizes not only the ‘foothold’ on which the tiny mouse stands, but also an art and the artist’s imagination with well-prepared circumstances and cause, which he suggests perhaps having enough energy to make a huge difference.

This exhibition, unable to be installed by the artist due to COVID-19, is created by the energy of communication and imagination through various channels under the constraints of distance and time between New Zealand and Korea. This condition has been a chance for Oh to free his imagination and sensation. The exhibition will be presented as an incomprehensible expansion from unknown.

3. Exhibition statement

Touch

The artist, who lives in New Zealand with his family, came to Korea at least once in a year or two. It was usually because of exhibitions. For his 2018 solo show and the art fair, Oh came to Seoul and Hong Kong in person to install his artworks. In exhibitions producing with Oh, one could easily find him smile with plumped up cheeks, followed by a quick frown and a glance at his upper right to fall into thoughts, or begin speaking carefully with his low-pitched voice, "Hmm...". For him, who stays long in the gallery to prepare, longer installation periods were crucial. And we assisted him installing with plenty of time. However, I never imagined removal of his presence in resolving compositions of his show, nor a pint of beer with him in evenings.

COVID-19. This disaster, which hit globally at the same time, has bound the hands and feet of the artist to New Zealand from preparing his show in Seoul, 2020. When we were preparing previously, we used to communicate by phone calls and e-mails until Oh flew to Korea. I thought there was nothing different this time until it was one month left before the opening. Like before, we mainly shared practical ideas necessary for the show on the phone, and talked about abstract ideas on the artworks sometimes. I chose to have a superficial conversation rather than a conversation that digs into the subject of the work, thinking it was difficult (meaningless, or pointing wrong direction) to express his work in words. Our conversation would not be able to pinpoint the quintessence anyway. Rather, groping around it may accidentally hit a momentary strike. When a deeper conversation about the work was needed, texts and images were exchanged by online chatting. We never talked why we preferred it to speaking on the phone. But we regarded it was impossible to hold on to the sound that may have seem to touch each other yet soon to scatter. However, wouldn't the remaining texts stay around in any form to be explored, thus leaving rooms to extend the moments a little? And images, often stretching out and settling in unexpected places, might lead us to where his troubled eyes stopped. From the images he had sent me, I followed his traces in various possible ways.

His words were short but long, clear but vague. Clear so were the images that conveyed immediate pleasure. But, the more I forfeited laughter to link them close to the reality, they transformed to something vague. His works were not meant to be stared for too long. At those moments, gazes were lost and showed nothing that should be seen. His works were like a short but intense burst of flashes, which an empty gaze, a tedious sensation would catch at some point. He added that that was something we could all relate to. So it was not something that could be dismissed simply as a ghost or illusion. When viewed selflessly, it could be similar to the perceived "pleasure" that Kant said.

Time passed and the fact that I had to prepare his solo show without him came closer. I became more immersed to the show than any other before. To embody his thoughts without him, I kept looking at the sketches of the works he had sent, and exchanged more thoughts with him. Strangely, however, I was more connecting with him in 2018, when he was with me in Seoul, than him now in New Zealand. Recalling his facial expressions and accent, his eyes and laughter, I was linking them with his new works. Connecting with him beyond a LCD seemed to be more distant than remembering him in 2018. We could be distracted and picking up floating words, looking at each other's illusions of other time and place than Auckland at 6 p.m. or Seoul at 2 p.m. I could not be sure which one was closer to me; him in Auckland, 2020 or in Seoul, 2018. Is it certain that we see with our eyes? Instead of each sense organ distributing the functions of hearing, sight, and touch, do they actually not share every one of them? I looked at him alternately over the screen and in the time past, once with eyes and the other with tips of hair. If it existed particles with masses and those with time separately, it could never be known to which I should be connected to be more deeply caught.

Even if the images mediated by a small screen and the voice from beyond were not in fact his, I could not have a doubt or know what they really were. Furthermore, I would not know I had been hearing from him across the South Pacific now, or him having gone across two years of time. No, maybe this show is not a show of artist

“Seung Yul Oh”. But there was no way to doubt or find out who else’s it was. We would never know what the Auckland-bound artist imagined and sketched for his show, nor know how much what I had embodied here would resemble it. However, we transmitted and received each other. We imagined/sensed that something was linking us in this long time and far distance, Auckland and Seoul, 2018 and 2020. When this imagination/sensation created a very intense and vivid moment, all the time, space and distance were jumbled with an idea that the show had already been completed. ‘Is it upcoming or has it already passed?’

The reality-phenomenon of untact shortened the gap between the artist and I. I recalled his images (They might be reality.) that I let slip away when he was around. His short stories like jokes were floating over my head. His appearance, voice, and words, so fine and damp, gave presence in forms of invisibility, yet visible to prepare the show with me. Minute by minute, I received his instant drafts in video calls, rendered drawings with his time and effort, and finished blueprints of designers with accurate dimensions and plans to complete the show in my head. Already I were in the gallery, walking among the installed works, again to measure invisible molecular structures within these massively enlarged ones. Somewhere within the gallery, position the artist: About here, nah, about there, he stands with open arms.

Seeing presupposes distance, decisiveness which separates, the power to stay out of contact and in contact avoid confusion. Seeing means that this separation has nevertheless become an encounter. But what happens when what you see, although at a distance, seems to touch you with a gripping contact, when the manner of seeing is a kind of touch, when seeing is contact at a distance? What happens when what is seen imposes itself upon the gaze, as if the gaze were seized, put in touch with the appearance? What happens is not an active contact, not the initiative and action which there still is in real touching. Rather, the gaze gets taken in, absorbed by an immobile movement and a depthless deep. What is given us by this contact at a distance is the image, and fascination is passion for the image.

“L’Espace littéraire (the Space of Literature)”, Maurice Blanchot, 1955

4. About the artist



Seung Yul Oh (b.1981)

Born in Seoul, Seung Yul Oh studied fine arts at the University of Auckland, and is currently living in New Zealand. In Korea, Oh gained domestic attention with solo show “Solo Group Show” (2011) at ggool (currently Amado Art Space/Lab). Since then, he has held several solo and group shows, traveling between New Zealand and Korea. His consistent interest is to regain an extended sense beyond fixed recognitions from the beginning. His works are often read as ‘humor,’ because the artist is using ‘laughter’ or ‘joking’ as a device to instantly break down the frame of concrete perceptions. ‘Humor’ is also a ‘distancing’ device that keeps you from being overwhelmed by the infinite sense you experience at the moment of rupture. Rather than being helpless in the face of the vastness of phenomena, his attitude of gazing and keeping them besides of life can also be applied to attitude of accepting situations of the pandemic we are experiencing. Oh focuses on sensing all these phenomena, creates flooding moments through his works, and produces a cycle, which is once again experienced and observed by audience. This show “Touch”, which was unable to be installed by the artist due to COVID-19, is created by the energy of communication and imagination through various channels under the constraints of distance and time between New Zealand and Korea. This condition has been a chance for Oh to free his imagination and sensation. The show will be presented as an incomprehensible expansion from unknown.

Seung Yul Oh held a number of solo shows both domestically and internationally including “Vary Very” (ONE AND J. Gallery, Korea, 2018), “Horizontal Loop” (Starkwhite Gallery, New Zealand, 2018), “Slit Scan” (Tauranga Art Gallery, New Zealand, 2016), “Left, Right” (ONE AND J. Gallery, Korea, 2015), “Soom” (Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand, 2014), “MOAMOA, a Decade” (City Gallery Wellington, New Zealand, 2014). Oh participated group exhibitions such as “We Don’t Really Die” (ONE AND J. Gallery, Korea, 2019), “Between Waves”(Amore Pacific Museum of Art, Korea, 2014), “Made Active”(Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand, 2012). His artworks are collected in National Gallery of Victoria(Melbourne, Australia), Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa(Wellington, New Zealand), Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand, Dunedin Public Art Gallery(Dunedin, New Zealand), The New Dowse(Wellington, New Zealand), Amore Pacific Museum of Art Project(Jeju, Korea) etc.

5. Selected work image [Download link](#)



Seung Yul Oh, *Pou Sto*, 2020. Epoxy paint on Nylon, 110 x 150 x 140(h) mm.

Image courtesy of the artist.