



GALLERY GUIDE

SHARED ROOM In **Kyoung** Chun

Feb. 19 - Mar. 22, 2024

with
exhibition essay by: Jacob O'Kelley

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The New Gallery acknowledges the traditional, ancestral, and un-ceded territory of the Yuchi, Shawnee, and Cherokee First Nations on which we organize, exhibit, listen and learn.

In Kyoung Chun

Shared Room

by Jacob O'Kelley

In her most recent exhibition, *Shared Room*, In Kyoung Chun presents a thought-provoking exploration of personal narrative and belonging by weaving together elements of contemporary life with styles and traditions from her Korean heritage. The exhibition, which is currently on display at The New Gallery at Austin Peay State University, examines the banality of daily life while engaging with the traditional notions of exhibition viewing. Chun has used a unique blend of paintings, plexiglass, neon light, and sculptural installation to create a communal experience that invites viewers to confront their perceptions of space and belonging. Through her compelling work, Chun delves into an immersive world she has created, where everyday objects, intimate connections, and mundane moments come to the forefront as they transform into symbols of beauty and profound meaning.

Primarily an oil and watercolor painter, Chun's two-dimensional artworks are often a poignant reflection of her personal experiences. Within these paintings, she employs simple forms and familiar objects to construct immersive environments that resonate with viewers on a deeply personal level. Drawing inspiration from the traditional Korean still-life genre of Munbangdo, an 18th-century style of painting dedicated to portraying scholarly objects and motifs such as books, flowers, and writing implements, infuses her works with personal and societal values. In the same vein, her paintings are reminiscent of Intimist painters such as Pierre Bonnard and Édouard Vuillard, where she also depicts banal yet intimate domestic spaces with exaggerated palettes, looser forms, and emotive interiors.

At the entrance to the gallery space, there is a curated selection of plexiglass works and small paintings within immediate view. The

jewel-toned plexiglass pieces, shaped like stereotypical houses in varying sizes, each contain their own small, individualized paintings. These have become a hallmark of Chun's playful and introspective practice. Embracing the metaphorical community she has created, each plexiglass home is unique, tailored in such a way as to be representative of a neighborhood. There are houses with clear plexiglass, offering the viewer a focused glimpse into the activity happening within the painting. In contrast, others contain reflective, colorful plexiglass, allowing the viewer to become a small part of the overall narrative. Each miniature painting represents a daily task or gathering: a family sitting down to eat breakfast or sitting in a garden together, a dog sleeping next to a window, or even a table containing a birthday cake as it patiently waits for its lit candles to extinguish.

Central to Chun's practice is the celebration of everyday life and the beauty found in the mundane. Through her art, she encourages us to slow down, pause, and appreciate the small moments of wonder and discovery that surround us. Whether through a vibrant painting or a carefully crafted sculpture, Chun invites us to see the world through her eyes – a place filled with possibility, curiosity, and boundless potential. Through the meticulous arrangement of plexiglass works and miniature paintings, as well as Chun's unwavering devotion to providing glimpses into her private life, Chun invites us to reflect on our own experiences of connection and belonging.

Upon moving into the main space, viewers face an empty room with the starkness of the institutional environment. The controlled setting, with its neutral walls and predetermined pathways, creates a sense of detachment and impersonality. Within this space, the concept of 'home' seems distant, elusive, and unattainable, creating an intentional yet contrasting feeling in comparison to Chun's familial and inviting plexiglass works. However, as viewers navigate through the gallery, they are encouraged to look up and discover the unexpected: physical pieces of the house and objects suspended from the ceiling.

Having heavily produced two-dimensional works for several years, Chun wanted to create a large-scale installation that did not have to rely on the traditional walls of a gallery setting. Tired of presenting work on the wall, the first iteration of *Townscape* came to fruition in 2019 at MINT Gallery, while a condensed second iteration was exhibited at the Atlanta Contemporary in 2020. The newest version of *Townscape* is an abstract and narrative installation constructed

on the ceiling of The New Gallery. The work engages and uses the gallery's physical space in a new way, shifting the focus entirely to the ceiling so people look up instead of out. Using multi-layered, mixed media materials like reflective vinyl sheets, natural and artificial light, fabric, painting, plexiglass, and daily objects, Chun produces a new type of landscape painting representing our mind as it travels to multiple spaces throughout daily life.

The tangible pieces in *Townscape* - a morning breakfast, a scene from the local newspaper, or even a live plant - evoke a sense of familiarity and comfort, challenging the sterile environment of the gallery with their presence. Chun subverts traditional gallery conventions by hanging the artworks from the ceiling rather than displaying them on walls and encourages viewers to engage with space in new and unexpected ways. The act of looking up and encountering these pieces above creates a moment of revelation, as viewers are reminded of the multifaceted nature of home and the ways in which it can transcend physical boundaries. The overhead placement of the pieces creates a sense of 'emptiness' below, prompting viewers to reconsider their relationship to the gallery environment and to question the limitations of institutional space. In this redefined setting, the boundaries between viewer and artwork, between public and private, blur, inviting a deeper exploration of the connections between space, identity, and belonging.

As mentioned above, *Townscape* contains a multitude of references to personal experiences, daily activities, and the general structures of the home. In this new iteration, Chun has updated and expanded the installation. One of the first noticeable updates is the material changes to the egg in a direct reference to a morning breakfast. Now made from neon, this piece adds a new material element to *Townscape* while referencing said material in Chun's past smaller installation works like *Blue Gate* or *Two Circles*. The second change is reworking the long, white, sheer painting of a still-life: a viewpoint from a person sitting at a table, enjoying a daily meal. Like the plexiglass pieces, Chun references Munbangdo by including paintings of a book, flowers, and fruits, all within an intimate domestic space. The last and most notable change is the addition of an entirely new panel of dark buildings and a vehicle attached to a long stack of belongings. Sourced from our daily news cycle, Chun added these additional panels to create discussion around the affairs happening throughout our world as they are regularly becoming more a part of our mental scape.

In *Townscape*, Chun invites viewers to reconsider their perceptions of space and home within the context of the gallery. By suspending physical pieces of home from the ceiling, Chun creates a transformative experience that challenges traditional exhibition practices and encourages viewers to engage with space in a more intimate and introspective way. Through this innovative presentation, Chun invites us to reflect on the complexities of our relationship with space, memory, and belonging, ultimately inviting us to reimagine the possibilities of shared environments and experiences.

In Kyoung Chun's intimate odyssey, the everyday emerges as a source of inspiration and revelation. Through her art, Chun invites us to pause, reflect, and rediscover the beauty and significance of the world around us. In her hands, the ordinary becomes extraordinary, and the familiar becomes profound. As we embark on this journey through Chun's immersive world, we are reminded of the transformative power of art to illuminate the hidden depths of our shared human experience.



Jacob O'Kelley is an Atlanta-based curator and visual artist. He received his BFA in Drawing and Painting from Georgia State University. In 2018, he co-founded ShowerHaus Gallery. From 2021-2022, Jacob managed MINT Gallery, a local arts non-profit focused on emerging artists in Atlanta. As of 2023, he is the Artistic Director at Swan Coach House Gallery. He is also a contributor to *Burnaway* and *Art Papers*.

His interests and ambitions lie in uplifting artists, primarily in the Southern United States. He focuses on the development of artists by dedicating time and energy - providing space for experimental work and exploratory research while being adaptable to artists' needs. Most recently, he curated *Local Stories 2023-24* for A&E Atlanta, a local billboard project focused on the history of Downtown Atlanta, *Offerings*, also in Downtown Atlanta, and *Interconnect* at Echo Contemporary in Atlanta.

About the Artist:



Born in Seoul, South Korea, InKyoung Chun is a painter living in Atlanta, Georgia.

Her work has been included to its permanent collection of High Museum of Art, the City of Atlanta Mayors Office of Cultural Affairs, Fulton County Public Library of Atlanta and numerous private collections. Chun recently had her solo shows at HiLo Press of Atlanta and the Sumter County Gallery in South Carolina. Chun's public art, *Rainbow Gateway: Saekdong*, curated by Dash, was featured at the Peachtree Center Plaza in downtown Atlanta. Another public sculpture, *Blue Gate*, has been featured at Emory University of Atlanta, and at Industrial City Square of Brooklyn, New York.

Her installation *Table and Cloud* was up for the Studio Artist Wall at the Contemporary as a part of its Spring Exhibition of 2023. Chun currently participates in a two-person show, *In Light* at Spruill Gallery of Atlanta.

Recently, Chun completed her studio artist residency at the Atlanta Contemporary. Her installation *Table and Cloud* was up for the Studio Artist Wall at the Contemporary as a part of its 2023 Spring Exhibition programming

InKyoung Chun's current work depicts her personal and narrative spaces by arranging simple forms and familiar objects through painting and sculptures. Living in the United States as a South Korean immigrant has been challenging, so she creates spaces where positive energy arises. She needs to present spaces where intimacies are present. While creating these works, she attempts to achieve life's optimism and peace even in its troubled and isolated settings. She believes channeling discovery and recognizing sweetness in her everyday life is essential.

Curator/Gallery Director of The New Gallery:

Michael Dickins

Gallery Assistants:

Sarah Roach, Mai Mai Newberry, Lily Goodowens

Special thanks and recognition to:

Thomas Chun, Installation Assistant

Tobias Layman, Art+Design Studio Technician

Jacob O'Kelley, Artistic Director at Swan Coach House Gallery.

Jeffery Wagner, APSU Facilities

Associated Events:

In conversation with
curator Michael Dickins

Public Artist Lecture:

6 p.m. Mar. 12 , AD120

Reception/Gallery Talk:

noon - 1:30 p.m., Mar. 13,
The New Gallery

FUNDING PROVIDED BY:

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