



Red Beans-Bird I, 2011, oil on canvas, 106.8 x 91 cm



Cotton Work Gloves, 1987, Woodcut, 34×27cm



Hold Up, 1987, Woodcut, 32.5×23.5cm



At a spring day, 1988, Woodcut, 36×26.5cm



Sewing the Blanket, 1988, Woodcut, 55×40cm

Jung Jungyeob has been working with non-linear dots in the coordinates of Minjoong Misool (people's art) and women's art, localism and universalism, and activist-artist identity. Jung's oeuvre has been in response to the contemporary Korean society. Jung has entered the domain of Minjoong Misool through small-group activities, starting with "Durung" in 1985, after recognizing the issues of the Korean art scene at the time, which surfaced up through abstract, monochrome, the National Art Exhibition-oriented, academic, and dominance of male artists.¹ As a member of the Minjoong Misool movement, she shared a studio with "Durung" and has produced hanging paintings, woodcuts, and handouts, while working undercover at a factory in Incheon to explore the usefulness of art.

Between the People and Art

Jung produced a total of 17 woodblock prints *Cotton Work Gloves*, *A Day without Overtime on female laborers*, *Hold Up*, and *Sewing the Blanket* combining drawing with poetry by Park Nohae, while working in a small group between 1987 and 1992.

Unlike male counterparts who express the grand discourse of democratization in a declarative manner, Jung's woodblock prints calmly and subtly show the poor working conditions of young women who have been driven to the cities by industrialization. Her woodblock prints made with everyday materials also have art historical significance as they record the reality of life faced by women artists in the 80s. The woodblock prints show Jung as an activist who engages with society, and they also reveal the beginnings of the feminist and ecological perspectives that would later permeate her work.

The woodblock prints produced during the Minjoong Misool movement in the 1980s under the demands of democratization were considered "lukewarm" at the time, but they can now be seen as a reflection of the feminist perspective within Minjoong Misool. Rather than containing large-scale discourses or declarations, the woodblock prints, which are everyday-like and incorporate her experience, convey to the viewers the meaning of authenticity and labor solidarity. In around 1992, changes occurred in the labor movement scene, and woodcuts gave way to print media, and Jung began painting in earnest. Feeling the futility of art in the labor movement, she recognized the oppression of women by the patriarchal social system, which is hidden behind the aspirations for democratization.² The questioning of the reality she encounters as a woman and artist drives her artistic practice, leading her to combine her work as artist with her engagement in small group activities.

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Her work can be broadly categorized into Minjoong Misool, feminist art movements through small group activities, and personal paintings. However, Jung's personal work of producing pieces of art and small group activities meet and disperse as freely as the red beans and peas in her oeuvre. As an activist and artist, Jung bridges the gap between the feminist art movement, which grew locally within Minjoong Misool in the 1980s, and the feminist art that came with neo-capitalism after the 1990s. In 1985, Jung founded the "Women Artists Group" with her classmates from the College of Fine Arts at Ewha Womans University, and together with Kim Insoon, Kim Jinsook, Yoon Seoknam, and other artists from "Siwol Gathering", she founded the "Women's Art Research Society" within the Korean People's Artists Association, where she organized and participated in feminist exhibitions such as Women and Reality until its dissolution in 1994. From the mid-80s to the mid-90s, she has been engaged in two kinds of work amid various different trends back then: Minjoong at in "Durung", "Labor Sharing(*Ilson Naneum*) in Incheon, and "Gaetgot"; feminist art movements such as "Teo" and "Women' Art Research Society"; and social changes with the emergence of feminist artist group "Ipgim" in the late 1990s and "Haekmong", an anti-nuclear art movement since 2016, while juggling her roles and functions in response to changes in society.³

Her feminist art movement, which began with small group activities, culminated in her performance at the *Avant-garde Jongmyo Occupation Project* in 2000. Her attempt to crack the solid institution by occupying Jongmyo Shrine—the core of the Korean patriarchal system - resulted in the removal of her work and a years-long court battle due to fierce opposition from the Jeonju Lee Clan Society. The incident made both the society and culture pages of the newspaper and united a wide range of women activists in solidarity. The family register system was at the heart of the patriarchy and was a kind of "shrine". Women's aspirations for gender equality and democratization at home coincided with the *A-Bang-Gung Jong-myo Occupation Project*.⁴



Ipgim, *A-Bang-Gung Jong-myo Occupation Project*



Body Ache, 1994, Acrylic, oil, medicine bag on top of apron cloth, 160×104cm

Jung has been painting female figures since the beginning of her career. Since the 1990s, the women she has painted have been domestic workers. One of her representative works, *Jipsaram I* (1991), depicts a female worker carrying her second child on her back while looking at job postings on a recruitment billboard. This image of women performing invisible labor in a patriarchal society continues in *Preparing a Meal*(1995) which depicts women in Gwean-dong heading home with shopping baskets in each hand, and in the drawing installation *Jipsaram*(2000-2008) which explores the inner lives of women at home. While the women in her woodcuts of the 1980s were depicted as those struggling for equality in their workplace, the women in her works from the 1990s onwards are depicted as those struggling between their daily reproductive/care work and paid labor. During this period, Jung participated in small group movements such as "Teo", "Getgot" and "Women's Art Research Society", while depicting the reality of women in the home who were isolated and cut off from society and were doing double work. In the future, a woman who was a full-time homemaker or jipsaram within the patriarchal system becomes a grandmother who is freer from the oppression of the patriarchal system as she grows older. In *Grandma commando unit*(2021), older women after a lifetime of hard labor are no longer public sexual objects or subjects of domestic care. Grandmothers in work pants take an unconventional step forward, free from the oppression of patriarchal society.

Since the 2000s, female figures have been breaking out of their domestic isolation and joining forces in society. *The First Dinner* (2019)—a parody of *The Last Supper* of Leonardo da Vinci - depicts 12 women. Social fame, intimacy with Jung, and unrelatedness to life and death coexist, deconstructing the hierarchy between characters in the work. Unlike previous works that have parodied *The Last Supper*, this work shows a variety of women who are not white, elite, or famous, but only have the commonality of being women. Jung invites these women to a place of unconditional hospitality. *Face-Scape*(2009-2021) is a portrait of "friends tied together through a kind of contemporary friendship that has nothing to do with closeness or intimacy." These are women who have no teachers and have created untrodden paths. The contemporaneous female figures in *The First Dinner* and *Face-Scape* survive without being isolated, going crazy, or dying by connecting with each other through solidarity. For Jung, painting female figures is an act of solidarity per se.



Jipsaram I, 1991, oil on canvas, 116.5×91cm



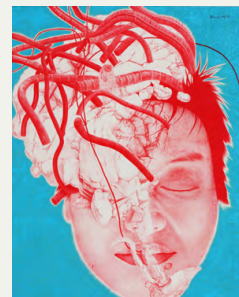
Preparing a Meal, 1995, oil on canvas, 162×372cm



Grandma Commando Unit 2, 2021, acrylic, oil on canvas, 162×260cm



The First Dinner 2, 2019, acrylic, oil on canvas, 50×100cm



Unsupported Fighting, 2009, acrylic, oil on canvas, 162×130cm

Between humans and non-humans

In his personal paintings since the 1990s, Jung has been working on various non-human creatures such as extinct animals, herbs, worms, and potato sprouts. Her works are reminiscent of some natural history museum. Unlike art history museums, where manufactured objects are majestic, humans in natural history museums are smaller than a speck of dust. One might glimpse at an ecological perspective that removes the hierarchy between human and non-human life. One of her most important works, *Mother's Spring* (1991), juxtaposes the labor of a mother as a woman with the vitality of *spring vegetables* that have emerged in spring after winter. The subject matter of herbs, which tended to be figurative in her early works, such as *Spring Vegetables* (1995), were expressed as they were as in *A Village-Shepherd's Purse* (2012) as she had her studio settling down in Yongin in the late 2010s. Jung has painted herbs suggesting the labor of women who gathered, trimmed, washed, and brought potatoes that have sprouted and become poisonous and plants to the table. She also depicts marginalized creatures such as insects that are not usually visible such as moths and endangered animals—a reality that she does not want to face.

The *Grain* series which seems to stem from her ecological concern has been ongoing since 1995. Initially depicting sacks filled with grains such as beans and red beans, her paintings gradually shifted to focusing on the individual grains of different crops. Recognizing the daily burden of doing house chores, a sudden image of red beans spilling from a housekeeping scene hit her mind, and the red beans were then grotesquely crawling out of the place or a woman's body. Her initial figurative grain works gradually became abstract, with colorful grains filling the canvas or rolling freely like firecrackers exploding. That the materials and production methods resemble women's repetitive labor, as Jung stacked each red bean grain in a performative manner. The *Grain* series is made with a consciousness of the condition of being a "woman", not only in terms of the materials but also in terms of the production methods, so feminist and ecological perspectives come into play at the same time.



Mother's Spring, 1991, oil on canvas, 73×91cm



Spring Herbs, 1995, oil on canvas, 80×233cm



Village-Shepherd's Purse, 2012, oil on canvas, 162×130cm



Sprout 1, 2015, acrylic, oil on canvas, 162×130cm



Flowing Earth, 1997, oil on canvas, 180×140cm



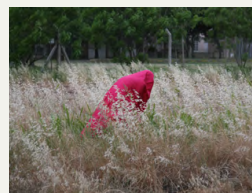
Banquet, 2011, oil on canvas, 112×112cm

Between an activist and an artist

Jung's artistic practice as an activist continued even after engaging in Minjoong Misool. As society changed, the way artists relate to society also changed. In 1985, as Jung practiced art in the field as Minjoong Misool activist in "Durung", Jung began collaborating with other artists on hanging paintings and woodblock prints. After gaining various field experiences through small group art movements for a lengthy period, she continued her activities closer to reality when she got married and her daily lives as a full-time artist and a married woman collided. Her works of feminist art movements such as "Teo" and "Women' Art Research Society" from the mid-1980s to the first half of the 1990s and her works of in the feminist art group "Ipgim" manifest various aspects of her works as a women's art activist. "Ipgim"'s *A-Bang-Gung Jong-myong Occupation Project* made headlines in the culture and society sections of the newspapers in the early 2000s, cracking the rigid patriarchy of Korean society. One of the detailed plans of the project titled "The New Millennium Art Festival" was to surround the entire Jongmyo Park with Korean traditional costume or hanbok skirts. "Ipgim" sought to engage the audience not inside the museum but outside, in the patriarchal Confucian symbolic space of Jongmyo, by transforming art from a visual experience to a holistic experience. After 2006, she stopped co-creating projects at "Ipgim", but she continued to perform in the form of one-person protests, and produced works such as the *1,000th Wednesday Rally for Japanese Military Comfort Women* and *South American Action Project*. Since 2016, she has been working in solidarity with artists who support nuclear disarmament through a collective called "Delusions of Nuclear Power(*Haekmong*)".



2005.7.9 breath performance-missing women-Suwon Na Hye-seok street 1



2008 South America action project: performance, Pergamino in Argentina 3



2011.12.14. Japanese Military Sexual Slavery Performance 1



2022 Mokpo coastal environmental art action 2

Jung's oeuvre is positioned "in-between" where the micro and macro discourses—the specificity of Korea and the universality of women—encounter. Despite the different media, techniques, and times, the theme that runs through her work is women's labor and marginalized lives. Jung sees life through the eyes of a working woman and expresses the power inherent in it as an artist and activist. If her early woodblock prints reflected life and society as seen through the eyes of a female artist within Minjoong Misool of the 1980s, *Changes in the History of My Studio: 1985-2017* shows the life history of a female artist through the changes in her work-space, while also reflecting the changes in contemporary Korean society such as real estate boom, gentrification, and development. Jung Jungyeob pokes holes in the rigid discourses of Korean society and art history, allowing the voices of various subjects to be heard. Her work continues to be appreciated repeatedly from a contemporary perspective.



History of My Workroom Transition,
pen on paper, 1985-2017, 59×42cm

1. Jung Jungyeob said in a dialogue with curator Yang Jeongae that she saw an exhibition titled *Reality and Utterance* by candlelight as a second grader in high school, and that she collected 1,000 exhibition pamphlets as a high school student, which led her to ask the question on "the mysterious unknown." "Jung Jeongyeob, The Naturalness of Living History as a Work of Art" Minjoong Misool, *Listening to History 2 Conversation with Curator Yang Jeongae*, pp. 503-566.

2. In December 1986, the Korean People's Artists Association(KPAA) formed the Women's Art Division. Artist Kim Insoon recalls, "The KPAA was preoccupied with issues of democratization and national unification, without any awareness of women's art." Wolgan Misul (*Art Monthly*) "September Discussion on the Women's Art Movement in the 80s" Wolgan Misul (*September 1989*) p. 72.

3. Researcher Kim Hyunjoo is wary of approaching the epistemological gap between the 1980s and 90s in Korean contemporary art history as a huge break. "It is problematic to erase the specific activities of artists, their polyphonic voices, and the existence of internal otherness, which show the continuity and change of their work through the different periods. This perspective is reflected in the historical narrative of Korean feminist art, which tends to simplify the 1980s as folk art and the 90s as postmodern feminist art. This makes it difficult to explain the work of artists such as Yoon Seoknam, Park Youngsook, and Jung Jeongyeob who have pursued feminist art with a steady transformation to the present, using the feminist awareness and activities formed in the 1980s as the main springboard. Therefore, it is fair to say that there was an epistemological shift rather than a break between the two periods, and it is important to note that the individual responses of the artists to such changes were starkly different." Kim, Hyunjoo, "Solidarity and Artistic Practice as Interventions of the Feminist Artist Group 'Ipgim', *Art History Forum*, No. 42 (Seoul: Center for Art Studies, 2016), pp. 161-162.

4. The patriarchal family registry system was introduced under the Japanese colonial rule in Korea to manage household members. It was abolished in North Korea and Japan as early as the 1950s. Women activists have been campaigning for years to abolish the system, calling it a "falsification of tradition." Jung Hyunbaek, *Feminism in Solidarity* (Dongnyuk Publisher, 2021), pp. 59-60, 83-87.



My strange bugs, Acrylic on cotton cloth,
2023, 300×156cm

Artist's Biography

Jung Jungyeob

born in 1962 in Gangjin

Education

1985 B.F.A. in Painting, Ewha Womans University, Seoul

Seleted Solo Exhibitions

2023 *The One Who is Disgraced and the Great One*, Gallery Meme, Seoul

2022 *Red Bean on a Headstand*, Bongsan Cultural Center, Daegu

2021 *Walking on the Moon*, Art Center White Block, Paju

— *Silent Uproar*, Seoul Botanic Park, Seoul

2019 *The 4th recipient of the Goam Art Award The First Dinner*, Leeungno's House: Goam Leeungno Birthplace Memorial Museum, Hongseong

2016 *Bugs*, Gallery Skape, Seoul

2006 *Be Erased*, Arko Art Center, Arts Council Korea, Seoul

2000 *Outpouring*, Insa Art Space, The Korean Culture and Art Foundation, Seoul

1998 *The 2nd Solo Exhibition*, Kumho Gallery, Seoul

1995 *Living Merging with Life*, 21C Gallery, Seoul

Seleted Group Exhibitions

2023 ARKO Art Center 50th Anniversary: *Path of Contact*, Seoul

2022 *Whose story is this*, Museum of Contemporary Art Busan, Busan

2021 *Promise*, Suwon Museum of Art, Sowon / Asian Culture Center, Gwangju

2020 *Hack Mong 4—Savage Dreams*, Art District P, Busan

2019 *Awakenings: Art in Society in Asia 1960s-1990s*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, Gwacheon / National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo / National Gallery Singapore

2018 *Soft Power*, Cheongju Museum of Art, Cheongju

2017 *The Warm Supper Table*, Art Space Boan 1942, Seoul

2012 *Women In-Between: Asian Women Artists 1984-2012*, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka

2009 *Off the Beaten Path: Violence, Women and Art*, Stenersen Museum, Oslo / University Art Gallery, San Diego and it has 10 traveling exhibitions including the U.S., Mexico, Spain, Canada, and South Africa until 2014.

2002 *Gwangju Biennial 2002: Project 3*, 5.18 Freedom Park, Gwangju

Collections

Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (Fukuoka), National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (Gwacheon), Seoul Museum of Art (Seoul), Arko Art Center (Seoul), Gwangju Museum of Art (Gwangju), Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art (Ansan), Suwon Museum of Art (Suwon), Museum of Contemporary Art Busan (Busan) and etc.

Awards

2022 The 34th Lee Jungseop Art Award, The Chosun Daily

2020 The 13th Gender Equality Award, Woman & Culture in Network

2018 The 4th Goam Art Award, Goam Leeungno Birthplace Memorial Museum Leeungno's House