

Minsu Kim's *Yesterday, Today, Live*

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Minsu Kim's paintings reawaken the sensations and memories shaped by everyday life, inviting viewers into moments of empathy and contemplation. Her works function both as visual essays born of personal experience and embedded recollections, and as a space of images where those impressions may be transformed into new states of mind. Having presented numerous solo exhibitions and participated in several group shows in recent years, the artist approached her solo exhibition at Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art (GMoMA)'s Project Gallery as a chance to pause, revisit earlier works, and place the imagery that once moved her alongside the vivid images emerging in the present. The exhibition title *Yesterday, Today, Live* reflects this intention quite literally. This essay examines the key works featured in the exhibition, drawing on a conversation with the artist during the artist talk held this past September, in order to explore where Kim's painting practice stands today.

The title of this exhibition emerged naturally from presenting three works side by side: Kim's earlier pieces *Yesterday* (2014) and *LIVE* (2014), together with her new work *Today* (2025). The texts that appear in each piece seamlessly connected to form the exhibition's title. About a decade ago, while watching a televised sports broadcast, the artist found her attention drifting away from the fast-moving images and toward the static date and text fixed at the top of the screen. After photographing the broadcast, she began what she later called the "TV Painting Series," with *LIVE* as the first work in the sequence. Although clearly based on a TV image, the painting evokes color field abstraction when the text is removed. *Yesterday* is a painting in which the artist painstakingly employed pointillism to reveal the pixels-- the very substance of an LCD screen. Encountering these two works again after many years, the artist felt *Yesterday* as a marker of the past and *LIVE* as a marker of the future, and thus created *Today* to link the two. Marked not only by painterly nuance but also by its reflection on temporality, *Today* celebrates the present moment of change within her artistic trajectory.

The exhibition unfolded across two spaces: Project Gallery and Lounge. Structured as an enclosed room, Project Gallery featured works that reveal the artist's lyrical yet somewhat solitary inner images. In contrast, the more open Lounge space was curated with narrative-driven works that encourage engagement from viewers. At the center of Project Gallery stood *Vaguely* (2025), a work that offers the pleasure of gazing out over a wide horizon and a vast sky. Kim recalls undergoing numerous trials and errors before achieving the painting's refreshing openness. Moving back and forth between abstraction and figuration,

she wrestled with the scene and the palette, testing different fabrics and paints before ultimately settling on a basic gesso-primed canvas. She describes this process as a period of uncovering, recovering, and repainting the scene and sensation she sought to express. Ultimately, the eight square canvases form an image that is at once intimate, encouraging close viewing of each panel, and expansive, offering a breadth that a single canvas could not achieve. The result is a composition that feels more flexible. Another large painting, *The Bird's Place* (2025), presents a simple yet bold contrast between the dark silhouettes of trees, clouds, a bird, and land, against a soft lavender gradient. According to the artist, the work is the culmination of memories of backlit dusk landscapes she often encountered on her way home, as well as landscapes with trees viewed from a slightly elevated perspective. In other words, even if her paintings begin with an impression drawn from a specific place or moment, the identity of that place becomes less important as the work nears completion. Instead, repeatedly encountered images overlap and develop into a single form. In particular, trees and birds are subjects that consistently draw and hold her gaze. Meanwhile, *Gradually 1* (2025) and *Gradually 2* (2025) are works in which the forms and movements depicted merge seamlessly with the properties of Kim's materials and brushwork. Both paintings capture a humid moment filled with clear sunlight, either after rain or in the midst of it, when a sharp beam of light breaks through. In *Gradually 1*, the artist painted the bird and rain by spontaneously splattering mixed paint. The contrast and connection between the background and the paint running down its surface results in a color harmony that feels both delicate and natural. *Gradually 2* establishes its overall tone with a yellow palette and features thin newsprint paper cut into a maple-leaf shape and collaged onto the surface. The left side of the painting appears like either a tree or light. To create this effect, Kim attached a piece of canvas painted with pearlescent pigment so that it protrudes slightly beyond the wooden panel.

Kim not only handles supports, materials, and paint with great flexibility in individual works, but also frequently pushes the canvas beyond its conventional formats within the exhibition space. *Nest Withstanding the Wind* (2024), installed on the central wall of the Lounge, is a collage made of canvas and wood that the artist created during her residency in Suwon. At that time, she was adjusting to a new environment, and she found herself drawn to the bird nest visible among the bare branches surrounding the residency. The work stayed with her in her studio for a year before being brought into GMoMA Lounge, where it resonates with its new surroundings, creating yet another scene. *The Explorers (L)* (2025) and *The Explorers (R)* (2025) are installed on either side of Lounge entrance, forming a visually striking pair. The artist conceived the two separate walls as a single surface and sought to paint them as a kind of mural. She recalled the children she had seen wandering freely among the trees during an outdoor arts education program. She transformed the memory into a painting that conveys the impression she received from that encounter. Although the

two paintings hang on different walls, she painted a bridge stretching between them, making them two works that are also one. The butterfly at the far left of *The Explorers (L)* leads the viewer's gaze to the small adjacent painting *A Bird* (2025). Although Kim frequently encounters birds in daily life, her interest in painting them began above all with sound. One day, she was startled by the sudden flutter of wings nearby and by birdsong in the distance. She found that imagining what she could not see made their presence all the more vivid. Since then, her gaze has often turned toward birds, which have come to function as messengers embodying the artist's inner sensibilities in her paintings. Lounge also features works such as *The Arrow Turned to Music 2* (2025), *Hatching Every Day 1* (2025), and *Spilled, But Still Okay* (2025), which reveal how Kim relates to the world and interprets it, offering a glimpse of her personal worldview. Through these paintings, she reaffirms her will toward life. Recently, she felt she needed to summon courage to overcome the sense of emptiness that sometimes accompanies making art. *Hatching Every Day 1* expresses the feeling of breaking out of an eggshell each day. *The Arrow Turned to Music 2* recalls a moment when she laughed heartily while making bows and arrows with children. *Spilled, But Still Okay* expresses her wish to encourage not only herself but anyone who regrets past mistakes.

Kim's paintings have often been described simply as "capturing everyday life." Yet the term everyday is somewhat insufficient to account for the subtle, concise imagery that characterizes her work. For Kim, repetition, relationships, and reflections on the meaning of life are central to her practice. She paints the people she has met through recurring routines, the animals she has come across, the conversations she shares with those she sees daily, and the insights these moments bring. This attitude reflects an appreciation for what might seem insignificant, as well as an affectionate attentiveness rather than a sense of boredom with relationships. In other words, her paintings seek a calm and ease that emerge from reflecting on human connection, while contemplating the meaning of life. Such an attitude signals her resolve not to be governed by the fleeting, stimulating images that saturate our age. For Kim, images and impressions that hold meaning are not expressions of perception conditioned by digital imagery.

Just as her paintings remain free from digital images, Kim approaches the supports and materials of painting with similar flexibility. In her drawing process, she uses materials in ways that defy their original purposes. Beyond conventional painting tools like paint, she collects items not typically associated with painting, such as architectural model materials, sequins, and paper. For this exhibition, in *Spilled, But Still Okay*, which reflects on an experience of accidentally spilling paint, she used thick, dripping paint and divided the composition across multiple canvases to maximize the fluid, material quality of the paint. As the artist herself notes, this approach embodies a flexible attitude that embraces mistakes.

Kim's sense of color is instinctive and intuitive. Her decisions regarding not only color mixing but also color contrast, layering, and texture occur almost instantly. Among the many judgments she must make while working, she notes that choices involving color come the quickest and with the greatest confidence. At the same time, color is also the area to which she pays the closest attention, precisely because she wants to guard against becoming complacent with what feels familiar. She prefers acrylic paint because it dries quickly and its viscosity can be easily adjusted with water. Yet acrylics, as she describes, feel far more artificial than watercolor or oil, "like a plastic bottle placed on top of mud." Through many years of working with acrylics, she has learned that choosing a color that resembles the sensation she wants to convey, rather than one that matches the actual object, results in an image that feels more natural.

The sensibility embedded in Kim's paintings is instinctive, yet built through repetition. It is virtually an intuition that has accumulated over time. She aims to place her sincere perceptions into her paintings, and she does this by repeatedly revisiting familiar scenes and messages, altering them slightly each time until they reveal themselves. Birds, trees, children, family, and friends remain important pictorial subjects for her. It is within the relationships, the time accumulated together, and the memories shared that her perceptions take shape. For her, memories tied not only to vision but also to sound, smell, and touch are significant. Although she grew up in a city, she recalls loving the smell of soil and rain and enjoying the feeling of touching and smearing things with her hands. This is why Kim's paintings should be understood as works shaped by multiple embodied senses, not only visual but also auditory, olfactory, and tactile. Such multisensory embodiment gives her paintings the power to connect past and present. As in Marcel Proust's "In Search of Lost Time", where the taste of a madeleine dipped in tea vividly summons childhood memories, dormant recollections resurface through sensory experience. This is a phenomenon in which embodied sensibility transcends time, bridging past and present. The artist indeed seeks to renew her present perceptions through the past. She returns to past experiences in order to perceive and experience the present more fully. In an era where speed is synonymous with power and competitiveness, painting remains an exceptionally slow medium that moves against the current. Yet Kim sees painting as both a traditional form and one that can accommodate anything, in any way, at any time. It can be past, present, and future all at once. No matter how fast the world accelerates, Kim's paintings simply need to keep their own pace.