

JIN-ME YOON

HERE ELSEWHERE OTHER HAUNTINGS

APRIL 23 TO JULY 2, 2022



kamloops **art** gallery

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Here Elsewhere Other Hauntings is the first retrospective dedicated to the work of Jin-me Yoon, a Korean-Canadian artist living in British Columbia. Conceived and organized by the Musée d'art de Joliette, Québec, this exhibition brings together nearly 30 years of Yoon's artistic practice through a thematic journey. It shares works that condense several of the artist's preoccupations, including her relationship with her Korean heritage, her experience of migration and colonization, and her testing of the reality of what are considered Canadian ideals.

Yoon's early photo and video work from the 1990s employs deconstruction as a strategy to challenge how identity is formed. Drawing on what she calls "inherited representations," she introduces clues that disrupt our perception of things and critiques our preconceptions and stereotypes of gender, motherhood, race, culture, and nationality. In the early 2000s, while continuing to develop performances for the camera, Yoon abandoned her initial position as the object of the gaze—the surface onto which others could project—to instead assert herself as the subject in the process of becoming. The video camera then became a tool to express her embodied subjectivity manifested through duration. With works like the series *As It Is Becoming* (2006/2008), Yoon focused her attention on Asia, making projects that examined tourism and war, which lead her to reflect on the militarization on both sides of the Pacific. These concerns, along with her own family history, affected by Japanese imperialism, further complicate her relationship to the colonialism that still affects both Canada and Korea.

Cover Image: *Long View* series (detail), 2017,
6 chromogenic prints, 83.8 x 141 cms each
Collection of the artist

Here Elsewhere Other Hauntings presents a non-chronological, thematic exploration of Yoon's recent works, including projects made in South Korea and on Canada's Pacific coast that exhume the memories haunting these countries' tourist areas. By drawing on iconic landscape images popularized by the tourism industry, Yoon questions the ideological underpinnings of these types of images. Each work suggests an alternative way of transmitting history. By focusing on what has not been retained through official narratives, Yoon creates situations that emphasize the contrasts between the landscapes and the actions that take place there. She deliberately addresses sensitive subjects related to power dynamics.

Although Yoon is renowned for this aspect of her practice, this survey exhibition adds another layer to our appreciation of her work. An important leitmotif in this selection of works is the interconnectedness of human lives shown at different stages of their existence. This is expressed through images of parents in their twilight years, gestures of filial support, and a sensitivity to spirituality, death, and nature understood as a global entity that encompasses humanity. Even though these notions are universal, it is the artist herself, along with her family and those close to her, that inhabit the works, adding an emotional overtone that complicates and destabilizes the clinical aesthetic of her conceptual representations. With this choice, she reminds us that exclusion and misconceptions are not just experienced on a theoretical level, they affect real individuals and their day-to-day lives.

Curated by Anne-Marie St-Jean Aubre, Curator of Contemporary Art, Musée d'art de Joliette

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Created at the invitation of the Banff Centre in Banff, Alberta, the six images in the *Souvenirs of the Self* series adopt the form and conventions of the postcard, an important tool for promoting tourism and, until recently, a popular souvenir for tourists. Inscribed on the back of each is a two-part descriptive caption in English and translated into French, identifying the place and the state of mind of the woman in the image, referred to as “she,” as a means to highlight her position as an object from whom the narrator distances herself.

This caption is accompanied by a message in Mandarin, Japanese, and Korean, aimed at those who can read it: “We too are custodians of this earth.” Composed like collages, juxtaposing a person with visible traits of East Asian heritage dressed in Nordic clothing with an iconic view of a Western Canadian landscape, the photographs provoke confusion: What exactly are we looking at? A snapshot of a tourist visiting sites near Banff National Park?

Her fixed gaze and stiff posture, the same in each image, do not, however, give the impression that she is enjoying her trip. In a multicultural context like that of Canada, why is this woman not immediately perceived as being Canadian? What is national identity and what makes it recognizable? And what are the specific indicators of inclusion and belonging? These are the questions raised by these images. The original postcards were first sold in tourist shops, where they were not identified as art, following the interventionist strategy favoured by the artist. For this exhibition, the original postcards are displayed in the Gallery, along with another series of postcards produced in relation with the body of work *Long View*. The images were also recreated to be presented on the wall outside the exhibition space, recalling Yoon’s original intention.

Souvenirs of the Self, 1991

A project of 6 postcards

Collection of the Kamloops Art Gallery, gift of the Artist

Long View, 2017

set of 6 postcards

Commissioned by Partners in Art for Landmarks 2017/Repères 2017,

Collection of the Kamloops Art Gallery, gift of the Artist



Installation views, Kamloops Art Gallery, Photos: Cory Hope



Installed on Open Gallery, Atrium

Souvenirs of the Self (Rocky Mountain Bus Tour), 2019 (1991)

« Come and enjoy the great Canadian wilderness. As they parted she wished them all a safe journey home. »

Souvenirs of the Self (Banff Avenue), 2019 (1991)

« Banff has been charming visitors from around the world for over a hundred years. She has trouble finding that perfect souvenir for herself. »

Souvenirs of the Self (Lake Louise), 2019 (1991)

« Feast your eyes on the picturesque beauty of this lake named to honour Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, daughter of Queen Victoria. She discovers the lake on a sunny day; before that she did not exist. »

Souvenirs of the Self (Bankhead), 2019 (1991)

« Explore the riches to rags drama of this historic coal mining town. She discovers that Chinese workers lived on the other side of the slack heaps. »

Souvenirs of the Self (Banff Springs Hotel), 2019 (1991)

« Indulge in the European elegance and grandeur of days gone by. She remembers being told that tradition is something you can always count on. »

Souvenirs of the Self (Banff Park Museum), 2019 (1991)

« Marvel over the impressive collection of Western Canada's oldest natural history museum. She looks with curiosity and imagines life beyond the rigid casings. »

Souvenirs of the Self

Inkjet prints on laminated polyester, 185.4 x 121.9 cms each

Collection of the artist



This photo series was shot in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve on Vancouver Island. When invited to produce a new work as part of the *Repères2017/Landmarks2017* project, Jin-me Yoon chose to dig a hole in the sand at Long Beach to unearth the layers of meaning—historical, touristic, emotional—sedimented in the memories so often silenced by the beauty of the endless horizon. The series, which also exists as postcards, begins and ends with two key images that call to each other beyond the image's frame: a woman scans the horizon with a pair of binoculars and seizes upon the blurred silhouette of a stranger, an ultimate symbol of the other. Between these two images unfolds a scene punctuated by a mound of sand similar in size to the war memorial on Radar Hill, north of the park.

A former military site, Radar Hill had an active radar station during World War II and the Cold War capable of detecting potential aerial attacks. A monument to Canadian veterans of the Korean War who fought in the battle of Kapyong in 1951 is located along the path to the site and serves as a reference for the sand mound on the beach, which in turn also evokes a funeral rite. An active military base with air and sea squadrons is still stationed at Comox also on Vancouver Island. Situated on the traditional territory of the Nuučaáníł [Nuu-chah-nulth], the park's natural beauty makes it a prime tourist spot.

The presence of military patrols in the area, historically and today, reminds us how coastlines, as frontiers, are also perceived as areas of potential threat in the form of illegal immigration, drug trafficking, pollutants, illegal fishing, and foreign submarines. But who occupies the position of the foreigner here? Are recent and past immigrants, who settle on unceded land upon their arrival in Canada, aware of this situation? What responsibilities do they have to these histories of colonization?

Long View series, 2017
6 chromogenic prints, 83.3 x 141 cms each
Collection of the artist



As It Is Becoming (2006 / 2008)
video installation, exhibition view, MA Musée d'art, Rouyn-Noranda
Collection of the artist
Photo: Christian Leduc

The end of the Second World War also signalled the end of the Japanese occupation of Korea, which had lasted 35 years. While the country served as a source for raw materials and food, a cheap labour resource, a supplier of *comfort women*, and a support for industrial development in the war effort, South Korea has since transformed itself into a leading economic player in terms of new technologies. Jin-me Yoon's parents were raised under the yoke of Japanese colonialism, which forbid them from speaking Korean and even forced them to adopt Japanese names. Yoon came to Canada with her family in 1968, after her parents had lived through the Korean War. Responding to this history, Yoon staged a series of performances for the camera in Japan and in South Korea. Crawling on the ground like an insect, Yoon slowly creeps through the Kannawa District of Beppu, Japan, known for its natural healing hot springs used to treat injuries caused by radiation exposure from atomic bombs. The dilapidated architecture of this area, characterised by a disquieting number of steam clouds, stands in sharp contrast to the bustling streets of Seoul, Korea where she also undertook this performance as a critique of the overlooked effects of progress. With its futuristic buildings, Seoul is a symbol of the country's spectacular post-1960s economic growth during the military dictatorship. In comparison, and in a strange reversal of fortune, the areas Yoon selected in Japan—a park formerly occupied by an American military base and thermal water treatment sites—look extremely modest in comparison. By juxtaposing these sites, an ongoing question remains: "What is the nature of healing from historical trauma inflicted on bodies?"

As It Is Becoming (Seoul, Korea), 2006
Multi-channel video installation, durations between 2 minutes, 13 seconds and 5 minutes, 58 seconds

As it is Becoming (Seoul, Korea): *Inverted City*, 2006
Single-channel video, colour, mute, 4 minutes, 23 seconds (loop)

Collections of the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Seoul Museum of Art



Putting her own physical endurance to the test, Yoon conceived these works as ephemeral monuments in honour of other bodies that have suffered. In the Gallery, the installation is configured on the ground, like rubble. The video's quality emphasizes its conceptual nature, where the raw aesthetics and long durational takes support the artist's bodily exploration of intergenerational trauma by connecting to and traversing these sites. The accumulation of moving images suggests a kind of eruption that reaches the Gallery's ceiling. Yoon appears literally as a foreign presence, sometimes even a monstrous one, highlighting the fact that there, too, *she is out of place*. Her body, moving laboriously and seemingly aimlessly, is set against the verticality of her surroundings, the choreography of cars, pedestrians, and buildings. And yet, she attracts little attention from those who cross her path. They continue to go about their business, ignoring her struggle and pain, as evidenced by her bandaged hands. The incongruity of the scene, emphasized by its repetition, is surprising and might even be amusing if it wasn't for the artist's extreme vulnerability. Rather than representing the suffering of civilians as a repercussion of these events in Japan and Korea, Yoon attempts to embody them, to bring herself closer to a suppressed reality that inhabits her without actually having lived it.



As It Is Becoming (Beppu, Japan): Park, former U.S. Army Base, 2008
Single-channel video, colour, sound, 14 minutes, 24 seconds (loop)

Ear to Ground, 2008
Single-channel video, colour, sound, 13 minutes, 25 seconds (loop)

As It Is Becoming (Beppu, Japan): Onsen, Atomic Treatment Centre, 2008
Single-channel video, colour, sound, 4 minutes, 28 seconds (loop)

As It Is Becoming (Beppu, Japan): Kannawa District, 2008
Single-channel video, colour, sound, 22 minutes, 17 seconds (loop)

Collection of the artist



Testing Ground was filmed on Long Beach, in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve on Vancouver Island, and was loosely influenced by Samuel Beckett's *Quad I and II*, 1981, which inspired Jin-me Yoon to create an absurd ballet where soldiers move mechanically on the beach but fail to interact. Set against the background of the Pacific Ocean, the soldiers suddenly multiply, emerging from behind a mound like a colony of ants to briefly survey the area before abruptly disappearing, leaving behind a few casual strollers along the water's edge. When a fierce hailstorm strikes, the sound it creates is reminiscent of bomb strikes and lends an uncanny feeling to an otherwise everyday scene. In this sequence, two temporalities co-exist: the reactivation of the region's military vocation during World War II and the Cold War through the sound of hail and the soldiers' ethereal, mirage-like appearance, and the exclusion of this history by the presence of a few beachgoers, going about their daily lives. The gap between these two states, between the soldiers' determined movements and the banal motions of ordinary passers-by, adds to the incongruity of a scene that seems haunted by a restless memory. This same area was once used as a practice target for bombings. And while the land knows this history well and is anchored in it, the tide has washed away its traces.



Testing Ground, 2019
Single-channel video, colour, sound, 9 minutes, 27 seconds (loop)
Collection of the artist



While Jin-me Yoon has never experienced war first-hand, she grew up with the stories, silence, and trauma shared—or not—by community members who indirectly informed her perception and understanding of this reality. One such tale described how American soldiers entertained themselves with target practice by shooting at victims' bodies floating on the Han River during the Korean War. This story left its mark, embedding itself in her memory to the point where it resurfaces here like a dream that suspends all sense of time and space. This contemplative diptych embodies the continued wish for peace, acknowledging the coexistence of both intergenerational trauma and resilience through healing.

(it is this/it is that), 2004

Two lightjet chromogenic prints with overlam and acrylic surface mount, 74 x 126 cms each,
Collection of the Kamloops Art Gallery, purchased with financial support of the Canada
Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program



Rest offers a powerful portrait of filial love based on mutual trust. Supported by her grown children, Jin-me Yoon is held in the air, parallel to the ground. The tree near the group suggests rootedness and stability, which serves as the foundation for the trusting love that emanates from this photograph. While the mother accompanies and guides her offspring through the years of their development, there comes a time when this relationship is reversed, as aging parents seek assistance from their children. The work evokes ideas of transmission, protection, and care.

Rest (detail), 2012
Chromogenic print, 148.6 x 121.9 cms
Collection of the artist
Photo: Paul Litherland



A figure dressed in traditional Korean clothing floats in what appears to be a river, perhaps the Han River, but it is in fact Paul Lake, near Kamloops, BC. Two places merge into one, condensing several stories that follow the flow of memory. The body lies suspended, sinking then reappearing periodically to the rhythm of the water that sometimes submerges it completely. The play of superimposition and transparency creates the illusion of a ghostly presence, an intangible body on the edge of the visible and the invisible, of dreams and reality. Is this woman simply in repose? Or is her body a corpse drifting toward its final resting place?



Unbidden (Channel), 2003
Single-channel video, colour, sound, 11 minutes, 11 seconds
Collection of the artist



Jin-me Yoon's most recent work, *Dreaming Birds Know No Borders*, brings together video footage shot on both sides of the Pacific Ocean at two different times. On the traditional unceded lands of the Coast Salish people, a young Korean man performs a traditional dance inspired by cranes, while a Korean woman watches from afar through binoculars. Along the estuary at the 38th north parallel, which divides the Korean peninsula into two ideologically opposed regions, observers look towards the demilitarized zone, an in-between area that has become a wildlife sanctuary. Footage from a VHS tape of a North Korean film from the 1990s found in Toronto, Ontario is mixed with the contemporary images. Degraded, the footage tells the true, but melodramatic, story of a Korean family separated by war: the father, an ornithologist, remained in the North without his family which moved to the South.



Birds, which are symbols of resilience, migration, and freedom, ignore borders. Indeed, this family was able to communicate thanks to these winged envoys. In the video, birds remind us that the lines of demarcation, created by human beings, are temporary and permeable and that it is possible to imagine the future differently. The paradoxical existence of this demilitarized zone as an important nature reserve preserving the habitat of many species threatened by the current environmental crisis offers hope. Yoon's work suggests that a change of perspective—taking action with nature in mind rather than pursuing development at all costs, for example—can have unimagined potential, bring about common ground, or pave the way for some form of reconciliation and redress. The experience of longing, of intense losses, can thus strangely allow a vital force to assert itself with even more power.

What is this woman looking at, through her binoculars? Perhaps, as the artist suggests, "she looks for the future now - a future tied to a past and a present, and one entangled in ecology, cultures and geo-politics in an interconnected world."

Dreaming Birds Know No Borders, 2021

Single-channel video, colour, sound, 7 minutes, 22 seconds

Collection of the artist



Time and space are factors that fundamentally define the human condition. They have long fuelled Jin-me Yoon's imagination, leading her to question notions of origins, transmission, home, affiliation, and memory. The seemingly boundless nature of the sky and the sea, allied with trees that seem enormous in comparison to the bodies around them, speak of a reality that transcends the human lifespan. These natural elements seem immutable in the face of subjective lived time.

Traversing the artist's works without being their central focus, time is the concept through which Yoon presents her family and friends at different stages in their lives. In homage to her son and her friends who chose to settle on Hornby Island, BC, these six diptychs portray them as strong yet fragile, connected to the Earth yet vulnerable in the lush West Coast landscape. Presented as a series to highlight their conceptual underpinnings, these photographs recall the aesthetic of Western Romantic painting and East Asian brush painting. In them, Yoon presents trees and nature as forces that deserve to be respected.

Living Time series, 2019

Unmounted inkjet prints over-matted with custom Western hemlock frame, 66.4 x 76.5 x 3.8 cms each
Collection of the artist



The *Long View* series contains a photo that is compositionally similar to an iconic painting titled *To Prince Edward Island*, 1965, by Canadian artist Alex Colville. Both feature a close-up, frontal view of a woman scanning the ocean's horizon with a pair of binoculars. Jin-me Yoon often quoted other artworks in her photo projects of the 1990s, where, through appropriation, she challenged stereotypical modes of representation associated with certain cultural identities. Although Colville's painting comes to mind here, the artist's main concern is in drawing attention to the act of looking.

For Yoon, the image is much more reminiscent of photographs of Korean soldiers observing an enemy camp's activities from a demilitarized zone. The zone that runs along the 248 kilometres of territory separating the Korean peninsula attracts an increasing number of tourists hoping to witness firsthand the threat that still lingers over one of the most militarized regions in the world, where more than one million soldiers monitor the area from both sides. Do we need to *see it* to *believe it*?

The photo suggests that Yoon is looking across the Pacific Ocean towards Gureombi Rock, located in the village of Gangjeong, on Jeju Island off the coast of South Korea. The rock is a sacred site that has been occupied by a South Korean naval base since 2016. It also serves the US Army, which uses it as a strategic pillar in its effort to contain China. Many years of protests led by Jeju Island's residents and supported by activists from around the world have tried to stop the construction of the growing military base because it threatens the area's fragile ecosystem, recognized as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve since 2002.

Other Hauntings (Song) is filmed with a hand-held camera using experimental techniques. These choices reflect the intimate nature and sense of urgency that led to the work's creation. The artist opens herself up to reality's affective and invisible dimensions, made tangible through the camera.

Many wonder if Gureombi still exists. When asked, an activist questioned by Yoon replied, philosophically, that the rock is simply wounded and is still there under its damaged surface. Must we *see* to *believe*? A young man sings a song in offering to the sacred rock that sinks below the water's surface. He refuses to believe that Gureombi is gone.



Other Hauntings (Song), 2016

Single-channel video, colour, sound, 7 minutes, 20 seconds (loop)

Collection of the artist



Dreaming Birds Know No Borders, 2021
Single-channel video, colour, sound, 7 minutes, 22 seconds
Collection of the artist

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Tuesday to Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Thursday 10:00 am to 8:00 pm
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Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

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ADMISSION

Gallery members and children under 6 FREE
Students FREE with ID
Adults \$5
Families \$10
Seniors \$3
Groups of 10 or more \$3 each

The Kamloops Art Gallery is situated on the traditional unceded lands of the Tk'emlups te Secwépemc within Secwepemcúl'ecw; the traditional territory of the Secwépemc people.

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