

Insight | Exhibition

## Three Artists Explore Bodily States at Seoul's Art Sonje Center

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Showing at Art Sonje Center in Seoul until 13 September 2020, three concurrent exhibitions examine various states of the body—physical and psychological, interior and exterior, and fragmented and whole—through new and recent works by Don Sunpil, [Camille Henrot](#), and Mir Lee.



Don Sunpil, *Portrait Fist* (no.2), 2020. ABS, resin, acrylic, figure, polyurethane foam. 55 x 40 x 45 cm. Courtesy Art Sonje Center. Photo: Hong Chulki.

Although independent of each other, Don Sunpil's exhibition *Portrait Fist* on the first floor is a fitting introduction to these three presentations, as it focuses on the first thing that people often notice about others: the face. Yet the 24 resin and polyurethane foam busts mounted on tall perches in the show are faceless: features have been replaced with flat surfaces supporting small-scale objects, ranging from a figurine of a young girl (*Portrait Fist* [no.2], 2020) to a box full of figurine parts (*Portrait Fist* [no.12], 2020).



Exhibition view: Don Sunpil, *Portrait Fist*, Art Sonje Center, Seoul (23 July–13 September 2020). Courtesy Art Sonje Center. Photo: Hong Chulki.

A precedent to the 'Portrait Fist' sculptures was exhibited in *Kitsutaiten*, Don's solo exhibition at Arario Museum in Space, Seoul, last year (20 February–13 June 2019). In addition to approximately 400 action figures on view—many from the artist's collection amassed since he was a teenager—were sculptures and installations including *Next backdoor* (2019): a pair of grey and light pink busts with flat surfaces for faces.

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Don describes the face as a marker of identity, through which assumptions can be made about a stranger's background and even personality. Portraits are never innocent; they are carefully produced constructions. As an image, the artist writes on his blog, the face signifies abstract qualities—abstractions mirrored in the stylised visages seen in anime or cartoons, which mimic the human face but feel closer to objects, as representations that bring together threads of associations.



Exhibition view: *Saturday, Tuesday*, Art Sonje Center, Seoul (23 July–13 September 2020). Courtesy Art Sonje Center. Photo: Yeonje Kim.

Conceptual connections continue on the second floor, where Camille Henrot's presentation *Saturday, Tuesday* revolves around two eponymous video works originally conceived for her solo exhibition *Dogs are Days* at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (18 October 2017–7 January 2018), which scrutinised human behaviour and the physical body through their connotations with each day of the week.



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‘At its core, human behaviour is influenced and regulated by contact with other bodies’

*Saturday* (2017) takes its departure from the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, a Protestant Christian denomination that observes the Sabbath on Saturday. In approximately 20 minutes, Henrot demonstrates a penchant for assembling diverse source materials, with her own documentation of SDA practices intersecting with images of commercials, leisure sports, medical tests, and civil protests, among others, evaluating the varied ways in which humans face the dangers or banality of daily life.



Camille Henrot, *Saturday* (2017). Exhibition view: *Saturday, Tuesday*, Art Sonje Center, Seoul (23 July–13 September 2020). Courtesy Art Sonje Center. Photo: Yeonje Kim.

Henrot takes an etymological approach to *Tuesday* (2017), drawing from the origins of the word ‘Tuesday’ as deriving from Tyr, the Norse god of war. Slightly longer than *Saturday*, the work switches between footage of men locking each other into positions as they practice Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) and of racehorses being groomed. In slow motion, the intimacy of entangled athletes replace adrenaline with a suggestion of eroticism.

Other works in Henrot's exhibition echo the tension that arises from physical contact. Cast in aluminium and chained from the ceiling and a gallery pillar above a wrestling mat, *Lobster* and *Chained Bronze I* (both 2017) seem to continue the struggle of BJJ practitioners in their entwined forms.



Exhibition view; Mire Lee, *Carriers*, Art Sonje Center, Seoul (23 July–13 September 2020). Courtesy Art Sonje Center. Photo: Yeonje Kim.

At its core, human behaviour is influenced and regulated by contact with other bodies—an entanglement that Mire Lee's presentation upstairs, *Carriers*, considers intimately with suspended and floor sculptures reminiscent of intestines. A hose runs through a kinetic installation, pumping and extracting a substance resembling mucus between its different parts, with a concrete bench in the space providing viewers with a voyeuristic invitation to study bodily mechanisms.



Exhibition view; Mire Lee, *Carriers*, Art Sonje Center, Seoul (23 July–13 September 2020). Courtesy Art Sonje Center. Photo: Yeonje Kim.

*Carriers* is a continuation of Lee's earlier works such as *Andrea*, *Ophelia*, *at the endless house* (2018) or *Saboteurs* (2019), the latter of which was presented at the [15th Lyon Biennale](#) (18 September 2019–5 January 2020). Similarly making use of motors, pumps, and pipes, these kinetic sculptures crawl and twist like tortured creatures, tangling and untangling their parts while excreting viscous liquids.

Lee's preoccupation with acts of consuming and digesting partly derives from an interest in vorarephilia, a fetishistic desire to swallow or be swallowed alive—to exist as one within another. This desire echoes Don Sunpil's blank faces on the ground floor: like artworks, open to all manner of projections.—[O]