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Indeterminate Order

Tai
Hwa
Goh

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Overflow, 2016. Mixed-media print on hand-waxed paper, Plexiglas, vinyl pipes, and wire, dimensions variable.



***That Morning*, 2006. Screen print and intaglio print on hand-waxed mulberry paper, dimensions variable.**

Contemporary art by Asian artists in New York occupies an often marginal position in relation to the mainstream. In the '90s and early aughts, Chinese art captured the attention of the New York art world, but its moment is now over. Korean contemporary art, on the other hand, has never had a similar success. There are major artists from Korea here — Do Ho Suh and Kimsooja, among them — but they do not figure as prominently as they should (Kimsooja shows mostly outside New York), and those at the emerging level seldom show their work outside small, special-interest galleries or non-profit spaces in the suburbs. (The Tina Kim Gallery in Chelsea is one of the few major spaces in the city devoted to Korean art.)

Tai Hwa Goh, who recently completed a residency at the New Jersey space of New York- and Seoul-based Art Mora (her work was on view there through September 30), fits this general description, but she has built a broader reputation with solo shows at Wave Hill, William Paterson University, and Gallery Aferro (in Newark). Her sculptural installations, such as *Overflow* (Wave Hill, 2016), deserve serious consideration.

Goh received a BFA and an MFA from Seoul National University. After moving to the United States in 2000, she took a second MFA at the University of Maryland. She now lives in New Jersey; her recent projects consist of installations attached to walls or columns or floating in air. Goh focuses on

three-dimensional prints, often suggestive of natural forms, though abstraction persists; it is evident not only in her painterly effects, but also in the forms that carry the imagery. While wild disorder seems to characterize these environments, viewers can always find ways of holding the compositions together — primarily by creating correspondences of style and emotion across the disparate elements. Chance co-exists with a semi-hidden plan — the seemingly chaotic effects construct a continuous flow, which if not entirely composed, comes closer to a unified whole than one would imagine. Goh, who initially trained as a printmaker, uses prints as a primary component in her work, where they add color and texture to an already complicated aesthetic. Her highly mixed assortments of shape, color, and placement result in a thoroughly compelling language, one that plays on entropy and makes room for indeterminacy.

In *That Morning* (2006), one of her early installations, massive intaglio and screen prints are attached to the walls and corners of a large space; within the room, groupings of slim, tree-like poles rise upward, creating small, denuded copses. The dominant wall form consists of several large-scale sheets of mulberry paper, reaching to the ceiling and covered with randomly placed ovoid dots, the paper at the top folded over like a canopy or awning. The corners of the space are disguised by horizontal sheets of paper, each sheet bearing two amorphous, almost monumental black shapes. With its subdued, almost colorless atmosphere, *That Morning* evokes a woodland coming to grips with the end of the world. A corner print featuring two bold horizontal shapes, much like boats, is placed near two poles/trees, suggesting escape. Goh's command of space is highly interesting; the prints take on a presence beyond their actual dimensions, pushing outward into the room.

The imagery in the vibrantly colored *Lull* (2010) suggests clouds, mountains, and sea

***Lull*, 2010. Screen print and intaglio print on hand-waxed mulberry paper, dimensions variable.**

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Right and detail: *Ebb and Flow*, 2016. Mixed-media print on hand-waxed paper, cardboard tubes, and honeycomb party balls, dimensions variable.

foam, all coalescing in glorious chaos. Spilling out from a corner, the composition forms a palimpsest that confounds common sense with its multi-layered panoply of visual effects. Disks covered with natural forms float along the wall, linked by thin branches to each other and to additional small masses of imagery. Intuitive and organizationally free, this unfolding cacophony of re-ordered landscape elements places viewers in the middle of a wild, inventive garden tended by Goh's freewheeling hand. Her shapes are mostly fragmentary and discontinuous, in keeping with the improvisatory approach central to her imagination. At the same time, she is devoted to making something beautiful. Her vision encompasses both the decorative aspects of traditional Korean art and the explosive disorganization of contemporary art worldwide.

In *Ebb and Flow* (2016), an environment done for William Paterson University, Goh recycled screen and intaglio print elements from *Lull*, which layer effects to reflect the infinite complexity of the natural world. The overlapping forms are also intended to relate to the human body and its inevitably partial and often mistaken perspective. With *Ebb and Flow*, Goh has increased the dimensional reach of these elements, focusing on printed paper forms that fold outward in notable intricacy and combine with found three-dimensional components like cardboard tubing and honeycomb party balls. The forms are more complete here, more individually substantial, though assemblage remains key to her aesthetic. And while the forms are still organic, they are also more coherent and less randomly conjoined.

In a way, Goh's technique is a revision — and re-vision — of nature, perhaps in the hope that she might increase awareness of an ecological crisis we have done very little to confront. She has carried to America memories of Korea's extraordinary mountains and landscapes, and this may well lie at the root of her work. Like many contemporary Asian artists seeking to bridge the gap between East and West, Goh reinter-



prets her inheritance through the lens of Modernism and post-Modernism while re-casting their formal and conceptual pursuits through her own history. The resulting hybrid becomes more than the sum of its

parts, acknowledging, using, and reworking abstraction from multiple perspectives.

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