

Sangbin IM and the Cityscape

I was trained as a traditional painter, yet I have always been fascinated by the artistic possibilities of new media. My practice seeks to bridge the language of tradition with contemporary technology, envisioning new forms of artistic discourse. My work interweaves photography, painting, and printmaking, creating tension and drama when images of recognizable landmarks merge with photographs of my own paintings. Paradox and ambiguity are not only inherent in my process and technique but also visibly present in the final works. These images attempt to negotiate the boundaries between illusion and verisimilitude through amplified scale, heightened color saturation, and painterly textures. For example, subjects are photographed over extended periods of time and across specific sites, then seamlessly integrated into the digital surface of my paintings. From a distance, these digitally altered cityscapes appear familiar, but closer inspection reveals the constructed artifice embedded within their details.

The spaces in these vibrant, meticulously detailed works are digitally compressed from panoramic views to avoid the “fishbowl” distortion of wide-angle photography. Perspective is further complicated by the insertion of disparate, everyday objects—such as measuring tapes, Post-it notes, or pencils—superimposed onto street scenes, as in *Times Square* (2007). These secondary images not only signal the artificiality of the work but also simultaneously conceal and reveal the artist’s hand through digital manipulation. In *West Side Market* (2008), a local green market is transformed into an expansive commercial site, its produce stands elongated into rhythmic bands of festive color. In *Seoul I* (2006), the exteriors and interiors of iconic skyscrapers are stretched beyond their original scale, transforming buildings into abstract lines and patterns while reconfiguring historical architecture to reflect contemporary reality. These exaggerated spaces blur the boundary between illusion and reality, inviting viewers to question their own ways of seeing in a world that is perpetually shifting.

My works are not mere documentations or fleeting spectacles of places like New York City. Rather, they critically engage with themes of consumerism, human desire, and modern production. Their monumental scale echoes the language of advertising billboards, which I appropriate as a means of critiquing society’s restless pursuit of “bigger and better.” Through this lens, I digitally and metaphorically weave disparate fragments of reality into painterly surfaces, constructing new ways of perceiving and contemplating the world. For me, these reimagined cityscapes are more persuasive and evocative than reality itself, transforming urban landscapes into meditative abstractions open to multiple interpretations.