

Introduction

Nan Rosenthal

My first encounter with Sangbin IM's work involved the pleasurable shock of several kinds of recognition: the subject matter [selections from the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York]; the techniques for creating the images [a mixture of photography and painting]; and collage, the twentieth-century artistic invention of most importance.

The selections from the collection of the Museum of Modern Art are part of three related projects: one dealing with urban architecture, the Cityscape Project; one dealing with crowds of people who do not necessarily know one another but have been "introduced" by the artist's manipulation of his digital images; and the third, the Museum Project, which relies on Sangbin's photographs of works in major museum collections. These he studies on the monitor in his studio and then decides which to select and how they will be juxtaposed in his finished composition.

A striking feature of the photographs is that they are not in scale with the original paintings. Sangbin's decisions about the size of his reproductions and the placement of these in the architectural space he decided upon or, often, created, indicate his preferences. Bigger is better, in terms of the artist's original experience of seeing the works in the context of a museum. A central placement in the composition also suggests his preference.

The realization that the digitalized and often manipulated reproductions are not true to their original scale places Sangbin's work out of the so-called reality of typical photography and into a world of the imagination, the artist's.

In this respect Sangbin has made a radical departure from collage of the Teens and Twenties. Collage has become not a puzzle to be pieced by the viewer of Picasso or Schwitters but something new.

Nan Rosenthal retired recently from her position as Senior Consultant in the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Prior to that she was Curator of Twentieth-Century Art at the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. and before that was Professor of Art History at the University of California, Santa Cruz.