

Sangbin IM

Born in Seoul, 1976

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Poignantly Enchanting Scenes: A Portrait of Today

I portray insatiable human desire in capitalist society and enormous energy emancipated from a specific place in contemporary society through multifarious relations and clashes deriving from a melding of; nature and city, tradition and modernity, reality and imagination, photography and painting, part and whole, and digital and analog. A celebrated place born out of government and conglomerates' capital, technology, and manpower collects and adjusts collective social and cultural energy, luring the general public. Through this, those living different lives can meet together, producing uniqueness as a whole. This is a sacred place and a performing place for contemporary civilization.

As a painting major, I work on experimental works involving a wide range of mediums such as photography, painting, drawing, video, sound, and installation. My photographic work is a new interpretation of everyday life through exaggeration, modification, and distortion in an intrinsic manner. I take hundreds of photographs of the buildings and urban scenes of a megalopolis and persons surrounding them at diverse angles. I create one probable, uncanny image that seems to feature a moment by marrying and expanding it with a digital program. I present humid, pictorial scenes by utilizing an overlap of painterly brush strokes. I solidify and reproduce spectacle scenes with a dramatic contrast between forms, colors, lights, shades, and texture.

Numerous buildings rising high around us join in the fray. I dreamed of possessing one of these buildings as a child. I create, own, and display images. As a humble man, I depict urban fantasies and relish the bittersweetness that capitalism brings, witnessing the duality of a metropolis: its magnetism and danger. Some still think that the 63 building, built with aspiration for globalization in 1985, is the tallest building in Korea. I seriously considered how gargantuan structures may change our destiny when I escaped from the Sampoong Department Store collapse in downtown Seoul in 1995, and I reflected upon how a city defines and regulates human life while undergoing the New York City blackout in 2003 which happened to be the day of my first visit to New York. I also witnessed how desire for capital and addiction to speculation can entrap and devastate us, going through the financial crisis in 1997, and then again in 2008. And yet, I feel pity for those seeking trivial pleasure, being attracted to rapture and gloom. In my work they are in a bustle. Some appear happy and leisurely. They are replaceable but special. I look at this scene, maintaining my critical distance from them.

Through my art, I wish to elaborate on the way I see the world, share my vision, and start a conversation. The space of illusion I create is, after all, the space for captivating contemplation and mediation where the flow of unknown universal beings and each individual's countless trifling narratives meet. This is a venue for competition of signification, where multiple diverse perspectives consistently intersect and overlap, while multilateral and plural conflict clauses are infinitely expanded. My work intersecting vision and mathematics, expression and reason, culture and technology, painting and computers can be my presentation to view reality in the era of new media, to question the social fabric and our own existence, and eventually envisage and relish the new.