

THE INNOVATIVE LIFESTYLE RENDEZ-VOUS

PRESS KIT



MAISON & OBJET

NEW & NOW

SOUTH KOREA'S DYNAMIC INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE

Following the trend of 'hallyu,' Korea's cultural 'soft power,' the peninsula has become home to many established international architects who work in this highly inspiring setting. The new generation of designers is exploring the paradoxes between Western influences and the roots of their craft heritage, innovating with ancestral materials and shifting the boundaries between design and art - or vice versa.

For the 2025 edition of the Rising Talents Awards, Maison&Objet is pointing its compass rose towards this hotbed of creative activity. Dereen O'Sullivan, head of the Rising Talents Awards programme, explains: *"The languages they weave are marked by an assertive futurism, refined originality and a reinvention of sculptural techniques. Moreover, our daily lives are fuelled by this giant of industrial and technological innovation. Finally, even if the Korean creative scene is recognised today, we still have much to discover."*

As usual for the awards, all recipients are under 35 and have set up their studio less than five years ago. Together, they represent an aesthetic that is both modern and respectful of the rich history of the dynasties that once ruled the shores of the Yellow Sea.



Megalith Object chrome 01, Lee Sisan © DR

On the cover: Wrong Chairs,
Minjae Kim, 2023 © Stefano Maniero



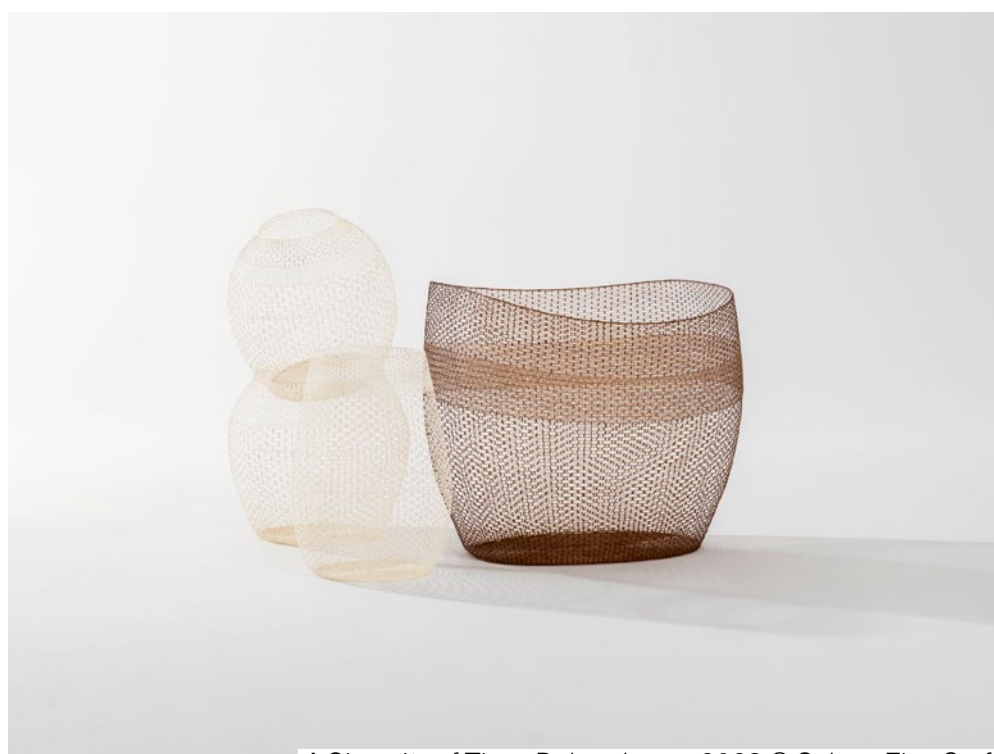
A DISCERNING JURY

The jury brings together established talent and experts from each country. On the Korean side, **Jonghwan Baek**, CEO of WGNB, winner of the IF Awards, FRAME Awards and Dezeen Awards, is joined by **Youngshin Jang**, Creative Director of the Hyundai department store and lecturer at Keimyung and Konkuk universities. They are joined by **Jeongman Song**, Global Business Director at the Korean Design Promotion Institute and a former researcher at the University of Washington, and **Teo Yang**, whose luxury interiors in Amsterdam, Berlin are the focus of two Phaidon volumes and won the 2022- AD100 award from Architectural Digest. Finally, **Kang-Heui Cha**, CEO of the Seoul Design Foundation, spoke of the strong identity of the Rising Talents 2025 cohort: *“They are discovering new values and breaking down the boundaries between art and design.”*

In France, **Vincent Grégoire**, Director of Consumer Trends & Insights at Nelly Rodi, describes the selection as *“eclectic yet coherent, reflecting the energy of the land of the morning calm, which is perhaps not all that calm after all.”* **Stéphane Galerneau**, President of Ateliers d’Art de France, who is responsible for selecting the Rising Talent Award Craft winner, also endorses this Korean cohort. Designers and sculptors of objects, weavers of stories, experts in materials – even living ones – they are cosmopolitan, ambassadors of their time and of the aesthetic codes specific to this region of the world.



Vino Chair, Kuo Duo, 2024 © DR



A Sincerity of Time, Dahye Jeong, 2023 © Soluna Fine Craft

THE JURY



**RISING
TALENT
AWARDS
JAN. 2025**

Flowing Turtle, detail, Jeong
Dahye, 2023 © Soluna Fine Craft

JONGHWAN BAEK: INTERIOR DESIGNER AND ARCHITECT – WGNB

“Kuo Duo employs a diverse range of materials and adopts a distinctive, experimental approach in each project. By embracing elements of uncertainty, they aim to create products that challenge traditional notions of feasibility and push the boundaries of conventional design.”

niceworkshop focuses on crafting objects and spatial designs that embody a sense of dynamism. They redefine furniture beyond mere functionality and comfort, presenting it as a vehicle for imaginative expression and creative engagement.”



KANG-HEUI CHA: CEO – SEOUL DESIGN FOUNDATION

“The six young people selected create unique designs with their own identity and concepts. Their sustainable mindset, their novel way of using a variety of materials and their spirit of experimentation really stand out; they go beyond aesthetics.”

STÉPHANE GALERNEAU: CHAIRMAN – ATELIERS D'ART DE FRANCE

“In Yeonghye’s work is both majestic and deeply immersive. She experiments with various textiles, such as cotton, velvet and terrycloth, to design furniture such as stools, benches and sculptures, both hanging and free-standing. Each rounded shape, carefully crafted by hand, demonstrates an exceptional mastery of unique craftsmanship, while establishing an intimate connection with the viewer.”





© DR

VINCENT GRÉGOIRE: DIRECTOR OF CONSUMER TRENDS – NELLY RODI

*“I was moved by **Minjae Kim**’s sensitive creations, and above all by his transgressive, expressionist approach, at the limits of practicality and coherence, almost dysfunctional. This brutalist emotion, this energy, this urgency, this tension in his work, on the verge of obsession, seems to call out to us. This uncompromising commitment to radical integrity challenges our certainties. The Seoul-New York culture clash certainly had something to do with it.”*



© DR

YOUNGSHIN JANG: CREATIVE DIRECTOR – HYUNDAI DPT STORE

*“**Woojai Lee** transforms everyday materials into works of art that challenge conventional perspectives. His ability to accentuate the tactile qualities of materials creates a sensory experience that reveals the beauty of the mundane. With a rich background of exhibitions and international collaborations, he pushes the boundaries of design and art.*

***Dahye Jeong** meticulously weaves horsehair to emphasise the integrity of the craft, modernising the simplicity and delicacy of Korean tradition. This choice captures the depth of Korean history and culture. His work takes a fresh look at the value of craftsmanship with flexibility, boldness and humanity.”*





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JEONGMAN SONG: GLOBAL BUSINESS DIRECTOR – KIDP

“Kuo Duo’s approach is innovative in its exploration of the possibilities of bold construction, maintaining the balance between functionality and simplicity. Their ebullient experimentation with different materials, forms and techniques pushes the boundaries of contemporary design.”

TEO YANG: INTERIOR DESIGNER AND ARCHITECT

“Minjae Kim and Sisan Lee are two contemporary creators who took inspirations from the beauty of Korean landscape and nature. Each with their distinctive creative interpretation and vision, they share a common appreciation towards the nature elements. If Sisan Lee’s creation is defined by its purity, Minjae Kim’s pieces is a prime example of contemporary expressionism and avant-garde.”



THE TALENTS



**RISING
TALENT
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DAHYE JEONG: THE THIRD DIMENSION OF WEAVING

Dahye Jeong, 34, weaves horsehair on wooden moulds inspired by ancient antiques and traditional Korean ceramics. Time dissolves in the hands of the weaver whose precious craft revives that of the Korean hat-makers who came half a millennium before her. With an emphasis on intricate pattern detail and transparent colour, she creates sculptural objects and relief wall pieces that are widely exhibited and have won multiple awards.



© Soluna Fine Craft

Maison&Objet: Where did the idea of weaving in three dimensions come from?

Dahye Jeong: *“I’ve always preferred to create in three dimensions rather than draw. I already had a deep desire to work in 3D during my studies in sculpture at the Fine Arts School and in textile arts at the Korea National University of Cultural Heritage. In 2017, while taking part in a project to promote local crafts, I discovered the use of horsehair, an ethereal national cultural heritage that survives in my home town, Jeju. I was captivated because, although it’s a fibre art with simple techniques, it allows you to create a wide variety of three-dimensional shapes. For me, when something grows in size, it gains in vitality. As I weave, I reflect on myself: could I, too, take on different dimensions? My work seems to me to reflect my potential to become a person of many facets.”*



M&O: How do you choose these shapes?

D. J.: *“I started with geometry: triangles, squares, circles. I was captivated by the light! The sun shines through the transparent manes. They take on a sparkling sheen, as if they had been lit. It was as if my shapes created their own light. I then became interested in ancient pottery because, although primitive and simple, it conveys a sense of power.*

My aim is to express the gentle yet strong power that emanates from horsehair. In woven form, they are no longer fragile and reveal an unsuspected strength. Recently, I’ve been experimenting with freer shapes - the cylinder, the donut – and I’m trying not to limit myself any more. In Korea, this technique has been used since the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910) to make hats such as the manggeon, the tanggeon and the gat.”

M&O: Is time a raw material for you?

D. J.: *“This craft takes an enormous amount of time. I select the hairs one by one and weave them with a needle... Some days, even weaving 2 cm seems insurmountable. However, working on a project that requires so much patience has given me great comfort at times when I wasn’t sure about the future. This time, which is necessary for the production process, has helped me to give my work legitimacy when I doubted that it could be considered art. Whatever the result, the fact that I spend my days diligently weaving horsehair makes the material precious in itself.”*



Crescent Moon, 2024 © Soluna Fine Craft



Sunset, 2024 © Soluna Fine Craft

KUO DUO: SPARKS FLY BETWEEN LIMITED EDITIONS AND INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

Hwachan Lee and Yomin Maeng, who founded Kuo Duo in 2021 in Seoul, incorporate experimental elements into each of their projects. They do so by using traditional wood treatment methods, for example, or more innovative recycled plastic methods. Striking a balance between the complexity of technical research and the simplicity of functionality, the studio designs and develops products, furniture and spaces under the direction of designers with international experience. Their work ranges from industrial design (they collaborate with the Korean furniture brand Wekino), to limited editions and spatial installations, with the aim of expanding their own design typologies.



© DR

Maison&Objet: You say you're exploring "the limits of design." What do you mean by that?

Kuo Duo: *"Although we both studied design at the University of Hong-ik in Seoul, we have a wide range of experiences between us. Whether in an industrial design agency focused on electronics, in a studio with an artistic approach or one centred on living materials, in different fields we have encountered various design philosophies and methodologies that have shaped our multifaceted understanding of design. These perspectives have confirmed our interest in exploring three-dimensional objects and spaces. Our creativity emerges when we question our preconceived ideas, when we seek out new challenges to achieve imaginative and expansive results; when, in other words, we grasp the limits of design."*



M&O: Marble shelves, plastic sofas, wooden vases... Is the role of these materials (used almost against the grain) to create surprise?

K. D.: *"The use of such materials allows ideas to be expressed more freely and experimentally. Our studio includes spatial design and strategic design consultancy. Continuously working on these limited edition pieces can help to spark off new ideas, moving towards a project where new products are mass-produced from these pieces. Ultimately, these two types of work create synergy and interact with each other. Along the way, we may discover unexpected properties of materials or encounter new aesthetics and other happy surprises."*

M&O: How do you distinguish between "spatial installations" and "three-dimensional design"?

K. D.: *"We describe ourselves as an industrial design studio for three-dimensional design. We use 'spatial installations' for space design and 'three-dimensional design' for the manufacture of 3D objects. The range of application of three-dimensional design is incredibly diverse. Our interest lies in exploring the intersection between one-off creations and mass-produced products, continually researching and experimenting with materials and production techniques to establish our design typology. Through collaborations with a variety of clients – ranging from fashion brands to industrial product companies – we develop a wide range of projects, all of which are highly varied."*



Fold Plastic Sofa © DR



Reel Hanger © DR



Milan Design Week, solo show © DR



MINJAE KIM: WOODY LUMINESCENCE

Minjae Kim, a 34-year-old Korean artist based in New York, designs furniture that acts as an antithesis to architectural practice (he has a degree in architecture) in terms of time, scale and accessibility. His creations in quilted fibreglass, bamboo and wood are like short sentences revolving around an idea. It might be a chair made of translucent leaves, or a lamp balanced by wooden weights. One of these lights up when two brass rods touch. Like a touch of genius?

Maison&Objet: Architecture led you to furniture design. What brought you to New York?

Minjae Kim: *“I was born in Seoul but studied architecture in Seattle. The programme included a furniture-making workshop where I designed my first chair, in steel and sculpted wood. Without abandoning my interest in furniture, I went on to study architecture at Columbia University in New York. Making objects allowed me to decompress when I felt frustrated by the slow and demanding pace of architecture. I then worked with interior designer Giancarlo Valle, converting my basement into a studio so that I could focus on my art in the evenings after work. During the Covid pandemic, by spending more time at home than ever before, I was able to make the transition to professional independence.”*



© Jesper Lund

M&O: How did the idea of working with quilted fibreglass come about?

M. K.: *“At university, I found the traditional method of making moulds and layering fibreglass messy and frustrating. So I thought I’d build up the layers by padding the structure and introducing resin. This enabled me to create large volumes without needing a large workspace or a joinery workshop. I was able to create a large chair on a sewing machine, then take it to my roof to apply the resin. This led me to make larger structural objects and play with opacity on large-scale lamps.”*



M&O: The results are “imperfect, inconsistent and impractical.” How does the irrational side of your creations provoke emotion?

M. K.: *“This is no doubt due to the fact that I concentrate my efforts on the indefinite. For fibreglass, I have a quilt made and then form a shape by hand. For a wooden chair, I make a drawing that establishes the smallest rectangular volume in which the chair I want to create can fit. Based on this drawing, a joiner delivers the blank chair. For me, this is where the design process lies: I remove material and discover lines and volumes that I would have been unable to define in the preliminary drawing. I always felt this ‘suppression’ of the material was missing in my architecture studies, where we were taught to build.”*



A show at Matter, In Conversation with Myoungae Lee, 2022 © Sean Davidson



A show at Matter, In Conversation with Myoungae Lee, 2022 © Sean Davidson



Another day in the studio, 2023 © Sean Davidson

NICEWORKSHOP: PRIMITIVE METAL

Based in Seoul, the studio explores the physical properties of industrial materials. Hyunseog Oh, 30, and Sangmyeong Yoo, 27, who trained in interior architecture at Soongsil University, are transmitting a new design language, overheard on building sites and translated for art galleries. Their first series of furniture, which forms an alphabet of this language, was inspired by fully threaded bolts. Their subsequent research led them to interaction and then to crafts inspired by nature, which they described as “neo-naturalism.” Through their commitment to the reuse of industrial materials, new interpretations emerge.

Maison&Objet: How did you come up with the idea of using bolts as inspiration?

Hyunseog Oh: *“Living in a dynamic city, like Seoul, I’ve been naturally inspired by the materials that surround me. While working as a site supervisor, I observed fully threaded bolts being used as ceiling supports. This sparked the idea to repurpose them into furniture. My goal was to transform an industrial material into sculptural works of art. What began as a simple assembly of nuts and bolts has evolved into a creative process, focusing on achieving a balance of structural aesthetics. Since launching our first Bolt series in 2021, we have continuously refined the craftsmanship and quality of our work.”*



© DR





Al-Form, 2024 © DR

M&O: What are the advantages and difficulties of exploring metal as thoroughly as you have?

H.O.: *“The study of material properties is an ongoing journey with limitless possibilities. We explore construction materials, pushing boundaries to suggest new creatives. By deeply understanding the characteristics of each material, we experiment with innovative processing techniques that have never been attempted before. Through this process, we create finished works that offer a fresh perspective on conventional building materials.”*

M&O: Is it fair to say that your design infuses a highly industrial aesthetic with a touch of madness?

H.O.: *“Every construction material serves a specific function, and we enhance this by incorporating our own aesthetic to create something both sustainable and functional. Through coordination, we are developing systems that are not only practical but also promote circulation. Our work transcends simple beauty,*

encouraging viewers to experience it from multiple perspectives. Reflecting this vision, our latest creation is a series titled Al-Form series, inspired by aluminum formworks used in concrete construction for architectural frameworks. Drawing from the cyclical process of production, use, repair, dissolution, and reproduction, niceworkshop is integrating these formworks into a new line of furniture, merging industrial materials with innovative design.”



Bolt Series, 2021 © DR



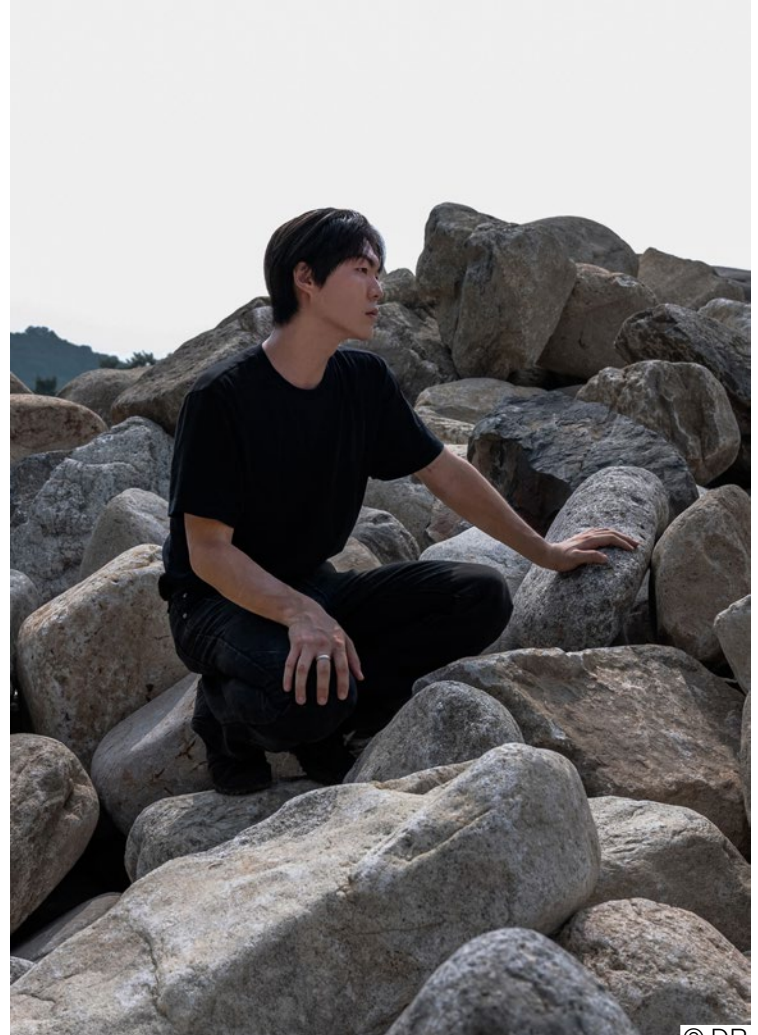
SISAN LEE: THE SEDUCTION OF CONTRADICTION

Profiled by the trade press in 2020, Sisan Lee, 29, based in Seoul, creates sculptural furniture and lighting worthy of museum installations. Fascinated by the shapes of the stones he collected, he decided to let the stones determine the dimensions of his chairs and shelves. Combined with manufactured steel plates, the raw stones fulfil the desire for balance between nature and artefact. Rimowa and Hyundai have adopted this highly aesthetic approach.

Maison&Objet: Why let natural stone determine the shape of your furniture?

Sisan Lee: *“When I was a student at Konkuk University, surrounded by rivers and mountains, I was attracted by the uniqueness of the stones I collected, which contrasted with the standards of the industrial system. And I found treated stone less beautiful than natural stone. So I opted to preserve the physical properties of nature, to the point of accepting the idea that they would determine the shape or size of the furniture.*

My pieces are fully integrated into my approach as a designer, and some of them are pure contemplation. Whether hanging or on the floor, they provide a narrative in space, a visual and emotional form of communication that goes beyond the functional. I see this purely aesthetic experience as an extension of design.”



© DR

M&O: Nature / city, past / present, primitive / modern, natural / artificial. Antonyms inspire you!

S. L.: *“I’m interested in the moments when contradictory concepts collide. Seoul is a highly-developed industrial city, but its ancient cultural heritage, nature, mountains and rivers live side by side with its industrial aspects. What stimulates me is finding a point of contact between two extremes, looking for where confrontation meets harmony and ultimately creating a balance, because there are complementary elements in opposing relationships.”*





Proportions of Stone, Collection © DR

M&O: How does the dialogue between stone and metal, leather and wood help your thinking?

S. L.: *"I love the conversation between conflicting materials. They have their own properties, but together they create new meanings. The weight of the stone, the suppleness of the leather, the warmth of the wood and the coldness of the metal work together to give a complex meaning to the work. These materials coexist in harmony with each other, combining to break down boundaries, conveying deep emotions such as the interplay between nature and artificiality."*



Proportions of Stone, Shelf 01© DR



WOOJAI LEE: THE VALUE OF THE INVISIBLE

Woojai Lee draws inspiration from the small, even ignored, details of our everyday environment (old paper, damaged walls) to make solid benches, pedestals, bricks and partitions. A Korean-New Zealander, he is a graduate of Dutch and Australian universities. Belonging to a foreign minority in the West makes him feel the beauty of silent presences, of what we don't see.

His work has been exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the Saatchi Gallery in London, and is part of the permanent collection at the Schaudapot Lab, Vitra Museum in Germany. He works with COS, Nike and UNIQLO.



© DR

Maison&Objet: Why use old paper as material?

Woojai Lee: *“One day I was taking out my bins and came across a huge pile of paper. Newspapers, leaflets, read for a few minutes before being thrown away. I felt sorry for them! They are so much a part of our everyday lives that they have become invisible, and we throw them away without even realising it. This prejudice against paper, which is perceived as worthless, overlooks its potential.*

So I set myself the goal of giving it a new life where it would be stronger, more beautiful and more precious. After years of reflection, I believe that my empathy for this material comes from having grown up as part of a minority in Western societies, where I felt the invisible limits imposed on me by societal preconceptions. A strong bond has been forged with paper and I continue to look for ways to extend its potential, without prejudice.”



M&O: Is your approach a declaration of love to imperfections?

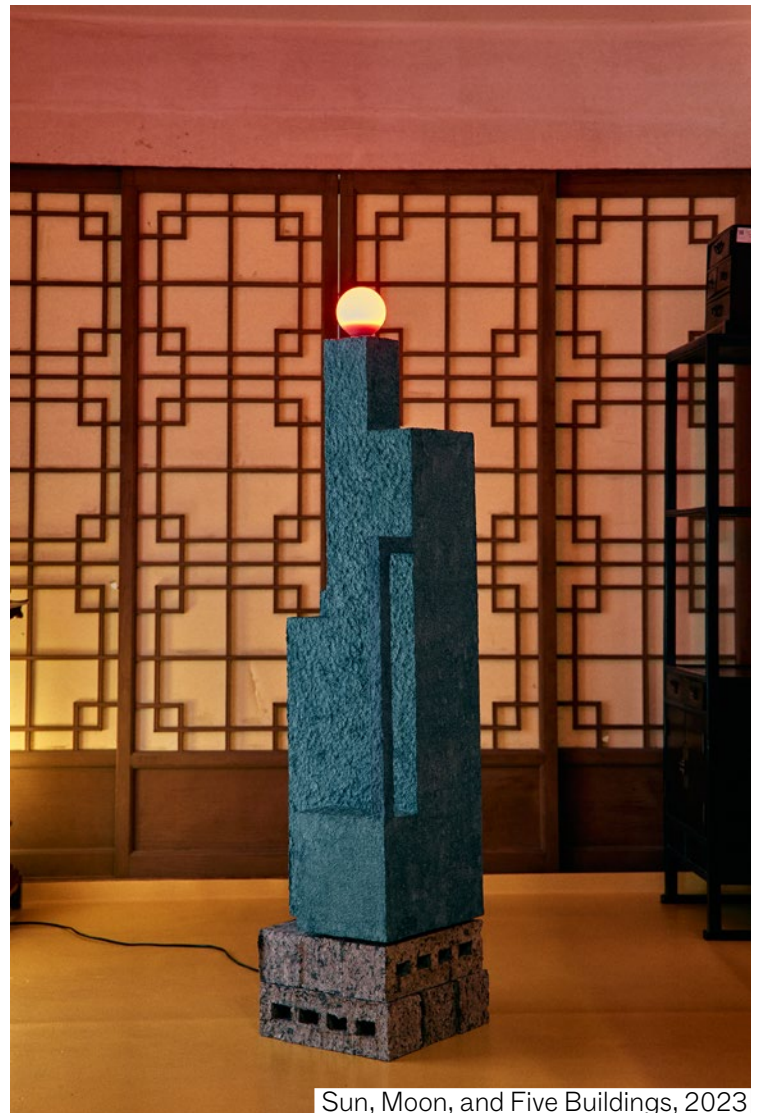
W. L.: *“More like to the underestimated aspects of everyday life, the unnoticed details. The white walls of a gallery, the forgotten corners of a room, the cracks in bricks... elements that form the backdrop to our lives and remain unstated. My work focuses on highlighting these humble, tactile and neglected forms, which speak not through noise but through their quiet existence. To invite the viewer to slow down and recognise the beauty in the seemingly insignificant, I take advantage of the unpredictability of materials and the irregularities inherent in handmade work. These are not flaws, but subtle tools that reveal a profound presence in the ordinary. They evoke the unpredictability of life itself, where imperfections have meaning and value.”*

M&O: Your work blurs the boundaries between art and design. Do you feel you have to choose between exhibiting at museums or at trade fairs?

W. L.: *“I’ve often been confronted with this question: art, design or craft. Why these boundaries? To remain in line with history, or simply to put a price on the object? Where a work is exhibited or sold should not matter; it should not change its value. Even if my work is exhibited in museums, I want the public to touch it and feel its materiality. To fully appreciate the transformation of the material, interaction is essential. I want people to feel a sense of warmth and volume, a presence in the space. I encourage people to take a step forward and take a closer look, whether it’s a work of art or a commonplace item.”*



Pillars, exposés au musée national de Cheongju, 2023 © DR



Sun, Moon, and Five Buildings, 2023 © DR

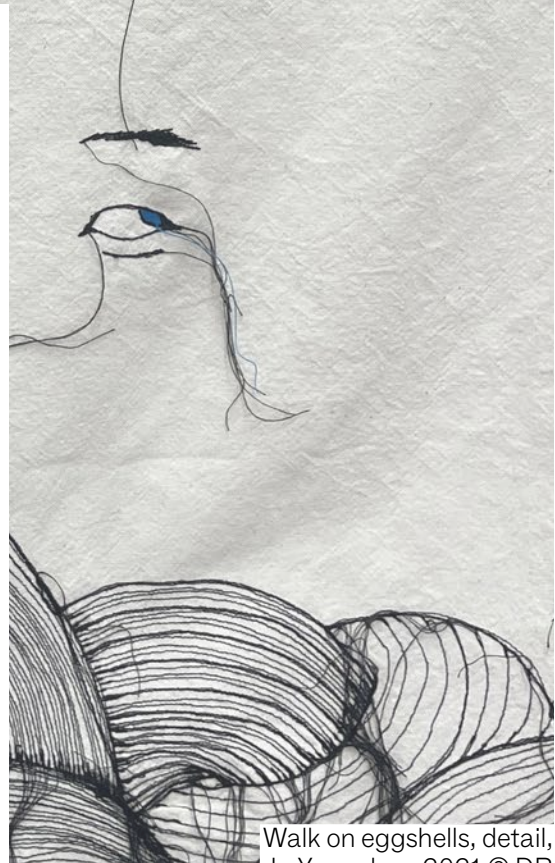


TALENT CRAFT

BY ATELIERS D'ART DE FRANCE



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Walk on eggshells, detail,
In Yeonghye, 2021 © DR

IN YEONGHYE: THE SOFT EXPLOSION

In Yeonghye grew up in the 1990s in Yesan, in the ambiance of her parents' furniture shop. It was a playground where her mother, who has a degree in fashion design, gave her a penchant for making things by hand. Following this path, she obtained a master's degree in industrial design (at Chungnam National University) and began working with textiles in an intimately personal way. For the past two years, while in residence at the Korean Crafts Museum in Cheongju, she has been expanding her textile practice by producing sewn drawings, furniture and art objects. Using unique hand-sewing techniques, the artist moves away from the confines of functional structure to achieve a freedom of expression that is both liberating and comforting. Whether finely woven or roughly cut, velvet, cotton or terry, soft and thick, become a soothing, intimate comfort that invites you to touch, enfold and lean against, taking in its always positive vibrations.



Maison&Objet: Your dad is a furniture salesman, your mum has a degree in textile design. Does your work represent a collision between the two fields?

In Yeonghye: *“My mother made everyday clothes and traditional garments like the ‘han-bok’ dress, and my father instilled in me a love of design and objects. This mix of influences shapes my work, in which I use fabric as the main material. Unlike many textile artists who concentrate on two-dimensional motifs, I create three-dimensional forms such as chairs. The transition from objects to spaces was a natural evolution for me.”*

M&O: What techniques do you use?
I. Y.: *“For the fabric designs, I start from my sketchbooks and make simple hand-drawn thread sketches, then finish on the sewing machine. For furniture and objects, it’s the other way round: I use a sewing machine to create the basic elements, then I join them together and shape them with hand stitching. A method adapted to the elasticity of textiles, with the challenge of achieving uniformity!”*



M&O: Your work is deeply immersive. Why is this important to you?

I. Y.: “When I was a teenager, I became introverted and shy, feeling embarrassed and unable to express my emotions. My softly textured works are a means of communication, a way of telling my story, however insignificant it may be. So when my story takes the form of a chair, this simple object is transcended by free expression. The audience can interact with this emotion by sitting and touching to allow for a deeper connection. I want you to immerse yourself in an experience; in this way you commit to understanding the nuances of my work.”



Walk on eggshells, 2021 © DR



Body chair, 2018 © DR



Bumpy, 2022 © DR



Face Chair, 2016 © DR

ABOUT MAISON&OBJET



© Anne-Emmanuelle Thion

Maison&Objet (SAFI, a joint subsidiary of Ateliers d'Art de France and RX France) has been leading and bringing together the international decoration, design, and lifestyle community since 1994.

Its trademark is its ability to elicit productive international meetings, to drive the visibility of the brands that join its exhibitions and its digital platform, but also its singular instinct for highlighting the trends that will set the heart of the interior design planet racing. Maison&Objet's mission is to reveal talent, to offer opportunities for discussion and inspiration both online and offline, and to facilitate the development of businesses.

With two annual exhibitions and Paris Design Week in September, Maison&Objet serves as an indispensable barometer for the entire sector. Online since 2016, MOM (Maison&Objet and More) allows buyers and brands to continue their exchanges, launch new collections, and make contacts beyond physical meetings. Weekly launches of new products provide an ongoing boost to the industry. In 2023, Maison&Objet rolled out new digital services, and MOM also became a marketplace.

On social networks, discoveries are made on a daily basis by a community of almost 2 million active professionals on Facebook, Instagram (+1M followers), Twitter/X, LinkedIn, Xing, WeChat, and now TikTok.

Spearheading the Paris Capitale de la Création label, Maison&Objet is a catalyst for positioning Paris as a major magnet for international creative talents.



© Anne-Emmanuelle Thion



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