

## List Projects 22: Cindy Ji Hye Kim

October 29, 2020—March 21, 2021

The MIT List Visual Arts Center is pleased to announce *List Projects 22: Cindy Ji Hye Kim*, the artist's first institutional solo presentation. While our galleries remain closed at least through the end of 2020. We invite you to engage the exhibition through the following press announcement illustrated with exhibition documentation, and to watch a [video interview](#) with the artist, read a [curatorial essay](#) in the exhibition brochure, and attend a virtual public program with the artist taking place on February 11, 2021 at 5:30 pm est.



Installation view of *List Projects 22: Cindy Ji Hye Kim* at MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA, October 29, 2020–March 21, 2021.  
Photo: Charles Mayer

In Cindy Ji Hye Kim's recent paintings, stylized figures—graphically rendered with bold, illustrative lines—are contained by restrictive or provisional structures like scaffolding, gallows, and theatrical lighting rigs. Referencing a wide range of art and visual culture, from the styles of propaganda posters to early black-and-white animations to painterly representations of biblical narratives, her works exploit the strategies of image making with a critical attention to their conventions. Kim's sometimes

gruesome subjects probe the body's relationship to architectures of power, while articulating formal and conceptual relationships between the content of her images and the technical limitations of two-dimensional representation.



*Reign of the Idle Hands*  
#1, 2019  
Graphite, charcoal,  
pastel, ink, acrylic, and oil  
on birch wood, 12 in.  
(30.5 cm) diameter  
Collection of Rahul  
Sabhnani, New York  
Photo: Charles Benton

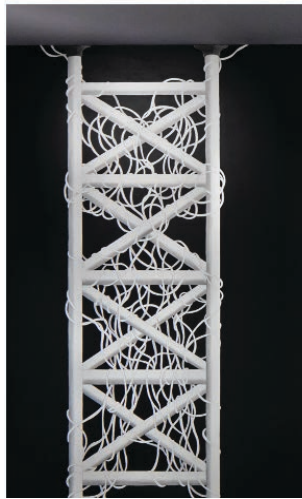
A pair of small round paintings titled *Reign of the Idle Hands #1* [above] and *#2* (both 2019), are informed by the phénakistoscope, an early animation disc that when rotated around a central axis gives the illusion of movement to the figures drawn on its surface. In these works, Kim disables the apparatus central to their concept. Presenting the mechanism of the technology, rather than its effect, repeated forms are trapped in poses that are each a fragment of what, if activated, would be a cohesive motion. Here, and in all the works on view, Kim employs a greyscale palette known as grisaille, a technique historically used in artist's drafts, depictions of classical sculpture, or as an underpainting scheme over which other pigments are layered. Kim's singular application of this restrictive palette yields images with a hit of cinematic noir that mirror the sense of confinement her subjects face.



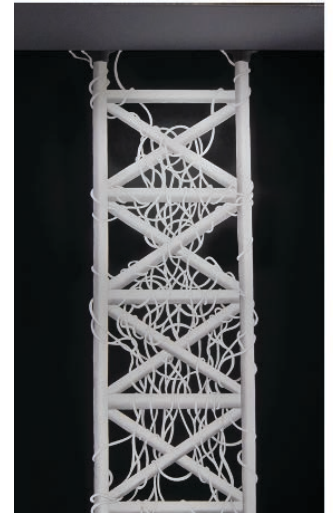
At the List Center, Kim presents a focused selection of recent paintings alongside two site-responsive sculptures, a major new painting, and a mural featuring two of the artist's recurring characters, "Mister Capital" and "Madame Earth." With these new works, Kim foregrounds an analogy between painterly support structures and somatic and psychic states of confinement, integrating organic and biological forms like plants, vines, and skeletal fragments into her allegorical compositions. In *Superego Fortuna* (2020) [below, seen from behind], a large hanging painting, a system of stretcher bars milled in the shape of a human pelvis are visible through the translucent surface of the silk fabric. Just as the artist's considered use of grisaille exposes the often hidden, technical elements of painting, the figurative use of stretchers calls attention to the rear side of the canvas, which is typically concealed. Central to the painted image is a mesh of vines that emanate inwards from a border of medicinal and edible herbs and flowers that include bone set, sage, elderberry, nasturtium, fenugreek, milk thistle, ginger leaves, bilberry, flax seed, and blackcurrant. Seen over the silhouetted pelvis, the vines seem to form a circulatory system for the skeleton beneath—as if the painting itself is made flesh—stretchers, silk, and image each serving as constituent parts of a body.



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A visual pun between veins and vines extends the arterial metaphors established in *Superego Fortuna* to a newly commissioned two-panel mural titled *Double-Tongued Citadel* (2020) [details, left and right]. Here, the familiar silhouettes of Mister Capital, identifiable by a ten-gallon hat, and Madame Earth, with a signature bouffant hairdo, are formed by intertwined stems creeping up gallows-like structures of PVC piping. The archetypally gendered figures, each associated with resources, natural and extracted, are gripped by the biological and both supported and restrained by the human-made.



Detail views of *Double-Tongued Citadel* and *Superego Fortuna* (both 2020) in List Projects 22: Cindy Ji Hye Kim at MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA, October 29, 2020–March 21, 2021. Photo: Charles Mayer.







Employing the same materials that constitute the support structures of her paintings, Kim's sculptures engage the gallery architecture to delineate and discipline the corpus of the space itself, while furthering the self-contained iconographic system through which the allegorical content of her works unfolds. In *Iron Nerve* (2020) [detail, at left] steel cable and screw eyes form the laces of a corset as if constraining the waist of the wall, while *The Body Sins Once* (2020) [below, foreground] is comprised of a hemlock wood dowel etched with a relief of Madame Earth and held in tension between floor and ceiling. As Kim's works exhaust the spatial possibilities of the painting object and the flat and bounded picture plane, they also engage visible architectures as analogues for unseen structures of power, intimating that one's subjection to such forces is both integral and by design.



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Photo: Charles Mayer

## Additional Installation Views



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Artwork + Detail Views



*The Body Sins Once* (detail), 2020

Carved hemlock wood

1½ in. diameter × 96 in.

Courtesy the artist; Foxy Production, New York; and François Ghebaly, Los Angeles

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Photo: Charles Mayer





*Iron Nerve* (detail), 2020

Steel cable, screw eyes

Dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist; Foxy Production, New York; and François Ghebaly, Los Angeles

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Photo: Charles Mayer





*Yearnings of the Flesh*, 2019  
Graphite, charcoal, pastel, ink, acrylic, and oil on canvas  
84 x 64 in.  
Collection Majudia







*Reign of the Idle Hands #2*, 2019

Graphite, charcoal, pastel, ink, acrylic, and oil on birch wood  
12 in. (30.5 cm) diameter

Collection of Rahul Sabhnani, New York

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Photo: Charles Mayer



## About the Artist

**Cindy Ji Hye Kim** (b. 1990, Incheon, South Korea; lives and works in New York) received her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and her MFA from Yale University School of Art. Her work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions at Helena Anrather, New York; Foxy Production, New York; François Ghebaly, Los Angeles; Interstate Projects, Brooklyn; Cooper Cole, Toronto; Antenna Space, Shanghai; Art Gallery of York University, Toronto; Bahamas Biennale, Detroit; and others. The List Center exhibition is her first institutional solo presentation.

*List Projects 22: Cindy Ji Hye Kim* is organized by Selby Nimrod, Assistant Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center.

## Support

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## For more information contact:

**Mark Linga**

[mlinga@mit.edu](mailto:mlinga@mit.edu)

