

Infinite Tolerance

Press Release

Koh San Keum

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August 30 - October 2, 2019

Gallery Baton is pleased to present 'Infinite Tolerance', a solo exhibition by Koh San Keum (b. 1966) from Aug 30th to Oct 2nd, 2019. Koh San Keum responds to the moment when she is mesmerized by books and sentences the artist has personally read which have always fueled her thoughts, in the same way a painter gains sudden inspiration from particular objects and shapes. Koh's modest way of life, disciplined through a long period of living overseas, and her unique lifestyle, constructed through her subconscious acceptance of different styles in a multicultural environment, formed the artist's intellectual receptors that are fascinated by particular objects of creation and writing styles. In other words, the selective sentences and groups of sentences that she is particularly responsive to and mediates, are regarded the unique identity and the essence of the artist philosophy.



Koh San Keum. *Memory Board 4*, 2019.
4mm artificial pearl beads, adhesive, ballpoint pen on paper, 114 x 83 cm.

In the process of converting texts consumed as social symbols, such as novel, newspaper, poetry, essays and law books into material objects, as tiny artificial pearls are placed according to the number of letters and spaces in between the letters in a fixed and minimal arrangement. In this manner, the semantic context of

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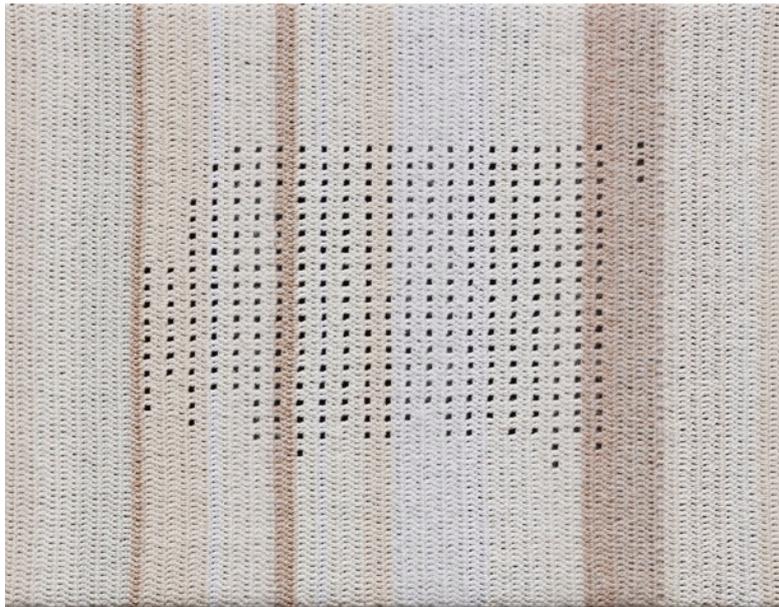
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the sentence is concealed, shedding light on the visual sense of formation and aesthetic impression created by her imagination, energy, and arrays by pearls. Koh's work involves a heavily labor-intensive process in which the artist herself arranges tens of thousands of artificial pearls on the panel, one by one. Converted into a pearl, the text emancipates itself at last from its obligation to function as a symbol, and becomes something that is post-national and post-ethnic. This laborious endeavor driven by the artist's impetuosity eventually deactivates the innate authority of text, which is highly interlinked with a literacy, then reinvents the universal language that is ubiquitously responsive to the human vision, and therefore, it fulfills the infinitely tolerant.



Koh San Keum. *Text by Oh Se-Chang, Excerpt from Sehando JeChan (Written Impression)*, 2019.
cotton yarn, fabric on wooden panel, 47 x 60 cm.

Her previous works, the artificial pearl beads are planted on panels which become similar to the surface of ivory through repeated painting and sanding of acrylic paint, express Koh's awe of the origin of text metaphorically. Whereas, new series of works displaying clusters of artificial pearl beads on countless and dense arrangement of trace of ballpoints, demonstrate that she widens her interest to before the birth of the text.

The plane made of countless pen marks capture the slightest traces of dents where the lines cross each other, and clusters of artificial pearl beads are formed on such intersections. Casting quite a stark contrast with the regularly fixed interval in her previous works, these colonies demonstrate random patterns and structures alike enlarged organic forms under a microscope. This composition and effect represent something that is primitive, exposing a stage before the text, or an unidentified image in the writer's mind when text exists only as an idea before it is put together and formed into something that can be articulated. Through the new works, which can be interpreted as a prequel to her previous works on panels, Koh embarks on the exploration into the vast and untrodden field of 'text before the text'.

Koh San Keum received M.F.A in painting from Ewha Women's University, Seoul and the Pratt Institute, New York. She has held solo exhibitions including Gallery Baton, Seoul (2016) and has participated in group exhibitions at National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art(MMCA), Gwacheon (2017); Seoul Museum of Art (SeMA), Seoul (2018); Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, Ansan (2017); Daejeon Museum of Art, Daejeon (2018); Sungkok Museum of Art, Seoul (2015); C5 Art Beijing, Beijing (2007); and Museo Carlo Bilotti, Rome (2013). Her works are in the collections of MMCA, Korea; SeMA, Korea; Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, Korea; Gyeonggi Creation Center, Korea; Museum of Art, Seoul National University, Korea and etc.