

# Sleepers in Venice

## The Purgatory of Desires

Calle del Carbon, San Marco 4179, Venice, Italy / 8 May 2015 – 7 June 2015

ISKAI Contemporary Art is delighted to present, *Sleepers in Venice*, an exhibition featuring commissioned works by eight Korean artists, joined by guest British artist Mark Wallinger.

This exhibition questions the enduring allure of the Venice Biennale. Does the Venice Biennale offer artists opportunities to develop their work or is it a place of magic where artists and visitors alike are seduced by fleeting beauty, falling into a sleepy trance like Thomas Mann's famous character, Gustav von Aschenbach from *Death in Venice*. Can the Biennale deliver critical thinking about art and the artworld or is it an opiate?

Artists were asked to interpret Mark Wallinger's work *Sleeper* (2004). A film shows the artist dressed in a bear suit wandering alone as if in a daze, around the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin. He stayed in this location for ten nights. The bear is the emblem of Berlin and his whole masquerade alludes to the city, once at the epicentre of the Cold War where spies could blend into their surroundings by sporting disguises. *Sleepers in Venice* aims to explore the notion of masquerade in an altered context. What mask do you choose to wear? Which disguise will you assume during your visit?

Wallinger's film, not seen in Venice since 2005, is an inspirational example of the creative tensions and struggles an artist faces. *Sleeper* highlights how an artist's creativity can as easily become a pavilion of dreams, as it can become a cage. The Korean artists have responded in equally distinctive ways to the danger of falling under a sleepy spell; they fight back by prodding, poking and re-working the fabric of art practice, questioning how art is made, seen and consumed.

Jia Chang, recently shortlisted for Artist of the Year at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea, has made a special pair of curtains that reference the human body and social taboos. Chang's works will be visible from the vantage point of the Grand Canal, hung in the window of the gallery overlooking the Rialto Bridge.

Hyunjoon E is a sound producer, and an installation artist. His large expressionistic installations are filled with objects reflecting his own possessiveness and desire to hold on to material things.

Deokyeoung Gim, resident artist at Bethanien, Berlin, asks questions about national pavilions: staying up throughout the private view nights, pavilion by pavilion, Gim collects discarded rubbish and makes works from it.

Eemyun Kang's paintings weave energetic and fluid brushstrokes with formal constraints and organic structures. Kang recently moved to Milan from London for new inspiration.

### ISKAI Contemporary Art

Hyeyoung Ku will make performances throughout the private view times, presenting humorous, serious and metaphorical acts that manipulate the audience and highlight the ever-present contradictions in staging art openings.

Woody Kim invites guests into a pitch-dark room, where they are unable to see. Within the room a dancer – aided by infrared night goggles – weaves ghostlike patterns amongst them.

MR36 are a collaborative duo who gather unlikely materials to explore Storm trooper effect; a commentary on the phenomenon of ‘star’ artists for big art shows like the Venice Biennale.

Curator Stephanie Seungmin Kim comments, ‘so many artists, curators, writers and visitors whose everyday life is made up of creative decisions and who come to the Venice Biennale will empathise with this exhibition. They will see and feel how one is always torn between creative urges and reality, hence the subtitle, *Purgatory of Desires*.’

The production and the installation of the exhibition will be the focus of a documentary film entitled, *Sleepers*. The film is directed by Steve M. Choe, an award-winning director who has edited more than 40 blockbuster films including *Snowpiercer* (2013), *A Moment to Remember* (2004), and *War of the Arrows* (2011). The documentary will be screened in London during the Frieze Art Fair, and a longer version will be screened at various international film festivals.

## Notes to Editors

- Vernissage : 7 May 2015, 15:00 - 20:00
- Vernissage with performance and drinks reception : 8 May 2015, 20:00 – Midnight
- Press Conference : 8 May 2015, 13:00
- Curatorial Advisor : Damien Brachet, James Putnam, Mark Wallinger
- Supported by Arts Council Korea, Korean Airlines, Sony A7S
- Contact : Hansol Choi, ISKAI Assistant Curator  
hansol@iskaiart.com / +44(0)7597 299199

ISKAI Contemporary Art UK Ltd. (ISKAI), founded in 2010, curates and organises many large-scale art exhibitions. Based in London, ISKAI concentrates on promoting British artists outside the UK and showcasing international artists within the UK. Each opportunity allows the public to enjoy diverse global art and also supports art professionals with new inspiration for their creativity. ISKAI curated 'City States' at the Liverpool Biennial in 2010 and 2012. 2013 saw *Soldier's Tale*, an exhibition held in Asia House with 12 artists' new commissioned works. To commemorate Korea's Presidential visit to the UK, a special exhibition entitled *Crystallize* (UK-Korea Media Art Lab) was held in the vast basement of the Old Billingsgate market, showcasing 15 British-based artists, in partnership with FACT Liverpool. Artists included Semiconductor, Dave Lynch, and Sam Meech among others. In 2015 ISKAI is presenting five UK artists in Singapore Media Festival in May 2015.

## ISKAI Contemporary Art