

## U Sunok



*Art is already in your mind*

2011

Video, 5min 30sec

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery, Seoul

**November 10 – December 6, 2011**

### **Exhibition Information**

Artist: U Sunok (Korean, 1958-)

Duration: November 10(Thu.) - December 6(Tue.)

Place: Kukje Gallery, K1, 1-2F (Tel 735-8449)

Opening Hours: Mon. – Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 10am-5pm

### About the Exhibition

Kukje Gallery is pleased to present *Drawing for a While*, a solo exhibition of U Sunok, a mid-career representative Korean artist and a professor of Ewha Womans University in Seoul. The present exhibition will be comprised of installations, drawings, and video works, building on her previous conceptual oeuvre that boasts a distinctly Korean aesthetic of the void.

Rather than rendering and describing a specific time or tangible objects, U Sunok focuses on the nonexistent and the intangible, presenting their particular conditions and atmosphere. A passing moment is fast fleeting and dreamlike, especially in the universal scheme of things. The artist, who states that we are merely “drawing for a while” throughout our lives, attempts to create the impression of a gently lingering formless existence. In doing so, the artist reflects on a nonexistent landscape, a place that cannot be seen yet is familiar, as if it truly exists somewhere – tapping into our fantasy and nostalgic longing for a lost utopia and paradise.

### About the Works

Kukje Gallery is pleased to present *Drawing for a while*, the third solo exhibition of U Sunok at the gallery, following the earlier shows in 1993 and 2006. In the previous exhibition, the artist showcased the imaginative quality of her works, emphasizing longings and dreams of faraway landscapes. The present exhibition extends on that impulse and infuses a meditative reflection and a sense of poeticism. As *We are all passengers*, installed at the entrance, embodies the thoughts and meditative reflections of the artist who believes our lives to be fleeting and ephemeral, based on merely “drawing for a while”.

*12 mirages*, located on the first floor, is an installation work which combines scenes from 12 different movies with a setting of wildflowers. The artist chose films that left a deep impression while she was studying abroad in Germany, including influential works such as Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Nostalghia*, Werner Herzog’s *Fata Morgana*, Luchino Visconti’s *Death in Venice* and Michelangelo Antonioni’s *The Passenger*. Each screen replays a selected scene, all dealing with the concept of existence and absence, memory, and the yearning and fantasy of utopia. The artist equates the course of our lives with this effect of materializing only as a vision then disappearing like a mirage, and she creates an instance for the viewers to naturally escape into that phantom-like experience.

The second floor of the gallery imitates the artist’s own studio. The works correspond to her 2006 exhibition, *microhome*, when she transformed the space into a private space of memory. *Art is already*

*in your mind*, is a video recording which captures the artist's own experience in the privacy of her studio. The video shows the artist, who stares at a work for a while, then slowly paces around the studio while reciting a short poem from the 6th century. Her determination and purposefulness of reading the poem line by line evokes a ceremonial aspect to the performance, as if she is conjuring some sort of a spirit. The artist discovered the poem about the cyclical nature of life from a book written by Jorge Luis Borges, and similar to her previous exhibition, the artist once again poses the question of "What does it mean to see something? Doesn't the act of seeing ultimately mean encountering the abyss?" Such space composed of drawing, objects, videos of performance allow the viewers to share their personal stories and walk within poetic drawings.

*The moon* is a recurring symbol in U Sunok's works which represents the ideal nature of an untarnished, pure world and a state of enlightenment. Such use of the symbol occurs in *Moon Walk*, where the artist records the moon that endlessly follows her home, watching over her trek through an abandoned forest on a cold winter night. The artist reflects, "If we think of our lives as being fickle, wondering aimlessly then deteriorating, then the quality we value most is something which is unchanging, constant and eternal." Such self-explanatory yet often ignored concept is deeply reflective of the art world. U Sunok's previous work, *Lunar Oasis*, emerged from the burst of creativity after reading an article which posed that a sustainable world could be created on the moon, and it evokes a distantly familiar place that cannot be seen, some sort of a lost paradise. In *That Place*, the artist expands on that concept by showing a video of the NASA recording of the moon. However, the artist slows the recording down in order to tap into a nostalgic longing for that slowly changing but always constant presence of the moon.

In the present exhibition U Sunok weaves together reflections and sentiments of places and memories, existence and nonexistence, and waiting and longing in the course of working and reworking, in the same way she creates drawings. Through this organic process, she reveals and records something that does not exist but is only meaningful in its absence.

**About the Artist**

After finishing both her undergraduate and graduate studies in Fine Art at Ewha Womans University, U Sunok went on to study abroad at Düsseldorf Kunstakademie in 1985 under the direction of Günther Uecker. The seven years in Germany exposed the artist to a deeply philosophical and conceptual artistic practice and became the basis for her creative and artistic development. After completing her studies, U Sunok returned to Seoul and is currently a professor at her Alma Mater.

U Sunok has been exhibiting consistently, currently showing at *Countdown*, a group exhibition at the historic Seoul Culture Station 284. Other group exhibitions include *Abstract it!* at National Museum of Art, Deoksugung, Seoul (2010), *Mind Project* in London (2010), *vide & plénitude* at Espace Communes, Paris (2009), *Platform in KIMUSA* at Artsonje Center, Seoul (2009), Sydney Biennale (2006), *Mind Space* at Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul (2003), and *Leaning Forward, Looking Back: Eight Contemporary Artists From Korea* at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (2003). Her key solo exhibitions include *Lunar Oasis* at Atelier 705 in Seoul (2009), *Empty Space* in Seongbuk-dong in Seoul (2007), and *microhome* at Kukje Gallery in 2006.

**Exhibition Images & Captions**

Use of images must clearly credit the artist and other relevant parties.



***The moon***

2006-2011

Video projection

“Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery, Seoul”



***We are all passengers***

2011

Text, LED, synthetic resin, iron plate

“Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery, Seoul”

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*Couple Tree W*

2011

Steel, 7 fluorescent lights

170 x 71 x 71 cm

“Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery, Seoul”



*12 mirages*

2011

Video installation

“Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery, Seoul”

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*12 mirages*

2011

Installation view (detail)

“Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery, Seoul”



*12 Mirages*

2011

Still from Luchino Visconti's *Death in Venice*

Video installation

“Courtesy of the artist”

**Exhibition Images & Captions**

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**12 Mirages**

2011

Still from Werner Herzog's *Fata Morgana*

"Courtesy of the artist"