Tears in the Snow

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Art, Visual Arts

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May 2024
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Acknowledgements

All of the Professors I learned from: Samantha Fields, Tim Forcum, Erik Mark Sandberg, Christian Tedeschi, Tanya Brodsky, Steven Hampton, Michelle Rozic, Mario Ontiveros, and Lesley Krane. I appreciated all your inspiration and direction throughout my artistic journey.

All of my classmates, I also learned from you.
Dedication

This graduate project is dedicated to my daughter, Hannah. Hannah, you introduced me to the world of art, share many of your books with me, and have been a shining star in my life path.
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Abstract

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By

Ann Jinhwan Kim

Master of Fine Arts in Art, Visual Arts

I have often felt divorced from nature's energy because of my focus on establishing security as an immigrant. I feel that these pressures are shared by many others today. Through my artistic practice, I am regaining my connection to the truth and vitality in nature. My images are drawn from my life experiences and focus on the places I have lived, such as Los Angeles' northeastern mountains and the South Korean countryside where I was born. My work reflects contemplative methods to express nature's energetic spirit and awaken the viewer's inner vitality through sympathy and resonance with these landscapes.

My art derives from the embrace of moments that produce transcendence, just as the “sublime” came to play a central role in the transformation of modern art. I harmonize representation and abstraction to dismantle viewers’ association of images that are usually limited to specific meanings. Most importantly, I seek to convey vitality.
My process is like a sacred ritual to capture the rhythm of the moment when inspiration from nature and my body communicate on equal terms in a state where intellectual judgment is suspended. Capturing these fleeting moments into visual expression awakens my consciousness once polluted by prejudice and now restored to my original creativity.
Introduction

All my life, I labored in service of my family and immigrant community. For twenty years, I worked as a design director at a construction company, studied Catholic theology in Korean, and taught Bible classes. After doing my best for my family and neighbors, I began to invest in myself. In 2015, I enrolled at Los Angeles City College to work toward my bachelor’s degree and awaken my self-actualization. Then I transferred to CSUN where I’ve studied world art history, art philosophy, and art analysis. In studio classes, I developed my artistic vision of ecological feminist subject matter and symbolic methods of expression.

There are historical examples of women artists expressing their contemplations as artworks, whose consciousness reveals nature is related to humans. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), a mystic in the history of Christianity, introduces the Creation-centered theology emphasized the interconnectedness of creatures. She uses metaphors such as light, music, and vitality to create greenness and fruitfulness. Hildegard of Bingen is considered one of the most significant women of medieval Germany. Matthew Fox describes her as the “Grandmother of the Rhine Valley Mystic Movement, the Creation-centered Spiritual Movement.”¹ Fox explains that Hildegard first wrote and published Liber Scivias about cosmology and anthropology harmonizing with theology. And in the 1151 compendium, Scivias (Latin for “Know the Ways”) included rich illustrations and several musical compositions.

Linda Nochlin (1931–2017), a feminist art historian, she wrote "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" published by ARTnews in 1971. Nochlin wonders why

artistic genius has been reserved only for male artists. Nochlin argues that significant societal barriers have prevented women from pursuing art, including restrictions on educating women in art academies and "the entire romantic, elitist, individual-glorifying, and monograph-producing substructure upon which the profession of art history is based." Feminist art historians gave me a critical view of the art world while I was learning. So, I took a course in women’s art history and studied female artists from Whitney Chadwick’s textbook Women, Art, and Society. Chadwick challenges the assumption that great women artists are exceptions to the rule, having “transcended” their gender to produce major works of art while introducing some of the many women since the Middle Ages whose contributions to visual culture have often been neglected. Among the great women artists, I learned about Hilma af Klint, an abstract artist and visionary who was inspired by spiritualism, modern science, and the riches of the natural world. She was a forgotten female artist in art historical discourse before her long-delayed rediscovery. Eventually, my work was influenced by the aesthetic traditions of modern female abstract artists who discovered nature’s universal rhythm in the form. My painting offers reflections on the landscape, philosophy, and current political and social concerns. As modern women, abstract artists remained independent from shifting art trends and stayed true to their vision, which was based on finding essential forms in nature; similarly, my primary subject is the relationship between nature and humanity.

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Chapter One: Concept

American psychologist Abraham Harold Maslow’s 5th level of need for self-actualization is to demonstrate one’s potential through continuous self-development and personality growth. He subdivided self-actualization into cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, self-actualization, and transcendence. Self-actualization (Maslow, 1962) refers to the need for personal growth and discovery throughout a person’s life. For Maslow, a person is always “becoming” and never remains static. Maslow believed self-actualization could be measured through the concept of peak experiences. This occurs when a person experiences the world for what it is, generating feelings of euphoria, joy, and wonder. Maslow offers the following description of self-actualization:

> It refers to the person’s desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. The specific form that these needs will take will of course vary greatly from person to person. In one individual it may take the form of the desire to be an ideal mother, in another it may be expressed athletically, and in still another it may be expressed in painting pictures or in inventions (Maslow, 1943, p. 382–383).

In order to live a creative life with my own individuality, I established the theory necessary for my self-actualization based on German philosopher Immanuel Kant’s (1724–1804) aesthetic theory in his *Critique of Judgement*. Embracing beauty is what is most self-like, and when I am most like myself, I harmonize with others. Through this aesthetic, I develop my unique individuality and begin self-completion with my own authentic style. Reason, according to Kant, is not just a mathematical and geometric dimension as Plato or Descartes thought. Kant wrote the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) about knowledge, the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) about living, and the

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Critique of Judgment about hope (1790). Kant largely divides his aesthetic theory into the analytic theory of aesthetic judgment and the dialectic theory of aesthetic judgment. Kant believed that beauty combines imagination and intellect, and the sublime combines imagination and reason.

An aesthetic judgment, in Kant’s usage, is a judgment which is based on feeling, and in particular on the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. According to Kant’s official view there are three kinds of aesthetic judgment: judgments of the agreeable, judgments of beauty (or, equivalently, judgments of taste), and judgments of the sublime. However, Kant often uses the expression “aesthetic judgment” in a narrower sense which excludes judgments of the agreeable, and it is with aesthetic judgments in this narrower sense that the “Critique of Aesthetic Judgment” is primarily concerned.⁷

In my painting’s subject matter, I adopt Kant’s aesthetics judgment of taste to express feelings of pleasure and displeasure that I feel in my heart. Until the Kantian era, human emotions were the subject of oppression, but by distinguishing aesthetic pleasure from other pleasures, I move toward my true nature. However, because Kant’s aesthetics studied the standards by which beauty is judged, he defined beauty as indifferent satisfaction. My painting Tears in the Snow (Figure 11) starts from my interests and pursues ideal beauty while maintaining autonomy and expressing itself with a sense of critical resistance to reality. For me, self-actualization is the process of finding my original and creative self, and art teaches me how to live life passionately. My goal is to live as an aesthetic person, engaging in creative work with independence and sparking inspiration that is not bound by social or conventional forms.

My work shows the process of interpreting the relationship between nature and humans through temporality, regionality, and identity. I express the energy and inspiration I get from nature and my memories in a way that fits the times. In my painting, Breeze on the Trials (Figure 1), I experienced rest and healing in nature while revisiting my favorite hiking trails after the Pandemic and wildfires. Nature changes its appearance and exists always. While climbing a mountain, I am part of nature and part of the change. I believe nature contains a healing message that conveys comfort and rest to tired people. My painting Tears in the Snow (Figure 11) visualizes the excitement I felt on Mammoth Mountain on a family vacation after a stressful year of work as an immigrant. When I saw the white, snow-covered mountain scenery shining in the morning sunlight, I remembered the mysterious beautiful snow scenery of my childhood hometown. At that moment, the whole world seemed pure and innocent and my tears fell into the snow endlessly due to the extreme emotion. My connection to nature and life’s vitality has been weakened by societal pressures. I am regaining my connection to the truth in nature using my artistic practice. Through innovative techniques and images, I am aiming to awaken viewers to the life force of the present moment.

The essence of painting is to uncover the truth of nature. When viewed through symbolism and metaphor, it is the spiritual world of landscape painting that communicates the wisdom of nature, humans, and the universe. Ancient ancestors said that if the human spirit relies on the providence of nature, a world of transcendent creation can be achieved, and they emphasized the need to find mysterious principles or true meanings hidden in nature. Korean landscape painting was accepted as an abstract and ideological form based on a folk view of nature or developed into a
representational landscape painting style based on actual images of objects, and has existed as the most central model in the history of Korean painting.\(^8\) Tradition is not simply a trace of the cultural heritage of the past, but a foundation for creating the future and a living, breathing flow in our lives. Therefore, tradition must be maintained and reborn through modern prototypes. Traditional painting must also be inspired by a creative passion that can lead to originality without being bound by the past. However, it must always have an innovative approach suitable for the new era and an awareness of tradition.

Within my bicultural, Korean American identity, I am intimate with the world of art, where the unique spiritual world and aesthetic experiences of life are incorporated into traditional Korean paintings. East Asian and Western paintings are the same “painting,” but they show differences in methods and subjects. East Asian painting attempted to capture spirit and philosophy rather than the visible world, while Western painting focused on capturing the visible world. The difference between Eastern and Western painting styles is that East Asian painting emphasizes subjectivity, while Western painting emphasizes objectivity. Additionally, while East Asian paintings emphasize flatness, Western paintings emphasize three-dimensionality. One of the differences between East Asian and Western paintings is the way they portray subjects. In the East, the spirit of an object is considered first, because Easterners try to understand its meaning first rather than its appearance. On the other hand, in the West, the external history of the object being drawn is considered first with the shape of the object considered first.

\(^8\) Korean Landscape Painting. https://www.mmca.go.kr/study/study07/study07-48.html
Western artists favor object-centered scenes, whereas Chinese artists prefer context-oriented scenes. Paintings in the West typically seek to make the object salient, i.e., to distinguish the object from the background (Masuda et al., 2008). In China it has been otherwise; Chinese artists put great emphasis on the context, often with a meditative theme showing small human figures, as if humans are embedded in a natural environment and awed or inspired by a mountainous landscape (Turner, 2009), or even overwhelmed by the sublime (Burke, 1757).⁹

When I first began my artistic exploration in the graduation program, I focused on minimal abstract compositions. The spatial dimension in my work became abstract in 2019, and the subject matter shifted from the physical world to the virtual informed by my conceptual theory and inspiration. I boldly juxtaposed different types of space in the same pictorial space and gradually developed an abstract visual language. My paintings addressed form, line, color, and emotion, remembering that the rules of composition mattered maybe more so than in a figurative image: balance, emphasis, unity, movement, rhythm, harmony, discordance, scale and proportion, and contrast are principles that guide the viewer through my work. They help me transform my visual and emotional perceptions by revealing essential elements. My images and shapes suggest the landscape and show an initial structure where simplified, geometric forms are arranged and interact.

Abstraction art arises from the real world through perception or emotion that is non-representational. My painting, *Point of Crisis* (Figure 2), recognizes only pure form, mark making, color, and the flatness of the surface. I painted it from an ecological perspective, considering there are limits to growth on planet earth; where common ground for human civilization should exist, the unrestrained growth of capitalism

⁹ Aesthetic Preferences for Eastern and Western Traditional Visual Art: Identity Matters
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5071313/#.
pursues profit and unsustainable growth. The ecosystem has reached limits that have
massively destroyed wildlife habitats. Excessive industrial development, blind
capitalism, and rampant consumerism resulted in a catastrophic situation during the
Covid-19 crisis. Through layers of paint, I created colorful energy fields around
individual objects, with dynamic lines separating them. My paintings employ shapes and
movement that produce different kinds of visual space and unexpected juxtapositions of
positive and negative emotions. Some of these images could be considered landscape,
suggesting goals both abstract and representational. My paintings offer reflections on
nature, art history, and the environment.

Kandinsky is often referred to as the first non-objective abstractionist in Europe.
During World War II, artists immigrated from Europe to the United States in large
numbers to escape Nazi persecution. Based on the expression ‘freedom,’ the American
artists succeeded in presenting forms and attempts that were different from European
abstract style.\textsuperscript{10} In Abstract Art, Anna Moszynska writes about French artist Sonia
Delaunay’s (1885-1979) Electric Prisms (1914) which shows the influence of poetry by
freeing art from strict representation. In America, such works as Evening Star, No III
(1917), Georgia O’Keeffe (1887-1986) created delicate abstractions derived from a
naturalistic starting point and transformed it into powerfully simple forms.\textsuperscript{11} O’Keeffe
developed her own painting style that intersects abstraction and figuration, leaving
behind some of the most original works of the 20th century. Initially captivated by

\textsuperscript{10} Fred S. Kleiner, Gardner’s Art through the Ages: The Western Perspective, Nam June Paik (829-830), Volume II
flowers, and later captivated by the vast and desolate landscape of New Mexico, she internalized Mother Nature and transferred it to canvas in her own style.

Through the pandemic, the signifiers of autonomy and purity in modernist art limited my ecofeminist subject matter and method of expression. Ecofeminism observes environmentalism and the relationship between women and the earth as sources for analysis and practice. Ecofeminist thinkers use the concept of gender to evaluate the global crisis as a problem of social and economic domination. Fundamentally, the problem of cultural ideology justifies patriarchal domination and exploitation. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva first published *Ecofeminism* in 1993 and linked the oppression of women to the destruction of the environment. Reviewed by Christina Holmes, the second edition of *Ecofeminism* (2016) remains relevant but addresses more complicated problems that are globally resonant. Holmes states, “In the twenty years since *Ecofeminism* was first published, every key socio-economic and cultural-psychological problem discussed is still current – and many situations have even worsened under the stranglehold of neoliberalism.”¹² My painting, *The Healer* (Figure 3), portrays overcoming the framework of dualistic thinking from an ecofeminist perspective. It sees all phenomena, such as men and women, humanity and nature, mind and body, civilization and primitiveness, as having complementary relationships rather than opposing and exclusive relationships.

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Chapter Two: Philosophy and Influence

The themes of my graduate school work can be summarized as ecofeminism, regionality, and “true landscape” painting through memory and emotion based on my vacations to national parks. My painting, *In the Rocks* (Figure 4), portrays a critical view of social, environmental, and cultural issues. I take culture as a collective and visible mode of behavior that people participate in while producing intangible values. My work starts with researching subject matter and developing a concept through my own interpretation. I often reference regionality to explore cultural heritages between people, nature, and social relationships. I build methodology in the preparation, development, and finalization to maintain a consistent quality of work.

For me the purpose of art is freedom, a privilege enjoyed by evolved humans with creative abilities. Artistic creation is a mental and emotional activity that allows me to freely create something I need to express or solve problems. My consciousness is the agent of creation that narrows the gap between conventional forms and essential ideas. The intentionality necessary for creation is charged in a state of awareness and immersion. Being conscious of an object that continues curiosity without judgment is the result of my personal attention and love. Austrian-German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) states, “Consciousness does not exist independently of the object, but is oriented toward the object and actively constructs the meaning of the object.” Husserl's theory of phenomenology shifted the subject of philosophy from studying external objects or the contents of knowledge to human consciousness. Therefore, in phenomenology, we focus on impressive and unfamiliar encounters that attract us rather than on data. Husserl believes that consciousness is not something that exists in
the mind but is a dynamic process that is directed toward something, whether it is an entity or an imaginary fiction. In Western philosophy, phenomenology sought to philosophically investigate the working mechanism of consciousness to reach “pure consciousness” by suspending phenomenological judgment.¹³

I became captivated by the emotion of color that makes objects move and change, and the continuous movement of geometric patterns and multiple spectrums of color drawn into one screen to compose a new dimension. In my painting, Merge (Figure 5), I allow for feminist sophistication and contradiction through multiple layers from my unconsciousness to encounter complicated visual expression. According to Kant, when we consider the beauty of an object, it is not objective or prescriptive, but subjective and reflective, and can be felt differently at each moment by each perceiver. Kant recognized painting as an independent field equal to philosophy and believed that art could help develop the intellect by increasing imagination. He viewed intelligence as the spontaneity of creating concepts on one's own, unlike emotions triggered by objects. Appreciating pictures that stimulate the imagination was also an essential requirement for integrated intelligence. In Critique of Judgment, Kant defines reflective judgment as the ability to move from the particular to the universal based only on experience, without following any higher ability, unlike intellect or reason that follows a priori principles. What ensures objectivity in his reflective judgment is that he assumes a concept that has not yet been realized, and acts only when his current actions fit that purpose.¹⁴

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French philosopher Henri Bergson’s beliefs paralleled Eastern thought in that he viewed the world as a constantly changing flow of time. While Westerners thought that the world was unchanging, Easterners thought that it was eternal because it changes. Quantum mechanics, it deals with the fundamental building blocks of the universe at the particle and wave level, also pays attention to this temporality and perceives the universe as continuously changing and that our bodies are also constantly changing through interactions and relationships with the outside world through wavelengths.

Henri Bergson (1859–1941) provided a rigorous account of the real efficacy of time (which he called duration). This allowed him to conceive of creativity as the source of both psychological freedom and of life as an open system. Bergson identifies in the history of Western thought the demotion of time to the status of a measurement, a demotion that renders the effects of its real activity in consciousness and in life inexplicable (even non-existent).\(^{15}\)

In *On the New Journey* (Figure 6), my intuition in the painting was open-minded and sought to become one with the object through curiosity about local flora and fauna and concern for the ecological environment. My idea was expanded during the work process because I realized the experience of migratory monarch butterflies parallels my own, and I began to think about walls around the border. I sympathized with migratory individuals and understand what is unique and difficult to express in this subject.

The North American Migratory Monarch is a subspecies of Monarch known for its bright orange color and annual migration. They travel nearly 3,000 miles from the Northern United States and Southern Canada in the summer, to Mexico and California in the winter. Monarchs go through 4-5 generations each year, but the last is the only one that migrates. [...] Monarchs and milkweed have a symbiotic relationship where the milkweed is the sole host plant and food source of Monarch caterpillars, and the adult butterflies pollinate the milkweed.\(^{16}\)

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\(^{16}\) Kyle Strain. https://wellfieldgardens.org/2022/09/05/in-defense-of-the-monarch-butterfly/?gad_source=1&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI56eFliCEhQMVZhKtBh2jjwerEAAAYASAAEgKQXvD_BwE
The intuition Bergson speaks of is the activity of consciousness moving with continuously changing beings. Intuitive knowing detaches itself from practical concerns and grasps creation and change as essential realities in a state of continuation. It becomes an experience of oneness where I and the object become one. In order for intuition to be realized, one must break away from one's own desires and daily concerns and observe indifferently with curiosity and without judgment. In Bergson's philosophy, aesthetic intuition and artistic creation are inseparable. Creation is a spontaneous and active act full of unpredictability and unexpectedness that brings into existence something that did not exist. Bergson's idea of art is to find invisible movement behind visible lines in order to depict the individuality of an object and to reveal the more secret mystery that operates behind that movement.

Henri Bergson found human greatness in the ability to freely create and master materiality. From an evolutionary biology perspective, Bergson finds the world in temporality in which entities constantly change through the interaction of waves and criticizes existing Western philosophy and science. The world continuously changes in the flow of time. What we see is just a fragmented image, like a cut from a movie. In this way, our knowledge, which fixes and understands uncontrollably changing objects, is an artificial distortion of reality.17

In Western philosophy, there has been a tendency to place high value on reason and overlook the importance of the senses. Today's postmodernist and poststructuralist philosophies that seek to dismantle rationalism made it known that the senses were more important than reason. French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) considered sense a core concept. While Western metaphysical philosophy since Plato has focused on identity, Deleuze reverses this in his 1968 book *Difference and*

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17 https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bergson/
Repetition and focuses on difference. Identity means that an object is the same as itself, but in reality, objects are constantly changing and cannot maintain stasis, and the senses have been treated similarly. However, Deleuze denies the original form of ideas that imposes a vertical hierarchy on individuals, and argues that only horizontal differences exist between individuals. From the perspective of identity, reason is important, but when we focus on difference, sense becomes important.

For Deleuze, art is seen as the desire itself necessary to dismantle the existing self. To him, art is a cosmos and a state that contains the scent of chaos. Here, chaos is not chaos itself, but a “potential state” where countless cosmos can be created. As this potential emerges, art makes it possible to think about new worlds and see the world proliferate.

I created my painting Following the Navigation (Figure 7) while I was in front of LACMA considering it from an ecofeminist perspective and hoping that more museums will highlight environmental issues of the present in addition to preserving art from the past. As Deleuze’s “potential form” emerges in my paintings, I think about new worlds beyond the current cosmos, which is solidified by hardened customs and common notions. As Deleuze claims, painting is not simply an object of aesthetic contemplation, but an art of life that transforms us into nomadic subjects who overthrow pre-existing stereotypes and endlessly create new things. In my paintings, I become a bird, a flower, or a cloud through my senses. Deleuze’s “becoming” is not a regression to the animal level against evolution. Rather than limiting myself to one identity, I return to the zone of possibility before the stereotypes of existence were solidified and creatively expand the horizon of existence through connection with others.

18 https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/deleuze/
Chapter Three: Works

My goal was to create a unified body of artwork by developing professional technical skills and theoretical art history knowledge. I have advanced my training to create a signature artistic style and solve visual problems with critical thinking skills. I studied toward more mastery of tools and methods in acrylic and oil painting to create artwork with formally coherent and conceptually developed works. I am still developing as an artist. The CSUN graduate program in Painting helped me achieve this goal through accelerated collaborations with students and guidance from professional artists who are committed to strengthening my artistic vision. Classroom critiques guided my vision, and I gained much constructive feedback and support from showing work in MFA reviews and in the Shed Gallery. I am motivated by its disciplined community of professional faculty members and students.

My paintings show the relationships between humanity and nature to communicate ideas accessible to broad audiences using a combination of abstract and representative visual language. My combined and complicated visual vocabulary comes from my bi-cultural and by-lingual background. I think the spiritual role of art in mediating the gap between humans and the universe leads to constructive reconciliation. Prehistoric cave paintings had an enchanted function and spiritual energy; the picture of Bisons in an ancient cave painting expressed the wish for a successful hunt.¹⁹ I believe that images allow humans to move between the material and the spiritual worlds.

The first step of my process is to observe and engage a subject within the theme of humanity's relationship with nature. While I may understand the subject abstractly, I rely on painting to explore my unconscious reflections and to capture the subject's unique identity. For example, many of my tranquil and layered images are influenced by Southern California's cultural diversity. In *Memory of My Commute Roads* (Figure 8), I painted the mountains along my drive to CSUN in different seasons to illustrate nature's changing presence next to the concrete highway. While a commute evokes routine, I attempt to shake the viewer from complacency by illustrating the vitality of nature close to traffic.

The next step of my process is to create analogies and perform research for reflection on the subject. I aim to see beyond the obvious. I use contrasting color that symbolically expresses cultural and environmental concerns. For example, in *On the New Journey* (Figure 6), I stimulate my imagination and emphasize ecological migratory mysteries, local attributes, and the world of meditation. My artistic expression has evolved from minimal abstraction as in *Point of Crisis* (Figure 2) to post-pop romanticism in *Somewhere Over the Mountains* (Figure 12) which portrays natural phenomena and the environment we live in from an ecofeminist perspective. Post-Impressionists were interested in the universal essence of existence that operates beyond the world of form. While Cézanne pursued the essence of form and Gauguin was interested in subjective color, Van Gogh expressed the mystery of nature and the invisible vitality of nature with vibrant lines. Similarly, my work emphasizes lines to express the energy and vitality of nature. In my painting, *The Evergreen Pear Trees* (Figure 9), I rendered the trees with line work. Rather than seeing nature with my eyes, I
felt the vitality of nature resonate within the waves of my mind, and I captured this vitality and expressed it with contrasting and mysterious colors.

During my art practice, I have discovered that solitude is a catalyst for making artwork. It allows me to find my thoughts, to steady myself, and to escape into my work. Georgia O'Keeffe and Agnes Martin found their way to solitude in the Desert, the landscapes of which inspired their work. Color was important to their work, and each found a depth of color in the desert that gave unique life to their paintings. Although I am not in the desert, I live near the Angeles National Forest and often go to the mountains to feel the wind blow through me. In my painting *Santa Ana Winds* (Figure 10), I depict the winds sweeping from the desert and across coastal Southern California; I use a bird's-eye view to condense perspective depth and a rendering method to show the wind passing through the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the San Gabriel Mountains. By experimenting with various viewpoints, I created an abstract yet cubist landscape presence. The monochromatic blue color harmonizes with the shape of the moon, which expresses the mystery of women.

Drawing an image involves interacting with an invisible energy field embodied in humans and in the world. The various works of art left behind by humans throughout history clearly communicate a sense of mystery. To me, art is meditating on nature and the world, feeling a sense of oneness with everything that exists in it, helping individuals correspond with the large universe, and then expressing it all. The role of art is to mediate between humans and nature, and humans and the universe so that humans in the microcosm can respond and achieve harmony with the macrocosm.
Landscape painting, which has a long history in Korea, is related to immortal thought. While Westerners viewed mountains as objects of conquest, Easterners viewed mountains as places where gods descend and sacred spaces where gods and humans meet. In this way, the yearning for sacred mountains untouched by the secular world was the foundation of landscape painting, and idealized landscapes being preferred over actual landscapes. My painting *Tears in the Snow* (Figure 11) was inspired by Korean “true landscape” painters, Jeong Seon (1676-1759) being one of them and appearing in the late Joseon Dynasty. “True landscape” painters are noteworthy in that they attempted to break away from the tradition of ideological landscape painting and depict what they felt directly while touring the mountains and streams of Joseon.

Jeong Seon painted this album following his first trip to the Diamond Mountains. He likely traveled northeast from the capital, Hanyang (today’s Seoul), and traversed the mountain range from Inner to Outer Geumgang toward the sea. Displayed here are six scenes from a total of thirteen (the last leaf in the album is a colophon). The varied compositions reveal Jeong’s early experimentations, which he would repeat, adapt, or refine over the course of his career.20

In art history, landscape is an ideal representation of nature. The “Hudson River School” is an art movement that emerged in the United States in the mid-19th century. Kevin J. Avery writes, “The Hudson River School was America’s first true artistic fraternity. Its name was coined to identify a group of New York City-based landscape painters that emerged about 1850 under the influence of the English émigré Thomas Cole (1801–1848) and flourished until about the time of the Centennial.”21

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River School drew inspiration from America's vast continent and captured the wonder of nature in a romantic painting style. It captures the desire for historical continuity and permanence in an idyllic setting that contrasts with the difficult reality of a rapidly changing country. They were also early environmentalists who concerned dense forests were being stripped bare by logging and ranching industries, after the extermination and dislocation of the indigenous people who lived generations. Hudson River School artists used their art work to lobby congress to protect places like Yosemite national park which is my favorite place visit. This year, Yellowstone is celebrating its 152th anniversary as the first national park in the United States and while it's one of the most popular parks in the world, it remains a place of wild majesty. Thomas Moran’s Paintings, *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* (1872), Influenced Congress to Establish First National Park.

My painting, *Somewhere Over the Mountains* (Figure 12), referenced by *View of the Yosemite Valley*, 1865, by Thomas Hill that makes the viewer contemplate the place and time we live in now. The imagery contradicts urban life and behind the hidden message it connects to viewers’ aspirations. My goal is to create an imaginary space as a sort of utopia that expands into a unique place within the region. Romantic aesthetics, which sought to use subjective and transcendental beauty based on irrational creative forces instead of rational classical beauty, are well represented in art by emphasizing sublime beauty. My work explores the possibility of transcending the human mind through imagination.
Conclusion

As my paintings reflect on the landscape, philosophy, and current issues, they are based on finding essential element forms in nature, and my primary subject is the relationship between nature and humanity. I believe that artists are a dynamic force to liberate rigid, conventional thoughts for the sake of aesthetic ideals. I grew up influenced by Confucian culture and Catholic religious doctrine. Male centered society stunted my growth, so I turned to art to overcome it. In order to expand my thinking, I needed to look at and make art that enables empathy with others. Art resists a society that seeks to standardize individuals, reveals differences that cannot be identified with others, and preserves the growing diversity of the world. I pursue a creative and wonderful life as a free artist based on my nature and personality and find my own path based on my own aesthetics. Feminist Helene Cixous said that the source of a woman’s life lies in the woman herself becoming a source of strength and vitality. With my free will, I autonomously create passionate results.

The 57th Venice Biennale (2022) showcased the power of women, with Cecilia Alemani serving as general director.\textsuperscript{22} Alemani gave the Biennale a poetic title, \textit{The Milk of Dreams}. \textit{Milk of Dreams} is taken from the title of an illustrated fairy tale by British surrealist female artist Leonora Carrington. The Biennale gave rise to many controversies, including concerns about spirituality and mythology, the environment, and female artists. Among these, as many media outlets rushed to report, the keyword that runs through the Biennale is “women.” Most of the names left in the history of art are male artists. Meanwhile, many female artists have been unable to join the

mainstream or have been completely erased from history due to a male-centered worldview. A female artist who has endured hardships for a long time is now at the center of the stage. Many of the female artists who participated in this Biennale and the award-winning artists are outstanding artists who do not need to receive special attention simply because they are “female.” The 57th Venice Biennale marked in history as the first women-centered biennale. Furthermore, I hope that the Biennale will begin a new history of taking all of this for granted.

As a first-generation immigrant, I have experienced rest and healing in nature amid rampant capitalism and maintained spiritual and emotional stability through a life of faith. All these joys and sorrows are the resources of my art. I am full of energy to create paintings that confidently integrate my concepts with varied painting methods. I believe that great art explores the mysteries of human experience and juxtaposes it with the mystery of nature. Through my artwork, I express the timeless wisdom and rejuvenation of nature by presenting the results of my self-exploration.
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Appendix

Figure 1
Ann Jinhwan Kim, *Breeze on the Trials*, Acrylic and Oil on Canvas, 36 x 36 Inches, 2022
Figure 2
Ann Jinhwan Kim, *Point of Crisis*, Acrylic on Canvas, 48 x 36 Inches, 2021
Ann Jinhwan Kim, *The Healer*, Acrylic, oil, and collage on Canvas, Triptych, 40 x 90 Inches, 2021
Ann Jinhwan Kim, *In the Rocks*, Acrylic on Canvas, 40 x 30 Inches, 2022
Figure 5
Ann Jinhwan Kim, *Merge*, Acrylic on Canvas, 30 x 24 Inches, 2022
Figure 6
Ann Jinhwan Kim, *On the New Journey*, Acrylic on Canvas, Diptych, 36 x 72 Inches, 2022

Figure 6_research & study
Figure 7
Ann Jinhwan Kim, *Following the Navigation*, Acrylic on Canvas, 48 x 36 Inches, 2022
Figure 8
Ann Jinhwan Kim, *The Memory of My Commute Roads*, Acrylic on 4 canvases, 36 x 36 Inches each, 72 x 72 Inches overall, 2023
Figure 9
Ann Jinhwan Kim, *The Evergreen Pear Trees*, Acrylic on 3 canvases, 40 x 30 Inches each, 40 x 90 Inches overall, 2023
Figure 10
Ann Jinhwan Kim, *Santa Ana Winds*, Acrylic and Oil on Canvas, 60 x 48 Inches, 2024
Figure 11
Ann Jinhwan Kim, *Tears in the Snow*, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 x 60 Inches, 2024
Figure 12
Ann Jinhwan Kim, *Somewhere Over the Mountains*, Acrylic on Canvas, 60 x 72 Inches, 2024
Figure 13
Jeong Seon, Geumgangjeondo, Ink and color on paper, 1734 | Leeum Museum of Art Collection