

Becoming one with nature: Jihee Kim at Boisbuchet Summer Workshops 2023

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Wagner Kreusch's workshop "It Comes, It Goes Away - Floral ephemera" at Domaine de Boisbuchet, Lessac, France, 2023

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Photo: Andres Alejos

Sponsored by the Hanwha Foundation, Seoul-based artist Jihee Kim took part in Domaine de Boisbuchet's Summer Workshops in Lessac, France, in August. Throughout her two-week stay, Kim's social media transformed into a canvas depicting the ethereal beauty of a French rural landscape. These images strike a contrast to the bustling, dizzying cityscape filled with towering skyscrapers and busy crowds, transporting onlookers to a place where time is slowed for a much-needed moment of respite from the everyday urban grind.

Upon her return to Seoul, eazel extended an invitation to Jihee Kim to visit our office, situated in one of the city's prominent high-rise buildings, and share stories about her enriching time at Domaine de Boisbuchet. Kim eloquently described the two workshops she participated in, offering insights into the experiences and inspirations she had gleaned during her stay. The dreamlike natural surroundings and the tranquil lifestyle she encountered seemed like an unexpected bonus for her, and she detailed how they further enhanced her workshop days. As she spoke, it felt as though we were transported to the enchanting realm

of her midsummer nights amidst the picturesque landscapes of the French countryside. Join us along Jihee Kim's adventures in this exclusive interview by eazel.

eazel: Shall we start with how you came to be aware of Domaine de Boisbuchet and their Summer Workshops?

Jihee Kim (Jihee): I first heard about Domaine de Boisbuchet through Hanwha Foundation's Youngmin International Artist Residency Open Call. There were three programs listed, but in consideration of my commitment as a lecturer, the Boisbuchet Summer Workshops were more in line with my schedule. They offered weekly workshops and I was able to sign up for two consecutive ones that fit my summer vacation agenda. They had several workshops available, so when applying, I had to make my choice based on how they would aid in further developing my current practice. In the end, I decided to go with two options that would inspire my ongoing Garden series: one by graphic designer Tereza Ruller's studio, The Rodina, and the other by flower arrangement master, Wagner Kreusch.

eazel: What about these two workshops did you find interesting, and could you expand on how they would help develop your Garden series?

Jihee: In the process of preparing for last year's solo exhibition titled Sundays (Oct 19 - Nov 13, 2022) at ThisWeekendRoom, Seoul, I felt the need for change in my practice. I had mainly been addressing the body, or the idea of physicality, in my work, but for that exhibition, I paid more attention to the conceptualization of a "library" in relation to the Book Drawing series, as well as an unraveling of the notion of garden. At that point, it had been less than a year since I became interested in "garden" as a concept, so I focused on deepening this relatively new interest. Even if it were to be a subtle change that only I can recognize, I do think my work needs some alteration – whether through experimentation with materials or a change in form. It's a promise I wish to keep to myself.

I continued to think about the Garden series even after the exhibition had ended, and realized it might be refreshing to gain inspiration from a discipline other than fine art. In this sense, The Rodina's "Garden of Encounters" workshop, with the stunning Domaine de Boisbuchet as its backdrop, came to my attention at the perfect time. Wagner Kreusch's "It Comes, It Goes Away - Floral ephemera" workshop was based on the concept of flower arrangement, which I thought overlapped with fine art with the curatorial element involved in the process. While "Garden of Encounters" had the potential to help me with conceptual development, "Floral ephemera" could inspire me in terms of materiality.



Jihee Kim

Left: Leave Me Alone, 2022

Right: Fighting Back Tears, 2022

Gouache on Arches paper

76 x 57 cm (29.92 x 22.44 in.)

Courtesy of the artist and ThisWeekendRoom, Seoul

Photo: CJY STUDIO

eazel: Shall we talk a little more about your Garden series in detail?

Jihee: As I mentioned earlier, I've been working on the concept of body and physicality for a long time, thinking about how to induce an element of change. One day, plants caught my eye. There are two botanical gardens near my new studio, and I often visit them to go on walks whenever I need to take a moment to heal or rest. As a younger artist, I completely overlooked nature as a potential source of inspiration. How arrogant of me, right? But lately, going on walks in the botanical garden has me basking in comfort. Rather than keeping these outings as simple healing sessions, I began to bring this feeling with me into the studio. I would take pictures, and upon returning to the studio, I would start sketching. I wouldn't take photographs to make exact reproductions, but rather to remember the residual image of the plant, on which I would base my drawing. Some plants had vivid and intense colors, but those that I drew on memory alone would sometimes end up more atypical.

Eventually, plants began to feel like sentient beings. Beautiful but with deadly charm, making them feel a little dangerous at times. I thought it would be good to deliver these emotions through plants instead of the body, and that was how the Garden series was born. Sundays at ThisWeekendRoom was also prepared with the hope that these feelings would be conveyed to the audience. I wanted to portray more than the element of beauty when it came to plants, and make the audience feel tense, overwhelmed, and

excited as they faced an unfamiliar garden full of unknown flora.

eazel: Do you have any unresolved concerns regarding the Garden series?

Jihee: I once received feedback that my work looks like simple flower paintings. I didn't take it negatively – instead, it encouraged me to think a little deeper about the series. I am in constant contemplation of how I can better portray the sensations and emotions that I feel when I look at the plants in the Garden series. Because my work is not botanical art, although the paintings quite obviously look like plants, I want it to be more emotionally expressive, almost explosive.

I want to expand my exploration of the concept of garden as something that transcends physical space, where layers multiply and adventure abounds. I also want to connect the idea to my existing work around the body. Just like how the body is a mechanism that requires various organs to function, gardens need a dedicated workforce and abundant energy to maintain their visual beauty and their integrity as operative ecosystems.



Left: Jihee Kim installed a butterfly mobile at the tree she named "The Magical Moment," inspired by her dreamlike experience during The Rodina's workshop "Garden of Encounters" at Domaine de Boisbuchet, Lessac, France, 2023
Right: Another participant's installation for the same workshop

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Photo: Andres Alejos

eazel: In that sense, participating in this year's Boisbuchet Summer Workshops must have been a refreshing opportunity in many ways. We would love to hear details about what the workshops entailed. Shall we start with "Garden of Encounters" led by The Rodina during the first week?

Jiheer: The description for The Rodina's workshop was so impressive that I ended up doing further research on her. I was excited by her use of vivid colors and the workshop itself was rather performative, even though the main discipline was graphic design. All of this felt very contemporary and I knew that I wanted to learn from someone with such a worldview.

At Domaine de Boisbuchet, we spent the majority of the time outdoors. On the first day, we had a brainstorming session and had to draw the person sitting across from us. This was our first meeting and we didn't know each other very well. We then took turns to explain why we had drawn each other in certain ways. After that, there was another drawing activity in which we had to design a "badge of a spaceship captain". I remember trying to imagine that we were in a spaceship, flying past planets, and asking myself, "If there was a captain there, what kind of badge would they be wearing?" The catch was that we had to do it all in under one minute. It was truly an exercise of spontaneity, trying to pull out the creativity that people can only conjure instinctively when time is of consequence. It was exhilarating to make up narratives while improvising.

The main task of the workshop was to explore the grounds of Domaine de Boisbuchet with a map and find a spot that hadn't already been marked. We were to then name that place and design its signage. Domaine de Boisbuchet is massive, so it took a while to explore the area. I did end up finding a spot though. As I was circling a tree, a kaleidoscope of about 10 butterflies fluttered away like little fairies, surprised by my intrusion. They had vibrant emerald-colored wings that I had never seen on a butterfly before. I named this spot "The Magical Moment," based on how surreal the experience felt. I wanted to express the movement of the butterflies as they flew away, translating them into a fluttering mobile with paper as the main medium, which I then installed on the tree.

Through this workshop, I was able to further develop my methodology in employing different perspectives when looking at a subject matter. Away from the existing rules and framework and letting nature dictate my behavior, I was able to see glimpses of myself that were quite organic. I was pleasantly surprised by how naturally I began to exhibit new attitudes after leaving myself to nature, away from restrictive frameworks and rules of the city. Exchanging opinions and feedback with people from diverse backgrounds and disciplines was also inspiring.



Wagner Kreusch's workshop "It Comes, It Goes Away - Floral ephemera" at Domaine de Boisbuchet, Lessac, France, 2023

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Photo: Andres Alejos

Wagner Kreusch, with a background in Japanese Ikebana flower arrangement, embraces a minimalist and refined form reminiscent of a haiku. During the workshop, he introduced participants to the art of Ikebana, showing them how their creations could harmonize with space, akin to a painting.

eazel: The structure of the workshop sounds very freeing. The opportunity to mingle with nature on such a large scale doesn't come often, especially when you live in a city like Seoul. It must have been inspiring. If becoming one with nature was the main pursuit of The Rodina's workshop, what was Wagner Kreusch's "Floral ephemera" concerned with?

Jihee: The Rodina's "Garden of Encounter" was about experiencing nature in its raw form, whereas Wagner Kreusch's "Floral ephemera" in the second week was a more polished encounter with nature in conjunction with addressing the concept of flower arrangement.

Wagner Kreusch is a London-based Brazilian florist. I was surprised to find out that he had already arrived at the site the week before the scheduled workshop and had been mapping the spots that participants would use. He was exceptionally organized, and such preparation felt like a very humble gesture. People from around the world had applied to his workshop, with participants from Mexico, Spain, the United States, Singapore, Hong Kong, Italy, and Korea. There was another Korean person in the group and she had signed up for the workshop in March because she was desperate to come. I was able to understand the reasons behind such an obsession straight away when the workshop began. The curriculum was so detailed and Kreusch showed genuine passion throughout the week.

The workshop consisted of a group task and an individual task. For the group task, we were asked to choose one of the interesting locations in the estate and decorate the place with only one plant species. We drew straws to form the groups, and my team decided to go with mint for the decoration. We filled the space with the plant so people could smell the mint fragrance the moment they opened the doors.



Left: The group task that Jihee Kim and her team members worked on for Wagner Kreusch's workshop "It Comes, It Goes Away - Floral ephemera" at Domaine de Boisbuchet in Lessac, France, 2023

Right: The flower arrangement that Jihee Kim created for Wagner Kreusch's workshop "It Comes, It Goes Away - Floral ephemera" (detail) at Domaine de Boisbuchet in Lessac, France, 2023

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Photo: Andres Alejos

Jihee Kim's reuse of bottles at Domaine de Boisbuchet and the vase she crafted from wood scraps resonate with her Book Drawing series, evoking themes of recycling and rebirth. Initiated in 2011, the series involves the artist creating images on donated books that symbolize memories or various layers of imagery. In both her workshop projects and book drawing, Kim breathes new life into discarded materials and pages, highlighting the transformative power of art.

Taking inspiration from the way mint was kept in bottles at Domaine de Boisbuchet, I wrapped water bottles in paper to create a gradation, and then Kreusch suggested covering the opening of the bottles so only the roots of the plant would be visible. I was very impressed with this kind of sensibility, and thought that seeing the roots in flower vases rather than the top was a refreshing idea.

The personal task was to make our own vase. Before getting started on the actual vase, we were asked to decide on five different types of plants that would be used in our arrangement and present our reasons for those choices. Everyone seemed to have a different way of looking at plants, resulting in a blend of unique views and relationships with nature. For instance, an artist chose plants based on color, while a florist did

so based on structure, and for some, the presence or absence of a fruit in their arrangement was an important point to consider. It was nice to get to know so many different approaches.

For my vase, I collected scattered wood that had been broken into pieces – perhaps by rain or the wind – and made the vase using Kintsugi, a Japanese ceramic technique. I assembled the wood chunks a bit abstractly, and put a single flower in the vase. I actually wanted to add in several dried flowers, but changed my mind after Kreuzsch asked if more dead flowers were necessary when the vase was made up of weaving together what was already dead. So, I decided to go with only one live flower to make both the vase and the flower stand out on their own. I really liked the result. Through Kreuzsch's neat and concise Ikebana-style of flower arrangement and the workshop, I was able to learn how to change my perception and look at the vase in a formative way. I haven't thought about how I can connect the workshop experience to my ongoing practice yet, but I want to include these formative attempts and other inspiring ideas in my work.



The Rodina's workshop "Garden of Encounters" at Domaine de Boisbuchet, Lessac, France, 2023

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Photo: Andres Alejos

eazel: We are quite intrigued by the overall program at Domaine de Boisbuchet. Conducting workshops in a place so far removed from urban life, where nature thrives, seems exceptionally unique.

Jihee: Domaine de Boisbuchet was established by Alexander von Vegesack in 1986 when he acquired 150 hectares of land, creating a haven for young creatives to immerse themselves in nature, culture, and community building. People from diverse backgrounds and nationalities converge there. Some participants sign up with the purpose of developing ideas for their careers, sponsored by their companies, while others aim to attend programs led by renowned tutors. Additionally, artists like me go to seek inspiration stemming from a changed environment, with the goal of expanding and evolving our own practices.

What had me the most in awe was the concept of communal living. From meals to bedtime, everything was shared. As someone who grew up in a city, it was initially quite unfamiliar and challenging for me. However, Domaine de Boisbuchet has an incredibly well-structured program to help participants adapt to communal living, and a lot of the credit goes to the volunteers who operate the system. They managed everything from meal service, vehicle pickups, workshop assistance, to photography. Witnessing this large-scale project running smoothly and flexibly due to the efforts of volunteers left a strong impression on me. They had so much energy and took pride in what they were doing. Coming together under the banner of creativity, living in the moment, assisting each other, and fostering exchanges was a tremendous source of vitality.

eazel: The concept of community appears to be deeply ingrained in the program's ethos. Within such a relatively short time frame, you have to make numerous decisions at various junctures – whether to connect with others or opt for moments of solitude.

Jihee: Absolutely. Everyday, at around 8:30 a.m., we'd gather for breakfast, providing an opportunity to discuss our work, exchange greetings with participants from other workshops (typically, there are about two-to-three different workshops running concurrently each week), and share our ongoing experiences. We sat with different people at every meal, meeting individuals from diverse backgrounds and engaging in conversations about their unique journeys. Although these encounters may seem mundane, having to introduce myself each time was a bit nerve-wracking. Nonetheless, placing us in this routine situation did help cultivate a sense of community.

Only the essential rules were provided, and the rest of the experience was shaped by the community members themselves. It's a highly organized system that doesn't feel overly regimented. Domaine de Boisbuchet has accumulated wisdom over the years, and while this culture may be somewhat unfamiliar in Korea where I am from, it offers valuable learning opportunities.



Porkys during Wagner Kreuzsch's workshop "It Comes, It Goes Away - Floral ephemera" at Domaine de Boisbuchet, Lessac, France, 2023

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Photo: Andres Alejos

Wednesdays at Domaine de Boisbuchet exude a distinct charm. Each week, visitors and residents curate their attire to harmonize with the theme of the Wednesday party, the "Porkys". These gatherings serve as lively social hubs where workshop staff, tutors, and participants converge to relish the moment, forging connections as they mingle late into the night.

Community building stands as a cornerstone of the Domaine de Boisbuchet program. For instance, Jihee Kim recounted an anecdote about the considerate care and support she received from Pablo, the manager, when she fell ill during the workshop. Pablo diligently checked on her and provided assistance, helping her throughout her recovery. This commitment to fostering a sense of community and ensuring everyone's well-being to facilitate the smooth progress of the workshop owes much to the dedicated care and efforts of the volunteers at Domaine de Boisbuchet.

eazel: We are curious about the schedule and your daily routine from the beginning of the workshop week to the weekend. Could you give us some insights into your life at Domaine de Boisbuchet during that time?

Jihee: The first Monday of the week started with a comprehensive orientation about the program and the estate, accompanied by brainstorming sessions. On Tuesday, we kicked off the actual workshop based on what we had discussed. From Wednesday to Friday, the activities were in full swing, with participants working on their individual and group projects. Starting from Thursday, everyone got immersed in preparing for the Friday presentations, which marked the final day of the workshop. Once those were done, the workshop wrapped up, and on Saturday morning at 10 a.m., most participants bid farewell to the place. Since I enrolled in two workshops, I had the opportunity to experience Domaine de Boisbuchet over the weekend when it was quieter with fewer people around. It was a valuable time for taking leisurely walks, listening to music, catching up on sleep, and preparing for the upcoming week.

Oh, and on Wednesday evenings, there was a themed costume party, separate from the workshop, where we used materials available on-site to create themed outfits and enjoyed a night of socializing.

eazel: Were there any standout events or programs apart from the workshop?

Jihee: After dinner on Monday evenings, there were lecture sessions led by the workshop tutors. These were inclusive programs open to everyone, regardless of whether they had enrolled in specific classes. During these lectures, tutors would showcase their portfolios, a preview of sorts for the various workshops. These sessions typically started around 9:30 p.m. and would extend until 11 p.m. or even midnight.

In addition to the ones I attended, there was a workshop by Olimpia Zagnoli, an Italian illustrator, that left a lasting impression on me. Her overall portfolio was remarkable. When I spoke with participants who had registered for her workshop, they mentioned that she offered incredibly detailed feedback on their projects. If the opportunity arises, I would love to attend one of her workshops in the future to experience her teaching approach firsthand.



Wagner Kreuzsch's workshop "It Comes, It Goes Away - Floral ephemera" at Domaine de Boisbuchet, Lessac, France, 2023

© CIRECA, Domaine de Boisbuchet, Lessac, France

Photo: Andres Alejos

eazel: Upon reviewing the photos you shared in advance, it's evident that the environment around Domaine de Boisbuchet, which appears to preserve nature in its unadulterated state, is truly striking. It seems that nature is an integral part of the program. How did it feel to depart from the familiar city

lifestyle and immerse yourself in nature during your stay?

Jihee: One significant realization I had during my time there was how accustomed I had become to comfort. Domaine de Boisbuchet is located on an incredibly vast estate – even a simple trip to the kitchen for a quick drink during the workshop meant covering quite a distance. The nearest pharmacy is a staggering 9 km away! Adapting to these environmental inconveniences posed quite a bit of a challenge.

My perspective on hygiene also underwent a transformation. Since most workshops took place amidst nature, activities like sitting in the grass or walking barefoot initially felt unfamiliar to me. However, by embracing these instances of discomfort and adopting a different outlook on the situation, I found myself gradually adapting to the new environment. Despite being isolated from the outside world and presenting various challenges, the program awakened new sensations within me.

eazel: Do any memories of that place still linger in your mind?

Jihee: I remember the sun would rise around 5:30 or 6 a.m. On one particular day, I woke up early and opened the window around 7 a.m., only to be greeted by a thick, enveloping fog. It looked like something out of a painting by William Turner, with the fog so dense that it obscured everything in front of me. Even the château, which showcased Domaine de Boisbuchet's art and furniture collection and was clearly visible from the window during the day, was entirely shrouded that morning. That moment remains vivid in my memory.

The beautiful memories of European evening landscapes have also stayed with me. When it was time for dinner, a bell resonated across the estate, calling everyone to gather. The echo of that bell still lingers in my ears. The atmosphere was incredibly romantic, set against the backdrop of an exceptionally long sunset. We dined together, discussing our work and the day's experiences. It was a tranquil and enjoyable time that I cannot stop thinking back to.

eazel: Were there any other thoughts that crossed your mind during your stay, even if they weren't directly related to your art practice?

Jihee: While crafting butterfly mobiles for The Rodina's workshop, I couldn't help but imagine what it would be like to live in a place like this and create art that truly resonates with me. In Seoul, there's a constant undercurrent of tension, and I frequently find myself in competitive situations, sometimes involuntarily. The idea of living here, surrounded by nature, and drawing inspiration from this serene environment for my work, presents a stark contrast to my current life. Even as a short stay, I believe it has added a different and equally fulfilling dimension to my artistic journey.

While my primary focus during this stay was participating in the workshop, which left no room for thinking about my own projects, I would wholeheartedly seize the opportunity to dedicate time to creating my art in this natural setting should such an opportunity arise.

eazel: Were there any aspects of the workshop that left you feeling less than satisfied?

Jiheee: Well, I was somewhat disappointed that there weren't many artists in these workshops. I guess that's because this program is predominantly known in the realms of graphic design and architecture. However, during my stay, I had the pleasure of meeting another artist from Glasgow, and we engaged in numerous conversations while attending The Rodina's workshop together. Connecting with someone in the same field was enriching. I genuinely believe that this program has the potential to inspire individuals in fine arts as well. Particularly, if emerging artists who are just embarking on their creative journeys were to participate, it could profoundly reshape their perspectives on the world, undoubtedly expanding their artistic horizons.



Jiheee Kim
 Being Equal, 2022
 Gouache on pages of book donated in London
 20.3 x 28.5 cm (8.00 x 11.22 in.)
 Courtesy of the artist and ThisWeekendRoom, Seoul
 Photo: CJY Studio

eazel: Have you been working on any projects apart from the recent Garden series since the workshop? Could you give us any details about your upcoming plans?

Jihee: Since the Boisbuchet Summer Workshop experience, I've been even more invested in the idea of expanding my Book Drawing series. Currently, I am exploring the thought of presenting it as an open library, although that is still in the early stages of development. Rather than merely hanging the works in this series on exhibition walls, which feels like passive preservation, I want to make it available in a more engaging format – a library, which would foster greater interaction with viewers, if the idea ever comes to fruition.

eazel: Your idea about creating an open library seems to have an intriguing connection with your Garden series. Gardens, with their diverse elements, can, in a way, feel like a single book when everything comes together. From that perspective, one could even interpret gardens as open libraries.

Jihee: I find your interpretation incredibly intriguing. I hope that my Book Drawing series and the Garden series don't appear entirely disconnected from one another. While it's possible to turn gardening into a book-like experience, we can also explore the idea of a book about gardens or a book transforming into a garden. There are still many aspects to refine, but with the experiences and inspiration I gained from the workshops as a foundation, I'm excited to advance my current work.



Jihee Kim at The Rodina's workshop "Garden of Encounters" at Domaine de Boisbuchet, Lessac, France, 2023

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Photo: Andres Alejos

Jihee Kim, an artist based in Seoul, explores the nuanced connection between text and image, finding inspiration in literature to craft imagery that is both surprising and vibrant. Her current artistic exploration takes on the theme of gardens, encompassing both the physical and conceptual dimensions. With an extensive academic background, including an MA and BA in Western Paintings from Dongguk University in Seoul and an MFA in Fine Arts from Goldsmiths College, University of London, Kim enriched her oeuvre with her PhD degree from Ewha Womans University in Seoul. She has held solo exhibitions at numerous galleries and institutions, including ThisWeekendRoom, Seoul, Soorim Cultural Foundation Art Centre, Seoul, Gallery Soso, Paju, Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul and Songeun Art Cube, Seoul. Additionally, she has showcased her work at notable group exhibitions, such as Seoul Olympic Museum of Art (SOMA), Seoul, Tokyo Arts and Space Hongo, Tokyo, OCI Museum of Art, Seoul, Taipei Artist Village and Asia Art Centre Taipei I + II, to name a few.

Jihee Kim attended the Boisbuchet Summer Workshops by The Rodina and Wagner Kreuzsch at Domaine de Boisbuchet in Lessac, France in August 2023.

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