Doll Parts

2024. 09. 12. | Ann Binlot

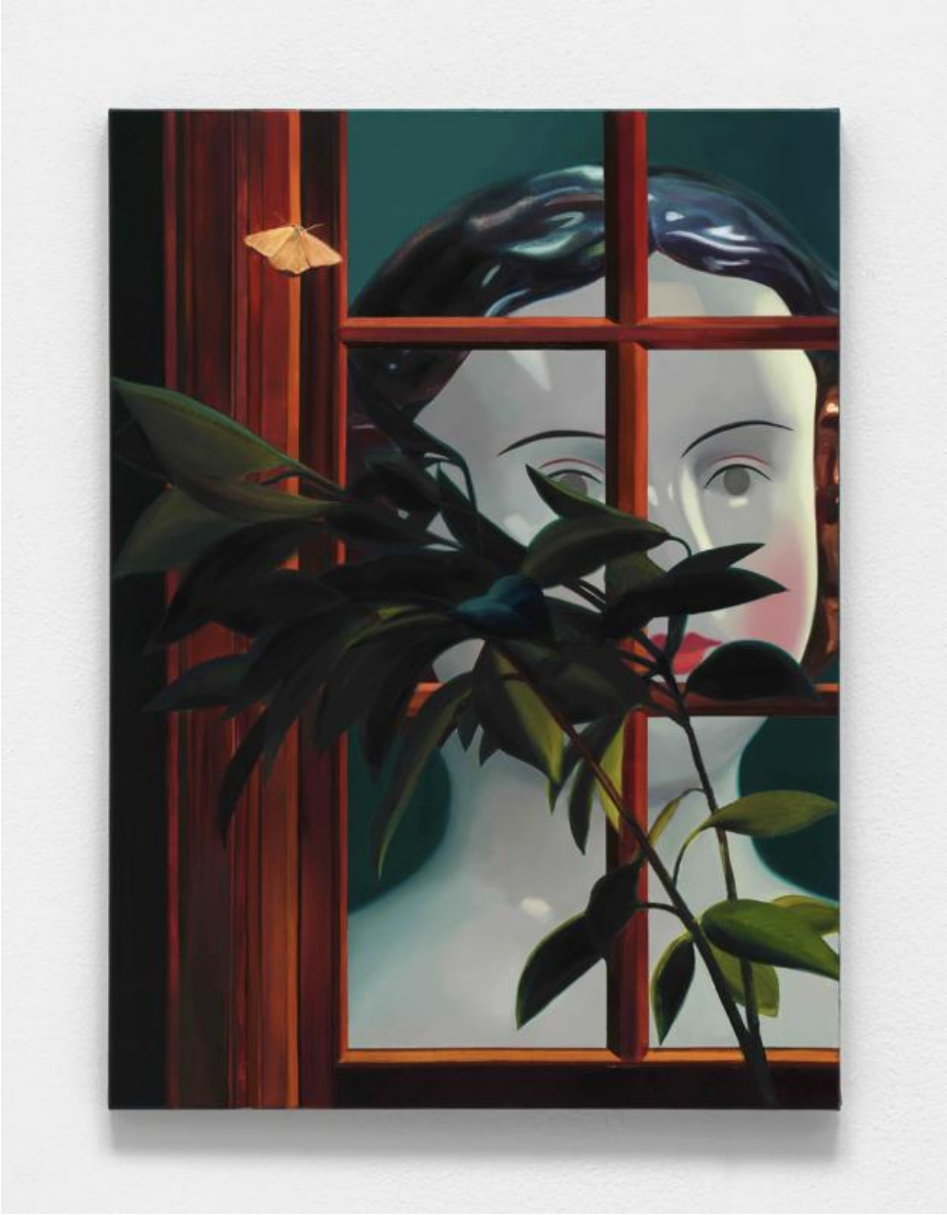
After an electrifying Seoul Art Week, a new crop of artists have emerged. For painter Jiwon Choi, whose detailed oil paintings of porcelain dolls took home a Kiaf Highlights Award, this is just the beginning.



Jiwon Choi, Toward Tranquility, 2024. Image courtesy of the artist and ThisWeekendRoom, Seoul.

Art fairs are all about discovery, and at Kiaf SEOUL which took place alongside Frieze Seoul at the COEX convention center from September 4 through 7, Jiwon Choi's detailed oil paintings of porcelain dolls placed in lifelike situations were one of the 22-year-old regional fair's highlights. Presented by Seoul gallery ThisWeekendRoom, the 28-year-old's paintings didn't only impress me, they also earned the attention of a panel of international art experts who awarded Choi a KRW 10 million ($7,470) grant as one of the three finalists of the second annual Kiaf Highlights Award—along with Cheolgyu Kang of Arario Gallery and Eunjin Kim of Keumsan Gallery.

Choi's surreal, photorealist paintings of glazed faced dolls peering through window panes or walking through doors have a human quality and resemble the models in the Spring 2024 Maison Margiela Haute Couture show. The Seoul-based artist is certainly one to watch. Following her big week, I asked Choi to discuss her affinity for ceramic dolls as subjects, her creative process, and how Seoul Art Week has transformed the Korean market.



Jiwon Choi, Pruning 2, 2024. Image courtesy of the artist and ThisWeekendRoom, Seoul.

Ann Binlot: What attracted you to painting ceramic dolls? Did you play with dolls as a child?

Jiwon Choi: I'm very interested in tactile surfaces that I want to touch, so I always have a habit of scanning the surface of an object. When the surface, color, and texture of an object catch my eye, I'm drawn to it, and the desire to translate it into a painting is most often triggered. My gaze is often drawn to objects that are smooth but devoid of life: porcelain dolls, taxidermied flora and fauna, cuckoo clocks shaped like empty birdhouses, or models and objects that mimic natural objects. Some of the objects are collected in real life, but mostly online.

AB: Describe your process: Where do you go for inspiration? What themes are you interested in? What are you trying to evoke in your work?

JC: When it comes to conceiving my work, it often seems to happen in an unconscious flow—I always keep my senses open and react to what I'm seeing. Usually, I sit down in my studio and make a drawing and write down words that come to mind, and that might be the title of my work later. Sometimes I think best when I'm taking the subway or bus, in which case I write a short phrase in my phone notepad or draw it on a small piece of paper in a hurry.
I don't collect porcelain dolls; I find them online, and then I rework them in Photoshop, such as increasing their proportions, and then I draw them. Also, the space I live in is very close to nature, and I often feel like an observer of the four seasons. Birds, wasps, and spiders are often seen around my window, and I often find them dead. I observe them and try to draw them as if they were taxidermied on the screen so that they can be resurrected in my work.



Jiwon Choi, Gateway, 2023. Image courtesy of the artist and ThisWeekendRoom, Seoul.

AB: How do you feel about being a finalist for the Kiaf Highlights Award?

JC: It's very gratifying. As I spend a lot of time alone in my studio, it's encouraging to be awarded. And it's nice to know that my work will be seen by more people.

AB: Did you see the Maison Margiela Haute Couture show where the models had shiny skin? What did you think of the effect?

JC: I'm not a big fan of fashion and beauty, but when Maison Margiela's show came out, I found out about it because people I knew sent me pictures. It was fun and interesting to see how different the outcomes were, even though we are all working with the same porcelain motif



Jiwon Choi, I See, 2024. Image courtesy of the artist and ThisWeekendRoom, Seoul.

AB: How has art week in Seoul transformed the art scene and art market in Korea? What about the Korea Art Festival? Do you feel there are more opportunities for a Korean artist?

JC: This is the third year that Kiaf and Frieze have been co-hosted, and the Korean art scene has been promoting various exhibitions and programs around this period. From an artist's point of view, it's great to have my work exposed to so many people, but sometimes I feel like it's overheated because all the events are centered around this time. I hope that this enthusiasm will become a continuous and stable base, not just a momentary one and that many good Korean artists will be showcased. I believe it will happen.

AB: What's next for you?

JC: I will have a solo exhibition in Berlin next year.

[출처] Family Style

(https://www.family.style/articles/jiwon-choi-seoul-art-week?utm_source)