# 8 Standout Shows to See during Frieze Seoul 2025

2025. 08. 29. | Monica Jae Yeon Moon



Hansaem Kim, Cut and Burn, 2025, ThisWeekendRoom

As Frieze Seoul returns for its fourth iteration in 2025, galleries are gearing up to present works in their spaces in the Korean capital. While the international art fair will again find its home at COEX amid the skyscrapers of Gangnam, the events that take place as part of Frieze and its Seoul partner KIAF will spread throughout the city. One can peek at the old Seoul in the serene Samcheong-dong; the glitz and glamor in Chungdam-dong and Hannam-dong; and the grassroots art scene in Eulji-ro, known for being a playground for artists.

Galleries across Seoul are highlighting a mix of international and local artists' works. Highlights include Antony Gormley's human-building sculptures at White Cube and Thaddaeus Ropac; the are also featured in Museum SAN, in a space specifically designed by Tadao Ando.

Here are Artsy's picks of the best shows to see during Frieze Seoul 2025.

## ■ Hansaem Kim | ThisWeekendRoom | Through Sep. 6



Hansaem Kim, YOU WIN , 2025, ThisWeekendRoom

Emerging Korean artist Hansaem Kim's solo show title "NOWON" is both a reference to the northeast district of Seoul and a play on the phrase "no one wins." The exhibition features interactive video art works that recreate pixelated, two-dimensional, platformer-style games (think Donkey Kong, Super Mario Bros) that visitors can play, as well as resin sculptures that combine in-game scenes and characters that will tug at the heartstrings of '90s kids.

Owing to this subject matter, major themes in Kim's work are religious iconographies, the occult, fantasy, and European myths. Digitally designed figures like a red devil, a gargoyle, and a "holy knight" are portrayed in acrylic painting and lacquer with an eroded effect, which accentuates the nostalgic feel. They are then transformed into frames that surround significant scenes of the game, such as moments of victory. In his works, Kim uses irony and humor to question the definition of winning in both games and in life.

## ■ Minjung Kim | Gallery Hyundai | Aug. 27–Oct. 19



Minjung Kim, Blue Mountain, 2022, Gallery Hyundai

For over 30 years, Korean master Minjung Kim has experimented with the traditions of calligraphy and ink painting, inspired by an Eastern philosophy that emphasizes the human connection with nature and meditation of the mind. In Saint Paul de Vence, France, where she is partly based, she "collaborates" (as she puts it) with her chosen media: hanji (traditional mulberry paper local to Korea) and fire. She carefully scorches pieces of paper on a candle, letting the flame determine their final shape. She then layers the pieces on a canvas to create her landscapes.

In this exhibition, Kim's recent series "Zip" will be on display for the first time in Korea. Zip refers to both the file name designated for digital compression and the Korean word for "house." Here, layers of scorched hanji are stacked on top of one another to create a herringbone pattern that resembles the roofs of houses in varying pale hues of blue, violet, and black. In other works, such as Encounter (2023) and Predestination (2024), Kim adopts pointillism by overlaying small circles of hanji tinted with ink.

## ■ Ann Veronica Janssens | Esther Schipper | Sep. 2–Oct. 25



Ann Veronica Janssens, 32 Green Yellow Blocks (805/3), 2025, Esther Schipper



Ann Veronica Janssens 75 Lilas Blocks (608/3), 2025. Photo © Andrea Rossetti. Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul

When Ann Veronica Janssens represented Belgium at the Venice Biennale in 1999, she filled the room with fog, disorienting the viewers and leaving only trails of other visitors' silhouettes for them to see. Since the late 1970s, the Belgium-based British artist has been working with light and materials such as glass, mirrors, aluminum, and artificial fog to play with optical phenomena—the ways we perceive the interactions between light and matter.

In this exhibition, dryly titled "September in Seoul," minimalist glass sculptures, dark green, green-yellow, pink, and lilac rectangle bricks come together to create another rectangular prism that resembles a jelly-like, luminescent Rubik's cube. For these sculptures, Janssens used optical glass, which is more transparent than regular glass, so it visibly catches the light for longer periods, creating an effect that can be described as "drinking the light." This show continues her extensive work using this material, which she incorporated into her monochrome glass monoliths that replaced the stained-glass windows of Chapelle Saint-Vincent de Grignan in the Provence region of France.

## ■ Woo Hannah | G Gallery | Through Sep. 27



Woo Hannah, Tinkerbell Tooth, 2025, G Gallery



Woo Hannah, Things That Always Come at Once, 2025, G Gallery

When Woo Hannnah won the 2023 Frieze Seoul Artist Award commission, the Seoul-based sculptor explored aging women's bodies with voluminous draped fabrics. Two years after the commission and a show at Frieze No.9 Cork Street in London, she strips the meat down to the bone in a new series of sculptures featured in this exhibition titled "POOMSAE." The biggest work in the show is a towering, 3.8-meter, spine-like pillar sprouting from the floor. Alongside it, she presents a series of colorful yet bizarre

abstract sculptures. Woo cleverly juxtaposes stuffing and fabric with rigid materials like 3D-printed plastic and steel to evoke a contrasting vision of typically feminine subjects.

The result is like something out of a twisted fairytale. In Tinkerbell Tooth (2025), the pulled-out "tooth," with its root visible, stands out more prominently than the helpful fairy, who is only recognizable by the glittery blue lacquer paint and a torn piece of fabric from her dress. And in Chocho (2025), a bunny-like figure stares at the void with its red, bulging eyes, skeletal ears, and tail sprouting out of its small body.

## ■ Suh Yongsun | PIBI Gallery | Through Sep. 13



Suh Yongsun, 뉴욕 지하철, 2023-2025, PIBI Gallery

In a subway carriage, travelers furrow their eyebrows looking into their phones while others hunch over themselves to keep warm. In another carriage, someone pleads for sympathy as a sparse crowd casts their eyes away into the void or stares into their phones. "City and People," on view at Seoul's PIBI Gallery, presents works by Korean painter and sculptor Suh Yongsun that he recently created in New York, featuring the metropolis's streets and subways.

Suh's interest in urban life began in the 1980s, when he focused on depicting Seoulites and their lives in the city in the most realistic way possible. This approach took a turn when he travelled to New York in 1992, after which his paintings became more expressive, using bold shades of red and blue. Regardless of ethnicity or gender, the city dwellers have nondescript red faces with wide eyes, as well as prominent noses and cheekbones. With their coarse lines, these raw features are reminiscent of Jean-Michel Basquiat's works, as well as the traditional Korean tal masks. The somber atmosphere that surrounds these figures evokes the cold and quiet nights of Edward Hopper.

## ■ Antony Gormley | Thaddaeus Ropac | Sep. 2–Nov. 8

## ■ Antony Gormley | White Cube | Sep. 2–Nov. 8



Antony Gormley, OPEN DAZE, 2024. © Antony Gormley. Photo by Stephen White & Co. Courtesy of Thaddaeus Ropac.

In his first solo presentation in Seoul, a two-part show at White Cube and Thaddaeus Ropac, British sculptor Antony Gormley will show works from several ongoing series. As with much of his practice, these works interrogate the relationship between humankind and the urban environment. “Does the urban landscape free us or constrain us?” he asks, and “What toll does it have on our body?” As the exhibition title “Inextricable” suggests, Gormley’s work argues that we are intimately entwined with the built world.

In the ongoing series presented at White Cube—from “Bunker” (2022–present) to “Beamer” (2014–present)—stacks of steel, concrete, and iron cubes take the shapes of faceless humans, variously standing, leaning, sitting, and crouching. Elsewhere, in EARTH (2024), part of the “Strapworks” (2018–present) series presented at Thaddaeus Ropac, amber steel frames appear like buildings clumped together in an aerial shot.

If one can afford the time to travel two hours outside of Seoul during the busy fair week, the exhibition “Ground” is also on view at Wonju’s Museum SAN. Seven of Gormley’s “Blockworks” sculptures, in the form of silhouetted human figures, are situated under a 25-meter-wide dome created by Japanese architect Tadao Ando. It opened in June, and it’s the first collaboration between the pair.

## ■ Izumi Kato | Perrotin | Through Oct. 25



Izumi Kato, Untitiled, 2025, Perrotin

There are figures with heads that seem out of proportion. Expressionless eyes appear and disappear, with their limbs tapering off into the water. Japanese painter and sculptor Izumi Kato’s dreamlike—at times nightmarish—paintings of faces, with distinct lines around the nose and the mouth, evoke ancient masks or sculptures, while their smooth heads recall extraterrestrial beings. Kato, who grew up in the Shimane prefecture in Japan, is inspired by the region’s legacy of animism, a belief that all things have souls or spiritual essences. He uses ghosts and spirits as motifs to create an eerie and sometimes disturbing feel in his paintings.

The artist, who has worked with major blue-chip gallery Perrotin since 2014, applies paint on canvas with his fingers instead of a brush. He often stitches together two or three different canvases, creating a harsh line separating the body parts in his strange paintings. For his exhibition with Perrotin during Frieze Seoul 2025, Kato will show mainly new works created after 2020, when he revived his childhood passion for assembling plastic model toys, resulting in works like Untitled (2024), a life-size wooden figure with three plastic model planes along the front of its body.

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