

굵은 선의 맥 위에
각 도시의 풍경을
세밀하게 그려내는
박지은 작가



Artist Jieun Park The Night of Cities Immersed in Ink

On white Korean (*hanji*) paper, bold and dynamic lines are drawn with black ink. Over these, fine brushstrokes delicately depict the landscapes of various cities once more.

The moment these opposing elements coexist, the night of the city is complete.

The artist Park Ji-eun, who works with ink and urban landscapes, is someone who deeply loves to travel. She channels the contrasting emotions she experiences during her travels into her artwork, expressing them through contrasts like East and West, boldness and intricacy, fullness and emptiness, distortion and balance.

You recently moved your studio, right? The view from the window is the first thing that catches the eye.

Yes, I moved here in April. Over the past three years, I've been working non-stop, and it felt like I lost a sense of balance both physically and mentally. Since I'm quite sensitive to my surroundings, I wanted to find that balance again by changing my environment. When I first visited this space, I liked that it had a lot of trees around it and there's a small playground to the left. The innocent laughter of children gives me energy. My previous studio was also near an elementary school, and whenever I felt drained from work, the sound of children's laughter seemed to give me something intangible yet uplifting.

Since the beginning of your career, you've been intricately drawing cityscapes over bold ink strokes. Could you tell us more about your creative process?

It all started with the contrasting emotions I feel during my travels, like loneliness and wonder. I try to capture these feelings in my work by incorporating elements such as East and West, boldness and delicacy, fullness and emptiness, and distortion and balance. I mainly depict cityscapes of places I've enjoyed during my travels, though because of the ink, they often resemble nighttime scenes.



I start by applying ink to Korean paper (*hanji*) with a brush or ladle, letting it dry for several days. Afterward, I sketch the cityscape and use acrylics to depict the scene, finishing with gold leaf. Each piece usually takes about a week to ten days to complete. I didn't originally use gold leaf, but I eventually wanted to capture the lingering impressions of my travels. The gold leaf became a way for me to convey that lingering feeling at the final stage of the work.

Your work features the delicate depiction of cityscapes over bold ink strokes, creating a strong contrast, like lights illuminating the night when everything else is asleep. The title of your previous exhibition, 'The White Way', also reflects that idea—symbolizing brightness in the dark, like the sun shining even at night.

Yes, when I walk alone during my travels, especially at night, I tend to think a lot. As a traveller, I feel a mix of emotions—on one hand, I enjoy being free of any labels in a foreign city, but on the other hand, I sometimes feel a sense of isolation. There's a kind of peace in that ambiguity, and I try to focus on that emotion and translate it into my work, through the materials, colours, and process I use. I apply ink quickly and boldly, but when drawing the cityscape, I work slowly, calmly, and delicately. There's also the contrast between the white Korean paper and the black ink. Through this process, I seek to maintain the sense of peace I find in the opposing emotions I experience during my travels. It's almost meditative, and working this way brings me a deep sense of calm. When I'm sitting and creating, I often lose track of time because I feel so at peace.

In your opinion, which city has the most beautiful nightscape?

Just before the pandemic, I travelled to Cuba for three weeks. In Viñales, a rural area, I basked in the warmth of the sun, surrounded by lush green nature and red soil. Since electricity is scarce in Cuba, the nights were pitch-black, but when I looked up at the sky, it was filled with stars—so many that the dark sky almost appeared white. That star-filled sky left a lasting impression on me, and I've never forgotten it. I also have to mention Seoul. The ridgelines of the mountains are visible from almost anywhere in the city, and they appear so graceful and distinctly Eastern. It's a view you can't find in other cities, and I find those mountain lines incredibly beautiful.

"It all started with the contrasting emotions I feel during my travels, like loneliness and wonder."



Artist Park Ji-eun hopes that her works can serve as a medium for people to connect with and share their own stories.

Do you have any playlists, books, or films you'd recommend for nighttime?

For a movie, I'd suggest Wong Kar Wai's *Chungking Express*. As for music, I'd recommend Yoo Hee-yeol's "Summer Day." It has that perfect blend of humidity and coolness that pairs well with a sticky yet refreshing summer night.

You've participated in many international exhibitions and art fairs. Why do you think your work resonates so strongly with people from all over the world?

I think people are drawn to the Eastern charm of the harmony between hanji (Korean paper) and ink. Additionally, everyone has a city they love or a place that holds special meaning for them. My work might evoke those emotions and memories, allowing them to reconnect with those cherished experiences.

Is there a particular message you want to convey through your work?

It's similar to what I just mentioned. Everyone has a city they love or fondly remember, and some people share their own memories when they see my work. It's almost as if they're feeling what I felt at that moment. I hope that through my art, we can all connect and share those special emotions that only certain cities can evoke.

In 2018, you collaborated with the whisky brand Ballantine's. Are there any other fields or brands you'd like to collaborate with in the future?

I do receive collaboration proposals from time to time, but I specifically wanted to work with Ballantine's. At the time, I was focused on creating works depicting Seoul, but surprisingly, people didn't respond as well to those pieces as I expected. I thought that by collaborating, I could express Seoul better. If I were to collaborate again, I'd still want to focus on Seoul. As for other fields, I haven't decided yet.

What are your dreams or ultimate goals as an artist?

When I was younger, I had big dreams, but now I just want to create peacefully, with a calm heart, and continue working even when I'm old—when I've become a grandmother. That's really all I want. My focus has shifted inward. I used to be eager to promote my work internationally at a rapid pace, but these days, I'm less concerned about that. Through my work, I find comfort and my own pace.

Can you share what's next for you?

In August, I'll be having a solo exhibition at Art SoHyang in Busan. The title hasn't been decided yet. After that, I plan to go on a long trip—around three to four months. I have a few key destinations in mind. After the trip, I'll start preparing for an exhibition with REDSEA Gallery Singapore.

Some people seem to find their creative energy flow more at night. When do you usually work?

I also tend to focus better at night. Working at night, when everyone else is asleep, feels different from working during the day. When I was younger, I used to pull all-nighters, but now I don't quite have the stamina for that anymore (*laughs*). These days, I try to wake up early and fill my day with work from morning until night. I also make time for yoga in between.

Was there a particular night that left a lasting impression on you? In your twenties, it's easy to be weighed down by worries.

There was a time when I was overwhelmed with uncertainty about the future, so I took a long solo trip for the first time. In Prague, I just kept walking through the night. Eventually, the noisy night grew quiet, and it felt like I was in the vastness of space. The silence, combined with the softly glowing lights of the buildings, felt as if the city was quietly listening to my story. It was as though the city was comforting me. It happened to be December 31, just as I was turning 22. That night, I somehow gained the confidence and courage to wander around, greet strangers with New Year's wishes, and even share a meal with them. Before that, I was timid and afraid of trying things on my own, but that night felt like a turning point for me.



A little ink - Seoul, 2022