

# Si On: A Peace Brimming with Malice

19 January – 4 March 2023

Opening reception | Thursday 19 January 6-8pm



*My dog barks. Snow falls. Wind blows. The moon rises. I count stars. The sun rises.  
In the morning, I change water in a vase once and for all. It stinks from stem rot.  
However, the flower is still beautiful and smells sweet.  
I will probably cut the rotting stems out and look away as long as I can.  
I pretend not to notice the stinking reality until I dump all of it, and finally I buy flowers again to embrace the peace given to me. I hide behind it and stare. I keep silent. Then, I admire.  
What a peace brimming with malice.*

Edel Assanti is pleased to present *Si On: A Peace Brimming with Malice*, the artist's first solo show with the gallery and first in London since her acclaimed 2019 exhibition at Parasol Unit.

Si On's practice takes forms ranging from hallucinant monumental painting to hulking sculptures melted with a soldering iron, alongside overbearing installations formed from swathes of second-hand fabric and clothing. Si On's characters exist in vibrantly hypnotic landscapes that serve to mirror their inhabitants' transcendent states. Despite the otherworldly aesthetic of her work, Si On's subjects are universal human emotions, often focusing on extreme psychological states and their underlying triggers:

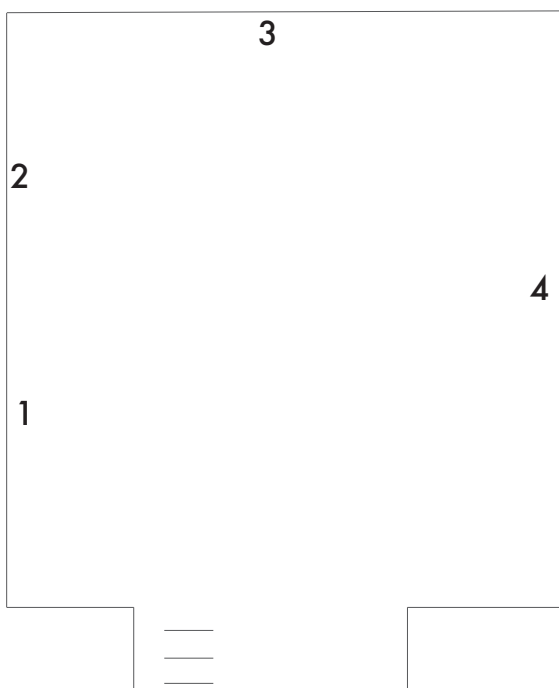
personal trauma, sociocultural tension, political unrest, and in her own words, "the sadness and pain caused by the inscrutability, absurdity and contradictions that human beings face in their lifetimes."

Inspired by her own experiences of Korean shamanism, her work accesses deep subconscious states to purge waves of personal and collective fear, pain, grief and rage. The four new paintings in *A Peace Brimming with Malice* can be considered reticent self-portraits in which the boundary between the individual and her surrounding plant ecology is dissolved. Si On draws on the ritualised celebration of the Day of the Dead - flowers play an integral role in these traditions and are offered to ancestors as a welcome back to Earth. The artist incorporates species tied to this day: pink cockscomb and chrysanthemum are augmented with lilies and orchids more widely associated with the afterlife. Within the riot of colours, the layering of symbols of morbidity are warning and wisdom.

Si On's protagonists explore this metaphor to reflect on her own personal circumstances and resources. Whilst recent bodies of work have dealt with specific national histories and autobiographical trauma, *A Peace Brimming with Malice* relays Si On's relatable sense of frustration with the moral hypocrisy of participating in systems of production reliant on exploitation, in an increasingly interconnected

yet socially divided world. Self-critical of the abundance she enjoys, her work points to the ethical inconsistencies and ease at which she overlooks the disconnect between labour, production, product and consumer.

Si On (b.1979, South Korea) received her BA from Mokwon University in South Korea and received her MA and Ph.D. at Kyoto City University of Arts' Graduate School of Arts. In 2023, Si On will exhibit at James Fuentes Gallery, New York, USA; T293, Rome, Italy and Galeria Labirynt, Lublin, Poland. Recent solo exhibitions include Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan (2020); Parasol Unit, London, UK (2019); Pioneer Works, New York (2015); HAPS, Kyoto, Japan (2013); Kyoto Art Center, Japan (2011). Si On has participated in group exhibitions in institutions including BWA Wroclaw Galleries of Contemporary Art, Wroclaw, Poland (2019); Museum of Contemporary Art / Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej, Warsaw, Poland (2018); Carnegie Art Museum, Pittsburgh, USA, (2016); Brooklyn Museum, New York (2015); Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, USA (2012) and Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan (2010). Her work is in the permanent collections of Brooklyn Museum, NY; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Kyoto City University of Arts, Kyoto; Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, Kyoto; Kyoto Bank, Kyoto; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; Museum of Contemporary Art, Krakow and Takahashi Collection, Japan. Si On lives and works in Krakow, Poland.



1. *The Gazer*, 2022, oil and spray paint on canvas, 220 x 170 cm, 86 5/8 x 66 7/8 in.
2. *Eyewitness*, 2022, oil and spray paint on canvas, 180 x 168 cm, 70 7/8 x 66 1/8 in.
3. *The Observer*, 2022, oil and spray paint on canvas, 230 x 185 cm, 90 1/2 x 72 7/8 in.
4. *The Watcher*, 2022, oil and spray paint on canvas, 220 x 170 cm, 86 5/8 x 66 7/8 in.