

# Si On: Soft Armour, Heavy Bones

28 March - 17 May 2025

Opening reception | Thursday 27 March, 6-8pm



Si On, *Master of Puppets*, 2025. Edel Assanti, London, UK, 2025 © Si On. Courtesy the artist and Edel Assanti. Photo by Tom Carter.

Edel Assanti is pleased to present *Soft Armour, Heavy Bones*, Si On's second exhibition at the gallery. Comprising recent paintings and sculptures, the show follows the artist's acclaimed 2024 solo exhibition, *There Is Neither The Beginning Nor An End*, at GGM2 in Poland.

Si On's works are developed through a deeply intuitive practice of daily creation, working in a vibrant palette across painting, sculpture and installation. Works are built up in a process of repetitive material layering, using traditional techniques alongside the incorporation of all manner of objects and mediums. This practice is emblematic of Si On's belief in art as a space in which superficial distraction must be peeled away to allow unseen dynamics to come into focus.

Si On's hallucinant world is characterised by methodically balanced forces: innocence invaded by darkness; decay held at bay by beauty; brutality countered by primitive justice; and pain overcome by humour. Through this tense equilibrium, Si On visualises the way in which, in her own words, "Life experiences shape our identities, as we carry memories, hopes, scars, and traumas that accumulate over time, revealing the complex aspects of our humanity."

*Soft Armour, Heavy Bones* unfolds across three rooms, each populated by defiant female protagonists roaming

hypnotically swirling landscapes. An ecosystem of animated objects and natural forces is instilled with a morally unstable character, at times nourishing Si On's antiheroines, elsewhere threatening to ingest them altogether, decentring her human subjects: "I believe that every form — human, animal, or even inanimate objects like stones and dust — possesses spirit and value. I honour even the smallest elements of the world, recognising our interconnectedness."

The first room introduces a bold, dysmorphic avatar across two large-scale paintings. Si On's language of haunting symbolism announces itself through seamlessly blended pop culture, spiritual and autobiographical references. Whilst the figures possess a jaded innocence, their exaggerated, battle-worn forms bear the imprints of past struggles and the embodied sexual power dynamics. The figure *Unstoppable* (2024) is accompanied by a three-headed bird, an all-seeing guide from Korean shamanism, serving as a reminder that our reality is shaped by our past, present and future selves. Her armour, decorated with delicate stickers and flowers, serves as both a shield and emblem of self-determination in navigating the tension between external forces and personal reclamation.

In the second room of the exhibition, the figure's symbolic journey is mirrored in *Master of Puppets* (2025), a striking allegory examining the interplay between power, control

and latent resistance. Central to the composition are two figures: a “master”, adorned with costume medals – markers of false authority – and an enchained tiger, whose caricatured wild nature signals the ease with which the oppressed are dehumanised. The beast’s jaws barely conceal a girl with burning eyes, embodying of the spirit of rebellion concealed beneath layers of subjugation. The underlying sense of suspense deepens in *Forest Knows* (2021), a painting where vibrant bursts of colour reveal uncanny entities lurking beneath a lush curtain of pine trees, dissolving the boundary between the individual and surrounding environment.

Alongside the paintings, several new sculptures echo themes of mortality and transcendence. A towering bronze and mixed-media candelabra, entitled *40 Years Old* (2018–2021), reflects on autobiographical concerns of the development of identity that accompanies aging. Metal plungers, tools for clearing blockages, are used as pedestals for personal accessories and mineral stones, symbolising the passage of time, endurance and renewal.

*Soft Armour, Heavy Bones* offers a deeply personal meditation on the discovery of selfhood within the context of the many contradictions that universally define the human experience: “Each piece serves as a reminder of our fragile yet resilient nature, highlighting that we are constantly evolving, often in conflict with ourselves, yet still holding onto hope. It’s a celebration of what makes us human, in all our fractured, imperfect strength.”

## Notes to Editors

### About Si On

Si On (b.1979, South Korea) currently lives and works in Krakow, Poland, after having lived in Japan and New York City. She received her BA from Mokwon University in South Korea and her MA and Ph.D. at Kyoto City University of Arts’ Graduate School of Arts. Recent solo exhibitions include GGM2, Gdańsk, Poland (2025); Mazowieckie Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej, Radom, Poland (2025); T293, Rome, Italy (2024); James Fuentes Gallery, New York, USA (2023); 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). Recent institutional group exhibitions include MART, Rovereto, Italy (2024); Conservatorio di Musica Benedetto Marcello, Venice, Italy (2022); BWA Wrocław Galleries of Contemporary Art, Wrocław, Poland (2019); Museum of Contemporary Art / Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej, Warsaw, Poland (2018); Carnegie Art Museum, Pittsburgh, USA (2016); Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, USA (2012) and Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan (2010). Si On’s 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.

### About Edel Assanti

Edel Assanti was founded in 2010 by Jeremy Epstein and Charlie Fellowes. Having been located in London’s Firovia since 2014, in 2022 we opened our 4,000 square foot gallery in a renovated Grade II listed building on Little Titchfield Street.

Edel Assanti works with international artists whose practices engage with the complex realities of the moment in which they live. The gallery stages 4-5 ambitious, narrative driven exhibitions per year, tending towards interdisciplinary, research-led work. Biannual, expansive group exhibitions provide a platform to bring together non-represented artists in explorations of emerging themes of artistic interest.

Our premises play host to a dynamic events programme in parallel to gallery exhibitions, encompassing performance, talks and live music. The gallery’s digital presence includes a series of short films and artist interviews published to accompany exhibitions.

In 2021 Edel Assanti founded London Gallery Weekend (LGW), an annual celebration of London’s diverse gallery community bringing together 130 contemporary commercial galleries. Now in its fifth year, Edel Assanti remains at LGW’s helm. Chief amongst LGW’s initiatives is a wide-ranging partnership with Art Fund, enhancing the relationship between London’s galleries and regional museums across the UK.

We are proud to support several public arts institutions each year, and are currently part of Modern Art Oxford’s Director’s Circle and Gold Patrons of the Royal Academy of Arts. Edel Assanti is a Gallery Circle member of UK charity Hospital Rooms, and a member of the Society of London Art Dealers.

### Contact Us

For further press information and high-res images please contact: [press@edelassanti.com](mailto:press@edelassanti.com)

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