

Thaddaeus Ropac

Lee Bul

South Korean

b. 1964

With a sensibility that is closely aligned with science fiction, Lee Bul's work investigates the ways that modern art, architecture and technology have shaped both our real and imagined worlds. The artist draws inspiration from diverse sources – including film, literature and modern architecture, as well as European and South Korean history – to create hybrid forms that convey a fantastical and often disconcerting dystopian vision. Made from deliberately contradictory materials that range from organic silk and mother of pearl to manufactured fibreglass and silicone, her work explores the utopian potentials but also the darker undercurrents of an increasingly technological culture.

Born in 1964 to dissident parents under the military dictatorship of Park Chung-Hee in South Korea, Lee Bul began her career with public performances that positioned her own body as both subject and object of the work. These performances channelled the personal and emotional impact of political persecution and restrictive gender roles into visual form. Composed of sexualised and anatomically amorphous robotic figures, her *Cyborg* series (1997–2011) encapsulates the desires and anxieties surrounding genetic engineering, cloning and cosmetic surgery. At the core of her more recent immersive installations is an investigation of landscape, which for the artist includes the intimate topography of the body, idealised or fictional settings and the physical world that surrounds us.

Lee Bul lives and works in Seoul, South Korea. Her 1997 installation *Majestic Splendor* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York used rotting fish encrusted in sequins as a commentary on the ephemeral nature of beauty and the powerlessness of women, causing a furore and establishing her international reputation as an emerging artist. In 1999, she was selected by curator Harald Szeemann to participate in the International Pavilion at the 48th Venice Biennale, where her work was also shown in the Korean Pavilion. She has had solo exhibitions at the New Museum, New York (2002); Le Consortium Contemporary Art Center, Dijon (2002); Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2004); Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris (2007); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012); Musée d'Art Moderne Grand Duc Jean, Luxembourg (2013); National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul (2014); and Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (2014). She has also been the subject of multiple exhibitions at Art Sonje, Seoul in 1998, 2012 and 2016. Curated by Stephanie Rosenthal, the retrospective *Lee Bul: Crashing* opened at the Hayward Gallery, London and travelled to the Gropius Bau, Berlin in 2018–19, followed by *Utopia Saved* at the Manege Central Exhibition Hall, St. Petersburg in 2020. Lee Bul received the Ho-Am Prize for The Arts in 2019, awarded to people of Korean heritage who have contributed to the enrichment of culture and arts for humankind.

Solo Exhibitions

2020

Utopia Saved, Manege Central Exhibition Hall, St. Petersburg, Russia

2019

Interlude: Perdu, Lehmann Maupin, New York, NY, USA

City of the Sun, SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA, USA

2018

Lee Bul: Crashing, Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, London, UK; Gropius Bau, Berlin, Germany

2017

After Bruno Taut, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London, UK

Lee Bul, Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York, NY, USA

2016

Cockatoo Island, Sydney Harbour, 20th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

Lee Bul, Artsonje Center, Seoul, South Korea

2015

Musée d'art moderne de Saint-Étienne, Saint-Étienne, France
PKM Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló, Castellón de la Plana, Spain
Aubade III, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France
Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
Chambers of Wonder, Swarovski Crystal Worlds, Kristallwelten Wattens, Innsbruck, Austria

2014

Lee Bul, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK
MMCA HYUNDAI MOTOR SERIES 2014: LEE BUL, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, South Korea

2013

Pure Invisible Sun, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris, France
Mudam-Musée d'art moderne, Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg
Inaugural Hong Kong Exhibition, Lehmann Maupin Gallery, Hong Kong

2012

From me, belongs to you only, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
Artsonje Center, Seoul, South Korea

2010

Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York, NY, USA

2009

Paintings and Drawings, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris, France

2008

Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York, NY, USA

2007

Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France
Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Salzburg, Austria
PKM Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
Domus Artium 02, Salamanca, Spain

2005

SCAI the Bathhouse, Tokyo, Japan
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand

2004

Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
PKM Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
Deitch Projects, New York, NY, USA

2003

Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA, USA
Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, UK
Ohara Museum of Art, Kurashiki, Japan
Japan Foundation, Tokyo, Japan
Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

2002

The Power Plant, Toronto, Canada
Musée d'Art Contemporain de Marseille, Marseille, France
Jean Paul Slusser Gallery, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA
Life Forever, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY, USA
Le Consortium centre d'art contemporain, Dijon, France

PKM Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
Rodin Gallery, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea
Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA, USA

2001

Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
SCAI the Bathhouse, Tokyo, Japan
San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA, USA
BAWAG Foundation, Vienna, Austria

2000

Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan
Kukje Gallery, Seoul, South Korea

1999

Korean Pavilion, 48th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy
Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, Switzerland

1998

Artsonje Center, Seoul, South Korea

1997

Projects, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, USA

1994

Unforgiven, A Space, Toronto, Canada

1988

IL Gallery, Seoul, South Korea

Group Exhibitions

2020

MMCA Permanent Collection 2020+, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, South Korea
Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924 - Today, CaixaForum Barcelona, Barcelona; CaixaForum Madrid, Madrid, Spain
DMZ Project, Korean Culture Centre, Paris, France

2019

May You Live in Interesting Times, cur. Ralph Rugoff, 58th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy
The Nature Rules - Dreaming of Earth Project, directed by Jae-Eun Choi, Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo
Desire in Art from the 20th Century to the Digital Age, cur. Rachel Thomas & Yuko Hasegawa, IMMA, Dublin, Ireland
Cosmologic Arrows, Bonnier Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden
Phantom Plane, Cyberpunk in the Year of the Future, Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong
Negotiating Boundaries, Korean Culture Centre, London, UK
Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924 - Today, Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany
Utopian Imagination, Ford Foundation, New York, NY, USA
PRISM FANTASY: New Ways to View Light, Paradise Art Space, Incheon, South Korea
APMA CHAPTER ONE, Amorepacific Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea

2018

Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale 2018, Echigo-Tsumari, Japan

2015

Space Age, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Pantin, France

Storylines: Contemporary Art at the Guggenheim, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, USA
Esprit Dior – Miss Dior, Beijing, China
Esprit Dior Seoul, Dongdaemun Design Plaza & Park, Seoul, South Korea
Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale 2015, Echigo-Tsumari, Japan
SÉOUL, VITE, VITE!, Renaissance, Le Tri Postal, Lille, France

2012

Bios – Konzepte des Lebens in der zeitgenössischen Skulptur, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin, Germany
Invisible Cities, Mass MoCA | Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, MA, USA
Lehmann Maupin at Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore
Nostalgia is an Extended Feedback, Nam June Paik Art Center, Yongin, South Korea

2011

Countdown, cur. Sungwon Kim, Culture Station Seoul 284, Seoul, South Korea
Space Study, PLATEAU (formerly Rodin Gallery), Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea
Contemporary Craft, Now & Here, cur. Chung Joonmo, Cheongju International Craft Biennale 2011, Cheongju, South Korea

2010

Transformation, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan
Fantasmagoria, le monde mythique, les Abbatoirs, Toulouse, France
New Décor, Hayward Gallery, London, UK
Morality, Act VI: Remember Humanity, Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, Netherlands
The Flower of May, Gwangju Museum of Art, Gwangju, South Korea
New Art for a New Century: Contemporary Acquisitions, 2000-2010, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA, USA
Itinéraires de l'élégance, entre l'Orient et l'Occident, Villa Empain, Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Belgium
A Fragmentary Anatomy of Every Setting Sun, permanent installation, Hara Museum ARC, Gunma, Japan

2009

Void of Memory, cur. Mami Kataoka & Sunjung Kim, Platform Seoul 2009, Kimusa (Former Defence Security Command Site), Seoul, South Korea

2008

Prospect.1, cur. Dan Cameron, Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, LA, USA
Life? Biomorphing Forms in Sculpture, Kunsthaus Graz, Graz, Austria
Fluid Street - Alone, Together, Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki, Finland
Fragile Beauty, Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany
Mobile Art: Chanel Contemporary Art Container, Hong Kong; Tokyo, Japan; New York, NY, USA
Art is for the Spirit: Works from the UBS Collection, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan

2007

Tomorrow, Artsonje Center, Seoul, South Korea
Views from the Bosphorus, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Istanbul, Turkey
10th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey
Global Feminisms, Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, NY, USA

2006

Real Utopia, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan
Dirty Yoga, Taipei Biennial, Taiwan
The Past Made Present: Contemporary Art and Memory, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA
100 Years of Korean Art - Part 2, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, South Korea
Uneasy Nature, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC, USA

2005

Baroque and Neo-Baroque: The Hell of the Beautiful, Domus Artium 02, Salamanca, Spain
Gorgeous Isn't Good Enough, Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan, Italy
California Modern, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA, USA
Art Unlimited, Art Basel, Basel, Switzerland
Visions of the Body, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea
IDYL, Openluchtmuseum voor Beeldhouwkunst Middelheim, Antwerp, Belgium

Encounters with Modernism, National Museum of Art, Deoksugung Palace, Seoul, South Korea
(My private) HEROES, MARTa, Herford, Germany
New Acquisitions 2004, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, South Korea

2004

The Nature Machine, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia
Encounters in the 21st Century: Polyphony - Emerging Resonances, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan
Inaugural exhibition, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Modern Art, Seoul, South Korea
Why Not Live For Art?, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
Standing on a Bridge, Arario Gallery, Cheonan, South Korea
Andererseits: Die Phantastik, Landesgalerie Linz, Linz, Austria
Artes Mundi Prize, National Museum and Gallery, Cardiff, UK

2003

world rush_4 artists, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
Five: The Artsonje Collection, Artsonje Center, Seoul, South Korea
Girls Don't Cry, Parco Museum, Tokyo, Japan
The Uncanny, Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, Canada

2002

Shape, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan
BINGO, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris, France
Fusion Cuisine, Deste Foundation, Athens, Greece
Walk Around Time: Selections from the Permanent Collection, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA
The Uncanny, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver; Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, Canada
My Reality: The Culture of Anime, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, OH, USA

2001

Record All Over, 9th Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland
ARS 01: Third Space, Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki, Finland
Egofugal, 7th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey
Connivence, cur. Laurence Hazout-Dreyfus, 6th Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, France
The Collection of 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan

2001

Body as Byte, Kunstmuseum Luzern, Luzern, Switzerland
01.01.01: Art in Technological Times, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, USA
My Reality: The Culture of Anime, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa, USA; Brooklyn Museum, New York, NY, USA
Let's Entertain, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany; Miami Art Museum, Miami, Florida, USA

2000

Au-delà du Spectacle, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, China
media_city seoul, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea
Lust Warande, De Oude Warande, Tilburg, Netherlands
Air Air, Grimaldi Forum, Monaco
Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial, selected by Nancy Spector, Echigo-Tsumari, Japan
Zeitwenden, Künstlerhaus Wien, Vienna, Austria; Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, Austria
Tourlou, tourlou, Melina Mercouri Art Space, Hydra, Greece
Der anagrammatische Körper, ZKM Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe, Germany
La casa, il corpo, il cuore, National Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic
Continuum 001, cur. Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, UK
Let's Entertain, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR, USA
Slowness of Speed, Artsonje Center, Seoul, South Korea

1999

International Pavilion, cur. Harald Szeemann, and Korean Pavilion, 48th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy

Zeitwenden, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, Germany
Cities on the Move 7, Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki, Finland
Der anagrammatische Körper, Kunsthaus Muerz with Neue Galerie Graz, Austria
La casa, il corpo, il cuore, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, Austria
dAPERTutto, 48th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy
Hot Air, Granship Center, Shizuoka, Japan
Slowness of Speed, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
Cities on the Move 5, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humblebaek, Denmark
Cities on the Move 4, Hayward Gallery, London, UK

1998

Sarajevo 2000, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, Austria
Slowness of Speed, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
The Natural World, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
Hugo Boss Prize 1998, Guggenheim Museum SoHo, New York, NY, USA
Cities on the Move 3, capc Musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux, France
Cities on the Move 2, P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, NY, USA
Traffic Jam, Büro Friedrich, Berlin, Germany

1997

Cities on the Move, Secession, Vienna, Austria
Fast Forward, The Power Plant, Toronto, Canada
L'autre, cur. Harald Szeemann, 4th Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, France
619 KBB 75, installation project with Pipilotti Rist, Georgina Starr and others, Paris, France; Berlin, Germany

1996

Join Me!, Spiral/Wacoal Art Center, Tokyo, Japan
Arcos da Lapa, public projection, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

1995

Information and Reality, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, UK
6th Triennale Kleinplastik, Südwest LandesBank Forum, Stuttgart, Germany
Korean Contemporary Art, 1st Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea

1995

New Asian Art, Japan Foundation, Tokyo, Japan
Ssack, Artsonje Center, Seoul, South Korea
Body and Recognition, Korean Culture & Arts Foundation, Seoul, South Korea

1994

Technology, Environment & Information, Recycling Art Pavilion, Expo Science Park, Daejeon, South Korea
Untitled installation and performance, Before Building, Myeong-dong, Seoul, South Korea
This Kind of Art-Dish Washing, Kumho Museum, Seoul, South Korea
Woman: The Difference and the Power, Hankuk Museum, Seoul and Yongin, South Korea
The Vision of the Next Generation, Seoul Arts Center, Seoul, South Korea

1993

1st Asia-Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia
Plastic Spring, Duk Won Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
Conversation, performance, Proto Theater, Tokyo, Japan
Impromptu Amusement, performance, Kunitachi Art Hall, Tokyo, Japan

1992

Diet: Diagramming III, performance, Sagak Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
Year of Ears: Diagramming II, performance, Live House Nanjang, Seoul, South Korea

1991

At the Forest of Chaos, Jahamoon Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
DMZ: Art and Cultural Movement, Seoul Arts Center, Seoul, South Korea
Dish Washing, Sonamu Gallery, Seoul, South Korea

BIO, Space Ozone, Seoul, South Korea

Interaction, 5-day performance with Chino Shuichi, Suwon Castle, South Korea

1990

Tokyo-Seoul Traffic, K Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

Sunday Seoul, Sonamu Gallery, Seoul, South Korea

Artoilet II, performance, Space Theater, Seoul, South Korea

Song of the Fish, performance, Dong Soong Art Center, Seoul, South Korea

Sorry for Suffering-You Think I'm a Puppy on a Picnic?, 12-day performance beginning in Gimpo Airport, Korea, and continuing in various sites in Tokyo, Japan

1989

Cravings, performance, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, South Korea

Abortion, performance, Dong Soong Art Center, Seoul, South Korea

Korean Installation Art Festival, Total Art Museum and Sculpture Park, Jang Heung, South Korea

1988

U. A. O., Renoir Art Hall, Seoul, South Korea

Anti-Idea, Total Art Museum, Seoul, South Korea

Point of View and Point in Time II, Batang Gol Gallery, Seoul, South Korea

Hong Ik Sculpture Association Annual, Korean Culture & Arts Foundation, Seoul, South Korea

1987

Museum III, Soo Gallery, Seoul, South Korea

Print of Concept, P&P Gallery, Seoul, South Korea

Point of View and Point in Time, Batang Gol Gallery, Seoul, South Korea

Museum, Kwanhoon Gallery, Seoul, South Korea

Public & Private Collections

Australia

Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane

Austria

Bawag Contemporary - Bawag Foundation, Vienna

Italy

Trevi Flash Art Museum Of Contemporary Art, Trevi

Japan

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art - Kanazawa, Kanazawa

South Korea

Leeum - Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul

Seoul Museum of Art (SeMA), Seoul

Amore Pacific Museum, Yongin-si

UK

Tate, London

USA

New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY

Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN

Awards

2019

Ho-Am Prize, Seoul, South Korea

2014

Noon Award, Gwangju Biennale, South Korea

<https://ropac.net/gallery-documents/14/>