

Lloyd Choi Gallery

Mok-su

Born 1973 in Seoul, South Korea

Exhibitions

2021 Guest artist at Cheong-ju Craft Biennale, Cheong-ju, South Korea

2020 Guest artist at 'Hugayegam' of Craft Tend Fair, Seoul, South Korea

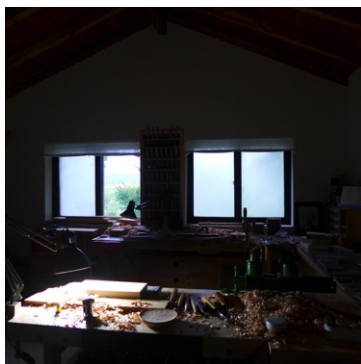
2019 'Life' solo exhibition, Gallery Document, Seoul, South Korea

Biography

Known only as Mok-su, the artist has adopted woodcarving as a meditational practice to calm his restless mind. Trained as a classical musician, the artist had to leave music behind to support his inventor father's business in Poland. Whilst in Poland, he taught himself to work with wood in order to make himself a classical guitar. Whilst making this first instrument, Mok-su found a sense of peace and mindfulness in the solitary practice. After returning to South Korea, he continues to work with wood. He found a house surrounded by mountains with space to work and here he mastered his chip-carving skills. Using these skills to make everything from toys for his child to furniture for his wife and speakers to listen to music. The mediating artist goes to his studio before sun rise and immerses himself into carving in a silent state of mind.

Concerned with the dehumanising nature of contemporary working practice, the artist cast aside his wood working machinery. Undeniably, the machine brought efficiency and productivity to modern life but the subsequent dehumanising or removal of the human touch affected the artist deeply. Over the last few years, Mok-su works only with hand tools. Woodcarving has become harder and slower but a more liberating experience. Within this simplified and meditative practice, he found a sense of calm, that created space for his books and for playing his classical guitar. Mok-su's works find the sublime in focused human effort, that belongs in the realm of transcendence.

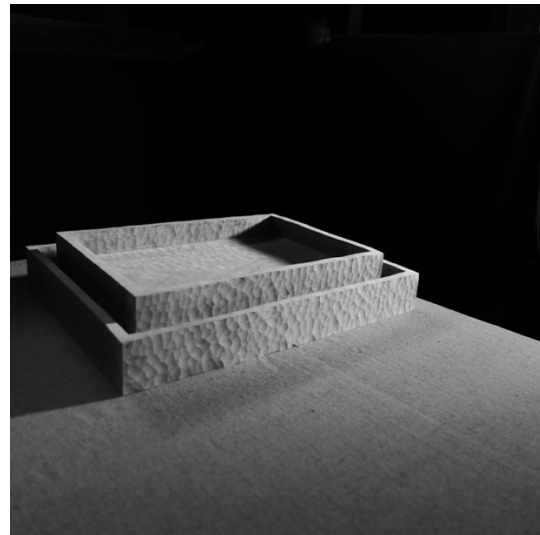
"(The) working process is a like mind...I let go of all the large machines to simplify this process, now I use only hand tools and try to keep my work small and low"



In close examination, countless gouge marks covering the entire body of each work of art can be seen. These marks organically grow into lines, planes to form a body and foot. Mok-su starts from a block of wood, without any planned sketch or design and meditates to be in the moment of each carve or chip of wood, letting the works come into being. Even the smallest works take days to complete. The subtle differences within the works, hint at his pursuit of neither perfection nor imperfection. Further engaging with nature, he experiments to create his own natural colour palette, mixing pigments taken natural materials such as charcoal, chalk, earth, indigo, herbs, seashells, Korean calligraphy ink and minerals. Applying these to the carved wood surface, exploring the varied surface textures created by burning, brushing, rubbing, patting, polishing, scorching, scratching, tapping, using clothing, brushes, sponge, hand-made paper and tools. Often his works are mistaken for other materials like leather, marble or that they were discovered in the deep woods, drawing viewers to the wonders of the material world.

Working in this way makes it impossible for Mok-su to repeat the form, colour or textures of each piece. Like each life is unique, each of his work is one of a kind, its human like quality is the alchemy of meditational practice combined with timeless hand craftsmanship. Mok-su holds an admiration for unknown potters who made 'every object', his appreciation leading him choose to create functional pieces over sculpture. The ancient Chinese philosopher, Zhuangzi considered the emptying bowl as the egoless mind; inspired by this, Mok-su considers emptying as transcendental meditation. Just as he freed himself from the machine, the artist aims to liberate himself from the ego, remaining anonymous.

"I have no purpose nor design and my works are only the result of emptying" - Mok-su



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Tuesdays and other times by appointment only

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For information on artworks and artists, please email contact@lloydchoigallery.com