Common Ground: Inter-Echo

Enna Bae(Locus Solus)

Introduction: Mieum (ㅁ)

At the tail end of winter in 2023, I met Yi Yunyi for the first time. She offered me a glimpse into the year she had spent as a resident at Art Lab. Sanyang. "Yi Yunyi." — a name that reads the same forward and backwards in Korean, a palindrome. While I found myself drawn into a whimsical reflection on how inhabiting such symmetrical repetition might shape the contours of a life, she handed me a thick blue book titled *Today's Oreum(Gravity toward the Island)*. "Oreum" is the Jeju dialect term for a mountain. It is a name formed at the intersection of ancient terms for bulging landforms and the verb oreuda (to climb). As I imagined the convex arc contained within that name — ascending with the first syllable "Yi," reaching its peak at "Yun," and descending back with the final "Yi" — she gently opened the glass door, leading me into the unfamiliar landscape of her work.

In 2025, pushing through the heavy door of Gallery Chosun, which quietly opens toward the Samcheong-dong path, and descending its long staircase, I encountered the guardians of the space: *Parakletos(Who Stands Beside)* (2025), a guardian spirit that watched over Yunyi's time on Jeungdo Island in Shinan last summer; *Two Anchors* (2025), a record of pedestrians traversing the city; and *Chromatic Personae* (2025), guardian spirits condensed from salt and mud. As I lowered my cold body onto the shimmering silver foil stretching across the gallery's concrete floor, I was suddenly reminded of the "Kisses Army" — the young girls who had occupied Yeouido Park and Hannam-

dong during a particularly harsh winter a year ago. A lively march, swinging flickering lightsticks over their shoulders, shouting "Apt! Apt!"* and advancing to the lyrics of "I Am the Best."** Were you all less cold because you were together? As the image of silver foil blankets wrapped around the cold bodies of refugees overlapped with this afterimage, the regular square grids of the salt farm in the video flickered, rose, drifted, and disappeared across the surface of the muddy tidal flat.

This flow continues into the journey of Delines, the artistic research duo she formed with artist Cho Jaiyoung in 2024. The ghost prints of mud and salt left there expanded into a research trip toward Haenam, and from that dialogue, the work *Murmur/ation* was born. Following the initial consonants of the places and collectives through which she moved — ㅅㅁㅈ (Seumui-jip), ㄷㄹㄴㅅ (Delines), and ㄹㅋㅅㅅㄹㅅ (Locus Solus) — one eventually encounters the bilabial sound Mieum (ㅁ). Meo-mut (murmuration). *Murmur/ation* seems to have merely paused there for a moment after wandering through various timelines; its loose pages remain ready to depart at any moment. A leaflet unfolding from a single fold, nearly transparent drawings of day and night, stiff Sabian Symbols chart postcards, and twenty-seven texts written through automatic writing — these read differently regardless of where one begins, while the shadows of deposited traces filling the reverse sides remain whole without explanation. They are the materiality of time that once remained in the past. Yet they powerfully inhale the present with a primordial foresight, as if caring for the unknown time we ourselves are yet to fill.

Eco-Essay: A Fluid Dwelling

Gravity toward the Island is more than a record of daily life in Jeju; it is a process of reconnecting with land, water, and humanity through the medium of writing. Here, Yi moves away

* ROSÉ & Bruno Mars, *APT.*, 2024. Excerpt from the lyrics.
** 2NE1, *I Am the Best,* 2011. Excerpt from the lyrics.

from the fixed gaze of the observer, instead navigating through the land's waterways as landmarks and the signals of others as a compass. Borrowing the expression of poet Kim Hyesoon, just as a skeletonless anemone entrusts itself to ocean currents, the artist allows the rigid boundaries of the self to soften and become fluid.*** Through these openings, texts from within and images from the outside world surge inward.

As the etymological root of Ecology, *oikos*, means "a house to live in," Yi's gaze embodies a concern for a "slightly different way of dwelling"—one in which diverse species coexist within the shared house called Earth. This is neither a scientific gaze oriented toward the conquest of nature nor a traditional anthropological gaze concerned solely with tracing human trajectories. Rather, it is a form of environmental resonance—an act of listening to the aeons of life force accumulated within species while physically sensing the density of the surrounding environment.

"Nature-praising and environmental crises that only go on about while we are alive—after all, it is humans who are just passing through. A place said to have no water, usually, but creates a waterfall when heavy rain falls…. Could it be that humans, too, are just a whimsical, brief phenomenon before nature? Like a fleeting rainbow. Like the transient waterfall of youth. I jot down the names of those unlikely places and, like a frog ready to hop out on a rainy day…."****

Within this thick volume, which dissolves boundaries of the self in order to capture surfacing text and images, lies a blend of peripheral histories that inevitably intervene and an artistic philosophy that must nevertheless persist. It encompasses conversations and movements with residents, cooperation and collaboration with colleagues, and the constant impulses toward small risks or grand adventures that emerge even within the mundane processes of eating and sleeping. Yi's ecological

*** Kim, Hyesoon. "Author's Note". In *Synchronized Sea Anemone*. Paju: Nanda, 2025, 5.
**** Yi, Yunyi. *Gravity toward the Island*. Jeju: Art Lab. Sanyang, Jeju Foundation for Arts and Culture, 2023, 19.

attitude—one that does not exclude the impulse to reach a finalized form or aesthetic perfection, yet simultaneously embraces the tremors that occur in between—flows naturally from the pages of *Gravity toward the Island* (2023) into her solo exhibition, *Solar Grounds* (2025).

Inter-Echo: Substances Standing Beside

Who stands beside? 'Parakletos' is the Greek word for "one who stands alongside," "comforter," or "advocate." The artist invites the audience onto silver foil mat—a material typically reserved for the temporary flooring of a Vacation Bible School. Its shimmering surface reflects the blue light of the atmosphere; its texture preserves the warmth of the viewer's body. The light from the projector, emerging through the diagonal folds of the ground, gathers our gaze like the "hearth"***** of an ancient dwelling, sending its ashes toward the Guardians installed on the facing pillars.

The triptych *Chromatic Personae*, realized through a prayer of spirits, is a three-paneled stained-glass work centered on the symbolism of three colors: red (赤), green (綠), and white (白). Patterns in the shape of the character jeon (田, field), together with materials such as earth and salt, evoke the materiality of land, sunlight, and labor. The three panels standing at the front each disclose a distinct persona. Just as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Bible are depicted as personae who experience anger or forgiveness through distinctly human verbs, the artist's materials are transformed into beings with their own emotions and attitudes. *Guardians*, a combination of salt, mud, and resin on OHP film, is in fact a byproduct generated during the preparation of *Chromatic Personae*. Yet the artist does not overlook these materials; she grants them a place—as spirits that participated in the trial and error of the process and guided the sensory trajectory of the work. Like

***** Ingold, Tim. *Lines: A Brief History*. Translated by Eunjeong Cha, Hyeyoon Kwon, and Seong In Kim. Seoul: 2B, 2024, 45.

stained glass in a medieval church, one panel reflects the interior from the glass at the entrance of the stairs, while another radiates downward from the central pillar, welcoming the audience as they enter. The silver foil floor, receiving these multilayered gazes converging downward, functions as a space beyond religious commemorative sites such as the Moon Jun-Kyung Memorial Hall or the Daecho-ri Church. It poses a more fundamental and sensitive question: "How is faith or belief commemorated?"

Belief in art, like faith, is immaterial and fluid; the sharing of its aesthetic value cannot be achieved through linguistic description or visual experience alone. Whether intentional or not, by bringing temporary materials like silver foil and "poor" substances — the inevitable residues of processes involving salt or mud — into the gallery, the artist returns art from an object to be understood into a message to be listened to and upheld. For the artist, the act of recording and editing subjects through a camera is not a mere technical process. Within the moments of the body where all sensory functions are become concentrated, there exists a sacredness in capturing moments akin to a form of "consecration"****** descending upon her two hands and bowed head — a shared spiritual resonance emerging within the literary commons described by Virginia Woolf. Yi Yunyi carries these fragments of intimate and private time into the exhibition space one by one, placing them beside one another as if performing her own religious rite, or writing her own language into poetry. Through this process, her mode of narration lightens the weight of words such as "spirituality" and "community," which might otherwise evoke resistance, particularly among non-Christians. In doing so, she implicates the audience — voluntarily or involuntarily, through the lens of art or religion, and at the level of appreciation or belief — in a universal question emerging within the subtle gap between art and religion: "How do you remember that place, and with what feeling do you

****** Woolf, Virginia. "Hours in a Library." In *Literature is Common Ground*. Translated by Ae-ri Choi. Paju: Open Books, 2022, 23.

remain there?" The outward echoes and inward resonances woven through Yi's visual essays form an invisible web between the audience and the work, creating a temporary sanctuary for a paracletic solidarity that responds to and stands beside the rhythms of nameless beings.

Common Place(s): The Screen as Meshwork

Yi Yunyi's screen, which traverses the land from Jeju to Shinan, from Shinan back to Seoul, and from the city to Haenam, is not so much a tool for recording time as it is a sail for navigation — one that allows movement to persist even in a state of disorientation. The regular mechanical hum of pushing salt across the fields, the clumsy hand movements of a boy weaving a net, the cluttered conversations echoing inside a church, the refined movements of a choreographer's repeated gestures, and the tail of a kite soaring into the sky…. Within this accumulation of scenes that neither culminate in a narrative nor serve a specific purpose, the audience encounters vibrations of senses not yet articulated in language. Just as the trajectory of the letter Mieum (ㅁ) expands from a pre-linguistic murmur into the murmuration******* of a flock of birds in flight, and as a world once divided into red and green integrated into white — while diagonal movements intervene between the horizontal and vertical — a (strange) divine resonance arises between reality and art, and a (familiar) stirring of the heart emerges between language and image. Woven through this entanglement of the strange and the familiar, the screen embraces the floor, pillars, walls, and even the windows of the space, emphasizing a constantly shifting meshwork of relations as they are reflected and refracted through one another.

A camera traversing the walkways, playgrounds, underground passages, and overpass stairs of the Mapo area at dusk; landmarks distributed throughout the city; and the

******* Delines. *Murmur/ation*. Seoul: Locus Solus, 2025, n/p.

respective “anchors” (anchor and buoy) held by two figures, a man and a woman wandering through the urban landscape…. The recurring phrase flowing from the speakers — “Blessing guides us into the awareness of unity” — crosses the locational sensibilities of the waterways and ferry points of Shinan and Mapo-naru, which have carried salt since ancient times. However, the figures never form a single point of intersection, instead they crisscross the city along their own trajectories. Only the speakers, scraping the floor as they follow behind, weave these irregular movements into a loose web. It is only when the two figures reach their final destination, Mapo Children’s Park, and trace the patterns of the old ferry landscape engraved on a public sculpture, that the resonances between the two figures — or between the two places — overlap into a single rhythm. The visual intersection and narrative overlap created in the video provide a “common place” where the work is co-created, rather than a specific message toward which the work must ultimately reach.

Four sessions of “Walkthrough with”, held just before the exhibition’s closure, were the culmination of this journey, gathering the friends and collaborators who had taken part in the work. Through the “place of the book”, *Murmur/ation*, which contains the past, present, and future of the journey from Seoul to Shinan and on to Haenam; the “place of the window,” *Chromatic Personae*, which opens the ritual of the hand transforming through the energies of heaven and earth; and the “place of Seoul”, *Two Anchors*, which responds to the markers installed in the city and resonates with its landscape; we finally arrive at the “place of Shinan”, *Parakletos(Who stands Beside)*, which offers an interstitial space between history and time, gods and ancestors, labor and creation, and recording and staging. Though it could not be fully realized, there was even a “place of tea” intended to share Wolsan Tteokcha from Baekryeonsa Temple in Gangjin, where *A Journey Unfolding Through Dryness, Humidity, and Spiritual Elevation* (2025) once paused. Within that space, we shared our own stories, allowed room for Yi Yunyi’s time — where objects become language — and layered our stories back onto one another. The artist’s gaze, which traverses, moves through, and occupies the two worlds once separated into heaven and earth, island and city, human and nature, and man and woman, eventually flows into us along the waterways. As if the fragments of time placed within the gallery and all the proposals implicating us in the exhibition were not plans prepared for a show, but had always existed there, they begin to assemble the scattered pieces of sensation within us.

Conclusion: Gyeot (Beside)

Just as the evangelist Moon Jun-kyung moved from island to island with the tides, carrying the words of heaven across the sea, Yi Yunyi trains herself and gathers the messages of the world, carrying and delivering them back into the world. This is not a grand march for political ideology, religious gospel, or any particular definition of justice. It is the simple, yet profound act of guarding the distance that slips through the fingers: ‘Gyeot (곁, the side, or being beside)’. It is a relationship I did not want to let go of when I began this writing, and one that remained with me throughout the process of writing. Drawing on the Daseok philosophy we studied together, the expression of a physical life lived through the sweat of labor remains alongside life itself — a form of *gyeot-buchim*. It is not merely physical labor, but an attachment through which body, mind, and eol (spirit) come into alignment, moving with clarity and sincerity toward the truth.

The “I” reflected through that which is “beside me.” The self is created through the other. It is the “I” reflected through that which stands beside me, rather than through myself. It is the “you” created through the “me” that is not you. Within the complexity of this “attachment” — this entanglement of I, You, and We — a subtle oneness emerges. Perhaps this was the Solar Grounds that briefly passed us by, or perhaps lingered for a moment. I return, once more, to the first letter of the name that draws the arc of a mountain.

Enna Bae (Locus Solus)
Enna Bae is an independent curator based in Seoul. Through various artistic platforms—including exhibitions, research, projects, and festivals—she explores the attitudes and language of curatorship. She currently operates Locus Solus, an Imaginary Office for thought and inspiration, as a cultural commons where she remains close to artists and supports the generative power of artistic imagination.

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Chromatic Personae, 2025, Glass deco, salt, red clay, mud, crystal resin on acrylic panels, 58×182cm(set of 3, each).
Production Support: You Jiin

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Two Anchors (Performance documentation), 2025,
Single-channel 4K video, color, sound, 26 min 19 sec.
Director: Yi Yunyi
Producer: Shin Jinyoung (apparat/us)
Performers: Yun Lee, Bang Ji Hyun
Music & Sound: Kim Namyoon
Video: Lee Heein
Music: Vomit & Tear (with Hong Chulki), Naptalam (Sun Plaza, 2023)
Translation: Yun Lee
Cinematography: Lee Jinsil, Lee Hakmin
Sound Recording: Kim Haeun
Organizer: Windmill

Cover

Guardians, 2025, Salt, mud, crystal resin on OHP film, 21×29.6cm (set of 7, each).