

RYAN LEE

RYAN LEE GALLERY LLC
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Sangbin IM

AI/IM

September 5 - October 12, 2019

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 5, 6-8PM

RYAN LEE is pleased to announce *AI/IM*, an exhibition of new works by Sangbin IM. IM is known for his dynamic composite photographs, each meticulously composed from a combination of hundreds of IM's own photographs and paintings. The resulting works are hyper-realistic utopian fantasies that reimagine well-known places for an increasingly technocratic future. IM's photographic process has always relied on both the artist's hand and digital tools, but it is the relationship between the artist and technology that is at the center of this new body of work.

As an artist constantly searching for ways to optimize his extremely labor-intensive process, IM uses Photoshop's Photomerge function to synthesize hundreds of images into a single composition. For the artist, this task is painstaking, exhausting, and fraught with fear of failure. The computer, free of such emotional baggage, simply completes the task it is given. The work in this exhibition is the product of the partnership between artificial intelligence and human consciousness—in particular the subjective consciousness of the artist. The exhibition's title, *AI/IM*, reiterates this: "AI" refers to machine learning and "IM" is both the artist's last name and an abbreviation for "I am," the signifier of human subjectivity in the Cartesian sense.

In this series, IM combines hundred of photographs of well-known cities and landmarks taken during his travels—Athens, Manhattan, Bali—into panoramic scenes whose irregular edges push beyond the traditional rectangular picture plane. IM photographs his subjects from different angles, over the course of hours or sometimes days; his photographs are not random, but he begins without a vision of the finished product. Next he inputs the images into Photoshop and allows the program to auto-splice them together, creating various compositions that IM then tweaks. In this series, IM has also retained the jagged, computer-generated borders of the images, which give literal shape to the works' mechanical-organic hybrid nature. IM considers the computer-generated image as a "draft," and views his role as "a director who actively improves them" IM finds "errors or weaknesses that are included in the draft and artistically modify them in an attempt to articulate the entire scene in the best way possible."

While IM—with the human capacity for consciousness coupled with extensive artistic training—maintains his role as "director," the inevitability of his own emotional response is a constant challenge. As he explains it, his struggle is internal: "This is a situation where my intelligence could be likened to a computer operating system (OS), my consciousness is like a virus that has invaded that system." For IM, not only does this technology help to modulate his psyche, it also helps to guard against the wear and tear on his fingers and eyes from years of such meticulous work. IM believes that humanity has always relied upon the technology of its time, and these photographs reveal the multiple creative dimensions that produced them. IM's stunning multiverses, familiar yet fantastic, are the product of the symbiosis between man and machine, between AI and IM.

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Sangbin IM (b. 1976 Seoul, Korea) received his MFA in painting and printmaking at Yale University as a Fulbright scholar. He received his doctorate from Columbia University, and currently teaches at Sungshin University in Seoul. IM's work has been the subject of notable group exhibitions, including the Artrium Museum, Vitoria-Gasteiz; Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, Ansan City; Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, Auburn; Museo Amalia Lacroze de Fortabat, Buenos Aires; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul; Royal Academy of Arts, London; Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul; and Sungkok Art Museum, Seoul. His work is also included in major public collections, including the Artrium Museum, Vitoria-Gasteiz; Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, Ansan City; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Gwacheon; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh; and Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul. IM lives and works in New York, NY and Seoul, Korea.

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