

Kim Bohie

Towards

kaufmann repetto is glad to announce *Towards*, Bohie Kim's first Italian solo exhibition, opening on April 15th in Milan. One of Korea's most esteemed landscape painters, her vividly chromatic compositions synthesize a breadth of influences, merging Oriental and Western traditions. At the core of Kim's radiant paintings are the exuberant forms of the natural world, infused with evocative visual and spiritual qualities.

Kim was initially trained in East Asian painting, employing ink-wash techniques on *hanji*, the traditional Korean mulberry paper. Gradually she started to incorporate also Western mediums such as canvas and acrylics, developing a hybrid style for her depictions of landscapes, still-lives and human figures. After earning both her BFA and MFA from Ewha Womans University, she served as a professor in the same department until 2017 and she is now professor emerita at the university.

In the early 2000s, the artist set up home on the island of Jeju, which lies south of the Korean Peninsula. The move marked a period of creative transition, during which her vocabulary underwent a transformation, shifting towards a visual language imbued by the island's luxuriant subtropical flora and its volcanic landscapes. Under the influence of this overwhelming ambience, Kim's attention began to focus on the daily observation of her surroundings. Informed by the lineages of *jingyeong sanshuwa*, the traditional 'true-view landscape painting', and avoiding the use of linear perspectives, she favored instead cropped close-ups of botanical specimen, indexical plant studies and wide-angled depictions of coasts and valleys. Often her depictions blur the boundaries between representation and abstraction, reflecting a dichotomy inherent in nature itself: "There are some objects that need to be expressed in a more realistic aspect, and sometimes it is necessary to express a more abstract portrayal", says Kim, "I believe that nature does not only have figurative features; nature itself holds abstraction, and I only express it as it is."¹

Meditative and calm, yet at the same time radiant and seductive, her paintings exude a profound appreciation for the physical world as a site for sensory as well as spiritual experiences. For the artist, the universe, the earth and all existing life are manifestations of the 'creation' in an almost biblical sense, and 'Towards' - the title of the Milanese exhibition - reflects her own empathic gaze and posture. Echoing the pioneering essay 'The Sense of Wonder' by proto-environmentalist Rachel Carson, Kim says: "I believe that humans should ultimately get closer to nature. I hope through experiencing my work, viewers might feel the mystery and wonder of the world around them, and the gratitude for our presence in it".²

1 Mark Rappolt, 'Kim Bohie: Look Outside Yourself', Art Review (2022)

2 Ibidem