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2018

After the big wind stops I see gentle waves

Eunji (Jubee) Lee

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After the big wind stops I see gentle waves

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Craft/Material Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Eunji (Jubee) Lee

B.F.A Southern Illinois University, 2015

M.F.A. Virginia Commonwealth University, 2018

Director: Jack Wax

Professor, Craft/Material Studies

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2018

Richmond, Virginia

May, 2018

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Abstract

AFTER THE BIG WIND STOPS I SEE GENTLE WAVES

By Jubee Lee, Master of Fine Arts

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Craft/Material Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2018

Major Director: Jack Wax

Professor, Craft/Material Studies

This thesis covers my reflections on the inspirations and the motivations behind selected works including my candidacy exhibition; *Resonance* and my thesis exhibition; *after the big wind stops I see gentle waves*. It contains my life throughout my MFA studies and the development of my art practice. Through its story-within-a-story method of narration and my describing streams of my thoughts, I am attempting to explain the processes of my development and the discoveries I have made, the little things in my daily life, and the big turning points that inspired me. My work and this document have been strongly determined by my poetic imagination and the emotional events and experiences I have had.

Pas-resent

As is said, we should not look back to the past, but look forward to the future for a promising life; yet, I easily find that so many of my inspirations come when reflecting upon my past. I feel most happy and a slight touch of dreariness at the same time when recalling my past. It is not limited to feelings of loneliness, rather my feelings are akin to a bittersweet dreariness. I confess, I was constantly looking forward to the reunion with my former self who was living in the good old days. My memories of the past dreamed of an eternal sense of being reincarnated in my work. Does this mean that I am not happy? Should I worry about it? Could I be forced to let go of my past, and allow myself to begin living in the here and now?

September 17, 2015

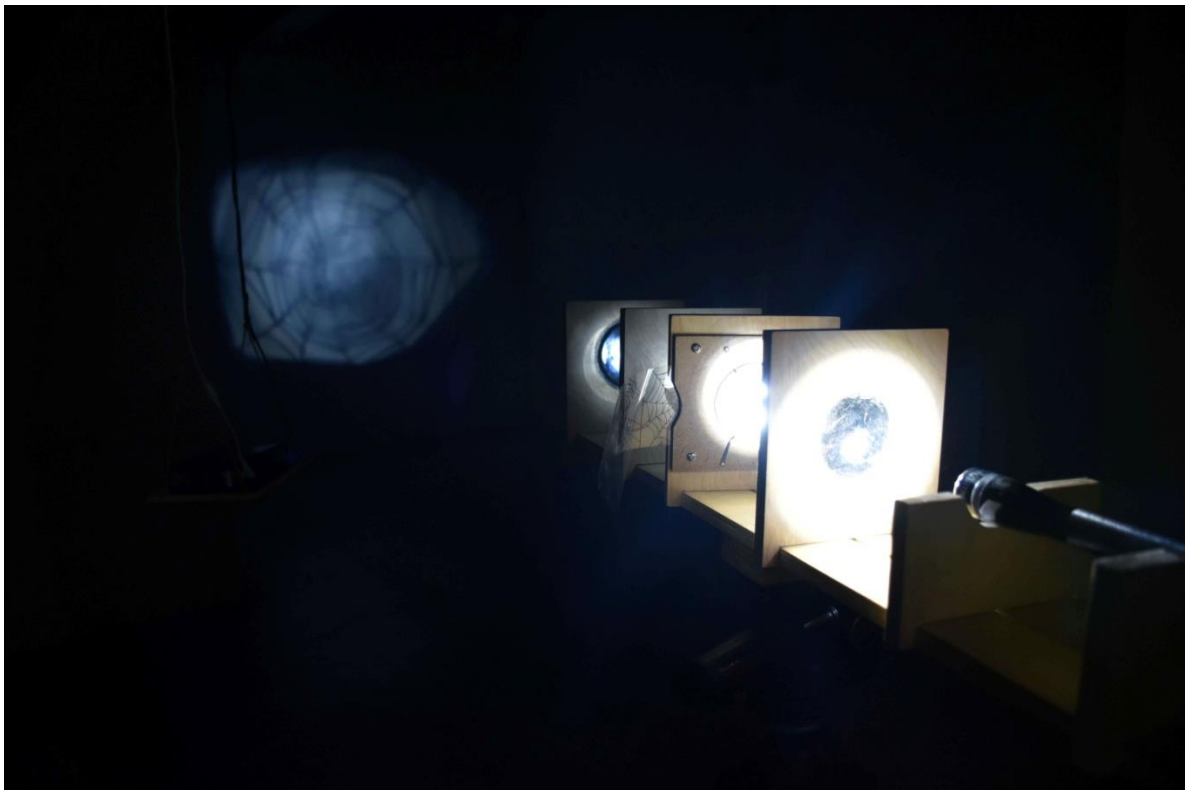


fig.1

A spider story (My enthusiastic artist)

There was a spider spinning a perfect web every day in the right side mirror of my car. I was moving to Richmond, Virginia. This diligent spider followed me about 793 miles from Illinois, tagging along with my car. She continued her activity every day. She had been living there for almost two months. She never let me see her face, though I wondered much about what she looked like. I only knew that she was there because every day I found her work. It was always in the same place, on the right side mirror. I broke her artwork every time I drove because I couldn't see through it. The next day, she'd made another artwork. I couldn't help but break it to drive safely. She was a passionate and vigorous artist. Plus, she was very creative. It was interesting to look at her various web patterns each and every day.



fig. 2

One day, I did not break her work and just left it. The next day, I found a much bigger and larger work, extending outside the area. Driven by curiosity, I left it for another day. She extended the stronger and larger work from the right side mirror to half way past the passenger's side door. I suddenly felt a little bit scared. Thought my entire car would be entwined by her work if I didn't stop her. I broke it through again after three days of sitting by and watching. I wondered why she was so obsessed with the right side mirror of my car. I thought it might be because my side mirror was a little too dirty, so I wiped it off clean with



window cleanser. Perhaps she'd be stunned and come out as I sprayed, but nothing ever happened. My expectation that she would not create another work in this clean mirror didn't stop there.

This most resilient of living things made a work again the next morning without fail. Of course, you are the prolific artist. Her work looked even more elaborate and beautiful in the morning dew. Another few weeks passed just like that. Making, breaking, making, breaking, making, breaking, making, breaking, making... Breaking her artwork became an annoying job for me, especially on a busy morning. I got tired of breaking it. Still, she never showed up even then. One day, I cleaned the mirror with 'Raid' without any thought in my mind. I thought to myself that she would survive anyway because she was strong and persistent.

The next day, I didn't see anything on my side mirror. Her artwork wasn't there. I felt strange and perhaps a bit bitter. I felt like I had committed a horrible crime. She followed me from so far away from Illinois. She wouldn't think that I could hurt her, even though I broke her work. I had no idea that breaking things could cause my own heart to be broken. It felt as if part of my memories of Illinois had vanished suddenly. I missed her as I did my memories. Since that day, I have not seen her work, but I am continually checking my side mirror every morning. She wasn't just a little arachnid, rather she was an enthusiastic artist as well as a tiny piece of my days of old. Perhaps I look back nostalgically a little too much. To free myself of things from the past is the hardest part for me above everything else. I said to myself that parting is such sweet sorrow. *'The past is like a dream. Whether it's a sweet dream or a bad dream, a dream is just a dream.'* I work to keep this dream in my work.

Don't come back (please come back)

Stay where you belong (stay with me)

Don't go too far though,

So you can come right back when I call you.

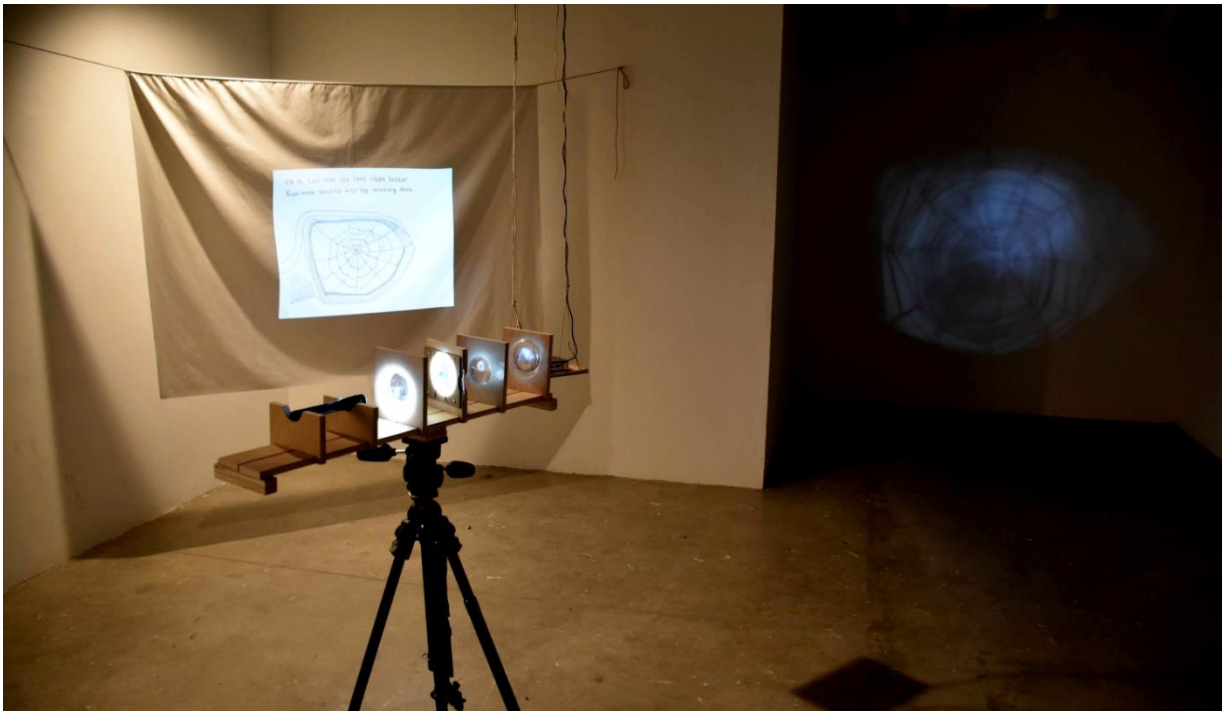


fig. 3

Nothing Special

“As long as we are alive, we are always doing something. But as long as you think, “I am doing this,” or “I have to do this,” or “I must attain something special,” you are actually not doing anything. When you give up, when you no longer want something, or when you do not try to do anything special, then you do something. If you continue this simple practice every day, you will obtain some wonderful power. Before you attain it, it is something wonderful, but after you attain it, it is nothing special.” (“Zen mind, Beginner’s Mind” 47)

I hope that my work in this exhibition is not too special. That it does not have too many meanings, nor is it too brilliant, nor too showy.

I want the viewers to take their eyes from the visible things to the invisible things, things such as the atmosphere in the room. I would rather be open and leave things as they are than over-explain and strictly define everything. I want the viewers to feel what they feel and fill the remaining things. In that way, the viewers will have the chance to experience multiple mood changes for themselves, within my work. This is how I am attempting to maintain my humility. This allows for a more imaginative experience for me as well as the viewers.

The exhibition that lets people feel good, and that’s it.

I dream for my artwork to be a tangible poem, which has a serene, calming, and positive effect.

January 23, 2016

Giving abandoned things new life

I felt a great deal of pity when I found a myriad of abandoned window glass in a place of musty, shabby storage. I had no idea how long they had been sitting there. They had been wounded badly, and were stuck together in their wetness. There was a bad smell and a lot of discoloration from all kinds of bugs and mice feces. I left there after checking on the condition of the wounded and abandoned window glass, with the promise that I would come back to rescue them.

I visited the place again about two months later, and this time I walked into the dark storage with resolute determination of rescuing them. There were too many sheets of glass to handle by myself. After that first rescue, I visited again a week later, and another after that. I felt so sorry for the remaining glass that I was not able to bring with me despite going three times in my rescue effort. Through this, I was led to reflect upon the life of “things.” This glass might have gone through all the effects of time and effort until they became shiny glass, but they were rotting away abandoned there with wounds and scars from any number of experiences. After I brought them to my studio, I gently and carefully washed them with water, one after the other. That action of my touching was a meditative act; it made me more attached to each and every one of them. While handling these sheets of glass, I promised to myself that I would give them a new life. Giving these abandoned things new life is as valuable and meaningful as jogging my buried memories. I hoped that their valiant effort and the time that they went through to become shiny glass would in the end pay off for them beautifully.



fig.4

Blue, Water, Roof tiles and Resonance

Blue.

Blue is my color. Clean, fresh, simple, trusting, believable, pure, peaceful, ideal and hopeful. This is how I feel. Yet, the color blue is rarely the focus of one's attention nor is it always positive when I feel 'blue.' With light though, it gives cozy, calm, and relaxed feelings.

Water.

Water has been the most powerful earth element to affect my state of mind; it has become the most potent muse for my artwork.

Water is birth and life; it is the beginning place of life, and its movement always has a supremely meditative effect. I admire and wish to emulate its sense of freedom. Water is free in color and shape. I yearn for its absolute presence; its infinity and its eternity. Meaning can be found in a quiet, serene atmosphere, as we look at the gentle waves in complete silence.

A Korean traditional roof tile.

This is a part of my roots, a part of my identity. I feel the 'resonance' of waves from groupings of roofs. When contemplating the rooftops, I can let my imagination run free. I remember this impressionistic moment from when I was a child.

I make a lot of roof tiles every day as if I am a pointillist, making dots on paper. It shall be a large sculptural pointillist painting when all of the roof tiles meet together. It shall exude serene and positive energy.

I put down my thoughts and my memories in the record of my tile as I am making it. It is as if I am writing in a diary. I paint invisible things such as the memories of longing, of friendships, of loves, and of joys. Sometimes such things are more valuable and precious than knowing that the purpose of art is to confront the world. I hope to have an awareness of the "nothingness," while also embracing the perception of the world as being made up of relationships.

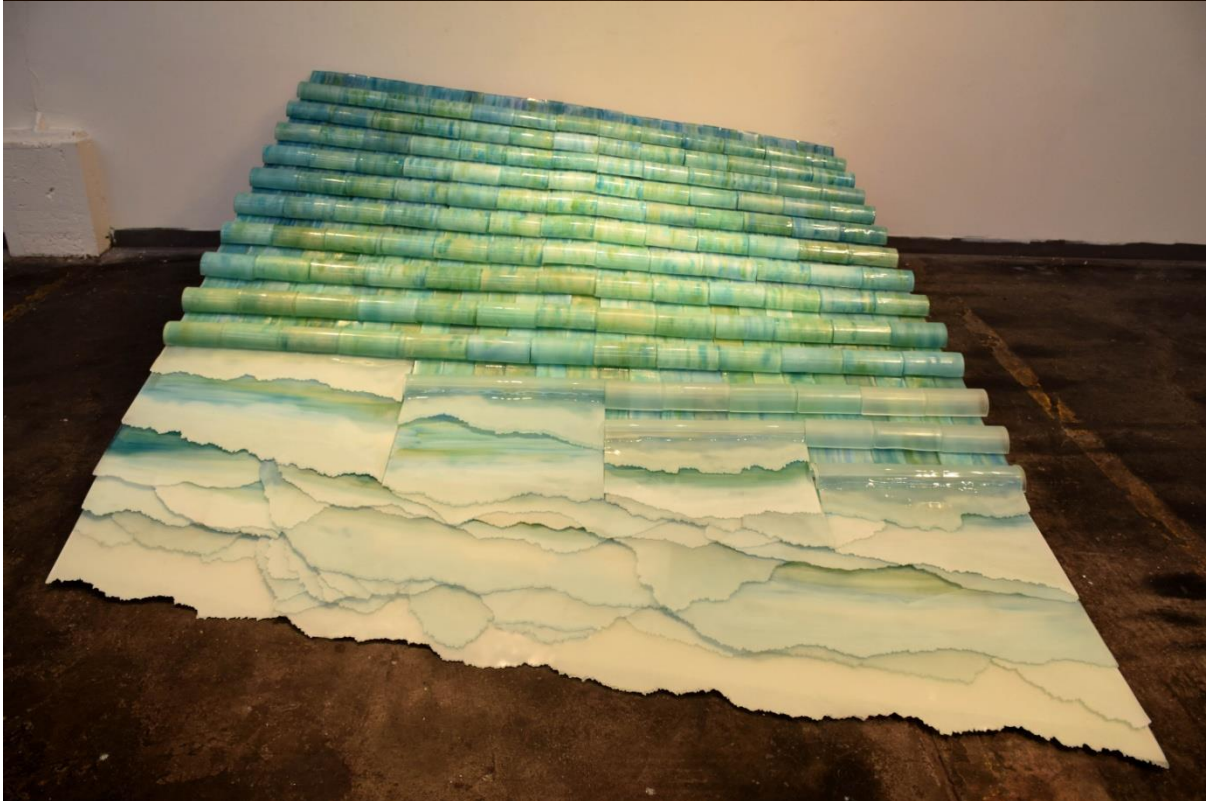


fig.5

3-1

Dear beloved family

I came to Virginia Beach today. How are things with "our" ocean?

This beach brought back the memory of our beach, and the time we spent there together.

Indeed, there's no better ocean than our ocean.

I feel glad that I can look at the horizon at Virginia Beach, though.

I miss you all, although it is too much, thinking that you are there beyond this far-off horizon.

Looking at this boundless ocean, I can imagine being able to arrive where you all are, riding on the waves.

When might we see each other again?

I thank you so much for the package and everything else.

I felt so happy and missed you all terribly when I found your letter under the gifts.

Thank you for sending me books by Ufan Lee and Hwanki Kim. You'll never know how much I was consoled by these books.

I'm doing all right here. So please don't worry about me.

See you all again, please take a good care until then.

Love you.

At Virginia Beach,

Your youngest daughter

March 12, 2017



fig.6

Haeundae Beach and Virginia Beach

One of the happiest moments in my American life happens when I get a package from my home in Korea. I feel butterflies in my stomach before I open the box wondering what might be inside. This feeling doesn't go away easily after I open the box. It seems as if my heart warms more to the delight that this package came to me from all the way across the ocean, than to my wondering what is inside.

I often think, how great it would be if the ocean's sea water from my home was in this package. I miss my ocean so very much. I was raised in the town of Haeundae Beach. My mom, sister and I built so many good memories there, sitting on the beautiful white sand beach every day throughout the hot summer when I was a young child.

I am in Virginia. I go to Virginia Beach driving ninety minutes from where I live. It looks nothing like my Haeunda beach.

Waves foaming along the beach without resting from unknown origin, there to here.

The feeling of two different oceans under the same sun.

There is disconnection between two oceans, though they are connected.

That is the place I can't easily reach.

I think of my ocean that is half way across the world, while looking at this far-off horizon. It is about 7,213 miles from Virginia Beach to Haeundae Beach. This seems to be a distance beyond my comprehension. Looking at the boundless ocean, I imagine that the package that contains my ocean's sea water is drifting along Virginia Beach's shore, carried by the waves, and so similarly is the package I send from this beach, drifting along the shores of Haeundae Beach, carried by waves of nostalgia.

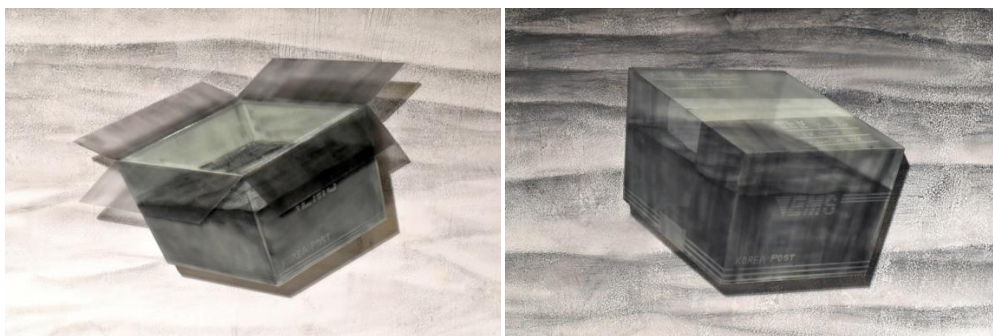


fig.7



fig.8

4-1

To live is so startling it leaves little time for anything else

It is said that, our life is like a glass bottle; one in which we can put sand, pebbles, and small stones. So many of the things that repeat in our daily lives are like the sand. It becomes harder and harder to put something like love, human relations, and wonder in the glass bottle when it is full of sand. Things we deal with in life cannot all be necessary. Though it may feel a little odd to modify a to-do list of life (to reduce it whether it is full of just small tasks or big life goals), it may make our lives better and happier than before. Giving ourselves some breathing space in life; that is all that matters.

October 11, 2017

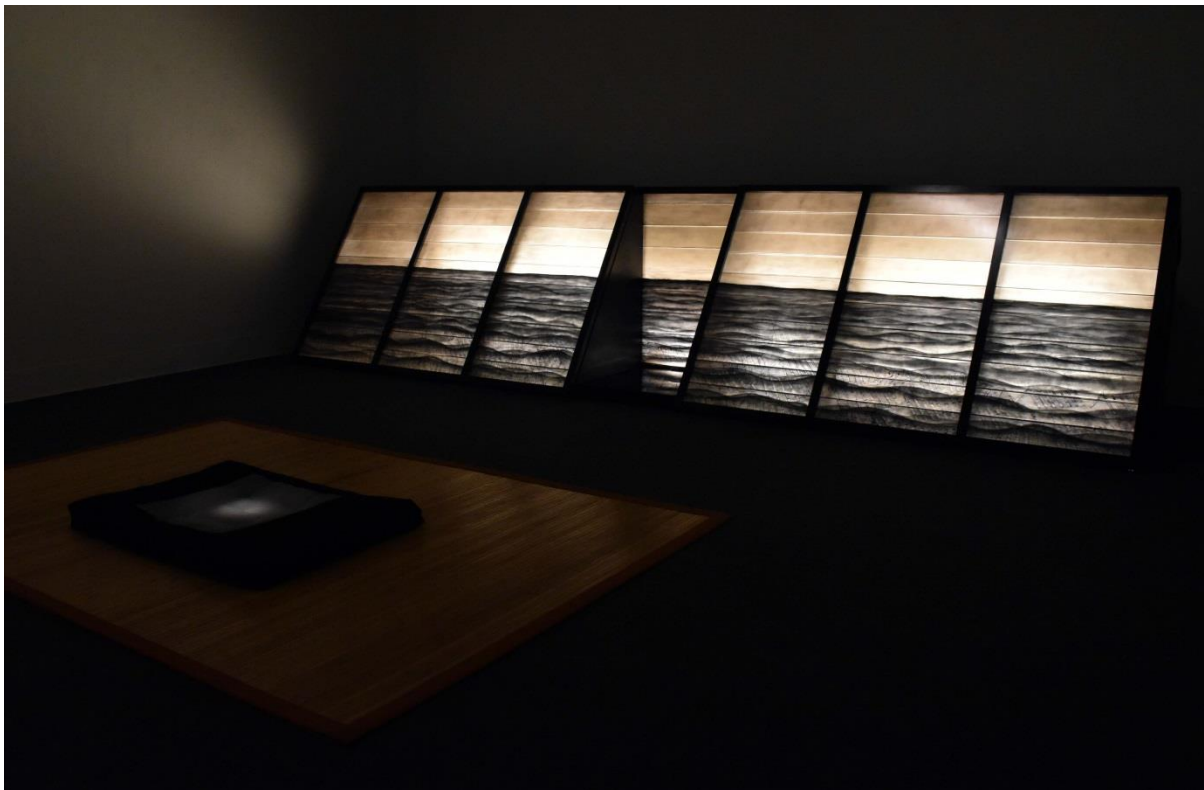


fig.9

Artistic Healing

A Zen poem says, "After the wind stops I see a flower falling. Because of the singing bird I find the mountain calmness." Before something happens in the realm of calmness, we do not feel the calmness; only when something happens within it do we find the calmness.

("Zen mind, Beginner's Mind" 121)



fig. 10

Looking back on all of the years of my life living abroad, there was no such thing as a 'pause' or 'real resting.' I always had to do something. I did it, and then had to come up with what would be next, always planning ahead. I won't feel guilty for saying that I worked so very hard, and did my best to study during my time abroad. I truly believe in my heart that nothing comes easily in life. I felt as if I was doing well when I was busy. Perhaps I was afraid of the feelings of 'pause,' although I don't think I was avoiding anything else in-the-act of engagement.

Things in my life have changed without giving me notice, so dramatically and suddenly. I had a terrible car accident on my way to school. My normal life completely stopped and so did my ability to think clearly. I was no longer physically and mentally free

and easy. I struggled so hard to turn my life back, but no matter how hard I tried, it just hurt me even deeper. It was so painful. I didn't want to delay my progress, and I was nervous and felt extremely anxious doing nothing. So, I was forced to take a 'pause' for the first time in my life.

A few months after my car accident, my body still wasn't in control, but my head was; I had so many thoughts and feelings, mostly unnecessary and negative. I knew that the only thing I must do was to empty those thoughts, so I struggled not to think about anything and worked at staying still. I spent all of my time every day clearing my thoughts.

When I limited my activities in order to not do anything, I began a regiment of meditation. It wasn't easy to do, but I finally felt that I was resting fully while doing this. After the big storms in my mind, I began to see the gentle waves. I asked myself, why was I so worried about everything, even just the little things and what was I so afraid of? When I think of nothing and just concentrate in this moment, new energy that I never was aware of came to me, making me grow up.

I continued this focus in my art practice as well. For me, it was meditating that helped me spend the time necessary to make hundreds of glass panels, repeating the same processes over and over again. This meditative practice stopped me from thinking any further, and it cleansed my mind. It let me heal myself.

I hope to give the viewer the chance to directly feel artistic healing and indirectly sense what I'd experienced. Through my work '*after the big wind stops, I see gentle waves*' with its combining the concept of meditation in a form of contemporary art, the viewer may have some kind of new experiences. If they are similar to practices I could have or totally different experiences, it matters not. (it doesn't matter)

It might take quite a long time before the viewer begins to find their own calm, serene mind. Many thoughts come and images arise, but they will just be waves in their minds. The viewer will be looking at the ocean's waves, and the horizon laid spread out in front of them, and perhaps forgetting the waves in their own minds. I hope the viewer will feel a "true moment of pause/resting", even if it's only for a few minutes in a busy day, by sitting in a comfortable position on the floor in a darkened room.

Contemplation in Light

I cannot forget the day when I first encountered James Turrell's "Skyspace" and "Horizon Room" at Museum SAN (Space, Art and Nature) in Korea. After such a long hard time, I felt that my body and mind wanted to be healed by nature. I decided to leave for a short trip to the museum, which was surrounded by nature at the top of a mountain. This museum was known for its artistic architecture and the beautiful natural garden designed by the great artist Ando Tadao. This was all I knew about this place. I never imagined that I would have the honor of seeing James Turrell's original works there in person.

I entered the exhibition site after an hour wait. Because the hallway was completely dark, people had to follow the person in front, placing their hands upon their shoulders, in line as the exhibition staff guided us. After a few minutes to allow our eyes to adjust to the darkness, we were able to enter a rounded room. As we sat on the bench, the door on the ceiling slowly opened like a curtain and the deep blue cloudless autumn sky appeared. It was not however just an ordinary blue sky, rather it seemed to be like a blue escape hole that was felt and perceived by my entire mind and body. I felt that my being was part of his work, and that my worn-out mind was gradually being restored at that moment. Perceiving my existence, while observing his work, was the ultimate meditation for myself. His magnificent, yet poetic artwork encouraged me to keep my imagination free and in a magnanimous state to experience the feast of light, with a reverence for life.

Turrell's medium is extremely minimal; there's no object, only light and our perception. His work nonetheless allowed me to see inside myself and behind my own eyes. Turrell considered meditation as "going inside to greet the light," as he was raised by the Quaker religious tradition. The Quaker concept of "inner light" is deeply soaked into his work. Viewing his work, I considered what it was to be a perceiving being and realized how much of our experience was determined by the "inner light" of our perception. I was blessed by being given this unexpected sensation, which let me continue a special journey of the mind.

This state would surely be echoed in my work, as an expression of my poetic passions and imagination, moving from that moment forward.

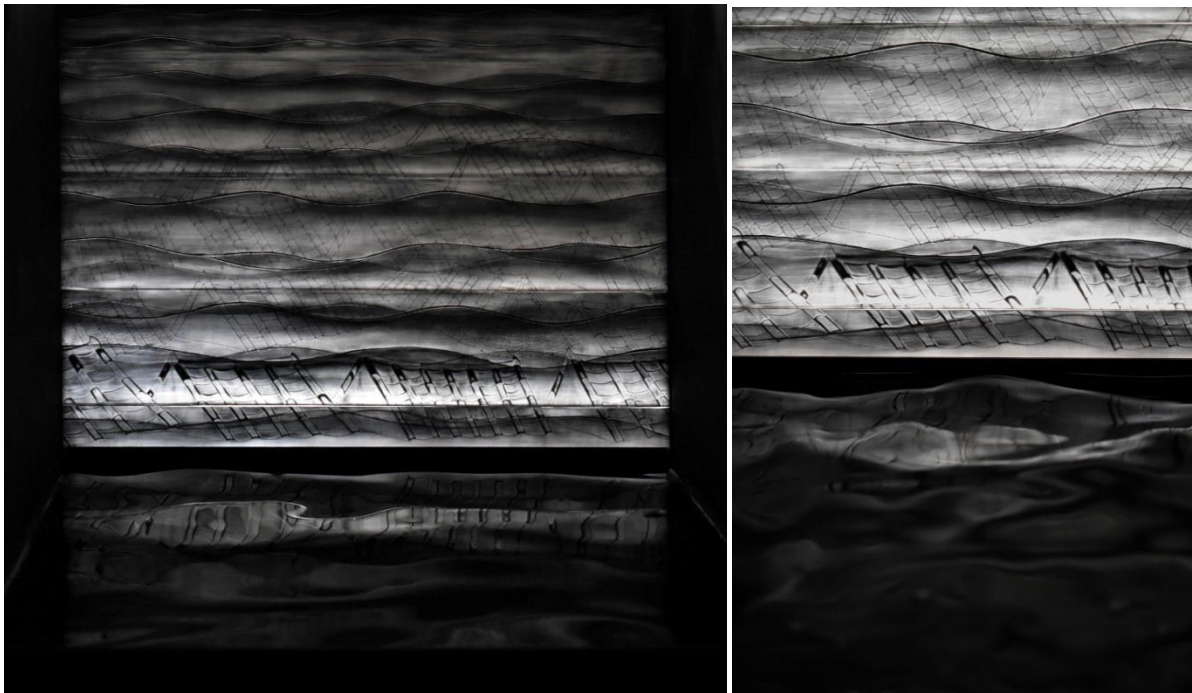


fig. 11

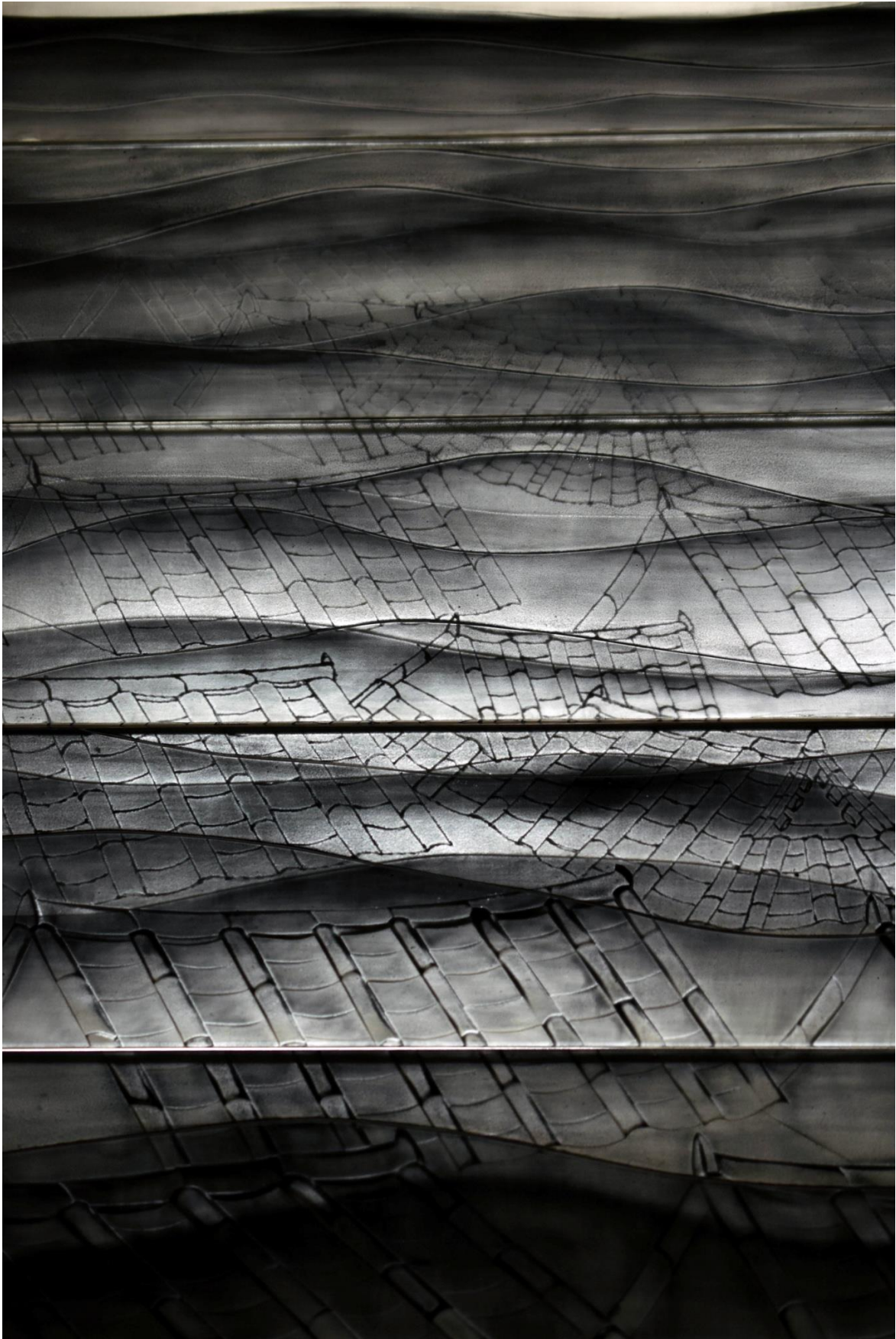


fig. 12

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Vita

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Education

- 2018 MFA , Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
2015 BFA in Glass, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
2009 AA, Lakeland College, "Summa Cum Laude", Mattoon, IL

Other Education / Workshops

- 2015 April Surgent and Marshall Hyde: "Engraving and Printing"
The Studio, Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY
2014 Hugh Salkind : "Fine Tune Your Torch Fundamentals"
The Studio, Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY
David Schnuckel: "Drawing, Painting on Glass"
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
Denise Stillwaggon Leone: "Sandblasting and Painting on Glass"
The Studio, Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY
2013 Yoonmi Nam: "Moku Hanga – Japanese Woodcut Printing",
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL

Employment

- 2017 Adjunct Professor, Art Foundation/Glass, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
2016 Teaching Assistant, Glass Kiln-working, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
2015 Teaching Assistant, Glass Kiln-working, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
2009 – 2012 Instructor, Painting and Drawing Class, Summer Academy, South Korea

Awards, Grants, Scholarships and Honors

- 2018 Full Scholarship recipient from Pilchuck glass art school, WA
Full Scholarship recipient from the Studio of the Corning Museum of Glass, NY
Full Scholarship recipient from Penland School of Craft, NC
2017 VCU Arts Graduate Travel Grants, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

- 2016 Student Scholarship recipient, Glass Art Society 2016 Conference, Corning, NY
 GAS General Scholarship, Glass Art Society
 Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (Fall and Spring)
 VCU Arts Graduate Travel Grants, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (February, April, and October)
- 2015 Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
 VCU Arts Graduate Travel Grant, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
 Rickert-Ziebold Trust Award, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
 2nd place, "Mapping" Exhibition, Ann Brierly Gallery, Winnetka, IL
 Dean's list, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL (May. 2013 – May. 2015)
 International Undergraduate Awards, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
 Scholarship for the Studio of the Corning Museum of Glass, Corning Museum of Glass, NY
 Windgate Charitable Foundation Education Opportunity Scholarship, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
 Windagate Charitable Foundation Undergraduate Research Grants, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
- 2014 Academic Honors, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
 Summer Full Scholarship for CMOG Workshop, Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY
 Windgate Charitable Foundation Education Opportunity Scholarship, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
 Windagate Charitable Foundation Undergraduate Research Grants, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
 International Undergraduate Awards, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
 University Honors Program, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
- 2013 Golden Key International Honor Society, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
- 2009 LLC Honors, Member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, Lakeland College, Mattoon, IL
 Talented Art Student Award, Lakeland College, Mattoon, IL
- 2008 LLC Academic Award, Lakeland College, Mattoon, IL
 Talented Art Student Award, LLC, Mattoon, IL

Exhibition

- 2018 *VCUarts MFA Thesis Exhibition*, Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA

- Virginia Glass Guild Exhibition*, Slover Library, Norfolk, VA
Glass Art Society Student Exhibition, Murano, Italy
 2016 *Material*, FAB Gallery, Richmond, VA
Practice, Artspace Gallery, Richmond, VA
This Just In, Depot Gallery, Richmond, VA
Glass Art Society Student Exhibition, Corning, NY
International Student Online Exhibition, Glass Art Society
 2015 *Rickert-Ziebold Trust Award Exhibition*, Surplus Gallery, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
SIU 3D senior Group Exhibition, Surplus Gallery, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
International Student Online Exhibition, Glass Art Society
Mapping, Ann Brierly Gallery, New Trier Township High School, Winnetka, IL
 2014 *International Student Online Exhibition*, Glass Art Society
Glass Art Society Conference Student Exhibition, Chicago, IL
 2013 *SIU Student Exhibition*, Carbondale, IL
 2009 *LLC's Annual Talent Award Exhibition*, Lakeland College, Mattoon, IL
 2007 *LLC's Annual Talent Award Exhibition*, Lakeland College, Mattoon, IL

Publication

- 2017 *GAS member Monday*, Glass Art Society, September, 2017
 2015 *2015 Juried Selection*, the Glass Art Society Catalogue, December, 2015

Memberships/ Professional Affiliations

- 2013 - present Member of Glass Art Society
 2013 – 2015 Member of Southern Glass Works
 (Glass Student Organization at Southern Illinois University)
 Fundraiser Productions & Sales Events Participation
 2015 – present Member of VCU Glass Works
 (Glass Student Organization at Virginia Commonwealth University)
 Fundraiser Productions Participation
 2018 – present Member of Virginia Glass Guild