

The Hare, the Turtle, the Shrimp and the Whales

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The exhibition *The Way a Hare Transforms into a Turtle* came into being during an Autumn 2018 journey to Korea with Inseon Kim. "A shrimp surrounded by whales" – this is what the Koreans call their country, located geographically as it is among the great powers China, Japan and Russia. Both Korea and Denmark are island nations with one major peninsula and a number of smaller islands; but whereas Denmark is flat, Korea is mountainous.

There are many similarities and differences to explore within the two cultures. But this is not the purpose of the exhibition *The Way a Hare Transforms into a Turtle* with its reference to Aesop's fable. Instead, the exhibition provides an impression of what the Korean visual art scene looks like right now.

Even though Korea today is probably best known for its production of electronics and cars, it has an art scene very much its own. The ten artists of this exhibition, all of them fairly young and living and working in Korea, with their various approaches display great diversity and autonomy. At the same time, one senses that these artists possess admirable work morale and a dedicated determination to focus on and explore the selected topics and concepts.

Hardly surprising, one of the prevailing themes is the border between North and South Korea. At a time in which the hope of one united nation is strong but also fragile, the tensions and longings that have torn the country as well as numerous families since 1948 are reflected in art. Hayoun Kwon's work *489 Years* describes a border soldier's emotions while patrolling the demilitarised zone between North and South Korea. We get to experience his physical watchfulness and how his mind reacts in the crucial moments crystallised by the work. It is a reality that seen from a distance appears almost like a dream, a kind of hyperrealism that with time has gained a patina of the beauty and romance of dreams.

The Way a Hare Transforms into a Turtle is not about a competition in which the fastest wins; instead, it presents pieces of experienced reality as conveyed by art. This allows us to meet new aspects of Korea's present, history, aesthetics and culture – and perhaps we may even recognise ourselves somewhat in what we see, whether we feel like a hare, a turtle, a shrimp or a whale.