Korean Shamanism Come to America
Kresge Art Museum, MSU


The twelve paintings of *Gods, Demon and Generals: Icons of Korean Shamanism* represent and explore the indigenous shamanic tradition, which is a force that exists at the nexus of the culture and religion of Korea. These paintings were not created as art or decoration but as visual representations of the gods that a shaman honors each day in her shrine, calls upon to help her give divinations, and manifests in her own person when she performs an elaborate ritual called kut. When they appear in kut, the gods and ancestors speak through the shaman’s lips and perform through her own body, chastising family members for neglect and misbehavior but also bringing promises of good fortune. The images in the paintings, like the costumes that shamans wear in kut, reveal a lively religious practice that incorporates elements of popular religion, Buddhism, and the old Confucian state, often with a dash of humor. To glimpse the world depicted in these compositions is to gain a unique perspective on Korea’s ancient past and immediate present at once.

continued on page 2
On display at Kresge Art Museum and presented by The Korea Society, *Gods, Demon and Generals: Icons of Korean Shamanism* is the first substantial survey of Korean shamanism to be exhibited in the U.S. The show is organized and curated by The Korea Society, New York, as part of their traveling exhibition programs. It is currently traveling to colleges, universities, galleries and nonprofit institutions across America.

Korean-born, New York-based artist Haeri Yoo executed a large scale, mixed-media installation on two gallery walls in the museum during the month of August. The Kresge Art Museum piece represents Yoo’s first in Michigan. She returns on September 28, 2009, in conjunction with MSU’s Department of Art & Art History Visiting Artist series, for class visits, a gallery walk and lectures.

Yoo says her “mixed-media drawings, paintings, and site-specific installations explore psychological humor, bodily tensions, human sexuality, and the overt and subtle relationships that haunt the space between beauty and violence.” Her large walls are a riot of color, forcing the viewer to stop and focus. Images hidden next to and below other images begin to emerge. “Marked areas are developed from touches produced in a brief moment and are judged based on the gesture's emotive quality that they stand in memory of. Final works are built up, painted, drawn, pasted and re-shaped from a large repository of smaller explorations. Like a child views the world, my work segregates and playfully mutates the realities present.”

Exhibitions and programs organized in conjunction with MSU’s Asian Studies Program.

Kresge Art Museum is located in East Lansing, MI, on the first floor of the Kresge Art Center, at the intersection of Physics and Auditorium Roads between the Alumni Chapel and the MSU Auditorium, on the campus of Michigan State University. Museum hours are Monday through Friday, 10 to 5 p.m., Thursday until 8 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. Admission is free. For additional information, call (517) 355-7631 or visit [www.artmuseum.msu.edu](http://www.artmuseum.msu.edu).

###

**Caption/Credit for attached image:** Guardian Spirits, mid–20th century, color on paper and fabric, 42 x 63 inches, Kresge Art Museum, Michigan State University, loan from The Korea Society Collection

###