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Shin Mee-kyoung's Soap Sculptures at Kukje



"Translation - Vase" by Shin Mee-kyoung is part of the of Kukje Gallery

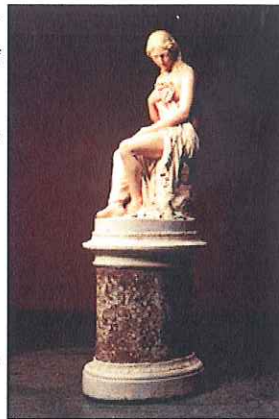
By Cathy Rose A. Garcia Staff Reporter

Soap is not a medium often associated with sculptures, but when Korean artist Shin Mee-kyoung saw Greek pieces in a museum, she immediately thought of their similarity with soap. This prompted Shin to start experimenting with soap in recreating classical Greek sculptures.

To find out how closely these soap sculptures resemble their marble counterparts, head over to Kukje Gallery, which is exhibiting 40 of Shin's works ranging from Oriental vases to Buddha and ancient Greek reliefs.

"Ever since she moved to London in the early '90s, she has been concerned with the issues of re-contextualization, which is addressed in her work in the exploration of the shifting contexts of cultural artifacts when they are removed from their original setting, resulting in their translation between East and West, past and present, and old and new," organizers said.

The highlight is "Translation — Greek Archaic Sculpture," a series of ancient statues of Kuros and Venus that were originally shown at the Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art for 100 days starting from August.



"Young Aphrodite" by Shin Mee-kyoung

Four of the pieces show signs of being exposed to the natural elements, like wind and rain, when they were displayed outdoors at the Gyeonggi museum. There are other sculptures that look similar but are painted.

Two busts of Venus are on display at the exhibition. These were actually placed inside the museum's bathroom first, where people could use it as soap, and later transferred to the exhibition hall.

"Shin has installed her works in the bathroom so that the audience can participate in the process of transforming her work into a relic as they use the soap to wash their hands. Thus, each of her artworks becomes authentic through its placement, duration of the work and the active participation of the audience. In effect, Shin's work presents the idea of not creating a work that is complete as it leaves the artists' studio, but the ongoing process of the whole work that has site-specificity and historicity through natural weathering," organizers said.

The exhibition also includes the "Translation — Vase" series, featuring Korean and Chinese vases, some of which are replicas and others of her own design. "It is a quintessential reference of export ware that represents cultural mistranslation incurred during trade between East and West," organizers said. Shin divides her time between Seoul and London. She has a B.A. and an M.A. in



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sculpture from Seoul National University, and an M.A. from Slade School of Fine Art in London. She has participated in many group and solo exhibitions, including a special installation/performance in 2004 and Translation-Moon Jar in 2007 at The British Museum in London.

The exhibition runs through Dec. 19 at Kukje Gallery, located near Gyeongbokgung Station Line 3, Exit 5. Admission is free. Visit www.kukje.org.

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