

Yoonjee Kwak

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Artist Statement

Clay allows me to tell the story of my memories that are left behind from diverse and unpredictable relationships between others and myself. My memories are expressed by using precarious and fragile forms. These memories can be represented in my work through exploration of the duality between weakness and strength

The body of work is composed of sculptural vessels. I use this form to represent human beings as iconic symbols of the Korean culture. In Korea, when people talk about someone's personality, we often use "vessel" as a metaphor of one's spirit of tolerance. For instance, when we talk about someone who is very generous or broad-minded, we say, "His vessel is big". The structure of the vessel that gradually widens from a narrow base symbolizes human relationships; people can have deep or shallow relationships, or have both relationships at the same time. I explore this theme through forms that are derived from minimalism, nature and geometry. The theme and language are developed through various sizes and styles of works such as big sculptures and small utilitarian piece but also extended from traditional to contemporary.

I usually use hand-building techniques, because the marks left by the fabricating process is very direct and leaves evidence of my physical interactions with clay. When I work with clay, my interactive conversation with the clay is vital to the process. While I slowly build up clay coils from the bottom, my hand marks remain on the surface. It records elements of movement, time and my feelings. The attractive characteristic of coil- building is that it allows artists to observe progressive growth through the process of the work. The process is very similar to raising a plant from seedling to blossoming. As a plant needs water, sunshine and time to grow, my works need patience and time. The process of building up the blocks, memories of patience and time into the pieces, I am able to create a meaningful record of my practice.