



About the Artist

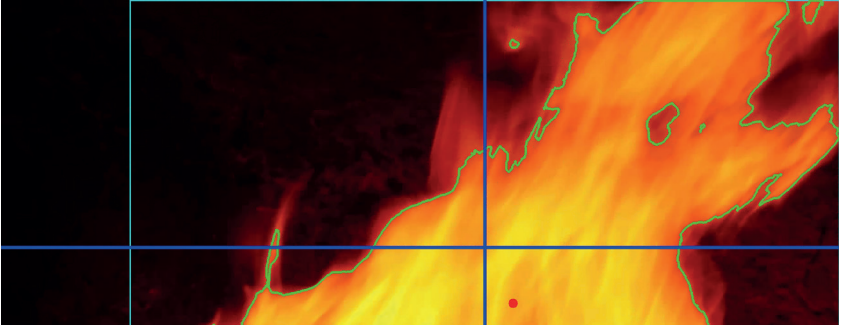
Insook Choi is a composer and interactive media artist born in South Korea, living in Manchester, UK. She is Professor of interdisciplinary Arts and Technology in the School of Arts and Media, University of Salford, where she holds a research chair in Creative Media and Technology at MediaCityUK. She is also a scholar on Human Computer Interaction for engaging the theme of future audiences with an emphasis on human experiences.

Ceramics and computation: two extreme slow arts brought together by digital creativity for the 4th industrial revolution.



Visuals have ways of impressing narrative structure in time. Sounds and music have ways of expressing our memory.

Insook is a pioneer in new genres in both performing and installation arts to generate new audience engagements. Ranging from circuit-bending to VR performances, to interactive media and sound installations, her works have been premiered in Expo93, Daejeon, Korea; Ars Electronica 1996 and 1998, Linz, Austria; Supercomputing 1995, San Diego; Cyberfest '97 Gala, University of Illinois; Columbia University's 1999 Miller Theater series; solo exhibition in 2000 in Dorsky Gallery, SoHo; and the Simuse concert in Voorhees Theatre, Brooklyn, 2007. Recent engagements include the ICMC2018 opening concert, Daegu, Korea, and the Subi exhibition, Castlefield Gallery, Manchester, UK. Insook's recent work engages semantic computing, AI, Artificial Life simulation, and multimedia information and immersion systems, and applies cognitive models of users' temporal engagement to generate interactive narratives and scenarios.



Labour teaches creative arts; one thousand years of knowledge teaches AI.

Insook treasures the honest labor of an artist like Master Shin Gyung Kyun who devotes his life into an epic process of ceramic making. Through her work with low and high technologies in pursuit of creating new experiences, Insook understands material-bound inertia, which an artist negotiates through a long process to see the results that can be meaningfully perceivable. She writes, "Digital tangibility of materials and processes is an important aspect of new art forms to offer alternative narrative structures, as modern society is saturated with digital stimuli that can potentially alienate human experiences. How to appeal to senses and knowledge grounded in observers' internal reflections? What are the respectable ways of presenting a story to collaborate and play with audience imagination? How can an artist function as a facilitator and mediator rather than a star or celebrity?" These are the questions Insook takes into exploration.



Personal Structures

11 May-24 November,
Palazzo Mora Gallery 16
European Cultural Centre
Venice, Italy

Insook Choi
Media and Interaction Artist

Robin Bargar
Producer

Gyung Kyun Shin
Ceramic Artist

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Ceramic Production: Gye Hwa Lim, Hyun Min Shin

Additional Source Credit: JangAnYo, Kiwi Media

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Insook Choi



Venice Biennale 2019

From where about in the orbit, we see the fragment of a moon. In the darkness of our own shadows, two crescents meet. Broken dreams dwell in forgetfulness, in contemporary illusion. Only the touch may reveal the dream of whole.

Artist's Statement

In this orbit, I explore a space for experiencing experiences. In idle moments, our neurophysiology has its way of limiting awareness by defaulting our minds to habitual states, blinding us to other potentials. To what extent can a space allure our minds away from that normal circuitry towards ephemeral and elusive experiential play? How does the space develop and how may it change over time as an audience brings their own authentic skills and creativity? With Touch Crescent Moons I desire to facilitate audience authentic self-referential experiences through moment-to-moment sensory engagement and free-to-play immersion. This requires a rigor of coding with no rigidity; coding a space is a necessary condition for art, but only a beginning. Touch points in this space suspend immersive sounds and images, movements and social potentials, and nascent narratives that simply begin by dwelling upon what sense might we make of.

For an allegory of the space, Touch Crescent Moons is an epic fusion of two extreme slow arts, the process of born ceramics, and the making of computation that works with space. An emblem is dal hangari known as Moon Vase, of which materiality will be brought into immersive projections with the subject of five elements, fire, earth, water, wood, and metal. Founded in Chinese philosophy, they are the fundamental elements of everything in the universe and the interactions among them bring different energy. Born ceramics are the very synthesis of these five elements. "Dahl" means moon in Korean. Dahl hangari is a Korean white porcelain from the 15th century Joseon Dynasty. Its shape and luminescent glaze make the lunar connection to its name. The meaning of a full moon goes deep in the Far East, from the sense of cyclic life to the abundance associated to the Autumn Festival and to folklore such as the moon rabbit. As a child, I always looked for the mysterious rabbit on the moon whenever the full moon arose, and this visual search, I still continue.

My journey to this project anchors on the pursuit of a metaphoric transfer from the rendering of the primordial narratives of silent objects to the rendering of potentials, as first handed, and spatiotemporal, experiential narratives endowed by an audience. As human capacity is so limited for such ambition, I engage into a deep and sobering partnership with technology for critical reflections upon my ideas and experiments. My long research about ceramic making took a place in parallel with iterative technology prototyping, to bring both ends to be compatible. I share thoughts and attitudes towards dahl hangari, the emblem of this work, which guided the direction of technology developments such as AI and sensors, and the digital lens through which the subjects were studied.

Once an ordinary object in the 15th century, dahl hangari has gained a global reputation. Praised for its perfect imperfection, subtle purity, poetic and asymmetric beauty, the mythological status of dahl hangari may

overshadow the rest of its semantic space: How it comes to exist, its dark phases in cycle, an eclipse, the waning and dwindling motion. Its shape and colour, the undistinguishable plain roundness and milky colour, yield social and political implications analogous to the faded white clothing worn by commoners in the Joseon era.



Dahl hangari is an art of phenomenon, as displaced from kitchen to museum, a phenomenon of an extreme slow art, as the process unfolds epic rhythm, an art of reconciliation, as it remembers and embraces an artist's sweat, blood, and skin to its body

Dal hangari is a phenomenon. Its poise is serenely encompassed with a subliminal glow which has survived the metaphorical journey from kitchens to museums. The warm touch-feel persists however persisting beyond time and space. The sensual moon impregnated in earthly material is always generous to touch, as it seems to remember the artist's sweat, blood, and skin it consumed in order to become its material whole. Not every moon-like jar is considered dahl hangari, as its signature comes from the unique process and technique: It is made of two oversized sahbals, the bowls with wide open rims, joined to form a full moon shape. The abundant space that dahl hangari symbolizes comes from two halves with open spaces united. The pause of the wheel hangs heavy when the artist lines up two open edges of sahbals and joins them into one surface. It is a moment of high concentration. As the wheel pauses, the silence gathers and locks into hangari. When this ceramic is born, silence will have transformed itself into a mature quietness. This transformation of the nature of silence, undergoing all tests of five elements, is simply a wonder.



Dahl hangari is an art of reconciliation, as the open rims of two sahbals are joined with care. an art of circulation, as the process of making flows with seasons and nature. an art of orchestration, as the artist works with a deep understanding of the five elements of materials.

The process of born ceramics is a journey through many phases unfolding in circadian rhythms and seasons. With the seasonal flow, the act of creation involves soil gathering, soil balancing and mixing, transforming soil and water into clay, mixing and kneading with feet and hands, clay maturation to prepare for wheel throwing, shaping and burnishing the objects by kicking the wheel, glaze and iron pigment preparation, glazing, brushing and painting, drying greenware, preparing wood and drying it for seven years, kiln work and firing, cooling the kiln and unpacking. Ceramic process itself is a metaphor for the life of a ceramic artist. Every stage requires long-term planning and projection. Along with meticulous preparation, life and plans must adjust to the variation of seasons and weather and as such are open to the influence of the elements.



The final stage is the test of fire. Fire is the harshest judge of all. Pots may collapse or shatter by the forceful energy of the fire inside the kiln. After an intense period of firing and cooling, the pots are uncovered and their final form revealed. Master Shin Gyung Kyun, the ceramic artist whose works are captured for this installation, watches flames day and night for three full days. "Fire speaks to me", he says. Firing is like having a conversation with fire. During that conversation, Shin visually "reads" the state of fire as if to read the emotional state of his conversing partner. However, the conversation is not always peaceful. Much tension must be reconciled and negotiated during firing. The colour of the smoke coming out of the chimney is a helpful indication: no dark grey smoke, feed the fire. Inside the kiln, pots endure through the rigorous test of the various stages of intense heat and fire. A leakage of glaze into a tiny crack can make the vase collapse. Some may shatter into fragments and fly through the fire path to get stuck onto perfect ones. Iron pigments may bubble up over glaze layers. There are many encounters that lead to fragile and broken dreams. As much as the synthesis of five elements is beautiful, the process undertakes a cruel path. After Shin has done all he can do in humanly possible ways, "fire determines everything."

When I first started creating this work, I used ethnographic methodology to elicit knowledge of craft design and process to abstract the performativity of the ceramic making, which stood me on good ground. After I have experienced the whole process myself whilst filming with a media research team, my analysis throughout the process revealed that any perception of how time "flows" is only a summary, as there are countless articulations of openings and closures. Upon my creative deconstruction of this flow, those laborious performative articulations yielded ways to be reflected in the labor of sound synthesis for sonic experience. Even tiny motions of fingers are the executions of short notes with articulated envelopes that must be shaped swiftly and accurately, then accumulatively forming a rhythm, then rhythms forming a phrase, phrases accumulating mornings and afternoons, and days. When glazing a dahl hangari, the motions dipping into a large basin of glaze, turning submerged, and lifting out with a gentle turn, must be meticulously performed as to execute different durations of the three gestures in one seamless phrase. The fourth action requires a fermata, for holding the hangari upside down to drip off excessive glaze. This is a painful and muscular task for the ceramic artist. The glaze-worn wet-ware weighing more than 10 Kg is held with only two index fingers. This is to leave no other marks on the surface texture. The two fingers trained for sensitive detailed craft sustain a balance and stability longer than 15 seconds.

Breaking is an art of curation, as the act belongs to making choices an art of intention, as an artist returns the materials to earth an art of deliberation, as the fragments suspend dreams into hibernation.

The slow materiality of Dahl hangari culminates in dozens being smashed by the artist to keep only the best. Breaking is an intentional act, an art of curation, returning fragments to earth, from whence, this work claimed back fragments as an allegory of Crescent Moons. I aspired to create an enabling architecture for the metaphoric pathway from the fragments to the whole, the dreams intact by five elements, exploring a reverse path, from the suspension of disbelief to the suspension of belief, by retrieving the dreams of broken dreams. Having gone through the whole process of ceramic making during a winter season, my response to fragments is as strong as to beautiful objects intact. Though shattered, they are the synthesis of five elements undergoing the enduring period of time. They carry the meanings of the other side, the absent side, where an eclipse foregrounds.

Eclipse may draw blindness by shadows of our own, by night flocks filling the sky with the noise they racket in any stage of the process, perhaps more in between make cycles, even more on the matters of struggle in ethos and methods, small or big, failed or succeeded, of the life of making and the life of racketing.



Installation Design and Technology

Configured along a **Yin-Yang shape line**, there are six touch stations installed, each presenting a stage of the ceramic making process. Plinths hold crescents, the ceramic fragments waiting to be touched. As crescents sense the touch, they wake up and play. Metaphorically, the crescents are remembering. Pragmatically, the visitors are playing and exploring in touch with the crescents. Distance sensors attached to the plinths detect the touch and the depth of the touch, sending signals to a dynamic media player.

How time passes in Touch Crescent Moons is an important consideration for coding a space. Without touch, crescents simply drift into indistinguishable states of suspension with no memory and with no sense of time. Upon touch, they wake up from the drift and begin to release suspended dreams into memory space. Touch registers the memory of each crescent on a unique viewing area. Once touched, images and sounds begin to play out. Visitors may experience all six crescents in any order, from Soil Work, Clay and Wheel Work, Glaze and Water Work, Kiln and Fire Work, and Born Ceramics. The longer that visitors stay in touch, the crescents will bring out their deeper memory. Once in a while, they come together into a joint celebration of orchestrated events.

Multifaceted signal processing is applied to process sounds and visuals using motion data and AI techniques. The interactive media system is enabled by reengineering a state of the art web technology for live streaming with complex dynamic query processing techniques, and compositing assets through a local area network to secure the quality of experience. This experiment envisions future web experiences with cloud solutions. An intelligent display mechanism orchestrates scenes and executes programmed designs of interactive scenarios. A network of communications among all system components is an analogy to the narrative structure as a network of media assets of this installation, which in turn is a representation of a network of the memories and suspended dreams of the crescents.

The narrative structure combines linear and nonlinear processing techniques to respect how time passes during the ceramic process and how time passes in this installation space. The former, is the scale of epic time. The latter, is the scale of epic perception. Visuals have ways of impressing the narrative in time; sounds and music have ways of expressing our memory. My work generates the interplay of fleeting cinematic elements brought on by a visitor's touch, as each touch registers into a transient state. The media research team for this installation has meticulously captured the footage, rigorously tagged and curated, then conditioned into where the narrative scaffolding was coded and from which the units of images and sounds are retrieved. Narrative in this sense is the composite of images and sounds that are dynamically responding to the audience interactions, a structure of temporal potentiation on the depth of multi-sensorial associative paths that is neither static nor hierarchical. Various encounters and combinations will bring about the events on the fly, each time as live moments, every time as different momentum. The juxtaposition of craft and computation reveals a figure-ground play in dahl hangari, irregular and plain at first sight, then on, with a captivating quality of femininity, a fleeting beauty in hide and seek

