



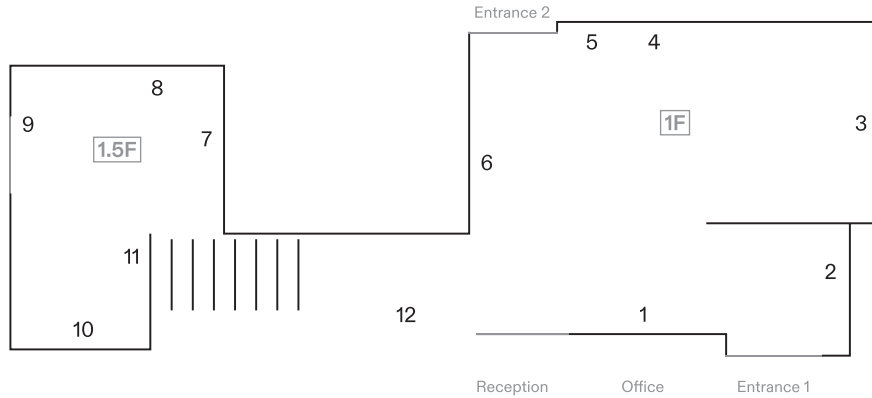
Song Seungeun *Planta*



25.5.15.Thur — 6.14.Sat

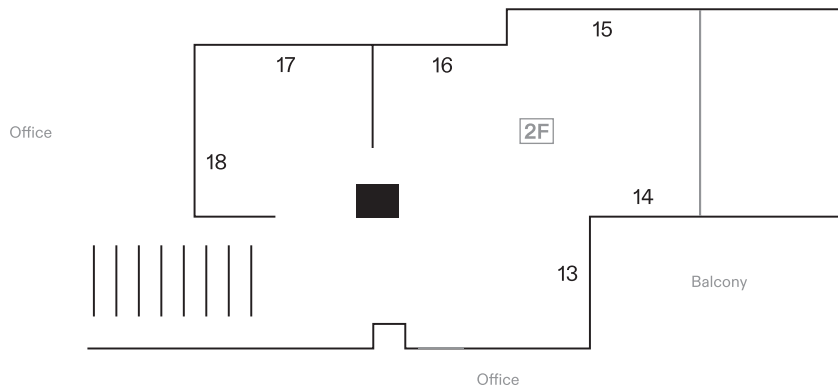
KICHE 

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1. SONG Seungeun, *Plantaria*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 53 × 41 cm
2. SONG Seungeun, *Thinking About Pet Bees*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 41 × 31.8 cm
3. SONG Seungeun, *The Bluebird's Advice*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 227.3 × 181.8 cm
4. SONG Seungeun, *An Old Cup and the Memory of a Mountain I Forgot the Name Of*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 162.2 × 130.3 cm
5. SONG Seungeun, *Grown in Haze*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 45 × 38 cm
6. SONG Seungeun, *Names of Seeds I Had Forgotten*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 116.8 × 90.8 cm
7. SONG Seungeun, *How to Name a Seed*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 116.3 × 80.2 cm
8. SONG Seungeun, *Late Night*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 33.3 × 24 cm
9. SONG Seungeun, *Cloud Blanket*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 72.5 × 72.5 cm
10. SONG Seungeun, *An Old Cup and the Memory of a Mountain I Forgot the Name Of*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 162 × 130.5 cm
11. SONG Seungeun, *An Old Cup and the Memory of a Mountain I Forgot the Name Of*, 2025, Pastel on paper, 27.5 × 23.5 cm (Frame : 37.5 × 33.2 cm)
12. SONG Seungeun, *Buddy*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 38 × 37.5 cm

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13. SONG Seungeun, *Names of Seeds I Had Forgotten*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 116.3 × 90.5 cm
14. SONG Seungeun, *Flipping the Paper*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 45.5 × 37.7 cm
15. SONG Seungeun, *One Day After Another*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 149.8 × 149.8 cm
16. SONG Seungeun, *A Person with Strange Hat Spilling Out Heroic Tales*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 72.5 × 60.6 cm
17. SONG Seungeun, *Stories and Belongings*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 145 × 112 cm
18. SONG Seungeun, *Stories and Belongings*, 2025, Charcoal on paper, 65 × 49.8 cm (Frame : 74.6 × 59.5 cm)

From May 15 to June 14, KICHE presents *Planta*, a solo exhibition by artist Song Seungeun. This exhibition features her latest works, in which she builds compositions structurally on canvas—almost like drafting a blueprint—beginning with the fundamental element of line in painting. A total of 15 works are on view, including 13 paintings and 2 drawings, such as the large-scale *The Bluebird's Advice* (2025).

The exhibition title *Planta* is derived from Latin, meaning plant, grounding, or seedling. Song likens her paintings to something that is constantly changing yet remains rooted—like a plant breathing and evolving with the seasons. Her works capture new scenes that emerge from the layering and entanglement of resurfacing memories, sensory traces, and fleeting images. In particular, her latest works are experimental attempts to reveal this ever-shifting, continuously active state of painting in a more structural way.

“I think about how things from within—personal experiences, thoughts, and memories—can become painting. I construct a single scene using images from various media that surface in my mind, and I’ve always wrestled with the tension between the narrative and the surface depth of painting. It’s less about writing a story and more about building a structure. Each element is meticulously assembled like a mechanism, designed to function as a single organism.”

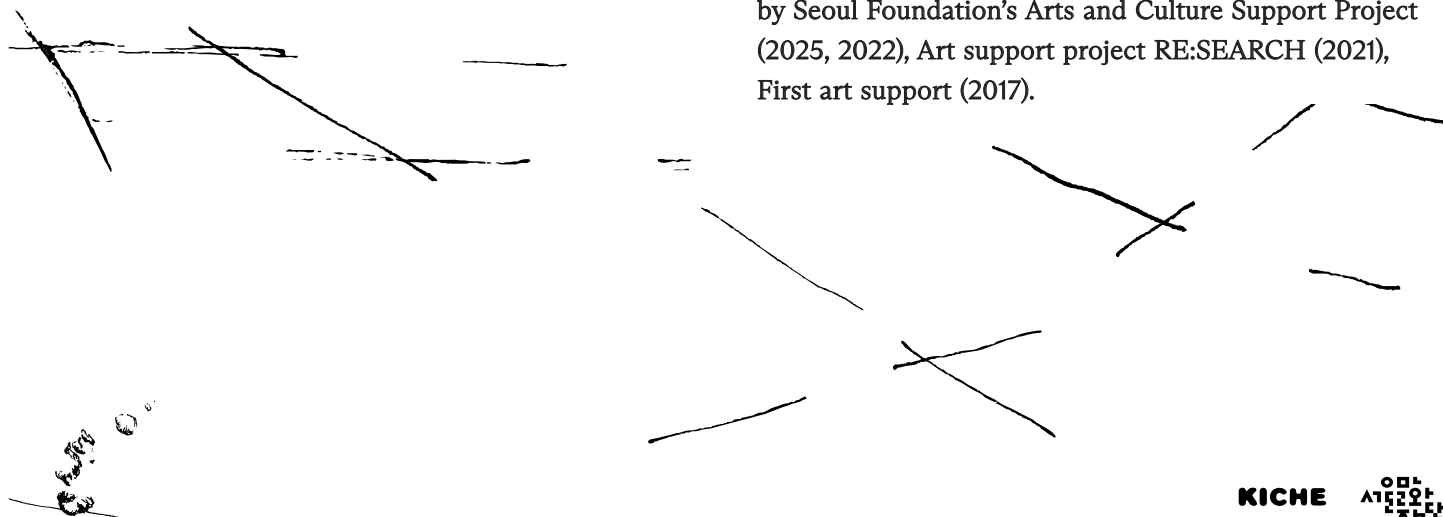
— from the artist’s note.

In her earlier works, Song typically completed a painting after composing a collage and a simple sketch to shape the image. In contrast, her current approach is more layered: she begins with a collage, reinterprets it through a charcoal drawing to develop a painterly image, then analyzes its formal structure through a line drawing from a geometric perspective. Only then does she begin applying paint to the canvas.

This line drawing stage, in particular, closely resembles architectural drafting—drawing a kind of visual blueprint. As a result, the contours of the images and the connections between lines become especially pronounced in these new works. Her investigative process is further highlighted in the series *Memories of an Old Cup and a Mountain Whose Name I’ve Forgotten* (2025). Though both pieces are derived from the same original image—developed through an identical process of collage, charcoal drawing, and line drawing—they diverge in color, each evoking a distinctly different atmosphere.

Ultimately, *Planta* reflects the artist’s ongoing exploration of how a painting is constructed—and of what emerges, vanishes, or transforms along the way.

BIO - SONG Seungeun (b.1991) lives and works in Seoul. She has held solo exhibition of *Planta* (KICHE, Seoul), *Slippery teacup* (Artside Gallery, Seoul, 2022), and *Grab the Slush* (Keep in Touch Seoul, Seoul, 2020). She has staged various group exhibitions such as *If we remember everything* (KICHE, Seoul, 2024), *A Glimpse of Our Time* (Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul, 2023), *Today, Moment, Emotion* (Artside Gallery, Seoul, 2021), *BGA Showroom* (BGA, Seoul, 2021), and *A planet filled with void* (Hapjungjigu, Seoul, 2018). The artist is also selected by Seoul Foundation’s Arts and Culture Support Project (2025, 2022), Art support project RE:SEARCH (2021), First art support (2017).



Planta:
The Mother Tongue

Written by
Sangyeop Rhii

Planta is a feminine noun meaning “plant” in Latin. In her solo exhibition, *Planta*, Artist Song Seungeun imparts this word with the past 10 years, and perhaps even the past beyond. What is held in the time spent until she embraced *Planta* as her own language and gave it meaning? It’s the linear time spent in a studio for 10 years, the internal growth and evolution that naturally came during this period, and the countless stories that the artist and her works have created as they became entangled and took root in the studio. For Song, *Planta* is a nickname given to paintings that came to life as a collection of abstract sensations that arose between “the artist (herself) - painting - studio”. It is also a name for the reflections, actions, and structures that she repeats in her studio. In this sense, the time spent long in a single place becomes a key to understanding *Planta*. Rather than being stirred by the daily changes that arise from physical movement, Song finds meaning in contemplating and accumulating time in a place that feels right and comfortable for her. Her artistic disposition brings to mind a line once expressed by the critic Paul Valéry (1871–1945) as he reflected on the landscapes of Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796–1875): “A tree can only live where it is currently growing. Every tree, without exception, has its own place. (...) Within each tree lies a history that belongs to no other. A tree is a ‘someone’—a being with its own personality.”¹ As Valéry mentions, a tree typically claims one place as its own ground. Unless forced to move by external forces or others’ intentions, a tree takes root in one spot and spends its entire life there. That place becomes the tree’s singular and unalterable point of existence. Each tree carries countless encounters and events it has experienced, things it feels through its own body, and a history that stretches across decades or even centuries. Similarly, within the ten years Song spent working in a single space, there is a uniqueness and singularity, much like the time of the tree Valéry describes. In much the same way, *Planta* is a place where one can trace back through that time and those stories.

As one follows the passage of time in *Planta*, reaching the final layer, there comes a realization that something unseen, yet deeply rooted beneath the surface, firmly resides there. This invisible presence, though not immediately apparent, exists not in the past ten years but in the time she spent before that. The artist often reflects on the past, frequently returning to her childhood years. At the core of these memories is a scene from the veranda of the house where she spent most of her life, filled with the green plants her mother lovingly tended. The habits, traces, gestures, and language of her mother become nourishment for Song, shaping her very existence. In this way, *Planta* becomes the place where the first roots of her “mother tongue” take hold. Although her mother tongue does not appear overtly, it naturally forms the foundation that supports the entirety of her work. *Planta* is, in essence, the language of seeds—a language unknowingly absorbed long ago and cultivated through the body and memory. In this solo exhibition, the artist consciously moves away from direct verbal expression, instead quietly releasing the words she has internalized and cherished. *Planta* becomes her mother tongue, the way she speaks through painting.

At the same time, Song’s paintings follow a certain set of rules and procedures. The artist allows for a fairly long process before completing a single painting. To explore the nuances and forms of narrative, she begins with paper collages made by cutting and recombining scenes from early to mid-20th century television animations and illustrations. She then sketches the main figure and composition in pencil, transfers it into a charcoal drawing to examine light and form, and finally renders it in pastel to study the harmony between colors. Once she stands before the canvas, brush in hand, a different set of rules comes into play. Just as plants follow their own cycles of watering, Song sets her own rhythms for the progression of the *Planta* series. According to this pace, the works are laid out in a row, painted in simultaneity, then left to rest and dry repeatedly. Every rule and procedure she sets and follows requires great care, layered with unseen energy and time. From a human perspective, plants may seem to grow silently, without sound or pain—but in truth, each new leaf emerges through an intense gathering and release of inner heat. In much the same way, her process is quiet, yet mirrors the fierce, invisible labor of a plant’s growth. The plant-like quality that runs through her paintings also emerges through her use of composition and color. Her canvases and palettes linger in the past—a past tinted in hues of green and blue. The faded greens and blues that appear consistently across the *Planta* series resemble the washed-out tones of old television

screens she watched as a child. Once again, memory circles back to her paintings, taking form as color. These are the colors of childhood television screens, the colors of her father, who had a habit of keeping things for a long time. These are the colors of *Planta*, held quietly at the edges of her gaze as she grew up.

In *Planta*, a series of paintings cross between “here” and “there.” It traverses figuration and abstraction, narrative and non-narrative, form and color, structure and freedom, construction and collapse, dream and reality. Because Song seeks to hold opposing directions within a single canvas—because she deliberately sets boundaries that differ in character and stance—her paintings resemble an unraveling sweater. In a sweater, threads are woven tightly according to a certain order, creating form and function. Now imagine, for whatever reason, a single thread at the hem comes loose. As the thread unravels, the garment gradually loses its form, the yarn escaping in a long, sweeping curve—and in that moment, the thread reveals the fullness of its own being. What if we looked at Song’s paintings with this image of an “unraveled sweater” in mind? Just as we might shift our focus from a well-structured sweater to the material itself upon discovering a single loose thread, suddenly noticing the line, the fiber, the color for what it truly is, her way of constructing and simultaneously deconstructing form within painting mirrors this very gesture. The artist embraces ambivalence and irony, placing them deliberately within her work. If one encounters a clearly rendered figure, devised with function or intent in mind, there is always, just beyond it, a mass of material—something in its original state and nature, before it ever took form. Song practices painting as a way of retroactively retracing and rediscovering what has come before. In her canvases, the figure begins to emerge even as it dissolves into planes of color; objects are rendered only to blur, allowing the presence of paint itself to rise to the surface. In this process, what she first wants to show, and what she ultimately and truly wishes to reveal, both come into view. She has long waited for this precise moment in painting. And this waiting extends beyond her own work—it becomes a way of encountering the sincerity, the truth, embedded in the paintings of the past that she has loved. “Following the movement of the brush is like turning time backwards. What we see on the surface is the artist’s final stroke. As we trace beneath it, we begin to reach the deepest part of the painting. I think observing an old painting is, at heart, a desire to uncover the sincerity the artist left behind. Perhaps this is what I believe to be the only real thing I can find in our time. When we move against the grain of time, the truths once hidden begin to reveal themselves—if only little by little.”

Song Seungeun’s unraveled paintings undo the final knot, embarking on a journey that retraces the direction of the threads and moves against time to uncover the painting’s true essence. Through *Planta*, Song undertakes an inner adventure that revisits beginnings and origins. This is a journey to find the language of beginnings, the language of origins—none other than her first language, her “mother tongue.”

1 Paul Valéry, *Man and the Seashell*, trans. Rak-Gil Jeong (Seoul: Emotion Books, 2021), p. 27.

2 Excerpt from Song Seung-eun’s work notebook.

