

A world seen through creative malfunction

Media forms the basic architecture of contemporary life. The evolution of AI and digital technologies has likewise reshaped how art is made and received. Still, discourse around digital work often fixates on the immateriality of data. Data must be sensed through physical means, but the devices that deliver it are often treated as incidental, rather than integral to art.

Kwon examines how media conditions perception and how its forms shape the way we see and know. Operating under the premise that the digital and the physical mirror and reinforce one another, Kwon attends not only to the image but to the machinery that produces it. In other words, the material body of media itself. Kwon's earlier works centered on the screen as media's primary output surface. More recently, her focus has expanded to the tools of input such as cameras, sensors, devices through which machines perceive the world.

Kwon's solo show *OVO* continues the line of inquiry developed in *Fever Eye* presented earlier this year at SONGEUN, examining how artificial intelligence "sees" the world through its mechanical eyes, and what misreadings occur in the process. The title *ovo* is a partial rendering of the letters of the word "eye", as well as the Latin term for "egg" the origin of life. As with her previous exhibition, the title gestures toward a symbolic symmetry between the physical and the digital realms. *OVO* also evokes the uncanny transformation of the eye into *ovo*, a visual slip that reflects how machine vision increasingly replaces the human gaze. Rather than critique this shift, the elegant contours of *OVO* suggest an aesthetic embrace of the newly formed being, born from error. Through both the images on the screen and the screen as object, Kwon constructs a practice that spans the digital and the physical.

Installed before a large window in the main gallery, the titular work *OVO* mirrors the view outside as if gazing back at it. Inspired by the concept of the "backrooms", a virtual labyrinth imagined behind real spaces, the piece visualizes an unseen world lurking beyond physical reality. Using a LiDAR sensor, a technology commonly employed in self-driving vehicles, Kwon scans the exhibition space and its surrounding landscape in three dimensions, projecting the data onto two mesh LED screens. Although LiDAR

captures its environments with high precision, it falters when facing darkness, translating the differences in distance into color. The resulting image, distorted and oversaturated, reveals a scene at once familiar and alien. These discrepancies invite a new sensory experience, a glimpse into a parallel world behind the tangible one. The transparency of the mesh screens allows their projections to overlap with each other, with the gallery interior, and with the view beyond the window, folding multiples realities into a single field. Visible LED modules and electrical wiring draw the viewer's attention to the body of the medium itself. Instead of passively watching, viewers navigate the work as if exploring the backstage of a stage set, encountering the material structure of media as a spatial experience. Through the window, natural light and external scenery merge with the projected images, creating playful encounters between reality and simulation.

In the adjacent small room, *Nowhere Happiness* features two slide projectors rotating trays at different speeds, casting adjectives and nouns onto the wall. As the words meet by chance, they form fleeting combinations, an automatic poem of sorts. The mechanism eliminates conscious intervention, generating a rhythm of chance and poetry. While the projected words and light appear immaterial, the physicality of the projectors (wires, stands, sound) asserts their agency as the true authors of text. The intimate, secluded space heightens a sense of privacy, inviting viewers to interpret the words personally, to imagine their own poetic intervals.

Ascending the narrow staircase to the second floor, one encounters *Intercross*, an image-world seemingly detached from reality. The work combines the photograph of the first computer produced by Xerox with photographs of the Polestar electric car factory, using generative AI to merge two disparate technological epochs. Machines of different eras and functions hybridize into new entities, proliferating through endless variations. Kwon regards machines and AI not as mere tools but as autonomous beings engaged in mutual exchange with humans. The fusion of Xerox and Polestar thus becomes a scene of crossbreeding, an act of technological recombination that births new species of form and thought. Rendered in cool monochrome tones, these images shimmer beneath glass and white framing, creating an atmosphere reminiscent of a vacuum-sealed laboratory or operating room. Here, boundaries between the virtual and the real dissolve into sterile brilliance.

Continuing through the corridor, the black-and-white images of *Freeze Frame* extend into a sequence of reflective surfaces. Borrowing its title from a film term denoting a stopped motion, the work translates moving images into still sculptural forms. Kwon replaces screens with mirrored or metallic plates, composing planes, lines and color blocks like a geometric abstraction. Reflections of the viewer and surroundings overlay the static image, producing a simultaneity of motion and stillness. Contrary to critiques that media induces erasure of the self through immersion, *Freeze Frame* continually reaffirms the viewer's presence. As layers of mirrors accumulate, the work assumes a sculptural quality, a quiet play between video, painting, and objecthood.

OVO as a whole sensitizes the materiality of media, tracing moments when new forms of perception emerge from the errors of technology and system. Through oscillations between matter and immateriality, reality and simulation, human and machine, Kwon's works render a world in flux, one constantly reconstituting itself through misreadings and recombinations, thus inviting us to experience the fracture in how we sense and understand today's world, and to imagine new possibilities for a shared reality between humans and machines.

Park Soohyun (PhD in Visual Arts/art critic)

Kwon Ahram studied the moving image while majoring in advertising and visual design at Konkuk University and earned an MFA in fine art in media from the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London (UCL), as well as a doctoral degree in design from Seoul National University. She has held solo exhibitions at SONGEUN (2025, Seoul), The Great Collection (2021, Seoul), and One and J. +1 (2018, Seoul). She has also participated in group exhibitions at the Seoul Museum of Art (2018, 2019, 2020, and 2022, Seoul), Daejeon Museum of Art (2025, Daejeon), SONGEUN (2021 and 2022, Seoul), Kiche (2023 and 2024, Seoul), Museum Hanmi Samcheong (2024, Seoul), Sungkok Art Museum (2021, Seoul), Platform-L Contemporary Art Center (2019, Seoul), Shinhan Gallery Yeoksam (2018, Seoul), and ARKO Art Center (2010, Seoul). Additionally, she has taken part in international film festivals in the UK, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Poland, and Greece. Besides the MMCA Residency Goyang (2015) and the Seoul Museum of Art Nanji Residency (2020 and 2022), she has also been a resident artist at the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (2016) and Künstlerhaus Schloss Balmoral (2015) as well as multiple other international residencies. She won the Grand Prize at the 21st SONGEUN Art Award in 2022.