

Meta-Painting

A solo exhibition by Kimsooja

Opening Friday April 4, 2025

Exhibition dates: April 5 – June 7, 2025

Press release

Antwerp April 2nd 2025

Axel Vervoordt Gallery is honoured to present Kimsooja's latest solo exhibition *Meta-Painting*, marking the artist's sixth presentation at the gallery. Kimsooja (b. 1957, Daegu, South Korea) is a multidisciplinary conceptual artist whose work spans installation, sculpture, performance, and film. Her practice engages deeply with the themes of migration, memory, and materiality, pushing the boundaries of textile and painting through the performative gestures of folding, wrapping, and spatial intervention. Her work explores the tension between presence and absence, movement and stillness, surface and depth—transcending disciplinary boundaries.

Central to the exhibition is *Meta-Painting* (2020), an immersive installation that redefines painting through its most elemental materials. Comprised of raw linen canvases suspended freely in space, and *Bottari*—fabric bundles traditionally imbued with notions of transition and mobility—this work challenges the conventional role of painting. While Kimsooja's *Bottari* have often been wrapped in opulent silks, satins, or polyesters in this iteration she chooses the stark simplicity of unadorned linen, reinforcing a profound dialogue between textile, painting, and the raw materiality of creation as a fundamental form and structure of it. In this pairing, the act of wrapping, unwrapping, and folding extends beyond the physical gesture, offering a meditation on the nature of painting as a tabula rasa.

Conceived at Wanås Konst Sculpture Park in Sweden, *Meta-Painting* reflects Kimsooja's sustained inquiry into the origins of painting itself. The installation emerged from the planting, harvesting, and weaving of flax—the very material that constitutes both linen canvas and linseed oil. Through this process, the artist reimagines painting not as a static object but as a generative cycle, from the cultivation of flax to its transformation into painting's foundational components. This transformative act of materiality reframes painting as an ongoing, life-generating

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process, which resonates with Kimsooja's long-standing exploration of the relationships between textile, landscape, and labour, first articulated in works such as *Agriculture* (1988).

The adjacent room of the exhibition presents *Thread Routes II* (2011), the second chapter of a six-part 16mm film series that explores the structural affinities between textile, architecture, and human movement. Shot across diverse locations, *Thread Routes* (2010–ongoing) unveils the performative connections between weaving, building, and daily labour, offering a meditative visual anthropology. Initially conceived after Kimsooja's visit to Bruges in 2002, where she encountered the intricate tradition of lace-making, the series immerses the viewer in the cyclical interconnections between cultural materiality, gendered labour, and embodied gestures of making.

By bringing together *Meta-Painting* and *Thread Routes*, this exhibition underscores Kimsooja's sustained exploration of transformation—of textiles, objects, and spatial perception. Moving fluidly between painting, sculpture, and film, her work dissolves boundaries between medium and meaning, revealing an interwoven narrative of materiality and migration.

Kimsooja studied in Seoul (1980–84) and Paris (1984–85). Her works have been exhibited in numerous solo shows at renowned international museums, including MoMA PS1 in New York (2001), Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid (2006), Musée d'Art Moderne Saint-Étienne and Miami Art Museum (both in 2012), Vancouver Art Gallery (2013), Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (2015), Centre Pompidou-Metz (2015, 2022), MMCA Seoul (2010, 2016), CAC Málaga (2016), Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein (2017), Wanås Konst Sculpture Park in Sweden (2020), Leeum Samsung Art Museum in Seoul (2021), Frederiksberg Museum in Copenhagen (2023), and Bourse de Commerce, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, and Museum De Lakenhal in Leiden (all in 2024). In May 2025, a solo exhibition will be organized at Oude Kerk in Amsterdam.

In 2013, Kimsooja represented Korea at the 55th Venice Biennale (Korean Pavilion) and has also participated in the biennials of Istanbul (1997), São Paulo (1998), and Sydney (1998). Her work has been the subject of major site-specific installations, including projects at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Leeum Samsung Art Museum (2021), the Oku-Noto Triennale in Suzu (2021), Metz Cathedral (2022), Desert X AlUla (2024), and Desert X Coachella Valley, California (2025).

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Kimsooja's works are included in the collections of institutions such as the FENIX Museum for Migration in Rotterdam, the Art Gallery of Western Australia in Perth, CAC Málaga, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea in Turin, the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens, Folkwang Museum in Essen, Fukuoka Art Museum, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Seattle, Hana Bank Collection in Seoul, K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in Vaduz, Kunstmuseum Bern, LACMA in Los Angeles, MAC in Lyon, Magasin III – Museum for Contemporary Art in Stockholm, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Saint-Étienne Métropole, National Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul, Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean (MUDAM) in Luxembourg, Musée National de l'Histoire de l'Immigration in Paris, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Helga de Alvear in Cáceres, the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo, the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC, Sammlung Goetz in Munich, Sammlung Hoffmann in Berlin, Vancouver Art Gallery, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

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