

[Space K Seoul] Press Release

Sophie von Hellermann: Festival

Space K Seoul is pleased to present *Festival*, a solo exhibition by London-based artist Sophie von Hellermann (b.1975), on view from April 9 to July 6, 2025. Drawing inspiration from a wide range of sources, including mythology, history, and literature, the artist's work is characterized by its pastel-toned, lyrical atmosphere. In particular, she has garnered significant attention in the art world for her installations that engage with the surrounding space and large-scale paintings in the form of murals. In this exhibition, von Hellermann presents around twenty new paintings and a massive mural referencing festival, including the Korean holiday of Dano.

Sophie von Hellermann grew up moving between Germany and the UK. In an environment where she used two languages, painting became a more comfortable means of expressing feelings and thoughts than writing. For the artist, painting is both a tool for communicating with others and a driving force for creation. Her works draw inspiration from the mundane moments of daily life to mythology, a city's history, and even popular culture. Constantly intersecting the personal and the social, the artist's work has expanded its scope through installations and murals, exploring various approaches to push beyond the traditional forms of painting.



◀ *Sacred Liquor*, 2025, Acrylic on canvas, 90 x 110 cm

▶ *Dano*, 2025, Acrylic on canvas, 256 x 352 cm

In this exhibition, Sophie von Hellermann finds inspiration in the Korean holiday, Dano. The artist is intrigued by the fact that the Korean holiday Dano, celebrated around the same time as the exhibition, shares similarities with Western festivals and also has a ritualistic nature. Von Hellermann became interested in traditional Korean festivals that used ritual and play to pray for peace, prosperity, and well-being, as well as to strengthen community bonds. Each work captures fleeting moments of abundance with her characteristic lyrical colors. *Sacred Liquor* (2025) portrays figures preparing for the Dano ritual, dressed in traditional Confucian clothing and carefully brewing the ceremonial drink. *Dano* (2025) features traditional Dano festivities with women on swings and men tightrope walking, embodying the harmony of Yin and Yang. In addition, *Masked Dance* (2025) humorously recreates characters from 'Gwanno Mask Dance,' which satirized the pretentiousness

and hypocrisy of the aristocracy. *Mountain Walk* (2025) depicts the 'Sinmok Procession,' where people climb mountains to select trees believed to possess divine spirits. It features men in ceremonial attire and women in shamanic clothing, portraying a scene where the Confucianism of the ruling class and the Gut (shamanic ritual) of the common people come together. In this way, the traditional forms with which we are familiar are reinterpreted through the artist's imagination and sensibility. Throughout the works, the striking contrast of pastel tones in the background and the dynamic movement of the figures is emphasized.



◀ *Masked Dance*, 2025, Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 230 cm
▶ *Mountain Walk*, 2025, Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 190 cm

Von Hellermann applies color by appropriately mixing water, pigment, and acrylic on unprimed canvas. Then, she quickly draws figures and other elements before the paint dries. This allows for a dreamlike quality as the abstraction of the background and the figures blend together. In *Celebration* (2025), a woman is dressed in colorful clothes, strolling along a blue beach holding a sacred rod. Rhythmic movement is added by the crashing waves and the fabric fluttering in the wind. *Waking from the Winter Sleep* (2025), which features a woman on a swing, emphasizes the lyricism of the work with the bright greens of spring and the radiant pinks of flowers added to the fluid brushstrokes.



◀ *Celebration*, 2025, Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 230 cm
▶ *Waking from the Winter Sleep*, 2025, Acrylic on canvas, 110 x 90 cm

Furthermore, works inspired by Korean literature are also noticeable. In particular, the artist focused on the emotion of 'love' that comes and goes like a spring festival. *Jindallae Flower* (2025), depicting flowers and two figures, references Kim Sowol's poem of the same title. The figures' intersecting gazes convey the emotions of having to send someone away. 'The Tale of Chunhyang,' a classic story about love that transcends social status,

has been reinterpreted in *Chunhyang* (2025) and *Mongryong* (2025). The artist playfully reimagines the relationship of these classic figures, portraying Chunhyang with a confident stride of freedom and Mongryong drawing back his bow like Cupid, the Roman god of love.



- ◀ *Jindallae Flower*, 2025, Acrylic on canvas, 110 x 90 cm
- ▲ *Chunhyang*, 2025, Acrylic on canvas, 56 x 51 cm
- ▶ *Mongryong*, 2025, Acrylic on canvas, 140 x 160 cm

Sophie von Hellermann paints a grand mural within the exhibition space, her largest work to date. The mural features natural phenomena such as rain, snow, sunlight, and fire to depict the festive landscape where figures and nature interact. The artist transforms the entire space into a festival with synesthetic images expanded from the canvas to the exhibition walls. Destined to be erased after the exhibition, the mural prompts us to reflect on how human birth and death are also festivals that come in their own time.

Through Sophie von Hellermann's paintings, the exhibition invites us to revisit Dano, which continues to be observed through the traditional seasonal divisions. With vibrant colors and expressive brushwork, the artist imbues certain moments with vitality and a dreamlike quality. The works extend beyond the canvas, encompassing the exterior walls and heightening the festive atmosphere, approaching festival as a space where humans and nature interact. In doing so, it views festival as a means to overcome uncertainties caused by uncontrollable natural forces and as the essence of community consciousness. Sophie von Hellermann's portrayal of festivals, which traverses truth and fiction, ritual and play, and the East and West, confirms that traditional festivals remain a meaningful source of inspiration even in the midst of rapid social changes after the agrarian society.

Sophie von Hellermann received her BFA from Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and an MFA from the Royal College of Art, London, UK. Currently, she works in London and Margate, UK and is also a professor of painting at the State Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe. She has held solo exhibitions at Brücke Museum, Berlin, Germany (2024) and Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium (2010); and a two-person exhibition at Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK (2021). Von Hellermann participated in group exhibitions at the Center for Contemporary Arts,

Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA (2024); X Museum, Beijing, China (2020); and Tate Britain, London, UK (2011). Her work is in the collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, X Museum, among others.

'Space K' is Kolon group's art and culture sharing space that was first launched in Gwacheon in 2011. Expanded and reopened in Magok-dong, Gangseo-gu, in September 2020, 'Space K Seoul' has been providing exhibition opportunities for emerging Korean artists and mid-career artists who deserve to be reappraised as part of Kolon's unique art and social contribution program. Furthermore, 'Space K Seoul' strives to expand the base of contemporary art by holding exhibitions for foreign artists who are lesser-known in Korea and continuously supporting artists, allowing them to focus on their practice.

- Exhibition Information

- Title : Festival

- Duration : April 9 – July 6, 2025

- Artist : Sophie von Hellermann

- Location : Space K Seoul T.+82-2-3665-8918

- <32, Magokjungang 8-ro, Gangseo-gu, Seoul, South Korea>

- Works : around 20 paintings, including a large-scale mural

- Opening hours : 10:00 – 18:00 (TUE – SUN) / Closed on Mondays

- Ticket fees: Adult 8,000 won / Youth 5,000 won



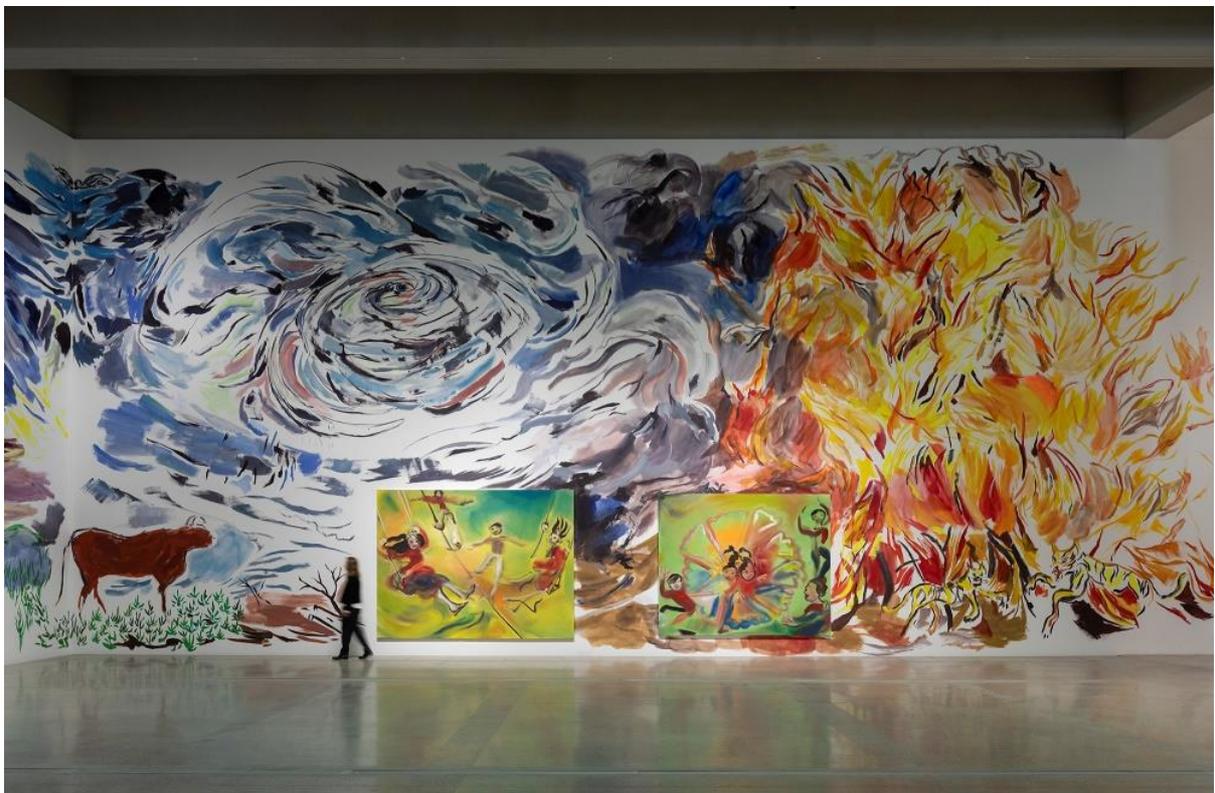
Sophie von Hellermann, *Festival*, Installation View, Space K Seoul, Photo by JunHo Lee



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