

Eun-Ha Paek

Alters

May 2 – June 14, 2025

Opening Reception: Friday, May 2, 6–8 pm

Tribeca Gallery Night: Friday, May 9, 6–8 pm

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Brooklyn-based sculptor Eun-Ha Paek (South Korean, b. 1974) is known for her hand-built and 3D-printed ceramic figures, which incorporate humor, personal history, and storytelling. Her newest body of work includes anthropomorphic serveware, cartoon busts, moon jars, and her signature *Mongmong Lassie* vessels. Her sculptures are presented alongside a video installation and a Risograph flip-book.

Titled *Alters* for the alter egos and divided selves depicted in her work, Paek's second solo exhibition with the gallery gives voice to archetypal figures beset by questions of duality, self-doubt, and internal contradiction. In her doubled and unraveling portraits of cartoonish characters, Paek's humorous deconstruction of the self is made apparent. A 3D printing machine is programmed to falter and err, draping loops of clay over the sides of her characters' faces. As a result, the sculpture appears to melt as though caving under pressure or a weight of emotion. Like a faulty television signal which produces static across the clean animated lines of a Sunday morning cartoon, her sculptural process pushes up against our interactions with technology to reveal something destructive in the interplay of viewership and being seen. Paek's gestural handling of glaze and surface texture exacerbates this sense of breakdown. Often, the cuteness of her characters rubs shoulders with existential doubt: human skulls as reminders of mortality, a stack of dinner plates which hides interchangeable emotional states, and a two-faced moon jar wrestling with its conflicted identities.

Paek's central character, a puckish cartoon figure with her hair tied up in any number of rounded buns, cavorts and poses throughout the exhibition. Her body and face are formed from a series of plates, bowls, and dinnerware. Reclining and lifting platters, the figure acts out pottery's functional tasks — containment, support, and service — to imagine life from the perspective of the objects we use. Her hairdo is modeled on the coifs and pompom cuts of poodles, a breed Paek describes as "the most objectified of dogs ... a metaphor for objectification, notions of servitude, and not being taken seriously." She alternately sports a grin or a mischievous pucker; however, as *Stack of Plate Heads* reveals, her attitude is a mask that hides an uneasy grimace when flipped upside down.

In her related series of *Mongmong Lassie* sculptures, Paek continues her anthropomorphic study of dogs. Clone-like figures with poodle hairdos are placed in pairs around bowls, jars, and lidded boxes, personifying the role of guard dog and faithful companion as they protect and tend to the hearth and home. Like modern-day caryatids, they are arranged flanking the sculptures and often merge with the object they exist to protect.

"Mongmong" is the Korean word for the sound a dog makes, and a doubling of the word for dream. As such, Paek's sculptures of canine "lassies" can be seen as an expression of our

animal and emotive selves, as well as oneiric missives from an imaginative realm in which the roles of owner and pet blend provocatively together. Paek's moon jars, riffing on the form of traditional Joseon white-ware vessels, fill the exhibition with another archetypal female figure — the moon — whose ever-shifting face and enigmatic dark side stand in for a changeable, observant, and maternal gaze.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Paek lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She received a BFA in Film/Animation/Video from the Rhode Island School of Design, where she has also been a guest lecturer. Paek's work has been exhibited throughout the United States and internationally, and she is the recipient of several awards and grants including the Windgate Scholarship and Rudy Autio Grant from the Archie Bray Foundation. Paek's animated films have screened in the Guggenheim Museum, Sundance Film Festival, and venues around the world. She has been a guest lecturer at the Fashion Institute of Technology, a visiting critic at the Maryland Institute College of Art, and she currently serves on the faculty at Parsons School of Design/The New School.