

## Yooyeon Nam

Yooyeon Nam is a Korean-born, New York-based oil painter. Her works, through her characters, explore the weird nature of the world, where we are disconnected within our own communities. She investigates what it means to be an outsider in both her own and chosen cultures. Beyond cultural hardships, life itself is inherently strange, lacking innate meaning or predetermined purpose. This eerie discomfort is further evoked through a wide array of colors and mysterious narratives. By depicting her overly cute and adorable characters as suffering or being violent, she accentuates the sense of uncanniness, paradoxically intensifying the seriousness of her narratives.



**Double Wick and Paradise Lost, 2024, Oil on Canvas, 46 x 46 inches** (picture on the right)

'Double Wick and Paradise Lost' explores the gap between reality and ideality. One eye, where two wicks of cold fire grow, gazes toward the ideal, while the other, with a jade-ring pupil, observes reality. The complexity of reality is symbolized by the tangled rings at the bottom right.

The work is from my recent series, *In the Face of*, where my round-faced, nose-less characters reflect my sense of displacement as an outsider both from the culture and my own life, while honoring my heritage. The blank face and weird eyes echo norms where direct eye contact and overt emotional expression are considered impolite, contrasting environments where eye contact is expected. I combine this alienation with my admiration for Korean Buddha sculptures, whose idealized yet anatomically incorrect body forms and hand gestures inspire me. These sculptures represent past artists' struggles to overcome the lack of innate meaning in life.

Yooyeon Nam earned her BFA in Painting from Pratt Institute with the highest honors in 2023. Nam had solo exhibitions like "No Home in Wonderland" at A Space gallery, "Perfect Kidnapping" with ChaShaMa, and "Kidnapped" with Artists Living Room, all in NYC.

She participated in group shows in NYC, including "KIDS ONLY" at A Space gallery, "Oasis of Color" at Van Der Plas gallery, and fairs like "Artexpo New York" with AGI Fine Art, "ASYAAF" in Seoul. She won the first grand prize from Arthouse Z Art Prize, and participated in artist residencies at SVA, ChaNorth, and Woodstock Byrdcliffe in 2024.



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**Oh Well, the Truth is..., 2023, Oil on Canvas, 40 x 30 inches** (picture on the left)

'Oh Well, the Truth is...' depicts a forced situation where one cannot reveal the truth and must endure disadvantages. A figure with a hole in her body is arrested and taken to a strange world where uniformity is enforced. Three figures in the middle walk toward a dead end, illuminated by the full moon behind them, which resembles a halo.

The work is part of my series, *Kidnapped*, where my characters endure external hardships and eerie discomfort stemming from life's lack of predetermined purpose. They navigate chaos, struggling to survive an unfamiliar world despite life's inherent meaninglessness, expressed through dynamic compositions and a wide array of colors. In this series, I explore grotesque and ironic narratives open to interpretation, developing a personal visual language and symbols, such as downcast eyes. These eyes reflect the alienation and desire to avoid unpleasant situations I experience as a Korean living in the U.S.

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