

Inspired Ink

South Korean artist JIEUN PARK gives us the lowdown on what inspires and drives her passion for her Chinese ink art.

Jieun Park's current solo exhibition, *Travelogue*, at REDSEA Gallery, is an array of striking, abstract, travel-inspired Chinese ink pieces. For the artist, drawing and design have been a passion since she was a little girl growing up in South Korea. She pursued her love of painting by taking a degree in *Fine Arts and Design Advertising* at Konkuk University in Seoul, majoring in Oriental painting.

It was in her second year of university that Jieun went on a two-month trip to the Czech Republic – a trip that ignited her passion for travel. Wanting to express this newfound passion through her favourite medium of Chinese ink painting, she began creating the style of artworks that have been a feature of her work ever since.

The Inspiration

Towards the end of her solo travels, at the tail end of a bleak Czech winter, Jieun climbed to the top of the Old Town Hall in Prague to take in its signature views of the city. "I remember gazing at downtown Prague. The cold was gone, and I began to feel ecstatic. I think I was there in a daze for hours. After that, I completely fell in love with travel."

The city that has inspired her the most to date is Lyon in France. "I recall fondly how the view from my window was full of red roofs. It was quiet, and the architecture was beautiful during the day. It was a time when my mind was so stable and happy."

She also often paints Singapore, particularly because she loves the city at night. "I love any place where I can enjoy a rooftop bar, a riverside restaurant, a nice walk or a beautiful night view! I love the views from the River Cruise in the evening, too; when you look across to the Marina Bay Sands' laser show, you know it's going to be a beautiful night."

Jieun names French-American artist Niki de Saint Phalle (1930-2002) as someone she greatly admires – she's especially in awe of the artist's "Nana" sculpture series. "I've been deeply inspired by their energy and liveliness. The Nana sculptures are dynamic and beautifully coloured; someday I want to visit the park in Tuscany that is full of her artwork."



Over time, Jieun has also experimented with different art mediums, including sculpture and ceramics. "The expression and the stories were the same in those pieces, but the material was very different." Yet there has always been one constant element in her art, and that is brushstrokes. "The brushstrokes represent my feelings towards different destinations: the cities, the people, the scenes and the music, for example. They also represent the emotions I feel while reminiscing about those places."

The Present

With the travel restrictions imposed by COVID-19, Jieun has had to find other ways to keep herself occupied. "I wake up and do my yoga, go to the studio, eat at home with my husband in the evening; it's a very simple day."

Ultimately, peace of mind is her main source of inspiration. "I think peace and quiet are important in every day. That's the source of my work, so I take a lot of walks. The little things I see – the trees, the sky, the moon, the lights – are all sources of inspiration."

"Small happinesses in everyday life are precious. Eating delicious food with friends and family, talking and listening to each other – that, to me, is happiness. I love to surround myself with family and friends because they're precious to me and give me a lot of inspiration and energy. On the other hand, I don't love noise or angry people and situations. It's hard to watch and listen to."



The Process

"The start of my work is important and difficult. I begin with an abstract brush movement that is led by an emotion, and I follow this up with meditative painting, while working on the fine details. I think I have the whole thing in my mind, from start to finish."

The painted ink marks she uses in her art can be described as a kind of calligraphy, and they are instinctively spread and dropped on the surface of the paper. Jieun then starts creating comparatively realistic images of various cities within the abstract ink marks, adding colours to convey the stories from her travels, and the emotion she felt at specific moments, be it happiness, loneliness or eagerness.



Reflections & Tips

- "My advice to anyone looking to make a living from art would be to not worry and continue painting."
- "I love books and plants. If I wasn't an artist, I might have become the owner of a small bookstore or a botanical shop."
- "The best piece of advice I've been given is that there is no right answer in life."

Jieun Park's artwork can currently be viewed at REDSEA Gallery (Block 9 Dempsey Road, #01-10 Dempsey Hill) until 25 February. To find out more, call 6732 6711 or go to redseagallery.com/exhibitions/travelogue.