

Artzine / Features & Interviews / An Interview with Choi Jeong Hwa

## An Interview with Choi Jeong Hwa

December 18, 2018 by Grace Ignacia See



©Tae Kyun Wang

Image courtesy of the artist.

Artist Choi Jeong Hwa's practice spans just about medium of artistic expression. From installation, architecture, interior design, furniture design, art direction, the list goes on. He's also exhibited internationally at notable art events and locations such as the Sao Paulo Biennial, Gwangju Biennale, Singapore Biennale, Mori Art Museum in Tokyo and the Rockbund Art Museum in Shanghai.

At this current point, you can find his works at the inaugural Bangkok Biennale, where his brightly stacked found objects constitute his installations. Well known for large-scale installations that undermine institutional hierarchy due to their presence *outside* buildings rather than in them, Choi's works consistently evoke the harmony and chaos of urban environments.

We spoke with Choi about his works, why he chooses the materials he uses, what's next for his practice, and his 'Alchemy' series now proudly available on The Artling:



Happy Happy, LACMA, Los Angeles 2009. Image courtesy of the artist.

*We're very excited to have your Alchemy series on The Artling. You frequently explore everyday objects in your works, using them to create these tall structures. Could you tell us about what motivates you in your practice to create these sculptures?*

It started off with stacking plastic wares. By combining lightings and kitchen wares, I wanted to make useful objects using materials everyone is familiar with. Over the course of 10 years, I built, played, and held workshops called 'Gather Together' which invited the public to participate in installations. In recent works, I use objects I've collected for 30 years including everyday objects, domestic wastes, stones, Styrofoam, folk artefacts, furniture, glass, steel, and started to stack things all over again.

When you go to the mountains in Korea, you can find small stupas that native people make. These are stupas built with time and effort by each person. A stupa is an altar standing on the ground towards the sky, bearing phrases of 'eating well, achieving great wealth and health'.

All standing things are stupas. A tree is a stupa, and the man is a stupa. They bear folk religion, shamanism, and Buddhism. Among these stupas in my exhibition, my favourite is 'The Feast of Flowers' which is made up of Korean dining tables and rice bowls. In Korean folk religion, there is an altar made of one clean bowl only. This is the simplest monument, and I believe we can make our lives rich with only one bowl. When making 'Dandelion', we initiated 'Gather Together' again. I wished for participants—who made the works together, contributed materials, and watched us—to be the owners and the artists of the work. I want to tell them, 'you are the monuments'.



Alchemy, Choi Jeong Hwa, mixed media, 2017. Available on The Artling

*Your visual practice interestingly spans installation, graphic design and architecture. Could you tell us more about your background in the arts; did you always want to be an artist?*

I never wanted to be an artist. I used to say my job was 'Choi Jeong Hwa' or an 'intervenor'. Moving across graphic design, stage design, architecture, installation, sculpture, etc. I am doing one coherent work which might be seen as different works depending on the observer. I'd say I do only one thing—that is to find the balance of the world!

*You've been cited as a founding member of contemporary art movements in Korea. Could you tell us a little about your journey as an artist? How would you describe your career as an artist thus far?*

What should I call myself... a conceptual artist? No, a facilitator.

I don't believe art is what someone 'does'. It is what 'becomes' and is 'realized'. I think my current career can be described as raw Kimchi (as opposed to aged and fermented). I think it will take time to be properly aged. I think I still need more experience, exercise, and practice.

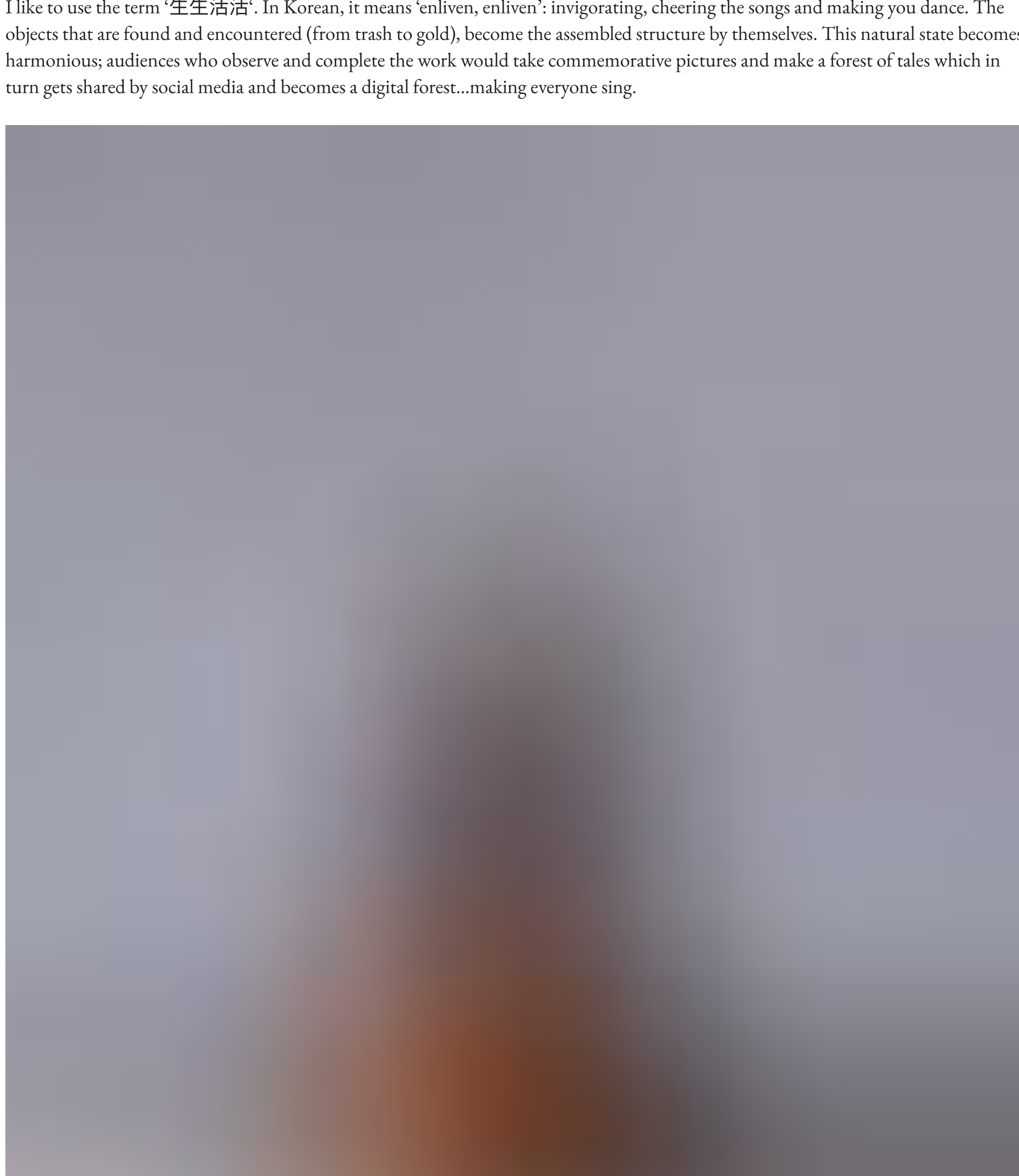


Dandelion, Choi Jeong Hwa, 2018. Image courtesy of the artist.

*Your works truly challenge the notion of what art is, and what can be recognised as art. It falls along the lines of making 'found' objects into art, similar to Duchamp and his readymades. Could you tell us about this method of your practice and how you decide what to use?*

Perhaps I could say Duchamp is rather 'cold' and I'm on the 'warm' side in terms of being a conceptual artist? I think 'primitive, shamanic art' and 'found objects' are the same thing with different names. Are we conceptual artists for the sake of art? I think it's rather conceptual for living itself.

I like to use the term '生生生活'. In Korean, it means 'enliven, enliven': invigorating, cheering the songs and making you dance. The objects that are found and encountered (from trash to gold), become the assembled structure by themselves. This natural state becomes harmonious; audiences who observe and complete the work would take commemorative pictures and make a forest of tales which in turn gets shared by social media and becomes a digital forest...making everyone sing.

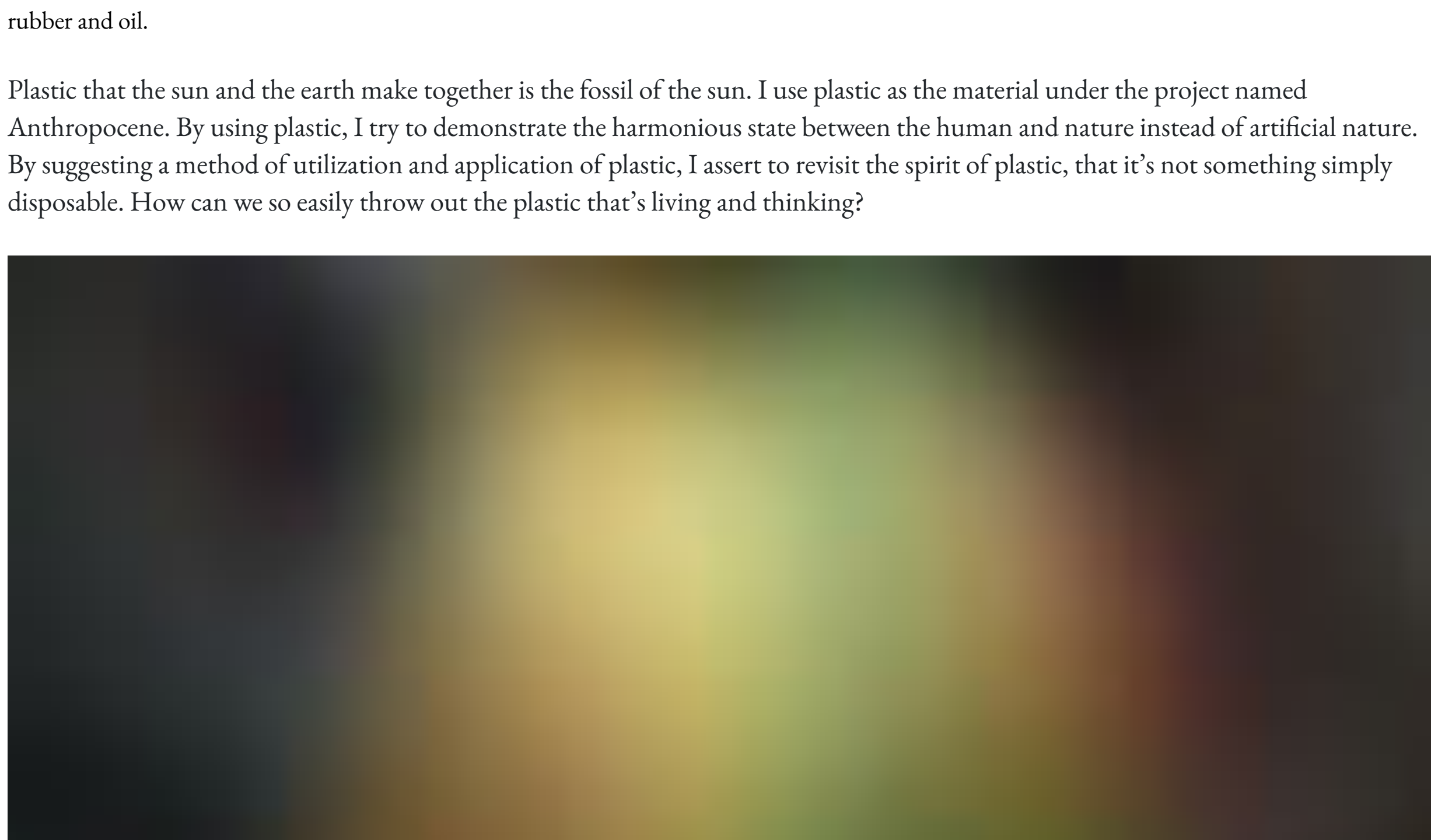


Alchemy, Choi Jeong Hwa, mixed media, 2017. Available on The Artling

*You've previously mentioned that you like using plastic due to its lack of deterioration. What is your aim through the usage of this material? What are you trying to achieve?*

Undecaying plastic! Since the 1990's, I started pondering the question: what is disposable? Between fresh flowers and artificial flowers, for example. It's still an ongoing project. I think the relationship between the manmade and the natural is that between the human and nature. Plastic is made by the sun, the earth, and humans. What humans make is made by nature. This can also be seen as a '2nd nature', as plastic is a synthetic compound of rubber and oil.

Plastic that the sun and the earth make together is the fossil of the sun. I use plastic as the material under the project named Anthropocene. By using plastic, I try to demonstrate the harmonious state between the human and nature instead of artificial nature. By suggesting a method of utilization and application of plastic, I assert to revisit the spirit of plastic, that it's not something simply disposable. How can we so easily throw out the plastic that's living and thinking?



Happy Happy, The Olympic Museum, Lausanne 2017. Image courtesy of the artist.

*What three artists do you think the public should always have their eyes out for?*

Brancusi, Bourgeois, Kusama

*Could you tell us a little about what you're working on now, and perhaps what you have in store for the future?*

I will continue the projects 'Chaosmos' and 'Mandala' in different media. I will also continue public programs in different locations. Now, I'm studying infinite and limitless subjects like the Möbius strip or the Klein bottle.

*If you had to give one piece of advice to an artist trying to make their mark on the art scene, what would it be?*

The beautiful and the ugly are not two different things but one. Is it? Continuously question this.

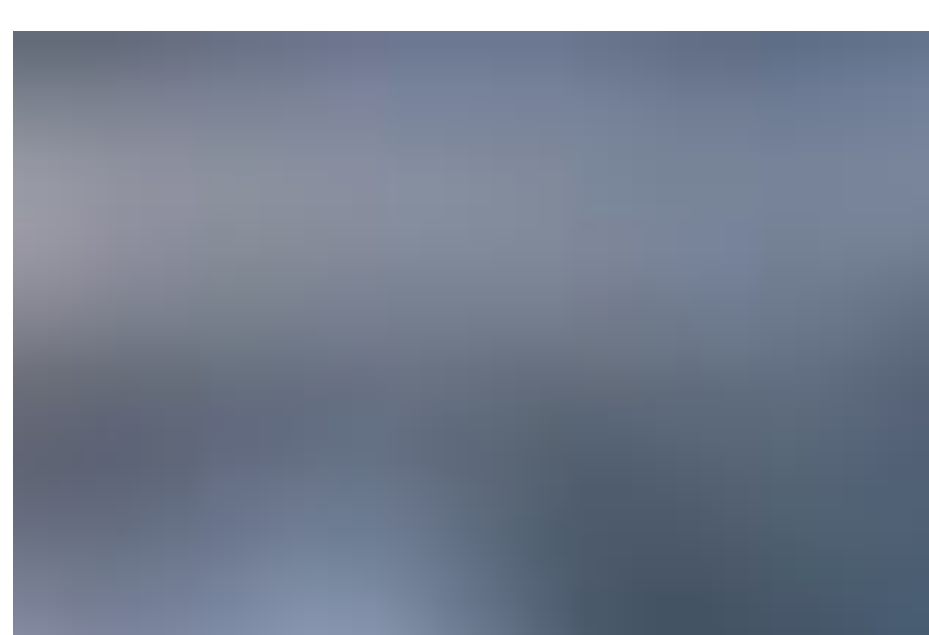
Choi Jeong Hwa is represented by [P21](#).

His solo show is currently on at MMCA Seoul (National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea) until 10 Feb 2019.

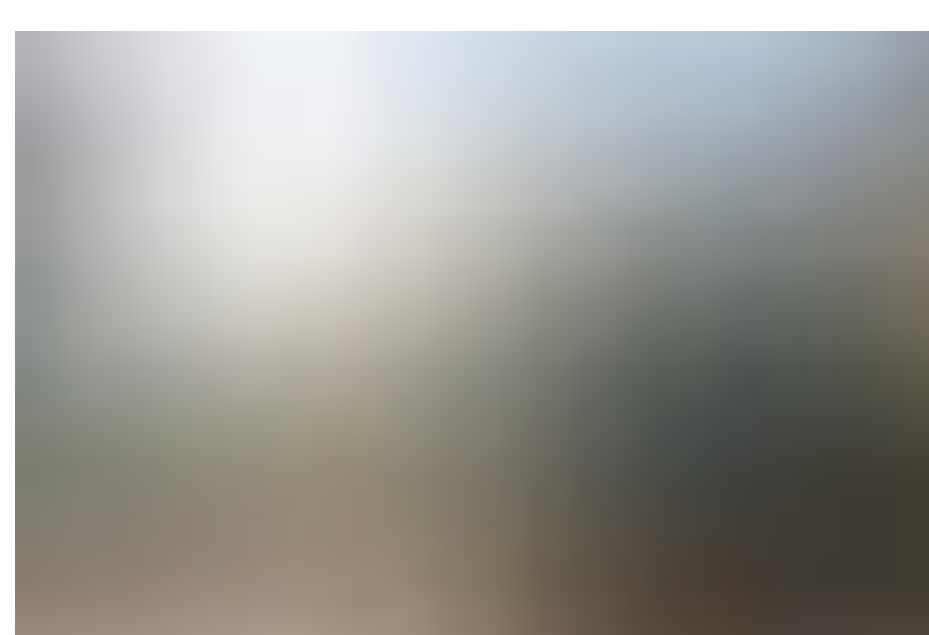
To find out more about this exhibition, [click here](#).

*Any views or opinions in the post are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the company or contributors.*

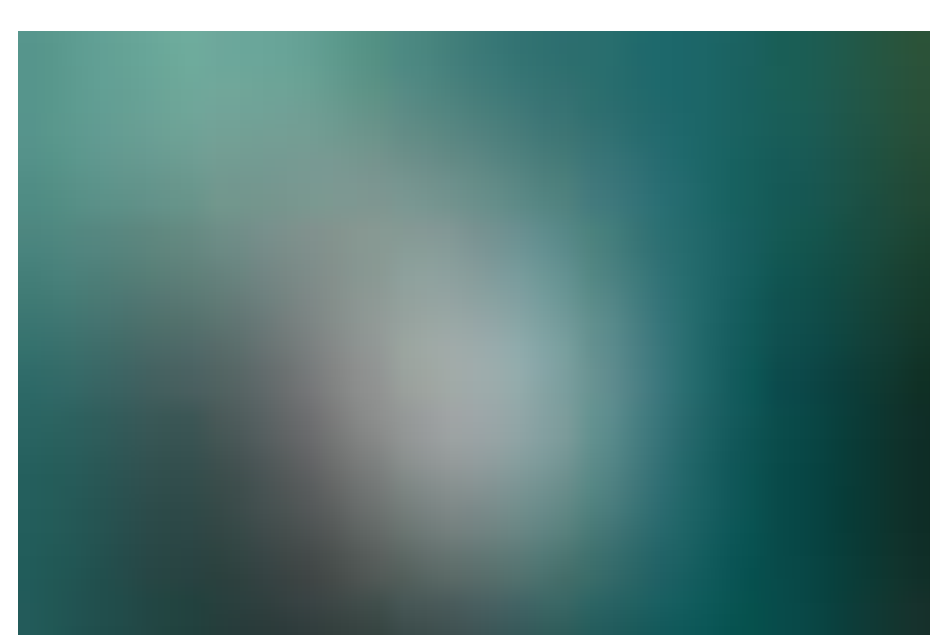
### Related Articles



"CIVILIZATION: THE WAY WE LIVE NOW" at MMCA, Gwacheon, Korea



The Korean Biennales are here!



Bangkok Art Biennale 2018 Announces Participating Artists

Art 101	Design	City Art Guides	Art Fairs & Exhibitions	Features & Interviews	Artling Social
---------	--------	-----------------	-------------------------	-----------------------	----------------

Back to Top

Loading...



The Artling

Art Advisory

About Us

The Team

Advisory Board

Careers

Contact Us

Press

Customer Care

FAQs

Return Policy

Terms of Use

Privacy Policy

Buy with Confidence

Collections

Places

Nature

Design

Artistic

Objects

Activities

Events

Sell

Submit your Works

Seller Guide

Seller Resources

Start Collecting

Art

Design

Prints

Books

Artzine

Buy a Gift Card