

OUR GESTURES DEFINE US AND SHOW WHO WE ARE

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ATELIER
HERMÈS

Atelier Hermès is pleased to present Paranoia Paradise, a solo exhibition of the artist duo Na Kim & Gregory Maass, on view from November 22, 2024, to February 2, 2025.

Since 2004, Nayoungim & Gregory Maass(N&GM) have been collaborating across a wide range of fields in a practice best described as omnidirectional. The duo's ongoing, diligent, and tireless endeavors include creating sculptures and paintings in their studio, producing large-scale public installations, running a gallery as a project, publishing, curating exhibitions, and organizing community workshops. They are prolific, and every exhibition they hold presents myriad forms (this exhibition at Atelier Hermès features as many as sixty new works), providing visitors with abundant visual insights into their work. Yet, intriguingly, a lingering sense that we don't know much about the work remains.

High art and the commonplace, the past and the present, the cultural products, knowledge, and tastes of the East and the West are intertwined as such in the world of N & GM. These fusions can be interpreted as results of a cultural merger, a characteristic of works made by multiple authors. When the two first met in Paris, Nayoungim had recently arrived from Korea – then still considered a distant Far Eastern country – after studying art at Seoul National University, and Maass, originally from Germany, had studied philosophy at Sorbonne University and then art theory at the Institut des Hautes Études en Arts Plastiques, founded by Pontus Hulten. Both arrived in France with their unique cultural backgrounds. Their paths converged at the École des Beaux-Arts. Some delightful coincidences include the fact that Maass' mother was a student of the painter Günther Uecker and that Nayoungim's father worked with artist Robert Filliou (when Filliou was dispatched to Korea as a member of the UN reconstruction team shortly after the Korean War). These form part of the many episodes that N & GM dramatize in their work. In the life of these two who continue to communicate in French, a foreign language for both, cultural diversity quickly becomes an everyday occurrence.

The reason why work remains difficult for the audience despite the ample information provided is not that the diverse components are difficult to identify, but rather that the ways they are combined are very particularly distinctive. N & GM bring together elements distant in time and space, disregarding their heterogeneity and thus fostering a sense of dissonance. They pursue surprise rather than logic or beauty, often employing caricature to provoke irreverence, which elicits ambivalent feelings of intrigue and discomfort in viewers. Furthermore, the duo's work titles, which resemble wordplay, further obscure the messages or meanings. Far from the refined style or empathetic sentiment generally expected from art, N & GM present to us a world of hybridity and the grotesque.¹

The duo refers to their creative process as “Frankensteining,” invoking the mad scientist who assembled a human part of corpses stolen from charnel houses and cemeteries, then electrified it to life. Similarly, N & GM collect objects and ideas from various sources, dismantle them, and reassemble them to create bizarre, unexpected results. Take, for example, their work *Kitty Enlightenment*(2024), developed from a discarded Hello Kitty sculpture they found in a park. The symbol of innocence had been abandoned because it was dirty. N & GM “revived” it by cleaning it and filling it with warmth. They also gave her a mouth – original Hello Kittys don't have one so they can maintain their cuteness –, allowing her to now convey emotions like joy and sadness. Bearing two faces like Janus, this reborn Kitty reaches enlightenment or prajña.

The duo's ceramic sculpture titled *A rough day at the workshop*(2022-24) depicts figures lying down as if burned out after a hard day's work ('burning out' here may allude to the ceramic firing process). The piece also features cigarette butts, wigs, dentures, and the early arcade game character Pac-Man, which can be interpreted as metaphors for endless labor and the exhaustion that borders on near-death. One figure with a bundle of pickled cucumbers shaped like intestines wears a tired-looking face of Nicolas Cage, the Hollywood actor who is known to have taken on random commercials after his acting career declined. This ceramic series was originally titled *Hery Moorish 000*, reflecting the duo's skepticism about the popularity of the 20th-century sculptor Henry Moore, known for his widely admired abstract reclining figures with holes.

The Doctor Frankenstein theme is fitting here also because the human body is where the subject's vulnerability is exposed. In this exhibition at Atelier Hermès, N & GM present several human anatomy diagrams, suggesting that humanity – when reduced to body organs – is indistinguishable from metaphysical objects. With the inside and outside reversed, there are ominous signals that internal forces such as sexuality, impulse, and desire are about to surface. N & GM often incorporate motifs related to smoking and alcohol, reflecting their interests in themes of individual freedom, passion, and stupidity embedded in such a culture of indulgence.

Foam follows Phallus 2.0(2024) employs a subtle wordplay, mimicking the modernist motto “Form follows function.” Next to the phallus, depicted as a huge monument, hangs an empty Chupa Chups container – a surprising discovery as the candy container is shaped like a foamy beer mug! This moment of pleasure connects to a human body bound by a sturdy, unbreakable chain. The human body, revealed as layers of organs as if it were a three-dimensional computerized tomography scan, is slightly tilted and barely held up by the hands of an adorable doll.

Since N & GM's work focuses on the signification of objects, it can be understood in terms of postproduction. The objects, images, and ideas that they employ are always pre-existing cultural products, so their work is often described as readymade or appropriation. However, it is important to note that N & GM always reprocess their sources manually: they cut, add, paint, sew, weld, and utilize any of their other skills for the desired outcome. In other words, these artists select cultural objects and then insert them into a new context, as DJs sample and edit. This method allows them to reexamine concepts of authorship and originality through recycling, and to explore the idea of sharing – not owning – contemporary cultural forms.²

Borrowing elements from art history, *I nailed it*(2024) highlights not what it cites, but rather that the work has been accomplished successfully. This work reproduces and references Picasso's famous distorted human figures; but instead of using a brush or paint, N & GM produced it by the act of nailing, a technique borrowed from Günther Uecker, the German artist whose use of nails contributed to the development of Op art. They also incorporated a golden rectangle, a motif associated with Kazimir Malevich who pursued absolute flatness, thus emphasizing their intention to transform a traditionally two-dimensional work into three dimensions. However, as they were absorbed in hammering small nails, all complex thoughts went away. So, the exclamation “I nailed it!” humorously overshadows all the piece's references to art history.

N & GM produced two types of work from a found, old folding screen by separating its frame from the embroidered painting. Evoking the formal experiments of the 1960s French art movement Supports/Surfaces', this process not only calls attention to the flexible relationship between surface and frame, but also points to ideas long present in traditional Asian art forms such as hanging scrolls and folding screens. Reborn as a hanging scroll, *Flower Nap*(2024) contrasts a flower, a symbol of paradise, with a flyswatter, representing anxiety or defense against uninvited guests, like flies. The idea of “Paranoia Paradise” is visualized as such.

N & GM's work provides abundant visual information but resists a single interpretation. This is because the artists employ objects and ideas not as vehicles of meaning, but as elements that serve a purpose. For them, collecting old objects is nothing more than sampling; it is gathering of fragments of memory. Since the meaning of these objects are often related to personal memories or emotions, the artists and the viewers alike must then create meaning based on their own experiences. “Paranoia Paradise” serves

as a metaphor for an era where insufficiency persists, despite information overload. It is a metaphor for the “world” where the artists, longing for the luxury of paranoia amid objects, and viewers, curiously lingering in front of their artworks, encounter.³

- 1 Hybridity and the grotesque were prominent concepts in the 1990s when N & GM were students. Related to Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection and Georges Bataille's *Heterology*(1933), these concepts highlight the historical—and often failed— attempts of by the ruling powers to exclude the impure and heterogeneous. In 1996, based on these themes, Yves-Alain Boix and Rosalind Krauss curated the exhibition “L'informe: mode d'emploi” at the Centre Pompidou, which drew tremendous attention.
- 2 Korean translation of Nicolas Bourriaud's *Postproduction*, published by Graphite on Pink, Seoul, 2016, p. 14.
- 3 Referring to the famous novelist Thomas Pinchon, who was so public-shy he once jumped out of his hotel room to avoid reporters, what Gregory Maass describes as “luxurious paranoia.”

Nayoungim & Gregory Maass

Working together as artist duo since 2004

Nayoungim

- 1996 L'École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France
- 1987 Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea

Gregory Maass

- 2001 Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, Holland
- 1994 L'Institut des Hautes Études en Arts Plastiques, Paris, France
- 1995 L'École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France
- 1992 University of Sorbonne (Philosophy), Paris, France

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2022 "Lady Fountain & Krummer Hund", Clayarch Gimhae Museum off-site, Gimhae, Korea
- 2021 "Learning Machine", Bupyung" Seo Middle School, Incheon, Korea
- 2019 "Reprospective", Sungkok Art Museum, Seoul, Korea
"Greasy Corner", Gallery Daham, Ansan, Korea
- 2016 "Hobo Sapiens", Coffre-Fort Artist Club, Brussels, Belgium
- 2014 "No-ego Ego Trip", Split Fountain, Aukeland, New Zealand
- 2013 "The Things You Think are Great", Makeshop Art Space, Paju, Korea
- 2012 "There is No Beer in Hawaii", Artclub1563, Seoul, Korea
"Sales since 1845; Temporary Service", The Book Society, Seoul, Korea
- 2011 "POWR MASTRS: Lounge Project", Artsonje Center, Seoul, Korea
- 2010 "The Early Worm Catches the Bird", Space Hamilton, Seoul, Korea
"The Best Neighborhood", Art Osaka, Osaka, Japan
- 2009 "Survival of the Shitest", 3 bis f, Aix-en-Provence, France
"Unveiled Twinkling Space", ARTest Foundation, Tirgu Mures, Romania
"Ah, Sorry... My Leg... Wait... Ooh, That's Better. Where Was I?", Le Bureau d'Art et de Recherche, Roubaix, France
"You Got to be Like Water", Old Lady House Art Space, Macau
- 2008 "KIM KIM GALLERY", Market Gallery, Glasgow, Scotland
"Don't Hassle the Hof", Galerie du Jour Project-Room, Paris, France
"Oh, Baby I Like It Raw", Stadthaus Museum Lichtenberg, Berlin, Germany
"Auto-focus", Gallery Shilla, Daegu, Korea
"Two Millions of Art", Kuenstlerhaus S11, Solothurn, Switzerland
"Mona Lisa Overdrive", City Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- 2007 "The Mad Doctor", La Galerie Friche Belle de Mai, Marseille, France
"Handsome Tofu", Artspace DeFKa, Assen, Holland
- 2006 "Shower of Blessings", Kultur Magazin Lothringen, Bochum, Germany

- “Have Spacesuit-Will Travel”, Lokaal01, Antwerp, Belgium
- “The Beauty of being Numb”, Mini-Salon, Munich, Germany
- “Jaded Zombies from the Stratosphere”, Amot Operagard, Bygstad, Norway
- 2005 “Bold Eyeball”, Hinterconti, Hamburg, Germany
- “Fine for a Robot”, De Nederlandsche Cacaofabriek, Helmond, Holland

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2023 “Future Lies Adead: Daejeon 1993/2023”, Daejeon Museum of Art, Daejeon, Korea
- 2022 “Masquarade”, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, Korea
- “Sisters, We Grow!”, Alternative Space Loop, Seoul, Korea
- “Say it with Flowers”, Ruang MES 56, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- “Sowing Worlds”, The San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco, U.S.A.
- 2021 “A New Way of Living for ()”, Suwon I-Park Museum of Art, Suwon, Korea
- “The Golden Ratio 7:1”, Daejeon Museum of Art, Daejeon, Korea
- 2019 “Take () at face value”, Korean Cultural Centre Australia, Sydney, Australia
- 2018 “Wild Youth_Riot School”, Jajaknamusoup Museum, Haengsung, Korea
- “The Golden Chain”, Word Script Symposia, Seoul, Korea
- “Open Storage”, Art Bank Collection, Cheongju, Korea
- 2017 “Futures of the Past”, Design Biennale, Gwangju, Korea
- 2016 “Der Schatten des Körpers des Kutschers”, Kunstsaele, Berlin, Germany
- “Color Error_Temperature of Blood”, MMCA, Seoul / National Science Museum, Busan, Korea
- 2015 “Space Life”, Ilmin Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- “Jungle Shoes”, Kim Kim Gallery @ Bel Ami Concept Store / LaSuisse, Nantes, France
- 2013 “NEW & NOW”, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- “Republic of the 2”, Arko Museum, Seoul, Korea
- “Learning Machine”, Nam June Paik Art Center, Yongin, Korea
- “Tell Me Her Story”, Space C: Coreana Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- “ANIMAMIX Anima Biennale”, Daegu Art Museum , Daegu, Korea
- “Scenes VS. Scenes”, Buk Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- “Douglasism; Itemized Miasma”, Kwansoon Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- “Das Neue Fleisch / The New Flesh”, After The Butcher, Berlin, Germany
- 2012 “Ceramics Commune”, Artsonje Center, Seoul, Korea
- “As Small as a World and Large as Alone”, Gallery Hyundai Gangnam, Seoul, Korea
- “Playtime”, Culture Station Seoul 284, Seoul, Korea
- “(Im)possible Landscape”, PLATEAU Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- “The Science of Photography”, Daegu Photo Biennale, Daegu Art Factory, Daegu, Korea
- “Ramen Ensemble, Festival Bo:m”, The National Theater Company, Seoul, Korea
- “Take Campus Fit”, Faculty of Veterinary Sciences, Seoul University, Seoul, Korea
- “Archive Fever / Modules for Doncealment / Opportunivores / Painting the Air Awry & Array”, St. Paul St. Gallery 3, Auckland, New Zealand

- "Industrial Complex Flowing with Art", Public Art Project, Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, Ansan, Korea
- "Science Show in Progress", Nam June Paik Art Center, Yongin, Korea
- 2011 "Dancing to the Rhyme", Kumho Museum, Seoul, Korea
- "Hit and Run", Seoul, Korea
- "Countdown", Culture Station Seoul 284, Seoul, Korea
- "What is Art Worth?", Former Commercial Bank, Daegu, Korea
- "The Whales-Time Diver", The National Theater Company, Seoul, Korea
- 2010 "Oh! Masterpieces", Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, Ansan, Korea
- "Payages Chavires 2", Voyons-Voir, Domaine de St.-Ser, Puylobier, France
- "Sanbokdoro Public Art Project", Space Bae, Busan, Korea
- 2009 "Dissolving Views", Cheongju International Craft Biennale, Cheongju, Korea
- "Void of Memory: Platform in Kimusa", The Old Defense Security Command, Seoul, Korea
- "If it works, it's out of date", KIM KIM GALLERY AT SHILLA, Gallery Shilla, Daegu, Korea
- 2008 "Bridge", Gana Art Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- "Kim Kim Gallery @ Rob-ert", Rob-ert Showroom, Berlin, Germany
- 2007 "Anyang Public Art Project II", Anyang, Korea
- 2006 "(De)zentral", Neuer Kunstverein Giessen, Giessen, Germany
- "Between Heaven & Earth", Ssamzie Art Ware House, Heyri Art Valley, Korea
- "Tail of Turtle", The Chiwoo Craft Museum, Seoul, Korea
- 2005 "Mixed Pickles", K3 Project Space, Zurich, Switzerland
- "Power Station", ARKO Museum, Arts Council Korea, Seoul, Korea
- "Beyond Artifice", The Chiwoo Craft Museum, Seoul, Korea
- 2004 "I Had a Dream", Kunstraum Baden, Baden, Switzerland



Installation view
Photo Sangtae Kim © Fondation d'entreprise Hermès



Kitty Enlightenment

Resin, jesmonite, lightbulb, varnish, acrylic color, marble, metal
170×150×258 cm, 110×110×61 cm, 2024

Photo Sangtae Kim © Fondation d'entreprise Hermès



A Rough Day at the Workshop-Picolas Cage called Cornichon
A Rough Day at the Workshop 1-5
Glazed stoneware, mixed media
24×30×13 cm (Dimensions variable),
37×24×32 cm, 28×24×39 cm, 34×18×13cm, 24×30×18 cm, 25×20×17 cm, 2022-2024
Photo Sangtae Kim © Fondation d'entreprise Hermès



Foam Follows Phallus 2.0

Wood, metal, plastic, paint, soft vinyl

75×47×150 cm, 60×60, 125 cm, 2019-2024

Photo Sangtae Kim © Fondation d'entreprise Hermès



I Nailed it 1-5
 Nail, laminated wood, copper plate, varnish
 58×96×4 cm, 2024
 Photo Sangtae Kim © Fondation d'entreprise Hermès



Flower Nap 1-4
 Hanging scroll, stitches on fabric, fly swatter, magnet
 110×43 cm, 2024
 Photo Sangtae Kim © Fondation d'entreprise Hermès

FONDATION D'ENTREPRISE HERMÈS

Created in 2008, presided over by Olivier Fournier since 2016, and directed by Laurent Pejoux since 2021, the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès is currently pursuing its fourth five-year mandate, with funding of 63 million euros for the period 2023-2028. The Foundation's activities are defined by four key themes – Transmit, Create, Protect, Encourage – and enacted through its dedicated programmes. Beyond its own network of exhibition spaces in Europe and Asia, the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès commits to work in situ, in close collaboration with its beneficiaries and partners. Since its inception, it has supported over 900 projects across its diverse spheres of activity.

PRESS CONTACT

HERMÈS KOREA

YUM Hyejo

Sr. Art & Window Manager

82 2 3015 3248

hyejo.yum@hermes.com

SHIN Yeji

Communication Assistant Manager

82 2 3015 3258

yeji.shin@hermes.com

FONDATIONDENTREPRISEHERMES.ORG

