To Paint the Portrait of a Bird

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**Sadang B**, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea, 2019

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**To Paint the Portrait of a Bird** invites the audience to enter the ‘inside’ of a cage where artworks are displayed, while the ‘outside’ of the cage is not accessible to the audience, it is only possible to look at this surrounding space through the mesh walls. This binary structuring of the space throws open the hierarchical positioning of humans and birds.

The installation comprises a giant mesh cage and video projections of the shadows of birds, elaborately embroidered carpets and wall pieces, specially constructed lighting and a 5 channel soundscape of recorded bird sound played through 10 speakers.

The inside of the cage is reminiscent of a ceremonial space where eastern and western motifs and symbols are brought together. For example, the Confucian ceremonial space, Confucian painting, Japanese colonial buildings, the Houses of Parliament in London, coats of arms, faux art nouveau and textile hand craft skills all combined to create heraldic hybrids that draw parallels with a hierarchy of the species.

Video footage of birds the artist shot at the zoo and local farms and online images were also used directly for developing and constructing the wall tapestries and carpet designs. These wall pieces and carpets show an imagined critical perspective of the birds towards the humans, a perspective that was based on the poem, *To Paint the Portrait of a Bird* by Jacques Prévert. The wall piece is indirectly reflecting the Confucian *sadang* in Kam Mo Yo Je Do (감모여재도), but here the middle of the *sadang* that is supposed to be empty is full of bird images. Outside the cage is a non-symbolic space, viewed as a natural space for domesticated birds.

**To Paint the Portrait of a Bird** questions our notions of freedom and seeks to contest Nationalist belief that positions human above human.

Work Specifications:

Metal (steel) cage, video projection, wood

Carpet 108x450x4cm(embroidery on cotton, fur fabric, recycled yarn),

Wall piece 360x300h cm (embroidery on cotton, polyester, recycled yarn, recycled fabric, metal mesh, wood)

Lightings: 60x45x85cm, 51x38x86cm, 60x57x247cm, recycled fabric, cotton, copper pipes, cable, plastic balls.

Sound installation through 10 speakers and 5 channels.