

Heemin Chung *Garden of Turmoil*

21 November 2025—7 February 2026

Thaddaeus Ropac
Seoul Fort Hill
1F, Dokseodang-ro 122-1, Yongsan-gu, Seoul



Heemin Chung, *Spheres*, 2025.
Acrylic, gel medium and UV print on canvas. 89 x 130 cm (35.04 x 51.18 in).

Thaddaeus Ropac Seoul presents Heemin Chung's second solo exhibition with the gallery, following *UMBRA* at Thaddaeus Ropac London in 2024. Bringing together a new body of paintings and bronze sculptures, the exhibition explores the sensory experience of a world that is increasingly mediated by technology. In her artworks, Chung examines the material potential of digital imagery to reimagine the virtual landscape in painterly and sculptural terms.

Images of the natural world, including seashells, stones, waves, flowers and tree bark, form the basis of Chung's compositions. Retrieved from online databases and manipulated using 3D digital modelling software, these motifs are transferred directly onto canvas or transparent sheets of gel medium – a clear, viscous substance used to bind pigments in acrylic paint. Since 2017, she has worked with gel medium to create multi-layered



Heemin Chung, *There She was Found Pulled and Folded 1*, 2025.
Bronze. 323 x 94 x 145 cm (127.17 x 37.01 x 57.09 in).

reliefs; while wet, the material is shaped into creases and folds that gather across the picture plane like a skin. In doing so, she brings virtual imagery back into the physical realms of painting and sculpture, and turns a conventional painting material into a tool for rendering real, rather than illusory, volume.

Chung describes her paintings as ‘landscapes’: composites in which layers of handcrafted and digital matter accrete without ever fully integrating. Their tactile, alluring surfaces operate within both organic and artificial registers, evoking synthetic plastics as much as geological formations or bodily terrains. Through these contoured topographies, she seeks to restore physical autonomy to images that, in the virtual realm, are flattened and estranged from their material origins. As art critic Moon Hyejin observes of Chung’s paintings, ‘the pictorial surface, an incomplete illusion in which painterly images of differing textures are pieced together with gel medium, is akin to a mixed reality in which the virtual

and the actual are inextricably entwined.’

The exhibition’s title *Garden of Turmoil* reflects the anxieties of the digital age and a world perceived through screens. Like the garden, Chung conceives of the virtual domain as a human-made ecology: a simulacrum in which images – like living organisms – propagate. ‘I do not see the artificial and natural worlds as separate entities,’ she says. ‘What we experience as “nature” is merely nature within the artificial world.’ Two bronze sculptures, *There She was Found Pulled and Folded 1* and *There She was Found Pulled and Folded 2* (2025), resemble tangled tree branches or helical strands of DNA. Their hybrid forms, like those encrusted in her paintings, emerge through processes of digital distortion. Evoking glitches, variations and mutations, they capture the tension between order and entropy that defines both natural and digital systems. Chung first explored the garden as an artificial environment in *Elsewhere, Rhema, Open Torso*, her two-person installation with sound artist Joyul at Maison Margiela’s Hannam Flagship in Seoul this year. Combining sound, video and sculpture, the installation of cascading bronze and copper forms conjured the sensory experience of an untamed jungle.

The artist frequently uses photogrammetry, a process that reconstructs three-dimensional models of physical objects and environments by combining images captured from multiple angles. Rather than functioning merely as a digital tool, photogrammetry becomes for Chung a sculptural act – a way in which immaterial form can, once again, acquire volume, tactility and density. ‘By rematerializing objects that have become data through techniques such as transferring and casting,’ she explains, ‘I open up an imaginary space of replication and proliferation.’ The inherent shapes of the motifs she selects – scalloped shells, cresting waves or grooved bark – also contradict the conditions of her chosen medium. Through them, she highlights the paradox of representing three-dimensionality on a flat surface, whether digital or pictorial. As curator Kim Jinju notes, her paintings ‘enter the three-dimensional world with a surface intended for two dimensions.’



Heemin Chung. *Your Angry Setting Sun*, 2025.
Acrylic, gel medium and UV print on canvas.
117 x 80.5 cm (46.06 x 31.69 in).

While invested in the contemporary technological experience, Chung's work also draws on 19th-century Romanticism and the concept of the sublime. Defined by British philosopher Edmund Burke as the simultaneous awe and terror evoked by something too vast or powerful to be fully comprehended, the sublime became central to the Romantic imagination, shaping both painted and literary depictions of the natural world. Inspired by J. M. W. Turner's vertiginous seascapes, in which humankind appears defenceless before nature's overwhelming force, Chung translates this Romantic sensibility into the present through her engagement with the digital landscape – a similarly boundless realm that is apprehended through the sensate, visceral body.

In *Garden of Turmoil*, Chung brings digital, painted and sculptural forms into coexistence. She explores 'nature' and the 'artificial' as dialectical constructs – each defined and perceived through the other –

and how, whether through the technologies of 3D modelling or painting itself, nature can be continually redefined as a material reality.



Heemin Chung, 2025.

About the artist

Heemin Chung was born in Seoul, South Korea, where she continues to live and work. She received her MFA in Fine Arts from the Korea National University of Arts, Seoul in 2015, and has since exhibited her work in solo exhibitions at DOOSAN Art Center, Seoul (2023); Sindoh Art Space, Seoul (2022); Museumhead, Seoul (2021); Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul (2018); and PS Sarubia, Seoul (2016). She has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, including those at WESS, Seoul (2023); Nam-Seoul Museum of Art (2021); Eulji Art Center, Seoul (2021); Soorim Art Center, Seoul (2020); Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, Ansan (2020); Rainbowcube, Seoul (2020); Platform L, Seoul (2019); Boan 1942, Seoul (2019); National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA), Gwacheon (2019); Hite Collection, Seoul (2018); Korean Cultural Center, Hong Kong (2018); and Archive Bomm, Seoul (2017).

Chung was awarded the DOOSAN Arts Award in 2022 and has participated in the SeMA Nanji Residency, Seoul (2022); Sindoh Artist Support Program (2020);

and MMCA Residency Goyang (2020). Her paintings and sculptures are housed in public institutions including the DOOSAN Art Centre, Seoul; Art Bank, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul; Seoul Museum of Art; and Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul.

Her first solo exhibition at Thaddaeus Ropac, *UMBRA*, was presented in the London gallery in 2024. In 2025, Chung's work was displayed in a two-person exhibition alongside Joyul, entitled *Elsewhere, Rhema, Open Torso*, at the Maison Margiela Hannam Flagship, Seoul as part of their Line 2 art project. Her work is currently on show at the Centre Culturel Coréen, Paris in the group exhibition *Colors of Korea: Spotlight on Contemporary Korean Art* until 29 August 2026.

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