



[Home](#) > [Exhibitions](#)

Myung-Joo Kim: The Body of The Soul at Kunstforum Solothurn, Solothurn

March 21, 2022 in [Exhibitions](#)





CERAMICS NOW





Tete pensive III, 2021



Nuit de tete, 2021



Tete pensive I, 2021



Voyageur, 2020



Bouquet de tete, 2019



Les Sensibles, 2020





Body of plant, 2017



Tete pensive II, 2021



Tete rouge, 2020

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March 5 – April 9, 2022

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Sculptural forms made of stoneware and porcelain dissolve, faces disappear, enamel colours fuse to a glowing rain; Myung-Joo Kim's (ceramic) universe defies the rational and invites us instead to drift away into the unfamiliar, into the mystery of being. By modelling the clay sensitively with her fingers and the palms of her hands, she captures that which is beyond our grasp, the human soul and its pain. In this, however, she constantly strives after truth by developing her own methods and allowing the compound and glaze to merge, both controlled and uncontrolled.

We can all sense that there is a soul, but we cannot grasp what it is. How can one fathom something that is not actually perceptible, reveal something that is indescribable? Even though painting and sculpture has made repeated attempts, a preoccupation with the soul has rather been the domain of musicians and poets. Their art manages without outlines, without anything that can be identified or recognized, just like time. Moving much as in a dream, Myung-Joo Kim dares to venture forth into this field. To that which is formless she gives a material and often even baroque form, she captures the inner movement, the excitement that motivates us, the animal that lives within us, and nature, too, becomes perceptible when her trees begin to resemble human bodies. The soul, the animistic, and the animalistic can all be thought together in Asian cultures.

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The soul belongs to what is transcendent and mysterious. It is not the ceramicist's objective to paint or give shape to this inconceivable, mystical, and elusive something, but only to create a sense of its existence. Myung-Joo lends it a physical form for us to be able to see and feel it in its permanently interdependent relationship with the body. Mere suggestions of human figures emerge from the clay, and the colourful glaze blends on a vibrant white ground, vaguely reminiscent of moods, blood, tears... in any case, one can sense them.

There is a nonpresence about these organic figures, which seem to have passed through pain and suffering, but without having lost their humanity. Even though the eyes almost disappear in the whorls of these small misshapen objects, one nevertheless gains the impression of something that is looking. A transformation begins to take place. A curve, a tilt are reminiscent of a back, a shoulder. At times it seems one can recognize numerous small heads in the glaze, heads which nevertheless remain elusive. The artist also creates small, fragile figures that wander about alone. As with Louise Bourgeois, who has depicted equally tortured bodies, no psychoanalysis takes place here either. Myung-Joo consciously distances herself from any expression of feelings. The portrayal of despair, fear, grief, abandonment, and loneliness lends these figures a great purity of intention. In the depiction of a head that is about to approach another head, to gently merge with it, lies profoundest humanity; one in which love, even in the failure of being, never wholly fades away.

Text by Carole Andréani

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Photo captions (images of individual works):

- Tete pensive III, 2021, clay, glaze, 35x26x26 cm
- Nuit de tete, 2021, clay, glaze, 34x29x33 cm
- Tete pensive I, 2021, clay, glaze, 39x30x28 cm
- Voyageur, 2020, clay, glaze, 34x26x10 cm
- Bouquet de tete, 2019, clay, glaze, 25x21x21 cm
- Les Sensibles, 2020, clay, glaze, smokefired, 25x10x10 cm & 31x12x12 cm
- Body of plant, 2017, clay, glaze, 90x60x41 cm
- Tete pensive II, 2021, clay, glaze, 54x40x35 cm
- Tete rouge, 2020, clay, glaze, 25x21x21 cm

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