

Artist Yona Lee welds, bends and weaves her way through Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in latest exhibition



Yona Lee
An Arrangement for 5 Rooms, 2022
 (installation detail)

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki is excited to announce its first new exhibition opening for 2022, showcasing the work of Yona Lee, a New Zealand-Korean artist with a growing international reputation. Opening in late February, *Yona Lee: An Arrangement for 5 Rooms* is the artist’s most ambitious solo exhibition to date.

Within the context of a global pandemic, restricted borders, and a changing relationship to public and private spaces, *Yona Lee: An Arrangement for 5 Rooms* negotiates the relationship we share with domestic and public spaces and objects. The five rooms of the Gallery’s park-side exhibition spaces take the meandering visitor on a journey through both densely and sparsely filled rooms.

Constructed entirely from stainless-steel tube, Lee picks up the signature handrail of the Gallery’s architecture and weaves it playfully through the building, turning it into sculpture, and supplying new seating and lighting for visitors. She even pushes the railing into Albert Park where it knots and pauses in the shade of a neighbouring tree. Incorporating familiar signs, like the fabric of Auckland Transport seating and bus bells, this new sculptural installation will interweave common experiences of transit for many across the Auckland region.

‘Yona’s work has a certain whimsy and playful sense of the uncanny to it, cleverly responding to the Gallery’s architecture, and enlivening our spaces. I am looking forward to visitors experiencing her work – both in the Gallery and in our neighbouring Albert Park,’ says Auckland Art Gallery Director Kirsten Lacy.

‘My ambition for this project is to activate the whole building. To break down the barriers between what is art and non-art, the inside and outside, the day and night, and the public and private. The highlight of the

Continues overleaf

Supported by



work is where it transitions from the inside to the outside. There is a sense of freedom in this moment that I believe is necessary for this current environment' says Lee, prior to the exhibition's opening.

This new work builds upon Lee's highly regarded *In Transit* series, which she developed in Seoul during her first return visit to South Korea to undertake residencies in 2016. Seoul is widely regarded as having the world's most extensive subway system and Lee used that as inspiration to develop a strong sculptural language for her artistic practice and voice.

'With its narratives of life, music and movement from the perspective of a young Korean New Zealand artist, often literally in transit for work, *Yona Lee: An Arrangement for 5 Rooms* solicits migration stories familiar to many New Zealanders who may have relocated to temporary premises in new urban environments, inspiring new materials and ideas for living in a new home, yet maintaining some hallmarks of that migratory spirit,' says Natasha Conland, the Gallery's Curator, Contemporary Art.

Based on the stainless-steel tube system designed as both handrail and barrier in dense urban environments to create efficient travel, Lee uses her materials to provide an alternative map of living. The sculptural system is used by Lee as a kit-set living system to guide visitors through imaginary transport networks, homes and urban spaces.

The commission is a story of intimacy brought from Lee's experiences in Seoul and repurposed within the New Zealand urban environment. With familiar signs like the seating-fabric from Auckland Transport and the city's outdoor seating, *Yona Lee: An Arrangement for 5 Rooms* will incorporate common experiences for many across the city.

'Not only will this large-scale sculpture introduce new audiences to Yona Lee's work in Auckland – her hometown – but also continue a successful template for solo sculpture commissions at the Gallery, extending artistic practice and providing effective avenues for new ambitious work,' adds Lacy.

Open from Saturday 26 February, *Yona Lee: An Arrangement for 5 Rooms* is proudly supported by the Contemporary Benefactors and the Asia New Zealand Foundation.

Exhibition details

Yona Lee: An Arrangement for 5 Rooms

When:

Saturday 26 February to Sunday 2 October 2022
10am–5pm daily

Where:

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
Cnr Kitchener and Wellesley Streets
Auckland, New Zealand

Admission:

FREE

For more information, high-res images and interview requests contact:

Priscilla Southcombe
Communications Officer
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

+64 21 548 480
priscilla.southcombe@aucklandartgallery.com
aucklandartgallery.com

Supported by

