

# **JULIA KWON: MORE THAN A BODY**

**JUNE 14 – AUGUST 4, 2019**



**TARGET GALLERY**

### **About Target Gallery**

Target Gallery is the contemporary exhibition space for the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

The gallery promotes high standards of art by continuously exploring new ideas through a variety of visual media in a rotating schedule of national and international exhibitions.

More information is available via [torpedofactory.org/target](http://torpedofactory.org/target).

### **About Torpedo Factory Art Center**

Founded in 1974 in an old munitions plant, Torpedo Factory Art Center is home to the nation's largest number of publicly accessible working artist studios under one roof. Just south of Washington, D.C., the Torpedo Factory Art Center overlooks the Potomac River in the Old Town section of Alexandria, VA.

Each year, more than a half million national and international visitors meet and interact with more than 160 resident artists in more than 70 studios and seven galleries.

For more information, visit [torpedofactory.org](http://torpedofactory.org) or follow the Art Center on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Pinterest](#) via [@torpedofactory](#)

Front cover image:

Julia Kwon, *Like Any Other: No. 60 (The Blanket Statements You Use on Me and Every Other Yellow Women)* 2019.



Target Gallery and the Torpedo Factory Art Center are part of the [City of Alexandria Office of the Arts](#), a division of the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities.



# JULIA KWON: MORE THAN A BODY

TARGET GALLERY  
2019 SOLO EXHIBITION

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JUNE 14 — AUGUST 4

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# About the Exhibition

# JULIA KWON: MORE THAN A BODY

*Exploring Objectification and Otherness*

Target Gallery presents their competitive annual solo exhibition featuring Northern Virginia-based artist Julia Kwon. *Julia Kwon: More Than A Body* was on view June 14 through August 4, 2019.

Based in Woodbridge, Virginia, Kwon uses traditional Korean inspired textiles to create a dialogue on othering and objectification she experiences as a Korean-American woman. Her work touches on her minority identity and delves deeper into a broader commentary on the dehumanizing and reductive process of being categorized.

"I aim to capture the tension that arises from the divide between different social groups and the mindset of us versus them," she said.

Kwon draws her main aesthetic inspiration from *bojagi*, a Korean practice of wrapping objects in cloth to protect good luck. Historically, it was a creative outlet for women in the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910) who had limited contact with the outside world.

"I am directly drawing inspiration from *bojagi* and consider ideas such as tradition, craft, and 'feminine' work," she said.

By utilizing this textile method, Kwon both honors her heritage while using it as a tool for disruption. Traditionally, common *bojagi* were made with patchwork cloths leftover from other projects. Kwon uses stereotypically "ethnic" textiles instead. This creates a subtle yet poignant commentary on orientalism and the perceived exoticness of Asian imagery. She calls attention to the viewers' assumptions based on Kwon's gender and identity.



Julia Kwon, *Like Any Other: No. 60 (The Blanket Statements You Use on Me and Every Other Yellow Women)* 2019.

## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Kwon uses these textiles as part of a larger sculptural work. She manipulates the fabric to suggest a female form trapped underneath. "Gender" is consumed and hidden by an artificially ethnic textile of "identity."

Kwon was selected from more than 130 North American applicants as part of Target Gallery's annual Open Call for a Solo Exhibition. The jury panel for this opportunity was: [Sandy Guttman](#), a curatorial assistant at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture; Michael Matason, Gallery Manager of [DC Arts Center](#); and [Terence Nicholson](#); a DC-based artist.

According to Guttman, "Kwon stages interventions in textile and sculpture, creating cross-cultural forms that implore the viewer to metaphorically look beneath the surface and question the very limitations of identity. She leaves us to ponder our own place within society and history. In Kwon's patterns, we find form; in Kwon's figures, perhaps we find ourselves." "This hybrid approach to her works breaks the

boundary on viewers preconceived notions the artists identity and background," said Matason. "Each piece and each piece of fabric should be carefully looked at, as Julia's works speak to race, femininity and her experiences on what it means to be Korean."

"The beauty of the pieces almost camouflages the poignancy of the message behind them. Her experience of being looked at as 'other' is a theme that I think will resonate with most viewers in some way," said Nicholson.



*Julia Kwon, Like Any Other: No. 60 (The Blanket Statements You Use on Me and Every Other Yellow Women) 2019.*



# The Jury Panel

# SANDY GUTTMAN

## JUROR FOR 2019 SOLO EXHIBITION

In a contemporary moment fraught with divisive politics, an onslaught of rapid-fire headlines, and the inundation of advertising dictating how to be oneself, it is difficult to find one's voice and know thyself. Julia Kwon's textiles, sculptures, and installations attempt to bridge the gap between the internal struggle of self-recognition and the external experience of being seen, leaving one to meditate upon what it is to be an "other." Through repetitious and meticulous patterning, Kwon attempts to rupture our own understanding of identity, pointing to the fragile state of being that any given identity might have within varying contexts. Using the traditional Korean method of *bojagi*, Kwon stages interventions in textile and sculpture, creating cross-cultural forms that implore the viewer to metaphorically look beneath the surface and question the very limitations of identity, leaving us to ponder our own place within society and history. In Kwon's patterns, we find form; in Kwon's figures, perhaps we find ourselves .

– Sandy Guttman



### About the Juror

**Sandy Guttman** is an independent curator writer, artist, and activist. As a curator, she is interested in the transformative power of art, and in the ability of artists and their work to transcend boundaries, question power structures, and incite dialogue. She has worked with Aspect / Ratio Gallery, Bodies of Work, Gallery 400, and is currently a curatorial assistant at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC. She is a founding editor of the arts and culture publication *FWD: Museums*.

# MICHAEL MATASON

## JUROR FOR 2019 SOLO EXHIBITION

It has been a pleasure to be part of the committee to pick Julia Kwon and her work as part of the upcoming summer programming at the Target Gallery. Julia's work features paintings and subjects wrapped and hidden in elegant flowing textiles. The mixture of both Korean and locally found textiles transform the space into body landscapes with each piece featuring both forms of textiles to create hybrid Korean textiles. This hybrid approach to her works breaks the boundary on viewers' preconceived notions of the artist's identity and background. Each piece should be carefully looked at as Julia's works speak to race, femininity and her experiences on what it means to be Korean.

– Michael Matason



### About the Juror

**Michael Matason** is an Arlington, VA, based photographer, and artist. He is currently the Web Design and Project Manager for Lauinger Library at Georgetown University. Since 2012, Michael has been the Gallery Manager at District of Columbia Arts Center. He also serves on the Program Advisory and Review Council for Arlington Independent Media (AIM) and the radio station WERA. He received his BFA in Digital Arts at George Mason University and is currently pursuing his MA at Georgetown University.

# TERENCE NICHOLSON

## JUROR FOR 2019 SOLO EXHIBITION

What I appreciate most about Julia Kwon's work is both its literal and figurative layers. The beauty of the pieces almost camouflage the poignancy of the message behind them. Her experience of being looked at as "other" is a theme that I think will resonate with most viewers in some way. Her embrace of her heritage in her treatment in materials (bojagi) comes from a genuine place, and adds weight to the work's execution, design decisions, and then sinks layers deep into the subtext of many of the works. The floor pieces command the space in a haunting manner and if it were not for the beauty of the patterns and palette, would almost accost the viewer, as they should. This tension gives added vibration to the pieces. The collection of work is a convergence of dexterity, adventurous spirit, and thoughtfulness.

– Terence Nicholson



### About the Juror

**Terence Nicholson** is a former Lead Curator/ Associate Creative Director of Honfluer Gallery and Vivid Solutions Gallery in Washington DC. Among the exhibitions he has curated are Michael Platt, Aziza Claudia Gibson-Hunter and Michaela Pilar Brown. He has also been very instrumental in musical and cultural programming with the likes of Fulbright Scholar Jen Shyu. In response to the lack of support of local musicians by larger venues in the District, Nicholson founded The Hut ; a monthly concert series featuring local musical artists that takes place in the Anacostia Arts Center. He currently works as an installer for the Hirshhorn.



# **Julia Kwon: *More Than A Body***

2019 SOLO EXHIBITION

# JULIA KWON

2019 SOLO EXHIBITION RECIPIENT

## ARTIST STATEMENT

I create Korean textiles to comment on my experience of being seen as “the other” based on my gender and ethnicity. The work explores different ways for creating ruptures on Korean patterns. I activate the textiles in relation to the frame, which become metaphors for framing and societal expectations for the authentic. The color gradients that turn to white to comment on the act of erasure and whitewashing. I reference crucial sociopolitical issues as well as consider the idea of cultural hybridity and transnationalism by incorporating various fabrics and contemporary logos into traditional Korean textile.

Further, Korean textile is not only created through sewing and manipulating fabric to suggest a trapped, exoticized female body, but also invented by overloading the textiles with patterns that are perceived as Korean. The human-scale figures are wrapped like an object with overtly colorful textiles to express the embodied experience, and both the gravity and absurdity of objectification. However, the fabrics are not only exoticizing, blocking and suffocating, but also protecting, hiding and mystifying the body.

The textiles I create symbolize what it means to be “Korean.” My work is not simply a representation of minority identities, but rather a commentary on the dehumanizing, problematic process of being identified, reduced and categorized. I aim to capture the tension that arises from the divide between different social groups and the mindset of “us versus them.” I am directly drawing inspiration from Korean object-wrapping cloth called *bojagi*. By employing *bojagi* that was historically a creative outlet for Korean women who had limited contact with the outside world during the Joseon Dynasty, I consider ideas such as tradition, craft, and “feminine” work.

Through the traditional and invented textiles of hybridity, I aim to destabilize preexisting notions of what it means to be “Korean” or “feminine.” By meticulously creating colorful Korean textiles through sewing, I am cherishing my cultural background. However, through imposing various disruptions and overburdening the textiles with “ethnic” patterns, I not only convey my experience of being objectified and judged superficially, but also expose and undercut the very preconceptions others may have based on my gender and ethnicity.

The work shifts the focus from the search for authentic origins and clear categories to the uncertainties of translation and complexities of hybridity and individual subjectivities. I aim to present my specific point of view and experiences as a Korean American woman as well as to spark conversations and position us to experience a more sweeping glance at issues regarding gender and ethnicity.

# JULIA KWON

2019 SOLO EXHIBITION RECIPIENT

[juliakwon.com](http://juliakwon.com)

 @artistjuliakwon

 @Julia Kwon

## BIO

Julia Kwon is an interdisciplinary artist currently based in NY and the DC area. Julia Kwon was born in the U.S. and has earned her M.F.A. at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts/Tufts University and B.A. in Studio Art at Georgetown University. She has had numerous solo exhibitions and won awards such as the School of the Museum of Fine Arts/Tufts University's Traveling Fellowship as well as the artist residencies at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Vermont Studio Center, NARS Foundation, Montgomery College, Gallery 263, and Textile Arts Center. She has had artist lectures at Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Georgetown University, Lehigh University, The University of Rochester, Emerson College, and Montgomery College.





**Julia Kwon**  
Woodbridge, VA

*Like Any Other: No. 55 (Reclining Nude)*  
Satin, thread, wood, and wire  
2019

[juliakwon.com](http://juliakwon.com)

 [@artistjuliakwon](https://www.instagram.com/artistjuliakwon)

 [@Julia Kwon](https://www.facebook.com/JuliaKwon)



**Julia Kwon**  
Woodbridge, VA

*Like Any Other: No. 59 (Ornamental Beings)*  
Satin, satin, thread, wood, plaster, and wire  
2019

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**Julia Kwon**  
Woodbridge, VA

**(Detail)**

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Woodbridge, VA

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*Like Any Other: No. 59*  
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