

# Alone – Jung Yong Sung

South Korean contemporary artist Jung Yong Sung first visited Bali in 2005. The dramatic volcanic landscape, the traditional culture and the onslaught of modernity were three decisive factors that, to him melded Bali and his island of birth, Jeju, inseparately together. The kindness of the Balinese people along with their art impacted strongly upon him and since that initial journey he was compelled to return to Bali.

Located 60 Km's south of Korea the people of Jeju have developed a language and culture that are unique from mainland Korea. Cultural elements create many similarities between Bali and Jeju; the strong roots of traditional, agrarian culture, the belief in the existence of a supernatural world that affects everyday life, along with various traditional rites and ceremonies that are held throughout the year.

"My paintings resemble Jeju Island, its history, culture, environment and people," says Yong Sung. His works, black ink on white paper, feature solitary, anonymous figures, some are dramatized as defiant 'heroes', living testaments to the dexterity of the human condition and the harsh, often absurd predicaments that must be braved. Other figures are portrayed in states of despair.

'Alone' Yong Sung's first solo exhibition of paintings in Indonesia opened on 13 January at the Tony Raka Art Gallery in Ubud, Mas and continues through until 13 February 2015.

"The faces of people who endure hard lives inspire me," Yong Sung says. "Because this is a reflection of my past." Driven by social issues as the creative core of his works the modern history of Jeju Island reveals a dark and horrid history that has been intimate part of his expression since graduating from college and joining the Tamara Art Group in Jeju.

Born 1968 Jejudo, Sth Korea Yong Sung is a graduate from the Graduate School of Art Education and the Department of Art Education, Jeju National University. "In university I painted using traditional Korean ink and brush technique, however in 2007 my method evolved and I began using knives and saw blades to scratch the surface of the paper. The surface texture is similar to that of the raw volcanic stone on Jeju, and the people who live in the extreme environment."

Yong Sung believes these textures are similar to his experiences are a metaphor for life. "Growing up in Jeju's harsh natural elements mould tough human characters," he adds.

"I dedicate this exhibition to my mother, who aged 83 lives happily alone, and is strong and active. My father died 40 years ago, yet my mother worked each day and raised 4 children. This has inspired me to grow as well as appreciate those who live a hard life," Yong Sung adds.

Closing inspection of the surface of his works reveal patterned scoring of the paper achieved by measured strokes of a saw blade across the paper. His technique involves the painting of the surface, the scratching and then final application of the black ink.

Stand out works are 'Looking at the Sky' 2014, the sturdy angular features of the subject gazing up and pondering the cosmos is reminiscent of Easter Island's famous stone statues, sentinels upon a barren landscape casting hope to the heavens above 'Like a Boxer' 2014, a broad and confident figure with raised fists ready for combat, and 'A Glass of Beer' 2014, in which the subject grasps an elevated glass of beer, boldly, somewhat sarcastically laughing.

'Shouting' 2014, however, is the most confronting and the strongest work on display. The expression ventures beyond despair into a violent outpouring of emotion. Hair extends out vertically, eyes forced fully open like having received a jolt of electricity. Yong Sung intentionally depicts an oversized mouth cast open wide compounding the emotional tension.

"When I am in Bali I always experience powerful emotions and something of a blooming within me. Some Balinese artists have a unique power and are much more freer than I am. My relationship with Bali has allowed me to grow as an artist. When I return home and I can find more emotion and freedom to express my art."

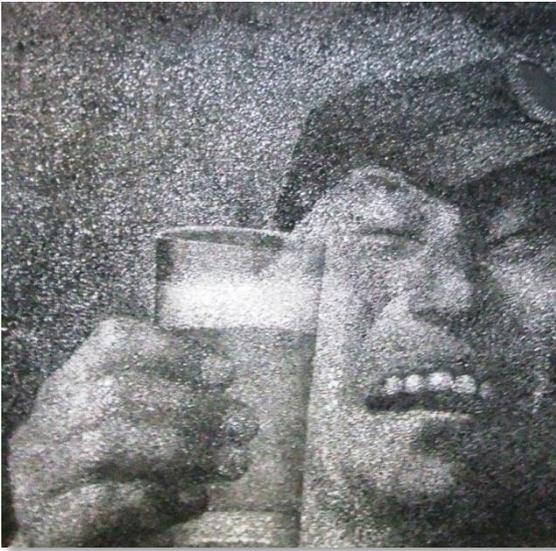
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The Tony Raka Art Gallery

Jl. Raya Mas 86, Mas-Ubud, Bali

Tel: +62361 7816785

[www.tonyrakaartgallery.com](http://www.tonyrakaartgallery.com)



Jung Yong sung, 'A Glass of Beer', 2014, black ink and scratching on paper. Image Richard Horstman



Jung Yong Sung, 'Looking at the Sky', 2014, Black ink and scratching on paper. Image Richard Horstman



Jung Yong Sung, image by Richard Horstman



Jung Yong Sung, 'Shouting' 2014, black ink + scratching on paper. Image By Richard Horstman