

**Press Release
16th October 2023**

**A special exhibition with works by the artist Kimsooja in the galleries of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst and the Ethnologisches Museum in the Humboldt Forum
25th October 2023 – 19th February 2024**

Kimsooja. (Un)Folding Bottari

**Press conference: Monday, 23 October 2023, 11.00 am
Guided tour through the exhibition with the artist at 5.00 pm (in English)
Exhibition opening at 6.30 pm**

At the invitation of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst, the South Korean-born and internationally active artist Kimsooja together with guest curator Keumhwa Kim has developed a sequence of (non-)interventions in the permanent exhibitions. The show is the prelude to a series of new exhibition projects that mark the Humboldt Forum as a place for contemporary artistic and social debates. It presents fourteen stand-alone or groups of works by the Korean-born, internationally acclaimed artist, *unfolding* in medial diversity in the galleries of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst and the Ethnologisches Museum at the Humboldt Forum. Existing works and new pieces created especially for the exhibition connect associatively with the historical objects in the museums' galleries, stimulate dialogues and place collections and their themes in a relationship to the present.

Bottari: material and metaphore

The *Bottari* mentioned in the exhibition title are a characteristic motif and principle in Kimsooja's work. As sculptural objects made of richly coloured textiles, the cloth bundles are both material and metaphor. They stand for protective reception as well as for unfolding and offering. In a figurative sense, they refer to the universal themes of home, migration, and mobility. Located in the spaces where the permanent exhibitions on Korean, Chinese, and Japanese art meet, the series *Bottari* (2017) alludes to the manifold relationships and entanglements between these regions and their manifestations in the works. Global textile cultures and the ability of fabrics to create social relationships are the topic of the video installation *Thread Routes* (since 2010). In a number of other works presented in the exhibition, the *Bottari* are condensed in their content and conceptually transformed.

Moon Jars: iconic Korean art and a new group of works derived from the *Bottari*



In cooperation with the Staatliche Porzellan-Manufaktur Meissen, a new group of porcelain works related to *Bottari* (*Deductice Object: Bottari*, 2023) was created especially for the exhibition. Inspired by the aesthetics of so-called *moon jars*, Korean storage vessels from the 18th century, the artist adapted historical technologies that were translated by the Meissen ceramists. In addition, Kimsooja had porcelain tiles produced which she worked with a needle (*Sewing into Soil: Invisible Needle, Invisible Thread*, 2023). These two newly created work groups tie in with essential aspects that shaped the arts of East Asia and thus are also present in the collections of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst. The relief tiles pick up the genre of painting in the sense of designed surfaces that are not aimed at representing something concrete but carry conceptual ideas. Comparably the vessels do not function neither as objects of utility, nor as decorative pieces but next to their conceptual inscriptions of holding and letting go point to relationships between space, objects, and spectators. Together with Kimsooja's earlier work *Deductive Object* (2016), a cast taken of the artist's hands and arms that surround a "void", the new workgroup continues not least her longtime engagement with temporality and immateriality.

***To Breathe: Mandala*: artistic transformation of everyday objects and the search for transcendence**

On a formal level, works like *To Breathe: Mandala* (2010) touch questions of transcendence and repetitive actions as a meditative praxis. Flanking a bodhisattva sculpture in the galleries with sacred art from East Asia, jukeboxes in *obangsaek*-colours rotate. They emit the artist's vibrating breath and a sequence of chants from different religions. *To Breathe: Mandala* works like a spiritual chorus. At the same time, it can be read as a commentary by Kimsooja on the controversial inscription of bible quotes on the Humboldt Forum's dome.

***Bottari 1999-2019*: a container as a symbol of being on the road**

A shipping container painted in the scheme of Korean *obangsaek* (cardinal colours, black and white) on the south outside the Humboldt Forum already points to the presentations on the third floor of the building. *Bottari 1999-2019* (2019) represents the concept artist's principle of operation: she derives works of art (deductive objects) from everyday objects that reflect her own biographical experiences as well as position themselves to places and occasions.

Rooted in Korea traditions and working with differently constituted media, Kimsooja combines personal history with global topics in her installations, performances, sculptures, films, and photos. With a minimum of interventions and low-key actions that she describes as the "art of not-doing", she tries to reveal the hidden and make tangible the immaterial and ephemeral. By appropriating things and patterns of activity, she links spaces, times, and

cultural practices. In the two museums, her works help us see entanglements and serve as a sounding board. With her creations, the artist not least puts into question the hierarchy of knowledge transfers from West to East and the dichotomy between art and everyday life.

Kimsooja (*1957 in Daegu, South Korea). Initially trained as a painter in Seoul, then residences in a studio for lithography at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris (1984/85) and at P. S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in New York (1992/93). From the 1980s on, her artistic practice focussed on textile works. Since then sewing and weaving, folding and unfolding are formally and conceptually central to the artist's work. *Kimsooja – (Un)Folding Bottari* unfolds in several constellations in the galleries of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst and the Ethnological Museum and traces the transformation of her works from two-dimensional sewing (*Mind of the World*, 1992) to sculptural objects (*Bottari*, 2017 and *Bottari 1999-2019*, 2019) and filmic works (*Thread Routes*, 2010 – ongoing).

Curatorial Team

Keumhwa Kim (guest curator of the exhibition)

Art historian and curator, engaged in questions on the conditions of a (post)-Anthropocene world, responsibilities in the post-colonial rise as well as performative actions as artistic strategies. Numerous exhibitions and projects in Berlin and Korea, e.g. *Getbollab* (2023), *Speaking to Ancestors* (2022 – 2023), *MOSS-0|77|* (2022), *Terrestrial Assemblage* (2021), *Das Dritte Land* ("The third country", 2019 – 2024).

Kerstin Pinther is curator for modern and contemporary art in the global context at the Museum für Asiatische Kunst and the Ethnologisches Museum

Uta Rahman Steinert is curator for modern Chinese art at the Museum für Asiatische Kunst

Emma Shu-hui Lin is scientific associate in training

Artist talk

On Wednesday, 25 October 2023, 5 pm, there will be a discussion between Kimsooja and the curator Keumhwa Kim in English in room 306.

Publication

An accompanying booklet with descriptions of the work and an interview with the artist will be published ca. three weeks after the exhibition opening.

Location

Kimsooja – (Un)Folding Bottari is an exhibition in the galleries of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst and the Ethnologisches Museum in rooms 319, 318, 306 and 304 in the Humboldt Forum.

Press conference

The press conference with an exhibition preview will take place on Monday, 23 October at 11 am in the Humboldt Forum. We are looking forward to your participation. Please register until Thursday, 19 October 2023 by email to: presse@smb.spk-berlin.de

An exhibition within the framework of the Collaborative Museum (CoMuse) and in cooperation with the Staatliche Porzellan-Manufaktur Meissen. The exhibition is supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Korea, Korea Arts Management Service, and the support Fund for Korean Art Abroad.

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