

# LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

"Sacred Space." *Wall Street International*. (November 17, 2017).



## Sacred Space

9 Nov — 23 Dec 2017 at Leila Heller Gallery in New York,

United States

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Sacred Space. Courtesy of Leila Heller Gallery

Leila Heller Gallery is pleased to present Ran Hwang's third solo show, *Sacred Space*, through December 23rd, 2017. As a Korean artist living and working between Seoul and New York City, Ran Hwang finds solace, peace, and calm in meditative principles. In her works, buttons and pins become more than mundane, mass-produced items; they are transformed into metaphors for human freedom. Recontextualized when affixed to Plexiglas panels, they take the form of iconic symbols such as temples, plum blossoms, and Buddhas.

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This transformation is reinforced by the very process of constructing her works. Creating hand-made paper buttons, weaving thread, hammering thousands of pins into place requires the utmost discipline and concentration, recalling the meditative discipline of Zen masters. The production of such works is, in effect, a ceremonial action, emptying the mind and evoking a combination of endurance and ephemerality.

Although Hwang refers to her Korean heritage in her artistic practice, she is also very much influenced by her time living in the United States. Her complex, layered works reflect the personal journey of growing up in a traditional Korean family, straying away, and then returning after numerous encounters with the corruption, terrorism, and tragedy of the contemporary world. That harsh discovery led Hwang to contemplate the fragility of life, the meaning of mortality, and the nature of time. Reflecting on her bi-cultural consciousness, the artist states, “I use Western objects with an Oriental mind.” Her fragile materials and careful attention to detail bespeak the seamless integration of her dual Asian-American identity. Each pin is held tightly in its position, just as we all are by society, yet each also appears to be meditating.

Her work suggests that nothing is permanent—neither culture, nor identity, nor even the artworks themselves. Yet, amid this universal fluidity, she constructs from humble, everyday materials entire ethereal worlds. Hwang’s work evokes a space for healing, meditation, contemplation, treatment, and care. Just as plum blossoms represent the transient beauty of life as it blooms and decays, Hwang's art, likewise caught between freedom and restriction, offers optimism, peace and calm—a place of respite in these unstable times.

**Ran Hwang** was born in the Republic of Korea in 1960, and currently lives and works between Seoul and New York City. In 1997, the artist moved to New York City to study at the School of Visual Arts. Hwang has exhibited at several international institutions, including the Brooklyn Museum, New York; MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts; the Queens Museum of Art, New York; IMAS (International Museum of Art and

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Science), McAllen, Texas; The Hudson Valley Center for the Arts, New York; Unesco Paris; the Third Floor-Hermès, Singapore; House of Dior, Seoul; and the Asian Civilizations Museum (ACM), Singapore. Hwang's work is also a part of numerous private and public collections including the Brooklyn Museum, New York; the Des Moines Center for the Arts, Iowa; the Third Floor-Hermès, Singapore; the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul; King County Library, Issaquah, Washington; and the Hammond Museum, North Salem, N.Y. Her collaborative work 'Lady Dior As Seen By' was commissioned and collected by the renowned fashion house Christian Dior. Hwang received the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant in 2015 and the AHL-Jason J. Kim Grant in 2017. She has an upcoming show at the Palais du Bozar in Brussels in 2019.