

MJ Kim

The Architecture of Empathy

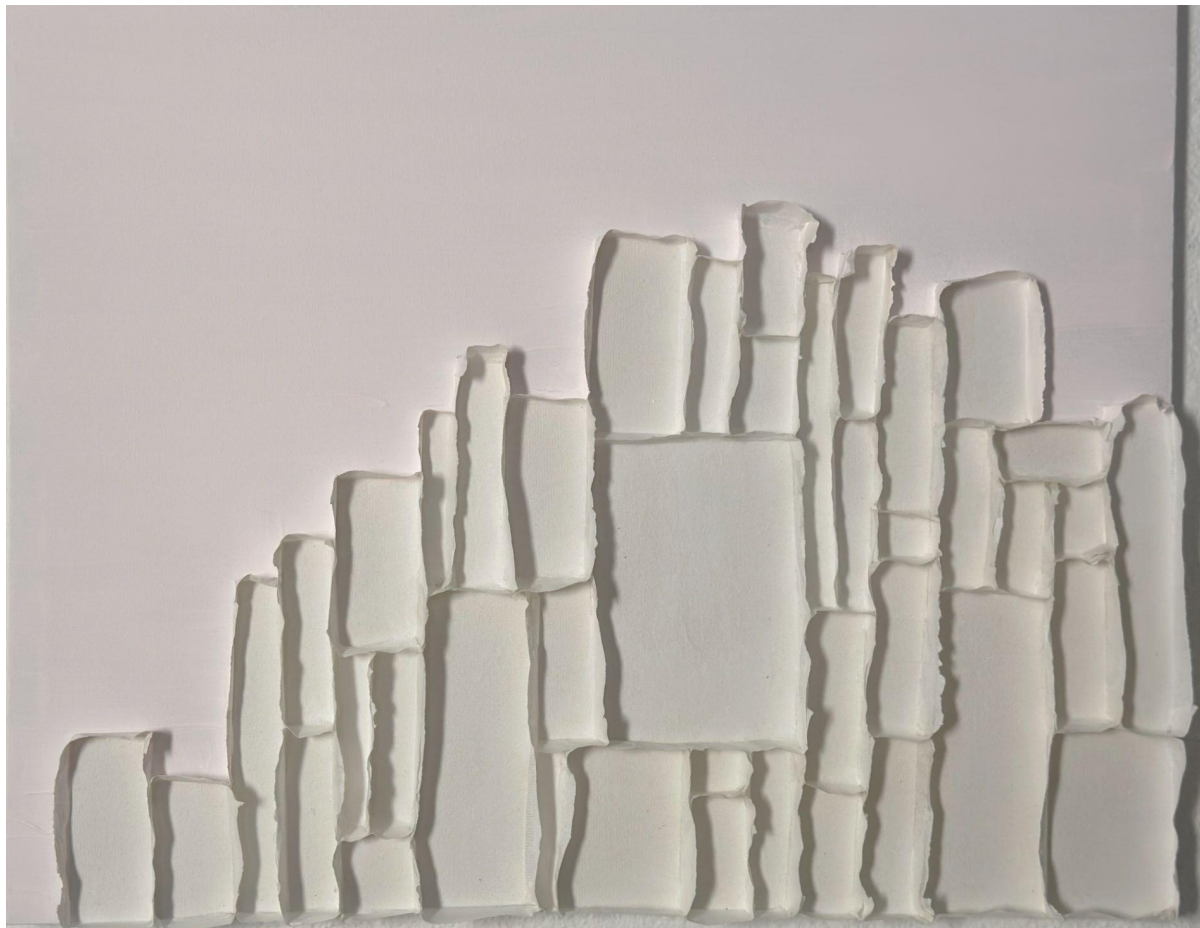
공감의 구조

SELECTED WORKS | 2026

Hanji, ink, and acrylic on canvas

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Artist Statement

My earliest memory of Hanji is of an old family genealogy book my father showed me when I was young. It traced our family through generations. I remember its worn, rough edges and how well the paper had endured. To me, it reflected a strength I associate with my Korean heritage: a delicate appearance holding remarkable resilience. Since my father's passing, this memory has become especially meaningful.

In my work, I develop that relationship between softness and strength through my own process. I moisten Hanji with glue and shape it by hand. As it dries, the paper becomes firm enough to hold its form, while retaining its soft, uneven edges. I then bring these individual forms together into a larger composition.

The small pieces remind me of individual lives within a family history—each distinct, yet connected. Through Hanji, I explore how memory and belonging take shape, and how something seemingly fragile can carry strength across generations.

B Series | Light and Space

Artist Notes

In the B series, pale color and raised Hanji forms create a quiet interplay of light and shadow. The paper's worn, soft edges recall the family book my father showed me, and the strength I found in its pages.

Each small form retains its own shape as it joins the larger composition. Pink, white, blue, and purple bring openness and hope to this memory of connection.

작가 노트

B 연작에서는 옅은 색과 입체적인 한지가 빛과 그림자의 조용한 변화를 만들어 냅니다. 종이의 닳고 부드러운 가장자리는 아버지가 보여 주신 오래된 족보와 그 안에서 발견한 한지의 강인함을 떠올리게 합니다.

작은 형태들은 저마다의 모습을 간직한 채 더 큰 구성으로 이어집니다. 분홍, 흰색, 파랑, 보라의 색은 이 연결의 기억에 열린 마음과 희망을 더합니다.

B1 | 2026

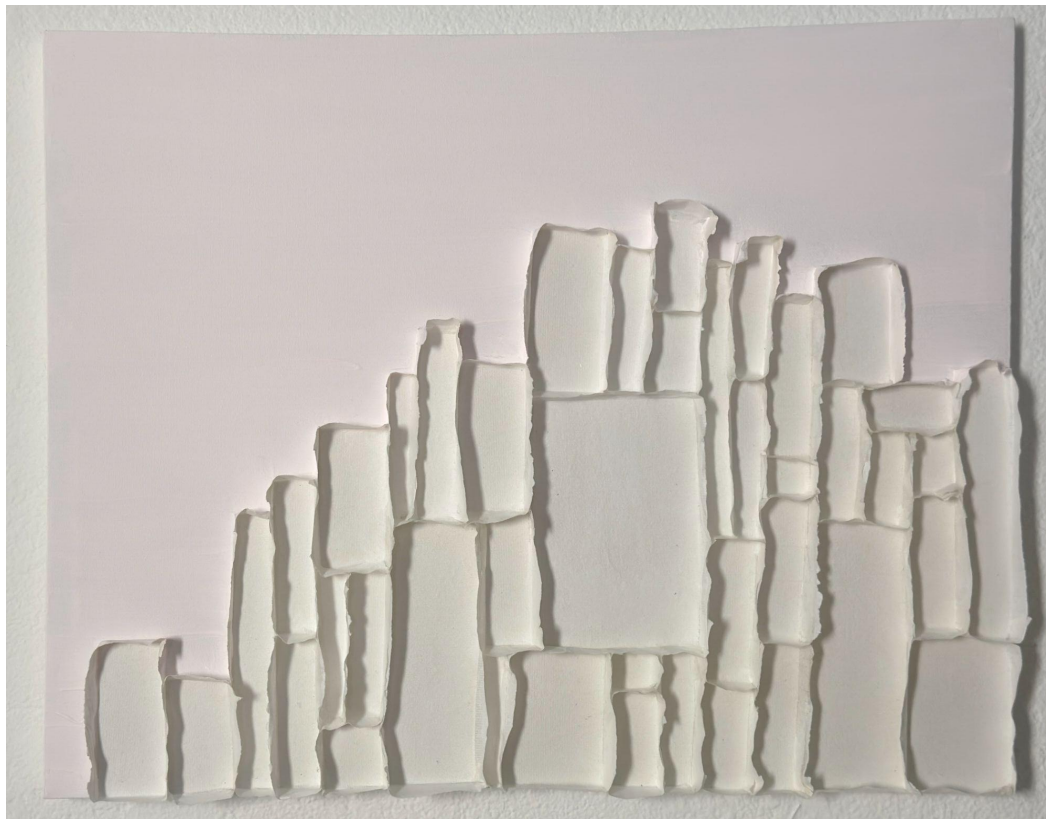
A Joyful Tomorrow

라온하제 (Raon-haje)

Pale pink brings a quiet warmth to the raised Hanji forms. Their gathering shapes suggest the possibility of a brighter, shared tomorrow.

Gesso, acrylic, Hanji, and paper adhesive on canvas

20" W × 16" H



B2 | 2026

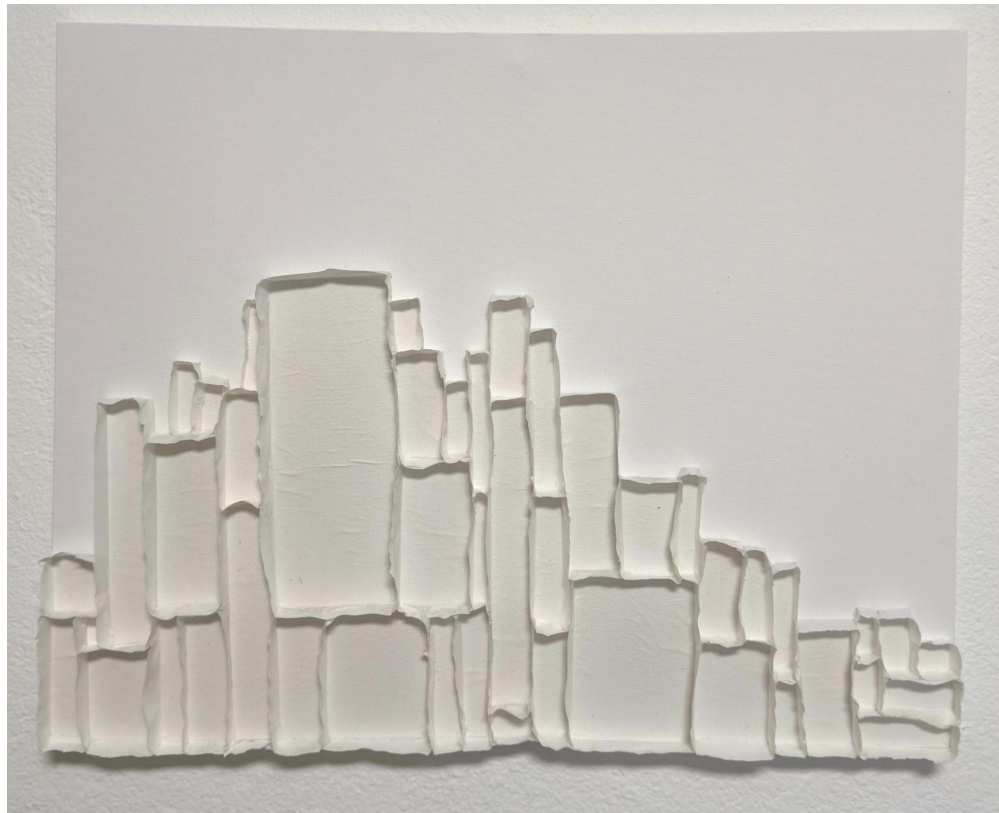
Spilling Light

든해 (Deunhae)

White Hanji catches the light across its raised edges. The spaces between the forms become places where warmth and connection can enter.

Gesso, Hanji, and paper adhesive on canvas

20" W × 16" H



B3 | 2026

First Light

먼동 (Meondong)

Muted blue and soft paper edges suggest the first light of day. The work considers the quiet moment when distance begins to give way to openness.

Gesso, acrylic, Hanji, and paper adhesive on canvas

14" W × 11" H



B4 | 2026

The Guiding Core

벼리 (Byeori)

Against soft purple, individual Hanji forms gather into a connected structure. The work reflects on the bonds that hold people together while allowing each person to remain distinct.

Gesso, acrylic, Hanji, and paper adhesive on canvas

14" W × 11" H



C Series | Ink and Connection

Artist Notes

In the C series, ink settles into the Hanji, moving from pale gray to deep black. The visible fibers and layered forms recall the resilience I first saw in the old family book: paper that looked delicate yet endured.

The closely gathered pieces suggest lives held within a shared history. In C5, pink appears among the dark forms, offering a small gesture of hope and renewal.

작가 노트

C 연작에서는 먹이 한지에 스며들며 옅은 회색에서 깊은 검정으로 이어집니다. 드러나는 종이의 결과 겹겹의 형태는 오래된 족보에서 처음 보았던 한지의 회복력을 떠올리게 합니다. 섬세해 보이지만 오랜 세월을 견딘 종이입니다.

서로 가까이 모인 조각들은 함께 이어지는 역사 속의 삶들을 암시합니다. C5에서는 어두운 형태 사이로 분홍색이 드러나며 희망과 새로움의 작은 기미를 전합니다.

C1 | 2026

Gradual Diffusion

번짐 (Beonjim)

Ink darkens the lower forms and disperses across their textured surfaces. Set against pale blue, the composition explores connection extending beyond individual boundaries.

Ink (Meok-mul), gesso, acrylic, Hanji, and paper adhesive on canvas

14" W × 11" H



C2 | 2026

The Softening Shade

그늘 (Geuneul)

Layered gray tones move between shadow and light. Uneven paper edges soften the grid, bringing variation and intimacy to its repeated forms.

Ink (Meok-mul), Hanji, and paper adhesive on canvas

11" W × 14" H



C3 | 2026

The Inward Spread

스며들 (Seomyeodeum)

Ink sinks into the Hanji fibers, deepening toward the lower edge. The changing tones explore how feeling enters and transforms an apparently ordered structure.

Ink (Meok-mul), Hanji, and paper adhesive on canvas

11" W × 14" H



C4.1 | 2026

The Absence of Boundaries

스스럼 (Seoseoreom)

Dense ink draws the clustered forms into a shared dark field. Glimpses of paper and reflected light keep their individual edges visible within the whole.

Ink (Meok-mul), Hanji, and paper adhesive on canvas

11" W × 14" H



C4.2 | 2026

The Absence of Boundaries

스스럼 (Seoseoreom)

Deep black tones unify the closely arranged Hanji forms. Small shifts in texture and reflected light suggest connection that holds both difference and closeness.

Ink (Meok-mul), Hanji, and paper adhesive on canvas

11" W × 14" H



C5 | 2026

The Tonal Seeds

씨앗 (Ssiat)

Pink accents emerge through a layered field of gray and black. Like seeds within a dense structure, these small moments of color suggest the possibility of growth and renewal.

Ink (Meok-mul), gesso, acrylic, Hanji, and paper adhesive on canvas

11" W × 14" H



Hanji | Material and Process

I work with Hanji I have kept for more than 40 years. Its texture connects me to my Korean heritage and to the family history my father shared with me.

I cut the paper by hand, leaving its edges uneven. I moisten each piece with paper adhesive and shape it with my fingers. As it dries, the paper becomes firm enough to hold its raised form. I join the pieces on canvas, where their edges catch light and cast shadows. Ink (Meok-mul) settles into the fibers; acrylic adds color to selected works. Through this process, a delicate material carries memory and strength.



About MJ Kim

MJ Kim was born in Seoul and is based in California's Bay Area. She studied Environmental and Product Design at ArtCenter College of Design and worked in interior, furniture, and lighting design. That background informs her attention to structure, materials, and the movement of light across a surface.

Returning to art, Kim works with Hanji she has kept since childhood, along with ink and acrylic. She cuts and shapes the paper into raised forms that gather on canvas. Her work draws on Korean family memory and explores how distinct lives can belong to a larger whole.

MJ Kim은 서울에서 태어나 현재 캘리포니아 베이 지역을 기반으로 활동합니다. 아트센터 칼리지 오브 디자인에서 환경디자인과 제품디자인을 공부했으며 인테리어, 가구, 조명 디자인 분야에서 일했습니다. 이러한 경험은 구조와 재료, 표면 위에서 변화하는 빛에 대한 관심으로 이어집니다.

다시 미술 작업으로 돌아온 Kim은 어린 시절부터 간직해 온 한지에 먹과 아크릴을 더해 작업합니다. 한지를 자르고 형태를 빚어 캔버스 위에 입체적으로 모읍니다. 작품은 한국의 가족사에 대한 기억에서 출발해 서로 다른 삶이 더 큰 전체에 속하는 방식을 탐구합니다.

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For inquiries, availability, and exhibition opportunities

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