

Area

Al Quoz (39)
 Barsha (7)
 Bur Dubai (15)
 Deira (7)
 DIFC (11)
 Downtown Dubai (2)
 Dubai Marina (4)
 Dubai Media City (2)
 Emirates Hills (1)
 Festival City (2)
 Jumeirah (12)
 Jumeirah Lakes
 Towers (2)
 Karama (1)
 Knowledge Village (1)
 Nad Al Sheba (3)
 Others (15)
 Oud Metha (1)
 Rashidiya (2)
 Satwa (2)
 Sheikh Zayed Road (5)
 Umm Suqeim (3)

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Jung Lee: Everything is illuminated

We chat to the South Korean artist about her new exhibition at Green Art Gallery [Discuss this article](#)



Picture 1 of 2

Jung Lee talks about her haunting photographs and how they relate to our fear of loneliness.

The South Korean artist Jung Lee's photographs are of barren landscapes, with incongruous neon messages forming a central focus. Her desolate images provoke searching questions about the sense of loneliness which people experience, either in or out of relationships. In an effort to understand Lee's sparse snapshots, we asked what inspires her, why she chooses to use the messages she does and what she thinks this should mean to her audience.

I saw a description of your work which referred to you 'using neon lights in a philosophical manner'. Is that a statement you would agree with?

That's right. Neon is common and even cliché in reality. But I want neon lights to be profound and even humane.

Your inspiration for this exhibition was Roland Barthes' novel, *A Lover's Discourse*. Can you elaborate as to why?

It is a dynamic novel. The book describes love as a living thing that is wondering, shouting and constantly changing. The book helped me a lot to understand the deeper nature of love and personify neon lights in landscapes.

You seem to choose quite bleak or austere environments for your work. Is it fair to interpret this as slightly pessimistic?

I choose the locations that make my neon look more lonely and desperate. But I always leave another space beyond neon lights. My work is up to a viewer's interpretation.

Why do you believe that being in a relationship can lead to a sense of loneliness?

Maybe your expectation gets bigger than when you are alone. Although when you are in love, loneliness seems inevitable.

You named one of your exhibitions *Aporia* [coming to a dead end]. Do you think all human relationships are ultimately doomed?

Aporia is a metaphor for one person's journey. The person, from my imagination, might have got to a dead end with their relationships. But at the same time, I wanted to imply another door in my images.

What is the rationale behind using lights people would find in a city in a bucolic landscape?

I know how lonely being in a city is because I live in one. But while I travel to the countryside for rest, I find myself missing something familiar such as McDonald's or Starbucks. In Aporia, by using neon lights, as a symbol of city life, I tried to reflect today's people.

Do you see a relationship between melancholy and beauty?

I see beauty in imperfection. I want to draw something unusual from melancholy and make my own vision of beauty.

How do you choose the phrases that you illuminate?

I'm interested in the phrases that encourage me to pre-visualise the image. If the phrases are inspiring, they lead me to commit.

Do you expect your work to make people feel sad or would you prefer the viewer to relate to your pictures in the context of their own memories?

My work is not about messages. I expect my pictures to be delivered as a short trip. If my work evokes uncompleted desires, I would be happy enough.

Your work for the Day and Night exhibition was influenced by Dantes' thoughts on how true faith and love lead to paradise. Do you share that belief?

I'm drawn to Dante's journey searching for true light. I wanted to respond to his passion in my own way. Day and Night is my version of work about endless questions. Maybe I am one of these people who keeps asking those questions.

Do you think modern living leaves people isolated and did this idea influence the nature of your work?

My work is about people who do not want to be isolated. In my work, I try to reflect a desire not to be lonely, rather than just loneliness itself.

The Lowdown

Exhibition: Green Art Gallery from September 9 until October 23, [Al Serkal Avenue](#), Al Quoz (04 346 9305).

Artist: Jung Lee

Price of works: On request

By Peter Feely

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