

FOOD & WINE / ART / BOOKS / FASHION / GARDENING / TRAVEL ... AND OTHER WEEKEND TREATS

**EUN JU CHO PRINTMAKER**

## THROUGH THE SQUARE WINDOW

words **GABRIELLE RISH**

photography **NIKKI DAVIS-JONES**

The silkscreen printing process is usually a manic one, paint squeegeed across the screen in a firm sweep, paper taken out and replaced by a fresh sheet then the process repeated five, six, 20 times with machine-like rapidity. Screen sponged off, next colour applied, repeat that fast and furious process.

South Korean-born artist Eun Ju Cho is a silkscreen printer with a difference. Her style is slow, quiet and meticulous. The end results reflect the Zen-like quality of their production.

These minimalist works involve an interplay of square shapes and tones mostly of the palest green, pink and yellow. A sudden intensifying of the colour or shift in the relationship between the squares hits the eye and creates sensations deep in the brain, like a mandala.

"Why I love pink and yellow is that when I was 20 my mum bought me a set of beautiful traditional clothes, or hanbok. The top is pale yellow and the bottom bright pink, to symbolise virginity," Cho says. "On my wedding day my top was green and the bottom bright red."

This year, completing her Masters at UTAS, Cho made more use of pale turquoise, which is the colour of traditional Korean chang ga, or blue ceramics: "It symbolises heaven, pureness and cleanness," she says.

Both her prints and the sculptures she makes out of wood and fabric are inspired by Chang Moon - traditional Korean lattice and rice paper windows and doors - and Bojagi, which are traditional patchwork wrapping cloths.

"I work very slowly, very precise and calm and meditative," Cho says. "Empty space is very important to my work because big spaces are very important in traditional Korean ink painting and architecture."

Cho started off studying ceramics, both in Seoul and at TAFE in Hobart. But carrying heavy clay around exacerbated a knee injury so when she went on to take a degree in fine arts, at the University of NSW in Sydney, she switched to painting.

Back in Hobart, studying for her Honours and Masters degrees, she switched again, this time to printmaking, combining etching, hand-colouring, screenprinting and her Chang Moon-inspired sculptures. Though she seems a thoroughly Korean artist, she says she has recently made a psychological and artistic passage from Korea to the West.

"When I started my concept, it reflected mostly traditional Korean colours and culture, but now it's more about expressing my inner self," she says. "My father was very authoritarian and I didn't have confidence. But after I started my art work I began to get confident."

"Before, my work was always contained inside a frame but now, since last year, the work comes out of the frame to symbolise my move from oppression to freedom."

*Eun Ju Cho's work is on show at the UTAS post-graduate show at the Plimsoll Gallery, Centre for the Arts, Hunter St, Hobart until Sunday, November 20*

