

From the collection

Art

Along with a substantial number of fellow art students such as Seung Yul Oh and Hye Rim Lee, Jae Hoon Lee (no relation) arrived in New Zealand to study at Elam School of Fine Arts as part of a new generation of South Koreans migrating to New Zealand in the late 1990s.

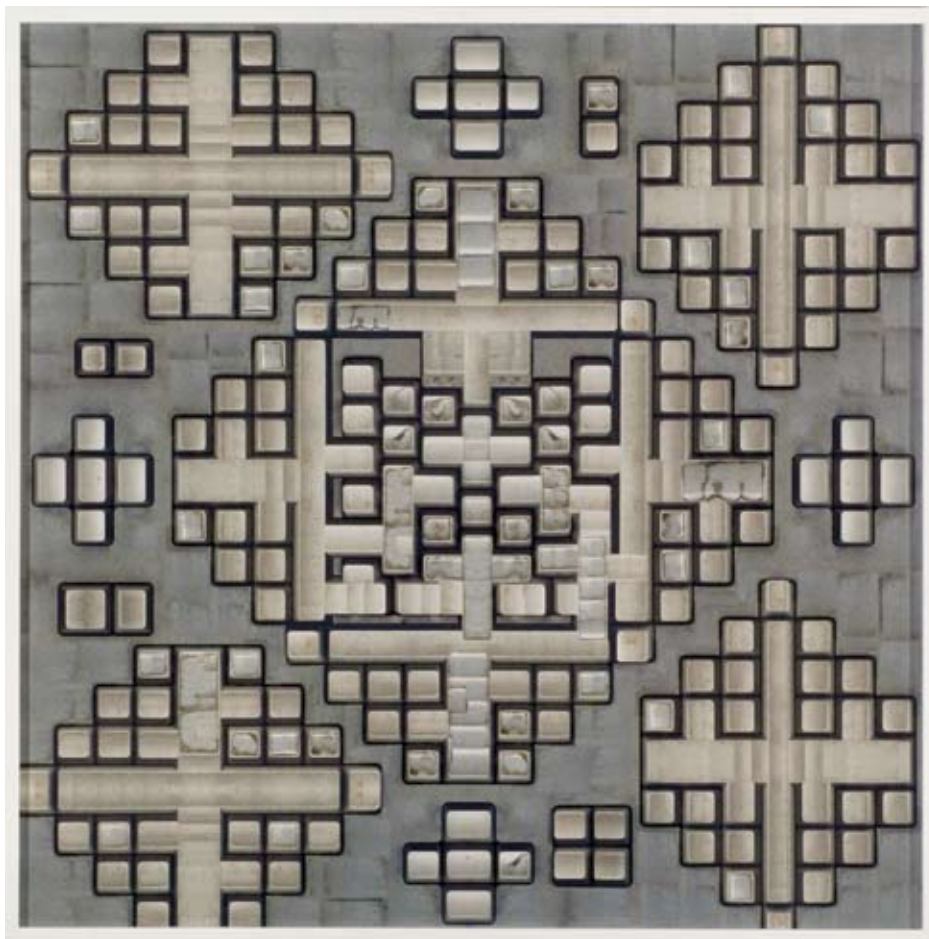
This new cultural influx, now an established part of the New Zealand community, was sparked by a loosening of travel regulations in the previously reclusive nation.

A regular traveller, Jae Hoon moved to New Zealand to complete his masters degree at Elam School of Fine Arts, having already majored in sculpture at the San Francisco Art Institute; he is now a doctoral candidate at Elam.

Much of the content of Jae Hoon's work is gathered from his nomadic lifestyle, documenting his random encounters and creating an image bank of his experiences. His latest exhibition *Tomb*, on show at Te Tuhi in Pakuranga until 28 June, includes a reconfiguration of pyramids photographed on a recent trip to Egypt. Like much of his work, the images have been digitally reconstructed brick-by-brick in an almost sculptural manner, transforming them into towering monoliths.

Jae Hoon's work is primarily constructed digitally, no doubt a result of growing up in a media-savvy country with one of the fastest internet take-up rates in the world. Presumably having fellow Korean Nam June Paik (1932-2006) leading the vanguard of international video artists in the 1960s was further inspiration. It was no coincidence that all three also found themselves under the tutelage of New Zealand's intermedia pioneer, Phil Dadson.

Jae Hoon's work is a consideration of the fluidity of identity and existence, repositioning ideas of life and death as a constant negotiation of flux. The direct experience of touch played an important role in his early works and he used a flatbed scanner to capture skin, faces, leaves, and anything else that could be absorbed into his electronic mosaics.



Jae Hoon Lee (b.1973), Salvation #3, 2007, Digital photograph, The University of Auckland Art Collection.

In 2007 Jae Hoon produced a series of three works using the title *Salvation* – The University of Auckland Art Collection has *Salvation #3*.

Salvation #1 and *#3* are reconfigurations of the keyboard he owned when he arrived in New Zealand. By removing the Korean characters from the keys, the keyboard has more ambiguous cultural origins. It also becomes a more abstract object, seemingly worn bare by touch and drawing

attention to the dust, hair and coffee stains; residue of its intimate relationship with its owner.

Each work in the *Salvation* series was produced in an edition of eight, as either digital photographs or lightboxes. *Salvation #2* is on show until July as part of an Auckland City Council public art project, illuminated on the side of a phone booth in Lorne Street.

Andrew Clifford