

HESSE FLATOW

Annette Hur: *Act of Wings*

February 24 – April 1, 2023

Opening reception: February 24, 6-8pm

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From the earliest bird goddesses to the space age, some women have refused to be defined by the restrictive gravity of men's wishes or desires; their ability to fly empowered them to impose conditions on men, or to escape roles they found constricting. – Serenity Young



HESSE FLATOW is pleased to announce *Act of Wings*, an exhibition of new paintings by the Brooklyn-based artist Annette Hur, marking her third solo presentation with the gallery.

Resonating with her upbringing, a decision to leave South Korea, and women's movements against patriarchal entitlement and violence, Hur's striking and tumultuous abstractions combine her visceral dream imagery and the symbolism of traditional Korean painting. Intertwining color and metaphor into images of outstretched wings, Hur poetically mediates between the natural and the constructed. She balances figurative elements with asymmetrical patterns like those found in Hanbok attire, which allude to strife, phases, endurance, and hope.

Bold movements of abstract creatures expand throughout the canvas as Hur carefully coordinates colors with compositional logic to build allegorical narratives teetering between determination and perseverance. In *Leaving Without Guilt*, a feathery arthropod valiantly takes flight in the quiet hours of dusk or dawn, leaving behind the warm, seductive glow of a picturesque landscape of home. In *Look Away, Sky Is On The Other Side*, a mother hovers over a dark, consuming body of water, faced with the wrenching decision of abandoning her young in order to avoid being engulfed. In *Unstitched Metaphors*, red strings corset and constrict a butterfly body whose intricately layered garment doubles as the fabric of its delicate wings, signaling that cultural and personal identities are inextricably linked.

ACT OF WINGS by Annette Hur

I never felt sorry, at least never admitted to it. The great guilt oozing from my body that weighed me down had become second nature. I accepted it somewhere within my feminine subconscious as something innate to the body of a woman.

When I took flight from Korea, I felt the heaviness as I fought with the gravity of those I was leaving behind. Their judgment of me, this deceitful creature that played the role of the good girl, the responsible one, obedient and aware of my place. Dumbstruck patriarchal entitlement watched me climb awkwardly above it. It was the glares of the ones like me that made me doubt my choice the most though.

When I landed, I examined every inch of my metaphorical wings. I experimented with all the angles, surface tension, force, gravity, vortex, strokes, and most importantly, aligning the feathers in rows and patterns to assimilate into my new environment.

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The time spent mastering the aerodynamic mechanisms found in my freedom was time spent ignoring my guilt. The black box that proved I had broken the collective agreement reached to denounce my existence as an appropriate asset in society.

My observations from above have shown me that no place is exempt from this guilt laden culture. I feel the inhumanity faced by the feminine collective, subjugated, stereotyped, discriminated against, sexually assaulted, objectified, fetishized, clipping away at my wings with each witnessing, adding to the heavy sensation. But then I feel my hollow bones lifted by the elegance of their defiance. The sky is filled with those like me. Souls wielding their words, education, protests, books, art, music, poems, motherhood, and grace.

Some view our frantic *act of wings* as a desperate fleeing action. Some as a vain attempt to pull ourselves above our station to be viewed and praised for merely existing. Desperately acting out in order to be heard. Creatures claiming autonomy. They cannot be bothered to see where it is we are going or what it is we are saying.

Our *act of wings* is a great source of inspiration and motivation for me to continue to be a creator. Painting, writing, collaging my being, my flight map.

A bird can learn to walk on the ground like a bear, and they can spend their whole life walking — but they will never be happy this way.

People born from the bird egg are interested in beauty, order, harmony and meaning. They look at nature from on high, in an abstracted way, and consider the world as if from a distance. These people are like birds soaring—flighty, fragile and strong. ~Sheila Heti, Pure Colour, 2022

This series of paintings reflects on my own experience with invalidation, loss, and survival along with my painful witnessing of these wounds being inflicted upon others.

The *act of wings* in these paintings are not random erratic wanderings. It is a depiction of the deliberate will to survive, the will to use the act of wings to make waves, and to fly away without guilt.

Annette Hur was born in South Korea and currently lives and works in Brooklyn. Recent exhibitions include solo/group exhibitions at Helen J Gallery, Los Angeles; HESSE FLATOW, Shin Gallery, Ross + Kramer, Assembly Room, Wallach Gallery, Columbia University, Gavin Brown Enterprise, RegularNormal, Urban Zen, Times Square Space in New York; Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey; West Chester University in Pennsylvania; Heaven Gallery, Chicago Artists Coalition, Boundary in Chicago. Hur was a nominee for Rema Hor Mann Grant in 2019, a resident of BOLT Residency at Chicago Artists Coalition in 2016-2017. Hur holds a BA from Ewha Women's University (2008), BFA (2015) from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and MFA (2019) from Columbia University.

Image: Annette Hur, *Look Away, Sky Is On The Other Side*, 2022, oil on canvas, 60 x 51 in (152.4 x 129.5 cm)