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Se Yoon Park's sculptures take root in the architecture of trees

Korean-born architect-turned-artist Se Yoon Park discusses his new tree-inspired architectonic sculptures, now on view at Carvalho Park, Brooklyn



Se Yoon Park, *Continuum: Crossroads, No. II, 2021*. Courtesy of Carvalho Park (New York)

Examining the space between the earth and sky would be what you'd expect from an architect turned artist, but in the case of the Korean-born, New York-based sculptor Se Yoon Park, an introspective approach to such subjects yields surprising results.

His first New York solo exhibition, 'Of Earth and Sky', on view at Carvalho Park in Brooklyn's East Williamsburg area, showcases an array of architectonic, tree-like sculptures, all presented on an intimate scale, to exude an atmosphere of peace and quiet.



Se Yoon Park in his Brooklyn studio, 2021, courtesy of Carvalho Park (New York)

Having spent time working at OMA and Bjarke Ingels Group prior to embarking on an artistic practice in 2014, it's no surprise that Park continually draws on his architectural sensibilities and perceptions of light and shadow.

'My previous experience at OMA specifically influenced my way of working,' says Park. 'Unlike traditional architecture design processes based on drawing and the physical model, OMA brings the diagram to the process, which pools all possibilities to develop the design. My design process is similar to OMA's diagramming in that it is open to all contributing factors, regardless of how small or abstract. Sometimes it starts with writing a feeling.'



Top and above: Installation view of 'Se Yoon Park: Of Earth and Sky' at Carvalho Park, June 2021, courtesy of Carvalho Park (New York)

Despite this show marking his solo debut on home turf, Park has exhibited work at the European Culture Centre in Venice, in tandem with the 57th Venice Biennale, as well as in two-person shows in Seoul and New York. On his own though, Park's sculptures emanate an ethereal quality. Catalysed by the pursuit of light yet anchored in the fundamental dualities of light and shadow, birth and death and the finite and infinite. The geometric forms take cues from the structures and abstract values of the tree - itself an entity that strives towards light and continues to grow in darkness.

'Trees embody the nature of light and darkness. A tree needs both in order to survive,' explains Park. 'This lesson in nature corresponds directly to our lives, we need both as well. Nature is my best teacher. When I was growing up in Korea, I lived in a small town. Living in the countryside allowed me to understand the subtleties, beauty and lessons of nature.'





Top: Se Yoon Park, *Birth and Death: Karma*, 2021. Above: *Birth and Death: Void*, 2021. Courtesy of Carvalho Park (New York)

He continues, 'To actualise a tree's essence, I extract formal elements such as divided mass, fractal expansion, the cursive line from its complexity of form. These geometries are distilled, emphasised in themselves and reconstructed as a series of geometric sculptures that together build my work.'

Although Park does reference literal aspects of trees and plants, such as the branch, stem and calyx, these components are ritualistically refined through casting, bonding, sanding and chiselling until new reconstructions are formed. The arching and segmented forms symbolise the trajectory of self-transformation and development. As Park concludes, 'This is not a meaningless repetition, but the necessary development to grow into a new self, conceived from oneself.' ✱



Detail view of Se Yoon Park, *Continuum: Self, No. 1*, 2021. Courtesy of Carvalho Park (New York)



Installation view of 'Se Yoon Park: Of Earth and Sky' at Carvalho Park, June 2021, courtesy of Carvalho Park (New York)



Installation view of 'Se Yoon Park: Of Earth and Sky' at Carvalho Park, June 2021, courtesy of Carvalho Park (New York)