

Seung Ah Paik
Suspended Landscapes
24 Apr–30 May 2026
39 Walker

Bortolami is pleased to present *Suspended Landscapes*, an exhibition of new paintings by Seung Ah Paik, the artist's first with the gallery. In this new body of work, Paik expands upon her exploration of the physical and emotional geographies of the human form, foregrounding the body as a living, cartographic archive.

Paik's process draws upon traditional portraiture techniques from the late Joseon Dynasty (1392–1897) in Korea, during which time prevailing Neo-Confucian conceptions of ethics and humanism dictated that the primary means by which portraitists capture the true character of their sitter is through the meticulous depiction of their skin, and in turn their lived experience. In her contemporary compositions, Paik applies this logic to her own form, photographing herself and carefully painting the specificities of her own flesh. Wrinkled hands, blue veins, and calloused heels transform each composition into salient, living records of mortality, documenting the passage of time as chronicled by and manifested in her body.

In her large-scale *Self Configuration* paintings, Paik also incorporates elements of the "floating perspective" traditionally found in East Asian landscape painting, reconstructing her body from an array of disjointed perspectives into one composite image. Entangled arms, legs, fingers, and breasts across single- and multi-panel works are rendered from an uncanny, first-person perspective that both mirrors and unsettles how the viewer perceives the artist's and their own corporeal self. Anatomical details emerge as topographical landmarks, eroding the distinction between artist and artwork, humanity and the natural world.

Relatedly, Paik's single-panel *Autolandscapes* represent a subtle shift in focus from external self-image to the internal experience of self-embodiment, further emphasizing the body's emotional terrain through texture and form. This distinction is rooted in the physical impossibility of objectively seeing oneself from a perspective beyond one's own body, unmediated by a reflection or photograph. Accepting this truth, Paik sets her figure within horizonless, monochromatic fields of color that shift with her own internal landscape. Foregrounding her body as a repository of her lived experience, the poses are familiar though depicted from novel perspectives that also echo forms found in nature, such as mountain landscapes and growth rings in trees.

Both approaches reject common notions of portraiture, reimagining the body as a charged, changing space that is simultaneously vulnerable and durable. Paik's unflinching and diligent reproductions stand in deliberate opposition to the fleeting, filtered, and manipulated imagery dominant in contemporary visual and consumer culture.

Seung Ah Paik (b. 1979 Seoul, Korea, lives and works in Pittsburgh, PA) studied Oriental Painting at Seoul National University and Fashion Design at Central Saint Martin's before earning her Master of Fine Art in Painting from Goldsmiths in London. Her work is the subject of a solo exhibition on view now at the Rubell Museum in Miami through fall 2026.

Additional selected exhibitions include Gratin, New York (2025); Roy Gallery, Seoul (2024); Saatchi Gallery, London (2016); Hus Gallery, London (2014); Jubilee Gallery, Nagoya (2013); Lubomirov-Easton, London (2013); and Noam Gallery, Seoul (2013).