

**singapore
biennale
2025**

**pure
intention**



ARTIST FOLIO

(For Educators)

ikkibawiKrrr

SECONDARY:

Visual Arts

History

Geography

THE ARTIST

- ikkibawiKrrr is a visual research band formed by Gyeol Ko, Jungwon Kim and Jieun Cho. The name combines the Korean words for “moss” (*ikki*) and “rock” (*bawi*) with the onomatopoeic *krrr*. An onomatopoeia is a term used to describe words that resemble the sounds they represent. For example, *krrr* can be used to describe the sound of rolling in nature.
 - Their practice expands in response to surrounding environments along the boundary between land and air. Working with farmers, divers, scholars and others, they explore plants, natural phenomena, people and ecology through lived experience.
 - They have investigated tropical life and seaweeds, which grow independently while integrating into the surrounding environments.
 - Their recent solo exhibitions include *Rocks Living in Rewind* at Art Sonje Center, Seoul and *who forgot the village* at Aranya Art Center, Hebei. They have also participated in major exhibitions including Documenta 15 (2022), the 14th Gwangju Biennale (2023), and Aichi Triennial 2025.
-

THE ARTWORK



Installation view of ikkibawiKrrr's *Seaweed Story* (2022), as part of Singapore Biennale 2025: *pure intention*. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Seaweed Story

2022

Acrylic on Foamex board and single-channel video (colour and sound), 5 min 22 sec

Collection of the artist

THE ARTWORK

- *Seaweed Story* combines seaweed-inspired sculptures with a video of the Hado Haenyeo Choir singing “Jeju Arirang”, a folk song from Jeju Island.
- The *haenyeo* are women free divers from Jeju Island who dive without breathing equipment. They harvest a wide range of marine life such as seaweed, abalone, and sea urchins. This practice has been developed and passed down over centuries.
- The artwork is rooted in Hado-ri, a fishing village on Jeju Island where *haenyeo* culture has long shaped daily life. The village represents a community built on shared labour, collective organisation, and deep knowledge of the sea. Hado-ri reflects the social world from which the artwork emerges.
- Seaweed harvested by the *haenyeo* has always been more than food. Seaweed has been traded for industrial use and also as a key ingredient in explosives. This demonstrates how natural resources can be repurposed depending on who controls them.
- During the Japanese occupation, Hado-ri became an important site of anti-colonial resistance. *Haenyeo* and other villagers protested Japanese-controlled fishing cooperatives, unfair price controls, and discrimination that limited their freedom and economic rights.
- In *Seaweed Story*, the performance of Jeju Arirang acts as a form of collective memory. It connects everyday marine labour to a history of resistance, resilience, and community solidarity.
- The *haenyeo*’s song carries a broader meaning. It mourns the suffering of colonial-era occupied islands, comforts the community, and celebrates the deep connection between people and the natural world.
- Seaweed, as a central symbol in the artwork, holds multiple meanings. It represents survival and nourishment, but also a material connected to colonial extraction, industrial trade, and exploitation.
- Overall, the work highlights how colonial history continues to shape Jeju Island today, while the *haenyeo* keep alive the island’s memory of collective strength, shared identity and social cohesion.

THE ARTWORK

DID YOU KNOW?

- The word “haenyeo” (해녀) translates to “sea woman”: hae means sea and nyeo means woman. Haenyeo culture became part of UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2016.
- Jeju Island’s volcanic soil and limited arable land made farming difficult. Haenyeo labour has been essential to household survival and the local economy.
- At their peak in the mid-20th century, there were tens of thousands of haenyeo on Jeju Island—with estimates over 20,000 active divers in the 1960’s, making them a major part of the island’s labour force.
- Today, the tradition is endangered. As of 2024, there were fewer than 3,000 active haenyeo and more than 90% aged 60 or older, reflecting a sharp decline in younger successors.
- Before diving, haenyeo often perform traditional Jeju shamanic rituals to honour sea deities, pray for safety, calm waters, and abundance — acknowledging the dangers of the sea and their respect towards it.

ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONS

PRE-VISIT:

- Many communities have traditions closely tied to their surroundings. Think of a place you know. How might people's lifestyles or identities be shaped by the environment around them?
- Songs and rhythms are sometimes used to pass wisdom from one generation to the next. Why might a community choose sound and voice instead of books or technology to preserve its memories?
- Some skills or professions fade when younger people choose not to continue them. What is a tradition or practice you know that may disappear one day, and how might its loss affect the stories we tell about ourselves?

DURING YOUR VISIT:

Choose one part of the artwork to guide your viewing of *Seaweed Story*:

- Voice and Sound: what the *haenyeo* sing, breathe, chant
- Movement: how diving, labour, and rhythm appear
- Seaweed and Materials: what the natural elements symbolise

For your chosen layer, think about the following:

- Details you notice such as the textures, tones, colours and even gestures by the *haenyeo*
- The meanings you interpret and what the artist may be communicating
- A personal connection to the artwork like a memory, story, or emotion

Share with your friends

- What happens when voice, movement, and material come together?
- What bigger story emerges from all three layers?
- If your objects could come together to have a theme song, what would they sing to tell their collective story?

ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONS

POST VISIT:

Everyday objects can hold memories just as songs or seaweed are symbolic in *Seaweed Story*.

Choose a small object you use every day (e.g., your keychain, water bottle, watch, favourite snack wrapper, school item).

Draw in the boxes below:

- Origin Story: Where did this object come from? Who made it? How far has it travelled?
- Life Story: How do you use it? What moments has it witnessed? How has it changed?
- Future Story: What will become of it in 5, 10, 20 years from now?

ORIGIN STORY

LIFE STORY

FUTURE STORY

FIND OUT MORE:

ARTIST

- 이끼바위쿠르르 (@ikkibawikrrr) • *Instagram Photos and Videos*. 2025. Instagram.com. 2025. <https://www.instagram.com/ikkibawikrrr/>.
- IkkibawiKrrr 이끼바위쿠르르. 2025. Facebook.com. 2025. <https://www.facebook.com/ikkibawiKrrr>.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Unesco. “The Haenyeo: Guardians of Jeju's coastal legacy”. *The Unesco Courier*. Updated December 21, 2023. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/haenyeo-guardians-jejus-coastal-legacy>.
- Kim, Haeju. “ikkibawiKrrr Collaborate with Korea’s Female Divers.” *Frieze*. Updated March 10, 2023. <https://www.frieze.com/article/ikkibawikrrr-profile-2023>.
- Buck, Louisa. “ikkibawiKrrr: ‘We Spend a Lot of Time Visiting Sites and Being with People.’” *The Art Newspaper*. Last accessed June 2, 2025. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2025/06/02/ikkibawikrrr-we-spend-a-lot-of-time-visiting-sites-and-being-with-people>.

The information is accurate at the time of print.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without prior permission of the copyright holders. The Singapore Art Museum is not responsible for any injuries, losses or damage which may be sustained by visitors to the Singapore Biennale or this Educational Resource and accepts no liability whatsoever arising from your participation. Please exercise precaution when navigating the various venues. Copyright of the content in this publication may also reside in persons and entities other than, and in addition to, Singapore Art Museum. We are fully committed to respecting the intellectual property rights of others and always use our best efforts to obtain permission for images used. Please contact us at learning@singaporeartmuseum.sg should you have any queries.