

Gwangju, South Korea, 2024

Ministries of Loneliness – Italian Pavilion at the 15th Gwangju Biennale

WHERE: Dong-gok Museum of Art, Gwangju, South Korea

DATE: September 8 – December 1, 2024

EVENTS: September 7, Press & VIP Opening | September 8, Public Opening

The **Italian Cultural Institute in Seoul**, in collaboration with the **Embassy of Italy in Korea** and the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation**, presents the **second edition** of the **Italian Pavilion** at the **Gwangju Biennale**, from **September 8 to December 1, 2024**, at the **Dong-gok Museum of Art** in Gwangju, South Korea.

This initiative is organized by the **Italian Cultural Institute in Seoul**, the **Gwangju Biennale**, the **Bomun Welfare Foundation**, and the **Dong-gok Museum of Art**, with the support of **Mazzoleni, London - Torino**, the **Bomun Welfare Foundation**, with an institutional partnership with the **Seoul Institute of the Arts**, and a technical sound partnership from **Bang & Olufsen**.

The **Italian Pavilion** at the **15th Gwangju Biennale** aims to examine the relationship between the individual (I) and the social/collective environment (We), in the context of many "certainties" that are often taken for granted and are now collapsing. While the main exhibition of the Gwangju Biennale, *Pansori, A Soundscape of the 21st Century*, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud, addresses issues related to the "great outdoors"—the external world in its vast cosmological scope—through sound, **Ministries of Loneliness** focuses on the relationship of the self (I) with its surroundings (We). The collapse of both is conditioned and influenced by the "great outdoors". **The theme of loneliness**, proposed by **Rebecca Moccia** in *Ministries of Loneliness*, is understood here, as presented by Soik Jung, as *the collapse of the "I"—whose existence and ubiquity derive from the physical isolation of the individual and the unstable relationship between "We," "I," and other "Is."* More fundamentally, it is a side effect that arises from the imbalance and disharmony of the "great outdoors." *Ministries of Loneliness* persistently explores this point by presenting *Stories of "I," Places of "I," Daily Life of "I,"* all understood as the landscape of life that "We" experience daily through cultural production (music, film, drama). In all these elements, the artist identifies the loneliness of "I" and "We," **aiming to reveal the socio-cultural and psychological structures that cause it.**

Ministries of Loneliness is a new chapter of *Ministry of Loneliness*, a context-specific project that Rebecca Moccia has been working on since 2021. Starting from the exploration of the *Ministry of Loneliness*, an actual ministry established in the UK in 2018, the project develops as a reflection on the political and social structures that shape the emotional state of loneliness and its perception in contemporary society. The exhibition will present a body of work that narrates the physical and speculative journey through loneliness and its Ministries—whether formalized institutions or not—undertaken by the artist across Italy, the UK, the USA, and Japan, focusing on its materiality: from the words we use to describe this emotional state, to the architecture and sound of the solitary spaces we inhabit; from the relationship between bodies and the social structures that shape loneliness, to the connections with the economic-productive system in which this emotion has historically developed. For the first time at the **Italian Pavilion** at the **15th Gwangju Biennale**, the project will be presented in an international exhibition in an expanded format, enriched by a site-specific exploration and research on loneliness as understood by Koreans, thanks to a series of residencies curated by the Italian Cultural Institute in collaboration with the *Seoul Institute of the Arts*, the institutional partner of the Italian Pavilion for the second consecutive year. In particular, the artist has conducted a series of **workshops involving students from the Seoul Institute of the Arts in a participatory research process**. The students contributed not only as dialogue subjects but also as **co-researchers to find and document places, stories, situations, and media that reveal the roots and development of loneliness in Korea.**

Aiming to transcend a stereotypical presentation, the curatorial direction of the exhibition—shared by the artist and the curator—proposes a **totalizing, transmedia, and immersive spatial installation** where the viewer can have a complex experience of loneliness. The works thus become a landscape to explore, activating a multisensory reception through sight, sound, and touch. The exhibition at the Dong-gok Museum of Art will be divided into two macro-sections: an archival section presenting documents, images, and texts related to the **artist's research on loneliness**, and an installation created ad hoc for the exhibition, featuring multimedia works, including multi-channel audio-video installations, photographs, and ceramics produced specifically for the Italian Pavilion, with the support of the Italian Cultural Institute in Seoul and Mazzoleni, London - Torino.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND PRESS INQUIRIES

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Curator and Artistic Director: Soik Jung

Artist: Rebecca Moccia

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CREDITS

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Gwangju Biennale Foundation

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Dong-gok Museum of Art

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Partners

Institutional Partners - Seoul Institute of the Arts

Sound Partner – Bang&Olufsen

F&B Partner – Illy, Lauretana

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Curator & Artistic Director

Soik Jung

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Note to the editors

THE ITALIAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE

The Italian Cultural Institute in Seoul, part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, promotes the Italian language and culture in South Korea. The Institute collaborates with Korean partners to organize diverse cultural events throughout Korea, covering performing arts—especially theater and dance—visual arts, music, cinema, literature, fashion, cuisine, craftsmanship, design, and architecture, showcasing the excellence of Made in Italy in dialogue with Korean culture. In addition to preserving heritage, it supports contemporary art, playing a crucial role in identifying and promoting contemporary and emerging Italian artists increasingly sought after on the international scene. Through partnerships with Korean museums, the Institute hosts exhibitions in prestigious venues like the Art Sonje Center and the National Museum of Contemporary History. The recent collaboration with the Gwangju Biennale and the Bomun Welfare Foundation highlights its commitment to strengthening and promoting intercultural dialogue with South Korea.

GWANGJU BIENNALE FOUNDATION

Founded in 1995 in memory of the civil uprising following the 1980 repression of the Gwangju democratization movement, the Gwangju Biennale is the oldest contemporary art biennale in Asia. Over the past twenty-three years, the Gwangju Biennale has emerged as a network for international cultural exchanges and a platform for visual arts, generating discourse on contemporary art. Located in the southwest of the Korean peninsula, Gwangju is known for its historical tradition of art and culture. In recent decades, particularly among foreign intellectuals, Gwangju has been recognized as the heart of the democratic revolution due to the 5.18 Gwangju democratization movement—the popular uprising against military dictatorship in May 1980. Established in the mid-1990s, the Biennale was created to preserve the city's cultural heritage and make sense of the traumatic events of the May 1980 uprising through art. Although contemporary Korean art has faced development delays for over twenty years, the Gwangju Biennale has undeniably contributed to its budding progress and the emergence of Korean art on the international stage. By embodying the broader values of human civilization through visual arts, the Gwangju Biennale continues to spread messages of democracy, human rights, and peace throughout Asia and the world, as well as within local communities.

Artist

REBECCA MOCCIA

Rebecca Moccia (b. 1992, Naples; lives and works in Milan) is an artist whose transdisciplinary practice explores the materiality of perceptual and emotional states that can emerge from specific social and spatial characteristics. Her works have been exhibited at the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation (Guarene), the International Short Film Festival (Oberhausen), the ICA Milan, Jupiter Woods (London), the Prada Foundation (Milan), the Italian Cultural Institute (Brussels), the Morra Greco Foundation (Naples), Mazzoleni (London-Torino), the Museo Novecento (Florence), MACRO (Rome), among others. Between 2021 and 2023, she received significant recognition for her work, such as the international research grant awarded by the Italian Ministry of Culture (Italian Council X - DGCC) for the Ministry of Loneliness project, a collaboration with Magazzino Italian Art (New York), Outset (London), Nanzan University (Nagoya), and other cultural partners; the ArteVisione 2022 award promoted by Careof, Milan, and the OGR Award at Artissima 2023.

Rebecca Moccia is also a founding member of AWI - Art Workers Italia.

Artistic Director

SOIK JUNG

Soik Jung conducts research, exhibitions, and educational programs, as well as publications on public art, architecture, urbanism, and community practices. Recently, she co-curated the Korean Pavilion at the 2023 Venice Biennale, titled "2086: Together How?"; "Smaller Slower Closer" (2020-2021), sponsored by the Arts Council Korea; and "Architecture for All" at the Seoul Museum of Art NamSeoul (2020). In 2024, marking the 140th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Korea and Italy, she has been selected as the curator of the Italian Pavilion to further enhance the scope and density of cultural exchanges between the two countries.

** The texts used in the visual identity (front page) are from Loneliness Annual Report January 2020 (2020) by the UK Government (Department for Culture, Media and Sport; Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport), and from A Connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness - laying the foundations for change (2018) by the UK Government (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport).*