

PKM GALLERY

Keunmin Lee: *Before It Becomes a Scene*

June 10–July 25, 2026 | PKM

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- ▶ PKM Gallery presents *Before It Becomes a Scene*, a solo exhibition by Keunmin Lee. Twenty-three, previously unseen works, including large-scale paintings and a drawing series, will be presented in Korea for the first time.
- ▶ The exhibition transforms the artist's personal experiences of illness and hallucination into an artistic force that confronts social prejudice, offering a sense of liberation and catharsis through the raw vitality that exists prior to the formation of a "scene".

PKM Gallery is pleased to present *Before It Becomes a Scene*, a solo exhibition by Keunmin Lee (b. 1982), on view from June 10 to July 25, 2026. Marking the artist's first solo exhibition with PKM gallery, the presentation brings together new works developed since 2023, including large-scale canvases approaching three meters in height and a series of drawings. Featuring twenty-three works presented in Korea for the first time, the exhibition offers insight into Lee's recent practice.

Twenty-five years ago, while hospitalized following a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder, Lee underwent two formative experiences: the authority of psychiatric diagnosis and the experience of hallucination. He became aware of the violence embedded within systems that classify and define human disposition through the language of pathology. At the same time, he encountered hallucinations populated by nameless presences—fragmented bodies, traces of living organisms, raw matter, and wounds. Taking these memories of suffering as a point of departure, Lee repeatedly summons beings excluded by systems of social categorization and control onto the canvas.

Before It Becomes a Scene traces the exposed psychological terrains that run throughout Lee's work. Here, the term "scene" refers to a situation shaped by intention, construction, or definition. Lee instead turns his attention to a state that exists prior to such framing—his visual and olfactory hallucinations before they were classified as symptoms of illness. As suggested by titles such as *Organic Plate*, *Connected Body*, and *Psychiatrist's Head*, fragmented and dispersed bodily forms that emerged in these hallucinations form a central motif in the exhibition. Rather than simply reproducing these images, Lee translates their elusive sensations and nuances into a coherent visual language. The explosive energy that unfolds across the canvases ultimately becomes both a vivid portrait of the artist's inner landscape and an expression of liberation from the social frameworks that once confined him.

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Muscles, organs, and blood-like traces in Lee's paintings originate in personal experience, yet they also point to a condition shared by all—one that resists control regardless of the boundaries between self and other, or disability and non-disability. The warm, predominantly red palette reflects both the artist's instinctive attraction to flesh and blood and a direct, unguarded metaphor for humanity and life itself. Created through an automatism process, without preliminary sketches or predetermined plans, the *Refining Hallucinations* drawing series traces primitive and unsettling beings pushed to the margins of society with fluid pen lines. By returning viewers to a state before existence is shaped by imposed definitions and standards, the exhibition invites an encounter with genuine freedom and catharsis.

Music by *Goat and Monkey*, Lee's one-man band project, will be presented during the exhibition opening reception on June 10. IDM (Intelligent Dance Music), a genre of electronic music that emphasizes texture and structure, closely resonates with the artist's visual practice and will add another layer to the exhibition experience.

Lee studied painting at Seoul National University. Since his first solo exhibition in 2009, he has held solo exhibitions and participated in group exhibitions in Seoul, New York, Paris, Berlin, and Malmö, among other cities. In 2016, he participated in the Pioneer Works Residency in New York. He received widespread attention through the solo exhibition *And Then None Were Sick* (2022) at Space K, Seoul. His works are included in the collections of Space K (Seoul), Colección SOLO (Madrid), and the Park Seo-Bo Foundation (Seoul).