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Find Nirvana This Summer: Korean Art at Moscow's VDNKh

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VDNHk

Fancy something a little more exotic than the excellent collections of European art in Moscow's main museums? This summer VDNKh has set its sights further afield, playing host to an exhibition of contemporary Korean art. "Nirvana" — an exhibition from some of Korea's most prominent contemporary artists — explores and toys with our perception of reality through painting, sculpture and photography.

Artist Hyung Koo Kang's giant hyper-realistic portraits greet you on entry to Pavilion 13. Painted across enormous canvasses, the larger-than-life images of iconic individuals provide an arresting welcome to the exhibition. Churchill, Gandhi and a flaming red Sophia Loren are just some of the famous faces on display. Kang explained to The Moscow Times that the purpose of the works was to realistically render faces we would recognize, even if we knew little about the actual people. According to Kang the personality of the individual and their character is of less interest than the iconic status of their images.

Kang plays with the genre of realism, making subtle changes such as creating extra lines and wrinkles that perhaps only a real life acquaintance of his subjects would notice. The man who recently showed his work at the Saatchi Gallery in London even tips his hat to Russia with a 1997 portrait of Boris Yeltsin. The works are across several mediums — in Churchill's portrait the wartime British prime minister's piercing gaze been captured in steel plating.

In another exhibit it appears artist Han Sungpil has photographed a series of buildings, but on closer inspection they are revealed to be images printed and draped across the facades of existing buildings. In the works curtains several stories high conceal the true structures, which are either partially demolished, or being renovated.

Meanwhile in the pavilion's largest room, artist Chun Kyung-woo plays with reflection. Twenty-four printed photographs of photographers appear on mirror sheeting, meaning that when examining the images the viewer sees their own reflection in the portraits.

Another thematic current to the exhibition is the "combination of religious meditation with artistic practice." One of the works on show features a meditating Buddha, staring at a screen televising his reflection. The playful artworks on show provide a welcome invitation to become acquainted with little-exhibited Eastern art, as well as challenging you to take a second glance at the world around you.

"Nirvana" runs through Aug.28. VDNKh.⊠Pavilion 13,⊠119 Prospekt Mira.⊠Metro VDNKh. vdnh.ru

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