HaeAhn Paul Kwon Kajander | Artforum

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Dan Adler February 1, 2025



HaeAhn Paul Kwon Kajander, *Tells the Time*, 2025, reglazed toilet, compass, blue resin, LED light, ceramic, glass bowl, 28 × 16 × 26".

"How Is Where You Are," a sprawling and seductive show by collaborative duo HaeAhn Paul Kwon Kajander, posed a query with no easy answer: How do we gauge what's real when the level of deception and subjugation flowing from governments in tandem with digitized corporate power continues to increase? Informed by a Duchampian concern with questioning how and why time and space are regulated and regimented, the artists respond to our techno-

capitalist predicament by embracing analog craft. They express this through sampling and staging divergent geographic and cultural references from Scandinavia to South Korea, and from outdated screens to aged plumbing.

Humans Make Money (all works 2025), for example, featured a predigital photo from a Finnish bank advertisement of paper currencies orbiting the Earth. Housed within an LED light box, this naive image of global commerce was placed directly above *The Other Way Around*, a ceramic sculpture that comprised a Korean-style squat toilet the artists had sandblasted, reglazed, and kiln-fired before installing it in the wall. The sculpture may be taken as a curious site to relieve ourselves of (or piss on) those universalizing ideologies of online trade and accountability that draw upon data meant to be our measure. Nearby stood *Tells the Time*, a Western-style toilet subjected to multiple rounds of sanding, polishing, and lacquering, resulting in lustrous layers of suggestive greens and browns. Within the bowl of this adorned throne lay a Suunto compass immersed in blue resin. Patented in the 1930s, this compact device—supplied to various postwar military and civilian markets—may be shat upon according to a human sort of (ir)regularity, foiling rationalist standards of cardinal directionality. Installed directly above this sculpture was *Sells the Time*, in which a monitor veiled by a beaded curtain depicted the Greenwich Time Ball atop London's Flamsteed House—one of the earliest publicly visible temporal signals that helped shape the form and frequency of shipping. Pictured here in close-up, with the colonial building hidden from view, this historical monument was converted into a self-referential meditation on the form of the sphere itself, until it dropped with a pathetic plop, like a turd heading for the toilet below.

Several striking video sculptures extended this obliquely scatological theme, examining the industrial origins of global commerce before technological feudalism took hold. For *Bed with Blur*, footage of a waterfall at Tammerkoski Rapids in Tampere, Finland, was projected on a massive floor-to-ceiling ladder outfitted with a slender, vertical screen. (The waterfall was a source of power for Nokia in the nineteenth century, when it still produced its original product—toilet paper—before ascending as a telecommunications giant.) The work depicts a decontextualized torrent of flowing water overlaid with an image of a Samsung Galaxy tablet (first released in 2010) framed within the bed of a printer's scanner. Images of the tablet and cascade move in and out of focus, implying the limits of such devices to describe reality and keep us truly connected. Elsewhere, *In's Address* consisted of a gaming monitor hovering above a reflective dome in which one may contemplate a 360-degree panning shot of Sigmund Freud's London study—a scopic reversal of the psychoanalytic dogma that confines patients to the couch. A soundtrack of

environmental noise, bird calls, rushing water, and a ticking metronome played throughout the gallery, layering another divergent hybrid atop the many disjunctions and reorientations staged throughout the show. Cleverly combining abstracted imagery and found objects modified with great care, Kwon Kajander's multilayered and multimedia critique was grounded in a refusal to present neatly identifiable, measurable, and coherent selves.

