

For Immediate Release

Mercer Union presents HaeAhn Paul Kwon Kajander's first institutional solo exhibition, *How Is Where You Are*

September 2025 (TORONTO, O.N.) — Mercer Union presents *How Is Where You Are*, the first institutional solo exhibition by **HaeAhn Paul Kwon Kajander** on view from **18 October 2025 to 17 January 2026**. HaeAhn Paul Kwon Kajander comprises HaeAhn Woo Kwon (b. 1985, Daegu, KR) and Paul Kajander (b. 1980, Vancouver, CA). Threading given and family names together, HaeAhn Paul Kwon Kajander complicate the notion of individual authorship as a way to challenge identificatory constructs such as gender, ethnicity, and individualism. They currently live in Dartmouth/Punamu'kwati'jk.

How Is Where You Are is an installation that uses transformation to reveal the contradictions in the world that we live in. Contemplative and enigmatic, the exhibition is also playful in how it makes us see materials and objects in a new light,” says Theresa Wang, Director & Curator of Mercer Union. “At a time when old ways of ordering the world are dissolving, HaeAhn Paul Kwon Kajander's exhibition shows us that working together creatively and openly is critical for new ways of thinking to emerge.”

Upon entering the gallery, several artworks remodelled from humble domestic fixtures—a fridge, a set of latrines, a cluster of lamps, a rug—symbolically set the stage within an amorphous interior. Kwon Kajander treat the notion of home as foundation-setting: it is the place from which we inherit and consume the understandings of who we are and where we have come from. These objects, however, are curiously glazed, stripped, reformed—uprooted from their functional context and juxtaposed with others that bring forth a different set of connotations. Appendages like phones and tablets (communications technologies) and flagpoles and border markers (symbolic representations of national identity and separation) create an unsettling effect. By collapsing the scale of the home, the corporate, and the nation-state, the artists produce a space of deliberate disorientation that antagonizes each object's status.

A four-channel video installation, with each channel displaying a moving image embedded in a sculptural body, is dispersed across the gallery. Assembled like a cast of autonomous characters, the videos present distinct scenes: an obscured view of Sigmund Freud's study, a Finnish waterfall harnessed for industry, a ticking metronome on a Public Standards of Length placard, and the slow drop of the Greenwich time ball. The vignettes are characterized by static, long-duration shots that build pressure towards a single moment. Subtly manipulated through in-camera editing techniques, the images call into question the apparatus of the camera itself and what it mediates. A dynamic industrial soundtrack weaves motifs from each video together, creating a cohesive narrative. Through looped playback, variations emerge, and recurrent themes start to coalesce.

How Is Where You Are builds an underlying narrative that traces the idea of personal and collective lineage: how did we get here where we are now? Through references to imperial systems of measurement and arbitrarily drawn border barriers, the artists reveal the enduring legacies of empire that continue to govern us and the standardized ways of moving through the world that are passed on as immutable fact. Yet the artists also deny us simple conclusions, leaving narratives of origin deliberately unresolved, while allowing heterogeneous connections, new potentials, and the indeterminable to shift in and out of focus.

How Is Where You Are is the eleventh project in Mercer Union's *Artist First* commissioning platform and HaeAhn Paul Kwon Kajander's first institutional solo exhibition. Mercer Union distinguishes itself through its focus on commissioning and supporting the production of new and experimental work, often facilitating first exhibition opportunities for artists who then come to prominence in a wider international sphere. *Artist First* is Mercer Union's trailblazing commissioning platform and the first of its kind among artist-run centres in Canada.



HaeAhn Paul Kwon Kajander is a collaborative duo working primarily with natural lacquer and sculptural installation. Through the threading together of given and family names, their practice complicates the notion of individual authorship and addresses the constructedness of identity. They have presented work with Franz Kaka, Toronto (2024); Daniel Faria, Toronto (2024); The Real DMZ Project, Paju/Ottawa (2023); Galerie Nicolas Robert, Toronto (2022); Trilobite et le Pneu, Montréal (2020); Jack Barrett Gallery, New York (2019); The Small Arms Inspection Building, Mississauga (2019); Julius Caesar, Chicago (2019); NERI | Barranco, Mexico City (2019). HaeAhn Paul Kwon Kajander gratefully acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

For more information about the exhibition, visit mercunion.org. Public programming includes an artist talk in partnership with Mercer Union's FORUM series and the Graduate Program of Visual Arts, York University.

How is Where You Are is made possible with Leading Support from TD Bank Group and Partners in Art.

How is Where You Are is presented as part of *Artist First*, a Mercer Union commissioning platform. *Artist First* commissions are made possible with the generous support of Femi & Aminat Adeyinka, Kaye & Paul Beeston, Rebecca Carbin, Anouchka Freybe & Scott Connell,



Joanna & Meric Gertler, Miles Gertler, Popsy Johnstone, Christie Kirchner, Margaret McNee, Matt Meagher, David & Erica Neligan, Frances & Tim Price, Lauren Charyk Silverberg, Carlos Yep, and Yue Yin. Learn more at mercerunion.org/support

Public programs

fORUM: HaeAhn Paul Kwon Kajander artist talk

Tuesday, 21 October 2025 at 6pm

York University, Joan and Martin Goldfarb Centre for Fine Arts, 86 Fine Arts Rd, Room 312

Join HaeAhn Paul Kwon Kajander for an artist talk about recent projects, working methodologies, and materialities. This event is a part of Mercer Union's ongoing program series fORUM and presented in partnership with the Graduate Program of Visual Arts, York University.

About Mercer Union

Mercer Union is a non-profit, artist-run centre dedicated to commissioning and producing new works of contemporary art, and providing an engaging program that encourages critical inquiry and conversation. We champion ambitious exhibitions that empower diverse Canadian and international artists in formative and established stages of their practice.

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Press Contact

Tatum Dooley
tatum@artforecast.info
416-697-8283