

YURIM GOUGH

VainEgo



A·P·T
Art in Perpetuity Trust



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

The VainEgo Project

12 - 29 May 2022

A.P.T Gallery / London

Curated by **Lee Sharrock**

VainEgo features a series of 108 ceramic heads described by Gough as an 'Army of me', as well as film, drawings and photographic prints. All the featured works were made during a 6-year period which was triggered by Yurim Gough's breast cancer diagnosis in 2016, and her subsequent treatment and recovery. During this challenging time, Gough sought solace in her work, expressing the emotions and experiences of her cancer treatment through life drawing and ceramics.

Yurim Gough says: "The Vain Ego project was a 100% cathartic process. Focusing on creativity was a great tool to release emotions, weakness and pain, especially after I found that I had breast cancer and the subsequent treatment and recovery. I also got a strong spiritual feeling from the creative process and that I was able to survive from the cancer journey. Vain Ego consists of one word and depicts myself in the mirror looking for my ego. As the fight against cancer began, I drew my feelings, which changed from day to day, and I also drew my changing body nude onto a ceramic

bowl. In addition, photographs and videos of myself at that time will also be presented for the first time in this exhibition."

Gough is a talented fine art ceramicist who merges the draughtsmanship and gender fluid mind-set of Grayson Perry with the autobiographical honesty of Tracey Emin. Gough was born in South Korea where she had a successful early career as a shoe designer, working in Tokyo and London, before moving to the UK where she pursued a career as a fine artist and ended up settling in Cambridge where she has a studio.

As well as the VainEgo exhibition at APT Gallery, curated by Lee Sharrock, Gough is going to be featured in a major group show at the prestigious Fondation d'entreprise Bernardaud in Limoges from June 2022 to March 2023. Limoges is the famed centre of ceramics where Picasso made some of his most iconic ceramic works. Gough will exhibit nine pieces from her Gender-Fluid series in Limoges.

108 VainEgo Faces

Army of me





Drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, and porcelain pens.
10 x 10 cm (approx.)
2020





















VainEgo Bowls

VainEgo 1 (Born)



I was born in 1976 in the winter, on the longest night of the year.

My name is the name that my mother gave to me. 'Yu' or 宥 meaning generous and 'Rim' or 臨 meaning pro; forming 'Yurim' which means merciful.

My life began in the countryside, in the Gangwon province in South Korea.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.

23.5 x 23.2 x 10.2 (D) cm

2016

VainEgo 2 (Paper Dolls)



At the age of five, I had collected close to one hundred paper dolls of people. I cut out the dolls from sheets of paper and clothed them with pretty clothes and trinkets, and imagined the lives of the different characters.

I remember that one day I was sent to the supermarket with my mother's purse to buy some food, and I used the change to buy a paper doll. I was supposed to return the change to my mother...

Later, when I grew up and had a career as a fashion designer, I laughed at myself still cutting and pasting imagery from magazines for my work, just as I did while I was playing with my childhood paper dolls.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.

21.5 x 22.5 x 12 (D) cm

2016

VainEgo 3 (Houses)



During my childhood, my mother and I had no home. I remember moving to a new place and moving quickly. I moved almost every year to a different place in the same small country village.

My mother was a woman without a husband, and everybody in that place looked down on my mother. In Korea, at that time, without a man people were free to treat her very badly. Correct and brave mothers have to fight for right and wrong from time to time, and as a result, we were kicked out every time over an unexpected quarrel with the owner of the house.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.
23.7 x 23 x 12 (D) cm
2016

VainEgo 4 (Book)



At age 11 my writing was selected for the Pyeongchang in the Gangwon province convention and came out in print in a book. I still keep this book titled "Small Day Bigger". In the story, written on the bowl, I promised my mother that I would give her warm gloves and that I would take care of her forever. But I now live very far away from her.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.
22 x 25.5 x 9.8 (D) cm
2016

VainEgo 5 (Snow)



My early years in the countryside were full of beautiful surroundings. The four seasons can be felt clearly even with my eyes closed. In the last of the seasons, the world is covered with new white snow and at the beginning of a winter night when the moon is round and big, the outside is as bright and calm as daylight... The night that the church bell rang, my mother and I dressed up beautifully, dipped our feet in the snow, and headed to the church on the hill. That Christmas is kept in my happiness bottle.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.
22 x 24 x 9.5 (D) cm
2016

VainEgo 6 (Fried Chicken)



When reading a book or watching a movie, there is a point in time when a story change is made.

My 13-year-old rural life ended abruptly because of my mother's love for her daughter and an incident with the new owner of a fried chicken shop.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.
23 x 23 x 9 (D) cm
2016

VainEgo 7 (Cylinders of charcoal)



We moved to Uijeongbu, a city near Seoul, and the place where I first stayed was a large area of buildings, like a refugee village.

After a family died from carbon monoxide poisoning, I moved into my Aunt's house for a few years until I finished school. The cheap underfloor heating, which they needed to survive the brutal sub-zero winter temperatures in those temporary buildings, meant that they needed to burn charcoal indoors.

Thinking about the souls who had to die from burning those cylinders of charcoal...

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.
23.5 x 24 x 9.5 (D) cm
2016

VainEgo 8 (Enigma)



Enigma.

The music that put a mysterious aura in my life and into my soul.

Even when I slept and when I walked, I listened to music, even when I went to take my school exams, I listened secretly.

Still if I listen to Enigma's music, I enter into the young and innocent feelings of that time.

Music plays a large role in my art, always listening to it as I work.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.

23.5 x 19.5 x 10 (D) cm

2016

VainEgo 9 (Apartment)



Moving to a new apartment. I was able to have happiness and dreams. I could say that it was my house and that my first experiences of living independently began.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.
25 x 22.5 x 10.7 (D) cm
2016



VainEgo 10 (Rejected)



Rejected!

In my first school, I painted what I imagined it would be like to be under the ocean. My teachers were surprised to see my painting and arranged for me to enter art competitions and encouraged me to keep painting. So, every year, I entered these competitions and put my surprised teachers into a pit of disappointment every time with my failure.

The painting I was doing was not meant to satisfy other people. Nevertheless, I grew up wanting to go to Art University. Despite gaining entrance to the University, I was then rejected after they took into consideration my family situation and circumstances.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.
20.2 x 24 x 11.7 (D) cm
2016

VainEgo 11 (Guam)



In 1995, I did not go to university, but I got a job in Seoul with an insurance company called Dong-A Life Insurance. I started life drawing as a hobby using my first salary. I still cannot forget the mysterious world of fascination. I worked for the company for 6 months but I knew that it was not the place for me. So I planned to start studying fashion design as this was already spinning round in my head. I went to Guam on my first overseas trip after I left my first job.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.
20.5 x 20 x 11 (D) cm
2016

VainEgo 12 (Design)



I studied at fashion design college for a year, studying seriously for the first time. During that time, I could not imagine how much time I spent devoting myself to it night and day with joy and happiness.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.
19.5 x 20.5 x 10 (D) cm
2016

VainEgo 13 (Billiard ball)



I had to pay for my own tuition while attending college, so I found something I could earn money from while also learning a new hobby: I was working part-time at a billiard hall, and getting good at playing too. After that, I learned bowling and worked at a bowling alley. Later on, I also worked at a bar making cocktails.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.
22 x 25 x 10.7 (D) cm
2016

VainEgo 14 (Fame)



20-year-old me started fashion design work for the first time. The brand was called 'Supermarket' and it was the first brand in Korea to sell certain kinds of accessories and novelties.

The store was located in an expensive area of Seoul called Apgujeong, where I was able to collect autographs from all the celebrities. The smile that I got from the actress Choi Jin-sil when she laughed is still vividly present in my memory.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.
22.5 x 23.5 x 10.5 (D) cm
2016

VainEgo 15 (Shoes Designer)



Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.

22 x 23 x 10.7 (D) cm

2016

The first time I started designing for a shoe company was in 1997, when the IMF was bailing out the Korean economy.

It wasn't easy to get a job because I wasn't a university graduate. I was also really upset about the severe economic problems.

Having not been paid for three months, I started to work in the evenings at a cocktail bar in Uijeongbu, not far from Seoul, where I was living with my mum. I worked every day until midnight and slept no more than five hours. It was a very hard time working day by day.

Eventually the shoe design company was forced to close, so I had to look for other shoe design companies and ended up doing a string of design jobs in an unstable economy.

Every time I submitted my CV to new companies, I was so embarrassed and aware that I had not lasted long with any company yet.

After surviving for three years of working through such a crisis, I started working as a total accessory designer for a popular clothing brand called OZOC in 2000. This was a Japanese brand in Korea, and I went on business trips to Japan many times, which is how I became very interested in Japan and Japanese culture.

I was a popular accessory designer for three years, and my handbag and shoe designs were in high demand, and I was often interviewed for fashion magazines in Korea at the time.

VainEgo 16 (Shoes Business)



Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.

24 x 22 x 10 (D) cm

2017

When I was twenty-five years old. My career was spectacular. It had turned into a positive one.

Based on various experiences, I had grasped the overall shoe industry.

That's how I was able to start my own business. One of the shoe manufacturers provided me with an office and made my designs. They were very successful and were sold to more than 20 clothing brands; the largest order was from a company that exported shoes to Japan. I think the Japanese liked my designs.

I made a huge profit in just one year. Although I was doing very well, I wanted to explore and experience bigger and different things in my life. I thought it would be good to go to Japan and learn Japanese so that I could communicate directly with Japanese companies and make my business more prosperous.

The people around me thought that I was not in my right mind. They couldn't believe that I was going to go to Japan and close such a successful business... I think they could not appreciate my vision.

VainEgo 17 (Japan)



Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.

22.5 x 25 x 11.5 (D) cm

2017

26 years old. I arrived in Tokyo to learn Japanese.

I spent half of the day at the Naganuma Japanese School in Shibuya, and I also studied at home, spending a total of 15 hours a day learning Japanese. I was so proud of myself that I got to level 2 in Japanese in six months. My auntie, who lives in Japan, was very impressed by it.

When I left my mother for a few years for the first time, to go to Japan, I brought a rosary to protect my mind, even though I have no religion, and I also brought a sketchbook that looked like a Bible. I started drawing a picture diary in the sketchbook. One day I would draw a vivid image of a dream, and another day a line in random directions, without thinking. I drew portraits of new friends and the people surrounding me.

VainEgo 18 (Shoes Garden)



During the year that I spent in Japan, I had a strong desire for shoe design, and this led me to organise a shoe design exhibition.

With the help of a shoe company that I once worked for in Korea, I made shoe samples and held an exhibition called "Shoes Garden" on top of an antique shop Cafe in Daigangyama, in Tokyo. It was just a one-day show, but it was a really a pleasant time.

Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.
22 x 22 x 10 (D) cm
2018

VainEgo 19 (Love)



Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil,
ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-
hanging 3D printed parts on the back.

23.5 x 24 x 10 (D) cm

2019

I met my soulmate.

When I first came to Japan, I had a Japanese boyfriend. But my English flatmate, who lived with me in Shinjuku, had a friend who would visit, and one day, I saw this man in front of our flat and he made my heart flutter.

However, neither of us knew that the feelings were mutual.

A year passed without expressing our love for each other and then one day, I had a leaving party to which I invited him and some friends of mine. We all had a good time and then the party finished, but he was still there, and we found out that we liked each other.

In fact, I never wanted to get married. I was influenced by my mother's experience and the unsuccessful marriage that surrounded my family. However, meeting this person made me confident that I would really be able to 'Love' even though we didn't speak each other's language...

VainEgo 20 (Marriage)



Life drawing on stoneware with ceramic pencil, ceramic transfers, gold, porcelain pens, and wall-hanging 3D printed parts on the back.

25 x 26.5 x 12.7 (D) cm

2020

I said 'Yes'. In 2006.

We moved to Bristol, UK just one day before my birthday in December 2006. Since we didn't know each other's languages, we started by speaking a little in Japanese. I had to teach him Japanese to be able to communicate with each other. Unfortunately, I did not teach him Korean.

Anyone with experience like me will know that knowing each other's language is not very necessary for early lovers.

In June 2007, we had a wedding at the University of Cambridge, Churchill College Chapel, with the blessing of families and friends of mine, and Julian Gough's family and friends.

My 'British' life, in which I hated to learn English so much, had begun.

VainEgo Paintings



VainEgo Painting 1
Acrylic paint on canvas textured
paper
29.7 x 21 cm
2020



VainEgo Painting 2
Acrylic paint on canvas
textured paper
29.7 x 21 cm
2020



VainEgo Painting 3
Acrylic paint on canvas
textured paper
29.7 x 21 cm
2020



VainEgo Painting 4
Acrylic paint on canvas textured
paper
29.7 x 21 cm
2020



VainEgo Painting 5
Acrylic paint on canvas
textured paper
29.7 x 21 cm
2020



VainEgo Painting 6
Acrylic paint on canvas
textured paper
29.7 x 21 cm
2020



VainEgo Painting 7
Acrylic paint on canvas textured
paper
29.7 x 21 cm
2020



VainEgo Painting 8
Acrylic paint on canvas
textured paper
29.7 x 21 cm
2020



VainEgo Painting 9
Acrylic paint on canvas
textured paper
29.7 x 21 cm
2020

VainEgo

a solo exhibition by
Yurim Gough



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