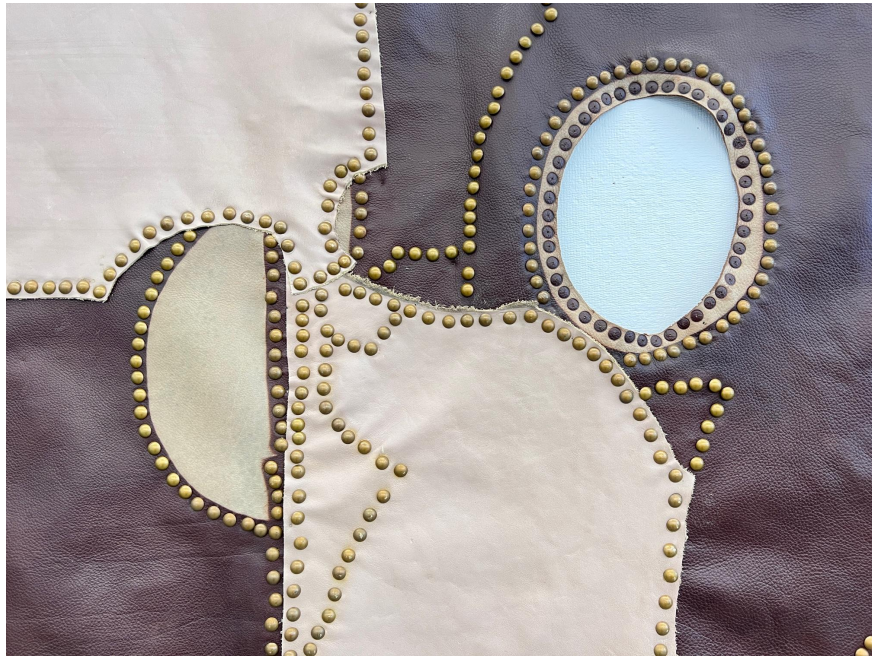


Jean Shin
Second Skin

June 16 - July 23, 2023



Opening Reception
Friday, June 16, 6 to 8 pm

(April 13, 2023 – Brookline, MA) Praise Shadows is honored to present *Second Skin*, a solo exhibition by the New York-based artist Jean Shin. Widely recognized for her large-scale installations and sculptures, her practice is rooted in the rethinking of materials, specifically those that have been discarded at mass scale. As she told the New York Times in a 2009 interview, her criteria for materials is often something that is “cast off from a person’s life because its desirability and usefulness are questioned, that it in some way archives a personal history but also can speak to larger issues going on in our culture.” *Second Skin* is composed of materials used prominently in recent public art commissions, giving them another life in the realm of artistic expression. This exhibition demonstrates the possibilities of translating monumental public art works into intimate indoor experiences by building on the materials’ history and finding common ecological narratives in the new works.

This exhibition is a continuation in the life cycles of two of Shin’s recent commissions: *Fallen* at Olana, the Frederic Church Estate (2021), and *Freshwater*, commissioned by Philadelphia Contemporary (2022). Both projects present layered temporal narratives through the

intersecting histories of everyday objects and threatened plant or animal species, inviting audiences to encounter each layer of a region's environmental and industrial history through artistic intervention.

When *Fallen* at Olana was completed in late 2021, Shin tenderly enshrouded a large 140-year-old eastern hemlock tree with colorful leather discards. It was a memorial of sorts. The magnificent tree had died, and to help the public remember its earthly presence, Shin used leather cut-outs that had been thrown away by the fashion industry to cover and protect its trunk, as if preparing the body for a funeral gathering. Similar to her *Spring Collection* series, one can make out silhouettes of boots and purse shapes in the leather, ghosts of accessories from some of the world's most notable fashion houses. The pairing of the hemlock and leather is apt, as millions of hemlocks were decimated by the leather tanning industry in the first half of the 19th century due to the rich tannins in the tree's bark, which were used for hide-curing.

During Shin's December 2022 residency at the MacDowell artist residency in New Hampshire, she spent her time carefully cleaning the leather shrouds that had been removed from the tree. At Praise Shadows, these same pieces will be installed in two formats. Small works on wood panels will present smaller sections of the leather, with hemlock branch cross-sections exposed through holes within the leather. Wall hangings of the larger leather shrouds will be suspended from hemlock branches. Reminiscent of large maps, these tapestries bear the contours of the tree trunk's form and the remarkable color shifts that mark exposure levels to the sun. If *Fallen* was the tree's open funeral, this is the recording of its memory.

Additionally, Praise Shadows will feature four examples of Shin's S.O.S. limbs, branches from the Olana hemlock tree that have been wrapped in leather and hammered with upholstery tacks in a manner similar to the tree's trunk.

Second Skin will also include sculptures the artist has adapted from the public art sculpture *Freshwater*, which spoke to the overharvesting of mussels in the 19th century by manufacturers of shell buttons. In the sculpture on view last year in Philadelphia, 30 blown-glass pods were suspended to create a soaring 16-foot high fountain. Live mussels inhabited each pod. Water from the polluted Delaware River was piped up to the ceiling of the venue, which then gently cascaded down to the glass orbs. The mussels did their jobs: filtering 10 to 15 gallons of water a day. The clean water pooled onto a bed of vintage buttons made from such mussels, which Shin found in a fashion warehouse in New Jersey, a vast collection that was accumulated from time before the mass adoption of plastic buttons. As the artist told Hyperallergic, "The tragedy there was to imagine that they had been extracted from all over the world and made into incredible, beautiful buttons that were never used...I feel like this extinction was for absolutely no reason, just that we thought we wanted them."

For Jean Shin, these remains of living beings – the leather hides, the shell buttons – are not disposable consumer accessories, contrary to fashion industry trends. They are a critical part of

the life cycle and our natural ecosystem. *Second Skin* asks the viewer to reconsider the devastating impact of our consumerism, and to wonder how our actions can be reconciled.

About the artist

Known for her large-scale installations and public sculptures, artist Jean Shin transforms accumulations of discarded objects into powerful monuments that interrogate our complex relationship between material consumption, collective identity and community engagement. Often working cooperatively within a community or region, Shin amasses vast collections of an everyday object or material—Mountain Dew soda bottles, mobile phones, 35mm slides—while researching its history of use, circulation and environmental impact. Distinguished by this labor-intensive and participatory process, Shin’s poetic yet epic creations become catalysts for communities to confront social and ecological challenges. As such, her body of work includes several permanent public artworks commissioned by major agencies and municipalities, most recently a landmark commission for the MTA’s Second Ave Subway in NYC.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, and raised in the US, Shin works in Brooklyn and Hudson Valley, New York. She is a tenured Adjunct Professor at Pratt Institute and holds an honorary doctorate from New York Academy of Art. Shin’s work has been widely exhibited and collected in over 150 major museums and cultural institutions, including solo exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington DC, and Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, where in 2020 she was the first Korean-American woman artist featured in a solo exhibition. Shin has received numerous awards, including the Frederic Church Award for her contributions to American art and culture. Her works have been highlighted in The New York Times and Sculpture Magazine, among others.

About Praise Shadows Art Gallery

Praise Shadows Art Gallery is a contemporary art program based in the Boston area with a focus on exceptional artists working in all artistic disciplines. Our worldview is informed by the notion that the artworld’s untapped and unrecognized potential is worth cultivating, supporting, and championing. Since our founding in December 2020, the gallery has placed artworks by our artists in esteemed public collections, and our exhibitions have been covered widely in major international media outlets. Our work is grounded by partnering closely with artists to develop opportunities in traditional and emerging models of creativity and entrepreneurship — exhibitions, commissions, brand partnerships, new technologies, and original concepts that no one has ever tried before. www.praiseshadows.com

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