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July 2015



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Issue 25

July 2015

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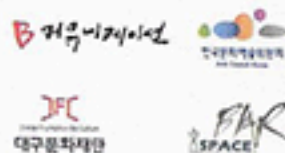
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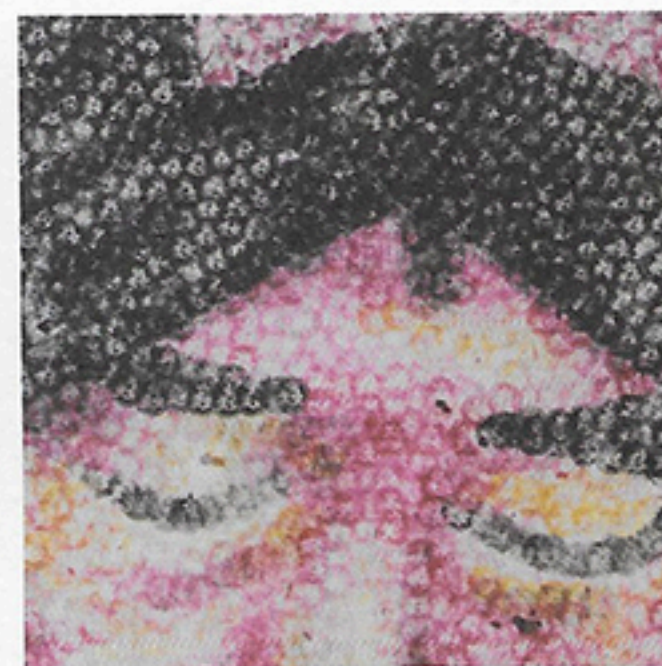
**14**  
Shim  
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**18**  
Jung  
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**22**  
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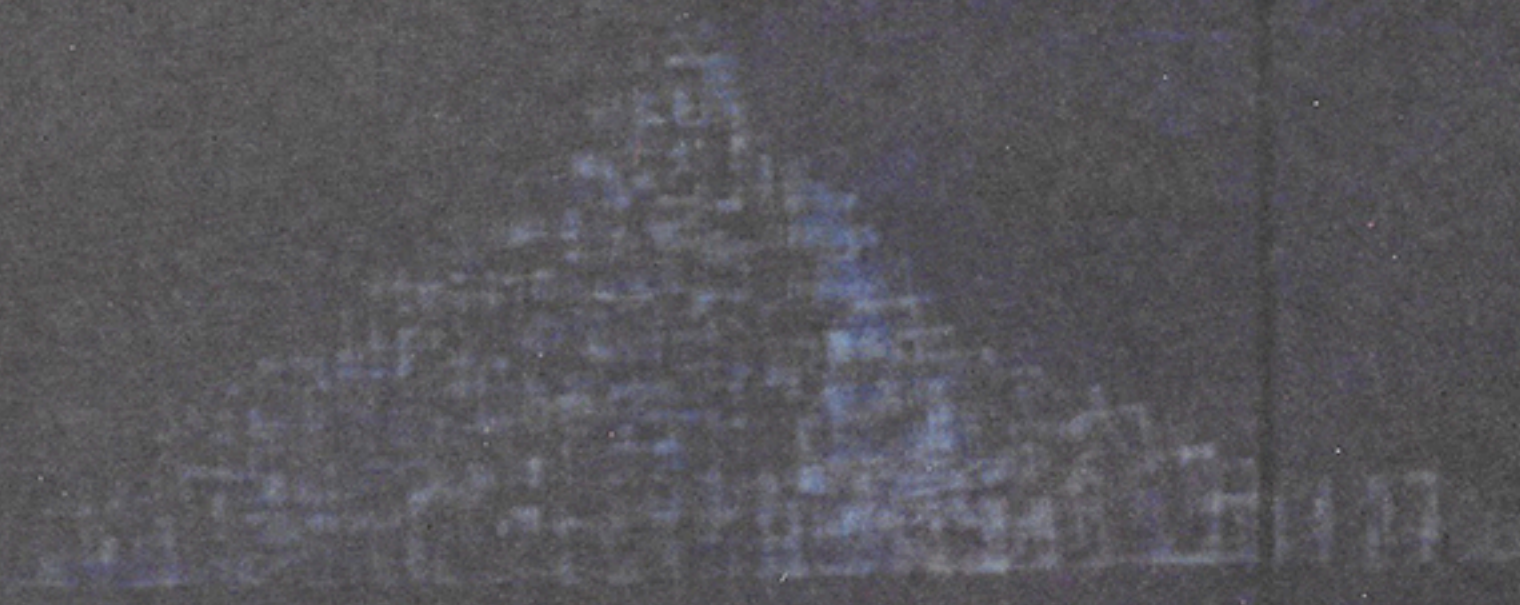
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Martyn  
Thompson




# Martyn Thompson

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Sybille Cavasin







On the evening of April 15, 2014, more than 450 people, most of them high school students, boarded the Sewol ferry from the west coast of Korea headed toward Jeju Island. The ferry was stocked with cargo four times more than it was capable of carrying. When it made a sharp turn it capsized and slowly began to sink. Many students on board were told over loudspeakers to stay in their cabins. While they waited for further instruction, the captain and many crew members were among the first people to be saved. Many rescue efforts were delayed because the issue was not reported as soon as it should have been. The series of events that led up to the accident, and the way the situation was handled by those in charge angered and alarmed people around the world. Images of the sinking vessel ran in the news for days. The tragedy became not only a source of pain, but also one of embarrassment and anger.

As a way to show support and respect for the families and their children, Martyn Thompson has created portraits of the Sewol victims. Through the use of traditional materials like dojang stamps, inju ink, and hanji paper, he has found a way to appropriately broach a subject that is incredibly touchy.









Thompson's use of the dojang stamp is especially interesting because in South Korea it is customary that children receive a stamp as a gift once they reach adulthood. The stamps are made of wood or stone, and are commonly used in Korea on documents the way a signature might be used in western society. Korean and Chinese characters, names, as well as symbols are carved into the stamps. "Historically, name stamps hold a permanence and dignity that I hope honor the lives of the Sewol students who were unable to reach maturity," Thompson said.

Thompson's repetitive application of the stamps has created images that attempt to address the idea of the passing of time. The artist explains that, "instead of the pieces remaining in a singular time frame, it shows a few fractions of life." Like many who paid close attention to the Sewol disaster, Thompson is painfully aware of the difficulty of commenting on this tragedy. But he skillfully does so in his process. "Similar to how photo collages work, using mosaics and built up layers to construct images adds to their complexity, which in turn, is dealing with a complex issue," Thompson said.









The pigments of inju inks are limited in variety and as a result much of the work is monochromatic. Not to be limited by the medium, Thompson has experimented with the inks by stamping on top of other colors to form process colors on the portrait. In "The Student" (page 30) we see a colorful portrait of a high school boy. The striking hues reach out at the audience and insist to be seen. The sheer number of stamps per piece suggests motion within the work, truly capturing the spirit and energy of a young life.

In times that are bleak it can be easy to forget the most important things. While there has been a lot of media-related focus on the details of what happened, the children themselves have not been forgotten. Thompson's art seeks to commemorate those who have been lost. His work is a reminder of the energy, complexity, and beauty of each person. He uses the power of art to help us remember those young individuals in a peaceful and positive way. **[b]**