

## Artist Biography

# Jae Yong Kim



## Early Childhood

Jae Yong Kim was born in Seoul, South Korea in 1973. At the young age of three, he and his family started moving around to places such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait when his father was relocated several times for his job as a regional director of a Middle Eastern construction company. Kim and his family lived in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for a total of five years. In high school, Kim joined a sculpture club and fell in love with the medium so upon graduating from high school in 1994, Kim decided to travel alone to the United States to pursue a university degree in this field.

## Education & Developing Body of Artwork

When Kim arrived in the United States, he attended [Hartford Art School](#) at the University of Hartford in Connecticut. There he received his Bachelors of Fine Arts (BFA) in Ceramics and Sculpture and graduated in 1998. During his time at Hartford, Kim had his first formal experiences teaching Art at the collegiate level when he acted as a teaching assistant for the university in 1997, teaching courses including 3D



Foundations and Introduction to Ceramics. Along with developing his own artistic skills, Kim started participating in several local Art shows and competitions. Navigating through trying to make a career for himself in Art, he began accumulating awards such as the “Best of Show Award,

*Contemporary Vision Award”* and the “*Estelle Hartman Sculpture Award.*” In his earlier works, Kim would stick to monochromatic pieces, featuring black, grey, and white tones on his sculptures. This was due to his

colorblindness. Diagnosed as a child with red-green colorblindness, Kim had both positive and negative experiences with creating Art. Previously, some of his Art teachers would suggest never taking an Art class



again, while others told him how beautifully he used colors together. Later in his career, Kim took it upon himself to experiment with color to a point in which he became comfortable using it in his artwork. This would prove to be a turning point for his work.

Once Kim finished his degree at Hartford, he decided he still needed more knowledge and experience to be successful as a professional artist. He continued his education and traveled to Bloomfield Hills, Michigan to attend the [Cranbrook Academy of Art](#).

There he earned his Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in Ceramics and graduated in

2001. After graduation, Kim traveled to several large cities including Los Angeles, Chicago, then finally New York. Kim had always wanted to know what it would be like to be an artist in New York and followed his curiosity and ambitions there. All of these traveling experiences and adventures moving around the world provided fuel for Kim and helped him develop the content of his artwork. In 2004, Kim earned a summer residency in New York at the [Greenwich House](#) teaching pottery classes. From there he continued to work and participate in solo and group exhibitions, improving himself and developing the content of his artwork.



Kim continues to explore and try to understand his identity and the meaning of “home” in his ongoing works. He explores these issues through the use of a substitute subject in his works, which include his dog Momo (*pictured left*) and cartoon snails (*pictured below*). His style has become

easy to recognize and notice due to it’s quirky, eclectic, and humorous renditions of these subjects, and for his ability to create a relatable language for the viewer in order to deal with human issues they may not even be aware of such as cruelty, pain, greed,

anguish, joy, love, and friendship. In 2004, Kim’s solo show “Snailing” at



the New Century Artists Gallery in New York, New York captured these emotions beautifully, showing winged snails, greedy snails, snails shooting at one another... all of these caricatures of himself and his own emotions at the time.

Introducing donuts to his subjects came as a happy accident. At a time where he was considering whether or not he needed to sell real doughnuts to help support his family, a particularly difficult time in his life, he was considering giving up his career as an artist. On an impulse, Kim made a doughnut with clay and hung it up on a wall in his studio in New York to console himself. When going through his financial hardship, donuts had always made him feel better. His accidental creation soon caught the eye of gallery owners who then stopped by his studio and asked him questions about it. In that moment, Kim realized that he wanted to do something that made him happy and he wanted to please others in the process, and this is how the donuts started to appear in his body of artwork!



## **Career Highlights**

During Kim's career so far, he has participated in over forty group exhibitions! The most recent include the "Day After Tomorrow" (2009) at the [Sweetwater Center for the Arts](#) in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, the "The LEAP Award Finalists Exhibition" (2009) at the

[Society for Contemporary Craft in Pittsburgh](#), Pennsylvania, the “*East & West Clay Works Exhibition*” (2008) at the [Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art in Japan](#). These are just a few of the show titles and galleries in which Kim’s works have been shown but the list continues and many other galleries continue to show interest in Kim’s works.

Kim lived in Long Island City, New York for about a decade. While there, in 2004, he accepted a formal adjunct professor position for the Department of Art and design at Montclair State University. Then in 2008, Kim formed an ongoing collaboration with a recognized fine jewelry designer, Sally Sohn, whose designs can be found at high-end retailers such as New York Bergdorf Goodman, Neiman Marcus, Stanley Korshak, and so on. Kim’s interest and research in studio practices extends from making individual ceramic pieces, to installation, and he is always open to experimentation with different media, and pushing different mediums to their fullest capacity and limit.

## **Current Work**

In 2015, Kim returned home to Korea. In his first solo exhibition since returning from the United States, his current artworks can be seen in a show he calls, “Donut Fear” which features over 1,700 doughnuts adorned with a variety of colors and sparkles at the Hakgojae Gallery in central Seoul. The timing couldn’t have been worse, as it had been negatively affected due to the spread of the coronavirus and people staying home. In a recent interview with Kim, it was easy for him to lament why a global



pandemic had to happen at the same time as his first private exhibition. However, he decided to give it a go and opened his show as scheduled. The exhibition is named, "Donut Fear," to encourage others to be brave and move forward together. Available viewings and tours of the show were open to the public until May 31, 2020, and went quite well all things considered. Currently, Kim is continuing to steadily work on his craft, building and creating his meticulously detailed donuts for future projects and installations.



## Resources:

“Donut Fear - Meeting the Donut Writer Jae Yong Kim,” Blog. April 7, 2020. Available from: <https://m.blog.naver.com/designpress2016/221895645751>. Access date: May 1, 2020.

“Jae Yong Kim Interview - Ceramic Genius” People, August 12, 2014. Available from: <https://twelvmag.com/people/jae-yong-kim-interview-%E2%80%9Cceramic-genius%E2%80%9D>. Access date: May 1, 2020.

“Whimsical Wall of Donuts Inspires Hope,” Korea JoongAng Daily, in association with The New York Times. April 28, 2020. Available from: <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2020/04/29/artsDesign/doughnuts-wall-like-doughnuts/20200429094400184.html>. Access date: May 1, 2020.

Personal Artist Webpage/Instagram:

<http://jaeyongkim.com/bio.html>

[https://www.instagram.com/jae\\_yong\\_kim\\_nyc/](https://www.instagram.com/jae_yong_kim_nyc/)