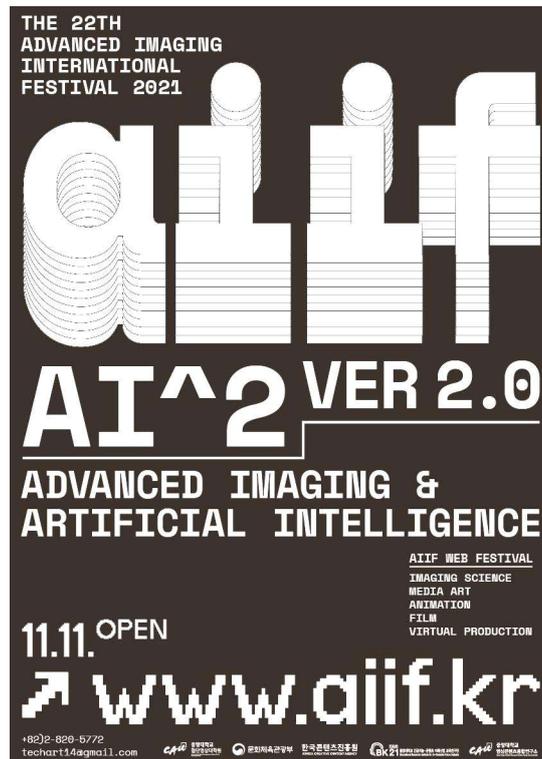


AIIF Special Exhibition_ Interview Question



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Q1. Hello, author. Please introduce yourself briefly. (5-10 lines)

A1 :

I am Elliot Woods, one half of Kimchi and Chips art collective based in Paju, South Korea. The studio was founded in 2009 in collaboration with Korean artist Mimi Son. Our work employs contemporary technologies to explore the relationship between reality and images, often through artworks which are exhibited in public space. I frequently apply my educational background in Physics to these artworks, using computer vision, robotics, structural engineering, machine learning and other techniques. I am particularly interested in the way people form their world views and personalities in response to the communities and phenomena that they encounter in public space.

Q2. What kind of story does the AIF invited(Special Exhibition) work have? (15-20 lines)

A2:

Halo was exhibited at the MMCA Seoul this year and at Somerset House in London in 2018. The work builds a surprising relationship between materials that people encounter everyday (mirrors, sunlight, water). 99 robotic mirrors track the sun and reflect beams of sunlight into a mist of water. The beams of sunlight describe the tangents of a circle, and together they form an image of the sun out of sunlight. The halo image appears only for moments when the wind, sun, water, and technology coincide, creating a form which exists between the material and immaterial.

The installation superimposes diverse timescales. The sun is beyond humanity's timeline; as the solar energy interacts with the earth, it creates the clouds which occasionally pause the installation as they shadow the mirrors; The daily passage of the sun across the sky is traced out by the mirrors moving in tandem; The sun forces the wind which, second-to-second, catches the mist and chaotically carries it into the focused sunlight, drawing the halo. The moment that Halo emerges in the air, it briefly superimposes the transience of momentary experience with the immutability of the sun.

Halo is a spectacular disruption of supply and demand. It is spectacular in that it is visually powerful, lit with the power of 100 suns, the sun directly and the 99 reflections tuned to the halo. It is an image of the sun, made of sunlight, brighter than the largest projection mapping spectacles. It is a way of staring at the sun.

However, it accrues this power from a source which is chaotically supplied - direct sunlight. The demand of the viewer has no bearing on the supply of the spectacle itself. You cannot buy a ticket to see it, the supply cannot be "fixed" by the artist or otherwise. The ecosystem is abundant but not on demand.

Q3. What is the most worrisome or questionable thing in the process of planning this work? and what is the emphasis in the work?

(15-20 lines)

A3 :

Civilization's current relationship with energy causes climate change, which is abusive for the planet that we live on, and is suicidal for human beings. In order to create a functioning relationship between humans and energy, we must not only build new technologies such as hydrogen vehicles and more efficient solar cells, but we must also unlearn the relationship with energy that became prevalent during the current era of fossil fuels: that we can have as much energy as we want whenever we want it.

Our current instinct for energy is incompatible with the chaotic nature of renewable energy sources, since we cannot control when a solar panel or wind turbine will produce energy. Batteries and hydro dams can help to store some of this energy, but cannot offer a complete solution to the supply and demand problem without introducing significant environmental impacts of their own.

Halo offers its audience a moment of meditation where they will view a raw relationship with energy that is built on a much more chaotic basis. Within this meditation, energy becomes abundant and spectacular, but also easily disappears and scatters, it is magnificent and out of control, and that's ok. This helps us to form an alternative relationship with energy and builds useful instincts.

Q4. Technology and technological environment are important for creating works. How is the technology used in your work implemented? (15-20 lines)

A4 :

Halo has two major technical systems: motion control and calibration.

The motion control system consists of a network of 198 servo motors which can each navigate a mirror to an accuracy of 0.1 degrees. This network of servo motors is then centrally controlled by a single computer which monitors the servos for temperature, voltage and positioning issues and sends signals to keep them constantly tracking the sun.

The calibration system employs machine learning and computer vision to train a mathematical model of each mirror module. A camera is used to capture data from the mirrors so that we can know all the distortions and mechanical variations of each module. A separate system then calibrates the path of the sun relative to the local coordinate system. Using this trained mathematical model and the sun tracker, we can then calculate the correct servo values to aim the mirrors correctly to draw the halo.

All of our technical are open source and available on our GitHub accounts. As well as these systems, there is also the mechanical engineering of the robotic mirror modules themselves,

which must be weatherproof, practical and aesthetically fit within the installation.

Q5. What do you think of the convergence of art and technology used to express your work? (15-20 lines)

A5 :

We often say that the arts, sciences and philosophy are not distant disciplines which must be bridged, but act as alternative maps onto the same territory, and that employing these maps in tandem allows the territory to be navigated more readily. The notion of 'convergence' gives us an image in our minds of the disciplines of art and technology being far apart, and that they could be brought together occasionally in somewhat unnatural ways. Instead, we should think of art and technology as being different perspectives onto the same reality, and that by absorbing both types of understanding we can better understand that reality.

Talking about science (which is admittedly different from technology)... science itself is a network of metaphors that can be useful for navigating nature. Metaphors such as 'particles', 'waves', 'forces' show up repeatedly in physics, and yet if we look deep enough into any phenomena, we see that the metaphors themselves break apart and are approximations rather than reality. The metaphors are often used to describe one another, but never exist truly by themselves except in our imagination. The metaphors are of course still useful for helping us to understand and navigate the world.

In art, an artwork in itself constructs a relationship between a set of metaphors. Each element of the artwork might represent something through cultural association, through sensitivity to art history, or as recognizable components of day-to-day life. The metaphors and the relationship between them can then be absorbed and manipulated by the viewer, and may in turn be applied by the viewer to help them to understand and navigate the world.

Q6. What is your perspective on AI? What does today's AI and art ultimately mean to us? (15-20 lines)

A6 :

Modern AI gives us an incredible tool to investigate embodied intelligence, and can even help us to separate the notions of consciousness and intelligence. An eye is intelligent since it can discern shapes but perhaps it is not by itself conscious. The same is true for a hand or a foot. This relationship between consciousness and intelligence could not be properly discussed before, because they could not be easily separated and we lacked the rich set of metaphors for intelligence that AI gives us.

By externalizing this embodied intelligence into a machine, we can observe it and critique it. We can examine the unfairness in society by seeing how inequality emerges within the judgements of an artificially intelligent system. This gives us new tools to critique ourselves and to improve our own view of reality.

AI however is however, sadly, mistakenly, seen as a 'secret sauce' for artworks with

technology, where it adds a layer of mystique and helps the work pass for being contemporary. AI can be mistakenly seen as implicitly valuable, diverting attention from what is truly interesting in artworks. For example, a work that is incredibly pretty (employing the same techniques as blockbuster movies) might be commended for its use of groundbreaking AI, even though there is no relationship between its aesthetics and the AI system that it employs (which itself was copied off the internet). This type of work does not help us to build our understanding of the world, and instead exploits our prior conceptions about the way the world works.

There is space for every type of artwork to exist, but we must always be concerned whenever we identify a topic as becoming a 'bandwagon'. A bandwagon occurs when too many artists adjust their own work to match a popular taste. In the case of a bandwagon, artworks then become judged on their relation to the bandwagon (e.g. how well can a work be described as 'AI' rather than how good of an artwork is it). In order to encourage a rich and diverse artistic scene, bandwagons should be identified and deflated.

Q7. Is there a message you want to convey to the audience through your work? (15-20 lines)

A7 :

Yes – the artworks convey that message to the audience directly. I could only ever poorly translate that by trying to put it into words. Rational linear written language (e.g. English or Hangul) employs only a subset of our intelligence, and cannot be used to convey every type of idea. Some ideas can only be portrayed through dance, an object, a sound or a space. If we choose to describe all ideas in linear written language, it would require us to remove all incompatible ideas from the world. I believe that an artwork description should be seen as a prompt to help the audience to begin messaging with the work directly, like the sounds a dial up modem makes before the real connection begins.

Q8. Is there anything that differentiates you from other writers in your work? (15-20 lines)

A8 :

The work of different artists should exist within different value systems and cannot be compared against one another. It is always important to make artwork that is sufficiently unique that if you didn't make it, nobody else would. I am confident in my own work, and am happy to exist within an ecosystem of diverse artists. There are many specific approaches and techniques that we apply in our work that we don't see elsewhere, but hopefully that is evident in the answer to my other questions.

Q9. In addition to this work, please introduce other works representing your art world. (15-20 lines)

A9 :

I made one brief and incomplete selection of people working with digital creativity in Korea 3 years ago which can be seen on Instagram here :

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BuSivWIFro0/> . I also co-hosted a series of online conversations regarding art with technology where I had the chance to introduce many of my favorite practitioners, the archive for which can be found here: <https://linktr.ee/artntech> . I think those 2 resources give a nice introduction to other artists working in similar territory.

10. What are you planning to do in the future? Please introduce future exhibitions or events. (15-20 lines)

A10 :

We will be bringing 2 works to Korea this winter, notably:

Another Moon : a large scale outdoor spectacular installation which gathers the sun's light during the day and then projects it back into the sky at night using lasers that draw a second moon in the sky.

Collective Behavior : a dance performance in collaboration with Danish choreographer Simone Wierod and techo music duo M € RCY, which will take place at Sogang University Maryhall Theatre.

We do have some works sketched out for next year, but nothing announced yet. We often make new announcements via our Instagram @studiokimchiandchips and our Facebook page.

Thank you for taking the time to interview. I look forward to good activities in the future.