

ARTILLERY



DENK gallery

AN AUTHENTIC REFLECTION OF LIFE

Renée Lotenero and Soo Kim at DENK Gallery

by Avery Wheless ·

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As soon as the exhibition opened at **DENK** gallery last Saturday, the space circulated with a plethora of gallerygoers who attended to see the work of Renée Lotenero and Soo Kim—luckily we were amongst the crowd. Upon entrance into the first room, we were captivated with Kim’s photo-based sculptural works, from her series “Homesick for a Better World.”



Gallerygoers with Soo Kim's work to the right

The images broke the typical confines of photography with their incorporation of collaging, drawings and cut-outs while striking their positions in the center of the space as well as in frames and shelving on the walls. The negative space of the photo cut-outs held just as much authority or even more so than the sum of their parts —allowing us to peer through the negative spaces to gather the entire narrative. Luckily, in the hubbub of the evening, Kim was gracious enough to give me insight to some of the work. One piece she talked about in particular, *The DMZ (Ballad of the Branches and the Trunk)* manifested as a physical divide in the gallery space depicting the DMZ between North and South Korea. The photo stood upright and suspended in a glass, allowing viewing from either side. The bold cut-outs in the photo created new pathways in the platform representing the porous border and striking an emotional chord of the intangible weight of the time and space captured. Each of Kim's works remained rooted in the nostalgia of photography, but also coupled with an activation of sculptural intrigue. These works could have been studied forever, but there was more art to be seen and the contagious energy kept me moving.



Soo Kim chatting with a friend

The next room completely enamored us with the works of **Renée Lotenero** for her series, “Sprawl.” These sculptural pieces were framed and existed more as 2D experiences, which were lyrical and truly elegant. Each of Lotenero’s multimedia works were layered and intricate, yet captivating in their boldness and sense of movement, evoking ethereal memory with bold physicality. Lotenero humored me allowing me to take her photo next to an exquisitely large piece while explaining to me that she and her husband had to take most of the works apart and then put them back together again during their travels from Portugal in order to get it through customs. She admitted this slightly adapted them from their original form, but this process of reconstructing and redefining resulted in fluidity. To me, this poetic redefinition of an original idea made them authentic, reflecting the fragmentation of memory and haphazard beauty of life that cannot be planned and is constantly in motion.



Renée Lotenero in front of her piece



Outside the gallery where food and drink were plentiful

Both artists stayed busy as they had quite the turn out and were supported by fellow artists including **Stuart Kusher, Kim Dingle, Luigia Gio Martelloni, David DiMichele**—to name a few. Luckily, the joyous overflow of energy was able to expand outside as the gallery's lot was decorated with festive string lights and tables for us to relish in the fact that there was a glorious cheese plate and an amazing selection of wine and beer—plus a BBQ truck if you were craving something a little more substantial.

Kim and Lotenero' work both depict life experiences by means of disassembling, reconstructing and challenging form. No small task, but their re-contextualizing of material bring us one step closer to an authentic reflection of life, and on that note, it's safe to say both did their job—while making it beautiful too.

Photos by Avery Wheless