

City Life Becomes Art in New Exhibit

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Urban living is captured by artwork shown at a Chelsea gallery.

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MANHATTAN — Everyday city life has become art at a Chelsea gallery.

"Subtle Anxiety: This is How You Feel Now" is a new exhibit at West 25th Street's Doosan Gallery — and it's inspired by life in New York.

The abstract art by three South Korean artists evokes the anxieties of urban experiences such as people scurrying down streets, staring at cell phones and passing construction sites.

The pressures and strains that typify day-to-day routines in New York are not unlike those in Seoul, said exhibit curator Jee-Young Maeng, 32.

"The environment is very similar," said Maeng, who now lives in Jersey City. "You're always in a hurry, you're always forced to do things fast."

The oil paintings of one featured artist, Jiyeon Koo, were inspired by her fascination with building construction. One work, "Dionysia in Ground Zero," depicts the upheaval at the World Trade Center site.

"She sees this circle of violence in cities," Maeng said. "It never ends. You think you're creating something new, but it's always destroying."

Another installation, Jong Hyun Oh's "Untitled," reflects the fragility of bustling modern life.

"It almost looks like it's falling down," Maeng said of the clear plastic and fish wire structure. "You can feel this physical tension."

Gyungjin Shin's video, "Smiley Suicide," displays a young woman who, feeling pressured to keep up a happy appearance, paints a smiley face across her cheeks and then places a toy gun filled with laughing gas in her mouth.

For gallery visitors, Maeng said she hopes the exhibit helps evoke sensations that aren't always expressed.

"I want them to feel," she said. "We can't visualize this feeling, it's not visible. They might pause for a moment and think about what they're feeling."

"Subtle Anxiety" is on display until August 14.