

## Ranking

# [2026 Forbes Korea 30 Under 30] ART&STYLE | Moka Lee (29), Artist

[Translated from Korean to English]

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Moka Lee is an artist who began her career in 2019 at the age of 22 and rapidly expanded her scope of activity to the international stage. She launched her career in earnest after winning the top prize, the DDP Prize, at ASYAAF 2019 while still an undergraduate student, and subsequently participated in exhibitions at major institutions such as the Busan Museum of Contemporary Art and the Seoul Museum of Art. In 2025, she was selected for Artsy Vanguard 2025, where she was featured on a large LED screen in Times Square, New York, and was also mentioned in international media outlets such as CNN, Artnet News, and The Art Newspaper.

Her work begins with collecting selfies from the web and transforming them into paintings that reveal the contemporary “double self.” Light digital images are transferred into rigid oil paintings, and surfaces composed of countless overlapping thin layers of paint visualize the “state in which the double self clings to the self like skin.” The method of combining Western oil painting traditions with the sensibility of Korean ink painting forms the structure that firmly supports her work. In the early stages of her career, she placed images found on social media onto the canvas and delicately transplanted the waves of expressions created as those images encountered the viewer.

It was not easy for the work of a painter in her twenties to find a place. Even amidst the surge of interest during the pandemic, she stated that “the only way to break through any situation was to create works better than the past.” It was a method of responding with the density of her work, unwavering in the face of external conditions. This attitude is clearly evident in her recent works as well. The expressions filling the canvas are not mere portraits, but unfold as narrative scenes where images and memories collide and resonate with one another.

## | A painter who depicts the boundary between portraits and sensations

Having graduated from the Department of Painting at Sejong University and completed the Master’s program in Visual Arts at the Korea National University of Arts, she states, “Within the vast realm of art, the traditional profession of ‘painter’ is akin to passing through art with the body.” This attitude of striving to sustain a dense life without allowing the body and mind engaged in art to become numb is also a philosophy that permeates his entire body of work.

With plans to open a solo booth at Art Basel Paris following her 2026 exhibition at 10 Corso Como in Seoul and the publication of its catalog, as well as a solo exhibition at the David Kordansky Gallery (LA), she intends to continue her growth alongside her entry into the global stage. Her commitment to remain an artist who expands the landscape of Korean art is also clear.

### PROFILE

Winner of the Top Prize at the Asiaf 2019 DDP Prize,  
Selected for Artsy Vanguard 2025

