
oude kerk

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Kimsooja

To Breathe – Mokum



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Kimsooja: *To Breathe – Mokum*

Kimsooja has gained international acclaim for her poetic installations that address important issues of our time, such as migration, displacement, longing for a home, and the search for identity. Especially for the Oude Kerk, she created a new series of her iconic textile bundles (*bottari*), inspired by the traditional Korean wrapping cloths in which people carry their cherished belongings during travel. The bundles are filled with clothes from Amsterdam's many communities. She has also covered the over 44,000 panes of the soaring windows with iridescent film, transforming sunlight into a sea of rainbow colours. *To Breathe – Mokum* offers a meditative experience that invites reflection on uprooting and returning home as well as on what we take with us and leave behind.

'Homeland is not a topographically definable place, but a state of consciousness and belonging.'

— Kimsooja

Bottari – textile bundles with stories of travel

Placed across the centuries-old gravestone floor are round, colourful textile bundles called *bottari*. They draw on traditional Korean wrapping cloths and are a recurring motif in Kimsooja's work. Each bundle is filled with clothing donated by residents from across Amsterdam's many communities, whose cultural roots span the world. The *bottari* resonate with Amsterdam's identity as a city of arrival and departure: one shaped by global influences. Today, the city comprises a majority of minorities, representing more than 170 nationalities.

Bathed in rainbow light

For *To Breathe – Mokum*, more than 44,000 panes in the Oude Kerk's towering windows have been covered with a transparent film that refracts sunlight into every colour of the spectrum. The film consists of thousands of vertical and horizontal lines in every inch, a woven structure that functions like a prism or painting abstracted into light, enveloping the space and the viewers as another architectural *bottari*. As the sun moves across the sky, the coloured light shifts throughout the day, casting its glow over the floor, pillars, and wooden surfaces. The light not only evokes the church's medieval past – when nearly all its windows were stained glass – but also brings Amsterdam's radiant character into the space. Kimsooja creates this work in many different venues across the world as a way to connect places across the globe.

Migration city Mokum

In the year Amsterdam celebrates its 750th anniversary, Kimsooja's works embed themselves into the city's long migration history. Situated in our capital's old harbour district, the area around the Oude Kerk has, for centuries, been a point of arrival and departure. When Amsterdam flourished into a metropolis in the seventeenth century, the area around the church was already home to various migrant communities. From sailors who dried their sails in church and prayed for safe passage, to migrants who signed their marriage certificates here in the seventeenth century. But also the rise of Chinatown in the twentieth century (which is considered the oldest Chinese neighbourhood on the European mainland): this history is resonantly woven into *To Breathe – Mokum*. The title of the exhibition refers to the Yiddish word 'mokum', which means 'city' or 'safe haven' – a name that Jewish migrants gave to the city of Amsterdam when they found a home here.



‘I would like to create works that are like water and air, which we cannot possess but which can be shared with everyone.’

— Kimsooja

**Film screening
in the Board Room**

In the Board Room, a film is shown about the creation and background of Kimsooja’s installation and her body of work.

**Reading room
in the Oudezijds Room**

In the Oudezijds Room, various books on Kimsooja’s work are available for viewing.

**Public Programme
and Artist Talk**

Throughout the exhibition, we are hosting an extensive public programme featuring concerts, workshops, and guided tours that engage with the themes in Kimsooja’s work. On 15 October, the artist give an artist talk. For more information and tickets, visit oudekerk.nl/publieksprogramma

About Kimsooja

Born in Daegu, South Korea, in 1957, Kimsooja is widely regarded as one of today’s most important artists. Her work is rooted in Korean traditions and encompasses diverse media, including installation, performance, video, and photography, and is exhibited worldwide. Recent solo exhibitions include presentations at the Bourse de Commerce, Paris, in 2024; Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden, in 2024; and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in 2015. She represented South Korea at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013 and took part in Documenta 12 in Kassel in 2007. The FENIX Migration Museum in Rotterdam recently acquired her key work *Bottari Truck – Migrateurs* (2007–2009).

About the Oude Kerk

The Oude Kerk, Amsterdam’s oldest building, is a place where contemporary art engages with centuries-old heritage. It offers a platform for artists and musicians to explore new perspectives on history, the world around us, and the future. Artists who have previously presented their work at the Oude Kerk include Navid Nuur, Meredith Monk, and Ibrahim Mahama.

Support

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