



**Beyond Magic**

Revolutionary Unboxism

Yujeong Han

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## ABSTRACT

Beyond Magic : Revolutionary Unboxism

I firmly believe in the power of magic and the capacity for jewelry's queerness to embody its essence. The societal preoccupation with standardization, which often propagates ableist, heteronormative, and patriarchal standards, has negatively impacted my journey toward self-acceptance. But who gets to dictate what is 'normal,' 'standard,' or 'ideal'? Who is omitted from these determinations?

To contest these rigid norms and discriminatory systems, I put forth a social movement titled "Beyond Magic: Revolutionary Movements." This initiative seeks to counterbalance the entrenched cultural forces that uphold heteronormative and patriarchal values deeply ingrained in Korean society. Drawing inspiration from the magical girl subgenre of animation, which often reflects societal issues, I aim to foster a more inclusive and equitable culture in Korea through my artistic endeavors. I am committed to documenting and challenging the conservative cultural backdrop that engenders strict gender codes in society. Each piece of jewelry I create unveils historical incidents of gender discrimination and sexism in Korea, engaging and enlightening audiences with my vision for a more balanced and equitable society.

By transcending traditional confines of adornment and defying societal expectations of what is considered 'ordinary' or 'normal', I urge individuals to reconsider the normative practice of classifying people into rigid categories and, instead, embrace the diversity of individual uniqueness. I work to dismantle the restrictive structures that have bound us and to amplify the voices of those who have been silenced. Ultimately, my goal is to instigate new dialogues that question the concept of a fixed 'normality' and champion a more inclusive and equitable societal framework.

## INTRODUCTION

### Contours of conformity

This thesis delves into the interplay of gender discrimination during the Joseon Dynasty and its implications on contemporary Korean culture. It scrutinizes prevalent instances of gender discrimination in modern Korea and traces their roots to historical traditions, further exploring how these cultural nuances shape my artistic expression. My works are designed as forms of creative resistance to heighten awareness of gender discrimination while fostering a transformative dialogue.

The dissertation encapsulates my personal manifesto. My work Adaptive Control Apparatus(2021) initiated this manifesto, which critiques a majority-centric society and inherent discrimination against minorities. It continues with New Normalization, Where Are You? (2022), a jewelry device that boldly confronts the constraints on self-expression in Korea and societal perceptions of deficient femininity. The narrative continues with Power Make Up! : Magical Amulet (2022) and Charm+ing (2022). These collections serve as tangible expressions of my professional identity and symbolize my dedication to societal progress. Finally, this journey reaches its apex with "Beyond Magic," a series of thesis works illuminating the pressing issues of gender and sexual discrimination in Korea.

My manifesto puts forth a collection of works that incite social change through innovative techniques and approaches, underscoring the multitude of gender identities and expressions. I hope these pieces will spark recognition of the systemic issue of gender discrimination, thereby catalyzing introspective shifts in individual beliefs and actions. Ultimately, my creations aim to advance a more equitable and inclusive cultural landscape within Korean society.

# THE ROOTS OF CONFORMITY IN KOREAN SOCIETY

## (1) Conformity in Joseon dynasty

Societal norms often impose restrictions on individuality, compromise autonomy, and perpetuate social inequality. This is particularly observable in the Republic of Korea, where the legacies of Confucianism from the Joseon Dynasty continue to enforce stringent gender conformity. These traditional gender norms remain a potent force in contemporary Korean society and significantly contribute to marginalizing those who deviate from these norms.

The Joseon Dynasty's focus on female chastity and virtue significantly shaped societal views, casting women's bodies as potential threats with the potential to undermine women's rights. This view is echoed in Korean phrases like «Chilgeojiak» and «Namjonyeobi,» both of which illuminate gender inequality. «Chilgeojiak» refers to grounds for divorce that disproportionately affected women, and «Namjonyeobi» underscores the presumed inferiority of women. Such traditional values have invariably limited women's societal roles, diminishing their public sphere influence and often relegating them to domestic realms. They have also constrained women's autonomy, enabling men to dictate significant life decisions and control their bodies.

In addition, the Joseon Dynasty acknowledged only binary gender roles, male and female, offering no acceptance of gender or sexual diversity. Historical records, such as Shin Yuh-an's travelogue Haeyurok and the Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty, the collected written records of the kings of the Joseon Dynasty of Korea, disclose negative attitudes and severe punishments towards homosexuality. The enduring influence of these conservative attitudes and the traditional patriarchal order continues to not only reinforce gender conformity but also foster exclusion and marginalization of those diverging from traditional gender

roles. This historical legacy continues to shape contemporary Korean society, inhibiting diversity, perpetuating social inequality, and limiting the experiences and perspectives of marginalized groups.

The restrictions and regulations imposed on minorities have significantly influenced my creative practice. One of my works, Adaptive Control Apparatus (2022), comprises six metal collections, reflecting society's predisposition towards the majority. Function, sizes, and format of jewelry are predominantly aimed at a so-called «universal» body structure, with most pieces representing standard body types. Individuals fitting within society's definition of «normal» are privileged to wear conventionally designed jewelry.

However, The Adaptive Control Apparatus induces discomfort and restricts body movement for those with bodies that are typically prioritized. Wearing this piece may lead to limited mobility, thereby challenging societal norms of what is considered normal. My intention with this work is to critique the unseen constraints and discipline imposed on societal minorities.

Drawing inspiration from Adaptive Control Apparatus, New Normalization - Where Are You?(2021) series makes a daring portrayal in all its diverse and imperfect beauty, boldly challenging the stigmas and negativity typically associated with bodies that diverge from societal norms.

As a Korean woman, I have experienced a multitude of social constraints imposed upon my physical appearance, with women often questioning and rejecting their perceived flaws, unable to embrace their authentic selves. The homogenized body image exemplified by South Korean female idol groups has perpetuated a societal expectation for women to adhere to a thin ideal. This has unfortunately led to a significant percentage of Korean women feeling compelled to resort to cosmetic surgeries to meet these socially prescribed beauty standards.

The New Normalization series catalyzes the dismantling of prevailing social standards. By maneuvering a brass scroll, individuals are given the opportunity to confidently express their unique attributes, which may not necessarily align with societal standards. This action symbolizes their powerful refusal to succumb to the societal conventions placed upon them, fostering an environment where they are encouraged to share their distinct body shapes and emotions openly. By unapologetically embracing their authenticity, they make a bold statement of self-acceptance. This fearless revelation of their identities challenges the oppressive expectations of neutrality and conformity often demanded by society, enabling individuals to break free from these constraints.



**New Normalization**  
2022, Brass, Acrylic  
140x110x50 (mm)



**New Normalization**  
2022, Brass, Acrylic  
290x330x80 (mm)



**Adaptive Control Apparatus**  
2022, Rhodium Plating on Copper  
28x14x30 (cm)



**Adaptive Control Apparatus**  
2022, Rhodium Plating on Copper  
8.5x6x5.5, 6x5.5x8.5, 13x6.5x6.5, 19x16x10, 11x8x8, 12x5x5, 28x14x30 (cm)

## (2) The Fight to be Seen and Accepted

The enduring legacy of Confucianism in Korea's history has profoundly sculpted the contours of its contemporary society, setting the foundation for a culture that can often breed discrimination. This societal context has repeatedly prompted me to reconsider my position and function as an artist within this framework. I have faced numerous discrimination predicated on sexuality and gender, experiences which have deeply impacted me and provoked introspection regarding my identity. These reflective inquiries have provided me, as an artist, with the impetus to evaluate the purpose of my creative contributions critically. Furthermore, they have spurred me to deliberate upon the societal elements I seek to embody and represent in my artistic endeavors. Ultimately, these experiences and reflections have acted as an indispensable catalyst, empowering me to challenge the stringent societal norms through the medium of art.

These are incidents of sexual and gender-based discrimination that have occurred in Korea:

1. On September 7, 2013, the first openly held gay marriage in Korea involving well-known film director Kim Jo Kwang Soo and his partner was disrupted when a protester threw garbage at the couple. This event cast a shadow over the momentous occasion for both the couple and the Korean LGBT community.

2. On May 7, 2020, South Korea witnessed a spike in online discrimination and threats against the LGBT community, who were unjustly accused of spreading Covid-19. Media outlets labeled nightclubs as gay clubs, intensifying online harassment and exacerbating the already hostile environment for LGBT individuals.

3. On January 23, 2020, the case of Byun Hee-soo, a transgender soldier who underwent surgery in 2019 and sought to continue serving as a female soldier, gained attention. She was

forcibly discharged in January 2020 and later found dead. Military authorities declined to acknowledge her death as being in the line of duty or recognize her as a transgender soldier.

4. On February 10, 2022, the United Christian Churches of Korea and the Bioethics Committee of the Catholic Church of Korea opposed an anti-discrimination law proposed in 2007. They claimed the law disregarded traditional values.

5. On August 2, 2017, the "Nth Room" case involved cybersex trafficking, blackmail, and sexually exploitative videos on the Telegram app. At least 103 victims, including 26 minors, were identified. Their images were sold to over 260,000 IDs and purchased in cryptocurrency by approximately 60,000 users.

6. On January 28, 2019, the Burning Sun scandal emerged, initially involving the alleged assault of a male clubgoer. The scandal rapidly expanded to encompass allegations of prostitution, drug trafficking, police corruption, rape, spy cams, and illicit filming during drug use. Singer Jung Joon-young admitted to secretly recording himself having sex with women and sharing the videos without their consent, with many instances involving date rape drugs.

7. On May 17, 2016, around 1:05 AM, Mr. Kim (34) was arrested and charged with murder for fatally stabbing Ms. A (23), a stranger to him, multiple times in a public restroom at a bar building near exit 10 of Gangnam Station in Seoul. He specifically targeted women, waiting at the crime scene for about 30 minutes before brutally murdering her.

7. On May 17, 2016, around 1:05 AM, Mr. Kim (34) was arrested and charged with murder for fatally stabbing Ms. A (23), a stranger to him, multiple times in a public restroom at a bar building near exit 10 of Gangnam Station in Seoul. He specifically targeted women, waiting at the crime scene for about 30 minutes before brutally murdering her.

8. In South Korea, illegal filming crimes occur incessantly every year. This persistence is attributed to lenient punishments, leading to reduced caution towards these offenses. Over 5,100 cases were detected in the past year, and digital sex crimes involving the online distribution of illegally filmed material are rapidly increasing annually. With a recidivism rate of 75% for illegal filming among sexual violence crimes, this pressing issue urgently needs to be addressed.

9. According to the recent OECD report on the gender wage gap, as of 2021, South Korea had the largest wage gap among surveyed countries at 31.1%. This means that male workers who receive the median wage earned 31.1% more than their female counterparts when arranging both male and female workers by annual salary.

10. In 2016, the "Me Too" movement began spreading across the cultural sector. As new allegations of sexual violence emerged daily in the theater and film industries, the entertainment world's atmosphere became notably unusual. Many accused were high-profile celebrities, including award-winning directors, university professors, and well-known actors.

These recurring incidents of discrimination have invariably incited a wave of profound anger within me, with art emerging as an instrumental medium to channel this energy. Through my creative expression, I effectively transformed my art into a rebellion against societal norms and exposure to its inherent absurdities.

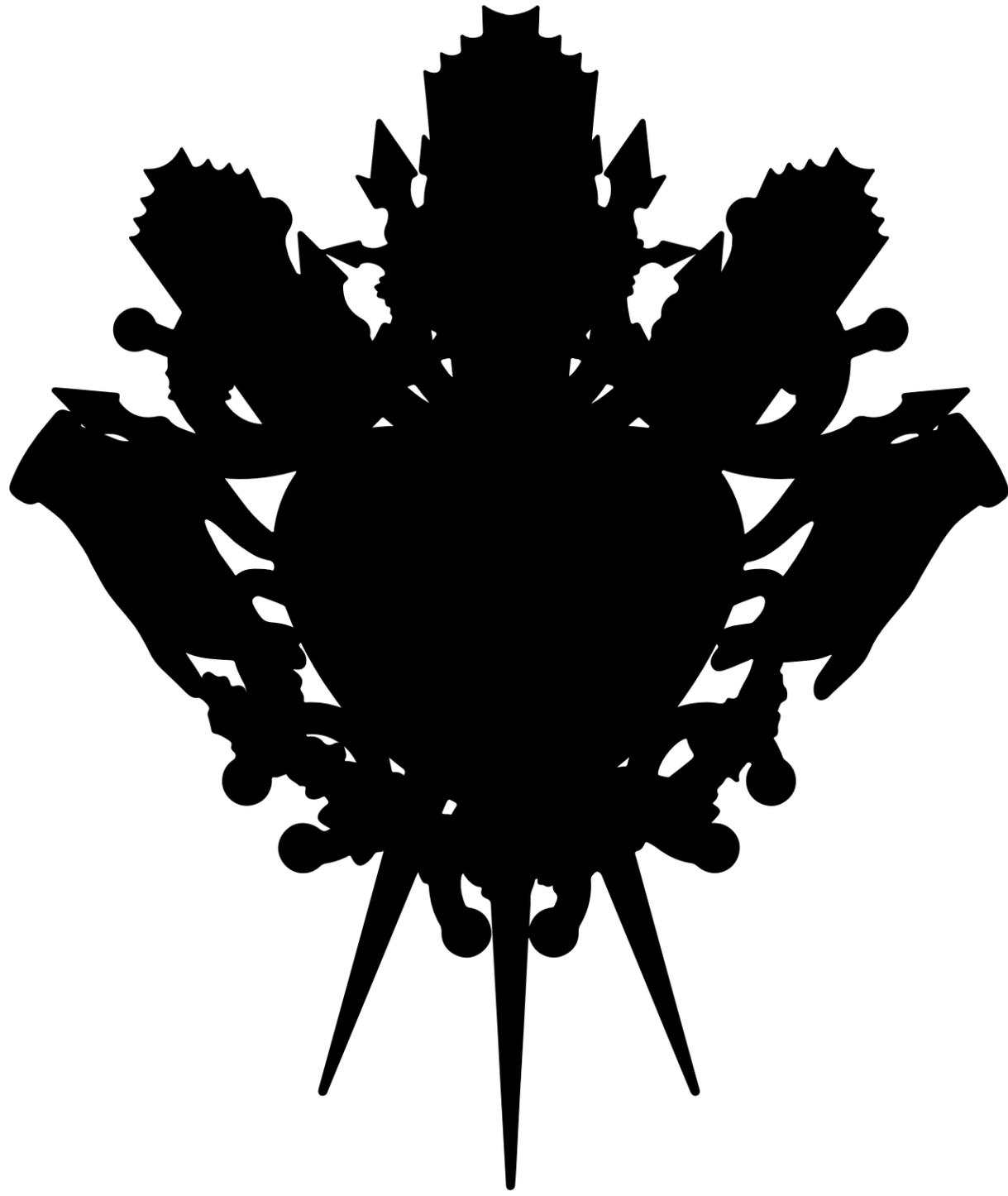
The thesis project, Beyond Magic: Revolutionary Movement serves as a dual-purpose endeavor: it is both a vivid documentation of the glaring instances of gender discrimination in Korea and a testament to the lives that have been impacted by prejudice.

For me, recording is equivalent to a form of protest. While discrimination incidents frequently

surface in the media, they often recede into oblivion as time progresses. As a contemporary artist, I feel responsible for meticulously documenting and remembering these injustices. Beyond Magic: Revolutionary Movements encompasses the distressing instances of gender discrimination in modern Korea. By revealing the harsh reality hidden beneath the surface of societal glamour, I intend to draw attention to these issues and provoke Korean society into questioning why such injustices are permitted to endure. My work is a tribute to the memory of these victims, expressing my empathy and condolences.

Additionally, my art aims not merely to expose societal absurdities but to fundamentally transform our perception of society. Beyond Magic: The Revolutionary Movement highlights these events and reimagines each series of events as positive occurrences. In essence, Beyond Magic: Revolutionary Movement represents events that may not have occurred in the past but are fundamentally necessary for a more equitable future.

What follows are fictional scenarios that, while they may not have transpired in South Korea, serve as illustrative examples in my work:



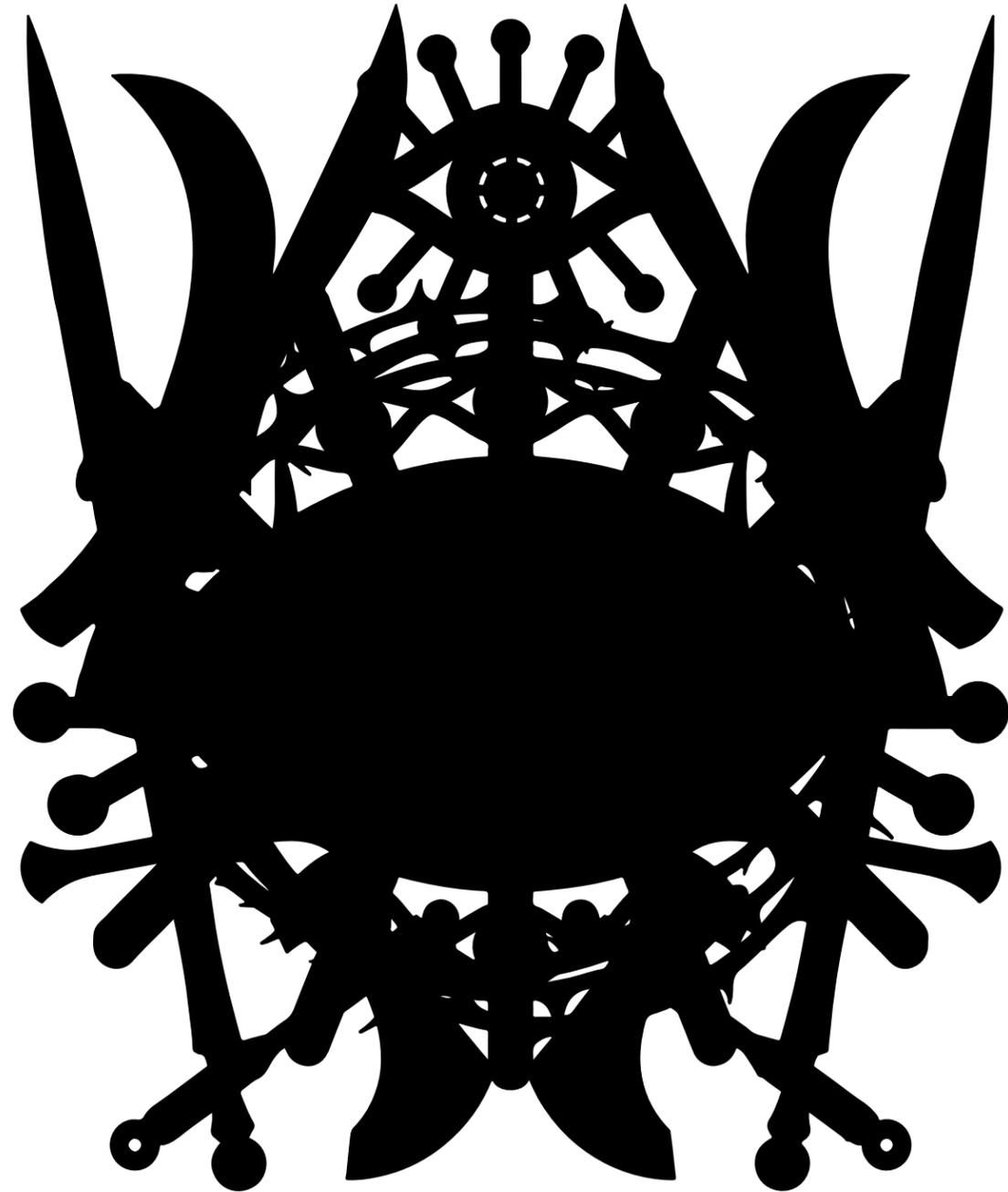
#### #1 <Summoned Metamorphosis - 2013. 9. 7>

Director Kim Jo Kwang-soo and Rainbow Factory CEO Kim Seung-hwan were successful in holding their same-sex wedding ceremony, undisturbed by the conservative Christian groups who had previously demonstrated opposition to it.

On September 7th, at the Gwangtong Bridge in Seoul, their ceremoniously titled "A Natural Wedding, on a Beautiful Day" unfolded. In an incredible show of goodwill, members of the Christian groups who had previously resisted the ceremony assembled to offer their congratulations and exchange cordial greetings with the newlyweds.

In the early hours of the day, Director Hong Ji-yoo shared, "At 2 am, preparations for the significant wedding of Kim Jo Kwang-soo and Kim Seung-hwan were well underway, with some Christian members even lending a hand to set up the wedding stage. They devoted two hours to this task, preparing for a congratulatory service that would continue until noon." She added, "The ceremony proceeded without disruption, with a multitude of individuals coming together to rejoice in the happy couple's union. Contrary to previous instances when the rights of sexual minorities were dismissed in the name of religion, this occasion was marked by widespread happiness and support for Kim Jo Kwang-soo and Kim Seung-hwan's wedding."

The absence of any requirement for police intervention further underscored the joyful atmosphere enveloping the same-sex wedding ceremony. The event, directed by Bae Myungjoo, Kim Taeyong, and Lee Hae-young, was not only a significant milestone for the LGBTQ+ rights movement in Korea but also a celebration of the legalization of same-sex marriage.



**#2 <Summoned Metamorphosis : 2020. 1. 23>**

Heesu Byun broke new ground as the first openly transgender soldier in Korea following her gender confirmation surgery in 2020. Byun's unwavering advocacy for her rights culminated in her receiving permission to resume her service in the military, marking her as Korea's first openly transgender soldier. Despite having faced discrimination as a sexual minority within the military in the past, Byun's accomplishment signifies a movement towards equitable compensation and opportunities for all service members, irrespective of their gender identity.

Historically, there have been numerous disclosed instances of discrimination against sexual minorities within the military. However, Korea has now marked a significant stride towards evolving into a more inclusive nation that values diversity and refrains from discriminatory practices against sexual minorities. The Human Rights Commission lauded Byun for her resilience and courage, acknowledging her as a contributor to societal progress with a commendation. This event signifies a pivotal milestone in the ongoing journey toward advancing LGBTQ+ rights in Korea.

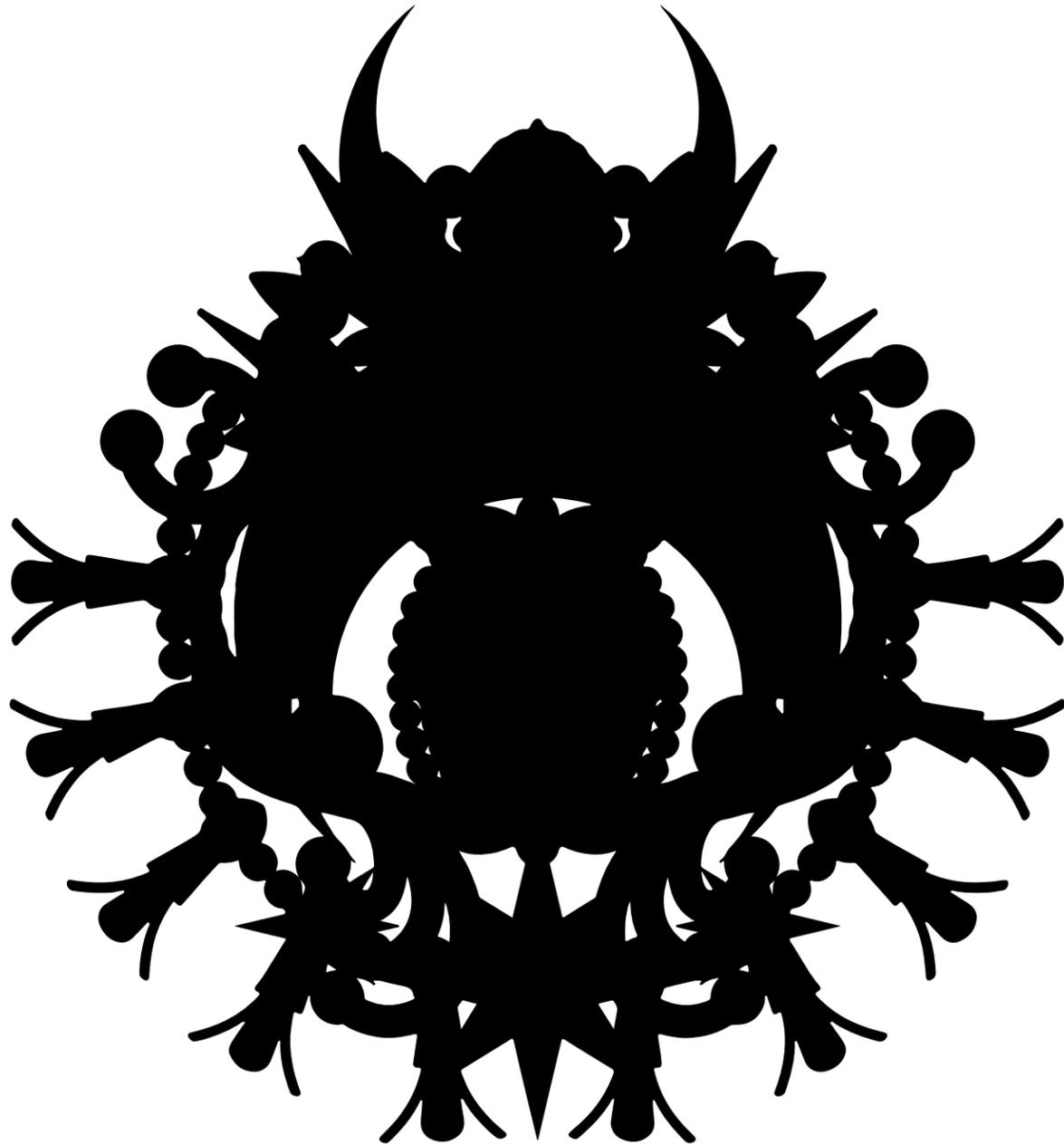


### #3 <Summoned Metamorphosis : 2022. 2. 10>

On February 10th, 2022, a landmark moment was marked in South Korea legislative history with the long-awaited enactment of the Anti-Discrimination Law. The legislative subcommittee of the National Legislation and Judiciary Committee took the lead in initiating deliberations on establishing the law. The ruling party underscored the crucial need to address this pervasive issue, a continuous topic of discourse among party officials for an extended duration.

The Legislation and Judiciary Committee subcommittee brought their rigorous review of the law to completion at the National Assembly. This led to a comprehensive debate on the Anti-Discrimination Law. The subcommittee duly acknowledged the persistence of diverse forms of discrimination in society, with varying factors such as gender, disability, or sexual orientation being the basis. The debate aimed to pinpoint potential legislative remedies to confront these pressing issues.

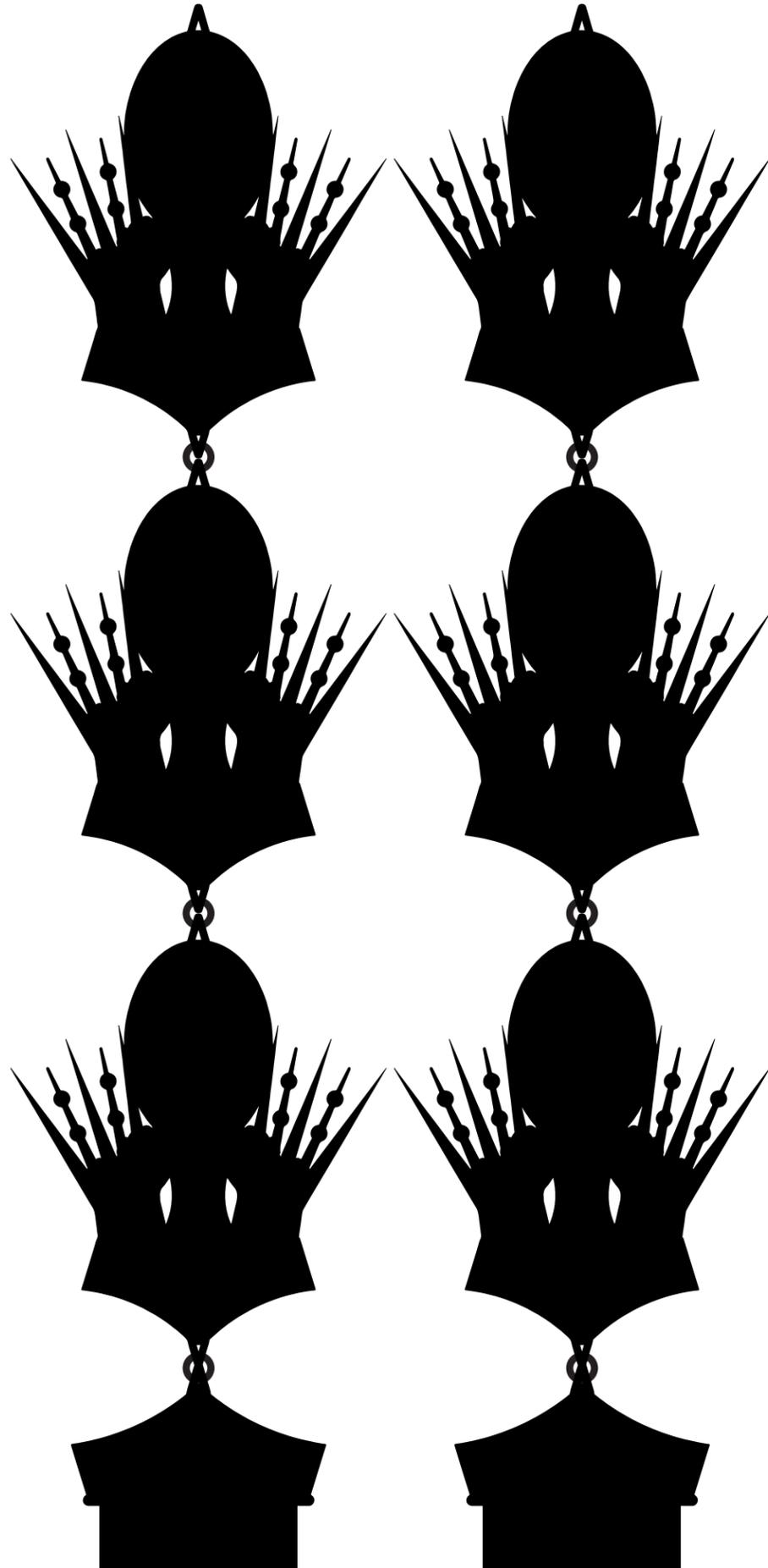
The Anti-Discrimination Act, first tabled as a legislative proposal by the Ministry of Justice during the Moo-hyun Roh administration in 2007, had been recurrently proposed in every National Assembly session after that. Nevertheless, due to persistent opposition from conservative Christian factions, its advancement was impeded for 15 years. Upon the law's eventual enactment, a broad spectrum of citizens, including sexual minorities, celebrated this significant achievement with fervor. This day was further immortalized as the Day of Anti-Discrimination, marking a milestone in the country's legislative progress toward equality.



#### #4 <Summoned Metamorphosis : 2020. 5. 7>

In early May, an outbreak of COVID-19 was reported at a club in Itaewon, Seoul. The first identified patient of this cluster infection, referred to as the "Yongin #66" case, had visited several prominent gay clubs in Itaewon. However, it is vital to underscore that the transmission of COVID-19, in this instance, was attributable to a failure to comply with sanitary regulations and not associated with the sexual orientation of the individuals involved.

In an interview with BBC Korea, Mr. Kim highlighted the absence of any negative societal perception directed at sexual minorities resulting from this incident. He underlined the necessity of strict adherence to sanitation regulations to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, emphasizing the importance of implementing robust public health measures rather than attributing blame to any specific group.



**#5 <Unvoids - 2016. 5. 17>**

On May 17, 2016, Mr. Kim (34) was arrested for targeting and fatally stabbing Ms. A (23), a stranger and a woman, multiple times in a public restroom at a bar near Gangnam Station in Seoul. In response to this gender-targeted crime, on May 20, 2016, protestors used post-it notes at Gangnam Station to express their outrage against crimes targeting women and demand justice for the victim.

**#6 <Unvoids - 2017. 8. 2>**

On August 2, 2017, the "Nth Room" case began, involving cybersex trafficking, sexually exploitative videos on the Telegram app, and blackmail targeting women, which continued for three years. On March 25, 2020, women organized a protest to condemn the ongoing crimes and demand justice for the victims affected by the case.

**#7 <Unvoids - 2018. 5. 19>**

Illegal filming crimes toward woman in South Korea have surged, with cases increasing nearly sixfold from 2010 to 2017, due in part to lenient punishments. In response to the growing issue, a protest was held on May 19, 2018, to demand action against hidden camera crimes and protect potential victims.

**#8 <Unvoids - 2018. 10. 19>**

The "Me Too" movement began in South Korea in 2016 following a sexual harassment case involving a female prosecutor and rapidly spread across the cultural sector. High-profile celebrities were accused of sexual violence, creating a unique atmosphere in the entertainment industry. In response to these revelations, a protest was held on October 19, 2018, demanding justice for victims and accountability for the accused.

**#9 <Unvoids- 2019. 1. 28>**

The 2019 Burning Sun scandal began with an alleged assault and rapidly grew to include prostitution, drug trafficking, and non-consensual filming. In response to these crimes, a protest was held at Hyejwa Station on March 2, 2019, condemning the perpetrators and demanding justice.

**#10 <Unvoids - 2023. 3. 8>**

As of 2021, South Korea had the largest gender wage gap among OECD countries at 31.1%, indicating that male workers earned 31.1% more than female workers. In response to this disparity, on March 8, 2023, International Women's Day, protests were held to demand improved working conditions and greater political representation for women.

Guided by this perspective, my artistic vision is designed to stimulate introspection and spark substantial dialogues that confront established societal discrimination. Through the prism of Beyond Magic: The Revolutionary Movement, I aim to cultivate empathy, foster comprehension, and ultimately drive societal advancement.

By spotlighting these issues and envisaging a world where affirmative change is the norm, I strive to galvanize others to participate in the movement toward a more inclusive and equitable society where each individual's inherent worth is recognized and they are esteemed for their authentic selves.

# JEWELRY, AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

## (1) Jewelry as a means of self-identification

Humans are animals who express their identity.

“The internal dynamic of fashion is also contained in the definition we have put forward: fashion is but a principle of social distinction and assimilation. In other words: fashion is a certain way of defining social affinities and, simultaneously, a way of defining ourselves as distinct among our peers. Indeed, while the impulse to create fashion follows from a desire to distinguish oneself from others, the impulse to follow fashion derives from a desire for belonging and social recognition.”

«By this, Kant understood the tendency to enter into society, combined, however, with a thoroughgoing resistance that constantly threatens to sunder this society! In other words, we experience the tendency to assimilate and, simultaneously, the tendency to distinguish ourselves from others is demonstrated by the introduction of novelties and originality.»

Immanuel Kant posits that while individuals should express their uniqueness, they also have to connect with others as part of a social collective. In this regard, fashion and clothing assume a crucial role, facilitating the articulation of one's identity and the creation of an ideal self-image. Moreover, through fashion, individuals can signal their social standing and wealth.

«Consumers do not so much ‘buy’ identity through their consumption of particular goods as ‘discover’ it by exposing themselves to a wide variety of products and experiences and then carefully monitoring their reactions to these as part of a process of coming to realize ‘who they really are’»

Echoing Karin's perspective, consumers do not simply “buy” their identity through their

acquisition of specific items. Instead, they “discover” it through immersing themselves in a broad array of products and experiences, and then scrutinizing their responses as part of an introspective journey towards self-realization.

Thus, fashion transcends its role as a mere medium for identity acquisition. It evolves into a tool for excavating one's authentic self through exposure to varied products and experiences while closely observing reactions to them. In essence, fashion presents a conduit for self-expression and the formation of personal identity. In a society where I was compelled to conceal my true identity, jewelry emerged as a medium for voicing my individuality.

Jewelry, its unique quality of being either authentic or mutable, affords me the platform to narrate a personal, sincere story. The process of curating, adorning, and creating jewelry has been meant to explore my fluid identity. It has also been a journey that has facilitated a deeper understanding of myself, my ambitions and a way to share my personal narratives with the broader society.

Jewelry's shapes, materials, and surface characteristics embody an individual's personality and identity. As we engage in the process of selecting and purchasing jewelry, we simultaneously embark on a voyage of self-discovery. Through this exploration, we investigate and realize our social aspirations, honing our self-image.

## 1. Drag as a medium for challenging social conformity and expressing identity

In the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance circa 1350 AD, societal attitudes experienced a profound shift. Fashion emerged as a pivotal instrument in molding the concept of individuality, inaugurating the idea of selfhood, and offering a medium for aesthetically expressing personal thoughts and experiences.

In this era, drag was perceived as a vibrant form of expressive art, providing a platform for the donning of extravagant attire. This mode of self-expression was characterized by a focus on candidly projecting one's identity and gender orientation to society, culminating in dramatic and overstated performances. The costumes and jewelry adopted by drag performers were often personalized, reflecting their unique identities. These outfits were not confined by any rules, and the abundant use of accessories further enhanced the overall impact of their performances.

In my perspective, drag represents a daring challenge to societal norms, inciting individuals to contemplate the importance of personal freedom and the oppression that has persisted in society. It provides a tool to dismantle the entrenched conformity that has long been prevalent, facilitating individuals to express themselves in vivid and colorful ways that resonate with their identities. Jewelry serves as a medium for self-expression, enabling me to unveil my identity to the world. My personally owned jewelry narrates a distinctive tale, showcasing my individuality and offering the liberty to express myself.

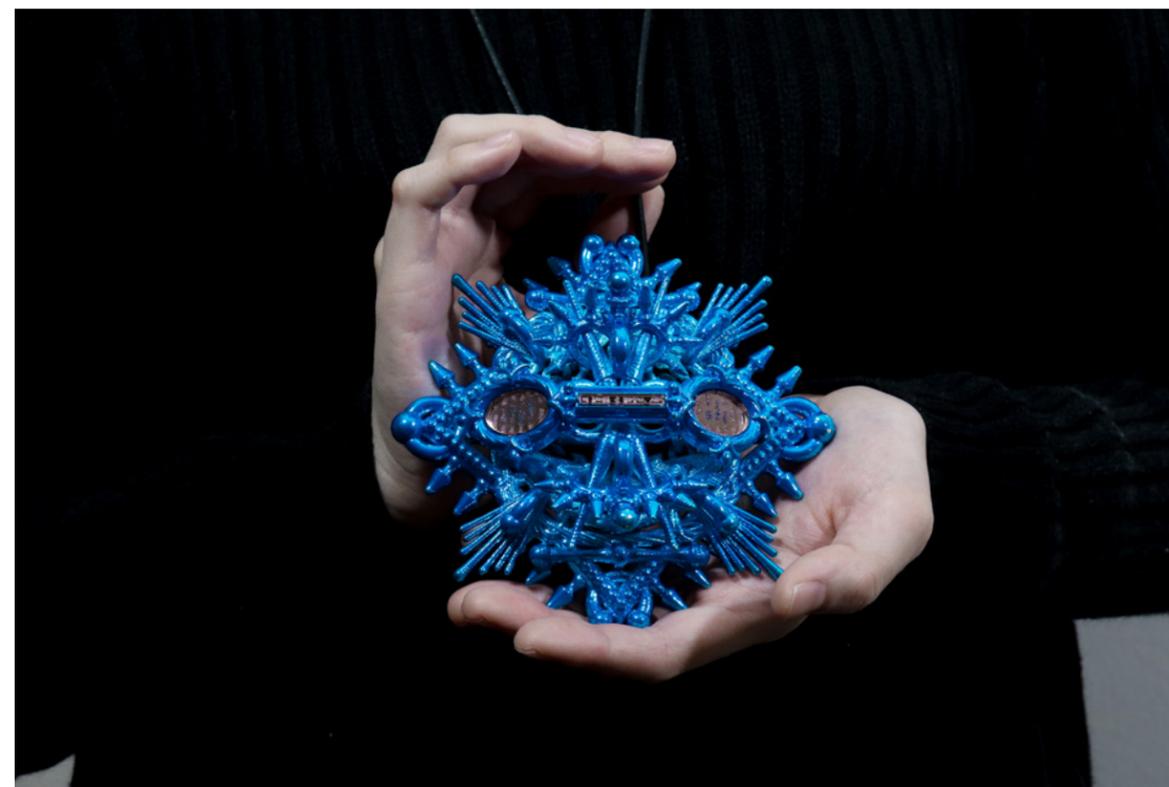
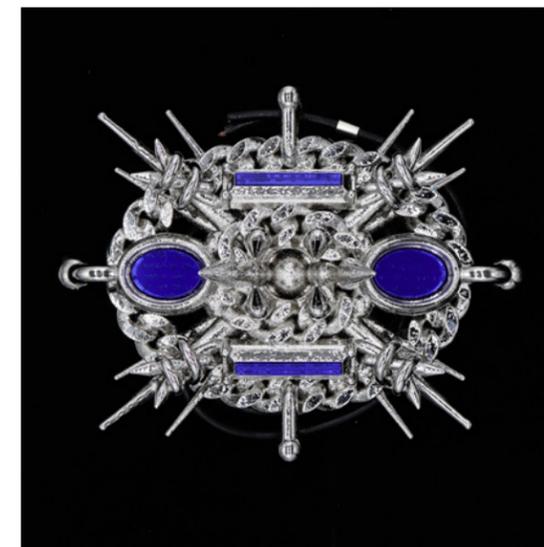
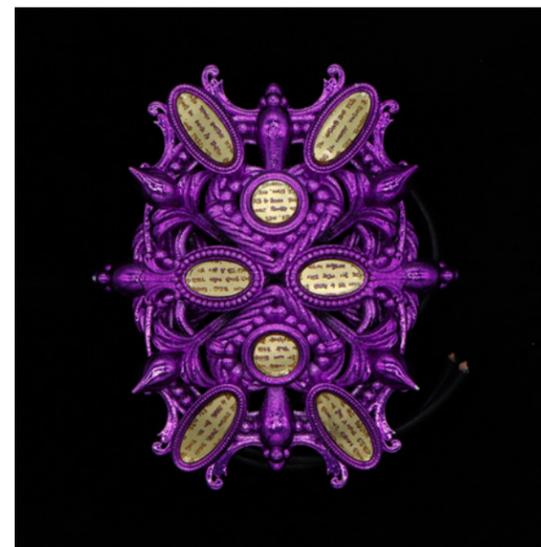
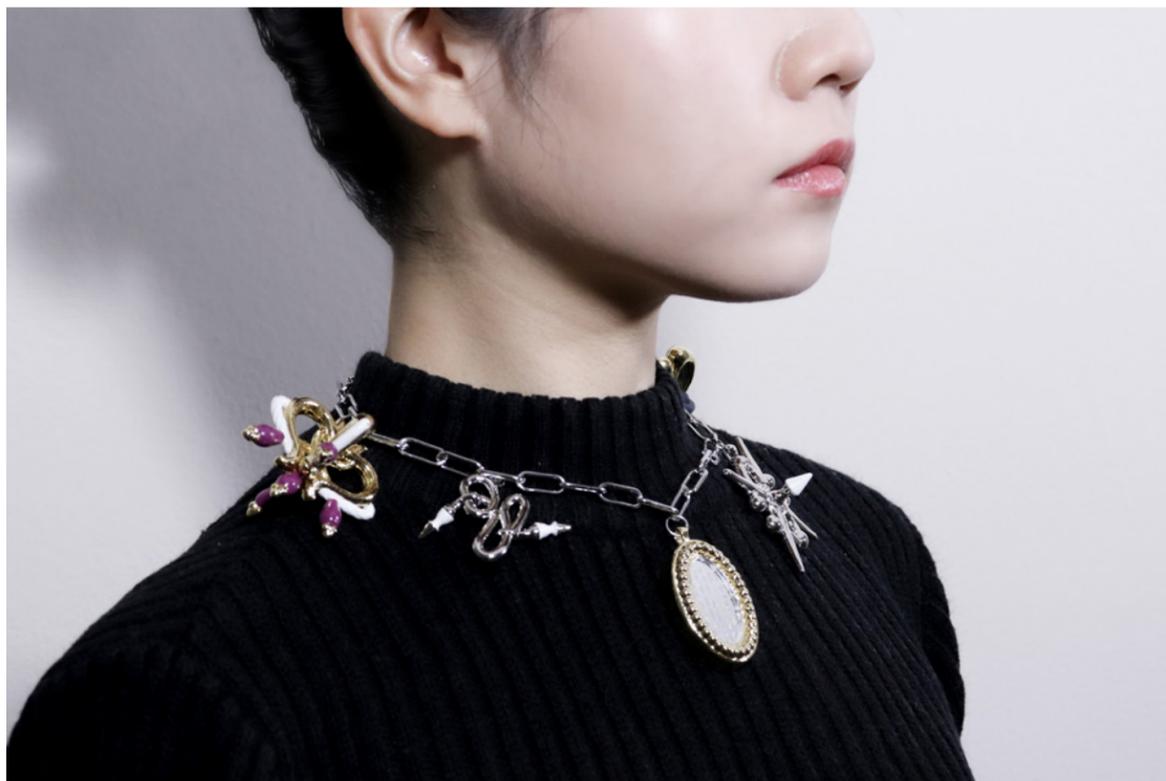
My previous work, the Charm+ing and Power Make Up!: Magical Amulet series, focused on the identity imbued within jewelry. Jewelry mirrors the wearer, providing personal narratives or symbols of status, thereby enhancing its intrinsic value. People use jewelry as a means to express themselves to society, which facilitates the discovery of different facets of their personality while also offering them freedom of expression. In this way, jewelry allows me to

incessantly question and discover who I am and the kind of influence I aspire to have on society. It also functions as a form of resistance against a conservative society and as a medium to unveil myself to the world.

The Power Make Up!: Magical Amulet collection features personally curated jewelry that has been transformed, exaggerated, and expressed as amulets to reflect my desires for society. The pieces “Enforcement,” “Confidence,” “Rebellion,” and “Disguise” within the collection were inspired by my jewelry, selected and worn based on their intended purpose. Subsequent works build on this concept, accentuating each element to craft distinct amulets that empower the individual.



Drag Artist : Kimchi  
Cosmopolitan 6. 20, 2019



**Charm + ing**  
2022, Silver, Gold Plating on Copper, Enamel Paint  
390x60x13, 390x55x40, 200x50x15 (mm)

**Power Make up! : Magical Amulet**  
2022, Silver, Gold Plating , Powder Coating on Copper  
120x120, 120x110, 130x100, 80x90 (mm)

## (2) Jewelry as a means of protest

Jewelry has long been recognized as a powerful means of conveying messages to society. Its intimate connection with the wearer's body and its public visibility allow jewelry to touch hearts and minds, influencing both individuals and society.

For example, suffragette jewelry was worn by British women's suffrage activists leading up to World War I. It served as a potent symbol of their dedication to the cause. This jewelry not only commanded respect for the activists but also fostered a sense of identity and facilitated communication among the suffragettes. The slogan "Votes for Women" was often embodied in suffragette jewelry, with gemstones such as amethyst, diamond, pearl, emerald, and peridot signifying the colors purple, white, and green.

Similarly, punk fashion, which originated in England in the mid-1970s, served as a vehicle to reject the perceived excesses of mainstream culture. Defined by its radical and daring style, punk fashion featured unconventional jewelry complemented by BDSM-inspired accessories, fishnets, studs, piercings, and spikes. This movement also defied traditional gender stereotypes, with women opting for chunky boots and black or ripped clothing in lieu of delicate or colorful attire. Today, punk fashion is perceived as a symbol of freedom and rebellion and has been integrated into mainstream fashion.

Beyond Magic: Revolutionary Unboxism, drawing inspiration from these movements, presents an innovative form of protest against societal issues and pays tribute to those who have challenged norms in the past. My work infuses jewelry with profound significance by integrating various symbols and tapping into historical events and movements to offer a fresh perspective. This initiative poses com-

pellent questions, such as: What if perspectives had been different? What if minorities had wielded more power? What if the outcome had been different?

These questions lie at the heart of Beyond Magic: Revolutionary Unboxism, which urges us to reassess our presuppositions and envisage a more promising future. By instigating us to question the status quo and explore new possibilities, it stimulates reflection on past events and kindles vital discussions about societal issues. By wearing pieces from the Beyond Magic: Revolutionary Unboxism series, individuals can endorse this cause and heighten awareness about pressing societal issues. Through sharing personal narratives and engaging in meaningful dialogues, Beyond Magic: Revolutionary Unboxism harbors the potential to catalyze positive transformations for individuals and society at large.



**Suffragette Lavalier Necklace**  
Circa 1915



**Punk Fashion**  
1960s

## JEWELRY AND MAGICAL POWER

### (1) History of magical girl animation

The magical girl, a distinct form of Japanese animation that originated in the 1960s, introduced a groundbreaking character archetype to the world of media: female figures with extraordinary powers who metamorphose into heroines, safeguarding the world from malevolent forces. This pioneering narrative approach presented a refreshing counterpoint to the prevailing male-dominated storylines of the era, showcasing empowered young women as central characters with their unique narratives. Over time, the genre has evolved, significantly shaped by notable series such as «Sally the Witch,» «Minky Momo,» and «Sailor Moon. These series have not only broadened the scope of the genre but have also addressed critical societal issues.

These magical girl series often incorporate unique transformation sequences, diverse character backgrounds, and innovative storytelling techniques. By deviating away from traditional gender roles and expectations, magical girl anime has influenced the portrayal of female characters in social media. Characters are portrayed in popular media. Moreover, it has reflected and reacted to societal values, beliefs, and challenges, including feminist movements and LGBTQ+ representation, integrating these into storylines and lines.

In addition to serving as captivating entertainment, the magical girl genre reflects the prevailing social and cultural climate of the times. For example, the emergence of «Sailor Moon” coincided with the emergence of the feminist movement in the United States and the Japanese asset price bubble that pervaded Japan in the 1990s. The series tackled themes such as gender equality and LGBTQ+ representation, concurrently addressing the widespread sense of insecurity prevalent at the time. By fostering hope and empowerment, the magical girl genre has evolved into an influential and enduring

cultural phenomenon, captivating and inspiring global audiences.

By drawing parallels to the magical girl animation, my role as a jewelry artist is deeply intertwined with themes of transformation and empowerment. A magical girl, seemingly ordinary at first, experiences a transformation, battling societal evils with the aid of a distinctive magical object. In a similar vein, I aim to embody the spirit of a magical girl, critically observing various societal issues, weaving these concerns into my works, and striving to foster positive change for those who wear my work pieces.

Jewelry holds the power to elicit emotions and memories in its wearer, but I believe it can also serve as a medium for communicating significant social messages and instigating change. My creations grapple with themes such as human rights, diversity, gender equality, and discrimination, endeavoring to leave a broader, positive imprint on society rather than merely focusing on aesthetics or motifs.

In the same manner that a magical girl transforms into a braver, more potent version of herself through her unique magical object, my creations assume a profound significance when worn. They become a beacon of my individuality and identity, bestowing upon me an enhanced sense of confidence.



**Sally the Witch**  
1966



**Magical Princess Minky Momo**  
1982



**Sailor Moon**  
1994

## (2) Jewelry and magic

Magical girl anime frequently features a magic wand or tool, which has become a common cliché in animation. These magic devices are integral to their characters, and it is seldom that a magical girl character is found without these objects. The origins of these magical objects can be traced back to the historical use of jewelry, which was traditionally employed as a symbol of status, power, or to accomplish a specific purpose or wish. Indeed, many magical girl anime objects have their roots in ancient jewelry designed for protection and good fortune.

For instance, the Claddagh ring, referenced in #1<Beyond Magic - September 7, 2013>, exemplifies the belief and potency of jewelry throughout history. The Claddagh ring, with its heart symbolizing love, the crown denoting loyalty, and the clasped hands signifying friendship, encapsulates the enchanting aspects of jewelry that have held people in thrall over centuries. Furthermore, this traditional Irish ring demonstrates the potential of jewelry to bestow a sense of strength and purpose upon its wearer.

Historically, jewelry has conveyed messages of power, protection, and enchantment. The Claddagh ring, steeped in symbolism and cultural significance, can serve as a wellspring of inner strength and empowerment. It serves as a reminder of the importance of love, loyalty, and friendship, inspiring the wearer to uphold these values and confront life's challenges with courage and fortitude.

Featured prominently in #2 <Beyond Magic - 2020. 5>, the Naja is a captivating design element found in jewelry from the American Southwest. Derived from the Navajo word for «crescent moon,» this inverted crescent shape

is often the central ornament in Native American squash blossom necklaces. Traditionally, the Naja symbolizes protection.

The Naja jewelry embodies the resilience of the Diné (Navajo) people, who have endured severe adversities. It represents the transformation of despair into beauty, a rise from the ashes, and the symbolism of fertility and new life. Throughout history, the Naja has been esteemed as an emblem of wealth and bravery.

The squash blossom necklace, featuring the Naja motif, holds significant cultural value. This unique design epitomizes artistic expression by being incorporated as the central element in necklaces while reflecting the profound symbolism embedded in jewelry across different cultures and eras.

Another example is the Turkish amulet known as the Nazar Boncuk. This amulet features a flat, vibrant blue glass bead fashioned to resemble an eye. Traditionally, in Turkey, eyes of distinct colors, particularly blue and yellow, were believed to have the ability to discern a person's thoughts or hidden intentions. The Nazar Boncuk symbolizes the «evil eye,» representing harmful energy, but its purpose is to deflect ill intentions and safeguard its owner from malevolent forces or individuals. The Nazar Boncuk thus stands as a powerful testament to the protective and magical qualities that jewelry can possess.

Distinct from other art forms, jewelry is an expressive medium that captures the essence of human hopes and aspirations. It allows individuals to manifest their dreams and visualize yet-to-be-realized situations. By acting as a navigational tool, jewelry guides wearers toward their chosen paths, serving as a steadfast symbol of faith and hope. In this sense, jewelry can be compared to a magical compass. It symbolizes the relentless pursuit of life, the exploration of an unfulfilled future, and an examination of one's present reality, making it a profound testament to the human condition.

Extending this concept into my work, Beyond Magic, I endeavor to infuse each piece with a dynamic energy that confronts past injustices and prejudices. I leverage the symbolism and significance of jewelry as a conduit for expression and empowerment, transforming each piece into a beacon of resistance against forces that strive to limit and control us. Channeling jewelry's transformative and potent essence, I aspire to inspire others to don the mantle of the «magical girl,» a formidable warrior who defies convention and staunchly advocates for justice. Beyond Magic transcends being a mere jewelry collection; it embodies a manifesto for change, a rallying cry for those who reject societal norms and refuse to be confined by their gender or societal expectations.



**A Claddagh ring**  
1700, made by the goldsmith Richard Joyce  
Galway City Museum



**Navajo Squash blossom necklace**  
1915-1925, Silver Gift of Ms. Jacqueline Eidel, NA-SW-NA-J-737 Photo: Heard Museum, Craig Smith

## CONCLUSION

### Beyond Magic

The transformational magic inherent in jewelry has always held a unique allure for me. By acting as a reflection of the wearer, jewelry offers a distinct avenue for personal expression and narrative, enabling us to transcend societal norms and explore novel facets of our identities. It catalyzes self-discovery, prompting us to question our place in the world and the impact we aspire to make. To me, jewelry transcends the realm of mere ornamentation; it becomes an instrument for personal evolution and emancipation, unlocking the latent potential within each individual.

As a contemporary jewelry artist, I draw profound inspiration from the transformative power of jewelry within traditionally conservative societies. I see jewelry as a compelling catalyst for significant societal change, enabling individuals to fully embrace their authentic selves and express their innermost thoughts and feelings. My creations are designed not only to challenge established norms and transcend societal gender and sexual constraints but also to provide aesthetically pleasing jewelry while empowering the wearer to forge their unique path. Furthermore, my work serves as a powerful critique against the persistent gender and sexual discrimination prevalent in our society, raising probing questions about these systemic injustices.

This thesis seeks to bridge the divide between personal expression and broader societal impact, exploring the multifaceted role of jewelry as a medium for challenging societal norms, fostering personal growth, and engendering social change. Drawing inspiration from magical girl anime and the historical significance of jewelry, I underscore the potent capacity of these art forms to dismantle ingrained societal discrimination. My work, Beyond Magic, showcases pieces that directly confront historical injustices and prejudices. Each creation is created not only as a physical adornment but also as a tangible manifesto advocating change and serving as a rallying cry for those who resist societal limitations.

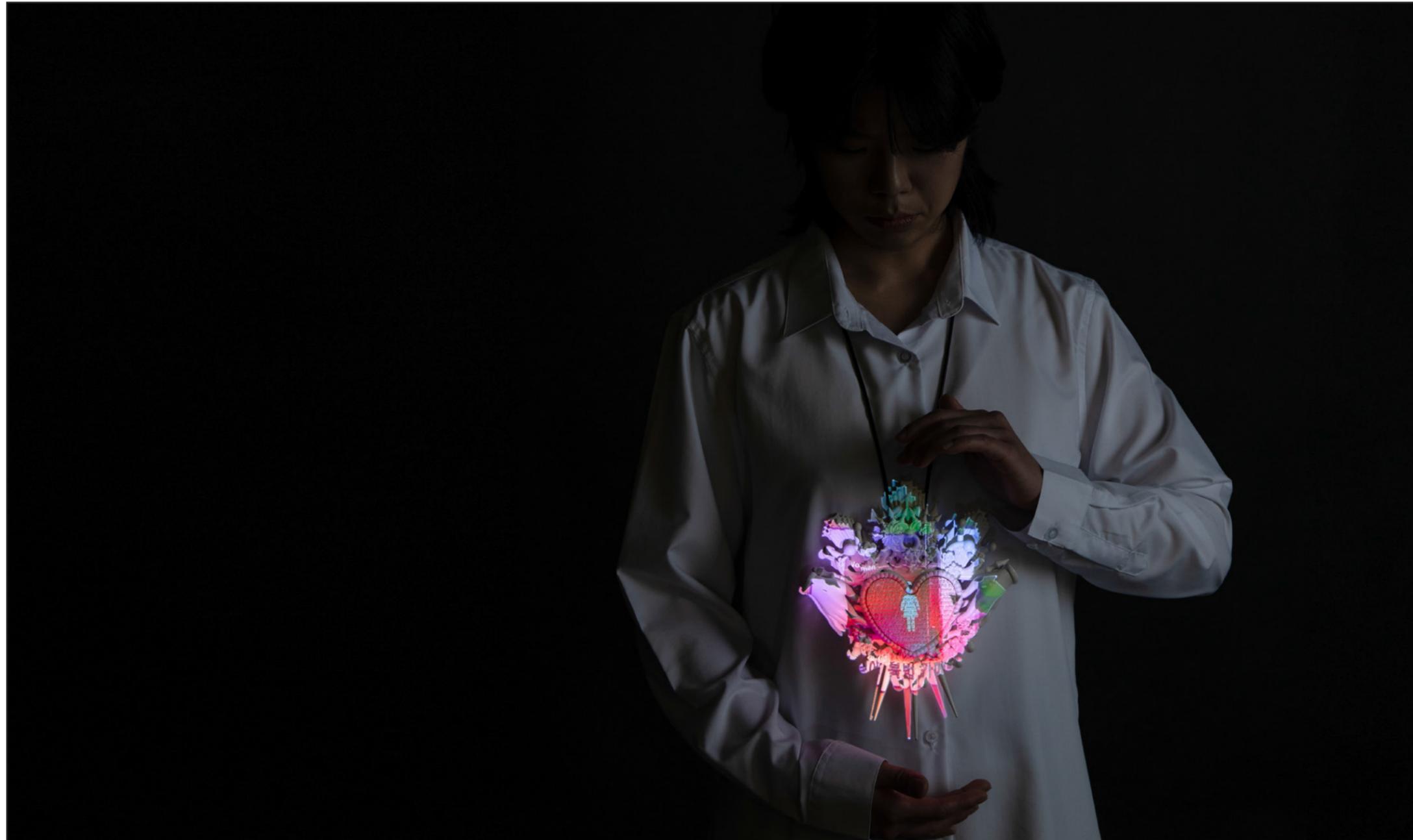
My research delves into the roots of gender discrimination in Korea and examines the cultural and symbolic importance of various jewelry pieces, such as the Claddagh ring, Naja, and Nazar Boncuk. This exploration underscores the value of jewelry in expressing individual identity and promoting personal growth. I aspire for my work to provoke introspection, spark dialogue, and inspire others to join the movement toward a more inclusive and equitable society.

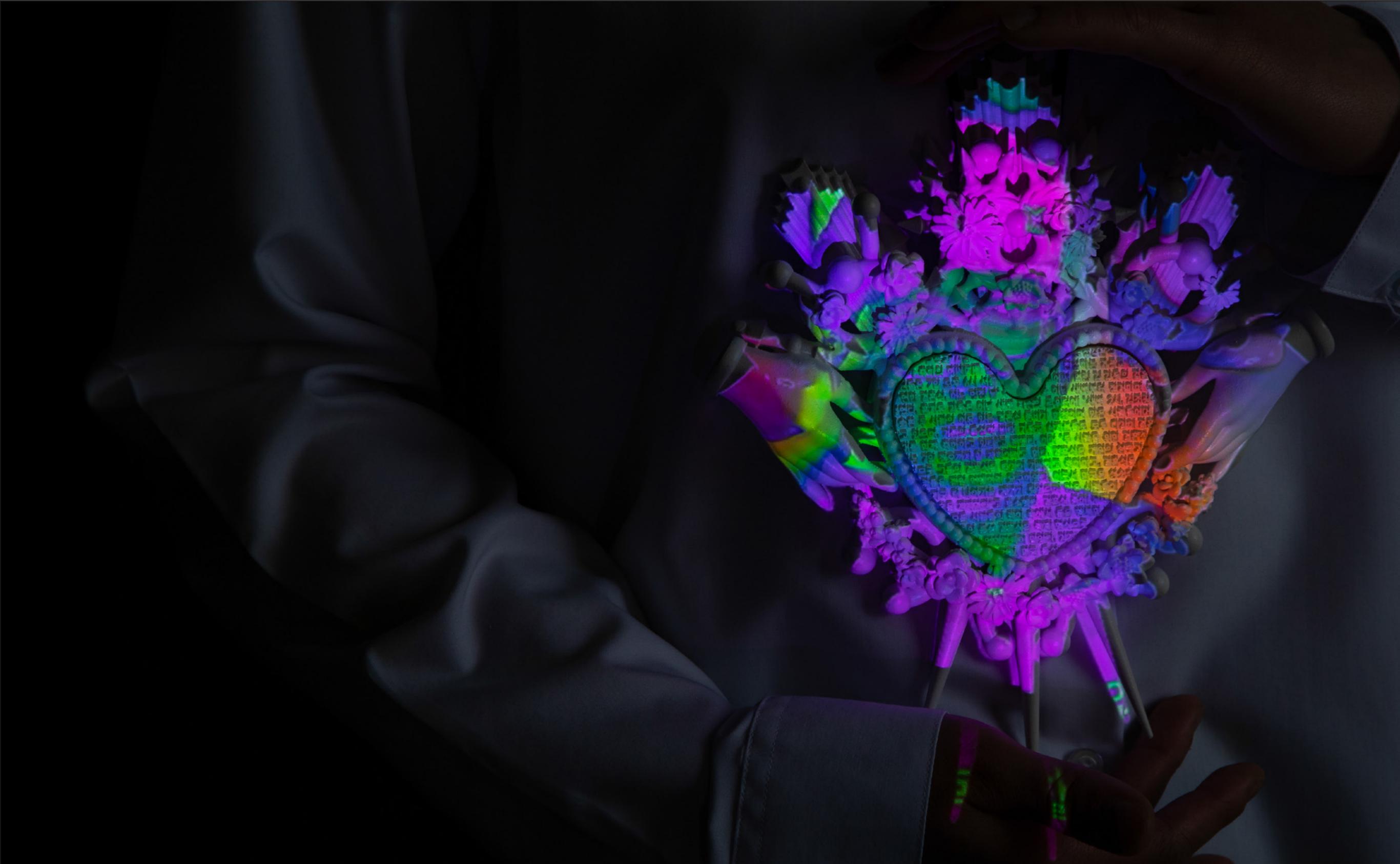
This work ultimately contributes to a deeper understanding of jewelry's role as an agent of change and its potential to engender a more inclusive and equitable world. The transformative power is not confined to the realms of magical girl anime but also resonates in the hands of those daring enough to challenge the status quo and envision a more inclusive society. As a contemporary jewelry artist, my commitment remains firm to harness this transformative power, creating pieces that inspire change and promote inclusivity. My work will continue to challenge societal norms, empower individuals, and ignite conversations fostering greater understanding and appreciation for diversity.

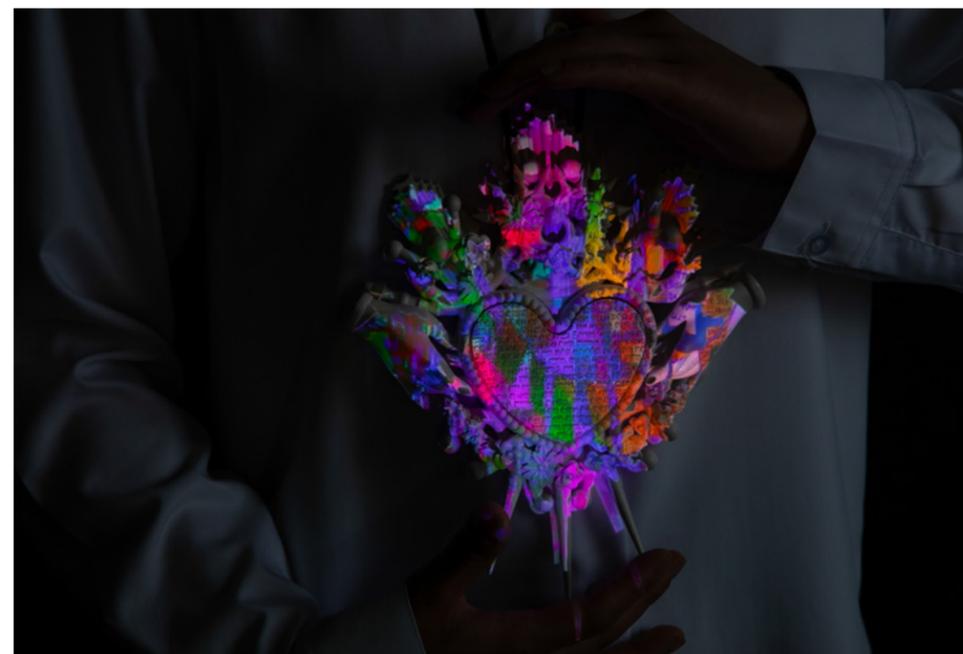
# 01

## Beyond Magic

<Beyond Magic, 2023, Copper on Lacquer, Cord,  
Video(7min), 19 x 23 x 3(cm)>







**Beyond Magic**  
**2023**  
Video(7min), Copper on Lacquer, Cord,  
19 x 23 x 3(cm)

# 02

## UNVOIDS

<Unvoids, 2023, Copper on Lacquer, Plexiglass,  
Mirror, Fabric, 14 x 280 x 2.5(cm)>







**Unvoid**

2023

Copper on Lacquer, Plexiglass, Mirror, Fabric

14 x 280 x 2.5(cm)





**Unvoid**  
2023  
Copper on Lacquer, Plexi Glass, Mirror, Fabric  
14 x 280 x 2.5(cm)

# 03

## Summoned Metamorphosis : 2013.9.7

<Summoned Metamorphosis : 2013.9.7 Copper on Lacquer, Cord, 19 x 23 x 3(cm)>

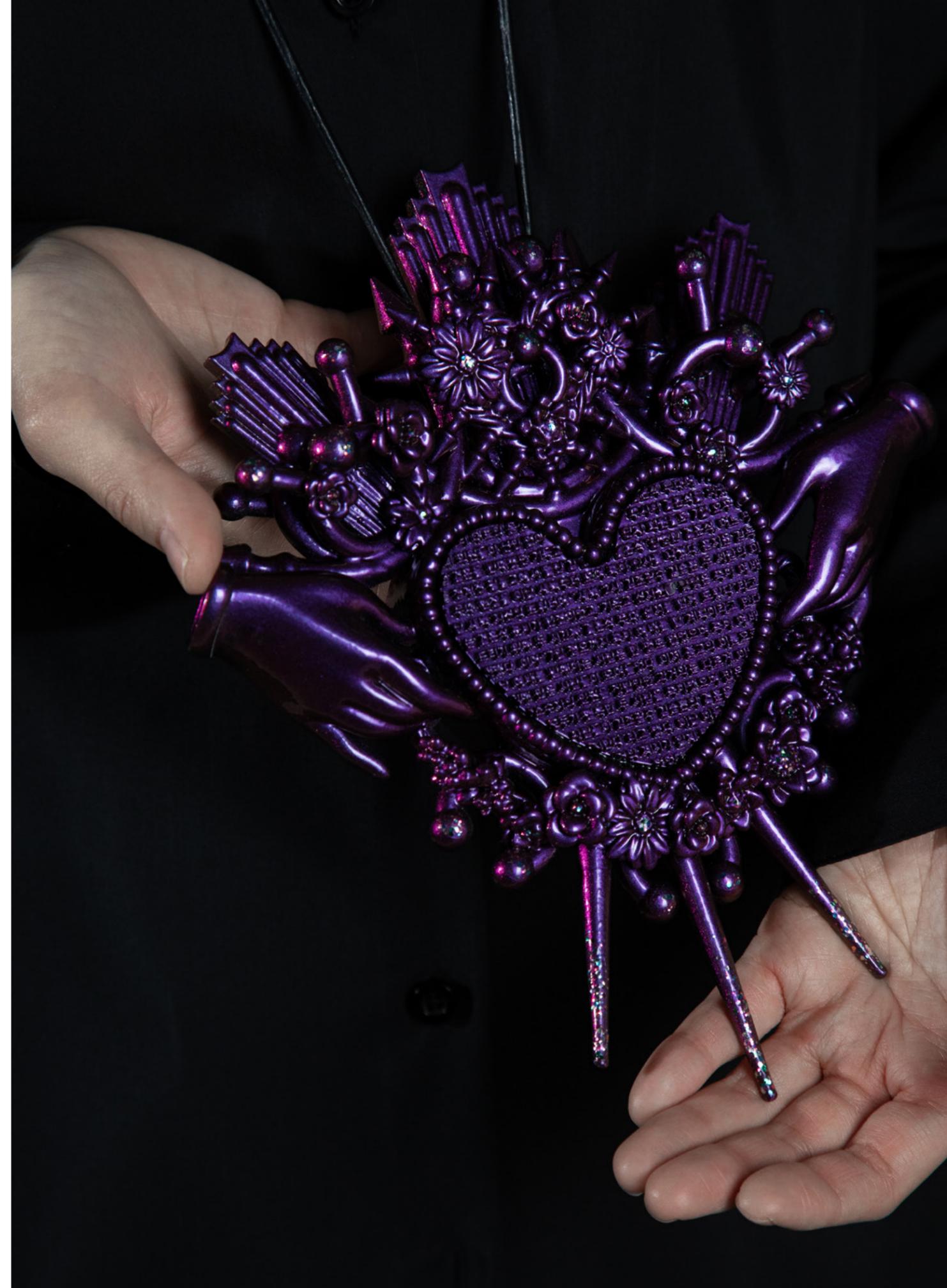
### #1 <Summoned Metamorphosis : 2013. 9. 7>

Director Kim Jo Kwang-soo and Rainbow Factory CEO Kim Seung-hwan were successful in holding their same-sex wedding ceremony, undisturbed by the conservative Christian groups who had previously demonstrated opposition to it.

On September 7th, at the Gwangtong Bridge in Seoul, their ceremoniously titled "A Natural Wedding, on a Beautiful Day" unfolded. In an incredible show of goodwill, members of the Christian groups who had previously resisted the ceremony assembled to offer their congratulations and exchange cordial greetings with the newlyweds.

In the early hours of the day, Director Hong Ji-yoo shared, "At 2 am, preparations for the significant wedding of Kim Jo Kwang-soo and Kim Seung-hwan were well underway, with some Christian members even lending a hand to set up the wedding stage. They devoted two hours to this task, preparing for a congratulatory service that would continue until noon." She added, "The ceremony proceeded without disruption, with a multitude of individuals coming together to rejoice in the happy couple's union. Contrary to previous instances when the rights of sexual minorities were dismissed in the name of religion, this occasion was marked by widespread happiness and support for Kim Jo Kwang-soo and Kim Seung-hwan's wedding."

The absence of any requirement for police intervention further underscored the joyful atmosphere enveloping the same-sex wedding ceremony. The event, directed by Bae Myungjoo, Kim Taeyong, and Lee Hae-young, was not only a significant milestone for the LGBTQ+ rights movement in Korea but also a celebration of the legalization of same-sex marriage.







**Summoned Metamorphosis : 2013. 9. 7**  
2023  
Copper on Lacquer, Cord  
19 x 23 x 3(cm)

# 04

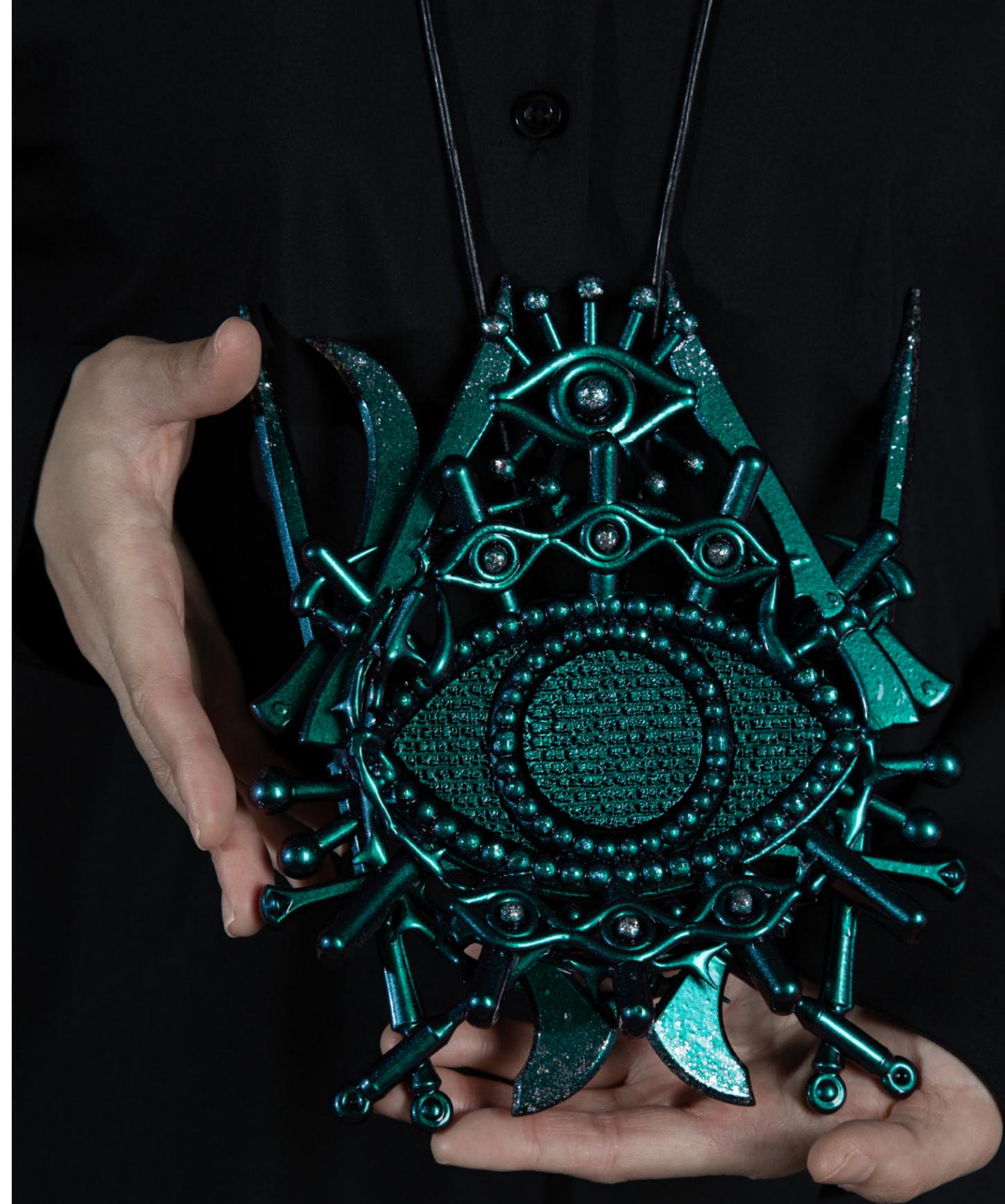
## Summoned Metamorphosis : 2020.1.23

<Summoned Metamorphosis : 2020.1.23  
Copper on Lacquer, Cord, 18 x 21 x 5(cm)>

### #2 <Summoned Metamorphosis : 2020. 1. 23>

Heesu Byun broke new ground as the first openly transgender soldier in Korea following her gender confirmation surgery in 2020. Byun's unwavering advocacy for her rights culminated in her receiving permission to resume her service in the military, marking her as Korea's first openly transgender soldier. Despite having faced discrimination as a sexual minority within the military in the past, Byun's accomplishment signifies a movement towards equitable compensation and opportunities for all service members, irrespective of their gender identity.

Historically, there have been numerous disclosed instances of discrimination against sexual minorities within the military. However, Korea has now marked a significant stride towards evolving into a more inclusive nation that values diversity and refrains from discriminatory practices against sexual minorities. The Human Rights Commission lauded Byun for her resilience and courage, acknowledging her as a contributor to societal progress with a commendation. This event signifies a pivotal milestone in the ongoing journey toward advancing LGBTQ+ rights in Korea.







**Summoned Metamorphosis : 2020. 1. 23**  
2023  
Copper on Lacquer, Cord  
18 x 21 x 5(cm)

# 05

## Summoned Metamorphosis : 2022.2.10

<Summoned Metamorphosis : 2022.2.10 Copper on  
Lacquer, Cord, 20 x 23 x 5(cm)>

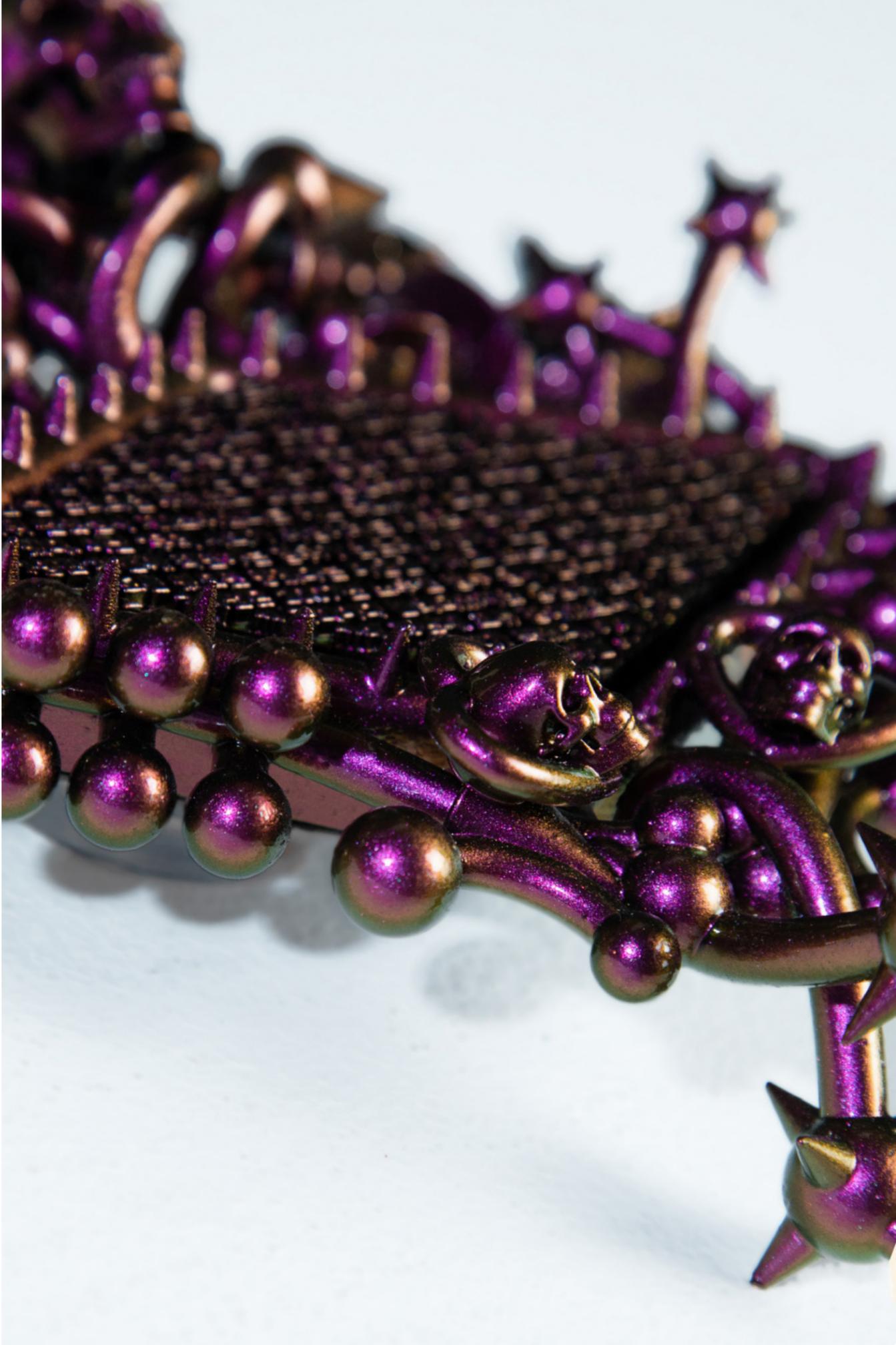
### #3 <Summoned Metamorphosis : 2022. 2. 10>

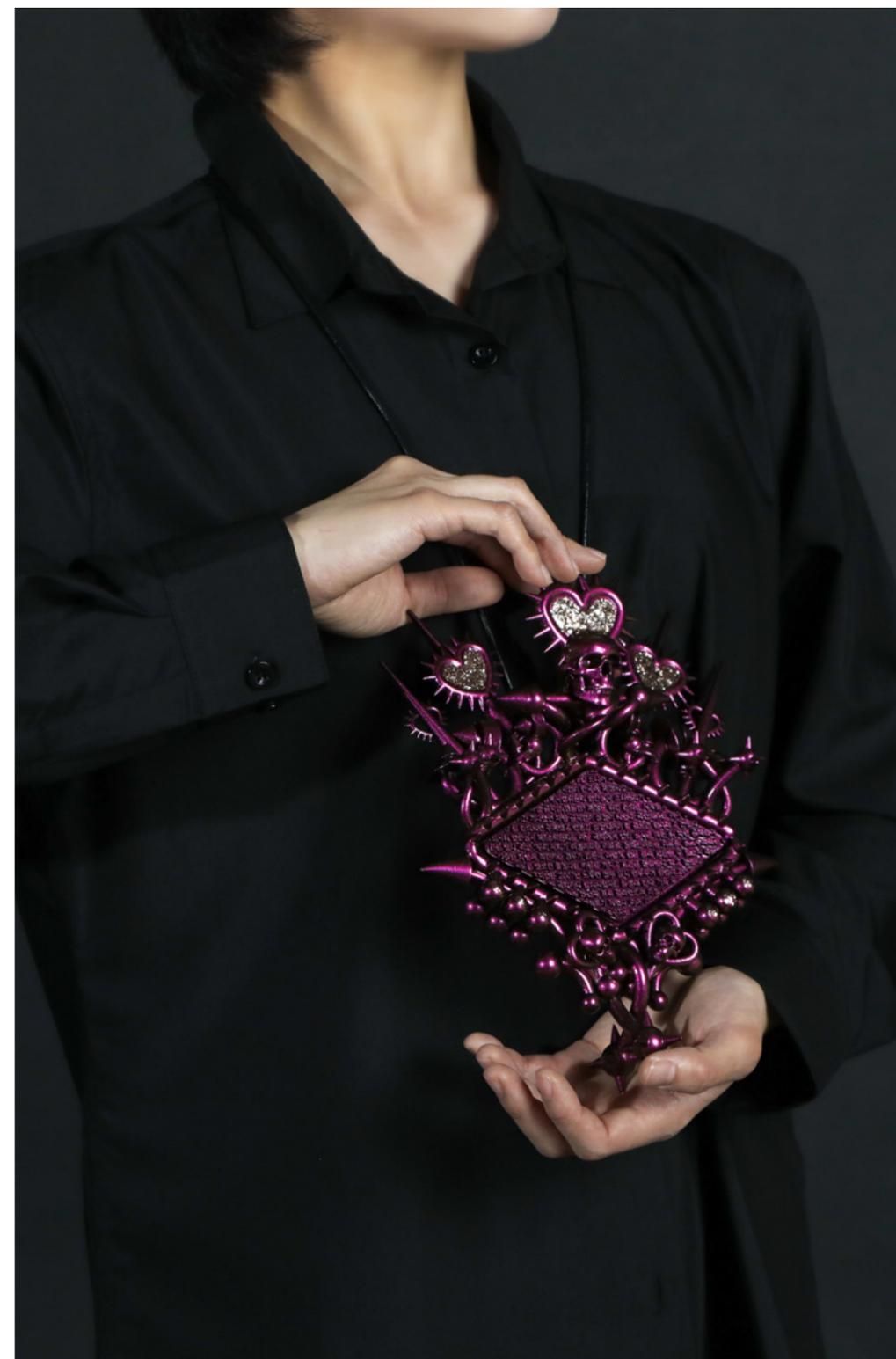
On February 10, 2022, a landmark moment was marked in South Korea legislative history with the long-awaited enactment of the Anti-Discrimination Law. The legislative subcommittee of the National Legislation and Judiciary Committee took the lead in initiating deliberations on establishing the law. The ruling party underscored the crucial need to address this pervasive issue, a continuous topic of discourse among party officials for an extended duration.

The Legislation and Judiciary Committee subcommittee brought their rigorous review of the law to completion at the National Assembly. This led to a comprehensive debate on the Anti-Discrimination Law. The subcommittee duly acknowledged the persistence of diverse forms of discrimination in society, with varying factors such as gender, disability, or sexual orientation being the basis. The debate aimed to pinpoint potential legislative remedies to confront these pressing issues.

The Anti-Discrimination Act, first tabled as a legislative proposal by the Ministry of Justice during the Moo-hyun Roh administration in 2007, had been recurrently proposed in every National Assembly session after that. Nevertheless, due to persistent opposition from conservative Christian factions, its advancement was impeded for 15 years. Upon the law's eventual enactment, a broad spectrum of citizens, including sexual minorities, celebrated this significant achievement with fervor. This day was further immortalized as the Day of Anti-Discrimination, marking a milestone in the country's legislative progress toward equality.







**Summoned Metamorphosis : 2022. 2. 10**  
2023  
Copper on Lacquer, Chord  
20 x 23 x 5(cm)

# 06

## Summoned Metamorphosis : 2020.5.7

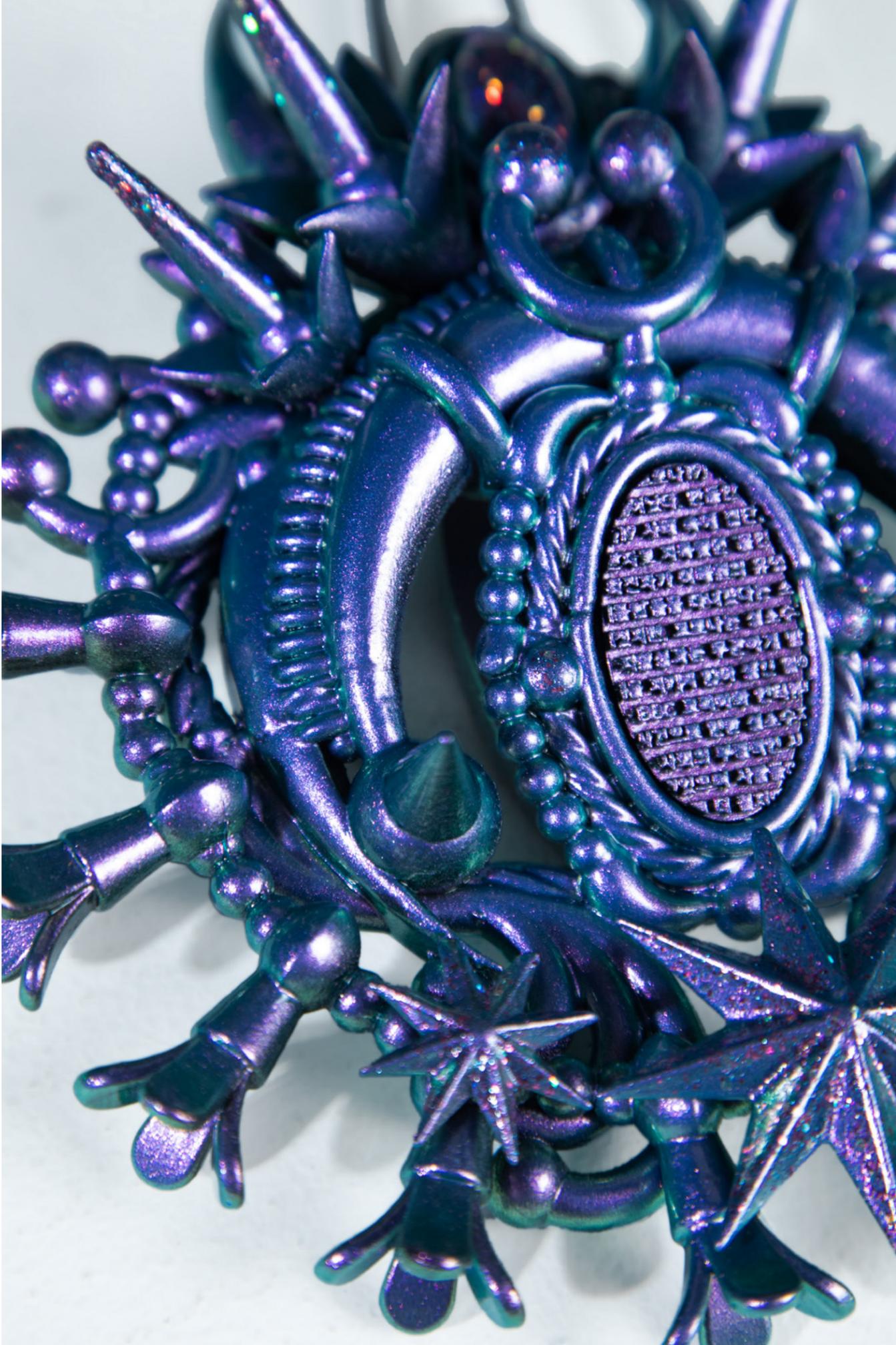
<Summoned Metamorphosis : 2020.5.7  
Copper on Lacquer, Cord, 19 x 21 x 5(cm)>

### #4 <Summoned Metamorphosis : 2020. 5. 7>

In early May, an outbreak of COVID-19 was reported at a club in Itaewon, Seoul. The first identified patient of this cluster infection, referred to as the "Yongin #66" case, had visited several prominent gay clubs in Itaewon. However, it is vital to underscore that the transmission of COVID-19, in this instance, was attributable to a failure to comply with sanitary regulations and not associated with the sexual orientation of the individuals involved.

In an interview with BBC Korea, Mr. Kim highlighted the absence of any negative societal perception directed at sexual minorities resulting from this incident. He underlined the necessity of strict adherence to sanitation regulations to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, emphasizing the importance of implementing robust public health measures rather than attributing blame to any specific group.







**Summoned Metamorphosis : 2020. 5. 7**  
2023  
Copper on Lacquer, Cord  
19 x 21 x 5(cm)

# 07

## Documentation

This project focuses on creating a refined photographic documentation collection, capturing and analyzing images of individuals sporting «Beyond Magic» in public spaces.

The primary objective is to showcase «Beyond Magic» in everyday settings while sharing the unique experiences of those who wear these works. In addition, this visually engaging documentation aims to provide meaningful and purposeful insights into the world of «Beyond Magic.»



















**2023**  
**5.10**

**Photographer :**  
Heeyoung Cha

**Model :** Soeun Bae  
Weixin Wang  
Sigrid Yu

“If, due to your body experience, you have never had a question how the world looks at your race, class, ethnicity, gender, body, or if that has never impacted the way the world identifies your work, you should know this is privileged experience”

**Decolonization as care (2016)**  
**Uzma Z. Rizvi**



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## Beyond Magic : Revolutionary Unboxim

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Jewelry + Metalsmithing at Rhode  
Island School of Design in Providence, Rhode Islands.

By Yujeong Han  
Rhode Island School of Design, 2023

Approved by the Master's Examination Committee

**Timothy Veske-McMahon**

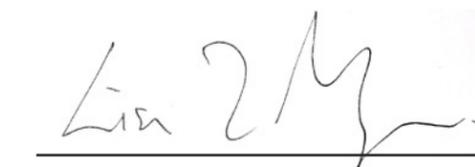
Department of Jewelry + Metalsmithing  
Graduate Advisor  
Thesis Committee Chair



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**Lisa Z. Morgan**

Department Head of Apparel  
Thesis Committee Advisor



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**Jamall Osterholm**

Department of Apparel  
Guest Critic



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## Acknowledgements

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my RISD professor and my cohort.

### Professors

Tracy Steepy  
Timothy Veske-McMahon  
Seth Papac  
Brian Bergeron  
Lauren Fensterstock

### Photographer

Heeyoung Cha

### Model

Soeun Bae  
Weixin Wang  
Sigrid Yu

### Peers

Oi Ying Valerie Ho  
Qianwen Lu  
Fei Gao  
Ayesha Mohyuddin  
Meixian Li  
Chongxiao Zhang  
Weixin Wang  
Xiaodai Huang  
Fangjun Liu  
Yarina Dai  
Sigrid Yu  
Yuta Yang

### Special Thanks

Isabel Mattia  
Anne West



