

**Born**

1957, Taegu, South Korea

Education

BFA, MA, Hong-ik University, Seoul

Lives and Works

New York, NY

About the Artist

Kimsooja's videos and installations blur the boundaries between **aesthetics** and transcendent experience through their use of repetitive actions, meditative practices, and serial forms. In many pieces, everyday actions—such as sewing or doing laundry—become two- and three-dimensional or performative activities. Central to her work is the *bottari*, a bundle traditionally used by Koreans to wrap and protect personal belongings, which Kimsooja transforms into a philosophical **metaphor** for structure and connection. In videos that feature her in various personas (Needle Woman, Beggar Woman, Homeless Woman), she leads us to reflect on the human condition, offering open-ended perspectives through which she presents and questions reality. Using her own body, facing away from the camera, Kimsooja becomes a void; we literally see and respond through her. While striking for their vibrant color and density of imagery, Kimsooja's works emphasize **metaphysical** changes within the artist-as-performer as well as the viewer.

Teaching Connections**Media and Materials**

installation, performance, sculpture, **textiles**, video

Key Words and Ideas

culture, nature, nomadism, **social sculpture**, **symbolism**, **transcendence**

Related Artists

Janine Antoni, Cai Guo Qiang, Ann Hamilton, Roni Horn, James Turrell

For me, all the questions I have personally or professionally as an artist are always linked to life itself. I see art in life and life as an art, and I can't separate one from another.

DISCUSS**Before Viewing**

■ Define and discuss the word **transcendence**. What kinds of experiences are transcendent? Can art be transcendent? How? Why?

■ Consider the terms *traditional sculpture* and *social sculpture*. What forms might these types of sculpture take? Look at examples of contemporary and historic sculpture. How do they relate to or challenge the categories of traditional and **social sculpture**?

While Viewing

■ Kimsooja is physically present in many of her projects and speaks specifically about using her body to become Needle Woman. How does she do this? Why do you think she chose the **metaphor** of a needle?

■ What associations do you make with Kimsooja's work? Consider specific artworks featured in this segment in relation to your own ideas, experiences, and memories.

After Viewing

■ Kimsooja talks about the importance of the *bottari* (the Korean word for a bundle used to transport belongings or goods) in her work. She also describes her installation at the Crystal Palace as "a bottari of light and sound and reflection." Discuss this metaphor.



Cities on the Move—Bottari Truck, 2000. 2½ ton truck stacked with bottaris. Installation at Rodin Gallery, Seoul. Photo: Kim Hyunsoo, courtesy Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul.

■ In what ways is Kimsooja's work transcendent? Kimsooja says that she always tries to find the **transcendent** moment and space within her work. Does she achieve her goal? How?

CREATE

■ Create a video or series of photographic images that describe how you see yourself in relation to your school, community, city, or country.

■ Assemble a unique collection of objects that reflect aspects of your daily life and use them to form a sculpture or installation. Write a brief description of each object's significance to you and describe how they all contribute to the finished artwork.



To Breathe—A Mirror Woman, 2006. Diffraction grating film, mirror, and sound performance piece by the artist from *The Weaving Factory*, 2004. Installation at The Crystal Palace, Madrid. Photo: Jaehe Chong, © Kimsooja, courtesy the artist and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid.