

OKSUN KIM NATURE PROVIDES IDENTITY

Palms, cacti, shrubbery, hedges— Oskun Kim's trees stand there like monolithic figures in lush green; they are unique, and yet all have a common history.

Berlin, August 16, 2018 – There is something resilient about a tree. And although it is deeply rooted in the earth, still it provides no information about its origins. In her illustrated book *Jeju Island* the artist Oksun Kim (*1967)—whose work persistently deals with questions of identity and homeland—has turned the trees on the island of Jeju-do into the protagonists of her photographs.

“The way in which KIM looks at the trees of Jeju is tight. With an abundant demonstration of detail and midtones, she faces the trees squarely and wholly. It is about preparing a space, at least for this given moment, where they unfailingly become the lead character, even if they were to leave soon after,” explains Suejin Shin, the artistic director of the Dong Gang International Photo Festival.

Kim knows these trees well; she herself spent twenty years of her life on the island of Jeju-do, which lies in the southernmost corner of the Korean peninsula. A volcanic island with subtropical nature, it is a popular tourist destination. Here, KIM saw tourists come and go; some stayed forever, and strangers became acquaintances. She took on the task of documenting the immigrant population in photographs, turning it into a project about homeland, about new and old identities. Today, trees have replaced people, for, in a certain sense, they are also immigrants. They were introduced to the island so that their exotic presence would enrich the flora and fauna of Jeju-do.

Oksun Kim won the Ilwoo Foundation prize for her book *The Shining Things*. *Jeju Island* is a lavish edition of this series, presenting the photographs in a high-quality format in opulent Japanese binding.



**OKSUN KIM
JEJU ISLAND**

Hrsg. ILWOO Foundation, Vorwort von Suejin Shin, Gestaltung von Greige. Mark Kiessling, Birthe Haas, Berlin

Englisch

2018. 176 Seiten, 56 Abb.

Hardcover mit japanischer Bindung

23,00 x 28,00 cm

ISBN 978-3-7757-4457-7

45,00 EUR

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PRESS CONTACT

Jennifer Berndt

PR Manager

presse@hatjecantz.de

Tel. +49 30 3464678-23

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