

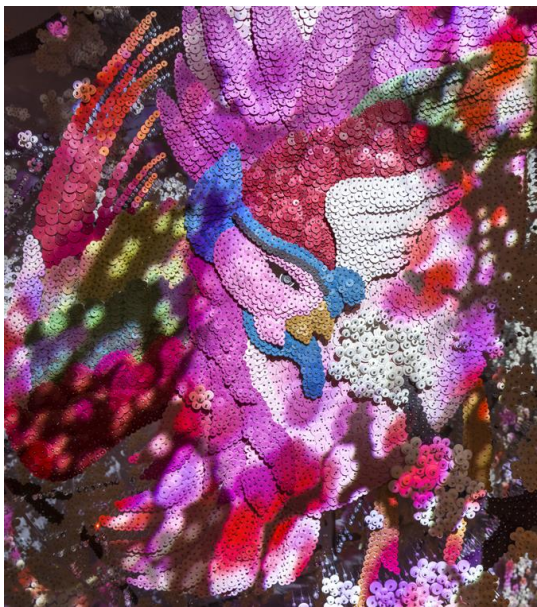
MASS MoCA

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Jodi Joseph
Director of Communications
413.664.4481 x8113
jjoseph@massmoca.org

Ran Hwang: *Untethered*

140-foot sculpture in buttons and pins



Ran Hwang, *Untethered* (detail), 2015

North Adams, Massachusetts — Using thousands upon thousands of buttons and pins, Korean artist Ran Hwang returns to MASS MoCA to install *Untethered*, a 140-foot-long sculpture featuring 14 birds, including six phoenixes. Hwang's recurring representation of birds in flight both echo the transient nature of existence and serves to represent ideal life achievements: limitless opportunities and freedom from worry. The piece, limited by architecture even in the generous gallery space of MASS MoCA, also suggests the contrary — that birds encounter predators and other obstacles, facing restrictions that are out of their control. Layered amidst the birds, metallic thread-spider webs

emphasize that the more freedom is desired, the more difficult it is to achieve. *Untethered* opens with a reception for the artist on June 20, 2015.

Hwang finds beauty in the most ordinary circumstances. Choosing the humble button as a metaphor for mundane aspects of human existence, she creates extraordinary landscapes by hammering them into Plexiglas and wood panels in a repetitive and meditative process. Hwang notes, "I create monumental iconic imagery using materials from the fashion industry. I hammer thousands of pins into panels like a monk who, facing the wall, loses himself in deep concentration. The pins hold thousands of individual buttons. I choose buttons because, like human beings, they are at once common and ordinary yet as unique as the rarest jewels. Each button can move freely between the head of the pin and the wall, suggesting the human desire to be free from any restriction. For the viewer, the details of my work

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coalesce into a clever illusion — recalling the Zen masters' lesson that life itself is an illusion, from which we can awake only by clearing our minds of daily distractions.”

About the Artist

Ran Hwang (born in 1960 in the Republic of Korea) lives and works in both Seoul and New York City. She studied fine arts at the School of Visual Arts in New York City and attended the Graduate School of Fine Arts at Chung-Ang University in Seoul. In addition to MASS MoCA, Hwang has exhibited at international arts institutions including: the Queens Museum of Art, New York; The Hudson Valley Center for the Arts, Hudson, New York; the Chelsea Art Museum, New York; The Seoul Arts Center Museum; the Jeju Museum of Art, Jeju Island; Third Floor-Hermès, Singapore; and the International Museum of Art and Science, McAllen, Texas. Hwang's work is in numerous private and public collections including: The Brooklyn Museum, New York; The Des Moines Art Center, Iowa; The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul; and the Hammond Museum, North Salem, New York. She has completed residencies at MASS MoCA and Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, Vermont, and received the 2004 Gold Prize from the AHL Foundation Annual Arts Competition, New York.

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest (and largest) centers for making and enjoying today's most important art, music, dance, theater, film, and video. Hundreds of works of visual and performing art have been created on its 19th-century factory campus during fabrication and rehearsal residencies, making MASS MoCA among the most productive sites in the country for the creation and presentation of new art. More platform than box, MASS MoCA strives to bring to its audiences art experiences that are fresh, engaging, and transformative.

MASS MoCA's galleries are open 11am to 5pm every day except Tuesdays. The Hall Art Foundation's Anselm Kiefer exhibition is open seasonally, reopening in spring 2015. Gallery admission is \$18 for adults, \$16 for veterans and seniors, \$12 for students, \$8 for children 6 to 16, and free for children 5 and under. Members are admitted free year-round. For additional information, call 413.662.2111 x1 or visit massmoca.org.