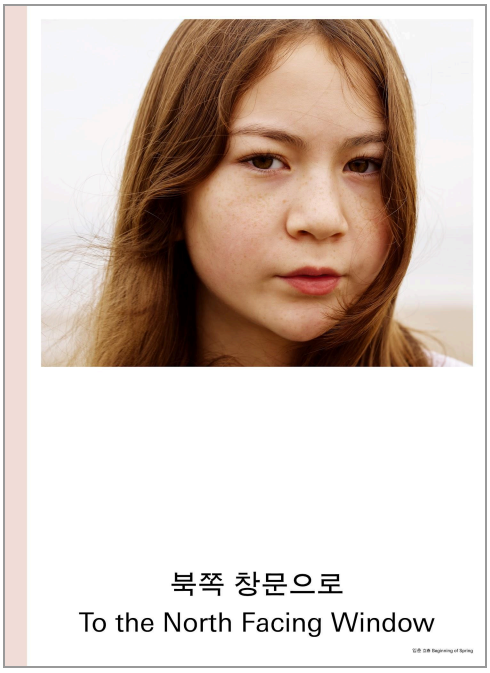
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[To the North Facing Window] (2026)



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Photographs by Eun Chun

Text by Eun Chun, Kim Sung-woo, Kay Jun

Edited by Kay Jun

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About the book

To the North Facing Window is a monograph that gathers fifteen years of the photographer Jeon Myungeun's work, organized around her portraiture. Since 2010, when she first presented photographs made in collaboration with Deaf participants, Jeon has spent the past fifteen years building a photographic language of her own — one that moves across people, objects, and landscapes. In works made with Deaf and blind collaborators, she explored the world of human perception in its many layers and facets; in a collaboration with an astronomer, she asked what it means to see; and in work with a sound effects artist, she questioned photography's capacity to mediate between the visual and the aural. Jeon understands photography not as the act of fixing a subject within the frame and anchoring its meaning there, but as something that becomes possible only in the encounter with the subject. She shifts the agency of the photographic act from the photographer to the person before the camera, approaching the photograph as an outcome of relation and interaction. This attitude is equally evident in the way she photographs people. Where conventional portraiture supplies cues — a setting, a possession — to make a sitter's identity explicit, Jeon's photographs work through fragmentary glimpses of a person, widening the gaze toward beings and worlds beyond the human. As in her broader inquiry into the senses, her portraits lead us to imagine what lies outside the frame rather than to settle our eyes on the figure within it.

The photobook *To the North Facing Window* recomposes this body of work in the language of the book as a medium. It draws in particular on the strong sense of season that runs through Jeon's photographs, making it the structuring principle of the book itself. From the cover through the interior pages, the traditional solar terms (jeolgi, 節氣) are marked throughout, and the reader meets the photographs while passing between the turning seasons. Portraits sit at the center of the book, yet in photographs that always set off a passage toward the next scene, what a portrait reaches for is never the "person" alone. It is also an object, a landscape, an animal — the whole of what might be called the nonhuman. And so, in this book, a figure opens out onto a landscape, or appears briefly within one and then disappears. *To the North Facing Window*

condenses fifteen years of accumulated work under the keyword of "portraiture" while reopening the classical definitions of both the portrait and photography itself. In that sense, the book is a synesthetic response to the questions of where photography can stand today, and what it ought to be asking. Texts by the photographer Jeon Myungeun, curator Kim Sungwoo, and editor Jun Gakyung are included to open up the photographs and the book.

In the Book

It was then that I realized a question I had carried with me for a long time was, out of nowhere, coming undone — the question being: Is it possible for two people to take a photograph together? When there is only one finger on the shutter?

- from “Opening the Lid of a Box With a Candle Inside, Toward You and You Toward Me”, Eun Chun

The first series of photographs I completed set out to give form to the way Deaf people — and sign language, their language — occupy time and space. When I wanted to photograph the movements of signing, I needed someone who could perform them, and to find that person I went to the sign language interpreting office at my school. After explaining the whole situation, I put up on the noticeboard by the entrance a carefully printed A4 poster titled "Looking for a Model." That was how I met Florence, and beginning with her I photographed, one after another, Thomas, Adélaïde, Simon, Stan, Caroline, Bachir, Steve, Myriam, Sweeney, David, Chantal, and Laurent. At some point I found myself surrounded by friends who communicated in sign, and I had come to know how to sign at least "hello," "thank you," and "tea? or coffee?" This, I thought, was what taking photographs was. Meeting a person, traveling through their world, being astonished, realizing, learning, coming to know them one thing at a time.

- from “Opening the Lid of a Box With a Candle Inside, Toward You and You Toward Me”, Eun Chun

They were my guides. Having learned from the very beginning that this was what taking photographs meant, I have since become someone who cannot take a single step without a guide.

- from “Opening the Lid of a Box With a Candle Inside, Toward You and You Toward Me”, Eun Chun

That this book opens with a photograph of snow-covered railway tracks in an unfamiliar city is an extraordinary coincidence. When I was around twenty, I made a photobook by cutting up sheets of drawing paper, and the last page of that book – titled *From Winter* – was a photograph of railway tracks in some city. Having come all the way around and back to where I started, I wonder whether the person I am now has been telling the person I was, over and over, that we should make peace – or whether the child I was, who did not yet have a single photograph, is another one of my guides, leading me here.

- from “Opening the Lid of a Box With a Candle Inside, Toward You and You Toward Me”, Eun Chun

I have often found myself thinking about how Jeon Myungeun's photographs are grounded in the documentary, yet, because they are reborn in the vitality of the present, their subjects are dislocated from any fixed impression and always situated at a moment of transition. This holds equally when her gaze moves from someone's gesture to a season, or to an object that carries the passage of time. Her landscape photographs, for instance, make the linguistic partitions that bound time – spring, summer, autumn, winter – seem beside the point.

- from “Moments That Cannot Be Decided”, Kim Sung-woo

The artist describes her work as "images that pass through." True to her words, what stands out in her photographs is a refusal to dwell on the outward form of the subject: a gaze that seeks out the fluidity discovered within it, that tries to catch the movement of change, that reaches for temporality and motion. Here the modifier "decisive" becomes unnecessary. What matters is not that a single moment brings the world into alignment, but that even in an unaligned state a moment can be sufficient unto itself as an image. And so, rather than summing up the

world in a single "decision," her photographs make each frame call forth the next — the next span of time, the next movement.

- from “Moments That Cannot Be Decided”, Kim Sung-woo

Rather than representing an individual through a single impression, the artist's portraits seem closer to scenes that quietly disclose the impossibility of holding a subject entirely within one image. Not every photograph works this way, but a face may be brought to the fore only to be pushed off center, or shown in part alone; and a person may be pressed toward the margins by their relation to the background. The poses, moreover, never take on the settled frontality by which a subject is made to stand for herself. Small acts — a hand pressing into a face, a body drawing in on itself, skin grazed or bearing down — are less the drama that arises out of gesture than movements that come before the body has made an expression. Her portraits therefore offer no finished information. They burrow instead into the gap that opens as a person becomes an image, shifting the gaze from what to look at toward how to look.

- from “Moments That Cannot Be Decided”, Kim Sung-woo

That photography is a record of surfaces is unlikely to be disputed. What matters, though, is how that surface image operates. In Jeon Myungeun's work, the image is never reducible to a linear narrative or to an identity. In her portraits, for instance, the time a person has lived through, their relations with others, the names society has assigned them, and the attitudes and sensibilities they have chosen for themselves all seep in, layer upon layer. And a face, rather than reigning as an autonomous center, holds within it the density of the objects and places around it, of the air and the light. The portrait, then, no longer resolves into a token that defines an individual. How he or she exists comes before who he or she is.

- from “Moments That Cannot Be Decided”, Kim Sung-woo

Photographs from different periods, of different subjects, in different tonalities communicate across the left and right pages of this book as if seeping into one another — and they do so because her photographs

ultimately draw the gaze past the frame and provoke the image that lies beyond it. The book can therefore be called a book of portraits, one that extracts the figures from fifteen years of Jeon Myungeun's accumulated work; yet in placing objects and landscapes alongside them, it circumvents the conventions of portraiture as we know them.

- from “The Photographs in This Book Are Placed Between Seasons”, Kay Jun

Because the turning of a page is itself an expression of time, the solar terms are set in between. But just as our lives do not end because winter has come, this book aspires to a circular structure, without a definite beginning or end. As winter and spring meet and pass through one another, as the sunless north and the sunlit south come to touch, the book's beginning and its end will interlock and repeat without a dividing point. The human and nonhuman beings that dwell within it look at one another, exchanging glances — or exchanging existence.

- from “The Photographs in This Book Are Placed Between Seasons”, Kay Jun

About the artist

Eun Chun
Eun Chun is a photographer. She thinks about movement in all its forms. Her works include *Photography Is the Scholar's Retina*, *The Bird and the Umbrella*, *The Time of a Reclining Sculptor*, *Glider*, and *To the North Facing Window*.
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