

# A.I.R.

## ***Break a Leg*** **Ailyn Lee**

October 14–November 12, 2023

Opening reception: Saturday, October 14 from 6–8pm

GALLERY III

A.I.R. Gallery is pleased to announce *Break a Leg*, an exhibition of sculptures and short film by Ailyn Lee. This is Lee's first solo exhibition in New York City.

Ailyn Lee creates multimedia sculptures, installations, and short films that offer surreal spaces of comfort and wonder. When Lee first arrived in the United States from South Korea, the change in her residence and environment triggered intense anxiety and insomnia. To escape this chaos, she began to imagine scenes from her grandmother's antique shop and mother's sculpture studio in South Korea, places of childhood comfort and psychological stability. These spaces were perfect for playing hide-and-seek, or staging theatrical plays—adolescent activities that mirror elements of Lee's current artistic practice. Lee dreams up spaces crowded with old furniture, mysterious objects of unknown origin, and fragments of figurative sculptures. The process of reproducing these symbols is like a talisman, keeping her safe wherever she is.

Anchoring the installation is *Break a Leg* (2023), a figurative sculpture incorporating antique furniture found in Wassaic, New York, where Lee was in residence at the Wassaic Project. The wooden furniture is combined with parts of the human body, rendered in stone clay. The sculpture takes on the appearance of an actor or character who is preparing for a performance. Lee's combination of familiar and unfamiliar elements creates an uncanny and enigmatic feeling. The concept originates from her childhood memories. Lee's mother, a figurative sculptor, would often inadvertently place her finished sculptures of busts, torsos, hands, and legs atop the furniture. When combined, the furniture and human body parts seemed to be alive: a bust resting on a drawer looked as if it might speak; a table connected to hand and leg sculptures felt like it would start crawling.

In *The Fourth Wall* (2020), Lee reimagines the wardrobe in which she once played games like puppet theater as a child. This sculptural work presents four different surreal stages: curtains opened by floating hands; human-shaped chairs; drawers with candles on top; a spinning moon and the sun. These fantastical scenes look back at the viewers, inviting them into Lee's world. *Wonder Mobile* (2021) is inspired by the childhood dreamcatcher and mobile that Lee believed protected her from bad dreams, allowing her to sleep soundly. This work contains a motor that slowly turns clockwise, making vivid reflections appear on the wall. The *Memory Box* series (2022–2023) contains works made with wooden boxes that hold important memories. Small objects made with stone clay are suspended in the box, hung by thread, and move slightly with the footsteps of viewers.

Presented alongside the sculptural works is *Good Shoes Take You to Good Places* (2022), a six-minute, black-and-white surreal short film created late at night in Lee's apartment, using her artwork as the backdrop. In this video, Lee leads viewers into her private space, full of symbolic clues that might unlock the key to her insomnia. She renders surreal scenes including hands coming out from the wall; a painting that is moving its eyes; and an animated version of herself. Lee creates an enigmatic and dreamlike atmosphere that offers a hypnagogic state of consciousness, which occurs right before falling asleep.



Ailyn Lee, *Break a Leg*, 2023, Stone clay, carved wood, found cabinet, acrylic, wood stain, mirror, epoxy, 35 x 35 x 23 inches.

**Ailyn Lee** is an interdisciplinary artist based in New York City. She received her MFA (2022) and BFA (2017) from the School of Visual Arts in New York, NY. She has exhibited her work at venues including A.I.R. Gallery, Wassaic Project, SVA Chelsea Gallery, SVA Flatiron Gallery, and the Busan International Art Fair in South Korea. Lee has completed artist residencies at Wassaic Project in Wassaic, NY, and Vermont Studio Center, in Johnson, VT.

A.I.R. Gallery is wheelchair accessible via ramp. There are accessible toilets in the venue. There is comfortable seating with backs. Free tap water is available. The venue is nearest to the F train at York St (0.2 miles) and the A train at High St (0.5 miles). The nearest wheelchair accessible trains is the B, Q, R at Dekalb Av (1.1 miles) and the 2, 3 at Borough Hall (0.8 miles). The roads immediately surrounding the gallery are cobblestone. The nearest accessible parking garage (for an hourly fee) is two blocks away at 100 Jay St. No ID necessary for entry. Please contact [info@airgallery.org](mailto:info@airgallery.org) for more information.

