



Two photobooks from the South Korean artist present different takes on the metaphorical theme of gravity

Jun Ahn

Words by Izabela Radwanska Zhang

We first met Jun Ahn when she was selected for *BJP*'s annual talent issue with *Self-Portrait*, a project that went viral after appearing on the cover of the Ones To Watch edition in 2013. The series, for which she perched precariously on the ledges of skyscrapers, was less to do with the thrill-seeking 'rooftop selfie' phenomenon it has been associated with, and more concerned with the passing of time. Or, in the words of Japanese publisher Akaaka, which recently put out the series as a book, it attempts to "visualise the void that exists between a past that cannot be changed and a future landscape that seems far away, while capturing the momentary fissure that is the present".

Her second book, *One Life* (brought out by another Japanese publisher, Case, soon after the first), has an equally existential theme, though the photographs are markedly different. "Beauty of coincidence, possibilities and hope," says the South Korean photographer when asked to describe her thoughts – coincidence being the key. Consisting of images taken between 2013 and 2018 in, among other places, Japan, Turkey, UAE and Ireland, the project is a metaphorical illustration of Ahn's reflections on chance and probability, but also life and death.

The idea for the project began when Ahn was teaching at the Korea University Museum, and noticed the heightened levels of anxiety among her students, worrying about the future. She began to consider this, and the idea that no matter how much you prepare yourself, life is unpredictable. "I planned to show the beauty of coincidence with an inevitable situation," she says. "For me, that situation is gravity. That is part of the reason why many of my works are about working against or becoming free from it."

Ahn's images in *One Life* are created as a result of a coincidental formation of apples suspended in mid air, after they have been thrown against a wall. Apples were chosen because of their symbolic ties to knowledge and Isaac Newton's demonstration of the forces of gravity. In the year that Ahn began working on this project, a number of what she considers 'coincidences' occurred in her personal life – she married, and her grandfather passed away. "It made me think about life and death," she explains. "Life is like an object thrown into a space with gravity. We are born without any reason or right to have a choice, and death is inevitable. Just like an object in a state of freefall, it inevitably falls and eventually hits the ground and crashes. Hence I used gravity as a symbol of the memento mori."

"The reason why we try to step forward, despite the fear of uncertainty, is that there is a hope for the future that we can recall and celebrate with the past," says Ahn. "Hope starts from the moment we realise the endless possibilities that surround us. These make us willingly accept the uncertainty of the future and coincidence. I wish to capture the very moment of wonder in a process of repeating – just like repeating our daily routine." **BJP**

ahnjun.com
akaaka.com
case-publishing.jp

Opposite: From the series *One Life* © Jun Ahn.
Courtesy of Christophe Guye Galerie.

Left: Covers for *One Life* (published by Case) and *Self-Portrait* (published by Akaaka).

