

ISTANBUL THE GUIDE

“Emotion Commune” streams South Korea’s smart city to Istanbul

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Interconnectivity of networks, free capital flows, ergonomic efficiency from mind to interface to production: these are the catchphrases of the digital world that is rapidly encasing our workplaces, homes, and bodies. New York-based artist Mika Tajima has examined these dizzying developments in her works that combine fashion, furniture, painting, and interior design. Now the itinerant art project Protocinema brings us Tajima's work *Emotion Commune* at [the 5533 space in Istanbul's İMC building](#).

The focus of *Emotion Commune* is New Sedong City, South Korea. This planned "smart" city was designed with built-in networks implanted into each building and home. From disaster management to education and home management to transportation, these systems are marketed as a step towards individual control over every aspect of life. The more sinister view is that these systems are monitoring and controlling every aspect of the residents' lives – whether or not they are aware of it.

Emotion Commune extrapolates from the functional aspects of this system and focuses on the mental connectivity it affords. Smart lights in the exhibition space react to software that scans the emotional content of thousands of Twitter feeds in New Sedong City, changing from hot pink through yellow to white as the collective mood shifts from positive to negative and back again. In this way, people in Istanbul can feel a condensed flow of emotion from a city 8,000 kilometers away.

The exhibition also displays three works in Tajima's "furniture art" series – in this case representing New Sedong City, Belo Horizonte (Brazil), and Accra (Ghana). Instead of canvas, these works utilize the molded plastic used in public and office furniture, sprayed on the inside with bands of hazy paint. The viewer is actually looking at an encased painting through the medium of plastic, which has a structural similarity to the mediated emotion of the lights.

With a vast difference between its high-rise developments and the jumbled streets of the old city, Istanbul is neither a planned development nor a smart city. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality launched a smart city initiative in 2015, aiming to cooperate with global states and corporations to develop local responses to crises such as natural disasters and civil unrest. The Haliç Congress Center hosted a smart cities conference in June 2016, sponsored by the state housing developer TOKİ along with banks, advertising groups, communications companies, and Turkish Airlines.

In this sense, “Emotion Commune” is a window into a possible future for Istanbul. As the city’s interconnectivity coalesces, will people in South Korea one day be watching the collective mood of Istanbul from across the world?