

# ARTFORUM

## Lee Bul

**MUDAM LUXEMBOURG - MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE GRAND-DUC JEAN  
3, Park Dräi Eechelen  
October 5–June 9**

Korean artist Lee Bul's first major European museum exhibition begins in the air. Cast in white polyurethane and suspended across Mudam's I. M. Pei–designed glass and concrete atrium, two squads of sci-fi species appear frozen in the midst of a celestial ballet or battle. Perhaps a little worse for the wear (variably missing arms, legs, and heads), the hard-bodied, humanoid “Cyborgs,” 1997–2011, face off against the amorphous tentacled “Anagrams,” 1999–2006. Alternately evoking classical Greek marbles and “Star Wars” creatures, these ghostly human-scale beings appear to have arisen from Lee's alien universes and landscapes exhibited on the museum's lower level.

Playing with scale and legibility, Lee's topographies are ambiguously utopian or dystopian. *A Perfect Suffering*, 2011, is part of a sculptural series featuring helical metal armatures adorned with shiny chains, crystals, and glass beads. Hung from the ceiling, these steely, glittering chandeliers are also microcosmic landscapes—floating mountains colonized with winding roadways and Frank Gehry-style buildings. Installed atop a table like an architectural model, *Mon grand récit: Weep into stones...* (My grand narrative: Weep into stones), 2005, recasts real-world attractions—an upside-down Hagia Sophia, a roller coaster-like ring road, a flashing billboard—as a miniature amusement park ride that is at once anachronistically futuristic and ancient. Having observed Lee's sci-fi terrains and creatures from afar, the viewer also has a chance to experience these elaborate fantasy worlds from within. Past a black curtain and through a low-ceilinged tunnel (*Souterrain*, 2012) is a large-scale installation whose mirrored floor is populated by two structures whose curious forms tempt the viewer to venture inside. The more disorienting is *Via Negativa*, 2012, a snail-shaped labyrinth made of wood, mirrors, and LED lights. Excerpts from psychologist Julian Jaynes's text on the bicameral mind (in English and Korean) plastered to the structure's exterior walls appear a vain attempt to verbalize the overwhelmingly discombobulating experience of Lee's hall of mirrors.



Lee Bul, *A Perfect Suffering*, 2011, crystal, glass and acrylic beads on nickel-chrome wire, stainless-steel, and aluminum armature, 64 x 67 x 43".

— Mara Hoberman

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