

Photographer Ha Manseok Has Long Asked: Where Do We Discover the Self?

His answer is unambiguous—within the gaze of the Other.

EUNPYEONG-GU, SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA, April 23, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Recently, Ha took a significant step onto the international stage with the publication of his photo book *Hanbok* through the renowned documentary photography platform BURN, based in the United States. Simultaneously, he held a solo exhibition in Seoul titled *INTERHUMAN*, continuing his profound inquiry into the act of “gazing.”

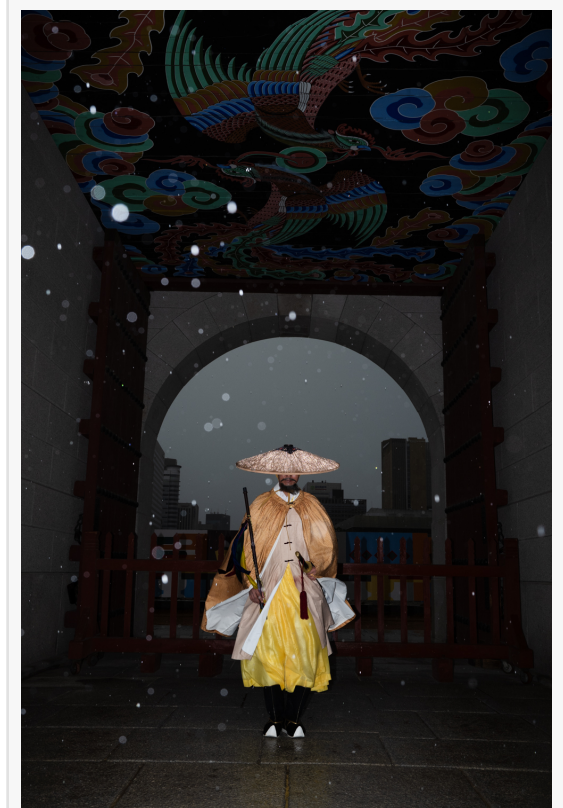
The *Hanbok* series, photographed at Gyeongbokgung Palace and featuring foreigners dressed in traditional Korean attire, goes far beyond portraiture. Upon entering the exhibition space, visitors are handed a flashlight and immersed in complete darkness. Without actively illuminating the work, nothing is visible. In this way, Ha gently lures the viewer into the heart of each photograph.

“The darkened space is a metaphor for our inner world,” Ha explains. “With the flashlight in hand, the viewer explores the images as if delving into their own internal cave. I wanted the act of seeing itself to become a form of performative experience.”

For Ha, light is not just a technical tool. The flash becomes an emotional language—a sensory bridge between self and other. He refers to it as his “brush of intuition.”

“The light that emerges from the flash originates from me. When it touches the surface of the other and reflects back, a circuit of gazes is formed—and within that loop, there is a friction of emotion. I try to capture the trace of that moment within my photographs.”

The exhibition title *INTERHUMAN* encapsulates this entire process. It points to the invisible but undeniable space between people—a threshold where identity wavers, echoes, and is



□Royal guard in a raincoat, Gyeongbokgung Palace, Seoul - <HANBOK> HA MANSEOK

reassembled. Ha seeks to capture that liminal moment when the self is shaken and reshaped through the encounter with the other.

He believes photography, at its core, is the art of relationship. In his previous work Incheon South Port, he visualized the physical dynamics between tugboats and barges. With INTERHUMAN, he shifts focus to the fleeting existential tremor that arises when facing another person. For him, relationship is physical, psychological, and ontological all at once.

"I come to sense my own existence through the gaze of the other. There are moments when a subtle emotion, buried deep inside, rises to the surface through light. I want to capture those fragments."

The photographs are printed on holographic paper—an intentional nod to the shimmering surface of Korean mother-of-pearl lacquerware. The shifting reflections created by this material evoke the fluidity of identity.

"None of us are fixed beings. Depending on angle, gaze, and emotion, we reveal different versions of ourselves. I wanted to express that constant flux through image."

Ha cites Cindy Sherman and Emmanuel Levinas as key philosophical and artistic influences. While Sherman constructs personas by performing identity, Ha disassembles and reconstructs the self through the gaze of others. Levinas provides the ethical foundation for his work.

"Levinas once said, 'The Other is the one who is prior to me.' That idea stays with me.



□Em from the US, Seyoung from South Korea, Gyeongbokgung Palace, Seoul - <HANBOK> HA MANSEOK



□Julia Eyenga from France, Gyeongbokgung Palace, Seoul - <HANBOK> HA MANSEOK

Photography, for me, is a way of trying to understand myself by looking at others. In that moment of mutual gaze, I begin to sense who I am.”

Though influenced by the flash techniques of David Alan Harvey, Bruce Gilden, and Martin Parr, Ha diverges from their bold, extroverted approaches. Instead, he leans into the emotional subtleties—the quiet tremors and stillness of presence.

His choice of gear reflects this sensitivity: Leica M11, SL2, Q3, and the SF60 flash. These tools are not mere devices but extensions of his hand—resonant instruments of his emotional intuition.



□Tindra & Lovisa from Sweden, Gyeongbokgung Palace, Seoul - <HANBOK> HA MANSEOK

In July 2025, Ha will appear at Les Rencontres de la Photographie, Arles, the world-renowned photography festival in France, where he will host a book signing for Hanbok. This marks the European debut of his work and a celebration of its international release.

“In the end, I’m not trying to present Korean tradition as it is,” he reflects. “What I want to share are the emotional resonances that emerge between culture and face, light and shadow, between you and me. We all come to know ourselves within someone else’s gaze.”

Ha Manseok’s photographs do not speak loudly. Rather, they approach quietly—like a beam of light gently touching the surface of darkness—and stir something deep within. Between gaze and response, within that narrow but potent space, his work captures the fragile textures of feeling that linger long after the light fades.

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