

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Clockwork Heart

April 28 – May 18, 2026 | 2 Rivington Street, New York NY 10002

Reception: Thursday, April 30, 6–8 pm

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Jakupsil is pleased to present *Clockwork Heart*, a solo exhibition of recent paintings and sculptures by Anikoon at 2 Rivington Street, New York, alongside the launch of his first children's book, *The Robot and the Winding Key*. The exhibition brings together three bodies of work: paintings and sculptures in which Anikoon's figurative language becomes more lyrical and biographical, drawing on personal memory and consumer culture; new canvases in which that figuration gives way to abstraction, surfaces built through repeated layering and sandblasting to approximate pre-patina copper; and watercolors in the book, developed in parallel with the paintings, extending the exhibition's preoccupations into narrative form. Taken together, they represent the most comprehensive overview of Anikoon's artistic practice to date. This is his second solo exhibition with Jakupsil in New York, and some works will also be on view at Future Fair, held at Chelsea Industrial, May 13–16.

Anikoon's practice has consistently centered on the automaton as a figure of contemporary alienation: his robots awkward, vulnerable, their expressions oscillating between blankness and affect. Growing up in South Korea during the 1980s and 90s, when American mass-produced goods, fast food chains, and pop culture entered the Korean market at scale, Anikoon belongs to a generation for whom these imports were simultaneously objects of desire and markers of cultural distance. His pseudonym, a compound of the Korean words for animation and boy (*kun*), encodes the pursuit of what he describes as a primary, pre-socialized vision — the child behind the mask — and positions the robot not merely as subject matter but as a conceptual structure for examining performed identity. Offered directly to the viewer, the robot's vacant, stricken, or playful face enacts the ethical summons of the face-to-face encounter: the self called into responsibility by the alterity of the Other.

The distinctive surface preparation is biographical in origin. Anikoon grew up near iron foundries and metalworkers in Korea, and his technique — sandblasting each paint layer — translates that material environment into pictorial method. The resulting surfaces resemble oxidized metal, making the process of their making visible: accumulated labor registered in the physical constitution of the picture plane. This indexical quality aligns the work with Arte Povera's insistence that material traces carry historical meaning in themselves. Into these prepared grounds Anikoon draws figures from personal memory — objects, faces, fragments of landscape — that address the experience of a specific generation while opening toward broader questions of encounter and self-recognition.

The exhibition also marks a deepened engagement with abstraction. Where earlier works maintained legible, cartoon-inflected figuration, several new paintings dissolve the figure into fields of oxidized pigment and collaged fragment, the form present as silhouette or residue rather than full representation. Objects sourced from New York antique markets — vintage print, packaging, found ephemera — are incorporated not as Pop citation but as material archive. These brands and objects, already images of images, are absorbed into a painterly process that further destabilizes their referential stability, transforming them into signs whose original meanings have been partially, but not entirely, eroded.

The children's book, *The Robot and the Winding Key*, follows a tin robot who wakes without memory and must travel to recover a missing wind-up key, encountering figures that map the psychological terrain of Anikoon's paintings: isolation, the need for recognition, and the distortions that accumulate

when identity is performed rather than discovered. Written and illustrated alongside the exhibition, the book marks Anikoon's first foray into published narrative.

Works by Anikoon are held in collections including Pfizer Korea, Park Young Foundation, Munhak Publishing, Gordon Ramsay Restaurants, Sofitel Ambassador Hotel Seoul, and the Official Residence of the South Korean Ambassador to the United Kingdom. Recent collaborations include augmented reality projects with Samsung Mobile, LG Display, and Makku, and a live performance at Cincinnati's Blink Festival. He has also participated in a group exhibition at the Seoul Arts Center.

Text | Brett Lee, Director, Jakupsil

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Space Whale, 2026  
Acrylic on canvas, 28.5 x 23.8 in



Attacking Robot, 2026  
Acrylic on canvas, 17.8 x 15 in



Shadow Monster, 2026  
Watercolor on paper, 8.3 x 11.7



Space whale, 2026  
Watercolor on paper, 8.3 x 11.7 in