

The Hidden Cost of Prosperity

2013 Open Call for Curatorial Proposals
Curated by Anna miyoung Kim
Anna Art Project

Korean Cultural Centre, UK

The Hidden Cost of Prosperity

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Panel of Judges

Katrina Schwarz

(Collection Development Advisor, British Council)

Daniel F. Herrman

(Eisler Curator & Head of Curatorial Studies, Whitechapel Gallery)

Sook-Kyung Lee

(Research Curator, Tate Research Centre: Asia-Pacific)

Curated by Anna miyoung Kim

Anna Art Project

Participating Artists:

Youngin Hong

Heungsoon Im

Ayoung Kim

Sejin Kim

Seungwook Koh

Hyewon Kwon

Gangwoo Lee

Korean Cultural Centre UK

The Hidden Cost of Prosperity

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The Hidden Cost of Prosperity
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This exhibition is the first of two exhibitions selected as part of the KCCUK's
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FOREWORD

It is a great pleasure to welcome to the Korean Cultural Centre UK the exhibition *The Hidden Cost of Prosperity*, the first of two exhibitions selected as part of our inaugural 2013 Open Call for Curatorial Proposals.

The KCCUK has run an open call for UK-based Korean artists every year since we opened, and to mark our 5th year in 2013 this annual Open Call evolved to support independent curators. The number of curators, not only Korean but also international curators who are keen to work with Korean artists continues to grow, and this is seen with the consistently vibrant and interesting showcases being presented each year across the capital. By working with guest curators and international artists, this Open Call Exhibition adds a collaborative context and positive energy to our ever widening exhibition programme.

I would like to once again thank all the curators for their interesting proposals and presentations and congratulate Anna miyoung Kim for producing such a thought-provoking exhibition about Korea's modern history. May I also express my heartfelt gratitude to the panel of judges: Katrina Schwarz (Collection Development Advisor, British Council), Daniel F. Herrman (Eisler Curator & Head of Curatorial Studies, Whitechapel Gallery) and Sook-Kyung Lee (Research Curator, Tate Research Centre: Asia-Pacific) for their generous support and insightful guidance. Finally, may I wish the exhibition every success and express my hope that it lays the foundations for further collaborative exhibitions in the future.

Kab Soo Kim
Director
Korean Cultural Centre UK



<Gangwoo Lee_Sabuk Dongwon Coal Industry_2004_118 x 150cm_C-type Print>

'The Hidden Cost of Prosperity'

Exhibition <The Hidden Cost of Prosperity> draws attention to the lives of the underclass in the history of economic development of Korea, well known for its remarkable achievement of “Modernization” in a short period of time. Behind the history of modernization of developing countries, there were often sacrificed but easily ignored lives of the underclass by capitalism. Korea also couldn’t avoid the shade of the capitalism, but recently there have been increasing interest and reflection on those sacrificed but ignored underclass’ lives and human rights in the wake of crumbling Neoliberalism. This exhibition will observe the ‘sacrificed but ignored’ people’s lives of with 7 participating artists to explore the meaning of their lives, which we had justified as ‘**Cost**’ of modernization.

The modernization of Korea had been initiated since 1962 with the **5-Year Economic Development Plan** (The 5-Year EDP¹) by the authoritarian government with full control over economic and social system. The 5-Year EDP had achieved rapid economic growth and accumulated the country's wealth. However, unlike the government's optimism towards the economic development, the lives of the underclass had become much harder because of the government's unjustifiably concentrated support on industrial giants (Jae-bul) with a belief of 'the trickle-down theory'². This inevitably had caused continuous inflation, speculation on real estate and a low wage policy, and consequently led inequality in wealth-redistribution, bipolarization and unbalanced regional development. The underclass had never been considered for sharing the hard-earned wealth but rather been consciously ignored for the sake of nation's continuous modernization. The rapid modernization in 30 years (vs. 100 years in the West) had left no room for taking into account the value of human rights in the process.

1 The 5-Year EDP: The plans were designed to increase wealth within South Korea and strengthen political stability. A change in policy from import substitution industrialization to export-oriented growth occurred throughout these five-year plans. South Korea had seven five-year plans under the auspices of the Economic Planning Board, a state bureaucracy pilot agency.

2 The trickle down theory: The idea that tax breaks or other economic benefits provided by government to businesses and the wealthy will benefit poorer members of society by improving the economy as a whole.

3 David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism, (Oxford university press, 2005): The book provides an historical examination of the theory and divergent practices of neoliberalism since the mid-1970s. It conceptualizes the neoliberalized global political economy as a system that benefits few at the expense of many, and which has resulted in the (re)creation of class distinction through what Harvey calls "accumulation by dispossession".

4 From suicidal notes of the deceased female jockey.



Hyewon Kwon_*Eight Men Lived in the Room: News*_2010_Video projection, sound_5m 57s



Hyewon Kwon_*Eight Men Lived in the Room: Filmset*_2011_2ch HD video, sound_2m 51s



Hyewon Kwon_*Eight Men Lived in the Room: Monument*_2012_Resin, LED,
7 Lambda prints_86x37x20 cm (resin Sculpture), 72.5x49x3 cm each (photograph)

Hyewon Kwon

<Eight Men Lived in the Room series - News, Remains and Monument>

The film, <Eight Men Lived in the Room: News> by Hyewon Kwon reflects 1960's Korea where the government's economic development plan demanded for a lot of cheap labour, resulting in massive migration from the rural to Seoul. The film is originated from a 45-second black and white news footage regarding the completion of a boarding house in Yeongdeungpo, Seoul. The boarding house had been built in 1962 for the migrant labourers who had worked in Seoul, the heart of Korean's modernization and demolished in 1999. With demolition, oddly all the news and stories related to the boarding house had been wiped out from the National Archives of Korea. Artist had doubts about the disappearance of records and searched them through public presses such as newspapers, magazines and novels. The film chronologically reveals the real stories of the poor migrant labourers' and this revelation explains in itself why the records had been wiped out. Continuously repeating 45-second news footage in the film is the recreation of disappeared records; film cannot move on to next stories as no records exist after the first 45 seconds.

The 2 channel film <Eight Men Lived in the Room: Film Set> shows the details of replicated boarding house with a song, presumably sung by the boarders. Immaculate room with no trace of boarders and the song about missing hometowns create melancholy feeling about their ignored and forgotten lives.

A sculpture <Monument> had been located in many unknown or unnamed streets and area in the photographs on the wall. But it cannot be established firmly in any of those locations as we lost the records as we might intend to do so for their lives. It also creates an irony that the Monument, a structure built to remind people of an important event, is built where nothing to remind of.



Ayoung Kim_Please Return to Busan Port from Tales of a City_2012_3 Channel Video, 5:07 min

Ayoung Kim

<Please Return to Busan Port>

Artist Ayoung Kim's film, <Please Return to Busan Port> describes a drug smuggler's life in the late 80s Busan, the biggest harbour city in Korea, where foreign cultures flowed in and smuggling often happened. The film juxtaposes a drug smuggler's life for a living with images of 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, which symbolized the late 80's Korea, a time of economic boom with hyper growth and modernization. Through the contrast between the life of the poor and nation's prosperity, artist shows how the underclass' lives had been imbalanced with others in the hyper growth society and also asks what the meaning of the accumulation of nation's wealth is to individuals. And also the contrasting images of re-winding Asian and Olympic Games and smuggler's bicycle riding imply the underclass' hope that the prosperous society can wait for their catch-up and accompany with them. The title of the film, <Please Return to Busan Port> named after an old Korean pop song, played through the whole film. Repeating 'Return to Busan' in the lyric linked to the city where smuggler had lived, appeals for audience to focus on the lives of the underclass.

Despite the government's intervention in economic development has been decreased recently in Korea, the **Neoliberalism** has rooted in since late 1990's. And it brought tax cuts, privatization and deregulation of the industry and in employment protection, which resulted in inequality among classes and bipolarization. The philosophy of Neoliberalism, *'Human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade'*³ made the society accept 'competition' as the absolute social value to pursue, and it alienated the underclass further because of inability to compete due to the inherited social class.

Jin Hee Park, the Only Female Jockey at Busan Kyeongnam Race Park Won the Fifth Victory with Her Favorite North Star

Hankook Ilbo, 26th Jun, 2009

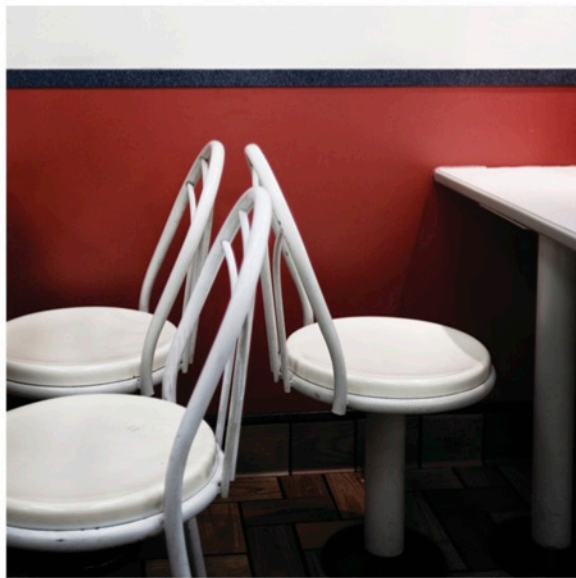


Ayoung Kim *_Every North Star Part I,II from Tales of a City_2010_Single Channel Video_6:09 min*

Ayoung Kim

<Every North Star Part I & II>

Single channel video, <Every North Star part I & II> is consisted of two episodes about a racing horse, “North Star” and a female jockey, Jinhee Park. Part I shows how horse racing industry had been developed in Korea by following the pedigree of “North Star” and its settlement in Busan Horse Racing. Part II, a complimentary episode of Part I, is about a tragic story of a female jockey who had ridden and won many races with “North Star” but ended up committing a suicide because of heavy competition and mistreatment by trainers⁴. Horse racing is a sport with the historical heritage and cultural events in its origin countries but it had been transformed in Korea as a legal gambling event, where jockeys and horses race only for gamblers’ betting, ironically not for the “Life & Love”, official catch phrase of Korean Racing Authority. The rise and death of a female jockey resembles the lives of people under Neoliberalism, where wining at the competition is the absolute virtue to pursue but human beings are dismissed if they don’t win the competition.



Sejin Kim_24hrs city_2009_Variable Size_Digital Inkjet Print



Sejin Kim_Night Workers_2009_2 Channel Video_6:53min

Sejin Kim

<Night Workers>, <24hrs city>

Film, <Night Workers>, closely observes 2 night workers' lives, a security guard in a building and a tollgate fee collector. By simply displaying mundane and routine lives, artist explores night workers' loneliness, isolation and alienation from the mainstream society. Their isolation and alienation have been deepened by the view or perception of mainstream people in the very society they belong to. Neoliberalism, which brought 'competition' in all the area of social and economic system, has formed the perception of 'Fallen behind the competition' and/or 'Redundant'.

The photographs, <24 hrs city> show a 24-hour fast food chain store, maybe the only rest place for night workers. Contrary to its modern furniture and bright lighting, it is filled with tiredness and loneliness of night workers'.



Youngin Hong_Miners' Orange_2009_Single channel video_10:35min

Youngin Hong

As a part of the 5-Year EDP in 1960's, Sabuk, Gohan and Cheoram in Gangwon province met economic boom by coal mining but the prosperity had been diminished since the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games due to environmental protection law. Faced depleted local economy, the locals filed a petition to bring casinos with a desperate hope to bring economic boom back again. However, all the wealth generated by casinos went to the migrant investors while the locals were left over with the by-products of casino business; prostitution, bankrupt gamblers and crimes. Government faithfully followed Neoliberalism law by allowing 'competition winners' to open casinos, but the locals couldn't be the winner in the competition.

<Miners' Orange>

<Miners' Orange> by artist Youngin Hong is a parade project in which around 500 local people from Gohan and Sabuk participated. The Parade, where the participants wore orange coloured costumes, symbolised the region's history. Some participants wore traditional miners' uniforms and the others wore bright orange coloured hats, gloves, sashes or balloons. In this context, the orange colour represents vitality and endurance but also uncertain identities of the region. The parade was initiated in response to local peoples' struggles as a result of new regional developments, such as casino business and its impact on their social and cultural lives.



© 2006 Gangwo Lee. All Rights Reserved. Photo: Gangwo Lee. 2006



Gangwoo Lee_Cheoram River_2006_16x24ocm_C-Type Print



© 2006 Gangwo Lee. All Rights Reserved. Photo: Gangwo Lee. 2006



Gangwoo Lee_Sabuk Jijang Mountain_2006_16x24ocm_C-Type Print

Gangwoo Lee

<Political meaning of landscape:
Modernity on the edge between Cheoram and Sabuk>

Since 2004, Gangwoo Lee has photographed the changes of Cheoram and Sabuk, the main sources of the coal for 1960-70's Korea industrialisation. His film, <Mirror of the landscape> consisted of 200 photographs, not only sheds new lights on 2 regions' historicity and value in Korea's modernization but also brings into relief the changes, in which Neoliberalism has brought, in the local's lives and identities. Cheoram, once the heart of industrialisation is left for deterioration with only memories. Sabuk, where casino business has replaced the coal mining industry is being filled with by-products of neoliberalism, showing stark contrast with historic products. Now, Sabuk cannot be free from the greed of capitalism, relying on vulgar desire of gambling. And it seems no one clings to Sabuk's historic heritage and its value.

Seoul's urban poor had been formed from the rural immigration for labour intensive industries at the early economic development in Seoul. Sudden increase of migrants to Seoul had caused the shortage of houses and inevitably housing price inflation. With low wages, these migrants couldn't afford the expensive housing cost and fell into urban poor, who formed early shantytowns in Seoul. In 1980s even though urban redevelopment started with good causes of improving the substandard houses and living environment in shantytowns, the development ended up being a victim of real estate speculation. The urban poor who had originally resided the area were expelled from their homes as they were not able to buy redeveloped houses. Moreover, with Olympic Games in 1988, the urban redevelopment had been justified with full blown scale for better or beautiful urban landscapes of Seoul. Behind the prosperous international Games, the urban poor were evicted from their dwellings.

Urban redevelopment has been continued even in recent years to improve housing quality and living environments of citizens' but the benefits of redevelopment are still not for the original residence but for the outsiders with the capital. For urban poor, capitalism they trusted couldn't shelter them in the urban.



Seungwook Koh_*For Elise*_2005_Video record of performance_6:27 min

Seungwook Koh_*Triathlon*_2005_Video record of performance_4:53 min

Seungwook Koh_*Playing on the vacant lot 1,2,3*_2001_Video record of performance_1:31 min

Seungwook Koh

<For Elise>, <Triathlon>, <Playing on the vacant lot 1,2,3>

<For Elise> is a performance showing the metaphor of disparity between the desired modernization and its stark reality. To reach the ideal modernization, intense labour is required, thus labourers had been driven to dream an illusion of modernization by society or government regardless of their humble realities. While a pianist plays an elegant piano music 'For Elise', artist drags a heavy piano by his physical power, creating an ironic scene.

<Triathlon> alludes to the hard lives of urban migrants, who works very hard to achieve their dreams but to fail to get what they dreamed of. None of his triathlon, cycling on propped up bicycles, swimming on the land, and running in the crowd can make him to reach the end line due to the structural flaws of his game. Like artist's triathlon, we may run hard for the unreachable dreams without noticing structural flaws in our society.

<Playing on the vacant lot 1,2,3> is a satire of the urban redevelopment which is always on-going in Seoul. Artist digs the land of the construction sites for redevelopment and swims in the hole. Like his absurd swimming in dry land in construction sites, redevelopment is not for the residents, who are dreaming of settling down there.



Heungsoon Im *Basement My Love* 2000_DV 6mm_17min
 Heungsoon Im *Inspirational Video 1- A New Community Song* 2001_DV 6mm_2:30min
 Heungsoon Im *Memento* 2003_2 Screen projection_DV 6mm_15min

Heungsoon Im

<Basement My Love>, <Inspirational Video 1- A New Community Song>, <Memento>

The films by Heungsoon Im reflect the whole theme of this exhibition through his family's history. His parents were the migrant labourers during 1960s' 5-Year EDP. And his family became urban poor having lived substandard house despite his parents' hard working. The shade of rapid modernization of Korea has been melted down in artist's family history. Thus, artist's filming his parents' lives and family events became documentaries of the labourers and the urban poor who had lived through Korean Modernization era.

Film, <Basement My Love> is a record of the last day before his family move to a new apartment (permanently rented for the urban poor) from the basement his family had lived for 9 years. This film shows the real life of the urban poor.

<New community song> in the film, <Inspirational Video 1- A New Community Song> is famous and iconic propaganda music in 1970s to encourage the labourers and people to participate in government led modernization. In the film, the images of labourers in a factory and the portrait of artist's father once a labourer participated in the 'Semaui Movement' are overlapped. The film lyric creates a contradiction between the song praising hard works for bright future with full of hope and the mundane works in a factory with a worn out labourer's face after serving long years.

<Memento> is 2-channel film describing artist's parents' lives, sacrificed for modernization under a patriarchal society. One side of film shows parents' monumental photographs taken in 1970-80s. In these photos, the history of modernization of Korea is melted down as background. And the other side shows a photo studio where all the family has gathered to take a new family photo for the first time in 33 years. His documentary films shed light on the real lives 'sacrificed but ignored' as "**Cost** of modernization" by observing his family's history.

