

DIVERSITY OF KOREAN STREET ARTS:

Dialogue & Spectrum



Ministry of Culture, Sports
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DIVERSITY OF
KOREAN
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**Dialogue &
Spectrum**

Table of Contents

Preface

04	Preface Written Together Street Arts, Where Did They Start and Where Are They Headed?
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Interview

16	Momggol
24	MarineBoy
32	MOMSORI
40	BONGnJOULE
48	CCOT
56	Yamagata Tweakster
64	Would You Mind Project
72	Creative Group NONI
82	ELEPHANTS LAUGH
90	FORCE
98	Project WAE
106	White Cube Project

Supplement

114	New Trends of Niches A Different Street, A Different Art
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Preface

Preface Written Together

Korean street arts have constantly changed, without any fixed academic concept. Those in the street arts scene have influenced each other, creating a variety of forms. The preface written together is an attempt to symbolically show the trajectory of Korean street arts which are still in progress.

Planners, artists and researchers working on street arts wrote this preface together. Participating anonymously, the authors wrote their part without knowing who the others are. In this way, they added, deleted, modified or reinforced things in the text written by another author.

Such a text was sent to the next author, with traces of modifications kept intact. The editing team received the text written by the authors and adjusted its length for this book.

We hope that this text expands to become a "Wikipedia of street arts written together" which could give us an overview of Korean street arts.

Our thanks go to every author who participated in this preface written together.(Editing Team)

Street Arts, Where Did They Start and Where Are They Headed?

#Where_Is_the_Street

#Cultural_Democracy

In Europe, street arts began in order to share the arts with the general public who hadn't had many opportunities to enjoy the arts. The street was a place where artists could meet the public easily. However, for street arts that grew with May 68, streets and plazas didn't just mean places for meeting the public. In such a sociopolitical context, a street was a space for certain movements where citizens raised political voices. One of the voices was about refusing the elite arts and accepting one's own language. Either consciously or unconsciously, street artists focus on notions such as 'freedom' and 'resistance'. That is because they explore diversified expressions by letting go of any limit of styles. In addition, the use of such notions is linked to the aforementioned context regarding the content and spirit of street arts.

The street and the arts aren't in a relationship like a two-way arrow heading to the opposite ends. In street arts, the street is not just a physical background which is noisy and distracting. Instead, the street could also become the main material or theme of a work. Moreover, the street's context(i.e. sociopolitical situation) could also be a production's main element.

Street arts are an art form which consists in meeting audiences in public or private spaces in different ways, thus ensuring relational esthetics. In street arts, the audience and the artist are not in a clear-cut relationship such as the one between the target and the actor or the receiver and the producer. Rather than that, they act mutually. Some people argue that it is necessary to experiment with the possibility of the arts on the street and to demonstrate it to the audience. Such an argument comes from a very narrow view of street arts.

In this process, street arts have also questioned the role of streets and public spaces. The difficulty shared by Korean street artists is the one generated in "the procedure to obtain permission to use spaces and cooperation with relevant institutions".¹⁾ This clearly reveals the administrative barrier that makes us feel that public places are privately owned by institutions. Under these circumstances, street arts have exerted its 'questioning power' by trying to overthrow the space with guerilla events and by temporarily occupying urban spaces filled with capital and cars. By doing so, street arts have allowed people to breaking away from their daily life and to have a new view of the city. This has been the 'questioning power' of street arts. Recently, street artists have dealt with stories of disappearing old city centers and collaborated with urban refugees who are victims of gentrification. In such a way, they have visibly presented works focused on the violence of capital that shakes the city. At this point, street arts go into private spaces to interpret a bigger picture of the city and publicness. In this regard, the site-specific aspect of street arts still remains. Considering this, street arts go beyond just providing the public with opportunities to enjoy art, thus becoming a genre of urban sociology.

1) KIM Kyung-hee, "Confession of Street Artists," Sourcebook of the 2012 Table Forum: Deliciously Eating Street Arts, 2012, p. 4.

#Public_Spaces_and_Street_Arts

#Audience_on_the_Street

A public space is one of the most important issues in street arts. In our city, public spaces, where we can raise our voices and be connected to others, are gradually disappearing today to be replaced by commercial spaces based on capitalism. It is worth reflecting on this issue. Frédéric Rémy is the artistic director of Le Festival d'Aurillac(one of the world's representative large-scale street arts festivals) and Scènes de la rue(street arts festival in Mulhouse). According to Rémy, public spaces filled with freedom, where people can raise their public voices, are disappearing. Under these circumstances, street arts festivals should "make publicness more visible in today's privatized spaces". Seeking the possibility of regenerating publicness is thus the role of street arts festivals for him. A street artist coming to a city should not be regarded as someone sacred and unapproachable. And there shouldn't be a fixed relationship between the artist and the audience. Instead, local residents should be able to observe how an artist is making artwork in the city, thus viewing the artist as a 'citizen'. That is the true existence of a street artist.

It is necessary to seriously think about street arts in Korean public spaces which are closely connected to local governments' support and cooperation. To be more specific, we could consider the following questions. How do artists survive in public spaces as they create their artwork against the background of representative local spaces characterized by publicness? To which degree could Korean street arts become brave in places led by the public sector? To which degree are today's street arts in public spaces becoming flexible while facing so many refusals, deletions and nonnegotiable situations? We need to reflect on these questions. Do street arts, which have infiltrated into public spaces, need to exist to ensure the positive results of local governments' cultural projects and local residents' safe cultural enjoyment? How could artists meet people on the street by means of their bodies and the definition of 'publicness' we have in mind? Asking themselves these questions is another challenge to be met by today's street artists.

Civil complaints in public spaces are also interesting. During the creative process of street arts, artists naturally reveal scenes, acts and sounds which are 'evaluated' by the citizens occupying the space together. Here, a street artist could be treated as an intruder of the space or as a disrupter of citizens' peaceful daily life. Throughout the period of their creative activities, artists face inopportune moments as they become disrupters of the 'publicness' of public spaces. Moreover, some people could criticize the artists or break into their activities either during or after the performance at festivals, unexpectedly. These war-like moments are also something street artists need to endure. It is necessary to clearly distinguish between the freedom brought by the large space(i.e. the street) and the limits set by public spaces. Changing the name of the genre to 'arts in the public space', which was mentioned before, may be a phenomenon led by the arts scene. Nevertheless, it is important to seriously think about what has been the meaning of the world called 'street' we have wanted and what has been the freedom we have desired in that world.

#Environment_Surrounding_Street_Arts

Korean street arts **started in earnest** as the Gwacheon Festival changed its name from the Gwacheon Madangeuk Festival(focused on traditional Korean outdoor performances) to the Gwacheon Hanmadang Festival(focused on street performances) in 2003. **Some experts view the traditional Korean outdoor performance, which has existed for a long time, as the beginning of Korean street arts. Nonetheless, street arts with a greater variety of expressions and spaces came to people's mind as the Gwacheon Festival began to use the term 'street performance'.** Traditional Korean outdoor performances and street performances both take place in outdoor places but their roots are different. The traditional Korean outdoor performance started in the late 1960s as artists adopted traditional Korea theater styles like the mask dance in order to deal with political themes such as dictatorship, economic inequality and division of the two Koreas. Interestingly, the starting point of traditional Korean outdoor performances is very similar to that of Europe's contemporary street performances, which began by using culture to spread political issues in the era of May 68. On the stylistic front, artists of the traditional Korean outdoor performance actively accept the audience's existence and they also talk to them. They sometimes involve the audience in their performance. This is also a technique that is often found in some of European street performances called "héritage du théâtre forain".

Since the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Seoul Olympics, international performances have been presented in Korea. Stimulated by these performances, Korean artists have carried out a greater variety of experiments. They not only sought the diversity of expressions but they also experimented with performance spaces, leading to the beginning of street arts in the country. Mostly taking place at festivals, performances 'outside the theater' started meeting the public. Based on Koreans' common experiences of protests or games on the street, artists came to consider the street as a space of their artistic expression.

It is also not to miss the fact that the history of Korean street arts is closely related to the street culture that has been experienced by audiences. Street performances as movements of political resistance were on the decline as the culture of protests weakened in the 1990s. In the 21st century, the 2002 FIFA World Cup took place and this occasion brought a large-scale street culture to the country, led by national sports. The audience of a street performance experience a moment of becoming one of the 'people on the street', watching something with others and empathizing with them. Such an experience makes them remember that they were part of a picture of the street in a certain era. In this way, they also regard themselves as participants of street culture. Today's Korean citizens are still seeing street arts led by protest culture and parades. Examples of this include the 'Queer Parade' on the street, 'Mad Pride' about the survival and pride of mental patients, 'Black Tent' serving as a theater in a plaza that resists black lists and <Camino de Ansan> commemorating the sinking of MV Sewol. These events form a street arts culture made not only by artists but also by citizens as 'participants on the street'.

#Important_Trends_of_Korean_Street_Arts

#Environment_of_Creation_and_Distribution_of_Street_Arts

In 2005, performances in the form of street arts appeared for the first time in Korea(<Orpheus> by Momggol and <Street Number 4-59> by Homoludens Company). Before serving as pioneers of street performances, they experienced diverse performances during their studies in Europe. Meanwhile, international street performances(mostly from Europe) were staged in Korea and Korean street arts companies also co-produced performances with international partners(<Sortie de cuisine>, <Ku-do>, <1+1>, <Nal Boa-Look at me> and <Pixel Mountain>). Consequently, young performing artists full of curiosity came to try street performances.

In 2008, Creative VaQi presented <Sancho's Dream> at the Seoul Marginal Theatre Festival and in 2009, Project Jamsang staged <Under Construction> at the Gwacheon Festival. These two performances were characterized by their active use of videos. Later on, in order to encompass different styles including videos, the term 'street performance' was naturally replaced by 'street arts'. In Europe, the terms 'video art for the street' and 'street arts' had already been generalized for several years. A case in point is 'media façade' which often makes use of a building's windows and walls. This has become a video-based genre of street arts by generating spectacular effects through the large surface of video mapping.

In 2009, Korea Street Arts Association was founded, thus enabling street artists to actively exchange information and human resources. Moreover, Korea came to have numerous festivals focused on street arts: Ansan Street Arts Festival(2004), Goyang Lake-Park Arts Festival(2005), [Street Arts Market\(2013\)](#), Seoul Street Arts Festival(2016), Gwangju Street Arts Festival(2017), Pohang Street Arts Festival(2019) and Ulsan Promenade Festival(2019). In addition, the Suwon Theatre Festival also turned into a street arts festival in 2018, greatly contributing to the spread of street arts.

In 2015, Seoul Street Arts Creation Center was opened. As the center began to serve as a creative base camp equipped with production, education, distribution and rehearsal facilities, the Korean street arts scene ushered in another topographical change. In particular, young creators have contributed to the fostering of street arts. Indeed, those coming to the center are as follows: 1. creators who feel artistic thirst in the framework of the traditional performing arts like the theater and who are willing to make their own creative world by doing new forms of work or by getting out of the theater space. 2. creators who are willing to make performances with their own colors, making use of their physical capacity and letting go of texts.

All of the aforementioned street arts festivals are organized by local governments. Such local festivals' major goal is to provide local residents with opportunities to enjoy the arts and culture and to invigorate the urban space. The trend of local governments' festivals actively adopting street arts is the result of combining political interests and the nature of street arts.

In the context of decentralization, local governments have established cultural foundations and run the existing spaces including arts and culture centers. However, it was not enough for them just to present high-quality performances in their local areas and to provide more opportunities to enjoy culture. They needed events where local cultural foundations' chairmen and local governors could greet a huge number of citizens(electors) and offer them things to enjoy. Street arts then emerged as a realistic alternative. Since people can enjoy street arts in their daily space without going to the theater, street arts were regarded as a synonym of cultural democracy. Moreover, street arts absorbed the

circus and clown performances, also gaining popularity. In addition, street performances' visual and spectacular effects such as aerial performances, large puppets and flames, attracted policymakers. These days, each local cultural foundation has attempted to restore community spirit by telling its city's story. Such an attempt also belongs to the trend of being inspired by street arts and actively attracting and increasing street arts performances. In this regard, quantitative criteria(e.g. number of citizens participating in an event) are critical to see if a festival was successful and if it would continue to be held.

In 2020, the unexpected global pandemic led to the cancellation of most street arts festivals. Street arts take place not in indoor arts spaces but in open, public spaces to meet the audience. So street arts may be less vulnerable to the coronavirus. Nevertheless, almost all street arts festivals were cancelled for the great cause of citizens' safety which is the country's priority. On the other hand, among the festivals led by the private sector, there are also those programming street arts: Seoul Fringe Festival and Chuncheon International Mime Festival. These festivals and street arts projects run outside the festivals took place as planned, strictly respecting quarantine measures. Ironically, public arts festivals' mission to meet citizens through the arts seems to have been transferred to the private sector.

In the pandemic era, street arts inside local arts festivals, which are epitomized by 'plaza', 'public' and 'festivity', seem to have lost their ground. In fact, the coronavirus triggered such a situation. Recently, street arts festivals have tended to program different levels of street arts performances that pursue meticulous communication with spaces and audiences. This is not confined to Korean street arts. European street arts have also diversified their sizes, spaces, forms, ways to communicate with audiences and performance hours. And in Europe, the term 'street arts' are gradually replaced by 'arts in the public space'.

In order for street arts festivals to become the sustainable platform of ever-changing street arts, we need a new paradigm: expansion or reduction of space, understanding and creation of local contexts, redefinition of the scope of citizens(audiences) and establishment of relationships with them.

Street arts have also existed outside festivals; artists have presented works highlighting their thoughts and creativity, focusing on contemporary issues, democracy and restoration of public spaces.

<Camino de Ansan>, which took place from 2015 to 2019, is a project remembering and contemplating the sinking of MV Sewol. The Camino de Ansan Exploration Committee, a collective of artists of different genres, planned and produced this project which was also officially invited to the Ansan Street Arts Festival from 2016 to 2018. Meanwhile, during the candlelight vigils in Gwanghwamun Plaza in 2017, MarineBoy(LEE Sung Hyung) presented an installation performance called <Breath> in order to commemorate the 1000 days after the sinking of MV Sewol. Furthermore, artists who don't call themselves 'street artists' also carry out their activities of different forms and levels in public spaces.

#Definition_and_Form

#Attempts_Going_beyond_the_Norm

It is not easy to define street arts in one word. Let me explain why. Street arts began with street performances where artists tried to stage plays on the street for those who don't come to theaters for several reasons. Later on, street arts adopted other genres and experimented with a great variety of forms and content. Consequently, street arts have changed rapidly and we can never predict their future changes. That is why it is difficult to define street arts. Therefore, some people also use the terms like 'arts in the public space', 'urban theatre' and 'unconventional theatre'. Recently, street artists have also made diverse attempts such as site-specific and experienced-based performances. Either consciously or unconsciously, street artists concentrate on notions such as 'freedom', 'resistance' and 'wandering'. Such notions may have led to the different attempts doing away with the existing norm. So defining street arts in one word means establishing a norm, which would run counter to the spirit of street arts. Nevertheless, everything should have its name to find its identity, to exist properly and to communicate. All street performances are different from each other due to the unspecified number of visitors and spaces, very diverse messages, forms, sizes, esthetics and relations. It is necessary to name every project, to keep records, to find each project's meaningfulness and to categorizing the projects. Such a process could contribute to clarifying the scope of Korean street arts and to understanding street arts as a genre.

In this regard, we could try to find specific characteristics of street arts that are not seen in other genres. First of all, such a characteristic would be a physical space which could be a street or a plaza. In a plaza, artists are surrounded by the audience on three or four sides. On the street, they make use of the perspective generated by a linear space. Or, they could also run through that linear space with the audience in a mobile performance. They could also draw on the existing objects in the space. These cases are seen in street arts very often. In contrast, even in the case of an outdoor performance, if it takes place in a theater-like environment with a stage set, it is not considered a street arts performance. This implies that interpreting a space and integrating it into a work is important in street arts.

The physical limits of an outdoor space are also made visible in the use of texts. In an outdoor space, sounds scatter. And the space is vulnerable to outside noises. Meanwhile, the surrounding urban landscape is read as a text. In such a space, a street arts performance tends to have a simple and condensed storyline focused on physical movements rather than on actors' lines and narration found in traditional plays. This also concerns the circus. In this way, many of street arts performances provide instant pleasure while they make images mostly with the symbolism of objects used acrobatically.

Street artists perform for the public in a crowded space without any seat. That is why they search for ways to make themselves visible. In addition to presenting mobile performances, street artists raise their stage in order to secure the audience's visual field. For example, they get on stilts or perform mime on a high chair. They also prepare an aerial performance in an urban space. Such strategies came forward amid the spatial limits.

The absence of seats for the audience also means that the border between the stage and the audience is not clear. This corresponds to the spirit of street arts, regarding citizens' active participation as one of the major goals. So the audience actively participate in the performance and artists try to remove the border between the audience and performers. Or, they involve the audience in their performance just like in clown performances or traditional Korean outdoor performances. In short, the audience's participation is one of the important trends in street arts.

When it comes to lighting and sound, street artists have made their own styles. In their performance, lighting is absent or simplified. Sound is replaced by that of a cart in a mobile performance. Meanwhile, there is a limit to people's capacity to stay focused on what performers say. So performers' text and that of the sound system overlap in different contexts. This is also the heritage of street arts which have developed by overcoming spatial limits.

When the definition of street arts is centered on 'space', what becomes important is not just an open space but the context and site-specific aspect of the space. Street artists conduct more local research compared to those of other performing arts genres. That is also the result of exploring the site-specific aspect of street arts. Here, what becomes important would be the concept of 'street' at the site-specific level.

Numerous citizens, arts and culture policy institutions and even those in the arts scene don't regard street arts as an independent genre. In general, street arts have been considered part of entertainment vitalizing the city. In 2017, Korea Street Arts Association conducted a survey on the current state of street artists. Asked about improvements to make for the development of Korean street arts, about 40% of the respondents said, "raising awareness of the characteristics of street arts as a genre". This issue isn't limited to those outside the street arts scene. It is necessary to understand and share the scope of street arts so that relevant public institutions and those in the street arts scene can reach a consensus.

In the mid-2000s, Korean street arts were at their early stage. At that time, most of the street performances communicated with body language or objects. The circus, whose body movements form its major language, has met the audience as street arts, or as street arts festivals more exactly. Over the recent few years, support for creation and distribution of the circus has become active. Under these circumstances, circus artists have performed in an independent genre called 'contemporary circus'. Furthermore, there are numerous street arts companies that don't define themselves as circus artists but that use the human body as their major language and as a major tool of their artistic embodiment. So in Korea, the border between the circus and street arts isn't clear in terms of genres.

However, in street arts, the site-specific aspect is an essential element defining the genre. In contrast, the circus can be staged not only on the street but also in an indoor space. Considering this, the circus couldn't be a subgenre of street arts. The same is true for the theater. Even if a play is presented on the street, the theater isn't regarded as a subgenre of street arts.

The meaningfulness of clarifying the concept of street arts doesn't consist in differentiating street arts from the existing genres to find their own characteristics. Moreover, it is not to place street arts above the other genres. The twelve companies selected for this book have ceaselessly tried to meet the 'street' and the 'public' with their own methodologies in order to generate ripple effects. The distribution of such ripple effects allows us to see the diverse and complex comprehensiveness of Korean street arts. That is why the book is entitled "Spectrum". This work is about confirming that street arts have always written the history of contemporary artists vibrantly communicating with citizens on the street and about adding future challenges for street arts.

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Interview

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Momggol

YOON Jongyeoun

Established in 2003, Theatre Momggol has drawn attention in the arts scene by presenting works that integrate social contexts through bodies and objets. They continue their work by finding stories of bodies, objets and spaces on the street. They always think about how to visualize bodies' memories and properties. Rather than beginning to create something through dramaturgy, they try to bring out things that stimulate their bodies. They ceaselessly experiment with their own artistic language that feels both fresh and unfamiliar. Doing this, they are willing to evoke what society has forgotten or excluded.

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QR Code for the Interview Video



Impulse
©Daiyoon Lim



What is the source of Momggol's creative ideas? Could you explain the creative method and process of Momggol which moves among bodies, objets and streets?

YOON Jongyeoun We mostly work on things and objets so the material we choose becomes an important starting point for us. For example, we start creation by selecting objects symbolizing the contemporary era or by establishing a space as an expanded concept. Depending on how we look at objects and how we arrange the actors' bodies, we can have a variety of sentiments, tensions and stories. Rather than making something meaningful out of a neutral space like a black box theatre, we try to bring out what has been hidden and invisible by means of the existing space and materials. Stories we met on the street were really diverse and sometimes, they were hiding what is miserable and unknown. So we came to expand our performance venue to the street and we also expanded our stories along with spaces.

How has your style of creation and expression changed so far?

YOON Jongyeoun As we start creating on the basis of actors' bodies and power, we focus on what makes them move and where they are headed with their power. In other words, we begin our work by imagining that we are traveling to a certain destination or an unknown existence. At the beginning, the company often used "nightmare" as a tool to look at different aspects of life. Through a nightmare, we observed life's dark side and we also depicted someone having a nightmare. To us, a nightmare always exists in our lives but we are not accustomed to it so we are afraid and on alert and we also we also build the wall around it. the wall. For instance, the performance <Handcart, Overturned> describes a person who finds themselves under wheels and or who is taken to a certain place by the cart. In contrast, our recent works have more cheerful and satirical elements. That may be because of the changes in life, politics and society. I feel that our society still has many "brakes getting in the way". We are breaking away from something. We are not moving forward and bumping into something. As we reflect on how to deal with these things, we are diversifying our creative methods.

Street Arts
#wandering_about_the_streets



Handcart, Overturned
©Momggol

In <The Grave Faraway>, compared to your previous works, the characters show a different attitude toward the frustrating reality and toward things they encounter amid social changes, compared to your previous works. What stories does the performance, which took place at the center of Gwanghwamun Plaza in Seoul, tell us?

YOON Jongyeoun <The Grave Faraway> depicts those who need to visit someone's grave but who are wandering, not being able to get there. In this work, it isn't important to know where they are headed and who is blocking them. It was made visible naturally during the period when the work was produced. So we rather deleted all the tools that tell the stories concretely. A that time, protesters filled Gwanghwamun Plaza every day after the death of Mr. Baek Nam-gi.¹⁾ On the performance day, the protesters' flags filled the entire plaza which was surrounded by the police. In the lower part of the plaza, a performance was taking place and on the upper part of the plaza, protesters' flags were visible. In such a chaotic situation, we didn't even know if we could stage the performance. So the work's story didn't need any other tool in addition to the given situation. Put differently, it was a work that existed with the era. With the performance, we wanted to show people who feel confused while wandering; they can't go to the grave and they have no choice but to get back to their reality. I'm curious about how the people who were there would have viewed this work even for a moment. It wasn't an easy performance but it was a work with meaningful confusion because it faced and dealt with the multilayered contemporary era.

<The Propaganda>, which was presented later, also seems to tell a story of a given era and space. What is the theme of this performance which was staged just once?

YOON Jongyeoun <The Propaganda> was presented in 2017 when Korea was going through a really confusing period politically. We believed that the performance wouldn't be meaningful unless it is staged in the Gwanghwamun area at that time. So we did it just once and we won't be doing it again probably. In that year, Korean society looked like a train or a wild animal running recklessly. We wanted to make use of the performance to talk about unilateral logic and recklessness in an indirect and satirical way. We also wanted to give people a chance to look at the plaza with different arguments, from a new perspective and sensibility. Just in time, the performance was presented on a day when a certain festival and protests were unveiling different facets of Korean society without any filtering. From our performance venue, we were able to look at the chaotic moment from above. It may have been a coincidence to face such a landscape of overlapping, complex situations. Anyway, the tumultuous scenes in such situations served as an important backdrop for the performance's story. In Korean, there is a concept of "borrowing a landscape". When Korean ancestors built a house, they were believing that they were borrowing a landscape. That concept worked for this performance. That is also the secret behind the production of such a large-scale work even with a small budget.

Editor's Notes

1) After Baek Nam-gi, a participant of the South Korean protests of 2015, died despite his innocence, protests continued in 2016.



The Grave Faraway
©Dayoon Lim

During that period, the series <Something Missing> was also produced as a long-term project in collaboration with Thai artists. The series was also impressive. What made you start collaborating with Thai artists? Could you elaborate on the work process and the results?

YOON Jongyeoun We produced <Something Missing> with a Thai company called B-Floor for three years and staged it with them. The performance is a story of those who lost something but who don't know what it is. Every year, we stayed in Thailand for a month to find stories for the work through joint research and workshops. The performance indirectly reveals untold stories and things happening in a society of censorship and control while indirectly criticizing the era full of irony. B-Floor was ceaselessly producing works with acute messages despite Thailand's social restrictions amid military dictatorship. Their stories and expressions rang true to us so we came to work with them. This collaborative performance is a site-specific, movement-based work. During the performance, we walked around the theater and wildly opened the door of the washroom at the corner. We also staged a worship service on a rooftop. The work received a prize at the Bangkok Theater Festival in Thailand, thus drawing greater attention in the Thai arts scene than in the Korean one. Before that, we had often worked with European artists so we hadn't known about neighboring countries in Asia. So we were happy to work with an Asian country meaningfully, starting with Thailand. During the collaboration, we talked about what had happened in Asian countries throughout history and what influences they had exchanged, from the perspective of world history. We had a high level of mutual trust so we were able to count on and respect each other throughout the collaboration. That was the most precious result. Once we fixed certain stories, we kept developing them from a long-term perspective to make them clear. In this way, we were able to deal with our shared themes more deeply.

Street #don't_know_what_I_lost

You seem to have perseverance to explore certain stories, characters and objets once you start dealing with them. Some of your works have a ladder as an objet. From <Orpheus> to <Impulse>, how was your process of exploring objets and themes?

YOON Jongyeoun <Impulse> deals with the human desire to keep climbing by means of two hemispheres(serving as a roly-poly toy) and a ladder. The performance actively observes and utilizes the limitations of materiality and forms of games. So it seems to have many elements that make the audience react and feel pleased. The work's acrobatics generate tensions and the performance strongly encourages people to move with it. We have actually used a ladder quite often. It has been about 10 years since we began to deal with this objet. Because a ladder has simple lines so it is very easy to change it theatrically and to come up with diverse symbols. Starting by directly exploring an objet, we find stories for our work from the object's stories. This naturally leads to securing elements of creation. Modifying and developing our view of the objet, we condense the existing discoveries. And such research process has led us to the performance <Impulse>. If we create something, it is consumed and dealt with easily. In fact, so many ideas are thrown away. This is also linked to environmental issues. We have persistently tried to make use of different ideas, physical elements and concerns, without throwing them away easily. This may look like something that is inefficient and that isn't fresh, it is important for us to do it till the end without giving up and to hold on to it intentionally.

#groping_around_after_losing_my_destination



Ku-Do
©Monggol

I would like to know how you interpret objets with actors' bodies, deal with the objets and establish relations with them. In your work, do objets and bodies exist with a certain balance and tensions? Could you explain your creative methodologies or approaches?

YOON Jongyeoun We have some basic elements: to try to use an objet anyway, to play by adopting a concept of a theatrical game and to go against the existing balance and gravity. Going beyond this, we get diverse and unexpected stories, memories and experiences depending on where objets and actors' bodies are placed and what their states and differences are. Approaching themes in this way, Momggol imagines horrible and cruel things rather than fun and joyful ones. The former stimulates and intrigues me further. Earlier, I mentioned "nightmare" and it gives us many ideas and allows us to make many attempts.

The Wheel
©Momggol



Momggol has stayed in a studio in the Mullae-dong area in Seoul for a long time, being influenced by the space in many ways. What influences and experiences have the space brought to the company?

YOON Jongyeoun I first came to the studio in Mullae-dong because the rent was not burdensome. The studio is large so many people came to see us, enabling us to forming networks. That is why the space is meaningful. Such networks have been greatly beneficial for us. The Mullae-dong area has many artists and it still has the steel industry which has been there for a long time. Indeed, it is in the area's steel factories that we designed and made materials and tools for our works. So the local area greatly influenced our works and our living patterns. The <Nomadic Festival> first started in Mullae-dong. At this festival whose venue changes every year, ten street arts companies created and presented their works in a specific space. Their works were also connected under the common theme. The artists met the audience by experimenting with different ways of observing places and cities. After its beginning in Mullae-dong, the festival changed its venue every year, leading the artists to study and create together to present performances. It may look tiring and inefficient to create new works every time through joint research and to discuss endlessly in such a process. But I believe that a creator needs to insist on such an unproductive method of creation. Such an idea is also having a strong influence on the work we currently produce. Unfortunately, the <Nomadic Festival> isn't held anymore. I still want to make something that is not commercialized easily. But it seems that I came to live a life focused on efficiency comped to the past. So I'm considering changing our patterns of creation and research again.

What are the keywords of your recent creation? What does Momggol want to do in the future?

YOON Jongyeoun Momggol is seeking a new way of creation. The production methods based on strictness and authority that theater companies had before need to be overturned to be able to tell stories for today's life. In other words, it is time for us to restructure and redesign our methods of creation to continue our work. It is true that we have already done many works in the name of Momggol but we are willing to make and continue other stories and works through changes and attempts.

MarineBoy

LEE Sung Hyung

MarineBoy started his clown circus in 2003. He came to call himself MarineBoy because he grew up in an island. As a creator, he is interested in cutting-edge technology, ecology, nature and humans. In general, what he sees and feels in a street landscape leads to a performance. Recently, he has vigorously done not only the circus but also creative activities making use of devices made by himself, asking questions to the world in different ways. Willing to embrace both joy and sorrow in this world, the clown MarineBoy continues to expand his realm of activities on the border between the circus and street arts.

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QR Code for the Interview Video



Circus Alone
©MarineBoy



What made you MarineBoy a clown?

LEE Sung Hyung At first, I started by working part time as a clown at supermarkets and shops. I'm a shy guy from an island so it was quite challenging to disguise myself as a clown to meet people. At that time, other clowns I met accidentally informed me of "juggling". I then bought juggling tools to start practicing it little by little. It was so fun and worked well and in a few months, I reached a technical level that others couldn't imitate. I felt great about acting as a clown so I continued to do it. On stage, I'm a funny clown but once I move backstage, I'm calm and think much. So I personally feel the difference between the two persons in me. At first, it was as if I were wearing someone else's mask but it has already been 17 years.



Breath
©MarineBoy

Performing <Circus Alone> as a clown, do you have any memorable moment? I would like to know what you think of a clown comforting and caring about people.

LEE Sung Hyung As a clown, the most memorable moment came at the 2015 Ansan Street Arts Festival. The sinking of MV Sewol resulted in canceling the festival in 2014 and I participated in the event the following year. I prepared a performance for the festival's program called the "City of Clowns". I presented <Circus Alone>. I had already done it previously but at that time, I expressed my intention to comfort people through the performance's small elements. This was to talk to the city and citizens that had gone through common sorrow. The performance has a scene where a child appears on stage. Normally, I make something with a balloon for the child. But on that day, I made a yellow ribbon(symbolizing commemoration of victims of the sinking of MV Sewol). I then held the child, saying, "Please do not forget me. Please remember me". My funny tone of a clown would have made some people laugh but it would also have made others empathize with it, feeling comforted. What I said on stage also expressed my determination. And during the performance, it rained. Thousands of people were watching my performance under the rain. It was also raining in my heart. My performance won the grand prize in the "City of Clowns" program. The prize was more precious and sadder than any other prize.

Street Arts #waves_in_daily_life

#ecounter_breaking_solitude_

How would you define MarineBoy the clown and MarineBoy the creator?

LEE Sung Hyung MarineBoy disguised as a clown always generates lively and cheerful energy. The clown thinks about how to hang out joyfully with the audience. He often says that he wants to be a clown embracing both joy and sorrow in this world. On the other hand, MarineBoy the creator is closer to my life backstage. He is serious, have lots of concerns and doesn't know how to enjoy himself. Instead, he diligently learns and studies something. He does something patiently and diligently. He focuses on what makes him curious and he waits for an occasion to transform his thoughts and concerns into a creative work. And when he is willing to make a work, he doesn't hesitate to do it. He hides technology inside art. He doesn't make technology visible and he lets art lead technology. That is the work I want to do. Without clarifying a certain border and staying inside, I want to meet audiences in a variety of ways. That should be my greatest joy.

Technologies seen in most clown performances and those discovered by MarineBoy look similar but they are different. You presented several performances using technologies. What made you produce these performances? When did you begin to change and expand your method of creation?

LEE Sung Hyung There used to be a project called <Nomadic Festival>. At the festival, artists gathered together to plan something and they discussed common themes for a long time. And they presented their own works they created. Participating in the festival four years, I tried and used different technologies to present performances. I had made performances alone before but the performances I made with other creators gave me power to apply my existing technologies. The performances included <Smart Cockroach Contest>, which is made with a vibration motor and labyrinth, <Looking for My Brother>, which is about flying helium balloons with leaflets to find his own brother, and <Strange Fruit> which asks questions about people looking at the world while they are trapped in their smartphones, ignoring their reality. It was an occasion to gradually discover aspects in this world that MarineBoy the clown hadn't seen before.



#laboratory

The performance <Breath>, which took place in Gwanghwamun Plaza, conveys a message about the sinking of MV Sewol. Similarly, <Grandma's Cart> also started with your interest in weak people in society. Could you tell me about the two works?

LEE Sung Hyung I presented <Breath> while I was about to take a break after finishing several performances. Citizens in Seoul used to go to Gwanghwamun Plaza to attend candlelight vigils. I then heard that there would be a gathering commemorating 1,000 days after the sinking of MV Sewol. So for a few days, I made an apparatus by welding it day and night. This is how the apparatus works. First, people put air into nine bicycle pumps connected to the apparatus. I then let the air get out of the apparatus at once. Then people can hear the sound of the marine signal horn. I designed the apparatus so that citizens gathered in the plaza could operate the pumps together, sweating. An elderly man turned around and shed tears as he heard the sound of the marine signal horn making him remember the sinking of the ferry. Meanwhile, a child gave a silent prayer in front of the life vest while pumping with such a small hand. As a creator, I wanted to use my artistic tools to be with those holding candles. It was an occasion to remember many stories together so it is still resonating in my heart.

Daily objects I see around me and things I wouldn't have observed before seem to attract me. <Grandma's Cart> also started from such things. One day, I saw a cart with a big pile of boxes. Whenever I passed by, I saw more boxes in the cart. And the pile got bigger to the point that it would be hard to believe that it was done by a human. One day, the cart disappeared. So the process of searching for the owner of the cart became a performance. <Grandma's Cart> is a puppet performance that depicts an old lady collecting scrap paper in slow movement. A robot plays the old lady pulling the cart full of scrap paper in an urban landscape. As for the previous performances, MarineBoy the clown appeared as the main character to be applauded by the audience but in <Grandma's Cart>, MarineBoy in this performance hides himself in the crowd to control the robot and he isn't applauded till the end. Instead, he can listen to what people say closely. An elderly man kept talking to the old lady pulling the cart and he gave her 3,000 won. A woman held the old lady's hand, turned around and shed tears. In this way, I had my eyes opened to stories and emotions that I hadn't felt in my previous clown performances.

Grandma's Cart
©MarineBoy



In addition to creating performances, you have studied and produced a circus tent called <Circus Island>, which is quite interesting. What made you produce the tent? What process do you go through so that a creative idea can become a work after technical experiments and research?

LEE Sung Hyung I once lived in Incheon City. After school, I got money from my piggy bank and went to see the circus in a tent-type theater in the vacant lot of my neighborhood. The circus performance had a clown, monkey and donkey. The name of the circus would have been Dongchun Circus. And in 2012, I went to the Aurillac Festival in France and on that occasion, I saw performances in and out of a tent. Then I really wanted to get the tent. These two experiences of seeing a circus tent met each other subtly to make me interested in making a space for the circus which is located neither on the street nor in a theater. Later on, in 2015, I attended a workshop on making architectural structures organized by Seoul Street Arts Creation Center. The workshop brought me to 'La Cité des Arts de la Rue' in Marseille, France, allowing me to make a tent miniature. At first, I gathered branches in the area and I cut and connected them to design a tent. Afterward, I studied a 3D design program to carry out the early stage of making the structure. Finally in 2019, I completed the circus tent called <Circus Island>. It required so much hard work and time. I still feel dizzy when I think about the work process. What remains to be done is to equip the tent with its cover, seats and internal system. After finishing all this, I want to take people to the tent island, on a boat I'm also making. I will make them feel the sea, waves and wind through sound effects as if they were actually in an island in the heart of the sea.

Circus Island
©Goguma



A few years ago, you began to make a community called 'Showmohs' with other artists and you recently opened the "Space One Point One". You seem to be making an autonomous ecosystem. What results have you seen so far? What have been your concerns and challenges?

LEE Sung Hyung Performing alone for a long time, I heard that a studio in the Mulla-dong area in Seoul was offering a reasonable rent. So I got a basement studio. After that, I kept asking other artists having personal studios to make a bigger studio which would not be in a basement. I then secured a space of 200m², which felt quite big at that time, in Ilsan City. The name of the community 'Showmohs', which is composed of artists who have worked alone for a long time, means to "overturn the 'show'". The group has artists of different genres including those doing the circus, soap bubble performances and drawing shows. Afterward, we moved to a new space in the Yangpyeong-dong area in the district of Yeongdeungpo-gu in Seoul. There, we made quite a nice theater space. Moving around the neighborhood, we performed circus acrobatics and promoted ourselves while flying soap bubbles. Our first performance attracted so many people who filled the entire venue. We then came back to the Mulla-dong area again to have a new space located on a high floor. We are all artists so we may have become competitors but we didn't. That is because staying together, we have comforted each other with solidarity and joy.

I came to make the "Space One Point One" because I needed to have a big space where I could produce and keep large apparatuses, with my performing arts work expanding. The space was made by LIM Dong-joo from CroquikyBrothers and LEE Sung Hyung the MarineBoy. We thought of what the space could look like, and then, we designed and built the space for three months. Now, it has a workshop, storeroom, office and rest space. I hope that the space is used for many artists to communicate and dream of new works. My goal is to gather together artists to help them find ways to survive and realize their dreams one by one. I believe that artists should be able to learn autonomy, without relying on anyone. These days, not only two of use but many other people come to this space. For example, an artist comes almost every day to make automated puppets. Here, we also collaborate with different people, including those working on design, technical advice and production, without limiting their roles and collaboration methods.



MarineBoy has diverse identities such as a clown, inventor and performer. What will he do in the future? What is your future dream?

LEE Sung Hyung For me, the circus is not only about acrobatics but also about everything in the world. Everyone is living a life comparable to the circus. Life itself may be the circus. In the future, MarineBoy will complete the circus tent which is a long-term project. And with the completed tent, he will wander everywhere. Going beyond clown and circus performances as acrobatics, I also want to found a school that could train clowns as artisans. I want to start a festival for artists as well. Someday, I want to develop an apparatus that will amaze the entire world and become an inventor helping people overcome disasters. And I want to make a house I will live in. Above all, as an artist, I want to be someone asking questions about many things in the world. People often tell me, "You worked 17 years without break. When will you get some rest?" But there are so many things that intrigue me so it seems that I already became a person who can't take a break. There are so many things to study and learn. The excitement of meeting the audience still makes me move.

MOMSORI

KIM Jinyoung

MOMSORI creates and presents performances using sound as a major material. Since their founding in 2008, they have explored diverse performances and spaces to actively experiment with all sounds including human voices. With these creative works, they have resonated with audiences. Without setting any limit for sound materials and resonance methods, their journey still goes on. Focusing on the basic power of human voices that could transcend social and psychological oppression, they share the healing power of voices with people not only through performances but also through voice therapy workshops.

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QR Code for the Interview Video



Your Own Lullaby
©MOMSORI



What is the 'bodily sound(MOMSORI)'? And what is the 'voice theater' for the voice theater MOMSORI?

KIM Jinyoung A voice doesn't just come from the throat. Although the vibration starts in the throat, the sound spreads all around the body to make different parts resonate. That is the "sound" we are talking about. So we are using the term "bodily sound" in an attempt to move our energy and interest, which used to be focused on the throat, to the entire body. From the body, we try to bring out unknown energy through sound vibration. Carefully observing the vibration that makes the body resonate, it becomes clear that the heart is always there. To express our willingness to use sounds making both the body and heart resonate, we added the word "MOM" which means "heart" in Korean. And we came up with the "voice theater" after looking for something that could explain what we do. Our work has been characterized by its unfamiliar and experimental form. So whenever someone asked us what we do, we used to answer, "We use voices. What we do is similar to the theater and it cannot be explained completely with music". Our name seems to explain where we are headed.



Breath of Lullaby
©Korea Theater Festival 2019

How do you create? What are your main interests and how do you choose the directions and themes of your creation?

KIM Jinyoung Our interest is neither music nor the theater. We use sounds that are found on the border between musical and verbal elements. Rather than starting from a script or a story, I focus on creating something out of a certain material. I then tell stories of what I can imagine through direct contact with bodies, sounds and spaces and what stimulates me as I generate sounds. Each of our works has a different creative method but they are all based in improvisation. When I go to a certain space, I'm influenced by its colors, smell and altitude. And I'm also influenced by people who are in there and what state they are in. So we create something by accepting the surroundings, spaces, people and energy like animals and by beginning to improvise. This is also why we must rehearse in the very place where the performance will take place.

I believe that improvisation isn't a technique but a willingness to listen to each other's sound and to harmonize with the sound. So the power of listening is important. When we listen to each other's sound carefully to generate one's own sound, the two sounds become one, float around together and expand. This is a sound experience where vibrations and wavelengths meet each other. We carry out sound improvisation while looking for a moment when a sound expands effortlessly. And the impulse of the body is also important. As I mentioned earlier, our sound is not only in our head but it is generated by making all parts of the body resonate. So we also move and use our bodies often during a performance.

You have explored different places to perform. How do you find performance spaces? Is a space an important material for a work?

KIM Jinyoung Selection of a space is linked to daily experiences. Depending on what we experience and how we are inspired in daily life, we choose a performance space. <Voice Caves in the City> was first created at Seoul Street Arts Creation Center. The place where the performance took place used to be an intake station. This is a very big place. The sounds I generate there climbed the walls to make me expand. I was surprised to see that a human sound can expand that way. In that space, a sound expanded without any limit. Believing that such an experience would be necessary for all of us who become smaller every day, I began to create <Voice Caves in the City>. On the other hand, <Breath of Lullaby> is different. I like to go camping and I often visit parks. One day, I was lying down in a pavilion inside a park. At that time, I thought of the performance. I realized that our auditory sense becomes different when we are seated and when we are lying down in nature. When people are lying down on hammocks, they seem to become carefree and vulnerable like babies. In such a situation, their senses become more subtle and sensitive. Through this performance, we wanted the audience to sense sounds with such subtleness and vulnerability. So we decided to have them lie down on hammocks.

If you start creating a work from improvisation, what process of structuring do you go through to complete a performance? What role does the members' trust play in this process?

KIM Jinyoung Our creation is based on improvisation but our performances are not completely improvised. We do have a certain theatrical direction to make the form and structure of a work. Nevertheless, if we emphasize the structure too much, the liveliness of improvisation disappears. In other words, the sound has a form but it doesn't have any content. It is difficult to strike a balance between the two. At the stage of creation, we don't highlight the structure. Rather than that, we focus more on making an optimum condition for approaching the structure and for making us want to generate sounds. We are still practicing that. We are studying how to ensure a sound's improvisation, impulse and willingness while building a stable structure.

That is why the creators' trust has a strong influence on our work. Our members have a great variety of characteristics. They have different sounds and capacities. When different people gather together to generate sounds, it is important to see how much they accept each other's sound and if each of them can maintain their own color in harmony with others. Such consideration is more important than focusing on generating one's own sound. We didn't have such trust from the beginning. After taking some time to trust each other and to look forward to possibilities, everyone is now capable of generating their own sound. From this, I'm willing to try different mixtures with their sounds.

Your early voice performance <Jar> was a solo performance. What are the theme and form of the work?

KIM Jinyoung Right after founding the company, I was fascinated by things like narration, structure and concept. But I wanted to express them in a non-narrative, non-rational way. This performance skillfully transforms the essential and concrete materials of a jar(water, fire, air and earth) into abstract sounds. Each of these elements has its own sound improvisation. Such a series of improvisation describes how a woman gives birth to a baby. First, the woman drinks water from the jar. After that, she becomes showing and gives birth to a baby. With the child, she listens to the sounds of the jar again. I wanted to depict a woman's life and the life cycle. Considering the percussionist joining the performance, it has a stronger musical element. On the other hand, it is also theatrical in that it has a clear storyline.



Voice performance <Jar>
©MOMSORI



Your Own Lullaby
©MOMSORI



Later on, <Voice Caves in the City> enabled your transition to performances in spaces outside theaters. What is the performance about?

KIM Jinyoung <Voice Caves in the City> is a performance that takes the audience to an unreal place in a city to make them hear the sounds resonating in the space. We performed in several places where sounds resonate like in a primitive cave. We wanted to provide the audience with a sensitive experience through which they could feel certain primitive power. So the performance has many ritual elements. As for our previous performances at theaters, we used microphones and speakers additionally to our voices. But since <Voice Caves in the City>, we have mostly performed only with the resonance of our own voices. That is because we came to think that we could make a space resonate so that it could replace the expansion of sounds through microphones and speakers. The audience of this performance first listens to sounds in an unreal space. In the middle of the performance, they move to a very ordinary space to listen to daily sounds. At that point, they hear the sounds they have always heard but with different senses. This is something like making a time difference. The audience then come back to the cave and see the end of the performance by attending a sound rite together. We wanted to find an interesting point where an unexpected daily space becomes a place full of resonating sounds and ritual elements.

Could you tell me about <Breath of Lullaby> and <Your Own Lullaby>? Do you have any reason why you have continued to present works dealing with lullabies?

KIM Jinyoung We find a lullaby attractive not because the song makes someone sleep. Rather than that, what is important for us is how we listen to a lullaby and how a lullaby works. In addition to songs, other sounds (e.g. sounds of humming, reading a book and gently talking to each other) could also be lullabies. In your childhood, you are comforted by lullaby-like sounds made by those who take care of you. But once you become an adult, you need to take care of someone else rather than receiving others' care. Then you no longer have an opportunity to listen to a lullaby comforting you, even though every adult has an inner child. We wanted to sing lullabies for such adults so that they could have an experience of being looked after like a child, through the sound of a lullaby. In this context, we created <Breath of Lullaby> where everyone lies down on a hammock to enjoy the sound of the lullaby, space and time. And after the outbreak of the global pandemic, we wanted to meet even one person watching our performance so we created <Your Own Lullaby> which invites only one person to each show. In addition, we are also running a program called <My Lullaby> as part of our voice therapy workshop. During this program for refugees, the participants brought and sang their own lullabies. For a lullaby, not its lyrics but its vibrations are important. We wanted to share sounds and vibrations that could touch people's bodies and comfort their hearts.

How was the experience of meeting one person through <Your Own Lullaby>? Did you discover anything in this new type of relationships?

KIM Jinyoung Although their motif is the same(lullaby), the two works <My Own Lullaby> and <Breath of Lullaby> are completely different performances. What differentiates each of them is how we communicate with the audience and to which degree we involve them in the performance. In <My Own Lullaby>, the performer talks to the person in a more intimate way. And the person also participates in the performance more actively. For example, we make a lullaby for the person together and sing it. The person's breath, rhythm and energy influence us. As it is only for one audience at a show, we had to stage five shows a day so it was not an easy attempt for the performers. But while actually presenting the work, the performance was comparable to meditation. It isn't an event that requires lots of energy. Rather than that, it feels closer to daily life.

The major elements of your work seem to include not only the intentional sounds from bodies but also those from objets, spaces and passing time. How do these elements function?

KIM Jinyoung Whether it is generated by a human or an object, a sound can express sentiments. The sound of flowing water and branches that are broken convey different sentiments, attractive aspects and images. So we actively explore sounds from objets. In the same vein, the wind is also important. Breath is a wind, too. Right now, this space also has winds. Breath and winds are connected. Rather than just making sounds, it feels more comfortable for me to find a feeling of a sound moving through the wind. So we use the wind as an important element.

Does your voice therapy workshop pursue "art as a therapy"? What are the similarities and differences between a performance and a workshop in terms of their direction or intention?

KIM Jinyoung A performance and a workshop are different but they influence each other. That is because there is a difference between watching what is intended by artists during a performance and generating your own sounds. I have taught sounds for a long time so without workshops, I will feel that something is missing. I want to make use of the workshops to help people newly discover their own sounds and face other aspects of life through sounds. That is what differentiates a workshop from a performance. I want to share the ways and extensionality of sounds. It is not necessarily "therapy" healing something but it is close to untying a knot.



Voice Caves in the City
©MOMSORI



Street #public_place

BONGnJOULE

AHN Jaehyun

BONGnJOULE was founded in 2015 as AHN Jaehyun met the circus after acting at theaters in the Daehakro area in Seoul. Based on the circus acrobatics using a Chinese pole and tightwire, the company pursues contemporary circus performances combining other genres. In particular, BONGnJOULE embodies on stage 'heterotopia' (space-time where reality and symbolic presences become intertwined). In this context, they make works focusing on human weaknesses behind splendid feats of acrobatics and on daily life that feels unfamiliar. The company's representative works include <IT'S GOOD>, <BURN>, <The Road to Heaven> and <Get Drunk>.

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QR Code for the Interview Video



IT'S GOOD
©BONGnJOULE



Introducing your company, you said that you embody 'heterotopia' through the symbolic existence of circus acrobatics. Could you explain this more in detail?

AHN Jaehyun I came across the concept of 'heterotopia' while reading a thesis about Borges at graduate school. It means a condition in which a real world has an unfamiliar space, a symbolic space, an unfamiliar world, the border between real and fictional worlds and symbolic existence. That was so interesting. Circus acrobatics constitute something bizarre and weird because there are many movements resisting gravity. So I believed that putting the circus in a real space could embody an unfamiliar and different space which form heterotopia. Such a concept of spatial heterotopia is closely linked to why I want to do the circus on the street. A theater has a space close to a fiction or utopia with its lighting and stage effects. I didn't find it very interesting to put the circus into this already fictional space. But a street is a real, daily space. Imagine that you are in such a daily space. Out of the blue, you see a man walking on a tightwire, climbing a high pole and falling suddenly. And then, he goes back to his daily space. This fascinated me.



The Road to Heaven
©BONGnJOULE

Street Arts #my_first_performance

BURN
©SFAC



The creation of the performances such as <I, BONGnJOULE> and <The Road to Heaven> and more recent ones <IT'S GOOD> started with your personal acrobatics. What is the difference between these works and your previous plays?

AHN Jaehyun I produced BONGnJOULE's first performance <Get Drunk> after training for circus acrobatics for less than six months. At that time, I was a beginner so this first work was focused on a certain theatrical atmosphere rather on acrobatics. I was on the border between the theater and circus so I expressed my state and determination with the poem "Get Drunk" in a theatrical way. But in fact, what I want to do ultimately is not just to express an atmosphere but to evoke a certain message through repetitive movements and acrobatics. That is because I'm not interested in the theatrical approach of choosing a message before making a work. Performing plays more than ten years, I didn't feel comfortable about such an approach. Rather than that, I prefer naturally bringing out a simple message by repeating existential, simple and easy movements. What is challenging is that I have two persons in me: AHN Jaehyun the director and AHN Jaehyun the performer. AHN Jaehyun the performer just repeats training and that's it. But as soon as AHN Jaehyun the director comes in to try to find a certain meaning, it becomes difficult. Every day, I train and take notes. This leads to accumulating curiousness and ideas little by little, for six months or a year. And that naturally results in a performance. In such a case, the performance is simple but enables people to empathize with it easily. At the same time, such a work isn't light at all. Nevertheless, AHN Jaehyun the director doesn't wait for this and he intervenes to constantly give a certain meaning.

While acting, I thought that I wasn't recognized by others. So I became less interested and I felt that I was being kicked out more and more. I was already 35 at that time. After attending different workshops, I held on to the circus as a last resort. I had no choice and I had to work hard. When I was an actor, I didn't use my body very much. And I started the circus not at a young age. So I had to really concentrate. I walked on the tightwire four or five hours a day. As an actor, I talked to others and hung out with them often. During that period, I wasn't able to tell my story to the fullest. But working alone and keeping a diary, I gradually organized my thoughts. After organizing them, I became able to meet people more actively. What is different from my days as an actor is that I have more time alone and that staying alone has enabled true communication.



Street Arts #free_but_dispassionate

Although you discovered the circus, which requires long training, in your mid-30s, you had amazing results in just four years. Could you explain your daily routine of training?

AHN Jaehyun There has been a change. Four years ago, I did more muscle training but now, I do aerobic exercise and stretching much more. That is a natural change. As I grow old, my physical capacity weakens so I came to do more stretching and yoga in order to make up for that. My daily routine is quite simple. For an hour, I do some exercise that makes me sweat. For another hour, I do core workout. For two to three hours, I practice Chinese pole climbing and tightwire walking. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, I usually do pole climbing and on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I do tightwire walking. If I need to prepare a tightwire performance, I do tightwire walking three times a week and pole climbing, twice. If a pole performance is planned, I do the opposite. What is important is not to practice only one of the two skills throughout the week because I'm bong(pole) and joule(tightwire). These two acrobatic skills require the use of totally different muscles. So doing both seems to have effects of compensation and balance. I use different muscles in rotation and practice movements that feel different. This seems to help me do this activity for an extended period of time.

IT'S GOOD
©BONGnJOULE



In <I, BONGnJOULE> and <The Road to Heaven>, you performed with Korean traditional music including folk songs from Gyeonggi Province and Korean instruments like the gayageum and daegeum. Have Korean traditional elements influenced BONGnJOULE's circus?

AHN Jaehyun I don't know much about Korean traditional music or theater. I didn't add these elements intentionally. After presenting <Get Drunk>, I became eligible for financial support and I produced <Contemporary Circus BONGnJOULE> which took place at Mary Hall at Sogang University. It was an omnibus-type performance combining the circus with different genres: 'Korean Theater and BONGnJOULE', 'Music and BONGnJOULE' and 'Dance and BONGnJOULE'. During the performance, there was a scene where I performed with pansori singer LEE Jaram and Korean traditional musicians. That occasion allowed me to discover the possibility and potential of collaboration with Korean music. I think that not only the Korean traditional performing arts but also traditional sounds, which don't always need accompaniment and which highlight breath, perfectly match the acrobatic movements of the circus. Pole climbing and tightwire walking make you feel the performer's breath. I believed that if this breath meets that of a pansori singer and musical instruments, that would be interesting. That is why I tried that combination in <The Road to Heaven>. Meanwhile, I chose Korean traditional musical instruments for my performance quite simply. First, I was inspired by the shape of the Chinese pole which looks like a pipe that is empty inside. That reminded me of wind instruments, and then the daegeum. On the other hand, I wanted to compare tightwire walking to playing string instruments like the gayageum. In short, I didn't add traditional instruments just because they are part of the Korean traditional performing arts but I did it because I liked the feeling when I first collaborated with Korean traditional artists. I have actually collaborated with them for four or five years. Now, we are used to each other's breath and we can exchange it. Indeed, I believe that the communication between acrobatics and music makes my performances unique.

I haven't done Korean traditional tightrope walking but I saw some masters doing it. They asked me where I had learned Western tightwire walking. In my view, the biggest difference between Western and Korean tightrope skills is found in the energy used for movements. A Korean tightrope requires many dynamic movements going up and down. In contrast, Western tightwire generates more static movements going back and forth. In other words, the directions of the movements are different. And I use two kinds of wire: slackwire and tightwire. Slackwire makes me use the lower parts of the body more than the upper ones and for tightwire, the opposite is true. This may not be a perfect explanation but to give you an image, slackwire is similar to Korean dance and tightwire, to ballet.

Street #daily_life

#life #ordinary #public #everyone

You staged <The Road to Heaven> many times both in Korea and other countries. What was the reaction of overseas audiences? Please explain how you communicate with your audience while performing the circus with sophisticated acrobatics on the street, which is an unorganized, raw place unlike a theater.

AHN Jaehyun Overseas audiences' attitude is "all or nothing". They really like my performance or they just go away. As for Koreans, most of them stop to watch my performance because it has traditional Korean elements like folk songs from Gyeonggi Province, pansori and music played by the Korean instrument daegeum. In the case of overseas audiences, some of them find my performance unfamiliar and go away as soon as it starts while others watch it out of curiosity and stay focused, even giving us a standing ovation. <The Road to Heaven> could be called a non-verbal performance but its music has lyrics and I even sing myself. But the lyrics in Korean wouldn't have been very important. Seeing me climb the pole and fall repetitively, some people kept concentrating on it, thinking, "Until when could he climb?". They also empathized with the meaning of such repetition.

In most circus performances based on acrobatics, the performer concentrates on themselves to express their excellence, rather than making eye contact with the audience and communicating with them. On the street, there are lots of risk factors because the artist performs for an unprepared audience in a place more disordered than a theater. So for the first two years, I didn't consider audiences. At that time, my goal was just to get it done. This seems to have appealed to people because such a performance is less burdensome and it doesn't convey a specific message. And from my third year, I came to concentrate more on that approach. It doesn't mean that I don't communicate with people. I just found a way suitable for audiences on the street. For me, a good performance should be able to demonstrate that behind splendid feats of circus acrobatics, I'm not different from them. A street has many risks but that could also be an advantage and that keeps me from being obsessed with performing perfect acrobatics.

What is the dream of AHN Jaehyun the artist? Is there any circus performance you want to discover?

AHN Jaehyun The company's name BONGnJOULE(pole and wire) would make you think that I have set a certain limit to my circus acrobatics. But there are so many things I could discover only with the pole and wire. So I may not find all of them before my death. I will make efforts to ceaselessly carry out research within the context of the pole and wire and to find something new. These days, I'm interested in augmented reality. I'm dreaming of making more interesting moments by combining my Chinese pole and tightwire with AR. But it doesn't look easy.

I had always been dreaming of becoming a famous person recognized by others. But after finishing <IT'S GOOD>, I changed my mind. It's also related to what this work is about. My dream is to make works that could communicate with those living today with me and to comfort and cheer for them with my performance.

CCOT

LEE Cheolsung and
HA Sohjeong

CCOT creates performances through materials from the visual arts and poetry. In public spaces, they try different projects bringing out what is deep inside in people. Before founding the company, its director LEE Cheolsung made his debut as a poet and published collections of poems with the publishing company Moonji. While studying at the School of Visual Theater in Israel in 2000, he established CCOT. The company produces works that transform streets and daily lives into artistic spaces and that explore the depth of life. In addition to actively creating and performing in Korea, they were invited by numerous European street arts festivals such as the Chalon dans la rue(France) and FiraTàrrega(Spain), thus sharing Korean street arts around the world.

www.visualtheater.kr
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QR Code for the Interview Video



Massager
©CCOT



What made you establish the CCOT?

LEE Cheolsung Before founding the CCOT in 2000, I used to write poems in my room. But one day, I felt certain resistance from my body. It was as if my body were screaming, telling me to save it. So I thought that I would need to do something other than what I had been doing. It was in this context that I met the theater and I immediately fell into it. As I used to write poems, I wondered if I could create performances just like writing poems, for reflecting my own attitude as a writer in a performance that I create. I went to the school of Visual Theater in Israel as there was no place where I could study this at that time in Korea. Soon after that, I formed a company and began to create works. The name of the company CCOT, which means 'flower' in Korean, symbolizes what is on-site and ephemeral. A flower in full blossom is so splendid and beautiful but after it withers, it feels so futile. Unlike other genres, the performing arts don't leave anything behind, just like a flower that disappears sadly. That is why I like the performing arts.



From left to right
**LEE Cheolsung and
HA Sohjeong**

How do poetic styles influence your creation of performances? Could you tell me about how CCOT creates performances?

LEE Cheolsung In general, artists could start creating something from verbal elements like a message, theme and context. But we start creating works mostly from materials. So what we do could be called a 'performance of materials'. If a poem directly expresses things like 'me', 'you', 'us', 'love' and 'solidarity', it loses its power. The more the poet argues for something, the more they lose power. Instead, if the poet talks about a 'stone', 'stream', 'weed', 'sand' and 'swaying grass', that poem often becomes powerful. The same is true for the performing arts. The performing arts are basically synthetic so artists can deal with a huge number of materials. They can tell stories from diverse materials on the street including audiovisual elements, shapes and spaces. Taking <Rock, Rolling> as an example, I first experimented with throwing stones on the street just like ducks and drakes. I then imagined a person rolling like a stone. Such an image led me to Sisyphus from Greek mythology. I believe that such a way of starting from materials to reach a big theme makes a performance armed with poetic power.

How is your process of connecting research materials to creation? Could you explain this through the performance <Rock, Rolling>?

HA Sohjeong <Rock, Rolling> started with an image of a stone and homeless person. Once I have an image, I keep on imagining, finally finding my own story. At the beginning of creating the performance, I thought about what a 'stone' would be. Then I experimented with and explored numerous images coming from a stone. For example, like a stone, a person is kicked by others. He also rolls everywhere, stops somewhere and gets out again to keep rolling. Meanwhile, he is solid like a stone made of multiple layers with passing time. Finally, this person resembling a stone does throw a stone. So what was the most important for the performance was 'stone'. Rich interpretation starting from stone formed a basis for the work.

Each of <Rock, Rolling> and <The Wall> has similar character. Although their stories are different, the two works seem to have something in common.

LEE Cheolsung Making many works has led us to have some main directions. First, there are community-based performances like <Massager>, <Self-Massager> and <Paper Human>. Other performances go deep inside people's nightmare or fantasy to unveil isolated individuals' stories. Examples of this are <The Wall> and <Rock, Rolling>. These works have worm-like characters who are invisible in society or who look drunk or dirty. I believe that humans are natural beings before they become social beings. A person, who is a natural being rather than any other identity, faces so many things in society. In <The Wall>, a drunken person is going home in the evening. He is so drunk that he sees fantasy on a big wall in the city. The wall has a big mural painting of a tree. When the person urinates on the wall, the painting disappears instantly. <Rock, Rolling> also depicts a person's sentiment. The person, who is homeless, wants to see his daughter. In society, he is a dangerous person throwing stones on the street. In the performance, the police come to him and start fighting with tear gas. With personal desires expressed, resistance to oppression comes out. Through this work, we wanted to ask a question about what our existence in society looks like. I think that an artist is a spiritual medium. Doing what could be called a 'rite', artists make such questions visible while also sharing and relieving something and making people empathize. Creating works, I suddenly found myself doing these things.



Rock, Rolling
@CCOT

What you said reminds me of other performances where a “spiritual medium” appears differently but more actively. In <Paper Window> and <A Giant’s Table>, a certain dominating character appears on stage and that character leads the story or generates certain effects. What thoughts did you have while creating these performances?

LEE Cheolsung <Paper Window> and <A Giant’s Table> are media drawing performances. A painter actually draws a picture during the performance. On stage, the painter’s existence becomes very big as a giant through a media apparatus. The performer then enters the scene to go this way and that way and starts a journey in the hands of the giant and his painting. Very easily, the person’s inner fantasy or nightmare becomes visible. The person is trapped in the giant’s hands or sometimes flies in the sky. I created these performances in 2007 and 2011 respectively. During that period, my children were going to elementary school. The sensibility I developed by raising the kids led to these two works. Creativity, games, fun and freedom were connected to the performances so naturally. While creating the works, I reflected on the fact that everyone(adult or child) has their own inner world. And I thought about these philosophical questions. “What would dominate such an inner world?”, “Is the giant in the performance a god or capitalism?”

Street Arts
#things_becoming_art_anywhere
#everyone_becoming_art



Massager
©CCOT



Among the performances by CCOT, <Massager> particularly allowed you to meet different people at a deeper level. What made you start creating the work?

LEE Cheolsung As for our performances using paper as a major medium, there are <Paper Human>, <Massager>. And recently we made <Self-Massager>, which was created amid the global pandemic. These works pursue community art, and they work different compared to other works. In <Massager>, massagers train local residents as massagers and with them, they invite their customers from the public. They then cover these customers with paper and provide them with a special massage service. At a certain moment, paper bodies are made out of the invitees’ bodies. After that, the artists perform with the paper humans along with them. They hug them and finally burn the paper humans at the end of this healing performance. Many factors would have made me produce this work but most importantly, I received a certain revelation of the era as an artist. Such a revelation also came from a material. One day, I rediscovered paper. I accidentally wrapped a person with paper and it became a copy of the person’s body. The paper body overwhelmed me. Led by indescribable power, I worked on paper over 15 years. I believe that important things come from materials.

Your collaborators, including citizens, would have played a very important role in your work. How was the process of research and creation for <Massager>?

HA Sohjeong I started to work with CCOT by working on <Paper Human>. For this performance, I wrapped people with paper and prepared the stage. One day, Cheolsung called me, saying that he wanted to do a performance called <Massager>. In CCOT’s studio, we worked on the same material(paper) but did totally different, strange experiments. After doing a massage with paper, we cut out the face part from the paper. I then used it as a mask. Without seeing anything as I put the mask on my face, I once climbed a hill. Such a tryout made me experience all kinds of things by bringing out my existence, which was not that of a performer. In particular, I enjoyed experiencing something with my eyes closed and going somewhere with someone leading me. I kept my eyes closed but I felt free, which was great. With my eyes open, I have to perceive something and make decisions. But with my eyes closed, there came a moment when I became able to free myself from these things and run around peacefully. I hoped that the audience could also have this experience. As such thoughts played a direct and important role for the work, we met new people in a great variety of cities and countries, running and shouting with them. The previous works of CCOT were made by the performer LEE Cheolsung from the beginning to the end but this performance can be completed only with citizens’ participation. So every show was different and every facial expression of the audience filled the performance differently, just like changing weather. So we ended up having multiple layers and result of performances.

Street #outdoor_art_museum_already_full_of_art



Did you have any special experiences while performing in different environments, backgrounds and situations?

LEE Cheolsung It couldn't be generalized but people in different countries had different sentiments and reactions. I had several memorable moments. In 2018 in Spain, we did the performance <Massager> with a citizen performer in a wheelchair. At first, we wondered if the person could perform with us in a wheelchair. But despite our concerns, he was able to participate without any big problem. He mentioned that he had started artistic activities while overcoming numerous challenges and found vitality as a dancer and citizen artist. We learned many things from this collaboration. And going beyond that, it was rewarding to contribute to community art enabling us to learn many things from each other.

On the other hand, we also faced different aspects in society. In 2019, we were performing in Pohang and an angry person suddenly came and took a participant of the performance with her. It was the participant's mother-in-law. We don't know what was the matter but it seemed that she wasn't aware that a performance was going on and didn't care about it. It happened in full view of the audience. The incident was bewildering but we believe that this is something to reflect on seriously. Sometimes, art unveils aspects in society that may feel us uncomfortable. Such phenomena also help us think about where our art is and where it should be headed.

Street
#what_is_the_most_important_
when_growing_a_plant

What will CCOT do in the future?

HA Sohjeong In addition to <Self-Massager> we worked on lately, there is another performance of the "Massager" series. In this work called <Foil Massager>, we also make a human shape, not with paper but with foil. The person made of foil then gets up and walks around. Performing with foil is actually a small chapter in <Paper Human> and I really like that part. I want to develop this further. I also want to do other projects that could lead us to meet many people.

LEE Cheolsung I like expressions such as 'book of poetry on the street', 'museum of art on the street' and 'movie theater of the street'. On the street, everything looks like a movie in a theater, like an artwork in a museum and like a poem on the street. Walking down the street is comparable to reading an outdoor collection of poems. Artists may need to get out of their authority as artists to serve as humble guides for the collection of arts in the street. They are not creators but they are leaders of the existing arts everywhere on the street. I dream of a world where streets become art and everyone becomes an artist. That is what I pursue as a street artist.

#wind #the_air_that_is_not_stagnant

Yamagata Tweakster

HAHN Vad

Yamagata Tweakster is an entertainer for people composed of inter-dependence musician HAHN Vad and a MacBook Air. His performances breathe with people in any place, whether it is a concert hall or a street.

www.facebook.com/vad.hahn
walkwithme@naver.com



QR Code for the Interview Video



Mallidong Machine/
Missing You
©Hahn Vad



Not only your different stage names('Amateur Amplifier' and 'Yamagata Tweakster') but also your project names(<Groove Guruma> and <Mallidong Machine/Missing You>) sound impressive. Have such different names changed your music as well? What does such naming mean to you?

HAHN Vad I'm currently performing in the name of 'Yamagata Tweakster' and 'Amateur Amplifier' is my previous name. Both are the musician HAHN Vad's stage names. They are different. Amateur Amplifier mostly played folk music. He calmly sang songs about a man's daily life, playing the guitar. Actually, the music wasn't that calm because it was closer to funk than folk music. Yamagata Tweakster focuses on dance and electronic music. What clearly differentiates him is that he tells other people's stories through his songs, rather than telling his own stories. While performing, he cheerfully sings and dances. A visible performance is particularly important for him.

Once I come up with a name, it is followed by a character or an act matching the name. For Amateur Amplifier, a man's inner fantasy in his daily life seemed to be amplified vigorously. When it comes to Yamagata Tweakster, 'yama' comes from a Korean slang meaning 'crazy'. This character cheerfully interprets the anger we feel in daily life by performing to a beat, just like relieving stress. In this way, a name helps me specify a character's details. <Groove Guruma> also seems to have exerted some power by combining personal sensibility and a concrete and physical object's act in this world.

You suggested the concept of 'inter-dependence music'.¹⁾ For HAHN Vad, what is the difference between 'indie music' and 'inter-dependence music'?

HAHN Vad For listeners, there may not be any big difference. But once a concept is made, a new meaning comes from it. This also generates new power. Previously, I used to consider myself a small musician in the indie scene. But I came to think that it would no longer be meaningful to have my music consumed in the small local scene of the Hongdae area in Seoul and to form relationships with listeners that way. So I went through a period of losing my direction. Thinking about how to go beyond the music scene in Hongdae without heading to the mass media, I came up with the concept of 'inter-dependence music'. This may look fundamentalist. 'Indie music' means 'independent' but it is not actually independent from the capitalist market. It seemed that the music was trying to suit some listeners' taste. I wanted to get out of that. Without relying on capital, I wanted to tell my story on my own and meet those who could be empowered by my music.

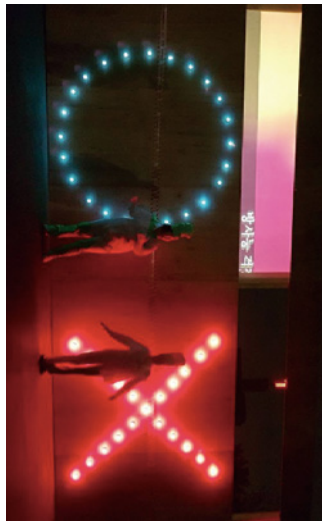
How has the concept of 'inter-dependence music' changed from the past?
Does inter-dependence music also have a scene?

HAHN Vad 'inter-dependence music' doesn't seem to have a fixed meaning. Within myself as well, the meaning of inter-dependence music has changed through different experiences. Ten years ago, I criticized the situation in which my music wasn't getting out of the boundaries of the indie scene in the Hongdae area. The concept of inter-dependence music has expanded. So right now, 'inter-dependence music' stands in contrast to 'music as merchandise' and 'music consumed in the market'. Instead, it literally refers to the music that raises up those who have fallen down and myself who look at them. In short, it is the music that saves people.

A scene for inter-dependence music was almost formed but it went nowhere. Now, it doesn't exist. Ten years ago, I shared my definition of inter-dependence music with collaborators at the restaurant Duriban²⁾ which was about to be demolished. We joined forces to make a scene for inter-dependence music and we also established a cooperative. And we tried to stabilize several concrete systems. But the cooperative had internal problems. In addition, its members didn't pursue any power or authority so the organization was fragile. The cooperative began to weaken three or four years ago and currently, it isn't doing any activity as a cooperative. Instead, some of its members have led some trends to carry out activities after those of the inter-dependence music production cooperative.

22018YOK
©Hahn Vad

Street Arts
#changing_the_air_of_the_street



Gyeongwon Line March
©Hahn Vad



I enjoyed reading your research paper <A Study about East Asian Inter-Dependence Music> which was published in 2018. One of the stories in the book says that those who were participating in a protest ran away after HAHN Vad started performing. I would like to know why you chose such an amateur, raw type of performance. What would be HAHN Vad's aesthetics for what is amateur or for solidarity music?

HAHN Vad Before performing as Amateur Amplifier, I was in Daegu City. During that period, people often told me that I had great enthusiasm but that I lacked basics. It could be called 'enthusiasm without roots'. Later on, in 2003, I made my debut as Amateur Amplifier in Hongdae. In that area, the Free Market(a marketplace for artists organized by Mr. Kim Young-deung leading Club Bbang) was taking place in a playground. While performing there, I felt the spirit of street arts. At that time, the atmosphere was quite different from that of today. Whatever I performed, a certain group of people looked at me attentively and seriously, just as they were thinking, "This crazy guy is incredible!" Even if I screamed and broke the guitar, they accepted it. I then immersed myself in street arts. That same was true for the performance at Seoul Fringe Festival. In that era, on the streets in Hongdae, whatever artists performed, people didn't hate or stop it even if it was shocking. Instead, passers-by looked at them seriously and cheered for them. That was the culture at that time. This seems to have formed a basis for my current aesthetics of street arts. I believe that the free atmosphere in Hongdae has nurtured many street artists. In those days, I experienced avant-garde performances and a variety of artistic movements in Hongdae. That experience became a great asset to me. Thanks to this experience, I have been able to continue interesting performances for rallies and protests. Such a style may have been shocking to union members. Nevertheless, my enthusiasm finally brought me partial success in meeting them. It could be said that an avant-garde artist in Hongdae has been transformed into an avant-garde(?) artist in rallies.

#making_people_stop



Dang-in-ii
©Hahn Vad

When it comes to the inter-dependence music you have performed on the spot, I heard that you have some rules and a method to put them into practice.

HAHN Vad Yamagata Tweakster's music doesn't tell my own stories. Instead, he tells stories of those on the spot. I receive stories from them and make sings to empower their movements. When I performed as Amateur Amplifier, a small group of people certainly empathized with my music and they were comforted by it. I got a clue from their reaction. I started singing songs of those on the spot when I went to Jongchon-ri which is a small village located in Jochiwon in Korea. The village has become Sejong City. As the city was formed in that area, local residents left their village and scattered. There was a party comforting those leaving the village and Amateur Amplifier was invited on that occasion. I sang really badly so people would have wondered if I'm a singer. I actually started singing in a high tone. The video of that performance shows a kid moving his finger, just like saying, "That guy is crazy!" I wanted to give up but I finished the song. Those who were looking at me dumbfoundedly finally started applauding with empathy and support. I believe that we were comforting each other at that moment. I was giving them a certain comforting message in a sincere way. The song allowed me to have an experience of sharing what was in our hearts. And this experience made me decide to perform for those in need. It led me to make cheerful songs out of on-site messages to encourage people with my performances.

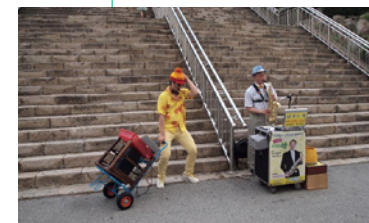
Street Arts #bowl_movement_of_the_moment

Could you tell me about the sites of solidarity where you performed?

HAHN Vad The first thing that comes to my mind is a hunger strike at Ki-Ryung Electronics & Energy.³⁾ For me, it was a transition period from Amateur Amplifier to Yamagata Tweakster. Playing the guitar, I was singing as Amateur Amplifier. But suddenly, I stood up with my laptop computer and started singing and dancing as Yamagata Tweakster. My dance during the hunger strike caused a stir. But soon after, some people began to dance with me. The 'Desperate Guitar Man', who performed with me during that hunger strike, contacted me later. Saying that a performance was taking place every Friday near the statue of Jeon Tae-il, he invited me. After that, I encountered the incident at the restaurant Duriban.

I remember that people kept talking about Yamagata Tweakster's performance at the restaurant Duriban. Do you have any other memorable on-site performance?

HAHN Vad The restaurant Duriban used to make a traditional type of noodles. It was demolished so it didn't have any tableware left. I wanted to cook something in the restaurant so I prepared Chapagetti while singing. Everyone there liked it. After finishing preparing the instant noodles, we ate it together. I also remember myself rolling over fields and rice paddies in Miryang where people were resisting the construction of a transmission tower.⁴⁾ I also performed in front of the Statue of King Sejong to encourage the Korean National Association Preventing Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities. At that time, the protesters of the association were confronting the police. I hadn't imagined that I would perform on such an occasion. I had to sing while everyone was fighting around me. I kept thinking, "Do I have to perform or not?" And someone in a wheelchair told me to keep singing, saying that my performance was encouraging them. So I sang till the end.



Kyoung-jeon Line Groove
©Hahn Vad

You describe <Mallidong Machine/Missing You> as a 'street theatre'. What is it about?

HAHN Vad Yamagata Tweakster used to perform alone. But preparing the performance <Mallidong Machine/Missing You>, I formed a group called 'New Seoul Proper Ghandi'. This is a sort of propaganda group. I moved into a residence for artists in the Malli-dong area five years ago and I came to live with artists of many different genres. So I naturally wanted to work with them. I also met up with local residents of Malli-dong who had scattered after redevelopment and interviewed them a lot. During the interviews, they mentioned Jeon Tae-il and tailors. So I made a performance in which the Malli-dong area is the main character who misses those who lived there before redevelopment. Here, the word 'missing' also implies 'mishin', Japanese pronunciation of 'machine' which refers to a sewing machine in a textile factory. It was my first collaboration with many artists and it was also very hard.

You performed on protest sites for a long time and based on this experience, you developed the concept of inter-dependence music. And you finally completed your research paper. How do you feel about it? Do you have any follow-up research or project you want to do?

HAHN Vad With <Groove Guruma>, I actively rolled in the Hongdae area for about three years. The experiences I had in those days were practical ones headed to inter-dependence. I want to share the records of that time with many people. I began to write <A Study about East Asian Inter-Dependence Music> thanks to the research support from Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture. It was really difficult to write it. Moreover, the scope has widened to East Asia which has different languages and cultures. So it was really challenging to communicate and to understand contexts. Publishing the book, I came to think about inter-dependence music again. And what came to my mind is that inter-dependence music is about going to die. I thought of the image of a dead-end alley. I also thought of a sentence from Yi Sang's poem which says, "Thirteen children run toward a dead-end alley". A dead-end alley looks like a closed space. But we keep running even though we know that it is a dead-end alley. We then see a glimmer of light in that place, which looked like a dead-end alley from afar. Therefore, we must run till the end.

AIRLF
©Hahn Vad



Street #front_line #farthest_border_area

Editor's Notes

1) Inter-dependence Music: HAHN Vad replaces the existing term 'indie' with 'inter-dependence'. He also suggests the multilingual analysis of this term: 'in'('person' according to the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese word), 'ter'(meaning 'place' in Korean) and 'dependence'. As this analysis implies, 'inter-dependence music' refers to the music that a person(in) keeps generating in a place(ter) in order to depend on each other and to form solidarity and wavelengths. Finally, not a scene of capitalism but a scene of 'thanks to you' is gradually created. This is what inter-dependence music is about and it is the direction to be pursued by music in general.(The word 'interdependence' was suggested by Shinichi, a Japanese cultural anthropologist and environmental activist, to mean 'thanks to you'. It implies that people, things and situations get together to support one's existence now, here.)
- Source: <A Study about East Asian Inter-Dependence Music>, HAHN Vad.

2) Duriban(strife at the restaurant Durian in the Hongdae area): The restaurant Duriban was demolished by force on Christmas Eve in 2009. The developer of the zone gave the restaurant 3 million won as a cost for moving out. But that amount wasn't sufficient for their survival, let alone moving out. They couldn't leave the place that way. The following day, Ms. Ahn, the restaurant's owner, came into the restaurant and started a protest with her husband Mr. Yu Chae-rim(51 years old). Soon after, the small restaurant was full of people. Its gray walls had mural paintings and people played musical instruments. Every day, different events took turns to take place: concert, screening of movies and candlelight worship service. Under these circumstances, the restaurant Duriban became a cultural symbol in the Hongdae area. In July last year, 200 days after the beginning of the protest, the restaurant's electricity was cut off. Korea Electric Power Corporation had stopped its electric supply, requested by the developer. The heat from the area's asphalted road was reaching those in the restaurant. Nevertheless, the number of those protecting the restaurant increased. Amid their solidarity, Duriban finally kept its space intact. Ms. Ahn said on the 8th, "All over the local area, there are still so many people whose places have been demolished and who are desperately asking for help. In such a situation, Duriban achieved a 'great' victory". She regarded Duriban's victory as "everyone's victory". She said, "This is a victory brought by everyone who has been with Duriban". "My indescribable thanks go to so many people".
- Source: "Duriban in Hongdae Wins a Victory in 531 Days of the Protest" (article from Korean newspaper Segye Ilbo, June 10, 2011)

3) Hunger Strike at Ki-Ryung Electronics & Energy: The hunger strike at Ki-Ryung Electronics & Energy started in July 2005. At that time, the company's dispatched temporary workers formed a union and after that, the company laid off its temporary employees. In response to this, the union went on a stay-in strike and in October of that year, the Korean Ministry of Labor told the company that it had dispatched its employees illegally. The company then handed its production line over to a subcontractor. At this, the union members carried out a series of protests by shaving their head, fasting and staying in a high place. In this way, they kept requesting the company to employ them as regular workers. Under these circumstances, the labor and management have repeated dozens of negotiations and ruptures. At last, the two sides dramatically reached an agreement in 1895 days. Mr. Kim, representative of the union, said, "It doesn't mean that all the problems we have raised were solved so it feels bittersweet". "We have been able to hold out for the past six years thanks to the solidarity of so many people including those in the arts and culture scene and religious people in addition to the union members".
- Source: "Strike at Ki-Ryung Electronics & Energy: Dramatic Agreement in 1895 Days" (article from Korean newspaper Kyunghyang Shinmun, November 1, 2010)

4) Transmission Tower Site in Miryang: Korea Electric Power Corporation constructed transmission lines of 765W in Miryang(South Gyeongsang Province), Danjang, Sanoe, Sangdong, Bubuk and Cheongdo as well as transmission lines of 345W in Punggak and Gakbuk (in Cheongdo in North Gyeongsang Province). This project's goal was to transfer the electricity produced at the nuclear power plant of Singori(units 3 and 4) located in Ulju toward the substation in the north of South Gyeongsang Province, which was in Changnyeong in the province. Residents of Miryang and Cheongdo formed the Task Force against the Transmission Tower of 765W in Miryang and the Task Force against the Transmission Tower 345W in Cheongdo respectively. Since 2011, they have fought against the construction of the towers in their own protest zone on the construction site. As those on the site tried to demolish their protest zone, a resident self-immolated on January 16, 2012 and Ms. Yu Han-suk poisoned herself to death on December 6, 2013.
- Source: "The Police Exert Unjust Authority to Construct Transmission Towers in Miryang and Cheongdo" (article from Yonhap, June 13, 2019)

Would You Mind Project

SHIN Moon-young and
KIM Seung-eon

Would You Mind Project is the 'talkative visual theatre' that aims at the theatre out of the theatre. Two actors expand images in harmony with space through texts, sounds and movements. Focusing on the actual issues arising between the social structure and an individual, they create documentary plays based on self-narratives and present 'in-situ theatres'.

www.facebook.com/wouldyoumindproject
eonie@hanmail.net



QR Code for the Interview Video



Speed.Jobs
©Would You Mind Project



Before doing street arts in Would You Mind Project, each of you performed as actors. You are still working on theater works. What made you form the group together?

SHIN Moon-young We met at theater school as students. After performing individually, we got married. And one day, we lost our job. We had talked about performing together before but we hadn't had any opportunity to do so. And then we tried our first performance together at the 2015 Seoul Fringe Festival.

Could you tell me why you have been performing outside theaters? What is attractive about non-theatrical spaces?

KIM Seung-eon The rental fee for theaters was a big problem for us. Even if we do have money, a play requires not only two actors but also the staff at the theater. So the size becomes bigger. We wanted to let go of what we had worked on before and find something we could make together. We also wanted to find our own way to perform. When I first understood the concept of a street, it felt refreshing. On the street, I could see things that aren't found in theaters. As I didn't know what they were exactly, I was shocked as well.

SHIN Moon-young We didn't turn to streets intentionally in the process of looking for alternative spaces. We just met streets naturally while doing what we could do. We had produced performances in the theatrical style and we made attempts to locate ourselves on streets or alternative spaces. Would You Mind Project seems to be the result of such attempts. In addition, the platforms dealing with street arts at that time worked for us as well.

In a magazine interview, you said that <Job on Loan> was like a gift for you. You said that you didn't understand the audience's enthusiastic reaction. But such feedback seems to have helped you complete the 'trilogy of ordinary citizens' economy'.

SHIN Moon-young We still think that part of what we did was a coincidence. The same was true for the issues we dealt with in <Job on Loan>. We are not professional dramatuges so the structure and text of works are inevitably rough. Despite this, our attitude of sincerely expressing ourselves would have appeal to the audience. That is why we used the expression 'gift'. We mainly perform with words. In fact, sounds of those participating in rallies and religious people on the street are similar to the voices of us who keep talking. Nevertheless, ordinary but slightly cold stories in our voices would have been refreshing for the audience. Many people empathized with the content of our performance. We felt that they were cheering for us during the performance. As for the trilogy, we planned it from the beginning. It has a long text and tells today's stories in the form of collage. In the process of presenting the works, we sometimes failed to lead people to empathize. It seems that we have found an appropriate tone through trials and errors.

KIM Seung-eon In fact, we performed at the Seoul Fringe Festival even though we hadn't completed the work. At that time, all we wanted to do was to share the message that "it is hard to survive". Looking back, the performance was completed at about 50% but the audience reacted to it positively. That seems to be the strength of the fringe platform. In other words, it is where we could feel out if something will work. Based on that experience, we were able to perform again at the Seoul Street Arts Festival in 2017. The festival platform gave me feedback in diverse ways and thanks to that, we came to make a more sophisticated work. I believe that the Korean street arts scene has greatly developed in terms of genres, compared to the period when we first performed at a festival. We are stimulated positively and Would You Mind Project keeps thinking about how to develop its form.



Job on Loan, SSAF 2017
©Would You Mind Project

Street Arts #playground

Speed Jobs.

Cheongyecheon Stream Gwangtonggyo Bridge)
©Gallim Hwang, Would You Mind Project



I watched the performance at the 2015 Seoul Fringe Festival you mentioned. I felt that each of you are a well-trained performer. Your harmony was also great. The fringe festival has many new artists as its participants and that is why Would You Mind Project looked impressive more than any other participant. And people said that your performance was refreshing in the street arts scene because at that time, many of street arts performances were non-verbal ones.

SHIN Moon-young Being successful at festivals, we were afraid of our next projects. We also became more concerned about our dramaturgical attitude and the content of our works. As we deal with sensitive issues in society, we also wondered if it would be right to share our personal views of these issues. We sometimes find ourselves explaining something to the audience. But such a direct explanation in our performance also made the audience grow apart. When it comes to more recent works <Speed, Jobs> and <Adam's Miss>, we learned a lot from the audience's reaction during a street arts season program.

KIM Seung-eon Such experiences gave us an internal turning point while working on the trilogy. At the beginning of 2018, the Me Too movement started and events that were much more powerful than performances were happening in reality. We also felt nervous, thinking that it wouldn't be right to talk about these events carelessly. And we changed the order of completion to this: <Job on Loan>, <Adam's Miss> and <Speed, Jobs>. Such a flow of work seems to be in line with social issues of that time. It naturally happened because creators keep thinking about issues that feel close to them.

SHIN Moon-young It is already so hard to struggle with these issues in the city. So we are also wondering if we would have to deal with these issues in our performances. On one hand, we want to set these issues aside and live comfortably. On the other hand, we want to talk about them in our works. These two ideas keep colliding ironically. Since the 2015 Seoul Fringe Festival, we decided to participate in the festival every year.

Would You Mind Project tells stories of daily life by borrowing familiar proper nouns such as classics and masters of economics as well as entrepreneurs with global influences. Such an approach is visible in <Job on Loan>, <Speed, Jobs> and <Adam's Miss>. What is impressive is how you point out absurdity in everyday life. Why are you exploring these economic nouns?

KIM Seung-eon I studied economics and I came to think about famous economists known for dealing with how to make a living. I also reflected on their influences. I just borrowed their theories in a shallow way, just at the level of economic notions we all know generally. Rather than exploring profound academic meanings of their theories, we created works by focusing on what status their theories have in reality and how they work. We thought that we couldn't be free from the influence of major discourses.

SHIN Moon-young The titles of the works came from Seung-eon's ideas. We first chose a title and wrote down the content of the work. We don't like what is difficult. We just wondered how such a huge number of masters' theories would help us make our society a better place to live in. Our performances actually started from our conviction that we would need to know what kind of economic cause and effect are influencing our lives.

From left to right
SHIN Moon-young and
KIM Seung-eon



As for methods used by Would You Mind Project, the first thing that comes to my mind is 'wordplay'. Koreans find it fun to use words with double meanings and verbal rhythm, which constitute wordplay. But it wouldn't have been easy to perform for international audiences. The title of the 'trilogy of ordinary citizens' economy' is something understood by everyone in the world so international audiences would have found it familiar. Nevertheless, your performance doesn't deal with theories. It wouldn't have been easy to translate your work but I heard that you had tried that.

KIM Seung-eon In 2018, <Adam's Miss> was selected for the PAMS Choice and we came to try the performance in English. The running time of its Korean version was 40 minutes. We translated it into English and shortened it to 30 minutes, which was the time limit of the showcase. So we couldn't show the last part of the performance. We tried that without thinking seriously. NA Hee-kyung, a producer who collaborated with us at that time, said that people would find it tiring to read subtitles on the street. The translator did a good job but couldn't really highlight our wordplay. The audience's reaction was not bad but the showcase didn't lead us to be invited to foreign countries.

SHIN Moon-young In 2017, we presented <Job on Loan> in Germany. We roughly translated some scenes to perform. In the scene where we introduce Adam Smith and Karl Marx, we couldn't do the wordplay in Korean so we tried it in English but there was certainly a limit. As for <Adam's Miss>, international audiences empathized with the performance's style and issues rather than its wordplay. A Swedish lady really empathized with the story, even if she is from a society where feminism and gender equality would be better than those of Korea. So it was surprising.

KIM Seung-eon While performing, I was worried that the issues we deal with may be regarded as something that characterizes Korean society. But as we kept performing, we realized that <Adam's Miss> has a theme appealing to women around the world.

How do you feel about completing the 'trilogy of ordinary citizens' economy'?
How has the work helped you grow?

KIM Seung-eon These days, I have no idea about the scope or concept of 'ordinary citizens'. I wonder why the poor would side with the super-rich and the unreasonable social structure supporting them. I wonder if noisiness is what democracy is about. In this world, people isolate and attack those thinking differently. So I wonder what the right answer would be.

Street Arts #border_between_life_and_survival

Job on Loan_Mallidong Artists Cooperative, M.A.Coop
©Would You Mind Project



In your new performance <H.E.S.I.T.A.T.E> which premiered in 2020, you highlight the physical distance between the performers and the audience. Preparing this performance, was there any sensibility that was discovered or that may be lost?

SHIN Moon-young We came to prepare <H.E.S.I.T.A.T.E> amid the global pandemic. The coronavirus has forced us to change the style of street performances. Under these circumstances, the Seoul Street Arts Festival came up with its open call program "The Street That is Very Close to Us". And we create this work to participate in this program. As usual, we experimented with it in the Seoul Fringe Festival setting. For this new performance, we couldn't be close to the audience with our droplets spreading as we did for the previous trilogy. This is a story of those who find it hard to keep a distance. In the context of the pandemic, people suggest online performances as an alternative but I believe that they will never be able to replace offline performances. Through this new performance as well, we wanted to express that no medium can replace our sensuous experience on the spot. When we gave a virtual flower to the audience while respecting the institutional distance, they would have empathized with the story expressing the deplorable distance.

KIM Seung-eon On the other hand, the social distancing enforced amid the pandemic also made me think that we may have needed a certain distance between each other before. If there is a certain distance between people, they may be able to share what is in their hearts more safely. In such a safety zone secured that way, they could be able to express themselves, with everyone's realm respected. We wanted to elaborate on such contrasting aspects of distancing.

Could you tell me about what you want to do in the future?

KIM Seung-eon Right now, we are talking about distancing but we always want to meet our audience and communicate with them. At the end of <H.E.S.I.T.A.T.E>, we wanted to dance with the audience while maintaining our distance. So we are thinking about how to make them move. In <Future, City> as well, we wanted to involve the audience so they could draw a picture freely but it wasn't easy. In the future, we want to make more performances involving the audience. We want to find ways to involve those we naturally meet on the spot, rather than having them reserve their seats. And this may sound inappropriate in the context of the pandemic but we also want to perform discussion plays. Trying not to be too serious, we want to discuss with the audience everyday themes which may look trivial but which are important for each of us. We also want to strengthen the 'visual' part of the 'talkative visual theatre' which is our main direction. This would be about the aesthetic side of our performances.

Creative Group NONI

KIM Kyunghee

LEE Mikyung

KIM Minkyung

Creative Group NONI was founded in 2006 with artists specializing in stage design and the traditional performing arts who gathered to rediscover the aesthetics of the Korean traditional performing arts. In this group, artists and co-workers of different genres work with different collaborators according to the characteristics of each project, thus carrying out projects without any border. Recently, they work on a sustainable archiving project focused on street arts and the circus and on the basis of this project, they experiment with a new form of artistic activities. There representative works include <Collectors>, <An-Nyeong>, <Life Jackets 304>, <Things That Remember>, <역:STATION:驛> and <Dear Friend: A Letter through Motions>.

www.facebook.com/cgnoni

www.youtube.com/creativegroupnoni

www.archiveground.com

creative.group.noni@gmail.com



QR Code for the Interview Video



An-Nyeong
©Creative Group NONI



What I find interesting is the combination of the roles played by all of you who constitute Creative Group NONI. Two of you joined the group after its founding. How did you meet the director KIM Kyunghee? I would also like to know how three of you are sharing the group's creative process.

KIM Minkyung I was studying film and video in France and Creative Group NONI came to conduct research in France as part of the France-Korea project <역:STATION:驛>. I served as an interpreter for the project and met Kyunghee. After the decision was made to produce <역:STATION:驛>, I collaborated with her as a coordinator. I also participated in other projects little by little and since 2014, I have been the group's production manager. Before joining the group, I just watched performances and didn't know much about the genre. But joining NONI and working for the group, I found that its creative style is very refreshing. When it comes to the group's research, approaches and concrete results, everything was interesting to me because I felt that the group was working without any border, contrary to my previous knowledge.

LEE Mikyung I met Kyunghee in 2014 on the street. Just after the sinking of MV Sewol, NONI performed <Dear Friend: A Letter through Motions> in Ansan City which is home to high schoolers who became the victims of the disaster. At the preliminary stage, the group asked the citizens of Ansan to share their opinions about the performance. It was in this process that Kyunghee came to me. Listening to her, I also wanted to contribute to the performance so I decided to participate, not as a member of the performance but as a citizen of Ansan. That experience was a really powerfully one that enabled me to meet street arts for the first time. The work wasn't easy. As for things that may be done easily, the director requested us to work on them differently. Carrying out such requests and communicating, I felt that I kept overcoming my own limitations. For me, what was challenging was also attractive. I used to be a visual arts critic. NONI's work is based on the performing arts but it has elements that appeal to me visually. In fact, I couldn't see any border between genres.

KIM Kyunghe Our creative style changes every time, depending on the nature of a certain project. If collaborators also change with projects, such a change is more dramatic. Basically, we talk a lot. We make the process itself through discussions. And during the creative process, we work a lot. What is essential for us is to establish a system through actual labor and experience. People have their roles they have received from some sources and they also have their limitations. But the group's basic attitude is to destroy such limitations. Consequently, what we do isn't efficient in many ways. I feel great about not being able to characterize the group. As I formed the group, I decided to call it a 'creative group', not an 'arts company'. And I came up with the group's system based on projects. All this is because of the group's main direction. We start working by sensitively reacting to our co-workers and to events and environments around us. That is an important sensibility for street arts.

LEE Mikyung The way we choose the title of a work is also in line with our destruction of roles and borders in our creative process. For example, we dismantle a word or put together words in different languages as in the case of <G.Round>, <역:STATION:驛> and <TEMPest_Do you HEAR. me?>. In this way, we encourage people to look at things differently. In other words, we unveil our creative attitude and intention through titles. That is the inefficiency we have chosen. In fact, these titles aren't found easily on search engines.

Street Arts #the_arts_in_the_front_line



Dear friend
©Creative Group NONI

#making_me_stop_my_daily_activities_to_remind_me_of_something

You created a series of works linked to the sinking of MV Sewol: <Dear Friend: A Letter through Motions>(2014), <Life Jackets 304>(2016) and <An-Nyeong>(2017).¹⁾ These artistic activities and projects would have constituted the most important turning point for Creative Group NONI. Please explain what made you work on these projects.

KIM Kyunghee Working on <TEMPest_Do you HEAR. me?>, we met performers of parkour. They weren't thinking about the possibility of becoming artists at all. France has circus schools and I actually saw practitioners of parkour going to circus school. We thought that helping them meet circus artists could let them know their possibilities and stimulate them. It is in this context that we started planning the project <역:STATION:驛>. So in 2014, we went to Ansan City every week to prepare for the Ansan Street Arts Festival. But after the sinking of MV Sewol, the festival was canceled and everything stopped. The city was silent and everyone seemed to be underwater. I had already experienced cancellation of festivals before but I couldn't help questioning repeated cancellations done by force. I wondered if we needed to accept that and I asked the young collaborators who were preparing the performance with us. Most of them said, "We don't feel comfortable to stop like that but we are afraid of moving forward". But a decisive moment came when the youngest collaborator said, "We must do something. Ansan City needs that now". He was living in Ansan so what he said was all the more persuasive to the older collaborators. So all artists participating in the project decided to present a guerrilla performance in Ansan and Seoul, on the date when the festival was supposed to be held. It was a difficult decision to make so I was thankful. In those days, the participating artists were carrying a huge mat from the theater to the plaza every week to rehearse. And the guerrilla performance was a simple one made out of these movements. The performance's title <Dear Friend: A Letter through Motions> is also in line with the improvised performance. One of the participating artists found it challenging to perform more than anyone else. But after the performance, he said, "I don't know what it is exactly but I now have an exclamation mark in my heart". What he said really comforted me. Memories of that time still constitute a big asset to me. This experience and the power I gained through it enabled me to produce other works which led me to <An-Nyeong>. It felt like mourning for three years. For <Life Jackets 304> as well, I just did what I could do in the same vein. In the plaza, we spread out the life jackets we had invited the audience to put on for <역:STATION:驛>. The project involved everyone including the street artists of Korea Street Arts Association and citizens, without any boundary.

Editor's Notes

1) With the sinking of MV Sewol on April 16, 2014, 304 passengers either died or went missing. After the accident, Korean citizens held candlelight vigils in 2016 and 2017 in order to protest against the government's incapability of responding to the disaster and to call for the salvage of the ferry. <Life Jackets 304> by Creative Group NONI, which took place in Gwanghwamun Plaza (site of the candlelight vigils), commemorates the 304 victims of MV Sewol.



STATION
©Creative Group NONI

LEE Mikyung Our previous works stretching from <Dear Friend: A Letter through Motions> to <An-Nyeong> make me think about artists' role. Depending on the reactions and thoughts of those who are in a given space or depending on the story of the space, a performance feels very different. That is the attractiveness of street arts which give us a vigorous and powerful experience that a stage performance or exhibition can't provide. I strongly feel that art isn't something a person could do alone. Such an experience has helped me expand an artist's roles at different points. While working on <An-Nyeong>, I didn't keep any objective distance from it. I just did it voluntarily as an act of alleviating my sorrow and guilt. During the performance, I should have been helpful as its staff member but at a certain moment, I also cried while watching the performance. I experience how a festival should express death, sorrow and mourning. That experience gave me power to continue to work up until now.

KIM Kyunghee The young collaborators of <Dear Friend: A Letter through Motions> served as a great source of power and inspiration for me. I also experienced and perceived 'street arts outside a festival', a concept I only had in my head. Of course, an artist needs to be a 'speaker' to express what they want but in addition to that, a street artist must be a 'listener' who listens to stories of space, time and the public. I came to understand this point clearly. Street arts are the arts in the front line. It also requires strong mental and physical power as well as prompt decision-making and implementation. I felt somewhat reassured, thinking that we made it at that moment of 0.001% at least. The young artists didn't calculate something in their head but they actively discussed and made a decision to take action. I'm grateful that I was with them at that moment. I hope that they don't forget the exclamation mark they felt on that occasion.

Street Arts the_closest_arts

Since 2019, you haven't performed at street arts festival. What does a festival mean to NONI?

KIM Minkyung A festival, which has been established in an institutional framework, certainly has positive functions. A festival helps artists meet many people and approach them easily. But as creators, we keep thinking about how to be independent from festivals and how to overcome our limitations. To prepare for a festival, we can't avoid doing something within a certain scope. In that sense, I have contrasting attitudes toward a festival.

KIM Kyunghee I once studied a lot by observing festivals. I currently don't have any complaint about festivals but in my view, we must not think that a festival is everything. What is problematic isn't a festival but the environment of street arts dominated by festivals. So it is necessary to widen the scope of our activities to go beyond festivals. That could make the cyclic structure of the artistic ecosystem more natural. Street artists should also make efforts to find means other than festivals.

Life Jackets 304
©Creative Group NONI



Street

#storeroom_of_memories

An-Nyeong
©Creative Group NONI



Interview

78

As for <Things That Remember>, variations of this performance took place in numerous places. Could you explain how you worked for each place?

KIM Minkyung <Things That Remember> is a site-specific performance that premiered in the Culture Station Seoul 284(formerly Seoul Station) in Korea. For this performance, we worked on evoking memories coming from a place's story. In Hanoi, Vietnam, we presented the performance in a small train station which still operates, in collaboration with Vietnamese artists. We connected memories of the place and the artists' own memories. While we were discussing the theme of the performance from different angles, the keyword 'woman' hit home. After coming back to Korea, we performed at Gyeonggi Sangsang Campus in Suwon. On that occasion, we invited some of the Vietnamese artists we had collaborated with and focused on personal memories with the subtitle "Women".

KIM Kyunghee <Things That Remember> is basically about how spaces, objects and personal memories are connected. Which of these to focus on differs according to the place of the performance and conditions of its production. In the case of the performance in Argentina, the local space had universal memories but not personal ones. So we focused on memories of objects. We would like to present this performance in Gwangju City, Korea, if we have a chance.

In <G.Round>, you made an installation-based version of the performance without any performer. And you experimented with encouraging the audience to play the role of performers. Creative Group NONI's works involve audiences in different ways. Their role seem to be strengthened more and more.

LEE Mikyung For <G.Round>, the audience play a very important role. In the performance, the audience become performers. It doesn't matter if they perceive that role or not. This work keeps blurring the clear lines and boundaries of the elements constituting the performance. And its scene changes at the audience's will. We study and record that moment of transition. The audience actively gave us feedback on accepting such an unfamiliar way of watching a performance.

KIM Kyunghee After <G.Round>, we also made the performance <No Title> which has scenes without any performer. Like <G.Round>, machines play the role of performers to create scenes in <No Title>. Here, the audience participate as performers with a different role. We keep experimenting with this environment without performers. Doing this, we are trying to see if people could regard such an environment as a performance. <G.Round> has a repetitive system and variables which are made by the audience. Once they have control over the variables, they become active performers.



#place_making_me_think_and_let_go_of_thoughts

79

Creative Group NONI

Recently, you presented a mobile exhibition called <Collectors> as part of your archiving project of street arts and the circus. What made you start concentrating on research and archiving in 2019? Could you explain your recent direction of projects and questions?

KIM Kyunghee Preparing <역:STATION:驛>, we talked with French collaborators about all kinds of things. And we found circus categories with the word 'Korean': trapeze and plank. They asked us how Koreans were practicing these categories today. We didn't know why the categories have the word 'Korean' even though they are very different from what Koreans do. At that time, we continued to talk and moved on, still feeling curious. Later on, my curiosity didn't disappear. The categories would have the word 'Korean' because a Korean technique or a Korean practicing the technique was famous. So I thought that it wouldn't make sense if I don't know it. That question triggered our research and we collected data from Asia. But the continent has different languages so it was difficult to work on it. We traced today's circus back to the time when there was no word 'circus'. We explored how the past form had been connected to the present one and how circus people had moved and communicated. And it turned out that finding the origin of the categories wasn't something to be done in a couple of years.

KIM Minkyung We vaguely started the project at the end of 2018 and we started doing lots of things in earnest in 2019. And we have worked on it for three years. We supposed that the Korean trapeze and plank in today's circus would imply a certain trend that had existed before the modern circus. In that era, the word 'circus' didn't exist but a different term may have been used. Such a word would have continued to be used in a certain trend to form a prototype. That was the hypothesis for our project. But we still don't know why the categories have the word 'Korean' or who contributed to the circus terms. It would take time to find the answer.

KIM Kyunghee This must not be approached on the basis of what we have today such as the circus and traditional theater. In the past, terms like 'circus', 'theater' and 'street arts' didn't exist. So if we don't accept that era's terms and types as well its languages used by specific countries or regions, everything becomes complicated. Once we think that we could dismantle the categories of all information and put them into a certain zone, we have to spread out the elements in the zone and organize them again. Creative companies often carry out research to make performances but our research's purpose is not necessarily creation. Of course, we find really interesting stories everywhere so we want to turn them into a performance right away but we are trying not to do that. We need to let go of that desire in order to work on archiving. For some time, we will keep on studying different documents. We need to work while thinking about the possibility that other artists could be inspired by these documents and about the joy of enriching the artistic ecosystem. That way, we could make progress in the project even a little bit. We will organize what we have collected so far to share it both online and offline, in collaboration with Seoul Street Arts Creation Center. But it seems that we are not organizing what we have done. It feels like the beginning of the project right now.

Street #connection



From left to right

KIM Minkyung
KIM Kyunghee
LEE Mikyung

LEE Mikyung We adopted numerous methods used by researchers but these documents have been chosen and collected from artists' perspective. And the archiving project naturally unveils this. That is the attractiveness of our project. We allow those who are interested in the data to make categories themselves.

KIM Kyunghee That is actually how we work. Just as it isn't important to define NONI as specific terms like 'street arts', 'multidisciplinary arts', 'traditional performing arts', 'plays' and 'circus', it is not important to define our documents. Instead, what is important is to connect different contexts. For those who consult the archives, it would be more interesting to make these connections themselves. If we work only in the framework of what is organized, it is difficult to come up with new things. We started the archiving project with the circus but in cooperation with Seoul Street Arts Creation Center, we also added street arts to the archives this year. The platform for consulting the data is online but we have condensed the documents and put them into a container for a mobile exhibition.

What is Creative Group NONI's new challenge?

KIM Kyunghee First of all, our goal is to successfully reach a certain level of embodying our ideas in the archives. Another goal is to ask questions about capital. Street artists don't have any structure for making profits other than festivals and busking. In particular, they don't have any solution during a pandemic like that of this year. So we are reflecting on if we could be free from capital and we are trying to find alternatives and solutions.

ELEPHANTS LAUGH

LEE Jinyeob

SEO Hyunsung

HAN Kijang

ELEPHANTS LAUGH was founded in 2009 by director LEE Jinyeob who specializes in stage design. The company's work is summarized as three keywords: #site-specific #community #participation_of_the_audience. Based on their site-specific style, they produce performances by integrating stories of the community and space. Their representative works include <Neighborhood museum #1 Chunggye>, an exhibition and performance based on the exploration of their neighborhood, <Dream in the Changdeok Palace>, which consists in walking in the rear garden of the palace, <Flat 201, there is Einstein>, which took place in the director's apartment, <BODIES IN THE DARK>, which invites the audience to explore senses and ethics with their own bodies, <MULJIL 1>, where the audience visit different places in Seoul to serve as performers, <MULJIL 2>, which tells stories of Korea's social minorities and refugees, <3pm to 3pm, 4pm to 4pm>, a performance lasting 24 hours designed to narrow the gap of time sensed by those who are visually impaired and those who are not, and <People from Doksan>, a mobile performance telling stories of those living in Korea's Doksan 3-dong area.

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QR Code for the Interview Video



BODIES IN THE DARK
©Swan Park_ELEPHANTS LAUGH



Since its founding, ELEPHANTS LAUGH has collaborated with many people to create performances. And you have worked with fixed team members for the past few years. Could you explain since when the team members, who join this interview, have worked together and what roles each of you are playing in the team?

SEO Hyunsung We have worked together since 2013. Producing street performances, I serve as an actress and creator. I also organize community workshops and communicate with people. I like to talk so I came to take charge of talking to communities and managing their schedule naturally.

HAN Kijang I'm an actor and I also do different things needed for performances. For example, I also serve as a stage director and set up the stage. I drive when the crew needs to go somewhere. In <MULJIL 2>, I managed the water tank. Doing all kinds of things, I keep learning.

You don't work in theaters and this may be because you aren't attracted by fixed spaces. How are you inspired by places where you create performances?

LEE Jinyeob I believe that theatergoers are already meeting lots of arts. I want to meet those who don't go to theaters. While working on performances, I'm inspired by spaces. What is more important is people who are there. Every place has different passers-by.

SEO Hyunsung We sometimes performed in an unlikely place for those who weren't interested. I find it attractive to perform for unprepared people.

HAN Kijang At first, it felt awkward to perform on the street. But as time went by, I felt that people, nature, cats and cars in a certain place were reacting. It was fun to see unexpected things happen simultaneously and to enable people to feel that with us. For me, a site-specific performance is about communicating with the place and everything in there.



MULJIL 2
©Sukhyun Jang, ELEPHANTS LAUGH

You are interested in those who are excluded from the arts such technicians, refugees and visually impaired people and you try to work with them.

LEE Jinyeob We didn't try to find them intentionally. In the case of the Ipjeong-dong area, we went there to look for a stage set. We met and talked to those working on it and we found out that they had never seen a performance before. So I decided to perform in that area. In 2018, we went to Ansan City and discovered a community of multiethnic families, foreign workers and refugees. So we met them and came to work with them. And I saw visually impaired people often in my neighborhood and formed relationships with them. I wanted to know about them. I wondered how I could meet up with them and I thought that art would be an easy way to do so.

Such a process allowed me to see the aspects of society I hadn't known. The occasion fixed my attitude toward such aspects and led me to create a performance. Without my creative work, I wouldn't be interested in society. Meeting them has helped me gradually know about society.

Street Arts #playground

Your previous performances actively involve communities and audiences. Repeating such community-based projects would have given you some special knowhow of meeting people. Could you explain briefly how you carry out research and interviews concerning places?

LEE Jinyeob For each of the Ipjeong-dong area, Cheonho Park and citizens of Ansan City, the process of meeting people was very different. In Ipjeong-dong, over 70% of the residents had come from local areas outside Seoul. When I talked to them, I spoke in different local dialects. And they asked me where I was from. At the beginning, people considered us religious people or salespeople. That is why we began to wear a uniform for our performances. We don't interview people as soon as we see them. We first let them know who we are and make them feel curious about us.

HAN Kijang Even if we want to do our research, we put it aside for next time. And we eat with them and pass lots of time together. To talk to a restaurant owner, I eat at the restaurant and to know about a barbershop owner, I ask him to do my hair. In a market, I eat fruits and stir-fried rice cakes. Like this, we start by saying hello. Later on, those in the community come and talk to us.

How is the process of preparing the performance <People from Doksan>?

HAN Kijang We did research for three months. Like in Gwangmyeong City, we started from scratch to collect data. The Doksan area has those who had worked for a sewing factory, the Korean-Chinese and merchants in the south gate market. While the Gwangmyeong area is characterized by buildings in the redeveloped zone, what differentiates the Doksan area is the activeness of its local residents. So this performance will involve many of those in the local community.

LEE Jinyeob Beginning to prepare the performance, I thought that it would be great to tell past stories of tailors and sewing factories in the Guro industrial complex. But walking around in the neighborhood, I saw that they were all on the second floor so we couldn't see them. So we thought about how to meet them on the route we had chosen. In this process, we were able to meet many people and listen to their stories. The number of communities participating in the performance increased more and more thanks to the local residents' active participation. So unlike what we had planned, we minimized the role of the actors while expanding that of the communities.

Producing performances, have you felt the limitations of community projects? After a performance, do you keep in touch with its community participants? Or do you stop seeing them?

LEE Jinyeob Doing community projects, we often witness people's problems that could be solved only by changing the social system. While working with them, I wonder if not an artist but a social activist would be more important for them. But I don't think I could be an activist so I think, "What could I do in this situation?" I reflect on how our work could be connected to society to have positive influences, even though we may not be bringing big changes.

SEO Hyunsung Normally, we go and see the community participants a couple of times a year. We also invite those who participated in the previous projects to a new performance. But when a performance is around the corner, we are so busy so we sometimes forget about them. In addition, our performances aren't for a large number of people so there is a limit to meeting the previous participants through another performance. It is always hard to say goodbye. So we try not to excessively feel the sense of responsibility for relationships with them while also trying not to ignore them. We shared with them a moment of caring about each other sincerely so now, we could meet each other anytime without any burden.

In the case of <BODIES IN THE DARK>, <MULJIL 2> and the 24-hour performance <3pm to 3pm, 4pm to 4pm>, you went beyond just involving the audience to almost experiment with them. As far as audiences are concerned, what have you discovered by repeating these experiences?

SEO Hyunsung More and more, our performances remove criteria for how to encourage the audience to participate or to which degree we would allow them to participate. When performing <BODIES IN THE DARK>, we were worried, thinking, "What if a strange person comes? Wouldn't we need to be prepared legally?" But the audience were more rational than expected. Of course, we don't know how they communicated in the dark.

LEE Jinyeob When presenting <lpjungdong hope, wind>, the owner said that nobody would come to see the performance. But the first performance attracted more than 100 people. When it comes to <Flat 201, there is Einstein>, the audience get wet completely in the bathroom but nobody complained. In this way, we came to trust our audience. For <MULJIL 2> as well, people first said that nobody would go inside the water tank.

HAN Kijang In <MULJIL 2>, almost everyone goes inside the water tank after being asked only a couple of times. The performance seems to have the energy that makes the audience get inside once we approach them. In fact, we have got some knowhow, too. We performed on a cold day and my hands were trembling. And the person who was walking to the water tank with me held my hand tight. Others covered me with their clothes. Such communication is so powerful that I never forget it.

Street Arts #act_outside_a_theater #interaction



BODIES IN THE DARK
©Sven Park_ELEPHANTS LAUGH



Please tell me about the 24-hour performance <3pm to 3pm, 4pm to 4pm>, which was the result of developing your collaboration with visually impaired people through performances and workshops for about two years.

HAN Kijang During a workshop, a participant said something unforgettable. Supposing that a human has radar perceiving a space, a visually impaired person just perceives it a little more slowly. Regardless of disabilities, everyone needs their own duration of time to perceive a space.

LEE Jinyeob According to the participant, if people are given a sufficient amount of time to perceive a space, there isn't any big difference of perception between those who are visually impaired and those who are not. Thinking about how we could experience this, we concluded that we needed to be in the same place for at least 24 hours, 'in the dark'. We thought that by staying in the dark for 24 hours, people could narrow the gap of their senses. Starting from this idea, we came to plan the 24-hour performance <3pm to 3pm, 4pm to 4pm>.

HAN Kijang It was really difficult to make the space completely dark. It was a three-story residence building with a single piece of glass and it was looking toward south. So a particularly great amount of light was coming into the building. We blocked that light for several days and even during the performance. Staying long in the dark, we became more sensitive to light. We thought that the audience would also perceive even a slight amount of light after getting used to the darkness. So even if they were sleeping, we came out and blocked light. It was a 'fight with light' to make the entire building completely dark.

LEE Jinyeob It was so hard and after presenting the first performance, I thought about telling others that I couldn't do it anymore. In the dark, everyone became sensitive so we got hungry soon and we had a headache. Moreover, the actors who newly joined us were supposed to prepare meals for the audience but they got lost in the dark. Under these circumstances, those who are visually impaired didn't know if there were those who are not and vice versa. In fact, we hadn't told them anything about who would come. In the dark, they didn't know who has disabilities and who doesn't, which was surprising.

Street #me

You also performed in public spaces several times. What is the nature of public spaces you have experienced? Was there any difference between private and public spaces when it comes to performing?

LEE Jinyeob We presented <Flat 201, there is Einstein> in my apartment. It was my apartment but it wasn't a private space at all. While we were performing, local residents called the police, saying that there seemed to be a cult in my place. And the police did come. On the other hand, not everyone has access to public spaces. To perform, you need to get permission. When rehearsing <Manual how to play>, we went to Sungshin Women's University and were kicked out. We were also kicked out of the Cheonggyecheon area. Street artists don't have any proper place to rehearse. A public space is supposed to be used by everyone but I don't know what it is.

SEO Hyunsung We did perform in a public space without getting permission. Performers and me planned to show some movements at the Seoul Express Bus Terminal. On that day, we first got ready for the performance, each artist in his or her own position. When the time came, we started the performance. The person in charge of the space came and as soon as he noticed us, we had to stop this brief, guerrilla performance.



Street #white_paper #transparent_water

What is the role of street arts platforms to you?

LEE Jinyeob Street arts platforms remind us of a theater or a fixed space. So we haven't participated in those platforms often. We performed on those occasions just three times. In 2011, we performed for 'water'. I wanted to use the space stretching from the Gwanghwamun area to the plaza in front of Seoul City Hall. I also wanted to use the electronic display in the plaza. I couldn't get permission alone so I decided to participate in a festival. As for <Neighborhood museum #1 Chunggye> and <MULJIL 1>, I wanted to share with many people the stories of those I had met so we participated in a festival. Particularly for <MULJIL 2>, I wanted to keep in touch with the community participants who had been with us for the preparation of the performance. In addition, the young participants enjoyed acting so we performed at a festival.

At a festival, many people look happy. This makes me realize the importance of performances that can be enjoyed by many people. But at the same time, artists should be given opportunities to make new attempts. For example, it is great to perform in a big plaza but there is only one plaza. I hope that festivals help artists use places they want so that they could make new attempts. Or, festivals could also discover more places for such attempts. It could be the expansion of what is site-specific because a performance's form and content become different depending on places. That would be a way to diversify street arts.

Please tell me about what you want to do in the future.

LEE Jinyeob I want to infiltrate into spaces owned by businesses. For example, I want to go to Starbucks or E-mart to perform secretly. I wonder if I could be eligible for a creation fund by filing in an application form with such a plan. But I really want to try that.



From left to right
SEO Hyunsung
LEE Jinyeob
HAN Kijang



MULJIL 2
©Sukhyun Jang_ELEPHANTS LAUGH

FORCE

LEE Young-ho

Standing for 'FOR Creative Entertainment', FORCE is a fusion/new form art group which was created in 2016. Based on fusion and connection, they present performances that efficiently combine the intrinsic value of art with the unlimited possibilities of modern times. Through such works, they make attempts to change views and approaches of art. They work on fusion performances in collaboration of different genres, mostly on the basis of bodily art. Their major performances include <Suzik>, in which they perform dizzying acrobatics on a six-meter pole, and <A;seul>, which uses aesthetic acrobatic apparatuses.

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QR Code for the Interview Video



Suzik
©FORCE



Could you explain in which field each of FORCE's three members used to perform and how you three have gathered together to form a team?

LEE Young-ho In 2017, I met different performers on the occasion of a circus acrobatics workshop called Jumping Up organized by Seoul Street Arts Creation Center. I wanted to create something new with some of them who saw eye to eye with me. This is how we came to plan the circus performance <Suzik>. In 2018, the work was selected to benefit from support for creation. So we were able to produce and showcase the performance. The members I worked with at that time have continued to be with me to keep creating performances. Before joining FORCE, each of the team's members had been active in a variety of performing arts fields such as play, musicals and other performances.

Previously, FORCE used to perform in theaters and on outdoor stages. I'm curious about your first experience of street arts. What made you perform on the street?

LEE Young-ho We had done something similar to street arts during different events. But the workshop organized by Seoul Street Arts Creation Center allowed me to see different circus performances. I also had chances to have a better understanding of street arts culture at numerous arts festivals. I then began to focus on street performances in order to naturally meet many and unspecified people. <Suzik> is the first performance we produced to expand our realm to the circus and street arts.

What made you start collaborating with Seoul Street Arts Creation Center?
What does the center mean to FORCE?

LEE Young-ho Seoul Street Arts Creation Center shares unconventional circus genres with the public while also invigorating the culture of creating and enjoying performances. It is an open space welcoming everyone who is interested in the circus like me. Before the center was established in Korea, those who were interested in the circus weren't able to train and perform, even though the circus requires training more than any other genre due to the safety issues. Compared to its early days, the center currently plans a greater variety of programs while producing and distributing works. So the center seems to have nurture many people feeling artistic thirst like me. FORCE has been selected by the center as its official resident circus company benefiting from its support. This has enabled us to carry out our art practice sustainably. In this way, the center and the performers, who have grown thanks to it, share the goal of expanding the circus culture.

Street Arts #wild_flower



Suzik
©FORCE



Suzik
©FORCE



Please explain how FORCE creates its works.

LEE Young-ho We first choose a story or an acrobatic apparatus as a theme. After that, we provide its image with lots of imaginations and meanings. Exploring a given object with our bodies, we look for different movements that could be derived from it. We constantly do research on how to create. Indeed, we do lots of experiments. And we are trying to find the most effective point for the performers, who consider both the artistic value and popularity of a performance, and for the audience. At first, rather than showing simple acrobatics, we wanted to highlight each member's own artistic field. So for some time, we interpreted our own stories or social messages in the circus framework. These days, we attempt the genre-oriented expansion of the contemporary circus by strengthening our previous works and by adding modern technology to them.

A:seul
©FORCE

You attended a circus workshop at the National Circus School in Montreal. And you have actively participated in international exchange. You also contacted the members of Cirque du Soleil in an attempt to develop your acrobatic apparatuses. Could you tell me about what you experienced in this regard?

LEE Young-ho In 2017, I was selected for the Circus Next project run by Seoul Street Arts Creation Center and I had a chance to go to Montreal. I had really wanted to go there so I had stopped all my activities to make great efforts to be selected for the program. Looking back, it was worth the efforts. Just as I expected, Montreal had a different circus culture, a much bigger market and talented artists. I was so excited and had such a great experience. What was unexpected about the stay was that I got acquainted with many coaches and friends rather than learning acrobatics. I had some difficulties in communicating with them but we all loved the same thing so it wasn't difficult to get close to them. This experience has led me to engage in exchange with numerous international artists and to collaborate with them. Experiencing acrobatic tools and apparatuses I hadn't seen in Korea, I realized what FORCE would need for its performances. This one-month stay seems to have given me knowledge of more than ten years.

As for Cirque du Soleil, it was them who contacted me first. Cirque du Soleil has been loved by Koreans so much that they performed several times in Korea. On the occasion of their performance last year, the company's Cyr wheel performer contacted me. He said that he was curious about the current state of the circus in Korea. So I met him and introduced to him Seoul Street Arts Creation Center. This occasion made us friends, allowing us to communicate naturally. Rather than teaching acrobatics to each other, we became friends in an equal position to help each other grow. It was a precious experience.

Suzik
©FORCE



You have requested overseas production of the Cyr wheel. And you have made attempts to introduce new acrobatic apparatuses to Korea. Is there any work you want to further develop by adding more apparatuses?

LEE Young-ho I saw the Cyr wheel for the first time in Montreal. One month wasn't a sufficient period to get used to acrobatic apparatuses so during the stay, I tried to use as many tools as possible. Indeed, I experienced so many things including trampolines, wheels and aerial acrobatics. And a eureka moment came when I tried the Cyr wheel. I became convinced that I could integrate my past physical training and my favorite atmosphere into the Cyr wheel successfully. During performances in Montreal, the Cyr wheel scenes impressed me more than any other scene. Watching these scenes, I had a feeling of soft and wild things coexisting in solitude.

I had focused only on bodies and movements for my research and experiments but now, I'm more interested in what is aesthetic. So these days, I visit art museums often and carefully observe sculptures in daily life. Doing circus performances using unfamiliar objects has widened my view like that. Currently, I keep trying new acrobatic tools while also observing what is basic: mathematics, motility, stability, materials and textures. But my ultimate goal is to create aesthetic scenes after getting used to these things. This year, I'm also preparing a performance using new tools. It will premiere at the end the year.

You have expanded your realm as a circus artist through active exchange. This implies that you have a clear goal. Could you tell me what your future plan is?

LEE Young-ho Performing abroad, I felt that I wanted to study local performing arts systems rather than accumulating overseas performance experiences. What impressed me was not just what is seen on stage but what is behind the scene(i.e. process before performing on stage, backstage work, safety, technology and management). I believe that Korea also needs production crews with professional knowledge, experience and technology regarding the circus. It is a genre that generate many accidents and injuries so if we make up for this, artists on stage will be able to perform more excellent acrobatics in a stable manner. Making a safe and high-quality performance ultimately requires such a system.

Street #field



You are also interested in doing research on the Korean traditional circus. Are you also considering international exchange based on the Korean-style circus?

LEE Young-ho Last year, a large-scale performance called <Musa>, which had been planned by Asia Culture Center, was presented. Under the theme of Korean mythology, the performance combined diverse acrobatics and genres including the circus and Korean traditional performing arts like Namsadang Nori. It was a chance to see Korean acrobatics which have existed for a long time: tightrope walking, Korean plank, plate spinning and traditional acrobatic movements. In fact, the contemporary circus also has numerous apparatuses that remind me of traditional Korean games like the Korean plank, tightrope walking and fire on paddies and fields. For example, 'Korean plank' is the name of a contemporary acrobatic apparatus. This started from a traditional Korean game but it has been recognized more in other countries. And it is called the 'teeterboard' more than the Korean plank. Just as Korea's taekwondo, b-boying, traditional music and K-pop have drawn global attention, I would like to form Korea's own unique circus culture based on the country's acrobatic tradition I mentioned earlier and introduce the culture to other countries. I know that it will take lots of studies and research and it will take a great amount of time. It's really my long-term goal.

Project WAE

JEONG An-Young
SEO Soo-hyun
JEONG Sungtaek

Project WAE is a project group that was established in 2010. They constantly ask themselves why they perform in exterior spaces rather than in theaters. Answering this question is their primary motive. They meet audiences with performances that reflect modern people's lives in a variety of daily spaces. In collaboration with communities and other countries, they create site-specific street dance theatres. Their representative works include <Be Sill in Existence>, <ID and PW>, <1258 bunji, joong 1 dong, Haeundaegu>, <Quickly Quickly>, <B Real> and <Gargantua>.

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QR Code for the Interview Video



B Real
©Hyungjun Parkkim



You define yourselves as a team doing site-specific performances. What does 'site-specific' mean to Project WAE?

JEONG An-Young There may be numerous concepts of site-specific performances but to me, it means to tell daily stories in daily spaces. In most cases, we don't choose a special place for a performance but we produce it in a way that doesn't distinguish between the daily space and performance venue. So it isn't easy to present our works in a festival context which is about transforming a space around a plaza into a festival venue. We perform everywhere in daily life, without separating our performances from daily life. That is what a 'site-specific performance' is about, for me.

Of course, what I have wanted to express couldn't be understood at 100% but what counts is "why we perform in this space". So for all our works, I do research and creation by focusing on the present aspect, the past and the future direction of a certain place. I once performed plays and after that, I studied stage design and I'm currently working as a director. My identity as a director resides in the 'eyes looking at spaces'. When working, I always look at spaces at the same time. I also want to work with stories of those who live in the space or who use it as a daily space. As an outsider, I would like to be with them throughout the creative process from its beginning. But it isn't easy. In many cases, they don't want that. And they also stop collaborating with us if the process is challenging. But it is our goal we need to achieve gradually. It will take time and efforts.

In your team, a director, an actor and a stage director create works together. What specific process do you go through to produce performances?

JEONG Sungtaek At the beginning, we worked with professional choreographers. But An-Young's intention wasn't reflected well and it wasn't satisfactory. So for the past three years, An-Young and I have interpreted the intention together. An-Young doesn't like dancers' uniform movements. Instead of stylized dance movements, we look for those found in daily life. So it takes lots of time. I'm an actor so it isn't easy to do this job but I give advice to An-Young in this regard. While working, it's really hard so I want to quit. But I keep working with An-Young because I agree with her artistic view and mise-en-scène in street arts and I want to be with her. I'm not used to how she works but I had a chance to grow as an actor.

JEONG An-Young I feel more comfortable when working with actors who are good at using their bodies. In the case of dancers, when I ask them to walk naturally, they couldn't do that, in my view. And dancers don't understand the selection of a space according to the concept of a performance. In contrast, well-trained actors may find it difficult to create a dance performance but they communicate better and have a better understanding. For me, it is easier to fill something than to empty it so I prefer working with actors who are already empty and who need to be filled.

SEO Soo-hyun I have camaraderie with An-Young. Although we work in different fields, we studied together. As the stage director, I'm in charge of what is technical and administrative. What we do couldn't be called co-production but An-Young talks about her concept and synopsis for the first time with me. We not only talk about technical elements but also about how to perform in general. It seems that we can discuss all these things because I majored in dramaturgy. After clearly understanding the main points of what she wants to do, I give her advice. I also arrange scenes, routes and roles in a practical way. I'm not in the front line of creation but once there is a certain concept, I'm in a position of exchanging ideas with the director.

We have experienced many fun things in the process of infiltrating into daily life to perform. When it comes to our early work <Gargantua>, we worked in the alley behind the Sewoon shopping area in Seoul and at that time, someone stole our equipment and we also had to deal with a drunken person. What is challenging at the technical level is that in addition to highlighting our concept of not separating daily life and performances, we need to keep a certain distance in order to ensure the safety of the performers and audience. We need a distance to the point that people could not easily distinguish between reality and unreality. At the same time, we need to make the distance appropriate so that we could communicate with the audience emotionally. In particular, we need to improvise this in every performance space, on the spot. That is challenging but attractive. But with experiences accumulated, such an aspect of our team seems to have developed greatly compared to its other parts.

Street Arts #reality_itself



#turning_point_in_life

#expansion_of_life



1258 bunji, joong 1 dong, Haeundaegu
©Hyungjun Parkkim

Street

#windpipe_allowing_me_to_breathe



Quickly Quickly
©Hyungjun Parkkim



From left to right
SEO Soo-hyun
JEONG Sungtaek
JEONG An-Young

As for <Quickly Quickly>, you developed the performance for an extended period of time to meet many people in many places. What made you create the work? And what is regrettable in the creative process?

JEONG An-Young I have never been an employee before. One day, I had a really incredible experience. I was in the Jongro area in Seoul and it was lunch time. Suddenly, a huge number of employees in shirts and ties came out. Pushed by them, I got lost on the street. That experience felt very unreal. I felt that I was like oil that doesn't blend with water because I don't belong to this world. Starting from that feeling, I made the performance <Quickly Quickly>. During its premiere in 2014, four dancers and about 30 citizens joined the performance on the stairs behind Sejong Center. At that time, I focused on using its scenes to express a strange and unfamiliar atmosphere felt in the crowd. Later on, I made up for what was lacking in the performance to re-create it in 2017. In this new version, there is no distinction between the space for performers and that for the audience. And characters showing unfamiliar movements in a daily urban space appear suddenly, which is different from the previous version. And we made everyday movements that could be performed anywhere. After that, we found a space for the performance. We presented this performance for about four years and during that period, the performers improved their harmony and led the work to perfection.

JEONG Sungtaek I have performed in this work since its premiere. In one of its scenes, five performers put Bluetooth speakers in each of their bags and walk while generating sounds. When they reach a certain place, the speaker installed there integrate the sounds from the performers. At the same times, the performers seem to be absorbed into the zone and I liked that. For a year, we have performed with new music but the music has an excessively cinematographic flow so it is difficult to be immersed. I actually prefer the previous flow in daily life and its calm finale.

SEO Soo-hyun From the perspective of an administrator, I understand the performers' challenges. As the performance is modified, its scenes are clearly divided. Some people like it while others don't. But there are actually many people who like it. For me, what is regrettable technically is that I couldn't control the Bluetooth speakers at the same time. This is something that needs improvements.

JEONG An-Young The 2017 version of <Quickly Quickly> was presented at the lobby of COEX at lunch time, on weekdays. At the beginning of the work, there is a scene where a performer falls down suddenly. At this, passers-by were surprised and hurriedly came to the performer who had fallen down. We couldn't even continue the performance. Then the stage director Soo-hyun told them that a performance was going on, trying to stop them. But I told her not to stop them because such reaction is rather natural. I told her not to control what is natural just to keep the flow of the performance intact. From then on, in such a situation, we calmly approached shocked people, who tried to ask for help or who were about to react excessively, and we told them that it was a performance.

#place_where_people_can_leave_or_erase_their_traces



Be still in existence
©Hyunjun Parkim

Could you tell me about <Be Still in Existence> which premiered last year? This performance seems to be different from the previous ones in terms of its sentiment. What triggered such a change?

JEONG An-Young Through the previous works, I used to express my own world view. On the other hand, in <Be Still in Existence>, I expressed many other people's world view in my own style. That is what differentiates this work. I have lived very fiercely since I was a high schooler. Such a challenge to survive is clearly expressed in many of my works. It has been tough to live and I have also felt the futility of life, just as I had nothing. Such a feeling of emptiness is also reflected in my works. That may have made the audience feel uncomfortable. But thinking about what story to tell on the path in Gyeongchun Line Forest Park(the venue of <Be Still in Existence>), I saw people living their daily lives. So I interviewed 50 people to listen to their life stories. They told me about their lives symbolized by a railway, their splendid moment, the challenging part of their lives and the process of overcoming the challenges. Writing down each facet of their lives was shocking and touching. Looking at such different perspectives of lives, I accepted them as my own stories. This allowed me to keep looking at the people warmly. That power came not from me but from them. After creating a performance like that, I also felt great. I came to let go of many things. And I realized that if I express many people's ideas and thoughts in my work more comfortably instead of insisting on my own perspective, these people finally touch the audience's hearts. I keep learning. I keep widening my scope.

JEONG Sungtaek Doing this performance, I also felt some artistic change personally. In the work, there is a point that share different views of how to connect the work's unreal characters to our reality in daily life. In particular, the performance has not only professional dancers but also actors, children and older people who are capable of expressing daily movements. Such a change in directing feels natural with authenticity. I like and welcome the change.

Street
#what_is_ordinary_and_extraordinary



Is there any work you want to attempt as artists or any place you want to discover?

JEONG An-Young We are preparing a performance taking place at a convenience store. Working part-time at a convenience store for over six months, I came to question the store's system, thinking, "For whom does this 'convenience' exist?" "Is this convenience a real one for us?" Working at a convenience store, I meet all kinds of people. It's so fun and strange. Their voices, acts and tastes for products are all different and while looking at them, I thought that it was like a play. So I wanted to make a performance out of it. Fortunately, we became eligible for support so we are preparing the work. But amid the pandemic, we are searching for a solution. The performance will show the convenience store system operating 24 hours so it will be hard for the performers. The basic concept is to perform non-stop for 48 hours. Like the staff at the convenience store, the actors will perform in three shifts, with each of them dancing for eight consecutive hours, in a real convenience store. In short, the work will show the store's daily activities as they are and at the same time, the artists will perform. The audience will be wearing headsets to listen to different interviews: those with people, those about objects and those about the convenience store.

Personally, I really want to stage a performance near choppy waters. In a way, life's ups and downs resemble the sea. Maybe because I was born and grew up in the port city of Busan in Korea, I feel that I'm living with winds and waves. We do face winds and waves in our lives but we feel the most comforted at the seaside. So I want to present a performance at the seaside, which embraces everything including storms of life, consolation and bounty of nature.

JEONG Sungtaek What is regrettable about many international street performances is that artists have no choice but to create performances in the framework of a fixed space. It is still difficult to find a space and to get permission. In my view, a real street performance takes place in a natural and daily environment, rather than in a specifically fixed and prepared place. And it starts and ends while people don't know whether it is a performance or not. I want to do a performance after spending hours to observe a certain space, doing my daily activities in there and having a sense of belonging to the space.

SEO Soo-hyun For me, not only a space but also what we implement in the space is important. Here, 'implementation' refers to all daily or non-daily acts that we do to exist independently in a certain space. It means a performance that is completed by existing in harmony with the space. I believe that our team started that implementation with <Be Still in Existence>. A space for implementation could be a daily space or choppy waters. Or, the audience could look at performers from afar while they are implementing something at the rooftop of ARKO Art Center in Marronnier Park in Seoul. Artists could also play the role of implementation at symbolic, landmark buildings. That could allow them to communicate with their audience.

White Cube Project

JUNG Sung-tae

White Cube Project was founded in 2017 as JUNG Sung-tae, who had trained as a dancer and worked as a choreographer and creator for 20 years, met the circus genre. They keep trying to provide the audience with a driving force for letting go of anything negative and starting again through their performances. In order to communicate with their audience, they absorb, modify and restructure different elements including dance, acting, sound, light, structures and the circus. By doing this, they make performances with diverse and interesting forms and images. They perform in different types of places including theaters and streets. Their representative works include <The Most Valuable Thing>, <SIGNAL>, <Connection> and <Jo-Ta;Steer>.

wcp.imweb.me
whitecube.pjt@gmail.com
producergroupdot@gmail.com



QR Code for the Interview Video



Connection
©Sang-hun Ok_
White Cube Project



You met the circus after living as a dancer for 20 years and you founded the company. How did you meet the circus and how did you train?

JUNG Sung-tae I actually didn't decide to perform the circus at a specific moment. And I didn't experience any great inspiration from the circus and I didn't have any reference to emulate. Instead, I started the circus with a light heart, quite accidentally. In 2013, I attended a vertical dance workshop run by Project Nalda, a company specializing in aerial performances. On that occasion, the director of Project Nalda suggested that I try the circus. I had actually enjoyed extreme movements. His suggestion intrigued me and I got started. At first, I tried five or six acrobatic apparatuses one by one: chinese pole, tightrope, trapeze and tightwire, just like getting close a person I first met. I first tried the tightrope and trapeze but these tools weren't for me. The same was true for the tightwire. The movements generated through these tools didn't seem to be what I had wanted. What I finally chose was the Chinese pole. And two years ago, I also started performing on the trampoline. It's so fun and it feels great. So these days, I focus on the Chinese pole and trampoline.



The most valuable thing
©Sang-hun Ok, White Cube Project

Your performances often have 'white cubes' as major objets. What is the meaning of a white cube, which is also the name of the company?

JUNG Sung-tae I actually didn't know that 'White Cube Project' would be the name of the company. In 2017, Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture ran a program supporting promising arts projects. I applied to the program with a project and 'White Cube Project' was the project's name. My project was selected for the program and I came to benefit from several years of support. So producing two performances for two years, I saw some possibility and the name finally became that of the company. 'White' means a new beginning. It is a color with unlimited potential, just as we can write and express anything on white paper. It is also my favorite color. A 'cube' means a certain form that could be dismantled and reassembled, just like a building block I used to play with in my childhood. I can make a shape I want and I can change it. Or, I get an unexpected structure in that process. Such a meaning of a cube is attractive. Moreover, I thought that I could use it as an objet with which I could try many things for creation. That is why I combined these two words to name my company 'White Cube'. I feel great about unveiling the company's artistic direction through this name.

Street Arts
#unexpected_beauty

How do you want to define White Cube Project? Would there be any difference between a 'dance company using circus movements and tools' and a 'circus company pursuing dance movements and directing'?

JUNG Sung-tae In fact, this question is important for me. That is because this question helped me think about the company's direction again. In my view, how we define a company as a certain genre or a certain form helps artists receive institutional support. Clarification of a company's category according to its genre or form is the information that is required to describe their works at a festival or a performance venue. But I don't want to define my company that way. We sing, act, dance, use structures and perform circus acrobatics during our performance. As a matter of fact, all these things constitute what I want to pursue. For those who expect a certain specific genre, it may sound ambiguous but my ultimate goal is to successfully absorb and digest all these elements to express them. I would like to create, try and experiment with works that let people see all these things at the same time and that have many things to see. I still have many improvements to make but if I were to define my company, I want it to be defined not as a genre but as 'performance by White Cube Project'. Recently, when asked about our genre, I also answer 'contemporary circus dance theater'.

When it comes to creating works, I don't distinguish between dance and circus movements. In my subjective view, it is now meaningless to clarify any border between movements in the contemporary performing arts in which everything seems to be perceived as a movement. When I create a performance, I focus on expression rather than on dividing movements. I always think about how to mix and effectively express three things: emotions, breath and movement.

Dance and the circus may look very different in terms of their creative processes but in a way, they are not very different. I observe how international companies work and I watch my favorite companies' videos and interviews. I also visit international festivals. These occasions inspire and teach me. To summarize how we work, we adopt circus materials in the creative process of dance and expand it. That is the concept of our work. None of my works shows acrobatics only with circus tools. We don't express movements for circus tools. Rather than that, we express something by means of objets that enable circus movements. That is my direction. Dance also has its way of using objets. So the only difference is how much we expand such a way in the acrobatic style.

#unexpected_energy

Depending on your performances, you collaborate with professionally trained dancers or with actors who are not dancers but who are skillful at movements. Is there any difference between the two groups in terms of how they work or how they communicate?

JUNG Sung-tae Of course, there are differences. Those who work with me are artists who have trained and performed for at least 10 to 20 years. They have lived different lives so it is natural that they differ in terms of how they communicate. I majored in contemporary dance so when I collaborate with dancers, I don't need to talk much. That is because they already know how I have worked so far and what language I speak. When working with them, I don't need to depend on texts. I can just show them movements or images or I can tell them something abstract. Even then, they can communicate with me and they easily empathize with the direction of my creative work. But when collaborating with actors, I sometimes need to give them very detailed explanations and even the subtext. In such a case, we need to discuss a lot in order to understand each other and to share the direction of a work. In the creative process, dancers sometimes find it embarrassing or challenging when asked to try theatrical movements. On the contrary, when actors are asked to express movements, their facial and verbal expressions are rich but they find it difficult to express something bigger. Nevertheless, they can overcome all these difficulties by practicing and training together. It isn't about what is good or bad. It is just that how they communicate is different. Both dancers and actors successfully follow me to reach the final destination of directing I pursue. The process of understanding it differs depending on their educational backgrounds, age and experience. But I finally realized that such a process also concerns my capacity and knowledge as the director. I still need to make many improvements for that and I will keep making efforts.

Jo-Ta;Steer
©Hyungjun Parkim, White Cube Project



Street #another_theater_with_unlimited_potential

For <The Most Valuable Thing>, you were inspired by <The Little Prince> and for <SIGNAL>, by <The Pied Piper of Hamelin>. What are sources of inspiration for White Cube Project's creation?

JUNG Sung-tae It is different for every performance. For <The Most Valuable Thing>, I was inspired by a text. I had a chance to read <The Little Price> again. Reading it, I kept thinking about what would have been the most valuable thing in my life. This is how I came to produce the performance. <SIGNAL> premiered at the rooftop of Seoul Dance Center. It started with the sunset in that space. One day, I visited the center's rooftop at sunset and the view was really beautiful. So I wanted to perform there. Works by French director Yoann Bourgeois also inspired me. And I was very interested in sound interactive performances. These three elements stimulated the creation of <SIGNAL>. For other works, I was inspired by a painting and I also made certain works only for certain spaces. In the case of <Jo-Ta;Steer>, which was produced this year, its idea started with a structure with a pendulum I often saw at the optician's when I was a kid. I was interested in the motility of the structure and I thought that it would be fun to see a performer becoming its pendulum and moving everywhere. So I did research which led to creation. In short, when an image, a space and things I have wanted to use for a performance meet each other in a timely manner, they constitute a starting point for a performance.

I'm very interested in how structures used for performances interact with human bodies and how they make people move. I unconsciously repeat a certain word and that is 'mechanism'. Indeed, those who work with me do say that I repeat that word. It is necessary to understand the motility of movements before moving in order to get things done more rapidly and to enrich expressions. It is important to understand the mechanism. Since my childhood, I have enjoyed rides. So I carefully observe such structures or movements caused by them. Observing them, I think, "How do they move like that?" My curiosity and observation for mechanisms and my imagination about rearrangement seem to be endless. Such inclination has a decisive role in determining the direction of my works.

When it comes to content, it is not an exaggeration to say that all my works are connected. <SIGNAL> is about how we accept, react to and retransmit the innumerable signals in this world. And <Jo-Ta;Steer> says that it is necessary to find one's own helm while drifting in every direction. I think I will keep on telling such stories. That is because I want the audience to reflect on their lives and to find the direction they want through my performances.



You also performed in open spaces like plazas and you also presented mobile performances. What is the most important factor you consider when you choose a space for your performance?

JUNG Sung-tae The first thing that counts is the 'view'. In any place, I feel something during the first visit, like its smells, lights or sounds. I'm sensitive to visuals. I imagine if my work would match a space or not. For example, if White Cube is in the middle of an eight-lane asphalted road, it will look very unfamiliar but it will also look very fun and mysterious. It will make people think something may happen and stimulate their curiosity. In such a way, I stay in a place for a long time and imagine. I consider different factors but what finally leads me is the place's view.

What is the dream of JUNG Sung-tae as a dancer, choreographer or circus director? Is there anything new that White Cube Project would like to try?

JUNG Sung-tae When I was a kid, I wanted to be the President of the Republic of Korea. A dream could be unrealistic. I always dream unrealistic and realistic dreams at the same time. I always have at least one dream that would be nonsense and impossible for others. But who knows? My dream is to become a world-renowned choreographer. Another dream is for White Cube Project. I want the team to meet people on the spot as long as possible, in a sustainable manner.

As for something new to try, I want to produce a large-scale performance. I want to make a very large work. So far, I have made works whose number of performers ranges from two to six. Like Pina Bausch and Cirque du Soleil, I want to experience a large-scale, complex production with many artists. I'm personally doing research on experiments using sounds. I would also like to further study and experiment with juggling-based scenes and movements in a structure hanging in the air in order to try them.

Street
playground_of_imagination



Jo-Ta Steer
©Hyungjun Parkkim_White Cube Project



SIGNAL
©Hyungjun Parkkim_White Cube Project

DIVERSITY OF
KOREAN
STREET ARTS:

Dialogue &
Spectrum

New Trends of Niches



Supplement

A Different Street, A Different Art

KOH Jooyoung

independent producer of the performing arts

'Stree' and 'arts', words that constitute the street arts, are both multilayered elements. So their definitions could differ, depending on each individuals' perspectives and values and on the positions and points of discussions. Therefore, 'street arts', which form artistic trends(without being limited to a genre) could also be defined in so many different ways. In other words, it would not be an exaggeration to say that 'street arts' are innately undefinable from a single perspective. This article doesn't define a 'street' just as a physical 'outdoor space'. Instead, it considers a street as a space outside the system called 'theater' or a 'space where a community exists'. Such a community could be a village or a city. In addition to suggesting such a wide perspective of a 'street', the article also broadens the scope of the 'arts' which go beyond the completed results of projects to refer to the attitudes, perspectives and implementation that come before such results.

The Audience Serving as Performers

The first street arts groups I would like to introduce from the aforementioned perspective of street arts are those that encourage the audience to play the role of performers. Even in indoor performances, artists keep reflecting on the positions and roles of the audience. In street arts, the border between the stage and audience is meaningless in the first place so artists inevitably think about this question even more. For a long time, different artists have presented street performances reflecting these concerns. The two teams I introduce here considered this issue and as result, they came to offer more active roles to their audience. Meanwhile, they are relatively new to the street arts scene.

General Kunst

www.generalkunst.com

Picket Line
©General Kunst



This performing arts team presents their work mostly in unconventional spaces such as streets, forests, art museums and salons. A female director produces her works with diverse collaborators. The most important collaborators are the 'audience'. In almost all performances produced by General Kunst, the audience are provided with headphones. Headphones are used as a tool that organically connects the audience to the performance. Headphones also constitute a medium that gives the director's directions to the performers(=the audience). The audience understand movements and spaces through the language they hear through the headphones. At a certain point, they become performers to form a big landscape or to present their own performance. Consequently, the arts become 'something of everyone and by everyone', just as the name of the team implies.

Recently, they don't pick up their themes from the privileged or from general situations. In most cases, they focus on 'labor' and 'gender' which form the audience's daily life. This also corresponds to the value and role of the arts they suggest. In parallel, they also work on sound projects focused on the sounds heard through headphones. Their representative works include <Avec moi - a foreign stranger> and <Picket Line>.

Creative Mia

www.facebook.com/creativemia



Mia Smart Parcel Service
©Galim Hwang

This young creative group has performed on the street only for three to four years. The group's members also create plays for small theaters so their performances are narrative. However, the way they stage their works in specific spaces is not confined to the fixed, genre-related rules(of the theater or street arts). Unlike their creation of small theater plays, they create and direct street arts performances together, without designating a director. And they all serve as performers. This is about properly combining their narrative aspect and free style, elements that are in opposition to each other.

Here are some works by the group. In <Rude Mia's Mobile Round Table>, Mia, who represents different women, understands what feminism is because of the rudeness of this world. The story unfolds in the Daehakro district, a zone of the performing arts in Seoul. In <Free Ride>, the artists make the audience deliver parcels by subway. In <Mia Smart Parcel Service>, the performers follow elderly people delivering parcels. For these performances, they choose social issues and place them in different spaces, wittily and freely. They also give specific roles to their audience to complete their theatrical narration.

All Streets Are Plazas

The next groups I will introduce are those focusing on a street's function as a plaza, among its diverse functions. The sentence "A street is a plaza". has existed for a long time but such a function of streets has sometimes been nullified, with excessively political connotations. The following teams are currently embodying a 'street as a plaza' on Korea's urban streets.

Diana Band

www.dianaband.info

Cats and Paper Boxes
©Diana Band



Diana Band is a group of two artists who studied the arts and computer programming respectively. With the keywords 'object' and 'sound', they work on complex projects including performances, exhibitions and arts education. In particular, they generate sound (or sometimes light) from objects either digitally or non-digitally. They then focus on forming relationships and solidarity through the waves and wavelengths of the sound and light. Their way of using digital/non-digital technologies is particularly useful in forming a temporary community through sound in a boundless space which is a street.

Participating in the four-year project <Camino de Ansan>, they organized workshops with the pilgrims(audience) to make each person's own musical instrument. Using the instruments, they performed in an area of townhouses which had been demolished for redevelopment. This performance was called <Citizen Band>(2016). They also presented a soundscape performance led by the sounds coming from the speakers of the pilgrims' using the application developed by the duo. These works greatly impressed many people. In addition, they also stage indoor or outdoor performances where small objects generate sounds that are never loud. Particularly during an outdoor performance, the soundscape combining the diverse surrounding sounds and the artists' own sounds make a familiar landscape unfamiliar.

Camino de Ansan

www.caminodeansan.org

Camino de Ansan 2018
©Camino de Ansan Exploration Committee,
Sanghyuk Park



Camino de Ansan is a project that took place every May for five years from 2015(year following the sinking of MV Sewol) to 2019. The project was run by the Camino de Ansan Exploration Committee, a collective of artists of different genres such as the theater, dance, visual arts, maker culture and literature. The sinking of MV Sewol was a man-made disaster that left serious trauma to all Korean citizens. Among the 304 victims, 250 of them were either students or teachers of a high school in Ansan, who were on a school trip. For <Camino de Ansan>, the artists made a pilgrimage route of over 12 kilometers so that they could walk through it with the audience. Walking through the route, the visitors could watch performances and installations which could be part of the landscape or which could be seen where they stop. In this way, the duo wanted to remember and contemplate MV Sewol not with words but with the body and senses.

During the five-year period, the artists came up with a different pilgrimage route and artistic works every year, considering how the accident had been dealt with and how much time had passed since the disaster. The pilgrimage route included places directly linked to the sinking of MV Sewol: the students' high school, group memorial altar(and its site after its demolition), street on which the students used to walk and 'memory class'. The artists also took the audience to places that show the history of Ansan, an industrial city that was planned as part of Korea's national policy in the 1970s. Such places are immigrant's district, an industrial complex, a redevelopment area, a large bookstore in downtown Ansan, an unused railroad as well as a plaza where a festival is taking place. In all, this collective pilgrimage took five to seven hours.

Expansion of the Street, Expansion of the Arts

Listen to the City

www.listentothecity.org



This is a collective composed of members whose backgrounds encompass the arts, design, urban engineering and film. The activities of Listen to the City consist in resisting the privatization of commons such as rivers, mountains, air, water, streets, plazas and cities. But in fact, they carry out their activities for all minorities and weak people by dealing with the following

Preserve Okbaraji
©Listen to the City

themes: zones of thoughtless redevelopment that don't consider the history and value of spaces(e.g. Four Major Rivers Restoration Project, alley for prisoners' families and Cheonggyecheon), disasters, disabilities and feminism. They are activists who are always on the street to protect these people and spaces. They are recorders. They are planners organizing events that would be necessary on the spot. They also compile these records to publish a book and organize exhibitions, performances and films as artists.

They are not street artists who present completed works on the street. Nevertheless, they stay on the street longer than anyone else. By doing so, they witness, record and share the time on the street. And they always make sure they contemplate the essential meaning and value of the street and the city. All the time, they discover the beginning and end of their work on the street. So it is certain that they are artists who get along with streets better than anyone else.

Seoul Queer Parade

sqcf.org

Seoul Queer Parade 2019
©Seoul Queer Culture Festival Organizing Committee



Launched in 2000, the Seoul Queer Parade celebrates its 21st anniversary in 2020. This is the main program of the Seoul Queer Culture Festival which is held every summer. In 2015, the festival moved its main site to the plaza in front of Seoul City Hall, at the center of Seoul. Since then, this one-day festival has attracted so many participants filling the plaza, thus becoming one of Seoul's representative street festivals. Different artists who perform with keywords such as 'gender' and 'queer' present their works at this festival.

The crown jewel of the festival is the 'Queer Parade', where people with a variety of sexual orientations gather together in broad daylight to occupy the center of Seoul, Korea, which is still a country of Confucianism and evangelical Christianity. Different drag performances, which used to be staged only for a small group of people, occupy the heart of Seoul in broad daylight. In addition, activists and members of relevant organizations and groups are transformed into performers, thus making the festival a venue of arts education and citizens' art.

An increasing number of citizens respond enthusiastically and walk with the artists during the festival, regardless of their sexual identity or sexual orientation. Moreover, street artists who participate in the Queer Parade such as drag artists and musicians are seen in different performance venues and exhibition halls more and more. All these trends imply the ripple effects and meaning of the parade.

DIVERSITY OF KOREAN STREET ARTS:

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