



HAUNTED KOREAS

MINA CHEON
WITH
KIM IL SOON

Essay by Avital Ronell

ALPER INITIATIVE FOR WASHINGTON ART



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September 10 – December 11, 2022

American University Museum
at the Katzen Arts Center

Washington, DC

ALPER INITIATIVE FOR WASHINGTON ART



North-South Declaration of Partnership: Standing before the Unification Flag, 2022. Vinyl print, 103 x 150.35 in.

FOREWORD

On behalf of our students, faculty, staff, and friends, I thank Mina Cheon for returning with her art to American University. In 2014, her work was an important component of *Double Mirror: Korean-American Artists*, curated by Iris Inhee Moon. Cheon's contribution to *Double Mirror* included her wonderfully interactive and delicious installation *Eat Choco-Pie Together*. Since then, the American University Museum has played a pivotal role in bringing visual stories from the Korean peninsula to the American audience, presenting images of North Korean life by the great photographer Carl de Keyzer in 2017, and presenting concurrent exhibitions of works by artists living in both North Korea and South Korea. Indeed, *Contemporary North Korean Art: The Evolution of Socialist Realism*, the exhibition curated by BG Muhn in 2016 for American University, was the first of its kind in the US.

This time, in the Alper Initiative for Washington Art, we are featuring Mina Cheon's works by her alter ego, Kim Il Soon, a North Korean artist who paints, sculpts, and makes video, installations, and performance art. Cheon is able to embody the reality of the precarious coexistence between North and South Korea, even as we dream of the peninsula's unification. We celebrate her socialist realist achievements and her mastery of the more subversive arts. It appears Cheon is a protest artist in love with the subject of her protest – *the Koreas*.

There are many individuals and institutions that contributed to this solo exhibition *Haunted Koreas* by Mina Cheon w Kim Il Soon. The Wolpoff Family Foundation sponsored the catalog that accompanies the exhibition. Avital Ronell wrote the extraordinary text for the catalog, titled "The History of a Paradoxical Incorporation," which guided the curatorial direction of the show. The exhibition was made possible with the 2021 AHL – Andrew & Barbara Choi Family Foundation Grant Award. Great thanks are also due to the Ethan Cohen Gallery, Waterfall Mansion and Gallery, The Korea Society, and Asia Society Museum of New York for supporting the artist in the works displayed in the exhibition. And a special thank you to the courageous North Korean defectors around the world and in South Korea.

Jack Rasmussen
Director and Curator
American University Museum
at the Katzen Arts Center
Washington, DC

INTRODUCTION

South Korean new media artist Mina Cheon works for Korean unification with her North Korean alter ego counterpart, Kim Il Soon, through "asynchronous communication." Crossing borders by sending and receiving art between North and South Korea, the artist brings the remnants of her global activism by sharing the recent works from the Inaugural Asia Society Triennial and The Korea Society in New York, respectively, between 2020 and 2021, as a comprehensive solo show for the Alper Initiative at the American University Museum in Washington, DC. The guiding exhibition text, "The History of a Paradoxical Incorporation" by critical theorist Avital Ronell contextualizes the haunted Koreas and the artist's protest for peace.

"Cheon breaks into forbidden territory, a no man's land—certainly a no-woman's land—of contested sovereignty. She slips into No. Korean territory, and recedes back to So. Korean haunts in camouflage, be it as a secretive convoy of art historical teaching or in roguish disguise, as one of "them." Thus her deliberate misappropriations of propagandistic iconography sometimes simulate adherence to an opponent's claims, switching up cues of politically coded assumptions and the righteous bullet points of human rights advocacy. The work attracts a riot of controversy that secretly targets the heart of a dilemma, an ambivalence shared by many who cannot choose sides, yet must choose sides, living in the tensional structure of division, asymmetrically apportioned."

—Avital Ronell

The exhibition was made possible with the 2021 AHL - Andrew & Barbara Choi Family Foundation Grant Award. With great thanks to the Ethan Cohen Gallery, Waterfall Mansion and Gallery, The Korea Society, and Asia Society Museum of New York for supporting the artist in the works displayed in the exhibition. And a special thank you to the courageous North Korean defectors around the world and in South Korea.

HAUNTED KOREAS:

THE QUESTION OF KOREAN UNIFICATION — PROTEST PEACE

MINA CHEON WITH KIM IL SOON

This artist statement is a compilation of new and old thoughts. I've even borrowed from my past writings and artist talks. This "thought piece, artist statement, and manifesto" rides on many topics of my interests related to communication, community, transnational identity, protest, practice, and performance of an artist. This is an opportunity to write my herstory that was somewhat molded before me and before my time. I call myself a Korean diaspora artist with ancestral traits from the Northern Korean regions now known as North Korea, with a last name "Cheon" from China. I've inherited some of the Korean transhistorical and intergenerational trauma and its misfortunes. Our country's ancient belief and practice of shamanism exists to undo the misfortunes by ritualizing the healing process, might that be by eating some Chocopies. As an effective shaman knows, the path of the ritual is dark, but the life of an artist is received.

Korea is entrenched in complexities, cultural paradoxes, and contradictions. The schism created by the division between North and South Korea as an extension of the Cold War, layered by the traumatic history of colonization, war, and the aftermath, reinforces the complexities and dualities in its social fabric. *It is what it is (not) to be, or imagine oneself as, Korean.* Fraught existence accepted by most older Koreans is challenged by new generations who may have not directly experienced

past hardships. My Generation X is stuck between the old and new Korea. Many of us living between countries, myself Korean, yet American, Western and Eastern, with colliding values I piece together as forced hybridity and transnational identity.

My country is split into North and South Korea. The splintering forces extend themselves in other ways: progressive and conservative politics, severe gender division servicing a distinctive Confucius Korean patriarchy (protested by every Korean woman I know), the religious hierarchy between Christianity and Buddhism and Shamanism, and contradictions between the Western neoliberal lifestyle versus Korean humility and modesty. At this time, art and life come together for me, and protest is recognized as an art practice. Art activism for social justice work is a necessary cultural expression of our time that exists here and over-there, as protesting is nothing new to Korea. Indeed, I am not the only Asian in America to say Black Lives Matter always, and thank you for stopping Asian hate, as all these things relate.

Tracing Korea's modern pro-democracy protests, they existed since the post-Joseon Dynasty under Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945) as *marches*. The simultaneous embrace of modernization and westernization promoted human rights and ideas of independence, which fermented the seeds to help

liberate Korea from imperial Japan. Still, the desire for human liberation and rights continues today, with inter-Korean peace efforts (from both North and South Korea) creating elasticity beyond the contours of its own nation-state.

Korea has been historically flooded with protests. As people rise, *simin*, citizens, Minjoong (the people's movement) cascade as markers of a performing nation that seeks a catalyst for change at each turn: from the Yu Guan Soon and March 1st, 1919, the independent movement from Japanese colonization, the anti-military government Gwangju uprising in the '80s, and Lim Su-kyung's legendary peace walk through the DMZ in 1989, to the 2016 candlelit democracy protests that led to the 2017 impeachment of the last President Park Geun-hye—and the plethora of uprisings that continue to surge, the 2018 #metoo of Korea, the weekly Wednesday comfort women protests in front the Japanese embassy in Seoul, the anti-Japanese 2019 boycott of Japan, and Korea's pride parades. Out of these forms of protests, many Korean women, LGBTQIA+, laborers, students, and intellectuals have taken sides to rise.

Even in America, I have not yet met a contemporary artist who attends rallies, but I've met many who protest. Parades, peace walks, and protests align with the artistic practice, declaring individual and collective performativity as modes of subverting norms, hegemonies, governing powers, and established law. The marginalized and outcasts, who remain on the periphery, are layered by common threads related to justice and peace works. An artist working within the times may use all the languages and tools of the arts but can make work with a message and directives imparted by our culture of awareness. *My artistic medium is my conscience; I share therefore I am.*

Coming from this protest culture and backdrop, I, Mina Cheon, who also works/performs/practices art as (and with) "Kim Il Soon," her North Korean art persona and counterpart, exhibit art for Korean unification while protesting peace. The works were first exhibited at the Ethan Cohen Gallery in New York, a solo show, *Dreaming Unification: Protest Peace* (December 10, 2020 – February 25, 2021), at the height of the pandemic and before vaccination rollouts. But we braved to "raise the flags, the Korean Unification flags" that allowed a second extended life at The Korea Society in New York (May 3 – September 2, 2021). The unification flags are figures, and they are raised high and in line, like a procession of a parade.

The solo exhibition at The Korea Society ran concurrently with the Inaugural Asia Society Triennial (October 27, 2020 – June 27, 2021) exhibition at the Asia Society Museum in New York. The works in these two sites related directly to each other and pointed to the interconnected artistic investigation into the complex ties, histories, and conundrums between the two Koreas and the biases many non-Koreans have about these issues.

The works coming together in this site as a solo show, *Mina Cheon w Kim Il Soon—Haunted Koreas* (September 10 – December 11, 2022), at the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center in Washington, DC, brings it to a full circle, a closing of a chapter, and a spotlight of a decade's worth of artistic practice with a supportive and guiding exhibition text, "The History of a Paradoxical Incorporation" by critical theorist Avital Ronell, my teacher, mentor, friend, and ally. I've asked her to help bridge me to the next chapter and a little closer to Korean unification.

Living with the daily terror of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the global impact, anxieties rise that anything can happen next.



Installation view of the Main Gallery of The Korea Society with the *Unification Dream Paintings* by Kim Il Soon.



Installation view of Ethan Cohen Gallery with the series of Korean unification flag paintings known as *Unification Dream Paintings* by Kim Il Soon, a selection from the series of twenty total pieces, custom IKB blue paint, stencil, spray paint, sumi ink on canvas, each at 60 x 40 x 1.5 in.



Installation view of Asia Society Triennial: *We Do Not Dream Alone* at the Asia Society Museum, New York, October 27, 2020 - June 27, 2021. Photograph © Bruce M. White, 2021, courtesy of the Asia Society.

In North Korea, continued spectacles arise with ongoing threats. April 15, 2022, the 110th anniversary of the birth of Kim Il-sung, was the “Day of the Sun” and also marked Kim Jong-un’s ten years in power. While military parades are one thing, there is an escalation of missile testing. China remains an ally with a blind eye to the activities of North Korea’s acceleration of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. With the outgoing South Korean President Moon Jae-in are hopes for reconciliation efforts with

North Korea; who knows where we stand with the incoming President Yoon Suk-yeol. As a leader of the conservative People Power Party, he capitalized on anti-feminist rhetoric to win his campaign and has set the tone for a grim future against democracy from the onset.

In 2020, we witnessed the InterKorean Liaison Office building at Kaesong blown up (June 16) due to the parachuting of anti-North Korean propaganda leaflets into the North from the South. Today, there is

nevertheless North Korean citizens' resistance and consumption of foreign information that also have tightened governmental surveillance. Moreover, the violent blowup of the InterKorean space for peace talks coincided with the 75th anniversary of the Worker's Party military celebration (October 10), parading new ICBMs.

In South Korea, still economically robust and considered America's finest ally and a model of a pro-democratic country in Asia, the consumption culture continues with the riches and the lands. K-wave films and K-pop thrive on marking South Korea as producers of new cultural elites for the global market.

Frankly, the ongoing struggles for reconciliation between a "me-first" capitalist state of South Korea, now with a heightened conservatism and lifting its defense policies, may radically change the forecast of the exchanges between the Koreans.

Divided Korea is a nuclear Korea. While we used to think the Korean war was frozen in time, peace talks about reconciliation remain in question as ideological freedom and democracy from the South can't outweigh the socialist sovereignty of the North with a nuclear deterrent. And North Korea has withheld through time that they still exist with all kinds of sanctions. What is Korean unification? Reunification like united Germany? Korean reunification may be an opening of the DMZ and extending tourism, shared economy, labor, and natural resources. Still, reconciliation between two systems without one giving in or being forced at the hands of the other seems unlikely.

Furthermore, what would be the aftermath of reunification? Can a two-system one-state solution be different from those we have seen? China and Hong Kong have increased struggles from within and have further separated from global accountability; or Israel

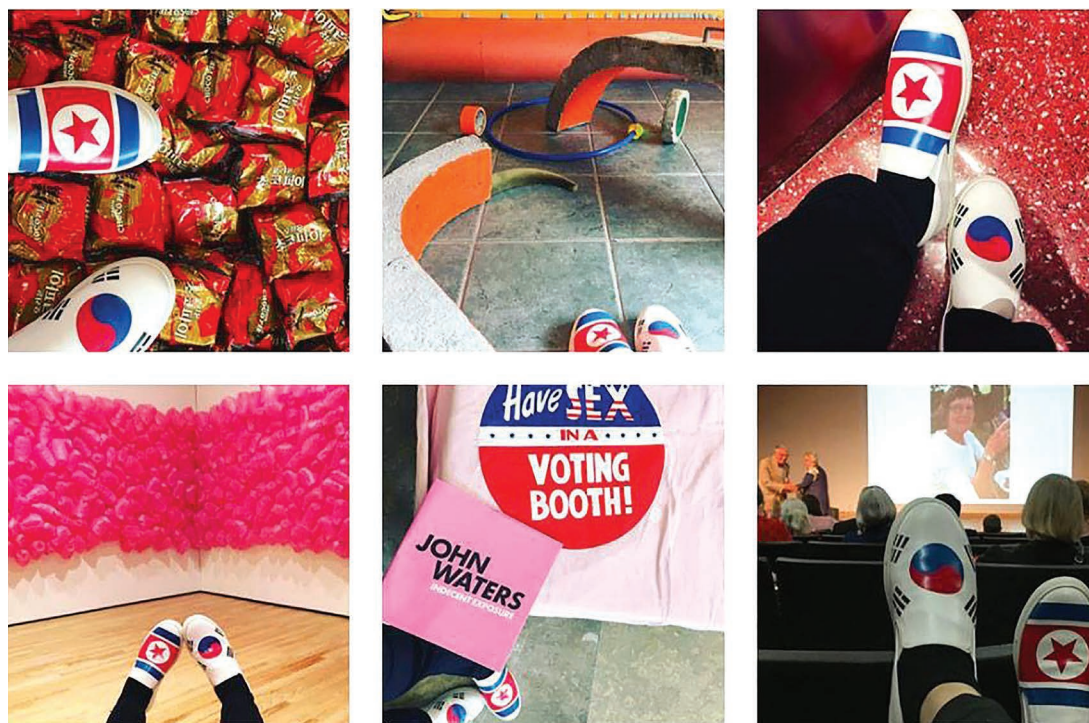
and Palestine, when will their war end? Being frozen in time is a neutralizer, political propaganda for complacency and amnesia because the Korean Peninsula was always and has been on fire, remaining a war zone.

Moreover, the past years of secret underground human rights activism for and within North Korea are far more dangerous today. At the same time, the North Korean internal economy relies on the black market, and North Korean citizens are coming to greater awareness of the world outside their hermit kingdom. As a result, we face a new precarious and unpredictable state of questioning who will lead and carry out Korean unification; the wave may come stronger from the North Koreans. Indeed, North Korean defectors in South Korea are connectors and leaders of the future. They are already doing the work of reconciliation; they embody Korean unification and are the unifiers.

The arch of my work is done in response. The artistic practice has been about what is possible to transmit and work between the Koreas for "sharing," "streaming," and "communicating" for Korean unification and global peace. As I yearn for my country, land, people, and family, the work is about communication between self and other. It is about crossing borders and blurring boundaries.

It is about sharing Chocopies with the world, sharing video art history lessons with North Koreans, receiving paintings from them, and sneaking around painting unification flags in secret, in dreams. In dreamworlds and in the world of imagination, and in the stream of collective unconsciousness, we can work the future, spilled out into fragments of our social reality.

One of the pre-COVID headlines on North Korea was the buzz of Yo-Yo Ma performing at the heavily fortified DMZ on September 9, 2019, "calling for peace and the building of



Images of Global Peace Shoes, 2018-2019. The Global Performance - Walk for Peace.

bridges across cultures.” But unfortunately, the short-term effects of music, entertainment, or athletic competition to bridge peace on war fares feel unsatisfactory, relying on fabricated “catharsis” that cannot compensate for seventy years of separation between Korean families.

The unification flags waved by the joint North and South Korean athletic teams during the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics were only a momentary bliss for our Koreas. And I think back to the moment I got to ride on a bus right through the DMZ from South Korea to North Korea in 2004, visiting Keumkangsan. Back then, I could have never imagined the future when Trump gets to jump over to the other side like jump roping or hopscotching, nor did I foresee a future where a North Korean

soldier, who ran across the DMZ for his life and was shot, wakes up from his surgeries in South Korea, wanting to eat a Chocopie.

So, I’ve become a fan of “peace” and decided that we must protest for peace by walking, dreaming, eating, and sharing. I walk for peace in “Global Peace Shoes,” and so do my friends around the world, since one foot cannot move forward without the other. The left cannot move without the right.

I’ve started to dream of Korean unification further. With my North Korean art persona, “Kim Il Soon,” we have ventured into stencil work, spraying and tagging in dreams to continuously wave the flag that has fallen since the Olympics, and to offset the discouraging chaos and canceled peace talks in the Peninsula.

We “Eat Chocopie Together.” As one of my main mediums for global activism, the food for art and healing is a South Korean manufactured chocolate marshmallow cookie cake worth three rice bowls in North Korea, which remains a strong currency in the black market and a favored smuggled good there. With thousands sent by helium balloons over the DMZ and circulated within the North Korean black market for years, today’s Chocopie is undoubtedly a cultural symbol of love and peace within the Koreas.

I dedicated 100,000 Chocopies to the North Korean defectors. They were consumed by art lovers and global peace lovers alike during the 2018 Busan Biennale (September 8 – November 11, 2018) at the Busan Contemporary Art Museum. Sponsored by the Chocopie manufacturer Orion Corporation of South Korea, even the South Korean President Moon Jae-in and First Lady Kim Jung-sook came to *Eat Choco-Pie Together*.

For the Asia Society Triennial in New York titled “We Do Not Dream Alone,” co-curated by Boon Hui Tan and Michelle Yun Mapplethorpe, the physical installation event that was supposed to happen at the Lincoln Center a couple of years ago had to go virtual during the pandemic. To respond to our socially distanced time with the coronavirus, Ken Tan, serving as the Executive Director of Global Artistic Programs of the Asia Society, approached me with this digital initiative: EatChocopieTogether.com.

This website allowed people to stay connected by sending virtual Chocopies to loved ones with custom messages, by clicking on the map of Korea and selecting an artistically designed package with the theme of “Love, Peace, Share, Eat, and Unite,” referencing things we need right now, whether we are in divided Korea or in the United States of America. And each participation



EatChocopieTogether.com
Promotional image, 2020. Virtual online project.



Visitors of all ages enjoying *Eat Choco-Pie Together* at the Busan Biennale 2018.



Video still (detail), *Art History Lesson 5 Feminism, Are We Equal?*, video art, approx. 10 mins.

in sharing the pies automatically raised funds for Korean Americans affected by the coronavirus thru the Korean American Community Foundation (KACF) COVID-19 Action Fund. The fund then helped with a Korean language COVID-19 health hotline, increased domestic violence counseling, meal delivery, shelter for the homeless, and the rise of anti-Asian racism programming to address this social problem.

Since the launch of EatChocopieTogether.com on August 15, 2020, thousands of people have taken action to share and eat virtual Chocopies to “take a bite for global peace.” It is still available for virtual interactions online. In one month, \$5000 was raised for KACF. It was also the launching project for the Asia Society Triennial. And August 15 is also the Korean Liberation Day from Japanese colonization, which is the single national holiday celebrated in both North and South Korea.

Dreaming Korean Unification, Eating Chocopies, Walking for Peace, and Information Media Penetration into North Korea are all artistic works to cross over borders and boundaries—to cross over the DMZ border that physically separates North and South Korean people. As global activism art, my work is intended to infiltrate the Korean psyche by calling on peace, streaming for Korean unification.

From dream worlds to the underground world, I’ve been sending contemporary video art history lessons into North Korea through USB drives, SD cards, and media carriers for the last several years with the help of North Korean defector activists in South Korea and intermediaries who frequently cross many borderlines between Korea, China, and Russia. I do this with love and a message to North Koreans: “I love you, and the world loves you.” The videos were created with North Koreans

in mind and with specific visual and popular media language, likened to a children's TV show for accessibility and security reasons.

In them, "Professor Kim (Il Soon)" purposefully gives prescribed global art history lessons against the backdrop of North Korean receivers who are primarily familiar with state-sanctioned propaganda art of North Korea. My sources and inspiration for this work come from existing scholarships related to North Korea's hidden revolution. The video series includes art history lessons on Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, Ai Weiwei, Mark Bradford, Nam June Paik, Shirin Neshat, and Kimsooja, and many others, and focuses on topical themes of modern and contemporary art, such as art, life, food, reproduction, feminism, social justice, and the environment.

The real message, however, is about the human rights to education. From the other histories of secluded countries, hermit kingdoms, totalitarian societies that, too, have opened up, from the Arab Spring to the foreseeable Pyongyang Spring, it is possible to rise up from within, with media in one hand and freedom in the other.

The extended work I now call "asynchronous communication" with North Korean citizens, exemplified by *The Last Supper* that was hanging at the Asia Society Museum, painted by anonymous North Korean painters, who also risked their lives painting it, was presented alongside the videos in Notel players installed at the Asia Society Triennial exhibition.

Together for the Alper Initiative at the American University Museum, Katzen Arts Center, shown with more unification flag paintings, videos, and paintings from North Korea, are the featured asynchronous communication coming from both sides of the Peninsula. As its first public presentation, *The Last Supper* was sent to me to funnel support

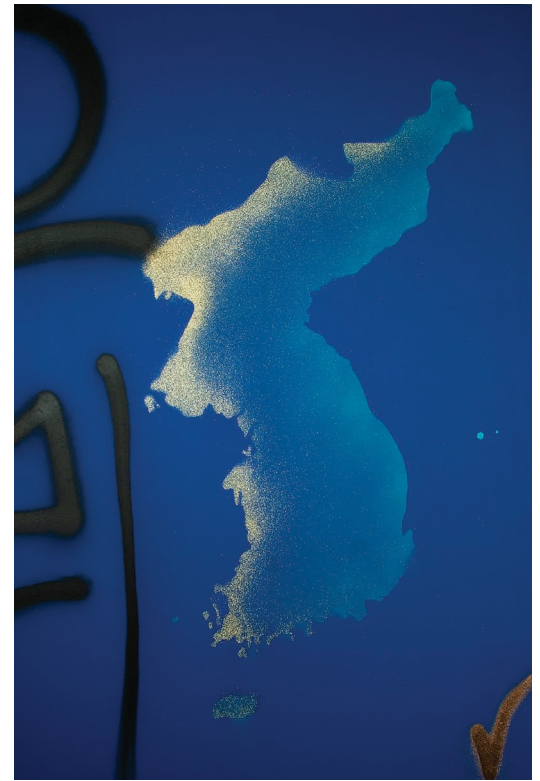
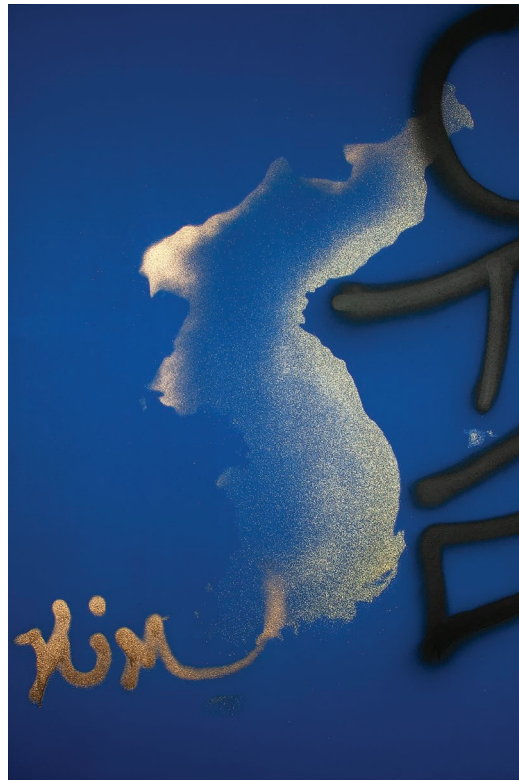


Anonymous North Korean painters, *The Last Supper*, 2019. Oil on canvas, 44 x 88 in.

for human rights in North Korea. The painting is key to understanding another level of ongoing exchanges between North and South Korea, and what is considered the premium of Western art history by North Koreans.

The diptych painting of Korean unification flags with the Korean word "Ori 우리 (we/us)" down the center includes the Korean "Han" and pro-democracy sentiments. Many contemporary Korean artists, workers of social justice, and keepers of the peace, like myself, belong to a vast nexus of Korean artists working with post-Minjoong misool (people's democracy art) lineage and responding to the fraught relations between North and South Korea.

Moreover, many American BI+POC artists today in the United States are global allies in a joint effort to stop hate, ignorance, and structural racism at the forefront. And, yes, racism is rampant in Asia; hatekoreawave, hateJapanwave, hateChinawave are blockbuster mangas, while disguised and bracketed as nationalism, classism, and other forms of humanity crimes.



Dreaming Unification: Oori (우리) Protest for Peace, Diptych, 2019–2020. Custom IKB blue paint, stencil, spray paint, sumi ink on canvas, 60 x 80 in.

The diptych painting created by/with “Kim Il Soon” “while dreaming and protesting” for Korean unification and global peace was not a one-off, but came from a serial process from a stream of unconsciousness, a series of dream paintings that has been in the making for over ten years.

The “aka Kim Il Soon” shift to “w- (with) Kim Il Soon” is pertinent to understanding the basis of reading my/her/their/our work because my art practice, as both Cheon and Kim, and the many of us, parallels the split of the Koreas and the splintering effects of a fragmented nation. The Korean Unification Flag painting series hits a different chord from past Kim Il Soon’s dream painting styles—from social/socialist realism, pop art to abstract expressionism, dip and drip abstraction—has been brought to light with the greatest sense of urgency, in an aesthetic-arrest of

street, graffiti, stencil, and tagging—forms of protest art.

It goes without saying, I am a Korean transnational female diaspora artist living and working in the United States, dealing with transhistorical and transgenerational Korean trauma. The inclusion of these contextual fields and using conscience and soft power in creating art are ways of artistic responses for countering scattered hegemonies, walls, and borders in our world of increased cultural, ideological, political, and economic divides. It is the workings of an artist in a time of the “woke” era.

As a vernacular term that became popular with the Black Lives Matter movement’s protest culture, “woke” means being awakened to social injustice and racism. The awakening is a way of being, or being “with it,” since when one succumbs to social awareness,

one becomes conscious of the world around them, and there is no turning back. The artist's conscience bridges art and life. It creates paths to greater social projects that take on issues, and are awoken by them in relation to power, race, gender, identity, politics, economics, and the environment. An artist working with the social medium must deal with the temporality of existence, conflict, and awareness. The work responds to the environment and the time we live in. Materials to work with are people-life-culture, and to dismantle are structure-power.

Just as the philosophical and psychological construct of the self has changed, the concept of borders in relation to the body must change. We live in an age where identity is flexible, information is accessible, and bodies are celebrated as adaptable, permeable, transmitted, digitized, shared, and expressed.

The metaphors of boundless body and hyper-digital-extensions "by choice" remain for those who can choose (and own Zoomland), the privileged vaccinated from the zombie apocalypse. In contrast, those on the other side, or from the lines drawn apart, have no access to security and safety. While some are allowed the freedom of exit and entry (digital or physical spaces), others are confined in camps and poverty lines.

The myths and stereotypes that create the "bodily other" (the racial other, minority, foreigner, or the queer body against the protected citizen body) exist in social structures and fabrics of power and hierarchy that stratify, separate, and keep those in power intact. And the lesser-so from basic human rights. So, artists with soft power, being woke to the urgencies of our time, are cultural agents (of change) and can use culture as a weapon to share a different kind of response when it comes to rethinking borders and bodies, and "where our protest lies."



Umma and Children, 2017. Blue dip painting on archival digital print on canvas, custom IKB blue paint, 30 x 40 in.

In my case, do I/we dare wake up from dreaming and protest for peace for the liberation of my-other-selves, of the North Koreans who are of my kind? If we can take care of our vulnerable others, can we get somewhere in life? From the divided Koreas to the divided United States of America and the divided worlds we live in, protesting for anti-war efforts "there" echoes desiring peace "over-here."

Art must continue as a banner of hope and is essential in life.

This piece was updated April 23, 2022 since a draft was shared at The Korea Society live webcast and an in-person artist talk on June 30, 2021, in New York. It is a compilation of different parts of recent writings by the artist Mina Cheon.

www.koreasociety.org/arts-culture/item/1504-artist-talk-mina-cheon

www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdB8BE-ZVsA

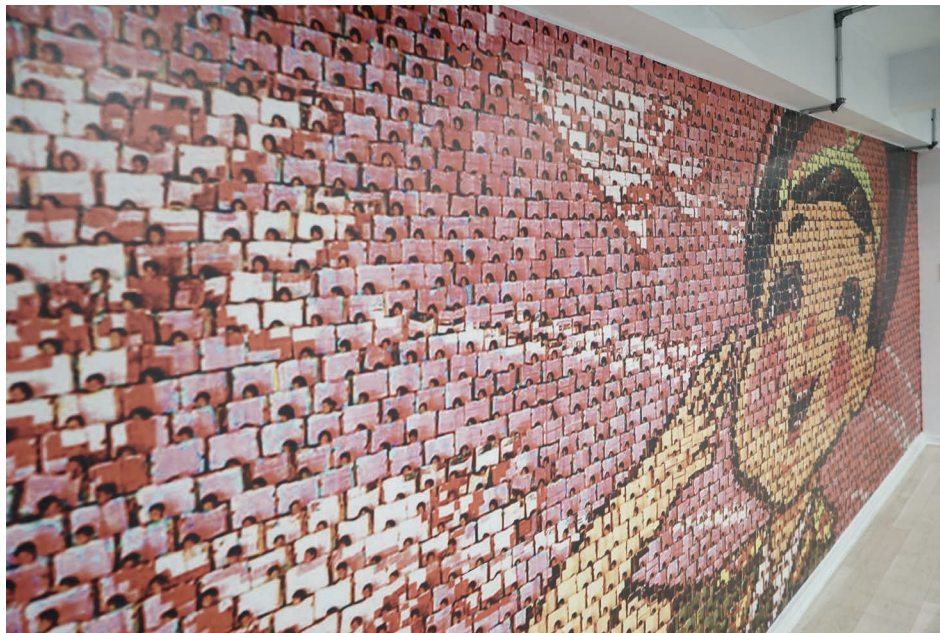
UMMA : MASS GAMES - Motherly Love North Korea, Ethan Cohen Gallery, New York

Solo exhibition, curated by Nadim Samman, October 20, 2017 - January 11, 2018.

Photo courtesy of Ethan Cohen Gallery and the artist.



Installation view of "The Heavens and Earth" thematic gallery section with banners, drapes, print on fabric, vinyl print on wall, paintings, and installations made of C+C router and MDF, silent siren, upper gallery space approx. 1500 sq. ft.



Ariang Mass Games, 2017. Vinyl print, approx. 7 x 16 ft.



Installation view of "The Underground" thematic gallery section that includes ten Notel players (common media players in North Korea for viewing foreign media), *Art History Lessons by Professor Kim* sent into North Korea on USB drives and other media carriers since 2017. *Happy North Korean Children*, painting and print series on wall, lower gallery space approx. 1000 sq. ft.



Dreaming Unification Painting Series, 2017. Blue dip and drip paintings stacked like card games for interactive viewing, symbolizing new ways of playing underground in North Korea, with the centerpiece being the Korea's third flag, the *Unification Flag*, approx. 5 x 20 ft.



Happy Land Games, 2017. Mobile assembly installation made of MDF sculptures, fabricated by C+C router with vinyl sticker adhered on wood, approx. 5 x 20 ft. The image is of benday dots blown up to life-size of the same design as the actual punch-out games originally found inside the Choco-Pie boxes that went into North Korea with the title "Happyland." The images of the Happyland games looks a lot like the real Kim Jong-un's Funfair Amusement Park near Pyongyang, North Korea's own Disneyland.

Divided We Stand, Busan Biennale 2018, Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA) Busan, South Korea

Artistic director Cristina Ricupero and curator Jörg Heiser, September 8 – November 11, 2018.
Photos by Lee Sang Uk, courtesy of Busan Biennale 2018 and the artist.

Eat Choco-Pie Together, 2018. A hundred thousand Chocopie art installation for the audience to eat at the Busan Biennale 2018, sponsored by the Orion Corporation, 23 ft. diameter circle, and 1 ft. height. Stacked Chocopies in a circle that changed shape due to the daily consumption of the confectionery by the audience during the three-month Biennale exhibition. The installation was dedicated to North Korean defectors in South Korea and around the world. Chocopies made in South Korea are the number one smuggled good in North Korea and are a cultural symbol of unification between the Koreas.



Airang Mass Games, 2018. Installation at the Busan Biennale 2018 with paintings, digital prints, and new media, with *Happy North Korean Children*, photographic print as a vinyl wall on the background, approximate wall size 11 x 33 ft.



Eat Choco-Pie Together, 2018. 100,000 Chocopies as an art installation for the audience to eat at the Busan Biennale 2018, sponsored by the Orion Corporation, 23 ft. diameter circle, and 1 ft. height. Stacked Chocopies in a circle that changed shape due to the daily consumption of the confectionery by the audience during the three-month Biennale exhibition. The installation was dedicated to North Korean defectors in South Korea and around the world. Chocopies made in South Korea are the number one smuggled good in North Korea and are a cultural symbol of unification between the Koreas.



Lunch time packed with students from a local middle school who came to *Eat Choco-Pie Together*.



Visitors of all ages enjoying *Eat Choco-Pie Together* at the Busan Biennale 2018.

Dreaming Unification: Protest Peace, Ethan Cohen Gallery, New York

Solo exhibition, December 10, 2020 - February 27, 2021. Photo courtesy of Ethan Cohen Gallery and the artist.



Installation view of the gallery with the series of Korean unification flag paintings known as *Unification Dream Paintings* by Kim Il Soon, a selection from the series of twenty total pieces, custom IKB blue paint, stencil, spray paint, sumi ink on canvas, each at 60 x 40 x 1.5 in.

Mina Cheon: Dreaming Unification/Protest Peace, The Korea Society, New York

Solo exhibition, May 3 - September 2, 2021.

Photo courtesy of The Korea Society and the artist.



Installation view of the Main Gallery of The Korea Society with the *Unification Dream Paintings* by Kim Il Soon.



Installation view of the Main Gallery of The Korea Society with the *Unification Dream Paintings* by Kim Il Soon.

***We Do Not Dream Alone*, Inaugural Asia Society Triennial, Asia Society Museum, New York**

Artistic director Boon Hui Tan, co-curator Michelle Yun Mapplethorpe, and Executive Director of Global Artistic Programs Ken Tan, October 27, 2020 – June 27, 2021. Virtual Tour: asiasociety.org/triennial/visit#virtualltour

"Mina Cheon is an artist and activist based in Korea and the United States. Many of her works speak to the relationship between North and South Korea. The Korean Peninsula is one block of land, but it has been divided since the late 1940s. This has created a situation where people, objects, and information cannot move freely across the border. As you look around, you will see videos of art history lessons that Cheon made for a North Korean audience. The artist plays the role of a North Korean teacher, presenting herself as "Professor Kim."

You will also see a diptych, which is an artwork made of two parts placed side by side. The artist painted a unified Korea on each panel. By doing this, Cheon hopes to symbolically bring together the two divided countries. The diptych is exhibited alongside another painting. Does it remind you of an artwork that you have seen before or learned about? This is a reproduction of an artwork titled *The Last Supper*, originally painted by the famous Italian artist and scientist, Leonardo da Vinci, over five hundred years ago. The version that you see here was painted by anonymous North Korean artists. Cheon's work teaches us that borders between countries are not always as clear as they seem to be and that there are ways for us to stay connected, no matter where we are in the world."

—Audio Guide
asiasociety.org/triennial/family-audio-guide-33-mina-cheon



Inaugural Asia Society Triennial participation included an installation at the Asia Society Museum in New York with: *Oori (우리)* Unification Flag painting diptych; *The Last Supper* painting by anonymous North Koreans; and a row of DVD Notel players with artist's video *Art History Lessons by Professor Kim*. These works were defined and coined as "Asynchronous Communication with North Koreans" by the artist.



Installation view of Asia Society Triennial: *We Do Not Dream Alone* at the Asia Society Museum, New York, October 27, 2020 – June 27, 2021. Photograph © Bruce M. White, 2021, courtesy of the Asia Society.



THE HISTORY OF A PARADOXICAL INCORPORATION

AVITAL RONELL

At once disguised and exposed, she cites a face, her face, in costumed morphs, traversing contested territory with paradoxical resolve

Mina Cheon hosts many identities, some of which are poised in tensed collusion, battling various aliases. Mythical personae emerge as splinters of an unbearable history bound only by the timeline of warring positions. Her own positions, to the extent they can be “owned” or stabilized, tend to alternate according to ironically coded programs of self-appropriation. Regularly inserting herself in a composite of events that share historical and fictional edges, she incorporates a multiplicity of place-names, logging in dislocations and implausible conjunctions that point to familiar ethnic syntagms without grounding their meaning. Her realist depictions at best simulate a recognizable world. One could say that Cheon paradoxically establishes the prevalence of national boundaries in order to knock them down and make them quiver. Her work acknowledges inhibitive encroachments that haunt relations. The police force, everywhere on the prowl, inflects the scenes of her performance. Sensitive to the limits of what can be shown and said, constantly reinforced by various acts of policing, she replaces and neutralizes acts of repressive patrolling with her own replica of paramilitary figurations.

Materially bound and part of a vocabulary of tenuous nationhood, the work implacably stands apart, facing a formidable opponent. Her procedure is at once in-your-face and stealth. She switches up identities where the fixity of identity papers are required as part of a national checkpoint system. Still, the collection presented under her name manages to remain loyal to an elusive notion of “Korea.”

In order to maintain the repertory of her stylized aliases, Cheon shuttles between two poles—one indicating extreme passivity, and the other offering the audacity of an engaged interloper. On the one hand, she assumes the role of an historical subject who did not ask to be born, tethered to radical acceptance of place, habits, signification. On the other hand, just as intently, she jumps in to rearrange the official mapping of her birth country, demanding a rethinking of theoretical premises in the business of urging “peace” and “unity”—premises that impassion her moves. As with Korea, she apports as two discernable entities (at least): Passive Mina, a subject of history, alternates with Resolute Mina, an action-heroine simulating agency by means of acute rounds of defiance and pop breaches of protocol.

The Minas battle each other, combing for a truce in a world that is continually testing out boundaries. Though dispossessed by the taunts of an unmasterable history, the Minas manage to reposition the way a country can be read when called to another kind of order. By means of the deployment of critical acumen and skeptical pushback, art begins to question the overscale dominion of politics in the unfolding of history. Throughout the stages of their imparted dossier, the Minas maintain the tensions of a restrained passivity whose flipside goes after its object with ferocious determination.



For the most part, the work of Mina Cheon stands both as a reception center signing for incoming parcels of dispersed historical narrative and a generator of that history's meaning. Cheon's efforts consist in reinscribing a history of trauma, which put her at risk of being misunderstood. Trauma, as instigator of historical narrative, is also that which, in our attempts at articulation, struggles with memory and event. A traumatic subject is often overwhelmed by an event, unable to seize on its particulars, prey to its intrusive slams. When trying to reconstitute history, Cheon holds onto what necessarily disperses, falls apart, resisting narrative summation. Trauma compromises the impulse to totalize a narrative: it is the core of historical telling, yet notoriously unreliable.

Thus at times it may seem that Cheon carries too close to the fire of her expropriation, burning identities and the politesse of ideological clarity. She opts out of easy resolutions and the cooling comforts of historical platitude. Positioning her aliases in a thematic space whose sides are sharply drawn, one often wonders, Whose side is she—are

the Minas—on? The question repels any quick solution yet proves decisive to the way we incorporate historical disaster—especially where the sides are stringently regulated yet artificial, walled in yet secretly porous. Her circumscriptions raise in any case the specter of bold artistic incursion, teaching us how to redraw lines and displace our certitudes about the measure of clarity used to seal in and mime national identities. The work also blurs the lines between *compliant* and *defiant* statements launched by the artist-teacher. Overly compliant, performative statements edge into the realm of defiance and rebel assertion.

Her acts—and staged passivities—call up a philosophical tradition of questions associated with art, whether it be pronounced dead (Hegel, et al) or still pounding the cultural pavement (Nietzsche, et al). Assuming we had a provisional grasp of the essential stakes in politicized arenas, we still need to understand whether art touts the privilege of powerlessness, the kind that can speak truth to power without getting whacked—or even whether art can move the needle of immovable facticity? To what extent, for instance, should art expect to battle a sinister historical opponent, a circumscribed division of forces, allowing the artistic inflexion to become part of a moving banner of contestation and protest? Or should art rather surrender to a temptation of *shooting blanks*, as Kant has said of philosophical aims and effectiveness? “Shooting blanks” offers the paradoxical advantage of protected outspokenness in a situation of political repression, when the philosopher must recede into muffled areas of impossible negotiations with world-class brutality and unstoppable acts of human cruelty. Given Kant's shrewd assessments of our limitations as subjects and artistic markers, how does the practice of *dissidence* come into play? What

kind of sanctuaries or buffer zones should an artist build around herself, even as history presses in on transformations of which art, in complicity with a critique of judgment, still proves capable? For her part, Cheon walks into the line of fire, where art stares down politics, baring its tiger teeth. Disarticulating some of the premises that keep us embattled in adversarial claims, her work raises issues that cannot be overlooked or easily muted.

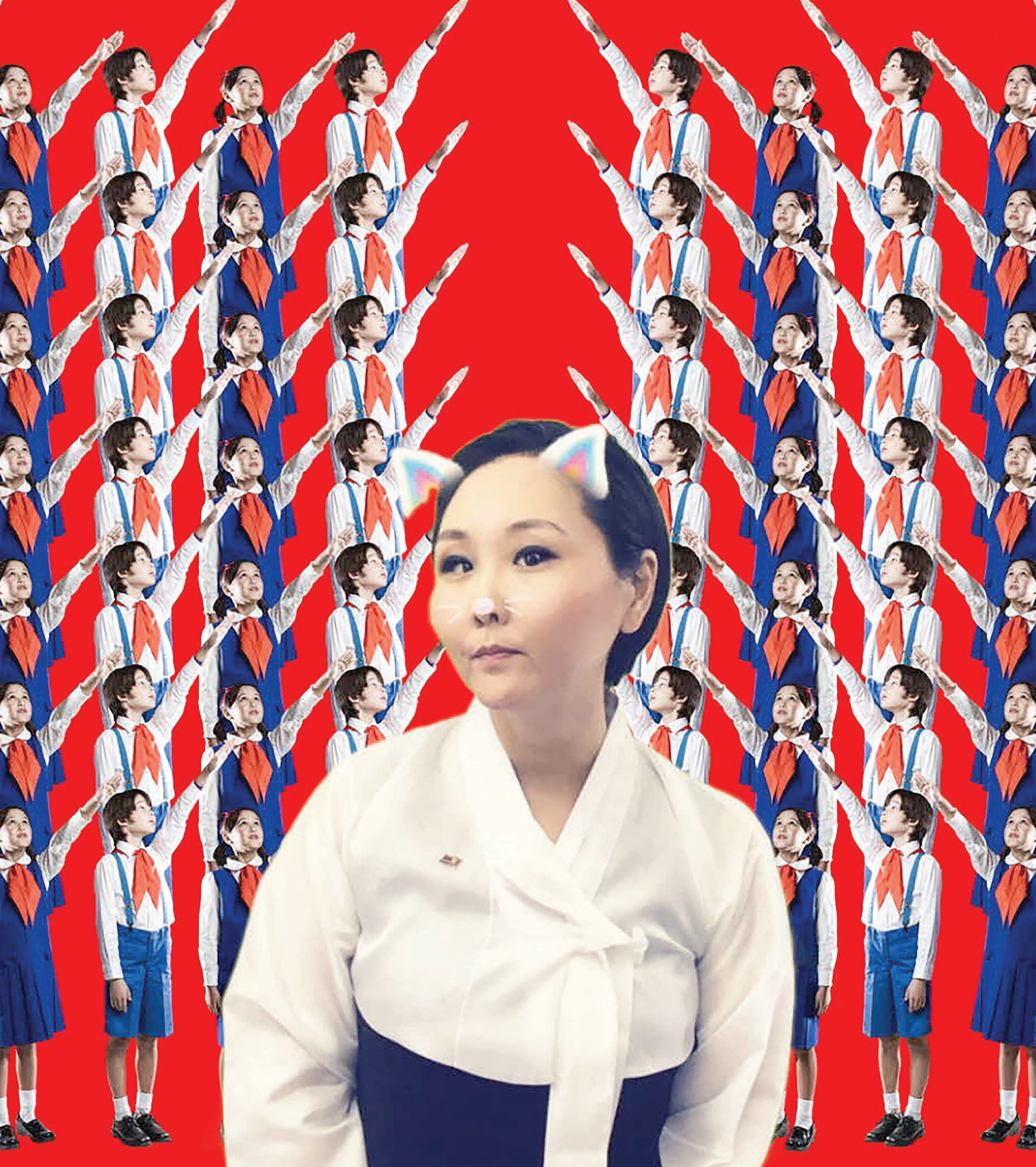


Stepping up to the plate, Mina Cheon has us wondering whether she has not crossed the line. As Heidegger has said of Ernst Jünger's *Ueber die Linie* (On the Line), we must first ask *what a line is*. There are circumstances that disable one's ability to locate, much less toe, the line. Lines can blur, act as decoys, become murky and untrackable—a source of controversy for moralistic hardliners who think they are holding a line. Yet Cheon's work suspends any such certitudes. Part of the questioning provoked by Cheon's work involves how we *internalize* lines drawn or effaced by national delivery systems and antagonisms, how we shred contracts made in good or bad faith, how the fate of a nation determines the minute particulars of well-being or chronic distress among its citizenry.

Nations deliver messages covertly, but also by means of addictive lures. Americans tend to chow down on former enemies that become favored plates—hamburgers and frankfurters have been nationalized to the American palate, a "Meister aus Deutschland" (a German master, as poet Paul Celan famously said of death). One can scroll down the menu of incorporated otherness, the trail of aggressive takeovers and body-snatching dexterity, the cult of zombies, especially prevalent in South Korean in primal cahoots with

Anglo-American cultures. These assimilations follow a different kind of path than normed history serves up—how one disposes of one's enemy body or complicates the itinerary of identification and desire, sometimes following an unconscious compulsion. Because Cheon's work includes art-edibles and contraband sweets, we are authorized by the oeuvre to follow domestic digestive tracts and their alien policies.

What we digest or expel is linked by tropes of assimilation and expulsion familiar to philosophy and literature. Nietzsche, for instance, was a great expectorator, and not only because he despised German cuisine. The meaning of his purges as part of a rebellious philosophical reflex is traced in his works to the repeated theme of his pregnancy—Nietzsche is always expecting, "pregnant with the future," transgendered in his self-depictions, affined to Eve, the first scientist, bravely going up against the Man, split between God and Adam, constitutionally queasy, prepping for her divine smackdown. She sucked in the forbidden, took an evilly proffered bite. He identifies with Eve, sassy, living the edge on a need-to-know basis, kicked out of the Edenic promise, condemned to eternal morning sickness and hard labor. According to Deleuze's commentary, Nietzsche's purges also signal a way of reversing dialectics. How nations swallow insults or pump opiates has been a question placed on the international dashboard since Marx's explicit raid on historical analyses. But Nietzsche starts on the food chain in order, first and finally, to fail Germans on the taste-test and to urge that we evaluate nations accordingly, reverting, among other criteria, to their foodie potential. Returning to the sweets on Cheon's menu of deliveries, it may be apt to remember that, according to Freud, the very idea of telling someone they are sweet points to our cannibalistic past.





Unite. *EatChocopieTogether.com*. Chocopie package designs by Mina Cheon, 2020. Virtual online project.

Opposite: Video still (detail), *Art History Lesson 5 Feminism, Are We Equal?*, video art, approx. 10 mins.

Nation-states have a well-documented cannibalistic rap sheet as they control a faltering notion of sovereignty. Cheon offers metonymies of predatory assimilations and their sublimation into art and techno-science.

When it comes to national feeding time, things quickly become uncanny, dematerialized, in some ways spiritualized or technologized. Some heads of state salivate when they see missiles go off. We have all been fed lines, sometimes swallowing them whole; other times, one is discerning enough to expel them. A lot of the critical pressure exerted by Cheon's work addresses what we have inadvertently assimilated or kept down when fed persistent lines of propaganda and honeyed myths of nation-building. Her work moves in on the smallest morsels as it tackles larger

issues of national remorse—and delectation, part of the reconditioned judgement of taste explicated by Kant.

Swept up in a constant sense of trespass, upending what constitutes a “proper” object of art and installation, her work maintains a level of untranslatability. Nonetheless, whether by medial deftness or stark portraiture, it establishes a storehouse of bold strokes and quasi-readable postures, the petulance of strong convictions in a clash of global proportions. She is there and not there in the historical standoff that obsesses and haunts her work. More often than not she depicts herself, or her alias, as a “Stepford” citizen, a ghostly participant sidelined by gender and the political fringe-work assigned to art. Still, Mina Cheon shows up at the limits of

what can be shown, carrying the burdens of referential authority, reminding us that artistic incursions can evacuate or populate a world, shake up boundaries, infringe on sense, create new names and addresses while vacating old truths and dogmatic assertions. Her calibrated instabilities—the unrelenting rehearsal and dissolution of self-presentation—prove timely in terms of the unsteadiness of our era: her work is necessarily set on a collision course of contradictory impulses that reconfigure our ability to make sense of place and purpose.



The hallucinatory pace and ebullient directions of Mina Cheon's work strain credulity: she takes position alongside disparate fronts of artistic and institutional practice, never shirking the diversely pitched pressures of being-in-the-world, even when the "world" is thrown into question and must continually be rebuilt, if by bold feats of renewable stores of enabling fiction. Shattered and no longer a prime carrier of representation, the "world," or rather, its remnants, whether viable or imaginary, requires unrelenting arbitration, reality testing, and visitations that reconnoiter forgotten or condemned sites. The alert artist-philosopher must be ready to undertake the work of scaling discrete monuments to historical destruction, to the extent that such markers become available. The spaces circumscribed by Cheon's objects are in many ways barred to us, protecting areas of clandestine inscription to which one lacks material access or valid permits. Bright and repurposed for pop depiction, the work dives deep into abysses. The lament her work emits is in part muffled by the agonized strictures of dark zones of deprivation, scandalous rollbacks of freedoms boasted, if mythologized, by the West.

In terms of artistic uploads fronted by political contestation, Cheon, by over-traditionalizing her various incursions, draped in the garb of Korean ancestry, goes small in order to battle an unbeatable power, a towering vis-à-vis of historical aspect. Modeling a lone stance, she seeks out a power whose effects are figured diversely, as the technological sublime or the uniform mechanicity of human mobilizations. For instance, her themes and objects line up as a nuclear missile head, a sinister military parade, classroom obedience, or a fixed patriarchal stare down. Often enough her line of fire builds on the likelihood of offensiveness—a strident showdown that consists repeatedly in committing an *offense* against monumental power blocs, a pushback on life's immovables, whether intruding from left or right. Hyper lady-like, faux fuzzy, she circumscribes her combat zone with stealth calculations. If there is a line or limit, she will cross it, double-crossing any oath of allegiance that will try to bind her actions.

Yet, Cheon remains loyal to her vision, a double vision, often dizzying and confounding. She remains immobilized while mobilizing language to break down stalwart barriers, inflexibly set. Her advocacy for a possible/impossible recuperation of K-sovereignty is cast with stubborn consistency, a unique call out of human rights and a grasp of the psychological consequences of censorship on which a repressive regime habitually doubles down. Cheon's work locates repression on both sides of the borders she visits and contaminates—instigating her form of emancipatory tryouts, often doomed, yet indefinitely roving, uncharted in terms of their secret travel itineraries, within and outside the Korean boundary systems that the work reinscribes even as it must come to a halt before different types of border patrols and their foreboding regulators.



Video still (detail), *Art History Lesson 3 Art, Money, Power*, video art, approx. 10 mins.

Perilous raids into hostile territory do not always land a work's exertion in museums—or in catalogues that can explain or contain the effects of an artistic act aimed at a political monolith, no matter how divided or immersed in opacity. In her case, Cheon defies the serene containment of an artwork's enframing or the ostensible readability of turbulent inscription. Her boundary-crossings break down walls, posit futurity without making claims for a new grounding: they go so far as to resist a reframing or a *simple reversal* of the troubled objects in her sights.

Nor is Cheon a hungry colonizer seeking out takeaways of glory. Modest yet deliberate she is on the prowl for heart-opening fissures, historical lesions and instances of weeping

woundedness that hide behind bland, in-your-face yowls of social realism that she converts into an offspring of pop, delivering an ever remastered brand of K-pop. Her installations and performances, doused in subtle tones of delirium, rarely evade geo-ethical scuffles. The calculated missteps are many, determining part of her repertoire, in sync with failing tropologies and obsolesced theories of nationhood. In a sense, she restates the reason that Plato kicked out the poets and artists of mimesis who threaten the state with distortion and the free run of political fiction, skipping so many steps away from Truth.

Cheon breaks into forbidden territory, a no man's land—certainly a no-woman's land—of contested sovereignty. She slips into No. Korean territory, and recedes back to So. Korean haunts in camouflage, be it as a secretive convoy of art historical teaching or in roguish disguise, as one of “them.” Thus her deliberate misappropriations of propagandistic iconography sometimes simulate adherence to an opponent's claims, switching up cues of politically coded assumptions and the righteous bullet points of human rights advocacy. The work attracts a riot of controversy that secretly targets the heart of a dilemma, an ambivalence shared by many who cannot choose sides, yet must choose sides, living in the tensional structure of division, asymmetrically apportioned. To be sure, no one in their right mind would choose the side of swaggering brutality. In an invested world where North Korea sends largely uncontested shivers down one's historical spine, she accords hospitality, consideration, edible teaching tablets, communitarian language and medial enticement. She relinquishes the stronghold of hardened enmity in favor of ambiguous embrace and pained identification, staging the disintegration of self-identity. The work, a kind of pop *Guernica*, internalizes the split off parts of a nation in distress, turned against itself, facing an unbeatable other in a reciprocally endangering standoff. Cheon insists on maintaining a discomfort zone on which she sets her sights, offset only by cooing lures and the *promise* of untenable allegiance. In this way she occupies a Nietzschean edge, where allegiance, bound by ideology and its false transparency, reveals a lazy, decadent, tiresome attitude adopted by the majority of state-bound humans. Nietzsche advocates for a transformative punch, a resolve that shakes off historical burdens holding one down, denying the need for life-affirming audacity



Missiles Good Bye, 2017. Blue dip painting on archival digital print on canvas, custom IKB blue paint, 40 x 30 in.

and trespass. Without art, says Nietzsche, we would all commit suicide—but perhaps not for the reasons you think. Not because art dispenses tranquilizers or “metaphysical comforts,” but because, in a way that the poet Celan later says about poetry as part of art, it *keeps us upset*. Art maintains us at a level of upset, in existential free fall, to the extent that it dispenses with dogmatism and ground, pulling us out of numbing zones of denial, de-simplifying our relation to truth, pushing and inventing limits that exceed mere polarities of inside/outside or their correlates in truth/falsity. In fact, art does not content itself with nailing truth although it prompts, in more Heideggerian term, *unconcealment*, marking and demarcating our worlds even as the very solidity of world withdraws--and, with the crumbling of world, we see the demise of any possible *Weltanschauung* (worldview). At the same time, it must be conceded, Cheon no longer adheres to the precepts of Great Art, but finds ways to ironize her predicament as artist, engaging *poesis* in a world that no longer exists strongly enough to find it reticent disclosures in Art.

Disillusioned yet inventive, fluent in the languages of multifaceted media and their technical upgrades, Cheon goes up against the hardening icons of state power, deploying ruses of mimicry, the dramaturgy of feminine deflations and the seductive lures of the learned scholar, maternally retrofitted. Her work encourages raids on areas of referential authority that will not bend or upend the more severe facets of power. Still, her surprising alignments may prove furtively hospitable to nano-incursions and ironic deposits, small fists of rebellion. Her interference with monolithic power questions the unyielding strongholds of language and runs up against the uber-serious syntax of power. The effects of such incursions are immeasurable because we

dispose of no scale that can adequately assess the effects repetition, distortion, reframing the objects of a tireless protest, what Cheon calls a *peace protest* propelling her work and that lands fissures in unmovable fortifications of human cruelty. Sometimes her weapons are nano-fitted to stifle linguistic insolence, as when she resists Korean-on-Korean violence by going up against the adversary with baby talk. Other times her childish burble, her pointed missives, turns to confront full on towering missile heads, establishing a kind of test site for artistic intrusion. There are many uprisings quietly elicited by her work, including the 1980 Gwangju Uprising that grew in unanticipated consequence for Korea. To cross another boundary, though, and conjure a scene more familiar to the West, the confrontation of Mina-in-Awe with the missile offers a transmutation of Tiananmen Square, 1989, depicting a desperate squaring off between the nuclear technicity of state power and lone protester—updating Caspar David Friedrich’s square off with the alpine sublime. All three of these figures have their backs turned to the spectator, fixed in poses of solitary aversion. Each is about to be crushed by the implacability of an overwhelming force, at once aimed at and indifferent to them.



As artist, professor, dean, mother, transnational, her roles constantly shift and collapse into one another, redistricting the very notion of material engagement. Wary but resolute, she circumscribes acts that seek to counter destructive habits of gender and social violence. Some of these habits are recognizable, identifiable through adopted grids and measures that have come into acceptance. Other forms of violence addressed by her work remain stealth or crawl under one’s skin as

they openly take on political impositions that lacerate and stunt. The far-reaching limits of Cheon's questioning encroach on the body, encouraging by constant overstep medial and material breaches of all kinds.

"Korea"—a referentially anchored entity subjected to reinvention—bears many meanings, histories, enigmas, transformations, and pain-points. In a way that Roland Barthes constructed "Japan" in *Empire of the Senses*, Cheon chips at "Korea," resignifying its contours by means of imaginary and analytical reinscription. Eventful in its self-appropriation, if teetering on shifting grounds urged by a history of forced splitting, referential Korea remains a country poised against itself, ever on the edge of calling off a precarious truce; pumped by an aggravated form of death-drive, the doubled and divided country stands tensed in readiness to suspend an aggressive standoff. While fairly singular in displaying its split-off parts, "Korea," whether boundarized as one or two, or a third imaginary country, may lay bare a structure running through all nation states and the way they assert claims for sovereignty, balancing the latency of internal strife. In some cases, larger national entities in our purportedly postcolonial times have accelerated encroachments on former parts, have torn down or built up walls as in Germany, or the U.S., or have committed to forcible takebacks, the historical rollbacks and erasures that depend on distorted national narratives and mythologies. Each one of these cases, including those of India and Pakistan, African and Caribbean nations, in the Middle East, deserves analysis and calls for the ongoing critique and de-simplification of artistic intervention.

Following Cheon's trajectories we seem to have learned from "Korea" that nation-states are in many ways motored by Freudian impulses, prepped to turn against themselves

on a dime, minted by a version of capitalism or some form of communism, streaming a death drive whose endpoint cannot be predicted with certainty. At times the complex itinerary pairing pleasure with destruction, part of a libidinal economy, appear to converge in Freudian theory—someone (or something) must be the beneficiary of such a display of nationalistic overdrive, on the rebound today, revving up the identitarian libido and phantasms of select supremacy. I leave the analysis of capital and identity to a sidebar at this time.

It is hard to offer a summation of what Korea's disjunction means to the world as it remaps and splinters, falling prey to different intensities of violence that dissolve our world-boundedness. The status held by split Korea exemplifies a fear, not unfounded yet largely uncontrolled, of the invasion of an alterity. The effects of "Korea" are alternately desirable or menacing to the West, remaining a source of fascination laced with outbreaks of phobic aversion. This split evaluation may inform any over-the-top appreciation of circumscribed otherness, ambivalently received. On academic rosters, and in terms of cultural accomplishment, medical innovation, advances in the techno-scientific spheres, Korean turns of invention, associated principally with South Korea, have exceeded any simple understanding of favorable growth charts or boom mythemes in the realm of accruing prestige. South Korea, with breakthrough stamina, has achieved a cult vitality in cinema, literature, and art forms while it also sustains a posture of troubled mourning over its split-off part, locked and vaulted in unregulated antithesis to its recalcitrant other.

Countries, like individuals, are prone to idealizations, including narcissistic boosters of all kinds, that may collapse with time or sudden shock into the pain of imago deflation. The permanent lesions borne by Korea testify



Dreaming Unification: Protest Peace (Triptych Flag Figuration East Meets West, Joseonhwa Protest Art), Triptych, 2019-2020.
Custom IKB blue paint, stencil, spray paint, sumi ink on canvas, 5 x 10 ft.

to a violent interruption. Similar to any number of traumatic disruption, its contours are blurry, hard to make out, resisting the closural moves that an interpretive approach would want to venture.

Nowadays, with history being cast off in ways that become more audacious, steeling a will to blatant distortion and reductive rewrite, the effort to keep count of losses subject to repression in itself becomes a formidable task, largely de-authorized and tenuous at best. The wounding disjointedness of history disallows the trophied bestowal of mastery or closure. Even the victors cannot agree on a “master narrative.” At a remove from historical recounting yet still bound to historicity (Heidegger), art responds to the call of interruption, ever reinscribing what cannot be said


but must be said—a hack into Beckett’s famous imperative, turned on a phenomenological self: “I can’t go on, I must go on,” communicating with Paul Celan’s poetry of *Aschenglorie* (Glory Ashes) and *Atemwende* (Breath-turn)—texts that wrestle with the necessity of testifying beyond the limits of mere witnessing. In her way, dislocating to the drama of a broken Korea—her internalized object—the Minas step in as witness for witnesses, most of whom are shut down by state decrees and various levels of silencing technics. A lone yet split warrior-artist, she slips and splits into forbidden territories of anguish, ambiguating the simplicity of taking a position, finding themselves ever out of place, standing as misplaced aliases for barely identifiable perspectives and political attitudes, while at times overly



“identifiable” because seemingly transparent. The signatory, Mina Cheon, in any case makes herself vulnerable to misunderstanding as if driven by ethical duty, a responsibility that will not let up. Loosening the grip on the meaning of her actions, she has abandoned a totalitarian habit of signification, when meaning is throttled: *ashes, ashes, we all fall down*. Regimes that surveil signification do so in a way that is indisputably reductive, referentially bound and straitened by readability. Advancing with the false starts of national readability, she disrupts what we think we know about the Koreas. Thus her work evades any notion of simple enmity, sidestepping the evidence of a discernible clash while evincing the despair of raw adversity.

The gestures of her works seem simple enough, stark and brightly pushed into the light of pop frankness. Still, ambiguity and unreadability continue to prevail. This has been as true of her North Korean salutes as of her arrangements on the scale and typology of maternal poses and aspects of traditional femininity that bleed into military formation. She breaks down every morsel of the feminine conglomerate—the conventions with which Asian gender recognition is commonly associated—rendering a truly morcellated subject obsessed with the unification of the bits and pieces that constitute her medial appearance, spliced, edited, part of the control of the information flow that has inflected Cheon’s work and does not hesitate to impose limits. To top off the technological prowess that characterizes her individual pieces, she adopts the quietly alarming tones of *umma*, motherly love, lulling and subduing, warding off the maternal phallus and its dragon histories.

In the end, Cheon’s obsession with unification points to the past but serves the future. Her work calls for political action while retaining the skepticism characteristic of the philosopher’s interrogation of our world, even as it shatters. Rigorously partitioned as she encounters large-scaled objects shaved down to miniscule part-objects, Cheon displays an approach to highly volatile themes with an audacious mixture of simulated naiveté and critical downplay. In one of her morphs of mystified femininity she evokes the voice of an indulgent kindergarten teacher. Elsewhere she advances the demeanor and costume of traditional feminine docility that alternates, still elsewhere in her corpus, with stern, militaristic, if unisex resolve, in manifestations of stubborn instruction. The complications in voice and figure to which her work is tethered, crucial to an understanding of human destructiveness and the attendant falsifications of facile resolution, speak volumes to our allegiances and fragile experiences of pride, whether national or taken by measure of personhood. By sheer audacity the Minas’ interventions outweigh the egregious simplicity by which the human experiment, and our belief in its transcendent qualities, has been consistently strained and exposed.



Opposite: *Arirang* (detail),
2014. Archival digital print
on velvet fine art paper, 22
x 33 inches, AP (5 Edition).

Dreaming Unification: Protest Peace, Unification Dream Painting Series

Dreaming Unification: Protest Peace, 2019–2020. From a series of twenty protest for peace artworks completed in 2019, shared first in 2020, created with custom IKB blue paint, stencil, spray, sumi ink on canvas, each 60 x 40 x 1.5 in. Photo by Cyrus Feldman.

In her dream world, artist Mina Cheon's North Korean art persona, a.k.a. "Kim Il Soon," paints the Korean national third flag, the *Unification Flag*, in a new body of work of flag figurations, *Dreaming Unification: Protest Peace* painting series. Tapping into her stream of unconsciousness to promote a future of unity and peace, flags are raised in a series of art exhibitions (Ethan Cohen Gallery, Asia Society Museum, The Korea Society, American University Museum) to recall past inter-Korean efforts, including the Olympics, athletic teamwork, Arirang Mass Games, and other public events that celebrated "One Korea."

Each flag painting is a symbolic new figuration, a body that parades in a procession for peace and poses as figures floating in space, as a means of protest to counter the discouraging chaos and canceled peace talks in the Peninsula. For the past decade, Kim Il Soon has been painting in the socialist realism propaganda style, hot pink drip abstract expressionism, and in Yves Klein's IKB dip conceptual paintings. As she masters Western art styles and dreams for liberation within the canvas, as well as from the North Korean regime, the new series as a "protest for peace" is done with stencils and spray paint and sumi ink.



Dreaming Unification #1: Protest Peace aka Flag Figuration #1 (One Korea)



Dreaming Unification #2: Protest Peace aka Flag Figuration #2 (One Land, Flat Plane)



Dreaming Unification #3: Protest Peace aka Flag Figuration #3 (One Korea, Land and Water)



*Dreaming Unification #4: Protest Peace aka Flag
Figuration #4 (United Chemical Eros)*



*Dreaming Unification #5: Protest Peace aka Flag
Figuration #5 (United Copper Melt)*



*Dreaming Unification #6: Protest Peace aka Flag
Figuration #6 (Eclipse)*



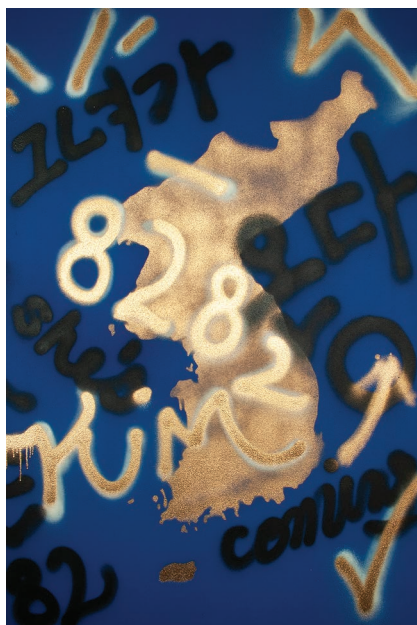
*Dreaming Unification #7: Protest Peace aka Flag
Figuration #7 (United Country, "나라")*



*Dreaming Unification #8: Protest Peace aka Flag
Figuration #8 (Kim √)*



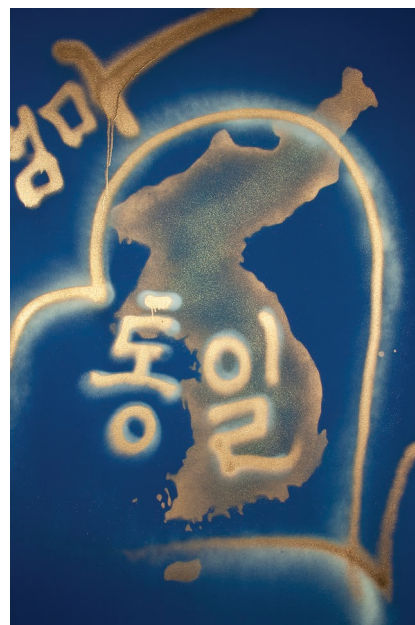
*Dreaming Unification #9: Protest Peace aka Flag
Figuration #9 (Let's Live and Die Together Now
"같이 살고 죽자 지금")*



Dreaming Unification #10: Protest Peace aka Flag Figuration #10 (New feminist slogan: She's Coming, 8282 means not fast enough, quickly quickly "그녀가 온다 8282 빨리빨리")



Dreaming Unification #11: Protest Peace aka Flag Figuration #11 (Umma, Unification, Now, Kim Il Soon "엄마, 통일, 지금, 김일순")



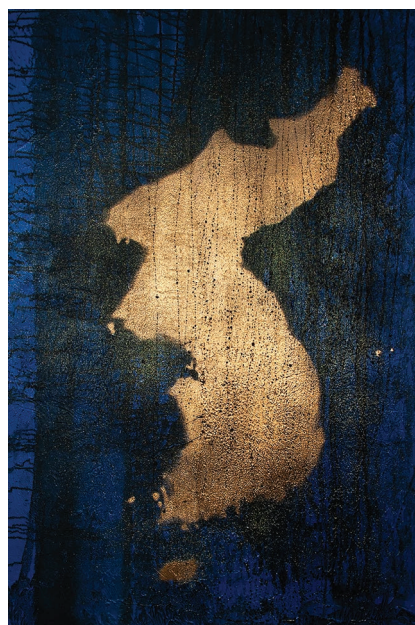
Dreaming Unification #12: Protest Peace aka Flag Figuration #12 (Umma, Unification "엄마, 통일")



Dreaming Unification #13: Protest Peace aka Flag Figuration #13 (Floral-coral from Land to Sea, Give 8282 quickly quickly "주세요 8282 빨리빨리")



Dreaming Unification #14: Protest Peace aka Flag Figuration #14 (East Meets West Streaming Unconscious)



Dreaming Unification #15: Protest Peace aka Flag Figuration #15 (East Meets West Streaming Unconscious)



Dreaming Unification: Oori (우리) Protest for Peace, Diptych, 2019-2020. Custom IKB blue paint, stencil, spray paint, sumi ink on canvas, 60 x 80 in.

"Asynchronous Communication with North Koreans," Paintings by Anonymous North Koreans

The artist Mina Cheon releases only black and white photos of her North Korean art collection so that visitors can see it in color in person.



Anonymous North Korean painter, *North-South Declaration of Partnership: Standing before the Unification Flag*, 2019. Oil on canvas, 33 x 23 in. Translation: "We, people(s) must stand in our confirmed stance with respect and sincerity towards declaring partnership."



Anonymous North Korean painters, *The Last Supper*, 2019. Oil on canvas, 44 x 88 in.



Anonymous North Korean painter, *The Juche Tower and Visitors*, 2019. Oil on canvas, 24 x 35 in.

Art History Lessons by Professor Kim, Sent into North Korea by Various Media Carriers Since 2017

Art History Lessons by Professor Kim, 2017. Video art, approx. 100 minutes total, 10 minutes each.

"The video art pieces were created in compliance with the fair use agreement and digital appropriation for visual arts. A special thank you to all the inspiring modern and contemporary artists on this list who have made this project possible. The videos were sent to North Korea on USB drives and other media carriers with the anonymous support of other Koreans since 2017 as a part of the global activism known as information media penetration into North Korea. In order to support North Koreans' human rights for freedom of information and education, the ten videos made by the artist include themes on what is art and life, feminism, social justice, technology, and the environment – contemporary art themes that North Korean citizens would otherwise have no access to – while showcasing over forty modern and contemporary global artists and their artworks. Therefore, in the spirit of sending media into North Korea, the project is dedicated to all the North Korean defectors around the world. The 2017 video works from the Mina Cheon Studio were produced by artist Mina Cheon and her team of media and art assistants: Andrew Keiper, Anita Zheng, and Anuj Malla. The script was written by Mina Cheon and the art history lessons taught were delivered by Professor Kim, otherwise known as the artist's North Korean art persona, Kim Il Soon."

–Mina Cheon Studio



Video still, *Art History Lesson 1 What is Art, What is Life?, Part 1 (To be an Artist)*, video art, approx. 10 mins.

Professor Kim Snapchat Filter: Flower

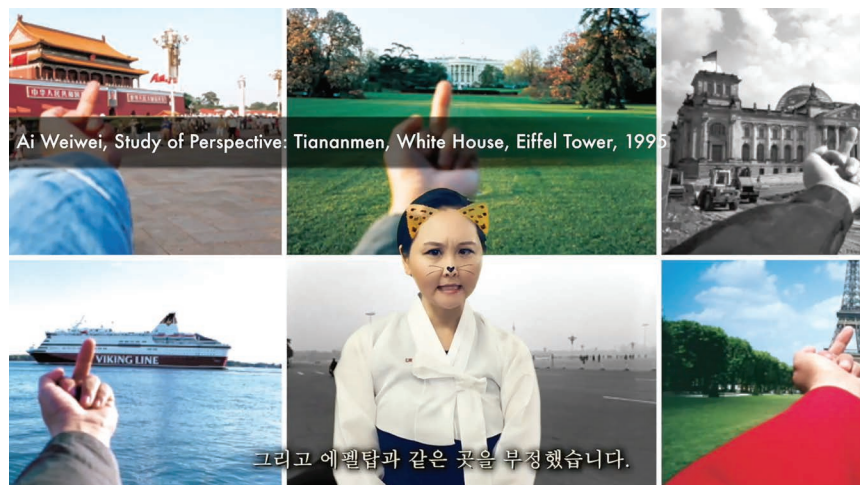
Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917

Assignment 1: Select an object from everyday life and call it art.



Video still, Art History Lesson 2 What is Art, What is Life? Part 2 (Art and Food), video art, approx. 10 mins.

Professor Kim Snapchat Filter: Flower
 Kim Il Soon, *Eat Choco-Pie Together*, 2014
 Damien Hirst, *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, 1991
 Andy Warhol, *Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1962
 Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*, 1991
 Ai Weiwei, *Sunflower Seeds*, 2010
 Cody Choi, *The Thinker*, 1996-97
 Assignment 2: Select a food you like and call it art.



Video still, Art History Lesson 3 Art, Money, Power, video art, approx. 10 mins.

Professor Kim Snapchat Filter: Leopard
 Andy Warhol, *Mao (Series 90-99)*, 1972
 Ai Weiwei, *Mao (Facing Forward)*, 1986
 Ai Weiwei, *A Study of Perspective - Eiffel Tower*, 1995-2003; *A Study of Perspective - Tiananmen*, 1995-2003; *A Study of Perspective - White House*, 1995-2003
 Joonho Jeon, *The White House*, 2005-2006
 Wang Guangyi, *Great Criticism*, 1990-2007
 Alexander Kosolapov, *Coca-Cola*, 1983;
 Malevich, 1990; *This is My Blood*, 2001
 Lee Mingwei, *Money for Art*, 1994
 Assignment 3: Share your money not as money, but as art.



Video still, Art History Lesson 4 Abstract Art and Dreams, video art, approx. 10 mins.

Professor Kim Snapchat Filter: Bunny
 Grace Hartigan, *Untitled*, ca. 1952
 Wassily Kandinsky, *Black Lines*, 1913
 Kazimir Malevich, *Suprematist Composition: White on White*, 1918
 Mark Rothko, *Untitled*, 1955
 Jackson Pollock, *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*, 1950
 Rene Magritte, *Golconde*, 1953
 Salvador Dali, *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931
 Yves Klein, *International Klein Blue (IKB)*, 1957
 Kim Il Soon, *North Korean Dream Paintings*
 Assignment 4: What do you dream about?
 Write down your dreams and make them come true in abstraction, so you won't get into trouble!



Video still, *Art History Lesson 5 Feminism, Are We Equal?*, video art, approx. 10 mins.

Professor Kim Snapchat Filter: Cat
 Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries
 Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, 1964
 Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (Not Stupid Enough)*, 1997
 Guerrilla Girls, *Do Women have to be Naked to get into the Met. Museum?*, 1989
 Shirin Neshat, *Rebellious Silence*, 1994
 Kim Il Soon, *Happy North Korean Children*, 2014
 Assignment 5: Reverse the gaze, and find a gorilla (Guerrilla Girls) mask and wear it to a party.



Video still, *Art History Lesson 6 Art, Lives Matter, and Social Justice (Dedicated to the Black Lives Matter Movement)*, video art, approx. 10 mins.

Professor Kim Snapchat Filter: Mouse with Glasses
 South Korean Minjung Misool, 1980s
 pro-democracy art
 Dread Scott, *I am Not a Man*, 2009; *A Man Was Lynched by Police Yesterday*, 2016
 Mark Bradford, *U.S. Pavilion*, Venice Biennale 2017, and his social justice work
 Free Ai Weiwei
 Banksy
 Assignment 6: Make a sign that says "My Life Matters" and wear it to a special event or make art in the streets in secret.



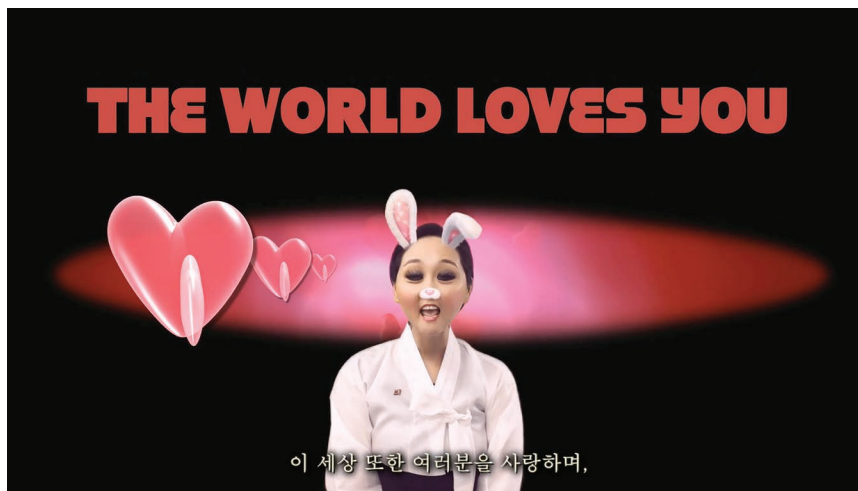
Video still, *Art History Lesson 7 Remix and Appropriation Art*, video art, approx. 10 mins.

Professor Kim Snapchat Filter: Zebra
 Cindy Sherman
 Mariko Mori
 Yasumasa Morimura
 Gerhard Richter
 Komar & Melamid
 Ilya Kabakov
 Mina Cheon aka Kim Il Soon
 Inspired by Kirby Ferguson, *Everything is a Remix*
 Assignment 7: Create a remix collage—to make something original—and think about who do you want to be today, a copy of another personality.



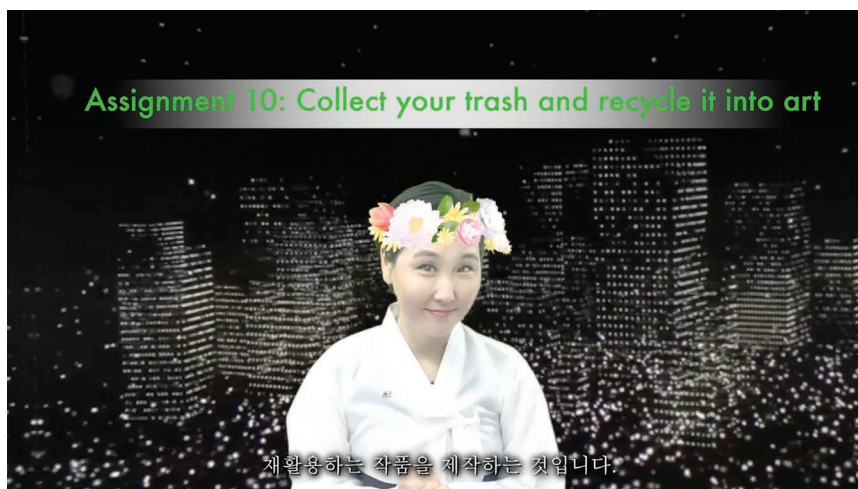
Video still, *Art History Lesson 8 Art and Technology*, video art, approx. 10 mins.

Professor Kim Snapchat Filter: Mouse with Glasses
 Nam June Paik, *Zen for TV*, 1963; *Zen for Film*, 1965
 Satellite Art
 net.art
 Douglas Davis, *The World's First Collaborative Sentence*, 1994
 Char Davies, *Osmose*, 1995
 Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno, *Annlee*
 Christian Marclay, *The Clock*, 2010
 Lee Wan, *Proper Time*, 2017
 Cao Fei, *RMB City*, 2008
Assignment 8: Turn on all your devices (media players) at once!



Video still, *Art History Lesson 9 Art and Silence*, video art, approx. 10 mins.

Professor Kim Snapchat Filter: Bunny
 John Cage, *4'33"*, 1952
 BBC Televised Full Orchestra *4'33"*, 2004
 Allan Kaprow, *On/Off*, 1994
 Yoko Ono, *Bed-In for Peace*, 1969
 Kimsooja, *A Needle Woman* series
Assignment 9: Get together with friends and watch John Cage's *4'33"* broadcasted live by the BBC in a full orchestral setting.



Video still, *Art History Lesson 10 Art and Environment*, video art, approx. 10 mins.

Professor Kim Snapchat Filter: Flower
 Chris Jordan, *Cell phones #2*, *Atlanta*, 2005
 Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970
 Olafur Eliasson, *Your Waste of Time*, 2013
 The 1st Antarctic Biennale, 2017
 Gabriel Orozco, *Sandstars*, 2012
 Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Surrounded Islands*, 1980-83
 Random International, *Rain Room*, 2013
Assignment 10: Collect your trash and recycle it into art!

Global Peace Shoes - Walk for Peace, "Can't Move Forward Without the Other"

Global Peace Shoes, 2018. Limited edition 100, Polipop Shop first item, artist's pick.

In Pyongyang in September 2018, the former South Korean President Moon Jae-in spoke to the North Koreans about reunification and how "we had lived together for 5,000 years, but apart for just 70 years..." It's time to walk the extra mile for unity and peace. He also walked the Mt. Paekdu with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

Also known as "Reconciliation Shoes" or "Unification Shoes," the *Global Peace Shoes* project brings awareness about the Koreas and its relationship with the world, and how steps towards the end of war, cooperation, and unification can help shape the future of global peace. The shoe project is a part of Mina Cheon's ongoing global art activism work that advocates for positive change, especially supporting loving exchanges between North and South Korea to impact peace on earth. Many people around the world participated in *Walk for Peace*, a global performance and protest, by sharing, following, favoriting, liking, or walking the Peace Shoes on social media for ninety-nine days in 2018-2019. #minacheonstudio

The artist believes that the day of crossing the DMZ in these shoes is not far away, and by walking in them today means participating in the global performance of stepping forward together, united, one foot at a time towards peace. And we can't walk or move forward together without the other.

The Global Performance - Walk for Peace

Score.

The Global Peace Shoes 99-Day Challenge, a.k.a. the Global Performance Walk for Peace, is simple: Wear your art for ninety-nine consecutive days and share a photo each day on any of your social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.). Post with any of these hashtags daily or a variation of them: #koreasunite #stepforward #cantmovewithouttheother #marchforglobalpeace #letsrunwithit #letsflywithit #onestepatatime #makingprogress #change #globalpeace #globalpeaceshoes #polipop etc. You are welcome to create a reiteration or derivative concept, and format to the performance that works to advocate for global peace with the shoes, #minacheonstudio #ethanchoengallery, for a wider audience and sharing.



Yanghee (Iris) Jang, reporter at Voice of America (VOA), wears it to work, Washington DC.



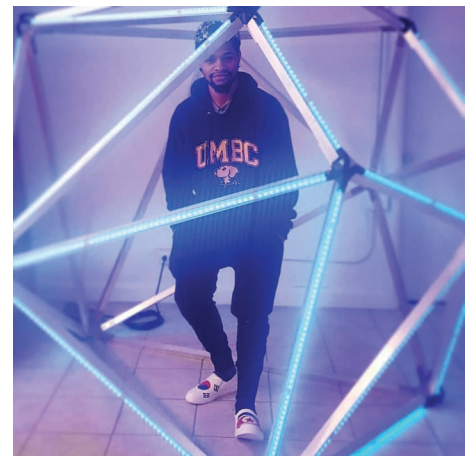
Global Peace Shoes, 2017. Promotional image, "Let's Run With it."



Fluxus artist Alison Knowles and intermedia artist Jessica Higgins walk for peace together in New York.



Professor Doug Holden walks the Han River in Seoul, South Korea.



Illustrator Eben McCullough shines bright, posing for peace at Mina Cheon Studio of K-Town Studios, Baltimore, Maryland.

Eat Chocopie for a Sweet Cause - EatChocopieTogether.com

Virtual Eat Chocopie Together, 2020-2022, interactive web art, launching project, part of the Asia Society Triennial: *We Do Not Dream Alone*. This project was made possible with the support from Executive Director of Global Artistic Programs Ken Tan during the Asia Society Triennial. www.eatchocopietogether.com
Website developer: Peter Jablonski.

"Can Choco Pies—the delectable marshmallowy snack cake—bring us closer together? The artist Mina Cheon hopes so, and in collaboration with the Asia Society Triennial, she has launched a new digital initiative dubbed *Eat Chocopie Together*, in which she implores the public to share the treat virtually with a friend "for global peace", to help those affected by the coronavirus and to combat anti-Asian racism."

—*The Art Newspaper*, August 17, 2020

During the socially distanced time with the coronavirus, *EatChocopieTogether.com* was created to allow people to stay connected by sending virtual Chocopies to loved ones with custom messages. On the website, if you clicked on the map of Korea, you could choose a Chocopie from five packages that the artist designed with the themes of love, peace, share, eat, and unite, referencing things we desperately need, whether we are in divided Korea or in the United States of America.

Furthermore, within seconds, the online participation of virtually sharing Chocopies with others for free automatically raised funds for Korean Americans affected by the coronavirus through the Korean American Community Foundation Covid-19 Action Fund. More specifically, by clicking and sending pies, it raised direct dollar amounts to help with such things as a Korean language COVID-19 health hotline, increased domestic violence counseling, meal delivery, and shelter for the homeless. And with the rise of anti-Asian racism, it supported programming to address this social problem. In one month, five thousand dollars was raised and forwarded to support those in need.

But why Chocopie? This chocolate marshmallow biscuit that the artist grew up with in South Korea is like a Twinkie in the US. While it is a nationally favored snack in South Korea, it is also the most desired and smuggled good in North Korea, and a single Chocopie is worth three bowls of rice. With thousands sent by helium balloons over the DMZ and circulated within the North Korean black market for years, the Chocopie today is no doubt a cultural symbol of love and peace within the Koreans.

To complement Mina Cheon's physical installation of *Eat Choco-Pie Together* at the Busan Biennale 2018, 100,000 Chocopies were included for the audience to eat, the virtual Chocopie was launched as a kick-off project for the Asia Society Triennial on August 15, Korean Liberation Day, and immediately over a thousand people shared and ate virtual Chocopies, "taking a bite for global peace."



EatChocopieTogether.com, 2020-2022.
Virtual *Eat Chocopie Together*, interactive internet art.
Collaboration: Mina Cheon Studio, Ken Tan and
Asia Society Triennial 2020-2021.
Website developer: Peter Jablonski.



Eat.



Love.



Peace.



Unite.



Share.

EatChocopieTogether.com
Chocopie package designs by Mina Cheon, 2020.
Virtual online project.

Thank you for helping us achieve our campaign goal! Feel free to continue sharing Chocopies! See you at the Asia Society Triennial Chocopie physical artwork in 2021!

Eat Chocopie Together for Global Peace

Click the map to share a free virtual Chocopie with a friend to extend love and peace. Your participation also raises funds for [charity](#) to support those affected by the Coronavirus, and to stand against anti-Asian racism. [Learn more](#)

Part of the [Asia Society Triennial: We Do Not Dream Alone](#)



Thank You!

100%
of Shared Chocopies Goal
Achieved

Thank you for helping us raise \$5,000 for the [Korean American Community Foundation COVID-19 Community Action Fund](#)

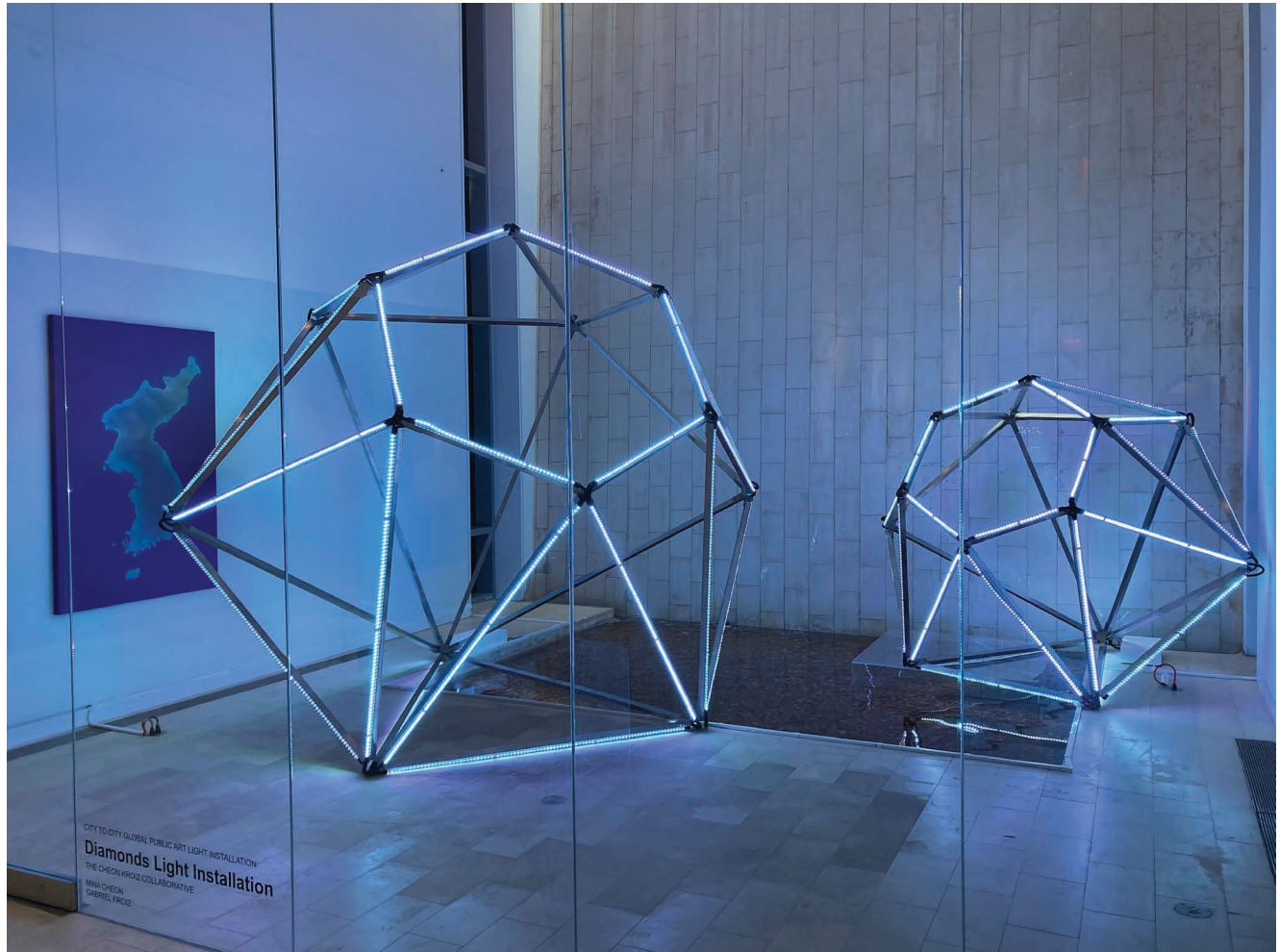
Website front page. Land of Korea made of Chocopies.



Pick your Chocopie and send a message to a loved one. Your and their names are forever inscribed on the Korean Peninsula.

Light House, Kate Shin: Waterfall Mansion & Gallery, New York

Mina Cheon and Gabriel Kroiz, Diamonds Light Installation: City to City Global Public Art Light Installation, *Light House*, February 6 – June 25, 2021. Kate Shin: Waterfall Mansion & Gallery, New York. The Cheon Kroiz Collaborative, the artist-architect team, includes international artist Mina Cheon and award-winning architect Gabriel Kroiz, whose diamond installations were exhibited around the world, as far as from South Korea and Qatar to New York, Baltimore and Washington DC, since 2007.



Cheon Kroiz, *Diamonds Light*, since 2007. LED lights and aluminum structure in the shapes of diamonds, varying sizes. Surrounded by Mina Cheon's Unification Flag paintings.



Mina Cheon, 2022. Photo credit and image courtesy: Grace Roselli, Pandora's BoxX Project.

MINA CHEON (천민정) (b. 1973, Seoul, South Korea; lives and works in Baltimore, New York, and Seoul)

Mina Cheon is a new media artist, scholar, educator, and activist best known for her “Polipop” paintings inspired by pop art and social realism. Cheon’s practice draws inspiration from the partition of the Korean Peninsula, exemplified by her parallel body of work created under her North Korean alter ego, Kim Il Soon, in which she enlists a range of mediums, including painting, sculpture, video, installation, and performance to deconstruct and reconcile the precarious history—and ongoing coexistence—between North and South Korea. She has exhibited internationally, including at the Inaugural Asia Society Triennial (2020–2021); Busan Biennale (2018); Baltimore Museum of Art (2018); American University Museum at the Katzen Arts

Center, Washington, DC (2014); Sungkok Art Museum, Seoul (2012); and Insa Art Space, Seoul (2005). Her work is in the collections of the Baltimore Museum of Art; Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton; and Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul. Mina Cheon’s solo exhibitions include those at the Ethan Cohen Gallery (2014, 2017–2018, 2020–2021), the Lance Fung Gallery (2002), and The Korea Society (2021) in New York; the Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton University in New Jersey (2018); the Trunk Gallery (2014), Sungkok Art Museum (2012), and Insa Art Space (2004–2005) in Seoul, Korea; and the Maryland Art Place (2012) and C. Grimaldis Gallery (2008) in Baltimore. Currently an Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies, at the Maryland Institute

College of Art (MICA), Cheon has been a full-time professor at MICA since 2004. Under the guidance of dissertation advisor Avital Ronell, she received her PhD in Philosophy of Media and Communications from the European Graduate School, European University for Interdisciplinary Studies, Switzerland, and adapted her dissertation into a book, *Shamanism + Cyberspace* (Dresden and New York: Atropos Press, 2009). She also received her MFA in Imaging Digital Arts from UMBC: An Honors University in Maryland; an MFA from the Hoffberger School of Painting, MICA; and a BFA in painting from Ewha Womans University, Seoul, Korea.



Avital Ronell at the Nietzsche Haus in Sils Maria, Switzerland, July 2022. Photo by Alejo Duque.

AVITAL RONELL

A recipient of numerous prizes, Avital Ronell is University Professor of the Humanities at New York University, and teaches philosophy and media at the European Graduate School in Switzerland. She has delivered lecture performances at the Centre Pompidou and the Théâtre de l'Odéon in Paris, and at Hau3 in Berlin. Recent works include *Complaint: Grievance among Friends* (University of

Illinois Press, 2018) and *Burnout der Autorität* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, translator Peter Trawny, 2020), "An Addictionary of Violence" (*Counterpunch*), "The *Gestell* from Hell" (*The Oxford Literary Review*), "The Next Level: Erasures and Rollbacks" (*Modern Language Notes*), and the "Survival Kit for the Anguished" podcast series from Philomonaco's "Rencontres philosophiques."

ALPER INITIATIVE

First published in conjunction with the exhibition

Haunted Korea

Mina Cheon with Kim Il Soon

September 10–December 11, 2022

Alper Initiative for Washington Art

American University Museum

at the Katzen Arts Center

Washington, DC

American University Museum

Beth Huffer, *Registrar*

Jack Rasmussen, *Director & Curator*

Kevin Runyon, *Preparator*

Aly Schuman, *Curatorial Assistant*

Exhibition essay by Avital Ronell, "The History of a Paradoxical Incorporation"

Design by Lloyd Greenberg Design, LLC

Vida Russell and Lloyd Greenberg, *Designers*

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ISBN: 79-8-9866153-1-8

All images courtesy of the artist, Mina Cheon Studio,
unless otherwise indicated with the image.

Cover: *Missiles Good Bye* (detail), 2017. Blue dip painting on archival digital print on canvas, custom IKB blue paint, 40 x 30 in.

Inside front cover: *Umma Rises: Towards Global Peace*, 2017. Blue dip painting on archival digital print on canvas, custom IKB blue paint, 30 x 40 in.

Essay Image (p.22): *Dreaming Unification #7: Protest Peace aka Flag Figuration #7 (United Country, "나라")* (detail), 60 x 40 x 1.5 in.

Back cover: *The Juche Tower and Visitors* (detail), 2022. Vinyl print, 194 x 136.8 in.



The exhibition was made possible with the 2021 AHL –
Andrew & Barbara Choi Family Foundation Grant Award.

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FOR WASHINGTON ART

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