

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF VISUAL ARTS, THEATRE AND DANCE

ART AS A MIRROR AND WINDOW ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN SOUTH KOREA:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ARTWORKS BY THREE CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS
WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR ART EDUCATION

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A Dissertation submitted to the
Department of Art Education
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Degree Awarded:
Summer Semester, 2014

UMI Number: 3638016

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give my deep gratitude to my directing professor Dr. Tom Anderson for his intelligent guidance, endless encouragement, warm caring, and belief in me. I will never forget what he has shown me as a scholar and also as a life mentor. His love for art, nature, and people is now in my heart. I promise that his effort will be rewarded with my students. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the members of my great committee, Dr. Carolyn Henne, Dr. David Gussak, and Dr. Jeffrey Broome for their insightful advice and support.

I was very fortunate to have a group of extremely talented artists in my study, Jeongmee Yoon, Eunjeong Lee, and Minja Gu. The richness of data for this study could not have been achieved without the sharing of their life experiences and remarkable artworks.

I also express my thanks to Dr. Yong Row at Ewha Womans University, for her caring and belief in my ability to complete this study, as well as her assistance in helping me to grow as a scholar. My many thanks also go to Dr. Zoya Kocur and Dr. Dipti Desai at New York University, who inspired me to open my eyes to the world.

This study would not have completed without my family and friends' support and love. I dedicated this dissertation to my parents, Yongwoon Kang and Kyungsook Kim with deep gratitude. I could not even have contemplated starting and continuing this long journey without their heartfelt caring, sacrifice, endless love, and trust in me. My sincere gratitude also goes to my parents-in-law, Dr. Ki-whan Nam and Youngnim Cho, for their love, emotional support, and encouraging words. Their support gave me a sense of emotional stability and confidence. I also want to thank my sister and brother for giving me energy for life, as well as Junghee Han, the best museum educator in South Korea, for listening to my ideas. And also many thanks go to Dr. Jayme Harpring for her enormous help with editing and companionship during the study.

Lastly, all my gratitude goes to my beloved husband Do Hyun Nam. He is my soul mate and best life partner. His love, patience, understanding, and caring for his busy wife have brought this long journey to an end.

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ABSTRACT

Today's societies are becoming ever more culturally diverse. A traditionally mono-cultural society, South Korea is in the midst of remarkably rapid changes that have made cultural diversity a widely discussed topic in education and many other fields. Though art educators in South Korea have adopted some of the longstanding multicultural approaches developed by other countries, cultural diversity issues in South Korean society must be examined in the context of the country's unique history and cultural values. Based on the assumption that art reflects life, this study used a pragmatically grounded contextual art criticism model to examine art dealing with cultural diversity by three South Korean contemporary artists whose work may function as a barometer of our social and cultural climate. For the data collection, the researcher takes a role as the critic and three artworks from each of the selected three artists were chosen as research objects. The works of the three participating artists were carefully and critically analyzed in their authentic context including document examination and personal interview.

The critical analysis revealed several themes related to increased cultural diversity in South Korean society today: the influence of media on cultural understanding, a self-centered view of culture, less access to authentic traditional culture, missing the uniqueness and originality of local culture, generalization and prejudice vs. individuality, and multicultural groups in South Korean society. Though the role and the direction of the gaze may differ for each of the artists studied, all share the conviction that art can change society. Because art education is a means to this end, implications for art education are included for those who wish to meaningfully incorporate cultural diversity issues in South Korea classrooms. The findings of the study and their analysis point to the ways art can function as a mirror and window on today's culturally diverse societies in South Korea and many other places in the world.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study is an examination and critical analysis of the artworks by three contemporary South Korean artists in their authentic contexts to see what cultural diversity issues are raised and how they are presented by the three artists, and what the implications may be for exploring cultural diversity or multicultural issues through art education in South Korea. This chapter provides an overview for the study including the background of the study and the statement of the problem, which includes a review of my personal interests and experiences. In addition, this chapter contains the research questions, rationale and significance of the study, the conceptual framework, research design, procedure, scope and limitations of the study, and key terms used in the study.

Background to the Study

A Personal Reflection

Sometimes we are unable to see all that is around us, but once we step away from familiar circumstances we are presented with a different perspective. To have a different perspective helps us to see things existing in life not from another's perspective but from our own.

I wrote this statement based on my personal encounters as a cross border (Garber, 1995) between South Korea and the United States; these experiences were the ones that motivated this study. I grew up in South Korea and never had lived away from my family prior to coming to the United States. In the course of living and studying in this multicultural country for the last five-and-a-half years, I have had to learn how to negotiate unfamiliar circumstances, accept people's differences, and try to understand their reasons for doing unexpected things when their cultural backgrounds were different from mine. Initially I found life in this new culture to be a constant challenge, since I was required to make sense of unfamiliar rules, values, and mores. Yet, this challenge provided me with an opportunity to discover more about myself, both as a native-born South Korean and an independent human being.

My life abroad has had a profound impact on me. I have learned that all life experience and personal understandings are a constructed from the interactions between oneself, others, and one's environment (Dewey, 1934). Over time, my experiences have led me to a broader

worldview, that is, I now see the world as a place where all different individuals share their lives and so must learn to respect each other's value systems and ways of being. After returning to South Korea in 2009, I began working as an instructor and became even more interested in cultural diversity. Living in a foreign culture had given me a more critical eye; I was better able to see how the South Korean mass media and the South Korean government do and do not represent cultural diversity, as well as how educational institutions approach multiculturalism.

To my surprise, from the international perspective that I had gained, official interpretations of multiculturalism and cultural diversity were highly limited and placed a value on cultural homogeneity over the acceptance of cultural differences. South Korean leaders approach their increasingly multicultural society as if it is a melting pot where citizens who are not purely South Korean should leave their other cultural backgrounds behind and embrace an exclusively South Korean identity (Chang, 2012; J. Choi, 2010). This means that children from multicultural families or co-cultures are seen as abnormal or aberrant, thus narrowing South Koreans' understandings of cultural diversity and the notion of multiculturalism in their society.

Social Change in South Korea and Multicultural Education

Like many places in the world, the shift in South Korea to a more culturally diverse society can be attributed to developments in technology, increased immigration, and social change resulting from globalization (Chang, 2012). Accordingly, multicultural education has become one of the primary concerns of the South Korean government, which has announced multicultural policies, broadcast public campaigns on television, and included multicultural content in the national curriculum (S. Kim, 2011). These measures have led to a greater awareness of the necessity of multicultural education throughout South Korean society. In the field of education, many academic articles on multicultural education have been published (Ahn, 2011; Chang, 2012; J. Choi, 2010; Watson, 2012; Yun & Park, 2011), some in the area of art education (Ahn, 2011; Rhee, 2013; Kim & Nam, 2012, S. Kim, 2011; Son, 2012). In art classrooms as well, teachers have begun to educate students about cultural diversity through art. Unlike the United States, with its long history of debate about the significance and practice of multiculturalism, discussion in South Korean society has expanded only recently, making this a good time to revisit the notion of multiculturalism and examine how, through art education, multicultural education can be conducted in a more inclusive way that acknowledges the value of other cultures and co-cultures, and even celebrates cultural differences. This inquiry centered on

multicultural learning through art can help art educators discover new approaches to the increased cultural diversity that has come to characterize South Korean society.

The Art-for-Life Context

From a modernist perspective, art has formal quality for its own sake, but from a postmodernist point of view, the value of art is for life's sake (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). My own experience of studying abroad and living in two cultures has helped me to value art as a powerful cultural artifact and as a tool for communication about culture. As a reflection of life experiences, art provides an avenue for a greater understanding of other individuals and their cultures. If the primary goals of art education in contemporary society can be found in the context of real-life experiences—and in this case, multicultural life experiences—instructional strategies must have a connection to real life (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005).

Art education must not just exist for the purpose of creating beauty or developing the ability to create, but must be concerned with how we use art to make our lives better. It is not surprising, then, that many art education scholars have argued that art educators should actively seek to involve multicultural concerns in teaching and learning (Cahan & Zoya, 2011; Delacruz, 2009; Garber, 1995; Gaudelli & Hewitt, 2010; McFee, 1998; Stout, 1997; Stuhr, 1994; Wasson, Stuhr, & Petrovich-Mwaniki, 1990). Art education must take a place in helping students to use art as a mirror of and window to our multicultural society; when we better understand each other and our environment, we can help to make life better there.

Contemporary Art and Artists dealing with Cultural Concerns

Through art, individuals express their experienced worlds (Dewey, 1934) and those expressions deliver meanings (R. Anderson, 2004) that can create connections between the experienced worlds of artists and others. Artists naturally deliver their experience of being exposed in a society in an expressive (cognitive and emotive) manner and so frequently act as social and cultural communicators who help change society for better. J. Harris (2011) asserted that contemporary artists, in particular, have taken on the role of reacting to social changes such as globalization. The work of contemporary artists, then, can function as clues to issues surrounding shifts in cultural diversity in society. As J. Harris noted, the values of artworks “have changed in a particular way from being a clear visual impression, responding to ideological and emotional directions, to a cultural activity and a critical action within society” (2011, p.301). Cahan and Zoya (2011) also discussed the significance of contemporary art in

multicultural societies. They listed a number of contemporary artists whose art involves cultural issues related to identity, gender, nations, region, religion, war, people with disabilities, feminism, and whose work can be incorporated within an art lesson unit.

In framing the problem addressed by this study, I drew upon my own personal experiences as a stranger in a different cultural land. I reflected on the social changes in South Korean society and how education has approached them in recent years. In addition, I embraced the art for life concept as my philosophical belief and part of the background to the study, and explored contemporary art and artists dealing with cultural concerns. Since the ultimate goal of the study is to draw implications for incorporating multicultural concerns into art education in South Korea, I will use the findings to inform the construction of curriculum development guidelines geared for life-centered art education for students living in this newly culturally diverse society of South Korea.

Statement of the Problem

Contemporary societies have grown markedly more culturally diverse over the past several decades. Even in societies that until recently were mono-cultural, most people engage with culturally different individuals in their daily lives. Within such contexts human beings are called upon to learn to live together, leaving to educational institutions the responsibility of helping students become democratic members of their culturally diverse or multicultural societies. To this end, many education scholars have emphasized the importance of adopting a multicultural perspective when developing curricula and teaching cultural content (Banks, 2008; Banks & Banks, 2010; Freire, 2005; Neperud, 1995).

The notion of multicultural education has gained currency in many countries in the world. Such is the case in South Korea, the country of my birth and a largely mono-cultural society until approximately the end of the 20th century. Having been fortunate enough to live in both the United States and South Korea I have noticed that cultural diversity is highlighted in both cultures. In the United States, however, because issues related to a multicultural society have existed for much longer, current orientations to cultural diversity have evolved gradually and are specific to the American experience. Though South Korea has adopted some of these approaches, the phenomenon of cultural diversity in South Korea requires its own approach to multiculturalism—one specific to its unique history and cultural values. One way to accomplish this objective is to observe the perspectives of contemporary South Korean artists who are

sensitive to cultural diversity and whose work reflects their own social/multicultural understandings and those of their country.

Since the distant past, human beings have created art not only for beauty but, more importantly, for life's sake, as a tool to express one's sense of self, place, and community (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). Artworks incorporate culture, history, social justice, and aesthetics in the context of the society in which they are created (T. Anderson, 2010; Garber, 2004; McFee, 1998). Thus, if art reflects life, and societies are becoming ever more multicultural, the work of artists who engage with multicultural ideas can provide a lens for personal and social understandings about cultural diversity embedded in their works. Further, since multicultural knowledge and values are often communicated and essential to young people in school settings, the work of contemporary South Korean artists who deal with cultural content may provide clues about how to approach multiculturalism in South Korea through art and education. Since art reflects life and can aid us in understanding life experiences (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Dewey, 1934; McFee, 1998), we can gain many insights specific to multiculturalism in South Korea through the study of these artists. These insights can be used to explore how multiculturalism in South Korea can be promoted through art in education.

Research Questions

The first overarching research question for this study is: *What issues related to cultural diversity do three South Korean artists address in their art and how?* To answer this question the following procedural supporting questions were addressed as they related to issues of cultural diversity:

1. What is the thematic content of the three artists' work?
2. What are the compositional, technical, and stylistic qualities the artists use to express that thematic content?
3. What are the personal, physical, and social contexts of the artworks examined in this study?
4. What do the artists say about their work, especially related to cultural diversity?

Data pertaining to the first two questions were gathered by examining the visual/physical qualities of the work itself. The third and fourth questions cannot be answered by examining the visual qualities of the work, but must come from an examination of the authentic contexts surrounding the inspiration for the work, its making, exhibition, and use. In short, the

examination focuses on essential qualities that can be gathered *from* the work as well as contextual/external qualities that can be gathered *about* the work.

The second question guiding this study is: *What are the implications of the three artists' work for addressing cultural diversity through art education in South Korea?* This question was answered through the literature review on multiculturalism in relation to the situation in South Korea and the insights gained through the critical analysis of the three artists' work, particularly in reference to the role or roles art education can play in promoting cultural diversity.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

My four primary reasons for conducting this study emerged from a review of the research literature, a good deal of self-reflection on my personal cross-cultural experiences, and my observations about the need for a broader conception of multicultural education in South Korea: one that accepts the value of co-cultures within the dominant South Korean culture.

First, as it is grounded in the pragmatic approach to art, this study supported the significance of the value and function of art for life's sake. As Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) noted, if art is regarded as objects that exist for their own sake, their value is passive and silent, but if we consider art to be the collective reflection of life experience, its meaning becomes far greater than the objects themselves.

Yet in order to confer life to art, we need to understand artworks in the lived contexts of the artists who created them and then reflect on our own life experiences. Thus, the study findings will help to explain how art functions in our lives and expand our notions about its value. Further, because artists can act as barometers that show us the climate, the social weather of a society, I hope that this study can inform our thinking about the relationship between art and the multicultural issues at the forefront of South Korean society. In analyzing the artworks under study, this research also illustrates how contextual art criticism can be used to discover their implied meanings by examining artworks in their authentic cultural contexts.

Second, the multicultural nature of this study has meaning for multicultural art education in South Korea. While multicultural issues became a popular concern in education in the United States following World War II and the Civil Rights Movement, in South Korea, a traditionally homogeneous society, the topic is new to art teachers. In the past decades, however, greater cultural diversity in South Korean society has made the integration of multicultural issues in art education curricula a salient concern for South Korean students and art educators. Yet, even

though the South Korean government has some notion of what multicultural education is, the practical applications of multicultural ideas in the classroom tend to be limited and narrow. In South Korea, where the values of unity and pure blood have long been prominent, the melting pot notion has a number of negative implications for those children from multicultural family, for example, since it devalues heritages other than South Korean and the existing co-cultures within South Korean society (Chang, 2012; J. Choi, 2010). Given this situation, I believe South Korean educators and policymakers need to approach their increasingly culturally diverse society as if it were a salad bowl (Banks & Banks, 2010) or mosaic in which all individuals, from all cultures, are equally valued and respected. Art educators can play an important role in redefining multiculturalism in this way.

The use of multicultural insights in art education can help students better understand other cultures and discover more about their own cultural identities through a process of qualitative learning transformation (T. Anderson, 1989). According to Eisner (2002), the concept of metamorphosis describes a cognitive process in which, when given an example, the task of the student is not to take the example as a whole, but rather to use it to manipulate the meaning of the whole—a practice that can be extrapolated to other aspects of life. My belief that art teachers can create a bridge between social change and classroom activities, previously led me in 2006 to conduct a study investigating whether South Korean students had the desire to examine, through art, personal, social, and global issues related to their lives. I distributed a survey to 80 middle-school students and asked whether they would be willing to participate in classes that addressed social and cultural issues they might face in their daily lives. An overwhelming 91.5% of the students expressed interest in exploring social and cultural issues in the art classroom through art. Another survey question asked whether students believed an artwork can influence the public's awareness, and 78% of the students answered affirmatively. One student responded, "Art contains the artist's enthusiasm and thoughts, and I also have had the experience of having art change of my own point of view, so that is why I think a piece of artwork can influence people." Another asserted, "If it has a very clear and visible message, it is better than several sentences saying to the public because something visual can draw people's attention more easily."

This research supported my contention that South Korean art teachers can benefit from related curriculum guidance and just as importantly, that students want the opportunity to

participate in art classes dealing with social and cultural issues. It is my belief, then, that this study may greatly help South Korean educators respond to curricular demands for art education that address the increasing cultural diversity in contemporary South Korean society. In addition, this study provides some guidance, or at least food for thought, for South Korean art teachers who have not received clear assistance with integrating multicultural subject matter into their art classes.

A third justification for this study is that it contributes to social justice education through art. According to Garber (2004), social justice education brings together social issues such as “feminist studies, race and multicultural studies, disability rights, identity studies, environmentalism, community-based, critical pedagogy, performance pedagogy, social reconstruction, visual culture and other areas” (p.4). The ultimate goal of social justice education is to make society better for all by enhancing harmony between people, the environment, and other beings. Art education has the potential to augment students’ awareness of social justice issues through the visual power of art and its connotations (T. Anderson, 2010; Garber, 2004; Goldblatt, 2006). As T. Anderson (2010), noted, “from a social justice perspective, artworks and visual culture can be used as sensitive instruments to guide us to human understandings that engage both the intellect and the emotions, toward the ends of social reconstruction and social justice” (p. 5). Anderson also emphasized that art and art education can move people to act. In this study, the examination of artworks by artists dealing with cultural diversity supports pedagogy of social justice through art. Through this investigation, then, I hope to illuminate not only aspects of the artists and their work related to culture, but also approaches to multicultural issues that may reveal a path to a more democratic and socially just contemporary society.

Finally, because many art teachers find it difficult to teach about contemporary art due to a lack of familiarity with the topic and an inadequate supply of appropriate teaching materials, the focus of this study on contemporary artists and artworks may provide both content and a useful illustration of how to use contextual art criticism to seek meaningful insights from contemporary art. The conclusions derived from this study also may contribute to this outcome, as they may enable art educators to prepare classes with more life-related/life-centered practices. The development of cultural awareness on the part of art teachers can only benefit their students, who may not have used artistic expression to look at themselves and others as parts of diverse cultures, nor constructed a worldview geared to an ever smaller and more co-dependent world.

In sum, by examining how artistic expression helps multicultural artists to make sense of their multicultural experiences, this study of the artworks of multicultural artists in their authentic contexts has implications for multicultural art education curricula. It is expected to represent a contribution to theory and practice in the use of art education for life among art educators, art professors, and art curricula developers, who may then see the potential for teaching art with the aim of making our society a better place.

Conceptual Framework

Pragmatism

Both the conceptual foundation and practical structure for this study are grounded in *Pragmatism*, a philosophical movement that originated in the United States around the middle of the nineteenth century. Pragmatism is based on the notion that all human knowing is empirical in its genesis and comes to us originally through our senses (James, 1907/1978). Early pragmatists were William James (1842-1910) and his colleague Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). The philosophical concept of pragmatism has been applied in philosophy, language, education, aesthetics, and research methods.

Many pragmatists and pragmatic researchers (Dewey, 1934; James, 1907/1978, 1948; Ormerod, 2006; Pihlström, 2002; Putnam, 2010; Shusterman, 1997; White, 1998) argued that truth can only be found in life, and that experience is essential in finding real meaning through a bottom-up, inductive research process. Rochberg-Halton (1987) emphasized the appropriateness of pragmatism for questioning and answering life issues: “Pragmatism might be in contemporary consideration precisely because it provides a theory of meaning that answers the needs of the time for a broadening of meaning beyond the self-imposed restrictions of modernity” (p.194). Ormerod (2006) defined pragmatism as: a philosophical doctrine that can be traced back to the academic skeptics of classical antiquity who denied the possibility of achieving authentic knowledge regarding the real truth and taught that we must make do with plausible information adequate for the needs of practice (p. 892).

For the purposes of this study, pragmatism is defined as empiricism for life’s sake, that is, the use of inductive reasoning to find meaning in real-life experiences. The rationale for examining works of art in their authentic contexts within this framework is that the works do indeed reflect the makers’ life experiences. Thus, certain prominent theoretical ideas that serve as a foundation for pragmatism ground this study. These ideas include the proposition that the

source of meaning comes to us initially through our senses (James, 1907/1978), that we construct meaning inductively based on our perceptions (Dewey, 1934; James, 1907/1978; Koopman, 2006; Ormerod, 2006; Peirce, 1877/1955; Rorty, 2007; Russell, 2009; Shusterman, 1997), and that it is these meanings that are embedded in works of art as reflections of the artist's life experience (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Dewey, 1934).

Dewey (1934) argued that artworks constitute the lived experience of the artist in symbolic form, representing, and in their development, ideally constituting what he called *an experience*. An experience has a whole-cloth quality that comes from understanding both intellectually and emotionally its parameters and nature. Dewey called this emotional wholeness the aesthetic, and he argued that it was represented in an artwork and in the process of making an artwork. He believed the role of art criticism is to unwrap the meanings constituted in a work of art keeping in mind the artist's lived experience—what he called furthering the “office” of the artist (Dewey, 1934). Since a major goal of this study is to unwrap the cultural diversity issues embedded in the work of three contemporary South Korean artists and discover their implications for multicultural art education in South Korea, pragmatism serves as both an appropriate conceptual foundation and a sound basis for the structure and strategy of the research design, which will be discussed in more detail later.

Research Design

The primary research questions of the study are, *What issues related to cultural diversity do three South Korean artists address in their art and how?* and *What are the implications of the three artists' work for addressing cultural diversity through art education in South Korea?* Addressing the first question, based on its theoretical foundations, this qualitative study incorporates the use of pragmatically grounded contextual art criticism with the researcher serving as the primary instrument. In order to analyze the artworks of three contemporary South Korean artists who are actively and sincerely working with cultural diversity issues in South Korean society, I first selected participants using Internet search and word-of-mouth referrals. I then sent out e-mails and collect information about the artists and purposefully (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007; Conrad & Serlin, 2006) choose my participants by the suitability of the artworks for the purposes of this study. Next, I visually examined the selected works of art, conduct one-on-one interviews with the participating artists, and analyze document resources such as press reports, website content, brochures, artists' statements, and so on. I sought to obtain in-depth and

holistic insights that enabled me to obtain a greater understanding of the meanings of the artworks by each of the participating artists.

I transcribed the interview data, then carefully organized and reviewed all my data, giving myself sufficient time to start the process of listing repeated words, phrases, and themes related to each participating artist's understanding of cultural diversity. I also looked for naturally emerging themes that address the second question: *What are the implications of the three artists' work for addressing cultural diversity through art in South Korea?* The educational purpose of this question is to explore how art students and teachers, through an examination of the artists' works, can better address issues related to cultural diversity in South Korean society today.

By studying how the selected artists reflect cultural diversity issues in South Korean society, and by viewing their work as a barometer of society I was able to gain insights for multicultural art education for students living in our increasingly multicultural society. In addition, I believe these insights will help to broaden the current narrow definition of multicultural education in South Korea.

Procedures

The procedure I followed in answering the research questions was:

1. Review articles on pragmatism in education, aesthetics, and on contextual art criticism to establish a philosophical and methodological foundation for the study.
2. Review related articles on the meanings of art as a sense of being, multicultural society, the cultural functions of art, and discuss their importance to multicultural education through art.
3. Identify three South Korean artists who deal with cultural diversity issues and select artworks.
4. Begin data collection by analyzing the works of the three contemporary South Korean artists using Anderson and Milbrandt's (2005) contextual art criticism model as a primary tool to include in-depth interviews and a review of relevant documents and conduct a contextual analysis.
5. Transcribe interviews and content analyze all data; triangulate findings.
6. Synthesize the results of the critical analysis of the works of the artists and the content analysis of all qualitative data in order to answer the research questions.

7. Discuss the implications of the findings and practical applications for multicultural art education in South Korea.

Scope and Limitations of the Research

As the researcher, I functioned as the primary research instrument throughout the study (Eisner, 1998; Patton, 2002). I used my personal perceptions, from the initial stages of the study through its conclusion, in order to devise research questions, design the study, collect and analyze data, structure the results, and draw conclusions. This qualitative approach is standard in art criticism, where the critic is regarded as a research instrument whose personal taste, experience, and point of view influence the evaluations of artworks (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Eisner, 1998). In the same way, pragmatic qualitative research aims for a description of an experience or event as interpreted by the researcher (Neergaard, Olesen, Anderson & Sondergaard, 2009).

Interpretation is central to such study for as Eisner (1998) said, ontological objectivity is not possible:

We cannot secure an ontologically objective view of the world, that mind and matter transact, and that our experience of the world is a function not only of its features, but of what we bring them. We are always in a constructive position. We make our experience, not simply have it. (p. 60)

Thus, the hundreds or thousands of different art critiques on any particular art masterpiece all can be differently meaningful if each attends to the qualities of the piece being experienced (Dewey, 1934). Because art criticism reflects life and the experiences of the critic as well as the artist, it is able to draw forth many equally acceptable understandings of art. As Eisner (1998) noted, in qualitative research and criticism we need to build consensus from among a variety of personal interpretations in order to create widely agreed-upon meanings. The critic as an instrument of the research uses sensitivity in conjunction with intelligent insight (Dewey, 1934). Further, as Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) argued, some of the most insightful criticism comes from critics who are aware of and/or embedded in the authentic cultural context of that which is being critiqued. So given my history and experiences I feel well-qualified to examine the topic of South Korean multiculturalism as reflected in the work and lives of artists living and working there. In this study, then, I put my best effort into trusting myself as a critic as I view and interpret the artworks under study.

As with all qualitative research, there are limits to the generalizability of the study findings. The open-ended exploratory research methods used in this study may present some limitations since the analysis cannot be standardized. In qualitative research of this sort, however, that is not the point. The point is to explore the nature of experience in its depth and nuances. The qualitative data derived from narrative and descriptive methods such as the ones to be used in this study can have great richness and validity since they allow for in-depth understanding of people's perceptions, feelings, experiences, and knowledge (Patton, 2002).

Further, the researcher can achieve consensus by collecting and triangulating data from multiple sources (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Eisner, 1998). In this study, data was derived from the critical analysis (as a primary tool) along with one-on-one in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Despite its limitations this study can be replicated by scholars interested in the study of art and cultural diversity, since it provides an exemplar for the investigation of artworks using contextual art criticism.

Definition of Terms

Co-culture: Co-culture is the term used when discussing groups and communities exhibiting perceptions, values, beliefs, communicative behaviors, and social practices that are sufficiently different as to distinguish them from other groups and communities and from the dominant culture. Co-cultures may share many of characteristics of the dominant culture, but their member also exhibit distinct and unique patterns of communication. Co-cultural affiliation can be based on ethnic heritage, gender, age, cohort, sexual preference, or other criteria (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel & Roy, 2013, p. 9). Co-culture is synonymous with the term sub-culture.

Contemporary art: Contemporary art is “the institutionalized network through which the art of today presents itself to itself and to its interested audiences all over the world” (Smith, T., 2009, p. 241). According to Smith, contemporaneity is “the most evident attribute of current world picture, encompassing its most distinctive qualities, from the interactions between humans and the geosphere, through the multitude of cultures and the ideoscape of global politics to the interiority of individual being” (p. 5).

Critical analysis: Critical analysis is “a strategy in art for life writing about art and visual culture [that] systematically examines the forms of art and visual artifacts, their uses and meanings, and contextual information” (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 235).

Culture: Culture is “an accumulated pattern of values, beliefs, and behaviors, shared by an identifiable group of people with a common history and verbal and nonverbal symbols systems” (Neuliep, 2011, p. 19).

Cultural diversity: Cultural diversity refers to “the array of differences that exist among group of people with definable and unique cultural backgrounds” (Diller, 2004, p. 4). Cultural diversity is a more accepted term in South Korea meaning the same thing, or at least being very similar to, the term multiculturalism.

Multicultural: Multicultural means “of, relating to, reflecting, or adapted to diverse cultures” (Merriam-Webster).

Multiculturalism: Multiculturalism is “a philosophical position and movement that assumes that the gender, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of a pluralistic society should be reflected in all of the institutionalized structures of educational institutions, including the staff, the norms and values, the curriculum, and the student body” (Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 447).

Multicultural art education: An approach to structuring teaching and learning content in such a way as to fulfill the aims of multicultural education as part of the educational reform movement. Multicultural art education emphasizes equal educational opportunities, and also deals with cultural differences existing in a diverse society, but through the examination and sharing of art (McFee, 1998).

Multicultural education: Multicultural education is “an idea stating that all students, regardless of the groups to which they belong, such as those related to gender, ethnicity, race, culture, language, social class, religion, or exceptionality, should experience educational equality in the schools” (Banks, 2010, p. 25).

Pragmatism: Pragmatism is an approach to finding meaning by looking at a phenomenon in its context using direct life experiences. It is “a philosophical doctrine that can be traced back to the academic skeptics of classical antiquity who denied the possibility of achieving authentic knowledge regarding the real truth and taught that we must make do with plausible information adequate the needs of practice” (Ormerod, 2006, p. 892). In regard to art, Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) noted, “In art, pragmatism is grounded in a focus on the context in which a work is made, seen, or used” (p. 237).

Sense: Sense refers to any of the real aspects of the life of an organic creature as experienced through sense organs. The concept of sense includes almost everything from bare physical and

emotional shock to the meaning of things present in immediate experiences. It is implicated in a wide range of phenomena: sensory, the sensational, the sensitive, the sensible, and the sentimental, along with the sensuous. According to Dewey (1934), sense is “meaning so directly embodied in experience as to be its own illuminated meaning, is the only signification that expresses the function of sense organs when they are carried to full realization” (p. 22).

Summary

This study is a critical analysis of the artworks of three South Korean contemporary artists in order to examine how they reflect cultural diversity issues in South Korean society through art. The overarching question for the study is: *What issues related to cultural diversity do three South Korean artists address in their art and how? What are the implications of the three artists' work for addressing cultural diversity through art education in South Korea?* In order to provide an overview of the study, I have described the background of the study, the statement of the problem, research questions, the rationale and significance of the study, and the application of pragmatism as a conceptual framework. In addition, I outlined the research design, procedures, scope and limitations of the research, and provided the definition of key terms. In the next section, a review of literature provides a more in-depth theoretical foundation and context for the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides an intensive review of relevant research for this critical analysis of artworks in their authentic contexts by three contemporary South Korean artists who deal with cultural diversity issues in South Korea. The review of the literature focuses on six topics. The first concerns the theoretical framework of pragmatism and its practical application in education, art, and art criticism. In the second section, art as a sense of being is discussed, with a particular focus on how art may express a sense of self, place, and community. The third section is about multicultural society including the definition of culture and multi-cultures in a society. The fourth section contains the examination of the function of art as cultural metaphor and art as a barometer of society; here the focus is on the inherent characteristics of art and its function as a reflection of life. The fifth and six sections present literature on the multicultural art education in societies, especially South Korean society, and its role and effectiveness in connecting diverse individuals in an increasingly globalized world.

Theoretical Framework

The Origins and Philosophy of Pragmatism

The theoretical foundation for this study is grounded in the philosophical theory of pragmatism and its practical applications to the disciplines of education, art, and art criticism. Originating in the United States around the middle of the 19th century, pragmatism is a set of philosophical beliefs that are based on the notion that all knowing is empirical in its genesis, since it originally comes to us through our senses (James, 1907/1978). Prominent early classical pragmatists include Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910), and John Dewey (1859-1952). These thinkers were followed by the neo-pragmatists Richard Rorty (1908-2000) and Richard Shusterman (1949-). In 1907, the philosophy of pragmatism was introduced widely throughout the world via James' book *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, in which he asserted that truth is not discovered from the outside through the use of existing theories but rather is made through the transitions from events like collective life experiences.

Pragmatism is distinct from rationalist philosophy, which begins with already established premises and theories and seeks truth through top-down deductive reasoning. It is also different

from the scientific method, in which scientists judge a hypothesis or known theory in order to seek an absolute truth by testing it in the world. To the contrary, pragmatists seek to arrive at the truth through bottom-up inductive reasoning using the content of life experiences. The meaning of any notion is not pre-defined as absolute truth but instead emerges from the life experiences and observations of individuals. Therefore, the true meaning of any encounter for an individual derives from his or her accumulated real world experiences in observable surroundings. Put simply, from a pragmatic perspective, people make meaning and accept it as truth when it makes sense in actual moments and works to make their lives better.

Pragmatism, then, is a way of understanding the beliefs that guide people to act and judging them by their outcomes rather than by abstract principles (Ormerod, 2006). As James noted, “[Pragmatism’s] only test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience’s demands, nothing being omitted” (p. 44). In the same vein, he asserted, “True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify... False ideas are those that we cannot” (p. 97). Thus, meaning comes from real-life experiences and practical consequences that occur in the transitions between one experience and another when the results are satisfying (James, 1907/1978; Dewey, 1934). In this sense, it can be said that one of the most distinguishing characteristics of pragmatism is its practical nature. This idea is continued in Dewey’s theory of experience and its continuity.

For pragmatists like James, Peirce, and Dewey, because truth is often formed in individual life contexts, meaning also is grounded in our relationships throughout the continuum of our lives. Further, experimentation and action in particular times and circumstances are thought to be integral to the creation of meaning, an assertion with great relevance to art and art criticism, which will be discussed later in this paper. Though William James made the greatest contribution to the spread of the general philosophy of pragmatism, it was John Dewey who advanced pragmatism by working on its practical applications to politics, education, and aesthetics. The fundamental ideas of pragmatism form the philosophical and theoretical foundation for this study and inform the methodological approach as well.

Pragmatism in Practice

Dewey’s (1934) pragmatic view of education and art is grounded in his interpretation of the meaning of *experience*. A commonly used term, experience is understood in a very particular

way from a pragmatist perspective. As Dewey explained, “Experience is the result, the sign, and the reward of that interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication” (p.22). From Dewey’s pragmatic perspective, then, experiences are not realities passively stored in individuals but are realities actively built by people. Yet we cannot call every single experience “an experience” in the Deweyian sense without considering its quality.

Dewey asserted that experiences are less meaningful or fade more easily over time when they are characterized simply by the physical action of doing something. Encounters refer to that which occurs when experience develops meaning and quality through metacognition, that is, the process by which individuals use self-reflection and construct a deeper experience. There is no connection unless an experience actually remains present for us; the high level of satisfaction is understood as a quality of experience. As Jia (2005) noted, “The unique quality of quality is found in experience itself” (p. 103).

In Dewey’s formulation, having an experience is a simultaneously aesthetic, emotional and constructive occurrence. Dewey’s concept of an experience permeates his philosophical arguments on education, democracy, nature, and aesthetics. The next section contains a discussion of the application of pragmatic principles—most influenced by Dewey—to education as well as art.

Pragmatism and education. According to the early pragmatists (Dewey, 1934; James, 1907/1978; Peirce, 1877/1955), truth is intimately related to practical effectiveness, that is, what works in real life and makes it better. Truth, then, keeps us continuously acting in certain ways. Two principles are prominent in discussing education from a pragmatist perspective: continuity and individuality.

Continuity of experience. No experience is stagnant; all experiences involve moving forward (Dewey, 1938). According to Dewey, an experience does not occur just in the immediate moment but instead exists along a continuum of previous, present, and future experiences, all of which integrate organically throughout the course of human life. He argued that it is essential, then, that learners receive meaningful content and instruction so that they can develop further. Our experience of life in the present becomes deeper when we consciously or unconsciously recall earlier encounters with the similar or related experience, connecting the two in an ongoing chain effect.

The principle of continuity suggests that the quality of one's present experience influences our preparation "for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality" (p. 47). Accordingly, Dewey (1938) maintained, "The quality of any experience has two aspects. There is an immediate aspect of agreeableness or disagreeableness, and there is its influence upon later experience" (p. 27). Further, "The principle of continuity in its educational application means, nevertheless, that the future has to be taken into account at every stage of the educational process"(p. 47). In this sense, Dewey guided teachers to carefully and intentionally help learners experience moments that prepare them "for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality" (p. 47). Dewey's ideas are important in relation to this study because the idea of continuity of experience indicates that what experiences students have in school now influences their future experiences. Therefore, engaging students with multicultural issues may ultimately be crucial to their long-term success in adapting to increasingly multicultural societies.

Individuality. Because pragmatism emphasizes pluralism, or in pragmatist terms, individuality, Dewey saw learners as individual creatures whose different life contexts led them to different interpretations of the same event (Eisner, 2002). One's experiences, then, were seen as the most important factor in determining how human beings develop and interact with their environment. Dewey believed that individuals are not passive learners but instead actively create knowledge and construct meanings from their own experiences through a process of transition that engages meta-cognitive processes. As he noted, "There must be a reason for thinking that [certain materials and methods] will function in generating an experience that has educative quality with particular individuals at a particular time" (Eisner, 2002, p. 46). Education cannot ignore individuality; rather it has to deeply consider the context of individuals' experiences for meaningful learning to occur.

Pragmatism and art. Dewey's perspectives on experience have implications for finding the fundamental meaning and value of art. Shusterman (2010) supports Dewey's ideas in asserting that art is "the product of intelligent experience" (p. 30). As discussed, an experience has a whole-cloth quality that comes from understanding both intellectually and emotionally its parameters and nature. We "experience," that is, we do not accumulate experiences passively, but translate them as a whole through a process of inquiry that stimulates our emotions, cognition, and sensations. Dewey (1934) called this emotional, cognitive, and sensitive wholeness the aesthetic, and he argued that it was represented in the process of making an

artwork. This process of translating experience into visual form is the aesthetic experience itself. As Shusterman (2010) observed, “a satisfying artistic form is not enough but a certain intensity or vivacity of experience is called for that is not only rewarding in itself but that invigorates use toward greater flourishing”(p.28). A pragmatic view of art, then, supports the idea of that artworks can be clues to understanding the full life experiences of artists. I will discuss this idea more fully later in this chapter.

According to Dewey (1935), “If all meanings could be adequately expressed by words, the arts of painting and music would not exist” (p. 74). Dewey meant that human beings experience the world actively and cannot express everything they feel, think, and believe in words. Art plays an important role in representing the experienced world in visual form at a deeper level. Eisner (2002) asserted, “The arts are typically crafted to make aesthetic forms of experience possible” (p. 10). Similarly, Dewey (1934) said, “In short, art, in its form, unites the very same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy, that makes an experience to be an experience” (p. 50). Dewey believed, then, that our aesthetic experience is manipulated in a continual process of reconstruction that requires the involvement of aesthetic and intellectual processes.

Dewey’s view of experience and aesthetics influenced others to view art as emerging from the artist’s accumulated life experiences but also judgments of what the real value of art is. Stroud (2011) observed in *Art as Experience* that Dewey “criticizes the ‘museum concept of art’ that assumes that art is limited to practice and objects we enshrine in special spaces removed from everyday life” (p. 28). Until postmodernism emerged, a big distinction existed between the perceived value of high art and common art. Dewey (1934) was one of the first to ask why, when art meets everyday life, it is not regarded as high art. Before the postmodern era, the term “high art” generally indicated artworks by well-known European artists, and an emphasis on formal qualities. This traditional Western approach viewed beauty as the primary purpose of art; art was seen an absolute, ideal, and objective concept that precluded non-Western cultures or arts related to everyday life from the status of high art (Labadie & Simpson, 1998). With postmodernism, however, the Western art world came to emphasize pluralism and the accompanying pragmatist belief that each individual or group in society is significant and deserving of respect (Green, Newbert, & Reich, 2011). In addition, the postmodern perspective led to a reexamination of the

purposes of primitive societies in creating art, as well as the use of ethnographic approaches to reveal the cultural meanings and functions of art.

Dewey's ideas about art and experiences are shared by many scholars (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; R. Anderson, 2004; T. Anderson, 2000; Danto, 1981; Dissanayake, 1988) who take an ethnographic perspective in viewing art as separate from judgments of quality in relation to the artwork itself. Researchers working from an ethnographic perspective judge art by asking what it does, what it is for, and what value it contains in terms of human life. From this ethnographic perspective, then, numerous elements of the artwork are considered. Form, material, and subject matter, for example, all stimulate the intellectual process that enables us to have an experience, and at the same time, make the experience qualitative and aesthetic.

Along with a growing emphasis on multicultural perspectives, scholars began to address the notion of equality in the arts, as reflected in the question: What is art for? (Dissanayake, 1988). From a modernist perspective, art has a formalistic quality that allows it to be judged as outstanding and acceptable as a piece of beauty. When professional critics admit a certain artwork as beautiful, it finally becomes "good" and takes a place in a museum. From a postmodernist perspective with its emphasis on pluralism and individualism, however, the essential features of art are viewed differently, with a focus not just on formal quality but also on authentic context. In a postmodern formulation, the role of art is not just for its own sake, but for life's sake (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005) and our own sakes (Winner & Hetland, 2007).

The notion of art for life opens our eyes to the range of art and the matter of how we should judge art. As Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) observed,

Art is decorative or beautiful for its own sake; in addition, one of its primary functions in all cultures around the world has been to tell our human stories, to help us know who we are and how and what we believe. (p. xxiii)

In the same way, Dissanayake (1988) postulated that if art naturally comes from organic interactions between individuals' life experiences and their surroundings, the value of art should be found in common life contexts in the shared world, not in the abstract idea of art for art's sake. In postmodernism, context has come to be regarded as significant in discussing an artwork's value (Milbrandt, 1998), shifting the target of inquiry to questions about the main purposes involved in creating artistic objects. Whether in the past or present, the purpose of creating artworks shares a basic similarity, that is, to aesthetically save and express human life

experiences in visual form. Further, because we live together, human beings share their experienced worlds through art, thus harmonizing with each other.

Individuals live their lives in a series of situations or events (Dewey, 1934). People constantly connect with environments, objects, and others, and these interactions build personal meanings. If the real meaning of a work of art is represented by how individuals reflect their own life experiences through it, then, art criticism must incorporate the personal and its authentic context in its theoretical foundations. In the next section, art criticism based on Dewey's theory is discussed along with the importance of a contextual approach.

Pragmatism and art criticism. In our lives, art is something that contains a picture of how we live, what we value, and how we feel. It is a symbolic representation of our life experiences as well as a tool for communication and promoting understanding between us. The power of visual art is undeniable as symbolic experience (Dewey, 1934). Thus, we can use the symbolic meanings in artworks to better understand ourselves as well as the life stories of others, and we can achieve this through the function of art criticism (Barrett, 2000; Dewey, 1934).

In postmodern art criticism, context has come to be regarded as significant in discussing an artwork's value (Milbrandt, 1998), so the specific purposes involved in creating artistic objects have become a subject of greater interest. The awareness that human beings share their experienced worlds to harmonize with each other within certain cultures and spaces has resulted in a focus in the art education literature on anthropological approaches that emphasize the cultural context in deriving a sense of meaning from an artwork (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; R. Anderson, 2004; Danto, 1981; Dissanayake, 1988; Efland, 2002; Feldman, 1970; Smith, R., 2006; Shusterman, 2010; Sullivan, 1993).

Dewey argued that "art is located in context, for viewers to comprehend cultures from which the work is framed" (Goldblatt, 2006, p. 18). Shusterman (2010) stated that in defining art as experience, the contexts embedded in art "can be given the attention they deserve rather than isolating the aesthetic in a narrow formalism" (p. 31). In addition, he noted that "meaningful thought and perception requires a background context, and context qua structuring background cannot appear in the focal ground of object" (p. 36). This is the view of the pragmatist, then, that art should be understood within its personal, social, and cultural contexts and aspects of artists' life experience.

The functions of art criticism. From the distant past up to today, human beings have symbolized their experiences of life in visual formats. If we are deeply understand the significance of such symbolized creations we must seek to discover their implied meanings. According to Dewey's pragmatic view (1934), a work of art is a reflection of the experienced world and artworks are manifestations of human experience gained through processes of cognitive and collective construction. As Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) observed, unlike written expression "art is presentational: it presents us with a feeling, a visual worldview, suggesting or implying what is or what may be not giving an explanation" but through showing (p. 99).

Art criticism plays an essential role in promoting our understandings of the meanings of artworks. T. Anderson (1991) defined art criticism as:

a direct personal encounter with a specific work of art resulting in linguistic analysis and/or interpretation of the work. This analysis and/or interpretation is, more or less, informed opinion, based on evidence, and funded within a given cultural context. (p. 18)

Dewey (1934) described the function of art criticism as "the reeducation of perception of works of art; it is an auxiliary in the process, a difficult process, of learning to see and hear" (p. 338). He emphasized that the nature of art criticism makes the perceived subject matter the first principle for judgment since it is the only thing that makes our judgment different. Thus, Dewey asserted, "criticism is judgment" (p. 310). Though other standards might exist by which to measure artworks, standards of measure with respect to quantity are "not a mode of judgment itself" from a pragmatist point of view (p. 320). Because judgment is qualitative and analytic it enables viewers to perceive the meaning of artworks through their own objective examinations of their reactions, the process of examining a work from the aspects of what to see, what it means, and what to believe. Thus, art criticism can be differentiated from aesthetic inquiry in that it does not begin from philosophical theories, but from an individual's description, interpretation, and evaluation of an artwork (T. Anderson, 1993).

Art criticism is needed to judge the value of an artwork, understand its implied meaning, and make sense of the work based on one's own reasoning. Lankford (1984) emphasized the significance of art criticism: "Through critical experience with works of art a subject may develop aptitudes for art appreciation and criticism" (p. 155). Shusterman (1997) noted that because the experience of an artwork is silent, critical argument is necessary. This is to say that

although subjects and experienced stories exist in works of art, without the process of analysis they exist in silence.

Barrett (2000) emphasized the importance of interpreting art not just according to the responses of art critics but through a balanced relationship between the critics' interpretation and that of the viewer. He argued that good interpretations invite viewers to see for themselves and to continue on their own. Information about artwork provides knowledge regarding the art; but since feelings guide our interpretations as we create meaning, the matter of how to transfer and integrate works of art into our own inner worlds is even more important. We can stimulate this process of transformation and integration through the practice of aesthetic experiences. As Smith, R. (2006) argued, aesthetic experiences provide viewers with an opportunity to create their own meanings of artworks.

Art criticism in education. In the field of art education, teaching too often concerns itself only with the formal qualities of an artwork rather than the context in which it was created and in which it is and has been viewed (T. Anderson, 1995). T. Anderson (1997) emphasized the significance of aesthetic experiences in education. He asserted that defining, understanding, and using aesthetics as a tool for expressing meaning must be a primary concern of postmodern art educators. Though knowledge about art for its own sake is useful, structured art criticism in an educational context can enable students to experience artworks in a way that reveals something about the human condition. Thus, art teachers can provide “keys to open doors to collective (cultural) realities and individually significant meanings” (T. Anderson, 1993, p. 204).

In order to build a relationship between artists, their artworks, and students that is focused on life meanings, teachers need to concern themselves with instructing students how to be skillful viewers. This means schooling them in a method for considering the contexts surrounding the artworks, an approach also known as contextual art criticism. Like Dewey's (1934) ideas about art criticism, Eisner (2002) and Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) noted that educational art criticism is especially necessary in the art classroom, since students are asked to cultivate knowledge about what they are looking at and understand what the works of art mean for them. According to Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) the goals of educational art criticism are to help students interpret and assess the visual culture, works of art, and their response to those works. Students also must engage in art criticism “in order to find meanings for their own lives to understand the authentic meanings of others” (p. 101).

Pragmatists emphasize the importance of connecting abstract and imagined art to the reality of our lives (Goldblatt, 2006) as a way of making our lives better. Pragmatism highlights contextualism in that “what is most valued is that the work tells us something significant about human experience beyond the art world and in many cases has the power to move us to action” (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 87). If one goal of education is to help students become responsible members of a democratic society, art education can play a significant role by directing their attention to the contexts in which artworks are produced and viewed. By interpreting and reconceptualizing the artist’s vision as it is situated and filtered in a work, students can arrive at a deeper understanding of “otherness”—a sense of things as qualitatively different from themselves or what they have experienced. Further, they gain a more cogent understanding of themselves in relation to others.

Students can gain knowledge by engaging in art criticism and also develop their critical thinking abilities. In the arts, individuals and groups create multiple narratives to describe their cultures and spaces. In art education, then, it is important to encourage students to use a critical thinking process in order to better comprehend artworks. Further, instruction that provides a conceptual framework for examining and creating artworks can help them to refine their worldviews (T. Anderson, 1997). For students especially, understanding the real meaning an artwork requires that they learn to evaluate its influences on their own memories and emotions. Contextual art criticism can play an essential role in this process.

Art as a Sense of Being

Artworks can be understood as self-statements about one’s being, and as purposeful sharing of such statements in order to make sense of life. In its depiction of stories, cultures, and issues relevant to our lives, art remains a uniquely powerful way of expressing oneself and one’s own sense of being (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Efland, 2002; Eisner, 2002). To live, people must participate in the world, in the process experiencing everything around them through their senses. Dewey (1934) expanded on the meaning of sense:

Sense, as meaning so directly embodied in experience as to be its own illuminated meaning, is the only signification that expresses the function of sense organs when they are carried to full realization...The senses are the organs through which the live creature participates directly on the on-goings of the world about him. In this participation the

varied wonder and splendor of this world are made actual for him in the qualities he experiences. (p. 22)

From Dewey's perspective, then, art is a form of collected life experiences in transition. If this is the case, it is useful to understand how art may be perceived as a visual self-reflection representing one's sense of self alone and in relationship with others. To explore ideas about artworks as an expression of an artist's life experiences, it is helpful first to examine research literature that concerns the basic principles of sense of being: a sense of self, place, and community.

A Sense of Being

A sense of self. As Dewey (1934) stated, human beings have a social existence since they interact with their surroundings as they participate in experiencing the world. After developing the psychological ability to recognize that one lives with others, one becomes interested in making sense of *who I am* in a group of people, as well as *how I am different from or similar to them*, with the ultimate goal of developing a feeling of where one belongs. This seeking to find one's identity is a life-long journey.

Self-identity. The concept of self is understood through being in one's own world, but also through interaction within overlapping and intersecting visible as well as invisible influences to which we belong. In other words, one's sense of self is found in relationship with others. Therefore, it is necessary to approach self-knowing in multiple ways. Jones and other scholars (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Jones, 2009) have studied multiple dimensions of identity construction with the goal of creating a conceptual model of socially-constructed identity. They examined how each respondent constructed an individual identity based on her unique perceptions of multiple identity dimensions and contextual influences and found that the process of identity construction was dynamic, complex, and many-sided. The model of multiple dimensions of identity developed by Abes, Jones, & McEwen (2007) reflects the diverse aspects of the relationships within our lives (see Figure 1). The model in Figure 1 indicates that the core of one's sense of self is made up of personal attributes, personal characteristics, and personal identity. It also signifies the importance of contextual factors like family background, sociocultural conditions, current experiences, and career decisions and life planning to the development of self.

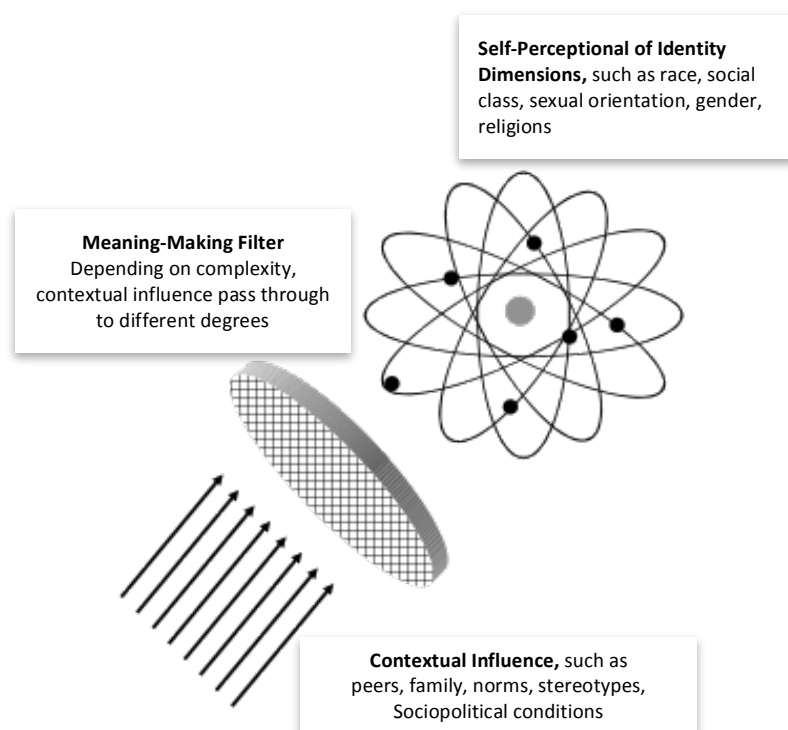


Figure 1. Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity. (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007, p. 7)

Abes, et al., (2007) noted that their model depicts “the dynamic construction of the identity and the influence of changing contexts on the relative salience of multiple identity dimensions such as race, sexual orientation, culture, and social class” (p. 3). Through studies with college student populations, they reconceptualized their earlier identity model (2000) from a holistic standpoint, adding a meaning-making filter that shades identities according to the contextual influences of individuals’ situated environments. According to the researchers, “incorporating meaning-making capacity into the model provides a richer portrayal of not only what relationships students perceive among their personal and social identities, but also how they come to perceive them as they do” (p. 13).

Jones (2009) explained identity construction from a contemporary perspective by posing the question, “How do we come to know who we are?” and answering in this way: “We do so in multiple ways, very much influenced by our locations in the complex web of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, culture, and family background” (p. 293). In his autoethnographic research on multiple dimensions of identity, Jones (2009) emphasized that the experience “tied to social identities and social locations such as race, culture, ethnicity, sexual

orientation, religion, ability, and social class, and these experiences resulted in a feeling of ‘otherness’ that prompted identity scrutiny” (p. 294). Jones (2009) argued that identity construction has two sides, involving “the process of managing how we think others view us and how we view ourselves, which includes negotiation and making sense of how others perceive us” (p. 298).

Identity is not something that can be explained simply, therefore we need to approach it from diverse and multiple perspectives. To find oneself in one’s own context and in one’s social context is an ongoing process that lasts throughout one’s lifetime, and the success with which one negotiates this identity has a significant impact on the quality of one’s life, since it is closely correlated with self-satisfaction and self-esteem. It is notable that self-identity is constructed by the recognition of the self in relation to others and to differences within the situated environments.

Personal identity and social identity. Personal identity and social identity are two aspects of identity construction (Deschamps & Devos, 1998; Turner, 1987; Wilden, 1968). As described above, the concept of a self emerges when we start defining *who I am* within the context of the group as well as in isolation from the group. As Deschamps and Devos (1998) stated:

The concepts of personal identity and social identity are based on the idea that every individual is characterized by social features which show his or her membership of a group or a category, on the one hand, and by personal features or individual characteristics which are more specific, more idiosyncratic, on the other. (p. 2)

Different terms have been used to describe personal and social identity: individual and group identity; individual and collective identity; and homogeneous and diverse identity (Deschamps & Devos, 1998). Individual identity is a personal identity composed of a set of beliefs, values, and cultural practices that creates an emotional independence from the group. Social or collective identity, on the other hand, refers to the part of one’s identity associated with a feeling of dependence upon the group. According to Deschamps and Devos (1998), social identity is related to finding similarities and a feeling of belonging within a particular group of people; therefore, the process of identification requires connecting with a group to which one belongs (the “we”) and differentiating the members of this group from those who do not belong (the “them”).

Turner (1987) outlined a hierarchy implicit in the nature of identity construction. At the supra-order level the self is classified as a human being; thus, the human identity is based on comparisons between species. Second, the intermediate level of self-definition is represented by the self as a member of a group, and this social identity is based on in-species intergroup comparisons. Finally, at the subordinate level of self-definition is the definition of self as a unique being. It is at this third level of self that a personal identity resides, one based on interpersonal comparisons.

A sense of place. The concept of place involves various aspects of one’s environmental context, such as being physically and emotionally located in a specific location, and having concerns and interests in an environment. It has to do with “how we suppose others may think and feel about it” (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 170), that is, our environment. Based on notions about a sense of place put forth by many scholars, Kudryavtsev, Stedman, and Krasny (2011) described the sense of place concept as a combination of two complimentary concepts: place attachment and place meaning (see Figure 2).

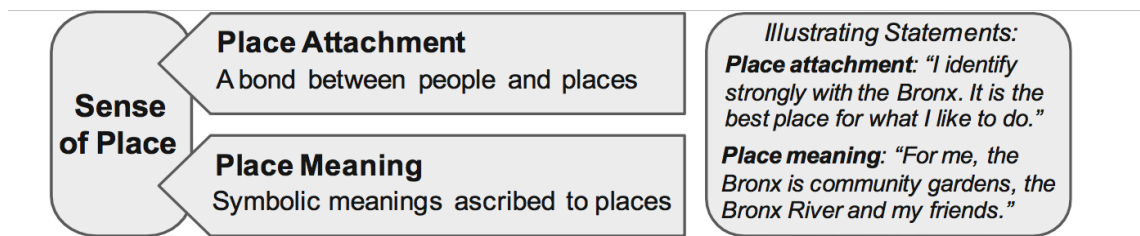


Figure 2. Components of Sense of Place Concept. (Kudryavtsev, Stedman & Krasny, 2011, p. 3)

In the research on sense of place, “place attachment” refers to the bond between people and places, or “the degree to which a place is important to people” (Kudryavtsev, et al., 2011, p. 3). This concept explains how individuals emotionally accept a particular environmental setting and define their own identity within it. “Place identity,” then, “is the extent to which a place becomes part of personal identity or embodies in the definition of the self” (p. 3). Place attachment may affect one’s level of place identity positively or negatively; one may have a more concrete sense of self-resulting from a positive feeling of attachment to a place versus a negative feeling. “Place meaning” signifies the symbolic meanings we ascribe to places. As Kudryavtsev, et al. (2011) explained:

Place meaning is defined by answers to descriptive questions such as ‘What does this place mean to you?’ or ‘What kind of a place is this?’... Place meaning is a multidimensional construct and may reflect an individual’s environment, social interaction, culture, politics, economics, and esthetic perspectives. (p. 4)

Thus, place meaning may influence one’s place attachment depending on how one assigns meaning. If we consider the sense of place concept from a pragmatic viewpoint, it suggests that different people may have different place meanings/attachments to the same place since such meanings emerge in individual contexts.

A sense of community. The concept of community also is salient to our sense of being, since we live in relationship with others as part of certain groups and society. Per Anderson and Milbrandt (2005),

The sense of community is based on both on the sense of self and on the sense of place. It’s an extension of yourself, a sense of your place in a group, and thus a sense of how others might feel, what they might need at particular times and places and in general. (p. 170)

According to McMillan and Chavis (1986), several elements need to be considered when defining a sense of community. These elements include membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, shared emotional connections, and dynamics within and among elements. Membership in a community has been described as “a feeling of belonging, of being, of being a part. Membership has boundaries; this means that there are people who belong and people who do not” (p. 9). Boundaries provide members of a community with emotional safety. The extent of our connections to others affects the level of safety one feels in his or her community. In terms of influence, McMillan and Chavis (1986) also noted that the “influence of a member on the community and the influence of the community on a member operate concurrently, and one might expect to see the force of both operating simultaneously in a tightly knit community” (p. 12).

In McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) conception of community, integration and fulfillment of needs refers to the particular phenomenon of reinforcement. While it might be difficult to determine all the reinforcements that chain members of a community closely together, when people find that “they have similar needs, priorities, and goals” (p. 13), they may find their needs satisfied based on those “shared values” (p. 13). Communities reward the members of the

communities when the sharing of emotional connections is at the quality of interaction to result in a concrete feeling of belonging. We need to have a feeling of connection to others; this can be described as friendship. McMillan (1996) explained, “We need a setting where we can be ourselves and see ourselves mirrored in the eyes and responses of others” (p. 315). Truth in a community context refers to “a person’s statement about his or her own internal experience. [Thus] if community members are willing to look inside themselves and honestly represent their feelings to others, then they are speaking ‘The Truth’ as they know it” (p. 316). Importantly, it is not simply these elements that create a sense of community but also the dynamic interactions within and between these elements.

Art as a Reflection of a Sense of Being

As we have seen, then, a sense of being is found in relation to others and to one’s environmental surroundings; as we experience and interpret everything around us, we notice what and who we are and where we belong. Art is a means by which human beings convey a sense of meaning about life that cannot be transmitted any other way (Dissanayake, 1988). When we pay attention to life aspects of art, we begin to see the natural instincts of humans experiencing their lives. Since our senses—how and what we see, hear, touch, and feel—are fundamental to experiencing and understanding our environments, the information we gain from our senses forms the structure from which we construct meaning (Dewey, 1934). Thus, if artistic forms can be assumed to express experience, it can be said that artworks naturally reflect our sense of culture, self, place, and community.

Art is not created by an immediate action without consciousness. Instead, the making of an artwork requires that the creator employ emotional and cognitive process to make sense of his or her life experience, and the experience of such feeling and thinking has its own quality and aesthetic. Individuals live in a series of situations or events (Dewey, 1934). This means that people constantly connect with environments, objects, and others, and that these interactions build situations that cannot be separated from life experiences.

Dewey (1934) asserted, “Art is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the live creature” (p.26). McFee (1998) defined art as “a form of human behavior which purposefully interprets and enhances the quality of the essence of experience through the things it produces—from the simple enhancement of a tool to the expression of his

deepest feelings and profound projections”(p. 101) in all different forms of art. Art is one of the tools that help our perceptions become expressive and alive. Art is a visual representation of accumulated life experiences through transition, so it can function as a significant symbol by which to understand others, things around us, and hence, ourselves within relationships.

Jackson (1998) observed that the arts have the capability of present “exemplary instances of an experience” (p. 4). He continued: “The true work of art is not the project that sits in a museum nor the performance captured in film and disc. Rather it is the experience occasioned by the production or the experience of appreciating objects and performances” (p. 5). Grushka (2005) stated that, in one sense, a piece of artwork can be understood as another “self” of human being, reflecting a relationship with his or her surroundings, including a sense of self, place, and community. In their interactions within their senses, artists present their work full of the sensibilities and reflections of life experiences. Thus, it makes sense that art criticism must be done within the context of artworks. While it is impossible to immediately enter the space and time in which an artwork was created simply by viewing it, artists’ representations of their cultures, which reflect identity, place, and community, might successfully encourage audiences to immerse themselves in different worlds and allow in new stimuli for interpretation.

Multicultural Society

What is Culture?

We all live within culture, and art always has a role in it. If art reflects life experiences, art is always, to some extent, a representation of culture. Further, culture is the most influential principle in constructing identity since it is related to the many contexts of daily life experiences. History, tradition, anthropology, and geography—all are major components of culture. The culture of a group explains who they are, how they live, and what they value, and when art is created, it may reinforce, challenge, and/or reflect cultural values. Thus, a short discussion here about the meaning of culture is warranted.

M. Harris (1999) defined culture as “the socially learned ways of living found in human societies and that it embraces all aspects of social life, including both thought and behavior” (p.19). He distinguished between the connotation of culture represented as a commodity obtained by reading classical books like Shakespeare, or listening to classical music, or taking courses related to tradition or history. Thus, culture has been defined in various ways, according to one’s particular perspective or field of study. Anthropologist Greetz (1983) defined culture as

“historically transmitted patterns of meanings...inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which [human beings] communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life” (McFee, 1998, p. 47). McFee (1998), who is deeply engaged with multicultural art education, defined culture as,

...the learned, shared, and socially transmitted forms of adaptation of human beings to the environment, which includes the habits other people, and their creations. A culture is pattern of living among a given group of people. The pattern is developed by the group’s shared values, beliefs, and opinions on acceptable behavior. Within the pattern people have roles to play and work to do. The culture in part directs how children are trained and how beliefs and values are maintained from generation to generation. Culture includes education, religion, science, art, folklore, and social organization. (p. 98)

In other words, culture refers to socially learned ways and patterns of living among a given group of people that encompass all of social life and are deeply grounded in shared beliefs, values, history. Culture, then, blends traditional and contemporary principles. It does not remain stagnant; its particular elements develop or change within a group of people based on their acceptance. Culture has multiple layers and is understood to be an invisible but highly influential principle for living in a society because it is related to the living environment and the living experiences within it.

The Complexities of Multicultural Societies

Societies generally consist of multiple and diverse cultures (Delacruz, 2009; Donati, 2009; J. Harris, 2011; Kumar, 2007; McCormick, 1984; McFee, 1998; Samovar et al., 2013; Saunders, 1998) within a dominant culture. According to Samovar et al. (2013), *society* can be thought of in a general and a specific sense. From a general perspective, society refers “comprehensively to organized human interactions, such as social structure, organizations, and institutions” and from a specific perspective, it depends on “a group or groups of interdependent, self-perpetuating, relatively autonomous people within a specified geographical area” (p. 9). Thus, a single society may “consist of diverse and multiple cultures” or co-cultures within a dominant culture. Thus, numerous groups of people live together in a society and each of these groups, or co-cultures, may have its own cultural uniqueness regardless of its size.

The multiple cultures in a society, then, can be divided into the dominant culture and co-cultures (sub-cultures) according to the size of the group or the historical power relationships

within a society. Cultural power influences the behaviors, beliefs, communication patterns, lifestyles, and traditional customs of individuals within the group. However, it is the dominant culture that has “the ability to control the major institutions within culture—governmental, educational, mass media, economic, military, religious, and the life” (Samovar et. al, 2013, p. 9) The culture of this dominant group is represented as “characteristic” over other cultures. Thus, although the dominant culture is most prominent within a society, numerous co-cultures also may exist, each sharing major characteristics of the dominant culture along with specified and distinguishable characteristics specific to their own experience.

While some measure of cultural diversity has long been found in societies in the world, technological and social changes have made multiculturalism more common around the globe (McFee, 1998). Donati (2009) observed that “multiculturalism produces a society distinguished by a growing pluralization of every culture, not only because of immigrants, but also because of the inner dynamics of the native (national or not) cultures” (p. 149). The number of immigrants in many countries has risen considerably in the last decade, and this is understood as global phenomenon. This growing number indicates how quickly culturally diversity is coming to characterize society. U.S. society has moved away somewhat from the predominant “melting pot” goal of the 20th century in which all co-cultures were encouraged to assimilate and become simply “American.” In Canada, however, people are actively encouraged to accept multiculturalism as the norm and see their society as a “mosaic” or “salad bowl” of different cultures. This latter approach to multiculturalism is a broader and more inclusive notion in which difference is acknowledged, accepted, and even celebrated (Kumar, 2007). The change to a more multicultural society may have positive impacts on a society as well as negative impacts. As Kumar (2007) pointed out:

The varied cultures can flourish and coexist harmoniously only if there is an informed consciousness of cultural diversity on the part of the government and of developmental policies devised in conjunction with the cultures of the land (p. 77)...when the world is dominated by current power, or power relations, the fragile balance sought for survival of cultural diversity is destroyed. (p. 81)

Thus, inequality and disrespect for cultural difference within a multicultural society creates disharmony that may weaken a society. It requires a concerted effort to address and acknowledge that each culture has own uniqueness deserving of respect.

Culture is not unchangeable; it develops or changes over time and between groups based on its acceptance. Though culture is invisible it is the most influential principle for living in a society. Thus, individuals benefit from understanding more about their own culture as well as others. Education can play an essential role in filling the gaps created by differences between cultures by teaching students to be aware of cultural similarities and providing opportunities to learn how to address cultural differences. As Katter (1991) stated,

A teacher may have a classroom of students who appear quite similar, but after careful observation, may find they are culturally quite different. Influencing the range of diversity are such things as the values one learns as a child, social opportunities to learn, exposure to understandable instruction, acceptance by sex, family stability, the ability to reject rejection, and an individual's degree of tolerance for change. (p. 30)

Katter's claim, then, is that art can play a significant role in nurturing understanding of others in a multicultural society. The rest of the literature review will concern how artists and art educators help to interpret the challenges of a multicultural society with art as a powerful communicative tool in the equation.

Art in a Multicultural Society

Art as a Cultural Metaphor

If the most influential factor in shaping people's lives is culture, it is necessary to understand the cultures of others if we are to make invisible cultural influences visible. Art can act as a cultural metaphor that enables us to gain such understandings. Friedrich (1982) asserted, "Only a deeper, poetic understanding can grasp the truth of culture as a 'work of art' " (in Friedman, 1994, p. 80). According to T. Anderson (1989), "Culture is a feedback system through which people send messages to themselves about the nature of reality. A major vehicle in this system is art" (p. 43).

The role of art in a culture, then, can be seen as purposeful. As R. Anderson (2004) noted, "Art's cultural significance may lie in its capacity to bring out some desired end—that is, one meaning of art lies in its being a means to some goal" (p. 280). For most of human history, art has existed around us as visible or invisible shapes for multiple purposes, including decoration, symbolism, religion, documentation, and so on. In fact, although the valuation of art has varied according to the standards and beliefs of different eras, art has long been a part of the lives of human beings and has reflected scenes of both our discoveries and our struggles. In fact, since

the most powerful characteristic of art is its expressive and communicative function, it is considered to perform much as language does. McFee (1998) asserted, “art is one of man’s major language systems, a mean of communications—of sharing his experience with others” (p. 97).

Symbolic meanings endow art with the power to encapsulate cultural contexts, depending upon which cultures and creators are involved. This symbolic function of art can be found from the early stages of children’s artistic development through their growth into adults (Freedman, 1997; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). According to Anderson and Milbrandt (2005), a metaphor is a “symbolic transformation that occurs when one thing in its entirety denotes another thing in its entirety... Metaphor is not simply a cognitive nicety; it is central to our ability to think and to our creative activity” (p. 236). Labadie & Simpson (1998) pointed out as humankind experiences the world, a transition is reflected in metaphorical forms: “Making sense of the world around us, our interactions, and experiences, compels us to make literal and metaphoric connections” (p. 49). Thus, artworks have a role in symbolizing the meanings gained from experiences and they function as metaphors that recall viewers’ experiences.

According to T. Anderson (1989), “Art evokes human emotions and ideas. It is a metaphor for the human life of the heart and mind. This life metaphor cannot escape being culturally embedded...metaphor is integral to the visual arts” (p. 43). Still, the meaning of art differs from one culture to another. Cultures differ in their “values, attitudes and belief systems...[and] in the design of their art forms, and in the structure of their built environment” (p. 26). Thus, visual images can serve as meaningful cultural metaphors with the potential to educate (Efland, 2002). By reflecting on the visual metaphors of an artwork and relating them to their own worlds, students can be helped to learn more about the world and consider the diverse issues they will face within this broader understanding. McFee (1998) discussed the relationship between art and culture and its implications for education:

There is a general consensus among those analyzing art forms in culture that art expresses values, reinforces concepts of reality, differentiates roles and status of people and things, provides the symbols that transmit meaning from one generation to another, increases the emotional involvement with rites of passage, transitions, and celebrations, illustrates the nuances and qualities of experience, and the concreteness, abstractness, and complexity of thought, and is a record upon which the members of a culture can reflect on the meaning of their particular identity as a group of people. (p. 73-74)

Thus, through constructive engagement with art forms and symbolic metaphors, audiences are driven to further explore their worlds and the worlds of others.

R. Anderson (2004) stated, “Art is culturally significant meaning, skillfully encoded in an affecting, sensuous medium” (p. 27). This way of looking at art leads us away from defining its quality in any fixed way. To the contrary, it leads us towards the discovery of the reality and culturally significant meanings it conveys with respect to religion, beautification, and social values, as well as the relationship between art and truth—thus compelling action. R. Anderson (2004) and Dissanayake (1988) asserted that art might be regarded as a silent cultural language to communicate with others for reasons such as personifying or examining God, spirit, ancestors, nature, people, society, all of which exist as elements surrounding human beings, and even oneself. All these functions are mediated through our own culturally influenced perceptions. Therefore, art, the silent language, can be understood as cultural content no matter what form it takes. In terms of techniques of art-making, the principles related to color composition, shapes, and materials are as extensive as the grammar system used in language. In a way, such principles act as rules for how to put together symbols of one’s own to make stronger the silent speech of art.

The pragmatic view of art—as a reflection of life experiences—shares with the anthropological approach this broader, pluralistic way of valuing and interpreting art. From an anthropological perspective, artworks from all parts of the world have unique value and cultural significance simply because they deliver life meanings and reflect human experiences in actual situations. Accordingly, artworks should be discussed in terms of their contextual quality and the subjective life experiences of their creators in order to more fully explain and ground them in life (Shusterman, 1997). When interpreted in this cultural context, artworks have more value and meaning, not only in themselves, but also for viewers and society.

With its metaphoric character, art provides us with opportunities to explore the experienced world as well as the experiencing world. As Eisner (2002) put it, “Finally, the arts are a means of exploring our own interior landscape. When the arts genuinely move us, we discover what it is that we are capable of experiencing” (p. 11). We can experience art from many different aspects. Looking at or making a work of art is an experience; but, more important, interacting with it by individualizing its content and having a transformation by reflecting on one’s own experiences through it are vital to making the experience long-lasting.

Art as a Barometer of a Multicultural Society

Humans naturally are born to be creators of products that reflect what they experience in their particular circumstances (Dewey, 1934). Thus, everything experienced can be reflected as a production that communicates with others. Echoing John Dewey's beliefs about the potential of all humans for creative endeavors, Goldblatt (2006) asserted, "Every person is capable of being an artist, living an artistic life of social interaction that benefits and thereby beautifies the world" (p. 17). Yet, though we might say all human beings are born to be creators and have the potential for creative endeavors, as Dewey (1934) and Goldblatt (2006) asserted, artists do more than what non-artists do in creating their work. Artists skillfully create art based on their sensibilities, in the process reflecting their emotions, cognitions, and experiences using the proper methods and materials to achieve quality as an artwork. Dewey (1934) described what sets apart artists in this way:

What is called the magic of the artist resides in his ability to transfer these values from one field experience to another, to attach them to the objects of our common life and by imaginative insight make these objects poignant and momentous. (p. 118)

Goldblatt (2006) elaborated on these particular capacities of artists:

The artist's special intelligence gives shape, form and expression to felt things, documenting the growth and demise of civilizations or individuals. A recorder of past histories or prophet of the future, the artist lives at the boundaries of what was and what may be, rendering through the lens of emotion, longings, aspirations and anticipations. (p. 21)

Jackson (1998) described how Dewey highlighted the ability of the arts to present "exemplary instances of an experience" (p. 4). Dewey viewed artists as individuals who use their sensibilities and intelligence to reflect the interactions of their life experiences through expressive objects, which then become the result, the sign, and the reward of these interactions. Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr (1996) maintained,

Artists produce visual representations about the actual world or imagined worlds that encourage them to create a different reality for themselves and their ways of experiencing. Their artworks contain representations of the society and culture in which they live and that the public might share. (p. 102)

Artists are not just a group of creators presenting art only within their personal contexts, however. Rather, they reflect the experienced world in a social/cultural context and deliver meanings to the public, thus encouraging the public to think. As Fehr (1994) noted, “The postmodern construct views the artist as cultural producer, and the work of art as a dialectical catalyst, a beginning rather than a monument” (p. 210). Grushka (2005) emphasized that artists play two roles, both as reflective self-learners and cultural communicators. Grushka described artists in a society as “the inventors, creators and maintainers of culture in a society” (p. 353) and also noted that “effective artists are able to position himself/herself as both creator and audience and through critical reflection validate self-knowledge and allow audiences to engage with a multiplicity of interpretive positions they present” (p. 354).

Artists reflect experiences in life and make meaning in order to express self, but further in the art-making process they become more able to see self as well as audience and community through critical reflection, finally fulfilling the identity of the artwork (see Figure 3).

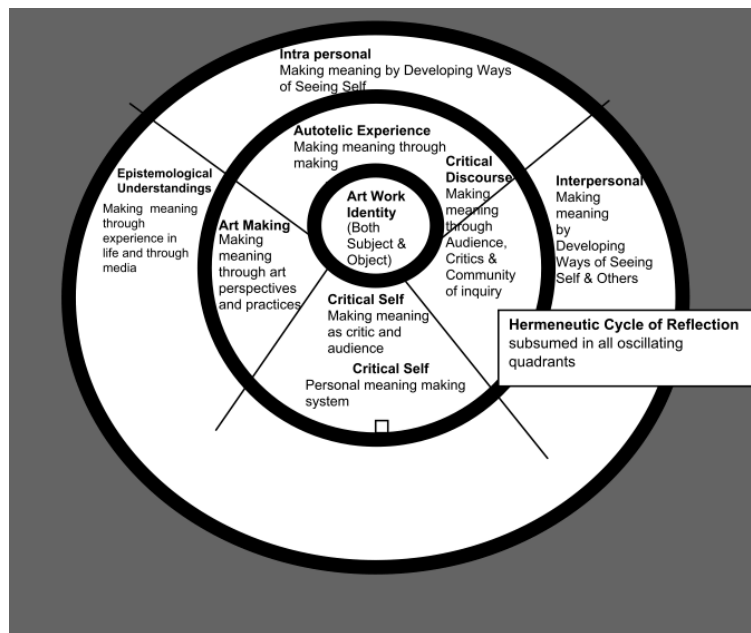


Figure 3. Art Inquiry: Construction and Negotiation of Identity. (Grushka, 2005, p. 356)

As Figure 3 shows, artists’ experiences in life and through media, and their interpersonal and intrapersonal explorations, are formed in a visual format. Yet, in the process of art making and practice, artists’ critical reflections give a subject and object meaning through art. Although

all human beings can create, the level of this critical reflection makes art and the artist distinct. Thus, art is a reflection of the artist's experienced world in which we may participate due to the nature of art and the communicative characteristics of human beings. In this way, art has great cultural and social significance as an unwritten language.

Regardless of the historical era (primitive, Renaissance, Modern, etc.), circumstances, or stylistic features (painting, photograph, sculpture, or print), art undoubtedly delivers meanings that we need to explore if we are to learn about the artists' realization of what he or she has seen, thought, felt, and cognitively approached. Sullivan (2002) said that historically, arts consisted of categories of formal styles, such as painting, sculpture, drawing, print, crafts, architecture, and the like. However, he acknowledged, "Today there is a realization that these categories rely as much on cultural, social, or ideological distinctions as they do on technical processes" (p. 23).

If art reflects the society in which artists live and has some power to provide knowledge about the world we share, then contemporary art can be regarded as an example of our contemporary society. Dewey (1934) emphasized that artists express the transformation between incoming energy and the environment. When contemporary artists create artworks out of contemporary life, these works are deeply related to concerns about where we live, what we share, and how we connect. Today's societies are largely multicultural and intercultural; thus, artists living in culturally interconnected societies reflect their insights through art. Accordingly, various contemporary concerns related to cultural diversity are expressed, such as race, gender, equality, human right, nationality, war, religion, region, and so on.

From an educational perspective, it is possible that teachers who use artworks to share meanings about how others experience the world may also help their students to have a deeper understanding about the world they themselves may directly and indirectly experience. In contemporary art we are able to share the perceptions of those artists who are negotiating life in a multicultural society by interpreting the work in its context. This interpretation can open our eyes to our world. Eisner (2002) described the role that art may take in awakening us: "One cognitive function the arts perform is to help us learn to notice the world... Art provides the conditions for awakening to the world around us. In this sense, the arts provide a way of knowing" (p. 10). Thus, art has its own power as a visual statement reflecting artists' cognitive and emotional perceptions of their culture and society. In elaborating on the power of art, Eisner concluded,

“Through the arts we learn to see what we had not noticed, to feel what we had not felt, and to employ forms of thinking that are indigenous to the arts” (p. 12).

Artists Dealing with Multicultural Concerns

Artists create artworks that represent their accumulated experiences in visual form (Dewey, 1934) through a critical reflective process (Eisner, 2002; Grushka, 2005; Sullivan, 1998). There are at least two sides to every position, and no society is more exceptional than another. In our increasingly multicultural contemporary societies, people struggle with various issues related cultural diversity. Many artists present cultural and social concerns since they sensitively observe, experience, and examine the cultures in which they work. For this reason, art can act as a sort of barometer of society.

In our globalized world, art has been said to have “an important role culturally, socially, politically, and economically” (Chapman & Crimmin, 2007, p. 43). Artists reproduce their experiences as visual productions compounding all aspects of their lives, and in this way may evoke in viewers related questions about what their own lives are like. Many stories are revealed in the experienced life depicted in an artwork, some of them powerful enough to compel viewers to actually take action on particular issues.

Marshall (2009) discussed the importance of using contemporary art to talk about multicultural issues. She asserted that artists share cultural aspects of life in a multicultural society through their artwork, and viewers can not only learn about their experience but also discover themselves within it. As Grushka (2005) noted, artists take a role in a society as inventors, creators, and maintainers of culture in a society. Following I present two contemporary artists who exemplify this position. I met and learned about these two artists in an earlier stage of this study, in 2011-2012. Both are actively dealing with social and cultural issues in their work.

Saira Wasim. Saira Wasim is an artist from Pakistan and I met her in Chicago in April, 2012 for a studio visit and interview. She belongs to the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Lahore, Pakistan. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a major in miniature painting from the National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan in 1999. In 2003, she moved to Chicago and was later invited to participate in the prestigious Whitney Biennial. Wasim creates mostly miniature-style paintings that reflect her negotiation between cultural and locational differences. She has exhibited in a number of premier museums in the U.S., and she now lives and works in

San Diego, California. Wasim is an artist who powerfully presents her negotiation of self, place, and community from her experiences as cultural border-crosser. As an artist who has lived in at least two very different cultures, she is exploring her identity in a multicultural context (see Figure 4) as well as real issues in a multicultural society. Her artwork is mostly about her experiences in Pakistan, escape from war, life in two locations, and struggles as a stranger in the United States (see Figure 5). Interestingly, her subject matter is both multicultural and social but her way of creating her artworks follows a traditional style of art in Pakistan. Her work clearly demonstrates how contemporary artists from diverse cultural experiences can be self-reflectors of diverse life experiences as well as communicators of social and cultural issues to the public.



Figure 4. Saira Wasim. Daughters of the East (2008). Gouache, Gold and Tea Washes on Wasli Paper, 21x20cm.



Figure 5. Saira Wasim, New World Order (2006). Gold and Gouache on Wasli Paper, 25.8x6.1cm.

Alicia Grullon. Alicia Grullon is an American artist from the Bronx, New York whose work deals mostly with her identity, place, and relationships between people in community. I interviewed her in New York City in July 2011. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from New York University and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the State University of New York, and she has exhibited internationally at numerous locations. Grullon participated in the Arts Council South Korea International Artist Residency in 2009 as well as a residency at the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning in 2010. She has lived and worked in the Netherlands, England,

and South Korea and now lives and works in New York City. Her work reflects her interest in the awkwardness and excitement of human interactions and the experience of border identity within community. Her family background is Latino though all now live in the United States. This family background has made her interested in finding her identity in different locations, as well as in relationship with people. She primarily presents her identity by meeting people in a mask as she performs on the street (see Figure 6). In one way, then, Grullon engages people in looking at her, while in another way she hides herself from others. She also meets and mingles with many people from different cultural backgrounds and demonstrates how she figures out her identity both as an insider and outsider.



Figure 6. Alicia Grullon. *An Ethnographic Study: The Bronx* (2008). Video Stills and Images from Interventions.

One of Grullon's videos shows how she can act like several different people by talking with different accents, wearing different clothes, and displaying different gestures. In a personal interview, Grullon shared an observation she made while living in a less urban part of South Korea where there was little cultural diversity. She found that people did not particularly notice her when she was wearing sunglasses, but once she took off her sunglasses she found that people began to stare at her. She realized that her black hair had made it possible for her to "pass" as Korean as long as her eyes could not be seen, but once her sunglasses were off she was perceived as the "other". As she related it, it was clear that this experience had made a deep impression on her. When working in South Korea in 2009, Grullon constructed several projects to investigate the community. One of these community participation projects was called *Language Words*,

2009 (see Figure 7). In it, she sat on the side of the street with a board on which was written, “Help me practice Korean, have a seat, and select a dialogue.” She explained her experience in this way: “The experience between us [the artist and Korean participants] was highlighted by the awkwardness of communicating without full command of any language. The dialogues used very formal and outdated phrases for most contemporary Korean speakers.”



Figure 7. Alicia Grullon. *Language Words* (2009). Intervention.

Besides Wasim and Grullon, who have had extensive cross-cultural experiences, a number of contemporary artists live in South Korea, a society long regarded as mono-cultural but in which cultural diversity is becoming more common. Many contemporary artists in South Korea are dealing with cultural and social issues and are enthusiastic about representing their experiences as members of a society in which diverse cultures coexist but not in a harmonious way.

One recent exhibition South Korea entitled *Good Morning Stranger!* (2013) concerned the convergence and coexistence of diverse cultures there. The show included artworks about the uniqueness of a particular culture, isolation caused by a lack of belongingness, and being a stranger in South Korean society. A number of artists participated and shared their insights toward contemporary issues related to cultural diversity. This exhibition was significant in that it revealed the social changes taking place in South Korean society, where a long history of homogeneity is rapidly being challenged by an increasingly culturally diverse society. The fact that not only international artists have interests in cultural diversity issues but also of South Korean artists also started to looking and talking about cultural diversity could support this study,

which focuses on contemporary South Korean artists to see their understandings and reflections of multicultural issues in South Korean society.

Multicultural Society and Education

Multicultural Education

Banks (2008) described education for a multicultural society or multicultural education as, “a reform movement designed to make some major changes in the education of students” (p. 1). Multicultural education is “an idea stating that all students, regardless of the groups to which they belong, such as those related to gender, ethnicity, race, culture, language, social class, religion, or exceptionality, should experience educational equality in the schools” (Banks, 2010, p. 25). The history of multiculturalism can be traced back to the 1890s, when the phrase *the melting pot* was used in the United States to promote social harmony in a time of massive immigration (Clark, 1996).

The melting pot concept that refers to a society composed of groups of people from various cultural backgrounds who seek equality as citizens of the same nation through assimilation (Samovar et al., 2011). The United States is a country of immigrants that was characterized as a melting pot (McCormick, 1984). By the time of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, however, the unequal treatment of African-American citizens became a prominent and divisive issue, particularly in regard to the American educational system. Gradually, the disproportionate amount of attention and respect accorded to representations of the mainstream white culture over non-white cultures in the U.S. (e.g., Native-American, African-American cultures), both in education and in the society at large, also became an issue. Such unbalanced attention began to be seen as contributing to misunderstanding and prejudice between these groups, thus shifting the country away from a focus on assimilation.

Multicultural education was introduced in the United States to increase understanding between people of different cultural backgrounds. According to Banks (2008), one of the key goals of multicultural education is to help individuals gain greater self-understanding by viewing themselves from the perspectives of other cultures. From the start, the goal of multicultural education was not simply to provide more educational opportunities for all. Rather, “it is a movement designed to empower all students to become knowledgeable, caring, and active citizens in a deeply troubled and ethnically polarized nation and world” (Banks, 2008, p. 8).

Thus, the multicultural education movement was intended to expand cultural appreciation and understanding among all students.

As Banks (2009) observed, “When individuals are able to participate in a variety of cultures, they are more able to benefit from the total human experience” (p. 1). Banks also noted that multicultural education emerged because of the multicultural nature of the U.S. Still, cultural diversity exists in the most countries around the world, so in all places the challenge of multicultural education is “to provide opportunities for various groups to maintain aspects of their community cultures while building a nation in which these groups are structurally included and to which they feel allegiance” (p. 20).

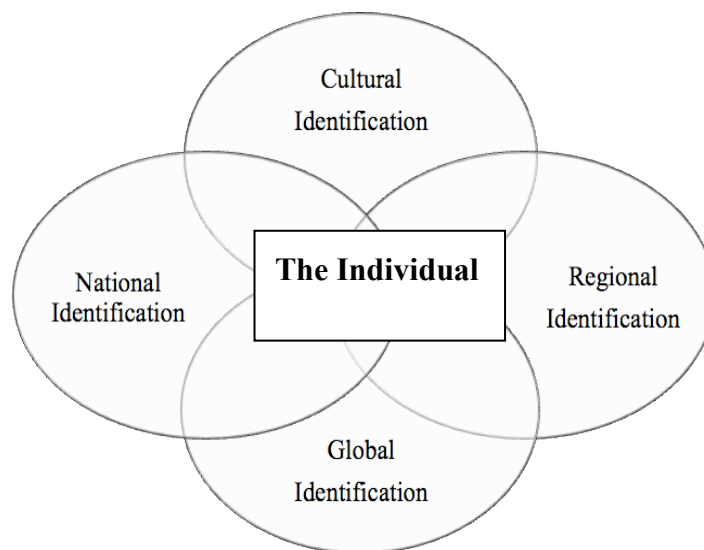


Figure 8. Cultural, National, Regional, and Global Identifications. (Banks, 2008, p. 29) Originally presented in Diversity and Citizenship Education: Global Perspectives. (Banks, 2004)

As illustrated in Figure 8, multicultural education seeks to help students develop an individual identity that balances cultural, regional, national, and global identifications with the goal of becoming a global citizen. In order to teach students to accept the differences between people as well as give them a fuller awareness of others within their multicultural society, teachers must increase the proportion of materials used from subcultures outside the dominant culture to reverse longstanding inequities (Banks & Banks, 2010).

Multicultural Education in South Korea

Increased cultural diversity. In recent years, South Korean society has changed from a mono-cultural to a multicultural society because of developments in technology, increased immigration, and social changes connected to globalization (Chang, 2012; Watson, 2012; Yun & Park, 2011). As of 2010, the foreign population in South Korea was over 1,130,000, and it looks as if it will continue to grow at a rapid rate. At the current rate of immigration, by 2050 10% of the population will be foreign (Yun & Park, 2011). This phenomenon has caused multiculturalism to be one of the primary concerns of the South Korean government in recent years. The government's efforts have concentrated on responding to this new cultural diversity through education. It has included cultural diversity instruction in the national standard curriculum, announced policies, built centers for multicultural education, and broadcasted public campaigns on TV. In addition, a number of academic articles have been published on multicultural education and, in 2006, the South Korean Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development introduced the Education Act for Children from a Multicultural Family (J. Choi, 2010).

Assumptions about cultural diversity. In spite of the general awareness in South Korea that it is important to address cultural diversity and the educational efforts of government to enlighten citizens and promote multicultural understanding, the rapid application of multicultural instruction has been steeped in misunderstandings about the concept of multiculturalism (Ahn, 2011; Chang, 2012; J. Choi, 2010; Watson, 2012; Yun & Park, 2011). The limited nature of the understandings of multicultural education in South Korea is exemplified by the TV campaigns in South Korea.

By the time the South Korean government began to speak to the public about multiculturalism, there was already one TV campaign sponsored by a South Korean bank that had become popular, and which actually stimulated my interest in the topic for this study. One of the advertisements in the campaign contained a child of a culturally mixed couple. The copy of the advertisement said,

He has a mother from Vietnam, but he is Korean too just like you. He can't eat meal without Kimchi [preserved cabbage regarded as the most representative food of Korea], and he respects King Sejong the Great [who created Korea]. He thinks of Dokdo Island as our territory [Japan insists on ownership of it]. He shouts in Korean when he watches

soccer games and he will join the military when he turns 20... he will pay taxes and vote for the country...just like you. Supporting multicultural families is a thing for happiness for the future. Add more happiness to our society.

In 2008, this campaign often appeared on TV at prime time, and it generated greater awareness of both cultural diversity in South Korean society, and just as importantly, the need to educate citizens about cultural diversity there.

Yet if we really look into the content of this advertisement we see another side of it than just simple public education. Who takes the major role in this advertisement? What is the dominant culture to which this child must assimilate? This advertisement asks the public to accept the child from multicultural family for one reason: because he does all the same things South Korean citizens do and therefore should be accepted as a South Korean. South Koreans have long regarded their country as a homogeneous nation, and have placed a high value on pure blood. So although such advertisements represent an effort by the government to help citizens adjust to the rapid transformation that is occurring, they contain a message that adheres to the status quo, rather than challenging it. Within the concept of the melting pot, they have found an apt metaphor. It is not so much that South Korean individuals must change their notions about the value of diversity in South Korean society, but that “mixed” individuals must jump into the giant pot named “South Korean” in order to be valued.

Thus, South Korean society continues to divide citizens in two groups—those who are “pureblooded,” and thus, considered mainstream, and those who simply are not. The “nots” then, must seek to join the mainstream by adopting all the traditions and trappings of South Korean culture. It is in this way that society has come to understand the concept of multiculturalism, and the limited scope and narrow assumptions of this approach has influenced multicultural education as well. In Korean, the word for multiculturalism is *damunhwa*, a term directly indicating multicultural family, especially between native Koreans and foreign workers. Yet, as Yun and Park (2011) point out, there are other ways of looking at multiculturalism: “What matters is that the multicultural-society phenomenon may be interpreted and projected in a different manner depending on who plays a major role therein” (p. 141).

Alternative approaches to multiculturalism. Several factors have created the social changes that have led South Korea to be seen as a multicultural society, but the most distinct of these is the increase in the number of foreign male workers, foreign female brides, and their

children (Ahn, 2011; Chang, 2012; J. Choi, 2010; Watson, 2012; Yun & Park, 2011). In fact, South Korean society currently pays a significant amount of attention to foreign-born female and children from multicultural families. They have become the subject of TV advertisements, national conferences, research articles, and government policies. Yet in all cases the focus of these efforts is how such individuals can best meld well with South Koreans and South Korean culture without any effort or struggle on the part of native South Koreans.

One problem with this approach is that the term *multicultural* does not refer only to race or nationality. Within any dominant culture, cultural diversity may include co-cultures based on region, religion, occupation, personal taste, social level, economic situation, and so on. For South Koreans to accept these co-cultures as having value and equal significance would require the use of a different metaphor than the melting pot. In the United States, where multiculturalism has come to mean greater acknowledgement of the contributions of all cultures to civilization and celebration of difference, the notion of the salad bowl rather than the melting pot is the metaphor that has come to be used.

As applied to multicultural education, the salad bowl concept means that multiculturalism is not only about foreign mothers or children from multicultural families; rather it means that all South Koreans must recognize and accept the value of *difference*, as even they are members of co-cultures—perhaps based on region or background—within the dominant culture. While many after-school programs (Kang, 2013) and local education centers for multicultural education exist in South Korea, they are open only for children and families with multicultural backgrounds, thus setting such individuals further apart and under the gaze of people who see themselves as the mainstream of society. Understanding and accepting cultural differences cannot be accomplished simply through narrow interpretations of multiculturalism or adherence to the concept of “pure” Koreans and the giant melting pot. Instead, effective multicultural education must teach value people as individuals with different histories and cultural backgrounds worthy of respect.

Art Education for a Multicultural Society

Multicultural Art Education

Over the past several decades, rapid changes have been taking place in societies around the world, both internally and as well as in their external associations with other countries. These changes have enabled the global spread of cultural content from one country to another, and

raised the issue of people's ability to digest all these different aspects of global cultures (Delacruz, 2009). If we cannot slow down the phenomena of a globalized world, we need to think about how to engage young people in building a better understanding of others in the world and creating a new worldview. Education can play a key role in preparing students to be part of these multicultural and increasingly connected societies by helping young people to develop a global perspective (Banks, 2008; Banks & Banks, 2010; McFee, 1998).

Along with the general need to address multicultural concerns in education, the need for multicultural approaches has come to be seen as ever more important in contemporary art education. A number of mostly American scholars have argued that art educators must address their students' awareness about our increasingly multicultural society and globalized world by helping them to interpret and create art in a way that connects their experience to the larger life-world (Cahan & Kocur, 2011; Clark, 1996; Delacruz, 1995, 2009; Garber, 2004; Stuhr, 1994). What art educators must convey is how art can be a tool by which to understand not only oneself but others in relationship to each other. Such understandings are the components from which they can then build a better society.

Art education has a special role in helping students experience the multicultural world by interpreting the content of art and also reflecting their own experiences in art. As discussed earlier, when considered from a pragmatic (Dewey, 1934) and anthropological viewpoint (R. Anderson, 2004; Dissanayake, 1988) the value and function of art for human beings lies less in its existence for its own sake than for our sake, in a life context (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). Among its other purposes, then, art can offer metaphors for our life experiences in a multicultural society. This function heightens the importance of multicultural approaches to art education and becomes the rationale for interpreting of the artworks of contemporary artists who have been deeply engaged multicultural society.

Stuhr (1994) proposed a variety of approaches to multicultural art education, such as teaching the exceptional and culturally different, human relations, single group studies, multicultural education, and social reconstruction. Delacruz (1995) identified four approaches to multicultural art education, including ethnic tourism, design and media literacy, cultural heritage, and social issues (p. 90). Two of Stuhr's concepts (human relations and social reconstruction) and two similar approaches described by Delacruz (1995) (cultural heritage and social issues) have particular relevance to this study.

Stuhr (1994) described an approach to multicultural art education that teaches *human relations* through art. This human relations emphasis is based on an idea that “the major purpose of schooling is helping students of different backgrounds to get along better in a world made continually smaller by modern technology and media” (p. 173). Delacruz (1995) described this same curricular focus using the term *cultural heritage*, and said that the point of promoting cultural understanding is to enhance the students’ understanding and appreciation of the art and cultures of others. Schools and teachers can guide their students to respect one another and their otherness regardless of race, nationality, economic status, or gender. One way teachers can do this is to encourage students to examine their identity in relationship with others and to reduce misunderstandings, which can exist when one has an immature consciousness about others. In the same vein, Stout (1997) advised that teachers have to earnestly consider using art to help students realize that differences are a natural part of life.

Two other approaches to multicultural art education that have many similarities are *social reconstruction* (Stuhr, 1994) and *social issues* (Delacruz, 1995). Delacruz asserted that the objectives of multicultural art education from a social perspective are to raise students’ social consciousness and motivate social action. In approaching art education as a path to social reconstruction, teachers can emphasize students’ critical ability to interpret social issues within visual cultures such as fine arts and popular art (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009). From artists’ visual presentation of their experiences to the interpretation of such artworks by viewers, the notion of constructed meanings is regarded as an important understanding for social reconstruction. Additionally, critical thinking skills are needed for students to express their recognition of issues from their own life experiences through art. In these ways, art as a self-statement can help to reconstruct our society.

Garber (2004) emphasized that social issues in art education may touch on “feminist studies, race and multicultural studies, disability rights, identity studies, environmentalism, community-based, critical pedagogy, performance pedagogy, social reconstruction, visual culture and other areas” (p. 4). Art has a social function; all art is social since individuals create art to communicate with others about what they have experienced and discovered (Dewey, 1934; Lord & Lord, 2010). As Stuhr (1994) noted, “Art is taught as it is experienced in life, as part of a social and cultural context” (p. 176).

T. Anderson (2010) stated, “From a social justice perspective, artworks and visual culture can be used as sensitive instruments to guide us to human understandings that engage both the intellect and the emotions, toward the ends of social reconstruction and social justice” (p. 5). He emphasized that art and art education can move people to act through understanding art and reflecting life experiences through art. If the ultimate goal of social justice education is to make the world better for all, with harmony between people, the environment, and other beings (Garber, 2004), then art education has a role to play because of its visual power and connotations (T. Anderson, 2010; Garber, 2004; Goldblatt, 2006). As Stout (1997) asserted, “Art can open social wounds and raise issues evoking conflict; and when the end goal is multilogical understanding, academic arguments are purposefully generated as part of the instructional plan” (p. 104).

Greene (1995) pointed out the importance of teaching students about pluralism through art education. Since artworks represent the environments where we live and the lived experiences of artists they provide numerous opportunities for initiating classroom discussions on global and individual social issues. Artists present conflicts and sensibilities gained from their surroundings through their art, and multicultural art education can provide a means for understanding and evaluating the content artists deliver. Society has become more complex and we cannot live without being influenced by culture. Art education has a vital role in helping students to develop opened eyes to otherness and difference in such a way as to augment their own cultural understandings.

A culturally-integrated art curriculum for a global perspective. In the context of a multicultural world, art education needs to consider socially-related multicultural issues as content for teaching and learning. Both from an ethnographic and pluralistic perspective, art is culturally significant in a way that art educators can use in the classroom, both in terms of content and art making. North American art teachers can include content about the arts from cultures other than Western culture in art appreciation lesson plans (McFee, 1998), for example. In addition to art from other cultures, multicultural art education attends to visual productions like advertisements, movies, and street art (Darts, 2006; Duncum, 2006; Freedman, 2003).

Students who live in a multicultural society can be asked to interpret artworks from different cultures and digest their content by reflecting on their own life experiences, thus making true meaning for themselves. Congdon (1986) asserted, “Our teaching [of art education]

should not deny students their aesthetic heritage, nor should we limit them to choices which come only from the cultural background of their birth” (p. 147). Hence, art teachers have a responsibility to design culturally-integrated art curricula for their students. As Dewey (1934) claimed, life experiences have to be placed at the center of educational content because of their power to affect students’ futures. For richness of educational content in the art classroom, it is not only important for teachers to examine artists’ works and their experienced worlds, but to connect aspects of students’ lives to the artworks, thus creating more meaningful and practical lessons.

Davis’s (1997) wheel of culture suggests that meaningful curricula can be developed by expanding the individual, personal cultural experiences of children to the bigger concept of culture (Figure 9).

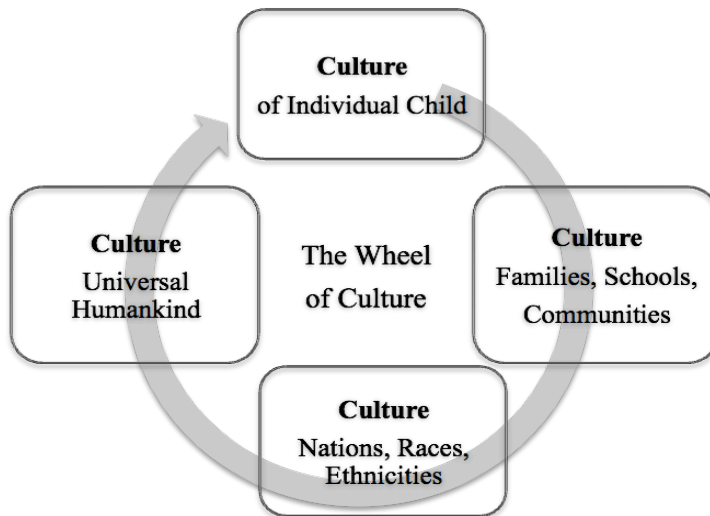


Figure 9. The Wheel of Culture. (Davis, 1997, p. 56)

A curriculum can function to engage children’s cultural experiences and bring them to a broader understanding of cultures at large. society, which may be more relevant to their experiences and the world they face.

Eisner (2002) mentioned that children bring to school wide varieties of experience that originate in the homes and communities in which they live. Contextualized art education curricula offer many options for discussing life-related issues through art. If art refers to a

context existing in a more distant time and space, however, it may be less connected to the issues students face in their daily lives than art created in contemporary

McFee (1995) emphasized:

Art education can help students gain broader perspectives for reflecting on their own culture's art, thus giving them more latitude for their own aesthetic responses and creations. They can become more aware of their own and other cultures' impact on themselves as individuals and thus be able to change or modify that impact. (p. 189)

Further, McFee suggested that teachers and curriculum developers consider designing curricula that accept a "diversity of responses according to students' background and cultural adaptations" (p. 190).

Nyman (2002) stressed that teachers must convey to students how studying multicultural content can help them to:

1) learn about themselves; 2) become creative individuals in an ever-changing society; and 3) develop their own identities, demand that one understands the roles that a person's background, cultural heritage, and environment play in the development of the individual. (p. 63)

Inserting multicultural content and global perspectives into the art classroom is not merely another option for students; rather, it has become a requirement if they are to become well-prepared members of a democratic society in a rapidly globalized world.

Gaudelli (2007) listed the aims of education in a globalized society: 1) developing awareness and appreciation of people who are culturally different; 2) recognizing the interdependent nature of life on the planet; 3) acknowledging the challenges related to social injustice and environmental degradation; and 4) committing to thoughtful social engagement on some of these myriad issues (cited in Gaudelli & Hewitt, 2010, p. 92-93). If students are influenced by the multicultural principles of society in their daily lives, they need to develop a sense of their own identities within this cultural complexity. Lessons are needed that enable them to discuss and manipulate ideas about cultural diversity, with which they are daily surrounded.

Using contemporary artworks to explore cultural diversity. Using contemporary artworks by artists dealing with current cultural diversity issues, art teachers can employ students' own life experiences in more openly talking about cultural diversity. In this way, multiculturalism applies not only to children from intermarriages but to all children living in

South Korea. In reference to controversial issues like violence, poverty, AIDS, environmental devastation, political corruption, and gender, ethnic, and other kinds of discrimination, Stout (1997) observed, “Artists wrestle with these dynamic issues in the act of filtering them through their own sensibilities and turning them into their perception of truth in visual form”(p. 105). Artists reproduce their experiences as visual productions compounding all aspects of their lives, trying to evoke in viewers related questions about what their lives are like. Many stories are revealed in the experienced life depicted in an artwork, some of them powerful enough to impel viewers to actually take action on particular issues.

In focusing on globalization and contemporary art, Marshall (2009) discussed the importance of using contemporary art to teach cultural/social issues. She asserted that artists share cultural aspects of life in a culturally diverse society through their artwork, and that viewers can not only learn about their experience but also discover themselves within it. In a recent study, Marshall (2009) emphasized using contemporary art in practical ways by suggesting teaching strategies. White (1998) also identified the function of contemporary art from a pragmatic perspective:

A pragmatic perspective similarly requires that art educators attend to how contemporary images, which are potentially relevant manifestations of belief, might provide a tool for interpreting curriculum, pedagogy, texts, other images, and the lives of students. (p. 228)

In discussing the use of contemporary art in education for cultural diversity, Cahan and Zoya (2011) pointed out that even though contemporary art has valuable implied meanings related to issues of social justice, cultural difference, and global life, teachers are often afraid of using such art as a resource to spur discussion. When focused on such issues, however, the study of contemporary art enhances students’ abilities to build their place in history and society, and to expand their notions of other human beings. Approaches to multicultural education through art should consider not only the focus and function of the artwork itself, but also the process by which it was culturally and socially shaped, the values and belief system of the particular society that produced it, and the meaning it has in that society.

The artworks of contemporary artists provide an opportunity for students to examine the lives of others. By looking at and transferring their own experiences as they examine the works, students can be encouraged to approach art appreciation from a multicultural point of view. White (1998) stated, “Pragmatists suggest that a criteria for valuing art education in general and

specific works of art in particular is lodged within the differences that artworks have made in people's lives and within the power of artworks to affect identity" (p. 222).

Goldblatt (2006) emphasized the desirability of using the artist's eyes as a tool to see social mores from a different perspective. Artists' special ability to shape and express their feelings makes them able to create art as "a readable language that transmits sensations gathered and expressed in art" (p. 21). Gaztambide-Fernández (2008) noted that artists are people who create visual reproductions of what they see, feel, and think, but their most important role is to deliver messages and meanings to viewers. Garber (1995) expanded on these ideas by suggesting that art be taught in the context of borderlands to enrich the learning of students living in a global society. Garber pointed out that instructors could use examples of artworks from other cultures when teaching cultural diversity. The study of border art can escape easy conclusions by forcing the viewer into the story of the artwork and its representation of complex cultural stories.

The use of students' personal experiences. According to White (1998), "A pragmatic analysis of art education might take questions and stories from the arts and from the lives of their students and use them as tools to reconsider pedagogy in art education and education in general" (p. 220). Eisner (2002) similarly contended that a pragmatic approach to art education should touch on students' life experiences, since students bring their own personal experiences from home to the classroom, giving teachers the opportunity to design curricula around such experiences and more effectively influence students' learning. Parsons and Blocker (1993) noted that the best way to develop greater understanding in students is to talk with them deliberately and purposefully about an artwork. This method involves choosing an important idea or a provocative work, introducing it to students, and asking them questions that might cause them to make connections with their personal experiences.

Students can share their thoughts, artistic skills, and interests through appreciating and making art, in turn broadening their conception of the world. From a constructivist perspective, teachers are not the only ones responsible for bringing materials to the table for learning; students can also contribute to the structure of the class to enhance each other's knowledge. Teachers should design lessons that set up the classroom as a place for students to share their own and others' experiences. Designing a curriculum that is based upon students' interests is a good way to encourage them to have meaningful learning experiences.

Multicultural Art Education in South Korea

As South Korean society has become more multicultural, educators and educational policymakers have sought to help students understand cultural diversity. This is especially the case in art education, since art is a powerful tool for self-expression, for understanding others, and for communicating about our experiences in society. The national curriculum for education has been updated more than seven times during the last 80 years, and the last revision for K-12 schools was in 2009. The objectives of this 2009 national curriculum for general education are:

- In seeking healthy and balanced development of mind and body, students actively explore their future career through knowledge and experience in various areas.
- Students develop the ability to think creatively based on foundational skills and problem-solving capacities for learning and livelihood.
- Students expand their understandings of the value of various cultures based on experiences with the world surrounding them.
- Students build various abilities for communication and the qualifications and attitudes to be democratic citizens.

Among these objectives, the third and fourth reflect a focus on cultural diversity and the growth of students as democratic citizens. The objectives specified for teaching and learning art are as follows:

- To build aesthetic sensibility about self and one's surroundings.
- To develop an ability to express one's emotion and thinking in a creative way and to communicate through it.
- To gain an ability to understand the value of the art and how to judge it.
- To have an attitude of appreciation and respect for the culture of art and to make the attitude as a way of life. (Ministry of Education, 2011)

More specific purposes for each grade level are suggested under each objective in order to show how we can achieve those goals. Table 1 shows the multicultural content in the 2009 South Korean national curriculum for middle school visual art.

Table 1.

Multicultural Content in 2009 South Korean National Curriculum for Middle School Visual Art

Domain	Middle School Level	Suggested Activity Related To Multicultural Education
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception Understand self and things in relationship with surroundings	- Collect visual images to show the relationship between self and others; discuss one's social responsibility; express social responsibilities through visual images
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Understand the social value of the visual culture and explore ways to participate in it	- Learn about differences in lifestyles and ways of thinking by comparing different groups and the visual culture in contemporary society - Find visual images showing socio-cultural issues or expressing opinions towards socio-cultural situations through visual images
Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject Expression Express the character and purpose of subjects through creative thinking	-Interpret commonly-seen objects or events with new eyes -Develop subjects based on personal and social interests
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expression Ways Manipulate media and ways of expressing creatively with different materials and techniques as planned	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Element and Principles Understand the visual effects of different design elements and principles and express them creatively	
Appreciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art History Understand the changing processes and value of art in a cultural context	-Understand how the processes of art in a society change and develop through interchange among different cultures - Understand the meaning and value of each country's traditional art by examining artworks and cultural backgrounds
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art Criticism Interpret and judge the meaning of artworks through art criticism activities	- Understand the meaning of art in historical, economic, social, and cultural contexts

As Table 1 shows, the 2009 South Korean national curriculum for middle school visual arts reflects the cultural diversity concerns of the government, as well as an awareness of the multicultural nature of South Korean society. In addition, the curriculum indicates an awareness of the value and function of art as a means of educating students about socio-cultural issues. These goals were apparent even in the inclusion of cultural and social concerns in the content of revised art textbooks, although the treatment of such concerns did not address the cultural diversity issues that exist in South Korea at multiple levels. For example, the content might concern the fashion, architecture, or artifacts of different countries, but focus on a variety of cultures or a culture's superficial characteristics, rather than regard such aspects in their authentic contexts or in regard to contemporary art. Further, though the concept of multiculturalism includes many different co-cultures that might exist in South Korean society, most of the current content of multicultural art education in South Korea is geared either towards showing more artworks from other cultures in art appreciation activities (not in their authentic context but with simple background information) or learning about traditional South Korean art so as to reinforce the national South Korean identity.

For these reasons, many art education scholars have raised self-reflective voices to critique current applications of multicultural art education in South Korea and argue for the need to expand the concept and practice of multicultural education there (Ahn, 2011; Kho, 2006; Kim & Nam, 2012; S. Kim, 2011; Son, 2012). In addition, a number of recent articles and books have emphasized teaching traditional Korean art as a part of multicultural art education rather than for the simple purpose of maintaining a national identity in this globalized world. Kho (2006) and Kim & Nam (2012) studied diaspora artists as a way of understanding the structure of cultural identity and its implications for art education. Ahn (2011) suggested using contemporary art to listen to the voices of cultural "others" and better understand "otherness." S. Kim (2011) emphasized that South Korean teacher education should include multicultural art education. Though the national curriculum for art and many scholarly articles in the field have touched on the treatment of multicultural concerns through art, such efforts are only in the beginning stages. Successful multicultural art education in South Korea will require a great many more voices and perspectives in order to identify effective practices that address the specific nature of South Korean society.

Banks (2008) addressed the importance of helping students to learn multicultural perspectives:

Individuals who know the world only from their own cultural perspectives are denied important parts of the human experience and are culturally and ethnically encapsulated. These individuals are also unable to know their own cultures fully because of their cultural blinders. (p. 1)

Banks' notion of "cultural blinders" speaks to the importance of helping students to expand their cultural horizons, an objective that can be facilitated via art education. For South Korean art educators, this idea involves more than just some superficial teaching about artworks from other countries or narrow treatments of traditional Korean art, but rather the challenging work of taking a broad view of cultural diversity and art in South Korean society.

Currently, South Korea is struggling with many issues associated with prejudice, isolation, discrimination, a lack of personal communication, and so on. It is time to more fully address the cultural complexity of South Korean society and rethink the role of education in building cross-cultural understanding and tolerance. Art as a visual representation of life must be seen as a tool with infinite potential for understanding others and ourselves as beings in this society. The assumptions of this study—that art can play a role as a barometer of a successful multicultural society and that artists are both self-reflectors and communicators of life in society—clearly have much import for art education in South Korea. I expect that by examining the works of South Korean contemporary artists who deal with cultural diversity issues this study provides valuable perspectives and guidance for the theory and practice of multicultural art education in South Korea's increasingly culturally diverse society.

Summary

This chapter contained a review of literature related to the theoretical foundations of the study, including the origin and practices related to the philosophy of pragmatism, particularly in relation to education, art, and art criticism. In addition, the chapter dealt with the fundamental literature on the development of one's sense of being, sense of self, place, and community. I also examined the theory of art and its cultural significance, as well as its metaphoric function, the role of art/artists as a barometer in multicultural society, and the work of some exemplary artists in order to show the possibility of their function as reflectors of society. Finally, I discussed the changes in South Korea that have brought multiculturalism to the forefront of society and

education, and the ways in which multicultural education can be achieved through art. In addition, I proposed a broader approach to multiculturalism in education, one with the potential to benefit all of South Korean society.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study is a critical analysis of artworks in their authentically situated contexts by three Korean contemporary artists who deal with cultural diversity in Korean society, and it has implications for teaching and learning cultural diversity in South Korean art classroom. A major goal of the study is to examine how the artists' expressed issues related to cultural diversity in their artworks; a secondary goal is to identify ways in which this analysis may provide guidance in dealing with cultural diversity in South Korea through art education. This chapter contains an overview of problem of the study, the theoretical underpinnings of the methodology and the overall research design. In addition, it provides a description of the study participants, the procedure for data collection, and the plan for data analysis and reporting of the data.

Overview and Purpose of the Study

The problem this study addresses is the need for art education in South Korea to both better reflect life in an increasingly culturally diverse society as well as incorporate broader understandings of multiculturalism both in society and through art education. The goals of the study were accomplished through the analysis of artworks by three contemporary South Korean artists who deal with the issue of cultural diversity in South Korea, with a particular focus on the reflective meanings of their life experiences. As societies like South Korea grow more culturally diverse, it becomes ever more important to help individuals gain awareness of their experiences in society and the world at large. They can do this by seeking to develop insights about their own lives and to the lives of others, as well as by acknowledging cultural differences. Accordingly, This study sought to explore cultural diversity and its contribution to one's sense of self, place, and community in contemporary South Korean society by examining the artworks of South Korean contemporary artists. Such artworks have the potential to provide useful insights about *who we are, where we are, what we experience, and what we believe* in regard to South Korea's increasingly culturally diverse society, and reveal how such meanings are constructed through art. This study, then, rests on the assumption that the work of South Korean contemporary artists reflects interactions between themselves and their environments, including both the visible and invisible influences of culture.

From primitive times, humans have used art as an expressive and communicative tool for sharing experiences with each other, in this way playing a social and cultural role in our collective and individual lives. Because it is reasonable to believe that we can use the power of art to make changes in our society. The purpose of this study, then, is to illuminate the social and cultural functions of art as a reflection of life as well as its possibilities as a mirror and window by which individuals may understand themselves and others within increasingly multicultural societies. As such, the results have implications for multicultural art education in South Korea.

Research Questions

The first overarching research question for this study is:

What issues related to cultural diversity do three South Korean artists address in their art and how?

To answer this question the following procedural supporting questions are addressed as they relate to issues of cultural diversity:

1. What is the thematic content of the three artists' work?
2. What are the compositional, technical, and stylistic qualities the artists use to express that thematic content?
3. What are the personal, physical, and social contexts of the artworks examined in this study?
4. What do the artists say about their work, especially related to cultural diversity?

Data related to the first two questions was gathered by examining the visual/physical qualities of the work (of the work) itself. Answers to the third and fourth questions cannot be achieved by examining the visual qualities of the work, but must come from an examination of the authentic contexts surrounding the inspiration for the work, its making, exhibition, and use. In short, the examination focuses on essential qualities that can be gathered *from* the work as well as contextual/external qualities that can be gathered *about* the work.

The second major question guiding this study is:

What are the implications of the three artists' work for addressing cultural diversity through art education in South Korea?

This question was answered through critical analysis of literature review on multiculturalism in relation to the situation in South Korea and the insights gained through the analysis of the three

artists' work, particularly in regard to the role or roles art education can play in promoting cultural diversity.

The overarching questions of contextual art criticism process and the procedure for answering each question are shown in the matrix in Table 2.

Table 2

Matrix of Questions for the Contextual Art Criticism Process

Questions		Criticism process
1	What is the thematic content of the three artists' work?	Description: Visual examination
2	What are the compositional, technical, and stylistic qualities the artists use to express the thematic content?	Description: Visual examination
3	What are the personal, physical, and social contexts of the works examined in this study?	Description: Contextual examination - Interviews - Document analysis
4	What do the artists say about their work, especially related to cultural diversity?	Description: Contextual examination -Interview -Document analysis
↓		
Q1	What issues related to cultural diversity do three South Korean artists address in their art and how?	Interpretation Evaluation + Critical analysis of literature review
↓		
Q2	What are the implications of the three artists' work for addressing cultural diversity through art and education in South Korea?	

The procedure I followed in answering the research questions was:

1. Reviewed articles on pragmatism in education, aesthetics, and on contextual art criticism to establish a philosophical and methodological foundation for the study.

2. Reviewed related articles on the meanings of art as a sense of being, multicultural society, the cultural functions of art, and discuss their importance to multicultural education through art.
3. Identified three artists who deal with cultural diversity issues and select artworks.
4. Began data collection by analyzing the works of the three contemporary South Korean artists using Anderson and Milbrandt's (2005) contextual art criticism model as a primary tool to include in-depth interviews and a review of relevant documents and conduct a contextual analysis.
5. Transcribed interviews and content analyze all data; triangulated findings.
6. Synthesized the results of the critical analysis of the works of the artists and the content analysis of all qualitative data in order to answer the research questions.
7. Discussed the implications of the findings and practical applications for multicultural art education in South Korea.

Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of the Study

Pragmatism as a Theoretical Foundation

In choosing the means by which to seek answers for the research questions I posed, I determined that Philosophical Pragmatism was a useful way to comprehend the lived experiences of the South Korean artists dealing with cultural diversity under study and find the meanings of their artworks as a reflection of their life experiences of culturally diverse society and its implications for art education in South Korea. Pragmatism is a philosophical belief that posits that any idea can be a "truth" if it originates in our sensory experience of the world and makes sense and works well in certain situations and times (Dewey, 1934).

Unlike many different philosophical concepts which posit truth as an absolute idea found outside of common life, pragmatism was developed from the notion that neither absolute rationalism nor the scientific approach to finding meaning can be applied to all questions about the world and the human condition. Rather, the pragmatists (Dewey, 1934; James, 1907/1978; Peirce, 1877/1955; Rorty, 2007) believed that it might be more appropriate to find truth in our own life experiences since we all live our lives and develop beliefs based on what we experience in our life contexts. In a given sense, the problems of human beings must be linked to real life experiences (James, 1907/1978; Kaag, 2006; Shusterman, 1989, 2009, 2010). Thus, the pragmatist approach to knowledge highlights the significance of the lived experience of people

in the context of their own stories (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 1998; Garrison, 1994; James, 1907/1978, Ormerod, 2006; White, 1998). From the pragmatic perspective, accordingly, meaning is best discovered through a process of inductive reasoning based on available facts and in a life-related context.

Dewey's (1934) concept of experience is significant when discussing the pragmatic view of the process of gaining knowledge and constructing meanings. Human beings perceive almost everything through their senses, not simply through their physical senses but through cognition, that is, cognitive realization. Through the participation of our senses in the world we share aesthetic experience itself, since we create the quality of our experiences through a cognitive process of interacting to the world. Not every experience can be called "an experience" according to Dewey (1934) because experience is an ongoing process between past and present experiences and the satisfaction of outcome of transaction effects on the further experiences. An experience requires cognitive recognition of it as having a guiding emotional/aesthetic quality. This transacted experience is expressed in communication with others, and its visual format is art.

Pragmatism is a broad philosophical concept but its empirical insights on finding meaning and truth make it useful as a guiding theoretical framework for research (Garrison, 1994). Savin-Baden (2013) explained pragmatic qualitative research as "an approach that draws upon the most sensible and practical methods available in order to answer a given question" (p.171). Merriam (1998) said that this approach is used when researchers need to seek "to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved" (cited in Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 171). This qualitative research is suitable when they want to suggest a thick description from an interpreted perspective and it is sure that there is no other approach for a specific topic. In this sense I applied the pragmatic perspective on the realization of truth from transition in experiences into the structure of this study.

Contextual Art Criticism as a Pragmatic Research Method

As Savin-Baden (2013) stated, the pragmatic research method is based on the premise that the "ontological assumption (reality) is practical and knowledge is derived from observation of interaction among a group or individual and artifacts in their environment [and that] the method is observation of a subject in context and the researcher's perspective as an interested

observer” (p. 64). If the objects of the study to be analyzed happen to be artworks, then observation of a subject from the researcher’s perspective can be understood through art criticism.

Contextual art criticism, a pragmatic approach to art criticism (T. Anderson, 1993, 2000; Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Dewey, 1934), is the methodological foundation for this study. This approach to art criticism informed the development of the research questions and influenced the methods of data collection and analysis that were used to discover the intrinsic and extrinsic meanings of the selected artworks under study. The meaning of art is not self-obvious; therefore, viewers should try to search for it by exploring the context in which it was created (T. Anderson, 1993). According to Anderson and Milbrandt (2005), art brings meanings beyond itself, and it has more value if it is interpreted in the context in which it was made and is used: “Contextualists think that art is or should be made and used for something beyond itself” (p. 235).

Further, art criticism that centers on context as well as form considers not only formal qualities as primary information for analysis, but also uses the context of an artwork to understand “the circumstances in which a work was created, used, and valued” (p. 235). Anderson (1997) elaborated on this contextual approach to art criticism:

Since art is communication that requires a shared code within a specific cultural matrix, [contextualist critics] believe that there are no universal forms or meanings. A large contingency of contextualists, called instrumentalists or pragmatists, think that art is never for own sake, but that the aesthetic response we have to an artwork does and should serve extrinsic purposes; that is, it should lead to some concrete thought, action, or activity beyond itself. (p. 10)

It is important to note that an assumption of contextual art criticism is that art is a form of reflected life. Thus, it is considered essential for critics to look for the meanings of an artwork beyond its form. The focus of the inquiry, then, is guided by the notion that each artist as a life expert has a different sensibility when seeing, hearing, feeling, and thinking, and that their sensibilities, accordingly, take different forms of expression (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; T. Anderson, 1993). Thus, the importance of the context of the artworks that artists present has even greater significance.

Art as a Research Object

Eisner (2002) noted, “Art provides the conditions for awakening to the world around us. In this sense, the arts provide a way of knowing” (p. 10). Leavy (2009) stated that visual art is not just a photographed mirror image of the world, but rather a created reflective perspective with multiple meanings. As Leavy (2009) noted, “all art regardless of medium is a product of the time and place in which it is created, as well as the individual artist who is an embodied actor situated within the social order” (p.216). She made the point that visual art can tell us much about life issues in relation to the experienced world, society, people, and other aspects of life.

As a pervasive social product visual art is a significant source of information about the social world, including cultural aspects of social life; economic and political structures; identity issues at the global, national group, and individual levels; and many other issues. (Leavy, 2009, p. 218)

Eisner (2002) asserted, “The works we create speak back to us, and we become in their presence a part of a conversation that enables us to ‘see what we have said’” (p. 11). I strongly believe that art is a reflection of the artist’s lived experience, which he or she shares through the understandings formed by viewers in relation to their experienced worlds. Therefore, in addressing the research questions for this study, the selected artworks were regarded as important objects to be considered in the analysis.

Criticism as Qualitative Research

As described above, in order to investigate the meanings in art that are accumulated from life experiences, I used pragmatically framed contextual art criticism. This approach is a good match for the research questions posed in this study, which explore how the artists negotiate their senses of identity, place, and community through their artwork and how the manner in which they express their sensibilities through their artworks might be applied to art education theory and practice. Art criticism is a way of making the implied meanings of artworks public (Eisner, 1998). In this study, the approach to context derived from Pragmatism and the use of contextual art criticism reflects a qualitative research design.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) noted that qualitative research is naturalistic. That is, qualitative research can be conducted in actual settings in which the researcher becomes a research instrument. Because qualitative research concerns natural contexts, research activities such as visiting, observing, and interviewing are seen as useful strategies. Because this study

focuses on the cultural diversity issues as reflected in the artworks of artists, the artists' real stories in their own words, gathered in in-depth interviews, served as the primary source of data, and as a qualitative researcher, I served as a research instrument throughout the data collection process. Further, three other features characterize qualitative research: it relies on descriptive data, has a focus on process, and occurs through an inductive process.

Reliance on descriptive data. Qualitative research is descriptive and narrative, so it collects pictures and written data rather than numbers. Since everything can be “a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied” (p. 5), many types of available data, including interview transcripts, photography, personal documents, memos, videos, and so on, are considered. In this study, I utilized interview transcripts, related documents, and the analysis of artworks as data for analysis.

A focus on process. Qualitative research tends to concern process rather than outcome, particularly how individuals negotiate meaning. In this study, this focus on process was reflected in the analysis of how the participating artists address cultural diversity issues. In fact, the primary goal of analyzing the artworks using a contextual art criticism strategy was to better comprehend the implied meanings and negotiation of the artists rather than formal quality or value of the artworks.

An inductive process. Qualitative research analyzes data inductively. This feature is shared with pragmatism since the pragmatic approach to finding meaning does not start with a hypothesis (top-down); rather, it poses that a problem can be solved with available and observable facts through inductive reasoning (bottom-up). This study follows the pragmatic method of approaching problems and finding answers, and is therefore consistent with contextual art criticism, since it starts with visible facts/expressions without any pre-knowledge.

Qualitative researchers who are interested in “how different people make sense of their lives” (p. 7) consider investigating meaning-making as an essential part of their research. In order to understand human lives and perceptions, researchers must be interested in the meanings that humans construct from their life experiences. Pragmatism emphasized that humans seek to create meaning from their experiences with the facts available to them, and that not all phenomena can be explained in a quantitative or singular manner. Clearly, the features of qualitative research outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) are in line with the nature of art and contextual art criticism.

Research Design

Based on its theoretical foundations, this qualitative study incorporated the use of contextual art criticism, with the researcher as a primary instrument, in order to visually examine works of art as well as conducting one-on-one interviews and document analysis of other available resources (press, media, brochures, website, artist statements). I sought to obtain in-depth and holistic insights that enabled me to obtain a greater understanding of the meanings of the artworks by the participating artists, who are individuals with recent experiences of living in an increasingly culturally diverse society. The findings were analyzed in terms of how they may inform multicultural art education for South Korean students.

Contextual Art Criticism

Criticism is an appropriate tool for the examination of abstract ideas like the meanings of artworks, which we might not be able to understand using quantitative methods. When used in qualitative research, art criticism involves the researcher's personal perceptions and experiences, which necessarily influence the process of collecting and analyzing data (Eisner, 1998). Yet, art criticism makes the meaning of art public and when the art critic is provided with the intensive contextual information, the analysis can be trusted and understandable.

Anderson and Milbrandt's (2005) analytic model for art criticism was used as a pragmatic strategy for analyzing the artworks of the artists under study. This analytic model asks four main questions: *What is this? What does it mean? What is it worth? and What is it for?* (p.102-106). In order to answer these four questions, the critic engages in a procedure consisting of four stages: 1) reaction, 2) description (visual examination and contextual examination), 3) interpretation, and 4) evaluation. I conducted an analytic critique of the artworks selected for the study by engaging in these four stages and reflecting on how the guiding and supporting research questions are answered in each stage.

In order to obtain rich contextual information, the contextual art criticism method used in this study employed multiple strategies, including an examination of the artwork itself as well as in-depth interviews (demographic, descriptive, and interpretive questions) with the participating artists and a review of document from other available sources (press, media, brochures, artist statements). This strategic method provided rich data, some in the artists' own voices, and enabled the use of triangulation strategies to enhance reliability. The specific process of contextual art criticism used in this study is described in the data collection section.

The Critic as a Research Instrument

As researcher, I acted as an instrument of research throughout the study. Dewey (1934) emphasized that the role of the critic, as an instrument of criticism, involves utilizing human sensibility and intellect in order to approach the context of a problem. As Dewey (1934) asserted,

Every Critic, like every artist, has a bias, a predilection that is bound up with the very existence of individuality. It is his task to convert it into an organ of sensitive perception and of intelligent insight, and to do so without surrendering the instinctive preference from which are derived direction and sincerity. (p. 324)

From a pragmatic viewpoint, what we experience through our senses is not simply physical motion, rather it is an intellectual cognitive process geared to making sense of what has been experienced. In art criticism, the subject matter arises in part from the context of the works of art, which itself is created from the artists' experiences, and the critic is in charge of interpreting it using his or her perceptions and understandings along with other resources. Even though the critic's personal experience and perspective influences the criticism, then, he or she still can communicate it so it makes sense to others since, "It is what it is because of interactions with the world outside, a world which in some of its aspects and phases is common with that of others" (Dewey, 1934, p. 318).

Eisner (1998) emphasized that a critic needs to have connoisseurship to see and examine works of art. Eisner's notion of connoisseurship refers to "personal and informed acts of appreciating the qualities of objects, situations, and events" (p. 85). In Eisner's (1998) terms, an art criticism model such as the one used in this study works best when the research has some measure of connoisseurship. Eisner (1998) explained this notion:

This means that evaluative criticism or connoisseurship is also highly interpretive and makes value judgments about the merits of what has been described and interpreted, using criteria that are appropriate to the situation based on the expertise of the evaluator and the agreements struck with those who are a party to study. (p. 173)

I felt qualified to conduct this study because, as an international border crosser, I have critical eyes by which to observe cultural contexts. Also, as a native of South Korea, I have an intimate knowledge of the cultural uniqueness and values of South Korean society. I also create art and have taught students how to create and appreciate art, a background that gives me a deeper understanding of the works of the participating artists. In addition, this context helps to

explain my motivation to discover the approaches the artists took expressing themes related to cultural diversity. Further, in 2011 and 2012 I actually met with two of the international artists studied, and I was able to interview them to examine their perceptions about how their cross-cultural experiences influenced their work. Thus, I may claim some measure of connoisseurship in my role as researcher and critic.

As Eisner (1998) observed,

The roots of criticism are found in the ordinary activities of daily life. Whenever people make judgments about the qualities of things...connoisseurship and criticism are present. It is in our self-interest to be able to describe and appraise what we experience. (p.86)

In Eisner's (1998) view, the critic's role is educational, and the primary purpose of criticism in education "is the expansion of perception and the enlargement of understanding" (p.113). Critics must focus on the qualities of artworks and collected materials with sincerity. Again, in Eisner's (1998) words:

Critics do not provide the specifications artists are to fulfill; their relationship to artists is not one of architect to builder. Rather critics are commentators, interpreters, evaluators, and, at the best, educators. In the realm of art, critics often focus on the context in which a work was produced to enable the reader to situate it in field of ideas that makes its perception more acute. (p. 121)

As a critic responding to the artworks under study, I served as something of a research instrument in order to implement the stages of the contextual art criticism method, which include: a) a short description of reaction and impression, b) intensive descriptions of each artwork, including observed qualities as well as non-observed contextual qualities drawn from written accounts and interviews with the artists, c) thematic and artistic interpretations, and d) an evaluation consisting of conclusions particularly about the expressed cultural context of the artists, as well as implications for art education theory and practice (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005).

Participants

In order to select participants for this study, I sought artists who represented several categories, among them: contemporary South Korean artists who live and work in South Korea, artists who deal with cultural diversity issues related to South Korean society, artists who reflect their experiences in their art, and artists whose work has different stylistic qualities. In order to

find such individuals I conducted both an Internet search and word-of-mouth questioning to find recent exhibitions focusing on the theme of cultural diversity. I then sought more information on the particular artists who participated in these exhibitions in order to identify those who fit the categories I had established. This process resulted in a list of five artists, three of whom were chosen based on the variety of media they utilized and their continuous expression of social and cultural issues, some of which were related to cultural diversity, in their works.

I chose the number of participants (3) in order to facilitate in-depth analysis of the artworks and gain enough data for a thorough but not overly broad analysis. Because this study involves a critical analysis of artworks, studying the works of a large number of artists would not have allowed me to deeply understand each of the works of every artist in their authentic contexts. Therefore, I chose a small sample that enabled me to achieve my research goals while still allowing for some triangulation of the data. Additionally, the small number of participants made it possible for me to approach each artist with my full attention, respect, and sincerity. In qualitative inquiry, as Patton (2002) has noted, there are no fixed rules for deciding on the number of research participants. Rather, the choice depends on the amount of available time and resources required to meet the purposes of the study.

The artists finally selected for this study were Jeongmee Yoon, Eunjeong Lee, and Minja Gu. Demographic for data each artist is offered in Table 3.

Connecting with the artists. After identifying artists who fit the criteria for the study, sent e-mails to them in order to introduce myself, explain the purposes of the study, and ask for their participation. I sent my first e-mail on March 1, 2014 and received affirmative responses from Jeongmee Yoon responded on March 6, Eunjeong Lee on March 4, and Minja Gu on March 10.

Jeongmee Yoon. After I received Yoon's e-mail saying that she was willing to participate in the study, we discussed about our schedules by phone and set up an interview for March 10, 2014. In preparation, I sent Yoon a summary of the study and interview protocol via e-mail. Though I did not request that she does so, prior to the interview Yoon returned the interview protocol tome with written answers under each question. We met on March 10 nearby her house and after obtaining consent, I conducted the interview, which lasted two hours. We also exchanged e-mails numerous times after the interview in order to achieve greater accuracy in the analysis and gain additional materials for the contextual analysis of her works.

Eunjeong Lee. Lee responded to my e-mail saying that she would love to participate in my study. I talked with her by phone to explain the content of the study and we set up a date for a face-to-face interview for March 11, 2014, at her studio. In preparation, I sent my interview protocol and a summary of my study via e-mail to her. We met at her studio in Cheongju, a city about two hours from Seoul. I met her at 11 a.m. and after obtaining consent, conducted an interview lasting three-and-a-half hours.

Minja Gu. After I received Gu's e-mail about her intention to participate in this study, following her request I sent the interview protocol and a summary of the study to her via e-mail. She invited me to her group exhibition, which was held in the small gallery in the Gyungbokgung Palace area in Seoul. We had a short meeting at the exhibition opening and met again for an interview on March 14. After obtaining Gu's consent, I conducted the interview, which lasted two-and-a-half hours.

Table 3.
Demographic Data for Participants

Artist	Jeongmee Yoon	Eunjeong Lee	Minja Gu
Birthplace	South Korea	South Korea	South Korea
Residence	South Korea	South Korea	South Korea
Education	BFA Seoul National University MFA Hongik University MFA School of Visual Arts, NY	BFA Chungnam University MFA Chungnam University	BFA Hongik University B.Phil Yonsei University MFA Korea National University of Arts
Media	Photography	Painting	Installation, Performance Mixed media
Selected Works	1. Korea at NYPL (2004) 2. Space-Man-Space (2000-2004): Insa-dong 3. The Pink and Blue Project (2005-ongoing): The Pink Project: Yerim and her things (2005) The Blue Project: Jimin and his things (2007)	1. Okee-ssi 3, Mother of South Korea and Vietnam (2012) 2. Hanna I, Daughter of South Korea and Vietnam (2012) 3. Women at Akwanwon (2013)	1. Happily Ever After (2010) 2. Atlantic-Pacific co. (2011-2013) 3. The World of Job (2008)

Data Collection

The Four Stages of Contextual Art Criticism

In the data collection stage, the culturally authentically situated artworks of the three contemporary South Korean artists served as the primary data. The four procedures involved in Anderson and Milbrandt's (2005) contextual art criticism model—reaction, description, interpretation and evaluation—were used as a pragmatic tool for data collection and analysis. The details of the four procedures follow.

Reaction. Reaction is the starting point for criticism, the initial stage that identifies brief, general intuitive reactions. In this stage, I described my impressions on meeting the artworks for the first time. Such impressions reflected my personal emotions, thinking, memory, and so on. Reaction can be understood by asking oneself the following sort of questions:

What's my first response to this work? How does this make me feel?

What does this make me think of? What does this remind me of?

In this stage, I thought about what each work reminded me of in terms of anything in my prior experiences or my life surroundings. I also noted my emotional reactions to the artwork. This first step established a starting point from which I could carefully explore the formal character and context of the artworks.

Description. In this second stage, the critic describes what an object is, what it tells us, and what it is for. The description consists of two sub-stages: visual description and contextual examination.

Visual description. In the first step of description, the appearance of the work is examined to identify the illusional qualities and formal details. The second step in description is formal analysis of the work. The most helpful tool for formal analysis is the use of the principles of design (unity, rhythm, color, line, variety) that guide the critic. The third step in description is formal characterization, which again addresses the feelingful nature of the work, but from a more developed place than in reaction that facilitates interpretation. The stage of description provides the evidence for interpretation.

The questions I asked in the first stage of description were:

First, in regard to *obvious thematic, formal, and technical qualities of the artwork*:

What illusions, recognizable things do I see?

What colors, textures, shapes, etc. do I see?

Are there any outstanding or unusual features that I notice?

How do I think this work is made regarding techniques?

Second, in regard to *formal relationships of shapes and images to each other*:

What colors, shapes, textures, and lines dominate the image and why?

Are there any significant negative areas of space in the work?

What makes it significant? What movement do I see?

What formal elements and principles cause movement?

Where do I see contrast? What causes it?

Where are the figures looking/leaning toward/pointing?

What is the focal point in this work? What causes me to look there?

Third, in regard to *formal characterization*:

What mood is presented?

How am I meant to feel in the presence of this piece? What's the evidence? Why am I meant to focus where I do?

Is this work realistic? Formalistic? Expressionistic? Some combination?

Would I characterize it as primitive, sick, aggressive, bold, intellectual, overpowering, timid, monumental, fluid, abstract, cool, static, rhythmic, hot, etc.?

What's the evidence? What if the background were a different color? What if this work were realistic instead of having exaggerated forms? What if it had soft instead of hard edges?

Contextual examination. The second sub-stage of description is an examination of contextual qualities that make the art more valuable and expressive. Context is not something that can be discovered by looking at the work; it is something discovered by looking to the contextual information surrounding the work. Relevant questions can be:

Who did the work? What was the artist's point or intention?

How does it reflect that place and time?

What influenced its production (cultural context, social context)?

What does the work tell us about the people who live in the culture, the history and nature of the culture, and cultural diversity in the society?

I conducted a contextual examination based largely on intensive in-depth interviews and a review of relevant documents. These two strategies provided me with meaningful

contextual information that enhanced the richness of the data and permitted effective triangulation, in this way strengthening the validity of the findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Eisner, 1998; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002).

In-depth interviews. Ethnographic interviewing with open-ended questions is a common method for understanding the lived experience of others, that is, the meanings of experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge of others (Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006). An in-depth interviewing strategy is valuable because it enables a researcher to capture the deep meaning of the lived experiences of participants—not through someone else’s words, but through their own (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Seidman (2006) reinforced the function of interviews for research purposes: “[The] interview is a powerful way to gain insights into educational and other important social issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues” (p.14). Thus, if the interests of the researcher include understanding the meaning others make of their experiences, interviewing is an effective avenue of inquiry. In this research, the conversations I conducted during interviews were derived from my initial examinations of the artists’ work in context. They were recorded with the artists’ permission and then transcribed in detail in order to facilitate the coding process.

Seidman (2006) suggested a three-interview series focusing on the participant’s life history, present lived experiences, and reflections on the meaning of those experiences in order to help researchers understand not only the participant’s life but also the lives those surrounding the participants. Through a series of interviews, then, the researcher is able to comprehend the participant’s life experiences in context. Interestingly, in addition to helping researchers, interviews provide an opportunity for interviewees to think of themselves differently (Eisner, 1998). In the process of participating in interviews, participants learn about themselves.

Interviews were conducted with each of three artists using a set of prepared demographic, descriptive, and interpretive questions (Seidman, 2006) in order to increase the comprehensiveness of the data (Patton, 2002). Depending on the content of the interviews, additional follow-up questions were asked.

Document analysis. Document analysis is another strategy for contextual examination, and includes the review and analysis of various written or presented materials, including official

publications, personal diaries, artistic works, and so on (Patton, 2002). Because the main purpose of this study is to discern each artist's perceptions about cultural diversity by analyzing their artworks in their authentic context, in addition to the artworks, different kinds of written materials were used as primary resources for analysis, including brochures from the artists' exhibitions, written critiques of their artworks, articles in the press, and the artists' statements. All possible written materials were selected and treated as data for analysis. In qualitative research, it is enormously important to have as much quality data with as many concrete details as possible in order to illuminate the real meaning of the subject matter.

Interpretation. The interpretation stage is the most important part of art criticism because this is the main outcome of criticism which the researcher investigates the meaning. Interpretations vary depending on the evidence found in the earlier in description, as well as on the researcher's sensibility and ability to synthesize the findings. To this end, I posed questions such as:

What, in the end, is this work all about, literally and metaphorically?

How does it reflect the genesis of its making both for the artist and in a broader social and cultural context?

What does the work mean to the artist, to me, and in the context of the driving questions about cultural diversity that frame this study?

What themes were drawn in these artworks from a multicultural context and how does this reflect on contemporary South Korean culture?

Evaluation. Evaluation is the last stage of the contextual critique; it evaluates the work's significance and value. This stage provided answers for the fourth and fifth supporting research questions for this study. The following sorts of questions were asked in this phase:

Does the work tell me something significant for talking about the artists' dealing with cultural diversity issues in South Korean society?

Does the artwork have the aesthetic power to make me feel the value and function of art strongly, or think something new, or move me to action as an art educator in any way?

Does the work have implications for art education theory and practice in South Korea and what are those implications?

Data Analysis

In the process of conducting a qualitative study, the data analysis stage is a great challenge since the amount of collected data is typically extensive and requires an enormous sense-making effort that involves transformation (Patton, 2002). Because contextual art criticism is designed to occur through the stages of reaction, description, interpretation, and evaluation, following each stage of the criticism of the artworks under study I endeavored to synthesize the meanings of the data collected up to that point in order to begin an iterative process of determining the value and importance of the artworks and the meanings they held for me as the critic. This analysis is presented as a written narrative.

In qualitative research and criticism, written language is important. Within the huge volume of written data, the researcher must be able to find certain connections. The connection of primary interest to me was, *What issues related to cultural diversity to three South Korean artists address in their art and how?* In order to answer this question I analyzed each work of art and the context for each artist individually and collectively following procedural steps aligned with the overarching questions: What is the thematic content of the three artists' work? What are the compositional, technical, and stylistic qualities the artists use to express that thematic content? What are the personal, physical, and social contexts of the artworks examined in this study? What do the artists say about their work, especially related to cultural diversity? (See Table 1)

In order to answer these questions, at each stage of contextual art criticism, I carefully examined the works of the artists and recorded my impressions in written format. In order to collect even more contextual information, I conducted in-depth interviews and document analysis. The in-depth interviews with each artist were recorded with an audio recorder with the participants' permission and converted into transcripts. I also made comments about my insights and reflections on the interview content on the side of the transcripts, and these comments were included in the data analysis. In addition, all available written documents and images related to the artists and their works were collected and examined to see emerging patterns and themes that related in some way to the analysis of the data from the other sources and in relation to my primary research question.

In qualitative research, researchers often check with participants on the content of their descriptive data in order to ensure that the voices of the participants have been documented and analyzed accurately (Sandelowski, 1993). Krafting (1991) stated,

Member checking is a technique that consists of continually testing with informants the researcher's data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions... This strategy of revealing research materials to the informants ensures that the researcher has accurately translated the informants' viewpoints into data. (p. 219)

Therefore, after collecting and analysing the data, I used such a member-checking strategy to authenticate my analysis and avoid misinterpretation.

In analyzing the data, I carefully organized descriptive notes and documents and then began to review the data, giving myself sufficient time to start the process of listing patterns, repeated words, phrases, and themes related to each participating artist's reflection of cultural content related multicultural society through their art. In light of the research topic, the focal points of the data analysis included the relationship between the artworks of the artists and their multicultural life experiences, the manner in which cultural diversity issues are reflected in their art, and what this means for people living in a multicultural society and art education, particularly in South Korean society.

As the last meaning-making step of the study, I sought to identify in the data connections that would enable me to discuss the implications of these findings for multicultural art education in South Korea. Thus, by connecting the themes that emerged from the critique of the artworks with the concerns that arose in the literature review about multicultural issues in South Korean art education, I addressed the second primary research question: *What are the implications of the three artists' work for addressing cultural diversity through art education in South Korea?*

The educational purpose of this question is to explore how art education can address the formation of student identities and worldviews through the examination and creation of visual images, and further, identify approaches in art education that address issues related to cultural diversity from a global perspective. If the artworks under study can be understood as shared stories of self-representation by artists living in this culturally diverse society, this study should provide some direction in the ways in which art educators can encourage students in a multicultural society to see the reality of society and express their own minds and life experiences through art. For this reason, I believe that the results of this study may help art teachers and art education curriculum designers reconsider how the current rather narrow approaches to multicultural education have been interpreted and used in South Korea and how

we can make art education curriculum and content better suited for all students living in South Korea's contemporary and increasingly culturally diverse society.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to conduct a critical analysis of artworks by three contemporary artists in order to examine the ways in which they reflected the experiences of life in an increasingly multicultural South Korean society. This chapter provided a theoretical foundation for the methodology to be used, highlighted its pragmatic and qualitative underpinnings, and described the contextual art criticism model that was used as an instrumental strategy. Consistent with the nature of the research questions, qualitative methods were employed for data collection and analysis, which focused on emerging themes and implications for art educators in South Korea who wish to address cultural diversity issues.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Critical Analysis of the Selected Works

This section contains the analysis of selected artworks by Jeongmee Yoon, Eunjeong Lee, and Minja Gu. The analysis follows the art criticism model developed by Anderson and Milbrandt (2005), including the four stages of reaction, description, interpretation, and evaluation. I selected three artworks for each artist according to the purposes of the study and the artists' suggestions and each was analyzed with same attention. In addition, for a more insightful and holistic evaluation, I conducted the evaluation component for each artist as a combined conclusion after going through the three stages—reaction, description and interpretation—for each artwork. In addition to the primary analyses, I analyzed two to three works for each artist, as well as demographic information, in order to support the contextual examination.

Jeongmee Yoon I: *Korea at New York Public Library*

I selected Yoon's work, *Korea at New York Public Library (2004)* as the first work for the critical analysis. The work consists of three photographs and a video. The photographs are described in the visual description stage and the detail of the video is discussed in the contextual examination. The interpretation component of the analysis concerns the entire installation. (see Figure 10-14).

Reaction

When I saw *Korea at New York Public Library (2004)* installation (Figure 10), the first figure I noticed was a familiar looking building. I lived in New York for several years and the library in the picture looked familiar to me. It reminded me of the time I spent at the same library. I used to visit New York Public Library on the weekends in order to prepare for a test I had to take for entrance to a doctoral program. Looking at this artwork gave me an emotional moment since the time I spent at that library actually led me to continue my study of art education. I can remember its atmosphere, including the smell of old books, the size and texture of the tables, the reading lights on the tables, and the stairs. As I recalled, even though this library is open to public, visitors are asked to check their bags at the entrance. Sometimes this security check process made me feel like I was a newcomer to the city.



Figure 10. Jeongmee Yoon. Korea at New York Public Library (2004), Installation, Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, South Korea.



Figure 11. Jeongmee Yoon. New York Public Library (2004), Image Size: 27.36 x 20", Paper Size: 35.24 x 27.9", Lightjet Print.

Description

Visual description. The most obvious object in the picture *New York Public Library* (2004) is a classic looking building in a busy area (Figure 11). The building is located in the center of the picture and its composition makes the building look magnificent. Additionally, the red and blue banners hanging on the building make it look more noteworthy. Even though this building is smaller than the other buildings behind it, it is obviously a remarkable and strong structure as depicted in the picture because of its color, aura, and sense of dignity. I can see that this building is located at a crossroad because many people are walking across the street from every side and cars are crossing in front of the building. In spite of my limited knowledge of the photo I can see that this picture was taken professionally and with technical skill, since the building pops up to the viewer. The diamond shape of the building indicates to me that this picture was taken with a convex lens or a wide-angle lens.

The color of the building is dark beige, making it look old and historical. An artist may have taken this picture standing across the street at a distance but its camera angles make the building look close and make all the figures in the picture dynamic. The focal point of the picture is the highest point of the building, which automatically captures the viewer's eye first, after which it drives those eyes to the bottom of the building. The white truck coming from the left side in the front of the picture naturally makes the viewer's eyes move to a group of people crossing the street in the lower side of the right.

The mood of the picture is heavy, conservative, and old. Even though the amount of sun coming from the right side of the picture makes it seem as if it were taken in the morning or afternoon, the classical building in a dark shadow. In addition, its classical atmosphere, oldness, and sense of straightness stand in contrast to the people and cars passing through from all directions. To me, this picture is a combination or contrast of two elements. One is the building as a monumental symbol that has existed over a long history and never changed. Another is the front of the scene of the picture, which depicts a changing and busy contemporary life.



Figure 12. Jeongmee Yoon. *South Korean Files on Shelves 01* (2004), Image Size: 29.92 x 20", Paper Size: 37.80 x 27.87", Lightjet Print.

Visual description. The most obvious objects in the picture *South Korean Files on Shelves 01* (2004) are the black files protruding from the shelves (Figure 12). The files seem organized in a certain order since I can see some labels on the files and shelves but it is hard to recognize what those files concern and how they are classified. A noteworthy element of this picture is the two groups of files sticking out of the shelves. It seems that someone intentionally set them up to be more noticeable than the others by pulling them out a bit. The wood shelves, which one can easily see in an old bookstore or school library, look old, and their surface is shiny. Both the shelves and the files on the shelves look old. The artist took this picture standing close to the shelves to capture the scene. Of the two groups of files that are pulled halfway out of the shelves, the more prominent group first captures my eyes. The eyes automatically follow the files obliquely lying on the shelves and then stop at the second group of files on the top shelf. The utilization of perspective automatically makes the files on the top shelves a focal point of the picture.

The mood of the picture is comfortable, warm, and drowsy. In spite of the unorganized files, the shelves and files in the sunlight make me feel comfortable and drowsy. Hand-marked files show the history of the place and also imply that many people have come to this place and

touched them before. From time to time, it is good to have the feeling that I am sharing time and space with others from the past that I do not know. This picture makes me wonder what people came here and who organized the files. This picture shows hidden meaning in a timid way since it makes people wonder what are inside of those reassigned files.



Figure 13. Jeongmee Yoon. 12 Korean Files at New York Public Library (2004), 33 x 20", Paper Size: 46 x 27.9", Lightjet Print.

Yoon's other picture in the installation, *12 Korean Files at New York Public Library* (2004) is a detail cut of those reassigned files (Figure 13). On the wooden table 12 old files made out of black hard paper are listed. White labels are attached to each file, but it is hard to discern what is written. Each individual file has a long white label on its right side and a small white tag attached to its bottom side. The files appear old since the first file on the left looks quite handled.

Contextual examination.

About the artist. Jeongmee Yoon is a contemporary Korean artist who was born in Seoul, South Korea, in 1969. She earned a bachelor's degree in painting from the College of Fine Arts at Seoul National University in 1992. Afterwards, she worked on print-making for two years and began to learn photography in 1993. Since then photography has become the main medium for her work. She pursued a master's degree in Photographic Design at Hong-Ik University in 1999, and later moved to New York City, where in 2006 she earned a second master's degree in Photography and Video and related media at the School of Visual Arts. Yoon has participated in

several residency programs including Ssamzie space studio program in Seoul in 2002, the International Studio & Curatorial program (ISCP) in New York in 2006, and the Changdong Studio Program in Seoul from 2008-2009. She has had both solo and group exhibitions in South Korea and internationally. Her first solo exhibition was held in 1999 in Seoul, and the most current solo exhibition was held there in 2013. She presented shows in China, the U.S., Spain, and many other locations. In a personal interview, she told me that she was influenced by professors and friends who all were art lovers at the universities she attended. Though Yoon also was inspired by the techniques and artistic styles of many of the artists she learned of through art books and exhibitions, she believed that their enthusiasm as artists motivated her to be an artist and create her work as well.

About the work. *Korea at New York Public Library* (2004) is a work Yoon created when she lived in New York City with her husband and daughter. This work originated from her experiences in school as a Korean female artist. According to Yoon:

After I moved to New York, I started to study my masters there. One day, I was asked to present all my works chronologically in front of many people at school. The professor who is also an artist listened to my explanation and saw all my works, then she said that if looking at my works individually, they look different but they have something in common among the works. She said my works can be categorized by certain frame such as female, Asian, or married woman... and so on. Actually it was a new perspective to my work since I have never thought my work and my self in such categories. I realized that “Ah! Maybe this is a perspective of how others see me.” Then it can be possible that people see things from a different view from each other. I have been thinking things from only my perspective not by others’ views. I have had a subjective perspective not only on my self and my work but also possibly on others. This experience made me think that there could be a different perspective towards me depending on whose perspective it is—no matter if it is right or wrong. And this experience drove me to have interests in possible different perspectives toward others. (personal communication, March 10, 2014)

Yoon said that she has never classified herself in certain cultural or social categories but when she listened her professor’s opinions, she was surprised by how others might see her in a cultural context. This made her realize that what she thinks and believes cannot be truth, that everything

must be subjective or, at least, not the whole truth. Others' perspectives can exist and each person's interpretation or perspective can vary and be different. When she lived in New York, Yoon's border-crossing life made her wonder what images American has in terms of her country of South Korea since she is represented as a Korean and Korean female artist in New York. One day when she was visiting the New York Public Library, she was wondering how it represented South Korea as a collection of images, and she found 12 folders named *Korea*. When she looked inside, she was surprised by the images that the library had collected to represent her country because most were unfamiliar or made her uncomfortable. She noticed that the files did not even acknowledge the separation between North Korea and South Korea and that most of the images were from the period of the Korean war. Even in the file of South Korean cartoons, the cartoons were not real Korean cartoons but rather cartoons drawn by Americans, reflecting their perspectives on the Korean war. In addition, there were no images showing the real lives of South Koreans in contemporary society and in ordinary life. According to Yoon:

When I took classes in New York, I was asked to visit the New York Public Library. I went there to look around the picture collection. I don't exactly remember the location of the picture collection but as I remember it, it may have been on the second floor or third floor. The picture collection is a section where all different images from magazines and newspapers are collected and classified in files by a librarian. I visited that section because of my school assignment, but suddenly I wondered what images they had collected to describe South Korea. I found a series of 12 files having images representing of South Korea on shelves. Those files were labeled, Korean Mountain, Korean Cartoon, Korean River, Korea Seoul, Korean A-Z, and so on. The interesting thing I found was, in Korea, when we explain about Korea to someone, we divide South and North first to make sure that we are talking about South Korea but in the 12 files about Korea at the library there was no separation between South Korea and North Korea. And in the file of Korean cartoons, most were from American newspapers or magazines showing the Korean war. Of course this file was not officially-made materials and it seems that they are still in the process of collecting images, but I realized that my own perspectives and foreign perspectives can be different—and it can only show a part of a country. A lot of pictures were from the 1980s, a socially confusing and suffering era for Korea. (personal communication, March 10, 2014)

Yoon made copies of all the images in the 12 files and took pictures in order to show her discovery process and she remixed it as a video. She explained the video in this way:

I spread the twelve folders on desk in the NYPL, and I can borrow all images from the files, and I scanned all images from the Korean files. I made video work through the images with zoom-in and zoom-out technique with the Beach Boys' 'Cocomo' music. There are many North Korea's images, and some photos are prohibited by the Korean government for publishing on magazines and newspapers in Korea that time. (Artist statement about the work *Korea at NYPL*, Flash Cube exhibition, Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, www.jeongmeeyoon.com)

The images Yoon used in her video were from the library files and they showed a tragic time in the history of Korea. She inserted the song *Cocomo* over the video. When I viewed the video for the first time, I was curious about why she used that particular song, which is pretty cheerful, since it does not match the historical black and white pictures and the tragic history they represent at all. Her intention was described in her statement. In her exhibition release at the Leeum Samsung Museum of Art Yoon wrote: "*Cocomo* music symbolizes that the America intervened the tragic division of the Korean peninsula, and the words of the song means very enjoyable life, so I tried to contrast the images and music to make an ironic situation and feelings."

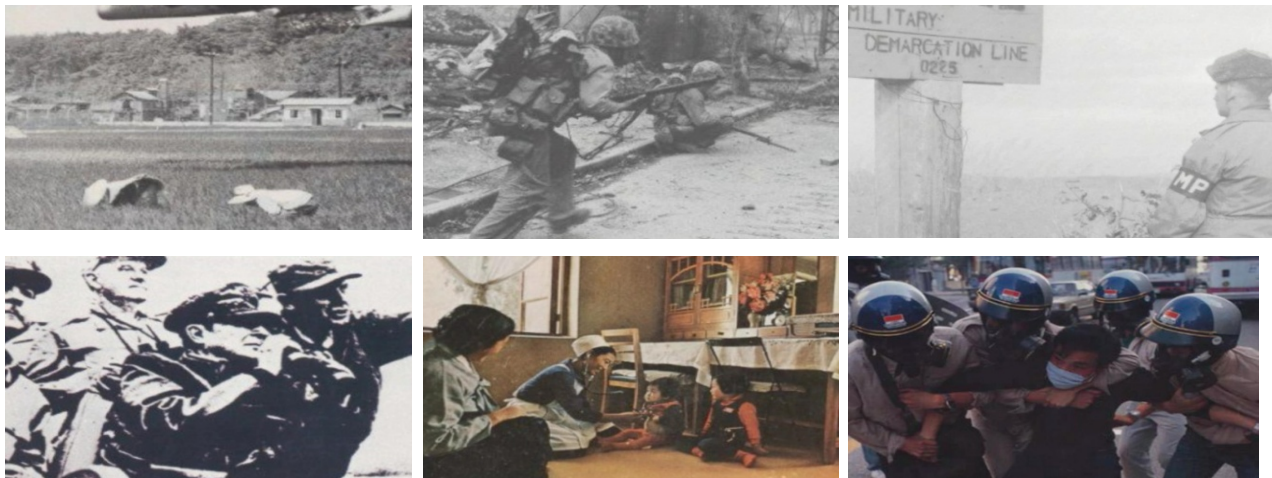


Figure 14. Jeongmee Yoon. *Korea at New York Public Library*, Still Cuts from Video.

Figure 14 shows some of the images she obtained from the files and used in the video. In the introduction to the video, she presented the following statement in order to describe her concept for the work *Korea at New York Public Library* (2004).

All images we see
are already edited by someone,
We have to think again
about what we are seeing.
What is truth?
Why, how and for what,
are those images collected, edited
and [used] by mass media?

(Jeongmee Yoon, Intro to Video *Korea at New York Public Library*, 2004)

Slager (2007), a guest curator of Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, described Yoon's work in this way:

Yoon Jeong Mee's work *Korea at the NYPL* (2004) is based on the archive of the New York Public Library where she searched the Korea section, which appeared to only contain twelve entries. Yoon's photographic report demonstrates how American archivists arrange Korean pictures: North-Korean and South-Korean images are not differentiated and the section of 'cartoons' appear to merely comprise satirical war images rather than real Korean cartoons. In her installation, Yoon JeongMee confronts photographs from the New York archive with a video remix of the same photographs accompanied by noncritical Beach Boys music thus revealing an unconcealed view on a confining American awareness. ("Flash Cube" exhibition at Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, 2007)

Yoon's work emphasizes that when we think of others, of other countries and of different cultures, we need to be aware that what we see and what we know do not represent reality because we usually meet other cultures through media and the perspectives of others, and usually really do not know who constructed that information. Further, her work suggests that we may not know the entirety of even our own cultures, since what we see may not be the whole and may be differently understood by others.

Interpretation

Korea at New York Public Library (2004), is a visual documentation of Yoon's experience of finding 12 files containing images representing Korea and its culture, images collected by a librarian in an American institution. The work is also a reflection of her examination of the content of the materials inside of the files and contains a message to stimulate viewers to rethink the way we understand others, especially those of other cultures, as well as ourselves. This work began with her realization that people had different perspectives toward different cultures. When she was in New York, Yoon often was asked what her works are about and how her personal background as a female, Korean, Asian, and married woman influences her works. The first time she was asked she was not sure what to say, since she had not had a chance to really think about herself in such categories. She had never before put herself in a cultural context to understand herself and her work.

Because Yoon never had not lived outside of South Korea for years before her sojourn in the United States, she had not thought about herself from the perspective of others in her U.S. cultural context, so her experience stimulated a great interest in the various perspectives people hold toward cultural others. In this sense, the materials she found inside of the files were not familiar to her with their images of North Korea and nuclear weapon threats, evidence of tragic elements in Korea's history such as the Korean war, political demonstrations in the 1980s, and the shooting of the First Lady in the 1980s. For Yoon, it was a big surprise to see how others used these kinds of images to describe her country because they were are different from her notions of South Korea. In addition, the files do not only represent one person's vision of South Korea but are materials that seem official, as they are offered by the most prominent public library in New York City. Therefore, if we look more broadly at the collection of photographs, we can assume that at least some people who have viewed these files see Korea in the way the photos depict it . Yoon's work, then, provides evidences of the fragmentary nature of our knowledge of different cultures or and the people of other countries.

Yoon's photographic work *Korea at New York Public Library* consists of three pictures that show her process of reachig the library and where and how the files were located on the shelves. One of the pictures, *New York Public Library (2004)*, depicts the library as a momental, gigantic, and historical entity located in a busy area surrounded by many people, cars, and buildings. The expression of the building seems quiet and academic in this picture, but after I

examined all the pictures, I realized that the appearance of the library stood in contrast to the fractional information on the country and culture of Korea. Yoon used photography as a third eye to deliver her discoveries and insights. She also made copies of the images in the files and created a video with them that included an introductory statement. The whole process of her work provides viewers with an opportunity to indirectly explore this place with her. The pictures and the video enabled me to rest in her shoes, and see where she stood, where the files were located, what images were inside of the files, and what she thought and felt.

Photography has many unique characteristics; it is duplicatable, it freezes action, and it is documentary, realistic, and contemporary. Yoon told me that she believes photography is a good method for showing phenomena or happenings around us in daily life. She also emphasized that she uses photographs as fine art and I can see the reason. She draws what she feels and thinks with her camera through composition, visual effect, and visual description. Yoon's use of photography to reveal her findings fits with the theme of her work because its documentary character drives us to participate in her discovery.

Yoon's work conveys a message about the limitations of our points of view and the influence of media, social customs, and common ideas and even prejudices and stereotypes. It also shows how certain fixed ideas influence the way people understand others and even know themselves. What the library shows about Korea is not all to know about Korea, of course. Rather, it is a small part of Korea presented through limited information focusing on several particular points. Yoon does not mean to suggest that this information about South Korea is not real, but that it is limited.

One other important thing Yoon discovered after considering the images was that her knowledge of her country was limited as well, since the images in the files were not things she can easily see in magazines or on television in South Korea. Even though the nuclear issue, division of the country, and period of social confusion are a big part of Korean history, South Koreans take these events as less important than others as they become more remote and less represented in media. Thus, Yoon recognized that she, like those outside of South Korea, does not view her own cultural and social context in a holistic way. Even one's own culture cannot be understood through the limited images presented by media. Thus, Yoon's work caused me to reflect and realize that if we believe media images represent reality, we will not understand other cultures nor our own.

My contextual examination of Yoon's work, then, led me to believe that it says a great deal about cultural diversity issues. Understanding other cultures through fragments of information may lead to preconceptions that are actually misconceptions. Therefore, in order to understand those of other cultures, we need to see their cultures from various perspectives so as to have a holistic view. Also, I see how important it is to be aware of the influence of media, because whoever's gaze is applied in describing country, culture, and people can generate different information about it. Yoon drove me, as a viewer, to put myself in her shoes. Her cross-cultural experience awakened in her a clearer vision of who she is, where she is involved, and the real social and cultural context of South Korea. In her personal interview, Yoon told me that when we are in the forest, we do not see the mountain. Sometimes we need to get away from all we are familiar with, and see from the sky in order to get a broader view.

Jeongmee Yoon II: *Space-Man-Space/ Insa-dong*



Figure 15. Jeongmee Yoon. Insa-dong: Antique Shop 2, Space-Man-Space Project (2000-2004), C-Print.

Reaction

When I saw this picture (Figure 15), *curiosity* and *memory* were the two words that came to mind. When we travel, we may see many stores selling interestingly shaped objects, many of which have a historical/cultural meaning and serve as a symbol of a certain culture. The variety of objects in the foreground of the picture reminded me of my trips to other countries. During these trips, I typically buy a small souvenir to preserve the memory of that moment and enable me to bring it back home with me. This picture also made me think of a famous street named *Insa-dong* in Seoul, where I often have gone to buy art materials for Korean painting projects or to see exhibitions. The two light grey-colored lion statues on the left side also reminded me of the royal palace in Seoul since they look similar to the mythical unicorn lion standing in front of the gate as a symbol of Seoul.

Description

Visual description. In this work, the most obvious things I noticed were the two large, grey statues in the left upper side of the picture; this was not only because their color is bright but because their shapes and forms are interesting. Their ball-shaped eyes, big noses, teeth, and long tongues were enough to catch my attention as well as make me think of the hobgoblins in a fairy tale I remembered (and was afraid of) from my childhood. The two animal statues are monumental and located turned toward each other. Their nearly face-to-face position makes them even more obvious. In front of the statues, many objects are displayed on a kind of terrace. These include a figure-shaped wooden sculpture, some brush stands made out of different materials, a Buddha, a file of small cups, carved small wooden containers, and so on. There are also interesting-looking carved figures, pottery, and more figures associated with Buddhism on the front row. There are fewer objects on the right side of the work than on the left side, but there are interesting-looking small objects on the small table. Behind the table, there is a big square stone and a middle-aged man is standing in the back with a little smile on his face. Despite the variety and number of objects, they are well organized, and apparently, carefully located to show to the public. This work shows a scene I have seen often in South Korea, where many stores sell traditional artifacts and religious goods.

The color of the work is varied because of the different materials of the objects. The color of most objects is toned down and deep, which makes people feel comfortable. In contrast to the objects that are amply lit, one can see a man in the background; he sits in shadow. Also, to

the left of the man there is a negative space in which I can see nothing. A storage space seems to be in the back. The two animal figures caught my eyes first as a focal point because of their size, bright color, and funny-looking faces. Then my eyes naturally moved to the front and followed all the different kinds of objects. As I looked, my eyes moved to the middle-sized objects placed in front. Then the line of the table and the contrasting sizes of the objects on the right side directed my eyes to the right side of the background.

The mood of the work is calm but strong. It almost seems like the man's museum and like he is proudly displaying his collection on the street. Whenever I see an artifact in one culture that is from another culture, I question where it is from, whether it was legally obtained, and why it is not being preserved by some organization or institution to keep it in good condition, and this picture also brings up such questions. Because several of the Buddha figures remind me of figures I saw in an art history textbook, I cannot figure out whether or not these are for selling or just for showing to people, and even whether they are about Buddhism or not since this work is very professionally produced and designed to make each artifact look distinctive and massive, with deep color. In addition, the artist's techniques with light make the objects look very visible; nothing is in shadow except the man who is sitting in the background of the picture. If the tone of the picture had been different, for example, brighter or darker, the objects would not have gained the same level of my attention. I would characterize this work as realistic, rhythmic, and curious. It works in whispers. By observing and describing the shapes and characteristics of each object, I feel almost as if the objects in the picture could suddenly begin to talk each other.

Contextual examination. *Insa-dong* is one piece in a photography series entitled *Space-Man-Space*. Yoon became interested in investigating the relationship between people and their workspaces in a local community that has existed since far in the past and not changed much. Yoon was fascinated by the ways in which the characteristics of workspaces shared an identity with the people working in them. Yoon investigated several areas in Seoul where old-fashioned customs and culture still exist, including Chungaechun, an area widely known for its old stores selling hardware. Another such location is Neagok-dong, where people maintain the lifestyles and community norms from long ago, and avoided much of the influence more contemporary areas in Seoul and Insa-dong, where Yoon and I discussed her work. Insa-dong is the most famous street in Seoul; it is a marketplace where South Korean traditional artifacts can be seen, bought, and experienced. Yoon (2003) described the area of Insa-dong in this way:

There are about two hundreds stores located in Insa-dong. In Seoul, 41% are antique stores, 38.8% are galleries, and 91.8 % are brush stores are located in Insa-dong. Insa-dong culture has been shaped by the traditional tea culture, restaurants, the many galleries and artists gathered in that area. Due to the influence of IMP, many stores moved to other areas in Seoul and Insa-dong lost visitors, however. In order to rejuvenate the area, the government changed Insa-dong so that no cars are allowed on the streets and business areas where traditional culture exists. On the surface, these businesses seem to have become successful since more people now visit there—including people from outside of the country—and they have more products to sell. Suddenly Insa-dong has become a place of abstract spectacle, which is full of people focused on visual images and products from a stopped space of the past. (p. 254)

Yoon asked herself, “What do people believe about Insa-dong? What do people who are coming to Insa-dong expect from this fake tradition?” She then explored the characteristics of Insa-dong to see what stores were there, what they sold, why people came to this street, and what this area meant to people. She visited stores on the street and met the owners of the stores. In the process of exploring this area, she was surprised that the reality of the street differed markedly from what she was led to believe, that is, that it was a place to sample traditional Korean culture. According to Yoon:

I was asked to participate in an exhibition showing the story of Insa-dong. So I started to observe and look around Insa-dong to take pictures of this area. I decided to investigate stores and people there to listen to the reality of the area from the insiders. For this, I took pictures and interviewed a storekeeper. From this process, I learned one fact... We regard Insa-dong as a representative street in Seoul where we can meet Korean traditional culture. However, according to the storekeepers who are the owners of the stores, most of antique shops in Insa-dong bring those artifacts from China. Actually, one of the storekeepers told me that he goes to China once a month to buy artifacts. Usually, foreigners regard those artifacts as Korean traditional but it is not true. Of course, in Insa-Dong, there are Korean traditional artifacts or goods but antique shops are especially the case. There is one store named *Toto's Old Things*, and it sells vintage goods from the 60s and 70s. But because of the growth in demand, they began to produce those products again, so they are not real vintage goods but things newly-produced because of the

demands of customers and the concept of the store. We think that Insa-dong is the most representative place for collecting and selling Korean traditional objects but after I looked at Insa-dong more closely, I recognized that what we believe about that street, such as that it represents Korean tradition and Asian culture, is actually made up. So if we look at Insa-dong from the outside, the place seems like a symbol of traditional and Korean culture, but if we look at it from the inside, we can see is partly fake. (personal communication, March, 10, 2014)

In the exhibition catalogue for the Insa-dong series, one of the critiques described the series in this way:

Jeongmee Yoon's 'Insa-dong' series shows a marketplace where traditional Korean items are easily purchased and consumed by the public. The marketplace also educates the public about the term 'Korean' and allows them to experience those Korean artifacts hands-on. Stores that sell traditional artifacts and traditional Korean restaurants commemorate old Korean culture. They also disseminate traditional artifacts and culture for profit. The public has a fantasy of being connected to tradition as they consume traditional things. They console themselves with the false belief that they are getting back lost history. (B. Choi, 2010, in the preface of the Hanam International Photography Festival catalogue: *Photography with history, History with photography*)

Even though Yoon's *Insa-dong* series shows the stores on a street that most people regard as the most traditional area in Seoul, if we investigate the reality of that area, the place is only a symbol of traditional Korean culture. Still, it gives the visitor a feeling of relief from the fear of losing Korean history and traditions even if we cannot really experience it.

Yoon stated in her personal interview:

So actually, foreign viewers of the works of the *Insa-dong* projects told me that my works are beautiful and very South Korean...but the truth is that those are not...Of course some stores sell Korean traditional papers or stripes of many colors but also there are many stores which do not sell authentic products, like the antique stores I mentioned...People still go to Insa-dong, especially when visitors come to Korea from outside of the country, to feel and look around Korean traditions. What I am saying is if we get into it in, then it turns out differently. (personal communication, March 10, 2014)

From a wide perspective we can see how people develop beliefs about some places. Most of people want to enjoy and preserve traditional cultures since they are part of their identity and history must be kept for the next generation to learn about. Thus, a place like Insa-dong gives them a feeling of relief and vague nostalgia.

The *Insa-dong* project is about a phenomenon that we might call a visual spectacle, the loss of locality, the confusion between traditional and exotic. Traditional crafts and souvenirs are an intensive component of memories. Thus, artificially-processed products may serve practical needs for the people who are selling them, and they may also serve as the means by which individuals can buy a piece of the past in their current time in a particular space. The pictures in Figures 16 and 17 are also from Yoon's *Insa-dong* series.



Figure 16. Jeongmee Yoon. *Insa-dong: Brush Shop, Space-Man-Space Project (2000-2004)*, C-Print.



Figure 17. Jeongmee Yoon. *Insa-dong: Souvenir Shop, Space-Man-Space Project (2000-2004)*, C-Print.

Interpretation

The *Insa-dong series* is Yoon's visual documentation of her investigation of the most well-known area in South Korea for artifacts of traditional culture. This work also represents her questions about the real meaning of South Korean traditional culture and the reason people want

to enjoy this culture as part of their lives. It also can be understood as her warning about the loss of locality and sincerity of traditional culture.

Yoon was asked to present Insa-dong and its history through her photography so she went to the owners of stores in Insa-dong, who she considered the experts on the area. In the initial stages, Yoon intended to meet and interview the shopkeepers and observe the inside appearance of their stores in order to give viewers an idea of the historical aspects of Insa-dong. However, during the interviews, she discovered that most of the owners talked mainly about the changes and the history of the area. She realized then that although Insa-dong is famous for its South Korean traditional art, and is a beloved place where many foreigners and even native Koreans visit, what the native local people feel and think about the area is quite different.

The pictures Yoon took of the owners of the stores and their products in Insa-dong present them in a very harmonious way. In each photograph, the owner looks a part of the store itself. He or she is not the one who dominates the space. In addition, despite the many products displayed every single thing can be vividly seen, and the way they are displayed makes a strong, dramatic, and noteworthy scene. The color in the pictures is thick and deep and beautiful. It makes the pictures strong, attractive, and visible. When I looked at the picture for the first time, they automatically reminded me of the beauty of Korean traditional culture and made me want to look around the store to see if there is anything I might want. Yoon's expressive techniques attract people to pay attention not only to the space of the store as a whole but also to the products displayed. Yet, the larger context of the work tells a shocking story and makes the picture seem ironic to viewers. The photographs beautifully depict Korean traditional culture, but also show that it is being lost.

Insa-dong has a long history of art and artists over the last 70 years. Most artists, however, have left because of the increased cost of rent as well as social changes associated with the influence of industry and commercialization. Yoon's work suggests the dissolution of South Korean traditional culture and the authenticity and originality of its traditions. Like the artist, I had believed that Korean traditional culture was being kept in this place like a time capsule and I felt proud of it. But now Yoon's work makes me worried about the loss of traditional Korean culture, which is my foundation. Though it makes me think about what I can do to protect it from the influence of the industry and commercialization, I realize that South Korea recently has tried

to boost tourism and this place is a hot spot where visitors believe they can experience the traditional culture of Korea despite the fact that most of the things sold there are made in China.

Yoon's *Insa-dong series* can contribute a great deal to the discussion of cultural diversity issues in South Korean society today, which is proud of its long history as a nation. It is important to Korean citizens to emphasize the history of the country and hold on to it as a symbol and source of identity. Insa-dong is the most likely place where South Koreans can fulfill this need. As revealed in the context of Yoon's photography, however, what we believe to represent Korean tradition culture is not actually original and is influenced by social change. Thus, it is important for contemporary South Koreans to think about a number of questions: 1) What is the real meaning of traditional culture? 2) What is the meaning of authenticity and originality of traditional culture? 3) What can we do to protect traditional culture from social changes, 4) What makes people still come to Insa-dong even though they know it is not as authentic as it once was? Do they have nostalgia for traditional culture? If so, why? 5) How can we be modernized and at the same time protect tradition and locality from social influences? 6) What is the relationship between traditional culture and contemporary society?

Jeongmee Yoon III (a): *The Pink and Blue Project/ The Pink Project*

Reaction

Two words, *sweetness* and *girlish*, came to mind immediately when I saw *The Pink Project: Yerim and Her Pink Things* (see Figure 18). This work first put a smile on my face and then gave me an *ah-ha* moment. The scene looks familiar to me since it reminds me of my childhood and an episode involving my younger sister. I used to be like the girl in the picture and was proud of my collection of toys, dolls, and dresses. When my mother bought things for my sister (who is two years younger) and me, she bought two that were exactly the same except for the color. The colors usually were pink and yellow or sometimes pink and sky blue. Both of us would want to get the pink one, but I typically did not get the pink one since I allowed my younger sister to choose first. This was a very fun and happy memory stimulated by the picture, which also made me think of my shopping experiences whenever I buy a gift for a friend's new baby.



Figure 18. Jeongmee Yoon. *The Pink Project: Yerim and Her Pink Things* (2005), Lightjet Print.

Description

Visual description. The most obvious feature of the work is the bright and vivid color pink all over it. The color and girlish atmosphere caught my eyes first, and the next thing I noticed was a girl sitting in the middle of the work surrounded by a variety of products. Shoes, socks, stationery, clothing, gloves, frames, dolls, an umbrella, small pieces of furniture, and plastic toys surround the child but the most interesting feature is that they are all very *pink*. Even though she is wearing traditional Korean cloth it is pink as well. I am not sure if all of the items in the picture are hers or were placed there by the artist. If it is all hers, then I am surprised by how much stuff she has and wonder why it is all pink.

The girl, who looks six or seven years old, caught my eyes before they moved to the things around her. The child's black hair matches the black background of the photograph in the frame near her, leading my eyes to move again to the next frame on the left, which shows two children holding hands. One is wearing pink and the smaller one is wearing blue. In front of the

frames, small bags are located on the bed. Many items display the well-known *Hello Kitty* character, including a lunch box, drawer, and bag. To the right of the girl lie two Barbies and a Mickey Mouse character. One of the Barbies has dark-colored skin and hair, so that area is more noticeable. I am not sure whether it was the artist's intention to put items with a black color next to the girl whose hair is black, but it technically balances the picture.

I think that this picture shows a high degree of technical proficiency because even though there are so many items around the girl, nothing is hidden under the shadow or gets less attention than something else. Every single object in the picture is clearly seen. Because the shoes in the left front of the picture look big on the girl, Yoon may have used a special lens to catch everything and make it look dramatic and wide. It seems that to take this shot, the artist very carefully considered its composition since it looks as if there is certain rule, and makes a combination of colors even it is all pink. Big-sized fabric is underneath and all kinds of items are placed on it. The girl's clothes are lying or hanging behind her and the items are carefully organized according to their use and size. It is surprising to see such a variety of pink; even though all the items can be described as pink each has a different tone. Some are powder pink and the others are bright magenta. Others are a mixture of pink and purple. The girl sitting in the center of the picture holds her hands in her lap and her lips are tightly closed. She may feel shy about being the main character in the picture but the look in her eyes as she stares at the camera lens suggests that even if she is shy she is, at the same time, strong.

The mood of the work is clear, bright, childish, and at the same time, a little disturbing. As I surmised, the child is beloved since the items surrounding her show how well her parents take care of her and provide her with goods that she likes. Her face does not have much expression in it, making me wonder what she thinks and feels about sitting in the middle of a massive amount of pink stuff. The artist's intention in this picture is to illustrate the pink world of a little girl and the influence of the commercialization of childhood.

Jeongmee Yoon III (b): *The Pink and Blue Project/ The Blue Project*

Reaction

This picture reminds me of a friend's son, who is five years old and in love with popular cartoon characters, heroes, trains, and cars (See Figure 19). When I visit his home, he takes my hands and pulls me to his room to show me his new collection of toys with a proud and a big

smile as he waits for my reaction. He categorizes his toys in his own way and his mother rewards him by adding to his collection whenever he does something well.



Figure 19. Jeongmee Yoon. The Blue Project: Jimin and His Blue Things (2007), Lightjet Print.

Description

Visual description. This picture is filled with blue-colored products for a boy and includes pieces of Lego, trains, train rails, a plastic gun, clothes, stools, and so on. A boy with beautiful eyes looks a bit shy as he sits in the middle of a vast array of blue products. Not only he is surrounded by these items but he also wears a blue long-sleeved t-shirt and jeans. It is interesting to look at a single object in the products surrounding him because of their variety. On the left side in front, different-sized Lego pieces are positioned straight up and side-by-side, and in front of the boy, small trains are organized. On the right side of the picture there is a pair of gloves, shoes, and a number of game cards. The corner of the room holds bigger items, including storage boxes, bags, and small furniture. In the back there are clothes, a swimming tube, and

something that looks like a big square box that may be the boy's bed. Nearby there is a big piece of furniture with the face of the popular character Thomas the Tank Engine on it.

To me, this is the pair to the pink photograph I described above. Though the children, objects, and dominant colors are different, and the point where the picture is taken varies somewhat, the way the objects, with a child sitting in the middle, is the same. It seems as if the pink work was transformed into a blue work and the girl into a boy. This is photography that is not taken in seconds in a spontaneous way; rather it seems that someone took the time to organize the boy's things all over the room to show clearly every single one in order, and asked him to sit in the middle. The artists' viewpoint is a bit higher than the boy, but in terms of the composition of the picture, it seems that the camera lens is fairly close to him.

The eyes of the boy caught my attention first, and then my eyes moved to an animal-shaped doll with a white face and big eyes and wearing a yellow helmet since the boy and the doll look similar. My eyes then naturally moved to the Thomas face to the left of the boy because of its humorous facial expression that seems to look askance at the boy. Then my eyes moved to the various products organized in the room. There is no noticeable negative space but unlike the pink work, a big surface of dark navy, almost black, lies under the products in the front and around the bed, with some parts darker than others. Small Lego pieces can be seen clearly because of the contrast with this bottom color. The boy stares directly at the camera.

The mood of the work is powerful; it seems that time is standing still in the picture because of the straightly organized products and the boy's facial expression. Additionally, there is no window, so it is hard to know what time it is and where light comes in. This picture is extremely realistic because not a single object is missed in the picture. The character of the picture is overpowering and monumental due to the dominant blue color; the whole scene is full of industrially produced objects, with the exception of the boy.

Contextual examination. Yoon studied painting for her bachelor's degree and printmaking for her master's degree. After she studied painting and printmaking, she took up photography in 1993. Since then, photography has been her main technique for creating a work of art. She has been working on several photographic series, including *Zoo*, *Red-face*, *Flag*, and *Natural History Museum*. The Pink and Blue project is one of her photography series; it is ongoing and has been conducted in two places. She first began to work on this project in New York City when she studied for her master's degree at the School of Visual Arts, and she has

continued working on it in South Korea. Among her many series, the scale of *The Pink and Blue Project* is the biggest.

According to her, *The Pink and Blue Project* started from her experience with her daughter. She explained:

I used to go to shop with my daughter, but I didn't recognize that my daughter always bought things in pink. Whenever it happened, I regarded it as ordinary daily life without any consciousness. When we lived in NY, my daughter went to a pre-kindergarten run by Chinese. Most of my daughter's friends were from all different cultural backgrounds including Japanese, Chinese, and Spanish and so on. One day, I realized that all of my daughter's friends had the same taste no matter what cultural background they had. Then I started to wonder why it is. (personal communication, March, 10, 2014)

With her recognition of the phenomenon of *pink* for girls, she saw that similarly, *blue* is for boys. Yoon said that when she went to stores, she saw that there were no choices other than pink products for girls and blue products for boys. She then started to investigate the color preferences of boys and girls. She met many children and parents and visited their homes to see their things in person. She organized the pink or blue things from all over the room in a certain way to create a particular quality of the scene, and she then took photographs that focused on their color preferences. In this way, Yoon brought up this stereotyping phenomenon as an issue that people need to think about.

The technique Yoon used in creating these works was to spend some time with the child and parents (usually his or her mother) in order to explain the themes of her work and to build a more comfortable relationship that would enable her to get the best shot. In her personal interview, Yoon explained that when she builds a good relationship with a subject she is able to take a better shot. Additionally, Yoon said that it usually takes her about six hours to pull out the child's belongings and decide how to organize them in their room. Her pictures are dramatic and contain hundreds of items that are organized so that every single object looks very clear in the picture and, in combination with the other objects, fills the whole scene with a particular color. In order to create a particular quality in the picture, she follows a particular procedure:

When I take pictures, I begin the photographic session by arranging the larger items like blankets and coats, and then I spread the smaller articles on the bed and floor. When I first started taking these pictures, the objects were arranged without an order, but I soon

realized that the photographs in which small possessions are well organized and displayed in the front of the scene make the image appear to be more crowded. This method is similar to the way subjects are organized in which museums, which categorize their inventories and display their collections. (www.jeongmeeyoon.com)

I had a question for Yoon because I was skeptical of the notion that these children actually had so many things, enough to almost fill up a room. I asked, "Do you sometimes bring things with you when you go to work with kids to make this pink or blue scene more dramatic?" She answered, "No, those are all the kids'. I didn't bring extra stuff to fill the room with the color that I'm thinking about. But repeating the work with kids and their parents helps me to find my method." (personal communication, March 10, 2014)

A critic, Yim (2007), explained Yoon's *Pink and Blue Project* in this way:

Yoon visited kids' room and ostentatiously assigned kids' belongings made in specific color, then on that spectacular stage, took photography of the owner of the objects who is a kid with a cynical attitude. The boys' rooms were filled with blue and the girls' rooms with pink. It can be regarded as an obvious idea but if you really see pictures taken and printed in a constant format, the idea might be understood differently. (text in Geunjoon Yim's *Up Side Down Art*)

Richard Vine, the managing editor of the magazine *Art in America*, interpreted the photographs in this way:

Jeongmee Yoon's photographic studies of children surrounded by their personal possessions—all pink for girls, all blue for boys—bring home a stunning realization of just how much stuff (multitudinous items that must be bought and paid for one by one) is required to live a normal life, and to have an acceptable identity, in an advanced market society. The neutrality of the camera's gaze in these works, with their evenly diffused lighting and all-over sharpness of focus, conveys the sense of a social inventory. (www.jeongmeeyoon.com)

Yoon is asking several questions through this project, including: Is this phenomenon created by the natural instincts of children or is it created by parents' choices, industry marketing, or social customs? What is the influence of the distinct differences in the color preferences of boys and girls on concepts about image/roles of gender? Is there any room for individuality in the lives of modern children?



Figure 20. Jeongmee Yoon. *The Pink Project: Lauren & Carolyn and Their Things* (2006), Lightjet Print.



Figure 21. Jeongmee Yoon. *The Pink Project: Lauren & Carolyn and Their Things* (2009), Lightjet Print.

To answer these questions and pose them publicly, Yoon worked with children in New York City and Seoul to prove the generality of this phenomenon. She recognized that girls preferred pink and boys preferred blue no matter where they lived and that they even shared the same products and characters. Yoon also conducted research on the phenomenon of color preferences in children and found a 1914 article in an American newspaper, the *Sunday Sentinel*, which advised mothers, “Use pink for the boy and blue for the girl, if you are a follower of convention.” She found that after World War II,

...the concept of gender equality emerged and, as a result, reversed the perspective on the colors associated with each gender as well as the superficial connections that attached to them. Today, with the effect of advertising on consumer preferences, these color customs are a worldwide standard. (personal communication, March, 10, 2014)

Yoon's described the purpose of her work:

...to make people think again about common thoughts or systems formed and constructed by society. There are certain ideas that existed from the past or are accepted as common, so we don't have a chance to think about them from a different or our own perspective. We just live in it. (written interview, received March 8, 2014).



Figure 22. Jeongmee Yoon. *The Blue Project: Ethan and His Things* (2006), Lightjet Print



Figure 23. Jeongmee Yoon. *The Blue Project: Cole and His Things* (2006), Lightjet Print.

Fujinami (2007) described Yoon's *Pink and Blue Series* in this way:

In each case the individuality of the child has been trumped by the vivid color and overabundance of objects that overwhelm the space. Once they must have craved those toys, but that original desire seems gone, replaced by a look in their faces that seems more tired and empty than happy and satisfied. It seems to be widespread across many cultures around the world. Yoon thus takes the symbolic use of color for gender identification as her theme. The photographs show a microcosm of our consumer culture in which the development of gender, character, social and sex roles has split very early into a girl's world of pink, and a boy's blue. Their dreams are made from the stuff of TV commercials, which advertise the things we buy, and give to our children, without thinking about the implications of those choices. (p. 26)

Another critic, Y. Lee (2007), described Yoon's *Pink And Blue Project* from another point of view:

Jeongmee Yoon confirms the heavy and sticky order of colors and senses with the children through a tyranny of signs that forces the kids into being the main character of their given surrounding colors. Frankly, the children do not want to know about such facts, but the order has been prepared long before they were born, and even if some

enlightened parents buy tanks and swords for their daughters and flowers and hair pins for their sons in an attempt not to raise their children as stereotypes, the children will demonstrate remarkable wisdom of selecting the stereotypical colors predefined by the superego of society on their own as if they were being led by some sort of centripetal force. Jeongmee Yoon's color controversy catches on cold fire. Who gave blue to the boys and pink to girls? Was it their parents? Was it society? Was it a neighbor? Was it a friend? Or was it the obscure but powerful custom and superego known as the distinction of gender? Will the same colors be given to the children to be born in these children's rooms in the far future? Will the children in the center of their rooms filled with pink or blue objects acts as superego of the next generations' children, or deny themselves and mix up the objects placing themselves in a gray zone of colors? A more fundamental question is must there be a distinction between colors? So what if it is blue and so what if it is pink? After a long struggle that lasted for over 50 years, our society has been barely able to escape from the red complex, except for a small part. Now should not it overcome the more elaborate and sneaky complex of tying pink and blue are clearly divided, but for some reason I feel that it is directed towards the more radical question of 'what use is it to make divisions between colors?' (www.jeongmeeyoon.com)

Such questions make the public and society think about their existing ideas and their impacts on children's lives and identities in a culturally diverse society.

Interpretation

This is a visual documentary work recording contemporary culture influenced by social change, the development of industry, and media, as well as by fixed conceptions shared by members of society. Yoon's *Pink and Blue Project (2000-ongoing)* adopts colors as metaphors for the prejudice and preconceptions people carry and take for granted without consciousness. Yoon's daughter wanted products that were pink all the time, and the artist did not recognize it until her daughter went to prekindergarden in New York City with children from other cultures. When she met her daughter's friends there, she realized that all the girls tended to like pink, not only her daughter or Koreans; rather she saw it as an international tendency. She wondered why all the girls are surrounded by pink and the boys surrounded by blue. Who made this rule?

There are so many products and things around us that are the developments of industry, but in spite of their variety, it seems that not many choices exist for children outside of the two

colors pink or blue. Through this project, Yoon shows how certain social preconceptions influence people's knowledge and perceptions and are accepted as the truth, as solid rules of society we do not even think about. She investigated many children not only in NY but also in South Korea, also Americans from different cultural backgrounds and also Korean-Americans as well. They all shared similar tastes but interestingly, among the domination of pink-colored products, they also had some differences and cultural influences of their own. She realized that the children's personal belongings represented a collection by which they presented themselves. Though they are just products they have personal meaning, and this insight makes it valuable to discuss her work.

The technical quality of Yoon's *Pink and Blue Project* is similar to the *Space-Man-Space* project: *Indadong series (2000-2004)*. Just as the Insa-dong pictures captured a certain moment made more dramatic by her intention, the *Pink and Blue Project* captured children and their spaces and objects. Unlike the Insa-dong series, for which many objects were already organized by the owners, for this *Pink and Blue Project* she had to set up the things herself. She told me that in this process she had an opportunity to make a collection with childrens' belongings. Her pink and blue pictures are full of color, so they are very easily recognized by others, who gain a great deal of visual pleasure on the one hand, but are made to think about social and gender issues on the other hand.

This work reveals a moment of awakening both for Yoon as well as me. In both her personal interview and written interview protocol, I asked Yoon, "What are the main issues you would like to communicate with viewers through your work?" She answered as follows:

My main concerns are to make people to think again about certain fixed ideas or system which is consciously or unconsciously absorbed under our society. We don't recognize those ideas have been fixed possibly by someone's point of view or don't feel that it influences to our perspective. (personal communication, March 10, 2014)

She deeply discussed about fixed system of our society by *Zoo* project. The *Zoo* project is about human beings and fixed systems or conceptions around human being. Human beings living in a certain system or conceptual frame made by society and others is not from animals living in a artificial environment, a zoo. She also commented that all of the system we made to be comfortable but sometimes it is something that we want to get out of. As Yoon noted, in this society there are many social systems, beliefs, and conceptual frames that have been artificially

constructed. She believes that her works may make a small change in society by continuing to ask small questions that make people and society think and then think again. Her works give me insight into why children's products are restricted to two main colors according to gender. They also make me wonder what it means that their belongings are differentially dominated by a particular color that is reinforced by media and industry no matter what their cultural backgrounds.

Yoon's *Pink and Blue Project* provides food for thought for cultural diversity issues as well because it speaks to the loss of individuality. Industry makes things for children in two colors and parents naturally buy things for them according to these unwritten rules: pink for girls and blue for boys. Our constant exposure to the influences of industry and commercialism, then, contribute greatly to the loss of individuality. The social tendencies associated with gender and color also mean that children get assigned to different roles by gender: girls have more dolls and accessories and boys have more swords, cars, and sports products.

In contemporary societies, an attitude of acceptance of others who we perceive as different is essential if people are to live in harmony. If we see things with certain fixed points of view, we cannot see the true nature of life, which is inherently complex. If we look closely at people and their various aspects, we can see each child as an individual with different tastes and preferences. We must be careful to revisit our perceptions with these considerations in mind.

Evaluation of the Combined Artworks of Jeongmee Yoon

This artist believed that there are various perspectives by which to view and understand a culture, and her various interpretations of traditional Korean and South Korean cultures exemplify this notion. Her works show how the trend towards standardization in the modern Korean society actually represents a twist on traditional Korean culture. The influence of media and central role of capitalism in South Korea, like many other countries, contribute greatly to misunderstandings about the authenticity and originality of cultures.

Understanding others from a holistic view. As she expressed in her work *Korea at New York Public Library (2004)*, the presentation of Korean culture at American library institution was limited to particular aspects and fragments of history that represent only a small part of what Korea means to Koreans. Her work suggests that when portraying a different culture we need to cultivate a respectful, sincere, and informed mindset, a goal that requires, at the very least, the desire to develop a more holistic view.

Understanding our selves from a distance. Yoon's *Korea at New York Public Library* (2004) also shows us that what we know about ourselves can be differently interpreted or understood depending on who is doing the viewing: the outsider or insider. If we do not see things around us, or if things are too familiar, we may ignore them as nothing or understand ourselves from a subjective view. The 12 files about Korea that inspired the work *Korea at New York Public Library* show us the importance of understanding others in their authentic contexts, and also provide South Koreans with the opportunity to see their country from the perspective of non-Koreans.

Influence of media. Yoon emphasized how images and information about culture can be transformed or twisted by the influence of media. As she stated in the introduction to her video, there is a possibility that what we see, hear, and read may not be the truth but rather limited information edited by media.

Missing traditional culture. Yoon's work *Insa-dong* is an example of social change in the oldest and most traditional area of Seoul. This place is a well-known destination for the experience of traditional culture where people are relieved to find that their cultural roots are protected and preserved. In truth, however, most of the objects displayed in the stores in Insa-dong are produced by people from different countries and cultures. The influence of industry and consumerism has caused us to lose locality and aspects of traditional culture. This lack of cultural authenticity and originality also may cause misunderstandings of a country by others.

Making a connection between traditional culture and contemporary life. Many people may know about the recent changes in Insa-dong, but still come to the area to walk the streets and look around at artifacts of their traditional culture that they may want to preserve. What is the reason of South Korean people come to Insa-dong even though know that the originality of the place has changed somewhat? Traditional culture is the foundation of the identity of a country and this might be the reason that people have nostalgia for tradition and want to have it in their lives. If traditional culture does not only exist in the history but still exists in contemporary society, we may need to think about how to cultivate a relationship between tradition and contemporary life?

Generalizations and globalization. Yoon's *Pink and Blue Project* shows how socially structured concepts that influence culture also influence children and their gender roles. All the children in the project live in different locations and in different cultural circumstances, though

they have different life circumstances, however, all of them share particular color and animation characters. The *pink* and *blue* phenomenon is international and so makes us think about who and what creates and reinforces this tendency. Is it children? Parents? Industry? Media? In a multicultural society, it is important to see people as individuals with unique characteristics, rather than make generalizations about the groups to which they may or may not belong. This work makes us think that even if all children like either pink or blue, if we look at them and their belongings in detail we will find that they are not all the same, that in fact they can be differentiated by their individual tastes. This notion provides many insights related to cultural diversity issues.

Eunjeong Lee I: *Okee-ssi 3*



Figure 24. Eunjeong Lee. *Okee-ssi 3 (A Mother of Vietnam and Korea, 2012)*, 80x60 cm, Ink on Korean Traditional Paper, Coloring.

Reaction

When I saw this work (See Figure 24), I frowned slightly, because I could not figure out what was drawn in the painting. It looked to me like an old painting that was faded and damaged, and that was lost for a long time, making it difficult to see what it is. This quality made me feel foggy and cramped, but also curious and mysterious. The fogginess caused me to take sometime to see the work; it reminded me of foggy windows that I can draw on with my fingers, giving me a fun moment on a rainy day.

Description

Visual description. The most obvious thing in the painting is the woman who is wearing glasses. The whole scene in the painting seems to have many layers of milky white colors because it is hard to see the woman's face clearly. The face is covered with paint or it has faded as time has gone by. Despite the fogginess of the painting, I can see her eyes over the glasses since they are painted with a darker color compared the other parts of the painting. The woman in the painting looks as if she is in her thirties; her hair is curly and loose. On both sides of her head, nine small bells are hanging. It is unclear if these bells are just hanging there or are tied up in her hair but I can tell that they symbolize something.

The edges of the painting are interesting because they have a watery light brown color, one usually seen in traditional old paintings or old documents when colors fade. The edges of the painting, then, indicate either that the work is old or that it was made to look old for some reason. Other than the brown color on the edges, a milky-white color dominates most of the painting, with the exception of the lips of the woman, which are noticeably saturated with a light orange color. As this light orange color spreads up, it gives her vitality. There is no negative space in the painting but the character of the edges implies that there could be another layer under it. The color, fogginess, and facial expression of the woman make me feel calm, but at the same time, the spread of color on her lips and unclearness makes me wonder what story she has and how she feels. Her eyes look directly at me and are obvious in this foggy painting, making me wonder even more what she wants to say.

The painting requires quiet time in order to figure out what it contains. After a short while, however, the woman's eyes and lips definitely emerge as the main focal point of the painting since her eyes, and next, the color of her lips, catch the viewer's eyes before they automatically find the small bells over her hair. The edges of the painting gain the viewer's

attention last. The viewer sees the whole scene of the painting and starts to see each aspect of it again from a different perspective than the first time. It is interesting to me that I first viewed the dominant color of the painting as milky beige, but later saw it as light purple.

The mood of the painting is dreamlike, silent, and cautious. The more I looked at the painting, the more clearly I could see the woman and the more obvious the edge of the painting seemed. On first encountering it I focused most on finding what was in the painting, and its fogginess actually made me more concentrate on finding the elements of the painting. Once I began to figure out what was in the painting, I could see clearly her facial expression and her eyes, which, along with the entire work, conveyed to me a sense of sadness and silence. This experience was special.

The painting is both realistic and expressionistic. If the color of the painting had been vivid or colorful, it would have totally changed the mood of the painting and the feeling I got from the work. Additionally, if the edges of the painting were different or unremarkable, this work could be boring. As it was, it really stopped my eyes and made it difficult to get out of the painting.

Contextual examination.

About the artist. Eunjeong Lee is a contemporary South Korean artist. She was born in Masan, South Korea, in 1977 and earned a bachelor's degree in South Korean painting from Chungnam University in 2000. She earned her master's degree in Korean painting at Chungnam University in 2003. Since 2002, she has taught at a number of universities in Chungnam and the Cheongju area of South Korea. From 2004 to 2007 she resided and worked in France; she now works and lives in South Korea. Lee was an artist-in-residence at Cheongju art studio in 2008-2009 and at Hive camp in 2009. She has held solo and group exhibitions since 2001. The titles of her recent solo exhibitions are *The Resistance to Directness* (2010), *The Record of a Collision and Disappearing Things* (2012), and *The Record of a Life of Weakness* (2013). Besides her educational background and history as an artist, Lee is the mother of two children. This element of her life has strongly influenced her interest in female issues in South Korean families. In an early period of her work Lee focused on investigating the inner world and beautification of the independent woman, so her paintings at this time tended to be self portraits that emphasized the expression of the face and long hair.

From 2004 to 2007, Lee lived to France with her children and her husband, who is also an artist. This opportunity changed her theme to the life of married women. In a personal interview on March 11, 2014, Lee shared:

I mostly drew self portraits using black ink on Korean traditional paper. When I went to France, people asked me if my work looks like the Korean traditional style. Then I asked myself, is my work really Korean? Is it Korean if I use Korean traditional materials in my work?... And I started to think about how I can present real Korean content other than through the use of particular materials in my work as an Korean artist. In addition, my life in France was not easy. Of course I had a language problem but also I just had begun my life as the mother of a daughter [now she has two children] and as a wife. People called me by my husband's name. This experience made me interested in thinking about the lives of married women. South Korean women keep their last name after marriage but their actual lives are invested in their husband's family and follow his family's culture. After I married, my parents sincerely asked, 'Be nice to your parents-in-law, be a good mother, be a good wife, and attune my mind to them.' Then I thought about where I am as an independent human being. I felt that my true self disappeared with my marriage. This might be the case with other women who got married. Then I decided to focus on the lives of married women and women issues in South Korean society.

In the past, there was a tendency in South Korean society for women to belong more to their husband's side rather than to their own family. Even though this tendency has weakened in contemporary society it exists on a certain level. After Lee came back from France, she started to conduct thorough research about women in her surrounding neighborhood, especially those in a big family in which three or four generations lived together. In order to bring the existence of these women to the surface she met many others like them, listening and gaining information about their life stories. The artist then created a family tree composed of the women members of a family, *Family Tree of Jangsoon Kim's Four Generations*. (Figure 25)

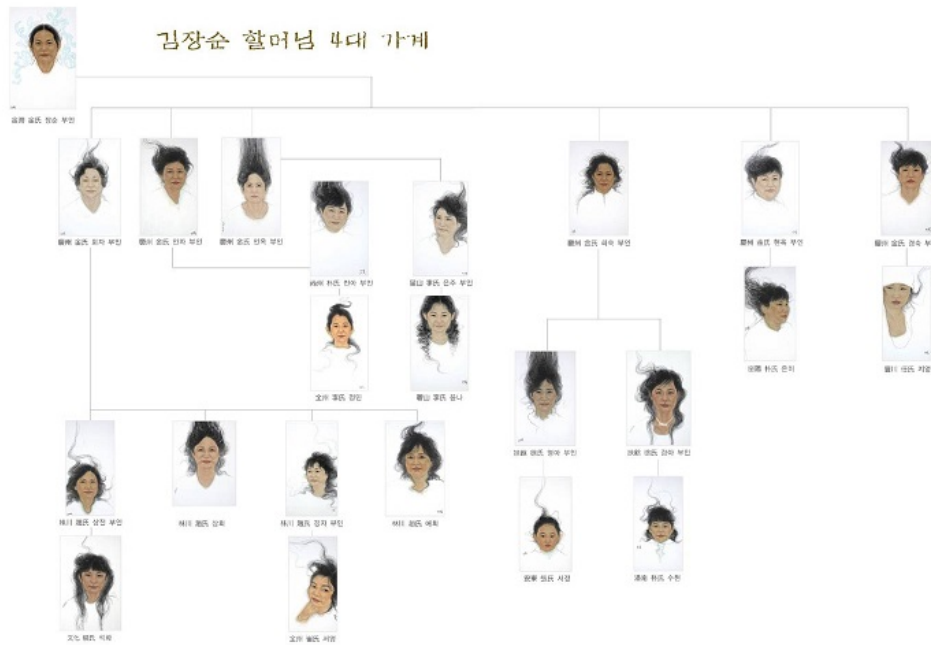


Figure 25. Eunjeong Lee. *Family Tree of Jangsoon Kim's Four Generations* (2008), Ink on Korean Traditional Paper.

Shin (2008) stated,

From the long past, recorded family history has focused on the paternal line. So records about women in families are short or even non-existent. Paternal line customs treat women inappropriately, as a member of the family without the same level of equality with men. In a society based on paternal lines, women are not allowed to give their last name to children, and only give them their genes. So after several generations, memories about women disappear. Eunjeong Lee provides a record of such women, who are disappearing in family histories. (Dowsing, exhibition release)

In her interviews with me and the text of an exhibition release, it becomes clear that the combination of her experiences as a mother of two children, as a wife of a man, as a daughter-in-law, as a resident of Cheongju, and a foreigner in France changed the theme of her artwork from her inner world to broader social issues that involve the lives of married women in South Korean society.

When Lee researched on the lives of married women in her neighborhood who were members of big families, she came to an insight. Even though women are at the center of

perpetuating families, they are regarded as less important than men within the family context. In a personal conversation, she told me that “there are many famous males in our society from the past and even now but before that there are mothers of them.” Several of her works focus on great men in the history, especially Generals like Soonshin Lee (Figure 27), who is the most well-known general in Korean history, and Napoleon, the most well-known general in French history.

In an exhibit release (2008), Lee stated, in the flow of this changeable society, it is easy to forget the existence of women who sacrifice their lives. Through my works, I hope to make people think again about the existence of women, especially mothers, from a wider perspective.” The theme of the work has been expanded to life stories about other women in her neighbor.



Figure 26. The Statue of General, Soonshin Lee in Gwanghwamoon Square Seoul, South Korea.

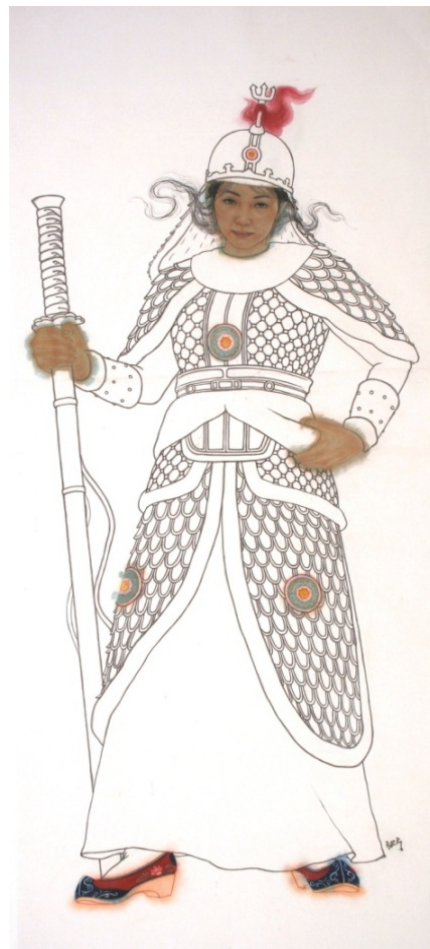


Figure 27. Eunjeong Lee. In Search of Isolated Gene (2008), 318x139 cm, Ink on Korean Traditional Paper.

About the work. In describing her work, Lee explained,

The main theme of my work is to draw portraits of women who live a different life but share the same gender with me. It is meaningful to find hidden history and life of women through drawing their faces. Even though women are the existence who carries a new life inside for our society, their existence is hazy, hidden, and not on surface. (Interview with Chungbook newspaper, March 14, 2010)

After she met women in her neighborhood to draw out the family tree of women, she realized that there were not only native South Korean women in the group but also women from different countries. At that point, she decided to listen the stories of their struggles as a married woman in this society, and bring them up to the surface of society.

Okee-ssi 3 (Mother of South Korea and Vietnam, 2012) is a portrait of a woman named Okee who lived in the artist's neighborhood of Cheongju. She is originally from Vietnam. In marrying a South Korean man she became a daughter-in-law in a South Korean family; she is now the mother of one daughter. The artist told me about the work:

I started to draw myself first, then drew foreign women that I met in France and women in a big family living in my neighborhood in Cheongju, South Korea. Recently I have drawn women from other countries who now live in South Korean society as a wife, as a daughter-in-law, and a mother of children just like me. As far as I have experienced it, living in a foreign country is such a challenge every day. They may face many differences in daily life, even every moment. One Vietnamese woman I met told me that she was surprised by the fact that it is not easy to find duck's egg in South Korea but that [chicken] eggs are common and cheap. In Vietnam, it is totally the opposite. It is not easy to buy [chicken] eggs because of their price, but it easy to see duck eggs. Something like this... every little thing can be a cultural challenge or difficulty when they live in Korea. They submit to all these challenges and now live in Korea as wives and mothers. Recently, South Korean society has changed to a multicultural society. According to the increased number of international marriages, cultural diversity is a big issue in South Korea. There are many TV shows broadcasting good stories about multicultural families, but as far as I have observed, bad news spreads more quickly and is taken more seriously. [With my work] I started to turn peoples' attention to the positive side of it. People are asking me what I mean by these portraits of women from other countries. I think that TV or media

usually show the bad sides/news about foreign women who have come to Korea to get married but my perspective in approaching this issue is not from a negative point of view. Rather, I approached it to present the strangeness and value of women, as was my focus in other earlier portraits of women. Art is naturally beautiful, so I believe that showing them through art highlights the issue but in a positive way. For this, I would like to describe their mysticism and toughness, their mother's instincts and love as women. I believe that if art can present them in a positive and a good way, people's perspectives toward them and the awareness of society can be changed a bit. (personal communication, March 11, 2014)

In her personal interview, Lee explained the story of the main character of the work, Okee-ssi:

Okee-ssi met her husband in Vietnam when he came there as an exchange student. Okee-ssi studied the Korean language at a university in Vietnam, so she is almost fluent in Korean. I feel that her Korean is even better than mine, but whenever I talk with her, I can see her nervousness in speaking in Korean. Besides her anxiety about using the language, she has a fear of living as a Vietnam woman in Korean society as well as concerns about the future life of her daughter. If you see her portrait, you can see small bells on her hair. I drew them as a symbol of her anxiety. As you know, bells are sensitive. When you move, they make sounds and people listen, and then you automatically get attention from others. So I presented her carefulness, anxiety, and worry as bells. (personal communication, March 11, 2014)

Lee's painting of Okee-ssi 3 makes her look like she is a figure in a cloud that is hard to see clearly. However, when one stands at a distance from the painting and takes a moment, one quickly can recognize what is on the canvas. The reason why she presents portraits in this way is that people cannot see the truth if it is too familiar, gigantic, or near to them. But once they step away, they can see it more clearly and holistically. Lee told me an episode related to her dim portraits:

My works are very dim, so people can't see clearly in a second. When I opened the exhibition, it was funny to see people's reactions. Actually, some people came into the gallery, then in seconds, asked me there was any exhibition going on in the space since they could not really see the figures in my paintings. The color is almost a beige

monotone, so when they come into the gallery, especially on a sunny day, their eyes really cannot catch it. However, after spending some time in the gallery, they said, ‘Ah! I can see!’ This actually is my intention—to deliver my themes through this dim way of painting. Characteristics of my painting like haziness and fogginess reflect the existence of women from other countries who live in silence, hidden in our society.

When I visited Lee’s studio, there was an exhibit space where she displayed her works. On the surface of many of her portraits, though not all of them, a pearl medium was spread over the painting, making it look even more shiny and layered. This technique keeps viewers from easily seeing the figures in her portraits; the viewer must actually step backward to see the whole from a distance. Lee explained:

We all might have an experience like this...There are people around or very close to you but you do not recognize the real value or importance of that person. One day you realize that the person really means something in your life and even seems big. Similarly, my dim painting, the more you look at it, it comes into your eyes and becomes clearer. In the case of my work, if you stand closer to the painting to see clearly, you may not be able to see it. But, if you step backward from the painting and look at it from a distance, you may get to know what it is drawn. And also a bigger painting takes you more time to figure out the painting and this happens in the same way with the big issues of society. If the issue is bigger and more serious, then people may have difficulty really finding it since you can see only small part of it. My technical method for these hazy portraits matches the way of I deliver my themes and concern about women from other cultures. (personal communication, March, 11, 2014)

Interpretation

Lee’s work includes a symbolic portrait of the woman Okee-ssi, who came to South Korea from Vietnam and who is now a mother of one daughter. However, this work is not only a portrait of a woman but also a portrait of the multicultural society of South Korea at large. There are many reasons for the changes in South Korean society, but the main reason is the growth in the number of international marriages. Like the woman Okee-ssi in the painting, there are many families of international marriages in South Korean society, and most are created by women from East Asia. In the Cheongju area where the artist lives, many women from other countries live as members of the community and raise their children alongside fully Korea children. Lee

was interested in listening to the women and presenting their lives stories since her own experiences abroad enable her to easily empathize with them and the difficulties they faced. After she noticed that many foreign-born women are living as a mothers, not only in her community, but also in general in South Korea, she listened attentively when they told her about their struggles, fear, and their concerns about the future of their children.

Though many South Koreans are aware that their society is becoming increasingly multicultural, particularly racially, the history of war invasions have caused some difficulties with the transition. Actually, multiracial individuals in South Korea have faced enormous problems, but most South Koreans do not pay attention to this issue. Lee's work reminds viewers of the attitudes in South Korean society towards multicultural and multiracial individuals through her portrait paintings with their dim tones, like *Okee-ssi 3*. She drew this portrait on wet Korean paper to make it blurred and hidden. This manner of presentation matches her theme well. As Lee observed, if anything is right next to us or too big, we do not know there is such a thing. However, if we step away from it and see it more objectively and from a greater distance perspective, we can see a whole thing. *Okee-ssi 3* is dim in tone and the small bells on the woman's hair act as a metaphor for the woman's inability to simply fit in to Korean society unnoticed.

Lee takes the role of mediator, not only between community members but between these women and the public, through art. Over several years she began to meet women in her community who were from countries other than Korea. As she created a family tree, woman from other countries started to appear more and more, providing evidence that South Korean society is becoming more multicultural. It was not easy for Lee to meet people who would come out and share their stories, but she kept trying because she thought that making it more possible for people think about social issues in the country where they live and what they might do to make it better. She thought that cultural diversity and acceptance are the most important and urgent issues in South Korea, not only for people who come from other countries but also for South Koreans. This is especially the case for the younger generations who must know about the multicultural society they face as well as how to understand and accept differences. So, Lee presents portraits of women from the international family to make viewers pay attention to social changes and significance issues in South Korea. Since I also have had the experience of living in another country, I feel a personal attachment to Lee's themes and work. I agree with her

perspective that art can play a role in taking the issue of multicultural acceptance more seriously. My time abroad was meaningful to me because it helped me see my own culture from a distance, and to learn that cultural others wish to have the same respect I wished to have. Lee said that listening to the stories of people from different culture helped her to understand others at a deeper level. This same experience could happen to students if they fully and contextually examined the artworks of other artists, all of whom have their own life story to share.

Eunjeong Lee II: *Hanna I*



Figure 28. Eunjeong Lee, Hanna I (A Daughter of Vietnam and Korea, 2012), 80x60 cm, Ink on Korean Traditional Paper.

Reaction

This portrait reminds me of cotton candy and my memories of it, and it immediately makes me feel its soft texture. The pictures gives me a peaceful feeling in my heart and brings a smile to my face because of the child's lovely appearance and soft colors used in the painting. Its pastel colors and atmosphere make this art piece look completely calm and quiet. The child looks like an angel that I might see in a picture book. This work gives me a very pure, innocent, and elegant feeling in some way.

Description

Visual description. The most obvious feature of the painting is the child, who looks directly at the viewers as if in a cloud; flowers are around his or her head and shoulders. The color of both the child's eyes and the background is light blue. This color covers the most of the painting except the face and clothing of the child. Besides light blue, the other colors in the painting are beige, green, yellow, and white. There is no obvious texture but a thin layer of pearl medium spreads over the surface of the painting, giving it a reflective quality. The transparency of the flowers and leaves attached to the face and body of the child make it possible for me to see the figure of the child through the flowers. I see that the whole painting is carefully drawn, since nothing is clearly shown even though it is a portrait. The child looks very mysterious, and I feel that the child is someone who does not exist in the real world.

The beige color makes a good match with the light blue as well as the other colors used in the painting, since they all share a similar level of chroma. The combination of colors creates a beautiful scene, as if in a dream. The child in the painting might be a being who needs to be taken care of and be with family; because of the light color, flowers, and ice color eyes, the child looks weak and fragile. As a viewer, it seems to me that he or she is asking for more caring and attention. In the past, portraits often were created to remember certain persons or celebrate someone as well as in order to provide information about the person in the painting. In this painting it is different, however, since nothing can be seen clearly. The child's eyes catch the viewer's attention first. In my case, my eyes then moved to the flower on the right side of the child's face. I could not recognize the type of flower it was, but I could see that it has a long yellow stamen and two different kinds of leaves. Some leaves are cleft into five parts and others are round-shaped, almost like a lotus leaf. Actually, the flowers make the eyes move around the face of the child. Two different kinds of leaves are on the right shoulder and the left shoulder,

and it seems that the flowers are different too. The stems of the flowers have small red thorns on them, and the background of the painting is filled with light blue dots that look like stitches of brushstroke. The focal point of the portrait is definitely the child's eyes and the flowers.

The mood of the portrait is dreamlike, blinding, and romantic. Compared to the bright tones of the colors used in many portraits, the tones here make the child seem weak and fragile. The painting makes me feel as if I am viewing a scene that I cannot see in real life. If it is real, then the child is in strong and dazzling sunshine. The blurred character of the portrait makes me take more time to look at it and think about the child and wonder why the flowers twist around the child's face and body. Ironically, this portrait is realistic, though at the same time it is not realistic. If the background were a different color the whole mood of the painting would be completely different. Also, without the patterns in the back, the painting might seem to be a bit boring and empty.

Contextual examination. As described earlier, the artist, Eunjeong Lee, has an interest in drawing the people around her, especially women from other countries. They live and exist in our society but live a hidden life in some way. They share the same gender with the artist and a similar life as a mother and a wife living in South Korean society. Yet, even though they live in the same community, the women from other countries live with anxiety because of their different nationalities and language skills, as well as the society's conservativeness. After Lee met with them and asked about their lives she discovered the extent to which they think about the lives of their children and their future. These women have struggled with becoming part of Korean society and familiar with things around them, so they are concerned that their children may have to struggle in the same way they did.

In a personal interview, I asked Lee what made her decide to draw children, how she goes about creating their self-portraits, and the difficulties she faced during the process. I assumed that it would have been a bit sensitive to ask them to be a model for this topic. Lee replied,

Actually, this happened naturally. I met with women from other countries in this area and told them about project just as I told you, that is, that I wanted to present their beauty and strength as a mother just like other mothers in this society. I initially met the mothers at my daughter's school through personal contact and word of mouth, so all had children about the same age as my daughter. This automatically made me expand my interest to not only women but also their children since they will be important members of this

society one day. For the portraits, I met with the parents and children and talked a lot in order to build relationship and trust before I started, because they were not particularly open to others. I understand this is natural since our society looks at families from multicultural backgrounds from a conservative perspective. Therefore, it was very important to build a good relationship with them and to give them faith before asking them to be part of my work. Actually, there were some mothers who felt uncomfortable about being a model in my portrait series. I also realized that when I understood them better through a long conversation, I was able to make a better portrait of them and most of the time this conversation provided me with an idea for their portraits. (personal communication, March 11, 2014)

Lee explained that she brought brochures from her early exhibitions to explain her theme and get the parents' permission. Afterwards, she met with the children to talk and spend some time with them. She took pictures and then, based on the history and background of the family, she composed the portraits in order to best show the character of the child and her theme. Lee also told me that after she finished an exhibition she gave exhibition brochures to the parents of the children and prepared a framed copy of a painting for them.

Hanna I is a portrait of a girl with a Vietnamese mother and South Korean father. Hanna has one older sister. Lee explained that she knew the girl's mother first and then met her children. Hanna was born in South Korea and lives between two different cultures: Vietnamese and South Korean. Lee presented Hanna's identity by displaying flowers, including lotus and mugunghwa, around her. Lotus is the national flower of Vietnam and mugunghwa of South Korea. The two flowers twisted around Hanna's body in the painting are symbols of the nationalities and cultural backgrounds of her family. Lee explained that in conversation with Hanna's mother, she understood how much she worries about her children, since everyday it has been a challenge for the mother to live in South Korean society. Lee depicted Hanna's struggles, challenges, and confusions in the future as red thorns on the stems of both the lotus and mugunghwa flowers. By contrast, Lee portrays Hanna as a pure, innocent, and mysterious being in the painting, using red to make vivid the challenge they present. She used the background of her painting as a space to represent the combination/mixture of cultural differences the child has. Besides *Hanna I*, Lee also has drawn many children from different multicultural backgrounds. Another of these works depicts a child named Elie, the daughter of an American and South Korean. In it, Lee drew

mugungwha flowers and roses as symbols of the child's mixed identity. In the background of the portrait she drew overlapping fabrics to show this mixture of different cultures and even tied the fabrics together to represent her hope. Lee told me that she created the background of the portraits to show a balance of the two cultures but also to show the inherent tension in the situation.

The journalist M. Kim (2012) described the exhibition of Lee's portraits of women and children in the *Daily Chungcheong* newspaper:

This exhibition is a kind of documentary work about multiracial women in the Chungbuk area. She reproduces women's lives by drawing their faces, which can be seen as an image of our society escaping from men's perspectives. Through her portraits, she is changing cultural collisions and conflictual elements related to multi-cultures to an awareness of respect towards different cultures. She is asking, "Who are we?" and "Where are we from?" Considering multicultural families is not a choice, but is essential in the Chungbuk area. Consistent with various policies for multicultural families, even those families that are in the area are expected to meld with Korean culture rather than be respected in their own uniqueness as they are. Cultural collision occurs due to Korean multicultural policies that do not support other cultures but fill them with Korean content and keep it from Korean's awareness. Eunjeong Lee asks us to rethink cultural diversity, the lives of women from multicultural families, and the disappearance of things caused by cultural collisions through her cloudy afterimages, such as *A Daughter of Korea and America*, *A mother of Vietnam and Korea*, and *A daughter of Korea and Japanese*, and so on.

Interpretation

This is a portrait of a child who has a Vietnam mother and South Korean father. It might be common to have parents from two different countries in the United States or other countries with a long history of immigration, and actually nowadays this is not an unfamiliar situation in South Korea as well. However, no matter how fast or how much South Korea becomes a multicultural society, a tendency remains to regard people from other countries, especially other Asian countries, with a narrow mind. In many cases, women from other Asian countries come to rural areas of South Korea to get married or men from other Asian countries come to find a job, sometimes living illegally. I am sure that in every society there are limited and prejudiced

perspectives by which people are judged according to their social and economic status. Yet, in South Korea, children from intercultural marriages are regarded as from the labor class. This is another issue that Lee brings to the surface.

The techniques Lee used in *Hanna I* are similar to those used in her work *Okee-ssi 3*. She did not visualize the child as colorful or decorated with many other elements; rather, she expressed her as soft but strong, simple but sophisticated. In spite of its quietness and simpleness, the eyes of the child in the portraits along with the mysterious atmosphere catches the eyes of the viewer, who then wants to give time to looking at the art, with eyes moving back and forth in front of the painting to see it more clearly. This elements are all related to her theme, and are intended to cause people to look at multicultural issues in Korean society in a different way and think about them again. The metaphoric expression of flowers and thorns around the child are the main elements by which she conveys this theme.

Lee reflected on her experience of living in a different culture in this family and children. Because she had a similar experience to that of these families she can empathize as she shares and talks about their stories with a sincere heart. As the mother of two children, Lee was able to meet parents and children from multicultural families at her daughter's school. Thus, she was able to apply both her female side and mother side by putting herself in another's shoes. In regard to the children's portraits, Lee described the meaning of her work in South Korean society today:

These mothers and children are struggling in this society in these times but this is the transition period of changing to a multicultural society, so I believe that, as time goes by, this current situation will be better. Then my paintings will be documents about them and their stories in this society. I hope that if my efforts work to make people pay attention to cultural diversity issues through my art, with its focus on the depiction of the beautiful lives of women from other countries and their children, the social climate may be changed. If people hear that there is an artist who carefully focuses on this multicultural issue and opens an exhibition, there might be some people who look at those issues from a different perspective. I would like to help solve these kinds of issues through my work. (personal communication, March, 11, 2014)

When I lived in New York City, I frequently heard the words *minority* and *majority*. I would be categorized as a minority in New York and a majority in South Korea. People should

not be treated and judged according to one certain set of preconceptions about a group, as this leads to prejudice. As societies become more complex and mixed, we must develop the ability to accept differences. Who can be exactly same as I? But the current social climate in South Korea does not yet reflect these ideas. A great deal of misunderstanding, separation, isolation, status, and exclusion towards differences exists. Since we all have to care about the generations to come, one solutions might be for the older generation to tell the younger generation what they can do to make social circumstances better in a multicultural society. This work gives me the conviction that the works of artists who actively and visually present social issues helps people to see what they do not otherwise pay attention to in their daily lives, even when that something is a real issue for them.

Eunjeong Lee III: *Women at Akwanwon*



Figure 29. Eunjeong Lee. Women at Akwanwon (2013), 190x366 cm, Ink on Korean Traditional Paper, Coloring, Pearl.

Reaction

This painting reminds me of the ordinary middle-aged women that I often see in my daily life as well as at family gatherings. Usually when my extended family gets together for the holidays, the women in the family gather together around the around the dining table in the kitchen area and have a good time talking to each other as they share teas and foods.

Description

Visual description. When I saw the painting the most obvious thing that I saw was the pink color around the edge of the painting. After taking a while to look at it, the other parts of the painting rather than the pink area came to my eyes. There are four women in the painting, each with a little smile. My first reaction to the painting was the thought that they are ordinary middle-aged women, but looking closely I realized that their ages are not the same: two are older than the other two. On the right side there is a woman wearing glasses who looks middle-aged, and the woman next to her has a long hair and looks younger than the other women in the painting. The next woman was wearing a hat and her short hair looks a bit older than the one with the long hair. The woman on the left side with the curly hair looks to be the oldest of the four.

This painting is almost in mono-color. Only white, beige, pink, and maybe a little bit of grey are used in the painting. For some reason, I viewed the figures of the four women and the background in reverse. My eyes went to the background first, then to the four women. Then, after a while, my eyes returned to the background again. I almost felt that the background is in front and the women are in back, but my perception continuously changes. In the silence, I felt various feelings when I regarded the work, even tickles in my heart. The pink color of the background is filled with large flowers that look to be blooming. The color of the background and the color of the women's figures are contrast to each other and catch the viewer's eyes. All four women are gathered together and looking at the viewer. Because the painting is huge it is hard to grasp the whole thing at once. I have to go back and forth to see the all the details of the painting. If I look at them closely, I become aware that the artist emphasized the eyes of the women. This is one painting but it combines three canvases. In her exhibition of this painting, I found that it almost covered the entire wall and dominated the whole space. The bottom color of the gallery was dark and it contrasted with the brightness of the painting. The painting also has a light layer of pearl medium like the works described earlier, and this pearl layer hides the figures from the viewer somewhat.

The mood of the painting is feminine and silent. Although each woman seems to have a small smile on her face it is unclear if they are actually smiling, particularly the woman on the left who does not seem to really be smiling and who conveys a level of quietness in her eyes. None of the four women in the painting show any movement. The composition of the painting is a bit simple, and in spite of its suppleness, the two main colors beige and pink dominate the

painting, making me curious about its meaning. I would say the painting is expressionistic in this sense, because it is drawn realistically but the artist emphasizes the emotion and feeling by using several colors and even showing the figures clearly. If the background had not been composed entirely of pink flowers, this whole scene would have given me a totally different feeling. This is because the background is my initial focal point before moving to concentrate on the figures in front as well.

Contextual examination. The artist, Eunjeong Lee, focuses on the stories and lives of women from other countries. This work *Women at Akwanwon* is about a group of women from China living in South Korean society. *Women at Akwanwon (2013)* is a portrait of four generations of one South Korean-Chinese family. *Akwanwon* is a Chinese restaurant located near the Cheongju bus terminal. Lee met the women at *Akwanwon* and listened to their stories, which went back to the time of their settlement to current days. Lee explained the background to her work *Women at Akwanwon (2013)*:

I have been interested in women from other countries and their life stories. One day, I heard of a story about some Korean-Chinese people in my neighborhood. I met these Korean-Chinese through some people I know and contacted them to ask about their participation as models for my painting. I did not recognize at the first that they felt uncomfortable but I knew it at the end of exhibition. They explained that there were negative perceptions and treatments of them in the past. Nowadays, it is easy for young generations to simply regard Korean-Chinese as people from China who now live in Korea. I had an opportunity to listen to the backgrounds of the women in the family who were over 60, and their story surprised me. There was a period when trade was actively going on between China and Korea and established diplomatic relations allowed for many people to come and go. With the outbreak of the Korean War, however, the relationship ended and they were stuck in Korea. They escaped from the war and settled down in Busan first, and then moved to Cheongju (personal communication, March, 11, 2014).

I have heard of the Korean-Chinese community and knew that there are some schools for these people but I had not paid much attention to their history since I did not regard them as a part of my life. I thought that such individuals came to Korea by their own will to find a Korean dream, but after I heard about their stories from Lee, I felt guilty about not having any

knowledge about them and even living without any thought to their existence. This group of people have lived in Korea since 1882; between the war and politics between the two countries, they have suffered a good deal while living in Korean society. Today the population of Korean-Chinese in South Korea is just over 20,000. Actually, South Korean viewers, including me, may know who these women represent if they see the red flowers and the title of the painting because most everyone knows that Korean-Chinese people live in Korean society. After the completion of the painting and the exhibition, Lee brought a small version of the painting and brochure to the women at Akanwon, who were not happy with it since they do not want to appear as Korean-Chinese to society and felt uncomfortable about being part of this issue. Lee told me that when she initially tried to contact them for an interview, they were skeptical about her and thought she might be some sort of investigator. Lee provided a background to explain why they may have felt this way:

They were excluded by people because of the fact that they are from China. At the time of the war's end in Korea, people closed their minds toward others from outside of the country. People from China around that time, they did not have the choice to go back to their country. However, they also had a hard time staying in Korea since they were foreigners and not even able to get a social security number. That time there were no relations between China and Korea, but because there were relations between Taiwan and Korea, they finally were defined as a Taiwanese and got a Taiwanese passport. After that, they settled down in Korea as Taiwanese (even though they are from China) and created a community of their own to help each other like a family. The currency value of their money disappeared and because there were not many things they could do, they started to sell things from foreign countries, open restaurants, do acupuncture or oriental medicine. They got married within themselves and sent their kids to schools for Korean-Chinese in order to teach them in their way. The first generation of Korean-Chinese had the worst time and the situation for the second and third generations is getting better but still they are isolated in some ways. (personal communication, March, 11, 2014)

It was surprising to hear someone's life story and the hardships they faced in this country. Recently, South Korean society has been regarded as a multicultural society that has begun to worry about such families and their children, but according to Lee's research, Korea has been multicultural for some time, but we did not feel or see the reality.

Artist C. Lee (2013) critiqued the exhibition of Lee's work in this way:

The theme of the recent work by the artist Eunjeong Lee is about the hybrid nature of the people in a country, or a multi-racial nation. Simply put, she explores how the experiences of individuals and families from different nationalities give rise to nations. In preparation for her work, Ms. Lee met with Chinese migrants who had come to Korea with a vision of a new world. They came to Korea voluntarily in search for a better life and have essentially become Korean while living here as refugees from the turmoil from their old country. Although they live in Korea and retain their Chinese culture, they suffer from an identity crisis due to their ambiguous national and ethnic consciousness.

(exhibition release, *The Record of a Life of Weakness*, 2013)

C. Lee went on to talk about Korean society using the metaphor in Lee's exhibition release:

In order to create a healthy and luxuriant forest, it is ideal to have more than seven species of trees planted within 1m². By having a density of seven or more species of trees per m², it is said that the forest can become self-cleaning and improve the survival rate of the ecosystem. According to the origin myths of the Korea, Koreans have lived only among themselves apart from other races. If so, is it possible to view South Korea as a healthy society, even without the other 6 species of 'trees'? This is because civilization has already evolved from the tragic events of history. (exhibition release, *The Record of a Life of Weakness*, 2013)

Interpretation

This painting is about the stories of the four generations of Korean-Chinese women living and running a restaurant business in the Cheongju area. It began in much the same way as the previously examined artworks by Lee, after she noticed this group of people in her neighborhood. Her work is a cultural anthropological document that reveals something about her neighborhood as well as South Korean society. Through this work, Lee brought to light a multicultural issue that has existed in Korean society since 1882, but one to which no one in the dominant culture ever paid attention.

Like the other two works described earlier, *Women at Akwanwon* (2013) is composed of basic, bright, simple colors. Lee decorated the background with red flowers and emphasized the eyes of the women to highlight their cultural roots. Unlike the other two works, this portrait depicts four women who are all family. From their facial expressions, I can tell that the oldest

woman does not have a smile on her face and the youngest one does. This suggests to me the present situation of the fourth generation Korean-Chinese is better than that of the first generation. The red flowers and name of the work may make the viewer wonder why they are in the painting and what message the artist wants to deliver. They seem as if they are cloud like the child in the work *Hanna I*. To me, this means that the people in this group are members of South Korean society and should be more harmoniously integrated into society. Lee also used traditional Korean materials to present contemporary South Korean issues—an acknowledgement of past and present just as with the women in the portrait. For Lee this portrait was a way of examining the reality of cultural diversity in South Korean society. She found it right in her neighborhood, and as the mother of two children she cares about the society and the community in which her children will grow up. Lee was a good listener for these community members and especially found the similarities she shared with the women. In fact, the process of the work was a study for her. She learned a lot about cultural diversity issues in South Korean society in the process of meeting these people and creating portraits, suggesting that looking around and listening to the stories of others in their own voices may be a good way to become more open to the reality of the lives of those who are cultural “others.” So even though the portrait seems to be of the women it is really a portrait of South Korean society today.

This work shows that diverse groups of people from different co-cultures, some with a substantial history in South Korea, exist outside of common knowledge. Even if they are not discussed in the media some groups have been in Korea for generations, South like the Korean-Chinese who have lived in Korea since 1882. Their story and the difficult obstacles faced by the older generations imply that many multicultural people have been here and are around us, but we ignore them because they are not directly related to our own lives. Though their difficulties have not entirely disappeared, the fourth generation of Korean-Chinese have assimilated more certain and so do not share the same difficulties. Lee has hope that over time the problems related to these multicultural issues will be resolved.

Evaluation of the Combined Artworks of Eunjeong Lee

In her artworks, Lee directly expressed social issues related to cultural diversity in South Korean society. She especially highlighted is the struggles of multicultural individuals and families as well as community immigrants.

Multicultural South Korea. As an influential artist in South Korea, Lee utilized her special knowledge as a woman, mother, and border-crosser to focus on stories of women from different cultural backgrounds and their children in multicultural South Korea. Not many artists speak so directly about issues related to cultural diversity in their work as Lee. Her portraits demonstrate how current notions about multicultural problems in society can be extended and explored through the art, and so make a significant contribution to the public discussion in this sphere.

First generation of a multicultural family. In the work *Okee-ssi 3*, Lee presents the reality of women from different countries who live in South Korean society as mothers and wives. She focuses on women from other cultures and their cross-cultural stories because she, herself, had a similar experience in the culture of the United States. Her work *Okee-ssi 3* shows that women from different culture who are now living as members of South Korean society struggle because of the limits of language, cultural differences, and fear as they seek to be assimilated in South Korean society. Through her portraits, she highlights the challenges faced by such women, with whom she has something in common, in order to support their need for attention and respect.

Second generation of a multicultural family. Lee's work *Hanna I* presents a child from a multicultural family to emphasize the importance of good care and education for all children in South Korean society. She thinks that media only focuses on education for such children and their mothers so that they can be assimilated in South Korean society, but that this is not exactly what we need. From a holistic perspective, we need to examine the exact situation and real difficulties they face and also try to find a means by which children from various cultures can share space and time with a much-needed basic respect for each other.

Community of immigrants. Though leaders in South Korea have begun to actively discuss the social changes in society and announce policies to address educational and other needs for multicultural families, they fail to acknowledge the history of immigrant co-cultures within the country. In meeting with Korean-Chinese individuals and listening to the stories of their lives in the local community, she has served as a kind of messenger between them and native Koreans through her portraits. Her works communicate the fact that immigration is not an entirely new phenomenon, but that it is the time to bring up cultural diversity issues in order

to educate individuals and reconstruct their negative perceptions and attitudes about a multicultural society and its members.

Becoming one society. Lee became a researcher of cultural diversity issues in South Korean society by focusing on women, mothers, and members of the Korean-Chinese co-culture. She suggests to viewers that even if South Korean society is already multicultural, it is a bit exclusive and closed. Since we all share the same time and space in society we must change this by meeting and talking with together. Lee's work helps us to remember that even if we are different from one another, we share similarities as human beings living a contemporary society. This can be a starting point for discovering a way to accept and understand each other.

Minja Gu I: *Happily Ever After*



Figure 30. Minja Gu. Happily Ever After (2010). APAP Public Art Project of City of AnYang.

Reaction

This picture looks unfamiliar, duplicated, and grotesque. It reminds me of masks I had in elementary school and makes me think of a scene of at the World Cup competition, where people wear masks of soccer players that they like as a sign of support. The many people in the room are wearing the same mask, and they do not move or talk in this moment. It looks like they are participating in a silent vigil, which gives me a powerful kind of feeling and makes me a little afraid. It seems much like a scene in a movie.

Description

Visual description. The most obvious thing in the picture is the group of people wearing the same masks with the same face. They are in the inside space of a room that is fairly empty. There is only one table in front of the people and one traditional-style door lying on the floor in front of the table. On the table, a piece of red fabric covers some items that viewers cannot see. A small plant with little yellow flowers is on the right side of the table and two black pots with lids are on the floor of the left side of the table. This room does not look like a place someone lives because I can see that it does not look like a room in a house, and in the back, and a small black sign board is attached to the wall. There is another of these in white, suggesting that this space is for public rather than personal use.

There are twenty-four people in the room; some are standing and others are sitting but each is wearing a mask. Even though they are sharing the same mask, they wear different clothes, so the colors in the picture vary. The bottom of the room is ocher and this ocher color matches the skin color of the mask. I am not sure whether this picture intends to present a moment or was taken to create a memory of people gathering. The people in the painting all wear different styles of clothes. Most of the men are wearing casual clothes, such as jeans, shirts, and t-shirts, but four are wearing suits as if they came after work. There are also women wearing masks and all are well-behaved. There is no negative space but people's faces are hidden. This makes this scene a bit weird and presents an awkward silence.

Since seeing a person wearing a mask in a picture is unusual, it makes the picture full of wonder, mystery, and silence, as well as strength. Two tall guys in the middle of the painting first caught my eyes. Even though they are wearing masks like the others, they are taller and stand at the center. My eyes then moved around to other people standing in the back, and then to people sitting in the front. Their masks made me want to see them again and again to figure out if

they are all really wearing the same mask. In this picture the artist catches the time and the situation, therefore is very realistic and at the same time, clearly devised by the artist. I can imagine that if they were not wearing a mask or their background was different from this the whole scene would be completely different.

Contextual examination.

About the artist. Minja Gu is a contemporary artist born and raised in South Korea. She was born in Seocheun in Chungnam, moved to Deajun after a couple of years, and then settled down in Seoul with her family. She earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts from Hong-ik University in 2000 and studied philosophy at Yunsei University for a bachelor's degree until 2002. She then continued to study art at South Korea National University of the Arts in order to achieve a master's degree in Art in 2007. Her first solo exhibition was at the Croft Gallery in Seoul in 2009, and she has been included in many group shows. She also was awarded the 10th annual SongEun Art Award in 2011.

Gu told me the story of how she became an artist. As a child she always was good at art and received many compliments from others. This naturally led her to major in art at university. After she entered the university, she thought that just becoming someone with the ability to draw something well was not what she wanted to be, so after graduation she decided to study philosophy, and then went back to the art field. Most of her works are installations, videos, and community participatory projects, and she frequently travels to places inside and outside of South Korea. Her inspiration comes from her trips, the people around her, and events that happen to her in daily life.

About the work. Gu's photograph is part of a project titled *Happily Ever After*. This city art project was a community participation project in the city of Anyang, which is in the south part of Seoul. The title of the project is *Anyang Public Art Project*. The room in which the people are sitting is often used for community gatherings. It is a place where community members can come to discuss issues related to their community, have events, share food, and even share their happiness or sadness with others. When she thought of creating a participation-based public art project in Anyang-si, Gu held a public meeting in the community of Anyang. She asked those attending about their most pressing issues, and many people spoke of the many community members who have trouble meeting someone to marry. Marriage is an issue in many cities located in rural areas in contemporary South Korean society. Many young adults prefer to live in

the capital and marry someone who wears a white dress shirt. There is a tendency in Korean culture to think more about a person's background than about their real personality. This disposition is grounded in the high value South Koreans place on social position and financial status. After her discussion with the community, Gu decided to create a project for people who live in Anyang and who are having trouble meeting someone. Gu recruited 30 single males and females who wanted to participate in this group meeting project. Unlike other blind dates, this project required two preconditions to be able to participate: project participants were not allowed to show their faces nor to give about any information about their educational background, family background, or job. Gu's intention in requiring participants not to show their faces or provide personal information was to make them concentrate on each other as individuals, that is, on their personality and stories rather than circumstances or social status.

Gu also set the precondition that participants needed to follow particular guidelines. The people who actively participated in the event became connected to each other as they passed around a string of red knitting wool (Figure 32). This string represented the connections between human beings. According to Gu, in China there is a myth that people who are destined to meet are connected to each other with a red string. The artist made the participants play with the red string and then at the end, when two persons came to hold a same string at both ends of the string, they became a couple that would conduct more conversation in a private space (Figure 31).



Figure 31. Minja Gu. Happily Ever After (2010), Detail Cut 1.



Figure 32. Minja Gu. Happily Ever After (2010), Detail Cut 2.

After this step, Gu provided the participants with a bunch of question cards. The questions were designed to help people get an idea of their partner's character, taste, or propensities. One question asked, "What would you do if you didn't take your wallet with you from home?" Other questions were: "If you hurried in the morning and you recognized that you were wearing mismatched shoes in the subway, what would you do?" "Where would you prefer to honeymoon?" and "If you had \$1000, what would you want to do with it?" Participants could ask each other more questions to continue their conversation as long as they did not ask about background information but rather personality, character, and propensity.

In this project Gu took a stand against the standard stereotypes we tend to have and judgments we tend to make when we meet others. Relative to cultural diversity issues, Gu asserted that there is no one who is ordinary; rather there are only individuals who live their own lives.

Gu stated in personal interview:

It is very important to meet people without any prejudice. I don't know the reason for that but there is a tendency like when we introduce someone, we explain about the educational background or family background of the person first, such as what cultural background she or he has, or what family background he or she has, or which school he or she is from. However, this thing cannot come first if we are to know about people.
(personal communication, March, 14, 2014)

In truth, this blind date project functioned as a real blind date. Anyang is a city where many immigrants live. Because it is culturally diverse, this project provided a meaningful message to this community and even other communities about the need for us to see people as they are and without preconceptions.

In a personal interview, Gu explained more about the theme of her work:

I'm interested in things which people take for granted...the frame of the society? It could be my perspective on other people or society. Here what I mean by a perspective does not mean my own perspective; rather it could be understood as perspectives made by society. I would like to make them think about those things again and let them know that those frames or systems are made by society. For example, we can think of words in our daily lives; we simply say 'foreign artists' or 'foreigners,' or I am told 'Usually foreign artists do things like that...' or 'Korean artists usually work in that way.' Actually, there is no such

existence we can define or express by one word. Foreign artists? Then which country? Can we just simply say someone is a foreign artist if she or he comes from other countries? I think we CAN'T... if we think of how many countries exist in the world and how many people live in this society individually. Even some people live in the same country, so they might share some similarities, but still they are different individuals. Let's say that the artist is from India, then can we talk about him or her with only the content of India? It could be a partial influence on who he or she is...then after all, I think that it is all individuals. Maybe it is caused by limitations of language...but still I think we cannot understand a person within simple meaning (something implies certain meaning which is already made) of words or their country. This also makes me think about statistical data. The national statistical office of Korea announced that the birthrate in Korea is 1.6. However, it is just a number. Someone has three children but someone else might not have any. Then what do those data mean...we take the data as the standard to compare and contrast with each other...Another example is...I am asked, 'What do Koreans think about (certain topic)?' Then I feel flustered to answer...since I have to guess what other Koreans might think about it...My thoughts cannot represent of all Koreans and also those certain statistical data do not fit my life. (personal communication, March, 14, 2014)

Gu work concerns fixed ideas that exist in society, ideas that make people see things in a narrow way by thinking within certain frames the society has made. We use expressions like “foreign” or “Korean culture” but at a deeper level, these expressions have only limited or shallow meaning. The masks in Gu’s work support her beliefs. She explained why she used the mask in relation to her theme:

Masks have an important meaning in this project. Those masks are a copy of the average Korean’s face. There was a study to calculate length, wide, the height of nose, etc. of Koreans' faces and present an exemplary face as the average appearance of Koreans. There may be someone who looks like this mask, but I'm pretty sure that there might be no one who looks exactly like the mask. Then does it have any meaning to create a certain face?

She said that through this project she found that all kinds of information is out there and that we have certain ideas in common but we cannot just accept them as the truth. In her work, Gu is

asking us to reconsider these ideas as active thinkers. As a result of this project, three couples were made on that day.



Figure 33. Minja Gu. Happily Ever After (2010), Installation View.

Interpretation

This is a community participatory project that Gu designed for the city of AnYang. She is asking question—not only of herself but also other—about what we accept as natural, what we believe is common, and whether the standards we apply are correct or even appropriate. Through this work, she is asking whether the images we typically have about certain types of people really reflect those people or whether we see them through a certain lens or predefined concepts we have gained from society. In the process of asking these questions, she tries to explore how people's thoughts are locked within narrowly structured images developed over the history of our society. Her work provides viewers with the opportunity to realize the extent to which their perceptions are intentionally or unintentionally fastened within socially existing concepts so they have the opportunity to break through their prejudices and find their own images.

Gu found the interface between her theme and expressive method by making it a performance. She invited single people who are living in that community and who are actually having a problem meeting someone to date. Though she designed this project as a blind date she had two requirements for those who wished to participate. They could not share any personal

background information and they had to wear a mask. In the project, the mask is the symbol of protection from premature judgments of others based on socially acceptable concepts related to job, economic status, or appearance. Instead of showing their faces and telling each other about their backgrounds, participants used question cards to begin a conversation focused on personal tendencies, values, and tastes. The whole process and the structure of the project shows how we can approach each other differently to know more about others as individuals rather than anything else.

This work represents Gu's social activism in Korean society by designing a participatory project in a real-life situation that contains an important theme related to culture, diversity, and individuality. What she tries to do in her project is to ask people not to judge people according to socially constructed concepts but rather focus on who people really are. She sharply criticizes social categories and standards that create certain types of negative images of people. She is against fixed ideas, predefined concepts, or social systems made for convenience. In her interview, however, she told me that she is a bit worried about her way of involving people in the project, because she leads it and takes an active role in its design and enactment. The more she thinks about it, the more she sees how the guidelines or frame she sets for the project also is a product of her perceptions, and so can be understood as another type of system that shapes the ideas of others.

This project provides food for thought concerning cultural diversity issues in South Korean society, where so many different groups of people live together. Because there is no one who is exactly same as anyone else we should be open to differences and to seeing people without socially-influenced preconceptions that can hinder the creation of relationships between people. This work also comments on the meanings of the concepts *average* and *usual*. As she emphasized in her personal interview, there are no typical answers to questions about what South Koreans do in a particular situation or what South Korean artists think about? As she noted, these are questions she only could answer by imagining what other Koreans might think about. Her use of a mask designed to conform to the average Korean face also pointed to the uselessness of such concepts. This idea may be subtle but may have many impacts on society at large.

Minja Gu II: *Atlantic - Pacific co.*



Figure 34. Minja Gu. *Atlantic-Pacific co.* (2012). Performance, Installation, Mixed Media, Kumho Museum, South Korea.

Reaction

This work reminds me of the classrooms in schools I went to because of the green wall. It looks to me like a giant chalkboard that extends throughout most of the classroom. In addition, a monumentally big table sits in the middle and the clocks on the wall remind me of the environment of my classroom. On the shelves, there are a great variety of products. Just by looking at the picture, I cannot tell exactly what kinds of products are being displayed. The room also reminds me of a small grocery store or the kinds of stores that sold miscellaneous goods in my old neighborhood where I loved to go as a child. The environment of modern classrooms has changed with technology and major companies have now taken over most small stores, so it is a bit hard to see these kinds of scenes anymore. The picture then awakened in me a sense of nostalgia about my childhood.

Description

Visual description. The most obvious thing in the scene is the giant cube-shaped table in the middle of the space and the letters *Atlantic - Pacific co.* written on the front of the table. One side of the body of the table is blocked, so I cannot see inside of it. The space contains several pieces of furniture including a table, two shelves, and all different kinds of small colorful stuff. There is also one easel-shaped wooden stand hanging a small carpet on it in the right side of the space. The brightness of the space is a bit dark and something like a pin light over the table seems to make it more obvious and prominent in the space. In contrast to the table, the back is a big green wall on which four clocks hang conspicuously. In front of the wall, there are two tall shelves containing many diverse and interesting groceries and miscellaneous goods displayed together. The many different products are well organized and have a mix of all different vivid colors. When looking more closely at the goods on the shelves, I can see that there are source bottles, two pairs of gloves, candies, chocolates, dry noodles, herbal teas, coffee, dolls, and more. A mid-sized orange suitcase sits in partial darkness on the floor next to the shelf on the left. On the table in the middle there are several bowls, including a clear one and a white one. Besides the bowls, a box is on the table.

There is not obvious negative space in the photograph, but the table, shelves, and products on them are more obvious and noticeable in contrast with the dark color of the back walls. It is not easy to recognize the stand on which a small carpet hangs since there is much light there. My eyes first moved to the table and then to the back to look at the colorful small things on the shelves and the clocks on the wall. This space is very opened to viewers because they can approach the work from any direction.

The mood of the work is communicative, juicy with stories, and curious. To me, the way in which the products are organized is different from what I used to see in markets. I can see that the artist organized the items to make the viewers wonder about the function of the space and the collection of products displayed. It appears that the products are different and from different places and that each may have a different reason for being there. I feel that this work is intellectual since Gu responded to her own way of understanding the theme and chose a way of organizing the goods to create harmony among the differences. The way Gu used color to create more contrast between the front of the space and the back makes this installation and its atmosphere seem grand.

Contextual examination. This art installation was inspired by the names of streets in Brooklyn, New York. When Gu participated in a residency program in New York, she was invited to the home of a friend who is an artist, where she stayed overnight and then emerged to the street in the morning. This neighborhood was unfamiliar to her and because it was morning, she decided to look around the streets to feel the atmosphere of the community. During her walk, she noticed that the street sign said Atlantic Avenue, and that the next street was named Pacific Street. In her personal interview, she told me that she was surprised and thought about the thinking of the enterprising Americans at that moment:

When I saw the name of the streets, I was thinking, like, who named it. Before I looked around, I did not recognize that there are many stores but after starting to walk on the street, I thought of a country, America. At first, I thought that the way, how to name those streets, might be evidence to show their identity of enterprise or to symbolize their tendency to explore the world. I said myself that ‘Ok, then let me explore it.’ Atlantic Avenue is a long street that starts in Brooklyn and ends in Queens, while Pacific Street is a short street. I walked on Atlantic Avenue from the end of the east side, and I realized that by following the street, I could see so many different stores and different cultural groups of people living there, including Indian, Mexican, Arab, Hipster, African-Americans and so on. I stopped by stores that looked unfamiliar to me or sold wired things, and I actually bought everything that I thought was wired, strange, or surprising. After I arrived the end of the street, I felt that I had come back from a world tour.
(personal communication, March 14, 2014)

The names of the streets made Gu think about oceans and scenes of big trading ships sailing across the sea, and she imagined the history behind the naming of those streets. Taking ocean exploration in the age of discovery as a starting point, Gu compared Atlantic Avenue and Pacific Street in Brooklyn to their respective oceans, and made herself an explorer of the land between the two streets. She visited almost every single store on both streets; including stores that sold products like herbs, coffee, oil, or tea for immigrants from South America, India, Nepal, and Islamic countries. In 2011, she founded the Atlantic-Pacific co. of New York, an imaginary international trading company specializing in rare products.

Gu obtained items from her expeditions on Atlantic Avenue and Pacific Street from a group of voyagers (native New Yorkers) as well as through her own devices, with the intent of

learning about area-specific customs and products. Her *Atlantic-Pacific co.* collection presented items from her fellow voyagers as well as a logbook telling the story of their explorations at 1040 Metropolitan Avenue (Figure 35) and Moore St. Market in Brooklyn (Figure 36).

Gu's *Atlantic-Pacific co.* is an ongoing project. One of the curators, H. Kim (2011), stated,

Atlantic-Pacific co. is the name of a trading company which was established by the artist. The artist found two streets names Atlantic Avenue and Pacific street in Brooklyn during her residency at the International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) in New York. Lining these streets, there are many shops selling a lot of traditional food, ingredients, and products from different countries. In reference to the exploration during the age of discovery, the artist pioneered new places for exploration of the streets of New York and during expeditions collected rare products that were found on Atlantic Avenue and Pacific Street. Then she presented them in a shop.

Over several years, the *Atlantic Pacific co.* project has expanded. The first two installations were held in Brooklyn but after she returned to South Korea, Gu opened the store again at the Kumho Museum (Figure 34) and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (Figure 37) in South Korea.



Figure 35. Minja Gu. *Atlantic-Pacific co.* (2011), 1040 Metropolitan Avenue, Brooklyn, November 2-6.



Figure 36. Minja Gu. *Atlantic-Pacific co.* (2011), Moore Street Market Store, December 2-31.

Viewers actually can buy products from the *Atlantic Pacific co.* installations. This is a part of her work of art. A detailed schedule for the *Atlantic-Pacific co.* installation and performance follows:

- First store opened at 1040 Metropolitan Avenue, Brooklyn, NY from November 3-6, 2011.
- Second store opened at 110 Moore Street, Brooklyn, NY, December 8-31, 2011
- Third store opened at Kumho Museum, Seoul, South Korea, July 4-August 26, 2012
- Fourth store opened at National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, South Korea, March 30-June 22, 2013.



Figure 37. Minja Gu. *Atlantic-Pacific co.* (March-June, 2013). Museum of Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, South Korea.



Figure 38. Minja Gu. *The Products of the Atlantic, Atlantic-Pacific co* (2011). Catalog.

I asked Gu about the meaning of the four clocks hanging on the wall in the installation scene at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art. Gu answered that there is a different time in the Atlantic region than in the Pacific region, and another in New York, and another in South Korea. Besides the installation, she also presented drawings of Atlantic Avenue on one side of the exhibition space.

In the personal interview, I asked Gu if her participants actually bought goods and what they said about the store. She answered:

When I started this work, I was interested in the identity of America which is implied in naming streets, then I thought that each country has a different view of the world and also has its own identity incautiously permeating through the society...and in the process, I recognized various stores on the same avenue and collected products which showed cultural diversity as a symbol. Actually nowadays, it is easy to find product imports from abroad but it might be difficult in rural areas. Cultural diversity exists in our lives and is influenced by the rapid expansion of trade. I think these are efforts by contemporary society to help people want to enjoy different cultures nearby. We already have international cultures in our society. By chance, I realized that people from different cultural backgrounds reacted differently to particular objects. For some people, certain products bring back their memories of childhood, and for others, the products represent different cultures that they can meet indirectly in this way. (personal communication, March 14, 2014)

Even though she explored only one avenue and one street, Gu was impressed by how diverse cultures coexist in one place and how the names of the streets reveal something about the characteristic cultural diversity of American society and their attitudes toward that.

Interpretation

The *Atlantic Pacific co.* is an imagery trade company Gu founded in response to her experience exploring a small area of Brooklyn, New York. She made an assumption that this is a company founded in New York that now still exists and sells many different products in many places. She showed all kinds of different products collected from Atlantic Avenue and Pacific Street and this was her reflection after experiencing these two streets full of diverse cultures.

Gu's initial goal was to explore an unfamiliar area in Brooklyn by walking down two streets named Atlantic and Pacific. These names made her want to explore the area as well as

how Americans gave these streets names on such a big scale. She assumed that these names might reflect the identity of America and its perspective towards the world. After exploring the long avenue from the east to west and until it ended, she felt at the last moment that she had traveled the world, with so many stores selling products from all different countries. She found that in following the avenue she saw, along with the various cultural products, many groups of people from different cultures living together. From the atmosphere of cultural diversity on the avenue and the single experience/moments she faced in her journey she created a collection of products.

Gu expressed her experience by opening of a company that allows her to show the results of exploring various cultures in a single location. In her store she can share and communicate her experiences with viewers by selling this variety of products. Her installation and performance are a communicative or socially active way of showing an American perspective towards the world and cultural diversity, and how one might react to cultural differences. Gu made a collection of her experiences by buying products that represent a small version of the cultural diversity of Atlantic Avenue. She did not just keep those experiences as a memory or buy souvenirs, rather she opened the store to show them to others and meet people and see what they think about it. She opened the store first in her studio and another space in Brooklyn, and then moved it to South Korea and opened the store again to see how South Koreans would react to it. She believes that the participation of viewers can complete or remake the meaning of art, so she regards their actions as an important part of any art project. She made it possible for viewers to actually buy items from the collections, adding a small amount of money for the labors of the artist, and she documented the process of selling objects, meeting people, and participating in dialogue.

This is the journey on which Gu embarked in order to understand identity and characteristics of American society. For Gu, Brooklyn is a place she is unfamiliar with since she grew up and studied in South Korea. When she noticed the names of the streets in the neighborhood she was walking through, she imagined a certain historical story about the neighborhood, and found a way to interpret and understand the characteristics of the environment that was personally meaningful to her. Her work is an active performance of her experience of unfamiliar things and other cultures. A second meaning of her work is that it represents her way of finding and exploring meanings in a society. When she opened the store in New York, people

came to it and told stories related to specific products. Many people were from outside of the country and lived in the United States as immigrants. They were very happy to see products in Gu's installation that made them nostalgic about their home country. For the artist, then, the products are records of her exploration and experience of an unfamiliar space, while for people from other countries living in New York the products are a nostalgic symbols. For South Korean viewers, the collected products were ethnic objects that enabled them to meet other cultures. Therefore, the project had different meanings and points of view depending on the viewer/participant. Overall, it can be said that Gu's works are communications between different cultures, people, communities, and the artist herself in different cultures.

Gu's work shows how just one avenue in Brooklyn, various cultures from all over the world coexist and culturally diverse people share their lives. Her active way of approaching this understanding may give us some ideas about who we approach to understand others. At her stores in NY, the artist realized that people visited to store to share life stories or memories related to the exotic products and all communication was naturally exchanged. When she opened the store in South Korea, however, many visitors came and bought products, since those products looked new and culturally different to them. Over the course of the show in South Korea, many parents visited the gallery and brought their sons and daughters. In this way, the show functioned on an educational level as well. Gu's work also shows how certain objects take on cultural, symbolic, and even aesthetic value in different contexts and how the meaning of objects can be remade through communication with viewers/buyers.

Minja Gu III: *The World of Job*

Reaction

This picture reminds me of people who advertise products by holding a placard on the street (Figure 39). The Chinese characters written on the board and an unfamiliar- looking license plate on the back of the car make me think that this picture was taken in another country than South Korea. Some of the people passing by Gu are looking at her but there is no conversation between them. This scene is quiet and nothing is happening, yet it makes me tense at the same time.



Figure 39. Minja Gu. *The World of Job* (2008), Photographic documentation, Camera and Support: Yun Sabi. Taipei Biennial.

Description

Visual description. The most obvious thing in the picture is the woman holding a white board as she stands on the street. On the board are Chinese characters written in various colors. She is standing on the roadside and leaning on the yellow railing along the street. Also, an evening glow comes from behind her, indicating that this moment occurred in the evening time. It makes me think that she has been standing there for quite a while and as the evening time comes on she is getting a bit tired. Her face looks embarrassed to be standing there. Several people are passing by her, including an old man, a father, and a boy wearing a balloon hat. Down the street we can see people who are taking some time to have a drink with others. The space behind her seems to be a parking lot in which several people are standing. All things taken together, I think that this is a residential district where many families live. She is wearing a sleeveless shirt and sandals, and the people passing by her are also wearing sleeveless shirts and short pants. Therefore, I can assume this picture was taken in summer or in a country in hot area.

To people living in that area, the woman who is holding the white board looks a stranger. Both the boy wearing a red balloon hat and the old woman on the far left side of the picture are looking at her. The woman with the white board is also looking them as she holds her display. She caught my eyes first because of the colorful board, after which my eyes moved to the red balloon hat and yellow t-shirt of the boy. The angle, the line of the street, and her line of sight automatically drive the viewers' eyes to move from right to left and also lead the viewer to observe people along that line. Then the eyes stop at the full-sized van in the background. The mood of the picture is a bit boring, lethargic, and quiet. In the evening of a hot day, the woman continues to show her message though the people on the street actually do not pay attention to what she is doing. This scene feels to me like fatigue, cringe-worthiness, and humidity. This picture is realistic but I cannot get any idea of what she is really doing or saying through this picture. The dazzling light on the upper edge of the right side adds to the calm and quiet of the scene.



Figure 40. Minja Gu. *The World of Job* (2008), Photographic Documentation, Detail Cut 1.



Figure 41. Minja Gu. *The World of Job* (2008), Photographic Documentation, Detail Cut 2.

In the picture on the left (Figure 40), contrast to the above picture which the mood is quite and everybody in the situation is doing their own thing (Figure 41), this picture gives me a productive feeling. She is sitting in the chair attached to a round pole and she is talking with a middle-aged man. She is holding the same white board, but the edge of the board is decorated with red and pink flowers. Further, she is putting her board in a green handcart. She seems to be explaining something based on her body language and that of the man listening carefully. There are more people passing by them, but unlike the man, they do not pay attention to what is going

on in the middle. The motorcycle and store in the background suggest that this is a commercial area.

In the picture on the right, Gu is standing in front of a building. She is looking directly at the camera lens and showing her pleasure. She is hooraying and displaying a big smile on her face. From her gestures and facial expressions, I can guess that she got what she was waiting for or she achieved what she tried for.

Contextual examination. This is Gu's documentary photographic work entitled *The World of Job*, created in 2008. Gu went to Taiwan for a short time to create a work for an exhibition. In personal interview, she told me that she was inspired by the environment and the things that happened in it. She has visited many countries and cities in South Korea. Usually, she goes to different places for work and when she visits a place, she spends some time just making the adjustment. Actually, this time in an unfamiliar place gives her ideas for work. Taipei was such a place. When she went to Taipei she met a woman who had come there for a job. The woman told her about how much she struggled to settle down in Taipei and become accepted by society since she was a foreigner who could not speak Chinese. This woman reminded her about people who come to South Korea from other countries in order to find a job. She decided to put herself in their shoes. She made a sign with several Chinese characters she knows and went out on the street to appeal to the public for a job. She explained about this work on her website:

Based on the story of an aboriginal woman who arrived in Taipei 40 years ago to make a living, I decided to seek a job in Taipei. As a foreigner who did not speak their language, Chinese, I went around to look for a job with a sign that read 'Finding a job is urgent, speaking South Korean and English, in good health...' using the few Chinese character I know. After two weeks, I got a job taking care of an old lady. (www.guminja.com)

Critic H. Kim discussed Gu's the *World of Job*:

One work of hers, *World of a Job* in 2008, documents the process of getting a job in Taiwan. The artist accidentally met and had a conversation with a woman who had lived for forty years in Taipei since she moved there to get a job. So the artist decided to try to find a job by herself. Because she cannot speak Chinese she hung a sign asking for a job in a park and on a street, and two weeks later she barely got a job taking care of an old woman. In this work the artist defines her work as experiencing the reality of an unfamiliar place in the role of a foreign worker. (www.guminja.com)

World of a Job reminds me of foreign workers and women who marry South Korean men and now live in South Korea as wives and mothers. These are the major scenarios behind the increase in the number of immigrants in South Korean society, a situation that has become a driving force in bringing multicultural issues to the forefront in South Korean society. This performance is her way of presenting social issues that we need to reconsider as she did, by putting herself in someone else's shoes. She spent two weeks finding a job and finally got one for two hours one day taking care of someone's mother. The man told Gu that his mother found it difficult to do things alone since she was quite old and could not move well. The artist took her to the market and helped her purchase her groceries and then take them back for her. (See Figure 43).



Figure 42. Minja Gu. *The World of Job* (2008). Photographic Documentation, Detail Cut 3.



Figure 43. Minja Gu. *The World of Job* (2008), Photographic Documentation, Detail Cut 4.

In her personal interview, the artist told me that she was worried about what would happen if she ended up not getting a job.

According to Beak (2009),

Minja Gu is asking about *The End*. Gu's work starts from the final moment such as the final credits moving up on the black background after the screening of a movie or the applause for the last runner in a marathon race. I can feel that Gu's work does not force viewers to turn their heads to the spaces that we do not recognize in our daily lives; rather

her works make us feel that those spaces are within our eyeshot. She does her thing in a space but her work strongly pulls objects into our sights. (<http://cafe.naver.com/spacessee>)

Interpretation

Gu's experimental performance was held in Taiwan, the place where the work was originally initiated when she there for an exhibition. Actually she had some ideas about cultural diversity before she left but when she got there, she met a old lady who had come to Taiwan for a job. The woman told Gu about the hardships she faced, because her language was different, when she sought to become part of Taiwanese society. This conversation naturally made Gu think of the foreign workers in South Korea who are mostly from Southeast Asian countries. The number of foreign workers is increasing at a rapid rate and their treatment by native Koreans is not good. Gu wondered how similar their experiences are to those of the woman she met.

This inspiration led Gu to put herself in the shoes of the foreign workers, both figuratively and literally. She decided to become a foreign worker in Taiwan and experience their hardness, toughness, desperation, and even their braveness. She went out to some public places where many people pass by and after two long weeks finally got a job to helping an old lady with her grocery shopping. Gu became a social activist highlighting a social issue and she became a host for the work. By wearing the shoes of a foreign worker in Taiwan, Gu was able to create artworks based on her investigation and self-exploration and in so doing, comment on the real situation of foreign workers in South Korean society.

Gu used pictures to present the process of her performance and real participation in this social issue, but it actually took her two weeks to accomplish her purpose. It was not at all easy to go out on the street and conduct this process for such a long time. Her work has an implied meaning about labor as an artist. In an interview with Marsh (2012) she stated,

“Labor” in artworks usually means how much work the artist did painting paintings or making sculptures...what I am more interested in is how to match the general meaning of labor and the making of artworks, and how labor can be handled as an artwork in and of itself, also, what artists are doing, and what they can do in terms of labor. In fact, art often seems unproductive because the value of the artwork and labor is very different in general. Perhaps because the value of productive labor in society affects me indirectly, my works directly address “labor” by becoming part of the artwork, also I create labor as an artwork in the process of creating them. (<http://sitecited.com/2013/gu-minja/>)

Her method of work shows where labor in general work and labor in the art world can meet. This method of presentation takes more time and requires more effort, but for Gu it is a way of presenting the realities of society more clearly. When one really experiences something, one can more accurately and realistically describe the context in which it has occurred. Therefore, even though her participation in the work might have been hard for Gu, I support her effort and seriousness of purpose.

For Gu, this performance was a way of participating in a social issue with the responsibility of a socially active artist. She used her position to make connections between social issues that South Koreans have paid enough attention to. Her work highlighted the people in the issues. Through her strong performance as an artist, Gu represented those workers and other people who leave their home countries in search of a better life. The growth in the number of foreign workers in South Korean society is now a big issue. Though they came to South Korea for a job on TV we see mainly bad news associated with them. This tendency of the media creates negative perceptions of immigrants and makes their lives even harder. Gu could have worked with another topic that could have been more easily sold but she went to Taiwan to have an exhibition and what she paid attention to was the issue of foreign workers. Her brave decision and commitment as a social activist artist is admirable, and her work works provides food for thought for contemporary artists who may wish to take a role as social communicators and reflectors.

Gu's work points to the necessity of paying attention to issues about foreign workers. In South Korean society, however, there are two other immigrant groups who come up when cultural diversity issues are discussed, that is, women who come to get married, and foreign workers who leave behind a family in their home country. Women who come to marry and make a family in South Korea can be expected to have more concern about the future of their children, and so, the future of the country. The other group of foreign workers is more readily stereotyped in a negative way, however, and so encounter bad treatment or offensive perceptions of them. Of course in any society there are minority and majority groups. In that immigrants, multicultural, multiracial, and native-born Koreans all share the same time and place, however, it is reasonable to ask that majority individuals work to become more open to people from different cultural backgrounds and respect their hard work and efforts to create better lives for their families. Gu's

action as an artist, of putting on another shoes, may suggest a worthy approach for multicultural art educators who is to address cultural diversity issues in South Korean society.

Evaluation of the Combined Artworks of Minja Gu

Gu expresses the reality that our perceptions of other people and cultures is intentionally or unintentionally affected by social prejudices. She points to the possible application of art as a means of integrating and appreciating the diverse population entering South Korean society. For Gu, one way to do this was to perform and restructure particular pieces of everyday life to emphasize the deeper parts of its reality.

Rethinking existing concepts. In order to express that certain social concepts already exist without our recognizing them, Gu symbolized existing social assumptions in the simple visual expression of a mask of composed of the average appearance of South Korean people. Viewers can easily become aware of assumptions about normality that are unconsciously accepted as a social standard in South Korea. In the work *Happily Ever After* (2010), Gu demonstrated that people are more likely to understand others when certain aspects that can somehow cause prejudice are excluded. In other words, she conveys that preconceived notions interfere and block our direct understanding of people as individuals, and that we can have a better understanding of the deeper nature of people and cultures without these preconceptions. In an art class, this kind of work can help show students how prejudice can unintentionally interfere with our recognition and judgments of others and how they can see others more liberally without such prejudices.

Emphasis on individuality. In *Happily Ever After* (2010), the performance of wearing a mask connoting the average appearance of South Koreans, which ironically is so difficult to find in the real world, prevented participants from judging the others in the performance according to the general social standards. After removing this barrier, participants began to listen more carefully to others and more actively express themselves. This outcome indicates that individuals can look to the more profound nature of others when they are free of the conditions set by certain standards. This insight is especially important in the young adult art classroom, where students with various cultural backgrounds may wish to overcome the limits of social prejudice and become more accepting of individuality and cultural diversity.

Discovery of diverse societies. Gu told us her story of discovering diverse society through the second work *Atlantic-Pacific co.*(2011 - 2013). In the *Atlantic – Pacific co*, Gu is not

only the artist but also the person who was surprised at diverse cultures existed even on the limited area, two streets of New York City, and moreover at herself who was grown up mostly in South Korea and surprised to see diverse cultures in short time. She showed us that people in US and South Korea would like to meet the cultural diversity finding how well their own culture harmonize among others and how joyful to encounter something different from theirs.

Actively exploring cultural diversity. The third work of Gu's that was analyzed, *The World of Job* (2008), is a social activist performance in which she steps into the shoes of another in order understand the reality of a group of multicultural people in South Korean society. Through documentary photographs, Gu gives us the opportunity to explore cultural diversity from the point of view of the foreigner.

Summary

This chapter contained a critical analysis of the authentic contexts for three selected works by each of the three contemporary South Korean artists selected for this study. For the contextual analysis, the four stages of Anderson & Milbrandt's art criticism model were applied and each work of the artists was analyzed with the same attention to the themes encompassed by the study. The selected artists under study, Jeongmee Yoon, Eunjeong Lee, and Minja Gu, all explored cultural diversity issues in South Korea's modern multicultural society through their works, stimulating others to explore their preconceptions and judgments and perhaps even change their actual behavior. In the next chapter I will synthesize the insights gained from the analysis in order to answer the research questions and suggest areas for further study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents insights and conclusions about cultural diversity issues in South Korea from the analysis of artworks in their authentic contexts by three contemporary South Korean artists. As I moved through the process of answering the questions associated with the first major line of inquiry I was led to general conclusions about the nature and impact of the thematic content and visual/physical qualities of the artists' work in the context of South Korean society. Similarly, my analysis of data related to the second major question led to ideas about how students may effectively address cultural diversity issues through art education in South Korea. Finally, the chapter includes suggestions for further study in this area.

Answering the Procedural Supporting Research Questions

Q1: What is the thematic content of the three artists' works?

The selected three works of Jeongmee Yoon are a visual documentary-style record of her reflections on her observations and experiences. Her works describe and ask viewers about social and cultural issues in the context of their interpretation of the culture and the influence of media and industry on it. *Korea at New York Public Library* (2004) shows how cultures explain and represent other cultures from various perspectives depending on whose lens is used to interpret the material and how media describes it. Her experience of finding the 12 files about South Korea at a prominent library led her to actually experience how the social and cultural context of a country can be variously -interpreted according to one's particular perspective. Yoon conveyed how media and subjective perceptions may work as inappropriate filters of information about a society and culture, and lead to cultural misunderstandings. An important insight Yoon gained was that this same self-centered perspective may shape our views about our own culture as well. Her work, then, provides a model for how viewers might rethink cultural information on other countries as well as their own.

In the second work by Yoon, *Insa-dong*, the authenticity and originality of traditional culture were explored. A beloved street in South Korean traditional art and culture, Insa-dong is now changing to a commercial area and losing its originality under the weight of industrial and commercial imperatives. Yoon's work asks viewers to consider the significance of traditional culture and what it means to people living in a contemporary society. Interestingly, her research

pointed to the powerful desire of people to come to Insa-dong in spite of the changes that have undermined its authenticity and originality.

Yoon's *Pink and Blue Project* shows the potent influence of industry and popular culture in the lives of children and, by extension, parents. Her photographs inspire viewers to think about how the dichotomous standards for boys and girls arose and the extent to which they adhere to this standard themselves. Through *The Pink and Blue Project*, Yoon encouraged viewers to see the influence of commercialism in daily life and examine the role of color as a reinforcer of gender.

Eunjeong Lee commented on cultural diversity issues in South Korean society through portraits of multicultural individuals who are members of a multi-generational family right in her midst. Lee used mysterious watercolor tones to express the inherent ambiguity in the social position of these women as well as to draw people's attention, giving the portraits deeply symbolic meanings.

In the work *Okee-ssi 3* (2012) Lee presents a woman from Vietnam who now lives as the wife of a South Korean man and the mother of a multicultural daughter. Lee's conversations with the woman (who speaks fluent Korean) gave depth to her depiction of the woman, who is apprehensive about meeting parents at her daughter's elementary school for fear of disapproval. The context for this situation is broadened and textured, however, when we learn that such disapproval may have its roots in conservative views derived from historical conflicts.

Lee's work *Hanna I* (2012) continues this theme as a portrait of a girl from a multicultural family, with a Vietnamese mother and a South Korean father. Lee's meetings with other mothers of such children opened her eyes to the depth of their worries for the future of their children. Despite facing and solving many difficulties as immigrants, they hold hope that the circumstances of their children's generation will be better.

Lee's *Women at Akwanwon* (2013) was inspired by the stories of four generations of Korean-Chinese women living and running a restaurant business in the her neighborhood. This work reflects her discovery that recent multicultural issues, though now widely discussed in South Korea, are actually not new. In fact, groups composed of individuals from different multicultural backgrounds have lived in Korea since the 18th century. Through the work *Women at Akwanwon*, she broadens the public discussion of one of the major social issues facing South

Korean society today. Thus, with her work, she takes the role of communicator of issues in her community through art.

The art of Minja Gu expresses the reality that our perceptions of other people are influenced, intentionally or unintentionally, by social prejudices. Her work suggests that viewers rethink many of the socially constructed systems and common assumptions about culture by which we live. Moreover, it shows how art can be used to help us to reconsider the presence of diverse co-cultures within societies by restructuring and performing pieces of everyday life to emphasize their unpleasant reality. In *Happily Ever After* (2010), Gu pointed out the preconceptions that may hinder the development of relationships when people meet others. She did this by designing a community participatory project in which participants wore masks and followed rules that enabled them to meeting others without knowledge of their formal backgrounds but with an eye to their personality, taste, and natural behavior—the qualities that express our individuality.

In her *Atlantic–Pacific co.* project, Gu explored cultural diversity in a place that was unfamiliar to her. She then shared her experiences with others, and provided an opportunity for them to experience a variety of cultures in turn. Her work enabled her to observe how people reacted to objects with characteristics of exotic cultures. By installing the project in different places and different countries, she highlighted the desire of people to experience cultural diversity and enjoy it. In the *Atlantic–Pacific co.* project, Gu made unfamiliarity a pleasure and educational commodity.

In *The World of Job* Gu executed, in my view, active participatory research using the methods of the artist. She put herself in the role of an immigrant who seeks and needs a job in a different culture. Gu opened herself to this idea on a trip to Taiwan, where a woman she met reminded her of the many people who come from other countries to find work in South Korea and find themselves in very difficult circumstances. Her effort reflected her desire to driving people to pay attention to this issue.

Though all of the artists studied presented the themes in their work in different ways, all expressed ideas related to cultural diversity both generally and particularly in relation to current cultural diversity issues in South Korean society. Clearly, these three artists share the belief that artists need to actively raise themes related to social and cultural issues by reflecting their experiences. In this way, they play an important role in improving society by leading viewers to

pay attention to the issues expressed through their works. Their different approaches of expressive techniques and styles are described below, followed by the personal and social meanings of their works, and the synthesis of their thematic context.

Q 2: What are the compositional, technical, and stylistic qualities the artists use to express that thematic content?

By their nature, artists have a unique capability to reflect their sense of being in place and community, and the experiences accumulated from their life experiences, in visual format. As examined in the literature review, some scholars have emphasized the artists' creative abilities of expression. Dewey (1934) noted the value of the artist in being able to deliver one experience to another, and attach those experiences to our common daily lives. Goldblatt (2006) also emphasized the capacity of the artist to transfer intelligent insights into shaped and formed expressions with quality. Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr (1996) also asserted that artists both present the real world and imagines the world by understanding reality in their own way. Even though Yoon, Lee, and Gu deliver social and cultural issues related to contemporary society, then, the art format each artist uses to express herself is distinct.

Yoon, for example, used photography as the primary media for presenting her discoveries in regard to cultural diversity in South Korea. In a personal interview on March 10, 2014, Yoon told me she prefers photography because of its reproductive, momentary, documentary, and realistic characteristics. She also noted that the steps she takes in creating her work are somewhat atypical. She does not first get an idea and then choose her materials accordingly; rather, she observes her environment and finds ideas that she can present effectively through photography. She also observed that after taking a picture she often recognizes features that were not apparent in the original time and space. (personal communication, March 10, 2014).

In *Korea at New York Public Library (2004)*, Yoon used photography to create a visual documentary that viewers can follow, tracing her journey from the street to the front of the shelves where she discovers, and then opens, files containing photographs of her home country. By looking at these procedural photos, viewers can experience a sense of being with her. As a part of this work, Yoon also revealed what was inside the files, creating a video that actually delivered a message about cultural perceptions in a visually realistic and powerful way, driving viewers into an actual setting. In this way, she makes viewers feel that the issue she presents is not about an imagined world but is about a real one. In *Insa-dong*, she also used photography as

a narrative visual document by which to describe her insights and make them objective and convincing through the presentation of many real cases. Her narrative photography documentary style is an effective way to illuminate issues about which people need to pay attention and rethink. Some of her photographic series take several years to create as she tracks down the phenomenon she wishes to capture. Her *Pink and Blue Project* is one of these. She captures moments in their current time and compares them to others in different times and locations. In personal conversation, Yoon emphasized that she considers photography to be fine art.

Lee's techniques and styles of painting give literal body to her thematic context. In her work, she portrays actual female members of her community, specifically women from different cultures who now live as wives and mothers in South Korean society, as well as their children. In her portraits she opens a door to the stories of multicultural families in South Korean society. Lee lived in France for two years, a time when she struggled with language and cultural differences and her role as a mother of children in unfamiliar cultural circumstances. This experience inspired her to listen to the life stories and difficulties of women in similar situations in South Korea. Lee's portraits present such women and children in dim tones so viewers can only see the subjects if they stand at some distance from the painting and take the time for the figure to emerge. Viewers who do this are rewarded when, after a while, their eyes start to recognize the figure in the portrait, which eventually becomes even clearer as time goes by.

This quality of Lee's portraits parallel many characteristics of problems connected to cultural diversity in South Korea. Even though these problems are serious, and represented in many aspects of our lives, we cannot see them clearly unless we carefully look at them. Lee symbolized the difficulties and different cultural identities of the subjects using the metaphors of bells, national flowers, and patterns in the background, but always the subjects were presented as mysterious. Lee chose traditional Korean materials for her purpose, a choice that added to the substantive content of her works.

Gu delivered her themes in an active way. She was interested in exploring the appropriateness of existing socially constructed systems, assumptions, and social concepts in people's actual lives. Depending on the details of her theme, she changed the format for her work and took a different role in its creation. In this sense, she generally uses materials in a more flexible way than many artists.

Gu shared that she does not consistently use fixed materials but rather changes materials depending on a topic, but that usually one media is not enough to visualize her idea (personal communication, March 14, 2014). In the work *Happily Ever After*, a community participatory project, she brought members of the community into the process of creating her artwork. By asking participants to wear masks and use a set of question cards to guide their conversation, she was able to meet the stated needs of the community and also provide an opportunity to rethink assumptions about status and culture that have long been accepted as a matter of course.

In her *Atlantic-Pacific co.* project, Gu used herself as an instrument by which to share what she had experienced in an unfamiliar cultural space and reflect what she had felt and thought while experiencing and exploring different cultures. In the work *The World of Job*, she experienced what it is like to find a job in different culture. Gu also used photography to document the process by which she conducted her project and performance. Like Yoon, Gu shared that she uses photography daily as a medium by which to record and observe every interesting and eye-catching item or experience she has in the daily life of her environment. The three artists studied, then, have dealt with various cultural diversity issues in South Korea by reflecting on their personal experiences, observing their surroundings, meeting other people, exploring differences, and so on. They choose media according to what they believe will help them most effectively express their themes. Thus, their art takes different forms and uses different techniques. In fact, the artists choose techniques and stylistic characters that enable others to participate in the process, take some time to look at works, and even make them a part of the art.

Q 3: What are the personal, physical, and social contexts of the artworks examined in this study?

The three artists under study reflected the issue of cultural diversity through the lens of their personal, physical, and social contexts. In personal interviews, I asked the artists what inspired them to have an interest in social and cultural issue. Jeongmee Yoon answered,

I am usually inspired by daily life elements including family, newspaper, movies and society. Also my experience of living in a different culture also influenced me to have an opportunity to look at myself, us, and my country of South Korea from an objective perspective and also help me see various social phenomena in it.... Is it common that people take only one's perspective to see oneself and social phenomenon? I have thought

that I am at the center of the society but the cultural experience of living a different country provided me to see things around me with an objective view. The political, social, and cultural problems in my physical location and environment (no matter whether it is South Korea or another country) are closely connected to my life, all the things that I faced in daily life influence my thinking, and they finally show up through my work. (personal communication, March 10, 2014)

The insights that inspired Yoon's works derived from her critical reflections and observations about her surroundings. As the mother of two children she began to look more carefully at the daily lives of those in her environment. Her physical location in New York City also provided inspiration for her works, since her preconceptions about people and subsequent cross-cultural experiences actually led to her interest in cultural differences.

Eunjeong Lee discussed the personal, physical, and social contexts at play in her work:

Actually, I was the type of artist who approached abstract themes emotionally, with a balanced composition and certain main techniques, but I noticed limitations as an artist myself. I continuously present themes that I can get from around me and a lot of discussion with my husband who is also an artist with a critical point of view naturally drove me to have interests in cultural diversity issues around me. Regarding of the work, from a behavioral aspect, I can solve my values, and I can talk about what I want to say...something, which is impossible to be expressed in any other way, but through art, and also something people do not listen. I think that this is a specialty that the artist takes to show things around us through my way. (personal communication, March 11, 2014)

Like Yoon, Lee is a mother of two children and has had the experience of living in a different culture. What she experienced in France as a female South Korean artist, as a mother, and as a wife had a great impact on her work, giving her a greater level of empathy for those who reside in countries as foreigners. By meeting people, conducting interviews, drawing them, and bringing them some rewards, she took on the role of a good communicator and mediator between people from the outside and other members of the community, as well as between people with multicultural backgrounds and native South Koreans.

Gu's three selected works reveal how she acted as a change agent in society through art. She told me in a personal interview:

To draw something nice or well may be not all about the job that the artist does; rather she is more interested in rethinking how the existing system is socially structured and ones' perspective in looking at others in society, since all of these are exposed in our thinking and also reflected in the meaning of words we use daily... after I had a niece, I began to think this way. As my niece grows more, her mother and I have to tell her every small thing that she needs to know to live in this society...girls may not do this, cross the street on a red light, little children do not go such place...and so on. Just small things...maybe she asks why...then we all think about why to give her answer. Like this, I'm questioning numerous existing concepts existing in this society [that are] adopted as normal, and looking at them from a different view or approach in another way of thinking. This is what I want to do as an artist. (personal communication, March 14, 2014)

In these remarks, Gu explained why, as an artist, she took a role as an active participant and explorer of cultural diversity and social problems. By recruiting community members to participate in an art project, she made the participants notice what she wanted to say both during and perhaps even after the project, but at the same time, this project delivered a message to society. Sometimes she takes a role as a main character in the work. Other times, she puts herself in a certain situation and does her work through performance in order to share a message with the public. The format for how she designs a project or performance is the media she uses for her work, but unlike many artists, Gu is the tool and the media by which she sees, explores, and presents her impressions of a phenomenon.

The three artists in this study use art as a tool by which to observe their surroundings, experience cultural diversity, reflect their experiences in a diverse society, present reflections, and gain people's attention. Grushka (2005) emphasized the position of artists in cultural and social contexts and their dual roles as reflective self-learners and cultural communicators, describing them as "the inventors, creators and maintainers of culture in a society" (p.353). Grushka went on to argue, "effective artists are able to position himself/herself as both creator and audience and through critical reflection validate self-knowledge and allow audiences to engage with a multiplicity of interpretive positions they present" (p. 354). It is noteworthy that this examination of the personal, physical, and social contexts of the works of the three artists supports Grushka (2005)'s ideas about the artist's place in society.

Q 4: What do the artists say about their work, especially related to cultural diversity?

In the interpretation and evaluation stage of the analysis of the artworks I was able to discover themes related to cultural diversity in South Korean society. Based on my examination of the selected artworks and the insights derived from the literature review, I discuss two components of these cultural diversity issues in South Korea. One involves the causes of the current multicultural situation of South Korea, and the other involves the artists' approaches to these problematic issues.

The Artists' Insights on Cultural Diversity Issues in South Korea

Recognizing the influence of industry on increased cultural diversity. Through their work, Yoon, Lee, and Gu all suggest that the development of industry, to a large degree, has brought about the changes that have made South Korea into a more multicultural society. Though the structure of the society has changed dramatically, it is difficult for people in South Korea to recognize how and why it has taken its current shape. The works of the three artists help people do just this, providing an opportunity for them to find this influence of industry in their daily lives. In *The Pink and Blue* and in the *Insa-dong* series, in particular, Yoon suggests that industry has influenced the way in which cultural diversity is expressed in contemporary society. In *Atlantic -Pacific co.*, Gu also displayed products from industry that were sold in a variety of small ethnic stores on a single street in Brooklyn.

Acknowledging the struggles of multicultural individuals in order to make change. Lee's and Gu's works focus on the stories of people from other countries who come to South Korea or on groups of people from other countries who long exist in Korea as a members of co-cultural communities. Lee's works *Okee-ssi 3*, *Hanna I*, and *Women at Akwanwon* all point directly to the various co-cultures living in South Korean communities, and Gu's *The World of Job* is a performance that directly brings the experience of foreign workers in the society to the public. These two artists strongly and pointedly interpreted the problems associated with the current status of multicultural individuals in South Korea with the intention of inspiring change.

Referencing global culture. The globalization that began in the last half of the 20th century has naturally and intentionally led to increased immigration to many developed countries and also the level of cultural diversity. Donati (2009) explained that this phenomenon produces distinctions within increasingly multicultural societies that are also linked to the inner dynamics of the native culture. In fact, most people enjoy cultural differences and even want to encounter

them, to some extent, in their daily lives. In Gu's work *Atlantic-Pacific co.*, as well as in her personal interview, she conveys a belief that an inflow of arts and culture from all over the world also has contributed to the multicultural quality of contemporary South Korean society.

Nowadays, in many countries throughout the world, it is not difficult to see exotic products from overseas and the food, clothes, music, movie, and art of other cultures. Gu sees this as caused by people's interest in cultural differences and a shared global culture brought about by media and industry. In *The Pink and Blue Project*, Yoon also makes reference to the global culture that children share.

Problematic Issues Related to Cultural Diversity

The influence of media on cultural understanding. Yoon pointed out in her work *South Korea at New York Public Library* that the images and information that are used to characterize a culture are always the result of some subjective choices, and that they can even be edited to show just one side of a culture. Since we all live in an Internet society and obtain a great portion of our information from broadcast and online media, our perceptions of other cultures can easily be skewed. If we only learn about a culture via information filtered by media, we gain only a partial sense of the culture, laying the groundwork for misunderstanding, stereotypes and even prejudice. Lee also highlighted the influence of media on our awareness of people from other cultures by stating how media describes them. Because our knowledge of other cultures is so important it is essential for students (and all of us) to learn to be critical when receiving information through media.

A self-centered point of view. The artists studied all agreed on the apparent human tendency to see others and even ourselves from a self-centered point of view. When we are situated in only a familiar environment, it is easy to look at our own circumstances as the norm and understand others from a one-sided perspective. As Banks (2008) noted, if we know the world only from our own cultural perspective, our "cultural blinders" keep us from really knowing our own culture as well as the cultures of others, and cause us to miss important cultural experiences. Interestingly, all of the artists in the study had cross-cultural experiences outside of South Korea that helped broaden their scope of understanding and their ideas about other cultures. Their experiences made them convinced that even though we may know our own culture well, we learn much more when step back and view it from enough of a distance to see it as a whole.

Less access to the authentic traditional culture. In South Korean society, traditional culture has long been regarded as the most important component of national identity. As multicultural issues become a major topic of public discussion, however, a movement emphasizing traditional culture has emerged. Yoon's investigation for the work *Insa-dong* revealed that this most well known place for preserving and experiencing South Korean traditional culture actually has come under the influence of capitalism and industry business. No longer the place it once was, the traditional culture that the place represents and offers to both foreign and domestic visitors does not represent authentic traditional culture of South Korea. In fact, the objects being sold in the place are mass-produced and even made in other countries.

Missing the uniqueness and originality of local culture. In the *Pink and Blue Project* and *Insa-dong series*, Yoon emphasized the issue of missing locality. The *Pink and Blue Project* presented how the consumerism and globalized culture created by the media and industry have influenced consumption in contemporary culture, especially among children. The two children in the pictures and their belongings seem to have many similarities even though they live in different locations and have different cultures. Yoon's works show how life patterns in contemporary society fail to represent localities. It is ironic that even though contemporary society has become widely multicultural it is also missing the uniqueness and originality of local culture.

Generalizations, prejudice vs. individuality. Through their works, Yoon and Gu make reference to the risk of generalizing about people in other cultures using existing socially constructed concepts. In the works of *The Pink and Blue Project*, Yoon poses a question about whether the images and knowledge we have about a certain culture reflect preconceptions that place people into categories, much in the way we shape children's propensities and tastes by dividing gender into only two colors- pink and blue. Gu's performance *Happily Ever After* also twisted the tendency of to generalize by using questions that explored deeper facets of a person. Her work echoes the assertion that what we believe to be common ideas are really common, what we know to be general ideas are truly general, and what we know about others is real.

Multicultural groups in South Korean society. Through the works *Okee-ssi 3*, *Hanna I*, *Women at Akwanwon*, and *The World of Job*, Lee and Gu illuminated the problems of multiracial persons in South Korean society, where the foreign-born population is rapidly increasing. In the public sphere, the social and political, pros and cons of this issue are widely discussed. Unlike

other countries like the United States, with its long tradition of immigration and more recently, multiculturalism, South Korea is greatly challenged by the rapid rise in immigrants and multicultural families. In order to build a balanced relationship between people from different cultures, it is necessary to break the ice that stands between such different groups of people.

The Artists' Approaches to Cultural Diversity Issues

Understanding other cultures holistically. All three artists had suggestions for individuals living in contemporary, culturally mixed, and socially complex societies. Because such individuals must face persons from other cultures, it is very useful for them to try to understand such cultures holistically, in their authentic contexts, rather than through images and information presented in the media. Yoon works suggest that it is more useful to view experiences from various perspectives. Lee also portrayed the stories of cultural others that she had gained from direct contact—from meeting and listening to them in person. Gu similarly sought out a direct experience of a different culture by locating the place, meeting people there, entering it, and experiencing it for herself.

Understanding our own culture from a distance. Yoon and Lee emphasized the necessity of seeing one's own culture from a distance. They agreed that when people are too familiar with only their own culture it is difficult to see the reality of it. When we step back it makes us able to see our own circumstances and those of others better. In her personal interview, Yoon compared this approach to perceiving culture to the use of a helicopter camera to zoom in and out when photographing. Lee asserted that when things are too close or big, we cannot see them.

Putting oneself into another's shoes. All the artists used their cross-cultural experiences to interpret cultural differences and empathize with others living in cultures different from their own. Yoon and Lee also drew on their backgrounds as mothers and wives living in a foreign culture to understand the challenges faced by women in the same situation in South Korea. Similarly, Gu built a foundation for empathy by putting herself in the same condition as the people whose experiences she wished to depict. In all three cases they relied on their personal experiences and backgrounds to create works based on the heightened understanding that comes when we step into another's shoes. Cultivating empathy is an effective way to break the ice when facing unfamiliarity and otherness.

Emphasizing individuality. Multicultural societies benefit from public acceptance of individuality. Yoon criticized the globalized popular culture supported by industry and media and the conformity it encourages, even among children. (Katter (1991) noted that if we look at children, they look quite similar but if we look them more closely, we can see that they all carry in them their own cultural differences. Gu communicated her insights about the importance of individuality through her work *Happily Ever After* (2010) through the symbol of the mask. An emphasis on individuality may be considered a good strategy in a multicultural society in order to help individuals escape collectivist thinking and see individuals as independent human beings who deserve respect.

Rethinking existing assumptions. Yoon, Lee, and Gu all referred to the importance of rethinking the existing assumptions that are socially constructed and accepted everyday as common truths to without any suspicion about their implied meanings. Social customs, social and cultural systems, stereotypes, biases, and prejudices all may harbor such negative and inaccurate assumptions, which create obstacles to getting to know people of different cultures. The concepts of gender, nation, religion, local, occupation and even appearance are so much a part of our awareness that they can strongly influence our first impressions of others. The artists in this study provided viewers with an opportunity to rethink their existing preconceptions with greater consciousness.

Questioning traditional culture in contemporary life. Yoon's work *Insa-dong* revealed that although the character of this cherished place had changed it curiously remained a location that people liked to visit and valued as a part of the city. People sometimes say that traditional culture is old-fashioned and from the past, but in fact, traditions still influence contemporary life. Not just traditional products or customs, but on an emotional level, tradition culture itself provides important linkages for people living in a contemporary society. To learn about the real meaning and value of traditional cultures, we need to focus on not only their stylistic beauty or history but more importantly, on why they remain valuable in terms of our relationships with ourselves and others. If these experiences are valuable and meaningful for us, we need to think about how we can protect traditional culture from unhealthy social change and, at the time, cultivate a relationship with contemporary culture.

Meeting community members and listening to their stories. In order to bring cultural diversity issues to the public and present them through their works, Yoon, Lee and Gu met individuals and asked about their related stories. This is an active way to reflect the environment and life experiences of the people in it. This process was not easy for the artists but was an essential part of creating works that were meaningful and reflected the reality of the community and society.

Actively exploring cultural diversity. Yoon, Lee, and Gu actively explored cultural diversity and presented insights they gained from experiences through their works. Though they each approached the topic in a different way and with different roles as artists, they all displayed an enthusiastic and direct attitude cultural diversity issues. As can be seen in the works of the three artists, cultural diversity is not represented simply by the stories of others nor the principles that separate us; rather it is in our everyday lives. Whether we recognize it or not, we actually already live within it. The work of these artists instructs South Koreans, “Do not ignore or pass by it. Stop there and look at it. Then you will see that it is here.”

Making citizens actors. Gu designed a community-based art project in which community members were participants and performers. She found this strong way of presenting problematic cultural diversity issues to the public so that the people of the community would take action in their community for themselves. This study focused on multicultural concerns in South Korea today, but many artists and activists actually are working on such social issues there. Gu suggested that artists and citizens work together to take action on cultural diversity issues.

Conclusions Generated by the Work and Its Context

In my examination, the works of the three artists selected for this study provided meaningful thematic content on cultural diversity issues in South Korean society. Through the analysis, I identified several themes that were noteworthy and that arose from the artists’ works and the contexts of those works, and I have structured these as conclusions. The social attitudes of South Koreans about the phenomenon of cultural diversity in their society reflect a general double-sidedness. Overall, people are aware of globalization and regard it as a requirement if our society is to be a member of global society, but there remain deeply-held conservative propensities left over from historical conflicts with other countries. These two sides of awareness coexist within the members of South Korean society and contribute to the continuing gaps in the acceptance of different people and different cultures.

- a. In the process of searching for participants I found it was not easy to find contemporary artists who are actively dealing with cultural diversity issues in South Korea. Even though several remarkable exhibitions have been held, most of the artists in these shows created the works only for that particular exhibition, rather than taking on cultural diversity as a long-term topic. This means that even though multicultural issues are discussed across South Korea, not enough active voices in the art world are paying attention to these issues.
- b. I found some interesting facts from the demographic data on the artists. First, though it was not my intention to select only female artists for the study, I ended up with three female artists who were all in their forties. In the interview and contextual examination, I realized that their characters as women as well as mothers or the relatives of children gave them a personal interest in the cultural diversity issues facing South Korean society. Yoon and Lee are mothers; each has two children. Gu is not a mother, but she told me that her niece has caused her to have more interest in social and cultural issues since this multicultural society is the place where these children will live in the future. They all share concerns about the future and the lives of the children and this makes them want to create works that can promote changes in society. Second, all of the artists had cross-cultural experiences of their own. Yoon and Lee each lived in another country for two to three years and Gu has frequently travels the world to experience the new and unfamiliar. These cross-cultural experiences have provided them with an opportunity to see themselves as well as others from a distance and with a holistic view.
- c. While Yoon approached South Korea's culturally diverse society as a sharp and critical observer, Lee presented the issues as a mediator and communicator between people and the community (society at-large) and Gu took a role as a social activist who appeared in her works and pulled the members of the community into the works with her. Each of the artists, then, had their own focal point for defining the problems associated with cultural diversity. Yoon is more focused on the influence of industry and media on society's conceptions of different cultures, traditional culture, and contemporary culture. Lee is focused on female groups of people from other cultures in her neighborhood and on delivering their life stories. Gu's interest is more focused on the fixed concepts that obstruct people's ability to face others and other cultures that are perceived as different.

- d. Even though their approaches and focus points are different from each other, the artists share something in common as artists who care about society. They reflect on their backgrounds to see, understand, and interpret the phenomenon of a socially diverse society, bringing up problematic issues related to cultural diversity in a strong and direct way by presenting them as life-related, real issues of South Korean society. Their work is important, because when people regard a social problem as none of their business, then separation, misunderstanding, indifference, and effortlessness appear.
- e. The artists all suggested that it is very important for South Korean people to have an opportunity to see their culture from a distance. They emphasized the importance of seeing others in their authentic contexts and from various perspectives, rather than relying on media.
- f. Finally, all the artists agreed that the logjam blocking greater acceptance of cultural diversity in South Korea is in the process of breaking up, though it will take some time. Yoon, Lee, and Gu all acknowledged that their art might not solve or even have a major effect on cultural diversity problems. They believed, however, that their art would at least stimulate people's thinking and action, and perhaps even change some individuals' points of view, since they themselves learned more about multicultural issues during the process of creating the works.

Implications for Art Education in South Korea

The second question that guided this study was: *What are the implications of the three artists' work for addressing cultural diversity through art education in South Korea?* This question was answered through the analysis of relevant literature on multiculturalism in South Korea and the insights gained through critical analysis of the three artists' work, particularly in regard to its implications for the role or roles art educators can play in promoting cultural diversity.

Art Education for Cultural Diversity in South Korea

Using contemporary art and cultural diversity issues. The art classroom provides very fertile and effective environment for teaching and learning about the cultural diversity issues in a society. Teachers can bring related issues to the table using visual resources that can stimulate a deep and meaningful discussion. The works of contemporary artists can be used as a great resource when bringing up current social and cultural issues in the classroom (Cahan & Kocur,

2011; Marshall, 2009; Stout, 1997). The works of the participating artists in this study lend themselves to such a goal, as they directly and powerfully describe real-life situations in a culturally diverse society.

Taking a holistic approach to understanding culture. In art education, many have discussed the importance of a holistic approach to various themes (Campbell & Simmons, 2012), and the same holds for understanding cultural diversity in contemporary society where it is especially important to understand other cultures as well as one's own. All of the selected artists, Yoon, Lee, and Gu emphasized the importance of looking at culture from various perspectives. As Bank (2008) stated, the limited perspectives we commonly use when viewing cultures can create blinders that interfere with beneficial intercultural interactions. Therefore, teachers must be aware that when discussing cultures it is useful to provide veracious resources for students and to guide them to conduct their own group research about cultures in order to develop richer understandings.

Learning about art cross-culturally. In order to better understand cultural diversity through art, students can conduct cross-cultural studies in which they compare and contrast the similarities and differences between different cultures. The three artists examined in this study all had significant cross-cultural experiences that actually inspired them to deeply examine the situation of cultural diversity in South Korea, since these experiences provided an opportunity for them put themselves in another's shoes and recognize related issues in their lives. Garber (1995) emphasized that teaching cultural diversity needs to be achieved to learn beyond one's culture. This cross-cultural approach is an opportunity for students to learn about others but also know about oneself in a deeper level. Therefore, in South Korea, when students have a classroom to discuss about cultures through artworks, they can study about the cultural context compared and contrast to it. In addition, the works of the artists who already have cross-cultural experience can be used a good resource to do a cross-cultural study.

Highlighting visual culture. As Yoon noted, it is important to have a critical view of the images presented by media, and in this sense, visual culture is a big component for art educators to use in teaching about cultural diversity issues. Students who live in this complex and multicultural society can examine images in media to discover whose gaze is used, how media is made, and how credible it is, as they experience cultural diversities through media in daily life (Duncum, 2006; Freedman, 2003) The work of Yoon and Lee illustrated how easy it can be to

see culture only from filtered images and information edited by media, and how that needs to be critically addressed.

Teaching the importance of traditional art in contemporary society. In art classrooms in South Korea, teachers often discuss the importance of traditional art in regard to personal identity, national identity, and valuing of the country's heritage. Even in multicultural art education, teaching and learning about traditional Korean art is regarded as the most critical theme. We must consider, however, that traditional art is largely the province of museums rather than real life. Further, its originality and authenticity have come to be massively produced. Thus, at the same time that South Korean society is becoming more multicultural and traditional culture and art require more protection from capitalism, authentic traditional culture and art is being forgotten and changed. People enjoy the fake traditional culture of Korea. Thus, in the art classroom, students need to learn how to do more than just draw and create paintings in the traditional style in order to know the real value of traditional Korean culture.

Promoting individuality *and* togetherness. South Korean society has a double standard in regard to cultural diversity, particularly with regard to groups of people of particular cultural backgrounds and social status. Because art classrooms in South Korea contain children from a variety of cultural and multicultural backgrounds, art teachers must emphasize and value the uniqueness of individuality. Art teachers and students should not seek to generalize or categorize students and other friends, but rather see them as individuals. The value of individuals is heightened when students and teachers share art, ideas, and stories related to cultural diversity. Such artifacts promote a sense of the value of individuals as well as the importance of cultivating a harmonious relationships with culturally different others who live in this multicultural society. According to McMillan (1996), students may need settings where they can be themselves and “see others mirrored in the eyes and responses of others” (p. 315).

Finding issues from the students' interests. The three artists gained inspiration from their daily lives and life experiences in South Korean society. There they noticed cultural diversity issues in real life situations and considered them seriously. When a bond of sympathy develops between these issues and their own lives, students see the issues as more meaningful and pay attention to them. Therefore, in the art classroom, students may share their interest in cultural diversity based on their actual lives, and lessons can be geared to address these interests.

Facilitating community-based art. Yoon described a certain local area in presenting her ideas about the identity of the place. Lee portrayed community members from multicultural backgrounds who she met and interviewed. Gu designed community participatory projects and invited community members to participate in her performance. In terms of finding a locality and having a sense of community and place, community-based art is a good way to have students to consider their environment and circumstances, and also learn about the other members of their community. Relative to cultural diversity, South Korean students can learn naturally about cultural diversity and diverse life stories by designing and participating in community-based art.

Including contextual art criticism in the curriculum. The experience of analyzing the work of these contemporary artists to learn about the cultural diversity issues they expressed through their art helped me to understand the effectiveness of contextual art criticism as a means by which to truly and deeply learn about others and mirror myself. Contextual art criticism is a meaningful method for examining the life stories contained in artworks, but also it provides an opportunity for students “to find meanings for their own lives to understand the authentic meanings of others” (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p.101). We all live in cultures, and art plays a role as a cultural metaphor. Thus, as a form of accumulated life experiences (Dewey, 1934), art can help us authentically and contextually begin to understand cultural differences and otherness, understandings that are critical for individuals in a culturally diverse society.

Positive Roles for Students in Art Classrooms

As I examined the works of the artists, I was able to find multiple roles these artists in South Korea’s multicultural society. Their artworks play a role as a barometer of our multicultural society because they reflect the artists’ actual lived experiences, with the content delivered in a visual format that is effective for expressing insights. In the process of describing the multiple roles played by the works of the three selected artists, and examining their way of approaching cultural diversity issues, I began to gain a sense of how students might know and interpret different cultures and cultural diversity in South Korea and present their understandings through art. Thus, in the art classroom, the teacher can help to cultivate the following roles for students to help them address cultural diversity issues in their lives and in their society:

- a. *Be a good and critical observer:* By observing cultural diversity in their lives and expressing related issues, students will be able to understand today's cultural diversity issues in their life contexts.

- b. *Be a good listener*: In order to have a better understanding of others, students would do well to cultivate the skills of a good listener. Listening carefully to friends' stories, the stories of people in the community, and artists' stories will help students feel more connected to others.
- c. *Be an active learner*: Students can learn about themselves in the process of learning about other cultures. Students can work together, be creative as they interpret their findings, and collect the data they need to understand cultural diversity. In this process, they will become active learners.
- d. *Be a skillful communicator*: By being a skillful communicator in the art classroom, students will be able to freely share their ideas with each other as well as with parents, and in the community.
- e. *Be an inquisitive explorer*: Students living in this rapidly changing and multicultural society should take the role of the inquisitive explorer in order to meet and experience cultural differences and become aware of the questions they have about it.
- f. *Be a creative presenter*: In the art classroom it is important to be a creative presenter. Students will be able to express their findings from their exploration of their culturally diverse society and share their thinking through art.
- g. *Be tolerant and open to others' ways of doing and being*: Students living in a multicultural society in everyday life must face challenges related to cultural diversity. When students have the opportunity to meet others and learn about their ways of doing and being through art, they learn to be tolerant and open to others. Also, in the art classroom, students can express their individuality, it providing a great chance for them to safely share their differences.
- h. *Be a brave change agent*: As stated earlier, "What is most valued is that the work tells us something significant about human experience beyond the art world and in many cases has the power to move us to action" (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 87). Students can be inspired by observing circumstances, meeting people, and appreciating the work of artists', and then can take a role in improving their own and others' circumstances.

Suggestions for Further Study and Implementation of This Research

In this study, I examined the artworks of three South Korean contemporary artists to investigate what and how they expressed issues related to cultural diversity. Using Anderson & Milbrandt's (2005) contextual art criticism model, the study revealed a great deal about the perspectives gained by the artists' reflections of their life experiences, as well as the ways in which their experiences inspired their work. I found this process of analysis to be highly productive; the enlightening methodology helped me to better understand cultural diversity issues and authentically experience the things around me in their real life contexts. Like the artists, I found that there are different ways to interpret cultural diversity in South Korean society based on one's perspective and cultural knowledge.

In this critical analysis, I, as the researcher, functioned as critic to examine the contained meaning of the works, documents, and interview transcripts. From a pragmatic perspective, personal experience and perception are reflected in the works of art and also influence understandings of art. This means that personal experiences and perceptions of the critic create a point of view that may influence the analysis. In this sense, it stands to reason that, another person may have conducted a different contextual analysis of the works of art in this study, particularly if that person had not lived in a foreign culture for an extended period. Though the conclusions others might reach through a study like this may differ from mine, however, I believe that what I have experienced as critic—deep reflection on my own and others' experiences with cultural diversity—can be replicated by others in my field, and enrich our understandings about the potentials for art education to improve society.

In conducting the analysis I reflected carefully on my personal experiences in order to go deep into the issues the artists communicated, and I examined other materials (i.e., documents, interview transcripts) to gain confirmation for my findings from various pieces of supporting evidence. The process of going through the four stages of pragmatically-grounded contextual analysis also provided me with an opportunity to give myself sufficient time to think deeply about the content of my impressions. This process also helped me tie together my perceptions and cross cultural experiences as a border crosser, the artists' perspectives, and also others' understandings of the works. Overall, the study became a true learning experience and an opportunity to examine the current shift to a multicultural society in South Korea. I was able to look at the data in two ways: both from my own context as well as holistically, from the

perspectives of others. These findings should be shared with others, since interpretation by viewers is also a part of a pragmatically understanding of contextual art criticism.

In this sense, there is a need for more studies employing contextual art criticism for research on subjects related to cultural diversity. To gain a deeper understanding of cultural diversity in South Korea, I believe it would be meaningful to examine the work of foreign artists from different cultures who currently live or previously have lived in South Korea in order to compare and expand on the findings of this study. On a broader level, this structure can be applied to research on co-cultural groups in South Korean society as reflected in artworks, with the secondary benefit of increasing understanding through listening to actual lived experiences. This study also can be expanded to other countries in which cultural diversity poses challenges. Even though the shift to increasingly multicultural populations is becoming an international phenomenon in countries around the world there are still many societies in need of greater awareness of the difficulties of “otherness” and more acceptance of difference. Many individuals who have not had the chance to experience life in a different culture and even live in isolated physical locations may find it difficult to have empathy for the “others” in their society. Therefore, this study can be adopted as a model for the further studies in other countries with problems of cultural diversity like those in South Korean society and also even for young people living in a country regarding as a multicultural society, unlike their elders, may not be aware that they are on the threshold of an increasingly multicultural society.

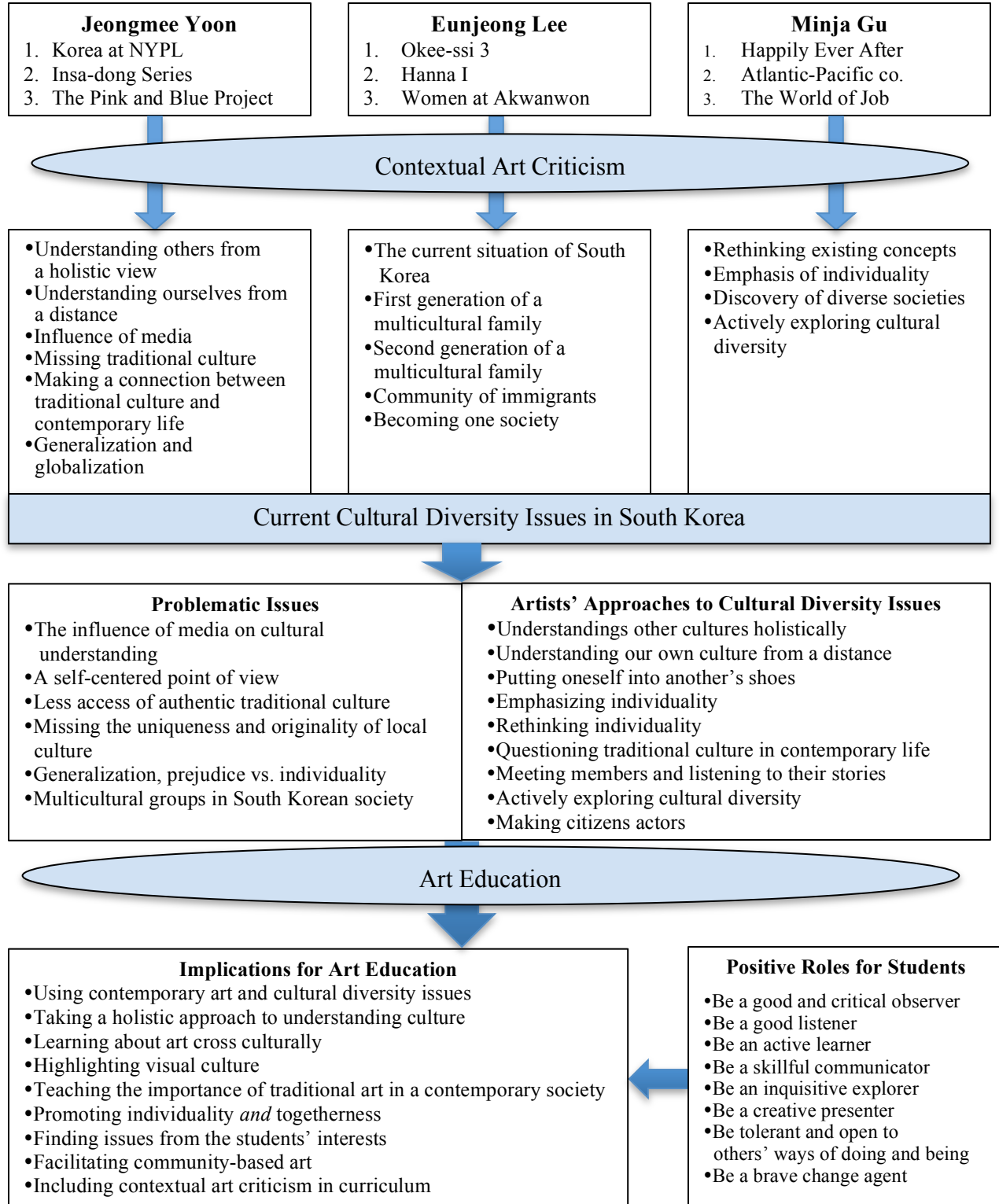
Thus, another suggestion is to develop curriculum guidelines based on the findings of this study for the practice of multicultural art education in South Korea. After structuring this curriculum, the next step will involve developing detailed lesson plans for practical application in the art classroom.

One of the artists in this study told me that she feels more worthy as an artist when she receives feedback about her work from viewers; she believes that her artworks are more fulfilling to her when she is successful in sharing the themes she wants to convey. In this study, I found that the participating artists had opened a public conversation on problematic issues related to greater cultural diversity in South Korean society. These artists proved through their work and their attitudes as artists that art can function as a mirror that reflects issues of cultural diversity in a multicultural society like Korea. In addition, such artworks can act as a window through which we can view and explore the different cultures within our society in order to better

understand each other. In this regard, I hope that this study will be useful in improving art education and making it more relevant for South Korean students who face a more diverse culture than ever before. Even more, it is my hope that art education can help those in our society to consider more carefully the cultures of others around them.

APPENDIX A

KEY ELEMENTS AND FINDINGS



APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Art as a Mirror and Window on Cultural Diversity in South Korea: A Critical Analysis of Artworks by Three Contemporary Artists with Implications for Art Education

You are invited to be in a research study consisting of a critical analysis of the artworks of three Korean contemporary artists with implications for art education. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a contemporary Korean artist dealing with cultural diversity issues. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. This study is being conducted by Yoonjung Kang, Art Education Department, Florida State University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is: to examine what issues related to cultural diversity three South Korean artists address in their art and how, and to find what the implications are for addressing cultural diversity through art education in South Korea.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be agreeing to participate in the following activities: a 1 to 2 hour interview that includes questions asking for your oral history and includes general information about your background, description about your artworks and interpretations about the artworks (questions are attached to this form). Your interview will be recorded with audiotape for subscription. Once the written subscription is made, I will check with you for accuracy to avoid any misinterpretation. You have a right to review and contribute to re-/editing the written transcriptions of the interviews. In addition, images of your artwork will be reproduced in this study for the purposes of analysis, interpretation and evaluation in light of the purposes of the study.

Risks and benefits of being in the Study:

This study has no risks for participants. The benefit will be limited to getting the word out on your artwork and ideas.

Compensation:

Subjects will not be paid for participating in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be used in the development of a doctoral dissertation, which will be in the public record, and may also be used in future academic writings on the issues and topics covered by the interviews and in the dissertation. The audiotapes of the interview will be erased after finishing the study if the participant desires that.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with any circumstances involved in this study. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Yoonjung Kang. You may ask any question you have now. If you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact the researcher anytime at ***@fsu.edu/***@gmail.com or my faculty advisor, Tom Anderson at ***@fsu.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I give permission that the researcher can use my name, quote after I review, and the images of my artwork I provide. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Art as a Mirror and Window on Cultural Diversity in South Korea: A Critical Analysis of
Artworks by Three Contemporary Artists with Implications for Art Education

Demographic and foundational contextual questions

Where were you born and raised?

How long have you been an artist?

Tell me about your educational background.

Can you remember anyone who influenced you to become an artist?

Can you describe him/her and his/her work?

What else can you remember that has influenced you to become an artist?

What ideas do you try to communicate through your work?

Where do you get those ideas?

Who has influenced your current work and how?

Have you lived/worked outside of South Korea? When? Where?

How has that influenced your work?

What's your assessment of the current state of Korean culture?

What issues are paramount?

Do you try to address any of those issues through your art?

Description of work

What conceptual and artistic problems are you trying to solve?

What are you most interested in, in creating works?

What are the aesthetic and substantive problems you are trying to solve?

What materials do you use in the artworks? Is there any particular reason for you to choose the style or materials for your works?

Do you involve community members or outside participants in your work?

If so, what work is it and how did you involve them?

Interpretive value

What is it that you're most trying to communicate through your work?

What does the work mean to you personally?

Have your works been influenced by cultural and social change? How?

Does your work address cultural diversity? How? What are the important issues you address?

Does the place you live matter for your art? How?

What future directions/projects do you envision for your art?

Are there implications that can be drawn from what you do for education in South Korea?

What?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewee: Jeongmee Yoon
Date and Time: March 10, 2014 10:00 am-12:00 noon
Location: Apgujeong-dong, Seoul, Seoul Korea

1. Where were you born and raised?

I was born and raised in Korea.

2. How long have you been an artist?

I have been working as an artist since I graduated from university in 1992. I did printmaking from 1992 to 1993 and started to learn photography in 1993. I buckled down to photography from 1996.

3. Please tell me about your educational background.

I earned a bachelor's degree in painting from the College of Fine Arts at Seoul National University in 1992 and studied photographic design at Hongik-University and got my master's in 1999. I went to New York for my second master's for photography, video, and related media at the School of Visual Arts in New York in 2006.

4. Can you remember anyone who influenced you to become an artist? And whether or not that person is an artist, could you describe him or her?

Whenever I am asked this question it is not easy. I cannot say one specific person. There are so many artists I learn from and feel touched by their works. I could say that I have been influenced by artists I met in books, all my professors at school, and the seniors and juniors in my art major who work very hard. If I pick one among my teachers, Professor Yongsun Seo is the one. I was touched by how hard he worked to create artworks...Regarding photography, I respect the photographer Bonchang Gu for his work in taking care of young artists...I can think of a performance artist, Marina Abramovic, too. I met her in person, and looking at her performances, I was influenced by her passion as an artist.

5. What else can you remember that has influenced you to become an artist?

I think I became an artist spontaneously. After I graduated, I looked for a job because I wanted to get a job in a field other than art, but I was not prepared. My mom wanted me to be a teacher, so I taught as a part-time teacher for six months at a middle school, and eventually I realized that it was not a life that I wanted. Actually, I learned art since I was a middle-school student, and I also

went Seoul Arts High School. I thought that the only thing I could do and I was good at was “art” and this led me naturally to become an artist. When I was young, my life was pretty smooth and this made me a bit loose about everything. I went to the United States for study abroad with my husband and kids when I was my mid-thirties. It was about the time I was thirsty for something that I could be passionate about. I did my best at school since I was so happy to learn and work as an artist.

6. What ideas do you try to communicate through your work?

My ideas are to make people rethink socially constructed ideas and systems they consciously or unconsciously [have adopted] and that underlie our society in a way we cannot recognize. It is like this: I used to go to shop with my daughter, but I didn't recognize that my daughter always bought things in pink. Whenever it happened, I regarded it as ordinary daily life without any consciousness. When we lived in New York, my daughter went to a prekindergarten run by Chinese. Most of my daughter's friends were from all different cultural backgrounds including Japanese, Chinese, and Spanish, and so on. One day, I realized that all of my daughter's friends had the same taste no matter what cultural background they had. Then I started to wonder why this is. In other words, if viewers look at my works, the first time they might think that is the way it is...but if viewers look at them again, they can start to rethink them. I think this is my work...um...there is one more example on my website. When I went to the United States for the first time, I was wondering about the reasons why so many American flags were all around the city. Then I was able to realize that America is a country of immigrants...so the flags are symbols of patriotism that consciously and unconsciously are exposed to the nation. This point is also something that people do not pay attention to, but I want to rethink it. In my other work *The Zoo Project*, I conceptualized humans and the social environment of humans as animals in a zoo. I just think that actually we make socially constructed customs and systems for certain convenience but from time to time this is what we want to get out of... all of my works fit in this concept but mostly these are the ideas I think of for my works.

7. Then where did you get those ideas?

I got those ideas in my daily life, which includes my family, things around my family members, newspapers, society, movies and books, etc. There are so many things that I can get inspired by.

8. Who has influenced your current work and how?

In the case of the *Pink and Blue Project*, I was inspired by my daughter to see her habits and tastes by comparing how her with her friends. My most current work is for the exhibition *It Will Be a Better Day*. I was not influenced by a person for this work, but by books. Accidentally I found books written in Korean modern times and I realized that time goes by and society has changed a lot, but still peoples' life stories in books are not different from [the ones in] our contemporary life. From this I thought that the life struggles people have are not different from that period.

9. Have you lived/worked outside of South Korea? When? Where?

Yes, I have. As I explained, I lived in New York from 2004 to 2006 for my master's.

10. Has that influenced your work? How?

Yes. Living in another country was a valuable experience for me. Because it was an opportunity for me to see through a third set of eyes about the country of South Korea, the definition of 'us', and myself. I also did work about various phenomena in that place. It is easy to be influenced by a living environment. The social, political, and cultural problems of a place are closely related to life, so all of these influenced my thinking and came out through the work... Here is an example. When I create an artwork, I focus on things that come to my mind. I didn't apply my background as an Asian, female, or married person....After I moved to New York, I started to study for my masters there. One day, I was asked to present all my works chronologically in front of many people at school. The professor, who also is an artist, listened to my explanations and saw all my works, and then she said that if looking at my works individually, they look different but they have something in common among the works. She said my works can be categorized by certain frames such as female, Asian, or married woman..so on. Actually it was a new perspective on my work since I had never thought my work and myself in such categories. I realized, "Ah! Maybe this is a perspective of how others see me." Then it can be possible that people see things from different points of view. I have been thinking about things from only my perspective but not others's. I have had a subjective perspective not only on myself and my work but also possibly on others. This experience made me think that there could be a different perspective towards me depending on whose perspective it is, no matter if it is right or wrong. And this experience drove me to have interests in the possible different perspective of others.

This is also the same with social issues in South Korea. Nuclear issues, in spite of their seriousness, people in South Korea are too much familiar with the issue, and don't take it seriously. However, I was asked about it when I was in New York, then I recognized that, yes... it is critical issue, and South Korea is a divided country. There are many things we don't recognize and see only from our perspective because they are too close, but if we stand from a distance, we can see with a different perspective. I remember one sentence in a magazine that the artist Iso Park wrote. This artist studied at Pratt Institute and applied his cross-boundary context... having a different perspective can be regarded as nothing special, but it gives some different experience. It is just like some scene we can see in a drama or documentary...the camera shoots close range and moves to the sky to show a whole thing like a helicopter camera. This sky-view perspective shows me my location and the various boundaries in my world.

11. Identifying your boundaries and living in a different culture really influenced you to look at your identity in a cultural and social context, and it also made you interested in cultural difference.

That's right. My location did this. I realized that I look at others from a self-centered perspective. I was at the center but I came to see myself from an objective view. Related to this, I have a work I want to describe. When I took classes in New York, I was asked to visit the New York Public Library [NYPL]. I went there to look around the picture collection. I don't exactly remember the location of the picture collection but as I remember, it may be on the second or third floor. The picture collection is a section where all different images from magazines and newspapers are collected in files and classified by a NYPL librarian. When I visited that section because of my school assignment, suddenly I wondered what images they have collected to describe the country of Korea. I found a series of 12 files with images representing of Korea on some shelves. Those files were named "Korean mountain," "Korean cartoon," "Korean river," "Korea Seoul," "Korean A-Z," and so on.

The interesting thing I found was, in Korea, when we describe Korea to someone, we divide South and North first to make sure that we are talking about South Korea, but in the 12 files on Korea at the NYPL, there was no separation between South Korea and North Korea. And in the file with Korean cartoons, most of the cartoons were from American newspapers or magazines and showed the Korean war. Of course this file was not officially-made materials and it seemed that they were still in the process of collecting images, but I realized that perspectives—my own or foreigner's—can be different and can only show a part of a country. A lot of pictures that are from the 80s era showsocial confusion and suffering of Korea, collected in the files. Actually there are the images that I do not want to show to foreigners... but most of the images are pictures taken in that complex era. I knew this...but these kind of things I don't take importantly, but like the files, 80-90% of the images of South Korea are the dark history. In this sense, I recognized that perspective is really important.

12. What's your assessment of the current state of Korean culture?

In South Korea, nationally, standardized thinking like uniform culture is strong, but these days it is open to diverse cultures, diversity.

13. What issues are paramount?

Um.... difference and otherness are not something wrong. We need to make it a bit simple. Otherness is just difference between people and we need to accept those differences. In the society of South Korea, in many cases the standardized ideas or point of view are of a single-race nation that does not accept cultural diversity. We need to be more open to different kinds of thinking and all kinds of differences.

14. Do you try to address any of these issues through your art?

Yes. If we look at the *Pink and Blue* project, children have similar things no matter where they live because of the influence of products from several major companies, books, toys, and also the

influence of the Internet and popular culture on media. Children in South Korea can watch American TV on the air. This makes our life convenient, but in some ways, it causes us to lose our locality.

Speaking of the *Pink and Blue* project, I used to go to shop with my daughter, but I didn't recognize that my daughter always bought things in pink. Whenever it happened, I regarded it as part of ordinary daily life without any consciousness. When we lived in NY, my daughter went to a prekindergarten run by Chinese. Most of my daughter's friends were from all different cultural backgrounds, including Japanese, Chinese, and Spanish, and so on. One day, I realized that all of my daughter's friends had the same taste no matter what cultural background they had. Then I started to wonder why this is.

One of the TV programs in Germany discussed this color preference of children and used my photography, and a psychologist said that pink is similar to skin color, so its image is soft and weak. The program asked boys in Germany what color they liked and they answered all different colors but after the TV came to their house they all like the same color...usually blue.

15. Does that mean that this kind of socially used concept like blue for boys and pink for girls influences the role of gender or certain type of images for girls and boys?

I also wondered about this so researched it. In an American newspaper, the *Sunday Sentinel*, published in 1937, mothers were advised to "use pink for boys and blue for girl, if you are a follower of convention." I also found that after World War II, the concept of gender equality emerged, and as a result, reversed the perspective on the colors associated with each gender as well as superficial connections that are attached to them. Today, with the effect of advertising on consumer preferences, these color customs are a worldwide standard. In the case of South Korea, the meaning of the red color once was regarded as negative idea, but after the 2002 World Cup, the meaning of the color red changed to positive. It seems likely that pink and blue phenomenon will change someday.

16. Do you think people make these choices because they know something about the inherent meaning of colors?

I guess it could be a matter of instinct but there is also a possibility that children are grown up and educated in that way and have this influenced on them from their culture. I'm thinking I will continue researching this issue, and I will meet the children in my pictures again every two to three years.

17. That might be interesting. When you took pictures for the *Pink and Blue Project*, did you bring some objects to display or did all those things belong to those children?

All of those objects were their belongings. It seems like a lot but depending on how I organized it, it can look like a lot. I also used a wide-angle lens to make a scene. Some people said that

those children look spoiled by looking the quality of their belongings, but the children in my picture are middle class...from ordinary families.

18. What conceptual and artistic problems are you trying to solve?

Regarding conceptual problems...It depends on the work, if I can think of something in common, it can be the same with the earlier answer. As I explained my works are designed to make people to think again about common thoughts or systems firmly constructed by society. There are certain ideas that still exist from the past and that we accept as common, so we don't have a chance to think about them from a different or our own perspective. We just live in it. Artistic problems? Maybe capital. For my work, recruiting models for the work could be a problem, but in my case, I don't have any difficulty with it.

19. What do they say when you ask [if they would like] to participate in your work?

Yes. Usually people say okay but there are also some people who say no. If I compare New York and Korea, it is easier to find it in New York.

20. What are you most interested in when you create your works?

Um. Something I can express effectively through photography.

21. What are the aesthetic and substantive problems you are trying to solve?

If I am asked what my aesthetic and substantive problems are...then I just try to make my work have a good match between the format of the work and the theme I want to convey. And make the work be expressive for what I'm thinking. This is always hard.

22. What materials do you use in the artworks? Is there any particular reason for you to choose a style or materials for your works?

If I think that if one media is more appropriate [for a subject] than another, I will use it. Since I use photography, ideas that are good to express through photography tend to come into my mind. When I was working with video technique, also I got ideas for video. I majored Western painting. What I am using is photography, but this is just a media to deliver my message, I used it as fine art. Photography has its own characteristics. I can capture the moment, one shot at one time even though it is duplicable it is also temporal and has sense of reality. I can take a picture of a person in 2006 and later again in 2009.

23. Do you have any advice for the art classroom that uses photography?

I talk to my students who are art majors "think about what you want to express fit with photography." It is good art when the media and theme fit well and effectively deliver a theme.

24. Did you involve community members or outside participants in your work? If so, what work was it and how did you involve them?

I involved people who had stores insa-dong, Chungeachun, Neagokdong, and Euljiro. And also

children in Korea and New York. Whenever I go to a place and see what content I can deliver, then automatically people are involved.

25. Did you have any episode when you took the space of stores and people?

After I printed out the picture, I noticed things I didn't notice at the moment. It is another interesting part of photography.

26. Do you ask the children to pose for the picture?

First I let them to play to see their personality and tendencies. At that time, if I catch the best moment, I take it, but sometimes some children are shy or too active then I drive them to locate a certain point or make a particular pose related to their interests. I take numerous pictures and pick one later.

27. What does the work mean to you personally?

To me, personally, art is much more meaningful, valuable than doing other things. I feel happy when I make art. For some reason, if I can't create art, then I feel down.

28. Have your works influenced cultural and social changes?

My works might not make a big change at one moment but my small questions in the works make people think about those social and cultural issues.

29. How does your work address cultural diversity? What are the important issues you address? If you can, please describe one by one.

Relative to cultural diversity issues, first, for the *Pink and Blue Project*, when we look at the picture, we can think that all of objects in my picture are the same pink. But if we look at them more closely, we can see differences in the pink objects. Some children hung posters of idols they liked all in the room, but depending on their cultural background, which idol they liked was different. I took children living in Korea and New York, but their cultural backgrounds were all different. They all shared a globalized culture, they were influenced by popular culture and media, but at the same time there are some cultural differences left. Their belongings also show how school cultures are different in the two countries by looking at the children's belongings. I heard from one of residency artists in New York, he told me that the appearance of the statue of Jesus in his country looked like a native person in his country. Changryul Kim, a Korean artist, also drew stories of Jesus in Traditional Korean Painting methods. It was interesting to see. The boys I met in New York like baseball and it shows in my pictures as well. When I showed this picture to a curator from Poland, he said that kids in Poland like soccer. It is interesting to see cultural differences. Also in one of the pictures, I can see that the girl dolls have different skin color. I think that this is good, for children to play with different cultures.

30. Then can we apply the *Pink and Blue Project* to art education like asking students to bring in their belongings to present themselves?

Yes, sure. If you ask children to present their own belongings then you will see that they have similar things, but if you look closely they are not all the same. You can take their belongings as a hint of their cultural background and personal tastes.

31. That's a good idea. Let's continue talking about your works related to cultural diversity issues. What else can you tell me about?

Yes. I would like to talk about the *Insa-dong* series. I was asked to participate in an exhibition showing the story of Insa-dong. So I started to observe and look around Insa-dong to take pictures of this area. I decided to investigate stores and people in them to listen to the reality of the area as an insider. For this, I took pictures and interviewed storekeepers. From this process, I learned one thing...We regard Insa-dong as a representative street in Seoul where we can meet Korean traditional culture. However, according to storekeepers who are the owners of the store, most antique shops in Insa-dong bring those artifacts from China. Actually, one of the storekeepers told me that he goes to China one a month to buy artifacts. Usually, foreigners regard those artifacts as traditional Korean items but it is not true. Of course, in Insa-Dong, there are Korean traditional artifacts or goods but especially antique shops are the case. There is one store named *Toto's Old Things* selling vintage goods from the 1960s and 70s. But because of the growth in demand, they started to produce those products again, then they are not real vintage goods but things newly produced because of the demands of customers and the concept of the store. Then we can think that Insa-dong is the most representative place for collecting and selling Korean traditional objects but after I looked at Insa-dong more closely, I recognized that what we believe about that street, about Korean tradition and Asian culture, is actually made. If we look at Insa-dong from outside of it, the place is traditional and Korean but if we look inside of Insa-dong, we can see it is fake.

That's a big surprise!

Yes. Yes. So actually foreign viewers of the *Insa-dong* projects told me that my work was beautiful and very South Korean...but it is not...Of course some stores sell Korean traditional papers or stripes of many colors but also there are many stores which do not sell authentic products like antique stores as I mentioned...People still go to Insa-dong, especially when visitors come to Korea from outside of the country to feel and look at the Korean traditions. What I am saying is, if we get into it in more deeply, it turns out differently...

But people still go to Insa-dong, especially when we have visitors from other countries.?

Yes, so if we go deeper, Insa-dong is like that. More details are discussed in a book *The Discovery of Life in Seoul*.

32. What about the work Korea at New York Public Library?

This work is related to cultural diversity issues. Because what we see through media is information filtered by someone else. When we look at images and text on the Internet or in the newspaper, we take it as it is and as truth, but sometimes we know who wrote it. So what I wanted to say was that what we see and what we read are filtered by someone. Therefore we have to be aware of it to know about things around us.

My most current work, *It Will Be a Better Life*, is a work about Whasoobun. It is a picture of the last scene of the Noble. This scene shows a mother and a daughter, but when I reproduced this scene I changed the daughter to a boy from a mixed cultural family to show the current situation in South Korea. Viewers might wonder why the kid changed and this is my intention—to show cultural diversity issues that we have now. There is another work that I can say is religious. I heard that the greatest number of deaths in the world happen because someone is against another's religion. This is also from the tendency of people to not accept differences and cultural diversity. Even though people have religions for happiness, they also cause many people to die. This is ironic. Differences exist in our society because of economic status, social status... This is all related to cultural diversity issues.

33. What future directions/projects do you envision for your art?

I would like to create more works for Collector projects and Color projects. I also am interested in healing, mothers, and women's issues, so I am thinking about them.

34. Are there implications that can be drawn from what you do for education in South Korea? What?

I think that South Korean society is getting better but I think we need to not only to understand the current situation of the culturally diverse society of South Korea but also to have an attitude to accept otherness and differences. This was also the case when I thought about why a person didn't get married... why that person does such thing... Beyond racial differences, in education, we may start to think about how to accept individual differences and respect each other. Especially, in our school culture, our students wear uniforms and share a certain culture... then it might be difficult for them to acknowledge otherness and differences from their circumstance. This is also a social tendency as well. Acknowledging differences with respect can help students and also other people to be able to understand others and it can be the basic element to live in a culturally diverse society that is thoughtful and caring. Maybe something can emerge from this effort and the range of understanding of our society will become wider. Art does make changes ...so I guess I like what I do.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewee: Eunjeong Lee
Date and Time: March 11, 2014 11:00 am - 2:30 pm
Location: Artist's studio in Cheongju si

1. Where were you born and raised?

I was born in Masan and raised in Deajeon, but moved to several places. Now I am working and raising my children in Cheongju.

2. How long have you been an artist?

Since I finished my master's in painting at Chungnam University.

3. Tell me about your educational background.

I earned a bachelor's degree in South Korean painting from Chungnam University...it was maybe in 2000 and I also earned my master's degree in Korean painting at Chungnam University in 2003.

4. Can you remember anyone who influenced you to become an artist?

Actually I can say that I have been influenced by my husband, who is also an artist. We share our studio and are together almost all day, so we have many chances to talk about each other's work. My husband sometimes gives me a sharp critique of my work. He was my art teacher when I was preparing to get into a university, and I met him again when I was senior. I found that he told me about things I didn't notice. He had a very different perspective and we could have enjoyable conversations... eventually this brought us to become husband and wife.

5. Can you describe him/her and his/her work? What else can you remember that has influenced you to become an artist?

He majored painting as well, but these days, he paints on glass and transforms it into an installation by making layers. He likes to be experimental, so he tries to present his painting in a different format.

6. What ideas do you try to communicate through your work?

As you can see, my earlier works were about myself. I composed self- portraits on the canvas space but emphasized the expression of hair. I approached the content and expression of the

work emotionally. I thought that I wanted to express the inner side of Woman which only a woman can feel and share. It sounds abstract (*smile*). Vitality? Beautification? Inner world? However, I realized that this was too abstract and there was a limitation to pulling in others' empathy. Then I became interested in social issues, which are more related to the realities of life, and this also gave me the opportunity to break the frame that I have kept for a long time as an artist.

7. Where did you get those ideas?

I lived in France for several years, and there I also was asked about my works... and whenever I answered, I felt that if I drew something not related to reality, it would be a bit hard to share my ideas with viewers...I said to myself ,like.. I should talk about social and life-related issues. I decided to find issues around me. In France, artists create whatever they like no matter what the trend is, and this tendency influenced my work as well. I get ideas from all around me and my daily life.

8. Who has influenced your current work and how?

I think, rather than a person, my experience living in France really influenced my work. I mostly drew self-portraits using black ink on Korean traditional paper. When I went to France, people asked me if my work looks like the Korean traditional style. Then I asked myself, is my work really Korean? Is it Korean if I use traditional Korean materials in my work?... And I started to think about how I can present real Korean content other than through the use of particular materials in my work as a Korean artist. In addition, my life in France was not easy. Of course I had a language problem but also I just had begun my life as the mother of a daughter [now she has two children] and as a wife. People called me by my husband's name. This experience made me interested in thinking about the lives of married women. South Korean women keep their last name after marriage but their actual lives are invested in their husband's family and follow his family's culture. After I married, my parents sincerely advised, "Be nice to your parents-in-law, be a good mother, be a good wife, and attune my mind to them." Then I thought about where I am as an independent human being. I felt that my true self disappeared with my marriage. This might be the case with other women who got married. Then I decided to focus on the lives of married women and women's issues in South Korean society.

9. Have you lived/worked outside of South Korea? When? Where?

Yes, as I explained. After I married, my husband and I moved to France, which is the country of art. We had two babies there and met many other artists. We didn't go there as students, rather we went there as artists.

10. How has that influenced your work?

Continuing on from an earlier question, I started to draw myself first, and then drew foreign women that I met in France and women in a big family living in my neighborhood in Cheongju, South Korea.

Yes I saw your paintings of French women.

I was thinking that if I drew women that I met in France... after I went to France I would have more interests in people around me. So I continued drawing women around me. Recently I have drawn women from other countries who now live in South Korean society as wives, as daughters-in-law, and mothers of children just like me. As far as I have experienced it, living in a foreign country is such a challenge every day.

11. I saw you also drew children from multicultural families. Could you explain about your current work presenting children? Actually, this happened naturally. I met with women from other countries in this area and told them about the project just as I told you, that is, that I wanted to present their beauty and strength as mothers just like other mothers in this society. I initially met the mothers at my daughter's school through personal contact and word-of-mouth, so all had children about the same age as my daughter. This automatically made me expand my interest to not only women but also their children since they will be important members of this society one day. For the portraits, I met with the parents and children and talked a lot in order to build relationships and trust before I started, because they were not particularly open to others. I understand this is natural since our society looks at families from multicultural backgrounds from a conservative perspective. Therefore, it was very important to build a good relationship with them and to give them faith before asking them to be part of my work. Actually, there were some mothers who felt uncomfortable about being a model in my portrait series. I also realized that when I understood them better through a long conversation, I was able to make a better portrait of them and most of the time this conversation provided me with an idea for their portraits.

12. What's your assessment of the current state of Korean culture?

Current Korean society is culturally mixed and we can see that many people are from outside the country. For my recent exhibition, I was interested in women from other countries and their life stories. I drew women who were married to a Korean man and are living as wives and mothers in this society, but also I drew Korean Chinese. As I drew I thought... the first time I started to focus on people from other countries, I started it because it is a big problem in South Korean society... and people ask me what I meant by drawing those women. They may face many differences in their daily lives, even their every moment. One Vietnamese woman I met told me that she was surprised by the fact that it is not easy to find duck's egg in South Korea but that [chicken] eggs are common and cheap. In Vietnam, it is totally the opposite. It is not easy to buy [chicken] eggs because of their price, but it easy to see duck eggs. Something like this... every

little thing can be a cultural challenge or difficulty when they live in Korea. They submit to all these challenges and now live in Korea as wives and mothers.

Recently, South Korean society has changed to a multicultural society. According to the increased number of international marriages, cultural diversity is a big issue in South Korea. There are many TV shows broadcasting good stories about multicultural families, but as far as I have observed, bad news spreads more quickly and is taken more seriously. [With my work] I started to turn peoples' attention to the positive side of it. People are asking me what I mean by these portraits of women from other countries. I think that TV and media usually show the bad sides/news about foreign women who have come to Korea to get married but my perspective in approaching this issue is not from a negative point of view. Rather, I approached it [so as to] present the strangeness and value of women, as was my focus in other earlier portraits of women. Art is naturally beautiful, so I believe that showing them through art highlights the issue but in a positive way. For this, I would like to describe their mysticism and toughness, their mother's instincts and love as women. I believe that if art can present them in a positive and a good way, people's perspectives toward them and the awareness of society can be changed a bit. Then one day, I heard of a story about some Korean-Chinese people in my neighborhood. I met these Korean-Chinese through some people I know and contacted them to ask about their participation as models for my painting. I did not recognize at the first that they felt uncomfortable but I knew it at the end of exhibition. They explained that there were negative perceptions and treatments of them in the past. Nowadays, it is easy for young generations to simply regard Korean-Chinese as people from China who now live in Korea. I had an opportunity to listen to the backgrounds of the women in the family who were over 60, and their stories surprised me.

There was a period when trade was actively going on between China and Korea and established diplomatic relations allowed for many people to come and go. With the outbreak of the Korean War, though, the relationship ended and they were stuck in Korea. They escaped from the war and settled down in Busan first, and then moved to Cheongju. They were excluded by people because they were from China. At the time of the war's end in Korea, people closed their minds toward others from outside of the country. People from China around that time, they did not have the choice to go back to their country. However, they also had a hard time staying in Korea since they were foreigners and not even able to get a social security number. At that time there were no relations between China and Korea, but because there were relations between Taiwan and Korea, they finally were defined as Taiwanese and got Taiwanese passports. After that, they settled down in Korea as Taiwanese (even though they are from China) and created a community of their own to help each other like a family. The currency value of their money disappeared and because there were not many things they could do, they started to sell things from foreign countries, open restaurants, do acupuncture or oriental medicine. They got married within themselves and sent their kids to schools for Korean-Chinese in order to teach them in their way.

The first generation of Korean-Chinese had the worst time and the situation for the second and third generations is getting better but still they are isolated in some ways.

I too didn't know about this story. Yes, they have lived such hard lives so when I approached them as an artist, it was very difficult to build a relationship with them. I needed to ask questions and do research about them, but they didn't want to be seen by others...I felt that. They said that there is one school for Korean-Chinese in the Cheongju area, so I visited to the school to get some information about the women, but there were not enough existing records.

13. What issues are paramount?

I think what I am focusing on is paramount issue. We feel that when an issue is too big or really close to our daily lives, then it is easy not to recognize it or regard it as important. However, this is very critical issue that our society has to think about.

14. I understand that you try to address those issues through your art. Yes. As I explained, these mothers and children are struggling in this society in these times, but because this is the transition period of change to a multicultural society, I believe that, as time goes by, this current situation will be better. Then my paintings will be documents about them and their stories in this society. I hope that if my efforts work to make people pay attention to cultural diversity issues through my art, with its focus on the depiction of the beautiful lives of women from other countries and their children, the social climate may be changed. If people hear that there is an artist who carefully focuses on this multicultural issue and opens an exhibition, there might be some people who look at those issues from a different perspective. I would like to help solve these kinds of issues through my work.

15. What conceptual and artistic problems are you trying to solve? Is there any particular reason for you to choose the style or materials for your works?

I tried to match my techniques and expression to the subject matter. My works are very dim, so people can't see clearly in a second. When I opened the exhibition, it was funny to see people's reactions. Actually, some people came into the gallery, and then, in seconds, asked me if there was any exhibition going on in the space since they could not really see the figures in my paintings. The color is almost a beige monotone, so when people come into the gallery, especially on a sunny day, their eyes really cannot catch it. However, after spending some time in the gallery, they say, "Ah! I can see!" This actually is my intention—to deliver my themes through this dim way of painting. Characteristics of my painting like haziness, fogginess, and hiddenness reflect the existence of women from other countries who live in silence, hidden in our society.

We all might have an experience like this...There are people around or very close to you but you do not recognize the real value or importance of that person. One day you realize that the person

really means something in your life and even seems big. Similarly, my dim painting, the more you look at it, it comes into your eyes and becomes clearer. In the case of my work, if you stand closer to the painting to see clearly, you may not be able to see it. But if you step backward from the painting and look at it from a distance, you may get to know what is drawn. And also, a bigger painting takes more time to figure out and this happens in the same way with the big issues of society. If the issue is bigger and more serious, then people may have difficulty really finding it since you can see only a small part of it. My technical method for these hazy portraits matches the way I deliver my themes and concerns about women from other cultures.

16. What are you most interested in, in creating works?

During the process, I met people around me and learned what I had not noticed from having a conversation. My work requires my effort and time since it is about people's stories. This is the hard part and also the interesting part. Also, I still feel pleasure in creating dim paintings. Drawing dim paintings is harder than drawing clear and colorful paintings since I have to figure out when I should stop. This is also enjoyable.

17. What are the aesthetic and substantive problems you are trying to solve?

As I mentioned, it is not easy to find models for my work. The mothers I met at my daughter's school introduced me to women from other countries but sometimes, some people do not want to be models for my work...I understand...there are even some people who participated in it but didn't feel comfortable telling their stories... I guess they want to hide their side. This is also evidence of the climate of South Korean society towards others.

18. Could you explain why you keep using Korean traditional materials for your work?

They are the most comfortable materials that I can facilitate the most readily. Also, this material is good for dealing with and expressing social issues that really relate to Korean society.

19. Could you explain about the work *Okee-ssi*?

Okee-ssi met her husband in Vietnam when he went there as an exchange student. Okee-ssi studied the Korean language at a university in Vietnam, so she is almost fluent in Korean. I feel that her Korean is even better than mine, but whenever I talk with her, I can see her nervousness in speaking in Korean. Besides her anxiety about using the language, she has a fear of living as a Vietnamese woman in Korean society as well as concerns about the future life of her daughter. If you see her portrait, you can see small bells on her hair. I drew them as a symbol of her anxiety. As you know, bells are sensitive. When you move, they make sounds and people listen, and then you automatically get attention from others. So I presented her carefulness, anxiety, and worry as bells.

What about *Hanna I*?

This is the daughter of Vietnamese mother and Korean father. I expressed the challenges she will be facing as thorns on flowers. I expressed her identity as the national flowers of Vietnam and Korea, which are the lotus and *mugunghwa*.

20. What does the work mean to you personally?

I think that my work is the way I express my values and voice...what I want to say to the public. There might be something people don't pay attention to if they read it, but I think when I show and speak it through my art...I think a lot as an artist of showing issues through art...the result will be more effective compared to other methods. Writers may express their voices through words but I am an artist so I use art as my method. I can also relieve my stress through my works. I also had held some conservative and exclusive attitudes toward people from outside, but during the preparation of my exhibition, I heard about elders and people in my neighborhood and this changed my perspective and consciousness about multicultural families. I started to see the positive sides of cultural diversity in South Korean society and now I am willing to express them through my works to teach people what I learned.

21. What future directions/projects do you envision for your art?

I haven't decided yet, but for now, I will keep working on issues concerning Korean- Chinese women and women from multicultural families...this work requires me to meet people, so it is not easy work, but until I find another issue that is stimulating to me, I will continue.

22. Are there implications that can be drawn from what you do for education in South Korea?

As I learned, students can learn about others through meeting them and listening to their stories. They might not know how to feel about social issues related to cultural diversity in Korean society and the reality of the issue...the only way they learn about this issue is through media. I think that [multicultural issues] will be a more significant issue in students' generations...they may need to have an opportunity to see the reality of a socially-multicultural society and to have a positive perspective toward people to live together well.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewee: Minja Gu
Date and Time: March 14, 2014 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm
Location: Tongin-dong

1. Where were you born and raised?

I was born in Seochun in Chungchungnamdo but lived there for a short period, then moved to Deajeon. After that I moved to Seoul when I was 12 years old.

2. How long have you been an artist?

I guess after I got into a masters' program, I started to become an artist.

3. Please tell me about your educational background.

I studied painting at Hongik University for my bachelor's and studied philosophy as my second bachelor's at Yunsei University. Then I studied painting again at Korea National University of the Arts to achieve a master's degree.

4. Can you remember anyone who influenced you to become an artist? And whether or not that person is an artist, could you describe him or her?

Firstly, I can say it is my family. My family supports me in my work as an artist in an invisible way, and my friends that I met at universities who have the same major also have influenced me to be an artist, I guess.

5. What else can you remember that has influenced you to become an artist?

There are also teachers like Eeseo Park, Wonki Seo. They helped me to learn how to think and develop what habits I have.

6. What ideas do you try to communicate through your work?

Actually this is a very tricky question. I'm interested in things that people take for granted...the frame of the society? It could be my perspective on other people or society. Here what I mean by a perspective does not mean my own perspective; rather it could be understood as perspectives made by society. I would like to make them think about those things again and let them know that those frames or systems are made by society. For example, we can think of words in our daily lives; we simply say, "foreign artists" or "foreigners," or I am told, "Usually foreign artists do things like that..." or "Korean artists usually work in that way." Actually, there is no such existence we can define or express in one word. Foreign artists? Then which country? Can we

just simply say someone is a foreign artist if she or he comes from other countries? I think we CAN'T... if we think of how many countries exist in the world and how many people live in this society individually. Even some people live in the same country, so they might share some similarities, but still they are different individuals. Let's say that the artist is from India, then can we talk about him or her with only the content of India? It could be a partial influence on who he or she is...then after all, I think that it is all individuals. Maybe it is caused by limitations of language...but still I think we cannot understand a person within simple meaning (something implies certain meaning which is already made) of words or their country. This also makes me think about statistical data. The national statistical office of Korea announced that the birthrate in Korea is 1.6. However, it is just a number. Someone has three children but someone else might not have any. Then what do those data mean...we take the data as the standard to compare and contrast with each other...Another example is...I am asked, "What do Koreans think about ____, a certain topic?" Then I feel flustered to answer...since I have to guess what other Koreans might think about it...My thoughts cannot represent all Koreans and also those certain statistical data do not fit my life.

7. Where did you get those ideas?

Well, I usually get ideas from daily and usual situations. What I am focusing on can be a situation that everybody experiences without unconsciousness, but I am an artist, so I may have a different view when I am located in the same situations. Things around me and things I can see in daily life and what I can do with those things become interesting ideas.

Do you carefully look around when you go out? I walk a lot and take pictures all the time. Those pictures are usually not used for work but I just take pictures and look around my environment with a sensitive sense.

8. Who has influenced your current work and how?

These days I am interested in eating and living. What should we choose to eat? What should have more or less? It can be my case or best-selling foods during a certain period of time in South Korea...some foods can be a social issue...my upcoming works will be about this issue.

9. If your works are influenced by your environment, then how? Have you lived/worked outside of South Korea? When? Where?

I haven't lived in a different country for a long time, but I used to go out for work. These locations include New York, Taiwan, France, and Spain. I usually stayed for one month or two months, and I stayed in New York for the longest time. I participated in a residence program in New York.

10. Has that influenced your work? How?

Yes. I think so. I went to other countries to create or participate in an exhibition. So during the time I settled down, the people I met, the events I experienced, the stories I got, all became subject matter for my work. If there is a specific name mentioned in the work, this is the case. In some cases, when I went to another country I had an idea before leaving, but also sometimes I didn't make it before arriving. Also even though I made an idea after I arrived, my idea changed if I accidentally discovered an interesting issue there. One of my works, Atlanta-Pacific co, is one.

11. Have you ever experienced any difficulties while staying in a different culture?

Surely, living in a different culture is not easy because of limitations of language but I was lucky to meet nice people, so it was not that bad. Actually, when I work for a short time in a different country it is a good time for me to focus on myself and concentrate on thinking of ideas.

12. What are you most interested in when you create your works?

This also can occur case by case, but mostly when I make a plan and come up with a lot of ideas it is the most interesting part of creating my works.

13. What are the aesthetic and substantive problems you are trying to solve?

It can be different depending on the work. When I work with many people in a community, I ask myself, like, "Am I controlling them by naming it an artwork?" My main issue is to present socially-constructed and existing concepts or systems but what I am also doing through my work is creating my own rules and guidelines for participants to be involved. I try to not to control them so this is a difficult challenge to solve. In addition, for some works, I try to express my concept in the process of creating but sometimes I focus more on the atmosphere of the installation scene in the space of exhibition.

14. What conceptual and artistic problems are you trying to solve?

My answer can be the same as with the earlier question. It could be a conceptual frame that people have and apply when judging things around us, including people from other cultures. And it also can be lifestyles...social systems...To draw something nice or well may not be all there is to the job the artist does; rather she is more interested in rethinking how the existing system is socially structured and at ones' perspective in looking at others in society, since all of these are exposed in our thinking and also reflected in the meanings of the words we use daily...After I had a niece, I began to think this way. As my niece grows more, her mother and I have to tell her every small thing that she needs to know to live in this society...girls may not do this, cross the street on a red light, little children do not go such places...and so on. Just small things...maybe she asks why...then we all think about how to give her an answer. Like this, I'm questioning numerous existing concepts existing in this society [that are] adopted as normal, and looking at them from a different view or approach in another way of thinking. This is what I want to do as an artist.

15. I can see that your works mostly have community participants. Is there any reason that you involve people in your work?

My starting point is my idea. I don't focus on creating a work that involves community members, but when I come up with an idea, usually it leads me to have community members in my works...but having participants in my work is not easy and not always fun. There was a work that lasted 24 hours. I recruited people who wanted to participate in my work as performers. I asked them to spend 24 hours in an adult routine presented as a very common one-day routine of Koreans researched by the statistics Korea. Many people told me that they wanted to participate [at first] but since they had to open up their private lifestyles, including their family members, some people didn't participate at the end.

16. What materials do you use in the artworks? Is there any particular reason for you to choose a style or materials for your works?

There is no specific material that I prefer to use, but last year, someone asked me to create a short video to introduce myself. I was so busy [it would have been hard] to create a new one and there was no time to shoot a video, so I decided to use pictures and texts. When I showed my video to others, one of the curators—who has seen a lot of my works—told me that this is my style of creating a work. Then I thought about it and noticed that I use different materials and techniques in creating an artwork, including photo, video, and text. Also I use hand writing...for me, it is difficult to express my concepts with only one material, so I use a variety of materials.

17. Have your works influenced cultural and social changes?

Yes, I think so because we all live in a society and I usually get an idea for my works from my daily life and ordinary days. Also as I mentioned, in many cases, my works are related to social systems, social concepts, and my experiences in different places and many different cultures, so I think that my works are influenced by cultural and social changes.

18. What's your assessment of the current state of Korean culture?

The current state of Korean culture? Today's Korean society is multicultural. When we watch TV it shows multicultural [issues], but only focused on multicultural families, children from multicultural families, including Vietnamese, Indonesian and Russian. However, besides this issue, there are many reasons for becoming culturally diverse if we think of the meaning of culture from a different view, for example, there are so many movies from outside, and also food cultures, art cultures, dance culture...If I think about it, Korean society has many foreigners who live as members of Korean society and many different cultures are shared naturally in society. Korean society focuses on advertising Korean culture to others but also there is a need for Korean people to understand more about others and all the different cultures that exist in the society. It does not make sense—but a tendency exists in Korean society...which is to regard people according to their cultural background and social status.

19. Do you try to address any of these issues through your art? If so, can you please describe one by one?

Firstly, speaking of the work of *Happily Ever After*, I was asked to participate in a community participatory project for Anyang si and I researched the concerns that community members had and realized that marriage was the main issue. As you know, many young people prefer white-collar shirt jobs or living in Seoul. I decided to create a project for people who live in Anyang and who are having trouble meeting someone. Actually, I recruited 30 single males and females who wanted to participate in this group meeting project. I asked one thing of project participants: that they not show their faces nor give about any information about their educational background, family background, or job to their partner.

Yes, I saw people are wearing masks and playing with a red string.

I asked each to wear a mask. Masks have an important meaning in this project. Those masks were a copy of the average Korean's face. There was a study to calculate length, wide, the height of nose, etc. of Koreans' faces and present an exemplary face as the average appearance of Koreans. There may be someone who looks like this mask, but I'm pretty sure that there might be no one who looks exactly like the mask. Then does it have any meaning to create a certain face? I provided several rules for them to keep in mind during the project. First one was to wear a mask, the second one was to not ask personal background questions...then I asked them to play with the red string. Like a Chinese fairytale, I asked them to participate actively in the project and then at the end, when two persons came to hold a same string at both ends of the string, they became a couple. I also gave them a set of cards with questions like: "What would you do if you didn't take your wallet with you from home?" Other questions were: "If you hurried in the morning and you recognized that you were wearing mismatched shoes in the subway, what would you do?" "Where would you prefer to honeymoon?" and "If you had \$1000, what would you want to do with it?" I thought that if they have a conversation with those cards and play together without background information, they can see the person from their own view, not from a socially-influenced view. It is very important to meet people without any prejudice. I don't know the reason for that but there is a tendency like when we introduce someone, we explain about the educational background or family background of the person first, such as, what cultural background she or he has, or what family background he or she has, or which school he or she is from. However, this thing cannot come first if we are to know about people.

Interesting. What about other works? My work Atlanta-Pacific co. can be discussed because I got the idea when I experienced cultural differences. When I saw the name of the streets [in Brooklyn], I was thinking, like, who named it? Before I looked around, I had not recognized that there were many stores, but after starting to walk on the street, I thought about the country, America. At first, I thought that the way they named those streets might be evidence of the identity of enterprise or it might symbolize their tendency to explore the world. I said myself, 'Ok, then let me explore it.' Atlantic Avenue is a long street that starts in Brooklyn and ends in

Queens, while Pacific Street is a short street. I walked on Atlantic Avenue starting at the end of the east side, and I realized that by following the street, I could see so many different stores and different cultural groups of people living there, including Indian, Mexican, Arab, Hipster, African-Americans and so on. I stopped by stores that looked unfamiliar to me or sold weird things, and I actually bought everything that I thought was weird, strange, or surprising. After I arrived at the end of the street, I felt that I had come back from a world tour. It was an interesting and great experience. Then I opened stores to sell those products in New York and in Seoul.

Yes. I saw it on your website. What did people say after they bought those goods?

When I started this work, I was interested in the identity of America that was implied in the names of the streets, then I thought that each country has a different view of the world and also has its own identity unconsciously permeating throughout society...and in the process, I recognized various stores on the same avenue and collected products which showed cultural diversity as a symbol. Actually nowadays, it is easy to find imported products from abroad though it might be difficult in rural areas. Cultural diversity exists in our lives and is influenced by the rapid expansion of trade. I think these are efforts by contemporary society to help people want to enjoy different cultures nearby. We already have international cultures in our society. By chance, I realized that people from different cultural backgrounds reacted differently to particular objects. For some people, certain products bring back their memories of childhood, and for others, the products represent different cultures that they can meet indirectly in this way. Someone said that this is more expensive than in her neighborhood, and someone else said that he is so happy to see certain products since he has not seen them since she came to New York. Someone also said that he grew up with certain products...and also in Korea, there were some people who felt exotic as a result of the products and also some who wanted to buy them since they are new and interesting.

20. I saw another work that you created in Taiwan. Yes. I went to Taiwan for an exhibition and I was looking for an idea for creating a work for the exhibition. One day I accidentally met a woman who came from China for a job and who has lived in Taiwan for a long time. She told me that even though she came from China her language and Taiwanese do not match, so she had a hard time communicating with others and found a job. Her story immediately made me think of foreign workers in South Korean society. They might have the same experience as this lady. This made me decide to be on their side. I went out to the street and tried to find a job. I didn't speak any Mandarin but I just wrote down several characters and tried. Finally one man asked me to take care of his mother. Actually what I was asked was to help his mother go to a grocery shopping and carry her items. I was so worried about the situation I failed to find a job but I got it at the end.

21. I think your works deliver a message to viewers. Do you ever get feedback from viewers or participants?

It is interesting that I haven't heard from participants often but I hear from people who watched the work. I guess that maybe people cannot feel at the moment or in the work but after, when my works are installed in a gallery space, people start to see the whole thing and give me feedback. Sometimes curators tell me what viewers have said and how they also understood my artwork as the work of a professional. There is a work of mine titled *Awkward Conversation (With Parents)*. Parents were the participants in this work, and the docents in the gallery who were mostly seniors told me that they had seen some people come to the gallery three times to see my work. This is a really rewarding experience as an artist. **What do you think when people react to your work?** I think when they feel empathy with my work and also when my interest matches with the viewers' interest. This is such as a good moment and I feel really good when viewers notice and understand my message.

22. Are there implications that can be drawn from what you do for education in South Korea?

Cultural diversity... actually we learned is that Korea is a homogeneous country. However, after I thought about it from a different view, my last name came from China, then someone in my family came to Korea from China but I haven't thought of myself as a part of China. This might be the case for children from multicultural families. Cultural diversity is discussed these days but only focuses on those children. If we think about it more broadly, we can remember that in a classroom, all the individual children have a different tendency and personality. Uniform culture is huge in South Korea society and there is a tendency for people not to accept differences. Even in the classroom...I remember that children do not like differences between friends. My mom bought me a very nice xylophone since my brother majored in music. However, I hated to put on my desk since mine is different from my friends'. This kind of tendency is deeply grounded in society and causes many prejudices. Therefore, I think that helping students have flexible and open minds toward others is very important.

23. Currently traditional art education is emphasized. Do you think that we need to emphasize traditional culture? Yes, definitely. Because there are not many chances to experience Korean traditional culture for our students. I hope that there will be more opportunities for students to learn about the value of traditional art. Actually my mother is an elementary teacher and she told me that these days, children are busy and also whenever teachers want to bring their kids outside of the school to experience other things, it does not work because of money issues.

24. What future directions/projects do you envision for your art?

As I explained, currently I'm interested in eating and living issues...so I will keep working on those issues for a while, while I stay interested in foreign worker issues as well.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Yoonjung Kang earned a bachelor's degree in Korean Painting at the College of Art at Duksung Women's University in 2001 and pursued her master's degree in art education at the Graduate School of Ewha Womans University in 2004. In 2007, she moved to the United States and achieved her master's degree in art education at New York University. Then, in 2008, she began to study for a doctoral degree in art education at Florida State University.

After obtaining a secondary teaching certificate in South Korea in 2001, Kang worked at museums in New York and Seoul and also taught students as a high school teacher in South Korea. She currently is working as an adjunct at the Graduate School of Education, Ewha Womans University. She is a member of several art education associations, including the NAEA, InSEA, the Society for Art Education of Korea, and the Korea Art Education Association. Her research interests include cultural diversity issues, visual culture, museum education, art criticism, character education, STEAM education, designing teaching resources and others.