

Interstitial Perspectives  
Evgenia Kim

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Thesis Committee:

Russell Maret  
Anthony Goicolea  
Jennifer Hirsh  
Mary Phelan  
Cynthia Thompson

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## Introduction

*...Beginning and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the fin de siècle, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. ...*<sup>1</sup>

--Homi Bhabha

As Homi Bhabha states in his discussion of cultural hybridity as a contemporary phenomenon, it is in that moment of transit, or confusion, when so many cultural aspects collapse in order to create some new, figures with complex differences and identities. This type of confusion permeates all of my works. As an artist whose identity has been inflected by different cultures and countries, I constantly revisit what this confusion brings to my work along with what it adds to the viewer's experience. It is when things become blurry, or obscure the questions of identity become honest searches into what it is that we desire to define in contemporary culture. The legitimacy of any culture becomes important in discussing how historically it had a huge impact on society, and made certain people visible, while others invisible.

As a displaced person who was removed from her place of origin three times, it is imperative for me to learn about my own history, so that I am not defined by others (and their assumptions), so that I can resist other people's images of my past and, consequently, of my future. History can be illuminated by looking back at one's own rich

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<sup>1</sup> Homi Bhabha, arguably one of the most influential figures in postcolonial criticism, has described "postcolonial perspectives" as emerging "from the colonial testimony of Third World countries. They formulate their critical revision around issues of cultural differences, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the "rationalization" of modernity." Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 171.

family's story, generation by generation—moves, job changes or losses, houses, illnesses, social expectations, class and religious fluctuations, and so on... all the things that connect us to each other and to a community, which can be a place or a feeling.

## **History**

Like most people with an interest in their family's history, I was always sentimental about stories that I was told as a child by my paternal grandmother. I was born into a Korean family, but neither my parents nor I ever lived or visited Korea. My family was completely assimilated to the life of the Soviet Union to guarantee the acceptance of their children into this new cultural space. Their willingness to fit into Soviet reality affected my childhood environment, as I grew up learning little to nothing about my obscure background except for the sporadic mention of my paternal great-grandfather's travel to Uzbekistan from the Far East Russia. This 'cultural amnesia' has directed me to focus on the concept of how one can explore and define artistically the loss of a relatively unknown and perhaps unknowable ethnic identity. I discovered that the stories I heard as a child from family members do not match each other, nor make sense when put into a linear perspective. This discovery brought to light the concept of memory, particularly how in the place of an aggressive assimilation, the fluidity of stories from the past affects the future generations. I have an ongoing desire to capture, or arrest, the fleeting nature of those stories that directly relate to my own family. My



story is one of many stories that speak to the experiences and effects of the uprooting and exile of 171,781 ethnic Koreans that were forcefully deported from their place of origin.<sup>2</sup> These Koreans often call themselves Koryo Saram, a term that refers to Koreans that mainly live in a Post-Soviet Territories.

Who are the Koryo Saram? On the one hand, they are Koreans, and they have much in common with Koreans on the both the north and south parts of the Korean peninsula. They have common genetic roots and share a culture as well as a language. On the other hand, they have undergone many changes in their ethnic identity, language, customs, cuisine, and even appearance. Koryo Saram have never tried to hide their ethnic origin and when asked about their nationality, answer simply, “Korean”. Korean ethnic origin has always been written into their passports and other official documents. In other words, not only did they call themselves Koreans, but other people labeled them as such as well.

This story of Korean immigrants starts with their appearance in the Russian Far East in the 1850s and early 1860s in search of better economic opportunities. By the 1890s, they had received the right to register as citizens of the Russian Empire, under the terms of a Russo-Korean treaty (signed September 1905) that determined their citizenship status at the time. With these expanded opportunities, many Koreans have to face new challenges of assimilation.<sup>3</sup> With the new government questioning the loyalty of these newly minted citizens, many Korean families decided to abandon their native language. As a result, many second-generation Koreans in Russia are not

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<sup>2</sup> Pavel Polyan and Nikolai Pobol, *First deportation and the “Effective manager”* Wayback Machine, *Novaya Gazeta*. (June 20, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> German Kim. *Koreans in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Russia*. [http://world.lib.ru/k/kim\\_o\\_i/a.shtml](http://world.lib.ru/k/kim_o_i/a.shtml).

familiar with Korean language. As in many Korean families, this linguistic lack came with the silence about the complicated past.

During the decline of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), Korea appeared unprepared to enter the era of capitalism. For nearly a century, Western and Japanese colonial claims aggravated its protracted political, social, and economic crises. In 1905, after its victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan declared the Korean peninsula its protectorate, annexing it five years later. Mass impoverishment and starvation among Korean peasants compelled many to flee the peninsula. Some Koreans found other routes to Russian territory that took them through Chinese territory. The number of Koreans increased in the pre-Revolutionary period from several dozen to some 85,000 by 1917.<sup>4</sup>

Koreans initially lived in separate villages, and their daily life, social relations, ethnic culture, and language were almost the same as in Korea. The October Revolution of 1917 united workers of all ethnic groups under the umbrella of its slogans of justice, freedom, and equal rights. Koreans largely supported the Soviet cause, with hundreds sacrificing their lives in World War II, believing this would help lead to the liberation of their native Korea. At the same time, by the 1930s, Koreans of the Soviet Far East had established their own identity, culture, and traditions. There were hundreds of Korean agricultural and fishing Kolkhozes; Koreans were actively involved in government and social organizations; traditional culture was maintained and developed; the Korean intelligentsia grew numerically and qualitatively; and Korean

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<sup>4</sup> Pohl Otto, *Ethnic cleansing in the USSR, 1937-1949* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999), 9-20.

theaters and other educational and cultural institutions were established. Koreans were arguably fully Sovietized and integrated in the new political and socioeconomic system.<sup>5</sup>

And yet Koreans were the first ethnic group of the Soviet Union to be deported. Top secret order number 1428-32cc of the Soviet government and Communist Party, “On the deportation of the Korean population of the Far East,” dated 21 August 1937 and signed by Vyacheslav Molotov and Joseph Stalin, was a logical continuation of earlier Tsarist and Soviet policies relating to national minority populations.<sup>6</sup> Koreans settled in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, established a basis for a new life, and contributed to the development of agriculture in these new places.

The number of Koreans in the Far East on the eve of deportation (1937) stood at about 180,000 people. The number of fatalities during the journey from the Far East to Central Asia-including victims of a tragic failure at echelon number 505, which took place on September 13, 1937 at Verino Station near Khabarovsk-was probably in the hundreds. The exact number of fatalities is difficult to calculate, but it is indisputable that the children and the elderly amongst the deported population suffered the most. Certainly, it can be assumed that several thousand Koreans died due to illness and poor living conditions during the early years of forced resettlement.

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<sup>5</sup> Kolkhoz (meaning)- also spelled kolkoz, or kolkhoz, plural kolkhozy, or kolkhozes, abbreviation for Russian Kollektivnoye Khozyaynstvo, English collective farm, in the former Soviet Union, a cooperative agricultural enterprise operated on state-owned land by peasants from a number of households who belonged to the collective and who were paid as salaried employees in the basis of quality and quantity of labour contributed.

*Encyclopaedia Britannica, inc.* Date Published: February 11, 2016.

Aleksey Nikolayevich Li, *Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan: Koryo saram*, retrieved November 2008 (in Russian).

<sup>6</sup> German Kim, *Deportation of 1937 as Product of Russian and Soviet National Policy*. Accessed May, 2011. <[http://world.lib.ru/k/kim\\_o\\_i/dgt6rtf.shtml/](http://world.lib.ru/k/kim_o_i/dgt6rtf.shtml/)>

On June 22, 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Despite the humiliation of deportation, the Koreans remained patriots who were more than willing to help defend their country. Korean men joined work brigades, otherwise known as the Labor Army, which kept the country and army alive throughout the war. Many Koreans wanted to join the ranks of the military at the front, but only a few were dispatched. One of them, Captain Alexander Min, was honored as a Hero of the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup>

Despite great losses, Koreans continued to survive through their persistence, work habits, and courage. In the immediate postwar period, Koreans continued to make great contributions to the development of agriculture in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In the 1940s and 1950s, more than 100 Koreans were honored with the Order of Hero of Socialist Labor, which was the highest Soviet decoration for work productivity. A turning point in the lives of Koreans, as with all other Soviet people, occurred in 1953, when Stalin died, and the political regime began to liberalize. In the 1950s and 1960s, Koreans also became more involved in cultivating cotton, sugar beets, and vegetables.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the founding of the Newly Independent States, a new page has appeared in the history of the Koryo Saram, who yet again, have been forced to adapt, this time to the nationalizing republics of Central Asia.<sup>8</sup> The political and socioeconomic changes and the deteriorating standards of living over the last decade have led to much trepidation among all people of the former Soviet empire regarding the future. Contemporary migration processes in Central Asia are

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<sup>7</sup> The title Hero of the Soviet Union was the highest distinction in the Soviet Union, awarded personally or collectively for heroic feats in service to the Soviet state and society. Aleksandr Mikhailovich Prokhorov (1982), *Great Soviet Encyclopedia, Volume 6*. New York: Macmillan. p. 594.

<sup>8</sup> Term Koryo Saram translates from Korean as Korean people. German Kim, *Koreans in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia*. Accessed May 4, 2011.

connected to a complex variety of socio-economic and political factors. Reasons for Koryo Saram migration include the following: a desire to return to the places where the first generation had settled, namely *kobonjil*; clans and families in business; and high levels of urbanization, education, individualism, and success-oriented mentalities.<sup>9</sup>

From the middle of the 1950s until the disintegration of the USSR in late 1991, Central Asia was home to approximately 75% of the Soviet Union's Koreans, and, of this number, about 90% were concentrated in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan's first census in 1999 recorded 99,665 Koreans, dispersed in all regions, but mostly in the south of the country. The number of Koreans in Uzbekistan according to recent data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs is approximately 175,000, mostly residing in the capital, Tashkent, and in the surrounding Tashkent area. Soviet Koreans were different from Central Asia's other peoples in their rapid migration from rural to urban areas, especially to capitals: Almaty, Tashkent, and Bishkek have seen the number of Koreans increase several times during the last two decades.

Historical experience shows one characteristic feature of the Korean diaspora: their special ability to adapt to new ecological, economic, and sociocultural conditions. The Koryo Saram adapted several times in Russia and in Central Asia, in each case achieving considerable success in creating opportunities for themselves.<sup>10</sup> The first generation of Koryo Saram tried as quickly as possible to adapt to the new living conditions of the Tsarist empire and later of Soviet Russia. That generation learned Russian and accepted Orthodoxy, and then a couple of dozen years later quickly

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<sup>9</sup> *Kobonjil*-specific agricultural activities unique to the Koryo Saram.

Tae Hyun Baek, "The Social Reality faced by Ethnic Koreans in Central Asia. The Koryo Saram: Koreans in the Former USSR." *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin*. Vol. 2&3, 2001, pp. 45-89.

rejected the religion, following the Communist Party line. They engaged in wheat-growing instead of rice cultivation and lived in Russian izbas.<sup>11</sup> They ploughed virgin lands and prepared the land for sowing. The second generation did not have time to taste the fruits of their labor in the new lands. They were forced to repeat the mission of the previous generation, that is, to adapt to a new land, namely Central Asia. Though they had to settle thousands of kilometers away from the homes they left, it was in the same country and at least they did not have to learn a new language and adapt to a new system. This generation heroically withstood all the difficulties and created, so it seemed, a solid foundation for the third generation (those born between 1950-1970s). The third generation has also turned out to be pioneering because they were forced to adapt to the new sovereign states of the post-Soviet area, such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia.

Present-day Koreans in Russia and Central Asia live primarily in large cities, which, due to their standardization living conditions, are melting pots. Among urban Koreans the rate of intermarriage is quite high, resulting in a generation of Koreans with weak ethnic identities. The general tendency to have fewer children has increased the likelihood that the number of people identified with the Korean diaspora will decline. The isolation and divergence of Koreans in Central Asia and Russia make it less likely that Koryo Saram will be preserved as a unique ethos.

The Korean language maintains its status as the “native language” of the Koreans living in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia. However, in social life it has rather limited functions in the context of everyday social life, remaining present primarily

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<sup>11</sup> *Izba* is a traditional Russian countryside dwelling. Often a log house, it forms the living quarters of a conventional Russian farmstead.

in mass media, art, literature, and education. Koryo Mar—the dialect of Korean spoken by the Koryo Saram—exists basically in oral form only and functions solely in the interfamily sphere. Ancestors of the Korean immigrants to the Russian Far East (and, hence, those now living in Central Asia and Russia) hailed from the province of Northern Hamkyong, to which they migrated from southern parts of the peninsula during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Long isolation from developing literary languages, absorption of elements from southern dialects, then preservation, and finally Russian-language influences led to the linguistic phenomenon that has received the name Koryo Mar (fig. 1 a,b).<sup>12</sup>

The modern language competence of the Koryo Saram has been affected by such factors as Soviet nationality and language policy, migrations, interethnic contacts, industrial employment, and educational and professional development. The level of language competence and the character of speech behavior differ for each age and social group. Most of those who are 30 years old and younger do not know Korean at all. Those whose ages fall between 30 and 60 years old typically have a passive mastery of the language; in other words, they are able to understand (more than produce) everyday household speech. Only the most senior age group, i.e., those who are between 60 and 80 years old, possesses genuine fluency in Korean.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Koryo Mar*—a term used when talk about such a phenomenon as Korean language used by Koreans in USSR.

<sup>13</sup> German Kim, *Koreans in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Russia*.

## Ideas and Concepts

My main interest rests on the interstices of the domains of difference and displacement. 'In-between' subjects are formed, despite shared histories and the exchange of values, where meaning and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly conflictual and incommensurable. My goal is to portray the *representation* of differences that are not read as pre-determined or given ethnic or cultural traits, or as a fixed table of traditions. From the minority perspectives, the traditional articulation of the differences is more complex; it is an ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that currently emerge in the constant acceleration of the historical transformations. In fact, these constant changes in terminology of the cultural differences may often be consensual as well as conflictual; they may not align with our definitions of tradition, but can realign our understanding of the boundaries between private and the public, high and low, and challenge normative expectations of development and progress. The art work that emerges as a result of the blend of different cultures insists that its 'newness' is not part of the continuum of past and present, but present as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent but also renews the past and innovates the performance of the present. The 'in-between' space of 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living.

As discussed above, some symbols and signs should reflect a predominant notion of any given cultural environment. The notion of knowable in this case will



dictate whether the visual aspect of the art will be particularly appealing to the audience. In fact, Western perceptions of art drastically differ from those predominant in the rest of the World. For example, Korean-born artist Do Ho Suh (b.1962), explains this fact when talking about his work *Paratrooper I* (2004) (fig.3). In reflecting on this piece's reception, he recalls the overwhelming experience he had gone through when this same work was shown in two different countries. The Korean audience cried at the opening, but, when showed the same piece in New York, it was seen differently. In his opinion, in New York, people tried to project the idea of an American GI, and him commenting on the war in Iraq, since the piece was shown in April 2004, straight after the Iraq war started. He understood this as a difference predicated on the very different perspectives creative by Korean and American histories, respectively. As he states in an interview: "I find that my work has always been read differently from one place to the other, which is fascinating. It brings more interesting meanings."<sup>14</sup>

This polarization of ideas in terms of how art work is *received* is especially relevant in discussions connected to race. Based on my personal experience, the first reading of any symbols will depend weather the given audience is familiar with postcolonial studies of Western societies. I think the strength and intensity of the responses differ depending on where people are from as well as their education and prejudices; the expectations of my background will depend on the fact that the particular hegemony services Western hierarchy of values. That is what looking is: an interposition between what one knows and what one recognizes, what one anticipates and predicts.

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<sup>14</sup> Tom Csaszar, "Social Structures and Shared Autobiographies: A Conversation with Do Ho Suh," *Sculpture* (2005) 24:10, 34-41.

The production of meaning in this case requires that the past and present both mobilize through a 'third space' through which the ambivalence of the specific implications collapse in the act of creating new interpretations. In this "third space", determined by Bhabha, the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, re-historicized and read anew. Only with willingness to descend into the "in-between space" may open the way to re-contextualize an international culture, that based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, nor on the articulation of the cultural hybridity. That in-between space where all these lies is the space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture, and by exploring this in-between space we may elude as Homi Bhabha puts it the "politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves."<sup>15</sup>

When challenging art that emerges from cultural hybridity, it is important to investigate the topic from the perspective that is opposite of the cultural exoticism. In the colonial discourse, it is often discussed as the 'otherness' which at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity. In the history of postcolonial constructs such 'otherness' often discussed as a process by which forms of racial, cultural, and historical 'otherness' have been marginalized in theoretical texts committed to the articulation of 'difference', or 'contradiction' in order to reveal the limits of Western representational discourse. As art critic and philosopher Boris Groys notes:

The unity of an international artistic language and purely artistic creation has been replaced in our time by a unified mass-media network, which, like international tourism, has a vested interest in the regional and specific but not in the actual reality of regional problems, movements, interests, etc. Instead, this network is looking for specific codes that

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<sup>15</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 171.

distinguish a given place from all others on the international tourist map: pyramids in Egypt; Hitler in Germany; Stalin in perestroika in Russia; penguins and environmental protection in the Antarctic, etc. An original national art is required to formulate itself around easily recognizable international signs.<sup>16</sup>

In other words, any visual language should at the same time represent a very particular culture, but at the same time still remain universal.

Jean-Marc Moura, professor of literature at the University Paris Ouest Nanterre La Defense, proposed following definitions of term such as “cliché” and “stereotype”; he asserts that stereotype can be defined as “a preconceived idea, an exaggerated belief associated with a category’ and ‘cliché’ as ‘stylistic defined as an effect of fixed style by the custom and a manifestation of a servile spirit of imitation.’”<sup>17</sup>

In the era of globalization, the visibility of non-Western artists has become more important. In trying to enhance global diversity and cultural relativism, an exotic cultural form has emerged. As a result, peripheral artists can be tempted to represent their own cultural identity a new aesthetic value, but through a stereotyped image suited to Western taste. In “The role of exoticism in international contemporary art in the era of globalization – an empirical study of international art magazines from 1971 to 2010,” Kusek Yun discusses articles dedicated to the most prominent Asian artists, such as Takashi Murakami (b.1962), Ai Wei Wei (b.1957) , and Lee Bul (b. 1964). They are respectively the top-ranked Japanese, Chinese, and Korean artists based on the monetary value of their work, and all have been featured in international magazines

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<sup>16</sup> Borys Groys, “The Global Issue; A Symposium.” *Art in America* (July 1989), 87-88; Y Michaud, *L’artiste et les commissaires: quatre essais non pas sur l’art contemporain mais sur ceux qui s’en occupent* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 2007), 86-87.

<sup>17</sup> Jean-Marc Moura, *La littérature des lointains: Histoire de l’exotisme européen au XXe siècle* (Paris: Honore Champion, 1998).

such as *Art in America* (US), *Artforum* (US), *Flash Art* (Italy) and *Artpress* (France).

Yun's study aims to discover whether a sense of exoticism generated by the mass media, by broadcasting stereotyped images, plays an important role in determining the visibility of non-Western countries in international contemporary art.

Several articles and texts on Murakami's work make clear that this artist speaks about Japanese cultural specificity. He notably favors otaku, manga, Japanese traditional painting (*nihon-ga*), and the Japanese tragedies marked by the atomic bomb at the end of the Second World War.<sup>18</sup> Among all the articles looking at the exotic aspect of Murakami's work, the following excerpts summarize well his view of his place in the art world:

...I am jealous of Warhol. I'm always asking my design team, Warhol was able to create such an easy painting of life, why is our work so complicated? But history knows! My weak point is my oriental background. Eastern flavor is too much presentation. I think it is unfair for me in the contemporary art battlefield, but I have no choice because I am Japanese.<sup>19</sup>

In those days, I was looking for a form that would express my originality, or, let's say that would make my name, so that my works could be sold in the art world as I then perceived it. But what was my identity? The answer is that I didn't really have one. So I felt that the only thing I could do, to explain that absence of identity, was to pile up all the formative layers that had contributed to my background: for example, my work in the field of *nihon-ga*, the soldier figures that I used, my very marked taste for manga and for anime. I thought that by making all that clear, by showing how I had existed without any real identity. I would be able to start up something else. It was during the process of transformation, going from *nihon-ga* to contemporary art, that I came to against this problem: gradually, as I made

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<sup>18</sup> 'Murakami believes that by incorporating the Japanese sub-culture into art, he could better depict the Japanese culture. Calling himself otaku, or a person who is obsessed with anime and cartoons, he creates sculptures and paintings that feature anime-inspired characters and elements of the Japanese traditional painting "nihonga". An extract from an article by Lee Woo-young, "With money and fame, Takashi Murakami has it all", *Korea Herald*, July 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Sarah Thornton, 'Takashi Murakami on What is an artist?', an excerpt from *Seven Days in the Art World* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company), 2009.

more and more works, I realized that I didn't really have an identity [Translation].<sup>20</sup>

Through these texts, we can see that Murakami is very interested in promoting the culture of his country, hoping to redefine or reinvent his identity through Japanese specificity. He freely uses the traditional elements of Japanese painting (nihon-ga) and Japanese cultural meaning (otaku) (fig. 4). He is also conscious of the cultural limits imposed by his native land, as he testifies to here: "My weak point is my oriental background. Eastern flavor is too much presentation. I think it is unfair." For these artists who have had great success on the art market, identity and cultural originality can even facilitate the sale of his works. Note especially that Murakami, who thinks he has no real identity and is interested in selling his works, reinvents his cultural identity, while introducing nihonga, film animation, and manga into his work.

As for Ai Wei Wei, a Chinese artist known as an "activist," notably for protesting against the policies of Chinese authorities, he refers very regularly in his creative activities to Chinese patrimony and ancient dynastic traditions such as "calligraphy", "temples", "Qing", "Ming", "Han", "Tang", etc.<sup>21</sup> (fig.5) Among the many texts of his available on the Internet, and interview by *Business Week China* on the design of the Bird's Nest stadium in Beijing most aptly demonstrates that Ai Wei Wei is aware of his identity as Chinese on the international scene:

BWC: Some people are saying that you were the "Chinese consultant" to the foreign design firm; in this sense, are they saying that you brought Chinese elements to design?

AWW: That is nonsense. In the process of design, we never once brought up any issue of alleged "Chinese elements". The reasoning is quite simple: I am Chinese, and thus I possess reasoning and a mode of thinking

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<sup>20</sup> Takashi Murakami; Helen Kelmacher, *Takashi Murakami*, (Paris-London: Fondation Cartier Pour l'art Contemporain and Serpentine Gallery, 2002), 72.

<sup>21</sup> Karen Smith; Hans Ulrich Obrist; Bernard Fibicher, *Ai Wei Wei* (New York: Phaidon, 2009), 16-19.

that belongs to my native culture. When the design was finished , and before it was sent to the competition, they said they should identify some Chinese elements in it. At that time it was necessary, so we talked about cracked ice patterns in pottery glaze, or the patterns on ancient painted pottery, I'm very familiar with these. We talked about it in the proposal as well, a so-called "ordered chaos", and ideas such as "perfect vessels" which demonstrate an understanding of the ancient Chinese classics. These were just to aid in identifying a pretext.<sup>22</sup>

Ai Weiwei expresses here his awareness of his cultural origins and critiques the absurdity of the reasoning that being Chinese introduces naturally Chinese cultural elements to his artwork. Western critics seemingly try to understand peripheral artists via "specific codes" which 'distinguish a given place from all others on the international tourist map'.

For Lee Bul, Yun studied several texts and interviews available online. The majority of the articles do not contain any clear cultural clichés and stereotypes, but more than hundreds of the articles devoted to this Korean female artist discuss exotic aspects of her art. Listed above, four international magazines use several stereotyping keywords, including "Karaoke," "PC bang," "Asian ceramics," "Asian history", "traditional material", etc. Below are some extracts from the articles and interviews devoted to this artist:

...skillfully manipulated cultural clichés, simultaneously spoofing Western images of the exotic Asian woman and expectations of how Eastern feminist art should look<sup>23</sup>.

How do you think your female/Asian background effects your relationship with international curators and critics? It seems ironic that your recent sculptures of cyborg parts look futuristic despite their being made of porcelain, the most traditional material in Korean art. Actually, pottery-making techniques, especially advancements in ceramics, constituted a very 'high technology' in Asian history. Despite common perceptions porcelain is an extremely durable, heat resistant material, and

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<sup>22</sup> Ai Wei Wei, *Ai Weiwei's Blog: Writings, interviews and Digital Rants, 2006-2009*. Edited and translated by Lee Ambrozy ( Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011), 163-164.

<sup>23</sup> Frank Hoffmann, "Lee Bul: Cyborgs and Karaoke," *Art in America*, May 2002, pp.124-127.

certain types of ceramics are used today, in space crafts and special engines. So are Asian ceramics really a sign of the traditional?<sup>24</sup>

Lee Bul's work appears less focused on questions of national identity or even Korean culture when compared to other Asian artists considered above. However, she does constantly include a Korean specificity in her artwork. The West, in turn, tries to understand her art through clichés and stereotypes.

The appreciation of the peripheral artist's work relies on an empirical system and mechanism of interpretation created by the Western artistic viewpoint. Lee Bul's works are then the fruits of the tension between Western and non-Western culture, meaning that she is very conscious of her identity as Korean, using many cultural symbols from her native country.

This Koreanness has indeed likely helped Bul on the international art scene, if we consider that she was awarded a Special Mention at the 48<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale (1999) for her *Live Forever* (fig.6) futuristic installation, involving essentially soundproof karaoke. In 2008, the Cartier Foundation organized the exhibition in Paris on cultural relativity between Western and Korean society and politics. This featured both Baekdu, a sacred mountain for Korean people, as well as modern Korean history marked by General Park Chung-hee, who is considered to have been at the same time a dictator and a national hero for reviving the country's economy. Afterwards, Lee Bul said, "The mystical components of the utopias of the East and West are met here, at least in a reflection."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Eleanor Hearney, "Report from Asia," *Art in America*, January 2001, p. 64.

<sup>25</sup> Lee Bul, *On Every New Shadow* exh. cat. (Paris: Fondation Cartier Pour l'art Contemporain, 2007), 67.

## Artists Comparisons

Some of the themes and concepts that inform my work can also be seen in works of contemporary artists Kimsooja (b.1957) , Shahzia Sikander (b.1969) , and Ghada Amer (b.1963). Specifically, these three artists often viewed and discussed in terms of their “origins,” even when much of their lives and work have taken place elsewhere.<sup>26</sup> This problematic phenomenon seems to occur frequently with artists whose cultural background is connected to areas outside of the Americas or Europe. In academic curricula and lectures, as well as any publications in press, artists such as Kimsooja, Sikander, and Amer—of Korean, Pakistani, and Egyptian origin respectively—are regularly described by singling out their country of origin.”<sup>27</sup> Yet these artists share neither nationality nor religion, have studied in Europe and the United States, and live and work in London and New York. My examination of works by these female artists shows that only active consideration and critical thinking can combat a tendency on the part of viewers or critics to oversimplify artist’s biographies with simplistic conclusions and binary thinking about non-Western art.

My approach to this subject comes from a variety of perspectives, the first of which is formal, in that I discuss classic traditions of Korean or Islamic art that have

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<sup>26</sup> Talk about what origins might mean.

<sup>27</sup> The term “Islamic,” which in aesthetic discourse was until recently applied mainly to the traditional arts of the Islamic world, is now being applied to modern and contemporary art. See, for instance, Wijdan Ali, *Modern Islamic Art: Development and Continuity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997). At Middlebury College in Vermont, a course on “Approaches to Islamic Art” addresses “the issue of contemporary Islamic art.” The University of Minnesota also offers a course on “Contemporary Islamic Art and Architecture” that deals with Shirin Neshat and Mona Hatoum,” *Art New England* 23:3 (April-May 2002): 9.



become well known in the West including, for example, traditional patterns and ornaments, the painting of miniatures, and embroidery traditions. These are artforms that might, at first glance, lead a Western viewer to label an artwork Islamic. To understand to what measure all three artists actually depart from any conventional notion of Korean or Islamic art I will examine their work in part by approaching it through just these taxonomic types. At the same time, I will highlight the effects of cultural displacement on these three female artists.

A multi-faceted female artist, a global citizen, and a critical voice for humankind, New York-based Kimsooja balances oppositions and paradoxes in her work through complimentary and poetically sensitive ways that set her apart. Her work transcends the idea of a singular human experience and instead enhances the understanding of our position in the world *as a society*. Kimsooja's interest in hybrid identities and her work's seamless connections to different cultures together is what makes her a global, nomadic artist. Although she does not like to limit herself to a single category, i.e., that of being a Korean artist or a female artist, there is no doubt that her work frequently springs from a Korean cultural context; and yet, again, her work addresses human expressions and basic emotions that transcend cultural boundaries.<sup>28</sup>

In her video series the *Needle Woman* (1999), Kimsooja places herself in fifteen different cities around the world over the course of 10 years (fig. 7). Her body and physical presence is the constant in these works, as she blends in or sticks out of the crowd. The camera behind her precisely records the interactions of the crowd with her body. She describes herself as a needle that weaves through the different cities and

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<sup>28</sup> Christina Arum Sok "Kimsooja: A Modern Day Global Nomad Transcending Boundaries, Re-constructing a Global Identity." (2014) [http://www.kimsooja.com/texts/sok\\_2014.html](http://www.kimsooja.com/texts/sok_2014.html)

experiences the diversity, building a tapestry of global interconnectedness. She becomes either an expression of the all-too-familiar global citizen or a stranger/foreigner who does not belong to the currently portrayed place. While presenting this contradiction, she also desires to reconcile “perfect immobility and perpetual motion,” wanting to exist simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. This kind of intrinsic way of exploring the issue of identity makes Kimsooja’s work essential in understanding the perpetual change of the idea of identity in the age of globalization. In the *Needle Woman*, the social identities of people can be examined, as they all go about their daily routine, and respond to the artist’s body in vastly different ways. At the same time, she throws her own identity into question as she constantly embodies and rejects her indigenous culture, constantly altering and blending into the global, social fabric. She takes the elements of culture to weave them into her intricately composed identity. Her identity is wrapping and rewrapping her body, just like a *bottari* as it travels through the world. In the *Needle Woman*, the body is understood as a needle within the fabric of life. Kimsooja elaborates on this important aspect:

The mobility of my body comes to represent the immobility of it, locating it in different geographies and socio-cultural contexts. Immobility can only be revealed by mobility, and vice versa. Constant interaction between the mobility of people in the street and the immobility of my body in-situ are activated during the course of the performance depending on the context of the society, the people, nature of the city and that of the streets...I pose ontological questions by juxtaposing my body and outer world in “relational condition” to space/body and time/consciousness.<sup>29</sup>

Looking at the world through Kimsooja’s eyes, we find ourselves looking at the universe through the eye of a needle.

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<sup>29</sup> Selene Wendt, “Sewing into Life,” in *KIMSOOJA—Unfolding*. Exh. Cat. (Vancouver: Hatje Katz Verlag in association with Vancouver Art Gallery, 2013).

Indo-Persian artist Shahzia Sikander mixes traditional forms of artistic expression, such as miniature painting, with more contemporary mediums such as animation, video, photography, and installation in order to explore history, politics, current events, as well as her personal experiences. Her visual vocabulary goes through some unsettling changes, but still remains recognizable; at the same time, it becomes strangely illegible as it goes through her own innovative process.

When Sikander studied miniature painting as an art student, Pakistani artists had long considered this time-honored form an anachronism. “It supposedly represented our heritage,” she says, “yet we reacted to it with suspicion and ridicule. I had grown up thinking of it as kitsch.”<sup>30</sup> In this context Sikander’s decision to study miniature painting “was an act of defiance.”<sup>31</sup> Right from the beginning, her transformation of the miniature capitalized on its innate, preexisting hybridity of it, which she further extended by incorporating in it both personal content and references to Western modernism. In *Perilous Order* (1997) (fig.8), for example, Sikander depicts a friend in the guise of a Mughal prince or emperor, one of them Muslim rulers of India (fig. 9). In this work, she surrounded his figure with the bodies from Hindu mythology- *gopis*, worshipers of Krishna, derived from a miniature of the Basohli school, which flourished in northern India during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The dots regularly punctuating the surface meanwhile recall a regime of repetition that she associates with Minimalism. Finally, a pure invention of Sikander’s hovers in the lower center: the shadowy silhouette of a female figure, perhaps an alter ego, with roots in place of feet-

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<sup>30</sup> Shahzia Sikander, “Nemesis: A dialogue with Shahzia Sikander by Ian Berry,” in Ian Berry and Jessica Hough, *Shahzia Sikander: Nemesis* (Saratoga Springs: The Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, and Ridgefield, Conn.: The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, 2005), 5, 7.

<sup>31</sup> add. *ibid.*

interconnected roots that absorb energy only from themselves, suggesting that this woman is self-nourishing.

I select one image from my vocabulary of forms and shifted the scale from 10 inches to 10 feet to mimic 'big is better', but also to see what happens to the image itself: Would it become more confrontational? More noticeable? More painterly? More precise? More stylized? Less exotic? More accessible? Less feminine? More macho? More minimal, more economical, less precious? And so forth... I was also trying to figure out a way to navigate spatial constructs...

Another significant technique for Sikander is layering, she uses it both as a device for altering the perception, but also to trap various conceptual ideas and issues in-between them. In some ways, this kind of abstract idea of layering is a contemporary approach to a tradition of *wasli*.<sup>32</sup> Again, the innovation of Sikander's approach to a tradition of *wasli*, is that she disrupts the idea of layering multiple sheets on top of each other and lets them hang loose, one in front of the other, another one with a slight shift. This kind of installation provides the artist with the opportunity to be free from the traditional technical constraints of miniature painting. It lets the viewer not only wander across the surface, but also to walk around and in between the piece. "Core information about a subject is often hidden behind layers of perception that can suggest multiple meanings," Sikander suggests, "Perception is shaped and altered on a daily basis, and information is spun to show us what we want."<sup>33</sup>

Sikander's work reflects issues and events connected to the early twenty-first century, complete with post-9/11 politics. *Web* (2002) (fig.10), with its fighter planes

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<sup>32</sup> *Wasli*, also referred to as *wasli paper*, is a type of handmade paper used specifically for painting miniatures. It was devised in India, in the tenth century, and figures widely in Mughal-era painting. The word *wasli* comes from the Persian word *Vasl*, which means union, coming together, oneness, etc.

<sup>33</sup> Shahzia Sikander, "Nemesis: A dialogue with Shahzia Sikander by Ian Berry," in Ian Berry and Jessica Hough, *Shahzia Sikander: Nemesis* (Saratoga Springs: The Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, and Ridgefield, Conn.: The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, 2005), 5, 7.

caught in the spider's web of some dusty, oil rigged corner of the globe, could be a poet's antiwar editorial. The context suggests a new interpretation for the traditional motif of a lion devouring a deer. The series of works on paper *51 Ways of Looking* (2004) shows Sikander finding argumentative possibilities in abstraction, if, in some cases, abstraction showing traces of representation. In #2 (fig. 11), for instance, a floral border recalling Islamic book illustration frames a rectangle of monochrome black that conjures a modernist art history running from Kazimir Malevich to Reinhard (fig. 12). In the next drawing in the series the border breaks down: the black center overflows into the margin while the margin grows into the center. This mutual intrusion invites metaphoric interpretations to do with relative positions of abstraction and ornament in the modernist hierarchy, say – or in the world beyond. In Sikander's work, as Eugene Tsai has written, "Categories of culturally specific and universal have becomes totally irrelevant."

Egyptian-born artist Ghada Amer moved with her family to France in 1974 to escape the increased polarization of the country after the Six-Day War with Israel. During her training at the art school at the Villa Arson in South France she encountered what she perceived as the machismo of the abstract expressionism of her male teachers. By using the traditionally feminine, domestic activity of embroidery in a gestural manner to both decorate and obscure her figure, Amer confronts cultural objectification of the female form. She draws from the East and West to create her delicately aggressive works. Since the 1970s, Amer have been challenging the boundaries that divide art from craft, public from domestic, and masculine form feminine by incorporating embroidery into their work. By using needle work as one of the

processes in her work, the artist's interest seems to concentrate around the tradition that classified sewing as a hobby and hobby in opposition to the rarefied, 'masculine', or professional arts of painting and sculpture (fig. 13-14).

I find her interviews particularly interesting, since she frequently expresses her concerns about her identity. She has similar to me experience of leaving in multiple places, with claims to several cultures but fully embraced by none. In one interview, she described herself as feeling "a little French," having lived in Paris for twenty-one years.<sup>34</sup> Her feeling, though, was not sufficient for the French government which has three times rejected her applications for citizenship; when in my case it is becoming even more complicating to talk about my identity, as though I have a dual citizenship. In her conversation with Nigel Ryan in 1998, she stated that seeing her work as the product of "a woman from a Muslim society" can be "liberating" and can help to "command an audience."<sup>35</sup> Yet, acknowledging the potential confusion of that tag, she warned that such an exclusive focus could also serve "simply to stereotype, to restrict." "I cannot resent people's internal on this level, she said, "but I cannot embrace it fully." While the assumption that both my own and Amer's work springs from a particular cultural background is correct, yet it is not solely belongs to it. Mainly, it can help the viewer to find the starting point, when yet it is merely a starting point; the problem occurs, when it becomes a measurement, and tries to standardize, when the most interesting part of the cultural hybridity in inestimable variations.

Laura Auricchio sees the hybridity of Amer's *Private Room* (1998) (fig. 15) and, more generally, the hybridity of postcolonial societies, "as reveling the essentially mixed

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<sup>34</sup> Sarah Robbins, "Love in Threads," *Australian Style* 49 (March 2001): 66-70, esp.66.

<sup>35</sup> Nigel Ryan, "A Stitch in Time." *Medina* (April 1998): 80.

and always unstable nature of language and social relations.<sup>36</sup> Further, Auricchio states that “Rather than presuming preexisting differences among cultures, the artist who makes hybridity visible highlights a constant state of interaction among all cultures and shatters illusions of cultural purity.”<sup>37</sup> The staggering nature of cultural hybridity is both stimulating and petrified phenomenon. Critic Yuri Lotman offers one such optimistic model with his so-called “semiosphere” that encompasses “the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages,” which are marked by asymmetry, heterogeneity, and interaction (fig. 16). Not a simple “sum total of different languages,” the semiosphere is intricately “transected by boundaries of different levels, boundaries of different languages and even of texts.”<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps we can recast Amer’s series of literal and implied translations as an ever-changing system. Rather than understanding the process of translation as an inevitably failed attempt at replication, Lotman sees translation as a crucial and on-going process that creates meaning. He calls translation “a primary mechanism of consciousness. To express something in another language is a way of understanding it.” Since two languages often do not process exactly equivalent words, every translation generates information by introducing or uncovering additional meanings.

Several contemporary theorists promulgate the resurrection of the postcolonial “hybrid” as a figure of fascination. In a historical analysis of hybridity, Robert J. C.

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<sup>36</sup> Laura Auricchio, “Works in Translation: Ghada Amer’s Hybrid Pleasures.” *Art Journal*, Vol. 60, No.4, Winter, 2001, pp. 27-37.

<sup>37</sup> add *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Yuri Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 123. For a summary of approaches to hybridity, see Nikos Papastergiadis, “Restless Hybrids.” *Third Text*, 32 (Autumn 1995): 9-18.

Young offers a simple definition of term: "Hybridity implies a disruption and forcing together of any unlike living things."<sup>39</sup> As Auricchio continues Young's statement:

Young reminds us that hybridity emerged from nineteenth-century investigations of botanical or biological cross-breeding. Indeed, apprehensions about hybridity gained currency within an anxious discourse on racial identity, as a fear of miscegenation found expression in debates over whether Africans belonged to the same human species as Europeans.

Young suggests that a similar presupposition of clear and separate races, if not breeds, remains latent in the writings of some postcolonial thinkers who see and use cultural hybridity as a liberating strategy.

## About My Work

Cultural transposition highlights a disproportionate number of elements that are based on the ideas of cultural identifications. What is at issue is continual remaking of the boundaries, exposing the problematic claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference, whether in terms of class, gender or race. Such a definition of social differences- where difference is neither One nor the Other but something else besides, in-between find their intermediation in a form of the 'future' where the past is of origin, where the present is not simply transitory, and that is what interests me the most. In my current body of work, I explore the concept that is antagonistic towards the idea of boundaries. I work against ideas of distinction and limiting categories, given my own cultural background as a product of a modern globalization. I use textile patterns that

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<sup>39</sup> Robert J. C Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 26.



are specific to Uzbek, Korean, Russian cultures; in other words, I draw on old images from places that relate to my own experience or to the shared experiences of the Korean diaspora in an act of reconstruction and investigation of what it means to be a displaced person.

As a child, I heard many stories from my paternal grandmother, the only first-generation person in my family with whom I had contact, due to the fact that my other three grandparents died before or slightly after I was born. I was aware as a child that I was not always told the whole story of my family's origins, but rather the parts that were more age appropriate for me at the time. I can recall only one time when my grandmother told me about the experiences that her family had gone through during World War II, and I remember how uncomfortable I felt seeing her crying in the dark. At the moment, I thought I would never ask her about the past again, not realizing then how these untold stories would go on to have an impact on my artistic life.

My work attempts to fill the silences produced by these untold stories. Without access to the direct source, my grandmother, I had to conduct my own research to my family's history and to explore, more generally, how trans-generational stories can be passed on. How can fragile, fleeting, and multi-layered stories be made tangible? Through the example of a specific viewpoint, I attempt to address a larger question of the identity displacement. In other words, how can I start with an inner emotion or something I want to articulate, rather than the inner image as an image. The narrative-driven composition in this case would be the most efficient way to do so, but I personally find thinking narratively quite stifling, since my story draws on so many different cultures and places at the same time. That is why I prefer to work in a non-linear way that

includes the simultaneous layering of subject matters. By doing so, I have the freedom to expand my ideas in multiple directions and to base my concepts on multiple starting points. If I start with a fully formed plan, then the plan will always end up less interesting than whatever could emerge through the awkwardness and gaps that arise in a less premeditated practice, which reflects similar aporias in my narrative. I usually start with an image, and then try to garnish it with details, that will support the narrative. In general, there are points of discovery during such process.

Visually, such a process can cause confusion, since collaging multiple symbols assumes viewer's participation. In order to make it more poetical, I layer visual impressions on top one another in the passage of time, so that they appear to be simultaneous. Abrupt breaks in the images render it possible to use the gaps for the viewers to insert their own personal experiences and images into a context. The rational image will build upon the idea of having the pieces of evidence all at once, evaluating the evidence and making logical deductions. That often times can explain the bewilderment while reading my work. At the same time, it can speak to the notion of incomplete history; or telling different points of views that when put together make no sense- in which case our brain is working much faster, it instantly making associations, filling gaps, taking leaps.

Collaging can be seen as a poetic form of laying down layers of meaning in order to deposit sense both in them, between them and indeed, in the very measure of their relative distance to one another, possible even with the inversion of the sense. My way of layering might seem "synthetic", meaning a synthesis, or a way by which the

collection of separate elements become a coherent whole.<sup>40</sup> As it was with Picasso and Braque, the use of the collage technique in my work can be seen as a break with the past ideas of limitations, but also with the idea of the authenticity.

While making *Location of Culture I* (fig.17) and *II* (fig.18), both approximately 50 inches tall and 60 inches wide, I relied heavily on the power of the needle, both literally and metaphorically, as a means of expressing the direct interaction between art and life. I have discovered fabric as a powerful artistic medium, as a young girl while watching my grandmother sewing bedcovers for my sister's dowry.

When I started to work with sewing, my first desire was to overcome the limited surface of painting by having a means by which to reach through to the other side of canvas. I was drawn to the idea of getting in and beyond the fibers of cloth with a needle, and subsequently realized the significance of the sewing to me as a process of wrapping fabric with threads that in turn also reminded me of a long Korean tradition of wrapping called *bottari*. I am constantly intrigued by continuous and mesmerizing back-and-forth action involved in sewing, and its inherent creative or mending purpose. With needle and thread in hand, the mind can suture together multiple pieces into one unit while the hand goes through the motions of a precise and monotonous craft.

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<sup>40</sup> This type of collaging multiple unrelated to each other objects comes from the Cubist; particularly from the works of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Collage was an extraordinary break with the past. Even though previous to Picasso and Braque had represented (i.e. painted, drawn, etc.) mass culture in their works, and even though artists in both art and popular culture previous to Picasso and Braque had occasionally used the method of collage, Picasso and Braque were the first well-organized artists to do it intentionally and towards the purposes of artistic innovation. Importantly, Picasso and Braque should also be seen as the first artists to make mixed-media works-a term we use very often today. As well, they were the first artists to put into question whether art could consist of pre-made materials, and finally, collage questioned the separation between art and life-ideas so many artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century-such as Duchamp, but also Dadaists and Neo-Dada artists like Robert Rauschenberg-would take up subsequently.

The image I used in works (fig. 17) and (fig. 18) recreate specific spaces where I previously resided, they explore the mysteries of memory, notions of home, as well as cross cultural displacement and integration. While figures (fig. 19) and (fig. 20) depict traditional Uzbek ornaments, these images of flowers and fruits were highly influenced by Korean folk art paintings. The background image is a satellite view of the place I was born in, and it comes from the Google maps. Many generations of images collapse and try to coexist in a two-dimensional space. This way of working helps me to visually render the idea of transient way of living, but also the global nature of contemporary identity. Images of people in all of my pieces consistently address tension between home and migrations, individual and collective, reality and illusion. Weird pixilation and graininess of the photographic images co-appear on the surface with the heavy painted florals and ephemeral qualities of the silk fabric.

Since my childhood, I have had a sense of cultural displacement from within Korean culture. This feeling remained present in my life no matter the geolocation, and it became accentuated with my move to the United States. Here, where I have been able to compare different traditions, cultures, and ways of thinking, I started to see the differences, especially in terms of looking at art. Almost immediately people read in my work ideas about individual versus collective and Western versus Eastern subjects and perspectives. Those ideas are indeed present, though there is more: a spatial experience of my going into those spaces and experiencing them. My understanding of space speaks to the Eastern traditions of building constructions, in which in order to go to one place, you have to go through many layers of spaces. Doors and windows are made of semi-transparent rice paper, so there is a sense that architecture is very

porous; there is a sense of permeability, versus opaqueness. This explains why I favor handmade eastern papers and semi-transparent fabrics in my own work.

I played with the idea of layering and transparency within the book format as well (fig. 21). Instead of functioning as an actual accordion folded book, the thinness of the paper allows it to unfold more as a scroll. This is a continuous story, approximately 22 feet long in both directions, that starts with images, and then resumes as a pure text based information. This type of construction allows the viewer to interpret the story based purely on the images, but then if necessary explains this from the artist's point of view. Once again, the images were created by layering different printmaking techniques, and later imbedding the pages with the thread, that eventually connects images to a text.

In Untitled (fig. 22), layering helps to portray the dichotomy of the idea of a contemporary hybrid identities. The image of the girls dressed in school uniforms symbolizes the culture in which the uniqueness of one single individual was highly discouraged. At the same time, it is surrounded with symbols of different cultures, to celebrate the difference and uniqueness. For example, the images of fruits and patterns come from the long tradition of Korean folk motives. The ship is a symbol of the mobility and transition mode of contemporary cultural displacement.

My main idea is not to criticize any type of political regime, but rather to shift the point of intervention from the idea of images seen as positive or negative towards the process of subjectification through the stereotypical discourse. The goal is to address how in order to signify the present, something gets to be repeated, relocated, or even

translated, but also acknowledging traditions that might not be a faithful record of historical memory.

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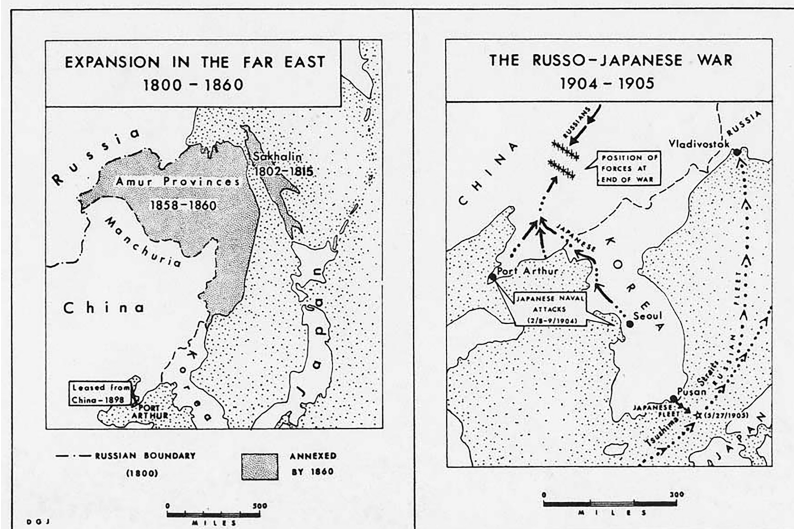
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## Images



### Languages among the Soviet Union's Korean population<sup>[51]</sup>

	1970	1979	1989
<b>Total population</b>	357,507	388,926	438,650
<b>Korean L1</b>	245,076	215,504	216,811
<b>Russian L1</b>	111,949	172,710	219,953
<b>Russian L2</b>	179,776	185,357	189,929
<b>Other L2</b>	6,034	8,938	16,217

**Fig. 1**  
**Deportation of Soviet Koreans of the Far East of Russia.**



Fig. 2  
Do Ho Suh, *Paratrooper I*, 2004



**Fig. 3. Takashi Murakami, *Me and Mr. DOB*, 2010. Print.**



**Fig. 5. Ai Wei Wei, *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*, 1995. Photo.**





Fig. 6. Lee Bul, *Live Forever*, 1999.  
Sculpture.



Fig. 7. *Needle Woman*, 2000.  
Video Art.



Fig. 8. Shahzia Sikander, *Perilous Order*, 1997. Painting.





Fig. 9. Traditional Mughal miniature painting.



Fig. 10. Shahzia Sikander, *Web*, 2002.  
Painting.





**Fig. 11. Shahzia Sikander, #2, 2007.**  
Ink on paper.

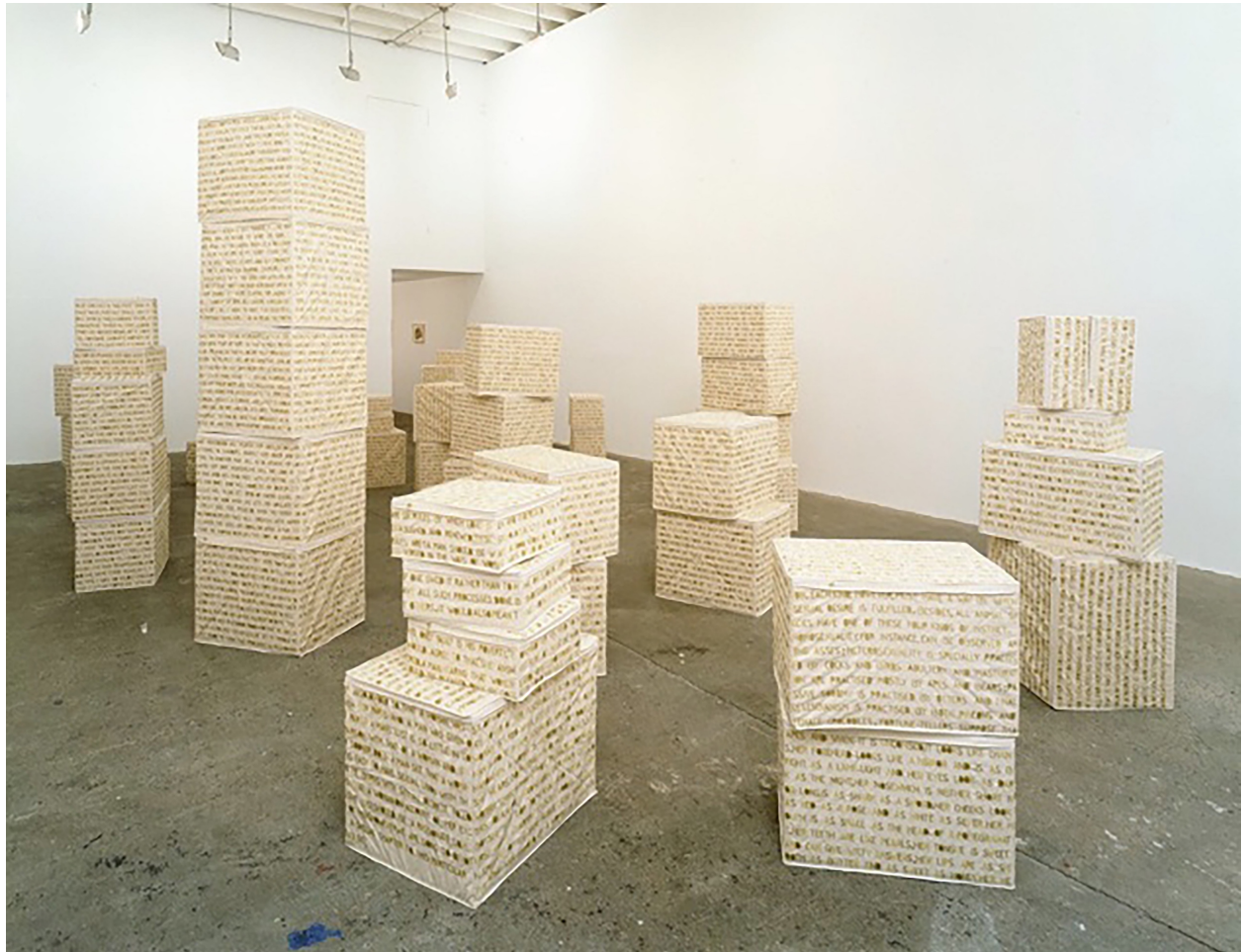


Fig. 12. Kazimir Malevich, *Balch Square*, 1915.  
Oil on canvas.



**Fig. 13. Ghada Amer, *Dormeuses*, 2002.**  
**Mixed media, embroidery on canvas.**





**Fig. 14. Ghada Amer, *Encyclopedia of Pleasure*, 2001.**  
Mixed media, embroidery on silk.



**Fig. 15. Ghada Amer, *Private Room*, 1998.**  
**Mixed media installation, embroidery on organza.**

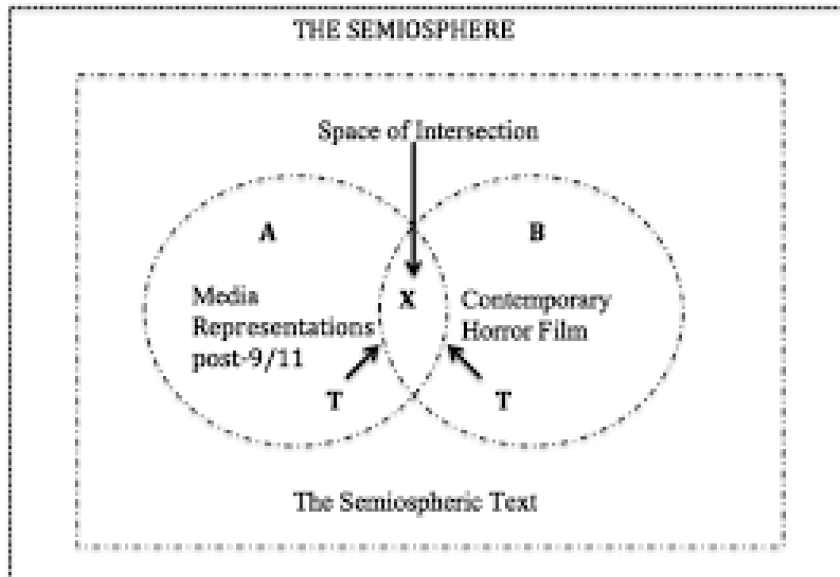


Fig. 16. Yuri Lotman,

*Semiosphere*



Fig. 17. Evgenia Kim, *Location of Culture I*, 2018  
Lithography, gouache, thread.





Fig. 18. Evgenia Kim, *Location of Culture II*, 2018.  
Lithography, gouache, silk.

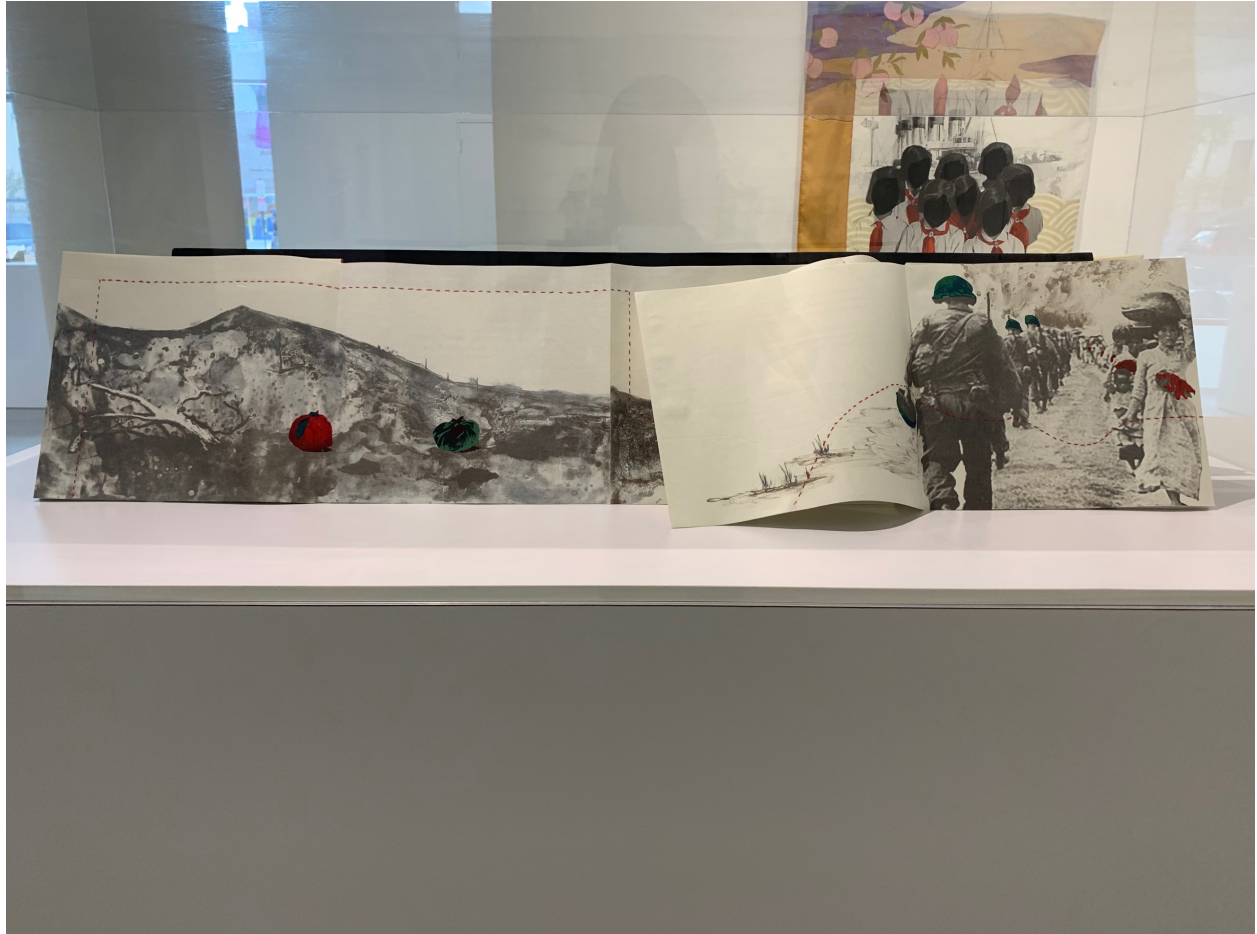


Fig. 19. Evgenia Kim, *Location fo Culture* (detail), 2018.



**Fig. 20. Evgenia Kim, Location fo Culture (detail), 2018.**





**Fig. 21. Evgenia Kim, *Koryo Saram*, 2019.**  
Lithography, silkscreen, letterpress.



Fig. 22. Evgenia Kim, *Untitled*, 2019.  
Gouach on silk, inkjet print, silk thread, charcoal.