

THE KOREAN WAVE AS VIEWED THROUGH THE PAGES OF THE NEW YORK TIMES IN 2007 THE KOREAN WAVE AS

*This booklet is a collection of 65 articles
selected by Korean Cultural Service New York
from articles on Korean culture
by The New York Times in 2007.*

THE KOREAN WAVE

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The Korean Wave and American Views of Korea, Yesterday and Today

By Charles K. Armstrong

FOREWORD

Charles K. Armstrong is the Korea Foundation Associate Professor of Korean Studies in the Social Sciences and the Director of the Center for Korean Research at Columbia University. A specialist in the modern history of Korea and East Asia, Professor Armstrong has published several books on contemporary Korea, including most recently *The Koreas* (Routledge, 2007).

Reading about Korea in the pages of *The New York Times* in 1907, one would find an exotic kingdom on the far fringes of America's interests. Russia and Japan had recently fought a war over Korea, and the victorious Japanese had established a Protectorate in Seoul, soon to be a colonial government. The Chinese Empire had for centuries considered Korea an intimate part of its political and cultural sphere of influence, but China was caught up in its own imminent disintegration. The news from Korea was of foreign abandonment and domestic turmoil. The Korean government dispatched a special envoy to the international court at the Hague to plead for Korea's independence, only to be rebuffed; Emperor Kojong was forced to abdicate under Japanese pressure; the Japanese military was busy putting down a Korean insurgency and demanding total control over Korean affairs. *The New York Times* condemned Japan's "obliteration of the Kingdom of Korea" (July 28), but America showed little interest in actively coming to Korea's defense.

Fifty years later, the U.S. was very much involved with Korea. In 1957 the Korean War, in which 54,000 American lives had been lost, was just four years in the past. South Korea was an American ally recovering from the devastation of that conflict, still deeply dependent on American economic assistance. The U.S. and the Soviet Union debated the "Korean Question" in the United Nations; Syngman Rhee presided over a war-ravaged but pro-U.S. Republic of Korea; the Korean situation appeared to be stabilizing, but for Americans, ominous signs of trouble loomed in the former French colony of Vietnam.

Foreign intervention, domestic intrigue, dependency, war and rumors of war characterized American reportage on Korea in 1907 and 1957. Politics was ubiquitous, but culture was nowhere to be seen. Coverage of Korea in *The New York Times* in 2007 was very different. To be sure, there was plenty of politics, both domestic

and geopolitical: the North Korean nuclear issue, the U.S. military presence, and the Presidential election in December were big stories. But what would have shocked a reader from 1907 or 1957 was the attention paid to stories about culture, in many different forms, both culture in Korea and Korean culture in America. From films to sports, food to fine arts, fashion to video games, Korea in 2007 was not just a distant object of geopolitical interest but part of the cultural landscape in America, and in New York in particular.

Music and movies were the most common subject of Korea-related cultural reportage in 2007. Koreans have long been recognized for their talent for classical music, and are disproportionately represented among the top soloists and orchestras in the U.S., Europe, indeed all over the world. Many of *The New York Times* music stories covered Korean musicians performing Western classical music in New York. The first Korea-related music story in January featured two Korean singers playing the leading roles in the Metropolitan Opera production of *La Traviata*, the tenor Wookyoung Kim and soprano Hei-kyung Hong. At the end of the year, the announcement that the New York Philharmonic would perform in Pyongyang in early 2008 dominated both the front pages and the cultural sections of *The New York Times*.

If stories about music tended to deal with Koreans playing Western classical music, stories about film were very much about *Korean* movies. For several years Korean films have been a hot commodity among film critics and aficionados in the U.S., and especially in New York, arguably the epicenter of art-film appreciation in America (with all due respect to Hollywood). New York has hosted a Korean film festival since 2002. Several new Korean films in 2007 were critically acclaimed in the pages of the Times. When it comes to movies, New York — and the U.S. in general — were part of the worldwide phenomenon that has been called the "Korean Wave."

One of the most unexpected developments in Korea's globalization at the turn of the twenty-first century has been the success of its popular culture as an export commodity, especially to other countries in East Asia. The term *Hallyu*, or "Korean Wave," was apparently first used in China around 1999 (*Han liu* in Chinese) to refer to the explosive growth in popularity of Korean films, television programs, pop music, and fashions in that country. Various K-Pop media, and especially certain actors, styles, and bands, found fervent and even fanatical followers in the East Asian region and beyond. Housewives from as far away as Honolulu came on group tours to visit sites filmed in their favorite Korean soap operas. Korean actors became household names in Japan. Korean pop bands outdid the biggest American acts in popularity in China, and when visiting the country received welcomes reminiscent of The Beatles in their heyday. Vietnamese schoolgirls tried to imitate the make-up and hairstyles of their favorite Korean singers and actresses.

Big-business underwriting and government support certainly helped push the Korean Wave, but these alone cannot explain Hallyu's success. Clearly there was something about Korean popular culture that struck a chord with young people across eastern Asia and the Pacific. It has often been argued that a combination of up-to-date style and slick production values with "Confucian" or "traditional East Asian" cultural norms resonated within the region. Thus, for example, Korean TV dramas set in contemporary Seoul showed a sophisticated urban lifestyle while focusing on family values and relationships, something to which an aspiring Chinese middle class could relate and wished to emulate. Similarly, Korean pop acts showed all the latest musical idioms and dance moves borrowed from the United States, but in a more subdued and less provocative package than their American counterparts. In other words, the combination of cutting-edge styles and cultural familiarity, novelty without excessive "foreign-ness," gave K-Pop just the right balance to be a success in East Asia. Another element of K-Pop's success is the fact that Korea is a less problematic source of popular culture than some other countries

in the region: China can more easily accept Korean pop culture than Japanese, for example, because of long-standing historical and political issues between China and Japan; Vietnam can embrace K-Pop more easily than Chinese pop, for similar reasons. And for all the countries in the region, Korean pop offers an alternative to the globally dominant American popular culture industry. The very fact that Korean popular culture wasn't American or Japanese, cultures already well-known in the region, gave it a freshness and novelty that American and J-Pop lacked.

The precise reasons the wave arose will be argued and analyzed for a long time to come; whatever its causes, this was the first time Korea had ever been a leader in cultural trends in East Asia, and it still not clear how long the Korean Wave can last. Well into the first decade of the twenty-first century, however, Hallyu can be seen as a key element in the growing cultural integration of the East Asian region. The Korean Wave in the U.S. and other non-East Asia regions is a more recent and less well-known phenomenon. Here in the U.S., it is probably not surprising that the most important consumers of Korea popular culture are Americans of Korean descent, and outside of that demographic group the "wave" is mostly confined to the large cities, especially Los Angeles and New York, where the highest concentrations of Korean Americans can be found. But Korean-originated culture is not popular only among Korean Americans in the major cities. Statistics are hard to come by, but it does seem that Korean TV dramas are gathering a growing and dedicated following among non-Korean Americans, just as those dramas have gained popularity in Japan and China. Korean food, once almost completely unfamiliar to non-Korean Americans even in multicultural metropolises like New York, is becoming more and more common. These days it seems every American, regardless of ancestry, has tried kimchee, galbi and bulgogi; certainly just about every New Yorker has been to a Korean restaurant and has paid a visit to 32nd Street, Manhattan's Koreatown. Not only reviews of Korean restaurants, but recipes for Korean food appear in the American mainstream media, including *The New York Times*, with increasing frequency.

Many Korean films have been hits among American film critics in recent years. Korean movies have established a firm foothold on the art-house circuit and at international film festivals. Here in New York, Korean films have been a regular part of the *ImagineAsian* film series, and — as mentioned previously — since 2002 there has been an annual New York festival devoted solely to Korean films. Critical success is not the same as mainstream American popularity, however, and the Korean film industry's attempt to reach a wide American audience have not met with much success — so far. Bong Jun-ho's *The Host* and Shim Hyung-rae's *D-Wars* were both released in American theatres in and covered in *The New York Times* in 2007, but neither achieved great commercial popularity. Still, this may change. A big Korean hit may yet break through to wide popularity in this country, as some Japanese and Hong Kong films have done in the past. Jeon Do-yeon's Best Actress award at Cannes last year for her work in Lee Chang-dong's *Secret Sunshine*, the first time a Korean actress won the award, suggests the global impact of Korean film may still have great untapped potential.

Korean pop music as well, which has a huge following in Asia, seems not to have reached much beyond the ethnic Korean population in America. One never knows, of course, which individual act may make a breakthrough to domestic popularity, and some aspiring Korean American singer from LA may be the Next Big Thing after he or she wins the American Idol competition. Americans are only beginning to become acquainted with Korean culture, which was virtually unknown in this country just four decades ago. A hundred years after *The New York Times* declared the Korean kingdom "obliterated," the Korean Wave has hit America's shores with a vengeance.

The Korean Wave: Last Year, Twenty–five Years Ago

By David R. McCann

FOREWORD

David R. McCann is the Korea Foundation Professor of Korean Literature in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, and director of the Korea Institute at Harvard University. He is the recipient of numerous prizes, grants, and fellowships, including the Order of Cultural Merit award (2006), one of the highest decorations by the Korean government, and the Manhae Prize in Arts and Sciences (2004).

The *New York Times* carried an array of articles about Korea and its culture in the course of the year 2006, which the Korean Cultural Service assembled last year in a compilation aptly called *The Korean Wave*. The book provided a varied introduction to things Korean, where readers could explore a range of topics on contemporary Korea, from music to technology, food to PC game rooms or football (soccer) fandom. Most helpfully, the stories examined not only a range of topics, but presented a considerable variety of outlooks as well. For example, one story on the singer Rain examined not only his music and the upcoming concert at Madison Square Garden, but also the singer's difficult path in developing his style, and his dedication to the performance profession. A follow-up article reviewing the concert was much more decidedly critical of the music. Or on the subject of Korean food, several readers of my acquaintance not only read the various articles, but went out and tested the food in local restaurants, examining matters of presentation and variety, a theme in several of the articles, as well as the flavor of the kimchi.

Some twenty–five years ago, when I first began teaching a course called *Introduction to Korea* at Cornell University, only a relatively small number of books on Korea were available in English, along with a few videotape tours of famous historical–cultural sites such as the Buddhist temples in and around the town of Kyôngju, former capital of the Silla Kingdom. I had several 33 1/3 r.p.m. records of classical court music and folksong, as well as one collection of songs by Kim Min Gi, which I had managed to purchase despite the ban on sales; his “Morning Dew” had become the anthem of the student democracy movement in the 1970's. In some ways for purely practical reasons, to make up for the scarcity of other materials, for one of the course requirements I asked the students to put together notebooks on contemporary references to Korea: stories on Korea in the papers or magazines, for example, or a mention of Korea on TV or the radio, or even more casual comments about Korea in conversations with fellow students, family, friends. I asked the students

to record what had been written or said, and then to add their own commentary on how “Korea” seemed to be presented. What assumptions seemed to color the representations of Korea?

The student assignment provided an informal and yet regularly repeated sampling, year after year, of changing attitudes about Korea, and views of it from outside. It was remarkable how little about Korea there actually was in the news during the mid–1980's, as I recall. The occasional items about domestic (South) Korean politics always spoke of factional conflicts and vague, distant evocations of “security concerns.” We found little or nothing about North Korea, except when some incident took place. If Korean culture was mentioned, it was usually in connection with comments about features of Korean cuisine.

I can add that over the years as the course continued to be offered, enrollments grew steadily. Already in the 1970's and 1980's there were a substantial number of Korean–American students at Cornell, some of whom had grown up and gone to school in suburbs with no other Korean–Americans friends and fellow–students, but others from places like Los Angeles, New York City or Chicago, where they had lived in a Korean–American community, and were interested, when they came to Cornell, in exploring their historical and cultural heritage. Still others, students with no direct connection to Korea, just became interested.

What we discovered was a general tendency to stereotyping. Korean politicians were portrayed as devoted to factional quarrels, a trait then generalized as part of the essential character of the Korean people. Viewed through a lens that made it seem very far away, Korea was made to seem foreign as well as underdeveloped in economic and other terms. The occasionally closer and more sustained examinations were most often the result of some calamity, such as the 1980 Kwangju Uprising, or the 1983 Korean Air Flight 007 shoot–down by Russian air force fighter planes. All through those years, the continuing reruns of the TV show M*A*S*H* offered another partial view of Korea and its people.

The long-distance and oversimplified view of Korea began to change in 1987, as the South Korean presidential campaign started to unfold into entirely new territory, an open election, while simultaneously Seoul began preparations to host the 1988 Summer Olympics. There were the first predictable stories, on-the-ground reports on restaurants that served dog stew, for example, or of first-hand looks at Korean political factionalism, but such examples of mere stereotyping, though from ground level, soon vanished. From the late 1980's, press and other coverage of the Korean scene has been entirely different: more fact-and observation-based, more frequent; and far more nuanced. Certainly one clear lesson from 1988, now twenty years ago, is that a decision to pursue policies of global outreach, through such global engagement as hosting the Olympics, brought Korea ineluctably to the world's direct attention. The energy, vitality, and ambitions of the Korean people stood revealed, and from time to time as well, the tensions surrounding such lingering historic issues as Japan's 1910–1945 colonial occupation of Korea, or the challenging legacies of the Korean War.

The decade of the 1990's, among other changes, witnessed the growth of Internet information sources, websites, the wider availability of information about North Korea, and the end of censorship and other controls on the news and book publications in South Korea. While the end of the Cold War in 1989–1990 left the People's Republic in the north as a kind of remnant Stalinist state, the many quick predictions of its immanent collapse were inevitably followed by puzzled ruminations on its stubborn capacity for continuing survival. Yet precisely that capacity has been a feature throughout Korea's history for a thousand years and more.

Wang Kôn, the founder of the Koryô Dynasty, 918–1392, shortly before his death summoned his attendants to give them a set of ten injunctions, practices to follow in order to ensure the kingdom's survival. The Injunctions started with a call for active religious practice and tolerance; second, a recommendation for sensible building plans and the avoidance of overbuilding in any one or another area; third, that the selection of succeeding rulers be made according to ability,

though within the royal line. In his fourth injunction, the king favored adaptation of tested and useful practices from foreign cultures, coupled with avoidance of slavish imitation.

The Founder King might have been writing an introduction to the current compilation of Korea-related *The New York Times* articles. In the year 2007, we find articles about distinct and yet interactive religious beliefs; concerns about marriage, weddings, and the continuation of family lines in a changing Korean society; the accomplishments of Korean musicians in classical, western music performance. What seems strikingly consistent in the current range of articles is the broad, general acceptance of the fact of Korea's presence in the world. We find references to the Korean Wave, but it no longer seems to draw attention of or by its own making. The golfer Michelle Wie made the news not because of her Korean background, but because her injured wrist caused a repeated series of early withdrawals from tournaments.

While the more obvious questions of identity have subsided, for the most part, those parts of the cultural identity of Korea that may seem at first glance to be shaken by recent developments, turn out to reassert themselves, in a most intriguing interaction of change, adjustment, and reappearance of old forms in new configurations. Stories about the greater role of women in the professional world include an interesting account of adjustments in the initiation practices. Some newcomers, men as well as women, have not enjoyed the ritual drinking, in particular. One woman employee's pursuit of legal redress may well have engineered an escape route for others who find the custom burdensome, but there was mention also of the practices used to get rid of a drink or two by various subterfuges, often with the help of one or more of the other initiates. The teams learn different practices for managing the managers, just as villagers in the old days found ways to deal with the demands of government bureaucrats or the local officials. One such method was simply to act invisible, as the notable woman traveler Isabella Bird Bishop observed back in the 1890's, as she saw how Korean peasant farmers slouched, with a most dispirited mien, to avoid drawing attention to themselves.

One of the more intriguing story lines from 2007 followed the course of planning and ultimate decision for the New York Philharmonic Orchestra's journey to Pyongyang. Christopher Hill, principal American negotiator with North Korea, and Pak Kil-yon, the North Korean representative to the United Nations, played roles in the process, which in turn was compared to the journeys to Moscow some fifty years ago by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, in 1956, and the New York Philharmonic in 1959. Again, one of the most intriguing features of this story is its resonance with Korean history centuries ago. Korean court ceremonial music was based on Chinese melodies and instruments, with an underlying belief that the proper melodies, performed on instruments tuned to the correct pitches, would bring harmony to the kingdom in Korea as much as in China.

There has been criticism of such cultural efforts as the orchestra's visit, but readers may yet agree with Christopher Hill's observations regarding the relative ineffectiveness of policies that seek only to prevent contacts, cultural and otherwise. The example of the Seoul Olympics from 1988 remains an instructive one. With world attention focused on Seoul in 1987 during the run-up to the Games, the controlling hand of the government was restrained in its response to demonstrations about the South Korean elections. In the late summer, Roh Tea Woo's announcement of the open election caught all political experts by complete surprise. While the journey by the New York Philharmonic cannot be expected to have any such large-scale effect, it may serve in other ways as a confidence-building measure not just vis-à-vis the North, but in American policy circles as well.

What lessons may we take from our perusal of articles from the year 2007? We find that Korean culture's constituent elements, its flavors, materials, colors, and inflections, remain consistently identifiable, as Korean, but those are features that are found in different cultures in differing mixes throughout the world. We might argue, however, that one feature that seems distinctively Korean is the overriding significance of the performance dimensions of Korean culture: whatever the musical form, how to perform it as perfectly

expressively as possible; whatever the food, how to present it as compellingly as can be arranged; whatever the movie, how to set up the most compelling glance or dramatic sweep of a dragon's limb. Finally, and welcome indeed to someone interested as I am in literature, there begin to be references to Korean literature, a vast and energetic enterprise in South Korea that has been remained off stage, patiently waiting in the wings for many years, it seems. Literature enters in the story about the movie director Lee Chang-dong, also a well-regarded author, and the *Review* section account of the new novel *Free Food for Millionaires*, by Min Jin Lee.

One final question: Why has *The New York Times* been publishing so many articles about Korea, Korean culture, and its global incarnations? The answer that occurs to me is a predictably obvious one. Though I might like to suppose that the growing enrollments over the initial years of my course at Cornell were a response to a masterful syllabus and an engaging professor, I have to admit that they were more likely a direct reflection of the increasing numbers of Korean and Korean-heritage students, and others who had encountered Korea in some way, among the undergraduates. In parallel fashion, the readership of *The New York Times* no doubt includes a number of readers having direct ties to Korea, but an increasing number also of those who have such indirect ties as listening to a performance at the Met or the Philharmonic, tasting the food at one of the restaurants on 33rd St., Park Slope, or elsewhere, seeing a Korean movie, or watching a Korean SUV roll by.

Korea is present not just in the Wave that seems to emanate from far away in Seoul, but all around us as we make our ways through our daily lives. The articles gathered in this year's compilation tell us about various particulars, and the lively, affirming energy of Korea's cultural presence, while at the same time they continue to remind us of those human traits we all share.

MOVIES

IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

TAZZA

THE HIGH ROLLERS

BY MATT ZOLLER SEITZ



*Opens today in Manhattan
Directed by Choi Dong Hoon
In Korean, with English subtitles
Not rated; 139 minutes*

“Tazza” is a Korean word referring to a gambler at the height of his powers. It could be applied to this film’s writer and director, Choi Dong Hoon, who transforms what could have been another chronology–scrambling time waster into a terrific film about the sensual energy and reckless optimism of youth.

Based on a Korean comic strip, the plot finds the gambling–addicted hero, Go Ni (Jo Seung Woo, who has the young John Cusack’s rumpled cool), losing his savings and his sister’s alimony money to bad luck and crooked adversaries. Desperate to win it all back, he seeks tutoring from an old pro, Pyeong Gyeong Jang (Baek Yun Shik), then gets further instruction, as well

as T.L.C. from Madam Jeong (Kim Hye Soo), a gambling ace who’s Lee Marvin in Ava Gardner’s body. She and Go Ni have a relaxed, tender chemistry, like characters from an early Jean–Luc Godard picture.

The Rubik’s cube narrative includes moments of low humor, romantic yearning and shocking violence, with a detailed appreciation of the tactics of card games. But the film’s true pleasures are visceral, sensual: the curve of a woman’s naked back as she sits on a bed talking to her lover; the star–field glitter of a nighttime cityscape; the interplay of color–coded rectangles in Mr. Choi’s widescreen shots, whose frames–within–frames evoke the Pop Art gorgeousness of early Pedro Almodóvar. Bet on “Tazza” to entertain; you can’t lose.

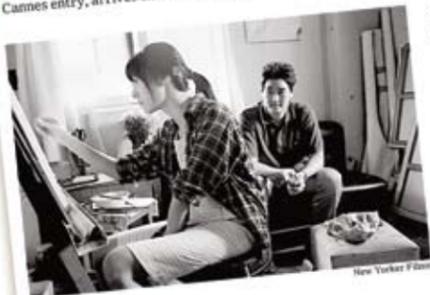
FILM

BY A. O. SCOTT

FILM

A. O. Scott

The Korean writer and director **HONG SANG-SOO** belongs to a fast-growing category of international filmmakers: masters at the height of their powers who remain almost entirely unknown in the United States. Mr. Hong's most recent film, "Woman on the Beach," has been shown at a few American festivals, including the New York Film Festival. On Tuesday "WOMAN IS THE FUTURE OF MAN," his 2004 Cannes entry, arrives on DVD, a year af-



Seong Hyeon-a and Yoo Ji-tae in "Woman Is the Future of Man," a 2004 film by Hong Sang-soo being released on DVD in the United States on Tuesday.

ter its brief run in theaters.

Short (just under 90 minutes), sly and oblique, "Woman Is the Future of Man" has things in common with both American slacker cinema and the romantic fables of Eric Rohmer. Its two male protagonists, Mun-ho (Yoo Ji-tae) and Hun-joon (Kim Tae-woo), are old school friends — one a college teacher, the other a filmmaker — whose desultory reunion propels the film through its wandering narrative. They seek out another old acquaintance — Sun-hwa (Seong Hyeon-a), who may be the woman of the title — and for a time the three drift together through the liquor-sodden, sexually anxious malaise of adulthood.

The movie's subtlety can be mistaken for slightness — it can feel at times like a long, puzzling anecdote — but Mr. Hong's unassuming, naturalistic shooting style masks a serious formal and ethical ambition. His portrait (or perhaps self-portrait) of South Korean men is unsparing but not altogether unsympathetic, and his insight into the nuances of disappointment is oddly invigorating.

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IT CAME FROM THE RIVER, HUNGRY FOR HUMANS (*BURP*)

BY MANOHLA DARGIS

The plug-ugly monster that jumps out of a city river in "The Host" to scoop up and chomp down on those unlucky enough to cross its path — men, women, a whip-smart 13-year-old girl named Hyun-seo — looks like something you might find lurking at the bottom of a Hieronymus Bosch painting or trolling the depths of a murky restaurant aquarium in the middle of a toxic dump. Blink and it looks like something that slimed out of the sea in a creationist nightmare.

It would have to be an awfully big aquarium, as it happens, because this fishy creature, this mystery from the deep with the gulping petaled mouth and prehensile tail is the size of a school bus and restless to boot. It rushes underwater and races over ground, its sturdy little legs churning turf. Every so often it spirals into a back flip as gracefully as a prepubescent Romanian gymnast or drops into the water like a knife, scoring a perfect-10 dive. It's as ugly as sin, this thing, but it has style to burn. As does this film, a loopy, feverishly imaginative genre hybrid from the South Korean filmmaker Bong Joon-ho, about the demons that haunt us from without and within.

By turns a carnival of horrors and a family melodrama (variations on the same theme), "The Host" is also a rethink of those 1950s cine-quickies in which mondo ants, locusts, wasps, crabs and snails and one seriously ticked off amphibious reptile go on the rampage, visiting punishment on a hapless, guilty humanity. Like Godzilla (Gojira in the original Japanese), some of these mutants were born under a mushroom cloud; others were hatched in the B-movie hothouse of box-office opportunism. The creature running amok in "The Host," meanwhile, was spawned by a 37-year-old South Korean who has spent his entire life in the shadow of the American military presence. No wonder the bad guys look like character actors on leave from Hollywood. They are.

As if in preparation for the carnage to come, the once-upon-a-time story opens in a modern autopsy room with two men, an American and a Korean, dressed in scrubs. Bathed in an eerie, silvery blue light, the American boss (Scott Wilson) orders the Korean (Kim Hak-sun) to dump bottle upon bottle of formaldehyde down the drain, on the pretext that the containers have become too dusty.

It Came From the River, Hungry for Humans (*Burp*)



The plug-ugly monster that jumps out of a city river in "The Host" to scoop up and chomp down on those unlucky enough to cross its path — men, women, a whip-smart 13-year-old girl named Hyun-seo — looks like something you might find lurking at the bottom of a Hieronymus Bosch painting or trolling the depths of a murky restaurant aquarium in the middle of a toxic dump. Blink and it looks like something that slimed out of the sea in a creationist nightmare.

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The Host
Boe Doo-na in this film by Bong Joon-ho, opening today.

legs churning turf. Every so often it spirals into a back flip as gracefully as a prepubescent Romanian gymnast or drops into the water like a knife, scoring a perfect-10 dive. It's as ugly as sin, this thing, but it has style to burn. As does this film, a loopy, feverishly imaginative genre hybrid from the South Korean filmmaker Bong Joon-ho, about the demons that haunt us from without and within.

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Continued on Page 19

Stunned, the Korean objects, noting that the chemical will flow from the drain into the Han River, the fat ribbon of water that cuts through Seoul and empties into the Yellow Sea. The American grimaces, capping his request with a barely veiled threat (“That’s an order”) that betrays him as an emissary of American military might.

Fast-forward to a day like any other and the Park family running its snack stand on the banks of the Han. Calculatingly, goofily dysfunctional, with enough issues to populate a couple of 12-step groups, the Parks don’t seem all that different from the brood in “Little Miss Sunshine.” There’s gramps, Hee-bong (Byun Hee-bong), his three adult children — including an unemployed salaryman, Nam-il (Park Hae-il), and his archery-champ sister, the lovely Nam-joo (Bae Doo-na) — and only grandchild, the aforementioned Hyun-seo (Ko A-sung). Mostly, though, there is the family’s oldest son, Gang-du (the wonderful Song Kang-ho), an overgrown baby with a shock of badly bleached blond hair and a moon face that waxes and wanes depending on his proximity to his beloved daughter, Hyun-seo.

Bong Joon-ho’s previous features include a smart-aleck exercise in gratuitous nonsense called “Barking Dogs Never Bite” (they just comically kick the bucket) and the shiver-inducing thriller “Memories of Murder.” As he did in “Memories,” about the hunt for a serial killer, Mr. Bong relies on a familiar bag of movie tricks in “The Host.” But, much like Steven Spielberg (an unmistakable influence), he makes all those old tricks feel new. That’s especially true during the monster’s first attack, when Mr. Bong instills an initial sense of calm and then of rapidly escalating panic through his masterful orchestration of the various tempos created by the actors (walking, then running), the monster (swimming, then galloping), the camera (tracking, then racing) and the edits (slow, slow, fast!).

The opening attack is sensationally well directed, and if the rest of the film never quickens the pulse in the same accelerated fashion, it does give the story both its principal excuse (the monster grabs the granddaughter) and something just as satisfying if unexpected: a portrait of parents, children and the ties that bind, sometimes to the point of near-strangulation. “The Host” may be born out of sociopolitical tensions, scares about SARS and the avian flu, or Mr. Bong’s imagination, but it’s also a snapshot of a modern South Korea bordering on social anarchy, one in which a fatalistically obedient old-timer and his three preternaturally im-

mature adult children face down a rampaging beast along with clueless doctors, Keystone Kops, faithless friends and even hordes of paparazzi.

Besieged by humans and monster alike, the family has nowhere to go but deep inside itself. This us-against-them strategy works deviously well because it ensures that the Parks are the star attraction, not the monster. Not that the creature doesn’t have its share of show-stopping moments, as when it’s caught by surprise in midgulp, a pair of legs dangling from its mouth. Or when it regurgitates a corpse into its lair with a slimy splat, an act it seals with a tender lick of its long tongue. It’s in this lair that Hyun-seo, her face and schoolgirl’s uniform flecked with muck, proves her mettle, retrieving the cellphone that becomes the lifeline to her family and playing protector to another child who adds a touching dimension to the mix.

Although some of Mr. Bong’s action scenes here are the match of those in “Jaws,” he seems made of sterner stuff than Mr. Spielberg. He can seem just as cruel, readily putting children in mortal danger, but he doesn’t share the American master’s compulsive need for tidy endings.

“The Host” is a loose, almost borderline messy film, one that sometimes feels like a mash-up of contrasting, at times warring movies, methods and moods. Mr. Bong would as soon have us shriek with laughter as with fright. But it’s precisely that looseness, that willingness to depart from the narrative straight and narrow, that makes the film feel closer to a new chapter than a retread.

Likewise it is Mr. Bong’s willingness not just to contemplate but also to deliver a worst-case scenario that separates “The Host” from run-of-the-mill horror and may have helped make it a runaway hit in Korea. Closer to home the film reminds me less of the usual splatter entertainments that clutter American movie theaters and more of another recent horror film, the one in which a newly thawed alien with a giant brain delivers apocalyptic warnings to humanity about its imminent future. I’m talking of course about the documentary “An Inconvenient Truth.”

Much like that Al Gore big-screen lecture, “The Host” is a cautionary environmental tale about the domination of nature and the costs of human folly, and it may send chills up your spine. But only one will tickle your fancy and make you cry encore, not just uncle.

“The Host” is rated R (Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian). It contains monster violence galore.

ASIAN-AMERICAN THEATERS PLAN NEW FESTIVAL

BY STEVEN MCELROY



In 2003, leaders from Asian-American, Latino-American and African-American theater companies held a round-table discussion during a Theater Communications Group conference at the White Oak retreat in Yulee, Fla., to examine the state of their art. Soon after six Asian-American theater companies — Pan Asian Repertory Theater, East West Players, Ma-Yi Theater, the National Asian American Theater Company, Second Generation and Mu Performing Arts — met again to discuss their particular challenges. One result of those talks is that New York will be the host of the inaugural National Asian American Theater Festival, scheduled to run June 11–24 at several locations in the city. The two-week event will draw more than 25 companies and individuals from around the United States, with backgrounds from Cambodia, China, Japan, Korea, Laos, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam reflected in their work. Festival highlights include the New York-based Ma-Yi Theater’s presentation of “I Land,” a solo play written and performed by Keo Woolford, a native Hawaiian and a member of the boy band Brownskin. The play explores the writer’s heritage through the history of hula dance.

VOICE OF A MURDERER

BY JEANNETTE CATSOULIS



Nam-ju Kim, left, and Kyung-gu Sol in "Voice of a Murderer." CJ Entertainment

*Opens today in Manhattan.
Directed by Park Jin-pyo
In Korean, with English subtitles
Not rated; 122 minutes*

With "Voice of a Murderer," the unpredictable Korean director Park Jin-pyo returns to the docudrama form he employed so provocatively in "Too Young to Die," his 2002 examination of septuagenarian sex. That film was judged unfit for public viewing by the Korea Media Rating Board, but this time the filmmaker is playing it safe: "Voice of a Murderer" arrives complete with its own public-service announcement.

A fictionalized account of the unsolved 1991 kidnapping and murder of a 9-year-old boy, "Voice of a Murderer" unfolds relentlessly from the point of view of the distraught parents (Sol Kyung-gu and Kim Nam-joo), a popular news anchor and his religious, stay-at-home wife.

The snatching of their son precipitates endless, repetitive scenes of parental hysteria, punctuated by calls from the shadowy abductor and abortive cash-delivery attempts. Despite the actors' valiant emoting, by the 44th day and the umpteenth call, it's déjà vu all over again.

The movie's best scenes belong to the fabulously incompetent police, who bicker over the merits of voice-recognition software and bungle every stakeout. Though the director exploits Seoul's parking garages and alleyways to convincingly claustrophobic effect, "Voice of a Murderer" is an uninvolved melodrama more suited to the small screen than to the large.

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JEANNETTE CATSOULIS

DRAWING A LINE FROM MOVIE TO MURDER

BY A. O. SCOTT

Drawing A Line From Movie To Murder

The mass shooting on the Virginia Tech campus was a ghastly, unique event, and yet the reaction to it, online and in the other news media, quickly took on an almost ritualistic predictability. The crime was so horrifically irrational that the machinery of interpretation went into overdrive, as though the effects of the violence itself could somehow be given meaning.

A.O. SCOTT

FILM

Like everything else in contemporary American media culture, the effort to wrest sense from senselessness was full of contention and contradiction. And of course as soon as the words and images that Seung-Hui Cho had sent to NBC began to circulate, there were fingers of accusation, or at least concern, wagging in the direction of popular culture. That was followed, as expected, by indignant dismissals of the idea that the movies (this crime's primary scapegoat, since Mr. Cho does not appear to have been a fan of hip-hop or heavy metal) could be in any way to blame for the horror in Blacksburg.

We have been here before. The extreme, inexplicable actions of a tiny number of profoundly alienated, mentally disturbed young men have a way of turning attention toward the cultural interests they share with countless others who would never dream — or who would only dream — of committing acts of homicidal violence. The Columbine massacre provoked a flurry of disquiet about the Goth subculture, with its histrionically sinister music and style of dress. John Hinckley Jr.'s unhinged devotion to Jodie Foster led some commentators to wonder about the connection between "Taxi Driver" and Mr. Hinckley's attempt to assassinate President Ronald Reagan. Charles Manson, it may be recalled, was obsessed with the Beatles.

It's worth noting that literature sometimes figures in these cases as well: Mark David Chapman, John Lennon's killer, carried around a dog-eared copy of "The Catcher in the Rye"; Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb footnoted their crime of kidnapping and murder (a modest one by current standards) with Nietzsche and Dostoevsky. But mov-

Continued on Page 5

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Like everything else in contemporary American media culture, the effort to wrest sense from senselessness was full of contention and contradiction. And of course as soon as the words and images that Seung-Hui Cho had sent to NBC began to circulate, there were fingers of accusation, or at least concern, wagging in the direction of popular culture. That was followed, as expected, by indignant dismissals of the idea that the movies (this crime's primary scapegoat, since Mr. Cho does not appear to have been a fan of hip-hop or heavy metal) could be in any way to blame for the horror in Blacksburg.

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It's worth noting that literature sometimes figures in these cases as well: Mark David Chapman, John Lennon's killer, carried around a dog-eared copy of "The Catcher in the Rye"; Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb footnoted their crime of kidnapping and murder (a modest one by current standards) with Nietzsche and Dostoevsky. But movies, video games, television and popular music offer a sturdier soapbox for those with an impulse to turn calamities into symptoms. Everyone knows, or can at least be bullied into pretending to know, that mass entertainment is responsible for injecting sex, violence and other pathogens into the eyes and minds of the young.

Mr. Cho's case offers a new wrinkle, since it appears that some of the films he may have seen, and which may have fed his disordered soul, were foreign. A photograph of Mr. Cho wielding a hammer was thought by some commentators to resemble an image of the South Korean actor Choi Min-sik doing something similar in "Oldboy," a bloody and critically esteemed revenger's tragedy directed by Park Chanwook. That both the film and Mr. Cho are Korean seemed full of significance, though it was not always easy to say just what the significance might be.

"Oldboy," Stephen Hunter wrote in The Washington Post on Friday, "must feature prominently in the discussion" of Mr. Cho's possible motivations, "even if no one has yet confirmed that Cho saw it." If he did, Mr. Hunter notes, "he would have passed on the subtitles and listened to it in his native language" and perhaps developed a feeling of kinship with its persecuted, paranoid hero.

Having said this Mr. Hunter goes on to discount the possible influence of "Oldboy" and to focus on the work of John Woo, another Asian director whose violent iconography seems to be more specifically evoked in the photographs of Mr. Cho. "As with the Park movie," Mr. Hunter writes, "it is not certain that Cho saw Woo's films, though any kid taken by violent popular culture in the past 15 or 20 years almost certainly would have, on DVD, alone in the dark, in his bedroom or downstairs after the family's gone to bed."

From this near-certainty Mr. Hunter makes a short trip to the assertion that during his rampage Mr. Cho "was shooting a John Woo movie in his head." Evidence

for this speculation is found in Mr. Woo's fondness for two-fisted gunmanship, which Mr. Hunter credits him with introducing into movies, and also in a scene from "The Killer" that Mr. Hunter finds "strikingly similar to what must have happened Monday."

It is hard to say what all this proves, other than that Mr. Hunter has no peer when it comes to wielding the conditional tense on deadline. He does not suggest that Mr. Woo is to blame for Mr. Cho's actions. But his article does conjure a story line — the loner in his room watching ultraviolent movies on DVD, gathering inspiration for his own real-life action movie — that has unmistakable and familiar implications. Like guns, it seems, certain movies in the wrong hands can pose a threat to public safety.

This may be true, but only to the extent that a disturbed mind is apt to seek external confirmation of its own disturbance. It seems somewhat fair to conclude that Mr. Hunter, in linking Mr. Cho's rampage to Mr. Woo's films, was simply trying to make a guess as to the features of the killer's mental world.

But the discussion of popular culture has a way of slipping from the particular to the general. Pious denunciations of movie violence can be expected to continue, even as it is unlikely that any serious attempt to curb it will ever be undertaken or that any causal or correlative link between on-screen mayhem and its real-life counterpart will ever be established (particularly since the Asian countries that produce gory and graphic movies, cartoons and comic books tend to have very low rates of actual violence). As "The Sopranos" and "The Departed" are worshiped and rewarded and the latest horror and serial-killer movies dominate the box office, scolds will continue to insist that representations of violence are not a matter of taste but of public morals and public health.

Millions of people meanwhile will continue to be entertained by spectacles of murder, indulging for a few hours in the visceral, amoral thrill of cinematic brutality and then going back to their peaceful, sane, non-threatening business. That we know the difference between reality and make-believe is evident in the shock and horror we feel when confronted with events like the one last Monday in Virginia.

FESTIVAL DISTINGUISHED BY ITS STRONG ACTRESSES

BY A. O. SCOTT AND MANOHLA DARGIS



CANNES, France, May 25

The critics in Cannes are a notoriously contentious bunch, but something close to a consensus has formed that this festival has new vitality at 60. Some years, a disappointing lineup in the main competition sends impatient crowds to the sidebar programs, but this year the big show is receiving most of the attention and acclaim.

Joining the list of top-tier contenders for the Palme d'Or is "Secret Sunshine," from the South Korean director Lee Chang-dong. Mr. Lee, who turned to filmmaking after a long career as a novelist (and who has also served as his country's minister of culture), brings a contemplative, literary sensibility to a story that might easily have lent itself to melodrama and sensationalism. It is about a young widow from Seoul who moves with her son to her husband's hometown, a small city where she knows nobody.

For the first third of its nearly two-and-a-half-hour running time, "Secret Sunshine" feels like a slightly somber fish-out-of-water comedy, until a sudden catastrophe cranks up the psychological intensity, sending the heroine (the remarkable Jeon Do-yeon) into a frenzied, desperate search for some kind of peace.

Her pain is almost too much for Mr. Lee's deliberate style to contain — and there is something incomplete about the film, in spite of its length — but Ms. Jeon's portrayal of a meek soul in torment is a tour de force. She joins an impressive roster of fierce, fearless actresses gracing the Cannes screen this year. On Sunday night the prize for best female performance may well upstage the Palme d'Or.

A. O. SCOTT

One Actress, Many Roles

The question isn't how the French filmmaker Catherine Breillat and that international woman of mystery, Asia Argento, found each other; the question is why did it take them so long? A match made in heaven (for some) or perhaps hell (there were walkouts), "Une Vieille Maîtresse" marks a strong return to form for Ms. Breillat and offers continued evidence that Ms. Argento is the reigning queen of Cannes. In the past week, Ms. Argento, the Italian-born actress and sometime director, has torn through Olivier Assayas's "Boarding Gate," where she carries the film on her slender shoulders, and helped keep the flame lighted inside Abel Ferrara's "Go Go Tales," where she bellied up to a stripper pole and exchanged slobber with a Rottweiler.

Leave it to Ms. Breillat, whose films include "Romance," a raw, philosophical inquiry about the bedroom, and her last film, the gravely miscalculated "Anatomy of Hell," to push Ms. Argento further yet, and with exhilarating results. Set in 1835 and based on a novel by Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, "Une Vieille Maîtresse" tells the story of a young nobleman, Ryno de Marigny (the newcomer Fu'ad Ait Aattou), who on the eve of his wedding to a delectable sweet named Hermengarde (Roxane Mesquida), finds his future threatened by his scandalous past. Her name would be Vellini, the film's title character and resident outrage, and a creature of such intensely burning, mad passions that it's difficult to imagine any contemporary actress in the role other than Ms. Argento.

From the first moment she appears on screen, stretched across a divan in a supine pose and dressed in a costume that directly invokes Goya's painting "The Clothed Maja" (which, along with its match, "The Nude Maja," was seized during the Spanish Inquisition for being "obscene"), Ms. Argento has us in her grasp. She never lets go. Having seduced each other 10 years earlier amid melodramatic storms and not a little blood, Ryno and Vellini remain locked in an epic amour fou.

Much of the film unfolds in flashback, as Ryno relates his life with his old mistress to his fiancée's concerned grandmother (a wonderful Claude Sarraute, whose layers of silk and lace make her look like a Viennese apple strudel). The witty, often exuberantly funny screenplay keeps you laughing amid the couple's pain and drama, while Ms. Breillat and Ms. Argento occasionally make you gasp with their own equally epic amour fou.

MANOHLA DARGIS

Films on Film

To celebrate its 60th anniversary, the festival commissioned 30 filmmakers — all but one of them men, in unfortunate adherence to the Cannes alpha-male tradition — to direct a series of three-minute shorts on the subject of movies. The results, an anthology called "To Each His Own Cinema," has been screened several times in its entirety, but the best way to see these films has been one at a time, as a series of tasty screening room hors d'oeuvres before the start of officially selected features.

Each short is stamped with the personality of its director. Lars von Trier's is a sick joke (and a pretty funny one) about how a filmmaker might deal with a boorish patron at a gala screening. Claude Lelouch tells his life story as a series of memorable moviegoing moments, starting with his parents' first meeting at a cinema in 1937.

Walter Salles writes a letter to his new baby, daydreaming about the future of the art form that has defined so much of his own life. Last year's Palme d'Or winner, Ken Loach, encounters a London dad waiting on line at the multiplex with his son, trying to figure out how to spend their afternoon.

Their decision — to watch a soccer match instead — is a bit shocking but also bracing. In Cannes in late May, movies are everything, and it never hurts to be reminded that there are other things, even if the reminder comes by way of yet another movie.

A. O. SCOTT

ASIAN CINEMA, SWIMMING IN CRIME AND CUTENESS

BY DAVE KEHR

Horror is over, gangsters are losing ground, and the coming thing is camp comedy dressed up in electric pink.

At least those are a few conclusions that can be drawn from sampling this year's edition of the New York Asian Film Festival, which begins Friday at the IFC Center in the West Village. (On July 5 the festival moves to Japan Society, where it will present several titles as part of the society's "Japan Cuts: Festival of New Japanese Films.")

Now in its sixth year, the scruffy, fan-fueled Asian Film Festival continues to serve as a reliable road map of the new directions in Asian popular cinema. Let the uptown art houses take the latest, made-for-export costume epics, like "Curse of the Golden Flower" or "House of Flying Daggers." The Asian Film Festival, which seems to run largely on the energy of its chief programmer, the film journalist Grady Hendrix (with sponsorships this year from the video label Dragon Dynasty and Midway Games, among others), has little use for such elevated fare. The house specialty is the

disreputable genre film, made for the Asian domestic market with a fast buck in mind.

Asian genre films of course have been building a steady following in the West ever since the Hong Kong cinema broke out of Chinatown theaters during the 1980s and introduced filmmakers like John Woo and Tsui Hark. In the years since, Hong Kong has faded as the primary supplier of popular entertainment in East Asia, done in by financial woes and the suspicions of Beijing, while South Korea has emerged as the epicenter of Asian pop culture, both in film and in music.

South Korea remains the primary creative force this year, although the genre that led its renaissance — the brooding, violent crime film — seems to be in serious decline. Even at last year's festival the genre seemed to be achieving a classical fullness with Kim Jee-woon's stylish and philosophical "Bittersweet Life," starring the matinee idol Lee Byung-hun as a soulful enforcer right out of Jean-Pierre Melville. But this year's crop betrays dissatisfaction with idealized gangster heroes and a distrust of the form's romantic roots.

“Cruel Winter Blues,” a 2006 film by the newcomer Lee Jeong-beom, picks up a plotline that was used to different effect in Takeshi Kitano’s 1993 Japanese film “Sonatine.” Sol Kyung-gu, the star of one of the founding films of Korean crime cinema, Kang Woo-suk’s 2002 “Public Enemy,” returns, older but wiser, as a respected elder hoodlum who thinks of nothing more than murdering the man who killed his boyhood friend; he takes a younger mob recruit with him (Jo Han-seon) and sets out for the small southern town where his enemy’s mother lives, the plan being to integrate himself into the community and strike when his nemesis pays a visit. But these two refugees from Seoul are soon lulled by the rhythms of village life, to the point where they seem

to have forgotten their reasons for being there. As in all self-respecting noirs, the past will not stay past, and they must eventually face up to the task at hand, leading to a finish that is more poignant than cathartic.

Song Kang-ho, the sad-sack comedian who saved Seoul from a mutant sea creature in “The Host,” brings his comic diffidence to the gangster spoof “The Show Must Go On,” directed by Han Jae-rim. In a story influenced by “The Sopranos” and “Analyze This,” Mr. Song plays a “wholesale produce distributor” whose real interests run to include nightclubs and strip bars. His business isn’t going so well, and neither is his marriage; his wife is threatening to leave him and to take their daughter along.

Asian Cinema, Swimming in Crime and Cuteness

By DAVE KERR

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“Dasepo Naughty Girls,” starring Lee Kyun, center, a South Korean film at the New York Asian Film Festival, seemingly takes the Japanese penchant for industrialized cuteness and raises it a few notches.

nity and strike when his mistress pays a visit. But these two refugees from Seoul are soon lulled by the rhythms of village life, to the point where they seem to have forgotten their reasons for being there. As in all self-respecting noirs, the past will not stay past, and they must eventually face up to the task at hand, leading to a finish that is more poignant than cathartic.

Song Kang-ho, the sad-sack comedian who saved Seoul from a mutant sea creature in “The Host,” brings his comic diffidence to the gangster spoof “The Show Must Go On,” directed by Han Jae-rim. In a story influenced by “The Sopranos” and “Analyze This,” Mr. Song plays a “wholesale produce distributor” whose real interests run to include nightclubs and strip bars. His business isn’t going so well, and neither is his marriage; his wife is threatening to leave him and to take their daughter along.

For a spell, the picture coasts along on the familiar, formula gag of juxtaposing humdrum reality with the powers and privileges of a gangster’s life, as in a nicely underplayed scene that

THE NEW YORK ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL
17C CENTER AND THE JAPAN SOCIETY
 The festival runs from June 27 until July 5 at 17C, 323 Avenue of the Americas, (212) 528-7771, @center.com, 111; and from July 5 until July 8 at Japan Society, 333 East 47th Street, Manhattan, (212) 715-1298, japansociety.org, 818. Schedule: subwaycinema.com

finds Mr. Song’s character summoned for a parent-teacher conference. Told his daughter isn’t doing well, he stuffs a wad of bills in the teacher’s hand and tells him to “look out for her.” But the violence increases and the tone darkens, until there is very little comedy left in the lonely, desperate character Mr. Song has become.

If Korean gangsters are softening up, their Hong Kong counterparts are turning into feral killers, red in tooth and claw. One of the few Category 3 (adults only) films to be released in Hong Kong since its return to mainland control, “Dog Bite Dog” is a viciously Darwinian drama about a boy raised to be a street fighter in Cambodia who is smuggled into Hong Kong Harbor to carry out an assassination. The violence is not of the stylized, exhilarating variety pioneered by John Woo (whose 1992 “Hard Boiled” will have a special screening at the festival), but of the sticky, sweaty, close-up gore of the new breed of American horror films.

Asian films have mostly been free of the curse of self-consciousness that has now turned

practically every American movie into a winking takeoff on itself (like the “Pirates of the Caribbean” pictures). But while Hong Kong has not yet succumbed to a camp sensibility (Johnnie To’s “Exiled,” which will receive one showing in the festival but is set to open theatrically in New York on Aug. 24, is absolutely straight, sincere, classically constructed and one of the best Asian films in years), South Korea and, with even greater enthusiasm, Japan, have thrown themselves into the postmodern cauldron of self-parody and scrambled styles.

Perhaps as a reaction to half a century of Japanese industrialized cuteness — the “Hello Kitty” empire is only the tip of a pink rhinestone iceberg — films like the Korean “Dasepo Naughty Girls” and the Japanese “Memories of Matsuko” turn sentimental sweetness back on itself, using digital technology to create coloring-book worlds filled with Disneyesque animated birds, Day-Glo environments that seem less real than a dollhouse and characters so saccharine that they make the French “Amélie” (clearly an inspiration for “Matsuko”) look like a Kubrick film.

Japanese horror, on its last legs since Hollywood raided its talent, receives a sardonic send-off in Shin Sono’s “Exte,” a curdled spoof that puts the genre’s curious obsession with long, limp black hair to its ultimate use: Death takes the form of evil hair extensions, infiltrating human bodies through open orifices and multiplying therein. Who else can confront this scourge but a plucky young hairdresser, played by “Kill Bill Vol. 1’s” Chiaki Kuriyama?

A self-conscious cuteness is also at the base of Park Chanwook’s “I’m a Cyborg but That’s O.K.,” this Korean director’s first film since “Lady Vengeance.” Mr. Park has put his revenge trilogy behind him (“Oldboy,” “Lady Vengeance,” “Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance”), and is starting on a new path with this wildly experimental, unclassifiable film.

Executed with Mr. Park’s usual attention to the tiniest details of visual style, it is a sort of “David and Lisa” story in which a suicidal young woman (Lim Su-jeong) whose ability to communicate with the vending machines she believes to be her fellow beings leads her to a mental institution. There she meets and, after much effort, opens herself up to a no-less-disturbed young man, a skinny kleptomaniac (the hugely successful pop singer Rain).

The actors are attractive, the rainbow colors abound, the other inmates reveal their lovable eccentricities, a magnificent score by Mr. Park’s regular composer, Jo Yeong-wook, swells in surround sound, and yet the film is no endearing fable of nonconformism like “King of Hearts” or “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest,” but something ambivalent and disquieting. Happiness, Mr. Park suggests, is only another way of filtering out reality — insanity with a smile — but no less essential for that.

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AN IMMIGRANT UPROOTED, A TEENAGER CAST ADRIFT

BY A. O. SCOTT



Jiseon Kim as an immigrant teenager adjusting to a North American city in "In Between Days."

An Immigrant Uprooted, A Teenager Cast Adrift

"In Between Days," the sensitive, modest, thrillingly self-assured first feature by So Yong Kim, was one of the standouts of the 2006 Sundance Film Festival — exactly the kind of thoughtful, independent work one hopes to find there and too rarely does. Its theatrical release today is an encouraging sign that there is still room, even in the midst of the summer glut, for a small, serious, unpretentious film.

The subject — a lonely young girl coming of age in a winter-bound North American city — may seem conventional, but Ms. Kim nimbly avoids both narrative and stylistic clichés. There is nothing melodramatic about "In Between Days," apart from the quiet strain of adolescent feeling that the main character, a Korean immigrant named Aimie (Jiseon Kim), brings to her own experience. You get the sense that if she did not allow herself small episodes of strong, disproportionate emotion, Aimie would vanish into adolescent ennui.

Recently arrived from South Korea, Aimie does not seem to fit comfortably into either her own skin or the world she inhabits. She lives with her mother, who is absorbed in her own emotional difficulties, and she spends most of her time with Tran (Taegu Andy Kang), her best friend and the object of all her pent-up love and longing. He takes her companionship for granted and seems increasingly drawn to the fashionable, "Americanized" girls who barely acknowledge Aimie's existence.

How she deals with this disappointment, and her more general alienation, might have been turned into either a fable of self-esteem or a cautionary tale of youth at risk. Instead, Ms. Kim uses rough, naturalistic cinematography and sound design to bring us into a state of remarkably intimate sympathy with her confused, inarticulate heroine. This fidelity to the ordinary dimensions of experience, which might have become tedious, instead makes "In Between Days" an exquisite illumination of both Aimie's circumstances and her changing perception of them.

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In Between Days

Opens today in Manhattan.

Directed and edited by So Yong Kim; written (in Korean and English, with English subtitles) by Ms. Kim and Bradley Rust Gray; director of photography, Sarah Levy; produced by Mr. Gray; released by Kino International. At the IFC Center, 323 Avenue of the Americas, at Third Street, Greenwich Village. Running time: 82 minutes. This film is not rated.

WITH: Jiseon Kim (Aimie), Taegu Andy Kang (Tran), Bokja Kim (Mom), Gina Kim (Michelle), Virginia Wu (Michelle's Friend) and Mike Park (Steve).

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THEY'RE ALL THROUGH WITH LOVE, YET SEARCHING FOR MORE

BY MATT ZOLLER SEITZ

They're All Through With Love, Yet Searching for More

Stephen Sondheim once said that melodrama and farce were his two favorite forms of theater because "they are obverse sides of the same coin." Kim Ki-duk, the Korean writer and director of "Three-Iron," has minted a cinematic example of that coin with "Time," a tale of big-city 20-somethings and the masks they wear. Throughout, Mr. Kim flips between soapy melodrama and dry, self-aware comedy. The effect is thrilling and disorienting, like walking on a trampoline.

FILM REVIEW

MATT ZOLLER SEITZ

The film starts and ends with the same scene: a woman clad in a long coat, sunglasses and a surgical mask (an echo of "Dressed to Kill") leaving a plastic-surgery clinic and colliding with our heroine, See-hee (Seong Hyeon-ah). The impact causes the patient to drop and break a framed photograph. See-hee promises to repair it and takes it along to a coffee shop, where she's meeting her boyfriend, Ji-woo (Ha Jung-woo). Clearly, their relationship is doomed. See-hee accuses Ji-woo of growing bored with her and having a wandering eye, paranoid accusations that she thinks are confirmed when Ji-woo checks out a waitress, then interrupts their conversation to exchange insurance information with a young woman who dinged his parked car. When the lovers' quarrel reaches a Jerry Springer pitch and See-hee stomps out of the coffee shop, the driver tells Ji-woo, "She must love you very much; I envy you."

See-hee, a self-loathing basket case who once said, "I'm sorry for having the same boring face every day," goes to the clinic glimpsed in the opening and signs up for a new face. Then "Time" switches its focus to poor Ji-woo, who knows only that his girlfriend suddenly moved away without saying goodbye. He doesn't realize that the cute new coffee-shop waitress with the suspiciously similar name Seh-hee (Park Ji-yun) seems familiar for a reason.

As "Time" follows Ji-woo through familiar big-city mating rituals — karaoke, speed dating, thwarted one-night stands — en route to an uneasy relationship with his new/old love, it becomes clear that Mr. Kim has more on his mind than the ethics of nose jobs.

"Time" has been described as a comedy about the hollowness of relationships in a global consumerist culture, and it certainly is. The film's three lead performances, by Mr. Ha as Ji-woo and by Ms. Seong and Ms. Park as the two incarnations of his lover, are fearlessly honest, so attuned to contemporary anxieties about sex, love and social status that the characters' unhappiness is as squirm-inducing as the movie's close-ups of sliced flesh.

But while the film's cultural context is of the moment, its depiction of romantic desperation is timeless. Many scenes end on the same uneasy note, a mix of cynical dissatisfaction

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Seong Hyeon-ah as a woman who changes her face in "Time."

and desperate, almost childlike neediness. This, too, is reminiscent of Sondheim, specifically the title "Sorry-Grateful," a song from "Company." Like Sondheim's Nixon-era swingers, Mr. Kim's clueless, self-absorbed 21st-century materialists are miserable in love, and they can't get enough of it.

Mr. Kim repeats ideas, situations and shots with musical precision. He puts certain sentiments in the mouths of different characters at different times. He lets pivotal moments play out through screams or partitions, or as reflections in mirrors or windowpanes, depriving them of emotional solidity. He shows characters donning actual or metaphoric masks (getting new faces, moving to new places, starting new relationships) and then becoming depressed when these alterations alter little. As Sondheim's married men

sing in "Sorry-Grateful," "Everything's different, nothing's changed/ Only maybe slightly rearranged."

The flyspeck insignificance of the characters' narcissism is expressed through a recurring setting: a sculpture garden that includes a pair of giant hands topped by a connected series of increasingly small iron squares that seem to vanish against the sky. The film's oft-repeated image of lovers photographing themselves in those palms, naively trying to immortalize their affection, is the closest the director comes to a moral: Don't obsess over surfaces, because your life is not really in your hands.

"Time" is rated R (Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian). It has frank sex, nudity and gory documentary images of plastic surgery.

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NEW YORK KOREAN FILM FESTIVAL

BY MIKE HALE



The Korean movies that Americans are most familiar with are the baroque revenge fantasies of Park Chan-wook ("Lady Vengeance," et al.) and the slow-moving erotic melodramas of Kim Ki-duk ("Time," "Samaritan Girl"). That probably says more about us than it does about a wildly eclectic film industry whose domestic audience eats up historical costume dramas, war stories, slapstick comedies, maudlin contemporary soap operas, teen sex farces, Hong Kong-like cop stories, imitation-Japanese horror films and much more.

Some idea of the breadth of the output can be gained from this sprawling 28-film, two-week festival, which opens Tuesday and includes screenings at Cinema Village, the IFC Center and BAMcinémathèque. It begins at the Brooklyn Academy of Music with a four-film retrospective of the veteran director Im Kwon-taek, including "Festival" (1996), above, with Oh Jeong-hae, left, and Ahn Sung-ki. After that comes a wide sampling of recent Korean films, including three of the country's top 10 all-time box-office hits: the plastic-surgery comedy "200 Pound Beauty," the gambling drama/love story "Tazza: The High Rollers" and the controversial and hugely successful period piece "The King and the Clown," with its hints of homosexuality. (Tuesday through Sept. 2 at various locations, koreanfilmfestival.org.)

WELCOME PAUSE FOR BREATH IN TELLURIDE

BY A. O. SCOTT

TELLURIDE, Colo., Sept. 3

People who go to a lot of film festivals — or people who come only to this one — tend to speak of Telluride with special reverence. If it seems to exist on a higher plane than Cannes, Toronto or Sundance, this is not just a matter of altitude. The elevation — more than 9,000 feet above sea level — can certainly make you dizzy, and the approach, especially in a car coming north from Durango through the rust-colored, spruce-covered mountains of the San Juan Mountains, is breathtaking.

The surroundings make Telluride a perfect place for a film festival, the natural splendor and the difficulty of access combining to heighten the sense of specialness that is central to this festival's self-image. There are no prizes, and therefore no juries; no market, no press screenings, no red carpets or paparazzi photo calls. The ethos is open and egalitarian, with some exceptions, like the special passes for patrons and sponsors.

Everyone else waits in line together, and your place is inscribed on a slip of paper known as a Q. The word is part of the local idiom, as is the habit of referring to everything that happens here as part of "the Show."

Until the day it begins the contents of the Show are a closely held secret. But the mix usually includes an impressive array of restored or rediscovered older movies and a decent helping of imports from Cannes mixed in with a number of midsize American movies ready to descend into Toronto and the Oscar race. On Labor Day weekend, during the 34th edition of the festival, you could happily fill four days with treasures from the past: like "The Big Parade," King Vidor's sweeping, silent antiwar melodrama from 1925, and "The Way You Wanted Me," a 1944 melodrama from Finland. Or you could discover the work of Shyam Benegal, a living master of Indian cinema who was the subject of a generous and informative retrospective.

This year's notably strong Cannes lineup was represented by a number of prizewinners, including the Romanian film "4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days," which won the Palme d'Or, and "Secret Sunshine," from South Korea, whose lead actress, Jeon Do-yeon, was honored for her heart-rending performance as a young widow who moves to a strange town with her young son. And Julian Schnabel was here with another Cannes favorite, "The Diving Bell and the Butterfly," his French-language film about Jean-Dominique Bauby, a magazine editor paralyzed by a stroke.

These Cannes movies — and quite a few more that are here — will land at the New York Film Festival at the end of the month. Others will soon feed awards-season chatter. For in spite of its high-mindedness Telluride is unmistakably a place where the industrial byproduct known as Oscar buzz is manufactured, albeit in artisanal form.

The number of movies selected is relatively small, around 35, and the quality level is unusually high for a festival. The excitement is fed by the audience's knowledge that it is frequently getting the first look at movies that everyone will be talking about, and also by the Telluride tradition of "Sneak Previews." These are movies not on the original schedule that pop up by surprise, their presence announced on slips of paper that appear outside the screening locations each morning.

On Friday, the day the festival began — it stretches through Labor Day, its brevity being another trait that distinguishes it from the 10-day (or longer) slogs elsewhere — we knew we could see "Into the Wild," Sean Penn's adaptation of Jon Krakauer's best-selling book, and "I'm Not There," Todd Haynes's movie about (or not about, or inspired by, or having something to do with) Bob Dylan.

Welcome Pause for Breath in Telluride

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From left, Jeon Do-yeon, Sun Jung-yeop and Song Kang-ho in the South Korean "Secret Sunshine," also shown at Cannes.

Continued on Page 5

But we didn't know about "The Savages," Tamara Jenkins's funny and unsparing look at a brother and a sister (Laura Linney and Philip Seymour Hoffman) coping with the deterioration of their elderly father. Nor did we have any warning about Jason Reitman's "Juno" or Brian De Palma's "Redacted."

These movies bumped up against "Margot at the Wedding" (starring Nicole Kidman and Jennifer Jason Leigh), Noah Baumbach's follow-up to "The Squid and the Whale," and Alison Eastwood's debut feature, "Rails and Ties," starring Kevin Bacon and Marcia Gay Harden. Ms. Harden has a role in "Into the Wild" as well, and not so long ago she appeared alongside Mr. Bacon and Mr. Penn in "Mystic River," directed by Ms. Eastwood's father. Small world.

It certainly can feel like one here. Telluride is the kind of place you can see Mr. Penn window-shopping along Main Street without entourage or celebrity gawkers. Or where, at the open-air "Feed" on Friday night, you can spot Werner Herzog munching a samosa and sipping beer from a plastic cup. Mostly it is the kind of place where, for one long weekend, all anyone wants to talk about is movies.

I thought that Mr. Penn, a first-time visitor, and Mr. Herzog, a Telluride fixture, brought films that seemed especially well-suited to this box canyon in the midst of the wilderness. "Encounters at the End of the World," Mr. Herzog's new documentary, takes him to Antarctica, where he meets a curious collection of researchers, wanderers, bizarre aquatic creatures and an errant penguin who abandons his peers to set off on a mysterious journey.

A human wanderer is the hero of "Into the Wild," in which Mr. Penn follows Mr. Krakauer in reconstructing the life of Christopher McCandless, a young man who left behind his family and most of his earthly possessions in the early 1990s, ending up in the Alaskan wilderness. Mr. McCandless's travels took him across deserts, mountains and prairies before he ventured north, and Mr. Penn's film recreates his journey with stunning images of these American landscapes. It also delves deeply into its protagonist's complicated, intriguing personality, thanks to Emile Hirsch's smart, guileless and affecting performance. Mr. Penn may have found his heir as an actor.

Mr. Hirsch — who up to now has been a likable enough presence in some not-always-likable movies — was not the only brilliant young actor here for audiences to discover. There were also Zane Pais, touching and precise as Nicole Kidman's sensitive, confused son in "Margot at the Wedding," and the tiny, fearless Ellen Page, star of "Juno." Playing the title character, a 16-year-old girl who finds herself pregnant, Ms. Page seems almost too smart and funny for her own good.

Accidental pregnancy is turning into one of the year's big movie themes — from Adrienne Shelly's "Waitress" to Judd Apatow's "Knocked Up" to "4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days," which don't have much else in common — and "Juno," propelled by Diablo Cody's slangy firecracker of a script, takes it in some interesting and risky directions, free of sentimentality or sensationalism.

No doubt there will be more to say about these movies. The summer is over, and the Big Show is about to begin. The Toronto International Film Festival starts Thursday; the Academy Awards will be broadcast on Feb. 24. I hope it's not all downhill from here.

NEW TACTICS AIM TO MAKE KOREAN FILM A HIT IN THE U.S.

BY BROOKS BARNES

LOS ANGELES, Sept. 9

Korean companies like Hyundai and Samsung started as punch lines but overcame quality and distribution problems to become industry giants. Now, a film producer based in Seoul wants to pull off a similar trick in the movie business.

The producer, Hyung Rae Shim, is aiming a film squarely at American moviegoers, an ambitious and expensive endeavor called "Dragon Wars." Hissing, computer-generated dragons terrorize Los Angeles as a television reporter unravels a mystery that will stop them.

Mr. Shim, the president of Seoul's Younggu Art studio, said the proper formula would prompt South Korean pop culture to wash over the United States, as it has done in much of Southeast Asia and China in recent years.

"The secret is to move beyond the melodrama that characterizes so many Korean films," Mr. Shim said recently through an interpreter at Younggu Art's Los Angeles offices. "They don't understand that to be commercial in the U.S., you need great action and effects."

The film's \$30 million budget, which typically does not buy the kind of special effects that American moviegoers have come to expect, is thought to be the largest ever for a Korean studio. Based on a Korean legend, "Dragon Wars" features American actors (Jason Behr from "The Grudge" plays the lead) and has a large marketing budget, even by Hollywood standards. Unlike most Korean films, "Dragon Wars" was filmed in English and distributed in South Korea with subtitles, a controversial decision.

"Dragon Wars" will have its debut in the United States on Friday on 2,000 screens, a very large number considering most foreign films are lucky if they make it to a few hundred.

"Our goal is to truly establish ourselves here, and a limited release doesn't get us that," said James B. Kang, who runs Younggu Art's Los Angeles operation.

Mr. Shim, however, is not just another foreign movie producer with high hopes of muscling into Hollywood. A well-known television and film comedian in South Korea — he calls himself the Korean Charlie Chaplin — Mr. Shim traded on his fame to secure financial backing from some of the biggest companies in Southeast Asia. He also has promotional support from Samsung and Sony.

Also notable is what Mr. Shim does not have: government money. Most foreign countries with a robust movie industry provide hefty subsidies to producers, and South Korea is no exception. But Younggu Art's decision to film "Dragon Wars" in English made it impossible to obtain government funding.

Mr. Shim persuaded corporate titans to invest, in part by appealing to their sense of nationalism. Over dinner with a Samsung executive, Mr. Shim asked the company to play trailers for "Dragon Wars" on its TV sets on display in retail stores.

"Something was going to be playing on those TVs," Mr. Shim said. "Why shouldn't it be Korean content?" As a result, Younggu Art's dragons are roaring on more than 180,000 sets in shopping malls across the United States.

Still, Hollywood is hardly biting its fingernails in fear. While films with Asian themes are a growing business (the Weinstein Company in August announced a \$285 million investment fund focused on the niche), South Korea's recent efforts to export mainstream entertainment to the United States have failed.

Consider the Korean singer Rain. His heavily promoted arrival in America last year was a washout, and his tour was canceled almost before it started.

Some Korean movies have been heralded as successes, but the bar is low. "The Host," an \$11 million monster saga, was considered a success in the United States last year with just \$2.3 million in ticket sales.

Eamonn Bowles, president of Magnolia Pictures, which distributed "The Host," said selling Korean movies here carries significant risk. "Even if you have great reviews, these movies are not an easy sell because the market is so saturated," he said.

Early reviews for "Dragon Wars" have not been kind. While praising its visual effects, Variety lamented its "Z-grade script." A review posted on the movie Web site Rotten Tomatoes said, "I will petition for the makers of this movie to crawl under rocks."

Also not boding well: some of the people working on the movie do not seem particularly proud of it. The Lakeshore Entertainment Group executive hired to market "Dragon Wars" refused to discuss it. The distributor, Freestyle Releasing, did not respond to multiple requests for an interview.

The picture's strong performance at home provides comfort. After a month in release in South Korea, "Dragon Wars" has sold more than \$60 million in tickets, according to Showbox, a movie distribution company in Asia.

The studio also thinks Korean pride will deliver big audiences, at least in cities like Los Angeles that have burgeoning Korean populations. To stoke that pride, Mr. Shim included a written message at the end of his movie, one that underscores his desire to make Hollywood his playground: "D-War and I will succeed in the world market without fail."



A WORLD WHERE AN ANTONIONI MIGHT NOT GET A DISTRIBUTION DEAL

BY MANOHLA DARGIS

Where an Antonioni Might Not Get a Deal

From First Arts Page

"Mad Detective" isn't Mr. To's finest hour and a half; it just reaffirms his status as an action master. It's also precisely the kind of movie that's guaranteed to play at Toronto, which has long been a showcase for global genre cinema alongside rarefied art-house fare and prestige Hollywood product. Nothing if not democratic, the festival has now become big enough to be all things to all movie people. Here, jostling side by side with industry executives and nonprofessional enthusiasts, aesthetes and fan boys, journeymen journalists and bloggers, long- and short-lead critics can each carve out a festival to their own choosing, finding the movies that matter, if only for 89 minutes and their next column.

Among the films that made my festival were some that will open within the month, like Todd Haynes's imaginative tour de force "I'm Not There," a multiple-personality portrait of the artist formerly known as Bobby Zimmerman, as well as a folkie, a sellout, a has-been and a born-again Christian. Other films, like "Happiness," a touching South Korean melodrama from Hur Jin-ho about two lovers who meet at a hospice, may never make it into American theaters

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Articles and other items about movies in the Toronto International Film Festival: nytimes.com/movies

because it may not seem aesthetically daring or novel enough to warrant the risk. Non-martial arts Asian films generally don't fare well at the American box office, even those that come with glowing reviews and that, like "Happiness," cause an entire audience to break down audibly weeping.

Because the Toronto is so large and functions both as a preview for the fall studio season and as an international bazaar, with goods from Germany, Kazakhstan, Russia and Mongolia (the multinational provenance for the period epic "Mongol"), it affords an instructive view of the state of the American art and industry. More than any other major festival, Toronto makes clear the divide between those movies that matter aesthetically and intellectually — think the work of Hou Hsiao-hsien, the Dardenne brothers and Gus Van Sant — and those movies that matter largely because of their awards potential and the presumed interest to what remains of the discriminating, adult audience. Think "The



Queen," "Good Night, and Good Luck" and any number of films nominated for best picture in recent years.

These two subsets — the art cinema of Mr. Hou and the quality studio cinema of George Clooney, in Toronto with "Michael Clayton" — are dwarfed by big-studio trash like "Pirates of the Caribbean," of course. But that's another story. The story here, one as complex if more urgent, involves radical shifts in distribution and exhibition; the ever-escalating numbers of movies pouring into (and quickly out of) theaters; and the demise of the sort of movie love that once inspired cartoons in The New Yorker. This isn't a story about the death of cinema or even of movie love, which is alive and excitingly well



Left, a scene from the South Korean film "Happiness." Above, "Mad Detective," directed by Wai Ka-fai and Johnnie To.

the best films I saw at Toronto — which showed in Berlin and is explicitly missing from New York — is Jacques Rivette's eccentric romance "Ne Touchez Pas la Hache" based on Balzac's "Duchesse de Langeais."

The marvelous (if distractingly thin) Jeanne Balibar, all sharp angles and shuttling eyeballs, plays a married noblewoman whose flirtation with a Napoleon-era general, played by an equally idiosyncratic Guillaume Depardieu, leads to tragedy. Love blooms, as do betrayal, confession and sacrifice.

Mr. Rivette's superb camera moves through the period spaces and around the performers fluidly, surprisingly, at times, the director disappears behind the two lovers; at other moments, he takes care to remind us of the performative aspect of their mutual seduction. The tilt of the duchess's head suggests a thousand and one nighty intrigues; the ravaged contours of the gen-

eral's face invite other, more distant torments, while Mr. Rivette's direction affirms that he remains at the height of his artistic powers.

"Ne Touchez Pas la Hache" isn't a difficult film. It isn't slow, oblique or exotic, though neither is it fully transparent. The complexities of Mr. Rivette's direction and of the performances, which embrace both emotional realism and near-theatrical artifice, prod you to think about what you're feeling, intuiting, while you're watching the screen.

I expect that the film will offer up more of its secrets the second time I see it, along with beauty, grace and form, as will "Flight of the Red Balloon" and "Parasol Park." What remains uncertain, now far more than when Mr. Rivette was first making his name in an earlier era, is whether movie lovers who complain that there's nothing to see will seek it out. The audience, I fear, does not always listen.

TORONTO, Sept. 12

It was the fifth day of the Toronto International Film Festival, just before a 3 p.m. screening of a new Johnnie To movie, when the stranger stopped dead in front of me. Having returned to the darkened theater, where the lights were too low to read by and almost to see, he had entered the wrong row. "I can't take it anymore," he declared morosely, shaking his head. "This festival is killing my love of cinema."

I felt for my befuddled stranger, lost in the dark and clutching a cup of megaplex coffee. It's hard to know what and how to love when there are so many suitors. Now in its 32nd year, the Toronto festival has grown into an immense industrial happening, with 349 films from 55 countries. You may have already heard about some of these titles — "Atonement," "Rendition," "Elizabeth: The Golden Age," "Reservation Road" — the ones with the supernova stars and name directors who pop up in the next day's news and then, in the months leading up to the Academy Awards, every media outlet imaginable. For many of these movies, Toronto is just the beginning of the end, the launch site for the seasonal red carpet bombing.

The movie that the lost man and I had come to see, "Mad Detective," directed by Wai Ka-fai and the astonishingly prolific Mr. To, may not have restored anyone's love of cinema, but it sent a jolt of energy through the audience, which laughed and twitched throughout this daft genre exercise. Even the credit sequence has its pleasures: to conjure up the mind-set of a murderer, the madman of the title repeatedly stabs a pig's carcass, and then has himself zipped into a cloth suitcase and tossed down one flight of stairs after another. The ice cream man done it, he announces on tumbling free. Bullets, elegant mayhem and a homage to Orson Welles's "Lady From Shanghai" follow amid circling cameras; bodies in fast, furious motion; and shattered film space.

"Mad Detective" isn't Mr. To's finest hour and a half; it just reaffirms his status as an action master. It's also precisely the kind of movie that's guaranteed to play at Toronto, which has long been a showcase for global

genre cinema alongside rarefied art-house fare and prestige Hollywood product. Nothing if not democratic, the festival has now become big enough to be all things to all movie people. Here, jostling side by side with industry executives and nonprofessional enthusiasts, aesthetes and fan boys, journeymen journalists and bloggers, long- and short-lead critics can each carve out a festival to their own choosing, finding the movies that matter, if only for 89 minutes and their next column.

Among the films that made my festival were some that will open within the month, like Todd Haynes's imaginative tour de force "I'm Not There," a multiple-personality portrait of the artist formerly known as Bobby Zimmerman, as well as a folkie, a sellout, a has-been and a born-again Christian. Other films, like "Happiness," a touching South Korean melodrama from Hur Jin-ho about two lovers who meet at a hospice, may never make it into American theaters because it may not seem aesthetically daring or novel enough to warrant the risk. Non-martial arts Asian films generally don't fare well at the American box office, even those that come with glowing reviews and that, like "Happiness," cause an entire audience to break down audibly weeping.

Because the Toronto is so large and functions both as a preview for the fall studio season and as an international bazaar, with goods from Germany, Kazakhstan, Russia and Mongolia (the multinational provenance for the period epic "Mongol"), it affords an instructive view of the state of the American art and industry. More than any other major festival, Toronto makes clear the divide between those movies that matter aesthetically and intellectually — think the work of Hou Hsiao-hsien, the Dardenne brothers and Gus Van Sant — and those movies that matter largely because of their awards potential and the presumed interest to what remains of the discriminating, adult audience. Think "The Queen," "Good Night, and Good Luck" and any number of films nominated for best picture in recent years.

WHO NEEDS PLOT WHEN YOU'VE GOT DRAGONS?

BY ANDY WEBSTER

These two subsets — the art cinema of Mr. Hou and the quality studio cinema of George Clooney, in Toronto with “Michael Clayton” — are dwarfed by big-studio trash like “Pirates of the Caribbean,” of course. But that’s another story. The story here, one as complex if more urgent, involves radical shifts in distribution and exhibition; the ever-escalating numbers of movies pouring into (and quickly out of) theaters; and the demise of the sort of movie love that once inspired cartoons in *The New Yorker*. This isn’t a story about the death of cinema or even of movie love, which is alive and excitably well at a blog near you. It’s about how the films that once thrilled a segment of the audience — Bergman, Antonioni — have become marginalia, increasingly obscure objects of cinephilic desire.

The truth is that if Antonioni were directing features today, there’s a good chance that his films would not be picked up for distribution in the United States. He would play the festival circuit. And, if he were lucky, he might sign a deal with IFC Films, which this year snapped up some of the best films at Cannes, some of which were also at Toronto and will also be in the New York Film Festival later this month, including Mr. Hou’s “Flight of the Red Balloon,” Mr. Van Sant’s “Paranoid Park” and Catherine Breillat’s “Vieille Maitresse.” One of the best films I saw at Toronto — which showed in Berlin and is inexplicably missing from New York — is Jacques Rivette’s eccentric romance “Ne Touchez Pas la Hache” based on Balzac’s “Duchesse de Langeais.”

The marvelous (if distractingly thin) Jeanne Balibar, all sharp angles and shuttling eyeballs, plays a married noblewoman whose flirtation with a Napoleonic-era general, played by an equally idiosyncratic Guillaume Depardieu, leads to tragedy. Love blooms, as do betrayal, confession and sacrifice.

Mr. Rivette’s superb camera moves through the period spaces and around the performers fluidly, surprisingly; at times, the director disappears behind the two lovers; at other moments, he takes care to remind us of the performative aspect of their mutual seduction. The tilt of the duchess’s head suggests a thousand and one nightly intrigues; the ravaged contours of the general’s face invoke other, more distant torments, while Mr. Rivette’s direction affirms that he remains at the height of his artistic powers.

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I expect that the film will offer up more of its secrets the second time I see it, along with beauty, grace and form, as will “Flight of the Red Balloon” and “Paranoid Park.” What remains uncertain, now far more than when Mr. Rivette was first making his name in an earlier era, is whether movie lovers who complain that there’s nothing to see will seek it out. The audience, I fear, does not always listen.

Who Needs Plot When You've Got Dragons?

If you've been missing Japanese monster movies, take heart. "Dragon Wars: D-War" (from South Korea actually) proves the genre quite alive. It is such a breathless, delicious stew, it's impossible not to be entertained, provided — this is crucial — you have a sense of humor.

Hmmm, exposition. O.K. Centuries ago in Korea there were giant serpents called Imoogi. A bad one, Buraki, had armored

ONLINE: "DRAGON WARS"
Trailers and clips from "Dragon Wars":
nytimes.com/movies

troops. A girl, Narin, had this glowing bubble, the Yuh Yi Joo, which turns Imoogi into dragons. But she and her lover-protector, Haram, sacrificed themselves without giving it up. Deep breath. In Los Angeles an eruption suggests something big has awakened, something cranky. When Ethan Kendrick

(Jason Behr) finds out, he recalls being taught as a child by the mystic Jack (Robert Forster) that he is Haram reincarnated. Narin is now Sarah Daniels (Amanda Brooks). Exhale.

Got all that? Good, because once Baraki starts to boogie, "Dragon Wars" rocks. Bulcos, winged carnivores, munch on iron-rich helicopters. References to Ray Harryhausen and Toho productions fly. One sequence evokes "King Kong," but with heat-seeking missiles. The seams in effects and dialogue glare, but lend charm.



A hungry serpent in Los Angeles in "Dragon Wars: D-War."

Baraki eats elephants, but he can't outrun cars, which lets Ethan and Sarah reach New Mexico for a "Godzilla"-like

rumble between Imoogi. "We'll see each other again," says Sarah to Ethan after the bout. Hoo-boy. Batten the hatches.

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“Dragon Wars: D-War” is rated PG-13 (Parents strongly cautioned). Bulcos were harmed during the making of the picture.

Opened yesterday nationwide.

Written and directed by Hyung Rae Shim; director of photography, Hurbert Taczanowski; edited by Tim Alverson; produced by James B. Kang; released by Freestyle Releasing and Showbox. Running time: 107 minutes.

WITH: Jason Behr (Ethan Kendrick), Craig Robinson (Bruce), Amanda Brooks (Sarah Daniels), Robert Forster (Jack), Aimee Garcia (Brandy) and Elizabeth Peña (Agent Linda Perez).

A PORTRAITIST OF A SUBDUED, LITERARY KOREA

BY DENNIS LIM

The South Korean director Lee Chang-dong occupies a unique, somewhat contradictory position in his country's film scene. As the first filmmaker to serve as South Korean minister of culture (from 2003 to 2004) and a longtime advocate of the quota system that obliges his nation's theaters to show a minimum number of local films, he has played a central role in the resurgence of Korean cinema.

As a director, though, he does not exactly fit in. While the best-known Korean movies of the past few years are stylish, violent genre works — crime thrillers like “Oldboy” or effects-heavy fantasies like “The Host” — Mr. Lee's films have a more subdued, literary flavor, and they tend to defy easy classification.

Despite being a fixture on the international festival circuit for some time (having won prizes at Venice, Vancouver and Karlovy Vary), Mr. Lee has been somewhat overshadowed by flashier compatriots like Park Chanwook and Kim Ki-duk. “Secret Sunshine,” his fourth film, is his first since leaving office and also the one that has brought him the most attention. It had its premiere in May at the Cannes Film Festival (where its star, Jeon Do-yeon, was named best actress), recently played in Toronto and Telluride and will be screened at the New York Film Festival on Monday and Tuesday. (The film is awaiting a distribution deal for the United States.)

As “Secret Sunshine” begins, Shin-ae (Ms. Jeon), a young widow from Seoul, is moving with her little boy to her late husband's hometown, a provincial city called Miryang. (The literal translation provides the English title.) Under the disapproving scrutiny of the gossipy locals, she sets up a piano school and finds a puppyish admirer in a friendly mechanic (the popular actor Song Kang-ho, last seen here in “The Host”). Before long a blindsiding tragedy sends the protagonist — and the film — spinning into an altogether different orbit. As Shin-ae agonizes over the meaning of suffering and the mystery of salvation, the movie evolves into a provocative study of madness and belief.

“One of the most important things to me was to find a way to portray things that are not visible to the naked eye, faith being one of them,” Mr. Lee said, speaking via a translator in Toronto this month.

A former high school teacher and novelist who turned to filmmaking in his 40s, Mr. Lee, now 53, has a knack for depicting the invisible. His films are intricate character portraits that succeed at animating the larger forces at work in Korean history and society.

His first feature, “Green Fish” (1997), is a gangster drama rooted in the dark side of the so-called Asian economic miracle. “Peppermint Candy” (1999) mingles personal and national history, recounting the life of a troubled man in reverse chronology, through two decades of defining traumas. The movie rewinds all the way to the Kwangju massacre of 1980, when the government cracked down on a pro-democracy demonstration, killing at least 200 protesters, many of them students. (That was the year Mr. Lee graduated from his university, with a degree in Korean literature.)

“Oasis,” which won several prizes at Venice in 2002, chronicles the forbidden romance between a mildly retarded ne'er-do-well and a young woman with cerebral palsy. Mr. Lee leavens his forthright naturalism with sprinklings of magic realism, as if insulating the unlikely lovers from the hostile prejudices of the outside world. (Both “Peppermint Candy” and “Oasis” are available in the United States on DVD.)

“Secret Sunshine,” perhaps Mr. Lee's most unflinching film, acknowledges its heroine's need for spiritual succor even as it takes a coolly skeptical look at the role of evangelical Christianity in Korean society. “Christians are quite a powerful group in South Korea, and people on the production team were worried about what the reception would be,” Mr. Lee said. When the film opened in South Korea in May, he added, “some people were critical, but there was also positive feedback. Some pastors were recommending the film to their church members.”

According to Sung-Deuk Oak, an assistant professor of Korean Christianity at the University of California, Los Angeles, about a third of South Koreans are Christian and the majority of South Korean Christians are conservative, evangelical Protestants. Mr. Oak said that “Secret Sunshine” was a hot topic of conversation in churches and the news media in South Korea this year.

“Non-Christians are uncomfortable because the movie has a lot of Christian things,” he said. “Christians are uncomfortable because Christian messages and activities are depicted in a simple and superficial way.”

Still, Mr. Oak added, Mr. Lee's film raises “heavy theological questions” and is nowhere near as condescending or stereotypical in its portrayal of the devout as “Lady Vengeance,” the concluding installment in Mr. Park's revenge trilogy. The film also deals with forgiveness and redemption, albeit in a very different way.

Mr. Lee said he had been careful not to exaggerate or caricature Christian rites. “In terms of the services and prayer meetings, it was very realistic, more or less a documentary approach,” he said. “If people feel uncomfortable or find some elements of it a little ridiculous, they might be admitting there's a problem with the way Christianity is practiced in Korea.”

A good part of the film's power derives from the range and intensity of Ms. Jeon's performance. Mr. Lee has a reputation for demanding many takes. “I am notorious for giving actors a hard time,” he said with a smile. “I believe that acting should not be about actions, but reactions.” By the end of the shoot, he said, his lead actress “was starting to hate me.” But, he added, “Maybe that helped her since her character really hates her God at the end of the movie.”

Asked about his own religious beliefs, Mr. Lee quoted Ludwig Wittgenstein — “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent” — and added, “That's my position on God and faith.”

“Secret Sunshine” ends on a note at once ambiguous and hopeful. Its limpid, humble approach to suffering and grace suggests something like “Breaking the Waves” stripped of mysticism, or a rationalist version of “The Pilgrim's Progress.”

“Shin-ae is always looking up and never at the ground,” Mr. Lee said, pointing out a recurring motif. The film opens with a wide shot of the sky and concludes with the camera trained on a patch of earth. “I wanted to show that the meaning of life is not far from where we are,” he said. “It's not up there. It's here, in our actual life.”



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SENSITIVITY AND A SURPRISE FOR 'LA TRAVIATA' AT THE MET

BY ANTHONY TOMMASINI

What might have been just a routine revival of Franco Zeffirelli's extravagant 1998 production of Verdi's "Traviata" turned out to be an affecting performance thanks to the inspired work of two South Korean-born artists and a stalwart American baritone who saved the day.

MUSIC IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

Sensitivity and a Surprise For 'La Traviata' at the Met

What might have been just a routine revival of Franco Zeffirelli's extravagant 1998 production of Verdi's "Traviata" turned out to be an affecting performance thanks to the inspired work of two

ANTHONY TOMMASINI South Korean-born artists and a stalwart American baritone who saved the day.

MUSIC REVIEW The soprano Hei-kyung Hong gave a beautifully sung and deeply felt portrayal of Violetta, Verdi's consumptive Parisian courtesan. The tenor Wookyoung Kim made his house debut as Alfredo, Violetta's impulsive young lover. As a Verdi tenor Mr. Kim is still a little green, but he has a robust voice and lots of promise. The American baritone Charles Taylor was scheduled to sing Giorgio Germont, Alfredo's patriarchal father, who persuades Violetta to give up his son for the sake of his family's name. But Mr. Taylor was ill and was replaced by Dwayne Croft, an experienced Germont, who was in very good voice.

Ms. Hong, a valued artist at the Met since her 1984 debut, has a loyal following. Though she may lack some charisma and vocal glamour, she is a vibrant and sensitive singer. Like many sopranos who take on this touchstone role with its wide-ranging vocal challenges, Ms. Hong was not entirely at ease dispatching the brilliant coloratura runs and roulades in Act I.

If her work in this scene was a little cautious, it was still a pleasure to hear the music sung with such accu-

There are additional performances of "La Traviata" tomorrow evening, Jan. 23 and 27, Feb. 1, 12, 16 and 22 and in March at the Metropolitan Opera House, (212) 362-6000.

La Traviata
Metropolitan Opera House

racy, good taste and penetrating tone. A lovely woman, she embodied the captivating Violetta, who tries mightily to deny for a while that she is fatally ill. From the beginning of Act II through the final death scene, Ms. Hong sang with increasing confidence and emotional intensity. Her poignant phrasing in Violetta's aching aria "Addio del passato" was especially moving.

Mr. Kim's first official appearance with the Met came last summer, when he sang Alfredo opposite Ms.

A baritone makes an unplanned return; a tenor makes a debut.

Hong's Violetta with the Met in the Parks concerts. A house debut is a career milestone, and Mr. Kim seemed a little nervous during Act I. But he has an attractive and healthy voice, evenly produced, and at his best he sang with energy and flair.

His one misstep came at the end of Alfredo's vehement aria "O mio rimorso!" in Act II. To prepare himself for a final high C (which is not written in the score but typically interpolated), Mr. Kim skipped the climactic vocal phrase that leads to the final note. For all this, he still wobbled on that unnecessary top note. Better to have sung the music as written. He is someone to watch. Carlo Rizzi was the able conductor.



Sara Kravich/The New York Times
Wookyoung Kim as Alfredo and Hei-kyung Hong as Violetta.

FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN THE PRESENT AND THE PAST

BY ALLAN KOZINN

The soprano Hei-kyung Hong gave a beautifully sung and deeply felt portrayal of Violetta, Verdi's consumptive Parisian courtesan. The tenor Wookyung Kim made his house debut as Alfredo, Violetta's impulsive young lover. As a Verdi tenor Mr. Kim is still a little green, but he has a robust voice and lots of promise. The American baritone Charles Taylor was scheduled to sing Giorgio Germont, Alfredo's patriarchal father, who persuades Violetta to give up his son for the sake of his family's name. But Mr. Taylor was ill and was replaced by Dwayne Croft, an experienced Germont, who was in very good voice.

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Jennifer Koh's violin recitals are consistently pleasing, not only because she is in command of a strong technique and a rich arsenal of tone, but also because she builds her programs thoughtfully, with a sensible balance of contemporary works and standard repertory.

There is something to be said, as well, for the collaboration she has cultivated with Reiko Uchida, the pianist who has accompanied her in recent years. Ms. Koh and Ms. Uchida seem always to be of one mind about the works at hand, and the interaction between them has an enlivening vibrancy.

The most striking work on their program at the 92nd Street Y on Wednesday evening was Jennifer Higdon's "String Poetic" (2006), a piece commissioned for Ms. Koh by a consortium that included the Y. The movements of Ms. Higdon's score carry impressionistic titles — "Climb Jagged" and "Blue Hills of Mist," for example — and her tonal but rugged style is suited to the imagery they suggest.

In both "Climb Jagged" and its mirror image, "Jagged Climb" (they are the first and last of the five movements), the violin line is athletic and often brash, with scampering figures and chordal shards to paint the picture (and, secondarily, test the technique).

The equally picturesque piano writing included sections in which Ms. Uchida was asked to create a plucked sound by reaching inside the piano to damp the strings while playing her line, with her other hand, on the keyboard. The more meditative and ethereal "Blue Hills of Mist" is surrounded by a dark, lyrical Nocturne and a perpetual motion movement, "Maze Mechanical."

Ms. Higdon's score shared the first half of the program with a taut, assertive account of the Janacek Sonata (1914–21). Ms. Koh used her range of color to create at least the illusion of a cast of characters to inhabit the four movements, which are alive with the anxieties of the work's time. (Janacek composed it during and after World War I.) Perhaps more subtly, Ms. Koh and Ms. Uchida kept Janacek's musical language in perspective, caught as it is between Romanticism and early Modernism.

On her own, Ms. Koh gave an alternately forceful and sensitive performance of movements from Gyorgy Kurtag's "Signs, Games and Messages" (1989–97) for solo violin. And Ms. Koh and Ms. Uchida played two 19th-century works, mingled among the contemporary scores almost as palate cleansers: a warm-toned, Classically proportioned account of Schubert's Sonatina in D (D. 384), and a stormy, high-energy reading of Schumann's Sonata No. 2 in D minor (Op. 121).

Finding a Balance Between the Present and the Past



Juliana Corvates for The New York Times
Jennifer Koh on the violin and Reiko Uchida at the piano collaborating at the 92nd Street Y on Wednesday.

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WHAT THE LEFT HAND CAN DO, HANDS IN THE AUDIENCE APPLAUD

BY VIVIEN SCHWEITZER



Vladimir Feltsman on piano, with Myung-Whun Chung conducting.

What the Left Hand Can Do, Hands in the Audience Applaud

Most pianists who had lost an arm would probably give up performing. But Paul Wittgenstein, the Austrian pianist who lost his right arm while serving on the Russian front during

World War I, commissioned a number of works for left hand only. The most famous of these is Ravel's one-movement Concerto for the Left Hand, which received an excellent performance at Carnegie Hall on Sunday by the pianist Vladimir Feltsman and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, led by Myung-Whun Chung, their Korean-born music director. Ravel's piece, composed simultaneously with his saucy Piano Concerto

in G, is serious (albeit with jazzy overtones that Wittgenstein initially disliked) and fiendishly difficult, so texturally dense that it sounds as if two hands are playing. At least it should sound that way, and it did here. Mr. Feltsman, who stretched and flexed his left hand during pauses in the piece, had no trouble with the virtuosic cadenza, in which his fingers blurred across the keys. He also beautifully conveyed the introspective, wistful nature of the rhapsodic

passages. The orchestra, which accompanied Mr. Feltsman with flair, opened the program with a dreamy, delicate rendition of Ravel's charming "Mother Goose," written as a piano duo for two children of a friend. After intermission came a savage, bristling performance of Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring." Mr. Chung, whose slender frame jerked around on the podium like a marionette being pulled in different directions, seemed to have the propulsive rhythms in his blood. He coaxed evocative woodwind solos and instilled an insistent pulse into Stravinsky's riotous cacophony, still startling almost a century after its composition. You hoped, as bitter March winds roared around Carnegie

Hall, that the local gods of spring were taking note. As an encore the orchestra offered a colorful interpretation of Ravel's sinister "Valse," written soon after World War I. The dancers evoked in the piece seemed to be waltzing blithely into the trenches.

A fiendishly difficult piece with jazzy overtones and wistful rhapsodic passages.

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STRONG EXPRESSION, DELIVERED WITH SPIRIT AND TEAMWORK

BY STEVE SMITH

Sarah Chang, a onetime child prodigy who has grown up in the public eye, is at 26 one of the most consistently satisfying violinists currently active. In her recital on Tuesday at Carnegie Hall it appeared that she had met her match in Ashley Wass, the bright young British pianist who played with her in works by Beethoven, Richard Danielpour and Prokofiev.

The performance had its uneven moments, most of which cropped up during the opening work, Beethoven's Violin Sonata No. 9 ("Kreutzer"). This heady, complex three-movement span of 40 minutes is hard work for its players. Here it sometimes sounded that way. The piece opened with a tone of exquisite introversion; Mr. Wass's playing was clean and elegant, ideally balancing animation and decorum.

Ms. Chang clearly felt every passage of the music and had a firm conception of what she wanted to say. And if notes went astray or an attack was coarse now and again in the first movement, overall that was a small price to pay for spirit delivered in such abundance. Ms. Chang and Mr. Wass forged an attractive unanimity of expression in the central Andante con Variazioni. The finale was a playful romp.

Mr. Danielpour's "River of Light," which had its premiere with these players last month in California, was composed in memory of the violinist Isaac Stern. Conservative in idiom and succinct at 11 minutes, the piece opened with ruminative unison passages. The violin line tumbled down to a despairing tremolo over rumbling piano; a slashing, stamping climax resolved into a stately, luminous conclusion. Mr. Wass, provided with little to do but accompany Ms. Chang's flights, did so with feeling and grace.

It was Prokofiev's Violin Sonata No. 2 that finally cut to the heart of what makes Ms. Chang such a vital, rewarding artist. The long-lined, songful melodies of the first and second movements brought out her best. Her playing was technically brilliant, lively and characterful, imbued with a sense of mastery and commitment.

The hushed, haunted Andante was filled with genuine mystery, while the visceral kick of the Allegro con Brio was amplified by Ms. Chang's excitable stomps and full-arm bow flourishes. Mr. Wass's contributions, equally exciting, were finely balanced with those of Ms. Chang. As an encore the players offered a tidy, sweetly spun Largo from the "Winter" concerto of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons."

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The violinist Sarah Chang and the pianist Ashley Wass as crucial complements at Carnegie Hall.

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A MOTLEY GROUP OF MUSICIANS IN A CONCERTO OF CONTRASTS

BY ANNE MIDGETTE

A Motley Group of Musicians In a Concerto of Contrasts

Four brand-new pieces, four impressive soloists, four distinctive musical styles and not a real clunker in the bunch. This was music as it can and should be, and it happened on Saturday night at the Miller Theater, which rolled out the second installment of its "Pocket Concertos," a three-year commissioning series. On paper, the four featured composers were the most diverse of the project's diverse field: Anthony Davis, an established composer known for his operas; Huang Ruo, a younger Chinese-born composer who recently wrote a concerto for a painter and orchestra; Sebastian Currier, a midcareer composer of lyrical, atmospheric works; and Charles Wuorinen, at 68 a veritable grand old man of uptown serialism.

Pocket Concertos Miller Theater

But diverse as they were, the pieces had in common an energy, an interest in a broad range of sound — from various percussion instruments to sampled recordings to vocalizations — and strong performances by the versatile Perspectives Ensemble under Brad Lubman, who got a workout from this program. The soloists, of course, are the key players, and each piece was tailored to its performer. Mr. Davis's clarinet concerto, "You Have the Right to Remain Silent," was played by J. D. Parran, who made his instruments' voices — from lithe lines on a soprano clarinet to flautest birdlike stutters on the contra-alto — more



From left, J. D. Parran, Jian Wang and Jennifer Koh performing at the Miller Theater on Saturday.

articulate than the words of the Miranda warnings that the instrumentalists spoke, sang and whispered in and around rhythmic jazzy ensembles. Mr. Huang's "People Mountain People Sea," the flashiest and most openly exuberant piece of the evening, was a cello concerto for Jian Wang, who looked like a businessman and sounded like a force of nature. The visual aspects of Mr. Huang's imagination were apparent: the piece crackled with color

and movement. The cello moved from thick double-stops to a dark lyrical elegy; the orchestra popped with sounds like the banged strings of a piano, the taut thwack of woodblocks between movements and the sizzle of tongued whispers from the musicians, like water on a hot stone.

A rendition of the Miranda warnings as you've never heard them before.

Water was evoked in Mr. Currier's piece as well, shaped to the limpid softness of the pianist Emma Tahmizian's playing and framing a fast tangle of a second movement with two more meditative ones, the last one interlaced with recorded excerpts from the first. And Mr. Wuorinen wrote a virtuosic showpiece for the violinist Jennifer Koh, setting her against a 15-part ensemble of virtually every instrument except the violin. Conventional wisdom would cast Mr. Wuorinen as the most difficult of the four composers, but Ms. Koh had no difficulty communicating this vibrant piece, its angles sparkling under her fleet fingers.

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PLAYED 'WILLIAM TELL'? YES THEY DID, YES THEY DID, YES THEY DID, DID, DID

BY BERNARD HOLLAND

"Sounds of Summer," the latest installment of the New York Philharmonic's Summertime Classics series is a kind of vacation in sound. Listeners wearied by challenge and deep edification get to lean back and get comfortable. Friday's program at Avery Fisher Hall, led by the conductor and amiable conversationalist Bramwell Tovey, was a chestnut roast from start to finish: a greatest-hits lineup calculated to soothe the brain and slow the heart rate.

It is embarrassing to say, on the other hand, that by avoiding very familiar repertory so strenuously, we end up not playing it much at all. Fearing the obvious, we make the obvious into the rare.

I can't remember the last time I heard Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" or Smetana's "Moldau." One noticed details in the Grieg Piano Concerto and Rossini's "William Tell" Overture that over long periods of absence had been forgotten. The Philharmonic sounded

in good spirits and fine voice. Given the rapidly changing programs and limited rehearsal time for each, Mr. Tovey had a hard time avoiding looseness of execution that the orchestra's music director, Lorin Maazel, might not have stood for.

The audience, enjoying the best spirits of all, seemed to like everything and also to adore young Joyce Yang's playing of the Grieg. Ms. Yang has a big-time sound and technique, and so basic is her musicality that I can see her one day abandoning the theatrical stretched-out tempos that sometimes work overtime at milking the drama of the moment. Barely 21 and still in school, Ms. Yang has the self-possession and grand style that will make her a competitor in the virtuoso career wars to come.

Elgar, Smetana and Rossini were what they were and offered considerable entertainment. The orchestra sounded lovely. I saw very few empty seats.

Played 'William Tell'? Yes They Did, Yes They Did, Yes They Did, Did, Did

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Sounds of Summer
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The pianist Joyce Yang joined the New York Philharmonic for "Sounds of Summer" at Avery Fisher Hall.

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC IS INVITED TO NORTH KOREA

BY PETER EDIDIN

The New York Philharmonic is considering an invitation from the North Korean government to perform in Pyongyang, the orchestra said yesterday, Reuters reported. "We have just very recently received an inquiry about the possibility of the New York Philharmonic performing in Pyongyang," North Korea's capital, said the orchestra's spokesman, Eric Latzky. "It came from an independent representative as an official invitation of the Ministry of Culture," he said. "We appreciate any invitation to the New York Philharmonic and will explore the possibility of this as we would any other invitation." The South Korean news agency Yonhap reported on Sunday that an American envoy, Christopher Hill, and his North Korean counterpart, Kim Kye-gwan, had discussed the possibility of civilian exchanges between the countries in a bid to improve ties.

Arts, Briefly

Compiled by Peter Edidin

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ANOTHER MOVEMENT OF MUSICAL DIPLOMACY

BY DANIEL J. WAKIN

If North Korea keeps its promises, potentially millions of its isolated, tightly controlled citizens are likely to hear their national anthem played on the radio by the New York Philharmonic. And then they will hear “The Star–Spangled Banner,” a quintessential American symbol, in a place long subjected to anti-American propaganda.

Today the orchestra is to present details of its planned trip to Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, in late February. So far it has declined to discuss repertory. But State Department officials, who have advised the orchestra as it was deciding whether to accept an invitation, have said the government there will allow the American anthem.

Korea experts familiar with the closed, anti-United States nature of the government said the playing of “The Star–Spangled Banner” in North Korea was a rather startling prospect.

“This would be a significant achievement,” said Peter Beck, the executive director of the United States Committee for Human Rights in North Korea. “Just the very fact that the North Korean people would know that the Philharmonic was able to visit Pyongyang and play would be a clear signal that relations between the North and the U.S. are improving.”

Philharmonic protocol calls for anthems to be played on tour during concerts of special importance. In 2002, for example, “The Star–Spangled Banner” was played in Japan when the empress attended. Traditionally the host anthem is played first out of courtesy. The United States anthem is always played on opening night of the Philharmonic’s season.

Beyond that, the repertory was not yet clear yesterday, although in the past orchestra officials speculated that Dvorak’s “New World” Symphony might be on the program. An American piece is also likely.

As flagship musical institutions that often have national identities of their own, orchestras have played a political role, especially during the cold war. The first major American orchestra to play in the Soviet Union was the Boston Symphony, in 1956. It opened its first concert, in Leningrad, with the Soviet anthem. The audience rose to its feet and stayed standing during the American anthem. The Boston was almost not the first; the Philadelphia Orchestra received an invitation before the Bostonians but declined when the members voted not to go because of a labor dispute.

The New York Philharmonic and Leonard Bernstein traveled to the Soviet Union in 1959 as part of a mammoth European and Middle Eastern tour. Bernstein programmed an American piece at every concert.

At one event Bernstein lectured about the similarities between works of Copland and Shostakovich as examples of how Americans and Russians were not so far apart. Just playing Shostakovich — who passed in and out of official disfavor — was a statement. But Bernstein dropped references to Igor Stravinsky’s post-Soviet life, apparently at official request.

The Philharmonic bowed to political pressures another time. During a 1984 tour in Malaysia, it dropped Ernest Bloch’s “Schelomo, a Hebrew Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra” from one program because of the government policy in that Islamic country of discouraging works of Jewish origin. After protests in the United States, the orchestra canceled two concerts.

In 1960 Bernstein took the orchestra to West Berlin, where it was hailed for lending moral support to a city

under Soviet pressure. But Bernstein made another gesture: He dedicated one performance to the goal of peace, saying “special reverence” was due because it came during Rosh Hashana, and said a Hebrew prayer from the stage.

The Philadelphia Orchestra made a huge splash with its 1973 tour of Communist China, the first by an American orchestra. Henry A. Kissinger, then the national security adviser, had included the visit as one of the measures were leading to normalization of relations between the United States and China.

Certainly North Korea is no China or Soviet Union; it is not the other pole of a cold war and has a tiny fraction of the military power or population. And it does not share the musical heritage that Russians and other Westerners have. Nor is it experiencing the explosion of classical music that China is now. But it has had past encounters with Western classical music, mainly in the late 1940s and ’50s when Russians and Eastern Europeans visited, said Prof. Charles Armstrong, a professor of modern Korean history at Columbia University. Much Korean music is intended to extol the leadership of Kim Il–Sung and his son, the current leader, Kim Jong–il, Korea experts said. (Accordion music, apparently, is very popular.)

The Philharmonic’s visit is “not just about the United States,” Professor Armstrong said. “It’s about the reconnection of North Korea to a broader cultural universe.” Aside from the specifics of politics and diplomacy, the visit of an orchestra to any totalitarian government is inherently dramatic.

By definition art music “is addressed to someone who has a certain independence of mind and in listening to the music is expected to respond in an idiosyncratic and special way,” said Lawrence Kramer, a professor of English and music at Fordham University and author of “Why Classical Music Still Matters” (University of California Press, 2007). “The music almost posits for its audience a certain degree of Western identity, which includes that sense of individual capacity to think, to sense, to imagine,” he said. “In that sense classical music is thoroughly at odds with the values of a closed, totalitarian society,” Professor Kramer added. “You don’t sign up and march to the music.”

Another Movement Of Musical Diplomacy

From First Arts Page

“The Star–Spangled Banner” was played in Japan when the empress attended. Traditionally the host anthem is played first out of courtesy. The United States anthem is always played on opening night of the Philharmonic’s season.

Beyond that, the repertory was not yet clear yesterday, although in the past orchestra officials speculated that Dvorak’s “New World” Symphony might be on the program. An American piece is also likely.

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Leonard Bernstein and his wife, Felicia Montealegre, foreground, and members of the New York Philharmonic boarding a plane for the Soviet Union in 1959.

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ONLINE: GOING ON TOUR

Additional articles about the New York Philharmonic’s planned visit to North Korea: nytimes.com/music

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FINE ART

IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

SUN KOO YUH

BY ROBERTA SMITH

*Nancy Margolis
523 West 25th Street, Chelsea
Through March 3*

Sun Koo Yuh
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523 West 25th Street, Chelsea
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Besides being an impressive debut, the first New York show of the Korean-born artist Sun Koo Yuh is a reminder that Chelsea is, above all, a plethora of almost literally shape-shifting contexts. Imagine encountering these lushly colored, ingeniously glazed, adamantly multicultural porcelain sculptures in one of the area's hip, high-end galleries instead of one dedicated to works made of fired clay, and you've got a different kettle of fish. That kettle might be positioned between more widely esteemed efforts — say, Anne Chu's polychrome carved-wood homages to Chinese Tang figures and the over-the-top ceramic wizardry of Grayson Perry. It's just a thought.

Each of Mr. Yuh's sculptures is a gnarly, gorgonlike aggregate of caricatural heads and figures, with animals, with flowers. Fangs or horns are not unusual. The effect is of a disassembled totem pole that mixes the personal with a broad range of cultural references. Roses and lotuses signal the East-to-West reach. A re-curring stocky bird or orange mottled hound could be household pets. The poured three-color glaze of (again) the Tang here evokes every-

thing from drool to ritual dousing, as does the blue stream covering the woman (possibly a spouse) who lords it over the pile of beings in "Anniversary." The antic, leering vehemence of the tangles can also bring to mind the German Expressionism of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.

Mr. Yuh, who is 47 and teaches at the University of Georgia and the Penland School of Crafts in Penland, N.C., begins his process with wonderful, densely populated ink drawings that mix sumi, calligraphy and cartoon and occasionally make their way into his glazes. The objects could use more of the drawings' casual cosmopolitanism, but this show is a wonderful start that should startle even Chelsea's most seasoned denizens from their appointed rounds.

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AN ART GALLERY IN THE LOBBY

BY LISA CHAMBERLAIN

Square Feet

The New York Times



The lobby of 125 Maiden Lane, left, has several shows a year, one with this piece by Soek Jin Jo, "Why Is the Horse Facing East?" Below, elsewhere in the building, an exhibit in progress at the office of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

An Art Gallery in the Lobby

Rotating Exhibits Make a Cultural Attraction for Tenants

By LISA CHAMBERLAIN

Placing art in commercial buildings to enliven a lobby or courtyard is hardly a new concept. But more often than not, the art seems to be an afterthought, especially as permanent installations fade into the background with the ficus trees.

But the first Class A commercial condominium building in Lower Manhattan has taken lobby art to a new level. At 125 Maiden Lane, also known as Water Street Plaza, the lobby is used to display rotating exhibits organized by an internal curator who recruits artists and organizes openings the way it would be done in a typical gallery space. The rectangular lobby is transformed by sculpture installations, and a separate high-ceiling fountain area also serves as exhibition space.

The building has been owned since 1999 by Time Equities, a New York real estate investment company with 18.1 million square feet of property in the United States and Canada.

The founder and chairman of Time Equities, Francis J. Greenburger, established the company's Art in Buildings program in 2000. Since then it has evolved so that the company now employs a full-time curator.

At 125 Maiden Lane, the art exhibits are becoming part of the building's identity. That has helped attract arts and culture-oriented buyers since last year, when Time Equities began converting leased space to for-sale office condos.

"Since 9/11, we were nomads," said Tom Healy, president of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, which recently bought space at 125

Maiden Lane. The council, a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to promoting the arts downtown and has its own public gallery space on the second floor called Redhead, had been at the World Trade Center and lost an artist in the attack.

The group moved five times in five years until finding space at 125 Maiden Lane. It moved in with the knowledge that not only did the landlord, Time Equities, have a commitment to art, but that the Cultural Council would be able to buy its space when the building went condo.

"For an arts organization, owning your own space is like having an endowment," Mr. Healy said. "The space has already appreciated in just the few months since we closed the deal."

The building has sold 200,000 square feet out of 350,000 total. Other tenants include the Empire State Development Corporation and the Civil Service Employees Association. Tenants who have already bought space paid about \$380 a square foot, but with the New York office market exceptionally strong, the current price is closer to \$450 a square foot, Mr. Greenburger said.

"We're negotiating with two buyers right now, and art is important to them," said Mr. Greenburger, who also underwrites the \$10,000 Greenburger awards given every two years to five under-recognized artists.

"One is himself an important artist who needs an office for his foundation. The other is a not-for-profit that is involved with, among other things, cultural issues."

The Art in Buildings program evolved from Mr. Greenburger's pri-

ivate collection, which he lent out for display in the company's properties, and his association with the Omi International Arts Center in Ghent, New York. Through that group, he met Elisabeth Akkerman, who had curated art exhibits in commercial buildings in Germany before coming to Time Equities in 2003.

Ms. Akkerman rotates exhibits in the lobby at 125 Maiden Lane four times a year and oversees temporary and permanent exhibits in other Time Equities buildings in New York and across the country, including the company's headquarters at 55 Fifth Avenue. The lobby there is showing the "Antarctica Project," a video performance installation by the Argentine artist Andrea Juan.

Other buildings around Manhattan have curated art exhibits, but they are almost always installed by outside organizations rather than handled by the landlord.

One such art gallery is in the UBS building at 1285 Avenue of the Americas. The 4,000-square-foot gallery, previously run by PaineWebber before it merged with UBS, has existed since 1985. The exhibits are organized by nonprofit groups working with the director of the gallery space, Colin Thomson, who sees advantages to placing art in nontraditional places.

"There's an audience here that's not necessarily going to go to a museum," Mr. Thomson said. "And unlike a museum exhibition, where you come in, see the show and leave, this is a situation where you come in every day and see it more than once. People really have time to live with something and see the exhibit from different angles."



Photographs by Peter Mohrman/The New York Times

Rotating exhibits in large gallery spaces owned by commercial landlords, however, are relatively rare. More common are permanent installations in lobbies overseen by an outside curatorial service, like Art Assets, founded by Barbara Koz Paley in 1992.

The typical arrangement for Art Assets is a three-year lease at 3 cents a square foot a year for turnkey service, an all-inclusive package. So, for example, a 500,000-square-foot building would pay \$25,000 a year for original art without having to buy it, install it or insure for it.

Ms. Paley employs two curators who work directly with artists, some of whom create art for specific sites. At 750 Third Avenue, for example, the Swiss artist Markus Wetzel has installed a continuous 36-foot photograph over the concierge desk in the lobby.

"Lobbies are more interesting than the white-box gallery," Ms. Paley said. "They have a personality and pose challenges. And it's not just about circulating art; it's about a societal trend. We want prettier spaces, and we want landlords to

take care of those spaces. People have come to expect it."

Encountering the unexpected, however, is the point of rotating art exhibits in commercial spaces, Ms. Akkerman said.

"People see the artist doing the installation and want to stop and talk with the artist," she said. "It becomes very personal, which is something that artists aren't always used to. On the opening night, the artist and people from the art world come, and tenants get to meet each other. It's very sociable."

The attention from the art world has been a pleasant surprise for Ms. Akkerman. At Maiden Lane, Tadaashi Hashimoto's "Myriad of Views" was reviewed by the international art critic Robert C. Morgan in the art magazine *Sculpture*, and Matthew Geller's video installation "Almost. Again. Almost. One more time," was reviewed in *Artnet*.

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THAT UNRULY, SERENDIPITOUS SHOW IN VENICE

BY MICHAEL KIMMELMAN

VENICE, June 13

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One such art gallery is in the UBS building at 1285 Avenue of the Americas. The 4,000-square-foot gallery, previously run by PaineWebber before it merged with UBS, has existed since 1985. The exhibits are organized by nonprofit groups working with the director of the gallery space, Colin Thomson, who sees advantages to placing art in nontraditional places.

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After the artists, dealers, critics and hedge-fund guys jetted off last weekend to shop in Basel and check out Documenta in Germany, it became easier to tell whether the 52nd version of the Venice Biennale was as much of a bore as it seemed.

It's not. It's subtle and sober. And, well, yes, maybe it's just a little boring.

But it grows on you. It did on me, anyway. Aside, of course, from the simple fact that it's in this ancient paradise of sun, honeysuckle and stone (passing disappointments of art somehow invariably wafting away on sea breezes), what's always glorious about this oldest of the international festivals is its unruliness. There is never just one biennale but many of them, all mixed up, and you're free to like or kvetch about any or all.

A commissioner — this time the former Museum of Modern Art curator, Robert Storr — deals with the crazy bureaucracy and is responsible for the main exhibition. As in the past that show divides itself between the Italian pavilion in the Giardini Pubblici, the biennale's traditional base, and the Arsenale, the former rope factory nearby, whose traversal, even when everything is as compulsively well ordered as it is now, feels like a forced march.

But then there are dozens of countries, more and more each biennale (76 now, a record), which organize their own pavilions all over town. By chance, overlaps occur between a pavilion and the main show, implying actual coordination. Mr. Storr has included a work by Sophie Calle (a simple, heartbreaking memorial to her

mother). Ms. Calle also takes over the large French pavilion with a virtual library of women's reactions to an anonymous break-up letter she ostensibly received. Maybe you have to be a woman to fully grasp its virtues, which many people did, but not me.

Mr. Storr has also picked two works by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, the Cuban-born American who (posthumously) represents the United States. His pavilion, put together by Nancy Spector of the Guggenheim, is the biennale's most elegant by far. Gifted beyond reason at turning hard-nosed Minimalism into humble, humane art, Mr. Gonzalez-Torres (1957-96) gets the tribute he deserves. I returned a few times to a sepulchral white room in the pavilion where a rectangular carpet of licorice candies (you may take one if you wish) evokes a gravesite beneath a rectangle of scrimmed skylight. My heart leapt.

I also finally made it into the German pavilion, having skipped the daunting lines over the weekend, and saw Isa Genzken's appalling mélange of mirrors, astronaut costumes, nooses and suitcases (something to do with "petrodollars," she has said, as if that's an explanation). Then I checked in a second time on Tracey Emin's tortured, itchy, nude self-portrait etchings and drawings in the British pavilion; they looked as wan and second-hand as they had the first time. Warmed over Egon Schiele's, they left an impression that Ms. Emin has her sights on the art market while also suggesting that even the cheekiest British artists are really reactionaries at heart.

That Unruly, Serendipitous Venice Show, After the Crowds

Continued From Weekend Page 29

ties to an anonymous heck-up letter she instantly received. Maybe you have to be a woman to fully grasp its virtues, which many people did, but not me. Mr. Storr has also picked two works by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, the Cuban-born American who (posthumously) represents the United States. His pavilion, put together by Nancy Spector of the Guggenheim, is the biennale's most elegant by far. Gifted beyond reason at turning banalness into minimalism into beautiful, beautiful art, Mr. Gonzalez-Torres (1957-96) gets the tribute he deserves. I returned a few times to a sepulchral white room in the pavilion where a rectangular carpet of ivory candles (you may take one if you wish) evokes a grave-site beneath a rectangle of crossed skylight. My heart leaps.

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The Korean pavilion was a nice surprise. A young, Yale-trained artist named Hyung-ki Lee, has fabricated the presumptive fossil remains of Bugs Bunny, Tom and Jerry, and others, somberly presented in glass vitrines as if at a natural history museum. There's also an installation having to do with devices to enhance the artist's physique and a surgical theater full of applicable instrumentation, conjuring Matthew Barney. A pair of 8-year-olds accompanying me found this quite fascinating, as they did David Altmejd's contribution on behalf of Canada: a house of mirrors with stuffed squirrels, hair, berries, mushrooms, werewolves and other harum-scarum concoctions typical of the artist. He gets my prize for the most industrious, if not the most profound, pavilion.

A near second on that score, across the gardens, is Monika Sosnowska, who has somehow shoehorned the huge twisted armature of a hypothetical building into Poland's pavilion, recalling coups of unlikely architecture by Gordon Matta-Clark and Robert Smithson. Cogitating on bygone utopias and Communism's fall, the work impresses mostly as a logistical feat and as one of the few large-scale sculptural gambits at the biennale.

The funniest entry belongs to Jaime Val-
The Venice Biennale, "Think With the Senses, Feel With the Mind: Art in the Present Tense," continues through Nov. 21; www.labiennale.org.



Among the biennale's largest works is the twisted skeleton of a hypothetical building by Monika Sosnowska, at the Poland pavilion.

lars and Rafael Lamata, calling themselves Los Torreznos, in the Spanish pavilion. Seated side by side against a white backdrop in several videos, they gesticulate and shout back and forth names and phrases of political figures in rhythmic, comedic crescendo: "Marx!" "Maaaaa!" "Marx!" "Maaaaaoo!" "Hitler!" "Maaaaaoo!" "Kropotkin!!!!" It is funnier than it sounds.

Mr. Storr's show is not funny. In the Arsenale he presents various photographs documenting far-flung global crises. These blessedly eschew the usual art world lecturing and two-bit posturing, providing instead, as Mr. Storr put it, "something to think about other than the art world." Thank goodness for that.

In the Italian pavilion he stresses estimable seniors, catering not to jaded insiders but to a broader public for whom the sight of new or nearly new paintings by Gerhard Richter, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Ryman and Sigmar Polke (huge translucent tundra-force of darkling mystery, the color of molasses or crude oil) does not provoke the rolling of eyes.

I confess to some eye rolling. Mr. Storr's choices seemed risk-averse.

But then, I saw the sense of them. Mr. Storr has spent his career endorsing these artists and others in the Italian pavilion—Susan Rothenberg, Sol LeWitt (a spectacular pair of spidery wall drawings, one light, one dark), Elizabeth Murray, Louise Bour-

geois and Bruce Nauman (a fountain, made with molded plastic heads turned inside out and industrial sinks). It would have been strange, not to mention disingenuous, had he ignored them to anticipate the insider response, especially considering that his job was to put on view the art he deems most worth looking at.

In lieu of the usual bazaar, with hundreds of artists in no logical order (not many biennales ago, the bewildering total topped 350), Mr. Storr limits his choice to 96. An argument, based on serendipity, can be made for more chaos. But less scrupulously, chaos panders to commerce, making the biennale resemble an art fair. This show declines to emulate that model and also skips the navel-gazing and institutional critique that art festivals favor, stressing instead good old patient observation.

The more I looked, the more turned up Adel Abdessemed's circles made of barbed wire, tucked into a corner and easily missed, gave a twist to Minimalism. They were nearly hidden behind El Anatsui's great chain-mail tapestries, made of metal bottle caps and whiskey bottle collars, richly colored, providing a rare dose of sheer eye candy.

Tosoko Yoneda's photographs, on inspection, revealed themselves to be views of a minefield in the demilitarized zone in South Korea, a sniper's post in Beirut and of Israel from a Hezbollah-controlled village in Liba-



Works at the Arsenale include a series of photographs of bombed-out buildings in Beirut by Gabriele Basilico of Italy.

ONLINE: MORE FROM VENICE

Michael Kimmelman discusses the Biennale, with an interactive map of the event and Emily Kennedy's blog from the previous: nytimes.com/design

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I shouldn't fail to mention another Brazilian he includes, Waldira Caldas. Mr. Caldas has arranged glass panes, metal brackets, dangling colored strings, rocks and painted black rectangles, all placed just so, in a room of the Italian pavilion. The work pays implicit homage to postwar computers like Lygia Clark and Helio Oiticica. Everything is still, except the strings, which move slightly when people pass. I don't think it's coincidental that Mr. Storr has included elsewhere sculptures by Fred Sandback, the American master of ethereal string geometries, a gentle genius, who died in 2013. Better late than never to honor him too.

Let me not forget a Japanese artist called Takahara, who has concocted an animation of a dollhouse, surrounded by disembodied hands that frantically scratch away at each other and then at the rooms, revealing a kind of pulsing body underneath, before a flood comes and causes the cycle to begin again. Dya and Emilia Kabakov have returned to form with an elaborate installation called "Maaaaa," of a supposed utopian city in northern Tibet, replete with intricate models of mountain observatories where inhabitants receive cosmic energy and commune with extraterrestrials. On certain days, so the Kabakovs explain, an identical city could be seen hovering in the sky, a heavenly Maaaa that the earthy one mirrors.

That's not a bad metaphor for the biennale. A video called "Shadow Boxing" by Sophie Whettnall shows a woman standing motionless while a boxer dances and jabs around her, his fist coming just millimeters from her face. The camera's gaze in. We see her hair move with the breeze of passing blows. Her expression remains impassive. She pretends to ignore the violence.

But her eyes dilate. It's impossible to remain impervious to what's going on around her, no matter how she tries to seem otherwise.

Come to think of it, maybe that's the right metaphor for the state of art now.

The Korean pavilion was a nice surprise. A young, Yale-trained artist named Hyung-ki Lee, has fabricated the presumptive fossil remains of Bugs Bunny, Tom and Jerry, and others, somberly presented in glass vitrines as if at a natural history museum; there's also an installation having to do with devices to enhance the artist's physique and a surgical theater full of applicable instrumentation, conjuring Matthew Barney. A pair of 8-year-olds accompanying me found this quite fascinating, as they did David Altmejd's contribution on behalf of Canada: a house of mirrors with stuffed squirrels, hair, berries, mushrooms, werewolves and other harum-scarum concoctions typical of the artist. He gets my prize for the most industrious, if not the most profound, pavilion.

A near second on that score, across the gardens, is Monika Sosnowska, who has somehow shoehorned the huge twisted armature of a hypothetical building into Poland's pavilion, recalling coups of unlikely architecture by Gordon Matta-Clark and Robert Smithson. Cogitating on bygone utopias and Communism's fall, the work impresses mostly as a logistical feat and as one of the few large-scale sculptural gambits at the biennale.

The funniest entry belongs to Jaime Vallare and Rafael Lamata, calling themselves Los Torreznos, in the Spanish pavilion. Seated side by side against a white backdrop in several videos, they gesticulate and shout back and forth names and phrases of political figures in rhythmic, comedic crescendo: "Marx!" "Maaaa!" "Marx!" "Maaaaaoo!" "Hitler!" "Maaaaaoo!" "Kropotkin!!!!" It is funnier than it sounds.

Mr. Storr's show is not funny. In the Arsenale he presents various photographs documenting far-flung global crises. These blessedly eschew the usual art world hectoring and two-bit posturing, providing instead, as Mr. Storr put it, "something to think about other than the art world." Thank goodness for that.

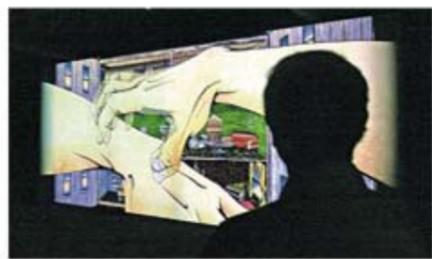
In the Italian pavilion he stresses estimable seniors, catering not to jaded insiders but to a broader public for whom the sight of new or nearly new paintings by Gerhard Richter, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Ryman and Sigmar Polke (huge translucent tours-de-force of darkling mystery, the color of molasses or crude oil) does not provoke the rolling of eyes.

I confess to some eye rolling. Mr. Storr's choices seemed risk-averse.

But then, I saw the sense of them. Mr. Storr has spent his career endorsing these artists and others in the Italian pavilion—Susan Rothenberg, Sol LeWitt (a spectacular pair of spidery wall drawings, one light, one dark), Elizabeth Murray, Louise Bourgeois and Bruce Nauman (a fountain, made with molded plastic heads turned inside out and industrial sinks). It would have been strange, not to mention disingenuous, had he ignored them to anticipate the insider response, especially considering that his job was to put on view the art he deems most worth looking at.

In lieu of the usual bazaar, with hundreds of artists in no logical order (not many biennales ago, the bewildering total topped 350), Mr. Storr limits his choice to 96. An argument, based on serendipity, can be made for more chaos. But less scrupulously, chaos panders to commerce, making the biennale resemble an art fair. This show declines to emulate that model and also skips the navel-gazing and institutional critique that art festivals favor, stressing instead good old patient observation.

The more I looked, the more turned up. Adel Abdessemed's circles made of barbed wire, tucked into a corner and easily missed, gave a twist to Minimalism. They were nearly hidden behind El Anatsui's great chain-mail tapestries, made of metal bottle caps and whiskey bottle collars, richly colored, providing a rare dose of sheer eye candy.



A scene from a video work by Takahara called "dolls/house."

Tomoko Yoneda's photographs, on inspection, revealed themselves to be views of a minefield in the demilitarized zone in South Korea, a sniper's post in Beirut and of Israel from a Hezbollah-controlled village in Lebanon. They snuck up on me. Ms. Calle's memorial to her mother came to mind before a suite of videos in the Arsenale by a Chinese artist, Yang Zhenzhong, who asked strangers on the street and elsewhere to say "I will die." A Japanese schoolgirl giggled the words. An elderly swimmer on the beach added, "But not yet." A gruff young man spoke the phrase, then glared at the camera, which panned out to reveal a policeman's badge on his chest.

There were links and themes. A Colombian artist, Óscar Muñoz, on five adjacent screens, is showing various faces drawn in watercolor, outdoors, on stone. The faces evaporate in the heat, suggesting the disappeared in South America. It's deeply moving, and it dovetailed with another remarkable work, by an American artist, Emily Prince, who makes palm-size drawings of all the American soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This is quiet art. Much of this biennale murmurs, it doesn't shout. The art world these days often bellows and struts. I doubt this biennale will be recalled as groundbreaking or dynamic, but it is an independent show, strong in its convictions. A series of photographs of bombed-out buildings in Beirut by Gabriele Basilico, an Italian artist, hang near a cut-and-dry informational display by Yto Barrada, a French artist, about how indigenous flowers in Tangier have been overrun by commercial development. They're works about civic demise, one linked to war, the other to prosperity.

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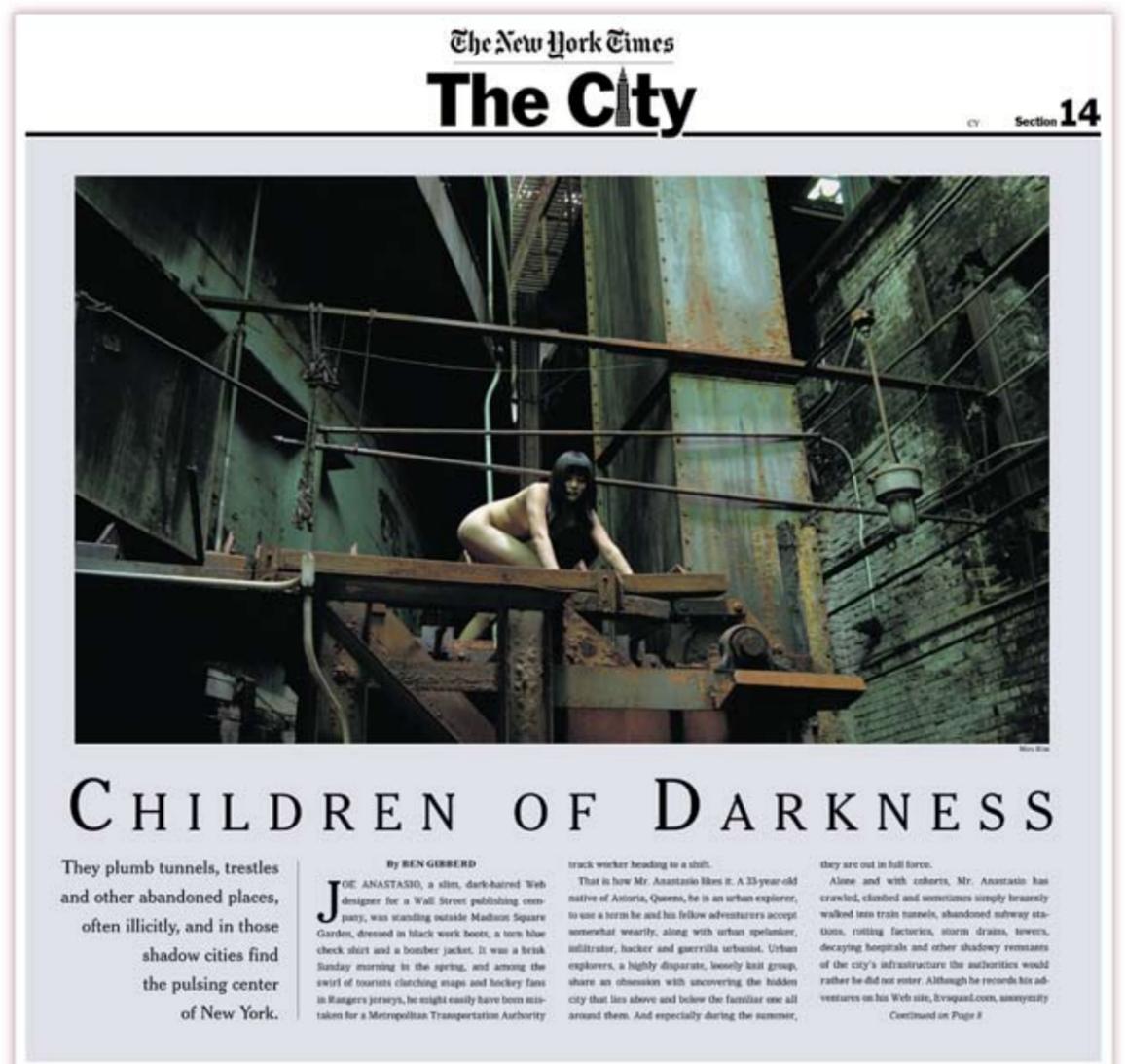
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The Venice Biennale, "Think With the Senses, Feel With the Mind: Art in the Present Tense," continues through Nov. 21; www.labiennale.org.

CHILDREN OF DARKNESS

BY BEN GIBBERD



Joe Anastasio, a slim, dark-haired Web designer for a Wall Street publishing company, was standing outside Madison Square Garden, dressed in black work boots, a torn blue check shirt and a bomber jacket. It was a brisk Sunday morning in the spring, and among the swirl of tourists clutching maps and hockey fans in Rangers jerseys, he might easily have been mistaken for a Metropolitan Transportation Authority track worker heading to a shift.

That is how Mr. Anastasio likes it. A 33-year-old native of Astoria, Queens, he is an urban explorer, to use a term he and his fellow adventurers accept somewhat wearily, along with urban spelunker, infiltrator, hacker and guerilla urbanist. Urban explorers, a highly disparate, loosely knit group, share an obsession with uncovering the hidden city that lies above and below the familiar one all around them. And especially during the summer, they are out in full force.

A lone and with cohorts, Mr. Anastasio has crawled, climbed and sometimes simply brazenly walked into countless train tunnels, abandoned subway stations, rotting factories, storm drains, towers, decaying hospitals and other shadowy remnants of the city's infrastructure the authorities would rather he did not enter. Although he records his adventures on his Web site, *ltsvsquad.com*, anonymity is, for him, a necessary tool.

A few minutes later on this Sunday morning, Mr. Anastasio was joined by a Korean woman in her 20s named Miru Kim, who with her delicate looks and glossy, shoulder-length black hair offered a striking contrast to Mr. Anastasio's grizzled appearance. The two headed off, bound for the netherworld beneath their feet.

A few blocks west, they looked around cautiously. Several trucks were parked behind a wire mesh fence, its gate wide open, but no one seemed about. Beyond the fence lay an entrance to the Amtrak tunnels that run north-south along the West Side. They stepped through the gate and headed for the tunnel's mouth.

Almost immediately, the space became not pitch black, as expected, but a dirty gray, lit by sodium lights and narrow shafts of sunlight from the open street crossings every few blocks above. Faded curlicues of graffiti formed a pattern as dense as wallpaper on the concrete walls.

As the two headed deeper, the sounds of the upper world, of voices and cars, faded. A train thundered past, and the two stepped to one side, averting their faces until its red taillights were dots in the distance. After about 20 minutes, the murky outline of a disused, darker tunnel appeared, and they followed it, holding their flashlights carefully.

This new tunnel ended at a strange contraption, resembling a vast air-conditioner on stilts. Near its base sat the abandoned remains of a homeless person's encampment: bags of filthy clothes, milk crates full of mismatched sneakers, a few swivel chairs and, lying forlornly in the middle of the tracks, a champagne cork.

Only 20 feet above lay Manhattan's busy streets, but it might as well have been 20,000 feet, the sense of human desolation was so intense. For Mr. Anastasio, however, the setting was perfect. He whipped out a digital camera and clicked away. A few days later, the photos were

up on his Web site. "Don't you just love this dump?" the text read. "About the only real thing left in NYC is the underground, the dirty, filthy underground."

Officially, 'A Pretty Stupid Idea'

Trying to calculate how many urban explorers there are puts one in the hapless position of the reporter who asked Bob Dylan in 1965 how many protest singers there were. "Uh, how many? I think about 136," Dylan replied sarcastically.

Many American cities have urban exploration Web sites, as do British, Canadian and Australian cities. New York, whose vast infrastructure provides a mecca for those drawn to such things, has dozens of Web sites devoted to recording their owner's adventures within it.

At the more extreme end are those like Mr. Anastasio's and *nycexposed.com*, which is run by a teenager named Sean and contained, until recently, a practical if tongue-in-cheek guide on how to cut through chain-link fences, as well as photographs of speeding subway trains perilously up close.

Not surprisingly, the authorities do not take kindly to such activities.

"Trespassing on the M.T.A.'s infrastructure is not only illegal and extremely dangerous, it's a pretty stupid idea," said Jeremy Soffin, a transportation authority spokesman, echoing the sentiments expressed by officials for Amtrak, the New York Police Department and other agencies. "I personally took a track safety class recently, and then you really appreciate how dangerous it is — how big the trains are, how fast-moving they are, and how narrow the spaces are.

"It's dangerous even for very experienced track workers. There's no place for urban explorers."

While Mr. Anastasio and Ms. Kim, a quiet-spoken artist and arts event promoter, have never been arrested while exploring, Mr. Anastasio said he knew some explorers who had been. And many other sites, while they don't thumb their noses so willfully at authority, are extreme in their own way. Ms. Kim's site, *mirukim.com*, which has made her something of a legend in urban explorer circles, contains a section devoted to a project she calls "Naked City Spleen."

The site features color photographs of Ms. Kim, naked, posed in abandoned tunnels and structures in New York and elsewhere. In one, she crouches like a cat on a vast slab of rusting steel amid the ruins of the former Revere sugar refinery, now demolished, in Red Hook, Brooklyn. In another, she appears, back turned to the camera, squeezed into the narrow heating tunnels below Columbia University, her alma mater. The effect is powerful, not just because of the eroticism, but also because her nakedness seems to emphasize her human vulnerability.

Ms. Kim took considerable risks to obtain her images. A few years ago, she and a friend encountered a body on a trip in Washington Heights. Another time, while she was making a solo visit to the same mysterious tunnel she and Mr. Anastasio visited together, the occupant of the homeless camp appeared just as she had removed her clothes.

Despite her initial fear, she continued with her photography. "In my mind," she wrote later on her Web site, "he is a dweller in one of the darkest rooms in the collective unconsciousness of all the inhabitants of New York and possibly of all modern cities."

20 Feet Below or 20 Feet Above

This sense of communicating with the city on a secret frequency may be what is most appealing to urban explorers.

Steve Duncan is a self-described "guerrilla historian" whose explorations of the city's forbidden structures — among them the old Croton Aqueduct in the Bronx and the long-closed upper viewing platform 216 feet above the 1964 World's Fair in Queens — are documented on his Web site, *undercity.org*.

"Most people experience their life in the city in a two-dimensional way," said Mr. Duncan, a sandy-haired 28-year-old. "You know, they go from Point A to Point B along streets and don't realize there are these multiple layers to the city. By going 20 feet below or 20 feet above, you can go to a place that is practically unvisited, that maybe 100 people get to see a year."

Seeing something inaccessible, he said, is special. "You experience it differently and more directly," he explained. "The history and city becomes alive."

To prove his point, Mr. Duncan led an expedition around one of his favorite places, the heating tunnels that honeycomb the foundations of Columbia University, a maze he discovered as a student there.

Bent double in their confines one afternoon, sweat dripping from his forehead as the pipes around him wheezed and groaned, he pointed out in a subbasement the remains of the original coal hoppers that fed the boilers before the buildings' conversion to oil. Beneath another building is part of a 19th-century stone wall that Mr. Duncan said was part of a city insane asylum before being demolished to make way for the university.

Mr. Duncan's greatest coup came when he wiggled through a vent in the ceiling and emerged from a door on the other side of a room. A quick step through the door and across the corridor outside led to a densely cluttered room, piled high with cases of ancient electrical machinery.

This, Mr. Duncan announced, was the original Pupin Laboratory, where the university's physics department built a particle accelerator and split the atom in 1939, in an early stage of what would be known as the Manhattan Project. Mr. Duncan said he believed that in 1997 he became the first urban explorer to discover it, although others followed suit, as attested by the graffiti around the room.

The particle accelerator — a circular green mass in the center of the room that resembles nothing more alarming than an enormous food processor — was too heavy and too dangerous to safely remove after the project moved to Chicago, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, he said, so the university decided to keep it here, "in their mildly radioactive junk storage room."

The discovery left him jubilant.

"It's just a great example of how you peel back one layer and you get to old coal hoppers," he said. "You peel back another layer and you find the foundations of an asylum when this area was all grass and farmlands. You peel back another layer, and here's the building where the atom was split."

Secrets Hidden in Plain View

For some urban explorers, the search for shadow cities does not entail venturing down tunnels or scaling high walls. Kevin Walsh, the 50-year-old, Brooklyn-born creator of the Web site *forgotten-ny.com* — a vast cornucopia of facts, photographs, conjecture, mythology and infrastructure — rarely goes urban exploring in the guerrilla sense of the term.

Instead, armed with a camera and the combined knowledge of a small library of books on New York, he stalks the city's streets looking for its secrets hidden in plain view. From faded advertisements to ancient streetlights to streets named after long-observed luminaries, he obsessively records the ephemera of what he terms "the lost metropolis" on his Web site. Much of this information is collected in his book, "Forgotten New York," which was published last year and is grist for the tours he conducts of forgotten corners of the city.

During a recent stroll with Mr. Walsh around Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, it became clear that his love of the city's ephemera goes beyond brick and stone. While on a hunt for the gravestone of the infamous 19th-century figure Bill the Butcher, he noticed some ancient lovers' graffiti carved into a tree trunk near the gravestone.

"That's what I love!" he said as he examined the blend of hearts and names, their edges softened and indecipherable with age. "That's what I show people on trips."

A Stolen Glance at Majesty

Beyond the thrill of seeing what others have not seen, or dare not see, and the sense that it should be recorded for future generations, urban explorers are driven by another motive. It is impossible to visit some of their more spectacular haunts without experiencing a touch of the sacred.

This was apparent one afternoon when Mr. Duncan's good friend and co-conspirator on numerous adventures, Moses Gates, a 31-year-old tour guide and graduate student in urban planning, undertook a journey into the abandoned Red Hook Grain Terminal on Brooklyn's waterfront.

"Generally, climbing urban structures and being high up really allows me to connect with the city," Mr. Gates said, "although I sometimes get that connection from other places, or just from walking around town. I love the feeling of being at one with the city — it's a spiritual experience, I won't deny it."

The grain terminal is one of the waterfront's industrial masterpieces, a series of 54 concrete silos about 12 stories high, built in 1922 to hold grain arriving by barge from the West. The cold gray waters of the Erie Basin lapping around the structure's edges give it the sense of an island fortress.

The terminal was decommissioned in the 1960s and now stands in a small industrial park, surrounded by concrete walls. Recently, a 17-year-old plan to turn it into a recycling center was revived, though its future remains uncertain. Mr. Gates negotiated the walls, then swung himself lithely beneath a rusted steel grating at one corner of the building.

Suddenly he was inside what might at first glance have been mistaken for a cathedral. Fat concrete columns lined up as far as the eye could see, creating a dreamlike procession of naves in all directions. Light filtered in from the sides, casting long diagonal shadows across the floor.

But what really gave the building its rarefied air was the silence. Amid the daily cacophony of the city, where every place is packed with a scrum of people, this space stood empty, a still counterpoint to everything around it.

Mr. Gates began to climb the corroded metal stairs that led to the roof. Graffiti lined the inner walls — a good sign. "Graffiti artists are almost always first," Mr. Gates said. "If there's no graffiti, there's a good chance it's impossible to get there."

At the end of his climb, as he popped his head out of a hatch on the roof, a magnificent — and utterly illicit — 360-degree view of the city opened up. In the foreground lay Red Hook's 19th-century industrial sprawl of warehouses and narrow streets lined with row houses. In the distance rose Manhattan's dull gray skyline. Tiny cars crawled along the elevated Prospect Expressway, an F train made its way over the Gowanus Canal, and airplanes banked steeply as they headed for Kennedy Airport.

"Planes, trains and automobiles, you got it all here," Mr. Gates said happily. Pausing to look out at this perspective, seen by so few, he added: "There's no doubt about it. You've got romance here."

Ben Gibberd's book "New York Waters: Profiles From the Edge," with the photographer Randy Duchaine, was published in May by Globe Pequot Press.

TO SEE THE WORLD IN BALLPOINT PEN

BY BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO

The attraction for artists of the ballpoint pen has grown over the years, particularly in affectedly informal contemporary drawing.

But it is also being put to more ambitious uses. At the Queens Museum of Art a selection of Il Lee's drawings — dramatic indigo and black ink abstractions, all done exclusively in ballpoint pen, on paper and canvas — can be seen in the mezzanine galleries. The drawings may not be great art, but they take doodling to a new level.

The works in this show, produced over the last few decades and including Mr. Lee's largest piece to date, a 50-foot pen drawing on paper, are deceptively casual; a lot goes into each one.

His drawings on canvas are meticulously primed with five layers of acrylic mat gel, each layer spread evenly with a knife before he begins to draw. Surface is paramount, with the gel primer preventing the ink from encroaching on the canvas; instead, it pools into a smooth wash on the surface, gradually obliterating the pen strokes.

The process is different in the works on paper, which are not treated before he begins to draw. The heavy white paper stock retains an impression of each pen stroke, resulting in an incised, dappled surface texture. And of course the ink seeps into the paper and bonds with it. Sometimes Mr. Lee applies so many pen strokes over weeks and months that the layers of ink become encrusted and gritty.

Works on paper, less luminous than the canvases but with more tactile appeal, are the highlight of this show, chosen by the curator Joanna Kleinberg from different phases of Mr. Lee's career. Mr. Lee has been making ballpoint pen drawings for 25 years; he began shortly after moving to the United States in the mid-1970s from his native Korea, where he was born in 1952. He went first to Los Angeles then to New York.

The show, with a dozen works and two dozen early experimental studies, begins with the 50-foot drawing. It took two and a half months and 400 to 500 ballpoint pens to complete, Mr. Lee working on sections at a time propped up against the wall in his Brooklyn studio. The installation is a sweeping, rhythmical abstraction in blue recalling the Italian Futurist paintings of Giacomo Balla, or elements of traditional Asian ink and wash painting.

What makes this work, and others like it, so alluring is its unexpected suggestiveness. When Mr. Lee's drawings conjure before you a soft, densely inked snowflake-like blob with feathery edges, or a pattern that recalls a distant constellation, or foliage, or even stones in a pool of clear, shallow water, it is hard not to be mesmerized. The simple, minimal forms are instinctively seductive.

One painting, "BL-060" (2005), is pure graphic intensity. A large, horizontal, heavily inked abstraction, it suggests a mountain range, the ocean, a wide-open landscape and even a rain cloud — nature captured in abstract terms. From some angles you'd swear you could step right into the picture.

An installation of experimental sketches, some of which correspond to elements in the drawings, suggests Mr. Lee's working method: He has an idea, jots it down on any surface available, from newspapers to notepads and sketchbooks, and sees if it works before he applies it to the larger scale. His images are too finely wrought, his forms too complex, to be left to chance.

That's not to say these drawings cannot be appreciated as abstractions alone. In various images he manages to convey a sense of alternating light and space, even movement — especially as shadows and slivers of natural light from nearby windows rake across the ink.

"Il Lee: Ballpoint Drawings," Queens Museum of Art, New York City Building, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Queens, continues through Sept. 30; (718) 592-9700; queensmuseum.org.

KOREA'S EXTRAORDINARY SEND-OFFS FOR ORDINARY PEOPLE

BY MARTHA SCHWENDENER



"BL-060" (2005), ballpoint pen on canvas, from the exhibition, "Il Lee: Ballpoint Drawings," at the Queens Museum of Art.

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The volume of art made throughout history to mourn, commemorate and celebrate death trumps just about every other category. Even so, "Korean Funerary Figures: Companions for the Journey to the Other World" at the Korea Society is unusual because it presents objects created for ordinary people rather than for aristocrats or the wealthy.

The other thing about these wooden figures, called *kkoktu*, is that unlike much somber and forbidding mortuary art, many are fun and friendly — even kind of cute. The Western objects they most resemble might be the *kachina* dolls carved by the Hopi Indians, although their purpose was different — *kachina* dolls were given to children to teach about spirits and ancestors — and the *kachinas* have become popular collectibles, while the *kkoktu* are rarely collected, even in Korea.

But they were meant to eye-catching. In Korea under the Choson Dynasty (1392–1910), when rules for exhibiting social status were strictly enforced, funeral biers — used to transport coffins to ancestral burial grounds in the mountains — were one area where an

elaborate display was acceptable. Carved and brightly painted clowns, acrobats and animals were fitted onto the bier to accompany the dead into the next world, to ease their journey and provide a bit of consolation for the mourners.

The 74 *kkoktu* here, all from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, also reveal a great deal about the culture that produced them. The anthropomorphic figures (they weren't considered human but instead intermediaries between the material and supernatural worlds) are grouped by their function and identified by key characteristics.

The "guide" rides an animal or mythical creature and leads the soul of the deceased into the other world. Versions here include a government official riding a mythical beast, a Buddhist monk straddling a turtle (one of the four celestial animals and a symbol of longevity) and a nobleman riding a horse. A frontal view of the nobleman's face has been painted on three sides of a relatively two-dimensional plank of wood to create the illusion of three dimensions.

Korea's Extraordinary Send-Offs for Ordinary People

The volume of art made throughout history to mourn, commemorate and celebrate death trumps just about every other category. Even so, "Korean Funerary Figures: Companions for the Journey to the Other World" at the Korea Society is unusual because it presents objects created for ordinary people rather than for aristocrats or the wealthy.

ART REVIEW

MARTHA SCHWENDENER

The other thing about these wooden figures, called *kkoktu*, is that unlike much somber and forbidding mortuary art, many are fun and friendly — even kind of cute. The Western objects they most resemble might be the *kachina* dolls carved by the Hopi Indians, although their purpose was different — *kachina* dolls were given to children to teach about spirits and ancestors — and the *kachinas* have become popular collectibles, while the *kkoktu* are rarely collected, even in Korea.

But they were meant to eye-catching. In Korea under the Choson Dynasty (1392-1910), when rules for exhibiting social status were strictly enforced, funeral biers — used to transport coffins to ancestral burial grounds in the mountains — were one area where an elaborate display was acceptable. Carved and brightly painted clowns, acrobats and animals were fitted onto the bier to accompany the dead into the next world, to ease their journey and provide a bit of consolation for the mourners.

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A dragon's face ornament on a funeral bier at the Korea Society.

straddling a turtle (one of the four celestial animals and a symbol of longevity) and a nobleman riding a horse. A frontal view of the nobleman's face has been painted on three sides of a relatively two-dimensional plank of wood to create the illusion of three dimensions.

The guard, who protects the soul from evil spirits, might take the form of a fierce-looking warrior, an army officer or, in later days, a police officer. Among the 12 guard figures there is also a Confucian scholar with a pointy beard who looks like a scowling schoolmaster.

Women, unsurprisingly, were given the role of the caregiver. As with the other *kkoktu*, details of clothing and hairstyle offer important cultural clues. One female attendant wears a vermilion skirt and yellow jacket and a long, single braid, signifying that she is unmarried; a pair of attendants with their hair done in double topknots can be identified as young girls; another figure wears a bridal costume, a green jacket and red skirt.

Then there is the entertainer, whose purpose is to console the dead and distract mourners from their grief. Dancers,

"Korean Funerary Figures: Companions for the Journey to the Other World," through Nov. 20 at the Korea Society, 950 Third Avenue, at 57th Street, (212) 759-7525.



A soldier to protect someone's journey to the beyond.

clowns, acrobats doing handstands and musicians playing drums or riding animals are among this mix.

In addition to the humanoids there are phoenix, dragon and goblin figures that would be attached to the front, back and top of the funeral bier. Some of the most intricate are the phoenixes, intertwined with flowers or a pine tree. A bell attached to a tassel hanging from the phoenix's beak would ring if the bearers jostled the bier, reminding them to be more careful.

Long horizontal dragons rode

ONLINE: SLIDE SHOW

Additional images from "Korean Funerary Figures": nytimes.com/design

along the top of the bier, while dragon or goblin plates on the front and back warded off evil spirits. Looking at these, you're reminded of the fearsome visages of Greek Gorgons, Mayan masks or European gargoyles.

A one-tenth-scale funeral bier modeled on a late-18th-century original from Tongyoung in South Kyongsang Province gives a sense of how large the full-size versions would have been. A few small photographs in a gallery handout show a dozen or so people carrying one; larger photographs installed in the galleries might have provided a bit more context.

The brightly colored replica also gives an idea of how the *kkoktu* would have looked when they were new and makes clear how much effort went into constructing a bier. Instead of burning them as tradition dictated, many communities hung onto them for use in future burials.

Funerary practices differed from one part of Korea to the next. The *kkoktu* differed in various provinces. This isn't made clear in the galleries (the origins of individual *kkoktu* aren't specified), and the rise and decline of these burial rituals, particularly after the Japanese occupation in 1910, isn't spelled out.

But this is not an academic show. In an essay in the accompanying catalog Dr. Ockrang Kim, who has collected over 20,000 *kkoktu* and whose foundation lent this selection to the Korea Society, writes that she became interested in the figures because they were a way to connect with traditional Korean culture. (Ms. Kim's essay is titled "How *Kkoktu* Changed My Life.")

Ms. Kim calls it "a tribute to our ancestors' optimism and humor" that they would want the deceased "to journey into the beyond accompanied by boys, girls, men, women, clowns and acrobats." She's got a point. We're all joining that party eventually, and it might be nice to have a few clowns and acrobats, even a monk on a turtle leading the way.

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KOREAN ARTISTS MIX, AND NATURE MINGLES

BY BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Korean Artists Mix, and Nature Mingles

Contemporary Works and a Japanese Garden Merge at the Hammond



By BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO

In terms of seasonal art pleasures, few outings in the Hudson River Valley match a visit to the Hammond Museum and Japanese Stroll Garden in North Salem, N.Y. You can stop at the museum, then at your leisure putter around the Japanese-inspired gardens stretching over about three and a half acres.

Now and through the fall is a terrific time to visit, not only because of the changing foliage but also because the museum is host to a small but worthy exhibition highlighting the work of about a dozen contemporary Korean artists. It dovetails nicely with the museum's focus on Asian art and culture.

Put together by Inhee Iris Moon, an independent curator living in Westchester, "Incarnation" includes Korean artists living both in their homeland and in the United States, specifically New York. The exception is Nam June Paik, a Korean video artist and New York resident since the mid-1960s who died last year.

Mr. Paik, born in Seoul, is the best-known artist in the exhibition and Korea's most famous contemporary art export. He is revered for his pioneering video and new-media artwork, including interactive robots and sculptures using old-fashioned television monitors. He was also involved with the Fluxus group, known for mixing various types of artistic disciplines in the 1960s, and early, experimental performance art.

At first, the works in this show look unassuming, but up close they reveal their depth. Mr. Paik's contribution is a sculpture in the form of a chandelier laden with plastic vines, leaves and ripe fruit, along with small video monitors displaying abstract patterns. It is an eccentric mix, one that puts you in mind of the ornate decadence of European Rococo and Baroque-era furnishings.

The photographer Atta Kim is another established Korean artist, though unlike Mr. Paik, he chose to remain in South Korea. Here, he shows ethereal images of nudes encased inside transparent plastic boxes, which are sometimes stacked on top of one another and installed in forest and urban settings. It is a strong statement about the alienation of modern life and loss of individual identity.

No exhibition of contemporary Korean art would be complete without Nikki S. Lee, a Korean-American artist who stages photographs of herself as a member of different religious, social and ethnic groups. In one photograph here she is dressed up as a punk sitting on the pavement; in another she takes on the appearance and mannerisms of a young Latina from the barrio. Her blank, androgynous features greatly assist the transformation.

Branching out, Ms. Moon has also endeavored to include some fresh new faces, among them Kwang Young Chun, who makes mesmerizing wall-mounted collages out of dense aggregates of tiny triangles of wrapped paper covered with calligraphic characters. They look like lunar landscapes, but also call to mind the ancient Korean practice of wrapping medicine in mulberry paper triangles.

Accretions of objects are also the basis for other works here, among them Junho Lee's sculptures made up of hundreds of used seals and stamps bunched together inside a baroque frame, their inky bases facing up. Then there is Ran Hwang's wall installation of a resting bodhisattva made of thousands of buttons and pins. The finished sculpture transcends the accretion of humble materials as a meta-

DEPTH OF FIELD

Clockwise from top left: "Video Chandelier No. 5" by Nam June Paik; "Aggregation 07" by Kwang Young Chun, which calls to mind mulberry paper; Atta Kim's "Museum Project," from the Holocaust series; Duck Hyun Cho's "Hoo Wha," a portrait with canvas layered beneath it.



The chance to stroll indoors or outdoors, soaking in the sights.

phor for the way in which religion transcends the material world. More modestly scaled, but equally thoughtful and lovely, is Duck Hyun Cho's photorealistic portrait of two young Korean women in traditional dress. Exquisitely drawn using graphite and charcoal on canvas, the image resembles an aged historical photograph. Intriguingly, the artist has layered sections of canvas drop cloth beneath the drawing to enhance its verisimilitude.

Nearby, Chong Gon Byun's panoramic oil painting looks like a historical group portrait of Native American Indians, until you notice that a senior figure at center holds an oversized bottle of Chanel No. 5 perfume. Though shamelessly kitsch, it is about ideas of identity and cultural boundaries between different groups of people and is one of the most provocative works in the show.

Little of the art here is noticeably Korean, or Asian, suggesting Korean artists are increasingly international. The one exception is Jaye Rhee's video "Cherry Blossoms" (2003), in which clumps of pink chewing gum blowing in the wind resemble cherry blossoms falling from trees in a reference to this popular Asian festival. It is also a reminder to head outdoors, where nature awaits.

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"Incarnation: Korean Contemporary Art," Hammond Museum and Japanese Stroll Garden, 28 Deveau Road, North Salem, N.Y., through Sept. 7. Information: (914) 669-5033 or www.hammondmuseum.org.

ASIA SOCIETY WILL BUILD A CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTION

BY ROBIN POGREBIN

After decades of operating without a large permanent collection, Asia Society is opening a drive to collect contemporary Asian and Asian-American art. The program, which the society plans to announce tomorrow, is aimed at both attracting younger museumgoers and drawing attention to the activity in Chinese and Indian art today, officials say.

The society has already begun by acquiring 28 video and new-media works, including pieces by Nam June Paik, Patty Chang and Yoko Ono, as well as works by artists who are only beginning to develop a following in the United States, like Shilpa Gupta of India and Koki Tanaka of Japan.

Yet Vishakha N. Desai, president of Asia Society, said the new acquisitions program would emphasize choice pieces rather than try to document the scene in encyclopedic fashion. "We will always focus on the strength of individual works," she said.

The initial acquisitions were pledged as a gift, valued at more than \$1 million, from the Asia Society trustees Harold and Ruth Newman. Later this year the society is to raise an endowment for future contemporary acquisitions and for the conservation of what will be

called the Asia Society Contemporary Art Collection. The initial endowment goal is \$10 million.

"Some of the strongest work being produced today involves the use of media," Ms. Desai said. "For a multidisciplinary institution like the society, it is important to collect work that can powerfully illuminate contemporary realities of Asia and Asian America."

Melissa Chiu, who is the director of Asia Society's museum and will head the acquisition program, noted that Asian artists had emerged as a primary force in the video and new-media arena. "Asian art is leading the field," she said. "We have to respond to where artists are going. We want to have the flexibility of keeping pace with changes as they make them."

Asia Society, founded in 1956 to promote understanding between Asia and the United States, sponsors music and dance performances, films, lectures, conferences and publications, as well as art exhibitions.

In the past its art holdings were limited to traditional art, most of it donated in 1978 by its founders, John D. Rockefeller 3rd and his wife, Blanchette Ferry Hooker Rockefeller.

Although Asia Society has yet to map out an exhibition involving the contemporary acquisitions, it hopes to organize one at its New York headquarters in 2010 that would travel to some of the society's other locations, including a new building in Hong Kong that is to be completed in 2009 and another in Houston that is to be built beginning in spring 2008.

"When we do do it, we want it to be a major show," Ms. Chiu said.

The new buildings are intended as regional cultural, policy and educational centers that will expand the society's reach. The Hong Kong center was designed by the architects Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, and the Houston center by Yoshio Taniguchi.

In March 2006 the organization opened the Asia Society India Center in Mumbai, and last fall it opened the Center on U.S.-China Relations in its New York headquarters on Park Avenue, at 70th Street.

Asia Society was among the first American museums to establish a program of contemporary Asian art

exhibitions featuring works by artists like Cai Guo-Qiang, Shirin Neshat, Shahzia Sikander, Dinh Q. Le and Montien Boonma. It has also commissioned site-specific installations by artists like Xu Bing, Sarah Sze and Ms. Sikander.

Interest in contemporary Asian art has been building among collectors worldwide, prompting auction houses to expand their sales of such works in New York, London, Hong Kong and elsewhere.

And from New York to Houston to Denver to Seattle, museums in the United States have been bolstering their contemporary Asian holdings and organizing more shows in the field.

"It's kind of slowly happening," Ms. Chiu said. "I think we'll see museums get into it more and more."

The environment is likely to be increasingly competitive. "I guess they're joining the race," Deepak Talwar, director of Talwar Gallery in Manhattan, said of the society's plans. "Most of the American museums are starting now too, so they'd better have their purses full."

Asia Society Will Build a Contemporary Art Collection

By ROBIN POGREBIN

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An institution that has had few holdings is getting ready to buy.

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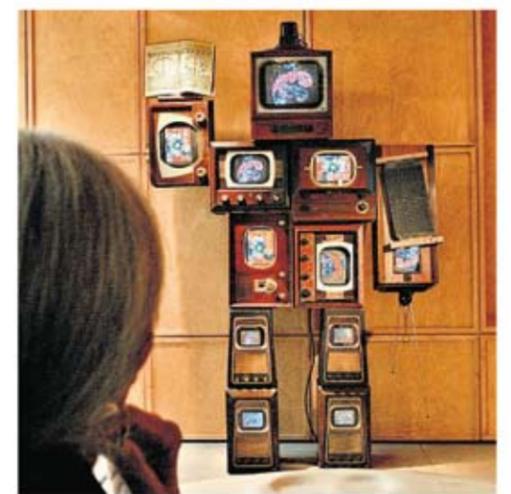
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"Li Tai Po," a sculpture by Nam June Paik at Asia Society.

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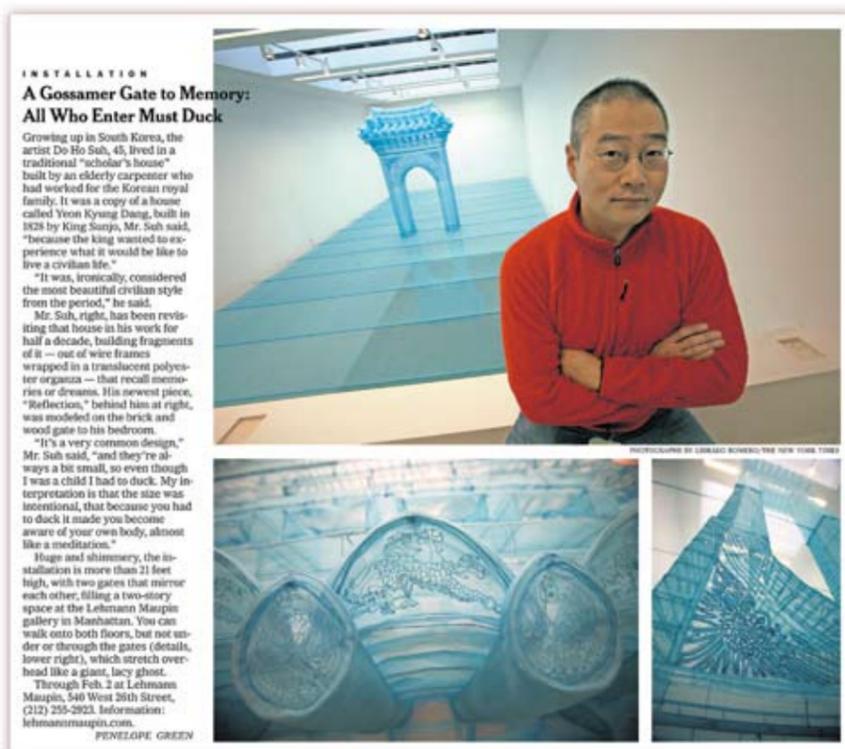
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Continued on Page 5

A GOSSAMER GATE TO MEMORY: ALL WHO ENTER MUST DUCK

BY PENELOPE GREEN



INSTALLATION
**A Gossamer Gate to Memory:
All Who Enter Must Duck**

Growing up in South Korea, the artist Do Ho Suh, 45, lived in a traditional "scholar's house" built by an elderly carpenter who had worked for the Korean royal family. It was a copy of a house called Yeon Kyung Dang, built in 1828 by King Sunjo, Mr. Suh said, "because the king wanted to experience what it would be like to live a civilian life."

"It was, ironically, considered the most beautiful civilian style from the period," he said. Mr. Suh, right, has been revisiting that house in his work for half a decade, building fragments of it — out of wire frames wrapped in a translucent polyester organza — that recall memories or dreams. His newest piece, "Reflection," behind him at right, was modeled on the brick and wood gate to his bedroom.

"It's a very common design," Mr. Suh said, "and they're always a bit small, so even though I was a child I had to duck. My interpretation is that the size was intentional, that because you had to duck it made you become aware of your own body, almost like a meditation."

Huge and shimmering, the installation is more than 21 feet high, with two gates that mirror each other, filling a two-story space at the Lehmann Maupin gallery in Manhattan. You can walk onto both floors, but not under or through the gates (details, lower right), which stretch overhead like a giant, lacy ghost. Through Feb. 2 at Lehmann Maupin, 540 West 26th Street, (212) 255-2923. Information: lehmannmaupin.com.

PENELOPE GREEN

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KOREAN ART IN HOUSTON

BY WENDY MOONAN

With 25,000 Koreans living in Houston (out of about 100,000 in Texas), the Museum of Fine Arts there this month opened a new gallery dedicated to Korean art from 8,000 B.C. to the present.

"We felt it was important to promote Korean culture," said Christine Starkman, curator of Asian art at the museum, speaking of herself and Peter Marzio, the museum director. "Our audience includes many Korean professionals who moved to Texas."

The initiative began with Mr. Marzio.

"Peter paved the way for Christine and me after he became enthusiastic about contemporary Korean art," said Kumja Paik Kim, the former curator of Korean Art at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, who is consulting for the museum in Houston. "In 2002 Peter visited Korea and realized Korean art needed exposure in the United States."

The museum's Korean collection was modest, so Ms. Kim helped to arrange long-term loans of 59 objects from the National Museum of Korea to present a show with a representative sampling of Korean art, including ceramics, Buddhist art, jewelry and contemporary art. She is also one of 10 contributors to the exhibition's catalog, "Treasures From the National Museum of Korea."

The showstoppers are two gold crowns and a belt from the fifth and sixth centuries, unearthed in royal tombs. Looking almost Scythian, the crown consists of a headband covered with gold leaf that supports gold antlers and other vertical elements representing the tree of life. Gold spangles and comma-shaped pieces of jade (symbols of wealth and power) hang from the vertical elements. The crowns and belt are Korean national treasures and will be on view only through January.

The ceramics include handsome black-burnished earthenware jars from 400 to 300 B.C.; a stoneware ewer in the form of a dragon from about 500 A.D.; elaborately decorated cinerary urns from the 8th century; and a few of Korea's renowned celadon wares from the Goryeo dynasty (918-1392).

What makes the art specifically Korean? "There is a strong connection to Japanese and Chinese art, but

Korean art has a different character," Ms. Starkman said. "It's simpler, warm, modest and imperfect. The Korean way is to stop before perfection. It's not that the Koreans are less talented, but they have their own sense of humor and like to laugh at themselves. Korean art has personality."

Ms. Kim has a slightly different answer. "Korean art has more freedom, more vitality and punch than Chinese or Japanese art," she said. "It's also much more expensive, because there is more demand and fewer works are available. It's rarer."



DANCE & THEATER

IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

KO-RYO DANCE THEATER

BY JACK ANDERSON



Han Meville for The New York Times

• **'GREY GARDENS'** Christine Ebersole is absolutely glorious as the middle-aged, time-warped debutante called Little Edie Beale in this uneven musical adaptation of the notorious 1975 documentary of the same title. She and the wonderful Mary

only three years ago, appears to be functioning in a state of mild sedation. Appealingly sung and freshly orchestrated, this fast-moving adaptation of Victor Hugo's novel isn't sloppy or blurry. But its pulse rate stays well below normal

Tonight through Sunday

Sunwha Chung's "Bi-Sang: Ascending Timeless" is a suite of seven dances expressing a woman's changes in her way of life as she makes a transition between her original culture and a new one. At 8 p.m., Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer Street, (212) 334-7479, joyce.org; \$20; \$15 for students and 65+; \$10 for children in fifth grade and younger.

A CONTEST FOR THE WORLD, LED BY SOUTH KOREANS

BY JENNIFER DUNNING

South Korean dancers dominated the field at the New York International Ballet Competition's closing gala, winning or sharing a majority of the medals and other honors awarded on Sunday night at the Rose Theater. But the programming made it hard to get a clear picture of the skills of any of the contestants in the biennial competition, which this year drew dancers from 19 nations.

It probably made sense on paper to include not more than one performance of each of the two classical pas de deux the contestants learned and danced during two rounds of the competition, or of Victoria Mazzarelli's "Divertimento," which shared a third round with "contemporary" solos that the dancers brought with them. Who would want to sit through repeated performances of the Black Swan pas de deux from "Swan Lake"?

But this was a ballet audience, after all. And that razzle-dazzle war horse, performed as the evening's finale by Eun Ji Ha and Kwi Sub Park, both from South Korea,

was as cool spring water to throats parched by cross-desert travel through endless repetitions of what was essentially the same solo: lots of limb action in a loose ballet-jazz or murky modern-dance style. Several of the solos began in silence. Most ended with dancers sinking to the floor. Three had the word "shadow" in their titles.

"Twisted Shadow," choreographed by Jorma Elo, at least made its performer, Elina Miettinen from Finland, look interesting. Sanija Abilmajineva, from Uzbekistan, managed to sustain a riff on Charlie Chaplin's famous walk in Elena Baryshnikova's "Old Film Shots." And Mr. Park was shamelessly endearing in Chang Young Sung's winsome "Jumping Bicycle."

Mr. Park won the men's bronze medal. The women's bronze medal was awarded to Seung-Won Shin (South Korea). The Gussie and Samuel Arbuse gold medal went to Ms. Ha, with no gold medal in the men's category. The women's silver medal was awarded

to Na Eun Kim (South Korea) and Karina González (Venezuela), with Wu Husheng (China) winning the men's silver. Mr. Wu also won a year's contract with American Ballet Theater.

The Lefkowitz Award, for dancers with "special attributes," was given to Ricardo Graziano (Brazil) and Jung Young Jae and Young-Do Lee, both of South Korea.

The South Korean winners are all students at the Korean National University of Arts in Seoul. The New York competition, part of an international circuit, is open to dancers 17 to 24.

An excerpt from "Le Corsaire" was buoyantly danced by Joseph Gatti, the competition's 2005 gold medalist and a member of the Cincinnati Ballet. An honorary gold medal was posthumously awarded to Fernando Bujones, the international ballet star, who died in 2005.

Bebe Neuwirth was the evening's host, providing a welcome note of wry humor.

A Contest for the World, Led by South Koreans

South Korean dancers dominated the field at the New York International Ballet Competition's closing gala, winning or sharing a majority of the medals and other honors awarded on Sunday night at the Rose Theater. But the programming made it hard to get a clear picture of the skills of any of the contestants in the biennial competition, which this year drew dancers from 19 nations.

JENNIFER DUNNING

DANCE REVIEW

It probably made sense on paper to include not more than one performance of each of the two classical pas de deux the contestants learned and danced during two rounds of the competition, or of Victoria Mazzarelli's "Divertimento," which shared a third round with "contemporary" solos that the dancers brought with them. Who would want to sit through repeated performances of the Black Swan pas de deux from "Swan Lake"?

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New York International Ballet Competition Gala
Rose Theater

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Hiroko Masuko for The New York Times
Eun Ji Ha, left, and Kwi Sub Park performing "Black Swan."

WITH CREWS AND ZOOS, A B-BOY WORLD

BY JULIE BLOOM

With Crews And Zoos, A B-Boy World

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LAST weekend at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland, amid the countless performances that make the Fringe an avant-garde hotbed, a group of break dancers from South Korea presented "Spin Odyssey." A 70-minute narrative piece loosely based on Homer's epic, the work transports an Odysseus-like character through time to a hip-hop wonderland, where he learns about the meaning of heroism through break dancing. With its long choreographed phrases and daring acrobatic moves in unison, "Spin Odyssey" is the latest example of how a style many might consider an '80s leftover, as forgettable as leg warmers, is being transformed into an international art form.

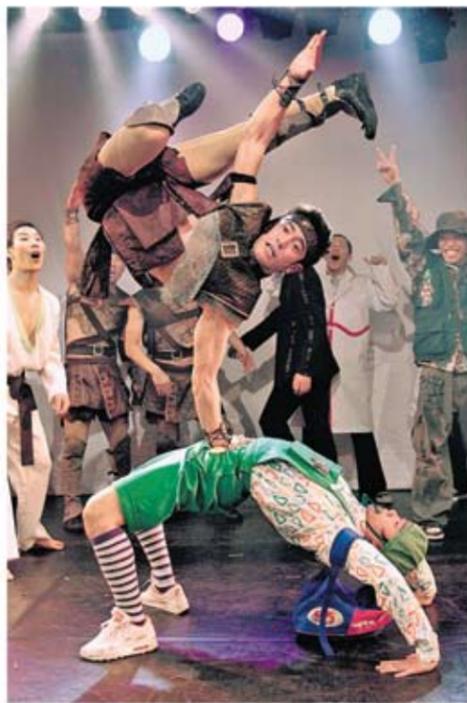
South Korea is at the forefront of the new wave of break-dance, or b-boy, artistry, but dancers from France to China are also incorporating elements of jazz, capoeira, acrobatics and martial arts into longer choreographed works that are intended for a mainstream audience and the legitimacy of a proscenium stage. Though still largely unknown, this new generation has reinvented a movement style that in many ways had been exploited and dismissed.

The basic vocabulary remains the same as it was 25 years ago when b-boying first emerged as a subgenre of hip-hop. Luis Angel Mateo, a historian of the style and one of the dancers who helped originate the form in the Bronx, said these foundational moves were based on what he refers to as rocking, "because a lot of the rock records would have a beat that would come in that the dancers would respond to." Speaking by phone from Connecticut, Mr. Mateo, who is also known as Trac 2, explained the two basic elements: top rock, or upper-body movement, and floor rock, which consists of footwork like shuffles, kick-outs and intricate steps. A transition, known as a "drop," sews together the two elements and a typical b-boy phrase ends with what's called a "freeze."

"The freeze is almost like an exclamation point," Mr. Mateo said, "like an 'Uh,' a space, a gesture, as if to say, 'Deal with it. It's a challenge.'"

The idea of a challenge, or a battle call, is at the heart of the style — in New York crews like the Zulu Kings, the Crazy Commandos and Salsoul tried to outdo one another at parties — and has actually led to the resurgence of break-dancing overseas.

For just as b-boying was fading here, teenagers in Europe and Asia, who had watched the Rock Steady Crew and other greats on video, started forming their own crews. Battles soon turned into formal competitions, and in 1990 in Germany, Thomas Hergenröther initiated Battle of the Year, a competition that attracts crews from around the world and is now acknowledged as the biggest international b-boy event. The contest, which takes place each October at the Volkswagen Halle in Braunschweig, is the subject of a new documentary, "Planet B-Boy," which had



No one ever told Europe and Asia that break dancing was over. Now they are at the forefront of a growing international art form.

its premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival this year and is scheduled for release next spring.

Battle of the Year is largely responsible for the trend toward longer, more artful works featuring characters and plot. Before a crew can battle, it must first perform a choreographed piece that is judged in part on innovation and often involves complex choreography in unison and a theme or narrative that expands on the basic rocking moves. Last for One, the South Korean crew behind "Spin Odyssey," won the competition in 2005 and is known for highly expressive, theatrical dances like the one for a commercial for a construction company. In that commercial, set to traditional Korean music, a dancer slows down the spins and acrobatic jumps to create an almost lyrical piece with arabesques interspersed with head stands.

Last for One was born in the small town of Jeonju, said the crew's manager, Daniel Jun Kim. "These kids in junior high school were bored, into music videos and exposed to Western culture," he said by phone from Scotland, adding, "They started off as

ONLINE: VIDEO

A video clip of break dancers performing "Spin Odyssey" is available at nytimes.com/dance

Members of Last for One, a break-dancing group from South Korea, performing "Spin Odyssey" at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland, last weekend. The piece is loosely based on "The Odyssey."

has one dancer manipulating six colleagues in unison to music by Yann Tiersen. Puppethood poses and mime expressions link the acrobatic moves. The dancers mirror each other while gliding and springing across the floor, throwing themselves into handstands and spins and occasionally breaking free in solos.

Like the South Korean groups, crews from other nations have turned works from different genres into break-dancing showcases. The German group Renegade Theater presented a b-boy adaptation of "Romeo and Juliet" called "Bumble" at the 2004 Fringe Festival, and in Britain the crew ZooNation created "Into the Woods," based on the Stephen Sondheim musical "Into the Woods." And at the Fringe Festival this year is "Break Out," billed as "Extreme Dance Comedy" and featuring star Korean b-boys who combine gymnastics with physical and visual comedy.

The director of "Planet B-Boy," Benson Lee, said he hoped to create a stage version of the film, with b-boying, beat boxing and spoken word: "We really want to make it an educational show. We really believe, and we strive to show in the movie, that hip-hop culture has matured," he said.

Still, the longer, staged form has yet to take hold in the United States, where battles continue to be the main showcase. The largest competition, Freestyle Session, will take place this year in Los Angeles on Aug. 23 and 24. The contenders will include one of the most admired and recognized American teams, the Knucklehead Zoo, which is known for themed works that seek to make a strong emotional connection to the audience.

Knucklehead Zoo, which formed in 2003, is based in Las Vegas, and its plans include a "street" version of the Cirque du Soleil shows that play there. The crew continues to perform at N.B.A. halftime shows and elsewhere, while also working on a proposed television show from the producers of "Entourage." Las Vegas itself has had an important influence on the crew's style, said Mike (Murda) Carrasco, 24, a leader of the group. When he choreographs, "I take pieces of a lot of different things," he said. "There's a little jazz, a little capoeira, a little acrobatics. We seek a lot of examples from Las Vegas, because there's so much talent from all over the world that lives in this city."

He said he chose break dancing over other forms because of the freedom it offered. "B-boying was interesting to me because it's a young dance," he said. "With jazz or ballet there's a lot of restrictions. It has to be done in a certain way and if you're not doing it that way, you're not doing it. But with b-boying it takes the best of all dances."

While the Knucklehead Zoo tries to expand American notions of break dancing, Mr. Lee, the "Planet B-Boy" director, takes heart in the direction international troupes are going. In South Korea, he said, "they see themselves as dancers and b-boying as a form of self-expression, more than just a battle."

Another Korean stage work, "Marisette," performed by the crew Expression,

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JUMP

BY JASON ZINOMAN

With their victory at Battle of the Year and with other South Korean crews becoming well known too, b-boying exploded in the country's popular culture. Now dancers there are treated like pop stars: featured in commercials, on the pages of magazines and in soap operas, and widely acknowledged as a source of national pride.

Mr. Kim, an American citizen who grew up in Los Angeles and moved to Seoul two years ago, said the rebellious roots of b-boying are part of the attraction for South Koreans. "Obviously Korea is very different from inner-city New York, but I think for Korean youth it appeals to a lot of them because Korean culture tends to be very conservative, very strict, and the education system is very stifling," he said. "Hip-hop and b-boying, for them, represents escape. Here's this form that's loud and aggressive and emotional."

One of the first such pieces in South Korea was "A Ballerina Who Loved a B-Boy," staged in 2005 by members of different crews. As the title suggests, it followed a ballerina who falls for a b-boy in a record store. She finds herself trying the dance and liking it, but she's also frightened by it. After the b-boy shows her steps, they end up dancing together.

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The aptly named "Jump," a South Korean show at the Union Square Theater, mixes martial arts choreography and comedy.

Union Square Theater
100 East 17th Street, Manhattan
(212) 307-4100

The Union Square Theater is carving out a niche as a home for a kind of barely verbal foreign import that has become a standard feature of the Off Broadway menu. These high-energy spectacles — the offspring of hits like "Stomp" and "Blue Man Group" — are sometimes called events or experiences, and audiences are usually told that the shows are a sensation somewhere very far away.

This year it was "Be," a rather loud headache from Israel featuring half-dressed actors leaping in the air, clowning around and banging on things. The new tenant is the lowbrow South Korean entertainment "Jump," offering another band of half-dressed actors leaping and banging and clowning. There are differences, of course, but they aren't much greater than those between the menus at McDonalds in Seoul and Tel Aviv.

"Jump," which was first presented in 2003 and has since toured the world, is not without charms. It tries to be a kind of live-action Jackie Chan film. Wearing martial arts outfits, the cast of archetypes includes a blushing ingénue (Hee-jeong Hwang), a goofball

uncle (Han-chang Lim) and a doddering old man (Woon-yong Lee) who just may be underplaying his athletic prowess. A sliver of a plot emerges from the series of sketches — something about a family's home being burglarized — but it's really incidental to the main attractions: comic mugging and elaborately choreographed fights.

Some of the performers, like Mr. Lee, are impressive gymnasts, flipping around the stage and displaying remarkable body control, seemingly defying several laws of physics. When the actors stick to the acrobatics, as in the rousing finale, featuring the cast members taking turns running up the sides of curved walls, the show has a certain kick.

The energy fizzles out, though, when the kicks and punches turn to comedy. With generous amounts of mugging, hackneyed physical humor and a weird fixation on the rear end, the creators of the show, including the director Chul-ki Choi, appear to be aiming for the toddler crowd. But all this hamming proves, among other things, the old cliché that a punch in the face translates much better than a joke.

KOREANS SHARE THEIR SECRET FOR CHICKEN WITH A CRUNCH

BY JULIA MOSKIN

FOOD IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

Koreans Share Their Secret for Chicken With a Crunch

By JULIA MOSKIN

WHEN Joe McPherson moved to Seoul in 2002, he thought he was leaving fried chicken behind. "I grew up watching Popeyes training videos," Mr. McPherson said. His father managed a Popeyes franchise near Atlanta and fried chicken was a constant presence in his life.

"Living in the South, you think you know fried chicken," he said. But in Seoul, he said, "there is a mass-and-pop chicken place literally on every corner." Many Asian cooking traditions include deep-fried chicken, but the popular cult of crunchy, spicy, perfectly greasy chicken — the apotheosis of the Korean style — is a recent development.

In the New York area, Korean-style fried chicken places have just begun to appear, reproducing the delicate crust, addictive seasoning and moist meat Koreans are devoted to.

"Food in Korea is very trendy," said Myung J. Chung, an owner of the Manhattan franchise of Bon Chon Chicken, a karaoke-and-chicken lounge that opened in December. "Other trends last two or three years, but fried chicken has lasted for 20 years," he said.

Platters of fried chicken are a hugely popular fast food in South Korea — like chicken wings in the United States, they are dined with beer or soju, after work or after dinner, rarely eaten as a meal.

Defying Southern tradition with two dips in oil.

"Some places have a very thin, crisp skin; some places have more garlicky, sticky sauces," some advertise that they are healthy because they fry in 100 percent olive oil," said Mr. McPherson, an English teacher, who writes a food blog called *seoulism.com/FoodJournal*.

"Suddenly there will be a long line outside one chicken place, for no apparent reason, and then the next week, it's somewhere else."

Even Korea's corner bars and fast-food chicken chains are preoccupied with the quality, freshness and integrity of their product.

With Korean-style chicken outlets opening recently in New York, New Jersey and California, fried chicken has begun to complete its round-trip flight from the States to Seoul.

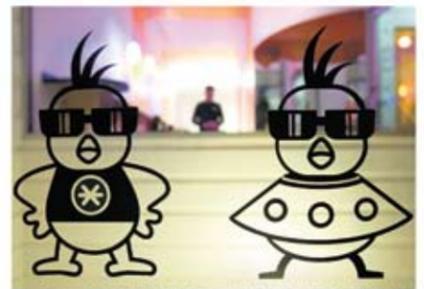
"I really think we make it better than the original," said Young Jin, who opened a friendly little chicken joint called Unidentified Flying Chickens in Jackson Heights last month. "We use fresh, not frozen, chicken, always fried to order, no trans fats, no heat lamps."

In Korea, chickens are much smaller, so the whole chicken is fried and served, hacked up into bite-size pieces. But the large breasts and thighs of American chickens are a challenge to cook evenly.

According to Mr. Jin and others, that's why the Korean-style chicken places here serve mostly wings (true connoisseurs can specify either the upper "arm" or the "wing") and small drumsticks. The chicken is typically seasoned only after it is fried, with either a sweetish garlic-soy glaze or a hotter red-pepper sauce that brings the dish into Buffalo wing territory.

But do not look for blue cheese and celery sticks, or even biscuits and gravy. The typical accompaniment to Korean fried chicken is cubes of pickled radish and plenty of beer or soju; the combination produces an irresistible repetition of salt and spice, cold and hot, bony and sweet, crunchy and tender.

"People — even Americans — say the combination is really addictive," said Ryan Jhun, Mr. Chung's brother-in-law and business partner. Mr. Jhun spent a month train-



ing with the founder of Bon Chon to master the chain's frying method, which produces characteristically light and crunchy pieces. Bon Chon, Bon Bon and Unidentified Flying Chickens all have their techniques on the one developed by Kyochon, one of the most popular Korean chains. Although none of the chicken fryers interviewed would describe the method in its entirety, its outline is clear. (Warning: partisans of Southern-fried chicken will find much that is blasphemous in the following.)

For crunch, American-style fried chicken relies on a thick, well-seasoned crust, often made even thicker by soaking the chicken pieces beforehand in buttermilk. When that crust is nibbly and evenly browned, and the chicken meat is cooked through, the chicken is sublime. But too often, the flesh is still raw when the crust is cooked, or the skin never cooks all the way through, leaving a flabby layer of skin between the meat and the crust.

Korean-style fried chicken is radically different, reflecting an Asian frying technique that renders out the fat in the skin, transforming it into a thin, crackly and almost transparent crust. (Chinese cooks call this "paper-fried chicken.") The chicken is unseasoned, barely dredged in very fine flour and then dipped into a thin batter before going into the fryer. The oil temperature is a relatively low 200 degrees, and the chicken is cooked in two separate stages.

After 10 minutes, the chicken is removed from the oil, shaken vigorously in a wire strainer and allowed to cool for two minutes. This shows the cooking process, preventing the crust from getting too brown before the meat cooks through. It also shaves off all those crusty nubs and crags that American cooks strive for.

After 10 more minutes in the fryer, the chicken is smooth, compact, golden-brown, and done. Then, it's served plain (with a small dish of salt and pepper for seasoning) or lightly painted with sauce. When it's done correctly, the sauce is absorbed into the crust, adding savor without making it soggy.

Last week, I tasted chicken from four different Korean-style spots, and arrived at a rule of thumb that the best chicken had the least sauce (although chicken with no sauce at all was windy bland). The chain Cheongju was more heavy-handed with the sauce than the others, making their chicken too sticky and sweet. But all the other chicken was at least tasty and even delicious, remaining crisp through the day and when reheated the next morning. The sauces at Unidentified Flying Chickens, which Mr. Jin makes from scratch and is still developing, had the most rounded flavors.

Mr. Jin sees his new store, located in a neighborhood that is more Latino than Asian, as the cradle of a multicultural empire devoted to one thing: perfect fried chicken.

"You wouldn't go to a soft tofu store and expect to find great kasha," he said, referring to the grilled, sweet-and-salty short ribs that are another Korean favorite. "When you make only one thing, and you make people wait for 20 minutes to get it, it had better be good."

A Sampler

Here are places to try Korean-style fried chicken in New York City. Seating is often limited. All chicken is fried to order, so for takeout or delivery, call at least 30 minutes ahead.

BON CHON CHICKEN 114 Fifth Avenue (2nd Street), second floor, (212) 221-2222; and 137-18 Northern Boulevard (96th Street), Queens, (718) 321-3223.

BON BUN CHICKEN 101 Chambers Street (Church Street), (212) 227-2275, opening in March.

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING CHICKENS 71-22 Roosevelt Avenue (31st Street), Queens, (718) 205-6662.

Photographs by Evan Agost for The New York Times; center and above right, photo provided by The New York Times; Fry Masters Ryan Jhun, above, an owner of Bon Chon Chicken's Manhattan restaurant, top, spend a month learning the two-step frying technique the Korean chain uses. At Unidentified Flying Chickens in Jackson Heights, Queens, center and above right, fresh chicken is fried to order, seasoned with garlic-soy or hot-pepper sauces and served with pickled radishes. Chopsticks are optional.

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But do not look for blue cheese and celery sticks, or even biscuits and gravy. The typical accompaniment to Korean fried chicken is cubes of pickled radish and plenty of beer or soju; the combination produces an irresistible repetition of salt and spice, cold and hot, briny and sweet, crunchy and tender.

“People — even Americans — say the combination is really addictive,” said Ryan Jhun, Mr. Chung’s brother-in-law and business partner. Mr. Jhun spent a month training with the founder of Bon Chon to master the chain’s frying method, which produces characteristically light and crunchy pieces. Bon Chon, Bon Bon and Unidentified Flying Chickens all base their technique on the one developed by Kyochon, one of the most popular Korean chains. Although none of the chicken fryers interviewed would describe the method in its entirety, its outline is clear. (Warning: partisans of Southern-fried chicken will find much that is blasphemous in the following.)

For crunch, American-style fried chicken relies on a thick, well-seasoned crust, often made even thicker by soaking the chicken pieces beforehand in buttermilk. When that crust is bubbly and evenly browned, and the chicken meat is cooked through, the chicken is sublime. But too often, the flesh is still raw when the crust is cooked, or the skin never cooks all the way through, leaving a flabby layer of skin between the meat and the crust.

Korean-style fried chicken is radically different, reflecting an Asian frying technique that renders out the fat in the skin, transforming it into a thin, crackly and almost transparent crust. (Chinese cooks call this “paper fried chicken.”) The chicken is unseasoned, barely dredged in very fine flour and then dipped into a thin batter before going into the fryer. The oil temperature is a relatively low 350 degrees, and the chicken is cooked in two separate stages.

After 10 minutes, the chicken is removed from the oil, shaken vigorously in a wire strainer and allowed to cool for two minutes. This slows the cooking process, preventing the crust from getting too brown before the meat cooks through. It also shaves off all those crusty nubs and crags that American cooks strive for.

After 10 more minutes in the fryer, the chicken is smooth, compact, golden-brown, and done. Then, it’s served plain (with a small dish of salt and pepper for seasoning) or lightly painted with sauce. When it’s done correctly, the sauce is absorbed into the crust, adding savor without making it soggy.

Last week, I tasted chicken from four different Korean-style spots, and arrived at a rule of thumb that the best chicken had the least sauce (although chicken with no sauce at all was weirdly bland). The chain Cheogajip was more heavy-handed with the sauce than the others, making their chicken too sticky and sweet. But all the other chicken was at least tasty and even delicious, remaining crisp through the day and when reheated

the next morning. The sauces at Unidentified Flying Chickens, which Mr. Jin makes from scratch and is still developing, had the most rounded flavors.

Mr. Jin sees his new store, located in a neighborhood that is more Latino than Asian, as the cradle of a multicultural empire devoted to one thing: perfect fried chicken.

“You wouldn’t go to a soft tofu store and expect to find great kalbi,” he said, referring to the grilled, sweet-and-salty short ribs that are another Korean favorite. “When you make only one thing, and you make people wait for 20 minutes to get it, it had better be good.”

A Sampler

Here are places to try Korean-style fried chicken in New York City. Seating is often limited. All chicken is fried to order, so for takeout or delivery, call at least 30 minutes ahead.

BON CHON CHICKEN

314 Fifth Avenue (32nd Street), second floor, (212) 221-2222; and 157-18 Northern Boulevard (157th Street), Queens, (718) 321-3818.

BON BON CHICKEN

98 Chambers Street (Church Street), (212) 227-2375, opening in March.

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING CHICKENS

71-22 Roosevelt Avenue (71st Street), Queens, (718) 205-6662.

HEATED COMPETITION. STEAMING NEIGHBORS. THIS IS FROZEN YOGURT?

BY JENNIFER STEINHAEUER

WEST HOLLYWOOD, Calif.

Condemnations have been made. Mildly menacing Internet comments have been exchanged. A lawsuit and a police report have been filed. Multitudes of parking altercations have occurred, with government officials summoned.

Yes, frozen yogurt is back.

For the past year, congeries of women in Uggs boots have lined up outside a chain of shops called Pinkberry to get a taste of Los Angeles's newest take on the airy, low-fat treat of yore. Otherwise reasonable people have hopped from illegally parked cars and waited as long as an hour to get a little cup of sour yogurt, in two flavors, plain and green tea, often topped with fresh fruit, or, inexplicably, Fruity Pebbles cereal.

Pinkberry's original store has drawn the ire of its West Hollywood neighbors after nearly a year of parking dramas and lawns dotted with small paper cups bearing little pink swirls.

The company's squabbles with the competitors that have sprouted around town have been the subject of fierce debate on Los Angeles food blogs and more than a dozen news articles in the local press. The rivals have plans to expand into Las Vegas and Florida. Meanwhile a company in Korea claims that it was the inspiration for Pinkberry.

Heated Competition. Steaming Neighbors. This Is Frozen Yogurt?

By JENNIFER STEINHAEUER

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inspiration for Pinkberry.

Undeterred, Pinkberry has marched on with its own expansion, opening nine new stores in Los Angeles County over the last three months, and three in New York.

How has frozen yogurt, the leg warmer of food trends, managed to stage such a showy comeback?

When frozen yogurt was introduced in the 1970s, the American public was largely unwilling to countenance its tart taste. In the 1980s, the chains The Country's Best Yogurt (now TCBY) and I Can't Believe It's Yogurt added flavors and sugars, creating cloyingly sweet and chalky products.

Consumers were charmed by this low-fat, lower-calorie alternative to ice cream and its odious cousin, ice milk. Sales of frozen yogurt soared over 200 percent a year from the mid 1980s until the early 1990s.

But then a wave of new reduced-fat ice creams turned up and "frozen yogurt started to take a dive," said Steven Young, a food technologist and an ice cream expert who runs a consulting firm in Houston.

In 2005, 65 million gallons of frozen yogurt were produced in the United States, a significant decline from 1990, when 117.6 million gallons of the stuff was made, according to the International

Continued on Page 5



© Erika Flores for The New York Times

NOT SO SWEET Pinkberry's tangy yogurt, topped with crunchy breakfast cereals.

PANCAKES OF THE WORLD, DRESSED FOR DINNER

BY MARK BITTMAN

Yet some neighbors want the store's license revoked. The city is trying to facilitate a compromise, and officials believe the spread of Pinkberry locations across Los Angeles may ease the traffic at the original store, said Susan Healy Keene, the director of community development for West Hollywood.

In the meantime, Pinkberry competitors have opened all over town.

There is Kiwiberri, and Fiore, in the Japanese Village Plaza downtown. Seeking the entrance to a parking structure in Westwood recently, I was momentarily stymied by a tiny shop called Snowberry, which was selling, well, you know.

In November, a shop called Berri Good opened in Fairfax, with kosher certification and a chartreuse-and-pink logo that is barely distinguishable from Pinkberry's.

"I don't think we're the same," said Uzi Moses, the owner of Berri Good. "We use different fonts." On top of that, he said, "You know we have celebrities here, right? Are you aware of that?"

Watching it all unfold, Red Mango executives are half frosted and half convinced that they are getting free market research, Mr. Jo said. "We are a little annoyed but at the same time they are introducing the product category to the marketplace."

Mr. Lee takes competition very seriously. John Bae, the owner of Kiwiberri, said that Mr. Lee had visited one of his stores puffing on a cigar and appeared to be up to something other than research.

"He came over at 11 p.m. and told me, 'I know where you live and I'm going to get you,'" Mr. Bae said. He filed a police report claiming he had been threatened with "great bodily harm," and demanded a restraining order against Mr. Lee, he said. A Los Angeles Police Department spokeswoman said that no restraining order was issued and that no criminal charges were filed.

Mr. Lee denies making any threats. There has been one hearing on the matter in the city attorney's office with another scheduled for next month.

Mr. Lee, who in turn has filed a suit charging Mr. Bae with copying his logo and other trademark infringements, said that he did not like his competitor's business practices and filed the lawsuit to "teach them a lesson." Lawyers are engaged in settlement talks, with Pinkberry's side suggesting, among other things, that Mr. Bae change his logo and put a sign in his store stating that it has no connection to Pinkberry, and that he confess to posing as a regular yogurt lover while posting comments on food blogs under the name "yogurtfanetik." Mr. Bae called the settlement terms "ridiculous" and denied that he is yogurtfanetik.

Lawsuits, alleged threats and crowd control issues aside, how is Pinkberry's yogurt? Smooth, with a tangy finish to the plain. Doused with some fresh berries, it is almost addictive, and the lines at many Pinkberry locations seem understandable, even if Cap'n Crunch toppings do not. The green tea flavor is a bit more grainy and overbearing, and makes up less than 40 percent of the sales, Mr. Lee said.

Frozen yogurt's rebirth appears to be an outgrowth of the nation's obsession with food that offers health benefits (TCBY, looking for a revival of its own, added more live active cultures to its yogurt's base) and of its evolving palate.

David Kim, a yoga instructor who lives in Santa Monica, is not remotely concerned about Pinkberry's competitive issues. He gets his yogurt fix (small plain with mochi) once a week. "O.K., twice," Mr. Kim said. "If I could, I would get it three times. It doesn't immediately grab you, but there is something about the flavor that draws you in, and each time you go back you taste something a little bit different. The next thing you know, it's like crack."

There is a world of pancakes beyond breakfast. Some are familiar to experienced cooks: potato pancakes and their Swiss cousins, rösti; corncakes and their South American relatives, arepas; and the earthy buckwheat crepes of Brittany. Others are a little more advanced, like the ones we cook here.

What all of these pancakes have in common is a certain off-the-cuff friendliness and flexibility. Once you understand that the batter essentially holds the more important ingredients together, and once you get the hang of what that batter looks like, you're free to start adding food almost at will, as you would with a soup or salad.

THE MINIMALIST
Mark Bittman

Pancakes of the World, Dressed for Dinner

KOREAN-STYLE CRISP VEGETABLE PANCAKE (PA JUN)
Time: 30 minutes

2 cups all-purpose flour
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1 tablespoon corn, grape seed, canola or other neutral oil, more as needed
5 scallions, green parts only, cut into 3-inch lengths and sliced lengthwise
20 chives or 5 chopped scallions
1 medium carrot, peeled and grated
1 small yellow or green squash, trimmed and grated
1/2 pound chopped shrimp, optional
1 tablespoon rice or white vinegar
3 tablespoons soy sauce
1 teaspoon sugar

1. In a medium bowl, mix flour, eggs and oil with 1 1/2 cups water until a smooth batter is formed. Stir scallion greens, chives, carrots, squash and shrimp, if using, into batter.

2. Place an 8-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat, then coat bottom with oil. Ladle in about a quarter of the batter and spread it out evenly into a circle. If first pancake is too thick to spread easily, add a little water to batter for remaining pancakes. Turn heat to medium and cook until bottom is browned, about 3 minutes, then flip and cook for another 2 minutes. Repeat with remaining batter.

3. As pancakes finish, remove them, and, if necessary, drain on paper towels. In a small bowl, mix together the vinegar, soy sauce and sugar. Cut pancakes into small triangles and serve with dipping sauce.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings.

SPINACH PANCAKES
Time: 30 minutes

10 ounces fresh spinach, well washed, large stems removed, or 1 10-ounce package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon grated nutmeg
1 tablespoon sugar
1 1/2 to 3 cups buttermilk or thin yogurt
2 eggs
2 tablespoons melted and cooled butter, plus unmelted butter for cooking
1 cup sour cream, optional
1 tablespoon minced lemon peel, optional

1. Put spinach in a covered sautépan over medium heat, with just the water that clings to its leaves after washing; or plunge it into a pot of salted boiling water. Either way, cook it until it wilts, just a couple of minutes. Drain, cool, squeeze dry and chop.

2. Heat large skillet over medium-low heat while you make batter. Heat oven to 200 degrees. In a bowl, mix together dry ingredients. Place 1 1/2 cups buttermilk in another bowl. Beat eggs into it, then stir in the melted butter. Stir the dry ingredients, adding a little more buttermilk if batter seems thick; stir in spinach.

3. Place a teaspoon or two of butter in pan. When butter foam subsides, ladle batter onto skillet, making any size pancakes you like. Adjust heat as necessary. First batch will require higher heat than subsequent batches. Add more butter to pan as necessary. Brown bottoms in 2 to 4 minutes. Flip only when pancakes are fully cooked on bottom; they won't hold together until they are ready.

4. Cook until second side is lightly browned; as pancakes are done, put them on an ovenproof plate in oven for up to 15 minutes. Mix sour cream and lemon peel together and place a small dollop on each pancake.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings.

ITALIAN-STYLE VEGETABLE PANCAKES
Time: At least 30 minutes

About 2 pounds zucchini, eggplant or turnips, peeled if necessary
1/2 onion, peeled and grated
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1/2 cup flour or plain bread crumbs, more as needed
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1-4 tablespoons butter or extra virgin olive oil

1. Grate vegetables by hand or with grating disk of a food processor. In a bowl, mix together all ingredients except the butter or oil. Mixture should be fairly loose but not liquid; add a little more flour or bread crumbs if necessary.

2. Put butter or oil in a large skillet and turn heat to medium-high. When pan is hot, put large spoonfuls of batter in pan. Cook, turning once, until nicely browned on both sides, 10 to 15 minutes total. Serve hot or at room temperature.

Yield: 4 servings.

WHICH OUT, BREAKFAST? Pancakes move into dinner territory when they are savory and full of vegetables. Above, spinach in a new form. Top, Korean pa jun. Above right, Italian vegetable pancakes.

There is a world of pancakes beyond breakfast. Some are familiar to experienced cooks: potato pancakes and their Swiss cousins, rösti, corncakes and their South American relatives, arepas, and the earthy buckwheat crepes of Brittany. Others are a little more advanced, like the ones we cook here.

What all of these pancakes have in common is a certain off-the-cuff friendliness and flexibility. Once you understand that the batter essentially holds the more important ingredients together, and once you get the hang of what that batter looks like, you're free to start adding food almost at will, as you would with a soup or salad.

Certain components are basic, especially eggs and flour. Eggs offer lightness, flavor and protein. Flour can be augmented with or even replaced by bread crumbs. Both eggs and flour are needed to hold most ingredients like vegetables and seafood, and both provide bulk.

There are three splendid starting places here, all quite different: Italian-style pancakes are the lightest. Grated raw or cooked vegetables are bound minimally with flour or breadcrumbs and seasoned with Parmesan and onion. Spread the lumpy batter into a hot, greased griddle or pan and cook until crisp on both sides, but be careful: they're so soft that they can be difficult to cook. Be sure the first side is nicely browned before attempting to turn them. Their fragility equals delightful tenderness, and they have an unmatched parity of flavor. Serve them after pasta, to complete a meal, or as a side dish with sautéed or roasted meat, poultry or fish.

On the other side of the spectrum is the Korean pa jun, a whole-pan pancake whose batter is stout enough to handle just about any ingredient you can think of, including chopped vegetables, seafood, meat, bean sprouts or kimchi. Pa jun are fun and easy to handle; with a little practice and a nonstick skillet with sloping sides, you can flip them without a spatula. They are strongly seasoned and real crowd pleasers.

The spinach pancakes made in northern Europe (I first ate them in Sweden) nicely demonstrate what you can do when you have a wet main ingredient, like spinach, but want to wind up with a firm but moist pancake. This is a slightly more elaborate production than the previous two recipes: roquent or buttermilk add acidity, there is baking soda for leavening, and there is a much higher percentage of flour. Nevertheless, they are easy to cook and delicious.

With all of these, if the batter lacks or cooks too fast (that is, it spreads unappealingly over the pan), add a little flour, or some more vegetables. If it is too thick, stir in more liquid — milk, water, stock, whatever — a spoonful at a time. The batter should be spoonable but not pourable, essentially vegetables just moist enough to hold together.

Even with minor adjustments, none of these pancakes take more than a half hour to prepare. How easy can a delicious supper get?

RISING STAR KNOWS WHAT, NOT WHO, IS COOKING

BY ROBIN FINN

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Time: 30 minutes

2 cups all-purpose flour

2 eggs, lightly beaten

1 tablespoon corn, grape seed, canola or other neutral oil, more as needed

5 scallions, green parts only, cut into 3-inch lengths and sliced lengthwise

20 chives or 5 chopped scallions

1 medium carrot, peeled and grated

1 small yellow or green squash, trimmed and grated

½ pound chopped shrimp, optional

1 tablespoon rice or white vinegar

3 tablespoons soy sauce

1 teaspoon sugar.

1. In a medium bowl, mix flour, eggs and oil with 1 ½ cups water until a smooth batter is formed. Stir scallion greens, chives, carrots, squash and shrimp, if using, into batter.

2. Place an 8-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat, then coat bottom with oil. Ladle in about a quarter of the batter and spread it out evenly into a circle; if first pancake is too thick to spread easily, add a little water to batter for remaining pancakes. Turn heat to medium and cook until bottom is browned, about 3 minutes, then flip and cook for another 2 minutes. Repeat with remaining batter.

3. As pancakes finish, remove them, and, if necessary, drain on paper towels. In a small bowl, mix together the vinegar, soy sauce and sugar. Cut pancakes into small triangles and serve with dipping sauce.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings.

It is late afternoon, and Momofuku Ssam Bar in the food-fixated East Village is idling in self-service mode waiting for the cocktail crowd — pretty much indistinguishable from the pierced and tattooed waiters — to saunter in.

The lights are dim, Pearl Jam grows on the sound system, and David Chang, the somewhat conflicted recipient of

this year's James Beard Foundation rising star award for best new chef, is hunched over a legal pad irritably compiling a list of incentives to help lure fresh cooks to his growing Momofuku empire. The list contains dollar signs and seems to consternate him. As does having to part from the list to pull his weight in an interview.

Instant message: culinary stardom can be aggravating.

PUBLIC LIVES

Rising Star Knows What, Not Who, Is Cooking

By ROBIN FINN

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The burly Mr. Chang, whose previous careers included junior golf champion (he burned out at 13) and entry-level Park Avenue financial functionary (he got drunk at the office Christmas party and burned his bridges) never plotted to become a celebrity chef. An ambassador of celestial ramen noodles and all things porcine at the place he calls his baby, Momofuku Noodle Bar, maybe.

His advice to vegetarians and snooty diners is to go eat someplace else. Not here at the Ssam Bar (a Beard Foundation nominee for best new restaurant), nor at Ko (it means "son of" in Japanese), which will open in Noodle Bar's spot when the mother ship moves to larger quarters at the end of the summer.

Diners seeking a slicker epicurean environment may find it at a Las Vegas-based Momofuku he is thinking of opening. (This may be the reason for the wanted-style poster of a major casino magnate in a staff-only stairwell. He is, it warns, a V.I.P. who must be "seated immediately.")

As for tooting his own horn to the news media, Mr. Chang says he was encouraged to do so by his Momofuku partner and co-chef, Joaquin Baca, the only player who wanted in when he conceived the noodle bar. Mr. Baca, married, even-tempered, and a whiz at mixing flavors in uncannily tasty ways, plays "the good cop" role. Mr. Chang skews high-strung, same as his blood pressure.

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DAVID CHANG

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He backs that up by recalling the impact he had on his cooking partner at the French Culinary Institute: The partner dropped out. Mr. Chang persisted and it paid off: Craft, Mercer Kitchen, Park Hyatt Tokyo (to refine his noodlemania), and Café Boulud employed him before he opted for independence via a lowly noodle bar.

"I think our stuff is overrated," he confides. "And now I feel sort of like a hypocrite because I'm doing less and less cooking and more business. I never intended this to happen. People say, 'Oh, he's a genius, he's so talented,' but it's all hype. Who cares about that fluff?" he asks.

Mr. Chang, 29, has a Diet Dr Pepper in one fist — he avoids sugar highs. In place of tattoos, his arms and hands are speckled with scars from cooking mishaps (he has a dangerous relationship with sharp knives and a speed-dial relationship with several hospital emergency rooms).

But that's not why he wants to delegate the kitchen duties. "New York City has too many restaurants and not enough cooks," he says. "Cooking doesn't pay that great."

He should know. He needed a loan from his father to buy the \$130,000 in plywood and other low-budget accouterments for the Noodle Bar; he used the apartment he bought with Noodle profits as collateral to secure a \$1 million loan to open Ssam Bar.

This slate-floored joint had its debut last year as a fast-food figment of Mr. Chang's imagination but has since bowed to market demand, offering a format he snidely — he is quite the self-deprecator — refers to as "bad fusion."

"My last good idea was my worst idea; every time my ego comes into it, it hinders the restaurant," he says. "Turns out the people in this neighborhood want real food, not fast food. We just want to make great food at an affordable price. And we don't copy. I've got the Emersonian take on that: Imitation is suicide."

So is selling the brand to a bigger entrepreneur. The cautionary tale: "Jeffrey Chodorow is the anti-Christ," he says of the magnate who was the ex-partner and reality show nemesis of the de-throned chef Rocco DiSpirito.

BESIDES looking for a few good cooks, he is, sigh, trying to pump up the Momofuku infrastructure to the point where he can reward loyal employees with health insurance.

Is smart growth a euphemism for diluting the goods? Mr. Chang is wrestling with this; good thing he hit the philosophy books at Trinity College, where he majored in religion and minored in partying.

He grew up spoiled in Vienna, Va., the baby in a family of four boys. His father, a South Korean immigrant who got his own start busing tables in New York City, owned two bistros and a golfing goods warehouse and was horrified when his youngest son opted for culinary school after college.

"He said something like, 'I spent my life working in the restaurant business so you wouldn't ever have to cook.'"

Then he relented and sent him to school.

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So is selling the brand to a bigger entrepreneur. The cautionary tale: “Jeffrey Chodorow is the anti-Christ,” he says of the magnate who was the ex-partner and reality show nemesis of the dethroned chef Rocco DiSpirito.

Besides looking for a few good cooks, he is, sigh, trying to pump up the Momofuku infrastructure to the point where he can reward loyal employees with health insurance.

Is smart growth a euphemism for diluting the goods? Mr. Chang is wrestling with this; good thing he hit the philosophy books at Trinity College, where he majored in religion and minored in partying.

He grew up spoiled in Vienna, Va., the baby in a family of four boys. His father, a South Korean immigrant who got his own start busing tables in New York City, owned two bistros and a golfing goods warehouse and was horrified when his youngest son opted for culinary school after college.

“He said something like, ‘I spent my life working in the restaurant business so you wouldn’t ever have to cook.’”

Then he relented and sent him to school.

E-MO KIM BAB

BY NICK FOX

2 West 32nd Street; (212) 594-1466.

I don’t know what’s more surprising, that someone would open a takeout place selling nothing but kim bab — Korean seaweed rice rolls — or that such a place has been open for more than four years in Koreatown and I’ve never noticed it.

But E-Mo Kim Bab is so tiny it’s easy to overlook. At most, 10 people can squeeze in front of the counter where, every day but Sunday, Yoon Oh takes orders.

From 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., Koreans stream in for Ms. Oh’s fresh, quick comfort food. (E-Mo means auntie, giving a sense of kim bab’s homey place in the cuisine.)

With each order, Ms. Oh or, at the busiest hours, her husband, Jae Won Kim, places a sheet of nori (dried seaweed) on a bamboo mat, spreads it with rice and lays on her ingredients, most made at home.

There are nine varieties, \$4.50 or \$5 each: beef, vegetables, spicy or tame tuna spread, kimchee, American cheese, mushrooms, squid and — the most palate tingling and enjoyable — pickled jalapeño. They’re rolled up with pickled radish, cured ham, spinach, sesame leaf and omelet, and sliced into colorful mosaic tiles. It’s a crunchy, chewy jumble of savory and sweet, spicy and cool, familiar and surprising.

TO GO

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Lars Klone for The New York Times
AUNTIE'S TREATS Seaweed rolls at E-Mo Kim Bab in Midtown.

KOREAN FIRE AND SPICE IN BALANCE

BY FRANK BRUNI



In an age of countless food bloggers and tireless restaurant scouts, I'm not sure how a worthy restaurant winds up flying under the radar anymore. But that's where the new Korean restaurant Moim finds itself, no doubt against its wishes, certainly against its interests.

It opened in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn four months ago, the gutsy dream of a talented chef who came to professional cooking late in life, and it hasn't attracted much notice since. During my recent visits no more than half of the 60 or so seats in its front lounge area and back dining room were filled.

That's a shame, and that should change. Moim does a tempered, tweaked version of Korean cooking that's still rarer — still more of an exciting discovery — than you'd expect, given all the Momofuku mania. Many of its dishes, distinguished by a beautifully modulated and lingering heat, are compelling. Most are at least satisfying.

They're served in the kind of sleek, contemporary setting well suited to young urbanites who favor drinks with -tini suffixes. Moim even has such drinks: soju-tinis, which use the clear Korean liquor soju in place of

vodka, come in a half-dozen flavors and are terrific.

And the prices at Moim — \$4 to \$10 for small plates, \$8 to \$22 for larger ones — amply reflect its liberation from Manhattan rents. With a little more maturation, a rethinking of a bit of its menu and better service, Moim could join the increasingly populous club of Brooklyn restaurants, like Franny's and Al di Là, that Manhattanites rightly and badly covet.

Upscale Korean food remains a relatively somnolent genre, no matter the borough: many diners haven't moved far past the grill-it-yourself, Woo Lae Oak branch of the cuisine. And while Moim's grilled beef ribs — marinated in sake, mirin and a vegetable stock infused with pears and apples — are a tender wonder, the menu reaches in less conservative directions as well.

The restaurant's chef and owner, Saeri Yoo Park, uses kimchi — that spicy, tangy tangle of fermented vegetables — in many of her dishes, where you'll be happy to find it. Pan-fried dumplings are stuffed not only with ground pork but also with kimchi and tofu, another staple of Korean cuisine that Ms. Park eagerly embraces.

Tofu, kimchi and pork are stir-fried together for another appetizer that, like so many dishes, has exactly as much heat as you want and not a flicker more. In terms of the amount of Korean red pepper paste that Ms. Park puts into the kimchi and the pork marinade, her judgment is flawless.

Two of the best appetizers, though, are less fiery ones. A tricolor salad of pickled bell flower root (red), blanched watercress (green) and braised water fern (brown) has all sorts of tart, salty and nutty currents, thanks to strategic deployments of vinegar, soy sauce, sesame oil and sesame seeds.

And a mix of crab and bouncy noodles made from a kelp gelée has a fleeting, fugitive, now-you-taste-it-now-you-don't sweetness. What's its source? Cubes of chayote squash are pickled with sugar, and there's a dusting of crystallized ginger.

These dishes spark the appetite without sating it. For sating, the superb bi bim bop, a classic Korean rice dish, does the trick. At Moim it comes in a broad, majestic stone bowl that brims with shiitake, zucchini, carrot and chunks of marinated flank steak, not to mention a big poof of fried seaweed on top. A thick sauce with potent blasts of red pepper and garlic generously coats the rice at the bottom of the bowl.

Some dishes at Moim don't go with the rest of the menu. They're mainstays of the modern New York restaurant that haven't been adequately passed through Ms. Park's Korean prism.

An underseasoned duck entree, which was also overcooked when I had it, is one example. The spicy chicken wings, no more distinctive than the spicy chicken wings at restaurants of other ethnicities, are another. They're a sop, a surrender. Sometimes a chef just has to go with the conformist flow.

Given Ms. Park's prudent realization of that, what's amiss? Moim means gathering; why aren't more people gathering here?

The service is a serious issue. On several visits the time that elapsed between our waiter's visits to the table was so great — and those visits took on such a rare, eventful air — that my companions and I came to think of him as a comet. More than once one of us asked another: "Any idea where Haley is?"

I think Moim also suffers from having an entrance a few dozen feet from Seventh Avenue and not on the main artery itself. And Ms. Park hasn't found ways to give the restaurant a vibe as exciting as the best of its food.

She's new to this. A Korean immigrant who worked for 13 years as a graphic designer, she decided six years ago to become a professional cook, enrolling in the French Culinary Institute. Jobs as a line cook at Spice Market and Café Gray followed.

And in June, at the age of 48, she dared to open her own place. Its shortcomings suggest she has a way to go as a restaurateur. Its strengths demonstrate that as a chef she has traveled an impressive distance already.

MOIM

*

206 Garfield Place (Seventh Avenue), Park Slope, Brooklyn; (718) 499-8092; moimrestaurant.com.

ATMOSPHERE

A front lounge with bright green and deep red stools leads to a sleek contemporary dining room with a wall of glass onto a back garden to be used next summer.

SOUND LEVEL Moderate when not crowded.

RECOMMENDED DISHES

Tricolor Asian vegetables; stir-fry kimchi with pork and tofu; kimchi dumpling; steak tartare; crab with kelp noodles and pickled squash; dol sot bi bim bop; marinated beef ribs; black cod with Korean red pepper sauce; melon sorbet; chocolate and chestnut pave.

WINE LIST

Merely serviceable, with about 15 bottles, none more than \$60. Supplemented by sake, beer and special house cocktails.

PRICE RANGE

Dinner: small plates, \$4 to \$10; rice and noodle dishes, \$8 to \$14; entrees, \$16 to \$22; desserts, \$4 to \$5. Three-course prix fixe, \$25.

HOURS

From 5:30 to 10:30 p.m. Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and to 11 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. Brunch, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, to begin soon. Closed Monday.

RESERVATIONS

Accepted only for groups of six or more.

CREDIT CARDS All major cards.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS

No ramp for two steps down to entrance; accessible restroom.

WHAT THE STARS MEAN

Ratings range from zero to four stars and reflect the reviewer's reaction to food, ambience and service, with price taken into consideration. Menu listings and prices are subject to change.

PAST REVIEWS

from The Times, with additional capsule reviews by Times critics: nytimes.com/dining

LIFE STYLE IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

TRADITIONAL KOREAN MARRIAGE MEETS MATCH ON THE INTERNET

BY CHOE SANG HUN

Traditional Korean Marriage Meets Match on the Internet

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea, June 5 — Sitting in his office crammed with files and boxes, Lee Woong-jin, a 42-year-old entrepreneur, talks enthusiastically about his latest moneymaking plan: merging the age-old Korean matchmaking tradition with the vibrant South Korean Internet culture.

His company — which allows subscribers to search for mates online — is one of a growing number of matchmaking services in South Korea, where families still arrange many marriages. Many of the services, like Mr. Lee's company, rely heavily on the Internet and bill themselves as being more scientific than one-person shops that use social connections to make matches.

One of Mr. Lee's customers, Kim Su-jong, a 29-year-old pharmacist, recently listed more than 330 pieces of information about herself — including her height, weight, blood type, drinking and smoking habits and monthly pay. And, in a twist that shows how much weight the society places on the standing of a spouse's family, she also listed the jobs and academic credentials of everyone in her immediate family.

Within seconds, the computer program produced a marriage consulting report advising her that it would be most realistic for her to get married next year to a 33-year-old dentist or herbal doctor between 5 feet 7 inches tall and 5 feet 8 inches. If she believes in horoscopes, the computer said, August would be the best month to marry, but March and September should be avoided. That information cost her \$21.

For an extra charge the computer will scan a pool of 25,000 clients and send her the names of one or two men whose profiles appear to make them suitable partners.

"We built our system by analyzing the marrying patterns of 10,000 couples married through our agency," said Mr. Lee, the chief executive of Sunoo. "Our site is not a place for Cinderellas — people with illusions of finding a prince or princess. Our emphasis is on being scientific and practical."

More than 1,000 dating agencies operate in South Korea. They include one-person operations run, typically, by middle-aged women who seek top graduates of prestigious universities and single doctors and lawyers and introduce them to rich families with eligible sons and daughters, and the corporations like Sunoo.

With the South Korean birth rate

among the lowest in the world, demographers are casting friendlier looks on these agencies, which are banned from advertising on television.

"Our low birth rate is more than a crisis, and it's because fewer people get married," said Cho Nam-hoon, director of the government-funded Center for Low Fertility and Aging Studies. "The government should encourage the matchmaking industry. Perhaps it should start its own matchmaking service."

Marriage is becoming optional, not a rite of passage, for South Koreans, with more men insecure about their jobs, and more women favoring work outside the home over rearing children. In 2005, 51 percent of South Koreans in their 20s and 30s were unmarried, five percentage points higher than in 2000.

In traditional Korea, where Confucian mores frowned on the mingling of the sexes, young people were brought together by matchmakers, usually old women in their villages.

Even now, marriage is widely viewed as a contract between two families, and parents often take charge. They check a candidate's looks, education, income and horoscope. On weekends, young men and women might face each other awkwardly in a hotel restaurant after being dragged there by their parents for a matchmaking session.

"More than half our 10,000 clients were brought to us by their parents," said Hong Kyung-hee of the Daks Club agency who has helped 100 couples tie the knot. "South Korea remains very conservative when it comes to marriage."

For parents concerned with "saving face," an agency can take care of the awkward business of checking backgrounds and, perhaps, rejecting a candidate introduced by friends.

For singles, using the agencies can reduce the risks of a blind date by screening potential suitors.

Leading companies like LG Electronics and Samsung ask agencies to organize group blind dates as a benefit for single employees. And major banks vie for rich private customers by offering free matchmaking for their children.

"We still find it hard to approach members of the opposite sex," said Cha Hyun-seok, 34, an employee at LG Chemicals, who attended a recent matchmaking party organized by a dating agency. "There must be a go-between. So this is a useful service for me."

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AS WOMEN RISE, CORPORATE KOREA CORKS THE BOTTLE

BY NORIMITSU ONISHI

SEOUL, South Korea

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In a time-honored practice in South Korea’s corporate culture, the 38-year-old manager at an online game company took his 10-person team on twice-weekly after-work drinking bouts. He exhorted his subordinates to drink, including a 29-year-old graphic designer who protested that her limit was two glasses of beer.

“Either you drink or you get it from me tomorrow,” the boss told her one evening.

She drank, fearing that refusing to do so would hurt her career. But eventually, unable to take the drinking any longer, she quit and sued.

In May, in the first ruling of its kind, the Seoul High Court said that forcing a subordinate to drink alcohol was illegal, and it pronounced the manager guilty of a “violation of human dignity.” The court awarded the woman \$32,000 in damages for the incidents, which occurred in 2004.

The ruling was as much a testament to women’s growing presence in corporate life here as a confirmation of changes already under way. As an increasing number of women have joined companies as professionals in the past half decade, corporate South Korea has struggled to change the country’s thoroughly male-centered corporate culture, starting with alcohol.

An evening out with colleagues here follows a predictable, alcohol-centered pattern: dinner, usually some grilled pork, washed down with soju, Korea’s national vodka-like drink; then a second round at a beer hall; then whiskey and singing at a “noraebang,” a Korean karaoke club. Exhorted by their bosses to drink, the

corporate warriors bond, literally, so that the sight of dark-suited men holding hands, leaning on one another, staggering toward taxis, is part of this city’s nighttime streetscape. The next morning, back at the office, they are ready to fight, with reaffirmed unity, for more markets at home and abroad.

Many professional women manage to avoid much of the drinking by adopting well-known strategies. They slip away while their male colleagues indulge in a second or third round of drinking. They pour the drinks into potted plants. They rely on male colleagues, called “knights in shining armor,” to take their turns in drinking games.

Companies, too, have begun to respond. Since 2005, Posco, the steel manufacturer, has limited company outings to two hours at its mill in South Korea’s southwest. Employees can raise a red card if they do not want to drink or a yellow card if they want to go home early. At Woori Bank, one of South Korea’s largest, an alarm rings at 10 p.m. to encourage workers to stop drinking and go home using public transportation, which stops running before midnight.

“My boss used to be all about, ‘Let’s drink till we die!’” said Wi Su-jung, a 31-year-old woman employed at a small shipping company.

Ms. Wi, who was out enjoying the sun in downtown Seoul, said the atmosphere began changing as more women joined her company in the past couple of years. “The women got together and complained about the drinking and the pressure to drink,” she said. “So things changed last year. Now we sometimes go to musicals or movies instead.”



Co-workers gather at a restaurant in Seoul, South Korea, for dinner and drinks after work. The emphasis on alcohol is now being questioned.

As Women Rise, Corporate Korea Corks the Bottle

Continued From Page 1

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Kim Chil-jong, who was taking a walk on his lunch hour, said he owned a nine-person publishing company. In the last couple of years, he hired two women for the first time.

"We drink less because of their presence," Mr. Kim, 47, said. "Before, I'd encourage my workers to drink whenever we went out, but I don't do that anymore."

Still, at least 90 percent of company outings — called "hoishik," or coming together to eat — still center on alcohol, according to the Korean Alcohol Research Foundation. The percentage of women who drink has increased over all as they have joined companies.

Over all, South Koreans consume less alcohol than, say, most Europeans, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, a research organization financed by industrialized nations.

But Cho Sung-gie, the alcohol foundation's research director, estimates that South Koreans rank first in binge drinking: the goal is to drink as

much as possible, as quickly as possible, so that co-workers loosen up.

Companies have awakened to the potential dangers of bingeing: health threats, decreased productivity and, with more women working, the risk of sexual harassment.

The foundation, though financed largely by the alcohol industry, is considered the authority on the country's drinking culture. It runs programs on responsible drinking and abstinence, and assists companies to

Tempering the binge drinking thought to promote bonding.

organize outings not centered on alcohol. Chang Kih-wung, a manager in the education team, has even joined company outings to the movies.

"Usually, a company decides to do something about drinking after a guest, often a foreigner, visits and makes a comment like, 'Man, people drink like crazy here!'" Mr. Chang said. "So they'll invite me for a lecture or organize a single activity — then they forget about it and go back to drinking."

Traditionally, this corporate culture often began at the job interview itself. Asked whether they liked to drink, applicants knew that there was only one correct answer.

"If they said they didn't drink, we'd think that we couldn't work closely together," said Lee Jai-ho, 40, an engineer at a paper mill that was bought by Norske Skog of Sweden in the late 1990s.

Mr. Lee said he was asked whether he was a good drinker during his job interview in 1992, and he asked the same question of job candidates later. The company's hard-drinking cul-

ture changed, however, after it changed to foreign ownership.

It is this fear of not being accepted as full members of the team that has led many women to drink to excess. A 31-year-old lawyer for a telecommunications company, who asked that her name not be used, blacked out during a company outing shortly after she became the first Korean woman to serve as a lawyer in the legal division three years ago. "During my studies, I always competed against men," she said. "So I didn't want to lose to men at hoishik."

She drank so much during dinner at a Chinese restaurant that she remembered nothing past 9 p.m., though the outing lasted until 1 a.m.

However, as more women have joined her division, she said, the emphasis on alcohol has decreased.

"Before it was always grilled pork with soju followed by mixed drinks," she said. "Now, I can suggest that we go to a Thai or Italian restaurant."

Not all men were so flexible, though. In the case of the 29-year-old graphic designer, when she was interviewed at the 240-employee online game company in 2004, she was also forced to submit to an "alcohol interview," according to the court ruling. She could drink only two glasses of beer and no soju at all, she said.

Her boss, though, liked to go out with his 10-person marketing team — six men and four women — at least twice a week until the predawn hours and brooked no excuses.

One time, he told her that if she called upon a "knight in shining armor," she would have to kiss him. So she drank two glasses of soju. Another time, after she slipped away early, he called her at home and ordered her to come back. She refused.

At the trial, the boss said he was so intent on having his subordinates bond that he sometimes used his own money to take them out drinking. He called the woman a weirdo and said of the lawsuit, "I'm the victim."

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SOUTH KOREANS CONNECT THROUGH SEARCH ENGINE

BY CHOE SANG HUN

SEOUL, South Korea, July 4

Park Hye Ran, a 15-year-old high school student, wanted to know the shortest route from a bus terminal in the southern port city of Busan to a fish market to the east.

That is precisely the kind of question that Cho In Joon, 50, a seller of lottery tickets in Busan, loves to answer.

Sitting at a computer installed at his street kiosk, Mr. Cho posted a reply for Ms. Park — and for other Naver.com users who might one day ask the same question — with instructions on where she should switch trains, which station exit she should take and how long it would take to walk from there to the market. He even attached a map of the market area.

Thanks to Mr. Cho and tens of thousands of other volunteer respondents, Web users in one of the world's most-wired countries seldom "Google" anything. They "Naver" it.

Tapping a South Korean inclination to help one another on the Web has made Naver.com the undisputed leader of Internet search in the country. It handles more than 77 percent of all Web searches originating in South Korea, thanks largely to content generated by people like Ms. Park and Mr. Cho, free of charge.

Daum.net, another South Korean search portal, comes in second with a 10.8 percent share, followed by Yahoo's Korean-language service with 4.4 percent.

Google, the top search engine in the world, barely registers in the country's online consciousness, handling just 1.7 percent of South Korean Web searches, according to KoreanClick, an Internet market research company.

"No matter how powerful Google's search engine may be," said Wayne Lee, an analyst at Woori Investment and Securities, "it doesn't have enough Korean-language data to trawl to satisfy South Korean customers."

When NHN, an online gaming company, set up the search portal in 1999, the site looked like a grocery

store where most of the shelves were empty. Like Google, Naver found there simply was not enough Korean text in cyberspace to make a Korean search engine a viable business.

"So we began creating Korean-language text," said Lee Kyung Ryul, an NHN spokesman. "At Google, users basically look for data that already exists on the Internet. In South Korea, if you want to be a search engine, you have to create your own database."

The strategy was right on the money. In this country, where more than 70 percent of a population of 48 million use the Internet, most of them with high-speed connections, people do not just want information when they log on; they want a sense of community and the kind of human interaction provided by Naver's "Knowledge iN" real-time question-and-answer platform.

"When people I have never met thank me, I feel good," Mr. Cho, the lottery ticket seller, said. "No one pays me for this. But helping other people on the Internet is addictive."

Each day, on average, 16 million people visit Naver — the name comes from the English words neighbor and navigator — keying 110 million queries into its standard Google-like search function. But Naver users also post an average of 44,000 questions a day through Knowledge iN, the interactive Q.&A. database. These receive about 110,000 answers, ranging from one-sentence replies to academic essays complete with footnotes.

The format, which Naver introduced in 2002, has become a must-have feature for Korean search portals. The portals maintain the questions and answers in proprietary databases not shared with other portals or with search engines like Google. When a visitor to a portal does a Web search, its search engine yields relevant items from its own Q.&A. database along with traditional search results from news sites and Web pages.

Naver has so far accumulated a user-generated database of 70 million entries. Typical queries include why North Korea is building a nuclear bomb, which digital music player is best, why people have cowlicks and what a high school boy should do when he has a crush on a female teacher.

Naver lacks the full-time editorial oversight found on Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia, and some entries are of dubious veracity and attract vigorous rebuttals. But many respondents, eager to build and maintain an online reputation, do careful research to provide useful answers.

NHN, which employs 2,700, is now the most profitable Internet company in South Korea. The company posted 299 billion won, or \$325 million, in profit on 573 billion won in sales last year. It has a market value of more than \$8 billion.

The company still runs its popular online gaming site, but its search engine, which sells advertisements and search-generated links to commercial Web sites, generated 52 percent of its revenue last year.

When Daum, Naver's largest local competitor, began making a big push into the Korean search market last year, it turned to its 6.7 million virtual Internet cafes, which are not physical structures but online user groups built around shared interests.

The cafes create pools of material supplied by people who, for example, went to the same school, support or oppose a free trade agreement with the United States or share an interest in hiking in the mountains. The biggest of the cafes have up to three million members.

By opening its cafes to its search engine, Daum's market share increased by nearly 30 percent in two years. It took in 22.8 billion won in ad revenue in the first quarter of this year, up 42 percent from a year ago.

Google, which started its search service in the Korean language in 2000, introduced an upgraded Korean-language service in May.

The new version deviates from Google's celebrated bare-bones style. In South Korea, people prefer portal sites that resemble department stores, filled with eye-catching animation and multiple features.

"It's obvious to me that Korea is a great laboratory of the digital age," Eric E. Schmidt, the chairman of Google, said in Seoul at the introduction of the new search service.

South Koreans Connect Through Search Engine

Naver.com Feeds a Sense of Community

By CHOE SANG-HUN

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SHAMANISM ENJOYS REVIVAL IN TECHNO-SAVVY SOUTH KOREA

BY CHOE SANG HUN

SEOUL, South Korea

Yang Soon-im says she began communicating with the spirits of mountains and ancient warriors more than 50 years ago, when she was only 7. But it was decades after that, when her son miraculously survived a knife wound, that she decided she had no choice but to become the spirits' full-time channel with the living — a mudang, or shaman.

"I found her sitting on the roof chanting at 4 a.m.," her husband, Choi Jong-sam, 62, said of that day about 25 years ago. "She was puffing away at four packs of cigarettes. She said her mountain gods had saved our son in a sort of bargain. I slapped her face to help her get her wits back.

"Then her eyes blazed like those of a wild dog about to bite a man."

The deal Ms. Yang struck with her spirits eventually paid off in other ways. Now 60, she is one of the most sought-after shamans in Seoul — a leading member of a profession that has survived centuries of ridicule and persecution and is now enjoying a seemingly incongruous revival in one of the world's most technologically advanced countries.

There are an estimated 300 shamanistic temples within an hour of Seoul's bustling city center, and in them, shamans perform their clamorous ceremonies every day. They offer pigs to placate the gods. They dance with toy guns to comfort the spirit of a dead child. They intimidate evil spirits by walking barefoot on knife blades.

"We used to do our rituals in hiding," said Ms. Yang, who performs two or three rites on a busy day. "Our customers kept it secret from even their own relatives. Now we have no shame performing in public. I can hardly take three days off a month."

Korean shamanism is rooted in ancient indigenous beliefs shared by many folk religions in northeast Asia. Most mudangs are women who say they discovered their ability to serve as a mediator between the human and spirit worlds after emerging from a critical illness. They believe that the air is thick with spirits, including those of dead relatives, a fox in the hills behind a village, an old tree or even a stove. These spirits interact with people and influence their fortunes.

So when tradition-minded Koreans are inexplicably sick or have a run of bad luck in business or a daughter who cannot find a husband, they consult a shaman.

"If I contact the spirit of a man who died of stomach cancer, I get stomach pains for days," said Kim Hong-kyung, 33, who has conducted rituals with Ms. Yang. "If I deal with the spirit of a woman who died during labor, my belly balloons like a pregnant woman's."

In an election year like this one, the most famous shamans are fully booked. Politicians, whether Christian or Buddhist, flock to them, asking, for instance, whether relocating their ancestors' remains to a more propitious site might ensure victory.



Jin Sun-mi performing a ceremony. Most shamans are women who say they can serve as a mediator between the human and spirit worlds.

Shamanism Enjoys Revival in Techno-Savvy South Korea

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea — Yang Soon-im says she began communicating with the spirits of mountains and ancient warriors more than 50 years ago, when she was only 7. But it was decades after that, when her son miraculously survived a knife wound, that she decided she had no choice but to become the spirits' full-time channel with the living — a mudang, or shaman.

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Kim Myung-soon, above, with a pig that had been killed as an offering to the gods. Yang Soon-im, below at right, performs two or three rites on a busy day. "Now we have no shame performing in public," she says.



Yang Jong-sung, above, with a pig that had been killed as an offering to the gods. Yang Jong-sung, a senior curator at the National Folklore Museum of Korea, said shamanism is very, very materialistic and this-worldly, as Koreans tend to be. "I don't think a Christian pastor can succeed here if he only talks about heaven and does not hint at health and material prosperity."

In a recent ritual, Ms. Yang and two associates spent hours carefully stacking their altar with fruits, dried fish and rice cakes. They decorated their room with portraits of gods and unpacked a suitcase full of brightly colored costumes they changed into at different stages of the rite.

Their customer, a 51-year-old nurse, wanted the shamans' help in getting a divorce from her unfaithful husband. Instead, for 5 million won, or \$5,400, the shamans promised to help them reconcile.

Ms. Yang's diagnosis: the husband had turned into a "horribly that sucks bone marrow out of your spine," because the couple had been cursed by a baby she had aborted, an uncle who committed suicide and a well her family had filled years before.

It never rejected anything but embraced everything, making endless compromises with other religions and social changes. That explains why it has survived thousands of years.

There are shamans who venerate Jesus, the Virgin Mary, even Park Chung-bee, the late South Korean military strongman. Under the pro-American military governments of the 1970s, there were shamans who took Gen. Douglas MacArthur as their deity. When MacArthur's spirit possessed them, they donned sunglasses, puffed on a pipe and uttered sounds that some clients took for English.

"Until perhaps 10 or 15 years ago, we had quite a few shamans who prayed before the MacArthur statue here," said Aegibosal, a shaman in Incheon, the port city where MacArthur's troops landed in 1950. "You don't see any of them any more."

Shamanism's eclecticism has influenced Korean attitudes toward religion, helping make South Korea one of the world's most pluralistic countries — a place where Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity coexist peacefully and often overlap, said Yang Jong-sung, a senior curator at the National Folklore Museum of Korea.

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Ms. Yang and the nurse embraced and sobbed when the nurse's dead mother, whom she had not mentioned to the shamans, spoke through Ms. Yang. Then Ms. Yang's younger associate, Chang Joon-ha, 42, a former army sergeant, danced with knives and a lump of raw pork in his mouth, his eyes rolling back into their sockets.

"We are like a hospital," he later said. "We do surgery on people's bad luck."

A HOUSE TO GROW INTO

BY FRED A. BERNSTEIN

“Look around,” said Kim Myung-soon, 41, a mudang who, in a recent ritual, decapitated a chicken with her bare hands. “So much of nature has been ruined. Spirits of trees and rocks are displaced and haunt humans because they have nowhere else to go. No wonder the country is a mess.”

Shamans were demonized by Christian missionaries and driven underground during Japanese colonial rule. The military governments that came after the Korean War disparaged them as charlatans and often banished them from villages, burning their shrines. But today, even many who regard shamanism as superstition acknowledge it to be an important repository of Korean culture, because the rituals have preserved traditional costumes, music and dance forms. Recent governments have documented and promoted the rituals as “intangible cultural assets.”

There are an estimated 300,000 shamans, or one for every 160 South Koreans, according to the Korea Worshipers Association, which represents shamans. They are fiercely independent, following different gods, sharing no one body of scriptures. And they are highly adaptable. When the Internet boom hit South Korea, shamans were among the first to set up commercial Web sites, offering online fortune-telling. Many younger shamans maintain Web logs.

“In our latest survey, we found 273 categories of gods venerated by Korean shamans. If you look into the sub-categories, you find 10,000 deities,” said Hong Teahan, a professor at Chung-Ang University in Seoul who researches shamanism. “Korean shamanism is a great melting pot. It never rejected anything but embraced everything, making endless compromises with other religions and social changes. That explains why it has survived thousands of years.”

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Moim, a Korean-inspired restaurant that opened recently in Park Slope, is the kind of place that convinces Brooklynites that they’re living in the most cosmopolitan part of the city.

But Kiho Park and Saeri Yoo Park, who own the restaurant, don’t need convincing. The couple moved to Park Slope in 1991, when Ms. Park was a graphic designer and Mr. Park worked for the city’s Health and Hospitals Corporation. Since then, they have had two children, who attend the local schools.

The couple’s son, Geneho, now 12, started out in preschool at Beth Elohim, a synagogue just down the street. “He would come home singing Hanukkah songs, and I thought it was great,” Mr. Park said.

“That’s what Park Slope is about.”

It is also about spacious houses. Until 1991, the Parks lived in a Brooklyn Heights apartment. When their rent hit \$1,000, Mr. Park decided it was time to buy.

A broker persuaded them to visit Park Slope, where they were entranced by the brownstones, including 10 complementary houses on the west side of Eighth Avenue. One of those houses, built in 1905, was on the market for \$690,000. “That was way out of our price range,” said Mr. Park, now 49. But the building, with original wainscoting, parquet floors and eight fireplaces (each a unique composition of metal, carved wood and ceramics) was hard to put out of their minds.

HABITATS/Park Slope, Brooklyn

A House To Grow Into

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Realtor called and said: “They accepted the offer. Get your stuff together.”

The couple’s biggest problem, back then, was what to do with all the space — three floors, each 20 feet wide and 75 feet deep. (The ground floor was and still is a rental apartment.) The couple had little money, they said, so they lived in nearby empty rooms.

Eventually, they began buying mission-style furniture, which complements the house’s woodwork and stained-glass windows. With their tight budget, they bought one piece at a time, Mr. Park said, proving it one piece at a time, Mr. Park said, proving it by pointing to the slightly different upholstery fabric on each of their Stickley-style dining chairs.

Eventually, the couple renovated the kitchen, which is Ms. Park’s domain. (“He cooked before we were married,” Ms. Park said wryly.) A graduate of the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Calif., she worked as a designer until 2000, when, she said, “my midlife crisis hit.”

That’s when Ms. Park, now 48, began studying at the French Culinary Institute in Manhattan. She went on to take jobs at a series of Manhattan restaurants, including Spice Market and Café Gray.

In the meantime, the couple — look-

ing ahead to when Ms. Park would be ready to open her own restaurant — bought a small building on Garfield Place near Seventh Avenue. Rent from two apartments helped them pay the bills, while the ground floor space sat empty. Eventually, they brought in an architect, Edward I. Mills, to design a sleek restaurant.

The basement kitchen has a skylight that allows diners to look down at Ms. Park and her assistants. There, they produce nontraditional dishes like kimchi fried rice, steak tartare with Asian pears and pine nuts, and black cod with Korean red pepper sauce.

Ms. Park works in exhaustion; she said that before she opened the restaurant, she didn’t realize how much administrative work she would have. “Only 30 percent of what I do is cooking,” she said.

Most evenings, Mr. Park drives from Queens, where he works in finance at Elmhurst Hospital, to the restaurant, where he serves as chief troubleshooter and greeter.

It helps that, when they leave the restaurant, their house is just a few hundred yards away.

When they can, they entertain guests in a large living room where the mission-style sofa and chairs mingle with a few contemporary pieces. The art is mostly by Korean-Americans, including Il Lee, who also lives in Brooklyn. (Mr.

Lee, who works in ball-point pen on canvas, is having a solo show this summer at the Queens Museum of Art.) “It’s good to support the community,” Mr. Park said.

Relaxing, for Mr. Park, means spending time in the second-floor den, with a ping-pong-table sofa and a high-definition TV. “It’s good to support the community,” Mr. Park said.

(Asked the brand, Mr. Park said, “Samsung, of course,” referring to the Korean manufacturer.) The room opens onto a terrace with spectacular rooftop (and sunset) views, but for Mr. Park the real attraction is that he can smoke on the terrace. (He hasn’t had a cigarette inside since the children were born, he said.) The TV room shares the second floor of the house with the couple’s spacious bedroom.

The top floor is shared by the Parks’ two children. Their daughter, Jiyeon, 14, who has the back bedroom, is spending the summer in Korea with Ms. Park’s parents. Geneho, whose bedroom faces the street, is attending a hagwon, a Korean tutoring program. Though he said he prefers skateboarding and basketball to academic enrichment, his mother said, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that he understands that spending the summer studying “is part of the process of being Korean.” If it’s any compensation, he has a foosball table right outside his bedroom.

The Parks say they are lucky to have such a large house. “Coming from humble backgrounds, we’re grateful to have this kind of space,” Mr. Park said. His only complaint, he said, is that the couple’s friends, knowing what they paid, can’t reconcile themselves to buying in Park Slope, where prices are now several times higher.

Ms. Park has a few small reservations: there are too many steps, and the woodwork collects dust. “There’s a lot to clean,” she said.

Then again, the house is a link to the past. “Every time I touch the wood,” she said, “I think that someone touched this wood 100 years ago. It’s history. I feel like I’m part of the timeline.”

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GORDON MARSH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

THEIR SPACE
Kiho Park, center, Saeri Yoo Park and their son, Geneho. Ms. Park is the chef at Moim, below, their Korean-inspired restaurant on Garfield Place near Seventh Avenue.

ONLINE: DESIGN SYNERGY
The Parks on how the design of their restaurant reflects the choices they made for their house.
nytimes.com/realestate.

Eventually, the house, which had been sitting empty for more than a year, was relisted at \$580,000. The broker advised the Parks to make an offer, any offer. Mr. Park offered \$425,000, expecting to be turned down.

Two weeks later, he recalled, “The Realtor called and said: ‘They accepted the offer. Get your stuff together.’”

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In the meantime, the couple — looking ahead to when Ms. Park would be ready to open her own restaurant — bought a small building on Garfield Place near Seventh Avenue. Rent from two apartments helped them pay the bills, while the ground floor space sat empty. Eventually, they brought in an architect, Edward I. Mills, to design a sleek restaurant.

The basement kitchen has a skylight that allows diners to look down at Ms. Park and her assistants. There, they produce nontraditional dishes like kimchi fried rice, steak tartare with Asian pears and pine nuts, and black cod with Korean red pepper sauce.

Ms. Park works to exhaustion; she said that before she opened the restaurant, she didn’t realize how much administrative work she would have. “Only 30 percent of what I do is cooking,” she said.

Most evenings, Mr. Park drives from Queens, where he works in finance at Elmhurst Hospital, to the restaurant, where he serves as chief troubleshooter and greeter.

It helps that, when they leave the restaurant, their house is just a few hundred yards away.

When they can, they entertain guests in a large living room where the mission-style sofa and chairs mingle with a few contemporary pieces. The art is mostly by Korean-Americans, including Il Lee, who also lives in Brooklyn. (Mr. Lee, who works in ballpoint pen on canvas, is having a solo show this summer at the Queens Museum of Art.) “It’s good to support the community,” Mr. Park said.

Relaxing, for Mr. Park, means spending time in the second-floor den, with a gingham-pattern sofa and a high-definition TV. (Asked the brand, Mr. Park said, “Samsung, of course,” referring to the Korean manufacturer). The room opens onto a terrace with spectacular rooftop (and sunset) views, but for Mr. Park the real attraction is that he can smoke on the terrace. (He hasn’t had a cigarette inside since the children were born, he said). The TV room shares the second floor of the house with the couple’s spacious bedroom.

The top floor is shared by the Parks’ two children. Their daughter, Jiyeon, 14, who has the back bedroom, is spending the summer in Korea with Ms. Park’s parents. Geneho, whose bedroom faces the street, is attending a hagwon, a Korean tutoring program. Though he said he prefers skateboarding and basketball to academic enrichment, his mother said, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that he understands that spending the summer studying “is part of the process of being Korean.” If it’s any compensation, he has a foosball table right outside his bedroom.

The Parks say they are lucky to have such a large house. “Coming from humble backgrounds, we’re grateful to have this kind of space,” Mr. Park said. His only complaint, he said, is that the couple’s friends, knowing what they paid, can’t reconcile themselves to buying in Park Slope, where prices are now several times higher.

Ms. Park has a few small reservations: there are too many steps, and the woodwork collects dust. “There’s a lot to clean,” she said.

Then again, the house is a link to the past. “Every time I touch the wood,” she said, “I think that someone touched this wood 100 years ago. It’s history. I feel like I’m part of the timeline.”

WORLD EXPRESS

BY TODD HEISLER

Kyung Jin of Astoria, Queens, a dancer with the Hanool traditional Korean drumming group, at the Moon Festival parade in Flushing on Saturday, near the Flushing–Main Street station of the No. 7 subway line.



VICTORIA LIM, PETER SHEREN

Victoria Yeon Sun Lim, a daughter of Jae Yuel Chung and Chang Yuel Lim of Seoul, South Korea, was married last evening in Washington to Peter Jay Sheren, the son of Peggy and Andrew Sheren of McLean, Va. The Rev. William P. Billow Jr., an Episcopal priest, performed the couple's legally recognized ceremony at the Washington National Cathedral.

On Friday, the couple had a Jewish ceremony at the Poste Moderne Brasserie at the Hotel Monaco in Washington, and on Oct. 7, the couple had a traditional Korean cultural wedding ceremony at the Korea House in Seoul.

Ms. Lim, 31, is keeping her name. She is a vice president for investment banking in the Hong Kong office of Credit Suisse, specializing in capital markets and mergers and acquisition advice for technology companies in the Asia-Pacific region. She graduated from Stanford.

Mr. Sheren, 32, is a vice president for stock sales and trading in Hong Kong for a securities unit of JPMorgan Chase, specializing in sales and trading for hedge funds in the stock markets of the Asia-Pacific region. He graduated from Colby College.

Even though the couple went to the same high school mixers in the early 1990s, when she was at Madeira in McLean and he was at St. Albans in Washington, and in the late 1990s lived in neighboring apartment buildings in New York, they did not meet until half a decade, and half a globe, later. In June 2005 each was invited to a farewell party for a friend in Hong Kong, where Ms. Lim works. Mr. Sheren, who was working in Taipei, Taiwan, flew in for the party. They sat next to each other; by December he had asked her to marry him.

"Our timing was perfect," he said. "We're both very driven individuals, and if we had met sooner, our careers would have made it more difficult."

Of their meeting, Ms. Lim said: "I thought it was a nice coincidence but I didn't think anything of it. He lived in Taipei. Hong Kong is a very transient city, with lots of singles. He seemed social, that he liked to go out with lots of women."

But Mr. Sheren called her the next day.

"I was pleasantly surprised," Ms. Lim said. Of their two years of engagement, traveling between Taipei and Hong Kong on weekends, she said, "It's a commute, like New York to Boston."



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A NEW LIFESTYLE IN SOUTH KOREA: FIRST WEEKENDS, AND NOW BRUNCH

BY SU HYUN LEE

SEOUL, South Korea, Nov. 1

When she returned to Seoul in 2000 after 10 years in New York City, Park Su-ji introduced her fellow South Koreans to an exotic way to socialize over food: brunch.

"I really missed brunch but didn't find any brunch restaurants," Ms. Park said. So in the spring of 2005 she opened Suji's, which serves toasted bagels and blueberry pancakes, among other brunch staples, in a setting that features black-and-white photographs of the Chrysler Building and Union Square in New York.

Ms. Park said that she had thought her restaurant would primarily attract Western expatriates. But two years later, scores of restaurants in Seoul offer or even specialize in brunch — and they are filled with South Koreans. Restaurant owners and local newspapers say there may be as many as 200 such restaurants.

The sudden embrace of the leisurely late-morning repast reflects greater exposure to Western customs and cuisines as more South Koreans travel, work and study abroad. But it also is related to a watershed development at home: the mandatory weekend.

For decades South Korean governments have stressed hard work and making money, which has helped to turn the country's economy into one of the most ro-

bust in the world. But starting in 2004, the government began shortening the official workweek from six days to five. Now, all enterprises with 50 or more employees are required to provide two days off. By 2011, all companies must do so.

The discovery of the weekend has meant an explosion in new activities. Inns have opened up all over the country to accommodate overnight excursions. The new opportunity for short trips to neighboring countries has helped catapult South Koreans to the top ranks of tourists in the region.

The unaccustomed free time has also meant that South Koreans can start indulging themselves like the young New Yorkers they had been watching in syndicated television sitcoms like "Sex and the City," whose characters always seemed to be whiling away enjoyable hours over brunch.

Now, on weekends female friends, male buddies, couples, parents with toddlers and three-generation families all line up outside crowded brunch restaurants like Suji's, Butterfinger Pancakes, Tell Me About It, Flying Pan Blue, Stove and All Day Brunch. Some restaurants are so packed that reservations must be made days in advance. Once inside, if they can get inside, people spend two to three hours chatting away.

A New Lifestyle in South Korea: First Weekends, and Now Brunch

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"Before the five-day workweek started, we were always tired after drinking until late, because nighttime was the only time to socialize," said Suh Yang-ho, a 29-year-old who was having brunch with a colleague one recent Saturday at Stove.

"I think it's healthier to relax



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SEOKYUNG LEE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES
Restaurants in Seoul, South Korea, offer popular American-style brunches on Sundays. The fare has little resemblance to typical Korean breakfast foods like soup and vegetables.

like this over home-cooked-style food in the late mornings," said Mr. Suh, who works at Credit Suisse in Seoul.

His colleague Choi Hey-rung, 30, gave another reason for preferring brunch. "I don't want to cook," she said. "So on Sundays, I

bring my family, including my parents-in-law, to brunch a little after noon."

Traditionally, married Korean women have stayed home with their families; they did not go out with friends on weekends. Now, married as well as single women

avoid cooking when they can and are leading the move toward eating out. They regularly get together with friends over brunch. Daughters are introducing their mothers to this laid-back way of passing a weekend morning. Wives are trying to get their husbands to appreciate the leisurely lifestyle it represents.

On a recent Sunday, Han Kye-soon, 29, was catching up with three other single women at a corner table at Suji's.

"I feel like a New Yorker or a Parisian, like the characters of 'Sex and the City,'" said Ms. Han, a pottery designer.

What makes the brunch fashion somewhat surprising is that Koreans tend to be reluctant to try non-Korean foods. Even when traveling abroad, they gravitate

A nation unwinds as workweeks are reduced to five days

toward kimchi (fermented vegetables) and bibimbap (rice with vegetables and chili paste). Eating steak and potatoes with knives and forks can be considered an act of sophistication.

Brunch is popular even though some Koreans do not really like the food served at the meal: eggs and bacon, pancakes and toast are all a marked contrast to the usual Korean breakfast of rice, soup and vegetables. The portions are huge by Korean standards. And brunch can be expensive, typically around 25,000 won, or \$27.50.

Will the brunch boom last? Clearly it has not taken with some people here.

On a recent Sunday, Jegal Min-jung, 22, and her parents were sitting at a table in the middle of Suji's. Fashionably world-weary patrons occupied seats by the wide-open windows, while young couples perched on high bar stools.

Ms. Jegal, who had heard about Suji's from a friend, had wanted to experience brunch with her parents.

Her mother, Kang Deok-hee, had agreed: "It sounded like it would be less greasy than other Western food, like steak with gravy."

Wishing to sample a variety of dishes from the English-language-only menu, the family ordered eggs sunny side up with toast and sausages; blueberry pancakes; and egg salad with fried potatoes and a toasted bagel. But the time it was taking for all that food to show up tested the father's patience.

After steaming silently for some time, the father, Jegal Yoon, shouted to the waiter to serve the food more speedily.

"Bring each dish when it's ready," he said. "I'm busy and need to leave as soon as possible."

His wife made a face, then smiled. She explained, "My husband has to go to work after this."

"Before the five-day workweek started, we were always tired after drinking until late, because nighttime was the only time to socialize," said Suh Yang-ho, a 29-year-old who was having brunch with a colleague one recent Saturday at Stove.

"I think it's healthier to relax like this over home-cooked-style food in the late mornings," said Mr. Suh, who works at Credit Suisse in Seoul.

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SOUTH KOREA, WHERE BOYS WERE KINGS, REVALUES ITS GIRLS

BY CHOE SANG HUN

SEOUL, South Korea

When Park He-ran was a young mother, other women would approach her to ask what her secret was. She had given birth to three boys in a row at a time when South Korean women considered it their paramount duty to bear a son.

Ms. Park, a 61-year-old newspaper executive, gets a different reaction today. "When I tell people I have three sons and no daughter, they say they are sorry for my misfortune," she said. "Within a generation, I have turned from the luckiest woman possible to a pitiful mother."

In South Korea, once one of Asia's most rigidly patriarchal societies, a centuries-old preference for baby boys is fast receding. And that has led to what seems to be a decrease in the number of abortions performed after ultrasounds that reveal the sex of a fetus.

According to a study released by the World Bank in October, South Korea is the first of several Asian countries with large sex imbalances at birth to reverse the trend, moving toward greater parity between the sexes. Last year, the ratio was 107.4 boys born for every 100 girls, still above what is considered normal, but down from a peak of 116.5 boys born for every 100 girls in 1990.

The most important factor in changing attitudes toward girls was the radical shift in the country's economy that opened the doors to women in the work force

as never before and dismantled long-held traditions, which so devalued daughters that mothers would often apologize for giving birth to a girl.

The government also played a small role starting in the 1970s. After growing alarmed by the rise in sex-preference abortions, leaders mounted campaigns to change people's attitudes, including one that featured the popular slogan "One daughter raised well is worth 10 sons!"

In 1987, the government banned doctors from revealing the sex of a fetus before birth. But experts say enforcement was lax because officials feared too many doctors would be caught.

Demographers say the rapid change in South Koreans' feelings about female babies gives them hope that sex imbalances will begin to shrink in other rapidly developing Asian countries — notably China and India — where the same combination of a preference for boys and new technology has led to the widespread practice of aborting female fetuses.

"China and India are closely studying South Korea as a trendsetter in Asia," said Chung Woo-jin, a professor at Yonsei University in Seoul. "They are curious whether the same social and economic changes can occur in their countries as fast as they did in South Korea's relatively small and densely populated society."

South Korea, Where Boys Were Kings, Revalues Its Girls



By CHOE SANG-HUN

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Continued on Page 14

Girls now have a fighting chance in South Korea as the preference for boys recedes.

The wife's lowly role in her new family was constantly reinforced by customs that included requiring a daughter-in-law to serve her father-in-law food while on her knees.

"In the old days, when there was no adequate social safety net, Korean parents regarded having a son as kind of making an investment for old age security," Professor Chung said. It was common for married Korean men to feel ashamed if they had no sons. Some went so far as to divorce wives who did not bear boys.

Then in the 1970s and '80s, the country threw itself into an industrial revolution that would remake society in ways few South Koreans could have imagined.

Sons drifted away to higher-paying jobs in the cities, leaving their parents behind. And older Koreans found their own incomes rising, allowing them to save money for retirement rather than relying on their sons for support.

Married daughters, no longer shackled to their husbands' families, returned to provide emotional or financial support for their own elderly parents.

"Daughters are much better at emotional contact with their parents, visiting them more often, while Korean sons tend to be distant," said Kim Seung-kwon, a demographer at the government's Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs.

Ms. Park, the newspaper executive, said such changes forced people to rethink their old biases. "In restaurants and parks, when you see a large family out for a dinner or picnic, 9 out of 10, it's the wife who brings the family together with her parents, not the husband with his parents," she said. "To be practical, for an old Korean parent, having a daughter sometimes is much better than having a son."

The economic changes also unleashed a revolution of a different sort. With the economy heating up, men could no longer afford to keep women out of the workforce, and women began slowly to gain confidence, and grudging respect.

Although change is coming slowly and deep prejudices remain — in some businesses, women are pressured to leave their jobs when pregnant — women are more accepted now in the workplace and at the best

A shift in traditional attitudes is spurred by new economic opportunities.

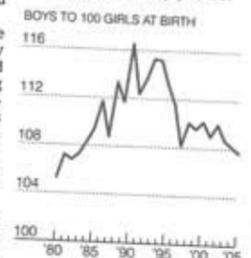
economic changes can occur in their countries as fast as they did in South Korea's relatively small and densely populated society."

In China in 2005, the ratio was 120 boys born for every 100 girls, according to the United Nations Population Fund. Vietnam reported a ratio of 110 boys to 100 girls last year. And although India recorded about 108 boys for every 100 girls in 2001, when the last census was taken, experts say the gap is sure to have widened by now.

The Population Fund warned in an October report that the rampant tinkering with nature's probabilities in Asia could eventually lead to increased sexual violence and trafficking of women as a generation of boys finds marriage prospects severely limited.

Sex Ratio in South Korea

The sex ratio of boys to girls in South Korea peaked at 116.5 boys to 100 girls born in 1990. It has dropped sharply since.



Source: Development Research Group, The World Bank

which encourages fealty not only to family patriarchs, but also to the nation's leaders.

With the move toward democracy in the late 1980s, the concept of equal rights for men and women began to creep into Koreans' thinking. In 1990, the law guaranteeing men their family's inheritance — a cornerstone of the Confucian system — was the first of the so-called family laws to fall; the rest would be dismantled over the next 15 years.

After 2002, the narrowing of the gender gap signaled that attitudes about the value of women — and ultimately of daughters — had begun to catch up to the seismic changes in the economy and the law.

And last year, a study by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs showed that of 5,400 married South Korean women younger than 45 who were surveyed, only 10 percent said they felt that they must have a son. That was down from 40 percent in 1991.

"When my father took me to our ancestral graves for worshipping, my grandfather used to say, 'Why did you bring a daughter here?'" said Park Su-mi, 29, a newlywed who calls the idea that only men carry on a family's bloodline "unscientific and absurd."

"My husband and I have no preference at all for boys," she said. "We don't care whether we have a boy or girl because we don't see any difference between a boy and a girl in helping make our family happy."

universities that send graduates to the top corporations.

Six of 10 South Korean women entered college last year; fewer than one out of 10 did so in 1981. And in the National Assembly, once one of the nation's most male-dominated institutions, women now hold about 13 percent of the seats, about double the percentage they held just four years ago.

Shin Hye-sun, 39, says she has witnessed many of the changes in women's status during her 13 years at the TBC television station in Taegu, in central South Korea. "When I first joined the company in 1995, a woman was expected to quit her job once she got married; we called it a 'resignation on a company suggestion,'" she said. Now, she said, many women stay after marriage and take a three-month break after giving birth before returning to work.

"If someone suggests that a woman should quit after marriage, female workers in my company will take it as an insult and say so," Ms. Shin said.

According to the World Bank study, one of the surprises in South Korea was that it took as long as it did for the effects of a booming economy to translate into changes in people's attitudes toward the birth of daughters.

The study suggests that the country's former authoritarian rulers helped slow the transition by upholding laws and devising policies that supported a continuation of Confucian hierarchy,

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In South Korea, the gap in the ratio of boys to girls born began to widen in the 1970s, but experts say it became especially pronounced in the mid-1980s as ultrasound technology became more widespread and increasing wages allowed more families to pay for the tests. The imbalance was widest from 1990 through 1995, when it remained above 112 to 100.

The imbalance has been closing steadily only since 2002. Last year's ratio of 107.4 boys for every 100 girls was closer to the ratio of 105 to 100 that demographers consider normal and, according to *The World Factbook*, published by the Central Intelligence Agency, just above the global average of 107 boys born for every 100 girls.

The preference for boys here is centuries old and was rooted in part in an agrarian society that relied on sons to do the hard work on family farms. But in Asia's Confucian societies, men were also accorded special status because they were considered the carriers of the family's all-important bloodline.

That elevated status came with certain perquisites — men received their families' inheritance — but also responsibilities. Once the eldest son married, he and his wife went to live with his family; he was expected to support his parents financially while his wife was expected to care for them in their old age.

The wife's lowly role in her new family was constantly reinforced by customs that included requiring a daughter-in-law to serve her father-in-law food while on her knees.

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Although change is coming slowly and deep prejudices remain — in some businesses, women are pressured to leave their jobs when pregnant — women are more accepted now in the workplace and at the best universities that send graduates to the top corporations.

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"If someone suggests that a woman should quit after marriage, female workers in my company will take it as an insult and say so," Ms. Shin said.

According to the World Bank study, one of the surprises in South Korea was that it took as long as it did for the effects of a booming economy to translate into changes in people's attitudes toward the birth of daughters.

The study suggests that the country's former authoritarian rulers helped slow the transition by upholding laws and devising policies that supported a continuation of Confucian hierarchy, which encourages fealty not only to family patriarchs, but also to the nation's leaders.

With the move toward democracy in the late 1980s, the concept of equal rights for men and women began to creep into Koreans' thinking. In 1990, the law guaranteeing men their family's inheritance — a cornerstone of the Confucian system — was the first of the so-called family laws to fall; the rest would be dismantled over the next 15 years.

After 2002, the narrowing of the gender gap signaled that attitudes about the value of women — and ultimately of daughters — had begun to catch up to the seismic changes in the economy and the law.

And last year, a study by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs showed that of 5,400 married South Korean women younger than 45 who were surveyed, only 10 percent said they felt that they must have a son. That was down from 40 percent in 1991.

"When my father took me to our ancestral graves for worshiping, my grandfather used to say, 'Why did you bring a daughter here?'" said Park Su-mi, 29, a newlywed who calls the idea that only men carry on a family's bloodline "unscientific and absurd."

"My husband and I have no preference at all for boys," she said. "We don't care whether we have a boy or girl because we don't see any difference between a boy and a girl in helping make our family happy."

& MORE

IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

THE KIDS ARE ALL HYPE, AND HOPE

BY SELENA ROBERTS



Clive Brunskill/Getty Images
Michelle Wie is on vacation at the Australian Open.

The Kids Are All Hype, And Hope

There is an insatiable public curiosity for teenage prodigies who can convincingly play dress-up as adults and schedule play dates with David Beckham or Ernie Els.

Freddy Adu and Michelle Wie are only 17, but they have been attracting attention for years, outlasting Bennifer and Vanilla Coke and the Hummer, all while cashing in on society's youth culture currency.

SELENA ROBERTS

SPORTS OF THE TIMES

Their gold rush to adulthood has been unsettling, if perfectly understandable, because sizzle factor does not age well in the era of adolescent Powerball.

But how long does the window for little darlings remain open?

As the soccer player who arrived to rouse the American game at age 14, Adu became a teenage millionaire before he was knee high to a header. He would be the face of American soccer. Everyone said so.

With a 300-yard golf swing ideal for clearing forests, Wie captured everyone's imagination when she materialized as a 13-year-old in bangle earrings, a fairway gender bender of dogleg proportions. She was destined to change everything. Everyone said so.

Right now, Adu is on his second Major League Soccer team, Real Salt Lake, after grouching over playing time in D.C. and sparring with his coach. When he turns 18, he may bolt the Beckham-dizzy M.L.S. for Europe in a vamoose, potentially vanishing from the American landscape before his first bar tab.

He wouldn't exit as a victim of burnout, but as a casualty of impatience. Wie is in a much more precarious position. Her impatience could lead to burnout.

Impetuosity is a Wie family trait. Wie could fan a poker hand out of the caddies she and her father, B. J., have fired over the past three years. She is on her second executive handler at the William Morris Agency. And, as she enters her second pro season with off-the-course earnings projected to be about \$20 million, she has been barnstorming the world on a lucrative appearance schedule that has left her weary, ailing game in regression.

She is farther away from the men on the PGA cut line than ever after finishing near the bottom at last weekend's Sony Open on her home course in Hawaii.

"It is very natural that some sports and

Continued on Page D3

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PARK FEELS RIGHT AT HOME AMONG SYBASE LEADERS

BY DAMON HACK

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She is farther away from the men on the PGA cut line than ever after finishing near the bottom at last weekend's Sony Open on her home course in Hawaii.

"It is very natural that some sports and golf reporters want to write about Michelle's recent struggles in golf and try to identify what has gone wrong with Michelle, her management team and her career path," B. J. Wie wrote in an e-mail message last night from Melbourne, Australia, where the family is on vacation at the Australian Open. "Unfortunately, she has struggled in most of the men's tournaments she has played in over the last year, except the SK Telecom Open and U.S. Open qualifying in 2006. But I can assure that her poor performance has nothing to do with either time commitments for her sponsors or her management team."

He didn't specify an alternative explanation for her six-month swoon, but it is not unreasonable to question Michelle Wie's bottom-line choice: her decision to continue playing against men right now.

This is not about surrendering her dream, but about Wie's persevering confidence in a sport that leaves divots in players' self-esteem. Psyche is everything on a tee box. And with every bogey at a men's event, the scrutiny on Wie increases and fickle bloggers sharpen their keystrokes.

"Everyone needs to back up and give her a chance to breathe," said Jill Smoller, head of the sports marketing team at the William Morris Agency. "Allow her to grow."

•
There is no doubt Wie deserves a margin for error — she's a wonderful talent, with a refreshing personality — but her schedule selection is curious.

Playing against men has made Wie distinct, famous and wealthy. Is she afraid of losing any part of that if she disappears on the Stanford campus or becomes a steadier fixture on the L.P.G.A. Tour?

As it is, the PGA novelty has worn thin around Wie, not for the adoring galleries, but for her male peers. They don't utter a word of disdain anymore, just indifference.

"It used to be, you know, when she was 14 and she got in this event for the first time, it raised eyes and you heard guys grumbling and it was such a bigger deal," Jim Furyk told reporters at the Sony Open, adding: "I don't hear guys talking about it anymore. There's not like a buzz in the locker room, 'What's she shooting?' or anything like that."

Apathy is the enemy of celebrity superstars. And like most, Wie likes attention. Her family did not pick an athlete rep but a Hollywood talent factory when it chose William Morris, which has a historic client list that includes everyone from Clark Gable to John Travolta.

Serena Williams is also one of its clients. If Wie watched Williams at the Australian Open this week, she witnessed a cautionary tale of a player who rushed to have it all, craving celebrity as much as victory.

•
Three years ago, when it was suggested to Williams that almost anyone would find difficulty living on a Hollywood lot and in tennis reality, she responded as only she would: "First and foremost, I am not most people."

Wie seems to believe she can do it all, too, if in a very different way. She isn't into the Hollywood scene, but she is all about defining her fame against men. She can't wait to play another PGA event. Everyone can respect her goal to play among men, but let's hope impatience doesn't burn out brilliance.

CLIFTON, N.J., May 17

On an L.P.G.A. Tour rife with translators and passports, Angela Park may have the most diverse background of all.

Park, 18, who is of South Korean ancestry, was born in Iguassu Falls, Brazil, near bubbling and misting waterfalls. When she was 8, she moved with her family to a suburb between Los Angeles and San Diego, where she discovered malls, text messaging and golf.

"I've been to a lot of places," Park said Thursday after her opening-round four-under-par 68 at the Sybase Classic at Upper Montclair Country Club tied her for second place with Lorena Ochoa, Se Ri Pak, Hye Jung Choi and Brittany Lincicome. The group trailed Sarah Lee by two shots.

Though Park is one of a close-knit group of 45 South Koreans on the L.P.G.A. Tour, she did not come up through the Korean junior ranks. She speaks Korean — along with English and Portuguese — but she has been to Korea only for vacation.

Brazil remains at the center of many of Park's childhood memories. Her father, Kyung Wook Park, and mother, Kyung Ran Lee, have a home in São Paulo and own an embroidery business. Her grandparents also live there.

"At the time, the economy was really on a spur in Brazil," she said of her parents' decision to immigrate there. "So then my dad thought it would be easier to make money in Brazil."

She added: "I really miss the time where, on weekends after church, all of our families would go to the beach an hour or two away."

When Park moved to the United States, she and her three brothers started playing golf while their father was at business meetings.

Park was a fast success on the American Junior Golf Association circuit, winning five times. In 29 events in four seasons, she posted 24 top-10 finishes.

In 2005, Park reached the semifinals of the United States Women's Amateur Championship and, last year, she turned professional, competed on the Duramed Futures Tour and secured her L.P.G.A. playing privileges by tying for fifth at the qualifying tournament. Her father accompanies her on the Tour.

On a Tour thick with young talent in players like Ochoa, Morgan Pressel and Paula Creamer, Park has had to work to stand out. Instead of attending college, she opted to learn her profession on the fly.

"These kids, for whatever reason, are in a hurry," Lisa Mickey, a Duramed Futures Tour spokeswoman, said in a telephone interview. "Even though Angela's young, I think she can win this year. She's so incredibly determined. She has the skills and she has the work ethic. Angela is my sleeper this year."

In nine starts this season, Park has made every cut. She finished tied for third at the Fields Open in Hawaii and tied for 17th last week at the Michelob Ultra Open at Kingsmill in Virginia.

At the Sybase Classic on Thursday, she did not bogey a hole. After making par on her first seven holes, she birdied 4 of her last 11, including the 461-yard, par-5 11th hole after reaching the green in two.

"It always seems like I do well the first couple rounds, and then I would trickle down a little," Park said. "I'm trying to stay focused for the next three days and not change anything."

Ochoa, the tournament headliner, defending champion and No. 1 player in the world, also took advantage of a day of light breezes. She offset two bogeys with six birdies and was safely in the tournament mix.

Ochoa, who won the Sybase Classic at Wykagyl Country Club last year, played Upper Montclair on Thursday with little stress.

"It was a good day," she said. "I just kind of feel really comfortable, and I think the key today was hitting my driver straight."

Park, who has had homes in South America and Southern California, now lives in Orlando, Fla. Though she came to the L.P.G.A. Tour via a unique route, her goals echo those of her competitors.

"I'm trying to get better," she said.

PAK INSPIRES NEW GENERATION OF COUNTRYWOMEN

BY KAREN CROUSE



Sarah Lee of South Korea held a two-shot lead over five other golfers yesterday after the first round at Upper Montclair Country Club.

Park Feels Right at Home Among Sybase Leaders

By DAMON HACK

CLIFTON, N.J., May 17 — On an L.P.G.A. Tour rife with translators and passports, Angela Park may have the most diverse background of all.

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The Tour rookie Angela Park lining up a putt on No. 18. She birdied 4 of her last 11 holes.

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"These kids, for whatever reason,

Sutherland Leads by 2 at AT&T

DULUTH, Ga., May 17 (AP) — Kevin Sutherland shot a seven-under-par 65 in favorable scoring conditions Thursday to take a two-stroke lead after the first round of the AT&T Classic.

Japan's Ryuji Imada, a former standout at the University of Georgia, had an eagle on his final hole to join Stephen Marino, Tommy Armour III, Bob May and Craig Kanada at 67 on the Greg Norman-designed T.P.C. Sugarloaf course.

Sutherland's 8-iron shot hit the lip of the bunker on the par-3 No. 16 and rolled into the sand. But the

49-year-old Sutherland, who began play on the back nine, holed the bunker shot for the first of three consecutive birdies.

After hitting a wedge within 3 feet at No. 17, Sutherland, who missed five fairways but hit 16 greens in regulation, reached the 18th green in two shots, leading to the second of his four birdies on the par-5 holes.

"It kind of adds up fast when they come in bunches like that," Sutherland said. "It was really just a solid day for me."

John Daly withdrew because of a sore shoulder.

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HAVRE DE GRACE, Md., June 9

Darkness used to be Se Ri Pak's trusty companion on the L.P.G.A. Tour, her long days of practice fueled by a fervent belief that the last one to leave the course was destined to finish first.

So it was strange to hear Pak speak about cutting out of Bulle Rock Golf Course while plenty of sunlight remained for lining up putts and launching drives. It was midafternoon on the day before she officially qualified, at age 29, for the L.P.G.A. Tour and World Golf Halls of Fame with her opening round at the L.P.G.A. Championship. Pak, the defending champion, was intent on adhering to her new routine.

"Go back to hotel," she said, "have great dinner with friends and then maybe some bottles of beer."

Pak never took the time to drink in her success when she was the toast of the Tour. Between 1998 and 2004, she won 22 events, including 4 majors, and steadily grew to hate the game.

"Before, I felt like I was having fun," Pak said in an interview here. "But I don't think I was having fun. There was always pressure, just wanting to be really, really great and pushing myself so hard."

Then, as now, her golf swing was flawless. It was her life that was out of alignment.

It was not until an injury sidelined her in 2005 that Pak was able to stand back and admire her body of work, and see herself as others did, as a pioneer.

"In Korea, people who don't know golf know Se Ri," Pak's compatriot Birdie Kim said.

When Pak joined the Tour in 1998 at age 20 after breezing through the L.P.G.A. qualifying tournament, the membership included only one other South Korean citizen, Ji Hyun Suh.

Golf was considered a rich man's game in South Korea until Pak turned it into a kind of cultural revolution. In a two-month stretch during her rookie season, she won four events — two of them majors — and a star was born.

Millions of South Koreans stayed up all night to watch the live coverage of her victory over Jenny Chuasiriporn, an amateur, in a 20-hole playoff at the 1998 United States Women's Open. At a time when South Koreans had little confidence in their economy, Pak became the gold standard for a generation.



Pat Crowe II/Associated Press

When Se Ri Pak, above at the L.P.G.A. Championship, joined the Tour in 1998, there was only one other South Korean player. Now there are 45.

Pak Inspires New Generation of Countrywomen

By KAREN CROUSE

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This year, 45 South Korean-born players are on the Tour, a dozen of whom started playing golf in or after 1998. Of the 84 golfers who made the cut here, 19, including Pak, were South Korean. One of them, Na On Min, is leading this tournament with 18 holes to play.

Pak is the idol of most junior golfers, Min said Saturday. She added, "So if I win this tournament, it's like no way to describe it."

Pak was a sprinter, a hurdler and a shot-putter before her father, Joon Chul Pak, steered her into golf when she was 14.

He once said he made her play because he had some vague idea "that golf would bring her money."

Under her father's watchful eye, Pak practiced on the range for hours. Sometimes in the winter, icicles would form in her hair while she hit balls. She regularly ran 15 flights of stairs, forward and backward, to build her lower-body strength.

To train his daughter's mind, Joon Chul had her hit golf balls in a cemetery at night and watch pit bulls fight.

Pak was trained to be a machine, but even as she was cranking out victories, she said, she felt strangely unfulfilled.

"It was like, hey, I'm missing something," she said.

In 2001 and 2002, Pak played brilliantly, posting 10 L.P.G.A. victories in that span — five each year — only to be overshadowed by Annika Sorenstam, who won 19 times.

Pak redoubled her efforts to become No. 1, and all it got her was exhausted. By 2004, she had little left in her tank. She won only once that year, at the Michelob Ultra Open, but it was a monumental victory, giving her enough points to qualify as a Hall of Famer.

Her induction would have to wait three years, until she met the 10-year Tour membership requirement. That loomed like an eternity to the burned-out Pak. Recalling those days, she said, "I hated to be on the golf course."

At the 2005 Women's British Open, Pak injured the middle finger of her left hand while hitting out of the rough and had to take the next few months off to let it heal.

Pak's friend and mentor, Nancy Lopez, called the injury "a blessing in disguise." Delivered from her golfing compulsions, Pak hung out with friends and forged an identity away

from the course. She returned to the Tour last year feeling like a new person and won her 23rd tournament and 5th major at the L.P.G.A. Championship. When she is inducted later this year, she will become the L.P.G.A. Tour Hall's 23rd member. (Dinah Shore is an honorary member.)

One day last week, as Pak prepared to defend her title, the practice green at Bulle Rock was alive with the sound of Korean. It was music to the ears of Pak, who was the center of the conversation, literally and metaphorically.

"First time it felt a little weird to hear so many players speaking Korean," Pak said. "Now it just feels comfortable." She added: "I'm really, really proud to see how many players have made it from my country. They're young. They have such great dreams. They're really doing well. I'm very happy to see it."

The young South Koreans are not the only ones who look up to Pak. Lorena Ochoa, the No. 1 player in the world, is one of two golfers from Mexico on the Tour. Her goal is to make her golfing dream as accessible to her countrywomen as Pak has made it to hers.

"I admire her a lot," Ochoa said. "She's very special. Sometimes I don't think she even realizes how big she is."

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THE I.O.C. SHOULD PICK THE WELCOMING BACKYARD

BY GEORGE VECSEY

Always listen to your neighborhood Nimby. That's my policy, and it's a good one. If enough people are chanting "Not in my backyard!" it probably means they really don't want it, whether it's a power line or a freeway or some cockamamie hybrid sports complex, no names mentioned.

That's why the members of the International Olympic Committee should listen to the Nimby factor in Salzburg, Austria, and choose the South Korean town of Pyeongchang for the 2014 Winter Games, when the vote is taken tomorrow afternoon in Guatemala.

Pyeongchang is a better choice than Salzburg or Sochi, Russia, not only because it seems to have the best plan, but also because South Korea has proved itself twice in the last generation to be a highly skillful and enthusiastic host of major sports events.

Another major reason for choosing Pyeongchang is a poll released in early June by the evaluation committee of the I.O.C. Twenty-seven percent of residents in Salzburg were strongly opposed to holding the Games while another 18 percent were somewhat opposed, compared with the 7 percent strongly opposed and 7 percent somewhat opposed in Sochi and 3 and 2 in Pyeongchang.

That's a lot of Nimby types in Salzburg. And they may very well be right. Salzburg has been staging winter sports since that Mozart boy was writing concertos, and the locals don't need Olympic-mandated security patrols and television construction crews clogging up their town, getting in the way of real life.

The South Koreans not only have space and money to build a modern Olympic site, but they are also a people with something to prove.

"Sports unite people," said Han Seung-soo, the former president of the United Nations general assembly and ambassador to the United States who is now the chairman of the Pyeongchang bid committee.

"I think the international community is aware of the Korean people and our rapid economic growth," said Han, an economist by training, in a telephone interview yesterday.

Then there is the matter of a geopolitical leap of faith — voting for a site only an hour and a half from what President Clinton once called "the scariest place on earth," the demilitarized zone separating North and South Korea.

Putting the Games near the border would, in effect, be making a statement that two halves of the same psyche won't be hurling missiles at each other. At the moment, the hermit nation of North Korea is toning down its nuclear bluster, and has approved the Winter Games near its borders, even agreeing to a joint Olympic team, eventually. The North Koreans want a team based on a straight 50-50 split while the South Koreans want a team based on results, which indicates a decade-long debate over whether to use a square table or a round table.

More importantly, the I.O.C. constantly preaches reconciliation through sport, and has already seen South Korea come through during the 1988 Summer Games.

"North Korea boycotted the Seoul Olympics," Han recalled yesterday, adding that "tension was very high," a reference to the civil unrest in South Korea before the Games. Yet the Games were held in a flurry of color and good will and competence, as the world got to know a major Asian nation.



"Now tension has receded," said Han, who was recently appointed a special envoy on climate change by his former assistant, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon.

Han, 70, grew up in Gangwon province, which includes Pyeongchang. He recalled years of poverty in the partitioned nation, but added, "the last 40, 50 years, we have had good economic growth."

"Now we have the infrastructure to build a modern Olympic center," he said.

The concept of reconciliation was criticized by Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer of Austria Sunday after his arrival in Guatemala.

"Is the vote for the sake of Olympic ideals or is it for geopolitics?" Gusenbauer was quoted as saying by The Associated Press. "We do not need to have the Olympic Games for a special purpose for us. We think we can offer something special — more emotion and more passion. This is what the Olympics so desperately needs."

More emotion? More passion? This man clearly has never met a Korean. He could not have been in South Korea in 2002, when that nation shared the World Cup with Japan, and everybody wore red T-shirts to contribute to the national team's improbable surge to the semifinals.

But spirit is not everything. Pyeongchang narrowly lost to Vancouver, British Columbia, for the 2010 Games in a vote four years ago, finishing slightly ahead of Salzburg. Both of their current plans have been termed "excellent" in the recent I.O.C. evaluation, although the criticisms of Salzburg seemed more pointed, while Sochi was chillingly described as merely "very good."

Austria had a doping scandal during the 2006 Winter Games in Turin, Italy, with 6 athletes and 14 team officials ultimately suspended. South Korea has also had a scandal in recent years, with Kim Un-yong, a former power in the Olympic movement, sentenced to 30 months in jail for embezzlement.

The three nations are throwing in the big guns, so to speak. President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea arrived in Guatemala yesterday while President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia was expected after stopping off to visit President Bush in Maine.

The Sochi committee installed its own skating rink in Guatemala City, with Slava Fetisov, the great hockey defenseman and an Olympic official, expected to skate, as was the former Olympic figure skating champion Evgeni Plushenko.

Chancellor Gusenbauer tried to prop up Austria by stressing Salzburg's proximity to the traditional winter-sports audience of Europe and North America, but Han noted this is a new century, saying, "There are a billion people living in Asia near the Games."

Being an Olympic host is an expensive honor. Sometimes the Summer Games are used to upgrade a city, the way Beijing is doing, and Athens, Atlanta and Barcelona did in the recent past, but Winter Games are trickier, based on cold-weather sports in a world of rising temperatures. A sensible swath of Salzburg residents may very well believe they don't need this intrusion, but Koreans, rightly or wrongly, want to throw a costly party in 2014. By their diligence and their spirit, they have earned it.

CHOI FINDS PLENTY OF SUCCESS BY PLAYING WITH GOLF'S GREATS

BY DAMON HACK

BETHESDA, Md., July 8

In a brand new tournament at a historic golf course, K. J. Choi stood in a yawning bunker by the 17th green of Congressional Country Club, digging his spikes into the sand with his golf club hovering over the ball.

As a loud and sun-baked gallery grew quiet, Choi took a slash at the dirt, sending droplets of sand and the ball toward the green. When the ball trickled onto the surface and disappeared into the hole for a birdie, Choi unleashed an uppercut worthy of the tournament host.

Five weeks after he won Jack Nicklaus's Memorial Tournament, Choi took the title at the inaugural AT&T National, with Tiger Woods as the host, shooting a two-under-par 68 in Sunday's final round to defeat Steve Stricker by three strokes and find himself in an exclusive club of one.

Choi finished with a nine-under-par 271 and joined Woods, Phil Mickelson, Vijay Singh and Zach Johnson as the only players with multiple victories this season.

In winning official events held by Nicklaus and Woods, however, Choi stood alone.

"I'm just shocked at myself being able to win Jack and Tiger's tournament," Choi, 37, said through an interpreter. "I can't express what this means to me. I just tried to make myself as comfortable as I could and approach it like a professional.

"This tournament is too big to absorb right now."

As he did in winning the Memorial, Choi surged to the lead against one of the strongest fields of the season.

Stuart Appleby, who held a two-shot lead over Choi going into the final round, shot a 76 and lost for the second time this season when holding the 54-hole lead. He held a one-shot lead going into the final round of the Masters in April and shot a three-over-par 75.

Woods, who wore many hats during the week, shot a par 70 and finished tied for sixth in his final event before the British Open begins July 19 at Carnoustie in Scotland.

"I had a great time," Woods said. "The tournament's come together in such a short span of time, and everyone's worked hard to make it happen. From what I've seen walking around the golf course, this tournament has been embraced by the people here in the D.C. area. We've been lucky."

Nearly 140,000 fans descended upon Congressional during the week, including 37,211 on Sunday.

"It felt like a minimajor out there," said Stricker, who shot a 70.

Already an icon in South Korea, where he learned to play golf while reading an instructional book by Nicklaus, Choi is gaining in stature in the United States.

If Woods was the tournament's leading man, Choi was easily the best supporting actor, with a vocal and passionate gallery of his own.

One fan carried a sign with the words "Go Tank" written on it. Tank is Choi's nickname from his days as a weight lifter in Wando, South Korea, where he could squat more than 300 pounds by age 13.

Asked who was more popular in Korea — himself or the Hall of Fame golfer Se Ri Pak — Choi played it down the middle.

"I think we're both walking a similar path right now," he said. "You can't really compare who is better, who is more popular. I think what she has done on the L.P.G.A. Tour is tremendous.

"There may be another Se Ri Pak following in her footsteps, there may be another K. J. Choi following in my footsteps."

The Choi at Congressional was plenty strong. He trailed Stricker by one shot through 13 holes but took a two-

shot lead after Stricker bogeyed Nos. 14 and 15 and he birdied 15 when he rolled in a 15-foot downhill putt.

His 30-foot bunker shot on 17 gave Choi a stress-free walk down the 18th hole, where Woods was waiting for him with a trophy, the way Nicklaus was last month.

Woods, wearing a blue blazer over his traditional Sunday red shirt, smiled as he handed off the trophy and Choi raised it to his lips.

"I can't say which one makes me feel better," Choi said when asked which title meant more to him. "They are both valuable. One thing I can say is Tiger's trophy is a lot heavier than Jack's trophy, if that means anything."

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Pat Perez and Hunter Mahan, with their high finishes at the AT&T National — tied for third and eighth — earned spots in the British Open. Woody Austin also qualified but turned down the spot, citing an overbooked schedule of eight starts in a row. ... K. J. Choi earned \$1.08 million with the victory.

Choi Finds Plenty of Success by Playing With Golf's Greats

By DAMON HACK

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THE GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

BY JENNIFER TUNG



The Graphic Designers

WHAT I'M WEARING NOW
 Lis G. Bayles for The New York Times

Truman and Minhee Cho, the founders of Paper + Cup, a graphic design firm in Brooklyn known for its hip, whimsical stationery, see eye-to-eye at work. "Everything we make, we think of together," Ms. Cho said. "I'm always looking for mundane objects on the sidewalk that I can translate onto paper." Her husband, Truman, who also works as a technological engineer at EMI Records, agreed. "We make napkin drawings at breakfast and dinner," he said. "Minhee comes up with the designs on the computer, and then I pull back the reins because she goes so far out there." Simply put, Ms. Cho said, "He edits me."

In terms of wardrobe, it is her husband who could use some editing. "He owns more than double the clothing that I do," said Ms. Cho, 32. "I usually just wear jeans and a comfortable shirt." Here, she wears a Tracy Reese cotton eyelet top, Paige jeans and Chie Mahara shoes. Mr. Cho, also 32, wears an Etro jacket over a Thom Browne shirt and a Dries Van Noten sweater. His jeans are by John Varvatos, and his sneakers are Jack Purcells by John Varvatos. "Clothes are functional art pieces," he said.

The Chos, who recently celebrated their first wedding anniversary, went to the same elementary school in Orange County, Calif., but didn't start dating until after college. They share a childlike sensibility that clearly influences their designs. "We're really into kung fu movies right now," Ms. Cho said. "They inspire us to keep things lively."

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FASTER FASHION, CHEAPER CHIC

BY RUTH LA FERLA

LOS ANGELES

Colibri Evans navigated the aisles of Forever 21 at the Beverly Center last week with a sure step and a shrewd eye. Her mother, Sasha Evans, was more circumspect, offering for Colibri's approval a string of neo-hippie beads Joss Stone might have coveted.

"It's her job to say 'Yes, No, Yes, No,'" Mrs. Evans said, nodding toward her daughter, a 29-year-old music producer. "She tells me what's cool and what's too young for me."

It was Mrs. Evans's first visit to a store that at first glance seemed to cater exclusively to the sparkle gloss-and-cami set. All the same she was intent on finding "maybe a nice overshirt," she said, "something summery that hides my questionable areas."

With Mother's Day just over a week away, a trip to the cavernous fashion bazaar at the uppermost level of the mall promised to cement a bond. "For me it's a way of our just being together, of spending some quality time with my mom," Ms. Evans said.

Bonding is only part of a larger emotional payoff for recreational shoppers like the Evanses, who throng the store, part of the rapidly expanding Forever 21 chain, giddy at the prospect of daily deliveries of fresh, trend-driven fashions at prices that undercut even those of its competitor H&M, across the corridor.

By relentlessly chasing trends and catering to an ever-widening market — young women and matrons, men and toddlers — Forever 21 has positioned itself as a retail powerhouse, the American answer to fast fashion emporiums like the European-based Zara, Mexx and H&M.

The privately held company has galloped ahead in recent years, doubling its number of stores to 400 since 2005. Retail analysts estimate sales have grown to more than \$1 billion last year from about \$640 million in 2005.

"They are playing by a different set of rules," said Howard Davidowitz, a New York retail consultant, partly by catering to entire families rather than focusing on teenagers, but also by rivaling competitors in scale. Forever 21 stores are typically 25,000 square

feet, roughly five times that of many Anthropologie or Gap stores.

Don and Jin Chang, the founders and owners of the chain, opened their first store on Figueroa Street in downtown Los Angeles in the mid-1980s. The small shop, aimed primarily at schoolgirls, proved successful enough that the Changs, who immigrated from South Korea, were able to add new stores on an average of every six months. By the early '90s, Forever 21 was a significant mall presence.

The purchase of Gadzooks, a Midwest clothing retailer, for about \$33 million at auction two years ago placed the chain "in the land of the giants," Mr. Davidowitz said.

Last year the company opened its retail showpiece, a 40,000-square-foot store in Pasadena, Calif., offering women's, men's and children's clothing, accessories and lingerie. Clearly the jewel in the family diadem, it is housed in a former Saks Fifth Avenue with silver candelabra posted at the door. The company also operates a Web site, Forever21.com and, as of this year, 17 free-standing For Love accessories stores.

Mrs. Chang, who is in her 50s, cultivates an all-but-invisible profile. She declined to appear for a scheduled interview, dispatching Lisa Boisset, the company's vice president for merchandise, to speak for her. Ms. Boisset discussed her boss, who appears in photographs as a trim woman with dark hair that swings well past her shoulders, with a born-again zeal.

Her eyes appeared to well spontaneously as she talked about the Changs' deep-rooted spirituality. The Changs' Christian faith is telegraphed near the bottom of the stores' trademark yellow shopping bags with the stamp, John 3:16, referring to a biblical passage.

Ms. Boisset described the Changs as ever on the prowl for ideas and trends. While it takes a designer like Marc Jacobs or Michael Kors several months to get clothes into stores after their debut on the runways, Forever 21 delivers interpretations of the same looks within six weeks.

Faster Fashion, Cheaper Chic

Trends are served fresh daily at Forever 21, the clothing retailer growing like a weed near you.



MIX AND MATCH Models at a Forever 21 store in Pasadena, Calif., display trends that appeal to both children and adults.

By RUTH LA FERLA

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Continued on Page 5

A among the stores' hip offerings this month are a club-friendly white cotton corset trimmed in midnight blue lace (\$19.80), a scarlet cotton swing jacket cropped well above the waist (\$27.80), denim capri pants (\$27.80) and a puff-sleeve hoodie sprinkled with tiny hearts (\$17.80).

The chain says it employs no designers, "just very savvy designer merchants," Ms. Boisset said. Although these merchants' skills are at the heart of Forever 21's success in offering shoppers faithful adaptations of runway hits, the company declined to make them available for an interview.

"Our design process is proprietary," Ms. Boisset said.

Forever 21 maneuvered its way into the cheap-chic arena at a propitious moment. "Consumers were cross-shopping more than ever and growing more confident that they don't have to rely on name brand to ensure good taste," said Robert Burke, a New York retail consultant. He added that in the last two years the company managed to shed its formerly frowsy image, one he characterized as "mostly bad polka dots — a little Melanie Griffith 'Working Girl.'"

Whereas its rival H&M offers both dolly-bird styles and urban chic staples like trench jackets and pencil skirts, Forever 21 appeals to shoppers with a sweet tooth who snap up toxic-colored psychedelic prints like M&Ms. But at the Beverly Center store, a more subdued style caught the eye of one shopper in her 50s, a consultant to graduate students, who was too embarrassed to give her full name.

"I feel a little self-conscious coming here by myself," she confided. "I'm too old." While she would bypass 90 percent of the store's offerings, she called the remainder "an incredible buy." Then she made for the register clutching a flower-patterned cotton shirt priced at \$22.80. "How do you beat that?" she exulted.

Unlike the eye-searingly bright and tidy stores in Los Angeles, the Forever 21 emporiums on West 34th Street and in Union Square in Manhattan have the hectic appeal of a jumble sale, with teeming aisles, cramped racks and the occasional pair of shorts or skirt trampled underfoot — as chaotic, you imagine, as the inside of Lindsay Lohan's closet.

On a recent Friday evening, discarded merchandise was hurriedly ferried from the canvas-curtained fitting rooms back to the racks and to tables piled pell-mell with castoffs. Colleen O'Neill, who works in the buying office of MaxMara, the Italian fashion label, ignored the line snaking toward the changing area, preferring to stand in the middle of the sales floor tug-

ging a tropical print sundress over her shirt. "Who can wait for a fitting room," she said.

With a friend and a fellow worker, Ana Burcroff, Ms. O'Neill scours the store for bargains every other day. "But it's really hard to find things here in your size," she said, explaining that they sell out quickly, "so we look for a style we like and go back and buy it online back at work."

She liked that "the clothes are on trend," she added, "almost indistinguishable from designer clothes."

Indeed. On the evidence of the wares at stores in Los Angeles and Manhattan, the merchants are clever enough to emulate a handful of retail competitors, reproducing the styles scouted on the runways and at upscale boutiques.

Diane Von Furstenberg filed a lawsuit last month against Forever 21 for replicating a DVF dress down to its print, fabric and color. Current law does not protect clothing design from being copied (logos are an exception), but Ms. Von Furstenberg and other American designers have been lobbying Congress since last year to expand the copyright statute that protects music and books. Such a change is considered a long shot.

Anna Corinna, a partner at Foley & Corinna, a boutique on Manhattan's Lower East Side, was startled to discover a photograph of a Forever 21 evening dress on a blog, Fashionista.com, alongside one of her store's designs. From their fluid cut and noodle straps to the floral panel running down their fronts, the dresses were almost identical. The Foley & Corinna dress sells for more than \$400, the copy for about \$40.

"When I looked at those pictures, I didn't know which dress was ours at first," Ms. Corinna said. "It's almost as if their people had told themselves: 'Mmm, this is good stuff. Let's forget product development and just make what they are doing.'"

"I would understand their being 'influenced or inspired by.' Everyone is," she added. "But this is just a blatant steal." She is not planning to take action.

Ms. Boisset of Forever 21 said that the company works with many suppliers and does not always know where their ideas originate.

In such cases, it is sometimes the customer who has the last word. "I found a wrap dress here that looked just like one by Diane Von Furstenberg," Ms. O'Neill recalled as she shopped at the 34th Street store in Manhattan. Did it trouble her that the company appeared to be trading in knockoffs? "Not really," she confessed. "That dress, you know, I bought it."

A LONGTIME SHEPHERD OF KOREAN FASHION

BY NORIMITSU ONISHI

SABUK, South Korea

Andre Kim's fashion show on a recent Saturday evening ended, as his shows always do, with wedding gowns and "Ave Maria." The models then all lined up on the outdoor stage to summon Mr. Kim, who appeared on the runway, triumphantly, in his trademark all-white space suit.

It was another successful show for Mr. Kim, 72, still South Korea's most famous and powerful fashion designer, some four decades after he made Western dress popular among Korean women. An instantly recognizable cultural icon because of the futuristic suit he has chosen to wear for 30 years, and a favorite of consumers and comedians alike, Mr. Kim threatened to overshadow his own collection.

The applause continued. After bowing several times, Mr. Kim stepped off the stage and shook hands with the Koreans and foreigners sitting in the front rows. But he was hardly done for the day. He and his entourage had left Seoul in the morning and arrived here in this former coal mining town, now a gambling resort with Las Vegas-style hotels, after a three-hour drive across the peninsula.

"Pardon me, pardon me, I must leave immediately," Mr. Kim, famous for working seven days a week, said in English. "I have work in Seoul early tomorrow morning."

With that, Mr. Kim began making his way through the crowds. His suit's baggy pants made a rapid swishing sound. People grabbed their camera phones, some not fast enough. Mr. Kim, like some costumed superhero, had already disappeared in the late summer evening's darkness.

Such is Mr. Kim's power that everyone from the most sought-after actresses to the wives of ambassadors posted to South Korea have modeled in his shows. In recent years, he has lent the Andre Kim brand to cosmetics, sunglasses, golf equipment and interior design, as well as washing machines, refrigerators and other home appliances manufactured by Samsung.

But it is the clothes — usually baroque, in bright, bold colors, with Byzantine or Renaissance motifs — that have made Mr. Kim. They exude a Western sensibility, sometimes loudly, as with his collection of dresses featuring prints of paintings by Rubens, Ingres, Michelangelo and Raphael.

"Fashion should portray grace, intellectual and artistic beauty, youthful energy," Mr. Kim said. "Not too classic. I don't like 'old.' Even though I was born in 1935, I don't feel my age. I feel like a teenager who is 10 or 15 or 20 years old — fairy tale, fantasy, young and brilliant."

THE SATURDAY PROFILE

A Longtime Shepherd of Korean Fashion



SEOCHONG LEE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

"I grew tremendously, in line with the South Korean society and economy."

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Su-hyun Lee contributed reporting from Seoul, South Korea.

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In the early 1960s, when Mr. Kim began designing, the country was still recovering from the Korean War, information from abroad was scarce and very few Korean women wore Western-style clothing.

Yang Sook-hi, a professor of textile and clothing design at Sookmyung Women's University, said that while female fashion designers also took up Western fashion in the early 1960s, Mr. Kim popularized it through

The Eastern designer who made Western clothing popular in his own country.

fashion shows and the mass media.

"Andre Kim contributed in a way that greatly appealed to the general public, and he was very proactive in this," Ms. Yang said. "He became known to all South Koreans."

Although Mr. Kim grew up in a farming village outside Seoul, his earliest memories revolve around clothes. During Japan's colonial rule, he said, he remembers hearing of privileged Korean women, called modern women, coming back from Japan dressed in the Western fashion already popular there. When he was in kindergarten, he remembers, he was deeply impressed by the sight of a bride during a village wedding.

"Since an early age I was into art," he said. "I started by painting landscapes, but then I started to draw Western dresses as if I were dressing women. But the reality at the time was that women were still wearing traditional Korean dresses."

Before anyone else here did, Mr. Kim also grasped the importance of creating an image — in his case, one that dovetailed with a do-

mestic longing for the West's imagined luxury and sophistication. He started by jettisoning his first name, Bong-nam. At the suggestion of a friend in the French Embassy, he reinvented himself as Andre, which sounded "poetic" to him. He sprinkled English words — "elegance," "romanticism," "fantasy," "intellectual" — into every other sentence.

"I love the Oxford accent — it is very dignified," Mr. Kim said. "I love America very much, the citizens, the government, the politics, the culture. But I love the Oxford accent. I feel it's more intellectual."

Over time, an Andre Kim dress became part of the closet of many well-dressed women here. Mr. Kim was invited to design the dresses for the Miss Universe pageant. He received cultural awards in Europe.

"I grew tremendously," Mr. Kim said, "in line with the South Korean society and economy."

EVEN as his dresses changed with each new collection, though, Mr. Kim settled on the white space suit for himself.

"I used to wear regular tailored suits until 30 years ago," Mr. Kim said. "But because I don't exercise, there came a time when I could no longer wear tailored suits in a way that satisfied the style. The suit I designed is not only futuristic, but it covers the figure I lost by not exercising."

He keeps more than 100 copies of the suit, changing two or three times a day. The white space suit has become a fixture of every important social event, where he invariably occupies the best seat or table. Only the ever thicker makeup on Mr. Kim's face, and the thinning hair he covered by painting his head boldly in black, betrayed the passage of time.

Yet, as South Korea opened up in the 1980s, Andre Kim seemed, especially to the young, a vestige of a long-vanished country.

On top of that, a few years ago Mr. Kim was forced to reveal his real first name, Bong-nam, in a court appearance. Many howled that the man known as "Andre" actually had a name that sounded old-fashioned and country-like.

Mr. Kim was unfazed.

"When I watch television and see comedians mimicking me, I feel embarrassed," he said. "But when I go out and meet the public, I'm popular. People ask for my autograph. They take photos of me or together with them. I see that as the public's love for me."

TO THE GLEE OF SOUTH KOREAN FANS, A GAME'S SEQUEL IS ANNOUNCED

BY SETH SCHIESEL

In the early 1960s, when Mr. Kim began designing, the country was still recovering from the Korean War, information from abroad was scarce and very few Korean women wore Western-style clothing.

Yang Sook-hi, a professor of textile and clothing design at Sookmyung Women's University, said that while female fashion designers also took up Western fashion in the early 1960s, Mr. Kim popularized it through fashion shows and the mass media.

"Andre Kim contributed in a way that greatly appealed to the general public, and he was very proactive in this," Ms. Yang said. "He became known to all South Koreans."

Although Mr. Kim grew up in a farming village outside Seoul, his earliest memories revolve around clothes. During Japan's colonial rule, he said, he remembers hearing of privileged Korean women, called modern women, coming back from Japan dressed in the Western fashion already popular there. When he was in kindergarten, he remembers, he was deeply impressed by the sight of a bride during a village wedding.

"Since an early age I was into art," he said. "I started by painting landscapes, but then I started to draw Western dresses as if I were dressing women. But the reality at the time was that women were still wearing traditional Korean dresses."

Before anyone else here did, Mr. Kim also grasped the importance of creating an image — in his case, one that dovetailed with a domestic longing for the West's imagined luxury and sophistication. He started by jettisoning his first name, Bong-nam. At the suggestion of a friend in the French Embassy, he reinvented himself as Andre, which sounded "poetic" to him. He sprinkled English words — "elegance," "romanticism," "fantasy," "intellectual" — into every other sentence.

"I love the Oxford accent — it is very dignified," Mr. Kim said. "I love America very much, the citizens, the government, the politics, the culture. But I love the Oxford accent. I feel it's more intellectual."

Over time, an Andre Kim dress became part of the closet of many well-dressed women here. Mr. Kim was invited to design the dresses for the Miss Universe pageant. He received cultural awards in Europe.

"I grew tremendously," Mr. Kim said, "in line with the South Korean society and economy."

Even as his dresses changed with each new collection, though, Mr. Kim settled on the white space suit for himself.

"I used to wear regular tailored suits until 30 years ago," Mr. Kim said. "But because I don't exercise, there came a time when I could no longer wear tailored suits in a way that satisfied the style. The suit I designed is not only futuristic, but it covers the figure I lost by not exercising."

He keeps more than 100 copies of the suit, changing two or three times a day. The white space suit has become a fixture of every important social event, where he invariably occupies the best seat or table. Only the ever thicker makeup on Mr. Kim's face, and the thinning hair he covered by painting his head boldly in black, betrayed the passage of time.

Yet, as South Korea opened up in the 1980s, Andre Kim seemed, especially to the young, a vestige of a long-vanished country.

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Much of South Korea and gamers around the world spun into a tizzy over the weekend as Blizzard Entertainment, perhaps the world's most successful video game company, announced that it was developing a sequel to its popular computer strategy game StarCraft.

The original StarCraft, which pits humans against two alien races in a science-fiction environment, has sold more than 9.5 million copies since its introduction in 1998. The game has become practically the national sport for South Koreans under age 40. It has been credited with helping propel the deployment of Internet connections that are far faster than those generally available in the United States.

Competitive gaming, known in South Korea as E-sports, has millions of young Korean participants, and the country has at least three television networks devoted to gaming (akin to ESPN and Fox Sports in North America). Top professional StarCraft players like Lim Yo Hwan are national celebrities on the order of film stars and pop music idols.

Over the weekend, thousands of fans jammed the Olympic Gymnastics Arena in Seoul for Blizzard's 2007 Worldwide Invitational StarCraft tournament, where the company announced that it was working on StarCraft II.

On video game Web sites and message boards around the world, the announcement eclipsed reports about Sony's Gamer Day in San Diego last week and speculation about Nintendo's media briefing tomorrow in Seattle.

"We know that the announcement of StarCraft II has all but caused the Internet to explode," editors wrote at Joystiq.com, a popular gaming blog.

"But can you imagine what it must be like in Korea? Seriously, can you imagine? It would be like people in the United States finding out that there was a sequel to 'American Idol' that would also power their cars."

Blizzard, based in Irvine, Calif., is a subsidiary of Vivendi of France. In an industry that usually focuses on consoles that plug into televisions, like the PlayStation 3 from Sony and Xbox 360 from Microsoft, Blizzard has built a billion-dollar business on games for desktop PCs. It has a record of smash hits based on its StarCraft, Warcraft and Diablo franchises.

World of Warcraft, the company's online fantasy role-playing game, has attracted more than eight million subscribers (who generally pay more than \$10 a month), in a genre where 250,000 users is considered major success.

Blizzard did not announce a release date for StarCraft II. Company executives said the game would not be released this year, but that it would run on both Windows and Macintosh computers when it is made available.

"We are going to take real-time strategy games farther than we have in the past and farther than anyone else has in the market," Paul Sams, Blizzard's chief operating officer, said in an interview.

Mr. Sams declined to comment on speculation among video-game specialists that the company was also working on a third installment of the Diablo fantasy action series.

The company is expected to make another major product announcement at its fan fair in Southern California in early August.

In South Korea, where major banks and telecommunications companies sponsor StarCraft leagues and teams (much as major American companies vie to associate themselves with the National Football League), fans cheered at every opportunity during the announcement.

"The graphics of StarCraft II seems so much better," said Kim Young Chul, 25. "No, I don't play the World of Warcraft or Warcraft 3. Only StarCraft."

To the Glee of South Korean Fans, A Game's Sequel Is Announced

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Se-Hyun Lee contributed reporting.

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SQUAREPANTS ROUNDTrip: SPONGEBOB'S YEARLONG RIDE TO ATLANTIS, VIA KOREA

BY EDWARD WYATT

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 11

If nautical nonsense be something you wish, it helps to be patient.

When SpongeBob SquarePants unleashes "Atlantis SquarePants," another of his periodic special episodes on Monday night, it will have been a long time coming: more than a year from the time the animators at Nickelodeon's Nicktoons studios in Burbank first sat down to sketch the outlines of a story about SpongeBob's quest to the lost city of Atlantis until the episode was delivered to the network.

They were able to get it done even in that time only because they split the 33-minute episode — the longest-ever installment of the eight-year-old series — into several parts, executing the drawing, sound recording, background painting and animation on each of those segments simultaneously.

The result, which stars David Bowie as Lord Royal Highness, and which will be shown at 8 p.m. Eastern and Pacific time Monday, is part of something that for Nickelodeon has become a twice-a-year ritual: a daylong marathon of viewers' favorite "SpongeBob

SquarePants" episodes. The marathon is capped by the new, heavily promoted installment and a behind-the-scenes documentary that together soak up cable television ratings for the day, if not the entire week.

As a way of exploiting Nickelodeon's most valuable property, the SpongeBob marathon is a key part of the channel's effort to stave off increasing competition from the Disney Channel, Cartoon Network and other rivals. And it has been notably successful. One year ago, for example, when Nickelodeon topped a 24-hour SpongeBob marathon with a new episode titled "Best Day Ever," the marathon grabbed 8 of the Top 10 half-hour slots in the week's cable ratings (the other two went to football games) and 14 of the top 20 slots, with the special episode itself drawing 6.7 million viewers.

"We do know that kids like events as much as adults do," Cyma Zarghami, the president of the Nickelodeon networks, said last week. "There's a certain amount of water-cooler talk that goes on among kids," she added, especially around a sequel-like installment of a beloved series, be it "Shrek the Third," "High School Musical 2" or the eighth special episode of "SpongeBob."

But a year? For 33 minutes of animation? The average hourlong hospital drama, after all, takes a couple of months to produce, from story idea to broadcast. The creators of "South Park," the animated hit on Comedy Central, have been known to produce a topical and timely satire of events surrounding a current newsmaker — Paris Hilton, say, or Terri Schiavo — in less than a week.

"We're one of the last shows that does it the old-fashioned way, like they used to do it back in the Warner Brothers days," said Paul Tibbitt, the supervising producer of "SpongeBob SquarePants," who serves as the show runner.

If, that is, the folks who brought you Looney Tunes had worked extensively with computers and shipped their original artwork to South Korea, where the bulk of the nuts-and-bolts animation is done.

But that is getting ahead of the story.

The year of preparation goes by fast. A SpongeBob episode begins, simply enough, with a premise: SpongeBob visits Atlantis, for example. The first two weeks are spent refining the idea and constructing a three-page outline of the story — no dialogue, just a description of where this ever-optimistic member of the phylum Porifera will go and whom he will encounter.

In the third and fourth weeks artists will construct a rough storyboard, which actually involves as much writing as drawing. Dialogue is written, jokes sharpened and the story rounded out, with sketches representing scene changes or illustrating the main plot points.

The storyboard is then pitched to network executives. "We stand up there with a stick and point to each frame and act it out," Mr. Tibbitt said. "It's not a wordy, jokey kind of show. It's more visual, so pitching it and acting it out seems to help."

After a week or so for dialogue and story revisions based on the network's feedback, the SpongeBob team begins to finalize the entire storyboard. If Squidward is holding

a paintbrush in one frame, a prop designer has to decide what that paintbrush is going to look like. Background scenes are conceived, drawn and painted, in part on paper; sometimes line drawings are scanned into a computer, which electronically fills in the colors.

Roughly three months after the start of an episode, actors record the soundtrack, after which all of the dialogue is broken down by syllables, with each utterance or action — SpongeBob blowing a bubble, for example — assigned a certain number of frames of animation. All of those are put together into a crude animated sketch known as an animatic, which in the 15th week is shipped to Stephen Hillenburg, SpongeBob's creator, for approval.

"He looks at every single episode," Mr. Tibbitt said. Though Mr. Hillenburg has not been closely involved in the day-to-day production since the series returned after the completion of "The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie" in 2004, "he's the guy who knows SpongeBob best," Mr. Tibbitt said, adding, "He'll call and say, 'I don't think SpongeBob would say this,' or, 'Squidward's feet are too big here.'"

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In the 1980s animation began to migrate overseas because the labor was less expensive and because animated shows were not selling well in the United States. The labor is still somewhat cheaper, Nickelodeon executives said, but South Korea dominates in animation because the country has built an infrastructure for the practice while in the United States there is little formal training for animators.

After 13 weeks of work, during which each frame of the film is drawn and colored according to models sent from the United States, the product is shipped back to Nicktoons in Burbank. There an editor puts it together, and scenes are redrawn to fix mistakes and account for final changes in dialogue or actions. By the 40th week the first segment of the episode is completed; over the next 12 weeks the other

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SquarePants RoundTrip: SpongeBob's Yearlong Ride to Atlantis, via Korea

BY EDWARD WYATT

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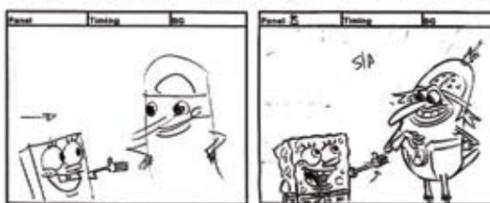
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A scene takes shape: top from left, rough and finished storyboards for "Atlantis SquarePants." Above, the final color art. The 33-minute episode took a full year to produce.

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THE WIZARD OF WHIMSY

BY SAKI KNAFO

For slightly more than a year, a mysterious little periodical has been circulating through the cubicles of New York publishing offices, attracting the kind of cultish attention usually reserved for letters stamped with secret societies' seals.

The name of the periodical, which arrives as an e-mailed PDF file, is The New-York Ghost. It offers an assortment of stream-of-consciousness prose, whimsical poems, dream transcripts and archival illustrations, as well as a mischievous motto: "The Weekly Newsletter You Print Out at Work."

Among the original pieces that have appeared in its pages are a one-question Q & A with a rapper known as Bun B. by Sasha Frere-Jones, pop music critic of The New Yorker, and an essay on pseudonyms by an author and New Yorker editor, Ben Greenman. The newsletter, which is free, boasts of having more than 500 subscribers, not to mention untold numbers of editors, copy editors, writers and fact-checkers who have read a copy abandoned on the tray of an office printer.

Yet the publisher of this jeu d'esprit has never officially disclosed his, or her, identity. Never, that is, until now.

Meet Ed Park.

Mr. Park, 37, is an editor of The Believer, a literary magazine; an associate editor for poetryfoundation.org; a novelist; the author of many blogs; and a former editor at The Village Voice.

Almost two years ago, after New Times Media, the Phoenix-based owner of a string of alternative weeklies, announced a merger with the paper, he and other Voice editors talked about establishing what they irreverently referred to as "the real New York alternative weekly." Various names were proposed, with The New York Whip ultimately triumphing over Mr. Park's preference, the not-yet-hyphenated New York Ghost. In August 2006, Mr. Park was one of a host of Voice editors let go by the new regime. He suddenly had some time on his hands.

By then, enthusiasm for The New York Whip had waned. No matter: Mr. Park got to work on issue No. 1 of The New-York Ghost. In one sitting, he filled four pages of a two-column Microsoft Word document with free-associative chatter about a book called

"Martian Dawn," a film called "The Science of Sleep," Korean soap operas, Brooklyn and something funny he'd seen while walking past a schoolyard.

Mr. Park also introduced some of what would become the paper's signature stylistic flourishes: the distinctly un-scary ghost logo, the nostalgic hyphen between the words New and York, and the exuberant use of italics and exclamation points. A legend near the top of the page read "Composed in toto on September 26, 2006."

That morning, just before noon, Mr. Park sent the document to about 20 of his friends. "Anonymity wasn't an issue," he said. "I just assumed everyone would know it was me."

Although Mr. Park had originally envisioned The Ghost as an homage to historical New York gazettes, the newsletter became less about the city and more about whatever Mr. Park found amusing. For example, he started a feature called "Ask the Yes Man" in which readers sent in questions to which the response was invariably "Yes." Yes was the response, too, when a reporter recently requested an interview, having overheard someone leak Mr. Park's identity at a party.

Mr. Park works out of the book-filled Upper West Side apartment where he lives with his wife, Sandra, a psychiatrist. When he needs material for the newsletter, he writes about his dreams, adopting the overexcited prose style of a Depression-era author of boys' adventure books.

"Digression: Every dream is an adventure!" begins a paragraph from a dream story published on Halloween 2006. It would be hard to find a better summation of the publication's philosophy than that sentence's first word.

One reader, Margaret Miller, an editor at Harper Collins Children's Books, was so taken with Mr. Park's digressions that she offered to embroider the Ghost logo on any article of clothing sent to her by mail. Her frequent letters to the Ghost appear under the pseudonym Regina Doublemint, and her first letter was printed beneath the heading, "Best letter yet?"

"Dear New-York Ghost," it begins. "I just woke up from a dream about The New-York Ghost." It concludes: "Please consider adding eight more pages of just rambling."

Excerpts

'One-Word Review: Hilarious'

Overdreamt in New York: We lay in bed, trying to wrap up the night's dream. It was time to wake up, perhaps, get the day rolling. Nothing is accomplished by staying in the sack. ¶ Nothing — except the pursuit of the sublime! ¶ Because the fact of the matter is, we had hit upon the perfect sentence — not for the first time. ¶ Dreams often bring us linguistic concoctions of unbearable beauty, or so it always seems at the time! ¶ That night's offering — or more likely, that dawn's — ran thusly:

"Newark lay there, sullen as a singer's boast." ¶ The perfect sentence! ¶ Newark! ¶ To our slumbering mind, nothing could be better.

*
Brooklyn: We go there once a week these days. Everyone lives there. Everyone. ¶ WHAT IS THAT ALL ABOUT? asks Grampa Ghost. When did Brooklyn become the center of the universe? How come all freelance writers and editors now live in Brooklyn? What happened to Manhattan? [Fades away.] ¶ Show of Hands Dept.: How many people listen to audiobooks? Oh yeah? Which ones are good? How do you navigate them on your iPod?

First 20 respondents to thenyghost@gmail.com will receive a free, personalized email, suitable for framing.

*
Midtown musing: If you stand across 57th so that you're looking at the front of Carnegie Hall, you'll notice that the frieze says: "MUSIC HALL." ¶ We like the old-school V, but we especially like the quotation marks. ¶ What was their purpose? ¶ What did the builders or the letters hope to indicate? That perhaps this was not a music hall? ¶ That it might instead be a stable, or a stocking factory? ¶ That all is uncertainty, and in years to come, the structure might be converted into a parking garage? ¶ Or do the quote marks suggest that the performances to be held inside were not what some meddling fuddyduddy considered

'music'? ¶ That is not music, that is the sound of HOOFEATS ON TARPAULIN! ¶ That was supposed to be our impression of a mustachioed aristocrat, decrying some new fad in music. ¶ Imagine him expounding while in a smoking-jacket. ¶ Okay. ¶ It's not working. ¶ We really wish we had a picture of those quotation marks.

*
Best thing that happened the other day: We were walking by a school playground, during recess. Kids were running around, screaming, laughing. In one corner, a teacher gave a command to a group of girls: "Robots!" Then they all started acting like robots, arms moving rigidly, etc. One-word review: Hilarious. Seriously, this made our day — our week — our year. ¶ Our life. ¶ That's going too far.

ED PARK



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For slightly more than a year, a mysterious little periodical has been circulating through the cubicles of New York publishing offices, attracting the kind of cultish attention usually reserved for letters stamped with secret societies' seals. The name of the periodical, which arrives as an e-mailed PDF file, is The New-York Ghost. It offers an assortment of stream-of-consciousness prose, whimsical poems, dream transcripts and archival illustrations, as well as a mischievous motto: "The Weekly Newsletter You Print Out at Work." Among the original pieces that have appeared in its pages are a one-question Q & A with a rapper known as Bun B. by Sasha Frere-Jones, pop music critic of The New Yorker, and an essay on pseudonyms by an author and New Yorker editor, Ben Greenman. The newsletter, which is free, boasts of having more than 500 subscribers, not to mention untold numbers of editors, copy editors, writers and fact-checkers who have read a copy abandoned on the tray of an office printer.

Yet the publisher of this jeu d'esprit has never officially disclosed his, or her, identity. Never, that is, until now.

Meet Ed Park. Mr. Park, 37, is an editor of The Believer, a literary magazine; an associate editor for poetryfoundation.org; a novelist; the author of many blogs; and a former editor at The Village Voice. Almost two years ago, after New Times Media, the Phoenix-based owner of a string of alternative weeklies, announced a merger with the paper, he and other Voice editors talked about establishing what they irreverently referred to as "the real New York alternative weekly." Various names were proposed, with The New York Whip ultimately triumphing over Mr. Park's preference, the not-yet-hyphenated New York Ghost. In August 2006, Mr. Park was one of a host of Voice editors let go by the new regime. He suddenly had some time on his hands.

An odd publication is flitting through New York offices, thanks to an editor with some time on his hands.

That morning, just before noon, Mr. Park sent the document to about 20 of his friends. "Anonymity wasn't an issue," he said. "I just assumed everyone would know it was me." Although Mr. Park had originally envisioned The Ghost as an homage to historical New York gazettes, the newsletter became less about the city and more about whatever Mr. Park found amusing. For example, he started a feature called "Ask the Yes Man" to which readers sent in questions to which the response was invariably "Yes." Yes was the response, too, when a reporter recently requested an interview, having overheard someone leak Mr. Park's identity at a party. Mr. Park works out of the book-filled Upper West Side apartment where he lives with his wife, Sandra, a psychiatrist. When he needs material for the newsletter, he writes about his dreams, adopting the overexcited prose style of a Depression-era author of boys' adventure books. "Digression: Every dream is an adventure!" begins a paragraph from a dream story published on Halloween 2006. It would be hard to find a better summation of the publication's philosophy than that sentence's first word. One reader, Margaret Miller, an editor at Harper Collins Children's Books, was so taken with Mr. Park's digressions that she offered to embroider the Ghost logo on any article of clothing sent to her by mail. Her frequent letters to the Ghost appear under the pseudonym Regina Doublemint, and her first letter was printed beneath the heading, "Best letter yet?" "Dear New-York Ghost," it begins. "I just woke up from a dream about The New-York Ghost." It concludes: "Please consider adding eight more pages of just rambling."

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KOREAN WAR

BY LIESL SCHILLINGER



Illustrated by Edel Rodriguez

In Korean tradition, there's a complicated emotion called *han* which, by general consensus, applies chiefly to women. A recently published Korean commonplace book defines it as "resentment, sorrow, sense of loss and hardship, stifled passion and love, or the frustration of the downtrodden." A woman who manages to overcome these obstacles is said to have "resolved her *han*." In 21st-century American terms, this is what Oprah would call "living your best life."

In her accomplished and engrossing first novel, the Yale-and-Georgetown-law-educated writer Min Jin Lee tells the story of an angry young Korean-American woman, raised by status-conscious immigrant parents in Queens, who falls out with them after she graduates from Princeton. Not only does this heroine harbor *han*, she embodies it — her name is Casey Han.

Casey's filial, romantic and professional struggles lie at the heart of "Free Food for Millionaires," which unfolds in New York in the 1990s with an energetic eventfulness and a sprawling cast that call to mind the literary classics of Victorian England. Defiant and proud, Casey sorts out her life with a little help from her beautiful and docile Korean-American friend, Ella Shim, whose kindness she accepts with suspicion and resentment.

In their differing temperaments, Casey and Ella recall the seesaw sisters in "Middlemarch" or "Pride and Prejudice" — foolishly idealistic Dorothea versus sensible Celia; headstrong Lizzy Bennet versus ami-

able Jane. But the men in their lives aren't as tidily classifiable as Casaubon, Chettam, Darcy or Bingley. Nor is marriage the girls' primary goal. Like the author herself, Casey and Ella are modern women whose definition of happiness includes career satisfaction and personal fulfillment — both of which can be harder to secure than a man with a ring.

In his precociously feminist novel "Can You Forgive Her?," Anthony Trollope (one of Casey's favorite authors) told of a young woman who, early in the story, decides to reject the marriage proposal of a virtuous man who bores her. In "Middlemarch," George Eliot mused, "We are not afraid of telling over and over again how a man comes to fall in love with a woman and be wedded to her, or else be fatally parted from her." But Trollope explored the opposite side of that proposition: how does a woman come to fall in love with a man? What if she changes her mind? And what happens after that? He believed that everyone — male or female — "should endeavor to stand as well as he can in the world."

Henry James, who, like many critics of Trollope's era, felt mixed admiration for him, praised his "complete appreciation of the usual" and called him "one of the most trustworthy, though not one of the most eloquent of writers who have helped the heart of man to know itself." This "appreciation of the usual" and unmasaged portrayal of present realities also emerge in Lee's ambitious book.

It would be remarkable if she had simply written a long novel that was as easy to devour as a 19th-century romance — packed with tales of flouted parental expectations, fluctuating female friendships and rivalries, ephemeral (and longer-lasting) romantic hopes and losses, and high-stakes career gambles. But Lee intensifies her drama by setting it against an unfamiliar backdrop: the tightly knit social world of Korean immigrants, whose children strive to blend into their American foreground without clashing with their distinctive background. It's a feat of coordination and contrast that could kill a chameleon, but Lee pulls it off with conviction.

In the first chapter of "Free Food for Millionaires," Casey and her mild-mannered younger sister, Tina — home from M.I.T. — have returned to the family apartment in Elmhurst. While their meek mother prepares one of their favorite dishes, their taciturn father, just back from his job running a Manhattan dry-cleaning shop, slurps whiskey and glowers. Casey has been accepted at Columbia Law School, but has decided to engage in what rat-race-averse college grads throughout the world call "finding themselves." Breaking the news at dinner, she discovers that in finding herself she will lose her parents.

"When I was your age, I sold kimbop on the streets," Joseph Han blusters, enraged by her sense of entitlement. But Casey proves equally wrathful. "I've always worked hard," she shouts back. "Do you know what it's like for me to have to go to a school like that? To be surrounded by kids who went to Exeter and Hotchkiss, their parents belonging to country clubs?" "I'm sick of hearing how bad I am," she adds, "when I'm not. You won the sweepstakes with kids like us. Why aren't we good enough?" At the end of their violent argument, Joseph kicks her out of the house. A fight this brutal crosses cultural lines: its heartache is universal.

Slender and tall, and possessed of an innate sense of style as well as a pair of glistening silver wrist cuffs (which remind her of the "Wonder Woman" shows she watched on television as a child), Casey gets a low-level job at an investment bank to support herself while she plots her future. She knows she doesn't want to crunch numbers or go to law school: she wants to sew hats, even though "in America, only eccentrics and religious women" wear them.

Casey has acquired her outsize sense of personal destiny from two sources: her mentor, Sabine (an immigrant from her mother's village in Korea who has built a successful fashion business and married a rich American), and a handful of British authors whose works she reads again and again: George Eliot, the Brontë sisters and Trollope. Their fiction, Casey notices, bears an uncanny resemblance to the "Korean fairy tales her mother used to tell her," in which good things came to clever and virtuous women who followed the paths of "sacrifice and integrity."

But growing up in Queens at the end of the 20th century — rather than in the British countryside in the 19th century or on the outskirts of Seoul in the aftermath of the Korean War — Casey finds she has little appetite for the "sacrifice" part of the fantasy she savored as a child: "She had a strong desire to be happy and to have love, and she'd never considered such wishes to be Korean ones." Her mentor reinforces the message that she must write the script for her own future.

"Every minute matters," Sabine tells her. "All those times you turn on the television or go to the movies or shop for things you don't need, all those times you stay at a bar sitting with some guy talking some nonsense about how pretty your Korean hair is. ... Your life matters, Casey. Every second. And by the time you're my age — you'll see that for every day and every last moment spent, you were making a choice."

Refreshingly, Lee is interested not only in Casey and her friends, lovers and colleagues, but in her parents' generation as well. While she escorts Casey and her contemporaries through their first acts and toward their second ones, she also guides Casey's parents and friends toward third acts, showing their continuing evolution and the precariousness of their own Korean-American existence.

Trollope wrote that men and women ought to grow upward, "towards the light, as the trees do," and Lee clearly has absorbed that lesson. But in "Free Food for Millionaires," she imparts a lesson of her own: young and old need to accompany one another as they grow — sometimes shooting ahead, sometimes lagging behind, sometimes crossing paths. They're different branches, but they're part of the same tree, no matter where they're planted.

THE LIST OF 2007

The New York Times articles
on Korean Culture

This is the complete list of The New York Times articles on Korean Culture in 2007 according to our research at time of publication.

Not all articles on the list were selected for this booklet. The articles that are included in this booklet will be in **BOLD**.

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KOREAN CULTURAL SERVICE NEW YORK

Korean Cultural Service New York is a branch of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Korea. Since our inauguration in 1979, we have worked to promote cultural exchange and stimulate interest in Korean culture through our programs.

INFORMATION ON KOREA

The Korean Information Center contains over 16,000 volumes of literatures on Korea and Korea-related subjects; such as culture, history, politics, economy and more. We also have a wide collection of Korean Films on DVD available to be checked out by our patrons. *Hanbok* (Korean traditional costume) and Korean instruments are also available for check out.



EXHIBITIONS

Gallery Korea's primary goal is to encourage cultural understanding as a site of cultural exchange between Korean and Western art lovers. Each year, Gallery Korea presents exhibitions devoted to diverse-folk, contemporary to diasporic-Korean arts, as well as group shows featuring international artists.



KOREAN CINE FORUM

Two Korean Films are screened each month by the Korean Cultural Service New York: *A Night at the Movies* and *Korean Film Screening & Discussion*. Discussions after film screenings allow audience members an opportunity to share their knowledge, opinions and comments on the screened feature, as the discussions are led by Korean film professionals.

EVENTS

The elegance in Korean culture can be experienced through the Cultural Arts Events. In addition to our own events, including classical music concerts, jazz concerts, literature readings, culinary tasting events; we collaborate with many of the city's finest cultural organizations.



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THE KOREAN WAVE AS VIEWED THROUGH THE PAGES OF THE NEW YORK TIMES IN 2007 THE KOREAN WAVE AS

Americans are only beginning to become acquainted with Korean culture, which was virtually unknown in this country just four decades ago. A hundred years after *The New York Times* declared the Korean kingdom “obliterated,” Korean culture is more vibrant and visible than ever, and the Korean Wave has hit America’s shores with a vengeance.

Charles K. Armstrong

The Korea Foundation Associate Professor of Korean Studies in the Social Sciences
Director of the Center for Korean Research at Columbia University

Korea is present not just in the Wave that seems to emanate from far away in Seoul, but all around us as we make our ways through our daily lives. The articles gathered in this year’s compilation tell us about various particulars, and the lively, affirming energy of Korea’s cultural presence, while at the same time they continue to remind us of those human traits we all share.

David R. McCann

The Korea Foundation Professor of Korean Literature in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations
Director of the Korea Institute at Harvard University