THE KOREAN WAVE

THE KOREAN WAVE AS VIEWED THROUGH THE PAGES OF THE NEW YORK TIMES IN 2010 & 2011

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한국문화원
KOREAN CULTURAL SERVICE NY

This booklet is a collection of 43 articles
selected by Korean Cultural Service New York
from articles on Korean culture
by The New York Times in 2010 & 2011.

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Tel: 212 759 9550
Fax: 212 688 8640
Website: http://www.koreanculture.org
E-mail: info@koreanculture.org

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The Korean Wave is Here to Stay

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).

The "Korean Wave" has been with us for well over a decade. Invented by Chinese journalists at the end of the 1990s, the term *Hallyu* or "Korean Wave" originally described the sudden and extraordinary rise in popularity of Korean pop music, TV dramas, fashion, film and food in China and elsewhere in Asia. Throughout the 2000s, Korean culture drew an enthusiastic and ever-growing following all over the Asian continent, from middle-aged housewives in Japan addicted to Korean melodramas, to young men in Bhutan sporting haircuts modeled after their favorite K-pop stars. Europe and the Americas were a bit slower to catch the Korean wave, but in recent years Korean culture has found a significant niche in France, Argentina, Canada and the United States, as well as in other Western countries. Of course, Koreans have been immigrating to the US for over a century, and Korean culture is hardly a newcomer to places like New York City. Still, the visibility of Korea in "mainstream" American culture has increased exponentially in the last several years. Korean movies are no longer limited to the art house fringe but are reviewed regularly in the *New York Times*; New Yorkers consume Korean food with gusto, whether traditional food in Queens, fusion fare in tonier parts of Manhattan, or barbecued beef and rice from the wandering "Korilla" trucks. Americans who speak not a word of Korean tune in regularly to Korean TV dramas, and many fanatical followers of K-pop can be found among college students of all ethnicities. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, Korea is part of the American cultural landscape. The Korean Wave is here to stay.

The range and impact of Korean culture in American life is reflected in the diverse articles on Korea in the Times. Food was a big story, and not just in restaurants: as a sign of how far Korean food has good mainstream, the Times ran two articles on how to cook beef bulgogi – one the traditional grilled way, the other in a slider. Travel articles on Korea described the local food with enthusiasm, and for those wanting to stay close to home, the Times ran a useful article on where to eat in Manhattan's Koreatown. New York-based celebrity chefs like David Chang and Jean-George Vongerichten have helped to boost the visibility of Korean food, at the same time that they made their own unique versions of the cuisine. Along with his Korean-born wife Marja, chef Vongerichten brought Korean cooking to American living rooms with *The Kimchi Chronicles*, a hit food and travel show on PBS. Perhaps the only question about the newfound popularity of Korean food in America is: why did it take so long? One might have thought that the American palate would naturally gravitate toward spicy grilled beef over cold raw fish and rice, but after the long reign of sushi, it looks like Americans may be taking to bulgogi as their favorite Asian dish.

Music, both Western classical music and pop, was also an important Korean story. After more than a decade of mass popularity in Asia, K-pop has made serious inroads into the American market in the last few years. Korea's SM Entertainment produced a series of sold-out concerts at Madison Square Garden, and the Times covered in detail the combination of intense competition, savvy marketing and sheer talent and hard work that have made K-pop a global phenomenon. On the classical end of the spectrum, Korean musicians like Jennifer Lin and Hahn-Bin made the news for their artistry (as well as, in Hahn-Bin's case, provocative fashion statements).

Korean films, from Bong Joon-ho's thriller "Mother" to Lee Chang-dong's quiet and contemplative "Poetry," received rave reviews. Shin Kyung-sook's novel "Please Look After My Mom" was reviewed prominently in the New York Times book review, and became the first work of Korean fiction (by Korea's most popular novelist) to become a bestseller in the US. Sports were also in the news, as the Korean city of Pyeongchang won the right to host the 2018 Winter Olympics, after two previous failed bids. There were individual sport achievements as well, especially by women: a Korean woman became the first female climber to scale the world's fourteen highest mountains, and figure skater Kim Yu-na was the star of the Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

Korean clothing, art, architecture and design have been receiving some belated appreciation in the West, as an article on the art of the hanbok showed. Korean-influenced clothing design even reached the White House, when First Lady Michelle Obama wore a dress by the Korean-American designer Doo-ri Chung for a state dinner with President Lee Myung-bak, a dinner where the Korean-American sisters the Ahn Trio performed. The revival and modernization in contemporary Korea of the *hanok*, or traditional Korean house, made the news as well. Back in New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art held a beautiful exhibition of traditional Korean ceramics, and Lee Ufan's installation "Marking Infinity" occupied the Guggenheim Museum.

Korea's well-known obsession with children's education, and Koreans' ambitious innovations in the education field, gained some attention with articles on Jeju Island's planned "Global Education City" and the "Engkey" English-teaching robot invented at the Korea Institute of Science and Technology. The Times travel section feature a guide to "36 Hours in Seoul," covering restaurants, museums, shopping, and even the *jjimjilbang* or bathhouse.

Korea is becoming an increasingly familiar place for Americans, but Korea is no longer a place "over there," exotic and strange. It is becoming increasingly part of the American cultural fabric, a place as familiar to the readers of the Times as the restaurant down the block. At this point, it may no longer be useful to describe the Korean cultural impact as a "wave." Korean culture is now a major tributary of the American mainstream.

MUSIC & PERFORMANCE IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

A VIOLINIST'S BELLS AND WHISTLES

BY ALEX HAWGOOD

A Violinist's Bells and Whistles

By ALEX HAWGOOD

WHEN the young violinist Hahn-Bin appeared onstage for a recent matinee at the Morgan Library and Museum, a gasp trickled through the audience, which consisted mostly of silver-haired classical-music enthusiasts. Clad in a black sleeveless kimono, dark raccoon-eye makeup and a high mohawk, the soloist resembled an apocalyptic Kewpie doll.

Hahn-Bin (who uses only his first name) slunk across the stage with his instrument, propped himself atop a piano and whipped his bow toward the crowd, more ringmaster than concertmaster. He then tore into works by Chopin, Pablo de Sarasate and Debussy, with some enhancements: At one point the pianist John Blacklow placed Hahn-Bin's bow into the violinist's mouth, while Hahn-Bin plucked his violin like a ukulele.

"Have you ever seen anything like it?" one female audience member whispered to a friend.

"No," she replied. "I've never heard anything like it, either."

Despite sharing a lease at Lincoln Center, the classical-music and fashion industries tend to be mutually exclusive. But for Hahn-Bin, a 22-year-old protégé of the eminent violinist Itzhak Perlman who holds Mozart and Warhol in equal esteem, they are complementary.

"What I choose to wear or how I choose to express myself visually is equally important as the music itself," he said in a recent interview at Le Pain Quotidien on Grand Street. "Fashion teaches spiritual lessons. It has taught me who I am and showed me what I didn't know about myself."

Hahn-Bin is a rare bridge between Carnegie Hall, where he will make his mainstage debut on March 13, and the Boom Boom Room, where he performed at a party hosted by V Magazine during New York Fashion Week. He is the latest in a series of classic-musical provocateurs who have included the German virtuoso Anne-Sophie Mutter, famous for her strapless ball gowns; and Nigel Kennedy, a genre-bending, hard-partying Brit.

A Violinist's Bells and Whistles

"The classical-music world needs to be shaken up a little bit," said Vicki Margulies, artist manager for Young Concert Artists Inc., which selected Hahn-Bin to perform at the Morgan. "And he's the one to do it."

Hahn-Bin credits Mr. Perlman and the star architect Peter Marino, who financed his New York concert debut in 2009 at Zankel Hall, part of Carnegie Hall, for teaching him how to straddle two cultural worlds. "The only person that understood that I was a genre of my own was Mr. Perlman," he said. "He gets that I have always been a performance artist who sings through the violin."

In a phone interview, Mr. Perlman said: "He is an extremely talented violinist who is very, very individual. He combines music with drama and a visual element. It's very personal to him. When an artist feels it that personally, the audience does, too."

Hahn-Bin's diverse group of fans also includes the fashion personality André Leon Talley, the art maven Shala Monroque, the magazine editor Stephen Gan and the gallerist Barbara Gladstone. "In the context of classically trained musicians, he is quite startling, as they are hardly given to personal theater," Ms. Gladstone said.

He collaborated with the video artist Ryan McNamara on "Production," a performance at the Louis Vuitton store during Fashion's Night Out last year, and he walked the runway for the designer Elise Overland last September. This month, he performed at the Stone, an art space in the East Village, in a show curated by the musicians Lou Reed and Laurie Anderson; and played soliloquies inspired by the exhibition "Andy Warhol: Motion Pictures" at the Museum of Modern Art.

"The movement, his body, his clothes, his style, his dramaturgy and the music, of course, form one strong, complex, multilayered audio-visual image," said Klaus Biesenbach, chief curator at large for the museum.

Hahn-Bin said that defying genres in this manner is an intrinsic part of his personality. "I have never identified as Asian or American, boy or girl, classical or pop," he said.

He was born in Seoul, South Korea; his family moved to Los Angeles when he was 10 so he could study at the Colburn School of Performing Arts. As a teenager, he would tell his mother he was going there to practice the violin, then sneak off to see performances by Ms. Anderson or the avant-garde playwright Robert Wilson. He moved to New York in 2004 after being accepted into Juilliard, where he quickly felt like "a strange fruit," he said. His classmates didn't understand why he studied the work of the musician Björk and the photographer Nick Knight along with Kreisler and Dvorak. "They would tease me endlessly," he said.

Between classes, he'd shop at downtown boutiques like Seven New York and Yohji Yamamoto, then return to class decked out in Bernhard Willhelm and Martin Margiela. "Everyone's jaws would just drop," he said. "I fought with the deans constantly about what I could wear. They finally told me I can wear something all black. Naturally, I went onstage wearing a top that had a very deep V-neck. I will never forget when the orchestra manager ran to me backstage with a safety pin in horror."

Hahn-Bin said that his use of fashion is part of an attempt to make classical music ("the new underground genre," he said) relevant to a group of young people who may have been dragged to concerts by their grandparents. He also posts relentlessly on his Web site, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook. "He is speaking directly to his generation," Ms. Margulies said. "This is his world."

With these bells and whistles comes the occasional accusation that his persona distracts from the music. "There are many people in my field who have tried to tell me what I should and shouldn't do with Mozart or Beethoven, even to this day," he said.

But Mr. Perlman dismissed any idea that Hahn-Bin's self-stylization is gimmickry. "It's not like he is following a trend in classical music right now," he said. "He is setting the trend."

At the Morgan, this trendsetting included three costume changes from the kimono: a Karl Lagerfeld-esque tuxedo with an oversize flower pin; an asymmetrical shirt dress with an eye mask made from feathers; and a boxy red blouse with a plunging V-neckline, accessorized with a pair of Jeremy Scott sunglasses and thigh-high Rick Owens boots.

"Honestly, to get onstage and balance in my shoes is a lifetime achievement in of itself," Hahn-Bin said. "Dancers have arms to help find their balance, but one of my arms, you see, is doing the most ridiculous things with the violin."

INSTRUMENTALISTS AT AN EXHIBITION

BY ZACHARY WOOLFE

Instrumentalists at an Exhibition

In the left panel of Simon Dinnerstein's painting "The Fulbright Triptych" a woman sits with a child on her lap. In the right panel a man also sits in a neutral posture. All three stare blankly out at the viewer.

ZACHARY WOOLFE
MUSIC REVIEW

The center panel is dominated by a table covered with sharp, almost surgical-looking printers' implements. Two picture windows behind it show an idyllic view down the road of a country town.

At a recital on Wednesday in the galleries of the Tenri Cultural Institute, the painting hung next to the players: the violinists Angela and Jennifer Chun, who are sisters, and the pianist Frederic Chiu. They seemed inspired by its eerie mixture of knife and landscape, aggression and idyll.

The Chuns in particular eschewed simple, folksy nostalgia in a program inflected with the tangy harmonies and dancing rhythms of Eastern European music. Their interpretations and tone were cutting and severe, accentuating the strangeness of the works and emphasizing their modernism.

They and Mr. Chiu are old Juilliard classmates. All three now record on the Harmonia Mundi label, and there was a sense of shared history, an easy intimacy, in the program, which was called "Ballad and Dance" after the title of a short Ligeti work for two violins based on Romanian folk songs.

The recital opened with some of Bartok's 44 Violin Duos (around 1933) interspersed with selections from Prokofiev's "Fugitive Visions" for solo piano (1915-17). Mr. Chiu's suave playing and subtle touch — those delicate high notes! — acted like a tonic to the violinists' intense, bracing duos.

Their Chuns' astringent style was effective in the Bartok, but less so in Shostakovich's rhapsodic "Three Duets for Two Violins and Piano." They seemed intent on adding rawness and edge to these ingratiating pieces, but here it was too much. They were more convincing in Isang Yun's Sonatina for Two Violins (1983), its suspended harmonics slowly building in waves of sound, and Martinu's playful, elegant Sonatina for Two Violins and Piano (1930).

But Mr. Chiu was the recital's star, bringing exquisite seriousness to Gao Ping's potentially gimmicky "Two Soviet Love Songs for Vocalizing Pianist" (2003). The work had some of the impressionist feel of the Prokofiev, with Mr. Chiu softly whistling and humming over crystalline filigree work at the very top of piano's range. Inspired in part by video of Glenn Gould singing to himself as he played, the work had the same quality that gave Gould's performances so much of their power: the sense of spying, of watching something you weren't supposed to see.

Ballad and Dance *Angela, far left, and Jennifer Chun, sisters, performing on Wednesday night at the Tenri Cultural Institute.*

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HAMLET AS EAGER KOREAN PRINCE

BY KEN JAWOROWSKI

Melancholy? More like bloodthirsty.

There's not much indecision from Shakespeare's prince in "Hamyul/Hamlet," a Korean-language adaptation of the play at La MaMa. But boy, is there intensity. In a show that runs just 90 minutes, this is a Hamlet quick to rage and eager for revenge, one who jettisons his infamous uncertainty long before the final scenes.

"Hamyul/Hamlet" finds the prince draped in shadows, mourning the death of his father. Within minutes he's spurred to action by the ghost, and fewer than 100 lines later he's holding a sword to his own throat, delivering a "To be or not to be" soliloquy that's trimmed to about a third of the original. It's a stark production, one that retains only the sparest plot and the strongest emotions. Extended pauses carry great weight here, and the play-within-a-play scene is severe and frightening.

As Hamlet, Young Kun Song handles the fury well, pacing the stage while his mind seems to plot far ahead. Ilkyu Park as Claudius and Youn Jung Kim as Gertrude are deft actors, rightly wary of this prince, while ManHo Kim's Polonius provides the rare, welcome moments of levity. The director, Byungkoo Ahn, adapted the work from his father's version, which first appeared at La MaMa in 1977.

Using ominous percussion, a bit of dance and a stage that's never more than dimly lighted, "Hamyul/Hamlet" creates a delicious mood of menace. It comes at a high price, however. You may find yourself anticipating lines that never arrive (English supertitles are projected above the stage) and longing for scenes that have been removed; this is a loose adaptation of Shakespeare's work, not a strict translation. Still, the play is beguiling to watch, a reinterpretation with a dark mind all its own.

"Hamyul/Hamlet" continues through July 10 at La MaMa, 74A East Fourth Street, East Village; (212) 475-7710, lamama.org.

Hamlet as Eager Korean Prince

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THEATER REVIEW

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Hamyul/Hamlet, *with, from left, Ilkyu Park, Mingi Hong and Youn Jung Kim, at La MaMa.*

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SOUTH KOREA FORGETS ITS AMNESIA AND REDISCOVERS ITS ROCK 'N' ROLL SOUL

BY MARK RUSSELL

South Korea forgets its amnesia and rediscovers its rock 'n' roll soul

New generation connects to music suppressed by the military in 1975

BY MARK RUSSELL

Shin Joong-hyun remembers the first time he took the stage 55 years ago in Seoul. Just 18, he had passed an audition for the U.S. Eighth Army and was selected to play top American hits to the troops. "I was too young to be scared," the 73-year-old rocker said in a telephone interview, "so I just tried to do a good job."

Soon, he was playing 20 to 30 dates a month at U.S. military bases all over South Korea, songs like "Guitar Boogie Shuffle," "40 Miles of Bad Road" and "Rock Around the Clock" — the first song Mr. Shin sang, instead of just playing guitar. "The soldiers seemed to like my guitar playing," he recalled. "They were really enthusiastic and often asked for more solos."

Bands that got their start rocking out on U.S. Army bases became the vanguard of a new music scene in South Korea. Mr. Shin was at the heart of it, creating bands, finding singers and writing many of the most memorable rock songs recorded in South Korea, especially from 1968 to 1975.

He has been called the godfather of South Korean rock. Mojo magazine likened him to Phil Spector for his ability to discover talent and create sounds. Mr. Shin's sound was low-fi and psychedelic, freely mixing genres and, as time passed, it grew ever more wild. His albums typically had short, poppy songs on the Aside, but side B was for Mr. Shin and the band, featuring free-flowing instrumentals up to 22 minutes long.

"The man was a revolutionary who mixed Western music such as rock, soul, and folk with the sound of traditional Korean music," said Matt Sullivan, founder of Light in the Attic Records, an American boutique label that in

Kim Min-joon, a.k.a DJ Soulscape, is a fan of Korean music of the 1970s and '80s.

September issued two retrospectives of Mr. Shin's music.

A government crackdown in 1975, on rock music, marijuana and the counterculture in general, put an abrupt end to Mr. Shin's career. Changing tastes hastened the public's amnesia for his music, and he spent most of the next years in obscurity running a live music club. His albums finally began to be issued on CD in the mid-1990s, but there was little mainstream interest at a time dominated musically by teenage-oriented dance-pop and syrupy ballads.

But now, after decades of being mostly forgotten, the music from South Korea's rock 'n' roll heyday is more popular here than ever, reimagined and reinterpreted by a new generation of fans.

Kim Min-joon, known as DJ Soulscape, is such a fan of the South Korean music of the 1970s and '80s that he put together a mix CD called "More Sound of Seoul," featuring 40 obscure and mostly forgotten, funk and disco tracks. (Adhering to copyright law, however, means he can only give away the collection, not sell it.)

He scoured South Korea, hitting flea markets everywhere to build an impressive collection of 1,500 old vinyl albums that serve as the foundation for many of his retro mixes. Mr. Kim is enthused that interest in old Korean music is on

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South Korea rediscovers its rock 'n' roll soul

ROCK, FROM PAGE 8

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It's not only Koreans who are interested in the sound. Mr. Park said D.J.s all over the world enjoy the genre-bending albums. He has spun his retro set in Los Angeles and New York.

Sato Yukie is also a fan of the era. A Japanese musician who fell in love with vintage South Korean music during a 1995 vacation to Seoul, he formed a Korean classic-rock cover band called Kopchangjeongol (named for a spicy beef-innards soup) and moved there in 1999. His band has released two records of covers. "There's definitely a boom in the old songs going on now," he said.

Mr. Sato's bandmate, Yohei Hasegawa, is a guitarist and producer in South Korea, and had a hand in producing the latest album by one of the most important acts in the retro-revival, Chang Kiha and the Faces, a group that came from nowhere a couple of years ago to become one of the biggest bands in the country.

South Korea's indie scene has long been tiny, but it began to change about 10 years ago when several young musicians, Mr. Chang among them, got together at the student music clubs at Seoul National University.

They formed a variety of minor bands, and, after graduating, four of them created BGBG Records in 2005. The label's president, Go Geon, wasn't interested in the music at first, but one of his bands introduced him to the old sounds, like Sanullim and Shin Joong-hyun.

"I didn't like Sanullim's unique amateurism," Mr. Go said, "but I was impressed by their attempts at different genres, especially psychedelic rock." It was an interest shared by several BGBG bands, such as Broccoli You Too?, Nine and the Numbers — who were co-founders of the label and fellow Seoul National students — and Chang Kiha.

By then, the Internet had ravaged the South Korean music market, leaving indie labels with less money than ever. BGBG's first two releases did so poorly the label nearly shut down, but by 2007 it managed to release a few more records. To save money, they burned their own CDs and printed their own packaging.

Chang Kiha and the Face's EP, released in July 2008, was the ninth boutique release for BGBG, but it was by far their biggest hit, thanks to a surprise explosion of Web interest and word of mouth. It was quirky, with witty lyrics and a folksy sound like something from the late 1970s. People loved it, particularly the single "Cheap Coffee," with its electric guitar hook that quickly transitioned into a bossa nova-esque acoustic bounce. By February, without any marketing budget, BGBG sold 10,000 copies, all hand-burned.

Chang Kiha's first full-length album, "Living a Nothing Special Life," sold 52,000 copies — big numbers for an indie release in South Korea these days — and his second full-length album, released in July, is getting his best reviews yet.

"Chang's combination of intelligent lyrics and a fresh sound oozes authenticity," said Bernie Cho, the president of DFSB Kollective, a digital music distributor. "Plus he put together two of the best videos of the year. Low budget, but very clever."

Then there are bands like Jambinai, which uses a mix of traditional instruments and f/x pedals to create a sound that is ancient but totally modern.

The Internet also helped Shin Joong-hyun find new audiences. Mr. Sullivan of Light in the Attic Records discovered Mr. Shin when a friend sent him a Youtube link of Kim Jung-mi playing her hauntingly beautiful song "The Sun." "To say I was immediately mesmerized would be a massive understatement," Mr. Sullivan said.

It was not easy to pull together the collection. Many of Mr. Shin's master recordings had been lost over the years, even, rumor has it, deliberately destroyed by the government in its sweeping 1975 crackdown. Most of the CD re-issues of Mr. Shin's old catalog were done poorly, even at the wrong speed. So Mr. Sullivan made new transfers off old LPs, trying to bring Mr. Shin's music to life. Another American label, Lion Records, has two more releases coming this year.

"At first, I couldn't believe it when an American label approached me, but then we started working together and we built our trust," Mr. Shin said. "I don't know much about these new bands, but I'm happy to think I might be making an influence still."

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: October 24, 2011

A previous version of this article gave an incorrect name for the man known as DJ Soulscape. His name is Park Min-joon, not Kim Min-joon. A photograph accompanying the article was erroneously credited to NAK. The correct credit is Aston "Husumu" Hwang.

WHEN BACH LAID BARE HIS OWN SOUL

BY VIVIEN SCHWEITZER

When Bach Laid Bare His Own Soul

By VIVIEN SCHWEITZER

On the cover of his recent recording of Bach's partitas and sonatas for unaccompanied violin Sergey Khachatryan is shrouded in darkness, head tilted back, eyes raised piously and hands pressed together above his instrument. The image is an apt representation of the reverence that musicians, scholars and listeners often bring to a discussion of these monumental works.

INTO THE MUSIC

Bach wrote the three sonatas and three partitas, which were probably never performed in public during his lifetime, over a span of some 17 years in the early 18th century. The set "almost seems like a prayer book," said the violinist Jennifer Koh.

"There is something incredibly personal about it," she added. "It feels like a lifetime's journey."

Ms. Koh will play all six works on Sunday afternoon in a recital at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, presented by the Miller Theater. Brave violinists with exceptional stamina occasionally venture this feat, a daunting challenge, given the music's emotional depth and technical hurdles.

Bach, a keyboard and organ virtuoso, also played the violin professionally at the Weimar court as a young man, and later in his career he often performed as violinist with the ensembles he led. He "played the violin cleanly and penetratingly," according to his son Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.

German violinist-composers began writing polyphonic works for solo violin in the mid-17th century. Bach is thought to have been influenced by musicians including Johann Paul von Westhoff, a prominent Weimar violinist and favorite of Louis XIV; he published a set of solo violin partitas in 1696. Westhoff incorporated techniques like bariolage, a fast alternation between static and changing notes, which Bach also used to create contrapuntal textures. But Bach's set far surpassed any previous attempts in the genre in terms of imagination, complexity and profundity.

Structurally the pieces adhere to Baroque norms. Bach's four-movement sonatas reflect the four-movement church sonata (sonata da chiesa), and his partitas offer the stylized dance movements of the chamber sonata (sonata da camera). Bach blended the solo line and the accompaniment into one part, writing multiple, independent voices that unfold simultaneously. The four-voice fugues in the sonatas should sound as if they were being played by different violinists.

Some have suggested that the six works convey a religious narrative, with the G minor Sonata representing, say, the Christmas story and the C major Sonata the Resurrection. Others have interpreted the monumental Chaconne, the approximately 15-minute movement that concludes the Partita No. 2 in D minor, as an expression of the Holy Trinity, with the opening D minor section representing the Father, the ensuing D major section the Son and the concluding D minor section the Holy Spirit.

While not all performers and scholars analyze the set in light of Bach's religious beliefs (he was a practicing Lutheran), it would probably be hard to find a violinist who hasn't grappled with the music's profound spirituality.

For Ms. Koh, who interprets the six pieces in a broader spiritual sense instead of specifically religious terms, the mighty Chaconne — a series of 64 variations on a stately four-bar, triple-meter dance theme — is "the heart of the cycle." The movement is thought to have been Bach's memorial to his first wife, Maria Barbara Bach, who died in 1720.

The Chaconne has transfixed listeners for centuries. In a letter to Clara Schumann, Brahms wrote: "On one staff, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings. If I imagined that I could have created, even conceived the piece, I am quite certain that the excess of excitement and earth-shattering experience would have driven me out of my mind."

The Chaconne "is the most human" part of the set, Ms. Koh said, adding, "It feels like this constant struggle to reach transcendence." The transition into the Adagio of the Sonata No. 3 in C, coming directly afterward if the works are played in order, is a "kind of acceptance of humanity," she said. She described the first movement of that sonata as "the most tragic C major I've ever heard."

Others of Bach's cycles for solo instruments, like the six partitas for keyboard, are sometimes played and recorded in varying orders. But if the six violin sonatas and partitas are to be performed complete, it is vital to perform them in the sequence Bach specified, Ms. Koh said, calling the set "an incredible musical arc."

Ms. Koh heard Nathan Milstein, who died in 1992, perform the D minor partita when she was 9, and she describes it as a formative experience. Milstein's searing 1975 Deutsche Grammophon recording of the set remains a benchmark, along with other 20th-century recordings like Arthur Grumiaux's beautifully sweet-toned, soaring interpretations for Philips in 1961 and Jascha Heifetz's intensely expressive rendition for RCA Victor in 1952. Mr. Khachatryan, Julia Fischer, Rachel Podger, Gidon Kremer and Christian Tetzlaff are among the younger generation who have contributed distinctive recordings.

Ms. Koh would like to record the sonatas and partitas. But instead of presenting them as a complete cycle, she will probably pair individual works with contemporary pieces, as she has been doing in her solo recitals in the Miller Theater's Bach and Beyond series. Many prominent instrumentalists never play Bach's music, which is nerve-rackingly exposed, for an audience. Ms. Koh, who has performed the sonatas and partitas separately on various occasions, said the works are so naked, visceral and personal that she hesitated for a long time before deciding to play any of them in public.

She finds it poignant, she said, that Bach didn't write the set for a particular commission or performance. As an artist, she added, "you need to create and compose."

"It doesn't matter if it pays," she said. "At the end you do it because you love it in every fiber of your being. There is something so beautiful to me that Bach just needed to write this."

KOREAN POP MACHINE, RUNNING ON INNOCENCE AND HAIR GEL

BY JON CARAMANICA


Korean Pop Machine, Running on Innocence and Hair Gel


South Korea's Prolific Pop Machine Runs on Innocence and Hair Gel

A showcase of young Asian talent packs them in at Madison Square Garden.

Think of the work required to make just one Justin Bieber. The production, the management, the vocal training, the choreography, the swagger coaching — all that effort to create one teen-pop star in a country that's still starving for them. South Korea has no such drought, thanks to several companies that specialize in manufacturing a steady stream of teenage idols, in groups of various configurations. One of the longest-running of these companies is SM Entertainment, which on Sunday night hosted SM Town Live, a sold-out showcase at Madison Square Garden for several of its acts, any one of which any American reality-TV talent show or major-label A&R department worth its salt would be thrilled to have discovered.

American teen-pop at its peak has never been this productive. K-pop — short for Korean pop — is an environment of relentless newness, both in participants and in style; even its veteran acts are still relatively young, and they make young music. Still, there were subtle differences among the veterans, like BoA and TVXQ, and the newer-minted acts like Super Junior, Girls' Generation and SHINee.

Members of the younger set are less concerned with boundaries, drawing from the spectrum of pop of the last decade in their music: post-Timbaland hip-hop rumbles, trance-influenced thump, dance music driven by arena-rock guitars, straightforward balladry.

Of these groups, the relative newcomer SHINee was the most ambitious. From the looks of it, the group's men are powered by brightly colored leather, Dr. Martens boots and hair mousse. Their music, especially "Replay," "Ring Ding Dong" and "Juliette," felt the riskiest, even if it only slightly tweaked that polyglot K-pop formula; these vocalists were among the night's strongest.

But SHINee came in a recognizable format, the same size as American groups like 'N Sync and the Backstreet Boys. But what K-pop has excelled at in recent years are large groups that seem to defy logic and order. Super Junior, which at its maximum has 13 members, was one of this show's highlights, appearing several times throughout the night in different color outfits, shining on "Mr. Simple" and the intense industrial dance-pop of "Bonamana." (K.R.Y., a sub-group of Super Junior, delivered what may have been the night's best performance on "Sorry Sorry Answer," a muscular R&B ballad.)

Super Junior was complemented by the nine-woman Girls' Generation, which offered a more polite take on K-pop, including on "The Boys," which is its debut American single. Girls' Generation gave perhaps the best representation of K-pop's coy, shiny values in keeping with a chaste night that satisfied demand, but not desire. (It was an inversion on the traditional American formula; in this country young female singers are often more sexualized than their male counterparts.)

Male and female performers shared the stage here only a couple of times, rarely getting even in the ballpark of innuendo. In one set piece two lovers serenaded each other from across the stage, with microphones they found in a mailbox (he) and a purse (she). In between acts the screens showed virginal commercials about friendship and commitment to performance; during the sets they displayed fantastically colored graphics, sometimes childlike, sometimes Warholian, but never less than cheerful.

In the past few years K-pop has shown a creeping global influence. Many acts release albums in Korean and Japanese, a nod to the increasing fungibility of Asian pop. And inroads, however slight, are being made into the American marketplace. The acts here sang and lip synced in both Korean and English. Girls' Generation recently signed with Interscope to release music in the United States. And in August Billboard inaugurated a K-Pop Hot 100 chart. But none of the acts on the SM Town Live bill are in the Top 20 of the current edition of the fast-moving chart. This is a scene that breeds quickly.

Which means that some ideas that cycle in may soon cycle out. That would be advisable for some of the songs augmented with deeply goofy rapping: showing the English translation of the lyrics on screen didn't help. The best rapping of the night came from Amber, the tomboy of the least polished group on the bill, f(x), who received frenzied screams each time she stepped out in front of her girly bandmates.

If there was a direct American influence to be gleaned here, it was, oddly enough, Kesha who best approximates the exuberant and sometimes careless genrelessness of K-pop in her own music; her songs "Tik Tok" and "My First Kiss" (with 3OH!3) were covered during this show.

But while she is simpatico with the newer K-pop modes, she had little to do with the more mature styles. Those were represented by the Josh Groban-esque crooning of Kangta, lead singer of the foundational, long-disbanded Korean boy band H.O.T., who made a brief appearance early in the night, and the duo TVXQ, a slimmed-down version of the long-running group by that name, who at one point delved into an R&B slow jam reminiscent of Jodeci or early Usher. BoA, the night's only featured solo artist, has been making albums for a decade, and her "Copy & Paste" sounded like a vintage 1993 Janet Jackson song.

She'll also star in "Cobu," a 3-D dance film to be released next year, previews of which induced shrieks before the concert began. The crowd also screamed at an ad for Super Junior Shake, an iPhone game app, and for the SM Entertainment global auditions, which will take place early next year in several countries, and will keep the machine oiled for years to come.

FOOD
IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

BACKYARD BULGOGI

BY MARK BITTMAN


EAT

Backyard Bulgogi

Korean barbecue (with all the fixings) is the perfect menu to kick off the grilling season.

In looking to create a menu for an early-season barbecue that would appeal to everyone — meat lovers, vegetarians, culinary thrill-seekers and whoever else might show up — I realized that such a menu already exists. It's just that it isn't what we think of as "American food."

Still, it is American to not fuss about the origin of recipes, especially when the menu spotlights both intensely flavored grilled marinated meat and a bunch of quirky, flavorful and mostly meatless side dishes.

In this case, the source is Korean. And with a little planning and advance work, you can make beef bulgogi and banchan (the name for the little tidbits either served first or as accompaniments) at home. And you'll make them as well as or better than you've eaten them on 32nd Street in Manhattan or wherever your local joint might be. In other words, you'll kick off the grilling season with an appealing, exotic, even exciting menu that will make most others seem dull.

The exoticism and excitement derive from both the ingredients and the techniques. Many of the ingredients you'll need can be found at any halfway decent grocery store, but there is one important exception: gochujang, or Korean chili-bean paste. This combines the salty, complex tang of miso with a mild fire, and it's an absolute must as a condiment for the beef. (If you've eaten Korean barbecue, you've been offered it.)

Gochugaro, Korean chili powder, which contributes heat to the kimchi and scallion-salad recipes, is also difficult to find in most supermarkets, but a substitute of red-pepper flakes or not-terribly fiery ground chili powder will give you a similar effect. Depending on where you live, you may well be able to find mung bean sprouts (which star in a simple salad), daikon radish (pickled along with cabbage in kimchi) and hijiki (which is soaked and then stir-fried in what is quite possibly the best seaweed preparation I've ever had) in your local supermarket.

The instantly recognizable profile of Korean food, however, comes not from obscure ingredients but from the relatively mainstream ones: sesame (both seeds and oil), garlic, soy sauce, garlic, rice vinegar, garlic, sugar and scallions. And garlic. I've more than once called Korean food "Japanese food with guts," not as a slight against Japanese food (wonderful in its own right) but as an endorsement of Korean cuisine's vigorous, muscular, completely unsubtle flavor profile. Korean food's aggressive seasoning is really just right for grilling, where attempts at nuance are usually in vain.

Some elements of this barbecue are familiar but tweaked. (Some of that familiarity comes from the American presence in Korea, now going on 60 years.) Korean potato salad, for instance, is similar to American potato salad in that its dressing is mayonnaise-based, but the Korean version sometimes uses julienned rather than chunked potatoes and also contains carrots, peas, scallions and chives. It's far from conventional and far from bland.

I will not (and cannot) claim that every element of this menu is legitimately Korean. In fact one recipe, the plum-and-herb cocktail, is plain made up: a sangria-like concoction of white wine, gin, rosemary-infused simple syrup and fresh plums. I see it as a tribute to the sweet plum wine so often served in Korean restaurants. (If you want to be authentic, drink soju — it will get you drunk in a hurry — or beer.) But if my cocktail isn't authentic, it is good and, like the rest of the menu, very potent.

Beef Bulgogi

Time: 45 to 150 minutes

1 bunch scallions, roughly chopped

8 or more garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped

1 tablespoon sugar or honey

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1/2 cup soy sauce

1 tablespoon sesame oil

2 pounds sirloin, rib-eye or skirt steak, thinly sliced, or 3 to 4 pounds beef short ribs, boned and thinly sliced

Boston or loose-leaf lettuce leaves for serving

Gochujang (Korean chili-bean paste) for serving.

1. Combine the scallions, garlic, sugar, pepper, soy sauce and oil in blender and purée, adding water as needed to form a smooth mixture. Toss the meat with the soy mixture and marinate for 15 minutes to 2 hours. Heat a grill with the rack 4 to 6 inches from the flame; the fire should be as hot as possible.

2. Remove the meat from the marinade, and grill until browned outside but still rare inside, no more than a couple of minutes per side; do not overcook. Serve the meat wrapped in lettuce leaves, with gochujang for dipping.

Serves 4 to 6.

Sesame Spinach and Tofu

Cook 1 tablespoon minced garlic in 2 tablespoons sesame oil over medium-high heat for 1 minute; add 1 pound chopped spinach and cook, stirring occasionally, until it begins to wilt. Crumble in 1/2 pound extra-firm tofu and stir until warmed through. Stir in 1 tablespoon soy sauce, a pinch of sugar and 1 tablespoon sesame seeds. Serve hot or warm.

Korean Potato Salad

Cook 1 pound julienned or shredded potatoes and 1/2 pound julienned or shredded carrots in salted boiling water until barely tender, about 5 minutes; add 1/2 cup fresh or frozen peas for the last minute of cooking. Drain and rinse with cold water. Whisk together 1/2 cup mayonnaise and 3 tablespoons rice vinegar; toss with the vegetables, 1/2 cup chopped chives and 1/4 cup chopped scallions. Garnish with more chopped scallions and chives, season with salt and pepper to taste and serve.

Grilled-Scallion Salad

Brush 1 pound untrimmed scallions with 1 tablespoon sesame oil; grill over moderately high heat, turning once, until charred and tender, 5 to 10 minutes. Roughly chop and toss with 1/3 cup rice vinegar, 1 to 2 tablespoons gochugaro (Korean chili powder) or less if using red-pepper flakes, 1 tablespoon sesame seeds and 2 teaspoons sugar. Serve immediately.

Kimchi

Layer 1 small green or white cabbage (separated into leaves) and 1 small-to-medium daikon radish (cut into 1-inch cubes) with 1/2 cup coarse salt in a large bowl. Let sit until the cabbage is wilted, about 2 hours, massaging and weighting it if needed to help soften. Rinse and dry well. Roughly chop and toss with 15 to 20 chopped scallions, 1/4 cup fish (or soy) sauce, 1/4 cup minced garlic, 2 to 4 tablespoons sugar, 2 tablespoons minced ginger and 1 to 2 tablespoons gochugaro (Korean chili powder) or less if using red-pepper flakes. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to a week.

Fried Hijiki

Soak 1 ounce dried hijiki in 2 cups hot water. When it's tender, about 5 minutes later, drain, squeeze dry, remove any hard bits and chop. Cook 1 tablespoon minced garlic and 1/4 cup chopped scallions in 1 tablespoon neutral oil (like grapeseed or corn) and 1 tablespoon sesame oil over medium-high heat for 1 minute; add the hijiki and cook until browned and beginning to shrivel, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in 1 tablespoon each soy sauce and sesame seeds and a pinch of sugar. Serve hot or warm.

Plum-and-Herb Wine Cocktail

Cook 1/3 cup sugar, 1/3 cup water and 1 sprig fresh rosemary or thyme over medium-low heat until the sugar dissolves; cool and remove the herb. Combine 1 bottle not-too-dry white wine (like Riesling), 1/4 cup gin, the juice of 1 lemon, 2 to 4 chopped plums and 1/4 cup of the rosemary syrup. Chill for at least 2 hours, taste and add more syrup if you like and serve.

FEEL FREE TO GRAZE, BUT JUST BE QUICK

BY SAM SIFTON

Danji is a wee little restaurant on West 52nd Street, done up in whitewashed brick and blond Ikea stylings, naked bulbs, extension cords and a lot of wooden spoons artfully displayed, as if by David Rockwell on a $200 budget. The crowds are fierce.

There is a good reason. Hooni Kim, who opened this place in December as a new-style Korean take on a Japanese izakaya, is a terrific cook. Those who take the time and care to explore his menu of both traditional and modernized Korean food will be rewarded.

Some stipulations before we eat. Danji is not a particularly comfortable restaurant. Customers perch on stools along the bar or at high tables in the front of the room, or wedge into the few tables in back. There are just 36 seats. It gets quite hot in the dining room, as at a crowded party in a small apartment.

Dinners proceed not as planned, leisurely affairs, but as fast-casual turn-and-burns: you get small, shareable plates and some drinks, and then make room for the next set of customers. You would not want to do business at Danji, unless your business involves knees touching and the thrill of discovery.

So stipulated. (A cold OB beer or glass of soju may help.) Now slide your menu out of the drawer that hides just below the surface of each table. It is time to graze.

Danji works best if you buck the trend and eat a great deal as leisurely as you can, building a tasting menu out of the tapas. (The plates run $6 to $18.)


RESTAURANTS
Sam Sifton

Feel Free to Graze, but Just Be Quick

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TASTINGS Stir-fried noodles at Danji, which serves a menu of modern and traditional small plates.

DANJI

Start with a pairing off the "traditional" list, of spicy whelk salad and a small pile of buckwheat noodles. This ought to be protected by the Marriage Equality Act. The tender little whelks are poached French-style with a mirepoix cut through with lemongrass, garlic and ginger, and dressed in a sauce of gochujang, a Korean hot chile paste, that has been muted with rice vinegar and mirin, grated garlic and ginger. Across from them sit fat noodles of the Japanese soba variety, glossy with that same hot sauce, along with honey and soy, some watercress, slivered red onions, chives. They are each other's best friends.

Order more noodles: japchae, glassy little numbers off a family reunion table in Seoul, sweet and salty with sesame oil and soy, with hints of ginger and garlic to romance the accompanying julienne vegetables and a small mound of barbecued beef. Have a crisp little pancake of scallions and Korean peppers, or the seafood version if it is available as a special. You will benefit from some kimchi as well, made for the restaurant by Mr. Kim's mother-in-law. There is Napa cabbage, of course, among other varieties: cucumber, of late, and ponytail radishes.

Ignore for a moment the obvious sops to Western palates and tapas-loving cocktail drinkers: the bulgogi sliders on the "modern" menu; the "K.F.C." fried-chicken wings; the kimchi, bacon and chorizo "paella" that reads like a midnight Twitter posting from a chef in his cups.

But only for a moment! Sliders may be a goofball trend like cupcakes or Korean fried chicken. That doesn't make them bad. (You can pass on Danji's wings, though: unremarkable, even a little pallid.)

That paella is nice, too: hot and weird below a fried Jidori hen egg, bright as the sun. And the bulgogi slider, crisp at its edges, turns out to be packed with the sweet thrum of Asian pear and the salty hush of soy sauce, with smoky sesame oil and the deep, steely taste of good beef. It provides excellent eating beneath its pickled cucumbers and mesclun-amped scallion salsa, on a soft grilled bun. A pork-belly version does, too, caramelized and fiery with gochujang and a finishing oil made from the seeds of hot peppers.

Appetizers? Entrees? All Danji's dishes are small. One exception on the traditional menu is the poached sablefish with daikon, which ought to be eaten with rice: the luscious fish and chopstick-tender daikon swimming in a dark, lovely braise of Mr. Kim's beloved soy, garlic, ginger and Korean red pepper, with a splash of dashi and a fine julienne of ginger to lighten things up. It explains in a single bite the concept of umami. (Another big fellow: the restaurant's classic DMZ meat stew, a staple of Korean restaurants that combines bits of hot dog and Spam, pork belly, kimchi and ramen noodles in a spicy broth.)

On the "modern" side of the menu is a dish marked simply tofu with ginger-scallion dressing. It is magical. Mr. Kim rolls rectangles of fresh tofu in potato starch, then flash fries them and tops the packages with crisp bits of fried tempura batter and a few slices of hot pepper along with the ginger and scallion. By the time the dish reaches the table, the starch has softened to create a skin over the creamy tofu that is elastic and not dissimilar to mochi, the Japanese glutinous rice paste. Two orders for four people seems correct.

More traditional is the steak tartare. It is a version of the classic Korean dish yook hwe, which often marries long strands of partially frozen beef to thin ones of Asian pear, sesame oil, soy sauce and gochujang, topped with a raw egg yolk. All those ingredients are present here, though in fancy form (a quail egg, Creekstone beef, pear purée). But Mr. Kim, who worked at Daniel, eschews freezing the meat and, with his fine dice and careful plating, makes the dish seem exactly as if it might be served with a plate of fries at Benoit or Balthazar. It could be colder, perhaps. But it is pretty great.

Not that everything at Danji is. There is no need for grilled corn with a cheese aioli and spicy mayonnaise here or perhaps at any other restaurant; fried calamari with wasabi mayonnaise is unnecessary except to accommodate those for whom a menu with no calamari is no menu at all; there is no real dessert on offer. And even if you stall your way through the menu, ordering in waves of food, a meal at Danji goes by quite quickly. Meanwhile, the crowd waiting up by the bar for tables stares bullets if you linger.

No reservations. Go.

Danji

*

346 West 52nd Street, Clinton; (212) 586-2880, danjinyc.com.

ATMOSPHERE Part tapas bar, part Japanese izakaya, all Korean, very welcoming.

SOUND LEVEL Moderate.

RECOMMENDED DISHES Whelk salad with buckwheat noodles, steak tartare, pancake, japchae, sablefish, DMZ stew, fried tofu, sliders, paella.

WINE LIST A tiny if serviceable list of wines, sakes and sojus, and OB beer.

PRICE RANGE Small plates, $6 to $18.

HOURS Monday to Friday, noon to 3 p.m.; Monday to Thursday, 5:30 p.m. to midnight; Friday and Saturday, 5:30 p.m. to 1 a.m.

RESERVATIONS Accepted only for parties of six or more.

CREDIT CARDS All major cards.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS The restaurant is up one step from street level and is quite narrow. There is an accessible restroom in the rear.

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.

HEAT BY THE HANDFUL

BY SAM SIFTON


EAT

Heat by the Handful

Consider it summer's last blast: a cold lager, cucumber kimchi and spicy Korean bulgogi on a bun.

By SAM SIFTON

There are three ways to make the recipe that follows here; three pathways to dinnertime nirvana. The dish is the Korean barbecue standard known as bulgogi — "fire meat," is the literal translation — transformed into a sandwich filling, a sloppy Joe for a more perfect union. (File under "Blessings of Liberty.") Fed to children with a tall glass of milk, the sandwiches may inspire smiles and licked plates, rapt attention and the request that the meal be served at least monthly — they are not at all too spicy for younger palates. Given to adults accompanied by cold lager, cucumber kimchi and a pot of the fermented Korean hot-pepper paste known as gochujang, they can rise to higher planes.

Bulgogi sandwiches are a taste of the sort of home cooking that can lead to more home cooking. They serve as fragrant hamburger crushers, elegant vanquishers of pizza. They are an enemy of takeout.

To cook them, you can follow the instructions slavishly, as if working for Hooni Kim, the chef and owner of Danji, on the edge of the theater district in Manhattan. Bulgogi "sliders" are a hallmark of his menu and by far the restaurant's most popular dish. The recipe is his.

Kim, who grew up in New York and dropped out of medical school to become a chef (his mother did not speak to him for a year), cooks with careful precision, even delicacy. For him, as for most restaurant chefs, the dish is made up of component parts that must be assembled separately beforehand and then put together, in the style of French-trained kitchens, expressly for each order: à la minute.

For this first exercise, then, you should do as he does, exactly. While making the marinade in a large bowl, you chill some brisket in your freezer, which makes it easier to slice the beef thinly. You mix the sliced beef into the marinade and place it, well covered, in the refrigerator. You make your spicy mayonnaise and store this in the refrigerator as well. You make your scallion dressing, then carefully wash and dry your scallions and place them wrapped carefully in a paper towel beside the marinade and the mayonnaise. You make your cucumber kimchi.

Then you go in search of proper buns: soft and not at all crusty, with enough structure to be able to absorb a great deal of fat and flavor without falling apart. Kim orders par-baked rolls from the Parisi bakery on Elizabeth Street near Little Italy but does not finish them off in his ovens at work. “Almost finished is just the right texture,” he said in a telephone interview. “Koreans do not like crust at all.” (A good-quality challah bun will suffice for home use.)

Finally, when you are ready to cook, you do so quickly and efficiently, never crowding your pan with too much meat, buttering the toasted rolls before applying any mayonnaise to them, applying a large pinch of scallions to each sandwich at the very last minute and then — and only then! — drizzling the thing with a teaspoon of dressing, so as not to wilt the greens. This results in a superlative sandwich.

So does forgoing the sauté pans and precision. On this second path, the cook fires up a backyard grill to approximate the smoky flavor of traditional restaurant bulgogis, where diners cook the meat themselves over tabletop braziers loaded with glowing charcoal. All else remains the same, including the quality of the sandwich.

But here is a truth of Kim’s marinade, and of its excellence. If you do not have time or energy to spare for artfully dressed scallions or elegantly plated sandwiches, all will be forgiven by all those who eat the result. You can cut the beef into the marinade on a weekend and keep it in the fridge for a few days, softly absorbing flavors, and then toss it into a pan some evening when the children begin to whine.

Toast a few hamburger buns and spread them with butter or spicy mayonnaise or both or neither. Then tong some meat onto the bread, or onto white rice if you like, with a side of steamed greens. Scatter some fresh scallions over the top, and let them have at it.

Which method is best? In matters of feeding, as in meditation and poetry, it is best not to consider the question too deeply. The Buddhist teacher Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche said it, and Allen Ginsberg called it art: “First thought, best thought.” In this bulgogi, there is only joy.

Bulgogi Sloppy Joes With Scallion Salsa

For the bulgogi:

- 1 cup soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon peeled and grated garlic
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 3 tablespoons sake
- 2 tablespoons mirin
- 1 Asian pear, peeled, cored and puréed in a food processor
- 1 small carrot peeled and sliced into julienne
- 1 medium white onion peeled and sliced into julienne
- 1 cup apple juice
- 2 pounds beef brisket, chilled slightly and sliced thin

For the spicy mayonnaise:

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons hot chili sauce, ideally Sriracha

For the scallion salsa:

- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons gochugaru (Korean red-pepper flakes)
- 2 tablespoons grapeseed oil
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- 3 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons mirin
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- 2 bunches scallions, cleaned, dried and sliced on the bias
- Unsalted butter
- 6 soft hamburger buns.

1. In a large, nonreactive bowl, combine the soy sauce, sugar, garlic, sesame oil, sake, mirin, pear, carrot, onion and apple juice. Add the sliced brisket, stir to combine, cover tightly and place in the refrigerator overnight or for at least six hours.
2. Meanwhile, in a small, nonreactive bowl, combine the mayonnaise, soy sauce and hot chili sauce and stir to combine. Taste and adjust flavors, then cover and store in the refrigerator until ready to use.
3. When you are ready to make the sandwiches, set one very large sauté pan (or two large ones) over high heat. Using tongs, lift meat from marinade in batches, allow to drain well, then cook, turning occasionally until the excess liquid has evaporated and the edges of the beef have started to crisp.
4. Meanwhile, combine all the ingredients for the salsa except for the scallions, then stir to combine.
5. Toast and butter the hamburger buns. Spread spicy mayonnaise on the buns, and using tongs, cover one side of each set of buns with bulgogi. Add a large pinch of scallions on top of each burger and drizzle with the dressing. Serve with cucumber kimchi (recipe follows).

Serves 6. Adapted from Hooni Kim, Danji restaurant, New York.

Cucumber Kimchi

- 3 small cucumbers, cut into 1/8-inch slices
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon gochugaru (Korean red-pepper flakes)
- 1/4 cup mirin
- 6 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon grated garlic
- 1 teaspoon fermented krill or baby shrimp (optional).

1. Place the cucumbers in a medium-size bowl, then sprinkle with the salt. Let stand 20 minutes.
2. Rinse cucumbers in cold water to remove salt, drain and pat dry.
3. Return cucumbers to bowl, add other ingredients, toss to combine, cover tightly and place in refrigerator overnight or until ready to use.

Serves 6. Adapted from Hooni Kim, Danji restaurant, New York.

A 300-DUCK DAY AND CABBAGES BY THE THOUSANDS

BY ELAINE LOUIE

A 300-Duck Day and Cabbages by the Thousands

By ELAINE LOUIE

THE food cognoscenti like to know the source of their vegetables, fish and meat. Is that lettuce organic? Did that chicken range freely and merrily during its short life?

But consider dishes whose sources are harder to find, that are not farmed or fished but made from scratch, and not in gigantic factories owned by Dole or General Foods. Think of the Chinese roasted ducks at the East Ocean Palace in Forest Hills, Queens; kimchi at the Korilla BBQ food truck; the lightly layered tortillas at Dos Toros Taqueria in Manhattan; and pão de queijo, puffs of Brazilian cheese bread, at Casa in Greenwich Village.

None of these specialties are made on the premises. Despite their authentic flavors and signature place on menus, they are turned out — by machine, hand or both — in commercial kitchens in Queens and New Jersey that are large but little known.

Restaurants outsource these foods because they are labor-intensive or require special equipment or skills, and because they are so popular they must be produced in bulk, like the pão de queijo.

"You need a machine to beat the dough; it's really hard, and you've got to really beat it," said Jupira Lee, the owner of Casa, which sells 300 of the golf-ball-size breads every week. "If you make a small batch for a home, like a bowl of dough, you can make it yourself. But if you're making 300 or 400 pão de queijo, it's a lot of labor."

So Ms. Lee buys them frozen from Ki Delicia, a brand of Brazilian Specialty Foods in North Bergen, N.J. The company's president, Getúlio Santos, said he sells the bread to 15 of the 30 or so Brazilian restaurants in New York City.

Making kimchi is the province of a specialist, said Yun H. Park, the president of two Ichiumi restaurants, a 600-seat place in Manhattan and a 400-seater in Edison, N.J., that serve Japanese and Korean food. Mr. Park buys 400 pounds of pogi kimchi, a traditional version of kimchi, each week from the Ko-Am Food Corporation in Flushing, Queens, where a kitchen produces 10 varieties of the fermented vegetable dish.

If Mr. Park tries to make his own, "I have to hire two people to make kimchi; I have to hire people who specialize in kimchi," he said. "One salary is well over $500 a week, and I have to buy the materials."

What stops restaurants from roasting their own ducks is often the need for ovens that are nearly six feet high and get as hot as 750 degrees. East Ocean Palace, which has 150 seats, is one of a half-dozen local businesses that buy ducks from Corner 28, a Flushing restaurant that roasts hundreds daily.

"Restaurants pick up here, and they reheat it," said Alan Gao, the manager of Corner 28.

At 9 one morning, two burnished Cantonese roast ducks — their meat moist and deeply flavored — hung in the window of Corner 28, a three-story establishment on Main Street at 40th Road. By 11, Beijing-style ducks, with cracker-crisp skin, were at the takeout window as part of a snack: a steamed bun, a slice of meat, crackling skin, a drop of hoisin and a scatter of slivered scallions.

In the basement kitchen, Wang Weiying, the barbecue chef, oversees the roasting: 240 to 280 ducks each weekday, and 300 on Saturdays and Sundays.

The six-and-a-half-pound birds arrive plucked but not eviscerated. On this day, workers — all men — rinsed them and heaped about 20 on a chopping table. After removing the wings, the men hacked off the lower beak so that the head would slide easily through a round metal collar that has a hook attached. Then they cut off the feet and discarded the innards. They worked easily and rhythmically, eviscerating a duck in three minutes and sharpening the cleaver every 15 minutes. The birds were washed in cold water.

A LARGE ORDER Hyuk Su Lee makes kimchi for restaurants at the Ko-Am Food Corporation in Flushing, Queens.

BUSY OVENS Hundreds of ducks are roasted each day at Corner 28 in Flushing, which supplies restaurants.

Each day Mr. Wang makes a dry mix of aniseed, sugar and salt, and cooks a wet marinade of hoisin sauce, minced fresh ginger, garlic, coriander and lettuce. A worker massaged a cup of dry mix into the duck's cavity, then a half-cup of the cooked sauce. He skewered shut the skin around the cavity, rinsed the duck in cold water and brushed it with a syrup of vinegar cooked with maltose. The duck dried in front of a fan for a half-hour, then was roasted at about 500 degrees for 55 minutes.

Just eight blocks away, on Northern Boulevard near Union Street, is Ko-Am Food, which shares a basement kitchen with its sister business, Kum Gang San restaurant. Soon Bo Lee, 63, who directs the cooking, learned how to make kimchi at age 16 in Seoul.

"She learned from her mother, because a woman, before she's married, must learn how to make kimchi," said Sang Jin Kim, Ko-Am's president, who interpreted for his cook.

Mrs. Lee and a staff of eight men and women make 10 types of kimchi, mostly from cabbage (2,700 pounds a day) but also from daikon and cucumbers. The staff cuts the vegetables by hand.

"We tried using a machine, but the machine broke up the cabbage," Mr. Kim said. For all 10 varieties, Mrs. Lee has a mother sauce of anchovy, kelp, radish and onion, boiled in water for two hours, then cooled and tweaked for each variety.

The most common variation is bright red and redolent of garlic. Mrs. Lee mixes crushed red pepper, fish sauce, salted shrimp sauce, fresh onions and radish in a blender, then adds it to the cooled sauce along with freshly sliced green pepper, sliced radish and garlic. Pogi kimchi, using napa cabbages sliced in half vertically, are dipped in the chunky marinade, which workers also brush onto each leaf by hand.

The Korilla BBQ food truck, which won a recent Vendy award for rookie of the year, sells bulgogi tacos topped with pogi kimchi, said Edward Song, a founder of the truck, which buys 240 pounds of Ko-Am's kimchi every week.

When the Korilla BBQ food truck first started in October 2010, Kum Gang San let Mr. Song and his partners make their food in its kitchen. A few months later the Korilla team started cooking at a kitchen of its own in Brooklyn.

"They were so supportive of our truck, and our goals," said Mr. Song, who ate often at Kum Gang San while growing up in Bayside. "So it's logical for us to buy their kimchi."

Not far away, in Corona, Queens, is Tortilleria Nixtamal, a restaurant well known for tortillas made from masa, a dough of dried white corn that has been boiled and soaked in slaked lime and water, which softens the corn and makes it easier to peel — a process called nixtamalization. The corn is then finely ground for tortilla dough.

In New York City, most tortillas are made from a dried, powdered version called masa harina, which has preservatives and is less tasty, said Zarela Martinez, the cookbook author who closed her Manhattan restaurant, Zarela, earlier this year. When heated, the Nixtamal tortillas puff up and taste clearly, though subtly, of corn.

Inside Tortilleria Nixtamal from 4 to 10 a.m., the tortillas pop out of a machine.

"It's 3,000 tortillas an hour, 6,000 to 12,000 tortillas a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year," said Fernando Ruiz, a firefighter and native of Mexico who opened Nixtamal in 2008 with his girlfriend, Shauna Page, a former business consultant.

"Our intention was to be a tortilleria to New York's Corona, a growing Mexican neighborhood," Ms. Page said.

It is more than that. Akhtar Nawab, the executive chef of La Esquina in SoHo and Cafe de La Esquina in Brooklyn, buys tortillas from Nixtamal.

"They're always hot and fresh, and they're very soft," he said. "There's a little chew. They're flaky, like a fine French pastry but a more peasant construct, and they have pockets of air, and they smell of corn."

KOREAN BARBECUE IN A SMOKE-FILLED ROOM

BY KARLA COOK

NEW JERSEY DINING | SOUTH PLAINFIELD

Korean Barbecue In a Smoke-Filled Room

By KARLA COOK

STEP into the dining room of Kimchi Hana Korean-Japanese Restaurant in South Plainfield, and right away you notice the smoke. A row of massive exhaust fans seems to provide more din than ventilation, but for diners, the fans are a good sign: They signify grilling equipment in tables below, where servers insert buckets of glowing coals for grilling traditional Korean barbecue. The grills separate the diners into haves and have-nots, barbecue or regular. The regular tables move faster.

I recommend both. With one exception (more about that later), every dish I tried was very good, from the tiny fried anchovies in the beautiful collection of side dishes (banchan) served at the start of the meal to the lamb soup with sesame leaves.

Other table favorites included seafood pancake (hae mool pajun), with shrimp and scallions, and a beautifully presented rice-vegetable combination in a hot stone pot (gop dol bibim bap). A family-size casserole of steamed monkfish with soybean sprouts and watercress was also a contender, though the fish was bony. (We left the Japanese menu, including the sushi bar, for another time.)

The quality of the food rests with Hyong Chang, whose sister opened the restaurant in 1986 and sold it to her a couple of years later. Mrs. Chang, who came with her family from South Korea in 1966, spent hours perfecting the flavors of each dish at home, she said in an interview after my visits, then shared the recipes with Duk Chung, the chef she and her husband hired.

After her husband's death 11 years ago, Mrs. Chang came to value Mr. Chung's hard work and reliability, and he became a partner in the business three years ago.

But back to the barbecue: Kimchi Hana delivers.

Our barbecue table was one in a line of them at the back of the big dining room, where the smoke was particularly thick. We ordered bulgogi (marinated beef), sliced boneless chicken and marinated spare ribs as entrees. Just as we began our appetizers — fried pork dumplings and a pleasantly crunchy flour-based pancake studded with hot peppers and scallions — the server appeared with the coal buckets and the grate, then a bowl containing the spare ribs, which she arranged on the grill. She returned occasionally to turn the meat, eventually pronouncing the pieces ready for dressing with Mr. Chung's housemade doenjang (fermented soy paste) and wrapping in lettuce leaves.

She repeated the process with the bulgogi but, with an eye on the scrum of waiting diners, asked whether she could cook the chicken in the back. We agreed, and shortly she brought the cooked chicken, removed the grate and coals and replaced the lid, and the table was as before. Our knees grew cool.

My plan to order the large marinated shrimp barbecue on a second visit was thwarted by a confluence of rules — a two-item minimum per party to justify occupying a barbecue table, and no, the shrimp could not be cooked in the kitchen. I capitulated, ordering the hot, spicy and sweet shrimp with garlic sauce recommended by the server, with predictable results: too much breading, most of it soggy, and very little shrimp flavor.

At dessert time, we skipped the red bean and green tea ice creams, ordering instead a sweet drink, sikhye, made with malt flour, rice and sugar. The grains of sticky rice floated among tiny cubes of ice, combining with the liquid to make a lovely palate cleanser. We felt equally refreshed later when we left the smoke-filled room for the clear night air, having eaten so well at Kimchi Hana.

TRADITIONAL Korean barbecue dishes are grilled in the table at Kimchi Hana Korean-Japanese Restaurant, where Duk Chung, making a seafood pancake at right, is the chef. Above left is steamed monkfish.

Kimchi Hana Korean-Japanese Restaurant

6001 Hadley Road, Middlesex Mall South Plainfield (908) 755-0777

WORTH IT

THE SPACE No-frills, 120-seat dining room encompassing semi-private dining rooms, regular tables and a sushi bar. The restaurant, except for the private dining areas, is on one level, but the space is tight.

THE CROWD Noisy and casual, with many children; servers are extremely efficient, headwaiters brusque when seating customers.

THE BAR Bring your own wine or beer.

THE BILL Lunch items, $8 to $11. Dinner main dishes, $8 to $30. MasterCard, Visa and American Express accepted.

WHAT WE LIKED Fried meat dumplings, flour pancake with peppers and scallions, seafood pancake, prime beef barbecue, marinated spare rib barbecue, chicken barbecue, lamb and wild sesame soup, stone pot bibimbap, steamed monkfish with soybean sprouts, sweet rice drink.

IF YOU GO Lunch Monday through Friday, including a special lunch menu, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dinner menu served 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days. Plenty of shopping-center parking. Reservations accepted only for parties of six or more.

RATINGS Don't Miss, Worth It, O.K., Don't Bother.

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FASHION
IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

SHE WANTS MORE THAN HER MTV

BY MELENA RYZIK

"Have you had a popsicle? They're sooo good," said SuChin Pak, known to a generation of screaming teenagers as the sweet and chipper on-air correspondent for MTV. "Let me buy you one!"

It was a sweltering Sunday, and Ms. Pak was nowhere near the red carpets or green rooms, interviewing Taylor Swift or spotlighting some do-gooder youth. Instead, she was walking up and down a small patch of asphalt on the Lower East Side, helping sell designer T-shirts and those really good ice pops, which come in artisanal Mexican flavors like horchata and mango con chili.


Up Close

She Wants More Than Her MTV

A reporter for the network moonlights as the creative force behind a weekend market.

No, Ms. Pak did not lose her plum job as an MTV correspondent. She still covers events like the earthquake in Haiti and every pop star's latest baby bump and broken engagement. But these days, she has become consumed by a side project, one that takes her to every corner of a newly trendy pocket along the Lower East Side-Chinatown border, foraging for indie designers and boutiques, and seeking new flavors like truffled pretzels and wild lobster rolls.

Ms. Pak likes to give credit to her brother, Suhyun, but she is the creative force behind the Hester Street Fair, this summer's newest designer flea market, wedged in a lot between a high school athletic field and the three-acre Seward Park, one of the oldest city-built playgrounds in the country. Started in April and set to run nearly year round, this modern incarnation of a peddler's paradise has been billed as a downtown Manhattan version of the Brooklyn Flea, but it feels more like a hyperlocal block party.

Every weekend the precious sliver of land, barely wider than two parked cars, is transformed into a modern-day pushcart bazaar, teeming with stylish terrariums, vintage jewelry and refurbished bicycles, plus a rotating feast that might include banh mi, wild smoked salmon and barbecued pulled pork — all from neighborhood restaurants and cooks.

It helps that Ms. Pak also seems to know everybody within a 10-block radius. "It's an obsession," Ms. Pak, 34, said of the fair. "For me, right now, it's the most creative thing that I do."

That says a lot, considering her quirky, unlikely career path. The daughter of conservative, religious parents from Korea who speak little English, Ms. Pak was born in Seoul and moved to the suburbs of San Francisco at 5. She grew up in a pop culture vacuum, forbidden to watch television or listen to Western music. Her world was school, church and her parents' cafe in downtown Oakland.

How she ended up on television, on MTV no less, is not a story of typical teenage rebellion. Even before attending the University of California, Berkeley, where she studied political science, Ms. Pak spent part of her high school years contributing to an ABC affiliate as the host of a show called "Straight Talk N' Teens." ("My hair," she said, "was very intense.")

After graduation, she moved to New York to lead a short-lived talk show, "Trackers," which she described as "less Bad Girl's Club and more I Am Woman Hear Me Roar," on the then newly launched Oxygen network.

When she was 24, MTV recruited her. She has been there ever since, over the years co-hosting the Video Music Awards and developing a series about immigrant life. Most recently she has been driving cross-country to cover the recipients of grants from Pepsi for civic, environmental and arts projects.

"I love TV," Ms. Pak said. "I've done it since I was 16. I don't have another skill."

But, she added, "It's not a creative game for me, it's much more of a business game." The Hester Street Fair is her outlet.

She and her brother conceived the fair in response to a request from the Seward Park Cooperatives, the sprawling redbrick towers built by labor and trade unions in the 1960s, where Ms. Pak has shared a two-bedroom unit with Suhyun, 32, for six years. The co-op wanted ideas for the empty lot, which it owns.

"Everybody put in these really lame pitches — dog park or a reflection pond," Ms. Pak said. Having grown up going to swap meets in Northern California, she and her brother immediately suggested a flea market. They also envisioned it as an antidote to the interchangeable MozzArepas-and-tube-socks fairs that plague city streets every summer.

"The last thing we want is an outdoor mall," Ms. Pak said. On any given weekend, there are art and Greenmarket stands, community bulletin boards and a misting tent. She and her partners have taken pains to make sure that the vendors, most from the neighborhood, fill a niche. Many are first-timers, trying out a second career or passion project. "Our hope is that they move on to their own storefronts and bakeries," Ms. Pak said. "We would love to be a launching pad."

The Paks brought in Ron Castellano, an architect who helped design Santos Party House and whose office overlooks the Hester Street space, and Adam Zeller, a TV marketing executive, as partners. They now oversee the fair's look and its online promotion. Suhyun runs the day-to-day operations, while SuChin, as he put it, "puts the little touches and the cool factor."

Ms. Pak has been known to sell some of her own designer castoffs at the market. She recruited other fashion insiders to do the same.

"I always knew that one day I would ask for a favor from my friends, who are all extremely well connected and really too cool for school," Ms. Pak said. "And now I'm calling them like, 'Remember that story I did two years ago, remember that blog post I posted? It's payback time.' " Sway, another MTV correspondent, is having his birthday party there on July 31, part of a parade of familiar television faces and downtown personalities who populate the fair.

Ms. Pak's parents, meanwhile, didn't quite understand her desire to run a flea market. Then again, they still watch her TV appearances with the sound off. But they can rest easy: Ms. Pak does not intend to swap TV for full-time bazaaring. "We just want to throw a really great party every weekend here," she said. "It's fun."

Walking around the market, appearing preternaturally cool in a ruffled and pleated skirt and blouse and flat Chanel gardenia sandals, she blended in easily with shoppers looking for vintage clutches or fanciful cake-pops. She's usually recognized only by teenagers.

"Every time I get caught on the subway around 3 or 4 during the school year, it's definitely dicey," she said. "I get a lot of like — yo, are you that girl? Then I have to go eight stops with them."

Not that she's complaining. "Ten million 16-year-old girls would sell their right arm to live the life that I've had," she said.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: July 25, 2010

An article on July 8 about the Hester Street Fair on the Lower East Side misspelled the given name of one of the organizers. He is Suhyun Pak, not Suyhun.

TRADITIONAL KOREAN STYLE GETS A FORWARD SPIN

BY ALICE PFEIFFER

SEOUL

Less mass-marketed than the kimono, the hanbok is the traditional Korean costume of comparable delicacy, but its centuries-old silhouette is increasingly in demand around the world, from Buckingham Palace to Beverly Hills and a few places in between.

Short for Han-guk pokshik, or Korean attire, a hanbok comprises two pieces: a bolero-style jacket, called a jeogori, and a voluminous, wraparound, floor-length skirt, called a chima.

The attire, predominantly worn by women, also exists for men with baggy pants, although it is not as common. It lost some of its popularity in the 1950s and '60s in South Korea, during the era of intense American-influenced modernization that followed the Korean War, from 1950 to 1953, when the hanbok was considered old fashioned.

Yet today, a new generation of upscale hanbok tailors, mainly women, are increasingly being acclaimed by the media.

Lee Young Hee has been praised as South Korea's most significant, old-school hanbok maker. Since her first snips in 1977, she has greatly encour aged the introduction of the complex garments into a cosmopolitan luxury market.

First influenced by watching her mother work as an embroiderer, she later developed complex, natural dying techniques by observing Buddhist monks.

Today, she has become the leader in her field, her customers ranging from Miuccia Prada to South Korea's first lady, Kim Yoon-ok. Mrs. Lee's hanboks are entirely handmade and range in price from $1,000 to $5,000.

It's not just a modern replica, because she applies Western haute couture techniques like painting directly onto fabric.

"The time needed to make a hanbok varies, depending on the intricacy and the level of artistry required in the final piece," Mrs. Lee said. "Some of my most ambitious pieces have taken five years to construct, but for an ordinary hanbok, I spend 15 days to one month."

Although she primarily uses silk, hand-woven ramie known as mosi, sometimes incorporating cotton and linen to create a contrast of textures, she admits to being "always open to trying new and unconventional fabrics."

Indeed, she also experiments by weaving Hanji, local paper handmade out of the inner bark of the paper mulberry tree, into the fabric.

Mrs. Lee says she wants to demonstrate "modern and elegant sensibility within the frame of the hanbok's formal classicism."

"Today, it is much easier to wear compared to yesteryear's garment," she said.

Once a costume worn on grand occasions, the hanbok has become a fashion item, and therefore liberated from ceremonial or symbolic constraints. Even fashionistas like Paris Hilton and Britney Spears have been attracted to the it.

In 2004, Mrs. Lee founded the Lee Young Hee Korea Museum in New York City, where she shows her personal collection of traditional costumes, accessories and books.

The museum's director, Jong Suk-sung, said these were belongings "that she has acquired over a lifetime,"

"Most of her pieces are from the late Joseon Dynasty, covering the period from the 18th to 20th century," Mr. Jong continued.

With its curved lines, loose fit, ample sleeves and abundant, flowing fabric, the style of that period still influences today's hanboks.

But a new generation of designers is reinventing the hanbok by rethinking ancient forms according to modern creative criteria.

Lie Sang Bong, for example, mixes these traditional silhouettes with contemporary fashion twists like large leather belts and bare arms.

His work, which is mainly in silk, cotton and wool, can sell for as much as $2,000, and he occasionally works on commissions, like a dress for Kim Yu-na, the 2010 Olympic figure-skating champion, who is from South Korea.

Both traditional Korean designs and culture are at the core in Mr. Lie's references: The designer says he is inspired and moved by the traditional fabric, cutting, silhouette, color and details but also "by the very traditional Korean elements," like the use of the colors red, yellow and blue, ancient Korean calligraphy, and flower embroidery.

"Korea is my mother country," Mr. Lie said. "I was born here and have lived so far, surrounded by this beautiful ground, air, water. It is very natural that my collection has been naturally inspired by Korean elements."

Yet he is seeking to discover "how well I can modernize the traditional elements to the Western world. That constitutes my endless quest."

"A new generation of hanbok designers are coming out with an outfit that translates modernity in a historically comprehensible manner," said Kihoh Sohn, fashion editor at Vogue Korea.

The magazine wants to encourage these new designs while celebrating national sartorial identity, Mr. Sohn said, so it features a minimum of two stories a year entirely dedicated to hanbok.

Similarly, the Korean Fashion Week, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in October, featured Mrs. Lee, Mr. Lie and many other traditional hanbok-influenced designers.

Women grow up "appreciating the beauty of the hanbok from early on," Mr. Sohn added.

But hanboks are appealing to Western women too because they have "an air of grandeur to them and can be a great source of evening wear," he said.

"And evening wear is much more appreciated in Western culture than in the East," he said. As a result, Mr. Sohn said, many European designers have also been influenced by hanboks, including Haider Ackermann.

Other hanbok tailors include Bae Young-jin, who has chosen to modernize the garments by using monochrome, black and white materials and dyes, an approach acknowledged in 2007 when Queen Elizabeth II visited her in her boutique near Gyeongbokgung Palace in Seoul.

Meanwhile, Kim Young-jin has reinvented the classic lines by using taffeta, silk and lace, and Kim Hee-soo has introduced dark shades, hats and veils into the hanboks.

Mrs. Lee sums up the hanbok's popularity this way: "It is a unique form that is capable of blending Korean traditional forms with modern aesthetics."

In other ways, she added, South Korean clothing design is like any other.

"Fashion is always moving fast and ever-changing," Mrs. Lee said. "People get excited over new trends."

ESTHER KIM AND JOSEPH VARET

BY KATE MURPHY

VOWS

Esther Kim and Joseph Varet

BY KATE MURPHY

IT'S fitting that Esther Jin Kim and Joseph Rosenwald Varet met because of their support of Performa, an organization in New York that promotes the work of performing artists. After all, these are two people who approach life as a kind of experiential art form.

For them, even the most mundane activity is an opportunity for artistic expression. Mr. Varet, 35, has been known to drive from farm stand to farm stand to find just the right produce for a picturesque beach picnic. And Ms. Kim, 29, stores her countless pairs of designer jeans in a glass case rather than using something as prosaic as a chest of drawers.

"They both have a highly developed aesthetic sense," said Dr. Audrey Chun, Ms. Kim's cousin and director of the Martha Stewart Center for Living at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York.

Mr. Varet was captivated from the moment he first saw Ms. Kim. It was April 2009, and she had arrived late to a meeting of young patrons of Performa called to plan a benefit gala. But Ms. Kim, who graduated from Yale and was a busy Ph.D. candidate in the history of art at Columbia University and a part-time art dealer, didn't notice him, despite taking the seat next to his.

APRIL 9, HOUSTON Joseph Varet carries Esther Kim during their traditional Korean ceremony, top. The couple after their vows, above.

A couple who see the beauty in their differences and share a common quest for artistic adventure.

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"When I saw her it was like I had been working on this puzzle and someone had suddenly given me the answer," said Mr. Varet, who the year before had sold the company he co-founded, LX.TV, to NBC Universal for a reported $10 million. (A broadband network and online production company, it is perhaps best known for the programming that plays in the back of New York taxicabs.)

He had been looking for a like-minded aesthete to share his life.

"Joseph achieved professionally beyond his wildest dreams and thought, Now what?" said his younger brother, David Varet. "I think he was finally ready for love."

Their mother, Elizabeth Rosenwald Varet, who is the chairwoman of American Securities Group and granddaughter of Julius Rosenwald, an owner and president of Sears, Roebuck & Company, agreed that her elder son was ready for love but added dryly, "I have this theory that people get married to get out of the agony of dating."

Mr. Varet's interest was piqued by the fact that Ms. Kim, whose parents immigrated to Dallas from Seoul shortly before she was born, is Korean. Mr. Varet's friends and family said that he had long had an affinity for Asian art, cuisine and culture and had traveled extensively in Asia.

Mr. Varet got Ms. Kim's e-mail address from group e-mails sent out by Performa and began inviting her to dinners in Koreatown as well as to the opera and art gallery openings. She accepted his invitations but only because she had an ulterior motive.

"I thought he was in technology and could help set up a Web site for my art dealing," she said. When it became clear he didn't know much about creating Web sites, she tried to discourage him by telling him she had a boyfriend in Paris (although she knew that relationship wasn't going anywhere). He was not deterred. "He was pretty persistent," she said. "But in a patient way, not an annoying way."

Friends describe Mr. Varet's and Ms. Kim's personalities as complementary: He is calm and deliberative while she is passionate and spontaneous. "Joseph grounds Esther," Dr. Chun said. "And I think she brings him out of himself."

A few weeks after they began seeing each other, he made a bold move.

They were attending the Performa benefit they had helped plan, and in midsentence he kissed her.

"I didn't know what to do," Ms. Kim said. "I was talking, and he kissed me, and then I continued talking where I left off."

Mr. Varet said, "Either she was ignoring me or oblivious, but I wanted to make it clear how I felt."

Up to that point, she did not think of him as boyfriend material, much less a potential husband, because her parents wanted her to marry a Korean. "I have always been very sensitive to pleasing my parents," she said.

The kiss, she said, began to change her attitude, as did the icons next to his name as she read Gotham magazine's 2009 "100 Hottest Bachelors" rankings. Along with a pile-of-money icon, which meant he was wealthy, and a pile-of-books icon, which meant he was smart (he has an undergraduate degree from Harvard and an M.B.A. from Columbia), he also had an apple-pie icon, which meant he was good to take home to Mom.

"I know it sounds silly, but that really got me thinking," she said. "I really started wondering if my parents, although he wasn't Korean, would love him, too, for their daughter."

Sensing he was making progress, and after several more dates, Mr. Varet invited himself to visit her in South Korea, where she spent her summers. Her parents, Chang and Susan Kim, have homes in Seoul, Dallas and Kona, Hawaii. But two days before Mr. Varet was scheduled to leave for South Korea, he had a biking accident on the Hudson River bike path and fractured his left kneecap. His doctor advised against travel, but Mr. Varet, in a leg brace, was determined.

"I wouldn't see her for eight or nine weeks and knew she'd forget all about me if I didn't go," he said.

Ms. Kim pushed him around Seoul in a wheelchair. "It wasn't all that attractive," she said. "My grandmother who had had a stroke could get around better than he could."

But her family was impressed. “They said he must really like me to go to so much effort,” she said. “He worked so hard to get my attention.”

When he returned to the United States later that summer, he worked tirelessly to rehabilitate his knee before Ms. Kim joined him at his rented summer house in the Hamptons.

“He was constantly exercising with a pursed brow and focused stare — like Rocky,” said Peter Friedland, who shared the house with Mr. Varet and who has known him since high school. “This was a Joseph Varet I had never seen before. A Joseph in gym clothes. A Joseph in love.”

Everything the two of them did together that August was studied and artful, from the particular way they ground and brewed coffee, to the beach time they spent not sunning or swimming but painting watercolors to present to each other.

They began to see the beauty in their differences.

“He’s solid where I’m like water,” Ms. Kim said. “I never caught him in a lie.”

Last year, the couple extended their reach for artistic expression and perfection by embarking on a four-month trip to Southeast Asia to discover the best street food, something both are passionate about.

“We went to all the most obscure food carts to eat some of the most bodacious foods imaginable,” Ms. Kim said. “It was that adventurous spirit, whether we’re in L.A., Brooklyn, Seoul or Penang, that propelled us to spend so much time together, to explore and share experiences and that will inspire us to keep going tomorrow.”

The couple concluded their travels with a visit during the Thanksgiving holiday to Ms. Kim’s parents’ home in Hawaii, where Mr. Varet proposed in front of several family members, including her parents.

“Before I proposed, I had to have a sit-down with her father, who is very traditional,” Mr. Varet said. “He had to make me sweat a little. He knew I hadn’t been working and wanted to know why.” He passed muster by explaining that he was making investments in start-up media companies.

Mr. Varet gave Ms. Kim a $4 ring bought at a beach stand; he knew she would want to design her own ring.

On April 9, the couple stood surrounded by 14 austere, plum-colored paintings by the abstract artist Mark Rothko at the nondenominational Rothko Chapel in Houston. The Rev. Shawn Kang, a Presbyterian minister, officiated with Rabbi Monty Eliasov taking part in the ceremony. The bride’s brother, Abraham Kim, played the processional on his Hawaiian ukulele.

After the religious ceremony, guests gathered for a seated Korean banquet at the Sheraton Houston Brookhollow Hotel, owned by the bride’s father. The hotel’s ballroom had been transformed into what looked like a mod nightclub: the floor covered with iridescent white synthetic turf, the walls draped with folds of frothy, white fabric, accented with turquoise and orange lighting.

The trendy ambience contrasted with the Korean paebaek ceremony, during which the couple wore traditional silk robes, known as hanboks, as he carried her piggyback around the room to symbolize his ability to support her.

The couple will continue their quest for artistic adventure, once back from an African safari honeymoon. They will live in Venice Beach, Calif., where the bridegroom bought a three-story contemporary town house. Ms. Kim hopes to show and sell art in an exhibition space on the ground floor as she finishes her Ph.D. dissertation, which focuses on the influence of computer technology on conceptual art.

She said that art, like street food, is a connection she and Mr. Varet share that sustains and nourishes their relationship: “It’s always changing form and creating challenges to old ways of thinking, or savoring, the world.”

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: May 1, 2011

The Vows column last Sunday, about the marriage of Esther Kim and Joseph Varet, misspelled the name of a traditional Korean garment. It is a hanbok, not hambok.

A WHITE HOUSE DEBUT FOR DOO.RI

BY ERIC WILSON

Michelle Obama has not been entirely consistent when it comes to dressing for state dinners. Since the considered choice of a gold gown by Naeem Khan, a designer with Indian roots who is based in America, for the first dinner for the prime minister of India in November of 2009, she has mixed things up, wearing Peter Soronen to a dinner for the Mexican president, and that controversial Alexander McQueen dress for the president of China. She wore another dress by Mr. Khan to a dinner for the chancellor of Germany.

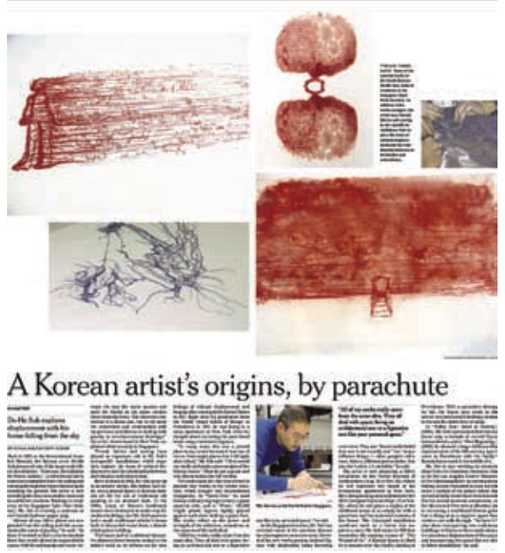
There is likely to be little complaint about her latest choice. For Thursday night’s dinner for President Lee Myung-Bak of South Korea at the White House, in the wake of the free-trade agreement approved by Congress, she wore a smashing plum one-shouldered jersey dress by the Korean-American designer Doo-ri Chung, which she accented with a turquoise beaded belt. It looked like a colorful evening, with the Ahn Trio in primary colors, though Janelle Monae stuck with her signature tuxedo. “I’ve always been a fan of purple, and I thought it was fitting for her,” Ms. Chung said in a phone interview Friday morning. “Purple is the color of royalty, and she wears it beautifully.”

ARTS
IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

A KOREAN ARTIST'S ORIGINS, BY PARACHUTE

BY SONIA KOLESNIKOV-JESSOP

SINGAPORE


A Korean artist's origins, by parachute

Back in 2003 at the International Istanbul Biennial, the Korean artist Do-Ho Suh presented one of his large-scale fabric installations "Staircase (Installation for Poetic Justice)," a red ethereal fabric staircase suspended from the ceiling and running through two floors without quite reaching the ground. The artist is now revisiting the idea on a smaller scale and in a different medium. Working in residency at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Mr. Suh is creating a staircase in red threads laid over paper pulp.

"Almost all my fabric pieces are suspended from the ceiling and this accentuates the sense of gravity," he said. "So here, I've tried to find a way to simulate lines that would almost be suspended in space, with thread in pulp and water, because the way the water pushes and pulls the thread on the paper creates these beautiful lines. The staircase connection is a literal one, but in my mind the connection and continuation with my previous installation is dealing with gravity in two-dimensional drawings," the artist, who is based in New York, explained while recently in Singapore.

Thread, fabrics and sewing have played an important role in Mr. Suh's site-specific installations which regularly explore the issue of cultural displacement and the relationship between individuality and collectivism.

Born in Seoul in 1962, Mr. Suh grew up in an artistic family. His father, Suh Se-ok, was a pivotal figure in Korean modern art for his use of traditional ink painting in an abstract style. In the 1960s, many of Korea's traditional homes were destroyed to make way for modern buildings, but Mr. Suh's parents had a small, traditional scholar's house built of discarded wood from a demolished palace building.

This house and its traditional decorative elements have become central to the artist's work as he reflects on his own feelings of cultural displacement and longing after moving to the United States in 1991. Right after his graduation from the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence in 1994, he was living in a noisy apartment in New York when he thought about recreating his quiet Seoul home using translucent organza.

"In many ways, this was a pivotal piece in my career because it was one of two or three major pieces that I did right after school," Mr. Suh said. "I first sewed my studio and made some samples of the Korean house." Then he got a grant and was able to realize the full version.

Two years later, Mr. Suh was invited to present four works in the Venice Biennale, which brought him international recognition. In "Some/One," he used Korean military dog tags to form a giant imperial robe, and in "Floor," 180,000 fragile plastic figures tightly placed against each other hold up a glass floor. The works reflect on the power and strength of the collective, sometimes at the expense of the individual.

"All of my works really come from the same idea. They all deal with space; being an architectural one or a figurative one like your personal space," he said.

At the Singapore institute, Mr. Suh has revisited some of his previous themes but also explores some new ones. Several of his new works portray isolated figures with shadowlike forms hovering over them. They are "based on the belief that one is not exactly one" but "many different things — other people's influence, history, different personalities. But you don't see it, it's invisible," he said.

The artist is now preparing a fabric installation for the Venice Biennale of Architecture (Aug. 29 to Nov. 21), where he will represent the facade of his brownstone apartment in New York. He's also planning an installation for the 2010 Liverpool Biennial (Sept. 18 to Nov. 18), where he will place a replica of his childhood house in an empty lot with a parachute and the scattered contents of the house. The Liverpool installation continues work on a theme that explores a story Mr. Suh wrote in 1999 that resembles the opening scenes of "The Wizard of Oz." A Korean house is lifted by a tornado over the Pacific, landing in Providence. With a parachute slowing its fall, the house gets stuck in the corner of a brownstone building similar to the one the artist lives in today.

In "Fallen Star: Wind of Destiny," (2006), Mr. Suh represented that Korean house atop a tornado of carved Styrofoam and resin, and in "New Beginning," (2006) he showed a large dollhouse-like representation of his 18th-century apartment in Providence with his family's Korean home stuck in the middle of it.

Mr. Suh is also working on commissions from two American museums. One is for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's Korean gallery: an in situ a royal folding screen recreated in clear acrylic resin a section of the palace where the screen initially would have been housed. For his second museum commission, at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, he is recreating a traditional Korean gate, but is doing so in a negative space that visitors can walk through. "So here it's also about transporting two traditional buildings in Korea to those institutions; it's also about displacement of the space and transporting the space like my other fabric installation," he said.

SHEEP IN TIMES SQUARE

BY RANDY KENNEDY

ANGEL FRANCO/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Sheep in Times Square

Joining the art carnival that descends on New York during the annual Armory Show, the huge contemporary art fair that opens on Thursday, Times Square is transforming itself into a whimsical sculpture garden. Pieces by **Tom Otterness** (a huge bronze mouse, looking as if it has outgrown the subway), **Niki de Saint Phalle** (a 10-foot ceramic and glass female figure) and **Kyu Seok Oh**, a Brooklyn artist (a flock of sheep made from heavy paper, above), were unveiled on Tuesday along with two other sculptures, by **Grimanesa Amorós** and **David Kennedy Cutler**. The works, presented by the Times Square Alliance, will remain on view through Monday. Four of the sculptures are installed around Duffy Square at sites between 46th Street and 47th Street. The sheep, which are presented in partnership with the West Harlem Art Fund, will be grazing motionlessly for a week between 45th Street and 46th Street near the Marriott Marquis Hotel on Broadway. No need to feed them. *RANDY KENNEDY*

VESSELS OF CLAY, CENTURIES OLD, THAT SPEAK TO MODERNITY

BY KEN JOHNSON

Vessels of Clay, Centuries Old, That Speak to Modernity

More than most other kinds of art or craft, ceramic works can seem unbound by time. A vase might be hundreds of years old and yet look as if it were made only decades ago. That is partly because glazed and fired clay does not show its age the way paint, canvas, wood and even stone do. And it is partly because some styles practiced in the past by forgotten artisans embody feelings of liveliness and immediacy that modern artists love to emulate.

KEN JOHNSON ART REVIEW

A beguiling case in point is the collection of bottles, vases, bowls and dishes from the 15th and 16th centuries in "Poetry in Clay: Korean Buncheong Ceramics from Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art," a beautiful exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

"Poetry in Clay: Korean Buncheong Ceramics from Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art," continues through Aug. 14 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, (212)535-7710, metmuseum.org.

The show was organized by Soyoung Lee, an associate curator in the Met's Asian art department, and Seung-chang Jeon, chief curator of the Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, in Seoul, from which most of the works came.

There is nothing ostentatious about buncheong, which evolved out of the previously popular celadon, a style characterized by its distinctive jade green glazes. Buncheong colors range from creamy white to warm shades of black. The wheel-turned forms are elegantly simple but have a comparatively coarse, homespun quality. Some bottles have narrow mouths with out-turned rims and round-shouldered, tapering bodies ending in flared bases. Others are pear shaped. There are flask-shaped bottles in the form of spheres flattened into canteen forms. Drum-shaped bottles are horizontal cylinders with rounded ends. Bowls may open out or turn in to assume squat, podlike profiles.

Excess ornament is rare, but a remarkable exception in the show is a mid-15th-century ewer with a mouth shaped like a dragon's and a scaly tail for a handle. Mostly buncheong has the sort of unpretentious sculptural aspect that ceramics by and for the people have had since time immemorial.

Poetry in Clay
Metropolitan Museum of Art

LEEUM, SAMSUNG MUSEUM OF ART

A jar inlaid, stamped and iron-painted with fish and petals.

The beauty of buncheong, however, is less in its third dimension than in its surface decoration. Its defining technical feature is the application of white slip — a coat of viscous white clay — to the gray base clay of a vessel. Early buncheong craftsmen carved or incised images into the base clay and filled the excavations with slip to create seamlessly inlaid representations of flowers, fish, birds, trees and other natural motifs. They also used stamps to impress fine-grained fields of dots and tiny blossoms.

Works made by this method are the most refined and the earliest in the show. A 15th-century bottle with a serpentine, goggle-eyed dragon flying wildly among the clouds inlaid in white with black accents on the vessel's bulbous, gray upper half is a joyous wedding of classically restrained, 3-D form and infectiously fluid linear draftsmanship.

As buncheong evolved, it became not more but less polished and more vigorously expressive. Works of this sort especially resonate with the 20th century's delight in spontaneity and directness. In many cases imagery and patterns were made by drawing with pointed instruments into the wet slip. An eight-inch-tall flask-shaped bottle from the second half of the 15th century has a comical, lumpy dog on its side that looks as if it were drawn by Picasso. On a similar bottle from around the same time a cartoonish, semiabstract landscape resembles a drawing made by Miró or Klee in a mood of cheerful delirium. Most of the show's works exude a happy and even goofy disposition.

Another approach was to brush gestural, black imagery directly onto the dried slip, a technique called iron-painting. An eye-popping example is a late-15th- or early-16th-century, drum-shaped bottle bearing a bursting, loosely symmetrical composition of silhouetted peony blossoms. Matisse would have been thrilled by this choreography of organic exuberance.

In buncheong's later stages some artists eliminated imagery by dipping pieces into the slip to create uniform surfaces resembling porcelain or by using wide brushes to produce wavy, striated patterns. These too have a remarkably modernistic look that calls to mind ceramicists' responses to Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s and to Minimalist tendencies in the 1960s.

In admirably lucid catalog essays the exhibition's curators raise intriguing questions about what the buncheong style meant to its creators and consumers. What was it about the rustic style of late buncheong that so appealed to the aristocrats and common people who avidly acquired it? Did buncheong craftsmen consciously cater to nostalgia for country life and times past the way producers of faux antiques purveyed by stores like Pottery Barn do today? Did they favor a spontaneous, seemingly naïve style as an "authentic" counter to more overtly urbane esthetics and lifestyles of their day?

Ms. Lee details economic and political factors that may have encouraged a turn to less labor-intensive modes of production, but she says she does not think they explain everything. Evidently there were no critics around back then to elucidate the issues. But a selection of buncheong revival ware from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries by Korean and Japanese artists included in the exhibition suggests that fantasies of rural innocence, naturalism and unbridled expressionism are likely to persist wherever and whenever metropolitan anxieties flourish.

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A FINE LINE: STYLE OR PHILOSOPHY?

BY KEN JOHNSON

For the hot, tired and frazzled masses, the Guggenheim Museum offers an oasis of cool serenity this summer. “Marking Infinity,” a five-decade retrospective of the art of Lee Ufan, fills the museum rotunda and two side galleries with about 90 works in a Zen-Minimalist, be-here-now vein.

Mr. Lee, 75, is an aesthetic distiller. He boils two- and three-dimensional art down to formal and conceptual essences. Sculptures consist of ordinary, pumpkin-size boulders juxtaposed with sheets and slabs of dark, glossy steel. Paintings made of wide brush strokes executed in gridded order on raw canvas exemplify tension between action and restraint.

A much published philosopher as well as an artist who divides his time between Japan and Paris, Mr. Lee has enjoyed considerable recognition in Europe and in the Far East. Last year the Lee Ufan Museum, a building designed by Tadao Ando, opened on the island of Naoshima, Japan.

But Mr. Lee’s reputation has not extended to the United States. This exhibition, his first in a North American museum, gives a sense of why. His art is impeccably elegant, but in its always near-perfect composure, it teeters between art and décor.

His sculptures call to mind those of Richard Serra, but shy away from the brute physicality of Mr. Serra’s works; his paintings invite comparison to those of Robert Ryman, but are less pragmatically inventive. In its modernization of classical Asian gestures, his work is more suavely stylish than philosophically or spiritually illuminating.

It is interesting to learn, then, from the well-written catalog essay by Alexandra Munroe, who organized the show and is the Guggenheim’s curator of Asian art, what a turbulent environment of art and politics Mr. Lee came out of. He was born in Japanese-occupied Korea in 1936. He studied painting in Seoul and philosophy in Japan, where he moved in 1956.

Steeped in the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger and in Marxist politics, he became an active participant in the countercultural upheavals of the 1960s. At the end of the decade he was co-founder of an antitraditionalist movement called Mono-ha, which roughly translates as “school of things.”

Examples of Mr. Lee’s Mono-ha works here have an enigmatic, wry wit. A piece from 1969 called “Relatum” (Mr. Lee has used this word in the titles of most of his three-dimensional works) makes his concerns explicit. A length of rubber ribbon marked in centimeters like a tape measure is partly stretched and held down by three stones. A stretchy ruler will give false measurements, but are not all human-made measuring devices similarly fallible? Here was a parable for a time when authoritative representations of truth seemed increasingly unreliable to youthful rebels everywhere.

A work from 1971 consisting of seven found boulders, each resting on a simple square cushion on the floor, foreshadows Mr. Lee’s solution. The pillows add a certain anthropomorphic humor, as if the stones were incarnations of the legendary Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, whose minds expanded beyond human limits to embrace geological time. But more important, the seven rocks prompt meditation on our unmediated experience of things in time and space.

The problem is that in a museum setting it is next to impossible to experience stones unclothed by cultural, symbolic associations. We have seen too many rocks used as landscape ornaments and read too many poems about them. Looking at a “Relatum” from 2008, in which a boulder is placed in front of an 80-inch-tall steel plate that leans against the wall, the juxtaposition of nature and culture is too familiar, too formulaic, to be revelatory.

In paintings from the last four decades, Mr. Lee has made the brush stroke his primary device, often to optically gripping and lyrical effect. In the ’70s he pursued two approaches, always using just one color per canvas — usually blue, red or black.

In one series he used a paint-loaded brush to make horizontal rows of squarish marks one after another, each paler than its predecessor, as the paint was used up. He thereby created gridded fields of staccato patterning.

In other paintings he used wide brushes to make long, vertical stripes, dark at the top and fading toward the bottom. They give the impression of stockade fencing obscured near the ground by low-lying fog.

In the ’80s Mr. Lee loosened up his strokes and began to produce airy, monochrome compositions in a kind of Abstract Expressionist style driven not by emotional angst but by delight in existential flux. This period culminates at the end of the decade in canvases densely covered by squiggly gray marks that are among the exhibition’s most compelling.

From the mid-’90s on, Mr. Lee pared down his paintings, arriving four years ago at a particular modular form: an oversize brush stroke shaped like a slice of bread and fading from black to pale gray. He uses this device to punctuate sparingly large, otherwise blank, off-white canvases. Here, as with the stone and steel works, preciousness trumps phenomenology.

But something different and more exciting happens in a site-specific work that ends the show. In an approximately square room, Mr. Lee painted one of his gray-black modules directly on each of three walls. A surprising tension between the materiality of the paint and an illusion of space arises. The modules become like television screens or airplane windows, affording views of indefinite, possibly infinite space beyond the museum walls. It makes for a fine wedding of the real and the metaphysical.

“Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity,” runs through Sept. 28 at the Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, at 89th Street; (212) 423-3500, guggenheim.org.

Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity, *a retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum that is the first North American museum exhibition for Mr. Lee, includes “Relatum - silence b” (2008), left, and “Dialogue” (2007).*

A Fine Line: Style or Philosophy?

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His sculptures call to mind those of Richard Serra, but shy away from the brute physicality of Mr. Serra’s works; his paintings invite comparison to those of Robert Ryman, but are less pragmatically inventive. In its modernization of classical Asian gestures, his work is more suavely stylish than philosophically or spiritually illuminating.

“Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity,” runs through Sept. 28 at the Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, at 89th Street; (212) 423-3500, guggenheim.org.

It is interesting to learn, then, from the well-written catalog essay by Alexandra Munroe, who organized the show and is the Guggenheim’s curator of Asian art, what a turbulent environment of art and politics Mr. Lee came out of. He was born in Japanese-occupied Korea in 1936. He studied painting in Seoul and philosophy in Japan, where he moved in 1956.

Steeped in the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger and in Marxist politics, he became an active participant in the countercultural upheavals of the 1960s. At the end of the decade he was co-founder of an antitraditionalist movement called Mono-ha, which roughly translates as “school of things.”

Examples of Mr. Lee’s Mono-ha works here have an enigmatic, wry wit. A piece from 1969 called “Relatum” (Mr. Lee has used this word in the titles of most of his three-dimensional works) makes his concerns explicit. A length of rubber ribbon marked in centimeters like a tape measure is partly stretched and held down by three stones. A stretchy ruler will give false measurements, but are not all human-made measuring devices similarly fallible? Here was a parable for a time when authoritative representations of truth seemed increasingly unreliable to youthful rebels everywhere.

Works so composed they teeter between art and décor.

A work from 1971 consisting of seven found boulders, each resting on a simple square cushion on the floor, foreshadows Mr. Lee’s solution. The pillows add a certain anthropomorphic humor, as if the stones were incarnations of the legendary Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, whose minds expanded beyond human limits to embrace geological time. But more important, the seven rocks prompt meditation on our unmediated experience of things in time and space.

The problem is that in a museum setting it is next to impossible to experience stones unclothed by cultural, symbolic associations. We have seen too many rocks used as landscape ornaments and read too many poems about them. Looking at a “Relatum” from 2008, in which a boulder is placed in front of an 80-inch-tall steel plate that leans against the wall, the juxtaposition of nature and culture is too familiar, too formulaic, to be revelatory.

In paintings from the last four decades, Mr. Lee has made the brush stroke his primary device, often to optically gripping and lyrical effect. In the ’70s he pursued two approaches, always using just one color per canvas — usually blue, red or black.

In one series he used a paint-loaded brush to make horizontal rows of squarish marks one after another, each paler than its predecessor, as the paint was used up. He thereby created gridded fields of staccato patterning.

In other paintings he used wide brushes to make long, vertical stripes, dark at the top and fading toward the bottom. They give the impression of stockade fencing obscured near the ground by low-lying fog.

In the ’80s Mr. Lee loosened up his strokes and began to produce airy, monochrome compositions in a kind of Abstract Expressionist style driven not by emotional angst but by delight in existential flux. This period culminates at the end of the decade in canvases densely covered by squiggly gray marks that are among the exhibition’s most compelling.

From the mid-’90s on, Mr. Lee pared down his paintings, arriving four years ago at a particular modular form: an oversize brush stroke shaped like a slice of bread and fading from black to pale gray. He uses this device to punctuate sparingly large, otherwise blank, off-white canvases. Here, as with the stone and steel works, preciousness trumps phenomenology.

But something different and more exciting happens in a site-specific work that ends the show. In an approximately square room, Mr. Lee painted one of his gray-black modules directly on each of three walls. A surprising tension between the materiality of the paint and an illusion of space arises. The modules become like television screens or airplane windows, affording views of indefinite, possibly infinite space beyond the museum walls. It makes for a fine wedding of the real and the metaphysical.

“From Line,” a 1977 work, is an example of Mr. Lee’s making the brush stroke his primary device over the last four decades.

SQUEEZING ESSENCE FROM A STONE

BY TED LOOS

BRIDGEHAMPTON, N.Y.

If an artist is going to create an installation for a major museum show using only an industrial steel plate and a rock, then the rock had better be just right.

So it was that Lee Ufan was standing in a freezing rain early this spring, carefully culling stones in a large field divided by a muddy driveway at a garden center on the East End of Long Island. He studied huge gray 1,400-pound boulders that had to be moved by forklift. He bent down to gaze at brownish medium-size stones, turning them over to examine them as if they were precious diamonds.


ART

Squeezing Essence From a Stone

Mr. Lee, and the half-dozen helpers and associates with him, had spent the previous day picking out these rocks from a nearby quarry, and were now at work on the second cut, with the goal of finding 52 that were fit for the Guggenheim Museum exhibition "Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity," which opened on Friday, his 75th birthday. It will be the first large retrospective of his work in the United States.

There was something of the shaman in the spry Mr. Lee as he tried to understand the purpose of each rock. When excited by an idea of how to use one, he would start running across the field to give directions or share his thoughts with a member of his team.

"He can see things we can't see," said Alexandra Munroe, the Guggenheim curator who organized the exhibition and who was spending several days with him on the hunt. "When his antennae go up, it's wonderful to behold. And I've never seen this kind of energy coming off him."

But a "Chorus Line" moment was imminent; not all the assembled stones were going to make it. One, a taupe beauty with whitish veins that, when slick with rain, had the quality of milk stirred into coffee, was bothering Mr. Lee.

He walked over to it and stared at it. It had various paper labels taped to it, printed with its vital statistics and the work it was being considered for: "Relatum," formerly "Situation" (1971), a series of three stretched canvases on the floor, each topped by a single stone.

Mr. Lee, who was born in Korea and now lives in Kamakura, Japan, shook his head.

"The presence of this rock is weak," he declared in Japanese. (Two members of his entourage were translating.) Someone behind him yelled, "He's changing stones!" A large X in blue masking tape was applied to the rock.

"It's a funny thing," Mr. Lee said later that day. "There is no good or bad stone. It just depends on where it's going to be placed. But I have a concept in mind, and I know it when I see it. Making the selection of the rock — that is art."

"Marking Infinity" features Mr. Lee's paintings and drawings too, but he is best known for the continuing and frequently rock-filled series in which every work, like the series as a whole, is called "Relatum." Twenty-seven pieces from the series are being shown at the Guggenheim, and most of those have been "re-enacted," in Ms. Munroe's word, with new materials; the others are existing works on loan.

"The point of the work is to bring together nature and industrial society," Mr. Lee said as he continued to move among the stones. He was referring to pieces like "Relatum — silence b" (2008), in which a rock sits on the floor in front of a steel plate leaning against a wall. "The viewer is to experience the tension between the rock and the steel plate."

He has made his mark by simplifying and distilling his ideas, using as few elements as the conventions of showing art will allow. The works require a commitment of contemplation; they do not reach out and grab the viewer right away.

"At first they looked casual and unintended and without interest for me," said the sculptor Richard Serra, who first encountered them in the late 1970s when he and Mr. Lee shared a gallery in Germany.

"They're passive," added Mr. Serra, who is famous for his own mammoth steel constructions. "But I walked by them every day for months, and over time they became much more meaningful to me than some works that intend so hard to elicit a response. You could think these objects always existed together. They're timeless in that way."

Especially with re-enacted works Mr. Lee will sometimes change the positioning of materials from that in previous shows, depending on the exhibition space and his mood — an approach that Ms. Munroe called "iterative."

"The work is never complete, because there is no perfection or completeness," Mr. Lee said. "Maybe it's because I'm Asian. One day I'll be happy with it, and the next day I'll want the museum to change it."

As the name of the series suggests, it's the interplay of the elements that counts more than details of their size or positioning. "Lee always says that his works are not things in space but things that activate space," Ms. Munroe said.

Mr. Lee's "Relatum" series bears the strong stamp of the Minimalism and Conceptualism movements of the 1960s and '70s. A philosopher and the author of 17 books, he was a prime theorist of the Tokyo-based Mono-ha (School of Things) movement of the same era. He said that the original purpose of Mono-ha was to "combine what is made with what is not made," bringing together man-made materials and objects with natural ones, like the rocks, to animate the space between them in a kind of performance.

Mr. Lee's quarrying and culling expeditions generally last from two to five days if he's re-enacting "Relatum" works for a large exhibition. He aims to capture local flavor wherever he is, even if the differences among the stones in question wouldn't be appreciable to the untrained eye.

"The rocks in Tuscany, France or England are all different and a reflection of that place," he said. "The Hamptons is a great area for rocks. It's my fourth time coming here."

As the rain continued, Mr. Lee and his museum entourage realized that they had to return to the quarry for one more stone. Once back in the rock pit, he started scrambling up a pile of boulders.

"I grew up in the countryside of southern Korea, and there were a lot of slippery rocks along the riverbed," he said, explaining his surefootedness. "I have been doing this a long time. Of course I have slipped and fallen, but that is part of the process."

He pointed to a big gray rock too big for him to carry; it was pulled out by two quarry employees. "When the stones are too natural looking, I'm averse to that," he said. "They should be natural but neutral."

This is the paradox of the rock quest: Mr. Lee spends a lot of time looking for rocks that don't really stand out at all.

"It can't be a singular rock," he said. "It has to be able to be interchanged with other rocks."

His strict selectivity did not keep Mr. Lee from a certain anthropomorphic empathy as he went back to finish culling. When the forklift lowered one boulder and cracked it in the process, a furrow passed over his brow. "They have insulted the rock by cracking it," he said, asking the workers to be more careful.

Perhaps even the tan rock that lost its big break early on had potential for a future work. Mr. Lee said he was considering setting it aside: "I feel badly when a rock is rejected."

FILMS IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

WHERE WIT AND GENRE FILMMAKING COLLIDE

BY MIKE HALE

Where Wit and Genre Filmmaking Collide

MIKE HALE FILM

Four features and a handful of shorts: that hardly qualifies as a mini-festival, let alone a luxuriously titled retrospective of a major international filmmaker. Yet that's what "Monsters and Murderers: The Films of Bong Joon-ho" is. Beginning Thursday night at the BAMcinématek in Brooklyn, this five-day series will present the entire output of Mr. Bong, a Korean writer-director who is one of the most seriously entertaining film artists around.

South Korean movies that have more on their minds than lank-haired ghosts or baroque violence tend to share a tight set of concerns: corruption, individual liberty, fraying families, the changing balance of power between women and men. These flow from the dislocations of recent Korean history, in which authoritarian rule spurred violent protest and an economic "miracle" meant both liberalization and the deterioration of traditional values. For added spice, there are always the issues of American domination and separation from the North.

Lee Sung-jae in Bong Joon-ho's "Barking Dogs Never Bite," in which a neighbor's pet sparks a pitch-black comic plot.

Kim Hye-ja in Mr. Bong's most recent film, "Mother."

These are Mr. Bong's themes as well, but no other director of the current Korean film renaissance has handled them with the same sort of finesse. From his first feature, "Barking Dogs Never Bite," in 2000, he has done justice to the storytelling demands of a variety of genres — the paranoid thriller, the police procedural, the scary-monster movie — while wrapping them in his bone-dry, perfectly calibrated wit. For American audiences it's an unusually friendly combination.

"Monsters and Murderers" includes Mr. Bong's best-known films, "Memories of Murder" and "The Host," but its highlights are a sneak preview of his most recent release, "Mother," which opens in New York on March 12, and the rare opportunity to see "Barking Dogs." That film opens with the proclamation, "No animals were harmed in the making of this film." A series of small, annoying dogs meet or are threatened with gruesome, if fictional, ends, but the real violence is done to human self-esteem.

The story concerns a low-level academic who discovers that bribery is the only way to obtain a professorship and at least partly even the playing field with his imperious, more gainfully employed wife. Adding to his troubles is the incessant yapping of a neighbor's dog in the high-rise apartment block where nearly all the action takes place. A sudden opportunity to dispose of this pet sets in motion a pitch-black comic plot in which a janitor with a taste for dog soup and a spacey bookkeeper with a hero complex also figure prominently.

The humor in "Barking Dogs" is broader than that of Mr. Bong's later films — in one recurring motif the wife hands her husband bags of nuts and orders him to crack them with a hammer for her dinner. The basic joke: If a Korean man allows it, he'll be treated worse than a dog, and probably deserve it. "Dogs" may be minor compared with the elegant "Memories of Murder" and the high-octane "Host," but it's funny from start to finish and showed that Mr. Bong's films would not be characterized by the misogyny that finds such multifarious expression in Korean cinema.

It also benefits from the presence of the fearless comedian Bae Doo-na as the bookkeeper. Mr. Bong tends to attract a high class of actor: Ms. Bae reappears as the aunt with a talent for archery in "The Host" (2006), that rollicking combination of creature feature, SARS parable, eco-drama, agitprop and dysfunctional-family comedy; and Song Kang-ho, star of a good share of the most prominent South Korean movies of the last 12 years, brings his hangdog charisma to both "The Host" and "Memories of Murder."

"Murder" (2003) remains the best combination so far of Mr. Bong's anarchic impulses and his meticulous genre craftsmanship. Based on a string of killings in a South Korean village in the late 1980s, it stars Mr. Song as a bumptious local cop who relies entirely on his shaky instincts, and Kim Sang-kyung as a more sophisticated detective who arrives from Seoul to take over the case. "Brainy geeks like you can go to America," the hometown boy says, setting up the fault lines of old versus new and small town versus big city along which the case will fracture.

Other touchstones appear: a call for help goes unanswered because all the extra cops are off suppressing a demonstration; the breakthrough in the case is made by the only female officer in the station; semen samples must be mailed to America for DNA analysis. Beautifully composed and adroitly paced, the film is suffused with a melancholy that Mr. Bong, in his signature trick, somehow marries to low humor. When the detectives connect the killings to a man seen lurking near a school outhouse, they go to investigate and have to push through a crowd in the schoolyard. Only the attentive viewer will note, with satisfaction, the reason: it's time for a gas-attack drill.

"Monsters and Murderers: The Films of Bong Joon-ho" runs Thursday through Monday at the BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Avenue, at Ashland Place, Fort Greene, Brooklyn, (718) 636-4100; schedule: bam.org. Mr. Bong will appear for questions after the 7 p.m. screening of "Mother" on Friday and the 6:30 p.m. screening of "The Host" on Saturday.

FIERCE LOVE: BETTER NOT MAKE THIS MOM ANGRY

BY MANOHLA DARGIS

The last monster to run wild through Bong Joon-ho's imagination was an enormous creature from the watery deep. A different menace storms through "Mother," the fourth feature from this sensationally talented South Korean filmmaker, though she too seems to spring from unfathomable depths. Unlike the beast in "The Host" — a catastrophic byproduct of the American military — the monster in "Mother" doesn't come with much of a backstory, which suggests that she is a primal force, in other words, a natural.

She is and she isn't as Mr. Bong reveals through a kinked narrative and a monumental, ferocious performance by Kim Hye-ja as the title character. Written by Mr. Bong, sharing credit with Park Eun-kyo, "Mother" opens as a love story that turns into a crime story before fusing into something of a criminal love story. Nothing is really certain here, even the film's genre, and little is explained, even when the characters fill in the blanks. Though richly and believably drawn, Mr. Bong's characters are often opaque and mysterious, given to sudden rages, behavioral blurts and hiccups of weird humor. But it's this very mystery that can make them feel terribly real.

None are truer, more disturbingly persuasive than Mother, who lives with her 27-year-old son, Do-joon (Won Bin), in cramped quarters adjoining her tiny apothecary. Beautiful and strangely childlike, Do-joon doesn't seem right in the head: he's forgetful, seemingly naïve, perhaps retarded. (When he tries to remember something, he violently massages both sides of his head in an exercise that Mother, without apparent irony, calls "the temple of doom.") But if he runs a little slow, Mother runs exceedingly fast, as you see shortly after the movie opens when, while playing with a dog one bright day, Do-joon puts himself in the path of an oncoming BMW, which leaves him dazed if not particularly more addled.

You watch the accident unfold alongside Mother, who busily chops herbs with a big blade in her darkened shop while casting worried glances at Do-joon as he goofs off across the street. From her vantage point, he looks as centered within the shop's front door as a little prince inside a framed portrait. The dim interior and bright exterior only accentuate his body — the daylight functions as a kind of floodlight — which puts into visual terms the idea that he is the only thing that Mother really sees. Mr. Bong may like narrative detours, stories filled with more wrong turns than a maze, but he's a born filmmaker whose images — the spilled water that foreshadows spilled blood — tell more than you might initially grasp.

He's also a filmmaker who finds great, unsettling dark comedy in violence, and once again the blood does run, if somewhat less generously than in "The Host" and his often brilliant "Memories of Murder." Although Do-joon seems to recover from his accident, the event sets off a chain of increasingly violent incidents that culminate in the murder of a local schoolgirl, Ah-jung (Moon Hee-ra), whose body is found slumped over a roof wall in the village, positioned, one character says, like "laundry." Do-joon is summarily arrested for the death after an incriminating golf ball is found at the scene. Mad with grief, Mother sets off to clear him and begins furiously rooting around the village in search of the killer.

The hard-pounding heart of "Mother," Ms. Kim is a wonderment. Perched on the knife edge between tragedy and comedy, her delivery gives the narrative — which tends to drift, sometimes beguilingly, sometimes less so — much of its momentum. At times it feels as if Ms. Kim is actually willing it, or perhaps Mr. Bong, forward. Yet while Mother can seem like a caricature of monstrous maternity ("You and I are one," she insists to the jailed Do-joon) the performance is enormously subtle, filled with shades of gray that emerge in tandem with the unwinding investigation. There are several crimes in "Mother," and while none can be justified, Mr. Bong works hard to make sure none are easily condemned.

"Mother" is a curious film, alternately dazzling and frustrating. Mr. Bong's virtues as a filmmaker, including his snaking storytelling and refusal to overexplain actions and behaviors, can here feel like evasions or indulgences rather than fully thought-out choices. There's a vagueness to the film that doesn't feel organic — as if, having created a powerhouse central character, he didn't exactly know what to do with her. That said, his visual style and the way he mixes eccentric types with the more banal, like a chemist preparing a combustible formula, are often sublime, as is Ms. Kim's turn as the mother of all nightmarish mothers, a dreadful manifestation of a love so consuming it all but swallows the world.

"Mother" is rated R (Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian). Bloody violence, intimations of depravity.

MOTHER

Opens on Friday in New York and Los Angeles.

Directed by Bong Joon-ho; written by Park Eun-kyo and Mr. Bong, based on a story by Mr. Bong; director of photography, Hong Kyung-pyo; edited by Moon Sae-kyoung; music by Lee Byeong-woo; production designer, Ryu Seong-hie; costumes by Choi Se-yeon; martial arts by Jung Doo-hong and Heo Myeong-haeng; produced by Moon Yang-kwon, Seo Woo-sik and Park Tae-joon; released by Magnolia Pictures. In Korean, with English subtitles. Running time: 2 hours 9 minutes.

WITH: Kim Hye-ja (Mother), Won Bin (Yoon Do-joon), Jin Goo (Jin-tae), Yoon Jae-moon (Je-mun), Jun Mi-sun (Mi-sun), Song Sae-beauk (Sepaktakraw Detective) and Moon Hee-ra (Moon Ah-jung).

MAGNOLIA PICTURES

Kim Hye-ja plays the combustible title role in "Mother," the fourth feature film by the South Korean director Bong Joon-ho.

Fierce Love: Better Not Make This Mom Angry

MANOHLA DARGIS
FILM REVIEW

The last monster to run wild through Bong Joon-ho's imagination was an enormous creature from the watery deep. A different menace storms through "Mother," the fourth feature from this sensationally talented South Korean filmmaker, though she too seems to spring from unfathomable depths. Unlike the beast in "The Host" — a catastrophic byproduct of the American military — the monster in "Mother" doesn't come with much of a backstory, which suggests that she is a primal force, in other words, a natural.

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A son's arrest for murder leads to a parent's crusade.

FESTIVAL MOVES TO FANCIER BASE BUT KEEPS ITS GENRE-BENDING FARE

BY MIKE HALE

Jung Rye-Won plays an agoraphobic woman living in an apartment in the South Korean film "Castaway on the Moon," one of 45 offerings in this year's New York Asian Film Festival.

Festival Moves to Fancier Base but Keeps Its Genre-Bending Fare

MIKE HALE
FILM

The New York Asian Film Festival has been waving the fan-boy flag proudly since 2002. Glossy crime dramas and horror shows, martial-arts spectaculars, machine-gun-wielding schoolgirls — "the kind of crazed, populist blockbusters that we were born to show," in the words of Grady Hendrix, one of the festival's founders — have led the way, as the series, which started with just 11 movies at the Anthology Film Archives, has grown to 45 films and moved to the uptown precincts of Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater.

That habit of gorging on genre fare continues in this year's festival, the ninth, which officially opens Friday night with the Hong Kong martial-arts hit "Ip Man 2" and closes July 8 with the Korean swordplay period piece "Blades of Blood." It has driven ticket sales (the opening night screening is sold out) and drawn attention, resulting in this year's partnership between Subway Cinema, the four-man cooperative that has run the festival since its inception, and the decidedly mainstream Film Society of Lincoln Center. But the event has always made room for many other kinds of films, including the art-house exercises its organizers claim to abhor. Movies like "Kung Fu Chefs" and "Mutant Girls Squad" will find their own audiences; presented here is a sampling of some other sides of the festival's schedule.

A film with a foot in both the genre and art-house camps in Tetsuya Nakashima's "Confessions," which, in a nice piece of timing, has been the No. 1 box-office hit in Japan for three weeks running, holding off "Iron Man 2" and "Sex and the City 2." Based on a novel by Kanae Minato and being shown for the first time outside Japan, it's an elaborate revenge fantasy with a twist: the protagonist is an adult who exacts vengeance, in a clinical and psychologically sadistic way, on a pair of children.

The bright palette and amped-up, music-video style Mr. Nakashima exhibited in "Memories of Matsuko" (winner of the audience award at the 2007 festival) are both toned down in "Confessions," which is shot in dark blues and grays and moves with a grim statelessness. One recurring motif is school milk cartons flying through the air in slow motion. The thematic territory of nihilistic Japanese teenagers and their frantic, career-obsessed parents is awfully familiar — Natsuo Kirino's novel "Real World" is a close analogue — but Mr. Nakashima gives it an operatic intensity, especially in the film's first half-hour, an inventive and eerie piece of stage setting.

("Confessions" is one of eight films being presented in conjunction with Japan Cuts: Festival of New Japanese Film. Some of those will be screened at both the Japan Society and the Walter Reade; "Confessions" will be shown only at the Japan Society, where it opens Japan Cuts on Thursday night.)

Miwa Nishikawa's "Dear Doctor," a pastoral tale about a village doctor who may not be what he seems, is in a radically different style. Like Mr. Nakashima's movie, however, it partakes in the critique of soulless modernity that is implicit in so many Japanese films. The commentary on change and tradition is double-edged: the village loses something because of its doctor's less-than-sterling qualifications, but it also gains something from his old-fashioned personal touch and his willingness to listen. In some cases the idea of a doctor is more important to his patients' peace of mind than the reality, but not in every case, and that dichotomy spurs Ms. Nishikawa's low-key thriller plot.

JAPAN CUTS

A scene from the Japanese film "Confessions," directed by Tetsuya Nakashima.

Nostalgia, a subject of some debate in "Dear Doctor," is unabashedly the ruling emotion in "Echoes of the Rainbow," another Hong Kong hit. Alex Law's sweeping family melodrama about the two sons of a poor shoemaker growing up in the 1960s is set to treacly pop songs, in both Cantonese and English (the Moonkees' "I Wanna Be Free," Gordon Lightfoot's "Pussywillows, Cattails"). It feels like a musical shot on a giant soundstage, even though its a drama shot on an actual Hong Kong street. Simon Yam, who has helped define the role of the quiet but simmering gangster, here plays the downtrodden father; his fans may be alarmed to see his undyed gray hair.

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A South Korean take on some of the issues of alienation and identity raised by "Confessions" and "Dear Doctor" can be seen in Lee Hae-jun's "Castaway on the Moon," whose Korean title translates literally as "Kim's Island." Responding to the humiliations of debt and being dumped by his girlfriend, a Seoul office worker tries to kill himself by jumping into the Han River, only to wash ashore on a deserted island in the middle of the city (an actual place, maintained as a nature preserve), where he takes up residence. This urban castaway magically goes unnoticed except by an agoraphobic woman in an apartment building on the shore, who begins communicating with him via messages in bottles.

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An entirely different segment of the film industry is the subject of the Japanese director Tetsuaki Matsue's "Annyong Yumika" ("Hello Yumika" in Korean), an actual documentary that functions as a mash note to the porn star Yumika Hayashi, who died in 2005. Using an obscure Korean-Japanese soft-core film called "Junko: The Tokyo Housewife" as his starting point (and including a number of scenes from it, none of them particularly explicit), Mr. Matsue tracks down men who worked with, exploited and loved Ms. Hayashi, and even travels to South Korea to find the director of "Junko." In a final coup he persuades the director and the film's male stars to film a scene that was dropped from the original movie.

"Annyong Yumika," made in a distinctly Japanese mode of jokey earnestness, is a lark of a film with a serious, and moving, undercurrent, one that builds as Mr. Matsue single-mindedly burrows into Ms. Hayashi's life. It's about Korean perceptions of Japanese women and about the price of being a free spirit in Japanese society, at the same time that it celebrates a profoundly Japanese idea: the rippling effects, through many lives, of something as ephemeral, and even perhaps ugly, as "Junko: The Tokyo Housewife."

ONLINE: **SLIDE SHOW**

Additional images of films in the New York Asian Film Festival:

nytimes.com/movies

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The New York Asian Film Festival has been waving the fan-boy flag proudly since 2002. Glossy crime dramas and horror shows, martial-arts spectaculars, machine-gun-wielding schoolgirls — "the kind of crazed, populist blockbusters that we were born to show," in the words of Grady Hendrix, one of the festival's founders — have led the way, as the series, which started with just 11 movies at the Anthology Film Archives, has grown to 45 films and moved to the uptown precincts of Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater.

That habit of gorging on genre fare continues in this year's festival, the ninth, which officially opens Friday night with the Hong Kong martial-arts hit "Ip Man 2" and closes July 8 with the Korean swordplay period piece "Blades of Blood." It has driven ticket sales (the opening night screening is sold out) and drawn attention, resulting in this year's partnership between Subway Cinema, the four-man cooperative that has run the festival since its inception, and the decidedly mainstream Film Society of Lincoln Center. But the event has always made room for many other kinds of films, including the art-house exercises its organizers claim to abhor. Movies like "Kung Fu Chefs" and "Mutant Girls Squad" will find their own audiences; presented here is a sampling of some other sides of the festival's schedule.

A film with a foot in both the genre and art-house camps in Tetsuya Nakashima's "Confessions," which, in a nice piece of timing, has been the No. 1 box-office hit in Japan for three weeks running, holding off "Iron Man 2" and "Sex and the City 2." Based on a novel by Kanae Minato and being shown for the first time outside Japan, it's an elaborate revenge fantasy with a twist: the protagonist is an adult who exacts vengeance, in a clinical and psychologically sadistic way, on a pair of children.

The bright palette and amped-up, music-video style Mr. Nakashima exhibited in "Memories of Matsuko" (winner of the audience award at the 2007 festival) are both toned down in "Confessions," which is shot in dark blues and grays and moves with a grim stateliness. One recurring motif is school milk cartons flying through the air in slow motion. The thematic territory of nihilistic Japanese teenagers and their frantic, career-obsessed parents is awfully familiar — Natsuo Kirino's novel "Real World" is a close analogue — but Mr. Nakashima gives it an operatic intensity, especially in the film's first half-hour, an inventive and eerie piece of stage setting.

("Confessions" is one of eight films being presented in conjunction with Japan Cuts: Festival of New Japanese Film. Some of those will be screened at both the Japan Society and the Walter Reade; "Confessions" will be shown only at the Japan Society, where it opens Japan Cuts on Thursday night.)

Miwa Nishikawa's "Dear Doctor," a pastoral tale about a village doctor who may not be what he seems, is in a radically different style. Like Mr. Nakashima's movie, however, it partakes in the critique of soulless modernity that is implicit in so many Japanese films. The commentary on change and tradition is double-edged: the village loses something because of its doctor's less-than-sterling qualifications, but it also gains something from his old-fashioned personal touch and his willingness to listen. In some cases the idea of a doctor is more important to his patients' peace of mind than the reality, but not in every case, and that dichotomy spurs Ms. Nishikawa's low-key thriller plot.

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A FINE BALANCE: THE QUIET LIFE OF A STAR ACTRESS

BY FRANZ LIDZ


FILM

A Fine Balance: The Quiet Life Of a Star Actress

Fine Balance for an Actress, Maintaining the Quiet Life

From Page 13

emy Awards — for the third time.

Ms. Yun is "one of Korea's most treasured, decorated and beloved actresses," said Ted Kim, a Los Angeles-based executive at one of Korea's biggest entertainment companies. "Like Michael Jordan she stepped away from the game in her absolute prime."

Though Ms. Yun had been considered the front-runner for best actress at last year's Cannes Film Festival, the honor went to the local favorite Juliette Binoche for her role in Abbas Kiarostami's "Certified Copy."

"Great reviews are better than prizes," Mr. Paik said, perhaps speaking from his own experiences. "It would be awful to get prizes and terrible reviews."

Ms. Yun has been earning accolades since her film debut, in 1967, at 23. Born into modest affluence in Gwangju, she appeared in school musicals and idolized Audrey Hepburn but aspired to be a diplomat. She was majoring in history at a college in Seoul when, on a whim, she auditioned for "Cheongchun Geukjang," ("Sorrowful Youth"), a film adaptation of a popular novel about Korean resistance fighters during the Japanese occupation.

She had read the book and strongly identified with one of the characters, an exchange student in Tokyo who falls in love. "I felt as if I could enter her personality directly," recalled Ms. Yun, who won the part over 1,200 other hopefuls.

While the film was a sensation, she was something else again. (At that time in Korean cinema women were mostly limited to roles as housewives or femme fatales.) Screaming teenage girls mobbed her. Teenage boys scrawled fan letters in blood. "I couldn't leave my house," Ms. Yun said.

Not that she spent much time at home. During the '60s and '70s Ms. Yun worked on as many as 50 films a year, sometimes three in a single day.

"A melodrama in the morning, a historical drama in the afternoon, a comedy at night," Mr. Paik said. At one point five of Ms. Yun's films played in theaters simultaneously.


KINO INTERNATIONAL

The filmmaker Lee Chang-dong said he wrote "Poetry" with Yun Jung-hee in mind.

While grateful for her popularity, Yun Jung-hee wanted a measure of freedom.

She essayed spies, teachers, taxi drivers, nightclub singers, shamans and kisaengs, the Korean equivalent of geishas. "Villains, not very much," she said. "Once I was a servant who loved a man already married." There was the slightest of pauses. "No, make that several times."

Originally Ms. Yun planned to make movies in her homeland for five years, then move to the United States and attend film school. "I was grateful for the adoration I received in Korea, but I had no freedom," she said of her popularity. "I wanted my real life to be a quiet life."

Seven years later, in 1972, Ms. Yun did resettle, in Paris, where she enrolled in a film program and commuted to shoots in Asia. "I realized I should live in the land of the Lumière brothers," she said.

That same year Ms. Yun and Mr. Paik, who was born in Seoul and was then living in New York, met at the National Theater Munich during a performance of "Sim Tjong," an opera based on a folk tale about a girl who lives with her blind father.

"I saw a beautiful lady," Mr. Paik said. "I didn't know she was an actress."

Ms. Yun said, "I didn't know he was a pianist."

She did know the opera's plot, having just played the girl in a film version. The next night Mr. Paik accompanied her to a screening of the feature.

"I didn't see much of the girl in the movie," he said. "I was too enchanted by the beautiful lady in the audience."

The couple married in 1974, and Ms. Yun scaled back her schedule considerably. After a Daejong Award-winning turn in the Korean War epic "Manmubang" (1994), she was offered — and declined — many projects.

As Mr. Lee, a novelist turned filmmaker who served as culture minister of South Korea from 2003 to 2004, wrote "Poetry," he imagined the main character in Ms. Yun's image. He introduced himself to her, and one night over dinner with Ms. Yun and her husband he sheepishly mentioned the screenplay. She was so flattered that she accepted the role without even knowing what the movie was about.

"I am like Mi-ja," she said. "I daydream and lose myself in beauty. When I see a flower, I scream with joy."

Sitting in the bright, airy lounge of the Grand Hotel, Mr. Paik listened to his wife with a look of infinite understanding.

"Years ago we went to Venice, and she practically floated through the city," he said. "I felt like I was holding onto a balloon with a thin thread."

Mr. Paik crossed his legs, revealing a black sock.

PARIS

Yun Jung-Hee appeared in the lounge of the Grand Hotel InterContinental here wearing a gray wool suit and a silk blouse the color of heliotrope, a grande dame trailing a half-century of South Korean film history as lightly as a wisp of perfume.

She was on the arm of her husband, the pianist Kun Woo Paik. They live in the Paris suburbs. "I'm his secretary," Ms. Yun said, flirtatiously. "I fold his socks."

Mr. Paik gazed at his wife with amusement. "Before I leave home on concert tours," he said, "she makes sure I have black socks in my suitcase."

He flinched at the memory of the socks that she once packed for a recital at Alice Tully Hall in New York. "They were black, all right," he said, "but they belonged to our daughter, Jin-hi."

Ms. Yun, 66, flashed the wry, wide smile that illuminated some 330 feature films from 1967 to 1994, the year she stepped out of the spotlight to fold and pack for Mr. Paik. Moviegoers will once again be able to glimpse that grin in "Poetry," Lee Chang-dong's intricate meditation on art and empathy, which opens Friday in New York.

She plays Mi-ja, a pensioner in a provincial town who signs up for a poetry class and struggles to find inspiration in everyday beauty. Her attempts at writing are complicated by the onset of dementia, the demands of mercy sex from the stroke victim she cares for, and the news that her sullen teenage grandson, whom she is raising herself, was involved in the gang rape of a classmate, leading to her suicide.

"To Mi-ja, writing poems is important because she's discovering the meaning of the world," Mr. Lee said. "The paradox of her life is that she's leaving the world and forgetting the words."

CONSIDER AN APPLE, CONSIDER THE WORLD

BY MANOHLA DARGIS

WEEKEND Arts MOVIES PERFORMANCES FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2011

The New York Times

Consider an Apple, Consider the World

MANOHLA DARGIS
FILM REVIEW

The women and few men sitting at their desks in the film "Poetry" have open faces and smiles. They're good pupils, these older people who have come to the cultural center to learn. Perhaps because they have chosen to be there, they don't have the look of sullen resentment and cultivated boredom that glazes the faces of the high school students glimpsed now and again. Instead these latter-day bards gaze at the man who has come to say something to them about art and maybe life. Instead he holds up an apple and talks about seeing.

The importance of seeing, seeing the world deeply, is at the heart of this quietly devastating, humanistic work from the South Korean filmmaker Lee Chang-dong. Throughout the story, the teacher, a bespectacled man with an easy manner, will guide the students as each struggles to write a single poem, searching memories and emotions for inspiration. "Up till now, you haven't seen an apple for real," he says in that first class, as the film cuts to a student, Mija (Yun Jung-hee), sliding into a seat. "To really know what an apple is, to be interested in it, to understand it," he adds, "that is really seeing it." From the way the camera settles on Mija it's evident that he could substitute the word apple for woman — or life.

Poetry *Yun Jung-hee stars in this South Korean film by Lee Chang-dong, opening on Friday in Manhattan.*

For Mija, a 66-year-old raising her only grandson, Wook (Lee David), in a cramped, cluttered apartment in an unnamed city, the pursuit of poetry becomes a pastime and then a passion and finally a means of transcendence. At first, though, it's a pleasant distraction from an otherwise mundane existence, if also a way to exercise a mind that, as a doctor tells Mija early on, has begun to slip slowly away from her. Out of fear or confusion, she keeps the diagnosis to herself and almost from herself, telling neither Wook nor his mother, who lives in another city. Instead she dons the poet's cap. "I do have a poet's vein," she says, chattering into her cellphone. "I do like flowers and say odd things."

Continued on Page 16

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She seems so unremarkable, this woman with her white hats, tidily arranged scarves and vanity. But like this subtle, transfixing film, she draws you in. Crucial in this respect is Ms. Yun's performance, a tour de force of emotional complexity that builds through restraint and, like Mr. Lee's unadorned visual style, earns rather than demands your attention. (His earlier features include "Secret Sunshine.") The shabby rooms and ordinary streets in "Poetry" are shown without fanfare, more like statements of facts than pieces of an evolving narrative. Yet it's the prosaic quality of this world, its ordinariness, that makes the story's shocks reverberate so forcefully, beginning with the revelation that Wook and five friends, all boys, have been implicated in the death of a classmate, a girl first seen floating face down in a river in the opening scene.

There's a mesmerizing quality to that sequence, which begins with an image of rushing water, partly because — like the young child on the riverbank whose viewpoint you share — you initially can't make out what it is that you're looking at until the body floats into the frame in close-up. The corpse belongs to a teenage girl who accused some classmates of having serially raped her. On the most brutal level, her body introduces a mystery. Yet there's more to the opening, including the children clustered on the riverbank, ominously doubled by the teenagers who helped put that body in the water and whose indifference suggests that, for them, this death wasn't cataclysmic, just play that got out of hand.

This cruelty doesn't exist in isolation, as becomes obvious when the father of one of the other accused rapists contacts Mija and sweeps her off to an afternoon meeting at a restaurant. Together, he and four other fathers have decided — with the school's blessing — to give the dead girl's mother a large sum of cash, a bribe for her silence. What's done is done, one man more or less says, as another pours the beer. ("Ladies first," he says, offering Mija a glass.) "Although I feel sorry for the dead girl," a father says, "now's the time for us to worry about our own boys." Her face empty, Mija sits wordlessly. And then she drifts outside, opens her little notebook and begins writing: "Blood ... a flower as red as blood."

Out of pain, Mija finds a way to see, really see the world, with its flowers, rustling trees, laughing people and cruelties, and in doing so turns reality into art, tragedy into the sublime. It's an extraordinary transformation, one that emerges through seemingly unconnected narrative fragments, tenderly observed moments and a formal rigor that might go unnoticed. Yet everything pieces together in this heartbreaking film — motifs and actions in the opening are mirrored in the last scenes — including flowers, those that bewitch Mija outside the restaurant and those in a vase at the dead girl's house. The river that flows in the opening shot streams through the last image too, less a circle than a continuum.

At one point, Mija asks her poetry teacher with almost comic innocence, "When does a 'poetic inspiration' come?" It doesn't, he replies, you must beg for it. "Where must I go?" she persists. He says that she must wander around, seek it out, but that it's there, right where she stands. In truth, there is poetry everywhere, including in those who pass through her life, at times invisibly, like the handicapped retiree (Kim Hira) she cares for part time, a husk of a man whom she will at last also see clearly. The question that she doesn't ask is the why of art. She doesn't have to because the film — itself an example of how art allows us to rise out of ourselves to feel for another through imaginative sympathy — answers that question beautifully.

Poetry

Opens on Friday in Manhattan.

Written and directed by Lee Chang-dong; director of photography, Kim Hyung-seok; edited by Kim Hyun; production design by Sihn Jeom-hui; produced by Lee Joon-dong; released by Kino International. In Korean, with English subtitles. Running time: 2 hours 19 minutes. This film is not rated. WITH: Yun Jung-hee (Mija), Lee David (Wook) and Kim Hira (M. Kang).

THROUGH A FILMMAKER'S LENS, VIEWS OF KOREA

BY JANINE ARMIN

Through a filmmaker's lens, views of Korea

Chan-kyong Park's work takes nuanced look at North-South ties

BY JANINE ARMIN

This spring, the art establishment in South Korea made headlines worldwide by selecting the Chinese artist, activist and now political prisoner Ai Weiwei to co-direct the coming 2011 Gwangju Design Biennial.

The country's homegrown contemporary art scene may be less likely to make international news. But artists like Chan-kyong Park — known for his haunting films and photography — are making an impact both at home and abroad. His short and feature-length films as well as his photography address the storied relationship of North and South Korea without losing the levity required to captivate an audience — a careful balance in a country ready to break away from rule-book behavior.

"Korean contemporary art has the most vital scene in Asia," said Mr. Park, who says his belief is based on the growing prominence of Korean artists and, increasingly, women filmmakers like Jae-eun Jung, Chan-ok Park and Sun-rae Im. But overturning the rigid infrastructure of South Korean museums and galleries is an uphill battle, he said. "Institutions are too conservative, too vulnerable to government change, and there is no good journalism and critique."

Mr. Park's own work reflects the various structures born of Korea's fraught history. Centuries of Chinese colonization were followed by a Japanese occupation in the early 20th century and the Korean Civil War of the early 1950s. The resulting religious mix of Chinese Taoism, Catholicism and shamanism offer Mr. Park a rich palette of imagery.

His film "Sindoan" (2008), for example, portrays individuals practicing the many animalous religions generated in the country during the mid-20th century. His photo series "Three Cemeteries" (2009) consists of images of the final resting places for displaced peoples in South Korea.

Late last year, Mr. Park completed the film "Anyang, Paradise City" for a local festival in the city of the same name. The film, which was shown earlier this year at the International Film Festival Rotterdam and at the Jeonju International Festival in South Korea, is a blend of documentary and fiction that centers on the search for survivors of a 1988 sweatshop fire that killed 20 women. "From my college years, I remember Anyang as a city full of female factory workers," Mr. Park said. "Koreans all know that the Korean 'economic miracle' is based on their toil, but they never want to remember."

In the opening scene a group of women dance on a verdant plateau and appear to sing a traditional song about their troubles with men. The dance was declared a cultural asset by Unesco, and by using it Mr. Park is commenting on how he feels institutions exploit tradition to increase tourism. "It was a traditional folk dance," he said. But now it has "gained a certain marketability."

His criticism of bureaucracy, as well as of South Korea's neglect of heritage sites, is evident in other documentary aspects of the film. "Anyang" includes footage of an archeological dig for an ancient temple from the Silla dynasty that was covered with another temple during the Goryeon dynasty. "Tradition is dead in Korea, but no one knows how many antiques are buried under the soil," Mr. Park said. "There are too many big apartments on top of them."

Recently, the artist collaborated with his brother, the filmmaker Chan-wook Park, who is best known for his psychological thrillers that make up "The Vengeance Trilogy." The brothers wrote, produced and directed the short film "Night Fishing," which was shot exclusively with video from four iPhones in a partnership with Korean Telecom.

Chan-kyong Park said he enjoyed the odd angles he could capture with the phones. The first shots demonstrate the benefits of this technique: an initial pan across a dirt road where a band performs is punctuated with powerful close-ups. Their song is carried over to an elderly man in a nearby wood, who, after a fishing accident, is able to speak with his family one last time through a female shaman.

Paradise, and the struggle to get there, pervades both "Anyang" and "Night Fishing." Mr. Park's ambivalent search is an apt filter through which to consider present-day Korea. "Paradise became either a bad dream or a big joke," Mr. Park said. "There is a Stalinists' paradise in the North, and aggressive capitalists' paradise in the South. While Koreans are bound to the ideological utopian images, Koreans lost great richness of their traditional imagination of the good world, because Korean modern history is really built upon blind futuristic will."

Mr. Park's sensitivity to the vices and virtues of a divided Korea is what separates him from his peers, said Yun Cheagah, the commissioner for the Korea Pavilion at the Venice Biennale this year. "His work is very conceptual," said Mr. Cheagah, who has known the artist for many years. "He's willing to figure out what is between North and South Korea. Not South Korea, not North Korea, middle Korea."

For Mr. Park, the "blind will" that colors Korea's political history is inextricable from the current state of contemporary art. "1967 and 1988 was the high time of the labor movement," he said. "Like the artist group introduced in 'Anyang,' there were strong small groups who created propaganda works and were involved in grass-roots community arts. They have left a heritage. It's called 'Min-jung art' meaning 'people art.'" Mr. Park says a generation of "post Min-jung art" has arisen that is influenced by Western conceptualism and sensitive to media politics and art institutions. He positions himself between the present and past iterations.

Operating in this temporal limbo is clearly fruitful for the artist, who has several shows this autumn, including "Second Worlds" in Austria at the integrated contemporary art gathering Steirischer Herbst Festival 2011 (Sept. 23 to Oct. 16) and "Image Clash: Contemporary Korean Video Art" at the CU Art Museum in Colorado (Sept. 9 to Oct. 22).

He's also enthusiastically pursuing a new project, despite the fact that he does not yet have funding. It's "a horror film scenario, a narrative with a lot of female ghosts," he said. "Other than that, I practice every day in art, drawings, paintings and installation. The artworks focus on what I call 'Asian Gothic.'"

The sensitivity of Chan-kyong Park, above, to the vices and virtues of a divided Korea is said to be what separates the artist from his peers.

Left and below, screen shots from Chan-kyong Park's "Anyang, Paradise City," which centers on the search for survivors of a 1988 sweatshop fire that killed 20 women.

A ROGUE FILM FESTIVAL EARNS RESPECT (SORT OF)

BY MIKE HALE

The New York Asian Film Festival has an image to uphold, based on a well-honed story of low-rent beginnings and disreputable programming. This familiar narrative starts in 2002 with five young guys and their credit cards, and embraces rowdy, fiercely obsessive audiences jammed into downtown theaters watching movies about young Japanese women whose breasts double as machine guns.

Asked where his baby ranks among the city's annual film conclaves, Grady Hendrix, one of the festival's founders and its longtime spokesman, toes the line. "Firmly at the bottom," he declares.

He's exaggerating for effect, but he's serious about maintaining the event's renegade character. "In terms of that film festival circuit, we're pretty much the outsiders looking in," he said in an interview. "We don't have enough fancy parties."

Maybe not. But whatever it lacks in red carpets and seafood towers, it makes up for in the quality, quantity and variety of films. As it celebrates its 10th year with a program of 40 features, showing Friday through July 14 at the Walter Reade Theater and Japan Society, it's time to acknowledge that this outsider actually belongs in the top tier of New York's film festivals, next to some very serious, very inside gatherings.

Not every selection in the New York Asian Film Festival is great, or even good, but neither is every one in the New York Film Festival or New Directors New Films. Meanwhile the Asian fest presents virtually the same number of major new releases as those two august events, while maintaining more consistent quality and focus than the sprawling Tribeca Film Festival.

Of course, the Asian Film Festival suffers from a complete lack of two things that, in addition to big stars, give a film event credibility: European art-house movies and scruffy American independents. While operating on the geographic and cultural fringe, the festival is proudly mainstream in its taste and gorges itself on genre films and wacky comedies.

At the same time, it has helped introduce New York to highbrow favorites like Park Chan-wook, Bong Joon-ho and Seijun Suzuki. This year's lineup includes directors like Takashi Miike, Tsui Hark and Na Hong-jin that any highfalutin festival would be happy to recruit.

And over the course of a decade of relentlessly tracking down and watching Asian movies in whatever time they can take away from their day jobs, the founders have grown into their roles.

"We're all getting older," Mr. Hendrix said. "Our tastes are changing. And I think we have a better feel for the audience's taste." They're now willing to book slower, more serious, less categorizable movies that would have scared them off before (given that empty theaters can mean empty pockets for the volunteer programmers).

But the emphasis is still on visceral, accessible entertainment of all kinds, especially in this 10th-anniversary year, when, as Mr. Hendrix put it, "we're sort of being a little self-indulgent." That means a subset of Chinese wu xia (martial arts) movies that includes four films written or directed by Mr. Tsui, who will appear at screenings on July 9 through 11, and a generous, diverse selection of Korean thrillers.

This year's festival breaks down fairly evenly into films from China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan), South Korea and Japan, with single films from a few other countries (Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines) thrown in.

In "Detective Dee & the Mystery of the Phantom Flame," Mr. Tsui's most recent film, and "Reign of Assassins," directed by the up-and-comer Su Chao-pin and the veteran John Woo, the festival is offering two light-on-their-feet martial arts capers that stand in pleasant contrast to the bloated, nationalistic epics that are China's main cinematic export these days. ("If it's got more than five horses in it and more than two scenes of giant armies massing on the plain, waving flags, we avoid it," Mr. Hendrix said.)

"Detective Dee," starring the Hong Kong superstar Andy Lau as the title character, works its kung fu into a reasonably credible seventh-century mystery story (with supernatural elements). Its most memorable sequence, a teasing, not-quite-nude scene in which a beautiful courtier (Li Bingbing) uses her martial arts skills to dress herself while dodging hundreds of arrows, recalls the famously sexy duel between Brigitte Lin and Maggie Cheung in "Dragon Inn" (1992), which is also being shown in the festival.

"Reign of Assassins" tweaks the wu xia recipe by taking a break from its story of professional killers pursuing a monk's mummified remains to indulge in a long stretch of gentle (very gentle) romantic-domestic comedy. Michelle Yeoh and the Korean actor Jung Woo-sung play an ace assassin in hiding and a naïve delivery boy who meet cute during the Ming dynasty.

A third high-profile entry from China features the martial arts star Jet Li but couldn't be more different from the wu xia films. In "Ocean Heaven," the directing debut of the film scholar Xue Xiaolu, Mr. Li forsakes fighting entirely to play an aging, ailing aquarium maintenance worker obsessed with providing for the future of his autistic son (Wen Zhang). There's enough noble suffering here to fill three or four movies, but Ms. Xue handles it with remarkable restraint for a Chinese director, and while Mr. Li's performance suffers from the lack of kicking and punching, his immense likability is enough to carry him in the role.

The array of South Korean action-suspense movies — there are eight on the schedule — offers proof of the genre's longevity and flexibility, half a decade after its first heyday with Mr. Park's "revenge trilogy." In a category known for the brutality of its violence and the sometimes insane complexity of its plots, two of the festival films are exemplary.

"The Unjust," directed by Ryoo Seung-wan, is film noir at its most cynical, with a roster of characters ranging from prosaically corrupt to blatantly evil and a hero who lies closer to the wrong end of the scale. The story, involving a battle for survival between a dirty cop and a dirty prosecutor, is a spiral of double and triple crosses in which there is never a good option, not that these men would be inclined to choose it if they could.

The violence in "The Unjust" is fairly ordinary and often has a burlesque quality, but in Jang Cheol-Su's "Bedevilled," scythes, stones and other weapons are wielded in shockingly vivid and graphic ways. Ji Seong-Won and Seo Young-Hee (in a gripping performance) play childhood girlfriends reunited on the island where they grew up, a place where relationships between women and the few men who stick around have a dynamic straight out of "Deliverance."

The best of the festival's Chinese and Korean films fulfill expectations in stylish and exciting ways, but if you're looking for surprises, they're more easily found in the Japanese movies. One of the best examples is Yoshimasa Ishibashi's four-part "Milocrorze: A Love Story," a wacked-out fantasy that recalls early Tim Burton one moment, late Quentin Tarantino the next. A segment involving an abusive, white-suited television host is punctuated by groovy, wonderfully deadpan dance numbers, while a sendup of samurai and yakuza stories suddenly erupts into an elaborately choreographed and brilliantly staged six-minute sword-fight sequence inside the tight confines of a tatami-matted brothel.

Other highlights of the Japanese selections include Mr. Miike's "Ninja Kids!!!," a raucous comedy with a talented cast of child actors that's part "Naruto," part "Harry Potter"; and the former pornography director Noboru Iguchi's "Karate-Robo Zaborgar," a loving homage to Saturday morning cartoons whose title character is the human hero's brother, partner, moral compass and motorcycle. ("Zaborgar" also appears to be the only film in this year's festival in which female body parts become weapons, sometimes turning into rocket launchers and other times into carnivorous lizards.)

If these films sound too grim, too bloody or too crazy for you, here's a final recommendation. "A Boy and His Samurai," directed by Yoshihiro Nakamura, is a very American-style romantic comedy, in the mold of "Enchanted" or "Kate and Leopold." A samurai is mysteriously transported to 21st-century Tokyo, where he befriends an overworked single mother and her son and learns to do the laundry while dispensing lessons in discipline and obedience. It's completely predictable, a little underwritten and consistently charming. It may not merit a fancy party, but you'll go home feeling better than you would after a Lars von Trier closing-night gala.

The New York Asian Film Festival runs Friday through July 14 at the Walter Reade Theater, 165 West 65th Street, Lincoln Center, (212) 875-5367; and Thursday through July 10 at Japan Society, 333 East 47th Street, Manhattan, (212) 715-1258, subwaycinema.com.

WEEKEND Arts MOVIES PERFORMANCES

The New York Times

A Rogue Film Festival Earns Respect (Sort Of)

Andy Lau in "Detective Dee & the Mystery of the Phantom Flame," which blends kung fu into a seventh-century tale.

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From Weekend Page 1

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ONLINE: VIDEO

Mike Hale discusses the New York Asian Film Festival:

nytimes.com/movies

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SPORTS
IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

KIM RAISES BAR, DELIGHTING FANS

BY JERÉ LONGMAN

SportsSaturday

The New York Times

Vancouver 2010 nytimes.com/olympics

INSIDE THE RINGS

Kim Raises Bar, Delighting Fans

By JERÉ LONGMAN

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Dressed in azure, accompanied by Gershwin, Kim Yu-na of South Korea seemingly floated to the clouds with her soaring jumps and airy elegance Thursday night, winning an Olympic gold medal and her rightful place as one of the greatest women's figure skaters of any era.

Demonstrating technical superiority and ethereal grace at 19, Kim delivered a world-record performance of 228.56 total points. Math alone cannot fully describe the resourcefulness, complexity and artistry of her skating, except in this context: Kim would have finished ninth in the men's competition, nearly 10 points ahead of the American national champion, Jeremy Abbott.

Mao Asada of Japan became the first woman to land two triple axels in a free skate at the Winter Games, but she still finished a distant second by more than 20 points. Even before Asada skated, she knew that her chances for gold were futile after Kim's refined and charming performance.

"I could hear the crowd going crazy," Asada said.

What the audience of 13,771 at Pacific Coliseum had witnessed was an unprecedented combination of technical difficulty and willowy sophistication as Kim became the first South Korean skater to win an Olympic gold medal. She held up under enormous pressure to succeed as an athlete, a cultural icon and a vanquisher of competitors from Japan, which occupied the Korean peninsula for 35 years through the end of World War II.

Continued on Page D4

'She's the fastest skater I've ever seen.'
MICHELLE KWAN, five-time Olympic medalist

'She's the whole package.'
DOROTHY HAMILL, the 1976 Olympic champion

Kim Yu-na is the first South Korean figure skater to win an Olympic medal.

CRAIG W. LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

INSIDE THE RINGS

As Kim Raises the Bar, South Korea Delights

From First Sports Page

Kim Yu-na, the 2009 world champion, delivered a world-record performance of 228.56 total points.

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"Today, I was more confident than ever," Kim, the 2009 world champion, said.

It is impossible to precisely compare skaters from different eras. Rules change. Athleticism increasingly demands its place alongside artistry. But a number of Kim's gold medal predecessors were present Thursday, and all seemed thoroughly impressed that Kim had been so poised and lissome in her presentation and vaulting in her jumps.

"How do you compare that to Sonja Henie?" said Kristi Yamaguchi, the 1992 Olympic champion, referring to the three-time gold medalist from Norway in the 1920s and '30s. "Everything is relative to the time and era."

Still, Yamaguchi added: "Certainly, it has taken women's skating to another level. Technically. The whole package."

Assured, serene, Kim opened with a triple lutz-triple toe combination, a triple flip and a double axel-double toe-double loop combination. Through four minutes of the challenging program, she skated with speed, lightness and engaging openness in a style that her coach, Brian Orser, calls unselfish and welcoming.

"She reaches the last row of the building," Orser said beforehand. "People feel they're invited to enjoy it as she is."

On Thursday, Kim whisked like a feather across the ice.

"Technically, she's the greatest of all time," said Ted Barton, a Canadian who helped devise the new points-based scoring system. "If she skates a little longer and does this over the next three or four years, she will be the greatest skater of all time."

Scott Hamilton, the 1984 men's Olympic champion, compared Kim to Seabiscuit, the thoroughbred, as dominant athletes who broke their competitors' will.

"Yu-na has only been at the top of her game for a couple of years," Hamilton said. "But if she's here another four years at this level, a lot of skaters would break down. They would try to up their games so much, there would be injuries. There's no weakness there. Compare her with anybody; she's got it all. Under any system, anywhere, any time, she'd win."

Encomiums have been handed to Kim here in bouquets, like flowers. Michelle Kwan, the two-time Olympic medalist, said, "She's the fastest skater I've ever seen."

Katarina Witt, the 1984 and '88 Olympic champion, said, "She has a lightness to her skating and her jumps are very high."

Dorothy Hamill, the 1976 Olympic champion, said: "She's the whole package. Her jumps are soaring and they're equal. You don't have one big one followed by a little tiny jump. I think she's grown choreographically. She's very musical. The whole thing is very beautiful and athletic, but not too athletic. I don't feel like I'm missing anything when I watch her."

Some believe that the new scoring system, with its incessant technical demands on jumps and steps and spins, does not allow skaters the same charisma and signature artistry afforded Peggy Fleming and Hamill and other stars from previous eras.

"As far as being renowned as a legendary artist, I don't think so," said Frank Carroll, who coached the fourth-place finisher, Mirai Nagasu of the United States, of Kim. "As a really great skater, technically, yes."

David Kirby, an American coach and a technical expert, said: "Clearly, she's the best girl, but it's because she's the best technician. She's 70 percent sport, 30 percent art. Peggy Fleming was a real artist and real athlete. I don't think that balance of art and sport is the Olympic champion this year."

This will be seen as needless quibbling in South Korea, where Kim is the country's most popular athlete. So intense was the interest in the Kim-Asada rivalry that Korean reporters and photographers began arriving at the arena 12 hours before Thursday's competition, only to find that some of their Japanese counterparts had spent the night at the rink.

"This is not sports, this is war," Lee Jiseok, a reporter for the Daily Sports Seoul newspaper, said, laughing. He and his colleagues had already prepared stories on Kim, her mother and her coach. "If she loses, we're dead," Lee said. "We'll have to explain why she lost."

That would not be necessary; Kim won the most glamorous event at the Winter Games.

"I think the whole nation is in front of the television," said John Moon, chief of staff of the South Korean Olympic Committee. "Kim Yu-na is the country's special sister. Every athlete is important, but her medal is more important than the others. She is beautiful. She's our pride. I think Koreans will have a lot of drinks."

KOREAN IS FIRST WOMAN TO SCALE 14 HIGHEST PEAKS

BY CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea

Climbing on all fours after 13 grueling hours, a diminutive South Korean woman, Oh Eun-sun, reached the summit of one of the Himalayan giants on Tuesday to lay claim to being the first woman to scale the world's 14 highest mountains.

In keeping with her country's intense pride in its athletes, she pulled out a South Korean flag, raised her arms and shouted: "Hurray! Hurray!"

"I would like to share this joy with the South Korean people," Oh, who is 5 feet 1 inch, said after reaching the summit of Annapurna in central Nepal.

South Koreans — who watched her climb because it was broadcast live by an accompanying camera team — hailed her as a national hero.

A message left on the Web site of the broadcaster KBS said: "All our people watched each step of your climb. You have demonstrated our country's greatness all over the world."

Annapurna was the last of the 14 peaks taller than 26,247 feet (8,000 meters) that Oh needed to climb to make history. She reached the summit — 26,545 feet above sea level — 13 years after she scaled her first Himalayan mountain, Gasherbrum II, in 1997.

"We recognize her achievement as the first woman climber to scale all the highest mountains in the world," said Ang Tshering, president of the Nepal Mountaineering Association, according to The Associated Press.

CLIMBING

Oh Eun-sun of South Korea, who is 5 feet 1 inch, climbed her first Himalayan mountain in 1997, and she scaled four peaks last year.

Korean Is First Woman to Scale 14 Highest Peaks

By CHOE SANG-HUN

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On Tuesday, Oh completed her quest to climb all 14 of the world's highest peaks when she scaled Annapurna in Nepal.

president of the Nepal Mountaineering Association, according to The Associated Press.

Oh's closest rival, Edurne Pasaban of Spain, scaled Annapurna this month but has yet to reach the 28,336-foot-high Mount Shishu Pangma to match Oh's feat.

Pasaban has raised questions about whether Oh actually reached the summit of Mount Kangchenjunga, the world's third-highest peak, last year.

"Her Sherpas told me that she didn't reach the summit because of bad weather," Pasaban told The Times of London recently.

In the absence of an international mountaineering body, Elizabeth Hawley, an 86-year-old American mountaineering journalist, is considered the final arbiter on such disputes. She agreed last week to record Oh's ascent of Kangchenjunga as "disputed," pending an investigation.

Oh, 34, scaled 4 of the 14 peaks last year but terminated several hundred feet from Annapurna's summit because of bad weather.

On her historic climb, she was carrying a photograph of Ko Mi-young, her rival and fellow South Korean, who plummeted to her death last year while descending from Nanga Parbat, the world's ninth-highest peak. Ko had climbed 11 of the 14 peaks.

"She showed us what challenge means," Lee Myung-bak, the president of South Korea, said of Oh in his congratulatory message. "I am proud of her."

Oh was bound to receive a hero's welcome home in South Korea. Mountain-trekking is a national hobby in the country, where 70 percent of the land is mountainous.

Fewer than 20 people have made it to the top of the 14 peaks that are at least 26,247 feet high, including three South Korean men.

In recent weeks, the South Korean news media gave almost daily updates on Oh's condition. On Tuesday, KBS showed hours of live coverage as she inched toward the top.

Nationalism looms large in sports in South Korea, a country obsessed with making a mark on the international scene. Kim Yu-na, the figure skater who won this year's Olympic gold, is a national star.

News reports about sports stars winning world championships brim with patriotism. Reporters often ask the athletes to "say something to the people back home," and they always thank "the people and the fatherland" before mentioning their family and loved ones.

"When life was hard and we were tired, sports have encouraged us with good news," said Ko Dong-guk, one of hundreds of TV viewers who left congratulatory messages on the KBS Web site.

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This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: April 30, 2010

Because of an editing error, an article on Wednesday about Oh Eun-sun of South Korea, who on Tuesday reached the summit of Annapurna in central Nepal to lay claim to being the first woman to scale the world's 14 highest mountains, misstated her age. She is 44, not 34. The article also referred imprecisely to the number of people who have accomplished the feat. The figure, "fewer than 20 people," referred to the number of people who had done it before Tuesday; that did not include Oh.

MAKING THEIR OWN NATIONAL NOISE, BUT LOSING ANYWAY

BY COREY KILGANNON

Joyce Yoo, 15, center, and others kept hope alive with clappers in Flushing, Queens, as they watched the World Cup.

Making Their Own National Noise, but Losing Anyway

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Much has been made of the vuvuzelas, whose buzzy drone has been the soundtrack of the World Cup games being played in South Africa's stadiums.

But when it comes to assaulting eardrums, the stadium horns have nothing on the notorious inflatable plastic clappers that South Koreans use to cheer their team.

The sound is especially deafening in the confines of a smallish ballroom like the one above the Korea Village shopping center on Northern Boulevard and 150th Road in Flushing, Queens.

By 7 a.m., this stretch of the boulevard was teeming with Korean-Americans in the red T-shirts that are the obligatory uniform of South Korean soccer fans. More than 1,000 of them took to the carpeted floor of the ballroom for a dual-screen broadcast of the World Cup game between South Korea and Argentina.

They clamored for the inflatable tubes handed out by volunteers: clapping sticks that produce deafening staccato sounds when wielded overhead by hundreds of young, caffeinated fans.

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The clappers fell briefly silent before the game while an M.C. led chants in Korean, drummers beat large Korean ceremonial janggu and buk drums, and a dance group dressed in white martial arts robes blended tae kwon do and synchronized music video dance styles.

The inflatable banging sticks were used to celebrate the sight of the South Korean flag on the screen, then the appearance of the team's star player, Park Ji-sung. They were briefly silenced again when a curving kick by an Argentina player bounced off a South Korean midfielder's shin and into the Korean goal.

Fans who did not go to the ballroom flocked to the dozen businesses within half a block of it, including the Jang Shoo Chon restaurant, where a slightly older crowd was watching the game while dining on elaborate Korean breakfast offerings — plates of banchan and jigae stew. Some drank soju, which is similar to vodka, while others sipped the sweet rice beverage called shikhae. Argentina scored again.

South Korea scored going into halftime to close the gap to 2 to 1. Over at Park's Snack Corner, a crowd of older men cheered and ate from the pork kimchi stew on a burner on the table.

At the nearby H&Y Marketplace, a grocery clerk danced and sang between the stacked sacks of rice and Korean melons, under banners of South Korean flags and red T-shirts.

In the second half, though, Argentina scored a third goal, and Chris Kim, 46, a stylist at the Black and White hair salon, slumped in the barber's chair. He said the shop had bought the large-screen television just for the World Cup.

Next door at the Siruyeon coffee shop, Michelle Kim, 56, kept hope alive, as she watched on a laptop on the counter in the kitchen while making tteok, steamed rice cake pastries.

But in the 80th minute, Gonzalo Higuain of Argentina scored another goal, the final one of the game. The clappers fell silent once and for all.

SOCCER OFFERS LESSON IN HOW TO GET TOUGH

BY ROB HUGHES

LONDON

"Zero tolerance" is the in phrase among sports officials these days.

Sepp Blatter of FIFA and Jacques Rogge of the International Olympic Committee speak about it. South Korea practices it.

This past weekend, 10 Korean professional soccer players were banned for life from playing the game. The men, including one former national team player, Kim Dong-hyun, have yet to face criminal prosecution. But the Korea Football Association has banned them anyway.

"We made the decision determined that this would be the first and last match-fixing scandal in the league," said Kwak Young-cheol, the head of the K-League disciplinary committee.

"Players must keep in mind that they will be kicked out of the sport permanently if they get caught committing wrongdoing." The 10, and four other men accused of collaborating to fix the outcome of matches for betting purposes, could, if convicted in court, face seven years in jail.

The association, it seems, has concluded their guilt, though Kwak conceded that the life bans would be reviewed if they were cleared in criminal proceedings.

This, remember, is the Republic of Korea — not North Korea.

The K.F.A., the parent body to the 28-year-old K-League, has been built up through its past president, Chung Mong-joon, a leading lawmaker in the National Assembly in Seoul.

Chung was recently deposed as a vice president of FIFA, in part because his straight talk sat uncomfortably with some of the corrupt practices now being unraveled at the top of the world governing body of soccer.

By coincidence, Italy's courts are still sitting on the case of Luciano Moggi and Antonio Giraudo, the men barred for five years for their alleged roles in the Calciopoli corruption case that preceded Italy's winning the 2006 World Cup. Moggi and Giraudo were found, by the sports authorities, to have wielded such influence over referees that Moggi's club, Juventus, won championships that were later stripped from the records.

But Moggi has not gone away. He still contributes corruscating columns to the Libero newspaper and acerbic commentaries on Telcapri Sport TV. He is still in court, in Naples, pleading that he has always been innocent and was framed in relation to Calciopoli and other cases involving a player agency.

In the same week that South Korea was declaring 10 players persona non grata, the Italian soccer federation suddenly ruled that Moggi must never be allowed back into the sport, in any capacity.

So, zero tolerance before trial in Korea, and zero tolerance five years after the fact in Italy.

This column applauds draconian measures to root out match fixers in any sport, not just soccer. Nothing contaminates sports more than attempts to corrupt the outcome — and as the recent trial in Bochum, Germany, has demonstrated, the same big fixers come back again and again, even after they have been jailed for game tampering.

The spread of Internet betting has increased the stakes, and made it possible for syndicates on the other side of the world to attempt to fix precise moments in matches to make their financial killings.

There are sinister consequences to this. In 2008, two Chinese students who attended Newcastle University in England were found to have been murdered. Their killer refused to take the stand at his trial and went to prison without answering police and prosecution questions relating the murders to Triad betting gangs in China.

A suicide a month ago in South Korea triggered the reverberations throughout the K-League. The news agency Yonhap reported that a player found dead in his hotel roomhad left a note in which he referred to a match-fixing cartel.

The investigation that followed led to the bans, issued late Friday night, even before the state started its prosecution. Eight of the indicted players are from the Daejeon Citizen club. One is from Gwangju, and one from Sangmu Phoenix.

The Sangmu player, Kim Dong-hyun, is in big trouble. His team is run by the military, and military prosecutors are on the case. If the K-League verdict holds, not only will he never represent South Korea again, but he, and the other nine barred players, will not be allowed to be involved in any way at all with soccer.

An 11th player, Kim Jung-kyum of the Pohang Steelers, was handed a five-year ban after allegations that he learned of the Daejeon Citizen plot and bet on it.

No club officials are accused of knowing of the plot that allegedly started with one player's being paid 120 million won, about $110,000, and distributing it to teammates.

They lost the game against Pohang Steelers in April.

However, the clubs pay a penalty — an ironic one: they will be docked a large part of the nearly 270 million won paid annually to each K-League team from, of all things, Sports Toto. That is South Korea's only licensed sports lottery.

We are looking at the start of a zero-tolerance policy that will not be watered down by courts, as it very likely might in Europe or the United States.

No matter how good Kim Dong-hyun was on the field, the chances of his getting an amnesty and a recall to the national squad are long.

He has all the time in the world now to reflect on the real meaning of zero tolerance. And he might, if Kim is a student of soccer history, think his misfortune was to be born where he was.

Way back in 1980, Paolo Rossi was disqualified for three years after being implicated in another Italian scandal, the Totonero betting affair. His ban was later reduced to two years, just in time for Rossi to make the 1982 World Cup squad.

After a slow start, Rossi became the Golden Boot and Golden Ball winner of the Italian team that won the World Cup in Spain. Indeed, FIFA made him player of the year.

All was forgiven, and later, in his book "I Made Brazil Cry," Rossi maintained his innocence, corroborated by one of his accuser's admitting that Rossi was never guilty of anything. The evidence against him, apparently, was a lie.

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Rob Hughes

GLOBAL SOCCER

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LUCY NICHOLSON/REUTERS

Kim Dong-hyun was given a lifetime ban.

I.O.C. AWARDS 2018 WINTER GAMES TO A SOUTH KOREAN RESORT

BY JERÉ LONGMAN AND CHOE SANG-HUN

The Winter Olympics were awarded for the first time to South Korea on Wednesday as the alpine resort of Pyeongchang was named host of the 2018 Games.

Pyeongchang had been a persistent candidate for a decade, finishing second to Vancouver in the voting for the 2010 Games and to Sochi, Russia, for the 2014 Olympics. It built its successful candidacy for 2018 on a proposal to expand access to winter sports in the populous and lucrative Asian market.

The South Korean city won overwhelmingly on the first ballot of a secret vote of delegates of the International Olympic Committee, receiving 63 votes, compared with 25 for Munich and 7 for Annecy, France. Voting took place at a general assembly of the I.O.C. in Durban, South Africa.

“There is maybe a lesson in the achievement of Pyeongchang,” Jacques Rogge, the president of the I.O.C., said at a news conference. “Patience and perseverance have prevailed.”

Pyeongchang will be the third Asian city to host the Winter Games, after Sapporo, Japan, in 1972 and Nagano, Japan, in 1998. Its budget for 2018 was far greater than the other bids — $1.5 billion for the actual Games and $2 billion to $6 billion for infrastructure projects, according to news reports, as Pyeongchang seeks to become a regional winter sports hub.

The South Korean candidacy also enjoyed widespread public support, which the I.O.C. considers an important factor. Its plan to have all events within 30-minute’s drive from Pyeongchang apparently was also appealing. And the Olympic delegates seemingly were swayed by the fact that South Korea’s president, Lee Myung-bak, traveled to Durban to make a personal pitch for the 2018 Games.

But the most persuasive factor in Pyeongchang’s bid may have been the chance to further expand the popularity of winter sports in a country that had not previously hosted the Winter Olympics. Pyeongchang is about 100 miles east of Seoul, the South Korean capital, which has a population of more than 10 million.

Andrew Judelson, the chief revenue and marketing officer for the United States Ski and Snowboard Association, said in a statement, “The Olympics will benefit from returning to Asia and especially Korea, which has become a major global business center.”

OLYMPICS

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Wednesday’s vote was in keeping with recent attempts by the Olympics and soccer’s World Cup to bring the world’s biggest sporting events to places where they had not been previously held. The 2014 Winter Games will go to Russia for the first time and the 2016 Summer Games will be held for the first time in South America, with Rio de Janeiro as host.

The motto of the Pyeongchang bid was “new horizons,” which Cho Yang-ho, the bid committee’s chairman, described as an opportunity to “expand winter sports to new regions of the world and give opportunity to new peoples to access to the Winter Games.”

Park Yong-sung, head of the South Korean Olympic Committee, said that Pyeongchang’s victory “gave new hope for those developing countries, because in the past we think the Olympics are only for the rich and big countries.”

South Korea has shown its ability to organize major international sporting events over the past two decades. In addition to being the host of the 1988 Summer Olympics, South Korea was the co-host with Japan of the 2002 World Cup.

Yet, corruption involving high-ranking Olympic officials from South Korea has also brought embarrassment to the I.O.C. Kim Un-yong, a former I.O.C. vice president, resigned in 2005 after being convicted of embezzlement. Lee Kun-hee, the chairman of Samsung, an Olympic sponsor, relinquished his duties as an I.O.C. delegate in 2008 and was convicted of tax evasion; he was later pardoned and resumed his role with the I.O.C. last year.

Park, the head of South Korea’s Olympic Committee, was convicted of embezzlement but pardoned in 2007. Cho, the chairman of Pyeongchang’s bid committee and of Korean Air, was charged with tax evasion in 1999 and given a three-year prison term, but settled with the government for $12 million.

The news of Pyeongchang’s victory came near midnight in South Korea. In the resort, villagers danced and waved national and Olympic flags.

“This is a victory for the people of South Korea,” Lee, the country’s president, said from Durban.

Choe Sang-hun reported from Seoul, South Korea.

Pyeongchang seeks to become a regional winter sports hub.

TOURISM
IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

YOUTH PROGRAM INSPIRES DREAMS OF KOREAN UNITY

BY CHOE SANG-HUN

THE NEW YORK TIMES **INTERNATIONAL** THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 2010

Youth Program Inspires Dreams of Korean Unity

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea — When Ju Jin-ho arrived here from North Korea in 2006, it was as if he had come to an alien continent, not just the southern half of the Korean Peninsula.

Even though Mr. Ju, a 14-year-old defector, was placed in a school with children a year or two younger, most of his classmates were a head taller. They teased him, calling him a "red." They were far ahead of him in subjects like mathematics. Though he was desperate to make friends, he had trouble communicating.

"During class breaks, they talked about nothing but computer games," said Mr. Ju, who is now 17. "I started playing them so I could join their conversations. I became addicted. My eyesight deteriorated. My grades got worse."

Since last summer, however, he has been enrolled in a new program that seeks to overcome the yawning cultural gap that has developed in the six decades during which the Communist North and the capitalist South have been divided. The program brings together South Korean teenagers and young defectors from North Korea in a rare experiment here in building affinity — and preparing for possible reunification.

Just how far the two sides have drifted apart, how radically different their frames of reference have become, was evident when Park Sung-eun, a 16-year-old South Korean, met Mr. Ju through the program in Seoul's bustling Sinchon district.

"When I asked him, 'How did you get here?' I expected him to say by bus or subway," Ms. Park said.

Instead, she recalled, "he gave me the whole story of his journey from North Korea through China and Myanmar," when he fled with his family in 2005.

The program, called the Weekend Program for South and North Korean Teenagers Together, was begun last August by the Rev. Benjamin H. Yoon, 80, the leader of the Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights.

"Although we share the same genes, South and North Koreans live like completely different peoples, with different accents, different ways of thinking and behaving," Mr. Yoon said. "We forgot that before Korea was divided, we lived in the same country, marrying each other."

Under the program, the Citizens' Alliance, a civic group founded in 1996, has brought together students from Kyunggi Girls' High School in Seoul with young North Korean defectors for extracurricular activities.

They attend concerts. They cook, comparing North and South Korean dishes. The North Koreans, who are adept at farming, have shown the South Koreans how to harvest yams and make scarecrows. The teenagers from the South give those from the North tips on how to succeed socially and academically. They have made friends.

When the students went camping in October and stayed up late, Moon Sung-il, a 14-year-old North Korean, brought the South Koreans to tears when he recounted his two-and-a-half-year journey with other defectors, which took him from North Korea to China, Myanmar and a refugee camp in Bangkok. But he shocked them when he said that none of that was as daunting as a South Korean classroom.

"I could hardly understand anything the teacher said," he said. "My classmates, who were all a year or two younger than I was, taunted me as a 'poor soup-eater from the North.' I fought them with my fists."

More than 17,000 North Koreans, about 10 percent of them teenagers, have fled to the South since famine struck their country in the mid-1990s. The average journey from the North to the South takes 33 months, mostly through China and Southeast Asia. Not everyone who starts out makes it to the South; some have been caught and returned to the North, where they often end up in labor camps.

When they are placed in South Korean schools, the Northerners are forced to begin nearly from scratch. In the North, they spent as much time learning about the family of their leader, Kim Jong-il, as they did about the rest of Korean history. Few learned English, which is a requirement in South Korean schools. Dropout rates among defectors are five times the average for South Korean students, according to the Education Ministry.

With the number of North Korean refugees increasing by about 10 percent annually, the task of integrating them into South Korean society has become an early test for possible unification.

"Whenever something bad about North Korea came up during class, everyone turned to look at me," said Mr. Ju, who now attends an alternative school for defectors after failing to advance to a regular high school. "When teachers and students spoke disparagingly about North Korea, I felt like they were insulting me."

Ms. Park said she used to look down on North Koreans. "I associated them with something poor, dark and negative," she said.

Although many successful South Koreans have their roots in the North, a stereotype has developed here of Northerners as second-class Koreans, needy and starving, but also surly and belligerent. The mistrust is mutual. In the North, teachers tell children that South Korea is an American colony, a springboard for a future invasion, many defectors say.

"Back in the North, we seldom heard teachers talk about unification," said Choi Hyok-chol, a 19-year-old defector. "We seldom thought about it. I still don't think it's possible. The two economies are much too different."

In a survey of 1,000 South Koreans conducted last June by the Korea Peace Institute, a Christian research institute, half the respondents said unification was not necessary as long as the two sides lived in peace. In another public opinion poll, conducted in September by the National Unification Advisory Council, about two-thirds of the South Koreans surveyed said they wanted any unification to be gradual to avoid political and economic disruptions.

Although a spirit of unification persists in the South, many people balk at what is expected to be the enormous cost of integrating the two economies. Per capita income in the North amounts to only 6 percent of per capita income in the South, according to the Bank of Korea.

"I used to oppose unification, because I thought we'd lose more than we'd gain," said Hur Ji-young, a freshman at Kyunggi high school. Her friend Lim Hyo-jeong, however, said she supported it because she saw an economic advantage in a larger domestic market.

After mingling with the North Korean teenagers for a semester, the South Koreans said they believed more strongly in unification, but less for economic reasons now than for something closer to good will.

"Before I joined this program, I considered unification with a calculator, not with my heart for fellow Koreans in the North," Ms. Hur said.

CITIZENS' ALLIANCE FOR NORTH KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS

Ju Jin-ho, center, and Moon Sung-il, left, both refugees from North Korea, rafting with South Korean girls as part of a program run by the Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights.

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Ms. Park said she used to look down on North Koreans. "I associated them with something poor, dark and negative," she said.

Although many successful South Koreans have their roots in the North, a stereotype has developed here of Northerners as second-class Koreans, needy and starving, but also surly and belligerent. The mistrust is mutual. In the North, teachers tell children that South Korea is an American colony, a springboard for a future invasion, many defectors say.

"Back in the North, we seldom heard teachers talk about unification," said Choi Hyok-chol, a 19-year-old defector. "We seldom thought about it. I still don't think it's possible. The two economies are much too different."

In a survey of 1,000 South Koreans conducted last June by the Korea Peace Institute, a Christian research institute, half the respondents said unification was not necessary as long as the two sides lived in peace. In another public opinion poll, conducted in September by the National Unification Advisory Council, about two-thirds of the South Koreans surveyed said they wanted any unification to be gradual to avoid political and economic disruptions.

Although a spirit of unification persists in the South, many people balk at what is expected to be the enormous cost of integrating the two economies. Per capita income in the North amounts to only 6 percent of per capita income in the South, according to the Bank of Korea.

"I used to oppose unification, because I thought we'd lose more than we'd gain," said Hur Ji-young, a freshman at Kyunggi high school. Her friend Lim Hyo-jeong, however, said she supported it because she saw an economic advantage in a larger domestic market.

After mingling with the North Korean teenagers for a semester, the South Koreans said they believed more strongly in unification, but less for economic reasons now than for something closer to good will.

"Before I joined this program, I considered unification with a calculator, not with my heart for fellow Koreans in the North," Ms. Hur said.

THE PLACE ‘FIT LIKE A JACKET’

BY CONSTANCE ROSENBLUM

HABITATS/Jackson Heights, Queens

The Place ‘Fit Like a Jacket’

By CONSTANCE ROSENBLUM

THE apartment in Jackson Heights, Queens, where Sang and Minja Ji have lived for nine years fairly explodes with original and unusual works of art.

Above the sofa hangs a mixed-media piece by the Australian artist David Bromley, a dreamy depiction of a boy surrounded by images of cars, boats and airplanes. Overlooking their bed is a watercolor on handmade paper showing Vietnamese women immersed in their daily chores.

But one of the most fetching pieces is a creamy white wall hanging, its surface interrupted only by a pair of sleek golden koi.

Mr. Ji’s interpretation of the meaning of this work is deeply romantic.

“It’s as if with a soft wave of her tail, Minja was inviting me to chase after her,” Mr. Ji likes to say.

His wife offers a less sentimental reading. “In my opinion,” Ms. Ji said, “I’m the one swimming behind him and just quietly watching his back.”

Despite their different reactions to the image, the Jis are in many ways very much alike. They have similar family backgrounds and have pursued similar careers. And they discovered each other in a New York sort of way.

Mr. Ji, who is 35, immigrated from Korea with his parents when he was 10, and was raised in Elmhurst, one subway stop away from where he lives today. After graduating from the Fashion Institute of Technology, he went to work as an assistant pattern maker. Today he is director of technical services for the designer Narciso Rodriguez.

Ms. Ji, who is 38 and immigrated from Korea in 1994, also graduated from F.I.T. She met her future husband when he interviewed her for an intern’s job as an entry-level pattern maker at J. Crew, where he was working at the time.

“He was very tough,” said Ms. Ji, who is now a director of technical design for Ann Taylor. “He was not quite happy with my work.”

Notwithstanding this inauspicious start, the two began dating secretly. They quickly became a couple, and in April 2001 traveled to Korea, where Ms. Ji’s parents live, to be married.

A year earlier they had started looking for a permanent home, and one of the first places they saw was this very apartment.

“It felt as if it fit like a jacket,” Mr. Ji said, choosing an appropriate metaphor. “It was over our budget, but thanks to some creative math we made an offer. Then it was pulled from the market. We were heartbroken.”

The couple wrote the owner a letter, saying that if she ever decided to relist the apartment they were definitely interested. They never heard a word.

And so their search continued, right up to a memorable day the following January. On that day they were taken to visit a co-op that, as described by the broker, sounded eerily familiar.

“We turned a corner, and our hearts started pounding,” Mr. Ji said. “We looked at each other and asked ourselves, could it be? Then, sure enough, we stopped in front of this building.”

The original purchase price of $145,000 had climbed to $165,000 — even more of a financial reach — but the Jis were not deterred.

“We didn’t want to seem too desperate,” Mr. Ji said. “We called that evening.”

Their apartment is in a five-story red brick building on 78th Street, and faces a lush courtyard garden filled with flowering plants and mature trees. Ever since the building went up nearly a century ago, this oasis has been one of its great selling points. To the Jis, whose bedroom and kitchen overlook the garden, the big city seems miles away.

“We wake up and hear birds singing,” Mr. Ji said. “We feel the sun in our faces. I realize it sounds like a cliché, but it’s true.”

The apartment has a distinctly Korean atmosphere, and not just because the Jis ask visitors to remove their shoes upon entering, as is customary in many Asian households. During the couple’s Korean wedding trip, they bought several pieces of antique furniture, among them a 19th-century chest studded with iron hardware, a low scholar’s table that now does duty as a television stand, and an armoire made of Korean pine, notable for its densely detailed grain.

Opposite the bed hangs a hand-carved wooden plaque with a Biblical verse in Korean that reads in part, “With your blessing the house of your servant will be blessed forever,” a wedding gift from their church, the Flushing Korean Church of the Nazarene.

Many of their furnishings are the work of marquee-name designers, among them the Michael Aram silver candlesticks, the Simon Pearce wooden bowls and the Barbara Barry cherry-wood chest. (The Jis are adept at shopping sample sales and snapping up floor models.)

A few touches stand as a reminder of the couple’s professional interests. A pair of dressmaker’s dummies preside over the Jis’ workroom, like mute sentries keeping guard.

The shelves that line a wall of the dining area are crammed with glossy books on figures like Yohji Yamamoto, Yves Saint Laurent and Henri Cartier-Bresson. Mr. Ji’s library also includes a poignant relic from his childhood, dozens of leather-bound classics, among them “Ivanhoe,” “Little Women” and “War and Peace,” their titles embossed in gold.

“This was my mom’s attempt to make me read more books,” Mr. Ji said. “It didn’t exactly work.”

The Jis’ apartment has one obvious drawback. Despite nine-foot ceilings, cream-colored walls and living room windows that overlook the street, some of the rooms can be dark.

“So we said to ourselves, let’s embrace the darkness,” Mr. Ji said. “Let’s make the apartment even darker.” The earth-toned furniture contributes to this look, as do the cherry-wood blinds covering the living room windows.

The couple would be the first to admit that for every decorating triumph there have been a few awful missteps. The Charles Shackleton cherry-wood armoire, originally intended for the living room, never quite fit in and was sadly exiled to the workroom.

“And this is our third rug,” Mr. Ji said, pointing to the tobacco-colored Tibetan rug from Dolma on Lafayette Street that was carted home by subway and taxi. “When we laid it out on the floor, we were just so relieved that something finally worked.”

KOREAN TRADITION, ITALIAN STYLE

BY GISELA WILLIAMS

SEOUL, South Korea

From the outside, the home of Simone Carena and Jihye Shin looks like a traditional Korean house, or hanok, with its carved wooden door and pagoda-style roof. But the cherry red Ducati parked out front hints at something unexpected inside: a modern, loftlike space in an eye-popping shade of bamboo green.

"We wanted a strong natural color that would bring the outside in," said Mr. Carena, 41, a founding partner of Motoelastico, an architecture firm with offices in Seoul and Turin, Italy. "Similar to the contrast you get from bamboo leaves against a backdrop of black tiles."

The couple bought the property in the Samcheong-dong district in the spring of 2007, for 280,500,000 South Korean won, or about $300,000 at the time.

"Everyone we knew here thought we were crazy to buy a hanok," said Mr. Carena, who moved to Seoul from Italy in 2001, to teach at the International Design School for Advanced Studies, now part of Hongik University.

At first, so did his wife, a fashion designer who grew up in a hanok nearby and remembered what it was like to live in a house without modern amenities — and the inconvenience of having to use an outhouse, especially during Seoul's harsh winters.

"Even my parents advised us against it," said Ms. Shin, 31. "But I believed in Simone."

It turned out to be the right decision. In recent years, the neighborhood has become one of Seoul's most fashionable districts, with a new cafe or gallery opening every few months, Mr. Carena said, and the property has tripled in value.

Because the house was in "very bad condition," he said, they decided to tear it down and build a new one instead of renovating, reusing the original roof tiles and foundation stones.

Mr. Carena and his partner at Motoelastico, Marco Bruno, designed a U-shaped structure, positioning it so that the opening — and the courtyard — would face west, offering views over the surrounding rooftops, toward the sunset. "And towards Italy," he said.

The construction cost about $150,000 and was a constant battle, he said, because skilled traditional builders are hard to find — they work almost exclusively on large jobs, like museums or palaces, for organizations that can pay their high fees — and most of them tend to be wary of unconventional design solutions.

Needless to say, there were problems. Soon after Mr. Carena and Ms. Shin moved into the two-story, 1,100-square-foot home in April, they discovered leaks around the windows above the kitchen cabinets. So Mr. Carena came up with an innovative solution: a "little microsystem," as he put it, that uses gutters and plastic funnels to direct rainwater into flycatcher plants and a miniature herb garden.

The house is full of concealed storage and clever design ideas. A window cut into the courtyard floor and framed with mirrors brings light into the cellar room below and offers a "kaleidoscopic view" of the architecture, Mr. Carena said. A tiny terrace set on top of the kitchen offers the couple and their 1-year-old son, Felice, a place to enjoy the view of Mount Inwang during the summer.

And unusual decorative elements — like the enormous convex mirror (typically used to provide visibility around tight turns on roads) and the studio lights in the living room — create "the feeling of a film set," he said.

"This house is a puzzle of open views and hidden storage," he continued. Of course, all those open views make it easy for others to look in.

"One of our neighbors warned us one day that he saw us dancing in the kitchen," Mr. Carena said. "We didn't mind, but I built a small blind for his sake."

ON LOCATION

Korean Tradition, Italian Style

1. To make the small house feel as spacious as possible — and to bring the outdoors inside — Simone Carena created a U-shaped floor plan that allows the kitchen and living room to look out onto a courtyard, where an apricot tree grows. A window in the courtyard floor, framed with mirrors, lets light into a cellar room.

2. Mr. Carena; his wife, Jihye Shin; and their son, Felice, live in a traditional Korean house, or hanok, that is anything but traditional on the inside.

3. Instead of renovating the original house on the site, which was in bad shape, they tore it down and built a new one, reusing the old roof tiles and foundation stones.

4. The living room has a sunken sitting area and unusual decorative elements, like a traffic mirror, studio lights and a giant remote control, to create "the feeling of a film set," Mr. Carena said.

5. After Felice was born, Mr. Carena created a retractable shelf beside the library shelving in the bedroom that could be used as a baby bed; now Felice uses it as a reading table.

6. Mr. Carena described the leaf-green kitchen as "the engine of the house." It's "where the captain sits," he said, because you can see almost all the other rooms from there.

7. The cellar room is used for storage, and as a playroom and bedroom for Felice.

8. In the office area, the desk on the right — which faces the sunken seating area in the living room — doubles as a dining room table. Overhead is a loft bed, built into the ceiling.

9. The house has two small bathrooms. The one adjoining the bedroom is lined with mosaic tiles purchased from several shops in South Korea.

A tear-down in Seoul becomes a modern loftlike space for a young family. Outside, a Ducati.

By GISELA WILLIAMS

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SEOUL

BY ARIC CHEN



PHOTOGRAPHS BY WOOHAE CHO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

FROM LEFT Cooling off after a sauna at the sprawling Dragon Hill Spa & Resort; sampling barbecued pork belly at Tadak near the Hongdae night-life district; neon-lit street scene in Hongdae.

By ARIC CHEN

HASTILY rebuilt after the Korean War, Seoul is shedding its once-gritty image to become one of Asia's most glittering metropolises. Under its design-obsessed mayor, Oh Se-hoon, the city has been spiffed up with everything from sleek bus shelters to decked-out bridges. What's more, it was named this year's World Design Capital by an international design alliance. But that's just the beginning. Seoul has a booming contemporary art scene, fashionable stores throughout the urban landscape, and a thriving pop and youth culture that now rivals that of other Asian capitals like Tokyo.

Friday

4 p.m.

1 Culture, Then and Now

The convergence of art and architecture, Korean and Western, old and new, finds a marquee home at the Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art (747-18 Hannam-dong, Yongsan-gu; 82-2-2014-6900; leeum.samsungfoundation.org). Squirreled away in a hilly residential section of the Itaewon area, the museum showcases the Samsung Foundation's impressive art collection in a campus of buildings designed by Rem Koolhaas, Jean Nouvel and Mario Botta. Pieces date from historic Korean Buddhist paintings and celadon ceramics to works by Mark Rothko, Anish Kapoor and Nam June Paik. Then, for a contrast to the Leeum's polished presentation, walk five minutes to Ggooll (683-31 Hannam-dong, Yongsan-gu; 82-70-4127-6468; choijeonghwa.com). The experimental artist Choi Jeong Hwa has turned this former hovel into a riotous, well, hovel that doubles as a cafe and alternative gallery.

IF YOU GO

The 185-room **Park Hyatt Seoul** (995-14 Daechi 3-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-2016-1234; seoul.park.hyatt.com) occupies a 24-story glass-and-steel building in the central Gangnam district. Floor-to-ceiling windows, warm wood finishes and granite baths outfit its spacious, modern rooms. Doubles start at 270,000 won (about $249).

The new **IP Boutique Hotel** (737-32 Hannam-dong, Yongsan-gu; 82-2-3702-8000; ipboutiquehotel.com) is conveniently situated in Itaewon. It has a colorful facade that matches the 132 comfortable rooms within: think lots of white with splashes of Pop color. Rates start at 200,000 won, with frequent discounts available.

Situated in the heart of fashionable Garosu-gil, the **Hotel Tea Tree & Co** (535-12 Sinsa-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-542-9954; teatreehotel.com) opened last year with 38 spare yet cozy rooms. Standard rooms start at 96,800 won.

7:30 p.m.

2 Kimchi Redux

It was only a matter of time before Korean cuisine got the nouvelle treatment, and a pioneer in this growing movement is Jung Sik Dang (3F, Acros B/D, 649-7 Sinsa-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-517-4654; jungsikdang.com), next to Dosan Park. The dining room is modern and subdued, with white tablecloths and leather chairs. The rotating set menu (100,000 or 120,000 won, or about $92 or $110 at 1,085 won to the dollar) might include sea squirt bibimbap, anchovy paella and "Five Senses Satisfaction Pork Belly." There is just a handful of tables, so be sure to make a reservation.

10:30 p.m.

3 Seoul After Dark

Seoul has a panoply of night-life districts that cater to different crowds, but perhaps the trendiest is Garosu-gil. It's home to cute cafes and immaculate boutiques like p. 532 and Ilmo Outlet, but at night its many bars throb to life. Two cool spots include Café des Arts (2F, 545 Sinsa-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-541-0507), with its beer and flea market vibe, and the yuppie-ish, dark-and-moody Wine & Dine (535-18 Sinsa-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-545-6677).

Saturday

10 a.m.

4 Design Digs

The Dongdaemun Design Plaza, a massive complex designed by Zaha Hadid, will be a centerpiece of Seoul's design transformation when it is completed as early as 2012. Though still under construction, its impressive, space-age skeleton is already worth a look (2 Eulji-ro 7-ga, Jung-gu; 82-2-2266-7330; seouldesign.or.kr). So is the new Hadid-designed park that surrounds it, which elegantly incorporates recently discovered ruins, including a military complex from the Choson dynasty (1392-1910). Small design exhibitions accompany a museum chronicling the site's history.

11 a.m

5 White Cubes

The city's contemporary art scene is blossoming and it's centered in pleasant Samcheong-dong. Blue-chip spaces include Gallery Hyundai (80 Sagan-dong, Jongro-gu; 82-2-2287-3570; galleryhyundai.com); Kukje Gallery (59-1 Sokeuk-dong, Jongro-gu; 82-2-735-8449; kukjegallery.com); and Arario Gallery (149-2 Sokeuk-dong, Jongro-gu; 82-2-723-6190; arariogallery.com). Anchoring the area is the Artsonje Center (144-2 Sokeuk-dong, Jongro-gu; 82-2-733-8945; artsonje.org), founded in 1998 to support contemporary and experimental art. Meanwhile, over in the Cheongdam area is the Platoon Kunsthalle (97-22 Nonhyeon-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-3447-1191; kunsthalle.com), an alternative art space built from stacked shipping containers.

1:30 p.m.

6 Cheap or Chic

For lunch in Samcheong-dong, try the Kukje Gallery's upscale continental restaurant (18,000 won for the scallop risotto). Or slip into one of the hole-in-the-wall restaurants tucked into the hilly side streets, like Cheonjin Poja (148-5 Sokeuk-dong, Jongro-gu; 82-2-739-6086), where an order of pork mandoo dumplings will set you back 4,000 won. There's also aA (55 Sokeuk-dong, Jongro-gu; 82-2-722-1211), a new four-level temple to vintage modern furniture, though the draw is more the Danish lighting than the 8,000-won ham and Brie sandwiches.

3 p.m.

7 Credit Crunch

There's no shortage of ways to max out a credit card in Seoul. The heart of temptation lies in the Cheongdam-dong district, and spreads out from there. Watch international brands try to outdo one another, be it with the vegetation-covered Ann Demeulemeester (650-14 Sinsa-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-3442-2570; anndemeulemeester.be); the new concrete-on-concrete Rick Owens (651 Sinsa-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-516-2217; rickowens.eu); or the unapologetically decadent 10 Corso Como (79 Cheongdam-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-3018-1010; 10corsocomo.co.kr). For homegrown luxury emporiums, stop by Boon the Shop (89-3 and 79-13 Cheongdam-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-542-8006; boontheshop.com) and the edgier Daily Projects (1-24 Cheongdam-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-3218-4075; dailyprojects.kr). And for local skater and streetwear design, Humantree (4F, 653-1 Sinsa-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-514-3464; humantree.info) shows off its hoodies and T-shirts next to a Planet of the Apes blow-up doll.

7:30 p.m.

8 Fashion Barbecue

Given that its proprietor is a former editor at Vogue Korea, you might expect Tadak (412-29 Hapjeong-dong, Mapo-gu; 82-2-333-6564) to be a tad pretentious. Quite the opposite. Stylish yet low-key, this warm-and-woody Korean barbecue restaurant opened earlier this year near the Hongdae student night-life district. Beef, pork and vegetables are grilled over wood charcoal at your table, accompanied by all the pickled and bean paste fixings. The prices are just as palatable: 10,000 won per one-person portion. A serving of cold naeng myun noodles is 4,500 won.

ONLINE: **READERS' THOUGHTS**

View a slide show of Seoul, and share your suggestions on where to stay, where to eat and what to do.

nytimes.com/travel/seoul

11 p.m.

9 Where the Kids Roam

Seoul has its share of sleek bars and sophisticated clubs, but for a bit of urban anthropology to go with your drink, head to Hongdae. Packed with teenagers, university students and other 20-somethings, this carnivalesque, neon-lit area is where on weekend nights you might find yourself dodging a stilt walker as a rock band plays nearby. On the main drag, you can't miss Luxury Norebang (367-39 Seogyo-dong, Mapo-gu; 82-2-322-3111), a multistory karaoke palace that looks like Pee Wee's Playhouse as decorated by Laura Ashley. For a more upscale party vibe, check out Loud (83-13 Cheongdam-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-517-7412; 74loud.com), which draws a fashionable set to its hyperslick spaces.

Sunday

11 a.m.

10 Tapas With a View

Have brunch with the in-crowd at Between (124-7 Yongsan-gu, Itaewon-dong; 82-2-795-6164), a multilevel Italian and Spanish tapas restaurant, with a terrace and lounge, that opened earlier this year. Its airy, contemporary interior is an ideal place to wake up with an eggs Benedict (16,000 won) or prosciutto sandwich (17,000 won) and good people-watching.

12:30 p.m.

11 Bath and Beyond

A staple of Korean life has long been the jjimjilbang, or bathhouse. And perhaps the biggest and most extravagant of them all is the seven-story Dragon Hill Spa & Resort (40-713 Hangang-ro 3-ga, Yongsan-gu; 82-2-798-0114; dragonhillspa.com). Something like an amusement park with a touch of '80s Vegas, complete with pyramids and a Native American-themed pub, this family-friendly spot comes with sex-segregated spa areas, shared saunas, outdoor pools, Jacuzzis and more: picture nail salons, video arcades, an Internet cafe, even a cinema and putting green. (Admission 10,000 to 12,000 won; spa packages from 100,000 won.) A Zen retreat this is not. But it's a fun (and funny) place for a few hours of entertainment — and maybe some relaxation, too.

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1:30 p.m.

6) CHEAP OR CHIC

For lunch in Samcheong-dong, try the Kukje Gallery's upscale continental restaurant (18,000 won for the scallop risotto). Or slip into one of the hole-in-the-wall restaurants tucked into the hilly side streets, like Cheonjin Poja (148-5 Sokeuk-dong, Jongro-gu; 82-2-739-6086), where an order of pork mandoo dumplings will set you back 4,000 won. There's also aA (55 Sokeuk-dong, Jongro-gu; 82-2-722-1211), a new four-level temple to vintage modern furniture, though the draw is more the Danish lighting than the 8,000-won ham and Brie sandwiches.

3 p.m.

7) CREDIT CRUNCH

There's no shortage of ways to max out a credit card in Seoul. The heart of temptation lies in the Cheongdam-dong district, and spreads out from there. Watch international brands try to outdo one another, be it with the vegetation-covered Ann Demeulemeester (650-14 Sinsa-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-3442-2570; anndemeulemeester.be); the new concrete-on-concrete Rick Owens (651 Sinsa-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-516-2217; rickowens.eu); or the unapologetically decadent 10 Corso Como (79 Cheongdam-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-3018-1010; 10corsocomo.co.kr). For homegrown luxury emporiums, stop by Boon the Shop (89-3 and 79-13 Cheongdam-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-542-8006; boontheshop.com) and the edgier Daily Projects (1-24 Cheongdam-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-3218-4075; dailyprojects.kr). And for local skater and streetwear design, Humantree (4F, 653-1 Sinsa-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-514-3464; humantree.info) shows off its hoodies and T-shirts next to a Planet of the Apes blow-up doll.

7:30 p.m.

8) FASHION BARBECUE

Given that its proprietor is a former editor at Vogue Korea, you might expect Tadak (412-29 Hapjeong-dong, Mapo-gu; 82-2-333-6564) to be a tad pretentious. Quite the opposite. Stylish yet low-key, this warm-and-woody Korean barbecue restaurant opened earlier this year near the Hongdae student night-life district. Beef, pork and vegetables are grilled over wood charcoal at your table, accompanied by all the pickled and bean paste fixings. The prices are just as palatable: 10,000 won per one-person portion. A serving of cold naeng myun noodles is 4,500 won.

11 p.m.

9) WHERE THE KIDS ROAM

Seoul has its share of sleek bars and sophisticated clubs, but for a bit of urban anthropology to go with your drink, head to Hongdae. Packed with teenagers, university students and other 20-somethings, this carnivalesque, neon-lit area is where on weekend nights you might find yourself dodging a stilt walker as a rock band plays nearby. On the main drag, you can't miss Luxury Norebang (367-39 Seogyo-dong, Mapo-gu; 82-2-322-3111), a multistory karaoke palace that looks like Pee Wee's Playhouse as decorated by Laura Ashley. For a more upscale party vibe, check out Lound (83-13 Cheongdam-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-517-7412; 74lound.com), which draws a fashionable set to its hyperslick spaces.

Sunday

11 a.m.

10) TAPAS WITH A VIEW

Have brunch with the in-crowd at Between (124-7 Yongsan-gu, Itaewon-dong; 82-2-795-6164), a multilevel Italian and Spanish tapas restaurant, with a terrace and lounge, that opened earlier this year. Its airy, contemporary interior is an ideal place to wake up with an eggs Benedict (16,000 won) or prosciutto sandwich (17,000 won) and good people-watching.

12:30 p.m.

11) BATH AND BEYOND

A staple of Korean life has long been the jjimjilbang, or bathhouse. And perhaps the biggest and most extravagant of them all is the seven-story Dragon Hill Spa & Resort (40-713 Hangang-ro 3-ga, Yongsan-gu; 82-2-798-0114; dragonhillspa.com). Something like an amusement park with a touch of '80s Vegas, complete with pyramids and a Native American-themed pub, this family-friendly spot comes with sex-segregated spa areas, shared saunas, outdoor pools, Jacuzzis and more: picture nail salons, video arcades, an Internet cafe, even a cinema and putting green. (Admission 10,000 to 12,000 won; spa packages from 100,000 won.) A Zen retreat this is not. But it's a fun (and funny) place for a few hours of entertainment — and maybe some relaxation, too.

IF YOU GO

The 185-room Park Hyatt Seoul (995-14 Daechi 3-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-2016-1234; seoul.park.hyatt.com) occupies a 24 -story glass-and-steel building in the central Gangnam district. Floor-to-ceiling windows, warm wood finishes and granite baths outfit its spacious, modern rooms. Doubles start at 270,000 won (about $249).

The new IP Boutique Hotel (737-32 Hannam-dong, Yongsan-gu; 82-2-3702-8000; ipboutiquehotel.com) is conveniently situated in Itaewon. It has a colorful facade that matches the 132 comfortable rooms within: think lots of white with splashes of Pop color. Rates start at 200,000 won, with frequent discounts available.

Situated in the heart of fashionable Garosu-gil, the Hotel Tea Tree & Co (535-12 Sinsa-dong, Gangnam-gu; 82-2-542-9954; teatreehotel.com) opened last year with 38 spare yet cozy rooms. Standard rooms start at 96,800 won.

A GRAZING TOUR OF KOREATOWN

BY BETSY ANDREWS

$25 AND UNDER
Betsy Andrews

A Grazing Tour of Koreatown

THERE'S a wonder of things to eat in Koreatown: marinated bulgogi, milky beef-bone soup, sizzling bibimbap. But, with the banchan, the tableside grilling, and the communal grazing, dining here can be a commitment.

What to do if you're hankering for kimchi in a hurry? Luckily there are plenty of opportunities, new or lesser known, to snack.

Its bakeries offer scrumptious surprises. The Japanese brought Parisian-style baking to Korea in the mid-20th century, but it boomed in the 1980s, when a soaring economy brought a taste for foreign luxuries.

That's when Paris Baguette, which has more than 2,000 outlets in South Korea, took off. Its bakers, though trained in French techniques, range far afield of cream puffs. At the cheerful six-month-old Manhattan branch of PARIS BAGUETTE, 6 West 32nd Street, (212) 244-0404, parisbaguetteusa.com, a long flaky twist is braided with earthy sweet-potato purée and dotted with black sesame seeds ($1.80); crunchy oats and sour rye add interest to the "grain cream cheese pastry" ($2.50). Though the chestnut pastry tastes like nothing of the kind ($2.80), and the brioche is too sweet for its cream cheese filling ($2), a puff-pastry leaf topped with caramelized sugar is nutty with butter and nicely balanced by lemon and salt ($1). Savory pastries are either an adventure (kimchi-stuffed croquettes, $1.80) or lovably familiar. A croissant-like pastry enfolding a garlicky hot dog (a food adopted during the Korean War) is an overgrown pig-in-a-blanket, which is to say it's delicious ($2).

At KORYODANG, 31 West 32nd Street, (212) 967-9661, koryodang.com, a spacious, tony cafe with branches in Queens, the displayed lists of ingredients only deepen excitement. What is "all trumps" or "full strength"? "All trumps" turns out to be a high-gluten flour, used in pastries like the karoke, deep-fried and plump with various fillings. Purée potato ($1.50), dotted with carrots, peas and boiled egg, betters a knish. A joy if only for its incongruity is one filled with mayonnaisy, peppery tuna salad ($1.50). "Full strength" is the bread flour used to make the dutch, a crusty, chewy, filled pastry. The bacon-filled dutch ($2) is so substantial, it practically oinks.

On the sweet side, the sour cream orange bread's label lists the ingredient "orange feel," but with orange oil, zest and Grand Marnier, this is more like citrusy full-body contact. It's very good ($2.25).

Beyond the bakeries, a best-kept secret is the prepared food at the chain grocery H-MART, 25 West 32nd Street, (212) 695-3283, hmart.com. The cold case holds vermicelli in spicy sesame sauce ($5.99) and trays of pickled vegetables ($5.99). But the most delicious items are warm. Moist, fragrant soondae, Korean blood sausage, is stuffed with sweet rice, scallion and sweet potato noodle ($5.99). The whiting pie — warm, soft and very eggy, with plenty of flaky fish — is the fabulous love child of a fishcake and an omelet ($3.99).

Koreatown's big news is the opening of FOOD GALLERY 32, 11 West 32nd Street, (212) 967-1678, a complex of hawkers serving Korean riffs on Chinese, Japanese and American fare, as well as some traditional dishes, to a young, mobile crowd. Amid the ketchupy noodles and dull stir fries are a few streetwise gems, like the zhong zi at the stand run by the Taiwanese food truck, Bian Dang (formerly NYC Cravings). This gooey, gargantuan sticky-rice tamale stuffed with pork belly, Chinese sausage, mushrooms, dried shrimp and vegetables is an umami bomb wrapped in bamboo leaves ($4).

The Korean-style sushi at Boon Sik Zip's stall is bigger and more expertly rolled than at the long-established E-Mo across the street. Spicy tuna wrapped in rice and nori with daikon, spinach, carrots, omelet and sweet pickled burdock is a tasty, many-flavored finger food ($5.99).

If you must sit, climb past the cramped mezzanine to the top floor, where you can watch Asian music videos while tackling a hare-size "red rabbit" crepe at Crepe Monster. Rolled, Tokyo-style, into a cone filled with nutty bean paste, chewy mochi and red bean ice cream ($7), it's a grand Asian-fusion finale to a day of Koreatown snacking.

SOCIETY & LITERATURE
IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

DEATH PURSUES HER

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY


Death Pursues Her

In Chang-rae Lee's latest novel, a woman who survived war but is now dying of cancer sets off to find her wayward son.

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

Chang-rae Lee is fond of words like "accrete" and "accrue," words that try to name the slow, almost imperceptible processes by which experience acquires weight, mass and, if you're lucky, meaning. "Life, gathering," reads one full sentence in his ferocious and lyrical new novel, "The Surrendered," and you couldn't ask for a better two-word description of what good fiction aspires to. This novel, his fourth, gathers life greedily, hungrily, but with a certain stealth: Lee doesn't bolt it all down at once, as the refugee children in his story do. "The Surrendered," his largest, most ambitious book, is about the horrors of war and the sorrows of survival, yet its manner is quiet, watchful, expectant, as if everyone, including Lee himself, were waiting to see what might accrue.

In this respect, he has something in common with his heroine, a "difficult" woman named June Singer (née Han), orphaned by the Korean War and now, in New York in 1986, suffering the end stages of stomach cancer. "Her talent, her gift," the novel tells us, "was an instantly patent resolve," a sometimes frightening determination to survive by any means necessary. Her story begins in Korea in 1950, where within the space of a few pages she loses her entire family: her father and older brother are taken away, never to be seen again; her mother, two sisters and a little brother perish, one by one, on the road. She is by temperament a tough-minded girl — Lee never tries to convince us her hard shell is solely the product of her wartime ordeal — and her capacity to leave even the most cherished people and possessions behind helps get her through the trials fate, or history, has arranged. As a child in wartime she lives in the present, in full flight, aware always of "the suspension of any future save the one in which they persisted, kept on." As a dying adult, adrift in a morphine haze, she becomes more reflective, but she still can't seem to let herself rest: in the last days of her brief life (she's 47), she sets off for Europe in search of her wayward son, Nicholas. To the end, she persists.

It's no easy task for a novelist to make sheer doggedness beautiful, or even, for the length of a nearly 500-page narrative, interesting, but Lee trusts his own patience, his stubborn resolve to get to the bottom of things. He moves back and forth in time, circling his characters, sizing them up — trying, as June does, to "see each moment from every side." He shifts point of view frequently to give us some relief from his heroine's blurred, in-and-out consciousness. A good deal of the story is seen through the eyes of a rootless ex-G.I. named Hector Brennan, who is Nicholas's long-absent father and whom June enlists to aid her in her search. Lee describes Hector, a hard-drinking janitor, as a man who, in his mid-50s, is still "not yet fixed into his own life": a man who, after serving in Korea and then lingering there doing odd jobs at an orphanage, has preferred to be "happily ignored, free to go his unsung way." He is, not to put too fine a point on it, a classic loser, someone who has let life get the better of him. And he believes his very presence is destructive to others: he survives everything, without much caring to, and buries those he loves.

What has always most concerned Lee, from his first novel, "Native Speaker," through "A Gesture Life" and "Aloft," is the way people interpret their own lives, the accommodations they make in order to live with all they've seen and done. The events, the specific experiences, are important, but there's an awful randomness to them, which can be accepted or denied or, most often, willfully ignored. For both June and Hector, war and its aftermath make capricious experience unignorable: "You could never anticipate what might happen next, the earth-shattering and the trivial interspersing with the cruelest irony. You could be saved by pure chance, or else ruined. That was the terror of it." Throughout "The Surrendered," both in the past and in the present, terrible things happen, some purely accidental, some deliberately inflicted, and many that seem to exist in a kind of causal no man's land: nobody's fault, and everybody's.

There are more of those events in "The Surrendered" than in any of Lee's previous novels. The body count is high: Lee invents an extraordinary number of vivid characters, many of whom prove to be just passing through on their way to violent, senseless ends. The exponentially increased eventfulness of this book, compared with Lee's others, is perhaps the result of a decision to do something here that he's never done before — to tell a story in the traditional omniscient-narrator manner rather than the particular, self-interpreting voice of an individual. It's a leap of faith because the first-person mode has served him so well in the past, and because omniscience does not, I suspect, come naturally to him: to his credit, Lee has never seemed comfortable playing God. Whatever destinies he dreams up for his characters are what they have to live with, and if he burdens them too heavily there's the risk that they'll stop trying to explain themselves to themselves, that they'll stop persisting.

But in "The Surrendered" Lee takes that risk, enlarging the operations of fate and challenging his characters to assimilate, somehow, the things that have befallen them. June charges ahead; Hector fumbles along, dragged kicking (but not screaming) into some kind of settling into his own baffled life. They're very different, but they share the memory of an orphanage missionary named Sylvie Tanner, whom they both loved and who made her accommodations with dreadful experience rather haltingly and not, in the end, successfully. She is the single most touching figure in "The Surrendered" and the validation of Lee's third-person gamble. Seen mostly from the outside, mostly through the eyes of June and Hector, she's unforgettable.

Finally, though, "The Surrendered" must depend on Lee's own voice, the one he has adopted to tell these people's stories in a way they can't, or won't, themselves. Sentence by mournful sentence he keeps on, struggling a bit at times but constantly pushing forward, taking his characters however he can to a place where they can rest. And at the end of their journeys — for June and Hector, the stopping point is Solferino, Italy, where a bloody battle not their own once took place — there's a sense that something has gathered there, that some value has mysteriously accrued. Deliverance might be too strong a word for what awaits them: it's more like a profound, bone-deep sense of relief. But they've earned it, in their different ways, so it feels, to them and to us, like a great victory on the field of war. In the long course of "The Surrendered," Lee makes us understand, in painful increments, the virtue of endurance and the blessing of simple surcease.

Terrence Rafferty is a frequent contributor to the Book Review.

EXACTING TEACHING MACHINE STICKS TO THE SCRIPT IN SOUTH KOREA

BY CHOE SANG-HUN

Exacting Teaching Machine Sticks to the Script in South Korea

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea — Carefully trained by a government-run lab, she is the latest and perhaps most innovative recruit in South Korea's obsessive drive to teach its children the global language of English.

Over the years, this country has imported thousands of Americans, Canadians, South Africans and others to supplement local teachers of English. But the program has strained the government's budget, and it is increasingly difficult to get native English speakers to live on islands and other remote areas.

Enter Engkey, a teacher with exacting standards and a silken voice. She is just a little penguin-shaped robot, but both symbolically and practically, she stands for progress, achievement and national pride. What she does not stand for, however, is bad pronunciation.

"Not good this time!" Engkey admonished a sixth grader as he stooped awkwardly over her. "You need to focus more on your accent. Let's try again."

Engkey, a contraction of English jockey (as in disc jockey), is the great hope of Choi Mun-taek, a team leader at the Korea Institute of Science and Technology's Center for Intelligent Robotics. "In three to five years, Engkey will mature enough to replace native speakers," he said.

Dr. Choi's team recently demonstrated Engkey's interactions with four sixth graders from Seoul who had not met the robot. Engkey tracked a student around the room, wheeling to a stop a foot away, and extended a greeting in a synthesized female voice. (Although a male voice is also available, Dr. Choi says the female model seems more effective in teaching.) She then led the boy to a shelf stacked with plastic fruit.

"How can I help you today?" Engkey said.

"Do you have any fruits on sale?" the student said.

"Wow! Very good!" Engkey exulted. She sounded a fanfare, spun and raised her left arm for a high-five. A screen on her chest showed stars grading the student.

The students were amazed.

"It's cool — a machine hearing and responding to me," said Yang Ui-ryeol. "There seems to be a life inside it."

Still, Engkey has a long way to go to fulfill her creators' dream. The robot can help students practice only scripted conversations and is at a loss if a student veers off script, as Yang did during the demonstration.

"I love you," the boy said to appease Engkey after he was chastised for a bad pronunciation. Engkey would have none of it; it was not in her programmed script.

"You need to work on your accent," the robot repeated.

When Yang said, "I don't like apples" instead of "I love apples," as he was supposed to, Engkey froze. The boy patted her and said, "Hello, are you alive or dead?"

The trials and errors at the Korea Institute, a wooded top-security compound for the country's best scientific minds, represent South Korea's ambitious robotic dreams.

Last month, it announced a trial service for 11 types of intelligent robots this year. They include "kiosk robots" to roam amusement parks selling tickets, and "robo soldiers" that will man part of the 155-mile border with North Korea with a never-sleeping camera eye, night vision and lethal fire power.

But the most notable step was this country's plans to use robots as teaching aids. In February, the Education Ministry began deploying hundreds of them as part of a plan to equip all the nation's 8,400 kindergartens with robots by 2013.

One type of robot, toddler-size with a domed head and boxlike body on wheels, takes attendance, reads fairy tales and sings songs with children. A smaller puppy robot helps leads gymnastics and flashes red eyes if touched too roughly.

Even though they are little more than fancy toys, experts say, these robots prepare children for a fast-approaching robotic future.

Early this year, when the institute did an experimental run of Engkey in Masan on the south coast, there was a mad rush among children to be selected for the program, said Kim Boyeong, an English teacher.

"They all loved robots. They get shy before a foreign native speaker, afraid to make mistakes," Ms. Kim said. "But they find robots much easier to talk to."

An independent evaluator of the trial noticed that Engkey required the constant presence of a technical operator. "Engkey has a long way to go if it wants to avoid becoming an expensive yet ignored heap of scrap metal at the corner of the classroom," said Ban Jae-chun, an education professor at Chungnam National University.

Dr. Choi knows the challenge. After tests in more schools this winter, he hopes to commercialize Engkey and to reduce the price, currently $24,000 to $32,000, to below $8,000.

Dr. Choi said his team was racing to improve the robot's ability to recognize students and to discern and respond to a student's voice amid noise. It is also cramming Engkey with more conversational scenarios.

For now, though, Engkey's limits quickly become apparent. Hahn Yesle, who participated in the recent demonstration, said: "Engkey is fun. But she is not human. Repeating the same dialogue is what she does. I wish she would become more expressive and responsive, like a human teacher."

CHOE SANG-HUN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Yang Ui-ryeol, a sixth grader in Seoul, practiced a conversation in English with Engkey, a robot teacher that recognizes human speech.

SEOUL, South Korea

Carefully trained by a government-run lab, she is the latest and perhaps most innovative recruit in South Korea's obsessive drive to teach its children the global language of English.

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KOREAN ISLE LOOKS ABROAD FOR AN EDUCATION AT HOME

BY CHOE SANG-HUN


Korean Isle Looks Abroad For an Education at Home

SEOGWIPO, South Korea

Here on Jeju Island, famous for its tangerine groves, pearly beaches and honeymoon resorts, South Korea is conducting a bold educational experiment, one intended to bolster opportunity at home and attract investment from abroad.

By 2015, if all goes according to plan, 12 prestigious Western schools will have opened branch campuses in a government-financed, 940-acre Jeju Global Education City, a self-contained community within Seogwipo, where everyone — students, teachers, administrators, doctors, store clerks — will speak only English. The first school, North London Collegiate, broke ground for its campus this month.

While this is the country's first enclave constructed expressly around foreign-style education, individual campuses are opening elsewhere. Dulwich College, a private British school, is scheduled to open a branch in Seoul, the capital, in a few weeks. And the Chadwick School of California is set to open a branch in Songdo, a new town rising west of Seoul, around the same time.

What is happening in South Korea is part of the global expansion of Western schools — a complex trend fueled by parents in Asia and elsewhere who want to be able to keep their families together while giving their children a more global and English-language curriculum beginning with elementary school, and by governments hoping for economic rewards from making their countries more attractive to foreigners with money to invest.

"We will do everything humanly possible to create an environment where your children must speak English, even if they are not abroad," Jang Tae-young, a Jeju official, recently told a group of Korean parents.

By inviting leading Western schools, the government is hoping to address one of the notorious stress points in South Korean society. Many parents want to send children abroad so they can learn English and avoid the crushing pressure and narrow focus of the Korean educational system. The number of South Korean students from elementary school through high school who go abroad for education increased to 27,350 in 2008 from 1,840 in 1999, according to government data.

But this arrangement often resulted in the fracturing of families, with the mother accompanying the children abroad and the father becoming a "goose" — by staying behind to earn the money to finance these ventures and taking occasional transoceanic flights to visit.

This trend has raised alarms about broken families and a brain drain from a country that is already suffering from one of the world's lowest birthrates. Many of the children who study abroad end up staying abroad; those who return often have trouble finding jobs at Korean companies, regaining their language fluency or adapting to the Korean way of doing business.

Lee Kyung-min, 42, a pharmacist in Seoul whose 12-year-old daughter, Jeong Min-joo, attended a private school in Canada for a year and a half, said she knew why families were willing to make sacrifices to send their children away.

"In South Korea, it's all rote learning for college entrance exams," Ms. Lee said. "A student's worth is determined solely by what grades she gets." She added that competition among parents forced their children to sign up for extracurricular cram sessions that left them with little free time to develop their creativity. "Children wither in our education system," she said.

So Min-joo's parents believed that exposing her to a Western school system was worth the $5,000 they paid each month for her tuition and board, 10 times what they would have spent had she studied at home.

But Ms. Lee said her heart sank when Min-joo began forgetting her Korean grammar and stopped calling home. Still, she did not want to leave her husband behind to join her daughter, because she had witnessed in her own neighborhood how often the loneliness of "goose" fathers led to broken marriages.

"Our family was losing its bonds, becoming just a shell," she said.

In June, they brought Min-joo home, and they plan to enroll her in one of the international boarding schools in Jeju, often romanized as Cheju, next year. For Ms. Lee, this is the closest she can get to sending her daughter abroad without leaving the country.

"There is an expressed desire in Korea to seek the benefits of a 'Western' or 'American' approach to precollegiate education," said Ted Hill, headmaster of the Chadwick School, whose Songdo campus has been deluged with applicants to fill the 30 percent of slots reserved for Korean students. The balance of the student body will be recruited from expatriate families living in South Korea and China.

"When we explain to Korean parents what we try to do in the classroom, we see their eyes light up," said Chris DeMarino, business development director at Dulwich College Management International, which has a government-set 25 percent ceiling on Korean students at its Seoul school. "There is a tremendous demand for what we offer, but, unfortunately, we have to turn many of them away."

In South Korea, English proficiency and a diploma from a top American university are such important status markers that some deliberately sprinkle their Korean conversation with English phrases.

The country sends more nonimmigrant students — 113,519 in the fiscal year that ended on Sept. 30, 2009 — to the United States than any other country except China, according to the United States Office of Immigration Statistics.

In a 2008 survey by South Korea's National Statistical Office, 48.3 percent of South Korean parents said they wanted to send their children abroad to "develop global perspectives," avoid the rigid domestic school system or learn English. More than 12 percent wanted it for their children as early as elementary school.

Critics say that the Jeju schools — with annual tuition fees of $17,000 to $25,800 and their English-language curriculum, aside from the Korean language and history classes for Korean students — will create "schools for the rich." But Kwon Do-yeop, a vice minister of land, transport and maritime affairs whose department oversees the project, said it could save South Korea $500 million annually in what is now being spent to educate children overseas.

"Jeju schools cost half what you spend when you have your children studying in the United States," said Byon Jong-il, the chief of the Jeju Free International City Development Center, which is managing the education project as part of an overall plan for the island. "Not everything goes right when you send your children abroad."

Some of the things that can go wrong have been highlighted by the economic downturn.

"Many of the students who were sent abroad in the 1990s have since returned home," said Shin Hyun-man, the president of CareerCare, a job placement company. "Despite their foreign diplomas, they were unable to find jobs abroad because of the global recession. But their Korean isn't good enough, and they don't adapt well to the corporate culture here."

Jimmy Y. Hong, a graduate of Middlesex University in London and now a marketing official at LG Electronics in Seoul, said that when he returned to South Korea in 2008, he enrolled in a business master's degree program at Yonsei University in Seoul to help compensate for his lack of local school connections, which can be critical to making friends, landing jobs and closing deals.

"I feared I might be ostracized for studying abroad," he said.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2010 A1, A14

IN A LAND OF THE AGING, CHILDREN COUNTER ALZHEIMER'S

BY PAM BELLUCK

At the Cheongsan nursing home in Seoul, high school students help patients with dementia by performing foot massage.

In a Land of the Aging, Children Counter Alzheimer's

By PAM BELLUCK

SEONGNAM, South Korea — They were stooped, hobbled, disoriented, tumbling around the house. They got confused in the bathtub and struggled up stairs that seemed to swim before them.

"Oh, it hurts," said Noh Hyun-ho, sinking to the ground.

"I thought I was going to die," said Yook Seo-hyun.

There was surprisingly little giggling, considering that Hyun-ho, Seo-hyun and the others were actually perfectly healthy 11- to 13-year-old children. But they had strapped on splints, weighted harnesses and fogged-up glasses, and were given tasks like "Deathbed Experience" and "Bathroom Experience," all to help them feel what it was like to be old, frail or demented.

"Even though they are smiling for us, every day, 24 hours, is difficult for them,"

THE VANISHING MIND
War on Dementia

Jeong Jae-hee, 81, said she learned. "They lose their memory and go back to childhood."

It is part of a remarkable South Korean campaign to cope with an exploding problem: Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. As one of the world's fastest-aging countries, with nearly 5 percent of its population over 65 already afflicted, South Korea has opened a "War on Dementia," spending money and shining floodlights on a disease that is, here as in many places, riddled with shame and fear.

South Korea is training thousands of people, including children, as "dementia supporters," to recognize symptoms and care for patients. The 11- to 13-year-olds, for instance, were in the government's "Aging-Friendly Comprehensive Experience Hall" outside Seoul. Besides the aging simulation exercises, they viewed a PowerPoint presentation defining dementia and were trained, in the hall's Dementia Experience Center, to perform hand massage or nursing lessons.

"What did I do with my phone? It's in the refrigerator," said one instructor, explaining memory loss. "Have you seen someone like that? They may go missing and die on the street."

In another striking move, South Korea is also pushing to make diagnoses early, despite there being scant treatment.

"This used to be hidden" and "there is still stigma and fear," said Kim Hye-jin, director of senior policy for the Health and Welfare Ministry. But "we want to get them out of their shells, out of their homes and diagnosed" to help families adjust and

Continued on Page A14

In a Land of the Aging, Children Help Ease the Bite of Alzheimer's

SEONGNAM, South Korea

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There was surprisingly little giggling, considering that Hyun-ho, Seo-hyun and the others were actually perfectly healthy 11- to 13-year-old children. But they had strapped on splints, weighted harnesses and fogged-up glasses, and were given tasks like "Doorknob Experience" and "Bathroom Experience," all to help them feel what it was like to be old, frail or demented.

"Even though they are smiling for us, every day, 24 hours, is difficult for them," Jeong Jae-hee, 12, said she learned. "They lose their memory and go back to childhood."

It is part of a remarkable South Korean campaign to cope with an exploding problem: Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. As one of the world's fastest-aging countries, with nearly 9 percent of its population over 65 already afflicted, South Korea has opened a "War on Dementia," spending money and shining floodlights on a disease that is, here as in many places, riddled with shame and fear.

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In another striking move, South Korea is also pushing to make diagnoses early, despite there being scant treatment.

"This used to be hidden" and "there is still stigma and bias," said Kim Hye-jin, director of senior policy for the Health and Welfare Ministry. But "we want to get them out of their shells, out of their homes and diagnosed" to help families adjust and give patients "a higher chance of being taken care of at home."

Hundreds of neighborhood dementia diagnostic centers have been created. Nursing homes have nearly tripled since 2008. Other dementia programs, providing day care and home care, have increased fivefold since 2008, to nearly 20,000. Care is heavily subsidized.

And a government dementia database allows families to register relatives and receive iron-on identification numbers. Citizens encountering wanderers with dementia report their numbers to officials, who contact families.

To finance this, South Korea created a long-term-care insurance system, paid for with 6.6 percent increases in people's national health insurance premiums. In 2009, about $1 billion of government and public insurance money was spent on dementia patients. Still, with the over-65 population jumping from 7 percent in 2000 to 14 percent in 2018 to 20 percent in 2026, dementia is straining the country, socially and economically.

"At least one family member has to give up work" to provide caregiving, said Kwak Young-soon, social welfare director for Mapo District, one of Seoul's 25 geographic districts. Because South Korea encourages people to work well past retirement age, families may also lose dementia sufferers' incomes.

Most families no longer have generations living together to help with caregiving, and some facilities have long waiting lists, but "we can't keep building nursing homes," Mr. Kwak said. "We call it a ghost. It's basically eating up the whole house."

Dementia Epidemic

South Korea is at the forefront of a worldwide eruption of dementia, from about 30 million estimated cases now to an estimated 100 million in 2050. And while South Korea's approach is unusually extensive, even in the United States, the National Alzheimer's Project Act was introduced this year to establish a separate Alzheimer's office to create "an integrated national plan to overcome Alzheimer's." Supporters of the bill, currently in committee, include Sandra Day O'Connor, whose late husband had Alzheimer's.

South Korea also worries that dementia, previously stigmatized as "ghost-seeing" or "one's second childhood" could "dilute respect for elders," Mr. Kwak said. "There's a saying that even the most filial son or daughter will not be filial if they look after a parent for more than three years."

So the authorities promote the notion that filial piety implies doing everything possible for elders with dementia, a condition now called chimae (pronounced chee-may): disease of knowledge and the brain which makes adults become babies. But South Korea's low birth rate will make family caregiving tougher.

"I feel as if a tsunami's coming," said Lee Sung-hee, the South Korean Alzheimer's Association president, who trains nursing home staff members, but also thousands who regularly interact with the elderly: bus drivers, tellers, hairstylists, postal workers. "Sometimes I think I want to run away," she said. "But even the highest mountain, just worrying does not move anything, but if you choose one area and move stone by stone, you pave a way to move the whole mountain."

South Korea is even trying to turn a crisis into a business opportunity. The Aging-Friendly hall, financed by the Ministry of Knowledge Economy, encourages businesses to enter "silver industries," producing items for feeble elderly people, from chopsticks that are easier to pick up to automated harnesses that hoist people from bed, sliding along a ceiling track, and deposit them onto toilets or living room couches.

College students visit the hall and don blue 3-D glasses for "Dementia Experience" video journeys following people disoriented on streets or seeking bathrooms.

Throughout South Korea, Mrs. Lee leads "dementia supporter" training, arguing against longtime practices of chastising or neglecting patients, and advocating for preserving their skills and self-esteem.

One tip: give demented relatives "a washing pan and washboard" and say, " 'The washing machine's terrible — we need your help' " washing clothes, she told 200 senior citizens interested in nursing home jobs or family caregiving advice. If patients say, " 'I'm good at making soy soup,' but forget ingredients," guide them step by step, she advised. Otherwise, "They may make it into salt soup, and everyone will say, 'Oh, this is terrible, you stop doing it.' "

Even the youngest are enlisted. Mr. Kwak, the local government official, arranges for nursery school classes to play games with nursing home patients, saying that it destigmatizes dementia and that patients who "regress to earlier days" may "find it easier to relate to young children."

And Dr. Yang Dong-won, who directs one of many government-run diagnostic centers in Seoul, has visited kindergartens, bringing tofu. "This is very soft, like the brain," he said, letting it crash down. Now, "the brain is destroyed."

"Dementia is very bad for you, so protect your brain," he said, with exercise, "not drinking too much sugar," and saying, " 'Daddy, don't drink so much because it's not good for dementia.' "

At a Dementia March outside the World Cup Soccer Stadium, children carried signs promoting Dr. Yang's Mapo district center: "Make the Brain Smile!" and "How is Your Memory? Free diagnosis center in Mapo."

The Mapo Center for Dementia perches at a busy crossroads of old and new, near a university and a shop selling naturopathic goat extracts. It has exercise machines out front and a van with pictures of smiling elderly people.

Even people without symptoms come, Dr. Yang said. They are "eased by hearing, 'You do not have dementia and can visit two years later.' "

Cha Kyong-ho's family was wary of getting him tested. "Dementia was a subject to hide," said his daughter, Cha Jeong-eun. "I worried his pride would be hurt going through this kindergarten experience."

But when "my mother asked him to get ingredients for curry rice, he came back with mayonnaise," she said. And one day, Mr. Cha, 74, a retired subway official, could not find his way home. "I was like, 'Where the hell am I?' " he said.

Ultimately, he visited Mapo's center, finding the testing challenging.

"Sometimes I don't remember what I read, or I can see it with my eyes and my brain is processing it, but I cannot say it out loud," he said about the questions. "How can my brilliant brain remember everything? Jeez, it's so headachy."

Checking his ability to categorize items, Dr. Yang asked, "What do you call dog and tiger?"

"I call them dog and tiger."

"Pencil and brush?"

"Oh, there's a word for that."

"Airplane and train?"

"I feel embarrassed I don't know."

"You have a lot of loss of memory," Dr. Yang said. "This is the very beginning stages of Alzheimer's disease."

He suggested that Mr. Cha get a government-subsidized brain M.R.I. to confirm the diagnosis, and said drugs might delay symptoms slightly. He recommended Mapo's free programs "to stimulate what brain cells he has." These include rooftop garden "floral therapy," art classes making realistic representations of everyday objects, music therapy with bongos sounding "like a heartbeat."

Mr. Cha sighed.

"I think," he said, gesturing toward his brain, "that something's wrong with this, just a little bit."

Students as Helpers

Schools offer community service credit, encouraging work with dementia patients, whom students call grandmas and grandpas. Teenage girls do foot massage at the Cheongam nursing home, which is run by Mrs. Lee, the Alzheimer's Association president, for women without sons to care for them. (In South Korea, sons' families traditionally shoulder caregiving responsibilities.) During one massage session, 16-year-old Oh Yu-mi rubbed a patient's toes, saying: "I'm doing the heart. The heel is the reproductive system. It will help them excrete better."

Another girl doing foot massage, Park Min-jung, 17, was shaken to realize that dementia could explain why her grandfather recently grabbed a taxi and circled his old neighborhood seeking his no-longer-existent house. "He used to be very scary to me," she said, but training made her feel that "I can do things for him."

A patient wept as the girls left, upsetting 16-year-old Kim Min-joon, the massage group's leader. She said social workers suggested being less effusive to patients, so the girls' leaving would be less traumatic: "If there is love or affection of 100 grams, cut it up into 1 gram each" and distribute it over "100 visits, not all at once." But "I'm not good at controlling that," Min-joon said. Even at school, "The feeling of their touch remains with me."

A boys' high school selects top students to help at Seobu Nursing Center, doing art therapy and attempting physical therapy with dances and "balloon badminton" (the racket is pantyhose stretched on a frame). The boys write observations to help Seobu adjust programs.

At school, they wrote questions on the blackboard: "Problems and solutions of communicating with the elderly. Ways to improve and execute exercise routine. How to make sure we're all on time."

"They don't comprehend my words," said Kim Su-hwan, 16.

"Maybe we should get closer to their ears," suggested Kim Jae-kyeum.

Maybe "some of us could massage them," said Su-hwan. "You do that, Su-hwan," snickered Jae-kyeum.

"Smile at them more," another student said. "Some of us look like we don't want to do this."

For Kim Han-bit, 16, the program is intensely personal. Han-bit was 13 when his grandmother, who practically raised him, got Alzheimer's, and "I would just feel it was annoying and walk out of the room," he said. "She would ask to do an activity, and I would say, 'What business do you have doing that?' It was my responsibility to feed her, give her drinks, wash her face. But I even resisted and fought back," he said. When she died, he added, "I couldn't let out tears."

The dementia caregiving program had made him "wonder why I wasn't able to do that with my own grandma, and I think I should do better in the future to compensate for all my wrongdoing," he said. "I could have taken care of my grandmother with a grateful feeling. If only I could have."

Recently, he worked to engage Lee Jeong-hee, a patient half his height with missing teeth who laughed, but spoke incoherently.

"When I come next time," he said tenderly, "please remember me."

Su-Hyun Lee contributed reporting from Seoul, South Korea.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: November 25, 2010

An earlier version of a photo caption with this article misidentified the location where a student was bowing in a hallway. The photo was at the Seobu Nursing Center, not the Mapo Center for Dementia in Seoul.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2010 *A32*

AS KOREANS POUR IN, A TOWN IS REMADE

BY RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA

PALISADES PARK, N.J.

Two decades ago, the police here sometimes roused Jason Kim in the wee hours, but not because he was in trouble. There were few Koreans in town, and few of them spoke English, so whenever one was arrested, the police needed Mr. Kim to translate the Miranda warning.

It is hard to imagine such a scene today, as Mr. Kim, now an elected borough councilman, strolls along Broad Avenue, this town's bustling commercial spine, past storefront signs that are mostly in Korean, chatting in Korean and English with business owners and shoppers. A generation of Korean-Americans has grown up here, many people switch readily between languages, and the police force has three Korean-American officers.

Since the 1980s, the towns of eastern Bergen County — Edgewater, Englewood Cliffs, Leonia, Fort Lee and others — seem to have exerted a magnetic pull on Asian immigrants, particularly Koreans. But none more so than Palisades Park, whose population is now 54 percent Asian-American and 44 percent Korean-American, the Census Bureau reported this week.

Major population centers like Queens and Los Angeles have more Koreans, but Palisades Park, with fewer than 20,000 people, is, proportionally, the most heavily Korean municipality in the country, according to Pyong Gap Min, a distinguished professor of sociology at Queens College.

A striking 66 percent of the town's population is foreign-born, including many Guatemalans and smaller numbers from several other countries.

Palisades Park Journal

As Koreans Pour In, A Town Is Remade

A transformation that has not been trouble-free.

The Korean presence is growing fast; the 2000 census found that 31 percent of Palisades Park residents were Korean-American. The 44 percent figure came from surveys taken from 2005 to 2009, and local Korean leaders predict that the figure will be higher when 2010 census numbers are released next year.

"When I came here, only two stores were Korean; there were no Korean churches," said Mr. Kim, 54, who teaches math and computer science at Bronx Community College and also has a business preparing students to take the SAT. "It is hard to believe how much it has changed."

Palisades Park has not endured the kind of violent clashes that sometimes accompany ethnic transitions, but neither has its transformation been trouble-free.

Andy Nam recalled that after he opened Grand Furniture on Broad Avenue in 1989, "We had some young kids, troublemakers, who broke the windows, write 'Go home kimchi,' that kind of thing."

Korean restaurants and bars fought for years — unsuccessfully — for permission to stay open around the clock. White residents complained of shops that had signs only in Korean, until nearly all the new merchants voluntarily added English translations.

The first-generation Korean-Americans faced a huge language barrier. For years, they relied heavily on people like Mr. Nam, now 70, who spoke English, and on those like Mr. Kim who called themselves generation 1.5 — born in South Korea, but educated here.

Until the 1980s, the town was overwhelmingly white, a mix of blue-collar workers and professionals whose families had come predominantly from Italy, Croatia, Germany and Greece. Its houses were inexpensive, and it had a number of vacant shops and offices.

A pattern had started to emerge by then, of Asian immigrants moving from New York City to Bergen County. They were drawn by the area's relative safety and highly regarded schools, and by its proximity to the George Washington Bridge, for commuting to jobs in the city.

"At first everybody went to Fort Lee, but I couldn't afford Fort Lee," said Mr. Kim, who moved from South Korea to the Bronx as a teenager, then to Palisades Park in 1986. "The real estate agents told people to try Palisades Park."

The influx made the town more prosperous, as Korean businesses moved in, renovating buildings and erecting new ones. But for the old-timers, it made the place alien, and property more expensive. Today, 39 percent of the population is white, but few businesses are white-owned.

"In the beginning, some of the old businesses shut down because the Koreans would not patronize them," said George Mahsoud, whose family has run a shoe-repair shop here for 35 years. "You really had to make an effort — like I put a Korean sign in the window and I smiled and talked to them. Koreans are all about reputation — they have to hear good things about you from their friends, and that took awhile."

Two white women emerging from a bank, who asked not to be named for fear of offending their newer neighbors, said they lived in Palisades Park, but shopped elsewhere. The Korean shops cater mostly to Koreans, they said — a fact that used to bother them, but that now just peacefully propels them elsewhere.

The Koreans' numbers have been slow to translate into clout; only about one-quarter of the voters are Korean. Mr. Kim was the first Asian-American elected to a seat on the school board, in 1995 — his third try — and the first to win a seat on the council, in 2004. A second Korean immigrant, Jong Chul Lee, was elected to the council last year, and two others sit on the school board.

"I knew from the start I couldn't win with just Korean votes," Mr. Kim said. "I still can't. We have to work with everybody."

LOST IN TRANSIT

BY MYTHILI G. RAO


Lost in Transit

In Kyung-sook Shin's novel, family members suffer guilt and regret when their matriarch goes missing in a Seoul subway station.

BY MYTHILI G. RAO

"PLEASE Look After Mom," by the South Korean writer Kyung-sook Shin, opens with a family in disarray. Mom is missing, separated from Father by the closing doors of a subway car in a busy train station in Seoul. A day, a week, then nearly a month goes by. Mom's husband and adult children are not only worried, but crippled with guilt and regret, fumbling "in confusion, as if they had all injured a part of their brains." Are you punishing me? each privately wonders.

The eldest daughter, Chi-hon, is the writer of her family, and she is persuaded to draft the missing-person fliers. "Appearance: Short, salt-and-pepper permed hair, prominent cheekbones," she writes, "last seen wearing a sky-blue shirt, a white jacket and a beige pleated skirt." When Chi-hon thinks back on the Mom of her childhood, she sees a woman who "strode through the sea of people in a way that would intimidate even the authoritative buildings looking on from above." The strangers who respond to her ads paint a different picture: "They saw an old woman walking very slowly, sometimes sitting . . . or standing vacantly." Could it be the same woman?

Shin's novel, her first to be translated into English, embraces multiplicity. It is told from the perspectives of four members of the family, and from their memories emerges a portrait of a heroically selfless and industrious woman. She runs their rural home "like a factory." She sews and knits and tills the fields, and raises puppies, piglets, ducklings and chickens. The family is poor, but she sees to it that her children's bellies are filled, their tuition fees paid.

Only after her children grow up and leave their home in Chongup does Mom's strength and purposefulness begin to flag. When Chi-hon visits unannounced, she finds the house in shambles and Mom suffering private anguish. The daughter is stunned: "Mom got headaches? So severe that she couldn't even cry?" These are some of the many questions that punctuate her narrative and lead to a cascade of revelations. Mom's debilitating headaches are the byproduct of a stroke she told no one about. Other discoveries come gradually. After one of Chi-hon's older brothers leaves the village for Seoul, she is responsible for writing letters to him, dictated by Mom. For years, Chi-hon assumes this is just an additional chore. The reality is revealed in another question she asks of herself: "When was it you realized that Mom didn't know how to read?"

Shin's prose, intimate and hauntingly spare in this translation by Chi-Young Kim, moves from first to second and third person, and powerfully conveys grief's bewildering immediacy. Chi-hon's voice is the novel's most distinct, but Father's is the most devastating. Returning to the house in Chongup, he is "bludgeoned" with Mom's absence as he realizes that he never fully appreciated her, this "steadfast tree" at the center of his life — and that all this time he had been in denial over her health's deterioration.

"The word 'Mom' is familiar," Chi-hon observes, "and it hides a plea: Please look after me." Passages of the novel may cause the grown children among Shin's readers to cringe. ("You were the one who always hung up first," Chi-hon mournfully remembers of her own behavior. "You would say, 'Mom, I'll call you back,' and then you didn't.") And yet this book isn't as interested in emotional manipulation as it is in the invisible chasms that open up between people who know one another best. Who is the missing woman? In this raw tribute to the mysteries of motherhood, only Mom knows.

Mythili G. Rao has written for The New York Observer, Words Without Borders and Boston Review.

THE LIST OF 2010

The New York Times articles on Korean Culture

This is the complete list of The New York Times articles on Korean Culture in 2010 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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THE LIST OF 2011

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KOREAN CULTURAL SERVICE

NEW YORK

Korean Cultural Service New York is a branch of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Korea. Since our inauguration in December 1979 under the authority of the Korean Consulate General in New York, we have worked to promote cultural exchange and stimulate interest in Korean culture through our cultural programs, exhibitions, movies and events.

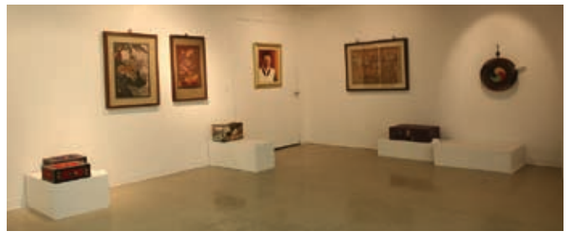
www.koreanculture.org

460 Park Avenue, 6th Floor New York, NY 10022
T: 212. 759. 9550 / F: 212. 688. 8640
E: info@koreanculture.org, nykocus@koreanculture.org

한국문화원
KOREAN CULTURAL SERVICE NY

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.

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.

SPOTLIGHT KOREA

The Korean Cultural Service NY along with Lotus Music and Dance are promoting Spotlight Korea, an educational program which sends one to four Korean traditional dancers or musicians, to K-12 New York City public schools in order to teach and perform Korean music and dance.

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Korea is becoming an increasingly familiar place for Americans, but Korea is no longer a place "over there," exotic and strange. It is becoming increasingly part of the American cultural fabric, a place as familiar to the readers of the Times as the restaurant down the block. At this point, it may no longer be useful to describe the Korean cultural impact as a "wave." Korean culture is now a major tributary of the American mainstream.

Charles K. Armstrong
Professor of History
Director, Center for Korean Research
Columbia University

Korean Cultural Service New York