

## Perspective Strikes Back

Hyunjin Kim

*The Perspective Strikes Back* exhibition reconstitutes the modern, contemporary scene through the eye of others inside our society, critically reconsidering the developer growth myth that has continued in Korean society until today. The curation was inspired by artist Minouk Lim's SOS performance, which helped rediscover the constructed landscape on the banks of the Han River and the modern version of vanities, as well as Okwui Enwezor's notion of andromodernity defining the developmental modernity of East Asian countries.

The history of Korean-style development, often referred to as 'the Miracle on the Han River,' constitutes the strong foundations of the current mainstream of Korean society. According to curator Okwui Enwezor, in his article *Modernity and Postcolonial Ambivalence* (Altermodern catalog, Tate, London 2009), Korean modernization is a typical example of developing modernity through adoption of the Western model of modernization (*supermodernity*), which is considered as the sole category of the developed and advanced. He designates this developing modernity as *andromodernity*, meaning a hybrid form of modernity, found especially in countries like China, India and South Korea. Such modernity is achieved through a kind of accelerated development, while also devising alternative models of development. It is understood to embody very masculine traits, since its principal emphasis is on development or modernization. In most East Asian countries, it has been reinforced through the incorporation of the deep-rooted patriarchal tradition. Thus, it is obviously noted that the main discourse of the state is quite centered on heterosexuality, masculism, and familism.

With the desire of the Faustian or pseudo-Faustian developer, the society is rushing from the condensed growth model of the past to today's 'Green Growth' plan, a more evolved form. It is simultaneously and constantly reproducing various invisible beings who have been drifted from the developer's propulsive force. The exhibition pays attention to certain kinds of social derelicts or undoers who are not operating the masculine narrative of the state, attempting to reinterpret their struggles as new possibility. It not only aims to report the problems of the present national situation under the new Korean government, but also deals with the marginalized narratives that constantly deviate from those of the solid Korean mainstream epic. In particular, by applying feminist perspectives to these issues, it explores the complex constitution of gender inside the society and the ramifications of its representations, showing the perspectives of younger generation women who try to re-establish themselves out of patriarchal conflicts or all kinds of violence.

First, Minouk Lim's film entitled *SOS-Adoptive Dissensus* (2009) documented the performance to take a cruise down the Han River in March, 2009, disclosing social issues in Korea including *Pal-Sib-*

*Pal-Man-Won-Se-Dae* (meaning 880-thousand-won generation which refers the income of 20s in current Korean society) and *Bi-Jeon-Hyang-Jang-Ki-Soo* (unconverted political prisoners) over the landscape of another construction project called “Han River Renaissance.” Through this 44-minute long single-channel video, the audience will follow the captain’s announcement and finally come to find the three different beings on the river bank: young people who are demonstrating, reflecting the light with mirrors, unsettled young lovers who are running along the bank of Nodeul Island, uncertain where to go, and the long-term political prisoners who are victims of the binary ‘security’ discourse under the North-South ideological conflict as in the cold war. In this way, we encounter not only contemporary scenes produced by modern Korea but also the vanitas of the growth myth in the flickering lights of the row of apartments by the riverside, recognizing that this persistent desire of developmental growth nevertheless reappears endlessly with changed faces.

Artist siren eun young jung’s three video works, *The Masquerading Moments* (2009), *The Unexpected Response* (2009) and *The Rehearsal* (2009) feature the female performers of *Yeosung gukgeuk* (women’s Korean musical) who play male characters. *Yeosung gukgeuk* started in the late 1940s as a new type of *Changgeuk* (Korean traditional musical). Although the strong popularity it enjoyed during the 50s and 60s has faded away nowadays, this special kind of play still possesses a very singular quality of subversiveness and queerness in that it is performed only by female actors who cover characters of all different ages as well as both genders (male/female). The artist took their bodily gestures, found both on and off stage – that is, their performances, observing their equivocal, complicated gender representations. By capturing the irony whereby these actresses actively embody and appropriate the Korean modern masculinity – such as typical Korean macho men’s behaviours –, the artist corroborates that modernity is still on the progress through more complexity of gender representation and its complicated performances of identity formation.

Ikjung Cho presents the film, *Four Refrigerator* (2009), saying in an aside about her troubles with the men closest to her- for example, a patriarchal conflict with her father and an estrangement between her boyfriend and herself due to the class gap and the man’s complex. The second video by Cho, *Room for Two* (2009), is a fictional documentary that tells a story about a woman involved in an uncomfortable and awkward relationship with an old man living alone for the purpose of finding a place where she would be able to spend time together with her financially inadequate boyfriend. Both of these show the weird and subtle relationship in which a young woman has to negotiate with different men in different positions in the social hierarchy, class level and generational strata, in order to obtain her own place and status.

Hyangro Yoon's drawings like *The SECRET Series* (2008) and *Criminal Lovers* (2008), infused in a delicate and strange atmosphere, suggest the suppression imposed on and experienced by women in and outside the home, or sexual harassment to which children and women are exposed. Through the process of appropriating images from various kinds of old design books and modifying them, the artist moderates the expressive nature of drawing and creates some sense of distance and objectivity. This cold neutralization of images objectifies an individual's particular experience or trauma, extending it to the social level. It also persuades the audience to recognize how intensively the violence in social units such as school and home is internalized.

Part-time Suite, who rent vacant spaces in urban areas for a month and create their own creative spaces, take a contrarian's approach and fling off the passive resignation that younger artists can enter the art world only by being selected. They not only constantly look for and entirely occupy urban transitory spaces but also present the language of the new generation through their lyrical and beautiful installations and performances. After their two projects during the past six months, *Under Interior* (in the basement of a building in Ahyeon-dong, Seoul) and *off-off-stage* (in an unoccupied plot hidden near Gwanghwamun), they are going to show their third space and project, *Loop the Loop*: viewers should leave from Doosan Gallery with maps in their hands and go to Part-time Suite's space in the roof of an old building nearby. Since Doosan gallery is located in Jongro 5th, very traditional market area of center of Seoul, you can view the landscape of Korean urban construction from 60s to today. PTS's poetically performs on the edge of the rooftop, interfering into the grand development's landscape of this area. This group of artists is converting the feeble position of youths drifting away, feeling stunned and bewildered by the possibility of creative life, and in this very sense, they are revealing a hope in own world.

The works of this exhibition disclose the reflective areas which can be drawn out of the drifting lives in society, and give an opportunity to consider the ambivalent and contradictory attributes of contemporary modernity that is still under formation through the tensions of different regional conditions in our global era. They also achieve an interesting complexity of gender formation that sublates the traditional gender hierarchy influenced by the domestic civil progress. Accordingly, this exhibition attempts to shed light on how the present of our society will be able to be reorganized and what complex process of modernity or contemporaneity found in the manifestation of the now-invisible subjects are undergoing. And what is required now is the search for ways to counterattack and reverse the 'possible presents', that is, a 'future to come' for us by discovering the many-sided beings. The position of excluded individuals and their different viewpoints strike back to the recently rebooting monotonous legacy of "development and growth." Now we meet the hidden adversaries who produce antagonistic narratives against the monstrosity of our society. The value of inoperativeness resonates here, while irregular perspectives reconstitute another modernity to come.