

**The Making of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art
(MMCA), South Korea, 1969-2016**

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This thesis investigates the dynamics, debates, and contexts of the making of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in South Korea (MMCA). An interdisciplinary history, it examines and deconstructs particular episodes, events, and relationships. This thesis interrogates the dialogues of internal and external agents that drove change, influenced developments, and negotiated the form and operation of the museum against a background of socio-political change.

The thesis illuminates several interrelated factors, such as trends in art production, national political change, policy development, and so on, revealing an institution shaped by its system, constant negotiation, and dynamic change. Rather than pursuing a linear developmental path of the kind commonly used to describe the histories of the world's great museums, the museum reveals a complex and, at times, disjointed narrative that shows an institution adapting to the rapid political development of South Korea. As such, the thesis sheds light on the contexts and associated agents that repeatedly configured and reconfigured its identity, practices, norms, and discourses.

Since the opening of the museum in 1969, there have been a number of scholarly debates that provide a chronological history of its 'troubled' identity. Instead of pursuing a biography, this thesis adopts an interpretive lens to probe more deeply into the history of the museum. Drawing upon historiographic and ethnographic research methods, this thesis contends that the museum has been an active art institution which moves and interacts dynamically with the society rather than situates itself as a remote, static, and bureaucratic system.

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List of Abbreviations

ARKO	Arts Council Korea
CAPA	Culture and Arts Promotion Acts
CE	Chief Executive
CPIC	Central Public Information Centre
DAA	Daehan Art Association
DPAM	Deoksu Palace Art Museum
DSC	Defence Security Command
FOA	Foreign Operations Administration
FR	Fulton Report
GAA	General Administrative Agencies
GDM	Gwangju Democratisation Movement
GIA	Government Information Agency
GOA	Government Organisation Act
GPAF	Gwangju Painters Association for Freedom
HAA	Hanguk Artists Association
HYAA	Hyundae Artists Association
ICA	International Cooperative Administration
KAPA	Korean Association for Public Administration
KCAF	Korean Culture and Arts Foundation

KCIA	Korean Central Intelligence Agency
KCTI	Korea Culture and Tourism Institute
KEA	Korean Executive Agency
KFAA	Korean Fine Arts Association
KPAA	Korean People’s Artists Association
MCAM	Minjoong Culture and Arts Movement
MCE	Ministry of Culture and Education
MCPI	Ministry of Culture and Public Information
MCS	Ministry of Culture and Sports
MCST	Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism
MCT	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
ME	Ministry of Education
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFE	Ministry of Finance and Economy
MIC	Ministry of Information and Communication
MMCA	National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea
MOC	Ministry of Culture
MOGAHA	Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs
MOI	Ministry of the Interior
MOIS	Ministry of the Interior and Safety
MOPAS	Ministry of Public Administration and Security

MOSPA	Ministry of Security and Public Administration
MPB	Ministry of Planning and Budget
MPI	Ministry of Public Information
NAA	National Academy of Arts
NAE	National Art Exhibition
NAROK	National Assembly of the Republic of Korea
NDPB	Non-Departmental Public Bodies
NMK	National Museum of Korea
NMMA	National Museum of Modern Art, Korea
NMCA	National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea
NPM	New Public Management
NSP	Next Steps Programme
NTOK	National Theatre of Korea
NVM	New Village Movement
PCMC	Promotion Committee of Museum Construction
SMG	Seoul Metropolitan Government
SNUP	Seoul National University Plan
TMAM	Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum
USAMGIK	United States Army Military Government in Korea
USIA	United States Information Agency
USIS	United States Information Service

Introduction

As to the definition of a ‘national gallery’, it might be understood as an institution meeting some or all of the following criteria: holding and exhibiting all or part of the national collection of fine art; established by an act of parliament or government decree; funded at least in part by the national government; possessing a professional staff employed by the state; situated in government bureaucracy and delivering in policy areas in the arts; and designated or referred to as a national museum or gallery. In these areas, no national gallery is static: legal status, funding arrangements, bureaucratic positioning, relationships to other institutions, employment status, mission, and so on, change over time. [...]

Simon Knell, *National Galleries: The Art of Making Nations*, 2016¹

As Knell points out, a national gallery, referred to as a national art museum in some cases, has changed over time responsive to socio-political conditions, cultural and contextual variations. If the word ‘national’ implies multiple geopolitical and psychological contexts and sensibilities that relate to the memories and negotiations of the public, the definition of a national art museum (or gallery) exists in nebulous, fluid, and mutating manifestations of museum practice which are driven by changing social circumstances, mechanisms, and values. In this vein, a national art museum is no mere store or exhibition space for artworks that represent the indigenous artistic identity of a nation. Rather, it is, or has the potential to be, a socially-built structure, constituted through social relations, and providing a powerful visual language through which particular social groups build their identity.² In contrast to those national art museums concerned with the historic canon, contemporary art museums negotiate the indefinite principles and contexts accepted by

¹ Knell (2016: 9).

² MacLeod (2013: 7).

such agents as art critics, academics, curators, and the public.³

This thesis examines the ‘making’ of a single museum: the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA) (Figure 1). This is the only national *art* museum in South Korea.⁴ The museum has only one Korean name ‘국립현대미술관’ (國立現代美術館), but has changed its English name three times as the terms ‘modern’ and ‘contemporary’ fell in and out of favour.⁵ The research here examines how the museum was constructed and subject to the changing ideas of particular agents and different political contexts that prevailed between 1969 and 2016.

For South Koreans, after the Korean War (1950-1953), revitalising the domestic economy was the most crucial issue. The war destroyed nearly everything including infrastructure in the arts and cultural sectors. The country then became embroiled in a period of political strife as military generals held onto power from the early 1960s. The museum opened in the back garden of the Gyeongbok Palace (경복궁, 景福宮) in 1969. However, the museum could not then be considered a typical or fully formed national art museum. Its main purpose was to hold the annual National Art Exhibition (NAE, 대한민국미술전람회). The MMCA’s subsequent development reflects the country’s political and economic transformation. The story that unfolds through historical analysis reveals an institution that is remarkably different from those documented in the West, which seem to establish an almost unchanging core mission and mode of operation on the day of their establishment.

Previous studies have rarely applied microscopic deconstruction to the museum adopted here. Many do not make connections to the influence of external agents, and thus fail to show how those

³ Knell (2016: 11).

⁴ According to statistics in 2016, there are 41 national museums (40 museums and 1 art museum) in South Korea. The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea has been designated as the sole national art museum in South Korea. See the webpage: The MCST (Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, 문화체육관광부) (7 October 2016).

⁵ The museum changed its English name as follows: The National Museum of Modern Art, Korea (NMMA, 1969-1986), The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea (NMCA, 1986-2013), and The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA, 2013-).

agents have inextricably contributed to the museum's making.



**Figure 1 The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea in Seoul (since 12 November 2013).
By kind permission of and © Nam Goong-Sun.**

Drawing upon a lens that is situated in art history and theory, the museum has caused Korean artists to experiment with diverse artistic and philosophical themes. During the period when the NAE supported conservative and old-fashioned artistic styles of academicism and prevented artists from displaying new visual representation techniques, the museum subsequently accepted Korean abstract art and *Informel* art, regarding them as revolutionary art trends. In order to express young artists' oppressed artistic desires, a group of artists tried experimental art styles, outside of the museum, and fought against the military regime and the conservative Korean art circle. Chapter Two addresses this issue in detail. Specifically, artists were eager to have an 'official' space that embraces liberal artistic expression. Not only cultural impact from the West, but also their self-reflective artistic gestures stimulated a process of rejuvenation in the national museum.

This introductory chapter provides a brief overview of how the core thesis argument has been constructed. Following an outline of the origins and rationale behind the research, the research questions, aim, and objectives are introduced in turn. These are followed by research design, which explores the theoretical framework and methodology. The final section then ends with introducing the thesis structure and key thesis argument.

The origins of and rationale behind the research

I have had a longheld interest in the issues surrounding the MMCA since the 2009 decision to establish a new museum building – effectively the organisation's flagship museum – in Seoul. It was an epoch-making event, which created considerable public debate (the museum had been located in the city from 1969 to 1986 but only in rented accommodation). Ostensibly, the plan was seen as building an entirely new national art museum in the capital. Since 1996, influential figures in arts community petitioned for the establishment of this symbolic landmark for the arts.⁶ They proposed using the site formerly occupied by the Defence Security Command (기무사, 機務司, DSC)

⁶ Kim Gap-Su (January 2006); KCTI (2009: 43-45 (44)).

(Figure 2). This gave the plan the practicality (the site was centrally located and accessible) and huge political significance: the DSC had been an emblem of the military government, and the site, in the Sogyeok-dong (소격동, 昭格洞) neighbourhood, is very close to Cheongwadae (청와대, 靑瓦臺), the presidential residence, and the Gyeongbok Palace, a symbol of the Joseon Dynasty (朝鮮王朝).



Figure 2 The MMCA, Seoul (left) and DSC (right). By kind permission of and © Nam Goong-Sun.

Although a dictatorial government has not existed in South Korea since the 1990s, the leverage of the DSC could not be easily displaced on account of its political significance. The DSC was the monitoring organisation that came to prominence following a North Korean attempt to assassinate president Park Jung-Hee in 1968 due to his strong anti-communist policies. The aftershocks of this

incident triggered greater efforts to protect the president's safety. Because the DSC contributed to ensuring both national and social stability, presidents from the 1960s to 1980s empowered the DSC to hold opponents in check. The DSC was located near the presidential residences for this purpose and thus proved difficult to move. The DSC was a symbolic representation of the political ideology that had once dominated the entire nation. After the relocation of the museum from Gwacheon to Seoul was decided upon, the National Defence Ministry (국방부) agreed to sell the land, which the DSC possessed, so that the government could commission a cluster of buildings to form a cultural centre on the site. For a while, associated agents in arts communities regarded this successful acquisition of the site and its subsequent development as a triumph of the academic world over the political one.

In 2008, a transfer plan was announced that moved the DSC from Seoul to Gwacheon. It was such a monumental moment that signified the weakening of DSC. Extreme political tensions associated with the legacy of the 'old days' began to diminish. When the museum finally moved from Gwacheon to Seoul, it was regarded as 'power succumbing to a cultural movement'. Setting aside the issue of the Japanese colonial government, which established a national museum in Seoul in 1915, the museum history of South Korea has been pervaded with political ideology from its beginning. It was this latest political episode that inspired me to prepare a proposal for the PhD thesis between 2012 and 2013. The museum has long been of particular concern both for me and the wider Korean museum studies sector. Although my interests in 2013 were very much with the contemporary situation of the museum, I came to realise that this situation could only be fully understood through the writing of a high-resolution history of its development.

The museum, however, remains concerned about how corporatisation and profit orientation might distort its arts mission. The museum wished to be an independent body, but in reality, long-established traditions of government management had been imprinted on it, making it a museum difficult to rejuvenate. In some respects, the museum has been subject to a 'tug of war' between the government and the arts community.⁷

⁷ Walker discusses a similar struggle in Washington D.C.. He focuses on institutional development of the Smithsonian

Ultimately, the motive for this research was twofold: as an ethnographic study, it interrogated the traditional interpretations of the museum to discover discursive complexity and the complicated nature of dynamics from the observer (or outsider) perspective. This process helped greatly in understanding how the museum was established, inherited, normalised, and invented its practices. The museum has more recently rebranded itself as a vibrant ‘laboratory’, which uses politics as a stimulant of negotiation.

This research also investigates the museum as a ‘constructed world’ through social relations.⁸ It signifies that the museum was never a value-free location. As Whitehead points out, interpreting art is not just the explanation, but rather a crucial political activity.⁹ Since national art museums (or galleries) are not regarded merely as object stores, the museum positioned itself as a place for sharing public memories, creating social connections with the visitors, and exchanging feedback about art and socio-political trends.¹⁰

Research questions, aim, and objectives

This thesis explores the following research question:

In terms of dialogues between internal and external agents, how has the MMCA been shaped and influenced throughout its history?

that has wrestled with political tensions between its associated institutions, ideologies, and discourses. His approach is relevant to the situation of what the MMCA has experienced since its opening in 1969. Walker (2013: 9).

⁸ Fairclough (2010: 4-5).

⁹ Whitehead (2012: xvi).

¹⁰ McIntyre and Wehner (eds) (2001: 3).

This research question fundamentally interrogates and extends the pre-existing interpretation of ‘museum making’ based upon historical and socio-political contexts; it aims to deconstruct the nebulous complexity of the museum. Unlike previous studies that have analysed the museum as an emblem of ‘troubled’ identity, this thesis sees the museum as an active ‘laboratory’ which develops through interactions with internal and external agents. It does not view the MMCA as a remote, static, or bureaucratic system.

The museum has generated doubts and curiosities for the researchers and critics in both art history and museum studies fields. They concentrated on the issue of the museum’s institutional partly-formed identity which has limited the possibilities of investigating its concealed narratives and contexts. In this respect, researchers have mostly criticised the museum’s low standards, political involvement and lack of expertise in modern and contemporary art. This critical approach has overemphasised its troubled history. This thesis seeks to resolve the puzzle of the museum’s disconnected history, which is owed both to scholarly lacunae and critical bias.

The primary *aim* of this thesis, therefore, has been to trace a ‘critical’ history of the museum rather than pursue a simple institutional biography. In terms of specifying the term, ‘critical history’, it implies that this research probes a specific socio-cultural system based upon the ethnographer’s viewpoint.¹¹ Hence, a micro-level of study, in close-up view, has been conducted to situate the art museum as a small social unit.¹² The museum then no longer exists as a mere place of continuing traditional museum activities or conveying artistic sentiments for the museumgoers. This approach provides an appropriate lens to probe the dynamics, negotiations, and discourses that are embedded ‘inside’ the museum by an ‘outside’ observer.¹³ This research explores how the museum works towards the construction of a vibrant entity that consists of selected elements, situated within wider

¹¹ Fetterman (2010 [1989]: 29).

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Latour and Woolgar (1979: 12).

socio-political and cultural contexts.

Each theme covers a specific historical aspect of the museum development: how a *negotiation* process was carried out to establish and relocate the museum; how Korean artists were influenced by a newly introduced *art movement*; *political climates* that formed the social context of making the museum; the *administrative factors* that drove the museum to the status of an ‘executive agency’ (책임운영기관). These highlighted phrases in italics are the core elements to interpret how the museum was constructed and how changing trends in internal and external factors related to the museum are concerned with its history of struggle. Consequently, these elements were transformed into the following subsidiary questions or objectives:

1. What socio-political dynamics drove changes and motivated negotiations within the MMCA?
2. During the developmental period of the museum, what intended purposes did internal or external agents have in controlling the museum and to what extent did these impede the realisation of a future-oriented institution?
3. How have practices at the MMCA become established and inherited, and in what circumstances is the museum called upon to innovate?
4. In what ways does the re-imagining of the museum as an executive agency permit the institution to better face up to the present and future?
5. What are the public’s expectations of the museum ‘now’, how should the museum go about acquiring a new relationship with its potential audience, and how has this affected the institution’s mission statement and operational strategy to achieve its autonomy?

Research design

Interdisciplinarity is not the calm of an easy security; it begins *effectively* (as opposed to the mere expression of a pious wish) when the solidarity of the old disciplines breaks down [...]¹⁴

This research is interdisciplinary in nature. Specifically, it draws upon both historiographical and ethnographical methods, combined with a diverse range of different academic methods - art history, aesthetics, politics, management, and public administration - which were applied to unpack the dynamics and contexts related to the museum. This thesis therefore crosses over different academic disciplines and does not focus on a single theory or framework. Compared to previous studies of this museum, it seeks to probe the museum in a multifaceted way.

Andrew Barry and Georgina Born, a social theorist and anthropologist respectively, explain three modes of interdisciplinarity.¹⁵ They locate three modes of interdisciplinary engagement practice ‘integrative-synthesis’, ‘subordination-service’, and ‘agonistic-antagonistic’.¹⁶ If this research recognises interdisciplinarity not only as a synthesis of different disciplinary approaches, it selects and integrates elements from all three modes. Even though there is no particular mode to this thesis, the ‘agonistic-antagonistic’ mode is the most preferred fit for the research framework due to its characteristic of problematising in response to existing facts, assumptions, or knowledge which may be revealed as unreliable.

Barry and Born describe the ‘agonistic-antagonistic’ mode as ‘interdisciplinarity springs from a self-conscious dialogue with, criticism of or opposition to the limits of established disciplines, or the status of academic research or instrumental knowledge production’;¹⁷ it is precisely this

¹⁴ Barthes (1977: 155).

¹⁵ Barry and Born (eds) (2013: 10-13).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, (2013: 12).

perspective that drove this research into the MMCA. This research then focuses on a way of interpreting and deconstructing the museum not only to produce its critical history but also to avoid pre-existing assumptions and descriptions. Previous studies have concentrated chiefly on either the MMCA's obscure development or how political narratives present it as an ideological figurehead. These studies have been driven by a single and linear framework and tended to generalise academic trends in museum studies. This thesis illuminates and contests the established logics or narratives that relate to this museum. It challenges what has been seen as a fixed history.

As Kumar describes, a research design is 'a procedural plan that is adopted by the researcher to answer questions validly, objectively, accurately, and economically'.¹⁸ In order to satisfy Kumar's criterion, this research is predominantly qualitative in nature and seeks to capture the researcher's intentions, feelings or interpretations of meanings, by addressing many debatable questions.¹⁹

This thesis seeks to identify the museum as a social world to interpret, understand, and critique at a conceptual level. By doing so, it also focuses on dynamics and discourses, while proving that the museum produces social meanings by negotiations with interconnected internal and external agents. Hence, it would be difficult for the researcher to be neutral or objective from any generated knowledge and evidence.²⁰ During the fieldwork, in this vein, it was not just data collection, but also interpreting it to understand the much wider relationship between the researcher, the museum, and its associated agents that was important to produce epistemological knowledge.²¹ This self-critical or self-reflective method of approach satisfies an underlying assumption that the museum is uniquely constructed by a set of social relations, but not by itself as an isolated entity.

¹⁸ Kumar (2005 [1996]: 84).

¹⁹ Dey (1993: 30).

²⁰ Mason (1996: 6).

²¹ *Ibid.*, (1996: 36).

Theoretical framework: Finding the location of the thesis

Without first developing a theoretical framework, reviewing literatures and formulating research questions becomes ineffective and relaxed.²² As Lynham notes, ‘a theoretical framework for all theory-building research is essentially the core explanatory container of any theory’.²³ Therefore, it demonstrates that the gist of a theoretical framework lies with introducing concepts, definitions, and theories related to a research topic in order to guide the reader in the process of articulating theoretical assumptions. Having thus narrowly circumscribed research focus as well as levels of unpacking the museum, this research draws upon multiple lenses within a solid framework to illuminate the several theoretical strands of the museum’s creation and its development.

Constructing an analytical framework to determine the relationship between the museum and its related agents that exerted influence upon the institution poses a discursive challenge. In order to investigate the underlying issues of the museum, which have traditionally been observed thus far, it is crucial to focus on the cultural milieu that generated the specific social narratives of South Korea. While this study captures the changes of the museum during its development stages, it also highlights the socio-political trends of the time: protests against the military regime, the avant-garde art movement driven by artists and the US, international sports events in Seoul, and financial crises in the 1990s. This demonstrates that the museum was established and has been developed by a myriad of interactions and negotiations between or among social agents.²⁴

Ultimately, there are two objectives to achieve through the applied theoretical framework: firstly, to explore more precisely the conceptual foundations and assumptions that shaped this national institution as it is now; and secondly to deconstruct and to re-interpret the museum by means of a

²² Kumar (2005 [1996]: 35-38 (35)).

²³ Lynham (August 2002: 232).

²⁴ Fairhurst and Grant (2010: 174).

new framework, developed in order to identify the related actors who engaged or negotiated with the museum, and to locate a vision that the museum aspires to for building its indigenous culture.

This thesis, to a greater or lesser degree, is framed by a social constructionist way of thinking. As Burr describes, social constructionism means that ‘accepting any forms of knowledge based upon historical or cultural relativism becomes problematic in order to investigate the notion of *truth*’.²⁵ In this context, the researcher reconsidered how to interpret and unpack the museum by adopting different analytical perspectives. During the formative stage of research, the museum was thought to be an isolated institution without social relations, which confined its spatial contexts in a limited way. There have been some academics who have focused on the museum contending that not many researchers in art-related fields have shown interest in issues such as its institutional conversion into an executive agency or contributions to the outside world as an active living organism.²⁶ Only a limited number of academics have interrogated the fundamental issues mentioned above.²⁷

Initially, deploying a social constructionist way of interpreting the museum and its approach that impacted on this thesis was thought to be relatively marginal. However, drawing upon theoretical frameworks from both historiography and ethnography revealed the museum to be a unique and vibrant organism that reproduced and reconfigured its institutional identity. Hence, they inspired me to consider the museum as a significant connecting link in the social fabric between its external agents - communities of practice, the public, or the government. This research illuminates a review of the institutional relationship between the museum and its related agents by interrogating such issues as: the tasks the museum and its related agents have carried out, and the narratives and practices that the museum and its related agents have produced and developed. These interactions have been shaped by a complex socio-political terrain that creates and interprets meanings which are socially constructed and negotiated. The making of a national institution is an image-making

²⁵ Burr (2015 [1995]: 9).

²⁶ Korea Institute for Art and Cultural Policy (2014: 131-132).

²⁷ Key references are: Ha Gye-Hoon (2004); Sim Sang-Yong (2012); Kim Dong-Il et al (2015).

process which involves officially recognised social, political, and cultural exchanges between related agents.²⁸ In this regard, the museum paradigm flows and shifts constantly. It refuses and questions a taken-for-granted view of museum narratives, identities and values.²⁹ Within this context, Hooper-Greenhill states as follows,

[...] it is a mistake to assume that there is only one form of reality for museums, only one fixed mode of operating. [...] Museums have always had to modify how they worked, and what they did, according to the context, the plays of power, and the social, economic, and political imperatives that surrounded them.³⁰

In this research, it is necessary to trace theoretical insights that Michel Foucault (1926-1984) calls into question. For example, Foucault's concept of *episteme* – a term that signifies the 'conditions of possibility of all knowledge' in *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* aids an examination of how the context of knowledge is structured and rationally defined.³¹ Foucault presents a model of modernist museum paradigm by proposing that the modern *episteme* was based on the characteristics of functionality, rationality and universality; modern (public) museums were vehicles of legitimising the absolutism of science, classifications (hierarchies) and truths.³² However, their fundamental roles, purposes, and traditions are challenged by rapidly changing contemporary society and socio-political climate, thus revealing the contemporary structures of knowledge. As Hooper-Greenhill mentioned above, the grand narratives, as taken-for-granted

²⁸ Barnes (2009 :2).

²⁹ Hooper-Greenhill (1992: 9).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, (1992 :1).

³¹ Foucault (1970: 168; 1974: 191); Hooper-Greenhill (1992: 12); Bennett (1995: 95-96).

³² Foucault (1970: 217-218); Macdonald and Silverstone (1990: 176); Hooper-Greenhill (1992: 17-18).

realities in modernist museums, have become problematic and fragmented. This corresponds well with the museum's chronological and interdisciplinary histories that are adapting to rapid socio-political development and cultural mind shifts in South Korea. Simply, the museum, an institution that is in a period of transformation, has struggled to challenge pre-existing and accepted norms, practices, and dogmas against a background of socio-political changes throughout its troubled history.

Hooper-Greenhill uses Foucault's concept of 'effective history' in order to investigate the history of museums.³³ Using this approach, she adopts Foucault's notion of 'discontinuity, rupture, and dispersion' and rejects 'smooth, progressive, and developmental' history.³⁴ Hooper-Greenhill's ideas are useful for pursuing peculiar and specialised histories of the museum that criticise the grand narratives, truths, and meanings derived from ruptures in perpetuated and shared contexts of knowledge.³⁵ In this regard, Hooper-Greenhill points out that:

'Effective history' also prioritises the breaks and ruptures which signal abrupt endings and painful new beginnings, violent change, and disruption. [...] A focus is developed on the history of error rather than the history of truth. [...] Focusing on when and how 'museums' in the past changed, and in which way and why longstanding practices were ruptured and abandoned, may provide a context for today's apparently all too sudden cultural shifts.³⁶

³³ Hooper-Greenhill (1992: 9-12).

³⁴ Foucault (1974: 4).

³⁵ Foucault (1977: 152-157); Hooper-Greenhill (1992: 9); Clayton (2002: 32); Barnes (2009: 14); Park So-Hyun (2011: 217-218).

³⁶ Hooper-Greenhill (1992: 11).

Historiography sheds light on historical interpretations and representations of the past.³⁷ As Gavin explains, ‘it (Historiography) reflects on the theories and philosophies that inform and motivate them and how they both might influence the conclusions drawn’.³⁸ Taking a broader perspective, historiography is an exploration of the multifaceted contexts that could produce historical thinking about the museum within particular time periods and place.³⁹ This involves careful consideration of the broader cultural, social, and political contexts that deal with the blurred boundaries between the museum and internal and external agents. This research, in particular, draws upon historian William S. Walker’s understanding of historiography from his book *A Living Exhibition*. Kylie Message, an Australian anthropologist, summarises the gist of his book that ‘(*A Living Exhibition*) is fundamentally an institutional history that focuses on the tensions between the Smithsonian’s historical aspirations for universalism and nation-building, and its concern with contemporary and local relevance’.⁴⁰ Walker’s critical and discerning lens contributed to a view of complex social topography, which sits in a wide historical context of the museum’s changing exhibitions to reveal how institutional decisions become intertwined with broader public debates about pluralism and multiculturalism. His book is not simply about producing a biography, but with deeper institutional relationships. As Walker observes, the Smithsonian is located ‘at the nexus of thought, culture, and politics in American life’ and exists as a witness of changes both in the museum and in broader society.⁴¹ This approach is also entirely applicable to the very different socio-political context of the MMCA.⁴² Like the Smithsonian’s museums, this museum also evolved into a cultural complex

³⁷ Gavin (2008: 399)

³⁸ *Ibid.*, (2008: 400).

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Message (2014: 160).

⁴¹ Walker (2013: 8).

⁴² Other studies that have informed my approach are: Knell, Simon, *The Culture of English Geology, 1815-1851: A Science Revealed Through its Collecting* (Aldershot: Ashgate, c2000); Whitehead, Christopher, *The Public Art Museum in Nineteenth Century Britain: The Development of the National Gallery* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); MacLeod, Suzanne, *Museum Architecture: A New Biography* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); and Hill, Kate, *Culture*

that inherited public memories, narratives of curatorial decisions, and manifestations of social interplay, which are inextricably connected.

Meanwhile, Bruno Latour (1947-), an influential French anthropologist and sociologist, provides intriguing conceptual approaches in *Science in Action*, published in 1987. In his book, Latour uses the idea of the ‘blackbox’ in order to examine how science works.⁴³ He guides the readers through several scientific discoveries and applications (facts and machines), asking them to open the ‘blackbox’ through a historical perspective.⁴⁴ Latour suggests that ‘science in the making (lively and open to controversies)’ is not yet ‘ready made science’ would be enclosed in a ‘blackbox’ as it is produced, evolves, and is interpreted.⁴⁵ Since this research focuses on adopting an interpretive lens to probe more deeply into the history of the museum, Latour’s method could give hints for a question of what elements constitute, operate, and modify the museum by analysing a notion of ‘blackbox’. Latour explains a word ‘blackbox’ as follows:

The word *blackbox* is used by cyberneticians whenever a piece of machinery or a set of commends is too complex. In its place they draw a little box about which they need to know nothing but its input and output.⁴⁶

If historiography provides the basic methodological frame of the thesis, ethnography offers a fresh perspective which helps to locate how ‘critical’ histories of the museum are constructed through

and Class in English Public Museums, 1850-1914 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

⁴³ Latour (1987: 2-3).

⁴⁴ Anon., ‘In conversation with Bruno Latour: Historiography of “Science in Action”’ (Fall 2005: 1).

⁴⁵ Latour (1987: 4).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, (1987: 2-3).

social interaction. This method allows for an understanding of social relations and actors engage in the context of their natural settings.⁴⁷ Hammersley and Atkinson explain it as follows:

[...] ethnography usually involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts - in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry.⁴⁸

Ideas of ethnography lie with embracing variety of voices and perspectives in order to investigate the nebulous complexity of a research topic. As O'Reilly explains, this method is suited to analyse specific topics 'which see culture as constructed and reconstructed through actors' participation'.⁴⁹ Simply, it is to raise questions of how a selected model constitutes or builds knowledge.⁵⁰ In this regard, ethnographers collect and interpret information by using emic (internal) and etic (external) approaches. In order to achieve an ideal view of understanding particular culture, the latter, as an efficient social scientific tool, enables ethnographers to observe various aspects of that culture without adopting the internalised biases or alienation of the former.⁵¹

⁴⁷ O'Reilly (2005: 3).

⁴⁸ Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 3).

⁴⁹ O'Reilly (2005:29).

⁵⁰ Fetterman (2010: 5-7).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, (2010: 22-23).

Within this context, this research is also influenced by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar from their book *Laboratory Life*. They use ethnography to analyse the scientific laboratory as a social space.⁵² If the ethnographer cannot be completely neutral, any preconceived beliefs or biases are challenged by hypotheses, such as seeing and interpreting how strange that world is.⁵³ Thus, it means that the ethnographer is a researcher who presumes that there is nothing natural about familiar things.⁵⁴ In order to get an in-depth understanding of the museum, this research draws upon the ethnographic approach to discover and problematise the superficial truths of the museum. In this book, Latour traces daily scientific practices of scientists as an outside observer by adopting an anthropological approach in order to see how the facts are constructed in the laboratory.⁵⁵ As an outside observer, Latour discovers the importance to the functioning and construction of the laboratory of relations and negotiations between macro and micro actors.⁵⁶ In terms of the nature of macro actors, Hernes states:

[...] Macro actors may take a range of different forms, including corporations, social movements, political parties, technologies, or institutions. [...] As macro actors, institutions provide legitimacy to actors who draw upon it when jostling for influence in organisational decision-making processes. Once created, institutional macro actors work as arbitrators between actors, settling their relative influence.⁵⁷

⁵² Latour and Woolgar (1979: 40-41).

⁵³ Fetterman (2010 [1989]: 24).

⁵⁴ Latour and Woolgar (1979: 43).

⁵⁵ Latour and Woolgar (1979: 12-13); Latour (1983: 147).

⁵⁶ Latour (1983: 141-143).

⁵⁷ Hernes (2005: 112-113).

Within this context, it is possible to claim that the museum consists of micro activities rather than macro ones. In detail, not only focusing on major historical or socio-political incidents, but also analysing single (or trivial) facts which influence the museum making can reframe pre-existing assumptions. Hence, it is accepted that the developmental path of the museum does not only result from a grand political scheme (macro), but also from official documents (micro), such as a mission statement, that are composed of nouns and verbs: powerful instructions that articulate in detail the direction of forward momentum. This approach helps me to achieve interpretive depth.⁵⁸

In terms of interpreting the institutional performances of museums, Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) has been particularly influential. His *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, *Distinction* (original: *La Distinction* (1979)) and *The Field of Cultural Production* gave new insights into ‘the conditions of production of the field of social agents such as museums, galleries, academies, and so on’.⁵⁹ Bourdieu uses ‘field’ to describe a network or social structure possessing objective relations within which agents are conserving or transforming the distribution of forces (or struggles).⁶⁰ Bourdieu explains a term ‘field’ as follows:

[...] Fields present themselves synchronically as structured spaces of positions (or posts) whose properties depend on their position within these spaces and which can be analysed independently of the characteristics of their occupants [...] The structure of the field is a *state* of the power relations among the agents or institutions.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Latour (1983: 146-149).

⁵⁹ Bourdieu (1984: 227-228; 1993a: 37).

⁶⁰ Bourdieu (1993a: 30); Kim Dong-Il et al (2015: 15); Cocotle (2016: 96).

⁶¹ Bourdieu (1993b: 72-73).

Bourdieu places emphasis on understanding the notion of *autonomy*. He explains that fields share a characteristic of *structural homology* with entire society and produce a space so that any agent can play their role and put their doctrines into practice in such autonomous conditions.⁶² In the field of cultural production, agents are situated in a structure that positions them, distributes specific cultural capital, and exchanges within an accepted code of values.⁶³ Bourdieu explains this as follows:

The literary and artistic field is contained within the field of power, while possessing a relative autonomy with respect to it, especially as regards its economic and political principles of hierarchisation. [...]⁶⁴

Michael Grenfell and Cheryl Hardy use Bourdieu's ideas to discuss the dynamics of an art field.⁶⁵ They argue that each field interacts with each other and is not regulated by an isolating boundary. It is not about following rules. It also implies that it is not autonomy but the logic of relations (cause and effect or negotiation) in fields that is a key aspect of explaining the social phenomena and changes over time. Moreover, there is a dynamic process of 'internalisation and externalisation'

⁶² Bourdieu (1993a: 37-38).

⁶³ Bourdieu (1984: 6; 1990: 131; 1993a: 30); Grenfell and Hardy (2007: 30). Bourdieu uses a term *Habitus* and defined it as '*Habitus* is both a system of schemata of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices [...] Its operation expresses the social position in which it was elaborated. Consequently, *Habitus* produces practices and representations which are available for classification, which are objectively differentiated; however, they are immediately perceived as such only by those agents who possess the code, the classificatory schemes necessary to understand their social meaning'. In terms of explaining a term 'cultural capital', Bourdieu mentioned that 'it is the possession of symbolically valued cultural accoutrements and attitudes.

⁶⁴ Bourdieu (1993a: 37-38).

⁶⁵ Grenfell and Hardy (2007: 128-129).

through agents' active interplay, struggle, or practice.⁶⁶ Within this context, the museum has been a dynamic actor that intersects and resonates inside and outside boundaries of artistic (cultural) field.⁶⁷ This research suggests that the museum can be viewed as a social organism in the artistic field. It produces significant cultural capital, while negotiating its place within the political field (government) and with several mediating social institutions and fields (international relations, political figures, art policies, artworks, and press companies). The museum is a discursive space and that responds to a series of political demands.⁶⁸ Throughout its entire history, the museum is positioned not only as a troubled government agency but also as a central site that reflects wider socio-cultural trends and operates within Korean society more broadly.⁶⁹ Despite its status as a national property, the museum reflects the needs of cultural and political fields, and negotiates its form and operation.

Field research

This section will give a summary of how the field research progressed towards the key findings and potential issues. A series of interviews, one of the primary methods of data collection during the field research, will be introduced. This section will then discuss how the field research was conducted. In this phase of the study, I applied oral history methods. The research also involved transcribing and translation of archival materials, such as printed materials - books, journals, news articles, memoirs, autobiographies and the record of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea (NAROK). Analysing these methods will offer an overview of the associated contexts of

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, (2007: 25-26).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, (2007: 61).

⁶⁸ Bennett (1995: 102-105).

⁶⁹ Grenfell and Hardy (2007: 59).

relationships, characteristics, and political dynamics are embedded in the museum rather than narrating historical facts or numerical figures.

Since this study is predominantly based upon collated archives and face-to-face interviews, field research in the museum and archive centres in South Korea was an indispensable part of this study. The field research took place during the period from September 2014 to March 2015. It was divided into two primary sections. First, in order to investigate and analyse the theoretical issues related with this research, it was necessary to collect and review academic materials in terms of internal and external circumstances of the museum. However, there is not much in the way of academic materials available regarding factors that affected the *making* of the museum until its building relocated to Gwacheon, and the first volume of the annual periodical – *Art & Museum Studies* (현대미술관연구) - was published in 1989.⁷⁰ Only a few art-specialised journals, such as *Space* (공간, 1966-) and *Gyegan Misul* (계간미술, 1976-1989, now renamed *Wolgan Misul* (월간미술, literally means *Art Monthly*, 1989-)), and newspaper articles were the sources that focused on identifying the controversies of the national art museum.⁷¹

Since the museum published its own periodical from 1989, curators within the museum and external researchers, including art historians and critics, began to study this institution. There has been large-scale research into the trajectory of museum development or achievement, but practices, policies, negotiations, the debates about the political narratives, and its embedded contexts remain marginal. Amongst the museum's curators and external researchers, there are notable researchers who investigated the issue of the establishment or formation process of the museum. Lee In-Beom, an art critic and a former curator of the museum, in his article 'Formation of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea (국립현대미술관의 형성)', investigates the museum's birth and its partly-formed institutional identity.⁷² Moreover, Choi Yeol, a renowned liberal art critic and art archivist,

⁷⁰ The title of the journal has now changed to the *Journal of National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea* since 2009.

⁷¹ Kim Bok-Gi (2012: 325-327).

⁷² Lee In-Beom (1990).

poses some provocative questions to cast light on the museum's organisation, future plans and overall strategy, including its policies as to exhibitions and research.⁷³ Lastly, Jang Yeop, an acting curator of the MMCA, provides detailed analysis of the museum's formative process. Jang's discerning analysis summarises the forty years of development and associated activities including the exhibitions, the acquisition strategy, the administration of the collection, and the educational programmes, all of which are divided into their respective periods of creation.⁷⁴

Therefore, locating specific academic sources, with a focus on 'critical' museum history and its embedded dynamics, was crucial before exploring the nature of how the museum was established, normalised, and practised. Thus, documentary material included officially published professional journals, news articles, and a large collection of 'grey' literature produced by the museum and government agencies were also treated as primary source materials. As to those archives, a wide range of areas about the museum - exhibitions, curatorial practices, cultural policies, and socio-political and administrative issues - which shed light on the actual dynamics of the institution were selected. They provided different contexts and plausible signs of reliability to not only interpret, but also unpack, factual information more concretely. The archives used for this research were located in the library of the MMCA, the National Assembly Library of the Republic of Korea (국회도서관), and the National Archives of Korea (국가기록원). Frequent visits were considered necessary to probe deeper into the unfolding story of the museum. The research itself generated questions that required yet further interrogation of the archive. Because so little was known and because I was asking questions that had never been asked of this institution, the research was iterative and hugely time consuming.

In order to elicit the veiled truth about the museum, reviewing published sources was insufficient. Locating sources in the limited access archives of national agencies was the primary aim. For instance, I used the library of the museum for finding in-house materials, which ranged over

⁷³ Choi Yeol (2002).

⁷⁴ Jang Yeop (2009).

diverse topics - conferences, public hearings, and internal reports - that mainly dealt with the museum's practices, discourses, and achievements. In terms of the National Assembly Library, I located a great number of government reports about *agencification* and *corporatisation*. This process made the research more fruitful due to comparisons between printed materials published in the government agencies and the museum. The National Archives of Korea also offered presidential archives to unpack how presidents of South Korea recognised the importance of cultural industry, cultural policies, and the museum.

Defining, transcribing and translating: texts of research materials

Since this research revolves around a particular national art institution, it is inevitable that this project analyses academic or non-academic references written in Korean. Their use in this thesis required an elaborate process of defining, transcribing, and translating these Korean texts. Owing to differences of nuances between the two languages, Korean and English, there were several stages of correcting and editing words, phrases, or jargon to avoid any semantic confusion. If a single Korean word had multiple meanings or implications, then I have put Korean, English (literal translation), and Chinese characters (漢字) to clarify its meaning according to the contextual state.

This thesis relies upon several transcribed and translated research materials: 1) newspaper articles, 2) interview scripts, 3) political speeches, 4) symposiums, and 5) minutes from an inspection of the NAROK. All these materials are focused on the key themes of this study. To discover any hidden political dynamics and narratives that are embedded in the museum, analysing subjective words or phrases of speakers or writers is very important. As a result, materials which were used for investigating the museum were transcribed and translated in a direct manner at an initial stage. Hence, materials that used a literary, rather than colloquial style, went through a filtering process based not only upon linguistic, but also sociolinguistic, aspects. For example, when art historians in the 1960s used terms such as 'we' (우리), 'ethnic group race' (민족), 'identity' (정체성), 'self-esteem' (자부심), and 'self-respect' (자긍심) to rediscover and redefine South Korea's cultural roots,

their implications, rather than original meanings, were considered in the process of transcribing and translation. In this sense, these terms were used for highlighting the importance of nationalism when president Park Jung-Hee tried to mobilise the Korean populace as a unitary entity.⁷⁵

One of the greatest challenges for this research was how to transcribe, translate, and analyse the published materials which were provided by the government agencies. Consequently, they were literally translated, then analysed, and quoted as a final step. However, it was necessary to have in-depth knowledge of how the government-published materials could be produced in political and national institutional settings, and how these related to contemporary systems of authority and control.⁷⁶ In this context, Choi Jin-Sil, a professional researcher who has focused on institutional translations, analyses the characteristics of ‘government institutional translations’ as follows:

The institutions make continuous choices in the selection of the language, or languages to translate into, texts appropriate for translations, translators, editors, and even content of translations, because it is the institution that confirms the final translation and releases it.⁷⁷

The thesis therefore took meticulous care in analysing political speeches and minutes from annual inspections of the NAROK and public hearings to spot any omitted contents which were reflected by institutional ideology.

Interviews: following an oral history paradigm

⁷⁵ The term ‘우리’ literally and linguistically means ‘we’ in English. However, analysing it based upon a nationalistic perspective, this could be translated into ‘an ethnic group that has a strong homogeneity, kinship or identity as South Koreans’ in a sociolinguistic manner.

⁷⁶ Choi Jin-Sil (2014: 22).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Ten interviews were conducted with participants who exerted influence not only in the museum, but also different academic fields. The research outcomes serve to illuminate the main aspects of this research. The interviews supported the collection of published archives and ‘grey’ literature which they enriched and validated. A full list of interviewees, dates, and venues is given as follows:

No	Name	Date	Venue
1	Ryu Ji-Yeon	7 February 2015	MMCA in Seoul
2	Kim In-Hye	5 March 2015	MMCA in Gwacheon
3	Ha Gye-Hoon	6 March 2015	Insa-dong (인사동), Seoul
4	Jung Joon-Mo	7 March 2015	Jung’s office, Anguk (안국), Seoul
5	Jung Soo-Hwa	16 March 2015	Jung’s office, Guro (구로), Seoul
6	Sim Sang-Yong	18 March 2015	Dongduk Women’s University, Seoul
7	Kim Dal-Jin	20 March 2015	Kim Dal-Jin Art Archives and Museum, Seoul
8	Choi Tae-Man	27 March 2015	Choi’s office, Gookmin University, Seoul
9	Choi Yeol	4 April 2015	Nowon station (노원역), Seoul
10	Kim Tai-Soo	5 May 2015	Leicester (via Skype)

Table 1 A full list of interview participants

The interviews observed the University of Leicester code of ethics.⁷⁸ Four groups of informants were considered when selecting interviewees. The first were acting curators (Ryu Ji-Yeon and Kim In-Hye) who have worked for the museum. Since they have been working as curators for more than a decade, their expertise and insight could contribute to tackling issues or exploring behind

⁷⁸ University of Leicester, *Code of Practice for Research Ethics* <<http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/ethics/code>> [accessed 5 June 2017].

the scenes. Interestingly, they were neither straight nor obvious to any accounts or viewpoints, but rather reflected the positive images of their performance. They both had worked in curatorial departments until 2016 and now moved to other departments.⁷⁹

The other three groups were: 1) former museum practitioners who worked for the museum and have no longer involved in any museum activities (Jung Joon-Mo, Jung Soo-Hwa, Kim Dal-Jin, and Choi Tae-Man), 2) external researchers that have studied this institution (Ha Gye-Hoon, Sim Sang-Yong, and Choi Yeol), and 3) the architect Kim Tai-Soo, who designed the museum for the Gwacheon and runs his architecture office in the US (Hartford, Connecticut). Compared with the acting curators, participants from other groups provided their inspirational expertise to the research. In particular, interview participants such as Jung Joon-Mo and Choi Tae-Man, who had worked for the museum in Gwacheon (opened in 1986) were notable informants to consider.⁸⁰ Although they are not working for the museum anymore, their accounts offered a crucial hint for exploring any narratives or contexts as to the museum's practices during their term in office, which was regarded as the museum normalisation period. They posed neutral or critical stances on particular issues such as ineffective museum practices or bureaucratic managerial systems. Their objective and detached accounts led this research to unpack the museum in a flexible way. An interview script for Kim Tai-Soo was designed separately to ask questions on what political dynamics or contexts were engaged in the museum, how the government officials recognised the importance of museum construction, and what was his main concept of designing the museum in a practical way despite some overlapping remarks between his interviews in other media.

Interviews were based upon an oral history methodology. It records the speech of participants and

⁷⁹ Acting curators of the MMCA as interviewees moved to other departments (Ryu Ji-Yeon: Exhibition Team 2 [전시 2팀], Kim In-Hye: Collection and Archive [소장품 자료관리과]). Since this thesis covers the period from 1969 to 2016, their current status will not be considered. The museum converted its institutional status as an executive agency, which requires curators (and does not apply to short-term contracted curators) to rotate their posts annually.

⁸⁰ Currently, the museum has buildings in Seoul, Gwacheon, and Deoksugung Palace (as the Deoksugung Palace Art Museum, which mainly accommodates Korean modern artworks, 1998-) and the other in Cheongju (淸州) as an exhibition-type national art conservation centre which is under construction (expected to open in May 2019). The MMCA, *History* <<http://www.mmca.go.kr/eng/contents.do?menuId=5020011210>> [accessed 30 April 2017].

then analyses their memories of the past based upon their personal experience and knowledge.⁸¹ Since the questions were designed by a criterion which effectively inquires into issues related to the past, present, and future of the museum, the interviewer should regard the interviewees' accounts as responsible, vivid, and truthful statements as the interviewee understands them.⁸² However, the interviewer should be aware of the so-called 'unreliability of memory'.⁸³ As Abrams points out, information that is given by the interviewees is susceptible to bias and could be inaccurate.⁸⁴ In this context, if interview questions expose any sensitive contexts or implications, interviewees might distort answers due to a memory affected by outside influences or that is simply unreliable.⁸⁵ The interviews proved invaluable for providing new information not recorded in any other way. Not only their insight, but also hidden knowledge as to any political narratives or contexts emerged.

A qualitative semi-structured interview method was used. A detailed list of questions or series of topics was drawn up beforehand which were then deployed flexibly during the interview.⁸⁶ The interviewer is deeply interested in the context and content of the interview, how the interviewee understands the topics under discussion and what they want to convey to the interviewer. Unlike a structured interview, this type of interview allows more flexibility for the interviewee to answer on their own terms or perspectives.⁸⁷

In the process of interviews, the researcher designed fifteen open questions mainly concerning

⁸¹ Abrams (2010: 1).

⁸² Seldon and Pappworth (1983: 51).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, (1983: 17-18).

⁸⁴ Abrams (2010: 23).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Kumar (2005 [1996]: 123).

⁸⁷ Edwards and Holland (2013: 29).

issues that ranged from general matters to administrative and managerial activity in the museum.⁸⁸ Each interview lasted approximately an hour to an hour and a half. All the interview participants were recruited on a voluntary basis and informed by the researcher that they could make their own choice to withdraw from the research at any time. They also agreed not to have their names anonymised. This meant that I had to be aware of any narratives or contexts that could be shaped by the availability of interviewees and needed to pay attention to the impact this could generate.⁸⁹ Since the museum has effectively been censored by the government, participants were permitted to withdraw from applying critical assessments or perspectives towards the museum. One of the advantages to recruiting interviewees, however, was that many were already known to me and thus were willing to speak freely rather than given professionally neutral answers.⁹⁰

The interviews did, however, throw up inconsistencies. There was, for example, a discordance between acting and former curators pertaining to their answers on several sensitive issues. The former unavoidably controlled their level of criticism towards both the museum and the government; while the latter opened their viewpoints without a need for confidentiality and anonymity. Each interviewee purposely used or offered data to support their personal stance. It is imperative to note issues of both reliability and validity in the results. To avoid any misapplication to the thesis, I performed a cross-comparison method (triangulation) between factual information and interviews to control variants during the data analysis process. It helped the research to distinguish which sources were reliable.

Graham draws upon the concept of *elite interview* to clarify the interviews that are personally undertaken with individuals of a certain standing. Often in an institution or profession, there is someone who is in a privileged position as far as knowledge is concerned. As Graham points out,

⁸⁸ The researcher designed twelve questions for an architect Tai-Soo Kim.

⁸⁹ Seldon and Pappworth (1983: 34-35)

⁹⁰ In contrast to this statement, Jennifer Platt notes that withholding any assumptions or personal views is difficult when interviewing experts, if the interviewer personally knows them well. Platt (March 1981: 86).

Although they (elites) may be remote from some aspects of what you are researching, they are likely to have a particularly comprehensive grasp of the wider context, and to be privy to information that is withheld from others.⁹¹

Amongst the interviewees who were engaged in or retired from professional practice in the museum, there were informants who have a great deal of knowledge about their area of expertise.⁹² Based upon Graham's theoretical explanation, it implies a number of facts: first, they would like to be a group of people in authority that controls the topic of discussion; and second, they would ask an interviewer for performing tasks such as reporting back or discussion on sensitive issues in order to have some degree of accountability.⁹³ As to the researcher's interview process, however, interviewees did not exert any particular influence upon the semi-structured interviews and their accounts supported key indicators for the direction of research.

Curators of the museum today were neither straight nor obvious in their accounts or viewpoints and projected the positive images of their performance instead. Other groups, however, posed either neutral or critical stances on particular issues, such as museum practices or bureaucratic managerial systems. Thus, transcribing and analysing interview scripts helped in discovering what was really 'inside' the museum, and the 'masked truths' of the museum were waiting to be unveiled. I did not reveal hypotheses that interviewees might answer, which were fitted into a framework of given questions to confirm those hypotheses.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Graham (2000: 81).

⁹² *Ibid.*, (2000: 82).

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Platt (March 1981: 77); Cresswell (1996: 133); Holstein and Gubrium (eds) (2003: 13).

Thesis structure

This thesis consists of six main chapters in total. Chapter One begins with an episode of the MMCA's opening ceremony, held in 2013, and sets the scene as to historical and museological narratives that will be explored through an examination of the embryonic stages of this museum's social development. The opening episode connects 'pre- and co-existing' narratives of museum *making*. It reveals the actors, contexts and politics that affect this museum now and, in other ways perhaps, in the past. The main focus of this chapter, however, is the long period of gestation and then establishment of the museum. Despite the presence of dictator, Park Jung-Hee, who regarded the museum as an ideological tool of legitimising his control over an entire nation, art-related actors did consider the potential roles and responsibilities of the new museum. This debate posed crucial issues, such as how the government and its agencies recognised the significance of the national art museum, and how the concepts between modern and contemporary, and between a museum and an art museum were classified.

Chapter Two focuses on the relationship between the West and the Korean art circle in the post-war period after 1945. This chapter poses several issues of how external agents, such as the US and trends of Western art, negotiated with the agents related to the museum such as artists, artistic movements, cultural trends, and policies to rebrand the museum. Investigating a transient stage of the museum history, this chapter examines the stimulants that influenced museum practice and impacted the framing of museum identity during the Deoksu Palace era. Chapter Two also traces a considerable paradigm shift in how Korean contemporary artists struggled to locate and reposition their artistic visions against a conservative social reality. Their strife was based upon a desire to liberate artistic expression influenced by the West and oppose conservative screening policies of the NAE. This movement led the museum at that time to mobilise people's attention and established a solid foundation to offer them cultural experiences as part of the vibrant negotiation.

Chapter Three moves the discussion from narratives of making the national art museum to the dialogues of how internal and external factors have influenced the museum in Gwacheon. This section analyses how individual ‘museum-related’ actors - director, architect, personnel, political figure, or cultural policy - vitalised museum practice and responded to the dialogues that encompassed agents produced in the process of opening a contemporary art museum. Although President Jeon Doo-Hwan adopted the same strategies as President Park Jung-Hee to camouflage his subversive activity, the museum in Gwacheon gradually manifested its visions by expanding the realm of institutional autonomy, securing art experts, and normalising its practices.

Chapter Four discusses the specific theme of how the museum legitimised its status as a national art institution with contributions by diverse agents such as individuals, exhibitions, or political and economic circumstances after the opening of the museum in Gwacheon. In this chapter, focusing on the mood of internalisation and globalisation from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, the museum selected controversial exhibitions, which raised issues of cultural pluralism. It was a period when the museum underwent a stage of self-reflection. In detail, the museum worked as a platform or social forum where the public pondered how to interpret features of social discourse and cultural diversity. This culminates in the museum asking, ‘What is Korean *modern* art?’ and in so doing redefines its futuristic visions after becoming a national museum of contemporary art.

Chapter Five observes how the concept of ‘*agencification*’ led to a paradigm shift in museum practices, that switched from a government-centred to a customer-oriented museum system, and what the rationales were of implementing the concept under the guise of administrative efficiency. The museum has a dual role as a national museum and a public museum. It demonstrates the fact that the museum is oriented towards a socially-situated art centre, which reflects public opinions and values. Setting aside its position as a government-affiliated art institution, the museum met a situation of institutional upheaval called ‘executive agency’, an adopted administrative model from the UK. This stated action caused a controversy between the Korean art field and the administrative departments. In this chapter, interview scripts and government-published materials concerned with the issue of *agencification* have been analysed to locate intended dynamics and contexts related to the museum.

Chapter Six examines subsequent debates after the introduction of executive agency. This chapter poses some problematic issues of *agencification* and analyses its underlying contexts in a detailed way. This process offers a critical lens to discuss how this conversion process might impact on the museum's institutional identity and operating system. This chapter then discusses what narratives and controversies emerged regarding the corporatisation of the museum, by introducing interview scripts, dialogues of annual inspection of the NAROK, and political speeches. Since the legislative bill of corporatisation remains pending, the museum and its associated agents have raised their concerns as to its feasibility. In this chapter, there is a section that focuses on the issue of how interviewees prospect the outcome of corporatisation. Their viewpoints and insight provide a crucial hint of how the museum should deal with this conversion process to a corporate body.

The Conclusion ends with an overview of the research findings and offers an analysis of how this research makes contributions to existing knowledge, and identifies questions and directions for future study.

Chapter One

Towards a Korean national art museum

On 12 November 2013, the new National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA) in Seoul opened to a highly expectant public. On the museum's opening day, there was an official ceremony. Many political figures, including Park Geun-Hye (朴槿惠, 1952-), South Korea's newly elected and first woman president, attended the event to celebrate its inception. President Park reflected upon her considerable expectations of this museum; not only its grand scale, but also as a representative icon to attract visitors from abroad. Those listening to her speech, could not help but look at the president and remember her father, Park Jung-Hee (朴正熙, 1917-1979), who controlled South Korea from 1963 to 1979 and was assassinated by his subordinates. This prompted interesting conversations among academics and museum practitioners regarding a remarkable connection between the two presidents that not only observed the father-daughter relationship, but also noted their different approaches to the development of MMCA. Although both Park Jung-Hee and Park Geun-Hye could, respectively, be regarded as the political founders of the first and existing MMCA, their approach to national cultural projects was influenced by the contemporary political situation. The situation they encountered and their reactions during their respective periods in office coincided with each of their 'nation-building' projects.

Studies of the beginnings of the MMCA have illuminated its confused identity, due to conceptual and semantic uncertainties surrounding such notions as 'art', 'art museum', 'modern' and 'contemporary'. However, instead of wrangling over these oft-repeated disputes, the museum had the chance to enter upon a new phase since 2013 through its deepening attachment to an interactive dialogue between internal and external museum-related agents. This phase has led to the following assumptions: first, beginning with the museum's opening in 1969 and extending into the present, the museum could be regarded as a vibrant laboratory, rather than a troubled institution; and second, the museum has either evolved or mutated into a significant social mediator that represents the

cultural hub of modern and contemporary art. These assumptions could interrogate pre-existing interpretations of the museum in a flexible way, unlike previous studies that have situated it as an isolated and inactive social unit. This chapter will explore how the dynamics and negotiations involving internal and exterior agents prior to the museum's inauguration.

Setting the scene

On the 27 July 1953, the Korean War (1950-1953) ended with an Armistice Agreement. With the division of the Korean peninsula, based on the 38th parallel (38 군사분계선), Korea's art circles encountered a period of reorganisation due to the opposing political and aesthetic stance of South and North Korean artists. Based on Choi Yeol's explanation, the art system in South Korea developed through planned national projects carried forward by the government such as exhibitions, art education facilities and awards ceremonies.⁹⁵ The bureaucratic and the private sectors were existed. The former could be explained, in a detailed way, by any, while the latter was undertaken by private agents. Bureaucratic government typically resulted in the existence of national art institutions that included those managed by the government-sponsored institution.⁹⁶ At the same time, the private sector developed similar projects in parallel but also introduced professional art press companies and the art market.⁹⁷

From the moment the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK, 주한미군정청) took control of South Korea in 1945 to its handover to Lee Seung-Man's (李承晩, 1875-1965) government with the proclamation of the Republic of Korea in 1948, anti-communism was central to political propaganda. President Lee gained the support of the U.S. due to his right-wing political

⁹⁵ Choi Yeol (2003: 238).

⁹⁶ Cho Eun-Jeong (2005a: 13-19).

⁹⁷ Choi Yeol (2003: 237-238).

inclinations. During the Korean War, anti-communism had dominated the thinking of the Korean art world, and controlled art organisations.⁹⁸

On 7 August 1952, the government had taken the unprecedented step of establishing the Law for the Protection of Culture (문화보호법). It enabled the government to order the Decree of Registering Human Cultural Assets (문화인등록령, enacted 1953), and establish the National Academy of Arts (NAA, 대한민국예술원, established in 1954).⁹⁹ This process resulted in the following consequences: first, the government successfully merged the Korean art world into the bureaucratic organisation of the state; and second, this led to calls for the formation of a national art museum. It also allowed the government to exert great influence on the museum, not least because it was responsible for the National Art Exhibition (NAE, 대한민국미술전람회). This was first held in 1949 and would continue until 1981.

With the establishment of USAMGIK, the Yi Royal-Family Art Museum (이왕가미술관, 李王家美術館, 1938-1945) changed its name to the Deoksu Palace Art Museum (DPAM, 덕수궁미술관, 德壽宮美術館, 1946-1969) (Figure 3).¹⁰⁰ Also, the Japanese General-Government Museum (조선총독부박물관, 朝鮮總督府博物館, 1915-1945) became the National Museum of Korea (NMK, 국립중앙박물관, 國立中央博物館, 1945-) (Figure 4 and 5).¹⁰¹ Yi Royal-Family Art Museum had another purpose-built building on the west side of the Seokjo Jeon (石造殿, displayed Japanese modern artworks) that was established in 1938. This new building was used for displaying various genres of classic Korean antiquities. It was due to requests from the public that the Seokjo Jeon was only used for displaying

⁹⁸ Cho Eun-Jeong (2013: 148-153).

⁹⁹ To become a member, there were several criteria: 1) university graduates who had studied more than three years as either scientist or artist, 2) college graduates who had studied more than five years as either scientist or artist, 3) and those who had studied more than ten years as either scientist or artist. Anon., 'Only 107 people registered for human cultural assets' (문화인등록 겨우 107명), (30 June 1953: 2).

¹⁰⁰ The first director of DPAM was Lee Gyu-Pil (李揆弼). He had sufficient expertise in Goryeo (고려) and Joseon Dynasty ceramics.

¹⁰¹ In 1949, the first organisation plan of 'national museum (국립박물관)' was proclaimed by the government.

Japanese modern artworks.¹⁰² The DPAM possessed the Yi Royal-Family's collection of Korean and Japanese artworks which held a solid storage vault with well-designed vitrines. Mok Soo-Hyun, an art historian, notes that the Japanese General-Government exhibited both Korean (classic) and Japanese (modern) artworks to the public in order to legitimise their rule over the Korean peninsula (Figure 6 and 7).¹⁰³



Figure 3 Yi Royal-Family Art Museum (1938-1945). By kind permission of and © NMK. This image was used for a front page of the booklet of Yi Royal-Family Art Museum (이왕가미술관 요람) in 1941. A building on the right side is the Seokjo Jeon that displayed Japanese modern artworks. A building on the left side is the one that newly-built and possessed Korean antiquities. These two buildings were consolidated into one and had its name the Yi Royal-Family Art Museum.

¹⁰² Jung Joon-Mo (2003: 151-152).

¹⁰³ Mok Soo-Hyun, *Yi Royal-Family Art Museum* (이왕가미술관),

<http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Index?contents_id=E0071658> [accessed 23 June 2017].



Figure 4 The Japanese General-Government Museum. By kind permission of and © NMK.



Figure 5 Japanese General-Government Museum (left) and Gyeongbok Palace (right). By kind permission of and © NMK.

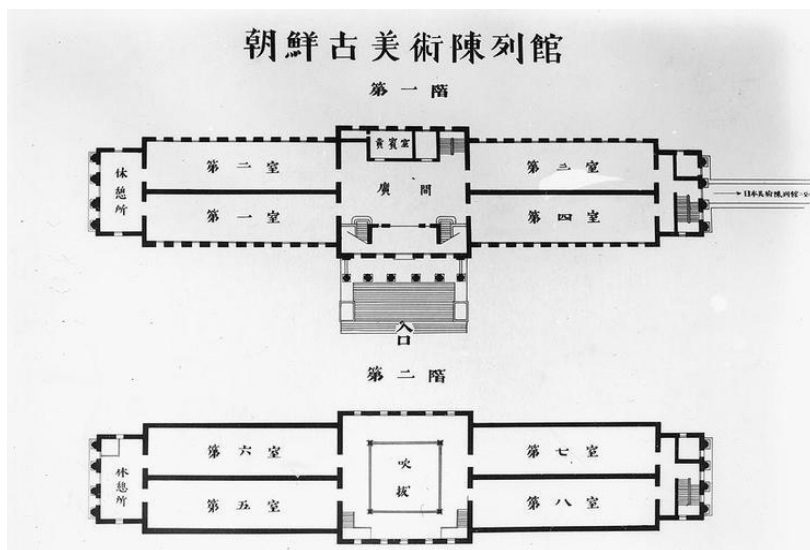


Figure 6 The ground-plan of Yi Royal-Family Art Museum (west annex). By kind permission of and © NMK.



Figure 7 Inside the Yi Royal-Family Art Museum (west annex, ground floor). By kind permission of and © NMK.

The Seokjo Jeon, the modernistic stone-built building in Deoksu Palace, was divided into east and west annexes. Unfortunately, the east annex became the office used for the Joint Soviet-American Commission (미소공동위원회, 1946-1948) and UN Commission on Korea (유엔 한국위원회, 1948-1950). The U.S. Army unit of engineering (공병부대) then ransacked the museum facilities to use the Seokjo Jeon as an office.¹⁰⁴ In addition to the disrespectful and damaging attitude of the U.S. Army, the DPAM suffered limited financial support, which meant it needed to use its hall for public wedding ceremonies.¹⁰⁵ Kim Chae-Won (金載元, 1909-1990), the first director of NMK, gave financial support to the museum staff in the DPAM.¹⁰⁶

Both the NMK and DPAM did their best to perform the role of national museums. Because of the Korean War, the NMK relocated its artworks to the DPAM in order to protect their safety and dispatched Hwang Soo-Young (黃壽永) to manage them. Since the DPAM stored artworks of both DPAM and NMK, they had to move together during the wartime.¹⁰⁷ For the NMK, the action was inevitable because the DPAM had a solid storage place.

After the January-Fourth Retreat (1·4 후퇴) in 1951, the DPAM and NMK were relocated to Busan with their stored artworks and archives. Then, when the Armistice was signed in 1953, both museums were relocated from Busan to Seoul. However, both museums experienced a difficult situation. The NMK could not return to the Gyeongbok Palace, its building site, due to President Lee Seung-Man's direct order.¹⁰⁸ In January 1954, the NMK was relocated to the National Museum of Anthropology, Korea (국립민족박물관, 國立民族博物館, 1945-1950, current the National

¹⁰⁴ Lee In-Beom (2002: 53); Jung Joon-Mo (2003: 157); Choi Tae-Man (2008: 14).

¹⁰⁵ Kim Chae-Won (1991: 40).

¹⁰⁶ Kim registered them as staff in the NMK. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Hwang Soo-Young (2 May 2002).

¹⁰⁸ Lee could not accept the NMK. He would like the Gyeongbok Palace to be repaired and preserved in advance. See more details: Choi Yeol (2003: 255); Jung Joon-Mo (2003: 157-158).

Folk Museum of Korea, 국립민속박물관, 國立民俗博物館, 1975-) in Nam-San (남산, 南山), Seoul (Figure 8).¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile, the DPAM could not return to its former position either because the war destroyed the Seokjo Jeon. The DPAM had to transfer temporarily to Nam-San where the NMK was located. In 1955, the NMK returned to the renovated Seokjo Jeon.¹¹⁰ At the same time, the DPAM also returned to a building (west annex) right next to the NMK.



Figure 8 The NMK during Nam-San period. By kind permission of and © NMK.

The DPAM lost its distinct characteristics as a national art museum despite its long history of storage that retained first-class art collections:¹¹¹ firstly, the director of DPAM at the time had no

¹⁰⁹ The National Museum of Anthropology was incorporated into the NMK in April 1950. Then, it officially renamed as the ‘Nam-San Annex Building of the NMK’ (국립중앙박물관 남산분관) in January 1954.

¹¹⁰ The government repaired the Gyeongbok Palace from May to October 1954. The NMK spent eight months of time for its transfer. Anon., ‘To the National Museum of Korea (국립박물관으로)’, (15 October 1954).

¹¹¹ Kim Won-Ryong (23 March 1961: 4).

expertise in art like Lee Gyu-Pil who was the first director of DPAM;¹¹² and secondly, the government recognised the DPAM as a partly-formed art institution in some aspects such as lack of financial support and art research centre unlike the NMK.¹¹³ The DPAM, consequently, was incorporated into the NMK in July 1968 when the plan of making the ‘first’ national art museum in South Korea was carried out in practice.

Making the first national art museum in South Korea

In the mid-1950s, a number of art critics, some of whom were also artists, strongly advocated, in a series of news articles, the ‘building [of] a national art museum’ (국립미술관건립). For example, Lee Gyeong-Seong (李慶成, 1919-2009), an art critic who later became the director of the national art museum, proposed an agenda for establishing a national museum of modern art in August 1955.¹¹⁴ His ideas were very clear and simple. He gave two rationales for why such a museum was necessary at that moment: first, to support the development of Korean society which was underdeveloped both economically and institutionally; and second, to achieve international standards of cultural infrastructure.¹¹⁵ He stated that a national art museum must perform roles such as research, collection, preservation, social education, and international exchange programmes and be focused on modern to contemporary Korean art history.¹¹⁶ Kim Young-Ki (1911-2003), a critic who aspired to have a national art museum in Seoul, believed such an institution could promote the modernisation of the country. His ideas were derived from Yoon

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Lee In-Beom (1996: 288); Jung Joon-Mo (2003: 158).

¹¹⁴ Lee Gyeong-Seong (7 August 1955: 4).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Sang-Soo (尹相菟), an established art collector who had put on exhibitions of modern and contemporary art.¹¹⁷

With the DPAM lacking professional staff, the NMK hosted national exhibitions ranging from classic to modern Korean fine art. Concurrently, the Rockefeller Foundation supported the NMK in opening the Research Centre of Formative Arts in Korea in 1954. The centre's primary purpose was to develop and revive genres such as crafts and engraving.¹¹⁸ Not only the NMK but also Seoul National University's college of Fine Arts performed its role in order to promoting the modernisation of Korean art world and training its future generations. Under the circumstances, the remarks of Lee Gyeong-Seong and Kim Young-Ki seem timely.

Discussions surrounding the making of a national institution became animated after the April Revolution in 1960 that overthrew the autocratic government of Lee Seung-Man and the May coup d'état in 1961, which replaced the democratic government with the military dictatorship of General Park Jung-Hee. Park and his government developed an Economic Development Plan (경제개발계획) that promoted modernisation. A desire for rapid economic growth, led the Korean government to adopt a westernised system that caused a crisis for both the country's indigenous ethnic cultural identity and traditional value (Figure 9).¹¹⁹ The Third Republic of Korea, that followed the coup, set up a cultural policy that focused on enhancing people's ethnic identity as a slogan in order to create associated organisations with regulations such as the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (문화재보호법), and making a comprehensive museum and culture centre for the public.¹²⁰ Park's motivation was to strengthen the nation both physically and spiritually. It was not only to

¹¹⁷ Kim Young-Ki (26 July 1956).

¹¹⁸ Choi Soon-Woo (April 1978).

¹¹⁹ Lee In-Beom (1990: 12).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

legitimise his military dictatorship but also disentangle the people from the vestiges of the Japanese colonial period by placing them as an independent ethnic group.¹²¹

Under Park's influence, national identity and nationalism became crucial topics of interest for Koreans and greatly affected the country's academic sense of Korean history and Korean art history. Art historians began to use terms such as 'we' (우리), 'ethnic group race' (민족), 'inherence' (고유성), 'identity' (정체성), 'self-esteem' (자부심), 'self-respect' (자긍심), and so on, in order to rediscover South Korea's cultural roots. There was an explosion of historical research (국학연구), leading to voluminous analyses of the archaeology and art history of the country's indigenous art and culture.¹²²



Figure 9 The miniature plan of Economic Development Plan (1962). By kind permission of and © National Archives of Korea.

¹²¹ Lee In-Beom (2002: 55).

¹²² Ahn Hui-Joon (1988: 3), quoted in Lee In-Beom (2008: 155-157).

It was in this context, in 1962, that Korean art associations, including the Korean Fine Arts Association (KFAA), submitted a request to the Ministry of Culture and Education (문화교육부, MCE) and its associated departments to recommend the opening of an art museum. They argued that since there were many exhibitions each year, including the NAE, it was necessary to establish a permanent collection so as to preserve the highest levels of artistic achievement.

One of the government's master plans was to design a 'Comprehensive Culture Centre for the Public' (종합민족문화센터). The President's State of the Nation Message (연두교서) in 1966 promised to establish three national institutions: the National Theatre of Korea (opened in 1973), the Training Centre of Korean Traditional Music (opened in 1967), and the National Museum of Modern Art, Korea (NMMA, opened in 1969).¹²³ This desire for cultural renewal led the government to establish laws that aligned cultural policies with national legitimacy and identity. As a result, when art organisations spoke of academic practice involving Korean art history or contemporary art, they consistently created an ethnic mythology through which they sought to draw the great attention of and inspire the public, a situation that created an atmosphere where it was possible to visualise a future 'Comprehensive Culture Centre for the Public' (Figure 10).¹²⁴

¹²³ Jang Yeop (2009: 86).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, (2009: 85-86).



Figure 10 The ground-breaking ceremony of ‘Comprehensive Culture Centre for the Public’ (25 April 1967). By kind permission of and © National Archives of Korea.

The initial phase of this latter project went quite smoothly. It was included in the Park government’s second five-year economic development plan which was established in 1966 under the title of ‘restructuring the nation’. The National Assembly of South Korea decided to set up a ‘Constructing the National Culture Centre Promotion Committee’ under Prime Minister Jung Il-Kwon’s (丁一權, 1917-1994) jurisdiction so that it could legally support the policy at the National Convention (전당대회).¹²⁵ The planning and management office of the Ministry of Culture and Public Information (MCPI, 문화공보부) already had the plan in development. The proposed centre’s

¹²⁵ Anon., ‘An eroding ancient palace’ (침식당하는 고궁), (10 January 1966: 5).

building was to be of a gigantic scale: the estimated total construction cost was 35 billion Won; it was to occupy a site of 661,157 square metres in the Hannam-dong, in Unbong Park (雲峰公園), Seoul. However, this lavish plan fell foul of budget cuts and widespread opposition from the art community. It will be discussed in a little more detail below.¹²⁶

Between 12 and 16 November 1967, young Korean artists opposed to the new centre and who had participated in the *Korean Young Artists Coalition Exhibition* (청년작가연립전, 靑年作家聯立展), marched with banners through the streets proclaiming ‘artworks after abstract art’ (추상 이후의 작품), ‘modern art is closed to the public’ (현대회화는 대중과 친하다), ‘national development comes from the aggressive arts promotion policy’ (국가발전은 예술의 진흥책에서), ‘4 billion Won gamble, the national comprehensive museum’ (4억의 도박, 국립종합박물관), ‘activating artists’ (행동하는 화가) and ‘the nation without a modern art museum’ (현대미술관이 없는 한국) (Figure 11).¹²⁷

Their action was a form of protest that was very similar to a performance art. Artists had compressed their critical frustration into this performance against the established Korean art world. Amongst the banners, one which had particular significance read, ‘the nation without a modern art museum’. This was seen as important not only because it complained about the absence of exhibition space, but also because it exposed the vulnerability of the Korean art system. For these artists, there were only a few exhibition places to display artworks, such as the Central Public Information Centre (CPIC, 중앙공보관) where the most recent exhibitions had taken place. The NMMA finally opened two years later, on 20 October 1969. It occupied a small rented building at the Gyeongbok Palace.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Anon., ‘The gigantic scale of the comprehensive national culture centre’ (매머드 민족문화종합센터), (30 December 1966: 3).

¹²⁷ Oh Sang-Gil and Kim Mi-Gyeong (2001: 89).

¹²⁸ Choi Tae-Man (2008: 13).



Figure 11 Korean artists from the *Korean Young Artists Coalition Exhibition*. Image Provider: Choi Tae-Man, Source: Kookje Shinmun.

The controversy over the concepts of modern and contemporary art

Since this research revolves around a specific national art institution in South Korea, it is essential to search and analyse academic and non-academic sources written in the native language. At this point, therefore, it is important to define some of the key concepts regarding their origins and implied narratives, such as the definitions of a ‘museum’ and that of an ‘art museum’ that have been widely accepted and distinguished throughout the modern and contemporary period. Interpreting those concepts is such a quintessential process in solving a number of underlying issues: first, the ambiguity of classifications caused by universal assumptions concerning the meaning of these terms, when local language and culture alter meanings and understandings; and second, the national art museum became a subordinate affiliated body of the NMK, and this too impacted its operation.

While South Korea adopted the concept of the ‘modern museum’ as interpreted by the Japanese Government-General from the first industrial exposition in 1877, the South Koreans purposely differentiated between the concept of a museum and an art museum. For example, they interpreted a museum as a venue to exhibit ‘antique’ objects from an archaeological perspective, whereas an art museum exhibited ‘manufactured’ objects through a pragmatic lens.¹²⁹ These interpretations led to the formation of these distinctive paradigms in South Korean museum culture.

These definitions affected the early formation of the NMMA, and led to the development of a cultural stereotype, which suggests that an art museum is subordinate to the wider concept of a museum. It can be argued that this gave the institution the inheritance of an underprivileged identity which in turn led to the mounting of unprofessional and haphazard exhibitions. Hence, it could be said that the museum became a partly-formed institution that performed inefficiently as a leading agent in modern and contemporary Korean art.

It is not only the ambiguity of defining terms such as ‘museum’ and ‘art museum’ or the concept of ‘art’ itself, but the definition of ‘modern’ and ‘contemporary’ that also became controversial. It has been discussed by several art critics, but the issue remains unresolved. Go Yoo-Seop (高裕燮, 1905-1944), who was known as the first art critic in South Korea, claimed that the period of ‘ancient art’ (고대미술) extended from the beginning of art history to 1910, when the Joseon dynasty officially disappeared. He defined the period ‘after-1910’ as ‘the time when modern and future art coexists’.¹³⁰

Based on his remarks, researchers have recognised 1910 as the starting point of modern art. Choi Yeol, a renowned liberal art critic and art archivist, has conducted in-depth research into this issue. He selected academic articles, published from the period before 1910 and after 1953, by representative art critics who had studied the issue regarding distinguishing between modern (or

¹²⁹ Doshin (1993: 154).

¹³⁰ Go Yoo-Seop (13-15 May 1932).

modern art) and contemporary (or contemporary art).¹³¹ While Choi Yeol had introduced intriguing theories in terms of how to locate a starting point for Korean modern art, it seems that he followed a criterion that was presented by Lee Gyeong-Seong, the first director of the national art museum in Korea to possess art expertise. Since the majority of researchers have agreed that the period of Korean modern art ranged from 1910 to 1945 when it was fundamentally effected by Japanese colonialism, Lee defined the year of 1957 as a starting point of contemporary art in an exhibition called the *Invitation of Contemporary Artists* (제1회 한국현대작가초대전), which was hosted by the *Chosun Ilbo* in 1957.¹³² His opinion was based upon the following ideas: in terms of the Korean art from 1945 to 1957, art critics defined its period as a ‘dark age’ due to unstable socio-political conditions.¹³³ The Korean art world became chaotic after the Liberation in 1945 and the Korean War. The term ‘dark age’ signifies how Korean artists were struggling with rediscovering their artistic identity. Due to the opposing ideological or aesthetic stance amongst Korean art groups, artists recognised a sign of crisis and sought creative artistic style.¹³⁴ Then, Lee and other art critics at that time found *Informel* and considered it as an answer to solve the issue of finding a representative of the Korean contemporary art as well as ‘national’ art.¹³⁵ This exhibition became a catalyst for the fundamental change of Korean art world. It has known as an important event because the influential press (*Chosun Ilbo*) supported *Informel* artists against the NAE, a strong advocate of old-fashioned academicism.¹³⁶

Lee put great emphasis on this exhibition supported by the following rationales: firstly, it was the

¹³¹ Choi Yeol (2011: 10).

¹³² Lee Gyeong-Seong (30 November 1957: 4).

¹³³ Lee Gyeong-Seong (1976: 20-27); The NMCA (presenter: Choi Yeol and Oh Gwang-Soo) (2006b: 75-82).

¹³⁴ Kim Hee-Young (2013: 271).

¹³⁵ Anon., ‘Exhibition: *Invitation of Contemporary Artists*’ (현대작가초대전), (9 October 1957); Oh Gwang-Soo (1997: 21); Choi Yeol (2011:10); Cho Eun-Jeong (2013: 146); Kim Hyun-Wha (2016: 136).

¹³⁶ Kwak Ah-Ram (2014: 1-2).

first time that Korean contemporary art manifested its code of conduct and started an ‘energetic parade’ during the transition period; and secondly, that Korean art developed itself to historical and spiritual ‘현대’ (closest to the meaning of ‘contemporary’).¹³⁷ What must not be lost here is that Lee is observing a paradigm shift or evolution (轉回) from the colonial period into a period where art is shaped by national identity, through negation and resistance that are based on a shadowed and creative spirit (‘재야정신, 창조정신을 기반으로 하는 부정과 저항의 전회’) to define the starting point of Korean ‘현대’ art.¹³⁸ The word ‘전회 (轉回)’ implied that Korean ‘현대’ art moved towards a creative and revolutionary attitude against a conservative and illiberal one that limited its potential to pursue an indigenous artistic style. Within this context, Lee Gyeong-Seong drew upon models in the Western world. One is from *Dadaism* (modern) and the other from *Informel* (contemporary). Lee strongly asserted that a repetition of a thesis (*Dadaism*) and an antithesis (*Informel*) is a historical rule of art, and it should be considered as a development aspect.¹³⁹

His criterion regarding the starting point of Korean contemporary art having evolved from an appearance of *Informel* has been widely accepted by art professionals.¹⁴⁰ They agreed on the following chronology: first, Korean modern art includes artists from the Joseon period who initially produced artworks by using art materials and techniques of western art to introduce the Impressionistic style of art in the 1910s; and second, contemporary art consists of artists who introduced *Informel* in the 1950s.¹⁴¹

On 4 October 1969, about two weeks before the museum’s opening, there was a round-table

¹³⁷ Choi Yeol interpreted the word ‘현대’ that implies the meaning of ‘contemporary’ in this article. *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Lee Gyeong-Seong (1976: 147); Choi Yeol (2011: 10). The word ‘轉回’ literally means ‘a passing or passage from one condition to another’.

¹³⁹ Choi Yeol (2011: 10).

¹⁴⁰ Oh Gwang-Soo, ‘Korean abstract art, its genealogy and trend’ (한국 추상미술, 그 계보와 동향), in Oh Gwang-Soo et al (1997: 11-32).

¹⁴¹ Choi Yeol (2011: 10-16 (10)).

discussion led by a group of five panellists – Kim Young Joo (artist), Lee Gu-Yeol (art critic), Lee Il (art critic), Lee Se-Deuk (artist), and Oh Gwang-Soo (art critic, the host of this discussion) – assembled at a company called Space (공간) to discuss the issue of ‘a national art museum’. The company published the art and architecture journal, *Space*, giving October issue to report the results of this discussion. One of their topics was how to define the term ‘현대’ (現代) along with the division into periods:¹⁴²

Oh: As I mentioned before, in terms of periodisation, in short, how should we classify the term ‘현대’?

Lee G-Y: The word ‘현대’ is very ambiguous. A Korean word ‘현대미술관’ (an English name at that time was the National Museum of Modern Art) is currently marked as the ‘modern’ art museum but not ‘contemporary’. When we look at other cases from abroad, their recognition of ‘modern’ and ours do not match.

Lee I: Well, our circumstances are quite complicated. We have used both terms and recognised them as having the same meaning without a clear criterion to classify ‘현대’ and ‘근대’ (近代, modern in Korean and pre-modern in English speaking countries).

Kim YJ: If so, then how to set the upper limit of that period would be an issue.

Lee SD: In the case of foreign countries, they considered a term ‘현대미술관’ that is a combination of both ‘근대 (近代)’ and ‘현대 (現代)’. Since there are no artworks in the museum, the national art museum should perform a comprehensive role from an archaeological viewpoint.

Lee I: Regarding the term ‘현대’, we say the ‘new art started from 1960’. Would it be appropriate to establish a criterion based on this analysis?

¹⁴² Space (1969: 28-32).

Lee GY: [...] I have heard that there will be an exhibition so-called the *100 Years of Modern Painting, Korea* next year. *Dongah Ilbo* is making its catalogue. Although there are insufficient amounts of academic resources, it seems that using a word ‘현대’ in the twentieth century is also applicable to the case in South Korea at any rate. In the case of foreign countries, meanwhile, they differentiate between the terms ‘contemporary’ and ‘modern.’

Lee I: Even countries abroad are not able to classify ‘modern’ and ‘contemporary’.

As Lee II states in the final comment, Koreans were not alone in debating the ambiguity surrounding these terms. The important consideration here is that the definition of these terms appeared to be necessary for the proper functioning of this national art museum.

The museum initially launched using the term ‘modern art’ that translated from the Korean word ‘현대’ in 1969. Within this context, there is a hidden historical fact. Lee Gyeong-Seong, the member of the advisory board after the museum’s opening at that time, claimed how to define and distinguish the concepts of modern and contemporary.¹⁴³ Lee emphasised slogans such as ‘지금 여기’ (literally means ‘here and now’) and ‘지금 이후의 미래’ (future after now).¹⁴⁴ He claimed that these phrases highlighted the importance of removing the painful memories of the past (colonial period). Lee considered South Korea’s modern history as a miserable and distorted one due to the colonial period (1919-1945).¹⁴⁵ In this context, Lee thought history of Korean modern art is an outdated thing to be removed. Instead, he recognised that of Korean contemporary art as a ‘field of beauty’ (미의 광야) that focuses on the progressive and pioneer spirit.¹⁴⁶ Thus, he opposed the

¹⁴³ Lee Gyeong-Seong (4 October 1973: 5).

¹⁴⁴ Lee In-Beom (2011: 355).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, (2011: 356).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

conservative NAE and supported creative and revolutionary art movement. In this regard, his desire as to making a national art museum could be an active idea in order to reform the old customs of Korean art and its related cultural policies.

Lee promoted his ideas vigorously to the Korean art world in order to solve this ensuing issue. He pointed out three elements: ‘rationalisation, modernisation, and globalisation’ (합리화, 현대화, 세계화). To be exact, his notion of modernisation lies with the contemporaneity that artists in South Korea must produce their creative art style based upon a close relationship between international art trends.¹⁴⁷ As the member of the advisory board, he promoted projects such as planning exhibitions of young artists, publishing their catalogues, and purchasing artworks in order to prepare for the modernisation and globalisation of museum culture. He considered the museum and its development process as the signs of contemporaneity. In 1987, due to this stance, the English name of the national art museum changed from the ‘National Museum of Modern Art, Korea’ to the ‘National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea.’

Opening the art museum and its performance during the Gyeongbok Palace era

Such a wholehearted endeavour led to the opening of the museum in the back garden of the Gyeongbok Palace on 20 October 1969, a date that coincided with the 18th NAE of Korea. It was called the Gyeongbok Palace Art Museum (경복궁미술관) and occupied a building once used as the Japanese Government-General Museum (조선총독부박물관).¹⁴⁸ This museum possessed two stories, with four exhibition rooms and a main hall but no storage space (Figure 12).¹⁴⁹

When Kim Im-Ryong, the first director of the art museum, was officially interviewed by the

¹⁴⁷ Choi Tae-Man (2011: 368); Kim Hyun-Wha (2016: 138).

¹⁴⁸ Jang Yeop (2009: 89).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

periodical journal *Space*, he mentioned that the museum site was not decided until September 1969.¹⁵⁰ The museum opened in October 1969, which means that the government had spent less than a month in deciding where to place the art museum.¹⁵¹ As Jang-Yeop notes, since the government had already decided the opening date of the NAE that year, it is not difficult to deduce that the issue of placing the NMMA in Gyeongbok Palace was rushed to meet that date (Figure 13).¹⁵²

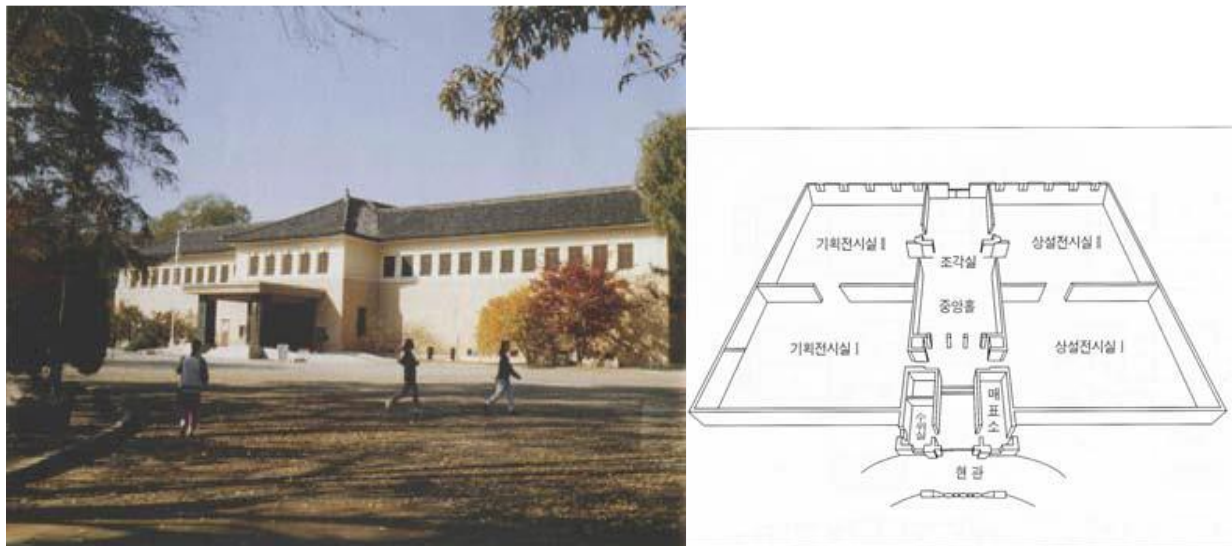


Figure 12 (Left) An image of the Gyeongbok Palace Art Museum. It became the National Museum of Modern Art, Korea (NMMA) in 1969. (Right) The floor plan of NMMA, Gyeongbok Palace. There were four exhibition rooms on both sides including a main hall (3,475m²) with sculpture room in the middle. By kind permission of and © NMK.

¹⁵⁰ Kim Im-Ryong (October 1969: 18).

¹⁵¹ Jang Yeop (2009: 87).

¹⁵² *Ibid.*



Figure 13 President Park Jung-Hee at the opening ceremony of 18th NAE (1969). By kind permission of and © Korea Public Policy Broadcasting Service, ehistory (e영상역사관, ehistory.go.kr).

There has not been much discussion regarding the reasons why the MCPI pushed forward this project to coincide with the opening date of the NAE. The daily newspaper, *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, explained it as follows: firstly, the MCPI was eager to transfer its responsibility for the NAE to the NMMA; and second, in response to the Korean art world's insistence on keeping the operation of the NAE and NMMA separate, the MCPI was keen to act rapidly.¹⁵³

Although the NMMA's its mission statement remained the same, to exhibit and operate the NAE, its function changed to 'Korea's first modern art centre'. When the NAE started as an institutional vestige of the Japanese Imperialist period, there was disagreement between the advisory committee

¹⁵³ Anon., 'The controversy of existence or abolition: the Deoksu Palace Art Museum' (덕수궁미술관 존폐시비), (26 August 1964: 5).

run by the MCPI and the NAA in terms of the initiative. This conflict limited the function to an exhibition space rather than an art museum. This implies that the exhibition space was a reluctant structure, albeit for a group of artists who aspired intensely for their works to be displayed.¹⁵⁴ Regarding the conflict between the MCPI and NAA, there was a notable news article prior to the opening of the NMMA that described the situation concerning the screening process of the NAE as follows:

As to the screening process of the 18th NAE, the MCPI, the NAA, and the KFAA are still divided over the issue, and then getting confused. Because of the MCPI's announcement regarding the selection of advisory committee members (자문위원) for the national art museum on the 1st October 1969, fortunately, it seems that this action found the clue to this chronic situation. The reformation of the NAE's regulations caused the confusion on account of the selection panels from the NAE for the newly established national art museum by its steering committee members but not the KFAA until now. Although the steering committee members of the museum have been selected, there will be trouble for a while due to both the MCPI's bewildered art administration and the Korean art field's complicated pedigree. Initially, the MCPI decided that the national art museum should take charge of judging the NAE instead of the KFAA. It abolished the screening regulations of the NAE so that members of the steering committee could recommend panels for the NAE. The KFAA strongly criticised the MCPI's action, and finally proposed a claim that Lee Chun-Seong (李春成, in office 1968-1970), the Vice-Minister of MCPI, was trying to control the art administration process entirely.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Space (October 1969: 9-18).

¹⁵⁵ Lee worked for the Ministry of Public Information (공보부) as the Vice-Minister from 1966 to 1968. Anon., 'Repetitive confusion of the National Contest [the NAE]' (국민심사 잇단 혼전), (2 October 1969: 5).

In a sense, the MCPI hoped to have a national art museum with a broad remit. However, their decision to let the NMMA operate the NAE was controversial. Based on the opinions of NAA members, they agreed with the MCPI's decision regarding the establishment of the museum. They denied, however, the idea that the new NMMA should hold onto the NAE after its opening. The NAA could not accept the MCPI's decisive action or the coverage by the mass media. Even though the MCPI sent an inquiry about the NAE and attempted to convince them,¹⁵⁶ members of the NAA replied by proposing that the NMMA, as a national modern art museum, should focus on acquisitions, preservation, and exhibitions rather than lend a space exclusively to an annual event.¹⁵⁷

A few art professionals suggested that not only the MCPI, but also art-related agents must accept criticism regarding this conflict. They, conversely, maintained that the NAE caused a problem every year and that both the MCPI and other art associations had evaded of their responsibilities.¹⁵⁸ This argument provided an opportunity to see the related matters critically and led the art museum to operate successfully. Consequently, the NMMA was freed from the duty of managing the NAE after 1981 (during the Deoksu Palace period).

The organisational plan of the first NMMA in the Gyeongbok Palace, proclaimed two months before its inception by the Presidential decree, stated that 'To control the cases of acquisition, conservation, exhibition and international exchange for modern artworks, we are placing this National Museum of Modern Art that is affiliated to the MCPI.'¹⁵⁹ It is crucial to identify that the NMMA, from the beginning, was officially defined as a modern art museum with exhibits, objects and phenomena related to the current state of the Korean art world. If it were to have been designated as a government agency, it could merely have been an exhibition site, rather than an

¹⁵⁶ The MCPI (23 August 1969).

¹⁵⁷ National Academy of Arts, Korea (대한민국예술원) (29 September 1969), quoted in *Space* (October 1969: 15-18).

¹⁵⁸ It is mentioned by Kim Young-Joo (western art painter). *Ibid.*, (October 1969: 29-32).

¹⁵⁹ The MCPI (23 August 1969).

independent and active art museum. Its actual function is supported by two rationales:

1. When the NMMA started out, its legal status was as an affiliated institution of the MCPI, which meant that it belonged to ‘public information’ (publicity, 公報) rather than the ‘cultural’ sector. Moreover, the first director, appointed under presidential decree in Article 2 (1969) was Kim Im-Ryong (金任龍), a government official without expertise in art. Under the circumstances, the NMMA had limited authority to appoint art professionals and hold facilities that represent the prerequisite conditions of museum management.¹⁶⁰

2. The NMMA’s first two tasks were to mount the National Art Exhibition and to create an advisory committee to effect its transfer from the MCPI whose role was evidenced in its official document: ‘When we did not have the national art museum as a government agency, the MCPI managed the NAE, but now the national art museum is established so that they can control this momentous event’.¹⁶¹

This statement suggests that at the outset the NMMA was only partly-formed as a national art museum. Since the NMMA could not inherit collections from the DPAM, which was merged into the NMK in 1968, its primary role concerned the NAE. As Lee In-Beom points out, it was, in effect, to follow an old tradition derived from the inertia of Japanese colonial museum policy or the governing pattern that was based on both the Japanese Government-General Museum and the Joseon Art Exhibition (조선미술전람회, former NAE).¹⁶² Lee has also observed the contradiction of this old inherited structure supporting an art museum culture in South Korea that, ideologically,

¹⁶⁰ Jang Yeop (2009: 87-88).

¹⁶¹ The MCPI (9 September 1969).

¹⁶² Lee In-Beom (1996: 290).

seemed to aim at the West.¹⁶³ At any rate, the NMMA was initiated separately from the DPAM, which had accumulated museum experience from the Japanese Imperial era. It was disconnected from that tradition which would result in trial and error as to managerial performance afterwards. The first organisational plan of the NMMA, from 23 August 1969, shows this (see Figure 14).¹⁶⁴

Article 1 (Installation)

There is the National Museum of Modern Art (NMMA) that is affiliated to the Ministry and also to the Minister of Culture and Public Information (MCPI)¹⁶⁵ in order to *control* the cases of acquisition, conservation, exhibition and international exchange for modern artworks.

Article 2 (Director)

1) There is the director of the national art museum. The director is assigned to either *chief of administration* or *chief of administrative bureau*. 2) The director handles the business in general that *receives orders from the MCPI* and supervises associated officials.

Article 3 (Chief of Administration)

To support the director of the museum, there is the *chief of administration*, who is assigned to the administrative secretary.

Article 4 (Number of Officials)

The number of officials in the museum can be seen in the attached table below.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ The MCPI (23 August 1969).

¹⁶⁵ The official English name at the time was the ‘National Museum of Modern Art, Korea’. The museum put the word ‘contemporary’ after its relocation to Gwacheon and administered the word ‘modern’ to the Deoksu Palace Art Museum in 1999.

¹⁶⁶ Here are the number of museum staffers during the Gyeongbok Palace period as following:

Article 5 (Division of Labour)

To divide the labour of the museum, there are people who take charge of general affairs and operation management. They are assigned to the administrative officers.

Article 6 (Person in charge of General Affairs)

The person in charge of general affairs takes charge of the following matters:

1. Matters regarding security, official seal and compilation, documents, budget, accountancy, and property management.
2. Matters regarding hire in the museum.
3. Matters regarding acquisition, reposition and management.
4. Matters regarding those not related to other bureaus under the jurisdiction.

Article 7 (Person in charge of Management)

1. Matters regarding exhibiting artworks.
2. Matters regarding international exchange of artworks.
3. Matters regarding studies and presentations of modern art.

There were eight staffers in total: 1 Administrative director (Director of the MMCA), 1 Administrative Secretary (Chief of Administration), 2 Administrative Officers (Head of Department), 2 Technical posts (Auxiliary workers from fourth and fifth-level), and 2 Gatekeepers.

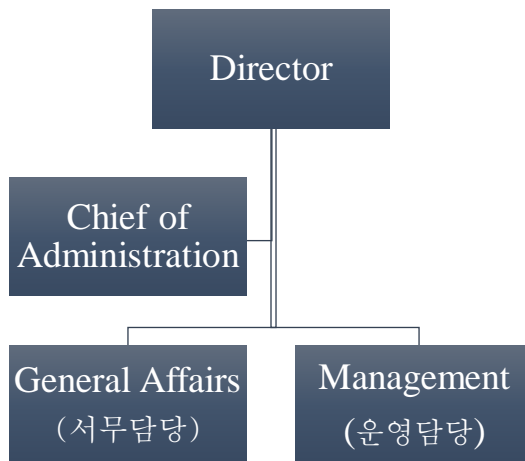


Figure 14 Organisational plan during the Gyeongbok Palace period¹⁶⁷

The government appointed personnel from the administrative officers and placed them in important posts such as director, chief of administration, and staff who took charge of both general affairs and operations. This suggested that the museum at that time was for temporary dispatch, not for the proper organisation of an art museum. Even though there was a decree which stipulated that ‘the museum controls the cases of acquisition, conservation, exhibition and international exchange for modern artworks’, the museum could nevertheless have staff who did not have any expertise in art. In addition, when the director of the NMMA, who was without any expertise in art and museum management, lost his future-oriented vision after its opening in 1969, the museum selected special advisory members (특별운영자문위원) to deal with any professional assignments.¹⁶⁸ This action, however, which was not included in the presidential decree, had great influence upon the NMMA’s activities later.

The first director of the national art museum, Kim Im-Ryong, only performed his directorship for a year. He had successively served as head of both the Central Broadcasting Station (서울중앙방송

¹⁶⁷ Jang Yeop (2009: 89).

¹⁶⁸ Jung Joon-Mo (2003: 160).

국, the Korean Broadcasting System (한국방송공사) since 1973) and the National Film Production Centre (국립영화제작소). Although there is not much information to illustrate his career, his appointment to the museum could be interpreted in two ways. According to the *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, his role as a director of the museum was merely temporary position prior to becoming chief of the planning and management division in the MCPI.¹⁶⁹ In this regard, there was an outdated custom in public offices for any senior officials that were about to reach the age of retirement. It was a prearranged procedure that officials could have the privileges of their former posts. Some considered this system unreasonable, but the public took it for granted without criticism.

Director Kim was born in Gyeongbuk Province (慶尙北道), which meant that he and President Park Jung-Hee had something in common. To control the entire country, Park used a strategy of appointing people based on political nepotism. Kim was discharged from the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1963, and this military background might have affected Park's decisions to promote him to such key positions as the Director of Cultural Properties Management (문화재 관리국장) and the presidential aide. Kim, himself, was of the opinion that the directorship of an art museum should be entrusted to someone with expertise in an art-related field.¹⁷⁰ His management approach was, first, that the museum must create a system to develop the level of exhibition, acquisition, conservation and any related art activities, and second, that the museum must have a selection committee who will consult and publish their managerial plan based on annual monetary assistance from the government.¹⁷¹

Kyunghyang Shinmun interviewed Kim two days after the museum's opening. During the interview, he explained that 'the museum will get better gradually over the course of time despite

¹⁶⁹ Anon., 'Promote Mr. Kim Im-Ryong to a Deputy Secretary General for Planning and Management in the Ministry of Culture and Public Information' (문공부 기획관리실장 김임용씨 승진), (10 October 1973: 2).

¹⁷⁰ Kim Im-Ryong (October 1969: 18).

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

being a void space without any artworks at this moment.¹⁷² Even though *Kyunghyang Shinmun* criticised the museum's poor conditions, he asserted positively that the national art museum would hold exhibitions, collect modern artworks, establish a permanent exhibition room, and preserve artworks to support the artistic activities of Korean artists.¹⁷³ He claimed that 'it is a much more urgent issue to research the NMMA's mission statements and manage business plans rather than establish an organised system of what advanced countries do.'¹⁷⁴ In this vein, Kim Im-Ryong could be a mediator who would build a bridge between museum practitioners, art-related agents, and museum-goers. During the Gyeongbok Palace period, Kim's successors were Cho Seong-Gil, Park Sang-Yeol, Jang Sang-Gyu, and Park Ho-Jun (see Table 2).

Number	Name	Period	Explanatory Remarks (former position)
1	Kim, Im-Ryong (金任龍)	15 September 1969- 24 September 1970	Chief of the Central Broadcasting System
2	Cho, Seong-Gil (趙星吉)	25 September 1970- 31 July 1971	Head of the Central Broadcasting System
3	Park, Sang-Yeol (朴商烈)	1 August 1971- 24 February 1972	Director of the Central Public Information Centre
4	Jang, Sang-Gyu (張相奎)	25 February 1972- 14 March 1973	Chief of the Busan Broadcasting System
5	Park, Ho-Jun (朴曉僞)	15 March 1973- 6 December 1973	Head of the Planning and Management Office in the MCPI

Table 2 Former directors of the NMMA during the Gyeongbok Palace period¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Anon., 'Interview: Kim Im-Ryong, the first Director of the National Museum of Modern Art, Korea' (국립현대미술관 초대관장 김임용씨), (22 October 1969: 5).

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Jang Yeop (2009: 132).

Prior to the directorship of the NMMA, each worked at the MCPI or its affiliated agencies. Their primary concern seemed to be maintaining the museum *status quo* so that they could transfer to a higher position without any grounds for disqualification. Although they were unaccustomed to the position due to their different areas of expertise, there are important points to consider regardless of their identity as government officials. In short, these officials worked hard to keep the museum systematically viable. Several newspaper articles wrote positively of their performance. For example, Park Sang-Yeol set up criteria to carry forward the project in terms of purchasing representative modern artworks from Korean artists so as to display them permanently.¹⁷⁶

The museum started to collect artworks in 1971. Prior to this, the museum could not collect art or recruit museum experts. According to a news article that was published by the *Dongah Ilbo* in March 1970, the museum had been closed for five months after its opening.¹⁷⁷ One of the main reasons was lack of monetary assistance from the government. Since the museum's primary purpose had focused only on the NAE, the museum could not host the first planned exhibition (other than the NAE) until May 1970.¹⁷⁸ The museum had two purposes relating to acquisition activity. One was to secure artworks for display, and the other was to have a permanent exhibition space in the Deoksu Palace that was expected to open in 1973. Since there had been a movement from the end of 1969 to early 1970 to reconsider the value of modern art, the museum could buy artworks and promote them to the public as important cultural heritage.¹⁷⁹ Notwithstanding there was not enough money - only about 8 million Won was initially appropriated to spend on the

¹⁷⁶ Anon., 'The National Museum of Modern Art' (현대미술관), (9 November 1971: 5).

¹⁷⁷ Anon., 'The National Museum of Modern Art, Korea is in a state of 'open without any business'' (국립현대미술관 휴업 상태), (10 March 1970: 5).

¹⁷⁸ The museum hosted four exhibitions: *Korean Association of Modern Sculpture* (한국현대조각연합전), *Members from the Mokwoo Group* (목우회), the *Baekyang Group* (백양회), and the *First Case of Oriental Painting* (초대동양화전). Anon., 'Four modern art exhibitions at the National Museum of Modern Art, Korea' (국립미술관 네 현대미술전), (4 May 1970: 5).

¹⁷⁹ Jang Yeop (1996: 79).

acquisition of artworks - Park led the art museum in a swift movement to target artworks for purchase.¹⁸⁰ Park also appointed personal consultants such as Yoo Geun-Joon (art critic and professor of the Fine Arts department at Seoul National University), Lee Gyeong-Seong (professor at Hong-Ik University), Choi Soon-Woo (chief of the Fine Arts Department at the National Museum of Korea) and Lee Gu-Yeol (art critic) as members of a special advisory committee to run the museum more efficiently.¹⁸¹

Criteria for the purchase artworks were 1) artworks ranging from 1910 to the present (1970), 2) give priority to artists who produced artworks and have already passed away, 3) artworks that contributed greatly to the Korean modern art scene, and also have a great value from an art-historical or educational perspective, 4) artworks that are awarded at the Joseon Art Exhibition and have ethnic characteristics, 5) artworks that are awarded at the NAE (대통령상), 6) artworks that are submitted and awarded at international-scale exhibitions, and so on.¹⁸²

As to the criteria mentioned above, however, these were overly general points to be evaluated in relation to the museum's targeted collections based on details such as artwork, artist and period of making, regardless of the low amount of allocated budget. Notwithstanding this situation, in 1971, the museum collected 101 artworks including 13 purchased and 88 donated ones. In particular, donated artworks that they received from the bereaved, the museum attempted to gain a significant number of artworks for the restoration and investigation of Korean modern art without enough monetary support (see Table 3).¹⁸³ In the meantime, the museum spent nearly 11.2 million Won to collect artworks during the Gyeongbok Palace era (from 1971 to 1973, in particular).¹⁸⁴ The museum purchased well-known modern artworks and classified them into five categories: Oriental

¹⁸⁰ Anon., 'The National Museum of Modern Art' (현대미술관), (9 November 1971: 5).

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² Lee Gyeong-Seong (January-February 1972: 26-27).

¹⁸³ Choi Tai-Man (2008: 18).

¹⁸⁴ Jang Yeop (2009: 91).

painting, Western art painting, sculpture, crafts, and calligraphy.

Categories Year	Purchase	Donation	Management Conversion	Total
1971	13	88	0	101
1972	28	9	0	37
1973	0	0	4	4
Total	41	97	4	142

Table 3 Details of collection during the Gyeongbok Palace period (unit: piece)¹⁸⁵

From 1969 to 1974, there were only five planned exhibitions, except the exhibition that was co-created with the British Embassy (*British Watercolour Paintings*) in 1974.¹⁸⁶ This did not change until 1980 when group exhibitions flourished based on thematic, genre and periodic classifications. In terms of museum activities such as research, education, and facilities, Park Sang-Yeol, when director, introduced a permanent collection space in order to attract people to donate their artworks.¹⁸⁷ The museum also took measures to facilitate permanent collection storage space meeting environmental criteria.¹⁸⁸ The museum also made a publication plan to research and locate references regarding Korean modern art and produced the exhibition, *60 years of Korean Modern Art* (한국근대미술 60년전) in August 1972, which reflected on the emergent canon. The

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, (2009: 92).

¹⁸⁶ Choi Tae-Man (2008: 23).

¹⁸⁷ Anon., 'Inauguration: 1972 (3) Summary of 60 years regarding Korean modern art' (출범: 1972(3) 현대미술 60년 정리), (11 January 1972: 5).

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

exhibition catalogue then became a primary reference for Korean art history.¹⁸⁹

Early cultural policy and president Park Jung-Hee

There have been few notable discussions concerning the cultural policy of South Korea since the Korean Association for Public Administration (KAPA) was established in 1956. It is not only due to the Ministry of Culture's short history, but also to insufficient research and contradictions in contemporary policies. In short, there was supposed to be an active interface between the political ideology of the government and its actions, but this has failed due to the government's economy-first policy that caused cultural issues to be relegated to a subordinate role. The creation of a national art museum bears the scars of this situation.

According to Park Gwang-Mu, who is an expert in cultural policy and has been in several high-ranking positions as a government official, the concept of 'cultural policy' is a public-oriented activity which implements cultural implications by virtue of policies.¹⁹⁰ He described it as 'a comprehensive concept that consists of varied ideas, behaviours, and plans purposely designed by the main agent who carries out any policy in order to add, increase, and retain cultural value'.¹⁹¹

Based on his explanation, the implementation of cultural policy improves the level of social systems and creates an atmosphere of public cultural activities. The government's primary concern is to systematise the processes that mobilise and distribute cultural resources for the public. Thus, the government of South Korea, which experienced unstable socio-political situations during the simultaneous processes of rapid modernisation, dictatorial government, and ideological conflict between North Korea, could not place cultural policy as a top-priority assignment. The cultural

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Park Gwang-Mu (2013: 43)

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

organisations that were initially planned during the early periods of South Korea's newly established government were not exceptional cases, according to the situation mentioned above. The cultural policy of South Korea has brought changes regarding its core missions in accordance with the current times and shift of political authority.¹⁹² The context-setting process of the museum results from these environmental factors.

In his inaugural speech of 1964, President Park Jung-Hee stressed that the Korean populace should inherit the revolutionary ideas of recent years and mobilise them in national reformation movement.¹⁹³ Park claimed to support the national reconstruction policy and the revitalising of ethnic identity. However, he recognised the fact that only powerful economic development could establish a solid foundation on which to achieve those targets. Based upon Yim Hak-Soon's analysis, Park's government had regarded the cultural sector as subordinate but nevertheless laid the foundations for the country's cultural policy.¹⁹⁴ Firstly, the support system of an arts and culture sector was established after the MCPI in 1968, and the Korean Culture and Arts Foundation (KCAF, 1973) which launched consecutively. Moreover, the Culture and Arts Promotion Act (문화예술포진법, Article 2337) enacted in August 1972 formed a legal basis for establishment and operation as to measures for culture and art promotion, the fund-raising policy of culture and art promotion, and the KCAF. Lastly, the first phase of a Five-year Culture and Arts Restoration Plan (문예진흥5개년계획, 1974-1978) was established and developed that marked a milestone in approaching cultural policy systematically.¹⁹⁵

According to this analysis, President Park's regime established a solid foundation on which to construct cultural policy in South Korea, such as the legal system, organisation, supporting projects,

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, (2013: 53).

¹⁹³ The Presidential Secretary Office for the Press (대통령공보비서관실) (1964).

¹⁹⁴ Yim Hak-Soon (February 2012: 160).

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

and cultural finance.¹⁹⁶ His regime, however, pursued a certain ideology, objective, policy matter, and administrative system. Many researchers have commented on both the implications and characteristics that are embedded in the cultural policy of President Park's regime.¹⁹⁷ In contrast, there are only few findings regarding the analysis of what contexts and environmental factors that affected the regime's cultural policy.¹⁹⁸

The plan for a 'comprehensive national culture centre'

Lee In-Beom, an art critic and former curator of the museum, insists that the word 'museum' is an ideological concept that only vaguely represents the implications of the art museum system.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, Lee strongly suggests that a nation's art museum structure partakes of the historicity of the period.²⁰⁰ Although the formation and development of South Korea's art museum system can be placed in the context of rapid modernisation and acceptance of Western culture that was imprinted by the Japanese, a new phase emerged in the 1960s when President Park adopted his cultural policy after his inauguration. As was stated earlier, the April Revolution and military coup stimulated action.²⁰¹ Not only did these events induce a great interest in self-recognition of

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Jeong Hong-Ik (1992: 229-245); Jung Kap-Young (1993: 82-132); Oh Yang-Yeol (1995: 29-74); Jeon Jae-Ho (1998: 83-106); Yim Hak-Soon (February 2012: 161-162).

¹⁹⁸ Yim Hak-Soon (February 2012: 162).

¹⁹⁹ According to the ICOM, they define the word 'museum' as "a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment". ICOM, *Museum Definition*, <<http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/>> [accessed 6 October 2015]. It was adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, on 24 August 2007.

²⁰⁰ Lee In-Beom (1996: 272).

²⁰¹ Lee Bong-Beom (2011: 423-425).

ethnicity (minjok-seong, 民族性) and Korean studies, but it justified the Park regime's dictatorship by proclaiming the Charter of National Education (국민교육헌장).²⁰² Within this context, President Park's cultural policy is closely linked with the modernisation of 'the fatherland', economic development, the legitimacy of his dictatorship, and anti-communism; considered ideological necessities for unifying the country under his rule.²⁰³

In particular, Park associated his 'economic development model' with the rejuvenation of Korean identity, as here in his important speech at the ground breaking ceremony for his 'comprehensive national culture centre for the public' (종합민족문화센터) in 1966:

My fellow citizens and our distinguished guests! It is such a meaningful day to celebrate the ground-breaking ceremony of the 'comprehensive museum (종합 박물관)' that forms a part of construction plans regarding the 'comprehensive national culture centre.' [...] After the liberation in 1945, because of unquestioning acceptance of foreign culture and an age of turbulence owing to the Korean War, we could not develop and support our ethnic culture so that indigenous Korean identity has not been established since then [...] If we would like to facilitate this national project that has gone smoothly, the psychological attitude of South Korea should assist it in leading their self-reliance [...] Hope this comprehensive museum performs not only as a mere decorative exhibition space that collects and exhibits the cultural artefacts from our ancestors, but also as a genuine research centre of national culture history which finds disseminated or buried cultural properties and develops new ethnic culture to underpin the modernisation of the fatherland, as well as raising the sense of sovereignty of the ethnic group (民族).²⁰⁴

²⁰² Choi Seok-Young (2008: 202-205).

²⁰³ Jung Kap-Young (1993); Jeon Jae-Ho (1998); Yim Hak-Soon (2002).

²⁰⁴ The Presidential Secretary Office for the Press (22 November 1966).

My fellow citizens and our distinguished guests! I am delighted to participate in the ground-breaking ceremony of the ‘comprehensive national culture centre’ today. As you may know, we are trying our best not only to modernise the fatherland to realise a sense of self-reliance internally, but on the other hand, also the construction of a communal society for the Asia-Pacific. It is such an urgent task to establish the sense of sovereignty of the ethnic group which, based on our thinking and behaviour, and underpins this historic project. It is to transcend our ethnic group’s outstanding culture and its tradition. Hence, we should create a new ethnic culture in the process of constructing a ‘cultural powerhouse.’ We have a splendid ethnic culture to boast of all around the world, and it was entirely reached by a determined national identity.²⁰⁵

In this speech, Park frequently used such phrases as ‘ethnic culture’, ‘national culture’, and ‘ethnic group’. He recognised that culture - in other words an invisible mental attitude - as the ‘second economy’ (제2의 경제) capable of supporting the modernisation process.²⁰⁶ However, this grand plan to make a ‘comprehensive museum’ was ultimately rejected in the early stages of construction process because of its illogicality and cost.²⁰⁷

The proposed centre was initially visualised as covering areas ranging from classic antiquities to modern art, but there was an objection to this from the Korean arts community, who at the time desired a national art museum as discussed above.²⁰⁸ They requested an independent art museum that deals only with modern artworks. As Lee In-Beom explains, the ideological or methodological

²⁰⁵ The Presidential Secretary Office for the Press (25 April 1967).

²⁰⁶ Yim Hak-Soon (February 2012: 171).

²⁰⁷ Lee In-Beom (2002: 55); Jung Joon-Mo (2003: 159).

²⁰⁸ Lee Gyeong-Seong (1998: 204-206); Lee In-Beom (2002: 54-55).

confusion caused by both the rise of nationalism and the plans for making the comprehensive national museum, gave rise to an unprecedented interest in museums by the public.²⁰⁹ To support this phenomenon, Lee Nan-Young (李蘭映), who worked as a curator for the NMK (1957-1986), published *Introduction to Museum Studies* (박물관학입문) in 1969, the first professional reference in the field. While these public debates were ensuing, private art museums, such as Gansong (간송, founder: Jeon Hyung-Pil, 全鏐弼), Hoam (호암, founder: Lee Byung-Cheol, 李秉喆), and so on, were developing vast art collections as well as periodic exhibitions and catalogues.²¹⁰

Not much has been written regarding the reasons why President Park and his government defined and promoted a concept of Korean ethnicity, though it was doubtless a core nation-building strategy.²¹¹ It is evident that this exerted great influence on South Korea's cultural development at this time, supported by the MCPI.

The MCPI's concept of 'public information (공보)' was related to promoting anti-communism through press releases, promotional movies, periodicals, and radio broadcasting. From the 1960s, the government used the mass media purposely to advertise their policies due to the intensified function of the public opinion poll. The mass media was a powerful tool in overcoming socio-political chaos after several sudden historical events, such as the invasion by North Korean guerrillas after the Korean War. The Ministry of Public Information (MPI, 공보부) was launched on 22 June 1961 by the National Government Organisational Act (정부조직법), and the missions of international propaganda from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and part of those of arts and culture from the MCE were transferred, including the National Theatre of Korea (국립극장) and National Centre for Korean Traditional Performing Arts (valid from 2 October 1961).²¹² Consequently, the MPI expanded and was reorganised into the MCPI.

²⁰⁹ Lee In-Beom (1996: 291).

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Chang Young-Min (2007: 449-452).

²¹² Park Gwang-Mu (2013: 128-129).

This change made it possible for the MCPI to combine the tasks of both culture and public information. Even President Park anticipated the birth of MCPI on account of its efficiency in systematising a value system of newly established ethnic culture and preparing a unified structure as to exerting effective administration.²¹³ The MCPI, however, could not provide well-organised and macroscopic policies regarding a ‘Culture and Arts Restoration Plan’ (문예중흥계획) that covered all art and culture sectors on account of the lack of sufficient expertise, experience, and monetary assistance.²¹⁴ The news article below supports this by criticising how the MCPI conventionally dealt with culture and arts policy.

In the aim of unifying the culture, arts, and administration sectors, it has been a year since the MCPI has taken over control of comprehensive projects regarding arts and culture, and of cultural heritage from the Ministry of Culture and Education (MCE) on 24 July 1968. The MCPI has performed a dynamic role in the name of ‘revival of ethnic culture’ (민족문화의 중흥) throughout the arts and culture sectors, and public information has attempted a ground-breaking policy improvement. This endeavour, however, could not go well owing to public relation-centred administration which caused much trial and error. In terms of creating the ‘comprehensive national culture centre’, the plan to build a modern art museum has consequently been rejected. The construction cost of the National Theatre Centre at first needed 4 billion Won but has now skyrocketed up to 16 billion Won as a result of four design revisions. It clearly shows the contradictory aspect of improvised administration. [...] ²¹⁵

²¹³ The Presidential Secretary Office (대통령비서실) (25 July 1968).

²¹⁴ Park Gwang-Mu (2013: 161).

²¹⁵ Anon., ‘Fields of culture, arts, and administration have not reached the level of unification’ (문화, 예술, 행정: 일원화 못미쳐), (25 July 1969: 5).

President Park strongly insisted that the MCPI works for artists who are associated with both culture and arts to enhance their status and protect their rights and interests. Furthermore, it demonstrated that this action would offer them unconstrained conditions and environments so that the Korean populace could understand its huge accomplishment. This positive outlook, however, turned in an unexpected direction. Although the NMMA opened after the inception of the MCPI without proper protocols for understanding the concepts of ‘national’ and ‘art museum’, the repeated trials and errors concerning museum awareness and its practice made it possible for the museum to interact with associated agents gradually.

Conclusion

Both art professionals and the public knew that having a national art museum was an urgent issue to consider. News articles on the culture and art sectors during the 1950s continually contended that improving the status of Korean art should largely depend upon a well-organised art education system. To this end, having an art museum according to whichever administrative models was indispensable for Korean society. No matter what the government considered its organisational details to be, as either a national or municipal model, the museum should carry out its core mission to highlight its symbolic importance. However, somehow the trajectory of the museum was derailed from the beginning. Even supposing a museum could be a representative icon of modern society, people in South Korea were not ready for sudden and radical cultural progress after a time of war. There was, however, constant controversy over whether museums, including cultural organisations, were necessary or not during the late 1960s.

From an analysis of the early period of the museum, the government maintained consistency through the lens of its cultural policies. However, its cultural project to make ‘an art palace’ failed to put in place a proper systematised infrastructure. It demonstrates that while the government decided to open the museum, their initial plan mainly focused on the ability to provide a museum building and promote this outcome as such a wondrous achievement to the public.

The museum was enmeshed in difficulties, which centred on not only the government's approach to culture but also to its use of propaganda. In terms of the success of being a national art museum with just eight staff in 1969, the question that needs to be asked is whether the museum performed an active role for the Korean people in the name of enhancing culture awareness or if it did not.

Chapter Two

The impact of the West

The history of the twentieth century in South Korea can be encapsulated in a few phrases: the colonial period under Japanese Imperialism, ideological conflict between the South and North, and the age of division after the war. The Korean War marked a new stage in the political relationship between South Korea and the U.S. William Stueck, a distinguished historian, called the war, ‘a seminal event of the early Cold War, this tragic incident remarkably changed the terrain of socio-political circumstances in the Far East and repositioned the diplomatic stance of South Korea in the direction of anti-communism’.²¹⁶ And Rosemary Foot, a senior researcher in International Relations, has described the implications as follows:

1. The first refers to the death and destruction wrought by the conflict and its role in solidifying the division of the peninsula.
2. The second factor reminds us of how the Korean War globalised the Cold War and the American global presence.
3. Related to this outcome is my third factor and that is the U.S. role in establishing the bilateral *security architecture* in East Asia – the *hubs and spokes* system as U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles termed it – which has mostly been maintained, even after the collapse of the former Soviet Union. This bilateral alliance system has had consequences for the various post-Cold War

²¹⁶ Stueck (September 2010: 266-287 (266)).

attempts in the Asia-Pacific to establish multilateral security structures. [...] ²¹⁷

Foot suggested that the U.S. Government had a change of political attention towards Asia after the outbreak of the Korean War, despite the continual tensions and conflicts which took place in Europe during the Cold War period. ²¹⁸ With the U.S. perceiving itself as the custodian of world order, it spent defence budgets and approved a rapid build-up of military forces, in an action to protect and consolidate ties with South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, and Thailand. Even before the Korean War, Korea had fallen under the control of the U.S. military (USAMGIK) following the defeat of Japan. ²¹⁹ It means that the principal purpose of USAMGIK was to imprint liberal model of American democracy on Korean society. In this regard, the USAMGIK feared any leftists that would threaten social stability and promoted the capitalist system simultaneously.

Under these circumstances, Koreans were obsessed with preserving and protecting their cultural traditions and spiritual values. It was a manifestation of ‘cultural nationalism’. ²²⁰ Escaping from the colonial period, South Korea sought to have its self-government as an independent nation. However, South Korea was not able to express their national identity during the occupation of USAMGIK. This trend continued after the establishment of Lee Seung-Man’s government due to the impact of the U.S. Government. In order to advocate both anti-communism and nationalism, Lee put emphasis on enlightening the national consciousness by investigating indigenous Korean culture such as protecting cultural heritages and artworks in Gyeongju (경주, 慶州). ²²¹ At the same time, the USAMGIK prepared a plan for promoting ancient Korean art and its related activities.

²¹⁷ Foot (2011: 160).

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, (2011: 161).

²¹⁹ Kim Jeom-Sook (2011: 265-266); Choi Yeol (2012: 100).

²²⁰ Cho Eun-Jeong (2013: 148).

²²¹ *Ibid.*, (2013: 149).

As an example, the USAMGIK established a Bureau of Culture (later changed to the Bureau of Culture and Education (문교부) in July 1948). It was interested in Korean antiquity, and sought to house and protect historical, cultural and religious objects and installations, as well as reopen museums, particularly the NMK and its local museums.²²² However, the USAMGIK might have another purpose based upon political consideration. According to Chung Moo-Jeong's analysis, the USAMGIK recognised that Korean society would need their guidance and encouragement in order to escape from the moment of left-right ideological conflict.²²³ By the promotion of ancient Korean art, the USAMGIK could instil ideas into the people's mind that the U.S. is a powerful supporter of promoting South Korea's national consciousness. Thus, the USAMGIK could have *de facto* control of the Korean society.

Although the Korean populace received limited information about Western art up until 1950, the USAMGIK enacted several cultural policies introducing American culture and arts. It established, for example, a Fine Arts school at the Seoul National University Plan (SNUP, 국립서울대학교 설치령) in 1946.²²⁴ It was based upon an educational model in the U.S., and the USAMGIK selected a group of right-wing academics to control.²²⁵ Also, Chang Pal (張勃, 1901-2001), the first Head of Fine Arts school, was a person trained in New York and studied art education. In this regard, the school taught students by following the American curriculum.²²⁶ At that time, the USAMGIK supported the Joseon Artists Association (조선미술가협회, established in November 1945, later became Daehan Art Association (대한미술협회)), a right-wing and pro-American group, by holding

²²² Local museums were reopened in Gyeongju, Buyeo (부여, 扶餘), Gongju (공주, 公州), and Gaeseong (개성, 開城). Chung Moo-Jeong (2000: 22-24).

²²³ *Ibid.*, (2000: 28).

²²⁴ Kim Jung-Hee (2012: 11).

²²⁵ Oh Wook-Hwan and Choi Jeong-Sil (1993: 73).

²²⁶ Kim Jung-Hee (2012: 14-18).

the NAE to attract as many artists as possible to their side.²²⁷ Then, the USAMGIK even awarded artists who were advocates of both pro-American and Lee Seung-Man's government a prize so-called Seoul Culture Award (서울시문화상) since 1948.²²⁸

As mentioned earlier, during the Korean War, the government enacted the Law for the Protection of Culture to launch both the Decree of Registering Human Cultural Assets and NAA.²²⁹ This brought Korean culture and the arts under the government's bureaucratic control. One strategy that arose from this was to have war artists depict war heroes and a visual means to support anti-communist rhetoric.²³⁰ The government also promoted a large-scale mural painting project at the Busan Provisional Government (부산 임시수도 정부청사) in 1952. The artists Kim Whan-Ki (金煥基, 1913-1974), Kim Byung-Gi (金秉麒, 1916-), and Nam Gwan (南寬, 1911-1990) participated in this project called 'Imitating Eugène Delacroix's (1798-1863) *Liberty Leading the People*'.²³¹ Its aim was clear but quite intended. The government recognised the figure of Liberty as an emblem of freedom or democracy against communism.²³² In this sense, the government used this painting for mobilising the people as one entity that were experiencing the tragedy of war. Ultimately, the painting supported Lee and his pro-American First Republic regime (1948-1960) ideologically (Figure 15).

Through the Truman Doctrine, the U.S. strengthened the first president's, Lee Seung-Man, hand in fighting communism. In 1951, Lee became the founder of 'Jayoo' (자유당, 自由黨), a political

²²⁷ Choi Yeol (2003: 239).

²²⁸ *Ibid*; Cho Eun-Jeong (2013:149).

²²⁹ Anon., 'Law for the Protection of Culture' (문화보호법), (October 1954); Anon., 'Proclamation of registration decree for cultural assets' (문화인등록령 공포), (14 May 1953).

²³⁰ Choi Yeol (2003: 243-244).

²³¹ Lee Jun (Fall 1985: 62).

²³² Cho Eun-Jeong mentioned that it is not easy to verify their participation in this project. Kim Byung-Gi denied it and Nam Gwan was in Japan during that time. Cho mentioned that it is possible for them to deny their participation due to the level of mural painting's artistic originality. Choi Yeol (2003: 244); Cho Eun-Jeong (2005a: 102-103).

party composed largely of pro-Japanese collaborators who weakened its ‘ethnic legitimacy’ but which offered the compensation of anti-communist ideology.²³³ At that time, the social reality in South Korea had become particularly harsh. Under Lee’s dictatorial government, everyday life and any liberal artistic activities were controlled. Because of this, many artists at that time went to North Korea, and this resulted in a huge gap in the South Korean art circle.



Figure 15 A completed mural painting of ‘Imitating *Liberty Leading the People*’ at the Busan Provisional Government (1952). By kind permission of and © Korea Public Policy Broadcasting Service, ehistory.

²³³ Yoon Beom-Mo (2011: 169-170).

For artists, there were two choices: pander to the Jayoo or go against authority. Artists such as Go Hee-Dong (高義東, 1886-1965), the first recognised Korean artist who studied Western artistic style in Japan, worked as a ‘puppet’ for the Jayoo and led the Korean art circle.²³⁴ Later, these government-patronised artists occupied positions in conservative organisations such as the NAE and NAA. This historical fact presents some symbolic implications: first, the Korean art circle could not unite into one entity against authority; second, a hierarchy among artists had emerged; and finally, the diversity of Korean artistic styles disappeared for a while. The implication was that the Korean art circle lost momentum regarding its representation of *zeitgeist* in the middle of this turbulent period. This would change, for some, through the influence of American modern art. It is this transformation in Korean understanding and approaches to art, and the involvement of the museum in this process that forms the subject of this chapter.

International exchange with the U.S. and the transformation of the Korean art circle

In August 1953, the U.S. established the United States Information Agency (USIA, 1953-1999). It was designed for advocating a positive and credible image of the U.S. in foreign countries. But fundamentally, it was for diverting any intellectuals’ attention from communism.²³⁵ As a solution, the USIA, an organisation in charge of international cultural exchange, was existed. A key aim of the USIA was to broaden the interactive dialogue with other countries. In this sense, the U.S. took meticulous care in its outlook towards South Korea so as conceal its political intentions: it not only exported American culture, but it imported international cultures too under the interests of ‘understanding traditions and religions of others’.²³⁶ In this context, the Department of State at

²³⁴ Cha Geun-Ho (31 July 1960).

²³⁵ Chung Moo-Jeong (2005b: 10).

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, (2005b: 14).

the 15th Semi-annual Report to Congress mentioned that:

Obstacles to good relations between the United States and the countries of the Far East are numerous and difficult to solve. [...] Cooperative educational exchange projects offer one constructive way of reducing these obstacles. They can do much to convince the people of these countries that the United States is sincerely interested in helping them to understanding their problems and aspirations.²³⁷

In the meantime, Seoul National University (SNU, 서울대학교) had been supported by the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA, 1953-1955) and International Cooperative Administration (ICA, 1956-1961).²³⁸ The FOA then helped the SNU in setting up a sister relationship with the University of Minnesota through which these two universities shared both their expertise and knowledge, though some critics saw the FOA on behalf of the U.S. as engaging in propagating American ideology.²³⁹ As a part of the programme, Fine Arts schools at both universities hold exchange exhibitions: *Korean Art, Faculty & Students, SNU* (1957) in Minnesota, and *American Art, Faculty & Students, University of Minnesota* (1958) in Seoul.²⁴⁰ It was such an opportunity for Koreans to see diverse artistic genres and materials in American art world (Figure 16 and 17).

In South Korea, the exchange of exhibitions with the U.S. was central to the introduction of new artistic traditions and values. In the 1950s, Koreans could see exhibitions on contemporary trends of Western (and primarily American) art for the first time. The United States Information Service (USIS), an organisation in charge of the USIA operations overseas, worked as a mediator. It was

²³⁷ The Department of State (March 1956: 11), excerpt from ‘Activities in the Far East’.

²³⁸ The FOA changed its name to ICA in June 1955. Kim Young-Na (2005: 100); Chung Young-Mok (2011: 142).

²³⁹ Kozloff (May 1973: 44); Guilbaut (Winter 1980: 68).

²⁴⁰ See details: Chung Young-Mok (2011: 149-159).

responsible for building a strong cultural network between the U.S. and South Korea.²⁴¹ As the USIA's diplomatic post, the USIS performed missions such as educational and cultural exchange activities, information programmes and international broadcasting.²⁴²



Figure 16 A banner of exhibition *American Art, Faculty & Students, University of Minnesota* from 23 May to 31 May in 1958. This exhibition held at Seoul National University, Dongsung-Dong (동숭동) campus in Seoul. By kind permission of and © Visual Arts Institute, SNU (Jo-Hyung Archive vol. 3).

²⁴¹ National Archives, *United States Information Agency (RG 306)*, <<https://www.archives.gov/research/foreign-policy/related-records/rg-306.html>> [accessed 14 July 2017].

²⁴² *Ibid*; Cockcroft (June 1974: 39-41).



Figure 17 (Left) The view of *American Art, Faculty & Students, University of Minnesota* (1958). (Right) Bertil Dahlman, *Painting*, 1951, oil on canvas. One of the submitted artworks in this exhibition that was influenced by American Abstract Expressionism. By kind permission of and © (Left) Visual Arts Institute, SNU (Jo-Hyung Archive vol. 3), (Right) Bertil Dahlman.

There were introduced exhibitions of Western art such as: *Belgium Contemporary Art* (벨기에 현대 미술전, 1953), *American Students Work from College and University Art Departments* (전미국 미술 대학생전, 1956), *Eight American Artists* (미국현대회화조각 8인전, 1957), *The Family of Man* (인간가족 전, 1957), *Contemporary Engraving from West Germany* (현대서독판화전, 1958), and *Highlights of Twentieth Century American Art* (20세기 미국미술의 하이라이트, 1958). As to the case of the *Eight American Artists* in South Korea, both the USIS and Seattle Art Museum were involved in the process of exhibition planning. It was held at the NMK in Deoksu Palace and included artworks mainly by the Pacific Northwest School artists, such as Mark Tobey and Morris Graves.²⁴³ Also, the case of *Family of Man*, a photography exhibition curated by Edward Steichen, attracted more than 300,000 visitors. Koreans responded to its universal but touching topics such as love, family,

²⁴³ Kim Young-Na (1988: 195); Choi Yeol (2012: 169).

and death (Figure 18 and 19).²⁴⁴ These exhibitions provided strong motivation for Korean artists in order to locate their position in the international art world.²⁴⁵ For them, looking at these exhibitions was a rare opportunity to search Korea's future-oriented unique and creative artistic style.²⁴⁶ It was because Korean artists could have only limited information about contemporary trends of American art from periodical subscriptions (*Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the *New York Times*) at the time.²⁴⁷



Figure 18 Exhibition *The Family of Man* at the Gyeongbok Palace Art Museum (1957). By kind permission of and © National Archives of Korea.

²⁴⁴ Kim Hee-Young (2008: 84).

²⁴⁵ Lee Gyeong-Seong (22 May 1953); Lee Gyeong Seong (17 April 1957: 4)

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ The USIS supported funds to purchase periodicals and translate art-related references. Lee Gu-Yeol (1992b: 491); Kim Young-Na (2005: 102); Kim Hee-Young (2013: 275).



Figure 19 Lee Seung-Man (the leftmost person) visits the exhibition *The Family of Man*. By kind permission of and © National Archives of Korea.

There was also a flow of Korean contemporary art to the West. In 1957, the antiquities exhibition, *Art in Asia and the West*, at the San Francisco Museum of Art, also included artworks by three Korean modern artists: Park Soo-Geun (朴壽根, 1914-1965), Kim Young-Gi (金永基, 1911-2003), and Song Jae-Ho. It was part of a UNESCO project encouraging mutual appreciation of the cultural values of Asia and the West.²⁴⁸ There were other exhibitions - *Korean Contemporary Paintings* (1958) and *International Biennale of Contemporary Colour Lithography* (1958) - that introduced

²⁴⁸ There were four Buddhist paintings, including sculptures which were lent by the Fogg Art Museum, the Honolulu Academy of Arts, and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Contemporary paintings from three Korean artists were from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. J.M. Zimmerman. See Grace L. McCann Morley, *Art in Asia and the West* [exhibition catalogue] (1957: 35-38), quoted in Chung Moo-Jeong (2000: 95-96).

diverse genres of Korean contemporary art to Western audiences.²⁴⁹ The first of these exhibitions was curated by Ellen Psaty Conant, an associate professor and Far-Eastern expert at the University of Georgia, and displayed 62 artworks consisting of oil paintings, ink scrolls, gouaches, and woodcuts at the World House Gallery, New York. The second exhibition was held at Cincinnati Art Museum, which displayed the artworks of artists including Kim Jeong-Ja (金靜子, 1929-) and Kim Jeong-Sook (金貞淑, 1917-1991), both female pioneers, who introduced new techniques and materials to lithography and sculpture in Korea.²⁵⁰

While some critics found the Korean works fell far behind the latest international trends, others praised these exhibitions' well-knit synthesis of Eastern artistic tradition and Western artistic expressions of modernity.²⁵¹ *Korean Contemporary Paintings*, in particular, was significant for a number of reasons: it was displayed at one of the cutting-edge galleries in New York; political figures on both sides were involved; the curator visited South Korea and met the art associations and select artworks.²⁵² These reasons imply that the exhibition was planned on 'public' grounds at a 'profit-centred' gallery in order to introduce Korean art and deliver a positive impression.²⁵³ Even though the exhibition did not meet the Korean art circle's expectations, because art-related figures in New York were much more interested in Korea's traditional clothes and music, it nevertheless expressed well the subtle cultural differences between Eastern and Western art.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁹ Anon., 'Displaying at New York en bloc' (뉴욕에 일괄 전시), (21 August 1957: 4).

²⁵⁰ Kim Young-Na (2005: 103).

²⁵¹ Chung Moo-Jeong (2000: 103-110 (104-105)).

²⁵² A list of political figures: Marcus W. Scherbacher (Commercial Cultural of United States Embassy), Ardelia Hall (Advisor of the Department of State in Art and Remains), Dorothy M. Frost (Chairman of the American-Korean Foundation), Choi Gyu-Nam (Minister of Education), Oh Chae-Gyeong (Director of MCPI), and Kim Chae-Won (the Director of NMK). See details: Chung Moo-Jeong (2005b: 26).

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, (2005b: 27-29).

²⁵⁴ Anon., 'Our exhibition: very first time at New York, February 26th' (우리 작품전시회, 뉴욕서 내 26일부터 최초로) (22 February 1958: 2); Anon., 'Great reputation in New York: Korean Contemporary Art Exhibition' (뉴욕서 대호평:

Inevitably, Korean artists and art critics started to pay attention to American art.²⁵⁵ American art offered an alternative to a Korean art circle that was criticised for its indifference to the issue of internationalism and modernisation. Events in the U.S. and South Korea were reported in the Korean media:

At the Whitney Museum of American Art, there were 35 artworks from painters and sculptors that emerged from World War II. Similar to a modern art museum in New York, abstract artists were superior to other artistic genres. [...] The Brooklyn Museum displayed hundreds of artworks and selections at the *International Watercolour Painting Exhibition* from American, French, and Japanese watercolour painters. They provided sufficient proof that the wave of abstract art remains at a state of high tide rather than a glimpse of an ebbing tide.²⁵⁶

Before 1945, Koreans had no idea about American art. They did not even recognise that American art is an independent genre rather than an affiliated part of European art. It is because European art exerted direct or indirect influence in the process of development of Korean modern art. [...] Although this *Eight American Artists* exhibition, curated by the Seattle Art Museum and opened at the NMK, had not introduced every aspect of American art, at least it truly revealed its features and characteristics for the very first time to the Korean art circle. [...] In American modern art (現代美術), both international and American elements were achieving the notion of aesthetic order in a state of opposition (對立) and intersection (交叉). [...] Therefore, research into American art could deliver deeper implications and messages to the Korean art circle that would encourage art historical

한국화가 현대미술전), (4 April 1958: 3).

²⁵⁵ Jeong Gyu (16 April 1957); Lee Gyeong-Seong (17 April 1957: 4); Chung Moo-Jeong (2001: 121-122).

²⁵⁶ Anon., 'International art scene 10 years after World War II' (전후 십년의 세계미술 中), (27 May 1955: 4).

modernity.²⁵⁷

If the Korean art circle were to move forward towards those future-oriented values, they had to search for legitimate logic regarding what artistic style or momentum could represent a notion of internationalisation, modernisation, or globalisation. The problem offers important hints to track issues: how the museum interacted with the Korean art circle, how did the museum reorganise and reinvented itself, and how were tensions produced by changing cultural or social trends dealt with?

The beginnings of modern art in South Korea: Abstract (추상미술, 抽象美術) and *Informel* art

In the process of active cultural exchange between the U.S. and South Korea, Korean art circle experienced a turbulent decade from 1957 to 1967.²⁵⁸ As mentioned above, Korean artists as well as critics became aware that new and progressive art movement was needed in order to interact with the international art world. It was remarkably progressed after the war. During this period, several influential artists who travelled abroad to France or the U.S. became fervent advocates of the latest trends of Western art.²⁵⁹ Amongst the trends, non-figurative art became a representative of progressive artistic movement in South Korea. In particular, American Abstract Expressionism and European *Informel* were thought to be suitable models for the modernisation of Korean art. A group of artists then found their own non-figurative style. They called it ‘Korean’ *Informel* art as their main subject and internalised it. In general, critics in South Korea mention that *Informel* art represents the first liberal and creative artistic movement under the names of modernisation and

²⁵⁷ Lee Gyeong-Seong (17 April 1957: 4).

²⁵⁸ Lee Gyeong-Seong (1976: 57); Oh Gwang-Soo (1997: 23-25).

²⁵⁹ Cho Eun-Jeong (2005b: 108).

internationalisation.²⁶⁰ In this context, the phrase ‘a turbulent decade from 1957 to 1967’ implies a trajectory of how Korean *Informel* art emerged, developed, and retrogressed.²⁶¹ It explains how artists experimented and transformed it into a universal language in Korean art circle. However, the phrase also signifies that *Informel* lost its momentum and became inactive since the mid of 1960s. As to the retrogression of Korean *Informel* art, more details will be discussed later in this section.

The emergence of *Informel* was not something that came up all of a sudden. In order to trace its trajectory, there are issues to be discussed: what is the origin and development of abstract and *Informel* art in South Korea; when were they introduced and how did they attract the attention of Korean artists as a means to express artistic identity and defy authority?

Abstract art arrived in South Korea from Korean artists who went to Japan during the 1930s.²⁶² Their activities were strongly related to Japan’s avant-garde art movement at that time. In Japan, exhibitions such as Jiyuten (自由展) and Bijutsu Bunkaten (美術文化展) promoted abstract art and Surrealism as liberal artistic styles.²⁶³ Both avant-garde exhibitions reached their peak in the late 1930s. In the case of Jiyuten, artists were accepted who not only produced abstract art but also Fauvism and Surrealism.²⁶⁴ Its forward-looking vision encouraged Korean artists, including Kim Whan-Ki, Yoo Young-Kuk (柳永國, 1916-2002), and Lee Gyu-Sang (李揆祥, 1918-1967), well-known abstract artists, to formulate their artistic style by attempting pure geometric patterns. As Oh Gwang-Soo explains, however, their activities ended with individualistic performance owing

²⁶⁰ Oh Gwang-Soo (1997: 17-21); Kim Young-Na (2005: 105); The NMCA (presenter: Oh Gwang-Soo) (2006b: 77-82); Kim Hee-Young (2008: 78-87).

²⁶¹ Oh Gwang-Soo (1997: 24-25).

²⁶² Kim Young-Na (1988: 180-181); Oh Gwang-Soo (1997: 11).

²⁶³ Oh Gwang-Soo (1997: 12-13).

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

to unstable social circumstances such as Japanese militarism and Liberation.²⁶⁵

After Korean War in 1953, young artists who directly experienced tragic incidents felt doubts in regard to the existing social order and values.²⁶⁶ Young artists' groups were inspired by the latest artistic information from the West. They rejected the style of academicism as a reaction against the NAE. As an anti-NAE activity, the exhibition *Four Artists* (4인전) in 1956 issued a manifesto in order to fight against institutionalised Korean art circle that could not accept different values of the time.²⁶⁷ However, this exhibition posed only a manifesto but not artworks that challenged the authority.²⁶⁸ At that time, ideological conflict within the Korean art circle, which centred on the Hongik University and Seoul National University, saw it divide into Daehan Art Association (대한미술협회, DAA) and Hanguk Artists Association (한국미술가협회, HAA).²⁶⁹ This conflict led to a boycott of the NAE.²⁷⁰

The year of 1957 was such a revolutionary moment for the Korean art circle. Firstly, art groups such as Hyundae Artists Association (HYAA, 현대미술가협회), Modern Art Association (모던아트협회), Changjak Artists Association (창작미술가협회), Shin-Johyung Group (신조형파, literally means New Figuration Group), and Baekyang Group (백양회) were formed around 1957 (Figure 20), the year in which modern art is said to have begun in South Korea. These art groups followed non-

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, (1997: 16-17).

²⁶⁶ Lee Gu-Yeol (1979: 37); Seo Seong-Rok (2010: 379).

²⁶⁷ Artists who participated in the exhibition were: Park Seo-Bo, Kim Young-Hwan (김영환), Mun Woo-Sik (문우식), and Kim Chung-Seon (김충선). Oh Gwang-Soo (1998: 123); Kim Hee-Young (2008: 79-80).

²⁶⁸ Lee Gyeong-Seong criticised their passive artistic vision. Lee Gyeong-Seong (26 May 1956: 4).

²⁶⁹ Oh Gwang-Soo, on the other hand, speculated that humane disbelief among artists who crossed the Han River (한강) in Seoul or who did not, during the Korean War, could be recognised as a causing factor. The NMCA (presenter: Oh Gwang-Soo) (2006b: 78).

²⁷⁰ Lee Gu-Yeol (1992a: 471); Kim Hyung-Sook (2005: 12-13).

figurative artistic trends and oriented themselves to liberal representational styles.²⁷¹ They raised a standard of revolt against the institutional approaches and artistic styles represented by the NAE.²⁷²



Figure 20 The 3rd HYAA exhibition and its members (June 1958). (From left: Moon Shin (文信), Lee Gyu-Sang, Yoo Young-Kuk, Park Go-Seok (朴古石), and Han Muk (韓默)). By kind permission of and © Yoo Young-Kuk Art Foundation.

Amongst them, the HYAA was the most progressive group that led *Informel* activities until 1961. In terms of their artistic style, figures were disappeared on canvas. They worked with fierce

²⁷¹ Kim Young-Na (1995: 296-297).

²⁷² Kim Dal-Jin Art Archive Museum (2013: 68).

brushstrokes and thick-layered *matière* to express their distress and anger resulting from the war.²⁷³ The HYAA used the word *Informel* at its third exhibition in 1958. Bang Geun-Taek (方根澤, 1929-1992), an art critic who first mentioned the concept noted:

The Hyundai Artists Association, a group composed of the young generation in South Korea, poses a new question at the 3rd exhibition. We are interested in their starting point. Their character is appearing at a crucial moment that informs direction, and it implies the 'Korean character of *Informel*'. [...]²⁷⁴

According to Bang, the HYAA shared ideological homogeneity with *Informel*, which became their fundamental tenet. Unlike earlier abstraction, the HYAA saw *Informel*, or passionate abstract style, as an avant-garde movement in opposition to the established Korean art circle.²⁷⁵ Artists worked on both escaping from the indiscriminate imitation of 'others' and incorporating oriental elements such as the brushstrokes of calligraphy.²⁷⁶ They found themselves in a state of freedom while producing artworks to locate their artistic identity. In this sense, the HYAA *Informel* artists regarded *Informel* as their kind of experimental process and envisioned a futuristic art movement. Park Seo-Bo (朴栖甫, 1931-), a key pioneer of Korean *Informel* and member of the HYAA, also felt a thirst for a progressive artistic style. He submitted seven artworks, from *no. 1* to *no. 7*, at the third

²⁷³ Kim Young-Na (1988: 182).

²⁷⁴ Bang worked for one of the USIS posts in Gwangju. He could read art journals such as *Art News*, *Time*, and *Life* to get information about American Abstract Expressionism. Bang Geun-Taek (23 May 1958).

²⁷⁵ Oh Gwang-Soo (1997: 20).

²⁷⁶ Park Seo-Bo, Kim Tschang-Yeul (金昌烈, 1929-) and Chung Chang-Seop (丁昌燮, 1927-2011) are the key figures who followed this artistic style. Lee Il (1998: 256-257).

exhibition of HYAA, which were later considered as the first from *Informel* (Figure 21).²⁷⁷ He used the audacious techniques of both dripping and overlapping, similar to that of Jackson Pollock. There is, however, a difference between the Western (American Abstract Expressionism and European *Informel*) and Korean *Informel* art.²⁷⁸ The former conducted radical experiments on canvas by using energetic colours and *Informel* forms, while the latter employed dark, turbid, and heavy colours that seemingly reflected the post-war social circumstances of South Korea.²⁷⁹ However, these stark differences might rather originate from an insufficient understanding of the Western art trend.²⁸⁰ Even though the HYAA's *Informel* activities were considered as the first collective modern art movement, art critics have suggested that Korean *Informel* artists could not tell a clear difference between *Informel* and Abstract Expressionism; they simply accepted both and called the 'Korean' *Informel*.²⁸¹ This is why the notion of Korean *Informel* has remained blurred.

This movement, however, was a meaningful moment to the Korean art circle. During that period, as mentioned above, a series of exhibitions under the name of cultural exchange between the U.S. took place. Although artists or art critics could not access detailed information as to *Informel* and Abstract Expressionism, some art critics speculated that artists might read either imported *Time*, *Life* or Japanese art journals such as 'Bijutsu Techo' (美術手帖) and 'Mizue' (みづゑ) to gain an understanding of the *Informel* movement that swept Japan.²⁸² Under the circumstances, exchange

²⁷⁷ Bang Geun-Taek (June 1984: 43).

²⁷⁸ Lee Il (2013a: 308).

²⁷⁹ Kim Young-Na (1995: 297).

²⁸⁰ Park thought *Informel* does not need any special technique to produce artworks. He did not want a schematic abstract but something energetic. Space (December 1967: 88); Kim Young-Na (1988: 224).

²⁸¹ Kim Young-Na (1988: 182); Oh Gwang-Soo (1998: 139-140).

²⁸² Kim Young-Na (1988: 192-193); Lee Gu-Yeol (1992b: 490).

art exhibitions offered an opportunity to experience the latest trends of American art.²⁸³ Artists in the HYAA might influence by the trends and experimented their artistic styles more actively. In 1958, as an example, their fourth art exhibition displayed ‘hot abstraction’ (*Abstraction Chaud*: French and ‘뜨거운 추상’: Korean) artworks based upon American Abstract Expressionism that proved highly influential in South Korea.²⁸⁴ Since then, artists showed more interest in Abstract Expressionism.²⁸⁵



Figure 21 Park Seo-Bo, *Painting No-1-57* (회화 No-1-57), 1957, oil on canvas. By kind permission of and © Park Seo-Bo (The Seo-Bo Foundation).

²⁸³ Kim Hee-Young (2008: 84).

²⁸⁴ The HYAA had two exhibitions every year. Lee Gu-Yeol (1979: 40); Chung Moo-Jeong (2005a: 247).

²⁸⁵ Kim Hee-Young (2008: 84-85).

Meanwhile, there is a story of how American modern art had deeply engaged with the Korean art circle. Dore Ashton (1928-2017), one of the reputable art critics at the *New York Times* and the *Times*, who published a news article in 1959 discussing the unknown world of South Korea. Her short article referenced a report that Harvard Arnason (1909-1986), a director of the Walker Art Centre in Minneapolis and chairman of the Art Department in the University of Minnesota, had visited Asian countries including South Korea as both a lecturer and consultant sent by the U.S. Department of State.²⁸⁶ He discovered how Asians knew the latest developments in American art:

The aging Korean painter, dressed in traditional white, argued cogently and at great length about modern Western painting, discussed the New York School, and what at a loss, consulted a variety of catalogues and the Museum of Modern Art publications to illustrate his arguments. [...] But even he was astonished when, during a question period in one of the Korean lectures, a speaker from the floor delivered a long disquisition in his native tongue through which he kept hearing names of Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, and other luminaries of the New York art world. [...] Student groups and younger painters he encountered in South Korea, Philippines, Hawaii, and Israel are generally exceptionally well informed, Mr. Arnason reports. They get most of their information about American painting from magazines, Mr. Arnason points out; there are far too few traveling exhibitions.²⁸⁷

The April Revolution offered a chance to awaken an oppressed society and the Korean art circle. Korean *Informel* art during that time became a universal language and swept the entire nation.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Anon., 'Art historian Arnason visited South Korea' (미술가 아내는 교수 내한), (11 June 1959: 3); Chung Moo-Jeong (2000: 1).

²⁸⁷ Ashton (20 November 1959: 37).

²⁸⁸ Lee Gu-Yeol (1992a: 477); Oh Gwang-Soo (1997: 23).

In 1960, 1960 Artists Association (60년 미술가협회) and Wall Art Exhibition (벽동인) expressed their creative and avant-garde art styles. The former, 1960 Artists Association, based upon thick-layered *matière* and strong brushstrokes that resembled more ‘American’ Abstract Expressionism rather than ‘European’ *Informel*,²⁸⁹ while the latter, Wall Art Exhibition, focused on *Informel*-based style and added anti-art materials such as metal, concrete, pebble, or sand. They proved that Korean *Informel* finally reached its peak as to not only become the mainstream artistic trend but also representative of national art (Figure 22).



Figure 22 Exhibition 1960 Artists Association (1960). 1960 Artists Association held this exhibition by using a stone wall around the Deoksu Palace area. Image Provider: Yoon Myung-Roh, Source: Chosun.com.

The year of 1961, however, brought a radical change. This change accelerated the fall of Korean

²⁸⁹ Actuel (악튀엘) followed this trend afterwards. Lee Gu-Yeol (1979: 41); Kim Hyung-Sook (2005: 19-20).

Informel. Firstly, *Informel* artists lost their artistic momentum since they participated in their first Paris Biennial (1959-1967) in 1961. The HYAA an artist selection committee of the event picked four artists and asked Lee Il, a reputable art critic of the time, for writing a foreword of Korean art circle's *Informel* trend and its avant-garde characteristics.²⁹⁰ Korean artists were satisfied with their monumental participation. However, Park Seo-Bo who saw this exhibition during his stay in Paris mentioned that *Informel* is no longer influential in the international art world.²⁹¹ Rather, he mentioned that artistic styles such as Pop Art or Nouveau Realism drew public attention in the biennial.²⁹² As a result, Korean *Informel* artists including Park might feel that they need to find a new artistic style.

Secondly, military coup in 1961 also impacted on Korean *Informel* artists. At first, they struggled against not only the NAE but also Lee Seung-Man's regime. Young artists, as mentioned above, became increasingly cognisant of the social reality of their time. They fought against dictatorship and challenged conservative values by pursuing avant-garde genres from *Informel*. Even though the vitality of Abstract Expressionism and *Informel* swiftly disappeared in the Western art world before 1960, Korean *Informel* artists expressed their anti-Lee Seung-Man viewpoints by pursuing liberal artistic representation. However, since Park Jung-Hee controlled South Korea in 1961, he used *Informel* as a political tool. Park recognised the vestiges of Lee Seung-Man such as the old NAE or Jayoo Party to be removed. In order to promote his government as an agent stood against an old-fashioned order, *Informel* was thought to be a solution.²⁹³ As a result, *Informel* dominated the NAE and became institutionalised since 1961.²⁹⁴ Then, Korean *Informel* art groups disbanded afterwards and artists initiated a new experimental artistic style such as Op Art, Pop Art, or Neo-

²⁹⁰ Chung Moo-Jeong (2005a: 254).

²⁹¹ Anon., 'Informel is in the saturated condition' (양휘르멜은 포화상태), (3 December 1961).

²⁹² Anon., 'The era of abstract art is gone' (추상시대 지났다), (17 November 1964); Chung Moo-Jeong (2005a: 249).

²⁹³ Kim Mi-Jung (2004: 320).

²⁹⁴ Lee Gu-Yeol (1992a: 477); Kim Mi-Jung (2004: 319).

Dada.²⁹⁵ Consequently, the fierce but short-lived *Informel* movement disappeared without a trace. In 1967, post-*Informel* art emerged and posed the new and diverse cultural movement.

Post-*Informel* art

From the 1960s to 1970s, South Korea was driven by an export-oriented economy. To instigate large-scale projects within both the domestic industry and overseas construction, in the mid-1960s, President Park and government officials visited advanced countries such as Japan and Germany establish loan agreements.²⁹⁶ In 1968, a year before the opening of NMMA, the country experienced invasions by North Korean guerrillas and Park under threat of assassination. This instability, and the economic miracle he had overseen, permitted him to retain his grip on control and to run for a third term in office (1972-1979).

Under President Park Jung-Hee's regime, social stability of the nation was a top priority. Park's government controlled the mass media and directed Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA, 한국중앙정보부) to censor any controversial political or economic issues. The generation inspired by the April Revolution, a group of people who reached the age of 20 between 1960 and 1972 (the year when the *Yushin* government started), was by contrast eager to seek democracy as their guiding principle.²⁹⁷ Artists from this generation expressed diverse and progressive viewpoints by

²⁹⁵ Kim Young-Na (1988: 224); Oh Gwang-Soo (1997: 24); Chung Moo-Jeong (2005a: 263).

²⁹⁶ Japan: Based on the memorandum between a presidential envoy Kim Jong-Pil (金鍾必, 1926-) and foreign minister Ohira Masayoshi (大平正芳, 1910-1980), both countries made an agreement as to Treaty on Basic Relations between the Republic of Korea and Japan (한일기본조약) including an agreement of solving issues such as property, claim, and economic cooperation (재산과 청구권에 관한 문제해결과 경제협력에 관한 협정). The Japanese government offered not only international loans but also private commercial ones, including an unspecified number of products and labour. Germany: Park dispatched hundreds of mine workers and nurses to earn 140 million Deutschmark (German currency unit before 2002) as international loans. Consequently, Park's government could initiate the Economic Development Plan.

²⁹⁷ Kang Nae-Hee (Summer 2010: 136-137).

challenging the core value of established culture.

The visual impression of the urban environment was a key phenomenon in the late 1960s. Neon signs, skyscrapers, TV antennas, fly-overs, expressways, and the introduction of international cultural information catalysed the reformation of the visual environment and exerted a strong impact not only upon artists, but also all of Korean society.²⁹⁸ Under these circumstances, young artists from the April Revolution generation considered *Informel* generation as the empowered group which held hegemony of the entire Korean art circle. Their rebellious voice finally turned into artistic forms of a unique, challenging and experimental representation style that claimed to advocate depoliticised and socially engaged responsibilities. Its specific manifestation initiated in 1967.

In order to present a new artistic style, artists from the *Korean Young Artists Coalition Exhibition* (청년작가연립전, 靑年作家聯立展) composed of the Origin (오리진), Zero Group (무) and Shinjeon (신전) groups, and mentioned in chapter 1, made their anti-*Informel* protest and displayed artworks. They criticised *Informel* that ruined the Korean art circle. In particular, they shouted slogans such as, “For the past ten years, (Korean) *Informel* and abstract paintings have not offered anything to us. We are acting artists and aim at ‘artworks after the abstract art’, ‘artworks in our life’, and ‘modern art that becomes intimate with the public.’”²⁹⁹ These artists argued that public-oriented art (such as Pop Art, Neo-Dada, Op Art, environment art, and happenings) was necessary to reorient the Korean art circle.³⁰⁰ They undertook diverse artistic experiments in order to create a new figurative order in the art circle.³⁰¹ For instance, the Zero Group produced three-dimensional artworks by using everyday objects; Shinjeon introduced happening artworks; and Origin sought

²⁹⁸ Lee Gu-Yeol (20 December 1969: 5).

²⁹⁹ Oh Sang-Gil and Kim Mi-Gyeong (2001: 89).

³⁰⁰ Anon., ‘Unprecedented courage: *The Coalition of Young Korean Artists Exhibition*’ (파격적인 용기: 한국청년작가연립전), (13 December 1967: 5); Oh Gwang-Soo (1997: 24); Chung Moo-Jeong (2005a: 264).

³⁰¹ Seo Seong-Rok (1994: 144); Yoon Jin-Seop (1997: 100).

geometric abstract art based on anti-*Informel* perspectives (Figure 23).³⁰² Their contributions led the birth of avant-garde groups such as A.G (Avant-garde), S.T (Space and Time), and Esprit (에스프리) since 1969. Their target was not only to overcome the influence of *Informel* art. With the theoretical aid of art critics such as Lee Il or Oh Gwang-Soo, they conducted diverse modernistic experiments to inquire into the essence of art.³⁰³ Their activities were much more sophisticated and independent. They did not rely on the latest trends of Western art and tried to upgrade the quality of Korean art by accepting self-reflective approach.³⁰⁴ Their approach reified their artistic concept and resulted in the arrival of conceptual art (Figure 24).



Figure 23 Zero Group and Shinjeon (collaborative work), *Happening with Vinyl Umbrella and Candle* (비닐우산과 촛불이 있는 해프닝), 1967. It has known as the first Happening artwork. By kind permission of and © Kang Kuk-Jin.com.

³⁰² The NMCA (presenter: Kim Jung-Hee) (2006b: 108).

³⁰³ Kim Young-Na (1995: 299); Oh Gwang-Soo (1997: 26); Yoon Jin-Seop (1997: 101).

³⁰⁴ Yoon Jin-Seop (1997: 110).



Figure 24 Lee Gang-So (李康昭, 1943- , A.G. Member), *Void* (여백, this artwork is also known as ‘Reed’), 1971, reed, plaster, and paint, 1000x1200x250cm. By kind permission of and © Lee Gang-So.

They were the groups of Korean artists that were focused on artistic performance, either closely related to or far removed from the oppressive political situations in the 1970s. Amongst them, the 4th Group (제4집단) consistently expressed their voice and performance regardless of their short-lived activities (Figure 25).³⁰⁵ The 4th Group was an art community composed of young artists

³⁰⁵ The 4th Group established on 20 June 1970 and lasted less than three months. Kim Mi-Gyeong (2003: 212-214).

who pursued the genres of Happenings and performance art that rebelled against the established social system.³⁰⁶ They focused on key issues of both human liberation and the independence of Korean culture. Their aim was to consolidate the tangible and intangible, traditional culture and modern civilisation, and pure art and Pop Art into such a new progressive art that represented contemporary Korean society and its counterculture.³⁰⁷ Indeed, their vitality did not last long on account of the stigma of decadence attached to them by the *Yushin* government.³⁰⁸



Figure 25 Newspaper articles introduces the 4th Group and their activities. By kind permission of and © Seoul Shinmun (Sunday Seoul).

³⁰⁶ Jo Soo-Jin (2015: 75).

³⁰⁷ Jo Soo-Jin (2015: 79-86); Lee Il (23 December 1967: 5).

³⁰⁸ Anon., 'Korean Avant-garde art' (한국의 전위예술), (1 September 1970: 5).

During the *Yushin* era, however, the Korean art circle did not remain static. Several commercial galleries opened, such as Hyundae (현대) and Myeong-dong (명동), to deal with both modern and contemporary art.³⁰⁹ Because of Park's export-oriented economic system, a wealthy social class could purchase newly emerged artworks.³¹⁰ Also, the urban lifestyle, including popular culture, rapidly settled into Korean society. The young generation at that period were born after the war and had not experienced any colonialism, but had received a Western style education. As a result, their own culture, the so-called 'youth culture', consisted of the 'acoustic guitar, draft beer, and jeans' that defined their identity.³¹¹ Park considered it as a rebellious and anti-social movement that threatened social stability. He requested that the MCPI censor any resistant activities towards him.³¹² However, youth culture contributed to the creation of new figurative order by challenging the closed and conventional society based on Confucian ideology. Groups such as the A.G. were also influenced by this social phenomenon until the mid of 1970s.³¹³ In the interim, Park's *Yushin* government implemented the Five-Year Plan of Culture and Arts Restoration Plan (1974-1978) and encouraged spiritual awakening to support continual economic development. Since 1975, the appearance of *Dansaekhwa* (單色畫) or Korean monochrome emphasised the Korean identity by embodying its spirituality.³¹⁴ *Dansaekhwa* artists sought autonomous artistic expression by using 'white (백색)' that signifies more than a colour (or tone) but symbol of Korean ethnicity (Figure

³⁰⁹ Lee Il (2013b: 417).

³¹⁰ Kim Young-Na (1995: 303).

³¹¹ Kwon Young-Jin (2013: 159-160).

³¹² Park Gwang-Mu (2013: 141-142); Jo Soo-Jin (2015: 96).

³¹³ Yoon Jin-Seop (1997: 113-119).

³¹⁴ The term '*Dansaekhwa*' was conceptualised by the exhibition *Korea, Five Artists, and Five White Colours* (韓國・五人の作家 五つのヒンセク<白>) in Tokyo Gallery, 1975. Oh Gwang-Soo (1997: 27), Kim Hyung-Sook (2005: 30).

26).³¹⁵ Indeed, there were other colours of monochrome paintings, but a colour of white was considered to be the manifestation of Koreans' long-standing cultural legacy.³¹⁶ This trend led the Korean art circle until the late 1970s.



Figure 26 Kwon Young-Woo (權寧禹, 1926-2013), *Untitled (P75-2)* (무제 (P75-2)), 1975, traditional Korean paper on panel, 122.5x122.5cm. By kind permission of and © the artist's estate and Kukje Gallery, Seoul. Image provided by Kukje Gallery, Seoul. Photograph by Keith Park.

³¹⁵ Those critics were Lee Il, Oh Gwang-Soo, and Kim Bok-Young. Yoon Jin-Seop (1997: 121).

³¹⁶ However, several art critics threw a doubt on this viewpoint due to its subjective interpretation by the 'others'. For instance, foreigners who visited South Korea in the 19th century saw Korean people wearing white clothes, using white rice cakes, and drinking rice alcohol during the memorial service for their ancestors. For Koreans, white was a colour that meant strong nationality and immortality. Foreigners called them the 'white-clad folk (백의민족)', but its meaning was distorted by their subjective viewpoints. Some of them thought Koreans were uncivilised so they wore white clothes. Japanese used this term and concept for legitimising their colonialization. Park Carey (2002: 298-306).

Under these circumstances, the NMMA did not miss the contemporary trends in Korean art circle. The museum offered the exhibition space and embraced diverse avant-garde artistic genres such as installation, Happenings, and conceptual art. For instance, the NMMA held exhibitions *Korean Art Grand Prize* (한국미술대상전) and *Korean Art Association* (한국미술협회전) in 1970. The former was the anti-NAE exhibition, while the latter introduced many avant-garde artists including Kim Ku-Lim (金丘林, 1936-) and Lee Geon-Yong (李健鏞, 1942-).³¹⁷ They were from A.G. and S.T. groups that attracted the Korean art circle's attention at that time (Figure 27).

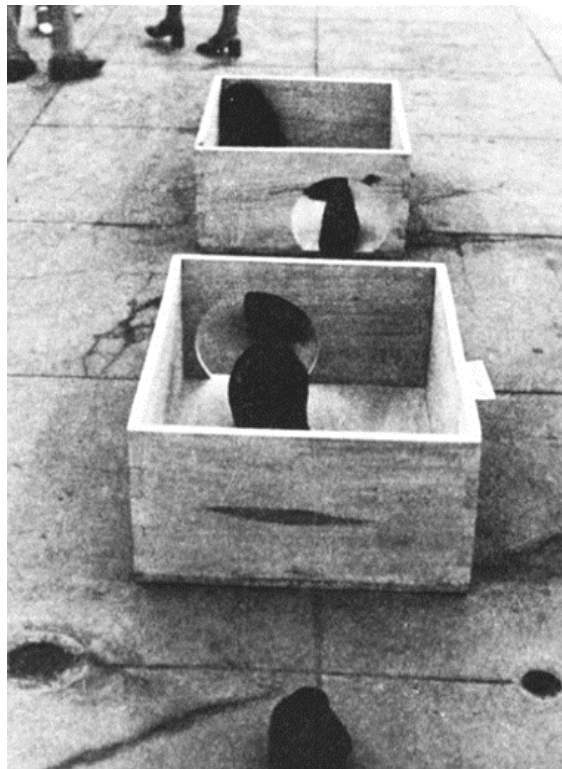


Figure 27 Lee Geon-Yong (S.T. Member), *Referent* (관계항), 1972, mixed media. By kind permission of and © Lee Geon-Yong and Gallery Hyundai, Seoul.

³¹⁷ Jang Yeop (2009: 93).

Owing to their significance, the national art museum during the early Deoksu Palace era invited both A.G and S.T groups inside the exhibition space. Not only were there reasonable rent fees and spacious exhibition rooms in the museum, but also their various avant-garde styles enabled them to hold exhibitions regardless of insufficient budget and professional curating staffers.³¹⁸ Even though Park brought about the prohibition of avant-garde art, which allowed the museum to censor it nationwide since the mid-1970s,³¹⁹ their cultural impact raised the issues of creating new art styles and discourses that would attract the experienced visitor's artistic taste.³²⁰ Under the circumstances, the museum relocated to Deoksu Palace met with a brand new challenge to re-historise and rebrand itself as a normalised and public-centred art institution.

The NMMA at Deoksu Palace

The NMMA was supposed to perform its primary missions by promoting up-to-date culture, collecting, and preserving artworks including archives. Notable art-related figures, who range from artists (Kim Whan-Ki and Kim In-Seung) to art critics (Lee Gyeong-Seong and Kim Young-Ki),³²¹ emphasised the importance of establishing a modern art museum, but internally the museum had to spend many years heading towards becoming a fully-fledged museum, and externally it needed to find an audience. The four years spent in the Gyeongbok Palace, once thought to be an official

³¹⁸ According to Jang Yeop, none of the avant-garde or experimental art exhibitions were held after the end of the 1970s, due to the implementation of the *Yushin* government's strong interference and censorship. *Ibid.*, (2009: 105).

³¹⁹ Anon., 'Provisions of 'censoring avant-garde activities' that made the art circle nervous' (미술계 일각을 긴장시킨 '전위규제' 조항), (15 March 1976: 5).

³²⁰ Anon., 'Details of what instructions President Park had issued to the MCPI' (박대통령 문공부 지시 내용), (5 February 1976: 1).

³²¹ Kim Whan-Ki (March 1950); Lee Gyeong-Seong (7 August 1955); Kim Young-Ki (26 July 1956); Kim In-Seung (11 January 1959).

bureau but not a ‘proper’ art museum, was the period during which the museum considered the chance to convert its institutional identity and general awareness.

The Gyeongbok Palace period saw changing ideas about the vision and purpose of the museum amongst staff, its development as a recognised centre for Korean modern art, and as an advocate of anti-academic values in art. It had also built a relationship with external art world actors.

Contrary to the views of previous researchers, it does appear that the museum was considered a barometer to gauge artistic trends that could be considered representative of Korean modern and contemporary art. Indeed, there is some controversy about whether the museum should be remembered merely as a temporary ‘shelter’ for directors from government officials before their retirement, or as a political ‘laboratory’ of the MCPI, or, indeed, as a void ‘house’ without revolutionary artistic relevance to Korean artists. While these arguments have proven persuasive, my own research shows the museum at that period working vibrantly to stimulate the Korean contemporary scene and build cooperation with external agents. In this way, the NMMA found several approaches to overcome its limitation as just a space for the NAE. Its time at Gyeongbok Palace was, however, limited.

The NMMA relocated to the remodelled Seokjo Jeon in the Deoksu Palace on 5 July 1973. The Deoksu Palace was once used as a space where the royal families resided during the Joseon Dynasty and Great Daehan Empire period (대한제국, 大韓帝國, 1897-1910). However, during the Japanese occupation, the Japanese Government-General, however, had a premeditated plan to imprint colonial ideology which involved establishing museums as one of the political tactics for manipulating the entire Korean peninsula as a puppet nation. Using royal residence as a space for public exhibition such as Deoksu Palace meant that the Japanese Government-General implicitly degraded royal family’s nobility and dignity to legitimise their control over Korean peninsula.

The Seokjo Jeon consists of two buildings (east and west annexes). The east annex, completed in 1909, is a Westernised and modernistic style three-storied building designed by two English architects, John Reginald Harding (1858-1921, basic design) and by the name of Lovell (interior

design).³²² Its exterior is neo-classical; the interior imitates rococo (Figure 28 and 29).³²³ This building was initially used as an invitational hall to receive foreign ambassadors and a place to store the gifts they gave.³²⁴ The west annex, was constructed by Japanese architect Yoshihei Nakamura (中村 興資平, 1880-1963) in 1938.³²⁵ The building was used for the Yi Royal-Family Art Museum and DPAM. Even though the total area of museum space in the Deoksu Palace was almost double that of the Gyeongbok Palace, the museum was still an inadequate space for storing and preserving artworks (Figure 30 and 31).

³²² Curators from the museum have argued that the architect who designed the east annex was either G.R. Harding or G.G. Harding. However, there are official records that mentioned the name of the architect as John Reginald Harding. Also, Lovell's first name has not discovered yet. Seoul Metropolitan Government (2015: 78); Baek Ji-Sook, 'Restoration work revealed at Deoksu Palace', (3 December 2012).

³²³ Gross floor area was 4,115m² including 1,634m² building area (three floors). There were ten exhibition rooms used for permanent collections. Also, there were four museum storages with four offices. The NMCA (1996: 58-59).

³²⁴ This building was neglected after the demise of King Gojong in 1919 and it was used as an exhibition space to display Japanese artworks after its renovation from 1932 to 1943. Its occupiers have changed repeatedly, and included the Joint Soviet-American Commission (1946-1948), the United Nations Korean Commission (1948-1950), the main annex building of NMK (1955-1972), and the NMMA (1973-1986). Jang Yeop (2009: 94-95).

³²⁵ Gross floor area was 3,403m² including 1,290m² building area (three floors). There were nine exhibition rooms used for curated and rented exhibitions. Also, there were two museum storages with an office and the committee of the museum. The NMCA (1996: 58-59).



Figure 28 The Seokjo Jeon (east annex). By kind permission of and © NMK.



Figure 29 Main hall of the Seokjo Jeon (east annex, 1st floor), 1918. By kind permission of and © Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Korea.



Figure 30 The Seokjo Jeon (west annex). By kind permission of and © Historical Culture Resource in Jung-gu Culture & Tourism Website (<http://www.junggu.seoul.kr/tour/eng/>).



Figure 31 Interior exhibition space (Korean antiquities) of the Seokjo Jeon (west annex). By kind permission of and © NMK.

The daily newspapers welcomed the museum's relocation and anticipated the development of a managerial system that would lead to an undisputed national and social institution:³²⁶

The National Museum of Modern Art, Korea relocated to Seokjo Jeon in Deoksu Palace and launched the opening of permanent exhibition space and an exhibition *100 Korean Living Artists* (한국현역화가 100인전) on 5th July. Although the museum was established in October 1969, Gyeongbok Palace, the former site of the national art museum, was not spacious enough to perform as a national institution; the new branch could now function exclusively as a full-fledged art museum. [...] However, the issue starts from this point. It is contents that the museum, a building composed of magnificent east and west wings (동서양관, 東西兩館), would like to display. And there is also a need for the establishment of guidelines and concepts about how to manage the contents from the viewpoint of contributing to the development of our art and culture. There has been a boom in the art field since last year. Not only culture and arts promotion policy, but also a boom in both architecture and tourism triggered off this phenomenon. Changes such as having a new building and designing a new housing style might create a requirement for hanging artworks on the walls.³²⁷

It was about four years ago, when the National Museum of Modern Art, Korea rented a multifunctional exhibition building as a makeshift space in the backyard of Gyeongbok Palace. In May 1973, the museum moved to the Deoksu Palace site where the NMK was located before, and at last, the art museum has museum-like space with surroundings. In terms of its relocation, the government spent huge amounts of budget to renovate the

³²⁶ Park Seok-Heung (5 July 1973: 5); Lee Gu-Yeol (13 August 1973: 5).

³²⁷ Anon., 'Towards the full-fledged performance from the National Museum of Modern Art' (현대미술관의 본격적 기능을), (6 July 1973: 2).

interiors of both Seokjo Jeon and DPAM. To commemorate this relocation, the museum curated and displayed an exhibition *100 Korean Living Artists*. [...] Even though the exhibition cannot attract many visitors, it effectively acknowledged the public in terms of the museum's relocation and its social responsibilities. [...] Indeed, there are critical viewpoints as to the exhibition and I agree with them as well. The museum, however, took an amateur approach to position its status as a national institution. The problem is how the museum contributed to society and the development of Korean art and culture. Hence, not a temporary exhibition function but ceaseless functional activity is the issue [...] At this stage, it is meaningless to criticise the art museum. It is too peripheral.³²⁸

Although the NMMA rented, rather than owned, the space, the Deoksu Palace already possessed an identity as a centre for art and culture because of its association with the Yi Royal-Family Art Museum and DPAM, museums possessing both Korean and Japanese masterpieces. This had implications for how the relocated museum should see itself: how much the NMMA in Deoksu Palace should promote its institutional identity to disseminate art and culture; whether the MCPI, the supervisory institution of the NMMA, would risk restricting its cardinal mission to national representativeness by instrumentalising the NAE and diminishing its role as an art museum; and how the NMMA in Deoksu Palace should mediate the tensions among the museum, art circle, and troubled society. Hence, the significance of relocating the NMMA to Seokjo Jeon, Deoksu Palace lies in the fact that it was not a mere physical space; this represented the establishment of a new social platform for art.

Transformation into a public-centred museum

³²⁸ Lee Gu-Yeol (13 August 1973: 5).

Compared to the Gyeongbok Palace period, the museum at Deoksu Palace received far greater attention from the public. It was now in a convenient location near City Hall (시청) in Seoul, and it was completely reimagined as an organisation. Although there were no curatorial staff, a few cultured directors and professionals nevertheless worked towards realising a museum performance. The NMMA was re-organised (see Figures 32 and Table 4).



Figure 32 Organisation plan during the Deoksu Palace period³²⁹

Departments	Task
General Affairs (서무과)	a) security, official seal and compilation, documents, budget, accountancy, admission, and property management b) hire the museum space c) matters not related to other bureaus under the jurisdiction
Investigating & Research (조사연구과)	a) collection, research and publication of art archive b) international exchange of artworks c) the selection of artwork acquisition d) researches and presentations of modern art

³²⁹ Jang Yeop (2009: 97-98).

Exhibition (전시과)	a) exhibitions from museum's artwork collection b) continuous support regarding the creation of modern artworks c) conservation and maintenance of artworks d) management of exhibition spaces
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Table 4 Departments and their tasks during the Deoksu Palace period³³⁰

From the Deoksu Palace era, there were two newly established departments charged respectively with Investigating & Research (I&R) and Exhibition. According to Figure 34, there are notable issues to be considered. By distributing missions to those three departments, the museum could improve its staff's work efficiency and expertise remarkably. Moreover, I&R and Exhibition, key departments, were dealing with missions suited for a museum identity. Despite insufficient budgetary support from the government, the museum's newly initiated primary missions were collating art archives, artwork acquisition, and conservation. Most importantly, the international exchange of artworks, one of the I&R's core missions, implied that the museum recognised its significance in disseminating developments in Korean modern art worldwide.

There were only a few direct or indirect options for Korean artists wishing to promote their work at this time. The former was to submit artworks to international art events, such as international-scale biennials. The latter involved attracting the attention of foreign academics and art collectors who might then publicise an artist's work abroad. However, these activities might also produce adverse effects: first, artists might mass produce or promote artworks that only suited foreign taste; and second, Korean artists might sell artworks or transfer their copyright to foreigners and thus challenge the NMMA's desire to build representative collections. As Lee Jong-Seok states, several

³³⁰ Here are the number of museum staffers during the Deoksu Palace period as following:

Ten officials from the first to fifth level: Administrative Director (Director of the MMCA): 1, Administrative Officials (Chief of Administration): 3, Administrative Officers (Head of Department): 3, Administrative Secretaries: 2, Administrative Assistant Secretary: 1, and two officials from technical posts (auxiliary workers from ninth and tenth level of government official). Also, there were eight employees who worked in Investigating & Research, and an Exhibition department. In summary, there were 20 staffers. *Ibid.*

artists did blame both the Korean art circle and the public for the outflow of artworks due to local ignorance about the value of their work.³³¹

The museum countered this trend and made a multilateral effort to both organise and investigate Korean modern art by exploring contemporary culture and repositioning artworks from the past in order to understand its tradition. The museum looked to the possibility of rebranding itself as the centre of modern art and thus consider the roles such an art museum should carry out so as to become a public-centred institution. However, Deoksu Palace era was also marked by numerous difficulties.³³² The next section will discuss the museum's struggle to establish a social consensus through a process of repetitive trial and error.

Towards an autonomous museum performance in the 1970s

For the museum, the opening of the NAE each autumn was the biggest and most representative event each year. There were, however, now calls for the NMMA to focus more on performing what might be regarded as the cardinal missions of an art museum, and not to be limited to mere exhibition space. The museum received demands from art critics and museum practitioners to be intent upon both securing new exhibition space and restructuring its organisational plans to achieve a better museum management process.

Each of the three main departments of the museum had an independent mission to perform. The Exhibition department, a team composed of inexperienced members recruited from administrative officials, dealt with the maintenance and display of artworks including exhibition planning. Jung Joon-Mo, a former curator of the museum, conjectured that department had its origins in the core

³³¹ Lee Jong-Seok (October 1978: 9-10).

³³² See more details from Choi Yeol (2002: 26-31); Jung Joon-Mo (2003: 161-162).

– NAE-related – mission of the museum.³³³ The I&R department was effectively curatorial and focused on research and international exchange. Even though it did not have any researchers or persons in charge, its gradual effort to retrace the development of Korean modern artworks might contribute to the transformation of the NMMA into a fully-fledged national art museum.

Ostensibly, the museum during this period was more successful in making institutional changes. Such an endeavour, however, did not go well for activities relating to the planning of permanent exhibition and the acquisition of artworks fell under the control of the troubled administrative department that took charge of all professional museum activities. The I&R department was abolished after six years, in 1978, having achieved little.³³⁴ Some might have wondered about these issues: what internal or external factors led the museum to be unsystematic? What made the government delay a plan to support curatorial staff in the museum? And made the museum so ineffective until the opening of the new museum building in 1986? These issues have not been discussed in detail, but remain intriguing and are crucial to challenging the taken-for-granted logic that suggests that establishing a national art museum is always a straightforward process. Certainly, some in Seoul presumed that this logic would prevail the nationally and internationally viable institution would simply result. Despite improvements on the past, this was not achieved at Deoksu Palace period.

Notwithstanding that the museum performance of Deoksu period had not changed fundamentally compared to that of Gyeongbok, some government officials who were appointed to directorship positions pondered issues of how the museum might negotiate with the Korean art circle and visitors. They all knew that the museum relied on a bureaucratic system and that they were there merely to serve out their time until retirement at the age of sixty-five. Yoon Chi-Oh (尹致五), a director during the late 1970s (1977-1980), recalled that the museum had improved considerably since its early years. Yoon said that a significant change had the position of the museum as an

³³³ Jung Joon-Mo (2003: 161).

³³⁴ Jang Yeop (2009: 97).

intermediary between the government, art-related agents, and the public.³³⁵

First of all, I (Yoon) should boast of what our museum has done thus far. [...] Although there was a huge controversy over the group exhibition of oriental paintings started this year, our museum, an art institution that mainly has rented its space to other group exhibitions, actively invited a curated exhibition this year and provided an opportunity for both oriental and fine art paintings in groups to compare with each other. [...] A modern art museum should perform its roles both as ‘an office for artists (작가들의 면사무소)’ and ‘a plaza for art lovers (미술애호가들의 광장)’. We must have not only exhibition rooms, but also reading rooms and an archive centre as well. [...] We also have a plan to launch a ‘museum membership’ (현대미술관회) programme so that the museum could attract more visitors who will take an interest in Korean art overall.³³⁶

Setting aside Yoon’s interview, several newspapers not only reported its relocation issue, but its progressive changes and self-examination process. In particular, newspapers highlighted issues as to how the MCPI empowered the museum to vitalise its autonomous management. The MCPI was trying not to repeat errors that were made at the Gyeongbok Palace era. Hence, it proposed a three-year plan (미술관 운영강화 계획, 1973-1975) as to strengthening the museum’s operational strategy:

The Ministry of Culture and Public Information (MCPI) made a three-year plan in terms of strengthening museum management of the national gallery, which results from its relocation to Seok-jo Jeon, Deoksu Palace in May. It was decided to develop the art and culture fields. Based on this three-year plan, the MCPI is trying to focus on the following

³³⁵ Space (Interviewer: Kim Cheol-Li, interview with Yoon Chi-Oh) (October 1978: 17).

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, (October 1978: 16-17).

missions: 1) managing permanent collection space and strengthening the management of exhibition spaces, 2) supporting creative activities and developing artworks, 3) unification of art exhibitions, and 4) international exchange of art. Within this context, the MCPI will carry forward this project in a more detailed way annually. [...]³³⁷

According to the three-year plan stated above, the museum was expecting to 1) run a permanent exhibition space and strengthened the management and administration of exhibition spaces, 2) publish annual reports, art history journals and monthly art journals, together with facilitating an art archives centre, audio-visual room and rest area for art-associated people - moreover, there was a series of seminars and lectures for art lovers to support creative activities and develop artworks - 3) take charge of the NAE from the MCPI so that the museum could hold an exhibition on the street, 4) interact with associated countries in the process of sharing both artists and archives to encourage international exchange projects, 5) reopen the National Art Exhibition in another form, and 6) reorganise its plan and compensated for art equipment to enhance artists' quality of life and strengthen the organisation. The following table summarises these details.

Category	Details (expected changes compared to the Gyeongbok Palace era)
Exhibition space (permanent)	Purchasing and collecting high-quality artworks from all over the nation to hold an exhibition. Spending 40 million Won to buy 100 artworks for three years until 1975 and receiving another 100 from donors. Replacing 200 artworks and opening an exhibition in turn.
Art archives centre	Providing a reading room of about 132 square metres in the basement floor area of the east wing. Completing the researching and collecting of art archives in 1973. A library including bookstand ready until 1974. Collecting or purchasing 200 sorts of archives to open an archive centre in 1975.

³³⁷ Anon., 'The new vitality to the art world: the National Museum of Modern Art, Korea formed a plan to strengthen museum management due to its relocation' (미술계에 새 활기: 국립현대미술관 이전 따른 운영강화 3년 계획을 수립), (15 March 1973: 5).

Audio-visual room	Expecting to collate a variety of important art archives from all around the world and produce art films that were open to both art professionals and art dilettantes. Collecting data and installing a projection room with a projector in 1973. Producing three art films and opening the audio-visual room on 1 May 1974.
Rest area (for visitors)	Preparing a rest area of about 132 square meters (40 pyeong) in the basement floor area of the west wing to exchange information and hold conferences among art professionals. Adding 50 more tables with chairs and opening a rest area in July 1973.
Publishing activity A. Annual report B. Art history book C. Monthly art journal	<p>A. Completing lineage research and collecting archives of Korean modern artists in 1973 to publish 1000 annual reports in March 1974.</p> <p>B. It would be the comprehensive version of Korean modern art archives. Completing academic research and collecting archives until 1973 to publish books in October 1974. Expecting to publish about 1,000 copies to establish the structure of the art world.</p> <p>C. Publishing the professional journals since January 1974 and reporting information regarding art archives and activities taking place in both South Korea and foreign countries. Expecting to publish nearly 500 art journals. Initiating research and collection of archives in 1973.</p>
Public seminars (for visitors)	Opening contemporary art seminars every March for both art experts and students who studied modern art to encourage both creativity and development. Providing monthly art lectures for increasing public and art experts' understanding.
International exchanges A. Artworks B. Artists	<p>A. Researching basic materials to attract exhibitions from abroad. Initiating advanced negotiations through foreign diplomatic offices in 1973. Expecting to hold a Korean art exhibition at Tokyo (about 100 oriental and Western artworks) in 1974 and invite approximately 100 Japanese contemporary artworks to South Korea in 1975. Also, in 1976, the museum was expecting to hold a Korean art exhibition in France, and South Korea hold an exhibition of French oil paintings in 1977.</p> <p>B. Inviting four Japanese artists to South Korea (two from oriental painting and the other two from Western painting) in April 1974. Dispatching four Korean artists to Japan in September 1974. Inviting two artists from France in May 1975, and dispatching four Korean artists there in September 1975.</p>

Table 5 Categories and details of how the NMMA, during Deoksu Palace era, could contribute to the MCPI's three-year plan³³⁸

³³⁸ Anon., 'The National Museum of Modern Art, Korea will take charge of the National Art Exhibition' (국전은 현대

According to the table 5, the MCPI made an unprecedented decision to increase the museum's vitality. Regardless of its unstable status, the museum struggled to escape from the institutional limitations brought about by the NAE. However, it also worked towards being the pivotal hub of the Korean art circle. In other words, the museum started to carry out all aspects of museum duties comprehensively. All the activities were for the visitors. Their development of museum activities was earmarked through imported catalogues and a series of exhibitions to stimulate the museum into pursuing a public-centred art museum. Although the MCPI was too powerful for the museum, this could be considered as the first time that a national art institution and a political agency had worked towards the same goal.

Notwithstanding the shortage of resources, permanent collection and monetary assistance, the museum held a series of exhibitions that reflected the latest developments in Korean art, as with the exhibition *20 Years of Trend in Korean Contemporary Art* (한국현대미술 20년의 동향전) in 1978. The exhibition delivered messages regarding what method and figurative spirit helped to develop Korean art (mostly paintings and sculptures) and how it negotiated with external agents such as the international art circle. Considering the impairment in museum performance at that time, the exhibition provided momentum for artists and visitors to trace the origins of Korean modern art.³³⁹ Moreover, exhibitions such as *Korean Modern Art: Fine Art Paintings after the 1950s* (한국현대미술- 1950년대 서양화전, 60 artists and 156 artworks) and *Korean Modern Art: Oriental Paintings after the 1950s* (한국현대미술- 1950년대 동양화전, 89 artists and 162 artworks) captured the particular features, and characteristics, of art trends during that period. Despite these meaningful exhibitions, the museum had difficulties in order to curate exhibitions with expertise. Since the museum abolished the I&R Department in 1978, the museum later launched an expert committee in 1980

미술관서 관장), (16 March 1973: 8).

³³⁹ Anon., 'A project that re-highlighted a particular era: after watching the exhibition of Korean modern art in the 1950s' (한 시대상 재조명한 값진 기획: 한국현대미술 1950년대 전을 보고), (10 September 1979: 5).

to guarantee the expertise of curated exhibitions.³⁴⁰

Moreover, a series of long-term museum management plans, such as launching an art academy and membership programme ‘Museum Family’ (미술관 가족), started from August 1978. It meant that the museum recognised museumgoers not only as temporary visitors, but also as permanent ‘family’ members. Lee Gu-Yeol (李龜烈, 1932-), an art critic, explained that this programme was designed to support the museum’s national and social development and improve the public’s awareness and understanding of modern art.³⁴¹ In this sense, the museum promised to do open lectures and promote museum negotiation with various external agents.³⁴² Although the museum repeated errors and exposed its managerial limitations, it was nevertheless transforming and labelling itself as a social platform. In other words, the museum tangibly or intangibly accepted surrounding agents in reshaping its new identity.

Conclusion

Not much has been researched or discussed about either the debates or dynamics related to the NMMA in its Deoksu Palace period. Some researchers have simply criticised the lack of published materials and archives, but others have more recently presented different viewpoints based on both social and political circumstances at that time. Those viewpoints have dealt with narratives of how the NMMA at Deoksu Palace had gradually become a public-centred national art museum.

Similar in status to its time at Gyeongbok Palace – it still rented an exhibition space and received donations of artworks to store as a permanent collection but lacked curatorial staff who might

³⁴⁰ Oh Gwang-Soo and Kim Ji-Hyun were appointed as expert committee members at that time. Choi Yeol (2002: 28); Jung Joon-Mo (2003: 162); Jang Yeop (2009: 104).

³⁴¹ Lee Gu-Yeol (October 1978: 20).

³⁴² *Ibid.*

research or preserve a collection of artworks professionally – it had nevertheless changed. In some respects, the NMMA at this time was passively controlled by the logic of government-centred policy. It also might be regarded that Korean art, an essential source of momentum in the museum development, was in a mood of stasis and digressed from the international outlook. How, then, did it affect the trajectory of museum development adversely? Presumably, there would be a couple of ways to address this issue: first, the trends of Korean art during the Gyeongbok and Deoksu Palace periods were short-lived on account of either severe government repression or absence of critical viewpoints; and second, mainstream art trends such as *Informel* and *Dansaekhwa* (monochrome painting), settled for the status quo and prevented the possibility of an avant-garde spirit. In this way, the museum not only internally experienced trials and errors due to a defective organisational system, but also externally lost the way to exchange artistic traits and promote multifarious experimental art exhibitions.

The Korean art circle, however, became more vibrant despite criticism of the circumstances mentioned above. Under the circumstances, the conservative artistic authority exerted by the NAE and non-figurative artistic movements, in either abstract or *Informel* art, was later exploited as a political tool under Park Jung-Hee's dictatorship. On the other hand, several avant-garde art groups such as Origin, A.G. (Avant-garde), S.T. (Space & Time), the 4th Group, and many short-lived groups posed questions regarding how to transcend artistic traditions and escape from enforced social regulations. In that sense, their pivotal ideas, themes of against authority or liberal artistic expression, were not only provocative, but also persuasive to the public. Once the ideas were imprinted on the public's mind, there would be radical change to the museum's missions.

Speaking of the museum's identity, my viewpoint is that it was established in the Deoksu period through the establishment of a network with external agents and a wider public. Notwithstanding its limited resources, the museum planned exhibitions, educational activities, and amenities and realised its status as a full-fledged national art museum. In addition, visitors who were interested in Fine Arts from the 1960s to 1970s were exposed to a growing Western literature which fuelled their interests.

During the Deoksu Palace period, both the museum and the Korean art circle concurrently reached

a plateau in the late 1970s. Ostensibly, this phenomenon could suggest that both agents had become conditioned to the status quo. To be specific, the museum had been limited by its curatorial expertise and the art community became constrained under Western influence. However, this changed drastically after the unexpected assassination of President Park in 1979. Symbolically, this political event, for a short while, signified the end of both the long-lasting dictatorship and government-centred cultural policy. In this situation, a new appointment to the presidential position, the abolition of the National Art Exhibition, and the revived aspiration of having an independent art museum were finally realised at the beginning of the 1980s. At least that seemed to be the opportunity that lay before the museum and the art community in 1979.

Chapter Three

The new museum building in Gwacheon

On 2 October 1980, President Jeon Doo-Hwan (全斗煥, 1931-) visited the National Museum of Modern Art (NMMA) to encourage those participating in the 29th National Art Exhibition (NAE). Here Jeon received a request for the establishment of an outdoor sculpture park, a call that he immediately acted upon.³⁴³ Jeon also suggested that the government support artists, such as by subsidising airfares for study abroad.³⁴⁴ His words and actions gave an impression that Jeon's presidency might mark a new era in the history of the NMMA.

His formal visit was not unusual; the NAE was an important annual cultural event. It was an opportunity for the art community to publicise their work and for the president make a public gesture. Like his predecessor, Park Jung-Hee, Jeon was a former army general and he, too, saw the NAE as an opportunity to create an anti-authoritarian image.³⁴⁵ On this occasion, there was a political context: a popular uprising against the military junta in 1980 that cost hundreds of innocent lives, the Gwangju Democratisation Movement (광주민주화운동, 光州民主化運動, GDM), forced Jeon and his Fifth Republic Regime (1981-1988) to design a plan that would legitimise the government. To this end, the development of cultural projects and related infrastructure sought to

³⁴³ Anon., 'High expectations, President Jeon's order regarding the consideration of outdoor exhibition space' (전 대통령의 야외전시장 검토 지시에 큰 기대, 전시공간 확대 계기로), (6 October 1980: 5); Anon., 'Making the outdoor sculpture exhibition space' (야외조각 전시장을 만든다), (20 October 1980: 5).

³⁴⁴ Anon., 'President Jeon, cut the ribbon for the opening of National Art Exhibition and gave order to consider the establishment of outdoor sculpture park' (전 대통령, 국전 개막 테이프 끊어 야외전시장 검토하도록), (2 October 1980: 1).

³⁴⁵ Between Presidents Park and Jeon, Choi Gyu-Ha (崔圭夏, 1919-2006) served in the presidential role after Park was assassinated by his closest advisor Kim Jae-Gyu (the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency) on 26 October 1979. Choi, however, only performed his position for eight months (December 1979–August 1980) due to political pressure from the 'Shingunbu' (新軍部, unofficial private organisation consisted of several army generals who were former officers in the Korea Military Academy).

normalise the state of Korean society. It put in place a number of national projects, including winning the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Seoul Olympics.

There has been subsequent debate about how to interpret these actions; whether as national achievement or window dressing. One of the outcomes of this period was the making of a new art museum at Gwacheon to replace the NMMA at the Deoksugung palace. This chapter explores this period of institutional transformation. To what extent did the museum establish its values during this period? And, how were these values shared with the Korean populace and did they satisfy their expectations? What conversations took place with internal and external actors, and what were the implications for the institution?

Socio-political circumstances: road to the democratic nation

Prior to his 7th inauguration in 1971, President Park had already initiated several national projects to boost the domestic economy including the second phase of a five-year economic development plan (1967-1971) and the New Village Movement (새마을운동, NVM) (Figure 33), a nationwide economic development campaign initiated in 1970. The former aimed to attract foreign capital through export-led industrialisation, while the latter was a community development project to revitalise rural villages and mitigate income disparity with urban areas.³⁴⁶ These were also intended attempts at popularism by a coercive dictatorship. In 1978, Park set out his vision for the movement:

³⁴⁶ Park Jung-Hee went to see Kishi Nobusuke (岸信介, 1896-1987), the former Japanese Prime Minister, at Tokyo in 1961 after he had seized power in the process of the military coup. Park showed his great interest in national economic development and modernisation. Park, who had performed as a military officer during the Japanese colonial period, was impressed by Japan's rapid recovery during the post-war period. Park relied heavily on models of Meiji Yushin (明治維新). In this vein, he had a desire to reform South Korea in Japanese ways. Kishi advised Park based on his experience as a wartime economic planner in Manchuria that any modernisation or industrialisation process should be supported by rural revitalisation projects. Kang Sang-Joong and Hyun Moo-Ahm (2012: 18-22).

[...] What is the New Village Movement? Simply put, I told everyone last year that it is the movement to be affluent. The word ‘affluent’, however, is problematic. [...] I stressed that we must be industrious, proud of ourselves, and able to cooperate with each other. In this way, you will be rich, your neighbour will be rich, your village will be rich, and your nation will be rich. [...] To make this happen, what should we do? First, we should work hard; in other words, ‘diligence’ (근면, 勤勉). [...] Second, we should concentrate on the ‘spirit of self-help’ (자조정신, 自助精神). We should ‘cooperate’ (협동, 協同) with each other. Three elements - diligence, spirit of self-help, and cooperation - are the codes of conduct of the New Village Movement. I am convinced that it is simultaneously a progressive movement towards modernisation, and that of a nationwide spiritual revolution.³⁴⁷



Figure 33 New Village Movement during the 1970s. By kind permission of and © National Archives of Korea.

³⁴⁷ The Presidential Secretary Office (대통령비서실) (6 December 1978).

Park saw Japan as offering an economic model and saw this movement and the October Yushin (維新憲法) as strengthening his control.³⁴⁸ The term ‘Yushin’ (pronounced ‘ishin’ in Japanese), quoting the same term used to refer to Japan’s ‘Meiji Yushin’ (明治維新, literally meaning Meiji Revitalising Reform), has been referred to as spiritual mobilisation.³⁴⁹ In Japan, this reformation led to modernisation, capitalism, and a constitutional monarchy. Park used this more coercively to legitimise his government-led capitalism and militarism. While economic disparities would remain, Park’s strategy was a success and South Korea emerged as a modern industrialised economy. This socio-political as well as socio-economic environment gave Park’s government a stability and legitimacy. However, it did not last long. When Park was unexpectedly assassinated in 1979, South Korean society fell into chaos and required a new order to stabilise the situation it encountered. Choi Gyu-Ha (崔圭夏, 1919-2006) became acting president but was deposed by Jeon and his army (新軍部). He then Jeon suppressed a series of demonstrations, including the GDM in 1980.

President Jeon and his government met the challenge of a succession of pro-democracy protests by suggesting that his government would adopt policies unlike those of Park’s regime.³⁵⁰ Under the banners of ‘stability, autonomy, and open-door policy’, Jeon promoted government-centred projects to reorganise and reconstruct entire cultural infrastructures within the framework of the

³⁴⁸ *October Yushin* was composed of a full text with 12 chapters, 126 articles, and 11 supplementary provisions. Speaking of the *October Yushin*, it was the constitution of Fourth Republic and 7th constitutional amendments that manifested the ‘reformation of our political system’ to support an idea of peaceful unification as a national task of the Korean populace on 17 October 1972. The fundamental characteristics of *October Yushin* were a reconfirmation of ‘orienting peaceful unification, fixation of democracy, the establishment of liberal economic order to achieve practical economic equality, and protection of freedom and peace’. However, it was a constitutional reform that enabled him to have a long-term presidency. Here are supporting points: 1) strengthen the president’s authority to become a leading head of state, 2) weakened the National Assembly’s authority and shortened its session, 3) the president had the power to appoint Supreme Court justices, 4) the president could recommend a third of members of the National Assembly and had the right to dissolve it, and 5) abolished the direct system of presidential election.

³⁴⁹ Park Sang-Mi (Fall 2010: 76-77).

³⁵⁰ Ha Tae-Soo (2011a: 89-90).

overall development plan; it seemed that he sought to transform the country from a military regime into a culturally advanced society.³⁵¹

President Jeon's approach to culture

Amongst Jeon's cultural actions, was the building of ties to the USA and Japan, the liberalising cultural spectacles through the 3S policy (sports, screen, and sex) to lure the public, and support for professional sports (baseball, basketball, soccer, and *ssireum* (씨름): Korean style wrestling) (Figure 34).³⁵² Concurrently, mass-manufactured colour televisions were supplied to households. It was an obscurantist policy to manipulate the public and gain their political apathy. The making of a new national art museum, which was confirmed during the 29th NAE, was a key component in this cultural policy.

Many scholars in the fields of cultural administration have defined the origin of cultural policy in South Korea as starting in 1972 with the enactment of the *Culture and Arts Promotion Act* (CAPA, 문화예술진흥법, 文化藝術振興法).³⁵³ As a result, several cultural organisations and associated cultural agencies were established, such as the Culture and Arts Promotion Fund (문화예술진흥기금) and the Korean Culture and Arts Foundation (KCAF, later changed to ARKO from 2005). In the 1970s, the government increased investment in culture but spent more than 70% of the budget on the nationalistic project of 'establishing historical viewpoints of ethnic groups' (민족사관정립, 民族史觀定立) and only 12% on the promotion of arts.³⁵⁴

³⁵¹ Na Seon-Hwa (2008: 32-33).

³⁵² Yang Eun-Hee (2007: 182-183).

³⁵³ Jung Kap-Young (1993: 94).

³⁵⁴ About 59 billion Won had been spent on the promotion of arts from 1974 to 1978. Yim Hak-Soon (2003: 100).



Figure 34 President Jeon Doo-Hwan and professional sports. By kind permission of and © Korea Public Policy Broadcasting Service, ehistory.

The MCPI had focused mainly on the development of traditional culture (such as maintenance or restoration work of cultural assets, development of Korean Studies, and supporting traditional artistic talents) and the expansion of cultural facilities (mainly making or expanding various museums).³⁵⁵ Under these circumstances, the status of the NMMA had not improved much.³⁵⁶ The museum belonged to the MCPI, but KCAF existed separately and had its own committee, and the Prime Ministers from President Park to Jeon's government had worked as its chairman. 50% of KCAF's support fund had been spent only on national policy projects; only a limited amount of the fund was used to support NMMA acquisitions.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Oh Jong-Hwan (1980: 161); Yim Hak-Soon (February 2012: 174-176).

³⁵⁶ Oh Jong-Hwan (1980: 165-166).

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, (1980: 166); National Archives of Korea (1 December 2006).

Jeon's Fifth Republic government, established in 1981, announced major long-term plans in cultural policy on four consecutive occasions (Table 6). Culture and the arts were now integrated into the plan for the both economy and society. New funds were put into the national museums to encourage their internationalisation, such as through exhibitions.³⁵⁸ The government also focused on matters of 'national welfare' and ethnicity as a strategy to stabilise popular sentiment.³⁵⁹ This included Guk-pung 81 (국풍 (國風) 81), an initiative to encourage university students to take an interest in Korean culture including Korean Studies, in an attempt to neutralise their resistance to the military regime (Figure 35).³⁶⁰



Figure 35 Guk-pung 81 held at Yeouido (여의도), Seoul from 28 May to 1 June 1981. By kind permission of and © Korea Public Policy Broadcasting Service, ehistory.

³⁵⁸ Koo Gwang-Mo (1998: 5-6).

³⁵⁹ The Presidential Secretary Office (20 October 1980); The Presidential Secretary Office (15 February 1983); The Presidential Secretary Office (30 October 1985).

³⁶⁰ There were 659 shows in which about 6,000 students (194 universities nationwide), traditional folk culture performers, and entertainers had participated. There is speculation that the KBS (Korean Broadcasting System), the national broadcaster of South Korea, was availed on for political tactic that was organised by Jeon's army (신군부, 新軍部).

Year	Name of Cultural Policy	Details
1981	새문화정책 (literally means ‘New Culture Policy’)	1) Establishment of cultural identity 2) Equal distribution of cultural benefit 3) Reconsideration of creative culture capability 4) Reconsideration of social education role regarding all sorts of cultural facilities
1983	(5 th phase) the five-year amended plan as to the development of economy and society: culture and arts sector (제 5 차 경제사회발전 5 개년 계획: 문화 예술 부문)	1) Establishment of cultural facilities and promotion of local culture to give equal opportunity (for the public) 2) Development of traditional culture and improvement of conditions for creation to establish cultural identity 3) Enhance the superiority of ethnic culture worldwide with 1986 and 1988 sports games as a momentum
1984	The five-year plan of promoting local culture (지방문화육성 5 개년 계획)	Promoting local cultural activities and making cultural facilities: complex of six culture centres with performing hall and exhibition room
1986	(6 th phase) the five-year plan as to the development of economy and society: culture sector (제 6 차 경제사회발전 5 개년 계획: 문화 부문)	1) Realisation of cultural welfare 2) Establishment of cultural identity 3) Vitalising capability of cultural creation 4) Globalisation of culture 5) Implementation of national development as to culture

Table 6 Key cultural policies during the Fifth Republic period³⁶¹

In 1980, Jeon issued the order to establish a new art museum with an outdoor sculpture park. Why? Jeon realised the importance of having an international art museum to encourage public sentiment

³⁶¹ (In Korean) 1981: ‘새문화정책’, 1983: ‘제5차 경제사회발전 5개년 수정계획 문화예술부문 계획’, 1984: ‘지방문화증흥 5개년계획’, 1986: ‘제6차 경제사회발전 5개년 계획 문화부문 계획’. Because of the five-year plan that began in 1983, cultural organisations such as Seoul Arts Centre, Independence Hall of Korea, National Centre for Korean Traditional Performing Arts, and the National Museum of Contemporary Art were established. Oh Yang-Yeol (1995: 56-57).

during his tours to various foreign countries. However, he decided this on impulse and not with the benefit of the Korean art circle in mind. What would this mean for the NMMA's successor?

The National Museum of Contemporary Art in Gwacheon

The NMMA had started to collect artworks in 1971 and this fundamentally shifted perceptions of the 'value' regarding modern and contemporary artworks. As a centre of Korean cultural heritage, the NMMA encouraged art-related actors, museum practitioners and the wider public to these a new significance in conservation and transmission. This had been aided by Park's cultural policy for the 'creation of new ethnic culture' (민족문화창조, 民族文化創造). However, without professional curatorial staff or an adequate budget, the NMMA could not realise the full potential of these developments:³⁶² a small clique decided on acquisitions and the museum found it impossible to reject donations of poor quality works.³⁶³

The relocation and opening of the new national art museum in Gwacheon was expected to bring about revolutionary change. According to the *Construction Records of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea* (국립현대미술관 건립지) published in 1987, several points were seen as imperative when designing the museum. Previous renditions of the museum provided important touchstones for considering the improvements to be realised:³⁶⁴

³⁶² Space (October 1969: 28-29).

³⁶³ Lee Gyeong-Seong stated his concern whether to accept artworks without legitimate assessment. The museum received 83 artworks from Han Gi-Seok (韓己錫) in 1971, a Korean artist who resided in the United States. Lee even evaluated that it was a disadvantageous donation and regarded his skill as an amateur. Lee Gyeong-Seong (January-February 1972: 31).

³⁶⁴ The NMCA (1987: 23).

First, the museum building in Deoksu Palace was not legitimately defined as a proper art museum. In particular, interior facilities relating to a steady temperature and humidity system including disaster prevention and compositional aspects were far below a suitable standard.

Second, since the number of artists had increased significantly, there was not enough capacity to accommodate artworks to hold exhibitions. In this vein, the museum decided to invite exhibitions in accordance with artistic genres, but it was futile due to the gradual increase of the population's engagement in art-related fields.

Third, the concept of today's art museum includes areas that reconsider not only the collection or exhibition of artworks, but also the cultivation of emotion and a framework of environmental creativity regarding fine arts, particularly in education, promotion, and relaxation. Thus, the construction of a new modern art museum was a requirement of the times.

Fourth, the construction of an art museum with modernistic facilities that could attract international-scale exhibitions was needed urgently to revitalise the cultural exchange between nations.

Additionally, plans for the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Olympics, the biggest sports events in Korean history, encouraged Jeon's government to see the construction of an internationally significant national art museum as key to the promotion of South Korea as a socially and economically developed nation.³⁶⁵ Lee Gyeong-Seong, who would become director of the new museum, and who was – unlike his predecessors – an art specialist, later reflected a collection of his thoughts in March 1981:

³⁶⁵ Jang Yeop (2009: 107); Park Jung-Hyun (2016: 199).

Nowadays, there are some aspects to distinguish between advanced and underdeveloped countries. However, the most salient feature seems to be how an art museum of that country, a modern art museum in particular, is well appointed and actively performed. Constructing an international scale modern and contemporary art museum that comes close to that of advanced countries would be not only a long-cherished hope for some art-related agents, but also our own standard cultural criterion to showcase to the world. Hence, having an excellent modern art museum means that a country owns the museum and enforces proper cultural policy and joins with advanced societies to that extent. [...]

Many visitors from abroad raise two questions. One is ‘what is the tradition of South Korea?’ [...] The other is ‘where could we access present-day creations?’ Some might say they could get them from the exhibitions, either at the national art museum or commercial galleries in downtown. However, the answer here is not quite right. The poor quality of facilities and artworks in museums cause a problem. Moreover, visitors who rarely come to visit South Korea in either April or October could not see Korean modern artworks, as visitors had to leave this country due to a chaotic state under the name of NAE. In this vein, visitors will only have an impression that ‘there is tradition, but no creation in this country’ when they depart from any of the international airports in South Korea.³⁶⁶

Lee was a far-sighted man who understood how to reposition the museum as a nationally- and internationally-recognised institution. Lee first became director in 1981, being replaced by Kim Se-Joong (金世中, 1928-1986) in 1983. However, Kim’s sudden and unexpected death in 1986, just two months before the new museum’s opening, meant Lee’s return to the position which he held until 1992.³⁶⁷ One of the significant changes that came about with the move to Gwacheon, was the change of the museum’s English name from ‘modern’ to ‘contemporary’; it opened as the

³⁶⁶ Lee Gyeong-Seong (March 1981: 73).

³⁶⁷ Yang Eun-Hee (2007: 175-176).

National Museum of Contemporary Art (NMCA), Korea, in 1987. Lee was behind this name change:

The issue of the museum's name is also crucial. Former directors used the term 'Modern Art Museum' without understanding the difference between a 'modern' (근대, 近代) and 'contemporary' (현대, 現代) art museum. [...] I had to make an adjustment to rename the museum as '현대미술관' in Korean, and 'Contemporary Art Museum' in English instead of 'Modern Art Museum'. Some people claimed that it would be better for the museum to change its name to '近代' art museum rather than '現代' since there has been no '近代' art museum in South Korea. However, I thought the name of 'contemporary' would be a provisional action according to the global trends. There were no art museums that are named as 'contemporary' in Japan or the United States (except Chicago) at this time. In terms of the naming issue, we, South Korea, move forward with advanced countries. In a sense, we are ahead of them.

[...]

As a matter of fact, I have my own guideline 'go forward and do not look back' to run the National Museum of Contemporary Art. This phrase applies not only to the purchase of artworks, but also operating an art museum. It is normal for artworks from the past to be expensive. For instance, our museum's annual budget could not buy a single piece of Impressionist painting. In that sense, the museum should move forward and aim at a future-oriented vision based on the promising artworks of young artists. If we continue to discover, develop, and progress, there would be someone who could cover our back. These are my guidelines for operating our museum.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁸ Lee Gyeong-Seong (1998: 202).

According to excerpts from his memoirs, Lee carried out a mission to acquire ‘contemporaneity’ so as to establish the museum’s identity. Setting aside the issue of discordance between the Korean and English term ‘modern’, there was a rather more fundamental reason for changing the museum’s name to ‘contemporary’: the museum possessed only 200 modern artworks, and this was considered insufficient to position it as a ‘proper’ modern art museum.

Another reason is derived from Lee Gyeong-Seong’s slogan ‘rationalisation, modernisation, and globalisation’. Lee In-Beom, an art critic who studied Lee Gyeong-Seong’s museum practice, reasoned that the orientation of this slogan equated to the aim of ‘Westernisation’ (서구화). This impression was supported by a series of international exhibitions that brought in a great many with Western-style artworks. At the same time, collections of paintings and calligraphic-style works were transferred from the NMCA to the exhibition gallery of calligraphy in Seoul Arts Centre (예술의 전당).³⁶⁹ As South Korea was exposed to the outside world, mostly due to rapid economic growth and democratisation, this progressive action enabled Lee Gyeong-Seong to strengthen and make explicit his ideology.

There are other viewpoints regarding this issue. Acting senior curators in the museum, Ryu Ji-Yeon and Kim In-Hye, have considered the renaming process of the museum. They have worked for more than a decade in the museum and experienced different periods in the museum’s history from the Gwacheon period until now. They were interviewed as part of this research project:

KYJ: How would you describe or define the ‘contemporary art’ that is presented by the museum?

RJY: In effect, the most ideal conditions of the museum to consider in terms of contemporary art, is about ‘now’. There are two different perspectives from which to examine this concept according to the particular situation happening in South Korea. One is contemporary art that

³⁶⁹ Lee In-Beom (2011: 358).

could only be seen in South Korea, and the other is contemporary art that could reach an international level to interact with others.

KYJ: Sounds like it is not only a matter of time?

RJY: Of course not. It is a matter of time, but also a matter of different viewpoints, such as what aspects of contemporary art could draw attention, what aspects of contemporary art could be understandable to the public, or what aspects of contemporary art could level up its quality with self-confidence.³⁷⁰

[...]

KIH: The keyword ‘contemporary’ is such a meaningful theme in the entire history of the museum. It is because the museum was initially opened in the name of ‘modern art’ then changed to ‘contemporary art’ that translated from a Korean word ‘Hyundae’ (現代) in 1969. Within this context, there is a hidden historical fact. From the memoir of Lee Gyeong-Seong, he claimed how to define and approach the concept of contemporary. He put emphasis on slogans such as ‘contemporary’, ‘from now’ and ‘future that after now’. He also stressed his viewpoint to remove the memories of the past after the establishment of a new museum. With this in mind, it seems that the notion of ‘contemporary’ has been overly highlighted from the phrase ‘National Museum of Contemporary Art’ that is comprised of four singular words national, museum, contemporary and art. Hence, we can understand that concept as the needs of the times. [...] However, it was not easy for the Korean people to understand what the concept was and the significance of contemporary art. Even the public or the MCPI had no idea how to deal with the crucial issue. At least, they had a sense that a concept of ‘contemporary’ had become a sort of new slogan only to consider ‘present and future’. It was a mandate from that era and dominated Korean culture.

For some time, no one had understood clearly enough the implication of ‘contemporary’, but only the name without practice. Not only had the public who are interested in art but also

³⁷⁰ Ryu Ji-Yeon, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Seoul branch of the MMCA, 7 February 2015.

experts and museum practitioners found themselves in a state of coma in terms of how to approach and interpret this conceptual term. Lee Gyeong-Seong was one of the external examiners that engaged in managerial activities for the museum from the 1960s to 1970s. He gradually started to establish the concept of contemporary and draw a concrete image of its fundamental aim after he became the director of the museum in 1982. In terms of the word ‘contemporary’, he had interpreted it from globalised and internationalised viewpoints. He fully paid attention to art scenes and their embedded discourses from the outside world. In this regard, he was trying to investigate and research in a global context so that the museum could position itself as a leading guide for introducing cultural diversities to the people in South Korea. In this process, the museum realised the fact that they had gone too far without retrospection to the past. In the process, the museum raised the question of ‘Ok, then what is modern?’³⁷¹

These two curators could be considered the successors to Lee Gyeong-Seong. They share some of Lee’s views: they all possessed a future-oriented and internationalist vision which envisaged how South Korea should keep pace with other parts of the world. Lee Gyeong-Seong confessed that some ignorant government officials simply translated Korean words to English ones without any knowledge of aesthetics.

Lee Gyeong-Seong (LGS): [...] By the way, it is a hilarious story how the museum had that name. A word ‘현대미술관’ was invented by government officials.

Lee In-Beom (LIB): Ah, that was why.

LGS: Yes. We should say ‘근대미술관’ when it is modern art. All around the world, they used the title ‘modern art museum’. South Korea, however, only used ‘현대미술관’ in Korean.

³⁷¹ Kim In-Hye, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Gwacheon branch of the MMCA, 5 March 2015.

They had no idea what the notion of ‘현대’ was. They felt that the museum was supposed to have its name as ‘현대미술관’ since it deals with the notion of the present. However, in English, the name of the museum was...

LIB: It was ‘modern art’.

LGS: It was ‘modern art’ when I went there. In English, it was modern art. There was only one small-size ‘현대미술관’ (contemporary art museum) in Chicago worldwide. (Yes) There was only one. The rest of the art museums used ‘근대미술관’ (modern art museum). However, South Korea was the first case.

LIB: We were the first.

LGS: Because of their ignorance, South Korea became the first country that used the word ‘현대미술관’.

LIB: Yes, many people used the word ‘근대화’ (literally means modernisation in English) at that time; the doctrine of President Park Jung-Hee, economic development, and the ‘modernisation of the fatherland’ (조국 근대화).

LGS: There was no ‘현대화’ (also literally means modernisation in English) at that time. These people, however, said ‘현대화’ or ‘현대’. The ignorant government officials brought up the word ‘현대’.³⁷²

A Korean noun ‘현대’ and its different English interpretations might be considered as merely a matter of conceptual differences. Owing to these circumstances, however, subsequent museum practices and values would be inherited, invented and normalised. Whatever motive or momentum the anonymous government officials had in mind regarding the naming process has been left undiscovered. Also, some might ask why they (or a person) decided on that name, what blinded

³⁷² Lee In-Beom (2004: 230-231); The NMCA (2006c: 5).

discourses existed behind the scenes, who were the beneficiaries of this decision-making, were they imprisoned by the notion of ‘현대’, what kind of performance did they imagine, and how did this relate to the outside world, such as other communities of practice and to the public? The newly established museum and museum-related agents had to examine the position that the museum was finally situated at the heart of social relations to make a link, to instruct the public, and to articulate the mission. Therefore, the conversion from modern to contemporary art was the point at which the museum had to set agendas as to creating a public-centred atmosphere and manifesting museum visions. For South Korea, the national museum in Gwacheon had worked as a cultural platform to mediate between the Korean locality and contemporary international art trends.

Locating the NMCA

The Promotion Committee of Museum Construction (PCMC, 미술관건립추진위원회) immediately found itself in difficulty in following the president’s orders. The prerequisites were for a museum building and sculpture park within easy reach of Seoul. The problem was finding a site that could accommodate these uses. According to the *Construction Records of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea* published in 1987, the committee went through a series of discussions and evaluated more than twenty sites. Several news articles discussed issue and made predictions on the site selection.³⁷³ Locations from Seoul to Daejeon (大田, a city in mid-South Korea) were examined. There were, in the end, only three nominees: a garden in the backyard of Deoksu Palace; near Seoul High School at Gangnam, Seoul; and Seoul Grand Park, Gwacheon. The first was rejected to preserve the Deoksu Palace area as a historic site. The second also failed because of

³⁷³ Anon., ‘Stingy about the support of cultural activities’ (인색해질 문화활동 지원), (25 October 1982: 6); Anon., ‘Lee Jin-Hee, the Minister of the MCPI, mentioned that ‘Cultural Olympic’ including the relocation and expansion of the National Museum of Korea planned from the New Year’ (이진희 문공부장관 밝혀 국립박물관의 이전확장 등 새해부터 ‘문화올림픽’ 준비), (24 December 1982: 2); Anon., ‘The National Art Museum will be established at Gwacheon’ (국립현대미술관 과천에 설립), (11 January 1983: 10).

ownership issues. Consequently, a site in the Seoul Grand Park (서울대공원) in Gwacheon was decided upon (Figure 36).³⁷⁴ This was not, however, the end of the problems.

When the MCPI selected this location and had approval from Jeon to begin construction, it was met by fierce opposition from the Seoul Metropolitan Government (서울시청, SMG). The twenty members of the Construction Advisory Committee affiliated to the SMG had an urgent meeting and called director Lee Gyeong-Seong to the committee to discuss the issue.³⁷⁵ Lee was accused of undermining agreement proposal, already in place, to build a natural history museum on the site.³⁷⁶ That museum fitted well with the local natural environment and large-scale amusement facilities. Nevertheless, the MCPI (and Lee Gyeong-Seong) received immediate approval from President Jeon, which propelled their plan forward as a national project.³⁷⁷ According to Lee, the committee had spit out the words with ‘venom’, and countless problematic issues would affect museum management subsequently.³⁷⁸ The conflict with the SMG caused an issue with an access way that has remained unresolved for thirty years. Directors of the museum and the Ministers of MCPI, MCT, and MCST have struggled with the difficulties. Kim Tai-Soo, the architect who won the design contest, explained:

In 1982, the PCMC started to look for a building site. [...] Former Seoul High School and Namsan (南山) Music Hall had no place to establish an outdoor sculpture park, and the sites of Whimoon (徽文) High School and Yeouido (汝矣島) were owned by private enterprises

³⁷⁴ Lee Gyeong-Seong (1998: 220).

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, (1998: 221).

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ Lee In-Beom (2004: 279).

³⁷⁸ According to Lee’s remembrance, he discussed with Park Se-Jik (朴世直, 1933-2009) who worked at the Prime Minister’s secretariat office. Lee asked Park to get approval from the president. After they received Jeon’s approval, the SMG called an emergency meeting. *Ibid.*, (2004: 279-280).

and cost too much to purchase. The site of Jangchung-dong (獎忠洞) tennis court, Seoul was also eliminated due to the incongruity that might harm a park inside the area. For this reason, the committee considered the Seoul Grand Park at Gwacheon that was owned by the SMG as a high priority. The construction of a zoo, however, had already commenced. Moreover, the making of a children's amusement park as a private enterprise at the east side of the entrance had already been decided. Between the zoo and amusement park, there was a cosy valley near Cheongye Mountain (淸溪山) that occupied almost 50,000 pyeong (165,289 m²). The SMG planned in advance to build both a zoological specimen museum and children's museum there. When the site of 50,000 pyeong was discovered as a building site for the art museum, many figures including the Minister of MCPI visited and were pleased that it would be a great combination to have the zoo, amusement park, and art museum all together. Indeed, the site was owned by the SMG and had a different purpose. The SMG could not abandon the site easily. After that, a direct request from the Cheongwadae (청와대), a presidential residence of South Korea, made certain the museum would have the site permanently. The SMG has not cooperated thoroughly in the process of constructing the museum or a vehicle access road. Still, the issue of the access way remains valid even now.³⁷⁹

Ostensibly, both agents, the museum and SMG, were subject to political authority. One aspired to have an international art museum, and the other to build a natural history museum in the same spot.³⁸⁰ It was an issue resolved by President Jeon intervention.

³⁷⁹ The NMCA (2006d: 16-17).

³⁸⁰ In 1988, *Chosun Ilbo* reported that since the MCPI received a building site and had started museum construction, it requested a separate access way for owner-driver visitors in contradiction to the arranged agreement with SMG. However, the SMG denied their request due to visitor safety reasons and promoting a sense of disharmony. Owing to the conflict, the museum visitors have had to make a long detour since then. Anon., 'Battle of securing access way for the National Museum of Contemporary Art' (현대미술관 진입로 확보 공방), (7 May 1988: 13).



Figure 36 The Promotion Committee of Museum Construction. By kind permission of and © MMCA.

In contrast with the story mentioned above, Yoo Jun-Sang (劉俊相, 1932-), the first chief curator of the curatorial department at this time, gave a different perspective on the building site issue. Yoo was interviewed by a notable art critic Jung Hyun (丁鉉, 1968-). According to their dialogue, Yoo presented a story of how the museum negotiated with political organisations and conglomerates to locate a suitable building site unlike that of government-affiliated agencies.

Jung: I would like to hear the story of when you started to work as the chief curator of the curatorial department after the relocation of the museum to Gwacheon.

Yoo: It was the period when there was no such correct understanding of a curator related to contemporary art. I had established relations with cultural organisations in South Korea

during the preparation of opening the exhibition in the Gwacheon museum. I went to France to study in the 1960s. It was the period when André Malraux (1901-1976) had performed as the first Minister of Culture in France, and there was an attempt to plan modern culture and arts at a national level. I had been working as an art critic since the 1970s. At that time, there was an exhibition *Asian Art of 16 countries* (아시아미술 16 개국전) in Fukuoka, Japan, once in a five-year period. I had introduced Korean contemporary art there three times until the mid-1980s. This experience served as a momentum to establish relations with the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea.

Jung: What was the motive?

Yoo: Although there was willingness regarding the establishment of a contemporary art museum since a long time ago, this agenda had not passed the National Assembly of Korea yet. It meant that the Korean art circle had no political power to exert. I have no idea how people evaluate Kim Se-Joong's achievement. Thanks to his effort and passion, the museum would be established in Gwacheon. [...] Kim asked me to curate the opening exhibition. The museum was at the Deoksu Palace and had operated through the system of an advisory committee. Consequently, the curatorial and exhibition departments were established after the relocation to Gwacheon.

Jung: Then, what circumstances did the museum encounter? Did the museum have any blueprints related to collection or exhibition planning?

Yoo: Almost none. There were only 2,100 artworks for the permanent collection. Same situation for exhibition planning as well. There is a long story related to the issue. In short, it was not easy to find a suitable building site regarding the relocation of the museum. Fortunately, Kim Se-Joong's political power had helped us to overcome the difficulties. Since there were no building sites to accommodate both an art museum and outdoor sculpture park, the government selected a part of Seoul Grand Park's premises owned by the Hanjin Industry (韓進, current Hanjin Group) as a building site. Initially, the site was

intended for making a Seoul Natural History Museum (서울 자연사 박물관). [...] There were too many illogical situations at that time.³⁸¹

There is another clarification of the criteria that is unfamiliar to people who do not know of any events behind the scenes. Initially, the basic plan for choosing the building site of the museum was to ‘formulate a new cultural sphere based on the spatial viewpoint, and relocate the museum immediately after the construction process completes on the selected site.’ Based on this criterion, the government decided to select the building site either in Seoul or a capital area that accorded the following standards in terms of visiting the museum: the site should 1) take less than an hour either by subway or by car, 2) be within a core area of civilised living, 3) be a place that has potential to be a cultural hub, 4) have green space such as a park, 5) have a public resort area and 6) have memorial value based on cultural significance.³⁸² Gwacheon was the place that satisfied all those requirements despite accompanying challenges from the SMG (Figure 37 and 38). However, Ha Gye-Hoon, an art critic and museum professional, commented on the compulsory government policy that engaged in the matter of site selection. He concluded that the policy led to the expulsion of residents in the Makgye-dong (막계동), Gwacheon because the building site of the new national art museum was located on their residence.

It is not easy to give a clear answer in terms of why the national art museum moved to Gwacheon. The pastoral atmosphere of the museum hinders its accessibility. Also, we cannot say that the NMCA in Gwacheon works better than ones in Gwanghwamun (光化門) or Deoksu Palace. If the related authorities professed their difficulty in finding a large space in the downtown area, we could understand a decision of relocation. However, the building site was Makgye-dong. The government forced local residents to migrate from Makgye-

³⁸¹ Yoo Jun-Sang, interview by Jung Hyun (8 October 2013).

³⁸² Choi Tae-Man (2008: 20).

dong to somewhere else. Residents who live at both Nantaeryeong (南泰嶺) and Seonbawi (선바위) are immigrants. Its entire process was such a forcible resettlement to accelerate the construction process.³⁸³

Comparing those two statements mentioned above, it is plausible to conclude that the mandatory requirement for the building site of NMCA was to have a spacious area to accommodate both an art museum and outdoor sculpture park. Without any debates or public hearings, Jeon and his government pushed ahead the plan to accomplish their ideas as to cultural internalisation and modernisation. They also considered cultural policies as a means of promotion to publicise their long-term vision towards ‘national welfare improvement’ (국민복지증진). However, it was made compulsory to execute involuntary migration once the related authorities of the project had found a suitable place at Gwacheon. Many residents had to migrate without reference to any decision-making procedures. It went against the government’s catchphrase of ‘constructing a democratic welfare state’ (민주적 복지국가 건설). Regardless of their illogical and undemocratic administration of the local residents, this selection process emphasised the impression to internal and external museum agents that they had little experience in sharing or accepting ideas from others. In sum, the conflict between related agents or the forced migration might be either impetus or trial and error for the museum to rebrand its identity in the process of forming a social consensus.

³⁸³ Ha Gye-Hoon, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Insa-dong, Seoul, 6 March 2015.



Figure 37 Ground-breaking ceremony of the NMCA, Gwacheon (1984). By kind permission of and © National Archives of Korea. President Jeon Doo-Hwan and the first lady Lee Soon-Ja (李順子, 1939-) took part in this event.



Figure 38 Framing completion ceremony of the NMCA, Gwacheon (1985). By kind permission of and © Korea Public Broadcasting Service, ehistory.

The management of the NMCA

With the relocation to Gwacheon as momentum driver, both the scale of the organisation and numbers of staff in the museum developed quickly. The Gwacheon period was the first time that the museum had systematically reorganised itself since 1969. The newly legislated organisation was created a week prior to the museum's opening (Presidential Decree 12341, 18 August 1986). There were significant changes. The three core departments (General Affairs, Investigation and Research, and Exhibition) from the Deoksu Palace period, were replaced by a new bureau (secretariat) with three museum departments (Management, Liaison and Education (섭외교육), and Exhibition) and a curatorial office. Heads of each department were assigned from the fifth or fourth tier of government official. The total staff capacity increased from 30 to 100, including 15 staff from the curatorial sector.³⁸⁴ The museum opened on 25 August 1986 (Figure 39).³⁸⁵



Figure 39 A completion ceremony of the NMCA, Gwacheon (1986). By kind permission of and © NMK

³⁸⁴ Jang Yeop (2009: 110-111); Kim Dal-Jin, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Kim Dal-Jin Art Archives and Museum, 20 March 2015.

³⁸⁵ See more details: The NMCA (1987: 22-23).

As to its scale and expertise, the museum was utterly transformed. Enacting a new organisation plan (see Figure 40) enabled the museum to reorganise its structure according to the tasks and functions of a contemporary art museum (Table 7).

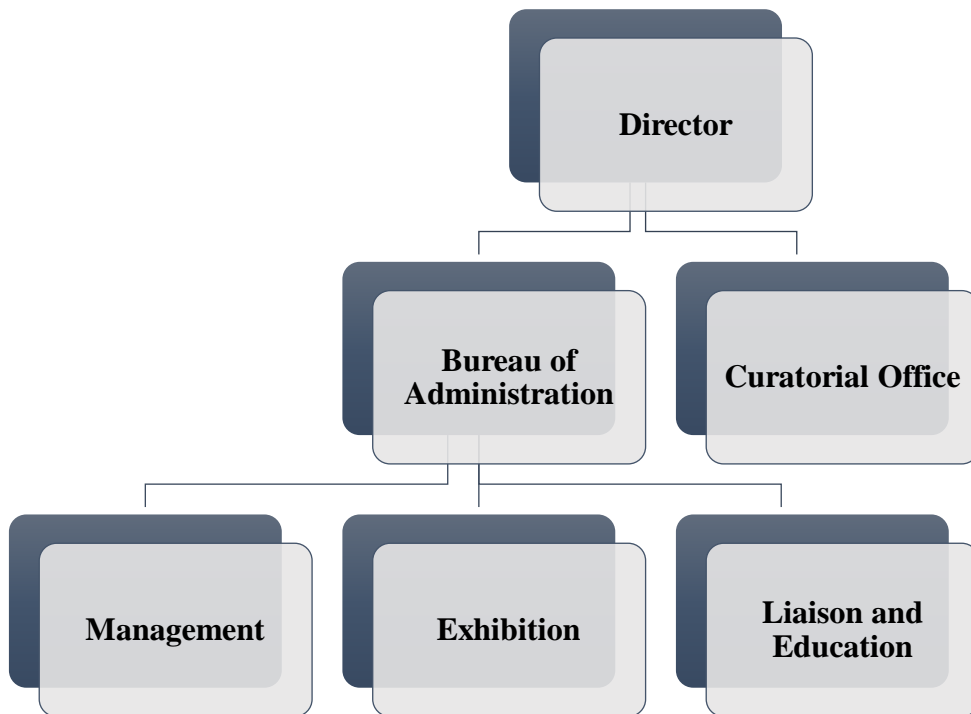


Figure 40 Organisation plan during the Gwacheon period (18/08/1986 – 31/12/2005)³⁸⁶

³⁸⁶ Jang Yeop (2009: 113).

Department	Task
Management (관리과)	a) Security b) License and commission of the organisation c) Courier, control, preservation, and management of official documents d) Employment, military, training, pension, and rest of personnel in their general affairs e) Budget, accountancy, and revenues f) Administration of goods and national properties g) Planning major museum projects, and comprehensive and screening analysis h) Administration of defence and facilities in the museum i) Matters that are not related to other departments
Exhibition (전시과)	a) Exhibition planning b) Permanent exhibitions including curatorial, rented, and international-scale both national and overseas c) Management of exhibition halls d) Museum collections administration e) Supporting creative activities among artists both in South Korea and overseas f) Exhibitions taking place at the other buildings (annexes) of the NMCA
Liaison and Education (접외교육과)	a) Planning and implementing of liberal education regarding art b) Supply and expansion of activities in art field c) Collection, publication, and management, both academic references and data d) International exchange of art references and data e) Training art professionals
Curatorial Office (학예연구실)	a) Research activities divided into segmented fine arts fields b) Discovery and investigation of artworks and references regarding fine arts c) Preservation, repair, and restoration of artworks d) Examination of artworks

Table 7 Departments and their tasks during the Gwacheon period (18/08/1986 – 31/12/2005)³⁸⁷

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, (2009: 111-112).

It was evident that launching both a Liaison and Education Department and Curatorial Office brought significant change to the museum. The former put an emphasis on educational purpose for the first time, and the latter permitted informed exhibition planning and research, again for the first time, so that fundamental museum missions – research activity, artwork collection, exhibition planning and education programme planning – could be put into practice through the collaborative work of those departments. The museum recognised that the public had keen cultural aspiration. There was a constant demand in how to meet their aesthetic taste and leisure needs at the same time. The newly established museum in Gwacheon had to offer a space where the public could participate in a museum experience. To this end, museum staff, particularly the museum director, had to have a clear and progressive museum vision or philosophy that was aimed at public-centred art space.

Lee Gyeong-Seong: the first museum professional as a director

Lee Gyeong-Seong (李慶成, 1919-2009) had supported the museum since its very first opening in 1969. As a member of the advisory committee, he offered help in curating several exhibitions. Lee had a deep interest in art history since his undergraduate years at Waseda University (早稲田大学) in Tokyo, and decided to work in the museum field after his return from Japan.³⁸⁸ This was realised when he met Kim Chae-Won, the director of NMK. Although inspired by Go Yoo-Seop (高裕燮, 1905-1944) and Choi Soon-Woo (崔淳雨, 1916-1984), who were the leading pioneers of Korean museum history, his rendezvous with Kim offered Lee a chance to work at the office in Gyeongbok Palace where the NMK was located at that time. Later, he purchased and rented the impounded

³⁸⁸ Although Lee studied Art History and Aesthetics, his first major was Legal Studies. After he finished his first major and prepared another entrance exam to the School of Arts & Humanities in Waseda, he met Aizu Yaichi (会津八一, 1881-1956) who started as a professor in the department of Aesthetics (芸術学専攻科) in 1935. During an interview for the entrance, Yaichi asked him to study Art History for the Korean populace due to the false interpretation of Korean art history conducted by Japanese people. Choi Tae-Man (2011: 365).

cultural assets in storage from Japan to open the Incheon Municipal Museum (인천시립박물관) in 1946.³⁸⁹ He worked as the first director from 1945 to 1954.³⁹⁰

As an influential art critic, he argued continually for the establishment of a national art museum during the 1960s when the social importance of the arts had not yet been recognised.³⁹¹ In 1968, he pinpointed five prerequisite agendas for the development of Korean art: the establishment of a modern art museum, reformation of the NAE, production of art materials, publication of a professional art journal, and effective participation in international art exhibitions. Among them, the establishment of a modern art museum was considered the primary aim.³⁹²

A modern art museum is needed due to its research and investigation purposes, not just for exhibitions. [...] The most important thing, however, is research and investigation work to collate and preserve vanishing art archives through the collection of artworks and archives, investigation, and research of modern art. In these days, there is no organisation dealing with this project due to the disappearance and unsystematic management of both artworks and archives after the modern period. [...] Hence, the establishment of a modern art museum, of either national (國立) or private (私立) status, is needed above all things.³⁹³

It seems from his remarks that Lee gave deep consideration to a long-term plan pertaining to the development of Korean art. His far-sighted viewpoint imprinted on the Korean art circle a view

³⁸⁹ Go was the director of Gaeseong Prefectural Museum (開城府立博物館), and Choi, as a staffer, was his apprentice. *Ibid.*, (2011: 366).

³⁹⁰ Lee started his job before the museum's official opening in 1946. *Ibid.*

³⁹¹ Choi Eun-Joo (2010: 37).

³⁹² Lee Gyeong-Seong (October 1968), quoted in Lee Gyeong-Seong (1980: 78-79).

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

that it was not only a matter of creativity, but that it was also necessary to collect and research the aesthetic value of artworks and pass them down to the next generation.³⁹⁴ In this regard, he struggled with such issues as factions among art schools, political interference from the MCPI, and the overextended scale of the NAE. Fundamentally, he would like the abolition of the NAE, which he felt impeded the development of Korean art.³⁹⁵

Lee worked in positions ranging from academic to administrative tasks until participating in the advisory committee of the national art museum in 1969. Many artists, sculptors, and craftsmen placed great confidence in his expertise. The situation led him to successfully curate exhibitions during the early years of the museum.³⁹⁶ Thus, he was the first internal mediator who negotiated the relationship with art-related agents. Although his position was not officially involved in the museum's organisational plan, it is possible to speculate that he was gradually becoming a social actor who controlled exhibitions, networks, and discourses. Owing to the bureaucratic system and political insecurity of the times that affected museum management, he frequently engaged with the authorities and the art circle to try to clarify the museum's otherwise 'confused' identity. His activities normalised the museum when he became the director in 1981 (Figure 41).

Lee was the only person who served as the director twice in different time periods.³⁹⁷ He was the first director who came with the status of civilian and not as a government official. His expertise on both art history and museum studies validated him as an expert who could plan curatorial exhibitions and research activities independently. He suggested to Lee Gyu-Hyun (李揆現, 1922-2004), the Minister of MCPI, that the NMCA needed three things: a good quality art museum,

³⁹⁴ Choi Eun-Joo (2010: 37).

³⁹⁵ Lee Gyeong-Seong (1998: 141-146 (141)).

³⁹⁶ Choi Eun-Joo (2010: 36).

³⁹⁷ Lee Gyeong-Seong was the 9th and 11th director of the museum. His first period started from 18 August 1981 to 7 October 1983 (2 years and 3 months) and second one from 29 July 1986 to 27 May 1992 (5 years and 10 months).

purchasing top-quality artworks and employing curators.³⁹⁸ Lee knew that the museum should be a leading agent in promoting national culture worldwide.



Figure 41 (Left) Lee Gyeong-Seong. By kind permission of and © Lee Gyeong-Seong (and the bereaved family), Photograph: Bae Ki-Woo, Image Provider: daljin.com, (Right) Ceremony of appointing Lee Gyeong-Seong to the director of NMCA (1981). By kind permission of and © Korea Public Policy Broadcasting Service, ehistory. Lee Gwang-Pyo (Left), a Minister of the MCPI, gave Lee an official certificate.

In the case of the new museum, the NMCA, Lee had to satisfy Jeon's requirements. Even though Lee resigned from his first term in office on account of a political conflict with the old masters of Korean painting, he devoted himself to finding a building site and selecting an architect for the

³⁹⁸ Lee Gyeong-Seong (1998: 201).

new museum at Gwacheon.³⁹⁹ The conflict between the PCMC and SMG caused a deep-rooted resentment. Even though Lee got permission from the President to use the designated building site, the museum is still suffering from the confrontation with SMG.

Lee was reappointed to museum director after Kim Se-Joong's unexpected death from overwork. Kim worked too hard to secure and win the enormous construction budget for the museum. After Kim's death, the government found it difficult to select an eligible person as a museum director (Figure 42).⁴⁰⁰ In the end, Lee was the only one whom the government could consider. Although Lee refused, a series of earnest requests from the MCPI and associated political figures made him reconsider the position.⁴⁰¹ He was in office for nearly six years to strengthen the early stage of managerial foundation. There were projects in which he demonstrated his ability: first, inviting international-scale exhibitions; second, collecting and preserving both modern and contemporary artworks with the aid of experts; third, launching a new museum library, archive centre, and art academy (현대미술아카데미); and finally, dispatching curatorial staff worldwide for educational purposes.⁴⁰²

His second term as a director was aimed at repositioning the museum's identity. In particular, Lee envisaged a multipurpose museum space that offered not only artistic and educational services, but also a relaxed atmosphere for the visitors. Also, the museum was constantly outreaching and interacting. It did not stay in one place; rather, the museum visited less art-favoured areas. A project called the 'Moving Art Museum' (움직이는 미술관) was initiated. It offered an opportunity

³⁹⁹ Lee wrote an article about the reformation of NAE and liquidation of colonial vestige in 1983. He criticised old Korean painting masters on how they caused serious damage to the Korean art circle. The old masters were outraged by his article. Although Minister Lee proposed a compromise, Lee submitted his resignation to keep his conviction. *Ibid.*, (1998: 214-215); Lee In-Beom (2004: 74-75).

⁴⁰⁰ Lee Gyeong-Seong (1998: 228-229).

⁴⁰¹ Lee In-Beom (2004: 77).

⁴⁰² Lee was the first museum director who invited a foreigner from Japan as a visiting researcher. Ono Ikuhiko (大野郁彦) curated *Paper Exhibition* and worked there for one year. The Korean Culture and Arts Foundation (문예진흥원) paid him. *Ibid.*, (2004: 282-283).

for local people to recognise what the *raison d'être* was for the national art museum, and how it should communicate with the public.⁴⁰³

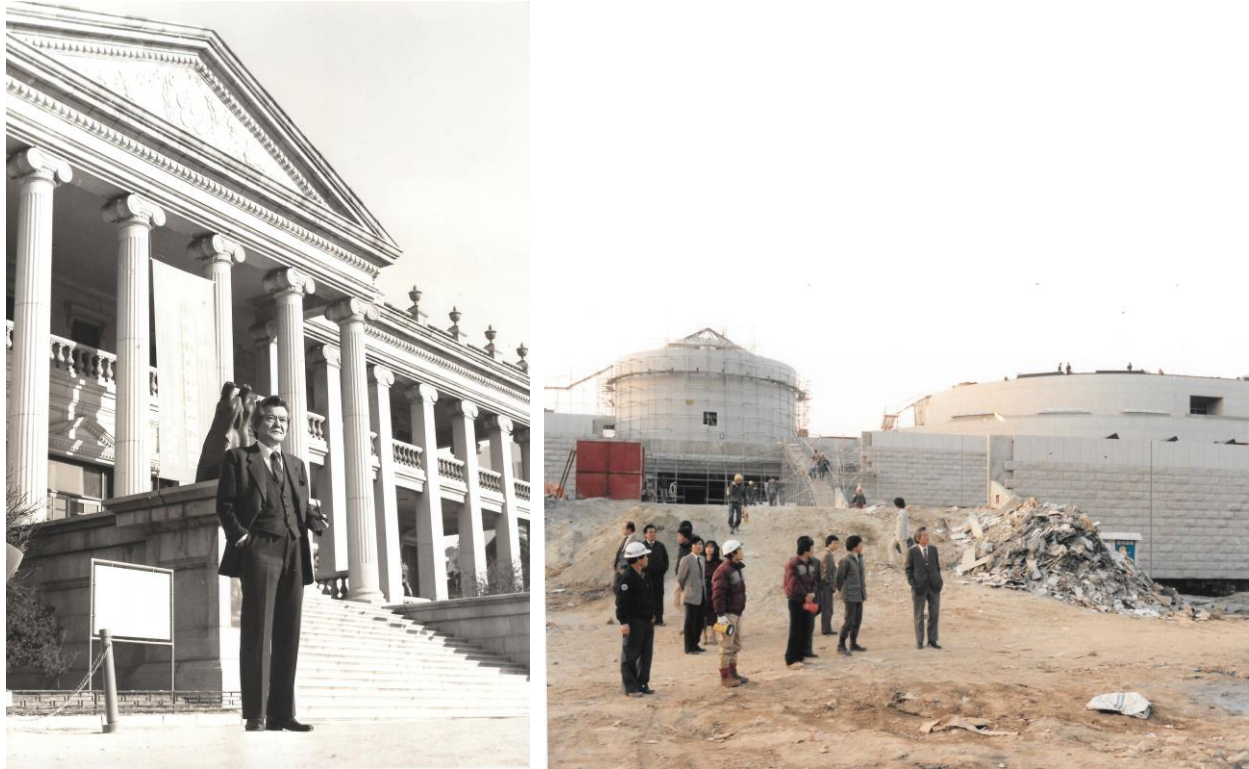


Figure 42 (Left) Kim Se-Joong. (Right) Kim visits the construction site of NMCA. By kind permission of and © Catholic Times (<http://www.catholictimes.org>).

Lee resigned his position for the second time in 1992. He had served almost eight years in total. Lee understood that, on the one hand, he had to ingratiate himself with the officials, and on the other hand, he had to find a way to make and defend his own decisions:

⁴⁰³ Jang Yeop (2009: 128-129).

In-Beom (IB): Yes, you resigned in May 1992, right? [...] From my viewpoint, you were not satisfied with so many things, particularly your position as a government official, but not museum director.

Gyeong-Seong (GS): My temperament was not adapted to the bureaucratic mind. There were two things. First, I had to go to headquarters every week and give a report together with directors from other government agencies. When I was there, there were the Minister, Vice Minister, director of the National Museum, and so on. Although I was the second oldest person in the group, my position was lower than I thought. It is because my position was about vice-minister class (or even lower). [...]

IB: Under the bureaucratic system, what could you do on your own?

GS: Yes, that bureaucratic system. [...] I did not want to go to the National Assembly either. When I went there and participated in a meeting at the subcommittee, the members of the National Assembly were very ignorant and said something like “Are you selecting people as you like?” or “You should not purchase artworks as you like. That is not acceptable.” [...] I strongly argued that selecting people and buying artworks are the most important tasks for the director. If I could not perform my duty, then it is an act of killing the museum director.⁴⁰⁴

In retrospect, Lee found the continual interchange with government officials tiresome. He had the dilemma of how to alleviate political tensions and attract official attention as to museum development and normalisation. External agents – political figures, cultural agencies, and the art circle – could be opponents but they were also his supporters helping him realise his vision for the museum. The NMCA might be claimed to embody the first normalised national art museum in South Korea and as such Lee might be considered a pathfinder who successfully struggled to

⁴⁰⁴ Lee In-Beom (2004: 78-80).

mediate between the museum's internal and external stakeholders. Gradually, the museum received attention and became a self-regulated institution.

Kim Tai-Soo: designing a house for the long-term 'drifter'

The first and major project that Lee Gyeong-Seong initiated was to construct a new art museum. Having settled the problems - finding the museum site, conflict with the SMG, and expulsion of residents from Makgye-dong - mentioned above, the progress of the construction plan seemed to progress smoothly with the full support of President Jeon. In 1982, the government circulated a proposal to create a nominated contest for the design of the new building in 1982.

There were seven nominees, from which two finalists were selected. One was Kim Soo-Geun (金壽根, 1931-1986), considered to be the most reputable Korean architect of all time, and the other was Kim Tai-Soo (金泰修, 1936-), an architect that worked for Philip Johnson (1906-2005) - Johnson had renovated MoMA, New York in 1939 with Edward Stone (1902-1978).⁴⁰⁵ Their design schemes showed different approaches as to the concept of an art museum (see Table 8). Both architects possessed an international reputation and the competition attracted nationwide attention at that time.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁵ Kim Tai-Soo completed his master's course at Seoul National University in 1961, and studied for two years at Yale University under the guidance of Paul Rudolph (1918-1997). After completion of the course, he went into Philip Johnson's office and worked for six years.

⁴⁰⁶ There was another final nominee named Yoon Seung-Joong (尹承重, 1937-), but he resigned at the final selection process.

Classification	Kim Soo-Geun's Design	Kim Tai-Soo's Design
Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Traditional Buddhist temple style and staged building style are combined -Each building connects to a 'bridge' with a garden as the centre so that unified formality can exist in the end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Classic style of Korean castle and Bongsudae (烽燧臺) that reflects the museum building -Castle type of sculpture room and half-elliptic type of painting room are connected to the Bongsudae style of centre hall to formulate unified formality
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Focusing on wide outdoor space and an outdoor sculpture park -Clear distinction of exhibition rooms under the categories of exhibition venues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continuity of exhibition spaces : offer convenience for museum visitors -A building for natural lighting over skylight -Securement of resting space for visitors as much as possible
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Many buildings and stairs : visitors feel fatigue -A building based on artificial light 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a separate lake next to the museum that is located next to the lakeside of Seoul Grand Park

Table 8 Comparison of design schemes between final nominees⁴⁰⁷

Kim Tai-Soo was eventually selected as the winning architect almost unanimously.⁴⁰⁸ In fact, there are intriguing interpretations regarding the selection process, which are explained by key figures behind the scenes. They were Lee Gyeong-Seong and Kim Tai-Soo. In the relationship between director and architect, there were implicit narratives, dialogues, and negotiations related to other external agents who had engaged in the process.

Lee remembered that the concept design of Kim Soo-Geun was compact compared to Tai-Soo's. The committee in charge of museum construction offered them 20,000 pyeong for the contest, about 66,116 m² (10,000 pyeong each for both building site and outdoor sculpture park), in the

⁴⁰⁷ The NMCA (1987: 53).

⁴⁰⁸ The NMCA (2006d: 7).

designated area, a hill extended to the west side of Cheongye Mountain and near the lake. Both architects had submitted design schemes to the committee based on the criteria. Regardless of their conceptual differences, however, Lee mentioned that Kim Soo-Geun had won too many major contracts provided by the MCPI.⁴⁰⁹ It was a fundamental reason why the government was searching for a new candidate. Lee recollected that it is possible to speculate that the selection process of the winning architect was a matter for the authorities to decide and not the difference in individual competence. Kim Tai-Soo remembers it differently. The NMCA transcribed Kim's memoir as following:

I had worked for six years in Philip Johnson's office, and felt ready to decide my career path between Korea and the United States. In the interim, I went to South Korea and stayed there for several months in 1969. Many traditional villages and temples were there. At the same time, I received advice on the conditions for doing any architectural projects in South Korea from Kim Soo-Geun. He asked Kim Tai-Soo to remain in the U.S. and have more experience until the situation got better. After that, I opened an architectural office with his alumni at Hartford, Connecticut in 1970. [...] After ten years, my works have been published in several professional architecture magazines and have received many awards. Soon, my name was well known to people in Seoul. [...] It was fall in 1982, and architect Kim Won, the founder of *Gwangjang* (광장), made a phone call. He told me that there was a project to make a national art museum as part of business for the 1988 Seoul Olympics. My name was nominated for the 'final four'. In this vein, Kim requested of me to submit concept sketches within two weeks prior to the selection process. [...] I met Lee Gil-Ryung (李吉隆) who was a head chief (본부장) of the entire construction process. Its headquarters were in the Deoksu Palace. I received some materials - a survey map and programme of the newly established art museum - from Lee, and headed to Gwacheon for an actual

⁴⁰⁹ Lee Gyeong-Seong (1998: 222).

inspection. Lee described the process of how the government had selected Gwacheon as the building site.⁴¹⁰

It was President Jeon who gave the direct order to build the museum during his visits to foreign countries. Jeon was deeply impressed with one of the art museums in South East Asia that had beautiful scenery and a large outdoor sculpture park at that time.⁴¹¹ Thus, his impression became the basic guideline for establishing the museum.⁴¹² Kim later discovered that the government had changed the annual budget plan for the museum due to a comparison with the scale of Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (東京都美術館, TMAM). Initially, the building site of Gwacheon was planned to be 10,000 pyeong, but was later changed to 11,000. Because the TMAM had 10,200 pyeong, the Korean government made a monumental decision against it.⁴¹³ There is no evidence to explain this background story in detail, but Jeon and his government were passionate about the construction at any rate. Meanwhile, Kim related his idea regarding the issue during a face-to-face interview:

Yes, I heard this afterwards. Anyway, before Gwacheon was selected as a building site, there were other nominees. [...] At that time, President Jeon gave an order to build both an art museum and outdoor sculpture park. However, how could we find a suitable place in Seoul? That was why there were several candidates. [...] Even though we could establish a building, a place for an outdoor park was not easy to find. In the end, political figures including the Minister of MCPI reported that only Gwacheon was the place to gain Jeon's

⁴¹⁰ The NMCA (2006d: 5-6).

⁴¹¹ The MMCA (2016a: 53).

⁴¹² Kim Tai-Soo (2006: 27).

⁴¹³ The NMCA (2006d: 16).

favour. It caused huge damage for South Korea. [...] Thus, the museum in Gwacheon was a strange outcome that resulted from Jeon's political system.⁴¹⁴

Under the circumstances, Kim visited the building site. From his recollection, he was moved by the mountains in South Korea and deeply considered the aesthetic balance between the museum building and its natural surroundings. There was not so much time to design concretely, therefore, and made his decision to establish the museum on a hill so that any visitor could see the building from a remote area. He considered the concept of 'at a distance, a platform on a hill of the mountains and three small pavilions (정자亭子, in Korean) on the platform' (Figure 43).⁴¹⁵ Here are his remarks about the conceptualisation:

The mountains in South Korea were incredibly beautiful. Unlike mountains in foreign lands, they were very delicate and magnificent. I had to consider conditions such as how to construct the museum without detriment to the mountains, and balance harmoniously with them in the name of delicate aesthetics regarding mountains in South Korea. I would like to build the museum without detracting from their shapes, and utilise the natural surroundings as much as possible. On top of that, many ideas crossed my mind pertaining to making an outdoor sculpture park near the museum and a rest area. They became the starting points for designing the museum. [...] It was about three or four days before the submission of the design proposal. I rented a desk from one of the offices (Il-Geon Architecture) in Seoul and started concept sketches. I had to do all the works, including a design manual by means of 'free hand sketch' style. [...] The last night prior to the deadline, I drew the floor plan of the museum single-handed. In the morning, I took eight pages of floor plans and made frames at the mounter that I had reserved. At 11am, I handed all the

⁴¹⁴ Kim Tai-Soo, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, Skype (video call), Leicester, 5 May 2015.

⁴¹⁵ Kim Tai-Soo (2006: 28).

works to Lee Gil-Ryung. He was surprised at my workload. [...] I went back to the U.S. and waited for the result. Consequently, the museum reported to me that I had become the winning architect of the new national art museum. According to Lee, ten out of twelve among the entire selection committee members voted for me.⁴¹⁶

With regard to his design concept, an image of three small pavilions (정자, 亭子) on the platform reminded him of the wall surrounding Suwon Castle (水原城) and Bongsudae (烽燧臺) over it. On the west side of the platform, he designed the circle-shaped exhibition room for sculptures and another one on the east side for paintings so that they looked like hills that were connected consecutively. In the middle of them, there was a tower that had a core ramp. Kim pulled walls back on every floor and used natural lighting inside the exhibition rooms to reduce the scale of buildings on the platform. He placed an access way that allows a way to the museum at the southern part of a small valley near the ridge. There was a small lake and stone bridge that formed an axis to enter the museum. Topographically, the main gate that invites museumgoers to the museum was positioned at the high ground of the stone bridge. He decided in regard to the entrance process that visitors should go through external space, which was comprised of several platforms to arrive at the main gate of the museum. According to his remembrance, Kim was inspired by the Buseoksa (부석사, 浮石寺) which was one of his inspirational architectures.⁴¹⁷ The museum in Gwacheon was finally established and it took less than three years to build (Figure 44, 45, 46, and 47).⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁶ The NMCA (2006d: 6-7).

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, (2006d: 8-12 (9)).

⁴¹⁸ It took 28 months in total. See its detailed construction process: The NMCA (1987: 244-252).

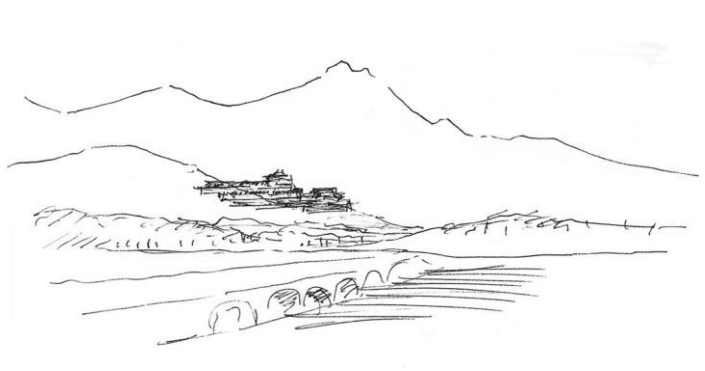


Figure 43 (Left) The view of building site and Cheongye Mountain. (Right) The first image sketch of museum design. By kind permission of and © Kim Tai-Soo (Tai-Soo Kim Partners).

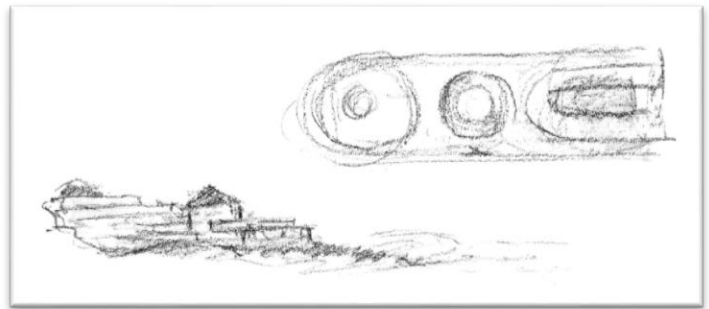


Figure 44 (Left) Suwon Castle. (Right) A conceptual sketch as to the NMCA on a hill. By kind permission of and © Kim Tai-Soo (Tai-Soo Kim Partners).

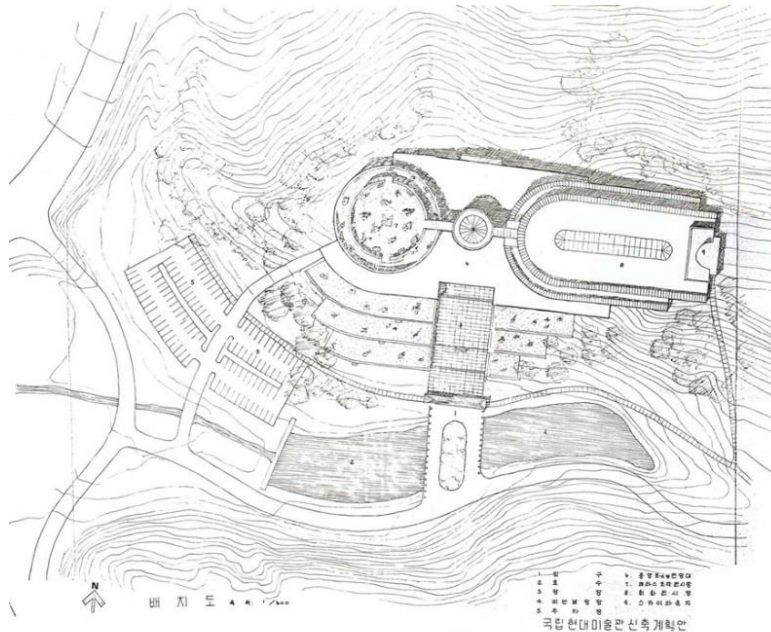


Figure 45 A plot plan that Kim Tai-Soo submitted for the competition. By kind permission of and © Kim Tai-Soo (Tai-Soo Kim Partners).

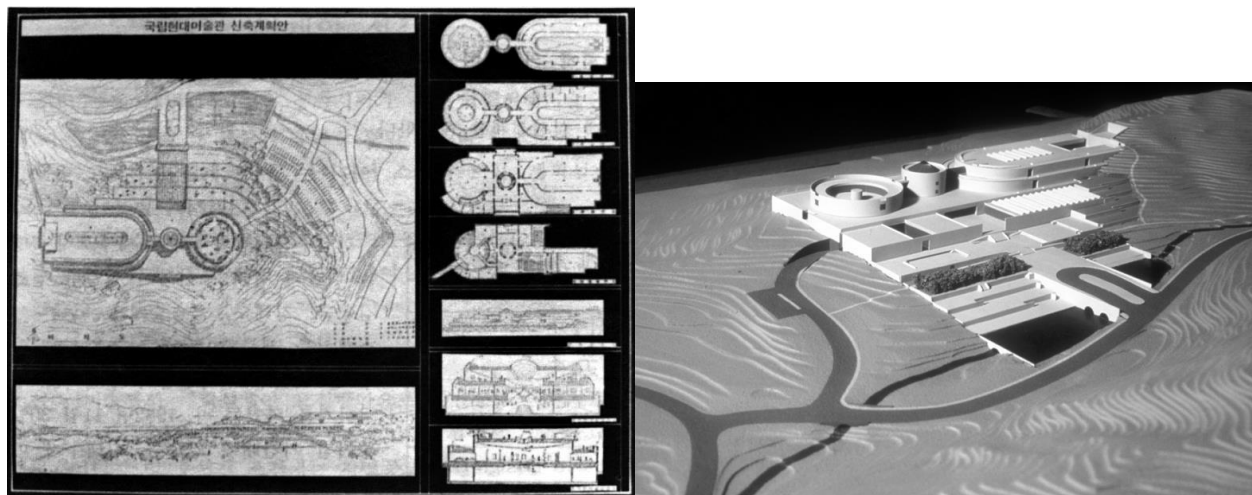


Figure 46 (Left) Final design plan of the NMCA. (Right) Final model of the NMCA. By kind permission of and © Kim Tai-Soo (Tai-Soo Kim Partners).



Figure 47 A sculpture park during the early period of NMCA. By kind permission of and © NMK.

There are nine indoor exhibition rooms, including outdoor as well as rooftop sculpture space (Figure 48 and 49).⁴¹⁹ Starting from *The More the Better* at the core ramp made by Paik Nam-June (白南準, 1932-2006), who was a reputable video artist worldwide, exhibition rooms displayed artworks ranging from Korean modern to contemporary artworks (Figure 50 and 51). The museum frequently replaced permanent artworks with new acquisitions. This ensured that visitors had the opportunity of a wide-ranging artistic experience.⁴²⁰ According to an interview with Kim Tai-Soo, he tried to emphasise the values both of a national art institution and contemporary art museum in the process of designing the new museum in Gwacheon. He hoped that the national museum would reveal its monumentality and uniqueness in representing the cultural identity of South Korea.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, (1987: 66-67).

⁴²⁰ Jang Yeop (2009: 117-118).

However, he had only less than three years,⁴²¹ and what is worse, he could not obtain a detailed plan from the museum regarding the exhibition planning and its layout scheme.



Figure 48 A cross-sectional drawing of exhibition rooms in the NMCA. By kind permission of and © Kim Tai-Soo (Tai-Soo Kim Partners).



Figure 49 Interior exhibition space of the NMCA. By kind permission of and © NMK.

⁴²¹ Jung Soo-Hwa, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Jung's office, Guro (구로), Seoul, 16 March 2015.



Figure 50 Paik Nam-June, *The More the Better*, 1987, 1003 televisions (installation). By kind permission of and © NMK.



Figure 51 Paik Nam-June (a person in the middle put his white shirt on) in 1987. Paik visits the NMCA to participate in the completion ceremony of his artwork *The More the Better*. By kind permission of and © NMK.

In terms of designing the museum, moreover, there were too many building codes to establish a national museum. Although he received a full authority permitted by President Jeon, there was severe external interference from government officials in the process of museum construction. Even in the stone finish for the exterior part of the museum, Kim Tai-Soo and associated figures were subjected to pressure from several administrators.⁴²² Even though Kim used a cutting-edge construction method, the museum now needs considerable renovation on account of the enforced hastiness requested by the government (Figure 52).⁴²³ For Kim Tai-Soo, not only insufficient budget and resources, but also strict regulations were administrative barriers to realising his plan.⁴²⁴



Figure 52 Kim Tai-Soo: explaining his design concept in 2016. By kind permission of and © Tai-Soo Kim (Tai-Soo Kim Partners).

⁴²² Kim found granite that can be seen all around the country. He thought the granite was the one best suited to the museum building. Although there were opposite viewpoints, he used the granite all over the building. However, Lee Gil-Ryung, the head chief of the entire construction process, got fired due to this matter. The NMCA (2006d: 14-15); Kim Tai-Soo (2006: 30).

⁴²³ The NMCA (2006d: 18).

⁴²⁴ Kim Tai-Soo, interviewed by Kim Yon-Jai, Skype (video call), Leicester, 5 May 2015.

Conclusion

Only on 25 August 1986, could South Korea claim to possess a fully-fledged national art museum, despite first being established in October 1969. Ostensibly, political figures related to the museum, not museum practitioners, have run the museum in all but name from the beginning. To overcome this challenge, the museum has constantly evolved, being directly or indirectly affected by any changes around it, but also through its own attempts to negotiate its autonomy.

The museum in Gwacheon realigned itself philosophically to Korean contemporary art and then had to consider how it could measure its success. In the process of making the NMCA, the most crucial issue was to construct an art centre that invites young and enthusiastic Korean artists. But Jeon and his government had a different idea. As mentioned above, Jeon desired to have a grand art museum that would implicitly glorify his leadership and foresight relative to the arrival of both internationalisation and consumer-oriented cultural policy. Jeon also promoted a slogan of ‘popularisation of arts’ in order to attract the people’s attention. In this sense, the NMCA was a notable cultural achievement that was deliberately planned by the Fifth Republic.

Setting aside this socio-political backdrop, artists in South Korea embraced this national project. Not only a museum building (hardware) but also museum infrastructure (software) were replaced with a new system that reached international level. In order to meet artists’ artistic expectation, the museum invited academics and practitioners to make a future-oriented national art institution. In this process, they negotiated with policy makers to construct an ideal art centre that works for both ambitious artists and art lovers. Lee Gyeong-Seong, Kim Se-Joong, and Kim Tai-Soo were key contributors who mediated in the entire museum-making process and respectively aimed at the realisation of contemporaneity. After the museum opening in 1986, its next assignment for art-related agents and the public was how to encourage the debates as to the notion of contemporary and identity of Korean art.

Chapter Four

Contemporaneity of Korean art: transformation of the institutional identity

In July 1987, the daily newspaper, *Maeil Gyeongjae*, interviewed Allen Bassing, Curator of Education at the Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution in D.C. Bassing expressed concerns arising from his short visit to South Korea's cultural facilities a year before.⁴²⁵ He observed that cultural facilities were not used as educational resources, and that museum staff performed without expertise in facility management.⁴²⁶ Bassing had also visited the NMCA. *Maeil Gyeongjae* was interested in the administrative improvements cultural organisations in South Korea should focus on in the field of arts.⁴²⁷ This evaluation provided hints to the NMCA, which had emerged from a long period of gestation to become a recognisable national art museum in the previous year. Government officials who operated cultural facilities in South Korea at that time, including museums and theatres, had more bureaucratic inclination than cultural taste.⁴²⁸ Since the opening of the NMCA in Gwacheon in 1986, its major issues were not derived from external matters, but from could the need to strengthen curatorial or managerial expertise, as well as deliver training programmes to university students of museum studies and their academic staff. The NMCA was no longer a nominal leader amongst Korean art institutions. It had to prove its *raison d'être* and

⁴²⁵ Jeong Young-Soo (10 July 1987: 9).

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁸ Because of hasty preparations for the museum opening, structural issues – humidified cement floors and museum storage, lack of permanent collection, limited numbers of curatorial staff, and unprepared educational programmes – impeded the progress of museum development. Jeong Cheol-Soo (5 August 1987: 6); Jeong Young-Soo (14 August 1987: 9).

secure a social consensus. This was seen as a revolutionary change in its mission.

The government of the Sixth Republic had replaced decades of military autocracy with a system of democracy which brought South Korea into a hopeful phase in all aspects. The Sixth Republic (1988-1993) was driven by slogans - ‘democracy, equity, welfare, and globalisation’ – and the desire to eradicate innumerable structural and individual factors which originated from the previous dictatorships.⁴²⁹ Amongst these was the MCPI, an institution that wielded enormous authority over the cultural sector and public relations policy. It was reorganised by the National Government Organisation Act (정부조직법, enacted in 1989) which later resulted in the birth of the Ministry of Culture (MOC, 문화부), which exclusively managed affairs in the arts and culture sectors. At this time, both ‘economic development’ and ‘enhancement of cultural enjoyment’ (문화향수 기회확대) were recognised as driving forces of national competitiveness.⁴³⁰

This chapter explores those factors which emerged from debates concerning postmodernism and the contemporary that transformed the NMCA. These two areas of debate stimulated art critics and historians and encouraged a refocusing on the 1990s when *contemporaneity* (동시대성/당대성) entered conversations about the nature of Korean art. In addition to the new national art museum in Gwacheon, art culture in South Korea was also influenced by the end of the Cold War and the emergence of capitalist consumer culture.⁴³¹ The June Pro-Democratic Movement (6월 민주화운동, 1987), the Seoul Olympics (1988), liberalisation of overseas trips (국외여행자유화, 1989), a public-oriented government, trends of capitalism and globalism, and so on, gradually weakened past oppression and censorship and caused a revolution in Korean society.⁴³² This conversion allowed people in South Korea to leave behind narrow arguments based on ethnicity and nationalism, and embrace the social phenomenon of cultural pluralism. Korean contemporary art fervently reacted

⁴²⁹ Ha Tae-Soo (2011b: 443-446).

⁴³⁰ Yim Yeon-Cheol (2 March 1988: 3); Sim Gwang-Hyun (1993: 23).

⁴³¹ Moon Hye-Jin (2015: 10).

⁴³² *Ibid.*

to these radical changes. Because of an expanded art market and successive international exhibitions, an aesthetical sense of the art circle in South Korea became internationalised.⁴³³

Art groups of the modernism line, which revolved around themes of *Informel* or *Dansaekhwa*, had been the mainstream of the Korean art circle, at least until the beginning of the 1970s, under the protection of political power. However, those artists affected by postmodernism, including *Minjoong Art*, which represents an artistic attitude of resistance to the existing mainstream art trends, interrogated the essence of Korean art and how to define the notion of Korean art in the postmodern era. At the same time, artists started to focus on of ‘individuality’ and personal identity. It raised controversial questions such as: what is Korean art when it shows such strong interactions with the international art circle and is driven by autonomous personification. In short, the contemporaneity of Korean art became a mixed and ambivalent concept that has dealt with notions of *past* (과거) and *now-here* (지금, 여기),⁴³⁴ both of which must be randomly negotiated and navigated.

Cultural policy in the 1990s

In October 1988, Noh Tae-Woo (盧泰愚, 1932-), the 13th President of South Korea served from 1988 to 1993, mentioned his forthcoming plans for cultural policy during a special interview in *Sisa Journal*.⁴³⁵ Its intended purpose was to persuade the public that his government was steering its way to democracy; that unlike his predecessors, this former military general was going to take South Korea in a new direction:

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, (2015: 11).

⁴³⁴ See details: Jeong Heon-Yi (2005: 235-274).

⁴³⁵ Yoo Hong-Joon (Spring 1991: 408-416).

The main agent of culture is the public, not the government. The former government had not followed this principle so it received criticism from various angles. Therefore, there should be cultural policies that mainly focus on promoting or supporting issues. In this vein, we must eradicate authoritarianism/regulations in the cultural administration fields. The doctrine of ‘support without interference (지원은 하되 간섭은 하지 않는다)’ should be the backbone of cultural policy. Our government builds the basic frame of cultural policy while relevant authorities and public agents should be in charge of its details.⁴³⁶

However, while Noh could not fully realise this vision, he nevertheless marked a step forward both in politics and cultural policy in terms of post-bureaucracy and post-centralisation.⁴³⁷ As a military general, Noh had supported Jeon Doo-Hwan, his predecessor, in coming to power from 1981. They had maintained a close relationship at first.⁴³⁸ In 1985, however, Noh had to revive his friendship with Jeon as to a constitutional amendment of the direct election system. After the general election in 1985, the opposition parties criticised an indirect election system which made Jeon president of the Fifth Republic (1981-1988) due to its legitimacy and morality.

At first, Jeon did not care about this situation. However, there were a series of incidents such as Guro General Strike (구로동맹파업, 1985) and Park Jong-Cheol’s death (박종철 고문치사, 1987) that made the public angry. They asked for greater democracy. Jeon was deeply concerned about this social atmosphere. Then, Jeon announced the ‘Protection of the Constitution (4·13호헌조치)’ and nominated Noh as a presidential candidate in 1987 to forbid requests of a direct election system and this provoked a storm of protest.⁴³⁹ What Noh did, as a leader of the Democratic Justice Party

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, (Spring 1991: 408).

⁴³⁷ Park Gwang-Mu (2013: 167).

⁴³⁸ Jeon and Noh joined the Korea Military Academy (육군사관학교, 陸軍士官學校) at the same time (started in 1951).

⁴³⁹ Jeon announced a ‘Protection of the Constitution’ in April 1987. Owing to his announcement, students and citizens

(민주정의당, 民主正義黨), which had been a ruling party that was led by the so-called ‘new military group’ (신군부, 新軍部), was to proclaim a declaration of the ‘6.29 democratisation’ (6·29 선언) in 1987. Noh forced his party to accept it as an official statement and also made Jeon agree with the views of the majority.⁴⁴⁰ Consequently, Noh became the first president through the direct election.

When Jeon was still in power, a political strategy designed by both Noh and the ruling party to maintain their authority and minimise the extent of public outrage, this call for democracy, along with a successful result for the Olympics, affected the development of cultural policy in South Korea. After Noh was inaugurated as President, he advocated an ‘open competitive employment’ (공개경쟁채용) that permitted each individual to pursue values of both equality and autonomy in all areas. This extended to cultural policy with the establishment of the MOC as an independent organisational entity free from political interference.⁴⁴¹ It was an unprecedented change from the era of centralised, autocratic, and controlled system of government.

The MOC performed its duty for the people using such slogans as - ‘from urban to rural or disadvantaged area’ and ‘from art producer to art consumer-centred cultural policy’ - to balance between supply and demand or creation and enjoyment of culture.⁴⁴² Under these circumstances, the art environment in South Korea started to rejuvenate its system, which had been stereotyped under the political influence of conservative government systems that prohibited both autonomy and diversity of artistic activities. The trigger for change was educated people who discovered or experienced the newest art trends around the world. They observed not only art scenes but also infrastructure abroad, and asked questions of how art-related agents offered chances for aesthetic

led large-scale street demonstrations in over 18 cities nationwide and nearly a million people joined in the protest on 26 June, in the so-called The June Pro-Democratic Movement. Park Gwang-Mu (2013: 168-171).

⁴⁴⁰ There are eight articles of declaration. See details: Bureau of Public Information (공보처) (1992: 47-48).

⁴⁴¹ Misul Segye (Hwang Si-Gwon: arranged discussion scripts) (February 1988: 31-33); Park Gwang-Mu (2013: 177).

⁴⁴² Its doctrine accelerated the speed of ‘democratisation of culture’. Ahn Geon-Hyeok (2 March 1988: 3).

experiences, or how the public enjoyed and participated in them.⁴⁴³

Compared with the time when the National Assembly enacted the *Museum Law* (박물관법) in 1984, this more liberal period saw a great number of people were interested in art-related fields and the importation of artworks from abroad. This interest expanded the Korean art circle. It led to the phenomenon of market saturation in which the few national museums could not meet the demands of this expanded circle.⁴⁴⁴ The *Act on the Promotion of Museums and Art Museums* (박물관 미술관 진흥법, enacted in 1991) marked a watershed that promoted wide dissemination of museum experiences to the public. It was an amended bill, which made up for the weak points of the *Museum Law*, such as rectifying ill-prepared art policies and providing spaces to promote museum infrastructure.⁴⁴⁵ It encouraged individuals and conglomerates to consider participating in cultural industry, such as through the establishment of museums.⁴⁴⁶ It also made museums strengthen their public-oriented social awareness so that visitors could expose their cultural taste and opinions.⁴⁴⁷ The NMCA in Gwacheon had to set up future-oriented visions that were based on public needs, but which reflected their wide-ranging cultural characteristics and tastes.

The movement of social transformation continued when Kim Young-Sam (金泳三, 1927-2015), the 14th President of South Korea (1993-1998), established a ‘Civilian Government’ (문민정부, 文民政府) and officially proclaimed that its system had at last liquidated the *Yushin* regime. This accelerated political democratisation and made so-called a local self-governing system (지방자치제)

⁴⁴³ The South Korean government liberalised the overseas studies and trips since 1989. National Archives of Korea, *Taboo and autonomy* (금기와 자율), <<http://theme.archives.go.kr/next/tabooAutonomy/kindOfTaboo06.do>> [accessed 10 November 2016].

⁴⁴⁴ Shin Jeong-Hee (11 April 1989: 12).

⁴⁴⁵ See details regarding the revised law in: Lee Yong-Woo (March 1991: 132-133); Chae Yeon-Seon (2014: 203).

⁴⁴⁶ Park Hee-Jeong (Fall 1992).

⁴⁴⁷ Lee In-Beom (2002: 59-61).

feasible nationwide.⁴⁴⁸ From the Sixth Republic Government, the doctrine of ‘from regulation to autonomy’ (규제에서 자율) had provided impetus towards distributing cultural capital to the public. Although a centralisation of government power hindered cultural autonomy and diversity, the slogan of ‘culture for everyone’ (모든 국민에게 문화를) exerted influence on how cultural policy could play a pivotal role in national development.⁴⁴⁹ It encouraged the mood of creating cultural uniqueness, and of offering equal access to high culture.

In terms of institutional management, the ‘Civilian Government’ advocated ‘support without interference’ and liquidated the vestiges of the authoritative military regimes as well as colonial historical heritage in the name of ‘recovery of national spirit’ (민족정기회복).⁴⁵⁰ However, despite Kim Young-Sam’s efforts, the autonomy of cultural organisations was not fully realised. One of the rationales originated from the time when the MOC changed its name to the Ministry of Culture and Sports (MCS, 문화체육부, established in 1993 and later changed to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT, 문화관광부, established in 1998)). Even though the MOC strongly supported ‘non-intervention’, its ministers were comprised of political figures without expertise in the cultural sector and much like the military governments before, cultural policy showed the direct influence of politics.⁴⁵¹ Only makeshift ideas were presented, so that a concept of culture was recognised as a token gesture, which merely highlighted the positive aspects of the MOC or MCS, but not their drawbacks.

In this situation, the NMCA was hoping to be reorganised as a professionally-centred institution. Despite the existence of the MOC that advocated a democratic and creative atmosphere, the

⁴⁴⁸ Lee Joon (2011: 168).

⁴⁴⁹ Sim Gwang-Hyun (1993: 22).

⁴⁵⁰ Because of his slogan, he demolished the former building of the National Museum of Korea, which was used for the Japanese Government-General of Korea to restore the prototype of the Gyeongbok Palace. However, it caused a great controversy between conservatives and historians whether to demolish it or not due to its historical significance as cultural heritage. Park Gwang-Mu (2013: 214).

⁴⁵¹ Lee Joo-Heon (16 September 1992: 19); Chae Jae-Bong (23 December 1992: 9); Shin Jeong-Hee (9 March 1993: 12); Park Gwang-Mu (2013: 210).

museum retained its bureaucratic system, which was affected by the government's censorship. Indeed, Lee Gyeong-Seong, put all his effort into ensuring a state of internal stability, such as inviting international exhibitions, purchasing artworks for the permanent collection in stages, recruiting curatorial staff, and invigorating the 'Moving Art Museum' programme under the guise of 'cultural enjoyment for the residents in local areas'.⁴⁵² The museum, however, could not rectify a number of problematic issues even in the early 1990s: first, numbers of administrative staff were five times that of art-related experts; second, the staff level of director of the NMCA was one step lower than that of the people who worked for the National Museum of Korea or National Library of Korea; third, the staff level of chief curator (4th grade) was also lower than that of secretary general (3rd grade) and caused curatorial staff to lose motivation; and fourth, the twelve curators in the museum could not be attached to the curatorial office but rather were dispersed into other departments - Exhibition (전시과), Public Relation and Education (접외교육과), and Library - where administrative officials were placed as heads of department. These issues caused a malfunctioning of the museum as a result of this weakened curatorial system.⁴⁵³ Thus, appointing a director of the museum after Lee Gyeong-Seong became a crucial issue, not only for the museum, but also the Korean art circle. There was a growing awareness that a new museum director should have expertise in management or marketing to aim at a multi-purpose culture centre for museum-goers; a selected person needed to be versatile in curating, fundraising, and negotiating. At last, a pioneer who innovated the museum to be a full-fledged international art museum appeared in 1992.

Pioneer: director Lim Young-Bang

After Lee Gyeong-Seong completed his second term in office, he was replaced by Lim Young-

⁴⁵² Jeong Cheol-Soo (5 August 1987: 6); Jeong Cheol-Soo (17 December 1987: 6); Lee Yong-Woo (12 October 1988: 8); Anon., 'An aim of the NMCA is the *Moving Art Museum*' (국립현대미술관 을 목표로 움직이는 미술관), (20 February 1990: 8).

⁴⁵³ Jeong Cheol-Soo (21 May 1992: 15).

Bang (林英芳, 1929-2015), an art historian who had earned his PhD degree in Paris.⁴⁵⁴ Lim has been widely recognised as a pioneer who handled more creative and challenging tasks than any former director. He would remain in post from 1992 to 1997. Growing up in a family that was enlightened by Western culture, he had the chance to go abroad at an early age and naturally acquired a cosmopolitan outlook. Following a family tradition, it was expected that Lim would study abroad, probably in the United States. However, he and his family moved to Hong Kong in 1949. There he attended a school based on the British system, where he met Paik Nam-June, who would become a pioneer in video art and who also had gained wide experiences abroad.⁴⁵⁵ This meeting would eventually lead to collaboration for the 1993 *Whitney Biennial*, in New York. That was, however, some years off. In the meantime, Lim went on to Paris and completed his academic studies.

After his graduation, Lim became professor of Aesthetics at Seoul National University in 1966. However, he had a difficult time during the military regime. In 1967, he was taken to the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA, 한국중앙정보부) and tortured severely by agents for several days on the charge of communist activities. The KCIA also arrested another 194 immigrants, including the painter Lee Ung-No (李應魯, 1904-1989) and composer Yoon Yi-Sang (尹伊桑, 1917-1995), who had lived in France and West Germany, and charged them as spies. This incident, known as the *Dongbaekrim* (東伯林事件, *Dongbaekrim* literally meant 'East Berlin'), was a set up by the KCIA to divert attention away from a rigged election, which had been strategically planned by both Park Jung-Hee and his government.⁴⁵⁶ The arrested suspects were seriously censured by a fabricated rumour that they were frequent visitors to the North Korean Embassy in East Berlin

⁴⁵⁴ Lim attended undergraduate and graduate school at the Université de la Sorbonne, Paris. He studied philosophy and art history. He also worked for the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Louvre, and UNESCO. Han Yun-Jeong (1 February 2015).

⁴⁵⁵ Choi Yeol (November 2006: 152-153).

⁴⁵⁶ For them, securing two-thirds of parliamentary seats was a prerequisite to revise the constitution, which enabled Park to serve as President for consecutive terms. Notwithstanding their unlawful act, and a rigged presidential election, Park became the President of South Korea for the third time.

and were subject to brainwashing in communist political ideology.

Partly, the rumours were true. Not fully recognising the anti-communist policy that the South Korean government had so strongly adopted, Koreans abroad had foreseen no problem in taking advantage of the accessibility between West and East Berlin, and had not been worried about paying frequent visits to the North Korean Embassy. The KCIA also found Lim to be one of the communist sympathisers who associated with North Koreans while he was in Paris. During several days of gruesome tortures, he found there was nothing to be afraid of.⁴⁵⁷ This might have been a driving force when Lim struggled to reform the NMCA in Gwacheon. Later, Lim was acquitted of communist activities and started his career as a professional art critic. He criticised chronic issues within the Korean art circle in the 1970s, which originated from official quarters, including careless management of the NAE.

Lim was not a person who avoided reality. He engaged in social issues that disrupted people's aesthetic environment, basing his ideas on humanistic values and against political authority. Because of this belief, his inauguration as museum director met with failure at first, despite his expertise at the Louvre.⁴⁵⁸ He then showed his ability in stabilising the performance of the NMCA. In terms of his position as director, it would be worthwhile to refer to an interview he had with Lee Gyeong-Seong. Interestingly, Lim often visited the Incheon Municipal Museum during the early years when Lee was a director. It is plausible that Lim's curiosity towards museum culture justified their close relationship when they became predecessor and successor as a director of the NMCA (Figure 53).

Lim: Not only the public, but also government officials, have a closed mind in recognising the value of arts and culture. They regard arts and culture as a less valued issue compared to economy and industry that causes them to draw up a marginalised museum policy. I will

⁴⁵⁷ Choi Yeol (November 2006: 152-153).

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

carry forward any projects that show how important arts are to our country.

Lee: Let us talk about the workforce supply issue. I had worked with Lee Eoh-Ryung (이어령, 李御寧), a former Minister of the MOC, to establish a training school collaborating with the National Museum of Korea. It was of no avail, but it is an important thing to do for private art museums (including the NMCA) in order to rapidly increase numbers. [...]

Lim: Recently, an institution called the École ICART (L'école du management de la culture et du marché de l'art) has opened in Paris. It is such an organised school. We should produce students at schools similar to the ICART, but there are no such departments or programmes in South Korea. I will consider matters of establishing educational training centres with the aid of museums.

Lee: It is essential that art-related agents should support and cooperate in overcoming the issues the NMCA has encountered without any private interests. [...]

Lim: It is an urgent issue to request that companies participate in support activity (mecenat). If we take a look at similar cases abroad, the majority of art museums rely on corporate sponsorship, because of limited financial support from their government. When I saw how Japanese plutocrats covered the full costs during the six-year maintenance work in the Louvre, I felt bad when major companies in South Korea are short-sighted about art. [...]⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁹ Lee Joo-Hyeon (29 May 1992: 9).



Figure 53 (Left) Lim Young-Bang. (Right) After Lim Young-Bang's inaugural ceremony in 1992. Lim is in the middle of this group, and Lee Gyeong-Seong, Lim's predecessor, stand next to Lim with his walking stick. (Left) By kind permission of and © Wolgan Misul. (Right) By kind permission of and © Wolgan Misul and MMCA (Art Research Centre).

Lim created a vision for the NMCA. He knew that a future-oriented museum should focus on matters such as positioning, branding, educating, and fundraising. If Lee laid the foundations for the NMCA to become a fully-fledged national art museum, Lim was the one who compensated for flaws regarding overall museum activities that challenged the socially accepted idea of an art museum. During his term in office, Lim strived hard to clarify the concepts and roles of a contemporary art museum for the public. Even though he experienced various difficulties, he did not want the museum to be solely an exhibition space. Jung Joon-Mo, a former staff member at the NMCA, remembered what Lim had done during his term in office. He had worked closely with Lim:

What Lim did was to publish a journal called *Art and Life* (미술과 생활), and performed the role of chief editor. A main theme of the journal was that ‘art should not be isolated from life’. His idea became the solid foundation in inviting an exhibition of *Minjoong Art*, and Lim curated the exhibition. In some respects, he provided opportunities for the NMCA to consider what parts should be changed under the guise of contemporary. Before that, the NMCA was just a below-par art museum in a developing country. [...] When Lim became a museum director, he passionately worked for fundraising and met people in Europe using his bilingual proficiency. He worked as a curator in a sense. [...] At the second selection of ‘Artist of the Year’ (올해의 작가), he chose the stage artist Yoon Jeong-Seop, which caused a controversy, right? Lim had a misgiving that only artworks hung on the wall were regarded as art. He also had a critical mind and perspective compared to others. He did not set up a parameter that the museum should consider the contemporary in a philosophical way. If a concept of modern art could be described as ‘abcde’, then that of contemporary could be something like ‘abcfg’. [...] Lim dispatched a fair number of curators and let them learn advanced techniques abroad.⁴⁶⁰

Lim had to struggle to form any fixed ideas of what contemporary art was, and what role a museum director should perform. Owing to his academic background, Lim’s museum vision was that the academic tradition of art history should be brought into the museum. On the basis of his vision, Lim was not afraid of confronting opposing parties who rejected his revolutionary and innovative ideas. In particular, he imprinted the ideas on the exhibition *Minjoong Art, 15 Years* in 1994. Lim wanted to alter social perception to show that *Minjoong Art* was a theme to be evaluated as a genre of art, not as a political weapon, which might distort its fundamental nature and characteristics.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶⁰ Jung Joon-Mo, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Jung’s office, Anguk (안국), Seoul, 7 March 2015.

⁴⁶¹ Seong Woo-Jae (10 February 1994).

The *Minjoong Art* is generally known as a cultural and artistic movement that emerged in the late 1970s that called for both democratisation and unification, and which as a result came under government censure in the era of military dictatorship.⁴⁶² What follows is an interview that he had with the daily newspaper *Hankyoreh*. It demonstrates how an individual, unlike former directors of the NMMA and NMCA, could rectify outmoded traditions of museum identity imposed by authority:

Yim (reporter): The museum has shown no interest in *Minjoong Art*. What motivation led the museum to open its exhibition?

Lim: We have been deeply interested in *Minjoong Art*. No one could hide their interest regarding the concepts of truth and resistance. Simply, we just did not get involved. I have had a plan to open the exhibition since I have been a director of the NMCA. I thought that *Minjoong Art*, which was established by young and competent artists for ten years and became one of the crucial parts in the Korean art scene, must not be regarded as a taboo to be overlooked.

Yim: This exhibition has been criticised in that lack of detailed information caused the museum to stay like a mere display case in a grocery store, due to its lack of expertise in exhibition planning and the excessive involvement of related artists. If you do not mind, may I ask your opinion related to this issue?

Lim: I disagree. My intention is to exhibit everything without any exaggerated gestures. The former went well, but not the latter. It was due to controversy over who we should include or not. However, we accepted everything. No more information is necessary since the people have experienced the situation of what *Minjoong Art* has resisted and fought. A

⁴⁶² See more details: Chai Hyo-Young (2005: 207-211).

main theme of the exhibition should be exposing everything that has been screened.⁴⁶³

He was not only a pioneer, but also an innovative leader for the Korean art circle. He served five years in the museum and transformed internal and external features entirely: he realised concretely what his predecessors, Lee Gyeong-Seong and Kim Se-Joong, had only envisioned; he improved working conditions, skillset and knowledge of the museum's curators and made their curated exhibitions a central feature of the museum; and he oversaw international (*Whitney Biennial*) and controversial (*Minjoong Art*) exhibitions that repositioned the NMCA within Korean society and established its *raison d'être*. These meaningful exhibitions will be discussed as case studies later in this chapter.

In terms of practices, Lim attempted to give wider publicity regarding concepts of museology. He put his thoughts into action: how to negotiate with museum-related agents abroad, how to fundraise additional income to the annual government budget, how to promote controversial exhibitions in opposition to authority, how to popularise museum culture and apply the cultural taste of the public to exhibitions, and how to privatise and redistribute high culture through museum programmes. He established the concepts of both contemporary art and the specialised museum in the political conception of South Korean state.⁴⁶⁴

Lim fought against people who urged him to jump on the bandwagon in terms of catering to politicians. Despite appraisals of his decision-making process, he embraced voices of social reality that were neglected by political authority. His belief in a public-centred museum vision met the expectations of the public and led the NMCA to present itself as an undisputed national art museum. This achievement allowed him to participate in the first *Gwangju Biennial* in 1995 as a chairman of the organising committee. Not only was it the first non-Western biennial in Asia, but also a place

⁴⁶³ Yim Beom (8 March 1994: 11).

⁴⁶⁴ Jung Joon-Mo (March 2015: 64); Choi Tae-Man, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Choi's office, Gookmin University (국민대), 27 March 2015; Choi Yeol, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Nowon Station (노원역), 4 April 2015.

where multi-layered socio-political factors engaged with Gwangju as an explicitly highlighted hub city of international culture in the era of globalism and localism. Gwangju is an important place in recent South Korean history, being the location of the Gwangju Uprising against the military government in May 1980 which then gave rise to the *Minjoong*.⁴⁶⁵ The *Gwangju Biennial* sought to be a political remedy and cultural promotion for Gwangju, which had been alienated from the mainstream of Korean politics and economy (Figure 54 and 55). Kim Young-Sam's government deliberately hosted the international exhibition to switch the image of Gwangju from 'strife and resistance' to 'hometown of culture in a global world (세계속의 예향)'.⁴⁶⁶ It was a political gesture of public relations whereby the South Korean government attempted to introduce its democratic stance.⁴⁶⁷ With great monetary support from the Kim Young-Sam's government, Lim focused on the issue of blending universal globalism and specific regionalism together. His experience of the *Whitney Biennial* two years earlier contributed to the radical decision of making the Gwangju exhibition theme as 'Beyond the Borders' (경계를 넘어서).⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ Lee Joon (2011: 167-168).

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, (2011: 170).

⁴⁶⁷ Joo Hyo-Jin (2010: 381).

⁴⁶⁸ Lim Young-Bang (1995: 8).



Figure 54 Prime Minister Lee Hong-Gu (李洪九, 1934-, a person stands on the podium) visits the first Gwangju Biennial in 1995. By kind permission of and © Korea Public Policy Broadcasting Service, ehistory.



Figure 55 Kcho (known as Alexis Leiva Machado), *Para olvidar el miedo*, 1995, mixed media installation. Kcho is the Grand Prize winner of the first Gwangju Biennial in 1995. By kind permission of and © Korea Public Policy Broadcasting Service, ehistory.

The notion of multiculturalism, meanwhile, sparked a storm of social movement, not only in

America, but across the global world, including in South Korea. The theme ‘Beyond the Border’ implied a meaning of how the international community could become one entity regardless of issues of nations, ethnic groups, ideologies, and religions in accordance with the trend of ‘newly constructed locality’.⁴⁶⁹ Lim displayed a field of cultural exchange that showed cultural diversity and difference. His appetite for multiculturalism led Koreans to escape from the Western-centric art scenes and other related perspectives, such as from Latin America, Africa, and Oceania.⁴⁷⁰ A precursor to these developments, however, was Lim bringing the *Whitney Biennial* to Seoul. This resulted in a radical reimagining of the national art museum.

Whitney Biennale in Seoul: introducing vivid and cutting-edge contemporary art

The *Whitney Biennial* in 1993 was its 67th event and its 10th mega-biennial.⁴⁷¹ There were 82 participating artists in total; 34 artists were female, about 30 were non-white, and over two-thirds of all the artists were in the 20-30 age range. This desire for cultural diversity, a feature of the 1990s more generally, first appeared in the 1991 biennial.⁴⁷² Its aggressive and shocking themes, which tackled AIDS, sexuality, and race, reflected contemporary social concerns. It was a radical transformation in the form of the biennial led by David A. Ross (1949-), the newly appointed director in 1991.

Ross, who served as director of the Whitney Museum from 1991 to 1998, and Elisabeth Sussman (1939-), chief curator of the *Whitney Biennial 1993*, intentionally curated the *Biennial* in terms

⁴⁶⁹ Hanru (2005: 57).

⁴⁷⁰ Heartney (April 1996: 51-55).

⁴⁷¹ Whitney Museum of American Art, *1993 Whitney Biennial Exhibition Catalogue* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1993), pp. 108-109, quoted in Johnson (April 2010: 3-4).

⁴⁷² Bodick (4 March 2014).

that aligned with the Clinton administration's support for multiculturalism.⁴⁷³ The 1993 show has been regarded as the most political in the *Biennial's*. Ross designated the preface title of the Biennial as 'Know Thy Self' (너 자신을 알라). It originated from a social trend in the United States surrounding the question of how to define boundaries - namely, ethnic group, race, and nation - that constitute the identity of Americans. Ross's slogan was intended as a reply to a stated social trend, and also a message that the Biennial would not be distracted by previously fixed ideas. Rather, it was to represent diversified social conflicts as they happened.⁴⁷⁴

Sussman, on the other hand, focused on a manifestation of *fragmented collectivity*, but refigured it. She focused on the voice of young and courageous experimental artists. Participating artists from *fragmented* identities - black, Third World, homosexual, and feminist thinkers - that were considered minorities or marginals, challenged the male Anglo-Saxon-centred hegemony of Western culture.⁴⁷⁵ However, Sussman argued that even ideology-centred art could embed such characteristics as humour, vagueness, melancholic desire, irony, and rhetoric, etc.⁴⁷⁶ Also, since displayed artworks were placed in a unique cultural position, Sussman did not want visitors to approach them with an essentialist definition or ideology. Hence, any notions such as identity, ethnicity, or nationalism could be fluid and flexible or in a state of conflict.⁴⁷⁷ She denied that all artworks needed senses of beauty and pleasure based on aesthetic qualities.⁴⁷⁸ George Holiday's video of Rodney King tackled racism, Byron Kim's *Synecdoche* represented an issue of how inhuman monochrome painting shouted a voice of racism as a non-white artist, Cherokee artist Jimmie Durham's artwork subverted the canon and revealed the absurdity of cultural identity,

⁴⁷³ Heartney (May 1993: 43).

⁴⁷⁴ Ross (1993: 16-17).

⁴⁷⁵ Kim Hong-Hui (September 1993: 40).

⁴⁷⁶ Sussman (Spring 2005: 78).

⁴⁷⁷ Ross (1993: 19-20); Choi Cody (September 1993: 44).

⁴⁷⁸ Kim Hong-Hui (September 1993: 41)

Daniel Joseph Martinez's work disclosed the issue of negativism and the privilege of cultural imperialism, Janine Antoni's showed a visceral way of representing a woman's body, Charles Ray made an equally proportioned sculptural family and let visitors read themes as to childhood fantasy and suppressed sexuality, and Pepón Osorio's artwork, which was meant to reflect the stereotype of Latin violence and vulgarity, challenged existing social issues under the guise of political correctness (Figure 56, 57, and 58).⁴⁷⁹ The Biennial was greeted negatively by many critics who disliked its lack of aesthetic values. Others were more tolerant and open to the challenge the show presented:⁴⁸⁰

Hilton Kramer: "Ross has never demonstrated that he has an understanding of art as art. He basically wants art to be something else. He wants it to be politics. [...] He has made it a vehicle for political correctness and multiculturalism."

Peter Schjeldahl: "Art +Politics = Biennial. [...] I disliked the show quite a bit."

Robert Hughes: "This show is not the end of civilisation as we know it, but it is glum, preachy, sophomoric and aesthetically aimless. Indifferent to pleasure, it becomes college-level art for college-level thinking about civic virtue."

Michael Kimmelman: "I hate the show, [...] it made me feel battered by condescension. [...] (it treated art) as if pleasure were a sin."

Roberta Smith: "Nonetheless, this Biennial is a watershed. [...] Instead of a frequently docile presentation of market trends, like many of its predecessors, this show takes a distinct position. It focuses on a range of art that is more or less political – or at least social – paying scant attention to anything else. [...]"

⁴⁷⁹ Kimball (April 1993: 54); Richard (1 July 1993: 51-54); Foster et al., (Autumn 1993: 14-18); Kim Hong-Hui (September 1993: 41-43); Johnson (April 2010: 41); Shaked (June 2013: 148-155); Bodick (4 March 2014).

⁴⁸⁰ Kim Jina (2005: 30-31).

Jerry Saltz: “These artists were against not beauty but complacency; they were for pleasure through meaning, personal meaning.”

Peter Plagens: “(The Biennial had the) aroma of cultural reparations.”

Paul Richard: “There is hypocrisy at work here. Not all the artists represented really are outsiders. The catalogue, which includes brief biographies, tells us that these three went to Harvard, that those two went to Yale, [...] Lots of them, one gathers, are ‘marginal’ by choice. [...] This show pretends to be ‘multicultural’. It is not. It is monocultural.”

Roger Kimball: “[...] The wacko feminism, the preening ethnic narcissism, the rejection of artistic standards, the naïve recapitulation of radical clichés about race, gender, class, power, the West: it is all here, stuffed in unlovely profusion into every nook and cranny of the Whitney’s exhibition space.”⁴⁸¹



Figure 56 George Holliday, *Videotape of Rodney King Beating*, 1991. By kind permission of and © George Holliday (<http://www.rodneykingvideo.com.ar/>).

⁴⁸¹ Nathan (4 March 1993: C1); Richard (4 March 1993: C1); Smith (5 March 1993: C1); Hughes (22 March 1993: 68-69); Kimball (April 1993: 54-56); Saltz (11 February 2013).



Figure 57 Byron Kim, *Synecdoche*, 1991-present, oil and wax on panel (275 panels), 10"x8" (each panel), 10' 1/2"x18' 1/2" (overall). By kind permission of and © Byron Kim and Kukje Gallery, Seoul. Image provided by Byron Kim. Photo by Dennis Cowley.



Figure 58 Pepón Osorio, *The Scene of the Crime (Whose Crime?)*, 1993, mixed media installation at Whitney Biennial. Collection: The Bronx Museum, NY. By kind permission of and © Pepón Osorio.

Setting aside these critics' reviews, Sussman later reminisced upon and re-evaluated the Biennial. She concluded that those who criticised the Biennial failed to take a macroscopic view of how thoroughly it reflected socio-political situations in America, and how exhibited artworks so as to represent issues in the identity of American society, and challenge the social elements that are said constitute 'Americanness'.⁴⁸² Thus, Sussman believed that those critics could not find the words to express the social atmosphere of America; that they were inherently conservative and incapable of radical change.⁴⁸³ Given the radical nature of this Biennial, even for a seasoned American audience, it is remarkable that it should then find its way to South Korea at a time when that country had only recently shaken off the last vestiges of military dictatorship (Figure 59).

⁴⁸² Sussman (Spring 2005: 75-79).

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, (Spring 2005: 78).

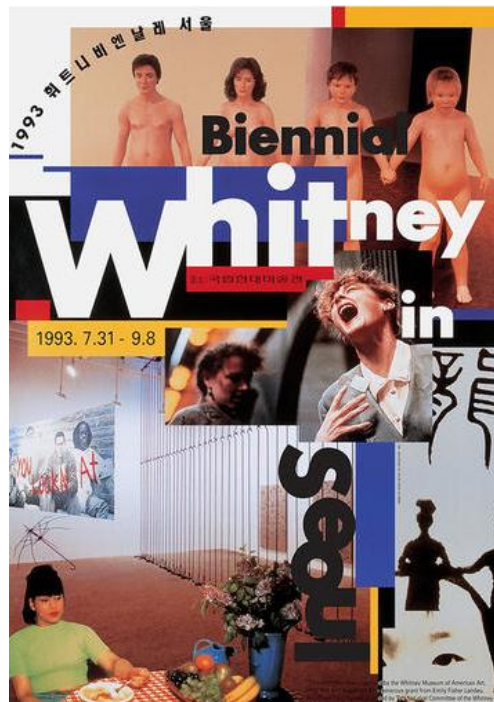


Figure 59 The front-page of 1993 *Whitney Biennial in Seoul*'s official catalogue. By kind permission of and © MMCA.

The pioneering video artist, Paik Nam-June worked as a ‘negotiator’ to import the Biennial to Seoul. Working with Lee Yong-Woo (李龍雨, 1948-), a former Korean museum official, he first considered the Seoul Arts Centre as a venue but it was too big a project for its budget.⁴⁸⁴ They then turned to the NMCA, and negotiated with the Whitney to win a right of lien on the Biennial against an unknown art museum in Japan.⁴⁸⁵ Even for the NMCA, however, the proposition was not straightforward but following a feasibility study they felt the fact that the political condition of

⁴⁸⁴ Choi Tae-Man (July-August 1993: 4-5).

⁴⁸⁵ One of the reports from the Whitney noted that an unknown gallery in Japan was interested in holding the Biennial for three million dollars, but the NMCA achieved its official right to host it for only 650,000 dollars with the aid of Paik Nam-June. See details: *Ibid*; The NMCA, ‘A report’, (Box of ‘the 1993 Whitney Biennial’, in the Archives of the Whitney Museum, New York, quoted in Kim Jina (2004: 349-350).

the Korean peninsula as a divided country and the theme of ‘borderline’ were well matched to be a reflection on the future of Korean society.⁴⁸⁶ Moreover, Director Lim, who was a close friend of Paik, claimed that the exhibition had symbolic significance in looking over multi-faceted issues of contemporary society and searching for the potential of new artistic representation.⁴⁸⁷ However, the museum knew this would be a difficult exercise. In particular, fundraising was crucial to meet the costs of importation. Indeed, finding a co-host and sponsors was seen as essential but this proved unsuccessful.⁴⁸⁸ At last, the Whitney proposed a discounted price so that the NMCA only had to cover expenses such as publishing catalogues, promotion, and operating cost.⁴⁸⁹

After a series of failures to raise monetary sponsorship from conglomerates and major press companies, the NMCA barely met the requirements. The major financial contributors were: Paik Nam-June (\$150,000), Hanssem Inc. (\$200,000), Daelim Group (\$100,000), Daehan Education Insurance (\$100,000), additional contributions (\$100,000), plus twenty round-trip business class tickets from New York to Seoul and discount of the transportation fee.⁴⁹⁰ However, the Whitney informed the NMCA that 650,000 dollars were not enough for transporting entire artworks. In response, the NMCA firmly emphasised the significance of key artworks to be displayed. As a result, a total of 61 artists, comprising 107 artworks, on a small scale, were chosen for the show in South Korea. The Whitney included Charles Ray’s *Family Romance* and Gary Hill’s *Between 1 &*

⁴⁸⁶ Choi Tae-Man (July-August 1993: 4-5).

⁴⁸⁷ Lim Young-Bang (1993: 8-9).

⁴⁸⁸ *Dong-ah Ilbo*, one of the daily newspaper companies, refused the proposal of co-hosting due to the replacement of the executive team. *Chosun Ilbo* became an official co-host of the Biennial on condition of no allotted charges. In terms of breaching a promised contract, one influential gallery cancelled \$100,000 in monetary support without a plausible reason. Later, it was identified that the gallery wanted an artwork of Paik’s in return for sponsorship. See details: Choi Tae-Man (July-August 1993).

⁴⁸⁹ The Whitney proposed 650,000 dollars as a discounted price (\$300,000: curatorial fee and \$350,000: handling and shipping fee). See details: Kim Jina (2004: 307-314).

⁴⁹⁰ As to a detailed story about how the NMCA had additional contributions, see Choi Tae-Man (July-August 1993: 8).

0 instead of *Fire Truck* (Ray) and *Tall Ship* (Hill) (Figure 60 and 61). Moreover, Ida Applebroog's *Jack F* and Yonemoto (both Bruce and Norman) and Timothy Martin's *Land of Protection* could not come due to installation and transportation issues.⁴⁹¹

As to this outcome, Kim Jina, an art historian, analyses the transportation process of mixed media and installation artworks from the Whitney's viewpoint. She explains that transportation costs and difficulty in installation caused difficulties but not strong censorship of the MCS.⁴⁹² The censorship issue, however, brought the museum into trouble regarding a translation of some affected works, whether to be displayed or not during the exhibition period in Seoul. More details related to the issue will be discussed later in this chapter.

At any rate, collaborative work between the NMCA and related agents including Paik Nam-June, who put in all his effort, made the Biennial possible. Despite Paik's pure motivation, there have been speculations regarding the purpose of his administrative support. Some said Paik was an 'international broker' who engaged in the sale of the Biennial, while others said he paid back the Whitney for the favour of letting him have a world-class reputation during his retrospective at the museum in 1982.⁴⁹³ However, Paik believed that the Biennial could offer a positive influence on Korean contemporary art. In detail, he thought diversified artistic genres of the Biennial could positively stimulate young Korean artists.

Nevertheless, his motivation of support has not been fully proved. Presumably, Paik might feel a sense of patriotism and pride regarding economic development or holding events such as the

⁴⁹¹ See more details on: From Shannah Ehrhart to other Whitney staff, 'Re: Biennial travel checklist', 6 April 1993 (Box of 'the 1993 Whitney Biennial', in the archives of the Whitney Museum, New York); 'Notes on checklist (for travel)' (Box of 'the 1993 Whitney Biennial', in the archives of the Whitney Museum, New York), quoted in Kim Jina (2004: 310-318).

⁴⁹² On the other hand, the NMCA also censored some artworks in order to evade any controversial issues. Kim Jina (2007: 106); Anon., 'Another controversial issue as to a photograph displayed in *1993 Whitney Biennial, Seoul*' (93회 트니비엔날레 서울전 사진 문제 또 시비), (20 July 1993).

⁴⁹³ Paik maintained a close relationship with David Ross and John G. Hanhardt, who was a curator who took charge of video art at that time. When Ross became director of the Whitney in 1991, Paik supported him as a mediator to satisfy his willingness of sending the Biennial abroad (non-Western countries). Kim Jina (2004: 351).

Olympics in South Korea that let him work as a mediator between the Whitney and the NMCA.⁴⁹⁴



Figure 60 Charles Ray, *Family Romance*, 1993, mixed media, 53"x7'1"x11" (134.6x215.9x27.9cm), New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Gift of The Norton Family Foundation. 281. By kind permission of and © Charles Ray & 2018. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

⁴⁹⁴ Because of his family background, he frequently moved from place to place, such as Japan, Germany, Hong Kong, and the United States. He was such a cosmopolitan who communicated with countless numbers of artists worldwide. His rich experience abroad inspired his desire to introduce Korean art worldwide at any cost. Kang Tae-Hi (1988: 4-8).

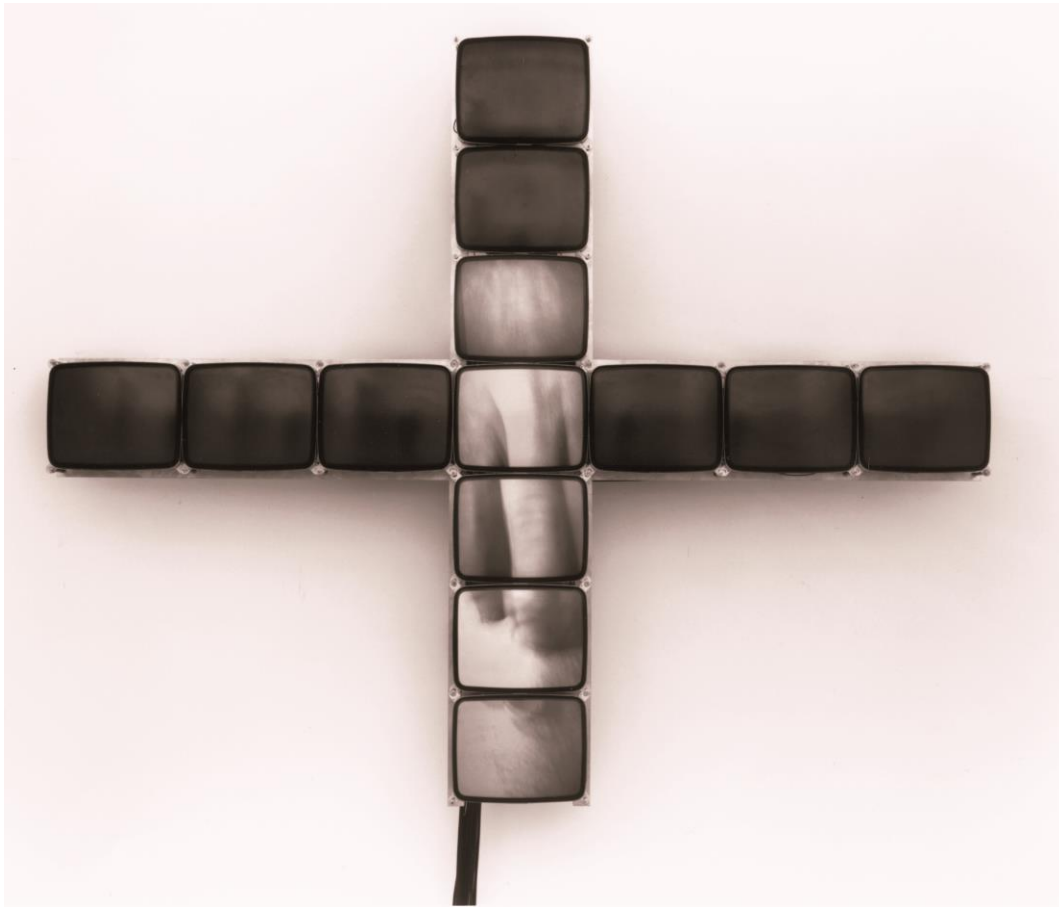


Figure 61 Gary Hill, *Between 1 & 0*, 1993, video installation. By kind permission of and © Gary Hill (Gary Hill Studio, garyhill.com).

The *Whitney Biennial Seoul* marked a watershed in the history of the NMCA for a number of reasons: first, it attracted nearly 150,000 visitors to a single exhibition that has recorded one of the highest figures in the museum's history; second, the Biennial was planned for introducing the latest global trends of contemporary art by its own curatorial expertise; and third, it produced a huge controversy in Korean society due to its provocative and contentious exhibition theme, the so-called 'borderline'. In particular, the concept of 'borderline' that represented this exhibition was

reflected in the selection of artists and their artworks.⁴⁹⁵

The exhibition in South Korea turned out to be a motivation in how individual artistic experience could become a political language that promotes social discourse and artistic diversity.⁴⁹⁶ The exhibition provided momentum for museum-related agents to rethink how they motivate the Korean contemporary art world and it convinced visitors of the power of cultural and visual languages that might transform the conservative political terrain of South Korea into a vibrant laboratory of contemporary art. According to Jung Joon-Mo, the Biennial let visitors in South Korea judge ‘What is art fundamentally?’

Jung Joon-Mo: [...] Speaking of Korean art history, it has been a vague academic subject. Only archaeological contents were regarded as a genuine category of art history. Slowly, then, the conception of art history has been changed. The number of people who studied Western art increased over that of Korean. Director Lim decisively considered the 1970s as the starting point of Korean contemporary art history. After that, what Lim did was to introduce the *Whitney Biennial*, one of the sensational global art events, to the Korean populace in 1993. The reason why Lim brought the Biennial was because Koreans were interested in oldies. Even though the global art trend changed rapidly, Koreans could not follow it and focused mainly on monochrome painting under the name of ‘collective individuality’ (집단개성). However, the notion of ‘collective individuality’ is nonsense. How could this be possible? [...] Lim introduced the *Whitney Biennial* and broke the culture of ‘collective individuality’ through the concept of multiculturalism. He showed such cutting-edge and vivid American art that awakened Koreans who had lived in a doctrinaire climate,

⁴⁹⁵ Kim Hong-Hui (September 1993: 40).

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, (September 1993: 43); Choi Cody (September 1993: 44-47).

in other words, a trend of (Korean style) monochrome painting.⁴⁹⁷

Ross and Sussman visited South Korea on 31 July 1993, an opening day of the event. Both gave public lectures on that day.⁴⁹⁸ Ross knew how culturally sophisticated a nation South Korea was. Although the Biennial did not invite any artists from South Korea,⁴⁹⁹ he wanted the show to be a stage where a vibrant dialogue between American and Korean people took place.⁵⁰⁰ Here are excerpts from lectures regarding theoretical background, social context, and change in American art in the early 1990s:

Ross: Honestly, a video clip of Yo-TV (running time 12 minutes) that you have just watched was trying to deliver issues, ones that non-artistic and normal people just like us could pose, which were presented by an artist's artwork.⁵⁰¹ Here, an 'art museum' performs an important role. Namely, an art museum uses artworks to send a sort of message to visitors who are not real artists. [...] I think an art museum should work as a role model to help visitors understand surrounding issues of seriousness, earnestness, and problem-posing through the messages of artworks that were posed by artists. The essence of this year's Biennial exists here. [...] Most people recognise that American culture has an inferiority

⁴⁹⁷ Jung Joon-Mo, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Jung's office, Anguk, Seoul, 7 March 2015.

⁴⁹⁸ Choi Tae-Man (July-August 1993).

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, (July-August 1993: 4); Kim Jina (2007:100).

⁵⁰⁰ Ross (1993: 20).

⁵⁰¹ The Yo-TV was a city youth video production company. They installed a video clip at a lobby of the *Whitney Biennial* in 1993. Sussman mentioned that the change, a natural shift of youthfulness of the Biennial, which oriented burning identity issues appropriate to 20 to 30-year-olds, was a generational movement at that time. She also argued that it was impossible to find younger artists who were 'apolitical (gender or race sensitized)'. Larson (22 March 1993: 71-72).

complex compared to European. In fact, it is such a complicated culture that is composed of several mixed types of culture. [...] In this situation, the Whitney initiated as an exhibition space that fuses complicated culture, in other words, American culture. Hence, it is our challenging responsibility to display networks of activities that are performed by American art and American artists under radical change in world affairs.⁵⁰²

Sussman: During the two-year preparation period, we (U.S.) went through a presidential election. When it became fierce, you may remember the tragic incident that a black Justice of the Supreme Court who sexually harassed his secretary and stood trial was exposed to press publicity. At the same time, in April, there were cases such as the Rodney King beating and LA riot which provoked a full-scale war among black Americans, Koreans, and Latin Americans divided into East and West. [...] I selected an exhibition theme that is related to our reality. I also picked artists who do social activity but have not had experience of selling their works. They are mainly rising artists. [...] Most of the top artworks displayed in museums were produced by artists who have an ethnic background of white, white American, and European American. Hope the Biennial in Seoul provides an opportunity for non-white artists to publish their different voices and opinions, and reflect the issues that I mentioned above.⁵⁰³

For the Whitney, the Biennial in Seoul was the first, but also last exported case that was sold as an invitational exhibition abroad. Interestingly, however, there were internal and external issues to indicate the difference between the Whitney and the NMCA as to what cultural framings they used

⁵⁰² Choi Eun-Joo (30 July 1993).

⁵⁰³ Sussman wanted delegates to focus on a couple of issues in terms of understanding the importance of the Biennial. See details: *Ibid.*, (30 July 1993).

to represent their curatorial intention for museum visitors.⁵⁰⁴ The Whitney in New York deliberately used many explanatory labels and pieces of writing as a process of ‘translation’, while the Biennial in Seoul provided some simplified essays (omitted essays including Homi Bhabha, Coco Fusco, Ruby Rich, and Avital Ronell) with a few educated docents that helped visitors to understand artworks emotionally, but not contextually.⁵⁰⁵ As Kim Jina explains, it implied that Korean visitors who did not fairly understand either English or American social issues at that time would be largely concerned with exotic and shocking images.⁵⁰⁶ Since they had little experience of this type of exhibition, their ways of interpreting artworks were to locate their formal, but not contextual elements (Figure 62).

⁵⁰⁴ Kim Jina (2004: 327-328 (328)).

⁵⁰⁵ The NMCA included essays of Korean art critics Lee Yong-Woo and Choi Tae-Man as external writers; essays of Whitney staff such as David Ross, Elisabeth Sussman, Thelma Golden, and Lisa Phillips were added with Korean translation. On the other hand, texts of prefaces were written by Lee Min-Seop (Minister of Culture and Sports), Lim Young-Bang (director of the NMCA), and Bang Sang-Hoon (president of *Chosun Ilbo* which was a co-host of the Biennial). Choi Tae-Man, on the other hand, stated that the museum let curators and docents hold lectures to make visitors understand more about implications of the Biennial. Choi Tae-Man (July-August 1993: 11); Kim Jina (2004: 318-335); Kim Jina (2007: 107-118 (109)).

⁵⁰⁶ Kim Jina (2004: 328).



Figure 62 Daniel Martinez, *Museum Tags: Second Movement (Overture)* - “I Can’t imagine ever wanting to be white”; or, *Overture con clique (Overture with Hired Audience Members)*, 1993, metal and enamel on paint, 12”x15”. By kind permission of and © Daniel Martinez and Roberts Projects, Los Angeles, California. It could not come to Seoul due to its nebulous and complicated socio-political implications. As Kim Jina notes, Korean visitors focused on visual effects but not contextual elements during the exhibition period.

All these outcomes are related to external factors. Similar to the Biennial in New York, critics and press companies in South Korea criticised and devalued this international event without clear understanding of its fundamental contexts. Indeed, a few of them had critical perspectives. Critic Jeong Heon-Yi (鄭憲二, 1959-), for instance, argued legitimately that spending an astronomical amount of money to import was not about Korean, but American art. Jeong simply criticised that the Biennial in Seoul might distort original narratives without a readjustment process under the name of cultural pluralism.⁵⁰⁷ Moreover, there were issues such as the exhibition attraction process and negotiation with sponsors for fundraising. The issues were about the stories of how

⁵⁰⁷ Jeong Heon-Yi (September 1993: 154-159).

the museum prepared their extra budget from the private sponsors, and what factors made it difficult for curators to carry forward the exhibition against such fierce criticisms.⁵⁰⁸

For Koreans, the Biennial was part of features that revealed some uncomfortable realities of American society. It is true that issues about what the Whitney dealt with were not acceptable to those people who believed ‘the NMCA is a place which accommodates and displays Korean art’. One art critic stated that the American art world deliberately curated the Biennial in 1993 to take the initiative off the culture war against Europe.⁵⁰⁹ However, it was informative teaching material for Koreans that made them aware of what the function of art is in modern society, as a means to transform an existing condition. In this sense, the NMCA mapped out a detailed plan for another sensitive exhibition that was presented by *Minjoong Art*, which represented the reality of Korean modern society.

Minjoong Art, 15 Years (1980-1994): a symbolic trigger embraced ideological diversity

Minjoong Art has become a proper noun that denotes complicated and conceptual viewpoints. As mentioned above, Korean contemporary art lost its way due to excessive acceptance of Western ideologies and artistic trends. Hence, its themes dealt with internal and individualistic issues.⁵¹⁰ *Minjoong Art* was such a radical and progressive art movement against existing and formalistic manners in the Korean art circle that manifested in socio-political statements. Before discussing its definition and narratives, it is important to understand that the word *Minjoong*. Its definition is slightly different to the term ‘*Minjok*’ (민족, 民族, ethnic group). While the latter indicates an

⁵⁰⁸ Even members of the annual inspection at the NAROK raised the issue to discover its detailed procedures. See details in: Choi Tae-Man (July-August 1993); The Culture and Public Information Committee of NAROK (국회 문화공보위원회) (4 October 1993).

⁵⁰⁹ Choi Cody (September 1993: 45).

⁵¹⁰ Ahn Gyu-Cheol (1985: 143-149).

absolute meaning that is has been used by governments to solidify their political legitimacy (Park's military regime in particular), the former was an invented concept based on the practical concern of realising democratisation under the autocracy from the 1960s to 1970s. It was needed for progressive intellectuals and students as a practical movement.⁵¹¹

The word *Minjok* was widely used in the literature field. When the *Yushin* (유신) system applied the word *Minjok* to establish a national autonomy, its resistance movement in culture and arts fields created the *Minjoong Culture and Arts Movement* (MCAM, 민중문화예술운동) arising from the April Revolution in 1960. Park's administration, based upon the *Yushin* system, distorted the concept of *Minjok* and made the people obey the government as a means of ethnic unification.⁵¹² In this situation, the MCAM was based on resistant nationalism, which induced the public to have an interest in the democratic movement. *Minjoong Art* later became one of the constituents affiliated with the MCAM.

As Park Hyun-Chae defines, the word *Minjoong* was produced by the modernisation process that reflected the sacrifices labourers, peasants, and small and medium-sized businessmen made for democracy and social equality.⁵¹³ Modernisation accelerated wage differentials between capitalist and the poor so that the latter class emerged as a new leading agent of the democratic movement. Han Wan-Sang (韓完相, 1936-), a reputable socialist, classified its concept into two categories: one is *Minjoong* that is awakened by self-consciousness, the other is *Minjoong* that does not recognise one's status as a *Minjoong*.⁵¹⁴ Although a debate of *Minjoong Art* was ideologically started by the 'Hyun-sil Dong-in' (현실동인), organisations established in 1979 such as 'Hyun-sil and Bal-un' (현실과 발언) and 'Gwangju Painters Association for Freedom' (GPAF, 광주자유미술인협의회 (광자협))

⁵¹¹ Yoo Jae-Cheon (ed.) (1984: 12); Im Ji-Hyeon (1999: 52-53).

⁵¹² Choi Tae-Man (December 2006: 145-180); Chai Hyo-Young (2010: 68-92).

⁵¹³ Park Hyun-Chae (1985: 71).

⁵¹⁴ Han Wan-Sang, 'Sociological concept of the Minjoong' (민중의 사회학적 개념) (Seoul: Moonji Publishing (문학과 지성사), Fall 1978), quoted in Yoo Jae-Cheon (ed.) (1984: 48-64).

effectively initiated their *Minjoong Art* activities.⁵¹⁵ These groups advocated an artistic style that reflected social reality and escaped from cosmopolitanism. It was to recover independent views through the realistic representation of the style of art.⁵¹⁶ Interestingly, members of ‘Hyun-sil and Bal-un’ had put more emphasis on the conceptualisation of *Minjoong* and social awareness rather than the definition of *Minjoong Art* per se.⁵¹⁷ They would not like them to be fixed by this term. Won Dong-Seok (元東石, 1938-), one of the art critics involved in the group, mentioned that “a truth of *Minjok* is *Minjoong*, and the main agent of culture is also *Minjoong* as well. Manifestation of living *Minjok* culture is possible by the main agent who does creative activity as a *Minjoong* (Figure 63, 64, 65, and 66).”⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁵ ‘Hyun-sil Dong-in’ was formed by students (Oh Yun, Im Se-Taek, Oh Gyeong-Hwan, and Kang Myeong-Hee) from the Fine Art School of the Seoul National University with theoretical support of the group ‘Pontra’ (Poem on Trash, a group mainly led by Kim Yoon-Soo and Kim Ji-Ha) in 1969. Chai Hyo-Young (2005: 207-209).

⁵¹⁶ Kim Jae-Won (2004: 107-113).

⁵¹⁷ Yoon Beom-Mo (Editorial Board of Hyun-sil and Bal-un 2 [현실과 발언2 편집위원회]) (1990: 542-543).

⁵¹⁸ Won Dong-Seok (1975: 84-89).

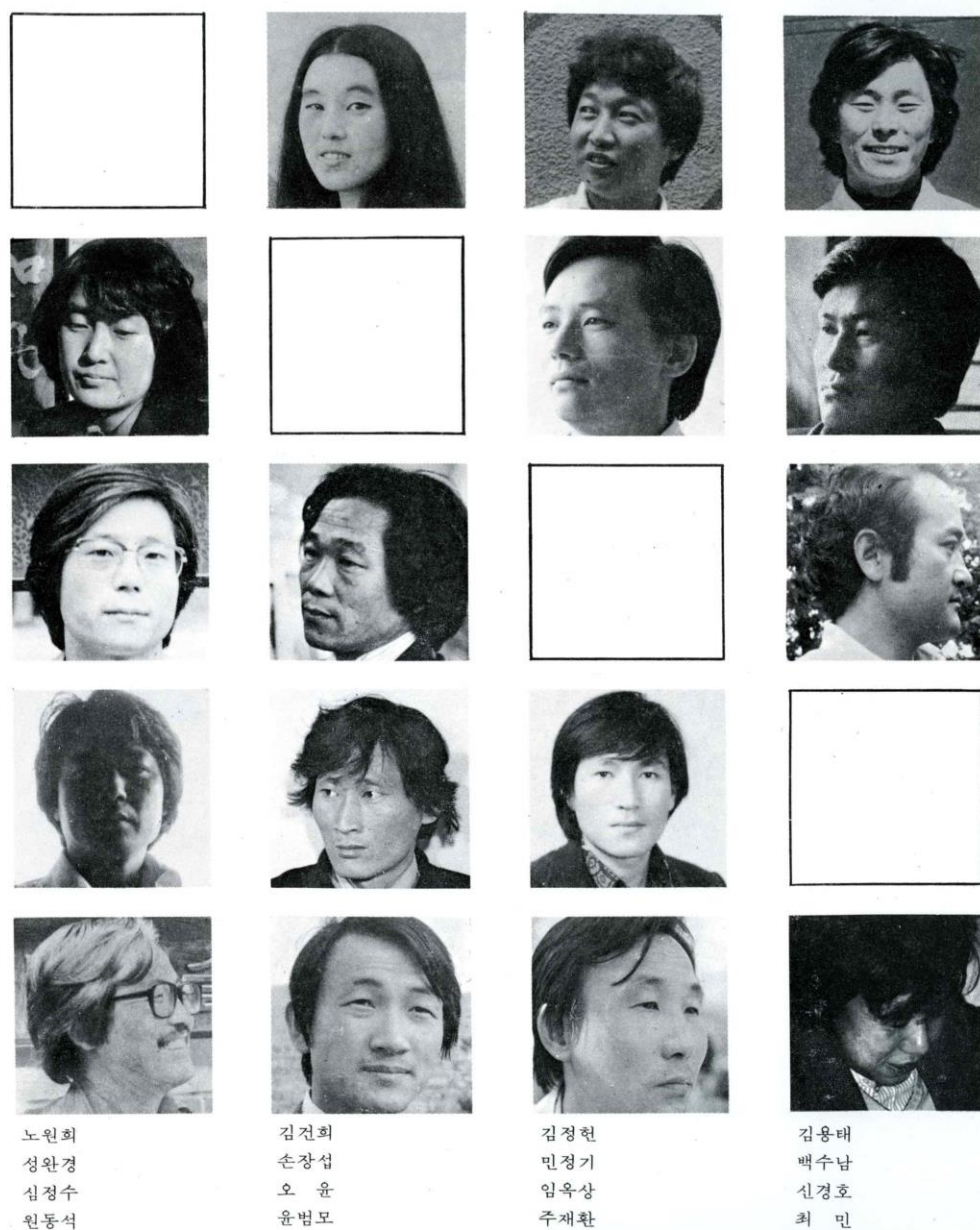


Figure 63 The first Hyun-sil and Bal-un's exhibition catalogue, 1980. By kind permission of and © Kim Jong-Gil Archives (Minjoong Art Researcher). In this catalogue, there are artists (such as Oh Yoon, Min Jeong-Gi, Kim Yong-Tae, Yim Ok-Sang and so on) and art critics (Won Dong-Seok, Yoon Beom-Mo, Seong Wan-Gyeong and Choi Min) collaborated in curating this exhibition. However, their first exhibition, as an anti-establishment (or counter-culture) movement, was censored by Jeon's government.



Figure 64 Early members of the Hyun-sil and Bal-un. By kind permission of and © Kim Jong-Gil Archives (Minjoong Art Researcher).



Figure 65 Min Jeong-Gi (閔晶基, 1949-), *Wash One's Face* (세수), 1980, oil on canvas. By kind permission of and © Min Jeong-Gi, Source: Korea Digital Archives for the Arts. Min has known as one of the Hyun-sil and Bal-un members and shown his great interest in *Minjoong's* everyday life.

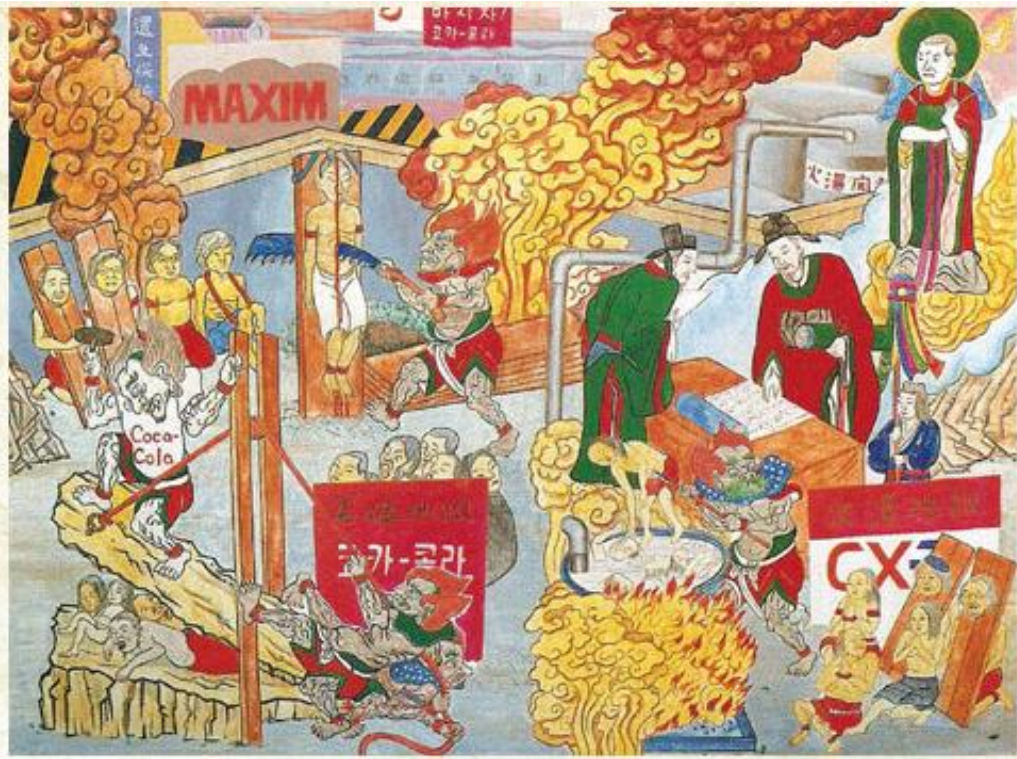


Figure 66 Oh Yoon (吳潤, 1946-1986), *Marketing I: 지옥도 地獄圖* (literally means ‘painting of hell’) (마케팅 I: 지옥도), 1980, mixed media on canvas. In this painting, Oh combines both commercial images (Coca-Cola, Maxim, CX3, and 遷生保險) in the post-industrial society and traditional Buddhist painting styles. As Choi Tae-Man analyses, four people in the pillories on the left and five on the right are the members of Hyun-sil and Bal-un. Oh would like to depict reality that artists could do nothing against hopeless social circumstances which were infected by commercialism. Oh paradoxically represents artists as weak and incompetent beings that should be judged by the Rakshasas (羅刹, evils in Buddhist world). By kind permission of and © Oh Yoon (the artist’s estate) and Kim Jong-Gil Archives (Minjoong Art Researcher). Image provider: Kim Jong-Gil (in order to research Oh Yoon’s artworks).

His words provided a clue as to how its concept was generalised by the public. Then, his group criticised industrialisation due to a rapid modernisation process that was represented by images which distorted reality. In their images, each *Minjoong* described an individual who alleviated them in the industrial system. Meanwhile, the groups of ‘Im-Sul Nyun’ (임술년, established in 1982) and ‘Do-Lung’ (두렁, established in 1983) which also presented *Minjoong Art* criticised the existing art system in order to proclaim their manifesto (Figure 67, 68, and 69). In particular, the ‘Do-Lung’

carried out their activities as a form of protest. Since the GPAF used placards, wall posters, and scribbles in the liberation process of slogan, ‘Do-Lung’, a group that consisted of members of *Talchum* (탈춤, Korean mask dance), worked with outdoor workers. The group also associated with other artistic genres to represent the autonomy of the *Minjoong*.⁵¹⁹ Their significance, however, exists with the fact of allowing *Minjoong* to recognise and discover one’s identity and social reality rather than be a mere artistic genre as a subject matter.



Figure 67 The first exhibition poster of Im-Sul Nyun, 1982. A term ‘Im-Sul Nyun’ means the year of 1982 and it was their established year. By kind permission of and © Kim Jong-Gil Archives (Minjoong Art Researcher).

⁵¹⁹ *Talchum* and *Madang-Geuk* (마당극, Korean traditional play), performances of the ‘Do-Lung’, had a participant-oriented characteristic that let audiences engage in their activities. Performers were representatives who could reflect their voices on behalf of the *Minjoong*. Choi Yeol (2009: 98).



Figure 68 Lee Jong-Gu (李鍾九, 1954-), *A Sequel, Farmer is the Essential Element in the Life of Living - History* (續 農者天下之大本- 沿革, 속 농자천하지대본- 연혁), 1984, acrylic paint on a rice bag, Seoul Municipal Art Museum. By kind permission of and © Lee Jong-Gu. Lee is one of the Im-Sul Nyun members. He has depicted the portrait images of fathers (as well as farmers) in farming area based upon Im-Sul Nyun's artistic theme 'Drawing the social reality of the time by means of realism in art'. According to Lee, he had to use a rice bag instead of expensive oil paint or canvas in order to represent real images of farmer as a symbol of Korean labour.

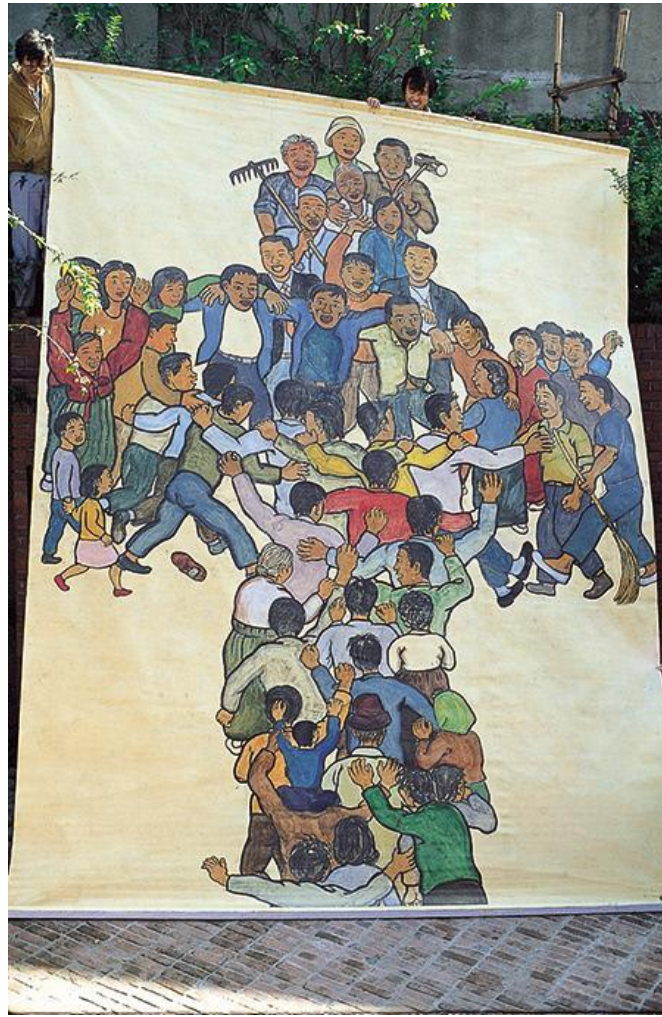


Figure 69 Do-Lung (collaborative work), *At Last, We will Become One* (끝내는 한 길에 하나가 되리), 1983, Geolgae-Geurim (a hanging picture). By kind permission of and © Kim Jong-Gil Archives (Minjoong Art Researcher).

The government recognised *Minjoong Art* as an anti-government movement and censored its representational style and embedded contexts. During the Fifth Republic era, Lee Won-Hong (李元洪, 1929-), Minister of the MCPI (1985-1986), stated that “there are some artists who identified themselves with ragged and starving *Minjoong* that support or accord with the anti-government movement” at the Second Nationwide Representative Conference of the Federation of Artistic and

Culture Organisation of Korea (제2회 예총 전국대표자대회).⁵²⁰ Since the government made an attempt to recover national identity with conciliatory measures due to the GDM (광주민주화운동) in 1980, this inversely induced the MCAM. Measures were planned for detaching the widespread democratic movement from the public, but it was in vain, which made the government use a hard-line policy.

Lee's speech was an official government statement that there could be overall regulation of the MCAM. It led to the cancellation of an exhibition called *Hymm* (literally meaning 'power') of the 20s (20대의 힘, 1985) and the police took nineteen protesting artists into custody on charges of radical pro-communism aimed at democracy, *Minjoong*, and *Minjok* (ethnic group) (Figure 70).⁵²¹ With this as momentum, the concept of *Minjoong Art* could be defined as an artistic style which embodies the reality of the *Minjoong*. Won Dong-Seok, in this sense, raised an issue as to its main agents of creation.⁵²² His concept of *Minjoong* does not limit it to a particular social class. He would like the *Minjoong* to be a living organism that is able to create, possess, and enjoy culture by oneself.⁵²³ Won even identified artists with the *Minjoong* who could share pain, sorrow, and agony with minorities. His definition enlarged its scope in that a conception of the *Minjoong* is fluid and penetrates deep into the social reality of South Korea. It became a strong rationale that *Minjoong Art* could be an indigenous theoretical concept, which represents the unique nature or characteristic of Korean contemporary art.

⁵²⁰ 'Lee Won-Hong (李元洪), Minister of the MCPI, representative gathering in the Federation of Artistic and Culture Organisation of Korea, appreciation' (이문공 예총대표자회의 치사), *Seoul Shinmun*, 21 July 1985, quoted in Choi Yeol (2009: 96-100).

⁵²¹ This exhibition took place at the 'Arab' art museum (아랍 미술관) from 13 to 22 July 1985. There were 34 artists and 110 artworks submitted. In the process of cancellation, 26 artworks were confiscated. Choi Yeol (1991: 240).

⁵²² Won Dong-Seok (1985: 372-389).

⁵²³ Won Dong-Seok (1985); Choi Yeol (1985: 140-153)



Figure 70 Artists in the *Hymm of the 20s*, 1985. On 20 July 1985, artists who participated in *Hymm of the 20s* discussed countermeasures in order to react against the censorship of Jeon Do-Hwan and his government at Arab art museum. Photograph by kind permission of and © Park Yong-Su (Kyunghyang Shinmun), Source: Korea Democracy Foundation.

The incident of cancellation officially authorised *Minjoong Art*, which was formerly known as the ‘New Art Movement (새로운 미술운동)’.⁵²⁴ Notwithstanding there were conservative art critics who defined its notion as a rebellious artistic genre, the term *Minjoong Art* became officially recognised and circulated.⁵²⁵ When the Sixth Republic government came to power, a group of *Minjoong Art* artists anticipated that there would be no regulations in the process of producing their artworks due to its democratic stance. However, their hope was in vain and nothing really changed. Still, censorship from the government has been valid (Figure 71). The government could not accept an anti-government stance that might corrupt the public morals of society.⁵²⁶ It was then that director

⁵²⁴ Several critics stated that the government officialised its ideology and concept as the *Minjoong Art* due to the stated case. Yoo Hong-Joon (1987: 11).

⁵²⁵ Kim Bok-Young and Lee Il argued that the word ‘Minjoong’ could not be used as a criterion of art and degenerated into an ideological tool against political authority. Hence, they minimised the scale of ‘Minjoong’ as a concept of social class. Kim Bok-Young and Lee Il (23 July 1985).

⁵²⁶ Yoon Beom-Mo resigned his director position after the opening of *Fresh Perspective: Suggestion for Tomorrow*

Lim decided to plan a retrospective exhibition of *Minjoong Art* and officialised its art-historical significance to the public (Figure 72).

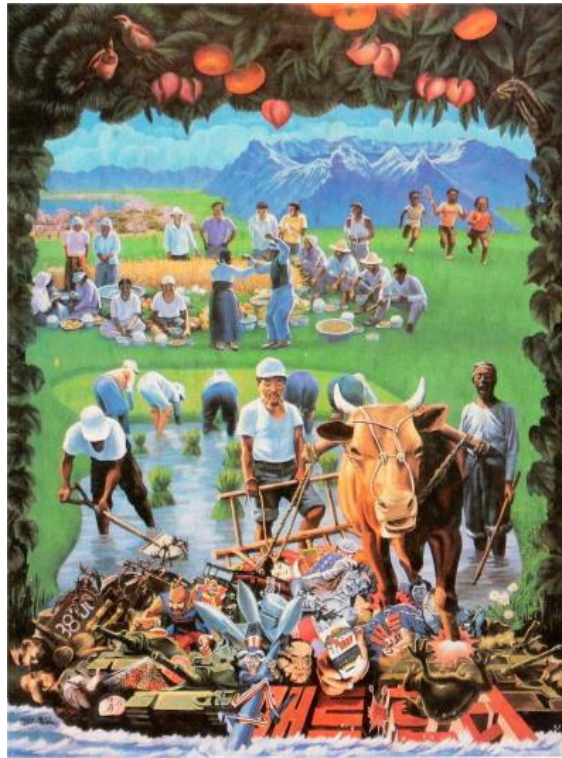


Figure 71 Shin Hak-Chul, *Rice Planting* (모내기), 1987, oil on canvas, 162.2x112.1cm. By kind permission of and © Shin Hak-Chul and Hakgojae Gallery, Seoul. Korean police arrested Shin because of violating the National Security Act (국가보안법) in 1989. Korean police thought Shin was glorifying the North Korean government due to following rationales: firstly, they presumed that Shin depicted North Korea (upper side) as a fertile and hopeful land and South Korea (lower side) as a painful and hopeless one; and, secondly, they interpreted that Shin drew a thatched house on upper-left side as a place where Kim Il-Sung, a leader of North Korea at the time, was born.

(젊은 시각- 내일への 제안전, 27 Nov 1990 – 30 Dec 1990) at the Seoul Arts Centre. He selected five curators and gave full authority in terms of artists' selection. Yoon let them reflect any contemporary artistic or aesthetic trends such as modernism, post-modernism, and *Minjoong Art*. Participating artists of *Minjoong Art* submitted their works, including a sarcastic stance of President Noh Tae-Woo. Later, board members of the Seoul Arts Centre, the MCT, and the Blue House requested anti-government artworks to be pulled down. Although Yoon and selected curators refused their request to hold the exhibition, figures including Minister of the MCT, chairman of the Seoul Arts Centre and Yoon were reprimanded by the Blue House. Yoon Beom-Mo (December 1990); Yoo Hong-Joon (Spring 1991: 410-412).

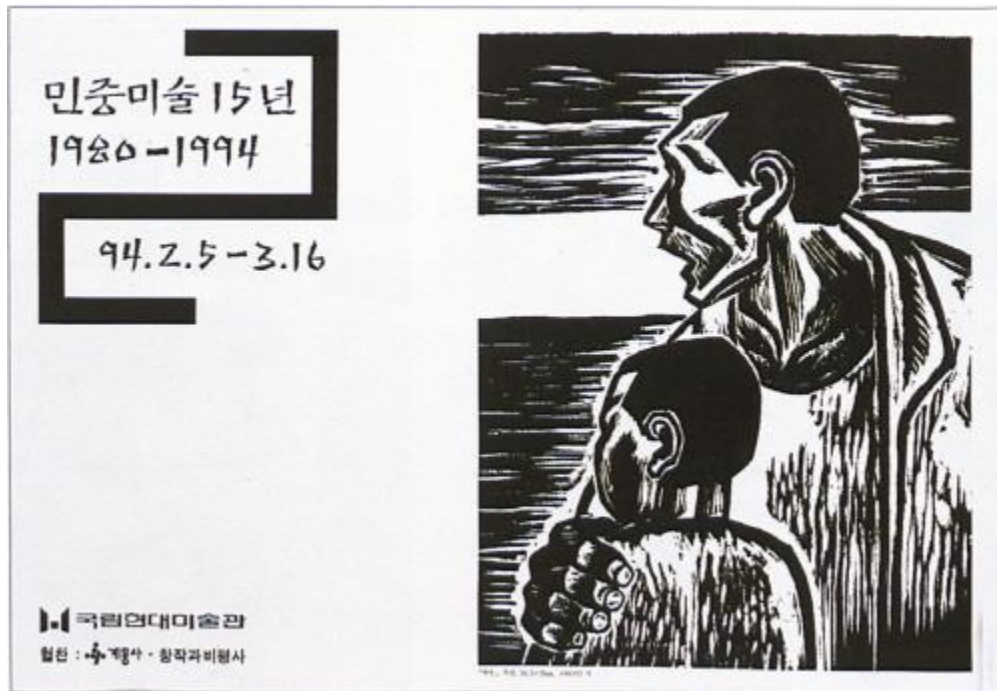


Figure 72 The official poster of exhibition *Minjoong Art, 15 Years* in 1994. A woodprint on the right is an image that was produced by Oh Yoon, *Father* (아버지), 1983, woodprint on paper. By kind permission of and © MMCA, Source: National Institute of Korean History.

When the NMCA hosted the exhibition *Minjoong Art, 15 Years* in 1994, there were controversies that it was either a ‘reconciliation (화해)’ with the government or a ‘paradoxical funeral’ (장례식) of the *Minjoong Art*.⁵²⁷ Setting aside these views, curating the exhibition meant that the museum planned for it to justify its resistance to authority. Hence, the museum became an autonomous champion of agents who fought for the people. The exhibition became a platform where notions

⁵²⁷ Choi Yeol mentioned that there were two viewpoints related to an idea of paradoxical funeral: first, it was a cynical stance how the *Minjoong Art* reconciled with the power despite an unfinished confrontation; and second, there were opinions that its movement, simply regarded as one of the chronological artistic trends, should come to an end. Choi Yeol (16 March 1994).

of ‘national’ and ‘*Minjoong*’ (民衆) met each other without a sense of incompatibility.⁵²⁸ Nearly 400 artworks were submitted by individuals or groups and filled 5,289m² (about 1,600 pyeong) of exhibition room. Genres of artworks such as painting, sculpture, engraving, photography, cartoon, mural painting, and *Geolgae-Geurim* (걸개그림, literally means a hanging picture) were representing the past and present of realistic images (Figure 73). They conveyed stories of how Koreans endured a troubled history and resisted the establishment.⁵²⁹ Therefore, images of the *Minjoong Art* were affiliated with critical realism which dramatically depicted both emotional distress and anxiety originating from social conditions. Because of its thematic vitality and dynamic artistic manners, visitors who saw the exhibition experienced another grand spectacle right after the *Whitney Biennial* in Seoul. Furthermore, they were surprised by dark-side images and the painful voices of a Korean society that had been strictly controlled.⁵³⁰ Since the military regimes manipulated public opinion with the aid of both public relation departments and the press to conceal defects such as labour repression, the public was unable to have opportunities to see the truth of what the dictatorial governments had done. In this vein, the exhibition visualised Korean contemporary political history.

⁵²⁸ Yang Gwon-Mo (24 February 1994: 9).

⁵²⁹ *Geolgae-Geurim* was designed for one of the propaganda art styles, which was used for democratic movement in the 1980s. Its movement took place at outdoor sites so that a group of demonstrators needed an effective and mobile artwork to expose their frustration. Although there were artistic media such as engraving and mural painting for any assemblies, *Geolgae-Geurim* had an artistic advantage, which effectively raised the vitality of protestors due to its gigantic scale (visibility) and movable characteristic. Its key criteria were clarity and simplicity in both thematic context and representational style. Choi Yeol (2009: 144-151).

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*



Figure 73 Choi Byeong-Soo et al, *Save Han-Yeol! (한열이를 살려내라!)*, 1987, Geolgae-Geurim (a hanging picture). By kind permission of and © Choi Byeong-Soo, Photograph: Bae Jong-Min, Source: Siminsori.com and Lee Han-Yeol Memorial Museum. The NMCA hung this artwork at the exhibition *Minjoong Art, 15 Years* in 1994.

Once more, exhibition rooms in the NMCA that accommodated artworks of *Minjoong Art* became an official site and recovered their artistic status. The exhibition was displayed in three rooms and classified into three periods to follow the historical development of *Minjoong Art*: its formation period (1980-1984) by a small group movement, expanding period (1985-1989) by a nationwide group movement (전국미술인조직 결성) such as the Korean People's Artists Association (KPAA, 민

죽미술협의회), and the investigation period (1990-1994) that focused on artistic achievement.⁵³¹ Director Lim proposed this exhibition plan to the KPAA, despite his status as a public figure in the mainstream of the Korean art scene.⁵³² Lim refused to accept the fact that *Minjoong Art* was regarded as a taboo subject, because it had taken a large role in Korean art.⁵³³ In this sense, Lim was interviewed about the significance of the exhibition:

Our art, that is to say our life, sense, thought, wisdom, sentiment, anguish, and enjoyment. It is our truthful and pure world as well as expression. [...] From this viewpoint, the museum planned this exhibition for not only highlighting our *Minjoong Art* and its path of development that we could not deny but also faith in finding a suitable position. Hope the *Minjoong Art* will be recognised as an achievement in the Korean art scene. [...] Art as an expressionistic activity would like us to see our life introspectively. Many people, however, have criticised and avoided the *Minjoong Art*. Occasionally, they had doubt about its ideology and purity. They also branded it as impure to suppress its disclosure to the public. What caused art that naturally reflected our disagreeable features of life to be concealed? What made them afraid and feel guilty to let it happen? As mentioned above, art is what makes our life wise and forward-looking. In this regard, its suppression might be the same as making an error.⁵³⁴

Lim did not interpret the *Minjoong Art* as a political artistic medium. He rather considered it as a

⁵³¹ Yang Gwon-Mo (24 February 1994: 9).

⁵³² Yim Beom (8 March 1994: 11).

⁵³³ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁴ Yang Gwon-Mo (24 February 1994: 9); Yim Beom (8 March 1994: 11); Cho Eun-Jeong (September 2002: 43-45).

part of phenomena that located the important position of Korean contemporary art.⁵³⁵ Indeed, he did not give a preference to the *Minjoong Art* compared to other artistic trends or activities. His concern was to let visitors interpret its veiled contexts from a neutral viewpoint, not a biased one that might distort its intended purpose. Similar to the *Whitney Biennial* in Seoul, the *Minjoong Art* exhibition also attracted a great number of visitors. Ostensibly, it was a successful cultural festival, where the NMCA, the government, and the *Minjoong Art* circles collaborated in opening the exhibition for the public. However, some unexpected troubles were encountered in the process of exhibition planning owing to political dissension among related agents. Although the exhibition initially planned for shedding new light on its outcome, based on selected artworks, the NMCA received resistance by artists from local areas, and the KPAA also caused a revision of curatorial practices that consequently reduced its quality.⁵³⁶ Setting aside these problematic issues, the exhibition marked a milestone as to how internal and external related agents of the exhibition planning committee collaborated with a director in a self-regulating attitude.

Notwithstanding unexpected variables, the museum showed professional ability to prove how curating an exhibition attracted people's attention and drew a social consensus to embrace a particular art trend, which had previously been regarded as a taboo.⁵³⁷

Conclusion

This chapter has explored how, under Director Lim, the NMCA realised its identity as a voice of contemporary thought both internationally and nationally. The museum established its identity, achieved social consensus, and introduced its self-awareness as a vibrant and open-minded cultural

⁵³⁵ Seong Woo-Jae (10 February 1994).

⁵³⁶ Yoon Cheol-Gyu (13 January 1994).

⁵³⁷ Choi Tae-Man (January-February 1994).

hub in the 1990s. Notwithstanding the inexperienced curatorial staff and the chronic bureaucracy, a single director allowed visitors to recognise the importance of the national art museum to the culture of South Korea.

If the authority that comes from ‘nation’ converted into the art field, a national art museum could be an offshoot that exerts its leverage in the social sphere.⁵³⁸ In this sense, the NMCA in Gwacheon was a platform as well as the institutional foundation that has converted political leverage into artistic values as a national museum. Indeed, there are negative viewpoints that the museum in Gwacheon could not perform its duties under the given conditions; rather, the museum has been a ‘puppet’ that was censored by the authorities so that it could not form a social consensus. The museum, however, played a pivotal role to vitalise the Korean art circle. In detail, arrangements, democratic government, a future-oriented director, and unprecedented exhibitions in Korean society were made, and they actively set the scene for museum-related agents to be faced with displaying the features of social reality through striking metamorphoses. Hence, the NMCA handed the right of interpreting not only images, but their embedded contexts, back to Koreans who had passively experienced censored museum cultures.

Under such circumstances, the NMCA had to keep pace with the trends of the times. Apart from Bassing’s interview above, a cardinal mission statement of the museum in Gwacheon since its establishment has been a phrase ‘a social education institution that contributes to foster people’s aesthetic sense and promote their participation.’⁵³⁹ It implied that no longer external, but internal development of the museum had become a high priority. If the museum had been an isolated agent that was controlled by the government prior to the inception of the NMCA in its new guise, it initiated communication among art-related agents (artists, art critics, and art dealers) and museum-goers. In other words, the museum envisioned a process of carrying forward a plan that pursued a global standard, not only as an international actor, but also as a public-centred art museum which

⁵³⁸ Korea Institute for Art and Cultural Policy (2014: 136).

⁵³⁹ The NMCA (1987: 215).

embraced the multi-layered artistic manners and alienated voices of social minorities. The NMCA, in this regard, experienced unprecedented challenges that were actively led by the internal experts.

It was not only the Korean art circle, but the NMCA, that reached a definitive moment to present a manifesto when the passionate debates of contemporary art in the postmodern era began. Elements, such as a new museum building, recruited curatorial staff, museum directors selected from art experts, international-scale but controversial exhibitions, played their roles successfully. However, the most important task for the museum was to inform regarding the implications of contemporary art. In this sense, the elements mentioned above were not the main actors. They rather acted as a trigger that induced visitors to ponder about issues - what caused the museum to be named the NMCA and in what ways the museum reflected features of social discourse and cultural diversity under the guise of contemporary art - since its relocation. Then, the museum recognised itself that it was time to review the past, namely, finding the origin of Korean modern art.

In 2002, the Deoksu Palace branch of the NMCA finally became the Deoksu Palace Art Museum and achieved its institutional independence.⁵⁴⁰ It was an organisational amendment of the MCT and its affiliated agencies that made it possible for the museum to rebrand its institutional identity. The MCT had a plan that the Deoksu art museum could be used as a medium-scale specialised space, which mainly accommodates Korean modern artworks. This decision was made due to the necessity of having another building of the NMCA in Seoul that guaranteed accessibility and attracted foreign visitors in order to expand the realm of the cultural cluster. Despite its identity that embeds a colonial memory, its new opening has been regarded as one of the notable achievements in the entire museum history. As a result, it was a meaningful sign that government agencies recognised the importance of recovering disconnected Korean art history. Setting aside the situation that consumers could embrace either modern or contemporary art, highlighting of

⁵⁴⁰ The Deoksu Palace Art Museum of the NMCA opened in 1998. Then, it got a new name so-called ‘The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea, and Deoksu Palace Art Museum’ (국립현대미술관 덕수궁미술관 분관) in 2002. This change meant that the MCST reorganised the Deoksu Palace Art Museum to rebrand it as an independent art institution, an affiliated body to the NMCA. Choi Yeol (2002: 19).

activities related to modern art provided momentum to how notions of the modern and contemporary could coexist. When the museum was renamed and used those terms in a phrase ‘modern and contemporary’, it signified the fact that Korean art was steering its way towards accepting both trends, not only linguistically, but socially as well. In a sense, the NMCA finally set its foundation and declared that it could decisively introduce both art trends globally as a grand manifesto.

Chapter Five

Becoming an executive agency

After the opening of the NMCA in Gwacheon, South Korea underwent a transformation to full democracy. A so-called ‘Local Self-Governing System’ (지방자치제), introduced in the 1990s, permitted the establishment of local public museums as part of the development of the country’s cultural infrastructure. These new museums, together with the national museums, offered a model based on public good which ran counter a group of museums sponsored by individuals or private enterprises, that were profit-driven.

The NMCA found itself in a rapidly changing society: the cultural sphere, the art circle, and the art market in South Korea changed drastically during the 1990s. The museum was required to perform as both a national museum and contemporary art centre, but received criticism from some in the art world, confused about the museum’s identity, for not taking on roles better suited to commercial galleries. The establishment of a group of competitive private art museums, commercial art galleries, and auction houses in that decade gave ‘contemporary art’ particular currency which required the museum to understand its nature and core values. The museum could no longer be said to be in control of its subject matter. And, as a government-affiliated institution, it could not easily reform its organisational status to meet the changing circumstances. It was this that resulted in the administrative concept of *executive agency* (책임운영기관) entering conversations about the NMCA’s management in the late 1990s.

This chapter considers the theoretical background to, and introduction of, this concept into South Korea’s administrative establishment. It will introduce on-going debates surrounding the process of ‘*agencification*’ together with its operational principles, outcomes, and limitations. Interview scripts and recorded minutes from the Korean art circle and National Assembly of the Republic of Korea (NAROK, 대한민국 국회의사당) will be analysed as well to discover previously hidden

developments. This analysis will be continued into the next chapter, as the debate evolves into one concerned with corporatisation or rather the establishment of a *special corporate body* (特殊法人, 특수법인) in 2009.⁵⁴¹

Reinventing government

After the Second World War, economic circumstances, such as market failure, government intervention in the economy, calls for a Keynesian welfare state, and wider social change, caused government infrastructures to expand significantly both in political leverage and organisational structure. A fashion for ‘big government’ swept across the globe.

However, the West experienced a series of recessions beginning in the 1970s, which brought low-growth, high-unemployment rates, high inflation and the spectre of stagnation.⁵⁴² In the 1980s, conservative governments blamed excessive government intervention in the market and the expansion of the welfare state and government bureaucracies. Government agencies and nationalised industries were blamed for inefficiencies and the misallocation of scarce resources.⁵⁴³

In the U.S., the Reagan administration pursued a policy of ‘small government’ or ‘*reinventing government*’ under the logic of efficiency. Later, the Clinton administration advanced this

⁵⁴¹ Not much has been discussed about how to translate this term into English. In the United Kingdom, terms such as Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) or Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisation (Quango, unofficial term) have been used in a similar way. However, in South Korea, the word ‘특수법인’ could be interpreted in a broad sense. The word implies that a corporate body was established by a special law to accomplish the public interests in accordance with national policies. The Korea Ministry of Government Legislation (정부입법지원센터), *Introduction: a Special Corporate Body* (n.d.); UK Parliament Website (영국국회홈페이지), *Quangos: Key Issues for the 2010 Parliament* (n.d.).

⁵⁴² De Vries (2010: 2).

⁵⁴³ Krueger (Summer 1990: 16-17).

campaign by actively pursuing ‘a government that works better and costs less’.⁵⁴⁴ There were attempts to reconceptualise traditional bureaucratic processes and systems: competition, slashing red tape, decentralising authority, empowering constituents, and so on.⁵⁴⁵ There was a refocusing on the quality and, particularly, the efficiency of public services.⁵⁴⁶

‘Competition’ became an increasingly important concept in the public sector worldwide. The wider context for this was the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and its efforts to lower global trade barriers which in turn forced governments to consider how to boost national competitiveness. The deregulation and contracting-out of governments’ roles followed this logic as a means to improve their managerial efficiency.⁵⁴⁷ Also, governments in advanced countries pushed forward administrative reforms to make themselves small and competitive in the global and information-oriented world. The accumulation of fiscal deficit in government sectors that accompanied the ‘Neo-liberalism’ that highlighted the importance of market contributed to the emergence of *New Public Management* (NPM).⁵⁴⁸

A majority of OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries adopted this market-based management approach to governance. NPM signifies a combination of principles such as competition, deregulation, customer-oriented *laissez-faire* ideology, and new

⁵⁴⁴ Osborne and Gaebler (1992: 16-20); Kettl (1998: 1-23).

⁵⁴⁵ Max Weber (1864-1920) was a pioneer who studied the theory of bureaucracy. He identified ideal types of public administration, and his model of bureaucracy coined the term ‘Weberian Bureaucracy’. Academics criticise his bureaucratic model that can cause several government failures and organisational inefficiency. Lee Moon-Soo (2008: 35-41).

⁵⁴⁶ Aberbach and Rockman (2000: 134); Greenwood et al., (2002: 8).

⁵⁴⁷ Gwon Oh-In (2003: 8).

⁵⁴⁸ New Managerialism (UK) and Entrepreneurial Government Model (US), both new administrative models on public sectors, emerged in the 1990s, and are representative models that adopted a competitive market mechanism and public-oriented approach to achieve fundamental administrative values such as managerial efficiency and responsiveness. Their movement coined the New Public Management (NPM) and put administrative reforms on the agendas of most OECD countries and other nations as well. Gruening (2001: 1-2).

management ideology that aim to increase efficiency and productivity in the public sector.⁵⁴⁹ It was this global administrative trend that led to the introduction of executive agency along with innovation in government structures.⁵⁵⁰

New Public Management

NPM institutes market principles and strengthens administrative autonomy in an attempt to develop entrepreneurial government. Its intention is to reduce the size and functional dependence of government and improve the degree of administrative management. At its core is a focus on customer-oriented administration.⁵⁵¹⁵⁵² ‘Entrepreneurial government’ aims to put innovation at the heart of its activities and which distributes resources, such as public services, so as to enhance managerial efficiency. It enables governments to adapt to any changes in socio-economic

⁵⁴⁹ Christopher Hood, a key academic expert who specialises in the study of executive government, and public-sector reform, mentioned that there are two original meanings of NPM: managerialism and the new institutional economics. The former signifies the application of private sector management methods to that of the public sector, while the latter means the introduction of incentive arrangements into that of public service provision mechanism. Hood (March 1991: 5-6).

⁵⁵⁰ Hood also addressed four administrative trends that caused the rise of NPM: i) attempts to slow down or reverse government growth regarding public spending and staffing; ii) the shift towards privatisation and quasi-privatisation and away from core government institutions, with renewed emphasis on ‘subsidiarity’ in service provision; iii) the development of automation, particularly in information technology in the production and distribution of public services; and iv) the development of a more international agenda, focused on general issues of public management, on top of the older tradition of individual country specialisms in public administration. *Ibid.*, (March 1991: 3).

⁵⁵¹ Generally, researchers have explored the assumptions of the public choice approach, that the principal-agent theory (ex: it is similar to the relationship between the proprietor of an enterprise and the CEO; applying this theory to the issue of executive agency, the ‘Open Position System’ could alleviate the moral hazard of a Chief Executive when the Minister in office performs as a principal) and transaction cost economics exert a decisive effect over institutional reforms of the NPM. *Ibid.*, (March 1991: 6); Kaboolian (May-June 1998: 190); Gwon Oh-In (2003: 16-21).

⁵⁵² Seo Pil-Eon (February 2002: 14).

circumstances.⁵⁵³ This entrepreneurial system performs using competitive and performance-oriented principles regardless of external conditions.⁵⁵⁴

The gist of NPM lies with principles that place competition in opposition to governance in the form of a monopolistic service provider. Adopting a customer-oriented market principle, it seeks the reduction of excessive internal regulation so as to realise performance-oriented administration (managerialism).⁵⁵⁵ Since the 1980s, Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the U.S, and a few Asian countries have implemented the NPM model.⁵⁵⁶ All saw it a means to deal with the financial crisis and the highly centralised hierarchical structure that were considered as functional aspects of a bureaucratic government in the era of Keynesian welfare states.⁵⁵⁷

The UK and U.S. actively accepted NPM as the basis of an ‘Anglo-Saxon’ reform agenda to reduce the scale of government. NPM also worked as an administrative driver for privatisation and deregulation under the name of *load shedding*.⁵⁵⁸ The UK brought in competitive principles to recover market-oriented economic order and improve governance efficiency in the Margaret Thatcher (1925-2013) era. UK policies, such as responsible management, separated government functions into policy and administration, and led to the adoption of the Citizen’s Charter in 1991 (a programme that was anchored in total quality and consumer satisfaction reforms), and a competitive open bid system for the allocation of government contracts.⁵⁵⁹ Hence, the essence of

⁵⁵³ Terry (May-June 1998: 197); Lynn (May-June 1998: 231-232).

⁵⁵⁴ Lee Hye-Hoon (Summer 1998: 21-22).

⁵⁵⁵ Ewan et al., (1996: 10-15); Ingraham (July-August 1997: 325-327); Terry (May-June 1998: 196); Yoon Byeong-Soo (June 2001: 26).

⁵⁵⁶ Peters and Pierre (eds) (2012: 7-8).

⁵⁵⁷ Galnoor et al., (September 1998: 393-394); Park Hee-Bong and Kim Sang-Muk (Winter 1998: 19).

⁵⁵⁸ Marlow (January 1991: 273); Osborne and Gaebler (1992: 85-86); Morgan and England (November-December 1998: 979-987).

⁵⁵⁹ Park Cheon-Oh et al., (1996: 259-260); Hood and Scott (September 1996: 331-332); Lam (June 1997: 406);

NPM could be summarised as follows: the separation of policy and administration followed by policy centralisation and management decentralisation.⁵⁶⁰

In this chapter, the way in which Whitehall initiated the system of executive agency, and how the South Korean government promoted the system, will be the main discussion. There are two reasons to support this: firstly, the UK started an administrative system called ‘executive agency’ and widely affected countries that adopted the Westminster system; and secondly, the Korean government accepted the British model of executive agency and developed a Korean version despite its superficial and rhetorical interpretation of ‘lesson-drawing / policy transfer’ from the UK.⁵⁶¹ These debates will shed a new light on the factors that contributed to the NMCA becoming an executive agency.

Executive agency in the UK: origin, concept and purpose

The system of executive agency is based in NPM theory and its origin can be traced back to the UK in the 1980s. The conceptual framework of executive agency lies a political desire to overcome the inefficiency of governance through the introduction of competition.⁵⁶² In the UK, New Managerialism, an international trend based upon New Right theory, imprinted or attuned an enterprise model based on market individualism to the core values of the public sector. As a means of structural reform, New Managerialism applied several strategies - privatisation, staff cutbacks, controlled fiscal expenditure, and deregulation - to its associated agencies.⁵⁶³ Executive agencies

Ingraham (July-August 1997: 327); Peters and Pierre (April 1998: 233).

⁵⁶⁰ Frederickson (May-June 1996: 266-267); Kamensky (May-June 1996: 248-252).

⁵⁶¹ Yoon Byeong-Soo (June 2001: 18-19); Stark (January 2002: 137-151).

⁵⁶² Kim Jae-Hoon (1999: 179).

⁵⁶³ Mascarenhas (July-August 1993, 321).

were established and operated in accordance with the Next Steps Programme (NSP) as a part of continual public reform that developed after the Thatcher era.⁵⁶⁴ As Ingraham notes, ‘NSP meant removing operation or service delivery agencies from the ministries in which they had been located.’⁵⁶⁵ And, Ingraham continues, ‘(in doing so) the government was creating single-purpose organisations whose productivity and effectiveness could easily be measured and monitored’.⁵⁶⁶

The main purpose of the NSP was to reform public services through productivity improvements and the modernisation of the civil service, thereby enforcing a new organisational type of government. When Margaret Thatcher, the leader of the Conservative Party from 1975 to 1990, came to power, her government initiated a series of political and economic schemes –that involved deregulation, flexible labour markets, privatisation of state-owned companies, and reducing the political leverage of trade unions. She appointed Sir Robin Ibbs (1926-2014) as a part-time director of the Efficiency Unit and her adviser, and requested that he carry out large-scale reviews of inefficiency and the underlying structural problems of government.⁵⁶⁷ According to his white paper, he reported that:

⁵⁶⁴ There is a group of OECD countries that have initiated the system of executive agency: UK (Executive Agencies), New Zealand (Crown Entities), Australia (Business Units and Statutory Authorities, Department of Administrative Services), Canada (Special Operating Agencies), and US (Performance-Based Organisations). Later, Japan (獨立行政法人) and South Korea (책임운영기관, the British Type of Korean Executive Agency) adopted the system. Kim Geun-Sei (2000: 13); Park Cheon-Oh et al., (2003: 5).

⁵⁶⁵ Ingraham (July-August 1997: 327).

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁷ After launching the Efficiency Unit, the Thatcher administration undertook the process of *Financial Management Initiative*. It was to relax budgetary control which was led by the Cabinet Office and authorise every executive to operate their agencies in a self-regulatory system within the limits of staff ceiling and operating budget. The MGA (The Ministry of Government Administration, 총무처) (1997: 13-14); Haddon (2012: 15-16).

‘[...] agencies should be established to carry out the executive functions of government within a policy and resources framework set by a department [...]’.⁵⁶⁸

Ibbs and Kate Jenkins, members of the Efficiency Unit team, claimed that there were too many blind spots for the government ministries to operate as an efficient single institution. Their solution was to initiate *structural disaggregation*. It was a plan that allowed agencies to implement the dichotomy of policy administration, and thereby carry forward the NSP. Therefore, the central government of the UK delegated far-reaching authority in areas of personnel, budget, and organisational management to Chief Executives. The restructuring process started in accordance with the NSP and had the purpose of establishing agencies to perform both policy and administration functions separately from their related departments.⁵⁶⁹ The essence of the NSP was simple. All the designated agency chief executives were deputed to perform their responsibilities as to quantified performance targets. Prior options such as privatisation, public corporatisation, and contracting out were required regarding the execution of government-initiated commercial functions. It was a strategy of organisational reform that adopted market principles to government sectors and allowed other sectors to be freed as executive agencies.⁵⁷⁰

The characteristics of the UK’s administrative reform can be summarised as follows: first, reform has been unaffected by the degree of reliability of the government ministries; second, preferential goals were set up to achieve small government and staff cutbacks were regarded as the collateral outcomes of administrative efficiency; third, the central government assures executive agencies of their autonomy under the condition of an autonomous accountability system which concentrates

⁵⁶⁸ Efficiency Unit (1988: 9); Oliver (Autumn 2001: 25-26).

⁵⁶⁹ In 1988, Whitehall announced the first list of 12 selected executive agencies including Her Majesty’s Stationery Office (HMSO), Passport Office, and Vehicle Inspectorate. Over 100 agencies had been created by 1995, and those numbers reached 127 in 2012. Nearly 78% of civil servants were in those agencies. Seo Pil-Eon (February 2002: 55-56); Gwon Oh-In (2003: 38).

⁵⁷⁰ Osborne and Plastrik (1997: 25); Seo Pil-Eon (February 2002: 55).

on managerial efficiency (*hiving-off*: avoiding the direct intervention of government); and fourth, the Cabinet Office under the Prime Minister's leadership took charge of administrative reform.⁵⁷¹ The term and concept of 'executive agency' originated in these circumstances:

Executive agencies were created to enable executive functions within government to be carried out by a well-defined business unit with a clear focus on delivering specified outputs within a framework of accountability to Ministers. [...] Executive agencies are governed by the Framework Documents, which set out in detail the division of responsibilities between the agency and sponsoring central government department. [...]⁵⁷²

The system of executive agency in the UK has been considered to be a successful model. It involved an elaborate plan along with various institutional measures, including bill arrangement in regard to financial management and preparation of trading funds that can compensate for defects in the efficiency of its implementation. However, Whitehall has not converted both the national museums and galleries into executive agencies. They have maintained the status of NDPB (Non-Departmental Public Bodies) due to their uniqueness as cultural organisations. They became, however, corporate bodies that have independent Boards of Trustees, and receive Government Grant in Aid directly from Parliament, not Whitehall.⁵⁷³

Based upon Ha Gye-Hoon's explanation, national galleries in the UK, thus, have the following characteristics: first, notwithstanding their status as national agencies, they receive a minimal amount of government intervention; second, they have a Board of Trustees which fulfils

⁵⁷¹ Gray (1994: 124); Park Hee-Bong and Kim Sang-Muk (Winter 1998: 25-26).

⁵⁷² Agencies and Public Bodies Team (2006: 2).

⁵⁷³ Ha Gye-Hoon (2004: 53).

autonomous policy-making and assumes responsibility for their performance; and third, staff are no longer government officials so that galleries can maintain flexibility in labour and financial management. Moreover, they recruit highly skilled curatorial experts and encourage academic activities which reinforce the professionalism of the museum's management.⁵⁷⁴

The introduction of executive agency in South Korea

From the late 1990s, not only other OECD countries, but also South Korea (which joined the OECD from 1996) displayed a growing interest in government reform. In this connection, the Ministry of Finance and Economy (재정경제부, MFE) demonstrated that South Korea was exposed to the structural vulnerability of the economy in the process of carrying forward economic development, and repetitively failed in the implementation of reforms to cope with the changing administrative environment.⁵⁷⁵ As a result, the number of insolvent major conglomerates reached a critical level, and international credibility dropped sharply. By 1997, South Korea faced a national crisis that was addressed by an 'IMF (International Monetary Fund) relief loan'. The incompetence and corruption of bureaucrats and a failure to achieve managerial transparency were seen as contributory factors.⁵⁷⁶ Kim Dae-Joong (金大中, the 15th President of South Korea, 1924-2009, served from 1998-2003), the first president from the opposition party, initiated far-reaching administrative reform to create a 'small, public-oriented, and efficient' government under the

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, (2004: 54).

⁵⁷⁵ The MFE and Korea Development Institute (한국개발연구원) (1998: 29).

⁵⁷⁶ Meanwhile, a few scholars abroad analysed that the emergence of the national crisis in South Korea was on account of currency upheavals rather than internal economic situations. Radelet and Jeffrey (November-December 1997: 46-48); Kim Gwon-Jip (December 2003: 31).

banner of ‘developing both democracy and market economy at the same time’. His administration put the country on course for a performance-based, but not control-based system.⁵⁷⁷

An MFE analysis located a number of issues with previous administration: continued unnecessary intrusions and regulations in regard to the private sector by the Korean government that held back the development of a market economy; government-business collusion, political corruption, seniority-based personal affairs, and fierce regulatory policies. In response, Kim’s administration formulated ten strategies which included the adoption of an ‘executive agency’ system.^{578,579}

The introduction of the Korean Executive Agency (KEA, 한국형 책임운영기관) in 1999 helped to strengthen competitiveness and raise the efficiency of public organisations under the guise of administrative reform. A performance-centred system, it allowed chief executives to exert their strong influence on personnel, coordination, and budget sectors, and guarantee their operational independence. Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA, 행정자치부, now: Ministry of the Interior and Safety [MOIS, 행정안전부, since July 2017]) provided a legal basis regarding the act on executive agency.

According to Article 2, Clause 1 of the Act on the ‘Establishment and Operation of Executive Agency’, the purpose of this Act is to plan for the increased efficiency of

⁵⁷⁷ The Job Analysis Task Force of the MGA (총무처직부분석기획단) (1997: 58-59); The MFE and Korea Development Institute (1998: 62-65).

⁵⁷⁸ Speaking of its English name, an appropriate phrase or expression for translation has not been accepted. From Seo Pil-Eon’s PhD dissertation, he classified the concept of ‘executive agency (책임운영기관)’ into several cases. Based on its purpose, both ‘Autonomous Agency’ and ‘Autonomous Operating Agency’ were discussed according to their managerial autonomy characteristic. Also, focusing on its specificity, the name of ‘Special Operating Organisations’ was mentioned. In this thesis, ‘Korean Executive Agency’ will be used. It has been widely accepted from a variety of councils in international organisations including the OECD. Seo Pil-Eon (February 2002: 100-101).

⁵⁷⁹ Targeted aims were: re-establishment of government role, promotion of government sectors, adoption of executive agency system, utilisation of IT technology, competency-based performance review system, the empowerment of authority and responsibility, empowerment to local areas, performance-based budgeting, transparent administration, and creation of brand new organisational culture. The MFE and Korea Development Institute (1998: 117-118).

administrative operations and qualitative improvement in administrative services by prescribing basic matters concerning the establishment and operation of responsible administrative agencies and special cases concerning the structure, personnel management, budgeting, accounting, etc. of responsible administrative agencies.⁵⁸⁰

This quotation encapsulates the core value of this organisational system. It shares a similar conceptual approach with the case of the UK with regard to policy and administration functions, which caused difficulty as to the flexible management and delivery of administrative services.⁵⁸¹ The fundamental aspect of enforcing executive agency is to retain characteristics of government agencies, while maintaining a higher degree of managerial autonomy and responsibility. It is a different organisational system compared to contracted-out, corporatised, and privatised agencies that work for profit and performance-based purposes.⁵⁸² Table 9 shows detailed information about the course of the KEA's transformation since then, and, Table 10, how it differs from other types of administrative agencies.

Year of Amendment (Year of Enforcement)	Key Details
Feb 1998	Introduction proposal: a policy of executive agency as one of the renovation plans regarding the government operation system
Jan 1999	Enactment: (no. 5711) The Act on the 'Establishment and Operation of Executive Agency'
Jan 2000	10 selected organisations initiated the test operation (National Medical Centre, National Theatre, Driver's License Agency, etc.)

⁵⁸⁰ The National Law Information Centre (국가법령정보센터) literally translated the word '책임운영기관' (Korean Executive Agency) into 'Responsible Administrative Agencies'. The MOI (Enforcement Date: 12 February 2016).


⁵⁸¹ Kim Yul and Kwon Young-Joo (2005: 575-576).

⁵⁸² Yoon Jong-Seol and Park Jong-Seon (2015: 33-34).

Mar 2002 (Mar 2002)	Reinforcement: independence and autonomy of executive agency
Dec 2004 (Jan 2006)	Classification: administrative and business-type institution Autonomy extension: operation of personnel affairs and budget issues
Dec 2005 (May 2006)	Autonomy reinforcement: operation of budget issue
Jan 2006	26 organisations including the NMCA selected as executive agencies
Dec 2008 (Apr 2009)	Providing grounds of establishment regarding an administrative-type executive agency: to apply a special account but not general one

Table 9 Key changes of the KEA⁵⁸³

Central Government			Public Institutions (Quango)			The Private Sector
Core Departments	Affiliated Organisations	Executive Agencies	Market-Type	Quasi Market-Type	Not Classified	



Degree of Publicness⁵⁸⁴

Table 10 Classification of the public organisations in South Korea⁵⁸⁵

In the late 1990s, MOGAHA benchmarked how the UK successfully developed and operated the system of executive agency.⁵⁸⁶ The Korean government enforced this British organisational system in detail, namely maintaining public aspects while managing on the basis of competition. The Ministry of Government Administration of South Korea announced the standards of selection to targeted organisations that might convert into executive agencies: those organisations, *inter alia*, that could provide administrative services, evaluate performance, and secure the entirety or portion

⁵⁸³ Sources: compiled from Park Seok-Hee (December 2007: 87); Kim Geun-Sei (2010: 13).

⁵⁸⁴ Antonsen and Jørgensen, researchers in public administration, define the term ‘publicness’ as ‘organisational attachment to public sector values’. Antonsen and Jørgensen (Summer 1997: 337).

⁵⁸⁵ Source: Jung Chang-Sung (September 2014: 185).

⁵⁸⁶ Seo Min-Soo (2011: 135).

of financial revenues,⁵⁸⁷ together with the principle of checks and balances, that balanced autonomy and responsibility. Executive agencies were still engaged, in part, with government-affiliated status, but were to hold relative operational autonomy in personnel management, budgeting, and accounting sectors instead of the General Administrative Agencies (GAA).⁵⁸⁸ Table 11 shows how the operation mode of the KEA system differs from that of GAA.

Classification	General Administrative Agency	Korean Executive Agency
Legal Basis	Government Organisation Act (GOA)	The Act on the ‘Establishment and Operation of Executive Agency’
Legal Base of Subordinate Units	Presidential Decree or Ministerial Decree on the GOA	a) Internal Regulations b) Basic Operating Regulations
Recruitment of the Head	Appointed within the Civil Service	Chief Executive (CE): Mainly Contracted from Outside
Fixed Number	Enacted by the Presidential Decree	a) Limitation of Total Fixed Number Enacted by the Presidential Decree b) Fixed Number per Positions Enacted by Ordinance of Prime Minister c) Chief Executive could Recruit Contract Government Officials within the Limit of Fixed Number
Authority over Personnel Affairs and	a) Authority: Minister b) Transfer: No Limitations	a) Authority: Chief Executive b) Transfer: Discuss with Chief Executive

⁵⁸⁷ Seo Pil-Eon (February 2002: 102); Gwon Oh-In (2003: 75).

⁵⁸⁸ According to the structure of the Korean government organisation system, there are four categories ranging from macro to micro scope: ‘National Administrative Agency (국가행정기관) - Central Administrative Organisation (중앙행정조직) - Government-affiliated Agency (부속기관) - Cultural Agency (문화기관)’. An executive agency is one of the government-affiliated types that belongs to the system of central administrative organisation. It performs the following functions: test, research, education, training, culture, medical, manufacture, and consultation. Currently, there are four cultural-type executive agencies that are affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism: National Theatre of Korea, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, National Audio Visual Information Service (한국정책방송원), and National Asian Culture Complex (국립아시아문화전당). Seo Min-Soo (2011: 135); Lee Gwang-Hoon and Park Sang-Cheol (2014: 44).

Transfers within its Body		
Staff Position	Government Official	Government Official
Budget and Accounting	General Accounts	General Accounts: administrative-type Special Accounts: business-type
Scope of the Contracted	Maximum 20% of Subordinate Directors	Maximum 30% of All Positions except Technical Posts (Maximum 50%)
Performance-Related Pay (PRP) Principles	By Government Guidance	By Ministerial Regulation
Revenue coming from its Sales	Not Expendable, belong to National Account	Expendable for the Agency Under the Condition of Government Guidance
Transferring Budget to Overspend Elsewhere within the Agency	a) On a Limited Base b) Applying Strict Rules	a) Deregulated b) Guarantees Autonomy
Carrying Forward the Budget (End Year Flexibility)	In case of Operating Costs within a Maximum 5% of Budget	In case of Operating Costs within a Maximum 20% of Budget
Limit and Responsibility	No Responsibility in regard to the Results of Operation	Impose Responsibility in regard to the Results of Operation

Table 11 Comparison: general administrative agency and Korean executive agency⁵⁸⁹

According to the table above, KEA features the following characteristics: first, it is run based upon the principle of ‘management by contract (계약에 의한 관리)’ to authorise managerial autonomy and impose responsibility; second, it is classified into either administrative (행정형) or business-type (기업형) organisations depending on the characteristics of tasks; third, any chief executive of KEA is selected by open competitive employment and a performance contracting system (term has been extended from 3 to 5 years); and finally, KEA could differentiate the management of budget and

⁵⁸⁹ Sources: compiled from Gwon Oh-In (2003: 22); Seon Jae-Gyu (2004: 9); Park Hee-Bong (2007: 233-253); The MOPAS (1 April 2009); The KCTI (2009: 241-243); Jung Chang-Sung (September 2014: 187).

accounting by using either general or special accounts (일반/특별회계) that run separately from related government departments.⁵⁹⁰ At first, the characteristics of KEA encouraged a positive outlook on the Kim Dae-Joong government in revitalising its administrative competitiveness under rapidly changing circumstances. Despite their radical and reformist ideas, however, a system of KEA did not go well as the Korean government expected.

In the UK, the Fulton Report (FR) published in 1968 provided the underpinnings for this move to executive agencies. It advised Whitehall as to how the organisation of the civil service could pursue managerial and administrative efficiency along with streamlining professional skills. It was acknowledged that administrators lacked skills and training. The civil service had become too rigid and numerous and thus inefficient. The FR proposed the definition of occupational groups and categories together with a simplified pay structure.⁵⁹¹ It also proposed an increased interest in professionalisation and specialisation, as well as management training.⁵⁹² Within this context, it introduced principles of ‘accountable management’:

According to those principles, the performance of individuals (or units) is measured as objectively as possible, and those individuals (or units) are then held responsible for tasks they have performed. Accountable management requires cost centres to be identified, and costs to be precisely allocated to the official in charge of each one.⁵⁹³

[...] whether there are areas of Civil Service Work that should be ‘hived off’ from the central government and entrusted to autonomous public boards or corporations. It has been

⁵⁹⁰ Kim Nan-Young (2008: 237); Seo Min-Soo (2011: 136); Yoon Jong-Seol and Park Jong-Seon (2015: 21).

⁵⁹¹ UK Civil Service, *The 1968 Fulton Report* (n.d.)

⁵⁹² Fulton (June 1968: 12).

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, (June 1968: 51-52).

put to us that accountable management is most effectively introduced when an activity is separately established outside any government department, and that this solution should be adopted for many executive activities, especially the provision of services to the community.⁵⁹⁴

The FR recommended the establishment of a new Civil Service Department that was composed of several units based upon categories to promote new management techniques and to exercise personnel responsibilities. More contact between the civil service and the rest of the community was also considered in order to avoid any secrecy in the administrative process and encourage much greater openness, so that any government-affiliated organisation could remain politically neutral.⁵⁹⁵ At that time, the concepts and features of ‘agencification’ became rooted, but it took the UK nearly 20 years to realise this structure in practice.⁵⁹⁶

In South Korea, the enforcement of KEA took less than two years from proposing to implementation of the bill, the so-called Act on the ‘Establishment and Operation of Executive Agency’. Many academics in administrative studies have criticised how the Korean government made what has been criticised as an irresponsible and impetuous decision.⁵⁹⁷ There were several contributing factors that were used to support this view. Firstly, South Korea experienced a financial crisis and was supervised by the IMF, so that public distrust of the Korean government and bureaucrats intensified. This was why the necessity of reform was supported by the Korean populace. Secondly, in-house government officials wanted the ability to resist reform from exterior agents. Officials who worked for selected executive agencies knew that the adoption of KEA might

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, (June 1968: 61); Parris (1969: 307).

⁵⁹⁵ Gwon Oh-In (2003: 76-77).

⁵⁹⁶ Ingraham (July-August 1997: 329); Park Hee-Bong and Kim Sang-Muk (Winter 1998: 29).

⁵⁹⁷ Park Hee-Bong and Kim Sang-Muk (Winter 1998: 31-32); Gwon Oh-In (2003: 77-78); Park Cheon-Oh et al., (2003: 8-10); Kim Gwon-Jip (December 2003: 37-40); Park Seok-Hee (December 2007: 87-89).

threaten their status. However, any government agencies or officials who were targets of restructuring or reorganisation could not resist change due to the prohibition of group action. Thirdly, the system of KEA was unfamiliar to the majority of people and even fewer experts. Since the conversion process progressed too rapidly, researchers did not have enough time to consider or study this thoroughly. After the promulgation of enforcement ordinance in July 1999, the MOGAHA initially gave just five months preparation period to the selected agencies.

The MOGAHA notified them of the enforcement guidelines of KEA in September 1999. This meant that selected agencies had less than three months until the implementation in January 2000.⁵⁹⁸ In this regard, groups within government agency, the academic circle, and mass media were unable to raise any objection to the introduction of KEA. Those government organisations targeted for reform revolted. Officials became pessimistic due to instability in their status, escalating anxiety increased workload, and a fear they might be transferred to another agency.⁵⁹⁹ Amongst those selected for this change were several cultural organisations and this caused a huge controversy. In 2000, for the first time, the National Theatre of Korea (NTOK, 국립극장) was selected for ‘agencification’ and various administrative reforms.⁶⁰⁰ The NMCA was one of a number of proposed executive agencies announced by MOGAHA in 2004. The proposal evoked considerable concern from various museum-related agents including the NMCA, NAROK, and the Korean art circle. In the next section, there will be a detailed analysis of how the museum has encountered the stages of political dilemma since then.

⁵⁹⁸ Seon Jae-Gyu (2004: 11).

⁵⁹⁹ Chung Gil-Won conducted a survey of about 170 people who worked for 25 targeted organisations that expected to become executive agencies. According to his findings, nearly 46% of interviewees were opposed to adopting KEA. They were afraid of changing their working environment, so that 49.7% of interviewees were planning on moving-out. Chung Gil-Won (1999: 80-82).

⁶⁰⁰ After the conversion, the NTOK is considered to be a successful case. Comparing the year of 1999 (before) and 2003 (after), all the indicators such as operating rate of theatre, performance (including rent task), number of attendance (including rent), total and net result of self-reliance ratio, and recovery rate of production cost increased significantly. Seon Jae-Gyu (2004: 23).

National art museum: road to autonomy and its political dilemma

In July 2004, the MOGAHA and Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT, 문화관광부), a parent ministry of the museum, made up of not only museum professionals but also members of a labour union of the museum, decided that 13 government agencies, including the NMCA, were to convert their operational system into an executive agency. The act on the ‘Establishment and Operation of Executive Agency’ including its enforcement decrees was announced through the NAROK. The announcement was unexpected by staff at the NMCA. The MOGAHA and the Ministry of Planning and Budget (MPB, 기획예산처), the main actors who came up with a plan of an executive agency, elucidated its validity to convince the museum and the Korean art circle:⁶⁰¹ the plan was a keynote of administrative policy for Kim Dae-Joong’s government that emphasised both autonomy and responsibility.

The MCT did not collect opinions from either the NMCA or the Korean art circle at the public hearings regarding the museum conversion.⁶⁰² Critics saw this as illogical and unilateral decision-making. The labour union in the NMCA formed a so-called ‘Committee of Countermeasures against the Conversion’ (책임운영기관 전환 반대대책위원회) and put forward their objections: first, the museum rejected the enforcement of executive agency with its emphasis on profitability and managerial efficiency; second, the museum expressed concern about maintaining policies of enhancement and care as to cultural enjoyment and public access for underprivileged people and the local community; and third, the museum disagreed with quantifying the degree of cultural values, which might lead to performance-oriented policies in the name of economic logic.⁶⁰³ This

⁶⁰¹ Kim Young-Jin (August 2004: 42-43).

⁶⁰² Choi Yeol (2009: 433).

⁶⁰³ Yang Ji-Yeon (2004: 39-41); The Labour Union of the NMCA (August 2008).

fierce opposition caused the MOGAHA and MCT to withdraw the law enforcing the change while amendments could be negotiated. The MCT then composed a Task Force to examine the agencification of cultural organisations. A year later, however, these two government agencies announced that they would carry forward the additional policies of executive agency without reporting any outcomes that the Task Force had produced.⁶⁰⁴

Few people in the art circle understood the implications of the enforcement of KEA. The MCT, however, made their stance clear that there was a thorough decision-making process with museum-related agents all year round. There was a closed-door administration between the MOGAHA and MCT excluding the selected agency, the NMCA. Interestingly, if the KEA also accepted the theory of ‘accountability according to performance’, the museum had to find a solution that satisfied both work efficiency and receiving an appropriation for its management.⁶⁰⁵ There are three keywords, ‘goal setting, assessment, and incentive’ that represent the core characteristics of KEA, therefore the evaluation of profitability would decide the outcomes of incentive, reverse-incentive, rehiring, and dismissal. The NMCA was to be evaluated based upon the achievement rate in regard to their performance. Basically, the formula to calculate one’s achievement rate was: achievement rate = (performance/aim) * 100, final grade= achievement rate * weighting – so the result would be converted into points.⁶⁰⁶ Then, the points would be classified into five levels such as A=100, B=90, etc.⁶⁰⁷ There was also a provision that if the selected executive agency showed the lowest figures on the comprehensive evaluation, the director or chief executive could be relieved of their post. In this regard, there were controversies between the museum and agencies that carried forward the conversion plan. Their rationales behind the scenes were varied and respectively supported by their institutional identity, political dynamics and viewpoints.

⁶⁰⁴ Choi Yeol (2009: 433).

⁶⁰⁵ Kim Young-Jin (August 2004: 43).

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Rationales: viewpoints from the NAROK, MOGAHA and MCT

After the MOGAHA selected ten test-operated agencies to be officially designated as one of the KEAs in 2000, the first annual report giving a comprehensive evaluation of KEA was published. The report evaluated their annual performance and gave an overview of what improvements should be made. The very first annual report in 2000 stated the following achievements: all selected agencies generally received a favourable evaluation in terms of achievement level compared with expected aim; second, each agency worked their best to increase revenues after the conversion so that they achieved a good result in the end; and third, since the selected executive agencies focused on public service to raise management performance, their business activities changed from the improvement of quantitative to qualitative aspects.⁶⁰⁸

Although the result only applied to the year 2000, Kim Dae-Joong's administration used it to justify the decision to apply the British system of executive agency to South Korea. Unfortunately, his government failed to realise that they chose reform strategies without thorough diagnosis and analysis in regard to the government sectors. The reforms had not sought a social consensus, and were thus not carried forward by a transparent and clear process. Indeed, all sorts of reform programmes that the Committee of Planning and Budget (기획예산위원회) presented were indiscriminately and simultaneously proposed.⁶⁰⁹ Debates arose regarding the appropriateness of the KEA, which criticised the selection of agencies, the autonomy of financial and personnel management, and the limited autonomy of these agencies.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁸ The Evaluation Committee of KEA affiliated to the MOGAHA (행정자치부 책임운영기관 평가위원회) (June 2006: 268-272).

⁶⁰⁹ The Committee of Planning and Budget (November 1998: 4); Park Hee-Bong and Kim Sang-Muk (Winter 1998: 31-32).

⁶¹⁰ Park Cheon-Oh et al., (2003: 8-10); Kim Gwon-Jip (December 2003: 37-40); Park Seok-Hee (December 2007:

Aside from more general doubts about KEA, there were specific issues for the affected cultural organisations, and particularly the NMCA. Here, MOGAHA and MCT responded to opposition from the museum. The MCT, for example, stated in response to an online civil complaint relating to the selection of the museum as an executive agency:

The grounds for selecting the NMCA to be an executive agency, as aforementioned in the press, are to improve public service and enhance administrative efficiency and autonomy. However, in terms of several concerns, we will discuss with the MOGAHA and work on the plan that considers the practical circumstances and distinct characteristics of national arts and cultural organisation.⁶¹¹

It was a lukewarm response. The MCT knew the limit of its institutional powers, but the early enforcement of museum conversion was expected on the assumption of optimistic projections. In connection with this, the MPB plays a pivotal role in the financial area, focused on budget savings rather than a management system. It implies that government agencies which took charge of conversion were interested in different purposes. Setting aside their grandiose aims related to improving public service, the plan of an executive agency was a makeshift policy for them to take a load off their administrative burden.

The internal force that works for the MOGAHA or MCT not only recognised its limits, but also suggested rationales to convince those concerned about the museum. It was the claimed success of converting NTOK that had made the NMCA the next target in 2004. According to the official announcements presented by the government agencies, they pointed out some basic concepts of executive agency and formed convincing rationales selecting the museum: first, the number of administrative staff in the museum was double the number of curators, and a competitive

87-89); Yoon Jong-Seol and Park Jong-Seon (2015: 134-137).

⁶¹¹ Seon Jae-Gyu (2004: 8).

organisational system was needed to make this team efficient; and, second, the level of customer satisfaction could be improved if the NMCA performed its duty as an administrative-type of executive agency.⁶¹² In this regard, the conversion process was expected to be a solution to administrative issues, such as enhancing efficiency and promising autonomy. By this time, a new president was elected and started his term: Noh Mu-Hyeon (盧武鉉, 1946-2009), the 16th President of South Korea, succeeded Kim Dae-Joong in 2002. Noh advocated national participation or ‘participative government (참여정부)’. His government continued several of the projects of the previous administration: first, rational reform to pursue transparent and efficient society; and second, liberal and interactive government to solve political conflicts. In particular, Noh stressed government principles in management such as transparency, decentralisation, and autonomy. In this regard, a drive for greater administrative efficiency might be regarded as a long-term plan, and thereby the government continued to apply the system of KEA despite previous issues.

The NMCA had changed director several times during this period, with Kim Yoon-Soo (金潤洙) taking up the position in 2003. With Kim’s arrival, the NMCA has conducted major reorganisation plans (Figure 74 and Table 12). Duties of acquisition, conservation, and exhibition planning were transferred to the curatorial office. The exhibition department was abolished, and the ‘Museum of Arts Policy Team’ (미술관정책과) was newly established. The team took charge of the museum’s policy field until 2007 when it was detached from the MCT as an independent policy area.⁶¹³ This change could be regarded as a preparation process while the MOGAHA and MCT carried forward the administrative reform of the museum. Adopting the plan of ‘executive agency’, the museum attempted to structure a customer satisfaction-centred system through a process of managerial reform.⁶¹⁴ Specifically, the slogan of ‘open museum’ that was similar to that of Noh Mu-Hyeon

⁶¹² The MOGAHA and the MPB (기획예산처, Ministry of Planning and Budget) (1999); Shin Gi-Nam (2000).

⁶¹³ Jang Yeop (2009: 113).

⁶¹⁴ Starting from 2003, not only the government, but also the museum highly emphasised the importance of popularisation of art culture. Budget in the educational field increased nearly 40% or 50% and educators were recruited for the first time. Moreover, education programmes were allocated to professionals such as re-educating curators, training educators and cultural administrators. The museum has also started to publish white papers and operation manuals. Lastly, the lottery fund was used for supporting public and private art museums’ curated exhibitions, and

administration's 'participative government' realigned all sorts of museum business fields to revolve around both visitors and outcomes.

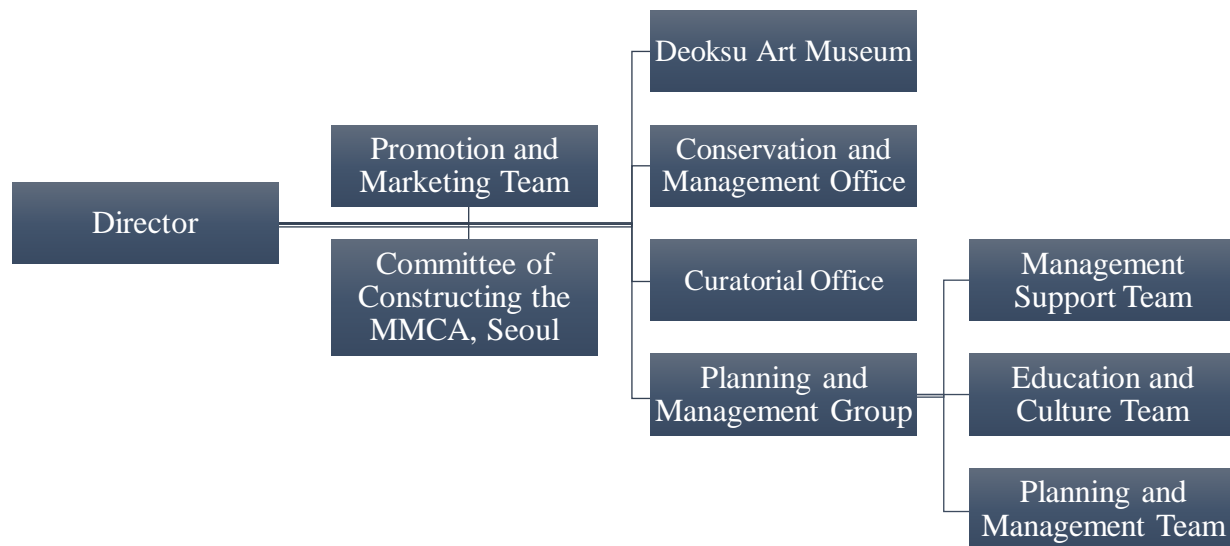


Figure 74 Organisational plan after the enforcement of executive agency in 2006⁶¹⁵

repair of the conservation offices. *Ibid.*, (2009: 114).

⁶¹⁵ The organisational plan of the museum has changed repeatedly since then. For instance, the Promotion and Marketing Team was abolished and transferred their duties to the Business Management Team (사업개발팀) from 2010. The NMCA (2006a: 82).

Classification	Details of Work
Planning and Management Team (기획총괄과)	Executive Agency, Evaluation of Museum Performance, Budget Planning, Management of 'Art Creative Studio', Personal Affairs, Organisation Plan, Innovation, Total Payroll Cost System (총액인건비제), etc.
Education and Culture Team (교육문화과)	Development and Management of Educational Programmes, Training Art Experts, Promoting Information-Oriented Museum, Cultural Events, Management of the 'Moving Art Museum'
Management Support Team (운영지원과)	Security, Official Licence and Seal, Document Management, Budget Execution, Management of National Properties and Goods
Curatorial Office (학예연구실)	Curated Exhibition Planning, Research and Investigation, Collection and Management of Fine Art Books and Archives, International Exchange
Conservation and Management Office (작품보존관리실)	a) Acquisition, Conservation, and Repair of Permanent Collection b) Management of Art Bank
Promotion and Marketing Team (홍보마케팅팀)	Promotion and Marketing of Museum, Explanation of Artworks, Management of Docents
Deoksu Palace Art Museum (덕수궁미술관)	Research, Investigation, Conservation, Collection, Exhibition, Education, and Promotion of Modern Art (artworks and archive)
Committee of Constructing the MMCA, Seoul (서울관 건립추진단)	Constructing the MMCA, Seoul (Comprehensive Plan)

Table 12 Details of work after the enforcement of executive agency (effective until 2012)⁶¹⁶

The NMCA was in a period of transition at that time and looked for a chance to rejuvenate. However, a conflict between the NMCA and government agencies in regard to the enforcement sprang up from several directions. Kim would become the first Chief Executive when the museum became an executive agency in 2006 but he would have to fight for an administrative system suited to the needs of a cultural institution. The following discussion between Kim and members of the

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, (2006a: 83-84).

NAROK and Chief Wi from the MCT recorded in the minutes of the annual inspection in 2004 illustrates this:⁶¹⁷

Choi Gu-Sik: Here is a question to the NMCA. Now the museum is carrying forward the plan of executive agency, is that right?

Director Kim: Yes, the MCT takes charge of the plan, and the MOGAHA does...

Choi: Then what is your personal viewpoint?

Kim: If our museum would like to be an executive agency, there are several enacted laws that should preferentially...

Choi: We do not have time for this. Please submit your response to this question in written form. Please explain to me briefly why the museum is trying to do this despite its unrealistic validity. The current fiscal self-reliance ratio of the museum is 3.5%. Although we doubled it, it is only 7% out of 100. I also would like you to offer me a plan how to recruit more curators, since there is only an 18.6% portion of them in the museum.

[...]

Lee Jae-Woong: The 'Culture and Arts' sector is one that requires quite an investment by comparison with its production. I would like to assess how much effort you have expended thus far. Firstly, Director Kim, there were inquiries posed by our members of the NAROK regarding the adoption of executive agency, right?

Kim: Yes, there were.

Lee: The museum does not want to be an executive agency, right?

Kim: If the government revises its related ordinances and regulations, the museum is

⁶¹⁷ The Culture and Tourism Committee of NAROK (국회 문화관광부위원회) (19 October 2004).

willing to accept the plan.

Lee: If the museum considers the plan under the condition of revising ordinances, it means the museum fails to meet the standard of requirements to establish an executive agency from the current legal point of view, right?

Kim: Our museum does not fall short of standards, rather they are contradictory to them. If the government revises related regulations, (then the museum will do it). I heard that the MOGAHA is currently reviewing them. To put it briefly, it is considering classifying the system of executive agency into administrative and business types. In this context, the MOGAHA is thinking of applying a general accounting law to the former and a special one to the latter.

Lee: Then, which type does the museum want?

Kim: We definitely would like to be the administrative type of executive agency operated by the general accounting law.

Lee: The Chief, Department of Arts?

Wi Ok-Hwan: Here.

Lee: The MCT positively considered this plan and transferred it to the MOGAHA, right?

Wi: In principle, we take a positive view, and thereby it needs detailed supplementation prior to the enforcement of executive agency.

Lee: What do you mean by that?

Wi: At this stage, the purpose of enforcement is to enhance the quality of public service, therefore our Ministry considers that the law as to the adoption of executive agency should compensate for issues such as self-regulating management of finance and personnel affairs in advance.

Lee: Is the museum ready for the conversion into an executive agency?

Wi: The plan needs systematic supplementation.

Lee: What kind of supplementation do you mean?

Wi: What the NMCA is concerned about is the drive for profit-centred managerial strategy. If the museum does this, then the quality of not only the public but also underprivileged service would worsen. In this sense, the institutional supplementation should be based on non-profit-centred value to improve the quality of public service.

Lee: Why has your Ministry, the MCT, designed a system of executive agency? Only to increase the opportunities for public service? For the government, what is the fundamental purpose in initiating the system?

Wi: The purpose is to enhance the quality of public service when we endow a managerial autonomy to the selected institution.

Lee: If we would like to do it, the government would be the main supporting agent and let selected organisations display their high-quality performance. The fundamental reason to initiate the executive agency was not to enhance the quality of public service. It was to take a load off the government's burden and reduce the size of organisations after the IMF financial crisis, wasn't it?

Wi: Not exactly.

Lee: Not exactly? Are you admitting that the reasons that I have above-mentioned were partly right?

Wi: Some organisations are selected as executive agencies to increase profitability, but we, the MCT, do not select because of the profitability issue.

Lee: Increasing profit is not a fundamental reason to choose them as executive agencies?

Wi: Yes.

Lee: Absolutely true?

Wi: Yes.

Lee: You are saying that all of the selected organisations could not promote their financial independence, and will receive government grants again? Then, why does the MCT still repetitively carry out the selection of executive agency?

Wi: It is why the MOGAHA and the MPB are reconsidering legislations to supplement the system according to the result of a five-year demonstration period.

Lee: I raised this issue to the Minister of MOGAHA at the Special Committee on Budgets and Accounts (예산결산특위), and he said there is no problem at all in implementing. He said organisations are voluntarily requesting themselves to be executive agencies, is this true?

Wi: We have not investigated other organisations. We listen to their opinions first and then share feedback. Then, we request an institutional supplement for necessary parts so that the museum can be an executive agency without any troubles.

[...]

Lee: If the purpose of selecting the NMCA as an executive agency is to improve public service, the plan should not be carried forward against the public fundamentally. Under the museum's present conditions, it should not be selected due to all aspects including low fiscal self-reliance ratio and characteristics of work. Clearly, you should not enforce the plan.

Wi: We will compensate for any related policies.

Kim: May I answer this question?

Chairperson Lee Mi-Gyeong: Yes, please.

Kim: I explained briefly at the beginning of today's inspection, but the museum is now at the important stage of change. There is a request from outside that the museum should be changed. I also found several problematic issues since I have worked here as an internal

agent. Simply, the museum has not reached the stage of rational and efficient management.

Lee: You mean if the museum does the streamlining of management, it could successfully operate as an administrative-type executive agency?

Kim: Hence, I think in this way. Abroad, when museums become independent corporate bodies, they receive a special fund to operate with.

Lee: If the museum becomes a corporate body, then what about monetary assistance from the government? Still necessary?

Kim: It is possible for us to operate without budget. However, this is impossible according to our national finance status. If we would like to maintain the present level, we need more than one trillion Won. It is an impossible thing.

Lee: Then, why are you saying that?

Kim: I mean the museum cannot do that at the moment. We need something to be changed.

Lee: I see.

Kim: The museum as an executive agency would be an intermediate stage to becoming a special corporate body.

[...]

Jeong Byung-Gook: I will ask one question, Director Kim. Even though you are carrying forward the plan of conversion into an executive agency, it was initiated as a part of restructuring after the IMF financial crisis. However, nowadays, since the system of executive agency has been classified into both administrative and financial types, the issue of how the museum could improve public service has become an emerging issue. In this regard, the museum needs autonomy. Hence, you are asking for the museum to be an executive agency on the conditions of having autonomy in personnel affairs and budget execution.

Kim: Yes, I am.

Jeong: But sensible people from art and culture sectors pose opposite views against the plan when the museum becomes a business type of executive agency. They argued that people in fine art would be in deep trouble. Please state your personal viewpoint clearly, also for the MCT. [...]

According to the recorded minutes, committee members of the annual parliamentary inspection kept asking about the validity and feasibility of converting the NMCA into an executive agency. Indeed, they took a neutral stance on its implementation, but revealed their unconvincing opinions to Director Kim and Chief Wi. The opinions were summarised in the following points:

1. Does improving the fiscal self-reliance ratio guarantee the upgrading of public service and managerial efficiency?
2. What are the supporting grounds for the MCT to carry out a plan of executive agency?
3. What contributing factors will place art-related agents in a difficult situation after the enforcement of executive agency?
4. Notwithstanding fierce opposition expressed by the internal workforce of the museum, what made Director Kim institute the system of executive agency with a conditional agreement?

Both Kim and Wi, respondents of the annual inspection in 2004, could not sufficiently answer those questions. Seemingly, they all recognised the conceptual ambiguity and incomplete scheme for adopting the executive agency model, thereby requiring related legislations to be supplemented before its implementation. For the NAROK, any rationales from them were needed to permit the adoption. Members of the NAROK could not accept the fact that the museum would like to change its administrative system, even if internal staffers of the museum could not reach an agreement to

decide their official position. Setting aside the debate of inspection, it is worthwhile to discuss the official report that was published by the MOGAHA and MPB on behalf of the Korean government in 1999. From the report, they sympathetically introduced the concept and purpose of executive agency to the public. Specifically, the report emphasised several imperatives for the museum:⁶¹⁸

1. In the meantime, former government has been unable to perform flexible management due to the mixture of policy / administration functions.
2. The UK considers executive agency as the most successful example of administrative reform in its entire history; the productivity of administrative agencies increased 3% every year.
3. Government officials have spent too much on minor paperwork; difficult to improve public service (customer-oriented management).
4. Executive agency is a type of government body, different from the system of privatisation, contract-out, and public enterprise. It is a system that cannot be privatised due to quasi-public characteristics.
5. It is not designed to reduce government support but increase the degree of responsibility.

Conclusion

Under the authoritarian regimes that had driven obsessive economic development since the 1960s, cultural agencies in South Korea were indiscriminately established to manifest the government's political authority. Within this system, and without fully understanding the nature and potential of a national art museum, the NMMA had remained an imperfect and troubled institution. Even

⁶¹⁸ The MOGAHA and the MPB (1999: 1-9).

though it claimed to be a public-oriented institution, only its scale as a national museum and passive stance on state-controlled cultural policies had been fully developed. Despite its limitations, this museum, and other national museums nationwide, were not obliged to ameliorate their organisational environment. Setting aside the parliamentary inspection, all they needed to follow were a set of directives and to hold exhibitions. In this way, their history and identity would remain untouched. As a consequence, proper museum activities towards the visitors were subordinated to bureaucratic decisions for a long time.

The institutional upheaval of the museum related to issues such as escaping from government intervention, or following museum trend of so-called globalisation were once considered to be remedies for resolving existing problems. The government, however, was the main agent that carried forward the debates on administrative reforms, both that of executive agency and, as will be discussed in the next chapter, special corporate body. The museum did not volunteer for conversion, but the political dynamics of the time demanded it. Conversion, indeed, offered an opportunity for the museum to change its obscure identity. The enforcement of both executive agency opened the door to autonomous act and an escape from subordination. It is why the government referred to cases in the UK or Japan to provide guidance for the museum. However, it turned out to be one of the government's window dressing (전시행정) strategies that the museum repetitively experienced. For the government, culture was of secondary interest. Museum-related agents began to tire of this vicious cycle and held onto the hope that the museum could be normalised in accordance with both international standards and expectations of operation. They anchored their hope on forming a social consensus to secure a paradigmatic role for the NMCA as a leader of museum culture in the 21st Century.

Chapter Six

Corporatisation and rebirth

The NMCA, the Korean art circle and insiders in the culture industry in South Korea were resistant to the conversion of the NMCA into an executive agency. Their objections were: first, cultural organisations should not expose themselves to the autonomy of market ideology when their value was as a public good; second, designating the museum as an executive agency would lead to the curtailment of government support; and third, the museum and the Korean art circle cast doubted that executive agency could strengthen the competitiveness of NMCA.⁶¹⁹

From a macroscopic point of view, the purpose of an executive agency was to pursue specialised and liberalised management. Since the museum has been criticised for the fact that government-led policies caused its outmoded operating system, lowering the degree of financial support from the government and focusing on managerial efficiency would seem to offer solutions to resolving a troubled past. Since the museum had experienced the corrupt practices that contributed to the institution's malfunction, flexibility and resilience were considered to be the prerequisite elements in the organisational design of the NMCA. Although museum-related agents were not satisfied with this reform, they agreed that a great deal of effort to remedy the negative effects of a bureaucratic management principle was urgently needed. If institutional measures were carefully taken into account concerning characteristics of the national art museum, then a system of executive agency might provide momentum to pursue a high degree of professionalism and responsiveness for the visitors.

⁶¹⁹ Kim Eun-Joo (13 July 2004).

This chapter examines the debates that followed the introduction of executive agency and the subsequent trend towards corporatisation. These debates exemplify the constantly unsettled nature of the museum's operation – an issue that has dogged it since 1969.

The problems of executive agency

Academics have postulated several key requirements that might make a success of the agencification of the NMCA: investing the director with full-scale discretionary power regarding personnel affairs and finance; legitimate performance indicators and measures suitable for the NMCA; arrangements for diversified fundraising, and rational financial support; and an organisation plan that improves professionalism.⁶²⁰ These requirements were to recognise the unique characteristics of the art museum. For instance, the fiscal self-reliance ratio of an art museum is lower than that of performing arts theatres. Between exhibition and performance, the former usually offers a lower admission fee. However, museums have duties to collect high-value artworks and house them for the next generation; national art museums then have to spend a large budget on purchasing and managing artworks. The museum as a national art institution, in particular, failed to make significant income. Its major source of income is the admission fee that captures approximately 3% of total income including government funding.⁶²¹ If performance indicators focused on the museum's fiscal self-reliance ratio then it would almost certainly be viewed as a failing institution when compared to other executive agencies.

Executive agencies, moreover, are required to devise a medium-term plan (two to three years) for business management within one month of receiving their missions. The plan is subdivided into year-on-year business plans including aims and performance indicators. However, a national art

⁶²⁰ Gwon Oh-In (2003: 206-207); Ha Gye-Hoon (2004: 49-50); Yang Ji-Yeon (2004: 39-44).

⁶²¹ According to the government statistics in 2014, the museum's income covered about 4.4% of annual budget. Kim Hui-Jung (13 May 2016: 3).

museum generally needs two to three years to plan, research, and progress a single curated exhibition. A museum director with a three-year contract would thus have difficulty working within the agency cycle, and could easily find him or herself being evaluated on the performance of a predecessor.⁶²² Choi Tae-Man and Choi Yeol, two distinguished academics, have expressed their concerns about this system:

Choi Tae-Man: One of the critical mistakes that the museum has made was switching research staff over to the position of contract employees. It means that even though curators need at least two or three years' time to display their ability in whichever jobs, such as exhibition planning or researching, basically, they need enough time to increase business adaptability. [...]⁶²³

Choi Yeol: (In terms of the job rotation system that the museum has adopted.) If there is a sense of flexibility, I think it is a positive change. [...] (See other cultural agencies that all posts are fixed and do no research.) The MMCA holds too many exhibitions. There is no time for rest. Suppose if curator A is thinking of planning a single exhibition between three and five years. Do you think it is feasible? In South Korea, it is just words without a plan. Curator A then sets up a plan to curate an exhibition within three years. In the interim, curator A does something else. At the end, curator A starts to prepare it in earnest within six months prior to its opening. The problem is, curator A should curate other exhibitions

⁶²² According to the Act on the Establishment and Operation of Responsible Administrative Agencies (enforcement date: 12 February 2016), a chief executive of agency could serve a position not to exceed five years, but not less than two years. In the case of the NMCA, a director's term in office is three years and able to extend the term.

⁶²³ Choi Tae-Man, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Choi's office, Gookmin University, 27 March 2015.

within six months of that time also. Hence, the quality of exhibitions becomes too low while curator A could not do any research activities. [...] ⁶²⁴

They felt it was necessary for the government not only to devise systematic plans to maintain the existing level of monetary support, but also adjust performance indicators in phases so that the museum can run itself in a stable state. However, if the museum failed to achieve the required performance level, then the director would assume the responsibility and could risk dismissal. Impractical projects to achieve visible and short-term results that might be demanded of the museum pose particular risks. The NMCA needed to diversify its income through fundraising, blockbuster exhibitions, raising the price of admission and perhaps hiring out space. These strategies are not without risks and could affect visitation and income negatively. ⁶²⁵ It was for these reasons that the museum requested to be an administrative type of executive agency due to its guarantee of steady financial support from the government support. It was necessary, so museum-related actors argued, for the NMCA to be recognised for its qualitative performance, rather than quantitatively; for the unique characteristics of what the art museum represents, and through the value added through research, exhibition, and collecting. This could be interpreted quite literally in the value added to artworks, as Kim In-Hye explained:

If someone asks what the most important keyword of the civil service in South Korea is, I would say the principle of ‘公平無私’ (공평무사), which literally means ‘fairness without personal feelings’. However, in some respects, it sounds like ‘no work’ or ‘no accident’ (meaning of both phrases derived from a word ‘無事’ which is pronounced the same as ‘無私’). This is why the principle is crucial. In this sense, a civil servant who served thirty years of term without accidents receives a good reputation. The culture of an art museum,

⁶²⁴ Choi Yeol, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Nowon Station, Seoul, 4 April 2015.

⁶²⁵ Kim Byeong-Seop et al., (2001: 77); Yang Ji-Yeon (2004: 42).

however, must not be fair. Do you have any idea what it means? Suppose if the museum pays a billion Won to purchase an artwork from one artist and 10 million Won to another, then there must be a process of ‘valuation’ (가치평가). Although both artists joined in the same exhibition, we cannot give them an equal amount of money to produce artworks. The important virtue of the curator is how to do valuing based upon unfairness. My point of view is that the most crucial role of what a curator does is ‘valuing’. I am always valuing for museum activities by myself. [...] Hence, virtues that the civil service and the museum have are different in opposite ways. I think this issue would be the most fundamental one that the museum should solve.⁶²⁶

The problem of there being too many administrative staff relative to the number of art professionals remains. The museum’s annual report in 2015 indicated that about two thirds of total staff comprised of officials in general service.⁶²⁷ As a consequence staff in the curatorial office have been unable to exert their influence and have felt burdened as a result of the imbalance of power. A director who was appointed by the open competitive employment system, a curator who has limited time to do their activities, and an art organisation without enough professionals can all be considered blind spots for a museum wishing to succeed as an executive agency.

Notwithstanding its unique organisational identity as a national art museum, both government agencies and the NMCA could not escape from the idea that the situation in South Korea was quite different when compared to other countries that have made every preparation for flexible management. Acting (Ryu) and former (Jung) curators of the museum have indicated what has caused the museum to be relatively ineffective and what improvements should have been made in the process of agencification:

⁶²⁶ Kim In-Hye, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Gwacheon branch of the MMCA, 5 March 2015.

⁶²⁷ In 2015, there were 63 officials in general service, 24 in research service, 6 in supervising, and 4 professional managers. The MMCA (2015: 11).

Ryu Ji-Yeon: We have learned from experience after the adoption of executive agency. It is the organisational culture that originated from the UK and Japan. Then, South Korea accepted foreign elements without consideration of the domestic situation in the process of agencification. [...] When the NMCA was converted into an executive agency in 2004, the government thought its conversion could be an initial stage of corporatisation that could make a huge profit. In this regard, if the museum just simply set itself up as a profit-centred institution, it could be turned into a successful example. However, it has not gone well thus far.⁶²⁸

Jung Joon-Mo: Thus, a system of executive agency was one of the achievements that both the government and the museum considered. However, no one had any idea how to evaluate, and what rationales are based upon the system. Speaking of evaluation standards in South Korea, how many visitors entering has been the most important one. Before the annual inspection, the museum just counts the numbers of visitors without any guideline. If the museum also counts who entered as a free admission, we could say the total number of visitors exceeds more than a million. Interestingly, the curatorial office does not count the number and has no idea about the current status. Then, they just raise figures all at once. [...] ⁶²⁹

Without having a thorough understanding of and preparation in implementing an executive agency system, the NMCA and its staff inevitably joined in the movement for administrative reform. Not many articles from the press have dealt with the issue; rather, academics and museum-related

⁶²⁸ Ryu Ji-Yeon, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Seoul branch of the MMCA, 7 February 2015.

⁶²⁹ Jung Joon-Mo, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Jung's Office, Anguk, Seoul, 7 March 2015.

agents revealed their concerns about how the museum could stand on its own without government support. Setting aside the internal affairs that current and former curators mentioned above, the government seemingly preferred the museum to be a profit-centred rather than public-oriented art institution. However, the NMCA is a public museum that is supported by taxpayers.⁶³⁰ If the museum is placed within the principle of market economy, its public-oriented projects risk becoming distorted.⁶³¹ However, this period of administrative reform soon reset its sights towards corporatisation and then privatisation. Its operating surgeons were not art experts, but government officials from behind closed-door politics.

Becoming a special corporate body

In March 2009, Bae Soon-Hoon (裴洵勳, 1943-), director of the NMCA between 2009 and 2011, had a press conference with a group of reporters to celebrate his first month in office.⁶³² The plan was to hear about his plans for the museum's management. He discussed such issues as museum globalisation and the operational strategies for a new building in Seoul. Bae also presented his views on corporatisation, in other words, *quangocratisation* (특수법인화), a project that was being carried forward by the Ministry of Public Administration and Security (행정안전부, MOPAS, 2008-2013).⁶³³ He cited the National Art Centre, Tokyo (国立新美術館), one of the *Independent*

⁶³⁰ Jung Joon-Mo (17 June 2008); Choi Byung-Sik (2009: 3-4).

⁶³¹ Koh Chung-Hwan (September 2004).

⁶³² Lee Young-Gyeong (24 March 2009).

⁶³³ Generally, the concept of 'Quango' originated from the US. Academics analysed that its meaning in the US was focused on 'non-governmental' and 'private sector', but changed when the term was introduced to the UK. The House of Commons defined the term as follows: 'For our purposes, we have defined as quangos all bodies responsible for developing, managing or delivering public services or policies, or for performing public functions, under governing bodies with a plural membership of wholly or largely appointed or self-appointing person'. Barker (1982: 219); UK Parliament Webpage, *Quangos: Key Issues for the 2010 Parliament* (n.d.); UK Parliament Webpage (21 March 2001); Ahn Byeong-Young et al., (2007: 142).

Administrative Institutions (독립행정법인, 獨立行政法人) in Japan, as an example of the failure of corporatisation, and expressed his opposition concerning transforming the NMCA into a special type of corporate body.⁶³⁴ Five months later, however, Shin Jae-Min (申載旻, 1958-), the first vice-minister of the MCST, officially announced to the public that the project of converting the museum into a *special corporate body* would be pursued.⁶³⁵ Director Bae then shifted his stance. He became an advocate. At the press conference that year, Shin gave several justifications:

Nowadays, there is no chance that any individuals or enterprises could donate 10 billion Won of money for the future of NMCA. [...] Speaking of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, it is a corporate body that receives only 15% of its annual budget from the city council, and the rest of it is supported by donation. Even the Louvre, a museum that works for the benefit of the public, is operated as a corporate body. [...] It is not due to inefficient accessibility, but to the museum collection that prevents visitors from going to the museum in Gwacheon. The NMCA cannot have a high-quality permanent collection due to its limited annual budget at present. Although the government has established and supported state-owned cultural organisations, they should develop by themselves after a period of time. There should be more donation activities supported from private sectors to increase their (international) influence.⁶³⁶

⁶³⁴ In the early 21st Century, Koizumi Junichiro (小泉純一郎, 1942-), the Prime Minister of Japan from 2001 to 2006, initiated the small government policy and his administration converted national museums into corporate bodies. His administration unilaterally requested them to be changed into profit-centred institutions. Also, their unique features as cultural organisations were not reflected in the process of corporatisation. In this regard, they competitively produced blockbuster exhibitions to get a positive evaluation. Similar to the case in South Korea, not much debate has been considered among museums and museum-related agents. As a result, national museums as corporate bodies in Japan have to cut back about 3% of administrative budget for five years. It implies that museums have to make a profit while the government reduces the amount of monetary support. The NMCA (2008: 3-36).

⁶³⁵ The MOPAS already prepared the promotion plan of corporatisation in regard to the NMCA in November 2008. Son Jeong-Mi (18 August 2009).

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*

When questioned, Shin repetitively mentioned the word ‘donation’. The NMCA had been heavily reliant upon the government for finances. With the limited annual budget allocated to the museum, spending on prerequisite items, such as acquisition and education programmes, had been restricted. Even with the museum now as an executive agency, the largest portion of the budget came from the government. The MCST claimed that corporatisation would bring about a ground-breaking change and solve the troublesome issue of the fiscal self-reliance ratio. It was imagined that direct support from the government would decrease and be made up for from revenue-making or donation. Shin’s comments, however, were rather more theoretical; he did not mention a cessation to, or large cuts in, government funding. At the NMCA, an institution bound together by existing customs and policies, the suggestion of another administrative plan caused the return of doubt. It is necessary here to recover the background story regarding the emergence of corporatisation and how this was viewed by museum-related agents.

Bae was the first director at the NMCA to come from a managerial position in industry. He had once been CEO of Daewoo Electronics (대우전자). Before he came to the museum, he served in the Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC, 정보통신부) and greatly contributed to the diffusion of a broadband network across the nation as a non-IT professional. Even though the method of appointing a museum director had been changed to the open position system, rumours suggested that Bae had been appointed in response to a secret request from the government to freshen up the museum environment. His CEO experience was considered useful in terms of transforming the museum into a customer and profit-oriented institution. His predecessor, Kim Yoon-Soo, retired from his position in disgrace due to following violations of regulations as a government official.⁶³⁷

⁶³⁷ During his term in office, he purchased an artwork named *Boîte-en-valise* (Box in a Suitcase), produced by Marcel Duchamp between 1935 and 1941. According to the press, Kim went against the following regulations: first, he did not fully investigate the proposed price and lay a bill to the commission of recommendation; and secondly, he spent \$623,000 for purchasing the artwork without approval from the commission. Lee Jeong-Guk (7 November 2008).

Bae became not only a museum director, but also a professional executive. It was felt that his expertise in management was needed and many museum-related actors anticipated his aggressive and innovative measures to improve the museum's systems. At the same time, the government announced to the public that there would be a new museum building in Seoul at the site of DSC. To balance this new investment, Bae had to promise several commitments and not least to improve fundraising. After his inauguration, he proposed two missions. The first was to attract five million visitors a year. The second was to make the NMCA into a world-class art museum. He sought to have a huge financial appropriation for the museum, at least five to six billion Won, in order to establish a stable foundation and global brand identity.⁶³⁸ Bae had not thought about the corporatisation process at the beginning of his term, but the mission statements mentioned above implied a change of stance. Not only Shin Jae-Min's interview, but also annual inspection by the NAROK revealed such movement in administrative reform. Here is a dialogue between Bae and one of the members from the NAROK:⁶³⁹

Cho Young-Taek: The bill of corporatisation, is it under consideration?

Bae: Yes, it is.

Cho: What is the reason for that? Since the museum has been a government-affiliated institution, what is the purpose of converting the museum into a corporate body?

Bae: It is a consideration in principle to measure the merits and demerits of corporatisation. Because we are thinking of the enlargement.

Cho: Oh, just gauging at a research level, right?

Bae: Yes.

⁶³⁸ Kim Bok-Gi (June 2009).

⁶³⁹ The Culture, Tourism, Sports, and Communication Committee of NAROK (국회 문화체육관광통신위원회) (28 April 2009).

Cho: You gave thought to carrying forward corporatisation and considered its plan, no?

Bae: Nothing has been decided yet.

Cho: As you may know, this project needs a lot of money, doesn't it?

Bae: It does.

Cho: [...] Hence, the concept of corporatisation looks good from the viewpoint of securing managerial autonomy, but you need to pay close attention to issues such as fundraising.

Bae: I see.

Bae was at the time responding to the arrival of yet another president: Lee Myung-Bak (李明博, 1941-) who performed as the 17th President of South Korea from 2008 to 2013. As Im Seung-Bin analyses, Lee's government prioritised the following tasks: budget reduction, governmental organisation, corporatisation of public enterprises for efficiency, innovation in administrative regulation, and establishing law and order.⁶⁴⁰ His goal was small and competent government.⁶⁴¹

On this account, several government departments were either integrated or abolished to secure managerial efficiency. The MCT, for instance, took over the Government Information Agency (GIA, 국정홍보처) and the function of Digital Contents from the MIC so that its name changed to the MCST in 2008.⁶⁴² Cultural policies of this government were also based on the principles of practicality and efficiency. The primary aim was to reduce the degree of dependence upon the government by minimising direct support and expanding indirect support (e.g. *ex post facto* support) from private sources. This was seen as a long-term strategy to promote the viability and

⁶⁴⁰ Im Seung-Bin (2008: 1-2).

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴² Won Yong-Jin (June 2009: 347-348).

sustainability of cultural organisations.⁶⁴³ In this regard, cultural organisations, such as Sejong Arts Centre (세종문화회관, 1999), Seoul Arts Centre (2000), Gyeong-Gi Culture Arts Centre (경기도 문화의 전당, 2004), and Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra (서울시향, 2005) each became corporate bodies.⁶⁴⁴ It was predicted that the government might also select the NMCA as a target of corporatisation so as to break down the rigid and bureaucratic museum management system. However, it did not progress as expected. What narratives and controversies then emerged in regard to the issue of corporatisation?

Corporatisation of the national art museum

It is getting difficult to locate criteria for distinguishing between public and private sectors; the boundaries between them have become blurred.⁶⁴⁵ With corporatisation, in contrast to privatisation, the government retains ownership while a private agent performs the production of service.⁶⁴⁶ A ‘special corporate body’ is one that is specified by special law. Interestingly, it should be supervised by the government and provided with monetary support.⁶⁴⁷ If the NMCA was to convert from an executive agency to a corporate body, then its management principle would also switch to market ideology. Since the NMCA has not fully operated as an executive agency owing to the administrator-centred museum policies after its enforcement, a system of corporatisation has been seen as a potential alternative to deal with remaining problems. Even if the museum made this change in its administrative status, the government would still have the

⁶⁴³ Park Gwang-Mu (2009: 169-174); Won Do-Yeon (2014: 221).

⁶⁴⁴ Han Seung-Jun (December 2011: 306).

⁶⁴⁵ Gwon Oh-Seong et al., (2009: 233).

⁶⁴⁶ Han Seung-Jun (December 2011: 307).

⁶⁴⁷ The Korea Ministry of Government Legislation, *Introduction: a Special Corporate Body* (n.d.).

rights of budget compilation and operation of organisation.⁶⁴⁸ Table 13 shows a comparison among public service providers (see below).

Categories	Government Institution (Includes Executive Agency)	Public Institution (UK: NDPB or Quango) ⁶⁴⁹	Private Institution
Ownership	Government (MOPAS)	a) Government b) Government + Private (Designated by the Ministry of Strategy and Finance)	Private: Privatisation of Ownership
Legal Basis	Government Organisation Act (GOA)	Individual Law (개별법) Public Institution Law	Civil Law
Staff Position	Government Official	Civilian (Quasi- Government Official)	Civilian
Finance	Revenue and Expenditure: National Budget	Replenishing from the Private Sector, Government: Make Up for Shortage	Revenue and Expenditure: Replenishing from the Private Sector
Autonomy (Personnel Affairs and Organisation)	Applying Strict Rules	Self-Regulating	No Control (Deregulated)

⁶⁴⁸ Cho Seon-Ryung (Spring 2010: 240-242).

⁶⁴⁹ According to the House of Commons, only the official NDPBs, listed annually in *Public Bodies*, are genuine ‘quangos’. The NDPB is “a body which has a role in the processes of national government, but is not a government department or part of one, and which accordingly operates to a greater or lesser extent at arm’s length from Ministers”. Sometimes a word ‘quango’ covers a wider range of organisations including executive agencies or non-ministerial departments. UK Parliament Webpage, *Quangos: Key Issues for the 2010 Parliament* (n.d.); UK Parliament Webpage (21 March 2001); Jung Chang-Sung (September 2014: 31-32).

Responsibility	a) Responsibility: Mainly Chief Executive b) Staff: Guarantees Position c) Subsist: despite any loss d) Not Responsible for Management Announcement	a) No Guarantee: Staff Position b) No Bankruptcy: despite any loss c) Responsible for Management Announcement	a) No Guarantee: Staff Position b) Bankruptcy: when any loss occurs c) No Government Intervention
Publicness	Backup: Market Failure Fields (Providing Public Goods)	Partial Backup: Market Failure Fields (Plans Needed: Necessary for Maintaining Publicness)	Focuses on: the Business Profit more than Publicness

Table 13 Comparison among public service providers: government, public, and private institution⁶⁵⁰

On 4 June 2010, Yoo In-Chon (柳仁村, 1951-), the Minister of MCST, made the announced an intention to introduce a ‘bill of Establishment and Operation of National Museum of Art’ (국립미술관 설립 및 운영에 관한 법률). Its purpose was to improve organisational and managerial autonomy and promote nationwide public services through the diversification of its operating finances.⁶⁵¹ Table 14 shows the key details of the bill (resubmitted version in 2012):

Classification	Details
Organisation character (article 3)	a special corporate body
Mission (article 6)	collection, administration, conservation, exhibition, research, education, publication, exchange programmes with other museums, management of

⁶⁵⁰ Sources: compiled from Im Seung-Bin (2008: 3); Park Yong-Seong (2010: 30).

⁶⁵¹ Its progress: the legislative bill of corporatisation was submitted at the 18th of NAROK (9 November 2010), but it was automatically abolished after the closure of the National Assembly. Its resubmission took place at the 19th of NAROK (6 December 2012). Currently, it has been pending at the Culture and Education Committee.

	museum cooperative network, and revenue-making business ⁶⁵²
Organising board members and installation of board of committee (article 7-9)	chairman of the board (standing member of committee/three-year term) including more than 7 or less than 11 members of Board of Trustees and 1 auditor
Contracting out of national property (article 16)	The administration of following national properties are enabled to contract out: 1) national state-owned cultural properties managed by the NMCA, 2) national state-owned artworks managed by the NMCA.
Supervising authority of the MCST (article 18-20)	approval of changing the articles of association, reports on annual business plan and settling the accounts, evaluation on its operation, inspection on missions, finances, and inventory status
Enforcement date (supplementary provision 1)	one year after its proclamation, and enforcement
Preparation of establishment (supplementary provision 2)	installation of establishment committee (less than 5 people, chairman is the 1st vice-minister of MCST)
Exemption on recruitment (supplementary provision 8)	giving an option for museum staffers to be government officials

Table 14 Key details of transforming the NMCA into a special corporate body⁶⁵³

The submitted legislative bill was widely considered both unconvincing and impetuous. Importantly, little debate had taken place between the museum and MCST regarding this institutional conversion since the first submission of the bill took place. A month after Yoo's pre-announcement of the legislation, the MCST held a public hearing on this issue.⁶⁵⁴ Each selected

⁶⁵² According to article 6, its plan must be subject to the consideration of publicness and social responsibility related to museum management.

⁶⁵³ Source: The MCST (4 June 2012).

⁶⁵⁴ The MCST already held two conferences in 2009 consecutively. The first one was on 13 November 2009, and second one on 24 November 2009. In the first conference, delegates from the art circle mainly addressed their opinions whether to agree or not in regard to the corporatisation. In the second conference, Choi Byeong-Sik and Yoo Jin-Sang, keynote speakers of the conference, introduced the concept, background, controversies, and prerequisites regarding the adoption of corporatisation. Yoo Jin-Sang (2009: 23-25); Cho Seon-Ryung (Spring 2010: 241).

Panels	Key Remarks (expected results or conditions after conversion)
Park Soon-Tae (Director of Arts Policy Division in the MCST)	1) the museum could secure its operational autonomy after its corporatisation ⁶⁵⁵ 2) exemptions from all the administrative laws 3) the government will not reduce the degree of monetary support
Yoo Byung-Chae (Chief of Arts Policy Division in the MCST)	1) the museum could establish additional branches after the Board of Trustees came to a decision (The Board of Trustees: the top legislative organ) 2) organisational system: initially - adopt a main/annex model such as the Tate, UK, later - adopt an independent organisation model such as the Smithsonian, US 3) option to select: either a government official or employee 4) diversification of financing: to stabilise profit-making 5) costs of labour, business and facilities will be provided (by the government) 6) promote donation and profit-making activities: to enhance both the quality and competitiveness of museum service
Kang Seung-Wan (Senior Curator of the NMCA)	1) acceptance of wide-ranging opinions from the Korean art circle is needed 2) the formation of social consensus is needed whether to be accepted or not 3) legal protection in regard to government's assistance is needed 4) a tax favour regarding contribution/vitalisation of artwork donation is needed 5) designated contribution policy from the ARKO to secure donation is needed
Kim Eun-Young (A Board of Director from the Korean Curators Association)	1) related bills are needed for: a) status and roles of the director as a chairman of the Board of Trustees in a special corporate body, b) possibility of fundraising through profit-making business, c) providing funds and collection of donations 2) social consensus and long-term roadmap regarding future visions and policies of the national art museum are needed: the MCST, the NMCA, museum experts, art-related agents, and public should cooperate
Seo Seong-Rok (Professor of An-Dong Univ.)	1) a thorough explanation of this conversion process is needed 2) establish a responsible department to stabilise the finance issue 3) key figures from all social standings are needed to form the Board of Trustees
Yang Hyun-Mi (Professor of Sang- Myeong Univ.)	1) support system is needed: stabilise the revenue structure 2) museum donation that should be admitted as a special case donation to expand the scale of fundraising; tax favour after donation of artwork is needed 3) circulation of posts (순환보직) should be changed to increase managerial efficiency
Lee Myung-Ok (Vice-president of the Korean Private Art Museum Association)	1) corporatisation is not a solution to tackle existing troubles 2) no countermeasures: the inadequacy of museum cooperative network (협력망) 3) balance between publicness and commercialism cannot be guaranteed 4) coercive measure: let staffers decide whether a government official or employee

Choi Byung-Sik (Professor of Gyeong- Hee Univ.)	1) a long-term roadmap is needed: too early for the museum to be a corporate body 2) fundraising structure is needed: no explanation received from the government yet 3) museum director should not hold a dual role as a chairman of the Board of Trustees 4) article of ‘supervising, assistance, and coordination of museum business for other art museums’: what are rationales? the reconsideration of its validity is needed
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Table 15 Minutes of the hearing on the bill of ‘Establishment and Operation of the National Museum of Art’⁶⁵⁶

representative presented their opinions, but their presentations were inconclusive and obscured in many ways, not least because their primary concerns were to gauge the pros and cons of the legislative bill and not to a detailed analysis of its ripple effect on the museum’s identity. At the hearing, the MCST put forward the positive implications of the conversion in an attempt to persuade the museum’s staff and stakeholders. A group of art and museum-related figures, in contrast, focused on more fundamental tasks such as how to devise a long-term plan for stabilising this system and developing fundraising activities. For these presenters, successfully performing these tasks could lead to ensuring the feasibility of corporatisation. Table 15 gives abstracted précised version of the minutes of the meeting.

The public hearing raised a number of questions. First, what is the main aim and purpose of corporatisation? Second, what contributing factors made the government agencies carry forward corporatisation, and what political narratives are embedded in it? Third, to what extent can the museum be transferred from an executive agency to a special corporate body? No one in this meeting gave firm answers to these questions. Although there were delegates from the MCST, they mainly focused on persuasion to justify their decision-making. Meanwhile, academics from the universities were explaining the essential prerequisites under the condition of corporatisation.

⁶⁵⁵ Bae Soon-Hoon mentioned that if the corporatisation goes well, the museum could have managerial autonomy of personal affairs independently from the MCST. Sim Sang-Yong (December 2011: 190).

⁶⁵⁶ Source: The Korean Art Museum Association (한국사립미술관협회) (July 2010).

Contributions from Seo, Yang, and Choi have something in common: they all stressed the importance of both fundraising and systematic structure. Notwithstanding that stable monetary support from the government would be guaranteed, they were suspicious about the feasibility of the museum enhancing its financial self-reliance ratio. As with the proposal for executive agency, they asked how such an ill-prepared plan could be proposed without a social consensus.

The delegates from the museum discussed much more practical agendas. Kang, a senior curator of the NMCA, expressed her concerns in detail. Her opinions could be regarded reflecting the position of museum staff more generally. She pointed to detailed institutional, financial, and qualitative aspects relating to the corporatisation. She wanted to minimise the risks and ensure a predictable outcome from the administrative reform. Prerequisites, such as legal protection and tax favour, disclose the fact that the NMCA already had managerial difficulties after the abrupt enforcement of executive agency. The museum needed a guarantee of ‘safety devices’ for the reform despite the repetitive and forced nature of the drive forward. All of the opinions presented at the public hearing were symbolically for and against the issue. In the next section, there will be a detailed analysis to discover the rationales and controversies.

Rationales and controversies of corporatisation

Since the announcement of the bill, the required measures to change the museum to a special corporate body have not taken place, and the bill remains pending at the NAROK.⁶⁵⁷ Notably, the debates on corporatisation issues were concentrated in the period from 2009 to 2011 when Lee’s administration exerted its influence. Sim Sang-Yong, a renowned art critic who has studied the issue, posed logical rationales to discover the background behind how the government initiated a plan of corporatisation. Sim suggested the following: first, the illusion of making the NMCA a

⁶⁵⁷ The bill has been reconsidered since 2015 after its term of pending expired. Kim Joong-Bae (24 August 2015).

global museum; second, a big-budget museum as a form of enterprise and orientation towards a small government; and finally, empowered private sectors, like the board of directors.⁶⁵⁸

In particular, since the Korean government has recognised the importance of cultural business, making a world-class museum drew attention, and the new Seoul incarnation of the NMCA was positioned as the highest priority among government projects. Sim also strongly argued that the government was captured by an illusion and carried forward the plan despite its massive budget expenditure. In this way, the government finds that corporatisation could be the right answer to solving the issue.⁶⁵⁹ On the other hand, Sim criticised excuses from the government that the corporatisation could not offer the chance for the museum to seek its managerial flexibility.⁶⁶⁰ Even the NMCA was attracted by the idea of ‘small government’ as it would enable greater institutional autonomy. Sim, however, predicted that government instability at the time could lead to mistakes, since the government has not fully investigated the potential side effects of its enforcement.⁶⁶¹

In the end, Sim focused on the roles of the board of directors in the museum. Ostensibly, its roles were thought to be crucial in many ways. Sim anticipated that if the board performed the role without any political, ideological, and aesthetical bias, then there would be a chance to revitalise museum activities in the near future: elevate professionalism in curatorial fields, introduce fair evaluation processes for budget expansion, facilitate artwork acquisition, and improve the organisational system. However, there were doubts regarding how a newly established board of directors could have autonomy without any requests from the government, which has exercised its absolute authority in the past.⁶⁶² Because the MCST still has the power to appoint not only the

⁶⁵⁸ Sim Sang-Yong (2012: 121-127).

⁶⁵⁹ Seo Seong-Rok (Fall 2010: 58).

⁶⁶⁰ Sim Sang-Yong (2012: 144-145).

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, (2012: 147-148).

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, (2012: 149-150).

director, but also the chairman of the board, it is uncertain that the board can become fully autonomous.⁶⁶³ Choi Yeol, another influential art critic, stressed the following:

Even though the museum becomes a private institution that marks over 50% of fiscal self-reliance ratio, there are no organisations that are unrestricted by the government's role in budget allocations and supervising in this nation. Whenever there are changes of Ministry, Prime Minister, and President, they will seize the board of directors and replace the chief executive as a legal procedure. This has lasted for a long time.⁶⁶⁴

As Sim argued, external influence could also come from the private sector if the museum became overly dependent on a private revenue stream. This, too, could result in burdensome requests to the board that might harm the museum's identity.⁶⁶⁵ It is intriguing that these concerns have been little debated. Unlike Sim, few academics have disclosed their position on the matter. Most remain neutral observers.

In August 2009, two days after Shin's press conference, the Central Government Officials' Labour Union of the MCST (문화체육관광부 공무원노동조합) refuted his official statements. They could not agree with these two things: first, 'there is no chance that any individuals or enterprises could donate due to its status as a national (art) museum'; and second, 'although the government has established and supported state-owned cultural organisations, they should develop by themselves after a period of time. Also, there should be more donation activities supported from the private sectors'.⁶⁶⁶ Their voices focused on the fact that there is no guarantee of any individuals or

⁶⁶³ Korea Institute for Art and Cultural Policy (2014: 130).

⁶⁶⁴ Choi Yeol (March 2010), quoted in Sim Sang-Yong (2012: 150).

⁶⁶⁵ Sim Sang-Yong (2012: 151).

⁶⁶⁶ State Public Officials' Labour Union of the MCST (문화체육관광부 공무원노동조합) (4 August 2010).

enterprises that might donate billions of Won to the museum. They argued that a comparison with the UK and US is inappropriate due to the difference in cultural maturity and historical background. Many of the public art museums in both countries started as private bodies and their donation system is now well established. Moreover, they have the foundation of rich collections of donated masterpieces. In South Korea, several conglomerates have cultural foundations or art museums that they would continue to support in preference to the national art museum.⁶⁶⁷

The union argued that corporatisation could not ensure either a collection of masterpieces or a donation system. Although advocates, including the MCST, emphasised that its enforcement, as a global trend, will create the chance to do fundraising from private agents and work in a creative atmosphere, the union strongly disagreed with their rationales and argued for backup plans.⁶⁶⁸ The members of NAROK at the inspection also argued similar viewpoints to those the labour union. Their concerns were encapsulated in a couple of issues. One is whether this reform might affect the perception that this is a public institution. The other concerned doubts about how the reform could strengthen and make up for the weakness of the museum. They even stated that the corporatisation process is unnecessary under the conditions of receiving sufficient budget from the government and operating the museum for the benefit of the public. Neither Bae (Director) nor Yoo (Minister) could give thorough answers to their objections.⁶⁶⁹ There is a sense of doubt that these two were ‘tools’ of an invisible hand. In other words, the invisible hand might be any government agencies or political figures that control them as puppets. The president, of course, has been a dominant power who is eager for achievement during his term. In this regard, making the Seoul NMCA or enforcing corporatisation could be considered as impromptu ideas lacking

⁶⁶⁷ In 2007, the Guggenheim Museum was operated by 80% of contributions, while the Metropolitan Museum of Art operated by 58%. Also, the Tate Modern that opened in 2000 increased a fiscal self-reliance ratio from 20% to 60% in 2012. Cho Seon-Ryung (Spring 2010: 244); Cho Deuk-Jin (April 2012).

⁶⁶⁸ Bae Moon-Hee (26 November 2009); Cho Seon-Ryung (Spring 2010: 240); Kim Bok-Gi (September 2011).

⁶⁶⁹ The Culture, Tourism, Sports, and Communication Committee of the NAROK (국회 문화체육관광통신부위원회) (6 October 2009).

detailed review. For the internal force of the museum, all they could do was receive instructions and prepare for instant conversion as usual.

The role, preparation, and outlook for the museum corporatisation

In this part, interviews from internal and external agents related to the museum will be discussed. I asked them: what are the institutional, cultural infrastructure conditions to implement a special corporate body system for the MMCA; do you think the MMCA has built up a solid evaluation system to assess the outcome of corporatisation? And, do you think the conversion process to a special corporate body is appropriate in order to cope with the changing paradigm of art museum culture in the 21st century? The group of interviewees was composed of existing and former curators and academics. Note that parts of responses have been removed due to their duplicated contents.

Ryu Ji-Yeon (acting curator, MMCA): If the museum accepts corporatisation, it should deal with a fundamental problem. The museum should not be an institution where visitors are paying an admission fee to visit as a sole purpose. It should be a place where they could make contributions or donate artworks to shape a vibrant art museum-related cultural environment. Then, the corporatisation comes next. Our museum is one of the government-affiliated agencies, so that too many legal constraints such as the Donation Prevention Law (기부금방지법), one of the institutional restrictions, have made it difficult for donators to make contributions. Hence, these are needed to be solved in advance. If the government cannot do that, then we should at least have a tax favour. However, there is not even a tax favour as stated by the law. [...] Not only internal, but also external evaluations have been considerably examined regarding the museum management. There are now seven evaluations in total: customer-satisfaction rate investigation for exhibitions, evaluation conducted by external experts, consecutive evaluations conducted by

evaluation staffers, the MCST, and Ministry of the Interior (MOI, 행정자치부, 2014-2017) in regard to the executive agency. Setting aside these institutionalised evaluations, there are examinations of how the members of the steering committee make comments about business plans or how to make comments and consider their relation to museum projects during the briefing session with the Minister of MCST. [...] Evaluation items such as budget have not been considered thoroughly by the museum, MCST, or MOI. Meanwhile, not enough external evaluations have taken place to establish institutional infrastructure (and also to assess the feasibility of corporatisation).⁶⁷⁰

Kim In-Hye (acting curator, MMCA): [...] Speaking of South Korea's distinctiveness, since a system of corporate body in Japan could not perform well, we expect that our system of the special corporate body will not work either. In the US, the government was funded by the central bank, right? Hence, private agents used to have the initiative from the beginning so that they could donate a huge amount of money and artworks to museums. It is a very different situation compared to ours. Our case is similar to Japan in cultural and historical aspects. [...] It is the MOSPA (안전행정부), but not the MCST that carries forward the corporatisation at the state level. For the MOSPA, the tax issue is the biggest one. They cannot receive enough amount of tax but have to spend more and more. [...] At any rate, the government requires more tax. The small government that began in the UK, a theory in which the size of government should be reduced, has been discussed too long. The system of corporatisation was requested by the government to each Ministry. The MCST, then, designated the museum to be a corporate body. [...] Any museum staffers in Japan who are curators or directors, they are tired of evaluation. Although they could not quantify their performance during the evaluation, they should make reports and quantify

⁶⁷⁰ Ryu Ji-Yeon, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Seoul branch of the MMCA, 7 February 2015.

their performance. That is their style. It is the same for our museum as well. We spend too much time only on writing reports.⁶⁷¹

Ha Gye-Hoon (art critic): In the case of corporatisation, the primary concern is how to increase the fiscal self-reliance ratio. However, it is not easy for the art museum. Art museums abroad, for instance, rely on almost 30% of their fundraising from donation activities which the MMCA cannot do. Moreover, our museum does not have a special fund either. If the museum cannot be fiscally independent, the museum would be in a difficult situation after corporatisation. [...] The reason why the issue of corporatisation repeatedly comes out is related to the issue of staff cutbacks in government officials. It is not merely a managerial or similar issue. When President Lee Myung-Bak started his term, he held a meeting to discuss with his secretaries about reducing the number of government officials. Lee asked all departments for any countermeasures and the MOSPA has dealt with the issue since then. Some say that an issue of corporatisation is a matter of autonomy, right? In fact, it starts with the problem of how to reduce the number of government officials, and how to transfer government officials to non-government ones. [...] The government will build up their own evaluation system (to assess the outcome of corporatisation). However, what I would like to say is that art museums in South Korea have not vitalised yet. It is because of the matter of disagreement. In terms of the disagreement, it is an issue between a person who knows the direction and another who would like to decide. In short, they know where they should go. [...] Anyway, staffers in the Ministry of Strategy and Finance (기획재정부), an organisation which manages, allocates, and approves the annual budget of the museum, do not agree with curators who set up their missions. The only thing that the government officials should be concerned about is

⁶⁷¹ Kim In-Hye, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Gwacheon branch of the MMCA, 5 March 2015.

numerical figures such as how much the museum had spent and earned or how many visitors had come. That is the thing in which they could intervene.⁶⁷²

Jung Joon-Mo (former curator, NMCA): [...] I think the museum should convert into a special corporate body. The board of directors must be aware of their responsibilities and authority. The members of the board in corporate bodies including the Seoul National University, however, do not pay money. It is why they do not need to take responsibility. To put it simply, they become serious after losing their money. However, nothing happens after all. [...] Hence, if anyone would like to become members of the board, similar to the cases abroad, a person who donated the most should be a chairperson of the board. [...] (Regarding the museum's plan of corporatisation) It is a general but not special type of corporatisation. It is not designed for the museum. An art museum is such a cultural institution that houses and collects our cultural properties to hand over to our descendants, but the government regarded it as a company from a management point of view. The government should not approach the concept of corporatisation in that way.⁶⁷³

Sim Sang-Yong (professor of Dongduk Women's University): [...] What I would like to emphasise in the journal article is that the precondition of corporatisation considerably goes against the public benefit pursued by public art museums. [...] However, the group of people who carried forward this project has a biased attitude. They do not realise the side effects of free market (*laissez-faire*) ideology in how the conversion might cause troubles and how much intellectual damage might take place. I am not sure how many people who are in favour of this issue realise its importance. My point of view is that we are not ready yet. Our society has not done any simulation of what problematic issues

⁶⁷² Ha Gye-Hoon, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Insa-dong, Seoul, 6 March 2015.

⁶⁷³ Jung Joon-Mo, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Jung's Office, Anguk, Seoul, 7 March 2015.

might be produced in case of corporatisation. [...] What I am concerned about is that any fallacious ideologies or thoughts might cause faulty policies or evaluation indicators. As a result, it might produce people who have defective knowledge. [...] The government should guarantee the publicness of the museum. If the government let the market carry forward a corporatisation as a panacea, it might cause such big trouble after all. There should be a system that could check the publicness of evaluation indicators. I cannot agree with the current evaluation system (to assess the outcome of corporatisation).⁶⁷⁴

Conclusion

In 2013, the new national art museum opened in Seoul under a new name: The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA). The museum announced envisioned itself as a cultural hub which introduces multi-layered art trends from the past, now, and future. The museum in Gwacheon had been an ‘isolated greenhouse’. It made visitor interaction difficult and led the staff to fall into a sense of inertia. Not only through physical distance, but also the organisational system, was far behind global art museum trends. Situated in the centre of the city, the MMCA, promises accessibility. It offers an opportunity to work more closely with the public and with government agencies. Compared to the period when the museum first opened to the public, the audience has changed considerably. They have demands and repeatedly want to be exposed to something new. In response, the museum is constantly developing new artistic experiences. Hence, a museum that serves as a social mediator could be a solution, not only to reflect immediate requests from the visitors, but also accept critical viewpoints posed by its related agents, and finally demonstrate the value of the museum to the government.

⁶⁷⁴ Sim Sang-Yong, interview by Kim Yon-Jai, mobile phone, Dongduk Women’s University (동덕여대), 18 March 2015.

Conclusion

Its encompassing signifier, ‘museum’, must be granted the flexibility of a cloth that can be gathered here, stretched there to accommodate a form whose mutations are linked to the changing character of capital, the state and public culture.

Jo-Anne Berelowitz, ‘From the body of the prince to Mickey mouse’, 1990⁶⁷⁵

A national gallery is distinguished by its attachment to the nation, regardless of the political system and circumstances under which it operates. However, attempting to generalise the relationship between government, state, nation, and national gallery is fraught with difficulty.

Simon Knell, *National Galleries: The Art of Making Nations*, 2016⁶⁷⁶

The MMCA opened, in 2013, with the exhibition, *Zeitgeist Korea*, one of the five inaugural exhibitions that interpreted and depicted the potential of Korean contemporary art within its historical context. The museum aggressively promoted this official event to draw the public’s attention to its grand scale and artistic significance. The director and the museum’s staff were satisfied that President Park Geun-Hye showed great interest in the displayed artworks at the opening ceremony (Figure 75). A few days later, a number of influential daily papers published articles both on the new museum and its opening exhibition. While they celebrated the birth of the

⁶⁷⁵ Berelowitz (1990: 82).

⁶⁷⁶ Knell (2016: 16).

MMCA, and appreciated Park Geun-Hye's attachment to it, they were less than positive about the exhibition.⁶⁷⁷



Figure 75 Park Geun-Hye delivers a congratulatory speech at the opening ceremony of the MMCA in 2013. By kind permission of and © Korea Public Policy Broadcasting Service, ehistory.

Following the publication of these articles, professional art journals in South Korea raised other concerns that they felt the daily papers should focus on.⁶⁷⁸ Art critics associated with those journals argued that controversies engulfed the museum. Museum staff were accused of curatorial incompetence. A particular concern of these critics, but also of a diverse group including artists from the Korean Fine Arts Association, was the biased selection of artists shown in the exhibition,

⁶⁷⁷ Lee Woo-Young (12 November 2013)

⁶⁷⁸ Lee In-Beom (December 2013: 114-115).

which seemed to favour the art school at the Seoul National University.⁶⁷⁹ They criticised the museum's lack of interplay and its inattention to the diversity of the Korean contemporary art scene.⁶⁸⁰ However, there were also suggestions that the museum's curators had not had a free hand in the display; that political interference may have been behind the exhibition. A few influential daily papers presumed that officials in the Cheongwadae (청와대, 靑瓦臺), the presidential residence, exerted leverage by withdrawing some of the artworks and replacing them with others, thereby infringing on the curator's autonomy and resulting in insubstantial and ill-prepared exhibits.⁶⁸¹ Artworks excluded from the exhibition shared a number of common characteristics. In particular, they were labelled by officials as representing anarchic and disrespectful attitudes against authority, and included artists, such as Yim Ok-Sang and Shin Hak-Chul, who had been censored during the military regimes and pro-democratic resistance period.⁶⁸²

Such anachronistic measures were implemented and the reprehensible legacy of the old-days reasserted itself. Even though the MMCA denied and forestalled these assumptions, Lee In-Beom, frequently a harsh art critic of the museum, mentioned that the disappearance of curatorship and the introduction of unethical practices had resulted in the worst of all possible new MMCAs.⁶⁸³ As Go Jae-Yeol describes, 'the title of the exhibition, *Zeitgeist Korea*, existed without the *Zeitgeist*';

⁶⁷⁹ Nearly 80% (32 of the 39 artists) of the exhibits were from Seoul National University alumni (the School of Fine Arts), and the rest from other Korean universities – Hong-ik and Dong-guk – alongside works from artists resident abroad.

⁶⁸⁰ Lee Eun-Young and Choi Young-Hoon (27 November 2013); Jeong Seok-Beom (28 November 2013).

⁶⁸¹ Im Jong-Up (16 November 2013); Yoo Sang-Woo (16 November 2013).

⁶⁸² Against news articles in terms of the Cheongwadae's political involvement, the museum published an official statement and strongly refuted that articles were too conclusive without any logical reasons. Even the chief curator of this exhibition denied the reports and stressed the fact that withdrawing artworks was only a part of the curatorial decision. The museum complained and asked the publishers to rectify their reports. The MMCA (16 November 2013); Go Jae-Yeol (2 December 2013).

⁶⁸³ Lee In-Beom (December 2013: 114-115).

in other words, the spirit of the age.⁶⁸⁴ The controversies mentioned above are not unprecedented. There have been similar cases since the opening of the museum in 1969. In detail, political agents affected the dynamics that drove changes in this museum.

As this thesis has demonstrated, the museum is located at the core of a cultural field, between government and society on the one hand and the possibilities of museological space on the other. The museum represents a social mediator that places dialogues in public-oriented discourse. And yet it is also an official art institution which offers national resources and produces narratives that are authorised by state power. As a national institution, the museum is situated at the pinnacle of a hierarchy that exists within the art field. These facets of the institution come together so that exhibitions displayed at the MMCA signify official recognition and a view authorised by the nation.

In this study, for example, the opening of the exhibition *Minjoong Art, 15 Years: 1980-1994* draws a paradoxical controversy of how *Minjoong Art*, which arose as a resistance art movement against political authority, was later recognised by the government through exhibition in the national art museum.⁶⁸⁵ By the same token, other artists who were invited by the museum achieved official recognition and were placed into the mainstream of Korean art history. However, the canonisation of a limited number of recognised art agents in the *Minjoong Art* group accelerated divisions in the parties of *Minjoong* artists and art critics. This kind of ideological collision between the political and cultural fields has become a recurring theme. Even though the museum is a cultural space which embraces government authority and activates as a primary stronghold of Korean modern and contemporary art to define their essential elements, an inextricable connection between the government and the museum transforms the topography of both Korean society and its art circle in a conflicted way. Hence, the museum is a system which rearranges and stabilises a particular set of social or cultural spheres, and mutates into a form that reflects the feedback of external agents such as political parties, art groups, mass media, and so on in museum practice.

⁶⁸⁴ Go Jae-Yeol (2 December 2013).

⁶⁸⁵ The NMCA (2006c: 9); Kim Dong-Il et al (2015: 23).

This conclusion outlines the research findings to locate the overarching themes, narratives, and debates within this topic. As to the entire museum's history, a myriad of 'pre- and co-existing' narratives have been reproduced to find the deeper implications of its practices and negotiations. An analysis of how and to what extent the research aims and objectives have been met, and how the research has contributed to both an overall view and critical approach of existing knowledge about the museum will be examined in detail. Lastly, the Conclusion ends by identifying questions, limitations, and potential directions for future study.

Research findings

There are several reasons to analyse this museum: i) the museum is a socially-built structure that initially operated without long-term vision and its expansion and remodelling process was conservative, ii) the museum is a cultural institution that aims to put modern and contemporary art, and South Korea, on the map of national sensibility, and iii) the museum has been a political tool that visualises and remodels ideologies (of presidents and others) to fit the operational paradigm of an institution. Although the structure of the thesis has mainly dealt with a chronological history of the museum, it has also considered the potential of viewing politics as a stimulant for negotiating that institution, though one often insensitive to those museum needs and requirements that might lead to its sustainability.

This research has set out to challenge the premise that there is a global similarity to the formation of national museums. It has raised the issue of how Korean society reacted to external influences, such as cultural assimilation from the U.S. that reconfigured, contaminated, and eroded indigenous Korean culture. This particular issue sheds light on how the museum probed its institutional identity, and negotiated the significance of combination of intellectual, ideological, and cultural stimulants introduced by external others. This thesis then highlighted how external forces motivated both the museum and its related agents to vitalise productive debates for having an art museum and understanding its historical, social, and political values.

This thesis contends therefore that a number of different internal and external agents or factors shaped the formation, development, and normalisation of the museum. The next three sub-sections describe the core research findings and each describes a particularly interesting narrative arc within the research. They assemble narratives into a story of how the museum has emerged as an institution in which the memories of multifarious groups are embedded. The thesis has exposed, through a study of dialogues between related internal and external actors, through the progressive establishment of museum practices, and in the public's changing expectations of the art museum as the new MMCA opens in Seoul, the little-known reality of the museum's trajectory.

Still dreaming? The museum that Korean society imagined

A museum is not a static institutional tool, but rather a historical entity that moves and vibrates in its reality. This widely accepted perspective structured the theoretical framework of this thesis and provided an appropriate lens to locate the 'critical' histories embedded in the museum. The use of the word 'critical', here, alludes to the questions: 'what does the national art museum in South Korea mean to the public?' or 'why does Korean society need the national art museum?' In the period studied, Korean society and museum culture in South Korea went through drastic transformation and development in terms of institutional system and policies imposed upon these institutions.

The research has examined and interrogated key concepts as 'museum', 'art museum', 'modern', and 'contemporary' from a Korean perspective, locating their origins and implied narratives. Drawing upon the archival sources and interview scripts, I have been able to unpack a number of underlying issues: i) how the translation of these supposedly universal concepts resulted in the inheritance of the museum's underprivileged identity, ii) how an inconsistency of interpretation influenced the early development of the museum, and iii) how important it was to form a national institution when faced with general ignorance about the repercussions of political authority. Setting aside the historical fact of the Japanese colonial period, which left the imprint of a local-specific

museum paradigm, these issues resulted in heated negotiations that produced discourses and semantic differences between the universal concept mentioned above and radical changes in museum practices, norms, policies, and even status of the national art museum in South Korea. In other words, analysing these kinds of general concepts provides the key to reach a depth of understanding of an institutional manifestation, like the MMCA, which might be assumed superficially to simply conform to a universal type.

The findings of this study have built debates that place the thesis within different contexts. If research findings have previously focused on the initial museum-building process and how socio-political and cultural factors were engaged in the museum prior to its inauguration, this thesis has rather emphasised the actual dynamics and debates influenced by associated museum agents. Indeed, the inception of the national art museum could be seen as one of the outcomes of a system of political propaganda, which reflects upon an often-obscured reality of museum development. If so, snapshots of historical moments show how presidents used the museum and its associated practices as political tools for legitimising their authority, how the government and its agencies applied window-dressing administration which ignored aesthetic goals of the institution, or how the internal agents of the museum have been keenly focused on satisfying political purposes as a priority. Such factors to situate the museum within a particular and narrower set of contexts, which demonstrate the degree to which it has been imprisoned by the past. Of course, from an internal perspective, the museum's utility as propaganda could be activated to maintain its longevity. By investigating the history of the museum, political factors, reveal that the museum may be interpreted as reflecting the local contexts, including Seoul's art world network and its different cultural philosophies.

The museum has sought to be an art institution in the Western tradition. By experiencing a state of insecurity in the process of shaping its institutional identity, associated museum-related agents recognised the museum's role as a social mediator which could develop and systematise its practices through feedback from interested parties. Only gradually, through this process, has the museum transformed into an institution that conforms to the international model. The thesis has investigated the on-going processes of *agencification* and corporatisation (*quangocratisation*), and

their conceptual narratives and repercussive effects. Although the museum sought to manifest itself as a public-oriented institution after converting into a form of executive agency, conflicting external and internal understandings of the possibilities and purposes of the museum led to an intermingling of ideas and practices that in some measure confused the public. This research therefore contends that the ideal art museum that Korean society has envisioned will remain simply an illusion until internal and external actors reach a common understanding.

Living organism: A museum history of struggle and social relation

The opening of the NMCA in Gwacheon has been recognised as a *de facto* point of inception in the museum's entire history. The research observed that a trivial dialogue between President Jeon and an artist at the NAE led to this national project, to which internal and external museum-related agents became inextricably linked. The establishment of a new national art museum signalled of the birth of a new institutional authority in South Korea. Crucial elements in the museum's management in Gwacheon, such as establishing the office of curator, offering public-centred educational programmes, and the acquisition of international masterpieces, shaped the public's understanding of museum culture. Despite President Jeon's agreement to the plan for relocation, the birth of the Gwacheon museum in 1986 revealed complex negotiation.

Due to its historiographical approach, the thesis consists of sections arranged in chronological order, and because of this, they might give an impression that any museum-related agents and their narratives emerged as an inevitable consequence of events. Yet this emergence was fluid and each element constantly interacted with each other. This research observes that they are not binary concepts.⁶⁸⁶ For instance, Kim Tai-Soo, the architect who designed the Gwacheon museum building, is a case in point. His emergence is considered to be a story of how a Korean architect in the United States submitted a design for one of the cultural projects, and how he negotiated with

⁶⁸⁶ Mercer (2007: 1-27 (13)).

related agents to build a 'house' for Korean artists. In this sense, the museum in Gwacheon might be considered as an outcome of his desire for recognition acknowledged by the political authority. The existence of the new museum in Gwacheon, however, had already been deeply influenced by related agents, their performances, their dialogues, and even their inherited museum practices. Comprehensively, this thesis shows that this negotiation goes back to the conceptual origins of the NMCA in the very first museum opened in Gyeongbok Palace in 1969. The assumption that the museum's development is encapsulated by a period of the six years that spanned the time between the conversation by President Jeon and the architect and the completion of the building is clearly false; the real story of the Gwacheon museum started long before the official plan of its establishment was decided in 1980. Contributing agents, factors, and narratives can be identified prior to its completion, and they, as a result, introduce a more nuanced understanding and epistemological shift, which may be woven into a self-reflective and complex nature of the museum history and its dynamics.

Despite the scholarly debates which have been highlighted and focus mainly on the story of the motivation of political agents - President Jeon and his military force - to request an independent art museum building near Seoul, this research has implicitly provided clues which prove that connections were previously made between agents in the process of the museum's establishment, which were not arranged in order of time.⁶⁸⁷ Ostensibly, the sequence of events in making the Gwacheon NMCA were as follows: i) President Jeon's direct order, ii) forming a construction committee, iii) selection of a building site, iv) a public contest to select an architect for the museum design, v) conflicts between museum agents, vi) the sudden death of director Kim Se-Joong, and vii) the museum opening in 1986. However, a recent publication in honour of the 30th anniversary of the Gwacheon NMCA has discovered significant lacunae and provided different contexts that

⁶⁸⁷ Lee In-Beom (1996: 292); Jung Joon-Mo (2003: 165); Jang Yeop (2009: 107).

may identify several directions for creative interpretation.⁶⁸⁸ It therefore supports an argument that those events occurred not respectively but inextricably.

Interviews with Kim Tai-Soo and Yoo Jun-Sang have revealed undisclosed narratives as to new connections and dialogues that envision a museum and which entails complicated associations between museum-related agents. In particular, both Kim and Yoo shared early experiences with Kim Se-Joong whose performance could not be analysed in this thesis due to a lack of published material and his sudden death just prior to the inception of the museum. When Kim Tai-Soo had his first solo exhibition at the Korean Culture and Arts Foundation (KCAF, 문예진흥원) in 1981, Kim Se-Joong visited the venue and expressed his interest.⁶⁸⁹ Kim Tai-Soo felt that his visit exerted a strong influence on the public contest for the museum's architectural design.⁶⁹⁰ Yoo, on the other hand, a former curator who was the expert in the museum's early-stage exhibitions and management, illuminated stories of how Kim Se-Joong persuaded members of the NAROK, and influenced Yoo's curation of the inaugural exhibition at the Gwacheon NMCA.⁶⁹¹ The findings show that Kim worked relentlessly as a mediator for the realisation of the museum opening. Kim struggled with the apathy of those who had the potential to be active agents. Through negotiation, he attracted agents and funds, and generated social awareness despite the political dynamics that impeded the plan of the new museum's construction. In these ways, this research has been able to find hidden truths in the debates surrounding the Gwacheon museum; contributing factors of its realisation were induced by previously unrecognised tensions, conflicts and social interplays between internal and external museum agents.

⁶⁸⁸ The MMCA (2016a: 38-53; 2016b: 84-89).

⁶⁸⁹ The MMCA (2016a: 39).

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹¹ Yoo helped Kim in organising an international exhibition: *86 Seoul-Asia Contemporary Art*. Kim contacted Yoo at Fukuoka, Japan, without notice, and persuaded him to join the museum as a curator. Yoo went to Japan to join an international conference where 16 Asian countries were assembled. Yoo had no prior expertise in art. Kim hired Yoo because of his diplomacy, which could be used to borrow artworks from the Asian countries. The MMCA (2016b: 84-85).

Towards a flexible ‘laboratory’: Prospects for the MMCA

The desire to create new spaces is understandable as the hope springs eternal that what cannot be accomplished in existing spaces can be realised in new ones. A new museum means, above all, money – money to build a staff, develop collections, and create exhibitions. [...] A new museum is also a blank canvas. Existing museums suffer under the burdens of what previous generations of curators and administrators have created.

William S. Walker, *A Living Exhibition*, 2013⁶⁹²

This study has discussed narratives of how a contemporary art museum responded to today’s challenging socio-economic climate. Since the museum mapped its core mission statement out as a national art museum, over many decades, the internal and external features shaping the museum have also transformed rapidly. One of the research questions that this thesis proposed was: ‘Using the example of the MMCA in terms of its conversion process from 2006, in what ways does this re-imagining of the gallery permit the institution to better face up to the future - or is this only a short-term solution to present-day issues?’ This thesis has elaborated on the fact that the museum has experienced a period of transformation both internally and externally. Under the process of museum transformation, repeated trials and errors were inevitable. This led to the creation of the museum’s unique identity that reflects complex cultural phenomena. In this sense, the enforcement of executive agency in 2006, which was an innovative gesture, could be considered as a solution to the administrative issues of the museum. The gesture has now resulted in on-going debates in adopting the bill of corporatisation which might challenge the traditional logic of the museum’s operation. This issue is deeply entangled with the conceptualisation of new MMCA in Seoul that

⁶⁹² Walker (2013: 228).

opened in 2013. The new MMCA was also established by the elements affecting the previous NMCA, but there have been constant negotiations and controversies impacting the expectations of the museum. These expectations have been mirrored by the atmosphere of internal reformation which have led to a creative change in norms of established museum practices.

The MCST, in 2015, selected Bartomeu Marí Ribas (1966-) as a director of the MMCA. It was the first time the museum had a foreign leader. Leaving aside his capabilities in managing an art institution, this decision marked a turning point in the museum's history. It was a sign that the museum was attempting to realise its aim of becoming a world-class art museum, by appointing an art expert who had expertise in the global contemporary art scene.⁶⁹³ Despite the controversies that Marí and the MCST created, which resulted in a debate concerning his suitability as for the post of director, this decision has resulted not only in a cultural but also an epistemological shift in how the museum can achieve managerial autonomy. Previously circumscribed by external political authority, the appointment gave this South Korean art museum with a newly acquired cosmopolitan outlook. Finally, the museum, and those external agents concerned with its development and operation, had the opportunity to realise a close-knit collaboration that aimed at the same goals: participation in the global system and an internationally recognised art museum.

This thesis has examined how the museum has crossed boundaries between Korean and Western art under the guise of cosmopolitanism. The museum did not hesitate to embrace cutting-edge and controversial art trends that went against social norms structured by a conservative Korean society. If the internal movement was affected solely by external factors, then selecting a foreign director and converting the museum system drastically into a corporate body would be actions influenced by self-reflexive momentum within changing socio-political circumstances. The problem at the moment, however, is how to attract public attention towards the museum's status. Agents who work for the art field, in particular, have paid little attention to the issues stated above. Although the museum has conducted a series of 'experiments' as to its institutional transformation, museum-related agents have not posed the questions of 'why', to share feedback with the museum and form

⁶⁹³ Marí was a former director of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) from 2008 to 2014.

a social consensus. Hence, the museum and its related agents need to do more to stimulate more discussions.

Contribution to knowledge and research outcomes

The major contribution the thesis has made is the application of a new conceptual approach to the interdisciplinary research of a national art museum in South Korea, which illuminates the importance of deconstructing the museum and the embedded narratives that surround it. By deploying this research approach, it has been possible to discover those internal and external actors who negotiate and influence the form and operation of the museum. The thesis has intended to capture a discursive complexity of the museum that has not been examined previously, so as to reveal its hidden truths. To trace the ‘real’ discourse of the museum, the research has considered a great deal of research material and scholarly debates that have not previously been critically examined. Analysis of grey literature and interview scripts that cover theoretical and pragmatic issues has contributed to a semi-ethnographical approach that has revealed the uniqueness of, and subtleties in, the museum’s development that has resulted in a number of embedded and locally-active meta-narratives.

Government reports, representative of the grey literature, have reflected upon the narratives of how the museum and its related agents - agencies, officials, and social policies – have negotiated to achieve agreement, and how their debates have brought about projects which are often treated as problematic, controversial, and impractical. In detail, drawing upon the minutes of annual inspection conducted by the NAROK, there is a significant gap of understanding, in legislating a bill or giving government grants, between members of the NAROK and museum-related agents. This has drawn attention to the multiple and competing perspectives - government-controlled or museum-centred value - that operate in practice. To deepen this understanding of dynamics among agents involved in the annual inspection by the NAROK, it was necessary to transcribe and translate minutes, government reports and news articles that have not previously been considered

as informing the museum's development. This process has contributed greatly to locating and examining the thoughts, voices and approaches of government officials and museum-related agents regarding issues that might influence the museum's annual projects.

This thesis therefore represents the first time this voluminous data has been used to expose a new complexity in the political dynamics between the museum and related external agents. Moreover, conducting interviews with a group of participants has drawn attention to narratives which have rarely been explored. Since interviewees agreed to use their real names, this study could arrive at a richer understanding of the sensitive issues that might help with the discovery of the real history of the museum. The interviews also built upon, enriched and validated the neutral, critical, and empirical ideas contained in the published and grey literatures. The perceptions of interviewees as to 'pre- and co-existing' issues, therefore, unpacked 'masked' truths about the museum. As such, it was possible to perform a cross-comparison between factual data and interviews to provide in-depth and rigorous study. It has also helped to drive out inaccuracies resulting from, but also highlight where pertinent to the history of the institution, the subjective positions of actors.

The findings of the study have offered a new translation of existing discourses of the museum. Over the past several decades, frequent scholarly debates have been had with the intention of determining the museum's *raison d'être*. However, there has been little serious research into actual and long-neglected dynamics and contexts. This study has exclusively explored the issues of understanding the systems, negotiations, and dynamics of the museum through a process of distancing the researcher from the museum, so as to see that actors who are situated at the heart of social relations and established practices. In this sense, the thesis has synthesised a vast array of scholarly elements, which have not been applied all together in previous studies of the museum. This process has filled a gap in existing academic materials which have had significant lacunae, and raised the question of what internal and external factors have 'constructed' the museum.

By investigating the museum, as a researcher, it is possible to ask questions about what is the nature of being for a contemporary art museum which is placed in a global context, and how such a museum should go about acquiring a new relationship with its potential visitors. This will raise awareness of the complex discourses which offer a clear sense of how to recognise the troubled

past and the agents' ideals for the museum. Therefore, the thesis potentially helps to understand how uniquely and strangely the museum has established, normalised, and invented its practices. It also offers a non-judgemental as well as self-reflexive lens to what researchers should believe, and what knowledge and political context are true regarding the relationship of the public towards the museum.

Directions, limitations and questions for future study

As the sociologist Brewer observes, ethnography is not merely a way of collecting information, but 'a style of research that is distinguished by its objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field' or setting, and its approach, which involves close association with, and often participation in, this setting.'⁶⁹⁴ Since this project has conducted an ethnographic approach in terms of learning about the local context and analysing social scenes from the native's perspective, the study of complex dynamics, debates, and contexts of the museum's development has raised discursive issues to interrogate its underlying realities and tensions. In this vein, analysing reliable archives has been crucial to unpack the concepts, narratives, and contexts that appear central to this research. As a fieldworker, locating archives based upon the native environment has provided a potential lens that might be developed in several ways. For instance, searching evidence for avenues of enquiry that might question some issues of undiscovered dynamics that shaped changes and influenced developments of the museum, would rely upon locally published materials or semi-structured interviews. Thus, this data-gathering methodology has not only answered research questions but raised several issues alongside potential directions and limitations for future study.

This study, however, is the first example of an in-depth analysis of an Asian or non-Western art institution. At the beginning of working on this thesis, knowledge of the history of the museum

⁶⁹⁴ Brewer (2000: 11).

was a skeletal story of development with huge lacunae. In opposition to former scholarly debates focused on casual engagement, this research has highlighted several aspects or factors that have contributed to expand the scale of work as well as interrogate some old-fashioned approaches which have been used to interpret the museum. Regardless of the results, for the reasons stated above, there are several questions that might be examined and reconsidered in more contextualised and insightful ways of thinking.

In the thesis, finding and analysing the voices of former directors could be explored in more detail. Previous scholarly materials on the studies of performance, vision, and evaluation of directors have been mostly concentrated on a group of people who performed after the inception of the Gwacheon NMCA. There is a general awareness shaped by researchers that a history of the museum, in effect, starts from Gwacheon due to having its first independent building, curatorial department, and archivists which formed a physical and intellectual setting of research. However, the study of former directors, who were in office during the early stages of the museum's history, from the Gyeongbok Palace to Deoksu Palace has long been neglected due to insufficient research archives.

Owing to the directors' short-term experience in office, unveiled narratives of how political factors affected the museum practice and decision-making process have not been discovered. Their testimonies about what they knew of challenged situations and embedded contexts could be important to examine what factors made them incredibly passive as museum managers. Only basic assumptions could be made through the research based on newspaper articles. Those assumptions are mostly focused on the difficulties that a director of the museum had without having his own building, collection, or government budget. At first sight, former directors who were dispatched to work for the short-term as a sinecure, stayed at the museum as a safe retirement project. During the Gyeongbok and the early stage of the Deoksu Palace period, however, directors who have been undervalued by some reputable art critics could be explored in more detail to *decode* their visions. Without a proper museum infrastructure, directors during this initial stage, indeed, had to follow orders of President Park Jung-Hee. Consequently, their major concerns were positioning the museum as a vehicle for propaganda.

Any museums, however, have their unique museum vision. In the meantime, such visions are travelling with society, and acting as a stimulus to not only museum practices but also traditions. In this sense, even a director who is not an art expert could decide a mission statement based upon established traditions. The traditions, in fact, have originated from the period when Korean art enlightened itself about the strong desire of having a full-fledged modern and contemporary art museum. Korean society played out in such an unpredictable world in the process of social transformation so that even the museum also experienced a state of destabilisation. Under these circumstances, former directors during President Park's era might consider several questions of how to capture the cultural values of Korean art, how to negotiate with related agents who were engaged in any museum practices, and should leave the museum as a space of propaganda rather than that of artistic performance. Examining these questions would mark an important watershed in the museum's history towards the premise that 'the museum was established by self-reflective museum visions but *not* political ideologies.'

Another related strand of inquiry is to highlight achievements that Kim Se-Joong has made during his term in office. As a distinguished sculptor, his role as the museum director has been discussed in relatively little detail. Owing to a shortage of scholarly archives on his performance, as stated above, researchers and museum practitioners have not had the chance to conduct any in-depth studies. In this sense, Park Rae-Gyeong, a former chief curator of the museum (1986-1996), addressed her concerns related to this issue:

Although Director Kim Se-Joong made a huge contribution to the establishment of the museum during his term in office, his official recognition has not been acknowledged. We still need to search more. If so, with administrative data provided by associated officials, we could highlight the issue of 'what image of the museum did Korean society envision during its construction period?'⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹⁵ Kim Eun-Young (15 December 2010).

Even minimal recognition of his achievements is unknown. It was because his activities were unofficial that they might be considered as ‘negotiations behind the curtain’. As Yoo Jun-Sang contends, despite the fact that his ideas were supported by private dialogue with Kim Se-Joong, the plan of the museum-making at Gwacheon may be understood as a social interplay between Kim and associated agents rather than President Jeon’s political strategy or desire as a landmark in celebration of the 1986 Seoul Asian Games.⁶⁹⁶ In some respects, in South Korea in particular, the influence of bureaucratic procedures could succeed in arranging deals such as national projects which require a huge amount of money as well as human resources. Yoo states that Kim persuaded several members of the NAROK over drinks to resubmit a legislative bill to establish an art museum at Gwacheon.⁶⁹⁷ In a sense, Kim knew the logic of politics. He is the person who first recognised that even politics or conservative elements could be such a positive stimulant. His story delivers the following enquiries: i) how government figures perceived the plan of constructing the museum, ii) how the MCPI, as a higher authority, regarded the national art museum, iii) what epistemological shift affected Korean society in having a national art museum, and iv) what inherited traditions and practices at the museum were called upon to innovate? If all these stated enquiries have validity, then it would be acceptable to consider that making an art museum in Gwacheon relied upon visions but not engagement or ideology. This thesis has explored several interrelated facets of development that reveal the interconnections between the state, politics, art, and institution. This ‘high-resolution’ research has been crucial, as a detailed history of the museum has come into view, particularly as a result of investigating grey literature. The questions stated above have emerged that would, in future, lead to a more comprehensive understanding, but which are beyond the scope of the present study.

⁶⁹⁶ The MMCA (2016b: 84).

⁶⁹⁷ Yoo Jun-Sang mentioned that Kim spent all his money in a proper way. For instance, Kim undertook many national projects of commissioning sculptures and earned a large amount of money. From this, he bought warm jackets for labourers who worked on the construction of the museum during the coldest season of the year. *Ibid.*

The museum has been such a ‘potential’ gift to the population. It has been such a cultural outlet, historical site, and experimental space, on which this thesis only touches upon fragments. Even if it were so, the museum and its constituents have stimulated a reciprocal link to tie them with the social fabric. This suggests that the museum exists in the middle of a social system. Therefore, the history of the museum is paralleled in how it achieved social consensus since its opening. Despite frequent and significant scholarly lacunae in the museum’s ‘discontinuous’ history, the topography of museum performance such as numbers of collected artworks or those of visitors was not the key aim of this study, but rather the dynamics, contexts and embedded discourses derived from a collection of published in-house archives, grey literature, and oral interviews which demonstrate the causes and effects of institutional decisions.

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