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Across Boundaries

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Graduate Program in Visual Arts

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Fine Arts

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ACROSS BOUNDARIES

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by

Diana Yoo

Graduate Program in Visual Art

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

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Abstract

In a combined Masters of Fine Art Thesis exhibition and dossier, entitled Across Boundaries, I focus primarily on transformational, productive labour as an important theoretical approach to help acknowledge the silenced trauma surrounding the Korean War in North America. My art practice focuses on an exploration of a hybrid, diasporic identity where I am situated between two cultures—my ancestral home, Korea, and the home where I was raised, Canada. Through my research trip to South Korea, I was able to discover the difficulties of the war that the two Koreas face and that is kept separate from the West. I found that the kind of traumatic losses in the war exists in what Jacques Ranciere calls the “unrepresentable.” I am driven by an installation and performance art practice that allows me to empathize with the ongoing victims of the war.

Keywords

Contemporary art, installation, trauma, diaspora, hybrid, and unrepresentable.
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Introduction

My Masters of Fine Art thesis dossier is comprised of three main elements that go hand-in-hand with the final thesis exhibition taking place in The Artlab Gallery at Western University, from April 17th to the 25th, 2014. These three components of my dossier are part of one focused project that allows me to pose important questions about the silence of the Korean War in North America through an autobiographical art practice. These three components are: (1) my Comprehensive Artist Statement, (2) Practice Documentation, and (3) an Interview with Korean-American artist Do Ho Suh. These components provide a means for me to make art-based inquiries in response to the silenced trauma of the Korean War.

My Comprehensive Artist Statement explains how I situate myself in a hybrid position between two cultures—my ancestral home, Korea, and the home where I was raised, Canada—a space from which I create artworks that convey fragments of a diasporic experience. I use the term “diaspora” to mean living in a place outside the geographic land of my ancestors, and the term “hybrid” to refer to the two cultures I have been brought up with. Both terms inform my work while investigating the kind of history that continues to concern me as a Korean-Canadian. I am interested in investigating the kind of labour that distances Western culture from the history of the Korean-Canadian diaspora, particularly labour that takes place in the common North American convenience store. It is the experiences of the division between the two Koreas that is significant to the Korean-Canadian diasporic history, and this must not be forgotten even when those who best remember the war want to escape its shadow by immigrating to a new land.

Chronologically listed according to the dates made, my Practice Documentation provides an overview of the production of various installation components in Across Boundaries. Attached to the documentation are short descriptions of the body of works and written identification for the pieces, most of which will be displayed in the final thesis exhibition. The documentation is sequenced as follows: the beginning of my explorations with Corner Store; the various installation experimentation of Building on Bloody Mountain; videos of Prisoners Once Here and Interview With an ESL Learner; and the final project From a Convenience Store. Through my photographic installation art practice and
performance, I do not try to explicitly represent the trauma of the war. I attempt to be able to make artistic propositions that address the pain that has occurred in the wake of the war.

For example, I create images of the North Korean Labour Party Building in the work, *Building on Bloody Mountain*, taken on a 2012 research trip to South Korea where I visited a site of battle during 1950-1953. Also, in the video piece, titled *Prisoners Once Here*, I create a physical connection to the memorial site where prisoners of war were held captive between 1908 and 1987. By recognizing the kind of loss that has continued in Korea, beginning as early as 1905-1945 (the colonialization of the country by Japan during World War II) to the postwar Cold War occupation by the superpowers, this video piece traces historical losses in Korea. This artwork, amongst the others that comprise *Across Boundaries*, attempts to communicate beyond the silences that surround the Korean diaspora in North America. In *From a Convenience Store*, I seek a means to reveal the confrontation of the boundary caused by the war, which takes place for the victims of the war behind the counter. Through my research trip to South Korea, I was able to discover the kind of complex legal and militant war that the two Koreas face and that is hidden from the West. It is a military and industrial war that is masked by both American capitalism in the South and extreme totalitarianism influenced by communist China and the former USSR in the North. As a response to this, my work does not attempt to explain the causes of the war. Rather, my focus is to allow for a juxtaposition of voices and places that attempt to honour the traumatic losses of the war. The estimated casualties during the three years of fighting between 1950-1953 are between 2.8 to 3.69 million.¹ This number excludes the death toll of the remaining sixty years of conflict due to the famine and concentration camps in the North. In this performance piece, I express empathy for the ongoing loss that exists in what cultural theorist Jacques Rancière calls existing in the realm of the “unrepresentable.”² As a result, I seek to make visible the divisions (or barriers) that an empathic response can help to overcome for both my viewer and myself. Across the barrier of the convenience store counter, I hope that my viewer will understand simultaneously the loss in the division crisis as well as a second loss in the silence about the war for the Korean-Canadian diaspora. During my performance, I work from my feelings of loss by tying reunification ribbons along the fenced store and Joint Security Area (JSA) in The Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

In my research about the Korean War, I became interested in what it means to identify with Koreanness as an artist. I found the artwork of internationally renowned contemporary artist Do Ho Suh to be deeply compelling and very much tied to identifying with transporting one’s home from one place to another. With great luck, I was able to connect with Suh in my planned trip to Gwangju when I went to research the massacre of May 18th, 1980. The following interview helps me to better understand the term “diaspora” in the context of Korean-North American hybrid identity. I learned that there is a difference between Suh’s first-generation Korean-American experiences of hybridity and my second-generation Korean-Canadian experience of hybrid identity. Interestingly, Suh has noticed that the trend in mobility of going back and forth between places renders identity more fluid and dynamic in an increasingly globalized world. This flow between cultures materialized in his installation of the art piece *Home Within Home*, where his work is the result of having to process his new surroundings between one place and another by fabricating his dwelling sculpturally.

In my artwork, I am interested in proposing delicate questions about the physical and psychological implications of the war, rather than offering to provide an easy solution to a 63-year long traumatizing struggle. I ask: how can an art practice further expose the war by providing viewers with the tools to begin to formulate their own analyses of the main problems with the war and the division? How can we, as global citizens, seek to communicate across the barriers that war creates between us?
Comprehensive Artist Statement

My thesis exhibition, titled Across Boundaries, is about acknowledging the traumatic loss occurring in the Korean conflict through the means of visual art, as it is difficult to fully express this acknowledgement through words. As a second generation Korean-Canadian living in Canada, I always wonder about the ongoing Korean War, and question the cultural silence towards it in the West. In my exhibition installation, I try to develop my artistic practice as a testament to my family’s life journey. Against the backdrop of the division crisis in Korea, subsequent famine, and the loss of many relatives—including six aunts and uncles—I refer to the war as the reason for my parents’ immigration to Canada in 1978. In my 2012 journey to the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and Seodaemun Prison, I found tremendous relief in locating physical sites for remembrance, and they help to acknowledge the burden of my transferred trauma due to the war. While the experience of diaspora can define the shift from my ancestral place of origin (South Korea) to my place of upbringing in the West (Canada), I consciously think of my artwork as emerging from a place of hybridity. I am located between two places: one a point of geographical departure and the other a point whereby I have known only a void around the subject of the war. From this place, I empathize with the victims and mourn for the loss of my family across geographical and political boundaries.

My exhibition Across Boundaries addresses the subject of the Korean War specifically as part of a Korean-Canadian diasporic experience. In my art practice, I regard my family’s labour as the point of departure whereby I can address the subject of the Korean War as a Korean-Canadian. I question the circumstances of my family’s self employment in a convenience store that, like many other Korean North American families, created a means for living in a capitalist environment. The labour in a convenience store has the tendency to create a wall between the cultural specificity of a war history in Korea and the immigration experience in North America. Through my artwork, I investigate this place of labour in a convenience store as a point of intervention. I am interested in the possibility of creating an emancipatory practice as an artist that reflects back upon the history of my family as Korean-Canadian immigrants. While I recognize the position of my identity as one within a democratic capitalist context, I also recognize the potential to exercise a form of communication about the transferred traumatic loss from the war through my artwork. In
order to do this, I wish to intervene in the kind of marginalizing, capitalist labour in which the Korean-Canadian diaspora often find themselves working: in a convenience store.³

In Jean-Luc Nancy’s text on “Labour” in *The Sense of the World*, he inquires about the subject of labour in relation to the Marxist question of how to pass from *poiesis*, an action that is to make, to *praxis*, a transformation that effects the agent, while maintaining work as labour. Could the work of art potentially act as a means to transform alienated labour into non-alienated labour? And what would this transformation look like? Though Nancy questions if there is such a thing as “nonalienated labour” in Marx and whether it could be “labour without pain,” his claim is not to propose the question of whether praxis is possible in the sense of transforming the agent. He questions whether a *poiepraxis* or *praxipoetic* thought, the combining of the two terms, is possible.⁴ In other words, he asks, how could labour act as a vehicle to express a transformation from alienated work to non-alienated work? My argument is that this is indeed a productive inquiry to have in relation to art making, which can evoke a subjective transformation through the creation of relational-based art performance and the making of the installation. I refer to praxipoetic, or poiepraxis, as transformational labour in the following text for the purposes of simplifying these two terms.

By using Nancy’s concept of transformational labour as a tool for achieving subjective agency over the conditions of work for many Korean-Canadians, I seek a means to find a more pluralized, Korean-Canadian identity that is referential to the experience of being between two places specific to diasporic relocation. I focus primarily on transformational, productive labour as a key concept to help me recognize and communicate the silence surrounding the Korean War in North America. These two political landscapes, Korea and North America, are separate and divergent (with their own complex colonial pasts), yet both focus on military and industrial production. Particular to North America, in the capitalist democratic market there are no readily available opportunities for people to face the war and to position themselves against it. According to the Government of Canada Website, “Canada's sanctions on North Korea are among the toughest in the world and include a ban on all imports from and exports to North Korea, with certain humanitarian exemptions.”⁵

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³ Although Statistics Canada indicates Korean Immigrants are more likely to become self-employed in Canada, it does not specify the type of self-employment or whether or not it is in a convenience store.
However, the relative lack of concern in Canada in educating people about humanitarian violations in North Korea is worrisome. We have no cultural means of sympathizing for the victims of the concentration camps and famine due to the cultural silence surrounding the war. My artwork is a vehicle for exercising transformative labour in relation to the lived histories of Korean-Canadian employment in the convenience store. As a means of survival, working in a convenience store leaves any acknowledgement of the war in a silence within the margins of society. This has prevented the kind of dialogue that would be productive for refugees of the war. Related to Nancy’s thoughts, transformational labour can be thought of as an activity that can help to expand upon one’s self-identity in the world, especially when wanting to expand upon a hybridized identity. In other words, by exercising transformational labour, I can better realize a sense of who I am, or who I want to communicate I am, by exercising agency within the context of the conditions of labour in which my family found themselves. The artwork I have created is necessary for me to culturally communicate a sense of this marginalization through labour. It is through a transformational process of art-based labour that I respond with a sense of autonomy: to produce artworks that convey my position—one that empathizes for the traumatic loss of both my ancestral country and my native birthplace.

Across Boundaries is an exhibition that marks the beginning of my personal struggle for emancipation from the burden of silenced trauma from the Korean War. My process is first about articulating a diasporic Korean-Canadian history to my viewers, and secondly, it is about mourning the traumatic loss through an installation combined with a relational art performance. As an artist, it is within my installation work that I find it possible to intervene in the silence of the war to create empathy-based artworks that are as much about acknowledging loss as they are about healing and emancipation from pain. I try to embody the loss, but also emancipate myself from it through a process of mourning. I am deeply driven to communicate the story of my family, and to acknowledge the invisible wounds many Korean-Canadians carry due to their traumatic experiences of war. On my research trip to South Korea, I discovered the reality of the war that we, in the West, refer to as the “Forgotten War.” The industrial and capitalist success of South Korea (with the American forces stationed there) tends to make the war seem less of a global concern. Hanna Arendt, in her text On Violence, describes a post-World War II condition that remains relevant to the current situation in Korea: “[t]he Second World War was not followed by peace but by a cold
war and the establishment of the military-industrial-labor complex.”6 After World War II, Korea became the battleground for a War between superpowers. Though the superpowers in question have largely moved on to new conquests, Korea is still fighting this war. With the incompletion of this prolonged Korean War, and only the Armistice Agreement and the isolation of the North Korean state to prevent physical battle, there has been a long-standing lack of communication about why the war began in the first place. In response, my work references the war as a product of a complex and ongoing political struggle that has remained invisible in the West. It is a struggle that causes one to ask: who created this division, why must it still be here, and whom does it benefit? Rather than offer answers to such questions, in Across Boundaries, I inquire what it means to potentially create more global awareness of the Korean War through my artwork despite the relatively positive industrial successes of the country.

I am interested in the role art can have to acknowledge traumatic loss due to war, particularly given that so much can be conveyed through an artistic gesture. My installation proposes an approach to representing the trauma of the Korean War as an embodiment of mourning. At the onset of the production of my art exhibition, I initially questioned, “how do I represent the Korean War’s continuing losses, which have remained a void of silence for so many families in the West for so long?” We do have an estimated number of casualties during the three years spanning 1950-1953 at approximately 2.8 to 3.69 million.7 Yet we do not have an estimated number for the famine or prison camps8 still active in the North, or both the deaths and number of families divided in the South over the last 61 years. How might an art project for the ongoing tragedies following the division of Korea for both the North, and the South and the general diaspora for the Korean people create more awareness of the war? How does the lack of available information further complicate this project? Is representation even possible? Would it not be impossible to represent a loss of life ranging in the tens of millions?

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7 Estimate is from: Baek Okkyoung, Understanding Korean History, (Seoul: Jimoodang, 2011), 241.
8 Kim Hye-Sook, a former North Korean prisoner from Camp 18 states in an interview in the episode of CBC’s the Current, “[The guards] were taught to treat us cruelly, they didn’t care about human rights.” Kim, Hye-Sook, interview by CBC, The Current, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 18 February 2014.
Contemporary theorist Jacques Rancière, in *The Future of the Image*, refers to the kind of trauma we encounter in war as existing in the realm of the *unrepresentable*. He claims concentration camps and extermination camps are “[…] the representation of phenomena that are said to be unrepresentable […].”9 In *Across Boundaries*, I explore the unrepresentable by means of juxtaposing contrasting imagery found from two places. I merge the spaces of the Joint Security Area (JSA) in the Korean DMZ behind a vinyl photograph of a North American convenience store counter. In my art practice, I convey my empathy for the tremendous loss by recognizing it as existing in the realm of the unrepresentable.

In my installation and performance, the visual imagery acts merely as indexes for sites where forms of boundaries exist—where physical and psychological barriers are restaged. Through their juxtaposition, the photographic materials in the installation provide an entry point from which we can begin to address the trauma of the war, a trauma that cannot possibly be adequately represented, but only imagined. Since the pain from the war can only be referenced through the installation of my image-based works, I am interested in asking what more an artist like myself can do to convey the empathy that I feel for the victims of this war. Here I shift my practice to an interactive performance-based one, offering the possibility of healing through communication and mourning.

Drawing from personal experience, I am interested in exploring how my family came to be self-employed as convenience store owners and commemorating the losses of the war. Culturally, North American media have not broadly reported the ongoing tragic conditions of the war. The intent in my work is not to disrupt this silence, but to allow my pieces to function as a bridge that could potentially help to close the gap. It is necessary for me to make this work in order to reveal a hybrid position that, for many Korean immigrant families, remains invisible. *Across Boundaries* is indexical and referential to this history of immigration through my own situation of belonging between the two cultures, Canada and Korea. In many ways, it is the circumstances of the diaspora and war experience that I identify as a significant factor in the positioning of so many war-torn countries around the world. Thus, my work, with my autobiographical subject matter, functions as a multi-component installation and performance practice that makes the experience of immigration tangible across the boundaries created by political difference.

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The creative performance and installation components of my piece, entitled *From a Convenience Store*, are positioned across from one another in the far corners of the gallery space. Taken together, the works convey my artistic journey in varied components. The fencing provides the four walls of the convenience store with the store counter positioned in front of a large-scale projection of the Joint Security Area (JSA) blue buildings in the DMZ. The projection of the DMZ represents a psychological boundary that exists in the imagination as well as where the real stasis and physical confrontation between democratic capitalism and totalitarian communism plays out. Between the fence and the counter is where I stand writing “one land” in English and “we are one land” in Korean on memorial ribbons. Two sites of remembrance in this space surround me: the crisis of division in Korea and the cultural confinement of the North American convenience store. The corners of the fence are left open so the viewer and I can walk in and out of the confines of the store and the barrier the fencing creates. In some ways, the installation can be thought of as a utopic hybrid space that invites dialogue about the war and our everyday experience of the convenience store.

In this multi-media performance piece, I show how I have learned to believe in the possibility of a reunification as a productive point of contemplation. As a result, in between these two spaces I will be tying these reunification ribbons along the fence to symbolize my response to the ongoing crisis of the division. The blue of the buildings is echoed in the colour of the fencing, which contrasts with the industrial orange colour of the reunification ribbons. At times, viewers may choose to interact with this ritualistic tying of ribbons by adding their own ribbons. The length of my interactive performance is six days so that I may draw upon my experience of this transformative labour throughout its duration. In this component of the exhibition, I mourn for the family I have lost in the war—first in the division between North and South Korea, and then to the famine. I also mourn for those whom I cannot name and whom have been victimized by the division of the war. As such, this work is an attempt to honour victims of the Korean War and to make explicit my hybrid Korean-Canadian being.

The experience of silence surrounding the Korean War is the reason why I need to convey empathy for the loss in the artwork that I make. Through an empathic response, I can convey a better understanding of the war to those around me in Canada. Feeling empathy for loss has the potential to ask us to rethink our day-to-day lives, making possible the experience of intervention in society. Dominick LaCapra insists in *Writing History, Writing*
Trauma, that the after effects of a psychologically traumatized postmodern culture, such as the “hauntingly possessive ghosts,” affect everyone as opposed to anyone. In other words, feeling haunted by traumatic events can and should be encoded as affect in those who experience them, even through others. In my work responding to the Korean War and diaspora, I aim to acknowledge specific sites of traumatic loss from this need to empathize. My installation proposes to provide a means to unpack the trauma of the war and diaspora experience through re-enactments of my life experience.

The feeling of loss and emptiness surrounding the Korean War has been driving my need to exercise transformative labour in my artwork. I have a desire to somehow honour the victims of the war and ongoing division through the act of meditating upon the trauma from the war. In my performance artwork, From a Convenience Store, I inquire whether a performance-based project understood as an alternative form of artistic labour can act as a means of meaningful expression about such prolonged wounds. Thus, over the course of seven days of interaction with visitors, I will have the place and time to mourn and empathize for those who have been and remain divided due to war. This empathic expression (and labour) is neither completely capitalist nor utopic in nature, but rather it is the kind of work that comes from a human need to mourn. It is about the physical desire to enact empathy. This performance work will be an attempt to transform my family’s loss into a space that indexes these fractured spaces as part of the life of a Korean-Canadian living in North America.

In Tourists in the Division and Interview with an ESL Learner, two documentary-style videos I have recorded are displayed on opposite sides of the gallery walls and show two very different monologues about the war. One monologue is from the perspective of an American soldier giving a tour of the JSA blue building in the DMZ. The other monologue is from a South Korean civilian who is learning English as a second language and shares her logic about who is to blame for the war. In this artwork, we have two very different voices on the subject of the war, both of which indicate how the war is being mediated differently depending on to whom you speak. In this scenario, native Koreans feel conflicted about whom to believe is to blame for the war, while American soldiers confidently assert their presence in South Korea to defend it from the North Koreans. Tourists in the Division and Interview with an ESL Learner attempt to illustrate how the war is a product of complex political and cultural interactions; conditions that have caused this first Cold War to last for
over 63 years. It is problematic that there is difficulty in accessing the content of the cause of war for North Americans who have fought and are still fighting in this war. Why is it that we are not being encouraged to evaluate the root causes of the war through news reportage directly? How does the news completely obliterate any sense of specificity about the war, while ignoring the depravity of the North Korean famine and concentration camps? My artwork is about bringing people, including Korean-Canadians, closer to the subjects of the war and trauma through empathy.

In my photographs, titled Building On Bloody Mountain, I have documented the ceilings of a site where the Korean War partly began: in the “North Korean Labour Party Building.” One part of my desire is to provide a space to address the silence for those who feel an absence about the forgotten war by claiming this site as a place of violence. Another part is to show the remains of a tormented surface. While they are indexical, these images cannot possibly represent the trauma of the war. In a way, the artwork is a pair of abstract photographs of the space that look like a scarred surface. In another, it is an attempt to fill the void: a metaphor. Across these images, I am interested in how to further acknowledge and attempt to claim the traumatic violence caused by the war. Further in his text, Dominick LaCapra asserts the significance of indirect truth claims as metaphors that serve as an alternative methodology to approaching historiography:

At the very least, the complex relation of narrative structures to truth claims might provide a different understanding of modern and postmodern realism [...] wherein correspondence itself is not to be understood in terms of positivism or essentialism but as a metaphor that signifies a referential relation (or truth claim) that is more or less indirect [...] 10

A truth claim in the form of an artwork can operate in place of a verbal testimonial that is suggestive of the subject matter rather than directly objectifying the subject of trauma. What interests me about having a metaphorically referential truth claim is that such an attestation can broadly attest to the traumatic reality that the war has inflicted on so many by simply referring to the site of loss. My photo-based documentations can potentially allow my viewer to locate a site where victims of the war suffered: at the 38th parallel where the North Korean Labour Party Building has been situated for over 60 years (The viewer will know that these images are of the specific building through the titling of the artwork). The images are installed in a way in which the viewer must gaze up at the photographs, so that she/he can

imagine being physically located in the remains of the building itself. By intentionally positioning the images on a diagonal angle high up on the gallery walls to occupy a psychological space, it is possible that my viewer could feel that these photographs are still haunted by the people who died here. In this way, these works attest to a form of metaphorical truth claim that is as much about expression as it is about not being able to represent the trauma from the war. They symbolize the truth about pain and a truth about traumatic loss that provides a means of relief, fulfilling a desire to express more emotion for the victims of the war. I am interested in how a metaphorical truth claim can potentially acknowledge the trauma and wounds that are caused by the war for the North American Korean diaspora.

In my time-based video installation piece, titled *Prisoners Once Here*, I am interested in proposing a connection to the individuals who died in Seodaemun Prison due to the militarization and industrialization of the country. Seodaemun Prison is where anti-colonial activists were held during Japan’s colonization in World War II and by the military dictatorship during the Korean War. The piece attempts to acknowledge this site as a place of historical violence. What the viewer sees is a slowed-down and blurry video documentation of my footsteps following a path of bricks that demarcate the past prisoner cell walls as raindrops stain the surface of the bricks. This piece suggests a metaphorical relationship between the memorial site for prisoners of war in Seodaemun Prison and me, the artist. It is through this site that I feel empathy for the prisoners whose lives can be represented only through their remaining products of forced labour—the bricks they created during their imprisonment. In 1908, the prison was first a labour camp called Gyeongsong Prison that produced bricks, which were used to update the prison, and then the prison was later renamed Seodaemun Prison in 1920.\(^{11}\) It is my intention for this artwork to possibly honour this place, which is now used as an historical museum. In this video installation, the feeling of trauma can potentially be directed to an acknowledgement of the loss of an unrepresentable number of lives in this prison.

My artwork references Korean-Canadian diaspora as a populace that is still haunted by a complex political struggle, but more-so as one that has experienced so much trauma and loss that I am compelled to mourn for the sufferers through my installation and performance to leave a cultural trace of this history for the future. Making this body of work has allowed

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\(^{11}\) Jeong Hyeon Ju, *Seodaemun Prison History Hall* (Seoul: Seodaemun Prison History Hall, 2010), 123.
me to share the burden of silenced, transferred trauma through empathic artworks. What I convey through this body of work can only skim the surface of a war history that is still ongoing and with losses that remain untold and uncommunicable. In *From a Convenience Store*, I respond to the silence of Korean-Canadian history by mourning for the victims and family members I have lost due to the division in Korea. In *Tourists in the Division* and *Interview with an ESL Learner* I question the politics of the mediated content of the war. In *Building on Bloody Mountain*, I place the subjectivity of the viewer in the place of the sufferer through a metaphorical truth claim. Finally, in *Prisoners Once Here*, I create a place to honour the repetition of loss for Koreans in the West, and here in Canada. More specifically, in *Across Boundaries*, I find a way to this loss through artistic practices that emerge from empathy. My exhibition provides a means to think about the significant losses that came about from the unresolved nature of the Korean War. It is my hope that this project is one that can help acknowledge the loss this war has caused so many while knowing that it cannot yet be fully memorializable or representable since the war is still ongoing and the extent of its atrocities unknown.

My art practice strives to engage others with a creative experience that is as much about recognizing a traumatic past as it is about communicating loss. Working in contrast to one another, my individual installation components strive to evoke a sense of awareness for the pain that the Korean War has caused for a generation of immigrants here in Canada as part of their fragmented journeys. *Across Boundaries* is about revealing the hidden tension between boundaries we experience as victims of this war. The resulting exhibition is not to create a conclusive homogenous whole. These artworks comprise an installation exhibition that is necessarily disjointed, in part, due to the varying elements of time, space, and cultures that I address. In fact, my practice is about recognizing and creating aesthetic work that conveys the important complexity of trauma for the Korean diaspora that can only refer to parts of a layered hybridized identity. I hope that these artworks can communicate greater acknowledgement for the Korean War across geographical boundaries.
Bibliography


Practice Documentation

*Corner Store*

This tightly framed video traces the interior ceiling corners of a convenience store conveying the banal or neglected architectural details. In the background there is ambient music playing from a radio and the repetitive sound of a 6/49 lottery machine.

Date: video documentation made in Brantford, Ontario in 2012, video completed in 2013
Media: video projection
Dimensions: 8’x6’
Duration: 2:46 minutes (looped)

*Corner Store*, image still from video

*Corner Store*, image still from video
Corner Store, image still from video

Corner Store, image still from video
Building on Bloody Mountain

These images are documentations of the interior space of the North Korean Labour Party Building found just south of the divide. The building functioned as an interrogation building between 1945-1950 before preceding the physical outbreak of war and remains standing to this day in what was once known as Bloody Mountain, in the town of Cheorwon.

Date: photographic documentation made in 2012 in Cheorwon, photographs completed in 2014
Media: digital Epson Premium Luster photographs
Dimensions: images vary in size from 20"x30" up to 87"x58"
Installation Detail: final two photographs are displayed on a diagonal angle from the wall

Building on Bloody Mountain, The Artlab Gallery, installation view (in progress artwork)
Building on Bloody Mountain, The Artlab Gallery, detail view

Building on Bloody Mountain A., The Artlab Gallery, detail view
Building on Bloody Mountain B., The Artlab Gallery, detail view
Prisoners Once Here

In this artwork, I walk along a path of bricks in Seodaemun Prison that once were prisoner cells during the Japanese colonial era and military dictatorship in Korea between 1908 and 1987. The bricks themselves are products of the labour enforced upon the prisoners who have now perished.

Date: video documentation made in 2012 in Seoul, South Korea, video completed in 2014
Media: video projection
Dimensions: 8’x4.5’
Duration: 30:00 minutes (looped)
Prisoners Once Here, image still from video

Prisoners Once Here, image still from video
Tourists in the Division and Interview With an ESL Learner

These two videos portray divergent interpretations of the Korean War from the perspective of an American soldier and an ESL Student, respectively. In Tourists in the Division, a tour guide is speaking in the background translating what the American soldier is saying in the blue Joint Security Buildings in the Demilitarized Zone. In contrast, Interview with an ESL Learner portrays a civilian student who is contemplating who is to blame for the war.

Date: Video documentation made in the DMZ, South Korea in 2012, artwork completed in 2014
Dimensions: 5’x3’ and 5x3’
Media: video projections
Duration: Tourists in the Division 1:22 minutes (looped) and Interview With an ESL Learner 1:24 minutes (looped)

Tourists in the Division, image still from video
Tourists in the Division, image still from video
in the Korean War, the --hmm-- the reason is other countries’ problem

So --uh-- but my husband blames North Korea.

Interview With an ESL Learner, image still from video
Interview With an ESL Learner, image still from video

Like my teacher.

But I didn’t think about it like that.

Interview With an ESL Learner, image still from video
**From a Convenience Store**

At the 38th parallel between the two Koreas is the most heavily militarized belt in the world with over 1 million soldiers along the border, prepared with combat readiness. The video of the Joint Security Area (JSA) division is projected behind a fenced convenience store. The artist is tying reunification ribbons along the fenced store while the JSA video pans from one building to the next in slow increments of time. This performance and installation represents the existence of the division and the traumatic divide for the citizens for the two Koreas. I am interested in a juxtaposition of the convenience store with the war. Such a framing could potentially initiate an increase in awareness, about the current division and silence surrounding the war.

Date: video documentation made in the DMZ, South Korea in 2012, artwork completed in 2014
Dimensions: gallery installation includes 16’x9’ looped video projection, 20’x10’ fencing unit, 10’x4’ photograph
Media: video projection, fencing, vinyl digital photograph, orange ribbon
Installation Detail: performance includes tying of reunification ribbons

*From a Convenience Store, detail of Joint Security Area (JSA) projection*
*From a Convenience Store*, The Artlab Gallery, installation view of Joint Security Area (JSA) projection, blue fencing and reunification ribbon for performance

*From a Convenience Store*, detail of vinyl digital photograph
From a Convenience Store, detail of Joint Security Area (JSA) projection and convenience store vinyl photograph
Convenience Store Counters, The Artlab Gallery, installation view

Convenience Store Counters, The Artlab Gallery, installation view
Convenience Store Counters, detail view

Convenience Store Counters, detail view
Interview Preface

I met Do Ho Suh in Gwangju city, South Korea on the 32nd anniversary of the Gwangju Massacre. This historical massacre occurred when President Chun Doo-Hwan and his army opened fire on thousands of civilians, mostly students from Chonnam University, killing over 200 and injuring over 800. The students were protesting against Chun’s imposition of martial law and were rallying in the hopes of acquiring a more democratic movement. It was due to this massacre in South Korea that, as a response to the devastating losses, Chun and his party were charged with treason and imprisoned for life.

Prior to meeting Do Ho Suh for this interview, I had visited his major solo exhibition at the Leeum Samsung Gallery in Seoul. In this interview, Suh generously gave much time and consideration in answering my questions about his art practice in relation to identity and the transition between different global cultures. I was particularly interested in his concept of “Home Within a Home,” and asking, artist-to-artist, about his position in relation to the history of people leaving Korea due to the war, and also to see if elements of trauma from the war had an impact on his practice.

I had the opportunity to speak with Do Ho Suh about his art practice in relation to the notion of home as “infinitely transportable.” My aim in this interview was to learn more about the connection between the Korean War and diaspora movements to North America. I wanted to further my understanding of his relationship to the trauma of the war and to perhaps open up a dialogue related to this. Throughout the following interview, we could hear in the background the sounds of assistants creating wall rubbings on the interior walls of the abandoned schoolhouse. This was in preparation for the artist’s Rubbing Project 1:Gwangju Catholic University Lifelong Institute piece, a work that would eventually appear in the 2012 Gwangju Biennale.
Interview

YOO: As a first-generation Korean immigrant, what role do you see a personal experience of diaspora playing in your work?

SUH: Although I am technically a first generation Korean immigrant, I don’t think I quite fit the standard definition. A first generation Korean immigrant is someone born in Korea who moves to another country. A “1.5” generation immigrant applies to someone who was born in Korea but immigrated with their parents. Then there is the second-generation Korean immigrant born outside of the country.

My experience is different from that of earlier waves of Korean immigrants. Those who went to US in the 1950s after the Korean War left for economical or political reasons, to lead a better life. Then there was also a wave of well-educated and highly skilled Koreans such as doctors who went to the US in the 1960s and 1970s. I left Korea in the 1990’s—with different reasons from those of earlier waves of Korean immigrants—at a time when Korea was doing well economically, with the sense that I could go back any time. So essentially my experience as an immigrant is mixed.

Not only is my experience as a Korean immigrant different from those who left with a sense of hopelessness about life in Korea, mine is also different because I fall in between “immin”, meaning immigration and “uhak”, when someone leaves to study. “Uhak” is often only temporary—people plan to go back home. My case was simultaneously “immin” and “uhak”. I started attending university as soon as I got to the US, but I was also married to a Korean American so technically my main reason for leaving Korea was “immin”. Although I didn’t know what was going to happen, I knew that I wasn’t going back right away. My situation was quite unusual—I was a Korean man married to a Korean American woman and then I moved to the U.S. This is in contrast to the wave of Korean women who married American G.I.s and then immigrated to the U.S. after the War.

The term “Korean diaspora” defines a community of Koreans that is outside the homeland. There is the kind of Korean diaspora centuries old comprised of communities forced to
relocate such as during the Chinese and Japanese invasions. Then there is the North American history of Korean diaspora, which came from a different set of circumstances. Looking into the complex history of Korean immigration, I find that the Korean diaspora is actually hard to define and is not necessarily bound by economic or political factors. Yet I still wouldn't say that I fit into a general definition of Korean diaspora, as I am not part of one particular immigrant community—I understand myself as a hybrid, somewhere in-between communities, and as a citizen of the world.

YOO: Do you know about other diaspora Koreans who immigrated to North America right after the war for various reasons?

SUH: Because there are many different categories of Korean immigrants, the contemporary notion of diaspora is more complicated than that of wartime Korea. The people I know that left in the 1950’s and 1960’s are my parents’ friends, relatives and their children. I also happen to know third- and fourth-generation Koreans from that time who were part of a wave of immigrants sent to work on sugarcane farms in Hawaii at the turn of the century.

YOO: Your work is discussed as an example of Korean nomadism in the book, “Diaspora,” which is part of the “Art and Culture” series published by Holly Co., I wonder, do you see your work closely related to the term “diaspora” as part of your identity as an immigrant in North America?

SUH: I don’t think it is accurate to associate me with the term diaspora, neither personally nor through my work. It is really how you want to define the word diaspora. In a sense it was an easy decision for me to leave the US—I am not bound to one place. I find life in the UK as being more of a culture shock than when I immigrated to the US. Growing up in Korea, my generation was very familiar with American culture through the U.S. military based in Korea. Being a Korean immigrant in the US doesn’t define me. I did not go back for a year and a half when I first moved to the US. I traveled once or twice a year during my school days. After that, because of my other projects and exhibitions, I come back here quite often. I never felt as if I completely left Korea or as if I completely settled in the U.S.
YOO: So you’re saying with deepening globalization there’s a new type of nomadism characterizing the diaspora condition? Is that because of the increase in flights to and from South Korea and developments in technology such as the Internet, email and news reportage that makes living abroad less difficult?

SUH: I think so. The ease of travel and also the Internet bring me closer to home. Up until 1982 it was difficult for Koreans to travel freely, especially for sightseeing, but even going abroad to study was limited to university level and still strictly regulated. After 1982, Korean children could also go abroad to study. Compared to other Korean students, I was somewhere in between a first and a 1.5-generation immigrant. Leaving the family home was a more significant issue for my parents, over the factors of marriage and immigration. Now there is a back and forth between the cultures. It’s partially a result of globalization and also the growth of Korean culture and the confidence to encourage reverse immigration. Korea is a more desirable place than before because of its strong economy and interesting culture. You see the rise of Korea pop culture as a major influence and people have direct real-time access to it through the Internet. There is a different flow now. There is no delay. You see in places like L.A. and New York where there are significant Korean communities that there is reverse immigration happening. Older Korean immigrants are going back. Third- or fourth-generation kids are going to Korea to become pop stars. You see more of this reverse immigration and a returning back. So it is very different now. Before, immigrants brought their cultures (suspended in time) to their new countries but now there is a back and forth between the two places, making things fluid and dynamic.

YOO: In the exhibition “Home Within Home,” at Leeum Gallery in Seoul, why was it important for you to bring your traditional Korean home back to South Korea?

SUH: I think it probably has to do with my idiosyncratic upbringing and background. Having my parents, and living in a traditional Korean house—which is not just any house—it has so much of a story behind it. It represents, in a way, a Koreanness because it is probably the last generation of this type of house. At least in the 70’s nobody else was building a traditional Korean house. At that time, everybody wanted to build modern, western-style houses. In a way, we were kind of going backwards since our house was actually modeled
after one of the palace buildings. This building was a sort of simulation of a Korean scholar’s house—built in the palace complex because the King wanted to experience the life of the scholar. It didn’t have a functional purpose or origin because it was not a real house for a scholar. It was a house that simulated the scholar’s house for the King. So my father used this house as a model, a hundred and fifty years after the real house was demolished. It was quite removed. There was no original, basically. It has been considered the most beautiful scholar-style Korean house from that time. I grew up and lived in this space. I also witnessed the entire process of making it. The people who built the house, the carpenters, the stonemasons, and the ironmongers are all likely the last generation of these craftspeople. They were all already really old guys when they were working on my parents’ place. In fact, most of them including the master carpenter worked at the palaces at the end of the Chosun Dynasty. Then they all passed away. In a way, this house preserves this type of architecture in its most truthful way prior to the entry of Western, modern and industrial influences. It is probably the last of its kind. For a long time, the majority of Koreans didn’t want to live in traditional buildings because they thought they were inconvenient and out of fashion. Now, there’s a revival. People have more interest in traditional Korean buildings and as a result have started restoring traditional Korea houses, which until recently had largely fallen into disrepair.

Anyway, my father, who is a very famous painter and scholar, influenced me by creating an environment for his children that was not only creative but also deeply rooted in authentic Korea culture. I think my upbringing and education was a little bit different from the rest of the Koreans at that time. So when I went to the US, the way I experienced my new surroundings and architectural spaces was probably quite different from other Koreans. Because I have this sort of knowledge and experience of Korean architecture by actually living in it, it did not just come from my thinking, but actually through my experience, which was quite rare at that time for most Koreans. So my awareness of my surroundings and home and how my spatial awareness developed are probably quite different from that of a lot of other Koreans. This has probably made me think more about the notion of home in different cultures in terms of space, particularly personal space and the idea of displacement. At the “Home Within Home” exhibition at Leeum, in addition to my Korean home I also had my New York home and Berlin home.
For me the significance of the “Home Within Home” show was that I had all of my homes in one space. Previously I had not had a chance to bring all these homes together in one place, and also the Leeum show was my first major exhibition in Korea since I left for the US. So this notion of home came out naturally as part of my art practice.

YOO: Is your practice as an artist based on your processing of space and place by making a comparison between a past home and a sense of a new home? I am wondering if you feel there might be a nostalgic element in your project?

SUH: I never meant to make all of my homes. It came out naturally as a way for me to process my environment. The reason I was recreating my home in fabric was not because of nostalgic sentiments. The term “processing” as you put it is particularly appropriate as I was responding to new environments and surroundings. My pieces are a physical manifestation of this processing and dealing with the new environment. It is about how I negotiate and adjust myself to new surroundings. Basically, it’s a very simple survival mechanism. I have a tendency to analyze a given situation and make the best out of it and to try to feel comfortable in a new environment. My work comes out of a constant negotiation with my surroundings. The notion of home and personal space…those things are one of the many things I have had to deal with. It takes a while for those ideas or experiences to become more tangible into an art form. I’m not quite sure how to define the mechanism of that or why a particular work came about and was realized. It isn’t necessarily easy to explain that one piece gets prioritized over another. You have to have the right sort of conditions to give birth to these new pieces. For me, since becoming a professional artist, certain work, related to “space” and “home” came before other pieces. This resulted in a body of work. I didn’t try to be that way. It just happened. That’s, however, how people or an audience may see my art practice and my body of work. But for me it is just one of many different things. These works happened to have the chance to come out even though it wasn’t necessarily my intention. The only way that I can explain it is that it is probably “injeon.” Do you know this Korean expression? “Injeon” is like fate. I didn’t have control over what came out first. The space, the house, or shelter was not necessarily my priority, but it turned out to be the works
that I have made so far. For the last ten or twelve years it has been my main focus but it’s not my main focus.

YOO: Then, for you, what becomes the main focus in your artwork?

SUH: It’s kind of everything. It could be anything. Anything from life. I haven’t had the chance to make something about food—cooking and recipes. I don’t think it is any less important than my house projects. It just hasn’t had the chance to come out yet.

YOO: Are you interested in cultural function and specificity of food, as in the earlier work of Rirkrit Tiravanija or perhaps how food passed through different cultures?

SUH: It is about specific recipes—my mother’s recipes that had been my mother’s recipes. It is about something that has been passed down from generation to generation and also how the same recipe is little bit different from family to family. It is a sort of heritage that has survived for many years. Almost like Karma. A good example of this would be ‘Kimchi’. We, Koreans, collectively know what Kimchi is and what it tastes like, but in fact, each family’s kimchi recipe is slightly different and tastes different. I am interested in this notion of a general and collective memory and how this memory becomes specific and personal depending on the individual.

It’s quite similar to my attempt to bring my own home wherever I go. Maybe I should master one of my mom’s recipes or dishes that you cannot find in a restaurant. Learning my mom’s recipes would be my project. I always describe my fabric pieces as clothing that you can fold into a suitcase and carry with you. My mom’s recipe could be something that tags along with my fabric pieces. Other pieces related to food and clothing will come out later. For me, as an artist, I’m always thinking about all these elements together as one.

YOO: Do you find that your artworks concern living in a global culture while moving from one place to another and longing to bridge those two places together?
SUH: My work is very autobiographical in the way that it reflects my own experience of moving from one place to another. I am in constant negotiation with the unfamiliarity and sense of discomfort that comes out of new environments. My work comes out of that urgency so at least at the beginning stage, it is all about my situation and myself. I don’t start out by making my art for other people. At the beginning the impulse to make something is also a self-indulgent act. I don’t necessarily make an added effort to communicate with other people through my work, it just does.

The idea of what global culture is should be questioned as it can be quite limited and often profit driven—which is heavily criticized. But when travelling, to a remote area in China or Africa for example, sometimes the access to the familiarity of American franchises can be a relief. On the other hand when I travel in Europe I like to experience cultural differences between countries. So Globalization is a constant dilemma—we need a balance between the local and global.

YOO: Since your work is autobiographical, I wonder if your parents were affected by the war?

SUH: Of course they were. Everybody was affected. I don’t think it was just Koreans. If anything happens somewhere or anywhere on the planet, whether you notice or not, it has an impact.

YOO: I am so often struck by how unknown the war is to so many people outside of South Korea. In Canada, while growing up, I found many people had little knowledge of the Korean War. In the U.S.A. the actual battle between 1950-1953 is often called the “Forgotten War.” Right now the war is still going on, but it seems that many Koreans do not have a global voice to communicate the current political situation.

SUH: I am not sure why it has become the ‘Forgotten War’ honestly. Maybe because it was right after WWII or because Korea was a small country so not that many people knew about it? Perhaps people in West felt it was not their war?
YOO: I feel it is a coping mechanism. In order to feel at peace, people repress or fear the past.

SUH: It could be.

YOO: Because we’re in Gwangju and it is May 18th (well it is exactly 32 years since the massacre) I am wondering if you could share how this affected you?

SUH: I was a high school student in 1980, and it was right before I went to college. I knew something was going on, but everything was censored and controlled by the government. So I didn’t have the entire picture of what was going on. Also, I was quite young, naïve, and we were all very busy and preoccupied with preparing for the college entrance exam. So finally when I went to college, students from the Gwangju area started to talk about what happened. That was the first time I learned about both sides of the story. Not only was it quite distressing to hear about these terrible things that had happened in Gwangju, but also that I had not been aware of this happening even though I was in Seoul, only four hours away by car.

My understanding of what had happened stayed that way for a long time. In a way the project that I’m doing here for the Gwangju Biennial, is about trying to understand how we construct our memory and history. How history becomes validated. At what point and how much information would you need to establish something as being part of history? As a Korean who was living at that particular time, most of us did not know what was going on in Gwangju. I’m trying to understand and/or at least bring up these untold stories about the things that happened in these spaces. I feel that’s all I can do as an outsider.

YOO: I am also interested in your video piece called “Gate,” installed at the Leeum Samsung Gallery in Seoul right now. It was through this piece that I discovered that you also worked in new media.

SUH: In fact I had made several video projection pieces, which I showed in 1998 at ICC in Tokyo, Japan. This was my first official solo show. I tend to forget about this. When I was
doing some interviews with the Korean media for the Leeum opening, most people had not seen these early video projections so they all thought that it was a new direction for me. I in fact said that it was, and that I was going to use more moving images in the future. But then, after the interview, I remembered that I had already made several video pieces in the past. After that initial body of video pieces, I then primarily made sculptural installation pieces, which is why people mostly perceive me as a sculptor.

YOO: Well, you integrated the two in that one piece—which was very interesting.

SUH: It just came very naturally, I think. It was commissioned by Seattle Art Museum (SAM). It was a product of the dialogue that I had with the Curator regarding the Asian Art collection at SAM. Given that I had a very short period of time to finish the project, I’m happy with how it turned out. It’s a bit difficult for me to bring that piece to Leeum because I created it specifically for SAM, and it is a site-specific piece. At Leeum it loses something without the original context. I tried to bring the context by having special print outs and information about the piece at SAM—no other piece has that in the rest of the Leeum show. Still, 90% of the context for the ‘Gate’ piece was missing from the Leeum exhibition because you would have to see all the collection and the way it was arranged at SAM for the exhibition in order to fully understand the work. The imagery of crows, deer and such in my piece, is specific to the SAM collection. There you could actually go in and out of my piece and see the piece in the context of the collection that inspired me. But here at Leeum, you don’t have that. I wouldn’t create that kind of animation in a vacuum. That is not the way I work. I always need to have some sort of reference point. Context is always very important. That’s what I like about site-specific projects.

YOO: Because there’s the home in L.A., home in South Korea, home in New York, and so on, the whole exhibition in Leeum appears different depending on what space you see inside the exhibition spaces… in a way, I think it works because it integrates your renewed interest in new media combined with your sculptural practice. However, to know “Gate” was part of a specific exhibition seems quite important.
SUH: Probably subconsciously, I had hoped that all those five different homes could be in one place at some point in my life. But I never planned for all those pieces to be altogether in one space, until now. Probably by putting those pieces together in one space, I gained something. But also, I probably lost something from the works because they were shown in a different context. It’s interesting to think that at some point it had to be done that way.

YOO: Was this your decision or a curatorial decision?

SUH: It was my decision. The physical limitations of the space also allowed me to create the show that way. The Leeum Samsung Museum of Art’s more peripheral spaces are very difficult to work with for most artists—you have a skylight, but there are black concrete boxes right above you. Then there are also small in-between spaces. There are three spaces that almost limit you to showing wall-based work, but I proactively used those spaces to show my fabric pieces. In fact I love working with those difficult spaces. My intention was to create an exhibition that does not have a center, center of gravity or central focal point. Apart from a common space in the center, all the pieces were on the periphery. The empty central space became an important way to connect these five different homes. Conceptually it was an interesting experiment for me to play with the idea of five homes that were never made to exist together in one place.

YOO: May I ask what project you are working on for the Gwangju Biennial in this abandoned schoolhouse?

SUH: I think Gwangju lost its vitality after the city center was moved in late 90’s from its original location to the current one as part of a government-initiated development plan. The new city center is Gwangju’s financial and shopping/entertainment center whereas the old center is historically important as it was tied to the Gwangju Democratization Movement. Even though these buildings in the old city center are no longer in use, they are of historical significance, and as a result they cannot be torn down to build new ones. This situation has created a kind of limbo, a vacuum between the two city centers. So for my piece I chose three spaces that have similar fates. I am trying to remember, imagine, ask, offer, or try to make a gesture to bring these untold stories from these spaces where these historic events took place.
Once this piece is done, I will transport it to Seoul and recreate the room with these rubbings, which are almost like wallpaper or unique prints. It is not a casting but an impression of the actual surface.

The act of making these rubbings creates a different relationship between you and the place. You have to touch the walls in order to make them. In a sense we are blind to things when they are happening even though we can see and experience them happening. Then we try to recollect already imperfect memories and create a story, which then becomes history. It’s so interesting how these stories are constructed and become history. It’s inevitable that things are fragmented and big chunks of the story are missing. This is not just the case with these landmark buildings. The entire city was affected by this historical event so I want to revisit these places between the landmarks to try and understand what happened in Gwangju during that historical event. For me it’s quite an emotional gesture, in comparison to my other pieces. There’s a history that’s being made, and I am part of that process. Especially as an artist, I am trying to connect these forgotten places to historical sites, forgotten places that might not be remembered otherwise except through this process of creating the wall rubbings.

One more thing I can tell you about this project is that we are going to be working on three rooms in different places in the city and in one of the spaces, which is a little bit smaller, we’re going to blindfold ourselves while we do the rubbing, so that’s going to be quite interesting. We’re going to use a chunky piece of graphite and rub it really hard so it will be a very dark and have a stark look. We will also be documenting the process. So each room will be treated differently. I’m quite excited about how things would turn out with the blindfold. It’s a metaphor of what I’m trying to do in terms of the history that I belong to but don’t have access to now and didn’t have access to when it was happening. When we make the rubbing we’ll be blind. We don’t think we’re blind, but we’re blind. There’s an expression in Korean—you’re eyes are open so you think you can see, but you’re blind, since you can only see what you want to see. In other words, you cannot see everything, “noon dun jang mi”. Physically your eyes are open but you’re blind. You don’t look like you’re blind, you don’t think your blind, but you’re blind. Or you’re not capable of seeing certain things. It’s that kind of inability to see. Well, I was a high school kid at the time of the
Movement, so what did I know. I am still sometimes embarrassed by my ambivalence during that time. Making the rubbing while blindfolded and trying to get the texture of the space is similar to the gesture of trying to figure out what really happened.
Curriculum Vitae

**BORN** 14 July 1981 North York, Ontario, Canada

**EDUCATION**
2014  Master of Fine Arts, University of Western, London  ON
2005  Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours, York University, Toronto  ON

**SELECTED EXHIBITIONS**
2014  *Across Boundaries*, The Artlab Gallery, Western University, London, ON
2012  *Wall on Wall*, Art Gallery of Peterborough, Peterborough  ON  
       *Make/Shift*, The Artlab Gallery, Western University, London  ON
2007  *A Month of Photography*, Gallery Streetsville, Mississauga  ON  
       *Looking Back*, CONTACT Photography Festival, Leonardo Gallery, Toronto  ON
2005  *Photography Area Show*, The Gallery, York University, Toronto  ON  
       *The Reproducibles*, The Gallery, York University, Toronto  ON
2004  *the space of the void*, The Gallery, York University, Toronto  ON  
       *in these corners...one may reside*, The Gallery, York University
2003  *Chapter One*, AKASA Gallery, York University, Toronto  ON  
       *Rubicel*, The Gallery, York University, Toronto  ON  
       *La Flâneuse*, Eleanor Winters Gallery, York University, Toronto  ON
2001  *Soft Like Blue*, Samuel J. Zacks Art Gallery, York University, Toronto  ON  
       *Fell Intu It*, Eleanor Winters Gallery, York University, Toronto  ON
2000  *Moving Trances*, Akin…“The Space Next Door,” Peterborough  ON

**UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE**
WESTERN UNIVERSITY, London ON, Jan–Apr 2014
*Advanced Studio Seminar Graduate Teaching Assistant*
• Aided in assessing both the studio and seminar components of the class.
• Worked as a second critique specialist in the student critiques and kept records.
• Made written comments on course assignments.
• Kept grade records and made considered valuable commentary on evaluations.

WESTERN UNIVERSITY, London ON, Sept 2012–Jan 2013
*Advanced Photography Graduate Teaching Assistant*
• Organized, designed and conducted lectures, demonstrations, and critiques while assisting course instructor.
• Demonstrated technical skills handling digital cameras, Photoshop software, and lighting equipment.
• Gave one-on-one feedback on the development of student projects and work progress.

WESTERN UNIVERSITY, London ON, Jan–Apr 2012
*Drawing Explorations Graduate Co-Instructor*
• Prepared the class topics for instruction and parameters of what will be taught in each class.
• Provided clear instructions of what to do for each in class project as well as away from class.
• Gave consistent feedback on the development of student’s skills in class as well as with homework.
• Marked all class work, homework, projects, attendance and participation.
WESTERN UNIVERSITY, London ON, Sept–Dec 2011

Digital Photography Graduate Teaching Assistant
• Demonstrated technical skills handling digital cameras, photoshop software and lighting equipment
• Assisted course instructor with lectures, demonstrations and critiques
• Gave one-on-one feedback on the development of student projects

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

MUSEUM LONDON, London ON, Jun–Aug 2012
Lead Instructor Photography Camp
• Organized, designed and conducted all camp programs for the proper and smooth operations of the children’s camp.
• Taught individual and group projects, both with digital and analog imagery.

ART GALLERY OF PETERBOROUGH, Peterborough ON, July–Sept 2011
Gallery Assistant
• Acquisitions reports, handled permanent collection and photographic documentation of artworks.
• Exhibition preparation, including communicating with artists and worked on artist texts to promote their work.
• Strong interpersonal skills in dealing with the public and group dynamics in a courteous manner.
• Strong background with various art forms and methodologies.

YORK UNIVERSITY, Toronto ON, Sept 2004–May 2005
Photography Lab Technician
• Assisted class demonstrations and gave technical support
• Monitored equipment, changed chemistry, kept studio clean and ensured workplace safety

REVIEWS AND ESSAYS
Cameron, Steve. Diana Yoo: Artist of the Month. MONDO Magazine March/April 2003: 3-5.

SCHOLARSHIPS, AWARDS, BURSARIES & GRANTS
2014 Faculty of Arts and Humanities Alumni Graduate Award, Western University
2012 José Luis Barrio-Garay Bursary, Western University
Faculty of Arts and Humanities Alumni Graduate Award, Western University
Society of Graduate Students OTSS Bursary, Western University
Society of Graduate Students Joint Fund (for MFA Exhibition and Brochure)
2011 Western Graduate Research Scholarship, Western University
2005 York University Project Grant
2004 The Louis Odette Sculpture Award, York University
   CASA Fall Project Grant, York University
   Winters Student Bursary Position, York University
2003 CASA Project Grant, York University
2002 The Gerard Sendrey Prize, York University
2001 Ferdous Akhter Memorial Bursary, York University
2000 York University Entrance Scholarship

**VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

2014 *Insight: Visual Arts Forum Committee Member, Western University*
2012 *Make/Shift Exhibition Funding Application, Western University*
2005 *Juror and Installation Assistant, Photography Area Show, York University*
2004 *Flipside Film Festival Juror and Coordinator, Nat Taylor Cinema, York University*
   *President, Fine Arts Student Government, York University*
   *York @ Propeller 2004 Exhibition Coordinator, Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts*
2003 *VP of Programmes, Fine Arts Student Government, York University*
   *The Sweet Soul Soiree Director and Juror, Winters Dining Hall, York University*

**WORKSHOPS**

2013 *Participant, Education for Global Citizenship, Future Professor Workshop, Western University,*
2011 *Participant, Effective Mentoring Workshop with Shawna Dempsy, OAAG, Art Gallery of Peterborough*