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Venice, a Passage to the World

Kyung-yun Ho / Editor in Chief



The year of the first Venice Biennale South Korea participated was not 1995, the year in which Korea obtained a pavilion, but in fact 1986. Korea then had been given a section of the Italian pavilion (wall space of 20 meters in length). Under the organization of the Korean Fine Arts Association and the support of the Arts Council Korea, groups of a commissioner and artists were selected for each Biennale: artists Dong-Chul Ha and Young Hoon Ko, and commissioner Lee Yil for the 42nd Biennale (1986); artists Seo-Bo Park and Kwan Su Kim, and commissioner Chong-Hyun Ha for the 43rd Biennale (1988); artists Myeong-Seop Hong and Sung-Mook Cho, and commissioner Seung-Taek Lee for the 44th Biennale (1990); and artist Jong-Hyun Ha and commissioner Seung-Won Suh for the 45th Biennale (1993).

In 1988 Seo-Bo Park and Chong-Hyun Ha had endured the hardships of not having a pavilion of their own, arriving just days before the opening, carrying the artwork with barely enough time to complete the installation. 27 years later they returned to Venice as participating artists. The *Dansaekhwa* exhibition posters, all over the city, attracted people who expressed their interest and making amusing attempts to pronounce the title of the exhibition. At the reception, internationally acclaimed curators and collectors scurried to have their photo taken with the aging artists from Korea. Kukje Gallery director Hyun-Sook Lee, who had played an imperative role in putting together the exhibition, wore a pleasing smile throughout, as she looked on. She urged the reporters that more support was needed to globalize Korean art. Having presented a solo exhibition of Bill Viola, as a collateral event with another gallery, as well as having sponsored the reception for the Korean Pavilion, Kukje Gallery is well aware of the place Venice holds in the art world.

Previously, many Korean artists had been introduced via the parallel exhibitions hosted by the Korean pavilion in 1995, *The Tiger's Tail* by the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art and *Asiana* by Fondazione Mudima. Since then, Ufan Lee and Atta Kim, each had a solo show in 2007, and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art presented *Who is Alice?* in 2013. The 2015 Biennale appears to have drawn the largest number of people from the Korean art scene. From the Giardini to the Arsenale, a wide selection of Korean art, by both rising and veteran artists, was exposed to public. These artists included Minjung Kim and Byoung-choon Park, who held solo shows; Ki-Woong Park, Myungil Lee, Lee Nam Lee, Soojin Cha, and Ho Han, who participated in the group show *Personal Structures*; Kim Joon and Chun Kwang Young, in the group show *Frontiers Reimagined*; and Lee Maelee in *Shan-Shui*. Also, Stephanie Seungmin Kim curated the exhibition *Sleepers in Venice*, which included artists Eemyun Kang, Hyeyoung Ku, Deokyeong Gim, Woody Kim, Hyunjoon E, and MR36, while the art initiative Nine Dragon Heads held an exhibition titled *Jump into the Unknown*. Venice is a "global platform" on which any and all who belong to the art world wish to stand, regardless of their job title, be they artists, curators, collectors, or gallerists.



Clockwise from top:
Chong-hyun Ha,
Conjunction 72-25,
200×100cm, 1974; Ufan
Lee, *Vestiges-A*, mixed me-
dia installation, 2015; Seo-
bo Park, *Ecriture No.55-73*,
195×291cm, 1973.

Page on the left
Lee-nam Lee, *Reborn
Light*, LCD, water,
90×90×520cm, 2015.



Clockwise from top left: Nine Dragon Heads' exhibition, a view of the entrance; Ufan Lee(6th from the right with a scarf) and staff on the *Dansaekhwa's* opening; Participants of the *Sleepers in Venice*; Seo-bo Park(left) and Chong-hyun Ha; Artist Ho Han next to his work.

Clockwise from top: Byung-choon Park, *Butcher's Shop*, 130 sumie, 2015; Joon Kim, *Ebony-Tiger*, C-print, 120x120cm, 2013; Jia Chang, *Song of Love*, 350x550cm, 2015.