

Yalu River Café

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Relativity transcends easy comparisons. Positions have both place, but also time, and both are subject to change. Physical units are variable and exist in both temporal and spatial dimensions, going through life and passing away. This process of change is space and time oriented. It's both dynamic and static, like a human-made clock.

From two different perspectives, the same situation will appear different. The reality of transnational economies and societies seem to be above simple "rights" and "wrongs". Modernist life demands simple choices, and though today we may have different perspectives, we still often have a monolithic view of the world. This global consciousness today, lost in an ocean of conditional variables, falls back onto us and induces a highly subjective state. We must resolve this cataclysm of relative perspective through reflection, and as Kant said, the arts are reflective. This is a process of dialectical exploration and unification. It's utilitarian in the sense that it's a reaction to emerging conditions. If viewed from different perspectives, however, it can become a paradigm shift ("paradigm shift of the physical") disjoining our values and shifting them into new positions.

As "proper space" is extended and expanded to "proper time", the speed we travel at through life has become a significant. In this aspect, Kant's aesthetic judgment that our perspectives are subjective means that intuitively embracing objectivity can lead to a philosophical explanation of the quality of life. To understand human social and other events, we should think about the concepts of "communication" and "consensus", as suggested by Habermass. To Habermass, consensus was the one and only democratic methodology with a chance for creating relationships between people and understanding events. In this respect, although Habermass is within the bounds of Kant's subjective view, the political and social directivity chosen by Habermass proves that his view of the world is different from Kant's formalist-oriented aesthetic view of the world. Habermass claims that humans come to understand the quality of their life through a life process, especially the process of labor. This shows that he is different from Kant, who pursued static subjectivism. It means that your life, irrespective of the form and quality, is philosophically different from others' with respect to your will to keep your own personal view of life along with your unique consciousness of the events that take place in this world.

<Yalu River Café> by Noa Im may sound spatially-oriented, due to the place-name "Yalu River" and the venue, a "café". However, most people will never stand beside the Yalu. It's just the name of a location on the map, until North and South Korea reunite or political issues between the countries are resolved. The Yalu is also related to a nostalgia for the past, prior to the Korean War in 1950. That nostalgia might have started with the fact that the Yalu is not a simple river, but a space shared by Koreans, a collective

imaginary border, a familiar space like a hill near someone's house. When something ordinary is considered taboo, it is natural that we feel a great sense of loss, based on the ordinariness and familiarity that have been projected onto the object. It can also be considered in connection with absence and desire, as suggested by Lacan, as the thing that is familiar but absent can be the root cause of the sense of loss, and also as a result the subject of intense desire.

What is the artist trying to say with <Yalu River Café>? She is creating an intersectional presentation, a cross-section of illusions that intersect with reality. This illusion does not long for a place that is real and absent at the same time. There's longing for existence, but equally it cannot be the subject of longing. More specifically, it longs for "Mother" as fundamental existence, as with Lacan's theory, rather than "Phallus" (in Freud's terms), as a cause of loss and absence. Documentation and fiction coexist in one space. Memory and reality intersect one another in one space. The video component of <Yalu River Café, 2015> reproduces this symbolic absence as an illusion that is intruding on reality. <The River I Must Cross, 2015>, a documentary film with an interview of a North Korean refugee, reproduces reality as an absence that cannot be reconciled with reality. Events that are real but illusory coexist together with reality, but before they can exist they become the subject of desire due to loss. This shows up the limits we face as trapped in historic situations.

The video recreates an artistic world based on real events. Each event does not belong to objective time, but lives in a subjective world. Events encountered by those refugees that escaped from North Korea belong to their own separate time. What they experienced is real. They are now in democratic South Korea, and their past experiences have become lingering traumas. Fortunately, their negative experiences came to an end and exist for them only as memories. In reality, however, the confrontational situation between the two Koreas still remains. For this reason, the time of North Korea is still marching on irrespective of how fast South Koreans and the refugees feel about their own personal time.

The artist tried to acquire scenes created by these divisive times. Images are definitely different from reality. This difference stems from the division that exists in reality. But she transits the division, created by the partition of the peninsula and social and cultural differences, to create an alternate time of "illusion". This is where the "proper" time of the photographer encounters the "proper" time of events in the video. But this encounter faces an ontological proposition: you cannot exist in two places at the same time. On the other hand, the difference between the time of the artist and the time of the events in the real world creates stories and may give insights into the direction and diversity in life.

<Yalu River Café > emerges into the middle of that region where time and space are tangled up, instead of viewing events currently taking place in our lives by separating the events in time and space. It suggests that you can place human existence and images in a place of dialectical change by viewing

events from one perspective, namely “spatio-temporality”, and that artistic events can breach these boundaries and help bring meaning and other perspectives to human life.