

## Art Competitions in the Age of Postmodernism: From Immigrants to Transnational Artists

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### **【Abstract】**

The paper questions issues of nationality, citizenship, ethnicity, and recognition of artistic merits within art competitions and art contests in the age of global migration and transnationalism. Several competition programs by national museums and cultural foundations to honor “Korean” artists are built upon an ambiguous concept of ethnicity, race, and citizenship. The question of nationality, citizenship, ethnicity, and recognition of artistic merits is not only pertinent to Korean artists in the global arena but also relevant to increasingly multicultural society within Korea. While many citizens chose or were forced to live overseas, South Korea has also experienced naturalized citizens among non-Korean ethnic groups. For both cases, common immigrant experiences such as the process of assimilation to or from Korea, absorption, schooling, or re-education of customs in the country of residence have become central to the life stories of the artists. More artists express locational identity and ethnic hybridity in relation to an imagined homeland whether they are based in Korea or working overseas. Traditional art competitions based on ethnonationalism or homogeneous national identity of the nineteenth century should be reshaped and revised to address equity and inclusion. The paper seeks for policy changes from Korean art organizations and institutions and asks whether they are willing to collect and honor works by non-Korean artists or multiethnic Korean artists.

### **【key words】**

Transnationalism, postmodernism, art competition, multicultural families, ethnicity, race, national identity, state-centrism, ethnonationalism

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## Introduction

**T**he Republic of Korea is no longer a nation of one race and one ethnicity. In an increasingly diasporic community of artists, writers, musicians, and dancers, which element is most important in the determination of one's heritage and ethnicity? Is it still a DNA shared by a majority of citizens in South Korea? Or is someone's commitment to "Koreanness" more relevant no matter how mythological the concept might be?

In this paper, I tackle the question of nationality, citizenship, ethnicity, and recognition of artistic merits within art competitions and contests in the age of global migration and transnationalism. Since its beginning, the French system of the Salon was based on ethnonational identity. The competition is for French artists by the French government. But in the present day, perhaps best witnessed in worldwide sport games, a diverse group of citizens now constitute France—they don't look traditionally "French" but they were born and raised as proud French citizens.<sup>1</sup> Several competition programs by national museums and cultural foundations to honor "Korean" artists also touch this ambiguous concept of ethnicity, race, and citizenship. It is encouraging that the Korea Artist Prize, awarded annually since 2012 by the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art and the SBS Foundation, has honored artists living and working outside Korea. This recognition, as well as the selection of artists representing Korea at the 2019 Venice Biennale, were both progressive signs of diversifying values traditionally associated with the patriarchal system of Korean contemporary art. Based on my involvement with these competitions as a juror, this paper revisits the issues of evaluating, recognizing, awarding deserving "Korean" artists.

## The Rise of Transnationalism Among Korean Artists Abroad

Before the 1980s Korean artists who aspired to pursue a career as a professional artist moved to Paris or New York.<sup>2</sup> Kwan Nam (1911-1990), Ungro Lee (1904-1989), Hwanki Kim (1913-1974), Han Yongjin, Byoung-ok Min, and others arrived in New York or Paris in the 1960s. Yong-jin Han (1934-2019), a sculptor trained at Seoul National University under Professor Chong Yung Kim (1915-1982), lived in Scandinavian countries and settled in the United States in 1967. Tschang-yeul

Kim (born 1929) left Korea to participate in the Paris Biennale in 1961 and then in the Saõ Paolo Biennale in 1965. He lived in New York until 1969 and then moved between Paris and New York in the 1970s. Choong-sup Lim and more Korean artists arrived in New York in the 1970s (Yun 2019). The Seoul National University Museum of Art presented a special exhibition, *Oscillation: Between Korea and the United States*, which documented sixty years of artistic exchange between South Korea and the United States immediately after the Korean War.<sup>3</sup> Artists who were born before 1945 and came of age during the time of the Korean War had political and economic hardships in pursuing emigration to other countries. Po Kim (1917-2014), who settled in New York in the late 1950s, insulated himself from his home country until the 1980s.

However, a majority of young artists sought opportunities of studying abroad and subsequent post-graduate professional careers in the 1980s. The transnational trajectory of Korean artists may coincide with an aesthetic or intellectual movement of Postmodernism. As the center-and-periphery model became obsolete, artists were inclined to employ diverse styles away from the orthodox of monochrome painting which was seen “over-institutionalized” by younger generations, as it was dominant force at the official art competitions and art institutions.<sup>4</sup> The People’s Art movement or *minjung misool*, emerged as alternative in the 1980s. With the rise of postmodernist theories of acknowledging multiple styles without the barrier of high and low art, interest in Korean traditional art and folk art was strengthened and encouraged in conjunction with more activist stance among visual artists.

Even after the government-hosted Grant Art Exhibition of Korea ended in 1981, art critics and jurors were slowly adapting to multiplicities of aesthetic values and subject, and to concerns over jurors and winners who are closely related due to tutelage and standardized tastes for aesthetic qualities. Although the Grant Art Exhibition of Korea continued under the helm of non-governmental organizations, a controversy often emerged over aesthetic validities such as originality and appropriation. At the Grand Art Exhibition of Korea held in 1991, the winner of the first prize in oil painting was Won-kang Cho. As Jeong-mu Yang, art historian summarized the event, Won-kang Cho’s *Another Dream* was viewed as borrowing from a black-and-white nude photograph of Frederic Achudou as well as a color nude photograph by the Italian photographer, Paolo Gioli. The debate of fundamental differences in art critics in South Korea at the

time was insightfully analyzed by Yang (2010). The clash of aesthetic standards and art-making processes was clearly observed in this incident within the paradigm of juried art competitions.

Opportunities to recognize emerging artist talent were found in art residency programs or alternative art spaces or studios (called *Dae-an gong-gan* in Korean) from 2000 within South Korea while emerging artists were actively looking for opportunities overseas. As addressed by many art critics, selecting new artist talent was not immune to the nepotism or preferential personal network through the educational background. Nonetheless, residency programs and alternative art spaces brought a new paradigm by diversifying a pool of jurors and sponsors (Kim 2013). These programs also served as a pivotal tool for diasporic Korean artists to be re-introduced to the Korean contemporary art scene.

Transnationalism in contemporary art is a relatively new concept as the scholarship on transnationalism started in the multiple disciplines such as sociology, studies of immigration, neoliberalism, global cities, and international trades. Since the 1990s, theorists such as Immanuel Wallerstein, Ulrich Beck, and Michael Burawoy called for a more global model of sociological research beyond state-centrism. Contemporary art critics also emphasized the interconnectivity of themes across national borders.<sup>5</sup> As we have seen in art biennials across Asia, curators and directors of biennials have grappled with these questions. For example, in November 2012, the Taipei Fine Arts Museum announced a plan to invite non-Taiwanese artists to the Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

At the centre of the controversy were questions such as: ‘What is the Taiwan Pavilion?’ and ‘What kind of biennials does Taiwan need?’ and ‘In the global art world embodied in the institution of biennial exhibitions, does an artist's nationality still matter?’<sup>6</sup>

This is to reiterate the current discussion on how to overcome the boundaries of national identity, postmodern cultural categories, disciplinary limits or possibilities, or diversity of artistic collaboration (West 1995). Art historian Hong-hee Kim had written on the same question: How did Korean contemporary artists transform their perception of Korean nationalism or Korean identity by comparing what was thought of by Korean artists before 1990 with diverse stances by new generations of artists, domestic and overseas, after 1990 (Kim 2010)?

Since 1995, the Gwangju Biennale has opened a window to redefine what contemporary Asian art is and what Korean contemporary art should look like. As Asian cities hosted more art festivals and film festivals at the turn of 2000, many wondered how global a local art scene could become (Mersmann 2013).

As biennales have for decades attested, art now comes *from* the whole world, from a growing accumulation of art-producing localities that no longer depend on the approval of a metropolitan center and are, to an unprecedented degree, connected to each other in a multiplicity of ways, not least regionally and globally.[...] Contemporary life draws increasing numbers of artists to imagine the world—understood here as comprising a number of contemporaneous ‘natures’: the natural world, built environments (‘second nature’), virtual space (‘third nature’), and lived interiority (‘human nature’)—as a highly differentiated yet inevitably connected whole. In this sense, from what we might call a planetary perspective, contemporary art may be becoming an art *for* the world—for the world as it is now, and as it might be.<sup>7</sup>

The Grand Art Exhibition of Korea was run for 32 years from 1949 to 1981. It was managed by the Ministry of Education and then later by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. When it first ran, the operation was mainly under the control of officers of the Ministry. In the 1970s, newspaper companies such as *Dong-Ah Ilbo* hosted their own contemporary art competitions while artists wanted to show their works abroad. With growing complaints and dissatisfaction of the status quo of this juried competition, the “official” Grand Art Exhibition of Korea ended in 1981. Arts Council Korea (ARKO) briefly managed this competition until the Korean Fine Arts Association (KFAA) took over the Grand Art Exhibition of Korea. In doing so, the program became a community event and celebrated its 39th exhibition in 2020. After this program became a non-governmental event, leading artists moved to new platforms such as art festivals, art residencies, or biennials. J. P. Park, art historian and curator has noted that Korean art after 2000 bears little in common with being “Korean.”<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, some art festivals and art competitions still request artists to represent a nation. Park poses crucial questions such as what makes young Korean artists’ works definitively Korean and whether it matters whether we label works by them Korean. I find these questions pertinent to the current system of contemporary art competitions and art festivals which bears locality and geopolitical paradigms.

## Art Competitions in the New Age of Transnationalism

As is well-illustrated in the development of modern art in nineteenth-century Paris, the Salon system became a target of disgruntlement amid new technology and visual taste. The rigidity of the competition could not cope with the changing socioeconomic status of artists and their community in the age of innovation (Shin, Lee and Lee 2014). Similarly, art competitions in the 1980s were coming to a demise. Instead, biennials and art fairs had become a stage for new types of visual arts.

Jane Chin Davidson summarized the transition of world expositions reaching their climax in 1895 to art fairs in the names of biennials and triennials in cities such as London, Saõ Paolo, Istanbul, Guangzhou, Gwangju, and Liverpool (Davidson 2010). In this global arena of contemporary art, the value of relative merits is difficult to measure. In the nation-state models of art competitions, one used to put a high note on national identity or shared values in its national territory assuming a homogeneous ethnic identity or aesthetic value. A classic example is the Turner Prize, founded in 1984 and given to a “British” artist. Members of Patrons of New Art at the Tate Gallery, encouraged by Director Alan Bowness, wanted to honor an artist of contemporary art following the model of the Booker Prize (now called the Man Booker Prize). Booker Prize, established in 1969, was initially given to authors from the U.K., Ireland, and the British Commonwealth. In recent years, the Booker Prize revised its policy and has given awards, since 2014, to a work of original fiction written in English and published in the U.K., regardless of the author’s nationality. However, the Turner Prize is given to a “British” artist. The organizers of the prize acknowledge that the definition of “British” is in flux.<sup>9</sup> They say a qualifying candidate is an artist “working primarily in Britain or an artist born in Britain working globally.” This assumes transnationality of artists in the age of globalization in the context of Britain having been an empire with many colonies overseas.

Now, in the new age of globalism with people and products constantly crossing the borders, the old standards of world expositions sound obsolete. For example, Davidson emphasized that “ascribing the aesthetic to national identity was integral to the inscription of artistic status and power at the fairs.”

The nineteenth-century culmination of the positivist and scientific view of the arts was exemplified by the use of geographic circumstances related to the artist's life to substantiate pre-existing ideas concerning artistic traits and the value of certain kinds of artistic production. But journalists reporting on the world's fairs had the power to communicate broad ideologies regarding art and culture to the greater general public, and they were most influential in the way they simplified the Kantian aesthetic rationale for judging artistic achievement according to essentialist traits (Davidson 2010, 730)

The notion of judging aesthetic qualities of someone's work was once considered worthy and valuable for the public good. However, in the postmodern theories of art under each person's subjectivity, the "contemporary art competition" is an oxymoron. Contemporary art cannot be subject to "evaluation" or "competition." If contemporary art is a process of being evolved, how can we measure or assess an ever-changing creature? On the other hand, an art competition is an economical model of publicity and promotion as cultural capital. The way a bestselling book list motivates readers to buy more books is similar to the operation of art/music/dance competitions or literary prizes (Ginsburgh 2003). In the past, newspapers and magazines (or their holding companies) were closely tied to the nationwide art competitions. Scholars have demonstrated how the general public "consumed" newspaper articles or essays by art critics instead of visiting the exhibition by themselves. As a historian and an art critic, I would like to see an anticipated conclusion of any art competition. This impossibility of evaluating and assessing aesthetic qualities of one's works should have many art festivals move away from "competition" and rename themselves "biennials"—a numeric term of occurrence without qualifying their events any further. "Exhibitions" are perhaps a better word than "festivals" because many works shown at biennials and triennials are not quite celebratory in their purpose.

The Venice Biennale began in 1895 with a plan to present to the world recognition of international art competitions beyond local or regional tastes (Davidson 2010, 734). The outlandish legacy of the Venice Biennale is still visible in national pavilions. Unlike other nascent biennials and triennials, the Venice Biennale hosts participating nation-states in their respective architectural topography. Whether an artist appears in the national pavilion or not, it is a political decision.

Whether these competitions end within 20 years or 30 years, historical precedents show us that contemporary art or artists find the system outdated or

inflexible sooner than later. An award can be still given as an honorary title; but who has the validity to let artists “compete” for something? Since its beginning, the French system of the Salon was based on ethnonational prejudice. The competition is for the French artists by the French government. As we witness in worldwide sport games in the present day, a diverse group of citizens now constitute France—they are born and raised in France. Many art foundations’ current condition for applying artists also touch this ambiguous concept of ethnicity, race, and citizenship. As many people aim to build a museum of Korean contemporary art, one might ask what constitutes “being Korean” and “being an artist” (Macdonald 2012). On the other hand, would art institutions considering themselves “universalist”—in other words, Europeanist willingly embrace and exhibit contemporary art by so many diasporic artists from Asia?<sup>10</sup>

Postmodernism supports multiple individualities in lieu of a hierarchical condition of institutional power structures. Artistic production influenced by postmodernism presented more options and possibilities for artists, especially those outside Eurocentric narratives of art criticism. Under postmodernist theories, the old hierarchy of “high” and “low” (crafts) art can be discarded. Whether an abstract painting was made in Chicago or in Daegu, geopolitical conditions should not affect the interpretation of it. As Homi Bhabha and Frederick Jameson have argued, globalization has enabled individuals to obliterate the locality of a culture. Displacement of a culture forces people to negotiate or re-evaluate national identity, new communal identity, or cultural traditions.<sup>11</sup> Canonical traditions and authorities carried by art institutions should be set aside in the postmodern practice of contemporary art (O’Keefe 2005).

With due respect and honor, I would like the audience to reflect on the legacy of contemporary art competitions entrenched in the painful conditions of social injustice, discrimination, gender inequality, racial segregation, and the concentration of capital— economic, cultural or social.<sup>12</sup> As an advocate of contemporary artists beyond national boundaries, I myself want to see a convivial solution. Overseas art organizations have argued that they support “Korean” artists abroad and have been able to survive as Korean cultural nonprofit organizations funded by the City of New York and also by the central government of the Republic of Korea (Jung and Moon 2007). In the post-WWII era, exhibitions of Korean art, ancient or modern, designed for foreign audiences, were carefully planned to present national identity as understood by Korean citizens (Roe 1995; Synn 2014).



## From Immigrant to Transnational: How to Define “Korean” Artists?

Korean artists after the 1988 Olympic Games may have gone through an abrupt encounter with postmodernism and global migration. Some were proponents of postmodernist visual culture; some were aware of it but not so sure of it; and some were rather reluctant to adapt to it. Nonetheless, postmodernist books were part of graduate seminars and of studio critiques. Much like how the wave of the internet and then mobile communication overwhelmed everybody, postmodernism surrounded many of these artists from all directions. Whether to become an early adopter or a late bloomer, it was their philosophical choice. Nobody pretended to be a postmodernist out of pressure or of curiosity. An important ideal of postmodernism is to dissolve modernist schemes of hierarchy among genres of arts and to replace an elitist pedigree or a bohemian myth of an artist with brand identity of new capitalism (Caldwell 2000; Fillis 2003). Jeff Koons, Takashi Murakami, and Damien Hearst came out of this era of postmodernism in order to promote their brand identity and marketability in global art scene.<sup>13</sup>

Art institutions such as museums and galleries as well as art fairs and biennials are increasingly competitive in getting the approval and validity from the crowd they can access on social media and by virtual network. “Brand identity” is a crucial concept for both institutions and artists. Sociologist Jean Baudrillard has argued that simulacra exists in the transnational media system where images, whether authentic or fictitious, are created, circulated, and consumed.

Representation stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and of the real (even if this equivalence is Utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Simulation, on the contrary, stems from the Utopia of the principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum (Baudrillard 1994, 4).

Some biennials invite each country’s representatives just like major international sport games or world fairs of the nineteenth century. The Venice Biennale is a prototype based on world expositions of the nineteenth century during the formation of nation states. The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation currently gives fellowships to through two competitions: “one open

to citizens and permanent residents of the United States and Canada, and the other open to citizens and permanent residents of Latin America and the Caribbean.” Founded in 1925 by U.S. Senator Simon Guggenheim (1867-1947) and his wife, Olga, in commemoration of their elder son (1905-1922), John Simon Guggenheim, the namesake memorial foundation aimed to honor bright fellows who can contribute “the educational, literary, artistic, and scientific power of this country [the United States].” The Philippines were part of the geography for the “American republics” until 1988. After that, the fellowship included citizens of Latin American and the Caribbean.

By 1914, the Venice Biennale had seven pavilions for the following countries: Belgium (1907), Hungary (1909), Germany (1909), Great Britain (1909), France (1912), and Russia (1914). The jury of the Venice Biennale give several official awards: Gold Lion for Best National Participation; Special Mention as National Participation; Gold Lion for the Best Participant in the International Exhibition; and Silver Lion for the Promising Young Participant in the International Exhibition; and Gold Lion for Lifetime Achievement. Whether being an art festival in Venice or a fellowship in New York, these institutions were created with the perception of a national identity or simulation of it as something “from the Utopia of the principle of equivalence” or uniformity as referred by Baudrillard.

To return to the growing transnational art world, I would like to move back to 1930s. How many have heard of Chiura Obata, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Yun Gee, Pan Yuliang, Zao Wouki, Ruth Asawa, or Theresa Hak-kyung Cha? A few of these artists may sound familiar but most are perhaps unknown to Chinese, Japanese or Korean students of art history. Some of these artists were featured in *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989*, an exhibition held at the Guggenheim Museum in 2009. In the catalogue for the exhibition, one can find the critical impact of Asian art and philosophy on American artists from 1860 to 1989. The above-mentioned artists are not yet included in the survey of modern art in their respective countries. Most of artists in the 2009 exhibition were precursors of the present-day transnational artists: Xu Bing in Brooklyn, Do-ho Suh in London, Soo-ja Kim in New York, Takashi Murakami in New York and Tokyo, Zhang Huan in Shanghai in New York, Hans Haacke in New York.

Imagined homeland is a familiar theme for most contemporary artists after WWII. Abrupt displacement from the homeland and subsequent nostalgia for said homeland is a universal experience in Asian countries. For Korean people, the

division of South and North Korea in 1945 was a distinct rupture. In 1949, Taiwan separated from the Chinese mainland. In the United States and elsewhere, there are a large number of Korean artists by cultural heritage and biological lineage. Many were born in the 1970s and 1980s. Their migration stories to North America are not uniform. Some came to the United States with immigrating parents while other deliberately chose the U.S. as a place of professional training. Most are bilingual, feeling comfortable on both sides of the Pacific Ocean. Nonetheless, their arrival in the United States flows along a different timeline than their lives in China or Korea did. While they believe they are familiar with the cultural heritage and ethnic authenticity of their homelands, they are no longer part of the temporal existence of Korea or China. Time in these still-rapidly-developing countries flows much faster and more bluntly than it does in Utah or Ohio.

Another geopolitical concern for Korean contemporary art is the idea of Global South. Global South is defined as a less developed region or regions in South America, the Caribbean and Central America, Asia, Oceania, and Africa. They were considered marginalized or economically disadvantaged as opposed to Europe and North America. These are also regions where many citizens risk their lives or pursue opportunities for migrating to the Global North. Korea, Japan, Singapore, or Taiwan are in odd positions to be considered either Global South or Global North. In South Korea, it is undeniable that many foreign brides have come from countries of the Global South—especially from Southeast Asian countries. South Korea has also seen an increase in foreign workers and their families settling in Korea. The Korean government projects that the population of multiracial families would be 1.5 million people by 2020.<sup>14</sup>

In the context of increasing multiethnic or multiracial families and communities in South Korea, art competitions and awards to honor Korean contemporary art should embrace practices in view of racial literacy. Currently it is considered ordinary to have a group of several Korean artists who look “Korean” and are biologically ethnic Koreans. However, South Korea itself has a large proportion of multiethnic families (called *Damunhwa gajeong*) according to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. In addition, Korea has a large population of adoptees and mixed racial families outside Korea (Kang 2009; 2013). It is now important to see how scholars and higher education institutions in South Korea have engaged students with studies of other civilizations and cultures—particularly with South and Southeast Asia, which South Korea recognizes

as crucial trade partners by the announcement of the government's New Southern Policy in 2017. Faculty of South and Southeast Asian civilization have addressed racial dynamics of South and Southeast Asian dynasties in historical contexts and their implications in nurturing cosmopolitan citizens. Contemporary art critics also take note of the migration of South Asian artists to East Asia.

Many in urban regions of South Korea are still oblivious of the fact that South Korea has a growing population from South and Southeast Asian countries because most of the marriage-based foreigners were brought to rural areas. In South Korea, the society as a whole has long promoted the concept of the ethnonational identity (called *danil minjok*) and thus used the education of Korean history as a vehicle to instill the idea of Korea being an ethnonational community.<sup>15</sup> Now this model is being revised, as attested by Gi-wook Shin and Gil-soo Han; and it is expected that advocates of multicultural families solicit educators and policy-makers to incorporate new skills and views.<sup>16</sup> While the core policies of the Korean government have been associated with political cooperation and economic prosperity—for example, many IT workers in South Korea are from these regions, those with artistic talent may be more attracted to Korea in its burgeoning entertainment and consumer culture (Seol 2007; 2010; Seol and Han 2004). By 2050, there may be more visual artists from multiracial families in South Korea as well as migrant artists seeking opportunities or finding refuge. Their works will touch the issues of belonging, national identity, and transnational sensitivity (Lee 2017).

Another potential group of non-Korean artists could emerge in contemporary art scenes in South Korea. Many residency programs for international artists are blossoming in Korea.<sup>17</sup> Most artists move back to their home country, but some have decided to work and live in Korea. L. N. Tallur, for example, is an Indian artist working in South Korea and India. In 30 years, the Korea Artist Prize may be awarded within ethnically diverse groups of artists who work “for the advancement of Korean contemporary art.” Art historian and curator Michelle Lim and I are currently working on a book project titled *American Art from Asia*.<sup>18</sup> In an increasingly globalized and mobilized circle of contemporary artists, a number of American artists have chosen to live and work in Asian countries. For example, James Turrell and Walter de Maria created meditative works on the art island of Naoshima while Bill Viola and Ray Langenbach frequently visited Asia since the 1980s. Langenbach settled in Singapore and has been most prolific

in his teaching, performance work and archival projects. Viola lived in Japan for almost a year and a half, from 1980 to 1981. During this period, he studied with a Japanese Zen master (Daien Tanaka), carried out research on Noh theatre and other traditional performing arts, and undertook an artist residency at the Sony Corporation's Atsugi research laboratories. From the late 1980s up until just a few years ago, Langenbach was based in either Malaysia and Singapore where he taught at universities there. Although he is presently based in Finland (where he leads the M.A. program in Live Art and Performance at the University of Arts in Helsinki), Langenbach continues to make frequent trips back to Singapore and Malaysia. James Jack is an American artist raised in New York City with a studio based in Japan since 2009. His work *Sunset House: The House as Language of Being* resulted from community participation in 2010 with people of all ages recording a memory, wish, dream, or hope on papers that became part of the mud walls. As Korea hosts a number of non-Korean artists for art residency programs and community-based art organizations, a visual art competition or an artist award needs to broaden its eligibility for diversity and inclusion.

Ideologies of nationhood and citizenship are ever evolving. In the unusual global pandemic of COVID-19, new geopolitical policies are to distrust the course of massive globalism by returning to an interwar sentiment of protective trade and secured borders. *The Economist* has reported that the Brexit and the Protectionist trade war between China and the U.S. are signs of slowing globalism.<sup>19</sup> It is difficult to predict how contemporary art will be reshaped after the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent sheltered protectionism in trade and social welfare. I agree with J. P. Park in his perception of successful Korean artists abroad from the late 1990s to 2020.<sup>20</sup> These artists stressed their otherness in their personhood and artistic development in the art market and in the institutions influenced by the Western taste and capital. Museums and galleries wanted to discover exotic styles that satisfy their otherwise mainstream collection of works by “white,” mostly male artists (Pinder 2002).<sup>21</sup> This is a sophisticated system with gatekeepers and poachers as expressed by Jonathan Harris (2013). National governments cannot exercise influence, although they want to maintain the authority in the form of censorship or sponsorship as seen in Chinese art overseas, on the volatility of the art market as much as they can meddle with art festivals or art competitions with representation of their nationality or sovereignty.

For returning citizens of South Korea after many decades of living abroad, what does nationhood mean to them? In the current matrix of gendered representation of contemporary artists in global art festivals, how would a woman artist of mixed race feel belonging in South Korea (Meskimmon and Rowe 2013)? Could this hypothetical citizen discover her place in relation to home, homeland, and nationalism? How can we connect this person's peoplehood to territory and national borders? I consider the art competition or the art festivals by national representatives a testing ground for notions of self, nation-states, citizenship, and cultural belonging in transnational identity conceived by many artists like this.

Currently, about 7.5 million people are considered overseas Koreans; 2.5 million people are living in the United States while 2.4 million in China.<sup>22</sup> South Korea has also experienced naturalized citizens among non-Korean ethnic groups. For both cases, common immigrant experiences such as the process of assimilation to or from Korea, absorption, schooling, or re-education of customs in the country of residence have become central to the life stories of the artists.

The 2019 Whitney Biennial included four women artists of Korean ethnicity: Maia Ruth Lee (b. 1983), born in Busan, South Korea; Christine Sun Kim (b. 1980), born in Orange County, California; Gala Porras-Kim (b. 1984), born in Bogotá, Colombia; Heji Shin (b. 1983), born in Seoul, South Korea and growing up in Hamburg, Germany. While these artists spent part of their childhoods in South Korea, some have barely lived in South Korea since young adulthood. This is a small window into the transnational lives of emerging artists. Marsha Meskimmon, art historian of transnational feminism has argued that art works in the age of transnationalism prompts viewers to “participate in a critical dialogue between cosmopolitan imagination, embodied ethics, and locational identity” (2010, 10). I have written this kind of locational identity and ethnic hybridity in relation to an imagined homeland by Korean American artists (Pyun 2019). Previously, art critics have focused on Do-ho Suh and Soo-ja Kim in the nostalgic sense of longing for home or home lost (Bae and Dimitriadis 2015). In the translational identity of artists born post-1980, home is not confined to one nation. Home is found in two, three, or several different countries. Traditional art competitions based on ethnonationalism or homogeneous national identity of the nineteenth century should be reshaped and revised to address equity and inclusion.

## Conclusion

It is promising that so many Korean artists are now living and working outside Korea. Anicka Yi, for example, was awarded a Hugh Boss Prize for an olfactory experience named *Life Is Cheap* in 2016. The special fragrance Yi created is named *Immigrant Caucus* by mixing chemical substances of Asian American women with those of carpenter ants. This is a kind of work obliterating national boundaries and cultural conditions as well as oscillating between the human realm and nature. Yi has been invited to install a monumental work in the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern in October 2020. Haegue Yang, a diasporic Korean artist based in Germany, presented *Handles*, multimedia installations at the Marron Atrium of the Museum of Modern Art in 2019-2020. In a decade or two, a Korean artist living in U.K. may receive a Turner Prize. Korean artists' works are also being acquired by many museums around the world in the category of contemporary art rather than being "Korean." Korean art organizations and institutions, in turn, may or could willingly collect and honor works by non-Korean artists or multiethnic Korean artists.

The question of nationality, citizenship, ethnicity, and recognition of artistic merits is not only pertinent to Korean artists in the global arena but also relevant to increasingly multicultural society within Korea. Transnational artists or artists from multiracial families in the U.K. or the U.S. have contemplated hard on their placement in their new homes and imagined homeland.<sup>23</sup> Their works were made for the audience in their adopted country to solicit a better understanding of themselves. A binary condition of "American meaning non-Asian" is no longer valid today even though many Asian immigrants lacked a legal path to obtaining U.S. citizenship until 1965. Likewise, the Republic of Korea has processed many naturalized citizenships—more than 10,000 per year since 2008. If colonial mimicry comes from the appropriation of the Other, postmodern mimicry of immigrant artists pursues universal languages and mirroring experiences regardless of historic particularities. With growing multicultural citizens, the contemporary art scene in South Korea will be willing to recognize and honor artists of all the status—diasporic, transnational, or naturalized.

## Notes

1. Global art competitions are somewhat comparable to global sport games in defining nationality and citizenship. See John Nauright (2004).

2. See Moojeong Chung (2005, 25-31; 39-41)

3. *Oscillation: Between Korea and the United States*. A special exhibition held in June-November 2018 (Seoul: Seoul National University Museum of Art, 2018), pp. 2-8. Chung Young Mok (2011) has written on a University of Minnesota project, which enabled students at Seoul National University to get an advanced education in Minnesota through exchange programs during the recovery from the Korean War.

4. See J. P. Park (2013, 510): "At the same time it represented a revolt against Monochrome painting, which was seen as over-institutionalized and a sort of meaningless decoration by those within the People's Art movement." It should be noted that critiques of monochrome painting or Dansaekwa were closely related to Korean identity to begin with its emergence as an art movement in the 1970s. See Hwi-yeon Jin (2015, 371-96).

5. See Marc James Léger (2012): "Writing more than fifteen years earlier, in the midst of debates about postmodernism and just after the collapse of Soviet state communism, Mike Featherstone argued for the unlikelihood of a homogeneous global culture. Globalisation, he thought, should rather be seen as a *transnational* process in which diverse cultural flows are mediated by the exchange of goods, capital, people, information, knowledge and images."

6. See Chu-Chiun Wei (2013)

7. See Terry Smith (2011)

8. See J. P. Park (2013, 510): "Their works do not conform to any overarching patterns, characteristics or attitudes that would point to 'Korea' as their common origin." For a similar inquiry, see also Peter Lord (2011, 56-70).

9. "This means an artist working primarily in Britain or an artist born in Britain working globally. One of the ongoing debates around the Prize has been about the definition of British and how to decide on who is British and who is not. As the meaning of Britishness has changed and evolved in our society, the Turner Prize has tried to reflect this." <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/turner-prize/five-common-questions-about-turner-prize> (accessed March 24, 2020).

For literary prizes, see James F. English (2002). English explains the system of awards as the hegemony of cultural capital. This essay is more concerned about literature, but visual arts and films are not very different. Gore Vidal, according to English, noted that there are more literary prizes than there are writers in the U.S.

10. One can think about many talented musicians from Asia and compare them with visual artists. See Mina Yang (2007).

11. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 2.; Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), pp. 2-13.

12. See Pierre Bourdieu (1985). For "The Forms of Capital" by Pierre Bourdieu, see the chapter 15: The Forms of Capital in *Readings in Economic Sociology*, ed. Nicole Woolsey Biggart (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2008), 280-91.

13. For the success of "superstar" artists who build their brand with creativity and innovation, see Luigi Di Gaetano, Isidoro Mazza, & Anna Mignosa (2019).

14. <http://theme.archives.go.kr/next/koreaOfRecord/MultiSociety.do> (accessed April 15, 2020)

15. See Jin-goo Kang (2009; 2013).

16. See Kristen A. Renn (2012), Gi-wook Shin (2006), and Gil-soo Han (2015).

17. This is related to "art studio project" promoted by municipal governments as renewal projects by using closed school buildings or former industrial sites. See Shin-eui Park (2013).



18. *American Art from Asian*, an organized panel at the 105th College Art Association (CAA) Annual Conference held at the Hilton Hotel and Convention Center, New York City on February 15-18, 2017 (Organizers: Michelle Lim and Kyunghye Pyun; Chair: Kyunghye Pyun).
19. "Goodbye Globalisation," *The Economist*, May 14, 2020. <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2020/05/14/has-covid-19-killed-globalisation> (accessed May 14, 2020).
20. See J. P. Park (2013), note 16.
21. See a revisionist move by a major museum. Rachel Kaufman, "Baltimore Museum to Sell White Male Art to Buy Works by Artists of Color," *Next City.Org* (May 2, 2018). <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/2033865268?accountid=10226> (accessed April 15, 2020).
22. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea. [http://www.mofa.go.kr/www/wpge/m\\_21509/contents.do](http://www.mofa.go.kr/www/wpge/m_21509/contents.do) (accessed April 15, 2020).
23. Multiculturalism enhanced with identity politics is also manifest in other Asian artists. See Kyunghye Pyun (2017, 4-8).

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