

A Conversation

Haegue Yang and Eungie Joo

Haegue Yang: I remember how from the very beginning of the discussion we both felt gratitude as well as pressure to be involved in the Korean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. It seems to me that you are searching for a way to turn this opportunity and privilege into an occasion to expand your engagement with the art scene in Korea, by initiating the project *An Offering: Public Resource*, for example. I would like to take this conversation as an opportunity to hear about how you, as a curator, see this as a kind of momentum.

Eungie Joo: The “side project” you mention is an informal, unofficial, but central part of the project for the Korean Pavilion at the Biennale this year. And though you have been a kind of silent partner in its development, you have been my co-conspirator in every aspect of conceptualizing and realizing *An Offering: Public Resource*. It’s basically a self-organized library, where the “self” includes colleagues, friends, and institutions that responded to a call to donate books (and LPs) as an imagined public resource on contemporary art, criticism, and related fields, installed from March through December 2009 in Seoul and then permanently donated to a library, school, or arts organization in Korea. Together, colleagues from around the world have chosen to share their ideas through publications and records as a kind of investment in the Korean contemporary art scene.

Over the past five years, you and I have had the opportunity to meet at many biennial, triennial, and otherwise “international” art events, where it seemed that questions of motivation, audience, relevance, and engagement surfaced many times and began to take a kind of form. Meanwhile, we have been having a separate but related conversation about how we engage with the contemporary art scene in Korea as “outsiders.” Although my practice as an “American” curator is obviously quite different from your experience as a “Korean” artist living in Germany and Korea but having been raised and trained in Korea, our concerns and strategies are related. We both are privy to a lot of information about exhibitions, trends, and discussions in contemporary art, and I wanted to share these ideas with our colleagues in Seoul, simply because the information is hard to find there, expensive to get a hold of, and sometimes just obscure.

Over the years, artists in Seoul have expressed to me their concern about the quality of criticism and discourse, the difficulty of obtaining books, and the lack of a proper contemporary art library for the public. We cannot solve these issues, but perhaps we can make a gesture that contributes to a solution by demonstrating a minor possibility. I feel that sometimes we need to pursue small ideas, small gestures, to ask for help and see if something can develop that takes us elsewhere.

Public Resource is the culmination of these conversations and concerns and a response to our trepidations about the challenges of participating in a system of national representation. Both of us wanted to find ways to think about presence and communicative acts as we prepared to represent “Korean Art” in/to Italy. Notice that I am implicating you fully, since I would never have gotten into this mess without you!

HY: The same goes for you, in that I was simply surprised when you came up with the idea of initiating a self-organized library, even though we had discussed the idea of an expanded framework for our participation in the Biennale at length. But I knew immediately that the project would empower me through a social and contextual extension and in this way I would finally feel confident about situating myself in the national pavilion. Without such a contextual and curatorial effort, a landscape/environment that stretches beyond the national and the international would not be possible.

Anyhow, the project has turned out to be amazing, with numerous friends and colleagues supporting it and collaborating by sending their books. The second stage was the encounters in Korea with art professionals at ArtSonje Center, which added another aspect to *Public Resource* as a serious, yet self-organized platform for another form of sharing.

EJ: Yes, currently we have books from about 150 participants who sent more than 1,500 books and LPs. And for the inauguration of the space, we organized five days of “Conversations” that featured about a dozen artists, writers, and curators presenting on recent projects in the informal setting of the ArtSonje Center’s lobby, designed by the artist Choi Jeong Hwa and coordinated by SAMUSO: Space for Contemporary Art and Sunjung Kim.¹

At some level the project is about doing something to develop our own level of engagement with the Biennale that extends beyond the festival atmosphere of the exhibition itself. It's also about using the occasion of the Biennale to imagine something more than the final project manifested as a press release, exhibition, and catalogue. I guess it's primarily about engagement with the absent audience for the Biennale. Most of the Korean artists who participated in the discussions and the people who will access *Public Resource* itself will not see the exhibition in Venice. But they remain a vital audience for us long after this summer. At the same time I felt the project would complicate our interactions and the development of the exhibition in fruitful ways, which it certainly has. I think it relies upon the ideas of subjectivity, investment, and resonance that are central to your work.

But now we have just come back from Seoul, and I have to say, this little experiment was a much more profound experience than I had anticipated. So many young people were at the conversations night after night. Since the education system is so different there, I had suspected that our colleagues in Seoul did not have many opportunities to discuss their work, but I was really surprised to learn that several had never spoken about their own practice as artists or curators in Seoul before.

HY: Well, it's not easy for me to make an evaluation of that weeklong marathon of talks and discussions in Seoul, since I lack a certain knowledge that would allow me to generalize the situation in Korea. Also, as far as I know, many of the speakers had never spoken in public before not because they never had the chance to do it, but because they chose not to do so. Somehow the fact that they did speak is of course evidence of your credibility as a curator and of the generosity on the part of the artists and art professionals who were willing to support us by contributing to the conversations.

I often take the position of observer, whereby I can better recognize and receive signals from others and reflect these in my own tempo. This time I was again more or less in a position of observer, except for the screening of my video trilogy.ⁱⁱ So at each talk I was sitting in the crowd

as one of them and observed interactions between enthusiastic young people and respected art professionals in Korea, which were moving and honorable mini-spectacles.

Starting with Choi Jeong Hwa, who not only designed the space but also spoke on the first day, we witnessed an impressive display of generosity. I must say that some aspects of what he revealed in the talk were unknown to me—that he is considered such an outsider in the Korean art scene because of his interdisciplinary practice despite his enormous name recognition. He is certainly noteworthy for his consequential and genuine practice as well as for his straightforward devotion, which remains unphased by how he has been treated as quasi-taboo. Even the way in which he gathers young people into his studio seems to be an almost social act of pedagogy.

On the second day, we both encountered a totally different generation of Korean art history. Reality and Utterance (현실과 발언, 1979–1990) is not only significant historically as a collective of artists and critics but also relevant currently.ⁱⁱⁱ We all became witnesses to their momentum in reorganizing themselves after not being active for nearly twenty years! After the presentations of Tae Ho Lee and Ok Sang Lim, I was impressed by Jung Hun Kim’s short remarks on “reconnecting,” which acknowledged their ongoing agony and struggle to survive the path of history in the wake of their recent engagement with reality, which has been primarily rather individualistic.

On the date of my screening, there was a brilliant presentation by two women I had been very curious about (and it was almost selfish of me to encourage you to invite them). Artist siren eun young jung^{iv} and curator Heejin Kim described their respective practices with extraordinary articulation. There are many artists whom we couldn’t invite because of time limitations, but as much as we could, I feel that we mobilized this opportunity to satisfy our own curiosity and by extension the curiosity of others. Their input was unexpectedly strong—something I had previous assumptions about but no precise knowledge of. I often think that in fully offering my blind optimism as a witness to support these moments of creative force in others, it simultaneously inscribes an impression on me that has an almost painful effect. I felt that we agonized in the most delightful and pleasant encounters with each other, and it confirmed many things for me.

After the official events, there were gatherings and passionate discussions on various issues ranging from the future of some alternative spaces in Seoul to specific works by artists. What do you think about our intensive week in Seoul?

EJ: I agree with you that the conceptualization of *Public Resource* was driven primarily by the momentum of a shared optimism and curiosity. I also think that the project, in its effort to engage with our colleagues in Seoul, relates to our reliance on many voices in order to begin to grasp the history and development of contemporary art in Korea. The series of conversations at ArtSonje might be understood as a kind of naïve gesture to bring together disparate voices and attitudes, and in fact it was. But the gesture was grounded in genuine interest, empathy, and desire and can be understood as an intervention into a system with which I interact while remaining outside of it. As you know, the choice of participants was well considered, even the pairings of speakers, and was in fact not so naïve.

You discussed Hyun Bal (Reality and Utterance), Jeong Hwa, Heejin, and siren, so maybe I will mention the others. Since last summer, when you reintroduced me to Young-whan Bae and Chan-Kyong Park, I have been a little obsessed with their work and thinking, as you know.^v We have had several amazing conversations about ideas, society, the art scene, and such, but I was really interested to see who they were in public, since this is something that is very hard for an outsider to grasp. They are of course major figures in the art scene, and each has at times suggested to me a kind of cynicism that I would attribute only to a true optimist. So I had to see them perform for the public. Young-whan's introduction to his talk—the way he defined a kind of cosmology for approaching his art that involves philosophy, ideology, spirituality, family, and nation—was intense. Of course I was really shocked to hear that he had never done a public presentation on his work before. By contrast, Chan-Kyong is often called upon to perform the role of critic/theorist/curator. But it was a unique experience to hear him combine these knowledges into an informal presentation on *Shindoan* (2008) and the research he conducted for the film and exhibition. We invited several artists, such as Heung Soon Im and Sangyoun Kim, whose work and ideas I had only briefly encountered but which immediately captured my imagination. Most people I know in Seoul were not aware of their work, so I thought it was

amazing that Heung Soon went over his recent works so thoroughly and thoughtfully. His investigation into the Vietnam War as it relates to Korean modernization is fascinating. Sangyoun was really inspiring to the young students, encouraging them to be curious and demanding with an energetic and contagious sense of humor. Doryun Chong gave a great presentation on the idea of internationalism based on his recent curatorial work on Huang Yong Ping and Tetsumi Kudo as well as his contribution as one of the curators of the 2006 Busan Biennale. I felt like the projects Hyunjin Kim presented were very intelligent and creative—her Plug-In project at the Van Abbemuseum was a serious and poetic institutional test—and I was so pleased that she took the time to share this with the audience members, many of whom were young artists, writers, theorists, and curators who could not be aware of her practice outside of Korea. We knew Gimhongsok would be the perfect closer, and he did not disappoint.^{vi} The variety of his works and his witty but serious mode of presentation were the mark of a master. He must be an excellent teacher. It was a great overview of his recent activity, and the way in which he is able to convey it all as a larger practice was powerful.

Many of the presenters revealed their own kind of blind optimism by participating in a project organized by someone they did not know well without any compensation. And the ones with whom I have been in dialogue for some time demonstrated a different level of faith and generosity. This is the kind of activity that we really needed to spark—not a well-organized symposium from the angle of alternative spaces or museums, but something loose—an experiment from the positions of practitioners and artists. Through these kinds of efforts, I hope we can work together to challenge the institutionalization of art practice and deformalize a small zone from which we can continue to act.

Also important, through the remarkable generosity and openness of the conversations in Seoul, we came to reorganize this publication into its current form, citing several artists and thinkers who could be considered foundational to your work—as influences, context, peers. Can you comment on the significance of including these kinds of contributions?

HY: As you have already addressed, this publication is a consequence of our trajectory—our observations, debates, encounters, expectations, and so on, rather than the result of a rigorous

concept. Inviting and implanting different voices from various contexts and times in the publication feels to me transparent, revealing an interdependency I desire and rely on with other creative contemporaries in Korea, whether they stay in relation to me more immediately or remotely. I hope this book will be more than a usual patchwork of different voices, because there is more to it than that. For instance, if I accidentally meet someone who becomes a significant influence in my life, I wouldn't call it chance, but destiny.

Concretely, I feel honored that the authors and artists willingly contributed (mostly republishing their existing output) to this publication. Personally, I am interested in hosting “non-collective” voices in this book with speculation that something unexpected might emerge from it. Here again comes the blind optimism (different from naïve optimism) that a certain agreement can be found in a most dispersed way.

EJ: I propose we back up to a kind of beginning—to your work *Sadong 30* (2006). I know that was your first “solo” exhibition in Seoul and was purposely an intervention in a noninstitutional setting, but can you discuss the genesis of the project as a kind of public and private intervention in space and time?

HY: There were many different desires and necessities that collided at that time in 2006. On the one hand, I was growing dissatisfied with showing my works in Korea in only fragmented ways. At the same time, there was another type of dissatisfaction and skepticism about the mechanical way in which I was practicing my profession: I carried out my job by accomplishing one exhibition after another without any possibility of independent production, due to my institutionally dependent career. Somehow I was considering the idea of organizing an exhibition on my own evolution and development, to present my current artistic interests and create a challenge for myself that allowed for self-examination regarding autonomy in the art enterprise. At that very moment I encountered the curator Hyunjin Kim, who felt a similar urgency in her work, and this mutual acknowledgment of each other's desire crucially accelerated the process of realization.

Talking about the timing, it seems uncanny to me that I simultaneously came to find out that my grandmother's place was still closed up, abandoned since her death. Due to the extreme discretion of family members, who were worried about me confronting this news from far away, I only experienced the state of that place long after her death. The existence of that abandoned house provoked in me an unusual courage and determination to visit it. I was less nostalgic about seeing the house again, where I had partially grown up and of which I have many memories, than I was driven by the desire to demonstrate to my guilty family that abandonment is not the best way to avoid confronting family tragedy. Regardless of the motivation for my visit, I was struck by the state of the house, and afterward that visit was narrated in my third video essay, *Squandering Negative Spaces*, completed in April 2006. I guess the process of elaborating that visit in a video narration was a kind of preparation, as I had been carrying the idea of an independent solo exhibition in Korea before I was able to make a real commitment to it. There was somehow a time delay, a period of time waiting for all the necessary conditions and desires to mature.

EJ: As you know, that installation both moved and unsettled me, and in many ways came to shape our relationship as cultural producers. I think this is because *Sadong 30* projected the personal as an allegory for a national or cultural upheaval.

HY: If I look back on my environment growing up in Korea, I remember the harsh confrontation between individuals and society. In the intense struggle for freedom and justice, many people couldn't live in peace, and the heavy political suppression wore people down. Even if I fully recognize and respect as well as aspire to this type of restless life in constant battle as a valuable and valid form, I am deeply pained by the harsh circumstances people had to suffer to make this kind of devoted life possible.

I was looking for a "place" to accommodate my thoughts. My yearning for a specific form of reconciliation and peace for my culturally split mind was what pushed my search—the pursuit of a place that offered a state of rest that could be achieved without negotiation; a place where concern remained concern without aspiring to solution. In other words, I was looking for an ontological space where a continued state of struggle, agony, or concern might not be a problem.

Instead of relying on what might be called “correct” or “solved,” I wished to find a site where my concern could be accommodated as it was.

Somehow, the Sa-dong house seems to me a metaphorical historical site for those lives in rupture as well as for my own. At the same time it is an abstract site that locates itself outside of the tangible sociopolitical framework, which is definitely another type of nonspace.

EJ: You said your mother was the one who got you to read the *Sadong 30* visitor comment book, which you at first kind of disregarded but quite recently revisited.

HY: Yes, when the project was over, I was happy and proud but somehow critical of all the positive reactions. Not only was unexpected success unfamiliar, but the project also seemed too popular to me, and I became skeptical and silent about it for a while. We received letters and many comments in the guest book that had been placed in the house over the course of the exhibition. In fact, the book was offered without any expectation or concept of what purpose it might serve yet the received letters and the guest book became an object-site that I had to revisit.

Initially I was very disappointed by all the seemingly naïve visitor comments, which seemed nonintellectual and driven by trivial, nostalgic sentiment for this place, even if this potential must have been clear to me from the beginning. In a way, this attempt to situate myself outside of the institution must have been fully conceptualized without considering the “unfamiliarity” of the audience I would encounter in Sa-dong, for which I feel now embarrassed and even ashamed. In fact, I immediately put those books and notes from the visitors aside and pretended as if they did not exist. My mom was the one who noticed their significance and advised me to read through them carefully. While she sensed the warmth and genuinely autonomous and self-empowered minds and emotions that came through in them, I remained stubborn and desperately tried to stick to my self-determined agenda, so I reluctantly read them months after my mom’s sincere advice. Anyhow, it seemed that “enough” time had passed, and I was finally ready to take them in my hands and read through them. And I was blown away by the beauty and liveliness of these documents. Of course some of them were simple compliments and encouragement addressed directly to me or to Hyunjin [the curator of the exhibition], yet the expressions were extremely

intimate and tender. They documented vivid moments of self-empowerment in which people's stories unfolded in the most modest and direct language.^{vii}

There are a couple of informative facts I discovered from the guest books. First, the majority of the visitors were nonart professionals—people who really took their time and mobilized their autonomous interest in this place. Second, quite a large number of people visited more than one time. Third, the way in which they found out about this project was mostly through nonofficial paths such as personal recommendations by friends, family members, or blogs. On top of all these meaningful facts, I also realized that visitors felt firmly convinced that they were entitled to relate to this place. This was indisputable proof that *Sadong 30* was neither an ordinary institutionalized public project nor a conventional art presentation. There was such an enormous amount of self-organization by Hyunjin and me, but moreover by the visitors. Some of them even changed the lightbulbs and noted in the guest book that they had found extra bulbs and carefully replaced them. Another person gave a noise concert on his own—without any announcement—using an old radio, which he took apart and with which he generated some sounds out of electric sparks. This performance was discovered accidentally and reported to me by a friend of mine, who happened to be there at the time.

Altogether there was an intensive post-*Sadong 30* process that took place in me. Somehow the project was not fully over even after the exhibition had closed, more or less because of the guest books and letters from visitors, who made their own history in that place, as an actual and communal space, without ever negotiating directly through/with me.

EJ: As in *Sadong 30*, you often develop works that require the subjectivity of the viewer—a kind of investment of one's subjectivity to locate an outcome, which is the experience of your work itself.

HY: It might sound absurd to bring up a scientific metaphor to address how I would like to construct my “output,” yet it seems proper to say that I strive for a kind of “condensation.” I imagine metaphorically that I preserve cool air in me as long as I can, until the temperature difference is so great that water drops collect on the bottle. I would like to transmit things to

others without pouring water out of the bottle. I believe that people can be mobilized by this condensation, which is a kind of direct reaction, without needing to negotiate specificities. I guess the Sa-dong house somehow triggered this kind of silent communication, without any trace of the water's source. I believe that in such "blind" and "silent" communication, which feels abstract, there is a negation of learned knowledge, obtained information, and individual experience that opens people up to others in an unprotected way.

For me, refusing specific stories and replacing them with something "blind" or "silent" is a conceptually ethical process, because it fundamentally prevents me from taming my audience with my learning and experience. The researched knowledge and lived experiences remain transparent, yet are accessible only if I am asked about them. The audience is therefore quite free of my own personal trajectories, whether related to my grandmother or historical figures who mean a lot to me. I don't deny that some of the audience would interpret such layers as meaningful and might wonder why I don't actively elaborate on those references. Since I am conscious about the exploitative aspect of self-reference and desire to reach beyond each individual narrative, I would rather continue to "unlearn" my own position in order to remain "impersonal" in the work. That is how I relate myself to the notion of subjectivity.

EJ: In *Doubles and Couples* (2008), you compare and conflate the appliances in your home. Why did you come to work with appliances and references to your private life or space?

HY: *Doubles and Couples*, presented at the 2nd Turin Triennial, has a prehistory, which is another work of mine: *5, Rue Saint-Benoît* (2008). These works have something in common in terms of their spatial implication, which is the kitchen and living. I work at home and have spent a lot of time in the kitchen, where I can be without my computer, printer, or phone, yet with cigarettes and coffee. The kitchen is a place where I can "work" in a different manner than at my worktable—work without work. This work is free of many of the things that are attributes of the ordinary concept of work in terms of social effectiveness/productivity. The kitchen is somehow a place of different engagement with my own work toward the outside world and toward others. My new work for the Venice exhibition, *Sallim*, also considers these ideas of how to distribute your most intimate part directly to the public without losing its compelling intimacy.

Of course, the emphasis on the kitchen is not solely self-referential; it is also interwoven with anecdotes from historical figures like Marguerite Duras, in whom I recognized a conformity with my seemingly overly idiosyncratic interpretation of “privateness.” I believe that I have a particular tendency to personalize not only historical figures and events but also machines and objects that are largely domestic. There is something profoundly genuine about household machines. They seem to me so dedicated and committed to what they are supposed to do, which moves me deeply. I used to observe them for hours, sometimes out of depression, which also developed into an affectionate fascination. I feel very close to appliances, maybe even wish to be similar to them in terms of attitude, silent presence, supportiveness, loyalty, understatement, and substance. They seem to be modest, yet it is significant how they are there to help with organizing life—things like cooking, washing, eating, etc., but not necessarily as acts for recharging oneself in order to be productive in the outside world. Rather the opposite. I would insist that the activities in the private space deserve more attention, that the private space be considered a place of complexity, where the self is cared for and contemplated and can be shared in a different way.

Second, I am interested in the potentiality of the kitchen as one of the most private spaces, which opens itself most generously and genuinely to the others, even under difficult circumstances. That’s what I got from Duras as well as from my mother. Both eagerly cooked for and fed people, even hid wanted political criminals in their homes. The kitchen was a peaceful battlefield for their engagement against sociopolitical injustice. I was a difficult child who was unsatisfied and unhappy with the openness of my mother’s kitchen, where I wanted to be her only child instead of one of many hungry people. It took me a while to understand the meaning of her activity as the hostess of the house who was an intellectual activist outside the home but also active from inside by opening her private space to others as a shelter for wanted people, a meeting place for students and activists, as well as a kitchen for anyone. I am interested in this most natural and genuine process of opening one’s home to others or to the outside world, physically or metaphorically. There is an intimate public engagement, in which privateness and publicness are not accommodated separately.

Besides, all of sudden I was aware of the fact that I had two flats, one in Seoul and one in Berlin, but no studio (working space). It may be hard to believe, but even I was a bit surprised by it when I became conscious of it. There were in fact two places I needed to open up. The experiment I was attempting with *Doubles and Couples* was to picture an impossible, therefore abstract space in which domestic appliances from two different spatial origins are in movement or in a relational posture with each other.

EJ: If then your focus in *Sallim* (2009), one of your new works for the Biennale, is to acknowledge the significance of that which happens inside as equal to, dependent upon, and affecting that which happens on the outside, then it seems that works like *Sadong 30*, *Squandering Negative Spaces* (2006), and *Yearning Melancholy Red* (2008) might do the reverse. In these works, there seems to be some reference to the impact of public life or the outside world on the person. In fact, many of your works might be discussed in terms of the impact of the larger world on the private space of the home, or on one's personality, ambition, or psychology.

HY: I haven't thought about this work in the way you describe it. It's interesting to hear your view, incorporating an idea of *in and out* with private and public. According to your observation, my focus lies in rhetoric about some private quality that isn't solely private, since it opens itself toward to an implication of the failure of rigorous and ordinary publicness.

As we discussed two days ago on the phone, the notion of *sallim*, which in Korean means something like "running a household," or I guess "a container of the household," such as the kitchen space, interests me as a microcosm of running the machinery of life. This modest form of machinery is often understood as a secondary or marginal (*nebensächlich*) narrative compared to one's job or productive activities, but it plays a significant role for basic life organization. Because of its unique autonomous and generous quality, I'm drawn to attempt an articulation of it.

Going back to your question about the reversed way of treating *in and out* or *private and public*, I have to say that for me, it's about the scale. On one hand, whether it is a private household or a public household, I am interested in the household, which is usually taken less seriously in any

system or structure because it regarded as something less specialized or as a territory that is less skilled. I feel extremely inspired to work in this low-tech or low-profile niche, which is somehow modestly scaled in its meaning, despite its fundamental importance.

EJ: Your new installation for the Pavilion, *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements—Voice and Wind*, cites a series of installations dating back to your project at BAK in Utrecht, the São Paulo Biennale, and recently at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. Tell me about *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements* as an ongoing investigation.

HY: I guess the new installation is citing not only previous works but also new encounters. Yet the type of citation has changed in that there are no clear referential stories anymore. The figures and stories behind my works were never obvious; in fact, they were impossible to read with bare eyes. I admit that this disappearance of reference is not a complete one, and if it has been weakened, the process was progressive and not sudden. So previous works reveal much of where I have come from and how much everything stays in relation. Still, for me, there is a big lapse with my previous work *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements—Voice Over Three*, from my exhibition *Symmetric Inequality* at Sala Rekalde in December 2008. The long march of intentionally conceived serial works is more or less finalized, and now I stand at a new beginning, which feels at the same time old. If there is a continuation from this previous work, it lies in the element of voice. *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements—Voice Over Three* contains an open microphone, which is made available for use by the visitors. Whenever the microphone transmits a voice, the six spotlights in the exhibition space move differently from what was originally planned. This break from a fixed choreography is triggered by the voice. The new work at the Pavilion is titled *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements—Voice and Wind* and offers a sensory experience of wind from various fans and wind machines, and I think conceptually offers a voice as an underlying sentiment, which is human and singular. Unlike *Voice Over Three*, these two elements are not connected with each other mechanically in *Voice and Wind*—the direct interdependence is not there. The connection between voice and wind without a traceable connection of mechanics seems to me more considered.

A contradictory sense experience had previously been mobilized in *Yearning Melancholy Red* at REDCAT in 2008, where three fans were installed face to face with three infrared heaters. When someone stood in between them, he or she would sense both simultaneously. I felt that these simultaneously intersecting and contradictory senses were very comforting. In *Voice and Wind*, scents will dissipate, blow away, and mix with each other whenever neighboring wind machines are turned on. This is a kind of evolution of my interest in offering different senses, which are presented in the space but which keep their ephemeral and vulnerable nature as well as their violent and expressive nature, even if on a meek scale.

Somehow the first of these installations, *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements—Version Utrecht*, realized at BAK in 2006, in which various sensory machines were installed alongside the presentation of my video trilogy, feels fresh and very close to what I am currently developing for the Korean Pavilion, due to its reduced elements and loose atmosphere. This is different from recent installations that use the theatrical effect of programmed spotlights and calculated compositions of sense experiences. The installation at BAK was immediately echoed in a more complex spatial configuration in *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements—Blind Room*, shown the same year at the São Paulo Biennale. In that installation, the machines are carefully yet simply arranged in the space with less relational interweaving. It features a simple juxtaposition of humidity, heat, light, reflection, and scent that is less composed, except for the partial and uneven distribution of each sensual effect. As the title suggests, I was interested in building a field of unevenness, in which the experiences are rather independent, simply existing next to each other. The realization in São Paulo, which was later also exhibited at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, achieved its roomlike form through a periphery of venetian blinds that made the entire zone a half-transparent chamber in which the light, smells, and humidity drifted around and through it, and yet because of the small scale of the work, the effects stayed more or less at their origin, marked by the body of each device. The looseness of these first installations with their various sense experiences is what I am trying to regain after the tours and detours of the last three years. I am not only including precisely programmed elements but also trying to endow a more airy atmosphere in general. For instance, wind will blow and destabilize the geometry of the blinds, while the audience's presence, the walls of blinds, and the crosscurrents of wind will

block and direct air in different ways to produce a subtle, unpredictable new order not designed for the space.

I adapted the recurring title, *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements*, for various types of works, from light sculptures to installations with blinds and spotlights. I never actually intended to have a serial title; it just happened that it felt right to use this title over and over again. There is, however, an aspect of this title that seems to me legitimate to carry on. It's difficult to articulate why, but I would like to try.... I am often interested in making things by loose association, which can be described by the word "arrangements"; this again allows me to follow a methodology of "take" instead of "make." So, as I stated in my video trilogy, I am interested in observing how new composition arises while cutting and pasting proceed, which is a nonediting process.

Also "arrangement" applies to the nature of things I take. Regardless of whether they are events, phenomena, objects, or images, I am often drawn by the vulnerability of things and I realize they make me vulnerable as well. Curator Binna Choi once described it as "oblique." I guess there must be other synonyms. I don't know where and how to meet "vulnerability," but I slowly get to know it, its hometown, its namelessness, as well as its voice. I guess I am still on a journey of investigating those concepts in life.

EJ: *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements—Voice and Wind* also relates to several large-scale, labyrinthine installations that have relied heavily on theatrical lighting. But the Pavilion necessitated a slightly different approach.

HY: Yes, lately I have been working intensively on the dialectic combination of light and venetian blinds that filter each other and demonstrate a certain quality of permeability as relational narratives in between. Now the situation of the Korean Pavilion's fully bright space with strong daylight makes me vulnerable, and I feel entirely disarmed in a sense that I have to give up all that I have recently mastered. Of course I could make the space entirely dark for the perfect choreography of lights to create a more controlled and familiar situation. Yet I have never felt comfortable making a major operation to change an exhibition space for my work, so I will not heavily tailor the space for my needs.

On top of this habit of taking things mostly as they are, this vulnerability I obtain by giving up “the known” is something familiar to me. Since I am currently busy with certain systems of self-management, which is modest self-management, the situation of natural daylight feels right to work with. It took me a while to accept the conditions of the Pavilion’s architecture as it is. There is certainly still a sensation of risk, and I am working physically and mentally to contain this under the umbrella of “domesticity.” I am interested in defining this notion of “domesticity” for myself.

EJ: Tell me more about how you are engaging with daylight and transparency in *Voice and Wind* as well as in your new video essay *Doubles and Halves—Events with Nameless Neighbors* (2009).

HY: It is somewhat difficult for me to articulate my interest in domesticity since the work is in process, but what attracts me is its scale. Domesticity has a slippery and elastic unofficialness that an authoritarian power structure can hardly grasp or influence. I guess even privateness can be the object of manipulation and control under severely suppressive circumstances, yet I believe domesticity is a framework of nonpublic influence, because of its almost mundane, modest, and harmless characteristics. When I was confronted by the fact of the daylight in the exhibition space, after a long period of working with theatrical lights, I felt that this might be something equivalent to the domesticity I was concerned with, because of its transparent clearness: as we often say, something is “as clear as day.” Having been away from the daylight for a while, working in a darkened space and illuminating it with choreographed light, I feel blended now with the daylight. I guess this sensation of blending my sight with ordinary sunlight is what I am looking to experience personally and artistically by unlearning controlled light.

The new video essay contains an aspect of a particular domesticity—places as well as people with specific recognizable qualities. I began with my neighbors in Seoul, who live without drawing much attention from the outside because of the scale of their life, which feels almost meek. I started with their seemingly poor situation, which is interpreted by me as youth. The same goes for the disappearance of this neighborhood, which is being pushed farther out of the

city due to gentrification. But they will remain, distinctively memorable beings. For *Doubles and Halves*, I wrote about the inhabitants of this neighborhood, called Ahyun-dong. I would just like to sing for them: the shamans, the aged, the prostitutes, the debtors, and ordinary people who don't seem to have much to boast about.

I quote the beginning of the narration here:

People who live here are young.
 Their youth is explained by its uselessness.
 Because they are young, they move swiftly.
 This is different from being in a hurry,
 because they are not in a hurry to be on a fast track.
 Their agility is also explained by its uselessness.
 (...)

Some may understand this form of living to be a kind of poverty.
 Mostly they say it's a life "without amenities."
 But we ourselves don't actually feel that way.

The "poverty" in this neighborhood is in fact not being understood very well.
 It is not surprising.
 It is not surprising that people do not notice the fact that what is called poverty in this neighborhood takes place only because their minds are somewhere else.
 It's hard to figure out where the minds have gone off to,
 so it's easier to simply say they are poor.

(...)

But, what they are busy with, they won't show;
 they are busy without being noticeable.

They know well that other people don't know, but they won't say.
 Because if the details were revealed, it wouldn't be elegant.
 Only they do send a message now and then, through a gesture,
 intimating "You people cannot possibly understand."

Those who recognize this gesture have a hard time figuring out what to call them.
 Thus they do not have a name.

On the one hand, while I was living in Ahyun-dong, I felt accepted by the neighbors through nonverbal communication. No one ever asked who I was or what I was doing there. This silence

made me feel incredibly accepted, and I could identify with them perfectly and live next to them. I somehow wanted to capture respectfully my memories of their ghostly existence.

The images of Ahyun-dong are combined with footage from Venice, around the Korean Pavilion, which is located marginally in the Giardini. The park draws many illegal visitors, who are mostly invisible to us, except for their traces. I heard about them from the coordinator who works at the pavilion—how it is a problem to have these people camping on the roof of the Korean Pavilion during the off-season or overnight. When I found traces of them, I was immediately inspired by these visitors to the Pavilion who might not be interested in art. I somehow perfectly understand them wanting to camp there, because the rooftop is a highly attractive hidden site for romantic youngsters, lovers, and homeless people. Their secretive existence and their coexistence with the spectacle of Venice as apparitions were what I was interested in.

I am now separating the narration and the footage, which I always wanted to try. In fact, I have never felt comfortable fixing a layer of narration and images on the same timeline. I believe that autonomous texts and images are more fluent and flow into each other better. If there is a relational structure, it will be so intimate that I needn't pair them on the same timeline. So somehow I expect that the separation will help people make momentary connections among the numerous and constant combinations of image and sound to evoke the relationship between Ahyun-dong and my thoughts on it, for instance. Seeing that I am addressing ghostlike places, figures, and their events, this type of unfixed match will endow a connection with my mysterious momentary experience, in which I had a clear glimpse of understanding those people.

I titled this new video essay *Doubles and Halves*, a phrase that from the beginning played a role in my conception of all the works for the Korean Pavilion, because the quality that fascinates me is the relationship between the half of the whole and the double of the whole. Both of them seem incomplete yet they can't help each other. As I previously expressed in *Doubles and Couples*, I am driven by the tragic incompleteness of reality, which encourages me to narrate things in an abstract manner. This time I am interested in ghostly "halves" who meet their ghostly doubles over and over again, which is altogether a silent event because of its worklessness

(*desoeuvrement*). I am focusing on their domesticity and its worklessness, which take place autonomously.

ⁱ A full list of contributing individuals and institutions as well as the conversation schedule can be found in this publication.

ⁱⁱ *Trilogy* (2004–6) consists of : *Unfolding Places* (2004), *Restrained Courage* (2004), and *Squandering Negative Spaces* (2006).

ⁱⁱⁱ The 1980 manifesto of Reality and Utterance (현실과발언/Hyun Sil Gwa Baleon) can be found in this publication. The collective Reality and Utterance was formed in 1979 in response to the manifesto of 현실동인/Hyun Sil Dong In (1969). Some members included Ahn Kyu Chul, Choi Min, Jeong Dong Suk, Kim Jung-heun, Lee Tae Ho, Lim Ok Sang, Min Jeong-gi, Noh Won Hee, Oh Yoon, Shin Kyung Ho, and Sung Wan-kyung.

^{iv} siren eun young jung's contribution to this publication can be found in this publication.

^v Contributions to this publication by Young-whan Bae and Chan-Kyong Park can be found in this publication, respectively.

^{vi} Gimhongsok's contribution to this publication, *Public Blank*, can be found in this publication.

^{vii} Selected examples of *Sadong 30* documents can be found in this publication.