

Panorama Seoul: Sense of Space-time

Since mid 1980s, Junghwa Jung drew multiple images from a single image via video installations using space or indicated that space-time related to our experience is unstable by disarranging the experience of image-space-time. Jung's idea is well presented in *Panorama Seoul* (2000/2016). This work of three big screens comprised of 48 patch worked screens is what the artist had filmed for 2 years, looking down the heart of Gangnam from the peak of the Daemo Mountain, located in the south of Seoul. At a glance, the work can be misconceived as a large pause screen displaying the metropolitan since the scenery of the fragmented frames are so elaborately connected. However, if you give a second look, Seoul's spell of time transits in one set of screen as it transforms to day and night, morning and afternoon, bright and hazy.

48 Patch Worked Screens

A few things crossed my mind when I saw this work for the first time. First, I was astonished by the elaborate, technical fit of the 48 screens. Jung says this is possible by shooting in long distance. However, envisioning the artist drawing grids in the open air and shooting fraction of sceneries up on the Daemo Mountain and patch working them in front of the monitor afterwards, I came to a realization that this work is not something that could be done without devotion. The motive is rather simple compared to the complexity of the work. Jung often visited Daemo Mountain near her home for a walk and looked down at Seoul. This led to a thought whether it would be possible to contain the landscape she sees in a single frame. Ordinary people would have considered taking panoramic photographs. But Jung, who have delved into video her whole life, set to make a video of 48 individual screens linked together. The completed video depicts one scenery of Seoul while the individual screens respectively present different slices of life. We cannot figure the order of time each fragment possesses. The time of the bordering screens can be disjoint. Air shifted by weather and time is reflected on the tone of the screens. The widespread apartments and roads are impossible to be captured in a single screen when the camera's location and angle is fixed. Therefore the artist have filmed the sight in segments, drawing grids in the open air, but kept the single vanishing point to give an impression of perceiving the video in visual range as the sight was seen under normal panorama shooting mode. The video also needs closer inspections. Cars racing down the outstretched roads disappear in between the grids. Other cars jump out of the fissure without delay and run down the same lane. Shifting the gaze from the dusky apartments to the distant view, Seoul's afternoon air feels crisp and clear. A bird flies into the fissure. Like this, *Panorama Seoul* grants us to experience 48 moments in one spot by collecting space-time that had individually existed.

Space-time Built by Capitalism

On the other hand, a world map that every child once has drawn come to mind when watching *Panorama Seoul* in relation to the experience of being able to see what cannot be seen. I also have an experience drawing a world map when I was a child. With the help of my father, I first marked the equator, latitude, and longitude, and then copied down the chunks of the continents on each grid. I remember being surprised at how much space Greenland took up on the map. This island, a territory of Denmark, was not only bigger than Denmark, but also as big as South America. Yet, it was a distorted mass. The cartography my father taught me was the Mercator Projection. When translating the globe to flat surface, the longitude of the Polar region is lengthened resulting in enlarged scale of the Polar region while there is less distortion at the Equator region. Greenland located near the North Pole was delineated in an expanded form for this reason. Mercator Projection born in the Age of Exploration corresponded to the Western oriented view of the world in making Europe seem bigger than reality. Translating globular as well as 3 dimensional space to a flat square and looking at it as

square measure is also related to the capitalistic view of the world. The map allows the capitalist who perceives land as an object to conquer and pioneer, to grasp it in a single glance. Gangnam is a Korean capitalism's integration of the late 20th to early 21st century. Especially from 2001 to 2002, when the *Panorama Seoul* was filmed, the real estate myths hit its climax. Facing Gangnam with its skyscraping apartments lined down the outstretched roads, we encounter our past captivated by land. However, our desire for land has not yet been faded living beneath the principle of capitalism. The desire to settle down in one of those apartments and commute to one of those buildings will stay as long as we keep on measuring land as a unit of capital and time as a unit of efficiency.

Space-time Portraying the Compound of Space, Movement, and Time

Although Seoul is a city with an underlying desire to grasp and understand the world through capitalistic view in an omniscient perspective, there are certain things that one can experience when he/she is out of such perspective and desire. This is the reason that Jung presents Seoul as a patch worked city of 48 frames rather than capturing it in a single frame. In the novel *Smilla's Sense on Snow: A Novel* by a Danish writer Peter Høeg, there is a phrase that one can apprehend the sense of time of the Inuits in Greenland.

"In North Greenland distances are measured in *sinik*, in "sleeps," the number of overnights that a journey requires. It's not a fixed distance, because the number of *sinik* can vary, depending on the weather and the time of year. It's not a measurement of time, either. Under the threat of a storm, I've traveled with my mother non-stop from Force Bay to Iita, a distance that should have taken two overnights. *Sinik* is not a distance, not a number of days or hours. It is a spatial and temporal phenomenon, a concept of space-time that describes the union of space and motion and time that is taken for granted by Inuits but cannot be captured by ordinary speech in any European language."¹

We reside in Seoul walking, running, and going in and out of the buildings. We occasionally go to a higher place and get a wider view, but Seoul that we feel everyday with our five senses is inconstant and difficult to grasp in a short moment. The sense of time in the city is varied by each element's velocity, and the experience of time can neither be logical or serial. We understand Seoul through comparison, combination, and statistics of the dismantled experiences. This is why Jung conducts video as an endlessly disengaging and moving surface.

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¹ Peter Høeg, translated by Tiina Nunnally, *Smilla's Sense of Snow: A Novel*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993, p.317.