

Panorama Seoul

Why does Jungwha Jung seem to see complex images within a single image? No, better yet, why does not Jungwha Jung believe in one simple image? We will be able to comprehend the answers to those questions only when we understand the conceptual plays (Gedankenspiel) she engages in. She has been cautiously making various attempts in order to show that temporal and spatial contexts of our daily experiences are not as stable as we might have thought. You cannot help being confused if what you thought to be a mirror turns out to be a semi-translucent canvas or if you run into an exactly identical photographic image of the stairs you just climbed down. To cause this kind of puzzlement, Jungwha Jung sometimes prepares many interesting conceptual traps you might fall into: she installs multiple video monitors in temporally arbitrary order, some of which show the real-time images of spectators, while others show video-taped earlier images of them. For Jungwha Jung, present is only one of the many time slots we can confirm the records of our lives right now, and here as this place is only one of the many spatial points which can be easily confused with there or that place where we had our experiences. My life in "here and now", which were regarded as the absolutely essential conditions of our lives and experiences, gets shaken and dissected by her conceptual knife. Is this a liberation or despair? Her philosophical questions often make us dizzy.

"Panorama Seoul" must be a more approachable work, giving us more pleasure in its audio-visual displays, compared with her earlier works. Yet, it should not be regarded as a compromise from her fierce experimental spirit. Hundreds of different video sequences she taped for many months from a mountain overlooking Seoul, endlessly change to appear in 48 frames of the monitor. In the change of seasons and climates, and in the heated construction fever throughout Seoul, and its consequent dynamic emergence and transformation of building complexes, how does Seoul appear to us anyway? "Panorama Seoul" attempts an answer to that question. In there, we find a mosaic image of Seoul with its very near past and present features endlessly replacing each other in every frame. Here, we can ask another question. Why did Jungwha Jung choose to show Seoul in that way? Maybe, she wanted to show us that Seoul is alive in a way that we as inhabitants cannot really notice. Seoul is ceaselessly being built, dismantled, and changed. Unless we grasp that kind of notion of dynamics, we cannot dare to say that we are seeing Seoul. Every spot in Seoul changes in its different speed: some fast, others very slow: some with their old facades, others with their ultra-futuristic looks. Thus, the image of Seoul cannot be one, it has to be complex and a set of heterogeneous images.

Another pleasure you get from "Panorama Seoul" is the pleasure of listening to the all different stories those mountain hikers tell when they overlook Seoul. Just as ever-changing image of Seoul, the stories the people who live inside of Seoul tell looking into their lives from outside are many-faced. They talk about the places of their lives with their steps away from the problems they have down there. Sometimes they are awed by the panoramic view, other times, they are startled by the changed look. The view is strange to them just as it is strange to look at their objectified images. Their stories, as they are the responses of people living inside Seoul make when they come out of their own individual places and look down upon Seoul as a whole, are simply so interesting to us. They want to know in which direction they will find their own places. They continue their dialogues as they mention the part of the town real estate value soared the most. When each individual's specific life becomes real in each story we listen to, Seoul as the objectified landscape becomes specific again as the place for people to live in.

With the dynamics of the transformations shown by the ever-changing video images, and with audio information heard from the dialogues, the liveliness of Seoul gets relayed to us. This is the work the complexity of Jungwha Jung style thought experiments approach us so beautifully.

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