

Jane Jin Kaisen

DISSIDENT TRANSLATIONS

8th October 2011 - 8th January 2012



Still shot from *Reiterations of Dissent*, 2011

The crows circle over the South Korean volcanic island of Jeju. Their screams stir memories among the people who experienced the “Jeju 4.3 Massacre”. Jeju 4.3 was one of the most violent events in the modern history of South Korea, and is quite crucial to the understanding of the Cold War in Asia. For decades Jeju 4.3 has been hushed up, and to this day there is no agreement on whether the event should be regarded as a communist uprising, a decided massacre or a microcosm of the ideological struggles that led to the partition of Korea.

In the exhibition *Dissident Translations*, Jane Jin Kaisen investigates power relations, colonization and the repression of history. The artist’s geographical focus is the island of Jeju; on this basis she examines the far-reaching consequences of the US occupation of South Korea – not only for the environment, but also for the population of the country and their economic, political and psychological wellbeing.

EPOCH-MAKING BACKGROUND STORY

Combining video and text, Jane Jin Kaisen conducts an extensive study of issues related to Jeju. In recent decades the island has been marketed as “Peace Island” and “the Hawaii of Korea” and is one of South Korea’s biggest tourist attractions. However, the recently-begun construction of a South Korean / American military base clashes not only with the conception of Jeju as an “eco-paradise”, but also brings the repressed history of the “Jeju 4.3 Massacre” to the surface once more.

TRANSLATION

South Korean-born and Danish-adopted, Jane Jin Kaisen sees herself as a product of conflicting ideologies and cultural influences. It is from this complex position that she approaches a personal ‘translation’ of Jeju’s repressed past, the present-day military escalation and the future consequences. In Kaisen’s perspective her translation of the tragic events can be seen as defiance or dissidence. At the same time her translation inevitably entails a certain degree of interpretation, and Kaisen is interested in the changes that the translation produces.

ISLAND OF STONE # 1-3

HALL A

In *Island of Stone # 1-3* three films are shown simultaneously with among other things sounds from the roar of the waves, rhythmic song and voices struggling with one another to be heard. The impression is complex, but ends with just a single film image showing the violent arrest of the film critic Yang Yun Mo and the activist Choi Sung Hee, who by placing their bodies beneath a demolition vehicle try to prevent the illegal construction of a South Korean/American military base,

the Jeju Naval Base. With the building of the base Jeju Island will once again be transformed from an environmental paradise into a militarized area for future conflicts.

From a situation of local resistance silenced by the authorities, the issue of Jeju 4.3 has achieved global attention through social media like YouTube and Facebook, as well as major networks like CNN, Al Jazeera, The New York Times and Amnesty International. Several hundred activists from all over the world have come to Jeju to participate in the revolt.

REITERATIONS OF DISSENT

HALL C

The five-channel video installation *4.3 Reiterations* has been edited in circular narratives shown in loops. This refers to traumatic repetitions, after-effects and traces of unresolved stories. The film work is almost entirely based on new film footage from the island of Jeju, including poetic images of crows flying around in a forest, a shamanist ritual with dancing and singing for the dead, as well as intense footage from the cremation of the victims of the massacre – 63 years after their death, when flowers are laid and incense is burned. “Don’t be scared,” shouts the official announcer at the cremations, thus urging the listeners to come to terms with the tragic history of Jeju Island. For five decades even mentioning the date, the third of April, was strictly illegal.

RETAKE: MAYDAY

HALL C

In the three-channel video installation *Retake: Mayday* one experiences a mish-mash of different opinions and attitudes that all collide: not only in sound, but also in images.

The film centres on Kaisen's reflections over the American propaganda film, *Mayday on Cheju-do*, filmed on Jeju Island on 1st May 1948. The film is the only visual representation of Jeju 4.3, and was at the same time used to alter the truth. The US Government made up scenes and hid the fact that the massacre was carried out by both the Korean army and the police under the supreme command of the American military. Despite this the USA has never admitted to any responsibility for the genocide.

LIGHT AND SHADOW

HALL D

Light and Shadow is a text-based work comprising three elements: Jane Jin Kaisen's grandfather's memoirs written in Korean; then a translation of her grandfather's memoirs into English; and finally Kaisen's own comments on her grandfather's text. The grandfather emphasizes his lived experiences and his direct involvement in the ideological disputes, while Kaisen writes about her return to Jeju Island in 2011, when she witnessed the after-effects of Jeju 4.3, female Jeju divers' anti-colonial uprising, and the conflicts surrounding the current construction of the Jeju Naval Base.

THE WOMAN, THE ORPHAN, AND THE TIGER

PROJECT SPACE

The film work *The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger* (2010), which Kaisen has made in collaboration with Guston Sondin-Kung, communicates across the boundaries of her earlier and more recent works. The film looks at the way militarism and the patriarchate in South Korea have had violent consequences for three generations of women: the earlier "comfort women" who were taken as sex

slaves by the Japanese army in the 1930s; female sex slaves around American military bases in South Korea from the 1950s; and the generation of Korean adopted women who have returned to South Korea since the 1990s. With its polyphonic structure, themes and discursive goals, the film points towards Kaisen's new works.

The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger will be shown exclusively every Saturday at 2 p.m. in the Project Space of the Aarhus Art Building.

ABOUT JANE JIN KAISEN

Jane Jin Kaisen is a Danish visual artist, born in South Korea. She has an MA in Art Theory and Communication from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (2010), an MFA in Interdisciplinary Studio Art from the University of California Los Angeles (2010) and attended the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program (2007-2008).

From a post-colonial and transnational feminist perspective Jane Jin Kaisen approaches major political and discursive themes in her works. She is intent on creating an artistic imagery that accounts for unequal power structures such as race, gender and class in our globalized present. Kaisen's film, performance, video installation and text works are often an accumulation of bodily, visual and auditive fragments where times, localities and hierarchies between personal and collective memories are broken down and rewritten so that new understandings are created.

Dissident Translations is Jane Jin Kaisen's first solo exhibition created specifically for the Aarhus Art Building.

The theme of the exhibition programme in 2011 is *IMAGINE – towards an ecoaesthetic*. *IMAGINE* suggests that art is a critical but at the same time positive, fruitful option that makes allowances for the surroundings and the environment. With this focus *IMAGINE* wants to put discussions of representation and negation issues on a back burner in favour of a more ‘healing’ aspect.

The point of departure for this year’s theme is the manifesto *Ecoaesthetics* by the artist, writer and curator Rasheed Araeen, which was published in the art and culture periodical *Third Text* in the autumn of 2009. In this text Araeen mounted a frontal assault on the modern ego and the recuperation of the avant-garde. He advocated a collective artistic imagination that would function as the way forward towards “lakes and rivers with clean water, collective farming and the planting of trees all over the world”.

The manifesto rejects – albeit in a slightly one-track masculine way – previous artistic attempts to step down from the pedestal of the bourgeoisie in favour of a collective commitment to the surroundings and the environment. While Araeen can be criticized for his slightly narrow aim of denigrating artistically committed experiments, this does not detract from the relevance of a debate that goes behind the current ‘acuteness’ one experiences today in relation to ecological and environmental issues in art.

With *IMAGINE* the Aarhus Art Building wants to take a closer look at alliances between art and sustainable development. The themes emphasize the origin of the concept of sustainability and the linkages between environmental and social problems which have been characteristic of thinking about and the development of this particular concept since the beginning of the 1970s. Through important movements that have consistently had sustainability as their primary starting point the concept has furthermore been linked conspicuously with an ethical imperative and a determined ambition to overcome inequality – understood as the concrete and symbolic construction of power relations.

ÅRHUS KUNSTBYGNING
 J.M. MØRKS GADE 13 DK-8000 ÅRHUS C
 www.aarhuskunstbygning.dk

DISSIDENT TRANSLATIONS
 is sponsored by:



ÅRHUS KUNSTBYGNING
 is sponsored by:



IMAGINE 2011
 is sponsored by:

