

**The Korean Pavilion
at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia**

Exhibition Title: History Has Failed Us, but No Matter
Period: May 11- November 24, 2019
Artists: siren eun young jung, Jane Jin Kaisen and Hwayeon Nam
Curator: Hyunjin Kim
Commissioner: Arts Council Korea

Under the title *History Has Failed Us, but No Matter*¹, the Korean Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia is curated by **Hyunjin Kim**, Lead Curator for Asia at KADIST. “Who canonized the formation of history and whose bodies are yet to be written about as part of that story?” It is this vital question that frames the exhibition, presenting the work of three women artists: siren eun young jung, Hwayeon Nam, and Jane Jin Kaisen. This exhibition explores the history of modernization in East Asia through the lens of gender and the agency of tradition. Questioning the canon of the heterosexual male as much as it questions the West, this is also an argument over the many boundaries and borders of modernity that are carved into today’s aporia. In particular, in its critical understanding of the problems of the modernization process in Asia, this exhibition investigates how tradition is invented and generated in close relation to modernity and explores the emancipatory potential of tradition in Asia through a perception of gender complexity that goes beyond the canon of Western modernity.

siren eun young jung is widely recognized for her practice that looks at how one’s individual desire impacts their experience of world events, and how such encounters become forms of resistance, informing history and politics. Winner of the Korea Artist Prize in 2018, her work over the past ten years has focused on *yeoseong gukgeuk*, a genre of Korean traditional theater that features only women actors. The genre still survives today in an altered modernized form, but it is waning quickly. Documenting the performance of second generation *gukgeuk* actor Lee Deung Woo (aka Lee Ok Chun), jung’s *A Performing by Flash, Afterimage, Velocity and Noise* also calls forth four performers that succeed the genealogy of contemporary queer performance—a transgender musician, a disabled woman performer/director, an openly lesbian actor, and a drag king performer. Engaging in these performers’ contestation against aesthetic canons, the artist lures the audience into an audiovisual setting activated by the feast of light, noise, and the moving body. siren eun young jung’s new production for the Biennale Arte 2019 was co-commissioned by KADIST.

¹ The exhibition title is borrowed from the first sentence of the novel *PACHINKO* with the generous permission of its author, Min Jin Lee.



Jane Jin Kaisen is a Berlin and Copenhagen-based visual artist and filmmaker. Stemming from the artist's own diasporic awareness and experience, Kaisen's new piece *Community of Parting* keenly interprets the ancient Korean shamanic myth of Bari, in which an abandoned daughter revives the dead and ultimately becomes a goddess who mediates at the threshold of life and death. For the artist, a different approach to memory, borders and translation can be traced in the epic myth that resonates with gendered migrations caused by war, nationalism, ideological conflicts, rapid modernization and patriarchic oppression in East Asia. Dissolving spatial and temporal boundaries by juxtaposing images, sounds, archive material, and poetry with the redemptive performances of shaman Koh Sun Ahn, the artist explores the embodiment of liminality as she sharply dives into stories of resilient women and images of borders throughout the history of the Korean peninsula.

Hwayeon Nam's experimentation with archives investigates how human desire can amplify certain myths and values in today's discursive operations of nation and economy. In her new video *Dancer from the Peninsula*, Nam traces the fragmented archive of Choi Seung-hee, a legendary but controversial choreographer and modern dancer, whose life intersected many of the most tumultuous events of the 20th century in East Asia. Nam's manifold presentation includes single-channel videos that utilize found footage and images from Choi's archives, as well as a large sculptural structure, and a small garden installed behind the Pavilion. This layered multi-media installation offers an enchanting and performative bricolage of a controversial woman artist figure's life and her lofty aspiration toward an East-Asian dance, mobilizing her from the simplified nationalistic or ideological arguments against her.

Generating a complex narrative assemblage of historical interventions, the three artists in this exhibition seek to resist and create ruptures in the logic of systems and power; and they are keen to question how the development of civilization, violence of convention, and the norms of such history take place in our times. In alignment, the streamlined curves of the exhibition space further encourage the audience to explore and to experience the space through the coexistence of elements; such as the various heights of the space, lightness and darkness, and the relationship of the space inside and outside.

Saturated with the performance of tactile knowledge and the experiences of affect that are manifested through the sounds, rhythms, waves, series of scattered images and bodily movements; the exhibition attempts a space for the veiled, the forgotten, the exiled, the condemned, and the silenced. Here, they murmur, sing, cry, pause, laugh, express, move, and dance, and finally speak out loud. "History has failed us, but no matter."

Artists' Websites:

siren eun young jung <http://www.sirenjung.com>

Jane Jin Kaisen <http://janejinkaisen.com>

Website of the Korean Pavilion:

<http://www.korean-pavilion.or.kr>

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Korean Pavilion - Significant Dates:

Preview: 2019 May 8 – May 10

Press Opening: 2019 May 9, 13:30

Opening Ceremony: 2019 May 9, 15:30

Korean Pavilion X Hyundai Party: 2019 May 10, From 21:00 – 02:00

Venue: Laboratorio Occupato Morion (Calle del Morion, 2951, 30122 Venezia, Italy)

- With performances by Asian musicians: CLEO P (Thailand), CHANGSIE (Japan),
IRAMAMAMA (Indonesia), KIRARA (South Korea), DJ YESYES (South Korea)

- Main Sponsor: Hyundai Motor Company