

## WON CHA: our bone s milk coal

Duration: Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 – February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024

Fundamental to Won Cha's installation practice is the idea of sites. Sites as temporal-spatial realizations of places that wander, carrying traces and knowledge of the previous sites and the places where they were realized with them in each new incarnation. The result is an artistic practice that feeds on its own history, openly exhibits its continuities and ruptures, but nevertheless remains open to new lines of questioning and forms of engagement. This dynamic, ongoing work can permanently adapt, change or re-contextualize its individual parts. In the case of the exhibition "our bone s milk coal", a new set of questions unfold. Through multiple visits to the Bochum mining archives, one of the main sources of sparsely documented Korean mining history of the Ruhr area (1960-1980), Cha worked within and against the limitations of the archive to weave together historic materials encountered within the archives and family stories of love and struggle in a post-war South Korea. Cha came across remarkably few images and personal accounts of Korean guest workers during his time in the archives, a concern that is reflected in the exhibition. Another is the administrative depersonalisation of the workers, whose names were first translated phonetically and then transferred to control or process numbers. The numbers taken from archival files are a leitmotif throughout the exhibition until they form a body in "Miss Korea of the Ruhr Valley" in a twisted reversal of their actual abstracting function. Within the erected site, the found archive material is linked to Cha's family history, which, characterized by hunger, love, and repression, also tells of the dirty foundations on which South Korea's current prosperity is based. In particular, the seven-part work "The Concept of Time Parts 1-7" shows how Cha weaves his family history into other contexts by allowing the individual frames to merge into other installations, some of which are composed of disparate material, thus amalgamating different historical levels.

*Won Cha* lives and works in the US and abroad. He had solo exhibitions at LC Queisser, Tbilisi, and took part in several international group shows. *Our bone s milk coal* is her first institutional solo exhibition in Europe.

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