

Obama: 300 ways of creatively announcing his victory

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Transpop: Korea Vietnam Remix at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts



Double Bubble Bazooka, Tiffany Chung, 2005. Photo courtesy of the artist.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA. - Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) presents transPOP: Korea Vietnam Remix, on Sat, Dec 6, 2008-Sun, Mar 22, 2009, in YBCA's First Floor Galleries. The exhibition offers a rare opportunity to view cutting-edge contemporary art by sixteen critically acclaimed artists from Vietnam, Korea and their respective diasporas in the United States. The featured artworks in transPOP explore interconnections between Vietnam and Korea, including the intersections of history, trauma and contemporary popular culture, using a variety of mediums – paint, video, photography, sculpture, installation, and documentary footage.

"My co-curator Viet Le and I conceived the exhibition during a lunch of budae jigae (translated as army base stew – a Korean goulash-like holdover from the Korean War days) to reflect our interest in the dynamic pulse of transnational and inter-Asian cultural flows as well as the twinned forces of media and migration," said co-curator Yong Soon Min.

Though the interactions between Vietnam and Korea span centuries, transPOP: Korea Vietnam Remix focuses on their shared history of a highly accelerated modernization process with militarized roots and the Cold War. During the American War in Vietnam, the Republic of Korea was the second largest foreign military and economic presence in Vietnam behind the United States, with over 300,000 combat forces and approximately 24,000 skilled workers in exchange for substantial U.S. aid. The financial boon from the involvement in the war played a catalytic role in the development of Korea, laying the foundation for what is now the world's 12th largest economy. The legacy of the Cold Wars is evident in the large Korean and Vietnamese diasporic communities in the U.S. In Vietnam, this accelerated modernity is evident in the breakneck speed of current economic development, as well as its entry into the World Trade Organization.

Since the late nineties, Vietnam and Korea have witnessed a significant development of popular culture, fostering greater cultural proximity locally and abroad. A global phenomenon known as the "Korean Wave," has popularized Korean television dramas, pop stars, music, films and fashion through East, Southeast Asia and beyond since the new millennium. As part of a growing inter-Asian flow of pop culture, the Korean Wave has also been influential in Vietnam, spurring numerous joint efforts between the two countries. "V-Pop" and "Viet Wave," or Vietnamese pop music and film, has created an explosion of pop stars and media products in Vietnam and overseas. The triangulated relationship between Korea, Vietnam and the U.S. forged through war in Vietnam is also manifest in the increased cross-pollination of cultural influence and exchange.

transPOP: Korea Vietnam Remix is part of YBCA's Imagining Our Future series, one of the three Big Ideas that guide this season's programming. In the midst of an ever-changing world, many artists wonder about what the future holds and what they can create to make life more enriching. Artists imagine a future that is as complex, rich and challenging as the present, but also one that is surprising and maybe even startling. YBCA brought together a group of artists whose visions of people, the kind of world they have created, and what the future could be within it are thought-provoking and often profoundly moving. The metaphorical power of art to help imagine the unknowable is at the heart of their work. Like many around them, these artists

are driven by a sense of urgency about the future.

BAE Young Whan (b. 1969, Seoul; based in Korea. BFA, Oriental Painting, Hongik University, Seoul) has been gaining prominence since the mid-1990s with works in a broad range of media and processes. He is part of a new generation of artists whose work diverges from the didacticism of the Minjungmisool (or "people's art") movement. His work reveals an ongoing interest in the vernacular aesthetics of pop songs and popular culture with mundane yet unexpected materials such as common digestion pills, plastic flowers, and broken glass from soju bottles. He has exhibited widely in Korea including solo shows at the PKM gallery, Kumho Museum, Namu Gallery, Ilju Art House, and Alternative Space Pool.

Min Hwa CHOI Chul-Hwan (b. 1954, Seoul; based in Korea. Painting, Hongik University) first came to prominence in association with the Minjung movement, a cultural and political movement struggling for socio-political change that peaked during the mid- to late 1980s. Min Hwa Choi Chul-Hwan's paintings feature contemporary youth and youth culture derived from television and magazine depictions; figures and gestures are obsessively reworked and remixed to evoke a sense of unsettling posturing and emotional paralysis. His solo shows in Korea include exhibitions at Munhwa Ilbo Gallery, Alternative Space Pool, Seonam Museum, Gongpyeong Art Center, and Hansun Gallery.

Tiffany CHUNG (b. 1969, Danang; based in Vietnam; BFA, California State University, Long Beach; MFA, University of California, Santa Barbara) is a Vietnamese-American artist based in Saigon. Chung's pastiche installations (photography, sculptural elements and video) utilizes a pop sensibility to capture the essence of the vibrant city life of an increasingly urban—and urbane—Vietnam: a candy-colored utopia, a hyper real fantasy. Her solo exhibitions include Momentum, Mai's Gallery, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Fifteen Seconds of Fame at the Sugarless Factory, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan; and Beyond Soft Air and Cotton Candy, LMan Gallery, Los Angeles, USA.

Sowon KWON (b. 1963, Seoul; based in the USA; BA, University of California, Berkeley; MFA, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn) dongghap (Korean for same birth year) prints and drawings are part of an ongoing series of self-portraits that chart historical and political events constellated by the year of her birth and gasoline. She has had solo exhibitions at The Kitchen, The Berkeley Art Museum at University of California, Berkeley; and The Whitney Museum at Philip Morris (now Altria).

Since 2001, the collaborative team Lin + Lam (Lana LIN + H. Lan Thao LAM) (b. Taiwan and Vietnam respectively; based in USA. Lam: MFA, CalArts; Lin: MFA, Bard College) have produced interdisciplinary projects that examine the ramifications of the past on the current socio-political moment. Their work has been exhibited at venues including the Museum of Modern Art, NY; the Whitney Museum of American Art; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions; and the Arte Nuevo Interactiva'07 Biennial, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Merida, Mexico.

An-My LÊ (b. 1960, Saigon; based in US; MFA, Photography, Yale University) staged photographic images and films draw parallels between the Vietnam War and the Iraq War, and explores the shifting and amorphous boundaries between fact and fantasy, politics and play, horror and banality. Her solo exhibitions include New Photography 13, MoMA, New York; Small Wars, PS1 Contemporary Art Center/Museum of Modern Art.

Dinh Q. LÊ (b. 1968, Ha-Tien; based Vietnam; BA, University of California, Santa Barbara; MFA, School of Visual Arts, New York.) was born in Vietnam and immigrated to the US in 1978. He has had numerous solo exhibitions including shows at the Bellevue Arts Museum, Bellevue, WA; Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Santa Monica, CA; Asia Society, NY; University Art Museum, Santa Barbara, CA; Photology, Milan, Italy; 10 Chancery Lane Gallery, Hong Kong, China; Houston Center for Photography, Houston, TX.

LEE Yong-baek (b. 1966, Gimpo; based in Korea. Fine Art, Hongik University; Painting and Sculpture, Staatliche Akademie der bildende Künste, Stuttgart, Germany) known for large-scale, fabricated sculptures and installations that often involve mechanically driven components as well as highly technical and digitally processed videos and performances is featured here with two video installations that obliquely reference the residual, anxiety-laden affects of Korea's military legacy as well as the economic and social displacements in the recent history of modernity. He has had solo shows at Arario Gallery, Beijing; +Gallery, Nagoya, Japan; Alternative Space Loop, Seoul; Kuandu Museum of Fine Art, Taipei, Taiwan; Sungkok Museum, Seoul; Gallery Zehentscheuer, Munsingen, Germany; and Sonamu Gallery, Seoul.

Sandrine LLOUQUET (b. 1975, Montpellier, France; based in Vietnam; diasporic artist. Fine Art University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; BFA, EPIAR [International Pilot School of Art and Research] Villa Arson, Nice, France) presents images that are at once familiar and unsettling. Her drawings and animations point at the complexities of memory and representation, jouissance and despair. During the past decade, she has participated in several international exhibitions and events in Asia and Europe. Since 2000, in conjunction with her personal artwork, she has collaborated with Bertrand Peret to develop and promote contemporary art in Vietnam, forming the Wonderful District project in Ho Chi Minh City in March 2005.

Tran Luong (b. 1960, Hanoi; based in Vietnam. BFA, Hanoi Fine Arts Institute) is an artist and curator based in Hanoi. Luong was originally part of the Gang of Five, an influential avant-garde group of painters who came to international attention in the mid 1990s. He was the Founder and Artistic Director of the Contemporary Art Center, Hanoi (2002-2003). Solo exhibitions include the Vietnamese Cultural House, Paris, France; Art In General, New York, USA; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca NY, USA; Civitella Ranieri Center, Umbria, Italy; Cave Gallery, Brooklyn NY, USA; Goethe Institute, Hanoi, Vietnam; British Council, Hanoi, Vietnam; Reyum Institute, Phnom Penh, Vietnam.

LY Hoang Ly (b. 1975, Saigon; based in Vietnam) is a poet, performance and visual artist whose works in the exhibition are informed by the memories of the war in Vietnam. She has had exhibitions in Vietnam, Thailand, Korea, Japan, the US, and Germany including shows at the Dahlem Museum, Berlin; National Gallery, Bangkok; Chiang Mai Art Museum, Chiang Mai; Blue Space Gallery, Ho Chi Minh City; Zen Gallery, Ho Chi Minh City; Vietnam Contemporary Art Center, Hanoi; 4th Asiatopia, Bangkok/Chiang Mai; 2002 Busan Biennale, Busan; Cave Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; Japan Society, New York, NY; Shiga Museum, Shiga.

NGUYEN Manh Hung (b. 1976, Hanoi; based in Vietnam. BFA, Hanoi Fine Arts Institute) creates surreal landscapes that playfully deal with issues regarding globalization, industrialization, urbanization and Vietnam's rapidly changing socio-economic and cultural terrain. Hung has had numerous group exhibitions and live performances including the Experimental Music and Video Show, Goethe Institute, Hanoi, Vietnam; Out of Context, Huntington Beach Art Center, Huntington Beach, CA, USA; Room-Zoom, Nha San Anh Duc, Hanoi, Vietnam; Saigon Open City; Fete de la musique, L'espace Alliance Francaise, Hanoi, Vietnam; Hue Festival, Hue, Vietnam; TIPAF Taiwan International Performance Art Festival, Kaohsiung, Taipei, Taiwan; NIPAF Nippon International Performance Art Festival, Tokyo/Nagoya/Nagano, Japan; and Window to Asia, Hanoi Contemporary Art Center, Vietnam.

OH Yongseok (b. 1976, Seoul; based in Korea. BFA, Painting, University of Suwon) has had a solo show at Alternative Space Pool, Seoul and participated in exhibitions and media art festivals internationally including the Asia Video Art Conference, Tokyo, Japan and Bandung, China; Incheon Media Art Festival, Incheon, Korea; Crystallization of Time, MAAP, Singapore, Singapore; Media Art Biennale at Seoul Museum of Art (2006); Shanghai Biennale (2006); Seforma, Yonsei University and Art Center Nabi, Seoul, Korea.

Area PARK's (b. 1971, Pusan; based in Korea. BA, Kyung-il University, Taegu; MFA, Chung-ang University, Seoul) photographs complicates the distinctions between documentary and more formal approaches to the medium to represent the political undercurrents in the cityscape of Seoul. He has had solo shows in Seoul at the Chohung Gallery and the Kumho Museum of Art. His group exhibitions include In & Out: Korea - Japan Young Artists, Konica Plaza, Japan, Tokyo; Standing Point, Back Sang Memorial Hall, Seoul; From the East, Morisita Gallery, Kyoto, Japan; PIP Pinyao International Photography Festival, China; Mio Award Exhibition, Mio Hall, Osaka, Japan; Mongyudowon, Ssamzie Space, Seoul; New Vision, Lightgarden Gallery, Osaka, Japan; Fast Forward, Foto Forum International, Frankfurt, Germany.

SONG Sanghee's (b. 1970, Seoul; based in Korea. BFA, MFA, Painting, Ewha Women's University, Seoul) photographs and video in the exhibition

addresses the intersection of gender and history in representations of Korean modernity. She has had solo shows at Insa Art Center, Seoul; Freespace PRAHA, Sapporo, Japan; Alternative Space Pool, Seoul; Gallery ICON, Seoul. Her group exhibitions include Global Feminisms, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn NY, USA; Artspectrum 2006, Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea; Stepping Across Borders, Hokkaido Museum of Art, Sapporo, Japan; Six Contemporary Artists from Korea, Kunstcentret Silkeborg, Denmark; The Battle of Visions: Critical Art in Korea, Kunsthalle Darmstadt, Darmstadt Germany. Song has also participated in biennales in Sao Paulo (2006), Busan (2004), and Gwangju (2006).

Soon-Mi YOO (b. 1962, Seoul; based in U.S; MA, German Literature, Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea; MFA, Photography, Massachusetts College of Art) has had her film and video work screened at the London Film Festival, Images Festival, Oberhausen Film Festival, Rotterdam Film Festival, New York Film Festival, Pacific Film Archive, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Flaherty Seminar, Academie Schloss Solitude, Seattle International Film Festival, Hawaii International Film Festival, and the Cinema du Reel Film Festival at the Centre Georges Pompidou.

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