



focus

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How do countries absorb other cultures? Is it a question of neat transference or is it rather a process of osmosis, a quiet assimilation over many years? What bits remain indigestible, separate and what morphs into interesting new blends of the indigenous and the new? And how do organizations that strive to present such assimilation or distinctiveness, do so in a manner that is sensitive to the cultures that were the originators? These are some of the challenges that are placed before InKo Centre, a centre that aims to extend the intercultural dialogue between India and South Korea through the access points of language studies, cultural exchange and information provision. What then is the nature, depth and range of interaction possible between these two countries?

EDITORIAL

Starting in November 2006, even as the invigorating exercise of giving the Centre its logo and creative identity was completed, the first of our events were upon us—the magnificent sweep of the traditional Korean stage with the Chongdong Theater; 7 Korean films that took centre stage at the 4th Chennai International Film Festival; an international seminar on Asian Cinema in collaboration with the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society, Bangalore and the Japan Foundation, New Delhi; a seminar on Nation, Gender and Identity in popular Korean and Indian cinema in association with the LV Prasad Film and TV Academy in Chennai. The feedback has been positive and the potential for intellectual and artistic exchange, enormous.

In this inaugural issue of focus, InKo Centre's quarterly newsletter, we acknowledge the vision and support of Mr Venu Srinivasan, Managing Director TVS Motors and Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Korea and Mr Lheem, Managing Director of Hyundai Motor India Limited. It is their support that encourages us to believe that what we have modestly begun will be sustained and developed into a meaningful conversation between our two countries.

This issue outlines the programmes that we intend to roll out over the next three months. From language and communication to wellness; calligraphy; film screenings, there will be something happening almost every day at InKo Centre. And at periodic intervals, the bigger events explode in different cities – the 9th Women's International Film Festival in Seoul; the first major commercial launch of a Korean film, 'The Host' in Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi; the 4th Ceramic Biennale at the Icheon World Ceramic Centre in Seoul. Read what the critically acclaimed filmmaker and film studies specialist Kim Soyoung, founder of the Women's International Film Festival in Seoul has to say about gender in Korean cinema. And join Kristine Michael, one of India's finest ceramicists, as she briefly discusses Indian ceramics and her new work 'Rites of Passage' and 'Fruit Trail' developed specially for the prestigious Biennale in Seoul.

I look forward to greeting you at our events and courses, to receiving your feedback online or over the telephone and to deepening this dialogue with your support and participation.

warm regards

Rathi Jafer, Director, InKo Centre



Mr Venu Srinivasan
Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Korea
& Chairman, InKo Centre

In today's world, globalisation is increasingly leading to sameness and a lack of difference. Difference when seen as 'the other', 'the unfamiliar', 'the unknown' often induces varying degrees of discomfort. We are increasingly controlled by brands that feed on the consumerist mind set that 'expensive' must necessarily mean 'excellent'. The choice of that which is niche and unique is getting smaller and smaller as our world shrinks to the command of a small but omnipotent group of brands generators.

If there is the phenomenon of the European Union in the west there is an increasing attempt to map the rise of an Asian entity in the east. But do such neat classifications fit? Perhaps they could do in a political, economic sense of the term. But what about culture? How do nations maintain and project their distinctive and indigenous cultures in a world that is demanding sameness?

In this context, the role of cultural diplomacy as the soft but dynamic power cementing nations cannot be over emphasized. It is a zone that ensures the acknowledgement, tolerance, even celebration of difference. Through language, literature, music, dance, film, visual arts, cuisine we find access to cultures other than our own, to traditional techniques different from those we are familiar with, to belief systems that make a people what they are. And, in the process, often in an indescribable manner, we understand ourselves and own culture better.

InKo Centre, the Indo-Korean Cultural and Information Centre, has been set up with an aim to promote intercultural dialogue between India and Korea by facilitating a consistent programme that draws on the rich traditions of both these countries. With a focus on language, culture and information, through performances, conversations and research, InKo Centre will look at the global dimensions of such a dialogue even while showcasing the local and national characteristics that underpin such exchange.

As Honorary Consul General to the Republic of Korea, I was delighted at the encouragement I received from Mr Choi Jung-il, Former Ambassador to the Republic of Korea in India when I suggested that such a Centre was necessary to deepen the engagement between India and Korea, at a time when trade relations between the two countries were growing at a tremendous pace. I am delighted to support InKo Centre in its attempt to deepen that engagement by reaching out to connect the peoples of India and Korea in a meaningful and sustained manner.



Mr Heung Soo Lheem
Managing Director
Hyundai Motors India Limited

The term culture denotes different meanings to different persons but for many persons culture is the full range of learned human behavioural patterns. It is the basic building block of any society and represents those unique and deep rooted set of beliefs, attitudes, values, customs, practices, aspirations and a way of life. In its myriad forms and manifestations of art, language and food habits, the basic nature of culture seeks to identify and typically group civilizations, nations and individuals of similar backgrounds by calling them Indians, Americans, Europeans, Koreans. When people speak of Italian, Samoan or Japanese culture they are referring to shared language, traditions, and beliefs that set each of these people apart from others.

In its perennial quest for existence & co-existence, survival & progress, culture seeks as much independence as interdependence, to conform as much as to reform, to accept as well as to reject. So it is not very difficult to see why cultural knowledge does not perpetually accumulate. While new cultural traits are added, some old ones are lost because they no more serve the purpose they were designed to accomplish. It is this regular phenomenon of addition and subtraction of cultural traits that results in cultural change. All cultures change over time - none is static.

Both Indians and Koreans have rich and diverse cultures. It is quite common to find the mythological stories of yore; proverbs of common origin in both the cultures. The deep cultural exchanges go back to the time when India gave Buddhism to the world and Korea adopted it with open arms.

In the twentieth century, where cross border commerce has become the order of the day, culture plays a vital role in unifying persons across continents. Lasting progress can be achieved only when cultures have learnt and complemented rather than competed.

It is the responsibility of multi national corporations and others to bring about this transformation. MNCs have to perform the role of both brand ambassadors and cultural ambassadors to make society accept new cultural traits. Changing one trait will have an impact on other traits because they are functionally inter connected.

It is in this context that institutions like InKo Centre play a crucial role in cultural transformation. They act as a bridge between two cultures, enhance cultural understanding and promote peace, harmony and progress. I wish them every success in their endeavours.

InKo 'happenings'

Managing stress seems to be of growing concern to professionals and students alike. InKo Centre, Chennai unfolds a series of programmes, that originating from India and Korea, continue to share with the world the fine art of balancing mind and body to develop a total sense of well-being.

The programmes include Pathanjali Yoga asanas, the Sudarshan kriya, Tae-kwon-do and Modern Korean Calligraphy, all time-tested, ancient techniques that enhance equilibrium, concentration and composure.

WELLNESS PROGRAMME



YOGA : meaning union is a discipline aimed at training the mind, body and breath to merge into a state of perfect balance and tranquility. More than mere physical exercises, yoga asanas have a profound benefit in developing a total sense of well-being.

Tue/Thu/Sat: 6-8 am. Mon/Wed/Fri: 9.30-11 am

ART OF LIVING – PART I; More than a mere breathing exercise, the powerful Sudarshan Kriya is a potent energizer that removes negative emotions stored as toxins in the body and reintroduces natural rhythms so that our breath, our body, mind and emotions can be brought from a condition of chaos to a state of balance.

One-week course (am & pm)

TAE KWON DO a martial art form originating from Korea, combines tae – meaning "foot", kwon meaning – "fist" and do meaning – "way", to develop strength, speed, balance, flexibility, stamina and is an exemplary union of mind and body. It is both self-defense and exercise; sport and philosophy.
For children (8 – 15 years), every Sunday (10.30-12.00)

CALLIGRAPHY



Learn Modern Korean Calligraphy using a Brush, Ink, Inkstone and the Korean Alphabet on Hanji Paper...

A piece of fine calligraphy is not a symmetrical arrangement of conventional shape but, rather, something like the coordinated movements of a skillfully choreographed dance – impulse, movement, momentary poise, and the interplay of active forces combining to form a balanced whole.

Eve is a registry Saturday 10.30-12.30

All classes by professional trainers at
InKo Centre, 51, 6th Main Road, R A Puram, Chennai – 600 028.
Registration on a first-come, first-served basis.

LANGUAGE CLASSES

Korean Language Beginners' Course- starting 25 April 2007

The three-month long Korean Language Beginners' Course is offered in four batches annually. The Beginners' Course is open to anyone interested in learning the Korean language and no prior knowledge of the language is required. The aim of the course is to impart the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking in Korean in an integrated manner.

As part of the Language* component of this course, students will be introduced to Korean cuisine and Korean social and business etiquette through visits to restaurants, homes as well as business houses.

Students will be introduced to Hangul (the Korean script) and there will be opportunities to learn Korean songs, watch Korean films, and read Korean newspapers. At the end of three months, students will be proficient in basic words, will be able to engage in simple day-to-day conversations and will be able to read and write short paragraphs on simple topics in Korean. Students will also have the option of joining the Calligraphy courses at InKo Centre on a subsidised fee.

Class strength will be small, 12-15 students at a time, in order to ensure maximum individual attention. The course will be run by highly qualified and experienced faculty from Korea.

Mon/Wed/Fri : 6.30- 8.30 pm. Registration closes on 23 April 2007

English for Social and Business Purposes- starting 7 May 2007

Starting May 2007, English language courses will be offered leading to the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), a certification that has been used by institutions, companies, and government agencies worldwide to benchmark the English language proficiency of non-native English-speaking people working in an international environment. As such, the TOEIC test results can help measure an individual's competence in the English language, provide increased confidence in using the language for social and business interactions as well as enhance the individual's employability. For companies, TOEIC functions as an excellent recruitment tool to assess a potential candidate's ability to communicate effectively in English.

While the TOEIC test benchmarks English language skills in listening and reading in particular, the course itself will focus on all four essential skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking in English using a wide variety of audio-visual material to enhance the learning experience.

To register for classes and programmes please call:
044 2436 1224

Classes are on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays every week for two hours each day. Class strength will be small in order to ensure maximum individual attention. The course will be run by highly qualified and experienced faculty. Mondays/Wednesdays/Saturdays. Registration closes on 4 May 2007

F I L M S C R E E N I N G S

Starting April 2007, there will be regular screenings of contemporary Korean films at InKo Centre **on the fourth Friday of every month**. Although entry is free, those interested are requested to register in advance of the show. Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

Film Studies Centres / Institutes can book the Audio-Visual room for special student screenings of upto 20 students at a time.

Please ring 044- 24261224 to register or to book the Audio-Visual room for special screenings

We begin the season with three outstanding films that have captured the imagination of local and international audiences alike both for their haunting visual appeal and powerful acting as well as their treatment of controversial subject matter. In all three films, the traditional arts feature as a core strand against which the human drama is played out.

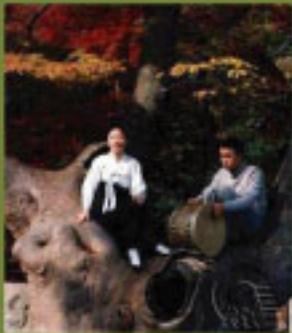
KING AND THE CLOWN - DIRECTED BY LEE JUN-IK (2005)

27 APRIL 2007 AT 7 PM



During the rule of the infamous King Yeon-san, two clowns start a play that is satirical, mocking the king and his wayward ways. They soon grow immensely popular with the common people. But soon they get arrested for treason and their freedom depends on winning a wager by making the king laugh at their play acting. The king does and their fortunate success results in an invitation to stay in the palace and perform there regularly. As the king shows a growing attraction towards one of the clowns, they realize that they have entered an irreversible stage in their lives- one that is entwined with desire, power and intrigue.

Based on a local play titled *Yi*, the film makes good use of the rich narrative material of the original text. With its period setting, its focus on the traditional arts, mesmerizing lead actors and an obvious gay subtext, King and the Clown directed by Lee Jun-ik is a powerful commentary of a society in transition.



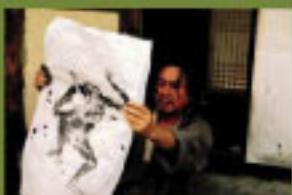
Sopyonje may easily stake its claim to being one of the most famous Korean films ever made. It certainly remains a legendary work in its homeland and is considered by some to be the very essence of Korean culture. Yet it is a controversial film and was attacked by feminist critics for what seemed to be an inherently patriarchal worldview. Viewers in Korea and around the world have been moved by the film's haunting visual, aural and emotional force.

SOPYONJE- DIRECTED BY IM KWON-TAEK (1993)

25 MAY 2007 AT 7 PM

Based on a novel by Lee Cheong-jun, Sopyonje centres around three main characters but perhaps the most important character is the traditional vocal art of Pansori. Yu-bong, a vagabond singer of Pansori lives with his son Dong-ho and daughter Song-hwa. He teaches Song-hwa Pansori music and Dong-ho the drum. The three wander around singing Pansori for a living but things get harder during and after the Korean civil war. With the influence of Western culture, Pansori gradually becomes less popular, is hardly favoured and is even despised by people. Dissatisfied, Dong-ho leaves home after a dispute with his father and Song-hwa refuses to sing Pansori, after a lifetime of training.

Widespread press coverage and public discussion of its theme as well as the 're-discovery' of the art of Pansori, turned Sopyonje into a must-see film.



CHIHWASEON- DIRECTED BY IM KWON-TAEK (2002)

22 JUNE 2007 AT 7 PM

Chihwaseon (2002), won the director Im Kwon-taeck the Best Director award at Cannes and stands as his most fiercely personal film to date.

The subject of the film is Jang Seung-Ub, a 19th-century painter known by the pseudonym Ohwon who lived, in Mr. Im's rendition, like a vagabond rock star. Jang, born a commoner and discovered as a boy by a sympathetic aristocrat, dazzled and scandalized his country's politically fragmented ruling class and spent his long career in and out of favor, and in and out of trouble. His work, undertaken at a time when the country was struggling to retain its identity in the shadow of its more powerful, imperially minded neighbors, Japan and China, is understood as an expression of the strength and uniqueness of Korean culture.

While on one level, this breathtaking period film unfolds as a conventional story of self-destructive genius, it comes with a vision of an artist at the height of his reflective powers and an exploration of how an artist's personal obsessions can feed the self-image of an entire nation.

DIRECTOR IM'S own aesthetic command is evident in the movie's wealth of beautiful, perfectly framed images of nature - shots so full of passion and perception that they could almost be paintings themselves.





"THE HOST" OPENS IN INDIA

"The most energizing, raucous aspect of Bong's creature feature isn't its 'message', despite the highly original way it is transmitted, but the director's ingeniously fresh approach to 'science fiction': *The Host* plays up ecological disaster, military insanity and the stupid side of technology in the most casual way imaginable... nothing prepared me for the carnivalesque, politically acid megaspectacle that unspooled, seduced me and the rest of the audience into a state of childlike rapture" -

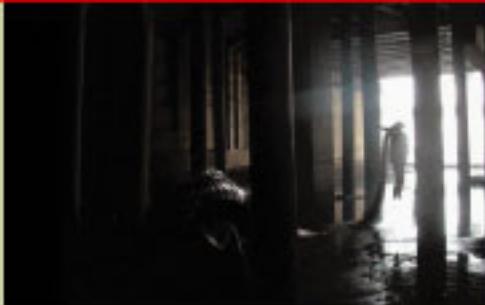
Novelist and critic Gary Indiana on the films of Bong Joon-ho in Artform International in anticipation of the Host's arrival in American theatres in March 2007

The movie that is rewriting the record books of the Korean film industry-
The Host-is set to premiere in India in May 2007

Ten million of Korea's forty eight million went to see *The Host* within three weeks of its release. The film, invited to the Cannes Directors' Fortnight screenings in 2006, received a warm reception from critics and audiences alike, and is busy setting and breaking numerous box office records. In a film industry with neither the tradition of monster movies nor the wherewithal for special effects, *The Host* is an interesting comment on contemporary Korean society as well as on the current status of Korean cinema.

This May, *The Host* will open across 100 screens with four dubbed versions in English, Hindi, Telugu and Tamil making it the first major commercial release of a Korean movie in India. InKo Centre and the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in New Delhi will support Indian Overseas Films, the Indian distributor to host special pre-release previews of the original film with English subtitles.

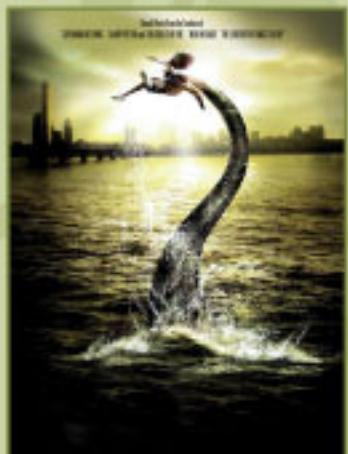
When Bong Joon-ho revealed that his next movie will be 'about a monster in the Han River', the Korean film industry was aghast. Bong who had until then shown a clear disposition for Korean realism in films like *Barking Dogs Never Bite* (2000) or *Memories of Murder* (2003) was seen as someone the least likely to make an American-type, monster movie. Considering how the Korean film industry and viewersthought of such movies as second-rate, even childish, Bong's decision seemed utterly suicidal. For Bong however, the story of a monster emerging from the Han River was a dream project, one that he had dreamt of since his high school days. While still in high school, Bong claims hat he saw "something black, like a mound of excrement climbing the bridge post" of Jamsil Bridge. Years later, in 2000, he read in the newspaper of the McFarland incident in which an American civilian



employee of the US military's mortuary discharged close to 450 bottles of formaldehyde through sinks into Seoul's Han River. "Anyone who has ever thought of making monster movie set in the Han River just couldn't pass this up. Environmental activists would be terrified to hear this but I was secretly glad thinking I could use this in the screen play right away" said Bong in an interview published in the Korean Film Observatory. If Godzilla was famously the projection of a postwar Japanese psyche traumatized by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the nameless monster of *The Host* is likewise the product of environmental disaster at the hands of the American military forces. Whereas Japanese films of the genre allegorized broadly the horrors of modern technology, *The Host* is a caustic and quite specific critique of American power: the monsters of our creation pose far less a threat to the world than our militarized overreaction to them. It is this encoding of deep social commentary into popular genres that has decisively established Bong Joon-ho as a vital force in the newly resurgent Korean cinema.

Unlike most monster movies, there is no slow reveal in *The Host*- the stage is set quickly. The idyllic Han River, which bisects the capital city of Seoul also provides a refuge, a small bit of paradise, for the working class unable to afford a countryside getaway. For Kang-du Park it is also his livelihood where he works at a small food stand, providing as best he can for his beloved daughter, Hyun-seo. On a sunny day, people picnic, take in the sights and photograph a massive sack that hangs from the Han River Bridge. The bucolic landscape turns to bedlam when the sack unfurls, drops into the river, climbs up the riverbank and crushes, tramples and devours scores of screaming victims. As Kang-du and his daughter Hyun-seo flee for their lives, the amphibious beast grabs the young girl and disappears into the river. A living nightmare begins...

Utilising state-of the art special effects courtesy a creative partnership between Weta Workshop (*King Kong*, *The Lord of the Rings*) and The Orphanage (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, *Sin City*), *The Host* is equal parts creature feature, thrill ride and human drama. Its blend of suspense, humour and farce and its decidedly uneven tone will doubtlessly surprise people looking for a straight-up monster movie, but it is precisely these elements that set it apart from other movies in the monster movie genre. As Bong himself says "I have always been a fan of *Godzilla* movies... but what put me off them was, for the most part, the human characters were scientists, soldiers and reporters- people I could not really relate to... I wanted my heroes, the family running the store alongside the Han River, to be more easily identifiable... They are working class people who struggle just to make a living, and when that livelihood is taken by the monster along with the youngest member, they have no choice but to band together, because those authority figures- soldiers, scientists and reporters- are unable and unwilling to do anything".



This May, *The Host* will open across 100 screens with four dubbed versions in English, Hindi, Telugu and Tamil making it the first major commercial release of a Korean film in India. InKo Centre and the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in New Delhi will support Indian Overseas Films, the Indian distributor to host special pre-release previews of the original film with English subtitles.

WATCH THIS SPACE...

For further details
please call:
044-24361224

RE-SHAPING ASIA THE 4th CERAMIC BIENNALE IN SEOUL

South Asia, will be represented at the 'Skin of Asia' contemporary exhibition of the 4th Ceramic Biennale: Icheon World Ceramic Centre from 27 April -24 June 2007 with the works of four ceramic artists from India- **Kristine Michael, Ira Chaudhari,**

PR Daroz and Vineet Kacker. InKo Centre is delighted to support Kristine's visit to Korea to participate in the exhibition and to present a key note lecture entitled "Traditional and Contemporary Ceramics in South Asia" at the two-day International Ceramic Forum on 28, 29 April 2007.



The ceramic vessel from Asia has a long historical tradition of excellence of technique, function, craftsmanship and purpose. In the 21st century when the concept of 'Asia' is being reflected on in notions of post-colonialism, nationalism and globalization, it seems apt for the Icheon World Ceramic Centre which organizes the Ceramic Biennale to choose 'Reshaping Asia' as the theme for its 2007 Biennale from April 27-June 24 2007.

Definitions of what constitutes 'Asia', with its margins, boundaries, peoples, language and economic aspirations and how 'Asia' interprets itself through culture will be one of the main thrusts of the Biennale. It hopes to illuminate the past, present and future of Asian ceramic culture. In the 'Crossroads' section, the focus will be on observing through the Topkapi collections from Turkey, the historical connection with the contemporary

The curator of the Biennale, Jae Young Park, visited Delhi in December 2006 and was facilitated through the contemporary artists group KHOJ to have meetings with ceramic artists in the city and to view the portfolios of artists from around the country. This is the first time that the Ceramics Biennale has approached India for a cultural dialogue about ceramic tradition on this scale. There have been earlier visits to Korea by senior ceramic artists like Nirmala Patwardhan to study the punchong inlay techniques and by Gurcharan Singh to study celadon and wood firing. Korea has a fine artistic tradition of pottery which is over 1000 years old. The subtle beauty of the celadon pottery and the porcelain of the Goryeo Dynasty and the Joseon Dynasty is world-renowned.

Cutting across national territories in the Indian Subcontinent, the traditional artisanal practice of the potter begins at the mother lode - the Indus Valley civilization based first on the banks of the River Indus in Sindh and Punjab over five thousand years ago. The earliest of these terracotta figures and vessels represent a unique body of technical knowledge and skill intertwined

with ritual and belief. The history of civilisational exchange due to trade, invasion and co-existence of cultures becomes the backdrop of a smaller narrative of what happens to craft with influences from the Mongols, Greeks, Arabs, British, French, Portuguese, etc. This is irrevocably linked to regions which faced an evolving national identity and modernity.

Post colonial studies in 19th century Indian craft begin with the viewing and 'improvement' of traditional artisanal practice through the accumulation, ordering and cataloging of craft into categories for the Crystal Palace Exhibition as a part of the exposition of 'Empire'. Early art schools of the Subcontinent in Madras, Bombay, Lahore and Calcutta either tried to improve the design and decoration of the traditional styles of pottery or taught the artisan the shift from craft to art – the unknown vessel maker of the community became the signed artistic vessel. Due to the Euro-centric vision of what constituted the great Asian glazed pottery tradition, the Subcontinent's terracotta traditions of figurines, architectural tiles, domestic pottery and ritual objects were largely ignored and sidelined even during the concentrated efforts of Western scholarship on the Mughals, textile art or metalware. At the turn of the last century, the philosophical premise of a unified great Asian civilization was idealized by thinkers such as Rabindranath Tagore, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Okakura Tenshin and others. With the regional nationalist struggles for democracy and ethnic recognition, this remained as a humanistic ideal as well as an approach to a new representation of the 'East'.



The increasing urbanization of rural India, the changing face of agricultural communities, industrialization and the growth of the ceramic industry along with plastics and stainless steel had its effects on the potter's craft. The art schools and other private art institutions along with globalisation and increased mobility for study and exposure played an important role in developing, sustaining and evolving the new ceramic art form. It is difficult to define what is a collective regional practice and what it means to be of South East Asian heritage and contemplate an identity which reflects this concern and geographical positioning. The pioneers and contemporary ceramic artists of the Subcontinent have drawn on resources of traditional imagery and bodies of knowledge and redeployed them in a contemporary sensibility.

Kristine Michael, New Delhi

Look out for
information regarding
a special exhibition in
India by these ceramic
artists in the next
issue of
focus in July 2007

WHAT IS A 'WOMAN'S FILM'?

KIM SOYOUNG

Acclaimed filmmaker and film scholar Professor Kim Soyoung comments on South Korean cinema, which largely relying on films targeted towards female audiences, provides a way of understanding the nation's post-colonial period in which technologies of gender, sexuality and cinema are inscribed in the topography of modernity.

Post-colonial South Korea, in its hyphenated identity, betrays the modernity problematic to Korean cinema, which invites multiple readings into the various layers of colonization - Japanese, American, European - embedded in its history. This hybrid formation of modernities over a short period of time has contributed to a highly condensed mode of gender construction.

The entity known as South Korean cinema came into full existence with two big box office hits - *Ch'unhyangjôn* (1955) and *Madame Freedom* (1956)

The entity known as South Korean cinema came into existence with two big box office hits - *Ch'unhyangjôn* (The Story of Ch'unhyang, Yi Kyu-hwan, 1955), a film adapted from a well-known piece of medieval fiction that praises the virtue of feminine chastity and *Madame Freedom* (*Chayu buin*, Han hyóng-mo, 1956), a film that deals with a female identity allegedly constructed through American modernity and its concomitant consumerism. These films have played a crucial role in the early formation of South Korean cinema, reflecting the shifting identities of women through the depiction of either the feudal woman, *Ch'unhyang* or the modern woman, *Madame Freedom*. Around the same time, movie-going allowed women to extend their sphere of mobility outside home and as spectators, women could venture into a public space.

The new field of interest both in the representation and spectatorship of women after the war anticipated the emergence of Korea's first woman filmmaker, Pak Nam-ok. Her film, *The Widow* (*Mimangjin*, 1955) was shown at the opening night of the First Women's Film Festival in Seoul in 1997. The largely female audience present at the screening not only responded enthusiastically to *The Widow* but also attempted to re-articulate the film within the frame of current feminist concerns in South Korea such as sexuality and identity politics. Social critics argued that feminist issues such as sexuality and identity politics had allegedly disrupted a set of issues including class and nationalism in the 1980s.

Feminist film critics began to re-categorize female audience-targeted films. In a 'Woman's Film', a woman has been categorized as a wife, widow, maid, and mother but never as a woman in a general sense. In this context, it seems necessary to point out the difficulty attached to the initial translation of "she" into Korean although "he" is easily translatable.

The Woman's film or "yôsông yônhwa", as a category dates back to the early 90s. The generic term 'women' in English can be translated both as *yôja* and *yôsông* in Korean. Often *yôja* has derogatory connotations, with a distinct emphasis on sexual difference. The re-appropriation of *yôsông* in the 90s feminist discourse parallels a growing interest in the politics of sexual difference derived from feminist and gay movements in South Korea.

Before "yôsông yônhwa," the film for female audiences was simply labeled as 'weepies' (*ch'oeryumul*). Following the pioneering work of Anglophone cine-feminists and the proliferation of feminist discourse in the area of cultural production and consumption, a few local film critics have, since the early 90s, invented new ways of reading popular films.

Around the same time, there surfaced a series of issue-oriented films and videos in the newly formed independent film and video making scene: *Our Children on the problem of daycare* (Women Filmmakers Collective, 1990); *Even Little Grass Has its Name* on the labour union movement of women workers in late 80s (Paritô, 1990); and *Living in Asia as Women* on sex tourism (P'urûn Yôngsang Collective, 1991). The early 90s reveals a condensed situation where the legacy of Anglophone cine-feminism intersects with two kinds of local filmmaking practices: one, the result of market-strategy focusing on female audiences, and the other films that are consciously oriented towards women's issues. As a result, the popular film and the alternative film began to inhabit the same space known as 'women's film'.

From the mid-50s to late 60s, films targeting a female audience were known as rubber shoes (signs of common or underclass women), handkerchief army, and tearjerkers (*ch'oeryusông*). The group of female spectators, whom the film industry favored, was *ojumma* (derogatory term for married women) in rubber shoes and armed with handkerchiefs.

The melodrama genre was conjectured as an outlet for the women's repressive experience under the transforming neo-Confucian patriarchy, the kind that would help women release their han (pent-up grief).

Bitter, but Once Again is a good example of this genre. The film deals with the illicit love relationship between a girl and a married man. One of the contradictions that haunt the female audience lies in the filmmaker's ambivalent treatment of the maternal. While the film severely condemns motherhood outside the family, it highly valorizes the emotional element of the maternal, in particular, the virtue of maternal sacrifice. The film demands the female (*ojumma*) spectators to over-identify with this element of the maternal even while elevating them to a position where they could cast a condescending gaze at the leading woman character. Between the oscillation of two spectatorial modes lies a gray area which aims to provoke tears, frustration, and anger from female spectators.



During the modernization of the 60s, unmarried female workers like the heroine of Bitter, but Once Again migrated to Seoul - a social phenomenon that influenced the depiction of women in films of this period.

Young rural girls became the most vulnerable and exploited group in the newly emerging urban society. Once in the city, they provided cheap labor mostly either in light industry as factory workers (*yôgong*) or as domestic helpers (*sikmo*). The films that dealt with the *sikmo* social type were *Sikmo* (Pak Ku, 1964) and *Three Sikmo Sisters* (Kim Hwa-rang, 1969). In these films, unmarried female workers are suspected of being the underclass femme fatale posing a dangerous threat to urban middle class families. The success of the film like *The Housemaid* (Honyô, Kim Ki-yông, 1960) can be contextualized in this vein. Female audiences at the time reportedly responded to the scene where the maid seduces her married male employer, by shouting excitedly, "Kill the bitch!". Class differences and marital status quite strongly marked in this kind of spectatorship which discloses the anxiety of the newly forming urban middle class towards the emerging other.



Post-colonial and post-war cinema declared its birth with the discursive construction of the dangerous woman in the form of *Madame Freedom*. The film, a huge box office hit in 1956 was based on a serial novel in a major newspaper and it caused a controversy with its scandalous representation of a professor's wife. In *Madame Freedom*, a leading female character, the wife of a well-respected professor, works as the manager of a boutique called Paris. Exposed to the smuggled commodities on display, she gradually transforms into a consumer of western goods.

Madame Freedom articulates the notion of freedom implicit with Americanization and sexual liberation in the form of promiscuity. In striking contrast with the widow character in *The Houseguest and My Mother*, the wife and mother character in *Madame Freedom* momentarily enjoys freedom outside the home. *Madame Freedom* becomes an object of desire, and subsequently of punishment, importantly enough, when she masquerades in a western-style costume.

The most under-represented, if not completely silenced subject in post-colonial South Korean cinema is the subject of its colonial past under Japanese occupation. South Korean cinema has focused on the pre-colonial past and the present and has seldom confronted the legacy of Japanese colonialism. Or, perhaps it has hardly considered its colonial legacy a marketable subject. The de-colonization process is displaced with a nationalistic narrative.

It is not surprising then that the Comfort Women issue has never been properly remembered and represented on the screen until it re-emerged in 1991 when three former Comfort Women came forward in public. The South Korean military government's complicity with Japan contributed to the silencing of the issue of Comfort Women. In spite of the political silence, the notion of feminine sexuality and the body in post-colonial Korea has been associated with the shame attached to Comfort Women, which in turn demanded the construction of a nationalistic narrative.

As You-Me Park poignantly points out:

"It was one of the numerous stories in Korea in the 1970s that used the metaphor of women's bodies being violated and raped to narrate the story of Japanese occupation and the U.S. presence after the Korean War. Korea as a nation was compared to a virginal body that was trampled upon and violated by aggressive outsiders."¹

Pyōn Yōng-ju, a feminist and independent filmmaker, made possible an alternative approach to Comfort Women. Pyōn's first documentary entitled *Living as Women in Asia* traced sex tourism from the Cheju Island in South Korea to Thailand. Unlike the women's film of Ch'ungmuro that tended to bypass the shared history of women, Pyōn's *The Murmuring and Habitual Sadness* recognized that the post-colonial genealogy of womanhood stemmed from a colonial history that has not been reconciled. The two films disclose how the present notion of feminine sexuality and body is deeply entangled with the Comfort Women as if it were a historical transference, providing a way in which an identity known as 'woman' could be historicized during the post-colonial period.

When the Comfort Women speak in *The Murmuring* after shattering 50 years of silence, the female spectator is invited not only to partake in their grief but also to understand her own involvement in this history. *Habitual Sadness*, the making of which was actually requested by a former Comfort Woman, mobilizes songs and jokes as a detouring vehicle to articulate the long repressed desire and needs of a group of Comfort Women, who slowly move into a process of self-healing by exchanging their painful memories.

The 9th Women's International Film Festival will be held in Seoul from 5-12 April 2007. InKo Centre is delighted to support journalist, translator, writer and film studies specialist Vasanthi Sankaranarayanan to participate in this Festival.

These two films did not reach a large audience but the discursive effect created was significant. The films toured college campuses and the story of the films and the filmmaker was covered by the mass media including major newspapers, television, and women's magazines. In addition, the filmmaker made an effort to link the case of Comfort Women to the ever-increasing sexual violence in the present time. Although it is not certain if the filmmakers' attempt to make a connection was effective, it clearly points out that changed modes of production, distribution and exhibition were demanding recognition of women as historical beings.

The Ch'ungmuro Yōsōng Film unfolded the limited scope of women's roles as a wife, widow, or maid – a woman positioned only by her relation with her male counterpart or master. In contrast, *The Murmuring and Habitual Sadness* focus on women's collective lives and their discontent with a history that needs to be-reconciled. Considering that these two films' were simultaneously exceptional and marginal in status, it is clear that a film that will show something other than a maid, a widow, and a Madame Freedom has yet to come in South Korea.

Professor Kim Soyoung, Korean National University of the Arts, Seoul.
This article is an edited version of Soyoung's article in *The South Korean Golden Age Melodrama* published by Wayne State University Press.

TRADITIONAL FOOD CATCHES FLIGHT



One of the noticeable changes in Korean dishes in recent years, is their advancement to international airlines. How difficult can that be? Very. Typical Korean meals are probably one of the most complicated to transport, as they usually entail hot soup and rice. Korean meals typically cover a table top with a variety of dishes; another impediment to in-flight service. In 1997 Korean Air did what was until then unthinkable: it served Korean cuisine, mid-flight. Boosted by that success, more efforts have been made to increase the variety of Korean meals on airliners by contemporizing the setting and serving of traditional Korean cuisine.



Bibimbap, a bowl of hot, steamed rice mixed with various vegetables and gochujang (chilli pepper sauce), is a nutritious diet food that won the prestigious Mercury Awards from the International Travel Catering Association in 1998, only a year after its flight debut. Bibimbap also received the top prize for the International Catering Awards given by Singapore Airlines in 2001. And while it was Westerners who first patronised bibimbap, Korea's neighbours in Asia quickly followed suit. In line with the trend, Korean Air began to service the dish on five Asian routes – Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore, Jakarta and now, Mumbai.



Bibim noodles - A noodle version of bibimbap, this spicy dish also uses plenty of kimchi, rice vinegar, sugar, and cucumber to produce a cold dish and it works wonderfully as a light summer meal. The dish is only 450 kcal and is a perfect example of healthy diet food. Bibim noodles is the result of research and development by the Korean Air Catering Center to keep the noodles fresh even during long-haul flights. In March 2006 Korean Air, once again won a Mercury Gold Award from the International Flight Catering Association. One of the judges praised the noodle as a true example of slow food that benefits people's mind and soul.

A MEAL FOR "WELL-BEING"



One of the major code words for Korean cuisine these days is "well-being" meaning health food that is usually tasty, nutritious, low in calories and easily digestible. Organic vegetables, low-calorie premium yogurt and bread made from organic flour are used to improve the overall quality of light morning meals and appetizers. In line with its strategy to be as luxurious as possible, Asiana's first class serves a 'palace meal' that is composed of seven kinds of food literally fit for a king, comprising 7 side dishes with a choice of nine entrees varying in seasons – bibimbap, bulgalbi, steamed sea bream, steamed sea food, roasted tile fish, codfish roasted with citron, pine mushroom with grilled meat and galbi-ssam (cabbage wrapped ribs). Research has shown that around 70 percent of the passengers choose this course over other dishes. Soups being served include pollack soup, haejang soup (a spicy soup said to relieve hangovers) as well as dogani-tang (beef knee-bone soup), kkori-gom-tang (ox tail soup), seol-long-tang (beef broth with chopped scallions). Samgyetang (chicken-ginseng soup) is a seasonal specialty served only in summer. There is also a wide selection of Korean and fusion health beverages such as green tea lattes and omija tea.

Courtesy www.korea.net

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - APRIL-JUNE 2007

APRIL - 2007																			INKO CENTRE - CHENNAI											
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JUNE - 2007																			INKO CENTRE - CHENNAI													
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FILM																																

KLC	Koren Language Classes.	WIFF	9th Women's International Film Festival
ELC	English Language Classes.	WCB	4th World Ceramic Biennale (upto 25 June)
AoL	Art of Living	FL	Launch of the film The Host .
C	Calligraphy		
Y	Yoga		
TKD	Tae kwon do		
FILM	King and the Clown (March), Sopyonje (April) and Chiwaseon (May)		

VISA SERVICES : Travellers from Tamilnadu, Pondicherry and Kerala can obtain a visa to travel to the Republic of South Korea from the Visa Services section at InKo centre.

For further details contact:

51, 6th Main Road, Raja Annamalaipuram, Chennai - 600 028, T : 044 24361224

FOR TRADE ENQUIRIES, please contact KOTRA (Korea Trade Agency)
463, LR Swamy Parvatham Block, 2nd Floor, Teynampet, Chennai-600 018

If Korean nationals in Tamilnadu require any assistance, please contact:

Mr Sang Man Shim
President

Korean Association : 51, 6th Main Road, Raja Annamalaipuram, Chennai- 600028, T : 044 24361224

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