

focus

Issue No: 10 July 2009

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Visa Services :

Travellers from Tamilnadu, Pondicherry and Kerala can obtain information regarding visas for travel to the Republic of South Korea from the Visa Services section at InKo Centre.

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Contact KOTRA (Korea Trade Agency)
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Editorial

How does a culture assimilate meaning from cultures beyond itself? The term ‘cultural appropriation’ is sometimes used to describe the act of borrowing aspects of another culture. For many people, the concept of cultural appropriation is a very charged issue. To many, the term is rather pejorative, making it difficult to discuss the very real issues associated with borrowing material from other cultures in a measured, balanced way.

Cultural appropriation is the adoption of some specific elements of one culture by a different cultural group. It denotes acculturation or assimilation, but often connotes a negative view towards acculturation from a minority culture by a dominant culture. In such instances, cultural appropriation becomes a site of resistance to dominant society when members of a marginalized group take and alter aspects of dominant culture to assert their agency and resistance. Cultural appropriation can include the introduction of forms of dress or personal adornment, music and art, religion, language, or social behaviour. These elements, once removed from their indigenous cultural contexts, may take on meanings that are significantly divergent from, or merely less nuanced than, those they originally held.

It is true that when objects are taken out of context, much of their meaning is lost, and that mindless cultural appropriation cheapens the culture which has been “robbed.” But if borrowed and assimilated in a conscious and thoughtful way, adopting things from other cultures is not necessarily harmful. In such instances, cultural exchange is often very beneficial and the sharing between cultures can lead to interesting conversations and greater mutual understanding. Cultural agencies occupy the cusp between cultures and as such, an examination of cultural appropriation and a critical selection of such assimilation for presentation in the receiving culture must remain one of its main objectives. The critical success of such presentation must take into account the familiarity of the ground between artist and audience, a shared memory, a re-awakened thought that connects in a powerful coalition of past and present.

In this issue of **focus**, we look at myriad attempts at cultural appropriations across art forms and spaces - theatre, film, language and literature. Our showcase event this quarter is the powerful appropriation of an ancient Greek text and its Korean re-telling infused with traditional music, dance and folkloristic traditions. Euripides *Medea* transforms into Hyoung-Taek Limb's *Medea and Its Double*, a resounding re-interpretation that lifts the original from its ancient past and moors it firmly in the present continuous. We are delighted to present the Indian premiere of this play by the Seoul Factory for the Performing Arts at the Hindu Metroplus Theatre Festival in August 2009. Read about the contemporary Korean film package that will be screened at special screenings at the National Film Archive of India, Pune and at the 14th Trivandrum International Film Festival. What happens when writers travel to distant shores, their words arching across country and continent? In January 2009, InKo Centre and the Arts Council Korea supported the first Korean writer-in-residence at the Sangam House Writing Residency at Adi Shakti, Auroville. We are proud to continue this association with ARKO, to initiate the first writer-in-residence programme, this September, for Indian alumni of the Sangam House Writing Residency, at the Toji Foundation in Korea. Meet our first writer at Toji- the hugely talented, Mridula Koshy. And meet Kang Ik-joong, a riveting installation artist and ‘global chronicler’, in our ‘personality focus’ section which aims to showcase an outstanding contemporary Korean artist who is at once proudly local and incredibly global.

Following the extremely enthusiastic response, the weekly and monthly ‘InKo happenings’ - Language classes; Yoga, Taekwondo, Calligraphy and Film screenings - continue at the Centre.

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 participation and support.

Rathi Jafer
Director, InKo Centre

InKo Screenings

The troubled relations between North and South Korea over the past 50 years has formed the basis of some of the most powerful expressions on film for many South Korean filmmakers with many films becoming modern-day classics or major box-office hits. InKo screenings this quarter focus on three filmmakers- Lee, Man-hee, Lee, Jang-ho and Park, Chan-wook- whose landmark films are defined by their humanistic portrayal, presenting the experience of a divided nation from a strongly personal point of view.

24 July 2009

The Wildflower in the Battlefield

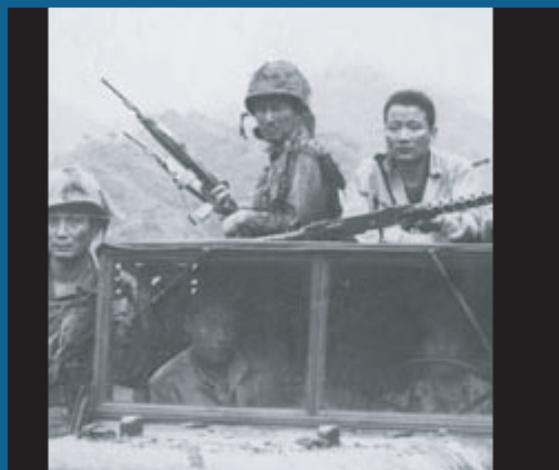
들국화는 피었는데 , 1974

Directed by Lee, Man-hee

More than a decade after making *The Marines Who Never Returned*, Lee Man-hee returned to the Korean War for inspiration. Set in the early days of the conflict, *Wildflower in the Battlefield* follows the brutal fighting through the eyes of a young boy adopted as a "mascot" by a group of soldiers near the front lines. A companion film to *The Marines Who Never Returned*, *Wildflower* revisits a favorite subject of the prolific and popular director Lee: the destructive war he actually witnessed. The tragedy of the Korean War unfolds through a mute 10-year old Dol-yi's silent recollection. One day, shocking news spreads that the North has attacked and before anyone realizes it, the boy's formerly close family is dispersed and fighting for their lives. What did Dol-yi really think about but was unable to voice during the tremendous upheaval and suffering that came with the war and the resultant tragedy of a divided country? Through the actions and experiences of a diverse group of characters, Lee depicts various examples of bravery and cowardice in the face of war.

Director Lee, Man-hee, one of Korea's most talented filmmakers who tragically passed away in 1975 at the age of 45, is known as a director who excelled in a range of genres and styles. One of the genres in which he made a particular impression was the war

film. Starting with the box-office hit *The Marines Who Never Returned* in 1963, Lee became famous for his character-centred stories that tended to walk the line between the kind of film that the military government wanted - tales of camaraderie and courage that celebrated the nation's success and sacrifices in war- and a more humanist-centred, sober look at the hard realities of fighting and dying in battle. Occasionally, Lee would stray beyond that line - most famously in 1965 when he was briefly arrested for his portrayal of North Koreans in his film *Seven Women Prisoners*.



The Wildflower in the Battlefield

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August 2009

Man with three coffins

나그네는 길에서도 쉬지 않는다, 1987

Directed by Lee, Jang-ho

Director Lee, Jang-ho's film *Man with three coffins* is based on an award-winning story by Lee, Je-ha titled '*Travellers do not rest on the road*'. The experience of a divided nations presented from a strongly personal point of view, forms the most striking aspect of this film's story. Yet, in place of a chronological narrative, Lee Jang-ho structures his story in fragmented overlapping segments that make the film feel more like a series of recollections than a story told from the beginning to end.

A man travels to the eastern coast of Korea carrying the ashes of his deceased wife. He hopes to scatter the ashes in a place close to her hometown which lies in the demilitarized zone (DMZ) separating North from South Korea. Along the way, he becomes burdened with the deaths of two more women who cross his path. At the same time, a nurse attempts to escort the dying chairman of a business conglomerate to his hometown which is also located just beyond the DMZ. Pursued by henchmen of the chairman's son, a politician who wants to keep his father's journey out of the press, the nurse encounters the man who metaphorically carries 'three coffins'. Underlying the film's political content are strong Shamanist themes, punctuated by glimpses of bells and a Shaman's clothing. A Shamanist notion of fate ties together the two protagonists in this dramatic story. Although by no means an easy film, Lee Jang-ho's film possesses a striking beauty and a brooding, dark tone that places it amongst one of the great films in the annals of Korean cinema in the twentieth century.



Man with three coffins

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September 2009

JSA - Joint Security Area

공동경비구역, 2000

Directed by Park, Chan-wook

JSA - Joint Security Area opens with a shooting incident in the truce village of Panmunjom that kills two North Korean soldiers and wounds one South Korean soldier. With each country giving conflicting reports on what actually happened, the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) is asked to send in a Swiss military officer to conduct an investigation. The Korean-Swiss Major Sophie Jean however finds that no one is willing to talk to her and that the soldiers involved all seem to be hiding something from her. The film is perhaps best described as a mystery human drama divided into two parts- the investigation by Major Sophie Jean and an extended flashback into to the incident between the soldiers.

JSA, acclaimed as a smash hit when it was released in 2000, was also the first Korean film to be shot on Super 35mm film, a special format usually reserved for Hollywood blockbusters that allows for a wide screen and very clear definition. For the film, the producers spared no cost to construct a replica of the village of Panmunjom, a site that can be visited to this day. Director Park Chan-wook saw his career re-launched with this film and went on to make highly acclaimed but controversial films such as *Sympathy for Mr Vengeance* (2002) and *Old Boy* (2003). As relations between the North and the South change and in the presence of a fragile peace that currently exists, *JSA* perhaps serves as a powerful record of the hopes and fears that many in South Korea have about the possibility of reconciliation and reunification in the future.



JSA - Joint Security Area

Medea and its Double

at the Hindu Metroplus Theatre Festival in Chennai

Medea and its Double by the Seoul Factory for Performing Arts will close The Hindu Metroplus Theatre Festival in Chennai on **Sunday 16 August 2009**. InKo Centre is delighted to premiere in India, the Korean version of this Euripides classic, directed by Professor Hyoung-Taek Limb, a riveting and critically acclaimed production that strips bare the text and explores the human essence with a seamless integration of the body, voice and imagination.

Does Medea murder her own children, driven by anger and desperation and the desire for revenge? Do these tragic events happen even today? What drives Medea to murder most foul and what do we, as audience take away from this tragic story? Prof Hyoung-Taek Limb's Korean version of the Euripides classic examines these questions and in a deft move, constructs two Medeas on stage. The one, represents the Medea of the present, abandoned by her husband Jason, lonely and angry, desperate and revengeful, plotting and executing the death of her two young children. The other, represents the inner Medea, who once fell in love with a young man called Jason; who gave up all she had for love; who, though betrayed and abandoned, is driven by her maternal instincts to protect her two young children. In the process, what is showcased is the eternal conflict between the before and the after of the act; the inner and the outer of personalities and their conflicts. We see many sides of Medea- the feminine and the masculine; as mother and as lover as past and present fuse into a powerful re-telling of the Greek original, a story recognizable by the audience as chillingly contemporary.



Medea and its Double

Director Hyoung-Taek Limb, strips the original text bare and combines Korean traditional songs and singing styles with sounds from everyday, contemporary life. He fuses Korean traditional martial arts with gestures and movements that form a part of our everyday existence. The text is spoken by actors simultaneously and with the seemingly coincidental twists and turns, the audience is gently but firmly guided to gain a greater insight into the inner lives of the characters. Director Hyoung-Taek Limb mixes occidental and oriental acting disciplines in an exploration to physicalize both the actors' imagination and that of the audience.

Beginning as a workshop performance, the production transforms into a full scale repertoire that creates a new style that combines Korean voice and martial arts with classical theatre. The performance orchestrates everyday sounds with voice work derived from Korean traditional music, Pansori and folk songs. Winning the award for Best Direction at the 19th Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre in 2007, this production was critically acclaimed by the jury for the finesse with which voice and sound, as well as the intensity of actors and the director's unique theatrical style have been effectively and effortlessly melded together.

Medea and its Double has been performed in numerous countries around the world, including most recently, Romania (2006); Egypt (2007) and Seoul (2007). The production has been critically acclaimed, both internationally and in Korea.

About the Seoul Factory for the Performing Arts:



The Seoul Factory for the Performing Arts was set up in 2003, with Hyoung-Taek Limb, Professor at the Seoul Institute of the Arts as its Artistic Director and Resident Director. The Seoul Factory currently trains more than 20 actors in the craft of acting, using physical language in a uniquely Korean way. The company continues to interpret classical Eastern and Western work in addition to creating original, new work. Director Hyoung-Taek Limb trains performers based on the essence of 'physical contact' derived from Anne Bogart, Grotowski, and the disciplines of Yoga and Korean traditional Mask Dances. Through this invigorating process, Limb re-interprets classical works of art and develops training methods that are best suited for Korean emotive and physical states of being. The Seoul Factory has a long history of collaboration with the theatre company LITE (Laboratory for International Exchange, Inc.) which was founded in New York in 1994 with Hyoung-Taek Limb and Adam Melnick as Art Directors. The Seoul Factory continues to create workshop and performance opportunities in which Eastern and Western theatre traditions develop under each other's influences.

Seoul Factory's ongoing projects include:

- Producing original repertoires applicable to the global theatre industry dealing with social issues and dilemmas of today.
- Researching and discovering unique Korean texts.
- Working with creative playwrights.
- Re-interpreting foreign plays into a Korean way of telling.
- Developing theatre repertoires for specific age groups including teens, families, soldiers, orphans, prisoners etc.
- Developing animated series for the Korea Broadcasting Service (KBS) discovering emerging playwrights and directors.
- Applying newly discovered acting disciplines.
- Creating a repertory bank for newly developed texts and productions.
- Conducting acting workshops.
- Publishing acting-related texts.
- Exchanging acting disciplines with local and foreign theatre companies.
- Creating co-operative productions with foreign companies.

"Amazing orchestration of traditional and contemporary voices of actors" - Dmitru Corneilu, Chairman of UNESCO

"Crystal clear directorial concept of two conflicting aspects of Medea"

- Jacek Romanowski, Professor at the Polish National University Theatre

About The Hindu MetroPlus Theatre Festival

Launched in 2005, The Hindu MetroPlus Theatre Fest has quickly become one of the most important dates in the country's cultural calendar. The festival has grown in scope and stature with every passing year. Over the last three years, it has acquired a distinctly international flavour, attracting theatre companies from places such as Germany, South Korea, the United States and Sri Lanka. It also showcases performances from theatre groups from all over the country – some of them extremely large and ambitious productions.

Large numbers of Chennai's youth and members of the cultural intelligentsia look forward to this event. The festival has begun to attract theatre lovers from other cities too, particularly from places such as Bangalore, Hyderabad and Mumbai. A number of allied activities are usually planned around the festival, including workshops, seminars, and short performances. This year's festival features six plays, two of them from abroad (the USA and Korea), three from Mumbai (one of which features Naseeruddin Shah and his group, the other which won the Mahindra META best play award in 2008, and the third which won the Hindu MetroPlus Playwright Award 2009) and one big musical from Chennai.





Hyoing-Taek Limb
Artistic Director/Actor-
Professor at Seoul Institute
of the Arts

About the Director: Hyoing-Taek Limb:

Born in Seoul, Korea, Hyoing-Taek Limb began his training while in college, focusing on how to combine Western and Asian theatre disciplines. With the goal of further exploration, Limb moved to New York and continued his work under the guidance of Mr Andrei Serban and Ms. Anne Bogart at Columbia University. He also worked as a movement instructor at Schauspielhaus in Germany. Limb holds an M.F.A. degree in theatre directing from Columbia University, New York. After his graduation in 1994, he founded the theatre company LITE, the Laboratory for International Theatre Exchange, Inc. with actors and directors mostly from Columbia University. Since then, he has been directing and acting both on stage and screen and has toured Europe several times with his company. Moving back to Seoul in 2000, Hyoing-Taek Limb directed *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which received national recognition in Korea for its unique combination of traditional and modern as well as Eastern and Western aesthetics. Limb currently teaches at the Seoul Institute of the Arts, one of the most distinguished theatre schools in Korea and heads the acting programme there. Limb is also the Artistic Director of the recently founded theatre company, the Seoul Factory for the Performing Arts.

Date: 16 August 2009

Venue: Sir Mutha Venkatasubba Rao Concert Hall
Madras Seva Sadan, No: 7,
Harrington Road, Chetpet,
Chennai 600 031

For enquiries about tickets
please contact:

InKo Centre:
044 - 24361224
e mail: enquiries@inkocentre.org

Limb's directing credits include:

- *Medea and its Double* (2006, Romania/2007- Seoul and Egypt)
- *The Cherry Orchard* (1999, New York/2007, Seoul)
- *Three Sisters- Lost in Time* (2004, New York/ 2005, Seoul/2006/Warsaw)
- *Woyzeck* (1998, New York/2002, Seoul)
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1995, New York/ 2001, 2005, Seoul)
- *Slowness* (2003, Seoul)
- *Waiting for Waiting for Godot* (1994, New York/ MALTA Festival Poznan, Poland)
- *No Exit = the Form of Space* (1995, New York and Poland)
- *A Man is a Man* (1992, Seoul)
- TV animation, *What a Wonderful World* (2002 to the present, Seoul, a popular, long-running show with KBS)

Acting credit's include:

Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1985, Seoul)
Tantric Monk in *Paramita* (1995, New York/1996, Paris)
Appeared as a member of the Screen Actor's Guild of America (SAG) in several movies and TV programmes

Awards:

Best Directing, Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre, 2007
Best Acting/Best Design, Seoul Theatre Festival, 2007

Workshops:

View point Workshops; Grotowski Workshop, Richard Schechner's Performance Workshop, Augusto Boal's Brecht workshop; Eugene Barba's Mime workshop, Zen Dance workshops as well as several Korean Traditional Mask Dance workshops.

Contemporary Korean films

A special Korean Film Festival at the National Film Archive of India and at the Trivandrum International Film Festival

InKo Centre is delighted to present 5 critically-acclaimed, contemporary Korean films at a special Korean Film Festival from **20-24 July 2009**, organised by the **National Film Archive of India**, Pune. Following the screenings at Pune, these films will be presented at the **14th Trivandrum International Film Festival (TIFF)** from **31 July to 6 August 2009**. Korea is the Country Focus at TIFF this year.

Secret Sunshine 밀양 2007

Directed by Chang-dong Lee * Awarded Best Actress, Festival de Cannes, 2007; Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor at the 2nd Asian Film Awards.

Secret Sunshine opens on a fable: a gentle young widow, a piano teacher, relocates to a small-town called Miryang for a new start. It is her husband's hometown. She also meets a car mechanic - a lumbering awkward man - who trails her faithfully. But things are not as they seem and her life takes a tragic turn. The film is both mysterious and terrifying. It is a film about faith, how it can enter a life and how it can vanish.

Welcome to Dongmakgol 웨컴투동막골 2005

Directed by Park, Kwang-hyun

A ragtag group of North Korean soldiers led by Commander Lee are ambushed. Encountering a strange young girl Yeo-il, they find temporary refuge in her village, called Dongmakgol. Its residents are blissfully unaware that the Korean War has been raging on. After a tense standoff, resulting in the blowing up of the warehouse in the village, the soldiers agree to a reluctant truce, at least until the warehouse and its contents are restored.

The King and the Clown 왕의 남자 2005

Directed by Lee, Jun-ik

During the rule of the infamous King Yeon-San, two clowns start a play that is satirical, mocking the king and his wayward ways. But they get arrested for treason and their freedom depends on winning a wager by making the king laugh at their play acting. 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.

Chihwaseon 추화선 2002

Directed by Im Kwon-taek * Awarded Best Director at the Festival de Cannes, 2002

The subject of the film is Jang Seung-Ub, a 19th century painter known by the pseudonym Ohwon. 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 favour, in and out of trouble. This breathtaking, period film unfolds the story of a self-destructive genius at the height of his reflective powers and explores how an artist's personal obsession can feed the self-image of an entire nation.



My Sassy Girl 엽기적인 그녀 2001

Directed by Kwak Jae-yong

The story kicks off with college student Kyun-Woo meeting a drunken girl, late at night, in a subway. After

carrying her on his back for what seems to be miles, Kyun-Woo drops the girl off at a motel. But instead of leaving her and getting on his way, Kyun-Woo finds himself intrigued by the nameless girl and vows to do whatever he can to heal her sorrow.

National Film Archive of India

The mission of the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) is to trace, acquire and preserve for the use of posterity, the heritage of national cinema and a representative collection of world cinema. NFAI acts as a nodal centre for the dissemination of a healthy film culture in the country. NFAI aims to promote film scholarship and research on various aspects of cinema; to familiarise foreign audiences with Indian cinema and to make Indian cinema more visible across the globe. Headquartered in Pune, NFAI currently has three Regional Offices in Bangalore, Kolkata and Thiruvananthapuram. Since 1969 NFAI has been a member of FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives) and has played an active role in the work of this organisation.

The Trivandrum International Film Festival

The Trivandrum International Film Festival was instituted in 1996 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Chalachithra, a pioneering film society in South India. The 14th edition of the TIFF, from 31 July - 6 August, 2009, will showcase approximately 60 films from 20 countries. The focus this year will be on cinema from Korea; the Netherlands, France, Germany and a workshop to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Iranian Cinema.



Indian writer at the Toji Residency in Korea



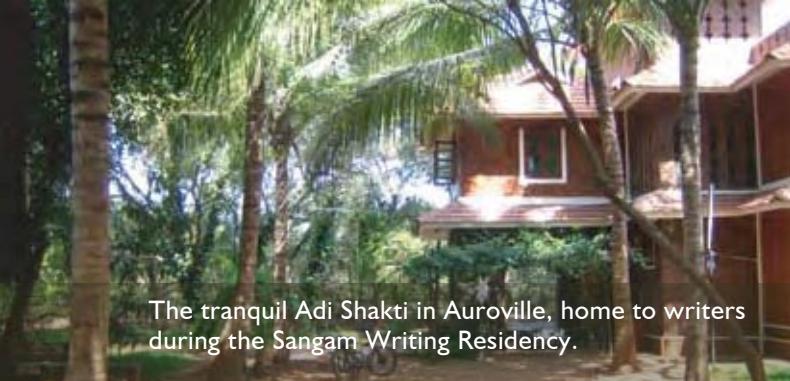
Mridula Koshy, reading from her work at the Sangam House Writing Residency at Adi Shakti, Auroville.

In January 2009, InKo Centre and the Arts Council Korea (ARKO) were delighted to support Son Honggyu as writer-in-residence at the Sangam House Writing Residency at Adi Shakti, Auroville. Following on from that residency, InKo Centre and ARKO have set up a writer-in-residence programme for Indian alumni of Sangam House at The Toji Foundation in Korea. Our first writer-in-residence, from 7-30 September 2009, is Mridula Koshy. Dr. Arshia Sattar, convenor of the Sangam House Writing Residency, speaks to Mridula Koshy about her tryst with writing, her experience at Sangam and the forthcoming residency in Korea.

Arshia: Tell us a bit about your background and how you came to writing.

Mridula: Four years ago I was debating what kind of skills- related class I should take to prepare myself for the workforce – a place I had been absent from for some seven years while raising my three little ones. My partner Michael urged me to forego the idea of a computer class, to instead sign up for a writing workshop. In Portland, Oregon where I was living at the time, there is a wonderful place called the Attic. They bill themselves as a “haven for writers,” which they are. I took a ten- week course which met weekly and we were urged to write for ten minutes a day. I did it for the first two or three days and never again, though I immensely enjoyed the sessions themselves. My favourite part of the sessions was the little ten minute writing exercises we did and the sharing afterward. I raised my hand every time and shared though it made me feel like a freak for being so enthusiastic when everyone else was so coolly glum.

At the end of the ten weeks I had little to show for the time and money spent except a renewed acquaintance with how good writing felt. I had not written for twenty years prior to that except for the most utilitarian stuff – grocery lists, justice doctrines etc. My partner pushed me to sign up for one more session and he diagnosed correctly my need for a more challenging class. I signed up for a ten week workshop on writing the short story. The instructor told us we needed to write for hours at a stretch daily, (not minutes), we needed to make it the priority in our lives, and that we would have to have courage to do it. I was shocked, exhilarated and compliant – pretty much in that order. I walked out of the ten weeks having written a number of short stories, moved to India two days after the last session and found the subject for my first collection of short stories in the city I moved to – New Delhi.



The tranquil Adi Shakti in Auroville, home to writers during the Sangam Writing Residency.



Mridula (second left), at the Sangam Writing Residency with fellow writers-in-residence.

Arshia: Tell us a little about your Sangam House experience.

Mridula:

The goal of writing for hours at a stretch eluded me for the first year of my writing life. My youngest was not yet in school and altogether the challenges of moving three monolingual kids to a multilingual city and getting them acclimated to a new culture entailed a huge amount of time and energy. By my second year, I could squeeze three hours at a sitting, at least a couple of times, three times a week. But it just wasn't enough. It made me nearly heartsick to live what felt like an interrupted life – on all fronts. By year three of writing I had progressed to writing four days a week and four hours at a stretch. Still not quite a half time job but one that allowed me to complete the manuscript for my short story collection, *If It Is Sweet*. I began work on a novel and ground to a halt again and again. I thought it was the form that eluded me. I thought possibly I wasn't writer enough to take on this larger canvass. I thought I sucked. Then I came to Sangam House for a ten day stay. And I really finally found what it is to be a writer.

Jeet Thayil once said you are a writer only when you write. I believe this is true. At Sangam House I was given my own room. Prior to that I had never lived in a room by myself, in a room that no one else could touch or change or establish a claim to. In this room there were two beds and a desk. I spread my material on one bed and slept on the other. At night I would look over at the other bed and the pages spread there glowed. I slept with thoughts of what I would write on waking. In the morning I rolled out of bed and wrote till breakfast. After eating a meal I had done nothing to conjure - not the shopping, the planning, the feeding, and certainly not the fretting, I went back to more writing. At lunch time the same miracle of food with no preparation on my part and then a long afternoon walk, lots of thinking, conversation with fellow writers, arguments even, and sometimes a second wind which allowed me write some more. In the year I had spent working on the novel I had managed a not shabby seventy thousand words. At Sangam I wrote ten thousand more in ten days. What is more I felt like a writer – a whole and complete identity—this once.

Arshia:

Your new book is out -- how has it been to read to new audiences?

Mridula:

Writing alone till now has been a rich experience; I have been my own audience. With a book out there is a whole other audience that is shaping my work and making it their own. This is a different kind of richness. It is no longer an exercise in self-discovery. Certainly I have a sense of my own impact on the world but more than valuable still has been the sense of entering a confluence of thinking, one that is changing me even as I participate in it.

Arshia:

The style and content of your writing make you very unusual in the current english writing landscape in india. what makes you write the way you do?

Mridula:

I spend a lot of time with children. I observe them and in turn I re-observe my own childhood. We are born without a sense of knowing what it means to be us, and what to expect from the experience of being in this world. As we sift through our 'not knowing' to shape our understanding of these questions we find there is an inherent sense of right and wrong that accompanies us, maybe even guides us. As adults we perhaps don't have as much access to this inherent sense, call it an instinct, if you will.

Writing is the one place in my adult life that I have been able to tap back into that sense of rightness in the world. Writing then fills me with hope. This in turn shapes the content of what I write about.

I don't mean to sound vague. To clarify: I am talking about our instinct for justice. Our drive to shape our world to it.

Arshia:

What do you most look forward to at the Toji residency in Korea?

Mridula:

I look forward to sustained thinking and writing. I wonder what influence being in an entirely different culture, one I have only a little knowledge of, will have on my writing. Internal instability has been good for my writing in the past. I expect I will be a little anxious and fearful and a lot excited about being at Toji. And I expect this will be a good thing.

The Toji Literature Residence

The Toji Literature Residence (the word Toji means 'Mother Earth'), supported by the Toji Cultural Foundation, is one of the most famous of centres in Korea in the field of literature. Most of Toji's guests are well-known Korean writers and many professional writers vie to join the Literature Residence at Toji. The Toji Cultural Foundation supports work created by artists and scholars and provides a tranquil space away from the din of every day life to allow such artistic expressions to flower. The Foundation aims to invite artists and scholars from around the world and by fostering mutual interaction it aspires to open up a new era of cultural exchange whereby foreign artists and scholars deepen their understandings of Korean culture while domestic artists and scholars enhance their awareness and appreciation of cultures other than their own.

The programme at Toji is supported by the Arts Council Korea (ARKO)

Arts Council Korea was established to promote creativity and enjoyment of the arts by supporting diverse arts and cultural activities in Korea. The Council consists of eleven dedicated professionals of the cultural and arts sector in Korea. The Arts Council also places emphasis on the establishment of arts infrastructure. It facilitates the rise of practice-oriented policy implementation in line with the increasingly sophisticated cultural environment of Korea.



Personality Focus

Drawing inspiration from his Korean roots, here is an artist who has left an indelible imprint on the contemporary art world as a global chronicler. Our spotlight this month is on **Kang Ik-joong**, who with childlike ease, re-invents himself, never forgetting how to start anew, all the time combining memory and the moment to create masterpieces that coalesce past, present and the future in a seamless continuum.

Kang Ik-joong



It was a fall morning and artist Kang Ik-joong went to a lake on the outskirts of Seoul to inspect his giant balloon installation that was supposed to float on the water. To his dismay, he found that it had deflated into a contorted shape. Suddenly, Kang was inspired and the moment of dejection was transformed to what would become the leitmotif of his recent series of work: the moon jar.

"I was devastated when I first got there and saw my work", he said, "but all of a sudden the shape reminded me of white porcelain and then I knew this was something I had been trying to say for years. I came back to my studio in New York and began painting moon jars."

Three years later, the artist created *Mountain Wind*, an installation made up of 2611 painted wooden panels adorning the façade of Gwanhwamun gate in central Seoul, which is currently undergoing a major restoration. Each panel is 60 by 60 centimetres and is painted with the artist's fingers, not with a brush. Most depict moon jars of various shapes, like the ones cherished for their austerity among local Confucian scholars during the Joseon Dynasty in Korea (1392-1910).

In February 2009, Kang created *Samnamansang* for the National Museum of Contemporary Art. The work is made up of 60,000 3-inch panels depicting various icons, letters and paintings of moon jars, adorned the museum walls surrounding the video tower titled *The More the Better* by Paik Nam June, the late famed Korean installation artist and Kang's artistic mentor. '*Samnamansang*', a reference from Buddhist teaching that means "all forms of nature are guided under the sun", was, in a way, Kang's homage to Paik and a celebration of *Multiple Dialogue*, the show the two artists had put on in 1994 at the Whitney Museum of American Art. *"For Paik, I think *The More the Better* was like a rocket that could fly to the future,"* says Kang. *"I felt that my role was to set the light on the launchpad."*



Kang Ik-joong lists his personal connection to art-making through a series of interesting metaphors. He refers to the activity of art as "a recipe on how to cook side dishes."

- I paint with my eyes half closed.
- I paint with my left hand if possible.
- I paint even when I am not good at it.
- I paint when I am happy.
- I paint when I am hungry.
- I paint when I am sleepy.
- I paint what I know.
- I paint what's easy.
- I paint what I see around me.
- I listen, I see, I paint.
- I paint as I'm lying down.
- I paint as I stand.
- I paint as I run.
- I paint with my eyes half opened.

Since their release, Kang's moon jar paintings have quickly become coveted collector's items among contemporary art lovers. However, despite his rising status in the contemporary art world, Kang has never forgotten what it feels like to start anew.

Those who have followed Kang's work over the years know that it started out depicting subjects that are deeply personal and evolved to grander themes like peace and reunification. Byron Kim, a Korean-American artist, once described Kang's earlier works as "the metaphysics of the mundane." *Happy World*, a series of Kang's works commissioned by the G8 Summit meeting and the United Nations, is representative of his recent work.

He recently unveiled *The Wall of Hope*, a giant mosaic done in collaboration with 50,000 children of migrant workers and Koreans based in Ansan, a factory enclave, for the Gyeonggi Museum of Art in Korea. The installation stretches 64 by 12 metres, filling the museum's two-storey wall completely with a map of the mountains, rivers and islands of the peninsula as a backdrop. Personal recollections are common in this work: the children sent in their first baby shoes; their mother's lipstick and a Pokemon doll. But also among the submissions were blunt slogans like "MB Out", a common catchphrase used by demonstrators during protests rallies against the nation's current President. *"It is me, my past and my future that I discover more and more working with children. These are like a small window to me. No matter how small they are, I can see the world through them"*, says Kang.

Kang Ik-joong moved to the United States in 1984 when pop art and street graffiti artists like Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat were emerging. He had just graduated from Hongik University but it was not until the early 1990's that his work began to be given serious attention. Back then, the artist's pockets were stuffed with drawing tools and small 3-by-3 inch swatches of canvas. He drew during his long subway rides to the flea market where he worked. On each trip, he filled his canvases with glimpses of life as he saw it in New York, daily musings and words or random phrases that popped into his head. When not drawing, he worked on *8490 Days of Memory*, a statue of General Douglas MacArthur behind a spectacular mosaic made of 8490 chocolate bars which reflected the number of days the artist had lived in Korea before he moved to the United States. The chocolate bars poignantly recall the bittersweet memories of his war-torn country where American GI's shared chocolate with local kids which meant the sweetness and safety from communist invasion. The response that this work elicited at the Whitney Museum of American Art was phenomenal.

In 1997, Kang represented Korea at the 47th Venice Biennale, a sign of mainstream acknowledgement. Kang said that he recently came to rethink Paik's once controversial words, "Art is just fraud", when he came across one of his mentor's works from 1981. On a television monitor, Kang saw paint scribbles by Paik that included the word "sagi" which means both "fraud" and "historical text" in Korean as in "Samguksagi" or "History of the Three Kingdoms". This new interpretation moved Kang deeply. "(The scribble) was the shortest and longest book that I've ever read", Kang said. "It's the shortest, yet the longest phrase Paik said to me."

Kang Ik-joong's global chronicle:

Happy World : permanently installed on the mezzanine walls of a **subway station in Flushing, New York**, plays with irony. It puts together 7000 small paintings on ceramic tiles, each depicting flashes of Kang's random thoughts, from politics to the banalities of urban living, from sex to violence. The work instills in the viewer a sense of urgency as it gathers images and phrases which the artist has collected from public advertisements and floating words across the city. The work is displayed in New York's second largest Asian-American neighbourhood. Kang produced each painting on his subway rides to work at a fleamarket during his early years as an immigrant worker living in Queens.

Mountain-Wind: is a **public installation at Gwanghwamun, central Seoul**. The historic palace gate is undergoing major restoration and Kang's work, 41 by 27 metres is made up of 2611 painted wood panels each depicting different shapes such as traditional Korean porcelain and local mountains. As a whole, they form a silhouette of the original gate. At the bottom of the work are three smaller gates, from the original Gwanghwamun structure to which digital prints of paintings contributed by 2000 children from around the world will be installed. The project was donated by the artist to the Korean government - the authorities paid only for the cost of materials- 500 gallons of paint!

Gateway: an installation in the departure lobby of an **international terminal in San Francisco International Airport** is made up of wood carvings and objects that reference Kang's dreams and experiences in New York.

Beautiful Mountains and Rivers: permanently installed in the **lobby of Heungguk Life Insurance Building in central Seoul** is one of Kang's best-known works amost the local public. The installation which comprises 7500 panels, features a giant panoramic view of man and nature. It depicts small paintings of people, flowers, trees and the Korean and English alphabets and stretches 7.62 metres in length.



** Article and photos courtesy Park Soo-mee, printed in Korea published by the Korean Cultural and Information Service.

Iconic Opera House astride the River Han in 2014

The year 2014 will bring a new phenomenon to Seoul: an opera house right in the middle of the River Han. The Seoul Metropolitan Government unveiled the final blueprint of the world-class integrated arts complex, dubbed the **Han River Art Island**, that it plans to build on Nodeul Island, a small island on the River Han. The complex will have two concert halls, an art museum and a variety of outdoor facilities spread across 53,000 square metres on the island. The highlight of the project will be the 1,500-seat opera house, tipped to be as unique and iconic as that of Sydney, Australia and vastly different from any existing opera house in southern Seoul.

Six prominent architects from Korea and abroad competed to win the contract to transform the island into a cultural site. **The judges ultimately selected the design by Korean architect Park Seung-hong called “Dance”, inspired by the image of a traditional Korean dancer, a dynamic image billowing above the river, full of power and grace.**

In order to improve the accessibility of Nodeul Island, the Seoul city government plans to build a 550-meter overpass for pedestrians and bike riders and to expand the sidewalks on the Hangang Bridge, which currently connects the island to the riverside. Visitors will also be able to take a special ferry to the island.

According to the Seoul Mayor, Mr Oh Se-hoon, “*the Han River Art Island will make Seoul a hub of culture and arts in Northeast Asia while serving as a haven for Seoul residents seeking peace during a busy day and as a place where they can savour cultural activities.*” “*I hope it will also be a Seoul landmark that will draw attention worldwide with its cultural prowess and aesthetic appeal*”, he added.



River Han

Manhwa: The colourful world of Korean comics celebrates its 100th year

This year marks the 100th year of the *manhwa* or Korean comic book. Its history is one of ups and downs. In the 1970's, schools nationwide saw comic books burning as *manhwa* were seen by Korean parents as an evil distraction from schoolwork! But this did not prevent the Korean comic book industry from thriving. The late 70's and 80's were a golden age for Korean comics with many series vaulting to great success and some even making the leap into animated films. With the advent of book rental shops in the 1990's however, the comic book industry lost its momentum as people began to rent comics instead of buying them. The spread of high-speed Internet throughout Korea further damaged the *manhwa* industry as readers scanned their favourite comics page by page and made them available for free over the Web.

Yet, in every crisis here is an opportunity and the Korean comic book publishers found new ways to survive: they expanded into overseas markets. Participating in international conventions such as the Frankfurt Book Fair and the Festival de la Bande Dessinée in Angouleme helped to take the colourful Korean *manhwa* overseas in the late 1990's. Up to 2003, only a handful of Korea comics were exported to Southeast Asian countries. But the decisive moment came at Angouleme in 2003 when Korea became the Guest of Honour at the international comic book fair. Since then, the Korean comic book industry has witnessed a remarkable growth in terms of exports. According to the Korea Culture and Content Agency, between the years 2004 and 2007, the comic book industry reported an average annual growth of 27.8 percent compared to the 18.3 percent average growth for other cultural exports. In terms of exports, Europe accounted for the highest revenues, followed by North America, Japan and South East Asia. With evidence of the potential of Korean comics, the central government has recently announced that it will pump in additional revenue to nurture this industry.

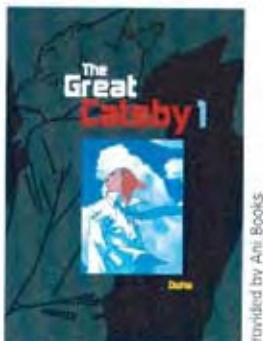
From left, "I.N.V.U."
©Kim Kang-Won, "La
Mosca" ©Kang Hyung-
Kyu, "Chunchu" ©Kim
Sung-jae, Kim Byung-jin



Newspicks



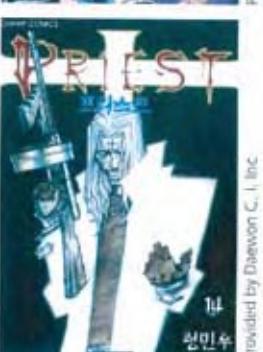
Provided by Seoul Animation Center



Provided by Art Books



Provided by Daewon C. Inc.



Provided by Daewon C. Inc.

From gun-slinging priests fighting vampires to sweet tales of young love in a changing city, there's a manhwa to suit every conceivable taste.

Priest by Hyung Min-woo and *Ragnarok* by Lee Myung-jin were among the first Korean comic books to attract the attention of foreign readers and publishers. Both books are based in fictional worlds and the characters' nationalities are unclear. *Ragnarok* has been exported to as many as 30 countries. *Priest* has been translated into 15 languages, including English, French, German and Spanish. The film rights for this book have been sold in Hollywood and a film adaptation of the comic book by Scott Charles Stewart who worked on the visual effects for *Sin City* and *Iron Man*, is now underway.

So what makes Korean comics so appealing to foreign readers and publishers? "There are two different preferences among foreign buyers. Some prefer the universal topics and characters found in *Priest* and *Ragnarok*. But others prefer to purchase comic books such as Kim Dong-hwa's *Story of Gisaeng* or Lee Do-ho's *Suhoji*. Romance comics are also bestsellers. *Gung* or *Palace Story* by Park So-hee was one of the most popular in this genre. *Thousand and One Night* by Han Seung-hee became so popular that the characters are featured on stationery goods such as notepads and pencil cases in Germany while *P.K* by Park Chul-ho has been transformed into an online game in France. Despite such apparent success there is however a realization that in order to stay competitive, the Korean comic book industry has to develop new content, especially for new comics developed specifically with an export market in mind. The Seoul Animation Center has launched a specific programme to support Korean cartoonists and to allow them to work at new comics aimed at the export market. Once such comic book produced with financial support from the Seoul Animation Center, is *Ghost Face*, a hugely popular book by Hyung Min-woo, the author of the legendary *Priest*.

Korea's high Internet penetration and strong IT infrastructure has led to the development of the phenomenon called Webtoons. Webtoons published on commercial and personal sites usually have faster-paced plots than conventional comics. In addition, the Korean educational comic book market is a rapidly growing one. Educational manhwa address historical events, scientific principles and even math formulae! The *Why* manhwa deals with all kinds of questions, from how the brain functions to how stars are created and is sold widely in the country as well as in France, China and Taiwan. According to the Korean Literature Translation Institute, a total of 1,103 types of books were exported to 23 countries in 2008. Among them, one-third were educational comics. With the world's comic industry showing more than 40% growth annually, industry experts forecast that the Korean *manhwa* is set to benefit from this boom which, up until now, has not seen any let up despite talk of recession worldwide.

CALENDAR 2009

InKo Centre - Chennai

July

August

September

KOREAN LANGUAGE : BEGINNER'S COURSE

1 6 8 13 15
Wed Mon Wed Mon Wed
20 22 27 29
Mon Wed Mon Wed

3 5 10 12 17
Mon Wed Mon Wed Mon
19 24 26 31
Wed Mon Wed Mon

2 7 9 14 16
Wed Mon Wed Mon Wed
21 23 28 30
Mon Wed Mon Wed

KOREAN LANGUAGE : ADVANCED COURSE

1 3 6 8 10 13 15
Wed Fri Mon Wed Fri Mon Wed
17 20 22 24 27 29 31
Fri Mon Wed Fri Mon Wed Fri

3 5 7 10 12 14 17
Mon Wed Fri Mon Wed Fri Mon
19 21 24 26 28 31
Wed Fri Mon Wed Fri Mon

2 4 7 9 11 14 16
Wed Fri Mon Wed Fri Mon Wed
18 21 23 25 28 30
Fri Mon Wed Fri Mon Wed

KOREAN FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES

2 7 9 14 16
Thu Fri Tue Wed Thu
21 23 28 30
Fri Tue Wed Fri

4 6 11 13
Tue Thu Tue Thu
18 20 25 27
Tue Thu Tue Thu

1 3 8 10 15
Tue Thu Tue Thu Tue
17 22 24 29
Thu Tue Thu Tue

ENGLISH LANGUAGE : BEGINNER'S COURSE

1 3 7 8 10 14 15
Wed Fri Tue Wed Fri Tue Wed
17 21 22 24 28 29 31
Fri Tue Wed Fri Tue Wed Fri

4 5 7 11 12 14
Tue Wed Fri Tue Wed Fri
18 19 21 25 26 28
Tue Wed Fri Tue Wed Fri

1 2 4 8 9 11 15
Tue Wed Fri Tue Wed Fri Tue
16 18 22 23 25 28 30
Wed Fri Tue Wed Fri Tue Wed

ENGLISH FOR SOCIAL PURPOSES: LEVELS I

1 2 8 9 15
Wed Thu Wed Thu Wed
16 22 23 29 30
Thu Wed Thu Wed Thu

5 6 12 13
Wed Thu Tue Wed
19 20 26 27
Thu Wed Tue Wed

2 3 9 10 16
Wed Thu Wed Thu Wed
17 23 24 30
Thu Wed Thu Wed

YOGA

1 3 6 8 10 13 15
Wed Fri Mon Wed Fri Mon Wed
17 20 22 24 27 29 31
Fri Mon Wed Fri Mon Wed Fri

3 5 7 10 12 14 17
Mon Wed Fri Mon Wed Fri Mon
19 21 24 26 28 31
Wed Fri Mon Wed Fri Mon

2 4 7 9 11 14 16
Wed Fri Mon Wed Fri Mon Wed
18 21 23 25 28 30
Fri Mon Wed Fri Mon Wed

CALLIGRAPHY

5 12
Sun Sun
19 26
Sun Sun

2 9 16
Sun Sun Sun
23 30
Sun Sun

6 13
Sun Sun
20 27
Sun Sun

TAE KWON DO

4 5 11 12
Sat Sun Sat Sun
18 19 25 26
Sat Sun Sat Sun

1 2 8 9 15
Sat Sun Sat Sun Sat
16 22 23 29 30
Sun Sat Sun Sat Sun

5 6 12 13
Sat Sun Sat Sun
19 20 26 27
Sat Sun Sat Sun

FILM SCREENING

24 *The Wildflower in the Battlefield*
Fri Director Lee, Man-hee

21 *Man with three coffins*
Fri Director Lee, Jang-ho

25 *JSA - Joint Security Area*
Fri Director Park, Chan-Wook

All the programmes listed above will be held at INKO CENTRE, Chennai.

EVENTS

20-24 July - Contemporary Korean Films at NFAI, Pune.

31 July to 6 August - Contemporary Korean Films at TIFF, Thiruvananthapuram.

16 August - *Medea and Its Double* by the Seoul Factory for the Performing Arts at The Hindu Metroplus Theatre Festival, Chennai.

7-30 September - Indian writer-in-residence at Toji Foundation, Seoul.

For information regarding Korean Language classes, Yoga, Taekwondo and Calligraphy classes, please contact InKo Centre, 51, 6th Main Road, Raja Annamalaiapuram, Chennai - 600 028. T: 044-2436 1224 or log on to www.inkocentre.org

3rd Women's Film Festival

Call for Entries



Over 10,000 people attended the 2nd Women's Film Festival (WFF) in March 2009. 136 films from 33 countries were presented over 8 days in Chennai. If you are a woman director who wants to share your creativity and point of view or a male director whose film focusses on a woman's point of view, we are waiting to hear from you.

Calling entries for WFF 2010 in the following categories:

- * Full-length feature films
- * Shorts
- * Documentaries

For more information about the 3rd edition of WFF and to download an application form, please visit www.inkocentre.org

Application forms duly filled, along with a DVD copy of the film must be submitted to the following address:

InKo Centre
51, 6th Main Road
Raja Annamalaipuram
Chennai 600 028

For further enquiries, please call 044 - 24361224 or e-mail [enquiries @ inkocentre.org](mailto:enquiries@inkocentre.org)

The closing date for receipt of applications is 30 October 2009