

Su Hyoung "Janice" Kim

Department of Visual Arts  
Art History and Museum Studies

# GWANGJU ART BIENNALE

THE INFLUENCE ON THE CITY'S CULTURAL LIFE

**MANY THANKS TO**

The Department of Visual Arts  
My Interviewees  
Dr. Preminda Jacob, Project Mentor  
Johnson Tien, Poster Designer  
My Parents  
Relatives who hosted me in Korea

**BACKGROUND**

Founded in September 1995 to commemorate those who died for the *Gwangju Democratization Movement of 1980* and to transform this social value into cultural arts.



Gwangju Art Biennale Building

2015 is the twentieth anniversary of this international art event. Each of the ten biennales held in Gwangju have showcased different themes about contemporary society and contemporary art that relates to the *Gwangju Democratization Movement*.

**THEMES - 1995 TO 2016**

<i>Beyond The Borders</i>	<b>1995</b>	(Sept 20 – Nov 20)
<i>Unmapping the Earth</i>	<b>1997</b>	(Sept 1 – Nov 27)
<i>Man and Space</i>	<b>2000</b>	(Mar 29 – Jun 7)
<i>P_A_U_S_E</i>	<b>2002</b>	(Mar 29 – Jun 29)
<i>A Grain of Dust, A Drop of Water</i>	<b>2004</b>	(Sept 10 – Nov 13)
<i>Fever Variation</i>	<b>2006</b>	(Sept 8 – Nov 11)
<i>Annual Report: A Year in Exhibitions</i>	<b>2008</b>	(Sept 5 – Nov 9)
<i>10000 Lives</i>	<b>2010</b>	(Sept 3 – Nov 7)
<i>Roundtable</i>	<b>2012</b>	(Sept 7 – Nov 11)
<i>Burning Down the House</i>	<b>2014</b>	(Sept 5 – Nov 9)
<i>The Eighth Climate</i>	<b>2016</b>	(Sept 2 – Nov 6)

**HYPOTHESIS**

New orders and relationships between the arts and the city of Gwangju are established through a major national cultural event, the Gwangju Art Biennale.

**METHODOLOGY**

By analysing past exhibitions of the Gwangju Art Biennale, I studied the influence of the biennale events on Gwangju society and specifically how the cultural life of Gwangju city has changed since the Biennale was instituted in 1995.

**RESEARCH ACTIVITIES**

- Travel to Korea in January 2016
- Photo documentation
- Literature Research
  - 광주비엔날레 1995-2014 (*Gwangju Biennale 1995-2014*). Gwangju: Gwangju Biennale, 2015. Print.
  - Lee, YongHun. *Gwangju and Asia*. 30. Print.
  - Griffin, Tim. "Worlds Apart: Contemporary Art, Globalization, and the Rise of Biennals." *Contemporary Art: 1989 to the Present*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. Print.
- Interviews
  - Director Inho Cho
  - Artist Bong Chae Song
  - Artist Yeon Gyun Kang
  - Chosun University professor Sun Joo Han and Song Sik Cho

**GWANGJU DESIGN BIENNALE**

- Founded in 2004 for the business of design
- Design the whole process of experience so that viewers themselves discover how to renew their lives through design and learn why design exists
- Share designs to learn new methods of communication, while preparing for a sustainable future, realizing that East Asian cultural value is truly energizing new futures

**GWANGJU FOLLY**

- In the architectural sense, a 'folly' means an architecture that plays a decorative role after losing its original function
- Architectures that contribute to urban regeneration, playing both decorative and functional roles in public spaces
- Gwangju Folly is aimed at playing the role of an urban get-away and plaza providing exhibitions and performances while achieving urban regeneration under the mission of establishing Gwangju as a cultural city and creating cultural attractions to be passed down to future generations

**HUB CITY OF ASIAN CULTURE (HCAC)**

- Hub City of Asian Culture (HCAC) project, administered by the national government of Korea, is the single largest cultural project in the history of the nation.
- The project aims to forge cultural ties and establish a forum of exchange with the various countries of Asia, and enhance the overall quality of life of the Asian community by transforming Gwangju, one of the six largest cities in Korea, into a culture city of novel concepts.

**INTERNATIONAL BIENNIAL ASSOCIATION (IBA)**

- World Biennale Forum N 1: Shifting Gravity - Organized by Gwangju Biennale Foundation
- The aim of this meeting is to discuss common objectives for biennale organizations and their role in society, and to jointly look into the possibilities and benefits of stronger professional alliances and collective and cooperative action
- Over 60 biennial representatives attended the 'Biennial Representatives Meeting' and as an outcome from the discussions, the International Biennial Association (IBA) was formulated in 2013



Memorial Park



Prison

Gravesite

Dead Bodies

Blood Stained Korean Flag

Gravesite

Archives

Chungjang Street Model

**DEMOCRATIZATION MOVEMENT**

In May 1980 over 150 citizens were killed and 3,000 wounded by Korean soldiers

The military proclaimed martial law on whole country to seize political power at midnight on May 17th 1980. The expansion of the martial law suppressed people's democratic desire since the October 26th situation (when the previous dictator was assassinated). The military placed soldiers everywhere, processed their plot and carried out their mission, "a glorious vacation" in Gwangju where the heat of democratization was increasing during the Spring of 1980 when college students began to demonstrate against the martial law. The first uprising was ignited at the front gate of Chonnam University at 10 AM on May 18th.

The May 18th democratic uprising started as a citizens' resistance against the wrong doing of government, through the formation of an autonomous community and through self-sacrifice in the cause of righteousness. This laid a foundation of a global human-rights movement against violent dictatorships.

The May 18th uprising documents were registered in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register positioning Gwangju, Korea as a global human-rights city.



Before 1995

Now

**BEFORE AND AFTER: BIENNALE PHENOMENON**

**NUMBER OF GALLERIES/MUSEUMS**

- Before 1995
  - There were two big art museums (Namdo, Jeonil), there were a few galleries, which artists used as studios
- After 1995
  - There are several museums (private and public) including the Gwangju National Museum, Gwangju Museum of Art, Gwangju Art Biennale. As well, there are three university museums (Honam, Chosun, Chonnam). There are also three big art galleries in the mall (Hyundai, Shinsegae, Lotte). And there are countless small art galleries.

**MAIN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

- Before 1995
  - They did not have any special cultural activity in the museums or galleries.
- After 1995
  - They have the Gwangju Foundation of Culture which has established many convention centers in which are held many cultural activities including the Gwangju International Movie festival, the Kimchi festival, the Spring festival, the Culture Education program for kids, and many other programs for children. And there are countless small art galleries.

**POPULATION GROWTH FROM 1995 TO PRESENT**

- 1995 1,257,636
- 2016 1,500,621 + 242,985

