



External Space

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Enna Kim

HANBOK/한복

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“How do you describe in-between-ness?”

Between any two or more items, there is an in-between: a boundary separating a person and another, or more abstract divides such as generations, languages, identities, or spaces. Rather than naming a specific location or object, the in-between is instead the gap whose defining requires the things around it. Set over a steady rhythm featuring traditional Korean instruments, *HANBOK/한복* - a video work by Enna Kim - straddles digital animation, textile, dance and projection installation to place and disrupt this transient space.

Worlding¹ is often understood as the practice of conceptualizing the world we live in; “the world” implies a singular entity that all bodies and identities take part in. Rather than finding new ways to relate to “a world” and its status quo, *HANBOK* considers worlds – the

¹ The practice of worlding broadly refers to the conceptualization of the space in which we live in, in speculative or categorical ways (such as “a better world” or “world literature”). The concept originates from Hannah Arendt’s critique of Martin Heidegger’s “being-in-the-world”, an expansive and universal conceptualization of the world as a singular plane of existence on Western bourgeois terms. Contemporary discussions of worlding include contestations of the default Western world, and of what or who is in a world -- which implicates what or who is valued. Relevant to these concepts is Sylvia Wynter’s discussion of the overrepresentation of the Western world as the only world, and Sami Schalk’s engagement with fiction and speculative worlds.

conceptual spaces of cultures, collective or understandings in which we exist in – as multiplicitous and fluid. One finds another world in a person, in objects, textiles, and digital planes; multiplying, mirroring and projecting into another. In this context, the body, with the donning of a hanbok, opens the door to another world and knowing.

In *HANBOK/한복*, Kim uses the mirror as a projection from the self, to examine or interact with another world – the one of our parents, or simply a different knowing or identity. The projection into or onto another world is perhaps the only way to relate others in the fluid and multiplicitous geometry; here, the body is a medium that contains us yet provides the means to relate outwards. A mirror projects the self onto another pane and invites another version of oneself reflected back, perhaps reflecting the consideration that the ‘other’ we see is ultimately a construction of our own subjectivities. It is in this mirroring and projection – and the literal projector images onto a wall and Kim’s dancing figure – that describes the in-between-ness as fitting together and then apart.

The overlay between multiple mediums also reflects the fractal potential of worlding, as each medium moves in the video to depict an in-between-ness in relation to another entity on the screen. This is perhaps most evident in the exhibition’s namesake, a hanbok that speaks to Kim’s connections and ties to Korean culture through their mother; the inheritance of physical objects and garments reflects the inheritance of a culture — in addition to the cultures and understandings that a person grows up with outside that culture. The body is again a medium to these connections, and can furthermore bridge gaps towards these connections by wearing a hanbok, or moving the body to music, or on the level of kinship and intimacy. Kim’s dance movements help reflect the flow that connects the body and the garment, and negotiates the projection of additional images onto the body and the wall behind it. The overlay on top of the body, and the body’s own in-between-ness, shows the fitting together yet differentiation between multiple worlds.

In the same way that body and textile are mediums into another world, the digital, speculative renderings of in-between-ness act as a door. The geometric, nebulous renderings of worlds harness projection and mirroring, but more importantly illustrate the act of falling

or “fitting perfectly into place...and then disappear.” In the speculative, digital rendering, appearance and disappearance are not expressed by an absence of an object, but by its realignment: as rows of discrete 3D rendered objects shift into view; their multiplicity is magnified by a change in perspective, then diminished when the perspective shifts again to only reveal one, the rest hidden perfectly behind. Alignments and realignments show falling in and out of place of worlds that can fit together perfectly, if only briefly. Here, *HANBOK/한복* seems to show that being with another’s world is as simple and fleeting as brief yet perfect realignment.

Also fitting together and falling into place is a sense of acceptance and belonging, especially amongst the variations of emotions one has for their loved ones. Like certain previous projects, Kim treats *HANBOK/한복* as a letter of love, in a speculative, digital space where there is the comfort to express as truly oneself. In the precarity of in-between-ness, and in the many gaps we find ourselves in, care and love are generative forces that provide or come from the moments where these gaps are reconciled. In watching gaps fill and un-fill themselves, and as things fall into place fleetingly yet repeatedly, viewers experience this speculative space as one of comfort, acceptance, knowing and love.

Rather than treating the speculative space as a utopia from reality, *HANBOK/한복* considers the speculative space as one that has been experienced yet difficult to name — it is speculative in that it is not physical and perhaps intangible, yet puts into visuality dynamics that the speaker experiences. The speculative is in many ways a reflection of the ‘real’ world we experience; in placing this space as an ode to those who experience and seek to fill the gap, *HANBOK/한복* appeals to affect as a viable and legitimate way of knowing ourselves and our worlds. The speculative, by showing different ways in which space and time can behave, furthermore challenges our assumptions of how worlds and worlding is conceived. We do not only inhabit a single “the world”, but also the different worlds between.

HANBOK/한복’s power lies in creating a space for in-between-ness to bloom, which enriches our own grappling with the various in-betweens or gaps. Many of us straddle between

cultures, or generational gaps, or either sides of a screen, or the different knowings and traditions that look for space in today's singular world. The multiplicity and movements of *HANBOK/한복*, offer us a way to make sense of these gaps, with a stability in relating to the unstable, and with love and acceptance of the gaps that may be bridged, if only briefly.

-Lucy Fang