

# focus

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# Editorial

The world's cultural wealth is its variety in dialogue. Equitable exchange and dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, based on mutual understanding and respect and the equal dignity of all cultures is the essential prerequisite for constructing social cohesion, reconciliation among peoples and peace among nations. Throughout history, peoples have exchanged cultural experience, ideas, values and goods through art, trade and migrations. Learning the art of dialogue is both a personal and social process. Dialogue concerns us all: from decision-makers and leaders to individuals within each community.

The phenomenon of globalization is certainly the most important factor of change facing the world today. It has become, practically in the absence of any regulation, omnipresent across the full range of social activities. Arguably, in the context of globalization, only appropriate cultural policies can guarantee the preservation of creative diversity against the risk of a monoculture.

The influence of globalization has logically spread to the world of cultural industries whose distinctiveness lies in their cultural and economic duality, whether this is with regard to market concentration or to the emergence of new models of production, distribution and consumption of cultural goods and services. Cultural industries play an important role in encouraging human creativity, developing democratic access to culture, facilitating knowledge exchange and cultural dialogue. They are also an important source of employment and wealth creation, but subject to the rules of demand and of a market which is increasingly dependent on capital from outside the sector. Especially during an economic downturn, cultural products are in danger of losing their originality as culture's critical role is weakened with decisions increasingly being taken on the basis of financial and commercial criteria which harms lesser known creators and cultures as well as new forms of cultural or aesthetic expression. In the new knowledge economy, the issue of "culture and trade" acquires prime strategic significance due to the fact that cultural goods and services convey and construct messages and values which can reproduce or encourage an evolution of cultural identities and contribute to social cohesion. Idealistic as it may sound, during an economic downturn such as the one under which the world as a whole is reeling today, it is cultural diversity and cultural industries that become the true indicators of global wealth, a wealth that needs preservation and one that can in turn, preserve mankind from utter despair and desolation.

In this issue of **focus**, we look at the steps taken in Seoul to combat a year a caution and restraint with free access to a plethora of cultural events which would otherwise be unaffordable to the common man, most hit by the economic recession. Read about the tangible and intangible treasures from Korea and India that have found its place in UNESCO's magnificent Memory of the World Register which seeks to document, preserve and share our global cultural heritage. We pay tribute to the late Korean artist Nam June Paik who through television projects, installations, performances, collaborations, development of new artists' tools, writing, and teaching, contributed to the creation of a new media culture. His work questions time and memory, the nature of music and art, even the essence of our sensory experiences and most significantly, perhaps, our understanding and definition of 'television', that ubiquitous medium that so controls our lives today. Starting with this issue, we introduce a 'personality focus' section which will showcase an outstanding contemporary Korean artist who is at once proudly local and incredibly global; both a repository of indigenous wisdom and a chronicler of universal truths. This month, the spotlight is on Ko Un, one of Korea's most prolific writers, who gained international readership with verse informed by both his political activism in Korea and a broader concern for humanity.

Following the extremely enthusiastic response, the weekly and monthly 'InKo happenings' – Language classes; Yoga, Taekwondo, Calligraphy and Film screenings, continue at the Centre. And, with the advent of summer, we introduce Yotae, a fun summer camp, especially for children.

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.

# InKo Screenings

From the poignant human drama of *Secret Sunshine*; the wit and reflexive art of *Milky Way Liberation Front* and the feel-good, endearing storyline of *Bunt - InKo* screenings this quarter present three recent films by three contemporary Korean directors, each unique in its treatment and style.

**24 April 2009**

**Secret Sunshine**

밀양, 2007

Directed by Lee, Chang-dong

*Secret Sunshine* directed by the Special Director's Prize and Asian Film Award winner, Lee Chang-dong, centres around a lady who has to cope with the death of her husband and child. The Korean title 밀양 (*Milyang* or *Miryang*), refers to the city in which the film was shot.

*Secret Sunshine* opens on a fable: a gentle young widow, a piano teacher, relocates to a small-town called Miryang for a new start. She goes to a Miryang with her child. It is her husband's hometown and the early signs are promising: people seem welcoming, the pharmacist smiles at her, and her small son adapts to his new school. 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. When tragedy strikes, one local man stands by her through all of her struggles and tries to offer her hope.

*Secret Sunshine* is mysterious and terrifying. At times, it feels like a thriller, with surprising twists, but it has a hidden core. It is a story of faith, how it can enter a life and how it can vanish. In May 2007, the film was one of 20 films competing in the Featured Films competition at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival. Jeon Do-yeon won the Prix d'interprétation féminine du Festival de Cannes (Best Actress). In the second Asian Film Awards, the film won Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actress.



**Secret Sunshine**

**29 May 2009**

**Milky Way Liberation Front**

은하해방전선, 2007

Directed by Yoon, Seong-ho

Yoon, Seong-ho's *Milky Way Liberation Front* opened in 2007 in South Korea, after receiving a thumbs up at the 2007 Pusan International Film Festival. The movie focusses on a filmmaker who suffering from a writer's block, has a vague idea for a story revolving around a man afflicted with aphasia. In an ironic twist of fate, the filmmaker in the movie travels to the Pusan International Film Festival, where the actual movie had its world premiere.

The movie was shot entirely in HD and features many unconventional moments.

This witty flick is all about life imitating art imitating life imitating art! The film sounds very much like a parody on director Yoon's efforts in making a movie. The story centres on Ryu Young-jae (portraying director Yoon), who is about to screen his short film at the Pusan International Film Festival. He has not penned the script as yet but knows that he wants it to involve Siamese twins and a protagonist who loses his ability to talk. To add to the problem, everyone from the cinematographer to the sound engineer has an opinion about how the story should unfold.

In addition, Young-jae's girlfriend dumps him saying that he does not know how to communicate. And just like the protagonist in his upcoming movie, Yoon also loses the ability to speak!

Things just do not go well for the director and his problems continue to increase. Fortunately, his ventriloquist actor helps him in a crisis, but even so the situation turns for the worse and gets out of control. Director Yoon Seong-ho's unique talent for light-hearted humour underscores this film. Director Yoon Seong-ho represents a new trend in Korean cinema, framing ideas of the digital generation through many digital shots. In *Milky Way Liberation Front*, he uses modern technology to brilliant effect to produce a reflexive piece of cinema.

**26 June 2009**

## Bunt

날아라 허동구, 2007

Directed by Park, Gyu-tae

Based on a novel by Wang Shu-Fen and sharing a more than passing resemblance to the Adam Sandler comedy, *The Waterboy*, Park Gyu-Tae's 2007 film is a well-told tale that focusses on finding joy in life, rather than dwelling on the negative. That is not to say that the film does not have its emotional moments or that it takes its subject matter lightly. There is high drama, but the filmmaker seems more interested in finding the humorous side of life, as is true of what many people do in less than ideal circumstances.

Despite the fact that he is ridiculed constantly by his peers and even told by his teachers to stay home on exam days so as to not lower the overall class grade, eleven-year old Dong-Ku is completely oblivious to it all and simply enjoys coming to school each day. But it is not the extracurricular activities, the daily social interaction with children his own age, or an opportunity to learn that propels him to school every morning. Dong-Ku's singular reason for attending school is a bit out of the ordinary - he simply loves being the class waterboy, taking the school-approved kettle around and filling the cups of his classmates during lunch.



**Milky Way Liberation Front**

Unfortunately, Dong-Ku's whole world comes crashing down when a practical joke quickly lands him in proverbial hot water with the school authorities, raising the distinct possibility of expulsion. His teachers insist that he attend a special school, a move his loving father Jin-Gyu, simply cannot afford. Meanwhile, Dong-Ku is horrified to learn that the school has got rid of all the in-class kettles, replacing them with water purifiers, thus eliminating Dong-Ku's sole reason for attending school.

However, while daydreaming in class, a solution presents itself, as he spies a waterboy carrying a kettle to his teammates on the baseball field. He meets Coach Kwon who's own job is in jeopardy.

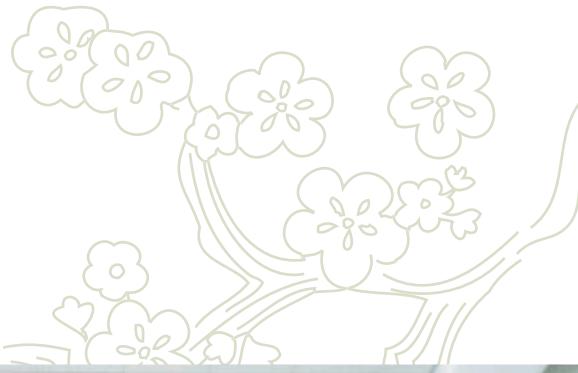
With his team on a losing streak and with only eight players left, the coach is at his wits end to find a way to field a team. Upon meeting Dong-Ku, the coach initially sees him as a godsend and is eager to sign him up for the team. Dong-Ku agrees, but only if he can serve as the team's waterboy. A deal is struck, and all seems well, only Dong-Ku knows nothing about baseball! Luckily for him, his classmate Joon-Tae decides to take him under his wing and teach him the basics of the game. Realizing that Dong-Ku is unlikely to ever be an ace with the bat, Joon-Tae teaches him the only move the young boy seems capable of executing: a bunt.

The big question is whether Dong-Ku will actually be able to make contact with the ball and pull it off on his own during the big game.



Bunt

Structurally, *Bunt* is all about character motivation. Dong-Ku wants to continue being a waterboy, Jin-Gyu wants to provide a home for his son, Coach Kwon wants to keep his job, and even Joon-Tae has his own reasons for helping Dong-Ku. The way in which all these side stories intersect might be predictable, but the manner in which director Park Gyu-Tae assembles all the separate pieces is to be commended. Punctuated with hilarious moments as well as with the occasional, genuinely poignant scene, *Bunt* is a feel-good underdog story that is likely to win over audiences both young and old.



# Centrestaging Culture: The Seoul example

What role will art and culture play to uplift a world reeling under a global economic downturn? Seoul, which is easily one of the most expensive cities in the world today, has announced a novel series of free cultural events throughout the year to combat the gloom, to cast away stress and to provide access to programmes that would otherwise prove too expensive in a year that cautions restraint.



Cultural events in Seoul

Seoul may be an expensive city to live in and, many people complain that ticket prices for live performances are high here, compared to those in other cities. With the ongoing global economic downturn affecting Korea as well, many people may have to tighten their purse strings and refrain from spending money to watch performances. However, amidst the economic gloom, there is a reason to rejoice. The government of Seoul has recently announced a list of free cultural events that it plans to present throughout this year. The highlight of the planned programmes are a series of open-air performances to be staged at Seoul Plaza in front of City Hall every evening from mid-May to mid-October. Locals and visitors will be able to enjoy a variety of 100-minute-long performances, including traditional dances, movies, classical and pop concerts while sitting or lying down on the grass, listening to music and staring up at the stars.

In addition, "Fashion in Seoul Plaza," a fashion event, will also regularly take place at the same venue, in order to make high-class fashion shows more accessible to the public. Besides Seoul Plaza, other locations will also host free cultural events. Every Saturday night from May to October,

people can listen to concerts and jazz performances at the Dalbit square near the Hangang (Han River) Park on the riverbanks near Banpo. The square is 40,000 square metres in size, and can accommodate large crowds. The folk market in Dongdaemun will hold various events from April to October every Saturday afternoon. Weekdays will be more colourful and exciting than ever as street artists and performances will entertain the visitors during weekdays. In spring and autumn, citizens and visitors can enjoy musicals for free at one of the city's major palaces.

In May, an epic musical based on the hit TV drama *Daejanggeum* or *Jewel in the Palace*, will be staged at Gyeonghuigung Palace. *Daejanggeum* is the musical adaptation of the 2003 MBC TV drama of the same name. The drama was aired across Asia and became a major hit from Taiwan to Iran. It is based on the story of Jang-geum, a 16th-century woman who rose from the position of a palace cook to become the royal physician during the Joseon Dynasty.

In August, one can enjoy performances, museums, galleries and clubbing all night during the "Seoul Open Night." Launched last year, the open night will allow pass holders to visit some 200 spots during the night in five areas in Seoul, including Jeong-dong, Bukcheon, Insa-dong, Daehangno and Hongdae (Hongik University).

The Seoul Metropolitan Government further plans to stage an original piece in September, expressing Korean beauty through traditional music and dance.

# Memory of the World

The Memory of the World Programme was launched 12 years ago, with the aim of preserving and digitizing humanity's documentary heritage. With the support of UNESCO, dozens of archive collections, thousands of metres of film and millions of pages of manuscripts, books or newspapers have been preserved for posterity. A look at the Indian and Korean inclusions to the Memory of the World Register...

In 1997, UNESCO initiated a Memory of the World Register for the purpose of preserving and disseminating the documentary heritage of the world that is in danger of being lost forever. Korean additions to this registry include *Hunminjeongeum* (Proper Phonetics to Instruct the People), *Joseon Wangjosillok* (Annals of the Joseon Dynasty), *Buljo Jikjismcheyojeol* (Selected Sermons of Buddhist Sages and Seon Masters), *Seungjeongwon Ilgi* (Diaries of the Royal Secretariat), the printing woodblocks of the *Tripitaka Koreana* and miscellaneous Buddhist scriptures, and the *Uigwe* (Royal Protocols of the Joseon Dynasty).

## The Hunminjeongeum

The *Hunminjeongeum* was a primer for teaching *Hangeul*, the Korean alphabet created by the fourth ruler of the Joseon dynasty, King Sejong the Great (r. 1418-1450). The new alphabet was promulgated in 1446.

## The Joseon Wangjosillok

*Joseon Wangjosillok* resulted from the tradition of preparing a historic record of each reign. It began in 1413 with the Annals of King Taejo, the founder and first king of Joseon, and continued through the end of the dynasty in 1910. The Annals were drafted by historians in the Office for Annals Compilation and to ensure preservation, copies were stored in special repositories situated in parts of the country.



## The Buljo Jikjisimcheolyojeol and the Seungeongwon Ilgi

The *Buljo Jikjisimcheolyojeol*, compiled in 1372 by the monk Baegun (1298-1374), contains the essentials of Seon (Zen) Buddhism. The key word of the title, *Jikjisimche* is taken from a famous phrase that refers to the attainment of enlightenment through the practice of Seon. A colophon on the last page of the book states that it was printed with movable metal type at the Heungdeoksa Temple in 1377, about seventy years before the Gutenberg Bible was printed in Germany, making it the world's oldest book printed with movable metal type.

The *Sungeongwon*, the Royal Secretariat of the Joseon Dynasty, was responsible for keeping the *Sungeongwon Ilgi*, a detailed record of the daily events and official schedule of the court, from the reign of the first king of the Joseon Dynasty, king Taejo (1392-1398), to the reign of the 27th and last king, Sunjong (1907-1910). However, currently only 3,243 diaries exist. Recorded in the *Sungeongwon Ilgi* is the largest amount of authentic historic information and state secrets of the Joseon Dynasty. It served as the primary source for the Annals of the Joseon Dynasty and as such its historic value is even greater than the Annals itself.

## The Tripitaka Koreana

The *Goryeo Daejanggyeong* (Goryeo Dynasty Tripitaka), known as the *Tripitaka Koreana* to modern scholars, is a collection of the *Tripitaka* (Buddhist scriptures). Carved onto 81,258 wooden printing blocks in the 13th century, under commission by the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392), it is currently stored at the Haeinsa Temple in Gyeongsangnam-do.

## The Uigwe: The Royal Protocols of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910)

A unique form of documentary heritage, the *Uigwe* is a collection of Royal Protocols for the 500-year-long Joseon Dynasty. A comprehensive and systematic collection of writings and paintings, it provides a detailed account of the important ceremonies and rites of the Joseon court. Its particular style of documentary heritage cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

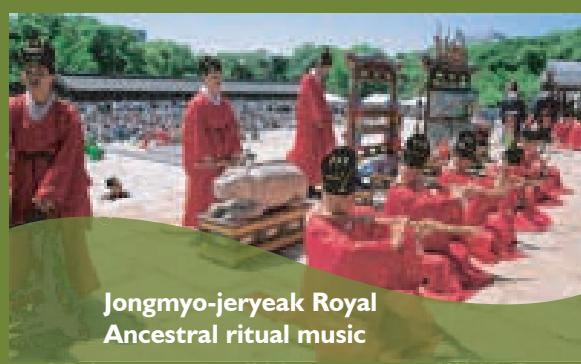


## Oral and Intangible 'masterpieces'

In 1998, UNESCO created the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity to protect the oral and intangible cultural heritage of the world. Since the first proclamation in 2001, three intangible cultural treasures of Korea have been proclaimed *Masterpieces*, and these include the *Jongmyo-jerye* and *Jongmyo-jeryeak* (Royal Ancestral Rite and Ritual Music), *pansori* (epic songs), and the *Gangneung Danoje* Festival.

## Jongmyo-jerye and Jongmyo-jeryeak

*Jongmyo-jerye* is the ancestral memorial rite held for the repose of the spirits of the kings and queens of the Joseon period at *Jongmyo* (the Royal Ancestral Shrine) where their spirit tablets are enshrined. *Jongmyo-jeryeak* was performed during the rites. Accompanied by ritual dancing, *Botaebyeong* (Maintaining the Great Peace) a suite of 11 pieces praising the civil achievements of the dynastic founders and *Jeong-daeop* (Founding a Great Dynasty) a suite of 15 pieces praising their military accomplishments were performed.





Pansori performance

## Pansori

Pansori is a genre of musical story-telling, performed by a vocalist to the accompaniment of a drum. These popular solo epic songs, characterized by expressive singing, stylized speech, and mimetic gestures, embrace both aristocratic and folk culture.

Pansori is a compound word from *pan* (a public place where people gather) and *sori* (song). Performances can last up to eight hours, where a male or female singer improvises on texts that combine rural Korean dialects with erudite literary expressions. The settings, characters and situations that make up the pansori are rooted in the Joseon period.

## Mask dance from the Gangneung Danoje Festival

Danoje, held to pray for a good harvest, falls on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month and marks the end of the barley and rice-planting season.

Traditionally, it was one of the three most important holidays along with Seollal (Lunar New Year's) and Chuseok (Thanksgiving).

Gangneung's Danoje Festival in Gangwon-do is the largest traditional festival in Korea and lasts nearly four weeks in the fourth to early fifth month of the lunar calendar.

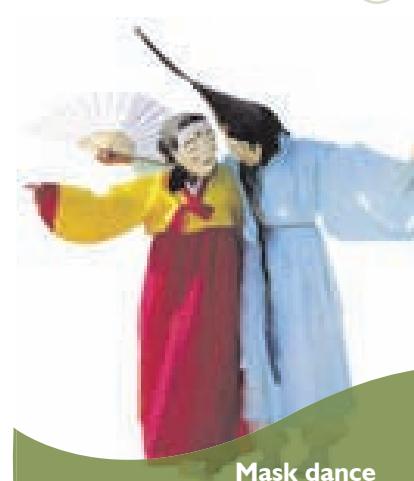
The music, dance, literature, drama and handicrafts associated with the festival are of high artistic value and have extraordinary worth in that the festival has continued for approximately a thousand years and reflects the history and life of commoners. The festival also incorporates Korean religious traditions, including Confucianism, Shamanism, Buddhism and Taoism and offers a diversity of ceremonies and performances.

## The Rig Veda in UNESCO's 'Memory of the World' Register

The Vedas are considered the earliest literary record of Indo-Aryan civilization, and are amongst the most sacred books of India. They are the original scriptures of Hindu teachings, and contain spiritual knowledge encompassing all aspects of our life. Vedic literature with its philosophical maxims has stood the test of time and is the highest religious authority for all sections of Hindus in particular and for mankind in general.

Veda means wisdom, knowledge or vision. The laws of the Vedas regulate the social, legal, domestic and religious customs of the Hindus to the present day.

All the obligatory duties of the Hindus at birth, marriage, death owe their allegiance to the Vedic ritual.



Mask dance



## Origin of the Vedas

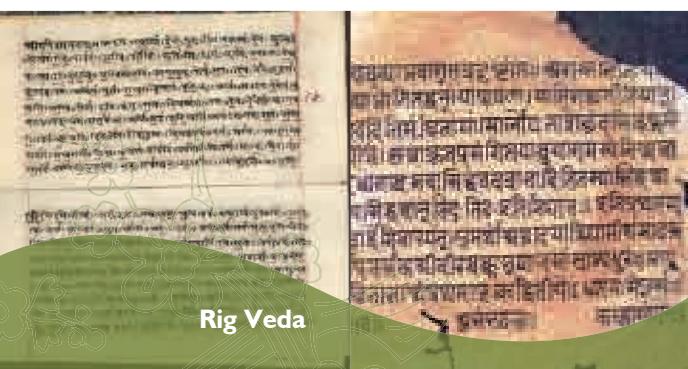
The Vedas are probably the earliest documents of the human mind and is indeed difficult to say when the earliest portions of the Vedas came into existence. As the ancient Hindus seldom kept any historical record of their religious, literary and political realization, it is difficult to determine the period of the Vedas with precision. Historians provide us many guesses but none of them is free from ambiguity.

The general assumption is that the Vedic hymns were either taught by God to the sages or that they revealed themselves to the sages who were the seers or *mantradrasta* of the hymns. The Vedas were supposedly mainly compiled by Vyasa Krishna Dwaipayana around the time of Lord Krishna (1500 BC).

## Classification of the Vedas

The Vedas are four in number: The Rig-Veda, the Sama Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda, with the Rig Veda being the most important. The four Vedas are collectively known as "Chathurveda," of which the first three Vedas namely, the Rig Veda, the Sama Veda and the Yajur Veda are similar in form, language and content.

The Rig Veda manuscripts have been selected for inscription in UNESCO's "Memory of the World" Register 2007.



## The Rig Veda

The Vedas are believed to be the first literary documents in the history of humankind. The Rig Veda, the oldest among the four Vedas, is the fountain source of Aryan culture in all its manifestations that spread beyond the Indian subcontinent to large parts of South and South East Asia, as well as parts of Central Asia. This valuable treasure of the ancient world has been preserved in the form of manuscripts in India, and handed down over centuries from generation to generation.

## The Rig Veda Manuscripts of Pune

These Rig Veda manuscripts are of high value as unique examples of the intellectual and cultural heritage of the world. Out of the total number of 28,000 manuscripts housed at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune in Western India, the 30 manuscripts of the Rig Veda form a valuable part of the collection. These manuscripts evince several unique features in terms of scripts, accentuation marks and the support material used.

The famed Indologist Prof. F. Max Müller, used one of the Rig Veda manuscripts currently at the Institute to prepare his famous critical edition of the Rig Veda, complete with a translation of one of the earliest known commentaries - that of *Sayana*. The material in this collection of Rig Veda manuscripts was also used to prepare the well known Critical Edition of the Rig Veda by the Vaidika Samshodhana Mandala, a premier institute in Pune for Vedic Studies.

The National Mission for Manuscripts of the Ministry of Culture in India submitted the nomination of the Rig Veda for inclusion in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register on behalf of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. The documentary heritage preserved in the Rig Veda reflects the diversity of languages, people and cultures in ancient India.

### Other manuscripts selected from India for inclusion in the Memory of the World project include:

1. The Tamil Medical Manuscript Collection (1997), housed at the Institute of Asian Studies, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
2. The Saiva Manuscripts in Pondicherry (2005)

# yotae

Summer  
Camp 2009



It is blazing outside and you are bored. Finished a book, watched TV, played a game on the computer, painted, opened the fridge yet again, ate, paced restlessly staring at the clock, urging its fingers to spin and yet, it is still not yet cool enough to go outside and play with your friends. Summer has arrived and so have the holidays. If you are not leaving town, what do you do to fill the hours with all the fun things you dreamt you'd do when you sat in class, shutting out with your daydreams what your teacher said? How about some **Yotae?** You choose if you want to jump in the air and kick or squat on the floor, breathe deep and stretch, or both!

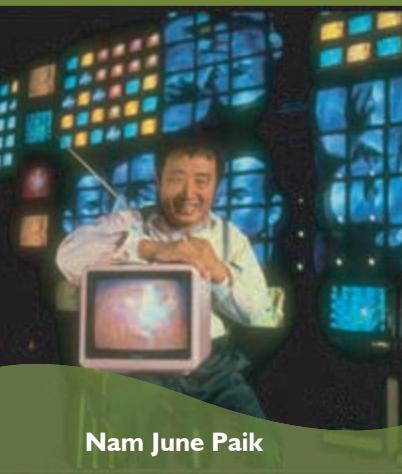
This summer, InKo Centre introduces **Yotae**, a fun camp for children in the age group of 10-12 with hour-long sessions of **Yoga and Taekwondo by trained tutors from India and Korea**. It is an opportunity to learn even while you have a lot of fun. Now how cool is that?!

Register now and collect your Yotae goodies

Camp commences on 20 April 2009

For further information and to register, please contact InKo Centre, 51, 6th Main Road, Raja Annamalaipuram, Chennai 600 028 or ring 044-24361224.

# Nam June Paik: Artist Extraordinaire - A Tribute



**Nam June Paik**

Nam June Paik-composer, performer, and video artist-played a pivotal role in introducing artists and audiences to the possibilities of using video for artistic expression. His works explore the ways in which performance, music, video images, and the sculptural form of objects can be used in various combinations to question our accepted notions of the nature of television.

Growing up in Korea, Nam June Paik studied piano and composition. When his family moved, first to Hong Kong and then to Japan, he continued his studies in music while completing a degree in aesthetics at the University of Tokyo. After graduating, Paik went to Germany to pursue graduate work in philosophy. There he became part of a group of Fluxus artists who were challenging established notions of what constituted art. Their work often found expression in performances and happenings that incorporated random events and found objects.

As broadcast television programming invaded culture, Paik began to experiment with ways to alter the video image. In 1963 he included his first video sculptures in an exhibition, *Exposition of Music-Electronic Television*. Twelve television sets were scattered throughout the exhibit space. The electronic components of these sets were modified to create unexpected effects in the images being received. Other video sculptures followed. *Distorted TV* used manipulation of the sync pulse to alter the image. *Magnet TV* used a large magnet which could be moved on the outside of the television set to change the image and create abstract patterns of light.

Paik began to incorporate television sets into a series of robots. The early robots were constructed largely of bits and pieces of wire and metal; later ones were built from vintage radio and television sets refitted with updated electronic components.

Some of Paik's video installations involve a single monitor, others use a series of monitors. In *TV Buddha*, a statue of Buddha sits facing its own image on a closed-circuit television screen. For *TV Clock*, twenty-four monitors were lined up. The image on each was compressed into a single line with the lines on succeeding monitors rotating to suggest the hands of a clock representing each hour of the day. In *Positive Egg*, the video camera is aimed at a white egg on a black cloth. In a series of larger and larger monitors, the image is magnified until the actual egg becomes an abstract shape on the screen.



In 1964, Paik moved to New York City and began a collaboration with classical cellist Charlotte Moorman to produce works combining video with performance. In *TV Bra for Living Sculpture*, small video monitors became part of the cellist's costume. With *TV Cello*, television sets were stacked to suggest the shape of the cello. As Moorman drew the bow across the television sets, images of her playing, video collages of other cellists, and live images of the performance area combined.

When the first consumer-grade portable video cameras and recorders went on sale in New York in 1965, Paik purchased one. Held up in a traffic jam created by Pope Paul VI's motorcade, Paik recorded the parade and later that evening showed it to friends at Cafe a Go-Go. With this development in technology it was possible for the artist to create personal and experimental video programmes.

Paik was invited to participate in several experimental workshops including one at WGBH in Boston and another at WNET in New York City. *The Medium is the Medium*, his first work broadcast by WGBH, was a video collage that raised questions about who is in control of the viewing experience. At one point in a voice-over Paik instructed the viewers to follow his directions, to close or open their eyes, and finally to turn off the set. At WGBH Paik and electronics engineer Shuya Abe built the first model of Paik's video synthesizer which produced non-representational images. Paik used the synthesizer to accompany a rock-and-roll soundtrack in *Video Commune* and to illustrate Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto. At WNET Paik completed a series of short segments, *The Selling of New York*, which juxtaposed the marketing of New York and the reality of life in the city. *Global Groove*, produced with John Godfrey, opened with an explanation that it was a "glimpse of a video landscape of tomorrow when you will be able to switch to any TV station on the earth and TV guides will be as fat as the Manhattan telephone book." What followed was a rapid shift from rock-and-roll dance sequences to Allen Ginsberg to Charlotte Moorman with the TV cello to an oriental dancer to John Cage to a Navaho drummer to a Living Theatre performance. Throughout, the video image was manipulated by layering images, reducing dancers to a white line outlining their form against a wash of brilliant colour, creating evolving abstract forms. Rapid edits of words and movements and seemingly random shifts in the backgrounds against which the dancers perform create a dreamlike sense of time and space.

Nam June Paik pioneered the development of electronic techniques to transform the video image from a literal representation of objects and events into an expression of the artist's view of those objects and events. In doing so, he challenges our accepted notion of the reality of televised events. His work questions time and memory, the nature of music and art, even the essence of our sensory experiences. Most significantly, perhaps, that work questions our experience, our understanding, and our definitions of "television."



John Hanhardt, Senior Curator of Film and Media Arts, Guggenheim Museum in a tribute to Nam June Paik stated that the wide presence of media arts in contemporary culture is in no small measure due to the power of Paik's art and ideas. Through television projects, installations, performances, collaborations, development of new artists' tools, writing, and teaching, he has contributed to the creation of a media culture that has expanded the definitions and languages of art making. Paik's life in art grew out of the politics and anti-art movements of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. During this time of societal and cultural change, he pursued a determined quest to combine the expressive capacity and conceptual power of performance with the new technological possibilities associated with the moving image. Performance and film are integrally linked to Paik's transformation of the institutional context of television and video. Paik realized the ambition of the cinematic imaginary in avant-garde and independent film by treating film and video as flexible and dynamic multilingual art forms. Using television, as well as the modalities of single channel videotape and sculptural/installation formats, he imbued the electronic moving image with new meanings.

Paik's investigations into video and television and his key role in transforming the electronic moving image into an artist's medium are part of the history of the media arts. As we look back at the twentieth century, the concept of the moving image, as it has been employed to express representational and abstract imagery through recorded and virtual technologies, constitutes a powerful discourse maintained across different media. Paik put the video image into a vast array of formal configurations, and thus added an entirely new dimension to the form of sculpture and the parameters of installation art. Paik's understanding of the power of the moving image began as an intuitive perception of an emerging technology, which he seized upon and transformed. In addition to collaborating with a number of leading technicians to rework the electronic image, Paik also incorporated sophisticated computer and digital technologies into his art to continue to refashion its content, visual vocabulary, and plastic forms.

**Nam June Paik passed away at his Miami home in January, 2006.**

# Personality FOCUS

# Ko Un Poet of Tragedy and Hope



**Ko Un**

## Flowers

Forty thousand years ago, in prehistoric times,  
When one by one  
People had moved from caves  
to live in huts,  
if a father was killed while hunting  
his sons  
would bring him home on their backs  
then hang the body from a tree  
and spread flowers on the ground beneath.  
Forty thousand years later  
in Chinan, North Cholla Province,  
a four-year-old child whose father had died in  
the war,  
once a grave had covered his remains  
spread flowers there.  
Behind him, his mother wept.  
A few wild crysanthemums.

Beginning this month, this section of the newsletter will focus on an outstanding contemporary Korean artist who is at once proudly local and incredibly global; both a repository of indigenous wisdom and a chronicler of universal truths. This month, the spotlight is on Ko Un, one of Korea's most prolific writers, who gained international readership with verse informed by both his political activism in Korea and a broader concern for humanity.

Prolific Korean poet Ko-Un, who gained international readership with verse informed by both his political activism in Korea and a broader concern for humanity is frequently mentioned as a possible recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature. Ko Un's career has spanned over four decades. He has produced over 140 volumes of poetry, fiction, essays, and drama. As a voice of the older generation, that experienced the Korean War and the political turmoil in the country following the war, Ko Un has been an advocate of civil rights and the reunification of Korea. Ko Un's poetic work has a universal, timeless quality, present in the writer's quest to comprehend life, human existence, death, truth, and justice.

*Where's the mountain I've just come down?*

*Where am I?*

(from 'Walking Down a Mountain', in *Beyond Self: 108 Korean Zen Poems*, 1997)

Ko Un was born into a farming family in a small village in the North Cholla Province, presently a part of the port city of Kunsan. At an early age, Ku Un was introduced to classical Chinese texts, and in 1945 he started to write poems.

All hope for reunification of Korea after World War II were destroyed by the Korean war, 1950-53. Ko Un himself volunteered for the People's Army, but was rejected because he was underweight. However, he witnessed the atrocities of the war and in 1952 he became a Buddhist monk of the Zen sect. *Pian-gamseong*, Ko Un's first collection of poems, was published in 1960. After returning to secular life, Ko Un worked for a period as a teacher. During a particularly difficult period in his life in 1970, Ko Un attempted suicide.

# Personality FOCUS



## Paddy-field

In the plains round P'yongtaek children used to laugh  
girls used to sing.  
In that hallucination  
in the freshly planted paddy-fields  
there were baby rice plants  
a bright yellow-green.  
Now it's sunlight.  
Water.  
After a final weeding the rice ripens.  
From being in the Republic of Korea  
the field became part of the Chosun  
People's Republic  
then the Republic of Korea  
then the Chosun People's Republic  
then the Republic of Korea again.  
After American jets had flown over, the  
plains were silent.  
Don't be sad.  
Your descendants have not lost touch with  
these plains.  
In scorching heat the rice is ripening.  
On the banks of the fields, homeless dogs  
are coupling.

Ko Un had started as a Modernist, but in the 1970s and 1980s, in an atmosphere of increasing suppression of civil liberties, political concerns took centrestage in Ko Un's work. One of his most famous poems from this period is 'Arrows', in which he wrote: "*Transformed into arrows / let's all go, body and soul! / Piercing the air / let's go, body and soul, / with no way of return*".

Ko Un was active in the Association of Writers for Practical Freedom, the National Association for Recovery of Democracy, and the Association of National Unity. An outspoken dissident and opponent of the dictatorial rule of President Park Chung-hee, he was jailed several times and also tortured. "*This military prison special cell / is a photographer's darkroom. / Without any sunlight I laughed like a fool. / One day it was a coffin holding a corpse. / One day it was altogether the sea. / A wonderful thing! / A few people survive here.*" (in 'New Year's Full Moon', trans. by Brother Anthony) While in prison, Ko Un decided to compose a poem of every person he had ever met in his life. Part of this on-going work was published in *Ten Thousand Lives* (2005).

As a consequence of his activities and political views, Ko Un's passport was withdrawn. In 1985, Ko Un married Lee Sang-Wha and they had one daughter. Ko Un settled in Ansong, south of Seoul, and started the most prolific period of his literary career.

A new democratic constitution was established in 1987, and from the early 1990s, Ko Un was allowed to travel abroad. In 1992, Ko Un visited India - the setting of his novel *Little Pilgrim*, about Sudhana's spiritual journey through India toward self-discovery. In 1997 he travelled in the United States and later across the Himalayas. He served as the Chairman of the Association of Korean Arts in 1989-90 and from 1992 to 1994 he was President of the Association of Writers for National Literature. In 1994 he was appointed Resident Professor at the Graduate School of Kyonggi University in Seoul.

Ko Un's first volume of poems in English, *The Sound of My Waves, Beyond Self*, with the foreword by Allen Ginsberg, was published in 1997. His later books in English translation include *Beyond Self: 108 Korean Zen Poems* (1997); *Ten Thousand Lives* (2005), excerpts from the first 10 volumes of the Ten Thousand Lives project; and *The Tree Way Tavern* (2006). Ko's work drew the attention of prominent American poets, including Allen Ginsberg, Robert Hass, and Gary Snyder, all of whom contributed forewords to these books. Ko also published novels, drama, and literary criticism. In 1999, Ko Un taught modern Korean poetry at the University of California, Berkeley.

Despite Ko's career in political activism, his poetry is not didactic or shrill; rather, it reflects his study of the Chinese and Zen traditions and a concern with humanity that ran even deeper than his political beliefs. He began writing in a Modernist vein, but he soon turned out to be more-lively, passionate, with down-to-earth verses that were rooted in Korea's Chinese and Japanese legacies but that above all rejoiced in their Koreanness.

# Personality FOCUS

His poetry is demotic, written to be read aloud, and its subjects are usually everyday people and commonplace occurrences

## That Old Woman

She knew many tales.  
Living in a grass-roofed hut,  
where millipedes used to drop from the  
rotting thatch.  
Falling raindrops were part of her family.  
Hard times were her element.  
Cholera  
or other common diseases never came  
to her.  
Poverty  
and bad spirits disliked her. the daytime  
moon was one of her family.  
When the nation was brought low,  
moonlit nights shone bright  
under the Japanese  
and later, after Korea was divided.  
She had only to drink a gulp of water  
and she forgot a host of tales.  
Once, Onnyon from the village opposite  
came by after gathering herbs  
and said, when you die  
we'll make the memorial offerings for  
you.  
I don't need offerings, she said,  
and laughed, a rare event.  
If she had no teeth  
she still had gums.  
Her gums' laughter was all there was.

Ko's poems run the gamut from multivolume epics and the mammoth Ten Thousand Lives project to Zen-infused, seemingly simple images.

In the 1990s, a dramatic change took place in the cultural life of Korea, and film as art and entertainment started to flourish. Kang Je-Gyu's *Shiri* (1999) and Park Chan-wook's *Joint Security Area* (2000) signalled a new attitude toward the demonized North Korea. In 1998 Ko Un visited the reclusive communist state as a member of a delegation. Ko Un's collection of poems, entitled *South and North* (2000), was inspired by the journey. "Poetry will never die," Ko Un has said. "Perhaps tomorrow, perhaps in the distant future, poetry and poets will be united as in the transmigration of souls described in Buddhism." Ko Un's prose works include *Hwao-mkyong* (1991, Little Pilgrim), based on the Garland Sutra, and the serial *Son*, about early Zen masters. He has also published biographies on poets such as Han Yong-un and Yi Sang. The first part of Ko Un's autobiography appeared in 1986.

Ko Un's poetry has been translated into more than ten languages including German, French and Japanese. Ko Un has been awarded the Korean Literature Prize in 1974 and 1987, the Manhae Literary Prize in 1989, the JungAng Grand Prize for Culture in 1991, and the Daesan Literary Prize in 1994. In 1998 he received the Manhae Grand Prize and in 1999 the Manhae Buddhist Literature Prize.

## Major works:

<i>God, the Last Village of Language</i> , 1967	<i>A Boy</i> , 1984
<i>Going to Munui Village</i> , 1974	<i>Ten Thousand Lives</i> , 1986
<i>Young Wanderer</i> , 1974	<i>Mt. Baekdu</i> , 1987
<i>Shattered Name</i> , 1977	<i>Avatamsaka Sutra</i> , 1991
<i>Wandering Man</i> , 1978	<i>The Song of Tomorrow</i> , 1992
<i>Early Morning Road</i> , 1978	<i>South and North</i> , 2000

# CALENDAR 2009

InKo Centre - Chennai

April

May

June

## KOREAN LANGUAGE : BEGINNERS COURSE

1	3	6	8	13
Wed	Mon	Wed	Mon	Wed
15	20	22	27	29
Mon	Wed	Mon	Wed	Mon

4	6	11	13
Mon	Wed	Mon	Wed
18	20	25	27
Mon	Wed	Mon	Wed

1	3	8	10	15
Mon	Wed	Mon	Wed	Mon
17	22	24	29	
Wed	Mon	Wed	Mon	

## KOREAN LANGUAGE : INTERMEDIATE COURSE

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

4	6	8	11	13	15
Mon	Wed	Fri	Mon	Wed	Fri
18	20	22	25	27	29
Mon	Wed	Fri	Mon	Wed	Fri

1	3	5	8	10	12	15
Mon	Wed	Fri	Mon	Wed	Fri	Mon
17	19	22	24	26	29	
Wed	Fri	Mon	Wed	Fri	Mon	

## KOREAN FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES

1	2	3	7	8	9	10	14	15
Wed	Thu	Fri	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Tue	Wed
16	21	22	23	24	28	29	30	
Fri	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Tue	Wed	Thu	

5	6	7	8	12	13	14	15
Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
19	20	21	22	26	27	28	29
Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri

2	3	4	5	9	10	11	12
Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
16	17	18	19	23	24	25	26
Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri

## ENGLISH FOR SOCIAL PURPOSES: LEVELS 1 & 2

1	2	7	8	9	14	15
Wed	Thu	Tue	Wed	Thu	Tue	Wed
16	21	22	23	28	29	30
Thu	Tue	Wed	Thu	Tue	Wed	Thu

5	6	7	12	13	14
Tue	Wed	Thu	Tue	Wed	Thu
19	20	21	26	27	28
Tue	Wed	Thu	Tue	Wed	Thu

2	3	4	9	10	11	16
Tue	Wed	Thu	Tue	Wed	Thu	Tue
17	18	23	24	25	30	
Wed	Thu	Tue	Wed	Thu	Tue	

## YOGA

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

1	4	6	8	11	13	15
Fri	Mon	Wed	Fri	Mon	Wed	Fri
18	20	22	25	27	29	
Mon	Wed	Fri	Mon	Wed	Fri	

1	3	5	8	10	12	15
Mon	Wed	Fri	Mon	Wed	Fri	Mon
17	19	22	24	26	29	
Wed	Fri	Mon	Wed	Fri	Mon	

## CALLIGRAPHY

5	12
Sun	Sun
19	26
Sun	Sun

3	10	17
Sun	Sun	Sun
24	31	
Sun	Sun	

7	14
Sun	Sun
21	28
Sun	Sun

## TAE KWON DO

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

2	3	9	10	16
Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun	Sat
17	23	24	30	31
Sun	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun

6	7	13	14
Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun
20	21	27	28
Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun

**Yotae:** Summer Camp for children from 20th April to 15th May.

## FILM SCREENING

24 *Secret Sunshine*  
Fri Director Lee, Chang-dong

22 *Milky Way Liberation Front*  
Fri Director Yoon, Seong-ho

26 *Bunt*  
Fri Director Park, Gyu-tae

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



# Discover



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