

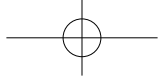
GLOCAL: Glocation/Location/Alteration

Dr. Denise Carvalho

Contemporary art today is fueled by new media possibilities that began with the expansion of the Internet and its network communication. These developments boosted artists to envision an art that crossed all boundaries: geographic, time zone, language barrier, geopolitical, cultural, and technological. This is the concept explored in the 2013 Juan Media Festival (JuMF), held at the Incheon United FC Soccer Stadium and inside and around Juan Station. The event showcases distinct collaborative links between people, activities, places, and new media art practices. The notion of art outside the white cube or museum is not new. Over the last century the art space has expanded from the museum to the cabaret, to the streets to the squares, to temporary spaces such as peripheries and abandoned houses or buildings, to everyday spaces such as stores, restaurants and private kitchens, to spaces where other activities take place, such as gymnasiums, soccer fields, the stock market and train stations. This can be exemplified by the use of a practicing gym as the space for the Lithuanian and Cyprian Pavilions at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013, on top of the fact that the two pavilions were collaborating.

This points to the importance of how current art tendencies have continued to fragment and hybridize into new kinds of collaborative possibilities. The idea of collaboration has expanded from the blurring of interactive artworks to art actions that are totally created by viewers/outsideers. Art has gone from object to concept to language to gift to action to agency to function to performance to critical thinking to awareness to consciousness.

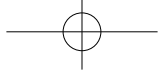
The Juan Media Festival brings together emerging South Korean artists whose works represent this shift: new media art practices that attempt to expand notions of fragmentation and hybridization in culture, language, and communication. Born in South Korea, and some living in Europe and the United States, these artists conceive the notion of home as well as that of identity as unfixed, while



maintaining critical positions in regard to their multi-dynamic histories and experiences. For them, new media becomes a sort of confluence that enables circuit, blurring distinctions and expanding limits.

The fact that some of the artworks are translated into English is no surprise. English is still considered the international language of technology and of social networking. The organic translation of English in artworks or other form of communication destabilizes traditional linguistic codes while forging new ones. I see this as a positive development to what has become a breakdown of tradition. Through a sort of derivation/translation of the English language, art can create a mediated language that opens new possibilities for thinking English or any other hegemonic language. This changes the second language status of English written or spoken by foreigners into a more important one, perhaps an organic version of Esperanto. As I think of Deleuzian and Guattarian “high” and “low” languages, the transformation of English from a major to a minor but more collective language could anticipate a new paradigm in language and culture. Words are always changing as they are organically appropriated by dialogue, and dying as they are extracted to represent discourse. As Deleuze and Guattari observe, “We witness a transformation of substances and a dissolution of forms, a passage to the limit or flight from contours in favor of fluid forces, flows, air, light, and matter, such that a body or a word does not end at a precise point. We witness the incorporeal power of that intense matter, the material power of that language. A matter more immediate, more fluid, and more ardent than bodies or words. In continuous variation the relevant distinction is no longer between a form of expression and a form of content but between two inseparable places in reciprocal presupposition. The relativity of the distinction between them is now fully realized on the plane of consistency, where the assemblage is swept up by a now absolute deterritorialization.”

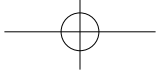
One of the main themes in the show is the constant shift of perceptions, which makes us think of it critically as well as philosophically. In some of the works, this shift in perception makes us realize the blurring distinctions between image and object, center and frame, image and word, or image and sign. What is current about these ideas is that we are escaping from these oppositional limits toward a more fluid connection to things and situations in an age of contingency. In other artworks, perception points us back to more singular in fusions through new ways of thinking subjectivity and imagination, but yet always in connection to the world, to the collective, and to the randomness of life. As new codes of communication arrive, they challenge the way we look at history, sometimes reverting the process, which means jumping notions of center and periphery, inside and outside, or even work and frame. The distinction between the frame and the work was addressed by the philosopher of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, exemplified by the *ergon* (work) versus the *parergon*(frame). Jacques Derrida, who played



with words, also talked about this. In *The Truth in Painting*, Derrida questions this distinction between *ergon* and *parergon* through ideas of inside and outside the painting, or splits between the work and the wall, the wall and the space, the cultural and the political, and soon. The frame became the only thing there was, until recently, when even the frame has been erased. With a fragmentation and hybridization of ideas and language, as well as through thinking circuit and networking, we find ourselves closer to a world of traces that disturb and disarrange the outlines, recreating new ones in a constantly shifting reality.

Jae Wook Lee's video, *Nightmare*(2011), focuses on a fictional persona, Nightmare, who shares the duality of having served in the US Army in South Korea. Based on the nightmares about the Korean War which the artist heard from his parents in his youth, the work deals with the paradox of events, the duality of the meaning of words and situations. For this piece, the artist built a projector-gun, which shoots at the screen, but is also part of the screen, interplaying the two meanings of shooting, as a projector shoots images and a gun shoots bullets. The two screens, one inside the other, refers to the frame inside the frame referred by Jean Genet in relation to the work of Alberto Giacometti. In Lee's work, the larger frame shows a train passing in front of the machine gun. In the smaller frame(inside the larger frame), one can see the bombardments conducted by the U.S. Army during the Korean War, while the projector-gun keeps shooting at the train. As the artist states in the interview with himself, which is part of the work, "The paradox here is that the U.S. Army destroyed Korea in order to protect Korea." The sociopolitical critique of this piece parallels the artist's self-discovery and the continuous unfolding of what art is. As he states, "I try to constantly re-position myself as someone who incessantly displaces himself from social forms as they begin to congeal and cohere. The socio-political subjects of my art practice might come out of this attitude toward society as a whole. In the art history, Duchamp is one of the artists of this kind." As Lee's work suggests, we are entering the world of relative contingency, and we are moving from the outside to the inside, searching for some ground in new forms of subjectivity and imaginary exchange. This is a shift in perception.

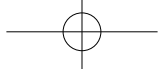
Another artist whose works attempt to erase boundaries is Kyuryee Kim. Her videos called *Restrictions*(1to8) began as examinations of the restriction of painting as a medium, later overcome by the artist's use of animation and cinematic technologies. Her *Restriction8*(2013) tells the story of a boy who hates light. Here, light is the beam that is projected onto the wall, both a tool needed for the function of the projection and the concept of the narrative in the work. In the video, the boy then tries to hide his body in the shadows made by viewers when approaching the work. The shadows are also both a concept and part of the interactive process of the work in relation to its audience. According to the artist, in his paintings/videos, "people become furniture. By painting human beings as nonliving things



without will, I reveal their lassitude, despair, and sometimes, deep resistance. These figures exist in a vague place between life and death. They are metaphorical beings eager to be freed from restraints.” When Kim adds his animations to his paintings, he stretches the restrictions of the medium, transforming not only the possibilities for her painted shapes and their metaphoric meanings, but also the medium itself. The medium is its form, function, and content. As Marshall McLuhan’s has determined, “The medium is the message.” What we perceive is technology transformed into substance, and is given the capacity to break with restrictions, as substances change when they are clashed with other substances.

Kyung Woo Han’s *Star Pattern Shirt*(2011) is a video playing with notions of perception and optics. The video shows the image of the American flag flat on the screen. Then we see the artist walking up a staircase and arriving at a place in the background of the image. He goes from side to side in the space, slowly removing the objects that to get he rcreated the illusion of the flag. First, he removes the white shelf and the red wallpaper, which alluded to the lines on the flag. Then, he played with the relations of proximity, texture, and scale by removing other objects, deconstructing the image into the background. The last item in the flag are the stars, a star pattern sweater hanging on the left side of the room, which the artist takes down and dresses before walking down the staircase and disappearing from the screen. The idea explored through perception is change. As the artist states in his statement, “Everything is always changing, and nothing is fixed.... I want to show that the world can only be interpreted at a subjective point of view, and it is impossible to maintain objectivity.” In the contexts that they are presented, things appear according to our capacity of comprehension. So, even though the possibilities of interpretation are infinite due to our unfixed capacity of subjectivity, language codes do shape our comprehension to a kind of a consensus, or the approximation of an idea to a language code. Private language can interfere with how we play the game, but won’t be coherent as a language until it becomes public. Thus we can raise the bar or expand the limits of comprehension as we move beyond oppositional differences.

Chanmin Park’s series, *Untitled*(2012), focuses on images of formal architectural structures removed from their original background. The result is a shift in our perception: what seemed familiar to our eyes, perhaps a similar idea to “white noise” but with images, now seems awkwardly objectified. Even more interesting is the fact that the artist played with perception by integrating the image with the object. We are looking at an image, but we are seeing an object. This perception is clearly a deviation created by the notion of the object as “a thing in itself” in a physical space that has become more and more subjective to the viewer. A concrete object in a place makes us respond through all our senses, not just sight, while an image may only affect the experience of sight. Thus an image is the result of our desire to expand the imaginary potential of an object.

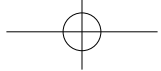


The connection between image and object makes us think of their relationship with language, more precisely through notions of connotation and denotation, which happen together. Denotation is the literal meaning of a word, and connotation is the associations made in relation to a word. It is not different when it comes to denoting and connoting an image or an object. Denotation would be seeing an image or an object for what it is, which is in itself impossible, while connotation is the associations between the image or object and signs and meanings. The result will always be a synthesis: a tentative of surmounting the indifferent intermixing atoms into one whole sense of something, perhaps closer to a “great parataxis” or the “great common factor of chaos.” “The New common term of measurement, thus contrasted with the old one, is rhythm, the vital element of each material unbound atom which causes the image to pass into the word, the word into the brush-stroke, the brush-stroke into the vibration of light or motion.”

Also, we can think of recent technologies that have allowed us to see the link between the image and the object. OBIA (Object-Based Image Analysis) is a technology that emerged over the last years from connecting geospatial concepts and advanced image analysis techniques. It is used to detect specific spatial properties of an object, such as size, form, scale and context. The difference in Park’s *Untitled*, however, is not that of detection and classification, used in OBIA, but that of shifting perceptions to expand the possibilities of imagining, rather than trying to obtain data. It is something closer to *dérive* and *détournement* revived in contemporary perceptions and uses of image in space. It is reinserting the image inside the viewer’s memory-image, and revisiting possibilities of perceiving it. The surface of perception, or what we know as “banalization of culture,” resulted from the accumulation of commodities in early mass culture era and now incorporated into a cultural sublime, has become the main terrain of infiltration in contemporary times. No more distinctions between image and object, time and space, author and viewer: these are the legacies we have embraced in contemporary image/object relations. However, we have to become savvy enough to realize the intricate complexities that go beyond these distinctions or their lack thereof.

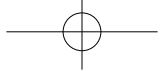
Park’s series, *Blocks* (2010-2012), also critically address this unification, brought to the concrete realm of architectural structure. The work includes photographic images of collective housing, such as mega apartment buildings transformed into concrete blocks without windows and doors, evoking the loss of humanity in the cityscape. These dehumanized spaces resulting from the modern ideal of living together but separately are now even more powerful in their symbolic segregated presence. Park’s use of these collective spaces as formal objects makes them strange and awkward, allowing us to critically displace them in our perceptions, also remembering that their power begins in our capacity to imagine them.

Kyungja Jeong’s *Monologue* (2013) is an installation with numerous phrases



placed as an incomplete puzzle on the wall. This work was inspired by a paranormal communication the artist had with the ghost of a dead writer. She used part of the writer's text into her own work. As the artist says about her work, "Monologue might be a one way communication but I think it is for delivering message anyway. This might be the purpose of network with others." Even when we communicate with others, we are communicating with ourselves. The idea is that all expressions are somewhat subjective, even if they are intended to a receptor. Private language is clearly a part of language itself, even though the assumptions of what the language communicates are always on a level of synthesis, as it is needed for comprehension. If all communication or expression has a limit to what it communicates or expresses, what is objective or truthful in language is also relative. Perhaps, what we also get in a sentence is its intentionality, and in artworks using any language, whether visual, spoken or written, the intentionality is more generally communicated, even if it is abstract, even if the scope of possibilities is broadened. Often in language, there is simultaneity between what is expressed and its content. As Deleuze and Guattari stress, "every sign refers to another sign, and only to another sign, ad infinitum....All signs are signs of signs. Contents are abstracted." As Lèvi-Strauss has observed, the signified signifies even before we know what it signifies. At the same time, the random displacement of codes expanded the possibilities of language derivation, making it furthermore abstract and subjective, like a Smörgåsbord of signs without content. Kyungja Jeong's work takes this language head on, a language formed by excerpts, excerpts of excerpts, deterritorialized and in flux.

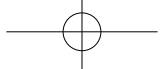
Going toward the other end is Hyekyung Jung, whose work explores memory as a form of connectedness, as well as an imaginary escape-way. Connectedness becomes an end in itself. Through memories that are both hers as they are memories without ownership (collective memory), she creates an imaginary world of random connectedness. Using materials that are old and personal (things that have been used by different people in different times), she finds a trace with their stories and memories. These fragments become traces of collective memory, since the artist's awareness of these fragments mixes memories and imaginations. Her work includes extensive installations that tell distinct pseudo-imaginary stories. As everything is subjective to our limited perception, memories are also fragmented. *Text winding sheet*(2013) is an installation that includes a silhouetted body of a woman dressed in what appears to be an 18th-century-style dress and cap made of receipts collected by the artist. Another piece that also uses receipts and past histories is *Second Skin*(2011). Hyekyung Jung's video, *An idea controls an imagination*(2013), focuses primarily on sound, but it is impossible to ignore the relationship between sound and image. According to the artist, the video begins as a sound piece that manifests images through the audience's and the artist's imaginations in response to the sound. The video, a sort of exercise of the imagination, doesn't have specific meaning, but gives us plenty of



possibilities for reflection. In the video, the first thing we hear reminds us of the sound of money, or the opening of a game box, perhaps Pandora's box. In the video, suspended diamond-shape figures move softly, hitting each other, creating a synchronic motion. Then, these figures start getting out of pace, finally losing sync. This makes us think of a strange combination of domino effect and mobile effect, which means entering a realm of random possibilities, since one depends on the ground and the other is suspended. The sound instigates action, and the video starts taking form through a mirrored space that scrolls and fragments rhythmically. The sound pace and the motion of fragments increase to the point of excess. Like the suspended diamonds, sound also starts collapsing, crumbling, and all fall in disarray, syncopated and not. As sounds and motions become chaotic, excess increases, to a point that excess becomes a thing in itself, a continuum. Is it auto-destroying or self-generating? Is it like a black hole that eats itself up or is it a dying star that explodes and germinates into millions of new stars? Perhaps we can think of the overabundance of matter accumulating in space, the force of an idea becoming entropy, compiling, increasing to a point of over-exhaustion and then, self-destroying. But we can also think of the force of imagination as a magnet of possibilities.

The ability to imagine and manifest new possibilities is what Deleuze and Guattari call becoming machine. Gerald Raunig addresses, "It is no longer a matter of confronting man and machine to estimate possible or impossible correspondences, extensions and substitutions of the one or the other, of ever new relationships of similarity and metaphorical relations between humans and machines, but rather of concatenations, of how man becomes a piece with the machine or with the other things in order to constitute a machine. The 'other things' may be animals, tools, other people, statements, signs or desires, but they only become machine in a process of exchange, not in the paradigm of substitution." Citing Guattari, he adds, "every extension or substitution would be communicationlessness, and the quality of the machine is exactly the opposite, namely that of communication, of exchange."

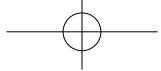
The collaborative duo MIOON(Min Kim & Moon Choi) have also brought ideas of excess, though for them, excess is always somewhat structured into form and function in the language of technology. They expand [their artistic ideas] on this notion of form that is already a part of information technology as aesthetic form, making a connection to the art object, while still focusing on information/communication as an interactive force in the urban environment. Their piece *Lead me to your door*(2011) is an 88-channel installation with computers and speakers that took part of the Salone Internazionale del Mobile in Milan, Italy in 2011. The installation shows the importance of immersion in everyday situations, bringing the flux of communication as engagement and collective imagination. The work was conceived to emphasize empathy through the observation of the lives of



others. A humanoid tower of screens placed in a dark room reminds us of how we see the world as a kaleidoscope of storyboards and emotions. The piece at first makes us think of the installations of Nam June Paik. Then we see that the gestalt impact created by the structure of lights is only a point of departure to a more microscopic examination of human reactions and exchanges seen in each of the monitors. It is almost like looking at our own lives performed by other performers. Mixing fiction and reality, TV, video game, animation, and real everyday situations, MIOON plays with intensities and quantities of visual information and the sensorial effect they have on audiences.

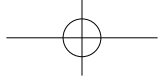
MIOON's *Statue Number*(2010) is a three-channel video showing a statue appearing in front of its city environment. At first, the video focuses on the distractions of information provided in the background, so much that we might even miss the statue. Then, the focal point changes to the statue while the background blurs. Then, we perceive that the statue is alive, and we can see it breathing. For a fraction of seconds, we wonder if we are in fact seeing this or if it is an optical illusion. The point of the video is the subtlety of perception, which often becomes secondary to the automatism of our actions in the world. This is why the artists compare it with Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors*(1553), which shows the anamorphic image of a skull in the bottom of the painting. That shows that perception has been used by artists as tactics of simulation for hundreds or even thousands of years. Anamorphosis has been connected to the invisibility of ideological apparatuses and to the use of verbal metonyms as a tactic against the diversion of metaphoric strategies of discourse. We can even think of the death of the author as anamorphic tactic that now looks more like a strategy for corporate thinking rather than the empowering of readers' autonomy and artists' anonymity. With that said, we can think of perception as the main instig at or of the expansion of communication. Without perception we couldn't even begin to make the connections we make today. Perception defines the exercise of observation. With the use of technology as a strategy of spectacle, one can easily become distracted with images and information, being engulfed by the new sublime, the gestalt of media culture. While communication brings us out into the world, connecting us to each other, and expanding our sense of immersion, perception brings us back into ourselves and back into the world all over again, always different, always in flux.

Minjeong Kim's *Far, 8 Away*(2013), is an installation and animation that explore the attempts to connect online experienced by a woman and a man, who live in distant countries. Due to 8 hours time-difference, as he lives in Austria and she lives in Korea, they can hardly share a quality time in the Internet. When he is sleeping, she is working, and when she arrives home from work, he is getting ready to go to his work. Their love is expressed as a series of discontinued dialogues recorded on the server. Their timing is always off due to things that are larger than their desires, but the protagonists' emotional attempt to connect is



clearly kept alive, as written records, forming a pattern of signs. The installation consists of the storyboard based on the woman's and the man's experiences, which are placed on two sides of the wall, each on the opposite side of the monitor with the animation. The work is to be read from outside to inside, following the motion of reading a scroll. As an image on a scroll is captured slowly and intimately, the same is expected of viewers, who in the reading process will move in the direction of the center, creating a funnel in their connectedness, which ends when they face the monitor. Facing the monitor is like facing the computer screen at the same time, which is what the couple could seldom do due to their difference in time zone. As the artist states, "even though they are away from the network, their relationship is matured thanks to the server. Fish dance together, musical notes move freely, and their avatars dance along without themselves." "The blend of possibilities created in this piece shows how there is a co-participation of man and machine through the orchestrating capacities of the human imagination. In this way, it is quite a jump from collage- or montage-oriented aesthetics to new media technology where diverse codes of intelligence collaborate. As Lev Manovich has suggested, the oppositional distinctions created by modern technology have been blurred by developments in software technology. As they continue to move forward into a better merging of quantity and quality, they also move toward an increase in immersion. Manovich sees "form" into the word "information" as an important aspect of this immersion.

Jeong Han Kim's *Qualia Landscapes*(2013) is a multimedia project based on the phenomenon of "qualia," a philosophical term that refers to individual subjective conscious experience that nowadays can be detected through technology. "Qualia" data can constitute degrees in the emotional response to a painful or a pleasant situation. This can be further examined through Kim's project *Emergent Mind of City* (EMC), directed by the artist with collaborators, artist Hyun Jean Lee and scientist Hong-Gee Kim, the latter also the director of LSR (Life Soft Research) Institute at LG Electronics. The work shows the data responses of a city in various situations, including extreme emotional stress, such as during a tsunami or earthquake. Similar to vessels of a body or to the neurons in a brain, the city is a live organism. Henri Bergson's concept of duration was influential in thinking EMC's three flows of fringe data: event data, emotion data, and image data, articulated through Bergson's Memory Cone and his notion of time and space. For Bergson, time-space coexists with memory and perception, and his duration comprehends past memories affecting present consciousness. As this consciousness is absorbed through everyday feelings, emotions, images, news, situations, events, weather, etc. we are In *Qualia Landscapes*, Jeong Han Kim examines the connection between two points of view: First person("I") and Third Person("They"). This work aims at finding some form of "raw feel" for certain emotional human responses. Kim's artwork blurs the borders between art, philosophy, technology, and science. One of his earlier projects, *Perceiving of Percep-*

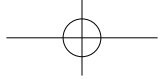


tion, divided in five parts, also explores a dialectic convergence of perspectives. The work focuses on a triangle of three vertexes: human/animal/machine or self/other/communication, exploring interrelating limits and potentialities.

Lee Nam Lee's video, *New-Danbalryeong Mangeumgang* shows Keumgang Mountain in a painting turned video. The painting shows a divided country, while the video increasingly finds a way to merge the country's two sides through a cable car that crosses the divided area by transporting people from side to side. The cable car is the connecting link. But even more importantly is how the artist changed the painting into the animation that allows the notion of circuit to happen. The work envisions a better world through the connection between the two Koreas, and technology seems to be a great innovator and facilitator for this to occur. The video is also bringing a sense of hope against the nightmares of war that hide in the back of our minds. It also shows how imagination can rethink and redirect our potentialities, manifesting concrete possibilities to our dreams.

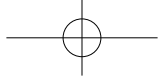
Eunok Hwang also connects with new performative and interactive tendencies as she works mostly in the streets, parks and urban spaces in Paris and Seoul. Her work blurs the distinctions between artist and viewer, art and life, public and private. The artist's practices include actions that cover her body, concealing and hiding inside furniture or covered by fabrics, creating a place for concealment, reversing ideas of public art to a private space inside the public. Her *Conceal to unmask #5* (2005), made in Paris, is a video showing a virtual gas mask. The artist's intention was to tap on collective anxieties and fears in the public space, such as threats of terrorism and pollution. With this work, the artist intended to create responses of the public in relation to their own feelings which are mixed to the artist's own emotions. Her public performances and interactive videos are intended as a game of searching for an inner place, and through this search she intends to communicate her need for a more subjective infusion between public and private in the social environment. *Abandoned Suitcase series* (Paris and Seoul), are video-performances made between 2004-2008, which address the artist's experiences of being locked up and exposed at the same time. The public space has become a place of imprisonment and regulation, a place of fear and anxiety. As people enter the public space, they enter a space of transit, of in-between, between one place and another. It is no longer a place of freedom and exchange. Perhaps, this is why the artist an intimate desire to express this, while performing her own breakthroughs. As she states, "My intimate space is related to my subjectivity, to the daydreams of my childhood, and it is all my passed emotion that re-appears in the present emotion." In that way, she blurs the distinctions between past and present, time and space, and singular and collective.

Seung-Bok Roh's *Block Game*(2007) was the first computer game created by



the artist. The work is a projection of images and a ball that moves from place to place on the screen. The idea is to try to hit the images, that way erasing them from the screen. The ball bounces on the shadows of viewers who try to hit it on the image. The images include “money,” “Mona Lisa,” “glass cup,” and “The Gate of Hell,” and viewers can select them according to preference. The question the artist asks the audience is: “What would you want to break first if you were given the opportunity?” The four images have distinct symbolic effects on the audience, and according to the artist, the first image viewers want to break is “money.” The work itself has a more playful effect than critical, but since the images have strong associations with every day issues experienced by viewers, the breaking of images can act as therapeutic and healing. This work taps into current notions of art and play, and art infiltrating places where other activities are being held.

It is hard not to make a connection with gothic characters from video game when diving into the world of Hwa-Jin Oh. The whole notion of hybridity is taken literally when thinking about the notions of grotesque and metamorphosis, notions which are not foreign to art history due to their connection to Baroque art. Are these gothic characters from video games so different from those gargoyles and chimeras of Baroque and Renaissance churches? Yet Hwa-Jin Oh appropriates images directly from pop culture, also changing them, making them her own. Her three series, *Iconoclasm*, *Desire*, and *Destiny*(2000-2013) bring us into the depths of her world. It is important to remember that tragedy was the highest form of art known by the ancient Greeks. Perhaps, we can look at these works from this perspective. As Nietzsche has expressed in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*(1885): “I tell you: one must still have chaos in one, to give birth to a dancing star. I tell you: ye have still chaos in you.” *Loot at the mirror & see your face*, a sculpture part of the series *Iconoclasm*, appears to be a man in his horse or a man-horse, perhaps Don Quixote or a centaur. In either case, the figure seems to have crumbled into a fragment of itself. There is a certain beauty in the figures’ postures, somewhat between Rodin and the movie *Alien*. What is even more interesting is that the materials of these sculptures are not traditional ones. Her *1300g*(2001) is a strange metamorphosis of human, bird, and television, made with artificial leather, beads, spangles, and a tiny old fashioned television set. Some of the sculptures allude to mythological cyborgs, as the installation *UP*(2002) and *Spirit of Independence*(2003), with TV, MDF, artificial leather, beads, and spangles. Her most recent works, *The Fish of Desire*, from the series *Desire*, has taken the color from her two-dimensional pieces and the grotesque shapes from the early sculptures, and the subject matter has become more complex and hybrid, a humanoid, half fish, half lizard, glittered and brocaded. Her color pencil and computer graphic on paper, *The Kiss*(2006), shows a more fluid tendency through abstract patterns and lighter colors, but yet sustaining her earlier intensity of the figures’ angst. The most interesting of her work is her *5 Stories*, particularly the



figures, exemplified by *The Molybdenum*(2010). This work is ground breaking through the way she melds mythological and abstract, ancient and contemporary forms, and still make them look fresh and absurd.

Hwa-Jin Oh's *The Mercy* (2010) is an expressionistic head (made of nylon and wool) with details that are not at all allegorical to a real face, except its tongue sticking out. The work makes us think of its opposite: Brancusi's *The Newborn*, in which synthesis eliminates the details of the face, leaving only the most symbolic crying mouth of the baby. Hwa-Jin Oh's *The Mercy* is also about death, while Brancusi's *The Newborn* is about life. Thinking of Brancusi's making of his sculptures from blocks of stone, like his *The Kiss*, or even Michelangelo's idea of a sculpture as a prisoner in a slab of marble, parallels a comment expressed by Hwa-Jin Oh that the work already exists even before it becomes manifested. In *The Mating Project # 1*, the artist explores this idea, that the work is present in its absence. She writes: "One day, I made a figure which was randomly cut out from a piece of paper. It was nothing more than a piece of paper only a few minutes ago, but now, all of a sudden, turns to be a 'figure' that would live in a 'role of the source of creation'; it was the paper's destiny from the beginning." With this in mind, I return to Lèvi-Strauss and his observation that the signified signifies, even before we know what it signifies. This is the potentiality of ideas that are both random and already on their way of becoming. How can it be random and yet have an essential design? It is a bit like a seed from a tree; that seed has in its design all the biological possibilities of that tree, yet it needs sun and rain and time to become. Art is this sun and rain, it is the nurturing of an idea that is already there, but has not yet manifested.

This is where we are in terms of art today: in the midst between cultures, technologies, languages, and places. The artists shown in the festival represent a small part of a larger shift in terms of new media art practices and attitudes, a hybrid laboratory that attempts to dissolve global and local, fostering the immersion of technologies, spaces, and ideas. As an exhibition and a cultural event, the Juan Media Festival provides open-ended possibilities for engagement and creative insights.

1. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.109. London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

2. Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, pp.44-45. London and NewYork: Verso, 2009.

3. See Guy Debord in *Society of Spectacle*. "Capitalist production has unified space, which is no longer bounded by eternal societies. This unification is at the same time an extensive and intensive process of banalization. The accumulation of commodities produced in mass for the abstract space of the market, which had to breakdown all regional and legal barriers and all the corporative restrictions of the Middle Ages that preserved the quality of craft production, also had to destroy the autonomy and quality of places. This power of homogenization is the heavy artillery which brought down all Chinese walls." Guy Debord, *Society of Spectacle*, 165. Detroit: Black & Red, 2000.

4. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.112. London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

5. Gerald Raunig, *A Thousand Machines*, pp. 32-33. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010.

6. Lev Manovich, *The Shape of Information*, 2005.