Exhibition and Travel in Korea

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The objectives of my exhibition, reception and visit to Korea were met with success. My work was packed and shipped out to Korea by Western Kentucky University. Over a half ton of art work was sent to Korea. The work arrived in South Korea and was delivered on time, May 25, to allow for installation at the Gail Art Museum, Gyeonggi-Do. During the exhibition local art patrons and students from area schools attended the exhibition. The exhibition ran from May 27 through June 26.
The trip to South Korea was successful as well. My travel dates included days between June 14 through June 22. On arrival to Incheon International Airport, I made my way to Itaewon via cab services. I stayed at the Imperial Palace Boutique Hotel. Travel was not too complicated in Korea as many signs are translated to English in the metros and there are cabs that cater to international travelers.

Hong Seong Mi, the Gallery Director, was gracious to act as escort which offered many opportunities. I was able to see many parts of Korean culture and art while there due to her efforts. Seong Mi, not fluent in English, hired and scheduled an interpreter, Kym Meyeong Hui, to assist in translating our discussions.

Meyeong Hui translated my lecture at the gallery reception. My extended family in Seoul were able to attend the exhibition reception and also acted as translators. They along with Meyeong Hui helped much in interpreting discussions with visiting patrons and visiting artist. They also answered many questions I had about Korean culture. This helped much in understanding the relationship of my work to Korean culture.

The reception attracted area artist and professors. After the exhibition, I was invited and visited the art studio of Son Ki-Hwan, Professor (College of Art) at Sangmyoung University, a private, coeducational university in South Korea. Once there, I was able to see and hear about his work, firsthand, exploring the DMZ and the complex relationship of South and North Korea.

During the following days, I visited galleries, museums, and historical sites. The hospitality of Seong Mi and my extended family cannot go without mention. As they were proactive in introducing many places and experiences of their culture. I feel as though I had a privileged experience under their kindheartedness and generosity.
The trip back on June 22 was a good time spent to reflect on the event. On June 27 my work was repacked in its original crates by the gallery and shipped back to WKU. The work arrived on campus on July 11. There are some minor issues with damaged crates. Otherwise, the artwork seems to have been undamaged.

The Impact of this event will no doubt be felt for a long while. I am still processing the experience. The event has opened my eyes to international exhibitions. Though complex with international shipping regulations and verbal communication the experience has benefited me in understanding that the language of art can be an ice breaker in creating discussions at an international level.

I have already conceptualized projects that have developed from the experience. Photos, documenting brief encounters while exploring Seoul, will no doubt develop into drawings, prints and possibly sculpture in the future. Compositions of historical and contemporary art works along with characteristics of South Korean culture will be an important part of projects planned in the next semesters. My peers in sculpture have already begun a discussion of a future group exhibition in Korea, potentially a commercial gallery that works more with the sale of artworks.

As I work with WKU Students on regular basis, I encourage students to explore the world outside their comfort zones. International travel in Europe seems to be a common venue, yet I hope to enliven them to explore Asian cultures as well. This could be a study abroad experience or exhibiting work outside of the United States. The long-term impact of this activity will no
doubt foster interest in future travel and education in our international study programs.

Three WKU Faculty grants were awarded to fund this exhibition and travel. An International Activities Grant (IAG) was used to support travel. A Quick Turn Around Grant (QTAG) and a grant from the Research and Creative Activities Program (RCAP) were used to fund some travel, packing artworks and international shipping.

The staff and faculty of WKU’s Office of International Programs made the process of applying for the IAG and for obtaining funds very efficient. They were very helpful in answering questions and making funds available while I prepared for travel. They seemed genuinely excited and interested, not only in what my experience entailed, but also active in making the experience successful.

My advice for future applicants and recipients is simple. Be proactive and plan well in advance. This was my strategy. It made the process appear seamless. Faculty and staff were very helpful in organizing the IAG, QTAG and RCAP grant processes. Not only looking over my grant application for quality but also offering advice to support the applications success. I am very grateful to all who assisted and supported this event.

I will be processing this event for a long while through my professional practices, as well as on a personal level. The event has opened my eyes to international exhibitions and the exchange between cultures. As we become more homogenized it is important to understand the cultures that seem to be hidden beneath the surface of everyday life. I encourage faculty and students alike to pursue and explore the world outside their comfort zones. International travel is a must to understand the global world around us.

WKU Shipping and Receiving: Michael, Anthony and John

-David Marquez