

An individual composes a volume of time. - On the solo exhibition of Jung Yeondoo

Written by Kim Inseon, Director of Space Willing N Dealing

Seeking asylum in France due to a dispute in political activism, **Tahou** has now settled here and works for the public security service. Experiencing a school admission scandal in his hometown of Bangalore, Côte d'Ivoire and being an activist, he had an innate distrust of France but ultimately came to understand her good intentions and now lives his own life working for the public security service while preserving his self-esteem. **Catherine** is an immigrant who left her homeland of Tunisia at a young age in 1978. This lively and energetic girl ran away from a culture that forced young girls into marriage and now lives the life where she makes her own choices. **Choi Okyung** is an immigrant from Busan, Korea. Having fallen in love with impressionist art, she studied art history in France and hoped to work with artists and organize exhibitions, but she is now a school teacher. **Salim** from Mali fled from the unstable situation of his country, came to France in pursuit of a perfectly independent life, and lives as a daily worker. Dreaming of a life with his family again, his life goal is to go back to his homeland. **Habiba** is a housewife who came from Algeria in 2004. She moved here imagining a romantic French life, away from oppressed culture and poverty. She wishes to have a happy family and maintain a stable life.

Arriving in France in 2015, Jung Yeondoo learned that an unusually high number of immigrants lived in Val-de-Marne, where MAC VAL Museum, his residency program initiator, is located. He researched the historical background of individuals, of their immigration, and conducted interviews with them in person. The immigrants he met told him about their prejudice and expectations about France before immigration, what caused them to move, and what they experienced when settling in this foreign land. While sharing the common experiences of an immigrant, they gave different individual narratives that were never plain. The artist encountered the residents of the southeastern suburban city. Most of the residents were immigrants from foreign lands, and the artist reproduced their former expectations about living in a foreign land and their current life in the ***Here and Elsewhere / d'Ici et d'Ailleurs*** series with his unique manner of presentation. The series was first presented in Korea for his solo exhibition at Space Willing N Dealing, after the exhibition at MAC VAL Museum in 2015. In 2015, French version of the interview with each speaker was exhibited, and in this exhibition at Space Willing N Dealing, the interview was translated into Korean and dubbed by Korean voice actors. A total of five pieces were exhibited, except for the three that are possessed by MAC VAL Museum.

The motives for this project can be found in the artist's note. He learned about a great number of Vietnamese refugees who reached France and gathered in front of the city hall of Paris in 1974. They received travel expenses from the city and took the train to Torcy Station, where they settled down. Jung imagined the fear those immigrants must have felt on the boat on the boundless ocean and their will to live. His sympathy and

passion as an artist expanded to the practice of listening and presenting the stories of the immigrants he met. This project was realized because he always tends to derive his subjects from the characters and narratives of an individual or particular group or community. Sincere concern and attention for an individual is always the most important beginning for Jung Yeondoo's practice. He has an organic interest in other people's activities, thoughts, culture, and historic background, which he reproduces in his artistic language. Each individual's life and culture are presented in greater and expanded versions through this process. He mainly uses photography and video to capture the reality of a scene through documentation. As the result is presented, the audience experiences a theatrical space and feels the volume of time that reveals itself in multiple layers, in its short moment and fragments of life.

The series is comprised of a three-dimensional photo collage made of 11 image layers. The silhouette of the photographic image is cut with a fine super speed drill. Cropped images are arranged back and forth in the framed space to express the sense of space that is physically compressed. Organized as if setting up a stage, the thin space creates shadows inside of the one frame, reproducing the landscape with a three-dimensional effect. It seems like one landscape in front, but the image overlays can be seen in reality, so one may perceive the matter of the material and layering order of the image. An actual space is captured as an illusionary scene through photography, and the materiality of the landscape is maximized through multiple forms of processing and combinations by the artist. This technique is one of the artist's unique methodologies that applies a multilateral point of view when presenting one scene as a slice of a whole narrative. In particular the three-dimensional effect of overlapped images reminds us of precise space compositions and optical illusions in the *Cinemagician* series that the artist has been working on since 2008. Actual stage of this work is in a three-dimensional multilateral space that changes through many angles depending on where the audience is; and as the illusion disappears, it deliberately reveals what is behind the image. One viewpoint that creates the perfect landscape is video-recorded by another camera, which is screened for all the audience to watch at the same time. *Here and Elsewhere* is a visual construction of one individual's narrative that is compressed into a downsized image of a stage. Eleven layers built in each artwork lead the eyes of the audience deeper into the image space, making them immersed into the stranger's stories. The time built and overlapped by individual lives is the history of this world and the culture of the living.

Jung Yeondoo was the first artist to win Artist of the Year by the National Museum of Contemporary Art in 2007 in the genre of photography and video. This also marked him as the youngest artist to have a solo exhibition at the museum. He won the Asia Europe Culture Foundation Award at the Shanghai Biennale in 2008 and was the first Korean and only Asian artist to be announced as '50 Next Most Collectible Artists' in "Art + Auction," the art magazine on global art market trend, in June 2012. In 2008, MoMA acquired his first video art *Documentary Nostalgia*, which was the first media art by a Korean artist acquired since Nam June Paik. With remarkable achievements like this, Jung Yeondoo's attitude has never changed. He experiments with new forms of media and seeks new subjects even more passionately. As if it is his calling, he still enjoys

traveling, values meeting people, and devotes himself to developing something significant from their stories. Although many other immigrants go through similar experiences, this series narrates the stories of individuals, who come from foreign lands and settle in different cultural areas, as an individual's history instead of one generalized perspective, emphasizing actual people and events. Spending several months in the residency program in France, his was a life of a stranger in a strange place. Through these experiences he can reveal their lives in each impressive and beautiful image, while not intervening in their lives. The ***Here and Elsewhere*** series shows that these individual recollected lives, collected by following the eyes and lips of strangers who settled in this area for a short time, are the volume that composes the time of history. Furthermore, the series demonstrates the energy of Jung Yeondoo, one that continuously fuels my admiration for the artist.