

**Cite this article:** Eunyong Park, “Beyond Conflict, Toward Collaboration: The Korean American Arts Community in New York, 1980s–1990s,” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2021), doi.org/10.24926/24716839.11629.

## ***Beyond Conflict, Toward Collaboration: The Korean American Arts Community in New York, 1980s–1990s***

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In February 1989, *Monthly Art (Wolgan Misul)*, one of the major art magazines in South Korea, hosted a roundtable for Korean artists and art critics active in New York City to hear directly from Korean American artists about their experiences.<sup>1</sup> A transcript of the roundtable was published in the magazine under the title “A Conversation on the Reality of Korean Art in New York,” including comments by the artist Mo Bahc (1957–2004), now also known as Yiso Bahc, who shared insights on the structure of the New York art scene and the position of Korean artists in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Responding to an increase in the number of Korean artists moving to the United States for educational purposes, Bahc first emphasized the necessity of considering Korean artists in the United States as belonging to one of two groups—“Koreans in America” or “Korean American artists”—by taking into account their different immigration backgrounds, relationship to Korea, and fluency in English.<sup>3</sup> Next, Bahc pointed out a common misunderstanding often found among “Koreans in America,” recent immigrants who came to the United States to advance their education or career. Many such Korean artists regarded their move from Korea to the United States as an entrance into the US mainstream art scene or as a relocation from the Third World to the First World. In fact, they remained marginalized in both US society and the US art scene. Furthermore, US-based Korean artists experienced (and continue to experience) multiple alienations due to their fractured relationship to contemporary art in Korea, the position of Korean art in relation to the western art paradigm, and, most importantly, their position as Asian people living in the United States.

Using this roundtable as a starting point, I raise the following questions surrounding the growth of the Korean American arts community in New York from the late 1980s to the early 1990s: How did Korean artists who moved to the United States for educational or career purposes develop an awareness of their identity and social position within US society? How did recent immigrants and members of the 1.5 generation<sup>4</sup> and second generation of Korean American artists come to communicate with each other and organize collective activities based on their shared Korean ethnicity? What social and cultural events did these artists use for collective actions? And how were their experiences and consciousness of their ethnic and racial identities expressed via their artistic activities?

Several studies on Korean American art recognize the significance of the first Korean American artists’ network in New York, the SEORO Korean Cultural Network (1990–94),<sup>5</sup> and their organization of the *Across the Pacific: Contemporary Korean and Korean American Art* exhibition at the Queens Museum of Art in New York in 1993–94.<sup>6</sup> However, the social and cultural conditions surrounding increased collaborative activities among

Korean American artists during this period have not been discussed in recent studies. This essay explores the development of collaborative activities among Korean American artists in New York during the late 1980s and early 1990s by mapping instances of social conflict and artistic collaboration that occurred around the time of SEORO’s organization. Specifically, I focus on these Korean American artists’ response to the Family Red Apple boycott of 1990—an event that exposed social conflicts between Korean Americans and African Americans—and examine the systems of communication and collaboration that developed between Korean American artists and other minority groups and cultural organizations. In highlighting and analyzing archival textual sources, this paper offers a thorough reading of some of the activities undertaken by major artists from the Korean American arts community in New York in the 1980s and 1990s.

### **The Korean American, Asian American, and New York Art Scene of the Mid-1980s**

Although Korean American artists had been active since the 1950s, the years 1988 to 1994 represent a significant period in the development of the Korean artists’ community in New York. With the relaxation of regulations limiting study abroad by the South Korean government in 1981, hundreds of Korean art students moved abroad for diverse personal reasons, including better economic conditions, artistic freedom from the military dictatorship in South Korea, and more educational opportunities to study international contemporary art trends.<sup>7</sup> The US Korean artists’ community expanded even more after travel and study abroad restrictions were lifted in 1989, when many art students came to the United States, particularly New York, to complete MFA degrees and further their careers.

The increase of Asian immigrants and emergence of the Asian American movement also influenced US arts communities. Due to the 1965 passage of the Immigration and Naturalization Act, which abolished the national-origin quota system that restricted immigration to non-northwestern ethnic groups, the number of US immigrants from Asian countries dramatically increased, from 9 percent in 1960 to 44 percent in 1980.<sup>8</sup> Given the volatility of sociopolitical circumstances during the 1960s—including the Civil Rights Movement, the New Left movement, and anti-Vietnam war activism—a generation of college-age Asian Americans adopted a heightened social and political awareness of their “Asianness” and became a driving force in the Asian American movement.<sup>9</sup> As Margo Machida has noted, foreign-born Asian immigrants from diverse countries and migration backgrounds surpassed the number of natural-born Asian Americans and took a significant role in Asian American arts communities.<sup>10</sup> A younger generation of Asian visual artists and cultural activists from diverse ethnic backgrounds used art and visual culture to affirm their ethnic and racial pride, explore the self-identification and expression of “Asian American” as a means of challenging the stereotypical “orientalist” perspective on their identity, and share Third World solidarity. Several Asian art and cultural organizations, including the Basement Workshop (1970–86), the Asian American Arts Centre (founded in 1974), and the Alliance for Asian American Arts and Culture (later Asian American Arts Alliance; founded in 1983), were established in New York City. These arts organizations made Asian Americans’ sociocultural, assertive acts visible and enabled inter-Asian collaboration and communication among visual artists, writers, and musicians.

Initially, these Asian arts organizations featured the heavy participation of artists and activists from China, Hong Kong, or Japan; Koreans were barely involved. This disparity

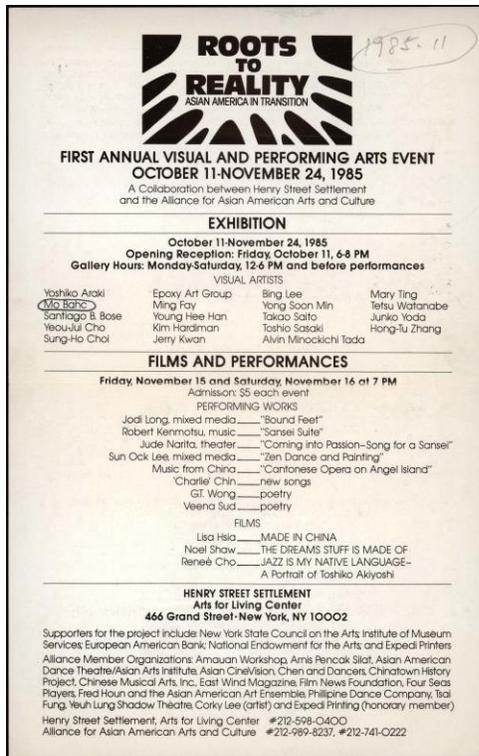


Fig. 1. Poster for *Roots to Reality: Asian American in Transition*, exhibition presented at the Alliance for Asian American Arts and Culture in collaboration with the Henry Street Settlement, New York, October 11–November 24, 1985. Photo courtesy of MMCA Art Research Center, Korea (donated by Yiso Sarangbang). © Asian American Arts Alliance

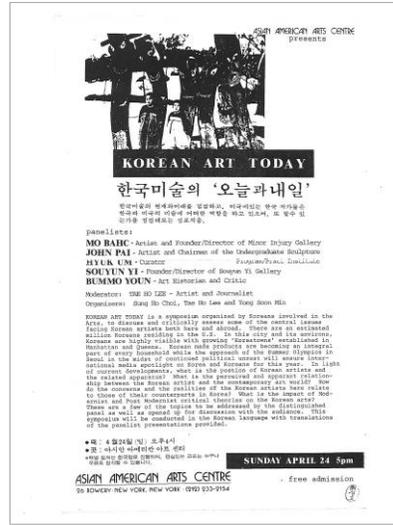
incorporated an array of works from the visual arts, literature, performance, and dance by young Asian American artists, creating a forum for multidisciplinary communication within the Asian American arts communities. As the selection of artists and essays published in the catalogue show, this multidisciplinary event, organized well before the boom of Asian American art exhibitions in the early 1990s, attempted to present diverse perspectives on the lives of Asian Americans by challenging Asian American stereotypes that dominated US society and media in the 1980s.<sup>13</sup>

*Roots to Reality* provided a chance for Korean American participants and audiences in New York to consider future collaborations within the Korean American arts community and their identity in relation to the larger Asian American communities. Four Korean American visual artists—Sung Ho Choi (b. 1954), Mo Bahc, Yong Soon Min, and Young Hee Han—were invited to exhibit alongside fifteen other Asian American artists.<sup>14</sup> This was the first opportunity for Choi, Bahc, and Min to consider artistic communication as a means of overcoming different immigration backgrounds; it was also the first time their works were deliberately framed as “Asian American art.” The Alliance’s second arts event, *Roots to Reality II: Alternative Visions* (1986), not only exhibited the work by Ku-lim Kim (b. 1936), who was a major figure of the Korean experimental art movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, but also hosted a performance by Binari.<sup>15</sup> Binari is a Korean American cultural

reveals the relatively small proportion of active Korean artists and lack of awareness and experience of collective activities with different ethnic groups among recent Korean immigrants. Korea was one of the world’s most ethnically homogeneous countries, and its national identity was constructed based on a belief in Korean ethnic nationalism. Therefore, Korean-born artists who immigrated to the United States or came to the United States for educational and career reasons would need opportunities to learn about the multiethnic and multiracial character of American society. However, following the mid-1980s influx of Korean-born artists and art students into the United States, and the simultaneous increase in the visibility of collective activities of Asian American artists and activists, Korean artists and cultural activists became associated with these Asian American arts organizations and participated in collective practices.

In 1985, the Korean American artist Yong Soon Min (b. 1953)—who had just moved to New York—became the first administrative coordinator of the Alliance for Asian American Arts and Culture.<sup>11</sup> Founded to provide central services to the Asian American arts communities, the Alliance enhanced the visibility of cultural activities by Asian artists. Min assisted in the development of the Alliance’s first multidisciplinary arts event, *Roots to Reality: Asian Americans in Transition* (1985), co-sponsored by the Henry Street Settlement (fig. 1).<sup>12</sup> *Roots to Reality* notably

troupe whose routines drew from Korean traditional music, instruments, and dances and who worked to facilitate communication and networking among young Korean Americans (fig. 2).<sup>16</sup> By bringing together contemporary art by a Korean visual artist and a Korean American cultural group rooted in Korean folk tradition, the Alliance set the stage for interdisciplinary communication within the Korean American arts community. As a result, Binari was invited to perform at *Minor Injury*, an art space founded by Mo Bahe, for the South Korean visual arts exhibition *Min Joong Art: New Movement of Political Art from Korea* (1987). They were also invited to perform at another Minjung art exhibition held at Artists Space in 1988.



Figs. 2, 3. Left: Binari, “The Road To Foreign,” 1986, in *Roots to Reality II: Alternative Visions*, exh. cat. (New York: Alliance for Asian American Arts and Culture, 1986), 29. Photo courtesy of Yong Soon Min. © Asian American Arts Alliance; right: Poster for “Korean Art Today,” symposium presented at the Asian American Arts Centre, New York, April 24, 1988. Photo courtesy of Sung Ho Choi. © Sung Ho Choi

Building on their experience with *Roots to Reality*, Sung Ho Choi, Mo Bahe, and Yong Soon Min—each of whom founded or were members of SEORO—became driving forces in the organization of events showcasing Korean American art in New York City. From around 1988, multiple programs on Korean American art—such as a symposium, an exhibition, a workshop, and an educational program—focused on collaborative works by several artists and curators, including Choi, Bahe, and Min. The first symposium on contemporary Korean art in New York, “Korean Art Today,” was held at the Asian American Arts Centre in 1988 and was a major achievement. Choi, Min, and Tae Ho Lee (b. 1951) co-organized the symposium, and Bahe, along with four other participants—an artist, a gallerist, a curator, and an art critic—gave talks (fig. 3). Although the symposium was spearheaded by several recent immigrants who had just finished MFA programs in the United States, John Pai (b. 1937), who immigrated to the United States in 1949 and worked as a professor at Pratt Institute, also participated in the symposium as a speaker. As the title suggests, this symposium attempted not only to discuss the issues and realities surrounding US-based Korean artists but also to explore the position of Korean art in the contemporary art world and to construct a relationship between Korean art and Korean American artists by utilizing the growing interest in Korea caused by the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul.<sup>17</sup> A Korean newspaper article pointed out that, as the first public discussion on this issue, the

symposium contributed to cross-cultural communication between Korea and the United States, but it was not able to facilitate enough communication among participants due to its wide topical coverage.<sup>18</sup> However, that the symposium included Koreans working in different parts of the New York art scene and offered a venue for speakers to share their diverse experiences and thoughts demonstrates the growing social awareness and interest—among these artists specifically, and Koreans in the art world more broadly—to explore how their identity and social position intersected with US and Korean society and culture in multifaceted ways. Lisa Lowe defines the “Asian American” group as a heterogenous entity when considering national differences as well as differences in education, class, gender, fluency in language, and relationship to a homeland. The common questions (rather than common answers) about their positions and roles in the US art scene that stemmed from individual experience and were raised during the symposium confirm the processes of social and discursive constructions of a “Korean American” or “Korean in the United States” ethnic and cultural identity at this time.<sup>19</sup>

The diverse voices and perspectives of Korean artists on the realities of living and working in the United States is also collectively represented and expressed through the *Immigrant Show* (1988), an exhibition at the Alpine Gallery in New York City, which was organized six months later by the central architects of the symposium. This was the first exhibition in New York to attempt an exploration of the Korean American immigrant experience (fig. 4). Four artists—Sung Ho Choi, Mo Bahc, Kiho Lee, and Tae Ho Lee—sent invitation letters to fifty Korean American artists, and twenty-nine responded.<sup>20</sup> The invited artists worked in diverse visual languages and mediums, including painting, sculpture, installation art, prints, and performance pieces, to delineate the idea of immigration and articulate the social and cultural realities of Korean immigrants. As explained in an introductory essay to the exhibition, these artists recognized both the challenges and possibilities specific to a group of immigrant artists who could, and indeed had to, construct a Korean immigrant culture, as well as articulate their own ethnic and cultural identity.

This had to be situated within the confines of cultural specificity, international universality, an “original” Korean culture, and the dominant US culture.<sup>21</sup> This point of view was also shared in an exhibition review written by Hyuk Um—an independent curator and speaker at the “Korean Art Today” symposium. Um explains the complicated situation encountered by Korean art students in the United States, who came to learn the “model” for their art in the “center” of the western art world but whose attitudes instead ran the risk of affirming their marginal position and alienation from the mainstream art scene. However, Um also argues that the exhibition was a way to accentuate the meaningful role played by artists who were trying to connect and mediate Korean and western cultures in their own concrete way.<sup>22</sup>



Fig. 4. Poster for *Immigrant Show*, exhibition presented at Alpine Gallery, New York, October 19–November 10, 1988. Photo courtesy of Sung Ho Choi. © Sung Ho Choi

Overall, the “Korean Art Today” symposium and the *Immigrant Show* exhibition reflect a growing social awareness of a distinct Korean ethnic and cultural identity in 1988 and ongoing attempts to find a position within US social and art scenes. Stimulated by the expansion of the Asian American movement and the growth of an Asian American arts community, Korean American artists explored Korean ethnicity and culture in a collective way and began to communicate and collaborate between broader social and cultural communities in order to strengthen the visibility of their art and identity.

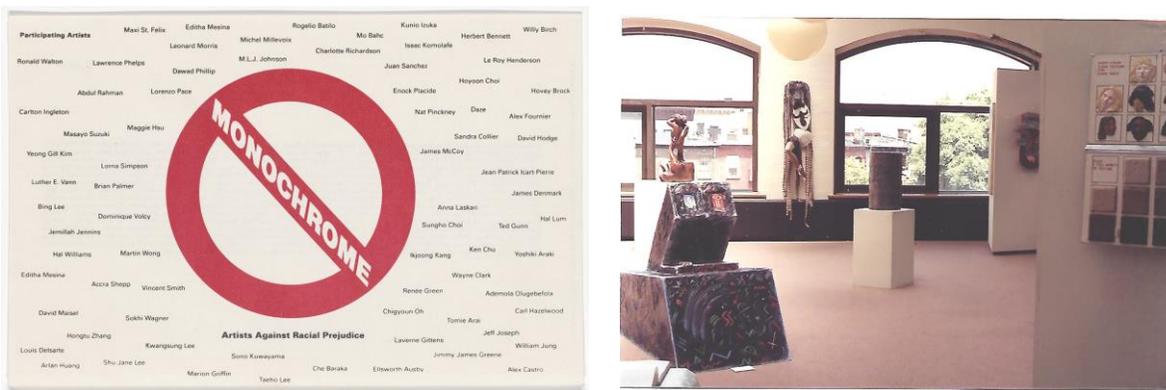
### **Artists Against Racial Prejudice: Interracial Conflict and Artistic Collaboration**

With the increasing activities of Asian American artists and organizations, these artists received invitations to participate in exhibitions for racial and ethnic minority groups organized around discussions of multiculturalism and identity politics.<sup>23</sup> *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s* (1990), co-organized by the Studio Museum in Harlem, the New Museum, and the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, was the largest such exhibition aimed at addressing questions of identity in visual arts, with more than two hundred works by ninety-four artists from Asian, African American, Hispanic, Native American, and European backgrounds.<sup>24</sup> While a number of artists of color participated in *The Decade Show* to promote multicultural America, with the institutional support of museums, *The Mosaic of the City: Artists Against Racial Prejudice* (1990) at the Skylight Gallery of the Center for Arts and Culture of Bedford Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, New York, was organized independently as a direct response to social conflict between Korean American and African American communities. Awareness of the interethnic conflict between Korean Americans and African Americans became widespread after the 1992 Los Angeles riots, but it began in the 1980s after the 1970s influx of Korean immigrants to several US cities.<sup>25</sup> With the rapid growth of Asian immigrant populations in New York City, many Korean immigrants opened small businesses in predominantly African American neighborhoods, including Harlem in Manhattan, Jamaica in Queens, and Bedford-Stuyvesant and Flatbush in Brooklyn. Under the racial and ethnic residential segregation endemic to US major cities, African Americans and Korean Americans occupied starkly different communities. Therefore, the presence of Korean businesses in African American neighborhoods was perceived as an invasion of territory or an exploitation of African American interests.<sup>26</sup> Differences in language, culture, and social behavior acted as a barrier for cross-cultural communication, intensifying prejudices, stereotypes, misunderstandings, and hostility between these two minority groups.

In January 1990, African American residents in the Haitian and Caribbean neighborhoods of Flatbush launched the “Red Apple boycott,” boycotting and picketing Korean-owned grocery stores. The boycott began when employees of Family Red Apple, a Korean American–owned market, allegedly beat a Haitian-born woman accused of stealing.<sup>27</sup> Neighborhood residents and leaders of Black community organizations tied to the Haitian community gathered to protest the alleged beating. The boycott and picketing campaign transformed into an organized program of sustained mass demonstrations, with the involvement of the Black Power movement. This thirteen-month-long boycott has been analyzed and discussed from various angles.<sup>28</sup>

While the boycott was expanding, Korean American artists and other multi-ethnic artists gathered under the name “Artists Against Racial Prejudice” (AARP) and organized *The Mosaic of the City* (1990) to oppose racial prejudice and encourage interracial

communication between these two ethnic groups (fig. 5).<sup>29</sup> Ken Chu (b. 1953), a multimedia artist who immigrated from Hong Kong in 1971 and relocated to New York in 1986, was invited by several Korean American artists to be an exhibition coordinator.<sup>30</sup> Chu contacted Theodore Gunn, director of the Skylight Gallery, to request an exhibition space. With Gunn’s enthusiastic response and support, *The Mosaic of the City* was realized.<sup>31</sup> African American participants were selected from the Skylight Gallery’s roster of artists and residency program; invitees ran the gamut from those involved in the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s to members from the younger generation active in the late 1980s. Chu and the AARP also invited artists whose works centered on political issues (fig. 6).<sup>32</sup> Chu remembers the event as a “true joint effort” between the Asian American and African American arts communities.<sup>33</sup> Sung Ho Choi also emphasizes that participants of *The Mosaic of the City* exhibition shared a common interest in social justice and their roles in society, regardless of their different ethnic, racial, or immigration backgrounds, making their participation in the exhibition natural.<sup>34</sup>



Figs. 5, 6. Left: Artists Against Racial Prejudice, postcard for *The Mosaic of the City: Artists Against Racial Prejudice*, exhibition presented by Artists Against Racial Prejudice and The Center for Art and Culture of Bedford Stuyvesant, Inc., July 1–28, 1990. Cardstock. MoMA PS1 Archives, I.A.1533. © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY; right: A view of *The Mosaic of the City: Artists Against Racial Prejudice*, exhibition presented by Artists Against Racial Prejudice and The Center for Art and Culture of Bedford Stuyvesant, Inc., July 1–28, 1990. Photo courtesy of Sung Ho Choi. © Sung Ho Choi

Organized as a response to the Red Apple boycott, the exhibition received significant political attention. During his 1989 campaign and his inauguration speech in early 1990, David Dinkins—the city’s first African American mayor—had described New York City as a “gorgeous mosaic” instead of a melting pot, indicating respect for cultural difference.<sup>35</sup> Only a few days after his inauguration, however, the Red Apple boycott began, and the Dinkins administration received criticism due to inaction and its inability to end the boycott, which lasted more than a year.<sup>36</sup> *The Mosaic of the City* provided the perfect chance for the Dinkins administration to promote racial harmony in a way that suited Dinkins’s original political agenda. The exhibition was supported by funds from New York City and changed its title from *Monochrome*, with the sign of a red circle crossed by a red line, to *The Mosaic of the City: Artists Against Racial Prejudice*, following the messaging of Dinkins’s campaign.<sup>37</sup>

The exhibition not only elicited political support; it also reflected Korean American artists’ understanding of the social role of their art. Through participation in a study group formed in 1987 and related article-writing, several Korean American artists had already expressed interest in progressive, socially engaged art and cultural movements, which they learned

about through encounters with the identity politics of American art and exposure to the Minjung art (people’s art) of South Korea.<sup>38</sup> For example, Hyuk Um co-curated the first major exhibition of Minjung art in the United States, *Min Joong Art: A New Cultural Movement from Korea* (1988), at Artists Space in New York City.<sup>39</sup> This exhibition provided an opportunity for several Korean American and Asian American artists to learn about political democratization movements from Korea and cultural and artistic engagement with the movements. Another member of the study group and the AARP, Mo Bahc, founded and ran a nonprofit art space, Minor Injury, in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, from 1985 to 1989. This space provided exhibition opportunities to artists from “racial, cultural, political and social minorities.” For example, Yong Soon Min and the Iranian-born artist Shirin Neshat (b. 1957) co-organized *Homeland: A Palestinian Quest* (1989) in response to the intifada, a Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (fig. 7). Through this art space, Bahc and his fellow Korean American and Asian American artists already met and communicated with artists from different minority groups and considered the social and cultural conditions surrounding minority artists.



Fig. 7. Yong Soon Min (far left) and Mo Bahc (far right) at a panel discussion *Homeland: A Palestinian Quest*, exhibition co-organized by Yong Soon Min and Shirin Neshat and Presented at Minor Injury, Greenpoint, Brooklyn, April 30, 1989. Photo courtesy of Yong Soon Min.  
© Yong Soon Min

*The Mosaic of the City* received attention and support from Korean American and African American communities. It could only be realized through the financial support of both Korean American artists and a variety of Korean American organizations across the country.<sup>40</sup> In addition to local media attention and mentions in US editions of Asian newspapers, the exhibition was featured in the *Amsterdam News*, which had the largest Black readership in New York and had reported several times on anti-Korean attitudes among African Americans, including the Red Apple boycott. In an article in the *Amsterdam News*, Gunn emphasized that *The Mosaic of the City* was one of the most “kaleidoscopic collections ever curated” for the center and marked a significant educational opportunity for African American residents and participants.<sup>41</sup> The *Amsterdam News* also noted that this was the first time Blacks and Asians had come together for a group show. Several African American artists described their first experience collaborating with Asian American artists, according to Choi and Chu. African American artists and educators shared and supported the exhibition’s emphasis on the role of art in society, notably expressed during a TV interview with the African American artist Che Baraka.<sup>42</sup> The actual impact of the exhibition

is hard to evaluate. Nevertheless, the organization of the show by minority artists, their lively communications, and the mutual support of African American and Korean American communities set a precedent for minority artists to work across ethnic and racial differences. It provided a glimpse of how art and visual culture could engage with sociopolitical issues and promote communication among diverse identity groups, rather than foment opposition.

Given the exhibition’s meaningful contribution, a second exhibition, *Public Mirror: Artists Against Racial Prejudice* (1990), was realized only a few months later by the AARP at the behest of the Clocktower Gallery, a space dedicated to residencies and group shows for emerging artists run by the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center.<sup>43</sup> The AARP expanded its call for participation, requesting that potential participants submit “a self-portrait of [their] racial identity from a personal or public perspective.” The exhibition included artists from varied cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds—including Greek, Iranian, Russian, and European American artists—reflecting the character of the exhibition space in Manhattan and highlighting the diversity of New York City.<sup>44</sup> The exhibition demonstrated that the AARP’s ideas had achieved widespread recognition within larger arts communities. At the same time, the generalization of the exhibition concept—to celebrate the diversity of the city—did not relate to a specific social event, suggesting that previous efforts to address a particular social conflict (the Red Apple boycott) became flattened and institutionalized through the involvement of a mainstream art institution. In fact, the Clocktower Gallery invited the AARP to organize *Public Mirror* to fill an empty slot—not because the museum had a long-term vision about how to address ethnic and racial issues within the city art scene.<sup>45</sup> Ironically, the acceptance of the AARP in the mainstream art scene “mirrored” sociocultural circumstances whereby multiculturalism was transformed into an institutional and nonactivist rhetoric, a circumstance that was already in place by 1990.<sup>46</sup>

### **The SEORO Korean Cultural Network and *SEORO Bulletin*: Cooperative Networks and Cross-Cultural Dialogue**

The SEORO Korean Cultural Network was founded in August 1990, after *The Mosaic of the City* closed and before *Public Mirror* opened. The often-fraught experiences of the Korean American immigrant community and the growth of artistic collaboration led to the organization of a progressive artists’ collective whose purpose was to expand their activities in a unified way. Sung Ho Choi, Mo Bahc, and the independent filmmaker Hye-jung Park founded SEORO at a meeting in Choi’s studio. SEORO intended to invite US-born Korean Americans and recent immigrants to develop an artistic network. Initial members tended to be recent immigrants who were comfortable speaking in Korean, but its membership expanded to include 1.5-generation and second-generation Korean American artists.<sup>47</sup>

SEORO was founded to enhance communication among Korean American artists from various immigration backgrounds, but the network did not always adhere to an ethnically oriented perspective in their activities. Another major goal of SEORO was to cooperate with cultural organizations beyond Korean American society;<sup>48</sup> this goal was reflected in members’ activities, especially in their interest and participation in projects organized by other Asian arts organizations, including Godzilla: Asian American Art Network. Founded by Ken Chu, Bing Lee (b. 1948), and Margo Machida (b. 1950) in 1990—the same year as SEORO—Godzilla was a pan-Asian and pan-Pacific Islander American artists’ collective that included Korean American artists.<sup>49</sup> Its activities covered a wide range of needs and issues

important to the Asian visual art communities.<sup>50</sup> Yong Soon Min participated in both Godzilla’s and SEORO’s activities, sharing discussions and activities from Godzilla with SEORO members.<sup>51</sup> This exchange did not simply go one way. Before the foundation of Godzilla, Ken Chu and Bing Lee participated in *The Mosaic of the City*, and Bing Lee participated in *Roots to Reality*.<sup>52</sup> After the foundation of both collectives, Sung Ho Choi, Mo Bahc, and other Korean American artists joined *The Curio Shop* (1993) at Artists Space, which was the first collective installation project by Godzilla.

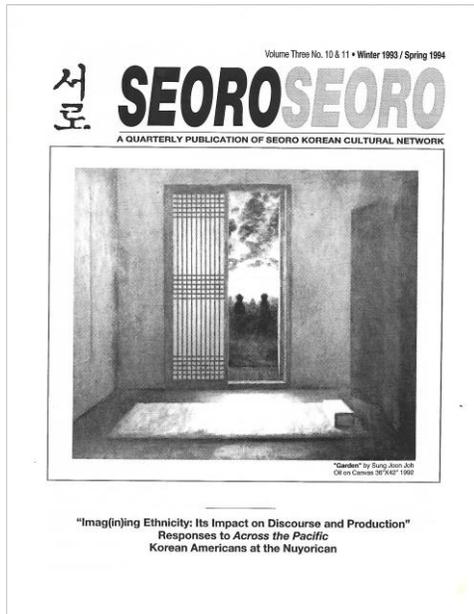


Fig. 8. *SEORO Bulletin (SEORO SEORO)* 3, no. 10/11 (Winter 1993/Spring 1994). Photo courtesy of Sung Ho Choi. © Sung Ho Choi

SEORO published a quarterly newsletter, *SEORO Bulletin* (later *SEORO SEORO*), from fall 1991 to summer 1994. This newsletter enabled cross-cultural communication and learning (fig. 8). Published in English and Korean, issues included articles by artists, curators, and writers; features on South Korean contemporary art; news from Asian American arts communities across the country; and opinion pieces on social and political issues associated with Asian immigrants’ life. In addition to members’ writings, the newsletter republished news and articles from other sources deemed helpful to the Korean American arts community.<sup>53</sup> For example, the winter 1993/spring 1994 issue published papers from a panel organized by Yong Soon Min for the first national Asian American conference, *Beyond Boundaries*, hosted by the Asian American Arts Alliance. In addition to Min’s paper, “Imag(in)ing Ethnicity: Its Impact on Cultural Discourse and Production,” three papers by an artist, a curator, and a writer were included in the same issue.<sup>54</sup> Among them, the paper by curator and art critic Alice Yang, “Asian American Exhibitions

Reconsidered,” is considered a significant essay that critically discusses the increase of group exhibitions dedicated to specific ethnic/racial groups.<sup>55</sup> The readership of *SEORO Bulletin* suggests SEORO’s goals and significance. It was sent to and read by SEORO members and their close friends, Korean American artists, researchers on Korean art, and patrons of Korean art across the country.<sup>56</sup> SEORO members also published outside the newsletter to share their thoughts with larger communities. Mo Bahc participated in a Godzilla survey that collected opinions from artists, curators, and writers about the increase in group exhibitions dedicated to contemporary Asian American artists. In the survey results, published in Godzilla’s 1993 newsletter, Bahc described his ambivalent feelings of having more opportunities to show work while seeing it framed primarily by his ethnic and racial background.<sup>57</sup> SEORO’s mission was to produce supportive and cooperative networks with other cultural organizations, and the publication was one of the best ways for participants to share their own voices and produce cross-cultural dialogues with other organizations.<sup>58</sup>

### **The *Across the Pacific* Exhibition and Its Aftermath**

As a part of the collective’s activities, SEORO began work on an exhibition for Korean American art in 1991 at the Queens Museum. *Across the Pacific: Contemporary Korean*

and *Korean American Art* (1993–94) included Korean American art and South Korean contemporary art together (fig. 9). Although SEORO members served as advisors and participants rather than curators, *Across the Pacific* nevertheless reflected and synthesized interests and discussion that had developed collectively within the Korean American arts community. The exhibition evolved out of the *Immigrant Show*, and the Korean American art section, curated by Jane Farver, proposed similar concepts by inviting artists whose work explored issues of identity, the immigrant experience, and artists’ relationships with Korean tradition and American multiculturalism. The South Korean art section, overseen by Korean curator Young-chul Lee, focused on politically charged Korean art, represented by works of Minjung art. Both sections were designed to overcome the center-periphery structure, which marginalized Korean identity and art in relation to American and western society and culture, through the presentation of multidimensional Korean identities.<sup>59</sup>

*Across the Pacific* was the most significant achievement of SEORO.<sup>60</sup> Ironically, it was also their last major event. SEORO disbanded a few months later in September 1994 when Mo Bahc returned to Korea and Sung Ho Choi temporarily suspended his artistic career. The dissolution of SEORO demonstrates that its foothold was neither stable nor systemic enough to survive on its own. Rather, the existence of the network relied heavily on the commitment of a few major members. Its breakup also indicated social, cultural, and ideological changes taking place in the United States and Korea around 1994. With the increase of group exhibitions centered on race and ethnicity, there were growing concerns about being labeled “Asian American artists”—a designation that some feared would repeat social stereotypes and reinscribe cultural difference. Such concerns were equally evident in Mo Bahc’s answers to the Godzilla survey and Alice Yang’s essay on Asian American exhibitions, both from 1993. Several Korean American artists also began to show works individually at major art institutions. Under the globalization policy promoted by South Korea’s first civilian government, the Korean art scene also made significant efforts to overcome the center-periphery structure by hosting international art events such as the Gwangju Biennial, founded in 1995. Korean American artists encountered both challenges to the development of their individual careers and artistic styles and chances to move beyond an emphasis on their collective identity.

As the only documented Korean American artists’ collective in New York City, SEORO has been discussed in both Korean and English scholarship, primarily in terms of its organization of *Across the Pacific* or the role of a specific artist within it.<sup>61</sup> SEORO’s activities, however, must be explored in a broader context. As this essay has shown, the growth of the Korean American arts community in New York from the late 1980s to the

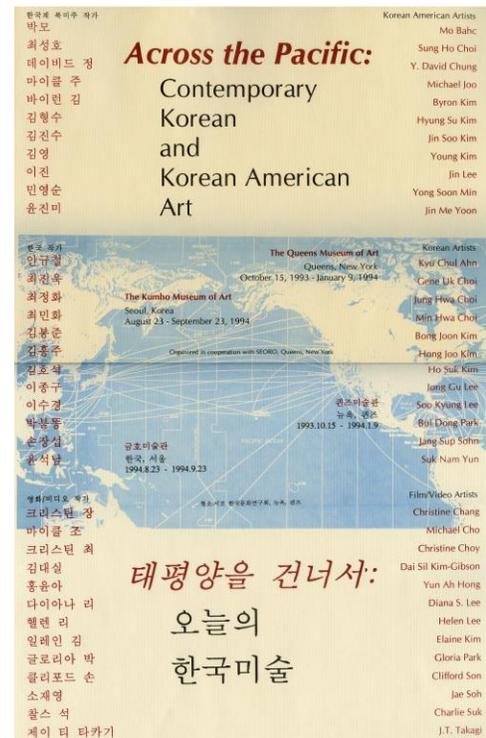


Fig. 9. Invitational poster for *Across the Pacific: Contemporary Korean and Korean American Art*, exhibition presented at the Queens Museum, New York, October 15, 1993–January 9, 1994; traveled to Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea, August 23–September 23, 1994. Image courtesy of the Queens Museum. © The Queens Museum

early 1990s operated beyond the framework of a single nation-state. A consideration of the differences between members of the Korean American arts communities, their diverse social and artistic interests, their interests in sociocultural conflicts, and their efforts to collaborate with other minority groups can bring a multifaceted perspective to our understanding of Korean American art of this time. Korean American artists in New York aimed to find their place in US society and culture through cross-cultural dialogue and solidarity within the larger arts communities. As Stuart Hall has observed, identities are not only a matter of being but of “becoming,” and they go through constant transformation based on their positions. Korean American artists’ continuous struggles and activities in New York City from the late 1980s to the early 1990s delineate the process of becoming “Korean American” and of constructing a new immigrant culture that intersected social, cultural, and discursive spaces, past and future, of Korea and America.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Six artists and curators participated in the roundtable, moderated by Dae-il Hong, a reporter for *Monthly Art*. It took place at the Alpine Gallery on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, which was run by a Korean American that displayed contemporary Korean art.
  - <sup>2</sup> Mo Bahc’s birthname was Cheol-ho Park. He used the name Yiso Bahc after his return to Korea from the United States. This paper refers to him by the name he used during his stay in the United States.
  - <sup>3</sup> “Hyönji chwadam: Nyuyok han'guk misul ūi shilsang ūl marhada” (Roundtable: A conversation on the reality of Korean art in New York), *Wolgan Misul* (February 1989): 114–22.
  - <sup>4</sup> The 1.5 generation concept describes Korean immigrants who were born in Korea and immigrated to the United States during their formative years. This concept has been discussed and used in Korean American studies to refer to sociocultural characteristics of the in-between generation of Korean Americans who have cultural and linguistic experience in both Korea and the United States. Mary Yu Danico, “Who Are the 1.5 Generation Korean Americans?” in *The 1.5 Generation: Becoming Korean American in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2003), 1–3.
  - <sup>5</sup> “Seoro” means “each other” in Korean.
  - <sup>6</sup> The exhibition was composed of three sections: Korean American art, South Korean art, and film and independent video works. The eleven artists in the first section included Yong Soon Min, Byron Kim, and Michael Joo; the twelve artists in the second section included Kyu-chul Ahn, Suk-nam Yun, Jung-hwa Choi, and Bong-joon Kim; and the third section comprised thirteen video works. *Across the Pacific* was intended to tour the United States, but this plan was canceled due to budgeting issues. The Korean government originally promised to provide 20 percent of the budget but withdrew this support due to the political nature of works in the South Korean art section, which were examples of Minjung art (people’s art). In 2014, a version of this exhibition, divided in two parts, traveled to the Kumho Museum of Art in Seoul. Mo Bahc, “Across the Pacific,” *Misul Segae* 113 (March 1993): 94–97.
  - <sup>7</sup> Sung Ho Choi, a founding member of SEORO, remembers that the Pratt Institute was a major center for Korean students in New York due to promotions from the Study Abroad Center. More than two hundred Korean students studied at Pratt between 1982 and 1984. Sung Ho Choi, “Interviews with Artists,” in *Faces and Facts: Contemporary Korean Art in New York*, exh. cat. (New York: Korean Cultural Service, 2009), 94.
  - <sup>8</sup> Hyun Sook Kim and Pyong Gap Min, “The Post-1965 Korean Immigrants: Their Characteristics and Settlement Patterns,” *Korea Journal of Population and Development* 21, no. 2 (December 1992): 122.
  - <sup>9</sup> William Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 1–2.
  - <sup>10</sup> Margo Machida, *Unsettled Visions: Contemporary Asian American Artists and the Social Imaginary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 3–5.

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- <sup>11</sup> Yong Soon Min is a 1.5-generation Korean American artist who was born in South Korea in 1953, the year the Korean War ended. Min immigrated to the United States in 1960 with her family. She grew up and was educated in California, taught art in Ohio, and was active in New York City from 1985 to 1993. She moved to California in 1993 and taught at the University of California, Irvine. After the New York State Council on the Arts launched the Alliance, Min worked for the organization during its developmental stage by helping to expand membership to include various Asian organizations for visual arts, dance, and music.
- <sup>12</sup> Min also developed the title of the exhibition. Yong Soon Min in discussion with the author, November 2020.
- <sup>13</sup> The essay written by Fred Ho (Houn), director of the Alliance, notably highlights the lack of opportunities that Asian American artists had to present their work in mainstream art galleries, theaters, and concert halls. He also critically discusses the “racist and distorted images of Asian Americans” often found in American movies and television programs such as *The Equalizer*, *MacGyver*, *Lady Blue*, and *The Hunter*. Fred Ho, “Roots to Reality Press Conference,” in *Roots to Reality: Asian Americans in Transition*, exh. cat. (New York: Alliance for Asian American Arts and Culture, 1985), 6.
- <sup>14</sup> Sung Ho Choi and Mo Bahc studied at the same university in South Korea and were already acquainted before moving to the United States. Choi was born in Korea in 1954 and completed his BFA at Hongik University, Seoul, in 1980. He moved to New York to pursue graduate work, escaping the politically unstable situation in Korea, received an MFA from Pratt Institute in 1984, and lives and works in the United States. Mo Bahc was born in Busan, Korea, in 1957, received his BFA from Hongik University in 1981, came to New York in 1982, and completed his MFA at Pratt Institute in 1985. After working as an artist, art critic, and director of the nonprofit art space Minor Injury in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, Bahc returned to Korea in 1995 and died of a heart attack in 2004.
- <sup>15</sup> After his career in Korea, Ku-lim Kim worked in Japan and moved to the United States in 1984. He returned to Korea in the early 2000s. Participants of the second exhibition were decided by the different selection committees for dance, media, music, theater/poetry, and visual arts/photography. Seven selection committee members, including Yong Soon Min and Margo Machida, worked for the visual arts section, and eleven artists were invited to the second exhibition. The second exhibition’s catalogue essay notes the rapid increase in recent immigration from the Philippines and Korea, which made for a strong presence in the second exhibition. “Introduction,” in *Roots to Reality II: Alternative Visions*, exh. cat. (New York: Alliance for Asian American Arts and Culture, 1986), 3.
- <sup>16</sup> Binari was created by the Young Korean American Service and Education Center in New York, founded in 1984 to support the education of younger Korean Americans and provide social services for Korean families and elders. “History,” MinKwon Center for Community Action, accessed November 21, 2020, <http://minkwon.org/who-we-are>. During the mid-1980s, Min became involved in Binari and the progressive Korean American political organization Young Koreans United (YKU), due to the fact that they provided an opportunity to study South Korean history, particularly the Gwangju Democratization Movement. Yong Soon Min in discussion with the author, November 2020.
- <sup>17</sup> The symposium poster proposes a set of insightful questions: “What is the position of Korean artists and the related apparatus? What is the perceived and apparent relationship between the Korean artist and the contemporary art world? How do the concerns and the realities of the Korean artists here {US} relate to those of their counterparts in Korea? What is the impact of Modernist and Post-Modernist critical theories on the Korean arts?” *The “Korean Art Today” symposium*, poster (New York: n.p., 1988).
- <sup>18</sup> Participants discussed artistic trends popular with Korean American artists, the gallery system in New York, the responsibility of Korean gallery owners to connect eastern and western cultures, the significance of producing works based on Korean cultural and spiritual backgrounds, the position of minority artists under pluralism, and the historical background of Korean modern and contemporary art. “Tongsŏ munhwa yŏn'gyŏr e hanmok tajyŏ” (Contribute to connect cultures of east and west: Successful end of the “Korean Art Today” symposium), *Segye Ilbo*, April 28, 1988.
- <sup>19</sup> Lisa Lowe, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 24–44.

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- <sup>20</sup> Tae Ho Lee, “Minjokchökh chiyökhchökh chaüshig üi hwagin” (Confirmation of national and local identity), *Wolgan Misul* (January 1989): 103–6.
- <sup>21</sup> Tae Ho Lee, Sung Ho Choi, Kiho Lee, and Mo Bahc, *Immigrant Show*, poster (New York: Alpine Gallery, 1988).
- <sup>22</sup> Hyuk Um, “Iminjön kwa chöngshin üi imin” (*Immigrant Show* and the spirit of immigration), *Gana Art* (January/February 1989): 45–46.
- <sup>23</sup> Select group exhibitions dedicated to Asian American art in the early 1990s include *Relocations and Revisions: The Japanese American Internment Reconsidered* (1992) at the Long Beach Museum of Art; *Across the Pacific: Contemporary Korean and Korean American Art* (1993) at the Queens Museum of Art; *Asia/America: Identities in Contemporary Asian American Art* (1994) at the Asia Society Galleries in New York; and *They Painted From Their Hearts: Pioneer Asian American Artists* (1994) at the Wing Luke Asian Museum in Seattle.
- <sup>24</sup> Margo Machida’s groundbreaking essay on Asians in contemporary American culture was published in the exhibition catalogue. Machida’s essay provides a comprehensive overview of the development of a sense of identity among Asian American artists. Margo Machida, “Seeing ‘Yellow’: Asians and the American Mirror,” in *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art; New Museum of Contemporary Art; Studio Museum of Harlem, 1990), 109–27.
- <sup>25</sup> The number of Korean nationals immigrating to the United States reached its peak in 1987, with nearly 36,000 individuals, and gradually decreased to approximately 16,000 in 1994. Pyong Gap Min, *Changes and Conflicts: Korean Immigrant Families in New York* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 11.
- <sup>26</sup> Douglas S. Massey, “The Residential Segregation of Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians, 1970–1990,” in *Immigration and Race: New Challenges for American Democracy*, ed. Gerald David Jaynes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 44–73; Ewa Morawska, “Immigrant-Black Dissensions in American Cities: An Argument for Multiple Explanations,” in *Problem of the Century: Racial Stratification in the United States*, eds. Elijah Anderson and Douglas S. Massey (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001), 55.
- <sup>27</sup> The Haitian-born woman claimed that three Korean employees accused her of shoplifting and beat her when she refused to open her bag while leaving the store. According to the Korean-born shopkeeper, the woman refused to pay for fruit, became agitated, and screamed at the cashier. The shopkeeper claimed the woman was not attacked.
- <sup>28</sup> The Red Apple boycott has been studied in the context of interracial tensions in American urban areas; African American and Korean American racial dynamics, including racial order, middlemen minorities, and power in US society; the political structure of New York City; and the growth of the new Black Power movement. Pyong Gap Min, *Caught in the Middle: Korean Communities in New York and Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Claire Jean Kim, “The Politics of Black-Korean Conflict: Black Power Protest and the Mobilization of Racial Communities in New York City,” in Jaynes, *Immigration and Race*, 74–97; Patrick D. Joyce, *No Fire Next Time: Black-Korean Conflicts and the Future of America’s Cities* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).
- <sup>29</sup> Mo Bahc, Ken Chu, Ik-Joong Kang, Hoyoon Choi, Bing Lee, Shu Jane Lee, Lorenzo Pace, and Accra Shepp were core members of the AARP who reached out to the larger arts communities. Ken Chu in discussion with the author, November 2020.
- <sup>30</sup> Ken Chu remembers that several Korean American artists invited him to serve as an exhibition coordinator. He does not recall how he was invited, but because he thought the exhibition idea was a good cause, he decided to join as a coordinator. Ken Chu in discussion with the author, November 2020.
- <sup>31</sup> The Center for Arts and Culture of Bedford Stuyvesant is an affiliate of a community-development agency called the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, which was established in 1967 with the support of Senator Jacob K. Javits and Senator Robert F. Kennedy. It remains a significant arts institution within diverse African American communities, showcasing artists from across the African diaspora. The Skylight Gallery’s schedule was already full for 1990, but the director agreed to push their program schedule for *The Mosaic of the City*. Ken Chu in discussion with the author, November 2020.

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- <sup>32</sup> The exhibition featured seventy-five artists, including approximately twenty-five Asian American artists, thirty of African descent, and some from Hispanic and Native American backgrounds. Eight participants were Korean American, including Sung Ho Choi, Mo Bahc, Tae Ho Lee, and Ik-Joong Kang.
- <sup>33</sup> Ken Chu in discussion with the author, November 2020.
- <sup>34</sup> Sung Ho Choi in discussion with the author, November 2020.
- <sup>35</sup> “Opinion: The Mosaic Thing,” *New York Times*, January 3, 1990.
- <sup>36</sup> Claire Jean Kim, *Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black-Korean Conflict in New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 201–7.
- <sup>37</sup> The AARP invited the mayor to the opening, and Sophia Kang, deputy director of the Mayor’s Office of Asian Affairs, participated in the opening and read a letter from the mayor. Also in attendance were the commissioner of the New York City Commission on Human Rights, a city councilwoman, the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation President and Board Chairperson, an assistant representing New York State Senator Velmanette Montgomery’s office, the director of the Folk Arts Program for the Brooklyn Arts Council (BACA), and the executive director of the Central Brooklyn Coordinating Council. After the exhibition opened, Robert Kennedy Jr. also visited. “Skylight Gallery Reception for Painting Exhibit,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 14, 1990; Ken Chu in discussion with the author, November 2020.
- <sup>38</sup> Sung Ho Choi, Mo Bahc, Hyuk Um, and Tae Ho Lee wrote several exhibition reviews and articles for Korean art magazines that addressed American art trends and theories, minority art and identity politics, and Korean American art. Articles by Hyuk Um and Mo Bahc also played a significant role in the development of postmodernism in Korea via their writings, which were filtered through their perspectives as minority artists and cultural activists. Their perspectives on postmodern theories are discussed thoroughly in Hyejin Mun’s *90 nyōndae han’guk misul kwa p’osūt’ūmodōnijūm: Tongshidae misul ūi kiwōn ūl ch’ajasō (Korean art of the 1990s and postmodernism: Finding the origin of contemporary art)* (Seoul: Hyōnshil Munhwa, 2015).
- <sup>39</sup> This exhibition was developed from the smaller show *Min Joong Art: New Movement of Political Art from Korea* (1987), held at A Space in Toronto and Minor Injury in New York City.
- <sup>40</sup> Ken Chu in discussion with the author, November 2020. The exhibition invitation card lists public funders and sponsors, including various Korean American organizations such as the Korean American Journalist Association in Northern California, Korean American Political Association in San Francisco, Korean American Women Artists & Writers Association, Korean Association of New York, Korean Businessmen Association, Inc., Korean Central Daily News, and Korean Community Center of the East Bay.
- <sup>41</sup> “Coalition of Artists Represent Mayor’s ‘Gorgeous Mosaic’ of Peace,” *New York Amsterdam News*, June 30, 1990.
- <sup>42</sup> Che Baraka, interview by Kyung Yoon, *McCreary Report*, Fox Television, July 1990.
- <sup>43</sup> A third exhibition—*Marginal Majority*—was also organized at Aron Davis Hall, a performing arts center in Harlem, but there are few records of it. Ken Chu, the exhibition coordinator, barely remembers it. Participation in the show was limited to around six artists, including Sung Ho Choi, Yong Soon Min, Carrie Yamaoka, and Rikrit Tiravanjia. Ken Chu in discussion with the author, November 2020. Min does not recall her participation in this exhibition; Yong Soon Min in discussion with the author, November 2020.
- <sup>44</sup> In addition to several participants from *The Mosaic of the City*, artists included Alison Saar, Fred Wilson, and Shirin Neshat.
- <sup>45</sup> The issue was related to a change in P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center’s leadership and program schedule. *Public Mirror* was the first show in the Clocktower Gallery’s community series called “commuNYCations.” Ken Chu continued to serve as an exhibition coordinator while the museum’s program coordinator supported the organization. Ken Chu in discussion with the author, November 2020.

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- <sup>46</sup> Lucy R. Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), 17.
- <sup>47</sup> Sung Ho Choi in discussion with the author, November 2020.
- <sup>48</sup> *SEORO Korean Cultural Network*, brochure (New York: n.p., 1990).
- <sup>49</sup> Two Korean American artists, Yong Soon Min and Byron Kim, were members of Godzilla. Ik-Joong Kang maintained close ties to Godzilla but never officially joined the group.
- <sup>50</sup> One example of Godzilla’s diverse activities was the writing of an open letter to David Ross, director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, highlighting the absence of Asian American artists in the 1991 Whitney Biennial. After this, Ross and Godzilla members met for discussions, resulting in the inclusion of Asian American artists in the 1993 exhibition and the appointment of Godzilla member Eugenie Tsai to a curatorial position. Alexandra Chang, *Envisioning Diaspora: Asian American Visual Arts Collectives from Godzilla, Godzookie to the Barnstormers* (Beijing: Timezone 8, 2008), 39–43.
- <sup>51</sup> Min is known to have worked as a kind of advisor to SEORO, but she also recognizes herself as a member. Yong Soon Min in discussion with the author, November 2020.
- <sup>52</sup> Ken Chu does not recall SEORO but does remember several Korean American artists who were actually members of SEORO. Additionally, he was also familiar with Bahc’s reputation even before meeting with him. Ken Chu in discussion with the author, November 2020. Sung Ho Choi remembers communicating with several Godzilla members, including Tomie Arai, Ken Chu, Arlan Huang, Bing Lee, Margo Machida, Eugenie Tsai, and Charles Yuen, through several arts events and exhibitions. Sung Ho Choi in discussion with the author, November 2020.
- <sup>53</sup> Sung Ho Choi in discussion with the author, November 2020.
- <sup>54</sup> *SEORO Bulletin (SEORO SEORO)* 3, no. 10/11 (Winter 1993/Spring 1994).
- <sup>55</sup> This paper was later included in an edited volume published after her death. Alice Yang, “Asian American Exhibitions Reconsidered,” in *Why Asia? Contemporary Asian and Asian American Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 94–98.
- <sup>56</sup> Sung Ho Choi in discussion with the author, November 2020.
- <sup>57</sup> *Godzilla: Asian American Art Network* 3, no.1 (Fall 1993). Yong Soon Min was on the editorial board for this newsletter.
- <sup>58</sup> In addition to the publication of *SEORO Bulletin*, SEORO members continued to host forums, lectures, movie screenings of independent films from Korea, and poetry readings.
- <sup>59</sup> Young-chul Lee, “Culture in the Periphery and Identity in Korean Art,” in *Across the Pacific: Contemporary Korean and Korean American Art*, exh. cat. (New York: The Queens Museum of Art, 1994), 10–12; Elaine H. Kim, “Interstitial Subjects: Asian American Visual Art as a Site for New Cultural Conversation,” in *Fresh Talk, Daring Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 33.
- <sup>60</sup> As the first large-scale exhibition for Korean American art and South Korean contemporary art in the United States, the exhibition has received attention in Korea. The process of organizing the exhibition, its concepts, and its curatorial perspective, especially Young-chul Lee’s perspective, are discussed thoroughly in Hey-Kyung Ki, “90 nyöndae han'guk misul ũi saeroun chwap'yo mosaek: T'aep'yöngnyang ũl könnösö chön kwa '98 toshi wa yöngsang chön ũl chungshimüro” (Paradigm shift in Korean art scene in 1990s: Focusing on two exhibitions), *Misulshakpo (Reviews on the Art History)* 41 (December 2013): 43–74.
- <sup>61</sup> *Coloring Time: An Exhibition from the Archive of Korean-American Artists, Part One (1955–1989)* and *Shades of Time: An Exhibition from the Archive of Korean-American Artists, Part Two (1989–2001)*, organized in 2013 and 2014 by the AHL Foundation in New York, were the first curatorial projects to historicize Korean American art through archival sources. At this exhibition, SEORO’s activities were contextualized in relation to the broader history of Korean American art since the 1950s. SEORO’s activities and *Across the Pacific* have also served as focal points for curatorial projects and academic work on Mo Bahc, represented by Bahc’s two retrospectives after his death: *Divine Comedy: A*

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*Retrospective of Bahc Yiso* (2006) at the Rodin Gallery in Seoul and curated by Young-chul Lee, and the most recent exhibition, *Bahc Yiso: Memos and Memories* (2018), organized by the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea.