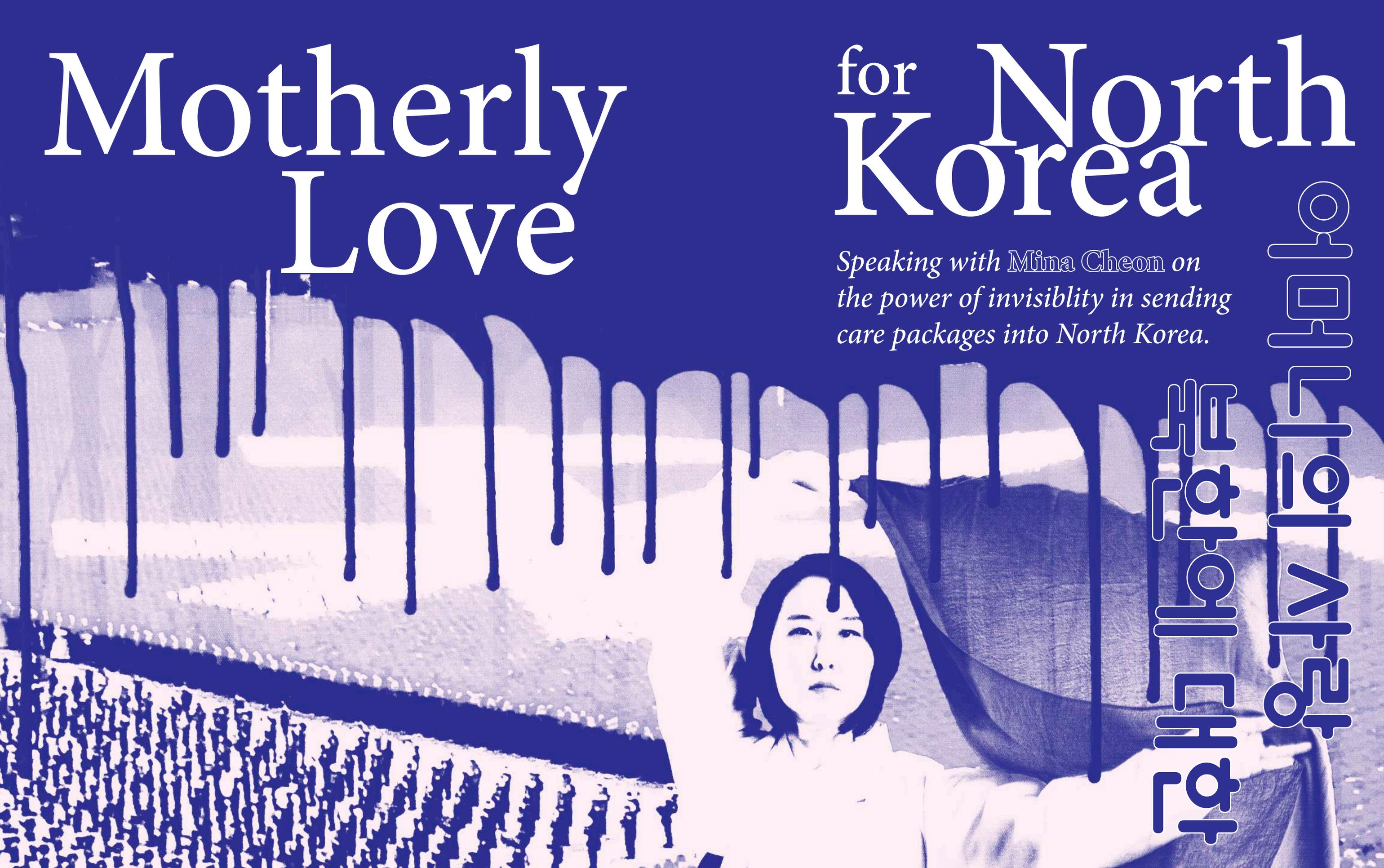


# Motherly Love

# for North Korea

*Speaking with Mina Cheon on  
the power of invisibility in sending  
care packages into North Korea.*

어머니의 사랑  
북한에 대한



**Kimi Hanauer:** In Mina Cheon’s solo exhibition *UMMA : MASS GAMES – Motherly Love North Korea* at the Ethan Cohen Gallery, curated by Nadim Samman, Cheon collaborates with North Korean defectors in sending care packages to family members and friends living in North Korea containing food, first aid, and USB drives with video art history lessons on global contemporary art, created by the artist. Her new body of work reveals itself in different forms to different audiences, the primary audience being those receiving her videos in North Korea as well as the dissidents in South Korea who share amongst themselves, and the secondary being the audience attending the gallery exhibition and the extended stage of the digital media world. At the gallery, Cheon complicates and expands a representation of North Korea by centering the figure of *Umma* (“mommy” in Korean), described by the artist as a shaman, superhero, and unidentified mother figure. As Cheon states, “[*Umma*] is an alternative power; something other than the failures of the current father figure power structures and leaders.” Responding specifically to a political context in both the subject matter and form, *Umma’s* care is directionless; it emerges from within and toward the people she cares for.

This exhibition is sectioned into three parts: heavens, earth, and the underground. In the heavens, we see the rise and descent of *Umma* from the legendary North Korean Baekdusan Mountain. On Earth, we see *Happyland Games*, a series of enlarged games referencing Cheon’s earlier work with *Choco·Pies*, that viewers are invited to play with. And in the underground, we find 10 Notel players running the videos of contemporary art history lessons that are currently being sent into North Korea. Throughout the show, we also see *Umma’s* dream paintings of abstraction and Korean unification, ideas and desires that only manifest within unconsciousness. Through this arrangement of digital photos, paintings, video, and sculptural works, we are invited to dwell in a space of potentiality, considering the artist’s concrete political gesture as well as the symbolic power inherent in the representation of the action. In this conversation, Mina and I unpack and consider the ideas this exhibition presents: the politics of visibility, collaboration, culturally specific content, representation, and motherly love.

## Part I: Who has the right to make art that is culturally specific?

In this work you’re dealing with pretty loaded and timely material surrounding the narrative and representation of North Korea, with aspects of your work taking place in the Western context of a New York gallery in Chelsea. A central question that has come up in regards to this is: Who has the right to make use of this kind of material? What are the qualifiers for being able to access and present the content you are presenting?

**Mina Cheon:** Well, if my position as a Korean who is devoted to addressing the trans-historic burden of what happens to a country—meaning the generational passing down of the trauma of the North and South division—doesn’t qualify me to be able to work with such material, I have to ask the same question about what are the makeups of total representation of a cultural scene. Do I have to be purely North Korean in order to make work about North Korea? Where do Asians fit in the struggle for racial equity within the United States? Does a South Korean in the United States have the right to advocate for North Koreans?

It becomes a question of what “allyship” means. For me, it’s a term that often feels too passive.

What is permissible as an ally? What is an alliance? What is the Korean-American Alliance? When there is alliance to support different groups, can we share the burden and the agency? And then it boils down to, well then, who has the right to make art about specific cultural and national issues?

How do you acknowledge power and privilege within partnership? What can we do to create a truly equal partnership when we aren’t com-

ing from equal circumstances? What are we doing to hold one another accountable?

And do you have to come from the exact same circumstance in order to be able to address a problem? What about anyone else who might be coming from a different or kindred history, it could easily be said that one is historicizing or objectifying a subject. If you go down that path, no one actually qualifies. One of the problems that I face as an Asian-American in Baltimore is invisibility in the discussion and conflicts between Black and white communities.

Yeah, I've thought about that too. I think it's important to remember that people who aren't white or Black have historically been used to (partly) produce white supremacy in the states. When the naturalization process was first formally created in 1790 with the Naturalization Act only "free white aliens" could naturalize. There were many Supreme Court trials throughout history where non-Western immigrants attempted to claim whiteness in order to attain citizenship rights.

Aren't we all a part of that discussion on structural racism today? Where is the responsibility for those who play the role of the uneducated but are open to learning?

Where is the accountability? I think the conversation of outside and inside is really important. It feels like the value of citizenship has been created again and again through processes of exclusion, of drawings lines of outside and inside, rather than that of building up a culture around what it means to be an accountable community member.

And media is a big part of that process. My humanizing of North Koreans is against the backdrop of Western media that is not doing this. Let's pay attention to how their lives matter. I am coming from a very earnest perspective and not one from exclusivity:

*My dedication to sharing art with North Koreans equals my dedication for humanizing North Koreans in the eyes of the world. For many Koreans, whether in the North or*

*the South, we are one: we dream of unification. With this project, we advocate that North Korean lives matter; and we plead, please do not destroy North Korea for the sake of global peace. (Artist Statement, Cheon, 2017)*

Part of this advocacy is played out in the actual action of sending art lessons over video made for specific North Korean audience members, and in the symbolism behind that action. Could you share with me more about the video content you and your collaborators sent over?

In sending the video footage over, I am saying that North Koreans have the right to access the type of information that most other people have access to in the world. The videos I created cover contemporary art from artists all over the world. Screened on Notel players at the gallery [Notel players being the commonly smuggled electronic device in North Korea for viewing foreign media], the art history lessons in video art form are the same ones being transmitted into North Korea, supported by anonymous NGOs [non-governmental organizations] led by North Korean defectors in South Korea and by these people who believe it their life's mission to help North Koreans liberate.

These defectors, the collaborators of this aspect of the work, believe that this kind of information has the power to educate North Koreans about media. And they are sending the work directly to people they know, such as friends and family members, [along] with rice and medical aid. These care packages include information, entertainment, and basic needs. The defectors' connections in North Korea are not part of the elite society in Pyongyang, they are not part of the government, they are sending it to those who are open to receiving them. It's not a blanket assumption that "North Korea" needs these contemporary art videos, it's actually a very unique and specific exchange.

I know you've been having a rigorous exchange with a former journalist for the New York Times, John P. MacKenzie, in regards to this work. Would be willing to share some of what has come up in your discussion?

Well, we started with him asking me, “Why is there so much animosity and hatred of Americans by North Koreans?” And MacKenzie noticed a discrepancy about my artwork being so subtle (and subversive), while the world news attention on North Korea right now is so big and a spectacle. I think he worried that my work would be misunderstood. I guess he was asking what kind of press attention I would like when right now everything is about the bombing [threat], while my work is a secretive and quiet action. This is a purposeful decision—it is related to motherly care, an approach that is in great contrast to Trump’s dehumanizing, macho sentiments of “I’m going to blow this place up.”

This work—how it is going into North Korea, the efforts to mobilize, people surrounding the project, and those receiving and disseminating the videos—it’s about invisible labor. And it’s layered in its audience: There are your collaborators (the defectors in South Korea sending packages to North Koreans), there are those family and friends who directly watch the videos, there is the New York art gallery audience, and there is a global digital audience that receives the project through other mediated accounts. And you’ve created the piece to uniquely impact and function a bit differently in each one of these contexts.

In my conversation with MacKenzie, he turned my attention to Nicholas Kristof, the *New York Times* journalist, who recently visited North Korea. I want to comment on a video documenting his visit, entitled “From North Korea, With Dread” by Adam B. Ellick, John Woo, and Jonah M. Kessel. It’s this crazy juxtaposition of Trump’s voice overlaying video cuts of North Koreans’ cheering and ecstatic responses. But then at the end you see that the North Koreans were just watching a dolphin’s performance. Probably some of the most bizarre video reporting I’ve seen. I question the message being sent by interlacing Trump with North Korean audiences in this intentionally strange way of visually defining and framing the relation between the United States and North Korea for the viewers in what seemed like a carefully constructed theatre of absurdity of North Koreans.

This video is mostly about going into Pyongyang, a very elite so-

ciety, and interviewing people and sharing just how much they believe that North Korea is going to win the war. The video repeats the most prescribed image of North Korea, including North Koreans in an American-style amusement park, with a later focus on a security man who was surveying the area behind the frame for every interviewee. Near the end of the video, Kristof’s voice says, “In North Korea, some things are seen and heard and others just mysteries.” The portrayal of North Korea’s high class felt cautiously omitting. The U.S.-N.K. relationship is really about the personality cults and followings of D.C.-Pyongyang. The people who were interviewed have the greatest stake and lineage in speaking the North Korean propaganda, and are not the sentiment of the entire country.

You can’t make a blanket statement of a nation of people. People are different even within the categories you might put them in; they still may not share the same ideas.

Yes, even if it’s North Korea! The people receiving these videos [that I made] are not the same people from Pyongyang. Those propelled to act on behalf of the governing regime take part because they have that much at stake for their own benefits. You see this in South Korea, for those who are elites, they abide to the power that provides benefits for them. In Albert Memmi’s book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, he explicitly references the Tunisians who work to keep the colonizing stratum in tact, with or without the French protectorates’ order, as they are called “petty tyrants.” They are part of what has to be the regime, but then there are the oppressed people who cannot even operate at that level.

*Such is the history of the pyramid of petty tyrants: each one, being socially oppressed by one more powerful than he, always finds a less powerful one on whom to lean, and becomes a tyrant in his turn. (Memmi, 1957)*

People in Pyongyang feed the conflict with strong belief in their system unknowingly, while others outside the system of power

are disillusioned, in part by having access to foreign media. The fact that there are North Korean defectors working on behalf of the North Korean people shows that there are those we aren't seeing in this engrossed propaganda image. The defectors are working to help the North Koreans get what they want and need—that includes food, aid, and media.

It brings me back to invisibility vs. visibility: What actions can and can't be visible? The action of you spreading these videos is not really something that can be visible if you want it to work, it has to be underground and executed in secrecy in order to succeed. So we can't talk about it in the same way, we can't expose the process or people. At the same time, just because this aspect of your work doesn't also carry images, faces, and names, doesn't mean that we should ignore that it is happening. This is the groundwork, the essence of the work you are representing in the gallery. It uses the artistic language, implicit process, and strategy, but may not get as loud or recognizable, like anti-American posters splattered in Pyongyang, and the reporting of them that we find in Western media sources.

That's the thing, I've had interviews about my project and several journalists ask for direct proof that people are watching my work in North Korea and about the impact worth reporting. But the thing is that, even when I do get responses, I'm not allowed to share it, or my project will fail since it is ongoing. My own name is out there, but the way my videos are going past the border and in the diverse routes into North Korea requires the secrecy and anonymity, so the effect and power is in its invisibility, or else the project stops. So part of this project has been learning about how news and journalism is centered on a pitch, it's about how you align it with what Trump said, and learning how media in its current form actually fails to capture this project.

There is something about not being sensational that is dependent on the success of the work. But that cannot work in tandem to the way news is generated today. Maybe that is the precise reason my conversations (for those who care to listen and discuss) end up being longer each time. The flow of this project works

UMMA : MASS GAMES – Motherly Love North Korea, installation view "Heavens" at Ethan Cohen Gallery.



Happy Land Games, installation view "Earth" at Ethan Cohen Gallery, Benday designs on Vinyl, D-Fab on MDF.



with a completely different criteria. So it is really tough to share. It's an art project and a social justice project that is very close to life. It has to work with the press because it is about politics, freedom of information, and democracy, but at the same time, it is not only misunderstood, but underserved by the press and the art world because somehow it's not artsy enough, not spectacle enough, and not evidential enough. And then there's another set of dilemmas on the conversation as to who gets to access and represent these materials.

I feel like it is representative of some of the failures of how things become visible under capitalism; visibility is directed by a “market” rather than critical thought, ethics, or social justice. It's more about “How do we get people to buy this?” rather than, “How do we do represent this story accurately?”

It makes it so my work has to be in the same rhetoric of these articles coming out about North Korea in order to be seen. And the critiques of my project are coming from a place that doesn't have room for nuance and differences.... You have to hit things with a loud bang or not at all.

And this project is so dependent on it not being that, on it being quiet and invisible. If this was loud and spectacle, it wouldn't work.

Exactly, that's just not this project. It's really the nature of the project that is not syncing up with mainstream visibility.... It's really rough with possible criticism. And, one would ask then, why showcase the work in a commercial gallery? Actually, the group of people involved in the project happens to be those dedicated to the cause of the project—that includes Ethan Cohen, the gallerist, who is an advocate of democracy, supporter of oppressed North Koreans by its own government as well as how they are pigeonholed by world media. The curator Nadim Samman has other global projects he is concerned with; I think he lectures about curating earth and the flood and has his hands full, but his interest in North Korea is one with strict alliance in supporting an art project produced with North Korean people in mind. The

collaboration is at a promising stage; the gallery just happens to be the supporting venue for where it is displayed.

## Part II: Korean Diaspora and Invisibility

Do you think that people are so hungry to talk about the subject of North Korea in this moment and they see your project as an opportunity to express vast opinions?

Yes, maybe that, but the response includes the cloud of generalizations that already exist surrounding North Korea. There is not enough work that has been done around these ideas and artistic projects for North Koreans, so there isn't the depth of reception that we hoped for. Recently however, I had a conversation with Jenna Gibson who is the host of *Korean Kontext*, a very credible and timely podcast reporting from the Korean Economic Institute in Washington, D.C. When we talked, I felt I was speaking to a Korean-American in the way she understood Korea so well. She is an exemplary American who studied a lot and lived in Korea and listens. I don't think she is not “Korean enough,” she is Korean enough to engage in topics that have everything to do with Korea in relation to the world. It was a very satisfying interview because she just cared about what I had to say and it wasn't about providing evidence to the results of my work, it was just about sharing my experience. And I really valued that kind of reporting, which I don't find to be common.

Do you feel like the way the conversation around North Korea is framed in the states has a relationship to showing power? It feels like a conflict that has been co-opted so it can be used as a symbol of the United States' strength.

North Korea has been North Korea for so long. I'm starting to really see *Iron Man* play out here! What is Trump doing in all these Asian countries? Is he selling weapons? Like, what is going on?

Yeah, and it's also not a new thing what is going on, we've known they've been developing weapons for decades.

And now overnight, the threat is real, ready to hit the states, so people here care.

What is the obsession really about? If it were really about the North Korean people, it would be taking a very different form, wouldn't it?

Well, war is expensive, but it generates its own self-serving economy. And, war is useful to enhance national power and new narratives of threat that naturally promote nationalism as a sentiment. Many presidencies declare their type of war and magnify new enemies, which leads to new defense strategies, military expansion, and foreign policy. The spirit of fearing the (often constructed) enemy has a track record of separating *us* from *them*. This type of rhetoric is played out again and again.

There are some scholars who really inspired this work, key writers and historians from Bruce Cumings, Victor Cha, Charles K. Armstrong, Hyun Jin Preston Moon; some of these pivotal male writers described North Korea and their predictions about Pyongyang Spring and the imminent internal implosion of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, so an artist interested in working on North Korean awareness and participating in an already existing media penetration into the hermit kingdom is natural to take place. Would only a North Korean artist then have the right to be making artwork this way? This is the true testament of alliance; my work is a collaboration of many Koreans and beyond, including the diasporic Koreans, immigrant Koreans, South Koreans, and North Koreans.

Then there is this other kind of study by Professor Seok-Hyang Kim, and Ewha Womans University North Korean Studies and Institute of Unification Studies. I found her study, which is a huge influence for this work, to be less known. She studies the words of North Korean defectors. While oral history is questioned in academia, I've found her documentation of oral narrations to say

so much more than a historical overview.

So that is another failure this work brings to light.

Her work in documenting and interpreting interviews by the defectors include North Koreans' consideration of what is the value of life amongst them. They have an ideological measurement system of where they fit. For example, according to Professor Seok-Hyang Kim's study, there are no homosexuals in North Korea. Except for, if they are in the army, on a cold winter night... but other than that, they do not exist. But when they do, their value of life is close to nothing. So this is how the defectors would talk about it, in a contradictory form of denial. It's very telling.

The research documents defectors' thoughts and their belief systems. These oral histories are rich in understanding the complex make up of closeness of North Koreans in light of how the more liberated and enlightened live outside in comparison. Again, I am not saying North Koreans are ignorant, in fact, I am saying that by listening (reading carefully and in between the lines), a person can learn about North Korean values. Another example to this value system is that there are disabled people whose value of life is considered nothing unless their family supports them. So there are just all these varied conditions of one's value of life. Professor Seok-Hyang Kim opened me up to this whole other side of North Korea that is discounted in Korea Studies. Her works also having invisible strength ferments the ground for my work to take place in very specific ways.

Everyone knows about the helium balloons that are sent over into North Korea for years, starting with Choco-Pies, over the border between the 38th parallel, and by way through China, with bribery for safe passage, all done in the network of the underground. But there is another route that is taking place, and that is the kind of stuff I can't talk about because it's happening right now. And if I did, you know it would be that news story, but a story that would put the project in jeopardy and many people involved on the line.

It often feels like in order for something to exist it has to become an image of itself. For example, it might need to be sensational, and often simplified, to be covered in a magazine, as you point out. Going back to your earlier comment bringing up Korean diaspora and immigration, the collaborative alliance that you initiate through this work can be seen as a way for you to add nuance to the often oversimplified image of the identities you occupy.

When you think about the migration of Koreans in general, it's very expensive. There are the Koreans who migrated to the West to live, the students who have left to study and to go back, and there's also the level of the invisible—you have the defectors who may be citizens of different countries.... I've seen very visible defectors using the same exact North Korean propaganda language but switched out in content with Anti-North Korean organizations, with their main goal to "get rid of" North Korea, I guess in alignment to Trump. You can also see some South Koreans feeling the same way with a conservative mindset. And you have the NGOs within South Korea, and some of them are part of the American dominant system, servicing the American conservative organizations. Then there are Korean-Americans who are oblivious and above it all, yet fail to integrate fully to the U.S. cultural mix. And there are the underground Koreans, who care for unification, and who care for North Korean lives and their freedom. It's broad in terms of today's Korean diaspora. Someone recently commented on how I am making work through a Western perspective, which seems moot, I don't even know what a Western perspective is today when the cultural flow between the East and West is obviously interchangeable.

## Part III: Motherly Love and Labor

Could you share with me a bit more about the *Umma* figure that is centered in the gallery exhibition?

Mass Games: Flagging Unification, Yves Klein Blue Dip painting, on archival digital print on canvas, 40 x 30 inches, 2017.



In this work I'm not essentializing what a mother needs to be, as the alter ego Kim Il Soon (my North Korean art persona) is presented in her full motherly virtuoso as *Umma*, the mother of unification. She is an alternative power, something other than the failures of the current father-figure power structures and leaders.

It reads as a very specific response to the context we are in right now.

At this very moment, *Umma* as an undefined identity is powerful and playful; she is her own type of superhero (a shaman). I think people misunderstand this too, that *Umma* equates the definition of motherhood, but it can be motherhood in terms of the way maternal work and power is dismissed and goes unnoticed in society. It is not necessarily talking about womanhood. It is perhaps just how femme power can make a difference in opposition to the common display of patriarchy, war, spaces, and words of conflict. And it has nothing to do with my mom or archetypes of the natural mother. *Umma* presents a pathway through the fractured reality and toward a creative force of global peace. And motherly love can be omnipresent and directionless.

Also, *Umma* vs. Mass Games (Arirang),<sup>1</sup> they are almost oppositional things. Mass Games is the rigid presentation of the ability to cohere and *Umma* is this indefinable terrain of the unknown, highlighting cultural liminality. Here, I am thinking of Victor Turner's postulations on the subversive power of symbolic liminality in ritual spaces in *The Forest of Symbols* (1967).

South Korea's modernization overnight is also attributed to mothers getting together and creating an internal banking system, called *getdon*. The idea that modernization occurred with mothers' *chima baram* (skirt wind) is important, since it is about passage, movement, strength, solidarity. So the concept of *Umma* should be understood as a catalyst, not a defining point nor ultimate solution.

In terms of the Mass Games, these games being a strong outward visual presentation to the world that is prompted by propaganda, it is asked in

the press statement of the show, "Are they [Mass Games] fun?" There was something about that question I was drawn to.

The curator Samman put that in, and I really questioned it. I think he was calling attention to possibilities of alternative games, like things that are done or can be played within the underground world. Where is the playing-for-the-sake-of-playing games that we don't see? Where is the human side of games in stadium performance? In the exhibition, the Happy Land Games installation are blown up and digitally fabricated to replicate the toys that were in Choco·Pie boxes. As Choco·Pies were one of the first desired smuggled goods from the South that made it big in North Korea, we imagine the toys being put together underground and in secret. In 2014 at the Ethan Cohen Gallery, with the exhibition *Choco·Pie Propaganda: From North Korea with Love*, I installed 10,000 Choco·Pies on the ground for the American audience to taste, so that the awareness was about learning the desire of North Koreans. This time, with the current show, the toys from the box are life-size so people can play with them at the gallery. These are alternative games, like arcades, or watching illegal video.

The presentation and the curatorial vision of the entire [new] show sections the gallery into heavens, earth, and the underground of North Korea. The heavens include this descent or rise of the *Umma* figure above the legendary North Korean Baekdusan Mountain, posed in a kind of crucifix as a superhero shaman. Behind her is the waterfall of the other most mystical Keumkangsan Mountain. And the image of Mass Games stadium cuts through the gallery space in serious contrast and architecturally perpendicular to the *Umma*. From the assumed wondrous nature of North Korea to the most mechanical man's presentation of Mass Games, the ground level includes the Happy Land Games, leading into stairs

<sup>1</sup> According to Wikipedia, the Grand Mass Gymnastics and Artistic Performance Arirang, also known as the Arirang Mass Games, or the Arirang Festival, is a mass gymnastics and artistic festival held in the Rungrado May Day Stadium in Pyongyang, North Korea. According to the Russian News Agency TASS, "Arirang is a gymnastics and artistic festival, known as mass games. The extravaganza unfolds an epic story of how the Arirang nation of Korea, a country of morning calm, in the Orient put an end to the history of distress and rose as a dignified nation with the song 'Arirang.'

of the underground world where the game playing at a different level, displaying the 10 Notel players that loop the videos of contemporary art history lessons being sent into North Korea.

In its form, this exhibition echoes the grand image that's pushed outward, but by thinking about the invisible role of motherhood. In that way the exhibition is a direct response to the landscape we find ourselves within, the multi-tiered experience of North Korea, that there is more than the media surface. And, while you are mimicking the form, you are changing, complicating, and expanding the content.

Also displayed throughout the show are *Umma's* dream paintings since she can only think about unification, revolution, and abstraction in her dreams. But the paintings are also piled up like game boards rather than strictly hanging on walls.

I feel like in the dream painting iteration of the project is a representation of the work you're doing in North Korea, and it's very different than the narrative we see portrayed in mainstream media on North Korea. You're representing a situation through a character who is very close to you but isn't you. Where did you come to the dreaming from?

Learning from dreams is one way to learn about a part of reality that we do not tap into for daily operation, certainly dreams do not hold influence on politics, perhaps in speeches. Can you imagine, however, if dream interpretation influenced policy-making? It would be considered cultish. But, a shaman's dream (or foresight) outlined solutions for crisis situations in other cultures. The influence of Korean shamanism is big here, but also the political pop element of my art is entering a new period of political surrealism. I was also reading Hyun Jin Preston Moon's *Korean Dream: A Vision for a Unified Korea* (2016) during the time I was tapping into the unconsciousness while collaborating with the notable psychoanalyst Dr. Laurence A. Rickels who e-couched Mina Cheon aka Kim Il Soon in e-therapy-sessions for the exhibition catalog, and unraveled the dream space, allowing me to recognize the path toward unification, that it is a matter of time.

Video Stills from Art History Lessons by Professor Kim, delivered to North Korea through USB Drives, Lesson topics include Art & Life; Art & Food; Art, Money & Power; Abstract Art & Dreams; Feminism, Are We Equal?; Art, Lives Matter & Social Justice; Remix & Appropriation Art; Art & Technology; Art & Silence; and Art & Environment.



The work spells out channels of uncertainty, but the way it is presented has to be very concrete for it to be understood. There is a huge tension between those two things.

There was a book I read about taking care of kids, it's called *The Price of Motherhood* by Ann Crittenden (2010). The premise of the book tells you that if there is an actual calculation of the amount of hours and executive organizational work that a mother does, that it parallels the salary and skills of a high-level CEO. What is the compensation of motherhood? Motherhood requires every skill but pays nothing.

I know Mierle Laderman Ukeles was also a reference for you with the performances you did before the show, where you spent time cleaning the gallery as a North Korean mother. Can you tell me about that?

As Ukeles did cleaning performances in museums, I cleaned the main floor of the gallery the evening before the start of my installation while the previous exhibition was up. I got on my knees to clean the floor with rags and water, like all good Korean mothers, and at the end offered the audience kimchi. The cleaning wards off the evil before the arrival of *Umma* and with the cleaning, everything starts anew. The performance "*Umma's Cleaning Lesson*" was also inspired by Nam June Paik, who performed as a shaman in his art practice and who was raised in Korea with shamanism rituals at the house. The stink of kimchi was essential to set the new Korean stage that is both North and South Korean. And we tried to do the performance in other galleries in New York as well, but they couldn't host us. It was a complete rejection of the *Umma*! Which kind of makes sense; she is, after all, North Korean.



*Umma Rises: Towards Global Peace*, Yves Klein Blue Dip North Korean dream painting, on archival digital print on canvas, 30 x 40 inches, 2017.