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History, Counter-Memory, and Commemoration: Enacting Remembrance for the Comfort Women of WWII

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HISTORY, COUNTER-MEMORY, AND COMMEMORATION: ENACTING REMEMBRANCE FOR THE COMFORT WOMEN OF WORLD WAR II

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HISTORY, COUNTER-MEMORY, AND COMMEMORATION: ENACTING REMEMBRANCE FOR THE COMFORT WOMEN OF WWII

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ART HISTORY

ABSTRACT

The case of the comfort women of East Asia is one of the largest human trafficking epidemics to have taken place in the twentieth century. It remains, however, an issue that is still widely unknown to the general public and has been obscured in both Eastern and Western historical texts up until the early 1990s. Scholars have determined that an estimated two hundred thousand young girls, now referred to as the comfort women, were forced into sexual servitude for the Japanese army during WWII. Of this number, seventy percent of the women did not survive the war. Currently, only forty are still alive today.

My thesis focuses on three different memorial projects, *Monument to Peace* (2012), Yong Soon Min's *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* (2007 – 2014), and Chang Jin Lee's *Comfort Women Wanted* (2008 – 2013), to consider how these artworks are tools of advocacy for both the individual comfort women and for a community in need of redress. Chapter one shows how the *Monument to Peace* and its replicas of a Korean comfort girl attempt to operate beyond the tensions of Japanese and Korean political agendas and have become symbolic of all comfort women. Further, they are a part of the comfort women's international activism and community building and are groundbreaking as the first public commemorations in the U.S. dedicated to sexual assault victims.

Chapter two shows how Min's three-part clothing series *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* highlights the continuing presence of comfort women who still suffer and mourn. I show how the artist's process of internalizing their trauma by wearing the t-shirts and taking on the role of a secondary witness creates an empathetic identity that becomes a performance strategy to visually enact their collective state of loss. Further, Min shares the responsibility of educating others about the comfort women issue with anyone who dares to also wear the t-shirts, transforming her personal project into a collective, public action. Finally, chapter three focuses on propaganda posters from Lee's multi-media project *Comfort Women Wanted*. Built upon the testimonies of individual comfort women, the posters expose the inconsistencies of the state's memory and rejects Japan's narrative of the history of the comfort women.

Although a wealth of historical, political, and sociological scholarship exists on the comfort women, little has been written about artistic responses to the subject. This thesis will address this gap in existing scholarship to argue that retrieving and validating the individual experiences of the comfort women vis-à-vis the visual language of memorial artworks not only encourages public awareness, but also provides spaces for individual and collective mourning. In doing so, the memorials reveal various strategies for how a public discourse can take place outside of the sanction of Japan's version of the history of the comfort women.

DEDICATION

For my grandmother, Soon Chong Paek, and my mother, Sonny Kim, whose strength, courage, and wisdom continue to inspire me every day. Also to the comfort women of WWII and all sexual assault victims from around the world: may you find a sense of peace somewhere within these pages.

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I must give special thanks to Yong Soon Min. As a longtime admirer of her work, I am honored to dedicate the second chapter of this thesis to her project *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW*. Min's gracious assistance and the information she shared with me via our email correspondences were tremendously insightful in guiding me through her work.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family, loved ones, and my two dogs, Gucci and Thor, for providing me with boundless amounts of love, happiness and support throughout my graduate career.

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INTRODUCTION

The case of the comfort women of East Asia is one of the largest human trafficking epidemics to have taken place in the early twentieth century. It remains, however, an issue that is widely unknown in the West, is still considered taboo in the East, and has been obscured from historical texts up until the early 1990s. The first official public break of silence was in 1988 at the International Conference on Women and Tourism in Cheju-do, South Korea, where Professor Yun Chung-Ok of Ewha Woman's University presented her research that revealed an estimated two hundred thousand young girls, known as comfort women, were enslaved and forced into sexual servitude for the Japanese army during WWII.[1] Scholars have determined that of this number, seventy percent of the women did not survive beyond the war. Today, only forty comfort women are still alive.[2]

My thesis focuses on three different memorial projects, Kim Un Seng's and Kim Suk Jeong's *Monument to Peace* (2012), Yong Soon Min's *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* (2007 – 2014), and Chang Jin Lee's *Comfort Women Wanted* (2008 – 2015), to consider how these artworks are tools of advocacy for both the individual comfort women and for a community in need of redress. Chapter one shows how the community-

[1] Alice Yun Chai, "Korean Feminist and Human Rights Politics: The Chongshindae / Jugunianfu Comfort Women Movement," in *Korean American Women: From Tradition to Modern Feminism*, edited by Young I. Song and Ailee Moon (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 238.

[2] Due to the old ages of the comfort women, this number changes frequently. When I began writing this thesis a year ago, there were forty-six comfort women that were still alive.

funded commemorations of the *Monument to Peace* and its replicas of a Korean comfort girl attempt to operate beyond the tensions of Japanese and Korean political agendas and have become symbolic of all comfort women. The public monuments enact remembrance for the women through their various sites of protest, representing not only the women's past experiences, but also are a part of their international activism and community building. Further, the *Monument to Peace*, its replicas, and other memorials dedicated to the comfort women are groundbreaking as the first public commemorations in the U.S. dedicated to sexual assault victims.

Chapter two shows how Min's three-part clothing series *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* highlights the continuing presence of comfort women who still suffer and mourn. My chapter shows how the artist's process of internalizing their trauma by wearing the t-shirts and taking on the role of a secondary witness creates an empathetic identity that becomes a performance strategy to visually enact their collective state of loss. Further, Min shares the responsibility of educating others about the comfort women issue with anyone who dares to also wear the t-shirts, transforming her personal project into a collective, public action. Finally, chapter three focuses on propaganda posters from Lee's multi-media project *Comfort Women Wanted*. Built upon the testimonies of individual comfort women, the posters expose the inconsistencies of Japan's denial and rejects its narrative of the history of the comfort women system.

Though a wealth of scholarship currently exists on the comfort women, little has been written about artistic responses to the subject. Currently, information on the artworks I discuss is limited and was gathered largely from news articles, artists' personal websites, and personal email correspondences with Yong Soon Min. I address the gap in

existing scholarship on comfort women commemorations to argue that retrieving and validating the individual experiences of the comfort women vis-à-vis the visual language of memorial artworks not only encourages public awareness, but also provides spaces for individual and collective mourning.

Japan's Comfort Women System

To better understand the controversies surrounding memorials dedicated to the comfort women, it is important to understand what the comfort system was, Japan's direct responsibility in creating it, and why the country has continued to deny any involvement. The comfort women were imprisoned in *Wianso / Iansho*, Japanese government-sanctioned military comfort stations, that privatized its military's rape practices and were established across Korea, the Philippines, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, French Indochina, and Burma as a protective measure to salvage the reputation of Japan from public scrutiny brought on by the Nanking Massacre and the rise in rapes by military men. [3] The Nanking Massacre, also referred to as the Rape of Nanking, was a month long catastrophic event in which Japan took military control over the Chinese city of Nanking beginning on December 13, 1937 that resulted in the killing of thousands of civilians and the mass rape of women at the hands of the Imperial army.[4]

[3] I interchange the countries of Korea and South Korea throughout my thesis depending on when the events I refer to took place. After WWII and because of the Korean War (1950-1953), Korea became two countries, North and South Korea. Because North Korea is currently a totalitarian government, information regarding the comfort women has yet to be released from the country. When referencing national identity, I use the term "Korean identity"

[4] Stephanie Lawson, "War Memories and Japan's Normalization as an International Actor: A Critical Analysis," *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 3 (2010): 409.

What is known through the few surviving documents from Japan during WWII is that the first comfort station was set up in Shanghai in 1932. Subsequent locations were also set up in occupied territories to minimize the increasing number of rape allegations being made against the Japanese military in occupied territories.[5] Referred to as "sanitary public lavatories," the comfort stations were also set up as a health regulation to quarantine sexual activity, as visitations to public brothels were prohibited. [6] Further, the comfort system was a response to the increased cases of venereal disease in Japan that posed the threat of taking soldiers away from combat.[7]

Other stations were also set up in Japan, but to preserve the honor of its nation-state, they only contained women from subordinate countries. It is estimated that because of Japan's colonial rule, eighty to ninety percent of the young girls and women were Korean. The most sought after were young girls between the ages of seventeen to twenty years old; some were as young as twelve, and thirty the oldest.[8] Due to economic disadvantages, most comfort women came from predominately illiterate, poor families.[9] Many middle-class families could arrange early marriages for their daughters while other young girls dropped out of school entirely to avoid such "recruitments."

Japanese military forces intentionally isolated the girls in comfort stations from any sense of freedom or mobility.[10] Believing that direct military operation of the comfort stations would incriminate its government, Japan handed down private

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[5] George L. Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*, 45.

[6] Alice Yun Chai, "Korean Feminist and Human Rights Politics: The Chongshindae / Jugunianfu Comfort Women Movement," In *Korean American Women: From Tradition to Modern Feminism*, edited by Young I. Song and Ailee Moon (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 248.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 239.

[10] Lawson, "War Memories and Japan's Normalization as an International Actor," 409.

operations of its comfort stations to local officials and civilians who were then awarded with military status and rank for their duties to "recruit" young girls. However, this process was still overseen by the state's government who increasingly took over more control of recruitment practices as the war intensified.[11]

Young girls were coerced by Japan in several ways: they were often promised labor work at war industry factories,[12] abducted from their homes, train stations, schools, or sold off by their impoverished, rural families to ease economic hardships.[13] Conditions of the comfort women recruitment system worsened in 1938 with the passing of the National General Mobilization Law. Under this ruling, Japan possessed total control over its civilian organizations, including labor unions, industry affairs, and all forms of media. This allowed for girls and young women to be captured in slave raid conditions.[14]

The comfort women were transported to comfort stations on battlefronts and mining towns on goods trains and were labeled in Japanese military records as "military supplies" with no further details given on their identities (Figure 1). [15] Treated as mere sexual commodities, the comfort women were forced to sexually service thirty to forty men a day and often beaten if they did not comply.[16] They also endured humiliating weekly medical exams that Japanese soldiers could view and were often raped by visiting doctors.[17] An estimated seventy-five to ninety percent of the women died either by the hand of Japanese soldiers, venereal disease, mental illness, poor health, or suicide

[11] Hicks, *The Comfort Women*, 47.
[12] Ibid., 52.
[13] Ibid., 53.
[14] Ibid., 51.
[15] Chai, "Korean Feminist and Human Rights Politics," 240.
[16] Hicks, *The Comfort Women*, 51.
[17] Ibid., 65.

committed during or immediately after their time in comfort stations.[18] For those who did survive, many did not return home out of fear that they would be chastised by their communities and/or bring shame and dishonor to their families.

Japan has yet to fully acknowledge its direct involvement in creating the comfort women system and stands by its claim that the comfort women were willing prostitutes who provided their service to Japanese soldiers.[19] The country bases its denial on the fact that the women's case is hard to prove based upon historical texts alone. This is because Japan destroyed most of its military records and all other documents that could be used to implicate the state in any war crime trials after their surrender to U.S. forces at the end of WWII.[20]

The Japanese government's denial in its responsibility for the comfort women system is in relation to its desire to be viewed as a powerful military force and stable nation in global politics.[21] A prominent issue debated in Japan is history textbooks because they solidify official histories and play an integral role in shaping national identity. In 1982, Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Miyazawa Kiichi announced that Japanese textbooks would be revised in favor of positive political relations with South Korea and China. By 2002, however, almost all details of the comfort women were erased from Japanese historical texts. This was carried out because of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o Tsukuru Kai). The organization's main objective is to revise the official record of the number of casualties

[18] Chai, "Korean Feminist and Human Rights Politics," 240.
[19] Ibid, 237.
[20] Hicks, *The Comfort Women*, 49.
[21] Lawson, "War Memories and Japan's Normalization as an International Actor," 422.

of the Nanking Massacre, abolish the history of the comfort women, and make its war crimes officially be referred to as "incidents" rather than "massacres."[22]

The first challenge to the state's denial was in 1992 when historian Yoshimi Yoshiaki conducted research at Japan's Defense Agency Library in Tokyo where he uncovered the first official documents on the history of the comfort women. The documentation he uncovered forced the Japanese government to admit, for the first time, any involvement in creating the comfort system. The acknowledgement, known as the Kōno Statement (1993), was made by then Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yōhei Kōno. It stated that Japan was "directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations."[23] The statement received backlash from prominent Japanese politicians including the current Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzō Abe, who at the time was a prominent lawmaker in the country's Liberal Democratic Party. Abe believes the Kōno Statement was a falsified statement and that, despite Yoshiaki's findings, there is no definitive historical evidence of Japan's direct responsibility in the comfort women case. Abe wants the Kōno's apology to be revoked and despite tensions between Japan and South Korea, Japan continues to refuse to release any surviving documents from WWII that could possibly shed light on its wartime history. [24]

It was during this time in the early 1990s that surviving comfort women began to come forward. Gradually, a global human rights movement took shape, with victims calling for legal reparations as well as a formal apology from the Japanese government, which has yet come. Most of the legal cases are based in South Korea, where two

[22] Ibid., 418.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

hundred and thirty-four victims have registered with the South Korean government as former comfort women.[25] Rather than focusing on the women themselves, the legal battle focuses primarily on Japan and South Korea's wartime grievances that have formed a broad, homogenous narrative of an unforgivable offence to South Korea's national sovereignty.

Historical Conflict between Japan and Korea

In relation to the global market, ties between Japan and South Korea have flourished since the later part of the twentieth century because of their mutual dependency on one another for economic imports. This is in stark contrast to their strained political relationship, as each sees the other as an "uneasy associate rather than true ally."[26] In 2005, a poll revealed that eighty-five percent of South Koreans felt Japan could not be trusted due to past grievances that are related to Korea's colonization under Japanese rule.[27] Until recently neither nation saw the other as a necessary political ally, but this has changed because of the recent threats made by North Korea of possible nuclear missile launches in the future.

The turmoil between Japan and South Korea dates to the sixteenth century when, in 1592, the Japanese forces destroyed most of Korea's royal palaces. Military tensions continued to fuel between the two countries and reached its peak in the 1860s when Japan began to infiltrate Korea's territory and because of its defeat in the 1905 Russo-Japanese

[25] Ibid., 238.

[26] Kevin J. Cooney and Alex Scarbrough, "Japan and South Korea: Can These Two Nations Work Together?" *Asian Affairs* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 179.

[27] Ibid., 174.

war, Korea was forced to become a Japanese colony.[28] During this time Japan asserted its domination on all fronts and attempted to demolish Korea's heritage. Known as "Japanization," this period was marked by the banning of Korean literature, language, and the arts to enforce a cultural policy that emphasized the superiority of Japan.[29]

Perhaps one of the most prominent tensions between Japan and South Korea regarding WWII is the Yasukuni Shrine, located in Chiyoda, Japan. Highly controversial, it commemorates and lists all who died in the service of Japanese Imperial forces, including war criminals, and is viewed by South Korea as "a symbol of unrepentant Japanese militarism in Asia."[30] The conflict surrounding Yasukuni is linked to the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, also known as the Tokyo Trials (1946), that resulted in the convictions of twenty-five Japanese high ranking military personnel and politicians who were found guilty of WWII war crimes. The ruling narrowed Japan's wartime responsibility to a few individuals rather than to its entire military. By the end of the 1950s, however, all of the men/ who were found guilty were pardoned and given parole.[31] Emperor Hirohito, the authoritative force behind Japan's WWII war activities, was also exonerated in the Tokyo Trials and is commemorated and enshrined in Yasukuni along with seventeen other war criminals tried in the case.[32]

The exoneration of Japanese war criminals in the Tokyo Trials and their official commemorations in Yasukuni serve as the basis for Japan's denial of the comfort women

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 175.
[30] Cooney and Scarbrough, "Japan and South Korea,": 183.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Lawson, "War Memories and Japan's Normalization as an International Actor," *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 3 (2010): 411.

history.[33] The shrine's website has garnered global controversy for its promotion of Japanese nationalism and frequent visits made by its government officials have fueled further tensions between Japan and South Korea. Former Japanese Prime Minister Junichirō Koizumi made annual visits throughout his tenure that were met with disapproval from both South Korea and some Japanese citizens. More recently, Prime Minister Abe's visit to Yasukuni in 2013[34] and his wife's appearance in December 2015 have caused further strains between Japan and South Korea.[35] The visits represent symbolic, political acts of commemoration that are direct statements of Japan's defiance and its refusal to fully acknowledge responsibility for creating the comfort women system.

A Well-Known History in East Asia

The existence of the comfort women has always been known in East Asia but what has changed over time is the way that it is perceived. The direct outcome of colonial power, gender, and class discrimination, the comfort system has historically been silenced by both Japan and South Korea. The history of the comfort women was not seen as a crime in South Korea until it resurfaced and was brought to light by Professor Yun Chung-Ok's research that encouraged surviving victims to come forward and share their stories. [36]

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Rupert Wingfield-Hayes. "Japan PM Shinzo Abe Visits Yasukuni WW2 Shrine," *BBC News*, December 26, 2013. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-25517205

[35] Afp Jiji, "Abe's Wife Visits Yasukuni Shrine," *The Japan Times*, December 29, 2015. http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/12/29/national/politics-diplomacy/abes-wife-visits-war-linked-yasukuni-shrine/#.V6f1BrgrKUl

[36] Ueno Chizuko and Jordan Sand, "The Politics of Memory: Nation, Individual and Self," *History and Memory* 11, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1999): 147.

A major reason why the comfort woman narrative was not acknowledged until this time is due in large part to South Korea's strict authoritative government (1961 – 1988) that created a repressed political environment throughout the country. Further, its postwar participation in the sex trade industry with U.S. armed forces, and dependency upon Japan for economic and technical assistance after the Korean War contributed to the delay in addressing the comfort women issue.[37] This changed, however, in 1988 when Roh Tae-woo was ushered in as South Korea's new democratic leader. The significant change in leadership allowed for women's and human right's issues within the country to finally emerge.[38]

The current battle for the feminist movement in South Korea involves questioning traditional Confucian ideals that are embedded within its culture. The country's strongly segregated society in terms of gender[39] and South Korea's ideals of nationalism portray the comfort women as fragile and broken, and as living testaments of "shameful reminders of an immoral past."[40] The women themselves were initially encouraged to remain silent but now that the case has received international attention, their testimonies are viewed by the country as a measure to protect the state's national pride. In her essay, "National Bodies: The Comfort Women Discourse and Its Controversies in South Korea," historian Aniko Varga addresses this problematic issue:

> In this interpretation, following the pattern of the discourse on military prostitution, the shift between nation/ethnicity and gender turns individual

[37] Chai, "Korean Feminist and Human Rights Politics," 243.

[38] Aniko Varga, "National Bodies: The Comfort Women Discourse and Its Controversies in South Korea," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 9, no. 2 (2009): 289.

[39] Heisook Kim, "Feminist Philosophy in Korea: Subjectivity of Korean Women," *Signs* 34, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 248.

[40] Varga, "National Bodies," 294.

sufferings into collective victimization, thus homogenizing the nation into a single entity.[41]

The case of the comfort women in South Korea, where notions of feminism are intertwined with nationalism, has become about the country's national suffering and collective identity which has ultimately hindered the comfort women movement. The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery of Japan, commonly referred to as the Korean Council, is the umbrella organization responsible for South Korea's local, national, and international advocacy for the comfort women. Often accused of Korean nationalism, the Korean Council caused controversy in 1995 when it refused funds for the comfort women offered by the Asian Peace and Friendship Fund for Women (Asian Women's Fund).[42] This was because the Korean Council believed that this private sector organization was established by Japan so it could avoid an official apology and admittance of its direct responsibility for the comfort women system. Seven Korean comfort women did accept funding from the Asian Women's Fund and were criticized and publicly condemned by the Korean Council, which has continued to ban the women from receiving any compensation from future negotiation efforts with Japan.[43] Causing further problems, the Korean Council made demands in 1988 to the South Korean government that they must supply funds to the comfort women, but only to those who were from Korea.[44]

This is problematic for a few reasons. The Korean Council actively rejects welfare projects for the comfort women if they do not comply with the organization's terms. By

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Pyong Gap Min, "Comfort Women: The Intersection of Colonial Power, Gender, and Class," *Gender and Society* 17, no. 5 (December 2003): 946.

[43] Varga, "National Bodies," 297.

[44] Ibid.

not fully recognizing that the comfort women's individual needs should be the primary concern, it takes away the victim's choice to accept funds. Further, as the official organization for comfort women issues, the Korean Council excludes comfort women from other countries and has made the South Korean comfort women narrative the primary issue in its demand for recognition from the Japanese government.

Significance of Topic and Existing Scholarship

It is important to move beyond this binary analysis of "victim-victimizer' between Japan and South Korea to properly engage the context of how Japan's controversial wartime past has been presented and controlled by its government in the case of the comfort women. What has been lost in the dispute between South Korea and Japan is the voice of the women themselves. Regardless of their country of origin, all comfort women were victims of sexual slavery under the colonial rule of Japan and therefore, deserve recognition from the Japanese government. Although many survivors were brave enough to come forward, they still face the same stigmas of the past in their current East Asian communities. It is for this reason that the comfort women deserve recognition. Further, memorials dedicated to the women, along with their testimonies and written text, serve as counter-memory to Japan's version of the past and therefore, play an essential role in solidifying their history.

The three memorials discussed in this thesis, *Monument to Peace*, *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW*, and *Comfort Women Wanted*, are important because they are a part of the process of legitimizing the women's claims. As visible and official memorials, they pose a threat to Japan's sovereignty. Although differentiating in form, these

memorials create a national identity rooted in the feminine. *Monument to Peace*'s design of a moderately sized, innocuous Korean comfort girl in traditional clothing follows East Asian ideals of women's roles in society: seen and not heard. The statue is properly clothed; however, her presence alone is unsettling to Japan. In *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW*, Min places her own female body at the core of her project, taking on the role of a secondary witness to the comfort women's trauma while exploring her own national identity as a Korean and Korean American. It is also a commentary on mourning's gendered division of labor in which women are positioned as grievers, referenced by the everyday scene of hung laundry which is allotted to being "women's work." In *Comfort Women Wanted*, Lee's photographs of the comfort women challenges Japan's version of history through portraying the "then and now" of the women's lives. Choosing to use the comfort women's personal photographs given to Lee of when they were young instead of "official" images taken by the U.S. Army at the end of WWII, the women take on a direct role in creating their own image-making process. The testimonies they share with Lee, along with their willingness to come forward and the permission they give to the artist to use their images for the project, creates a form of resistance to Japan's denial.

My research on the comfort women relied heavily on texts that were written from historical, political, sociological, and feminist perspectives. George Hicks' book, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (1995), is cited in almost all scholarship on the comfort women, and thus, was an important source in conducting this thesis. Hicks based his book on official comfort women documents discovered by Yoshimi Yoshiaki in Japan's Defense Agency Library in Tokyo. He also traces the history of feminist issues raised by Japanese and Korean

scholars on the comfort women and explores how Japan's ideologies on race and gender played a key role in the comfort women system. Further, the book is the first published text that includes comfort women testimonies.

Historical background was also gathered from Yoshiaki's 2002 publication, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II* (2000). Yoshiaki is a founding member of the Center of Research for the Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility and is noted as the first to discover historical documents on the comfort women. He includes quotes of Japanese soldiers given during WWII on the comfort system and states that the most troubling aspect of the women's history is that they were treated like sexual objects and ripped of any human dignity.[45] Yoshiaki questions how much attitudes have changed about sexual abuse and sex trafficking since WWII, and in doing so, draws attention to how the comfort women case is telling of a larger, systemic problem.

In her essay, "Korean Feminist and Human Rights Politics: The Chongshindae / Jugunianfu (Comfort Women) Movement (1998)," Alice Yun Chai offers explanation for differentiating between the terms *Chongshindae,* Korean for "volunteer corps," and *Jugunianfu*, Japan's term for the comfort women, which translates to "military prostitutes."[46] She stresses the importance in doing so, as most Korean girls were told that they would be working in factories, hospitals, manufacturing plants, and service jobs for the Japanese army. Chai's article provides substantial details on the comfort women

[45] Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II* (New York: Columbia University, 2000): 199.

[46] Chai, "Korean Feminist and Human Rights Politics," 238.

system, statistics on the women, as well as a thorough timeline of the emergence of the comfort women movement in the 1990s.

Chunghee Sarah Soh's book, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan* (2008), was also a valuable resource that provided further insight on the comfort women history. Accredited for shedding new light on the comfort women issue, Soh disputes the simplistic view that Japan was solely responsible for war crimes committed against the comfort women. Instead, she argues both the Japanese government and Korea's patriarchal ideals, along with the Korean Council's pro-Korean nationalism, are to blame for the silence surrounding the comfort women issue. Soh provides an innovative approach in discussing comfort women memorials in that, for their commemorations to be used as tools of advocacy, they must move beyond the binary of victim-victimizer to truly be effective.

I must also mention the major art historical sources that provided me with an indispensable amount of information that helped guide my analysis through each chapter. Because there is no existing scholarship on the memorials that I discuss and to make a convincing case for their significance, it was essential for me to draw upon and make comparisons with broader currents in contemporary art. In chapter one of my thesis, Kirk Savage's *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (2009) and Erika Doss' *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (2010), were of significant aid in my analysis of the *Monument to Peace* in relation to the nature of public commemorations.

Jill Bennett's essay, "Art, Affect, and the Bad Death: Strategies for Communicating the Sense Memory of Loss" (2002), provided insight in chapter two on

Min's personal approach to her project *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* from the position of a secondary witness to the comfort women's trauma. Further, I compare Min's highly personal oeuvre to other Asian and Asian American contemporary artists, such as On Kawara and Do-Ho Suh, who also explore issues of national identity and cultural displacement. Inspiration was drawn from Marianne Hirsch's essay, "Resisting Images: Rereading Adolescence" (1993), in my analysis in chapter three to explain how the comfort women's participation in their own memorialization in Lee's *Comfort Women Wanted* creates a space that allows them to heal and establishes a counter-memory to Japan's denial.

The case of the comfort women connects many of the same issues surrounding the current global epidemic of sexual assault and human trafficking, and it is my hope that through the memorialization of the comfort women, it encourages other victims of sexual assault to come forward and speak their truth. Further, I anticipate that this thesis will be a valuable contribution to the current body of literature on the comfort women and the emergent scholarship on Asian American art and Asian American women artists.

CHAPTER 1

MONUMENT TO PEACE

Prompted by North Korea's recent threats of possible nuclear attacks in the near future, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and South Korean President Park Geun-hye[1] held their first meeting in November 2015 in hopes of creating a joint cooperative alliance in regards to international security. One outcome of this meeting was an agreement to settle the comfort women dispute "finally and irreversibly," discontinuing any discussion about the comfort women issue in international affairs. [2] Details of the negotiation include the creation of the Korean Foundation which will distribute nine and a half million dollars of Japanese government funds among the forty-two surviving Korean comfort women and the families of those women who have since passed away, and an official apology from Abe to the women. [3] In exchange, the South Korean government agreed to make great efforts to resolve the placement controversy of the *Monument to Peace*, a statue of a comfort girl that sits in front of Japan's embassy in Seoul, that has become an object of remembrance for the comfort women and an

[1] Geun-hye was impeached on December 9, 2016 due to an unrelated political scandal.

[2] "South Korea Expert Hopes Comfort Women Pact Gets Wrapped Up by End of Park's Term," *The Japan Times*, June 26, 2016. http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/06/26/national/politics-diplomacy/south-korea-expert-hopes-comfort-women-pact-gets-wrapped-up-by-end-of-parks-term/

[3] Due to the elderly ages and health of the surviving comfort women, the statistic on those who are still alive changes frequently. Currently there are only forty comfort women alive today. ("South Korea Expert Hopes Comfort Women Pact Gets Wrapped Up by End of Park's Term," http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/06/26/national/politics-diplomacy/south-korea-expert-hopes-comfort-women-pact-gets-wrapped-up-by-end-of-parks-term/)

everyday reminder of the Imperial army's wartime responsibility for creating the comfort women system (Figure 2).

Known in South Korea as *Pyeonghwaui sonyeosang*, the *Monument to Peace* is a bronze statue that depicts a young, expressionless female in traditional Korean formal dress, known as a *hanbok*, seated next to an empty chair, a symbol of the comfort women who have died. Viewers are encouraged to sit in the empty chair and, metaphorically, place themselves in the same position as the women who are being remembered. The granite base beneath the statue's figure contains an incised fragmented shadow of an elderly woman meant to signify the surviving comfort women. According to its creators, Korean artists Kim Un Seng and Kim Suk Jeong, the white butterfly within the shadow illustrates a reincarnation and inner peace of the spirit. Created to commemorate the comfort women's 1000th weekly protest of the Japanese government in front of its embassy in Seoul, the statue of the young female also contains much symbolism: her clenched fists represent anger, her unevenly cut hair represents the abrupt break from the women's homeland, and her bare feet that strain to touch the ground express discomfort. [4] A bird resting on her left shoulder signifies hope and freedom. The memorial's inscription, written in Korean, English, and Chinese, is etched into the statue's granite base and reads (Figure 3):

> December 12, 2011 marks the 1000th Wednesday Demonstration for the solution of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery issue after its first rally on January 8, 1992 in front of the Japanese Embassy. This peace monument stands to commemorate the spirit and the history of the Wednesday demonstration.

[4] Jeyup S. Kwaak,"California City Unveils Comfort Women Statue," August 2, 2013. *The Wall Street Journal*, http://blogs.wsj.com/korearealtime/2013/08/02/california-city-unveils-comfort-women-statue/

Intended to represent all comfort women, the *hanbok* that the figure wears, as well as the Korean Council's[5] exclusive control over the statue's funding and affairs, proposes a challenge in separating the *Monument to Peace* from its strong Korean patriotic undertones. Additionally, its location in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul is historically significant as the site of Japan's former capitol building and Korea's colonized past; its placement reflects the longstanding disagreements over the location of the statue's memorialization[6] and has become the primary pawn in the ongoing political power struggle between South Korea and Japan.

Though under five feet in height and presented as a proper and modestly dressed Korean girl, the innocuous figure's existence and placement in front of Japan's embassy poses a threat to the country's denial of and attempts at erasing the history of the comfort women. The Japanese government ultimately wants the *Monument to Peace* removed and insists that the statue works against their country's national pride. Talks of the agreement between Japan and South Korea, however, has angered many Korean comfort women and their supporters who are upset by their government's failure to consult the survivors about the terms of the deal.[7]. Ultimately, South Korea's government has the authority to decide the fate of the statue, but its consideration of possible removal has agitated the situation.[8] If South Korea follows through with Japan's terms, it would effectively erase

[5] Officially referred to as the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan

[6] Kevin J. Cooney and Alex Scarbrough, "Japan and South Korea: Can These Two Nations Work Together?" *Asian Affairs* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 175.

[7] Currently, twelve South Korean comfort women are in the process of suing the South Korean government over the deal made with Japan. ("Seoul to Face Lawsuit Over Comfort Women Agreement," *ABC Australia*, August 30, 2016. http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-30/seoul-to-face-lawsuit-over-comfort-women-agreement/7799842)

[8] This past July, a group of student protestors made national headlines when they were arrested during a news conference for disrupting the opening of the Korean Foundation. (Alastair Gale, "Japan,

the comfort women from history, and what has been lost in the pact between the countries is the voice of the actual comfort women.

Consequently, this chapter addresses how the *Monument to Peace* raises issues about who has the authority to control and shape public landscapes, who determines what is memorialized, and what we understand that landscape to mean. In doing so, it examines how the memorial enacts remembrance for the comfort women through its site of protest, not only representing the women's past experiences, but also how the establishment of its replicas throughout the U.S. are a part of the women's international activism and community building. The rate at which the replicas continue to proliferate throughout the world attempt to operate outside of South Korea's and Japan's control. They not only create places of memory for the comfort women that challenge the public to acknowledge the women's case but also encourage viewers to participate in an ongoing dialogue about the nature of public memorials.

The Contested Landscape and Issues of National Belonging

Currently, twenty-nine of the forty-two surviving comfort women in South Korea have accepted the terms of Japan's and South Korea's comfort women deal while thirteen of the women have rejected the offer and refuse to meet with South Korean government officials. The women who refuse the proposal contest Japan's denial of legal responsibility to the comfort women and the conflict is further impacted by feelings of general mistrust toward General Abe's intentions. A member of the Japanese nationalist party, Abe is an outspoken advocate for the complete erasure of the comfort women

South Korea Build Ties After Comfort Women Deal," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 28, 2016. http://www.wsj.com/articles/japan-south-korea-build-ties-after-comfort-women-deal-1469697638)

narrative from history textbooks.[9] Abe's stance on the issue reflects the deep conflicts within Japan about its wartime past and how to properly establish peace with South Korea. Japan's denial of the comfort women stems from its desire to be viewed as a stable and powerful nation, with an assertive military.[10] It believes that the *Monument to Peace* stains its image and thus destabilizes its national sovereignty. The Japanese government's refusal to fully acknowledge its role in the establishment of the comfort women system has generated tensions both within its national borders and in international affairs.

The *Monument to Peace* draws its iconography from commemorative plaques in the U.S., namely, the comfort women monuments in Palisades Park, New Jersey (2010; Figure 4), and the Veterans Memorial Park in Westbury, New York (2012 – 2014; Figure 5 and 6) that were inspired by the 2007 U.S. House of Representatives' Resolution 121, a non-binding resolution that called upon the Japanese government to make official apologies and reparations to the comfort women issue. However, *Monument to Peace* has garnered the most international attention because it is the Korean Council's official memorial to the comfort women. Created by Korean artists Kim Un Seng and Kim Suk Jeong, *Monument to Peace* was funded by an estimated thirty-two thousand dollars in public donations through the Korean Council and was ceremoniously unveiled at the

[9] Japan has set up the funds to be distributed to the comfort women in installments due to "concerns that a lump sum payment may appear too much like the payment of reparations." (Elizabeth Shim, "South Korea, Japan to Distribute Comfort Women Funds in Installments," *United Press International*, August 25, 2016. http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2016/08/25/South-Korea-Japan-to-distribute-comfort-women-funds-in-installments/1061472150351/)

[10] Stephanie Lawson, "War Memories and Japan's Normalization as an International Actor: A Critical Analysis," *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 3 (2010): 422.

women's 1,000th Wednesday protest in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul in 2011.[11] The monument is the physical embodiment of a comfort woman on Japanese soil and therefore, is a strikingly more visible threat to Japan's denial of its war crime history.

The monument has been replicated throughout South Korea and the United States in Glendale, California (2013; Figure 7), Southfield, Michigan (2014; Figure 8), and another that is in the process of being constructed in San Francisco. Currently, twenty more statues are being planned in various communities throughout the world.[12] Due to a lack of available information on the *Monument to Peace*'s replicas in South Korea, I focus primarily on the replicas erected in the United States. Funded solely through Korean American public funding in collaboration with the Korean Council, the replicas have been met with protest by Japanese Americans and Japanese diplomats abroad.

The first U.S. *Monument to Peace* replica in Glendale, California made international headlines after its erection in 2013 when three hundred Japanese legislators sent a petition to the city demanding its removal. Tensions intensified when a school in Higashiosaka, Japan protested the monument by discontinuing their exchange programs with Glendale, citing human rights violations and the encouragement of hate towards the Japanese community as probable cause.[13] Additionally, Japanese American residents filed joint lawsuits against the city, asserting that the statue "infringed upon the federal

[11] "Statue of Comfort Woman Erected Outside Japanese Embassy in Seoul," *The Japan Times*, December 15, 2011. http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2011/12/15/national/statue-of-comfort-woman-erected-outside-japanese-embassy-in-seoul/#.VPzq3PnF98E

[12] "More and More Comfort Women Statues Springing Up, In and Out of South Korea," *The Hankyoreh*, August 4, 2016. http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/755207.html

[13] Kirk Spitzer, "Japan's Lawmakers Launch Campaign Against Comfort Women Memorials," *Time Magazine*, February 25, 2015. http://world.time.com/2014/02/25/japan-comfort-women-memorials/

government's exclusive power to conduct foreign affairs."[14] Ultimately, the case was dismissed by a federal judge for its failure to prove that the memorial was unconstitutional.

Controversies over Glendale's replica caused international debate and, contrary to Japan's attempts to obscure the comfort women case, the attention brought on by its commemoration inspired both Korean American and Korean groups to begin planning monuments dedicated to the women in their own communities.[15] Like Glendale, these communities also faced similar conflicts. When the city of Southfield, Michigan unveiled its replica, it was opposed by the local branches of the Japanese auto parts manufacturer Denso Corporation and Consulate General who insisted that the memorial would cause strife among local Japanese American and Korean American communities.[16] Despite its controversy, the statue's unveiling was attended by an estimated one hundred fifty Southfield residents, including Korean War veterans and other prominent figures from the local chapter of the Korean American Association.[17]

The commemorations of the *Monument to Peace* replicas, regardless of region, have incited similar conflicts that parallel the longstanding disagreement between Japan and South Korea on wartime memory. Similarly, the conflicts they cause in the U.S. reflect the disagreements of the Japanese American and Korean American communities

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[14] Amy Lieu, "Wounds of War for Japan, Korea Re-Open with Comfort Women Statue," *NBC News*, June 30, 2014. http://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/wounds-war-japan-korea-re-open-comfort-women-statue-n139481

[15] Kirk Semple, "In New Jersey, Memorial for Comfort Women Deepens Old Animosity," *The New York Times*, May 18, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/19/nyregion/monument-in-palisades-park-nj-irritates-japanese-officials.html

[16] "Michigan Latest to Install Comfort Woman Statue," *The Korea Times*, August 18, 2014. http://www.koreatimesus.com/michigan-gets-a-comfort-woman-statue-also/

[17] Ibid.

on the terms of national belonging and an "authentic" heritage. The opposition of the comfort women monuments in the U.S. reflects the anger and distance felt by Japanese Americans toward the comfort women case, and many believe that the issue is far removed from them and therefore, disagreements on the matter should only be debated abroad.[18]

Comprised of immigrants from around the world, the United States' definition of national identity and collective belonging is continuously under debate. Because the public landscape is a social construct and therefore belongs to everyone and yet no one, ideas of nationhood are shaped by consensus building and rely on shared beliefs within society.[19] In his essay, "Holocaust Memorials in America: Public Art as Process," James Young questions the difference between "American history" and "America's history." Addressing specifically American holocaust survivors, Young states that the public memory of America is comprised of both the old and new worlds of its citizens. He writes:

> Past are "foreign" only insofar as they transpired in other lands but American in that they constitute the reason for having come to America in the first place. If the survivors' history was not a part of the public memory, could they still regard themselves as part of the public?[20]

For American comfort women and their families who have migrated from countries across Asia, replicas of the *Monument to Peace* not only represent the women's past

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010): 34.

[20] James Young, "Holocaust Memorials in America: Public Art as Process," in *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy*, edited by Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster, 57 – 70 (New York: IconEditions, 1992.): 60.

experiences, but are a part of their activism and community building.[21] They are markers of protest that authenticate the existence of the comfort women and create visibility for the women's case. Further, they disrupt Japan's version of history, and the rapid rate at which they continue to emerge throughout the world attempt to operate outside of South Korea's and Japan's control.

"Memorial Mania"[22] and The Nature of Public Commemorations

The rate at which comfort women monuments are being created is an example of what historian Erika Doss terms "memorial mania:"[23] the contemporary obsession and anxiety over memory and history that drives a variety of political and social groups, in this case the comfort women, to claim their stake in the ever-changing public sphere in a visible and public way.[24] In the shift from traditional monuments that aim to emulate unified representations of national patriotism, to what has become a fragmented landscape comprised of a multitude of personal narratives, today's memory boom is directly related to the struggle over identity politics where public memorials are now increasingly viewed as being "substantially more authentic in shaping ideas of self and nationhood than the stagnant iconoclasm of traditional history."[25]

Funded and erected by Korean American communities, the *Monument to Peace* replicas authenticate the existence of Korean comfort women. While the commemorations of these memorials establish visibility for Korean comfort women, they

[21] Ibid.
[22] Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 48.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 52.

are equally problematic for their exclusion of comfort women from Japan, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines.[26] According to historian Peter Shackel, memory is formed in three ways: "forgetting about or excluding an alternative past, creating and reinforcing patriotism, and/or developing a sense of nostalgia to legitimize a particular heritage."[27] The public memory created by the replicas mirror the current political and social issues surrounding the comfort women case in South Korea and Japan rather than being an indefinite representation of the women's past.

The issue of inclusion raised by the *Monument to Peace* is reminiscent of similar debates caused by Maya Lin's 1982 *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* in Washington, D.C. (Figure 9). The first national victims' monument in the U.S., the memorial was dedicated to all U.S. soldiers who had served in the Vietnam War. Much like the comfort women memorials that seek public awareness for its victims, Lin's intention in creating the monument was to bring attention to the veterans' need for support in society.[28] However, only those who died in combat were listed on the monument's walls as other soldiers' names were placed on a nearby sub-category plaque. The unintentional exclusion of soldiers on the *Veterans Memorial* created a hierarchal imbalance in honoring the military dead and led to a larger national debate about the commemoration of those who served in the Vietnam War.[29] According to historian Kirk Savage, the walls of the

[26] Paul A. Shackel, "Public Memory and the Search for Power in American Historical Archaeology," *American Anthropologist* 103, no. 3 (September 2001): 657.

[27] Ibid., 655.

[28] Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009): 268.

[29] Ibid., 282.

Veteran's Memorial became about "absence of suffering communities" as much as it was about remembering.[30]

However, Shackel notes that while public memorials represent the interest of a specific a group, their commemorative form is constantly transforming and being remade as it is met with challenges from competing narratives.[31] While the *Veterans Memorial* drew attention to the absence of those soldiers' names that were not included on the monument, it was also the inspiration for other Vietnam war memorials that were created to further expand the limits of its discourse: the *Vietnam Women's Memorial* (1993) that honored the women who served in the Vietnam War and *In Memory* (2004) memorial plaque that commemorates veterans who died from injuries directly caused during the war but that are outside the guidelines of the Department of Defense.[32]

Lin's *Veterans Memorial* was also controversial because of its minimalist design and choice of black color. Many American public officials objected to the memorial, including American billionaire and former U.S. president candidate Henry Ross Perot and Vietnam veteran and then U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Jim Webb, who withdrew their support for its creation.[33] A compromise was reached through the commission of Frederick Hart's *The Three Servicemen* (1984)[34], a bronze statue of three Vietnam soldiers of Hispanic American, African American, and European American descent (Figure 10). Placed a short distance across from Lin's *Veterans Memorial*, Hart's

[30] Ibid., 281.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Also referred to as *The Three Soldiers*

realistic figuration of soldiers interact with the wall as they look upon the names of their fallen comrades.

Similarly, the *Monument to Peace* has inspired the creation of modified versions as well as other public memorials to the comfort women. The replica in Glendale was unveiled on the city's sanctioned "Comfort Women Day," and includes a plaque that is dedicated to the women and to U.S. House Resolution 121 (Figure 11). The inscription provides a more detailed description of the comfort women than the original in Seoul, and effectively expands the representation of the women's history outside of Korea. It reads:

> In memory of more than 200,000 Asian and Dutch women who were removed from their homes in Korea, China, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, East Timor and Indonesia, to be coerced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Armed Forces of Japan between 1932 and 1945.
>
> And in celebration of "Comfort Women Day" by the City of Glendale on July 30, 2012, and of passing House Resolution 121 by the United States Congress on July 30, 2007, urging the Japanese Government to accept historical responsibility for these crimes. It is our sincere hope that these unconscionable violations of human rights shall never recur.

The most controversial *Monument to Peace* replica in the U.S., the Glendale statue honors all comfort women with its dedication, effectively increasing the blame placed upon Japan. The memorial's unveiling upset many local Japanese Americans who felt that the city's commemoration perpetuated false and negative images of Japan, Japanese Americans, and painted Glendale as a city that promotes prostitution.[35] The local Korean community, however, enthusiastically advocated for the city's

[35] "Glendale Approves Comfort Women Memorial," *Rafu Shimpo Los Angeles Japanese Daily News*, July 15, 2015. http://www.rafu.com/2013/07/glendale-approves-comfort-women-memorial/

commemoration of the comfort women. Alex Woo, president of the Korea-Glendale Sister City Association, commended the City Council and the Arts and Culture Commission for standing by their decision to keep the city's memorial and praised the decision as Glendale's efforts to exemplify itself as a city that promotes and champions human rights."[36]

Another version of the original, *Monument to Peace (Chinese and Korean Youth)*, which was erected in a park in Seoul in 2015, is a modification of the original prototype (Figure 12). In this version, the difference is that a Chinese girl, wearing traditional Chinese formal attire, is seated in the empty chair, next to the Korean girl in a *hanbok*. Her presence symbolizes the solidarity between Korean and Chinese comfort women. This monument was a collaboration between the creators of *Monument to Peace*, Un Seng and Jeong, Chinese professor Pan Yiqun and Chinese filmmaker Shi Yung. Both dedication inscriptions of Glendale's *Monument to Peace* replica and *Monument to Peace (Chinese and Korean Youth)* broaden the representation of the comfort women and increases the blame placed upon Japan for the comfort women system. In doing so, they shed light on not only Korean comfort women, but also on other victims from its occupied countries during WWII.

The iconography of the *Monument to Peace*'s butterfly, seen in the Korean elderly women's shadow on the memorial's granite base, has been appropriated in other comfort women monuments as a symbol of "hope and freedom from discrimination" for not only the comfort women, but for all sexual assault victims around the world. [37] The *Comfort*

[36] Ibid.

[37] Tamara Treichel, "Fairfax County's New Comfort Women Memorial Courts Controversy," *Asian Fortune*, July 15, 2014. http://www.asianfortunenews.com/2014/07/fairfax-countys-new-comfort-women-memorial-courts-controversy/

Memorial Peace Garden in Fairfax County, Virginia (2014; Figure 13) and the *Comfort Women Butterfly Memorial* in Liberty Plaza, Union City, New Jersey (2014; Figure 14), both use the butterfly. In New Jersey's Liberty Plaza, a sea-foam blue butterfly sits atop a stone plaque commemorating the comfort women. In Virginia, two butterfly-shaped benches, also colored sea-foam blue, surround a boulder in which a memorial plaque is embedded that further derive their iconographic elements from the original *Monument to Peace*. Intended as an inclusive symbol, the butterfly represents "hope and freedom from discrimination" for not only the comfort women, but for all sexual assault victims around the world. [38]

Summary

The public commemorations of the *Monument to Peace*, its replicas, and other comfort women memorials create places of memory for the comfort women. Combating Japan's attempt to erase the women from history, these memorials are radically groundbreaking as the first monuments in the U.S. to honor sexual assault victims. Official commemorations dedicated to the comfort women not only challenge the public to acknowledge the women's case, but also to engage in an ongoing discourse of their significance. Places of memory established by comfort women monuments are living entities, and thus, are not finished texts or stagnant but are always in a state of transition. They stray from traditional war memorials that solidify ideologies of masculinity and militarism and instead visually reference the silence surrounding the victims' shame and the immoral acts of sexual violence via an innocuous form of a young Korean girl.

[38] Ibid.

The establishment of the *Monument to Peace* and other comfort women monuments confronts the silence surrounding rape in society and in part, has encouraged U.S. politicians to address related problems involved in the sex industry for military personnel as well as the larger global epidemic of sex trafficking. Phyllis Kim of the Korean American Forum of California explained that the statue represents, "a universal issue, not specific to any one ethnicity but for all women. Especially we are concerned about sexual violence that is still happening in this world, especially during time of war."[39] In his opening ceremony speech for the public unveiling of the *Comfort Women Butterfly Memorial*, Union City Commissioner Lucio Fernandez gave an impassioned speech that not only honored the comfort women, but also addressed the global epidemic of sexual abuse. The memorial's public unveiling was accompanied by an art exhibit entitled *Our Cry*, a compilation of community created artworks that featured graphic portrayals of sexually abused women (Figure 15).[40] The event highlighted not only comfort women, but also pointed to a larger problem of sexual assault in modern society.

Due to Japan's denial of war crimes and its subsequent destruction of any wartime documentation that could possibly implicate the state, what is known about the comfort system during WWII comes from the testimonials of those who survived the ordeal. Japanese nationalists adamantly claim that the comfort women were willing prostitutes who enthusiastically volunteered their sexual services to soldiers to show their support

[39] "Glendale Approves Comfort Women Memorial," http://www.rafu.com/2013/07/glendale-approves-comfort-women-memorial/

[40] Julie Kayzerman, "Comfort Women Visit Union City Liberty Plaza Monument," *The Jersey Journal*, August 5, 2014. http://www.nj.com/jjournal-news/index.ssf/2014/08/comfort_women_from_korea_speak.html

for the state's war efforts.[41] The hierarchy of "historical proof," in which documentation and material evidence is of greater value than testimony, alludes to a bigger problem that can be understood in contemporary times: the testimony of rape victims, which are often scrutinized for "proof" of an actual violation. Therefore, the establishments of public memorials as places of memory, accompanied by survivor testimonies, are essential in legitimizing the history of the comfort women.

The women's trauma, experiences, and backgrounds are varied and thus, a single resolution between Japan and South Korea is not an acceptable compromise for all Asian comfort women. What has been lost within the political conflict between the two countries on the comfort women issue and the *Monument to Peace*'s placement in Seoul is the voice of the comfort women and which has become secondary in favor of a struggle over national power in Seoul. The *Monument to Peace,* however, as the official monument of the comfort women movement, ultimately seeks to represent the marginalized history of all comfort women. Further, the accelerated production in which the statue's replicas and modified versions are created challenge Japan and continue to emerge throughout the world attempt to operate beyond the state's control and their production continues to encourage the public to acknowledge the comfort women case.

Comfort women memorials are contested sites because they stray from traditional commemorative practices of honoring heroes and are instead dedicated to memorializing victims of war.[42] Much like monuments dedicated to Jewish Holocaust survivors, the

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[41] Alice Yun Chai, "Korean Feminist and Human Rights Politics: The Chongshindae / Jugunianfu Comfort Women Movement." In *Korean American Women: From Tradition to Modern Feminism,* edited by Young I. Song and Ailee Moon (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 239.

[42] Quentin Stevens, Karen A. Franck, and Ruth Fazakerley, "Counter-monuments: The Anti-Monumental and the Dialogic," *The Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 6 (2012): 955.

comfort women memorials pay homage to a subordinate group whose wartime narratives have historically been neglected or completely erased in favor of glorifying national narratives of heroism. Revolutionary as the first monuments in the U.S. dedicated to victims of sexual assault, they commemorate the lived experiences of the comfort women and the abuse they endured. This not only validates their historical truth of the past, but also demand for their recognition in the present.

The establishment of public memorials to the comfort women create places of memory that are a necessary, if not vital component in combating Japan's attempts to deny and erase the women from history by officially recognizing the comfort women narrative. Places of memory are living, cultural entities that are never finished texts nor stagnant but are always in a state of permanent process.[43] The significance of the *Monument to Peace*, its replicas, and other comfort women memorials are not solely dependent upon their physical creation, but also contingent upon the events and public responses they generate after they are erected and officially commemorated.

[43] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26, no. 1 (Spring, 1989): 9.

CHAPTER 2

Yong Soon Min's *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW*

> Far from being grounded in a mere "recovery" of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.[91]
>
> - Stuart Hall (1990)

Yong Soon Min, who first received praise in the 1990s for her oeuvre that centers on issues of race, gender, and her own cultural displacement, is a prominent Korean American conceptual artist, educator, and activist currently based in Los Angeles. Born in 1953, Min considers herself a child of the Cold War, and her work is a reaction to her cultural upbringing and an exploration of the artist's identity as an immigrant, Korean American woman, and minority in the United States.[92] The artist's childhood in Bugok, South Korea, her family's immigration to the U.S., and the detrimental effects that WWII and the Korean War had on her family, community, and nation form the core subjects of Min's artworks. Her installation and performance project, *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* (2007-2014), is a three-part series of t-shirts that display all the years, from 1931

[91] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 225, quoted in Dora Apel, *Memory Effects: The Holocaust and the Art of Secondary Witnessing* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995: 7.

[92] Hwa Young Choi Caruso, "Art as a Political Act: Expression of Cultural Identity, Self-Identity, and Gender by Suk Nam and Yong Soon Min," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 71.

when the first comfort station was built up to the year that *Wearing History* (2007), *WHEN* (2012), or *NOW* (2014) was created, depending on the series (Figure 16). Wearing the t-shirts herself in *Wearing History* and then passing along the responsibility to others in *WHEN* and *NOW*, Min's project activates collective, shared mourning for the comfort women. Just as the *Monument to Peace* empowers the comfort women and is a representation of Korean American communities coming together to forge their collective identity in the U.S., *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* reflects the artist's personal involvement with the comfort women and her participation as an active member within her community. Min places her own female body at the core of her project, taking on the role of a secondary witness to the comfort women's trauma while exploring her own identity as a Korean and Korean American. This chapter examines the ways the artist's project highlights the continuing presence of comfort women who still suffer and mourn and how the artist's process of internalizing their trauma creates an empathetic identity that becomes a performance strategy to visually enact the women's collective state of loss.

Inspired by On Kawara's *Today* series (1966 – 2003), also known as *Date Paintings*, I explore how Min's design of the t-shirts created for *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* appropriates Kawara's minimalistic approach and repetition of dates to represent the accounting of time, history, and the artist's own lived experience within it (Figure 17).[93] Utilizing the same sans serif font as Kawara, Min brings awareness to the comfort women and emphasizes the significance of dates in their history, accounting for the establishment of the first comfort station in 1932, to the first public testimony in 1991

[93] Jung-Ah Woo, "On Kawara's Date Paintings: Series of Horror and Boredom," *Art Journal* 69, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 61.

made by former comfort woman Kim Hak-soon, and the years since that the comfort women have suffered and still wait for an official apology to be made by the Japanese government. Further, it is important to address the similarities between Kawara and Min's work, as both artists used the accounting of time to express their personal experience of living in postwar society: Kawara, from a Japanese American perspective coming out of WWII, and Min, a Korean American who was born at the end of the Korean War.

Wearing History / WHEN / NOW is also a commentary on mourning's gendered division of labor in which women are positioned as grievers, referenced by the everyday scene of hung laundry which is traditionally allotted as being "women's work." [94] By wearing clothing with the years since the women have yet to be officially recognized by the Japanese government, Min takes on the performative role to bring awareness to the comfort women's suffering and aligns viewers to the subjective position of the women's grief.[95] Her project renders loss as a present sensation and moves away from the traumatic events of the comfort women stations into the women's current reality of the ongoing experience of mourning in their everyday lives.

Project Details

Wearing History / WHEN / NOW originally emerged from Min's creation of *Wearing History* for "Trauma Interrupted," a 2007 exhibition in Manila, Philippines intended to bring attention to Filipino comfort women, known as *lolas*.[96] In the

[94] Jill Bennett, "Art, Affect, and the Bad Death: Strategies for Communicating the Sense Memory of Loss," 337.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Yong Soon Min, e-mail to author, January 20, 2017.

exhibition, the artist displayed various items of clothing that she, herself, had worn. Each garment was emblazoned with a spray-painted stencil design of a single year, beginning with 1931, the year the first comfort station was built, and ending in 2007.

WHEN (2012), the second project in the series, extended *Wearing History* and was created for an exhibition entitled "Unveiling the Truth: The Sorrow and Truth of the Comfort Women," at the Atrium Gallery in St. Louis, Missouri (Figure 18). This time embroidered in white on black t-shirts, each individually displayed a single year from 1931 to 2012. Further bridging her personal connection to the comfort women, her installation of *WHEN* at the Atrium Gallery included a composite photograph of the *Monument to Peace* in honor of the landmark 1000th Wednesday demonstration in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.

The final part of her project, entitled *NOW* (2014), was created for an exhibition that showcased the complete series, *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW*, as a single installation at the Seoul Museum of Art in 2014. In *NOW*, the front of black t-shirts displayed all the years collectively, from 1931 – 2014, and were screen-printed in white except for the year 2014 which was designed in yellow (Figure 19). To stress the urgency of the comfort women's case, Min also screen-printed a statement in Korean and in English onto the back of the *NOW* t-shirts that reads:

> *NOW* counts every year since Japan established the first comfort station in 1931. The Japanese government should accept unequivocal and official responsibility for the comfort women war crime. I wear *NOW* in support of the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sex Slavery by Japan.[97]

[97] Yong Soon Min, "Wearing History," Last modified January 30, 2017, http://www.yongsoonmin.com/art/wearing-history/

The shift from using personal clothing as the platform for the comfort women issue in *Wearing History* to mass produced t-shirts in *WHEN* and *NOW* occurred due to a brain hemorrhage that Min suffered in 2010 that caused her to take a couple of years off from her work to recover. No longer able to create or wear them in public, Min decided to pass the responsibility of wearing the t-shirt with others so that they could share information about the comfort women. By distributing the t-shirts, Min transforms her personal project into a collective, public action. Following the exhibition, she donated the t-shirts to the Washington Coalition for Comfort Women Issues (WCCW) to raise money for their advocacy efforts and created seventy-five t-shirts in various sizes for both *WHEN* and *NOW* so that they could be worn by others and used as fundraising items for WCCW and the Korean Council in Seoul.[98]

An integral part of *Wearing History* was an information card that Min made, carried, and handed out to anyone who took note of the dated t-shirts, prompting conversations about the comfort women history. It stated:

> I am wearing, close to my heart, one year of the 78 YEARS since Japan established the first *Comfort* station in 1932. During Japan's military advance in Asia, over 200,000 women were coerced into sexual service for Japan's military. Those who survived and are still living await justice. In demanding that the Japanese government accept unequivocal official responsibility for this war crime, I wear a year every day.[99]

Min brings to light the comfort women's trauma in the present by taking on the role of a secondary witness and preserves their memory by addressing the urgency and unresolved closure of the women's case. Further, her work is in line with other contemporary artists who grapple with the issue of trauma. Artists who wish to take on a

[98] Yong Soon Min, e-mail to author, January 20, 2017.
[99] Ibid.

secondary role as witness to the trauma of the past do so out of their own experiences of "intergenerational transmission of trauma" in that, they were not alive during the events they are addressing but nonetheless experience the after effects through the experiences of their relatives and loved one who did. [100] These attempts are carried out to comprehend the unsettled memories of previous generation's past, and the desire to recoup fragments of one's own history.[101]

Although Min is not related by blood to any of the comfort women, in Korean culture there is a familial respect for all people. The comfort women in Korea are referred to as *halmonis*, which means grandma and is a term of endearment for all female elders. Min's intimate attachment to the comfort women as her elders, coupled with her own postwar experiences, is reflected in *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* and is as much about representing the women's history as it is about exploring her own Korean heritage.

Yong Soon Min, Nationhood, and the Signification of Time

Min credits her move to New York in 1981, where she began to participate in advocacy projects for the Korean American community, as being instrumental in shaping her work.[102] Min first became familiar with the comfort women's case when they visited the United Nations in New York City in 1993.[103] In that same year she created *Remembering Jungshindae* (1993), an empty bodice *hanbok* meant to symbolize the body of a comfort woman, as a response to the women's case (Figure 20). Made from stretched starch-stiffened black fabric over a wooden armature with a mesh screen at its neck and

[100] Apel, *Memory Effects*, 3.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Yong Soon Min, e-mail to author, "MA Thesis Inquiry: Wearing History," January 20, 2017.
[103] Ibid.

texturized with paint, gravel, charcoal bits, modeling paste, and dirt, *Remembering Jungshindae* glows red from the acetate within its structure where it reads: "Your story will not be forgotten."[104] Min considers the artwork a predecessor to *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* as it caused the artist to question how she might try a different approach to the comfort woman issue that wasn't representative or figurative.[105]

Remembering Jungshindae explores ideas of nationalism through a gendered lens. Min addresses the comfort women's suffering using tactile, soiled, and damaged fabric to convey strength and to restore honor to the women. The *hanbok*, which translates in English to "Korean clothing," is a symbol of the state and its national pride. Traditionally made from bright colors of silk, the *hanbok* created by Min is instead black and rigid. In doing this, she spins the idea of how Korean women have historically been viewed as demure and soft like dolls, but exposes the labor and uglier sides of that expectation. The red that glows from within the fabric is a representation of the blood and sacrifice of the comfort women; material and color thus disrupts and destabilizes traditional gendered notions of nationalism that are built upon patriarchal ideals and shifts the focus toward the female form, exposing the fragile and complex nature of nationalism. Further, the ashen debris placed around the sculpture's base suggests a pyre and the comfort women's body as sacrifice to the state.

A useful comparison is perhaps Korean American artist Do Ho Suh's sculptural installation *Some/One* (2005); a monumental form that resembles both a ceremonial robe and a coat of armor (Figure 21). Indeed, it is even made of soldier's dog tags, reflecting Suh's mandatory military service in the Seoul army, after which the artist moved to the

[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.

U.S. The dog tags, however are stamped not with individual names, but nonsense symbols, suggestive of a generalized identity – borne from tradition, colonialism, international military entanglements, and nation-making. The sculpture's open front reveals an interior made of mirrors, meaning as viewers, we are invited to look inside, to see our own reflections to become part of the work, and to imagine our relationship to it. Yet while complicating notions of identity through its tag symbols, interior mirrors, and title, *Some/One* nevertheless retains a masculine underpinning through its solid, hard shell of metal tags. Min's *Remembering Jungshindae* might be understood then as a counterpoint, injecting questions of how gender, particularly within the history of military conflict, contributes to the formation of contemporary national and cultural identity.

Often using her body as the canvas, Min's oeuvre focuses on the centrality of women and explores her own identity as a Korean and Korean American woman. [106] This is further exemplified in her work *Defining Moments* (1992), an installation composed of six black and white photographic self-portraits that connect crucial events in Korean history to important dates in Min's life (Figure 22). In the series, five identical photographs of Min's face and chest are superimposed with historical Korean events. DMZ (Korean Demilitarized Zone), the highly policed strip of land along the Korean Peninsula that serves as the border separating North and South Korea, is emblazed across her forehead as well as "heartland" across her chest. The sixth photograph is of Min's naked torso and across her arms reads "occupied territory," a whirling line of historical

[106] Elaine Kim, "Bad Women: Asian American Visual Artists Hanh Thi Pham, Hung Liu, and Yong Soon Min," *Feminist Studies* 22, no. 3 (Autumn 1996): 593.

dates run along the center of her stomach, and the word "heartland" is again written across her chest. The spiral begins with 1953, which corresponds to her birth and the end of the Korean War. For some of the prints Min included text that begins at her throat and at the end of her torso that are the appropriated lyrics of "My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean" (Figure 23).

> MY BODY LIES
> OVER THE OCEAN
> MY BODY LIES OVER THE SEA
> MY BODY LIES OVER THE DMZ
> OH BRING BACK MY BODY TO ME
> BRING BACK BRING BACK OH BRING BACK MY BODY TO ME.

Min's body serves as the embattled territory on which these events are etched, the word "heartland" written across her chest in all six of the photographs further drive this concept. *Defining Moments* addresses a taboo subject, the idea that women are "central to history and nation, with images of the naked female body as the site of nationhood and global politics but also anti-imperialist politics," that is not typically discussed in traditional Korean society. [107] In *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW*, Min expands this dialogue through the artist's utilization of her body as the battleground to explore connections of the female form, specifically the comfort women, to issues of war and her own national identity as both Korean and Korean American.

She effectively does this by taking on the role of a secondary witness, positioning herself as the mediator, and effectively giving the women's "pain a home in the body" by wearing the t-shirts. [108] In doing this, Min aligns the viewer to the subjective position of the ongoing lived grief of the comfort women. Often an isolating and incommunicable

[107] Ibid., 595.
[108] Bennett, "Art, Affect, and the Bad Death," 336.

experience, the women's years of suffering are made tangible through a connection expressed through the human form.

Wearing every day at least one item of clothing from *Wearing History*, Min instilled a personal, daily connection to the comfort women.[109] Inspired by Japanese American artist On Kawara's *Today* series (1966 – 2003), *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* ritualizes the signification of time and the personal lived experience within it. It is important to discuss the parallels between Min's and Kawara's work because they both are heavily influenced by personal experiences of war. Creating from the perspective of the Japanese American experience rather than the Korean American, Kawara was, like Min, a member of a generation of artists who used his craft to address the realities of post-war society. He began his career in painting in 1952 in response to the end of WWII and moved to the U.S. to New York City in 1965 where he began the *Today* series a year later. [110]

Drawn horizontally by hand in white paint onto a monochrome canvas of varying sizes, each of Kawara's *Today* paintings bears the date on which it was executed. [111] The artwork was then paired with a clipping from the day's local newspaper, then placed carefully into a matching cardboard box and stored into a detailed inventory. Some dates were more personal than others and occasionally included personal notes about Kawara's activities of the day. Coinciding with his earlier works themed around issues of postwar

[109] Yong Soon Min, e-mail to author, January 20, 2017.
[110] "On Kawara," MOMA, https://www.moma.org/artists/3030
[111] Anne Rorimer, "The Date Paintings of On Kawara," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 17, no. 2 (1991): 121.

Japan, most news clippings from the *Today* series contain highly political subject matter such as death, war, and natural disasters (Figure 24).[112]

In *Today*, the date itself is the subject of the painting and the sole embodiment of the work's figuration and is unique in its creation.[113] Likewise, each t-shirt in *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* is a stand-alone artwork, the individual t-shirts of years varying stylistically depending upon the project. Both artists' conceptual artworks emphasize the repetition of dates to signify and make visible the incommunicability of everyday experiences and time. In examining the symbolism of time in Kawara's *Today*, Anne Rorimer writes:

> In the sense that one cannot 'see' a date, the paintings offer no information about their relationship to external reality, but within the confines of the painted canvas, the date – otherwise a mere abstraction – assumes a concrete form and shape. Within the very content of the work, therefore, the *Today Series* demonstrates how a painting can be a self-reliant presence, independent of (yet not disregarding) external points of reference.[114]

The simplification of dates in *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* give form to the collective, shared mourning of the comfort women and Min's use of space and time provokes an ongoing and open-ended re-evaluation of the past through the project's temporal, transient quality as memorial. Although borrowing from Kawara's style in obsessive uniformity, the repetition of years eliminating any indication of the personal trace, Min's rigidity is balanced by the intimate trace of her clothing that create a visual aid to the comfort women's indefinable, ongoing lived experiences of grief.

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[112] Jung-Ah Woo, "On Kawara's Date Paintings: Series of Horror and Boredom," *Art Journal* 69, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 62.

[113] Rorimer, "The Date Paintings of On Kawara," 122.

[114] Ibid., 126.

The Work of Mourning and Continuing Presence of Loss

Wearing History / WHEN / NOW is also a commentary on mourning's gendered division of labor in which women are positioned as grievers. referenced by the everyday scene of hung laundry which is traditionally allotted as being "women's work." [115] The work of mourning, like laundry, is negotiated through the body and is relegated as an insignificant yet necessary task, its public defacement and private burden placed within the confines of the domestic sphere. [116] Much like society's burden placed upon women as the managers of society's "dirt," the Japanese government considers the comfort women system a necessary yet deplorable act that should be hidden from history. [117] Like the labor of laundry, the history of the comfort women is associated with ideas of filth and eroticism, categorized as shameful, marginalized and concealed in the folds of history. [118] Min's commemoration of the comfort women vis-à-vis the private, overlooked, and rigorous work of hung laundry, effectively airs out Japan's "dirty laundry" and makes the comfort women visible. Most importantly, the artist creates a space of resistance for the women that counters Japan's denial.

It is within the domestic sphere that "gender subordination is produced and reenacted."[119] Min stresses the urgency and importance of the comfort women case and locates pain within the signification of time and in the female body. Both intimate and private, the abandoned scene of hung laundry in *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* renders the women's mourning present simply as an elusive trace. Min's project is both a

[115] Ibid., 337.
[116] Aritha van Herk, "Invisibled Laundry," *Signs* 27, no. 3 (Spring 2002): 894-95.
[117] Ibid., 897.
[118] Ibid, 893.
[119] Ibid, 895.

commentary on the evacuated space left by the comfort women who have died while also publicly addresses the continuing presence of the existing comfort women's private daily suffering.

Summary

Min's conceptual production and performance of *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* is an appropriate tool in approaching the difficult and enormous subject of the history of the comfort women. Drawing upon her interactions and personal involvement with the women allows Min to take on the role of secondary witness. By enacting the comfort women's state of mourning through the performance of wearing the t-shirts, her embodiment of their grief is fugitive rather than figurative, and shifts the focus away from traumatic events behind their stories and moves toward the women's current state of suffering and traumatic memory. [120]

Min's project is as much about representing the history of the comfort women as it is about the artist exploring her own identity as a Korean and Korean American woman. By attempting to make time visible, she creates a way to not only understand the comfort women's past, but also to comprehend her own placement within that history. A site of resistance that counteracts Japan's denial, *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* is a construction of memory that does not rely on presenting visual specificity but rather alludes to the lived experiences of the comfort women throughout time.

Min's decision to include information cards as part of the project allows the viewer to take on a role as a witness twice removed of the comfort women's trauma.

[120] Ibid.

Further, they are called to investigate into the women's history and to question their own moral obligation to share it with others. It is in this way that the exhibition portion of *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* extends the viewer past the confines of the gallery space and into the role of collaboration with the artist in a collective, public performance.

The continuation and repetition of dated t-shirts in *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* signifies the reality of the women's mourning where pain does not rely upon a single moment but is present in everyday life. Min memorializes not only the comfort women's history, but their current, lived experiences of grief. In doing this, she effectively signifies the importance of years to communicate the urgency in which the women's case must be recognized by the Japanese government as time is running out.

CHAPTER 3

Chang Jin Lee's *Comfort Women Wanted*

Korean American artist Chang Jin Lee's multi-media installation project *Comfort Women Wanted* (2008 – 2013) visually transforms the individualized, private trauma of the comfort women into public, shared knowledge and creates an alternate historical recording that rejects Japan's state memory (Figure 25). Just as Yong Soon Min was inspired by her personal interactions with some of the surviving comfort women, Lee based her project on intimate conversations she had with the women in their various locations overseas. The women's case came to the artist's attention in 2007 after she read an article detailing California Congressman Mike Honda's proposal of U.S. House Resolution 121.[121] Impassioned to take action, Lee gathered support from several grants and fellowships, including aid from the New York State Council on the Arts and the Asian Cultural Council, and traveled to Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, Indonesia, Australia, and the Philippines on four separate trips to meet the women and document their stories. [122] Driven to commemorate the "forgotten history"[123] of the comfort women,

[121] Chang-Jin Lee, "Comfort Women Wanted," artist lecture at the Korean Society in New York, New York. October 9, 2103. http://www.koreasociety.org/arts-culture/gallery-talks/comfort_women_wanted.html

[122] Chang Jin Lee, email to author, March 08, 2016.

[123] Aileen Jacobson, "World War II Sex Slaves Bear Witness," *The New York Times*, Last modified December 19, 2014. Accessed February 03, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/nyregion/world-war-ii-sex-slaves-bear-witness.html?_r=0

Lee's *Comfort Women Wanted* was the outcome of interviews she conducted with twenty-one survivors and one former WWII Japanese soldier during these travels.[124]

In the last two chapters of this thesis I have shown how the establishment of public, community-driven monuments pose a challenge to a singular national narrative that attempts to operate beyond Japan's and South Korea's state control and how, through taking on an active role in her Korean American community, Min raises further awareness for the comfort women by assuming a performative role as a secondary witness to the women's mourning. Both *Monument to Peace* and *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW* drew inspiration from the testimonies of the comfort women, and in *Comfort Women Wanted*, the women take a more direct role in their own image-making process.

Lee's project included a recreated military comfort station, along with audio, video, billboards, and kiosk street posters. Versions of it have been shown in the U.S. at Spaces Gallery in Cleveland (2011), at the Atrium Gallery in St. Louis, in the exhibition "Unveiling the Truth: The Sorrow and Truth of the Comfort Women" (2012), alongside Min's *WHEN*, at the Woodstreet Galleries in Pittsburg (2013), and at the Charles B. Wang Center at Stoney Brook University (2014). Internationally, Lee's project has been displayed at the Incheon Women Artists' Biennale in Seoul (2009), 1a Space in Hong Kong (2012), and the Comfort Women Museum in Taipei (2013). The recreated military comfort station included Japanese WWII style welcome and regulation banners, kimonos, tatami beds, washing bowls, windows, and Japanese name plaques (Figure 26). In the audio portion of the installation, two old fashioned telephones hung on either side of a red

[124] Chang Jin Lee, "Comfort Women Wanted," http://www.changjinlee.net/cww/index.html

column referencing a phone booth (Figure 27). When a listener picked up one phone, s/he could hear the voices of comfort women survivors; the other phone revealed the voice of Yasuji Kaneko, a former WWII Japanese soldier who came forward with his testimony in the 1990s. The project's video portion contained footage of interviews Lee conducted with the survivors and Kaneko during the artist's travels (Figure 28).[125]

This chapter focuses on Lee's propaganda posters from the project to show how they are successfully implemented as advocacy tools for discussing the comfort survivors as both individual subjects and as a collective community that need recognition (Figure 29). Rendered as propaganda advertisements created by the Japanese government to recruit young girls during the war, the posters are superimposed with a single photograph of the woman centered on a red background, the poster's heading emblazoned in black with the text, "Comfort Women Wanted" in English, Korean, Chinese, or Filipino, and is a direct reference to the actual text-based advertisements put out by the Japanese government in newspapers in occupied countries during WWII (Figure 30).[126]

According to Lee, due to the lack of response to Japanese comfort women ads during the war, many young children and women were abducted and forced into sexual service by the Japanese army.[127] The poster series is comprised of images of fourteen individual comfort women survivors created as paired images of each woman and is intended to represent the "then and now" of their lives (Figure 31). In the first poster, Lee appropriates a black and white photograph of the woman from their youth shared by them

[125] Ibid.
[126] Lee, "Comfort Women Wanted," http://changjinlee.net/cww/
[127] Lee, "Comfort Women Wanted," artist lecture, http://www.koreasociety.org/arts-culture/gallery-talks/comfort_women_wanted.html

with the artist; the adjacent photograph, taken by Lee during her interview with the woman, depicts a red silhouette of their now elderly form within their current home.

The visual transformation of individualized, private trauma into public, shared knowledge via the comfort women's direct participation in their image-making process creates an alternate historical recording that rejects Japan's state memory. Further, the personal photographs of the comfort women used for the project are counter-memory to "official" photographs taken by the U.S. army after Japan's surrender at the end of WWII (Figure 32, 33). The images not only encourage viewers to look upon the comfort survivor as individuals, but also as symbolic figures of historical significance, indicated through Lee's use of gold leaf superimposed around their figure, a technique the artist chose for its resemblance to Medieval and Renaissance imagery of saints (Figure 34).[128]

The second poster shows a photograph taken by Lee of the now elderly comfort women survivor as an anonymous red silhouette, which conveys to the viewer an emotional emptiness that is metaphorically telling of their current state of despair, pain, and erasure from history. The visibility that is created through representing the "then and now" of the comfort survivors' lives in these images, however, exposes the inconsistencies of the Japan's memory and Lee's untraditional representation of the women is a powerful advocacy tool that encourages others to reinterpret the subjects in a new light. Most importantly, the comfort women's participation in their own image-making process ultimately creates a space in which they can begin to truly recover.

[128] Lee, "Comfort Women Wanted," artist lecture, http://www.koreasociety.org/arts-culture/gallery-talks/comfort_women_wanted.html

Although never explicitly stated, Lee's posters draw inspiration from several historical sources. Appropriating the layout from a criminal wanted poster (Figure 35), Lee's use of black and red in her design is reminiscent of twentieth-century communist Chinese propaganda posters distributed with the intention to solicit total loyalty and dedication from citizens to the state (Figure 36). Perhaps Lee's posters most striking resemblance, however, are to Victor Keppler's 1944 poster, "Wanted! For Murder" (Figure 37). Published by the U.S. Government Printing Office during WWII, Keppler's poster was one of several propaganda advertisements released by the U.S. government in response to concerns about national security after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. Like Frederick Siebel's "Someone Talked!" (1942) poster illustration of a man drowning in a darkened sea with his finger pointed accusingly out to the viewer, these images warned citizens of the potential dangers sharing military information could cause and how it might damage the country's war efforts (Figure 38).[129] *Comfort Women Wanted* is a witty take on this idea of "talking," that in giving their testimonies and coming forward, the comfort women's direct participation in the creation of their commemoration poses a threat to the masculine sovereignty of Japan's nation-state and is a direct political statement of defiance by the women of the country's version of history.

The Power of Testimony

Lee's multi-media installation is a visual journey that transports the viewer into a comfort women station, supplies information on the comfort women issue, and concludes with the testimonies of the surviving women. The visual representation of the women's

[129] "Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art from World War II," The National Archives, https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/hes_watching_you/hes_watching_you.html

experiences is in every detail of the project. The interior of the recreated military comfort station's kimono belt on a tatami bed, with projected video footage of former comfort stations filmed by Lee during her travels, and Japanese name plaques hung on the walls, represent the Japanese names and attire the women were forced to take on while enslaved by the Imperial army (Figure 39).[130] Additionally, Lee's phone booth references telephone hotlines established in 1992 in both Seoul and Japan that were created with the intention to encourage comfort women survivors, relatives, and their friends to share their stories.[131] Further, the video installation includes testimonies from comfort survivors in seven different languages that represent the seven countries Lee visited.

Due to Japan's denial and erasure of any material documentation of the comfort women system, individual testimonies are essential in legitimizing the history of the comfort women. The photographs used in *Comfort Women Wanted* give face to their stories and emphasizes the importance of their individual experiences as the key in possessing a more comprehensive understanding of their current struggles. Twenty former comfort women participated in the testimonial portion of the project. Out of this number, Lee used the images of fourteen former comfort women including Korean comfort survivor Ong-Iyeon Park (Figure 40), whom Lee met at the House of Sharing, a caregiving home and museum dedicated to comfort women, Dutch survivor Jan Ruff O'Herne (Figure 41), and Taiwanese survivor Mei Chen (Figure 42), the latter two who were the most prominently showcased in *Comfort Women Wanted* billboards and posters.

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[130] Christine Jun, "Japan's Forgotten WW2 Sex Slaves," *Dazed and Confused Magazine*, Last modified in 2014. Accessed March 11, 2015. http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/18312/1/comfort-women

[131] Alice Yun Chai, "Korean Feminist and Human Rights Politics: The Chongshindae / Jugunianfu Comfort Women Movement." In *Korean American Women: From Tradition to Modern Feminism*, edited by Young I. Song and Ailee Moon (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998): 247.

O'Herne, the only European woman to have ever come forward with her experience as a comfort woman, was abducted by the Japanese Imperial army as a young girl while living in Java, Indonesia with her family and was one of three women who gave testimony to the U.S. Congress during its 2007 resolution meeting.[132] Most poignant of the series for Lee are the photographs of Chen, who according to the artist, appeared as if she was "no longer there; her expression says something about what these women went through."[133]

Lee's poster of Chen as a youth is replicated in her *Comfort Women Wanted* poster, and it has appeared on city streets, subways, and advertising billboards in cities across the world including New York City, Taipei, and Seoul (Figure 43, 44, and 45).[134] The black and white photograph of Chen as a youth was taken when she was nineteen and had just arrived at a comfort station under the false pretense that she would be doing manual labor to support her impoverished family.[135] The image of the young girl, staring blankly back into a Japanese soldier's camera lens, was kept hidden for years in Chen's possession until she shared it with Lee. [136]

The poster's attempt to restore Chen's vitality that was lost due to her forced enslavement as a young girl and her appropriation of the photograph in *Comfort Women Wanted* not only demands viewers to look upon her as an individual, but also as a symbolic figure of historical significance. Lee transforms the Imperial army's image of

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[132] Lee "Comfort Women Wanted," artist lecture, http://www.koreasociety.org/arts-culture/gallery-talks/comfort_women_wanted.html

[133] Jacobson, "World War II Sex Slaves Bear Witness," http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/nyregion/world-war-ii-sex-slaves-bear-witness.html?_r=0

[134] Lee, "Comfort Women Wanted," http://changjinlee.net/cww/

[135] Heziel Pitogo, "Comfort Women Wanted: The Exhibit Focusing Solely on the WWII Sex Slaves," *War History Online*, Last modified January 8, 2015. Accessed June 12, 2015. https://www.warhistoryonline.com/war-articles/comfort-women-wanted-exhibit-focusing-solely-wwii-sex-slaves.html

[136] Lee, "Comfort Women Wanted," artist lecture, http://www.koreasociety.org/arts-culture/gallery-talks/comfort_women_wanted.html

Chen as property of the state by superimposing gold leaf around her figure, elevating the subject as a saint in the tradition of Renaissance iconography. Through the application of the gold leaf that radiates from her figure, the subject is portrayed allegorically in the fashion of a piteous being; sacredly pure and immortally timeless. In depicting Chen as a holy figure, Lee transforms the image of her as a socially pitied victim into a survivor who is revered for her courage to speak out. She is not only divinely autonomous, but also has taken control of her own agency. Chen's portrait as a holy being signifies an "inter-subjective exchange of looks" between viewer and subject in which the past, Chen as a young girl, claims her voice in the present through an iconoclastic appropriation that encourages the viewer to reconsider a plurality of interpretations to her story. [137] It is in this light that the new image rejects both the U.S. army's "official" representation of the comfort women and refutes the singular narrative defined by Japan.

Contrasting this, the second image is like the first in its text and red and black graphic design; however, in this version a red silhouette of the now elderly Chen is superimposed onto a black and white photograph taken by Lee of her in her current home (Figure 46). Traces of gold leaf absent, the photograph symbolizes an erasure of self and a life lost. For those who survived, many comfort women never went back home, or were ostracized from their families and communities because of what was perceived as their "shameful past" in a conservative society that cherishes women's chastity as ideal. The melancholic representation of Chen exposes the subject's sorrow within the privacy of her interior setting, combating traditional East Asian ideals that women are to be seen but never to be "heard," especially within the confines of the domestic sphere that has

[137] David Rojinsky, "Urban Photography as Counter-Monument in Urrozola's *Miradas Ausentes (el la calle),*" *Journal of Romance Studies* 13, No.3 (Winter 2013): 36.

historically been allotted to women. *Comfort Women Wanted* archives the individual histories of the comfort women and illuminates the reality of sorrow surrounding their current lives.

The visibility that is created through representing the "then and now" of the comfort survivors' lives in these images, however, exposes the inconsistencies of Japan's memory. Lee's untraditional representation of the comfort women is a powerful advocacy tool that encourages others to reinterpret the subjects in a new light. The artist's appropriation of the photograph is a testament to having been there, its existence rejects Japan's denial for the comfort women system and defies their previous effacement from military records. [138]

Appropriation and Symbolism

Lee states that her decision to use the bold color scheme of red and black color for her poster series was to create a "strong visual impact"[139] that would be "carved into the memory"[140] of the viewer. Fashioned as advertisements, they mimic the style of socialist realism used in the early twentieth century propaganda by the U.S.S.R, China, and Japan. Often accompanied by fictional imagery to persuade total allegiance to the state, the style combines elements of nationalism and socialism that are based in anti-rationalism that idealizes the country's national sovereignty.[141]

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[138] Ueno Chizuko and Jordan Sand, "The Politics of Memory: Nation, Individual and Self," *History and Memory* 11, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1999): 131.

[139] Jacobson, "World War II Sex Slaves Bear Witness," http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/nyregion/world-war-ii-sex-slaves-bear-witness.html?_r=0

[140] Ibid.

[141] Toby Clark, *Art and Propaganda in the Twentieth Century: The Political Image in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997): 71.

The graphic format of Lee's posters in *Comfort Women Wanted* draw from some of the design themes from Chinese propaganda posters, specifically those made during Mao Zedong's tenure (1949 – 1976) as the leader of the People's Republic of China (PRC). *Xuanchuan hua*, Chinese propaganda posters, were a powerful tool in publicizing political agenda of the PRC and were made the official form of art of China under Mao's rule.[142] Inspired by Soviet socialist realist posters, German expressionist art, and Western advertisements, they were integrated into the tradition of Chinese New Year prints and often utilized the country's traditional colors of red and black in their illustrations that were accompanied by powerful, simple slogans. [143] Created in high volume and circulated in constant rotation to the masses, these posters were displayed in public spaces, bulletin boards, and throughout interior settings.[144]

In his now famous speech from 1942 at the Forum on Literature and Art in Ya'an, China, Mao declared the posters as the new standard for art in the country. In declaring their effectiveness, he stated that "they (propaganda posters) operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy."[145] Further promoted by Zho Yang, the longtime cultural spokesperson for the CCP (Chinese Communist Party), propaganda posters were praised as being "good at combining the reality of today with the ideals of tomorrow."[146]

Much like the PRC's distribution of propaganda material on walls and billboards, Chen's images in the *Comfort Women Wanted* posters and billboards were placed

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[142] Kuiyi Shen, "Publishing Posters Before the Cultural Revoultion." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 12, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 180.

[143] Ibid, 181.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid., 179.

[146] Ibid., 181.

throughout multiple cities in various locations as public art. By placing them within the urban landscape, Lee creates a commentary on the advertisements put out by the Japanese army and also in effect attacks and destroys Japan's erasure of the comfort women. Educating viewers while criticizing the silence that surrounds the issue, many of the posters included QR codes that when linked to the viewer's cell phone, would lead to a website that would provide more historical details of the comfort women issue.

Lee criticizes the propaganda advertisements put out by Japan during WWII. Fueled by religion, spurred on by the war, and strengthened through their military efforts,[147] its primary message was to portray the country as a "powerful, peace loving, godly, trustworthy, and kind," specifically describing their soldiers who were viewed as self-sacrificing for a just cause.[148] Such was the case when Japan distributed text advertisements calling on women to become "comfort" women to serve the Japanese soldiers for the sake of its national sentiments. *Comfort Women Wanted* posters are a witty commentary on Japan's recruitment effort by reimagining their advertisements in the fashion of figurative patriotic illustrations that are reminiscent of James Montgomery Flagg's *I Want You for the U.S. Army* (1917; Figure 46). Chen's eyes stare directly back at the viewer, challenging the one-sided nature of wartime advertisements.

The decision to utilize the layout of a traditional wanted poster appears to be more than just a mere coincidence. As women who have spoken up about their experiences, they are enemies of the Japanese state. It is suggested that when one sees a person on an outlaw poster, there is a bounty on their life and they are a "dead man walking."

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[147] Ibid., 47.

[148] David Nelson Rowe, "Japanese Propaganda in North China, 1937 – 1938," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Oct. 1939): 672.

Perceived in this light, the women in the *Comfort Women Wanted* posters are Japan's fugitives, and the years of suffering and loss from their forced sexual servitude is the bounty on their life. In comparing it to Victor Keppler's 1944 poster, "Wanted! For Murder," they are also "bad women," femme fatales who are both rebellious and powerful for their refusal to remain silent, posing a threat to Japan's nation-state.

Cultural Amnesia and the Moment of Resistance

Lee challenges the politics of silence surrounding the case of the comfort women while simultaneously delivering a poignant message that addresses the history of the women as violated bodies of war and how such casualties in society are often never fully addressed. The artist also creates a visual protest against larger problems of human trafficking, an epidemic that is one of the largest growing industries in the world and is the second largest global business after arms-dealing.[149] The culture of silence and forgetting the uglier parts of history are not reliant on Japan's shameful past alone, but are instead telling of a larger systemic issue. Historian David Rojinsky calls this historical erasure the "culture of amnesia" of our contemporary capitalist society. [150] In our consumer-driven economy, the effectiveness of Lee's kiosks posters and billboards are partially due in part to their unique mimicry as advertisements. Additionally, Rojinsky states that the ephemeral quality of the urban landscape "triggers internal living memory" of the human transience of the subject.[151] It is in this way that the women are figuratively

[149] "Japan's Forgotten WW2 Sex Slaves." *Dazed and Confused Magazine*, 2013. Accessed March 11, 2015. http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/18312/1/comfort-women
[150] Rojinsky, 34.
[151] Ibid., 39.

"brought back from the dead" and their direct gaze at the viewer challenges them to contemplate their own moral engagement in the comfort women issue. [152]

In placing the posters and billboards within the urban landscape, Lee not only creates a platform to question the advertisements put out by the Japanese army, but also in effect criticizes the community for maintaining their silence. It is of interest to note that in South Korea, where an estimated eighty percent of comfort women originated,[153] only billboards and posters were displayed, while kiosk posters were only shown in the United States because the comfort women issue has always been widely known in South Korea.[154]

Through their unwavering and direct stares, the comfort women of the *Wanted* posters confront viewers to contemplate their own moral imperative. Though contrasting one another, Chen's images are emblematic of Marianne Hirsch's interpretation of the cinematic term "the space off," that is "located in the elsewhere or in the margins of hegemonic discourses and in counter-practices of new forms of community." [155] By looking at the juxtaposed images through a lens that exists outside the proverbial frame, the viewer can understand how Chen creates her own narrative on her terms. This encourages interpretation of her photographs as the literal shift of power from the period of her subjugation as comfort women victim, to empowered survivor in the present. This transmission takes place somewhere between the "then" of her forced compliance to pose

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[152] Ibid.

[153] Margaret D. Stetz and Bonnie B.C. Oh., *Legacies of the Comfort Women of World War II* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 9.

[154] Chang Jin Lee, Email message to author, March 08, 2016.

[155] Marianne Hirsch, "Resisting Images: Rereading Adolescence," in *Girls, Girlhood and Girls' Studies in Transition*, ed. Marion de Ras and Mieke Lunenberg (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1993); rpt. in *Provoking Agents: Theorizing Gender and Agency*, ed. Judith Kegan Gardiner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 194.

for the soldier's camera and the "now" of her willingness to come forward with her testimony.

It is through this transformative intervention that the process of healing can begin, a moment which Hirsch calls "the moment of resistance."[156] Lee creates this resistance for the comfort women through her appropriated images and in turn the subject takes on an active role in writing their own narrative through their choice to participate in the project. Although the red silhouettes convey isolation and pain, the comfort women's shared grief creates a space in which a new narrative has been formed that may allow for them to heal. A "revision of the screens," their previously denied visibility is now brought to the center of the image's surface. [157] Lee's appropriated images of the subjects' "then and now" are not meant to be viewed as a continuous narrative, but rather to contradict this singular paradigm by encouraging the viewer to think outside what is made visible within the frame. This signifies not only society's task to re-examine the powers tied to the comfort women issue, but also provides a platform for the comfort survivors to come forward with their testimonies.

Summary

Bill Schwarz states that photographs have the power to inform and revolutionize history by transforming private emotions into public knowledge.[158] In sharing their photographs and making their testimonies, the comfort women make a claim to their own historical narrative that rejects Japan's representation of comfort women as objects.

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[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Bill Schwarz, "Our Unadmitted Sorrow," *History Workshop Journal* 72 (Autumn 2011): 143.

Lee's posters not only possess the ability to educate the public on the comfort women issue, but may also inspire other survivors of sexual abuse to speak their truth.

It is through their potential as tools for social change that the *Comfort Women Wanted* posters move the comfort women beyond the traumas of their past and into the present where they may recover and history can reconcile its wrongdoings. The women's personal testimonies and photographs, along with Lee's appropriation of propaganda design, create visual memorials that are extremely instrumental because they document the physical aspect of the "having been there" that history and Japan has often hidden and denied.

CONCLUSION

Japan continues to refute arguments that the comfort women were the victims of sexual slavery and insists that there is a lack of historical proof to validate the women's claims. Further, it continues to state that the comfort women were willing prostitutes who enthusiastically volunteered their sexual services to soldiers to show their support for the state's war efforts.[160] These denials and lies point to a bigger problem that is unfortunately relevant in contemporary society: that the testimony of rape victims is often scrutinized for "proof" of an actual violation.

The comfort women system was institutionalized slavery that was in breach of international law. Acknowledging the possibility that sex workers may have also inhabited the comfort stations, the late Argentine Supreme Court Justice Carmen Argibay argued that sex work is never a permissible form of labor.[161] The inhumane living conditions within the highly monitored confines of the stations, the harsh medical exams, and the women's lack of sexual agency "dehumanized and objectified them to the extent that they were sexual slaves."[162]

What is known about the comfort system is primarily given by the comfort women's testimonies which play an essential role in legitimizing their history. Despite

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[160] Alice Yun Chai, "Korean Feminist and Human Rights Politics: The Chongshindae / Jugunianfu Comfort Women Movement," In *Korean American Women: From Tradition to Modern Feminism*, edited by Young I. Song and Ailee Moon (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 239.

[161] Carmen Argibay, "Sexual Slavery and the Comfort Women of World War II," *Berkeley Journal of International Law* 21, no. 2 (2003): 375 – 389.

[162] Ibid., 379.

shortcomings such as circumstantial details and memory lapse issues, testimonies should not be easily dismissed because “official histories” also suffer from the same problems. The lived experiences of the comfort women and the abuse they endured not only validate their version of the past, but also demand that they be recognized in the present.

The Japanese government has argued that the inclusion of the comfort women narrative into official history texts is an inappropriate topic to teach to young adults. However, most of the young girls put into the stations were of school age. Japan insists that the uglier parts of its history works against nationalism, and that it must instead fight for an “official history” that the country can be proud of. The degradation experienced by the comfort women is not an isolated issue confined to only East Asia, but is telling of an international problem of human trafficking. One of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world, the sexual exploitation of young girls and women is widespread. The comfort women’s case can play an indispensable role in confronting sexual assault that is prevalent in society: on college campuses, within homes, and in military environments, especially during times of war.

Because of the nature of gendered trauma, the abuse committed on sexualized bodies during times of war, and the consequential shame and the erasure of identity, it is only through retrieving and recognizing the individual testimonies of the comfort women that any sense of justice can be achieved. Emphasizing the women’s diversity and further examining the collective message of the women’s experiences contains the key to a more comprehensive understanding of their struggles. The beginning steps toward the women receiving an apology of recognition lies not only in the hands of the Japanese

government, but also on a revision of society's patriarchal ideals so that it may be willing to grapple with its past grievances and wrongdoings.

Memorial artworks like *Monument to Peace*, *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW*, and *Comfort Women Wanted* establish what Pierre Nora terms *lieux de mémoire*, or places of memory. Nora states that places of memory are created because sites of memory no longer exist in today's modern postcolonial society.[163] The memories created by these artworks are sites of resistance for the comfort women that, along with the women's testimonies, solidify their experiences and serve as counter-memory to Japan's denial.

Comfort women memorials are radical because they stray from traditional commemorative practices of honoring masculine ideals of heroism and are instead dedicated to honoring female victims of war. Further, they pay reverence to a subordinate group whose narratives have been neglected and erased from Japan's version of history by creating feminine spaces of remembrance and national belonging. Operating as complex memorials to the comfort women, these artworks also educate the public about a historical issue and provide spaces for individual and collective mourning. In so doing, they reveal various strategies for how a public discourse can take place outside the sanction of Japan's memory.

[163] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26, no. 1 (Spring, 1989): 7.

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FIGURES

Figure 1. *Japanese Military Comfort Women Taken to Comfort Stations on the Front Lines in Military Trucks*, Courtesy of the House of Sharing, Seoul, South Korea, date unknown

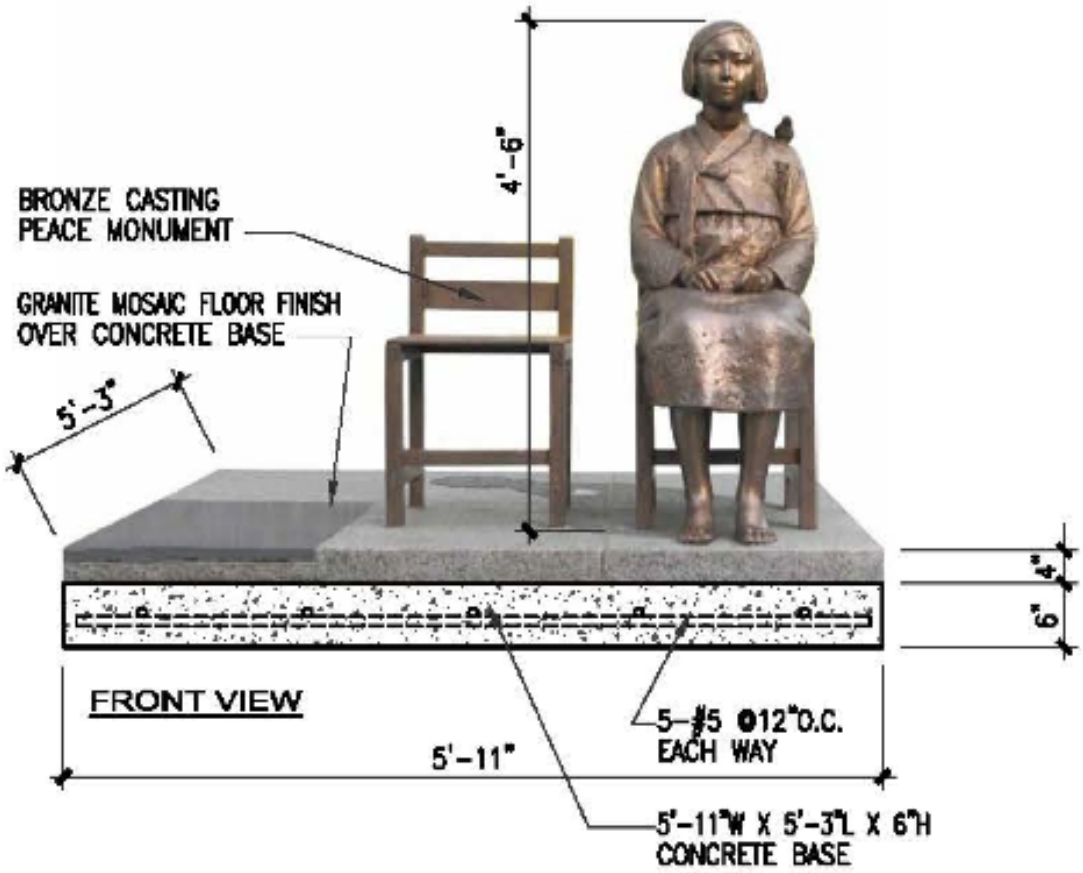


Figure 2. Kim Un Seng and Kim Suk Jeong, *Monument to Peace* (dimensions), Seoul, South Korea, 2011

Figure 3. Kim Un Seng and Kim Suk Jeong, *Monument to Peace* (original casting), Seoul, South Korea, 2011

Figure 4. *Comfort Women Memorial Plaque*, Palisades Park, New Jersey, 2010

Figure 5. *Comfort Women Memorial Plaque*, Veterans Memorial Park in Westbury, New York, 2012

Figure 6. *Comfort Women Memorial Plaque*, Veterans Memorial Park in Westbury, New York, 2014

Figure 7. Kim Un Seng and Kim Suk Jeong, *Monument to Peace* (replica), Glendale, California, 2013

Figure 8. Kim Un Seng and Kim Suk Jeong, *Monument to Peace* (replica), Southfield, Michigan, 2014

Figure 9. Maya Lin, *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, National Mall, Washington, D.C., 1982

Figure 10. Frederick Hart, *The Three Servicemen (The Three Soldiers)*, National Mall, Washington, D.C., 1984

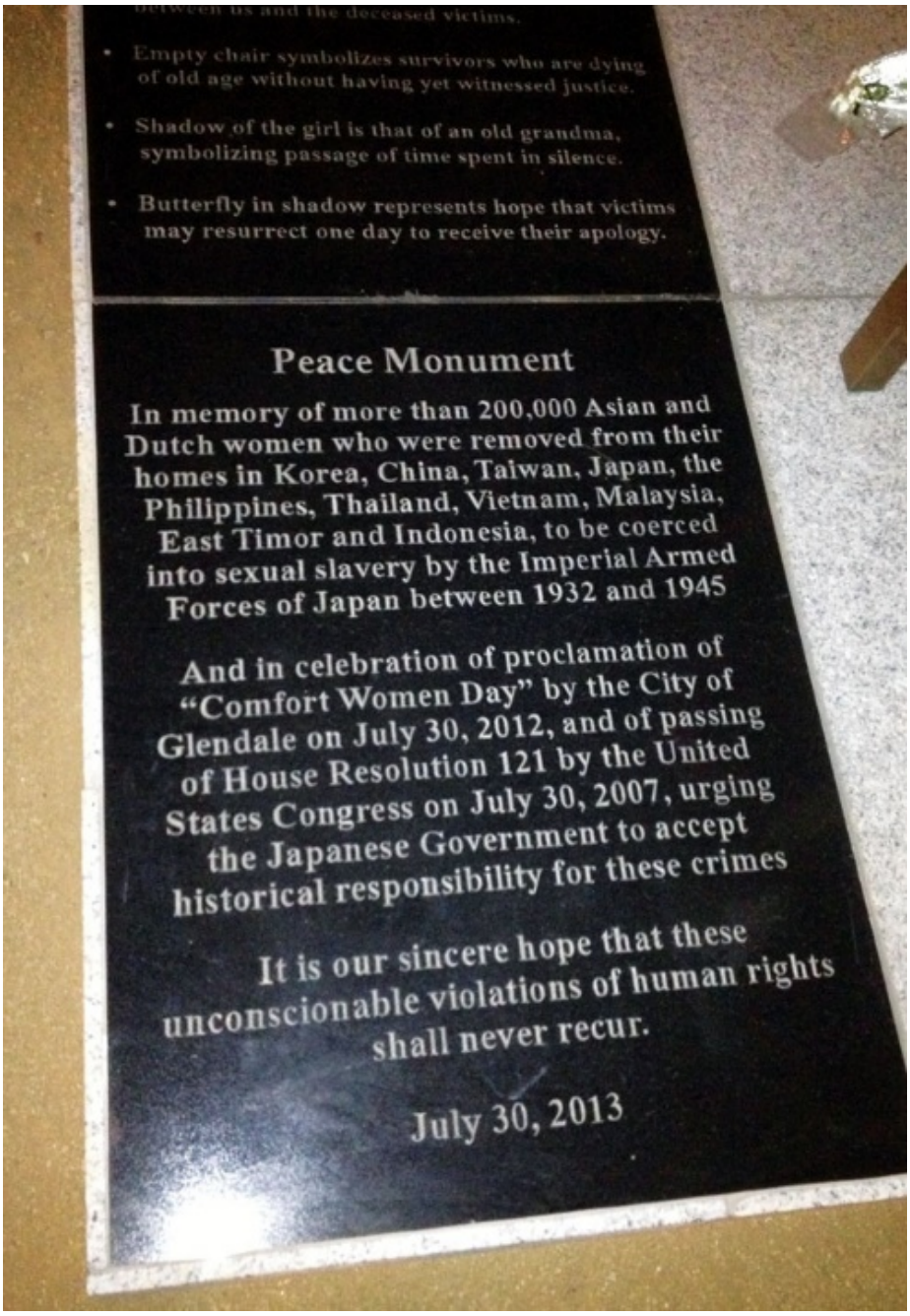


Figure 11. *Monument to Peace* (inscription), Glendale, California, 2013

Figure 12. Kim Un Seng, Kim Suk Jeong, Pan Yiqun, and Shi Yong, *Monument to Peace (Chinese and Korean Youth)*, Seoul, South Korea, 2015

Figure 13. *Comfort Memorial Peace Garden*, Fairfax, Virginia, 2014

Figure 14. *Comfort Women Butterfly Memorial*, Liberty Plaza, Union City, New Jersey, 2014

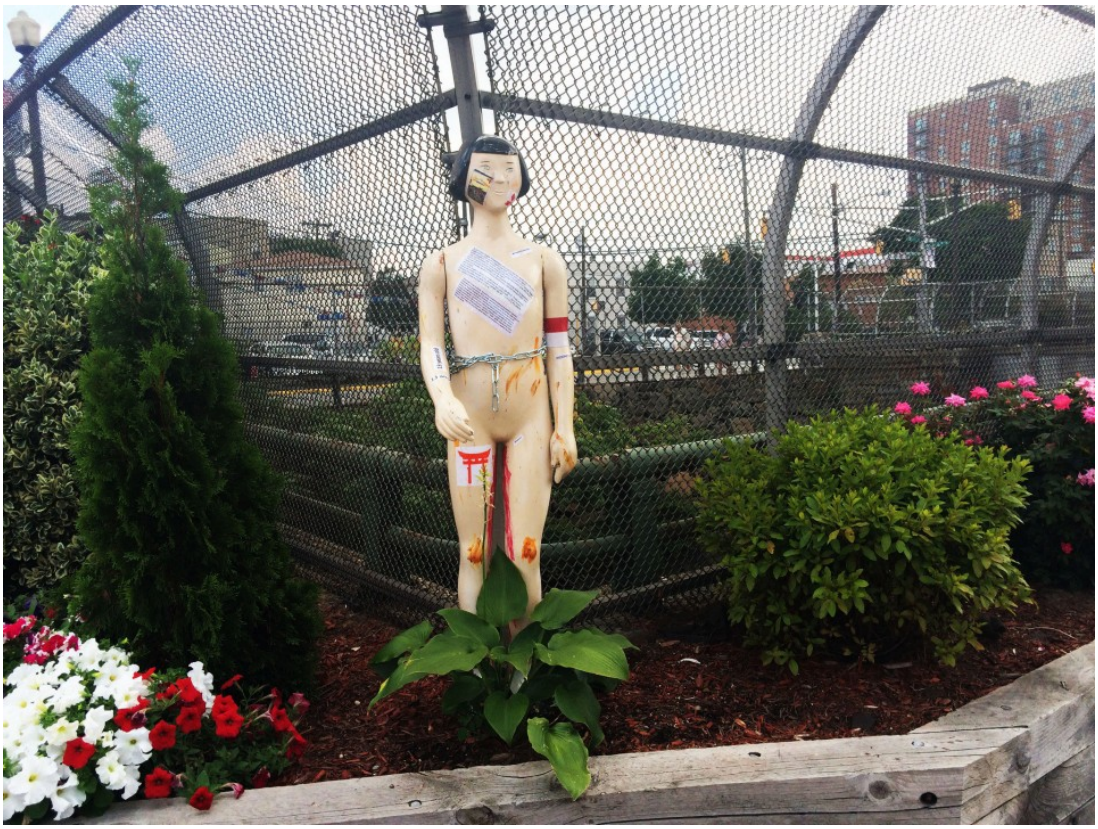


Figure 15. Artwork from *Our Cry*, Liberty Plaza, Union City, New Jersey, 2014

Figure 16. Yong Soon Min, *Wearing History / WHEN / NOW*, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea, 2014

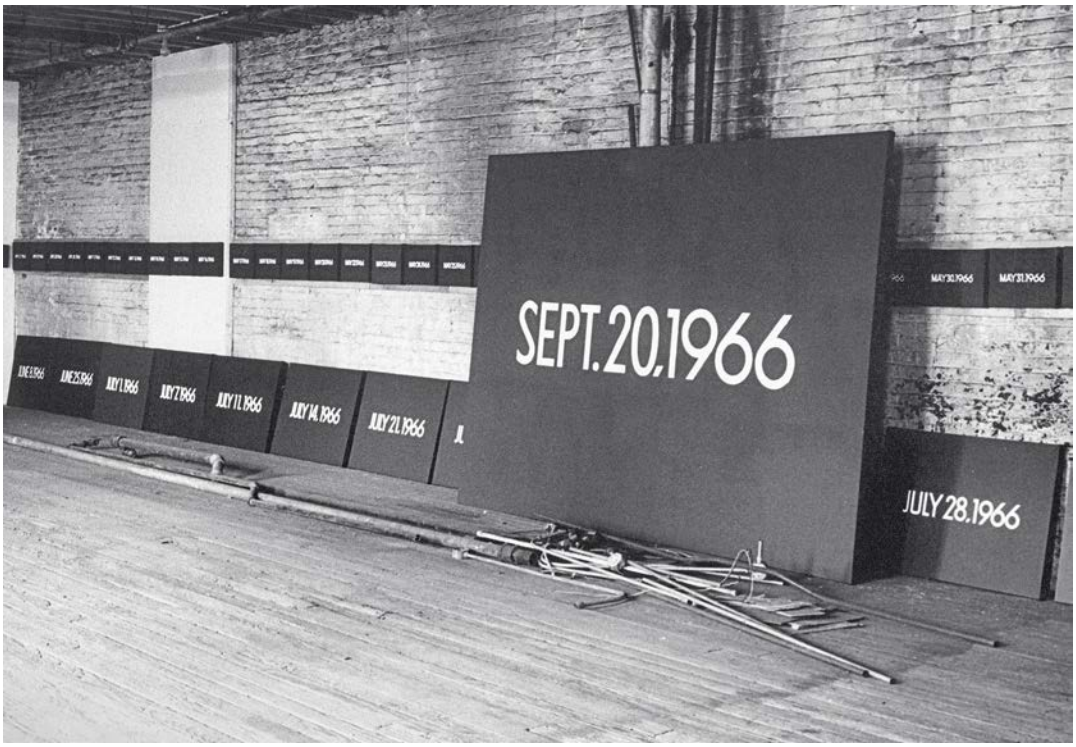


Figure 17. On Kawara, Selections from *Today*, 1966 – 2003

Figure 18. Yong Soon Min, *WHEN*, 2012

Figure 19. Yong Soon Min, *NOW*, 2014

Figure 20. Young Soon Min, *Remembering Jungshindae*, 1993

Figure 21. Do Ho Suh, *Some/One*, 2005

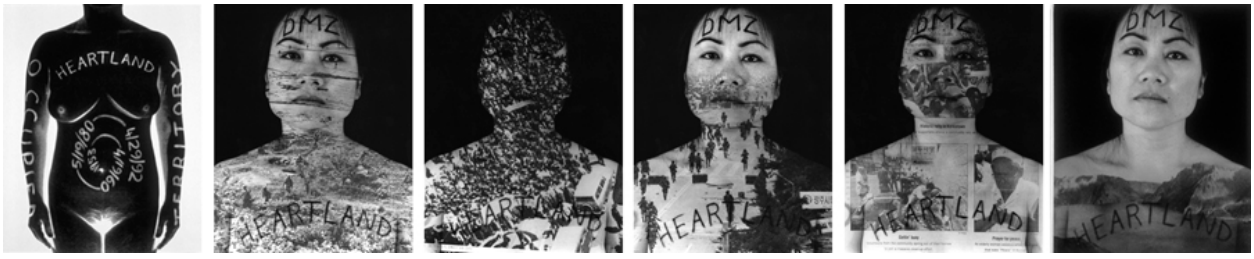


Figure 22. Yong Soon Min, *Defining Moments* (series of 6 photographs), 1992

Figure 23. Yong Soon Min, *Defining Moments* (torso detail), 1992

Figure 24. On Kawara, *May 20, 1981* (left), and *December 29, 1977* (right) from *Today* series, 1966-2003

Figure 25. Chang Jin Lee, *Comfort Women Wanted*, Entrance of exhibition, Taipei, Taiwan, 2013

Figure 26. Chang Jin Lee, *Comfort Women Wanted*, Re-creation of a Military Comfort Station (exterior), Pre-Inaugural Exhibit at the Comfort Women Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, 2013

Figure 27. Chang Jin Lee, *Comfort Women Wanted*, Audio Installation, Incheon Women Artists' Biennale, Incheon, South Korea, 2009

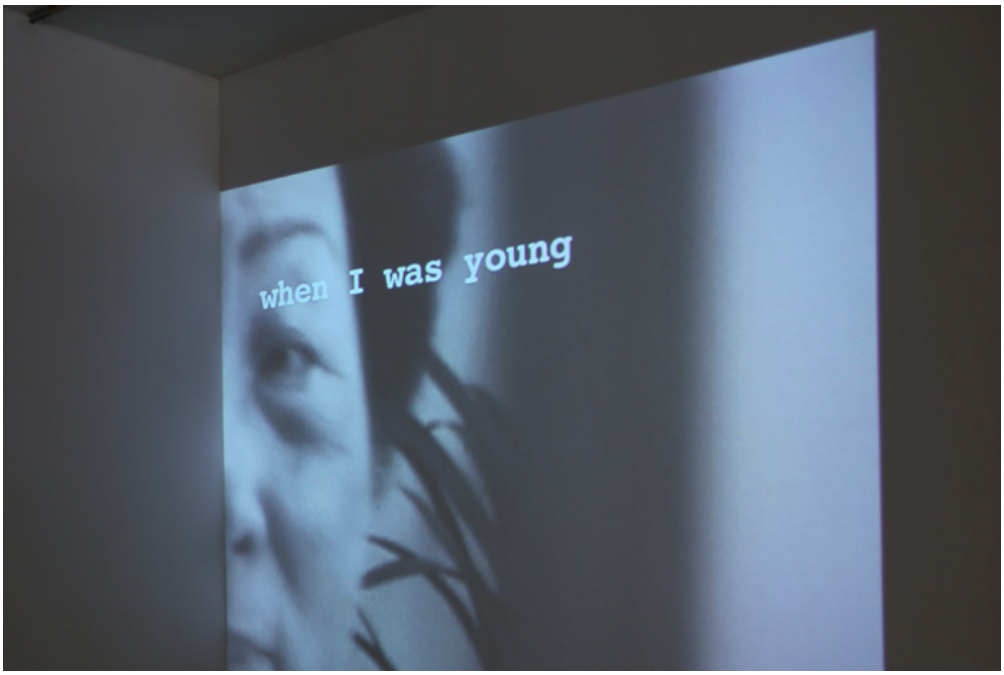
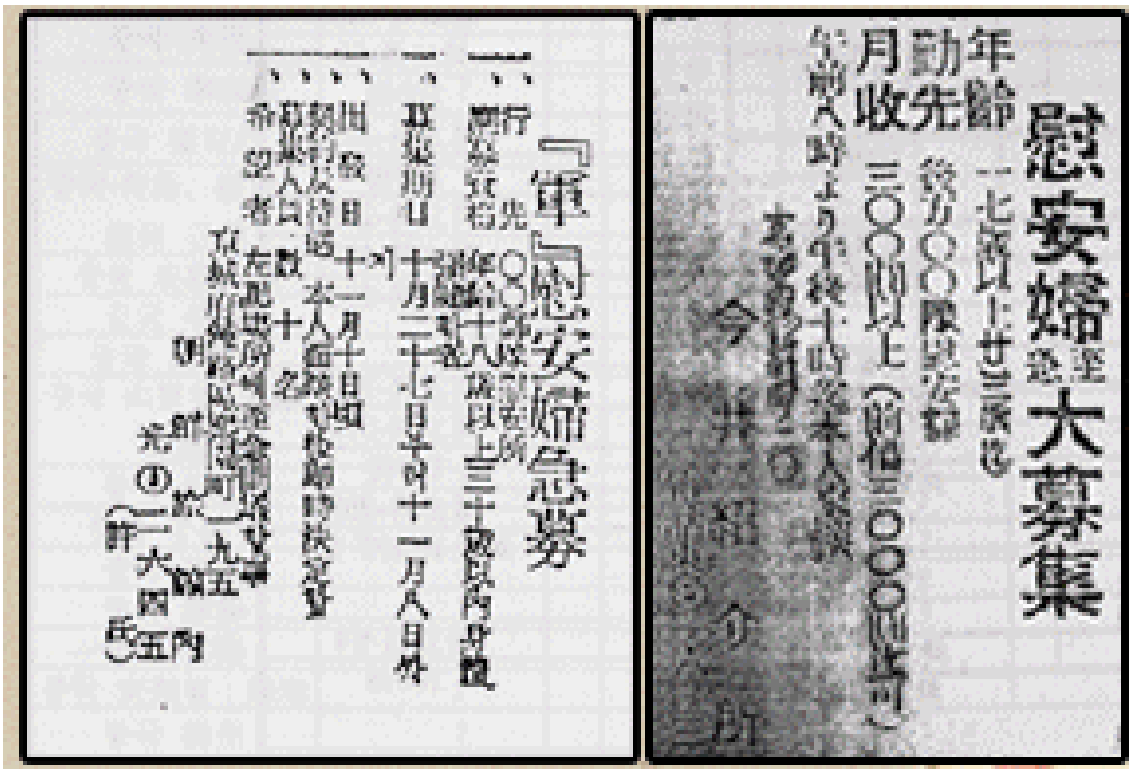


Figure 28. Chang Jin Lee, *Comfort Women Wanted*, Video Installation, Spaces Gallery, Cleveland, Ohio, 2011

Figure 29. Chang Jin Lee, *Comfort Women Wanted*, Posters, 2008 – 2013



朝鮮総督府機関紙
"毎日新報"
1944年10月27日広告

新聞"京城日報"
1944年7月26日

Figure 30. "Military Comfort Women Wanted, Urgent!" Recruitment advertising for Comfort women in newspapers in Korea (*Keijō nippō,* July 26, 1944), Courtesy of Chang Jin Lee via the House of Sharing archives, Seoul, South Korea

Figure 31. Chang Jin Lee, *Comfort Women Wanted*, Posters of Mei Chen, Wood Street Galleries, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, 2013

Figure 32. *American Soldier Talking to a Comfort Woman*, Photograph, U.S. National Archives, 1944

Figure 33. *Comfort Women and a Chinese Solider*, Photograph, U.S. National Archives, 1944

Figure 34. Comparison of Mei Chen's Portrait in Chang Jin Lee's *Comfort Women Wanted* Ad-like Poster (2009) to Bernardo Daddi's *A Crowned Virgin Martyr (St. Catherine of Alexandria)*, Tempera and gold on wood panel, 24 ¼" x 12," 1340

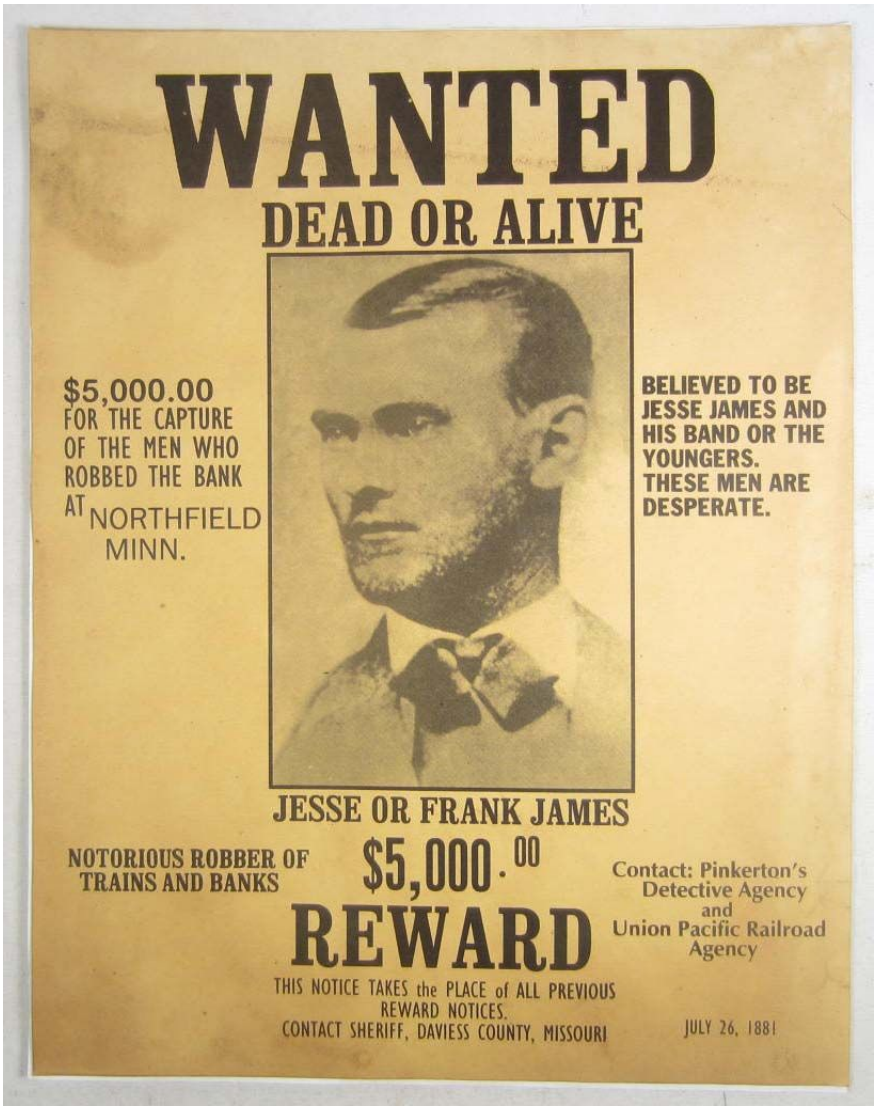


Figure 35. “Wanted: Dead or Alive,” Poster, 1881

Figure 36. 佚名, *Respectfully Wish Chairman Eternal life (Jingzhu Mao zhuxi wanshou wujiang)*, 1968

Figure 37. Victor Keppler, “Wanted! For Murder,” Poster, 1944

Figure 38. Frederick Siebel, “Someone Talked!” Poster, 1942

Figure 39. Chang Jin Lee, *Comfort Women Wanted*, Re-creation of a Military Comfort Station (interior), Pre-Inaugural Exhibit at the Comfort Women Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, 2013

Figure 40. Chang Jin Lee, *Comfort Women Wanted*, Posters of Ong-Iyeon Park, Spaces Gallery, Cleveland, Ohio, 2011

Figure 41. Chang Jin Lee, *Comfort Women Wanted*, Posters of Jan Ruff O'Herne, Wood Street Galleries, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, 2013

Figure 42. Chang Jin Lee, *Comfort Women Wanted*, Posters of Mei Chen, Incheon Women Artists' Biennale, Seoul, South Korea, 2009

Figure 43. Chang Jin Lee, *Comfort Women Wanted*, Poster of Mei Chen, Public Art, New York, New York, 2013

Figure 44. Chang Jin Lee, *Comfort Women Wanted*, Light Box Poster of Mei Chen, Public Art, Taipei City, Taiwan, 2013

Figure 45. Chang Jin Lee, *Comfort Women Wanted*, Posters of Mei Chen, Public Art, Seoul, South Korea, 2012

Figure 46. James Montgomery Flagg, *I Want You for U.S. Army*, Poster, 1917