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JANE JIN KAISEN'S WORKS AS THE PRACTICE OF EXPLORING HISTORY, MEMORY AND TRAUMA

Abstract: The text refers to the artistic practice of Jane Jin Kaisen, a visual artist born on the Korean Jeju Island, but living and working in Copenhagen. The starting point is her exhibition at esea contemporary in Manchester (2024), during which she showed works such as *Halmang* (2023), *Of the Sea* (2013) and *The Woman, the Orphan, and the Tiger* (2010). Balancing between multiple worlds, she portrays in them political histories and collective memories inextricably linked to individual stories. Returning as an adult to her home island, the artist here grapples with one of the most “silenced” events in modern Korean history. She “uncover” colonialism, including not only the Japanese occupation and subsequent American domination, but also the phenomenon of transnational adoption to Western countries. In doing so, she evokes the world of *haenyeo* (women of the sea) and shamanic practices, while juxtaposing popularised memories of her grandfather and traditions of her grandmother/mother. One of her main motivations seems to be to explore the ways in which trauma from previous generations is passed on to the present and how to heal. Her ambiguous status as an adoptee and granddaughter of a Survivor makes it possible to evoke Marianne Hirsh's category of “post-memory” and the strategy of re-viving and collecting stories, as Ernst van Appen understands it. Jane Jin Kaisen is interested in revealing complexity rather than creating linear narratives, as she declares that she lacks concrete memories, which makes her turn to archival material. In this context, her practice can be assessed as a search for a trace or “ghost form” of history that needs to be redeemed and evoked in the present through shamanic rituals. In other words, in this way, she “frames and illuminates the sore spots”, demonstrating the invigorating function of art in dealing with tragic events.

Keywords: Korean shamanism, post-memory, art as intervention, Jane Jin Kaisen

In his collection of essays *Krytyka jako interwencja* (*Criticism as Intervention*), Ernst van Alphen argues that art can be a space for experiments transforming thought through imagination, so as to “frame and illuminate the painful places of culture”. In this context, he sees intense proliferation of memory practices in art and literature, which has occurred since the 1990s, with the aim of “reviving lost or invisible knowledge and memories”¹. The Dutch researcher considers this to be the result of a serious crisis of memory (fear of forgetting), and links this phenomenon itself to changes in media culture (information explosion) and to the processes of globalisation and mass migration (when the preservation of stable national tradition, historical past and intergenerational continuity becomes problematic). Hence, van Alphen postulates that in this situation art and literature should take on an interventionist character, interacting primarily on an affective level rather than relying solely on the transmission of information or meaning. What is at stake here, he writes, “is an intensity that touches us and imprints itself on us, leaves a mark and thus transforms us”². It is precisely this type of artistic practice, understood as the creation of various intensities, that can prove invigorating and productive in the diagnosed crisis of memory. Crucially, however, it is most concerned, as the researcher argues, with the process of understanding and working through not so much past events as “current traces and imprints on the reality, their memory, their visible and invisible heritage”³.

It seems to me that this is exactly the tactic Jane Jin Kaisen, an internationally acclaimed visual artist born on the Korean island of Jeju but living and working in Copenhagen, uses in her artistic endeavours⁴. Her work – video installations, narrative films, performative acts and texts – is, in my opinion, characterised by this alternative practice that van Alphen writes about. This is

¹ E. van Alphen, *Krytyka jako interwencja. Sztuka, pamięć, afekt*, ed. K. Bojarska, transl. K. Bojarska, R. Sendyka, M. Szubartowska, Ł. Zaręba, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2019, pp. 7, 156-161.

² *Ibid.*, p. 216.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

⁴ Jane Jin Kaisen is a middle-generation artist (b. 1980), with thorough education acquired on both sides of the Atlantic (graduate of the University of California and The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, recipient of the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program). As a PhD in artistic research, she teaches media arts at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. Her work has been shown all over the world. Recent years have been full of successes: representing Korea at the 58th Venice Biennale (2019), “Exhibition of the Year” Award by AICA, Denmark (2020), grant from the Danish Arts Foundation (2022) and the New Carlsberg Foundation (2023), the Beckett Prize (2023), plus numerous solo shows, lectures, invitations to participate in group exhibitions (in the last 2 years, e.g., in Taipei, Seoul, Osaka, Sydney, New York, San Francisco, Ottawa, London, Paris, Copenhagen, Antwerp and Cologne).

because Kaisen seeks to trace the relationship between history, biography and art in a critical and self-reflexive way. Drawing on extensive interdisciplinary research, the artist activates a field where lived experience and embodied knowledge intersect with larger political histories, and where the past merges with the present. I would therefore like to reflect on her artistic practice, in which her distinctive use of the mediums of film, documentary and archive, although rooted in memory crisis, actually counteracts it. I will verify this statement by referring to a recently completed exhibition that was held at esea contemporary in Manchester (2024)⁵. Kaisen showed three video works in the historic interior of a former market building, once part of the Victorian Smithfield fish market: *Halmang* (2023), to which the title of the exhibition refers, and her earlier films: *The Woman, The Orphan, and the Tiger* (2010) and *Of the Sea* (2013). Publications, archival documents and personal memorabilia collected in the gallery – the result of several years of her research – gave them their proper context and even a kind of metaphor. This choice was not accidental, and all of the films and “memorabilia” are narratively intertwined, revolving around the themes of migration, loss, identity, memory and healing. In a peculiar way, they can be treated as a single work, stretched over time and consisting of four “acts”. To some extent compelled to explore private archives and open up to the domestic sphere, the artist releases the tension between private memory and history with her exhibition at esea contemporary, thereby illuminating “painful spots” in the histories of Korea, Denmark and the United States. I see in this the interventionist and critical potential that Ernst van Alphen demanded to be released in art.

Three Female Generational Narratives

The first “act” of this extended narrative is *The Woman, the Orphan, and the Tiger* (2010), one of the most important works from Kaisen’s early career. This was the period of her formation as an artist following her first encounter with Korea and Jeju Island (her place of birth – the artist was adopted by a Danish family at the age of three months), the moment when she began to understand her autonomy. She was already active in the artist-activist

⁵ *Jane JinKaisen: Halmang*, esea contemporary, Manchester, on from January 20, 2024, until April 21, 2024 (extended until 23rd June), conceived by Xiaowen Zhu, curated by Dot Zhihan Jia; exhibition supported by Arts Council England, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and the Danish Arts Foundation. Esea contemporary advertises itself as the UK’s only independent space to showcase and promote artists that identify with and are informed by East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) cultural backgrounds, as a venue for dynamic and engaging cross-cultural exchange, targeting themes relevant to the ESEA community and relating to the cultural experience of the area.

collective UFOlab (Unidentified Foreign Object Laboratory), which she co-founded with four similar artists from Denmark and Sweden. She was involved in social organisations committed to the rights of adopted people. During her education in Europe and the United States, she immersed herself in theories combining feminist reflection and postcolonial criticism, while learning about diasporic communities other than Korean ones⁶. Kaisen drew on many of these experiences by joining a major exhibition project, *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism*⁷, and creating *The Woman, the Orphan, and the Tiger*.

In the film made together with Guston Sondin-Kung (an American artist and filmmaker), she presents the stories of three generations of women who remain on the margins of mainstream historical narratives. In doing so, she gives voice to women forced into prostitution for the army of the Japanese Empire (before and during World War II); to women “mobilised” into the military prostitution industry near American bases (from the 1950s to the present); to women who were taken to Western countries as young children through international adoption (since the end of the Korean War). The film, which the artist describes as narrative and experimental, combines multiple “languages”: excerpts from oral testimonies, public speeches, interviews, archival and contemporary film footage. Kaisen’s cinematic story unfolds non-chronologically, layer by layer, with three main threads constantly intertwined.

The story begins with a scene before the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery⁸. A slow-motion shot shows

⁶ J. J. Kaisen, *The Woman, The Orphan, and the Tiger: Jane Jin Kaisen Disentangles Korean History Through Art*, interview by Lisa Kwon, 2022, <https://far-near.media/stories/the-woman-the-orphan-and-the-tiger-jane-jin-kaisen-disentangles-korean-history-through-art> (accessed 15.06.2024). Her other works also relate to this theme, including the film *Tracing Trades* (2006, single channel, 38'), in which the artist traces the history of human trafficking from Korea to Europe and discovers colonial tropes in the history of Scandinavia, as well as the project *Loving Belinda* (2006-2015, three videos, an artist book, colour photography), where, through the formula of a mockumentary and a staged situation, Kaisen tries to critically show the phenomenon of transnational adoption by reversing its traditional scheme (a white girl from Denmark is adopted by an Asian-American couple).

⁷ The project *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism* – through exhibitions combined with workshops, conferences and performative acts – was intended to contribute to illuminating the forgotten history of Nordic colonialism and to show how this past continues to reproduce itself as waves of intolerance, xenophobia and nationalism. In this project, Kaisen, in collaboration with Tobias Hübinette, explored the phenomenon of international adoption as a legacy of colonialism.

⁸ The Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery was organised on Tokyo by women's social organisations. See: R. Sakamoto, *The Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery: A Legal and Feminist Approach to the "Comfort Women" Issue*, “New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies” 2001, Volume 3, Issue 1, pp. 49-58, <https://www.nzasia.org.nz/uploads/1/3/2/1/132180707/comfortwomen.pdf> (accessed 11.06.2024).

an elderly woman, witness to the events, who, unable to describe her suffering in words, gesticulates violently and then faints. She is accompanied by women's voices, describing stories of violence and enslavement, which gradually increase in strength and intensity to the point of a cacophony of intermingled and no longer recognisable words in English, Chinese, Danish and Korean. The whole forms "the narrative of a body falling apart under the weight of another powerful blow, this time the pain of talking about being a victim of violence"⁹. This powerful opening of the film refers to sex slaves, largely Korean women, euphemistically referred to as comfort women (Japanese *ianfu*, Korean *wianbu*), used by the Japanese army in so-called "comfort houses". It is estimated that there may have been more than 200 thousand of them. Slavery left a deep psychological and physical mark on those who managed to survive. They were rejected by their families and local communities, isolated, and stigmatised for what had been done to them. Very often, therefore, they chose to remain silent and thus had to deal with their traumas in complete solitude. It was only in the early 1990s that the first of them (as elderly people) dared to speak out about it, because successive Japanese governments still refused to take responsibility for the practice of sexual slavery. In the film, Kaisen shows scenes from one of the weekly protest rallies held in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul, during which an elderly woman speaks about seeking to clarify the truth before they are gone and about compensation for wounds to their bodies and souls. Although their fate has become one of the most silenced aspects of the Second World War, recently there has been growing awareness of their story in the Korean society, and the struggle to regain their dignity is gaining increasing support.

The issue of military prostitution related to the US military presence in Korea, which remains a social taboo, is different in this regard¹⁰. The author of *The Woman, The Orphan, and the Tiger* perceives it as essentially structural continuation of the Japanese system of enslavement¹¹. Significantly, the artist argues that this practice operated with "tacit" social (or rather governmental) consent, for as a "necessary evil", only the bodies of some women were sacrificed for the safety of others, and they were even told that this "sacrifice" for the country was a patriotic act (this is how they were indoctrinated in the 1970s).

⁹ Y. Ikeuchi, *The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger - Voices and Narratives Opening Up a Site of Contestation*, in: *Dissident Translations*, ed. J. J. Kaisen, exh. cat., Århus Kunstbygning, Århus 2011.

¹⁰ It was only eight years after the Kaisen film, in 2018, that the the Supreme Court of Korea admitted that the Korean government, in alliance with the US government, had justified and promoted the prostitution of military "comfort women" in US bases since the Korean War.

¹¹ *A conversation between Cecilia Widenheim and Jane Jin Kaisen*, in: *Dissident Translations...*

However, these women found themselves outside the social framework, a result of the influence of patriarchal ideology combined with Confucian teachings underpinning Korean society and statehood (sexual purity and marriage being valued as the most important moral duty of a woman)¹². In this context, women having sexual relations and relationships with non-Korean men were stigmatised as “impure”, “promiscuous”, and deserving “public disgrace”. Since the Korean War, they have been referred to as *yang-gong-ju* (western princess), which would function as a derogatory and contemptuous term for decades to come. In the film, this is illustrated by mixed night shots of a modern city and archive films from the Japanese colonial period. “The present” is epitomised by barbed-wire walls surrounding military bases, nightclubs, and silhouettes of uniformed men accompanied by women. Those who narrate it, unlike the “comfort women” of the past, do not reveal their faces and identities in the film; their voices are the background to the projected images. This theme is underscored by a symbolic scene where the artist juxtaposes repeated shots of streets illuminated by the glow of garish neon lights with the cross of a church glowing like a neon sign. For Yasuko Ikeuchi, a Japanese theatre and gender studies scholar, this cross, illuminated in red, provides unique light that stands out strikingly in the Seoul night, symbolising “blood of countless thousands that flowed on the Korean peninsula during the Cold War following the colonial rule and the historical scars that are etched deeply into the subconscious of the people”¹³.

Jane Jin Kaisen, however, does not stop at showing the continuity of violence against Korean women through an organised system of military prostitution, initiated by the period of Japanese occupation and continuing as a consequence of US neo-colonial militarism. A third theme, close to her for personal reasons, relating to adoption, continues to emerge in her story. It was in Korea that adoption acquired an almost “industrial” formula due to its size and effectiveness. Notably, it also became international and interracial. This theme is represented by airport shots showing people arriving to and departing from Korea, views of a modern city by day, images from a hospital room and, above all, faces of women who talk about their experience of adoption and returning to their place of birth. One of them asks questions of her biological mother (“Do you regret that I never looked for you?”; “Should I go back to Denmark and will you be disappointed, or will you be relieved?”), and later also of herself (“Would you like to have grown up with your biological parents instead of your

¹² See: Y. Kwak, *Pushing away from their own nation? South Korean women married to migrant husbands from developing countries*, “Ethnic and Racial Studies” 2018, Volume 42, Issue 7, pp. 1186-1203.

¹³ Y. Ikeuchi, *The Woman, The Orphan...*

adoptive mother, or are you relieved that you haven't?"; "Are you able to forgive your biological parents for giving you up for adoption?"; "Did meeting your biological parents affect your relationship with your adoptive mother?"; "Do you feel anger about the adoption? If so, who do you direct your anger at? Your biological parents? The adoptive mother? The South Korean or Danish agency that carried out the adoption? Market forces, because you consider international adoption to be an industry? The South Korean or Danish government?").

To a large extent, these questions reveal the complicated context of Korean international adoptions and at the same time, which seems important, focus on the issue of being abandoned. Adoptions began after the end of the Korean War (1950-1953), due to a large number of orphaned children, as a temporary emergency measure to help children from an impoverished country in distress. However, this practice, perhaps surprisingly at first, continued and gained momentum over the next three decades as Korea developed rapidly and achieved economic success. Today, it is estimated that out of over 200 thousand international adoptions, less than 10 per cent occurred during this initial post-war period¹⁴. In the film, the artist relates the personal narratives of adoptees and those from the Korean diaspora, allowing us to understand the process of sending Korean children to (mostly white) families in Europe and the US. What emerges is a poignant picture of a silenced past showing patriarchal systemic instrumentalisation of women and children that still echoes in the present.

"The business of exporting children" in Korea began with deep-rooted xenophobia and prejudice against bi-racial children, which stemmed from the state's policy of being "one country for one ethnic people". Children born from a relationship between a Korean woman and an American (or Japanese) soldier were seen as a social problem, as were unmarried mothers¹⁵. Until recently, extramarital children were considered "non-existent" in the family registration system, and their mothers were ostracised and pressurised by their families, had difficulty finding work. Korean women could therefore not be single mothers – the state did not allow it. Deprived of a livelihood, they could raise such children alone in poverty and disgrace, or give them up for adoption abroad believing that the English language and a Western education (as a privilege) would offer them better prospects. The words of Jane Jeong Trenka, an adoptee in the USA and now an activist and award-winning writer, recalled in the film, are highly telling in this context. "One step away from a Korean-American

¹⁴ Y. Koo, *'We Deserve to Be Here': The Development of Adoption Critiques by Transnational Korean Adoptees in Denmark*, "Anthropology Matters" 2019, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 50.

¹⁵ Ch. Sang-Hun, *World's Largest 'Baby Exporter' Confronts Its Painful Past*, "The New York Times", 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/17/world/asia/south-korea-adoption.html> (accessed 11.06.2024).

woman married to a white man, one more or the same step away from a Korean military wife with a soldier husband. Another step away from a war bride. Another step: war booty. Step: camp town prostitute. Step: comfort woman. Step again: comfort child”¹⁶.

Jane Jin Kaisen was herself part of this peak generation of adoption in Korea of the 1970s and 1980s, when she was brought to Denmark at the age of three months. This destination of adoption is remarkable because it turns out that Denmark has one of the highest rates of international adoption per capita in the world, and the country from which adoptees most often come is Korea. In Denmark, it has been treated as “a progressive way of family formation and a humanitarian act that benefits the world’s neediest children as well as childless couples”¹⁷. This narrative, embedded in Scandinavian conceptions, is challenged by *The Woman, the Orphan, and the Tiger*. It brings to the fore the voices of those who have returned to Korea, making a personal journey to create or affirm their narrative of identity, only to find out that the constant demand for children for adoption from Western countries has resulted in unnecessary separation of families, questionable conduct of agencies involved in the process, and a failure to develop support for children and mothers in Korea. Kaisen thus uses her film to express a clear critique¹⁸.

To a large extent, this critical tone is reflected in the final scenes of the film, the backdrop for which is the Korea-U.S.A. Centennial Monument (a symbol of the strategic relationship between the two countries) and the War Memorial of Korea (an enormous military museum in Seoul that also serves as a cultural centre, patriotic education centre and recreational park). The artist focuses particularly on the latter, where activists attempting to draw society’s attention to the issue of adoption perform puppet shows featuring an eponymous protagonist, an orphan and a tiger. One scene is particularly shocking: a puppet representing a pregnant woman has her abdomen cut open, the foetus is pulled out of her, and straw inserted into her uterus is set on fire. This use of the allegorical power of representation, as Yasuko Ikeuchi puts it, makes it possible to show the brutal, grotesque reality of the adoption system and sexual

¹⁶ This is a quote from an autobiographical book: J. J. Trenka, *Fugitive Visions: An Adoptee’s Return to Korea*, Graywolf Press, Saint Paul 2009, pp. 68-69, referenced in *The Woman, The Orphan, and the Tiger*.

¹⁷ It is worth mentioning that in the *Tracing Trades* project prepared for *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism*, Jane Jin Kaisen and Tobias Hübinette suggest it was the Lutheran doctrine that contributed to the development of the Scandinavian welfare state model which paved the way for legal and moral legitimisation of international adoption to become so prevalent in the region.

¹⁸ N. Russett, *Jane JinKaisen: Halmang*, 2024, <https://corridor8.co.uk/article/jane-jin-kaisen-halmang> (accessed 17.06.2024).

violence against Korean women – to an extent that cannot easily be explained by words alone¹⁹. The film thus ends as powerfully as it begins, and to add to this, again, the final frames are accompanied by women voices arranged in a building-up and increasingly incomprehensible polyphony. In this way, the artist shows the complexity of personal accounts that struggle against the colonial and state amnesia that erases their official stories.

Sea women and the “Island of Endless Rebellion”

The second “act” of the complex narrative presented by Jane Jin Kaisen at esea contemporary is represented by *Of the Sea* (2013, single-channel video, colour with sound, 2’15”). This short video consists of a single slow-motion shot of the artist wandering through the rocky basalt shore of Jeju Island. Dressed all in black, wearing heeled boots, she clumsily but determinedly makes her way towards the sea, with a net containing diving and seafood-collecting equipment slung over her shoulder, and a book in her hand. The dominant, poignant element of the video is female singing, which forms the work’s only soundtrack. The video lasts as long as the song. Despite its apparent simplicity, the work intertwines tropes related to recent Korean history, traditions cultivated on Jeju, and the history of the Kaisen family.

Jeju is a volcanic island located south of the Korean Peninsula, between China and Japan. Its strategic military location has made it a victim of wars throughout history. Today, however, it is known for its extremely picturesque landscape, which has made it a very popular holiday and honeymoon destination in Korea (and even more widely in Asia). Due to centuries of isolation, its people have developed cultural practices and a dialect (*Jeju-mal*, Jeju speech) partly distinct from mainland Korea. What sets it apart, however, is its culture of *haenyeo* (“women of the sea”). It consists of an entire set of practices, linked to both the profession and the (natural and social) space in which they live and work. Many factors contribute to this uniqueness and *muljil*, or the unique ability to dive in the sea without a diving cylinder in search of sea urchins, abalones, marine algae and mussels, is just one of them. The *Haenyeo* believe that the act of swimming is not something that can only be understood through verbal or visual explanation; the body learns to swim by immersing itself in a performative act, capturing sensations and reactions to the water, so that this skill takes the form of memories accumulated and inscribed in the body. The *Haenyeo* do not cast their nets into the water, but instead immerse their bodies to gather food with their hands. They embody the idea of “sea people” very concretely,

¹⁹ Y. Ikeuchi, *The Woman, The Orphan...*

and the associated notion of “bodily affect” is fundamental to understanding their functioning on Jeju²⁰. Exceptional diving prowess acquired through years of training is combined with their extensive knowledge of the sea and marine ecology. They create their own mental map of the underwater world with the location of reefs and habitats, and use traditionally transmitted knowledge of changing tides and winds. The *Haenyeo* manage the “underwater field” while protecting marine life. The women’s community as a whole (through their *haenyeohoe* associations and related *echongye* fishing cooperatives) decides on the number of days to dive each year, regulates working hours and minimum catch size, and prohibits the use of certain technologies to avoid overfishing²¹.

The *Haenyeo* culture is an important part of the identity of Jeju islanders, given also the economic importance of fishing in the absence of extensive agriculture and farmland. “Women of the sea” have been taking on the role of “breadwinners” for decades and contributed their arduous and dangerous work to developing their island community.

It is of significance that Jane Jin Kaisen’s mother and grandmother worked as *haenyeo*. Equally important in the context of her video is that the “women of the sea”, deeply rooted in the social and cultural fabric of the island, became part of the resistance movement against the Japanese occupation. The annexation of Korea by Japan (1910) initiated a process of modernisation and industrialisation that lasted more than three decades, combined, however, with economic exploitation, suppression of Korean culture and forced assimilation. In the early 1930s, the *Haenyeo* spearheaded a series of demonstrations against cruel policies and discriminatory regulations imposed by the colonial administration. Although they did not directly lead to major (lasting) changes in Jeju’s situation, the movement became significant on a symbolic level, demonstrating the collective strength of the women, their courage to fight against oppressive forces, and their determination to defend their rights and cultural autonomy. The protests involved 17,000 women²².

²⁰ M. Shaikh, *A Comprehensive Study on the Haenyeo of Jeju Island: Tradition, Sustainability, and Women’s Empowerment*, “International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research” 2024, Volume 6, Issue 1, January-February, <https://www.ijfmr.com/papers/2024/1/12322.pdf> (accessed 18.06.2024).

²¹ Information from Nomination file no. 01068 for inscription in 2016 on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, *Culture of JejuHaenyeo (women divers)*, <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/download.php?versionID=40274> (accessed 18.06.2024).

²² It is interesting to know that Jeju Island was referred to by mainlanders as the “Island of Endless Rebellions”, as various forms of resistance against the current government often occurred there. This contrasts sharply with its present-day nicknames, such as “Honeymoon Island”, “Hawaii of Korea”, “Peace Island” or “Island of Amazons”. See: *Dissident Translations...*

The memory of these events is evoked by the proud *haenyeo song* contained in the film. It was created at that difficult time and based on an old Japanese melody, to which the lyrics were matched by one of the repressed women. The *haenyeo* sang it in spite of a ban which lasted until the end of the colonial rule, brought about by the defeat of the Empire in the Second World War (1945). And not coincidentally, in the Kaisen video it is performed by a female voice in the Jeju language (its meaning is conveyed through English subtitles)²³. The artist also highlights this act of resistance with a book, with which she makes her way through the same seashore where the “women of the sea” had marched a few decades earlier. The book, entitled *Annals of the Jeju Haenyeo's Anti-Japanese Resistance*, was authored by her grandfather, Bu Yeong Seon, a teacher and local historian. He managed to have it published in 1995, when the first public ceremony commemorating those events was held. Its opening pages feature notes to the forbidden song and the cover shows a *haenyeo* from an old magazine. Her posture and gestures are enacted by Kaisen in *Leave Early and Come Back at Dusk*, yet another work created in 2011²⁴.

Crucial to understanding this work (and other works in the exhibition) is an illuminated display case of archive material, opposite where *Halmang* is displayed. It contains books by her grandfather, Yeong Seon: the already mentioned *Annals*, as well as *Gujwa-eup Memorial* (1986) and *Light and Shadow* (1997), among others²⁵. In them, he recorded and collected events that he found worthy of remembering and that he could not forget, and which also today represent the most important (and still hot) spots in the island's recent

²³ The full text of the song, slightly different in detail from the English translation displayed in the exhibition at esea contemporary, but identical in overall expression, is as follows: “We, the countless *haenyeo* of Jeju Island / We know the sorrow of existence / Whether it's cold or raining / We submit our bodies to this sea and this water / We leave at dawn, return at dusk / Giving breast milk to a child, making dinner / A whole day's effort brings good pay / But it's hard to live, for a sigh awakens us from sleep / From a young age, separation from home, parents and siblings / To support the whole family on our own shoulders / From port to port to earn a living / We transcend this terrible sea full of high waves / Wherever we go / These villains exploit us / Feeding on our sweat and blood / Where are we to go - we, the countless *haenyeo*?”.

²⁴ With this colour photograph (80 x 115 cm), which can be seen as a “self-portrait” of Kaisen as a *haenyeo*, she refers directly to the traditions of her Korean family, while at the same time emphasising the ambiguous relationship (her dissonance to her mother's lineage is perceptible, as made evident by her movements and choice of modern clothing).

²⁵ In her text installation of the same title, *Light and Shadow* (2011, 22 framed triptych texts, 70 x 36 cm), Jane Jin Kaisen first entered into a kind of dialogue with her grandfather's memories preserved in this way. She juxtaposed a selection of photographed pages from his memoir (in Korean), their translation and her own comments and notes (in English). Different temporal, linguistic and generational perspectives are combined here, making this work an interesting example of engaging with the politics of translation and memory.

history. He directly experienced the cruel colonial rule and uprising in Jeju, and then the chaos that emerged from the ideological war and division of Korea. He saw how the memory of the anti-Japanese *haenyeo* resistance had been neglected for more than 60 years, and how the history of the uprising was officially suppressed for just as long. At the same time, he witnessed how unfairly the “women of the sea” were treated, especially during the Japanese period when they were economically exploited and their right to life was violated, and later when they could not escape marginalisation despite their leading economic and spiritual roles²⁶.

The uprising and massacre, most often referred to as the “Jeju 4.3 Events” (3rd day of April), cast a particularly dark shadow over the island’s identity. Launched 2 years after Korea gained its independence, protests against the division of the country and the elections that sanctioned it provoked a violent and very brutal response from the police and then the military (which was under US administration). Repression and “red hunts” continued until 1954, resulting in an estimated nearly 30 thousand civilians losing their lives and many more, branded as traitors and communists, being detained, tortured, placed in internment camps (like Kaisen’s grandfather) and forced to flee. As a result of the Security Act, the events could not be talked about – it was treated as a crime, making the victims of the atrocities unable to seek justice for fear of the consequences for their families. Until the 1990s, there was a forced silence, with no inquiries or answers. It was not until 2003 that the so-called Truth Commission defined Jeju 4.3 as genocide and there was an official apology from the Korean authorities (reiterated in 2018)²⁷.

The stigma of Jeju 4.3 haunting the island for decades has also affected Jane Jin Kaisen. When she first arrived in Jeju in 2001 (at the age of 21), she was “too preoccupied with having found (her) birth family and trying to make sense of the confliction between present reality, annulled past, and imaginaries of could-have-been, to engage in the broader history of the Island”²⁸. Much later, partial information about the events of 3 April reached her, and this is what made her decide to return after a decade. She wanted to try to understand the history that she felt connected to and distanced herself from. Important impetus was provided by her grandfather’s book *Light and Shadow*, given to her by her father. Not knowing Korean, she had to ask for the memoirs to be translated, and in this way, through the text, the grandfather she had never met entered her present. As she recalls: “I could no longer separate the desire to

²⁶ *Dissident Translations...*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

know the macro-history of Jeju Island and the 4.3 uprising from the desire to understand the micro-history of my family and the impact this event had on them”²⁹.

The artist thus experienced events crucial to Jeju’s contemporary history (also relevant to the fate of Korea itself) belatedly and with a distance from them, while seeking to understand the history that has now become her story. Interestingly, her return to the island in 2011 placed her at the centre of a contemporary battle for the future, which can be seen as a symbolic aftermath of the events of Jeju 4.3. What became tangible to her then was her grandfather’s return to the island in 1947 and the sequence of chaotic events he described, ending in a massacre, with what she saw for herself. Like him, she witnessed a series of clashes between residents and activists confronting the police and military, this time protesting against the construction of a US naval base on Jeju, fearing that it would once again become the centre of a regional conflict and cause lasting damage to marine life³⁰.

In this regard, Kaisen reminds us that the second generation of children of victims and survivors was the first to speak about the massacres of the late 1940s; they spoke about it not directly, but through literature and theatre, and were helped with shamanic rituals³¹. She also seems to belong to this generation: as the granddaughter of Yeong Seon, a survivor of the April 3 Massacre, and as an artist who uses the process of discovering her cultural and biological ancestry to literally and figuratively work through the historical tragedies of contemporary Korea. Marianne Hirsch’s category of postmemory is undoubtedly a strongly compelling context here. Dong-Yeon Koh, Korean art historian and curator, sees Kaisen’s personal history and her use of the fragments remaining from her grandfather’s written works as the art of the postmemory generation. At the same time, she points out the special status of the artist and her approach to the “diasporic self” that differs from Hirsch’s idea³². It is difficult to disagree with this.

In the classical view, postmemory refers to children of Holocaust survivors, but Hirsch, an American literary and art historian born in Timișoara,

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. This story formed the basis of the work *Island of Stone* (2011, 3-channel video installation and film), created when the protest movement transformed from a local to an international issue. The main video in the installation portrays a renowned South Korean film critic Yang Yun Mo, while the other two screens testify to the clashes between protesters and the military.

³¹ Cited in: F. Forbes-Carbines, *What to Do During a Period of Enforced Silence?*, “Art Review” 2024, <https://artreview.com/jane-jin-kaisens-halmang-esea-manchester> (accessed 17.06.2024)

³² D-Y. Koh, *The Postmemory Generation and Being Abandoned: Jane Jin Kaisen’s Film Community of Parting*, “Journal of History of Modern Art” 2022, No. 51, p. 158.

Romania, has modified and extended it to subsequent generations and limit experiences. According to her, postmemory is distinguished from memory by its generational distance, and from history by its deep personal bond, signifying above all a “powerful and very special form of memory precisely because its relation to the object or source is mediated not through memories, but imagination and creativity”³³.

Kaisen did not grow up “in the shadow” of constantly, often silently recalled, images of the past, which is characteristic of the postmemory generation. It all reached her, as already mentioned, with a geographical, temporal and linguistic distance, but as she recalled, since her second arrival on Jeju, she had met a wide range of people who had dedicated their lives to telling the truth about the events. Among them were survivors, children of the victims, poets, people of the theatre, academics and, which would later turn out to be extremely important, also shamans³⁴. So, she builds a story based largely on the “post-” generation and the images it conveys, imbued with an enormous emotional charge, thus having a significant impact on the lives of an entire community (and specific families). As Jan Asseman, a German researcher of collective memory, argues, this is not surprising given that “a person’s memory forms itself through his or her participation in communicative processes. Memory lives and survives through communication, and if this is broken off, or if the referential frames of the communicated reality disappear or change, then the consequence is forgetting”³⁵.

Kaisen thus conducts her own “investigation” through her artistic practice, with the aim of understanding herself and finding connections to the lost heritage of Korea and Jeju. She painstakingly extracts crumbs of the past in a mediated way from her grandfather’s translated memories, research in the archives and conversations with “witnesses”. This is reminiscent of Marianne Hirsch’s journeys to Czernowitz, her parents’ town³⁶ and has taken a variety of forms, ranging from a family nostalgia trip, through a search “on the spot”

³³ M. Hirsch, *Żaloba i postpamięć*, transl. K. Bojarska, in: *Teoria wiedzy o przeszłości na tle współczesnej humanistyki*, ed. E. Domańska, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2010, p. 254. See also: R. Więckowski, *Postpamięć krytyczna w narracjach potomków ocalonych z Szoa* (J. Dres, M. Grynberg, G. Rossenberg), “Politeja” 2017, 2 (47), pp. 63-72.

³⁴ *Dissident Translations...*

³⁵ J. Asseman, *Pamięć kulturowa. Pismo, zapamiętywanie i polityczna tożsamość w cywilizacjach starożytnych*, transl. A. Kryczyńska-Pham, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa, 2016, pp. 52-53. See also: J. Chłosta-Zielonka, *Postpamięć czy pamięć indywidualna? Doświadczenie zagłady zobrazowane w reportażu Agaty Tuszyńskiej pt. Bagaż osobisty po marcu*, “Acta Neophilologica” 2020, 2 (XXII), pp. 123-136.

³⁶ A record of these became a book: M. Hirsch, L. Spitzer, *Ghosts of Home. The Afterlife of Czernovitz in Jewish Memory*, University of California Press, London 2010.

for traces of the past to support family narratives (memories), to making reference to (involvement in) commemorative or anniversary activities³⁷. In this way, the researcher “travelled a path between concept and experience, intellectual and affective and somatic reworking of the problem of intergenerational transmission of the traumatic past”³⁸. It seems to me that a similar process was experienced by Jane Jin Kaisen. Indeed, it is her distinct characteristic that research from one project moves on to the next one, making them interlinked. The Manchester exhibition discussed here demonstrates this perfectly. While working on *The Woman, The Orphan, and the Tiger*, she explored Korea’s difficult history, issues of militarisation and the experience of abandonment at many levels, and then – as can be seen in *Of the Sea* and the archival material she collected – she shifted her gaze to Jeju, as this is where her biological family came from. This is how she began to engage with another difficult, traumatic collective experience³⁹. Further exploration of this theme led her to *Halmang* (2023, single-channel film, 4K, colour, stereo sound, 12'02”).

Material of purification and the ritual of healing

This film forms the central, eponymous work of the exhibition, displayed in a separate darkened space at esea conemporary. This one of the artist’s most recent video works. It shows a group of eight elderly women (aged between 70 and 80) concentrated on folding and tying pieces of cotton fabric. Slow-motion shots of them working, close-ups of their faces, the contrast between the white fabric, black jagged volcanic rocks and a blue sky, and the sound of waves crashing against the shore constitute the main audio-visual elements of the work.

³⁷ As for the Kaisen exhibition in Manchester, this aspect is highlighted by such ‘souvenirs’ from her site as a photograph taken by the United States Army Signal Corps (from 1945, when the Japanese occupation ended), photographs from the first memorial ceremony for the JejuHaenyeo Anti-Japanese Resistance by Kim Seongnae and Hallallbo (1995), a photograph of the *Haenyeo* Monument taken by the artist with her father’s Nikon camera (2011). The camera itself, gifted to the artist by her father, a hobbyist photographer, is also part of the exhibition. Here we have a strongly distinguished context of memory, because, after all, “photographs and objects collected by Kaisen also explore how the resistance was commemorated after Korea’s liberation in 1945, including shamanic rituals, parades and the establishment of monuments. These materials outline the crucial role of the *haenyeo* in this period, but they also contextualise a collective history of Jeju Island – one that exists within the landscape so affectingly captured by Kaisen” – F. Curtis, *Jane Jin Kaisen: Halmang*, “Burlington Contemporary”, 2024, <https://contemporary.burlington.org.uk/reviews/reviews/jane-jin-kaisen-halmang> (accessed 17.06.2024).

³⁸ A. Ubertowska, *Praktykowanie postpamięci. Marianne Hirsch i fotograficzne widma w Czernowitz*, “TekstyDrugie” 2013, No. 4, p. 269.

³⁹ J. J. Kaisen, *The Woman, The Orphan...*

As the film progresses, the sound of the sea briefly (for about 3 minutes) gives way to a woman's singing (this is *The Song of the Haenyeos*) and then the waves "rock" the viewer again. No words are spoken between the women throughout the film. By focusing on the old wrinkle-covered faces, weathered skin and skilled hand movements, the camera brings the methodical work to the fore. The women act calmly, and this action seems to have a definite purpose. Towards the end of the film, the activity of meticulously folding pieces of fabric turns into an increasingly animated action of "decorating" the rocks formed from solidified lava with the material. The final shots show how the white fabric, stretching almost endlessly, wraps around a stretch of the seashore.

It is not difficult to guess that the women in the film have spent most of their lives working together as *haenyeo*. The artist hints that they would start their fishing from this spot and that her grandmother used to dive here. What is essential about Kaisen's practice, her film portrays the experiences of the ageing women, their community and spirituality linked to the sea, wind and island, rather than visually appealing sea diving (which now delights tourists). It therefore emphasises the social functioning of the "women of the sea" and, at the same time, their current situation. The hallmarks of *haenyeo* culture are balanced interaction, concern for the vulnerable and the importance of shared needs, all based on a matrilineal pattern of inheritance of skills, knowledge and traditions, from mothers to daughters and from mothers-in-law to daughters-in-law. This generates, in effect, a strong sense of community and professional identity (they always dive as a group, organise themselves in local "cooperatives", make decisions together and share profits), as shown in Kaisen's film. Today, however, the *haenyeo* community, which numbered thirty thousand women a few decades ago, is disappearing. There are about 4.5 thousand of them, with the majority being over 50 years old. This has been brought about by a drastic change in the scale of fishing (industrial fishing is displacing the local "eco-feminist" practices of Jeju women), pollution and sea warming (translating into reduced profits for *haenyeo*), the need for years of practice, difficult working conditions and occupational hazards (causing young women on the island to seek alternative activities). Consequently, the profession is in decline with the deaths of the oldest *haenyeo*⁴⁰.

Not surprisingly, then, Kaisen's film features only elderly women. This is partly what the title of the work refers to. *Halmang* is a term meaning "grandmother" and is used on Jeju as a respectful way of addressing women. It simultaneously refers to the goddess of the sea and winds (*Yeongdeung Halmang*) in

⁴⁰ M. Karikis, *The Breath Sound of Sea Women*, 2013, <https://arteeast.org/quarterly/the-breath-sound-of-seawomen>(accessed 17.06.2024).

traditional Korean folk religion (*musok*). It is thus no coincidence that the film was shot on the Jeju coast, near an islet that served as a shrine (*haesindang*) to this goddess, and thus as a ritual place where *haenyeo* pray for safety and an abundant catch of fish. This, too, should come as no surprise, as a significant aspect of *haenyeo* culture involves shamanistic rituals performed in reverence to the sea deities.

This aspect is also emphasised by the white cloth so carefully arranged by the women in Kaisen's film. It is *sochang*, a traditional Korean fabric made entirely of cotton, associated with the work of women and the care of loved ones. It symbolises the cycle of life and death – as the fabric in which mothers wrap their newborns and with which they cover the dead. It is used in rites of passage as a sign of the opening of the gateway to heaven, i.e., the connection between human beings and the spirit world. This is also the focus of two books collected in the “archive” showcase that refer to and illustrate shamanic rituals on Jeju Island, both by Kim Soo-nam (*Jeju Yeongdeunggut*⁴¹, 1983 and *Jeju Shamanic Rituals*, 1989). They were written by a documentary photographer who began to document the disappearing traditional religion and culture with his camera in response to the growing modernisation movement in the Korean countryside in the 1970s, which stigmatised shamanism as an obstacle to the country's rapid development.

It is worth mentioning here that Korean shamanism is a non-institutionalised tradition, handed down orally, with female “ritual specialists” at its centre. Their role is to comfort an individual or community in “abnormal circumstances” and to be intermediaries between them, deities and ancestral spirits⁴². Although Korean culture is patriarchal, which stems from the rigid Confucian framework sanctioned by the state, it is female shamans who conduct most rituals. This uniqueness of Korean shamanism is combined with *haenyeo* culture in this context, which shows that the references between the two in *Halmang* are not coincidental. Kaisen explicitly refers to this spiritual and at the same time gendered aspect in her work. She was undoubtedly inspired by the Jeju memory culture, which is so strongly manifested in the female line in

⁴¹ *Yeongdeunggut* is one of the most important shamanic rituals on Jeju, performed to the goddess of winds *Yeongdeung Halmang*, Dragon King Yongwang and the mountain gods, and includes prayers for a calm sea and a good catch. *Haenyeo* are significantly involved in the ceremony. The ritual embodies Jeju identity and is an expression of the islanders' respect for the sea on which their livelihoods depend.

See: Information from Nomination file no. 00187 for inscription in 2009 on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, Jeju Chilmeoridang Yeongdeunggut, <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/download.php?versionID=27783> (accessed 16.06.2024).

⁴² A. Hilty, *Jeju shamans, healing minds and hearts. Shamanism as folk psychology*, “Jeju Weekly”, 2011, <https://www.jejuweekly.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=2196> (accessed 17.06.2024).

both the “women of the sea” and the female shamans. Despite westernisation and accelerated modernisation, shamanism has not gone into oblivion; it has persisted, especially on her home island, as a form of spiritual practice.

It was there that it took on added significance through the events of the Third of April. Semi-public shamanic mourning rituals provided a space for the display of loss, anger and all the complex emotions that the state forbade not only to be expressed but also to be stored. One such ritual is the *Sitkim-gut*, which involves purification, evoking an affect that makes up for loss and emptiness in a way that is invigorating to the suffering experienced, soothing the wounds caused by tragic events. In this ritual, the shaman (*mudang*) first presents the story of the deceased (lost) person while family members pray, and the purification ceremony begins. Next, to the sound of drums and pipes, the shaman sings and dances for hours, then the participants join her and also dance, eat, drink, cry and share their pain and stories about their loved one. All this is charged strongly with emotion and energy, which at the end leads to a moment of healing⁴³.

For a long time, this was the only way to cope with the recurring anguish of the overwhelming number of victims of Jeju 4.3, who had become political “ghosts” as a result of the authorities’ actions: their memory, while present in their families, was without a trace in the public sphere. Shamans were the only people who could help these “ghosts” speak, and thus overcome their isolation and reinstate them in the community. The shamanic ritual itself, by offering a space and voice to the dead, allowed grief and pain to be expressed publicly⁴⁴.

Jane Jin Kaisen seems to work in a very similar way with her videos, which is particularly evident in *The Woman, The Orphan, and the Tiger* – the artist continues at that point the oral transmission characteristic of shamanic spiritual culture, lending identities and stories to previously anonymous or forgotten (female) faces. In *Halmang*, she exerts her influence more contextually, through a special place and sochang, a key object, linking *haenyeo* with shamanic traditions. Through it, the women perform an act of purification, wrapping the black volcanic rocks in white cloth. Purification is necessary for the success of the healing ritual, and the white colour, widely used in such ceremonies, is a symbol of purity. As the film unfolds, the *haenyeo* wrap the *sochang* around

⁴³ N. Lee, E-Y. Kim, *A Shamanic Korean Ritual for Transforming Death and Sickness into Rebirth and Integration*, “International Journal of Humanities and Social Science” 2017, Volume 7, No. 5, pp. 75-80. Already at the beginning of the 20th century, Carl G. Jung, the renowned Swiss psychiatrist and father of analytical psychology, wrote extensively on similarities between shamanic practices and psychoanalysis.

⁴⁴ S. C. Hong, *Ghostly Imaginings and Alternative Reckonings in Reiterations of Dissent*, in: *Korean Film and History*, ed. Hyunseon Lee, Routledge, London and New York 2024, p. 123.

the shore like a farewell embrace. “In *Halmang*, the audience bears witness to Kaisen’s intense respect for these women’s lives, their political legacies and their care for traditions under threat of erasure by modernisation. As they fold the *sochang*, the significance of the divers extends well beyond their occupation; as they carry the weight of history, they confront the memories that haunt the shores”⁴⁵. Through the film, one sees this community of women as pillars of resistance, resilience and perseverance, and even more, as a kind of “vessel” through which generations can understand and process collective trauma through shared rituals and practices.

Conclusions: Shamanic Practices, Mediation, Critical Intervention

“I’ve always had a deep interest in notions of history and memory – the intersection between personal memory and collective memory and the discrepancies that can exist between ‘discrete’ history and ‘official’ history”⁴⁶. The exhibition at esea contemporary confirms this in all its breadth. Works shown there are formally and narratively different, but, at the same time, make up an elaborate, multi-layered story about “ghosts” haunting contemporary Korea, presented from a transnational, feminist, postcolonial (and family-related) perspective. Key to it is the final central video *Halmang* and the documentary material collected in front of it, which even suggests that the artist adopts, if not a role, then at least certain practices attributed to female shamans on Jeju.

Undoubtedly, she is interested in shamanism as a practice of oral and embodied knowledge, precisely because it is closely linked to memory and the social sphere. In this context, she sees it as a formula of aesthetic and discursive intervention that is an alternative to the Western tradition. This is because it gives her the opportunity to conduct artistic research that focuses on creating a space for dialogue between different ways of perceiving, perspectives, sensibilities and languages. She finds the position of the shaman inspiring because of her “ethic of mediating memories and narratives in time and place”⁴⁷. This is because *Mudang* is always situated “somewhere between”: she connects the world of the living and the dead, and at the same time she does not fully assume the role of an outside observer or participant in events, she is simply a spiritual guide who establishes a temporary connection through ritual. In other words,

⁴⁵ F. Curtis, *Jane Jin Kaisen: Halmang...*

⁴⁶ J. J. Kaisen, *Korean-Danish artist explores histories of diasporic subjects through lens of Jeju shamanism*, interviewed by Park Han-sola, “The Korea Times”, 2021, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/art/2024/06/398_313345.html (accessed 19.06.2024).

⁴⁷ J. J. Kaisen, *Delinger, sårog heling*, interviewed by Rune Gade, 2019, <https://kunsten.nu/journal/delinger-saar-og-heling> (accessed 19.06.2024).

she engages in a special form of “mediation”. It is based on verbal memory, dialogical in its form and founded on testimonies (and therefore subjective). For Kaisen, this transcendence of mental and physical boundaries, so characteristic of shamanic ritual, is important. It forces her to revise (rethink) what she takes for granted as “self-evident” knowledge. As an artist, she is interested in “how border thinking produces spatial and temporal hierarchies and effects, how we come to perceive reality, and how, through experimental aesthetic forms, these might be renegotiated and destabilized”⁴⁸.

It seems that it is for these reasons that she most often uses the medium of film as a form of mediation (and simultaneously interpretation). The fact that she can work with sound, image, rhythm, time (and also space – in the case of video installations), gives her the possibility to combine those different (sensory, performative, cognitive) layers and registers⁴⁹. All those elements can be found in the works shown in Manchester. In *The Woman, The Orphan, and the Tiger*, she breaks with the linear narrative form, interweaves archival, observational, essayistic and performative elements and, above all, brings voices and testimonies to the fore, so that the film can be treated like a ritual. In doing so, Kaisen does not speak from an individual perspective, for although her ambiguous status as an adopted person and granddaughter of a Survivor is constantly at play, she attempts to balance the subjective and the intersubjective by reflecting and embodying different perspectives. The next two films, *Of the Sea* and *Halmang*, are already devoid of this excessive amount of speech and “urgency to speak”, but exert an impact with a visually refined performance, sometimes overlaid with a mesmerising soundscape. With the soundtrack, the editing and the use of artefacts, the artist creates a sense of travelling in time – thus emulating the transgressive understanding of time that she is so attracted to in shamanic performance. In doing so, the overall effect at esea contemporary is reinforced by the synergy between documentary material and filmic mediation.

With her films, Jane Jin Kaisen forces the audience to think and feel, and importantly, she directs this “affective thinking” towards the “painful places” of Korean culture and history. With her artistic practice, she attempts to co-contrast “habitual perceptions” and “compulsive habits of thinking” in order to evoke – as postulated by Ernst van Alphen – an interpretative, emotional

⁴⁸ A. Ko, *The Translator and the Medium: In Conversation with Jane Jin Kaisen*, 2021, <http://www.heath.tw/nml-article/the-translator-and-the-medium-a-conversation-with-jane-jin-kaisen/?lang=en> (accessed 19.06.2024).

⁴⁹ J. J. Kaisen, *The Woman, The Orphan... See also: J. J. Kaisen, Praksisbaseredekunsthforskere VI: Jane Jin Kaisen: Grænseregoversættelsepåanden vis*, interviewed by Stine Nřrgaard Lykkebo, 2021, <https://kunsten.nu/journal/praksisbaserede-kunsthforskere-vi-jane-jin-kaisen-graenserog-oversaettelse-paa-anden-vis> (accessed 19.06.2024).

and imaginative effort. This specific engagement of the audience, urging them to enter into a relationship that is largely affective in nature, is very evident in Kaisen's work⁵⁰. It is a form of response to the problem of trauma, which, according to the Dutch researcher, results from the gap between the experience of an event and the available forms of representation through which it can be experienced⁵¹. This is why, with her film work and her contact with what is painful, what is difficult, and what is disturbing, the artist attracts viewers and at the same time prompts them to do something with it: to project it outwards or inwards. This takes on the formula of spiritual work, which is movingly transformed – as in a shamanic ritual – into a process of purification and healing.



Fig. 1. Installation view of *Jane Jin Kaisen: Halmang* at esea contemporary, Manchester, 2024. Photo: Jules Lister. Courtesy of esea contemporary.

⁵⁰ *A conversation between Cecilia Widenheim and Jane Jin Kaisen...*

⁵¹ E. van Alphen, *Krytyka jako...*, p. 115.



Fig. 2. Still from film *The Woman, The Orphan, and the Tiger* (2010), by Jane Jin Kaisen. Courtesy of esea contemporary.



Fig. 3. Installation view of Jane Jin Kaisen: *Halmang* at esea contemporary, Manchester, 2024. In the foreground, the projected film *The Woman, The Orphan, and the Tiger* (2010) by Jane Jin Kaisen. Photo: Jules Lister. Courtesy of esea contemporary

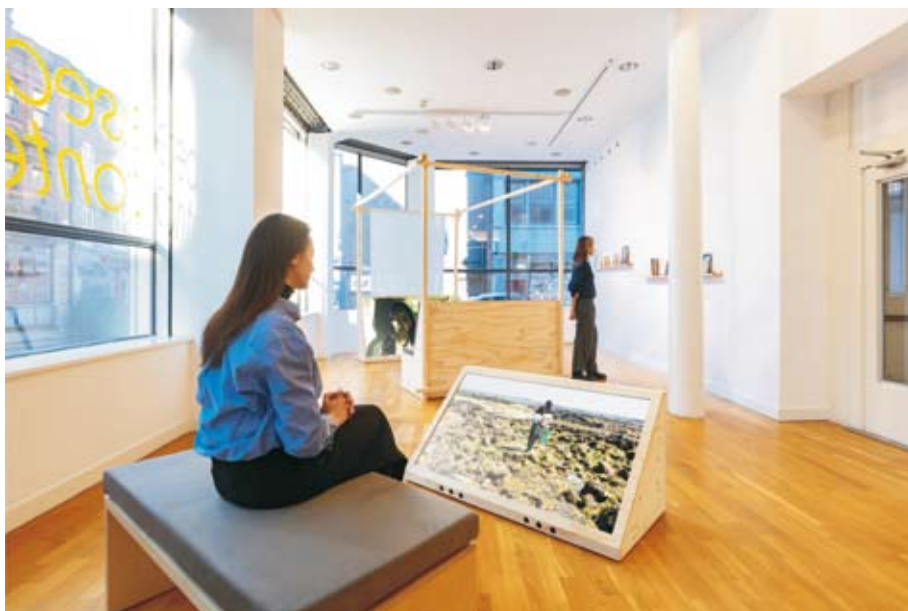


Fig. 4. Installation view of *Jane Jin Kaisen: Halmang* at esea contemporary, Manchester, 2024. In the foreground, the projected film *Of the Sea* (2013) by Jane Jin Kaisen. Photo: Jules Lister. Courtesy of esea contemporary



Fig. 5. Still from film *Of the Sea* (2013), by Jane Jin Kaisen. Courtesy of esea contemporary.



Fig. 6. Still from film *Halmang* (2023), by Jane Jin Kaisen. Courtesy of esea contemporary



Fig. 7. Installation view of *Jane Jin Kaisen: Halmang* at esea contemporary, Manchester, 2024, showing detail of archive table. On the left - *Annals of Jeju Haenyeo Anti-Japanese Resistance* (1995), a book by Kaisen's grandfather; in the middle - contents of the book with the score for Jeju Haenyeo Song and photographs of haenyeo (1950s and 1960s). Photo: Jules Lister. Courtesy of esea contemporary.

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TWÓRCZOŚĆ JANE JIN KAISEN JAKO PRAKTYKA BADANIA HISTORII, PAMIĘCI, TRAUMY (streszczenie)

Tekst odnosi się do praktyki artystycznej Jane Jin Kaisen, artystki wizualnej urodzonej na koreańskiej wyspie Jeju, a mieszkającej i pracującej w Kopenhadze. Punktem wyjścia jest jej wystawa w esea contemporary w Manchesterze (2024), podczas której pokazała takie prace, jak *Halmang* (2023), *Of the Sea* (2013) oraz *The Woman, The Orphan, and the Tiger* (2010). Balansując między wieloma światami ukazuje ona w nich historie polityczne i zbiorowe wspomnienia nierozzerwalnie powiązane z indywidualnymi historiami. Artystka powracając jako osoba dorosła na rodzinną wyspę mierzy się tu z jednym z najbardziej „wyciszanych” wydarzeń we współczesnej historii Korei. „Odkrywa” kolonializm obejmujący nie tylko japońską okupację, późniejszą amerykańską dominację, ale i też zjawisko adopcji do krajów zachodnich. Przywołuje przy tym świat *haenyeo* (kobiet morza) i szamańskich praktyk, a jednocześnie zestawia ze sobą upowszechnione wspomnienia dziadka i tradycje babci/matki. Jednym z głównych motywów jej postępowania wydaje się być badanie sposobów przekazywania traumy z poprzednich pokoleń na terażniejszość oraz sposobów na uzdrowienie. Jej niejednoznaczny status osoby adoptowanej i wnuczki Ocalalego pozwala przywołać kategorię „postpamięci” w wydaniu Marianne Hirsh oraz strategię ożywiania i zbierania opowieści, tak jak rozumie ją Ernst van Apphen. Jane Jin Kaisen zainteresowana jest raczej ujawnianiem złożoności niż tworzeniem linearnych narracji, deklaruje bowiem, że brakuje jej konkretnych wspomnień, przez co sięga po materiały archiwalne. W tym kontekście jej praktykę można oceniać jako szukanie śladu lub „formy ducha” historii, która wymaga odkupienia i przywołania w terażniejszości poprzez rytuały szamańskie. Inaczej mówiąc, w ten sposób „kadruje i oświetla bóle miejsca”, ukazując ożywczą funkcję sztuki w radzeniu sobie z tragicznymi wydarzeniami.

Słowa kluczowe: koreański szamanizm, postpamięć, sztuka jako interwencja, Jane Jin Kaisen

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