

The Memoir of the Fourth Finger

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A thesis project presented to OCAD University, completed to the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Master's in Art, Media and Design (IAMD)

Centre for Emerging Artists & Designers (115 McCaul Street, 3rd floor) &
room 118, 205 Richmond Street, OCAD University &
Butterfield Park (100 McCaul St), March 31-April 6th, 2026

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

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The Memoir of the Fourth Finger

The Memoir of the fourth finger represents an underrepresented personal voice within the collective identity constructed through familiar political and sociological contexts and interprets intergenerational trauma. It is focused on the unique family lineage of Korea's peace fighter, Ahn Joongeun, who is recognized as a hero by both North and South Korea, Ahn Yeonseang, his mother, and Lee Jihyun (Jessie). Through an autobiographical approach, Art as Healing, Research+Creation approach, the haunted voice becomes a guidance to reclaim soul sovereignty, igniting intergenerational healing by creating a transcultural space, the third space. The transdisciplinary project, *The Memoir of the Fourth Finger* (documentary), screened at the Centre for Emerging Artists & Designers and exhibited in room 118 (transdisciplinary installation), accompanied by a guerrilla public-intervention project, "Peace Act 2026: How to hold space", which took place at Butterfield Park. Together, they brought inherited and embodied knowledge, cinematic voice, performance, journaling, and installation, which included painting, glassblowing, ceramics, weaving/quilting, scent-making, and projection as outcomes of the MFA research-creation.

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Hanguel (한글) is a unique writing system in Korea, created by King Sejong, based on the philosophy of Sky (하늘), Land (땅), and human (사람), acknowledging the human as an 'in-between' of Sky and Land. Tapping into where I am coming from, I acknowledge the accumulated time of ancestral territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabeg and the Huron-Wendat, who are the original owners and custodians of the land, now we call Toronto, on which we eat, play, and love.

Throughout this whole research-creation journey, Julian Jason Haladyn has shown endless trust and support, becoming a safe space and anchor point for me to fully explore and wonder, as my primary advisor, mentor, and abundant source of encouragement. Minsook Lee reminded me how to bring courage into my practice by believing in my story and teaching me that it is okay to speak the truth as a secondary supervisor. To both, I show great gratitude, respect and love.

Thank you to the committee members. Ashok Mathur, Michael Lee Poy, for engaging in genuine excitement and critical dialogue to advance this project. Thanks to all the professors, advisors, mentors, and supporters who carried me along the way; special thanks to Ayumi Goto, Michelle Gay, Immony Men, Inder Sidhu, and Suzanne Morrissette for their support in the early stages of this research. Thank you, Peter Morin, for being the anchor for my performance. Thank you, Simon Johns, Natalie Majaba Waldburger, and Julia Rose Sutherland, for the extra gentle push and care. Thank you for the Encounters with Artists community, Steven Foster, Dereck Sullivan and Max Dean. Thank you for your patient technical support: Gerald Grinson, Tommy Truong, Nicholas Sagar and Robin Tieu. Thank you, film team: Finn Chen-Quigley for video graphing, Manhj Ali Khan for animation, Heyden Busse for special effects and voice acting, and Maria Mihyun Kim, Joho (Rick) Lee, Raymond Fong, and Alex Gruspier for bringing your personal voice to this story. Thank you to the public intervention participants and holding space together: Maria Khan, Whiley Saunders, Omer Tamir, Luke, Tavleen Kaur Lall, and Yetong Qi. Thank you to my peers and colleagues for sharing stories, holding hands tightly, and simply being there. Especially my 714 studio mates, crit club members and ceramic people! Special thanks to Ghazal Vakilzadeh and the Centre for Emerging Artists & Designers for your venue support in bringing the screening event to life. This research is inspired by numerous storytellers from families and communities, including the Ahn, Lee, and Lim families, as well as the Saito and Chiba families. Thank you, Korea Daily Toronto (토론토 중앙일보), newsroom director Michelle Yang, and the Ahn Joongeun Foundation for believing in the power of journaling and record-keeping. Thank you for everything, including my mistakes, hustle, and laughter, everything that helped me grow. 감사합니다. 고맙습니다. Thank you.

Introduction

The Fourth Finger



Figure 2. Ahn Joongeun. Ahn Joongeun's handprint with his fourth finger amputated by himself, 1919.

The Fourth Finger represents a silenced personal voice or story within unique, familiar sociological, political, and somatic contexts. Each finger has a distinctive function or characteristic. I have begun my film by observing my own hand. The thumb is the chief, the most reliable among the fingers, as it is the most muscular and has a great range of motion. The index finger is sophisticated, the most well-developed for fine movement, as we use it in conjunction with the thumb to write or draw. The middle one is the biggest and strongest. We use it to push things and as an axis for rotational movement. The pinky finger is simply cute, like the youngest child, and it allows more side-to-side range of motion. The fourth finger, like a lost child, is the least functional, aside from being able to wear a wedding ring. It mainly supports the motion of the other fingers as it is attached to the same tendon as the middle finger. Even if it gets cut out, it would not affect the overall function of the hands. That is why my great-great-uncle, Ahn Joongeun, who had his fourth finger amputated when he organized Danji Dongmaeng (12 Member Alliance of Severed Fingers) in 1919; the fourth finger did not bother Ahn for functional movement, such as shooting.

When I first decided to make this film, I had planned to focus on documenting my grandmother's story, about the Korean peninsula's national hero, which she had barely spoken about. I had been curious why she had barely talked about the family story, while observing media, publications, foundations and statues related to him. After I learned that she had felt scared to talk about his story and had been raised to "Watch her mouth" by her own mother, who was afraid of damaging his reputation. My grandmother refers to herself as 'no one' compared to his legacy.

After Ahn's great sacrifice, the entire Ahn family has been subject through tough times, including his close relatives, not to mention Ahn Joongeun's immediate family. In the official records, those who remain and struggle to survive have received little attention compared to the glorious features of Ahn Joongeun or other active family members in politics, the military and education. My grandmother's dad is an ordinary man who feels intimidated by big movements, and their family strived to live a quiet life, though Korean history would not let them. In addition, I noticed that women's voices have been disregarded compared to those of other male peace fighters in the family.

Considering Korean culture, we are raised to respect the elderly and family, I have begun to ask questions: "If my grandmother, who is part of the Ahn family and carries direct living memory related to Ahn Joongeun, refers to herself as 'no one', where does my voice even fit in the flow of family story?", feeling upset. Ahn's handprint, with the missing fourth finger, has become a symbol of the Korean Peace fighter, as he has used it as an autograph for the calligraphy pieces he creates in prison. We see the printed part of the hand but easily pay little to no attention to the missing part. I would like to give voice to the void space, reclaiming it through the personal life that Ahn has pushed aside, facing the great cause and his unseen/unknown family and people, including my grandmother, Ahn Yeonseng, and me.

CATOG_as my alter ego

Cat ? Dog? CATOG? (고양이? 개? 개양이?) – Who Am I?



Figure 3. (Jessie)Jihyun Lee, Cat? Dog? Catog?, 31.5 x 53.2”, Acrylic on canvas, 2010

The characteristics of a dog and a cat are opposite to each other.

The most distinctive difference is loyalty. A dog is more likely to be a panderer to its master, while a cat is more likely to be individualistic and dependent on its environment. When a master throws a ball, a dog would bring it back to the master, and a cat would not. At times, a cat appears, behaving like a dog or a dog behaving like a cat, losing its own identity.

There are cat people and dog people... Am I a dog person or a cat person?

I might be a cat that brings the ball back to the master among numerous dogs, or I might be a dog that does not bring the ball back to the master surrounded by cats. Now, the master throws the ball again.

What am I supposed to do?

In 2010, during my early twenties, I was experiencing issues with ‘sense of belonging’. I appeared to be a cat among dogs; striving to be loved and not to stick out, I suppressed my own nature in response to social cues to the point that I did not recognize it, yet I happened to stick out from the crowd. The odd Catog wishes to belong somewhere, but ends up belonging to nowhere.



Figure 4. (Jessie)Jihyun Lee, Where are the other cats going?, 35.9 x 45.9", Acrylic on canvas, 2011

Where are the other cats going? (2011)

I decided to visit a group of cats this time. When four other cats are walking towards the back, where is the only cat walking towards the front heading to? The one cat sends either mocking or sympathetic gazes at the cat walking towards the front. That ambiguous gaze.... That group of cats is weird anyway, since cats are not a collective animal, and it is not so sure if those animals are descendants of wolves or cats, but I appear to be an odd one in this group anyway. I belong somewhere but nowhere. Pretending to be a mediocre person and presenting myself in social contexts, I feel lonely deep inside. Not so sure about where I am going, but walking pointlessly anyway.

The CATOG series, which I have created since 2010, began as a story about the persona, creating CATOG as my alter ego. According to Carl Jung, the persona is the mask we wear before others that camouflages and oppresses who we truly are. Jung highlights how the persona can either interrupt or escort our psychological growth. According to him, “The persona is a complicated system of relations between individual consciousness and society.” Persona is not a tangible artifact. It is a formulated personality for each individual to mediate survival in the social context. It develops from childhood, as we are rewarded or punished depending on how we behave in certain social contexts.

Societal culture often pressures us to modify ourselves to fit into it from the moment we are born. From the smallest society, the family, to diasporic communities, 'in-betweenness' is fostered through the blending of different cultures. While I am growing up, I frequently question who I am as a person. I often feel like an outsider, alienated from tightly formed communities in which my family live, as I usually strive to 'fit in' with a community. I am born as the first daughter of the Head family's home of Hyoryeongdaegun's branch of the Jeonju Yi Clan in the Joseon Dynasty. As only the first son of the first son traditionally carries on the Head family line, I could sense that many adults in my family are expecting a son to officially carry on the family history records, Jokbo (족보), since daughters' names are not included. Many established families have a formal, family-run organization that collects and publishes genealogical updates. When my grandfather decided to make a progressive move to include his granddaughters' names in the family book, Jokbo (족보), our family story became part of the news, as the royal family does not traditionally include daughters' names within the family book. In fact, there is a 'Dolimja (돌림자)', a common syllable added to names to indicate that someone is related by blood. In a traditional family setting, both males and females share the same syllable within the same generation, though males and females share different syllables. When the Korean family follows this traditional and unique system, people in Korea can recognize, by name, which person belongs to which generation and which part of the family. However, the female's syllable is not officially recorded in the family book. While my paternal side family follows Buddhism and Confucianism as part of the Korean royal family

tradition, my maternal side family is one of the first generations of the Korean noble family who adapted Catholicism after it is introduced in Korea, which is rebellious to the class system of the Joseon Dynasty, due to its core belief that everyone is equal in front of god. This is a historical topic still discussed in Church lectures. It is quite an experience: going to church with my maternal grandmother and to the temple with my paternal grandmother. The memory still lingers with me through the Frankincense and Myrrh scents from the church, the temple's incense, and the various religious music in my ears. Until I understand that different religions talk about Love in many other ways, I am often confused by the two sides of strong traditions, as some behaviours are accepted in one side of the family but not in the other.

I frequently moved between communities across South Korea due to my father's occupation, the public school system, and my personal interest in art. The public system assigned students based on the geographical region they lived in, and my family lived between two regions. I would be assigned to a school in one region and then to another. Moreover, my interest in art would lead me to pursue a school with a specialized art program when I have the opportunity to choose my preferences. I was partially raised by my grandparents, who also had to change homes (and countries) multiple times. My maternal side grandmother, Ahn Yeonseang's family, was chased by the colonizing Imperial Japanese because of their blood relation to a Korean independence fighter, Ahn Joongeun, and by the North Korean government for their desire to become key members of the communist government, due to the profound heroism within the family. They were forced to migrate from North Korea to Russia, later to China, and then finally settle in South Korea.

The frequent changing of communities can be perplexing for an individual. It was a confusing experience, as I picked up different social behaviours from each part of my family. In addition to the family environment, the cultures of the local neighbourhoods where I was raised are a hybrid mix of low- and high-class housing, situated between Cheonho-dong and Myungil-dong. Considering the Korean public school system at the time, where students are assigned to schools based on the geographic location of their homes, I was assigned to both schools in low- and high-class communities, which constantly reinforced the need to learn and unlearn the codes of different communities. When I first moved from a

relatively homogenous country, Korea, to the diverse cultural dynamics of Canada in 2013, the question of my Korean identity began, and my sense of self continues, carrying on my constant practice of adaptation in the meantime.

There are certainly unresolved emotions I cannot fully express, simply cannot find the right words for at that time, or I cannot find somebody to share my thoughts with. Still, I feel an urge to express my emotions in some way, not necessarily having a perfect answer, rather than constantly bottling them up without realizing it, just like scribbling thoughts in a secret diary. Art is such a non-judgmental listener, so I do not have to worry about spreading my secret story. Both the cat and the dog are the most intimate animals in relation to my grandparents, whom I can easily relate to. Especially my maternal grandpa, who used to be a photo journalist, began running a small farm with five dogs after retiring from his stressful job. Luckily, both sides of my grandparents are green thumbs, and everything they touch has flourished, including plums, carrots, potatoes, onions, and those five dogs. etc. Later in my early teens, a mother cat from the street somehow gave birth to five kittens in a boiler room in my house. Those five kittens are a secret shared only between my grandpa and me, as other members of my family would start complaining if they found out we were raising them without their consent. We are caught not shortly after, but they are adored. They are too cute to ignore. My grandfather knows that other family members will complain at first, but will eventually accept the new family members. Sadly, one of each kitten has died one by one, and I remember making five small tombs to commemorate those little creatures with my grandpa. It is not a coincidence that those two animals have become key communicators in my practice.

Statement of Practice

My transdisciplinary practice examines identity across time and space through autobiographical, art-as-healing, and research-and-creation methodologies. My practice explores how one might progress and blend identity across the dichotomies of self/others, us/them, confrontation/peace, and absence/presence. The exploration of my identities is rooted in my survival experiences in life, depicting my interactions with my changing environment in individual, sociological, and ecological contexts: Having to save my younger sister and myself from a burning home, experiencing low to high-class school communities in my upbringing, moving to Canada in 2013 and coping with critical leg injuries along with COVID-19. I refer to this turbulent experience, ‘the ball of loneliness’, which represents my constant efforts to find ‘a sense of belonging’ within my life. My thesis explores the unique family lineage among me, my maternal grandmother, and my great-granduncle, Ahn Joonggeun. My great-granduncle is the only Korean independence activist who is championed and cherished by both North and South Korea for his devoted involvement in Korea’s resistance to Japanese colonial rule. He was executed on March 26, 1919, by the colonizing Japanese government, and remains a hero for Koreans on both sides of the divide.

Ahn was active in peaceful initiatives in education, journalism, politics, and entrepreneurship against economic oppression, and is also a militant who has taken up armed insurrection. That is to say, he encompasses all the different perspectives towards the Korean resistance movement. While expanding my practice further to the realm of my family legacy-related project through my thesis project, I have been involved as an artist in a curator role, recently through “Encounters with Artists”. This is an artist led public intervening research project in the form of a series of artist talks, led by Dereck Sullivan, Stephen Foster and Max Dean with OCAD U bachelor’s study students, focused on introducing students to established artists such as Evergon, Marelene Creates, and Maria Hupfield. I also served as a student representative for the Interdisciplinary Masters of Art, Design and Media program, working towards bridging the gap between students’ voice and administration. Through these experiences, I begin to imagine that my ancestor could have been an ‘Artist as a Curator’ if he was born in contemporary times. This perspective is based on how he embraced versatile perspectives towards the Korean resistance

movement, through his personal action and collaboration, and using ‘Artist as curator’s approach for knowledge and discourse creation.

This project will examine how to bring his spirit to the realm of my practice through the ‘Artist as a Curator’ approach. I intentionally use the present tense primarily in this paper to represent how identity is formed in fluid, non-linear ways across different times and spaces, tracing how my ancestral heritage is connected to my personal journey, and to hold them in the third space I create throughout the project, by illuminating a vision of the collective healing process through solitude and solidarity.

Methodology

Research + Creation

According to Natalie Loveless, she refers to “Research + Creation” as “Poldisciplinary, taking interdisciplinary’s transgressive charge to always be pushing at, and defamiliarizing, the limits of disciplinary boundaries and bringing it together with the theoretical polyamory, mentioning that it learns from queer theory’s contribution to critical pedagogy. My continuous involvement with the Research + Creation process certainly helps me push beyond interdisciplinary practice to transdisciplinary practice, thanks to its openness, ‘boundary fusing’ nature, and ‘knowing and doing’ nature. Transdisciplinary practice pushes beyond the essentialist nature of each discipline, bringing the practitioner’s focus into the process itself. While interdisciplinary practice asks how two different fields solve complex questions, transdisciplinary practice asks how we work together to resolve the critical issues for humanity. Transdisciplinary practices go further by bringing real-life issues to the fore and inviting non-academic voices, such as community members and stakeholders.

My practice is rooted in my deeply personal experience of combating my struggle with a sense of belonging by knowing the doing and doing the knowing, vice versa. I began my practice as a painter and have expanded it to installation, including ceramics, glassblowing, weaving/quilting, papier-mache, digital media, language/dialogue, journaling, performance, and scent-making. I have often received advice to narrow down the media and make the project more durable and focused. Despite this concerning advice, I have opened my portal to a variety of media to keep my process going, as it feels like “I just need to do this”, unable to explain the reason clearly and as an instinctive purifying process of foggy emotions and bodily sensations. After I began to consciously study the related field, I finally verbalized this itchy feeling. Active imagination, developed by Carl Jung, is a meditative and visualization technique that bridges the conscious ego and the unconscious, fostering dialogue with inner images or emotions. When I make something in any form, it gives me clarity, and I do not have to be overwhelmed by the heavy, foggy, unknown emotion. It is a process of creating and attaching my version of a name tag for the unknown to be known.

While I have experienced consecutive injuries on my right leg from my early twenties to early thirties, I have finally met an aromatherapist who is able to treat my condition which could not be treated with the conventional modern medical system or medicine. I did not have any other health issues, and my bone density and muscle condition were at an athlete's level, according to the test I took in a conventional hospital. She snatched out my unresolved personal memory that had been embedded in my injured leg without requiring any of my information. My treatment saw tremendous progress, as the symptoms of what I was experiencing turned out to be somatization. Somatization refers to an involuntary mind-body process in which emotions manifest as real physical pain, fatigue, or dysfunction. I began to pay close attention to the mind-body conversation, becoming an aromatherapist myself and reverse-engineering somatization through art. Later on, I learned that there is a trauma therapy called 'Somatic Experiencing.' Developed by Dr. Peter A. Levine, which focuses on releasing trauma-related energy stored in the nervous system rather than reliving events.

From my personal experience, painting, journaling, language, and dialogue help me reveal the core essence of emotions and memory, giving clarity. Glassblowing relates to 'Despite the fear' because I work directly with fire, which gives me emotional agency when I make something out of it, instead of denying it. Ceramic making is related to 'anger,' and centering and calming my emotions; the clay powerfully absorbs negative emotions with its patient nature and realigns them. Papier-mache is associated with nostalgia and with treating irritation, combining newspaper and Hanji, Korean traditional paper. Weaving/quilting fabric is 'stitching relationship through love' and is connected to the abundance of femininity. In particular, I explore the Korean traditional quilt, Jogakbo (조각보), which originates from Korean women's ancestral wisdom as it uses fabric scraps and turns into a larger harmonious piece, using a special weaving technique that makes the final fabric have no front or back, inside or outside, which is perfect to create an infinite sense of space through fabric making. Performance is a bodily sensibility through gesture, and how it channels that into emotional relief, as it requires attentiveness to all parts of my body, from wiggling my toes to making a sound and moving freely after shaking off the

heavy emotions. Aromatherapy-based scent-making connects emotional sensibility to the body and transforms emotional and physical discomfort into wisdom and soft power. I incorporate these practices in a film format, responding to a unique fictional and non-fictional story I have created or I have captured, making sure each discipline's material story reflects the story I am telling in a larger format. When turning these into an installation format, as a space-making process, I ensure it conveys both the intangible and tangible story by creating relationships within the space. When I am engaged with each discipline, I make sure I am fully immersed in the process to the point that I lose myself, focusing on the somatic experience and emotion itself to extract unique insight. It is a quiet, meditative process.

The Memoir of the Fourth Finger is treated as a whole project: a 60-minute experimental documentary as the main story, screened at the Centre for Emerging Artists and Designers, exhibited as a material story. It was held at room 118, 205 Richmond street, and Guerrilla Public intervening performance; 'Peace Act 2026: How to hold space' at the Butterfield Park as an ongoing story.

Transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary practices can be compared to a smoothie and a fruit salad. In an interdisciplinary fruit salad, you can still see the bits of disciplines that are incorporated, which means the boundaries between disciplines still remain, and it tastes great altogether. In the transdisciplinary smoothie, all the disciplines are fully blended, with no boundaries between them.

Autobiography – first person

I create a transdisciplinary documentary for my thesis that brings together embodied knowledge, installations, and performances, interweaving personal, familial, social, and political stories. This filmic creation conveys the core value of my practice, which can be considered the practice of 'an artist as a curator', as it creates space through a complex, critical story. Giving a voice to an underrepresented truth within a Korean family and community, and possibly for those who experience similar contexts, transcending national identities. The film takes the form of a cinematic diary that travels through time and trauma. For this film, I take an autobiographical approach, employing reflexive film essays that position myself as the first person within the complex narrative. The film will incorporate my imaginative

animated segments and performance, as well as an interdisciplinary-to-transdisciplinary installation (including paintings, ceramics, glassblowing, fabric-making, papier-mache, performance, and scent-making) to narrate my complex story.

To deliver a subjective, first-person narrative with an experimental approach, the essay film is the genre to emphasize. Timothy states that the camera is gradually becoming a language, a form in which and by which an artist can express his thoughts, however abstract they may be, or translate his obsessions exactly as he does in the contemporary essay or novel. He uses the metaphor “camera-stylo” (camera pen), indicating that “Cinema will gradually break free from the tyranny of what’s visual, from the image for its own sake, from the immediate and concrete demands of the narrative. It become a means of writing just as flexible and subtle as written language.” Some may criticize a film's image reproduction for taking away the authenticity or originality of art. From Benjamin Moore’s point of view, there is a unique agency that only film can achieve. He states, “film allows for the examination of minutiae—details in the landscape, in a person’s gait, or the sound of a faucet dripping—that we would not be able to perceive otherwise.” He compares this ability to isolate details to the psychoanalyst’s skills, as they help individuals actually ‘see’ both their conscious thoughts and actions and the hundreds and thousands of unconscious impulses, desires, and aversions. By choosing to take the film essay format for this project, I am becoming ‘a careful investigator’ for myself. An investigative journalist of my own story and a psychiatrist, bringing unconscious knowledge into the conscious realm, making my knowledge and experience more accessible to others who can share the collective purpose and empowerment.

Art as Healing – what is missing and what happened

Bringing knowledge from trauma studies, trauma lingers when an incident that should not exist happens in your life, and the incident is not recognized by people whom you feel most dependent on. The impact can be magnified, especially for children, who are more vulnerable than adults. In most cases, the key dependents for children are their parents, their primary caretakers. Even with experiencing the traumatic incident, individuals may not develop PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) with recognition

from the key caretakers. The constant emotional mal literacy and constant exposure to repeated traumatic patterns would contribute to the development of C-PTSD (Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), which would cause individuals to be in a constant survival mode and numbness as if one does not belong to the body or does not exist in the world. When there is a lack of recognition from others, self-awareness of what happened and what is missing is a powerful approach. This is why, in my artistic practice, Carl Jung's active imagination, supported by Dr. Peter A. Levine's somatic experiencing, plays key roles.

Drawing on Homi Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space", my thesis aims to expand the ways in which my practice explores "in-betweenness". Concepts such as diaspora, power, normativity, intersectionality and nature-inspired space-making frame my material, textual and curatorial research. I seek to understand the generational narratives travelling from my great-granduncle's and my grandmother's lives and their impact across generations. My intention is to understand the unspoken and unexamined intergenerational trauma, overlooked in my family because of the social-political heroic status of my great-granduncle, infusing my embodied knowledge surviving from trauma and including active endeavour as an aromatherapy practitioner.

I engage in theoretical and critical conversation with Ahn Joong-geun's final artworks. He creates his calligraphy piece in Rishuin prison, where he is executed. "용과 호랑이의 용맹하고 웅장한 형세를 어찌 지렁이와 고양이의 모습에 비교하겠는가" "The spirit of a magnificent dragon and tiger is not stooped to the mere spirit of a cat and a worm." his handprint, and his unfinished theory journal, A Treatise on Peace in the East. This journal, which he writes in prison until the day he is sentenced to death on March 26, 1919, discusses how Asian countries can collectively achieve peace. The journal has remained unfinished, inviting my artistic imagination to carry on the story. In addition, Bhabha's Third Space theory is applied as a theoretical framework to discuss a liminal, hybrid cultural space in which cultural identities emerge through the negotiation and translation of different cultural discourses. Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality theory is also essential, as it offers a critical framework for understanding how multiple forms of disadvantage or inequality intersect to create overlooked obstacles.

Carl Jung's approach of active imagination is incorporated to interpret each generation's individual perspective, all of which has been masked in my family due to social and societal expectations. To unpack this, I look to scholars and knowledge-keepers of both Indigenous cartography, such as Rose-Redwood, Carol Rose Goldeneagle, and Robert Falcon Ouellette and the philosophy of Hangeul (한글), Korea's unique writing system, which was created by King Sejong in the Joseon dynasty, the origin point of my paternal ancestors. These knowledge keepers will guide us in remapping and creating the alternative notion of 'peaceful space' in contemporary times by mapping relationships. To facilitate my practice, I interview and converse with my grandmother, Ahn Yeon Saeng, who carries her firsthand experience and a living memory of the peace activism my great-granduncle was persecuted for.

Positionality - understanding diaspora

Cat? Dog? I am Catog!! 2018

Cats, Dogs, Catogs, and those that belong to none of them all exist in the world. I am the oddest and shiniest Catog among them. I no longer conceal the authentic colour of mine in the shades. I no longer worry about belonging to either a group of dogs or a group of cats. Why? There are so many weird and versatile individuals in the world, and it does no harm to reveal my own weirdness. Each of us enjoys and plays with the ball in our own unique way, no longer waiting for others to set the rules. We add to each other's diversity when we are together. I am a beautiful being with my own authenticity. When I am alone, and when we are together, we are beautiful beings because we are different, just like a mosaic.



Figure 5. (Jessie)jihyun Lee, (Still) I am CATOG, 2min, 1 week of guerrilla live painting and music performance, intervened by the public with documentation, 2018

Diasporic communities are exposed to interdisciplinary cultural interactions involving two or more subjects or areas of knowledge and experience, as they carry aspects of their country of origin/genealogical background to their new place of residence. They happen to constantly challenge our received notion of place, disrupting normative space-temporal units of analysis such as the nation and

culture. When power in each subject area is exercised multidimensionally within this transcultural context, diasporas can easily face violence from the normalizing gaze. They grapple with being part of the state of 'the normal' or 'the ideal' where they are born and reside, which could leave them as a minority within the power discourse of both cultures. Foucault points out that normalization becomes one of the great instruments of power through a system of "perpetual penalty" in which every action is measured against a standard norm to sustain the system. Every culture could have different norms constructed through its social system, not necessarily always right. Diasporic individuals can easily be a bit of both or neither, exposed to different cultural systems and 'in-between.'

It is essential to ask who confers authority, the origin of power within a community, and to question where power is centred. Whereas numerous Western philosophers and theorists define 'power' as a top-down mechanism, conventionally leading to binary viewpoints, Foucault challenges this view, arguing that power is omnipresent; it comes from everywhere. "Power must first be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of the force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization" (1990a:92). Multiplicity means that we will find many different relations of force, intersecting and overlapping, in our social intersections. Immanent' means that they only exist within a certain domain or discourse. Your choices of what to wear thus reveal " a complex strategic situation of how you want to be perceived by various groups in a particular society (your school)". Power relations have shaped your self-presentation. Thus, diasporic individuals could be outsiders for being in-between and socially marginalized in every cultural context, and they could lose their voice in the global context. Furthermore, individuals with unseen/seen disabilities are in a more vulnerable position for this normalized gaze, often being hyper visible.

Though I do not consider myself a person who represents the diasporic community voice, I can say that I have come to a position where I can understand the diaspora community on a deeper level after moving to Toronto to study at OCAD University by sharing some common experiences, summarized by 'cultural adaptation' with my grandmother. She is a typical representation of a diasporic voice; she was born in China as her whole family was affected by the activism movement, went back to the North side of

Korea and resided in the South side of Korea. Based on my conversation with my mentor, Immony Men, who is taking the Canadian Research Chair position for the Asian diaspora community, I asked him one day, 'What is the definition of diaspora?' He replied, "Diasporic individual refers to a person who is alienated from their country of origin, due to political/economic/cultural reasons. " Simply put, I can visit Korea whenever I want, I can work there, I am very much attached and understanding of the culture, and I still use the Korean language at a native level of proficiency. However, the frequent adaptations my grandmother and I have experienced across different classes, religions, political views, sociological contexts, and ecological contexts have helped me place myself in her shoes. Anthropologist Kalervo Oberg initially theorized the idea of cultural shock in 1954. Cultural shock is a feeling of uncertainty or anxiety experienced by people immersed in a different or unfamiliar culture. It occurs in four stages: excitement, irritation, adjustment, and adaptation.

Such animated experiences can lead the experience holders to have mental health issues, such as emotional exhaustion, which can further develop into anxiety and depression, which my grandmother and I also share. In my interview, my grandmother recalls her life: 'I have lived like a roamer in my whole life.' Strangely enough, both my grandmother and I have shared similar physical injuries. My grandmother has had numerous fractures in her life, as well as surgeries; she has had fractures in her arms multiple times, and she has undergone surgeries for her spine and some other parts. From my mid-20s to my early 30s, I have struggled with a repeated injury to my right leg. I have undergone six surgeries for my right knee and ankle, and rehabilitation, which is strange for numerous health professionals that I have met; I am very athletic, with such high bone density that it is almost impossible to measure by Bone Densitometry, and more than an above-average sense of balance and flexibility. Through this troubled time, I have come to realize that the subconsciously idealized body figure would overlook the presence of some individuals who cannot overcome the mind and body traits for long periods.

Intersectionality and Korean Women's Identities (personal- socio-political)

When the Intersectionality framework is applied to an individual Korean woman, such as my grandmother, it can acknowledge how Korean women's identities as individuals are more likely to be oppressed during the colonization period. Under the threat to Korean national identity during colonization, solitude as an individual identity is marginalized, and consequently, individual Korean women's identities have had even less space to exist within the male-dominated society of that time. Korea is a homogeneous and historically peace-seeking country. However, Korea has endured foreign invasions, war, colonization, and recovery. Thanks to independence fighters, including my honourable ancestor, Ahn Joong-Geun, who is an educator, theorist, calligrapher, and soldier, Korea has overcome these hardships. Koreans have maintained their heritage and identity during periods of international power imbalances. What has been left for the next generation of Korean descendants are outcomes and vestiges of power practices, which is an ongoing intergenerational trauma caused by the past hegemonies and colonization. Within this flow, the voices of individual women, including my own grandmother, received insufficient attention. As Theresa Hakyung Cha's book "Dictee" (1982) acknowledges, Korea's peace activism lacks a multifaceted narrative that includes women, conveying the story of Gwansun Yu, a female peace activist executed for her protest, through her voice as an Asian diasporic individual.



Figure 6. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha. (3 Stills) *Permutations*. 10min, black and white, silent, 16mm film on video. 1976.

Truth embraces all other abstractions other than itself. Outside Time. Outside Space. Parallel to other durations, oblivious to the deliberate brilliance of its own time, mortal, deliberate marking.

Oblivious to itself. But to sing. To sing to. Very softly.

She calls the name Jeanne d'Arc three times.

She calls the name Ahn Joonggeun five times.

The author continues to provide her mother's experiences of exile to Manchuria and cultural displacement caused by colonialism.

Being broken, Speaking broken Saying broken. Talk broken. Say broken. Broken speech. Pidgon tongue. Broken word. Before speak. As being said. As spoken. To be said. To say. Then speak.

An individual's identity is heavily dependent on the formation of the nation's identity, which is constructed on the basis that Korean and East Asian culture is collectivist, in contrast to the individualism of Western culture. Within this cultural context, sacrificing individual life for the country is much more emphasized in Korea. During this turbulent time, each individual's narrative, and women's stories in particular, tend to be disregarded. This unique context is conceptualized as Han or Haan (한), a concept of an emotion, variously described as some form of grief or resentment, among others, that is said to be an essential element of Korean identity by some form of grief or resentment, among others, that is said to be an essential emotional element of Korean identity by some, and a modern post-colonial identity by some others. Although this unique concept is often romanticized and cherished in art, literature, and the cultural scene, etc., this fluid and sticky emotion (한) may get knotted, tangled, and turn into rock hard (한이 맺히다), if it is not released (한풀이하다). These distinctive oppressed emotions often lead to a Korean culture-bound syndrome characterized by physical and emotional symptoms resulting from suppressed anger and feelings of unfairness. In essence, Hwabyeong (화병), 'Anger (Fire) Disease' in direct translation, represents a unique intersection of culture, psychology, and physical health, where unresolved and subjective feelings of anger are accompanied by anger-related bodily and behavioural symptoms, especially among upper-generation women who are not allowed to express their emotions freely.

Considering the recent statistics from the Health Insurance Review & Assessment Service showing that female patients constitute four times as many as male patients visiting health clinics/hospitals, this underscores how much more women are exposed to this potential risk and how this emotionally oriented concept has become a critical sociological phenomenon.

(Ahn, Joongeun) 안중근



Figure 7. Ahn Joongeun in Rishun Prison, photography, 1919. (Photo courtesy of Ahn Joongeun Peace Foundation, Seoul, <https://greatkorean.org>)

Regardless of the personal context, peace activist Ahn Joongeun is the maternal great-great-uncle; there is much to discuss about his short life. It is essential to understand this well-known (internationally unsung) Korean hero and public figure of Korean history, as well as the international situation of his time,

to speak about unspoken memories. In the public realm, the general Ahn Joongeun and his last act of activism before his execution are much better known. I, however, would like to discuss him from a more multifaceted perspective. He has written two publications: *Ahn, Eungchil Autobiography* and *A Treatise on Peace in the East*, while imprisoned at Rishun prison for his last activism. His personal life would be referred to in his autobiography. He was born on September 2nd, 1879, in Haejoo, the North side of Korea, as the first son of Ahn, Taehoon, and Cho, Maria. His grandfather, Ahn Insoo, was a regional governor, a great landlord, and a rice miller. His family is known to be the first noble family to adopt 'Catholicism', which is rebellious to the traditional class system in Korea, governed by the Royal Lee family, and held the belief that every human is equal in the eyes of god. His family's story is still discussed in church lectures to this day with gratitude, as I have personally experienced. The family is very dedicated to the religion, to the point of contributing to the church's construction. Ahn sustained a comfortable early life until Korea's existential crisis, along with his father's death.

In the late nineteenth century, Joseon (Korea's old name) was kept under close watch by various Western Powers and its closest neighbouring countries, China and Japan, as the country's location is strategic, being connected to the Eurasian continent while also being a peninsula surrounded by the sea. According to the publication 'Korea's Fight for Freedom', written by Canadian journalist Fred A. McKenzie, who defended the unrevealed truth about Korea in the international community with his life, the book directly quotes the Japanese Foreign Minister.

"We are not ready to fight China yet," said the Japanese Foreign Minister to the impetuous young Korean. It was ten years later before Japan was ready, ten years of steady preparation, and during that time, the real focus of the Far Eastern drama was not Tokyo nor Peking, but Seoul. Here, the Chinese and Japanese outposts were in contact. Here, Japan, when she was ready, created her cause of war."

This quote refers to the Sino-Japanese War. Despite the name of the Sino-Japanese War, the war occurred in Joseon (Korea's old name), as it functioned as an outpost. Meanwhile, Mackenzie's publication receives harsh criticism for being anti-Japanese and is forced to cease publication. He states regarding the situation;

“No man has written more appreciatively of certain phases of Japanese character and accomplishments than myself. My personal relations with the Japanese, more especially with the Japanese Army, left me with no sense of personal grievance but with many pleasant and cordial memories.”

A Canadian independent political writer, Stephen Gowans, states clearly in his book, *Patriots, Traitors and Empires: The Story of Korea’s Struggle for Freedom*, that Korea suffers from financial and military infringement from both the West and Japan, hindered by the unequal terms of the Treaty of Ganghwa, signed with Japan in 1879. After the murder of Queen Myeongseong in October 1895 by Japan, King Gojong proclaimed the founding of the Korean Empire, declared himself emperor, and began carrying out a series of modern reforms. The result of Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War was the establishment of a protectorate over Korea. Korean intellectuals and activists seek to save the country through reform and modernization, as well as through the Uibyeong (“Righteous Army”) movement. Despite all of these efforts, Korea became a colony of Japan in 1910.

Even amid the social turbulence, Ahn still enjoyed the common pursuits of everyday life, such as singing, dancing, riding horses, shooting, and forming numerous close friendships. Things changed in November 1905, when the signing of the 2nd Japan-Korea Agreement (also called the “Eulsa Treaty” or “Protectorate Treaty”) completely deprived Korea of diplomatic sovereignty, making it a Japanese protectorate. As a result, the Japanese Resident-General of Korea was established to oversee all domestic political activities. In the wake of this disastrous situation, Ahn went to Shanghai, where he met a French missionary, Father Le Gac, who told him, “Heaven helps those who help themselves.”

In Ahn Joongeun’s autobiography, he recounted a dialogue with Father Le Gac: “Have you heard about the tragedy in Korea?” Father responded, “I have heard about it a while ago.” Ahn answered, “Given this situation, I would like to bring my family outside of Korea, keep in contact with overseas Koreans, widely publicize the unfair situation, seek support, and regain national sovereignty through committing a patriotic act.” Father responded, “I’m a religious person, a missionary, and not related to a political person. But I would like to help you since my heart goes out to you. If you agree with my suggestion, you can follow; if not, you can choose another way around.” “I would like to hear your

opinion.” Ahn sincerely asked. “If you bring your family outside of the country, and twenty million of fellow Koreans do that, the country would be empty, and that is exactly what the colonizer wants. As you know, when France was at war with Germany, we left two provinces empty. In the last forty years, there have been two opportunities to regain sovereignty; however, those committed to this mission reside outside France, so we have not achieved it. You should learn from this. Koreans who reside overseas are united ten times more strongly without words, so you could work with them easily. However, though international communities are aware of this situation, you cannot guarantee their support, as they could be busy with their own business. So, go back to Korea, commit to developing education, expanding society, fostering unity of public opinion, and developing competence.”

Sincerely inspired by Father Le Gac, An Junggeun was determined to live an ascetic lifestyle, giving up his social drinking until Korea completely frees itself from foreign infringement and regains its sovereignty. Among his most notable achievements, he established Samheung School (삼흥학교) and Donui School (돈의 학교) to enlighten the public consciousness using his family’s fortune, launched a mining company in Pyeongyang to vitalize the Korean industry, leading the National Debt Repayment Movement (국채보상운동) to act against economic oppression, which was interrupted by Japan. The situation worsened in 1907, when Japan disbanded the Korean army and forced Emperor Gojong to abdicate after learning that he had secretly dispatched three special delegates to the 2nd Hague Peace Conference (헤이그특사). Ahn fled to Primorsky Krai, Russia, where he attempted to stir up anti-Japanese sentiments. He organized a Korean resistance army and initiated an advance into Korea.

Sangeun Kim, in a critical biography of Ahn, Joong-geun, wrote that the army was winning against the Japanese army, and it arrested prisoners of war at the beginning. Ahn decided to free them, as he thought that killing Prisoners of War is against International Law, and the main focus of armed force activism is to achieve peace in Korea, not to kill the Japanese, though he faced significant opposition from his colleagues in his army. He ended up releasing them, and those who had been arrested and freed revealed confidential information they had obtained during their arrest after their return to Japan. The

operation ultimately failed, and he lost most of his colleagues through his humanitarian decision.

Refusing to give up, Ahn formed an alliance with eleven comrades in 1909, with the members vowing to devote their lives to Korea by amputating their fourth fingers and writing “Korea’s Independence” in their own blood.



Figure 8. Ahn Joongeun. Ahn Joongeun’s handprint with his fourth finger amputated by himself, 1919.



Figure 9. Ahn Joongeun, Korean National flag combined with Ahn Joongeun’s calligraphy written with his blood coming from his fourth finger amputated by himself, 1919.

While he led the armed force activism, he also worked as a journalist for Haejo Press, which was a Korean-language-based press based in Russia. They acted against colonialism and worked to publicize the truth about Japanese colonialism, which the Japanese promoted as ‘helping the less-than-equal Asian countries’ in the global context. He also urged the need for Korean solidarity through regularly writing articles in the press. Activism through journalism was a threat to the colonizers, and the press was censored in Korea after the Press Law (신문지법) was enacted in April 1908, a Japanese government law to suppress journalism. The presence of this press awakened Korean residents in Russia to journalism’s power to save Korea. Centred around Jaehyung Choi (최재형), Daedong Ilbo (대동일보), another Korean-language newspaper based in Russia, was launched, breaking through the oppression. Ahn prepared for his last act of activism in partnership with Daedong Ilbo (대동일보), published by Jaesung Choi (최재성), as he bore full responsibility for the loss of most of his colleagues due to the humanitarian

decision he made during the war. The Deadong Ilbo issued a press card to Ahn, granting him access to information and treating him as a journalist, while the press people have collectively developed a strategy with Ahn for his last activism.

Around 9:30 am. On October 26, 1910, at the Harbin Railway Station in China, Ahn shot Ito Hirobumi three times, assassinating the first Resident-General of Korea and the first prime minister of Japan. Notably, Ito, who already led Japan's invasion of Korea and shattered peace throughout Asia, was in Harbin to initiate Japan's invasion of Manchuria. After shooting Ito, Ahn Junggeun shouted for Korean independence in Russian, crying out "Корея! Ура!" ("Korea! Hurrah!"). This was an action to publicize the issue within Russian territory, as Harbin, now part of China, was considered part of Russian territory at the time after the Russian-Chinese War. He was arrested on the spot and sent to the Japanese colonial court in Lüshun, formerly known as Port Arthur. In the court, Ahn stated:

"My assassination of Ito is a part of the war for Korea's independence. I have lost the battle, which is why I am in the court of Japan as a prisoner of war. I do not act as a private citizen, but rather as a lieutenant general of the Korean resistance army for independence and Asian peace. Thus, by international law, I should be treated as a prisoner of war."

It is a counterargument to advocate against the colonial court trying to frame him as a terrorist who shot the prime minister out of personal resentment, and his shot was an accidental event. However, on February 14, 1910, Ahn was sentenced to death. Following the will of his mother, who had told him, "If you appeal, you are begging for your life from the colonizers. Since you have come to this for the sake of your country, do not hesitate and accept your death," she sent him a shroud that she had made herself. He decided not to appeal for his life. Until his execution on March 26, he wrote his autobiography, *Autobiography of Ahn, Eungchil* (Eungchil is his childhood name), as well as *A Treatise on Peace in the East*, in which he elaborated his philosophy of community, state, and peace. Ahn was able to sway the hearts of Japanese bureaucrats and intellectuals with his words and actions, so he was bombarded with requests for calligraphy, which was greatly cherished. He generously fulfilled the requests, creating

hundreds of calligraphy works in his final weeks. To date, 60 pieces of his calligraphy have been identified, and 31 of which have been designated as Korean National Treasures.

“대한 독립의 함성이 천국까지 들려오면 나는 기꺼이 춤을 추면서 만세를 부를 것시오”

“When the sound of Korea’s securing sovereignty reaches heaven,

I shall dance and shout ‘Manse! (Long. Live Independence!)’”

-Ahn Joongeun-

Fulfilling his promise, Ahn must certainly have shouted out “Mansae!” and danced from the heavens when he learned that Korea had regained its sovereignty. Unfortunately, his remains have never been returned to Korea till now, as the Japanese government fears igniting another form of peace activism. Also, they purchased photographs of the last activism scene from Russian journalists and discarded the crucial parts that could serve as supporting evidence of Ahn’s claim. Later on, in 2019, 24 articles documenting his activism in the Russian press during that stormy time were revealed. The articles portrayed him as a confident hero in the face of death, hinting at the location where his corpse has been buried. Furthermore, Korea faced another national tragedy, having been divided into two separate nations. It was initially separated by foreign invasion, as the Soviet Union took control over the North (stopping at the 38th parallel) and Imperial Japan continued control over the South before capitulating to American forces. This contributed to the ideological division and Civil War after WW2, as the North Korean government pursued communism and the South Korean government pursued democracy.

The Ahn family are scattered all over the world after Ahn was executed for his last activist act. Ahn Joongeun was succeeded by his first son, Bundo; his second son, Junsae; and his daughter, Hyunseang. After Ahn Joongeun’s execution, they migrated to Primorsky, Russia, and his first son, Bundo, passed away at the age of twelve. Later they settled in South Korea. My grandma, Yeonseang, would recall that Hyunsaeng, who later served as a French Literature professor at Daegu Catholic University, often took her mother out to eat near the Myeong-dong church. After Ahn’s second son, Bundo, passed away, his wife, Oknyeo Jung, moved to the United States with their children. Ahn’s

grandson, Woongho Ahn, became a cardiologist, and his great-grandson, Boyong (Tony) Ahn, who works at the telecommunications company AT&T, sometimes checks Wikipedia to make sure information related to Ahn is accurate.

His idea of “Peace.”

Unfinished *A Treatise on Peace in the East*, (*동양평화론*), woven with his spoken words



Figure 10. Ahn Joongun, *Treatises on Peace in the East*, written in Classical Chinese at Rishun Prison, 1919.

Ahn’s theory journal, *A Treatise on Peace in the East*, remains unfinished, which sparks my imagination as an artist. There remain two records that tell us the essence of Ahn Jungeun’s idea of peace. After he was sentenced to death on February 14, 1910, Ahn requested an interview with the president of the High Court. During the interview, held three days later, Ahn stated his idea for maintaining peace in the East. The text of the interview recorded by the interpreter was posthumously rearranged into “The Transcript of Ahn Junggeun’s Interview,” written in classical Japanese. The other document is “A Treatise on Peace in the East,” which Ahn began to write immediately after he finished work on the manuscript of *An Autobiography of Ahn Eungchil* on March 18, 191-. Ahn hoped to finish the treatise before he was executed. The treatise, however, remained unfinished because he was executed earlier than expected. Scholars and editors later bring these two documents together to present the full picture of his idea of ‘peace’ and to complement the unfinished part of his last theory journal, ‘A Treatise on Peace in the East.’

Written in classical Chinese so that any Intellectual in East Asia could read it, “A Treatise on Peace in the East” was originally conceived to be written in five chapters: an “Introduction”, “The Lessons from the Past”, “The Current State of Affairs”, “The Contexts”, and “Questions and Answers”. Because only the first two – the “Introduction” and “The Lessons from the past” – were finished, it is hard to know how his idea would unfold in the three unfinished sections. Fortunately, we can get an overview of his idea on peace in the East thanks to the already explained record of his interview, “The Transcript of Ahn Junggeun’s Interview,” in which he concretely mentioned what the three nations of Korea, China, and Japan should do to accomplish peace in the East.

“A Treatise on Peace in the East” contains a philosophical context, whereas “The Interview with Ahn Joongeun” contains a concrete action plan. “A Treatise on Peace in the East” discusses the justification for pursuing peace and the trends in international relations in his time. Ahn says that the East has mainly endeavoured to cultivate literature, thereby falling behind Europe and America in technological development. Ahn respects Japan for strengthening itself by importing technology, for building up its national power, and defeating Russia. People in Korea and China supported Japan in this war because, in its declaration of war against Russia, Japan made it clear that it would fight to maintain peace in the East and guarantee Korea's independence. He maintains that neither nation was to blame for helping Japan, but he criticizes Japan for betraying the ideal of peace.

“The Transcript of Ahn Junggeun’s Interview” deals with a strategic approach for accomplishing peace. Ahn says Japan should return Dalian and Lushun, which were acquired as a war indemnity, to China because the land’s ownership cannot be changed. Ahn says it is critical to maintain cooperation among the three countries to ensure stability under capitalist economics. Establishing a common bank can be done by collecting “membership fees” from each member. He suggests expanding the currency system to neighbouring nations, Thailand and India, if it is successful. Such a conception preceded the idea of creating the European Union (EU) by half a century. He also discusses the importance of education and cultural exchange through learning other cultures’ languages.

The re-evaluation of Ahn Joongeun's activism under international law:

The international legal issues converge on the international legal legitimacy of An Jung-geun's activism, whether the situation at the time constitutes a state of belligerency between the Empire of Japan and the Korean Empire's Righteous Army, what exactly the Righteous Army is, and whether both Ahn Jung-geun, of the Korean Empire's Righteous Army, and Itō Hirobumi qualified as belligerents.

Justifiable resistance against colonialism based on self-determination, not terrorism.

Janghee Lee, who is an active judge at the Permanent Court of Arbitration, an intergovernmental organization headquartered at the Peace Palace, in The Hague, the Netherlands, and an honorary professor of the Law School at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Korea contributed an article discussing Ahn's activism from the perspective of International Law, along with numerous other publications on international disputes.



Figure 11 (Jessie)Jihyun Lee. Finding Catog2. Acrylic on Canvas. 2024 at the group show. "Where are you coming from?" Graduate Gallery

Firstly, there is a big difference between international terrorism and Ahn Joongeun's assassination of Itō Hirobumi. His action is a justifiable act of resistance against colonialism to regain national sovereignty and achieve peace in Asia, and it has universal validity, as it actualizes justice in international society and fights injustice against humanity, while international terrorism is based on religious or financial motives, which is hard to receive mutual agreement from international contexts. Secondly, his assassination is confined only to Itto Hirrobumi, whereas general terrorism specifically targets innocent civilians. Thirdly, he clearly and officially reveals his position after his assassination in the court, whereas general terrorism, such as 911, clear reasons are not stated officially, with rumours flying everywhere. Fourth, his assassination stirs up the spirit of independence and motivates the right to self-determination of oppressed peoples. While the right to self-determination of oppressed peoples is

recognized under international law, general terrorists are more likely to focus on acts of destruction. Fifth, Ahn Jung-geun's last act constitutes an "international armed conflict" as defined in Article 1, Paragraph 4 of the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions (a combat between the Lieutenant General of the Korean Empire's Righteous Army and the Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese colonial power). At the same time, its legitimacy can be fully established as an act of resistance to Japanese colonial occupation, grounded in the right to self-determination.

Article 1, Paragraph 4 of the mentioned Additional Protocol I explicitly states that it includes "...armed conflicts in which peoples are fighting against colonial domination and alien occupation and against racist regimes in the exercise of their right of self-determination, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations."

Nations and the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations."¹

¹ Ibid



Figure 12 Ahn Joongeun, The Spirit of a Magnificent Dragon and Tiger is Not Stoop to the mere spirit of a cat and a worm, written in Classical Chinese at Rishun Prison, 1919.

“용과 호랑이의 용맹하고 웅장한 형세를 어찌 지렁이와 고양이의 모습에 비교하겠는가”

“The Spirit of a Magnificent Dragon and Tiger
is Not Stoop to the Mere Spirit of a Cat and a Worm.”



Figure 13. (Jessie)Jihyun Lee. Finding Catog2. Acrylic on Canvas. 2025 at the group show. "In the Making" 100 McCaul St,

For a few weeks in prison, Ahn was bombarded with calligraphic pieces conveying his idea of peace by Japanese bureaucrats and intellectuals. One of the pieces was purchased in December 2023 at the highest price in Korean calligraphy auction history, at 1.9 billion won (CAD 1.82 million), which reads "The Spirit of a Magnificent Dragon and Tiger is Not Stoop to the Mere Spirit of a Cat and a Worm." 용과 호랑이의 용맹하고 웅장한 형세를 어찌 지렁이와 고양이의 모습에 비교하겠는가."

This phrase was even included in his last theory journal, Treatise on Peace in the East, to personify his determined spirit as a dragon and a tiger, not to surrender to peace activism. I usually gravitate towards cat figures as a friendly CATOG person. I feel he somehow initiates a conversation with me through this piece.

"One of the calligraphy pieces created by Joongeun Ahn at Lushun Russo-Japanese Prison is sold at the highest price among all of his calligraphy pieces. The last two bidders competed vigorously by phone, and the piece was sold at a price significantly higher than the initial estimate. This piece reads, "The Spirit of a Magnificent Dragon and Tiger is Not Stoop to the Mere Spirit of a Cat and a Worm."

Joonggeun Ahn's handprint is placed alongside the strong and confident strokes, tying the whole piece together." (Yeonhap News)

Memory, Hauntology and Intergenerational Trauma

Some people state that experiencing the present with lingering memory, often with discomfort, as 'hauntology', if it is repeated with interesting contexts in the present, some may call it 'interesting coincidence'. They can often make the mistake of calling the repetition of a certain pattern in their life, 'destiny', and they sometimes decide to accept some painful loop. Hauntology is a range of ideas referring to the return or persistence of elements from the social or cultural past, as if to haunt the present. French philosopher Jacques Derrida first introduced the term in his 1993 book *Spectres of Marx*. On the other hand, Jung defines synchronicity as 'meaningful coincidences that cannot be explained by cause and effect'. He believes that these events are not merely random occurrences but manifestations of a deeper order in the universe. This is why people who have gone through trauma easily think they belong to the trauma. It is crucial to help them liberate themselves from it and realize they are actually a larger part of the meaning. I can certainly say that a series of encounters related to Ahn, Joonggeun, is a meaningful coincidence in Jung's language.

Jung also states that the psychological rule holds that when an inner situation is not made conscious, it happens outside, as fate. That is to say, when the individual remains undivided and does not become conscious of his inner opposite, the world must act out the conflict and be torn into opposing halves. This is a claim that he would not consider unconsciousness as a psychological theorem, a philosophical declaration about the essence of life.

The Shadow

Although having a glorious peace fighter within the family and his contribution to securing the Korean heritage from colonization are an honour, they also have a shadowy side. It means that the whole family has endured the sudden loss of the beloved son, and the feeling of subconscious guilt for not being able to protect him has been inherited throughout generations. The fact that his corps has not returned to

his family or Korea from the colonizer, as it might ignite another form of peace activism, has remained a deep wound in his family and Korean history. In East Asian culture, if we have sadness within our family, we do not officially talk about it. It has been considered taboo culturally. In these cultural circumstances, I haven't seen my family discuss him at family gatherings, except when I hear my grandmother's bad-time story.

Over time, I remember that the maternal side of my family became part of the TV show for the Separated Families due to the North-South division (이산가족). I remember my mom being busy searching for gifts and necessities for the special family reunion through the TV show. We have learned that most of my grandparents' family members have passed away.

The Lavender scents and Mauri

I remember sniffing lavender, standing on a grassy hill full of lavender in Christchurch, New Zealand, after my mom's work-related trip.

B r e a t h e

(Inhale)

(Exhale)

“Baa Baa Baa”

Sheep are coming by, too.

I remember learning the Māori language through a song, ‘Kia Kaha.’

"Kia kaha, kia māia, kia manawanui":

("Together Standing Strong, be brave, be steadfast)

His Fourth finger is cut off.



Figure 14. Ahn Joongeun. Ahn Joongeun's handprint with his fourth finger amputated by himself, 1919.

Figure 15. (Jessie)Jihyun Lee, My leg, Photography, 2020

Unlike many other peace activists with involuntarily deformed body parts caused by torture, Ahn voluntarily cuts off the fourth finger of his left hand with his twelve comrades to swear in blood his commitment to peace activism to regain Korean sovereignty. Ahn, with his other twelve comrades, would draw the Korean National flag with the blood of the fourth finger, an act that has since become a symbol of his calligraphic peace, leaving behind hundreds of calligraphic works. Additionally, he understood the Press's attributes, consistently publicized his movement, and drew attention from around the globe; the colonizer dared not deform any part of his body. My grandmother has undergone several fractures in her knee, arms, and a disk disorder in her spine. She has recently fractured the same left hand in 2025. I have spent from my mid-20s to early 30s with a consecutive right leg injury.



Figure 16. (Jessie)Jihyun Lee. (Still) The Memoir of the Fourth Finger. Documentary. 2026.

The invisible fire

In 2012, in the middle of one of my favourite critique courses at the University in Korea, the insightful professor Jung Hyun (정현) looked at my work, and he said, “Have you experienced a fire incident?” It is a painting that does not even include a fire. It is a painting about an imaginary space. And, yes. I have gone through a fire incident at the age of 10, and I was left alone with my seven-year-old sister when my grandmother ran away. I had to soak a towel in water and cover the mouth and body of both myself and my sister. There was no adult who could be dependent in my life. I had forgotten about this incident. Everyone in the class was in a shock. They asked the professor, ‘Are you a shaman?’, and he humorously responded to it. “ Oh, I hear that very often. HaHa.” And, he would look at my painting, and go, “ Please do not be so harsh on yourself. It makes me cry, and my body reacts with painful sensations to the point that I have to look away from your painting.” It was the warmest words for my painting at that time. I started crying. “How do you come up with these words?” “I just feel it from your painting. Please be gentle to yourself.” My family learned that I had gone through this incident by myself and had to secure my sister at the age of 10, just two years ago. It had been a hurtful time, as they were in denial.

They only said, “Good job for taking care of your younger sister,” or “ Oh, you are such a responsible older sister.” Later on, my parents told me that they assumed I was taken care of by my grandmother and felt awfully sorry. I have learned that this is also a traumatic response that someone can be in complete denial of the incidents, through studying clinical aromatherapy in 2022. Even then, it has been about twenty-five years of lonely time for me.

The encounter with the continuous journey of ‘Oriental Peace.’

In 2020, I was invited to a Peace festival at Hyochang Park, located in Yongsan District, Seoul, South Korea; it was established in 1876 as a cemetery for the Korean royal family and is now simultaneously a park for leisure and a memorial for the Korean independence movement, by my fellow artist friend. I encountered people from the Ahn Joongeun Foundation, accompanied them to the foundation’s location, and heard their journey to find his corpse and their devotion to translating his last journal, ‘Oriental Peace’, into many different languages. They would show me photographs of their journey to North Korea and China, saying, “This is your grandmother’s hometown.” Also, they shared their sorrow of not being able to find his corpse despite all of their endeavour. They say, “Please remember, Joongeun Ahn is the eternal son of Korea, and he lives eternally in our hearts.”



Figure 17. (Jessie)Jihyun Lee. (Still) The Memoir of the Fourth Finger. Documentary.2026.

Aroma Therapy and the Breath (숨)

While I was recovering from my last surgery and rehabilitation of my right ankle, which had been completely fractured, all three main bones that constitute the ankle, I studied for a clinical aromatherapy practitioner degree for primarily applying that knowledge to myself. This degree was accredited by the IAA (International Aromatherapy Association), founded by Australian and Korean aromatherapists in 2013. Aromatherapy is a practice that uses aromatic materials, including essential oils and other aromatic compounds, to improve psychological well-being. It is used as a complementary therapy or alternative medicine, typically through inhalation. Three major countries have developed aromatherapy and established distinct trends: France has developed medical aromatherapy that doctors must prescribe; the UK has infused the practice into the cosmetics and beauty industry; and Australia has developed holistic aromatherapy that focuses on healing the mind, body, and soul. I am lucky, in a way, because my mom is a medical aromatherapist trained at a French institution, and I have greater access to knowledge resources.

Aromatherapy works by inhaling essential oil molecules, which travel directly to the brain's limbic system, the centre for emotions, memory, and autonomic functions. The olfactory experience immediately stimulates physiological and emotional responses by influencing hormones, heart rate, and neurotransmitters, thereby quickly affecting mood, stress, and cognition, as the olfactory system has a direct anatomical link to the limbic system.

B r e a t h e

(Inhale)

(Exhale)

The Bloody Dream

One day, I had a strange dream of my maternal grandfather, who had passed away a few years ago. I am one of the very few people who can encounter my grandfather in dreams, which makes some family members jealous of me. When I came back to Toronto in winter 2024 after finishing my last surgery and rehabilitation, the job market had shrunk since the pandemic, and I had considered working as a waitress at a restaurant for quick cash. My grandfather appeared in one dream; he looks so intense, urgently gulps on a tiny glass bottle, and would spew his guts out to the point that the table he is sitting on is flooded with blood. The blood was dripping all over the place. I was awake, in shock. I decided to let go of the job offered by the small restaurant because of that crazy dream, and I received a call from Korea

Daily Toronto (중앙일보), one of the three major press companies headquartered in Korea, along with Chosun Daily (조선일보), and Donga Daily (동아일보), functioning as a major Korean diasporic voice in international contexts.

Korean Voice

In 2024, I worked for Korea Daily Toronto (토론토 중앙일보) as a journalist in the cultural sector. The original name of Korea Daily (중앙일보) means ‘being in the middle’ in direct translation. Korea Daily (중앙일보) is traditionally positioned as a neutral right-wing press in Korea, while some say it is a neutral left-wing press. It is known for its flourishing cultural scene and its relationship with Samsung. Hong-rahi, the partner of Gun-hee Lee, the former president of Samsung, has worked as a journalist in the cultural sector, as her family owns Korea Daily (중앙일보), and she has made her way to the managing director position, now serving as a museum director of Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art. While I am working for this company, as a journalist, I encountered a film related to his story, ‘Harbin (하얼빈)’, which was invited to TIFF, and his last calligraphic piece was purchased back to Korea through Seoul Auction at the record-setting price, around 190 million Won (CAD 1.82 million). Pieces of unspoken family memory and some coincidences have lingered within me, igniting an urge to create this project.

Understanding the sociological and personal implications of Contemporary Peace

Apart from my family's history of involvement in ‘Peace Making’, ‘Peace’ has undoubtedly been one of the most recurring terms throughout human history. The editor/translator of “The Theory of Oriental Peace, Lee Tae-jin, Professor Emeritus at Seoul National University, has indicated in the editor’s notes as follows: “The call for peace is no less strong in contemporary times than in the era of the Cold War, when the people of the world lived on the edge of violence in persistent ideological conflicts. Nowadays, regional disputes and hostilities are unceasing in many territories, and among different peoples and religions.” Unfortunately, considering Lee Tae-jin is of my parents’ generation, his

comments still speak brilliantly to the current geopolitical situation. Bringing Ahn Joongeun's 'The Treaties on Peace in the East' to people in contemporary times, and my imagination to fill the void of the unfinished journal, to interpret it in the most personal manner, is a valuable approach for both the personal and the universal. In his theory journal, he approaches the current situation stemming from the past with an awareness of how to resolve it through cooperation. I would like to carry this insightful approach throughout my practice.

As I have discussed earlier, I have undergone a big threat to my life at age ten, having to save my younger sister from the unexpected fire that occurred at home. My family has not recognized my personal position for more than thirty years. Personally, I can say I have longed for inner peace more than anyone, feeling like I have walked through a curved tunnel all alone countless times. I could not verbalize what had been done wrong or recognize it cognitively; however, I am drawn to the world of unconsciousness and the paintbrush. Given the conflicting religious beliefs within one family: paternal side Buddhism and maternal side Catholicism, I am not in a position to rely on any single religious practice. Personally, getting immersed in one religious practice means betraying the other side of my family, as I receive attention from both sides of my family, being the first daughter. It is pretty much like getting asked, 'Do you like your dad more or mom more?' Being drawn to Carl Jung's theory and practice since I was a teenager, could have been my constant effort to find my own peaceful space that transcends religion. Learning about Jung's upbringing, the gravitation does not seem to be a random coincidence. Carl Jung's father is a pastor. However, because of the conflict between his parents, he has faced the limitations of religion, which has led him to develop his unique analytical psychology that blends the boundaries of literature, art, religious studies, philosophy, and cultural theory, and to constantly help patients through his insights as a doctor. The most striking parts of his theory are that he does not consider the symbol a riddle to solve or a task to be transformed into another, but rather the process of encounter between consciousness and unconsciousness.

Three stages to individuation

Inherited unconsciousness has been discussed in diverse religious approaches; Buddhism talks about Karma and reincarnation, Christianity talks about the sense of Original sin, and Mysticism talks about ghosts, of which approaches may appear as a fatalistic/deterministic worldview. Meanwhile, Carl Jung's 'Active Imagination' approach to the unconscious, a powerful analytical technique for bridging consciousness and the unconscious by engaging with inner images and figures that arise from the psyche, is highly applicable to the complex contexts of contemporary times. Jung's approach aims to transform passive fantasy into a dialogue with the unconscious for self-discovery and 'Individuation', eventually putting one in an autonomous position. Simply put, Individuation refers to the process of distancing from the 'collective', including one's parents and inherited cultural norms, to become an authentic individual. Some may argue that individuals completely separated from the collective or the system do not exist. However, it moves beyond the surface-level meaning of 'separating from the collective', as it helps individuals to be critically aware of their complex identity construction process and to give opportunities for them to liberate themselves from the collective and intergenerational trauma developed through three stages: shadow work, anima/animus, and the self.

Stage One: The Shadow work = counterpart of 'Persona'

Discovering the unique familiar story and embedded knowledge through the dialogue with my grandmother is to acknowledge the repeated patterns, find out what has been overlooked, unchain and deconstruct the harmful patterns in the intergenerational time of our family and further the Korean community, as there is a figure who acts carrying responsibilities on behalf of Korean identity, which eventually, in turn, contributes to constructing my personal identity. Given that Korean identity is rooted in collectivism, these influences could have been reinforced even more strongly than in other cultures. Carl Jung's concept of the shadow represents the unconsciousness, rejected parts of our identity – the dark side we deny, holding negative traits, fears and unmanifested positive potentials. It is the opposite of

the persona, the mask we wear to be accepted in social contexts. When it is not acknowledged, it accelerates prejudice, conflict, and self-sabotage. Although a persona, the social mask plays a crucial role in survival in social contexts; if it is overly activated without acknowledging the shadow, it will oppress the source of one's embodied wisdom and return to oneself as fate or as synchronicities. Shadow work is the process of integrating these hidden aspects into conscious awareness, transforming them from destructive forces into sources of wholeness, creativity, and self-knowledge. The powerful analytical technique for bridging consciousness and the unconscious, which engages with inner images and figures arising from the psychological realm, is known as 'Active Imagination' by Carl Jung and involves non-judgmental conversation, journaling, and dialogue. Journaling can be interpreted differently depending on the familiar journaling tool for each individual. For example, painters find drawing/painting as a 'mother-tongue' medium, while writers consider the creative writing process as the most comfortable journaling method. As a multidisciplinary artist, I use my whole body and senses (see, taste, smell, touch, hear), and multidisciplinary methods such as painting, space-making, and writing, all converging into a cinematic diary to continue archiving these processes.

In the process of 'Active Imagination', Carl Jung has popularized 'archetype', which is a symbolic language of the unconsciousness, a universal, recurring symbol, character, or pattern such as the Hero, Mother, or Trickstar which serves as an original model appearing across different cultures, stories, myths, and art, which is a representation of inherited 'collective unconscious' patterns influencing human behaviour and storytelling. Archetypes are universal elements we all share, and we possess different archetypes within ourselves, shifting among them depending on the stages of our lives, our experiences, and the culture we are involved in. While we naturally identify some archetypes within us, we often feel uncomfortable and deny the existence of others. According to Jung, integrating and owning neglected parts of ourselves is part of the journey of becoming a whole, in other words, growth and healing.

Most of all, recognizing the 'Hero' archetype inside of me has been challenging in my life, as I am born as the first daughter in a very traditional family setting, which is a given persona. Growing up, I have been required to be responsible and be the hero for the rest of my family as a setting value and often

been taken for granted as I am asked not to stand out. Though saving my younger sister at age ten is a heroic and courageous decision at such a young age and holding other following family responsibilities, I have been in a situation as the one with mental and physical issues later on, as many other women within the family and communities have been. Acknowledging the well-balanced ‘Hero’ archetype, Ahn, Joongeun, in my subconscious, is one of the most crucial self-care acts when there is a lack of validation. I endorse that I have been courageous and strong enough to take care of myself and my sister. I am not a powerless individual who has gone through mental and physical injuries, but a power holder who can bring ‘care’ in such a dehumanizing situation. Moreover, I hold the power to heal myself from the past. In this sense, it is valuable to bring up the last dialogue between the Japanese warder/soldier whom my great-great-uncle, Ahn, Joong-geun, had encountered right before his execution. This story is even stated on the official homepage of the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs in South Korea, and has become part of my documentary narrative.

< **A Scene from The Memoir of the Fourth Finger by (Jessie) Jihyun Lee**>

Scene7

Jessie V.O.

Chiba did not understand Ahn and could not forgive him initially, and he thought his action was just based on his personal resentment.

Chiba:

“I cannot forgive you.”

Action: He first aims the gun at Ahn’s head.

Ahn:

“How we see ourselves and how we are perceived can be portrayed as beautiful or unpleasant, depending on the socioeconomic stance. People can have either an honest or a false life, and duality always existed within. Though Japan’s colonization of Korea is despicable, it may appear beautiful to the colonizer.

However, for the Koreans, who have lost their voice under Japanese oppression, they are struggling. How can we talk about beauty and ugliness or righteousness when death is always looming? We as humans cannot survive alone. That is why we help each other. As long as we have the will to cooperate, we can create peace. For Koreans, right now, it is impossible. After the Japanese and Koreans have come to terms, then we can talk about beauty and ugliness.“

I pass judgment on my actions to the next generations. I decided to dedicate my life to my country, as a way for my soul to return to the liminal time granted by my ancestors. After we complete our given life, we go back to where we were before. If we have a chance, we may reincarnate. But this is totally up to the lord. That is why I decided not to appeal for my life. I would be more than content even if I were to become a piece of abandoned stone in the flow of Korean history. I long for peace between Japan, Korea, and Asia. Mr. Chiba, please, I hope you understand me.”



Figure 18. (Jessie)Jihyun Lee. (Still) The Memoir of the Fourth Finger. Documentary. 2026.

Scene 9

Jessie's VO:

5 minutes before the execution, the last person he met is the Japanese warder and soldier, Chiba Doshichi. He visited Joongeun Ahn to inform him about the execution.

Ahn:

“I have a book to finish. May I have 5 minutes?”

Ahn asked.

Jessie's VO:

The conversation between the 31-year-old death row inmate and the 25-year-old warder was as follows.

Ahn:

“I deeply appreciate your kindness from the bottom of my heart. I wish we could be reincarnated so we could see each other again when Japan and Korea are on good terms.”

Chiba:

“I sincerely apologized. I feel great sorrow. I am so sorry for invading your peace for Japan's invasion of Korea. “

“ I feel a great pain as your warden to have watched over someone as admirable as you. You have humbled me, and I will not forget you.”

Ahn:

“ I am deeply moved from the bottom of my heart. It is very unexpected that I could hear that from a Japanese, especially a soldier. An individual cannot change the magnificent flow of history.

Jessie's VO:

And Ahn wrote this calligraphy and handed it to him.

“Soldiers’ duty is to serve for one’s country.”

(위국헌신 군인본분)

(爲國獻身 軍人本分)

Ahn:

“Do not feel bad about the action you took to serve your country.

That is what soldiers are supposed to do.”

Jessie’s VO:

Ahn would rather comfort him as he faces his death.

This short dialogue is very nuanced in its portrayal of the relationship between Korea and Japan in that period and of how these two soldiers convey the complex power dynamics. From 1910 to 1945, Korea was under Japanese colonial rule, following the Russo-Japanese War from 1904 to 1905, in which Japan defeated Russia. Russia claimed governance of the Manchurian region, while Japan asserted control over Korea. Promoting propaganda of the ‘Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’ in international societies, justifying and framing colonialism as ‘helping the less-than-equals’, to extract land, natural and human resources, by oppressing culture, language, economic exploration, and infrastructure development to facilitate the extraction of resources for the Japanese war effort and their colonialism. Still, there is an ongoing conflict between Korea and Japan due to numerous reasons, represented by the Comfort Women issue, women forced into sexual slavery by the imperial Japanese Armed Forces in occupied countries and territories before and during World War II, and Japan’s Distortion/Discard of History, the Dokdo (독도) territory invasion, framed as Takeshima in international societies.

The Japanese soldier was not able to understand Ahn when he first entered the prison, thinking that he was a general criminal with personal resentment, and he would point a gun at Ahn. However, after he spent a few months before the execution, managing him in a room in the Rishun prison, they were able to create a ‘safe space’, being able to proceed a heart to heart conversation. They transcended the tension

between two countries between soldiers as one who has a persona as a colonizer, and one who has a persona as the colonized, because they can share common truths of soldier's responsibility that could have been buried in their subconsciousness. Ahn also left his theory journal, 'The Treaties on Peace in the East', unfinished, which discusses how Asians collectively achieve peace. Later, the Japanese warder, Chiba Doshichi, left his will to his family, asking them to keep his memory alive with Ahn and claim the calligraphy piece he had received as a family heirloom, which was voluntarily returned to Korea on August 23rd, 1980. Chiba shared this story with Saito Daican, a monk in his community and a former journalist at The Asahi Shinbun, a Japanese daily newspaper founded in 1879, one of the oldest newspapers in Japan and Asia, and considered a newspaper of record for Japan. He has commemorated the memories of two soldiers together in his temple, Dairinji Temple, feeling moved after hearing Chiba's story. He has even released a book called 'Ahn Joongeun in my heart'. Up until now, the monk has shared the story about the two soldiers and Ahn's peace theory and activism in his lectures. The story of the unique friendship and the shared truth about patriotism has been officially shared by Korea's Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs. Weaving a story cannot be done alone – this work often requires a 'relationship.'

Stage Two: Anima/animus – collective unconsciousness

The Archetypes of Anima and Animus are in the second stage of the journey to “Individuation,” defined by Carl Jung, symbolizing the unconscious feminine side in men (Anima) and the unconscious masculine side in women (Animus), interlacing the personal and collective unconscious for psychological integration towards wholeness. In a more gender-neutral description, Anima refers to emotions, relationships, and creativity, whereas Animus refers to logic, meaning, and purpose. Recognizing and balancing both sides within one’s inner world is essential to acknowledging intergenerational trauma and to lighting the way forward.

<Scene 6>

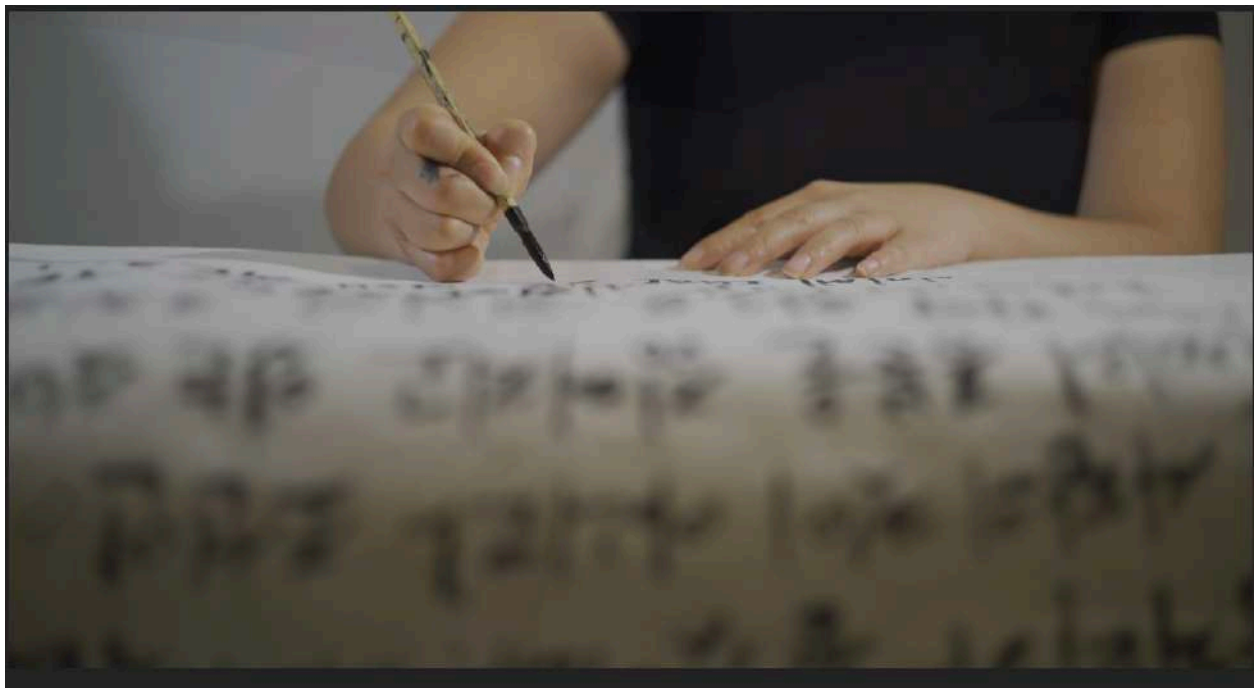


Figure 19 (Jessie)Jihyun Lee. (Still) The Memoir of the Fourth Finger. Documentary. 2026.

His mom, Maria Cho, sent him a letter in the last few months in prison.

Voice Over:

To my loving son,

If you think that dying before your old mother is undutiful, this mother will be humiliated. Your death is not yours alone, but the burden of the entire Korean people. If you appeal, you are begging for your life

from the colonizers. Since you have come to this for the sake of your country, do not hesitate and accept your death. Since you have put yourself into this position to do the right thing, it is your honour to be a martyr for your mother. This will probably be the last letter this mother writes to you. I have sent you a shroud here, so wear it and go forth. Because your mother does not expect to be reunited with you in this life. You must come back to this world as a virtuous son of the lord when we reunite.

Jessie V.O.:

She speaks in the third person to speak on behalf of the Korean nation.

Since this point, has he been reincarnated to see his mother?

Dream Work – 태몽 (Taemong) – The Birth Dream

태몽 (Taemong) is a birth dream that is very unique in Korean culture. I have heard some people joking that every Korean is a shaman, since every Korean has their 태몽 (Taemong), which predicts the baby's gender, characteristics, and future while the mother is pregnant. For a higher chance, the mother has a birth dream, after that, the most senior person in the family, such as a grandmother, grandfather, the father, relatives and friends. Being able to have Taemong is considered an honour and virtue in Korean culture. Ahn Joongeun's mother also had a birth dream about her son, and it is still discussed in the public records. During my interview, my grandmother talked about hearing about his birth dream from her mom, as she heard about it directly from Ahn Joongeun's mother, as she would regularly visit the head family to represent courtesy for important Korean traditional holidays such as Seolnal 설날 (Korean New Year) and Choosuck 추석 (Korean Thanksgiving). His birth dream was a glorious pear that his mother dared not eat and would carefully place on a shelf. During the interview, my grandmother revealed a story that was shared only among women in the family. After Ahn was executed, she carefully shared her sorrows with women within the family, interpreting that since the pear was so shiny, Ahn became a glorious figure, looked up to by everyone, but since the pear is edible, he was eaten by the colonizer.

It is mind-blowing that Maria Cho was able to respect her own son, Ahn Joongeun, as a peace activist and was able to encourage Ahn to accept his death. On the other hand, the responsibility Ahn Joongeun bears on behalf of the entire Korean nation is so heavy that there is no room for him to express familial bonds with his mom or his family. We call this ‘The Great Sacrifice’. Without this sacrifice and other sacrifices, Koreans could have lost their national identity. Observing the patterns within my family and many other families in Korea, I often find that individual identities are overly reinforced by collective goals and are not allowed to be vulnerable. Being vulnerable is not a negative state. We are most vulnerable when we love someone. The love and vulnerability between the mother and son are instinctive, and not being allowed to be vulnerable leaves love incomplete and leaves less room to express it. As Elizabeth O’Donnell Gandolfo brings her first-person motherhood experience to the theoretical anthropology,

“Vulnerability is central to who we are as human beings—it is the milieu in which we experience both suffering and redemption. Vulnerability not only exposes human beings to harm but also is the condition for the possibility of healing, health, and wholeness. The maternal narratives on which my arguments rest demonstrate that the redemptive human encounter with divine love—experienced here as resilience in the face of harm and resistance to violence and oppression—takes place within the vulnerable human conditions of embodied, relational existence.”

Sadly, the expression of love and the embrace of vulnerability are often suppressed by guilt and sorrow in our family’s subconscious when we face the collective goal, often due to a lack of emotional literacy. Somehow, expressing love and vulnerability is perceived as a daring act in the service of a greater purpose, or it often turns into a form of ‘harsh love’.

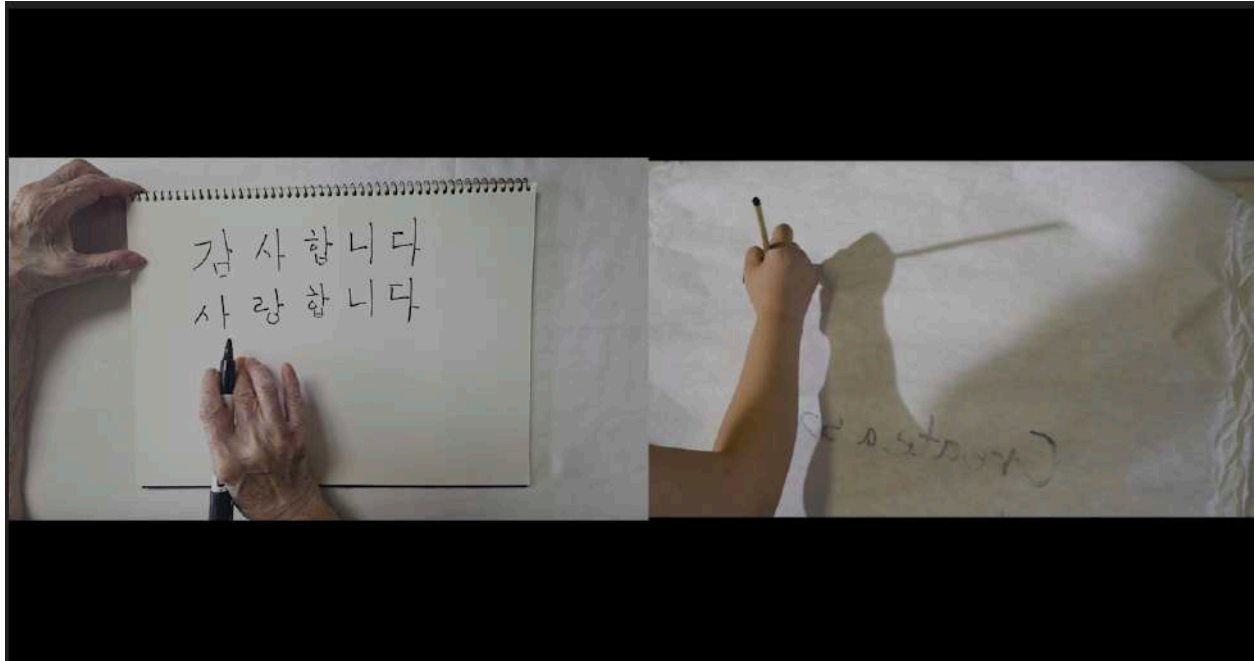


Figure 20. (Jessie)Jihyun Lee. (Still) The Memoir of the Fourth Finger. Documentary. 2026.

Stage Three: The self – Meaning Maker

‘The Self’ is the third stage of the journey to “Individuation” defined by Carl Jung, the process by which we can fulfill our full potential, to become all that we can possibly be. For this stage, I would like to call it the ‘Meaning Maker’ stage. Instead of letting the incidents that have happened to us define who we are today, we exercise our agency to tell our own story and reclaim who we are through the journey of transformation. Even when we cannot receive a sincere apology from those who hurt us, some say we should forgive them for our sake, rather than waiting or urging them to apologize. Do not let them have a chance to hurt your feelings and own your emotions. No one can hurt us, as long as we do not allow them. I do not mean that forgiveness always entails reconciliation, as reconciliation is achieved only through mutual recognition.

Forgiveness means silence and lightness, being free from the heavy emotional baggage. It is not easy, of course. It has to be a constant endeavour to dance in the storm and to continually situate yourself in the eye of the storm, in the silence and tranquillity of the journey of moving through the storm. Be comfortable with the blank space in between relationships. Choose where and when you want to be. Heal, like a fighter.

Subjectification - Meaning Maker

Carl Jung's approaches to healing help individuals "become who they are," as with Michael Facult. Meanwhile, while Carl Jung approaches healing through symbolic, internal, and psychological perspectives, Facult's approach focuses on external and sociological perspectives. It is essential to discuss both theorists to understand the multi-faceted dimensions of healing, eventually to achieve solitude from the past, transcend complex situations through artistic practice, and build solidarity through shared healing experiences as of the third space, or the safe space, in the contemporary time period; how an individual is connected to the world by sharing personal and awakening experiences to create and weave the bigger meaning and relationship.

The constant flow of power practices from the micro to the macro level has shaped the representation of 'normal' and 'abnormal' through social discipline, leading to hegemonies and the genealogy of power, and has shaped my grandmother's, my, and my family's fairly micro-level reality compared to the entire humanity. I recognize that Korea has undergone an existential crisis and, in turn, a crisis of Korean identity. My ancestors have taken leadership as a counter force, the resistance to the hegemonies and power imbalance, which has shifted the Korean identities from the 'victim' to 'resistance' and 'survivors'. However, 'the Great Sacrifice' Ahn, Joongeun has subconsciously reinforced the whole family to have less voice for individuals in front of the bigger cause, which has been practiced throughout generations, and subconsciously required in the family system, and in society, even for the time and space that do not require the sacrifice for individuals to a certain extent. These patterns are amplified for the oldest female figures within families and communities, leading them to make quiet sacrifices, even without validation. This acknowledgement is not just about criticizing collectivism and cherishing individualism, as both ideas have light and shadow; if collectivism is overemphasized, individuals' voices tend to be crushed, and if individualism is overemphasized, there is a greater risk of isolation and a lack of connectivity; or rather, an individual completely detached from social context simply does not exist. This is to understand the complexity of individual identity in a social context and

oversee the rusty patterns to become an active power practitioner, rather than remain a passive product of the past.

꽃 The Flower

김춘수 Kim, Chun-soon

내가 그의 이름을 불러주기 전까지는 Before I called her name,

그는 다만 she was nothing

하나의 몸짓에 지나지 않았다.more than a gesture.

내가 그의 이름을 불렀을때 When I called her name,

그는 나에게로 와서 she came to me

꽃이 되었다. and became a flower.

내가 그의 이름을 불러준것 처럼 Like I called her name,

나의 이 빛깔과 향기에 알맞은 누가 나의 이름을 불러다오

Please call my name

Suitable for my colour and fragrance

그에게로 가서 나도 I, too, long to come to her.

그의 꽃이 되고 싶다. And become her flower.

우리들은 모두 무엇이 되고 싶다. We all long to be meaningful

너는 나에게 나는 너에게 You, to me, and I, to you,

잊혀지지 않는 하나의 눈짓이 되고 싶다. Long to become a gentle gaze, unforgettable

This is the most representative of Chunsu Kim's Korean existentialist poetry that I have adored since the moment I have learned in my middle school class in Korea, included at the end of the documentary. Existentialism is the idea that humans are born without a pre-determined purpose, and thus one is responsible for creating one's own meaning. This approach acknowledges humans as free-willed agents capable of creating their own meaning, rather than being dictated by society's norms or past incidents, and of forming meaningful relationships to regain strength. No wonder 'Art as a Healing method' is related to this philosophy and also aligns well with Carl Jung, Michael Facult and many other psychologists and philosophers. Victor E. Frankl, the Austrian psychiatrist, states in his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, "Man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life, and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible." He is a key figure in existentialism, having been a Holocaust survivor himself.

Through my creation, I choose to assign new meaning to the void space that has arisen from past vestiges for the present moment, to feel safe within my most intimate and primitive space – my body – by looking, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling, simply put, to be comfortable for being.

"Ahn's missing finger could have been his personal story and vulnerability that he has to push aside."

"With Love that I do not have to conceal myself, with the most silent reconciliation, with the presence with clarity, I dance."

I use gestures to enhance the visibility of overlooked meanings amid complex personal, sociological, political, and ecological contexts. In Von Bismarck's framework, visibility is not a natural condition: it is a constructed curatorial gesture that participates in. She introduces 'gestures as politics'. In her definition, gestures are micro actions that reveal power, such as election, omission, naming, spatial arrangement, and framing. I hope my gestures function as a counterforce to the normalized visibility.

Ahn's missing finger could have been his personal story and vulnerability that he has to push aside. With gratitude to the time and space that allow discussion of the vulnerability, I shift my perception

from Ahn's cut finger, my grandmother's consecutive fracturing injuries, and my consecutive fracturing injuries being scar or tragedy to embodied knowledge and wisdom.

Identity as a Source of Power – love as a counter force

Self-awareness and acceptance, including of complicated contexts, embarrassing scars, and imperfections, are a critical foundation for healing, learning to truly love oneself as a whole, and finding a concrete 'sense of self' through reconstructing and reparenting fragmented identity. These aspects tend to be lacking for those who have survived trauma or struggled with a sense of belonging, as the struggles they face are not overtly visible and easy to be overlooked by key caretakers, others or even themselves. In other words, it is about "Meeting one's healthy narcissistic needs." Pete Walker, the psychiatrist and the survivor of C-PTSD (Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) from childhood, emphasizes the significance of self-focused verbal exploration of the client being the primary activity in the dialogue between the client and therapist in clinical practice, especially for those survivors whose self-expression is especially decimated by their caretakers. He states, "Without this, the unformed healthy ego has no room to grow and break free from the critic. The client's healthy sense of self remains imprisoned beneath the hegemony of the outsized superego."



Figure 21. Minsook Lee. There are no words. Documentary. TIFF. 2025

Self-validation is practicing self-love, and it is especially critical in the more complex and diverse contexts of contemporary time and space, given that no system can be perfect for each individual and that the pace of systemic evolution cannot completely keep up with the pace of change. Understanding oneself is not merely being an individual, but acknowledging oneself as a powerful agency, vessel and space to carry and claim a powerful story. Referring to a critical filmmaker and my supervisor, Minsook Lee's recent documentary piece, "There Are No Words," she delivers a story that could actually hurt herself, searching for memories of her mother, Son Ji Lee, who died by suicide when Lee was just 12 years old. The documentary contemplates how trauma fractures memory as Lee revisits the people and places of her childhood in Toronto, Canada, and Hwasun, South Korea, her place of birth. A looming figure in this search is Lee's now-90-year-old father, who meets her mother while serving at a national intelligence agency under dictator Park Chung Hee in 1960s South Korea. He is her last direct connection to her mother, although he is an unreliable narrator with a history of abuse who speaks in a mother tongue she cannot fully understand. Through a fabric of real and imagined histories, Lee reveals that some stories must still be told, even when there are no words for grief. From the title 'There are No Words', her work appears to me to be her lifelong research into her versions of emotional literacy, processing the grief beyond imagination that could not be resolved in her life, as she refers to filmmaking as 'privilege' in her cinematic screening event at TIFF in 2025. Furthermore, understanding oneself enables one to understand

others more deeply, fostering empathy, care, and empowerment, especially for those who share commonalities.

As bell hooks states in her book, 'All about Love', we learn about love in childhood. Whether our homes are happy or troubled, home is the first community we can learn about, across the world, regardless of lines of class, race, and gender. She points out that not many people learn the adequate form of love, surprisingly more than we expect; Some children learn that love can coexist with abuse and abuse is part of love, or some children just learn that love is a given status and they do not learn they can give love. Although many children are raised in homes where they receive some degree of care, love may be absent if the parents do not know how to love, creating a household that lacks love, where chaos, neglect, and abuse are prevalent.

She emphasizes that there can be no love without justice. Referring back to Minsook Lee's career, she has been fighting for social justice throughout her career in a creative and diplomatic manner. The current film, "There are no words", is the most personal film I have seen in her work. At the very end of her TIFF screening, she mentioned that she wanted to ask whether her mother had loved her, since her mother is no longer present. This film helps me understand her as a person and why she has been fighting for justice; she could have been laying the groundwork for cinematic practice to investigate and relearn about love.



Figure 22. (Jessie)Jihyun Lee. (Still) *The Memoir of the Fourth Finger*. Documentary. 2026.

Identity can be a source of belonging and a soft powerhouse. ‘Consistent validation of one’s perspective and experience builds confidence and enhances self-esteem. In the book “Tastes Like War”, the author tries to understand her mom’s Schizophrenia as a collective and historical wound. through understanding her through sensory experience. She claims her agency through sensory experience and food. For her mother, a cheeseburger is a glamorized cultural dislocation. “The cheeseburger was a complex symbol of survival and subordination, a luxury item that the Americans could afford to throw away while Koreans starved. For my mother, it also symbolized all the hope and possibilities that America had to offer.” The author finds that her mother exercises agency by selling blackberries. “In Marxist terms, she owned both the product and the means of production. In psychic terms, she had the capacity to feed the very community that had treated her as a second-class citizen, to rise above the fray and be the gracious one.” The author tries to honour her as she is through the means of communication, the food. “I went through my own process of psychic decolonization during these years of cooking for her. The meal we shared nurtured me through the emotionally taxing work.” The author’s move to share her vulnerable story and reclaim it, asserting her agency, adds complexity to the identity-building process, assuring herself and viewers that she is not tied to a specific negative life experience, but holds the power

to retell the story. Such positive reinforcement can encourage people to identify with others who resemble them, providing even greater validation of their worldview. I would not say that my experience and her experiences are the same or similar. But I choose to acknowledge the commonality between Grace Cho's creative journey and my own, rooted in the desire to continuously reconstruct identity in the safe space of belonging, power, and love. In fact, choosing to acknowledge your commonality with people who resemble you can be a very positive experience, generating feelings of belonging, power and safety. This can be true even when members of that group are not socially powerful, and joining the group does not enhance your social status. Because of the power and strength many people derive from identifying with their social group, it is important to facilitate that process for young people by recognizing, acknowledging and embracing differences. At the end of the TIFF screening, I approached her, hugged her and said, "I have so much love for you." It does not matter whether my intention to respect has been successfully conveyed to her, as it has been a great empowering experience for me.

Peaceful Space Making – "Cultural Maker"

Power dynamics, resistance, colonization, and decolonization persist in contemporary times and do not necessarily involve armed conflict or specific national-level conflicts. At this time, it can exist in a more nuanced, subtle, and friendly manner. Historically, in the art scene, curators have held critical authority as decision-makers over how artists are seen. Alongside the evolution of historical flows, artists and curators have challenged different groups and interchanged or converged in their roles. Though some young curators fear losing their agency, along with the tendency of interchanging and convergence in the contemporary art world, their unique identity as a 'frame maker', positioned as a decision maker, a 'cultural maker', immersed within the artists' community, would continue to exist and evolve, sharing this agency with artists, eventually contributing to prosper the cultural realm collectively.

When artists act as curators, they provide a unique perspective, challenge the traditional role, and engage in dialogue with other artists' work, expanding their own research and ideas in a shared context. When curators act as artists, they create new viewer experiences, shape interpretation, and become

actively part of discourse and history. This collective goal towards a flourishing culture is important, as culture has the power to shape not only our view of the past but also how we see ourselves today. This contemporary tendency, in the bigger picture, is a process of creating discourse between two different agencies with a care-centred approach, by sharing their knowledge and agency for the collective purpose, ultimately, 'the space' that holds discourse. One day, I asked my supervisor, Julian Jason Halladyn, a very insightful and trustworthy art historian and curator, a question. "What is your definition of Discourse?" He has answered, "It is a dialogue, a conversation. I believe that if the knowledge is not made part of the constant discourse, the knowledge is dead. The fascinating part of the discourse is being able to have a conversation with people who have already passed away and carry on their knowledge and heritage."

The space created through discourse between artists and curators exists everywhere yet nowhere and need not necessarily be tangible. Bringing this intangible, value-focused space-making practice to Korean diasporic individuals and, further, to other diasporic communities or any communities that struggle with a sense of belonging is significant. It is essential to apply the approach of Indigenous cartography to reclaim us/them, which can transcend into the role of a 'peace-maker' who can create a safe space to celebrate multidimensional identities by de/recentralizing the Third space mindfully, even further, approaching the current geographical situation in Korea, where the country is divided into two halves and other territories with fragmented situations more holistically. This is about how we can shift soft power to rise above the vestiges of fear from the survival experience. Barcelos in "Our Translation" reflects on the importance of Indigenous cartography to "reallocate in the map those who should have never been left out of it" and suggests that Indigenous and social cartographic praxis can contribute to Indigenous resurgence, counterhegemonic movements, and social mobilizations that aim to "denaturalize the development" that comes with colonialist-statist attempts to "modernize" Indigenous territories. Much like Korea, colonization in the so-called "new world" has caused borders and separated communities.

Decolonizing is remapping preconceived identities and creating safe spaces for intersectional cultural conversations that include nature within the identity-building process. Numerous ancestors seem to have been aware that nature is the divine teacher of 'Love'. Many indigenous heritages, including

Korean and Native Canadian heritages, have incorporated nature into human relationships and considered it a source of wisdom. That means connecting back to primal ancestral roots to unlearn and relearn 'Love'. What is Love? Love is coexistence, existing together. Nature does perform a decolonizing act of its own, practicing love and coexistence. Fire and biodiversity would appear to conflict: fire kills. Yet without fire, these particular forest systems, as we understand them, would cease to exist. The rejuvenating quality of fire provides new opportunities for colonization by both plants and animals, and ensures the long-term persistence of biodiversity (Granstrom 2001, Ryan 2002). Forest fires in the Northern Hemisphere create shifting mosaics of vegetation of different ages and structures, producing something of a kaleidoscope effect over extended periods. On the small scale, stands of pine or spruce can appear uniform since they look much the same wherever you stand in them, whilst a large-scale perspective reveals a complex mosaic of patches of age and structure. The rather unpredictable relationship between forests and fire creates stability. It is essential for ecosystem biodiversity and resilience. In the absence of fires, species diversity and community composition will diminish, and impact large-scale spatial heterogeneity (Granstrom 2001).

The forest fire may appear too destructive or negative, but it is actually illuminating what is lacking in contemporary society. In the book, *Burnout Society*, the Korean German philosopher, Byungchul Han, is pointing out that the problem that arose in modern society comes from an overly positive potency. "Mounting positivization of society also weakens feelings such as dread and mourning [Trauer], which are based on a kind of negativity; they are negative feelings.³ If thinking [das Denken] itself were a "network of antibodies and natural immune defenses,"⁴ then the absence of negativity would transform it into calculation. The computer calculates more quickly than the human brain and takes inordinate quantities of data without difficulty because it is free of all Otherness. It is a machine of positivity [Positivmaschine]. Because of autistic self-referentiality, because negativity is absent, an idiot savant can perform what otherwise only a calculator can do. The general positivization of the world means that both human beings and society are transforming into autistic performance-machines." He highlights the importance of having the pedagogy of seeing, which is contemplative attention and

lingering. By bringing contemplative attention and the ability to linger, we can transform the haunted voice of the past from a passive voice into an active guide, restoring the holistic shape of love.

The book 'Weaving Sweetgrass' reveals Indigenous wisdom about the relationship between nature and humans in the form of a love letter to nature.

We are thankful to our Mother the Earth, for she gives us everything that we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk about upon her. It gives us joy that she still continues to care for us, just as she has from the beginning of time. To our mothers, we send thanksgiving, love and respect. Now our minds are one.

“The Land loves us back. She loves us with beans and tomatoes, with roasting ears and blackberries and birdsongs. By a shower of a gift and a heavy rain of lessons. She provides for us and teaches us to provide for ourselves. That’s what good mothers do.” Treating nature as a symbolic, loving and living figure is embedded throughout the book’s narrative.

Hangeul, the Korean unique phonetic sound-based writing system created by King Sejong of the Joseon Dynasty, conveys the philosophy of the relationship between humans and nature. It is created with blends of East Asian cosmology (Heaven, Earth, Humanity), Yin and Yang, and Five elements with practical linguistics. The basic vowel shapes ‘·’ indicates for sky, ‘—’ for earth, | for person, symbolizing the cosmos. These fundamental forces are combined to create all other vowels, showing how elements interact and the relationship between person and nature.

By humbly recognizing that humans are part of a relationship with nature, we can maintain an equivalent relationship with love. It is necessary that each diasporic community, with different cultural backgrounds, or any community that seeks a ‘sense of belonging’ can exist with a voice and authority, with this care-centric approach, allowing those without a voice to be heard. Many diverse diasporic communities with various cultural backgrounds can coexist without being drowned out. By shifting our perspective, diasporic space can become a transnational/transcultural social space or 'Third Space', where members of transnational communities safely share values, ideas, and practices that bear meanings

inherited from their communities of origin. I would like to argue that this is a way to decolonize the modernized perspective, and that, I believe, is to become resilient to the embedded colonized perspective for myself and others who have undergone similar situations by shifting their space away from their place of origin to heal. Throughout our lives, we often experience a sense of 'otherness' if we do not belong to the dominant group. This 'otherness' can lead to a feeling of exclusion and loneliness. Acknowledging shared identity within engaged contexts is only possible through care-oriented mutual agreement, which ultimately reinforces a more inclusive and empathetic society.

Further exploring the interrelation between my grandmother and my identity, and how that identity has evolved across generations and accumulated unconscious identity, will bring clarity to my consciousness and to the community. Beginning with coping with the personal agony of carrying that 'ball of loneliness' and further delving deeper into intergenerational trauma within my family by understanding my grandmother's life through my practice, this project would contribute to the collective healing process within my family and many other families who share similar experiences. This will be achieved by finding my solitude, healing from intergenerational trauma and seeking an alternative notion of solidarity within that 'Third Space,' inviting other individuals who have experienced various kinds of 'otherness' in their lives. Ultimately, the project would help create a Utopian space that reconciles fragmented relationships, memory, identity, and community. By creating a safe space for critical stories, such as my grandmother's, which are often disregarded, I can open up and connect with my authentic self through her story. This process enables me to heal from the passed-down scars of colonization, decolonize my imagination, liberate myself from the burden of loneliness, and empower others to connect with themselves, embracing them with such love, by reclaiming my soul sovereignty, regardless of whether others recognize me.

Reflection

Documentary

In the making process, I focus on creating a third space that transcends familiar political and sociological contexts and holds trans-cultural identity, carrying the essence of ‘peace making’ in contemporary time and space through my unique storytelling. In my documentary, I choose to use English predominantly for my narration, even though I tell mostly Korean stories, because I feel too tightly bound to the stories told in Korean, which makes me freeze and keeps the story from flowing. I use English to maintain a sufficient distance from Korean culture while incorporating some Korean words and, when necessary, selective Korean dialogue. Not to mention, the documentary-making process was fighting with my hesitation. During the process, I have interviewed my grandmother with the help of my parents, who are non-professional videographers/photographers, as I cannot visit Korea or China due to my visa status, which has naturally created time and space for my parents to reconcile with my grandmother’s past. It is a significant process, as the unrecognized past repeats itself. When I am interviewing my grandmother, sometimes, I have to stop the camera for someone other than my grandmother and me, so that other people don't dictate the narrative. It is a very interesting moment, naturally revealing the power dynamic within the family. My grandmother makes me cry with her harsh comments, even though she is more than happy to see me. I complained to my supervisor, saying, ‘My grandmother does not need the REB (Research Ethics Board) since she is supported by two certified therapists, my mom and me, also my humorous dad. I need a REB for myself!’

I utilize found footage, such as recent news reports about Ahn Joongeun and his film created in both North and South Korea, and relocate my grandmother’s story and my personal voice/interpretation through my alter ego, CATOG. I selected a series of CATOG paintings from 2010 to 2019 and had two of my friends dub them. When I am choosing voice actors and actresses, I try to reflect their organic characters and relationships to naturally animate them. Hayden Busso and Alex Grusper are OCAD INTM graduates and video editor/streamer and game developer/actress, and their relationships are known to be ‘the old, married couple-like friends’ among friends, as they argue often, but they are very

understanding of each other. For real-life people such as Ahn Joongeun and Chiba Doshichi, I also reflect on real life. Rick Juho Lee used to serve as a soldier in the United Nations, so he not only understands the nature of a soldier through firsthand experience, but he is now an administrative staff member at OCAD, being friends with Raymond Fung, who is acting a role of the Japanese soldier Chiba Doshichi, the head technician at the 3D printing centre at OCAD. Both of them are very professional and have a very good sense of community. They find the dialogue between real people very relatable. So, I allow my voice actors and actresses to make minor revisions to the script when they mention that it is hard to voice act, as it feels like they are using someone else's language or tone, as I want their personal voices in contemporary time periods to be reflected. By doing so, I investigate what is missing in the existing history and publicized official records and find my agency within the complex narratives by filling the void with underrepresented personal voices.

The story plots are not in chronological order; I am presenting time in a non-linear manner. Time is not linear at either the micro or the macro level. Those who have experienced traumatic episodes tend to repeat the same patterns until they resolve them in a different time and space; many call them 'destiny,' as Carl Jung states. I try to show how unrecognized trauma repeats across generations like a four-season cycle, filming the four seasons of China, Korea and Japan. I pose the question, 'How do we remember the past for the future?' and try to answer it. Ironically, it is important to remember critical incidents as parts of the life cycle, as winter gives way to spring, rather than trying to completely remove them from memory.

A designated space to include all forms of art has not been available to me, so securing space for different art forms has been a task for the thesis project. The documentary has screened at the Centre for Emerging Artists and Designers for about 60 minutes, as it requires a different readership. In the middle of the screening, between the serious historical events, the most fascinating part of the experience was that the absurdity of CATOG made people laugh. Humour helps us treat severe incidents as a small part of the life cycle, helping us move on in the flow of time. I would like to include Charlie Chaplin's quote. "Life is a tragedy when seen in a close-up, but a comedy in a long shot." It is so important to laugh while

recovering from serious events. In the end, I received so many flowers, snacks, love, hugs with tears, accompanied by comments like ‘it is heart-moving’, ‘this is so special’, ‘I have learned so much about Korea, thanks to you.’ ‘Soft power is hard to deconstruct, Long Live Catog!’ From people who have Korean heritage, ‘This is well structured and interconnected plots, not relying on the social capital of Ahn Joongeun.’ ‘I have never seen a story about Ahn Joongeun like this. ‘I am grateful that Ahn Joongeun’s descendant is still alive somewhere in the world.’

I am grateful for everything, including the mistakes I have made.

Exhibition - Material Story

For painting, I incorporate calligraphic movement, passed down through generations, into a stretched canvas, using acrylic paint, and install it on the wall in a fluid manner. I have collaborated with my grandmother and my great-granduncle by collaging our work into a new form of ‘flag’ that claims soul sovereignty through the story, bringing the lineage of the Korean National flag created by Ahn Joongeun. The transparent, lightweight fabric used for flag-making also contributes to the fluid nature. To me, being fluid means securing the core of identity without being too rigid, while listening to the neighbour’s story. Weaving and layering newspaper and Hanji paper together represent the healing process of a publicized or official story and a story with a soft personal narrative. Making ceramics based on my grandmother’s story, mending it, and creating something new also contribute to this transformative process. Glassblowing is one of the most powerful material-making processes, as it directly confronts me with the fear of fire and imbues found objects with a vessel for story. The new form is more meaningful than the past, as it proudly reveals ‘the scar’ in the ceramic. Performance acts as glue between the material, story, and process, turning everything into a cohesive narrative.

The exhibition is held in room 118. I have used the room's height to ensure it contributes to the fun structure alongside my projection installation. So, I have covered them, along with the plinths with holes, using white folded paper to hide the unnecessary details of everyday objects. When the film projection is layered over the existing room structure and a new moon jar form, it represents how

materials and story initiate conversations and create the dialogue in the designated space. The materials involved in the new dialogue in the designated space interact with visitors, and the materials that listen to the dialogue between the materials and visitors are no longer the same materials, even though there is no significant physical transformation.

I have encountered a few people crying in front of the Catog painting with a smile in the end. One of the visitors who hasn't seen the documentary sees my painting and states, 'I do not know the story of the documentary, but the painting itself is so powerful. It makes me laugh and makes me cry in the end.' I am happy that visitors appreciate feeling and expressing emotions in such sweet words, which I have long wished for myself through years of practice. One of the visitors would leave sweet words to write a full-page letter and decided to use her mother tongue, Chinese, for the message: "I do not think I can express the essence of the feeling with English enough." It is one of the most memorable moments. From people who have seen both the documentary and the exhibition, I receive comments like 'The documentary helps understanding the material making process.' On the very last day, Andrea Fatona, the independent curator and the Black Canadian cultural producer, whom I have encountered a few times through an interview project in a curatorial class, happened to teach right beside my exhibition room. I am lucky to have her spend time in the exhibition room, either goose-bombing each other or getting goose-bombs at the same time. She has not seen the documentary, and she has only seen my material story. She finds the glass-blowing pieces interesting, and the glass pieces read as 'breasts' to her. I get goosebumps at the moment. As the glass and the stone carry the story between Ahn Joongeun and his mother. Ahn Joongeun mentions, "I would be more than content even if I become a piece of abandoned stone in the flow of Korean history." And his mother makes him a shroud with the last love letter to her son, encouraging him to accept his death for the sake of his country. Ahn decides to sacrifice himself, and his mom, Maria Cho, has silenced her sorrow for the loss of her loving son for the sake of the country. The abandonment I have experienced in the fire, and the one my grandmother experienced in the war, which has been passed down and been asked to accept as a frame of 'Bigger Cause', I just want to hold them. Andrea points out the fact that my painting reminds me of 'roots'. This was a stunning goose bombing comment, as I have been

thinking about the difference between ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’. Soul represents more of where I am coming from, and Spirit represents where I am going to be, the willpower. As a trauma survivor, I understand more than anyone that without healing the root, you cannot go anywhere. This reconnects back to my repetitive leg injuries. In the aromatherapy clinical practice, which focuses on mind and body healing, my injuries represent a typical representation of unresolved trauma.

Both the Documentary and the screening elicit significant emotional responses, as I have intended. When I start making the work, as a self-healing process predominantly at first, and as I reach certain phases of the practice, I start making things, hoping my audience would find a small comfort or heart-melting love when they see the work, resonating with the story I share.

Accidentally, while installing all the pieces in the exhibition, one of the glass pieces shattered. My supervisor says, “Always full of adventure.” I’m thinking, what kind of story will I make with these shattered pieces?

Public Intervening Performance – on-going Story

The drive for this guerrilla intervention, “Peace Act 2026: How to Hold Space,” is, ironically, the rejection I have faced. It was challenging for me to find a space to make this happen while navigating the school system. Luckily, I had a chance to talk with Peter Morin, the performance artist and the iconic IAMD professor, as an indigenous knowledge keeper. He helped me think outside the box, which, in this context, refers to the institutional space, suggesting that I perform at Butterfield Park, collaborating with me. I wanted to transform the struggle of hunting the space into decolonizing the sense of space. I was also grateful that he shared his rejection story, which helped me to push through. In that sense, Butterfield Park is a perfect choice, since I wanted to create a meaningful relationship by making us pay attention to our most primitive space: our body, gesture, breath and voice. With the participants for the intervention, we are holding space with our presence and relationship.

Conclusion

The process of my passionate pursuit has been daunting at times, and I try to remind myself that this is another form of peace activism in 2026, aimed at arriving at inner peace; it goes without saying that it can be challenging, sometimes lonely and worrying about judgmental voices. I constantly remind myself that I am doing this for my own joy and leave judgment to others, as Ahn carries his spirit in his activism at that time.

“대한 독립의 함성이 천국까지 들려오면 나는 기꺼이 춤을 추면서 만세를 부를 것이지요”

“When the sound of Korea’s securing sovereignty reaches heaven,

I shall dance and shout, Manse! (Long. Live Independence!)”

Korea has achieved sovereignty, and Ahn must have enjoyed his joyful dance in heaven. I was born in this privileged time, thinking about how to care for the post-memory I have not experienced, contemplating my own experience.

During my final thesis defence, I was asked why I was not using the word ‘feminism’ in my paper, even though I was doing a great deal of feminist work. Interestingly enough, it was not my first time receiving this question. I am still hesitant to call myself a feminist. This is because I care about my process of researching the subconscious through active imagination, which requires me to avoid any preconceived notions. In my process, claiming the word ‘feminist’ at the beginning of the research process is not helpful to freely explore the notions of femininity(anima) and masculinity(animus) in my subconscious. Additionally, I have learned (and am still learning) that there are different kinds of feminists in the world, and I cannot relate to all of them. Joseon Women’s Fellowship, the first feminist organization in Korean history, was founded in North Korea, which my grandmother’s father felt intimidated to have any of his family members associated with and gave him a reason to leave North Korea. Feminism in North Korean contexts began to encourage women to become socialist moms to raise socialist children for the North Korean Government. The North Korean government recognized women as

a nurturing force and asked them to serve the government after Ahn's activism. Later on, women were asked to take on financial responsibilities for the family, despite the fact that following capitalistic logic is regarded as inferior, along with the North Korean government's systemic failure, which made their citizens suffer from hunger. In the end, women's rights were placed in vulnerable positions. Feminism in Western contexts advocates gender equality within systems through diplomacy and women's and queer voices, and pays attention to intersectionality. However, it still needs improvement to include diverse cultural backgrounds. South Korean feminism has been influenced by Western feminism, which also focuses on gender equality. However, I was not able to relate to some of the intense feminist movements, referring to The Four "Nos (4B): Bihon (비혼): No heterosexual marriage, Bichulsan (비출산): No childbirth, Biyeonae (비연애): No Dating men, Besekseu (비섹스): No heterosexual sexual relationships." Also, it tends to lack queer voices, compared to Western contexts. Lastly, I do not relate to some radical feminisms that weaponize feminism to justify dehumanizing actions. Learning about all the different contexts, I am still hesitant to call myself a feminist. But I would rather say, I believe in women's voices and quiet voices.

I was a lonely Catog who did not belong to any social group in my birth year, 2010, the year of Catog creation. In 2026, I chose to situate myself as "a distanced perceiver" of people and communities, including myself, at a certain distance, as you look at your loved one with half-closed eyes to perceive and celebrate both light and shadow, still with love. At the end of the thesis defence, Michael Lee Poy told me, "You and your family still carry the spirit even though your grandmother's father was constantly avoiding any political and historical movements." That was one of the big acknowledging moments for the small me represented throughout the project. I believe Ahn Joongeun's peace philosophy carries powerful unifying forces that can help transcend personal, familial, social, political, and ecological contexts in contemporary time and space. I hope many individuals carry the essence of this spirit to peacefully coexist in the much more complex time and space in which we live, acknowledging that no system is perfect for each individual, and that we continue to seek our space.

Some say, “It is in the past. Just forget about it.” Or “Put it in the past.” Instead of forcefully trying to erase what has happened from our memory or records, it is important to allow some time for grief. We grieve because we love, and we grieve to move forward. History might have silenced some people’s voices. However, I believe that healing happens through the people who dare to speak. There are so many types of prejudice that still exist in the world, and this is because of a sense of ‘otherness.’

Through my research journey, I have learned that there are so many different kinds of otherness in the world, such as for indigenous, various diaspora communities, black, and South Asian communities, the Holocaust survivors, queer, various body identities, class, religion, etc. I also recognize that there are numerous good-hearted people challenging those prejudices and forms of ignorance, especially those I met through the OCAD community. I also recognize the mobility of my positionality. I cannot always be the majority or the minority in life. I would like to dedicate my research to recognizing ‘otherness’ in a different form, thereby cultivating Ahn Joongeun’s peace philosophy here in Toronto and beyond, hoping to contribute to creating a community that can pay attention to whispering voices.

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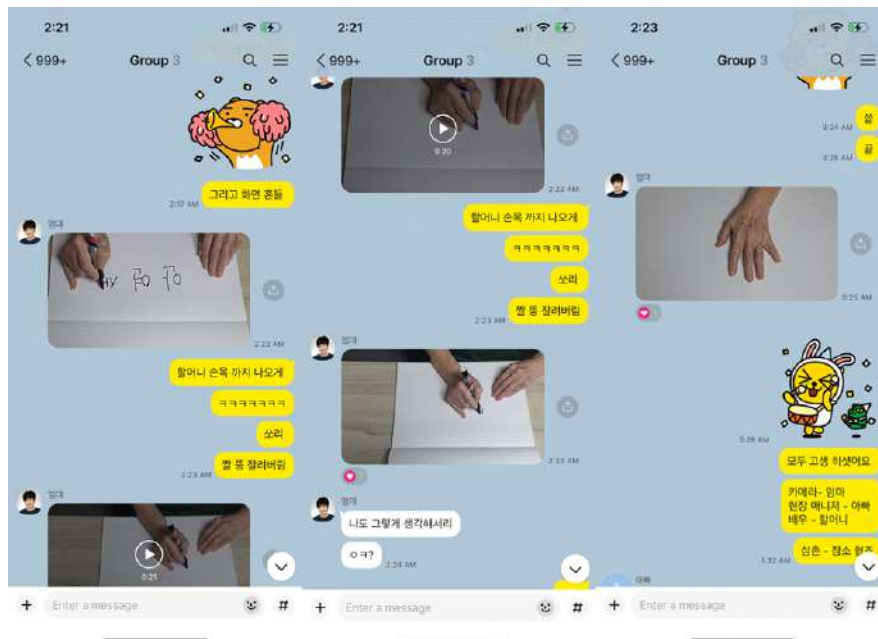
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Process Work

Since I was not able to visit Korea due to my visa status at the moment, I asked my parents to film my grandmother, remotely directing and have trained my parents, who are non-professional photographers/videographers, to visit and film certain sceneries at Hyochang Park in Korea, Harbin in China, and Rishun Prison in China. The process was quite interesting, as my parents would shoot the model or designated objects/places, often with lots of mistakes. My parents said they very much enjoy the dating process, and that it was just the two of them spending time together as well. For example, half of my grandma's hand would be cut off, or most of the time, the footage was so wobbly that it was hard for me to watch the scene at all. I facilitated workshops about new technology and encouraged them by sending cute emojis in response to every two or three comments. Media technology helped my family and me to transcend the time and space between Canada, Korea and China quite literally. Putting fragmented memories together in support of my parents was a powerful healing process for me, making meaning together, keeping a good enough distance.





Peace activists would sign their autographs on the Korean National Flag to show their dedication.

It has become the symbol of peace activism, carrying numerous names and voices on the flag.

Appendix A

Haliburton Flemington College Residency – focused on Ceramic and Glassblowing

Art Hut Show curated by Leah Small, Cassady Alejandria, Renata Critton-Papp, Amira Radwan (2025

Aug) When I enter the glassblowing shop, my body still remembers the danger of the hit that I experienced when I was ten. For the first three days, I am in shock, and after that I begin to play with fire, making things non-stop, pushing and pulling with gravity and time. It has been a fascinating experience controlling fire and creating something beautiful from it.



(photo credit to: Leah Small)





Appendix B: The Safest place in the world, according to AI

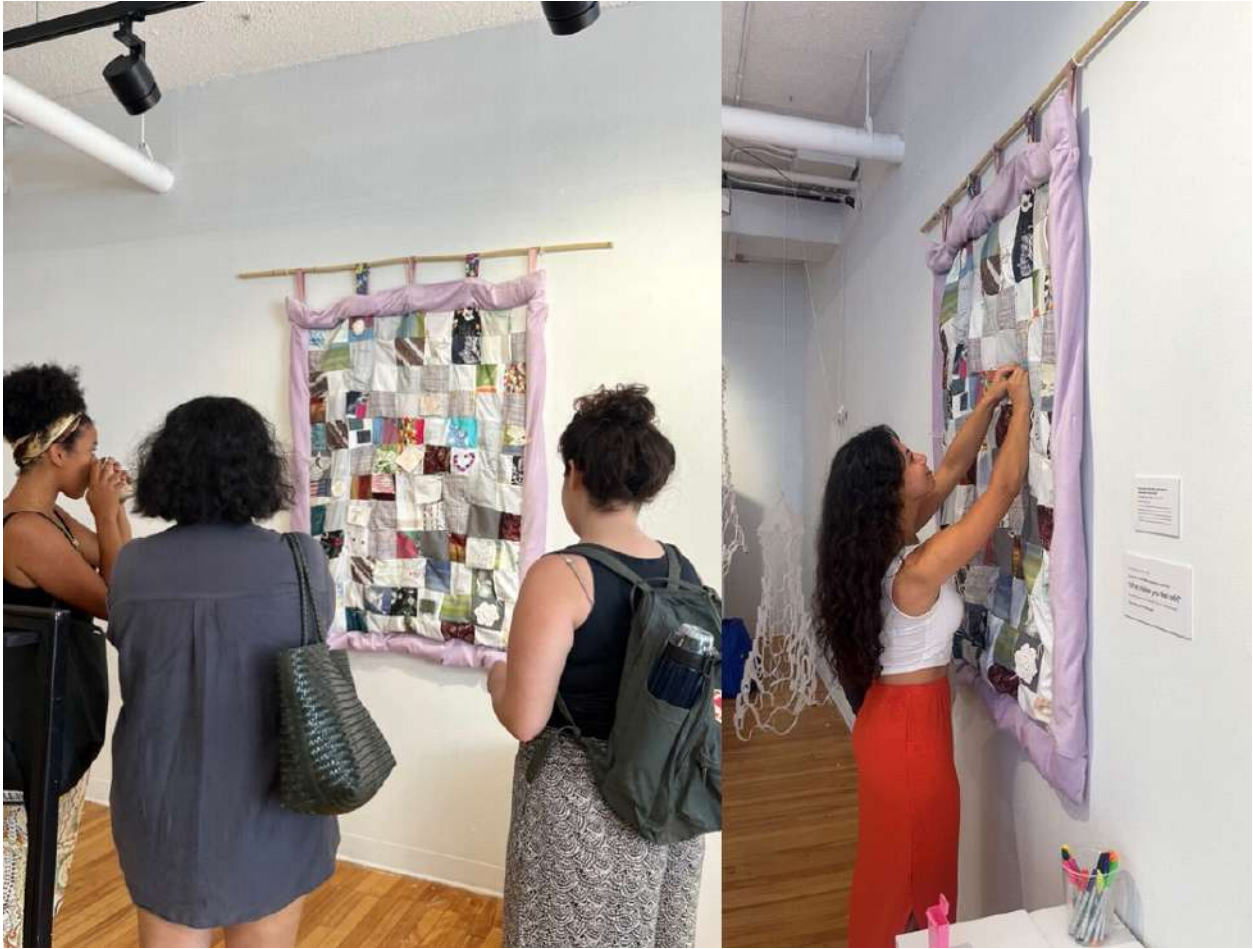
Artificial intelligence (AI) safety issues arise from its rapid development and deployment. On October 23rd, 2024, a lawsuit claims an AI chatbot is responsible for a Teen’s suicide. Megan Garcia’s 14-year-old son, Sewell Setzer, died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. As a response to this incident, we are developing a new media art installation titled “The Safest Space in the World According to AI.” The participatory process of creating speculative installations represents the collective responsibility of artists and designers, collecting each individual response as human-centred data, on pieces of recycled fabric, playing with Artificial Stupidity.

A year-long research and creation project (October 2024 – August 2025),

exhibited at the Graduate Gallery

Artist-curator: (Jessie)Jihyun Lee, Artist-designer: Kelsie Selson, Ishgun Lamba





Appendix C

When I was in residency at MOCA (Modern Contemporary Canadian Art Museum) from 2019 to 2020, the first half of the experience felt like a dream. I have been actively making things in the studio and facilitating workshops for the TD community, etc. When COVID hits, everything stops. I lost access to the studio, but I was still being asked to do the year-end show. I picked up an iPad and began drawing digitally and making animations. My urge to create a safe space, regardless of the loss of physical space, was significantly amplified.



Appendix D

My previous workplace, Korea Daily (중앙일보 토론토), Toronto, featured three series of articles I wrote for this project. (Sharing one of the three)
Titled, “The Shadow of the Hero (1-3) 영웅의 그림자.”

안중근의사, 영웅의 그림자 (1-3)

이지현(Jessie Lee) · 2026-03-13 · 0



이지현

Jessie Lee

OCAD Interdisciplinary MFA

여성의 침묵

이지현(본인)은 2025년 무렵까지 주로 토론토 중앙일보 문화면에 소식을 전하던 기자였다. 무릇 기자의 일은 신속하고 정확한 정보 전달을 바탕으로 사물이나 사건의 진실과 본질을 조명하여 공공의 이익을 우선시함으로써 사회의 가려운 곳을 긁어주는 등급계 같은 역할을 한다. 특히 문화면이 하는 역할은 다양한 문화 현상을 취재하여 대중에게 정확한 정보와 통찰력 있는 해석을 전달하는 것이다. 그 해석의 힘을 대중에게 전달함으로써 삶의 질을 높이고 동시대적 문화 현상 기록을 통해 대중에게 더 많은 문화 향유의 기회를 확대하는 것을 최우선으로 한다.

필자는 한국에서 우연히 주변 동료에게 초대받아 2018년경, 효창공원에서 매년 8월 15일 광복절에 진행되는 평화축제에 간 적이 있다. 그곳에서 안중근의사 기념 사업회에 있는 분들을 만나게 되었다. 함세웅 신부님을 중심으로 안중근 의사의 마지막이자 미완성된 이로서 ‘동양 평화론’의 다국어 번역과 안중근 의사의 유해를 찾는 일, 역사적 기록 보존에 힘쓰시는 분들이었다. 안중근 기념사업단 가택의 전통 가옥에 방문하여 유난히 그곳을 지키던 백구가 본인을 유독 반기던 통에, 본인의 외할머니의 존함을 밝히니, 더욱 자세히 연구 과정을 공유해 주셨다. 그곳에서 기념 사업회 분들을 통해 주로 안중근 의사의 마지막 ‘이토 히로부미’의거와 사형 선거로 알려져 있던 안중근 의사의 업적 외에 다양한 면모를 접하게 되면서, 다른 독립운동가 분들의 유해가 효창공원에 안치되어있는 것과 달리, 안중근 의사의 유해만 아직도 한국에 돌아오지 않았다는 점을 알게 되었다. 기념사업단 분들은 안중근 의사의 유해를 찾아 북한, 중국 일대를 갔지만 여전히 찾지 못했다는 점과, 그럼에도 불구하고 대한민국 국민의 심장 속에 그의 혼이 살아 있다고 믿는다는 이야기를 전해 주셨다. 이러한 우연한 만남은 가까이 있어서도 이야기하지 않았던 한국의 영웅의 이야기에 귀를 기울이게 하는 계기가 된다.

토론토 중앙일보를 떠나 본인은 토론토 예술 디자인 대학교 OCAD Interdisciplinary Masters of Art, Design and Media (MFA) 석사 과정에 재학 중으로, 졸업 프로젝트 발표를 눈앞에 두고 있다. 이 프로젝트를 통해 가족 내에서 잘 다뤄지지 않고 쉬쉬했던 대한민국의 영웅, 안중근 의사 그리고 그의 가족들의 이야기를, 특히 ‘여성’의 침묵된 목소리를 재조명하고자 한다. 신문사에서의 펜대를 내려놓고, 카메라와 붓을 들고 안중근 의사의 하얼빈 의거와 함께 휘몰아친 역사적 파도를 몸소 겪어내어야만 했던 본인의 외할머니(안연생)를 통해 안중근 의사라는 거대한 이름 뒤에 가려져 있던 ‘여성들’의 삶 그리고 어떻게 여성인 본인에게까지 영향이 미쳤는지를 재조명하여 어떻게 연대하고 함께 회복하는지를 고민하는 프로젝트이다. 현재 IAMD 석사과정 학교 학생 과대표직과, OCAD Faculty of Art 학과장, Dereck Sullivan, 학과장 Stephen Foster, 그리고 Canada’s Governor General Award 수상자 Max Dean의 멘토십, OCAD 학사과정 학생들과 함께하는 Encounters with Artists의 Project Assistant직을 역임하고 있다.

Link:

[Titled, “The Shadow of the Hero \(1-3\) 영웅의 그림자.”](#)

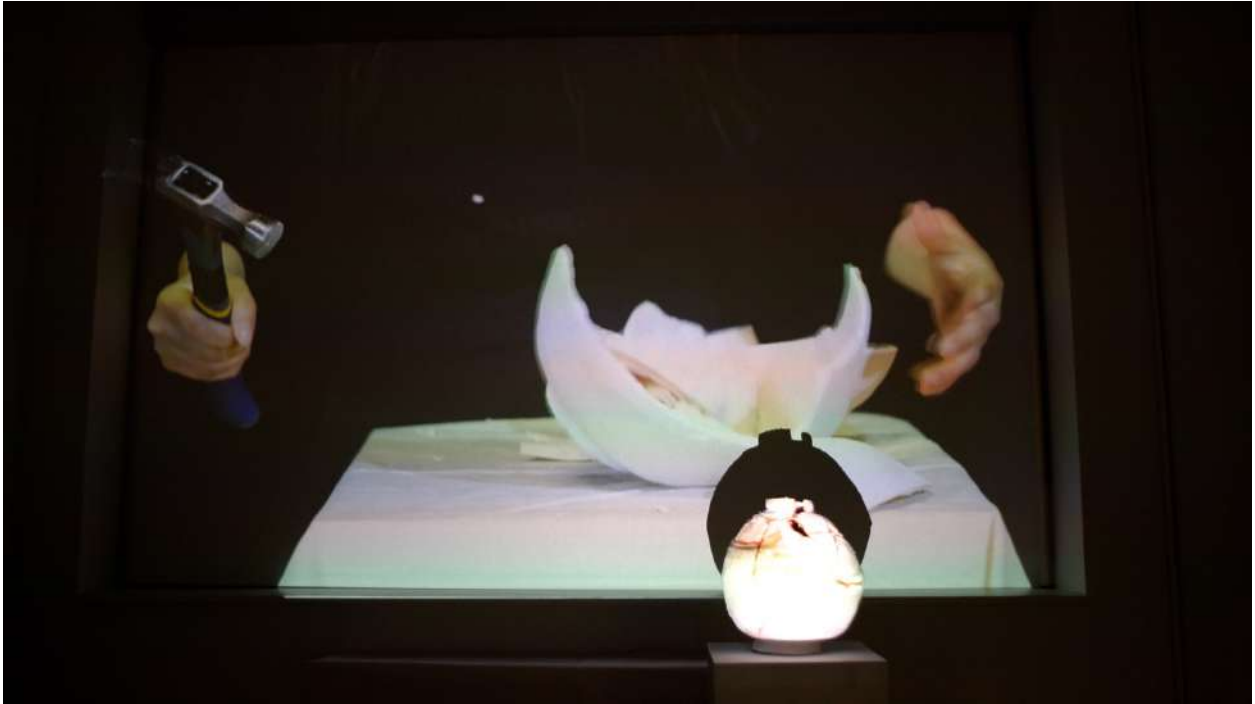
[Titled, “The Shadow of the Hero \(2-3\) 영웅의 그림자.”](#)

[Titled, “The Shadow of the Hero \(3-3\) 영웅의 그림자.”](#)

Appendix E – Screening / Exhibition / Public Intervention











September 30, 2025

(Jessie) Jihyun Lee
OCAD University

Dear (Jessie) Jihyun Lee,

This note confirms that you, (Jessie) Jihyun Lee and Julian Haladyn (primary supervisor) met with Bryan Weissenboeck (Research Ethics Advisor) on 23 September 2025 to discuss details of your proposed IAMD thesis project, including background, rationale, research question, methodology and project output(s).

The OCADU Research Ethics Board [REB] has considered the project details for your IAMD thesis project and has determined that this project does not require REB approval. The planned activities relate to creative practice and are outside the scope of the REB (TCPS2 Art. 2.6).

Please note that the REB considers projects on a case-by-case basis such that this determination only applies to this specific project as it was understood after this meeting. Please consult with the REB throughout the duration of your project if any major changes or modifications to the project are made and/or serious adverse events involving human participants take place.

We remind you that you are expected to still conduct yourself according to the responsible and ethical practices of the field. This may include, but is not limited to, obtaining appropriate releases from participants to use their images, audio/video or quotations in your work

If you have any questions about the REB review & approval process, please contact Bryan Weissenboeck, Research Ethics Advisor, at bweissenboeck@ocadu.ca.

Sincerely,

OCAD University Research Ethics Board

IAMD Graduate Thesis Show 2026



The Memoir of the Fourth Finger

(Jessie) Jihyun Lee

DOCUMENTARY

EXHIBITION

① **CENTRE FOR EMERGING
ARTIST & DESIGNER
(VIP, PRESS PREVIEW)**
(115 MCCAUL ST. 3RD FLOOR)
APRIL 2ND 6 PM - 7:30 PM



**TRANSMEDIA INSTALLATION
(PAINTING, GLASSBLOWING,
CERAMICS, ETC.)**
2026 APRIL 1ST - APRIL 6TH
(205 RICHMOND ST. ROOM 118)

② **OCAD GRADUATE BUILDING**
(205 RICHMOND ST. ROOM 115)
APRIL 4TH 3 PM - 6 PM



 @jessie_jihyun_lee

Copyright @ Jihyun(Jessie) Lee

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E. jihyun6257@gmail.com