

## About the Artist

Sung Hwan Kim (b. 1975, Seoul) holds a Master of Science in Visual Studies from the Visual Arts Program of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2003). He also has a B.A. in mathematics and art from Williams College in Williamstown, MA, and studied architecture at Seoul National University in Seoul, South Korea. Now based in New York, he previously worked and lived in The Netherlands over a period of four years, including the first two years as fellow at the Rijksakademie in 2004-2005. In 2007, he won both the 2nd prize of the prestigious Dutch Prix de Rome Award and the Korean award Hermes Korea Missulsang (Hermes Korea Prize for Contemporary Art). His solo exhibitions include those at Tranzit, Prague (upcoming in 2010); the Wilkerson Gallery, London, U.K.; Toronto Photographers Workshop, Toronto, Canada; Witte de With, Rotterdam, The Netherlands; and the Project Arts Center in Dublin, Ireland.

Group exhibitions include those at Montehermoso Cultural Center, Vitoria, Spain; Stedelijk Bureau, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Vox Populi Gallery, Philadelphia, PA; Bivouac établissement d'en face, Brussels, Belgium; Contemporary Art Museum, Saint Louis, MO; Neiman Gallery, Columbia University, New York, NY; Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea; Cubitt, London, U.K.; Atelier Hermès, Seoul, South Korea; and ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany.

## Related Public Programs:

Thursday, November 19, 7:30PM, Bartos Theatre  
LVAC Film Night: *Fellini's Roma*, (1972)  
dir., Federico Fellini, 128 min.

Wednesday, December 2, 7:30PM, Bartos Theatre  
Artist Talk with Sung Hwan Kim

**Sung Hwan Kim**

***Summer Days in Keijo-written in 1937 (2007)***



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**October 23, 2009 - January 3, 2010**

**Media Test Wall  
MIT LIST VISUAL ARTS CENTER**

## Sung Hwan Kim

### *Summer Days in Keijo—written in 1937 (2007)*

Artist Sung Hwan Kim often integrates video and performance art, taking on the role of director, editor, performer, composer, and writer to create works that are narrative yet dreamlike. His *Summer Days in Keijo—written in 1937* (2007) is a fictional documentary that opens with the artist, framed in a viewfinder, walking along a country road. The scene soon switches to a contemporary Asian city; a woman's voice narrating the action identifies the city as Keijo.

Kim's *Summer Days in Keijo* is based on Swedish zoologist and ethnographer Sten Bergman's 1937 travelogue, *In Korean Wilds and Villages*. Bergman was searching for things of ethnographic interest for the Swedish Natural History and Ethnographical Museums, and Keijo was the Japanese colonial name for Kyongsong or Seoul, which had been the country's capital since 1392. Kim traces Bergman's pre-war path through Keijo in present-day Seoul.

Kim, however, has replaced the zoologist with a female protagonist (played by Mieke Van de Voort, an artist from The Netherlands), who as she travels through contemporary Seoul, uses Bergman's text to describe the city as it was in 1937: a beautifully situated, bustling town of 400,000 inhabitants that was occupied by the Japanese.

Bergman found it "very interesting to explore it and note the way in which what was new in it and what was extremely old were mixed up."<sup>1</sup> Seoul's enormous city gates, once part of the walls that protected the city, are still the picturesque memorials of ancient days that Bergman described. However, Kim's protagonist also tours parts of the city that were built from the 1950s to the 1970s that now are falling victim to the city's rapid

re-development, such as the landmark Jong-no Saewoon Market (demolished in 2008). She also visits the "Korean" quarters of the city, a hint of the extreme hardships the Korean people endured under Japanese occupation.

Bergman's text focuses on what he called Keijo's "most impressive building,"<sup>2</sup> the Governor General's Palace:

...a massive formidable-looking edifice and makes a very strong impression on the Koreans. It is built of granite and its great central hall has columns and flooring of Korean marble. The building stands opposite the palaces of the late Korean Emperor, which spread out in an extensive park.

Designed by German architect Georg De Lalande and completed in 1926, this was the chief administrative building during the Japanese occupation of Korea. Post war, it housed South Korea's first National Assembly and became the National Museum of Korea. It had been deliberately constructed inside the grounds of the Gyeongbokgung Palace to obliterate the view of the former Korean royal palace and was despised by the Korean people. It was demolished between 1995-96.

Kim also filmed in a contemporary orphanage—a sensitive subject for many Koreans. Bergman's 1937 text states:

Many children have been rescued thus from the sewers and brought up in the [Salvation Army] Homes [for Boys] and trained for some occupation. ...Many of these boys from the sewers have become well behaved and industrious manual laborers, but others have run away and resumed their careers as beggars.<sup>3</sup>

Bergman's experience of the orphanages from that time was surprisingly similar to Kim's when he visited the contemporary orphanage:

Many of the children in this room looked very sweet, and the directress made the smallest of them, aged five or six, sing and dance for me.<sup>4</sup>

Kim has created an elaborate soundtrack for the film in collaboration with the Amsterdam- and New York-based musician David Michael DiGregorio also known as dogr. Part of the soundtrack incorporates Bergman's observations of the orphans:

"This one was born to-day," said Miss Roberts "...but today we are not well supplied with babies for five of them left us this morning. ...Aren't those two sweet?" ...I myself thought they all looked as like each as berries, but no doubt their mothers were of another opinion.<sup>5</sup>

The latter part of Kim's film shifts to a more personal, dreamlike state, with the narrative no longer drawn from Bergman's text but from writings by the artist and his lead character. In this interior travelogue, the protagonist discusses her guilt and answers a series of questions drawn from scary stories; finally, she declares: "None of these is what I meant. I just want to live in the country. I gather the straw. I dance on the horizon from left to right. But you think this is just romantic."

Jane Farver, LVAC Director

<sup>1</sup>Sten Bergman, *In Korean Wilds and Villages*, trans. by Frederic Whyte (London: Travel Book Club, 1938), 30.

<sup>2</sup>———33.

<sup>3</sup>———181.

<sup>4</sup>———181.

<sup>5</sup>———182.