
Hyunah Lee


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1 The Korean Pavilion at the Giardini della Biennale in Venice presents a unique case within the context of both Venice and Korea because of its rich history of dramatic and paradoxical exhibitions. It was the last national pavilion built in the Giardini, when it opened at the end of the twentieth century (1995) with an enormous lag behind the first pavilion of Belgium (1907), and it was eight years younger than what had previously been regarded as the last addition, the Australian pavilion. As a latecomer to the Biennale, however, it has become the oldest lasting architectural platform for South Korean architecture, despite its existence abroad. The presence of this pioneering venue overseas underscores the notion that it was born prematurely, before the Korean architectural scene fully recognized the possibility of exhibitions as a medium and joined a discourse within such a global context.

2 In 2014, an unexpected event unfolded within this remote place for Korean architecture. The Korean Pavilion’s exhibition, “Crow’s Eye View: The Korean Peninsula,” won the prestigious Golden Lion award at the 14th Venice Architecture Biennale (Ill. 1). Such accolades marked a significant juncture as it was the first time South Korea attained such esteem in twenty years of its pavilion history. As highlighted by the South Korean architecture magazine SPACE, this was undeniably an “achievement.” It was a triumph that resonated not solely due to its evident accomplishment but also for its pivotal role in shaping the incipient exhibition culture of South Korean architecture. It exemplified the notion that individual exhibitions can serve as productive spaces, employing distinct logics and methods compared to those.
found in real-world architecture. The “Crow’s Eye View” presented an unprecedented theme by including architectures of the entire Korean peninsula, unique in its short-lived nature as an exhibition.

Indeed, the show fulfilled a long-held political aspiration of the Korean Pavilion that had never been realized before: acting as a collaborative exhibition space for both South and North Korea within the Biennale. In line with the jury’s remarks, the exhibition served as “research-in-action [and] expanded the spatial and architectural narrative into a geopolitical reality.” This narrative emerged as a distinctive reflection of Korea’s unique situation as a divided nation within the global context. It found a suitable platform for its expression at the Biennale, where cultural politics can converge without direct political affiliations.


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The strategic cleverness of “Crow’s Eye View” in fulfilling the Korean Pavilion’s original vision of uniting South and North Korea is remarkable. What is even more astonishing, however, is that this ambitious goal was never a point of contention from the very beginning of the pavilion. Rather, the exhibition inadvertently highlighted the paradoxical history of the pavilion, which had initially been envisioned to accommodate both halves of Korea but has been and continues to be operated solely by South Korea under the aspirational name “Korea.” In fact, the architecture of the pavilion, serving as a symbolic entrance of South Korea in the context of an international art community, especially as the second Asian pavilion, had always been a central focus of ambition (Ill. 2). But, introducing Korean architecture, or architecture of South Korea, as content into this influential space had not been discussed during the construction process. It was only after the inaugural exhibition at the Venice Art
Biennale in 1995 that the architectural community in South Korea began to envisage its role in one of the most influential architectural events in the world.


The exhibition space within the Korean Pavilion possesses a unique charm that ignited the attention of visitors at the Biennale. Its architectural characteristics with an open design offered a captivating view of the waterfront of Venice. However, the venue was an unconventional and inconvenient backdrop for showcasing Korean art and architecture. The pavilion’s distinctive features, such as its wavy walls and extensive use of glass facades, faced harsh criticism from the domestic South Korean art scene, which considered it an unsuitable environment. It was dismissively likened to being “nothing more than a fancy café,” and its architectural elements as an exhibition space were confronted with skepticism from both artists and art critics. On the other hand, the Korean architecture scene remained notably reticent about the Korean Pavilion which would hold significant cultural diplomatic implications. The architecture initially stood without genuine appreciation from either field after the completion. Ironically, while the appearance of a Korean “building” as an essential infrastructure for the physical manifestation of the nation and its art was a top priority, the concept of Korean “architecture” gained an almost accidental and unprepared opportunity to participate in the Biennale.

During this period, architecture exhibitions were primarily presentations of lined-up works rather than curated projects (Ill. 3). The Korean commissioner for the 1996 Venice Architecture Biennale, Seok-won Kang, appointed by the Ministry of Culture due to his role as the president of the Korean Institute of Architects, chose two recent international competition projects held in South Korea. The selected projects, the designs for the National Museum of Korea and the Myeongdong Cathedral precinct, were intended to showcase the future of Korean architecture.
The 1996 exhibition encountered significant curatorial challenges due to its pioneering attempt to display architecture at the Biennale. It navigated the uncharted waters of contemporary Korean architects, who were relatively unacquainted with the concept of architectural exhibitions. The absence of a title and the lack of an organizing committee, apart from the commissioner's affiliation with the Korean Institute of Architects, accentuates the formidable difficulties faced in crafting a coherent and structured architecture exhibition. Finding a practical technique to handle the unconventional pavilion setting for the exhibition was also challenging. Affixing large classical panels to curved walls was deemed exceptionally difficult, and the spatial deficits imposed by the glass facades proved to be impractical and restrictive for exhibitions (Ill. 4).
Adding to the challenge, the commissioner was unaware of the pavilion’s historical background, and the organizing institution seemed somewhat detached.¹⁴

Because of this detachment and lack of experience, the exhibition grappled with the task of establishing a clear national identity within its presentation. To articulate the essence of Korean architecture in terms of “identity,” “status,” and “capacity,” internationality needed to be emphasized. This was achieved by demonstrating the ability of South Korea to attract a diverse range of global architects for large-scale national initiatives, which signified a desire for meaningful interaction and collaboration with European architects, “an age of equal exchange between the East and West,” within the field of Korean architecture.

This ambivalent attitude was not confined to the field of architecture alone but extended to the broader field of art. As the opening of the Korean Pavilion approached, art critics emphasized the importance of engaging with the global art scene while taking cautions to establish a distinct identity to survive amid “culture wars.” Balancing international influence with preserving and nurturing cultural identity emerged as a crucial endeavor in both spheres of Korean art and architecture. Similarly, the architecture scene of South Korea was concerned about the challenges stemming from the aftermath of market liberalization, all while celebrating the opportunity to introduce Korean architecture to the world. In their urgent mission to advocate for the yet-to-be-developed character of contemporary Korean architecture, they considered urban-scale projects with cultural significance as suitable subjects for the first presentation at an international architecture exhibition. Given these circumstances, it was unsurprising that the execution of the exhibition adhered to traditional norms. Among the seventeen selected works, which included designs from acclaimed international architects such as Christian de Portzamparc, Hani Rashid, and Alejandro Zaera-Polo, each project was presented using uniformly sized wooden models.
and large panels arranged in an orderly manner. While this presentation was well-organized, such a classical approach rendered all projects somewhat indistinguishable from one another, thereby obscuring their unique characteristics (Ill. 5).


It is intriguing that the South Korean architecture scene remained notably reticent about the Korean Pavilion which would hold significant cultural diplomatic implications. Records and documents detailing the reception of the inaugural 1996 exhibition at the Korean Pavilion are somewhat scarce despite its significance. Still, rare reviews revealed a fascinating mix of excitement and apprehension. The Korean Pavilion’s global debut at the Biennale was undoubtedly thrilling, yet it also bared a sense of uncertainty. When the exhibition opened, SPACE magazine voiced concerns about focusing on the Korean “city” rather than “the Korean city.” They were uncomfortable with the extensive involvement of foreign architects. PLUS magazine also raised criticism and questions about the selection process of featured works and architects, pointing out perceived shortcomings. It revealed a lack of transparency surrounding the inclusion of competition participants in the exhibition, pointing out that some proposals were chosen while others were not. These critiques shed light on organizational struggles to define and expose the national identity and character of the showcased architecture. While numerous topics deserved discussion, the historical significance of the occasion overshadowed these criticisms and they failed to ignite a sustained discourse after the exhibition concluded.

Yet, it marked the beginning of a journey. Noticeably, it also envisioned a future beyond its immediate confines, contemplating the inauguration of an Asian Biennale rooted in Seoul. This aspiration, aimed at nurturing the development of an architectural culture that transcended the exhibition’s immediate context, was not extensively discussed within the Korean architecture scene at that time. However, it
eventually materialized. In 2015, one year after winning the Golden Lion award at the Korean Pavilion for the 14th Venice Architecture Biennale, the city of Seoul announced plans to launch South Korea’s own biennial. Just two years later after the declaration, in 2017, the first Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism was inaugurated, with Hyungmin Pai and Alejandro Zaera-Polo serving as co-directors.

Over the following eighteen years after the first architecture exhibition of 1996, the Korean Pavilion expanded its experiences in thematic approach, and curatorial execution within the perennial format of the Venice Biennale. Yet the exhibitions did not often resonate with audiences the biennale, nor did they have a meaningful impact on architects and their audiences in South Korea. However, in 2014, the history of the pavilion and its exhibitions aligned at the 14th Venice Architecture Biennale where they became a new steppingstone to the exhibition culture of South Korean architecture. The show’s background can be traced back to the impact of the two preceding exhibitions in 2012 and 2013. A substantial controversy had erupted during the preparations for the 13th Venice Architecture Biennale in 2012, which became a catalyst for institutional transformation. The announcement of participants had sparked a massive debate, because of the inclusion of so-called big architectural firms. These firms were not seen merely as “designers” but rather as entities embodying “bad practices such as turnkey projects.” Despite their active involvement in architectural projects, their roles were perceived more as entrepreneurial pursuits rather than design-oriented endeavors. Ironically, among these architects from larger firms was a key designer of the winning proposal of the National Museum of Korea project, previously featured in the initial architecture exhibition at the Korean Pavilion in 1996.

For the first time, the selection process of the commissioner by nomination was questioned due to a lack of trust in the ability of large firms to curate, leading to disagreements within the architectural community. Moreover, the chosen theme and execution of the exhibition faced severe criticism, including being labeled a “regrettable state of Korean architecture.”

The recurring focus on Seoul through film presentations was deemed difficult to understand. Besides, the Japanese Pavilion’s second Golden Lion Award win in the same year underscored the contrast between the two Asian pavilions. It prompted a call to “exhibit the exhibition afresh,” and from 2014 onwards, the commissioner selection process for the Korean Pavilion became a competition.

The Pavilion’s rejuvenation also included its appearance with a fresh coat of white paint from its previous participation in the art biennale in 2013, intending to accentuate the pavilion’s distinct architectural character (Ill. 6).
The commissioner of the Korean Pavilion for the 55th Venice Art Biennale, Seung-duk Kim,\textsuperscript{32} recalls her aim to directly confront the challenging and controversial architecture of the pavilion. She resolved this by integrating the complex space into the exhibition.\textsuperscript{33} Throughout the process, she gained an appreciation for the exceptional architectural setting of the building. The story of the Korean Pavilion was unveiled in the catalog of the Korean Pavilion in 2013, featuring an article by Youngwoo Lee, one of the key contributors to the pavilion project.\textsuperscript{34}

Thus, the ninth edition of the architecture exhibition at the Korean Pavilion symbolized a new beginning following much needed institutional changes. In 2014, the exhibition was directed by South Korean architect Minsuk Cho,\textsuperscript{35} who was the first chosen curator after the organizing institution ARKO held a competition for commissioner selection based on the theme proposed and its potential as an exhibition. Cho had international experiences including running an architecture firm in New York as well as having designed the Korean Pavilion for the Shanghai Expo in 2010.\textsuperscript{36} “Absorbing Modernity 1914-2014,” the theme of the 14th Venice Architecture Biennale given to national pavilions by director Rem Koolhaas, prompted a retrospective exploration within each nation. For Cho, the decision to incorporate North Korea into the exhibition was both strategic and logical. He underlined that the division of Korea in the mid-20th century made the inclusion of North Korea particularly relevant within this context.\textsuperscript{37} He further emphasized that had the time frame been fifty years, the theme of the Korean Pavilion would have taken a completely different direction.\textsuperscript{38}

The “Crow’s Eye View’s” visionary approach, aiming to create “the first architecture exhibition of the Korean peninsula” for the 14th Venice Architecture Biennale, garnered great attention and received endorsement from the commissioner selection committee (ill. 7).
The initial plan involved the development of a collaborative joint exhibition, with efforts made to engage North Korean architects. Unfortunately, despite initial positive responses conveyed through unofficial channels, substantial engagement from North Korea did not materialize. Consequently, the project shifted to an alternative course of action, named Plan B. This scheme focused on creating an exhibition that revolved “around” the narratives of both South and North Korea, despite being constrained by the inability to bring architects from North Korea into the direct joint exhibition.

The exhibition was structured into four distinct sections: “Reconstructing Life,” “Monumental State,” “Borders,” and “Utopian Tours.” These sections provided clarity on the complex reality of division, shedding light on its multifaceted dimensions that often escaped casual observation. Confronting the “impossibility of a cohesive grasp,” the exhibition seamlessly intertwined diverse narratives from both Koreas, with a central focus on the cities of Seoul and Pyongyang. These narratives covered overarching urban developments and, in the first two sections of “Reconstructing Life” and “Monumental State,” offered in-depth insights into monumental infrastructures that emerged in the aftermath of the Korean War. Bearing the evocative title “Crow’s Eye View,” inspired by a poem by Korean poet Yi Sang, the exhibition encapsulated its unique essence – a perspective akin to that of a bird, inherently imperfect like a crow’s. As art critic Sohl Lee succinctly put it, the exhibition masterfully presented “a virtual space of Korean division.”

Especially the “Utopian Tours” exhibition section, presented by one of the exhibitors, Nick Bonner, gained remarkable attention and resonance (ill. 8). This collection featured depictions of self-proclaimed utopian societies envisioned by North Korean artists and architects. The critical reception was characterized by keen attention and astonishment, as reviewers could explore the intriguing scenery of how North Korean architects envisioned their prospective built environment. This fascination arose from
the scarcity of knowledge regarding contemporary architectural manifestations in North Korea. Undoubtedly, the exhibition served as a captivating representation of national architectural exploration. However, it is worth noting that the presentation still carried certain inevitable voyeuristic undertones in its inherent lack of providing an autonomous perspective from North Korea.

Yet the victory at this prestigious architecture event, despite its “admittedly South Korean view,”45 stunned and excited the South Korean architecture scene. Through a series of dedicated feature articles, SPACE magazine passionately celebrated the achievement as an “unexpected miracle of almost bewildering proportions.”46 The exhibition was celebrated as a harmonious culmination of thoughtful theme selection, skillful utilization of the unique spatial conditions of the pavilion, and a methodological implementation within a novel organizational framework.47 However, external appraisals also recognized the challenge of encapsulating both Koreas within a comprehensive narrative,48 leading to a description of “Data goes Dada.”49 Conversely, its impartiality received favorable reviews, as it was seen as free from criticism, political orientation, or any particular agenda, thus offering a full spectrum of information.50 The “Crow’s Eye View” occupied a unique position, straddling a wealth of information and an unguided influx of data. Complexity and subtlety coexisted within the exhibition. In a lengthy interview, Charles Jencks acknowledged that the Korean Pavilion “includes the North and the South,” while Rem Koolhaas expressed appreciation stating: “Isn’t that amazing...”?5 It is worth noting that while the pavilion received praise for its execution, some reviews on the best national pavilions omitted mention of it, underscoring the exhibition’s peculiarity in raising questions that may be indefinitely unanswerable. Still, the inclusion of the North Korean narrative and its
unprecedented aesthetics wielded an intrinsic potency that transcended the intended neutrality of the exhibition.

The exhibition further showed the adept integration of the pavilion's architecture within the curation process. Building upon its previous iteration at the Venice Art Biennale, the exhibition embraced the exceptional qualities of its spatial environment, which had hitherto been perceived as unsuitable for such displays. Unlike previous exhibitions that only partially utilized the walls or even concealed them with additional structures, it daringly exposed and made use of the fragmented architecture of the Korean Pavilion. Vibrant colors adorned the walls, and large numbers of pictures and information filled each surface, enhancing coherence within the complex architecture (Ill. 9). By embracing and accentuating the distinctive spatial characteristics of the venue and shedding light on the historical narrative of the pavilion's architectural evolution, the exhibition effectively reinforced the overarching narrative of a return to the intrinsic essence of the Korean Pavilion as a venue for both Koreas. In light of this resumptive dimension, the significance of the “Crow’s Eye View” exhibition resides not solely in deciphering its intricate details, but also in evaluating its position within the historical trajectory of the Korean Pavilion.


© 2014 Korean Pavilion, Courtesy of ARKO Arts Archive, Arts Council Korea, photo: Kyungsub Shin.

With its introspective orientation, the exhibition served as compelling evidence that the Korean Pavilion’s purpose went beyond mere participation in the Biennale. Chang-mo Ahn,\textsuperscript{23} one of the co-curators of the exhibition, aptly articulated the sentiment by characterizing it as the ability to showcase the nation’s architectural identity and achievements.\textsuperscript{24} Conversely, another co-curator Hyungmin Pai, highlighted an inherent vulnerability in Korean architecture, thus presenting an alternative viewpoint.\textsuperscript{25} The responses to the exhibition varied, oscillating between interpreting it as a culmination of cumulative experiences or as a singular, stand-alone occurrence. As the exhibition
unraveled concealed narratives within the Korean Pavilion and brought to light previously unexplored aspects of the Korean peninsula’s history, it also left behind a series of inquiries into the realm of Korean architecture. These questions pertained to the future trajectory of Korean architectural practice together with architecture on display, particularly in terms of how it would inherit and integrate the exhibition’s insights within the broader architectural landscape.

25 For Korean architecture, which only ventured into overseas exhibitions of contemporary Korean architecture beyond Venice in 2007,55 the Korean Pavilion served as a crucial proving ground for its national architectural identity. The inaugural 1996 exhibition that attracted little attention in the sphere of architecture in South Korea then and now, inevitably remained an isolated event (Ill. 10). In 2014, the pavilion “re-presented” Korea, weaving its pavilion history with the nation’s contemporary architectural narrative through the “Crow’s Eye View.” While the solutions adopted in these exhibitions varied, the common thread was the fundamental question of how to present Korean architecture. In architectural exhibitions, as expressed by Federica Martini, the Venice Biennale serves as a “condensation area” for ideas regarding nations and the ways of designing exhibitions.56 The Korean Pavilion distilled these concepts and evolved and magnified them over time, serving as a pioneering example of an exhibition model for the nation.


© 1996 Korean Pavilion, courtesy of ARKO Arts Archive, Arts Council Korea, photographer unknown.

26 In this manner, the years 1996 and 2014 stand as contrasting stepstones within the initial narrative of the Korean Pavilion’s architectural exhibitions. These episodes depict a journey of self-discovery within the unique cultural and political context of the Biennale – an opportunity unlike any other. They embody the inherent characteristic of participating in the Biennale, where national identity is brought to the forefront. This process led to an oscillation between internal and international perspectives,
encompassing both local and global considerations, thus sparking inquiries about identity. The 2014 exhibition at the Korean Pavilion underscored that confronting a nation’s reality is indispensable when presenting it on the stage of this “architectural Olympics,” even if that reality has been ironically overlooked within the domestic sphere.

However, the award in 2014, it seems, did not necessarily signify a deepening in the culture of Korean architecture. Following the conclusion of its initial narrative and the beginning of its second phase, the Korean Pavilion has witnessed four more editions of exhibitions at the Venice Architecture Biennale. The question of whether the initial chapter of the Korean Pavilion will continue its legacy within or outside the framework of the Venice Biennale, or if it will remain a singular event akin to 1996, still lingers as an inquiry into the resolution of national identity through exhibitions. Alternatively, the pavilion could once again envision a future re-re-presentation, potentially featuring a recurring yet paradoxically novel perspective – a concrete manifestation of collaboration between North and South Korea, encapsulating an authentically unified exhibition (Ill. 11).

NOTES

3. A monthly magazine, SPACE, was initially published in 1966 by South Korean architect Swoo-geun Kim, a pivotal figure often regarded as a pioneer of contemporary Korean architecture. With its recent publication of the 677th volume (April 2024), SPACE stands as one of the longest-running magazines dedicated to art and architecture in Korea.
6. Korea has been divided since 1945 following the end of World War II and the subsequent Korean War in the 1950s.
8. The first Asian Pavilion built at the Giardini was the Japanese Pavilion, built in 1956.
10. Seok-won Kang, educated in Seoul, South Korea, is a registered architect in both South Korea and France. He spent twenty years working at the office of French architect Georges-Henri Pingusson before establishing his own architecture firm in South Korea in 1978. Kang has been honored with numerous prestigious awards, including the first Presidential Prize in Architecture of Korea.
11. This article maintains the original names of institutions, even when they are organizations based in South Korea.
12. The competition held in 1994 was the first international competition approved by the International Union of Architects (UIA) to be held in Korea. The winner of the competition, Junglim Architects and Engineers was announced in October 1995. The museum was completed and opened in Seoul, South Korea, in October 2005.
13. The international competition held in 1995 in anticipation of the centennial anniversary in 1998 of the first Roman Catholic Church in Korea, was mired in controversy when the jury failed to announce a winner in April 1996. The redevelopment plan for Myeongdong Cathedral was revived in 2009, with completion scheduled for 2029.
14. Interview with Seok-won Kang, conducted by the author, September 8, 2020, Seoul, South Korea.
15. Until 2014, the 1996 exhibition was the only exhibition that was not organized by the Arts Council Korea. Arts Council Korea is an affiliated organization of Ministry of Culture, Korea, and the official institution in charge of the Korean Pavilion.
17. Many participants included international teams, sometimes comprising solely foreign architects, and at other times collaborating with Korean architects. Some notable participants
were Christian de Portzamparc, Laurent Salomon, Werner Christen, Nadim Karam, Hani Rashid, Diego Cano Pintos, Franco Mancuso, and Malcolm Nouvel.


20. In 1987, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of South Korea declared the liberalization of imports, including artworks such as paintings. Additionally, following the Uruguay Round held in 1993, the opening of South Korea's construction market ensued.


22. See the March and September 1996 issues of SPACE magazine, the September 1996 issue of PLUS magazine, and the March, November, and December 1996 issues of Architect magazine, South Korea.


24. PLUS magazine was first launched in 1987 with a focus exclusively on architecture. It earned recognition as the best magazine from the Ministry of Culture in South Korea in 1997. However, publication of the magazine has been suspended since 2012.


27. Hyungmin Pai is a historian, critic, and curator in South Korea. He was a documenter at the Korean Pavilion in 2008 and a co-curator of the exhibition of Korean Pavilion in 2014.

28. The turnkey operation, criticized for diminishing the role and expenses for architects while expanding opportunities for large architecture firms to undertake big projects, has been a subject of controversy in the Korean architecture scene since the 2000s. Youngkyu Shim, “The Korean Representatives for the Architectural Olympics Already Engulfed in Controversy,” SPACE, 538, September 2012, p. 22-26.

29. Seung-Hong Park, the founder of the architecture firm dmp in Seoul, South Korea, established in 2007, previously worked as a member of Junglim Architects and Engineers. He also contributed as a designer to the winning plan for the National Museum of Korea competition.


32. Seung-duk Kim is a South-Korean born curator now based in Paris, France. She was a commissioner at the Korean Pavilion for the 55th Venice Art Biennale in 2013 and directed Kimsooja—To Breathe: Bottari.


35. Minsuk Cho is an architect who founded the architecture firm Mass Studies, headquartered in Seoul. He received his architectural education in both Seoul, South Korea, and New York, USA, and is a member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

36. After winning the Golden Lion award in 2014, Cho emerged as an internationally recognized architect. Recently, he was announced as the designer for the Serpentine Pavilion 2024 in...
London, solidifying his position as one of the most renowned South Korean architects on the
global stage.

37. Interview with Minsuk Cho, conducted by the author on August 3, 2020, in Seoul, Korea.
38. Eileen Kinsella, “Crow’s Eye View at Tina Kim Korea’s Tumultuous History,” Artnet News,
September 12, 2015.
39. It is not officially documented which officials from North Korea the exhibition team of 2014
aimed to contact and was in communication with during the initial stages of preparation.
41. Yi Sang (1910-1937) was a Korean poet during the Japanese colonial period and is regarded as
an important figure in modern Korean literature, with notable works including “Crow’s Eye
View.” The exhibition’s title, derived from his poem, symbolizes the impossibility of seeing the
overall picture of the Korean peninsula under its division, echoing Yi Sang’s fragmented vision
influenced by Dadaism.
42. Sohil Lee, “Virtual Space and National Division: Crow’s Eye View: The Korean Peninsula at the
43. Nick Bonner, who was educated in landscape architecture in England, is the founder of the
Koryo Group, a tour company for visitors to North Korea. Through his engagement with North
Korean society for over twenty years, he has become the most valuable foreign collector of North
Korean art.
44. While Nick Bonner’s collection possessed by Nick Bonner contains valuable paintings from
North Korean artists and architects, many of them were presented anonymously at the
exhibition. Even when mentioning specific organizations, they are described as “architects of the
Paektusan Academy of Architecture.”
www.greekarchitects.gr/en/architectural-review/minsuk-cho-interview-at-greekarchitectsgr-
grid9890 [date of consultation: October 6, 2020].
46. Youngkyu Shim, “Ambition, Frustration and Achievement: The Korean Pavilion at the Venice
47. Ibid., p. 67.
48. Jinhee Park, Michael Wisniewski, and Pippo Ciorra, “The Korean Exhibition As Seen by
Architectural Record, June 9, 2014.
52. Chang-mo Ahn is a South Korean architecture historian specializing in the modern and
contemporary history of Korean architecture, encompassing both North and South Korea. He is a
publishers, 2012.
53. Ji-young Sohn, “Team Sheds Differences between Two Koreas,” The Korea Herald, June 13,
2014.
54. Ibid.
55. See exhibition “Megacity Network: Contemporary Korean Architecture,” held at the German
Architecture Museum (DAM), Frankfurt, Germany, from December 8, 2007 to February 10, 2008.
56. Federica Martini and Vittoria Martini, Just Another Exhibition. Histories and Politics of Biennials,
ABSTRACTS

The Korean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale is the last national pavilion in the Giardini, built in 1995. Yet, it is the oldest lasting platform for Korean architecture, despite its existence abroad. This article explores two seminal architecture exhibitions held at the Korean Pavilion in 1996 and 2014. The former was the first architecture exhibition at the pavilion and an important introduction of Korean architecture to an international audience at the Biennale. Simultaneously, however, it remained obscure and neglected in domestic Korean discussions. The latter exhibition won the first Golden Lion award throughout the pavilion’s history, showcasing the architectures of South and North Korea, and fulfilling the pavilion’s original ambition conceived in 1995. By covering the overarching history, the text examines the paradoxical path of the Korean Pavilion, which began with the building overpowering all contents within it and moved toward attuning its exhibitions to resonate with its own history as well as the context of the Venice Biennale. In doing so, the text discusses the inherent cultural politics of the Biennale and its influence in representing and developing local culture and identity.

Le pavillon coréen de la Biennale de Venise est le dernier pavillon national dans les Giardini, construit en 1995. Pourtant, il s’agit de la plus ancienne plateforme durable pour l’architecture coréenne, malgré son existence à l’étranger. Cet article explore deux expositions d’architecture majeures qui se sont tenues au pavillon coréen en 1996 et 2014. La première fut la première exposition d’architecture au pavillon et une introduction importante de l’architecture coréenne à un public international lors de la Biennale. Parallèlement, elle est restée obscure et négligée dans les discussions nationales coréennes. La seconde exposition a remporté le premier Lion d’or de toute l’histoire du pavillon, présentant les architectures de la Corée du Sud et de la Corée du Nord, et répondant à l’ambition initiale du pavillon conçu en 1995. En couvrant l’histoire globale, le texte examine le parcours paradoxal du pavillon coréen, qui a commencé avec un bâtiment dominant tous les contenus qu’il contenait et qui a évolué vers une harmonisation de ses expositions pour résonner avec sa propre histoire ainsi qu’avec le contexte de la Biennale de Venise. Ce faisant, le texte discute de la politique culturelle inhérente à la Biennale et de son influence sur la représentation et le développement de la culture et de l’identité locales.

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Mots-clés: Pavillon coréen, Biennale de Venise, architecture coréenne, exposition d’architecture
Keywords: Korean Pavilion, Venice Biennale, Korean architecture, architecture exhibition

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