

**DANCE RESEARCH NRW # 17
in Bonn
PERIOD: October/November
2015**

**HOST:
Bonn (CocoonDance & die Bundes-
stadt Bonn)**

**Sung-Im Her, choreographer/dancer,
Korea & Belgium
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UK**

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH:
You are Okay!**

Interview before the research in Bonn

Thematic focus: Identity is not tied to a specific location. Yet globalisation and migration question the conventional concepts of space. Only in movement can we experience locations and make them accessible with our body and thus create the space we can then connect to stories. The Dance Research NRW #17 in Bonn is devoted to the question of how these body and spatial experiences can be artistically tangible as a political and aesthetic category.

Together with our partner in Bonn, we are thrilled to be hosting you for this research residency. What is your project about?

I have lived in Europe for 10 years. Travelling and performing all around the world. Meeting and talking with people who I will never meet again... Sharing and laughing with people whose identities I don't know... It has never been my home and it might never be... My green, Korean passport is just a piece of paper which says I don't belong here... Where do I belong and where is my home? Who is protecting me and from what am I being protected? I am a Korean lady who has married a Belgian man who is working in the UK.

That's who I am and that's how I have to explain it whenever I go over the border of the UK to see my husband. Endless

stamps on my passport show how many times and where I have been. And each time, I have to prepare a ticket in order to show that I have a return ticket so I will get out of this country. Where is my home?

Someone said "Home is where your love is", and what if my home doesn't want my love...? What if my home doesn't want me to be there...? Then where is my home?

When and what did my passport have to agree with others?

Why is my passport so lonely in here ... Where is my home? Where can I be welcomed and loved?

This project will be deeply connected to a subject which I have been struggling with for 10 years in Europe. Identity is not tied to a specific location but location has its own identity and that can influence my identity.

The starting point of this project will be interviewing Korean immigrants who have been living in Germany for more than 50 years and will look closely at their stories.

I would like to combine these stories with "Pansori", a traditional Korean opera. It is powerful and yet has a simple form which is performed by only one singer and one drummer. The singer sings and tells the story with a special vocal method. Pansori uses a different type of vocal production than in Western opera and is emphasized on the off-beat. It uses Kuckgi, which is a method of bending the notes abruptly and creating change, which is related to the singer's emotion and to the story.

Pansori contains emotional feelings through its tone and breathing.

I would like to approach the highly charged emotional personal stories with Pansori and words and embody it in movement performance. This piece will combine my fascination with these stories and the different elements of traditional Korean opera and contain a specific, personal essence.

Is the city of Bonn or North-Rhine Westphalia relevant in your research?

After the 2nd world war, Germany lost lots of young workers and needed middle-aged workers in Germany, especially in North-Rhine Westphalia which is the principal mining and energy-producing area of Germany. In 1966, Korea suffered from serious economic recession and more than 21,000 miners and nurses moved to West Germany to work and live, and be a part of Germany.

To research this project in North-Rhine Westphalia where a lot of Korean immigrants are still living is an opportunity for me to observe their lives and look closely at their lives and forgotten stories.

How will you proceed?

This project will start by interviewing Korean immigrants who have lived in Germany for longer than 50 years.

To take a close look at every story, questions will include why they felt they had to leave their country.

“Why couldn’t they go back to Korea or if it was a choice then what was the reason? Do they feel at home here? Do they miss their country? What are they missing the most from their country? What is the meaning of home for them?

How are they integrated in society? How has this changed over time? Do they miss home? Does home really exist? And would they want to go back?

My intention is to recreate and transform these texts into my body gestures.

The recording of the interviewer’s voice will be repeated, cut, and overlapped with another voice, including my own, to create an illusion of time travel. Through endlessly repeating the same story (history), gradually it will guide us into a trance where we cannot go any further. Everybody has their own history and every history is a story, every story can be transmitted by words, every word has meaning, and so every single body has movement.

Do these stories move my body, or is my body making a story? Do the sounds and tones move me in a certain way or does

the meaning of the words move me in a certain way? And why?

And if the words or recreated sound is not there, what does movement imply? How can I express their emotion inexorably without my own interpretation? How might their story and my story meet? How can their voice and my voice cross and create another story? How can I use their natural voice as a sound score?

Language is an element for people to communicate and express their emotions and feelings and stories. If the audience doesn’t understand the language, what could be more effective and what is less effective? Or do the sounds of words transform into something else?

For this research I would like to bring “Pansori” into this art form, which represents Korean vocal music and is also a solo music drama accompanied by a drummer. It originated in the 17th century and was influenced by shamanistic songs and public entertainment. Pansori has its own unique form and vocal method.

It has a powerful yet simple form and is performed by only two musicians, a singer and a drummer. The singer tells a story with a special vocal method. Pansori uses a different vocal method than Western opera. It emphasizes the off-beat and uses Kuck-gi, which means bending the vocal sound abruptly and changing the tone. This technique is deeply related to the singer’s emotion as well as the story.

The reason why I would like to research Pansori and bring it into this project is because Pansori does not only use beautiful sounds, but it also uses vocal sounds in a more grounded way. It has the sound of real nature, sometimes very rough, sometimes very soft, sometimes hugely thunderous.

I believe the voice is the first instrument, coming from the depths of our existence, which exists beyond language.

I cannot be the Pansori singer but I would like to bring the method of real

natural sound which comes from deeply inside of my body and emotion.

What are the results you would like to achieve?

I would like to explore the perception of time travel through this work. My story becomes the interviewer's story and their story becomes my story. And I will travel to their time and they are invited to my time. Identity is not tied to a specific location but location has its own identity. Also the interviewer's individual stories are tied with a specific location.

Globalization has made the world closer than ever, but if there isn't a real understanding of each other, living closer would just feel threatening. By sharing personal history I would like to achieve a common basic ground where we can deeply understand each other.

Throughout this process, I want to achieve a state of openness, in which all the senses are susceptible to unplanned and authentic impulses and are able to consciously accept these movements. Voice, illustration, sound, light and body movements will be integrated and yet remain as an individual story line.

What are the next steps for you to prepare for your residency in Bonn?

I had a pre-researching period in April at "School van Gaasbeek" in Belgium where I focussed on developing sound and body relation.

(<http://www.deschoolvangaasbeek.eu/>)
In July and August, I will be flying over to Korea to learn and continue to research on Pansori.

In Bonn I will be starting to interview people and I will use these sounds and Pansori with movement material that I have already developed.