



The Real DMZ: Artistic Encounters Through Korea's Demilitarized Zone is part of the Midlands Korea Season led by New Art Exchange and Eastside Projects which creates a platform for contemporary visual arts from Korea with a focus on artists who explore issues of migration, borders and displacement. The programme also features as part of Korea/UK 2017-18, a national celebration of British and Korean art and culture.

For the Midlands Korea Season Eastside Projects will be presenting artists Mixrice, May – July 2018. See www.eastsideprojects.org for updated information.

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FREE EXHIBITION GUIDE



THE REAL DMZ

ARTISTIC ENCOUNTERS
THROUGH KOREA'S
DEMILITARIZED ZONE

MAIN & MEZZANINE GALLERIES
27 JANUARY - 15 APRIL 2018

The Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) is the border barrier that divides the Korean Peninsula roughly in half, serving as a buffer zone between North and South Korea. Created in 1953 at the end of the Korean war, this strip of forbidden no-man's-land measuring 160 miles long and 2.5 miles wide, is one of the most heavily militarized borders in the world.

This exhibition features eight South Korean artists, each addressing the reality of a divided Korea, the lived experience of a demilitarized zone and the often distorted narratives that surround North Korea. The artwork on show has largely been commissioned by The Real DMZ Project, a contemporary art initiative in South Korea based on research conducted on the zone. The objective of the project is to explore the many implications of a DMZ, and to address the diverse socio-political, cultural and psychological issues resulting from division and borders. As such, whilst the media continues to focus the world's attention on North Korea's nuclear threat, the artists in this exhibition draw our interest to the people, life, and human-scale realities around and beyond the DMZ.

The Real DMZ has been curated by Sunjung KIM.

Onejoon CHE,
Tigrachin Monument,
built 1977, Addis
Ababa, Ethiopia 2015.
Courtesy the artist.

Continues inside ▶

Inter-Korean Relations	Year	Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)
As WWII was ending, the Soviet Union advances into Korea to war against Japan, which had occupied Korea since 1910. The US requests the Soviets to stop at the 38th parallel north, and establishes the United States Army Military Government in the south in opposition.	1945	
Breakout of the Korean War, between N Korea (supported by China and Soviet Union) and S Korea (backed up by the US)	1950	
July 27 Korean Armistice Agreement signed by US Army Lieutenant General representing the United Nations Command, North Korean General representing the Korean People's Army, and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army to "insure a complete cessation of hostilities and of all acts of armed force in Korea until a final peaceful settlement is achieved.	1953	July 27 Establishment of the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Aug 1 First Meeting of the Neutral Nations Advisory Commission (NNSC). Formation of Peace Village (Gijeong-dong in North Korea) & Freedom Village (Daeseong-dong in South Korea).
Oct 1 Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea signed.	1960	
Apr 19 Revolution in S Korea.	1960	
Apr 26 The uprising by labor and student groups would lead to the resignation of Rhee Syngman, the first President of S Korea.	1961	
Aug 14 N Korean leader Kim Il-sung proposes to form a Confederal Republic between S and N, a federal structure retaining each side's leadership and systems.	1962	S Korea starts the "Voice of Freedom" radio, which transmits to N Korea.
May 16 Coup in S Korea. The military coup d'état led by Park Chung-hee against the government of Yun Bo-seon, the second president of S Korea. Park would become President in 1963.	1968	
Jan 21 31 N Korean commandos attempt to kill President Park in his residence in the Blue House. 29 were killed, one escaped, and one (Kim Shin-jo) captured.	1972	
July 4 S-N Joint Statement signed by the two governments for the first time in history to establish principles of unification: independence, peace, and national unity.	1974	Nov 15 The 1 st Infiltration Tunnel (under the border between N and S) discovered in Yeoncheon, S Korea.
Oct 26 S Korean President Park assassinated.	1975	Mar 19 The 2 nd Infiltration Tunnel found in Cheorwon, S Korea.
May 18 Democratic Uprising in S Korea against the government of Chun Doo-hwan, the military successor of Park.	1976	Aug 18 Panmunjeom Axe Murder Incident. Two US Army officers killed by N Korean soldiers in the Joint Security Area in the DMZ.
Oct 10 N Korean leader Kim Il-sung proposes the foundation of a "Democratic Confederal Republic of Goryeo".	Sep 16	Two Koreas begin split control of the Joint Security Area.
June 30 S Korea's network KBS launches a television special "Finding Dispersed Families" between S and N.	Oct 17	The 3rd Infiltration Tunnel discovered in Paju, S Korea.
Oct 9 Rangoon Bombing, an assassination attempt by N Koreans against S Korean President Chun. Chun survived, 21 killed.	1984	Feb 9 Opening of the Unification Observatory in Goseong, S Korea.
Nov 29 Korean Air Flight 858 exploded in mid-air by bombs planted by two N Korean agents.	1987	
Sep 17 - Oct 2 1988 Seoul Olympics.	1988	
Sep 3 N Korea announces its decision not to participate in the Seoul Olympics.	1990	Jan 19 S Korea unveils the Concrete Wall along the DMZ. Mar 3 The 4 th Infiltration Tunnel discovered in Yanggu, S Korea. Aug 15 Opening of the North side of the Joint Security Area.
Aug 1 S Korea proclaims the Inter-Korean Interchange and Cooperation Act.	1991	Oct 18 Opening of Chilseung Observatory in Hwacheon, S Korea. Dec 3 Opening of Taepung Observatory in Yeoncheon, S Korea.
Mar 25 A unified Korean team competes in the World Table Tennis Competition in Japan.	1992	May 22 Shooting in the DMZ in Cheorwon, S Korea. Three N and S Korean military uniforms killed. Three wounded.
May 6 A unified Korean team competes in the World Youth Football Competition in Portugal.	1994	Sep 8 Opening of Odusan Peace Observatory in Paju, S Korea. Dec 17 N Korea announces that a US army helicopter had crossed the border and was shot down.
Apr 10 N Korea ratifies the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), six years after signing the NPT.	1995	Oct 17 Two armed N Koreans found in S Korea at the Imjin River near DMZ.
June 3 N Korea announces its withdrawal from the IAEA, after refusing to allow full inspections of its facilities.	1996	Apr 5-7 Armed N Korean troops enter the DMZ at the Joint Security Area.
July 8 N Korean leader Kim Il-sung, who ruled since 1972, dies, and is succeeded by his son, Kim Jong-il.	1997	Oct 17-21 Two S Korean villagers kidnapped to N Korea and released through Panmunjeom.
Oct 21 US and N Korea adopt the "Agreed Framework" in Geneva, calling for N Korea to freeze its nuclear facilities, dismantle three reactors, and allow IAEA inspections. In exchange, N Korea would receive light water reactors and heavy oil.	1998	July 9 Opening of the Freedom House at Panmunjeom.
Aug 31 N Korea fires a ballistic missile over Japanese territory.	1999	
Nov 18 The Mount Geumgang Tour begins which is developed by N Korean government and Hyundai Group in S Korea.	2000	
June 15 The 1st Battle of Yeonpyeong between the navies of S and N Korea.	2002	Feb 18 Opening of Victory Observatory in Cheorwon, S Korea. Feb 20 S Korean President Kim Dae-jung and US President George Bush visit the DMZ. Apr 11 Opening of the Dorasan Station inside the Civilian Control Line (CCL), S Korea.
June 13-15 The 1 st Summit meeting between S Korean President Kim Dae-jung and N Korean leader Kim Jeong-il in Pyeongyang.	2003	July 17 N and S forces exchange fire at the DMZ. No injuries reported.
Sep 15 S and N Korean teams march together at the Sydney Olympics opening ceremony.	2004	June 15 S Korea stops transmitting the "Voice of Freedom" radio to N Korea.
June 29 The 2 nd Battle of Yeonpyeong between S and N navies.	2006	
Sep 23 - Oct 14 N Korean team participates in the Asian Games in S Korea.	2007	Nov Opening of Peace Observatory in Cheorwon, S Korea.
Jan 10 N Korea announces its withdrawal from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).	2008	Sep 5 Opening of Peace Observatory in Ganghwa, S Korea. Sep 10 Opening of Dorasan Peace Park in Paju, S Korea. Aug 14 Opening of the DMZ Museum in Goseong, S Korea.
June 30 Construction of the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) in N Korea, begins financed by S Korea.	2009	May 24 S Korea resumes the "Voice of Freedom" radio transmitted to N Korea.
July 6 S Korea reports its plan for providing 400,000 tons of rice aid to N Korea, which was agreed during the Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation Promotion Committee (June 5).	2010	
Aug 14 S and N Korean teams march together at the Athens Olympics Games.	2011	
Dec 15 Opening of the Kaesong Industrial Complex.	2013	Apr 19 Reopening of Chilseong Observatory in Hwacheon, South Korea.
July 5 N Korea conducts missile test.	2015	
Oct 9 N Korea conducts its first nuclear test.	2016	
Oct 14 UN Security Council approve limited military and economic sanctions against N Korea.	2017	
Oct 2-4 The 2 nd Summit meeting between S Korean President Roh Moo-hyun and N Korean leader Kim Jong-il in Pyeongyang.		
July 11 A S Korean tourist shot dead by N troops after entering a military zone. S Korean halts tour programs to N.		
May 25 N Korea reports its 2nd nuclear test has been successful.		
Mar 26 Sinking of S Korean naval vessel ROKS Cheonan in the Yellow Sea, killing 46 seamen, allegedly by N Korean submarine.		
May 24 S Korea announces to halt all trade with N Korea over the Cheonan warship sinking.		
Nov 23 Bombardment of Yeonpyeong. Following a S Korean artillery exercise in the south, N Korea fires at S Korea's Yeonpyeong island in the Yellow Sea, and S Korea returns fire. Two S Korean marines and two civilians killed.		
Dec 9 N Korean leader Kim Jong-il dies, and is succeeded by his son Kim Jong-un.		
Feb 12 N Korea conducts its 3 rd nuclear test.		
Feb 25 In S Korea, Park Geun-hye (Park Chung-hee's daughter) inaugurates as President.		
May S Korea withdraws its staff and workers from the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC), which is thus shut down.		
Sept 16 The KIC reopen after negotiations.		
Dec 12 N Korea successfully launches Gwangmyeongseong-3 Unit 2 satellite to reach orbit.		
Jan 6 N Korea conducts its 4th nuclear test.		
Feb 7 N Korea successfully launches the Gwangmyeongseong-4 satellite.		
Feb 11 S Korea announces it has shut off water and electricity supplies to Kaesong Industrial Complex.		
Sep 9 N Korea's 5th nuclear test.		
Dec 9 S Korean President Park Geun-hye impeached due to a political scandal.		
Sep 3 N Korea claims its 6th nuclear test with a miniaturized hydrogen bomb has been a biggest success.		
Nov 29 N Korea carried out its largest and most powerful ballistic missile (ICBM), the Hwasong-15.		



Kyungah HAM

Needling Whisper, Needle Country
(from SMS Series in Camouflage), 2015
North Korean hand embroidery,
silk threads on cotton

At first glance, Kyungah HAM's embroidered canvases are beautifully seductive. From afar the works seem to be brightly coloured high-resolution prints. It's only up close that one sees the tightly woven stitches, like millions of tiny pixels that make up the detailed embroidery. However after a deeper investigation, the stories behind the works begin to surface, washed up by the tides of history.

Although Ham's embroidery works bear the artist's name, they have been sewn by numerous unseen and unknowable craftspeople in North Korea. HAM's ongoing 'Embroidery Project' is as conceptual and political as it is beautiful. The image is not the primary focus: it is the story that lies in the making of the work that makes them powerful, controversial and political. The process is part of their meaning.

Through a complicated, lengthy and dangerous process, HAM uses go-betweens to smuggle distorted blueprints of works she wants embroidered across Korea's Demilitarized Zone and into North Korea where the design eventually, but not always, make their way into the hands of the artisans. The process is often fraught with obstacles: the work becomes an abstract embodiment of the tension and conflict between the two sides of the divided Korean Peninsula, making a forbidden meeting temporarily possible.

HAM's compositions call to mind the symphonies of Dmitri Shostakovich, whose sole expression of defiance against a repressive Stalinist state was subtly worked into his music. Thematic symbolism was woven into his symphonies which were full of references to Stalin and the sufferings of the Russian people. HAM's work is full of symbolism as well. Appropriated words and imagery and references to history and politics are woven into the works, hidden or revealed like a coded language. Through HAM's embroidery, North Korean artisans are exposed to images and ideas that they may otherwise never encounter: abstract art images, slogans using South Korean internet slang and pop lyrics, seemingly innocuous influences that are forbidden in a country where the personal is also political. The embroideries are a means for HAM to communicate with people completely cut off from the outside world. They challenge authority, signifying a creative collaboration between people of the North and South in a gesture of defiance in the face of politics and history. They are a critique of the legacy of war and power structures, as well as a denunciation of the absurd division of the Korean Peninsula.



Seung Woo BACK

Utopia, 2008
Digital prints

Seung Woo BACK's work emerges from the idea that digital image processing negates the need to produce original photographic images. Taking this as a point of departure, BACK develops work where he uses archives of photographs, some taken by him and some by others, to expose the unlimited possibilities of photography.

His *Utopia* series (2008-2011), developed from a visit to a Japanese shop called Rainbow Trading which sells a variety of goods related to North and South Korea. In this store, portraits of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il are hung alongside photos of South Korean celebrities (e.g., Bae Yong-joon and Ryu Si-won), and albums of North Korean military songs are mingled with pop albums by South Korean singers such as Cho Yong-pil. North Korea's state ideology has no jurisdiction over the shelves of Rainbow Trading, where every image simply represents a commodity to be consumed. Browsing the store, BACK discovered photographs of buildings taken by the North Korean government. For *Utopia*, he mixed these photographs with those of buildings in South Korea, along with images of fully constructed buildings that exist *nowhere*. To create these "non-existent" buildings, he borrowed from the minimalist architecture of German Bauhaus, or the drawings of the Russian abstract painter Lyubov Popova.

In this collection, BACK exploits photography's ability to authenticate something that, for all purposes, could exist, but yet does not exist. He calls these buildings "utopia," implying a certain kind of paradise. But the mere convergence of buildings from North and South Korea does not guarantee such a paradise. The origins of the word "utopia" are οὐ ("not") and τόπος ("place"), i.e., "no-place."



Heinkuhn OH

Absurd Play, 2010
Archival Pigment Prints

Heinkuhn OH's practice involves taking portraits of specific societal "categories" of people, such as middle-aged women (*Ajumma*) and high-school girls (*Girl's Act* and *Cosmetic Girls*). In the set of photographs shown in this exhibition, *Absurd Play*, OH features three images of soldiers from the South Korean military, two of which are from his series *Middle Men*.

The *Absurd Play* photographs are part documentary and part composed. OH photographed the soldiers after observing their motions, asking them to repeat specific actions he found interesting. Military equipment and backdrops are used to carefully construct each shot.

In the image, *A Mock Cavalry Battle*, soldiers are seen engaging in a playful fight on the beach where two of the men sit on their teammates' shoulders and attempt to knock each other down. Here OH is creating insights into the constant anxieties that pervade the Korean Peninsula. With the two-sided battle alluding to the conflict between North and South Korea, the playfulness depicted in the photo set against the soldiers' dangerous reality, creates a strange tension within the image.

In the wider *Absurd Play* project and his portraits of soldiers, OH was inspired to reveal the distinct anxieties and individualities that seep through the "presented" and homogenised image of masculinity within the military. OH notes that the soldiers present the look of a brave soldier, which they had been trained to do without being aware of, but instead of simply representing this superficial facade, OH wanted to probe and capture moments of isolation, segregation, trauma or compulsion. Exploring the spaces between patriotism and duty, the collective and the individual, OH's photographs reveal the artifice and absurdity of the military's social landscape and the individual's ambivalence towards their placement within it.



Soyoung CHUNG

Light Temperature Wind
(a feeling of distance), 2018
Aluminum pipes, shading net, wind shield,
plastic sheet

Through her site-specific installations, videos, and public interventions, Soyoung CHUNG questions our relationship to the politics of space. She typically uses geology to visualise layers of history. Exploring new terrain is a significant part of her practice.

The work seen in this exhibition developed from a residency in Yangji-ri, a former propaganda village in South Korea that was set up in the 1970s to attract South Koreans to live and work in the DMZ area. Yangji-ri is now in the Civilian Control Line, which runs along the demilitarized zone (DMZ). Soyoung was struck by the constant uncertainty that hung over the village, and how communities can exist in a vacuum, whilst also being aware of their neighbours on the other side of the border.

In *Light Temperature Wind* (a feeling of distance), CHUNG uses different shields that are meant for both agricultural and military uses in the DMZ: shading net to block sunlight; plastic sheet to control temperature; and a cloth to reduce wind. Suspended from the ceiling and connected like a tunnel, the multiple blocking layers evoke both the physical and psychological experience of the DMZ. The installation references greenhouses – structures that appear en masse through the region, and used here as a metaphor for an 'in between' state. The shapes within the installation mirror each other above and below, to evoke the inverted sense of territory between North and South.

Signal's is a site-specific installation, only activated when a visitor pulls down on a piece of basalt rock (brought from the DMZ) attached to a string. This action lights up an area in the exhibition space which the visitor can't see, sending a signal to the outside world beyond the boundaries of the gallery. CHUNG was inspired by the lights she saw from Yangji-ri, through the DMZ. For CHUNG, by night the lights became coordinates to measure the distance between borders and they pierced through space that she could not cross, signifying human life on the other side. Inspired by these small traces of existence, CHUNG imagined the lights could be used as signals to open a conversation.

Creating the feeling of distance and the desire to communicate through signs, CHUNG's new installations for NAE bring the realities of borders, isolation and the yearning for conversation from the DMZ in Korea to Nottingham.



Yeondoo JUNG

Theatre of Victory, 2018
C-print

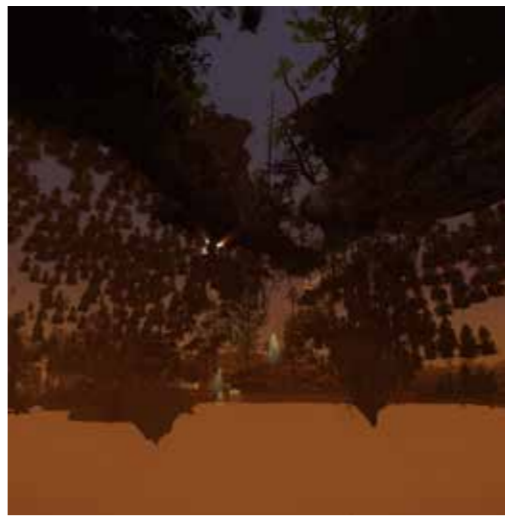
Theatre of Communist Extinction, 2018
C-print

Interested in the mediated reality of contemporary life, Yeondoo JUNG's video and photographic works typically portray a surreal and fantastical vision of the everyday. Describing his practice as "documentary" rather than "composed" in its approach, JUNG aims to create startling imagery that situates viewers in the current situation.

For this exhibition JUNG has created new work based on the Cheorwon Peace Observatories that dot the demilitarized zone on the South Korean side. Built mostly by the military and local governments, the observatories have two objectives: to generate tourism and income within the economically underdeveloped areas around the DMZ, and to stimulate patriotism through military propaganda. The observatories offer panoramic views of the DMZ, serving as a key stop-off for tourists looking to experience the military tension between the South and North. One advert for the observatories even promises visitors 'a glimpse of the faces of North Korean soldiers through binoculars' from the site.

JUNG has produced these new photographs in response to the many ironies of the site. Whilst the DMZ is one of the most heavily armed parts of the world, peppered with buried landmines, at the same time it's a peaceful and beautiful place where animals and plants flourish, free from human intervention. Fraught with military tension, there have been various incidents in and around the DMZ, with military and civilian casualties on both sides. Yet the observatories themselves draw families and tourists to this dangerous site, providing not only a spectacular view of the scenery, but also a front row seat to potentially devastating destruction should King Kim Jong-un carry out one of his threats. Structured like an auditorium with a large glass window facing the DMZ area, the observatory buildings resemble a theatre. JUNG's photos play on this viewing experience, emphasising the sense of spectacle and the unreal, alluding to the DMZ as fantastical backdrop belonging to a fictional film or theatre piece.

Recollecting his daily experience of watching footage of North Korean missiles and nuclear tests on TV over dinner with his family, JUNG highlights the conflict between sensing imminent danger, yet carrying on with everyday life. Blurring the line between fiction and reality, JUNG's work is a comment on the conflicting anxiety and numbness that South Korean's feel towards the ongoing war.



Hayoun KWON

489 Years, 2016
Video
Duration: 10 minutes

Having begun her career as a filmmaker, Hayoun KWON questions the ability of the lens of the camera to capture reality. KWON uses diverse forms of digital media – stop motion animation, 3D animation, virtual reality – to transgress the boundaries posed by the contemporary political situation.

In *489 Years*, KWON creates an animated landscape of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea, one of the most dangerous and heavily armed places in the world. The video is based on the narration of a former soldier who had entered the DMZ. Since only authorised personnel can enter the DMZ, KWON uses animation as a medium to reconstruct the space that plays on the fiction and the fantasy of a forbidden territory, providing an indirect experience for the viewer.

The former soldier featured in *489 Years* told KWON various stories of his experiences. Among his many accounts, KWON was touched by his story of the landmines and flowers, realising that she wanted the viewer to experience the DMZ as a paradoxical place where intense anxiety and unexpected beauty coexist. In creating her imagined landscape, KWON addresses the geopolitical realities of the peninsular division, its violence and projected images of this mythical space.

Originally shown through a Virtual Reality device, artificial interventions and fictional constructions enabled KWON to show what could not otherwise be shown. Animation affords KWON the freedom to theatricalize, exaggerate, and push the frontiers of representation, and even to exploit the fantastical potential of her subjects. Reflecting on identity and the notion of the border, KWON interrogates the construction of individual and collective memory, as well as the ambiguous relationship of both to reality and fiction. Offering the viewer an entrance into the DMZ, KWON's work leads the viewer to experience the DMZ through human emotions of anxiety and wonder.



Chan-kyong PARK

Child Soldier, 2017
Digitalized 35mm photography projection
Duration: 12 minutes

Through his film practice, Chan-kyong PARK typically addresses the political and philosophical conditions and paradoxes of North and South Korea. *Child Soldier*, PARK's most recent work, is a digital video made with scanned 35mm film camera photographs and sound.

The piece depicts a North Korean soldier – a young boy – who wanders through the woods, seemingly aimlessly. Showing tender, playful and mundane moments of childhood, PARK reveals the humanistic side of the soldier. In turn, the film creates an impression of North Korea that contrasts starkly with the violent, militant and radical image portrayed in the media.

The piece was inspired by an account by PARK's mother. She had grown up with a very negative perception of the North, and on encountering a soldier one day, she was shocked to see that he was just a child running around with a gun. PARK's mother had always associated North Korean soldiers with vandals, and was caught off guard by the presence of a child and the resulting realisation that the image created by government propaganda was false.

Influenced by his mother's story, PARK wanted to show North Korea in its most vulnerable form, in contrast to typical images of the country as a vicious threat. In challenging this popular image of North Korea, constructed through years of propaganda against Communism, PARK replaces the perceived image of a violent and war-driven country, with moments of innocence. The scenes and narrative in *Child Soldier* question the construction of South Korea's public perception of the North, and also attempt to present a new image devoid of political ideologies and associations with war.



Onejoon CHE

Mansudae Master Class, 2013 – 2015
Multi-media installation

North Korea today is known as the world's most isolated nation, a hardened outpost of totalitarianism. However, the public spaces of Senegal, Ethiopia, Kenya and elsewhere are dotted with reminders of a long-running, underappreciated and often surreal charm offensive that was waged by the North as part of the Korean Peninsula's own (still unresolved) Cold War. Since 1969, Mansudae Art Studio (established in 1959 by the order of Kim Il-sung) has exported statues and other monuments to at least 16 African countries, many of them free of charge.

Following the first wave of independence movements in Africa and Asia in the 1960s, a raft of new states emerged in need of national iconography and "statement" architecture. With an established studio experienced in producing propaganda art, North Korea recognised the chance to win the backing of young African republics, many of whose leaders held similar political beliefs. So under the direction of Kim Jong-il, Mansudae began exporting plans, workers and materials to Africa.

In his multimedia project *Mansudae Master Class*, artist Onejoon CHE explores the legacy of North Korea's particular brand of cultural diplomacy. Filming in six sub-Saharan nations, he has visited the sites in question and spoken to both African and North Korean former politicians in an attempt to tease out the historical lessons of Mansudae. "My interest lies in exploring the ongoing Cold War of the Korean Peninsula from a new geopolitical perspective," he says of his series of video installations, archival materials and miniature replicas. "*Mansudae Master Class* is the culmination of a study into cultural diplomacy, military alliance, translated forms of Socialist Realism, and images of utopia."

The three-screen film installation spotlights the building of the monuments with interviews with people who provide various and sometimes conflicting perspectives on the projects. CHE's models and photographs are frontal views of the monuments built by North Korea in the different African countries. Yet, the artist detaches the monuments from their original contexts so it becomes difficult to know where these architectures are located.