

An Active Guided Tour: Sailing to Fiction

Welcome to *Fiction Tool: Artists' Publishing and Active Archive*. The project is closely linked to two apparatuses: archive and exhibition. We are about to navigate through one side of Korean contemporary art, walking around the exhibition space in which the archival materials are displayed. In this journey, planned especially for you, I will wind the ship following the lodestar. But careful. Fiction is not an entity that can possibly be visible, identifiable or explainable. Fiction, 'stars shining in the dark,' exists as mere trajectory remaining for a journey to make an unpredictable drawing for unknown constellations, which is in order to render a fiction to ourselves rather than to possess them. Fiction thus has to be present regardless of our existence. The long journey could be strayed by unobservable tides and whimsical winds, or could be lost in different directions in clouds and fog. But no worries. The objects displayed in the exhibition space require the viewer to do something so strongly than anything else, even if they remain silent. Here I would like to mention one thing. The exhibition has to do with the most materialist and speculative objects. We might need to find a breach through which these objects can be exquisitely intertwined. Perhaps we would never be able to find one. However it's fine anyway. Okay, let's relax and follow their signs for now.

Most of the objects in the exhibition spaces are books. Why do we have to go through the books in order to read 'contemporary art' through the particular perspective of 'fiction?' More specifically, it is precise to say that what the exhibition would focus on is publishing, rather than the books. The book is one of the various results of publishing. Publishing itself constitutes a construction process of fiction. I believe publishing is an activity to create an exclusive place to exhibit its contents, and also an idea of the encompassing procedure. In such a procedure, the forms and media of the entity where the content is operated are selected and its distributing system (as well as any coincidences outside of the system) is envisioned. Thus the ultimate intentions implied in the activity of publishing could stay in fiction, which foretells a possible world. So publishing can become a tool for fiction. But each character would be all distinct depending on the choice of each element.

Visual artists have maintained their publishing activities profoundly aside from, most commonly, their artworks and exhibitions. Those who are more interested in the usage and functions of different media or those who believe in the potential for any alternative places would do so (often they were called 'avant-garde'). We will be able to read fictional narratives from their publications (apart from their artworks and exhibitions) and to hear their convivial

voices not affected by grand discourses or -isms. There is another benefit. Such perspective would visualize diverse movements which were not very discernible by the existing language of visual art, or maybe the visual art was being ignorant. Plus those idling contextualizations of ideas such as 'newness', 'contemporaneity', 'interdisciplinary', 'post media', 'collaboration', and 'multiplicity' could become coherently intertwined. The willingness to make publications toward fiction is a very interesting subject across different periods of time and artistic genres.

The exhibition starts from an indexical archive of publications, which are selected through the very basic criterion 'made by artists, not about the artists.' It is the webpage on a large TV screen installed on the ground floor where you're standing now. Here you can look through photographs of publications and informative content. (I personally recommend having a look at the webpage after finishing viewing the exhibition spaces, but this is just a suggestion.) However, here, there were some small issues, but also significant. There has been no existing official index of 'publications created by artists.' Thus in the project the task of making an archive and organizing an exhibition should be undertaken simultaneously. The collection of institutions that played an important role in artists' publishing such as Insa Art Space, Arko Art Center, Art Sonje Center, Art Space Pool and the private collections discovered from not-so-publicly-opened archives including The Book Society, etc. have scattered through all the private sectors that are not yet converted to data. Besides, an unexpected seed of the network was generated from the information given by someone whom I coincidentally met. At this point, I have to remind you that this research has been just embarked on. The list of archives on the website as well as the exhibition space will constantly be added during the opening of the exhibition. The list itself must be always incomplete but maybe it would become complete when it merely exists?

In the exhibition space, more than 200 various publications are collected, and it is almost impossible to look through all of them. The reason most of the publications displayed in the exhibition space are accessible by the audience is to open any probabilities to provoke unexpected happenings for each of you, instead of making a 'bookworm-type' request to take a close look into each of the books. It would be the most splendid time if only one single but amazing encounter/happening is possible in the exhibition than looking through all of the index. However, please mind that the books are mostly quite weak and fragile so don't treat them too roughly.

Okay, shall we have a closer look at the space now? But before, please take one of the handouts published by fldjf studio put next to this hand-out. fldjf studio is a kind of mediating body established by Boma Pak in order to make representations of immaterial things. She will

soon launch a brand to produce something substantial. The rules and orders of fldjf studio remind one of how deeply publishing is associated with the matter of representation. On the other hand, it's quite intriguing that the fldjf studio's publishing is not highly linked with the support habitually utilized within the customs of existing publishing.

To explain shortly in advance, the exhibition suggests a categorization of five different sections, situated with two on the basement floor and the other three on the second floor. This is followed by my own criteria on the archive index, which depends on 'ways of composing fiction.' The section F-1, on the basement floor, is for 'single-result publications that insist on becoming fictional, aesthetically dealing with different interfaces of alternative spaces and times such as books or webs.' You will notice when looking through them that the majority of works included in the section obtain fictional narratives, like a text based on novel writing. However, certain rules are generated by using alternative spaces and times as a condition of media. Probably so-called 'artist's books' or 'bookworks' in general could fall into this division. F-2 is similar to the F-1 section but could be differentiated as the publications in this section function as mediating roles to reality rather than making entirely fictional narratives to some extent. Thus they twist realities by compiling facts or information of reality and then reinterpreting or re-editing it through publishing. Subsequently, the publications included in this section may suggest the experience of encountering explicit reality as well as a twisted reality. Also these publications are often followed by some projects or curatorial plans, functioning as a subset. Maybe this implies the idea of the artist as curator or researcher that apparently exists now. I just used the word 'subset.' This means that different results exist, as they operate mutually in relation to a respective publication. For example, in a project, *Rock and Fairy*, by Im Youngzoo, three books were published and related works including moving image works and paintings were shown together in her exhibitions. It is quite intriguing that a kind of cinema where her works are being screened is built in her own website. (www.imyoungzoo.com) Especially for the exhibition, she will reschedule her screening plans bringing together different moving image pieces that are related to the idea of publication. It seems to be the desirable opportunity to see the project closely! Oh, for your reference, Rho Jae Oon's web-based cinema *vimalaki.net* is also set up in the next section.

Shall we move further? If you walk the stairs up to the second floor, you will find three rooms. Starting from the left they are the collective's room, the magazine's room and the publisher's room. Let's have a look at them one by one. The room F-3 is arranged with publications by artists who could be so-called 'collectives' that appeared in the 2000s or later. The artists are often those who reacted to issues of urban society and politics and actively executed their practices through observation of and intervention into these issues. The interesting thing is

that there have been sheer visual printing matters out of their practices. If you look carefully, you may notice how the publications were utilized as indispensable tools, a strategy for representing reality, or for appealing to its urgency as well. F-4 is a room for magazines made by artists. Apart from a single volume of a book, the magazines are serial publications whether they are periodical or not. Thus excessive observations or diverse approaches to a single subject, a perspective or to an object is feasible for a certain period of time in making magazines. The magazine is a medium in which the issues the publisher is concerned with and the topics she takes into consideration matter a lot. Besides, this could become an important tool for networking. The networks among those who periodically publish magazines and those who subscribe may constitute a temporal community. Lastly, F-5 is set to introduce subjects who take the act of publishing itself seriously. On one side of wall, there's a frame with a phrase saying "A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us." This was by a kind of a publishing collective, AC publishing, established in 2009. I just wondered how this metaphor could actually function through publishing, what the frozen sea within us could possibly be and how books could turn into a tool to break the frozen sea. I assume these questions are left to us for further research across the time. You might have noticed that, in this section, diverse artistic publications are compiled, including examples of a musician's label, a designer's publisher, and a cultural space for making zines. One of the important things for them may be a matter of distributing their printed matters by deciding its containing forms for their particular contents. Especially the choices for particular publishing methods should be taken into serious consideration. Anyway, publishing throughout its history has experimented with the methods for publishing by utilizing as well as by betraying them.

Now I will soon finish the brief guided tour. Shall we go back to the first floor?

While walking along the exhibition space you may have seen something tied to the stairs, door handles and chairs. They are garments with silk screened texts on them. The text is a translated and reprinted manifesto from a project *We Are the Market!* originally published in 2017 by the publisher Onomatopée, located in Eindhoven, Netherlands. This manifesto was originally produced as a web-based poster. Sunjoo Lee translated the text through her highly arbitrary perspective, printed it on a piece of fabric as its supporting body and tied it to many places in the city of Seoul. This translation-publication work plainly shows how one single content can be diversely materialized over different spaces and times as well as how the publication could become a significant tool to permeate into and intervene in reality. But then in which section should I put this piece in the exhibition? I am not so sure. I'll leave this up to you.

Now you come back to the ground floor, and on a monitor put on a side of the walls you can see an organized index of all the works you've seen in the exhibition space. The index on the monitor seems to continuously creep in to add the list of works so it would be quite intriguing to check it when you have time. Hold on, but have you noticed a tiny square floating on the monitor? If you chase it with your cursor it might start talking to you! This kid is newly manufactured by Minguhong Manufacturing especially for the exhibition. Minguhong Manufacturing produces parasitic programs based on the existing technology on the web, which means they function through being parasitized to an existing system to twist or transform it, instead of making a new space. The Minguhong Manufacturing is not serious. They are more likely to be a mischievous thing that cheers us up. The pink, square kid on the monitor would never harm you. However, it makes me a little bit worried as its body will become more and more swollen during the opening of the exhibition.

Now I am going to wrap up the brief guided tour of the exhibition. There's one last thing I would like to say to you. The subtitle of the exhibition 'Active Archive' came from the name of an archive built in 1979 by Artpool, an artist-run space situated in Hungary. Artpool asserts that their notion of the archive "differs from traditional archival practices in that the "ACTIVE ARCHIVE" does not only collect material already existing 'out there', but the way it operates also generates the very material to be archived." This envisions the archive not as a storage which organizes and stores the past but as a space for new production. This must have been a strong statement as well as a strategy for the resistance against the socio-political context of the time when suppression and forcing control over the culture in general existed, which also seems to be urgent in the current period of time as everything can constitute an object of the capital. Actively sharing and distributing archival materials and placing them in states of incessant flow ultimately suggests the history as an ethical index that constantly renews and recontextualizes instead of making a linear history that may create hierarchies. In addition, such a model of the archive should be taken as a necessity rather than a duty in terms of artists' publishing. This is because the results of the artists' publishing, as they are, are too ambiguous to be positioned within a certain taxonomy. When we investigate this under the idea of 'fiction' we will finally be able to peer into the possible worlds swimming inside the 'No-ISBN' space.

번역: 전효경