

CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY: DISSOLVING BOUNDARIES

IN JUNGJIN LEE'S *WIND* SERIES

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Art and Art History

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the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

by
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University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2016

ABSTRACT

In the *Wind* series (2004-2007), Korean photographer Jungjin Lee captures tumultuous views of the American desert. These photographs are printed on handmade mulberry paper, which Lee sensitizes by hand and heavily edits in the digital darkroom. Lee's images are landscapes of a state of mind, evoking a fleeting psychic connection between nature and the photographer – a connection that Lee enhances even more in the darkroom. Each image is the result of a heavily mediated process that both accentuates and effaces the technical capabilities of photography to create a unique aesthetics with many similarities to traditional ink painting. While her process is reminiscent of the Pictorialist movement and traditional Asian landscape painting, it is ultimately firmly rooted in the context of contemporary photography and linked thematically through the need to overcome displacement in an increasingly global context through image construction.

Lee's landscapes are rich in metaphors, making the unseen perceptible. Buddhist and Shamanistic concepts like impermanence, the void and oneness permeate the images in the *Wind* series, where majestic mountains dissolve into sky, until the entire composition becomes abstracted from an actual location. In *Wind*, Lee not only questions the unseen energy that transforms the skies and vistas, but she is also drawn to the intersection between these vast majestic expanses of land and the individual. In this exploration, Lee photographs the ruins of houses, abandoned detritus and forlorn homesteads. Throughout the *Wind*

series, Lee conveys the constant flow of experience, time and space through her experimentation with borders, framing devices and her printing process. To situate this body of work within a global framework of space, place and time, I rely on the theories of cultural geographers Yi-Fu Tuan and Doreen Massey that cast light on multiple modes of relating to our surroundings and the intricate histories embedded in them.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of College of Arts and Sciences have examined a thesis titled "Contemporary Landscape Photography: Dissolving Boundaries in Jungjin Lee's *Wind Series*" presented by Amelia Nelson, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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The work of Jungjin Lee makes me feel nostalgic for my childhood, bringing to mind long past car trips across the desert. While I recall my fascination with watching these landscapes race by, I don't think I truly understood their beauty or significance until I saw Lee's photographs in *Wind*. Without the insight of my advisor Cristina Albu, the support of my husband Mike Stofiel and the editing skills of so many, but especially of Marla Nelson, I would not have been able to articulate what I felt and saw. For a thousand explanations and insights into the wonders of the land, I thank my geologist father. For keeping me patient company inside, while he would rather have been out, I also thank Aster. For time and support throughout my master's degree, I am deeply indebted to my colleagues and my supervisor Marilyn Carbonell. I would also like to acknowledge the thoughtful feedback and insight provide by both Dr. Frances Connelly and Dr. Jan Kennedy.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Representations of the land have evolved along distinct paths in Western and Asian art. In the work of Korean photographer Jungjin Lee, both paths intersect and impact the construction of images that convey a vivid impression of the shifting parameters of our relationship to the environment. In the Western tradition of art, landscape painting had its origin in the late fifteenth century but as Liz Wells observes in *Land Matters: Landscape Photography*, the transition from landscape as backdrop to landscape as subject did not occur until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and even the landscapes were relegated to minor genre status in the hierarchy of academic painting.¹ This initial marginal position assigned to landscape in the canon of Western art could also be noted in the context of the nineteenth-century emergence of the new photographic medium. Although landscape photography was immediately embraced by nineteenth-century explorers and entrepreneurs to document conquest, land ownership and the power of nature, early practitioners used landscape largely as a backdrop to historical, allegorical, religious narrative works or to capture picturesque scenes. Landscape as a genre in photography was slow to gain artistic recognition since it was mostly valued for its ability to communicate an indexical relationship to the scene.

If Western approaches to landscape evolved at first primarily along an indexical path, Asian aesthetic approaches to landscape followed a very different trajectory. Landscape painting developed as a genre in the late Tang Dynasty (618-906) in China and early in the tradition depicted the essence of spaces instead of physical land. Rather than focusing on a naturalistic representation of the environment, Asian scroll paintings highlighted the

¹ Liz Wells, *Land Matters: Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 27.

experience of being in nature and part of nature, as well as broader themes of transcendence and oneness. The contemporary work of Korean photographer Jungjin Lee exists in the interstitial space between these two approaches to landscape representation. Lee's body of work offers multiple views into the world. Each series that she creates explores broad themes of psychic states, identity in a shifting spatio-temporal context and a physical world in constant flux. Lee's photographs have focused on the solitary existence of individuals in rural Korea and or in relation to Asian architectural structures with sacred significance. Even more often, her works capture vast open spaces that are not easily situated in a recognizable geographic location. Over the last two decades she has recurrently spent time in the desert, creating four photographic series that engage with this different aspects of this space including: *Desert* (1990 – 1994), *The American Desert* (1990-1994), *Self Portrait: American Desert III* (1992-1993) and culminating in *Wind* (2004 – 2007). Lee creates black and white panoramic photographs of the desert that minimize detail in favor of high-contrast views emphasizing shadows, horizons and disjunctive boundaries.

In the *Wind* series (2004 – 2007), Jungjin Lee captures the desolate and abandoned spaces of both the American Southwest and rural Korea. Throughout this series, an unseen energy defines the awe-inspiring vistas Lee captures in large-scale compositions. Although Lee starts framing the landscape with her camera lens, her multi-stage process of creating the images in the *Wind* series is akin to a painter's approach. The images captured in the viewfinder are altered in the development process as Lee undermines the crispness of the visual representations created with her mid-size format panoramic camera. When they reach the final stage of production, her landscapes draw the viewer's attention to diffuse forms and evanescent light. Lee's development process includes printing on traditional mulberry paper, editing in Photoshop, and ultimately printing a final inkjet image. The resulting images are

high-contrast views of the desert, where Lee's manual manipulation of the compositions can be easily noted given the marks of the brush strokes indexical of the application of painted emulsion on mulberry paper's absorbent surface. These marks are purposefully retained in the final print, leaving a human watermark on a digital print. Traces of manual production can also be observed at the level of the ragged borders of the handmade mulberry paper. Each image is the result of a mediated process that both accentuates and effaces the technical capabilities of photography, paying homage to the aesthetics of traditional ink painting and hand developed film.

While the *Wind* series is a product of Lee's exploration of the American West, she relates to this landscape from her unique cross-cultural artistic perspective. Her first training in Korea was in the deeply traditional arts of calligraphy and ceramics. Only after a short career as a self-taught commercial photographer did she leave Seoul in 1989 to study photography in New York City. While there she worked for photographer Robert Frank whose iconic collection *The Americans* documented the poetry of everyday life across America. Frank's influence can be seen in Lee's decision to embark on travels to the American West. Yet while Frank tells a story of everyday life through his photography, Lee uses her camera to capture the sky, mountains and the interplay between timeless vistas and the detritus that litters the desert floor, alluding to past experience. Lee's decision to photograph the desert allows her to connect to disparate elements that she finds deeply reflective of her innermost values, emotions and thoughts. The desert for Lee represents the unknown and being dislocated from her everyday life. This dislocation allows her to encounter the land as an unknown abstraction and establish correlations to different modes of experiencing place, spirituality and memory. I will argue that given the diverse influences upon her photographic practice, Lee's works are more suggestive of the unseen than denotative of specific physical

landscapes. In *Wind*, Lee captures a unique temporal-psychic-spatio moment, so specific that it begins to communicate beyond Lee's experience to the global simultaneity of other unique temporal-psychic-spatio experiences occurring around the globe. In the *Wind* series, Lee alludes to moments defined by experience rather than fixed space. She uses the diffuse materiality of the subjects to convey fleeting experiences that could actually be sensed in different parts of the world, suggestive of the interdependent relations increasingly visible in a global context.

For Lee, the diffuse landscape becomes a metaphor of nebulous relations and a means of making the unseen perceptible. In *Wind 07-60*, Lee captures small cloud-like puffs of downy cotton as the wind propels them across the desert floor while in *Wind 04-51* (Figure 7) she merges clouds and marks of emulsion resulting in a textural abstraction of the meditative void.

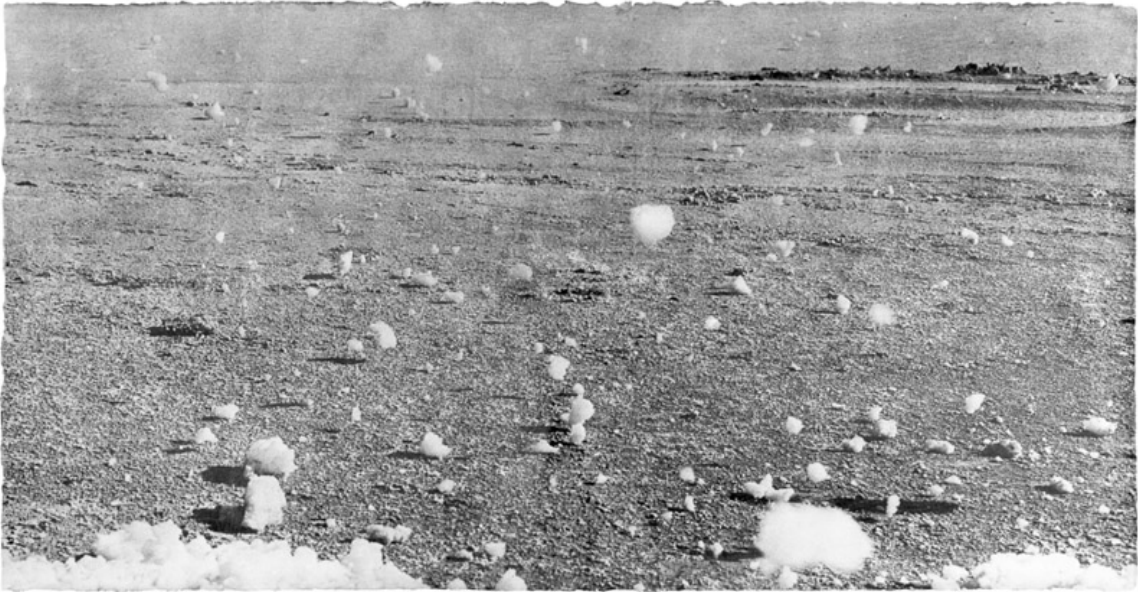


Figure 1: Jungjin Lee, *Wind 07-60*

Throughout the series, images of cosmic forces are juxtaposed with vignettes of abandoned and abject detritus from everyday life. In images like *Wind 07-106*, Lee photographs a keyboard abandoned on the desert floor, its keys beginning to pull away from the keyboard and its base already weathered by several winter snows and spring rains.



Figure 2: Jungjin Lee, *Wind 07-106*

From a fixture of everyday life, the keyboard becomes an abstraction with no function or place. Lee is drawn to this intersection between the quotidian experience and the desert, capturing images of abandoned houses, desolate roads and other reminders of the human presence on the land throughout the *Wind* series. Cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan distinguishes between two different approaches to the environment. One building on the notion of landscape as *place* where people live and work; another engaging with a more abstract notion of *space* as a symbol of freedom and aesthetic beauty. Lee's photographs in *Wind* relate to both notions. Her landscapes are conceived from the perspective of someone imaging past lives and thinking of her own fleeting presence in relation to the changing

attributes of spaces. Lee's exploration of *place* differs from the vibrant daily life that Tuan describes in his writings on this concept. She instead engages the remains of past daily life. As an outsider to the geographical space of the desert, Lee connects to the abandoned houses, cars and detritus that exist in flux somewhere between *place* and *space* and *now* and *then*.

In chapter one, I will delineate the aesthetic and cultural influences that run throughout the *Wind* series, including the long tradition of Asian landscape ink painting. Lee offers a unique view onto this genre, embracing the belief that landscape can be used to communicate emotional states of mind and the experience of being in the landscape, both concepts expressed as ideals of early Asian landscape painters.² Lee's photographs are as apt to capture the expanse of desert floor as they are to capture a tumultuous sky, infused with the idea of emptiness or the void, which connotes both a sense of displacement and an experience of overwhelming oneness with the universe. I will not only place Lee's work within the context of both Asian photographic traditions and Buddhist philosophy, but I will also situate it in relation to Western contemporary trends in landscape photography and space theory. While Lee is keenly aware of present and past trends in landscape photography, her work can be interpreted in many respects as a reaction against some major trends in contemporary landscape photography. Many contemporary landscape photographers are pushing the technological capabilities of their tools, creating hyper-real

² Nathalie Trouveroy, "Landscape of the Soul: Ethics and Spirituality in Chinese Painting," *India International Centre Quarterly* 30 (2003): 5.

In her article, "Landscape of the Soul: Ethics and Spirituality in Chinese Painting," Nathalie Trouveroy cites the tale of the eighth century painter Wu Daozi. In the tale Wu Daozi painted a landscape scene for the Tang Emperor Xuanzong so realistic that Wu Daozi enters and disappears in the painting while showing the Emperor its splendors. Trouveroy points out that tales of paintings coming to life or being entered are common in the history of Chinese painting. The experience of the painting was understood to be a vividly imaginative process of exploration, that if successful would replicate the experience of physically and emotionally experiencing the landscape being depicted.

ultra-high resolution images that strive to portray beyond what is visible to the naked eye. Later in this first chapter, I will contrast Lee's practice with that of Jeff Wall and Andreas Gursky, who both use digital manipulation to create staged and hyper-real scenes. The uncanny images are not intended to deceive the viewer, but to engage her in broad conversation with themes as diverse as the perception of reality, the juggernaut of modernity and the precarious qualities of cultural and physical space in a global context. In contrast with the highly saturated colors and evenly lit landscape compositions of Wall and Gursky, Lee's black and white constructions of space are ambivalent and imprecise, more reminiscent of ink paintings than photography. Her manipulation of images in the darkroom mutes detail and heightens contrast, resulting in photographs that reference the nineteenth-century Pictorialist movement rather than the everyday snapshot aesthetic found in the work of Robert Frank or the hyper-realism of Jeff Wall and Andreas Gursky. Lee reacts against the perfecting possibilities of digital technology as she is intent on registering and then recomposing an ethereal moment in time and space, more representative of her emotional presence than of the physical coordinates of space.

Chapter two will explore themes of spirituality and Lee's appropriation of religious concepts from Korea's major religions. The concept of the void is central to Buddhist teachings and is a recurrent aesthetic motif in Lee's photographs. Reflecting on its presence in the context of Korean art, curator Joon Lee describes the void as, "a world, which is empty yet also filled with elegance and compels viewers to see the horizon of life anew, and, at the same time, a productive space that traverses boundaries and difference."³ The meditative quality that one experiences when viewing the *Wind* series is further accentuated by Lee's process of photographing and developing these images. To capture each fleeting

³ Joon Lee, *Void in Korean Art* (Seoul: Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, 2007), 19.

image of cosmic forces and the transience of the human experience, Lee takes solitary walks through the desert. She searches for the moment when the peaceful stillness of the landscape transforms into a maelstrom of sheeting rain or gusting wind. She also captures ideal vistas obscured by the shell of an abandoned house or the scattering of broken detritus. In either case, her views into the desert are seen through a searching lens that sees beyond the indexical image in order to convey a sense of timelessness. It is not just Lee's journey to desert spaces that is meditative; her process of transforming the image from digital file to physical object also entails deep meditation and discovery. Lee describes this process in the following terms: "For my work, the darkroom process is just as important as the digital process. Throughout the process, I focus on transmitting on my prints the feelings that I felt at the time of taking the photograph. I try to deliver the essence of what I truly want to express."⁴ Every stage of Lee's artistic process is part of a search to express the inexpressible core of her beliefs. Lee sees her landscapes as a psychic self-portrait, "an image of myself which is reflected on the landscape..."⁵ She strives to capture her emotional core as an energy that flows from one image to another in the series. Each individual photograph exists as part of an ongoing search for the individual in the cosmic.

In chapter three, I will dwell on the psychological implications of site, which underlie the complex map of identity and dislocation in the *Wind* series. I will situate Jungjin Lee's practice within the theoretical framework of the work of cultural geographers Yi-Fu Tuan and Doreen Massey. Both the photographs of the abstracted views toward the desert

⁴ "Interview with Charlotte Cotton," October 21, 2013," accessed April 24, 2015, <https://jungjin-lee-oh21.squarespace.com/this-place-catalogue/>

⁵ Jungjin Lee, *ACAW 11: Jungjin Lee, Wind: In Conversation with Vicki Goldberg*. Hosted by Leeza Ahmady. (Originally recorded on March 26, 2011; Aperture Gallery, New York in association with the Asian Cultural Council: Originally aired April 25, 2011 on Clocktower radio, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://clocktower.org/show/acaw-11-jungjin-lee-wind>

horizon and the views which highlight traces of human interventions, tie in with Tuan's reflections on how modern culture shapes perceptions of the land. Doreen Massey's theory of *space* extends Tuan's theory, positing that *space* in contemporary life functions as an open system of coexisting plurality and individuality. Massey's theories provide an additional conceptual framework for understanding the distinct aesthetic, technical and art historical influences that are at play within the *Wind* series. Massey's theory that space is in a state of constant flux, which is best understood as a "simultaneity of stories-so-far,"⁶ finds resonance in Lee's experience of the desert. While physically in the desert, her photographs simultaneously communicate her fleeting psychic experience, as well as her past cultural heritage and even her previous life in two of the world's largest metropolises - Seoul and New York. All of these factors leave an imprint on the images in *Wind* and a map for viewers to trace Lee's struggle to express her personal identity through images of an unfamiliar land.

⁶ Wells, *Land Matters*, 9.

CHAPTER 2

JUNGJIN LEE'S PHOTOGRAPHS AT HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CROSSROADS

After graduating with a Bachelor's of Fine Art in 1984, Lee worked as a commercial photographer and later as a freelance photographer. In 1987, she immersed herself for one year in a project focused on documenting the existence of an old man who made his living hunting for wild ginseng. The resulting photographs present a traditional practice and way of life that no longer exists in Korea. Lee's photographs of the ginseng collector and his wife became her first book and exhibition. For Lee, this was a watershed moment in her relationship to photography, since it marked her transition from commercial work to her use of photography as an artistic medium. Her photographs of the ginseng collector anticipate her later works both formally and thematically. This series features black and white, high-contrast images in which Lee begins exploring the meaningful function of the frame within and around the composition. As she frames these images, she begins to pull away from the intimate portrait of the ginseng collector she is documenting, letting the wild vegetation and silhouettes of hills around him fill the composition. In several of these shots, the ginseng collector's hunched body is hidden at first glance, his presence in the land becoming increasingly tenuous. In this series, Lee begins to explore the limits of individuality and ponders the transience of human life and cultural practices in relation to the timeless energy subsistent in the air and the mountains.

It was this experience of documenting the ginseng collector's practice that motivated Lee to become a photographer and expand her technical knowledge of this medium by traveling to New York and enrolling in NYU to pursue an MA in photography. Bohnchang Koo argues that Lee is representative of the *New Wave* of Korean photographers, those born

after 1950 who “distinguished themselves from the preceding generation of Korean photographers by looking at photography as art.”¹ Bohnchang’s observation aligns very closely to Lee’s own description of the rationale for her move to New York which, in her view, reflected her choice to pursue an artistic career instead of a career as a commercial photographer.

As a student in New York, Lee photographed the life of the city, documenting the subways and the pedestrians rushing throughout the city. While in New York, she also worked for photographer Robert Frank, whose iconic collection *The Americans* documents the poetry of everyday life across America. Frank’s travel inspired Lee to search for her own connection to America by traveling across the country. While Frank focused on the people and the lives of American cities, Lee found her subject in the deserts of the American Southwest.

Landscape Tradition in Painting and Photography

Landscape photography traditions in the United States and Korea have distinct origins. Western landscape photography was initially embraced in the mid-nineteenth century in an age of Western exploration. Early photographic depictions of Western landscapes were experienced as “real,” a view influenced by the use of photography to document the land for exploration and objective recording. Liz Wells argues that this early “topographic dimension of landscape photography strongly supports documentary testimony, but there is a general fascination with photographs that draw on indexicality, that is, the apparently unmediated relation with scenarios and phenomena.”² While Western photography’s initial innovations

¹ Pon-ch’ang Ku, *Contemporary Korean Photographers: A New Generation* (Houston, Texas: FotoFest, Inc., 2000), unpaginated.

² Liz Wells, *Land Matters: Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 7.

were focused on the development of processes and technologies that would create indexical landscapes, the Eastern tradition of landscape photography was introduced in Korea in the twentieth century and was closely linked with traditional landscape painting and its mediated view of nature. These early Korean landscape photographs continued the long history of Korean landscape painting, a history which is intertwined with the Eastern tradition of landscape painting. In this tradition, brought to Korea from China during the Three Kingdoms period (53 BCE-668 CE), landscape painting celebrated the cultural sophistication and the enlightenment of the patron commissioning the piece.

Representations of nature were associated with the *literati* who often left behind the bureaucracy of the cities to pursue scholarship, literature, prayer and poetry. The picturesque scenes of retreat they produced were meant to reflect the cultivated minds of the patron and the artist painting the landscape. Landscapes did not record the world around them, but rather a synthesis of important vistas, significant symbols and inspiring details. Although Korean landscapes grew out of this broader tradition of Asian landscape painting, Korean landscapes are unique in several respects. In the essay “Void: Mapping the Invisible in Korean Art,” Joon Lee argues that “what distinguishes the naturalism of Korean artists’ works is the ways in which, instead of creating something, [they] draw out the inherent vitality of forms. In addition, there is a certain comfort and depth with which controlled emotions and unexaggerated, natural harmonies are deployed...”³ In addition to a unique psychological approach, a new strain of landscape painting, called “true-view” painting, emerged in the late seventeenth century in Korea. Advocated for by the scholar Yi Ik, (1681-1763), “true-view” landscape painting was influenced by Western painting from life and focused more closely on documenting realistic views of the actual landscape of Korea. While

³ Joon Lee, “Void: Mapping the Invisible in Korean Art,” *The Sublime*, edited by Simon Morley (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2010), 104.

“true view” landscape painting strove to depict the actual landscape, it did not abandon the important spiritual and symbolic role of the landscape in Korean culture. Artists like Jeong Seon (1676–1759) wished to communicate multiple “layers of psychological and art historical meanings embedded in the scenery.”⁴ Jeong’s many paintings of views of Mount Geumgangsan capture unique features of this landmark with its craggy peaks and outcroppings of trees. Given the verisimilitude of the painting, another layer of cultural meaning was communicated to contemporary viewers familiar with the conventions of landscape painting. Landscapes before “true view” were imagined ideals; collages of mountains, rivers and the seasons. The elegant depiction of the idealized natural world was seen as an illustration of the Confucian ideals, promoting harmony and the pursuit of self-cultivation practiced and patronized by the *literati*. “True view” painting was influenced by the Western artistic tradition and represented both a step away from the Asian tradition of landscape painting and an opening of Korean society. “True view” painting wasn’t based solely on codified artistic traditions of the *literati*, it referenced instead universal themes of timelessness and natural beauty. “True-view”

⁴ Soyoung Lee, "Mountain and Water: Korean Landscape Painting, 1400–1800," in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), accessed April 5, 2016. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/mowa/hd_mowa.htm

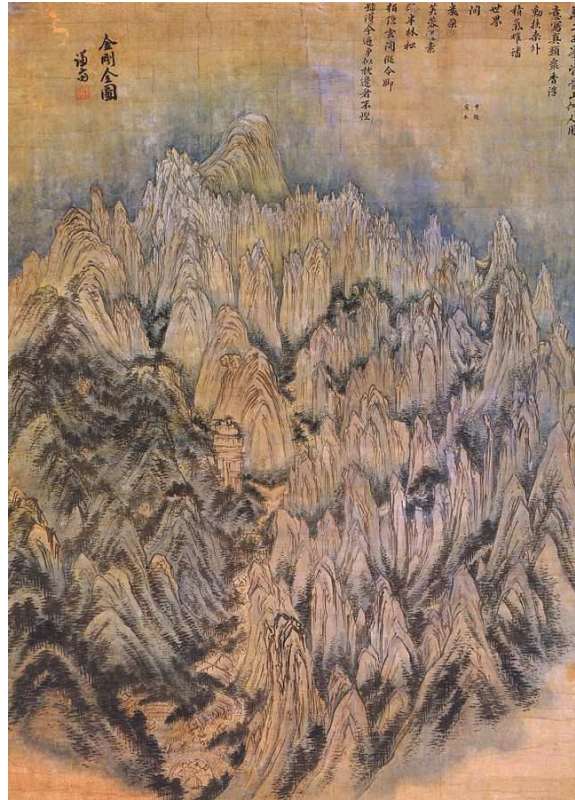


Figure 3: Jeong Seon, *General View of Mount Geumgangsan*, 1734
Ink on paper, 51.5”x 37”

landscape painting continued through the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century but, like many traditional Korean customs, faded during the rule of the Imperial Japanese from 1910-1945 and the upheavals caused by WWI and the Korean War.

While “true view” painting and most traditional Korean art was suppressed during Imperial Japanese rule, photography began to take on new prominence in Korea starting in the 1950s. Although photography was brought to Korea shortly after the signing of the Treaty of Kanghwa with Japan in 1876, Ann Tucker explains in her introduction to *Chaotic Harmony: Contemporary Korean Photography* that because of Korea’s cultural isolation and government censorship the first major photographic movement in Korea was a realistic, often commercial style, referred to as “ordinary life photos” in the 1950s. Not until the

1980s did Korean photography, with the influence of young photographers returning from newly open study abroad opportunities, begin to develop along more experimental trajectories. This experimentation included a return to landscapes as a source of inspiration for many of the *New Wave* photographers practicing in Korea. Ann Tucker finds that landscape as a genre in South Korean photography begins in the 1980s, with photographer Bae Bien-U's exhibition of landscape photography, one of the first of this kind.



Figure 4: Bien-U Bae, *Pine Trees*
Gelatin silver print

Bae's photographs of ancient Korean pine trees are filled with symbolic meaning. Historically, pine tree groves were planted as memorials to Korean royalty. Symbolically, the pine tree in Korea represents "justice, beauty and transcendence."⁵ For Bae, this series has personal significance. He has experienced South Korea's rapid transformation from an agrarian culture to an urban industrial culture. Through this barrage of change, the pine trees came to represent stability. With Bae's photographs, he wishes to tie a rapidly changing

⁵ Karen Sinsheimer, Anne Tucker and Pon-ch'ang Ku, *Chaotic Harmony: Contemporary Korean Photography* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2009), 15.

modern culture to its cultural and historic roots. Metaphorically, this series connects the evergreen pine trees to the cultural spirit of the Korean people. Bae's photographs expand on the symbolic meaning of these trees to generate a metaphorical approach to landscape, while reconnecting to the long tradition of landscape compositions in Korean painting. Bae's work influenced many of the *New Wave* Korean photographers, including Lee. In the *Wind* series, Lee's photograph of pine trees is vividly reminiscent of Bae's approach to the same subject matter; both compositions feature the bold silhouettes of a central grove of trees whose trunks cut through a blanket of atmospheric haze.



Figure 5: Jungjin Lee, *Wind 07-69*

Like Bae, Lee structures the shot around the graphic silhouettes of the trees' trunks. While Bae creates a sense of layered depth and immersion in a dense and dark forest, Lee's graphic composition contrasts the nearly black tree trunks with the void of the white sky, giving the impression that these trees are perched on the edge of a precipice. Lee appears to be inspired by Bae's pine tree series and its symbolical connotations, but she also pushes the

metaphor further. In Lee's view, the single tree in the background is not a recognizable pine, the white bark of its straight trunk cutting through the composition and sharply contrasting with the diagonal orientation of the other trees. In Lee's shot, the trees and even the small tufts of grass begin to dissolve into the void of the sky. While Lee takes as her starting point the pine tree as a symbolical embodiment of, "justice, beauty and transcendence"⁶ she expands its metaphorical connotations by pairing it with the void, which serves as a sign of the unknown and the universal.

Jungjin Lee's practice is deeply rooted in Korean culture, even as she reaches for new sources of inspiration. Her photographs, like "true-view" landscape paintings, document the land in front of her, but with the goal of capturing a moment so fleeting and subjective that it ultimately creates a psychic self-portrait. When Lee speaks about her choice of subject, she says: "Life changes on the surface, like an ocean. You have the constant movement of water on the surface but deep down, at the core, there is no movement."⁷ The "core" is what Lee strives to capture in her *Wind* series, a core that according to her represents her, "introspective states and thoughts."⁸ The core of the images that Lee captures is further underscored by the title of this series. Wind is the unseen force that moves the landscape and is symbolical of transience, as well as of endurance despite unavoidable changes. Eugenia Parry points out that *wind* in Korean describes both the movement of air and

⁶ Karen Sinsheimer, Anne Tucker, and Pon-ch'ang Ku. *Chaotic Harmony: Contemporary Korean Photography*. (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2009), 15.

⁷ "Interview with Charlotte Cotton," October 21, 2013, accessed April 24, 2015, <https://jungjin-lee-oh21.squarespace.com/this-place-catalogue/>

⁸ Vicki Goldberg, "Shorthand Notes From the Spirit," *Wind*, Jungjin Lee et al. (New York, NY: Sepia, 2009), unpaginated from Vicki Goldberg essay.

conveys a sense of hope.⁹ This unseen energy contributes to the awe-inspiring vistas which simultaneously convey an overpowering sense of desolation, solitude and sublime beauty.

Jungjin Lee's Practice Between Pictorialism and Digital Photography

While Jungjin Lee's photographs are clearly influenced by Asian landscape painting, they are also deeply informed by modern and contemporary trends in Western photography. The *Wind* series is highly reminiscent of the Pictorialist movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Lee's *Wind* series bears similarities to the Pictorialist tendency which accentuates the picturesque qualities of a scene with diffuse, soft focus light that underscores the atmospheric effects of storms, rain and snow. In addition to these aesthetic similarities, the *Wind* series shares with Pictorialism the emphasis on communicating an emotional impression that goes beyond the index of the photograph. The Pictorialist photographers struggled to distinguish their use of photography as a medium for artistic expression rather than a mere form of commercial documentation of people, land and commerce and Lee espouses a similar aesthetic desire. She does not have to fight for artistic recognition, the artistry of photography is no longer a point of contention, but she does clearly delineate her need to work as an artist using photography as a means to express ambiguity. She points out that she quit her commercial practice entirely to pursue projects where she could "express herself"¹⁰ rather than take assignments to illustrate subject matter she didn't select. Lee resists articulating a specific meaning to her work, opting instead to speak of what she felt

⁹ Eugenia Parry, "Ghost Lands," *Wind*, Jungjin Lee et al. (New York, NY: Sepia, 2009), unpaginated from Eugenia Parry essay.

¹⁰ Jungin Lee, *ACAW 11: Jungjin Lee, Wind: In Conversation with Vicki Goldberg*. Hosted by Leeza Ahmady. (Originally recorded on March 26, 2011; Aperture Gallery, New York in association with the Asian Cultural Council: Originally aired April 25, 2011 on Clocktower Radio, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://clocktower.org/show/acaw-11-jungjin-lee-wind>).

when she took the photograph and arguing that each photograph is a deeply personal psychic impression.

While Pictorialism was an international movement, one of its most ardent supporters was the American gallerist and photographer Alfred Stieglitz. Stieglitz's work, especially his cloud photographs, function as a historical antecedent to Lee's works, anticipating the themes of oneness, flux and identity that she explores in the *Wind* series. Stieglitz came to adopt the subject of clouds after his well-documented struggle to have photography accepted as an artistic medium equivalent to painting or sculpture. Towards this end, he co-edited the journal *Camera Work*, which featured the artistic work of Photo-Secessionist and ran his exhibition space Little Galleries. In addition to his promotion of artistic photography, he used his own photographic practice and technical skill to disprove many of the commonly believed limitations of photography as a medium. Like Lee, Stieglitz photographed in storms of rain and snow, low-light or night, experiments with color and pushes the boundaries of subject matter. Attempting to capture something universal, characteristic of the core of existence, Stieglitz photographed over four hundred clouds between 1922 and 1931. This photographic exploration developed alongside his fascination with defining life in the modern world,

...the idea of the fragmented sense of self, brought about by the rapid pace of modern life; the idea that a personality, like the outside world, is constantly changing, and may be interrupted but not halted by the intervention of the camera; and, finally, the realization that truth in the modern world is relative and that photographs are as much an expression of the photographer's feelings for the subject as they are a reflection of the subject depicted.¹¹

¹¹ Lisa Hostetler, "Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) and American Photography." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000) accessed December 12, 2015, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/stgp/hd_stgp.htm



Figure 6: Alfred Stieglitz, *Equivalent*, 1923 (printed 1926)
Gelatin silver print, Amon Carter Museum of American Art

Using photography to capture clouds, Stieglitz worked to overcome the stigma associated with the notion that photographs were just technological inventions for modern commerce. With this subject matter, Stieglitz saw an opportunity to communicate something profound, personal and universal. Each view into the sky captured a unique moment in an ever-changing modern world – a moment that was also understood to be a universal moment recognized by viewers to represent not only a transitory view into the spiritual realm, but also a fleeting kernel of quotidian experience.

Stieglitz called his cloud series *Equivalents*. The series grew out of his reflections on modern life. These works also gave him a chance to convey his philosophy of life through

subjective representations of universally experienced forms. Through photographs of clouds, Stieglitz felt he could communicate the ephemeral nature of experience, existence and individuality. Stieglitz manipulated these clouds in the darkroom by dodging some areas, over-exposing others and experimenting with printing on low quality postcard paper to better communicate his emotional state when he took the photo.

Although Lee's *Wind* series encompasses images of a significantly larger scale than Stieglitz's clouds series, she also strives to convey the enormity of the subjective experience by focusing the photographic lens on the sky. In the essay accompanying the exhibition, Jungjin Lee: The Stillness of Wind, Chas Bowie observed that Lee and Stieglitz both use clouds to explore connections to "interior, metaphysical truths."¹² Lee would agree with Stieglitz's assertion that: "Lens, camera, plate, developing-baths, printing process, and the like are used by [Pictorialist] simply as tools for the elaboration of their ideas, and not as tyrants to enslave and dwarf them..."¹³ Lee also sees the technical side of photography, the type of camera and chemicals used to bring the fugitive image to light as simply tools. Just as the Pictorialists, she embraces the goal of pushing photography beyond technical considerations to a medium that enables a truly psychic connection with the view. She manipulates the image at every stage of the process to make it *equivalent* to the reflection of her mind's eye. As David Travis extrapolates in his essay on Stieglitz's clouds series, "An "equivalence" is a situation that goes beyond the subjective, even reverses it. No longer is the photographer reacting to something from the outside, but rather projecting what is inside – what has already been established by experience – back out onto the world as if the

¹² Chas Bowie, "Jungjin Lee: The Stillness of Wind," *Untitled* (2010), accessed March 31, 2016, <http://untitled.pnca.edu/articles/show/1329>

¹³ Alfred Stieglitz, "Pictorial Photography," in *Scribner's Magazine* 26 (November 1899) in, *Photography: Essays & Images*, ed. Beaumont Newhall (Museum of Modern Art, 1980), 164.

world were reacting to the observer.”¹⁴ While the horizon and the sky figure prominently in Lee’s *Wind* series, there are only two photographs in which the sky fills the entire frame.



Figure 7: Jungjin Lee, *Wind 04-51*

In both photographs, the sky is dark and foreboding, the clouds abstracted so much that they appear pixelated by uncoated flecks of mulberry throughout the prints. Lee seems to wish to accentuate the ephemeral and transitory nature of these forms by abstracting not only their shapes but also the illusion of the photograph. The small white flecks of paper peeking through the clouds interrupt the immersive experience otherwise generated by these large prints, reminding the viewer that they are reproductions of a moment.

While Lee’s fundamental approach both aesthetically and theoretically is very similar to the principles of the Pictorialist movement, it is considerably harder to situate her practice within the contemporary context of landscape photography. She herself cites only the work

¹⁴ David Travis, *At the Edge of the Light: Thoughts on Photography & Photographers, Talent & Genius* (Boston: David R. Godine, 2003), 127.

of photographer Robert Frank as an influence on her work, but examination of Lee's work in relation to landscape photographers Jeff Wall and Andreas Gursky reveals that interconnections do exist in their approaches to both photographic technique and spatial documentation. The connection to Robert Frank is grounded in their working relationship as much in the artistic approach. While Lee worked as a studio assistant to Robert Frank, she was also a student at NYU shooting New York street scenes. Frank's influence can be seen in many aspects of Lee's process and approach to photography. Both search beyond their daily life for subjects, exploring rural America by car and connecting to their subjects from the perspective of outsiders. They also both place themselves into the category of artists who photograph, using photography as one mode of expression, a tool to be manipulated, experimented with to fulfill their artistic needs. Lee laments the limits of photography when speaking about the *Wind* series, wishing instead that she could write poetry or dance. Thematically, both photographers use their medium's ability to capture split seconds to engage with universal concepts, rather than the specific moments captured in their photographs.

Born in Switzerland, Frank's travels took him around the world, living for extended periods of time in Paris, New York and most recently in Nova Scotia. As the title of his iconic book *The Americans* suggests, he is aware of his status as an outsider. Working with Frank, Lee must have realized her own outsider's perspective. As Frank created photographs of Americans that express a dark drudgery in the reality of many daily lives, Lee creates images that explore the depth and complexity of the barren landscapes of the American desert. They both explore these spaces as part of road trips across the U.S. Frank's influence on Lee is seen in the outsider filter through which she explores and connects to America.

Photographers like Jeff Wall and Andreas Gursky exemplify a major current trend in contemporary landscape photography. Inspired by Frank's aesthetic style, they work to further exploit and explore the intrinsic technological characteristics of the medium, as well as the historical assumptions of representation and documentation, via photography. Lee's unique approach to representation of the land, as well her technical process is particularly evident when contrasted with the work of these two contemporary photographers.

Like Lee, Jeff Wall began his career as a photographer searching for a new way to use photography to communicate. Wall regarded Robert Frank as a master. In his view *The Americans* marks a watershed moment in photography. He recalls that as a teenager he, "...made pencil drawings from various photographs in it. Frank and Walker Evans closed the door for me. What they did was so well done, I could never have matched it and I don't think anyone has. They nailed it once and for all. That was a huge realization – that I could not follow in their footsteps."¹⁵ For contemporary photographers like Jungjin Lee, Jeff Wall and Andreas Gursky, this meant they had to extend their practice beyond the black and white straight photography that had reached its pinnacle in Frank's *The Americans*. For Wall, this meant creating elaborately staged scenes that referenced Dutch and Japanese woodcut landscapes and cinematography. He fully capitalized on the ability to manipulate digital images at every stage of the process from capture to printing. His landscapes are digital collages that piece together narratives and compositionally reference Western and non-Western traditions in landscape painting. Wall often incorporates dramatic perspectival views and uses the golden mean to define where in the composition the horizon line will lie. While Lee's landscapes in the *Wind* series could be analyzed through this same lens of digital

¹⁵ Sean O'Hagan. "Robert Frank at 90: The photographer who revealed America won't look back." *The Guardian*, November 7, 2014, accessed October 29, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/nov/07/robert-frank-americans-photography-influence-shadows>

manipulation, allusions to traditional Asian painting and even a propensity to situate the horizon line dramatically in the canvas, the result of Lee's digital manipulations is a paradoxical landscape made of psychic contours in constant flux. For Wall, digital manipulations reinforce a connection, beyond the current scene, to both the historical paintings or prints he is re-creating and the contemporary landscape he is nesting the vignette within. While Lee's compositions ultimately communicate a deeply subjective and personal truth, Wall's communicate a disjunctive view where culture and space are merged to create a hyper-real view. The results of these distinct perspectives can be seen in Wall's photograph *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)*, 1993.



Figure 8: Jeff Wall, *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)*, 1993

In the photograph, Wall creates a frozen tableau vivant of Hokusai's woodblock print of the same subject. Referencing the eponymous master print allows the viewer to

immediately experience the photograph as a construction without wondering about its “truthfulness” as a photograph. Just as Jungjin Lee, Wall uses the photograph as a tool to engage the viewer in a larger dialectic about the land and modern life. However, Wall scouts out interstitial locations to stage his scenes at the boundaries of the city or at the juncture between industrial and residential areas. These framed scenes, when employed by Wall as the backdrop for Hokusai’s stylized lush landscape, highlight an aura of uncertainty and transition. By creating a tableau vivant with modern day actors against the backdrop of liminal spaces, Wall weaves a complex narrative which underscores modern viewers’ understanding of the capacity of photographs to digitally manipulate images to create strange and uneasy scenes that not only confront the boundaries of reality, but also the contingent qualities of time. Wall’s choice to include elements like power lines and smoke stacks allows the everyday to slip into the artifice of the tableau vivant, ultimately creating constructions that merge the hyper-real and the mundane, exposing the surreal nature of these interstitial spaces. Lee and Wall create photographs that exist at opposite ends of the aesthetic and conceptual spectrum, with Lee’s diffuse black and white compositions and Wall’s hyper crisp saturated color compositions. Lee creates views that blur the boundaries between space, time and the individual while Wall creates views that probe the boundaries between culture, time and space by creating disjunctive hyper real scenes. Both Lee and Wall use as their starting point the land which they appropriate to engage these broader conceptual themes.

While Lee and Wall use digital photography and manipulation to confront the boundaries of photography, German photographer Andreas Gursky uses similar means to chart the extensive human impact upon the environment. Gursky views the landscape from a global lens, creating digitally collaged mural size photographs of everything from skyscrapers to ports. Like Lee and Wall, Gursky’s work must be viewed in relationship to the

black and white photographs of his early teachers Bern and Hilla Becher. While the Bechers accentuated the objective and indexical potential of photography through uniform composition and structures, Gursky uses the objective “realness” that photography as a medium still communicates to construct hyper-real scenes. In the *The Rhine II* photograph, Gursky presents a symmetrical composition of the tamed Rhine River placidly flowing in a straight channel.



Figure 9: Andreas Gursky, *The Rhine II*, 1999

Typical of Gursky’s style, the photograph includes little perspective, either linear or atmospheric. The blades and clumps of grass are as distinct in the foreground of the image as at the river’s bank. The same is true of the water’s slight chop, which is so uniform that it gives the whole river an animated and uncanny feeling. Matthew Biro observes that “Although the sensuousness of the work engages us, if we stare at the picture long enough, we come to mistrust it. Intuitively, the spectator knows that the landscape is false in some way and that, whatever reality the photograph still points to, what we see in front of us is not

the world as it existed before Gursky's lens."¹⁶ Gursky, like Lee, uses photography to create images that show the viewer more than would be visible at the site, confronting questions about the role of photography in engaging themes beyond what is immediately perceptible.

Similarly to her contemporaries Wall and Gursky, Lee uses photography to engage questions about what is truth in photography, as well as questions about what a view into the landscape means if it is not a pure index of what appears in front of one's eyes. Like Jungjin Lee, neither Wall or Gursky are interested in creating indexical photographs of place, but instead use photography to expose fissures in time, identity and place.

While Lee shares many motivations with her contemporaries, she also resists some of the dominant aesthetic currents in digital photography. Photographers like Wall and Gursky tend to use the technologically advanced capabilities of digital photography to create crisp, hyper-real image, Lee reacts against the ability to perfect a photograph. Instead she chooses to deny the perfecting capabilities of the photographic medium at every stage of her process. She works to layer meaning beyond the presumably objective view of the objects she sees in the lens, photographing in storms, printing on mulberry paper, manipulating the contrast to obscure details and finally exhibiting a scan of the original chemical print of her photograph. All of her efforts are ultimately directed to detaching the final image from its photographic antecedent. Lee explains that her connection to photography is established on the ability of the medium to capture a temporary experience. The moment when the shutter flashes open to capture a split second, allows Lee to engage broad themes in the *Wind* series.

¹⁶ Matthew Biro, "From Analogue to Digital Photography: Bernd and Hilla Becher and Andreas Gursky." *History of Photography* 36 (2012): 358. Matthew Biro's observation is made in his analyses of the photograph, *Atlanta*, 1996. Although this photo is of the interior of a hotel's multi-story courtyard the observation translates to Gursky's larger body of work including his landscape photographs.

One of the most dominant ones in these works is Eastern spirituality, which deeply influences her compositions and her process.

CHAPTER 3

SPIRITUALITY AND POROUS BOUNDARIES

In the *Wind* series, Lee creates images that exist as a scrim, layered over her views into the land. For Lee, spiritual and psychic connections to the environment deeply influence her experience in the desert. Her compositions almost dissolve the actual physical space, reaching into a deeply spiritual realm. In this chapter, I will explore the spiritual concepts that permeate the series and are actually present even in her earlier bodies of work. Lee typically divides her work into distinct areas of exploration, but themes of spirituality are woven throughout her entire oeuvre. The *Wind* series is often analyzed through the lens of Buddhist philosophy, but her work often engages a more general sense of spiritual awareness. Lee's willingness to probe accepted aspects of religious dogma in a search for personal spiritual experience, may be influenced by her life in South Korea with its complex religious heritage.

Korean culture is characterized by religious syncretism, combining elements of multiple spiritual traditions including Shamanism, Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism and, in contemporary times, Protestantism, Islam and Catholicism. Aspects of each of these religions have been incorporated into Korean society and culture, where ancestor worship, filial piety and meditation have transitioned from the status of religious values associated with Buddhism and Confucianism to customs characteristic of Korean society more broadly. In her work, Lee explores impermanence, the void and oneness, all concepts which are associated with a broad range of religious practices. She dwells on the spiritual aspects of nature, which itself is at Korea's spiritual core, a means of probing and questioning dogma associated with specific religions, embracing some themes while simultaneously questioning others.



Figure 10: Jungjin Lee, *Buddha series*

Lee's exploration of Buddhism can be more closely observed in two series *Pagodas* (1999) and *Buddha* (2002), both directly engaging icons of religious life in Korea. In these explorations, Lee raises questions, purposefully avoiding strict religious standards of iconographic depiction. In the *Pagodas* series, Lee photographs Korean pagodas that appear to be hovering in thin air, being grounded only by their own mirrored reflections. This architectural structure is part of the religious landscape throughout East Asia, its striking multi-tiered shape typically pictured as firmly rooted to the ground and surrounded by trees, majestic skies and the religious complex that they are part of. Yet, in these subtly toned images, Lee seems to explore the volume and form of the pagodas rather than directly engage with the overt religious significance of these historic architectural structures. She seems to question the intrinsic spirituality of a sacred form. When freed from its religious and physical context, it is uncertain whether the building still communicates its sacred function, or becomes a self-reflecting sculptural form.

Lee continues her direct exploration of Buddhism in the *Buddha* series (2002). In this series she chooses to photograph ancient ruins of Buddha stone statues in situ. None of the statues in the series have heads and all of the sculptures depict Buddhas in various states of decay. One photograph depicts only the partial feet and toes of an ancient Buddha sculpture thus referencing the non-figurative origins of Buddhist aesthetic traditions. As in the *Pagodas* series, Lee is photographing objects steeped in traditions. Yet in the *Buddha* series, she approaches these manifestations of religious iconography from another angle. She captures the Buddha sculptures at the end of their existence, when the stone is broken and the temples that surround them are in ruins. She is drawn to deteriorated Buddha sculptures because their broken state allows her to connect to the experience of spiritual seeker rather than focus on the encounter with a specific sacred manifestation of the Buddha. Her images of these sculptures instead offer a conduit inspiring viewers to continue searching for broader themes like impermanence, change, the void themes which are exposed as these sacred vessels begin to break apart.

Oblique and Evanescent Frames

In the *Thing* series (2003-2006), Lee probes objects pulled from everyday life in a search for their essential spirit. Like her explorations of Buddhism through symbolic structures and sculptures, the photographs in this series explore Korea's oldest religion Shamanism, this time through compositions featuring ordinary objects. Practitioners of Shamanism traditionally believed that animals, objects and people all had souls, but the vital energy of natural objects like water, mountains and the cosmos was significantly more powerful. In the *Thing* series, Lee interrogates Shamanistic concepts by pondering the idea of vital energy encapsulated in objects photographed from a very short distance, against a white background. Like the *Pagodas* series, all the objects in *Thing* float against the white

background. The “things” pictured in this series include a shirt, vintage shears, boots, an empty frame, cut vegetation and more objects pulled from their everyday context. In *Pagodas* and *Thing*, Lee offers a minimalist context to these forms, both the sacred and the mundane framework compelling the viewer to see them anew. The meaning and function of the structures and objects becomes abstracted. The subtlety of form and volume are newly visible. Lee’s approach puts the emphasis first on the material presence of objects, which is generally superseded by the strong focus on their function in quotidian rituals.

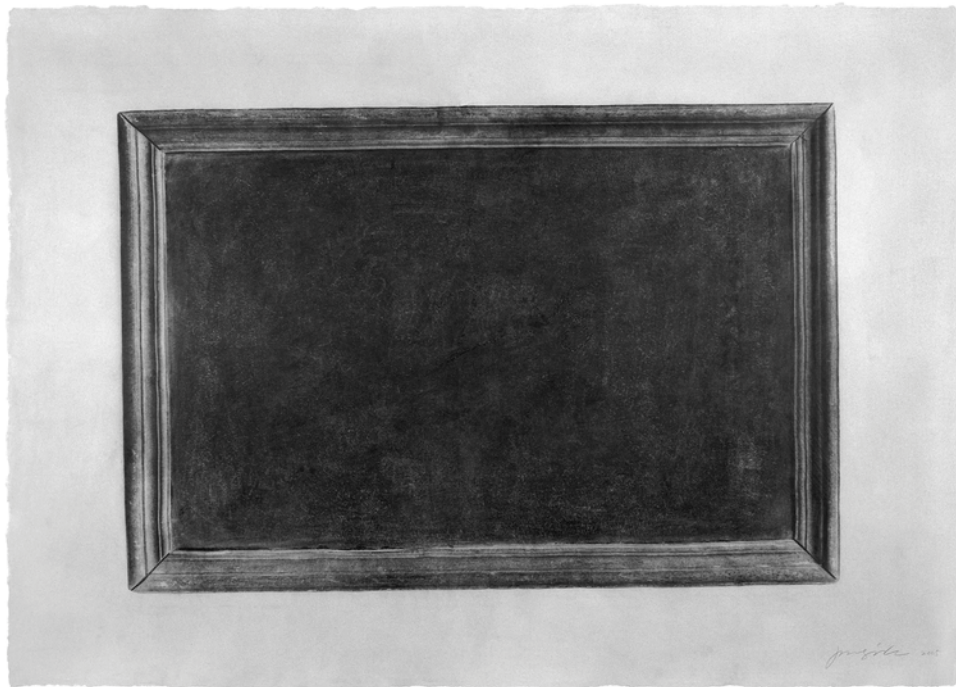


Figure 11: Jungjin Lee, *Thing series*

In one of the photos in the *Thing* series, Lee photographs a simple rectangular frame against a modulated white background. At first glance, the frame in the image appears to surround a blank slate. As one takes a closer look, it becomes clear that Lee has situated the rectangular frame slightly askew within composition. Moreover, the blank slate inside the frame is actually filled with subtle variations, made of brush strokes or eraser marks. The

blank void draws the viewer beyond the surface, guiding her to the heart of the series and the questions of universality, transitoriness, oneness and blurred boundaries between the experience the everyday and the sensation of enlightenment. In *Thing*, Lee probes these boundaries in her search for where one's personal experience is suspended in favor of universal spirituality and interconnectivity.

Pagodas, *Thing* and *Buddha* are all series in which Lee searches for personal connection to the iconography of religious and cultural artifacts. Rather than embracing the fixed religious symbolism of these objects of observation, she resituates them as energetic catalysts in a personal spiritual journey. In the 2012 exhibition of Lee's work at the Galerie Camera Obscura in Paris where the *Thing* and *Wind* series were exhibited together, they were linked by the gallery because of the shared "shamanistic meditation that links man to his surroundings."¹ Shamanism adds other layers of interpretation to Lee's landscapes, which are defined by mountains, trees and sky, but begins with her exploration of everyday objects in *Thing*. According to Shamanistic beliefs, the most important spirits are those inhabiting the cosmos, mountains and water, but trees, striking rock formations, villages and spirits of the dead are also important. In Shamanism worshippers connect directly with objects and significant sites in nature, while in Buddhist practice nature is part of temple complexes and sites of spiritual awakening. The earliest Buddhist monks sought spiritual enlightenment in the mountains and pilgrims sought purity, personal salvation and renewal in the natural world. In both of these traditions, the natural world is a sacred place, filled with vital energy that is intrinsically connected to and part-of life. In Lee's encounters with the natural world, she is drawn to the mountains, horizons, water, striking rock formations and trees.

¹ "Jungjin Lee: Wind/Thing," Galerie Camera Obscura, accessed April 24, 2016, https://www.galeriecameraobscura.fr/artistes/lee/dossier_de_presse/dossier_presse.pdf
Translation from French exhibition catalog is my own.

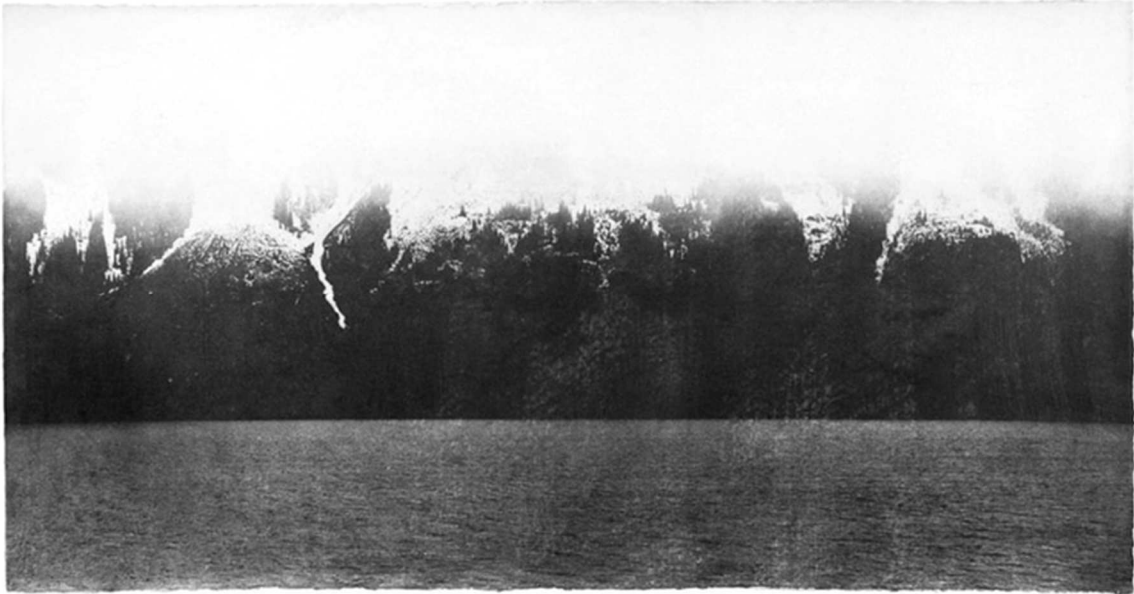


Figure 12: Jungjin Lee, *Wind 07-98*

By contrast with *Pagodas*, *Buddha* and *Thing*, the *Wind* series exhibits a greater degree of syncretism between Buddhism and Shamanism. In *Wind 07-98*, Lee captures a body of water at the base of snow-covered peaks that dissolve into the sky, under a veil of fog. The composition is striking when viewed in the context of Shamanism, where the three dominant spirits are found in water, mountains and in the cosmos. Lee enlarges this photograph so that the negative spills out beyond the torn ragged border of the original mulberry paper. Lee does not try to frame her composition but instead lets it flow beyond the uneven border, letting the viewer know that the space and energy depicted flows beyond the border of the composition. Lee explains, “the image flows in the pictures and then goes out the frame.”² Lee captures an impermanent vision, inviting the viewer to sense the shifting winds, clouds

² Jungjin Lee, *ACAW 11: Jungjin Lee, Wind: In Conversation with Vicki Goldberg*. Hosted by Leeza Ahmady. (Originally recorded on March 26, 2011; Aperture Gallery, New York in association with the Asian Cultural Council: Originally aired April 25, 2011 on Clocktower Radio, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://clocktower.org/show/acaw-11-jungjin-lee-wind>)

and even the ripples in the water. She alludes to the impermanence of the scene by letting the image spill beyond the borders of her composition.

For Lee, the idea of framing is more than an aesthetic choice defining the composition. The border of the photograph constitutes a barrier to communicating the immensity of the spatio-temporal connection she feels with the land. It is a feeling that is so overwhelming that Lee recalls her first experience of the desert as a shock, shock at the vastness of the open space and the power of nature. She recalls feeling disarmed as a photographer she: “didn’t know what to do with my camera – I wished I could be a poem or I could be a dancer...”³ The photos she initially made of this space were disappointing because she wasn’t able to capture the openness of the vista in her viewfinder. She explains that these initial images didn’t reflect what she was seeing and feeling in desert. Lee describes feeling small in relation to the power of nature. Throughout the *Wind* series, Lee is conscious of the paradoxical role of frames in photographing scenes that defy spatial and temporal limits. The theme of the frame, explored through ruined windowpanes, gates, screens and even the ragged edge of the print’s border becomes a tool for communicating impermanence through a static image. By letting the negative space of the landscape flow beyond the edges of the paper, Lee acknowledges the challenges she faces when attempting to capture the essence of the energy and the relationship between that energy and herself. When Lee encounters these spaces she tries to experience them with an open mind so that she can convey that some of their features escape both her vision and the camera lens: “there is something I cannot share. It’s just my own feeling. I cannot say what it is in words but there

³ Jungjin Lee, *ACAW 11: Jungjin Lee, Wind: In Conversation with Vicki Goldberg*, accessed April 24, 2016, <http://clocktower.org/show/acaw-11-jungjin-lee-wind>.

is something so, well I call it secret [sic] but in my work it shows my secret.”⁴ Lee’s description of the experience of these spaces seems to reflect the Buddhist concept of “right view,” which Martine Batchelor delineates in the following way, “The Buddha sees the body not as restricted by itself, but in its interaction with the world and the conditions surrounding it.”⁵ Lee experiences these landscapes as a flow of energy from herself to the land and back to herself.

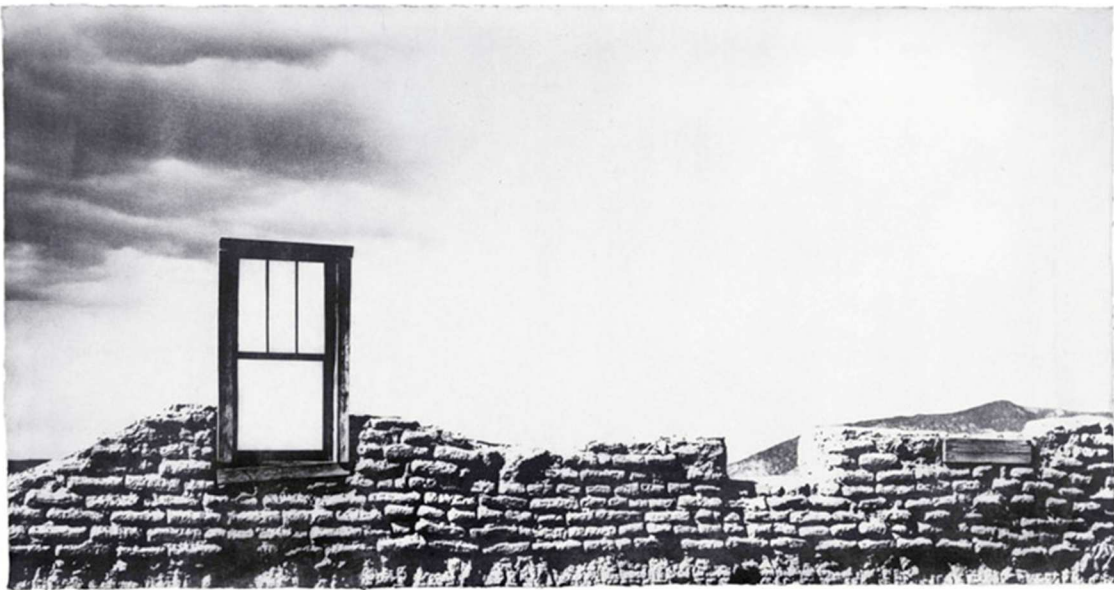


Figure 13: Jungjin Lee, *Wind 07-101*

The frames in the *Wind* series also engage another Buddhist concept, that of material impermanence. In *Wind 07-101*, Lee captures the ruins of what looks like an adobe wall. The wall’s undulating form recalls the undulating silhouette of a distant mountain range against the horizon, a mirage that is broken for the viewer by the actual mountain peak that is visible

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Martine Batchelor, *The Spirit of the Buddha* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 35.

above the ruined wall. While the ruins of the house no longer provide shelter from the elements a window frame still juts out from the ruined wall, framing a view of sky. In this work, the sky occupies the upper two-thirds of the composition. Thus, Lee discloses her struggle to express the impermanence of the land she encounters. This photograph expresses that struggle in several discursive elements. The ruined wall that Lee captures is made of earth that is gradually fading back into the land. The ruined window captures an ever-changing view into the sky. It temporarily frames views of rain, clouds and sky, but it that will eventually degrade until its ruins also litter the desert floor. The image seems to suggest that the mountain peak, now partly obscured by the ruined wall, will again resume its prominence in this view, unlike the human construction. By selecting her vantage point from within the ruins of the structure, she also recalls the past lives of those who labored to build the structure and those who may have lived or worked there. The composition ultimately brings to consciousness the impermanence of life. The ruined structure set against the backdrop of the sky and mountain, reminds us both of the fleeting moments that make up life and of its ultimate end. Like the views into the sky that flow in and out of the window's frame, the lives of the people who inhabit these places constitute mere particles in the vast history of the universe.

Stepping into the Void

Jungjin Lee was first made aware of the importance of open space in her early studies of calligraphy. The concept of the void continues to extensively inform her practice. In the *Wind* series, she captures vistas of the sky and the horizon. These views can feel desolate and lonely without the people who animate landscapes that belong to the Western art tradition. However, from an Eastern perspective these vast landscapes are filled with possibility, their skies indicative of impermanence and alive with energy. The void is the

animating space in the composition. In the context of many landscapes aligned with Asian artistic trajectories, negative space is as important as the mountains, oceans and trees because it contains the energy that breathes life into the natural world. In this context, the void is also connotative of a meditative state of mind. Mark Levy argues that the concept of the void is easier to communicate through visual means than through words, but can also be experienced, “directly in the gap between thoughts. All sorts of activities and situations can bring about this gap, including art making, being in nature, physical exercise...”⁶ For Jungjin Lee, the void is both an experiential state of mind and a central compositional element. Experientially, Lee’s solitary walks in the desert allow her to enter a state of mind she describes as open and free from materialistic thinking. Only when she finds this openness is she able to let the energy of the land and the moment merge with her own energy and being. Lee feels that only in these moments is she able to capture a view into the land that not only documents the contours of the land, but also the comingling of her own energy with the void. The moment of physically capturing a photo is equivalent to a moment of enlightenment.

The void as a meditative state is rooted in many religious practices and beliefs. Although the concept of the void is common to Korea’s major religions, it is understood differently in Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism. Lee Joon explains these distinctive interpretations using the following synonyms: “self-emptying”(i.e., Sunyata, in Sanskrit) in Buddhism; “[doing]” nothing” in Daoism; and “nothingness” in Confucianism.”⁷ While the concept of the void is filled with nuance in each of these religious practices, the notion of the void in traditional Asian painting appears to be more stable. Nathalie Trouveroy asserts

⁶ Mark Levy, *Void: in Art* (North Bergen, N.J.: Bramble Books, 2006), 2.

⁷ Joon Lee, *Void in Korean Art* (Seoul: Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, 2007), 20.

that the, “Chinese painter does not want you to borrow his eyes; he wants you to enter his mind. The landscape is an inner one, a spiritual and conceptual space.”⁸ Conceptually, this inner space is composed of *Yin* and *Yang*, energy that defines the physical elements of landscape, where *Yin* is the fluid feminine water and *Yang* stands for the masculine stability of the mountains. Trouveroy cites Francois Cheng’s writings which posit that these two elements are held together by the middle void, “where their interaction takes place.”⁹ The concept of Yin and Yang is central to Lee’s compositional preference throughout the *Wind* series. Her photographs are activated by the interaction of these energy sources, where desert vistas collide with dissolving mountain peaks or the hard line of the horizon divides the clouds from the earth. In *Wind 04-54* (figure 13), Lee perfectly divides her composition, with the bottom half filled with desert scrub brush and the upper half filled with a subtly modulated white sky. The two halves seem to collide into the center of the canvas, at the ruined shell of an abandoned school bus. The bus acts as the middle void that Francois Cheng describes, activating the rest of the view into the land. More than a visual punctum, the bus heightens our awareness of the visible brush strokes used to spread the emulsion and of the immensity of the sky. The black silhouette of the bus makes the subtle highlights on the top of each bush visible and the warmth of sun’s rays tactile, even when abstracted in the monotone palette of the *Wind* series. Trouveroy theorizes that the middle void as the realm of interaction is also the space, “...where Man finds a fundamental role. In that space between Heaven and Earth, he becomes the conduit of communication between both poles

⁸ Nathalie Trouveroy. "Landscape of the Soul: Ethics and Spirituality in Chinese Painting," *India International Centre Quarterly* 30 (2003): 6.

⁹ Trouveroy. "Landscape of the Soul," 10.

of the Universe.”¹⁰ According to this theoretical framework, the presence of the bus activates the energy of the void in the view. It acts as a foil for the vastness of the desert and the sky. Its presence awakens a sense of incomprehensibility in the viewer, temporarily suspending entrance into a meditative state of mind invoked by the expansive encounter with nature. Instead the viewer is flooded with questions: Why is the bus there? How did it get there? How long has it been there? Who left the bus there? How long will the bus remain there? Eugenia Parry observes that Lee acts as her own Buddhist teacher, *bodhisattva*, in the *Wind* series by asking us with each image to “view ordinary things, love change, tolerate absolute incomprehensibility. Contemplate the temporal, recognize the celestial.”¹¹ Lee provokes these questions through images of objects that may at first seem to be in opposition with the pristine desert landscape.

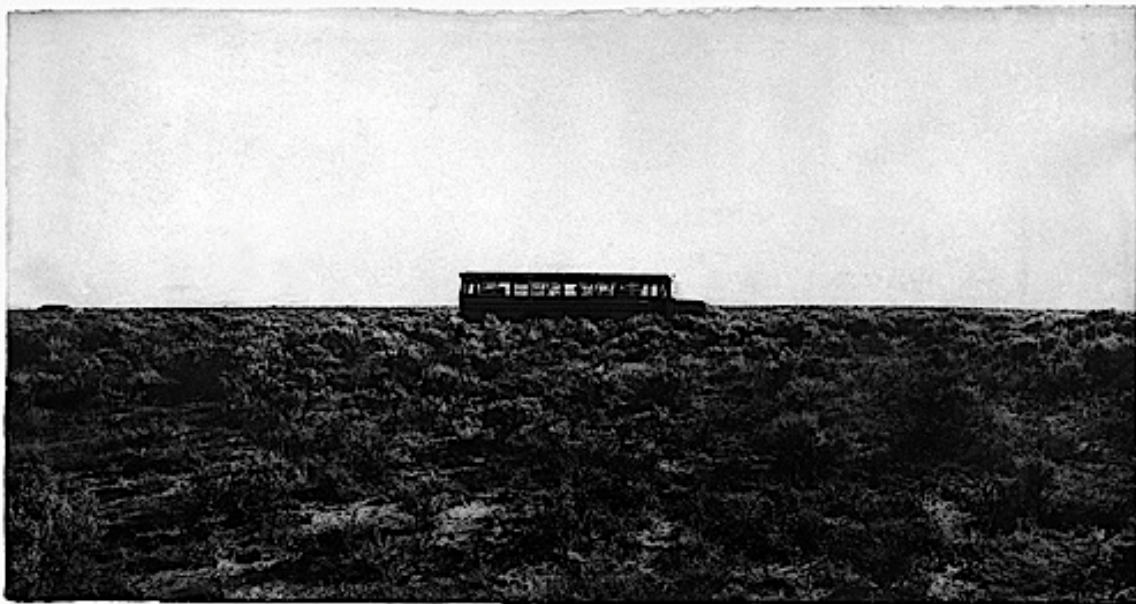


Figure 14: Jungjin Lee, *Wind* 04-54

¹⁰ Trouveroy. "Landscape of the Soul," 7.

¹¹ Eugenia Parry, "Ghost Lands," unpaginated, from *Wind*.

The aesthetic manifestation of the void can be seen throughout the *Wind* series, but for Lee the experience of the void begins with the pilgrimage-like process of taking a photo. In her essay “Ghost Lands,” Eugenia Parry explores this moment: “As an artist, not as an overt spiritual seeker, she claims the territory of no-mind because she makes an effort to silence the chatter in her head and eradicate the obstructions of habitual, materialist thinking.”¹² Lee describes the moment when she takes a photo as an “echo within myself,”¹³ a statement that finds resonance in the meditative experience of the void in Zen Buddhism. Zen Buddhists refuse to worship images, instead finding enlightenment through the “Direct pointing at the soul of man; Seeing into one’s own nature, and the attainment of Buddhahood.”¹⁴ Lee’s process of taking photographs is as important as the technique she uses to carefully erode their crispness because she is striving to capture a picture of her experience on the brink of acquiring oneness with the world. Each landscape exposes a transient moment of stillness that emerges out of the tumultuous world around Lee in the moment preceding the pressing of the shutter, a moment at which all photographers have to breathe deeply to remain still, ensuring their own breath doesn’t blur the view. This moment of stillness is when Lee captures her own identity dissolving into the viewfinder and the void.

¹² Eugenia Parry, Ghost Lands, unpaginated, from *Wind*.

¹³ Eugenia Parry, Ghost Lands, unpaginated, from *Wind*.

¹⁴ Mark Levy, *Void in Art*, 27.

CHAPTER 4

SIMULTANEITY AND SPATIO-TEMPORAL DISJUNCTIONS

Lee not only engages with a metaphysical dialectic with the images of vast spaces she captures, but like most landscape photographers she also engages with the materiality of the land she observes and experiences. I will draw on theories of space and its relationship to time in order to tie Lee's photographs of the deserts and rural areas in South Korea to themes of identity and temporality that run throughout the *Wind* series. Cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's pioneering insights into the metaphysical connections to land are a foundation upon which many later scholars have dwelt in order to expand the discourse and the understanding of the interconnections between space and time in the contemporary context. Tuan's argument that the experience of the land is inevitably subjective finds direct resonance in Lee's explorations in the *Wind* series. He divides this experience broadly into *place*, the land which is part of an individual's quotidian life, and *space*, the abstracted understanding of everywhere that is not part of daily life. In Tuan's theory, *place* is represented by home, comfort and security whereas *space* is the unknown, freedom and adventure. Tuan also engages time in his theory of space, amply discussing the notion of experiential time. For Tuan, experiential time is often implied because it is so intertwined with our understanding of distance, location, *place* and *space*. In familiar contexts, Tuan points out that time is implied when we wonder "whether there is a parking space, whether we shall be late for an appointment, and even as we estimate the distance from parking lot to office in terms of time..."¹ In quotidian life, time and place are intertwined, but in the abstracted understanding of *space* it follows that time is also abstracted. In Lee's interactions with the

¹ Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 119.

space of the desert, she explores time in fleeting moments and in seemingly timeless views of the landscape. The resulting images take viewers out of their daily routines which are defined by time and instead into a *space* where time flows with no connection to daily life but instead as a universal undercurrent on which change flows.

Transitoriness and Permanence Through the Camera Lens

In *Wind*, Lee captures the land from the perspective of an outsider, who is searching for deep metaphysical connections to a new land. Her dislocation is experienced both in relation to the broader culture and in relation to the specific *places* she photographs. Her nomadic exploration allows her to collapse to a certain extent the distinction between place and space. When Lee, an outsider, photographs a rural American house trailer, she frames this view somewhere between a *place* and *space* as outlined by Tuan. She may not be closely familiar with the quotidian life in this environment, but the space is not the equivalent of an unknown abstraction for her either. In *Wind 07-85*, Lee photographs what may be the only “home” in the *Wind* series, at least up to the present moment.



Figure 15: Jungjin Lee, *Wind 07-85*

In the shot, Lee takes a low position to crop the foreground of the image, capturing part of an old house trailer and a vintage model truck while offering a glimpse into a fairly deserted background that encapsulates a view of yet another trailer and shed. The scene is common across the desert in the U.S., where decrepit homesteads are scattered across the land, inviting the observer to consider the invisible lives of those struggling for survival in a harsh and often economically depressed environment. Lee approaches this scene as a fascinated observer. Compositionally and aesthetically, her photographs offer a view of a landscape structured around disparate elements. The house trailer and a small pine tree stand as bookends of the composition, while the center is occupied by the rear view mirror of the old truck and the taxidermied head of a buck jutting off the edge of the house trailer. The scene might be familiar to many, but hardly evokes the feelings of comfort or security Tuan ascribes to his theory of familiar *place*. Lee's photograph seems to question the concept of *place*, highlighting this set of domestic life that seems closer to a forgotten industrial park. Lee can't place it as part of the everyday or contemplate it as a space of freedom, seen through Lee's camera the scene is unsettling and disjunctive. Lee connects to this space as she connects to the other ruins in the *Wind* series, as empty spaces forgotten somewhere between space and time, suspended in depthless pause.

It is in relation to this depthlessness that Doreen Massey posits her theory of contemporary space. Massey works from both the foundation laid by Tuan and against Frederic Jameson's view that post-modernism erases the sense of histories. Massey interrogates Jameson's belief that post-modernism is so concerned with the synchronic nature of modern life, that it is consumed by "pseudo-experience" as opposed to modernism's single narrative. Massey argues instead that contemporary connections to space are intrinsically spatio-temporal, and explains that a synchronic understanding of modern life

doesn't exclude an acknowledgement of the simultaneity of spatio-temporal experience around the globe. She uses the metaphor of taking a slice through space to explain her conception of spatio-temporal experience. The slice is intrinsically spatio-temporal, capturing "a simultaneity of stories; that sense of 'right now. *Right now* there is someone growing manges-tout for your table; *right now* there is chaos on the streets of Baghdad; *right now* it is just about noon on the West Coast of the Americas (while it is already evening here in London.)"² Massey observes that each slice is the product of interrelations, multiplicity, contemporaneous plurality, underscoring the fact that distinct trajectories coexist. In short, she argues that "If movement is reality itself then what we think of as space is cut through all those trajectories; a simultaneity of unfinished stories. Space has time/times within it."³ Massey's theory of space also acknowledges representational space. She cites the observations of both Henri Bergson in *Matter and Memory* and the remarks of Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, asserting that, "it is not space that takes the life out of time, but representation. The real trouble is that the old equation of representation with spatialization has taken the life out of space" or in de Certeau's words the path is substituted for the journey.⁴ Jungjin Lee's representations of the desert reach beyond the boundaries Massey ascribes to represented space to connect to a temporal experience that is alive and exposes the simultaneity of multiple experiential trajectories. In *Wind 07-66*, Lee photographs the slope of a mountain with a circular mirror in the center foreground.

² Doreen Massey, "Some Times of Space." in *Time: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Amelia Groom (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2013), 118.

³ Massey, "Some Times of Space," in *Time*, 119.

⁴ Ibid.



Figure 16: Jungjin Lee, *Wind 07-66*

The photograph's combination of these two seemingly incongruous elements, the permanence embodied by the mountains and the transitoriness evoked by fleeting reflections, give the piece the initial impression of a surrealist collage. The mountain's slope is modulated, its ravens and intermediate peaks are suggested with shading. The details are washed out in all except for the very foreground where grasses and brush are still visible. In the muted outlines of the slope the brush strokes of emulsion are also visible. In contrast, the white reflective disk at the center of the composition has far more detail. The silhouetted wild grasses are individually visible at the base of the glowing orb. The mechanism of the orb is also visible, its border and a part of the stand that allows it to reflect the sun's rays is visible against the dark slope of the mountain.

In *Wind 07-66*, Lee positions the mirror in the foreground, almost at the very center of the composition. While the mountainscape retreats into the background, the mirror reflects the beams of light back into the atmosphere. While we don't know what the function

of this orb is we can tell that it connects to something beyond the landscape. It exists in the desolate and majestic landscape of the desert, yet it is also part of other scenes evoking a simultaneous sense of absence and presence. On a spiritual level this form alludes to the Zen Buddhist *ensō* (circle) that symbolically evokes the concepts of enlightenment, the universe and the void. Simultaneously the light the orb reflects also pulls this lonely location into a network of more or less visible signals, making one ponder the medium of satellite communication. Lee's photographs bring to mind Massey's assertion that: "The space of many trajectories, the simultaneity of stories so far, is also the product of those connections."⁵ The contemporaneous plurality is also evident at the level of the accumulation of traces of multiple stages in the photographic process. Besides the index of the image, we see the marks of Lee's brush as she sensitized the paper and unsensitized fibers of the paper. The reflective surface in the foreground projects the sun's rays out of the composition, encouraging the viewer to be simultaneously aware of the modern world the mirror is part of and the timelessness of the mountain. This connection to different notions of time can also be noted in other images of the *Wind* series. The forces of wind, rain, snow and water that animate these photos, also connects these scenes to global interconnections between weather patterns. The view of a storm that Lee captures in a specific spatio-temporal context is intertwined with other weather fronts unfolding across the globe. As Massey imagines the abstracted notion of all the *right nows* in the world, Lee struggles to capture her own *right now*. Rather than creating a depthless right now, Lee's photographs capture the subtle interplay of time, space and experience, suggesting that this specific moment is in total flux, a point she further accentuates by manipulating the final representation to a point where it can no longer be tied to a specific location.

⁵ Liz Wells, "Some Times of Space" in *Time*, 121.

Multi-Layered Experience of Space and Time

In Lee's *oeuvre* the *Wind* series can be seen as a culmination of her extended documentation of the desert. She initially felt that this foreign land was shockingly different from anything that she has ever seen or experienced. In a relationship that spans over two decades, Lee's experience has shifted from shock to calm openness to a land that appears to be more and more an extension of herself. She is keenly aware of mining her personal evolving relationship with the desert to acquire more insight into the connections between the individual and the universal. This continued exploration is seen in Lee's initial series of desert landscapes. Lee titled her first encounters with the American desert simply *The American Desert* (1990-94) and *Desert* (1990-94). Both of these series present views of the desert in crisp focus with distinct boundaries. The views are all black and white and capture the desert's harsh light and quiet seclusion in scenes that focus on the natural wonders and awe inspiring vistas of majestic landscapes. During the same period, Lee created the series *Self Portrait: American Desert III* (1992-93), acknowledging in this title her progressive attachment to the desert as a place of self-reflection and introspection. In these works, Lee points out that she no longer comes to the desert as a visitor but begins to see herself as part of the fleeting views into the land. In the seclusion of the space Lee is able to be so immersed in the present moment that she no longer feels the boundary between the land, her emotional identity and the core of her being.

In *Wind* (2004-07), Lee continues her personal quest, yet this series also marks a departure from her previous explorations. Gone is the photographic precision which is replaced by diffuse views into the land that are abstracted by wind, thunderstorms and Lee's own emotional turbulence. *Wind* reflects not only the pristine landscapes, but also the land as part of the lives of the people who make or made it their home. Through images of ruins,

abandoned detritus and neglected homesteads, Lee acknowledges that even these majestic landscapes exist as part of Massey’s “contemporaneous plurality.” If the *Wind* series is the culmination, as yet, of Lee’s experience with the American desert, then what is the significance of the final images included in the *Wind* exhibition catalog?

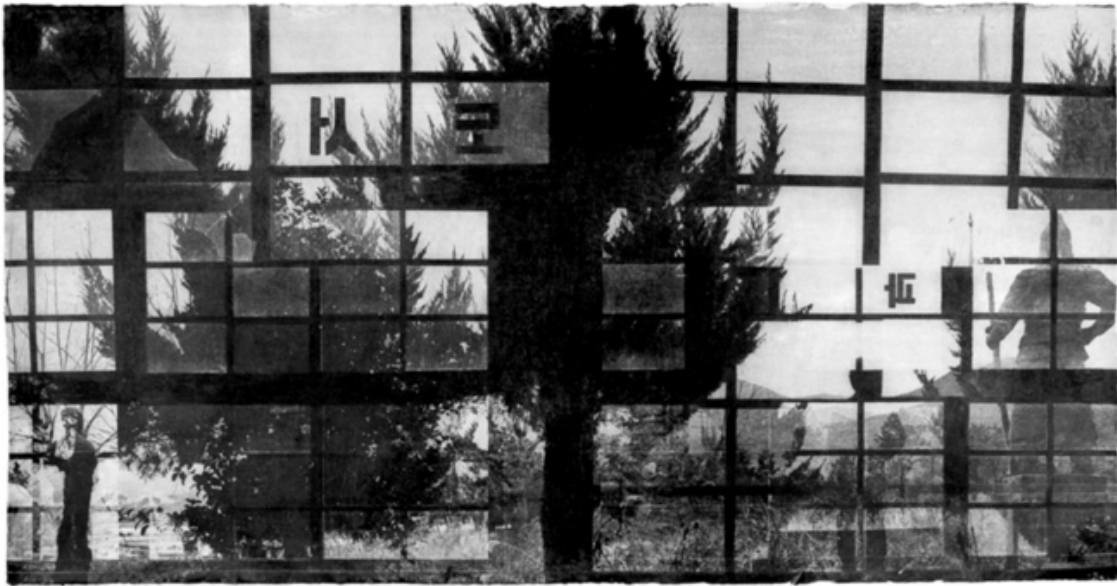


Figure 17: Jungjin Lee, *Wind 07-67*

Wind 07-67 stands out from the rest of the images in the *Wind* series given its distinct subject matter, unique construction and vantage point. In this image, Lee creates a palimpsestic landscape which intertwines many of the concepts that Lee examines throughout the series. This composition sharply departs from the spare and meditative aesthetics of the rest of the works in the series. In contrast, *Wind 07-67* is complex, dense, fragmented and incongruous. In *Wind 07-67*, elements of symbolic importance, e.g. trees, mountains, frames, found in the rest of the *Wind* series are present but this image also features new elements like the Korean script and the reflections of two individuals. While the prominence of the trees, the black and white contrast and the technique of image

transfer tie the piece visually to the *Wind* series, the disjunctive synthesis of fragmentary views and incongruous components is new.

Wind 07-67 is the only photograph in this series for which Lee used a visible multiple exposure. While the composition appears to include collaged elements there are at least three different exposures that Lee uses to create the primary framework of the composition. The first exposure which offers the foundation layer is the landscape. Hazy and diffuse, this layer includes sloping hills, a cloudless sky and an indistinct view of straggly brush and desert grasses. In this layer, there are four full or partial pine trees that anticipate and interact with the second layer. At the level of the second exposure, the frames of a glass wall superimpose a grid onto the landscape. This second layer seems to include the reflection of a human silhouette on the right. The grid functions as a transparent interface that connects the background and the third layer of composite elements. In the third layer, a large section of grid and the reflection of a second individual are superimposed on the composition. The fragmented Korean script, positioned inside several window frames, and the statue of General Yi Sun-shin on the right hand side of the composition are also part of this exposure. The layers of this composite image are blended with the background trees, bleeding through transparent sections of the latticework frames.

By combining these exposures, Lee connects the distinct themes that she explores throughout the *Wind* series to point in a more explicit manner to the entanglement of material entities and ongoing physical phenomena. Throughout the series, Lee's presence as a photographer is implicit. Her hand can be seen in her application of emulsion on the surface of the handmade mulberry paper and her presence in the landscape allows the viewer to connect with the spaces vicariously, but in *Wind 07-67* Lee actually includes three figures, two figures who appear to be gazing out of windows and the statue of General Sun-shin. By

relating to these figures, the viewer experiences this composition differently entering into an empathic relationship with the observers of the land visible in the photograph. By including the sculpture of General Yi Sun-shin, Lee introduces the only easily identifiable figure that offers a cue to a specific location. While the rest of the landscapes in *Wind* are so abstracted that the viewer isn't able to place them in a clear geo-location it is quite well-known that the sculpture of General Yi Sun-shin stands in central Seoul. Nonetheless, replicas of it can also be found in many Korean K-12 schoolyards, an aspect that once again casts doubt on the actual context of the photographic index. Placement in a Korean high school might be further implied by the Korean text that Lee includes in the third layer of this composition. The text on the upper left hand side of the composition is a mirror image of the Korean word "book," while the text on the right hand side of the composition appears to be an unidentifiable fragment of another term.

General Yi Sun-shin was a sixteenth century naval admiral whose undefeated military record and bravery in Korea's struggle against Japan gained him the status of national hero. Throughout the *Wind* series, Lee uses symbols that represent Korean ideals and values. The pine trees, the cranes and the mountains function simultaneously as part of the landscape and metaphors. The sculpture of General Yi Sun-shin is firmly grounded in Korea's historical and cultural milieu. The sculpture's inclusion in *Wind 07-67* counters the personal and subjective interpretations that other photographs in *Wind* allow, adding a specific historic and cultural narrative to the composition. Its inclusion heightens the disjunctive nature of the composition, alluding to a compartmentalized dream with memories and visions fading in and out of focus. While other images in the *Wind* series imply Massey's assertion that space exists "...as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of

multiplicity....”⁶ in *Wind 07-67* time, culture and identity explicitly fuse into a disjunctive yet holistic reality. The sharp distinctions between the human body, the natural world, the built environment and the realm of cultural values dissolve into a single picture that both acknowledges and denies the individuality of these distinct elements.



Figure 18: Jungjin Lee, *Wind 07-110*

Concluding Remarks

Out of the complex interplay between these disjoined elements, Lee chooses the current final image in the *Wind* monograph, *Wind 07-110*. A barren, almost lunar landscape of snow-covered hills and an equally still sky infuse the composition with subtlety. In *Wind 07-110*, Lee presents the viewer with a pristine void which seems to suggest a sense of oneness as all things are covered by a blanket of snow. The stillness of this scene absorbs the distinctions usually associated with identity, culture and time. The snow-covered hill

⁶ Doreen B. Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005), 10.

collapses these facets of Lee's work into a universal moment that is as fragile and transient as the sky illuminated with lightning or transformed by gushing wind.

The landscapes of the desert are so much in flux that Lee is able to use them as a conduit between herself and the uncertainty that she finds in contemplation of universal questions of identity, spirituality and time. While Lee engages these themes throughout her practice, in the *Wind* series she is able to express these abstracted concepts by merging her subjective mood with the physicality of the desert. She does this when taking the photo, making the mulberry paper, applying emulsion and digitally manipulating the image so that it reflects her experience in the land. The resulting images convey a meditative exploration of the unknown and a personal transient moment of oneness. By beginning her journey with the landscape, Lee is able to immediately connect to viewers at the visceral and the psychic levels. Lee's landscapes dissolve boundaries separating the physical environment and the unseen which manifest in questions of identity, spirituality and dislocation. In the *Wind* series, Lee acknowledges that the unseen is as vast as the desert and filled with a simultaneity of global spatio-temporal moments.

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