

PRESS KIT



61st Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Forum

2011 Berlin International Film Festival Forum selection

청계천메들리

CHEONGGYECHEON MEDLEY

A Dream of Iron

A Film by Kelvin Kyung Kun Park
박경근 작품

2010 Pusan International Film Festival Wide Angle competition selection
2010 Seoul Independent Film Festival Invitation selection

Running Time: 79min
Screening format Digital Betacam, 6mm DV STEREO Aspect Ratio 4:3 Korean Color, B&W

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Comments

The existential and the industrial meet head-on in experimental docu "cheonggyecheon medley". First-time helmer kelvin kyung kun park has forged an arresting essay on the intersection between personal and national identity.

-RICHARD KUIPCAS | film critic 

I would like to just further stress the importance of the film in the context of Korean documentary and beyond. It is indeed a radically more creative and formally daring film than what we are generally used to see in Korean documentary - where too often, as in other Asian contexts, the subject matter and its relevance exhaust the interest of too many documentaries. Beyond its strictly artistic quality, the film presents also a (not necessarily too) oblique political statement, as it delves into the historical identity of a Seoul neighborhood whose urbanistic reconfiguration played a great part in the wider scheme of national politics in Korea.

-PAOLO BERTOLIN | programmer, Venice International Film Festival 

This artistic portrayal could be the new experiment of Korean documentary form.

-HONG HYO-SOOK | programmer, Pusan International Film Festival 

The documentary as industrial machine music, preserving the heavy metal rituals of blue collar machinists before the future swallow them whole.

-GADY HENDRIX | film critic & co-director, New York Asian Film Festival

Tactical documentary, documenting the passage of all senses.

-SHIN JI WOONG | art critic power blogger, A Nomad of the Present 

Interesting narrative led by the perspective of the "Iron" poetic, dark yet fresh...

-SONG IL GON | Director, FEATHERS IN THE WIND

Comments

OhmyNews

"cheonggyecheon medley"... is completely different from any Korean documentary films... Abstract images and unforgettable sound dominate the entire film.

-JE SANGMIN | film critic/editor of moviejoy.com



The film is about the death of Cheonggyecheon which has been a symbolic place of our harsh, but heart-warming lives. We stand in awe at the metallic sound which becomes an ancestral ritual music just as we feel the weight of painful history of individuals.

-LEE CHOONG JIK | film critic, PIFF official daily cine21

movieweek

Park uses his nightmares as the nourishment to approach the unconscious of modern history.

-NA WONJUNG | reporter

Scoul Art Guide

"Cheonggyecheon medley" transmits the fatigue of our civilization and people through our senses, the dizzy spinning of milling machines, the burning heat of blast furnace, and the piercing sound of a metallic hammer.

-KIM BAIKGYUN | art critic/ professor of Korean painting at JoongAng University

Synopsis

The narrator writes a letter to the ghost of his grandfather

wondering if his recurring childhood nightmare of rusted metallic images is related to the family history. After running a scrap metal factory in Tokyo during World War II, his grandfather ended up in Seoul's Cheonggyecheon district where small-scale run-down metal workshops still exist amidst the gentrifying city. Drawing clues from fragments of dreams and myths relating to metal, the film reveals the secret alchemy of third world modernity in Cheonggyecheon where this nearly-obsolete hand labor still survives. The film attempts to reveal how we shape the metal through techniques such as sand casting and milling machines, only to find out that metals have already processed us into beings of industrialization instead.

About Cheonggyecheon

Cheonggyecheon is a small industrial area in the city of Seoul where small metal workshops are located.

Cheonggyecheon had played a key role in the industrialization of South Korea from the remnants of colonialism and war.

Following the liberation from Japanese rule in 1945, many industrial complexes became abandoned, resulting in the overflow of machine parts in the market. In Cheonggyecheon, street vendors who laid the foundation for independent workshops sold these machine parts. The aftermath of the Korean War filled the streets with abandoned military goods and scrap metals were traded rigorously during the 50's post-war recovery. In the 60's Vietnam War veterans brought many machines into Cheonggyecheon, initiating small-scale production and what's now considered "copy" production unique to the economies of developing nations. In the past five years, the business on Cheonggyecheon has declined as the surrounding neighborhood is in the process of renovation and gentrification, as part of a beautification initiative of the Seoul Metropolitan Government.





Introduction to Cheonggyecheon Medley Project

CHEONGGYEcheon MEDLEY PROJECT is a multi-media project that includes a documentary film and a 5 channel video installation. The film premiered at the wide angle documentary competition of the 15th Annual Pusan International Film Festival, and the video installation was unveiled in September 2010 at Seoul's Ilmin Museum of Art. The film is slated to be screened in the forum selection of the 61st Berlin International Film Festival.

CHEONGGYEcheon MEDLEY is an experimental documentary film about iron and the people who shape and are shaped by it. Through a letter written to the ghost of his grandfather, the filmmaker questions whether his nightmare about the iron is not only genetically related to his grandfather's life as the owner of a scrap metal factory in Japan during the colonial period, but also to the collective experience of a generation living through the storm of modern Korean history, and under the national ideology which considers steel as the rice of economic growth.

The Cheonggyecheon district, which once laid the foundation for present-day conglomerates like Hyundai and Samsung, is revealed through the unstable narrator's encounters with the workers in metal workshops. Although the personal and the collective worlds engage each other, the film reveals the incongruities of these two realms by showing us how the filmmaker encounters Cheonggyecheon. The film portrays Cheonggyecheon as a reality that traverses allegorical meanings that cannot be restored in historical structures. The film reveals a point in time that transcends



historical structures through psychologically aligning the personal to the whole of metallic civilization itself. Through capturing the rhythm of machines and the dance-like movements of metal workers, **CHEONGGYEcheon MEDLEY** attempts to create a ritual of healing from the trauma of the new iron age called modernity.

CHEONGGYEcheon MEDLEY represents a qualitative leap of innovation for Korean documentaries. While it formalistically deconstructs the general concept of documentary, the film suggests a new direction of creativity for the Korean documentary genre. **CHEONGGYEcheon MEDLEY** is a first feature documentary from Kelvin Kyung Kun Park, whose interdisciplinary oeuvre spans drawings, sculpture, film and media art. The film has received critical acclaim from Variety, Movie Week, Seoul Art Guide Magazine and Monthly Art Magazine.



Director's Statement

The impact of modernity is as traumatic as it is impressive in South Korea

where the shift from an agricultural culture to the industrial and information age unfolded in less than one generation. When I try to make sense of my personal life, my relations with family and people around me, I cannot avoid questioning the collective experience of my parents and grandparent's generation because they have lived through such a drastic change.

The industrialization of Korea forced upon by colonial powers gave no room for subjectivity and no time for contemplation of aesthetics. The reason why us Koreans are so obsessed with technology now is perhaps to compensate for the lack of subjectivity in technological development before. Modernity encroached upon us in such a tormenting manner that we could not even imagine a reflexive consciousness for examining its side effects. The shock has numbed our bodily senses, our only tool for those examinations. Thus the failure to produce our own image of modernity is the cause and effect of why us Koreans cannot overcome modernity.

The iron found in Cheonggyecheon metal workshops is a crucial element for sustaining modern life but since it has become a peripheral prop of our daily lives,

iron has become our unconscious.

The film searches for the inevitable entanglement between the narrator and the metal workshops in the realm of the unconscious, the dream. The dream image draws its clues from the collective mental system rather than the individual experience. What seems to be a personal nightmare is actually the image of the trauma of the collective unconsciousness. Extracting rhythm from the image of metal workers liberates the repressed unconscious into conscious art and music, creating a ritual of healing from the anguish of modernity.



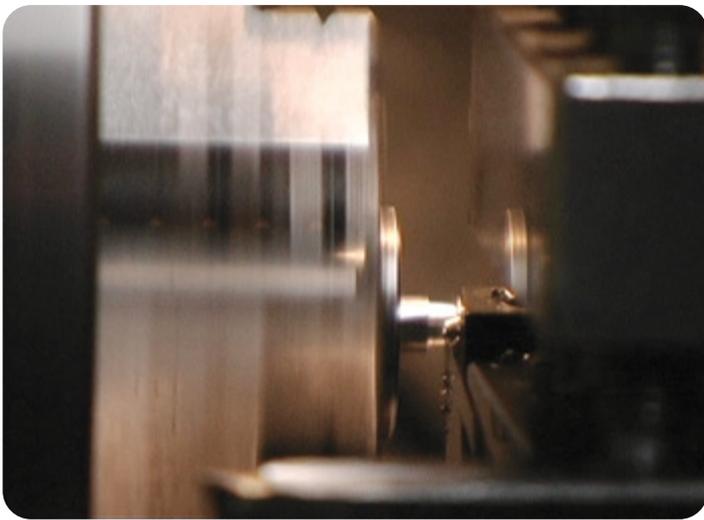
Kelvin Kyung Kun Park

filmmaker/artist

KELVIN KYUNG KUN PARK was born in seoul, south korea in 1978 and was educated in the united states. He earned his BA in design & media arts from the university of california, los angeles and holds a MFA in film and video from the california institute of the arts. His works have been shown in various film and art venues, including the pusan international film festival, seoul independent film festival, LA freewaves, dusseldorf contemporary, walker art center and rencontres international paris/madrid/berlin. He is currently based in seoul where he runs a multidisciplinary studio named flying studio.

Production Note

in collaboration with the artist group flying city since 2005, kelvin kyung kun park has been interested in addressing the development of korean modernity, but his attempts to express his interest inevitably created more questions than answers. he had to postpone his investigation in order to fulfill the mandatory two years of service with the korean military. he completed his service in 2008 and rejoined flying city just in time for 'iron cloud', a public art project in cheonggyecheon. park collaborated in research and conceptualizing the art project and created graphic works for 'iron cloud', which inspired him to embark on the multi-media project, 'cheonggyecheon medley'.



in my work with flying city,

I was concerned with developing a visual language of machine aesthetics in the local Korean context.

The first tier industrial technology such as metal casting and milling machines were imported from the west via Japanese and the Americans, but the uniqueness of the workshops in Cheonggyecheon was that their livelihood existed in an almost pre-modern production system that is community-based, relying on a loose network of shops and personal relationships. For instance, one sand casting shop would refer its client to his friend who ran a molding shop, who then would refer the client to a milling shop so that the client could develop his final product. To a curious outsider like me, this appeared to be a form of post-Fordian, post-modern production system that encourages small-scale production with customizable variables. However, working in Cheonggyecheon over the years I found out that nobody really took the initiative in systemizing or connecting this production network with the outside world. Because each shop and the whole district alike failed to produce a clear vision or awareness of who they were, they struggled to produce an identity that would take them into the post-industrial age without getting engulfed by it.

Shame is the key factor that undermines Cheonggyecheon in making a breakthrough into the future. The shop owners in Cheonggyecheon take off their work clothes when they finished work and get dressed up in a suit for their commute home. I became interested in these psychological tendencies of Cheonggyecheon, not with an intention to develop a dramatic plot, but to derive a form that would be free from those psychological limitations. What could Cheonggyecheon's metallic technology mean to us and to me as an individual and beyond? Could our obsession be our complex? And am I sensing my own complex, as a Korean, through my observations? In the editing process, I decided to incorporate my own childhood nightmare of metals into the film. This made sense to me because modernity was actually about the emergence of subjectivity, and I had to develop a subjective character to lead the narrative. The incongruity between the individual and the collective experience produces the meaning of Cheonggyecheon.



I went into cheonggyecheon thinking that I would make a sort of city symphony film like Walter Ruttmann's **BERLIN: SYMPHONY OF A GREAT CITY**, and the Brazilian film **SAUDADE DO FUTURO** by Cesar Paes, but I had neither the capacity nor the budget for such an endeavor. I was also drawn to the prints and films of Hungarian artist, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, but his works were nearly a century old and were made in Germany. Cinematically, my film was discombobulated because I hadn't seen a particular cinematic language that would satisfy me to describe the reality of cheonggyecheon. This is a symptom of Korean cinema in general lacking innovative aesthetics and it may go back to the crisis of cheonggyecheon, not being able to suggest a vision for its own future against demolition.

In order to define my cinematic aesthetics, I had to start observing Cheonggyecheon with all my senses, disregarding what was already ingrained in my mind.

One of the important revelations I had while filming in cheonggyecheon was the importance of the relationship between people and technology. Since everything in the district was relatively raw compared to my usual digitally mediated life, I was able to make better observations on how material things are made and more importantly how different techniques affect people. For example, people involved with sand casting are more gregarious and communal, always working and hanging out together in groups. The way their business is run is somewhat malleable and loose, whereas people handling milling machines are more "engineer" types, working mostly alone and precise in their relationships with clients. I wanted to film the process of how metal is shaped, but I found out that instead of workers shaping the metal, the metal was shaping the workers. The subject and the object had swapped or have become one, like how the individual and the collective contain each other. This observation became my aesthetic guideline, further liberating me from the confines of creating a documentary of a certain cinematic order.

It is easy to film the world because the lens is always pointing outward. But I discovered through this film that deep introspection must accompany the lens that points outward in order for us to make sense of the outside world that the lens captures. Because in the end, it is the filmmaker who projects meaning into the world he or she captures. Reality is much more mysterious than we can ever imagine to be because reality is always in relation to ourselves, the ultimate mystery in the universe.

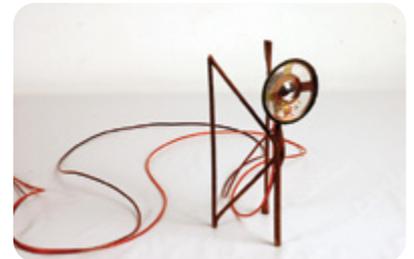
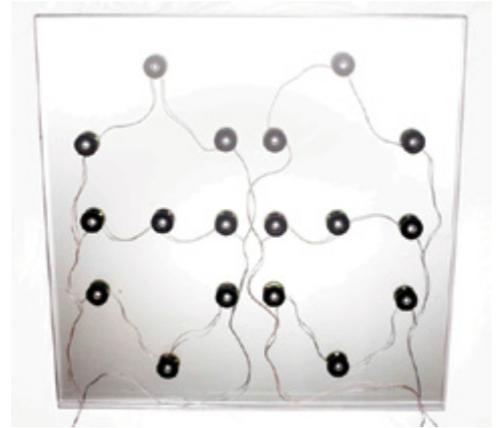
Crew



Paulo Vivacqua

Composer/ Sound Artist

Paulo Vivacqua creates site-specific sound installations and sound objects as well as collaborative projects with video and performance artists. He explores how sound can build up and influence different perceptions of both physical and imaginative space. He invites the viewer to individually experience (at times while wandering around his often large installations) this invisible yet highly narrative space of actions and emotions generated by time, sound and silence. He frequently creates matrixes of tweeters (the small treble components of speakers) employing materials ranging from everyday sounds recorded in nature and urban environments to electronically produced sounds. He lives and works in Rio, Brazil.



Crew

KIM Kyungmi Producer

producer KIM kyungmi has 10 years of combined experience in journalism, PR, marketing, film sales, financing and production. she is currently based in the us where she acts as a bridge between the american and korean film industries with the korean film production company filmmaker K&K where she produces international feature films and television projects for director KYOO seung-wan, one of korea's top contemporary filmmakers. prior to joining filmmaker K&K in 2008, KIM was with fine works and taewon entertainment. kim also serves as an advisor for the new york asian film festival(NYAFF) and programs the korean film series at tribeca cinemas presented by the korean cultural service. in 2009, she helped launch the first rising star awards, which were co-presented by the NYAFF and the hollywood reporter. her filmography includes **MARRING THE MAFIA**, **MR. BUTTERFLY**, **GOOD GIRL**, **HEARTY PAWS**, **TWO FACES OF MY GIRL FRIEND**, **BLOODY REUNION** (Tartan Palisades), **THE BUTCHER** (Tartan Palisades) and **THE PRODUCERS**(universal).



Credits

director/DP/editor kelvin kyung kun park
composer paulo vivacqua
animator cho hyeyoung
producer kim kyungmi, lee hwayoung
production company flying studio
sound mixer chang chul-ho(Lead sound)

Footage

Moving Images from Gosfilmofond

KTV

BULGASARI(1985) directed by SHIN sang-ok, DPRK

Review



Cheonggyecheon Medley (Cheonggyecheon medeulli)

(Documentary -- South Korea)

By RICHARD KUIPERS

A Flying Studio production. (International sales: Flying Studio, Seoul.) Produced, directed, written, edited by Kelvin Kyung Kun Park.

The existential and the industrial meet head-on in experimental docu "Cheonggyecheon Medley." Wrapping confessional narration about his family's history in the iron and steel business around archival footage of South Korea's rapid industrialization program of the 1960s and contempo images of metalworkers in Seoul's Cheonggyecheon district, first-time helmer Kelvin Kyung Kun Park has forged an arresting essay on the intersection between personal and national identity. Prospects outside niche broadcasters are minimal, but fests should take a look.

Linking material is provided by a voiceover letter from Park to his grandfather, a merchant who owned a factory during Japan's colonial occupation of Korea. Describing nightmares in which "my blood tastes like iron," Park wonders whether he is afflicted by a "genetic imprint" linked not only to his bloodline but to South Korea's accelerated modernization during strongman Park Chung-hee's regime. A fascinating thesis emerges via footage of workers operating machines in robotic unison, and interviews with employees in workshops in Cheonggyecheon, a recently redeveloped area where factories symbolizing the new South Korea once stood. Trippy montages and an elaborate soundscape by composer Paulo Vivacqua stand out in a pro tech package.

Camera (color/B&W, DV), Park; music, Paulo Vivacqua. Reviewed at Pusan Film Festival (Wide Angle), Oct. 14, 2010. Running time: 79 MIN. (Korean dialogue)

철강의 꿈

CHEONGGYEcheon
MEDLEY
A Dream of Iron

박경근 작품
A FILM BY
KELVIN KYUNG KUN PARK