

Practice of Theatre—Rehearsal of Life

Lee Kyung-Sung

I would like to begin by introducing myself a little bit and also by introducing my personal connection to the Central Academy. My name is Kyung-Sung Lee, I am from Korea, and I am a theatre-maker, director and founder of the Korean creative group *Creative VaQi*. Unfortunately, I cannot speak Chinese, so I have to speak in English and use an interpreter. I am very happy to be invited to this kind of big and interesting ... not conference, but space where we can exchange our experiences and thoughts regarding theatre and art. I am really happy to be part of this, and my thanks goes to Kai Tuchmann. This theatre and art connected me and Kai Tuchmann as friends, and our friendship was also initiated by just this kind of platform for exchanging experiences and thoughts on theatre and art. Very wonderful things happen in a theatre-makers life. I also have an interesting personal connection to the Central Academy.



The Dream of Sancho at the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing, Dongcheng
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When I had just graduated and founded a theatre company with my colleagues from the university, my first international tour brought me to the Central Academy. The piece was called *Dream of Sancho*, and it was based on Cervantes' novel.

We reinterpreted the text and made an outdoor performance, projecting a video on the outdoor wall of the Central Academy of Drama. I found a flyer from this time in storage, but that was a decade ago, and since then my work and aesthetic of making theatre have shifted a lot. Yet my first work did contain many creative seeds that blossomed in the future. Above all, at this time, what I needed to experience was an audience from a different culture.

Today, I will share how my company works and how I communicate with the society and culture I am from. I think the form of theatre always comes from a specific social or cultural context, because you always create a dialogue with the culture of the society you are from. I have been creating works not only in the theatre but also in the public space, outside of the theatre. Shifting my venue and platform helped me to create tension between art and life outside the theatre. I cannot go deep into each piece. But I will briefly introduce my findings and my strategy to deal with the places I was in.



Invitation 1 (2007) © Creative VaQi

Invitation was my first outdoor, site-specific creation after my graduation. When I was a student, I had two problems with the theatre I was learning from my professors. First, theatre, for me, was not powerful or real enough to capture life. The theatre on stage looked so fake to me. Even though the scene might be wonderful, you can see how it is constructed and made up from the side. To me, this was not strong enough to capture life. Secondly, as a director, I was not satisfied by con-

stantly reinterpreting the text of the writer. As a director, I wanted to be the first interpreter of the world by myself. In the fine arts, the artist sees the world and creates. But as a theatre director, you always have to read a writer's text, and then through the text, you see the world. But I wanted to encounter the world through my own eyes. So, I started to look outside of the theatre. Outside I found more real life, actual life, I would say. As a young artist who had just graduated from university, no organizations offered me a venue. I had to find venues that were free of charge.



Invitation 2 (2007) © Creative VaQi

This was a very simple performance. At a crossing, you wait while the red light is on, and you cross during the green light. I wanted to create a meeting point in the middle, where people could recognize each other, so I opened a kind of wine party in the middle. When the red light is on, the curtain is closed, so you cannot really see who is waiting on the other side. I wanted to create an expectation: who am I going to meet when the green light comes on.

While I was preparing the wine party, I lived in that area, but I had to move to a different place, which was two kilometers away. I called one small truck to carry my furniture, but the truck was a bit too small. One couch was left behind, and I had to carry it together with my friend.

At the same crossing—I remember—the light was red. Because the couch was very heavy, I and my friend had to put the sofa down and we sat on it to wait for the signal. And that was a very special moment for me, because a couch is normally associated with a private space like a living room or your house, but when this intimate object is positioned in a public space, you are sitting in this private space—this was a very poetic moment. I found this was a clash between these

two spaces. I started to think about where would be the most interesting area to put this couch and play with it, and I thought about the square, which is regarded as the most public realm in the city. At that time, there was a big debate about Gwanghwamun Square in Seoul City. The former mayor wanted to renovate the whole structure of the square: basically, the plan was to create a plaza in the middle with roads on both sides and the pedestrian walkways on the outside edges. The plan was to isolate the square in the middle of the highway. So many architects advised the mayor that if you want to make the square function, you have to connect the square with the walkways. But the mayor did not take the advice, and many people thought he wanted to prevent the people from gathering.

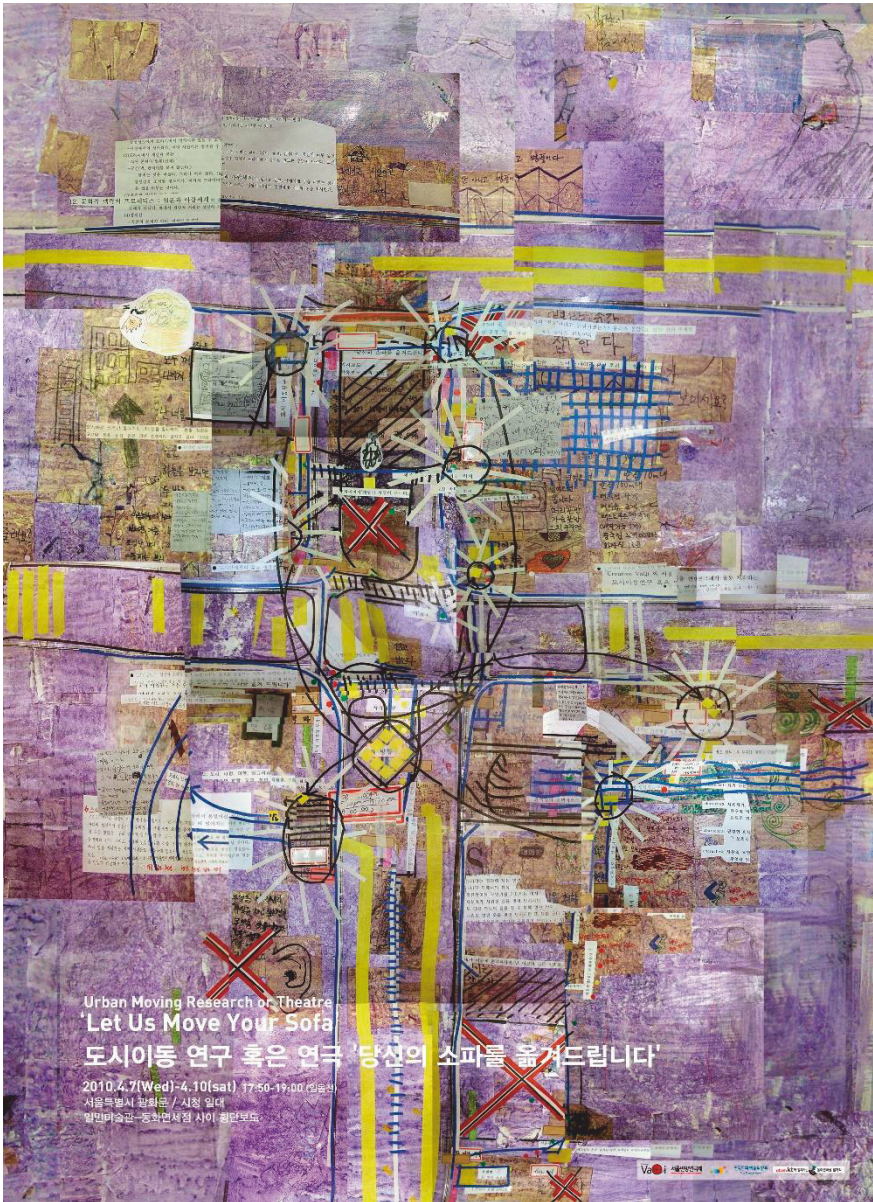
As you know, we had a massive kind of revolution, called the *Candle Revolution*, two years ago, to impeach the president. And actually, we made it work. Now we have a new president. During that time, people just walked on the highway and debated and covered all the roads.

Anyway, after the renovation, the square was transformed into a very nice looking park, but there were more than 600 surveillance cameras, and it was factually under the control of the authorities. There was only one way to exist in this public space. You could not be in the space and act autonomously—you always had to follow the public norms of behavior. Every time we tried to do something a little bit unusual, the police came and stopped us. This is a picture from our workshop.



Let Us Move Your Sofa (2010) © Creative VaQi

One thing I tried for the first time in this workshop was to answer these questions: How can we create an artwork together, not by one genius director or writer? How can we create texture and performance in a more ... I don't want to say democratic, but in a more equal way?



Map from *Let Us Move Your Sofa* (2010) © Creative VaQi

That was the first time I tried out this way of creating theatre that can be called a devised theatre. And so I invited not only actors but also an architect, and a choreographer, and a video artist. And for three months, we did a workshop and research on this area. Together, we all created a map based on our research of this space. The map was an exciting device for us to reflect on and represent the space.

We usually regard maps as a very neutral and objective way of representing the world. But actually, a map is a space onto which people project their subjective ways of representing the world.

For example, if you see the map of China from the 15th century, you can see how China has portrayed itself as the prominent center of the world and all other countries around it seem to be very small. By this, you can see how China regarded itself. For us, the square was not the green, well-established park; to us, it was more gloomy. On the map, we pointed out each spot where a performance was happening. And all those performances were happening at the same time. And out of this came the dramaturgical strategy for how we summed up the structure: We asked the audience to come to a certain point at six o'clock, gave them this map, and asked them to come back after one hour of walking. The audience could choose their own order of visit. We intended to create an individual experience in this space, not a mob or group experience. We aimed to establish an individual experience in this one way by pushing the limits of public space. But as you see, no one can experience the whole performance, because everything happens at the same time, and nobody sees the performance in the same order. So everybody will have their own experience and narrative of this performance. We called this an "open structure." But I have to say that the structure, this experiment failed in a way, because we set up an area that was too large to cover in one hour. For the audience, the area was too big to walk around. For some audiences, when they visited a place, everything was already finished. Some audiences were even just walking around the whole time and saw nothing. They came to us and complained. To them, it was not an "open structure" but a non-structure. To create an open structure, we had to be denser.

Kai forwarded me your questions that you came up with after he introduced me to your class, and one question was about the connection between internet space and public space.

Within the project *Let Us Move Your Sofa*, we created a character that we called "Shadow."

The public space was too bright, and everything was too positive—but we thought there is also negative energy and a dark side of the city. So this character observed all these dark sides of the city. She wandered around this very polished city.



Making “Shadow” during the process of making *Let Us Move Your Sofa* (2010)
© Creative VaQi

2010 was the year Korean people started to use smartphones, and all the people took photos of this character and put them on the internet. This character was the top news on several websites. The actress who played her was very shocked and surprised about this. That was not our intention. We didn’t expect these kinds of things to happen. We didn’t expect that this wide use of smartphones would influence our performance. Before our project, we asked the most significant media outlet in Korea if we could use the billboard at their building, but it was too expensive for us. But when the character of the shadow became a huge internet phenomenon, they used the same billboard to display news about our performance for free. That was a very ironic moment. Through this performance, we realized that although it looks “nice” in our public space, there are a lot of invisible restrictions. The performance can make these restrictions visible.

The next piece: After doing this big project in the public realm, I wanted to find out how we can bring the world outside the theatre to the stage. What kind of tension, what sort of aesthetic, what kind of strategy had to be found to do this? One day I read an article in the newspaper about a teenager that had murdered his parents to receive compensation money from the parents’ insurance. The shocking point was that the teenager said he wanted to use the compensation money to buy himself a good car and a good house on the south side of the Han river. Maybe some of you know that Seoul is divided by the Han river, and the south side is called Gangnam and is relatively rich while Gangbuk, the north side,

is economically poor. In this sense, the social structure in Seoul is very polarized. He was from a very poor area. This murder is about personal corruption, but we found it related to our social structure and could be considered as a symptom. Through the performance in the theatre, we aimed to make a connection to this murderer. Am I connected to the murderer? We felt connected to this tragedy. I wanted to make this connection visible on stage. So for our research period, our whole company visited the neighborhood where the murder happened, and we met the families, the friends of the teenager, and the policemen who arrested the murderer. We wanted to see what was happening in Gangbuk. We wanted to find out why a boy would do something like this. There are some interesting things that we found out during our visit. First, that neighborhood, even though it was economically poor, was still a very warm community. It was not like Gangnam, where everything is cold, and people just go for the money. Maybe in Chinese culture you also have this: In front of a house, we used to have a table where you sit together, eat together, talk together—like a meeting point. Seoul also used to have this but it all disappeared. But in this neighborhood, I still found a lot of these meeting points. But Korean society does not appreciate these values. We regard a town that allows such gatherings as underdeveloped. And the teenager who killed his parents had this habit of despising his own neighborhood. Additionally, this area was suffering from gentrification. The whole environment surrounding the teenager influenced his values and perspective on life. After the research period, we tried to transform our process and findings into a form of performance. We took a video the a subway. Geographically, it is an interesting thing: If you take the subway in this impoverished area and go just one station and cross one bridge, you already are in Gangnam. By this one bridge, you enter a very different world, and we were playing with this reality.

The actresses are like flight attendants in the airplane who give you tips on behaving in the different world after crossing the bridge: “Welcome to Gangnam/ You have to be reminded/The gravity here is different/You will be floating/ Please hold your credit cards/A kind of ghost appears/You have to take care of yourself in this area/At Gangnam station there are a lot of luxury shops.”

When we were preparing this performance we were very poor, we didn’t have much money. But during the rehearsal, one big advertising agency called me. Do you remember the performance that I did at the road crossing? This advertising agency asked me: “Can you create an advertisement using the crossroad concept advertising our pizza?” They would give us triple the amount of money we had during this time. I brought this issue to our team and asked them: “What do you think? Shall we do it or not?” Half of the company said: “Of course, let us take the money, we can spend it on our process and put it in our theatre”; the other half said: “Our initial goal, why we did the performance, was to create a meeting point, an encounter of strangers, and advertising a pizza does not make any sense to us and betrays our ideas.” And me, I thought we could do it: “Let’s get some money!” That was my opinion. But in the end, we decided not to do it. Discussing this question raised a lot of issues connected to the topic of our work.



The History of Gangnam, Spec-Tackle Epic of Ours (2011) © Creative VaQi

In order to confront an issue and to make something out of it, it is essential to be there, at the site, and to spend time there, so we try to visit and see what it is really like at a place—and in a way, this relates to an ethical perspective I will talk about later. To make a performance out of a social theme, I think the ethical issue is fundamental—and one way to approach it is to visit the place where it happened.

In 2014, I came back to the square again. A festival asked me to do an opening performance, and I decided to do something at the square where I had done *Let Us Move Your Sofa* four years ago. But now, four years later, that public space, Gwanghwamun Square, was totally changed. In 2010, Gwanghwamun Square was a very ordinary space, where people go to work or spend time after work. But on the 16th of April 2014, as some of you might know, a big ferry named Sewol sank. Most of the 300 dead passengers were high school students going on a field trip, and they drowned there, and the whole system failed to rescue them. A huge protest started to happen, initiated by the victims' families, and Gwanghwamun Square was the central spot where they gathered. It was a challenging place. There were hundreds of photos of students who had not been found, crying families, angry people. It was hard to be in that space as a human—as a part of this community. Also, because people started to protest in that area, the authorities began to strictly enforce regulations in this public space to arrest people and stop the protest. So I had to find a different strategy compared to my work in 2010. In 2010, if you even slightly avoided following the expected behavior, you could be easily seen. But in 2014, with everyone raising their voices, to exist as artists in this place you had to approach it differently. Also, you cannot let the police arrest your performer; you have to be smart about that. I looked up the public law. Kor-

ean public law states that one-person protest is allowed. But if you are two people, protest is not allowed. There has to be a distance of 20 meters between one person and another person if you want to be acknowledged as an individual. I started to play with that public law. In the middle of the square, I set up a 25-hour, one-man performative protest. So I got not only artists but also citizens, students, protesters, housewives. Everyone back then had something to say. I gave them just one rule: please do not use any written letters or placards. I gave them this restriction because I wanted to differentiate this space from the realm of public protest. I wanted to shift our practice to the artistic realm. I didn't want them to appear like political protesters. Starting at twelve o'clock, it lasted for 24 hours. I also broadcast it on Facebook and YouTube so people in other spaces could watch it. In the last hour, all 24 people gathered at 20-metre intervals, so they would still be regarded as individuals, and they performed for one hour. After 24 hours, this last hour created a space of being together without violating public law.



25 Hours—To My Era (2014) © Seoul Marginal Theatre Festival

She is a performer. She looks at the opposite side of the square, where a lot of people are protesting. She tries to make a connection. The people behind her are hired by the authorities to disturb the protest about the ferry. This area is where our red couch was positioned. In 2017 I repeated this format as the opening performance of the Seoul Marginal Theatre Festival, which I curated.

So as I have shown you: Reality always shifts from moment to moment, and it is always influenced by what is happening in society. If we want to reflect reality and if we want to react to it, the form always has to shift. You cannot keep the same format because social reality constantly shifts. So after 2016, the whole of

society was in a very gloomy mood because of this tragic Sewol ferry incident, and I started to think about what theatre could do. What is its function? Do we have to do something now? Or do we just stay calm and wait? And we had a difficult time confronting ourselves as theatre practitioners with these incidents. We say, or we learn, that theatre is a space where we understand each other or approach humanity from diverse perspectives. Then how do we represent the pain of the other in the language of theatre performance? That was our question, and at that time, many performances were made based on the Sewol ferry disaster. That made it more difficult for me because most of the performances approached it by having characters on stage telling the story of people who lost their families in the disaster, using the strategy of identification. It was really weird to see an actor acting the pain of one of these families. It created more distance from the actual pain and even distorted it. When she [pointing to the translator] is in pain, I can consolidate her. But I cannot be her. I cannot fully understand her. She is the Other, and I am me. You can try to understand and do your best to understand her pain, but you cannot fully confront her pain. But when you see someone acting pain in a conventional mode of representation, I feel this is too naïve. It is like saying: I can understand the pain fully. So I think we have to find a different approach if we want to do something. We thought of the concept of the witness because we are living at the same time as these incidents. Somehow we are witnesses of these events in our society. As a witness, even at a crime scene, you have to speak out about what you saw or what you heard. You have to speak this out.

First, over a period of two months, we met five mothers that had lost their children in this incident. We asked about their memories and their feelings. We started to write the interviews into a script. We did not interpret it but decided to convey their words. So our role was to disseminate the stories that we heard. One actress did a ritual. She could memorize the whole 304 names that died during the disaster, and then she spoke out these names for forty minutes. In a way, it was a very long time, and it could be a boring time just standing on the stage speaking out names one by one. But through this monotony, we touched something, and the spectators started to imagine each dead person's life, how these people have disappeared from this world, and how the utterance of these people's names makes the scale of the disaster apparent. But what I want to share with you is that, when we made this performance of the Sewol disaster, about these other people's pain, we felt we could not just stay in the rehearsal room and practice theatre. Somehow we felt we needed to engage more with the actual protest. Somehow we felt a bit uncomfortable. So during the rehearsal process of three months we went out one person-protesting. Like this:



During the rehearsal process of *Talking of Her* (2016) © Creative VaQi

These are pictures of people whose bodies are still missing. That is just in front of the President's official residence. What does it mean to act? What is the difference between acting as an artist and acting as a member of a social group? I think the roles are a little bit different. At that time, we felt that acting only as artists was not enough, so we also acted in the social realm. I had an interesting debate with my mother after the premiere of the show. She is always my first audience. The morning after the show, which was called *Talking of Her*, I asked my mother how she felt about what she had seen. She said something interesting, which I did not accept at that time. She said she could see the effort to act socially to reach the pain of the others and deal with social issues. But she also said: "You spent too much energy acting in the social realm, but the energy you put into the art realm was not enough to create an interesting form." That was a very tricky point. I do not define myself as a social activist but as an artist. But: An artist that deals with social issues and an artist as a member of the society. Then, given my identity as an artist, how can I embrace social issues? We definitely felt that dealing with that issue by walking into the rehearsal room was naïve. That's why we went out and participated in the social movement. And what happened was that we spent too much emotional energy in the social realm, which was inevitable. This became a tricky question and a dilemma.

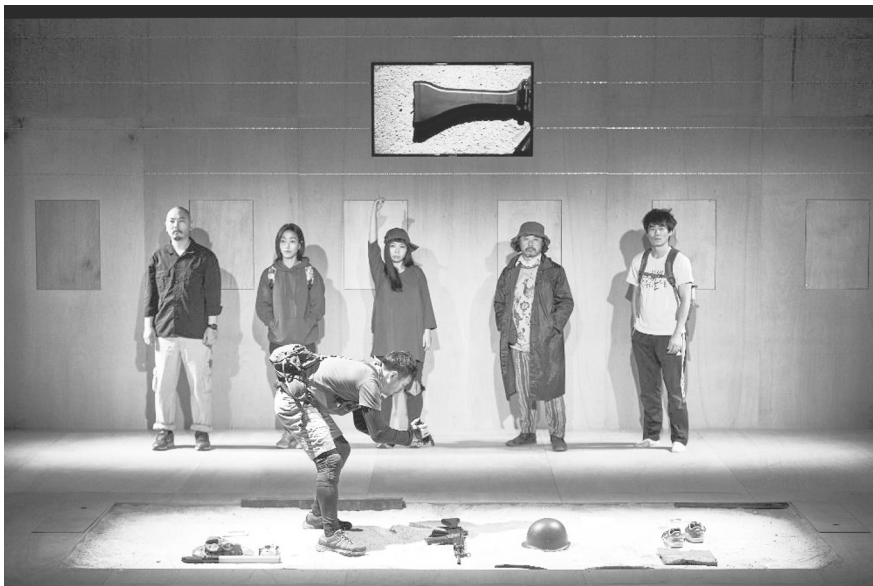
After finishing this project, after dealing with all these social issues, we started to think: Why are all these issues originating in our time? Why are they all coming out now? And tracing it back, we faced the reality of our society, which is divided into North and South. This division for more than 50 years actually created all

these social restrictions. While dealing with all the social issues, we realized that we cannot avoid this big issue: the reunification or the division of the Korean peninsula.

But this issue was too big, so I did not know where to start. As we did before, we decided to experience it physically, bodily, so we planned a very long walking trip. There is a division line from the west sea to the east sea. The whole company decided to walk along this line.

We went to the gate between North and South Korea, where President Moon and Kim Jong-un met recently. We had just seen the images in the media. But when we actually visited it, it was a completely different experience. It is facing North Korea. You can see the land over there, but physically you cannot go there. We walked from west to east, so you cannot walk to your left. That is a very strange feeling. We also met a soldier who is part of the border guard during our trip, and we interviewed him about his everyday life.

We made a theatre piece out of this experience that was supported by Doosan Art Center. It is called *Walking Holiday*. Not “working”—but “walking” holiday. In this piece, we filmed miniatures with a camera to bring the experience of our walking into the theatre.



Projecting miniatures in *Walking Holiday 1* (2017) © Doosan Art Center

We had to find a strategy to engage the audience in a dialogue about our experiences. These miniatures were also related to our experience of looking at North Korea. You always had to look far away, so North Korea always appeared small. Also in the Dora Observatory, North Korea is always displayed as something very small.



Walking-Holiday 2 (2017) © Doosan Art Center

This was an overview of my ten-year journey through reality and theatre. I think because life and reality are complex and not easy, theatre, as a form that seeks to reflect reality, should also not be too simple or neat. A lot of theatre is too beautiful. When it is too beautiful, it distorts reality. Sometimes when I meet theatre practitioners, or even some masters of this profession, I feel uncomfortable. Life is always bigger than the theatre. We are not making theatre to make good theatre. We are making theatre for many reasons, but we are trying to become good people. It is strange to say that. To make good theatre, these practitioners are always talking about and looking at the theatre. But I think we have to see life outside the theatre to make good theatre—because life is always bigger than theatre. When you are really in this industry, sometimes this relationship is missing.

As I mentioned before, I believe each society has a different context and history, and the form has to be applied differently. These days many people talk about universality. I am asking myself if it is possible to create universal content. I think our contemporary communication cannot be universal. It can only happen in a very specific context. But if you work in the art world, you see many people trying to create universal content, which you can communicate everywhere in the world. I am not saying this is impossible. But nowadays, I am asking myself, what is the universal and specificity in cultural communication? This was my talk, and now I would like to receive any thoughts or questions from your side.

XU LI (STUDENT): You mentioned that your mom did not like your art piece because she thought it was not artistic enough. My first question is, why did she think it is not artistic enough? Was she speaking in a technical sense, or how

did she mean this? My second question is about your statement that if theatre is too beautiful, it distorts reality. Do you completely reject the beauty of theatre? Or do you just don't care about this aspect at all?

LEE: These are good questions and not easy to answer. When I had the dialogue with my mother, I finally agreed with her that we did not spend enough time creating a form. We were just too simple and loose. On the stage, we were just reciting what we had written down from our interviews. For some audiences, it was not an artistic experience. This was her point, because she said we could also hear these things on the radio or TV. If audiences confront the body on stage, there should be more than the voice. You are not giving your opinion by only conveying the perspectives of others. You are just staying neutral. I love making beautiful things as an artist. But what I mean by being careful of creating beautiful images is that I try not to manipulate the audience's perception through beautiful images. That erases a lot of other contexts. For example, once I made a performance called *The Conversation*, which included an old lady who had been my nanny. In one scene, she was cleaning the theatre. As a theatre director, you always have to take care of aspects like timing and rhythm, and you try to shape a scene according to a good rhythm. But once she started cleaning the stage, she had to finish it, because this was her habit and technique of cleaning. So as a director I could not stop her and tell her: "Time is over, please just do the front floor." It must be boring for the audience. But somehow, that is more connected to her life and makes sure that it is about her reality.

GAO FENG (STUDENT): It is a very technical question. Once you have done an interview, how do you make use of it? I mean, do you just put it on stage one-to-one?

LEE: It depends on whom I interview. These days, I am working on another performance, called *Love Story*, that is based on the Kaesong industrial complex located in North Korea. Many North Koreans and South Korean workers worked there together and shared deep friendships and even love in the past decades. But now it is closed because of the political situation between North and South. So I interviewed the South Korean workers who worked there for a long time. I've got a lot of information from them. But I did not feel that I could use these interviews in the performance because they talk in such general terms—this time, I have not found a strategy for using them. I am a little bit lost.

TUCHMANN: I just want to jump in on this topic of interviews. I would be interested in how you structure your interviews. Are they open or structured? What is your method?

LEE: It depends on whom we interview. For example, when we questioned the mothers who lost their children, we needed to be more cautious. We visited their houses, where they feel more comfortable. We call them “interviews,” but they are not official interviews. We just spend time there. The mothers always got very lively when they talked about their daughters, their children. They did not use the past tense. They always spoke as if their daughters were still alive. We tried to spend time with them in their everyday space.

TUCHMANN: I remember that last semester when we had the anthropologist Matthew Gutmann in our seminar, and he said this sentence: “I do not *inter-view* people. I *talk* to people.” Is this approach characteristic of your concept of an interview?

LEE: Sometimes I think it is good to set up an official interview. It is about shifting the form of the interview. But it can be helpful in trying to approach someone’s story. After visiting the ordinary spaces, we also invited the mothers to the rehearsal room to set up a more official encounter. And here, an ethical issue comes out. How many interviews, how much research on this person makes it enough to talk about it on stage? It is always very difficult. You always have a certain amount of time to approach an issue or to meet people. And then you have to make something out of it.

It is always tricky to decide. “Ok, we met ten times and now we will make something out of it.” It is very tricky to decide how this relationship should continue after the performance as well. Once I had a chance to talk to a German theatre group, *Rimini Protokoll*. They also do a lot of work with nonprofessional actors. And I asked one of the directors, how do you maintain relationships after performances, since you are dealing with people’s lives on stage. The director said: “I don’t maintain the relationship. I’ve worked with 8000 people. It is impossible to maintain relationships. I just give them the chance to gain some distance from their lives and reflect on their lives on stage.” I felt a little bit too *kalt*¹ after listening to that. It is not a simple issue. After working with nonprofessional people, time passes, you slowly lose connection with them. A year after the performance, you call them every month. After two, three years, you start to contact them once a year. It’s challenging to maintain relationships, but somehow I feel guilty. The human relationships created through the process of making theatre leaves a complicated feeling on my mind.

LI YINAN: I saw your piece *The Conversation* live. It is about the generation gap, and it also talks about your frustration at failing to communicate with your

1 German for “cold.”

nanny. So, I am curious about her reaction to using her story and using her as an actress?

LEE: Basically, she enjoyed spending time with young people. Because in her own life, it was the first time that many people had focused on her story. She also enjoyed touring the piece around the world with us. One critic wrote about the creators who were using her in this performance, that they should have let her know in advance what interpretations and reactions would be triggered by her performance. Although she enjoyed performing on stage, she is not an expert in performance art. She does not know what her performance evokes, what kind of reactions or feelings will be produced. So the critic said the creative team should have told her about possible audience reactions. But we, as a creative team, always saw her enjoying performing, and we thought this is enough. But after reading this critic's opinion, in a way I agree, we kind of used her. Not used her, I mean, we should have informed her more about the side-effects of the performance, because she was watched as "the Other" on stage. But basically, she liked it. After telling her story on stage, she felt that something had been released inside her.

GAO YINFU (STUDENT): My question is about the 25-hour performance. Everybody seems to be protesting against different things. Did you make a decision, and if so, how, about who would participate in this performance? Also, some of the performers were interacting with people passing by. Were there limitations about how freely the performers could interact with pedestrians?

LEE: First of all I released an article about the project and asked citizens to apply. We received all kinds of applications. I did not select. It happened to be 24. I met every person one by one. For three days, I had meetings and we talked and shared the concept and issues each participant had, and then we had two workshops all together. We visited the site and got to know each other. During the performance I did not intervene or control the interaction between performers and strangers. So, I was not a director during this time, I was more like a creative producer.

TUCHMANN: On our way to the Academy this morning, you told me that reading Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* meant a lot to you, because this book provided you with a language to speak about your work. Could you tell us a little bit about the words and the concepts in this book that have been especially important to you?

LEE: When I was thinking of the *Dream of Sancho* as a very young artist who had just graduated from a very conventional theatre school, my goal was to create a very dramatic performance but without using too much text. I wanted to create a universal performative language that dealt with all kinds of aesthetic

approaches. But after this work, I was not sure about the structure of the drama, if it is the best way to capture our reality these days. I tried many different ways of making theatre, from different materials. This is how it was from the beginning of my career for three years: sometimes I made physical theatre; sometimes I made theatre based on using objects like soil or chairs; sometimes I also did theatre outside. At that time, one critic critiqued me, saying: "He does not know what he is experimenting." I remember this sentence well. At that time, I was trying to find my artistic language. I read the book *Postdramatic Theatre* in 2011. It was the English version, and through the book, I realized that what I was going through was connected to the process of art history in the 20th century. The function of pedagogy has been important, but now these concepts are changing, and new questions are emerging about how we create communication with new factors and strategies. In Lehmann's book, I found different approaches to answering this question. That theory gave me confidence because it gave me a context where I could find a form. So I could keep focusing on my experiment. But also I have to confess that it was not easy to read or to understand.