

UC San Diego

## UC San Diego News Center

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# UC San Diego Transnational Korean Studies Spotlights Diaspora with Two International Film Artists

The University of California San Diego's Program in Transnational Korean Studies will continue its Korean diaspora film series by offering audiences a rare opportunity to meet two award-winning film artists, Jane Jin Kaisen from Denmark (Feb. 9-10) and Heung-Soon Im from South Korea (Feb. 21-22). Highlighting the hidden stories of modern Korea, the series combines film, criticism and dialogue in an examination of transnational adoption, militarism, globalization and social protest. It also highlights the struggles and voices of women.

Using part of its \$600,000, five-year funding from the Academy of Korean Studies, the UC San Diego program will present Kaisen's lecture "Translations, Crossings, Specters" on Thursday, Feb. 9, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. This lecture will be followed by two of her films, "Reiterations of Dissent" and "The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger," to be screened on Friday, Feb. 10 between 1 and 4:30 p.m. Both the lecture and the films will be held in the Structural and Materials Engineering (SME) Building, Room 149. Im's lecture, "Things That Do Us Part: Belief,



Image from "The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger," Installation view: Tell Me Her Story, Coreana Museum of Art, South Korea, 2013.

Fear, Faith, Betrayal, Love, Hatred, Ghost,” will take place on Tuesday, Feb. 21, between 2 and 4 p.m. in the Seuss Room, Geisel Library. His film, “Factory Complex,” will be screened on Wednesday, Feb. 22, from 4 to 7:30 p.m., in the SME Building, Room 149.

According to Todd A. Henry, associate professor of history and director of the UC San Diego Program in Transnational Korean Studies, the film series is important because it draws attention to the little-known histories of the Korean diaspora—the result of imperialism, war, national division, capitalism, socialism and globalization.

“The films in this series explore the political, social, cultural, and the personal and psychic dimensions of individuals who have been displaced,” explained Henry. “Films about the Korean diaspora and by individuals who have experienced its dislocations are important media through which to critically reflect on traumatic historical experiences. These artistic works also shed light on larger and pressing questions of our contemporary moment, including labor exploitation, ethnic marginalization and gender discrimination.”

According to Erica Cho, assistant professor in the Department of Visual Arts, affiliated faculty in the Program for Transnational Korean Studies and filmmaker, Kaisen uses disparate histories to create a collective and personal “spiritual-remembering” about women’s experiences of war and militarism in South Korea. For example, “The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger,” co-directed with Guston Sondin-Kung, explores how past trauma is passed on generationally through a sense of being haunted. The film highlights three generations of “comfort women”—females subjected to sexual slavery by the Japanese military during the Asia-Pacific War (1937-1945). It also examines female sex-workers around U.S. military bases in South Korea from the 1950s to the present as well as South Korean women adopted by families in the West, another legacy of the Korean War.

Kaisen’s “Reiterations of Dissent” reveals the South Korean government’s repression of leftist activism and popular movements, such as the Cheju Island Uprising and Massacre of 1948. The film also exposes other forms of social protest, including mass mobilizations against Japan, South Korean government policies that marginalize their own people and opposition to the U.S. naval presence on foreign territory.



Image used to represent the "Factory Complex."

Kaisen's work will be put in dialogue with Im's "Factory Complex." A thought-provoking documentary, this film presents highly personal testimonials from South Korean female laborers. In doing so, it underscores the historically exploitative conditions of factory labor, their roles in labor movements and social protests, and how the global outsourcing of South Korean companies impacts female workers in Southeast Asia

Transnational Korean Studies at UC San Diego is unique among other programs throughout the world because of its sustained focus on the peninsula's connections to other nations, cultures and societies. According to Henry, the Korean Studies program at UC San Diego also connects campus programs, including those dedicated to other regions, such as Chinese Studies and Japanese Studies, and programs that are methodologically focused like Science Studies.

"In this way, we not only study Korea, but we also serve as a bridge among the various departments in the Division of Arts and Humanities as well as among other divisions, including but not limited to Social Sciences and the School of Global Policy and Strategy," he said. "The interdisciplinary work of Cho, Dredge Kang (anthropology), Patty Ahn (communication), and other new faculty have energized the program in recent years."

Transnational Korean Studies is among the most active of the many programs that are housed within the Institute of Arts and Humanities. In addition to the Korean diaspora film series, the program will also co-sponsor a contemporary dance event with Art Power on March 9 and host two upcoming conferences. It actively seeks new collaborations with campus partners as well as with community members in the San Diego area.

MEDIA CONTACT

Cynthia Dillon, 858-822-0142 [cdillon@ucsd.edu](mailto:cdillon@ucsd.edu)

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