



Seoul Curry

A visual travelogue of a nation where polar
opposites co-exist in harmony

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Chinmaye Aniruddha Bhave

P2 Report M. Des. 2012-14

12625 005 | Visual Communication

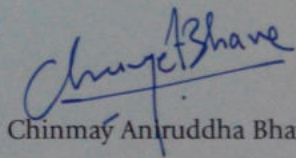
Guide : Prof. Sudesh Balan

Co-guide : Prof. Jong-Ho Park

Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay

Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all the principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/ data/ fact/ source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be a cause for disciplinary action by the institute and can also evoke penal action from sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken where needed.



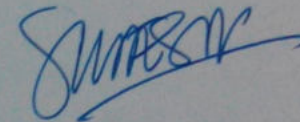
Chinmay Aniruddha Bhave

Roll no. 12625005, IDC-IIT Bombay

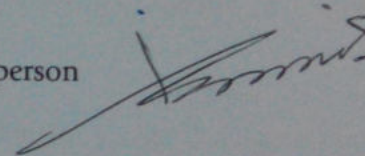
Approval

Visual communication project titled Visual travelogue on South Korea by Chinmay Aniruddha Bhawe, Roll no. 12625 0005 is approved in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Master of Design in Visual Communication at the Industrial Design Centre, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay.

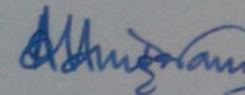
Project Guide



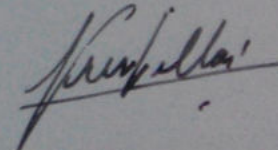
Chairperson



Internal Examiner



External Examiner



Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my guide Prof. Sudesh Balan who encouraged me to take up an international project and push myself beyond my comfort zone. Prof. Jong Ho Park ensured that I was able to understand sociocultural contexts and supported me with special sessions in English.

Prof. Ahn Sang Soo gave me several references and ideas that helped me overcome my inhibitions.

Prof. Abhijit Varde, OSU gave me invaluable inputs on the academic framework.

I would like to thank IR cells of IITB & Dongguk who made this exchange possible. My travel and stay in South Korea was partially funded by Global Korea Scholarship.



SECTION 1

Summary

“Seoul Curry is a visual travelogue on South Korea based on my photographic journeys conducted between September & December 2013. It is a photo-essay of my experiences. The fieldwork approach adopted is based on ethnographic methods. However, it is a personal story of what an Indian traveller saw in South Korea and why these experiences became a part of his story. South Korea is a vibrant nation in East Asia that has preserved its cultural core and at the same time embraced ideas from the west with ease. This project aims to explore this bi-polar harmony”

Abstract

This project was inspired by the travel accounts of ancient travellers like Marco Polo, Xuan Zhang & Ibn Battuta etc.; who traveled to new lands and wrote vivid accounts of their experiences. These travelogues became body of knowledge pertaining to the regions explored and were important exploratory ventures for the countries these travelers represented. Burton Holmes who is credited to have coined the term 'travelogue' monetized his skills by conducting travel lecture series. These travellers satiated the curiosity of their countrymen about the new cultures they visited. Today, these documents are landmark reference points in exploring cultural history of the regions these travelers explored. I intend to create a visual travelogue that presents a point-of-view account of my experiences in the land of the morning calm.

Travel writings of noted Marathi writer P. L. Deshpande are known for his deep cultural and behavioural observations. Whether he traveled within India or abroad; his writings described the cultural landscape as well as interesting personalities within these contexts. As I wanted to 'see things differently' and P. L. Deshpande was an important reference point for me.

Any comprehensive ethnographic project requires much longer fieldwork as well as familiarity with the language. These two qualities are critical to gain ethnographic authority. My project is an exploratory first step that borrows from concepts of visual anthropology in order to break the mould of structured journalistic methodology and see beyond what travel guides tell you. This would require focus on visual culture, interactions, going off the beaten track. As a designer, I would like to create a tool that can use camera as a research tool to unravel cultural insights.

I want to present my travel experiences and stories with dual temporality. While the book sums up the experience of traveling across South Korea and living there as a student; blog would be a collection of images where each experience in South Korea has its own unique position.

The book is a picture story that gives a holistic description of how South Korea was like for me. On the other hand the blog viewer can enjoy each image separately as work of art/ design. It allows the photographer in me to present stories of journeys within the journey.

I have explored the duality in photo-word relationship as well. In the book form, my notes support my images to say precisely what I want to say, to elaborate with specificity.

In the blog, words are bare minimum and expect the viewer to interpret and react.



SECTION 2

Project Background

Inspirations

Learning Objectives

Exchange program timeline

Project mandate

Inspirations

This project was inspired by the travel accounts of ancient travellers like Marco Polo, Xuan Zhang & Ibn Battuta etc.; who traveled to new lands and wrote vivid accounts of their experiences. These travelogues became body of knowledge pertaining to the regions explored and were important exploratory ventures for the countries these travelers represented. Burton Holmes who is credited to have coined the term 'travelogue' monetized his skills by conducting travel lecture series. These travellers satiated the curiosity of their countrymen about the new cultures they visited. Today, these documents are landmark reference points in exploring cultural history of the regions these travelers explored. I intend to create a visual travelogue that presents a personal, point-of-view account of experiences in the land of the morning calm.



Xuan Zang took with him 657 Sanskrit scriptures and 1330 bundles of published writings with him. The Tang emperor of China supported him to start a centre for translation and research. It became a source for China to understand India & Asia.

Xuan Zang

I was introduced to Xuan Zang's travel writings through school history text books. I was fascinated by how he came far away without knowing anyone navigating through forests and mountains exploring the famous 'silk route'

It was interesting that an Indian historian was quoting his memoirs to re-visit the era in which he visited India. Though he came to India to gain better understanding of Buddhism; his travel writings are far more valuable in order to understand India in a qualitative manner. It gives us a different perspective since in those times history was written with focus on kings and their fortunes rather than describing lives of the common people. His route presented him with daunting challenges to surmount and he spent sixteen years away from China exploring the life in India and Central Asia. His notes are visual and transport us into India of his times.



Ibn Battuta

Ibn Battuta was a Moroccan explorer who traveled more than 1,00,000 kilometers and most of his life was spent on the road. It is interesting that his memoirs named 'Rihla' were written towards the end of his life and he relied on his memory since he had not made any travel notes. His descriptions are detailed and present a comparative picture of the lands he visited with respect to his own context.

Ibn Battuta's journeys were participatory while other noted explorers tend to comment as outsiders from foreign cultures. He describes cities, customs, relationships, gender roles, political dynamics and documents social behaviour with rich details. His reference point for comparison is his perspective of Islam. Ibn Battuta's writings are inspiring as keen observations of people, their habitats and their times.

P. L. Deshpande



His travel writings are literary works in simple language but they have profoundly rich cultural content. What inspires me about his style of travel writing is his sharp observation skills.

The most important learning from his books like Apoorvai वा (अपूरवाई), Poorvarang (पूरवारंग), Jaave Tyancha Desha (जवे त्चदेश) is how to see differently and how to narrate experiences.

A travelogue should not be merely descriptive and informative but should be experiential. Especially since avid traveling is not just about seeing tourist destinations; it is about bringing new experience alive through the narrative.

I would like my camera to follow a visual language that re-creates sensorial experiences for my readers or viewers.

Visual Narratives



PuLa's narratives of experiences, interactions as well as landscapes and sculptures are extremely visual. It is extremely challenging to be as graphic as he is even with camera or any other visual medium.

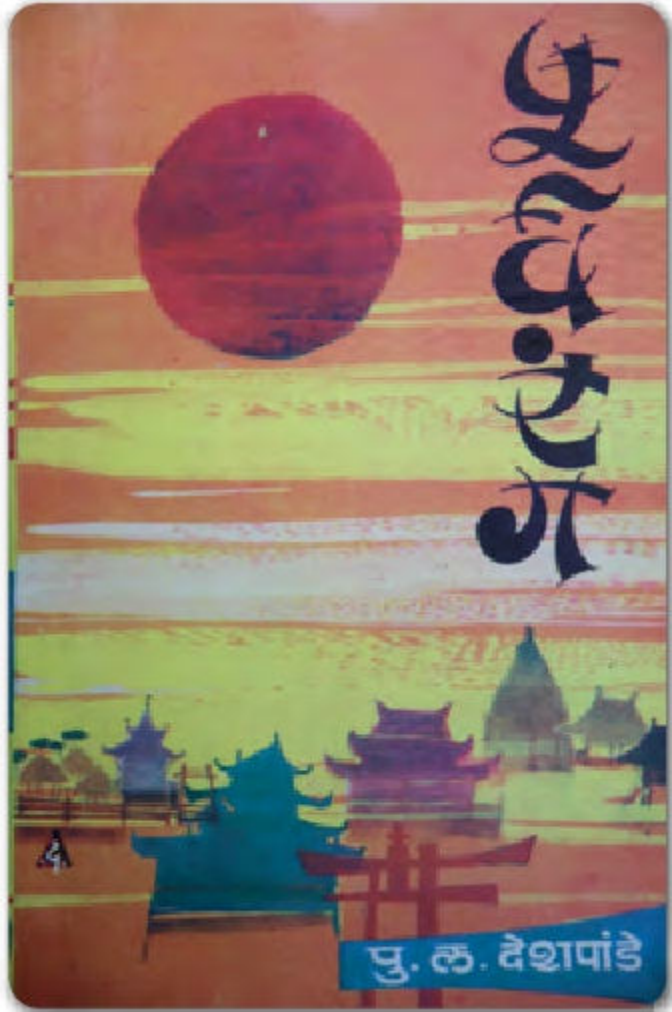
His accounts of seeing Tokyo from the aircraft was poetic; it is difficult to make such images tangible but it induced me to click glittering Shanghai in my transit flight.

He has collaborated with noted illustrator and cartoonist S.D.

Phadnis on several occasions. Phadnis has picked interesting phrases and characters from his descriptions and created engaging illustrations. A Visual travelogue should definitely have the quality of provoking other visual artists.

Ethnographic Insights

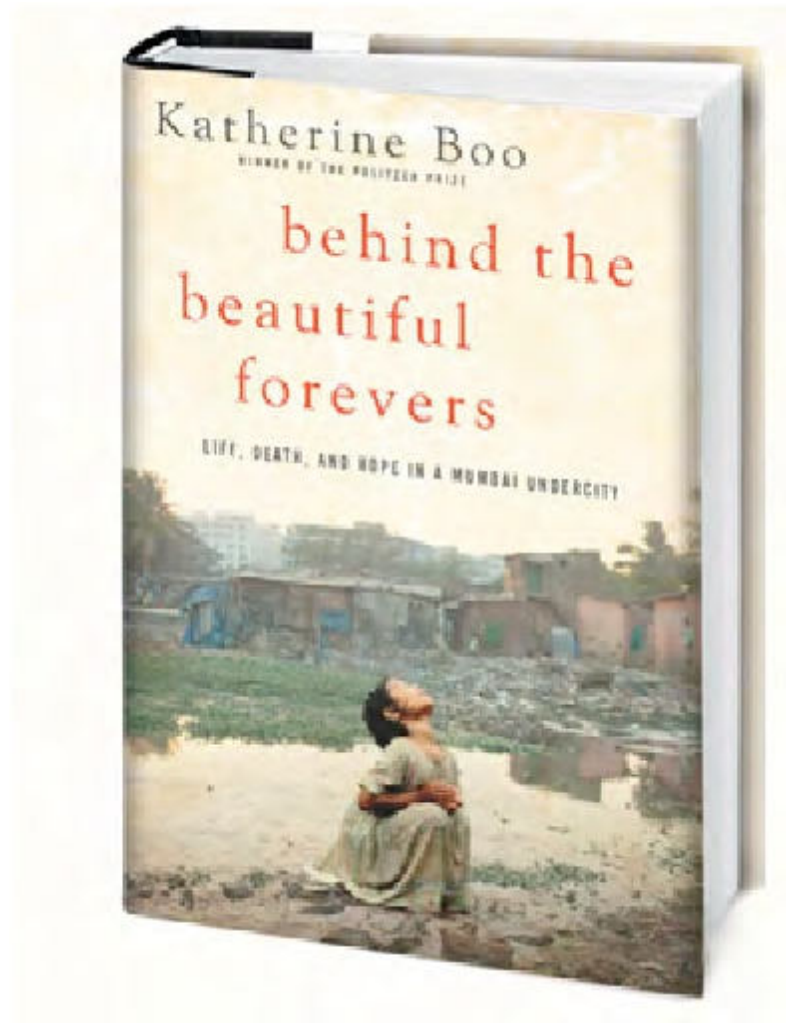
सृष्टीमध्ये बहु लोक, परभ्रमणये कळये कौतुक - समर्थ मिदास



PuLa begins his preface for Poorvrang with this line by Saint Ramdas; which means that the world is full of different people, one discovers the joy of seeing them when one travels. This is indeed the ethos of PuLa's travel writings.

Though he is a writer better known for his humour, his travel stories are full of cultural anecdotes. His appreciation of Indonesian culture and its linkage with India generated curiosity in my mind and my experiences in Indonesia validated his crisply vivid descriptions.

He brings out psychographic aspects of every experience alive in his stories and since he is looking through an Indian's lens it becomes relatable.

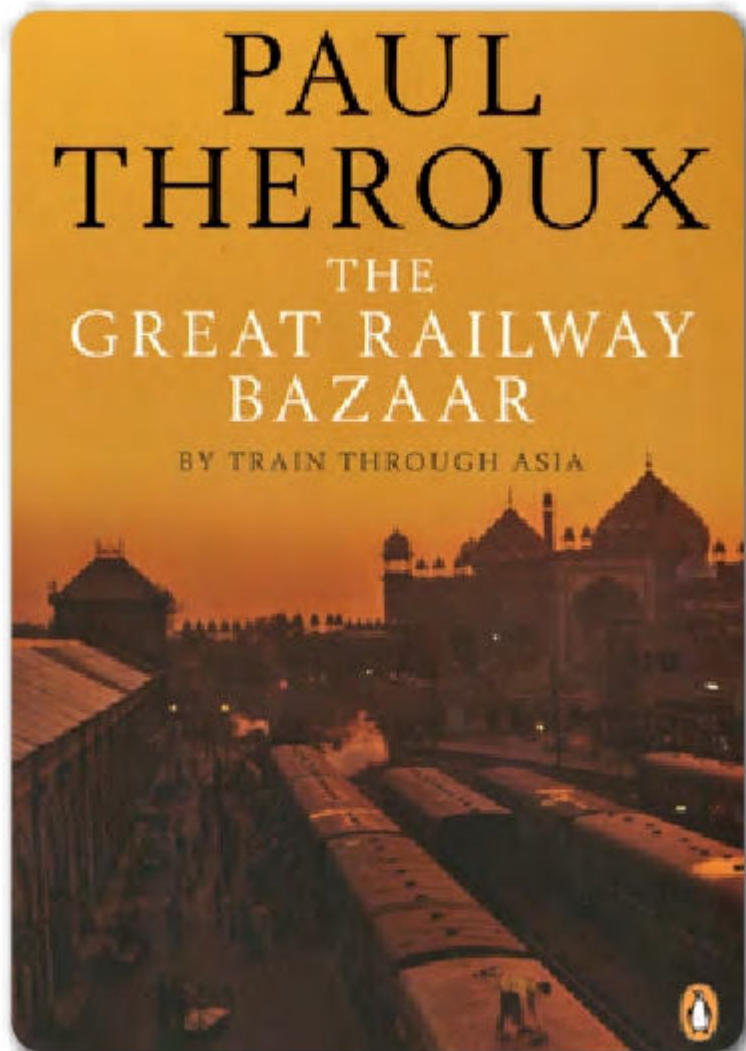


Katherine Boo

“As a writer I’m not looking to tell the most flamboyant tales, nor to describe only the most virtuous and supertalented people. I’m looking for resonant storiesstories that might illuminate something about the structure of a society.”

Katherine Boo, Pulitzer Prize Winner

Katherine Boo’s much celebrated book ‘Behind the Beautiful Forevers’ was an insightful reading for me. Though she began her professional career as a journalist; the ease with which she strikes rapport with the people of Annawadi and her vividly evocative writing style show her ethnographic authority. Her participant observations at Annawadi bring out the essence of life and social interactions through the book.



Paul Theroux

"I had two ambitions in India; one was to find a train to Ceylon the other was to have a sleeping car to myself... At Egmore station in Madras both ambitions were fulfilled.. My Ticket read Madras-Colombo fort... It is the slowest train he showed me the time-table I have been on slow trains before but this was perverse.. It seemed to stop every 5-10 minutes."

Paul Theroux, Travel Writer

Graham Greene calls this fine old tradition of purposeless travel for fun and adventure. His writings are more travel centric or journey centric but his descriptive writing has sensorial texture. Though at times he takes a very elitist view on things in the third world. But his appetite for long haul train rides is like Ibn Battuta taking re-birth.

The Backpacker

I am a traveler and not a tourist; because I travel to explore, to see and feel. That's why I move in public transport and spend nights at youth hostels. This is where I meet many other explorers like me.

Though I come from an urban middle class family in Mumbai where trips are usually planned to perfection in a white collar style; I enjoy traveling on shoestring. It is not about the money; It is about seeing the world and people differently.

I was inspired by this culture of traveling where the focus is on cultural experiences rather than shopping or luxury, where you live in a modest but clean and efficiently maintained accommodation. Most importantly, where you meet new friends every time you grab boiled eggs at the breakfast table' those who belong to your tribe.

Inspired by Asia

For someone with interest in visual culture, languages and people; Asia is a quest for lifetime. Being an Indian I am aware of cultural diversity and the prospect of traveling across Asia gives a heightened experience of socio-cultural diversity.

I am fascinated by Asia mainly due to my interest in visual culture and identity. It is intriguing to find out if there is anything uniquely Indian? Is Asia just a set of diversely different countries classified together due to geographic proximity or there is 'Asian-ness' that brings these nations together.

The whole world is today taking interest in Asia for its value systems, dynamism and growth potential. I feel exploring Asia would me understand India, Indian-ness and our development aspirations better

Learning Objectives

- To train myself to see differently; towards better cultural understanding. What does one mean by seeing differently is a bigger question that I had to tackle as a visual ethnographer.
- I want to create a Visual Story that is personal yet relatable to larger audiences in order to generate curiosity about South Korea to facilitate multi-cultural interactions
- To be able to pick insights from social behaviour and articulate those insights through a visual narrative
- Create a tool for macro understanding of culture based on visual research methods

Exchange Program timeline

I was selected as an exchange student with the School of Digital Image & Contents, Dongguk University in Seoul, Republic of Korea under the Global Korea Scholarship 2013.

During the winter semester I attended four courses totalling to 12 credits viz. Understanding Culture, Documentary Workshop, Cinematography Workshop, World Film History; prior to which I attended two courses in IDC and project fieldwork was conducted in Seoul from mid September

Travels outside Seoul were conducted on free days/ weekends and during festivals. Towards end of November snowfall set in and mobility became limited. However, I was able to cover all heritage sites and key towns in all the regions. The limitation was to manage academic work in India, South Korea along with fieldwork.

Project mandate

Being a student at IDC, IIT Bombay it is important to understand the project mandate because it is a public funded program and it is the responsibility of students like us to cater to communication gaps in our society.

I want my project to educate Indian audiences about an emerging nation like South Korea and introspect about our dreams, aspirations related to human development. It is important to understand East Asia since more often than not our comparative framework is based on the West where the cultural contexts are vastly different.

If India aspires to grow globally we need to understand the world and create a body of knowledge; which is available to our youth, academia, entrepreneurs. We should understand Asia better and the world better and it would help us understand India better.



SECTION 3

Project Outline

Macro Understanding

User Research

Literature Review

Design References

Need Space

Information Space

Project Goals

Deliverables

Macro Facts - South Korea

Area

99720 Square Km (106th in the world by size)
(comparable to West Bengal 88,752 sq. km)

Population

5,00,00,000 (5 Crores) 26th in the world
83% population lives in cities with 498 people per sq. km
density of population (India has 390/sq. km)

Macroeconomic Data

GDP 1.13 Trillion USD (1.842 Trillion USD for India)
Per Capita Income (PPP) 30890 USD (3840 UDF for India)
Literacy - 97% (74% for India)
Health Expenditure 7.2% of GDP (3.9% for India)
Education Expenditure 5.1% of GDP (3.3% for India)
Human Development Index - 12th (India 136th)

Macro Facts - Seoul

Population - approx 2,60,00,000 in the capital area (world's second largest urban area, which houses almost half of South Korea's population with population density of 17219 persons per square km.

2,50,000 foreigners living in Seoul city

68,99,000 people take subway everyday

15 lines operational 4 in making, 469 stations

600km of total length

Was known as Hwaseong and became the capital of South Korea in the Joseon era. It was at the epicentre of Korean war and was in state of complete destruction in 1953 when the Korean war ended.

Survey of Perceptions

Young people of different nationalities between 20-35 were asked to state their spontaneous associations with South Korea and India (including opinions about their own country) in order to understand the current level of awareness about India as well as South Korea.

Perceptions about Korea are important in order to create the narrative and narrow down on the content space. Perceptions about India help us understand what India stands for and to identify channels of interaction between India and South Korea.

It was also interesting to explore Indian-ness, Korean-ness and Asian-ness with respect to 'western values' through responses of Americans and Europeans



FRANK 22, HOLLAND
STUDENT, MBA

"I am interested in the soccer scene here; I think they are crazy about Guus Hiddink and the dutch football team"



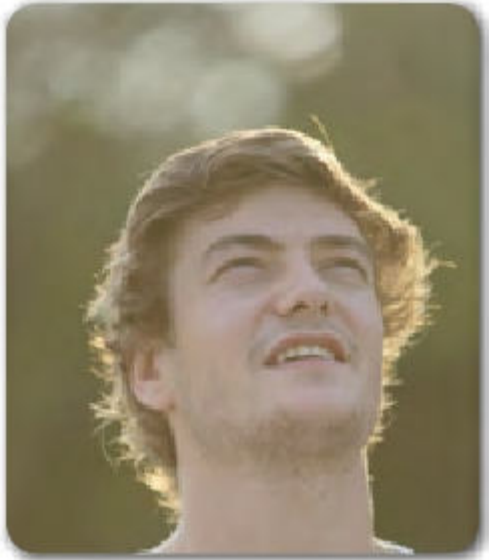
JOB 23, HOLLAND
STUDENT, MASS COMM

"My experiences in RSA changed my life. Similarly I hope Korea and Asia would give me a different perspective especially on spirituality"



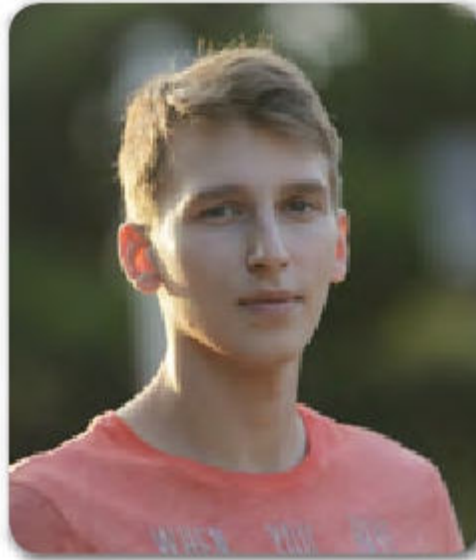
DARYA 21, RUSSIA
FASHION WRITER

"Though I am a student of materials science, I am fascinated by Korean fashion. They are like Italy of Asia. India is vibrant, traditional; I want to see Lakme fashion week one day"



LUUK 22, HOLLAND
STUDENT, FINANCE

"India and Korea both have Buddhism and deep philosophical perspective. I am interested in spirituality of these two nations."



VLADISLAV 19, RUSSIA
STUDENT, METALLURGY

"I do not have interest in my academic stream and it does not pay well. I would like to work for a Korean finance or electronic firm."



OMKAR 32, INDIA
PRODUCT MANAGER

"I deal with Indians, Japanese and Koreans to cater to a very demanding American market. We are lazy, Japs are tough but deliver quality. Koreans will do whatever you say that too fast"



**EUN-MO 32, SOUTH KOREA
PHD SCHOLAR, CINEMA**

"I am focusing on research on lighting and cinematography. I think Indian films are very colourful and bright. They are sunny"



**JONGHO 45, SOUTH KOREA
FILM-MAKER, PROFESSOR**

"Koreans know very little about their own country. I think that's how the world is today. I have seen Three Idiots, is your university like that? It is a blessing to have cinema industry that thrives"



**KIM MINYOUNG 24, KOREA
TYPE DESIGNER**

"India has so many languages and scripts; China is very big too but India is a mini continent.. Life here is very competitive and at times stressful"



LEE 22, SOUTH KOREA
STUDENT, FILM STUDIES

*"I heard everyone .. almost everyone
is vegetarian in India... is that true?"*



KAROLINA 25, CZECH
STUDENT, MARKETING

*"Korea is fascinating ... I love big
buildings, smartphones. I would like
to work here but language would be
a hurdle. I want to see India but there
have been too many rape cases!"*



MARIAH 22, HOLLAND
STUDENT, HRM

*"I love Asian men, Korean guys are
hot! I am going to Japan and it would
be interesting. When I visit India I
am sure I am coming to South ...
everyone goes to Delhi Agra"*



MOHITA INDIA
JAPANESE TRANSLATOR

*"IfirstlearnedJapanesetotranslate
into Hindi but now I have learnt
Korean too. Its amazing how similar
theirdramasare"*

AMOL THAKUR
STUDENT, DESIGN

*"They were destroyed; how come
theyprogressedsofast?"*

ROHAN CHAVAN 24, INDIA
ANIMATOR

*"Everything follows an interesting
structure in Korea ... especially
design ... they plan everything .. we
haveflair"*



AURELITJA 20, LITHUANIA
STUDENT, TOURISM

"I am here for environment and wellness. I am interested in alternate oriental medicine and ayurveda"



MADHAV 20, INDIA
STUDENT, ENGINEERING

"The most wired nation"



RADHIKA 20, INDIA
STUDENT SOCIOLOGY

"It is not a very touristy nation but going to Jeju and Busan can be exciting"



HYEIN 20, SOUTH KOREA
STUDENT OF LAW

*"Life is so stressed and competitive;
so I hope I get admit to good post
graduate school in law."*



TAMMY 24, GERMANY
STUDENT, MBA

*"Korea is interesting place to learn
management; plus when you live
in a different culture; you become
patient"*

AMIT BHAT 45, INDIA
SHIPPING

*"I love their public transport; wish
Mumbai had similar infrastructure."*

DIPESH SHAH 38, INDIA
IMPORTER LED LIGHTS

*"They are true speakers ... honest
and dependable; I stopped buying
from China"*

BUNKIM 32, INDIA
SONG WRITER

*"It's amazing how K-pop and J-pop is
sold well abroad ... they are creating
cultural exports .. we need to learn
from that"*



AMEYA 32, INDIA
BUSINESSMAN

*"Just the name reminds me of the
mess these days our big projects get
into...the POSCO steel project."*



Vishnu Prakash

Indian Ambassador to Republic of Korea

"It is a country of extremely hardworking people. It is true that US provided them economic help and safety net in the early years but their resolve to perform and achieve is relentless.

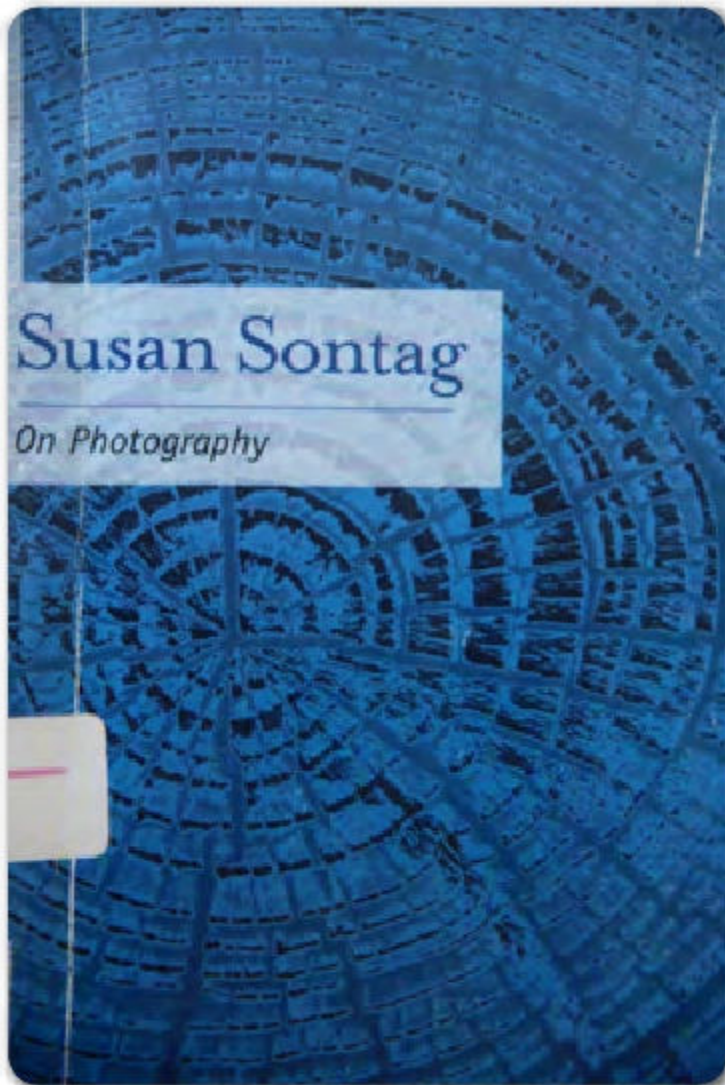
They have focus on research and willing to invest abroad, we are hopeful that POSCO project goes through and it will be a new partnership.

Samsung has a big research centre in India employing 4,500 Indian engineers and similarly five thousand Indian research scholars are studying in South Korea. We have recently signed in Science & Technology, Space and there will be growing cultural exchange as well. Geopolitically both countries share a healthy relationship"

Literature Review

I am currently a student of communication design and have professional background in visual journalism & ethnographic research. However, I am not a trained anthropologist. Since travelogue is exploratory and not so structured I was open to many experiences and my photographic explorations were not pre-planned to detail. It was important to focus on a cultural theme in order to achieve cohesion in my visual story.

Since I have decided to approach the subject with a cultural lens; it was important to be aware of academic frameworks in the domain of visual anthropology and evolve my own process. After the fieldwork a storyteller needs to deal with a large volume of images and experiences and these academic frameworks help us analyze visual data. Having said that I firmly believe that storytelling has to be spontaneous.

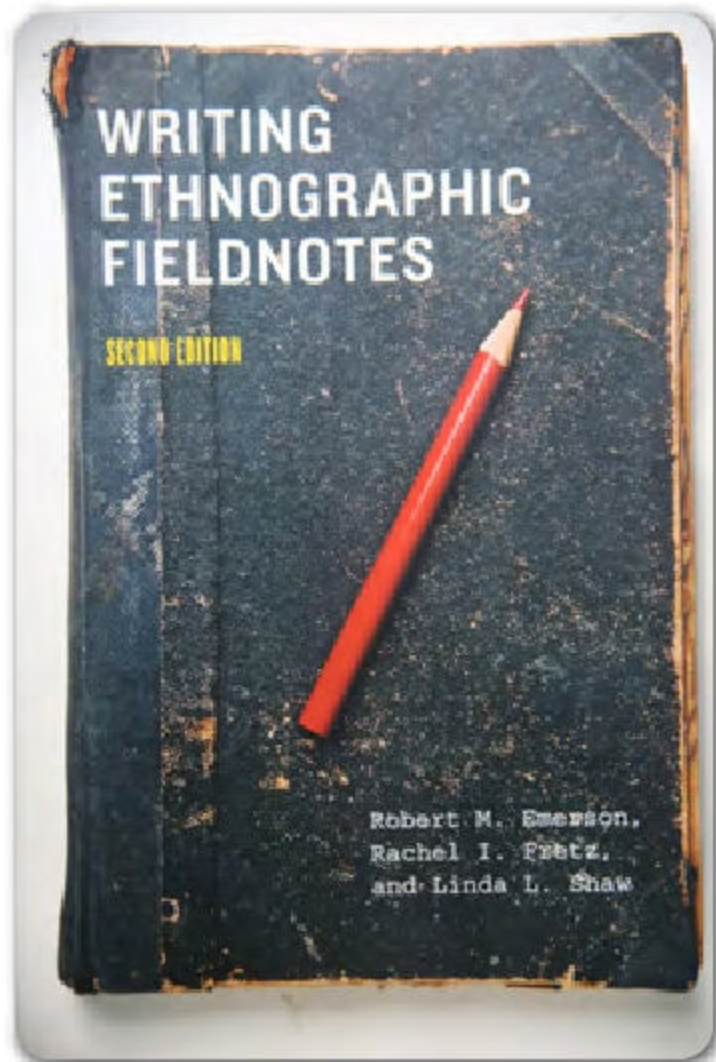


On Photography

Susan Sontag

This book helped me revisit my own work as a photographer and review how I work as a photo-storyteller. It also introduced me to several other photographers belonging to different genres and different schools of thought. This was critical since today photography has become all pervasive and natural. We tend to click things very spontaneously without consciously or unconsciously having an ideological perspective on the images we create.

It is an extremely important reference for me to plan what I want to do, what I want to say and how I want to say it. Aesthetics and functions go hand in hand and evolve together in design process. Sontag's book gives us important insights into photographic storytelling and we can de-code photographs beyond liking/ disliking them.

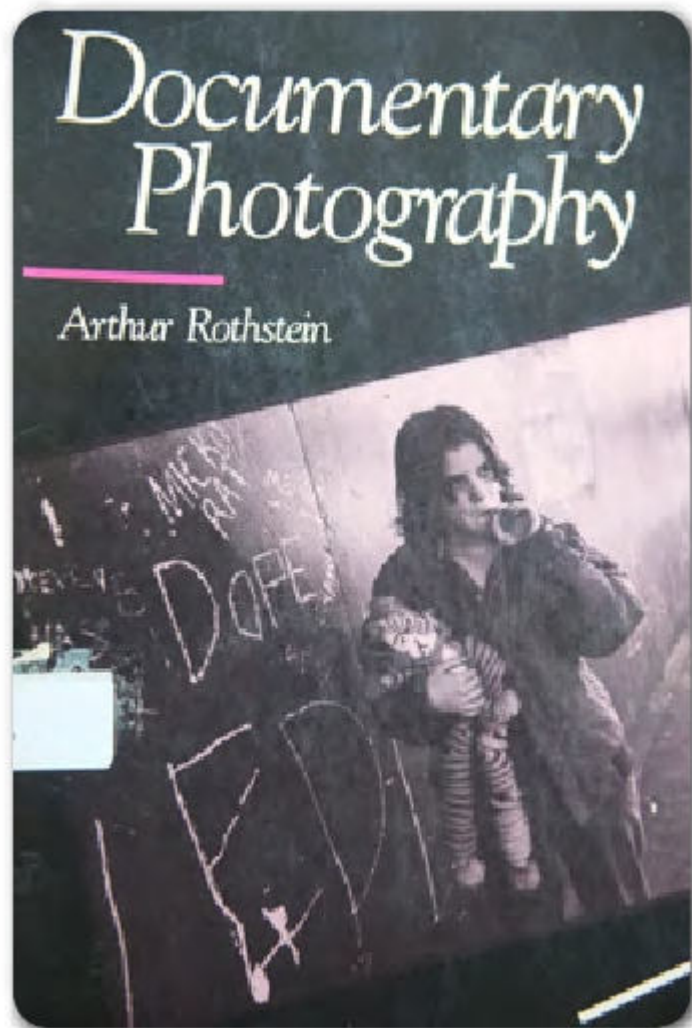


Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes

Emerson, Fretz, Shaw

Writing field notes is an essential activity in any ethnographic fieldwork. Since an ethnographer encounters large number of experiences, has several conversations and participates in several events. It is important to note down the observations when they are fresh and clear in the mind and jot them down before a set of fresh encounters his/her mind. This book taught me four key things about writing field notes -

- What is observed is inseparable from the observation process and both go in tandem.
- It is important to give attention to indigenous meanings and concerns of the people studied.
- Writing field notes contemporaneously preserves the richness and detail in observations.
- Interactional process should be documented in detail.

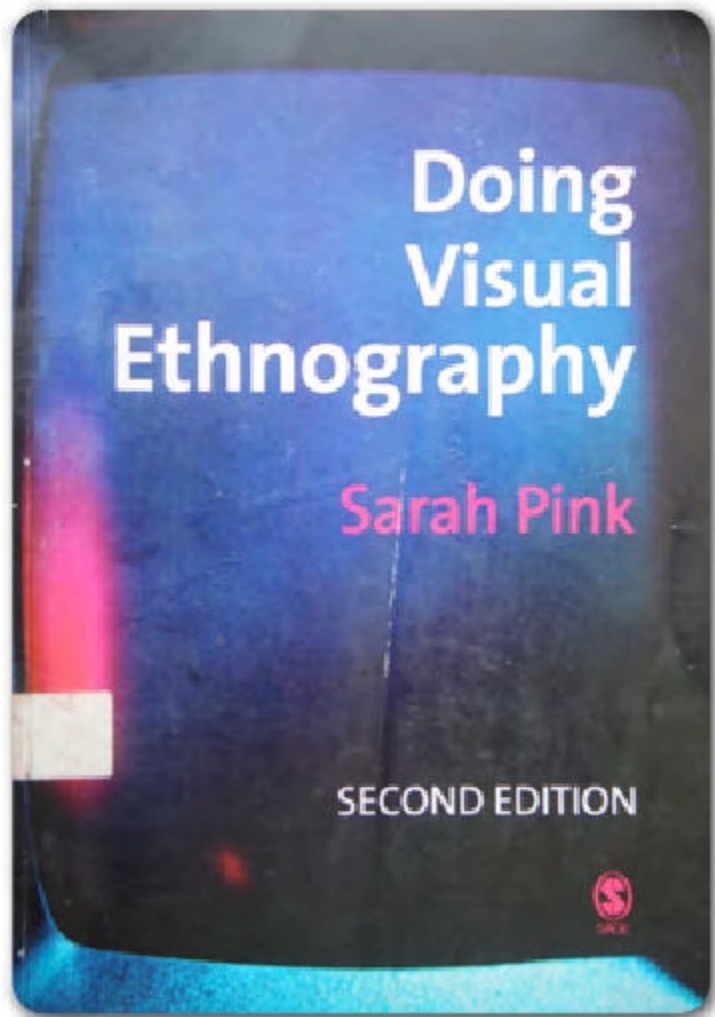


Documentary Photography

Arthur Rothstein

I wanted to understand the evolution of the documentary tradition to see how various masters have approached different subjects in different settings and times. I wanted to know more about the humanist tradition in photography and explore if it could add to my approach.

As a foreigner taking photographs in South Korea over four months I was curious and fascinated by many things; at the same time being objective and empathetic was an important consideration for me. Though I do not intend to produce a document that presents objective facts without personal expression; I am clear that this book should not be a parachuted photographer's viewpoint. There were useful insights about how to select or reject pictures objectively and dispassionately.



Doing Visual Ethnography

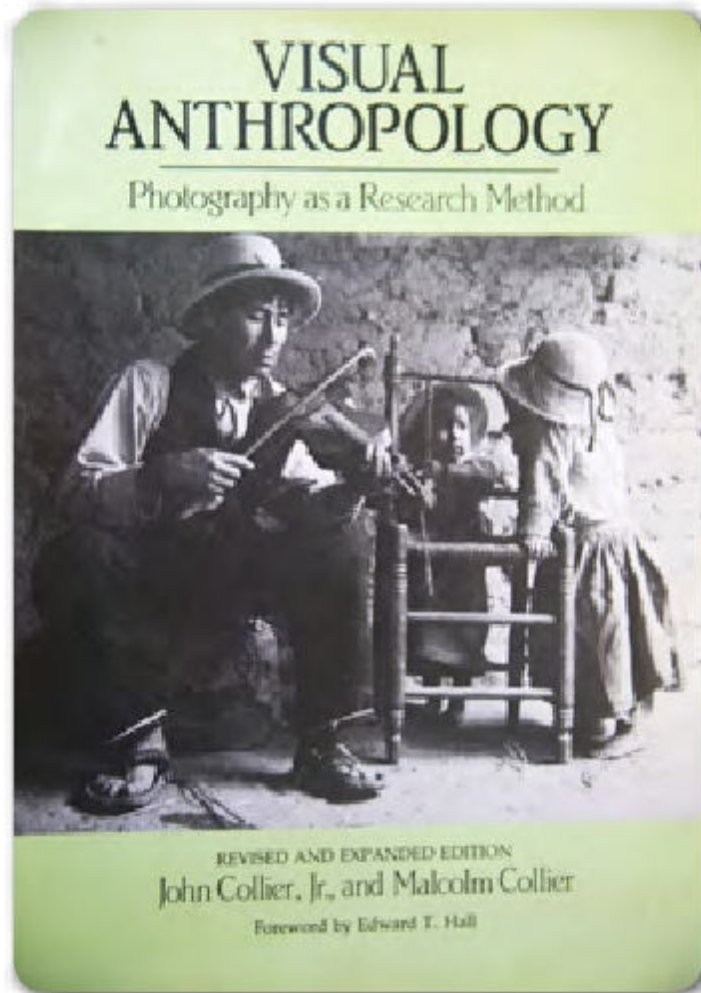
Sarah Pink

While I was excited by Robert Frank's view that images should be message and explanation free; I want the book to have a complementary and hierarchy-free relationship between images and words. Respecting the independent existence of images; I decided to create a blog where people could see images and videos with bare minimal information (merely giving information about the setting or context) This was to explore and learn about two contrasting techniques in visual storytelling.

Sarah Pink provides inputs on how to analyze images and their ethnographic meaning. This helps us understand how to present images in visual design context. The book throws light on differentiating between images that are useful data vs. images that become a part of one's storyline.

Visual Anthropology

John Collier & Malcom Collier



As a television reporter and photojournalist I was aware of visual storytelling process and how a camera is used in journalistic stories. However, what I did not know about how to use a camera as a research tool that is helpful for deeper cultural analysis. This book explains the process of visual ethnography in a comprehensive manner.

Apart from theoretical frameworks, the book also had practical tips about how camera can help create rapport and empathy and what are the risks that can disturb the rapport. This is critical for anyone who wishes to make the camera invisible in the participant observation process.

Most importantly, I became aware of my limitations with respect to time and language and fine tuned my approach.



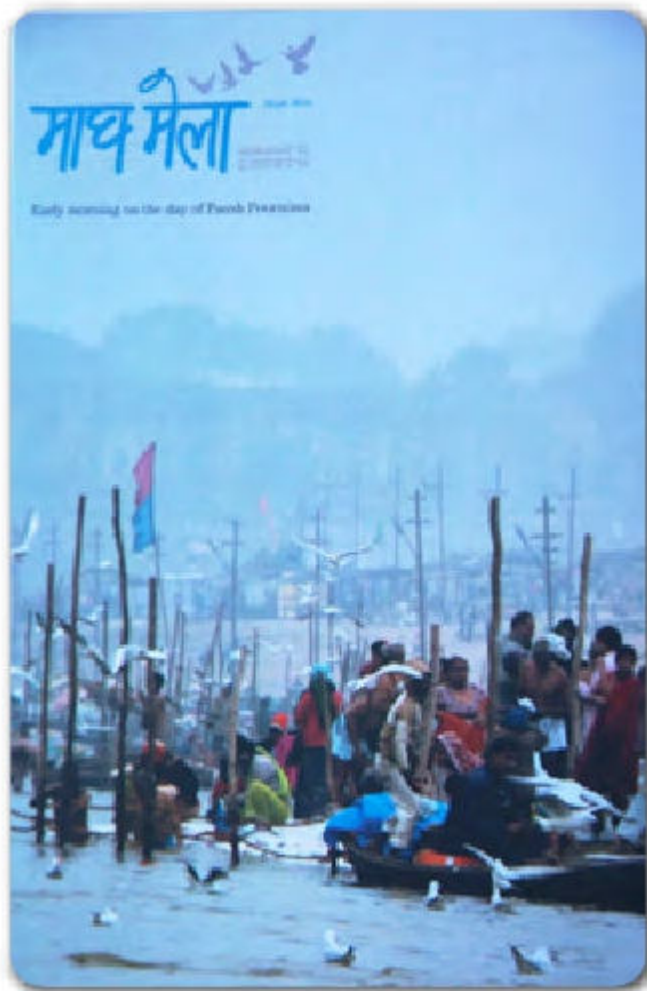
Intellectual Observer

Prof. Mandar Rane

In a series of photographs that reflect choice of design and cultural symbols this book explores the link between cultural identity and design.

It raises important questions about visual identity design in the age of globalization where all the cities and public places have started looking similar due to market considerations and how culture-centred approach could change this.

Prof. Rane has built his argument through visual sequences and it is extremely rational and evidence based approach of putting forth a point of view.



Magh Mela

Kalika Arora

Magh Mela is Kalika Arora's experience design project based on the magh mela in Allahabad. She brings out rural fervour and energy in the festival through documentation of visual culture during the mela. Her methodology is interesting since she shows the courage to keep the camera aside and soak in the ambiance through other senses as well.

Interestingly, her fieldwork is so strong that she is able to present the information in different media with ease. I referred to this project in particular since she re-created the experience in a sensorial way. However, my approach would be different. I think images and description should be lively enough to make the narrative experiential just like P.L. does through his words or photographers like Ami Vitale manage through poetic imagery which is evocative as well as communicative.

Land of Contrasts

Prof. Mandar Rane

Explore.
Photo essay on
Israel - A land of striking
visual contrasts.

[Browse the book](#)



Land of contrasts is a small but interesting book on two faces of Israel. It was particularly interesting for me since my focus is duality in South Korea. Land of contrasts brings out the stark differences between Tel Aviv and old Jerusalem through a set of images bringing out the difference in the temporality of aesthetics of two different eras.

It is interesting that words are in a supportive role and get integrated in the flow of the images. The layout grid flows with images and captions organically.

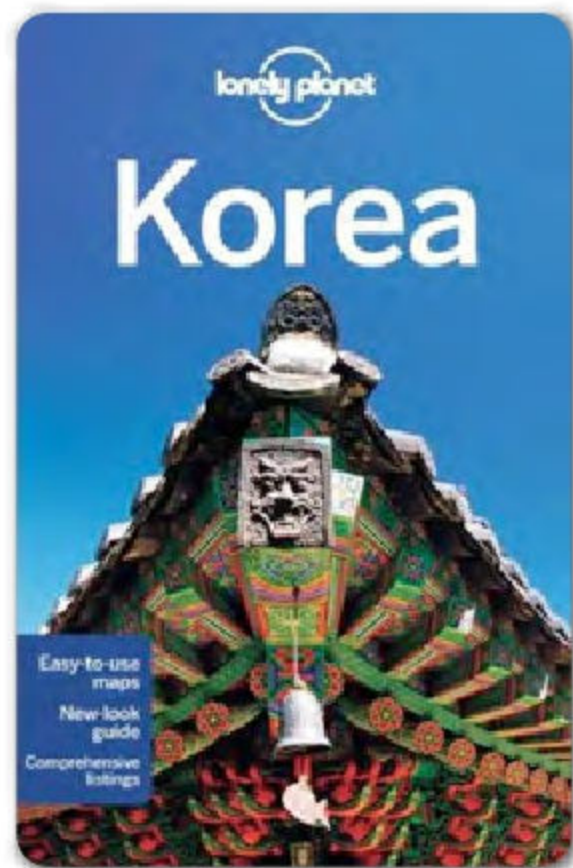
Korea Essentials

A Series by Korea Foundation

This series is produced by Seoul Selection and Korea Foundation and it has about 12 books on different themes like Hangeul text, DMZ, Jeju Island, Architecture etc.

Each book contains detailed information about the subject with expert opinions, illustrations and photographs and introduces the subject in a simple language. They are published in English in order to reach out to international tourists. These books also give references to important web sources and further reading.

While these books are informative, they are impersonal and lack expression.



Lonely Planet

Korea + Seoul

Lonely planet is comprehensive guide book with all practical information and elaborate maps. It is not worth to buy a Separate book on Seoul since Korea book covers Seoul and the book on Seoul doesnt offer deeper insights.

The most useful aspect of this book is the way it classifies information, itineraries region wise and it is therefore very easy to use. The writers have added additional information about political history, language top sites etc.

On the flipside, it lacks personal touch, experiential narrative. It is a great guide but not a book with deep cultural insights. However, these guides certainly tell a lot to an ethnographer about what is trending socially.

Needspace

Though we live in a globalized society today and products made in almost every corner of the world are part of our lives; international interactions have remained limited in certain channels. South Korea & India have had a healthy diplomatic and business relationship but there is little cultural awareness or people to people interaction.

There is immense curiosity about each other in both the countries and both are opening up globally in a big way. Starting a cultural interaction is critical to cement the ties and capitalize on areas of mutual cooperation.

India and South Korea are geographically on two zones of Asian continent and depend on the west largely to know about each other and that is the biggest communication need that needs to be addressed.

Information Space

- People
- Places
- Interactions
- Trends
- Geography
- Historical backdrop
- Popular culture
- Food
- Performing Arts
- Architecture
- Religions
- Urbanity
- Rural life
- Tensions
- Aspirations

Project Goals

My travelogue should inform, amuse and most importantly educate in an engaging manner through visual stories.

It is difficult to create a comprehensive ethnographic document in four months especially since I do not communicate in Korean language. However, I should be able to present social insights through visuals that provoke the readers to understand or visit South Korea.

As a visual ethnographer, photographer and designer; I should be able to see differently. Which means to be able to see interesting social processes in the day to day life.

My images should be able to re-create experiences rather than describing settings or people.

Project Deliverables

1. Photographic documentation of experiences in South Korea
2. A visual travelogue in Coffee-table book format
3. A blog of images



SECTION 4

Fieldwork Approach

Participant Observations

Museum Visits

Experiential Immersions

Insights Diary

What I 'Did Not See'

Participant Observations

I used Howell's participant observation framework for conducting these sessions as well as for evolving overall approach for fieldwork.

The first stage of participant observations is to establish rapport and become comfortable with respondents and communities under observations. While doing visual ethnography this is critical to ensure that the camera becomes invisible. The next stage is to hangout with these communities, interact, observe and understand their context.

The third stage comprises taking detailed field notes as well making reflexive analysis. The last stage involves thematic as well as narrative analysis of the data.

Museum Visits

Museums provide interesting data to cultural history of any society. It is a journey that helps you trace the evolution of the culture you are trying to study.

For example, seeing Seoul History museum give you an idea of how a completely destroyed city was rebuilt and developed and in what steps did it reach the point where it is seen today.

It tells us a lot about roles played by different generations as well as gives us a brief idea about hierarchy and political undercurrents.

Seoul & South Korea have a large number of museums related to diverse areas owing to government concessions. Interaction with curators also provides invaluable insights.

Experimental Immersions

Moving away from the idea of participant observations there were some experimental immersions I conducted. I heard a lot about how Korean girls get plastic surgery done to enhance their looks. Modification of jawline, to get bigger eyes, breast enhancements, hair removal etc.

I felt that Korean girls have their own unique beauty and I wanted to showcase in my book someone who did not believe in the idea of plastic surgery yet carried herself confidently. A portrait shoot session with Hyein Song was one such session.

I also wanted to interact with Korean youth and hence joined a group of four friends on an overnight trip to Mungyoung apple county and barbeque dinner.

Insights Diary

Apart from writing field notes everyday; I kept a small notebook for noting down things/ thoughts/ emotions/ ideas/ questions that came to my mind spontaneously while traveling.

It was a small notebook that could fit in my pocket and it was useful to jot down interesting occurrences or experiences while they were fresh. It is a field reference that has jottings of what I felt while visiting a particular monument or going through an experience.

I tried to note down thoughts on weather, people, interactions, places. These jottings are my spontaneous reactions which I re-visit later.

What I did not See

There are a few places that are on tourism map that I purposely avoided. The biggest example would be Korean DMZ. It is prohibitively expensive and one needs to go through security just to see a few buildings and North Korean soldiers in uniform. The whole process has become extremely commercial and touristy and there are severe restrictions on what one can see.

I stayed away from aquariums and theme parks that charge a hefty entrance fee to let visitors in. Since I wanted to 'see differently' I wanted to invest time to travel to spots not on the tourist map but were brimming with cultural activity



SECTION 5

Photography & Content

Photographic References

Aesthetics

Fieldwork Images

Photographic References

I studied photographs and photo essays of several photographers in order to understand their approach and treatment. I wanted to learn the grammar of this visual language and wanted to understand design decisions taken by these photographers while creating harmony between content and aesthetics.

It was also useful to understand the imagery they decided to showcase while communicating their viewpoint about a certain theme. What they included and what they excluded.

Thematic concepts and visual narratives emerging from their work helped me evolve my own approach



Ami Vitale

"In my opinion, you are the guest to this country and place and respecting and taking part in the life around you is an important component to getting the most out of your experience traveling. The more we try to create what is familiar to us, the less experiences we will have and after all, what is the point of traveling if you just want a repetition of what you have at home? It is all about adaptation and experiencing where you are."

Ami Vitale is a contemporary documentary photographer. Her images are pictorial and poetic in aesthetics. People in her images are expressive. She photographs social processes and interactions. She believes that objectivity is an illusion and there are multiple viewpoints to every truth and it is the responsibility of a photographer to give a voice to these perspectives.



GMB Akash

Today, I count myself blessed, having become a photographer.

To be able to articulate the experiences of the voiceless, to bring their identity to the forefront, gives meaning and purpose to my own life “.”

GMB Akash is a photographer from Bangladesh who focuses on communities and tells their stories through his visuals. He is a photographer who believes that photography can be an agent of social change.



Henri Cartier Bresson

“To take a photograph is to align the head, the eye and the heart. It's a way of life.” - Henri Cartier Bresson

This quote from Bresson sums up my idea of photography. I take my camera everywhere because I like to tell stories, and with photos these stories become alive ... they become sensory experiences ... though I would not claim that they can capture experiences themselves.

Henri Cartier Bresson's work is simple yet very evocative. He has chronicled the sociocultural processes of his times through his camera. His approach to street photography helps us understand how visual study of common people and their lives are full of interesting stories.





Robert Frank

"When people look at my pictures I want them to feel the way they do when they want to read a line of a poem twice."

He has documented life in America and the central social theme of alienation in his book 'The Americans' and being a swiss-born it is an outsider's perspective on America.

His images defy the need to have a message. He refused to elaborate or explain on his images and wanted his viewers to respond and interpret.

I decided to create a blog where images will stand alone inspired by his philosophy and also decided to keep my written text independent of images but more linked to my experiences and expressions.



August Sander

August Sander's portraits bring out the personality of his subjects at the same time they also elaborate on his status in society, his class, his occupation.

Sanders has also photographed nature, landscapes and architecture; he was better known for his portraits in his collection 'People of 20th Century' in this book he has captured portraits from different cross sections of the society during the Weimar (inter war period) time in Germany.

For me, his pictures are interesting portrayal of a person in context of his social class. August Sander describes photography as documentary art; this assertion is an interesting perspective on what a documentary photographer should do.



Lewis Hine

Lewis Hine was a photographer as well as a sociologist. He believed that photography was a tool that could change the society. His extensive work on labour and children working in the industry brought anti child labour laws and he made people aware about safety concerns of the working class.



Though my book is merely observation and documentation oriented and clearly not aimed at advocacy; His portrayal of people and their surrounding was inspiring for me. For one's photographs to be strong enough to mobilize public opinion and bring about a policy change; one has to capture a social process and the human face of that social process.

Aesthetics

Two schools of thought have influenced my approach towards photography

1. Pictorialism

A photographer's work should be artistic interpretation of what is being photographed. Straight photography is merely representational. A pictorialist is creating an image than just recording. As a visual designer; I believe that each element in an image has a semiotic relationship with the viewer and it helps us craft/ design our images.

2. Social Realism

This movement focuses on daily lives and social structures of the poor. However, for me Social Realism means to describe the society in a particular time space across different classes.

Fieldwork Images

While it is difficult to classify images in water tight compartments; my images belong to broadly following domains of information.

People

Places

Interactions

Visual Culture

Communities

Design

Urban spaces

History

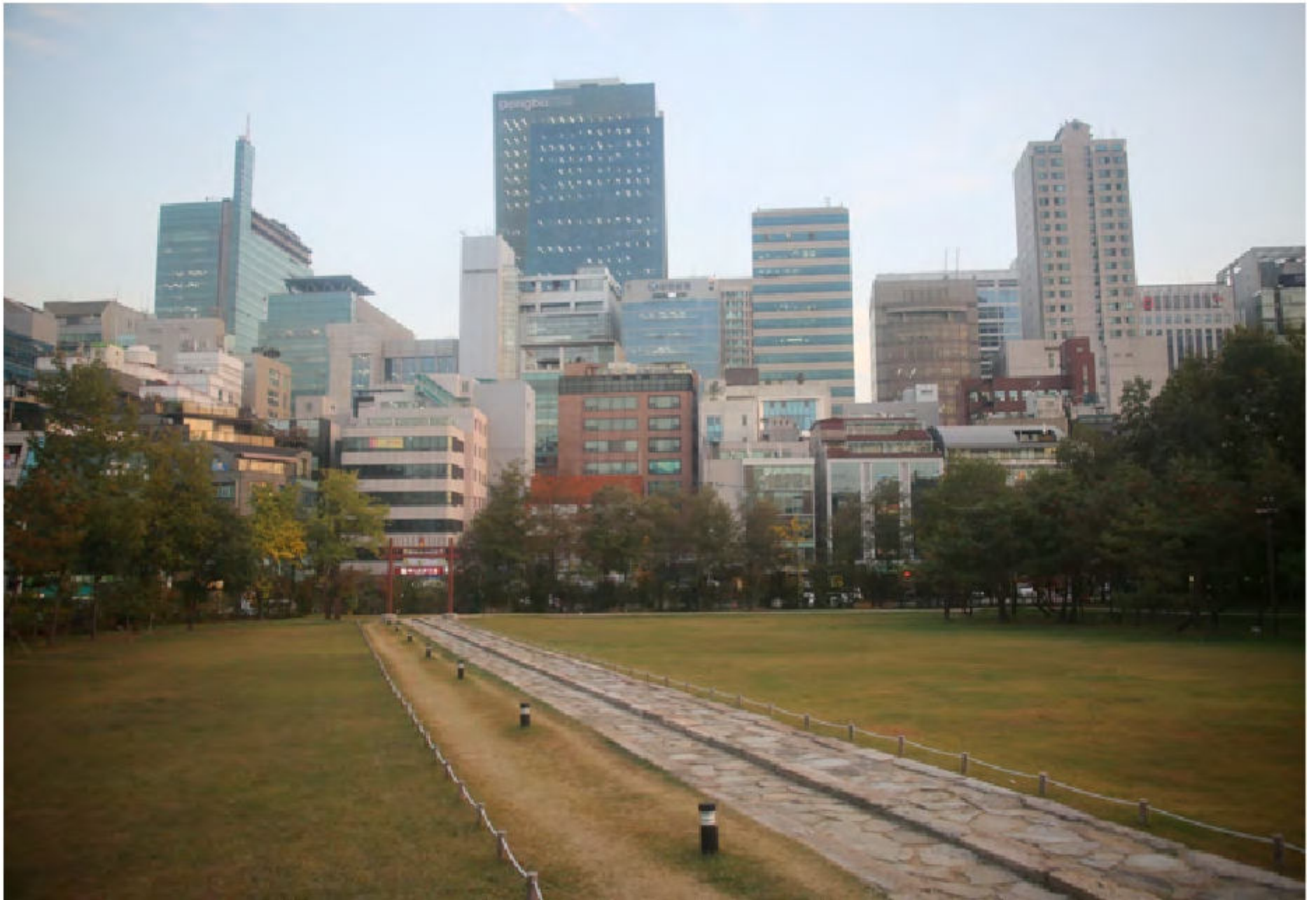
Geographical context

















this symbol is called sam-taeguk, i have taken colours for my photobook from this symbol. it also denotes harmony between contrasting things.

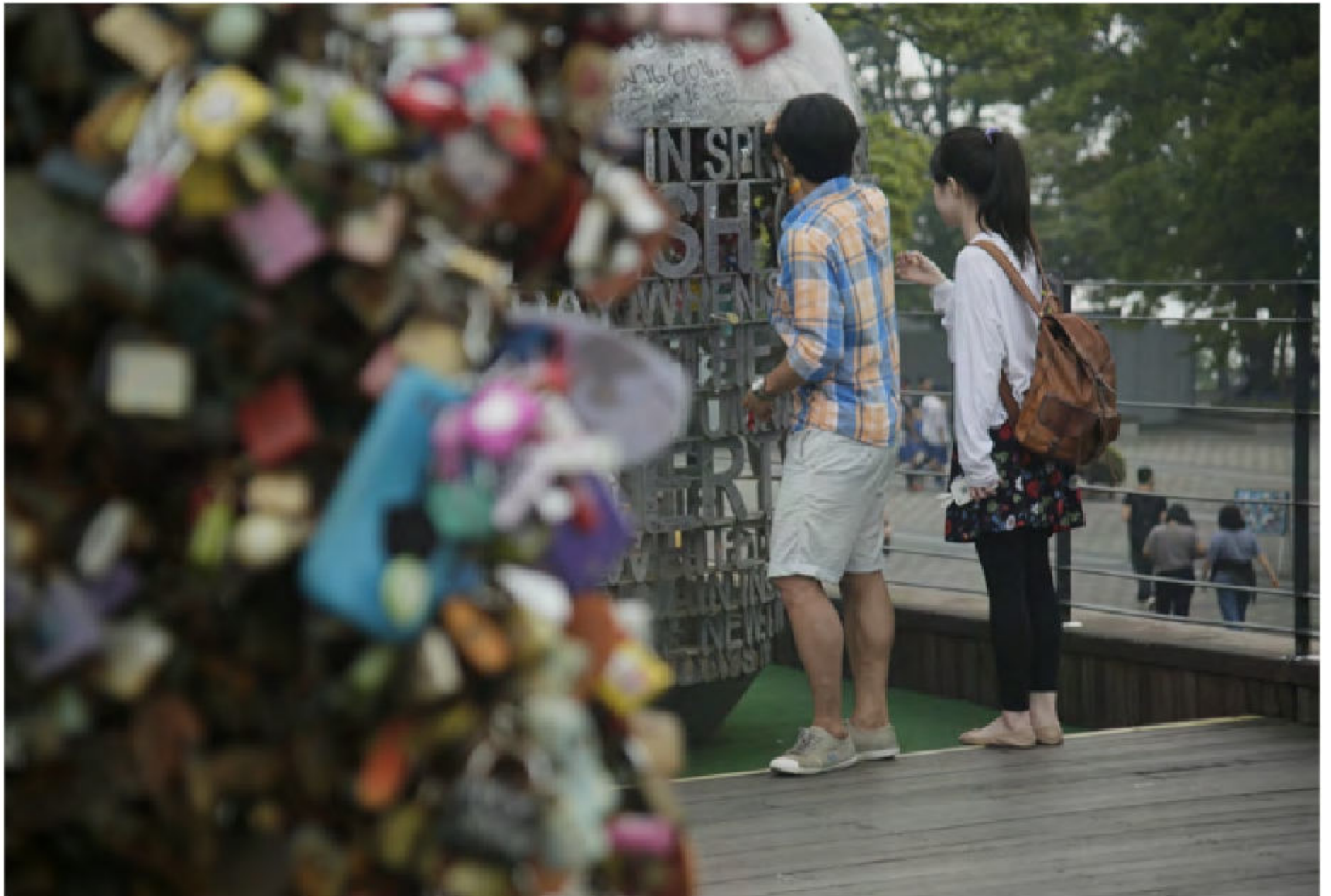










































These pictures are from an experimental photo immersion with Hyein Song; who opposes plastic surgery and idea of beauty prevalent in Korean society today.





















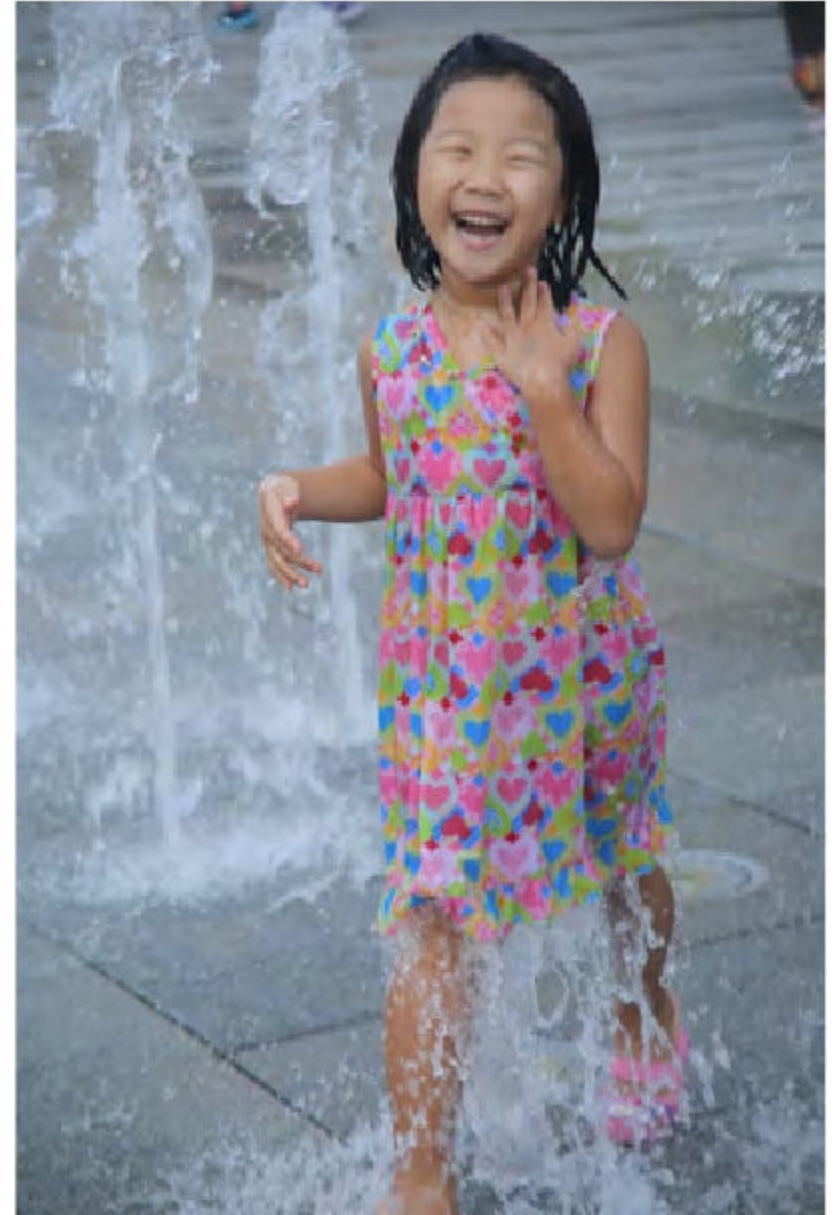




























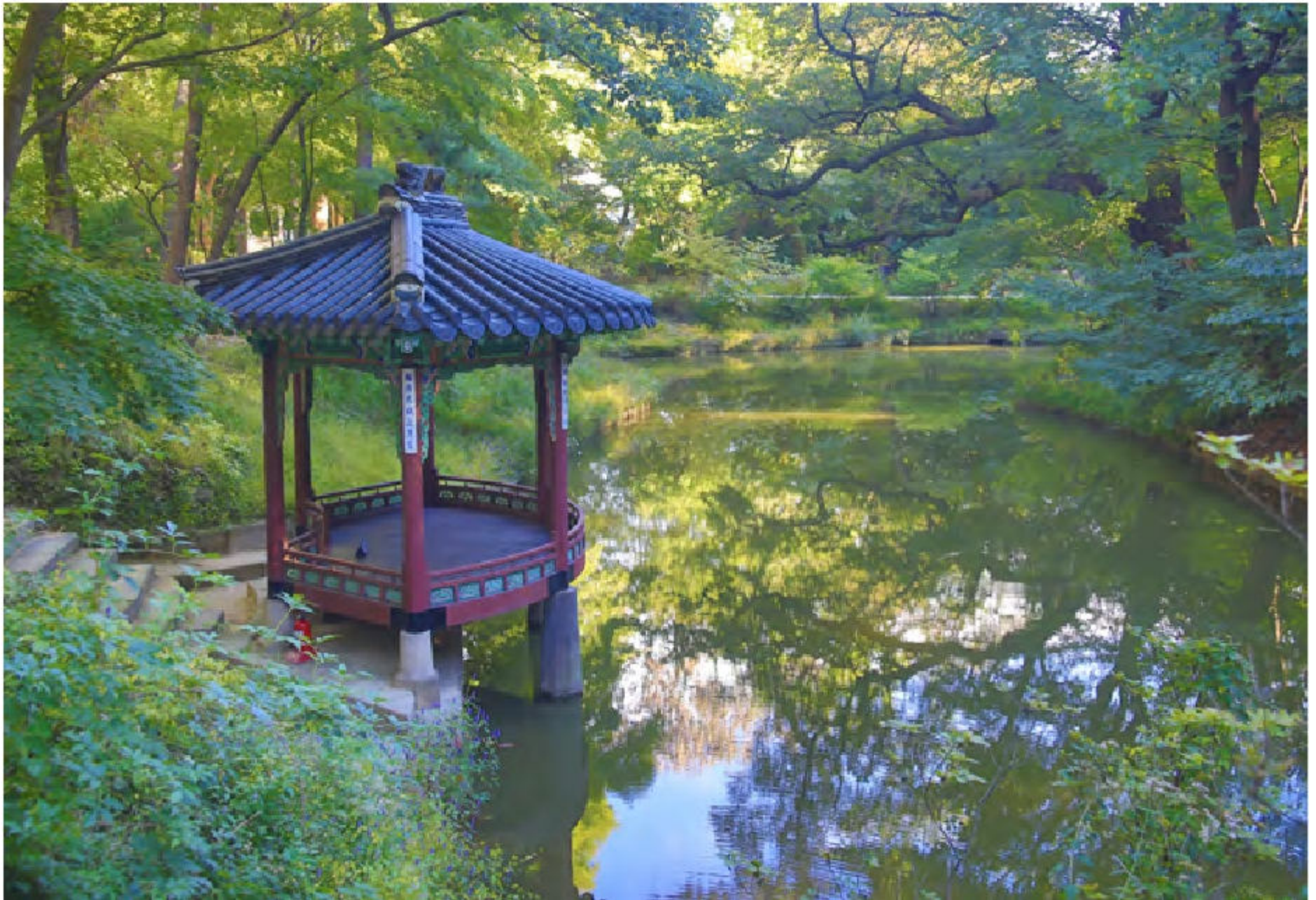




























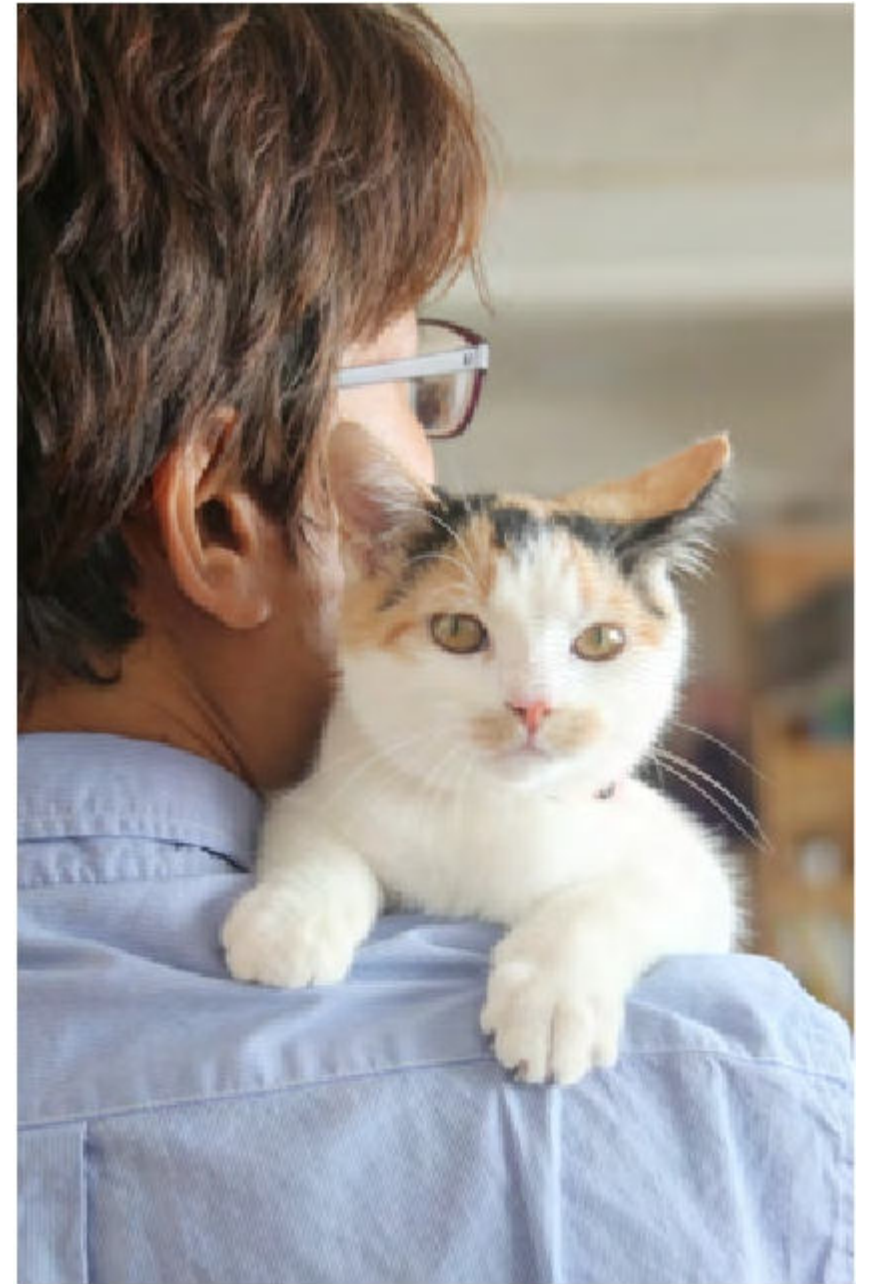




























































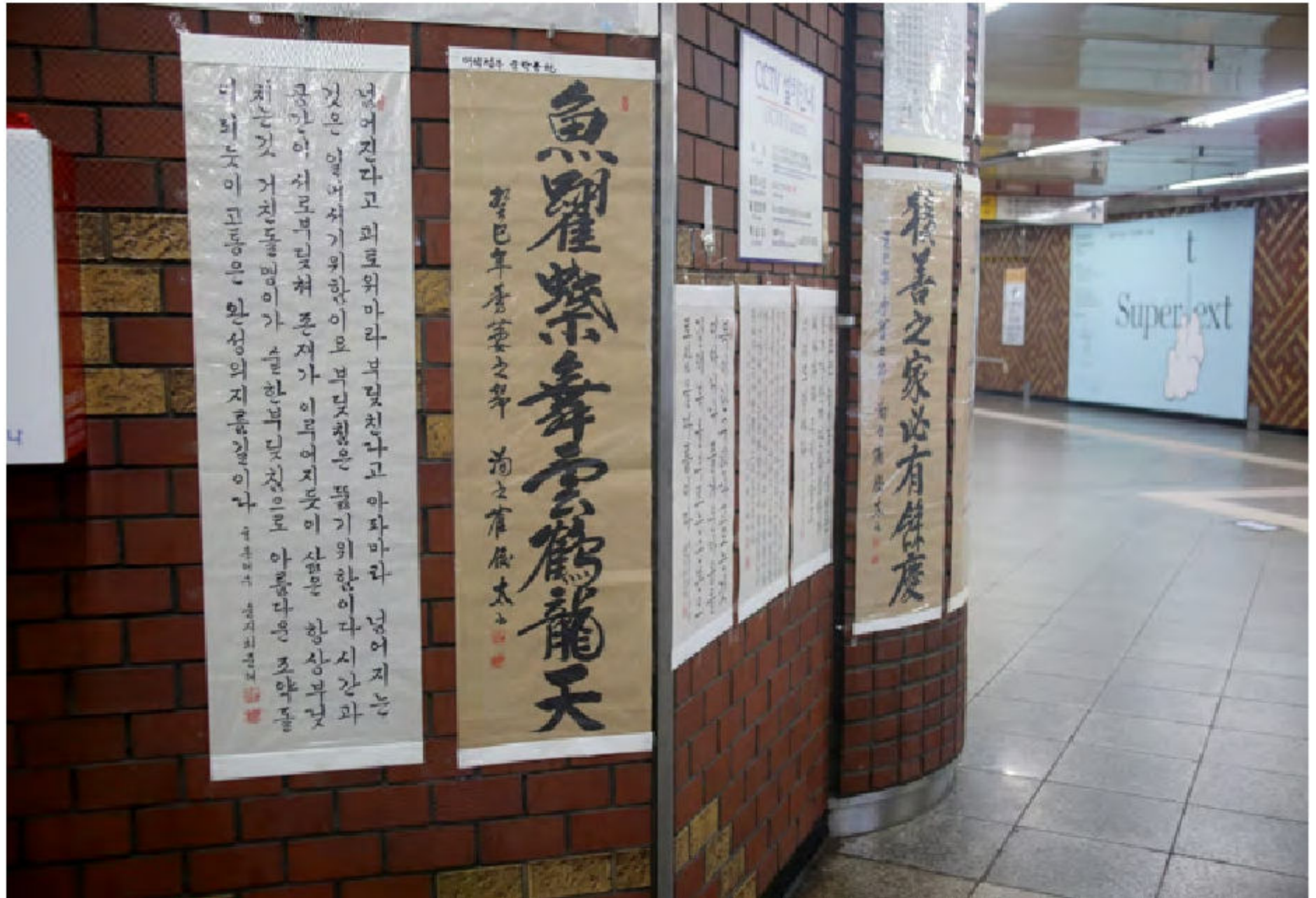
































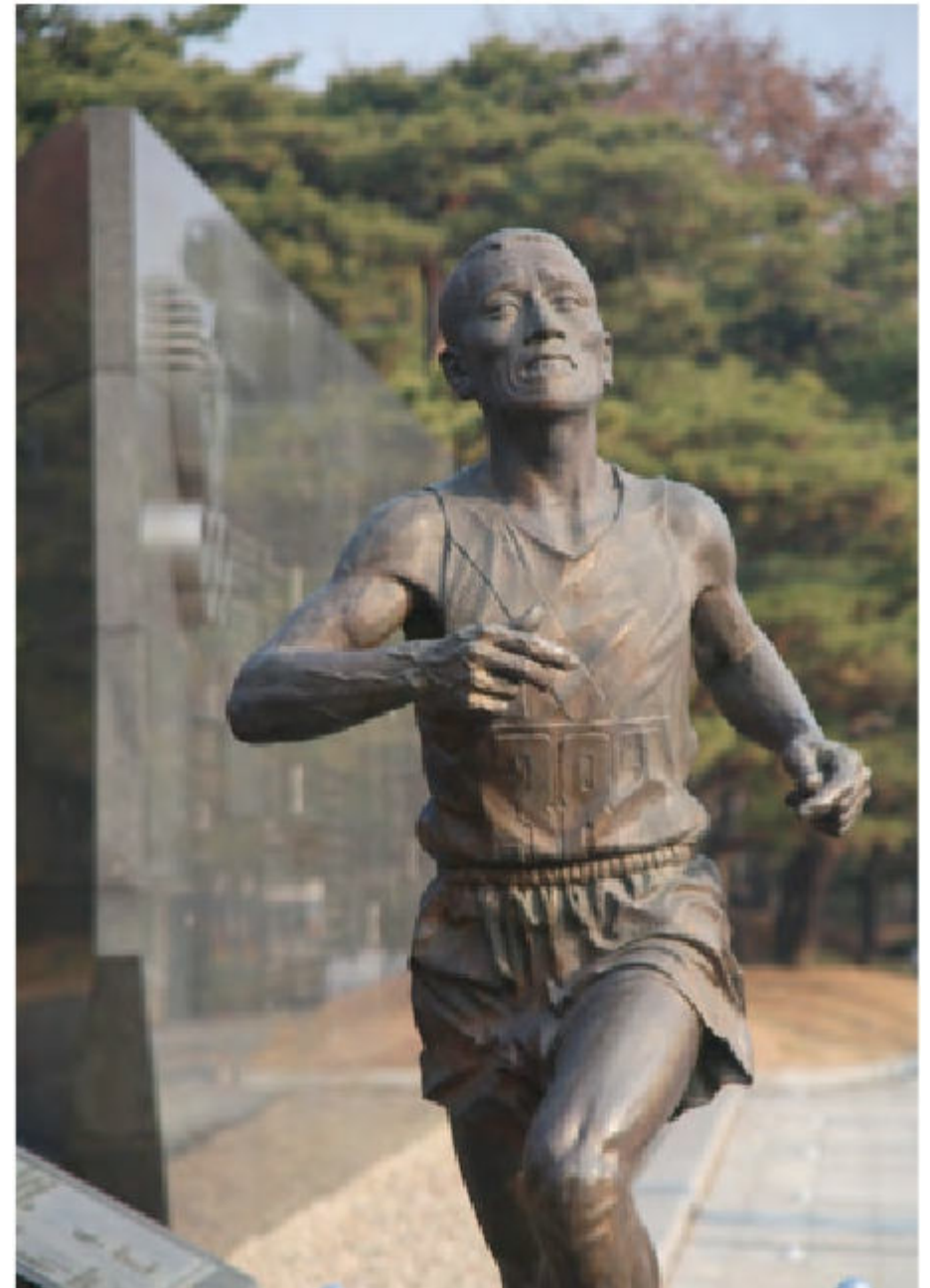
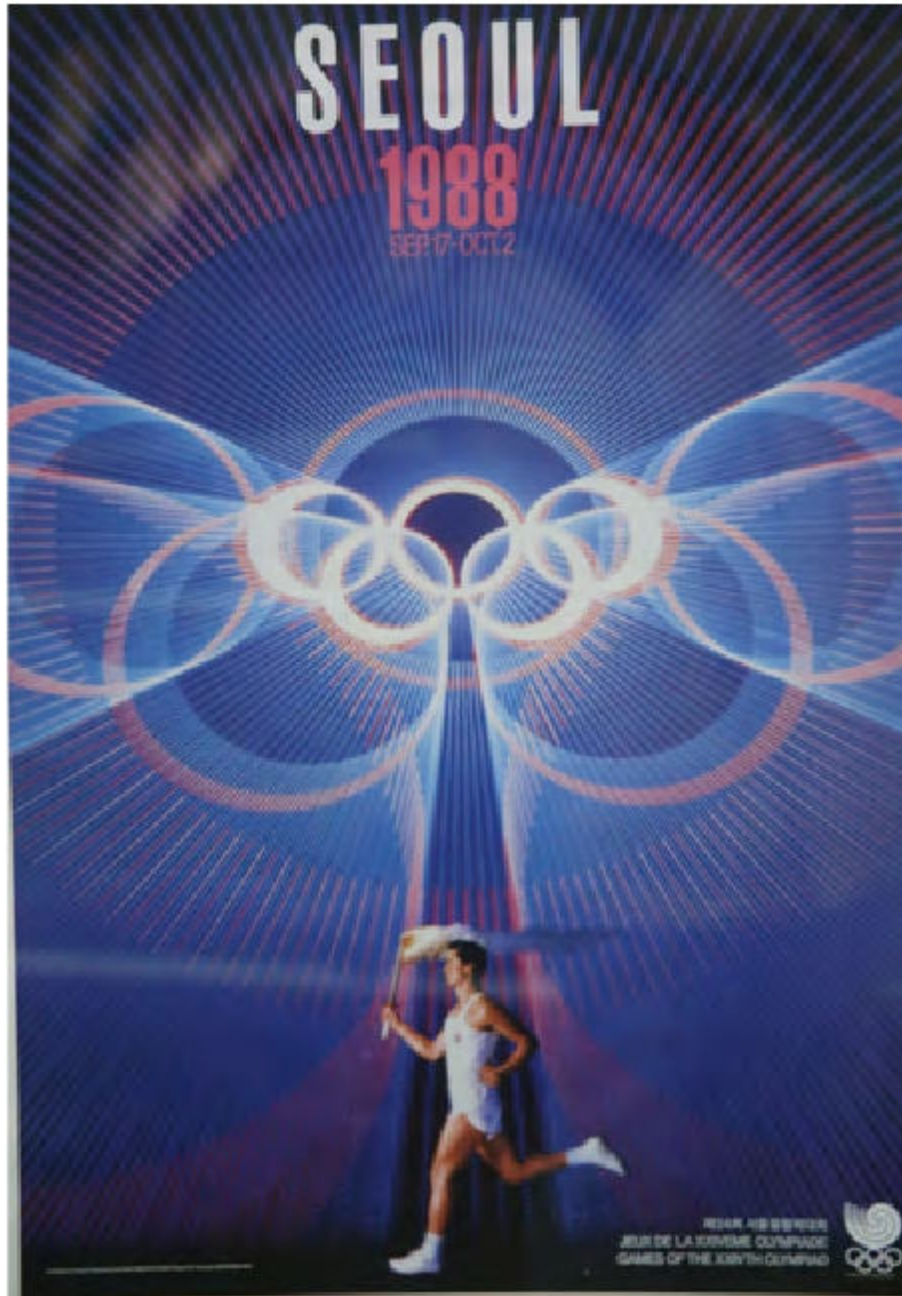




























SECTION 6

Design Thinking

[Design ethos](#)

[Delivery Strategy](#)

[Form](#)

[Blog](#)

[Book](#)

Design Ethos

Content

I should design the book and the blog in such a way that my images are presented in a sequence, in an essay. The classification of images is merely academic and should not be apparent to the viewer.

Form

The challenge is to create a photo book design that can be consumed both in printed as well as e-reading format.

The skeleton of the form should be able to support scalability into different languages.

Expression

This book is about visual culture & my interactions in this foreign culture.

I would like images to have a sensorial and experiential appeal and words to merely support the images.

Design Brief - Book

AspectRatio-Explores square format as well as 16:9 ratio to see image and negative space relationship as well as adaptability in different viewing formats.

Typography - Using ITC Caslin 224 for display and ITC Giovanni std for body copy.

Grid - working on a modular grid that gives the required flexibility. Using 3X3 field structure for square shape and 4 rows 6 columns field for 16:9 structure

Design Brief - Blog

The blog is to be designed to support multimedia content and have minimal text (captions that just state the context of the image and providing no interpretation.)

It should be a responsive design which is grid based and images generate viewer interest and navigation.



SECTION 7

Way Ahead

Hindi & Marathi book

Exploring DPRK (North Korea)

Visual ethnographic tool development

Book in Hindi & Marathi

Since I believe that this project should encourage multi cultural interactions and it should help Indian audiences should get a taste of what South Korea is like; I intend to produce an e-book version in Marathi as well as Hindi.

I would also like to share my book with authors who can transliterate this into other Indian languages.

Exploring DPRK

Any study on Korean peninsula cannot be complete without North Korea in it. However, current budget and political situation does not allow similar fieldwork to be conducted in the North and I would like to follow up with a visual travelogue on North Korea when the situation improves.

Visual Research Tool

I would like to collaborate with an anthropologist and design researcher to create a 'visual ethnographic tool' that provides a framework for exploration with following objective -

- Understand the macro aspects of the society
- Understanding people in different cross sections through interactions.
- Analyze images generated during the visual fieldwork as well as images create by people in the culture
- Come up with tangible social insights