

South Korean Artists Redefining Notion of Cultural Appropriation.

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We live in privileged times. Artists from all over are producing art, and global communication allows for works to be seen, interpreted, and appreciated by anyone with an internet connection. The free flow of information, and the accessibility and affordability of travel, allows for artists to gather inspiration from every imaginable source. Occasionally the question arises, as it has time and time again: is it right to make use of foreign cultural identifiers?

This paper sets out to define cultural appropriation, and offer an updated definition. In both the East and the West, artists continue to look outside of their particular areas of influence to inspire their works. Defining what exactly constitutes appropriation, though, is difficult in the global village in which we now live. This raises further questions about possession, like, when do we truly possess something? Can we truly come to possess “the other” through use, practice, learning, or experience?

That artists occasionally find foreign cultural identifiers intriguing will come as no surprise: what is interesting, though, is the way in which cultural identifiers are interpreted by the varied audiences to whom international artists now present their art. Some artists do art for a specific cultural group and consider the interpretation of that audience alone, whereas others have immersed themselves in multiple cultures and manage to have works that consider the perspectives of both audiences. To better illustrate this phenomena of the audience-considerate work, the paper will look at artists from South Korea who seem to target (knowingly or unknowingly) one audience over another. Other bodies of work demonstrate a type of artist that could only exist in the international society in which we live – artists who live between, or in, multiple cultures, who appreciate the differences in audience, and produce art that cater to those distinctions.

To begin, there will be a short history of appropriation in order to better understand why a debate over the definition is pertinent. What the terms "East" and "West" mean will also be briefly outlined. Following this, Korean artists who use foreign cultural signifiers in their work will be examined in order to highlight the ways in which appropriation exists in this day and age. Nikki S. Lee and Suh Do ho are among a large group of artists who identify with multiple cultures and produce works that reflect the dual (dueling) influences. To conclude, a new definition of cultural appropriation will be presented, and reasons for the change in definition will be offered.

### **Defining appropriation**

Appropriation is a word that is in desperate need of an update. It is monumental in scope, and seems to encompass anything that is re-contextualized.

Appropriation is an activity that is considered to have a negative connotation; an activity that, depending on who is “appropriating”, and from whom, can result in such extremes as the ruination of reputation, catcalls, and lawsuits. To begin defining this tricky word by quoting from a dictionary seems slightly irrelevant – we all have a basic idea of just what cultural appropriation is: an attribute or icon commonly associated with one culture or origin that is borrowed by others not of the originating source. Instead of presenting information that is easily available, we will begin by first narrowing our focus down to cultural appropriation, and investigating why cultural appropriation is typically frowned upon.

Much has been made in recent years of the appropriation of copyrighted items and symbols of consumerism: international music and movie industries would say they are fighting for its lives against the rampant music piracy that occurs via the internet. Peer to peer distribution of copyrighted material on the internet also extends to cracked software programs, and published material such as books and magazines. This paper, however, will only deal with the appropriation of cultural identifiers, and how they are used in art

from outside particular cultural spheres of influence. Sometimes questions arise as to whether or not an item is cultural or having to do with copyright, as powerful symbols (big brand names, famous works of art, and some music) can straddle both identities. In this paper, such identifiers should be considered cultural.

It should not be surprising that many people take offence to the appropriation of cultural signifiers by artists. Appropriation can cause the spread of misinformation, simplification, and, through multiplication, insignificance. Whether the signifier is tangible or not, it can be denied to the original owner.

Art museums, and museums in general, have a long history of having ulterior motives for exhibiting art and artefacts. Museums, being largely accessible to the general public, act as a forum for those in authority to display their power and their conquests. This practice goes back to the earliest civilizations in both the East and West. Roman legions, for example, would bring back the wonders of their conquered lands – slaves, animals, relics – not only to demonstrate their prowess and dominance, but also to demonstrate the strange and untamed world that exists outside their realm. These stolen items may have occasionally been treasured as aesthetically pleasing, but they were generally not understood for their significance to the society from which they were forcefully taken. Appropriation of this form had even further reason to strike fear into those outside the culture of the conquerors: to those not yet put to heel, this was a warning that they were next.<sup>i</sup> In Europe in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a “flowering” of art museums, reflecting the bourgeoisie’s drive to demonstrate their growing political and social significance.<sup>ii</sup> Private collections merged to form the massive treasuries we now refer to as museums. The rise of these public institutions was not only to demonstrate the bourgeoisie’s ability to travel and fascination with the exotic, but to help this class maintain power through the dissemination of their culture as dominant over others. This was not as direct as the collections amassed by rampaging armies, but there was still that flavour of a dominant culture believing it has the right to categorize, delineate, and appraise all with which it comes in contact. By defining the other you can come to better define yourself, and, in doing so, sustain a national identity.

Artwork done by artists of one group that contain images of another cannot avoid sharing these negative connotations, though typically in a subtle and unintentional way. An Eastern woodcut print put on the wall behind a sitter in a portrait may have been inserted into a composition to reflect a worldly and educated disposition. And, though it does lend an air of sophistication, there is, fairly or unfairly, still a history to the display of foreign cultures that stigmatizes. There is no doubt that Manet was not considering this when he sat his friend down to pose for a portrait: what he was concerned with was illustrating some of the influences on the art of the time, reflecting the class standing and environment of the sitter, and forming a strong composition. Though art at one time may have been about domination, about taking an image from one place and saying, “this is now my own, I will use it as I wish”, this argument may not be as compelling as it once was. A new definition of appropriation should consider the intentions of contemporary “appropriators”, the century of modern art that separates now from then, and the vast amount of connectivity and foreign-culture exchange that exists today. By looking at a small collection of South Korean artists, a contemporary face of appropriation will become apparent.

### **Defining East and West**

The “East” and the “West” referred to in this paper will be a refined definition of what we commonly consider as such. What is typically defined nowadays as East and West is based on a curious line originally delineated by the West (being Western Europe and the UK) to mark where they end, and the East (the Near East, or Middle East) begins. East

and West in this paper, though, will be referring to the two sides of the northern half of the Pacific Ocean. What will be defined as the East will be China, Japan, and South Korea. This narrow vision of what qualifies as East is not meant to allude to any sort of hierarchical rating system: it merely serves to place some sort of limit on the breadth of the paper. The “West” will also, for the same reasons listed above, refer to North America. Of course, these countries support a broad range of art styles, and the works and artists highlighted in this paper only demonstrate a sample of the broad spectrum of artistic ideas these regions produce.

### **Looking West: Nikki S. Lee’s search for inspiration in the West**

Nikki S. Lee is an example of a South Korean artist who looks to the West, not only for subject matter and imagery, but as a target audience for whom they produces art. Becoming “the other” is the basis of her work.

Lee established her reputation with a series of photographs with the unassuming title of *Projects*. Over the course of five years, Lee embarked on reinventing herself as a member of different sub-groups; mostly those that are identifiable as American. Beginning with such sub-cultures as Hispanics, yuppies, and punks, Lee completely immerses herself into the lives of these groups, adopting their interests and fashion sense, and adopting similar interests and attitudes. Other projects find her dressing up as a Senior Citizen or as a schoolgirl. In these series of photographs, it is not merely her race, language, and interests that are being tampered with, but her age as well. She also positions herself as an exotic dancer. The resulting photographs, which were casually taken by individuals other than Lee, show her interacting seamlessly in her espoused identity amid clueless compatriots. The next grouping of photographic studies looked at the more personal relationship that exists between couples. Again, Lee is at the centre of her photographs, with the image of her partner unceremoniously severed from the picture. A male other is implied, though, through the presence of a hand reaching into the frame, part of a head, or a disembodied arm onto which Lee clings. The technical proficiency and careful staging of these images indicates that these photographs are staged (suggesting Nikki did not need to break any hearts in the production of this series, as did happen with *Projects*). Lee appears deep in thought in many of the images, as if she, too, has doubts about these relationships she has formed. These photographs function like incomplete stories, allowing the viewer to decide what Lee is thinking, where the couple is, and who the missing man is.<sup>iii</sup>

Lee has gone beyond conventional appropriation. Her work completely resembles that of an artist from the West, and highlights the interests of a Western audience. This would hardly be interesting, considering that she has lived in the US for much of her adult life, if Lee did not identify herself as a foreigner - a Korean woman living as a foreigner in New York<sup>iv</sup>. Lee describes speaking English as a performance, because it is not her native tongue, while also saying that, because of her distance from Korean society, she feels that she has less and less in common with the average South Korean.<sup>v</sup> It would be fair to say that her work is a documentary of the loss of the original Nikki S. Lee. Lee seems to be actively trying to reinvent herself by putting herself in situations that require her to be someone who she is not.

Her photographic investigation, *Projects*, found her adopting the identities of American subcultures. The photographs that emerged out of the different investigations resulted in easily-digestible stereotypes of these subcultures; accessible and readable by the Western public, for which they were prepared. Even her film, *AKA Nikki S. Lee*, was produced in English. Aside from a couple of exhibitions in Japan, and the Gwangju Biennale of 2000, Lee has exhibited almost exclusively in the United States. Why is this? Maybe it has to do with the reading of the works Lee produces and the issue she

addresses. Fringe societies, like those presented in her works, are visually not as prevalent in the monoculture of South Korea. What makes the photographs so compelling is that the sub-cultures in Lee's work are identifiable. Westerners have stereotypes to accompany every one of the fringe sets represented, and the viewer can spend time considering the tribulations Lee would have faced and overcome to accomplish her assimilations. An Eastern, or specifically South Korean, audience would be left understanding what has been done, but not fully appreciating the "punch line". It goes deeper than this, too: the "outsider" entering a new group is an experience that happens with greater frequency in countries that have masses of immigrants entering their realms and having to adapt to the new system. Maybe it is for these reasons that Lee's works are not well known in the East; because an Eastern audience could only understand her work on a superficial level, there being less for the audience to relate the relationship to.

Strangely, Nikki talks of experiencing "the other" as acting. Though she plays the roles well, she does not appear to leave with anything but the captured images and an amusing story or two. She never comes to adopt all or part of the cultures as her own: these are forays into, and then out of, lifestyles different from her own. Interesting to note is that, though her images reflect her seemingly perfect immersion into the lifestyle group that she has chosen to investigate, she often comes off feeling uncomfortable and different.<sup>vi</sup> She is pretending to be part of the group, but inside, would prefer to be who she is in real life. But who is the real Nikki S. Lee? Has she left her back in Korea, with her family and the way of life with which she is most familiar and comfortable? Has her whole experience overseas been nothing more than an act, or a sacrifice of herself for the benefit of her art? This expands on the question, "can you truly possess the other?" The proper question may be more complicated than that - does the individual feel as though they can be part of the new? Can they be accepted by the other? The question is now reduced to those that all individuals face. Women ask the same within male-dominated workplaces, as do visible minorities, or anyone who stands out, of their own societies.

It is more common, these days, to find Eastern artists appropriating from the West.<sup>vii</sup> There does not appear to be the same strong negative stigma associated with cultural appropriation in the East that there is in the West, though many Eastern artists do insert themselves up for evaluation within a Western art setting. Imagine, for example, an artist from the West attempting to insert him or herself into a subculture in the East. Of course, this would likely not be possible on several levels, the first one being that any attempt to "blend in" with the monocultures of the East would be immediately noticed. Who would the target audience be? To Westerners, a lack of cultural sensitivity is immediately assumed when Westerners "dress up" like something or someone else. The only time that an unusual outfit is worn by people in the West is during Halloween: Westerners are conditioned to think of dressing up as humorous and silly. South Koreans, on the other hand, take great care and pride in wearing their Hanbuks, for example, when the appropriate occasions arise throughout the year.

### **Suh Do ho and his embrace of multiple cultures**

As our world becomes ever more connected, and as individuals move freely from one place to another, many artists find themselves straddling two (or more) worlds. Artists such as these can produce art that is for audiences in both their adopted and ancestral homelands. They can be empathetic towards both audiences when they produce art. Splitting his time between New York and Seoul, Suh Do ho is a good example of this type of borderless artist. It is no surprise that a lot of his work has to do with the difficulty in identifying where home truly lies. Again, our original question of "can we truly possess

the other?" is reshaped and questioned by Suh's quest. Like him, we are left asking, "Can we possess both and do each justice?"

The art of Suh Do ho *focuses on issues of representing how we construct, but also are constructed by, our private and public notions of space.*<sup>viii</sup> Suh began his art education at Seoul National University where he studied oriental painting. Upon the completion of his degree, he moved to the United States to study Architecture. Suh Do ho eventually earned a MFA from Yale University.

Suh is known for site-specific installations constructed from a wide range of materials. He demonstrates a serious interest in the distinctions between the society and the individual, and wrestles with the definition of home and origin in his work. Suh is dissimilar to Nikki S. Lee in this way: Suh appears to be, and describes himself as, comfortable in both countries. Though images of the East pervade his work, it is the Western language of Art that he uses most fluently to describe his works.<sup>ix</sup>

He has emerged knowing not only the individual cultures, but the individual expectations and ways of evaluating art of the United States and South Korea. Tellingly, he has been able to maintain a fairly balanced exhibition schedule on both sides of the Pacific.

Three of Suh Do ho's works best illustrate how his art tends to have multiple cultural readings. These three works are all made of entirely different materials and, at first glance, could easily be mistaken for the art of different artists.

*Some/one* was first installed in 2001. Appearing as a suit of armour made of dog tags, the work invites the viewer to become one with the piece, first by having to step on the flowing waves of dog tags, and further by the reflective inner core exposed through the open back of the suit where it rises away from the floor. The tags overlap, giving the impression of fish scales or old-fashioned armour.

This work illustrates how Suh is able to design a work that is purposely left open to interpretations, to allow for the different cultural readings of his two audiences. To a Western audience, *Some/one* will appear to be a "full metal jacket". The dog tags represent individuals: by working together they form armour to protect themselves. With the raised arms, there may also be some connection made to the lone figure sacrificing oneself for others. The slightly drooping sleeves do lend themselves to being part of some ancient oriental costume. The Korean interpretation, however, is equally correct yet somewhat different. Every able mature male in South Korea must complete their mandatory military service duty, as Suh Ho do did before departing for the US. Soldiers are brothers and friends. Soldiers ride the bus and periodically come home for visits. They are a part of everyday life in South Korea. To an Eastern, specifically South Korean audience, this work recalls time spent with comrades training for a war that, thankfully, has been low-key for over fifty years. The strong, layered armour also brings to mind Lee Soon shin, who invented the "turtle boat" to beat back a storied Japanese invasion.

The recent *Paratrooper* series again presents works that are designed to be accessible in different ways. There are three works in total. *Paratrooper I* and *Paratrooper V* closely resemble each other. In these, a single soldier struggles against the weight of his parachute, which lies horizontal to the figure, unfurled against the wall. Three thousand strings run tightly from the grip of the paratrooper. The strings do not merely attach to the parachute: each string ends in an individual signature of someone to whom Suh is connected.<sup>x</sup> *Paratrooper II* strikes a more typical paratrooper pose. The empty shell of a human made of transparent nylon hangs below a parachute constructed of dozens and dozens of jackets made of the same material, which are suspended from the ceiling.

*Paratrooper I* was completed and had its maiden showing in Korea. Suh discusses how many people were deeply moved by the experience<sup>xi</sup>. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the work had a personal story attached, and that there were likely many close friends and relatives in attendance. The work is a self portrait: the shiny, lone soldier is Suh upon his initial move to the US. In describing the work, Suh stated, “If there's no parachute, then the soldier dies. He has to use it. But when he finally lands, he has to fight in a completely unknown territory. That's something I felt when I went to the United States.”<sup>xii</sup> The work, when viewed by a Korean audience, had little, or nothing to do with war. In the US, of course, it was predictably linked to the hostilities in Iraq. Though the reading may be different, the underlying meaning was still very similar: the one is dependent on, and earns strength from, the many.

*Paratrooper II* is over five meters high. Standing close to the hollow, handless and footless body suspended off the floor, the jackets will extend over the viewers head, giving the feeling of being a part of the piece. The emptiness and generic form of the suspended body make it very easy to assume the role of the figure. The work is supposed to *represent* a mysterious person – an alien or foreigner– “dropping in”<sup>xiii</sup>. Again, it is illustrating the individual being supported by many.

A Western reading would likely be similar to the one for *Paratrooper I & V*; that the individual never stands alone; that, even though a single person can be isolated, there are always invisible links.

For an Eastern audience who commonly believes in fate, or karma, all these pieces can naturally lead to a discussion about the interconnectivity of people. For someone to believe in fate they must also believe in destiny. Given that, all those signatures on *Paratroopers I and V* are of people whom Suh was supposed to meet – it could not be any other way. For an Eastern person (or Western person) who follows these beliefs, the connection runs even deeper than that. The commonly-held belief is that meeting a person is to see their family history in that person. These ideas can give a whole new perspective to the empty jackets above. Are they the ghosts of ancestors; always present and always trying to help out?

Because of Suh’s movement through these differing societies, he is able to present the “tension between the American emphasis on the individual and the Korean celebration of collective society.”<sup>xiv</sup> Though the work may be read differently, the underlying point is shared: everyone is linked to everybody else, and strength and stability can be garnered from the relationship. This echoes the Zen belief that the individual cannot exist outside of the whole.

This intermingling ideas and interpretations from the East and the West extends, of course, to the work of many other South Koreans. Like Suh, many South Korean artists have managed to have their education straddle more than one art system, and produce works of art that seem to draw wonderfully from the myriad cultures at their fingertips.

### **New Definition of Appropriation, and the questions that arise through our global village**

The works presented above, as selective as they may be, are indicative of the prevalence of cultural appropriation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and that there is something fundamentally different in how appropriation was done in the past, and how it is done now. Among the reasons behind a need for a change, not in the definition per se, but in the association, is the interconnectivity that exists on a global scale, the idea individuals have pertaining to “the other”, and the new definition of an exhibition space.

The massive strides taken in communication have been a critical key in the redefinition of appropriation of all forms. The ease in which copyrighted material can be appropriated is proportional to the simplicity in which cultural material can also be appropriated. With

pervasive technology such as phones, internet, published literature, and TV, comes the ease of finding symbols or ideas: these forms of communication also function as access tools with which to research the meaning and significance of each appropriated item or idea. It is true that, sometimes, the information may be wrong or superficial, but the information is now available. Interconnectivity has increased the pervasiveness of appropriation; allowed for more equal access to other cultures; and applied varying art evaluation systems (scholarly, peer, or printed such as magazines and books) to the global body of art.

As the ease of trade and travel, and the pervasiveness of media brings us closer and closer to other members of our global village, the question of cultural ownership falls away. Ownership can be embraced by anyone with the willingness to learn, opening up that much more for artists to work with. Cultural appropriation is so common throughout the world that it is difficult sometimes, if not impossible, to identify from where, and by whom, a work of art originated. Cultural appropriation is, of course, not limited to artists: the practice is evident in everyday life. "Fusion" is a catchword used in cooking, fashion, and music. Nobody complains about people outside of Latin American learning to salsa or meringue. Bagpipes and didgeridoos, tandori spices, Bollywood and Hollywood, clothing materials, and fashion styles are freely used and fused by cultures worldwide to improve on, or redirect, the products of their culture. How many people of Western descent have Chinese letter/symbols tattooed somewhere on their bodies? How many people from the East dress up in hip hop clothing? These are personal choices that individuals make: usually they are informed choices, as the means of understanding the underlying signification of an identifier is accessible through the many media sources available worldwide.

The ever-expanding access to foreign cultures has made the playing field a little more level by allowing artists who were once isolated to exhibit worldwide, and to expose artists to the works of others. Different regions obviously have their own flavour of art, arguably enriching art production as a whole. In the past, lack of awareness of specific cultural value systems was associated with some of the faults derived from "Orientalism": what was once viewed as low art in the West because of its functionality, decorative appearance, or production materials has been recognized as important and representative of a foreign sensibility and art evaluation system. The art world itself demonstrates that it considers itself global through its international review of art. Art from all over is held to the same standards of evaluation and criticism. Regions of the world that are new to the international scene have been readily invited into the community, as is evident in the attention Chinese artists have recently been enjoying.

The works of the Nikki S. Lee and Suh Do ho show that an artist has a responsibility to be familiar with the symbols they are using. This does not mean, though, that the symbols necessarily need to be presented with sensitivity and consideration: artists are not in the business of making non-confrontational or easily-digestible images: they produce art to express an idea as fully as they can. These individuals do not set out to produce art that may be found to be lacking in sensitivity towards certain audiences: they are strong artists following their art and their ideas, whether or not they are well received in different societies. These two artists are representative of a new group of artists whose art benefits from the multiple philosophical principles, religious beliefs, societal structures, and personal identities that have influenced their personal development. They are not appropriating anything, though they are using identifiers from multiple cultures in their works. The free movement of artists and the world population at large, brings into question how cultural appropriation will be defined in the future. Already in the West, people identify themselves as being of multiple backgrounds (eg: Chinese-Canadian, African-American, etc.). With the gaining acceptance of mixed marriages,

both racially and religiously, constantly improving communication, and freedom of movement, specific cultures will become increasingly difficult to identify or define. The mysterious “Other” against which civilizations have defined themselves, appears to be disappearing. A good example of this would be New Year’s celebrations. Both the Western New Years and the Lunar New Years are celebrated worldwide by different people. Another example would be multinational companies. Though there is always a country in which a brand originates, the actual products are manufactured and distributed worldwide. And as distribution and manufacturing spreads, so does the technical know-how required to build products, breaking some of the old stereotypes based around the quality of a product. Places that years ago were confined to producing cheap, low quality products are now capable of, if not known for, producing high-end products (South Korea, China, and Thailand to name a few). The view that these cultural differences are becoming less identifiable is something that has not gone unnoticed<sup>xv</sup>. Apparently, individual cultures can also be responsible for the evolving definitions and associations of cultural identifiers.

The new qualities imbued in exhibition spaces reflect the need for a redefinition of cultural appropriation. The purpose of a public exhibition space these days is significantly different from that of a hundred years ago: they are, typically, no longer controlled, private institutions answering to a select group of individuals categorizing appropriated objects into a museological-hierarchical system. Their agendas are to serve the entire population. As public institutions, museums (including public art galleries) are constantly under pressure to educate the public. Museums are also meant to be non-exclusive: in the multicultural societies of the West, this requires that exhibitions are sensitive to minority populations. There may still be the feeling of domination in the old galleries of Europe, with the lingering traces of grandeur and pomp so according conquering nations, but the artwork in them is open to criticism, and culturally contentious pieces tend to be highlighted as such, moved to obscure corners (if not out of site completely). Private galleries of today and artist-run centres illustrate, through the art that they exhibit, a public interest in foreign art. Though there may be a slight bit of interest encouraged because of its other-ness, it also tends to be fresh and inspiring, as it is influenced by a different culture. The East is still fascinated by the West, and vice-versa.

### **Reworking Cultural Appropriation**

Though cultural appropriation is radically different now from how it was one or two hundred years ago, the written definition remains much the same; it still refers to a characteristic or symbol that has been associated with a specific culture of society being taken, borrowed, or used by an individual or group outside of that specific culture. Appropriation still involves taking possession or control of what is someone else’s, but not with the intention to defame or deny the society from which the signifier comes. The unflattering history of cultural appropriation is appreciated by most people, making the action one that is to be approached with care. Notions of hierarchical stratification of people, places, and things still exist, but not to the same extent as it did in bygone times, when empires would dominate, either militaristically or politically, weaker civilizations. There are far fewer societies devoting huge resources to conquering lesser neighbours, and far less evidence of the elite of a society trying to lord over the less privileged. Globally, there is a growing sense of equality, or at least an increasing recognition that every populace has something of value to offer. Signs of this exist in many places. For instance, Universities clearly recognize the value of many foreign educational institutions by offering exchanges with “sister schools” in all locations of the world. Another example,

one fresh on our minds, would be the Beijing Olympics, in which China threw a “coming out” party of a global scale

The “other” does still have reason to fear the appropriation of important cultural identifiers, especially if the identifier is being used by a significantly more prevalent culture. Identifiers can be hijacked, and given a whole new meaning – one that is maybe not flattering, or downright inappropriate.<sup>xvi</sup> It is not just tangible objects that get appropriated: ideas and beliefs can be easily taken, too. This demonstrates one of the more significant changes to cultural appropriation; before, audiences were satisfied with taking a physical object. These days, artists are just as likely to be appropriating non-tangible identifiers, like philosophical positions or religious beliefs.<sup>xvii</sup>

Artists are given a liberal lead on which to explore ideas. They do not need to agree with or use what they learn but, because of the history of appropriation, and because it is demanded of every artist who wants to be taken seriously to understand what he or she is doing, there must be a serious effort made to understand cultural identifiers, whether it be their own or foreign.

Are we able to claim possession of the other? Some would argue that it is impossible to truly possess foreign cultural identifiers. Others could look at the art of Suh Do ho or Nikki S. Lee and say otherwise. This is a topic worthy of debate and an open mind. What has been demonstrated is that the artist is able to work productively with (if not possess) the other by studying it and creating with it to a level that they are comfortable standing in front of their peers and audience and defend, if not demonstrate through their art, their right to use identifiers that had not always been their own.

*To see the works discussed in this paper, I would recommend visiting the following sites*

Nikki S. Lee  
[www.tonkonow.com/lee.html](http://www.tonkonow.com/lee.html)

Suh Do Ho  
[www.lehmannmaupin.com/#!/artists/do-ho-suh/](http://www.lehmannmaupin.com/#!/artists/do-ho-suh/)

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## Notes.

<sup>i</sup>Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism* (London, England: Vintage, 1994) p.225. Edward Said notes that another notable force besides that of domination, which is evident in art museums, is the drive for expansion.

<sup>ii</sup>Sherman, Daniel. "The Bourgeoisie, Cultural Appropriation, and the Art Museum in Nineteenth-Century France," *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Cultural Reader*, Edited by Vanessa Schwartz and Jeanne Przyblyski. New York: Routledge, 2004.

<sup>iii</sup>Shane Waltener. "The Real Nikki," *Modern Painters* (Vol.17 No.1, Spring, 2004), [www.vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com](http://www.vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com) (accessed October 2, 2007).

<sup>iv</sup>Alisia Chase. "Girl With Many Selves," *Afterimage* Vol. 34 Issue 6 (May/June 2007), [www.vsw.org](http://www.vsw.org) (accessed October 1, 2007). In this article, Nikki S. Lee is quoted as saying, "I'm not Korean-American, which means I don't have issues about race."

<sup>v</sup>Shane Waltener. "The Real Nikki," *Modern Painters* (Spring, 2004).

<sup>vi</sup>John Bowles; Olu Oguibe; Karen Stevenson; Maurice Berger; Ellen Fernandez-Sacco; Adrian Piper. "Blinded by the White: Art and History at the Limits of Whiteness," *Art Journal* Vol. 60, No. 4 (Winter, 2001): 38-67. [www.hwwilsonweb.com](http://www.hwwilsonweb.com) (accessed October 12, 2007): 20

<sup>vii</sup>This is a personal opinion. Either artists from the East who use appropriated western imagery are more popular, and therefore better represented in art sources than their Western peers, or, more likely, the statement is true.

<sup>viii</sup>Tom Csaszar. "Social Structures and Shared Autobiographies: A Conversation with Suh Do ho," *Sculpture* Vol. 24, No.10 (2005), [www.hwwilsonweb.com](http://www.hwwilsonweb.com) (accessed September 25, 2007).

<sup>ix</sup>Iris Moon. "Parachuting through life, art - Suh Do-Ho's solo show," *ArtSeoul.net* (2004), <http://www.artseoul.net/artnews/news03/e0626suhdoho.html> (accessed November 21, 2007).

<sup>x</sup>The signatures were, in large part, taken from the comment books that had been present at earlier exhibitions.

<sup>xi</sup>Tom Csaszar. "Social Structures and Shared Autobiographies: A Conversation with Suh Do ho," (*Sculpture*, 2005), [www.hwwilsonweb.com](http://www.hwwilsonweb.com) (accessed September 25, 2007).

<sup>xii</sup>Iris Moon. "Parachuting through life, art - Suh Do-Ho's solo show," (*ArtSeoul.net*, 2004), <http://www.artseoul.net/artnews/news03/e0626suhdoho.html> (accessed November 21, 2007).

<sup>xiii</sup>Roberta Fallon. "Ghost World," (*Philadelphia Weekly*, 2005),

<sup>xiv</sup>Queensland Art Gallery (QAG), "Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art 2002: Suh, Do ho," (*Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, 2002). [http://www.visualarts.qld.gov.au/content/apt2002\\_standard.asp?name=APT\\_Artists\\_Suh\\_Doho](http://www.visualarts.qld.gov.au/content/apt2002_standard.asp?name=APT_Artists_Suh_Doho) (accessed October 13, 2007).

<sup>xv</sup>Richard Dorment. "New Light on Modern China," (*Telegraph Newspaper Online*, 2007), [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/arts/main.jhtml?xml=/arts/2007/04/24/bachina\\_124.xml](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/arts/main.jhtml?xml=/arts/2007/04/24/bachina_124.xml) (accessed October 20, 2007).

<sup>xvi</sup>Other examples of appropriation would be the Dutch figure, Sinterklaas (also known as the figure from pre-Christian German Folklore, Odin) was appropriated by Coca-Cola. The Swastika from Hinduism and Buddhism was forever stained by the Nazi Party.

<sup>xvii</sup>Elizabeth Coleman. *Aboriginal Art, Identity and Appropriation* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005): 17