

Public art invades Anyang

October 20, 2016 | By Kwon Mee-yoo

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Visitors take a look around Choi Jeong-hwa's "The Gateless Gate" and Christina Kim's "Rock Pillow Garden" at the Anyang Pavilion, as part of the fifth Anyang Public Art Project (APAP), in Gyeonggi Province. The APAP 5 runs until Dec. 15.

Courtesy of APAP

Among commercials screened at Anyang Station on Seoul Metro Line 1 is a video featuring Anyang citizens playing American rock band Guns N' Roses' "Paradise City." This is video artist Park Bo-na's "Paradise City," which aims to connect the past and present of Anyang with its future as a part of the city's efforts to encourage public art.

People may think contemporary art is difficult and far removed from daily life, but Anyang citizens are surrounded by it, thanks to the city's interest.

The Anyang Public Art Project (APAP) celebrates its fifth edition this year and some 20 Korean and international artists are taking part to enrich the city.

Eungie Joo, artistic director of APAP 5, is a Korean-American curator who worked as the commissioner for the Korean Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale, as Keith Haring Director of Education and Public Programs at the New Museum in New York and as curator of the 12th Sharjah Biennial. Curators Jang Hye-jin and Park Jae-yong co-organized the project with Joo.



Adrian Villar Rojas's "Brick Farm" Courtesy of APAP

Joo expressed her gratitude for Anyang and the Anyang Foundation for Culture & Arts' commitment to culture.

"It was a pleasure and great learning experience to work here," Joo said. "I learned the specific history of Anyang, contextualized it in Korean history and brought Korean and foreign artists here to work closely with the city."

The director went back to basics and questioned the fundamentals of public art — what public space is, who the public is and what previous APAPs achieved.

"I was shocked that even neighbors of Anyang Art Park have never heard of the APAP," Joo said, "so we visited them to create networks."



Michael Joo's "Mediator (Anyang)"

APAP 5 is deeply rooted in the history of Anyang, a satellite city 20 kilometers south of Seoul. Anyang was once known as a major industrial complex outside Seoul, with paper and textiles as big industries. Now, industrial parks have declined and Anyang has a new downtown in the Pyeongchon area, a wealthy community.

Anyang Art Park, home to the Anyang Pavilion designed by Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza for APAP 1, is the site of the former Anyang Amusement Park, which holds vestiges of the city's heyday.

Art reaches for ordinary people

Participating works for APAP 5 are scattered around the city, with the Kim Chung Up Museum and Anyang Pavilion as main venues.

Park Bo-na's video is on view at the Kim Chung Up Museum, along with the 2016 Korea Artist Prize winner mixrice's "21st Century Light of the Factory." The newly commissioned video by APAP 5 reinterprets a 1978 people's play written and directed by Kim Min-gi. It features migrant workers and laborers in Anyang and attempts to capture the gestures and real lives of ordinary people through songs and dance routines.



Byron Kim's "Contemplation Room"

Byron Kim pays tribute to architect Kim Chung-up by placing a small painting in the machine room of the museum as homage to "bokjang," or a sacred piece of fabric enshrined in the vessel of a Buddhist statue. He also installed "Contemplation Room," a room solely for silent mediation.

Michael Joo installed a large semi-sphere that looks like a sundial or a satellite dish in the heart of the forest. Titled "Mediator (Anyang)," the piece has an antenna-like rod in the center. "The artist spent much time in the mountain area and wanted to give something back to the forest where he got inspiration," artistic director Joo said. "The centerpiece is made of copper and can work as a lightning rod, which is the artist's gesture to protect the forest. It will eventually get absorbed by the mountain like a living ruin."

Argentine artist Adrian Villar Rojas installed some 100 bird nests throughout Anyang City as a part of his "Brick Farm" series. It is originally for rufous hornero, the national bird of Argentina, and Villar Rojas employs the avian architecture to connect the two distant geographies of Argentina and Anyang.



A scene from Park Bo-na's "Paradise City"

The Anyang Pavilion, formerly Alvaro Siza Hall, is revamped into a gathering place for Anyang citizens. Artist Choi Jeong-hwa created "The Gateless Gate," a multi-purpose storage space made of found or donated furniture.

"We tried to reorganize the pavilion as a welcome center which can live through after the project closes," Joo said.

Korean-born designer and artist Christina Kim blends fashion and public art in her work "Rock Pillow Garden." She designed cushions in various sizes and shapes, inspired by the patterns of rocks of nearby Anyang Stream.

"These cushions are all made here in Anyang by volunteers using the natural dye technique," Joo said. "In addition to her installation, Kim designed uniform vests for APAP docents."

Im Heung-soon, the Silver Lion winner at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015, reveals his latest video, "Ryeohaeng," the North Korean word for "travel," at APAP 5. Revolving around female refugees from North Korea, the work reflects North-South relations and their changing circumstances. The film is screened free at Lotte Cinema Pyeongchon on Saturdays.

In an attempt to take a step closer to Anyang citizens, APAP 5 launched "Art in the Shops" with 20 local artists. The curatorial team and the artists visited shop owners and spoke with them, which resulted in artworks in cafes, restaurants and convenience stores.

APAP 5 runs through Dec. 15, but some of the artworks will be continuously on view, including three works scheduled for completion in spring 2017 by Chosil Kil, SUPERFLEX and Danh Vo. House of Natural Fiber, an Indonesian media art laboratory, will hold a series of workshops to develop creativity and technical skills for local and grassroots communities in Anyang in November.