

Older male K-pop fans inspire artist

Jung Yeon-doo explores identities of middle-aged male fans of Crayon Pop as an extension to his previous works investigating the lives of ordinary people and their dreams

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By Lee Woo-young

There have been flashy, glamorous collaborative projects between K-pop stars and artists, but few have dealt with the fans who cheer on the stars.

Artist Jung Yeon-doo examines a fan craze for Korean pop idols in his latest work "Crayon Pop Special." The group of fans in whom Jung took interest, however, was not teenage girls, but men in their late 30s and 40s.

Cheers in low male voices echo across the exhibition hall. The bass sounds come from Jung's 30-minute video showing about 50 older male fans of the girl group Crayon Pop. In the clip, the male admirers wear cheerleader costumes designed with motifs inspired by the young girls' stage clothes and sing along at the top of their voices.

"I started the video project because I thought of the middle-aged male fan craze as an interesting social phenomenon in Korean society," Jung said at the press preview of his exhibition at Plateau, Samsung Museum of Art, on Monday.

The artist, whose previous exhibition examined the identities of ordinary little-known members of society, highlights the peculiarities of these male fans. Jung, who was named "Artist of the Year" in Korea in 2007, received much acclaim with his video piece, "Six Points," that seamlessly followed the movements of pedestrians on the streets of New York.

"Korean men in their 30s and 40s are a very interesting demographic. They have undergone a bitterly competitive life so they understand how difficult it is to achieve success. They cheer for the B-list band ardently because they feel they are



Artist Jung Yeon-doo PLATEAU

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in the same boat, so they are gratified if the band's popularity rises (boosted by their enthusiastic support)," Jung said.

Jung said he was enamored with the older male fan group after watching their passionate cheering and insatiable dedication to the girl group. They hail from diverse localities, including Ulsan and Jeonju, southern cities far from Seoul.

"One guy even took a day off to participate in our video shoot," he added.

Jung calls the mature male fans "Popjeossi," a compound of pop from Crayon Pop and ajeossi, a Korean

word for an uncle or older man. Through the documentation of "Popjeossi," Jung attempts to reveal the older male generations' psychological hollowness.

While Crayon Pop Special deals with show business and fans, Jung's other latest work, "Virgil's Path," seeks to engage with "the essence of human beings."

In Virgil's Path, he reinterprets sculptor Auguste Rodin's work "The Gates of Hell," a giant sculpture which stands in the lobby of Plateau. A special optical device, the Oculus Rift, enables viewers to watch the world of "The Gates of Hell" recreated by the artist, who had models strike the same poses as the figures depicted in the original sculpture. An Oculus Rift is a device which provides a 3-D experience for video games.

Jung also displays snapshots of families in the apartment complex Evergreen Tower in Seoul and pictures of sales clerks at luxury boutiques in the affluent district of Ginza, Tokyo. Through the apartment family portraits, the artist seeks to explore the distinctive identities of middle-class families living in Seoul to showcase a variety of lifestyles and dreams confined in a standardized apartment complex.

The artist called up an uncomfortable moment he had when he was greeted by shop staff at luxury boutiques in Tokyo. He portrays their first gaze at customers and even their attitude in a photo series, "Tokyo Brand City."

The exhibition runs from March 13 to June 8 at Plateau, Samsung Museum of Art. Admission is 3,000 won for adults, 2,000 won for students. The Museum closes on every Monday. For more information, call 1577-7595, or visit www.plateau.or.kr.

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Screenshots from "Virgil's Path" by Jung Yeon-doo PLATEAU



A scene from a video in which middle-aged male fans cheer for the girl group Crayon Pop. PLATEAU