

Spell On You:

The 7th Seoul International Media Art Biennale Opening (Mediacity Seoul 2012)

Spell On You, 11th September – 4th November 2012

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Mediacity Seoul 2012, the representative biennial hosted by the city of Seoul opened on September 11, 2012. Based on the idea of a 'spell', this exhibition includes 49 artists from 20 countries, and various range of new media artworks. *Spell On You* is to be held for 55 days until November 4 at Seoul Museum of Art and DMC Gallery.

Jinsang Yoo, the artistic director of Mediacity Seoul 2012 announced the following curatorial statement; "this exhibition will be re-considering the social, cultural and political shifts that have taken place as a result of major technological developments in new social media."

The thematic scheme of this year's exhibition was overseen by three other co-curators of the biennale, which include: Yukiko Shikata (Japanese critic and curator of new media), Olof Van Winden (the former director of Netherlands Media Arts Institute (NIMk) and director of Today'sArt) and Dooeun Choi (former creative director of Art Center Nabi and co-curator of



Zero1 Biennale, 2012).

For the opening ceremony of Mediacity Seoul 2012, artist Sungmin Hong orchestrated a performance piece entitled the *National Geographic*. In this performance, the life of a lion was re-enacted through a lively dance performance by twelve traditionally masked “Bukcheong lions” (Lion mask dances are one of the most popular and representative traditional performances in Korea). This performance makes ironic reference to National Geographic Wildlife documentaries, which often depict lions as aggressive and active hunters when in fact most lions spend up to 95 percent of their lives resting on grounds. While representing these moments of inertness, the lion dance allude to the recent strike by the MBC broadcasting staff members that lasted for 174 days. Throughout this performance, the lion dancers linger in front of the museum, as if they were on a strike, implying the fact that the performance itself is greatly dependant on the paid labor of these performers. In a Mobius strip like pattern, Hong brought together these elements based on Wildlife documentaries and the traditional “Bukcheong” lion mask dance that eventually resolve the upheaval into a peaceful rest.



Numerous significant figures in international art scene were present at the opening ceremony. Held in front of the video piece by Adel Abdessemed *Mémoire*, Jinsang Yoo moderated the opening ceremony, and Honghee Kim, the director of Seoul Museum of Art gave an inaugural speech. Kim expressed her appreciation for Mediacity 2012 as an important addition to the Seoul Museum of Art through showcasing an innovative approach to new media and diversity of artworks.

Jinsang Yoo explained the main theme for *Spell On You*, and three other sub themes on each floor, inviting the viewers to gain a more extensive reading of various subjects. For the purpose of improving the general public understanding of new media, the exhibition included some participatory installations and complementary work descriptions to enforce the viewing experience.



Media Contact

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