

5100 Pentagon - Young In Hong

10th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, Republic of Korea, 5th September - 9 November 2014

Project Outline

Under the theme of Burning Down the House and curated by Jessica Morgan, the 10th Gwangju Biennale in 2014 invited artists who address the personal and political through individual and collective engagement, to explore the cycles of destruction and renewal through history.

Commissioned for the Biennale, **5100: Pentagon** was a collaborative flash mob performance commemorating the Gwangju Uprising on 18th May 1980, a seminal moment in history which marked the emergence of democracy in South Korea. Each week over 2 months of the Biennale, the performance occurred as an intervention in the space at the Biennale Halls in Gwangju, whereby up to 30 members of the public appeared to spontaneously come together to perform a series of gestural movements accompanied by volunteer musicians and after to disperse into the crowd.

5100 refers to the numbers of people either killed, injured or missing during the Gwangju Uprising. Pentagon indicates a space for performance and intensity of sound.

Drawing on her own formative experience growing up in Korea during the democracy movement and her research into archival images found in the May 18 Democratic Archive, Hong developed a series of choreographed gestural interpretations in collaboration with choreographers, Ann So-Hee Mannik Kristiansen and Sarah Louise Kristiansen. As a way of challenging the authorship of the artist and hierarchical modes of communication, the performance was constructed by making these movements accessible in an online tutorial, as part of a social media open call for participants with no restrictions in age, gender or experience, to organise themselves and take part in the performance. Hong's adapted version of the popular 1980s Korean protest song, *A Song In May* was also made available online for volunteer musicians to rehearse and accompany the performance on any instrument they chose. *A Song In May* was originally from a french song, *Qui A Tué Grand Maman?* by Polnareff, but shared orally at rallies during the 1980s and lyrically adapted depending on who and where it was being sung.

There were different groups of participants for each of the 8 Gwangju Biennale performances all encouraged to bring their own interpretations and incorporate their background in the work. The Open Call was made through social media to attract younger people, as a way passing on history so that it reverberates through emerging generations - 99% of those who use social media in Korea are under 30 years old. However many citizens who had either witnessed or participated in the Uprising on 18th May 1980, heard about the project and came forward to participate. The unexplored trauma of this past seminal event among the now multi generational groups, was activated in the present, as a highly charged collective force. **5100:Pentagon** explores the potential of this self organising and networked group subjectivity not just as memorial but as an act of resistance to current socio political norms.

