Beyond Opposites:
An Urban Initiative in Seoul

by
Hoon Moon
B.S. Inha University
Seoul, Korea
February, 1990

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE
AT THE
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
JUNE 1993

©Hoon Moon 1993. All rights reserved.

The author hereby grants to M.I.T. permission
to reproduce and to distribute publicly copies
of this thesis document in whole or in part

Signature of the author
Hoon Moon, Department of Architecture
May 7, 1993

Certified by
Bill Hubbard Jr.
Associate Professor of Architecture
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by
Roy Strickland
Chairman, Departmental Committee on Graduate Students

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE
OF TECHNOLOGY
MAY 02 1993
LIBRARIES
Acknowledgment

To People who have helped me by their silent existence.
ABSTRACT
The thesis began with the understanding of urban, cultural, and social conditions of Seoul. The choice of the existing bridge as the point of departure has meaning in two layers. Layer one: the need for more space in the city of Seoul has initiated intense discussions on alternative building sites—underground cities. The choice of the bridge was made as yet another possible alternative. Layer two: Seoul, like any other city, is full of urban attempts and failures. These mistakes and scars are taken as a point of departure, not as a point of destruction and restart. These structures have become our second nature, man-made nature. The existing bridge is one of the possible place for a new beginning.

The program layers for the thesis began on the basis of disparities—harmonies, and chaos—order imbedded in Seoul. Layer one: The need for 24 hour zone to accommodate various life styles in the megacity (not a single district is open for 24 hours). The need for a place where disappearing values, traditions, and rituals can be practiced (religious and performance facility). Layer two: The need for exemplification and accentuation of what is, so that we become aware. The need for a place of exposure and awareness, where implicit but widespread practices become explicit.
# Table of Contents

**mong:**
- 10 SEOUL
- 12 SEOUL images
- 14 The Larger Site
- 16 The Site: Dongho Bridge
- 18 The River

**song:**
- 24 Roots
- 25 Notes on Thesis
- 26 Program: Layers
- 28 Program
- 30 Design Initiative: Layer One
- 32 Design Initiative: Layer Two

**n i:**
- 36 Sketches

**mongo i s a n g n i:**
- 60 Final Presentation

77 Bibliography
All drawings, Illustrations, sketches, and Photographs contained in this thesis is done by the author, unless otherwise noted.

Picture Credits.

fig. 1, and 2: 4.3 group, ECHOES OF AN ERA, Ahn Graphics, 1992.

fig. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9: Jin-Ae, Kim, SEOULINESS, Seoul Forum, 1991.

new
fancy
shock
ephemeral
karaoke rooms
cafe
disco
love hotel
Lotte world
fortune teller
shamanism
superficiality
discipline
churches
McDonald
Seven Eleven
KFC
vending machines
parking tower
market
palaces
tradition
no values
fashion
vogue
cool
images
Hyundai
Orange
Sonata
extravagance
show off
Tico
ryokwan
era
APT
Marzo
rush hour
Chanel
Gucci
Christianity
Buddhism
animism
Apkujungdong
daldongnae
Jung! Jung!
Sony
Canon
Casio
Saga
Nonno
Illusion
hypocrisy
religious aspiration
SEOUL: An Overview

Seoul is a city of chaotic confusion that embodies the scars of the past and potential healing in the future. It was founded almost 600 years ago as the capital city for Yi dynasty of Choseon. The fung-shi and yin-yang principles were decisive and important factors for the birth of Seoul. The city has two major axes, one of visual continuity (north-south axis of mountain range), and the other of separation (east-west axis of the Han river).

Seoul is a dynamic breeding ground for the new on the basis of its traditions-hidden treasures. The extremely old and the extremely new lives side by side, each speaking for each era. The word 'context' has little meaning in Seoul, since the rate of changes in density and form is so rapid.

In the 90s, there has been active discussions on the future of Seoul. The expansion, density, and land prices in Seoul have reached its limit. Alternative possibilities, such as development of under-ground cities, have been announced. There is also much debate on providing Seoul with a landmark of some sort that would represent the caring intentions for the future of Seoul in symbolic terms.
The Larger Site

fig. 8
For the last 40 years or so, when Korea had only a singular objective-economic growth, Seoul had to go through an ordeal of expansion and incision without rest. For example, there were much unbalanced development of north and south of Seoul that resulted the notion of two disparate cities of one that is much more privileged (south—the new city) over the other (north—the old city).

There is also the topological difference between the north and the south. The north expanded on its own accord. The whole organization of the city is rather organic, adapting to contours and curves of the hills. On the other hand the south is dominated by wide imposed grid.

The case is most extremely comprehensible around the landings of the Dongho bridge.
The Site: Dongho bridge

Dongho bridge is mostly a vehicular connector between north and south Seoul. There is also a subway transit system and a station on it.

The exposed concrete bays of the bridge is a hidden beauty of intense power that can momentarily bring about a solemn silence. It might be such a short moment, but it will be powerful enough to provide a refreshing outlook and meaning to a city life of extreme chaos and confusion.
The River

During the mid 80s, there was a greater awareness of what Seoul, especially the Han river could provide, and subsequently large parks of sports and recreational facilities were built along the two banks of the river.

The interventions are not of a great beauty, but it has provided some relief and a place to visit in otherwise a very tense and crowded city.

The Han river is slowly regaining the richness it once had. It is becoming a place where people can momentarily detach themselves from the harsh realities without negating their being in the city.
Roots

The hidden, unmanifest sustains the visible, manifest.

QUOTES

From delusion lead me to Truth.
From darkness lead me to Light.
From death lead me to immortality.  I. 3. 28

Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad

The invisible and subtle essence is the Spirit of the whole universe. That is Reality. That is Truth. THOU ART THAT.

Chandogya Upanishad

Just as by knowing a piece of gold all that is gold can be known, since any differences are only words and the reality is only gold;

Chandogya Upanishad

When we return to the root, we gain the meaning;
When we pursue external objects we lose the reason.
The moment we are enlightened within,
We go beyond the voidness of a world confronting us.

Seng-Ts'an

Abide not with dualism,
Carefully avoid pursuing it;
As soon as you have right and wrong,
Confusion ensues, and Mind is lost.

Seng-Ts'an

The object is an object for the subject,
The subject is a subject for the object;
Know that the relativity of the two
Rests ultimately on one emptiness.

Seng-Ts'an
Notes on Thesis

Beginning

The cities are full of urban attempts and failures. These mistakes and scars are taken as a point of departure, not as a point of destruction and restart. These structures have become our second nature, man-made nature.

Summary

What exists beforehand can be both a clue and a restriction. The act of superimposing a new order over the old creates complexities of adjustment and conflict. The large bed of the river embodies innumerable matter of every health and harm. The intervention will focus on the control of harm as the departure point and an ephemeral tower as the inevitable destination.

Methodology

The theme of inhabiting existing structures or buildings have been my primary inspiration for quite for some time. One conflict will be the experiment of overlaying a new order over an old one. Another conflict will be the crossing of two axis, one natural and the other will. The conflicts and harmonies created by these lines and superimpositions will then be developed to bring about a synthesis.

Objective

Cacophony and Harmony: The objective would be that of understanding chaos and order as one. Chaos has order within, and Order has chaos within. The existing structure will be the womb for the new intervention while the intervention will be the guide for the rediscovery of the existing structure.
Program: Layers

The visible city is often chaotic, dynamic, and ephemeral. Power, money, and sex dominate it. They last as long as their inter-dependency lasts. It is indeed ephemeral. The implicit existence of traditional values and religious aspirations sustains the visible city in solemn silence.

The new, the fancy dominates the consciousness of Seoul. The Karaoke rooms are a phenomenon. There were only a few in Seoul three years ago. Now, they are everywhere. It will wither as time goes on, and something else will dominate.

Vending machines are everywhere. Mechanical tower parking structures are everywhere. We are not afraid of steel. We are not afraid of technology.

The concept of the program began on the basis of disparities-harmonies, and, chaos-order imbedded in Seoul.

The topological difference between north and south. The visible vs. hidden. The underprivileged vs. the privileged. The materialistic orientation vs. Religious dependency. The superficial following of Confucian traditions and values vs. Degradation of our widespread religious roots-shamanism, fortune telling, and etc. The new vs. Old.

The program endeavors to express the needs for both the spiritual, and the physical.

Layer one (explicit need) The need for 24 hour zone to accommodate various life styles in the megacity (not a single district is open for 24 hours. The influx of chain stores such as seven eleven is generating and accommodating to various life styles).

Layer two (implicit need) The need for exemplification and accentuation of what is, so that we become aware. The need for a place of exposure and awareness, where implicit but widespread practices become explicit.

26
Program

24 HOUR ZONE: (all equipped with automatic vending menu systems)

24 hour AMENITIES: Disco club
Kiosks
Cinema
Fortune teller cell
Meditation cell
Vertigo walkway
Seven Eleven
KFC
McDonald
VR game cell
Cafe
Pizza Hut

VRFTEL: (Virtual Reality Fantasy Hotel)
menu lobby
cell type 001-lodging capsules
cell type 00x-infinite menu VRcells

THING: (controls 24hr zone; image data bank-no access)
Thing itself is an image projector
Thing can be experienced only through cell type 00x of VRFTEL

RELIGIOUS ZONE:
Performance plaza (religious rituals and performances)
Crematorium (ash dispatching platforms)
Lookout platforms
Walkway
Filtering facility

PLAZA ZONE:
Barren plaza
Recycling plant
Design Initiative: Layer One

There are 19 bridges in Seoul, but none of them is pedestrian oriented. The first initial step of the design begins with the intention of providing walkways. One starts from the northern end of the bridge where a subway station sits. The other begins from the southern riverbank plaza. The walkway north is fragmented with the intention of reflecting the contours, curves, and its organic organization of the north. While the walkway south is of a straight will, endeavoring to express the harsh grid of the south. The character of the walkway north is of flotation and lightness. This is also the reflection of its origin - The subway station is the only one built with steel and glass out of entire station facilities. The character of the walkway south is of gravity and heaviness, since it starts from the concrete river bank. When both walkways converge - not yet touching - there will be a celebration.

The walkway north represents the secular path of life, often fragmented, and chaotic city life. The walkway south reflects the longing for distance from crowd and solemn silence within the city life. The converging of the two is a celebration for the union of two extremes.
The walkway north is provided with amenities which enriches the experience of walking. It has a crossing point where marine transportation terminal is situated.
The walkway south is provided with look-out platforms which endeavors to release tensions of high walled walkway.
The walkway north culminates into the plaza where the urftel is supported. The walkway south slips beyond the plaza, and on the left side the religious facilities are attached.

The plaza is a place of celebration for the meeting of two extremes. The plaza is an offering from the walkway south which sustains the urftel and 24 hour amenities. The act of celebration is emphasized by separation(two extreme facility as two different and separated entities), and merging(the physical meeting of the two in the plaza, and the indirect merging through the attached Thing).
The image comes with such an inspiring force.
I can only go back to the beginning.
The underworld and overworld demarcated by the bridge.
The dominant, the conspicuous, the 24 hour tower.
The hidden, the unmanifest, the religious facility.
The plaza that floats—place for gathering on the water.
A line of force from the north.
A line of force from the south.
They converge in the center.
There is a celebration.
The underworld extends to the two sides of the bridge. There is a sense of revolution, endless cycle of up and down. It is of implicit cycle. It cannot meet. Merge it can.
The matter recyclitorium.
The spirit recyclitorium.
The inaccessible image cell.
Projection within and without.
The relationship between the two parts are difficult.
One sustains the other, but how.
The relationship of denial?
The relationship of mutual care?
The sacrifice of one for the other?
The problem is solved when we realize that they are one.
The place for rituals.  
There are cremations.  
There are performances.  
This is a place for religious aspirations.
Walking through the solid corridor of the tower.
You discover that there is a whole new world beyond the wall.
These are my final sketches.
I do not wish to sketch anymore.
I want to invite CHANCE.
Chance of time, mood, and mistakes.
The beauty comes without intentions.
Bibliography
TEHT CREDITS

(English)

(Korean)

PICTURE CREDITS

(Korean)