

Lee Young Hee Museum of Korean Culture: Standing Strong in a Resilient Koreatown

By Katy Marshall, CC '12

Possibly one of New York's best-kept secrets, the Lee Young Hee Museum of Korean Culture is ensconced inside a non-descript office building on West 32nd Street, famously dubbed Korea Way, without so much as a sign on the door. Once I rang the doorbell and stepped inside, however, the gloomy Koreatown walk-up was transformed. A bright and intimate space, the LYH Museum consists of one large room housing a Korean *hanbok*, traditional dress, exhibit as well as a *hanbok* design studio in the rear of the room, where the two women who welcomed me inside were eating a traditional Korean lunch.

The eponymous exhibit is the brainchild of Lee Young Hee, arguably South Korea's most celebrated designer. Famous for bringing *hanbok* to Paris runways in the 1990s, Lee Young Hee, now 73, even dressed George W. Bush at the APEC Summit in 2005. Her exhibit, composed of *hanbok* and cultural ornaments from



Courtesy of popseoul.com

A model wearing one of Lee Young Hee's designs of a *hanbok* wedding dress.

the 18th-19th century Joseon Period, strives to show Americans "the depth [of] Korean culture . . . and the fullness of our heritage and our lives."

Unlike many Western exhibits on East Asia, LYH truly incorporates its viewer into the intimacy of Korean familial life. Meticulous in its presentation of details, the exhibit brings alive the stories of the traditionally private spheres of Korean women. From the exquisite layering of the *Gi-saeng-bog*, the outdoor attire worn for entertaining other women, to the elaborate *danghae*, silk embroidered slippers, the exhibit sings on an aesthetic level alone. Jewel-crusted, gold-plated ceremonial coronets and dozens of *norigae*, tassled pendants hung from the waist of the *hanbok* dress, hang on display, adorned with Chinese characters and filled with perfumes.

However, the accompaniments of the *hanbok* give the exhibit its true depth, as they frame

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About the Weatherhead East Asian Institute:



Since its establishment in 1949, Columbia University's Weatherhead East Asian Institute has been a major center for research, teaching, and publishing on modern and contemporary Asia. The Institute's mission is to train new generations of experts in the humanities, social sciences, and the professions and to enhance understanding of East Asia in the wider community.

Comforting Korean Delights

By Christine Kwon, CC '10

When November rolls around, and I find myself in boots, crunching over the frosted leaves that just last week were blazing red on the trees, I begin to crave cinnamon hot chocolate, fuzzy slippers, roasted chestnuts, and . . . tofu.

Not your porous white bricks of raw packaged tofu, mind you, but *sundubu jjigae*, a rich, spicy-hot stew brewed with hearty stock, soft clouds of silken tofu, scallions, clams, and mushrooms, served bubbling in a black stone bowl into which you crack a raw egg that cooks as the stew boils. The steam rising from the surface fogs your vision, and

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Courtesy of hwasinwon.com

Ddökbokki, a hot and spicy rice cake dish, is a popular snack food.

Mandoo Bar: Dumplings Galore

Courtesy of flickr/kramchang



By Hannah Kim GS '10

Located in the heart of New York's Koreatown, Mandoo Bar has been a local favorite for as long as I can remember. Mandoo Bar offers a wide variety of its namesake dumplings (*mandoo* in Korean) as well as an assortment of popular Korean dishes such as *bibimbap*, rice, vegetables, beef mixed with spicy pepper paste, *pajeon*, Korean pancake and *dduk bok ki*, spicy rice cakes. Over the past few years, Korean cuisine has steadily gained mainstream popularity due to the wealth of fresh, healthy and delicious ingredients. *Bibimbap*, *pajeon* or *dduk bok ki* are a few of the most well-received Korean dishes by non-Koreans and I was not surprised to find these very same dishes prominent at nearby tables.

The Korean *mandoo* looks very similar to the Chinese *jiaozi* or the Japanese *gyoza*, but taste difference lies in the cooking method, the dumpling shape, the different fillings and dumpling skins used. These dumpling varieties can be deep-fried, boiled, steamed, or pan-fried and accompanied by a soy sauce/vinegar mixture

to dip. While fried dumplings can normally be rather unappetizingly oily, Mandoo Bar's variation is actually grilled with a small dash of oil to crisp the outside and is very tasty. The filling options include *kimchi* (fermented cabbage), vegetable, seafood, and pork. The menu is diner-friendly and dumplings can be ordered steamed or fried (per dumpling) and there is a combo option so the diner can try every filling.

I ordered the fried dumpling combo platter and was served four pieces of pork, vegetable and seafood. Each filling has its own corresponding dumpling wrapping color and the platter is adorably colorful. The *bibimbap*, *pajeon* and *dduk bok ki* are always dependably tasty and filling but there are definitely other dishes at Mandoo Bar that are worth a try. My longtime favorite is the *dotori* noodle dish, which is actually a cold noodle dish mixed with vegetables and house dressing. The *dotori* noodle dish is unique in that the noodles are made out of acorn and the end dish is light, flavorful and easy on the waist.

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Columbia University Korean Students Association: A Showcase of Traditional and Contemporary Korea

By Derrick Fu, SEAS '12

Every year, student organizations, especially cultural organizations, strive to exhibit diversity, activity and accessibility by hosting (what seems like) an inexhaustible number of events throughout the academic year. However, few do so with the same vibrancy as the Columbia University Korean Students Association (KSA).

KSA, an undergraduate cultural organization, is comprised of over 300 students. However, it is not its membership that is most impressive, but the diverse backgrounds, experiences and talents that its membership brings to the table.

"This is my first year on the board of KSA," said Jeff Chou, SEAS '10, a KSA programming officer. "I've been heavily involved within other organizations with cultural focuses, including TASA [Taiwanese American Students Association] as well as Pi Delta Psi [Asian-Interest Fraternity], but it's rare to see such different individuals come together like KSA has always been able to do."

Diversity aside, KSA is one of Columbia's more active cultural organizations, having already hosted a number of events this year. They have ambitious

plans to host 5-6 events per semester, many of which will highlight different aspects of Korean culture.

"Of course, we want to have fun, but we're not only about that," explained Joffre Andrade, SEAS '10, KSA treasurer. "We're most definitely looking to educate the greater Columbia community on traditional aspects of Korean culture, while also educating students on events that are currently shaping Korea and the way in which Korea is perceived by the world." "Got Seoul", an educational event KSA co-hosted with the Columbia University Black Students Organization, explored violence and tensions between Koreans and African-Americans, especially in California in the 1990s. KSA also plans to host an educational panel next semester.

The uniqueness of KSA collaborations is certainly remarkable. "Parisian Seoul", an event KSA co-hosted with the French Culture Society earlier this semester, attracted a multitude of students from a wide range of backgrounds.

"We're extremely committed to bringing Korean culture to the forefront of Columbia's cultural setting, while also respect-

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Columbia's Korean Students Association hosts a Culture Show annually. KSA's upcoming culture show will take place in April of 2010.

Courtesy of columbia.edu/ksa

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the elegance of the clothing within the traditions of Korean courtship and marriage. An embroidered scroll holding wedding documents and a handbook for marital harmony are on display beside ornate sets of thimbles and chopstick cases. Wooden carved geese on display made traditional marriage presents, as the representation of the monogamous bird represented conjugal fidelity. The geese were traditionally carved as a gift to a new couple from a village elder, who had himself enjoyed a long, happy marriage.

A true cultural gem, I highly recom-

mend a visit to the Lee Young Hee exhibit for anyone interested in East Asia, fashion or art. The museum holds several workshops on making traditional crafts, and the staff is extremely knowledgeable and excited to have a visitor. Like the Koreatown neighborhood itself, holding fast amidst the gentrification of New York City, the modest, sequestered museum, speaks for itself with a guestbook filled with rave reviews.

Lee Young Hee Museum of Korean Culture
2 West 32nd Street, Suite 301
Call 212-560-0722



Courtesy of korea.net

Pictured here are models wearing redesigned *hanboks* by designer Lee Young Hee.

Comforting Korean Delights

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from the first spoonful you are hit with the kind of warmth that immediately fills your stomach. Ahh. It's. So. Good.

Of course, dishes like *sundubu* are comfort foods to me in part because I was raised with them; my family owns (and uses) a fridge specifically for kimchi. But while I recognize that to most, *sundubu* is just, well, tofu stew (read: not so tempting), Korean cuisine, with its warm spiciness, thick soups and stews, and no fear of rib-sticking carbohydrates, lends itself easily to comfort food. My vote for best comfort dish, of course, goes to the tofu, but here are a few other suggestions from friends:

Jean Pak (CC'11):

kimchi jjigae (kimchi stew)

Why? "Cause it makes me feel warm inside (scientifically proven!), it's substantial enough and can just be eaten with rice. It's spicy and hot (temperature-wise) so if you're cold or have a cold—it's the perfect thing to eat."

Chae Yoo Park (SUNY Binghamton '96): *yukgaejang*

Why? "Because it's spicy and hot!"

Kelvin Chan (SUNY Binghamton '11): Korean fried chicken

Why? "...it's Korean fried chicken."

Katie Mitchell (CC '11):

kalbi (short-rib beef)

Why? "Absolutely my favorite dish. Korean BBQ is comfort food because it's something you certainly CRAVE. I love the cut meat of *kalbi*."

And, *bibimbap*: "rice, earthy vegetables, mushrooms, raw egg that cooks in the piping hot bowl as you stir, chili paste."

Why? "I think it's the definition of comfort food because it's so warm (awesome on a cold, rainy day) but also because it's pretty healthy...like lots of Korean dishes, the dark green leafy vegetables and the different mushrooms just make you feel good when you eat them!"

Emily Ho (Rutgers '11):

ddökbokki

Why? "It's hot, spicy, chewy, and delicious."

You can enjoy any of these dishes at most Korean restaurants in Koreatown in Manhattan (32nd Street), or in Flushing, Queens. For a quicker fix, check out our local Mill Korean Restaurant as well. (Though, if you can, try and get yourself a home-cooked meal.)



Courtesy of flickr/roboppy



Courtesy of flickr/auturohm



Courtesy of flickr/avlxzy

Top: Korean fried chicken at BonChon Chicken, a franchise with 5 stores in the New York City area.

Middle: *Kalbi*, short-rib beef.

Bottom: *Bibimbap*, rice, earthy vegetables, mushrooms, raw egg, in a steaming hot bowl.

Columbia Korean Students Association: A Showcase of Traditional and Contemporary Korea

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ing other cultures,” said Eunice Nam, CC '10, KSA President. “We want our culture to be accessible and inviting to everyone, which is why we’re always looking for new ways to get more people involved and engage more students from different demographics.”

Nam, a senior in Columbia College majoring in Biology and Economics, has been involved in KSA since her freshman year. “Last year, I was a programming officer,” explained Nam, “but I was first involved in the KSA Culture Show.”

The KSA Culture Show, the organization’s largest event of the year, serves as its annual showcase of Korean culture and history. KSA’s upcoming culture show will take place in April 2010.

“KSA Culture Show is one of KSA’s tried and true events,” explained Hannah Chang, SEAS '11, KSA’s VP-External and co-director for this year’s show. “It’s one of those events that

have proven to be successful in reaching out to the student body. We definitely feel that students come away from the show with a strong understanding of what Korean culture is, what Korean culture means to them and areas in which they can relate.”

In addition to serving as a showcase for both traditional and contemporary Korean culture, the KSA Culture Show also serves as a stage for young and upcoming Korean talent. All performers are members of Columbia’s student body.

With so many unique events, talented individuals and new initiatives, what is KSA’s focus?

“Koreans are commonly stereotyped as being exclusive and cliquey,” explained Nam. “That’s why we always want to serve as Columbia’s primary channel to Korean culture. We want KSA to serve as a platform for introducing Korean culture and promoting awareness, while also empowering the growing Korean community.”

And indeed they have.

Mandoo Bar: Dumplings Galore

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A meal for two at Mandoo Bar usually averages about \$30-40, depending on menu choices. My dinner choice of the fried dumpling combo platter was approximately \$20 and the dotori noodle dish was \$8. Every meal is served with small dishes of *kimchi* and *dak ggwang*—Korean pickles. Aside from being budget friendly, Mandoo Bar is almost always packed full of diners, both Korean and non-Korean. I’ve always heard that the true test of an ethnic restaurant was

if the restaurant hosted a regular crowd of natives and I think it safe to say that Mandoo Bar has passed that test.

Mandoo Bar

2 West 32nd Street
(Broadway & Fifth)
New York, NY 10001
212 279 3075

71 University Place
New York, NY 10003
212 358 0400

Upcoming Events at the Weatherhead Institute

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24

Modern Tibetan Studies Program Film Screening

“Lhasa wangshi, Lha sa’i sngon byung gdam rgyud”
(Old times in Lhasa)

Tibetan Contemporary Realism:
local family TV dramas; Tibet TV, 2002
7:10 PM - 9:30 PM
Kent Hall, Rm. 522D

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30

**Lecture Series: “The Global Financial Crisis:
Responses from East and Southeast Asia”**

“Political Tsunamis and Financial Meltdowns:
Malaysia and the World”

Thomas Pepinsky, Assistant Professor of Government,
Faculty of the Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM
918 IAB

Co-sponsored by Columbia University’s APEC Study Center

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1

Modern Tibetan Studies Program Film Screening

“The Ends of the Earth” (extracts)
Chinese sixth generation views of Tibet
Directed by Duan Jinchuan
7:10 PM - 9:30 PM
Kent Hall, Rm. 522D

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3

Brown Bag Lecture:

“Japan’s Economy and Politics after its Historic Election”

Shijuro Ogata, Former Deputy Governor for
International Relations, Bank of Japan
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM
IAB 918

*Co-sponsored by Columbia University’s APEC Study Center
and the Center on Japanese Economy and Business,
Columbia Business School*

ABOUT SOUNDINGS



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