National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea
The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA) is one of Korea’s representative cultural institutions. With the recent addition of the Seoul branch of the museum in 2013, the MMCA has established an organic network of venues to serve the development of artistic culture in Korea and the cultural welfare of the public. Established in 1986, MMCA Gwacheon provides a place for rest with diverse genres of visual art and a rich natural environment around the museum. MMCA Deoksugung is located in a historical modern building in Deoksugung Palace, offering perspectives on modern art from both Korea and abroad. The building was reopened as a branch of the MMCA in 1998. Located next to Gyeongbokgung, MMCA Seoul is a venue for contemporary art and a wide variety of artistic content that crosses the boundaries of genres. All three branches pursue the essential role of a museum to collect, preserve, and research artworks. To reach a broader audience, the three branches of the MMCA also put much effort into realizing excellent exhibitions and educational programs. In addition, the MMCA is establishing itself as a hub for communication and interaction between various disciplines and contemporary art.
MMCA Gwacheon

MMCA Gwacheon opened its doors to the public in 1986. The building is surrounded by a rich natural environment, creating harmony between natural and artificial beauty. Kim Tae-soo, the architect who designed MMCA Gwacheon, applied a traditional composition of the architectural space to the modern function of the building, such that the museum presents both tradition and modernity. The building reflects the traditional architectural style adapted from beacon mounds and fortresses. With its central ramp core resembling a Korean beacon mound, the building holds three floors in its east wing and two in the west. Across a total of eight galleries, MMCA Gwacheon focuses on providing excellent exhibitions to its visitors while playing a central role in the research of modern and contemporary Korean art. Galleries 1 and 2 hold thematically curated exhibitions, while other galleries offer exhibitions in different genres including architecture, crafts, photography, painting, and media art. The museum also houses a children’s Museum with a strong focus on education, as well as an art library for the organized collection and preservation of different materials related to art.

| Plotage | 66,916m² |
| Floor space | 37,500m² |
| Exhibition space | 1,1530m² |
| Facilities | Open Air Sculpture Park, 8 galleries, Children’s Museum, Art Research Center, Library, Restaurant, Art shop, Small Conference Room, Large Conference Room, Parking lot |
The design of MMCA Seoul focuses on reflecting on the characteristics of the museum building while considering the site’s unique geographical and historical context. It is intended to be a museum without forms; a museum in everyday life; an eco-friendly museum. Taking the concept of madang, a courtyard in traditional Korean houses, the museum has individual buildings arranged around such open spaces. With a total of six madang spaces, it raises questions on the relationship between the museum and its audience, proposing the new possibility of a futuristic museum. MMCA Seoul is more than a museum; it is a cultural complex with a variety of facilities that include not only galleries and educational spaces, but also a Digital Library, a Multi-project Hall, and a theater, among others. With such diverse facilities, MMCA Seoul offers a range of contemporary art in different formats and genres. In addition to the newly-built facilities, MMCA Seoul houses the former Defense Security Central building and the Office of Royal Family Affairs, which were restored during the museum’s construction.

**MMCA in Brief**

**Museum in a City**

- **Plotlage**: 66,916m²
- **Floor space**: 37,500m²
- **Exhibition space**: 1,153m²
- **Facilities**: 8 galleries, Multi-project Hall, MMCA Film and Video, Digital Library, 2 workshop galleries, 3 seminar rooms, 3 lecture rooms, Membership Lounge, Gallery Art Zone, Cafeteria, Food Court, Book Café
MMCA Deoksugung is housed in Seokjojeon, the first modern stone building in Korea. The museum opened its doors to the public in 1998 with the purpose of building a systematic approach towards Korean modern art, and of realizing the country’s cultural and historical identity. While MMCA Gwacheon mainly focuses on contemporary art, MMCA Deoksugung emphasizes Korean modern art from around 1900 to 1960, as well as Asian and international modern art. Along with organizing exhibitions, the museum invests in research and development, education programs, academic activities and publications, and the international exchange of information on modern art.

### MMCA Deoksugung in Brief

- **Plotage**: 66,916m²
- **Floor space**: 37,500m²
- **Exhibition space**: 1,1530m²
- **Facilities**: 4 galleries, Art shop, Conference room, A/V room
Born in Seoul, Paik Nam-june migrated to Japan in 1950 with his family and graduated from Tokyo University with a degree in the history of art. He moved to Germany in 1956 and studied electronic music at Munich University (LMU) and the University of Cologne. It was during this time that he met contemporary avant-garde artists including John Cage, who deeply influenced Paik in carving out his artistic identity. Cage liberated Paik from the restraints of the past and tradition, enabling him to engage in performance art, which eventually led Paik to participate in various events and happenings as a member of the Fluxus group in the early 1960s. In 1963, Paik emigrated to the US, where he fully developed his video art. Instead of merely producing video images, he combined them with sculptures and installations, and he became a pioneer of video art. Dadaikseon(The More, the Better) in the collection of MMCA, which was produced in celebration of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, is an enormous assemblage of 1,003 TVs. The number 1,003 symbolizes the National Foundation Day of Korea, which falls on September 3.

Park Soo-keun (1914-1965) is widely referred to as “the artist of the Korean people” or “painter for the humble ordinary.” These names are very appropriate in view of Park’s life and art, as well as the essence of his artistic oeuvre. The rhetoric that follows Park relies on the style of his works, in which he symbolically represents the difficult times of Korean history, especially of the people. His works are rendered in thick and rough textures, often resulting in dark-brown or taupe hues. A work from his later years, Grandfather and Grandson depicts the two subjects on a flat surface with dim lines that barely distinguish the figures from the foreground. The painting resembles a relief carved on rock, especially that of a Buddhist image prevalent in Korean folk culture, which brings about the ideas of endurance and perseverance in a lyrical manner.
Lee U-fan is a distinguished artist and a theorist of the Mono-ha movement, which reinterpreted Western minimalism based on Eastern philosophy. In the process of repeatedly painting infinite numbers of dots and lines, the presence of the artist becomes insignificant and the final result emblemizes the height of losing oneself in the work. The condensed, monochrome pictorial planes and the dots forming an order of their own indicate the ever-expanding nature of Asian spirituality. From Line shows fading lines of blue brush strokes from the top of the canvas to the bottom. The bold, conspicuous blue fades away as it travels downwards. The lines emphasize the inherent essence of how the work is created rather than its final result.

Lee U-fan (1936- ), From Line, 1974
Oil on canvas, 194x259cm
FA-00251

Suh Se-ok (1929- ) emerged as a young artist after Korea’s liberation from Japan. A representative artist of his time and today, Suh led the Muslim Society and is considered a pioneer in the development of Korean painting, namely in the genre of modern abstract ink paintings. Suh also participated in various international exhibitions and pursued a combination of the purity of modernism and the spirituality of literati painting through the techniques of balmuk (blurring of ink) and pilsun (line layering). People is a work from a series that he frequently dealt with, and here Suh portrayed a group of people through restrained ink lines and simplified juxtaposition. As an artist who has focused on formal experimentation with Korean painting and the language of abstraction, Suh is now recognized as a master of Korean contemporary ink abstraction.

Suh Se-ok (1929- ), People, 1989
Ink and wash on rice paper, 164x260cm
KO-03180
A few days before he passed away, Park Sang-kwang stated “No countrymen have left history; no ethnic art ignored tradition; and all ethnic forms of art have a strong foundation in their traditions.” Park’s Jeon Bong-Jun is a representation of the aforementioned statement, and its sheer size (5.1 by 3.6 meters) represents the monumentality of his thought. The subject, Jeon Bong-un, was the leader of the Donghak Peasants Rebellion—a symbol of rebellion against feudalism and devotion to eradicate foreign threats. Jeon is of extreme importance in the history of Korea, and Park depicts him in a historical event during the rebellion—the fall of Jeonju Fortress. Interestingly, the figure Jeon is carrying on his shoulder is in fact the artist himself. This shows that Park identifies himself with the history of Korea represented by Jeon Bong-Jun. This work embodies the unique features of Park’s late oeuvre, such as the utilization of vivid colors and composition of the plane.

Before he committed suicide after suffering a sense of isolation and impoverishment, Kwon Jin-kyu (1922-1973) had established a unique visual language. His work shows a deep introspection towards the inner world of the self. Kwon’s masterpiece includes his series of refined terra cotta busts, in which the artist successfully combined Gothic solemnity and eternity with the qualities of the material, heightening the meditative quality. Jiwon’s Face (1967) is in many respects similar to another of his work, Bhikkhuni. The elongated neck, naturally relaxed shoulders, and simple collars seem to resemble the Bhikkhuni. One may even see a glimpse of extreme asceticism in the gaze that is seemingly pleading for eternity.
Choe U-ram primarily does works that give motility to inanimate objects. Most of the machines in Choe’s artworks are in the shapes of living things such as worms, insects, electric ivy, and diode dandelions. These machines depict things created by humans themselves gathering together, propagate, and evolve as they eat up the spiritual world of humans. This is a product of Choe’s experimentation and exploration into the relationship between ‘I’ and species that are about to be reborn. Urbanus (Female, Male) is of course a product of such experimentation.

Tristan’s Ascension is part of The Tristan Project, a series inspired by Wagner’s opera Tristan and Isolde. The work questions our origin and direction, drawing the viewers to piety and wonder through images of death and resurrection. The viewers are invited to a situation in which they encounter the work as if it were a sacred religious painting. Tristan’s Ascension presents Bill Viola’s artistic strength at its height, where he employs the most advanced medium while conveying a very abstract and spiritual world. In particular, the slow motion achieved by high-speed cinematography transposes time into a new space, making the viewers reflect on the world beyond reality by slowing the speed of time.
Well known for photographs of pine trees, Bae Bien-u initially studied design before exploring photography by himself. He was particularly influenced by László Moholy-Nagy and Edward Weston. Bae has been a leading figure in expanding Korea's photography scene since the 1990s. For two years between 2007 and 2009, Bae was commissioned by the Spanish government to photograph the Alhambra and Generalife Gardens. In his creations, Bae reinterprets the landscape of his native Yeosu, where the sea and trees have become the source of his artistic inspiration. In the late 1970s, Bae began capturing lighthouses, waves, and rocky islands from the coasts of Korea’s southern islands. The early works of his sea series emphasize the waves of the sea and the outlines of rocks through black and white tones. More recent works in the series, however, display a brighter tone and capture the delicate changes in light upon the flow of time as well as variations of climate such as the thickness of the fog, amplifying a visual quality that resembles ink painting.

In Thread Routes, Kim Soo-ja presents the shared psychological and formal origins embedded in the various textile cultures and geographies of the world. The artist reveals the routes of threads, following the traces of life that have been formed in different manners upon varying geographic characteristics. During the process, the work reveals structural similarities between different cultures in which simple and repetitive actions such as weaving, knitting, lace-making, sewing, and spinning present authentic histories and ways of life. Thread Routes – Chapter 1 is the first of six chapters to be completed in the coming years. The video shows a visual journey from the Sacred Valley near Cusco, Peru to Machu Picchu and the villages of Tequila Island. Through different cultures of thread that reflect varying customs and emotions, the work addresses the authentic landscape of each region as well as aesthetic and anthropological perspectives into people’s everyday lives.
Residency Changdong and Goyang are artist-in-residence programs run by the MMCA to facilitate creative productions by artists and internationalize Korean contemporary art. For the artists participating the program, the Residency Changdong and Goyang provide studio spaces as well as support for building networks. The program includes open studios, exhibitions, cultural experience opportunities, critique sessions, and international exchanges.

**Residency Changdong**
- Plotage: 1,495m²
- Floor space: 1,497m²
- Facilities: 11 studios, Outdoor workshop, 2 galleries, Community center, Office, Lounge, Dining room, Shower booth, Parking lot

**Residency Goyang**
- Plotage: 4,099m²
- Floor space: 2,400m²
- Facilities: 18 studios, Outdoor workshop, 1 gallery, Community center, Office, Parking lot
The Children’s Museum at MMCA Gwacheon is an educational space where children can discover the concepts of contemporary art through a variety of activities. The program of the gallery is composed of project-based classes, learning about exhibitions on display, and hands-on experiences in which children can play with different materials. Each year, the Children’s Museum offers project-based classes with a variety of themes and educational programs for different spaces run by the MMCA.

- **Floor space**: 1,135 m²
- **Facilities**
  - Permanent hands-on experience space,
  - Educational space on special exhibitions,
  - Children’s book space,
  - Information retrieval space, and space for relaxation

The Education Building at MMCA Seoul is a place for different educational programs, seminars, and workshops. A wide range of programs aimed at specific groups, programs related to exhibitions on display, and other cultural events are held in the building. Moreover, the Education Building also provides a ground for learning and experiencing the theory and practice of art and culture in general. Through such diverse programs and events, the Education Building proposes the model of an open museum and a cultural complex.

- **Facilities**
  - 3 lecture rooms, 3 seminar rooms, 2 workshop galleries
MMCA Gwacheon’s Art Research Center was opened in October 2013 to facilitate the understanding and research of Korean and Asian modern art. It operates and supports collection, management, preservation, and research of diverse materials. The center also provides an information service for its collection, and its facilities include separate storage for its archive, a reading room for original materials, and a seminar room. The archive of the research center is categorized into three groups: ‘Special Materials’ are those materials related to artists of the 20th century, ranging from sketches, drawings, and artists’ notes to photographs and films. ‘Museum Documents’ include various materials produced by the MMCA in regard to its major activities (exhibitions, educational programs, research, etc.). As of late 2014, the MMCA holds approximately 223,000 special materials and 100,000 museum documents, providing access to original materials that have been properly archived. In addition, the research center also houses ‘Publication Materials,’ which include approximately 20,000 publications on art, 4,500 dissertations, and 110 serial publications published in Korea and abroad.

The Digital Library at MMCA Seoul puts itself as a ‘Larchiveum’ that aims to function not only as a library but also as a facility that hosts various artistic and academic activities. Its goal is to build points of access to information on modern and contemporary art, which will be made available to the general public and researchers both on-and off-line. The library holds publications produced by the MMCA, books and exhibition catalogues on contemporary art, magazines and electronic publications, as well as access to online databases. The digital archive on the third floor provides materials related to the MMCA’s institutional history, archive materials from the museum’s collection, and items from the Park Hyun-ki Archives. Since its opening in 2014, the library has also held a number of archive exhibitions. In addition, there are more than 10 individual booths where visitors can watch 224 items from the MMCA’s video archive that have been collected since the inauguration of MMCA Gwacheon. The special reading room is equipped with more than 30 seats, providing access to the museum’s archive of artists in the collection and materials related to important Korean artists.
The theater provides a program that focuses on a variety of films and events. It introduces art house and experimental films as well as international screening events and festivals.

The Multi-project Hall is a space for diverse cultural events. Owing to its adjustable seating and attached practice room, the Multi-project Hall functions as a versatile space for various expressions of contemporary art.

As a cultural complex, MMCA Seoul hosts a theater, MMCA Film and Video, as well as the Multi-project Hall. In addition to the entertainment of film, the theater functions as a place where contemporary art and film come together. The theater is equipped with the same digital projector used in commercial theaters and a large screen, which can also present 3D moving images.
The MMCA collaborates with major museums and art institutions around the world. The international exchange program is connected to every aspect of the museum’s operation. Exhibitions and academic conferences are also organized through international collaboration and cooperation. The MMCA aims to establish long-term relationships with domestic and international institutions by establishing MOUs, while also working extensively with non-artistic institutions. Since 2005, the MMCA has offered a research fellowship as a part of the CPI (Cultural Partnership Initiative) by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism to actively facilitate the exchange of human resources.

**Major Projects**
- Collaboration with international organizations,
- Organization of international events,
- MMCA International Research Fellowship

As a cultural complex, the MMCA organizes diverse cultural events to present the trend of convergence between different genres as well as the unique creativity of the museum. The Museum Fashion Show, Festival Marqué, and MMCA X INDIE (concert) are part of the MMCA’s effort to offer a place for the museum’s visitors to experience art and culture from more diverse perspectives.

**Festival Marqué**
MMCA Gwacheon holds an annual festival in its outdoor sculpture park. The festival comprises an exhibition, educational programs, games, and performances. In 2014, the Festival Marqué was organized as a participatory festival with diverse programs such as an art book fair, participatory programs, collaborative projects with architects, outdoor concerts, and artist performances.

*Marqué* MMCA Gwacheon is located in Makgye-dong, Gwacheon. The title of the festival, Marqué, adopts the pronunciation of the name of the neighborhood.

**Museum Fashion Show**
The Art Collaboration Fashion Show at MMCA Seoul was the first cultural event that the MMCA co-organized with the MMCA Promotion Foundation. The lobby of the exhibition building and the corridor to the basement floor became a catwalk for the fashion show. The event was organized in conjunction with the Gallery Art Zone’s exhibition Fashion, Music, and Popular Culture. For the event, three emerging Korean fashion designers were selected through a competition, and each designer was given 15 minutes to present his/her work. More than 600 people attended the event, experiencing the creativity of Korean fashion design and the potential for collaboration between art and fashion.

**MMCA X INDIE**
MMCA X INDIE held at the lobby of the exhibition building. The concert introduced a number of indie bands to the visitors of the museum, providing a rich and unique artistic experience.
The first floor houses the Ramp Core and Circular Gallery 1 along with three galleries, the Children’s Library, Art Library, Art Shop, ticket booth, and cafeteria. The central Ramp Core is a connecting point for the galleries, where Nam June Paik’s *The More the Better* is installed. The Open Air Sculpture Park provides an open space for relaxation.

The basement floor of MMCA Gwacheon houses the Art Research Center, a small auditorium, and the main auditorium. The research center provides access to archive materials, and the two auditoriums host educational programs.

The second floor houses Gallery 3, Gallery 4, and Circular Gallery 2. Following the strategy for specializing exhibitions, each gallery is assigned to present arts and crafts, design, and new acquisitions, respectively.

The third floor houses Galleries 5 and 6. Each gallery introduces exhibitions on architecture and photography, respectively.
The basement floor of MMCA Seoul houses six galleries, the Multi-project Hall, MMCA Film and Video, and the Media Lab. The Multi-project Hall and MMCA Film and Video host a variety of cultural events and screenings. The mezzanine is devoted to installation works that employ art and science. The space is accessible through a staircase in front of the Multi-project Hall.

On the first floor, visitors can access amenities such as the cafeteria, food court, and art shop, as well as facilities such as a nursing room and an infirmary. Gallery 1 and the ticket office are directly accessible from the lobby. The courtyard, or madang, is an open space accessible to anyone for rest and relaxation.

The second floor of the exhibition building houses Gallery 8. In the education building, there are three lecture rooms and a digital library. The library is open to the public.

The third floor of the education building holds a digital archive, the membership lounge, and three seminar rooms. The digital archive provides access to the Korean art archive. The membership lounge is a space for MMCA special membership holders.
The third floor of MMCA Deoksugung holds Galleries 3 and 4 as well as a separate lounge for visitors.

The second floor houses Galleries 1 and 2 and an art shop. The ticket box is accessible from the main lobby.

The first floor houses an audio-visual room and a meeting room where educational programs and cultural events are held.
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