



**National Museum of
Modern and Contemporary Art
Korea**

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Installation View : Gallery 3

Papers and Concrete: Modern Architecture in Korea 1987–1997

1 September 2017 – 18 February 2018

MMCA Seoul

The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA; Director: Bartomeu Mari) presents ***Papers and Concrete: Modern Architecture in Korea 1987-1997*** from Friday, 1 September 2017 to Sunday, 18 February 2018 at MMCA, Seoul.

Papers and Concrete: Modern Architecture in Korea 1987–1997 is an exhibition that examines the beginning of contemporary Korean architecture through the activities of architecture groups that were organized from the end of the 1980s until the mid-1990s. The exhibition lies in an extended line of critiques on the phenomena of the 1990s, which are

widely conducted in art and culture, at a time during which people are especially revisiting important local and international social renovations thirty years after the '87 regime and on the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. In this exhibition, “**concrete**” represents the explosive growth in construction and increase in consumption after the democratization of Korea, the opening up of the Korean market to the world under the name of globalization, and the collapse of the short-lived prosperity, a consequence of the IMF financial crisis in 1997, while “**papers**” embody Korean architecture groups’ reflection in response to these phenomena and the consequent activities and ideologies pursued by their architecture movement in Korea.

It was in the late 1980s to the mid-1990s when Korean modern architecture went through a historical transition where the foundation for a variety of architectural institutions including architecture education was solidified. In this context, this exhibition will introduce ten architecture groups in Korea including the **Young Architects Association (1987–1991)**, the **Research Group for Architectural Movements (1989–1993)**, the **Architects Association for the People (1992–present)**, the **4.3 Group (1990–1994)**, the **Architects Association for the Future (1993–2000)**, the **Seoul School of Architecture (1995–2002)**, and the **Graduate School of Architecture at Kyonggi University (1995–2006)**. Having appeared at a time when the Korean architecture market enjoyed its largest boom with a construction plan for two million homes and increasing supply for new cities, such groups expressed critical views on the state of affairs, but the groups were short-lived, none surviving for more than ten years. Their activities, however, served as indicators for the map of modern Korean architecture’s narratives and an attempt to join the discourse on contemporary global architecture.

Among others, the Young Architects Association, dubbed the first progressive architecture movement in Korea, strove to spread a progressive historical theory and raised questions on urban architectural issues such as redevelopment of cities, development of small-sized plots downtown, and the construction of Yongsan Park, issues that still seem relevant today. In the exhibition, activities of such groups and their research materials will be disclosed to the public for the first time. Consisting of 14 young architects in their 30s and 40s represented by Seung Hyo-sang, Cho Sung-ryong, and Kim In-cheol, the 4.3 Group afterwards moved the

focus of their activities to educational organizations such as the Seoul School of Architecture and the Graduate School of Architecture at Kyonggi University and grew into a major Korean architecture group after completing important architecture projects during the early 2000s, such as Paju Book City.

Architecture groups in Korea questioned the role of architecture in society while pursuing improvement of the quality of architecture by addressing inner problems that arose from the design and construction processes. Despite different perspectives and attitudes, such groups came to congregate in shared awareness of the need for improved architectural education during the mid-1990s. The decade of the 1990s was a time when Korean architects struggled to solidify the intellectual foundation on which they could cross the border between the inside and outside of architecture and re-interrogate the meanings behind “modern architecture” in the Korean context. In this exhibition, you can encounter the legacies of the “papers” and the ways in which they confronted the world of “concrete,” a chance to unfold and discuss the multilayered context and horizon of contemporary Korean architecture.

On Saturday, 9 December, the museum will host a joint symposium in collaboration with the Korean Association of Architectural History in the Multi-Project Hall at MMCA, Seoul. During the exhibition period, eight forums inviting major figures from the Korean architecture movement will also be offered in Gallery 3; the space will be arranged in response to the theme of each forum to express a new environment and mood for the talk. Detailed information will be available on the MMCA website.

MMCA Director Bartomeu Mari notes, “It is very significant that the MMCA presents a special exhibition highlighting Korean architectural history, not just that of an individual architect or a pavilion.” He adds, “For the MMCA, a specialized institution in visual art which collects and studies architecture, the exhibition will be a great opportunity to further its research on architectural archives and dwell on future exhibitions on architecture.”

Participants of the **2017 Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism (1 September – 5 November 2017)**, hosted by the Seoul Metropolitan Government and Seoul Design Foundation, will receive a discount of KRW 1,000 on the museum entrance fee (during the Biennale only/multiple discounts are not available) when their tickets are brought and shown.

Detailed information is available on the MMCA website (<http://www.mmca.go.kr>).

- ※ For general enquiries, please call +82-2-3701-9500 (Seoul Branch, MMCA)
- ※ For more information on the exhibition, please contact Exhibition Department 1 of MMCA at +82-2-2188-6329
- ※ Please check the link below for images and further information:

<http://webhard.mmca.go.kr> id : mmcapr1 / pw : 0987 (guest > 2017 > MMCA 2017 Exhibition)

Exhibition Plan

Gallery 3

Gallery 3 examines the ways in which Korean architecture movements, interrelated to diverse social contexts, emerged from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s. We call activities that involve the exploration of the existing problems in a society and the alternative reactions to the social phenomena a “movement.” Based on this definition of a movement, the exhibition visualizes the most active periods from 1987 to 1997 and the social changes during this decade in the form of videos and texts. This decade is recognized as a time of development and demolition; it is especially known for the construction of large-scale new towns and the tragic collapse of the Sampoong Department Store in Seoul. This exhibition represents this time frame with the symbolic image of “concrete.” A matrix that displays the timeframe surrounds gallery 3, and visitors to the exhibition can find diverse materials and publications that testify to the major activities of individual architecture movement groups on tables within the space. These sources help us to understand how the trajectory of movements and practices are linked and respond to the trends of the times.

Gallery 4

An image of a simplified map is displayed on the wall between galleries 3 and 4. Through it, we can not only trace the ideological basis of the architecture movement groups but also understand Korean architecture within the broader context of the architectural history of the world. While these groups conducted architecture practices to bring about a new wave of social changes, they also attempted to establish a historical and theoretical foundation that could lead the direction of their movements. This map illustrates the references through which we can understand the multi-faceted context of the time. Postmodernism was most prevalent and influential in Korean culture during the late 1980s, but reinterpreting modernism was the primary concern for the architecture movement groups. They re-illuminated the historical heritage or remnants of twentieth-century world architecture. Their activities are related to significant sociohistorical changes, such as the publication of progressive history and theory books, which had been prohibited thus far, and the public's access to free travel to foreign countries, which enabled the architects to experience closely the masterpieces of modernist architecture in the West.

With videos and image archives, gallery 4 inquires into the passion and ideological foundation that propelled these groups to act. The groups, including the Young Architects Association, the Research Group for Architectural Movements, The Union of Architecture Students in the Metropolitan Area, the 4.3 Group, the Seoul School of Architecture, the Architects Association for the Future, and the Architects Association for the People, implemented intellectual activities such as seminars, critiques, workshops, field trips, and exhibitions. Traces of these practices demonstrate the aspirations commonly found in these groups. Though each group had different aims, they all strove to re-learn or re-discover Korean architecture within the international and regional context. The architecture groups, which experienced self-training, envisioned that they could foster a new generation of architects for the upcoming twenty-first century through a new format for architecture education. All these processes of ideation and practices remained in a variety of “papers” – from rough hand-written documents to posters and books created by professional graphic designers.

The Form of the Exhibition

Papers and Concrete conceives of 'content role play' as a new form of exhibition in order to mount the content of the show. On one hand, we have thoroughly collected materials that the individual groups produced from the end of the 1980s to the mid-1990s. On the other hand, we have curated a theatrical exhibition that reinterprets the archives on display. The exhibition space is a symbolic site just like a stage, set up with wheeled furniture and installations of moving images. The installed materials are the 'actors' who play the roles of this performance. The actors in the exhibition are the active performers and/or agents who speak to the audience, which is possible because the stage and the auditorium are not separate entities but environments that interchange with each other. The audience in the exhibition space (the audience on stage)—surrounded by the multi-layered stories—encounters the multitude of episodes that encompass the 1990s and the present. We also attempt to capture and include the phenomena of the audience's movements; actions like glancing up to view the floating moving images while walking through the tidily arranged archives on the ground and busy movements like those backstage are all parts of the audience's experience.

Such a theatrical setting is the result of curatorial sensibility, interpreting the show as a representation of the matters of time and movement with regards to the concept of "movements." The exhibition space here is not a mere vessel to hold the material results of times preserved through taxidermy, but an instrument that dynamically moves until the last moment of the event. Diverse forums held throughout the exhibition will provide a site to retrospect and reflect on the historical relics of "papers" along with the protagonists of the architecture movements, who returned to their individual positions in the mid-1990s. Whenever related programs are held, the installations will be "re-positioned" and the records of such changes/movements will create variegated layers of additional stories.

Forum as Form

The forum associated with the exhibition in Exhibition Room 3 consists of the 8 topics related to the Paper and Concrete exhibition. Key individuals who participated in the architectural movements in the 1990s will be invited, and how the activities and practices of those days are connected to the Korean architecture of today, and how they can be newly interpreted will be examined. The space of the exhibition hall will be rearranged for each new affiliated program: i.e. the tables will be repositioned. The program site, which will be recorded in real time, will be archived as new contents to be produced by the exhibition.

The Young Architects Association (1987 - 1991)

The Young Architects Association is a large progressive architectural movement organization that was established with the aim of defining the role of architecture (architects) in society. The Young Architects Association, which was formed in 1987 amid the fever of democratization consisted of more than 300 young architects under the age of 40. During its 4-year existence, the Young Architects Association paid attention to the direction of the architectural movement, legal systems related to architecture, housing and urban problems, and labor conditions in architecture, built close relationships with small related organizations, and served as the hub for various architectural movements. It also played the role of an organization representing the progressive camps beyond the internal movements of the architectural community. Its representative activities included the registered architect special admission system abolition movement, the proposal to construct public rental housing as a way of utilizing the US Army base in Yongsan, the design of the settlement for evictees in Incheon, the planning of the reconstruction of small lots in downtown as an alternative to large-scale development, and the participation in the Industrial Health Center design competition. The Young Architects Association published its journal Young Architecture for a total of five times, and recorded its activities by publishing newsletters and various handouts. The Young Architects Association played a leading role in the formation of the People's Architectural Committee when the Korean People Artist Federation was established in 1988, laying down the foundation for the Architects Association for the People. Also, the movement for public engagement and improvement of the problems of architectural systems, which was started by the Young Architects Association, led to the Architects Association for the Future and Korea Architects Institute (2002) later on.



The Young Architects Association, *A Poster for the Inaugural Meeting*, 1987

The Union of Architecture Students in the Metropolitan Area (1988 - 1990)

The Union of Architecture Students in the Metropolitan Area is the association of the progressive small groups in 10 or so departments of architecture in the metropolitan area. The Union of Architecture Students in the Metropolitan Area, who were undergraduate students, tried to unlock the potential of the architectural movement as a sectoral movement of the general social transformation movement in the process of the legalization of student movements since 1987. 'The Architecture for Humans' and 'the True Architecture with the People' were the goals they had set for the Union of Architecture Students in the Metropolitan Area. They participated not only in volunteer activities for rural communities, but also the Poor People's Movement opposing the demolition of squatter settlements that began in earnest in the mid-1980s. Meanwhile, the Union of Architecture Students in the Metropolitan Area published newsletters such as Architectural Students and The List of Books for Architectural Students to make up for the lack of knowledge of architectural movements, and create opportunities for 'autonomous learning.' Also, it invited members of the Young Architects Association or the Korean People Artist Association which led the architectural and artistic movements in those days, and offered open lectures. In 1990, as the student movement was declining, the Union of Architecture Students in the Metropolitan Area was disbanded, and some members joined the labor union movements in the Research Group for Architectural Movements or We the Architect.



The Union of Architecture Students in the Metropolitan Area, *Architectural Student* No. 3, 1990

The Research Group for Architectural Movements (1989 - 1993)

The Research Group for Architectural Movements is an academic architectural movement organization which provided the theoretical foundation for practical architectural movements. Consisting of graduate students in the departments of architecture in major universities in the metropolitan area, such as Seoul National University, Myongji University, Hongik University and Yonsei University, it was more of an academic subcommittee of the Association of Young Architects in its early days, but as overall activities of The Young Architects Association decreased, it became an independent organization, and it firmly established itself as the most theoretical and academic organization among the progressive architectural movement organizations established after 1987. Its members reviewed the successes and failures of the architectural movements of the 20th century such as Bauhaus, Russian Constructivism and the modern architecture of Korea before and after its independence by holding seminars and undertaking joint translation efforts, and discussed the methods of historical presentation. The academic exchange activities among graduate students, going beyond mere school connections, were directly linked to the theses of most participants who were in the master's program, and later led to their academic and practical activities. They published Architectural Movement four times, containing the results of the seminars, and published Anatole Kopp's Constructivist Architecture in the USSR, which was the result of joint translation and contributed to public engagement in architectural movements from a theoretical and historical viewpoint.



The Research Group for Architectural Movements, *Architectural Movement No. 3*(*Russian Revolution, Constructivism, Post-Modernism*), 1991

The 4.3 Group (1990 - 1994)

The 4.3 Group is an organization of 14 architects. Architects in their 30s and 40s gathered together to confirm their architectural values they acquired on the job, and learn more to grow further as architects. The members of the 4.3 Group announced their works and critiqued each other as they explored the language for explaining architecture. They wanted to ask what architecture means in Korea of the 1990s. To this end, they studied modern architecture and architectural theories of the West, and traveled to Japan, Europe and India to see masterpieces of architecture. On December 12, 1992, they held the Echoes of an Era exhibition, and published a collection of works. In 1994, they published their second collection of works known as Echoes of an era/ volume #0, and concluded their official activities. The members of the 4.3 Group are playing leading roles in various movements, e.g. the Architects Association for the Future aiming to reform architectural systems, and Kyonggi University's Graduate School of Architecture and Seoul School of Architecture both aiming to improve architectural education.



The 4.3 Group, *Exhibition view of the Echoes of the Era*, Photo by Kim In-cheurl, 1992



The 4.3 Group, *Exhibition Posters*, designed by Ahn Sang-soo, 1992



The 4.3 Group, *94 Architectural Tour Book*, 1994

The Architects Association for the People (1992 - Present)

The Architects Association for the People is an organization that emphasized the solidarity of architects and practicalization with citizens with the aim of furthering the development of the architectural culture and enhancing the public role of architecture. The People's Architectural Committee of the Korean People Artist Federation, which was organized by the members of the Young Architects Association in 1988, is the matrix of the Architects Association for the People. Then, architectural critiques, architectural workers' organizations and the students of the Arts and Literary Academy of the Korean People Artist Federation gathered together, and changed its name to the Architects Association for the People, a name that sounds more like a consultative body for architects, and began to work on a full scale. Its representative activities include the lectures on architecture and summer camps in the Arts and Literary Academy of the Korean People Artist Federation. The lectures on architecture, which are offered every season, deliver contemporary viewpoints on the history, theories and criticism of architecture, to ordinary citizens as well as architecture majors. The architecture camp, which began in 1996 under the theme of 'Making Korean Architecture,' gives an opportunity for exchange to young architects who are engaged in practical and progressive architectural activities.



The Architects Association for the People, *A poster for the architecture camp, 1396*

The Architects Association for the Future (1993 - 2000)

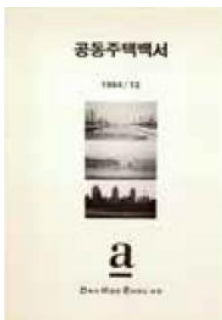
The Architects Association for the Future is an organization of architects formed for internal reform of architecture, e.g. improvement of architectural systems. It was formerly known as the New Council of Architects (tentative) which was formed in May 1993 by young architects opposing the separation of design and supervision. It announced its White Paper on Architecture 1993 for diagnosing and solving the urgent issues of Korean architecture, Declaration of Architects 1993 for realizing architectural justice, and White Paper on Housing 1994 for finding solutions to urban housing issues. It also launched the 'a' Mark Movement to eradicate corruption prevalent in construction licensing processes. In addition, its efforts to reform architecture achieved tangible results, e.g. improvement of the architect examination system, abolishing the separation between design and supervision, and improvement of various licensing systems. The Architects Association for the Future was an internal reform movement of the architectural industry to solve the contradictions and irrationalities that architects encounter in their work. Its efforts to improve architectural education led to the birth of Seoul School of Architecture.



The Architect Association for the Future, *New Letter 002*, 1993



The Architect Association for the Future, *A Proposal for Establishing the National Architecture School*, MMCA Archive, 1994



The Architect Association for the Future, *White Paper on Housing*, 1994

Seoul School of Architecture (sa, 1995 - 2002)

Seoul School of Architecture is an alternative school movement for the design-centered education of architects. The architects who led the Architects Association for the Future realized that the future of Korean architecture is in education, and architectural education urgently needed to be improved, and sought to found a school aimed at 'education of architects in the new era.' Its instructors consisted of the architects in the 4.3 Group and the Architects Association for the Future and young architects who are the first generation of architects who studied overseas. After the 2-year experimental preliminary education in Yangjaedong that started in 1995, the school was merged with the Kim Swoo Geun Foundation, and they began offering regular courses in the Space Group Building in September 1997. The design studio of architects with reinforced critique was the center of the education program, and support studios, such as history, aesthetics and technology, were offered. The series of courses led to exhibitions and publications. The week-long summer workshops are held every summer in small and medium-sized cities in Korea, such as Muju and Yanggu.



Seoul School of Architecture, *sa Poster Series*, designed by Ahn Sang-soo, 1995-1997

Graduate School of Architecture at Kyonggi University (GSAK, 1993 - 2000)

The Graduate School of Architecture at Kyonggi University (GSAK) was the first graduate school of architecture in Korea to grant a Master's degree in Architecture. Established in 1995, GSAK introduced the design director system and adopted the studio-type operation system by actively recruiting architects in the field as a means to provide productive design education in preparation for the opening and globalization of the design market. It offered various linked lectures, e.g. writing design papers, architectural aesthetics, architectural photography and environmental sculpture, and carried out various programs, such as architectural exhibitions, review sessions, special lectures, seminars, domestic and overseas architectural travels, overseas exchange studios, design education forums, and publication of work collections and newsletters. GSAK enters into history as other graduate schools of architecture, e.g. the Graduate School of Architecture at Kyung Hee University and the Graduate School of Architecture at Konkuk University, were established, and the Department of Architecture became a 5-year program.



GSAK, '94 SAK Review, 1994



GSAK, *The GSAK Exhibition Poster*, Designed by Ahn Sang-soo, 1998

The Sunkyong Architecture Studio (1994 - 2003)

The Sunkyong Architecture Studio is a group formed under the sponsorship of Sunkyong Construction Co., Ltd. (currently SK E&C). Its main purpose is for those who major in architecture and design to critique each other's works and enhance their architectural competencies. Established in 1994, the Sunkyong Architecture Studio sought to overcome the limitations of existing educational systems and design methodologies through various free activities, e.g. weekly critiques and seminars, exhibitions and publication of magazines. The members of the Sunkyong Architecture Studio published *Alternative*, a book summarizing their activities, for three times. They are now working as the leading architects in their 40s throughout Korea.

The Hanssem Architectural Journey

The Hanssem Architectural Journey is an architectural travel team that was started under the sponsorship of Hanssem, a leading furniture company. Cho Chang-gul, honorary chairman of Hanssem, and architect Kim Seok-chul were the key members who established this team in the mid-1980s. It provided an opportunity for a meeting between architectural historians and architects transcending school connections with the exploration of Korean traditional architecture serving as the medium. The Hanssem Korea Architectural Journey, which was initially intended for architectural historians, saw its participants expand every year to include young architects, and paved the way for the establishment of the Korean Association of Architectural History. The format of the Hanssem Korea Architectural Journey then influenced the architectural journey of the 4.3 Group and the excursion of the Seoul School of Architecture, and the Eagon Architectural Journey sponsored by Eagon Windows & Doors Co., Ltd.