

Art Now LA  
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Soo Kim: 'Homesick for a Better World'  
Windows Onto Fragmented Workds

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by Jody Zellen



In the pre-digital world, a photographer often used a camera and film to frame some aspect of reality. Waiting to see the picture was not instantaneous, it was part of a process. One would look through the viewfinder and click the shutter to freeze what was in front of the lens. The film then needed to be processed and printed. For every traditional approach to photography however, there were also artists who were interested in using the photograph as raw material for explorations beyond what was framed in the original image.

While **Soo Kim** frames and reproduces the world in front of her (she has photographed many places including, **Panama, Iceland, Dubrovnik** and **Korea**), she also manipulates these original images by cutting away significant parts to leave a delicate structure that holds the picture together. Kim's act of cutting does not feel like an act of violence (akin to **Luciano Fontana**, who sliced his monochrome canvases with a knife causing large fissures in the surface) as the absence she creates pushes the viewer to imagine the greater context of the image.

In ***Homesick for a Better World***, images from both 2014 and 2018 are on view. The two works from her ***Backlight*** series, 2014: (***He has surprised himself***) and (***When the light comes, after a few seconds, it comes as a sunrise***) are photographs of cities at night. They have been intricately cut with a sharp blade leaving a criss-cross pattern of presence (black triangles, squares and pentagons) and voids (spaces where the shapes have been removed) interspersed with recognizable urban iconography like reflections in windows and fragmented signage. What is striking about these images is the color shadows on the otherwise white wall. This is caused by lacquer paint applied to the verso of the print

While the locations depicted in *Backlight* are difficult to discern, it is clear that the two large floor-based photo-sculptures were taken at the **Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)** separating **North** and **South Korea**. These freestanding double-sided works are presented in custom frames that function like barriers. In each, Kim has sandwiched together two photographs of **Freedom House** (a modern building in the **Joint Security Area** in the DMZ) and then removed most of the windows and walls. In ***The DMZ (Ballad of the drop in the ocean)***, tourists, maps and views of trees out the window are isolated between the buildings structure; whereas ***The DMZ (Ballad of the branches and the trunk)*** focuses on the architectural perspective. These pieces are visually compelling, as well as disorienting.

<https://artnowla.com/2018/11/04/soo-kim-homesick-for-a-better-world/>