

MOA Visual and Material Culture Research Seminar Series – Winter/Spring 2018

Thursday, January 11 at 4:00pm – 5:00pm

Embodied Archives of Authenticity: The Elderly Dancers of Korean Heritage Arts

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Images: (Left) Yi Okgeum performing with a pungmul group.
(Right) Yang Seokok performing Taepyeongmu.

How has the Republic of Korea become a country where an athletic pursuit, like traditional dance, is most celebrated when performed by the oldest dancer? In this presentation I will explain how the best intentions can have unforeseen consequences, demonstrating the ways that cultural policy is implicated in frequent and celebrated staging of elderly solo dancers. I focus on three themes: (1) Korea's intangible cultural heritage legislation, which certifies expert performers based in large part on years of participation. Older experts must choose to either continue performing, in spite of failing health, or relinquish their hard-earned title. (2) The accepted belief that communicating the emotional core of the performance is more important than athleticism. This belief facilitates the continued performance by elderly dancers—or may be constructed by ever-older master-dancers who are given the gerontocratic power to define "traditional" Korean aesthetics. (3) Nostalgia, which is often intertwined with dance performance participation and viewership practices, and which manifests in Korean traditional performance consumption through yearnings for a pre-modern past embodied by older performers.

Open to all, and free. No registration required.

Venue: Room 213

Located near the MOA administrative reception past the MOA café.

Conveners: Dr. Fuyubi Nakamura, MOA Curator, Asia, Dr. Nuno Porto, MOA Curator, Africa & Latin America and Dr. Anne Murphy, UBC Asian Studies.

If you have questions, please contact Fuyubi. Email: fuyubi.nakamura@ubc.ca