Chapter 3
Spacing and Displacing as Artistic Enquiry

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ABSTRACT
This chapter presents a philosophical journey and practical piece of experimentation on spatiality, virtuality and displacement. A series of art practices using photography, installation and art writing form the trajectory for a sequence of conceptual maps. The discussion engages with spacing and displacing as an artistic enquiry on space. The chapter consists of an examination of the typology and meaning of displacement in its translation from Korean, and a discussion of the formation of a gendered and artistically constructed displacement by extending the scope of the theory to the displacement of women in a colonial situation. This chapter explores the way in which displaced women (in the very particular case of Korean “comfort women” during the colonial war with Japan, and through the case of the artist, Hyeseok Na) cannot belong in either their home or a foreign land. Virtual-ness, here, is approached with an artistic understanding, and is found to constitute an unreal living space rather than merely a virtual environment through technology.

INTRODUCTION
How do we approach an artistic understanding of ‘virtuality’? Is there ‘virtual-ness’ in our daily lives and cultural memory? One very immediate experience of ‘virtual-ness’ in our daily lives could be ‘sleep’. We sleep and dream every day. Through this simple physical experience, we collect our memories and re-arrange our lives in our unconscious. This chapter will discuss ‘virtual-ness’ in relation to ‘displacement’, and suggest a virtual-ness grounded in an imagina-tive experience primarily, and later digitally mediated. Elizabeth Grosz, a critical thinker on space, explains virtuality as ‘an augmentation, a supplementation, and a transformation of the real’ (2001). Perhaps this suggests that virtuality is a part of our understanding of reality, which contains time and space, history and memory. We live in a society where travelling and transitory experiences are embedded in our lives very deeply, as commonplaces and as readily-acceptable elements of our histories and understanding of value in the world. However, an understanding of any

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presence outside our ‘living space’ is unreachable and sometimes impossible. If Second Life is somewhat a realization of that impossible space, what other spaces have a similar other-worldly, oneiric, creative quality?

In this chapter, I will explore ideas of displacing and space as a possible artistic practice, as demonstrated by a series of artworks by the author. Firstly, we will explore the meanings of displacement through Korean translation etymology, and discuss the way in which displacement is a form of trace; a state of transferring and translating between one place and another. Then I will present the story of a Korean artist, Na Hyeseok, who died a lonely death in the early 19th Century, and how this became the starting point for my artistic vision. In relation to this, there will be a discussion about displaced women during the colonial era. In order to enable my creative process to bring these women alive into the present, a bed space is placed in the art work. This bed space travels through ‘virtual spaces’ such as the cul-de-sac, near a late night cinema, by an empty house that had been rapidly vacated, in a river, under a cold bridge, in a park at night-time, in a factory, and in the air-space of second life.

**DISTANCE AND DISPLACEMENT**

The distance from one place to another has a potential of transformation, which can be a form of abstract transformation. Let’s call this change ‘displacement’ before we explore the idea. Displacement has many meanings to unfold, even within one language. In order to re-locate the meaning of displacement in the context of cultural translation, I look at the semantic dimensions of the word displacement and how they come to be employed differently. Firstly, I look at displacement as a movement from A (Source/Departure) to B (Target/Arrival); secondly, I argue for displacement as a kind of turning. This enables us to see displacement as a conceptual movement and examines the liminal and politically significant spaces across which we translate; displacement as a state and a State.

Understanding the meaning of displacement in physics provides an initial important dimension for defining displacement as a process of the liminal state; being in a place of threshold. Distance and displacement are two quantities that refer to the characteristics of any path from one place to another. Distance is a scalar quantity, denoting a response to the question ‘How much ground has an object covered from (P) to another point (Q)?’ (Figure 1). This distance can take various paths, as in the diagram (a and c). Displacement, on the other hand, is a vector quantity, characterising the closest relationship between two places in the form of an x-and-y co-ordinate. Distance is an actual journey; the displacement can be a virtual journey, which is a sensation and result of distance.

Displacement contains motion within it. In moving from P to Q, the fact of movement between P and Q can represent a time interval. If P is in the past, Q is placed in the present or future. The movement between past and present (or future) becomes a temporal change. The extension of lines tells a story about time. The points of P and Q can also be spatially located. Lines between two sites are traces and trances of movement. A trace is a record of movement; it is an archive of movement. A trance is the embodied visceral experience of the displacement. Can a body be that trance of movement?

Brian Massumi interestingly looks at a similar notion of movement in his book, Parables for the Virtual (Massumi, 2002). He writes:

*The very notion of movement as qualitative transformation is lacking. There is displacement, but no transformation, as if the body simply leaps from one definition to the next. Since the positional model’s definitional framework is punctual, it simply can’t attribute a reality to the interval, whose crossing is a continuity (or nothing). (Massumi, 2002a, p.3-4, emphasis added)*
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