CHAPTER II

My work has its origins in Korean ceramics and culture, and my present work has its motive in the unjust situation surrounding contemporary Korean women. In order that the work may be adequately understood, it is necessary to examine the influences of social and cultural conditions on the genders, through Korean history in the past and the present. An analysis of the situation of Korean women provides a concrete example of the social and cultural conditioning of sex roles.

The Korean people’s customs and their way of life have been shaped by diverse influences, including Confucianism as an social and ethical norm, and shamanism as a religion. Confucian influence in Korea has been noticeable in politics and society. However, Shamanism has dominated the spiritual world of the people. Shamanism has never officially been recognised as the nation’s religion, but in a sense, there was no period when Shamanism was not the nation’s religion; it has always been the nation’s real religion, rooted in the spirit of the people.

Confucianism has always been the basis of the ruling class’s power. Although its hierarchical ideology may have
helped the systematisation and stability of the state, it brought conflict, affliction and discrimination between both genders and the classes. In contrast, in view of Korean Shamanism, there are no classes, but only equality in the relationship between all creatures, even between human beings and Gods. Shamanism has been especially sympathetic towards the powerless, and thus a favourite religion of ordinary people, especially women who are considered as an inferior and powerless group.

This chapter will examine those factors of Confucianism and Shamanism affecting women’s physical and spiritual way of life.

THE INFLUENCE OF CONFUCIANISM ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

In Korean history, it has been asserted that descent was determined by the mothers’ lineage during the early part of Neolithic period\(^1\). However, from the period of the
brone age, patriarchy was the ruling power. At this time, the ancient tribal community of Kochosen\textsuperscript{2} seemed to have a patriachal rule including slavery and monogamy accompanied by concubinage.

However in Shilla(AD.356-935),\textsuperscript{3} matrilineal system existed side by side with the patrilineal system and Shilla women had more legal rights and a relatively high status in society\textsuperscript{4}. In the Koryo Dynasty,\textsuperscript{5} women had almost equal rights with men regarding property inheritance.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{1} Ki-Baik, Lee (1990). \textit{A New History of Korea,} Seoul, Iljogak, p.21 \\
\textsuperscript{2} One of the ancient korean tribal communities appeared at the begining of the Bronze Age across Korean peninsular and Manchuria, Kochosen was main community of them to exist in late history period. \\
\textsuperscript{3} After countless tribal communities and alliance rose and fell from the 1st century, with Koguryo (AD.53-668) at the head, Paekje(AD.234-660) and Shilla(AD 356-935) developed as ancient kingdoms. Koguryo developed in Manchuria and the northern part of the Korean peninsular, and Paekje and Shilla arose in the Han River basin and the south-east parts of the Korean peninsula. Shilla conquered the other two kingdoms to become the sole master of the peninsula. \\
\textsuperscript{4} Young-Chung, Kim (1977) \textit{A History From Ancient Time to 1945, Women of Korea} Seoul, Ewha Women's University Press p.37 \\
\textsuperscript{5} The Koryo Dynasty was founded at the end of the Unied Shila(AD. 918-1392)
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regardless of their marital status. The eldest legitimate son had priority over the land, but for other properties, including slaves, sons and daughters had equal claim.\textsuperscript{6} Women’s life in general was free and there was less prejudice against remarriage for women than during Unified Shilla.\textsuperscript{7}

With the appearance of a new bureaucratic class\textsuperscript{8} at the end of the Koryo Dynasty (AD.918-1392), this lively and liberal life for women declined. The newly arisen literati reform advocates were by and large adherents to Confucianism. They opposed Buddhism not only on ideological grounds but also because, like the old powerful families, they had amassed great estates.\textsuperscript{9} This shift, based on economics signified the destruction of the old order and

\textsuperscript{6} Young-Chung, Kim (1977) Ibid., pp.47-P48

\textsuperscript{7} Young-Chung, Kim (1977) Ibid., p.50

\textsuperscript{8} They are called “Sa Dae Bu” were not only educated and knowledgeable but men who were adept too in the administration of the affairs of government. In short, they are scholar-bureaucrats or literati.

\textsuperscript{9} Ki-baik, Lee (1990) Ibid., p.223
the establishment of a new one which affected the status of women as well as politics and society.

With the establishment of the Yi-Dynasty (1392-1910 AD), the literati groups as meritorious retainers of the founding of the Dynasty, wielded more political power in the early days of the Yi-Dynasty than in the latter days of the Koryo Dynasty.\textsuperscript{10} Confucianism\textsuperscript{11} was adopted by the Yi-Dynasty as its ruling ideology.; it gave a validity to the new kingdom and its desire to link their own interests with the ideals of Confucian government.

The metaphysical concepts of Confucianism have their origin in the "Book of Changes"(I-Ching), which was originally a book of divination. Later, Confucianism gave it cosmological, metaphysical and ethical interpretations, which constitute the "Appendices".\textsuperscript{12} There are two

\textsuperscript{10} Ki-baik, Lee (1990) Ibid., p234
\textsuperscript{11} Most of the theories and schools in Confucianism came out of the differences in the interpretation of the structure and origin of the universe based on "Book of Change". Confucianism, adopted by the Yi-Dynasty as its ruling ideology is one of these schools -called Neo-Confucianism.

\textsuperscript{12} Fung Yu-Lan, (1948). A Short History of Chinese Philosophy Seoul, Hyong Seo Publishers(translated and edited in 1986 by In-Jae, Jung) p.216
important ideas in the “Appendices” of “Book of Changes”. One is the Yin and Yang principles as a cosmological idea and the other is the idea of “Tao” as a metaphysical and ethical idea.

The original corpus of “Book of Changes” consisted of what are known as the eight trigram, each made up of combinations of three divided or undivided lines. Later the Appendices interpreted each of the eight trigrams as symbolising certain thing in the universe, as follow:
1) Chien(☰) is heaven, round, father....
2) Kun(☷) is earth, mother.....
3) Chen(☳☲) is thunder, eldest son....
4) Sun(☳☵) is wood, wind, eldest daughter.......
5) Kan(☵☴) is water, moon, second son.......... 
6) Li(☴☲) is fire, sun, second daughter.....
7) Ken(☲☴) is mountain, youngest son......
8) Tui(☴☵) is marsh, youngest daughter.....

In the trigrams, the divided lines represent the Yin principle, and the undivided lines the Yang principle. This

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13 Fung Yu-Lan (1948). Ibid., p.184
process of combination or intercourse between Chien and Kun, which results in the production of the remaining six trigrams, is a graphic symbolisation of the process of intercourse between the Yin and the Yang, whereby all things in the world are produced. That the world of things is produced through such intercourse of the Yin and Yang, is similar to the fact that living beings are produced through the intercourse of the male and female.\textsuperscript{14}

The Tao of the “Appendices” is not unitary, but multiple, they are the principles which govern each separate category of things in the universe. From the point of view of divination, if people obey it they will enjoy good luck, but if not, they will suffer bad fortune. From the point of view of moral teaching, if they obey it they are right, but if not, they are wrong. The Appendices interpreted the Chien as representing the Tao for all things in the universe that are virile and Kun represent the Tao for all things that are docile. Thus the Appendices taught about the Tao of “kun”: Although the Yin has its beauties, it keeps them

\textsuperscript{14} Fung, Yu-Lan (1948). Ibid., pp.184-187
under restraint in its service of the king, and does not dare to claim success for itself. This is the Tao of Earth, of a wife, of a subject.  

On the ground of this ideology, Confucianism laid stress on the relationship between men and women as a basis of all human ethics. The Yi-Dynasty imposed on women this Confucian ideology for political purposes insisting that “no subject serve two king and no women serve two men,” This edict facilitated the stability of the kingdom by maintaining the master/slave relationship between men and women. Such social order led women to believe that they were inferior and subordinate to men, just as men were to the kings.

Since then, Confucianism has dominated women’s life in Korea. Women’s existence was worthy only as the means of giving birth to boys and for the entertainment of men. Social life was nonexistent for women. They were strictly isolated from the society by various Confucian social

\[15\] Fung, Yu-Lan (1948). Ibid., pp.216-218
norms, such as "girls and boys were not supposed to sit together after the age of seven", which worked mainly to the disadvantage of women.

As a result of practices of Confucian ethics by the kingdom, the roles of men and women were strictly separated. The roles and activities of women were limited to the privacy of home affairs while those of men were carried out in public. The opportunity of higher education was not given to women. Throughout the Yi-Dynasty, women had a nameless existences. Their name disappeared at marriage and they were called after their husband's surname or by the name of their parents' dwelling places.¹⁶ These social conditions deprived women of the opportunity to improve their intellectual and academic ability, as well as their access to society. Thus, there was not any chance for women to be aware of inequality between genders or to obtain any social status.

¹⁶ Yo-Sup, Jung (1976). bid., p.225
The hierarchical relationship between husband and wife is revealed in the "Seven Sins 17 of women." If a woman committed one of these, she could be discarded by her husband. On the other hand, the status of a wife is indicated by the advice given to the bride; "behave as if you were deaf, blind and dumb, each for three years".

It is a general view that the status of contemporary women has improved compared with the past. However, throughout the world, an equality between the sexes is not realized in actual life to the same extent as the advances made in laws.

Since 1960 in Korea, with radical socio-economic changes, women began to formulate perspectives of the world and life which were quite different from those of the existing male-oriented social system. As women's expectation and desire for social, cultural and economical activities are growing, the female labor force participation rate in Korea

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17 The Seven Sin of women were 1) no son 2) adultery 3) disobedience to parents-in-law 4) jealousy 5) being talkative 6) stealing 7) contracting a malignant disease. They were not law but social norms.
rose from 34.4 % in 1965 to 47.3 % in 1992.\textsuperscript{18} The research into the ideal woman as perceived by Korean housewives in 1983 revealed that 60.4 % of the respondents were favorable to women who engaged in careers, occupational works and leisure activities while only 12.8 % were favorable to the traditional role of the housewife.\textsuperscript{19} In the survey of women’s view on divorce, 80.4 % of the respondents approved of divorce in 1980 while only 33.4 % approved in 1958.\textsuperscript{20} On the question of the selection of a spouse, in 1958, 62 % were in favour of selection by parental arrangement whereas in 1980, 70.1 % were in favour of selection by their own choice and decision.\textsuperscript{21} In the meantime, with the increasing need for change in existing women’s roles and the systematic research of women’s problems and issues, Women’s


\textsuperscript{20} Dong-Won, Lee (1992). Ibid., p389

\textsuperscript{21} Dong-Won, Lee (1992). Ibid., p385
Studies was introduced into the education curriculum of Ewha Womens University in 1977. Since then, research centers for women have been established in many universities and Women's Studies was taught in about 60 universities in 1991.22 Yet despite progress, prejudice and discrimination remains.

The present Korean economy has created a demand for female workers. However, women experience discrimination in earnings, working conditions, and security of employment, etc. For example, the average earning of Korean women was only 54.2% of that of men in 1991.23 In occupational levels, based on 1990 statistics, female civil servants comprise only 1.6% of all administrative officers (upper fifth grade), and 3.6% of female principals in the school system compared to 45.2% female portion of all teachers.24 This illustrates sex


discrimination and exclusion of women in the higher eschalons of Korean society.

What is worse, bias against the female lies in the consciousness and subconsciousness of contemporary Korean women, and many of them subconsciously act as supporters of the traditional patriarchal society. Women as well as men still recognise the boy as the progenitor of the family line, a supporter for parents in their old age, and the one to perform rites for them after their death. As a result, most women treat their son and daughter differently in education and inheritance. Thus, they strongly want to give birth to a boy and some even resort to surgical abortion to facilitate this. In the meantime, the sexual biases in the context of education and media are functioning ideologically to maintain a traditional value system, which perpetuates the status of women as subsidiary and subjugated to men.

All those practices in contemporary society are in keeping with the traditional gender discrimination developed from Confucianism. As examined, Confucianism in Korea has been devoted to establish the hierarchical relationship between men and women. The next section will examine how shamanism affected Korean women's way of life.

THE INFLUENCE OF SHAMANISM ON WOMEN'S SPIRITUAL WAY OF LIVES AND THE ESSENCE OF SHAMANISM

In Korea, the Kut (shaman ritual) is said to have been an activity of women for women. Most Mudang (shaman) were women and the rare male Mudangs, who performed a Kut, wore women's clothing. Even today, more than 95% of the practicing shamans of the ecstatic tradition are females. In this respect, Korean Shamanism is different to the practice in other oriental countries and to the ancient Siberian Shamanistic heritage where males played a more predominant role in Shamanism. The reason why

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Korean women have exclusively occupied Shamanism may have its origin in the historical background of Korean society.

With the founding of the Yi-Dynasty, a highly Confucian State, the situation of Shamanism completely changed and was marginalized as much as Korean women. The Buddhist monks and Shamans who had been considered upper class during the Koryo period (AD. 918-1392) were relegated to the lower classes of merchants, artisans, butchers, and entertainers. The mobility of Shamans was restricted as they were forbidden access to the capital and prevented from carrying out ceremonies and rituals out of doors. 27 This deprivation of the social position of the Shaman was similar to that of women who were confined to the house.


Being ostracised like women, Shamans managed to survive by addressing themselves to women. Confucianism never addressed itself to the needs of women, but required of them only a lot of duties.\textsuperscript{28} They hardly found a release from their mental and physical hardship. Women could survive only by devoting their whole life to serve men's needs such as the birth, health and success of children, the health and success of the husband, filial piety towards men's parents, and offering rituals to men's ancestors. Women made desperate efforts to satisfy these requirements. In this abject circumstance, they turned to Shamanism for release and opportunity to express their physical and spiritual aspirations, while Shamanism in turn provided women with the opportunity to express their agony. Shamanism was devoted mainly to the problems of the family, concerning both men and women. Although women had to abstain from going outside their home, husbands, even literati, did not prevent the wife from visiting a shrine and participating in the kut as a patron or a spectator.

\textsuperscript{28}Covell (1986). \textit{Folk Art and Magic}, pp.52-53
Women usually went to the Mudang for the wealth, longevity and welfare of the family, aiming to improve their position in patriarchal society. Moreover as the Mudang is a god-descended woman, thus different from ordinary people, women often sought advice from the Mudang on their most private problems which they could not disclose to offers. Participation in the Kut provided another outlet for women. In the Kut, women danced with the Mudang either alone or in a group, during which some would experience an ecstatic state of consciousness, or an hysterical convulsion. Some would weep while dancing, often pouring out their problems without restraint.\(^{29}\) Korean women's Kut is, in a sense, an expression of their powerlessness, while at the same time empowering women. Shamanism played the role of crisis center when no other outlet could be found.

There are 3 types of Kut.

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1) Kipok-Che for welfare
2) Kibuong-Che for illness
3) Shayong-Che for the dead\(^{30}\)

Each Kut is not quite the same as the other in its basic structure because they emphasise one or another of the procedures or the appearances of a different God according to the purpose of a kut.

The Kut usually consists of twelve seances (12 Gori)\(^{31}\) and each Gori is composed of three parts: Young-Sin (calling the God), O-sin (amusing the God), Song-Sin (sending the God). The Young-Sin starts with slow and gentle music and dance, and gradually changes into a powerful dance as the tempo of the music becomes faster and stronger. The Young-Sin is a calling ceremony, using the dance to induce the spirit to come, and is the preceding stage to the trance and possession. In the stage of O-Sin, the Mudang enters into the stage of “possession” in other words, she becomes “God”, adopting certain identifying characteristics.


\(^{31}\) Dong-Sik, Ryu (1983). Ibid., p.296
Sometimes, she plays comical games or issues stern warnings and punishments. During this time of possession, there is a divine message called “Kongsu”. The Kongsu explains the causes of misfortunes such as illness, death or disaster. Whereby, the appropriate “Gori” is emphasised in the ritual. The Song-Sin is the procedure for sending away the God by placating It. The God departs as the fast and powerful dance gradually recedes into a slow and quiet dance, and this signals the removal of the spirit, the cause of misfortune, from the body of the Mudang.\textsuperscript{32} Besides the actual healing and relief from anxiety that occurred in the Kut, it also revealed the essence of Shamanism.\textsuperscript{33}

First, the creation of a positive new order: the ecstatic state of each Gori is a stage in which Mudang makes the body ready to be united with God, thus a preparation for death. However there is not a finality to the notion of death, but is considered as a preceding stage which must be passed through for rebirth. In the cosmology, the

\textsuperscript{32} Kwang-Il, Kim (1988). "Kut and Treatment of Mental Disorder", pp.139-140

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p.158.
condition of ecstasy refers to the chaos before creation or cosmos. In other words, the state of ecstasy in the Kut is the "world of no things" which enables creation.

The second, equality is in the relationship between creatures, human beings and Gods. Each God has its own special area where any other God cannot interfere or enter into. The Kut usually comprises of 12 Gori, and the Mudang performs the same procedures of Young-Sin, O-Sin and Song-Sin in each Gori. Such a reiteration of the procedure is essential for dedicating an equal offering to each God who presides in each Gori. There is no hierarchy between Gods in Korean Shamanism unlike the Gods in Greek mythology. Even the God of Heaven can not interfere in the area of the kitchen God. In terms of this equality between Gods, why are differentiating qualities attached to certain groups or individuals in human society?  

The third is harmonisation. In the point of view of Korean Shamanism, all kind of misfortune come out of disorder

with spirits, other people, and other creatures. The role of the Kut is therefore to eliminate disorder and restore harmony. In achieving this, Shamanism adopts a harmonious way of entertaining the spirit which is the source of a portent, and making it relent by offering food, dance and music throughout the process of Yong-Sin, O-Sin, and Song-Sin. No Kut employs the method of coercing it into submission through battle.
CHAPTER I

In spite of the fact that women form half of the human population, the role and value of the female have not been properly acknowledged. Their status has been considered inferior to that of the male. The male as the dominant gender has possessed priority while the female has generally been excluded from influential roles. Nevertheless, the majority of females have followed the existing unreasonable patriarchal system without seeming to express a strong dissent or showing a big resistance to it as if it is their fate determined by God.

How can we explain this phenomenon of male-domination and female-subjection in human society? There has been controversy as to whether it was derived by nature or by post-natural factors. This chapter will examine the theories and views acclaimed by two opposing groups—the biologically oriented group and the socially and culturally oriented group.

HISTORICAL DOMINANCE OF MEN AND ITS CONTRADICTION
The biologically oriented group have justified men supremacy by the insistence that they are brave, active, physically strong, intelligent and logical, and that women are docile, passive, physically weak unintelligent and illogical. As a basis of their assertion, they demonstrate the discrepancy between men and women in the fields of science, politics and economics, these are seen as male areas of creativity and given higher respect than domestic roles such a child-bearing, nursing, children, cooking and sewing. On this ground, men say that the differentiation in power and status between genders is a natural phenomenon caused by women’s lack of physical and intellectual power, as well as the difference in temperament. Men’s superiority has long been recognized as the truth without controversy. However, since women have become aware of their oppression, and have begun to develop their own view, there has been much debate about the difference in temperament, attitude, intellectual and physical power between genders in relation to whether it is determined by genetic and biological factors, or other conditions.

The belief that males and females are created differently and are by nature not equally privileged, center on differences in physical strength and structure, and temperament. In addition to this, the biologically oriented contestants maintain that pregnancy, childbirth, lactation
and the relatively long period of child raising account for limited participation in public affairs, particularly in war and politics.\(^1\)

Against the theories in favor of man's superiority in terms of the genetic and biological factors, there are a number of different views. The linking of differences in size and strength to male dominance is supported by very limited evidence. There is evidence from animal studies of the great apes, such as orangutan and gorillas, who are closely related to us, that dominance is not always associated with differences of size and strength.\(^2\) An additional problem is determining the standard by which to judge which characteristic is stronger. In the research cited, the male is stronger in temporary vitality, but the female in endurance, patience and mortality.\(^3\) In tribal and agricultural societies women often work just as hard as


men, or harder. Other studies have shown that there is a greater chance of male babies being miscarried and that male babies are more likely to suffer from inherited deformities and to die as infants than females. There are many studies to support that the difference in temperament between genders is not the result of genetic factors. Simone de Beauvoir for example has demonstrated that there are no differences in attitudes between girls and boys during the first three or four years.⁴

In her study of three New Guinea tribes, Margaret Mead found that in primitive societies differences of temperament, traits and roles between men and women had little to do with differences between sexes. Tendencies in personality, such as aggressiveness or cooperativeness in forming the tribal group are commonly possessed. Distinctions between roles and work

responsibilities for male and female are not clearly assigned.\textsuperscript{5}

In her paper, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?", Sherry B. Ortner countered the biological explanation for the universal devaluation of women\textsuperscript{6}. She argued that it has failed to be established to the satisfaction of almost anyone in academic anthropology. Instead, she seeks an explanation for this phenomenon within the framework of a culturally defined value system which has granted a higher value on men's functions in social and cultural organizations. At the same time, she asserted that in this value system, "various aspects of women's situation (physical, social and psychological), contribute to her being seen as closer to nature, while the view of her as closer to nature is in turn embodied in institutional forms that reproduce her situation."\textsuperscript{7} Ortner's belief is purpated

\textsuperscript{5} Margaret Mead (1972). Sex and Temperament, Dell Publishing Company Inc. New York, pp. 11-18, 260-267.


\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p. 87.
by many scholars who believe the difference is developed by a process termed socialization - the way in which individuals learn to become part of society and internalise its attitudes and values. Meanwhile many feminists refer to the process of socialization as conditioning. Everyone, both male and female, is conditioned, since all societies developed certain patterns of behavior and rules which people are expected to follow, and are otherwise influenced by the society. This conditioning not only affects the way in which women are viewed by other people, but also the way in which they think of themselves.

The problem is that much of the conditioning of traditional masculine and feminine behavior tends to work in men’s favour, and to the disadvantage of women. Simone de Beauvoir felt that centuries of conditioning caused women to think of themselves as passive creatures, physically attractive but otherwise uninteresting. This conditioning led women to lose confidence in their own abilities, achieving far less than they could have done - thereby
confirming people's beliefs that they weren't capable of doing very much.\textsuperscript{8}

Without mentioning the specifics of scientific research, we find that such differences between genders and the standard of judging which one is stronger and superior, are the results of patriarchal social and cultural conditions, not of biological heredity. The recent change of sex-role, evident in the increase in number, activities, achievements of women in so called male dominant fields is due to the change of social conditions in recent times. Although women's genetic make up has not changed, changes in the social condition have led to changes in attitudes and views of conventional sex-roles.

Given the historical superiority of men, the question is how did the status of men come to be higher while that of women fall into supportive and secondary position. According to de Beauvoir, this phenomenon arose during the developmental stage of the human race, when

\textsuperscript{8} Lucy Smith (1990). \textit{Equality:Understanding Feminism}  
London, William Collins Son & Co Ltd, p.23
nomadic life made battles with wild beasts necessary. Due to the physiological nature of their reproductive systems, women were rendered physically limited. Pregnancy, childbirth and menstruation were believed to diminish women's capacity for some activities and these, together with the long period of reduced capacity resulting from child care, seem to have fostered the consciousness of dependency. Because of this, men fashioned society and the family system on the basis of the private property and patrilineal system, making women subordinate to their productive function.  

We cannot deny all the physiological differences between the genders, however we can see that the differences between genders in terms of temperament, attitude, intelligences and achievement are largely the result of social and cultural conditions.

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9 Li-Sook, Jung (1992) "The conceptual Development of the Women's Liberation Movement", A Study of Women, Ibid., p.23
In the next chapter, I will examine how social and cultural conditions have determined Korean women’s way of life in the past and the present.
CHAPTER III

The present status of women's equality is the result of many women's struggles. Concentrating on women artists, this chapter will examine sex discrimination in art and their endeavors for equality.

EMERGENCE OF FEMINISM IN ART

Similar to women in other spheres, the lack of official achievement and the small number of women artists were not due to a lack of creativity, but rather to social conditions which deprived them of access to artistic training, exhibitions and Art societies, irrespective of their talents. Even their few achievements were overlooked due to the prejudice of a male oriented society. For example; in France during the nineteenth century, a country which had a larger proportion of women artists than any other country, women were not accepted as professional painters. And in London female students were not
admitted to life drawing at the official academy until
1893.\textsuperscript{1} The work of women artists has often been
attributed to their male teachers or relatives on the
assumption that no first class art could have been
produced by a female.\textsuperscript{2}

With the radical changes in all spheres that came with
Industrial Revolution, world wars, and the explosion of
scientific discoveries, discriminations against women artist
became more and more apparent. Showing art work,
gaining recognition and establishing a reputation were
difficult for women artist. Dealers remain partial towards
the work of their artists and many major galleries tend
consciously to limit the number of women artists they
represent because of their belief that women’s art is not
as good and they do not sell as well. Under such a
discrimination, some women artists attempted to express
their works in different ways. Yet as Chadwick claims,

\textsuperscript{1} Linda Nochlin (1971). \textit{Art and Sexual Politics}, New York, Collier
Books (Edited by Thomas B. Hess and Elizabeth C. Baker), p.26

\textsuperscript{2}Nancy G. Heller (1987). \textit{Women Artists: An Illustrated History},
London, Virago Press Limited, p.3
"the consolidation of Abstract Expressionism as dominant practice in American modern art" further marginalized women artists.\(^3\)

From the mid 1960s, the cultural conflict that divided a generation of Americans - racism, sexism and militarism - invaded the art world, rupturing the security in the belief that aesthetic issues transcended social concerns. Out of these cultural conflicts and the growing Women's Liberation Movement, came the feminist art activities of 1970s. They formed groups, organized feminist art program and had a strike. In the face of such activities, the fiction of an art world isolated from broader social and political issues by notions of objectivity, quality and aesthetics began to be exposed.\(^4\) The feminist movement in art (that is, the commitment to an art which reflects women's political and social consciousness), during this period transformed art practice in America through its constant questioning of and challenge to, patriarchal

\(^3\) Whitney Chadwick (1990). Women, Art and Society, London, Thomas and Hudson Ltd. p.300

\(^4\) Ibid., pp.320-321
assumptions and ideologies of art and the artist. Feminist artists challenged the assumptions and conditions of patriarchy by using a variety of strategies and political tactics - from political actions demanding equal representation in art schools and exhibitions to setting up alternative exhibition sites, to celebrations of the power and dignity of women's sexuality and fertility/creativity, to analyses of the ways that class, race and gender structure women's lives.\textsuperscript{5} They emphasised and developed the female origin of material, techniques and representation which were different from the Modernism of men. However, from the late 1970s, a "backlash" against women as well as against pluralism\textsuperscript{6} was growing within the dominant institutions and discourses of the art world. Exhibitions celebrating the 'return' to painting and focusing on a new male generation were remarkable for their exclusion of virtually all women. In 1984, women once again picketed the Museum of Modern Art, in New

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., p.326

\textsuperscript{6} The pluralism of 1970s has been viewed as asymptom of the disintegration of the set of practices (abstract painting, minimal sculpture etc) through which modernism was defined.
York, protesting against the inaugural exhibition of its remodelled galleries, in which out of 165 artists, only 14 were women.  

As the history of patriarchy has been one of continual war, conflict and suppression, men have relied on the same violent and exclusive methods to ensure their own dominant hierarchy. The negative reaction of the dominant male art culture to the movement of feminist artists will therefore continue as long as they do not recognise the method of harmony as another way of life achieved by compromise, recognition, inclusion and reconciliation. In order to achieve the equality of women artists in terms of showing work, gaining recognition and establishing a reputation, women artists need to continue to stimulate, enlighten and modify the mislead consciousness of members of the dominant art culture.

In turning now to the characteristics of feminist work, I wish to explore what feminist artists intended to express

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7Whitney, Chadwick, Ibid., p.347
through their art by looking at same specific works. This investigation will elucidate what needs to be done to ensure a different future based on equality.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMINIST WORKS

With the emergence of the modern women's movement, a new feminist consciousness began to take a visual form. Some feminist artists proposed the existence of a distinctive and recognisable female style, stemming from the unique character of women's situation and experience. With this feminist consciousness, some women artists have used non-traditional materials such as fabrics and wood for their association with women's cultural traditions. Others have opted for a realist or conceptual celebration of female experience concentrating on birth, rape, household imagery, family background and portraits of friend. Others are involved in changing the stereotype of femininity, which is closely linked to sexual identity under patriarchal society.

8 Nocline (1971). Art and Sexual politics. Ibid., p.3
Given the diversity of their endeavor, it is not easy to define the characteristics of feminist art in terms of style, materials and form. Yet a common thread of feminist art is rather in its ideology for the elimination of the discrimination and prejudice against women. In analyzing the work of May Stevens, Marisol and Suk Nam Yun, I will examine general tendencies to be found in their works and what modes of expression they adopted for the conveyance of their idea to public.

MAY STEVENS (American, b 1924)

The feminist perspective of May Steven’s art came out of her participation in the politics of the left in the 1950s. Later, in the 1970s, she established an early commitment to both feminism and the women artist’s movement. Since then, she has focused on the status of women under patriarchal society.

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In the late of 1970s, Stevens began work on a series entitled “Ordinary/Extraordinary “. In it she juxtaposed two different images of women, one of whom is her mother, Alice Stevens. The mother represents most ordinary women in the family sphere who live within the restriction of marriage and children, the limitation of opportunity and choice, oppression from custom and religion, and in the loss of their reality. The other is a revolutionary leader, Rosa Luxemburg, who represents one of the few historical women in the public sphere who challenged the existing preposterous and unequal structures and ideology. Her struggle for equality and change ended in failure. In spite of a radically different characters, both of these women have the same identity—both are suffering under patriarchal society.

She relied heavily on photographs as source material in order to best transmit to her audience those ideas. She also used contemporary filming techniques such as repetition, positive - negative reversals, scale juxtapositions, overlays and transparencies, often in combination with paint, xerography, photomurals, text or
montages of all these.\textsuperscript{10} Her work is remarkable especially for the diversity of materials which reveals her rejection of rules and restrictions in male dominant society including the art world. Her feminist commitment is marked by the ongoing series of "Ordinary / Extraordinary" which implies the continuation of protest and struggle for the equality of women. The series of "Ordinary / Extraordinary" include "Ordinary / Extraordinary" - 1980, "Everybody Knows Me"-1981, "Demonstration"-1982, "Voice"-1983 "A Life"-1984 (Fig.1), "One Plus or Minus One"-1988.

MARISOL (American, b 1930 in Paris)

Marisol began making small playful sculptures in clay and wood. Later in her mature work, she extended these sculptures into assemblage by adding plaster casts or various objects such as necklaces, television set, mirrors, flower pot, clothes, and by combining with drawing and painting. She also often incorporated parts of herself in

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p.183
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Figure 1. A Life, 1984.
her work, these elements were painted, photographed, wood-carved and moulded out of plaster ("The Generals"-1962, "love"-1962).

Many of her comments such as "my idea is to work for everyone", have created much the message in her work. However, one constant theme in her work is a persistent search for her own identity as a women which is evident in her practice of combining many women with her own features, or plaster casts of her face, hands or feets and later by identifying with the mythical underwater world of fishes joining their bodies with Marisol's face ("Zebra"-1971). By making many of her figures in solid block forms (for example, "Self-Portrait"1962, Fig.2:"Women and Dog", 1964) Marisol signals another issue in her work - criticism over the limitations and restrictions imposed on women in male society. The block looks like a prison in which all prisoners are confined and deprived of their rights and opportunities. To women, the block represents the barrier of the house where they have been confined,

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Figure 2. Women and Dog, 1964.
and it is also represent all kinds of social custom and norms that have limited and restricted the role of women.

SUK NAM YUN (Korean, b 1940)

Suk Nam Yun works in wood, paper and paint to express both the oppressed status of women under patriarchal society and maternal love with traditional Korean women’s figures.

'The Son and Daughter' of 1992 represents two symbolic aspects of Korean women. One is a great maternal love for their children that required hardship and sacrifice of their own lives. She depicts it by the round basket on the women’s head in which there is fruit to sell. The whole weight of the basket is pressing down on her body from the top, and the skirt is composed of parts of a washingboard. Another issue is brought out by the clothes of the children the son wears a school uniform while the daughter does not, which indicates that the son has been given priority in education, inheritance and even maternal love. Yun criticises the gender bias which still lies in women’s consciousness as well as men’s.

In her work ‘Genealogy’ of 1993 (Fig.3), she juxtaposes two aspects of women’s lives under patriarchal society; one is represented by the hung figure and the other by
Figure 3. Genealogy, 1993.
the seated figure. The hung figure looks like an empty sack or costume, as if all that was her's has been drained away by the patriarchal system. It represent the fate of women who try to live outside the rules defined by the structure of the male-oriented system, but her struggle ended in death. The seated figure set in volumes of fabric of the traditional dress, the fabric of which is of wood. The effect is a swirling movement which creates an unstable base for the figure of the women. Her heavy demeanor and quiet resignation indicate a denial of her identity under patriarchal society.

Her works are neither radical nor extraordinary in their mode of expression, material or objects, which are rather common. However, the objects and materials presented in her work have symbolic meanings, relating to all Korean women's lives. For instance, genealogy symbolizes women's exclusion in their society because their names were not recorded on it. Selecting washingboards as material symbolizes women's hardship. Korean women spent a lot of time and energy washing clothes. By using these common but symbolic materials and objects, she effectively brings the unjust situation surrounding women into the public area.

As we see through the works of these three women artists, contemporary women's art does not possess any
rigidly defined system of rules and definitions in the form of materials and expressions. Their feminist consciousness is reflected in a different way of handling language. However, their use of language helps women, including artist, to find the way to enact their search for a new self-image, a new consciousness and an identity based on women’s perspectives of life.

As a woman artist, I will introduce my work which is concerned with the unjust situation surrounding women.

My work is indebted to Korean culture and Korean ceramics which provided a fertile ground for my growth and also for my venture into Australian culture and art. The latter gave me opportunities to widen my view, especially in understanding modern western art which has a greater diversity in the use of materials and subject than Korean ceramics. My work embraces Korean cultural traditions and reflects the influence of western art.

My sculptural ceramic works of 1993 were constructed around the abstraction of human and natural forms, referring to both the physical and mental dimensions of women. The human body is comprised of physical and mental elements. The body has its vitality only with an amalgamation of flesh and mind which is an inseparable
integration. Thus, we can distinguish the mentality of the human through his/her body, so the body can be seen as an intermediary of mentality.

In my work, woman is metaphorically symbolized by the woman's body and by nature. The latter has a creative power in the same way as the procreative power of women. In this way, my works represent the mental and physical dimensions of oppressed women through the images of women in the Yi-Dynasty, the period when the status of women was the worst throughout Korean history. These images of women are symbolized by the traditional colours taken from traditional woman's clothing, footwear, ornaments etc. In one of the works (Fig.4), for example, the intellectual side of women is symbolized by the brain and the physical side by opening flower. This work is also intended to represent the birth of a baby.

During my research on gender issues, I have tried to develop the expression of the possibility of harmony and equality between genders within the change and progress of society. Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex, I was fascinated by the following phrase in her book and inspired to use it in my work; "The living spark is not the exclusive property of man or woman, but the new life springs from the union of the two gametes. The nucleus of
Figure 4. Untitled, 1993.
the egg is a center of vital activity exactly symmetrical with the nucleus of the sperm.”

From the Stone Age, woman was worshipped as deities of abundance or as deities of great earth. She was also worshipped mystically as one who gave birth and prosperity. The prevailing ancient thought and belief changed with the emergence of the patriarchal system and tribal societies. Recognition was given to birth, but the thought was that a mother only feeds the living sperm in her womb, while the father is in fact the creator. A similar view is seen in a Korean proverb; “The male is a seed, and the female is a field”. The fact that the notion of passivity of the woman is clearly false and prejudiced on the level of biological theory has been recognized.

Later, in further reading, I found that pictures of both fertilization in humans and of the birth of a new star in universal galaxies are very similar. These scene of

12 Simone de Beauvoir (1972). The Second Sex, p.43.
creation made me perceive a reverence. They appear to contain only harmonious peace.

The work of Harmonious World represents a human society, where inequality and hierarchy does not exist, through the scene of fertilization in human and the birth of a new star in universal galaxies. The fertilization is the result of the harmonious union of egg and sperm. In this work (Fig.5) the sperm and egg are expressed respectively by the Yin and the Yang which are two cooperative cosmic forces for the creation of everything in universe. It can also represent the fluid of the womb by the spirals of universal galaxies where the star birth is done.

In my recent work “Past, Present and Future”(Fig.6), I have divided my exhibition space so as to represent Past, Present and Future. The central area represents the Present and I have installed three pairs of doors to each side respectively representing Past and Future. The patterns of these doors are derived from the traditional Korean door and their colour evokes antiquity which is an expression of the passing of time in both past and future. The narrow opening to the doors in the Past Section are used to emphasize the restrictions and limitations on women in patriarchal society that deprived them of opportunity. On the other hand, the wider opening of the doors in the Future Section represents the elimination of
Figure 5. Harmonious World, 1994.
Figure 6. Past, Present and Future, 1995.
the restrictions and discrimination for the better future. The viewer, standing in the present, is able to look back at the Past at the wrong standing prejudice or forward into the harmonious Future where gender bias no longer exist. I also express through this work that it is contemporary women's duty to rectify wrong standing prejudices about sex-roles by exposing this phase of restriction to women's liberty and equality throughout the history.
CONCLUSION

Despite recent changes in various fields, the status of contemporary Korean women still remains subsidiary to that of men in the traditional patriarchal system shaped by Neo-Confucianism in Yi-Dynasty. In a sense, even though the difference is wider between the people of the same gender than between different genders, sexual bias against females has dominated the consciousness of males and even females through a process termed socialization.

Neo-Confucianism, as an ideology, distorted the earlier principles of the Yin-Yang, by characterizing it as respectively female and male for political purpose. The Yin and the Yang have been understood traditionally as the expression of a natural duality. The theory of Yin-Yang governs the structure and origin of the universe - the creation of everything in the universe needs the cooperation of these two cosmic elements. The relationship between the Yin and the Yang is the basis of equality, harmony and collaboration for creation. This primitive Confucian principle is exactly the same as that of Shamanism.

In the shamanistic view, a human being is a creature of the union between Sky God and Earth Goddess, that is,
human beings are divine offsprings of God. As mentioned in chapter II, in Korean shamanistic world view, hierarchy doesn't exist in the relationship between Gods despite the difference of their roles, instead the emphasis is on harmony. Neither male nor female can be superior to each other in the Korean shamanistic view.

A harmonious world is the earth that God created for His descendants. Disorder always brings human beings misfortune such as violation, hostility, sadness, affliction, illness and death. These misfortunes are the punishment of God against human beings who distort the harmony. In this way, the restoration of harmony and equality between human beings is essential in eliminating all the misfortunes in human society.

As a woman as well as an artist, I have experienced the limitations and restrictions felt by other females. I present my work to help both men and women to raise their awareness of the unacceptable conditions of biases and limitations against women. At the same time, by disclosing the essence of earlier Confucianism and shamanism, I am emphasizing through my art the notion that all kinds of misfortune come out of a broken harmony between creatures, people and different genders, and urge us to restore the broken harmony to avoid further misfortunes around us.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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APPENDIX I - CATALOGUE OF WORKS

The catalogue numbers correspond to those of slides in Appendix II.

The theme of my work illustrated in slides No1-9, symbolizes the mental and physical dimensions of oppressed women of the Yi-Dynasty. This period was the worst for women in Korean history. Women are metaphorically symbolized by the women's body and by natures and depicted in traditional colours of the clothes and ornaments.

1. (1993), earthenware, handbuilt, ht.45cm
This work represents the standing woman as a form of a tree, to symbolize woman's recognition as a creative power of nature.

2. (1993), earthenware, sprayed yellow underglaze.
This work of flower bud, just begining to open represents the womb. The inside of the flower bud / womb expresses the darkness of the universe, which is the realm of emptiness but capable of creation.
3. (1993), handbuilt, multiple underglazes, without transparent glaze, ht. 45cm.  
This work of an opening flower symbolizes birth of a baby from vagina.

4. (1993), white earthenware,  
Another expression of the birth of a baby, with a different flower, different colour and petals.

5. (1993), white earthenware, underglaze and crackle glaze, ht. 40cm  
This work is a representation of the female pelvis containing the creative power - this, I discovered through my research, to be of a different structure to the male pelvis.

6. (1993), handbuilt with cylinder form, multiple firings, ht. 50 cm.  
This work, more directly representative of the traditional state of women by its tall, slender and cylinder shape symbolizes the oppressed and deformed status of women. This is particularly expressed by the distorted brain at the area of the neck.

7. (1993), one of wing series, luster glaze, ht. 40 cm.  
This work signals women's freedom from the restrictions and oppressions under patriarchal society.
8. (1993), one of wing series, luster and underglaze, ht. 45 cm.
Same concept is conveyed by different colours and shape.

9. (1993), one of the wing series, handbuilt with slab, silver luster, ht. 45 cm.

10. (1994), Harmonious World I, white earthenware, unglazed, 1269 x 289 cm.
This composition of pieces represents an harmonious world through the scene of the birth of a new star in the universal galaxy. The black and white colours evoke oppositional forces, but when put together, make a complete picture of stability and harmony. The movement is inspired by the spirals of universal galaxies.


12. (1994), Harmonious World II, white earthenware, slab mould, carved, unglazed, the whole work is comprised of 104 pieces of half cylinder form.
This large composition is also representative of an harmonious world similar to the previous work. The whole composition represents the act of fertilization in human beings which is the result of a harmonious union between the egg and sperm. The sperm and egg are expressed respectively by the Yin and the Yang which are two
cooperative cosmic forces for the creation of everything in
the universe. The spiral movement represents the
embryolic fluid of womb.

13. One of the patterns for Harmonious World II. 23 x 53
cm.
104 individual pieces, the work consisting of Harmonious
World II represent 'the Egg and the Sperm' or 'the Yin and
Yang'.

14. Another pattern for Harmonious World II.
Although different movement is depicted in each piece,
they create a harmonious whole.

clay, wood, old bronze glaze, 69 x 180 cm.
In my whole work, I have divided my exhibition space so
as to represent past, present and future. The central area
represents the present while to each side represents the
past and the future marked by three pairs of doors. The
pattern of this door is derived from traditional Korean
doors and its colour evokes antiquity which is an
expression of the passing of time in both past and future.
The door is used to emphasize both the restrictions on
women in patriarchal society by the narrow opening and
the elimination of restrictions by the wider opening.
"A QUESTION OF EQUALITY"
WOMEN AND WOMEN'S ART
UNDER PARTRIARCHAL
SOCIETY

GUMSUN KIM

MASTER OF ARTS (HONOURS)

1995

University of Western Sydney, Nepean
PLEASE NOTE

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I certify that this paper has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other institution.
ABSTRACT

In the past and present the inter-gender relationship has been based on male domination resulting in the overlooking of the female role and value. Many male-inspired theories helped to establish this hierarchical relationship and to perpetuate the belief that men and women have been created differently and not equally privileged.

However, as women have become aware of their unjust situation with the recent radical social changes, they have made endeavours in every sphere to obtain equality. Previous theories are being challenged by women scholars who have set up new theories that many of the differences between genders are not due to genetic factors but derive from social and cultural conditions created for men's convenience.

My research on the status of Korean women verifies these theories by examining how much social and cultural conditions have contributed to the difference between the genders to the disadvantage of women. It also reveals the distortion of patriarchal theories by investigating the principle of Confucianism which led to the deprivation of Korean women's opportunities to develop themselves.
Women artist have also challenged the patriarchal ideologies. They have tried to stimulate, enlighten and modify the misleading concepts of a patriarchal society through the individual expression in their works of art.

The present level of achievement for women's equality is the result of these women's struggles. I as a women artist, present my work so that it will help both men and women to raise their awareness and to eliminate the prejudice towards females in society.

The early principle of the Yin and Yang, distorted later for political benefits, implied a cooperative relationship of two forces for creation and development. Although these forces are different and independent, when used cooperatively, they make a complete picture of stability and harmony. If they remain separate forces there is no resulting completion of creation, but instability and misfortunes. By disclosing this principle of harmony in Shamanism and early Confucianism, I also present the notion that all kinds of misfortunes come out of a broken harmony between creatures, peoples, and genders.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to Jill Beaulieu for her patience, valued criticism and tireless editorial advice in the supervision of this paper.

Many thanks to Nolene Lucas for her encouragement and criticism.

I would like to thank to Jacqueline Clayton and Ron Dunsire for their constant support, encourage and friendship during my stay at Nepean.

A special thanks to Sydny Brient for his proof-reading and friendship.
Dedicated to

my parents, my son Ju Young, my daughter Jung Eun and to my husband with love.
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INTRODUCTION

Regardless of change and progress in human society, an ongoing preoccupation in the world is the status of women and their position of subordination and oppression. In my private life, I have experienced the restrictions of marriage and children and the limitation of opportunity and choice caused by the traditional value system which views women for men's convenience. During the last two years of my studying in Australia, I have come to realize that inequality between genders is an issue not only in Korea and for me as an individual, but in all societies. Whether in the west or in the east, gender issues are a major social problem; it is manifested in violence against women, as well as in male-dominated politics and occupations often resulting in imbalance in wage levels and limitation of opportunity and choice, etc. This unjust, and essentially patriarchal situation surrounding women is the primary focus of my work.

In relation to this concern, I will investigate important causes and aspects of women's oppression, and the physical and spiritual dimensions of women under patriarchal society from the perspective of Korean women. This research develops the notion that all kinds of human misfortune are derived from the disharmony between the
genders and other people. From my theoretical research, I have drawn conclusions from which I will express the necessity for harmony and equality between genders to achieve a better quality of life for all people.

Chapter I will investigate the theoretical background of male-dominance and its contradictions by reference to the views of western scholars. Chapter II will examine those factors of Confucianism and Shamanism affecting women’s physical and spiritual way of life. Chapter III will examine sex-discrimination in art and the endeavors of women artists against it.