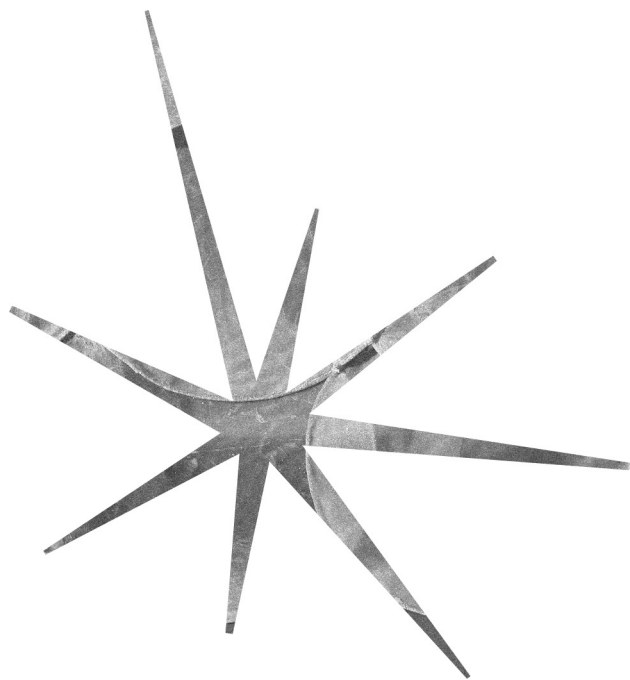


Guide



WELCOME TO OUR *Liberation Space* Monument

The Korean Pavilion during the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia is repurposed as a living, breathing monument to the idea of a “Liberation Space.”

The expression “Liberation Space,” or *Haebang Gonggan* (해방공간) in Korean, generally refers to the transitional period between 1945, when Korea was freed from Japanese colonial rule, and 1948, when the governments of Korea—divided into South and North—were proclaimed. This period marked a space of profound joy born of newfound freedom, as well as excitement for the life and society to come; but also included the tensions and struggles of forging a new and sustainable form of self-governance among diverse sovereign subjects as other foreign powers encroached upon the yet-to-be nation.

Our fundamental premise posits that “Liberation Space” is an unceasing movement, while a “nation,” by definition, is an unfinished project. And if a nation cannot be abolished, then we’d better take part and find a way to use it.

The Korean Pavilion, a late addition to the Giardini, embodies the story of a nation in the midst of becoming. Built in 1995, at a moment when South Korea was undergoing both rapid new establishment (birth) and widespread clearing and demolition (death), the structure was required to fit a narrow, irregular site wedged between the pavilions of former empires. Shaped by these constraints, it took on its current, distinctive form, atypical of a national monument. Poised between fortress and nest, the building is as undetermined as the nation it represents.

Artist Goen Choi approaches this Korean Pavilion as she might a body: one that requires opening in order to attain a new form of monumentality suited to liberatory praxis.

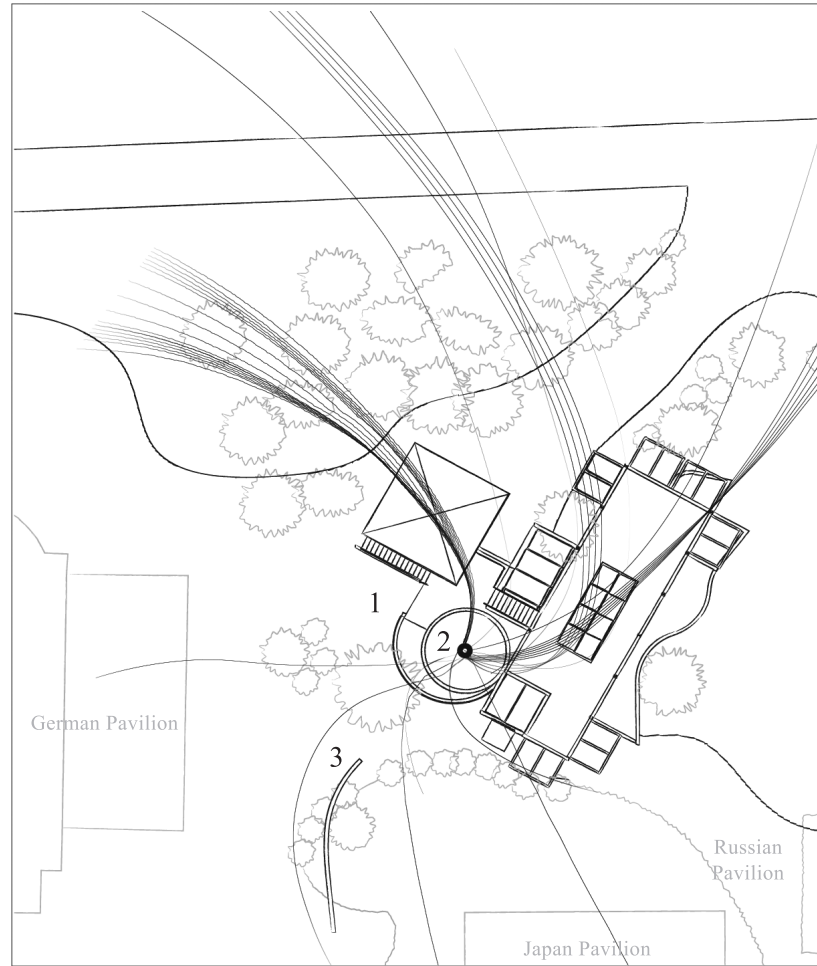
Various blockages—the second floor, where a spiral staircase once led visitors out onto the rooftop; a sealed pillar through which key infrastructural tubes run; the vegetative border between the Korean Pavilion and the Japan Pavilion; and, ultimately, the territorialized grounds of the Giardini della Biennale itself—are all sites proposed by Choi’s *Meridian* for such opening. Through the piercing, rupturing action of the pipes and the ache that accompanies it, we are kindled to heal and reconnect. In creating these new lines of movement, Choi’s cut, split, and curved copper pipes also create new ways for us to reach one another.

The word “meridian” itself refers both to the imaginary circular lines passing through the North and South Poles, used to measure longitude, and to the pathways within the body along which energy is understood to flow.



Completion of the Korean Pavilion ③ / Mancuso e Serena Architetti Associati, Courtesy of Arts Council Korea (ARKO) Arts Archive

This archival photograph features the staircase originally installed in the Korean Pavilion, suggesting a spiral, upward movement both literally and metaphorically. With no written record of when, why, or how it was removed, we know only that it was not seen following the Pavilion’s first exhibition, and that the second floor has been inaccessible to the public, used only for storage and facilities until opened again by *Meridian*.



1
Meridian, 2026. Industrial copper pipe, painted wood panels, dimensions variable.

2
Meridian-pillar, 2025–2026. Industrial copper pipe, painted wood panels, dimensions variable.

3
Corea Pavilion–Bush–Giappone Pavilion, 2026. Industrial copper pipe, dimensions variable.

Co-commissioned by the artists and curators of the Korean Pavilion and Japan Pavilion (Ei Arakawa, Lisa Horikawa, Mizuki Takahashi).

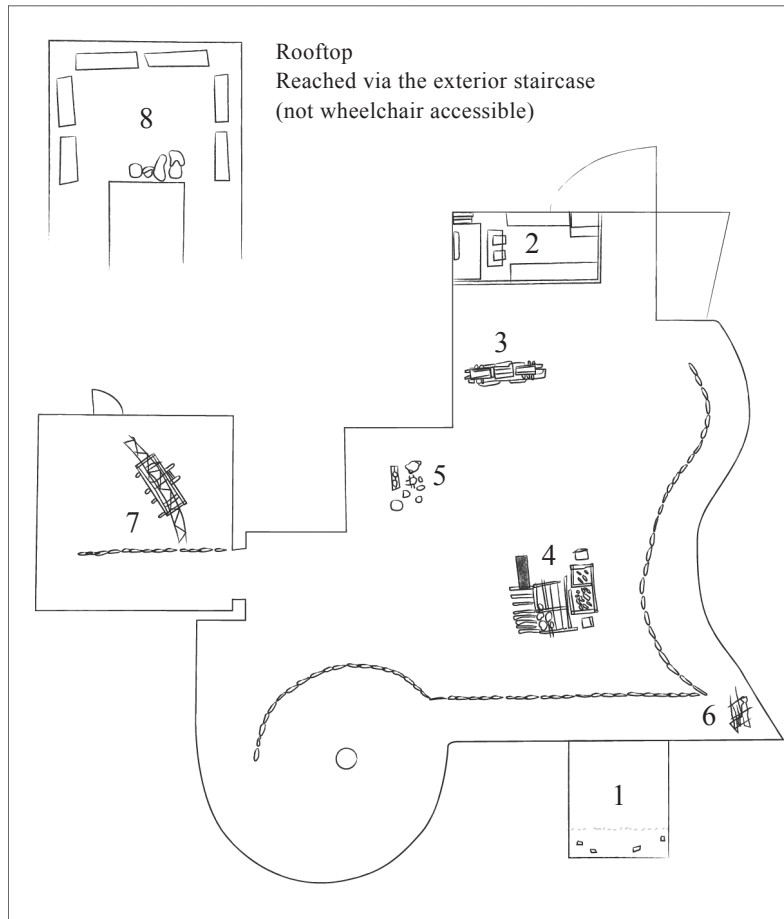


Photo by Goen Choi

What, then, comes in the wake of these openings and ruptures? Beyond the ongoing necessity of struggling to create such openings, a “Liberation Space” actually emerges through the activities we undertake and sustain as continuous practice, both individually and collectively.

Artist Hyeree Ro places nation-building on the same horizon as child-rearing and the practice of a self-determined life. Eight stations, composed by Ro and distributed across the Korean Pavilion, guide a set of basic, essential activities that constitute such practices. The paths to these stations are bounded by a membrane-like wall made of thousands of waxed organza circles stitched together, fragile yet protective. Some of the stations also host works by the Liberation Space Fellows, who contribute their own accounts of engagement with different manifestations of “Liberation Space.”

The title of Ro’s work, *Bearing*, carries multiple, interrelated meanings: to carry, to endure, to withstand, to relate, to guide, to give birth, and to produce.



* Station descriptions in the artist’s own words

1
Outlooking Station
전망하는 스테이션
2026. Soapstone, wood, painted wooden ramp, dimensions variable.

“A glass nook with a gradual ramp. It features four stone carvings of the four national pavilions that can be observed from the nook.”

2
Living Station
생활하는 스테이션
2025–2026. Wood, fabric, fired clay, foam, acrylic, repurposed sack, vinyl, fridge, microwave, dimensions variable.

“A space for the exhibition staff who care for the Pavilion each day, as well as the Bearers who circulate and practice daily around the stations. It houses a fridge, microwave, daybed, and shelves for catalogs and tools—

items once haphazardly stored in the closed-off second floor, which has now been opened.”

3
Planning Station
설계하는 스테이션
2025–2026. Wood, acrylic, air dry clay, fiberglass, epoxy resin, fabric, sealing wax, 136.5×189×88cm.

“A paper-making station where each day, two sheets of paper are made from collected ephemera and stacked.”

4
Mourning Station
애도하는 스테이션
2025–2026. Wood, paper, acrylic, fired clay, plastic bag, paper clay, rock, metal sheet, 132×191×195.5cm.

This station accommodates *The Funeral* (2018) by novelist Han Kang, commemorating those who lost their lives during the Jeju 4.3 Uprising and Massacre 제주 4.3 (1947–1954).

5
Waiting Station
기다리는 스테이션
2025–2026. Paper clay, wood, fired clay, rock, dimensions variable.

“A station where many bowls made with paper clay are gathered, waiting for something.”

6
Mending Station
수선하는 스테이션
2026. Wood, steel, fired clay, fabric, rope, scissors, thread, needle, thread snips, paper, plaster, 120×62.5×33cm.

“A small wheeled object composed of tools and materials for mending the organza circles and other installed works.”

7
Remembering Station
기억하는 스테이션
2025–2026. Paper clay, wood, fired clay, rock, dimensions variable.

Scenes from a Revolution (2020) by artist Christian Nyampeta is featured here, consisting of 72 lino plates that recreate print images by the Gwangju People’s Art School 광주시민미술학교 (1983–86), which operated in the wake of the May 18 Gwangju Democratization Movement 5.18 민주화 운동 (1980). One image remains fixed, while another is changed daily by the Bearer.

Four photographs by artist and writer Yezoi Hwang have been transferred onto this station. They are drawn from Hwang’s extensive documentation of citizen protests spanning the then-incumbent Korean president’s declaration of martial law on 3 December 2024 to his impeachment on 4 April 2025.

8
Sharing Station
나누는 스테이션
2026. Fired clay, dimensions variable.

Our ▣ (mieum), an original song composed by singer-songwriter Lang Lee and commissioned for *Liberation Space: Fortress/Nest*, is housed in one of the ceramic objects by Hyeree Ro.

Clay forms of indigenous Korean Seeds, made by activist and farmer Huju Kim, are kept in one of the ceramic objects to be gifted by occasion.

The *Liberation Space: Fortress/Nest* organizing team also commissioned and installed nine benches for this station, to be placed alongside *Reader (1)*.

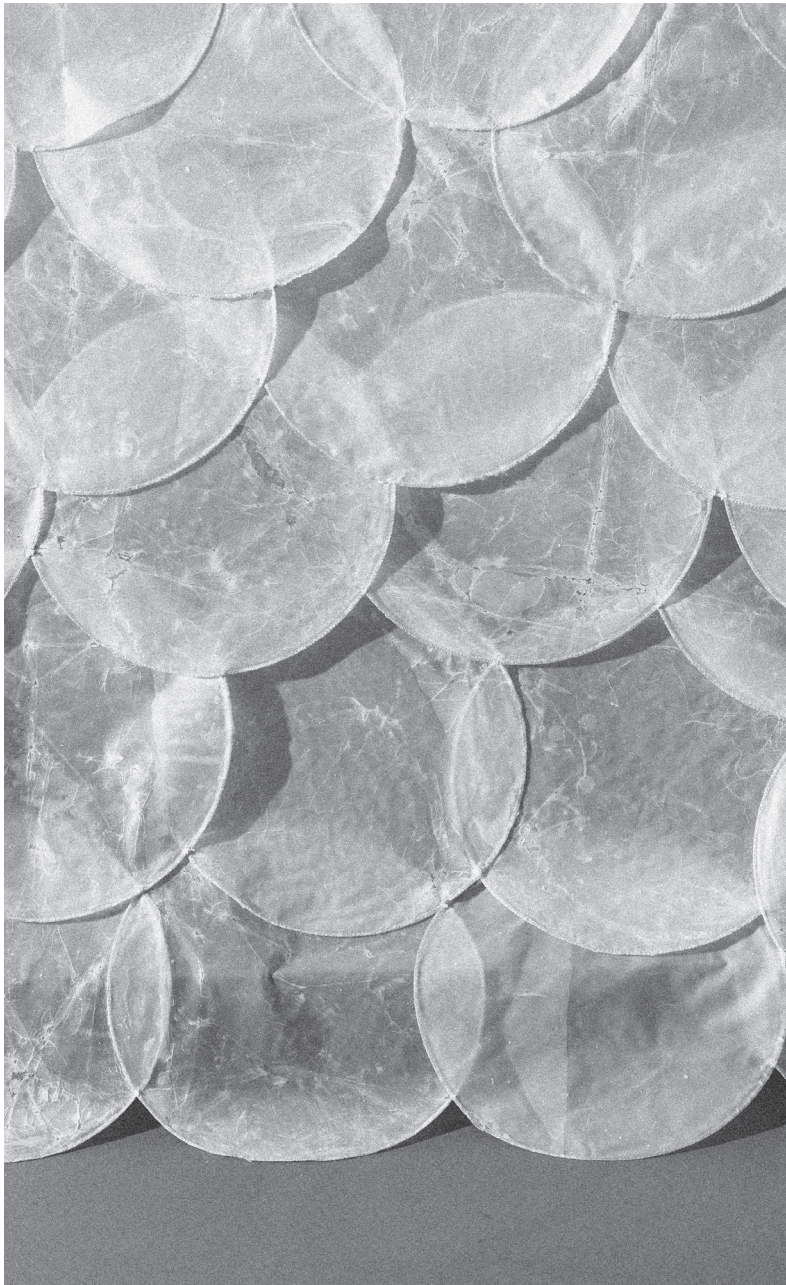


Photo by Sangtae Kim

TEAM

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Binna Choi

Artists

Goen Choi, Hyeree Ro

Fellows

Han Kang, Yezoi Hwang,
Huju Kim, Lang Lee,
Christian Nyampeta

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Eugene Hannah Park

Publications & programs

Maya West

Administrative manager

Hyein Song

Designers

Yejin Cho, Seokyung
Kim

Technical advisor

Jeonhwan Cho

Network & partnership
advisor

Janghwan Chung

Reader (1) contributors

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Jamaica Heolikalani
Osorio, GBICC25,
and *Liberation Space:*
Fortress/Nest artists,
curators, and fellows

Korean Pavilion
manager

Eunjeong Kim

Exhibition staff

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Chiara Garbin, Maša
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Wang, Jihyeon Yi,
Yeonjoo Kim, Sangha
Khym, Kangsun Lee,
Daun Lim

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Toraman, Chulho Yeom,
Devon Chen, Eliette
Mitchell, Andria Shafer,
Aidan Sung, Chiara
Garbin, Francesco
Amisano

Meridian production

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Gyusong Lee), So Min
Kwak, Subin Roh,
Jiwoo Hong, Hyung
Joong Kim, Sun Kyu
Lee

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Liberation Space: Fortress/Nest at the Korean Pavilion of the 61st International Art Exhibition — La Biennale di Venezia is on view in the Giardini della Biennale from 9 May 2026 through 22 November 2026.

*

Liberation Space: Reader (1) is published on the occasion of the opening; *Reader (2)* is scheduled for publication in early 2027.

Liberation Space Network activities unfold throughout the duration of the project, from May 2026 to late 2027.

A Homecoming Exhibition will be held at ARKO Art Center in Seoul, March–April 2027.

A Traveling Exhibition will be held at the Los Angeles Korean Culture Center in Summer 2027.

For the first time in Biennale history, the Korean Pavilion and Japan Pavilion have also come together in a collaboration that includes a co-commissioned work by Goen Choi, an opening week performance program, a breakfast reception in Hong Kong (March 2026), and more.

www.korean-pavilion.or.kr