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Cherry blossoms that previously adorned the campus have given way to the deep emerald leaves unfurling with the last scent of spring. The strains of the exam season are now replaced by the vibrant anticipation for the upcoming festival. Along with these changes, the arrival of May brings us to the midpoint of this semester.

Marking the halfway point of our journey, now is the time to reflect on the past and picture the roads ahead. Amidst the great tapestry of memories, some may find satisfaction in retracing steps they have taken, while others may wrestle with the emotion of regret. From the echoes of exam grades to human bonds, a lot of things in our lives are vulnerable to lament. All the ‘should haves’ and ‘could haves’ may torment our hearts, as things can quickly diverge from the script that we have written.

However, underneath all this regret lies the yearning for growth. The desire for improvement is what makes us glance back at the paths we have walked through. This regretful emotion can become the next segue into the path toward your better tomorrow. Having to navigate the crossroads laid in front of this midpoint can make us feel apprehensive about what lies ahead. A glimpse of the past may keep interfering with our journey of moving forward. Yet, in this process of replenishing the past and embellishing the future, may there be glee.
On March 20th, the special fund delivery to the ₩1,000 Breakfast Project was held on the Natural Sciences Campus (NSC). The ₩1,000 Breakfast Project is one of Sungkyunkwan University’s (SKKU) charity projects operated by donations from SKKU alumni. Thanks to this project, Kingos can enjoy a satisfying breakfast for only ₩1,000. At the delivery ceremony, 100 sanitary workers from the NSC, including Shin Ok-sun, the chief sanitary worker, delivered ₩12 million to the project. Shin Ok-sun revealed that the donation began with the kindness of one student she met 15 years ago, explaining, “A student gave me a cold drink when I was sweating a lot while working at the time. So, I wanted to convey sincere feelings that I have had for a long time towards SKKU and its students.” The sanitary workers joined the donation as a way to help the students after finding out the existence of the ₩1,000 Breakfast Project. They gathered money into the plastic collection box that they placed in front of the Student Center about a year ago. The heartfelt donations from the sanitary workers will be used to offer breakfast to Kingos. At the ceremony, President Yoo Ji-beom commented, “I deeply appreciate the voluntary participation of the sanitary workers and their affection for the students.”

Professor Kim Jae-Yun’s Research Team: Changing Lignin into a Vaccine

Professor Kim Jae-yun of the Department of Chemical Engineering and Polymer Engineering at Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU) and his research team have developed a technology utilizing lignin, an eco-friendly material extracted from trees, as a vaccine. Lignin acts as glue that combines another element of trees, cellulose fiber, and enhances the strength of wood. Previously, lignin was disused that combines another element of trees, cellulose fiber, and enhances the strength of wood. Previously, lignin was disused.

However, Professor Kim’s research team used lignin as a high-value-added vaccine for multiple sclerosis (MS) treatments. MS is an autoimmune disease that affects the central nervous system, such as the brain and spinal cord, and is known to be incurable. The research team found that lignin suppresses excessive activation of immune cells and made a therapeutic vaccine that combines lignin nanoparticles with autoantigen using its attribute. As a result of this vaccination, mice that had paralyzed hind legs due to MS began to recover from their paralysis and walk again. Prof. Kim explained, “We identified the sustainability of lignin as a high-value-added material for immunotherapy.” He also stated that the research could contribute to securing a material platform for various immunotherapies.

On March 27th to 28th, the Geumjandi Cultural Festival was held on the Humanities and Social Sciences Campus (HSSC) by the 56th Student Council SURE! The Geumjandi Cultural Festival is one of the annual spring festivals of Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU), which takes place in the Geumjandi Square. This year, the festival offered diverse student booths and events based on the slogan of “Let’s Love.” The student council’s booths ran various events, including the SURE! Receipt Photo Studio, which allowed Kingos to make their own keyrings with a photo of themselves and sold merchandise such as stickers and postcards. Moreover, several dance clubs and bands, such as JDA and TUNA, showcased their performances, while flea markets and food trucks enhanced the atmosphere of the festival. Bok Seo-jin (Junior, Department of Confucian and Oriental Studies) said, “I have new unforgettable memories of springtime thanks to the festival delivering to all of my senses.” The film festival, which took place in the evening, was also loved by many Kingos, with the screenings of Before Sunrise on the 27th and Eternal Sunshine on the 28th. Although the festival wrapped up successfully, some voices of disappointment emerged. First, the preparatory period for performing teams was relatively insufficient. Although the teams usually need at least a month to prepare for their performance, they had only about a week and a few more days after the results of the recruitment were announced. Furthermore, on the 28th, teams had to perform on the lawn when it rained because the tents were installed too low on stage.

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Drawing from the Past at SKKU

On March 29th, after the Geumjandi Cultural Festival, the Haeoreum Festival was held on the Natural Sciences Campus (NSC) at the Global Square in front of the Samsung Library. With the concept of praying for the year’s well-being, the Haeoreum Festival kept its traditions based on SKKU’s rich history. The main theme of the festival was Hyanggeumjure, a feast where yusaengs, scholars of the Joseon Dynasty, gathered to drink and sing. Likewise, Kingos enjoyed the feast on the lawn, playing traditional games such as archery and kite-flying while drinking Korean rice wine, makgeolli, and the sweet rice drink, sikhye. Jang Yun-chang (Senior, Department of Mechanical Engineering) said, “I had a lot of fun during the festival because of Korean traditional elements such as stone-throwing and pitching that I had not experienced before.” The events on the stage were divided into two parts, with performances by various clubs. In particular, the dance club Ayes’s performance got a great response for wearing Hanbok skirts, which emphasized traditional beauty. Jung Young- gi, the 56th student president of the NSC, said, “When preparing for the festival, we think a lot about combining tradition with content in which Kingos can participate.” He added that they would utilize the new attempts made at the Haeoreum Festival to enhance the quality of upcoming festivals such as Daedongje and ESKARA.
A Lifelong Experience

Please introduce yourself.
Hello, my name is Fernando Ruiz. I am currently an exchange student at Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU) from London, United Kingdom. My major at SKKU is mathematics, and I plan to stay here for two semesters, from Autumn 2023 until Spring 2024.

Why did you choose Korea and SKKU?
There are several reasons behind my decision. Firstly, the academic excellence of SKKU attracted me. Since SKKU is considered one of the top universities in South Korea, especially for its renowned academic programs and professors, I wanted to be part of the community. Furthermore, my passion for learning the Korean language led me to SKKU. I believe that the best way to learn a language is to be in the surroundings of other native speakers. The experience at SKKU gives me the opportunity to improve my Korean skills.

How is your life at SKKU?
SKKU has been amazing, from university culture and clubs to campus architecture and the students. The university has been inclusive of other exchange students, which helps us bond with Korean students. My experience in the musical band Aman, which is on the Natural Sciences Campus (NSC), has been particularly unforgettable. Although it is a challenge to climb the hill for the classes I have on the Humanities and Social Sciences Campus (HSSC), the memories I have created at SKKU are remarkable.

Do you have any advice for international students who are afraid to try new things?
Do not be afraid to take your shot, whether it is a new club or a new sport. Go and try different activities, and do not restrict yourself. Just because you are on the other side of the world, do not be scared. Remember that you only live once, and opportunities like this do not come often. You are doing this for the experience, so make the most of it! For students in other countries, I recommend traveling to South Korea, specifically SKKU, to enjoy the best experiences and make lifelong friends.

Spring 2024 International Student Job & Startup Fair

As the importance of a multicultural society grows, the third International Student Job & Startup Fair (ISF) is again taking place. According to the Ministry of Justice, the number of foreigners residing in Korea, including international students, is constantly growing, marking 166,892 students in 2022. The fair, therefore, aims to contribute to domestic multicultural employment by attracting capable international students. Hosting the fair with Jobcenter, Sejong University also organizes the event with SIGMA media. The event will take place at Gwanggaeto Hall Convention Hall at Sejong University on May 9th, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The fair will be composed of a series of job interviews, startup consulting, and networking with other participants. International students, company human resources (HR) teams, university international office and job teams, service providers, and related professionals can participate in the event. The participation fee is free for international students, and they can participate in the fair by updating their CVs at the Jobcenter website (www.jobcenter.kr). Enquiries can be registered through the Jobcenter Kakao Channel. International students, whether studying a language course or pursuing a bachelor’s, master’s, or doctorate degree, are welcome at the fair.

The Opening of the Third Session of the Regular Korean Program

Korean universities’ admission process and provide assistance in learning the Korean language and acquiring cultural knowledge. Classes are divided into six levels, starting from the Level 1 beginner class to the Level 6 advanced class. The number of students in each class is limited to a maximum of 15 students for active communication. Classes are held on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 2:50 p.m. The RKP is composed of six sessions per year, with each session lasting eight weeks. Each session covers one level, making a year required to finish all six levels. RKP opens on both campuses, the Humanities and Social Sciences Campus (HSSC) and Natural Sciences Campus (NSC), with slightly differing tuition fees. The application period for the third semester is from May 6th until the 31st, with the semester starting on July 1st and ending on August 23rd.
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Hello, I am Assistant Professor Min Moohong. I first entered SKKU in 2003 as an undergraduate student majoring in computer science and engineering. After graduating in 2010, I obtained a master's degree in the Department of Mobile Systems Engineering at SKKU and eventually a doctorate in information security at Korea University.

I wanted to become a computer engineer since I was in elementary school, as I have always enjoyed coding and working with computers. Similar to how young kids nowadays are learning to use Python, I also learned popular programming languages at the time, such as the Beginner’s All-Purpose Symbolic Instruction Code (BASIC). Coding especially intrigued me because of its power to bring my imagination to life. As long as I hone my programming skills, I can create my own world, whether it be a game or something else.

I had a rather unusual college experience. I began my freshman year ordinarily but soon felt slightly unsatisfied with the general education courses I took during the first semester. Because I wanted to delve deeper into topics related to my major and gain practical experience at a company, I immediately applied to AhnLab, a cybersecurity company, when I saw the opportunity and began my internship in the second semester. Even after my time at AhnLab ended, I continued to participate in several activities to increase my hands-on experience, including internships, competitions, and clubs.

For Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU) students who have taken the required Data Science (DS) courses, there is a face that they will certainly recognize beyond their i-Campus screens – Professor Min Moohong. With this, the Sungkyun Times (SKT) is delighted to share our interview with Prof. Min, an SKKU alumnus and the man who coded his way into many Kingos’ hearts.

Please share your area of research with Kings, who may be unfamiliar with it.

Although security is my main area of research, I have been focusing my studies more on the research of illegal gambling. I began studying this specific area after seeing the illicit gambling cases firsthand in my past workplace. By merging the branches of information security and artificial intelligence (AI), I aim to find strategies that efficiently identify and block gambling sites, as well as research solutions to help deal with underage gambling.

Please share your area of research with Kings, who may be unfamiliar with it.

What did you gain from the various competitions and hackathons you joined at the time?

By entering several competitions, I found peers with whom I could create and learn things. Although I did have friends in my major, the differences in our goals made it challenging for us to connect. Among the possible careers in areas such as software development, graphic design, and research, I had my sights set on the field of security from the beginning. I had the privilege of finding my path early on, so I was able to prepare for it in advance and study ahead of others. Through various competitions and hackathons, I found a place where I could meet individuals who shared the same path and dreamed of a similar future as me.

How did you transition into a career in academia?

I have always enjoyed learning, even if this was not always reflected in my grades. In fact, when I was in college, I spent a lot of my time at the library. I often left as I heard the sound of the university hymn signaling it was closing for the night. After graduation, I worked at the Korea Racing Authority for 10 years. In my third year there, I wanted to deepen my knowledge in the field, so I began balancing my Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) studies alongside my job for the next six years. I decided to eventually work in academia because of the merit of being able to continue my studies even after graduating. For this reason, when SKKU offered me the opportunity to return to my alma mater as a professor, I gladly accepted.

As a researcher and professor, how do you feel about returning to your alma mater?

Returning to SKKU and teaching my juniors has been such an honor. Beyond this, it has also been an enjoyable experience becoming acquainted with the Humanities and Social Sciences Campus (HSSC). Despite being a student at SKKU for more than 10 years, I never had the chance to experience the HSSC because my department was located on the Natural Sciences Campus (NSC). It is only now, as a professor of three years in the HSSC, that I have been able to truly enjoy everything that it offers.

Why is it essential for individuals with non-STEM backgrounds to learn how to code?

Nowadays, a life without computers is difficult to imagine. Everything is related to computers in a certain way. If you would like to maximize the potential of computers, you must know how to code. When developing

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What do you pay attention to when teaching programming to students of non-STEM majors?

When teaching coding in classes comprised of students who do not study science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), I take the time to fully explain and repeat concepts. I also introduce new topics by sharing related materials that have been discussed in the past. In comparison to STEM majors who may have had prior exposure to coding, many non-STEM students are only learning this for the first time and thus need more explanation.

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How would you define `beautiful code`?

I believe that “beautiful code” should be comprehensible to anyone who sees it for the first time. Many skilled developers would define beautiful code as concise and efficient. However, this type of code can be challenging to read for those who are not well-versed in the area. It is as if they have created a whole different world that only themselves can understand. In my opinion, beautiful code is written and explained in a way that anyone can easily understand.

Errors are an unwanted but unavoidable part of coding. Do you have any words of encouragement for Kingos who are facing errors in their lives?

Just like errors in life, mistakes or bugs happen all the time while coding. In fact, there is a term to describe the process of fixing these bugs — debugging. Kingos, remember that there is nothing you cannot debug if you put in the time and effort to solve it. For now, I hope that you can put your worries aside for a while and enjoy the upcoming Daedongje!
How Do Schools Charge Graduation Postponement Fees?

Understanding the Graduation Postponement System

Graduation postponement fees are a part of the tuition that students taking advantage of the system pay to the school. Most universities impose graduation postponement fees to provide a minimum number of facilities for those students while also rotating the use of university facilities for others. The method of charging graduation postponement fees differs among schools, which can be divided into proportional rate fees and flat rate fees. The proportional rate fees charge students 6.5% to 12.5% of the total tuition, whereas flat rate fees collect a specific designated amount without considering the tuition. For example, Konkuk University has adopted the proportional rate fee method, charging one-sixth of the total tuition, while Seoul National University of Science and Technology uses the flat rate fee method, which charges students W100,000 to be eligible for postponement. In 2022, the total amount of money collected from students by all universities was around W10.3 billion, and the highest fees paid were in public universities. The amount of money collected from the top eight national universities was W48.9 million.

Advantages of Being a Student

Despite the existence of graduation postponement fees, many students still choose to participate in the system because the benefits of delaying graduation are significant. One of the advantages is that it allows them to maintain their student status, which grants them many benefits and programs to participate in. First, those who deferred their graduation are considered university students, allowing them to use the facilities on campus and participate in various programs, such as internships. They are also qualified to partake in extracurricular activities, which can help them to develop work skills. The biggest reason college students choose to delay graduation is that many think maintaining a status as an expected graduate gives them advantageous points in the job market. “The current job market seems to favor students who do not have a career break. There is a sense of stability that comes with being a student,” said a senior in the Department of Economics in an interview with the SKT. In February, Job Korea, an online recruiting company, conducted a survey of university students eligible for graduation in 2025; 55% said they would postpone their graduation, and 62.9% said they would delay graduation because they think their status as a student will be more advantageous for employment. Due to these benefits, more students are now deferring graduation instead of entering the workplace.

Double Burden of Deferred Graduation

Despite these advantages, there are still problems that need to be solved. The first challenge is that the amount of graduation postponement fees differs for each university, raising equity issues. Currently, the variation of postponement graduation fees is significant, ranging from 6.5% to 12.5%. Moreover, there are even schools where a separate tuition replaces the graduation postponement fees due to the absence of the system. For instance, in Seoul National University (SNU), a major national university that does not have a graduation postponement system, students must pay a minimum tuition of W407,000 to take one extra credit. This phenomenon occurs because no penalties exist for universities that do not have the graduation postponement system. In addition, universities collect graduation postponement fees without specifying how the fund is used. Students are unsure of how the money is being spent, making them more skeptical about the existence of such fees. Moreover, the fundamental reason students delay graduation — employment difficulties — is not addressed. According to the MOE, the number of deferred graduation students is growing by 10-20% due to the current economic recession. Despite this, the structural problem of rising youth unemployment remains unsolved.

Improvement of the Graduation Postponement System

Legislation for the System

The current challenges must be solved to achieve the full potential of the graduation postponement system. First, it should be mandatory for all universities to run the system. In 2018, the same year in which the system was introduced, the Korea Higher Education Research Institute attempted amending the policy to mandate the system by law. Despite these efforts to make the system more student-friendly, the amendment was ultimately rejected. As more students are now taking advantage of the graduation postponement system, it is necessary to legally authorize it. Previously, there were no penalties for schools that did not have a system for postponing graduation, but now schools must be fined for not establishing the system. Making it mandatory for all universities would prevent unequal treatment and opaque policies. Additionally, universities should be transparent when using their graduation postponement fees by letting students know how they are used. Publishing information on the school’s official website, which allows students to access their information at any time, would be a progressive step.

Exclusive Support for the Deferred Students

University-level support is necessary to address the fundamental and structural cause of graduation postponement unemployment. Universities must expand their scope to include graduates in employment services. Programs for graduation deferring students should be designed with customized employment curriculum programs, which can help students plan their employment strategies. According to the 2016 College Deferred Graduation Survey Report, most students pointed out the lack of employment-related programs as an issue at their university and demanded solutions to address the problem. The University of California, Berkeley provides a comprehensive career support program for first-year and fourth-year students and beyond. Students can sign up for free career workshops on any topic each week and receive professional coaching on going to interviews and writing resumes. In Korea, Gyeongbuk National University offers an online program for job careers, which helps students learn the basics of employment and builds their strategies for finding employment. Similar employment support programs should be encouraged in other universities to help students acquire the skills required for employment and be more competitive in the job market after graduation.
Seoul City Unveils Support Measures to Revitalize Urban Redevelopment

On March 27th, Seoul City introduced support measures for redevelopment and reconstruction during a press conference. The essence of this plan is to ensure that there is no exclusion of areas from redevelopment projects due to a lack of viability and various regulations. There are three main developments made from this plan: tailored deregulation, provision of incentives, and public support to expedite projects. First, tailored deregulation involves involving regions that need high-density and mixed-use development, including high-quality transit areas, to semi-residential areas. This deregulation is contingent on introducing facilities linked to city policies, such as job creation and care services for the elderly and infants. Next, a viability correction factor will be applied to areas lacking project viability to reduce regional disparities. This new correction factor reflects the number of existing households, land price, and the level of overcrowding. This factor enables the increase of the permitted floor area ratio, the incentive ratio determined through distinct planning of redevelopment, from 10-20% to 20-40%. Lastly, the road width requirements for redevelopment have been relaxed from only permitting properties adjacent to roads wider than 4m to a maximum of 6m. Regarding these changes, Yoo Chang-soo, the Second Administrative Deputy Mayor of the Seoul Metropolitan Government, stated, “This plan will pave the way for improving aging residential areas and revitalize the stagnant construction industry.”

The Launch of the Personal Information Safe Zone

The Personal Information Safe Zone within Statistics Korea officially commenced operation on March 28th. This operation enhances the security environment, allows flexible handling of personal information, and ensures the safe utilization of statistical data. After receiving the conditional assignment last December, Statistics Korea became the first institution in South Korea to operate this zone. Statistics Korea utilizes the existing Statistics Data Center’s analysis room for this zone after installing designated computers to establish a secure, enclosed network environment. Under the principle of Zero Trust, this zone is a space where personal information is isolated from external access for more flexible processing with enhanced security. This zone utilizes linkage keys, including unique statistical identifiers, long-term retention, and third-party reuse of pseudonymous information for continuous research. Furthermore, the practical verification of privacy-enhancing technologies such as homomorphic encryption becomes plausible. In particular, Statistics Korea plans to enhance data linkage by connecting statistics, administrative data, and big data, that is currently held by 432 national statistical agencies, using unique statistical identifiers. It is expected that combining and utilizing national statistics and various data will become easier with the collaboration of the Personal Information Safe Zone and the specialized institutions. The Deputy Chairman of the Personal Information Protection Commission, Choi Jang-hyeok, said, “With high-quality pseudonymous information being processed flexibly in a safe environment, we expect more in-depth research to be conducted in various fields.”

Controversy Intensifies in United States over Abortion Pill

Conservative anti-abortion activists began to attribute the continued high abortion rates in the United States (U.S.) to the abortion pill. The abortion pill refers to Mifepristone and Misoprostol, two drugs that can be used to end a pregnancy. Since the pills’ approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2000, over 60% of abortions in the U.S. have been carried out through the use of the abortion pill. However, circumstances changed in 2022 as the Roe v. Wade ruling, which guaranteed women’s rights to the Roe v. Wade ruling, which guaranteed women’s rights to abortion, was overturned after half a century. Subsequently, 14 states in the U.S. no longer recognize the right to abortion. However, this ruling did not lower the abortion rates in the U.S., with over 1 million formal healthcare abortions in 2023, according to the Monthly Abortion Provision Study by the Guttmacher Institute. The anti-abortion activists argued that the abortion pill is attributing to the continued high abortion rates. They claimed that since it is possible to obtain a remote prescription for these drugs without a doctor, the prescription method itself must be revoked. For this reason, the anti-abortion activists filed a lawsuit on March 26th seeking the revocation of access to the abortion pill. The U.S. Department of Justice and pharmaceutical companies made an appeal, and the case will be decided by the Supreme Court. Not only does this trial determine women’s abortion rights, but it also becomes a presidential issue as the stances of former President Trump and current President Biden, who are also candidates for the upcoming election, diverge. Accordingly, the verdict is expected to be reached around July, before the presidential election in November.

China Triumphs in WTO Dispute against Australia

On March 27th, China won a three-year-long dispute with Australia over steel tariffs. This conflict originated in June 2021, with tense bilateral relations between the two countries. The dispute began when Beijing lodged a complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO) after the Australian government charged additional tariffs on steel products imported from China. Specifically, Australia imposed extra duties on railway wheels, wind towers, and stainless steel sheets from China. Trade in these products between the two countries was valued at approximately ¥46 billion in 2022. The WTO Dispute Settlement Panel ultimately ruled in favor of China when they found that the Australian Anti-Dumping Commission had taken action that did not comply with some articles of the Anti-Dumping Agreement. This agreement involves provisional duties or securities in the form of cash deposits or bonds equal to the amount of the preliminarily determined margin of dumping. The final ruling recommends that Australia amend or withdraw the measures, although some have already been resolved as the relations between the two countries have improved. The Australian Minister for Trades, Dan Tehan, announced that the Australian government would accept the WTO ruling. Meanwhile, the Australian government has made attempts to mend its relations with Beijing since 2023. Australia suspended a WTO complaint to reopen the Chinese market to Australian barley and has proposed a halt on another WTO dispute against China concerning sanctions on Australian wine.
South Korea's Harrowing Shrinking Future

South Korea is currently on the verge of a population cliff. According to Statistics Korea, the nation’s total fertility rate dropped to 0.7 in the third quarter of 2023. This data suggests that the population decline in Korea could occur more rapidly than during the 14th century when the Black Death annihilated one-third of the European population. Worryingly, it seems undeniable that South Korea is facing a severe population decline. The Sungkyun Times (SKT) aims to explore the causes of South Korea’s drop in population and plausible solutions.

By Kim Jeong-han
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The population of South Korea has had many fluctuations in the past due to historical occurrences and shifts in the societal atmosphere. In 1925, the inaugural census employing modern techniques was first undertaken domestically, facilitating precise population enumeration. Then, in the 1940s, despite the somber era of Japanese colonization, population metrics exhibited an upward trajectory, with the total populace residing on the Korean Peninsula tallying up to 25.12 million by 1944. Moreover, the Korean War between 1950 and 1953 did not halt the increase in population during the post-war Baby Boom era from 1955 to 1964, when approximately 9 million babies were born due to the universal rush to early marriage. Until the 1990s, the government’s population policy focused on reducing population growth as the economic situation of the nation could not handle the overcrowding of people. However, in 1996, the government halted birth control policies by shifting its population policy focus from birth restriction to quality enhancement. This shift, therefore, indicated a commitment to improving the overall quality of the population. The success of such policies and diverse factors decreased the childbirth rate, which had been at around 1.5 births per woman, to a record low of 1.08 births in 2005. With an acceleration to this decline, low childbirth rates and the increase in the aging population gradually led the nation to a demographic cliff, causing childbirth policies to transition again based on the need for more children.

Korea’s Demographic Cliff

The demographic cliff is a concept that was first introduced by the American economist Henry Dent in 2014. It refers to a country’s phase where the population of individuals aged between 45 and 49, who typically exhibit peak consumption patterns, begins to decline. This phase explains the negative impact of population decline on the economy as the reduction in consumption among large population groups leads to insufficient demand and thereby diminished production. After its peak consumption rates in 2010, as Dent predicted, the nation has been facing a drop in both consumption and population since 2016. The decline had been even more dramatic than expected, as the number of births set record lows for every month in 2023. At this rate, achieving a globally unprecedented rate of 0.6 births per woman is imminent, as the rate in Seoul City had already dropped to 0.59 births, indicating uncertainty about where the bottom actually lies. A low fertility rate will eventually lead to a decrease in the working-age population, meaning that a relatively small number of economically active individuals will have to support a larger number of both the elderly and children compared to before. Despite the nation having the lowest total dependency ratio among Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) countries in 2022, Statistics Korea anticipates that South Korea will have the highest total dependency ratio by 2072. This highlights the situation’s urgency, implying an upcoming economic crisis in the nation.

Republic of Seoul

An important reason for the Korean demographic cliff is the overconcentration of the population in Seoul City. According to Busan Ilbo, in 2020, over half of the total population resided in the capital region, which comprises only 11.8%
of the country’s land. Many professionals name this situation the “Republic of Seoul,” a nation in which Seoul is the only city, and emphasize its correlation to the gradual decrease in the nation’s birth rate. Jo Young-tae, the director of the Population Policy Research Center at Seoul National University, elucidated the concentrated population structure in the metropolitan area as a cause of the demographic cliff at the EDAILY Strategy Forum. This overpopulation in the metropolitan areas creates a vicious cycle of decreasing population in both capital and non-capital areas. First, non-capital regions face inevitable decline due to the exodus of young people for education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities in the capital region, leading to a significant decrease in population. Meanwhile, in densely populated metropolitan areas, intense competition arises naturally in areas such as housing, education, and employment. Consequently, the young generation lacks the resources in both capital and time to form families, especially since metropolitan Seoul emphasizes individualism and career, leaving little room to prioritize family formation. As a result, the proportion of unmarried individuals and single-person households increases, leading to a decline in the birth rate. The growing disproportion between the oversized capital region and the impoverished non-capital regions poses a severe threat to the nation’s competitiveness, contributing to the disintegration of social cohesion among members.

Another crucial factor affecting the decrease in the number of newborns is the lack of governmental systems to support new types of families. The number of married couples has been decreasing in Korea since 2011, and August 2023 saw the lowest number of marriages on record. With social advancement leading to delayed marriages, childbirth has become a physically challenging option, especially for individuals who choose not to have any or fewer children, as it is the optimal choice in terms of both economic and physical aspects. Jeong, a working woman in her thirties living in Seoul, said, “Marriage is currently my last option. Although I am in my late thirties, I still cannot see myself as a mother soon.” However, governmental support fails short for unmarried households and unmarried mothers who are in blind spots. In South Korea, the Civil Code is directly applied to childcare-related laws, defining families based on marriage. Most of the measures to address low birth rates are focused on supporting married households, worsening the phenomenon of discrimination against unmarried childbearers. Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act specifies the spouse of a worker as the subject of maternity leave, making it impossible for unmarried cohabitants to use maternity leave for childbirth. Furthermore, under this act, unmarried workers cannot utilize family care leave because they fall outside the framework explicitly defined as a family in the Civil Code, even if they have reasons such as accidents or illnesses. The same applies to parental leave, workplace childcare support, and childcare education support programs. South Korea lacks legislative systems to support non-traditional family forms, thus discouraging diverse family types and ultimately prolonging the decline of the population.

For the sustainable growth of the Korean population, it must be first evenly distributed throughout the nation. The balanced development of social overhead capital (SOC), indirect capital that contributes to various production activities, of over 85 cities in Korea can contribute to an effective distribution. The establishment of SOC indirectly enhances productivity by supporting the production activities of enterprises. Therefore, the Korean government needs to broaden the scope of SOC beyond transportation and consider all facilities closely related to people’s lives, which can enhance the quality of life of non-capital residents by providing them with mental and economic support. Additionally, upgrading living infrastructure in fields of culture and welfare, along with improving job-related infrastructure, is essential to suppress the outflow of non-capital residents to capital regions. For instance, in 1992, France revised the Act of Territorial Administration of the Republic, democratizing local administration and promoting cooperation between local governments and residents. As a result, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, almost all local cities with a population of 300,000 or more showed a population increase between 2011 and 2016. Moreover, the dispersal of SOC leading to the enhancement of living infrastructures will reduce overpopulation in Seoul City, ultimately relieving the level of tense competition among young generations. Park Jun-soo (Sophomores, Department of Chemical Engineering) told the SKT, “As getting a job and finding a place to live in Seoul is already very challenging, governmental alleviation is necessary.” A more spacious Seoul City, along with more busy local cities, will lead to the revitalization of the economy, allowing members of society to think about forming a family.

Refinement of Governmental Childbirth System

The government should refine childbirth policies and support programs to include non-married households within the societal framework by altering the rigidity of the current legalistic view on the concept of families. Legal guarantees for non-married households have been proven to be an effective solution to the problem of low birth rates, demonstrated in other countries. Sweden, which enacted the Family Law in 1969 to allow raising children without marriage, demonstrated in other countries. Sweden, which enacted the Family Law in 1969 to allow raising children without marriage, increased the nation’s total fertility rate to 1.66 in 2020. The South Korean government could adopt this precedent to grant different alternatives for the young generation who face economic difficulties in forming a family. Another refinement the governmental system needs is the expansion of welfare benefits for unmarried households to dismantle the discrimination between children from married and unmarried households. While the recent government decision to provide additional deductions for marriage funds — giving W1 billion received as a gift from direct line descendants — is positively evaluated, benefits should also be extended to those who have not married but have a child. Furthermore, the benefits should regard unmarried workers being able to utilize family care leave under the Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act. To make this plausible, the government should expand the definition of family in the Civil Code. The diversification of the definition of a family through governmental effort can change social perceptions towards non-traditional families and support those who have children outside of the exemplary household to engage in Korean society. Therefore, governmental programs supporting procreations outside of traditional family construction can open Korean society to a new pathway.
Neulbom: The Future of Educare

In March 2024, the Ministry of Education (MOE) implemented the Neulbom School program in approximately 2,000 elementary schools to reduce the childcare burden of Korean parents. However, as the semester began, the implementation process was proven to be unstable, leading to considerable public criticism. Therefore, the Sungkyun Times (SKT) aims to analyze the current limitations of the Neulbom School program and its potential solutions.

What Is Neulbom School?

Neulbom School is a new extracurricular program based on the collaboration of education and childcare to support the early development of elementary school students. It integrates the operating system, terminology, and infrastructure of two existing elementary school programs: daycare services, which were provided under the supervision of caregivers since 2004, and afterschool classes that have been provided by teachers since 2006. The government expects it to benefit many young parents by alleviating the problem of care deficit and lifting the burden of private education expenses. Neulbom School, which provides personalized classes focused on basic academic and social skills, arts, and sports for first graders, is classified into three sessions: 7-9 a.m., 1-5 p.m., and 5-8 p.m.

March, President Yoon Suk-yuel officially implemented the program in 2,741 elementary schools nationwide, one year earlier than the original plan. Ultimately, from 2026, all elementary school students will be eligible for Neulbom School. Currently, the government is highly optimistic about the future of the program and envisions “a comprehensive educational program that satisfies all students and parents.”

New Policy, New Improvements

Former daycare services and afterschool classes were generally available from 1-5 p.m., with daycare services provided until 7 p.m., occasionally on demand. With Neulbom School, students can stay at school from as early as 7 a.m. until 8 p.m., benefiting working parents who cannot take care of their children during commuting hours. In addition, daycare services and afterschool classes required tuition from all, excluding low-income families, but Neulbom School includes a free program. The personalized Neulbom classes for first graders are completely free for up to two hours every day. From 2025, second graders will also be eligible for this benefit, which is expected to ease the financial burden on parents. Dinner expenses are also fully subsidized for students in the evening sessions, allowing parents to entrust their children’s regular eating habits at minimal cost. Furthermore, Neulbom School is available to all applicants, unlike other care programs that accept only a limited number of students. Likewise, various benefits arose with the implementation of the program.

What Are the Challenges of Implementing Neulbom School?

As the program started, Neulbom School experienced various challenges due to the rushed implementation. The government’s promise to deploy administrative staff and professional program instructors remains unkept, resulting in staffing shortages in many schools. According to the MOE, roughly 3,500 people, including 2,125 part-time teachers, were hired as administrative staff for the Neulbom program as of March 11th, which sums up to only 1.3 people per school. This shortage is most noticeable in rural areas with low populations. An elementary school in Southern Jeolla Province pointed out, “We are located in the city center with nearly 600 students, but the shortage in applicants for teaching was so severe that hiring retirees was our only choice.”

Teachers under Pressure

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Like the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," raising children is not only the responsibility of parents but also the responsibility and support in the cognitive and emotional development of citizens is important. Practical support must be provided to ease the burden on schools, before the full implementation of the Neulbom School program. A nationwide enactment of such methods would improve student participation rate, resources, and available staff vary nationwide. In France, where the afterschool care program is known for its high quality, only fundamental decisions, such as setting the budget, are made by the central government. The actual implementation is carried out by state authorities, as setting the budget, are made by the central government. The actual implementation is carried out by state authorities, allowing the service to meet the specific needs of the locals. A nationwide enactment of such methods would improve the current instability of the Neulbom School program.

Hope for the Teachers

Since securing enough staff for Neulbom Schools is urgent, connecting with existing childcare specialists would be a realistic plan. Currently, two organizations under the Ministry of Health and Welfare — the Local Children’s Center and the Care Together Center — share the goal of providing high-quality childcare in which social workers are mainly in charge of the work. If the social workers in these two organizations were to be integrated with Neulbom Schools, more efficient distribution of human resources could be achieved. Specifically, a 2019 study conducted by education researcher Park Hye-kyung claimed that it is necessary for the qualifications and wages of childcare specialists to be standardized for an environment where employees can flexibly choose their workspace. Secondly, the new tasks concerning Neulbom Schools should be handled by the Neulbom staff instead of the homeroom teachers. A practical system that legally limits the work of homeroom teachers is crucial, while responding to Neulbom-related calls should be the role of dedicated administrators. In an interview with SKT, Ro Jin-a, an associate professor in the Department of Education at Sungkyunkwan University, commented, “Elementary schools have always been short of administrative staff even before the Neulbom School program. This emphasizes the need to expand dedicated personnel.” The government must actively take measures to solve current problems with Neulbom School, especially since it sets high expectations for the program.

Docking Dreams: Navigating the Space Economy

Over the years, South Korea has made substantial progress in space through technology and innovation. The Korea Aerospace Administration (KASA), which is to be established this May under the Ministry of Science and ICT, is the latest example to prove this. In this new emerging era, the Sungkyun Times (SKT) will follow the development of South Korea on this journey toward becoming a space powerhouse.

Space had been an unprecedented horizon until humans paved the way in the 1950s. Back then, space development was focused primarily on military purposes and mainly led by the government. For instance, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was established in 1958 by the United States (U.S.) government to gain a competitive advantage in the Space Race during the Cold War. Entering the 21st century, however, thanks to a richer understanding of the cosmos, the trend shifted from a government-centered old space economy to the new space era. New space typically refers to the commercialization of outer space, where private sectors can enter the market to pursue economic benefits.

Overcoming the Impossible

Ever since, several business models offering space-based products and services have emerged. Some examples of new space economy business models are Space X, a space exploration company founded in 2002, and Orbital Insight, a geospatial data analysis company founded in 2013. The convergence of the space industry and technology has accelerated the commercialization of space, thus increasing its importance as a future industry. The financial service company Morgan Stanley estimated in its 2020 research that the revenue of the global space industry would surpass $1 trillion by 2040, which is 2.86 times larger than 2020’s revenues of $33.5 billion.

Tracing back to Korea’s space exploration history, despite being a latecomer, the nation quickly caught up with the global space industry. Korea’s space development began in 1992 with the launch of Korea’s first artificial satellite,
Since then, Korea has succeeded in launching sounding rockets and multipurpose satellites, making significant progress in the sector. In 2023, Korea successfully deployed the homegrown rocket, Nuri, into orbit. Many space startups have also emerged in the Korean market in recent years. Perseus Aerospace, a domestic small-scale orbital launch vehicle startup, told the SKT, "Private companies such as Perseus will play an important role in carrying out major yet significant space tasks." Under these circumstances, the future space economy roadmap announced in 2022 by President Yoon Suk-yeol is certainly within the realm of possibility.

The ambitious plans presented in the roadmap included developing a reusable rocket engine in five years, landing and extracting resources on the Moon by 2024 and landing on Mars by 2045. The roadmap also anticipated the foundation of KASA, which is expected to be inaugurated in Sachon City, South Gyeongsang Province, this May. The institution would act as the control tower in charge of aerospace matters, increasing the expectations of Korea’s transition into the new space economy.

Augmenting investments in education and infrastructure is essential to secure human resources for future innovations and R&D projects. In respective fields, the country must be equipped to qualify the necessary labor force in the industry. Gyeongsang National University’s College of Space and Aeronautics (CSA), the first university in Korea to train professionals in the aerospace field starting in 2024, proves that efforts are being made. Professor Kim Hae-dong of CSA expected that this opportunity would produce many space experts, bringing win-win effects in KASA and other nearby space industries. However, beyond this, the lifelong education function that re-trains existing workforce and increase safety and comfort. As can be observed, the progress of space businesses will stimulate the nation’s economy and thus increase its influence in the global space arena.

Despite the positive aspects, some hurdles still exist behind the development of the space industry. Firstly, investing in the space industry does not result in immediate profitability. Like other research and development (R&D) intensive industries, long-term investment in R&D is required even without a guarantee of success until the presentation of a final product to the market. This means that the workforce shortage remains despite the creation of new jobs unless there is a clear advantage for the workers in terms of salary or welfare. Furthermore, experts have pointed out that the roadmap mainly focused on fulfilling pledges rather than on the essence. Jo Seoung-jae, a deputy of the Democratic Party of Korea, criticized the fact that no specific implementation strategies were stated. In addition, there are concerns that the functions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), MND, and KASA could be inefficiently divided, resulting in an incomplete control tower. For example, if KASA and the MND are responsible for different types of satellite technology, the control tower will inevitably be unable to make a homogeneous policy. The current lack of a comprehensive policy is concerning because the space industry is directly related to diplomacy and defense.

**We Will Find a Way, We Always Have**

To promote accountability of national institutions, the pillar of Korea’s space industry, major goals should be prioritized instead of individual interests. A way to promptly achieve missions is setting a concrete roadmap that integrates all processes by establishing projects and shared goals with other institutions to guarantee a broad network of collaboration and responsibility. For example, by associating with aviation colleges and professionals to work on space projects related to the pre-established roadmap, the goal of setting foot on the Moon would be achieved more systematically without delay. Additionally, a fair governance structure must be discussed for each institution to operate independently and efficiently by concentrating on its function. Regarding the issue, South Gyeongsang Province Governor Park Won-soon stressed in a meeting held this January that ‘For KASA to properly serve as the control tower of Korea’s space industry, it must incorporate functions of the MOFA and the MND in space-related areas.” A long-term goal should be set so the government can gradually transfer the specific space-related functions to the KASA. Ultimately, the essence lies in defining precise goals and allocating appropriate functions to each institution.
Unspoken Tales

Ballet, an art form as ancient as it is eternal, gracefully leaps through the annals of history, woven from the delicate threads of music and art. This dance, born in the regal courts of Renaissance Italy before flourishing under the opulent gaze of the French and Russian aristocracy, has long been a vessel for storytelling. Traditional ballet began as royal amusement and later evolved onto a stage where the fusion of artistry and physical prowess captivates audiences worldwide. Swan Lake, Tchaikovsky’s magnum opus, stands as a paragon of ballet, an art form as ancient as it is ethereal, gracefully leaping through the annals of history, woven from the delicate threads of music and art. Each performance is a rebirth, a moment where time stands still, and the audience is transported to realms made from threads of music and art. Each performance is a rebirth, a moment where time stands still, and the audience is transported to realms made from threads of music and art. This dance, born in the regal courts of Renaissance Italy before flourishing under the opulent gaze of the French and Russian aristocracy, has long been a vessel for storytelling.

A Pastry on Points

The Same White Swan

In the world of ballet, a dance form steeped in centuries of tradition and artistic integrity, there exists a prevailing belief among purists that true ballet adheres strictly to its classical roots. While honoring the rich history and foundational techniques of ballet, this perspective has sparked a debate within the industry regarding the implications for freedom of creation and evolution in the art form. A professor from the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) told the SKT, “It is true that the ballet stage is not offering space for contemporary and innovative ballet, which is the glass ceiling that the ballet industry must break.” By confirming ballet to a narrow set of historical narratives and established compositions, the industry risks alienating modern audiences and limiting the potential for innovative expressions through dance.

Gracefully, Mockingly

The strong inclination for traditional ballet to exhibit inadvertently perpetuated stereotypes, including orientalism and racial discrimination, casts a shadow over ballet as a culture. For instance, the portrayal of Asian characters in traditional ballet pieces such as The Nutcracker and La Bayadère often falls into orientalism, presenting exaggerated and stereotypical images that pose as mockery to Asian cultures. In The Nutcracker, particularly in the Chinese Tea dance, characters are often portrayed with exaggerated costumes and makeup, including pointed hats, eyes to imitate slanted eyes, and moving in ways that mimic traditional Chinese dances in a caricatured manner. Similarly, the tradition of blackface in Petrouchka and La Bayadère often falls into orientalism, presenting exaggerated and stereotypical images that pose as mockery to Asian cultures. In The Nutcracker, particularly in the Chinese Tea dance, characters are often portrayed with exaggerated costumes and makeup, including pointed hats, eyes to imitate slanted eyes, and moving in ways that mimic traditional Chinese dances in a caricatured manner. Similarly, the tradition of blackface in Petrouchka underscores the racial insensitivities that persist within the repertoire.

The impact of such stereotypes extends beyond the stage, influencing casting decisions and the career trajectories of dancers from marginalized communities. The historic lack of diversity in lead roles has been a point of contention, highlighting the need for systemic change, especially for dancers of color. According to the RAD professor, ballet is a dance with historical value that is in desperate need of change. For ballet to evolve further into a culture, it must respect all races and cultures.

Timely, Always

In the intricate narrative of ballet’s history, it is imperative for the ballet community to participate in campaigns aimed at modernizing classical ballet and eliminating the problematic elements hindering ballet’s future. Efforts could be the key to ensuring ballet’s relevance and vibrancy in the 21st century, allowing it to continue telling stories in a way that speaks to both traditionalists and those seeking fresh artistic expressions. This evolution allows the art form to remain respectful, eliminating outdated stereotypes that have long permeated its storied past. A notable example of this progressive shift is the reimaging of La Bayadère by the Indiana University Ballet. The piece was updated by replacing stereotypical representations with contemporary dances that intend to appreciate differences in culture and race. Moreover, the Final Bow for Yellowface campaign underscores a collective effort within the ballet community to eradicate ignorant portrayals, particularly of Asian characters in The Nutcracker’s Chinese Tea dance.

This active participation is crucial for fostering a ballet culture that is both progressive and respectful, enabling the art form to stay vibrant and relevant for future generations.

Ballet, a dance of time and tradition, pirouettes at the crossroads of history and innovation. In its embrace of change, ballet extends its hands to a future where diversity blossoms on stage. As it leaps towards inclusivity, each turn toward adaptation is a step toward unity. May the kings and queens applaud a stage where every story and every dancer find its place in the spotlight.
Nothing is sacred in the whispers of the rebellion of the Mischievous Chief of Provocation — MSCHF. With every stroke breaking convention, their mischievous attitude clears an inky night clouded by social norms. Nothing in their art is unwittingly worshipped. They flow across genres, cheerfully defying expectations and dropping innovation in their masterpieces. Amid all their mischief, a remarkable exhibition finally creates a spark of unimaginable originality. Raising your voice in support of MSCHF’s bravery, join their creative masterpiece full of rebellion and dignify the power of rule-breaking provocation.
In a world where the boundary between reality and ideals is blurred, questions of “Where exactly is this place?” and “Who am I?” arise. Let us enjoy the new media art exhibition of Alice in Wonderland, a steady bestseller widely loved even after 150 years. Meet the Mad Hatter and the Queen of Hearts this May and become Alice with the Sungkyun Times (SKT).

Do questions of “Who am I?” arise in Alice, a child’s imagination, where familiar things are perceived in a new light. Based on Alice in Wonderland, this exhibition, which started on January 10th, screens at Ground Seesaw Myeongdong. Visitors can become their version of Alice through surreal media art, which is fusion art that utilizes mass media such as television, movies, and radio. As such, the exhibition runs for nine sessions daily, and for a smoother viewing experience, visitors must specify the date and session they wish to attend. They can venture into the “new world” filled with a modernly reinterpreted storyline and captivating visual beauty that delights all the senses.

**New World, New Technology**

Ground Seesaw, a media art platform, is loved by many visitors for showcasing immersive exhibitions as a leading media art platform. By offering a multimedia experience where visitors can become part of the artwork, the space configures scenes over 6m in height on all five sides, allowing for viewing from any seat. The multimedia experience, which started on January 10th, features major characters from the story, which is expressed in vibrant colors. The strangeness of the original tale prompts the audience to question the familiar reality, sparking their creativity and continuously encouraging them to question themselves. Ultimately, the audience of this exhibition becomes part of the story, entering their childhood with an adult’s heart and getting closer to finding who they are.

**Composition (*Spoiler Alert)**

This exhibition is an invitation to a unique journey into a world like a mirage, nowhere else to be found. In the Forest Theater, one can enjoy the curiosity-filled animals, while the Mad Hatter’s Tea Party presents the wit and humor of the hatter. Alice, who enters the Mirror of Infinity, she confronts the “real me” she never knew. Alice and her friends lose and rediscover their selves in the chaos of hide and seek.

**Daydreaming**

The exhibition, through a reinterpretation of the original tale, evokes nostalgia from childhood while encouraging self-reflection on the present. Starting with the core question of “Who am I?”, Alice travels through the Forest Theater, where animals dance to dynamic music, and the Mad Tea Party, which is always set at 6 o’clock. One can focus more on the message of finding oneself along with familiar characters from the tale, such as the Cheshire Cat and Humpty Dumpty. This composition reflects modern society’s rapidly changing moments and the individuals who wander while contemplating what to do, deeply relating back to reality. The copious composition also brings out complex human emotions. Eco-centricity is depicted along with feelings of confusion and depression within the fantastical story, which is expressed in vibrant colors. The strangeness of the original tale prompts the audience to question the familiar reality, sparking their creativity and continuously encouraging them to question themselves. Ultimately, the audience of this exhibition becomes part of the story, entering their childhood with an adult’s heart and getting closer to finding who they are.

While feeling relieved looking at the familiar surroundings, the white rabbit running around exclaiming, “I am late! I am late!” confuses Alice, if she is going mad. Shocked to think she is nonsensical animals in this place, she首个 the Alice, who is going mad like the Wonderland. “You can’t tell me what to do here. Anybody can go anywhere they like.”

**Outside the New World…**

While the storyline and the variety of visual aesthetics generally received positive reviews, there were also some disappointments. The omission of major scenes from the story disappointed some viewers who were expecting the witty jokes of the animals. In addition, the reputation of the Ground Seesaw flagship exhibition does not quite match its short running time of 45 minutes, failing to leave as much of an impression as expected. Moreover, despite the rich story and diverse visual effects, the visual depiction of the main characters was somewhat lacking. The animation’s unnatural movement disrupted Alice’s traditional image of blonde hair and a sky-blue dress from the original story. Furthermore, expressing a rich storyline throughout the seven chapters is crucial in the characters’ facial expressions. However, Alice’s lack of facial expression changes, which led to an overreliance on narration, was a major drawback. Despite the support of a rich story and splendid media art, these few disappointments compromised the exhibition’s completeness.

**Review**

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Ground Seesaw, a media art platform, is loved by many visitors for showcasing immersive exhibitions as a leading media art platform. By offering a multimedia experience where visitors can become part of the artwork, the space configures scenes over 6m in height on all five sides, allowing for viewing from any seat. The multimedia experience, which started on January 10th, features major characters from the story, which is expressed in vibrant colors. The strangeness of the original tale prompts the audience to question the familiar reality, sparking their creativity and continuously encouraging them to question themselves. Ultimately, the audience of this exhibition becomes part of the story, entering their childhood with an adult’s heart and getting closer to finding who they are.
Dune: Part Two: A Story of Faith

It Is My Desert, It Is My Dune

Dune: Part Two, directed by Denis Villeneuve, was released on February 28th, as the sequel to Dune: Part One, released in 2021. Villeneuve’s Dune franchise is an adaptation of the eponymous novel series Dune written by the American author Frank Herbert, first published in 1965. While there were several previous attempts at adaptation due to the richly detailed universe and grandeur of the series, Villeneuve’s version is only the second film adaptation since David Lynch’s in 1984. Villeneuve first read the novel Dune at the age of 13 and dreamed of making the film adaptation throughout his life, thus honing his passion and devotion to the work. Furthermore, Hans Zimmer, who composed the music for both Dune: Part One and Dune: Part Two, is also a sincere fan of the original novel series and poured his heart into his work. With such dedication from the production team, Dune: Part Two has grossed over $500 million, and anticipation for the third film continues to grow among audiences.

Synopsis (*Spoiler Alert*)

In Dune: Part One, House Atreides is sent to the planet Arrakis, where House Harkonnen has monopolized spice production under the Emperor’s orders. However, this is a betrayal of the Emperor, who intended to curb the growth of the Atreides. The combined attack of the Harkonnen and the Sardaukar, who are the Emperor’s forces, swiftly annihilates the entire House Atreides in a night. Though Duke Leto is murdered, his son Paul and Lady Jessica narrowly escape, cast into the desert with nothing. At the end of Dune: Part One, they encounter the Fremen, the indigenous warriors of Arrakis, and pass the test to be part of them. Some Fremen, influenced by messages planted by the Bene Gesserit to which Lady Jessica belongs, see Paul as their savior, Lisan al Gaib, the voice from the other world. As Paul becomes romantically involved with Chani, what choices can he make between the holy war he foresees and the harsh realities he experiences around him? Is he truly the messiah of Arrakis and the savior of the Empire “as written”? Let us step into the world of Dune to find the answers to these questions.

**Arrakis Was Known by a Fremen Name**

**Is He the Real Messiah?**

The film embodies the deep contemplation of whether Paul, depicted as the savior by the Fremen prophecy, is truly the hero. Despite Paul in the film making different choices from the novel, it still maintains the theme of vigilance against messiahs and belief. The audience is made to build trust in Paul while instilling caution at the same time. Firstly, Paul foresees a future where millions die after he chooses holy war and confesses this fear to his lover Chani, who comforts him. However, when Paul volunteers to step forward as the Fremen’s savior and initiate the war, Chani opposes him, eventually leaving his side. Chani, who never showed faith in religion from the beginning and is the only character to deny the fulfillment of the prophecy, serves as a strong thematic representation. Moreover, Stilgar, the strict leader of the northern Fremen, begins to exhibit aspects of fanaticism, his decency transformed into ruthlessness. Additionally, the change in the house seal, from when Duke Leto received the Emperor’s envoy to Paul sending an envoy to the Emperor for revenge, depicts the reversal of power dynamics between Paul and the Emperor. These points add depth to the narrative and characters, enhancing the thematic richness of Dune: Part Two.

**Kwisatz Haderach, Shortening of the Way**

**Face the Beauty and Fear**

In Dune: Part Two, there are several points to focus on. Firstly, there are integrating parallels between Feyd-Rautha, the villain, and Paul until their final confrontation. Feyd-Rautha becomes a Harkonnen hero through a brutal rite in his coming-of-age ceremony, reminiscent of Paul’s later elevation to hero status through a speech at the end. Additionally, the climactic battle between Feyd-Rautha and Paul against a setting sun symbolizes their mirrored roles. Considering Feyd-Rautha’s depiction as a psychopath and his resemblance to Paul’s hidden cruelty, he could be interpreted as a manifestation of Paul’s darker side. Furthermore, the repeated images show the overturned positions. The scene of House Atreides’ annihilation and the burning of their bodies, depicted in both movies, mirrors Paul burning the corpses of Sardaukar and Harkonnen soldiers. This not only reflects the change in Paul’s perspective but also serves as a device to illustrate his decency transformed into ruthlessness. Additionally, the change in the house seal, from when Duke Leto received the Emperor’s envoy to Paul sending an envoy to the Emperor for revenge, depicts the reversal of power dynamics between Paul and the Emperor. These points add depth to the narrative and characters, enhancing the thematic richness of Dune: Part Two.
ENCHANTING HARMONIZATION AT MUSEUM SAN

MUSEUM SPACE. ART. NATURE

Artistic Sequence
The most special feature of Museum SAN is that the sequence calculated thoroughly becomes the art itself, while nature and water act as significant elements. Passing through the welcome center and walking through the nature trail, Kingos first encounter a vast lower garden. The harmony of widely spread blue greenery, red blushed flowers, endless sky, and elegant classical music from the outdoor speakers induces a sense of awe. The water garden, which is at the entrance of the museum, acts as a mirror that reflects the surrounding nature, presenting the sentiment that visitors might feel as though they were on a lake in the forest. Since the boundaries of water space are connected to where the forest begins, it evokes a mysterious atmosphere in which the artificial space and natural space are linked together, floating on water. In the main building, the wing structure is organically composed of rectangular, circular, and triangular spaces, which corresponds to the connection of earth, sky, and humanity. Seeing the stone garden, where the stone mounds inspired by the tombs of the Silla Dynasty and green pine trees create grand harmony, Kingos may be fascinated by the magnificent view of the earth. The serenity from warm sunshine sprinkled on the stone mound and the shadow pine trees enhances the scenery. With this, Kingos will directly experience the special coordination of the relationship between the natural world and the human world while wandering around Museum SAN.

How to Visit
To start the route from the Humanities and Social Sciences Campus (HSSC), Kingos can take the Jongno 08 bus at the Sungkyunkwan University Back Gate Bus Stop and get off at the Jongno 5-ga Bus Stop. Then, take the Line 1 subway at Jongno 5-ga Station and get off at Cheongnyangni Station. Board the KTX and get off at Seowonju Station. Afterward, take the Wonju City Tour Bus or Oak Valley Shuttle Bus to finally arrive at Museum SAN. For the route leaving from the Natural Sciences Campus (NSC), Kingos can take Line 1 at Sungkyunkwan University Station until the Cheongnyangni Station. The rest of the route is identical from there.

Light Creates Space
After a walk around the museum with a fluttering heart, Kingos will arrive at the exhibition area of light. At the James Turrell Hall, with exhibitions of an artist of light and space, Kingos can participate in four interactive exhibitions.

MUSEUM SAN, located on Oak Valley Road in Wonju City, Gangwon Province, is a pastoral museum shaped by Ando Tadao, the master of architecture who won the Pritzker Prize known as the Nobel Prize for architecture. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and is closed every Monday. Its admission fee depends on the price of the base ticket and the additional exhibition options visitors can choose from. According to Tadao, the construction of the museum started with his hope of building a paradise in a cozy place surrounded by beautiful mountains and nature, far away from the chaotic city. He attempted to capture the harmony of art and architecture throughout the changing four seasons when designing the entire structure of the museum. Museum SAN, meaning space, art, and nature, and the slogan “Disconnect to Connect” let visitors deeply relax through an analog ambiance. The journey in Museum SAN begins from the grass parking lot and welcome center, continues with the flower garden, water garden, and the main building, then ends with the stone garden and James Turrell Hall. Starting in 2005 and completed in 2013, the construction took eight years to complete. The museum boasts stunning views, standing at an altitude of 275m. It covers an area of 22,000㎡ and a total length of 700m, which corresponds to about nine soccer fields.

Ticket Access Price

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Life piles up a whole host of stories. If one does not empty these overflowing stories, there will be no space for truly valuable things to be preserved. Therefore, the act of emptying may perhaps matter more than continuing to pile up. For Kingos who want to be free from a chaotic mind, Museum SAN is the destination to travel to. Be captivated by beautiful art and nature with the Sungkyun Times (SKT).
for 40 minutes. In the Horizon Room, which visualizes an altar of light, Kingos would follow up the stairs, looking at the blue square frame situated at the end. At the top of the staircase, Kingos can recognize that the square frame shows the actual outdoor scenery, in resemblance to the last scene of the movie The Truman Show. Through the illusion of ambiguous boundary created by the light and its transition to enlightenment, the exhibition leaves one to question the real meaning of truth. Moving to the outdoors with the afterglow of light, Kingos can head to the Meditation Hall, which naturally mingles with the stone garden. With a window that crosses over the center of the ceiling. The darkness of the hall is reminiscent of a silent forest until the light eventually penetrates the window. This view creates an incredible space as aspects of the light change from moment to moment. Lying in the Meditation Hall while listening to calm music with peppermint oil rubbed onto the back of one’s neck, the space suddenly transforms into a forest in a fairy-tale filled with the scent of grass. Kingos can prepare to accept the new treasures in life and replenish the power to live by emptying all their thoughts and concentrating only on their breathing.

Walk at a slow pace and breathe in the fresh air of Wonju. Soon, concerns and anxieties in Kingos’ minds will fade away, with blooming potential to regain their strength in life. By merging into a beautiful harmonization of nature and architecture through Museum SAN, one will be reborn.

ANALOG AESTHETIC: DISCONNECT TO CONNECT

Wrapping up the experience of the mysterious space, Kingos can relax at the Café Terrace, where the outdoors is linked to the indoors. When sitting on the terrace located on the top deck of a staircase-style marble pond, vast mountains will unfold in front of one’s eyes. While capturing the wonderful scenery, savor a warm cup of coffee and a piece of matcha cake. Through these simple pleasures, Kingos will realize that happiness is not far away. After enjoying a leisurely moment, it is time to visit the paper gallery, which rediscover the value of analog sensibility. The Papyrus Conservatory, an outdoor space with the concept of a courtyard, introduces the history of paper. Here, papyrus, the precursor material to make paper, can be observed. Walking through the paper gallery and viewing the striking collection of national treasures and significant cultural heritage pieces, visitors can watch the history of paper unfold. The final part of the paper gallery is a holographic installation art with the theme of paper. As a holographic drop of ink falls on the paper, a letter appears on it. When the paper is tilted toward the screen, the letters on it flow upward fluidly. Charmed by the sensitivity of paper and analog atmosphere under the slogan of “Disconnect to Connect,” one may start to remember how to find relaxation in life again.

Change the Desire to Desire

As societal functions have grown more distinct, modern society has started emphasizing the discovery of facts and rationality. Jürgen Habermas, a German sociologist known for his theory of the public sphere, witnessed this occurrence and defined it as the systematic colonization of the lifeworld. He divided contemporary society into two realms: the lifeworld, where individuals interact through dialogue, and the system, which is the institutional framework established for developing the lifeworld. Meanwhile, the system, which surfaced to promote effectiveness in communication within the lifeworld, progressively acquired its authority and further established a separate framework of knowledge, economics, and regulations. For instance, the price of a product initially only served as a means for making the products worth more apparent in the lifeworld. However, prices now have subsequently grown to the point where they are determined not only by the relations with the lifeworld but by their independent force. Today, the system has quickly accumulated strength with its logic and started to overrun the realm of the lifeworld. It is, therefore, not difficult to hear about the Japanese yen hitting the lowest level in decades or the current capital gain of real estate at the dinner table. Discussions that should be carried within the realm of affection are now voluntarily yet destructively replaced by the logic of the system, especially the economic system.

In Korean society, the so-called self-help books, which employ the humanities as a decent packaging to convey the ideas of materialistic success, are no exception to Habermas’ thesis. Various self-help books that were subsequently born with an interest in humanities, which arose from the attempt to conceptualize the human race, are easily found on bookstores. With the growing popularity of self-help books, the pathological phenomenon coincides with the rapid growth of fake self-help books. According to Kyobo Book Centre’s 2022 research, the number of books containing the term “success” has increased within the top 15 self-help bestsellers over the past six years. The common repertory of self-help books with mythical stories of enduring numerous trials to eventually reach one’s goals serves as a great model of success. However, the uniform narrowing of achievement to money and social status can be analyzed as the systematic colonization of the lifeworld. It is now impossible to develop a dialogue of the lifeworld without the worship of the system. Self-help books competing for the yearly top bestsellers expose an individuals willful involvement in this colonization. Fake self-help books that degrade humanity into a source of revenue might be the natural result of chasing the flow of capitalism. However, it is barbarous to alter how humans seek it? Perhaps it is time to put aside the fake self-help books and discuss how humans can be humane again.
OTT Broadcasts: The Screen Is Lava

Amidst a sports craze, Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms are diving into sports broadcasting, with Netflix preparing live broadcasts of golf tournaments featuring F1 drivers since last fall. According to the 2024 report of CJ ENM on OTT platforms, more than half of the responses indicated that live sports broadcasts influence OTT subscriptions, leading to fierce competition among OTT companies for broadcasting rights. As sports leagues have large fan bases, OTT companies such as TVING and Coupang Play can secure loyal subscribers and revenue through broadcasting.

Live broadcasts of sports games are a blue ocean for the OTT platforms because of the comparative cost advantages. Unlike weekly dramas, sports broadcasts do not require production development and meticulous process control. Consequently, the competition among platforms has intensified, generating a massive surge in online traffic. TVING initiated a trial broadcast on March 4th after securing the new media broadcasting rights for the Korea Baseball Organization (KBO) League.

However, such exclusive broadcasting could infringe on the universal right to view. Based on amendments to Korea’s Broadcasting Act, the universal right to be entertained requires securing broadcasting means for all citizens regarding sports events of nationwide interest. From the perspective of non-sports fans or the public without a motive to subscribe to paid memberships, the choice of platforms is limited, and price competition among emerging OTTs is restricted due to the dominance of large “OTT giants.” To escape the current oligopolistic market, ensuring a permissive and liberal environment of sports as entertainment is imperative. The Korea Communications Commission should limit the giant OTT platforms from excessive monetization that mandates payments for what used to be free. Regarding the viewers’ aversion to paying for what had been free until last year, the central administrative agency responsible for broadcasting and telecommunications user protection policies can secure their rights. Furthermore, along with appropriate anti-monopoly measures, incentives for companies that provide content of remarkable quality should support legitimate revenue generation. Against the advocates for the universal right to view, some contend that the stature of sports broadcasting as a major industry should be recognized since mandating payment is a fair trade for content enjoyment. In response, the Korea Communications Commission suggests careful consideration without restricting corporate property rights, given the blurry definition of what is considered a “nationwide interest.” To mediate this, the example of Japan’s J-League, which grew into a global broadcasting market based on a solid domestic soccer fan base, could be gradually introduced to Korean baseball, the nation’s leading sport. By addressing the dysfunction of the rapidly emerging OTT sports broadcasting market, the growth of new OTT businesses can continue with the discovery of new possibilities.