

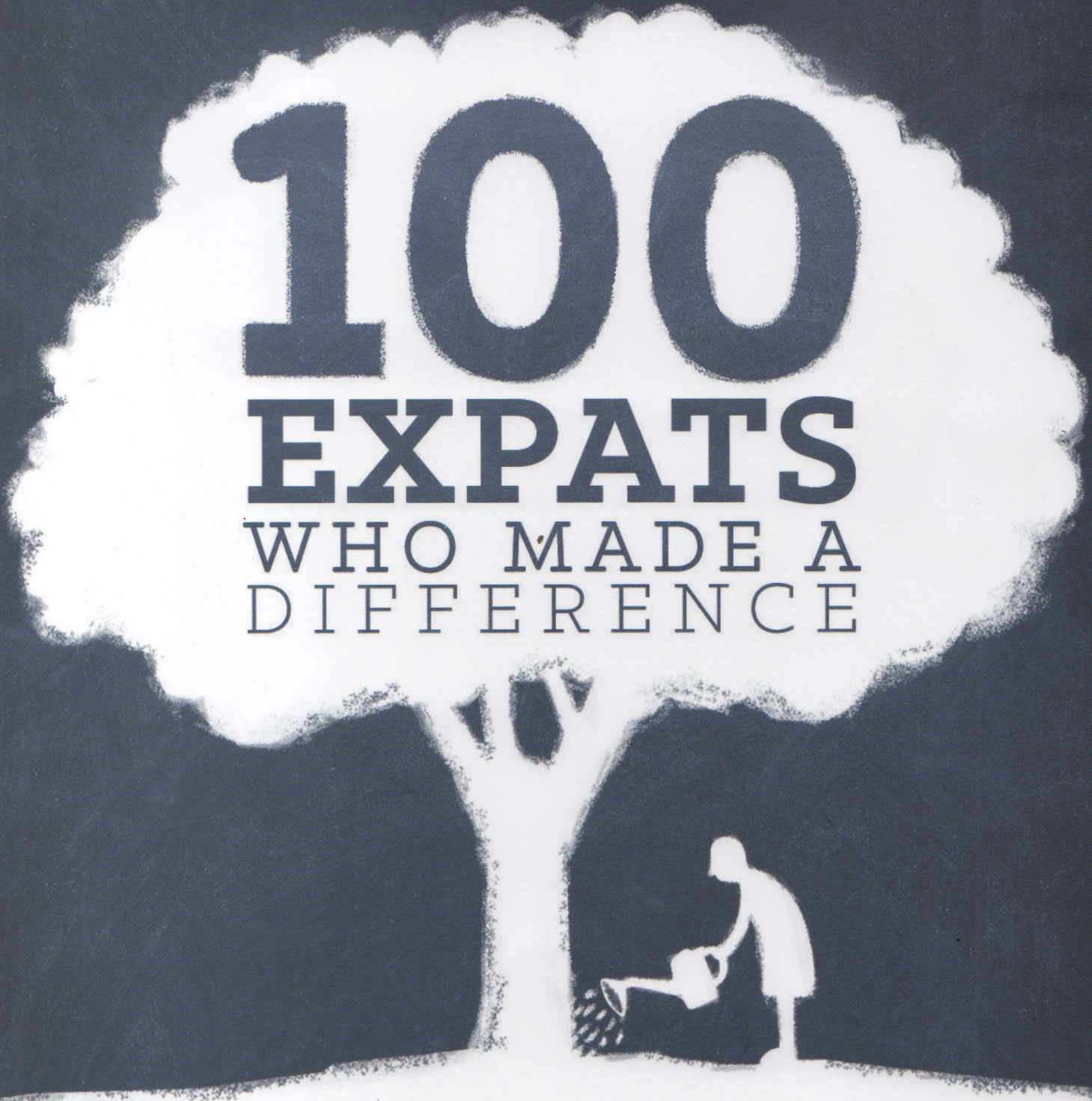
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# GROOVE

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# 100 EXPATS WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE



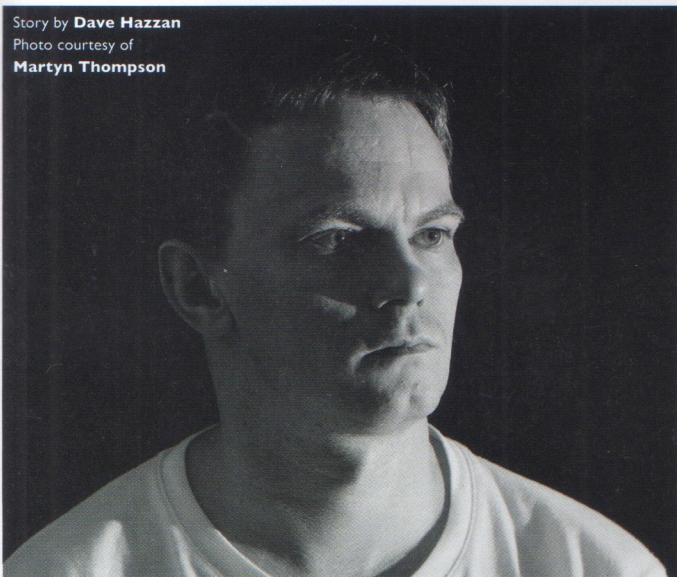
NO MATTER WHERE YOU'RE FROM,  
YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD YOU'RE IN



Story by **Dave Hazzan**

Photo courtesy of

**Martyn Thompson**



## MARTYN THOMPSON

Influence **Artist, arts organizer**

Residence **Seoul**

Featured in Groove Korea **April 2009, May 2012**

Korea looks different through the eyes of Martyn Thompson. The British-born Thompson, 32, is one of Korea's most accomplished expat artists and a leader in the expat art scene. His abstract and stereoscopic photos, his animals made of Perspex sheets and his portraits using the dojang (a Korean ink stamp) have been exhibited throughout Korea, as well as in the U.S. and around Southeast Asia.

"I'm not Korean," Thompson says, "but what better person to say what a complex country Korea is than someone who is not from

Korea?"

Thompson first came here in 2007, and his art has reflected on Koreans, their mountains, the traditional Korean bow (jeol), animal rights and cramped living spaces — cut-up, reimagined and reinvented.

His next show, however, may not warm the cockles of Korean hearts. Opening in April at Gallery I in Insa-dong, it will feature the story of the Sewol ferry disaster victims, reproduced using dojang.

"The dojang are cut with either Hanja (Chinese characters) or Hangeul words on them, and hundreds or thousands of impressions are made on the paper to construct the images," Thompson says. "The use of the dojang is due to the fact that many young people died before they were old enough to receive their name stamp."

Thompson is codirector of the International Artists' Community, Korea's largest collective for foreign artists. He is also president and founder of Professional Artists Network of Korea, which has 80 members and also organizes shows.

He curates a show every year at Gallery I in Insa-dong that usually features foreign artists from around Korea. "The themes are closely related to Korean culture, so I'm giving foreigners the opportunity to dig just a little deeper into what they think they know about Korea," he says. "It's not directly related, but I think each foreigner has their own preconceptions about what Korea is like before they get here. And I want them to change their preconceptions."

Thompson curated five shows in 2014 and plans to do at least another five this year.

"What I want the art projects to do is to set (foreign artists) to challenge themselves," he says. "To ask, 'Is this really how I feel?'"

Thompson says the future of Korean art depends on investment from companies — and right now, that investment is lacking. "The arts are not considered a high priority by funding bodies," Thompson says, "and unless we can bring about change within the investment side, then it will continue to struggle along."

**More info** [www.martyn.kr](http://www.martyn.kr); [www.pank.kr](http://www.pank.kr); [www.koreaiaac.com](http://www.koreaiaac.com)