

North Korea's privileged class
Two defectors tell their story

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AFTER DEATH, A TIGER'S SKIN REMAINS; A MAN LEAVES ONLY HIS NAME

The Sewol Disaster: One Year On

Story and photos by **Martyn Thompson**

I am proud to be showing my fifth solo exhibition entitled "After death, a tiger's skin remains; a man leaves only his name" which will be held at Gallery i in Insadong from 8th - 21st April 2015.

This exhibition takes place over the one-year anniversary period of the fatal Sewol accident. It investigates the media's rendering of the incident through symbolic depictions of key characters' roles that were reported on, as the timeline of events unraveled. The works pay tribute to the rise of heroes, who were hailed and honored for the parts they played in the story, juxtaposed against those the media malevolently portrayed and held responsible.

Expatriate artist Martyn Thompson shares his view on the ferry disaster that rocked the nation

The circumstances surrounding the disaster combined with a shocking death toll make it one of the worst maritime accidents of present day, and that alone struck something inside me. My wonderful wife and son form the motive as to why the Sewol accident prompted me to make this body of work: only three years prior, I had been on the same ship with my wife, for a cycling holiday around

Jeju. It could have been us. The number of students killed in the accident left so many parents childless. In a morbid way of looking at things: we too could have been one of those parents. Combine these feelings with the fact that domestic authorities often overlook safety parameters, and perhaps you can begin to understand how I became somewhat fearful for the safety of my family while residing in Korea.

traying Yoo Byeung Eon 'The Greed', the value of the 10,000w bill is changed to the date of the accident, as are the GPS co-ordinates that replace the bill number.

The death toll truly remained incomprehensible until I visited the memorial site in Ansan. I had seen many pictures, but seeing the scale of the place and how this continued to affect families from day to day was when it really sunk in. This prompted me to make the



Being a foreigner, even though married to a Korean and with permanent residency in the country, protesting or engaging in any form of political activity was, and still is, out of the question. Protests, demonstrations and petitions are still going on around us, today with the government still yet to make a clear plan on how they will find the corpses that remain submerged inside the sunken vessel. I began wondering how I could communicate this feeling in visual form as my thoughts still lingered over the students and their families as they tirelessly try and obtain closure in the form of answers.

The media handling of the situation, without being too cynical was, at best, abysmal. Reports quickly flowed out that everyone had been saved, only for the harsh reality that hundreds were still trapped in the ship. I remember sitting in front of the TV day after day watching the number of dead rising. These numbers began to play a significant role I began developing visual representations of the tragedy. 'The Ribbon' is made up of 304 smaller ribbons with each one symbolizing a life lost where as in the image por-

final piece for this show, showing silhouetted figures passing by the flowered memorial wall.

Traditionally in Korea, the dojang is given as a gift to signify reaching adulthood, a milestone that the majority of the casualties would not yet have arrived at. Historically, name stamps hold a permanence and dignity that I hope honor the lives of those that were unable to reach maturity. Both Korean and Chinese characters, as well as symbols, are carved into the dojang stamps. These carvings are relevant to each individual image and connect the media's depiction of the individual picture to the physical delineation.

The day I visited Ansan, I was given a tour of Danwon high school where the vast majority of the dead students received their education. The mother of the boy I depicted in 'The Student' was kind enough to show me around the eerily empty and lifeless second floor. I began to feel thankful. I was informed that I was sharing my birthday with one of the students, whose family had come to pay their respects. One of us was present. One was not.



MORE INFO: AFTER DEATH, A TIGER'S SKIN REMAINS; A MAN ONLY LEAVES HIS NAME

📍 Gallery i, Insadong, 서울, 인사동, 갤러리 아이
📍 Anguk Station (Line 3, Exit 6) / Jongak Station (Line 1 exit 11)
☎ 010-9891-3231 / martyn@m-art-yn.com
🌐 www.egalleryi.co.kr / www.m-art-yn.com
🕒 April 8th - 21st, 2015 between 11am-6pm (Closed on Tuesdays)
💰 Free

