

Noh, Won-Hee's **BARIDEGI**

The artist Noh, Won Hee was born in Daegu in 1948. She majored in Art and graduated from Seoul National University with a Masters Degree in Fine Arts. Currently she is working as a professor at Dongeui University, Pusan. In Won Hee's work, she tries to express the ironies and paradoxes of every day life within Korean society.

Since 1980, Won Hee has been a member of 「HYENSHILKWA BALEN」, a group of artists who focus on expressing, through their art, Korea's social, cultural and political situation. Won Hee was chosen to paint the pictures accompanying Hwang, Seok Young's modern day story of "BARIDEGI" because of her artistic affiliations with realism.

The modern day interpretation of this famous Korean legend was serialised in the daily newspaper, *Hankyoreh*, from Jan 3, 2007 to Jun 21st, 2007. Though there are many versions, the original Baridegi story involved a princess who, because she was the 7th girl in a row to be born to the king and the queen, was abandoned. As an adolescent she hears her father, the king, is dying. She is the only person who can save him. She sets out on a quest to save him, enduring many trials and tribulations.

In Hwang, Seok Young's modern day's version, Bari is raised in North Korea and travels to England, the capitalist center of the world, via China. Through Bari's life, the author makes social, cultural and political

comment on today's modern world. His words are vivid and flash before your eyes like a film, taking the reader on a journey that blurs the line between reality and fantasy.

Noh, Won Hee's interpretation of Hwang, Seok Young's story has been critically acclaimed. In an interview with *Hankyoreh*, Noh, Won Hee said, "The words on the page created beautiful, imaginary worlds in my mind. However, when it came time to paint on the canvas, I often sighed at the enormity of the task."

Noh, Won Hee painted 5 pictures a week for 6 months. This exhibition shows 52 paintings of the 120 painted for the serialized story. The pictures are displayed in 5 groups: 'the pain of hunger and family separation in North Korea', 'Bari's escape to China and on to England by ship as an illegal immigrant', 'her marriage to a Pakistan man who is later falsely arrested as a terrorist and sent to Guantanamo Bay', 'the death of her daughter and a happy reunion with her husband', and finally, 'forgiveness to all those who were the cause of her unhappiness throughout her life'.

In this exhibition, we can understand the contemporary world through Bari's story, vividly brought to life by Noh, Won Hee's paintings.



Translated by Sherrin Hibbard, ArtSpace · C