

Media Art Using Korean Traditional Cultural Archetype

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Introduction

The Korean Culture and Content Agency's 'Cultural Archetype Digital Content Project' was initiated in 2002. This project is to provide digital content that is based on Korea's unique cultural archetypal data. In other words, its goal is to produce digital content using various cultural archetypes such as the Korean history, tradition, folk, scenery, etc., which are usable for culture content industry. In the business field, however, the negative evaluation is compatible with affirmative evaluation. Thus, the relationship between the value of digital content and the cultural archetype should be discussed, because cultural archetype is changed in the form of culture content, and digital content is prepared for the public.

As an example, a special exhibition was held at The National Folk Museum in September, 2007. In this exhibition, some media art works were displayed with historical relics. All the media art works of this exhibition utilized existing relics as a cultural archetype, which kept the original meaning whilst re-interpreting them. In this experimental practice, new media including digital technology make the cultural archetype look and sound different and new.

In this paper, those experiments are classified into three categories which are the representation of Korean traditional painting, traditional folk dance and folk photograph. Then, in the view of culture content, it is discussed how the cultural archetype can become media art, and how it provides synergy effects when cultural archetype is utilized in media art.

Cultural archetype

Cultural archetype is cultural product as cultural heritage including mental/physical properties and patterns of a culture. Cultural heritage is divided into the tangibles

and intangibles, for example, historic sites, historic buildings, traditional paintings, and antiquities as tangibles, and traditional music, dance and folklores as intangibles. In Korea, Cultural Heritage Administration specifies important tangible/intangible cultural heritages that are valuable in the historical/artistic/scholarly, and preserves them.

There is a reason that cultural archetype is used in this paper instead of the term, cultural heritage or cultural property. The meaning of cultural archetype is similar to cultural heritage or property, but cultural archetype has a specific property as having an original source that can be transformed into digital content or culture content. Thus, the term, cultural archetype is used as 'original source' or 'source data' for producing culture content in cultural industries.

Culture content and culture technology

Culture content is a cultural product that the cultural attribute in mental value and its meaning is converged with digital media technologies. The Korea Culture and Content Agency (KOCCA) defines the culture content as the content of cartoon, animation, character, music, broadcasting, game, etc. Also as source data for producing the culture content, KOCCA suggests a project of excavating and developing cultural archetype. The final goal of the project is to digitalize them, and to provide it to the user free-of-charge or charged via websites.

Meanwhile, the culture technology (CT) is the core term for producing culture content. The concept of CT, however, already exists in experiments of media art works. Culture technology is not so different from digital technologies that have been used for media art.

Table 1: Categories of media art using cultural archetype

Categories	Art Works	Cultural Archetype	Culture Technology
Traditional painting	<i>Digital Mudong</i>	Kim hong-do's genre painting <i>Mudong</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •digital animation •interface design
Traditional folk dance	<i>Digital Seungmu</i>	Lee mae-bang's <i>Seungmu</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •motion capture •4D projection
Folk photography	<i>A Journey of Korean folk sound</i>	24 folk photographs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •interlocking touch sensor and PC •digital sound editing

Analysis of media art works

- **Traditional genre painting, *Digital Mudong***

Mudong is painted by one of the famous painters in old Korea in the Lee Dynasty of Chosun, Kim Hong-Do. In the painting, a little boy is dancing with other musicians. This painting is evaluated as a dynamic expression as if musical sound is heard. *Digital*



Figure 1: Junghwan Sung, *Digital Seungmu*, 2007

Mudong shows animated characters moving and playing in the painting represented in PDP screen. A touch-screen is placed in front of PDP screen, and a spectator

can touch each character, and the touched character is dancing and playing in PDP screen.

- **Traditional folk dance, *Digital Seungmu***

Seungmu is one of the most representative folk dances of Korea, performed by a dancer dressed in Buddhist monk's attire. *Digital Seungmu* uses motion capture data from the famous traditional dancer, Lee Mae-Bang's *Seungmu* dance. Four animations which

come from four different directions are projected in the reverse-pyramid glass-structure to produce a 3D animation. The dance animation is floating in the glass-structure, and the spectator feels the novelty and mystery of the dance.

- **Folk photographs, *A Journey of Korean folk sound***

This art work is an installation of 24 photographs are inserted in backlight photo-frames each, using LED modules. The content of each photograph is a folk portrait and landscape from the last Lee Dynasty of Chosun to Japanese colonial period 1910-1945. Touch-sensor is attached to the inner side of each frame and interlocked with PC. When a spectator touches a frame, s/he can listen to the sounds related to the content of the photograph.

Conclusion

These media art works using cultural archetype are shifting the aesthetic object from the stand-still oeuvres into dynamic entities. They also re-interpret the mental and physical heritage into our contemporary aesthetic experience. Furthermore, media art works using cultural archetype can be expanded into contemporary culture content. They are our active aesthetic experience, our interpretation, our contemporary cultural perspectives and the culture content here and now.