YOUNG-HAE CHANG HEAVY INDUSTRIES has created one of the most extraordinary bodies of disembodied work over the past fifteen years, to be seen anywhere today. Working out of a studio in Seoul, making their works available worldwide through their open-access website yhchang.com, YHCHI exemplifies the “glocalism” of much contemporary cultural production. Some of their works are existential or meta-artistic reflections set in an unnamed locale or in cyberspace itself, but others are site-specific, often arising out of their visits around the world. Other works are set in Korea, with a particularly resonant series treating the country’s division into North and South. In one video, a dispirited tour group enjoys – or suffers through – a “DMZ Tour with Bulgogi Lunch,” while the haunting “Miss DMZ” presents a tale of love and loss in a tunnel beneath the Demilitarized Zone. In “My DMZ,” one of the works created during YHCHI’s residency in Bellagio, our tour guide is a Korean woman who is also a Rastafarian – an implausible combination whose logic the piece gradually and movingly unfolds. The uncanny incongruity of the tale is heightened by the fact that it was presented at the 2012 Kiev Biennale, and so our Korean Rastafarian’s words are given in Ukrainian Cyrillic letters, with English below.

YHCHI’s work crosses borders of all kinds, notably including the divisions between narrative and visual art. In a body of work now amounting to more than seventy pieces, YHCHI constantly experiments with new ways to combine text and image, using the simplest ingredients in complex and subtle ways. Often, a piece consists only of stark black letters on a white background, but even in the most minimal cases we find constant variations in size, layout, and pacing. In one of their Bellagio pieces, “A Nordic Neurotic,” a Norwegian ponders life in the modern city and his own discomfort as an eternal outsider, in words displayed against a video showing bats flying at dusk over Bellagio’s trees. A prime focus of YHCHI’s activity while in residence was to start work on a series of videos under the title “Pacific Limn,” approaching the dimensions of a feature-length film and with a newly varied set of filmed images, now sometimes displacing text altogether.

A particularly resonant interplay of locales can be seen – or fleetingly glimpsed – in another Bellagio piece, “Reactivating the Republic,” produced for the 2012 Shanghai Biennal. Originally titled “Reactivating Communism,” the piece was rejected by the organizers in Shanghai, who evidently considered it to be critical of communism. YHCHI then re-submitted the piece after crudely blacking out many phrases in the text, thereby removing any indication of locale and what appear to have been descriptions of a loss of beauty and enchantment in modern cities like Shanghai. The self-censorship that enabled YHCHI to have their piece accepted in Shanghai only increased its artistic effect and its political critique.

As literary as they are visual, as site-specific as they are global, and as playful as they are serious, YOUNG-HAE CHANG HEAVY INDUSTRIES continues to advance the art of digital narrative in cyberspace and in the public sphere today.

By David Damrosch, Harvard University
GROOVIN' TO THE BEAT OF THE BIG LIE, 2013

Room 1:
BLUES FOR JUN
(6 channels)

GIRLFRIEND

IN BRA AND SOCKS,

SLURPING

SPICY CUP RAMEN

AND WATCHING TV.
11-channel HD video environment, flexible dimensions, 23 min 21 sec
Original bilingual (Korean/English) texts, graphics, background videos, and music soundtrack
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul

Room 2: POLKA DOTS AND PROPAGANDA (4 Channels)

Room 3: ME, MY BABY, AND BIBIMBOP (1 Channel)
I. WHY AM I AFRAID OF THE U.S.A.?

ARMPIT SWEAT.

BUT THEY DO HAVE HIDDEN SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS LOOKING TO SEE WHAT EXACTLY? TO SEE IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

HIDDEN SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS.

II. I TRIED TO DISCUSS COMMUNISM WITH THE CHINESE BUT NO ONE WANTED TO TALK TO ME

I TRIED TO TELL THE CHINESE ABOUT HOW, UNTIL RECENTLY, I HAD ALL THESE WRONG IDEAS ABOUT COMMUNISM, BUT NO ONE WOULD GIVE ME THE TIME OF DAY.

III. THE SECRET LIFE OF HARUMI

SUDDENLY HE TEARS OFF HIS SHIRT AND -- SURPRISE -- HE'S A SHE.

HER BRA IS RED. EVERYONE IN THE CLUB Hoots FROM SURPRISE. THE MUSIC ACCELERATES. SHE YANKS OFF HER BRA AND GO-GO DANCES.

HER FITS TUMBLE FREE, THEY'RE SMALL, PERKY, AND JERKY. THEY SCREAM FOR MORE.
PART 1: WANT TO DO GOOD? KNOW HOW TO SHOOT A SEMIAUTOMATIC HANDGUN?

A GUN IS A VERY PERSONAL THING,

SO TEST-FIRE A RANGE OF THEM, THEN CHOOSE THE ONE THAT SUITS YOU.

PART 2: BEING AND NOTHINGNESS AND BEING MIDDLE CLASS

ISN'T IT THE GREATEST IN THE WORLD?, 2012
Two-channel multiscreen video installation, flexible dimensions, 11 min 13 sec.
Original text and music soundtrack – University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI, U.S.A.
MY DMZ, 2012
Single channel HD video installation, flexible dimensions, 9 min 30 sec
Original bilingual (Ukrainian/English) text and music soundtrack – Kiev Biennial.

Я МІЙ ПРАЦЕДАВЕЦЬ, ЕКОЛОГІЧНО БЕЗПЕЧНІ

I'M NOW GOING TO HAND OUT WAIVERS FOR YOU TO SIGN STATING THAT MY EMPLOYER, DMZ ECO-FRIENDLY WELL-BEING TOURS, IS NOT RESPONSIBLE IN ANY WAY IF YOU BREAK THE RULES OF THIS TOUR AND END UP INJURED, CAPTURED, OR SHOT DEAD BY NORTH KOREAN SOLDIERS.

ПАСТАФАРІАНКА. Я ПОСЛІДОВНИЦЯ РЕЛІГІЇ

I AM A BELIEVER IN THE RASTA MOVEMENT OF JAMAICAN ORIGIN.

REACTIVATING THE REPUBLIC, 2012
Single channel video installation, flexible dimensions, 6 min 37 sec
Original bilingual (Chinese/English) text and music soundtrack – Shanghai Biennial

你和这帮疯子

IN FACT, IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOUR... YOU'D BE IN THE HELL OF THOSE Crazies.

向威尼斯去

THE SMELL OF [REDACTED] IN THE NIGHT AIR AS YOU WALKED FROM... TO...
The Rockefeller Foundation launched the Bellagio Creative Arts Fellowship in 2008, offering an exciting opportunity for visual artists. This high-profile program, selected by a distinguished international panel, hosts visual artists at the Bellagio Center for extended residencies to develop projects inspired by or related to social or global issues.

The Bellagio Creative Arts Fellows program is a selective award that helps advance the work of some of the most innovative, global, contemporary visual artists and raises their visibility in new arts, policy, and academic circles. The Fellows receive a cash award, undertake a two-month residency at the Center, and are provided with a travel award. They also contribute to and benefit from interactions among a stimulating community of scholars, writers, policymakers, and other artists who share dinners and occasional presentations at the Center. The combination of an extended stay, a generous stipend, private work space, and a unique group of fellow residents makes a Creative Arts Fellowship at the Bellagio Center a remarkable, unparalleled opportunity in the global arts community.

http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/bellagio-center