

----- [STATUS: EXHIBITION PROPOSAL SUBMITTED] -----

Following the start of the Korean War, the U.S. army, navy, and air force participated as members of the United Nations forces and dominated the operation order. In particular, from the beginning, the U.S. Air Force controlled the air command.

In the museum, walk a path around the perimeter of the exhibition hall, while speaking the names of your dead aloud.

Most South Korean civilian deaths associated with U.S. bombings occurred in the process of aerial bombardment. As the Commission verified, the U.S. Air Force bombings at Wolmi Island was in support of the Incheon Landing Operation of the UN forces. On the other hand, the U.S. Air Force bombings at Danyang Gokgaegul Cave and Sanseong-dong, Yecheon occurred while the U.S. Air Force attempted to prevent the North Korean People's Army from advancing south.

Break the floor with machines. Dig at the ground beneath your feet until all the graves lay open.

Even if massacres related to U.S. Forces transpired in the course of legitimate military operations, it is difficult to regard them as mere wartime usual accidents. The fact that aerial bombings continued to produce civilian deaths suggests that the U.S. Forces did not properly plan for the operations.

Sift through the dirt with your hands. Dig up bones, rocks, twigs, and shards of glass. Dig up scraps of cloth and plastic. Wash each object gently.

It is evident that in the course of planning for the aerial bombing operations, the U.S. Air Force sometimes failed to take into consideration the innocent civilians in the targeted areas. Mass killings by U.S. forces aerial bombings occurred mostly when the UN and Korean forces advanced north immediately after the outbreak of the Korean War in July and August 1950 with the Incheon Landing Operation, and during the retreat, when the North Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Liberation Army advanced south after the January 4th Retreat of 1951.

Lay it down on clean towels. This is your museum. Now begin.

The U.S. Air Force aerial bombings in South Korea were concentrated in areas densely populated with civilians. Considering this, the U.S. Army should have as a precondition distinguished civilians from the North Korean People's Army in the process of conducting reconnaissance operations and selecting bombing targets. The U.S. Air Force however engaged in indiscriminate bombing of the selected points and at low altitudes, with clear visibility of the ground, opened fire on innocent villagers. As a result, many civilians, including women and children, were sacrificed.

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IN THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

Do this in memory of my mother

and of my mother's mother

Here is this lacquered box (Fig. 100.5) inlaid

with their blood Most of what you see here

has been excavated from tombs or other archaeological sites

and has been damaged during burial and exhumation removed

from its cultural context preventing accurate provenance

Notice the decorative effects marked

by centuries of repeated invasion

Fig 100.7: Here is a locket no longer clasped around the neck

of the laughing girl who lingered too long

as the men approached Notice

how the delicate chain has been broken

Fig 100.9: Beneath the stone bridge everyone is crying out

but you can't hear them in this pictorial scene

Notice there is blood everywhere

beneath the scene the artist has provided description

in the manner of closed captioning

[distant gunfire]

and occasional subtitles e.g., "Mistakes were made."

Here we see a typical outfit for a young girl in Korea

(Fig 113.5) blue skirt and white blouse cotton weave pattern

note the hand-stitched hem suggesting

repeated mending hastily as the stitching is uneven

Fig 210.7 & 210.8: unearthed from hillside in North Chungeheong Province

we see buttons rubber shoes

and clothing of unknown provenance

[men shouting]

106 cartridges from Calvin and M1 rifles

200 bodies estimated from what remained

“Corporal damage, property damage, deaths in battle, forced arrests, and deaths”

Woven into the dress the recording

of the last things she witnessed memory imprecise but scent

of orange blossom and persimmon

linen starched and bleached (Fig. 254.1)

“At night we cried while we ate

a few grains of rice with some water”

It is likely it would have been traded for more utilitarian costume

buttons or fasteners rendering any garment useless

[men marching]

Such garments are often explained in accounts of forcible capture

[men marching]

“in the morning we saw
that the rice had been soaked in blood”

It is difficult to date these pieces accurately discolorations
tears in the fabric and staining suggest it was likely
these garments were torn or cut off

“Guns fired every day. Bodies in the dirt and the dogs would drag the corpses around.”

Fig. 254.3: yellow cardigan, blue skirt

Fig. 254.8: black cotton bundle containing underwear, sanitary towels and soap

“When there were battles, we were glad for it. It meant fewer men.”

Fig. 254.9: school uniform including white socks

In the contemporary era we see the depiction of a child lost
in what appears to be suburban mall food court (Fig 247.2)
from her expression you can conclude

[muffled crying]

that she has been lost for a long time

Fig. 247.3 Child reaches out for

Fig. 247.4 Bewildered woman shakes the child off

Fig. 247.5 Child screaming

[child screaming]

[screaming continues]

Notes:

1. Background text is excerpted from the March 2009 report of the South Korean Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which investigated atrocities committed during the Korean War.
2. Quotations come from one of two sources: the report of the aforementioned Truth and Reconciliation Commission and from oral histories of Korean comfort women. “Comfort women” is the term given to the women and girls who were forced into sexual slavery to the Japanese military in the time leading up to and during World War II.