

NEW RELEASE

CHE Onejoon International Friendship The Gifts from Africa

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The North Korean strategy of offering statues, monuments, and buildings to Africa during a diplomatic competition between North and South Korea in the 1970s

This book presents CHE Onejoon's documentary projects, *Mansudae Master Class* and *International Friendship*. The projects trace the statues, monuments, and buildings built by North Korea in Africa from the 1970s to the present and the historical background. The North Korea's Mansudae Art Studio has constructed statues, monuments, and buildings in about 18 countries in Africa. Among them, roughly half of the countries received these constructions from Kim Il Sung free of charge. Behind this North Korean diplomatic strategy of offering statues, monuments, and buildings to Africa, there was a diplomatic competition between North and South Korea in United Nations. This book deals with the historical background and critical writings about *Mansudae Master Class* and *International Friendship* as a documentary project, including the essays of experts from various fields such as history, photography, art history, and art criticism, among others.

Excerpt from **Long-Distance Friendships. Rendering Visible the Invisible Stories in Che Onejoon's Practice** by Inga Lāce:

My first encounter with Che Onejoon's work took place in a studio visit in Amsterdam several years ago. I remember watching fragments of his three-channel video Mansudae Master Class (2013–ongoing) and being for the first time introduced to the relationship between North Korea and African countries in the 1970s and 1980s. This relationship, which was slowly taking shape in front of me through Che's work, was two-fold. There were immense statues of African leaders made by North Korean artists and supported by the North Korean dictator, installed in many African countries, leaving a permanent marker in the public space and in the perception of its inhabitants. On the other hand, there was an im-

pressive number of gifts, often small in scale, flowing back to Korea from, among others, the African leaders, meant for the dictator of North Korea. In Che's work the first part of this relationship is unveiled in a three-channel investigative documentary which we watched while engaging in a lively discussion about other instances of cultural diplomacy, the military relationship that often comes with it, as well as the politics of gift giving. Meanwhile, the second part of the relationship is manifested as photographic prints of exceedingly impractical objects symbolically containing an essence of the represented countries, in the series International Friendship: The Gifts from Africa (2017–2018).

CHE Onejoon (b.1979) is a visual artist and filmmaker. One of his first projects involved photographing Seoul's red-light district, which began to decline after the anti-prostitution law took effect in 2004. He also made short films and archives that capture the trauma of modern Korean history by documenting the ruins of the global Cold War. In recent years, Che worked on a documentary project about the monuments and statues made by North Korea for many sub-Saharan African nations. His on-going project seeks to create a photographic work, film and installation about Afro-Asian culture and identity. Che has exhibited internationally at the Taipei Biennial (2008), Palais de Tokyo modules (2012), the Venice Architecture Biennale (2014), the Seoul Media City Biennale (2014), the New Museum Triennial (2015), the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art Afrika (2015), the Busan Biennale (2018), the Latvian Center for Contemporary Art Survival Kit 10.1 (2019), Jakarta Biennale (2021), and others. Che was a fellow of 2013 Sommerakademie Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern and Rijkssakademie in Amsterdam 2017–2018.

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Press images



01_Bust of former President Laurent Kabila, sculpted in 2002
Kinshasa, DR Congo, 2013 © CHE Onejoon



02_Statue of DR Congo's first Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, sculpted in 2002
Kinshasa, DR Congo, 2013 © CHE Onejoon



03_Iavoloha Palace, built in the 1970s
Antananarivo, Madagascar, 2015 © CHE Onejoon



04_Glory to the Heroes, Independence Memorial Museum
Windhoek, Namibia, 2015 © CHE Onejoon



05_Statue of Former Vice-President Joshua Nkomo, rebuilt by Zimbabwean
Artist in 2014. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 2015 © CHE Onejoon



06_Site of Demolished Statue of Former Vice-President Joshua Nkomo, removed
in 2011. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 2013 © CHE Onejoon



07_Independence Memorial Museum under Construction
Windhoek, Namibia, 2013 © CHE Onejoon



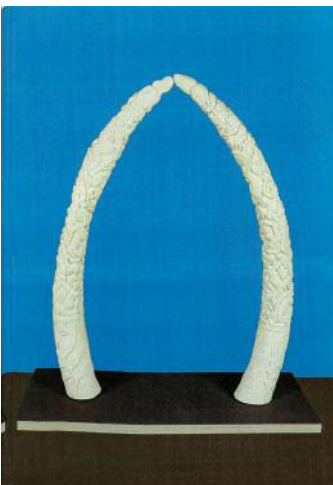
08_Three Dikgosi Monument, built in 2005. Gaborone, Botswana, 2013
© CHE Onejoon



09_Tiglachin Monument, built in 1982. Addis Ababa Ethiopia, 2015
© CHE Onejoon



10_African Renaissance Monument, built in 2010. Dakar, Senegal, 2013
© CHE Onejoon



11_Solidarity (ivory carving) by The National Coordination Committee of Juche Study, Dar es Salaam University College of Education [February Juche71 (1982)], 2017. Dimensions variable © CHE Onejoon



12_Solidarity (wood sculpture) from Samora Moises Machel, President of People's Republic of Mozambique [September Juche72 (1983)], 2017. Dimensions variable © CHE Onejoon