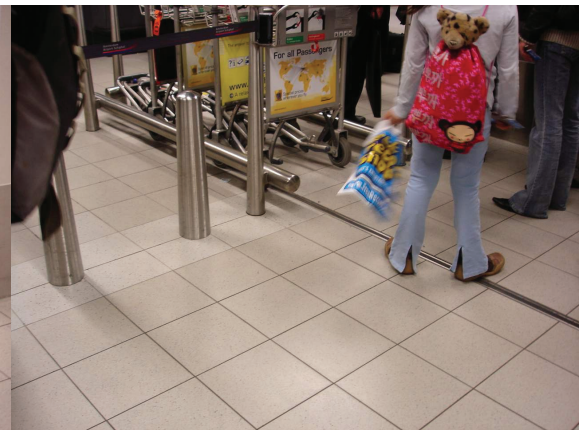


C2:1/3
Title: Beginning in the Air
By: Binna Choi
From: the air between Seoul and Amsterdam



Beginning in the Air

Finally after two years my personal library in the Netherlands is getting a bit bigger than the one in Korea. This is not only due to purchasing new books, but also because of the books I carry from one place to another. Probably my "territory" is shifting that way as well, because my hometown is becoming a place I drop by sometimes.

On a canal laced with white lights in Amsterdam, I sometimes suddenly have to ask myself: "Where am I?"

+

My baggage, weighing over the regulation 20-kg limit, is passed through the check-in desk without any problem, although I had to take out and carry on some heavy books with me. I was easily pleased with the fact that I was lucky to not pay any extra costs for being "over weight," and even mused that I am a sort of lucky person probably supported by a certain mythical power, blah blah. What thoughts of privilege and ego-centrism are reflected in the trivial details of life!

Got on the KLM airplane. After three weeks "visiting" in Korea, I felt so fresh being surrounded by the Dutch or other Westerners. I felt at home in that place I don't belong to, where I am not bound to anyone else. What an irony. Do I feel home as I leave "home?" Indeed it was so busy in Korea, the "center of home." All family, friends, colleagues in such a limited time. Great but exhausting.

+

There are two moments I love when I am flying, or more precisely, when I am on the airplane: taking off and landing. In the 1980s, I hear, passengers collectively clapped for the pilot when he landed the plane safely. If I clap now it is for a different reason. I would do that when the plane is taking off: after all those busy bee like days—always more intensive before you leave for somewhere else—finally I am free! Even if temporarily. I am served food, drink, can see films. A few moments of total passivity! And as a bonus, there is some physical disturbance, which is very fresh for a person who does not exercise at all. When landing, imagination and expectation are activated and furthermore, with the excuse that you are not familiar with the land yet, you can behave as if you are detached from this globe.

That's it. As soon as you are intermingled with work, gatherings, and places, then everyday nonchalance immediately clicks in, however wonderful the things you see and however dreadful whatever it is that you observe. Every moment of transformation is on demand.

At a certain point on the plane from Seoul to Amsterdam, probably looking down at the almost sci-fi like landscape near Ulan Bator, I happened to wonder how other "cultural jet setters" in this art world spend solitary moments like this. How are they at those moments? Are they so tired and overworked that they just sleep? Or do they worry about a crash landing or some vague terrorist threat? Or are they just sick of the milieu of neutral difference — let's say, similitude? I imagined them and suddenly rhizomatic connections unfolded, drawing this planet of known and unknown parts into a loose "bond" of people. Would there be a way to materialize these lines of flights, movements, and connections? Maybe.

+

+