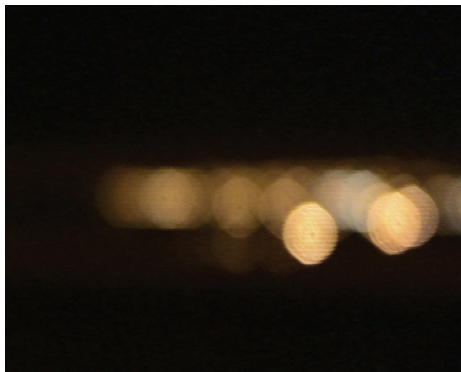
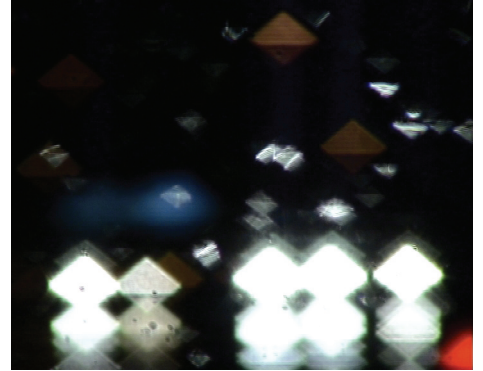
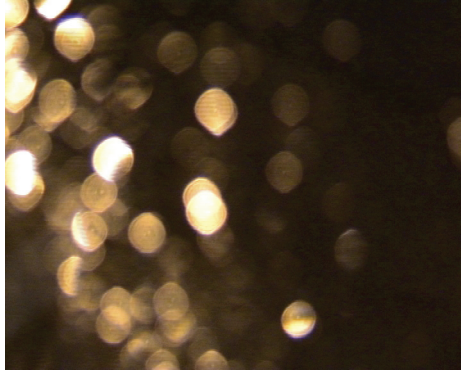


Y1:1/6

Title: Unfolding Places

By: Haegue Yang

From: en route from Frankfurt am Main → Incheon → Seoul → Copenhagen → Tokyo



## Unfolding Places

1. When on a moving subway or a train, one can see what seems an everlasting length of space suddenly disappear and come back, as it takes a curve followed by straight train tracks. I am interested in this kind of space, which comes into existence by visual recognition.

2. When first arriving at Incheon International airport, I go through customs, pick up my baggage, and then step out to the shuttle bus stop where I finally get to inhale fresh air. That "fresh air" is usually mixed with noise. If I identify this "fresh air" as the first element I meet when I arrive at a new place, it doesn't do the air a justice simply to call it "air."

Every time at the airport, an odd mixture of fine dust particles, polluted atmosphere, noise, and visuals in bad taste welcome me.

In other words, this air is sound, temperature, and smell. These are not always pretty, quite honestly; the noise, pollution, weird humidity, and the jumble of all these elements create certain feelings that I first face. Of course these feelings get dulled by time, therefore their influence seeps deeply into my subconscious as my routine takes shape. Naturally I do not know if it has any effect on me or I wonder if I even care about it anymore.

But at the moment when I first feel this air, taste it, I feel a sudden sting in my eyes.

3. Even after the arrival, the pursuit of place goes on. First, a private place where I can lie down and rest is much desired. Of course my need to have a physically nice shelter remains minimal. There is no doubt about that. Nonetheless, I despise the longing for a shelter itself. The same goes for privacy. In other words, I come back to the road movie.

4. Late at night on my way home, there was a black woman, huge like a house, with a deafening voice, riding on the same bus I was on. A few stops later, an elderly man stepped onto the bus assisting a very drunken man who seemed to be his friend. The black woman had been on the phone since before she got on the bus. The loudness of her voice set a record volume for me. The drunken old man would at times speak really loudly in spite of his friend's

effort to calm him down. Whenever he uttered something, the sentence always started with excuse me, as if to compose poetry. His voice was loud yet resonant and his manner of speaking even seemed quite polite, though there were plenty of curse words.

Excuse me, hell, you are an alcoholic.

Excuse me, I am a Queen.

Excuse me, fuck, I know where I am.

Excuse me, the bus driver knows me.

Excuse me,

Excuse me,

The friend pushed a stop button and tried to assist the drunken friend so that they could get off the bus but to no avail.

Missing his stop, the friend looked like wanted to help his friend again but got off by himself, leaving him saying, "you are on your own now."

A few more people got on.

The drunken guy raised his hand abruptly in order to get some attention.

Excuse me.

Besides, as if to react to something, he started a series of sneezes.

Not being able to prevent stupid sneezing, he went on a couple dozen times continually.

Some started to chuckle. When the sneezing finally stopped, barely controlling his body, the man collapsed in the back of the seat and mucus or saliva started running down his face. People stopped chuckling then. By now most of the riders got off and the man, the black woman, and myself—of course there was also the bus driver—were the only people left.

Starting to gain some control over his body, he started the "excuse me" thing again.

Excuse me, I'm home.

Excuse me, I'm a German.

Excuse me, you really are an alcoholic

Excuse me, I can bloody mouth off. (I can wag my tongue)

Finally the bus came to the huge black woman's stop.

In the middle of her phone conversation, she began cursing at the guy. He was too drunk to defend himself from the woman's horrible attack.

Before his "excuse me" ever reached the ending, the woman finished her business and got off.



Only after that he barely managed to say,  
Excuse me, are you talking to me?

I tried to check up on him once more through the bus window, but because it was thickly covered with muck it let no gaze through.

5. Up until now, the places I have lived in were more a moderate mixture of chance and fate than intended choices made out of necessity. Of course sometimes I did make some choices. But looking back, those decisions were not always my own. They seemed like a trap set up by circumstances and situations. At the same time, these places are an object of strong emotions like enthusiasm, compassion, and such.

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Moreover, according to the surroundings, one's state of mind and approach to living could vary.

One can live anywhere. But the problem is, when reflecting upon one's intended shape of life, nostalgic sentiments emerge. They are driven from a desire for self-examination and self-doubt, which are in turn produced by the unending questions I've been asking myself.

6. The Danish telephone ring tone at a hotel sounds a bit like the sound of a subway train in Seoul. I keep reminding myself where I am, but every time it goes off I become disoriented. This kind of moment makes me lonely.

At the same time however, I somehow grow confident that somewhere there are ties and links.

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7. The dilemma could come down to a love or hatred of sleeping bags. In a space called a house, a sleeping bag is cumbersome and unwanted. Something about it is unattractive and droopy. The same can be said about the nature of extra mattresses and the like; the symbols of wandering. I am not talking about a professional wanderer. That is because I don't have an illusion of a probability close to an improbability. Rather I am attracted to the anarchistic aspects of the problem that simply challenge the reality or that go merely beyond it. In short, I am interested in states of a meek, even ridiculous and pathetic nature. Even though it seems vague, we should focus on a clear point. This point is a story about a territory of incessant coming and inevitable and constant going.

8. Whenever I land at different places, in an effort to fill gaps in my orientation, I often go to a movie theatre.

A movie theatre is for me a road, a place for seeking and coming back.

It is a private mini-urban road movie.

In the midst of passing scenery, a series of unnamed spaces emerge as new places.

Going through places. Reaching a place. Leaving the place and hitting the road.

The passing of time indirectly interferes with my perception, focusing on a change of places, a conversion of spaces.

The power of time lies in being in the present.

That is because when time hands over its time to a place, the place gains more beauty as the time loses its influence.

The place is like a gentleman who grows more distinguished as time goes by.

The time is like an aging beauty who lets time gradually strip her of vitality.

In the end, we all get to experience emotions.

However, if one does not concentrate or open one's mind, emotions cannot penetrate the surface of experience.

9. Unless you are a traveler, one is bound to look for a place to live. In doing so, one broadens the understanding of a territory. When the territory is unknown, it comes across as quite barbaric. Seeking a place is a way of taming that unknown territory. It is to boast of my capability in the territory. It is also an opportunity to challenge and evaluate, to test my own competency.

Here is a territory and there is a territory. Yet it is not as easy to figure out one's relationship to a territory.

When I sit at a Korean restaurant with a group of friends, the world outside becomes forgotten, which is also relatively true in the case of a Japanese restaurant. The site of Japanese people eating quietly at a restaurant reminds me of my time in Japan. The experience, which came from the fact that I appear physically similar to the people there, is something that I never had in Europe; this is what interested me in Japan. Although I could not understand a word, there existed a comforting sense of lightness that nobody needs to bear 90% of my present being.

10. Going to the airport, leaving there by train or bus heading to a city center is often left as something solely in my responsibility. I'm not trying to judge anything

about it. My focus is on the aspect of "aloneness" in this act; my lone experience, time, perception, etc., all mine alone. "Arriving" is not a short process. On top of flight time, the additional time spent on "arriving" is a meaningful moment for it gives me an opportunity to listen to the change of mood caused by moving from place to place. Unfamiliarity might be the right word. In the unique and gratifying emotional flux, it is connected to the intimidating yet inspiring experience.

\*This text is part of Haegue Yang's film *Unfolding Places*, 2004, which is narrated as voice-over.

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