Curatorial Fellowship, Korean Photography, Chicago

Art Institute of Chicago, Aug 1, 2025–Aug 1, 2028

Yechen Zhao

Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Curatorial Fellowship in Photography and Media – Korean Photography.

The Department of Photography at the Art Institute of Chicago was officially formed in 1974 and has presented a continuous schedule of exhibitions across photographic history ever since. Starting in 2009, the department has also regularly collected and exhibited time-based and print media, as signaled by its new name–Photography and Media. With core strengths in American and European modernist photography, the museum's collection has grown to comprise approximately 25,000 objects, including daguerreotypes from the 19th century, photography made in Chicago beginning in the 1940s and 1950s, contemporary work from Japan, and work by 20th-century and contemporary African and African American photographers. The department now seeks to expand its remit toward photography in East Asia, beginning with the Korean Peninsula. This initiative benefits from important new scholarship and exhibitions of Korean art in the United States, as well as new partnerships between the Art Institute and major museums in South Korea including the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea and the Museum of Photography, Seoul.

The Department of Photography and Media seeks a Fellow to advance new avenues of research and collection development related to the history of artists on the Korean Peninsula using photography, as well as moving-image technologies from the 1900s onward. The Fellow will also work in close cooperation with the Department of Arts of Asia and its curator of Korean art, linking these artists and their accomplishments to longer histories of art in Northeast Asia. The Fellow will work with the curators to identify artists, research and recommend works for the collection, as well as develop proposals for exhibitions and publications, including an edited anthology of significant Korean-language texts on related topics to be translated into English. Artists identified for this project include, but are not limited to, Kim Sooja, Han Youngsoo, Lee Gapchul, Lee Hyungrok, Lee Kyojun, Limb Eungsik, Park Youngsook, and Sung Neung Kyung. This initiative seeks to understand how photography shaped, and was shaped by, a peninsula that experienced colonialism, imperialism, and Cold War realpolitik in one century. What are/were the formal institutions, informal networks, and material flows supporting photography in this region, and how did artists work within or against these systems? How can these artists inform alternative approaches to researching and narrating histories of photography as artistic expression, without retroactively fitting them to a Euroamerican model of art history and connoisseurship?

PRIMARY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Collaborate with the curators to create an extensive survey of impactful Korean artists using photography and moving-image technologies since the 1900s.

Compile bibliographies of English- and Korean-language scholarship on photography and media in South Korea since the 1950s; recommend books, periodicals, ephemera, and other research material for acquisition by the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries.

Conduct primary research in museums, archives, and libraries in South Korea (e.g. National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, Seoul Museum of Art Archives, and the Museum of Photography, Seoul) to drive new curatorial directions.

Work with the curators to build relationships with potential stakeholders including artists, curators, scholars, critics, and collectors in South Korea, while developing connections with scholars and curators of Korean photography in the United States and Canada.

Work with the curators to develop proposals for new acquisitions and exhibitions related to the fellowship project.

Work with the curators on project-related collection rotations as needed, including object research and gallery information.

Develop proposals for convenings with relevant scholars and practitioners in the field, presentations documenting fellowship research, and an edited anthology of Korean-language texts on related topics to be translated into English.
The fellow will be based in the curatorial department of Photography and Media, in close cooperation with the curator of Korean art in Arts of Asia. The Fellow may also work with other departments including Conservation, Digital Experience, Imaging, Publishing, and the Research Center. They should expect to travel on research trips, to conferences, and to art fairs. The Fellow is highly encouraged to develop and work on their own research projects during the fellowship, which the museum would aim to support.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

Remain standing or sitting at a desk or with a computer for 90% of the work day
Constantly operates a computer and other office productivity machinery, such as a copy machine and printer
Repeating motions that may include the wrists, hands and/or fingers
Light physical work that may include moving boxes up to 30 pounds
Occasionally handles art

Qualifications

Master’s degree required. Field of study in art history, East Asian studies, film and media studies, or a closely related field with a strong research focus on the history of photography and media-based art in South Korea strongly preferred.
Speaking, reading and writing fluency in Korean Hangul is required; competency reading Hanja is highly desired.
Minimum 1-2 years professional, internship or in depth research experience in the history of

photography and the twentieth-century history of the Korean peninsula required.
Candidates should submit a CV/resume, a cover letter detailing the candidate's interest in and qualifications for the position. Upon invitation to interview, further supporting materials (such as a writing sample) may be requested.

Please visit https://www.artic.edu/careers/employment-2 to access the portal for submitting your application.

Applications will be considered on a rolling basis until the post is filled. Interviews may take place at any time, but no decision will be made before March 21, 2025.

The start date of the fellowship is flexible, and will be negotiated based on a candidate's individual needs or circumstances. Optimally, the appointment would begin between May and September 2025. This is a three-year term. The fellowship includes benefits, a modest relocation allowance if appropriate, a stipend for research/professional development, and funds for project support.

CLOSING STATEMENT
The Art Institute of Chicago is an Equal Opportunity Employer that recruits, hires and promotes qualified individuals without regard to race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, national origin, ancestry, veteran status or citizenship. The Institute complies with federal and state disability laws and makes reasonable accommodations for applicants and employees with disabilities. If reasonable accommodation is needed to participate in the job application or interview process, please contact the Department of Human Resources at apply_help@artic.edu.
UNION INFO

This position is part of a bargaining unit represented by AFSCME Council 31.

Reference:
STIP: Curatorial Fellowship, Korean Photography, Chicago. In: ArtHist.net, Jan 24, 2025 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/43779>.