



Marc Lathillière, Won Jin & Yeong Se-sun, Conscripts in the Marine Corps, Ganghwado Island, photograph.

## THAILAND

### Bangkok

#### Marc Lathillière at Tang Gallery

Looking at Frenchman Marc Lathillière's diaristic snapshots in his show entitled *Transkoreana*, one notices a curious small toy motorcycle appearing in every frame. Whether a miniature rider in a sweeping vista, an insignificant blimp upon an austere monument, or a playful toy in a stranger's palm, the minute motorbike manages to both unify as well as subvert the assumed intention of the photographer's postcard-style travelogue.

The tiny toy bike is a humorous sidekick carried by the photographer-journalist on his journey through the South Korean peninsula. An innocent metaphor for his road trip undertaken on a 125 cc scooter, the toy cycle also acted as an invaluable ice-breaker to penetrate Korean sensibility. While Lathillière is capable of communicating in pigeon Korean, the toy bike functioned as an interactive device that allowed him a means of brief access to strangers, helping skirt formalities and social constraints.

Using the toy bike as what he terms his "doppelgänger," Lathillière supplants something of himself in each picture as a parody of typical smile-and-shoot souvenir portraits snapped in front of tourist attractions. By staging the toy cycle within broad panoramas, Lathillière also plays with the sense of scale as well as infusing a narrative to otherwise familiar travel photographs.

Less static than the landscape shots, Lathillière focuses primarily on portraits depicting a broad cross-section of Korean society. Taken in autumn, many of the fleeting encounters were shot against cloudless blue skies, with a cast that includes soldiers, a political demonstrator, a businessman, nun, trendy teen, exuberant kids, street vendor, and a traditional dancer. Looking beyond their camera persona, each reaction to the toy offers a glimpse into the subject's personality.

In an attempt to layer multi-media elements, Lathillière introduces sound recorded conversational encounters, which can be listened to on headphones in the gallery. Intended to be light-hearted vignettes to miscomprehension and misunderstanding, the recordings are in Korean only, offering little other than curious aural stimulation.

While Korea provides an entry point for this exhibition, ultimately Lathillière's photographs explore the general complexities of overseas tourism in the modern age; of communi-

cation, acceptance, and cultural understanding. Planning similar documentation through Thailand, Lathillière also looks at perceptions of identity, reality, and subjectivity when presenting the particular face of any given environment.

Whether or not the gimmicky ploy of utilizing a toy to chip away at communication barriers the photographic compositions that result from the experience work fully, there is enough depth to lift Lathillière's works beyond the genre of exotic travel photography.

Steven Pettifor

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