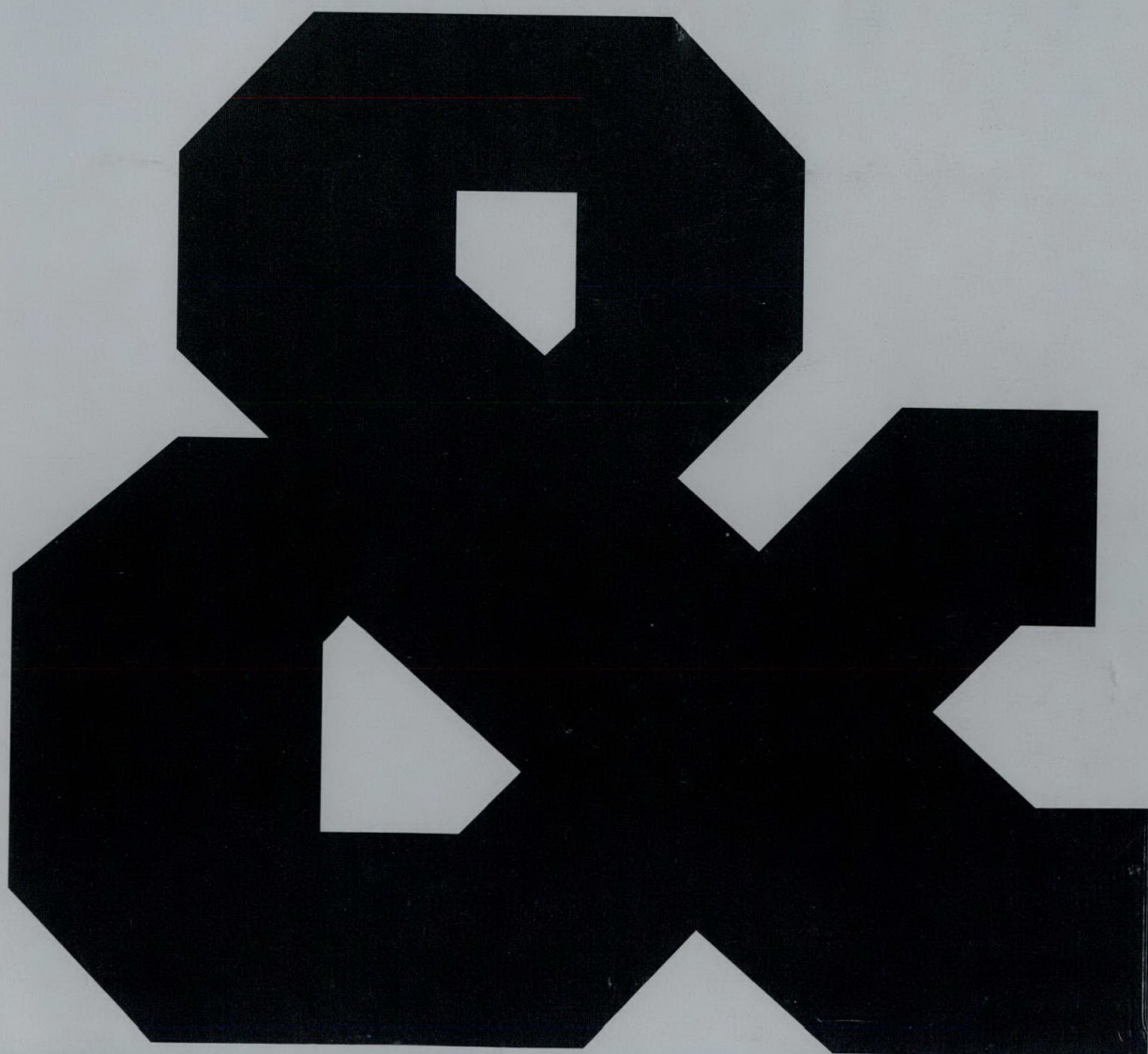


Ahn Sang-Soo
2GD
DM9 DDB
Zach Gold
Tadao Ando
Julie Taymor





HERBERT SAHLIGER • STUNTZSTRASSE 25/7

D 81677 MÜNCHEN • TELEFON (089) 9131377



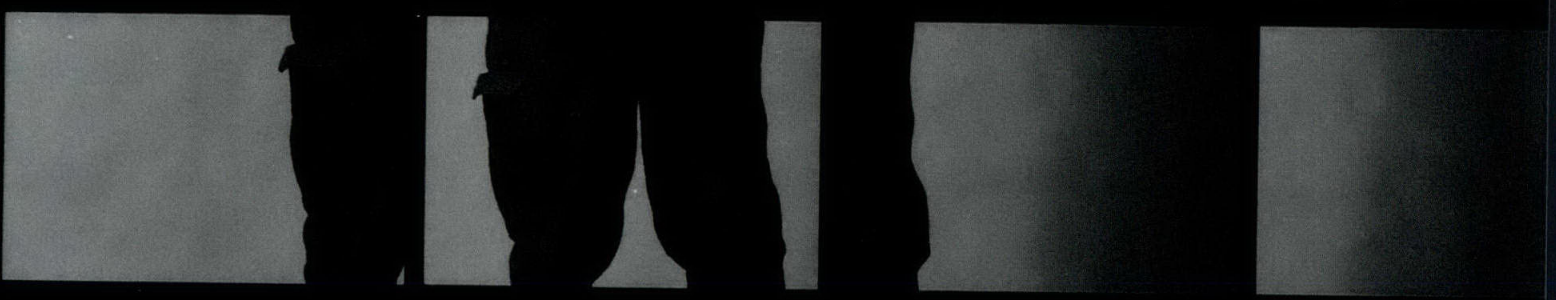
2 8 $\xrightarrow{2A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 3 9 $\xrightarrow{3A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 4 10 $\xrightarrow{4A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 5 11 $\xrightarrow{5A}$ KODAK 5063 TX



8 14 $\xrightarrow{8A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 9 15 $\xrightarrow{9A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 10 16 $\xrightarrow{10A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 11 17 $\xrightarrow{11A}$ KODAK 5063 TX



14 20 $\xrightarrow{14A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 15 21 $\xrightarrow{15A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 16 22 $\xrightarrow{16A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 17 23 $\xrightarrow{17A}$ KODAK 5063 TX



20 26 $\xrightarrow{20A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 21 27 $\xrightarrow{21A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 22 28 $\xrightarrow{22A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 23 29 $\xrightarrow{23A}$ KODAK 5063 TX



26 32 $\xrightarrow{26A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 27 33 $\xrightarrow{27A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 28 34 $\xrightarrow{28A}$ KODAK 5063 TX 29 35 $\xrightarrow{29A}$ KODAK 5063 TX





3 3A
9 KODAK 5063 TX



9 9A
15 KODAK 5063 TX



15 15A
21 KODAK 5063 TX



21 21A
27 KODAK 5063 TX



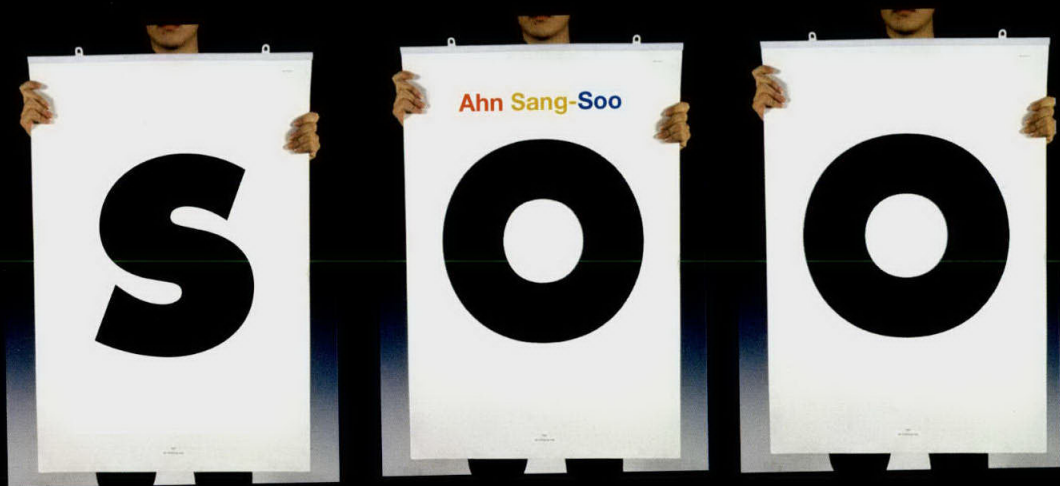
27 27A
33 KODAK 5063 TX



Ahn Sang Soo: Going Home

As a leader in his nation's typography and graphic design, Ahn is showing his students and the world how the fonts he creates in Korean are about more than just improving readability: They're about real cultural power.

By Maggie Kinser Saiki
Portrait by Jae-Yong Lee



"I am Korean," Ahn Sang-Soo told me throughout the day we spent wandering the streets of Seoul. For Ahn, a graphic designer most concerned with typography and the cultural position of language, Hangul, the country's written language, *is* Korea. As Ahn explains, "Koreans grow up within the culture of Chinese characters. Emotionally, we are within the Chinese culture. But writing is the vessel of the culture. The letter is a symbol of the culture." Korean writing is unique, as is the position of this split nation. "Geopolitically," says Ahn, "we are in the center of the sandwich."

A 600-mile-long peninsula, Korea separates the Yellow Sea from the Sea of Japan. Rich in minerals and fishing opportunities, Korea has been invaded by its neighbors on both sides. At the end of World War II, the country was divided roughly at the 38th parallel into communist North Korea and non-communist South Korea. Today, Ahn says, "Japan thinks it is our big brother. China is practical, and interested in us." But what Korea has going for it, in both politics and design, is knowledge and the possibility of independence. "We are very well informed in the neighborhood," says the designer.

Watching the sky darken over the border between North and South Korea, Ahn told me that returning from trips overseas—where his "mind and attitude are loose, happy and free"—he comes here, to a location "not in the paradise", to remind himself of who he is. As he sipped a cappuccino at a Seoul Starbucks, Ahn, 48, spoke of his childhood, about the Korean War—into the middle of which he was born—and about the bomb that hit his house and shocked his pregnant mother with the vision of her husband's bloody face. Ahn—sensitive in the womb—was scarred, he says, and was visited by nightmares of war. It is this country, sharing language and geography but splintered violently by ideology, that is the "pillar" which supports Ahn when he attempts his adventures in the wider world.

As a young man, Ahn Sang-Soo loved to draw on the paper that his soldier brother brought home for him. He went to high school in Ch'ongju (where one of the first metal printing presses was invented) and enjoyed his three years of mandatory army service as an offset press operator. For five years in the large LG Advertising agency, the "chores" of small brochures and English-language ads gave him a taste of professional freedom, for which he sought more. In 1981, he quit his position at LG and bought an 8-bit Apple computer. He went to work as an editorial designer at two magazines (both of which folded in the financially distraught early '80s), and in 1985, he established Ahn Graphics, where he designed a series of books on Korean art motifs. With his own pocket money, he started producing the magazine *Bogoseol/Bogoseo* (*Report/Report*), in which he carried out typographical experiments while disseminating his personal views on art and life.

Perhaps most importantly, Ahn has designed six typefaces, since 1983, for which he is now one of the best known graphic designers in Korea. In 1991, he was asked by his alma mater, Hong Ik University, to become "a baby professor," as he calls himself. Indeed, he is helping to lead Korea's graphic design society into the next century. In 1999, he took up the post of Vice President for both the Visual Information Design Association of Korea (VIDAK) and the International Council of Graphic Design Associates (ICOGRADA), serving as a member of the Operating Committee for October's ICOGRADA Millennium Congress, Oullim 2000.

In a button-down shirt, wool sweater with matching muffler,

trenchcoat and lace-up shoes—anomalous Western clothes that are almost a parody of Western style—Ahn could be doing an act, or extending his hospitality to the western world. But this is the real Ahn Sang-Soo, and he is being true to his identity as he perceives it. Part of what he is today is a cultural interpreter. He says he fell into the positions at ICOGRADA and VIDAK, but admits that because he speaks English and Japanese as well as Korean, he is better suited to help Korean designers become even more informed about both Asia and the West.

Today, in Korea as in Japan, young Net-connected designers recognize few benefits of being members of the traditional organizations, but the ICOGRADA congress—the first international design congress to be held in Korea—has already attracted new members. Ahn hopes to make this congress even more effective, concentrated and full of opportunities for vital face-to-face encounters than those in the past. Until now, not only Korea, but also Japan and China have openly copied the designs of America and Europe, "but now they are going to consider what Asia is," he says, "who we are, where we are, what we are."

"The Korean alphabet is the only designed writing system in the world," Ahn says. He shows me a copy of the original design concept, by King Sejong, and I understand the enormity of what he is saying; Hangul is no accident. It isn't a bastard born of old ideographs and hieroglyphics that people still struggle to decipher. Korea had already borrowed and mastered the written characters of China before Hangul. Japan's annexation and cultural colonization of Korea (from 1910 to 1945) gave Koreans another opportunity to consider identity as it relates to language (Koreans were forced to abandon their native tongue and learn Japanese). And then the United States, with its troops, trade and aid over the past half-century, have brought yet another language and identity. It's no wonder that Ahn and his followers should find new cultural power in typography.

When I visited Ahn's office at Hong Ik University, he showed me a sickle he had just bought. "This is the shape of the first letter in the Korean alphabet. This is the consonant 'g' which, in addition to looking like this vital agricultural tool, is also the shape your esophagus takes when you make the sound of a hard 'g.'" The Korean alphabet has 24 characters, and visually, every consonant illustrates the movement of the esophagus, tongue, lips and teeth when pronouncing that letter.

"The world's simplest alphabet," Ahn calls it. But the arrangement of letters in a square, which imitates the placement of Chinese characters, in fact makes it harder to read Hangul than Chinese. While Chinese characters have varying densities, depending on the number of strokes in a character—helping the eye distinguish one from another—Hangul letters are all about the same density, and placing them uniformly in a square evens out the white space. But Hangul typefaces are difficult to set; there are 11,172 possible combinations, each nearly original, composed according to a basic rule, but refined by arbitrary aesthetics.

Ahn's fonts, logical and based on a module, ignore the Chinese-inspired square. The overall effect is of Arabic written on a digital clock, almost all-straight lines, but with a flow of its own. Ahn says that his fonts are physically easier to recognize and read than the traditional fonts. Once they get the hang of it, his readers agree, it is easier to follow. But Ahn is much deeper into the logic and limits of

Through his typography, Ahn is opening the eyes of the non-designing public to the inherent possibilities in their language: By his estimate he's influenced five to ten percent of the Korean typography published today.

Hangul typefaces are difficult to set; There are 11,172 possible combinations, each nearly original, composed according to a basic rule, but refined by arbitrary aesthetics.

typography than one would suspect. In 1995, intrigued by the poetry that suddenly piqued his interest at the age of 40, he wrote his doctorate thesis for the Department of Applied Arts at the Graduate School of Hanyang University on a typographic study of Isang's poetry. Isang, a Korean poet in the 1930s, was influenced by Moholy-Nagy and Cubism. Like Ilya Zdanevitch, Kurt Schwitters and El Lissitzky, Isang explored and exploited type as a visual element, relegating literal meaning to a separate, sometimes subordinate role.

Isang and King Sejong, Hangul's designer, are the only two Korean figures Ahn respects. One was a dadaist, the other a logician. Ahn's own work bounces between these extremes. A poem of his reads thus: "The words were stars. Words became meaning. And fell into the earth." He performs experimental typography, such as typographic portraits of friends. But on the other hand, he has produced very serious work in the pursuit of readability, like the complete redesign of the *Seoul News Daily*, with its inch-thick manual. Says Ahn, "I just like balance. If I eat a very sweet cake, then I want kimchi [spicy, pickled cabbage]. If I eat too much kimchi, I want rice. If I eat rice, suddenly I need meat. My mind is always travelling. I just follow my mind." Ahn wins prizes for following his mind. In 1983, he received the Korean Journalism Award for research in the readability of newspaper typography, and in 1988, a commendation from the Korean Language Academy for contributions to the advancement of Hangul.

Ahn likens the Korean alphabet, with its self-conscious start and its short history, to a juvenile "troublemaker" and laughs. Ahn himself spends a lot of time breaking down traditional barriers, making, if not trouble, a road for trouble to travel on. In 1997, in the midst of the IMF crisis, he managed to get a manufacturer of "middle-class fashion" to sponsor an unstructured two-week trip to Thailand for "poor Korean artists," and then published a book of their visual impressions and recordings, designed and art directed by himself.

The product, the *Ssamzie Art Book*, won the 1999 Zgrapf Grand Prix. Ahn also arranges 48-hour guerrilla typographic exhibitions in galleries. As an educator, he opens his students' eyes to a world that is both understandable and marvelous in its variety, introducing them to the concepts of semiology and New Wave Typography, as well as French and German.

Through his typography, Ahn is opening the eyes of the non-designing public to the inherent possibilities in their language: By his estimate he's influenced five to ten percent of the Korean typography published today. One major Korean newspaper, *Hangyoreh*, uses his fonts only in the smaller titles, but because the public eye is so familiar with the Chinese-based square, mainstream change will have to be slow.

Young designers, however, use a lot of Ahn, which has brought him some fame, but not fortune. For that, the troublemaker and his colleagues are working to change the law to work in their favor. Currently the Korean government does not allow typeface copyright. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court, only to be crushed by the argument that letters are like air; everyone breathes them and they cannot be owned. "We will try again," says Ahn, and "the law will be changed eventually."

Despite being a troublemaker and a challenger, Ahn Sang-Soo's notion of his country is still his foundation. When he was younger, he pretended, with the rest of the designers his age, to be cool—which was to be International, European, anything but Korean. Now, he has come home. "When I think about my identity, what is the core of my life, what is the role of graphic design in Korea," says Ahn, "I find that the most natural situation, the most natural position for me is just standing on Korea itself."■

(Opposite page)
Exhibition in
Hangul Calligraphy,
"Today & Tomorrow"
poster (1996)
Art director,
designer:
Ahn Sang-Soo
Client:
Seoul Arts Center

한글반포 550주년 기념 특별전

1996. 08. 01 (화) - 1996. 08. 25 (일) 예술의전당 서예관

한글서예의 오글과 내이

주최: 예술의전당 | 중앙일보사

출판: 국립국어연구원 | 한글학회 | 세종대왕기념사업회

40 21 14 6 0 7 9 8 5 4 3 2 1 0

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291 292 293 294 295 296 297 298 299 300 301 302 303 304 305 306 307 308 309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325 326 327 328 329 330 331 332 333 334 335 336 337 338 339 340 341 342 343 344 345 346 347 348 349 350 351 352 353 354 355 356 357 358 359 360 361 362 363 364 365 366 367 368 369 370 371 372 373 374 375 376 377 378 379 380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393 394 395 396 397 398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411 412 413 414 415 416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425 426 427 428 429 430 431 432 433 434 435 436 437 438 439 440 441 442 443 444 445 446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453 454 455 456 457 458 459 460 461 462 463 464 465 466 467 468 469 470 471 472 473 474 475 476 477 478 479 480 481 482 483 484 485 486 487 488 489 490 491 492 493 494 495 496 497 498 499 500 501 502 503 504 505 506 507 508 509 510 511 512 513 514 515 516 517 518 519 520 521 522 523 524 525 526 527 528 529 530 531 532 533 534 535 536 537 538 539 540 541 542 543 544 545 546 547 548 549 550 551 552 553 554 555 556 557 558 559 560 561 562 563 564 565 566 567 568 569 570 571 572 573 574 575 576 577 578 579 580 581 582 583 584 585 586 587 588 589 590 591 592 593 594 595 596 597 598 599 600 601 602 603 604 605 606 607 608 609 610 611 612 613 614 615 616 617 618 619 620 621 622 623 624 625 626 627 628 629 630 631 632 633 634 635 636 637 638 639 640 641 642 643 644 645 646 647 648 649 650 651 652 653 654 655 656 657 658 659 660 661 662 663 664 665 666 667 668 669 670 671 672 673 674 675 676 677 678 679 680 681 682 683 684 685 686 687 688 689 690 691 692 693 694 695 696 697 698 699 700 701 702 703 704 705 706 707 708 709 710 711 712 713 714 715 716 717 718 719 720 721 722 723 724 725 726 727 728 729 730 731 732 733 734 735 736 737 738 739 740 741 742 743 744 745 746 747 748 749 750 751 752 753 754 755 756 757 758 759 760 761 762 763 764 765 766 767 768 769 770 771 772 773 774 775 776 777 778 779 780 781 782 783 784 785 786 787 788 789 790 791 792 793 794 795 796 797 798 799 800 801 802 803 804 805 806 807 808 809 810 811 812 813 814 815 816 817 818 819 820 821 822 823 824 825 826 827 828 829 830 831 832 833 834 835 836 837 838 839 840 841 842 843 844 845 846 847 848 849 850 851 852 853 854 855 856 857 858 859 860 861 862 863 864 865 866 867 868 869 870 871 872 873 874 875 876 877 878 879 880 881 882 883 884 885 886 887 888 889 890 891 892 893 894 895 896 897 898 899 900 901 902 903 904 905 906 907 908 909 910 911 912 913 914 915 916 917 918 919 920 921 922 923 924 925 926 927 928 929 930 931 932 933 934 935 936 937 938 939 940 941 942 943 944 945 946 947 948 949 950 951 952 953 954 955 956 957 958 959 960 961 962 963 964 965 966 967 968 969 970 971 972 973 974 975 976 977 978 979 980 981 982 983 984 985 986 987 988 989 990 991 992 993 994 995 996 997 998 999 1000 1001 1002 1003 1004 1005 1006 1007 1008 1009 1010 1011 1012 1013 1014 1015 1016 1017 1018 1019 1020 1021 1022 1023 1024 1025 1026 1027 1028 1029 1030 1031 1032 1033 1034 1035 1036 1037 1038 1039 1040 1041 1042 1043 1044

ბოგო5პო1

ბოგო5პო1ბოგო5პო

1997

ბოგო5პო1ბოგო5პო

გმგმგმ

გმგმგმ

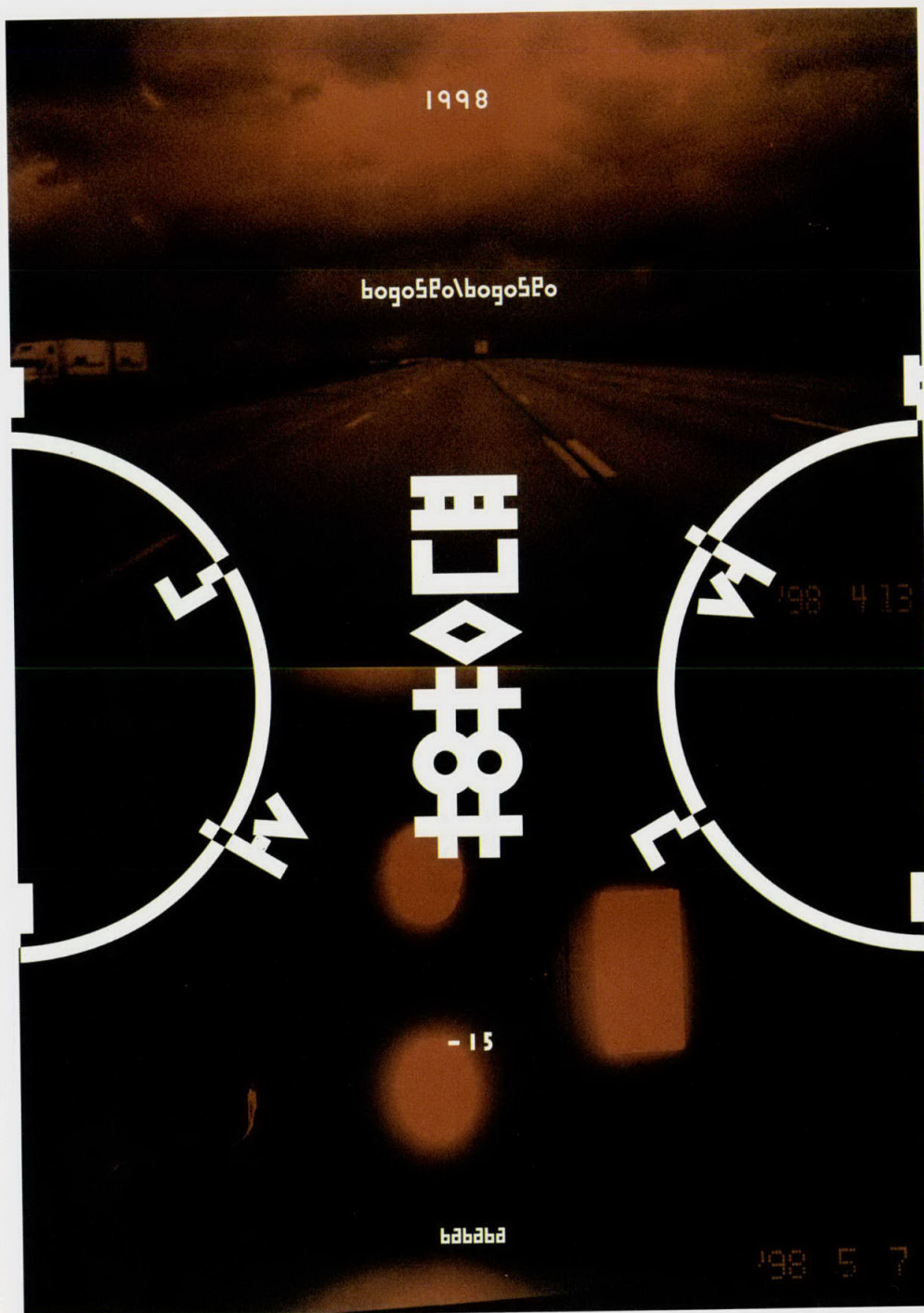
გმგმგმ

(Opposite page)
Bogoseol/Bogoseo
 10 magazine
 (1997)
 Art director,
 designer,
 photographer:
 Ahn Sang-Soo
 Client:
 Ahn Graphics



(This page)
Bogoseol/Bogoseo
 poster (1998)
 Art director,
 designer:
 Ahn Sang-Soo
 Client:
 Ahn Graphics

(This page)
Bogoseol/Bogoseo
 15 poster (1998)
 Art director,
 designer,
 photographer:
 Ahn Sang-Soo
 Client:
 Ahn Graphics



(Opposite page)
Bogoseol/Bogoseo
 13 magazine
 (1998)
 Art director,
 designer:
 Ahn Sang-Soo
 Client: Ahn Graphics
 Slide photo by:
 Lee Jae-Yong

(Opposite page)
Year of Ears
Music Festival
in Seoul '92-'93
poster (1992)
Art director,
designer,
photographer:
Ahn Sang-Soo
Client: Nanjang



(This page)
Year of Ears
Music Festival
in Seoul '92-'93
poster (1992)
Art director,
designer,
photographer:
Ahn Sang-Soo
Client: Nanjang



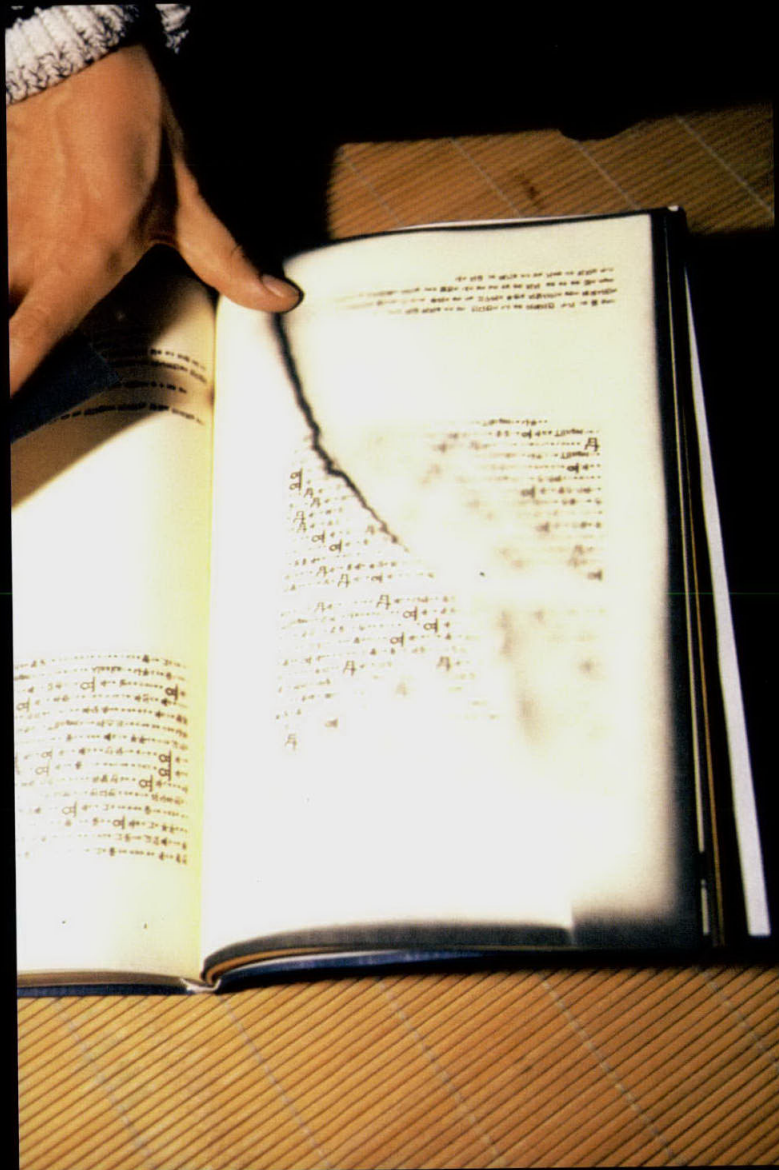
S
SaLIE
m

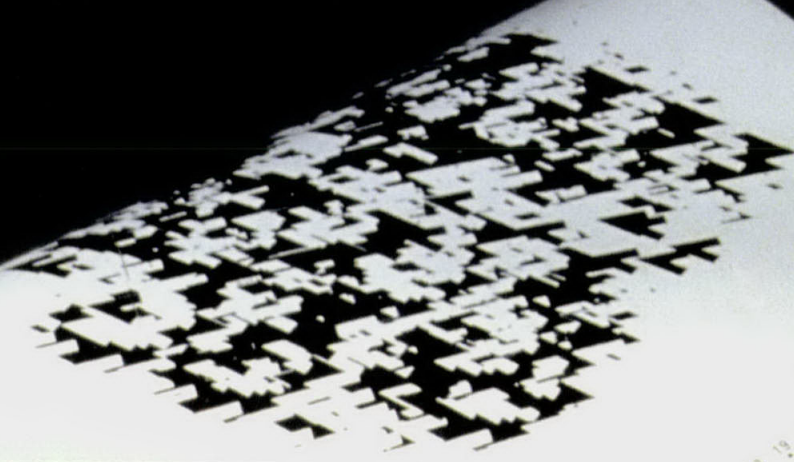
(Opposite page)
 Ssamzie Collection
 poster (1999)
 Art director,
 designer:
 Ahn Sang-Soo
 Photographer:
 Lee Jae-Yong
 Client:
 Ssamzie Collection



(This page)
 Ssamzie Collection
 poster (1999)
 Art director,
 designer:
 Ahn Sang-Soo
 Photographer:
 Lee Jae-Yong
 Client:
 Ssamzie Collection

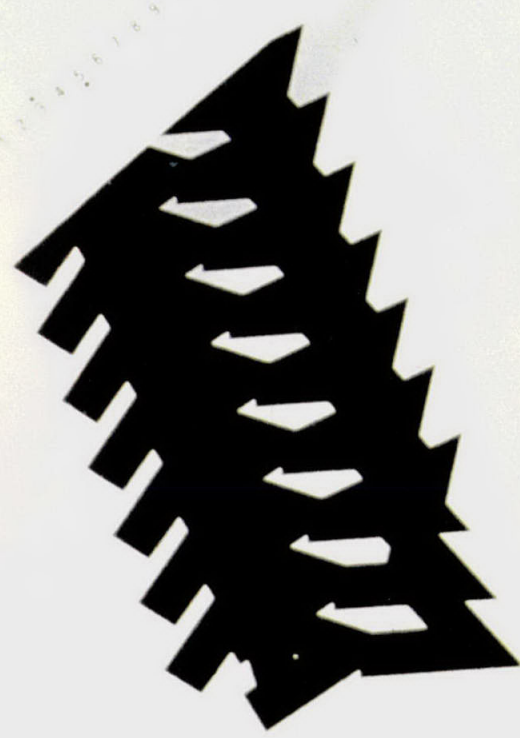
(This spread)
Ssamzie Art Book
(1998)
Art director:
Ahn Sang-Soo
Designer:
Ahn Sang-Soo,
Go Tae-Young
Client: Ssamzie
Collection
Photographer:
Lee Jae-Yong





10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30



11

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

Year of Water in Rural 2000



vol. 2
e n s e m b l e
p a r a d i s e



KLAPPA 1992