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Integrative Seminar 2 : Visual Culture

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On March 1st, my Instagram newsfeed was full of one thing: the flag of Republican Korea where I'm from and spent the whole years before high school. The date is a national holiday called Korean Independence Movement Day or Samiljeol that Koreans commemorate March 1, 1919, when we've finally proclaimed the independence from Japan after 9 years of its officially proclaimed annexation of Korea with severe and violent domination. While I've never paid that much attention to any national flag, not even to that of my own country, after I have thought about what does it actually mean by visual culture since I took this class, I suddenly wondered why and how flags were designed in those ways as well as what and how they convey and communicate the countries' histories and cultures visually. To investigate this question, I decided to explore specifically flags of Korea and America to which my identity belong. My investigation for this semester is not only for myself to better understand the countries where I've spent my whole life and, especially and the true meaning of "visual culture" but also to commemorate Korean Independence Movement Day by figuring out how things are visually and culturally communicated in my three domains: the national flags, Korea, and the United States.

It is Medicine Woman/ Evelyn/ The Doctor by Beverly Buchanan that caught my attention at her Exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum. Made in 1992, the six-foot-high standing figure is her self-portrait composed of her own empty pill bottles as well as fragments of wood and glittery bits of fabric with its face hidden by a hat. As she suffered from chronic

illness for much of her life, the piece was significant to her as an imagined healer based on the traditional belief—that placing bottles on tree branches traps evil spirits—originated in central Africa in the ninth century. While her domains, portrait, suffer, and heal, are similar to my domains in that Korean and American flags are portraits of each countries' suffer and heal, they are different from my domains in that they are more about personal. In addition, the piece is similar to my work in that it not only conveys the culture and tradition of a certain period—the ninth century's central Africa and, for instance, the 1920s' Korea—but also explores histories of locations where she lived and worked—Florida, New York, and Georgia—as I will explore those of Korea and the United States where I lived and studied through the flags; however, it would be different, in the visual aspect, to my work which will be more abstract and minimal.

Another work I chose at the museum was *Cartonnage of Nespanetjerenpere*, a 177 x 44 cm painted cartonnage—the mix of linen, plaster, and water—whose bright red face is composed of lapis lazuli eyebrows and outlines of the eyes, and glass eyes, and whose body is harmoniously painted with the large bull-headed bird, religious scenes, and etc. Known to be made in the Third Intermediate Period of XXI Dynasty, at Thebes, Egypt, the standing mummy is of a Theban priest Nespaneterenpera who was a god-father of Amun and the son of Sin-a-Amun as well as a prophet the fourth class of Amun of Karnak and priest of Hermonthis. With hieroglyphs that symbolize life and power, the sculpture conveys the theme of resurrection, restoration of life, and permanence. While its domains—life, power, and permanence—are similar to my domains in that the flags symbolize the nations' life, power, and permanence, they are different in that their subject is a person—to protect the owner and keep his mummy bound together for eternity—while my domains' subject is a group,—to protect the country and keep its citizens bound together for independence and unity. While

the piece would share symbolism such as hieroglyphs with my work, the materials would be totally different.