

A Sewing Collaborator Note: Jeonghwa Hong

At the Geumcheon open studio

Imagine the sounds of the sewing machine:
chk-chk-chk... dr-r-r-r... ra-ta-ta-ta-ta

An audience was pleased to hand over her clothes as we offered to sew a ribbon onto the seam of the clothes.

Another audience member made a curious expression while seeing other people's clothes having the state codes stitched onto them,

and he said, "I want to participate in the event!"
So then I asked, "Where do you want me to attach it?
How do you want to be seen?"

The black ribbons with the state control codes in white ink floated around on the participants' clothes as we found a place to stitch them. I tried to spot the best possible place and tried to sew them adroitly. With a designer's intuition I looked for the best possible spot upon which the participant and I could agree. Finally, my warm hands fix the black band on the silky cloth to be part of the owner of the clothes. This provides an experience that the participants did not have before. Although I was busy sewing the bands on others' clothes, it was only at the end of the day that I was only able to decide where to put my own black *time-line band*, as the last participant of the open studio, although I'd thought about it constantly throughout the day.

At The Reference Gallery

A year later on a cold day in the early winter, I was sitting next to the round wooden table in the gallery with other collaborators. On a wall of the gallery hall, we could see projections of the *time-line bands* painted onto the molding of the participants' living spaces. On the left side of the wall, there were the blank 13 digit boxes drawn for participants' residence registration identification numbers. Once an audience member wrote his registration number over others', the overlapped figures were no longer identifiable. I was waiting quietly at the edge of the table while an audience was participating in the events. I waited without disturbing her, so she could take sufficient time. Meanwhile I slowly approached another person standing with curiosity in front of the ribbon roll.

"You can participate in this work," I said. "If you select a *time-line* provision, I can sew it onto your clothes." A few moments later, they talked about the reason why they chose the provision and let me know where they wanted me to attach it. They sometimes asked for my recommendation before they made a choice. What thoughts and feelings affect them to make such a decision at that moment? Observing the duration of their decision making process, I felt like I was travelling a road totally different from any I've ever been on.

When the ribbon pieces marked with provisions were handed over to me along with the clothes, I took a deep breath. I figured out the characteristics of the texture of the clothes touching the cloth, which was still warm. I was a little nervous when making hand stitches in order to attach the ribbon to the clothes. It was my responsibility to help them have a memorable experience, because there must have been reasons for them to want to be a participant in the work, and to select a certain time band to wear on their own clothing. While I was sewing, I felt like my hands were those of sculptors. It felt like I was inscribing the wordings of the provisions onto their delicate fabrics. While wearing the clothes with the provisions, individual participants

contribute to moving the *time-line* to the place where one can observe it daily.

There was a man with a sensitive look who seemed to be in his thirties. He asked me to attach the ribbon in the place where the stitches could not be seen. Another man in his forties took off a luxury jacket and handed it over to sew a ribbon onto the inside lining. There was a woman who seemed to be in her fifties. She said she often wore black clothes, and she thought the ribbon would make them prettier. Another woman in her twenties wanted to place a *time-line* on her socks, so I sewed it on the spot where it would not bother her feet. There was a man in his thirties who asked the sewing workers to attach all the available ribbons for the provisions of laws to all around his clothes except his pants. I was curious about who that person was. There were also two young soldiers on vacation and they wanted to participate, but they couldn't because they were not allowed to amend their uniforms, so I gave them pieces of *time-line bands*, so they could sew them on other clothes later. I'm still curious if they'll do so. Having done the sewing job, I wondered where the *time-line bands* are now, and how the participants would share their thoughts with one another. I contemplated the influence of this work that would take place in others' daily lives.

I became very familiar with the provisions of laws printed on the *time-line* ribbons. I then had to decide which ribbon I would take, and where to attach it on my jacket. When I took a step back from the others, I started sewing my own *time-line*. Whenever I recall my memory at the Reference, or happen to see the black ribbon on my jacket, I can't help but smile.