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"Change of Citizens' Cultural Lives - Reading through Data, Guiding with Art" *A Policy Review of the 8th Seoul Arts and Culture Forum*

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The 8th Seoul Arts and Culture Forum: Exploring New Possibilities in Citizens' Daily Lives through Arts and Culture

Since 2022, the Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture (SFAC) has organized the **Seoul Arts and Culture Forum**. In 2025, the Forum is being held across three seasons, each examining how citizens' cultural lifestyles are evolving amid technological and structural shifts, how the arts ecosystem is transforming and facing new challenges, and what defines Seoul's unique cultural charm as a global city that embraces history, diversity, and creativity.

The 8th edition of the Forum was held on April 30 at the Gray Hall of SAPY (Seoul Artists' Platform_New&Young, <https://www.sapy.kr/>), and served as a platform to investigate the evolving patterns of cultural life in Seoul through both data analysis and practical example of cultural initiative. Moderated by Jemma HAN, CEO of Art Jemma & Company and member of the Forum Steering Committee, the theme of 8th forum was:

"Culture, Enjoyment, Change – New Possibilities in Citizens' Daily Lives."



The poster for the 8th Seoul Arts and Culture Forum held on April 30 2025.



Opening Remarks by the Co-Chairs:

Sangwon PARK, Chairperson of the SFAC and
Tae-ji CHOI, Former Artistic Director, Korean National Ballet

The three invited speakers presented interpretations of cultural lifestyle trends, drawing on the Seoul Citizens' Cultural Engagement Survey and big data analysis, as well as a dedicated artistic practice that broadens the scope of everyday cultural experiences.

Event Details of The 8th Seoul Forum on Arts and Culture	
▷ Date & Time:	Wednesday, April 30, 2025, 3:00 PM
▷ Venue:	SAPY (Live-streamed via SFAC's YouTube channel 'SPACtv')
▷ Host:	Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture(SFAC)
▷ Theme:	<i>Culture, Enjoyment, Change – New Possibilities in Citizens' Daily Lives</i>
▷ Panelists:	
Moderator:	Jemma HAN (CEO, Art Jemma & Company; Steering Committee Member, Seoul Forum on Arts and Culture)
Speaker ①	U-Seok SEO (Professor, Department of Urban Sociology, University of Seoul) <i>"Understanding the Cultural Lives of Seoul Citizens through Seven Themes – Based on the 2024 Cultural Engagement Survey"</i>
Speaker ②	HyunYoung PARK (Director, Life Change Observatory, VAIV Company) <i>"The Final Puzzle of Cultural Enjoyment: The Citizens are Ready"</i>
Speaker ③	Chang Soo PARK (Artistic Director, The House Concert) <i>"Expanding Cultural Sense through New Experiences"</i>

Changes in Citizens' Cultural Lifestyles Revealed by Surveys – Seven Keywords for Policy Focus

Professor SEO presented key findings from the upcoming <2024 Seoul Citizens' Cultural Engagement Survey>, analyzing trends through seven keywords:

Types of Cultural Life On-Off-Line, Differences by Residential Zones, Loneliness and Social Isolation, Artificial Intelligence, Highly Interested Groups, Culture for the Aging Population, and Persons with Disabilities.

These keywords serve as both interpretive lenses and focal points for future cultural policy directions.



Presentation of *“Understanding the Cultural Lives of Seoul Citizens through Seven Themes”* by Professor U-Seok SEO, the University of Seoul

“Among them, loneliness and Social Isolation was identified as the most pressing concerns,” Prof. SEO said. According to the survey, 4 out of 10 Seoul citizens—particularly younger individuals—are at high risk of loneliness, while 1 out of 10—mainly middle-aged and older adults—are at high risk of social isolation. This reveals an interesting dynamic: **whereas social isolation tends to hinder cultural engagement, loneliness may act as a catalyst for participation in cultural activities.**

<i>Differences in Cultural Engagement between High-Risk Groups for Loneliness and Social Isolation</i>								
(Source: Presentation by Professor U-Seok SEO)								
	Arts Attendance				문화예술활동 참여			
	Loneliness		Social Isolation		외로움		사회적 고립	
	Low-risk group	High-risk group	Low-risk group	High-risk group	Low-risk group	High-risk group	Low-risk group	High-risk group
None	23.6%	24.5%	21.7%	41.2%	64.6%	52.1%	58.9%	73.2%
1–2 times/year	19.1%	21.9%	20.2%	20.7%	8.7%	6.9%	8.0%	7.6%
3–4 times/year	15.3%	17.5%	16.7%	12.0%	8.7%	10.2%	9.4%	8.8%
5–11 times/year	27.4%	24.6%	27.4%	18.2%	10.8%	20.7%	15.5%	7.4%
Monthly or more	14.5%	11.5%	14.1%	7.9%	7.3%	10.1%	9.1%	3.0%

Professor SEO also emphasized the significance of the survey's detailed exploration into the cultural lives of persons with disabilities. The most frequently cited barrier to participation was physical accessibility, with 45.3% of respondents identifying "getting to cultural facilities" as their primary concern. However, the perceived key needs differed considerably by type of disability:

- For individuals with **physical disabilities**, **<accessibility>** was the top issue (52.0%), reflecting challenges in public transportation.
- For those with **hearing impairments**, **<usability>** was most important (53.6%), such as having service interfaces that are more intuitive and less obstructive.
- For people with **visual impairments**, **<mobility> within venues** stood out (25%), nearly double that of other groups.

These results emphasize the necessity of differentiated policy designs that address the unique experiences of individuals with diverse disabilities.

<i>Perceptions of Key Barrier-Free Elements in Cultural Facilities by Disability Type</i>				
(Source: Presentation by Professor U-Seok SEO)				
	Physical disabilities (N=458)	Hearing impairments (N=181)	Visual impairments (N=116)	Total
Accessibility : Removing transportation-related obstacles to reaching cultural venues.	52.0%	35.4%	34.5%	45.3%
Usability : Ensuring service interfaces are intuitive and minimally obstructive.	33.5%	53.6%	40.5%	39.3%
Mobility : Providing facilities that support ease of movement within cultural venues.	14.6%	11.0%	25.0%	15.4%

Cultural Trends Revealed by Big Data: Four Destinations Humans Still Seek Despite AI

The second speaker, Ms. HyunYoung PARK, Director of the Life Change Observatory at VAIV Company, opened her engaging presentation with the words;
 "In the Age of AI, and Yet, Humans Still..."

Without GPT ①

내 발로 직접 가고싶다



Presentation of *"The Final Puzzle of Cultural Enjoyment: The Citizens are Ready"*
by HyunYoung Park, Director, Life Change Observatory

Drawing on her expertise in digital behavior, PARK explored how even in an AI-saturated era, people still physically gravitate toward four specific experiences:

- **For Comfort:** <**Sensory-oriented**> individuals often seek comfort by visiting bakeries and dessert cafés.
- **For Refreshment:** People <**grounded in their physical body**> often go for walks, frequently ending up at places like Daiso or Olive Young.
- **For Growth:** <**Intellectually driven**> individuals gravitate toward libraries and museums.
- **For Connection:** <**Socially motivated**> individuals flock to baseball stadiums and festivals to cheer and shout with others.

PARK remarked, **"Data may reveal patterns, but trends emerge from tension,"** emphasizing that meaningful cultural shifts often arise from the desire to resist dominant norms. She cited the National Museum of Korea's **"Room of Quiet Contemplation"**, a space created around the Pensive Bodhisattva sculpture titled "Time to Lose Yourself, Deep in Wandering Thought." The space earned widespread praise, even in this era of hyper-rational AI.



The National Museum of Korea's *"Room of Quiet Contemplation"*
(Source: National Museum of Korea Website)

PARK jokingly remarked on Professor SEO's demographic analysis of the aging population, saying, **"I absolutely hate being categorized as part of the pre-elderly group (ages 50–54)!"** She stressed that people should not be viewed merely through static categories such as age, gender, or income. Instead, they should be recognized as active agents striving to care for and improve themselves. This perspective reinforces a crucial shift in public policy: rather than treating culture as a form of charity to be distributed, the goal should be to enrich the cultural time and spaces that people already cultivate in their everyday lives.

PARK also argued that in today's digital age, sharing cultural information can often be more effective than direct financial support in lowering barriers to access. As an example, she pointed to wine—once available only in upscale department stores—that is now commonly found in convenience stores, making it far more accessible to the public.

However, she cautioned that the information in form of educational content, while essential, often risks being dry and unengaging. To truly resonate, cultural narratives must be compelling enough to be shared virally, PARK noted. Crafting such narratives, remains a significant challenge for public-sector cultural planners.

Elevating Cultural Sensibility through Artistic Planning: Drawing Closer to Lead Higher

The third speaker, Mr. Chang Soo PARK, Artistic Director of The House Concert, shared his journey of expanding cultural sense of citizens through intimate artistic experiences embedded in everyday spaces. In contrast to the data-driven presentations that preceded his, PARK's talk—delivered in a soft voice due to a throat injury from overwork—offered a deeply personal and artistic perspective.

PARK, a composer and pianist, launched The House Concert in 2002 in his small apartment(approximately 830 square feet). Over the years, he has staged performances on the floors of small-town school auditoriums with fewer than 100 students and the stages of underused local culture centers where audiences sat right at the performers' feet. Rather than accepting familiar and crowd-pleasing repertoires often requested by local concert organizers, he insisted on playing authentic classical works—even unfamiliar ones—believing they were worth listening to. **He firmly believes that cultural sensibility is not raised by merely aligning with the public's eye level, but by leading them toward higher ground.**



The House Concert in Local Theaters – QR code linked to audience interviews
(Source: Presentation by Chang Soo PARK, Artistic Director of The House Concert)

PARK candidly admitted to falling short of his annual goal of staging 5,000 performances, even though he succeeded in delivering 100 performances in a single week. His vision, bold and perhaps unattainable, evokes the spirit of Don Quixote—driven not by pragmatism, but by passion. Yet, it wasn't numbers that validated his effort. Audience interviews conducted before and after the concerts revealed a profound emotional shift: attendees who initially remarked, "It feels awkward to sit so close," later left exclaiming, "That was incredible!"—their faces lit with joy. These moments of emotional resonance provided stronger proof than any metric: PARK's ambitious goals had, in a deeper sense, been realized.

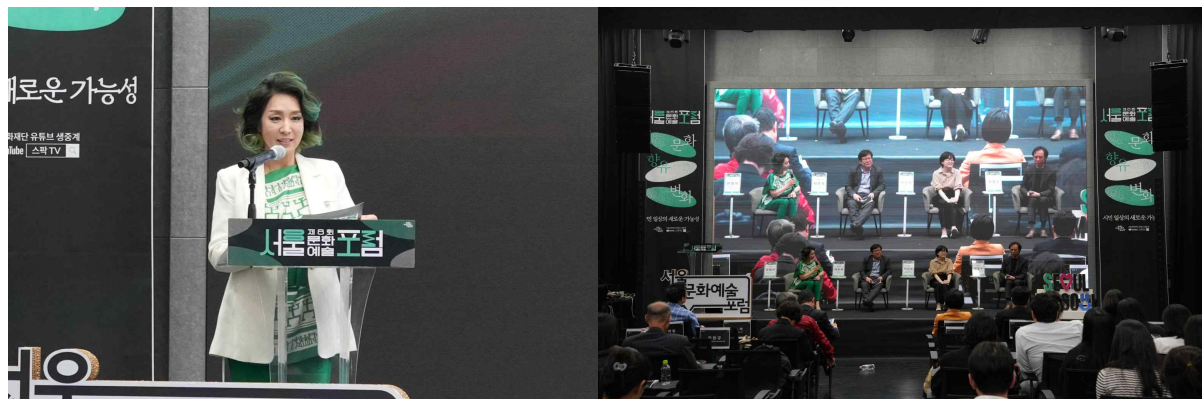
The Ever-Changing Cultural Lives of Citizens and the Artists Who Stand Before Them: Policy's Role in Connecting and Supporting

HyunYoung PARK's analysis of cultural consumption trends reflects the fluid and dynamic nature of citizens' cultural lives. **In Korean, such changes are often described as "winds"—aptly so, as these trends shift with the speed and unpredictability of a breeze.**

Chang Soo PARK, known for experimenting with blindfolded improvisations lasting up to 90 minutes, exemplifies an artist who pushes the boundaries of conventional cultural experiences—often subject to commodification by the market—into entirely new territories of the artist. The evolution of these artistic realms happens at the speed of artist's thought, often outpacing both wind and technology. Yet, few citizens can follow at that pace. And when the market is quicker to commodify the innovation than the public is to embrace it, the artist risks isolation. **That's why cultural policy must support the artist's step into new territory and bridge the gap between them and the citizens who wish to follow.**

What, then, is the ideal speed of policy? If policy merely functions as a tool of public administration, it will always lag behind. But when it embodies the spirit of cultural leadership, it can move in step with the hearts of citizens and the minds of artists. It may not be the fastest, but it journeys alongside the people—opening new possibilities in their everyday lives with arts.

May the Seoul Arts and Culture Forum continue to be a gathering of such hearts!



Panel Discussion Moderated by Jemma HAN (Steering Committee Member, Seoul Forum on Arts and Culture; CEO, Art Jemma & Company)

※ The presentations of the forum are available for download by clicking [here](#).

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