

KIWA

Finding Bigfoot (2018–)

Na Hyun

Finding Bigfoot traces a parallel history of “the disappearance of beings outside official records” through two events that occurred on the same day—May 18, 1980—in two distant places: Gwangju in South Korea and Mount St. Helens in Washington State, USA. Though far apart geographically, the artist highlights the simultaneous disappearance of two marginalized presences—street beggars in Gwangju and the legendary Bigfoot—and reconstructs their absence as a network of forgotten historical remnants.

Juxtaposing Origins and Events

In Gwangju, the pro-democracy uprising unfolded on May 18, 1980. After the military’s violent suppression, street beggars noticeably disappeared. Their absence was never addressed publicly; their existence was pushed into oblivion.

On the same day, Mount St. Helens erupted violently, and the traces of Bigfoot (Sasquatch), rumored to inhabit the region, similarly vanished.

Both cases share striking parallels: limited official documentation, beings unrecognized by society, and disappearances that were never treated as issues.

Na Hyun positions these two events along a single axis, proposing that a democratic uprising and a volcanic eruption—events of entirely different nature—converge when viewed through the lens of “violence that erases existence.” The coincidence of disappearances on the same day becomes a starting point for reading forgotten histories side by side.



Two events on the same day
(F) The Seattle Times, May 21, 1980
1980

Reconnecting with Erased and Marginalized Beings

The artist suggests that the absence left by these vanished figures forms another invisible layer of history. By placing two radically different beings—"Bigfoot" and "the beggars"—on the same narrative line, she opens a visual and conceptual channel for reconnecting with beings relegated to the margins.

This project is not an attempt to verify myths or factual records. Rather, it retraces the traces of those who vanished because society refused to acknowledge them—an act that becomes itself a restorative gesture toward forgotten histories.

Exhibition Form and Sculptural Interpretation

At the center of the exhibition stands a five-meter-tall inflatable sculpture of Bigfoot. The figure kneels with its head bowed and hands bound behind its back—a posture that directly recalls civilians dragged away by soldiers during the Gwangju Uprising. Moss covering the figure symbolizes the fate of truths that drift away from memory over time—forgotten, distorted, and buried.

Facing this monumental form, viewers encounter a rekindled presence of a being historically pushed to the margins, intensified by the overwhelming scale.

Drawings inspired by seismic graphs and imagery from the volcanic eruption line the exhibition's interior and exterior walls. These serve as "visual strata" that document the two events, constructing layered representations of how the disappeared became buried within overlapping times and spaces.



Two events on the same day
(B) The Seattle Times, May 21, 1980
1980

A History of Repeating Disappearances

Finding Bigfoot is not an exploration of a specific myth or region. It broadens into a larger inquiry: how do beings outside the boundaries of historical record vanish, and how does society come to forget them?

For Na Hyun, “Bigfoot” is not a fictional monster but a metaphor for human and non-human beings placed outside social recognition. The beggars of Gwangju represent not just individuals of a bygone era but symbols of structural erasure—produced by state violence and social indifference.

Through this project, the artist reveals how history is centered around dominant narratives, allowing peripheral existences to slip away.

Finding Bigfoot thus becomes not a mere juxtaposition of legend and event, but an act of summoning back displaced beings and exposing the empty spaces within the historical record.



Exhibition View



Exhibition View



Exhibition View



Exhibition View

