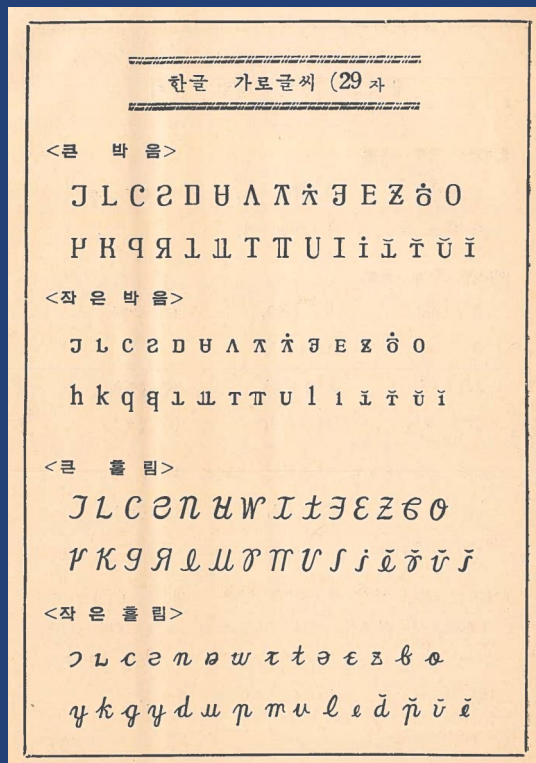


Out of Character, Out of Order: Typographic Reforms in Postwar South Korea

Seungyeon Gabrielle Jung, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Art History and Visual Studies, UC Irvine



“Out of Character, Out of Order” shows how typographic design was employed to negotiate shifting colonial, postcolonial, and Cold War geopolitical dynamics between 1945 and the early 1960s. United Nations agencies and Korean linguists regarded the Sino-Korean form of writing as an impediment to promoting literacy and democracy; and the scholars also viewed it as a remnant of the ancient World Order that subjected Korea to Chinese power. Linguists and educators introduced various typographic solutions, including reorienting *Hangeul* from vertical to horizontal writing and deconstructing syllabic characters into phonemes. These efforts to follow what they assumed to be the “universal standards” resulted in deformed letters that merely imitated the Roman alphabet without improving the writing system’s legibility or readability. This paper demonstrates how the attempt to break from the old order inadvertently led to a departure from the inherent character of *Hangeul*, culminating in its swift absorption into a new order.

Seungyeon Gabrielle Jung is a design historian and media scholar whose research interrogates the politics and aesthetics of design, with the postwar developing world as a critical site of inquiry. Her first book, *Utopia of Problems: Nation-Designing in Postwar South Korea*, challenges widely accepted definitions of design as a problem-solving method by analyzing failed state and corporate design projects. Originally trained as a graphic designer, Gabrielle worked in advertising and editorial design before attending graduate school. Currently, she is an assistant professor of Art History and Visual Studies at UC Irvine, where she teaches Korean art and design history, visual culture, and critical theory.

Monday, April 13 at 4:00pm, Arts Screening Room 335