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DECODING
DICTATORIAL
STATUES

Ted Hyunhak Yoon

The book launch for *Decoding Dictatorial Statues* will be taking place alongside a performance at 16:00 on the 22nd December 2018 at *Onomatopee*.

DECODING DICTATORIAL STATUES
Ted Hyunhak Yoon

* Illustration from *Manual of Gesture* by *Albert Bacon*

Decoding Dictatorial Statues, a project by Korean graphic design researcher *Ted Hyunhak Yoon*, is a collection of images and texts revolving around the different ways we can look at statues in public space.

We can say that the premise of each statue in every public realm is that it wants to sway our views and narratives about the portrayed figure. Or, in the words of German-born political theorist Hannah Arendt: 'Half of politics is image-making, the other half is the art of making people believe the image.' Heated discussions over statues, statue vandalism and toppling are often in the headlines. The South African student protests are a good example, where the statue of the British imperialist Cecil Rhodes took on a symbolic role, but also the riots in Charlottesville (US) and even Dutch discussions about the statues of colonialists like Peter Stuyvesant, Jan Pieterszoon Coen and Generaal van Heutsz grow more and more tense. In parallel to this opening up of the politics, *Decoding Dictatorial Statues* discusses symbolic culture and design in between cultures by offering opportunity to another, and more cross-cultural understanding.

Ted Hyunhak Yoon's visual analysis centers around the term 'visual design journalism' and attempts to find rules and phenomena which exist within, and lay behind, dictatorial statues. By carefully disjointing and reassembling the images, Yoon questions our position as viewer. This exhibition sees Yoon's research on gestural language through a critical and immersive lens. It will present overlapping ideological perspectives and designed scenarios, allowing space for imagination and speculation to combine. Bridging immaterial decoding and symbolic with the materiality of gesture of the supposedly untouchable and unbreakable statues, the installation offers a tangible experience around intangible matters.

Being a graphic designer, always concerned with mediating contents and growing up next to neighbour North Korea, Ted Hyunhak Yoon started collecting and dissecting the images of statues. Taking the dictator's statue as a starting point, the Decoding Dictatorial Statues exhibition aims to demonstrate how
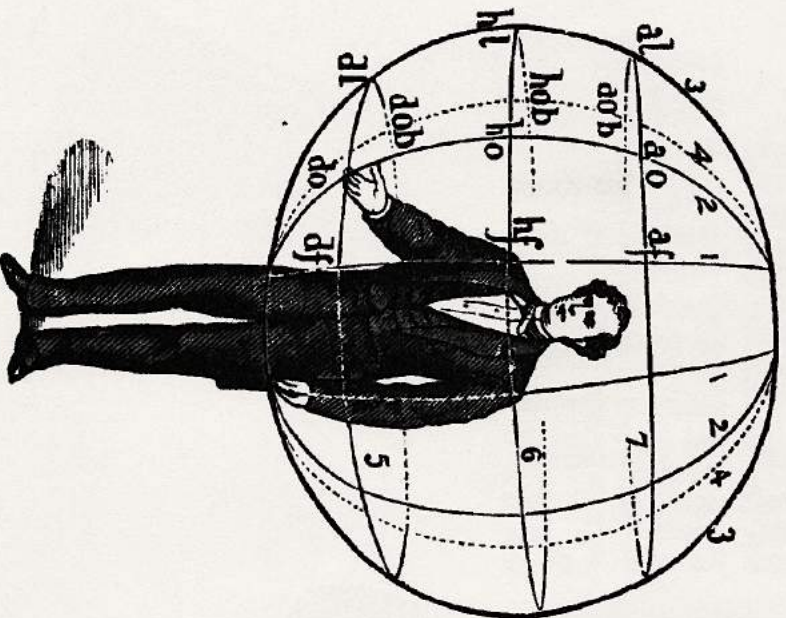
this particular object can be so powerful. it attempts to find the (visual) rules and phenomena that exist within, and lay behind, these statues.

This exhibition is linked with Ted Hyunhak Yoon's upcoming publication of the same name. The publication offers a real time analysis, an empirical understanding and data for reflection on gestural politics. While the work forefronts the actual status of statues, the various texts, edited by writer and curator Bernke Klein Zandvoort, revolve around the different ways we can look at statues in public space. How can we decode statues and their visual languages, their object-hood and materiality, their role as media icons and their voice in political debates? These are some of the questions that Decoding Dictatorial Statues proposes and aims to address.