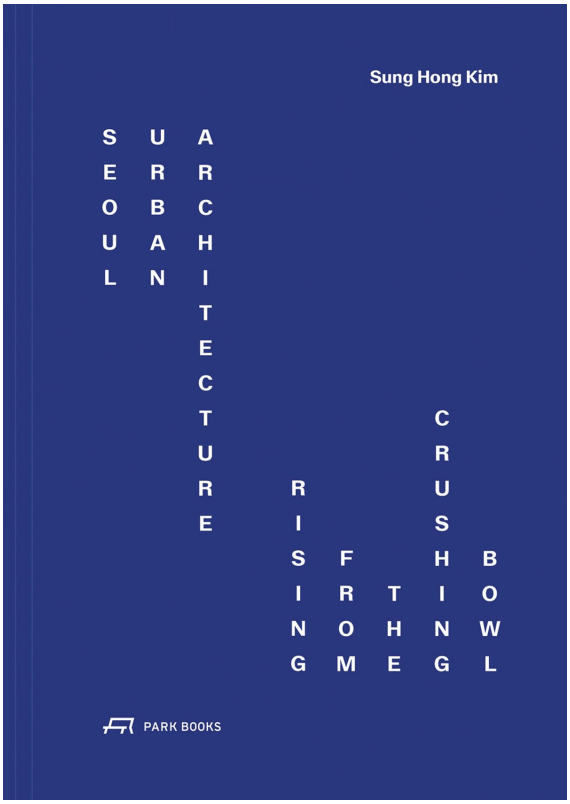
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Seoul Urban Architecture

Rising from the Crushing Bowl

Sung Hong Kim

ISBN	9783038604662
Publisher	Park Books
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Territory	World excluding Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland, Puerto Rico, United States, Canada, and Japan
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- A powerful and original study of Seoul's urban and architectural evolution from the14th century to the present
- Tells the architectural and cultural history of South Korea's capital through the lens of an architect who has lived and worked in the city for over four decades
- Sung Hong Kim's reflections address the globally topical question of how to find meaning and agency within environments shaped by forces beyond one's own control
- The book is essential reading for architects, planners, scholars of East Asia, and anyone interested in how cities evolve under pressure and how people continue to build within them

Rising from the Crushing Bowl is a powerful and original study of Seoul's urban and architectural evolution, told through the lens of an architect who has lived and worked in the city for over four decades. In his book, which is part memoir, part cultural history, and part urban analysis, Sung Hong Kim traces how South Korea's capital—once a walled city shaped by Confucian ideals—has become a sprawling, vertical metropolis marked by rapid modernisation, deep structural contradictions, and a fierce, creative resilience.

Organised into four parts, Kim surveys Seoul's urban landscape from the late 14th century to the aftermath of the Korean War, illuminating the layers of occupation, destruction, and imposed planning that have shaped the city's foundation. Throughout, he questions what it means to build a life and a practice in a city that never quite feels like home. His reflections on displacement, constraint, and ingenuity speak to a broader global condition faced by architects and urban dwellers alike: how to find meaning and agency within environments shaped by forces beyond their control.

At once personal and panoramic, ***Rising from the Crushing Bowl*** offers a vital perspective on Seoul as a city of paradoxes, where fragments of history coexist with radical new forms, and where the uneven fabric of urban life reveals the story of a nation that has risen, forcefully and unevenly, from the ruins of war and colonisation to become a cultural and economic powerhouse.

Sung Hong Kim is a Seoul-based architect, educator, and writer whose career bridges professional practice, urban research, and cultural analysis, with a particular focus on the spatial and social dynamics of Korean cities.

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