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(PUBLIC) ART OF DAMAGE

BECK JEE-SOOK¹

In the mid-2000s, when I visited Kim Yong-Ik at Kyungwon University where he was teaching, I ran, to my horror, into several of the artist's decades-old pieces left outside in the open air due to lack of storage space. In contrast to my grief over a sort of Korean cultural poverty that was manifest in the air, Kim seemed neither angry nor shameful, hardly disheartened. Actually, it was the opposite. Kim had already declared in 1987 that "a good artwork would be okay even if it's a bit torn or soiled or broken".² Since the 2000s, he gladly embraced damage caused by insensitivity towards the storage of artworks. Such an attitude is first and foremost a dismissal of the persistent elitism of experts and aseptic modernism that surround art conservation and exhibition practices; moreover, it stands as a criticism of the art institution, which tends to prioritise conservation over the quality of an artwork. Nevertheless, Kim was fully aware of the tendency of institutions to absorb subversive developments in an artist's work.³

In Kim's work, damage is not only a self-deprecating comment on the historical conditions and social contexts that led to their creation, but also a process that synchronises the work anew by 'corroding' the real on its surface. After literally rescuing a piece which had been wrapped in plastic and was being used as a

partition screen in a school studio, the artist decided not to restore the work from its torn and soiled state. Instead, Kim added inscriptions and a memo sheet to the plastic wrapping, reviving the work and transforming it into an entirely new one (*Closer... Come Closer...*, 1996–2013), and rehabilitating over several years the piece that had been abandoned for a decade. More so than the content of the text inscription that describes the work process,⁴ the formal characteristics are what draw our attention in *Closer... Come Closer...*: the contrast between rectangular patterns and handwriting, the heterogeneity of the faded white canvas and the added white memo sheet, and the composition of the handwriting that borders on indecipherable. More than anything, the materiality of the plastic wrap surrounding the 'original' piece stands out. The wrap, once a means to prevent damage, becomes the new, though damaged, surface of the piece and in this way, consolidates the transition from 1996 to 2013.

Bidding Farewell to You... (1995–2012) is an exemplary work that consolidates several iterations of Kim's damage-process. First produced in 1995,⁵ the piece was damaged and/or modified in 2005, 2009, and 2010 before being exhibited at the Seoul Museum of Art in 2012. Soon enough, a child audience member drew

and scribbled over the work, even leaving a signature. In the light of this incident of vandalism that astonished many, Kim wholeheartedly declared that the piece had finally been completed. Kim's power to act here, which circumvents the usual confines of logic and law, is anything but cunning; rather, it is the result of his will to *be logical, to live logically*.⁶ Accordingly, Kim interprets this defacement by the audience member as a Rancièrian political act, by "beings excluded and blocked by the symbolic order, submitted to injustice, standing up, protesting, and speaking for themselves"; he welcomes it as a momentous event that shatters the myth of authorship.⁷ Kim's piece, sealed with the visitor's damage-drawing, was subsequently placed in a glass casket and, along with Kim's wish imprinted on the glass,⁸ was acquired by the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, in Seoul, thus ending its journey through contemporary art history with a twist.

Here, I observe multiple paths arising from the intersection of the symbolic death of the artist and the artwork's completion. From an external standpoint, an outline forms wherein the work is completed through the artist's death, by the hand of the child visitor; at the same time, the finished piece enters the museum's collection, gaining a deeper symbolism. As one comes closer and closer to the picture plane, the artist Kim Yong-ik becomes visible. For the 2005 modification of *Bidding Farewell to You...*, carried out just before Kim turned 60, Kim drew his withering body on the canvas; the 'funeral preparation' stage in 2010 involved the application of gold paint and wooden decoration, an allusion to ritual shrouds and coffins. Through this process, the work becomes a metonymy of the artist himself. Kim's death, pre-attained by the artwork, leads us to another event from his past. Kim once undertook the provocative, didactic act of tearing up a student's drawing during class; he then spoke about a great philosopher who was instantly killed by a mob running through the marketplace. Kim argues that any beauty in a human being comes from the fact that their precious soul is housed in such a fragile body; similarly, any affection towards a painting stems from the fact that it is a precious projection of the artist as a being, while at the same time constituting a fragile object that can be torn or turned into scrap.⁹

From "undecipherable, riddle-like traces" of long-term weathering to active imprints caused by an assertive audience, damage in Kim's work is more than a superficial development.¹⁰ Rather, it is a singular event that reconfigures the entire piece. Like the aforementioned vandalism and 'killing' of the artist, damage causes a radical break in the usual proceedings that renders previous configurations obsolete; it permits the reflection of the artistic practice as an inner, singular truth.¹¹ The

damage-event undoes the moment of consolidation between the artist's death and the artwork's completion, causing a rift in the complex relationship between mythology and reality, intent and chance, the concrete and the ideal, irony and truth, ideology and participation that unites artist and artwork. The damage-event separates layers of perception and sensibility, layers that would otherwise remain unintelligible, articulating the inconsistent and imperfect outline of the artwork and the artist. In this context, the notion of ambiguity often used to characterise Kim's painted works is perhaps better substituted by that of multiplicity.¹² The damage in *Bidding Farewell to You...* represents the ultimate audience interaction, on the one hand, while the circulation of the artwork reflects its value as a market commodity. Furthermore, this configuration suggests the multiplicity of the artwork, both in its indifference towards formal ingenuity driven by a capitalistic desire and in its revelation of a means of material subtraction that resists the finitude of body, sex, suffering, and death.¹³

Within the contemporary Korean art scene, established over the history of conflict between Korean modernist art of the 1970s (also known as *Modönijüm*) and *Minjung* art (or People's art) of the 1980s, Kim's trajectory is described as having taken an independent course involving a long examination of the relationship between politics and art. For a while, he was loosely categorised as an artist who produces Korean modernist art but whose social activities are *Minjung*-friendly. An attempt to read the exceptional politics in Kim's work with regard to conceptualism was nevertheless already present by the late '90s.¹⁴ However, it has been suggested that only two years later, Kim's work was left out of an international exhibition examining the political implications of conceptual art and conceptualism for not being sufficiently 'Korean'.¹⁵ Meanwhile, during the '90s, long before the coinage of *Dansaekhwa* (monochrome painting) as a proper noun and before its international success, Kim's polka-dot patterns, accompanied by stains, mould, small and faint handwriting, and displaced brush bristles, had already earned its place as a symbol of "defiance against the authoritarian surfaces of Korean modernist paintings".¹⁶

Despite the wide-ranging contemplation of the politics of aesthetics in Kim's work, his oeuvre has generally been divided into two categories: modernism-oriented works such as the *Plane Object* series, installations, and paintings on the one hand, and public artworks on the other. Among these, the former garnered the most exhibitions and critical attention. The lack of focus on Kim's public art is due to the existence of fewer pieces, unrealised works that remained as concepts, and limited access owing to lack of documentation. But if it is a valid



Bidding Farewell to You..., 1995-2012
Mixed media on canvas, 194 × 164.5 cm

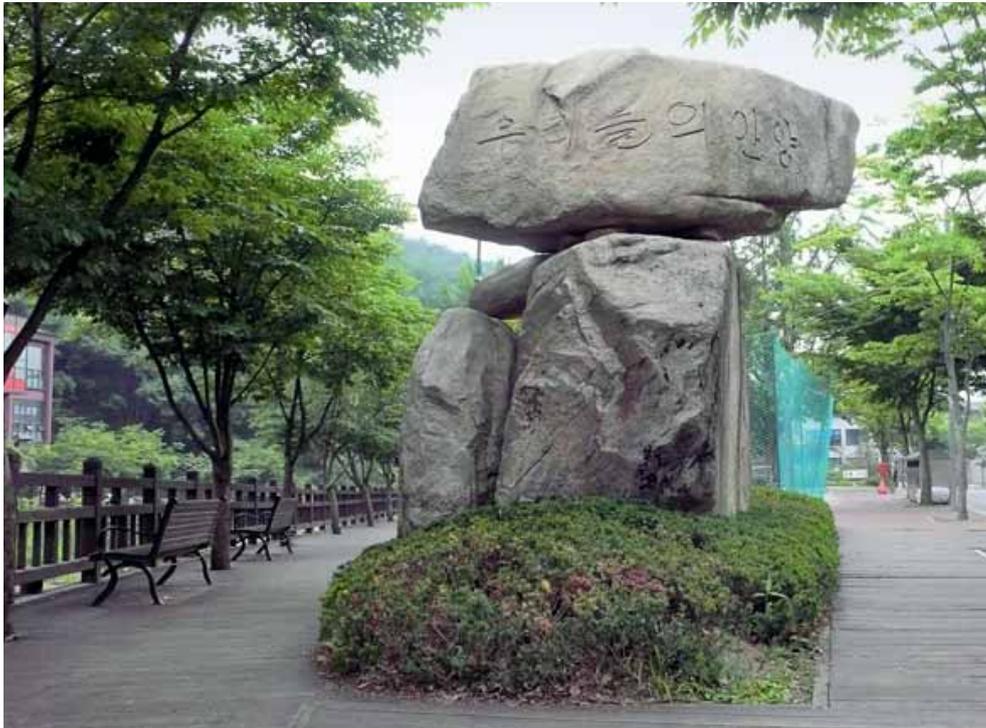
thesis that an alternative history of art and its effort to overcome the demarcations of institutionalised modern art has contributed to the establishment of a *public art*, then an investigation into Kim's public art could provide a path that encompasses both art and activism, modernist aesthetics and the political heritage of Minjung art, the international scene and local specificity. For instance, while Kim's public art is clearly more vulnerable in terms of conservation and exhibition practices, a damage-configuration perspective rapidly opens a realm of "compossibility".¹⁷ By identifying the pressure point in Kim's public art that destabilises the rigid aesthetic divide and by going back inside the museum to apply the findings, we could attain the 'specific universality' of a critical art that negotiates the autonomy and heteronomy in Kim's (public) art, in the Rancièrian sense.

Kim's expansion of his role from an artist focused on production to an activist working to reform the art world coincides with the establishment of damage as an artistic configuration. His activism arose during the alternative space movement, which came about amid the late-nineties IMF economic crisis and demands for the democratisation of the art world. As a founding member of Alternative Space Pool, which united artists who were directly influenced by the Minjung art movement (renamed Art Space Pool in 2010), Kim has maintained a sometimes direct, sometimes indirect, but nevertheless constant relationship with space. Alternative spaces like Art Space Pool turned to both discourse and the practice of public art to make a breakthrough in political art, which had been more or less paralysed after the 1980s. Levelling a fundamental criticism against practices such as public art sculptures based on the former Article 11 ("Art Decoration for Buildings") of the Culture and Arts Promotion Act, alternative spaces spearheaded a new public art movement.¹⁸ On the other hand, as government and public funds justified by political needs and the tourism economy came into play, public art started influencing not only the contemporary art scene but also the urban landscape of post-2000s Korea. Kim's public art activism during this period, which is inseparable from his public artworks, includes criticism of the status quo, reform of conservative public art laws and agents, and the planning and execution of public art projects, both private and state-funded.¹⁹

Our Anyang, commissioned by the inaugural Anyang Public Art Project (APAP) in 2005, takes the form of a mound of rocks, a common sight in Korean apartment complexes, public office landmarks, and signage for historic sites. While the origins of such stone sculptures remain unclear, it is safe to say that they serve as cultural icons that incorporate both a traditional yearning tending towards utopia and a secular desire for eternal power and

wealth, symbolised by the imposing structures made of oddly shaped stones. To produce the work, Kim collected dirt and stones, inevitable by-products of Anyang Art Park's construction, as well as handwritten texts from the artistic director of the first APAP, city employees, and local residents. *Touring Eternal Mountains and Rivers*, a neighbouring installation, consists of a series of rocks engraved with welcoming messages by local immigrant workers in their native languages, forming a small rest area within a plaza.²⁰ Kim's invitation for different community members to participate and his production of stone steps in Anyang Art Park leading down to a previously inaccessible stream, essentially express his idea of "public". However, what took up most of his energy was justifying his aesthetics to the agents of public art – notably, the landscape contractor, the artistic director, and the Mayor of Anyang. To the contractor, Kim's work was hardly anything more than simple rocks; however, for this piece, Kim draws on traditional images such as the homage to mountain rocks often found in East Asian painting and the more modern hobby-fetish of viewing stones, removing feudal, elitist elements and kitsch characteristics from them, and attempting a cross-genre translation from the perspective of a non-elite individual and global citizen.²¹ As for the artistic director and mayor of Anyang, they disagreed with Kim over the unrefined aesthetics of 'simply rocks' in a haphazard arrangement, the ambiguous typography, as well as the surface finishing, not to mention the unstable appearance of the structure. Against the pressure for completion represented by their demands, Kim recited numerous historic political injustices, objecting that the will to store, order, discipline, and oppress is the legacy of a hawkish dictatorship, closely associated with the still very influential construction-centrism.²²

Only three years later, another public artwork exhibited in the 2008 Geumgang Nature Art Biennale testifies that Kim's objections were not mere exaggeration, lament, or the unfounded fears of a leftist artist. In this piece, unlike the vertical stack of *Our Anyang*, the titular text "Just Let Me Flow" scrolls across rocks that are horizontally placed, like sheet music, on the embankment of the Geum River (Geumgang). When the piece was installed at the location the artist had chosen during the pre-biennial workshop, it bore a natural pattern caused by dirt carried in the wind, while a flood submerged much of the piece, leaving only the rocks' peaks exposed, which cast a moving shadow across the water's surface. However, this location was suddenly transformed into the construction site for an eco-park as part of the Geumgang Waterway project;²³ Kim's work, reassigned to a nearby hill, was doomed to the fate of becoming polished 'plop art'. The public artwork, which originally revealed different sides



Our Anyang, 2005
Text engraved on boulders, approx. 3m

Just Let Me Flow, 2008
Text engraved on boulders, approx. 2 × 15 × 1 m



Healing the Earth by Moxibustion, 2010

A Blue Constellation on My Shoulders, 2000
Digital print on paper, 55 x 77 cm

and hidden aspects of time, weather, and perspective, was now 'stored' in the middle of the mountain and installed facing forward, according to the wishes of the park planners.

Ironically, the relocated *Just Let Me Flow* stands as a contemporary public artwork that – post-event – communicates the dual monumentality of damage. First, like totem poles guarding the village, it quietly attests to the massive environmental destruction wrought by a violent construction-centrism. At the same time, like ruins to be discovered in the future, it theatrically re-enacts the artificiality of our ecosystem, which will not even allow for the natural course of damage to the artwork. An image of the artwork, printed on the collective banner of the People's Action for the Cancellation of Geum River Waterway and the Artists' Alliance for Geum River Protection, serves as an allusion to the former aspect; the relocated piece, turned into a photogenic prop for the viewer's smartphone camera, corresponds to the latter. It is plausible that Kim was not much opposed to the relocation; as he writes in the proposal for a previous work, "rocks, too, move busily. Just like the world."²⁴ The presence of an ever-changing artwork that must contend with sunlight, flood, and reckless development enables us to discover the pressure point that alters, transports, and reorganises natural space; to appreciate the extent of our strained relationship with the environment. Uprooted by a destructive artificiality that has kept the piece from its natural and intended course of damage, this public artwork ruthlessly exposes the blind spot in the notion that aesthetics and politics are separate.

Meanwhile, I am reminded of another monument to damage in the form of Kim's 1988 work, *Four Pieces*. One of the plywood pieces produced during Kim's transition from the *Plane Object* series to polka-dot works, *Four Pieces* is free-standing and comprises painted MDF plates that have been cut, folded, reversed, and connected into a rising form. This twenty-year leap made from a public artwork on the riverside of Geumgang to *Four Pieces* is not only due to plastic similarities in the composition of elements or its sculptural characteristic, a rare aspect in Kim's work. Nor is it just a formal connection, an abstract effect achieved by concealing traces of structural reinforcement such as hinges and screws, which are present in other pieces from this period like *Two Pieces* (1989). Rather, *Four Pieces*'s collage landscape, in which reassembled pieces of wood expose the rear side and empty gaps filled with debris overlap with the background, relates to the visual perception of *Just Let Me Flow*. Both works evoke constant change in a world where external forces intersect. Cheong Kwangho notes that the work that expresses the "tempo-spatial plurality of a visual disturbance device" was never

actually installed outdoors, except for the purpose of photo documentation.²⁵ Cheong's hypothesis that Kim might have intended to "install it somewhere in the city, away from galleries" perhaps accidentally proved true much later through another work, amidst the setting of Geumgang.²⁶

In the same essay, Cheong compares Frank Stella's formal evolution from flat surface to modified canvas and three dimensions with a similar transition in Kim's work, which came later but in a more condensed way; Kim's transition marks the revival of a "slower art ethics" than the Western modernist and attests to a "faster ecological art" in Korea.²⁷ If one extends beyond the treatment of the cultural speed of regionality as a derivation of Western modernism, thereby capturing the exteriority that is unassimilable into the totalising modern capitalist system, as Dussel puts it – that is, the otherness that always exists but almost always as potentiality – such a transversal cultural ecology will allow yet another time-disturbing sense of velocity to manifest in Kim's (public) art, distinct from that of the plywood pieces.²⁸

Exhibited in the 2010 Land Art Mongolia 360° biennial, *Healing the Earth by Moxibustion* consists of a pile of garbage found in the Gobi desert and a gold-painted fishing rod, accompanied by the performance of an ancestral rite. In the 2013 version of the work, executed on top of underground oil tanks outside the Soma Museum of Art in Seoul, golden cubes filled with Kim's catalogues and books were placed on 'acupoints', in lieu of the mugwort typically used in moxibustion.²⁹ Perhaps Kim wanted to stimulate the pulse of the land by employing a technique used when a patient is so unwell or when circulation is so weak that one cannot feel the meridian points. In *Healing the Earth by Moxibustion*, Kim practices a pseudo-acupuncture-moxibustion on ailing land, anticipating that the fishing rod will attract lightning and ignite the mound of garbage. In Kim's (public) art, the practice of moxibustion, which burns medicine and scars the body (in this case, both his literal body and the Earth), is itself another damage-process that synchronises the different ecosystems to which the interior and exterior of an organism belong.

By positioning a constellation of 360 imaginary acupuncture points on the Gobi Desert that stretches out in 360 degrees, in order to strengthen the Earth, which has fallen ill due to the Anthropocene, the idea is to reappropriate folk medicine as an artistic configuration, which was once purged and stigmatised as unscientific and unsanitary in the course of modernisation. This tradition, which has been repressed and denied by modern state governance and its associated technocracy, resembles what the poet Kim Soo-young spoke of when he wrote, "Traditions, no matter how filthy, are good."³⁰



I Worship Thee, 2009
Mixed media installation, variable dimensions



Four Pieces, 1988
Paint on MDF, 5 × 2.5 × 1 m

When Kim Yong-Ik burns his body,³¹ his work,³² and the land, perpetuating the traditional technique that survived postcolonial life like the colossal root-rhizome that it is, the effect goes far beyond a tattoo, or a superficial replication of traditional forms.³³ Rather than the mere resurrection or imitation of a tradition obliterated in modern times, Kim's practice reactivates a remedy for the senses in the context of a postcolonial and contemporary ecosystem.

Installed the same year at Partapur, India, *Holy Grail* further probes the complexity of transmodernity. Navigating through the minefield of self-orientalism, conveyed in this context as the giant mystery of India,³⁴ Kim incorporates a foundational element of Western culture, the myth of the Holy Grail, in his public art. *Holy Grail*, a vessel-shaped steel structure with welded text that is mounted over a tripod, is a monument to the most abject poverty, which Kim witnessed in the area.³⁵ Here, poverty is a glaring new iteration of damage, like the gas sparks that weld the text onto the piece. This strikes me as the beacon of transmodernity that carves colonialism in relief as the bleaker side of modernity. This beam of light presents an opportunity to engage in an holistic approach countering the dual limitations imposed by the collapse of the system of modernity-colonialism: environmental destruction on a global scale, and the death of the majority of human beings due to poverty and hunger.³⁶ Furthermore, it highlights an apocalyptic utopianism that foresees the normalisation of poverty in the post-petroleum world, and thus seeks hope in cultures that have venerated poverty. Burning points on the land adheres to the coloniality of modernist Kim Soo-young, while the poverty in *Holy Grail* contains the environmentalism of anarchist Kwon Jeong-Saeng. Like the gold paint splashed onto the column of a ruin in *Wongol*, Kwon Jeong-Saeng's eco-anarchism practised a philosophy of poverty that glowed of material subtraction, even after drinking from the "poisoned chalice of capitalism".³⁷ Thus the moment when excrement is personified as a star is captured within this dark cultural environment.³⁸

One must wonder why both artworks involve deserts.³⁹ Are we in the reality of the desert; or the desert of reality? While I could very well keep muttering these questions, connecting them to the black damage in Kim's *Despair Completed* series (1990–2006), I choose to follow his habit and "stop here and call it a day".⁴⁰

- 1 I express my sincere gratitude to Tina Kim Gallery and Kukje Gallery for their support and provision of research materials, and to Kim Yong-Ik for the kind responses to my questions.
- 2 Kim Yong-Ik, "Untitled", *General Financial Monthly*, February 1987. Translation cited from "Kim Yong-Ik", Tina Kim Gallery, accessed 1 September 2018.
- 3 Kim Yong-Ik, "Lesson 3" [in Korean], in *Why I Practice Art* [in Korean] (Seoul: Hyunsil Book, 2011), 226. "Who knows if my polka-dot paintings, gathering dust and rotting in the school hallway for two decades, might become art once they decay a little bit more?"
- 4 "Do not remove this plastic wrapping. Leave it in its shabby state." [Text inscribed on the artwork].
- 5 [The 1995 production of this work was a polka-dot painting originally titled *Closer... Come Closer...*—Trans.]
- 6 Kwon Hyeok-Bin, "Kim Yong-Ik Lives Logic" [in Korean], *Misulsegye* 48 (October 2016): 114-119.
- 7 Kim Yong-Ik, "Bidding Farewell to You" [in Korean], the artist's personal blog, 22 August 2012.
- 8 "Now it is time to enshrine this work in a museum."
- 9 Kim Yong-Ik, *Why I Practice Art*, 292.
- 10 Kim Yong-Ik, "Response to LACMA's questionnaire" [in Korean], the artist's personal blog, 10 June 2017.
- 11 Kim Ki-Soo, "Alain Badiou and Contemporary Art: Between Their Convergence and Divergence," *Journal of Contemporary Art Studies* 17, no. 2 (December 2013): 55-111, 75.
- 12 For instance, Kim mentions the politics of ambiguity as a keyword for understanding his body of work in the artist's statement on pages 4-5 of this book.
- 13 Kim Ki-Soo, "Alain Badiou and Contemporary Art", 76.
- 14 Park Chan-Kyong, "The 1970s within the 1990s: Kim Yong-Ik and South Korea's Conceptual Art" [in Korean], *Kim Yong-Ik* [exhibition catalogue] (Seoul: Kumho Museum of Art, 1997).
- 15 Lee Sohl, "Kim Yong-Ik and a Divided Art History," *Closer... Come Closer...* [exhibition catalogue] (Seoul: Ilmin Museum of Art, 2016), 218.
- 16 Diana E. Kim, "Foreword", *Kim Yong-Ik* [exhibition catalogue] (Seoul: Kukje Gallery, 2016), 5.
- 17 Alain Badiou, *Manifesto For Philosophy*, trans. Norman Madarasz (New York: SUNY Press, 1999), 103-112. Re-cited from Kim Ki-Soo, "Alain Badiou and Contemporary Art", 67.
- 18 *Closer... Come Closer...*, 140.
- 19 After serving as chair of the Art-wide Committee for the Normalization of Gwangju Biennale, Kim Yong-Ik was involved in the foundation of Alternative Space Pool (1999) and Mi-sul-in Hoe-ui (Congress of Artists) (2003). He also served as chair of the Public Art Committee led by the then Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2006-2008) and as president of Artists' Forum International, supported by the Consultative Organization of Non-Profit Exhibition Spaces, for which he organised the 2006 exhibition *Public Moment*.
- 20 The etymology of the city's name, Anyang, traces back to "Paradise". The message of the signage thus translates to "Our Paradise", an inclusive notion that clashes with the reality of Anyang, which excludes immigrant workers.

- 21 Lee Young-Wook and Park Chan-Kyong, "How to Sit: Tradition and Art" [in Korean], *Anneun Beob* [How to Sit] [exhibition catalogue] (Seoul: Indipress, 2016). According to Lee and Park, in translating the Four Gentlemen tradition in Eastern painting, Bahc Yiso's 1987 work, *Simply Weeds*, takes up a position between Western painting and the East Asian tradition, i.e. a contemporary painting that simultaneously translates between and revives tradition and foreign culture.
- 22 Kim Yong-Ik, *Why I Practice Art*, 197.
- 23 Lee Myung-bak, the former President of South Korea (2008-2013), campaigned on economic growth and construction-centric development. The Grand Korean Waterway, Lee's flagship project, which proposed to build a canal that diagonally cuts across almost the entire country, was met with huge controversy and resistance, especially from environmental organisations. The Lee administration subsequently pursued the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project that involved the Han, Nakdong, Geum, and Yeongsan rivers as well as other smaller-sized streams. It declared the project complete in 2011. Critics suspected that the Four Rivers project was a mere rebranding of the Grand Korean Waterway, and activists, including artists, led long and diverse protests and legal battles against it. Controversies over the project's environmental impact, economic effect and undemocratic processes remain and have led to four audits by the Audit Office. Lee has been arrested and is on trial (as at the time of writing) for charges unrelated to the project.
- 24 Kim Yong-Ik, "Artist Proposal for *Touring Eternal Mountains and Rivers*".
- 25 Cheong Kwangho, "Deconstruction of Pictorial Mythology through the Disturbance of the Eye" [in Korean], *Kim Yong-Ik* [exhibition catalogue] (Seoul: Kumho Museum of Art, 1997), 55.
- 26 Cheong, 53.
- 27 Cheong, 55.
- 28 Kim Yong-Gyu, "Transmodernity and the Ecology of Culture: Colonial Difference and the Critique of the Eurocentric Modernity", *Cogito* 70 (August 2011): 117-156, 146.
- 29 Moxibustion consists of burning or heating moxa or other medicine on specific points of the body, called meridian points. The process is intended to restore the normal circulation of blood and chi, resulting in a balance of bodily functions. Like acupuncture, moxibustion has a long history and its exact origins are disputed. While it has long been a folk medicine that anyone could practice without expert knowledge or at great expense, the Korean government banned non-licensed moxibustion practice in the 1960s, representing the interests of doctors and traditional medicine practitioners.
- 30 Kim Soo-young, "Colossal Roots" (1963), in "Ten Poems of Kim Su-yong", trans. Brother Anthony of Taizé and Kim Young-Moo, *Korea Journal* 37, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 131-53.
- 31 Lee and Park, "How to Sit: Tradition and Art".
- 32 After performing the ancestral rite in the desert, Kim performed moxibustion on his body, as was his daily routine at the time.
- 33 Kim Yong-Ik, *A Blue Constellation on My Shoulders* [in Korean], 2009, pigment print.
- 34 [Kim Yong-Ik, "Travel to India" [in Korean], *profyongik* (blog), February 13, 2010. In a blog post regarding the residency in Partapur, Rajasthan, Kim explains his thought process leading up to *Holy Grail*: "I vowed not to replicate a taxidermed orientalism. At least, I wanted to avoid the mistake of othering India as an inferior East and identifying Korea with the developed West. I wanted to avoid being blinded by staid notions of eternity, transcendence, religion, etc." He admits that it proved difficult to avoid an orientalist perspective. He was immediately challenged both physically and mentally by India's poverty, which, coexisting with the country's high technology exemplified by mobile phones, struck Kim as unreal and transcendent. In lieu of a narrative of underdevelopment, Kim contemplates the conditions he witnessed as an alternative future to the ill-fated oil-based civilization.—Trans.]
- 35 The welded text reads: "The nation of the Holy Grail will survive and get power and lead the world."
- 36 Kim Yong-Gyu, "Transmodernity", 147.
- 37 Kim Yong-Ik, *Wongol*, 2010. The golden paint used in *Wongol* is less a reminder of the death and funeral in *Bidding Farewell to You...* than of the yearning for a future-light amid darkness with the fishing rod in *Healing the Earth by Moxibustion*.
- 38 Uhm Hye-Sook, "A Study on Kwon Jeong-Saeng and His Works" (PhD diss., Inha University, 2010), 142. [The children's literature of Kwon Jeong-Saeng captured the dark period of industrialisation in Korea while noting the hope and resilience of its people. In his first publication, "Puppy Poo", the protagonist (a dog excrement) is devastated by the realisation of its filth and finitude. Over time, Puppy Poo begins longing for the stars and their beautiful eternal light. After talking to a dandelion plant, Poo learns that it can help the dandelion blossom by becoming the latter's soil. By accepting to disappear into the flower, which is "as beautiful as the stars", Poo becomes a star that blossoms from the ground.—Trans.]
- 39 *Healing the Earth by Moxibustion* was installed in the Gobi desert and the residency for *Holy Grail* took place in the Thar desert in Rajasthan.
- 40 Kim often abruptly ends his blog postings with this expression, citing lack of energy, regardless of whether a text will later be continued or not.