

Kim Yong-Ik
This is not the answer

April 27 – July 27, 2019

Opening: Friday, April 26, 6–9 pm

Coinciding with Gallery Weekend Berlin
April 26–28, 2019

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Plane Object

1978

Airbrush paint on cloth (2 pieces)

Airbrush auf Stoff (2 Teile)

250 x 130 cm





정이돈 이복영 신익을 기록한
책자 (概念美術) 1970-1980 초판
공유본-1981년 제1차
최대형이던 권출판본
부호: 100-100
제작: 2010

정리번호: 10-21-10
출판번호: 100
종류: 100, 100
수량: 100, 100
제작: 2010



Untitled (Dedicated to the Exhibition "Young Artists" in 1981)

2011

2nd version, after lost original of 1981

Photocopy and oil-based ink on boxes, PE foam film

2. Version, nach Verlust des Originals von 1981

Fotokopie und Öltinte auf Kartons, PE-Schaumfolie

Dimensions variable / Maße variabel





ARTIST	TITLE	SIZE
김홍도	관동팔경첩	1/1

2018. Art Bard Henry King
 2018. Art Bard Henry King
 2018. Art Bard Henry King



2018. Art Bard Henry King
 2018. Art Bard Henry King
 2018. Art Bard Henry King

2017. 4. 23
 Barbara Wien Gallery
 서울 79199

2015. Art Bard Henry King
 2015. Art Bard Henry King
 2015. Art Bard Henry King

2015. Art Bard Henry King
 2015. Art Bard Henry King

dition Log

Global
 Local Exhibit
 SOLB

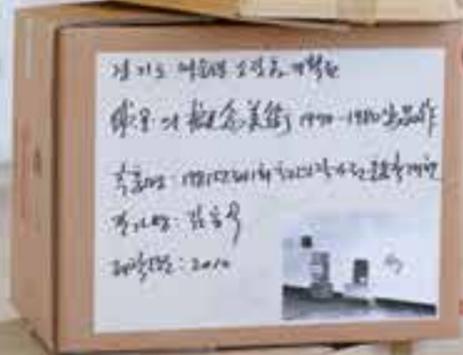
Untitled

1990

Mixed media on paper, framed (without glass)
Mixed Media auf Papier, gerahmt (ohne Glas)

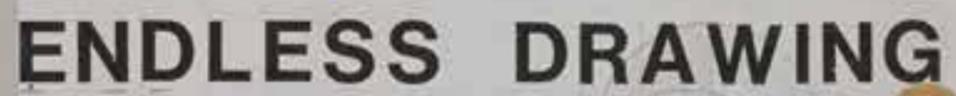
112 x 77.5 x 4.5 cm







Endless Drawing
2013 – ongoing / fortlaufend
Mixed media on cardboard box
Mixed Media auf Karton
131 x 194 x 8 cm



ENDLESS DRAWING

Detail
Endless Drawing
2013 – ongoing / fortlaufend



Detail
Endless Drawing
2013 – ongoing / fortlaufend

너를 보내며 - 2

bidding farewell to you

이 작품은 1995년에 태어났다.
18년이 경과한 지금 이 작품은
태어날 당시 가졌던 생기있는
미학적, 정치적 의미를 상실했다.
소생시켜보려 뜬 치료도 없었다.
그러나 수명이 다 한 것은
누구도 어쩔 수 없는 법.
이제 조용히 떠나보낸다.
금박 수의를 얹어고,
유리 덮개 관에 넣어,
미술작품의 무덤인
미술관에 안치시키려 한다.
부다 안녕...

This work was born in 1995.
As of now, 18 years later, this
work has lost the vital aesthetic,
political meaning it has when
it was born.
I performed moxibustion to
revive this.
As its life is about to expire,
I can't help it.
I let it go now.
I'd like to lay this in a museum,
the tomb of artworks, dressing
it in gilt grave-clothes and
putting it in a coffin with a
glass cover.
Good luck to you...

2013. 4. 18 김용익

April 18, 2013
Kim Yong-ik

Bidding Farewell to You-2
1995-2013

Acrylic, pencil on canvas, gold powder, wood, silk, vinyl lettering on glass
Acryl, Bleistift auf Leinwand, Goldpulver, Holz, Seide, Vinylschrift auf Glas
78 x 66 x 5 cm





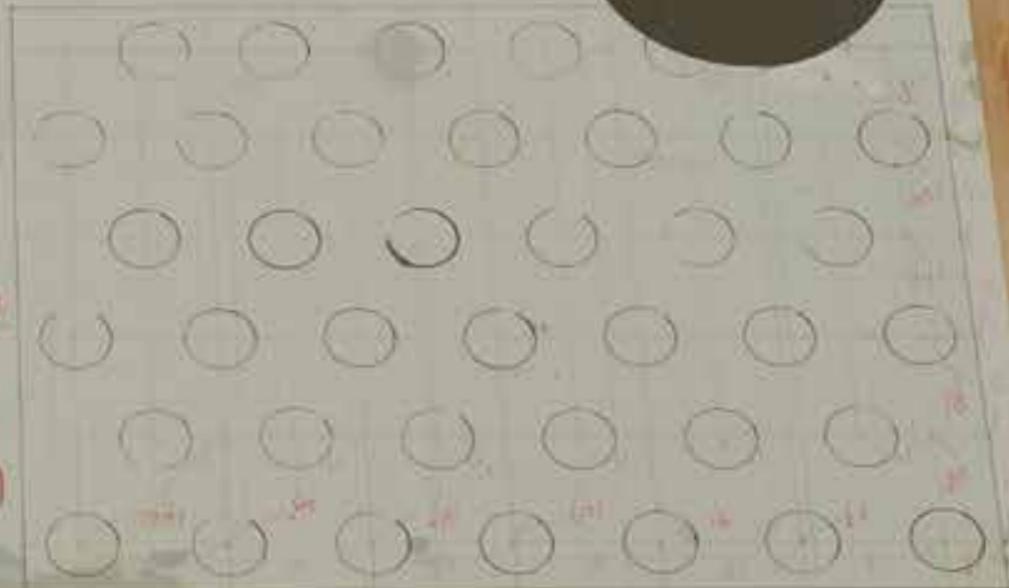
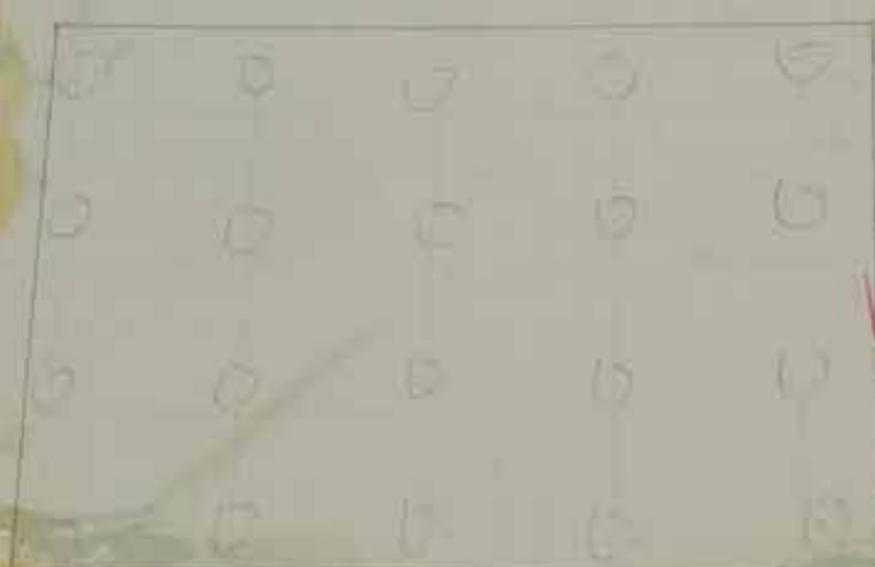
Apocalypse of Modernism #17-4
2017
Wooden panel, glass, PVC, paper
Holzplatte, Glas, PVC, Papier
2.5 x 114 x 130 cm

모 더 니 즘 의 무 시 문

Apocalypse of Modernism 12/4/2017

2017. 12. 4

17-4



17-4

182.8 113.5 64.2

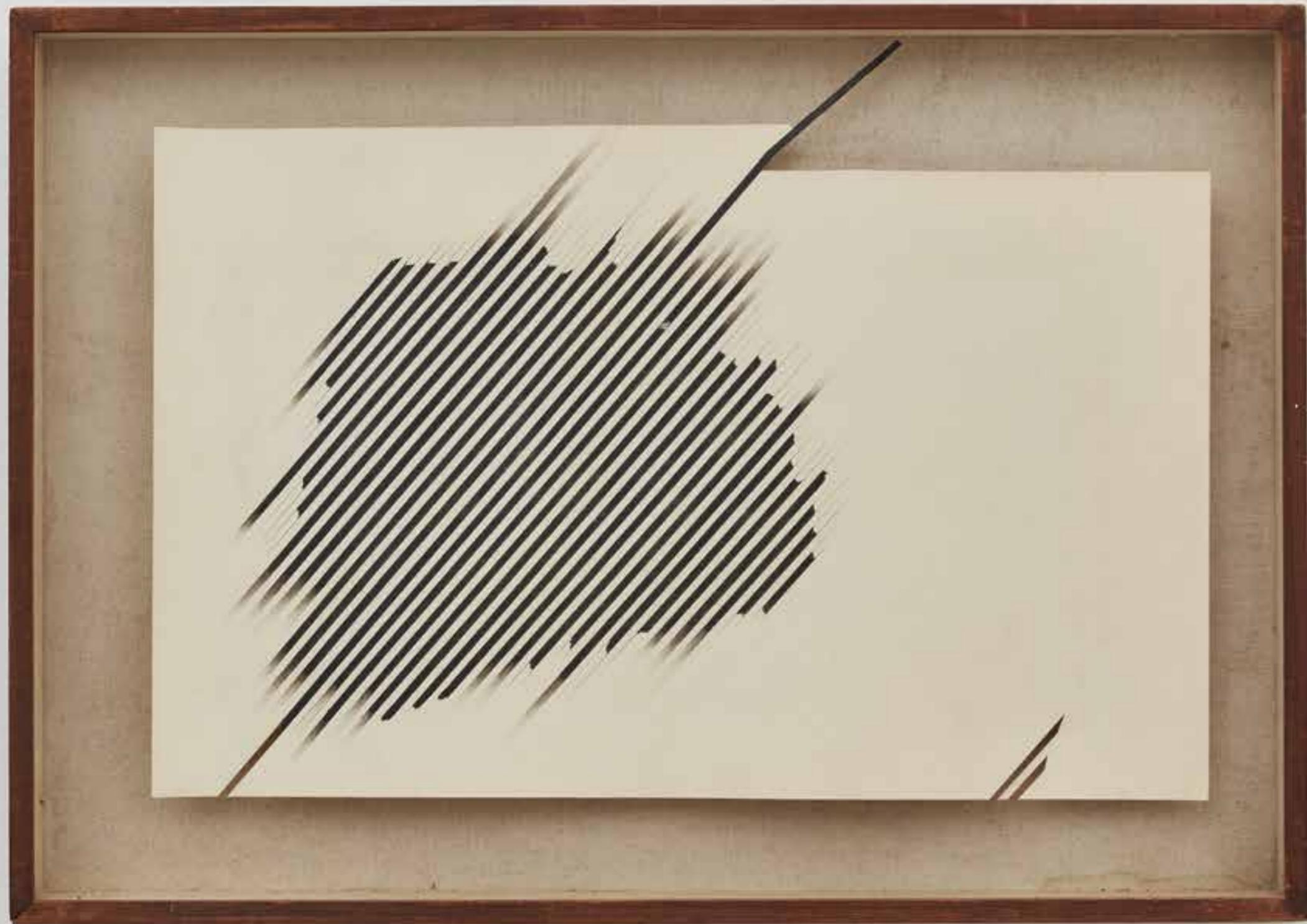
Detail
Apocalypse of Modernism #17-4
2017



Untitled
1994
Mixed media on canvas
Mixed Media auf Leinwand
72.5 x 60.5 x 2 cm



Untitled
1994
Mixed media on canvas
Mixed Media auf Leinwand
72.5 x 60.5 x 2 cm



Oblique Lines

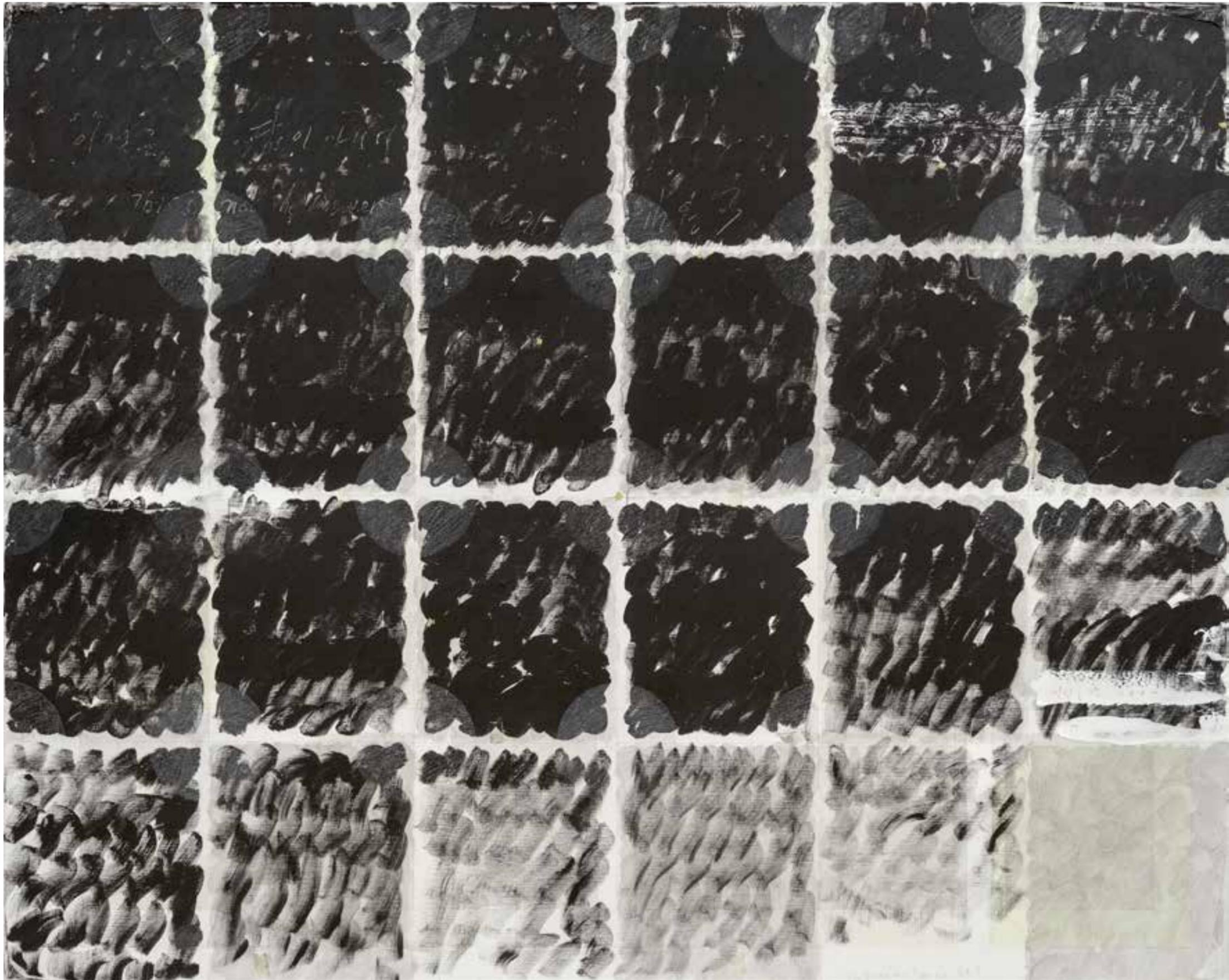
1983

Ink, pen on paper, framed

Tinte, Feder auf Papier, gerahmt

46 x 66 x 4.5 cm





This is not the answer #18-3
2018
Mixed media on canvas
Mixed Media auf Leinwand
182 x 227 x 5.5 cm



Detail
This is not the answer #18-3
2018



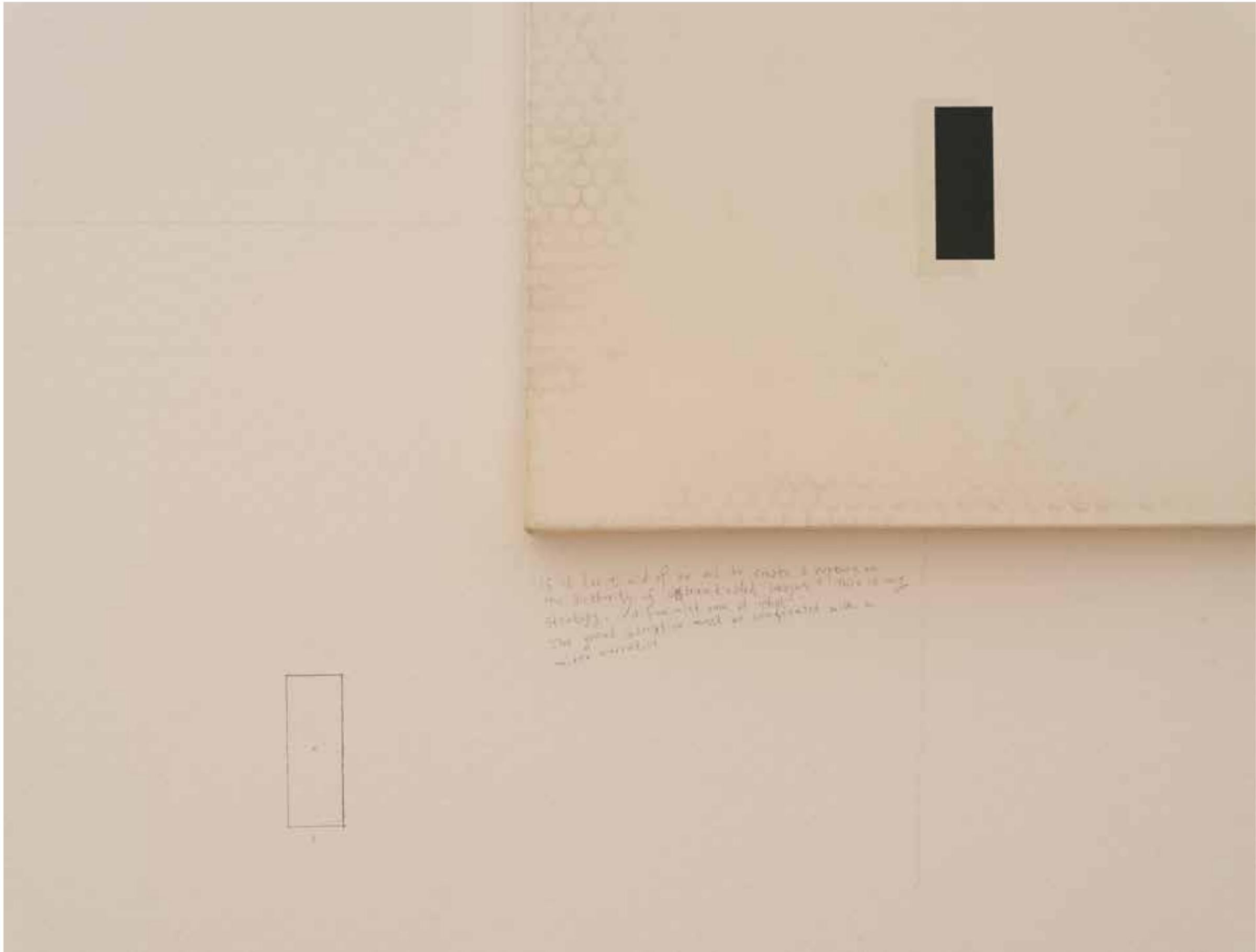
Detail
This is not the answer #18-3
2018



Closer... Come Closer...
2001
Acrylic on canvas
Acryl auf Leinwand
72 x 91 x 3 cm



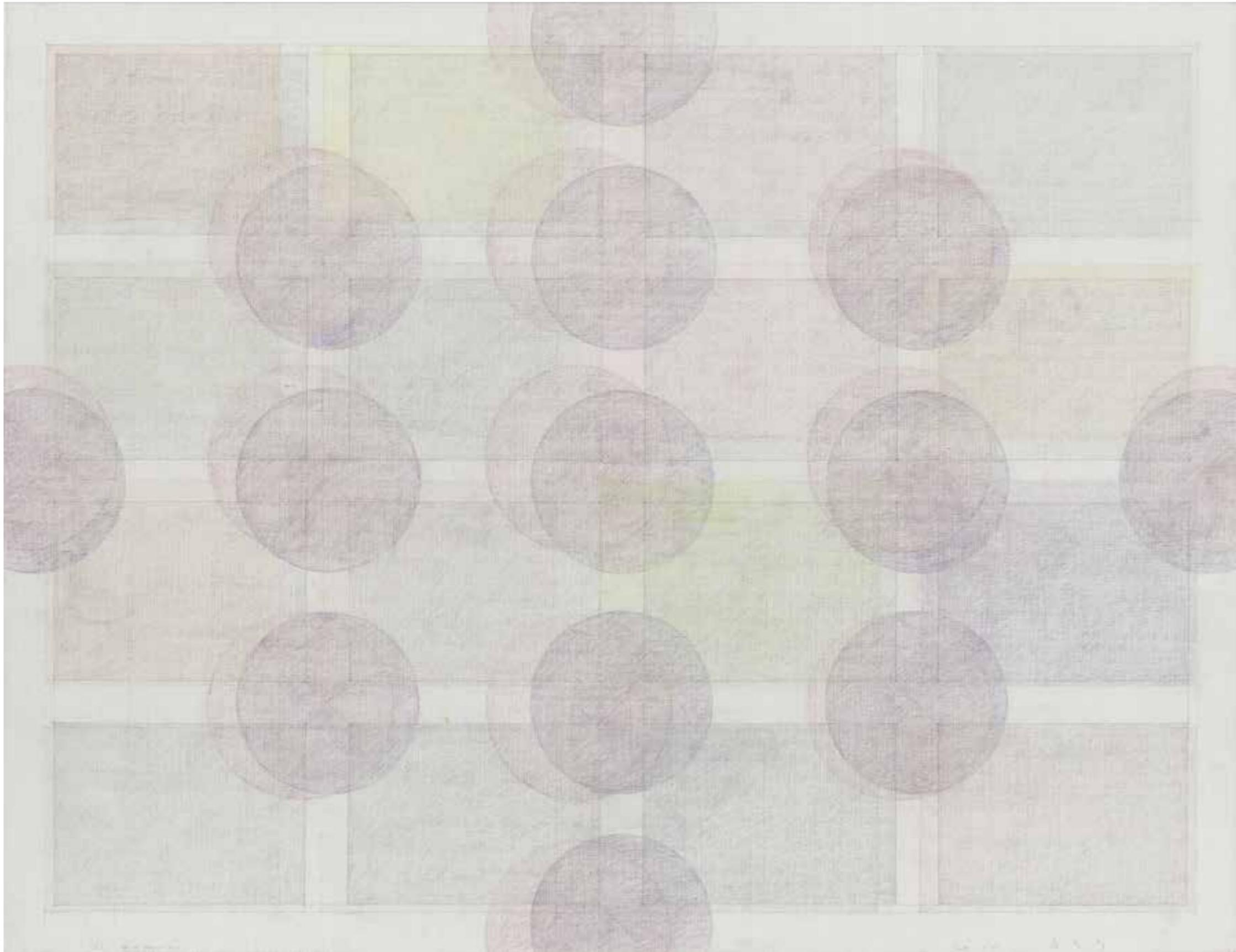
Detail
Closer... Come Closer...
2001



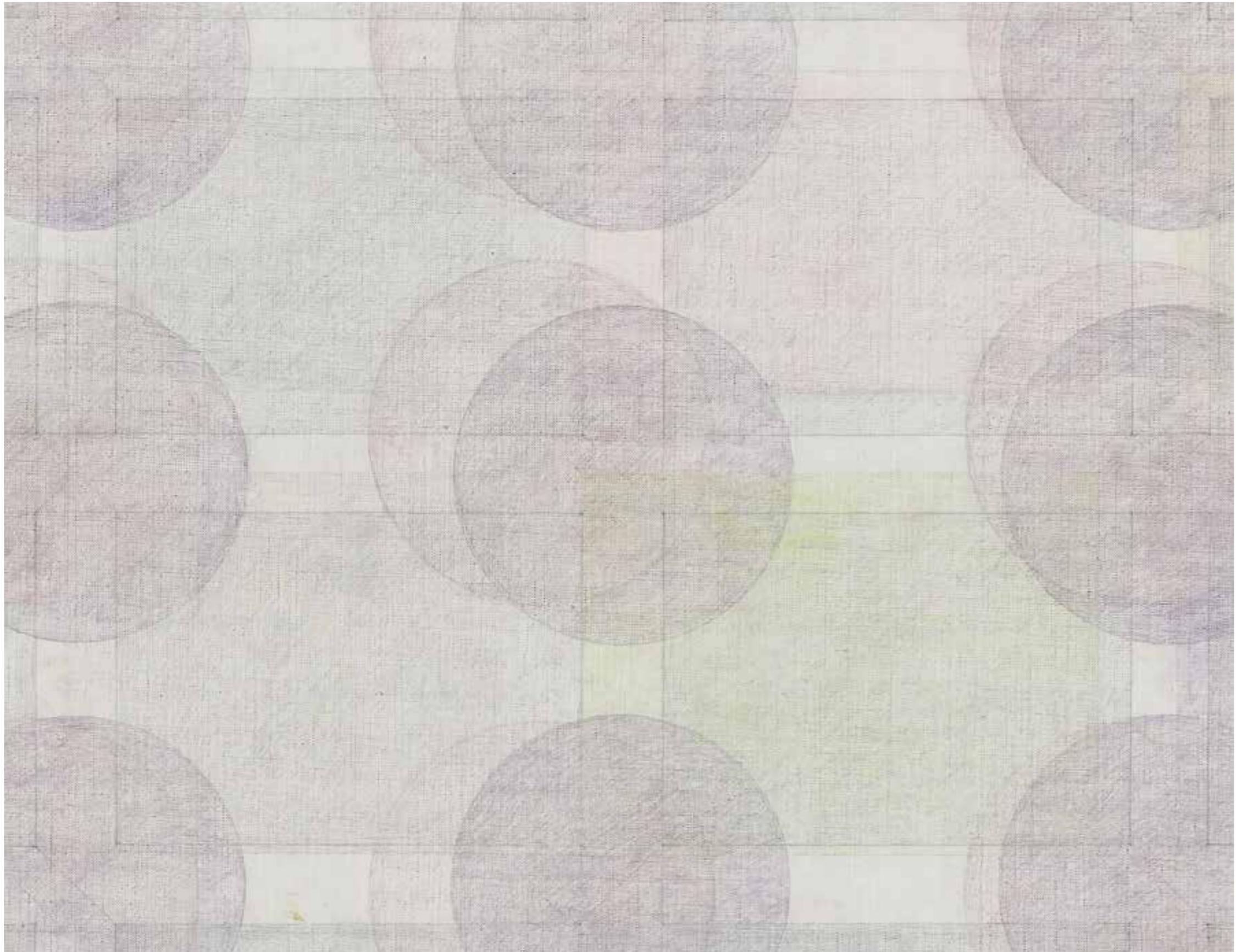
is a book and it is not to create a system in
the history of differentiated layers of time in my
strategy. It is a first one of which
the good thing is that it is complicated with a
- like a warship

Detail
Closer... Come Closer...
2001



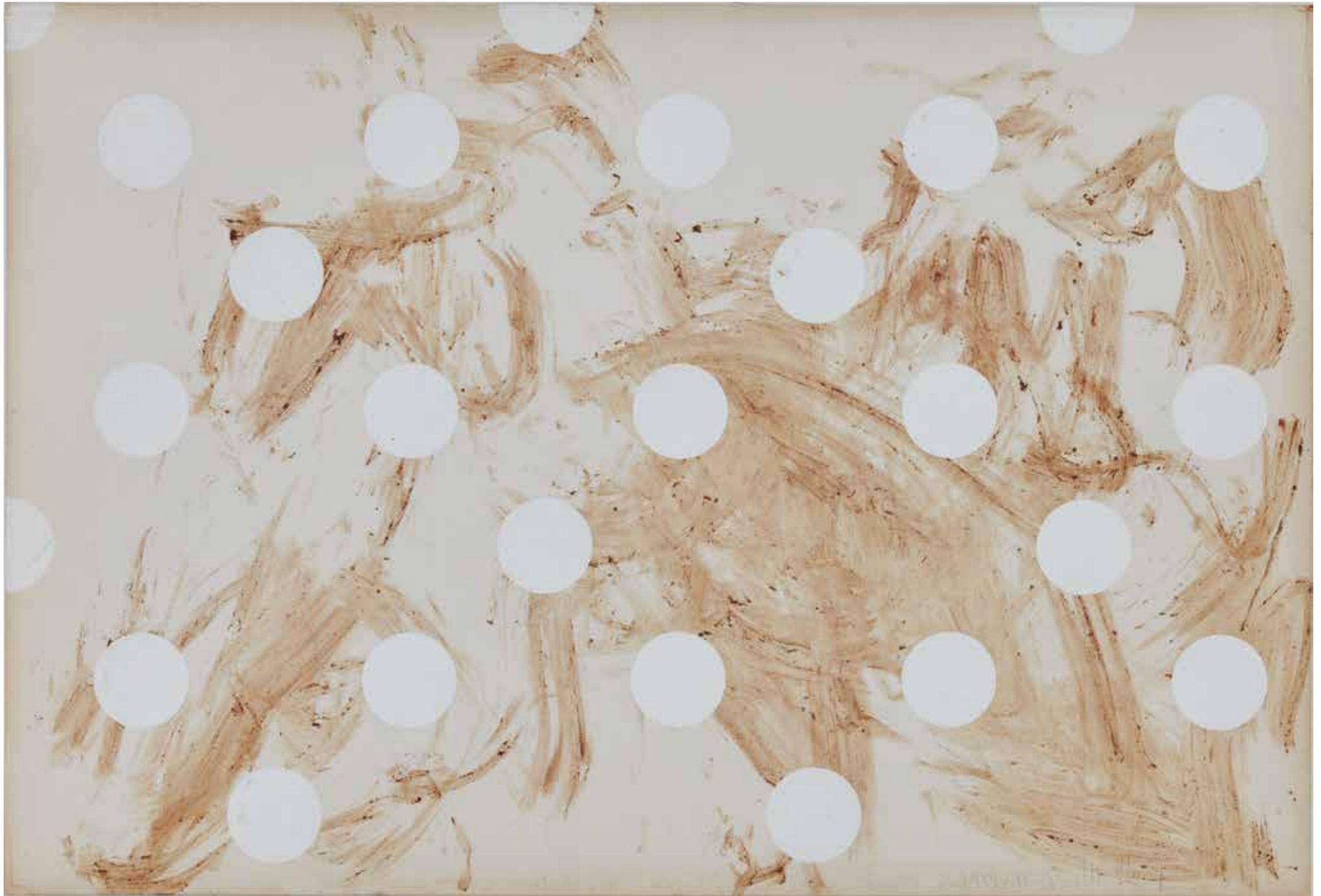


The Eye of Poetry #18-1
2018
Colour pencil and pencil on canvas
Farb- und Bleistift auf Leinwand
112 x 145,5 x 4 cm



The Eye of Poetry #18-1
2018
Detail



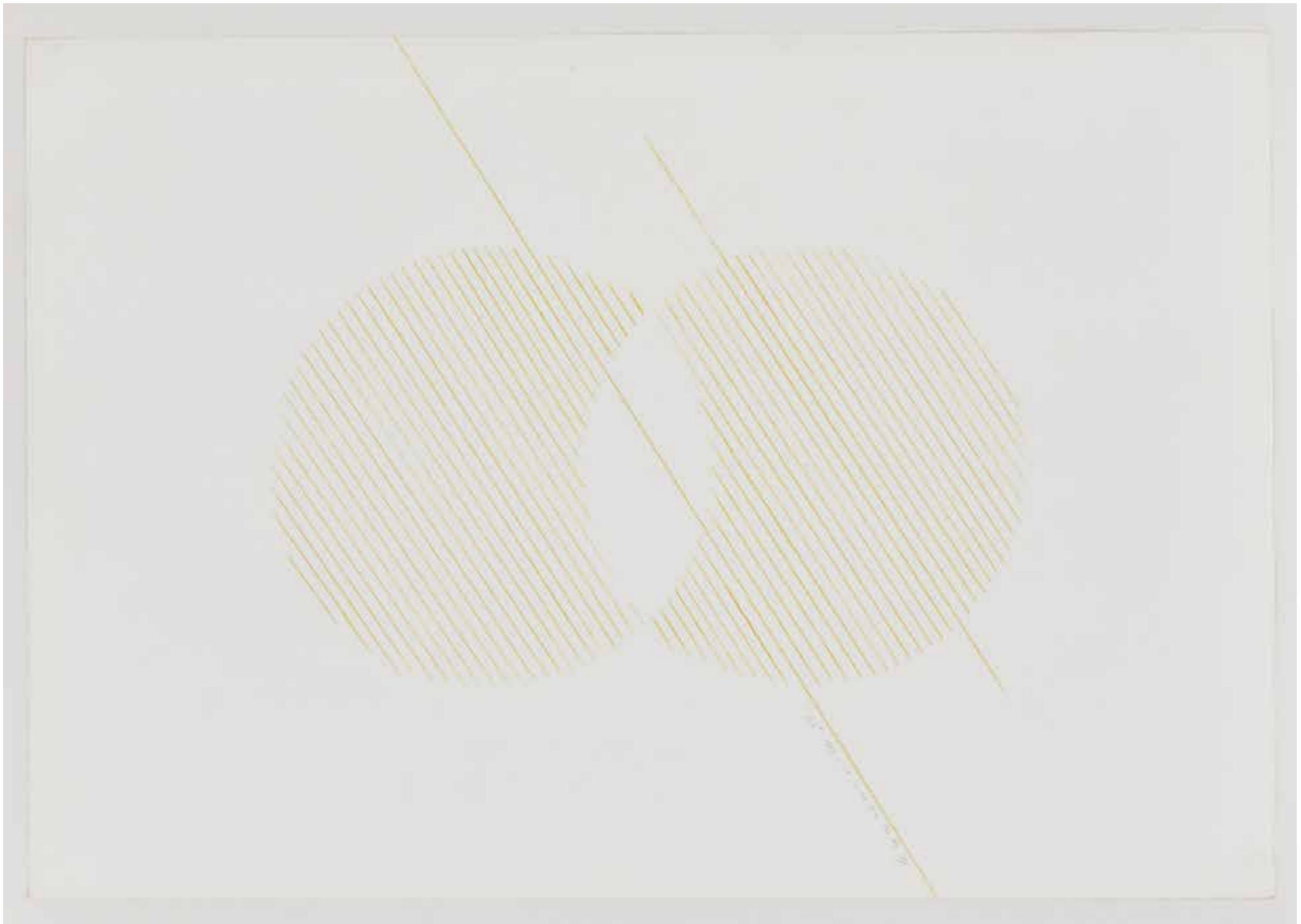


Untitled

1993

Mixed media on paper, framed
Mixed Media auf Papier, gerahmt

77.5 x 112 x 4.5 cm



Oblique Lines

1987

Colour pencil on paper, framed

Farbstift auf Papier, gerahmt

63 x 87 x 4.5 cm



This is not the answer #18-12

2018

Acrylic on tissue and wooden frame, glass

Acryl auf Stoff und Holzrahmen, Glas

21 x 26 x 1.5 cm

Press Texts

Leinwand in Glassarg

Das konzeptuelle Werk des 1947 geborenen Südkoreaners Kim Yong-Ik ist hierzulande kaum bekannt. Dabei befragt es die westliche Moderne, auch und besonders aus einer asiatischen Perspektive. Das klingt womöglich nach intellektualistischen Exerzitien, tatsächlich sind Kim Yong-Iks Arbeiten zart und berührend. Auf einer unbetitelten Arbeit von 1994 etwa haben die akkuraten Kim'schen Großpunkte, hier in Schwarz, sonst häufig auch in Weiß, ihr strenges geometrisches Raster verlassen. Befreit wandern sie über einen Untergrund aus braunen Schlieren. Euklidisches legt sich über Erdiges.

Kim befindet sich in einem steten Dialog mit seinen Arbeiten, er denkt sie und führt sie fort. Manche frühere Leinwand hat er vor wenigen Jahren erst in eine Art Glassarg gebettet und diesen mit seinen Reflexionen beschriftet. Es ist eine Form der Selbst-Musealisierung, jedoch keine narzisstische, sondern eine, die Kommentar und Abschied vom Glauben der Moderne an sich selbst ist. Gerade dadurch wirkt diese Kunst so lebendig. Eine Entdeckung.

Kim Yong-Ik: This is not the answer. Barbara Wien, 27. April bis 27. Juli.

Falten und Knicke

Polka Dots, große Tücher, die lose an die Wand gepinnt werden, und planmäßig beschädigte Bilder: Zum Gallery Weekend ist von Kim Yong-Ik die Ausstellung „This is not the answer“ bei Barbara Wien zu sehen

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Kim Yong-Ik, „Endless Drawing“ Foto: Chunho An/Kim Yong-Ik, Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin; Kukje Gallery, Seoul

VON BRIGITTE WERNEBURG

Er gehört zu den Künstlern, die immer wieder an ihre Arbeiten zurückkehren, die sich Werke, die sie schon als fertig erachteten, noch einmal vornehmen: Kim Yong-Ik, 1947 in Seoul, Korea, geboren. Es kann also sein, dass eine 1974 begonnene Arbeit noch 2010 (vorläufig) letzte Ergänzungen erfährt. Er scheint es zu mögen, noch nicht ganz angekommen zu sein.

Daran aber liegt es nicht, dass der 72-jährige Künstler in Südkorea – und erst recht international – wenig bekannt ist. Die Ursache liegt vielmehr darin, dass er 1981, als er zur 1st Young Artists Exhibition im Nationalmuseum für moderne und zeitgenössische Kunst in Seoul eingeladen war, seine Arbeit im Museum einfach abstellte und sich weigerte, sie aus der Transportkiste auszupacken. Die ikonoklastische Geste, die sich gegen die gesellschaftliche Unterdrückung durch die damals in Südkorea herrschende Militärdiktatur richtete, stieß auf blankes Unverständnis.

Zu diesem Zeitpunkt war Kim Yong-Ik der kommende Künstlerstar. Seine Mitte der 1970er Jahre begonnene Serie Plane Objects hatte ihn bekannt gemacht. Wie jetzt bei Barbara Wien zu sehen ist, die zum Gallery Weekend sei-

ne erste Einzelausstellung in Deutschland eröffnet, handelt es sich bei den Plane Objects um große Tücher, die lose an die Wand gepinnt werden, wobei sie sich teilweise auch einmal überlappen.

Die nicht weiter bearbeiteten quadratischen oder rechteckigen Tücher sind an einigen Stellen mit Farbe aus der Sprühdose markiert, sie weisen Falten und Knicke auf und sie hängen auch mal von der Wand bis auf den Boden, wo sie schmutzig werden können.

In westlicher Perspektive würde man vom Ausstieg aus dem Bild sprechen. Indem Kim Yong-Ik die straff gespannte Leinwand der Malerei vom Rahmen löste und sie umstandslos und unaufwändig ins Dreidimensionale fallen ließ, entwickelte er – um mit Lucio Fontana zu sprechen – sein „conchetto spaziale“, also sein „räumliches Konzept“ der Malerei.

In diesem Zusammenhang ist es interessant, vom Künstler zu erfahren, dass die Polka Dots, Kennzeichen seiner in den 1990er Jahren begonnenen Serie „Closer ... Come Closer ...“, durch ganz konkrete Löcher inspiriert wurden. In den 1980er Jahren stellte Kim Yong-Ik Holztafeln im Stil der geometrischen Abstraktion her, die er allerdings als beschädigt zeigen wollte. Zu diesem Zweck stanzt er Löcher in die Platten. Auch hier korrelierte der ikonoklastische Akt mit der Öffnung des Bildes in den Raum.

Später kam er, wie er in einem Interview sagt, wieder auf die zweidimensionale Fläche zurück, auf der seine Löcher nun im Form farbiger, regelmäßig gesetzter Polka Dots erschienen. Dabei ergaben sie, wie der Künstler erkannte, ein perfektes Raster und gingen mit der Sprache des Modernismus

Kim Yong-Ik ist der stille Rebell der koreanischen Kunstwelt

konform. Kein Gegner des Modernismus, war es Kim Yong-Ik trotzdem ein Anliegen, zu ihm auf analytische Distanz zu gehen. Also verunreinigte und beschädigte er seine Bilder, stellte sie ins Freie und überließ sie der Witterung, bis er sie wieder hineinnahm ins Studio und dort weiter bearbeitete. Sei es mit Pflanzensaft, sei es mit dem in die Ecke gekehrten Dreck und Staub.

Dass Kim Yong-Ik nun in Berlin zu sehen ist, heißt, dass sein Stern wieder aufgeht, seine Bedeutung als Künstler in Korea längst schon wieder erkannt wird, und er von Kukje, einer großen Galerie in Seoul, vertreten wird. Das zeichnet denn auch das Gallery Weekend aus: anders als auf teuren Messen, wo das Bekannte und Abgesicherte die Kojen beherrscht, aus ökonomischen Gründen beherrschen muss, können die Galerien hier riskanter operieren und künstlerische Positionen vorstellen, die noch ein wenig vom Abenteuer des Entdeckens wissen.

Der Raum, das sei noch zuletzt angemerkt, ist heute mehr denn je Ziel seiner Kunst. Es ist der Raum der Öffentlichkeit, den Kim Yong-Ik, der eigentlich stille Rebell der koreanischen Kunstwelt, sucht, indem er sich seit den 2000er Jahren ebenso für alternative Projekträume engagiert, wie er partizipative

Kunstaktionen initiiert. Thema ist dabei die Zerstörung der Umwelt auf lokaler Ebene wie die Klimaerwärmung auf globaler. Und insoweit er etwa 360 imaginäre Akupunkturpunkte in der Wüste Gobi installiert, um der Erde neue Stärke zu geben, ist er nicht nur Teil des ökologischen, sondern auch des postkolonialen Diskurses.

Bis 27. Juli, Barbara Wien, Schöneberger Ufer 65, Gallery Weekend, Fr. 18–21 Uhr; Sa., So. 11–19 Uhr, sonst Di.–Fr. 13–18 Uhr, Sa. 12–18 Uhr

taz. die tageszeitung

vom 25. 4. 2019

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OCULA CONVERSATION

Kim Yong-Ik in Conversation

Elliat Albrecht | Hong Kong | 23 May 2018



Kim Yong-Ik. Courtesy Kukje Gallery. Photo: Keith Park.

Kim Yong-Ik is the understated rebel of the Korean art world. Over his 40-year career as an artist, writer and curator, Kim has resisted aligning entirely with the dominant Korean movements, from the monochromatic and minimalist painters associated with Dansaekhwa, to those making socio-

politically concerned Minjung or 'people's art' in the 1980s. Declining an offer to align with the latter group in 1985, Kim committed himself to challenging the principles of modernist and the avant-garde by embracing an 'anti-art' aesthetic and concealing his political gestures in subtlety.

Born in 1947 in Seoul, he conceived of formative 'Plane Object' series (1975–1981) while he was still an undergraduate at Hongik University, where he graduated with a BFA and MFA in painting in 1980. 'Plane Object' comprises wrinkled, washy and airbrushed unstretched canvases, hung directly on the wall and lightly painted to give the illusion of depth and folds. Kim quickly became known for these illusory works; but, uncomfortable with the trappings of the mainstream art world that came along with recognition, he periodically stopped working on the project in 1981. He began depicting repeated and perfectly aligned polka dots on mostly-plain backgrounds in the early 1990s. Yet in defiance of precision, Kim deliberately blemished the canvases by smearing them with dirt, vegetable juices and other substances, even circling and annotating the imperfections with pencil to draw the viewer's attention to the 'mistakes'. This intentional ruination has been a consistent theme throughout his practice; Kim is none too precious about his work. He is known for intentionally contaminating or soiling his canvases and sometimes leaving them outside to amass mould, all to the ends of what he calls 'eco-anarchism', or the embracing of decay and cheap materials to minimise waste.



Kim Yong-Ik, *Plane Object* (1977). Airbrush paint on cloth. Approximately 200 x 370 cm. Courtesy the artist and Kukje Gallery. Photo: Keith Park.

Over the years, Kim often addressed, repeated and modified his own earlier projects, asserting that art has reached a point in which nothing new can be made. In such a state, he says, artists are mere editors of theirs and others' work. On multiple occasions Kim has left his works enclosed in their packaging

with only their labels left to indicate their titles, materials and dimensions. The first example of this was in 1981 when the artist was invited to participate in the 1st *Young Artists Exhibition* held at the National Museum of Contemporary Art in [Seoul](#), whereby Kim left his works enclosed in opposition towards the increasingly repressive military dictatorship in South Korea at the time. This act is closely linked to his entombing of old works in more recent years, in which the artist encloses earlier works in 'coffins' and re-exhibits them. For his [2016 solo exhibition](#) at [Kukje Gallery](#) in Seoul (22 November–30 December 2016), Kim transferred images from past sketches and prints to canvases and deemed them new pieces; he staged his retrospective *Closer... Come Closer...* at Ilmin Museum of Art in Seoul that year (1 September–6 November 2016). In his most recent show at Kukje Gallery *Endless Drawing* (20 March–22 April 2018), Kim presented 40 never-before-seen works including crated works, polka dot paintings and conceptual drawings.

At 71, Kim is affable, good-humoured, and generous in conversation. I spoke with the artist at [Art Basel in Hong Kong](#) (29–21 March 2018), where Kukje Gallery presented a solo booth of the artist's work as part of the fair's Kabinett sector.



Installation view: *Endless Drawing*, Kukje Gallery K2, Seoul (20 March–22 April 2018). Courtesy the artist and Kukje Gallery. Photo: Keith Park.

What was your experience of art school at Hongik University in the 1970s?

In the 1960s and 70s in Korea, the avant-garde and modernist art scene was in its nascent stages. Even the Dansaekhwa painters that we know now were very under the radar, and there weren't that many magazines or publications on western art at the time. Even if there were, not that many people could

read them. But a lot of the Dansaekhwa monochrome painters knew how to speak and read Japanese. So in a way, the modernist language came through Japan. My Japanese and English is very limited, so my only source was small translated excerpts about the western avant-garde that I was very excited to read. But among the scene, *Hongik*, a journal published by the students of Hongik University, was relatively progressive.

How did your 'Plane Object' series from the 1970s begin?

At the time, I was reading about the Japanese Mono-ha movement and read one of the artistic statements, which essentially said, 'leave things as they are'. It really struck me. All the western art history that I had learned fell apart after reading this. What I had previously learned was that art was either abstract or figurative—it was about representation and the involvement of the artist, basically. But Mono-ha taught me that things could be just as they are. You don't need the artist's intervention. That really struck me.

I think the concept itself was not entirely foreign to me, because I was exposed to the philosophy of Lao Tzu early on, which was all about leaving nature as it is. Now I realise that this philosophy was part of my conscience and the Korean culture for thousands of years, but I didn't realise it until I read the Mono-ha statement. I feel that the philosophy was really destroyed during the modernisation period and the war in Korea. It's constantly collapsing, even still.



Kim Yong-Ik, *Plane Object* (1977). Airbrush paint on cloth. Approximately 97 x 254 cm. Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Purchased with funds provided by the Acquisition and Collection Committee, Mandy and Clifford Einstein, Alan Hergott and Curt Shepard, Carolyn Powers, and Terri and Michael Smooke. Courtesy the artist and Kukje Gallery. Photo: Keith Park.

Going back to the 'Plane Object' series, I thought, why not just show the canvas as it is, without adding any elements to them? Mono-ha artists would exhibit their objects as they are. I do a little bit of airbrushing to create visual tricks. The works show depicted versus literal lines in a very intricate way. That idea is constantly reflected in my practice to this day. It could also stand for how I'm constantly trying to connect my actual life as an artist and my art.

Your use of disposable, cheap or dirtied materials is described as 'eco-anarchist', a philosophy you took to while in India in late 2009 while on Sandarbh International Artist Residency. What do you mean by that term?

It arises from the fine line between art and everyday reality. I'm constantly thinking: 'I'm an artist, do I want to be an artist, this is an artwork but this doesn't want to be an artwork.' How do I rectify that? The term is a combination of different philosophical ideas and is not a word that I've created myself, but I adopted the term to explain my idea of how an artwork should embrace damage and be open to change. The artist should be allowed to destroy the work if he wants to embrace dirt and time. I'm very keen on humble objects and I wish to have my works open.



Kim Yong-Ik, *Eco Anarchism Project 1* (2017–2018). Mixed media on canvas. 181 x 232.5 cm; *Untitled (Dedicated to 1981 'Today's Circumstance')* (2010). Second version, after lost original of 1981. Ink, packing strap, box. 15 x 81 x 80 cm. Installation view: *Endless Drawing*, Kukje Gallery K2, Seoul (20 March–22 April 2018). Courtesy the artist and Kukje Gallery. Photo: Keith Park.

You've also said that you're addicted to the comforts of a capitalist life and have lost all basis to argue for eco-anarchism. Therefore, your works are a form of self-consolation or self-deception. Do you feel consoled by your own work?

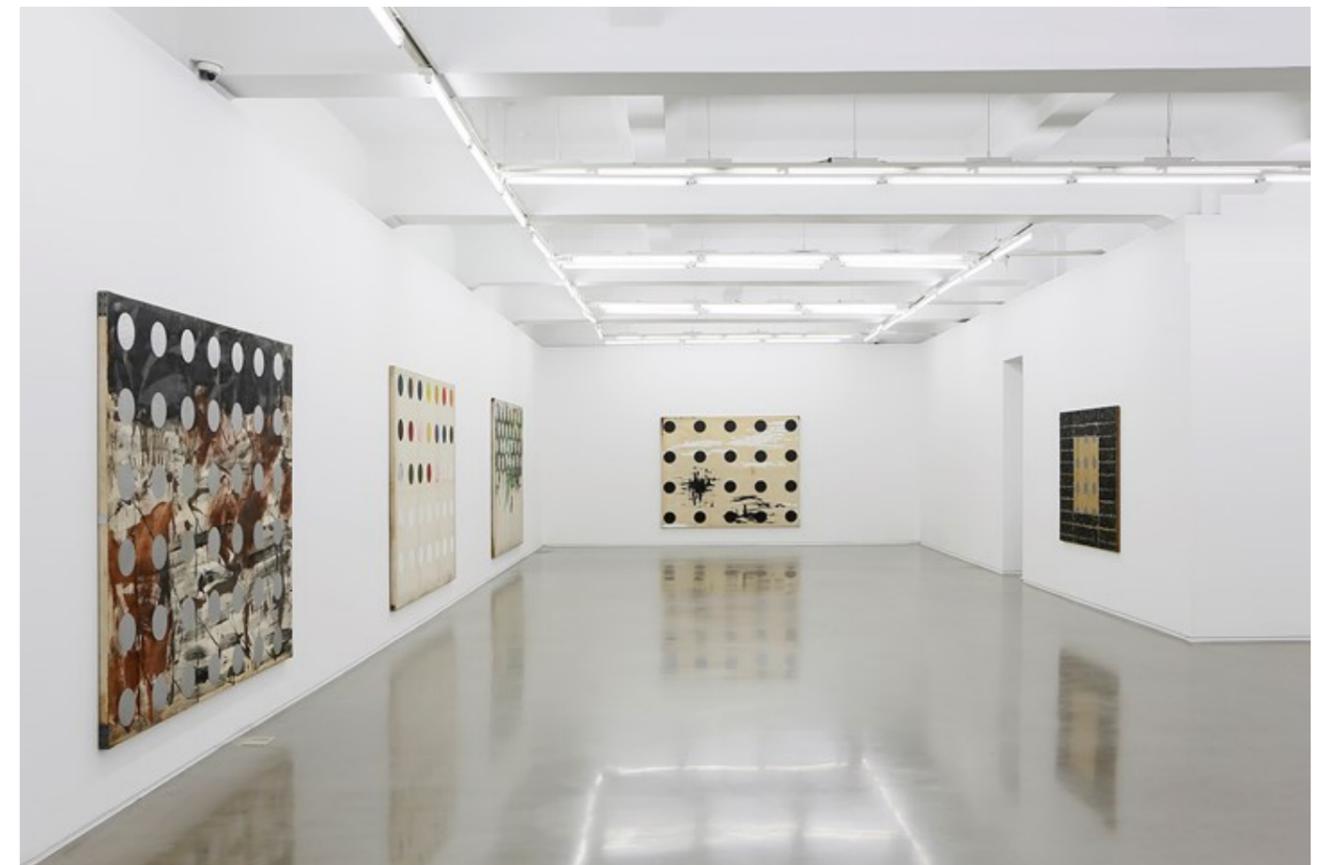
There is a sense of relief, but not an overwhelming one. It's very timid.

You've argued that the modern world has now exhausted its ability to create new art and we are now in an age where the artist acts as an editor who reappropriates and rearranges existing artworks. Do you consider yourself an editor?

I'm constantly reappropriating my old works, and sometimes even the work of other artists.

What appeals to you about polka dots?

In the 1980s, I moved from the 'Plane Object' series to more abstract and geometric languages. I made some wooden panel pieces that mimicked the drawings. While I was working on that, I tried to create some damages to these pieces by cutting holes in them. A circle is very easy to cut.



Installation view: *Closer... Come Closer...*, Ilmin Museum of Art, Seoul (1 September–6 November 2016). Courtesy the artist and Ilmin Museum of Art. Image provided by Kukje Gallery. Photo: NATHING STUDIO.

I would have thought it's very difficult.

I use a compass, which is the easiest device to use to create a perfect form. If you want to draw an accurate rectangle, it's very difficult to be precise. So I did those on thick panels, then I moved to more two-dimensional surfaces in the 1990s and started painting the dots on the surface. While I was doing this, one day I realised they can be in a perfect grid, and the grid itself is a language of modernism. So, I

never presented the polka dots as they were, in a well-aligned manner. I always created a little crack or blemish. That's also part of my personality. I was never outspokenly resistant to modernism, but I always like to create little puns here and there.

I titled those paintings from the 1990s 'Closer, Come Closer'. From a distance, they look like modernist paintings. But if you come closer, you can see little marks, cracks and even where I sometimes stick my hair on the surface.



Installation view: *Closer... Come Closer...*, Ilmin Museum of Art, Seoul (1 September–6 November 2016). Courtesy the artist and Ilmin Museum of Art. Image provided by Kukje Gallery. Photo: NATHING STUDIO.

What do you think of when you see your 'imperfect' works in a white cube setting?

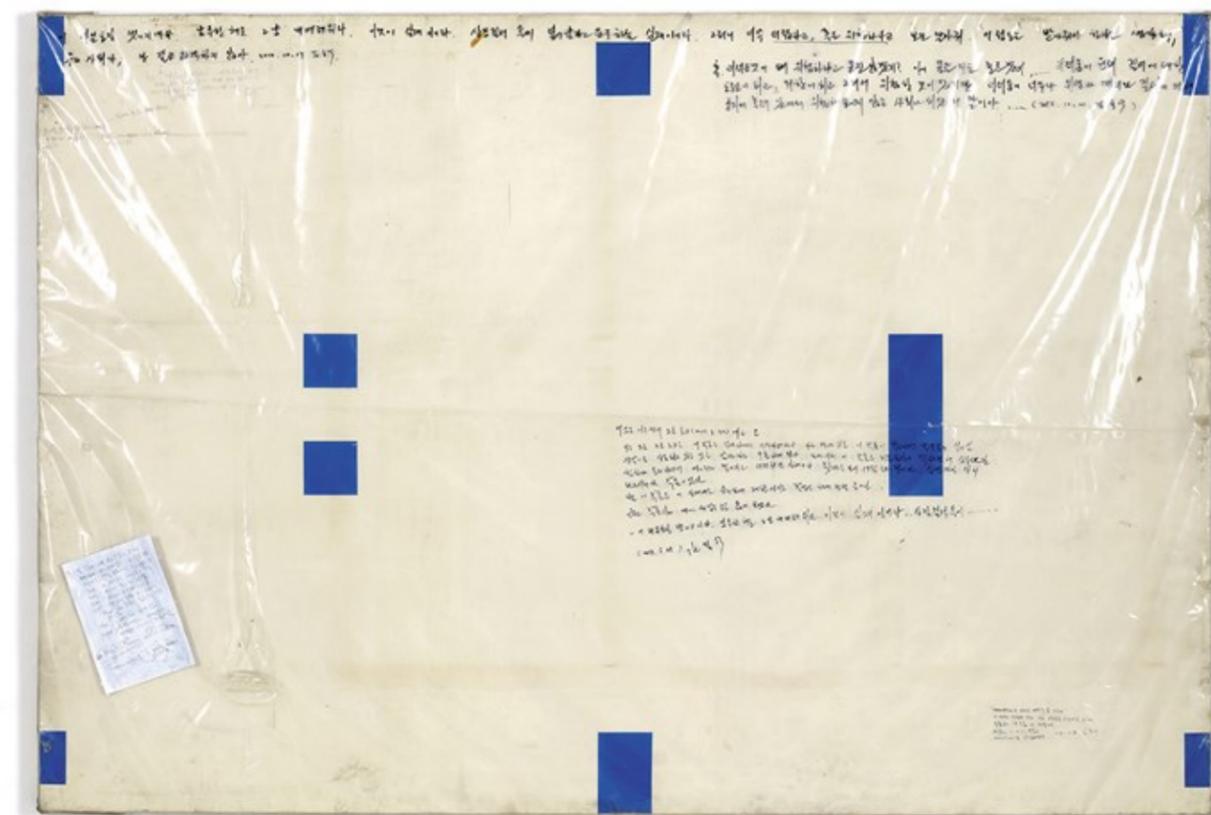
Of course, the work does end up in galleries and collections, which contrast the imperfections I embrace. But I'm trying to destroy modernism and create a crack from the inside, like a Trojan horse.

One writer described your work as having a punk sensibility. What do you think about that?

To me, punk connotes a very energetic and unrestrained force. But I think that I am more subtle. I want to delay a fixed interpretation of my work.

I think perhaps punk can also describe one who is rebellious and has a penchant for breaking the rules.

There is a true rebel inside me, but when I perform that into an action, I'm not a very energetic and aggressive type. I'm a moderate.



Kim Yong-ik, *Closer... Come Closer...* (1996–2013). Mixed Media on Canvas, wrapped in vinyl. 150 x 218 cm. Courtesy the artist and Kukje Gallery, Seoul. Photo: Keith Park.

That's interesting; it reminds me of how, the surface of one painting titled *Closer... Come Closer...* (1996–2013), you wrote: 'I am never an aggressive type, as all avant-garde has been!'

Your definition of drawing, given as the part of the press release for *Endless Drawing* at Kukje, is that it is in continuous work-in-progress. What do you mean by that?

The idea of a drawing exhibition is not medium-specific. I don't want to define the drawing by its medium in a traditional sense, so I gave my own definition. This idea of modernism that I'm trying to overcome is not just a stylistic advice of modernism I'm talking about, it's also about the modernist idea of life. For example, I think that modernism is about function and efficiency in society and I want to go against that. Art students and artists are obsessed with trying to create a completed product. But to me, an artwork is not a finished or perfect thing. It can always change. Our society and art should embrace things that can change. I want the art students who visit my show to feel a sense of liberation.—[O]

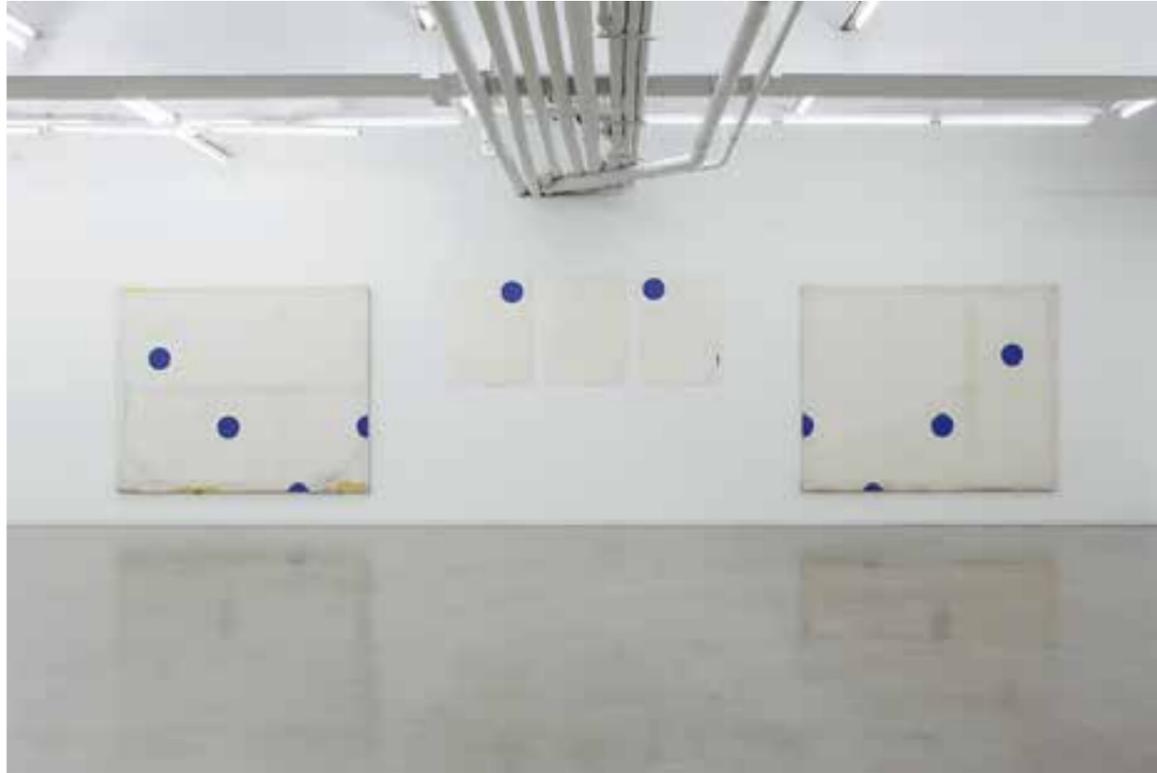


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HG Masters *CLOSER ... COME CLOSER ...* in: ArtAsiaPacific (online), April 2019
<http://artasiapacific.com/Magazine/WebExclusives/CloserComeCloser>

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KIM YONG-IK, To Ilmin Museum of Art 2016, 2016, acrylic on canvas, acrylic on paper and pencil, dimensions variable. Courtesy Ilmin Museum of Art, Seoul.

CLOSER ... COME CLOSER ... KIM YONG-IK

WEB REVIEW BY HG MASTERS
ILMIN MUSEUM OF ART

KOREA, SOUTH

Kim Yong-Ik's cultivated eccentricity is exceptional even by artistic standards. The title of his retrospective at the Ilmin Museum of Art (IMA) in Seoul, "Closer ... Come Closer ..." comes from a 1996 painting that hangs in the middle of the second-floor gallery, still wrapped in clear plastic on which the artist wrote the following instructions: "Do not peel off this plastic packaging. Leave it in its shabby state. This is the reality. This is the reality demanding to be included in the symbolic order. [...] I am not radical at all. As all avant-garde are ..." He wrote that on October 17, 2012, and then a few days later scrawled a few more words on the plastic covering: "The dirty used to be a challenge against order, and a resistance, and thus the dangerous. But hygiene, manners and order have now cornered the dirty to an extreme that it no longer seems threatening in this society."

The story of Kim's career is one of a prodigy turned iconoclast. When Kim made his artistic debut with his series of hanging canvas pieces, "Plane Objects," in 1974, he was seen, as Ilmin Museum of Art chief curator Youngjune Hahm described him, as the "legitimate heir to Korean Modernism, the so-called Park Seo-Bo cartel (sadan)," referring to the artist's mentor. Park's recommendations carried the young Kim to the 1975 São Paulo Biennial and into prominent exhibitions such as the Independents and École de Seoul series, organized by Park starting in 1975. But looking at Kim's Plane Objects (1974–81), it is obvious that these works are also rejections of modernism. Wrinkled and soiled-looking, airbrushed at the corners or down the spine to highlight the ghost of the traditional stretcher-frames from which they've been removed, Plane Objects are tacked to the wall in a desultory manner. They are anti-aspirational—a bit punk, even, like the guy who deliberately shows up for a formal reception in ripped jeans and a dirty t-shirt. This precocious-renegade trajectory culminated in 1981 when Kim packed his Plane Objects works into cardboard boxes and displayed them that way in the gallery at the first edition of the Korean Young Artists Biennale—an anti-art gesture that Hahm links to the tumultuous period around the assassination of autocratic president

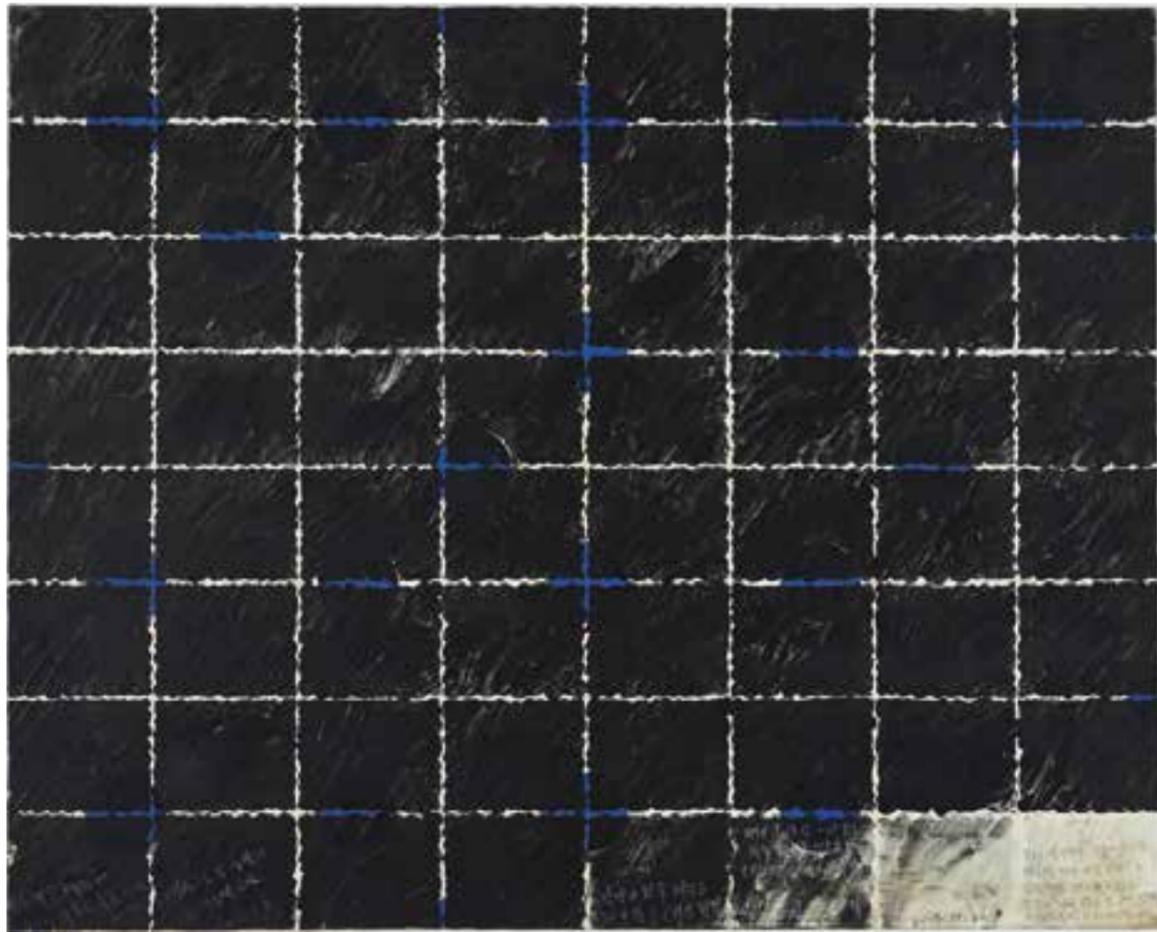
Park Chung-hee (in 1979) and the beginning of Chun Doo-Hwan's dictatorship. Around that same time, Park Seo-Bo rejected Kim, suspecting his former protégé of having developed sympathies for leftist social movements after the military massacre that was the result of the citizen uprising in Gwangju in May 1980.



KIM YONG-IK, Closer ... Come Closer ..., 1996–2013, mixed media on canvas, 150 × 218 cm. Courtesy Ilmin Museum of Art, Seoul.

Despite his mentor's suspicions, Kim was no more interested in making realist protest art (later dubbed Minjung misul or "people's art") than he was in doggedly pursuing a pseudo-Korean form of modernism like the Dansaekhwa ("monochrome") artists. Kim was invited to join the Minjung art movement in 1985 after the police forcefully removed artworks and arrested five people at their exhibition "Power of the Younger Generation." Kim declined to join their ranks officially, because, as Hahm explained, "He believed that the institutionalized Modernism should embrace Minjung art, which was the Korean avant-garde, while also contending that Minjung art should not be consumed by its purpose and discard the aesthetic potential of avant-garde art." Instead, in his own works, Kim navigated between these two harshly oppositional factions by defying each of their sacred positions. At Ilmin, this is evident in Kim's cut-paper works from the early 1980s on the first floor, where he used cardboard, pencil and ink to make very angular, geometrical abstractions in what at first seem like constructivist-style pieces (some reminiscent of Nasreen Mohamedi drawings). Up close these modest works are revealed to be little trompe l'oeil gags about modernist forms, as Kim pushes the cut-out forms outside the edges of the rectangle, or flips them over to reveal expressionistic drawings on the backside of the paper, or confuses the eye by mixing cut-out shapes with pencil-drawn lines. A pair of untitled, red and white works from 1990 presage his works of the ensuing decade, with circular cut-outs, plant-juice stains and diaristic scribbles across the surface. Rather than oppositional, Kim's works remained self-critical over the years.

By 1987, Kim had formulated his own criteria of "anti-standards" for a good artwork. As little energy (labor), cost and skill as possible should be used in making it, and the final work should be easily reproducible, transportable and susceptible to damage. Of course, he also then violated many of his own rules in the 1989 sculpture Two-pieces, which is a deliberate mess of un-conventionalism (anti-anti-art): two standing red MDF panels, each 2.4-meters in height, are bolted to each other; their barely visible inner-facing sides are covered in messy, "abstract" paintings. There are randomly cut circles across the panels, a jagged side on one of them and an additional cut portion on the other that hinges outward like a foot. This flap contains a poster of the work's original showing in an exhibition at Inkong Gallery, in the spring of 1989. Two-pieces is a completely undisciplined postmodern object: neither social-realist nor purely modernist, nor even "good" by Kim's own standards.



KIM YONG-IK, *Despair Completed*, part of series, 1994–2002, acrylic on canvas, 80 × 100 cm. Courtesy Ilmin Museum of Art, Seoul.

Ten years after stuffing his 1970s-era fabric works into cardboard boxes, Kim shifted directions again in 1990 with a series of polka-dot-covered works. These begin with heavily distressed-looking untitled canvases from 1990, on which there are splatters of white that appear as though they resulted from aggressive application of paint on another work nearby. Another canvas features rows of polka-dots, bordered by negative space painted in white, and then finally there are others where awkward portions of their surface (the left half, the middle, or the corners) are covered with the circles. Other polka-dot paintings (all untitled) on the opposite wall at Ilmin Museum, also from 1990, exhibit gleeful insouciance—where colorful brush marks surround unpainted circles; some rows of polka dots are painted in random colors, while the rest are in plain white, and rows of gold dots cover a black-and-white abstraction. If there was any temptation to begin finding these works too artistic, Kim disavowed that impulse in “*Despair Completed*” (1994–2002). Kim made these paintings from sketchy, unfinished rectangles of black paint, as well as with blank portions of the canvas, and other forms such as more polka dots. As the work’s title indicates, these are nihilistic paintings—evidence of the artist pulling out various “sacred” tropes from modernist abstraction and then undermining their supposed integrity, by leaving the canvases incomplete and scribbling notes on the surface. You can imagine that Park Seobo would have hated these works.



KIM YONG-IK, *Ksitigarbha 2*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, bubble wrap, wooden box, oil-based ink on acetate film, 150 × 116 × 14 cm. Courtesy Ilmin Museum of Art, Seoul.

For all of his cynicism about art, Kim has also believed in communicating about social and political topics through avant-garde art. He taught at Kyungwon University from 1991 until 2013. In 1997, he was appointed head commissioner of the “Gwangju Biennale Normalization Art-wide Committee,” which sought to reconcile the Modernist and Minjung cliques, where in-fighting had led to the dismissal of the 3rd Gwangju Biennale director Choi Min and had sent the festival into chaos. He was involved in the founding of the alternative venue Art Space Pool (formerly called Alternative Space Pool), with Park Chan-kyong, Lee Yeong-wook and Hwang Se-jun in 1999, and in the early 2000s, Kim turned to public art projects that, instead of “beautifying” spaces, spoke against political

decisions. In response to a government bill that required one-percent of construction costs be spent on “art decoration,” he had 10,000 bricks temporarily laid in front of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which were filled with sand and grass seeds and used as a site for public performances.

But Kim didn’t stop at burning his idols. Since the dawn of the current decade, he has also begun to kill off his own oeuvre. The third floor at Ilmin Museum features both archival materials (books, catalogues, slides, photographs and a timeline) and the artist’s latest series of “Coffin” works. As a preamble to this accumulation of materials, in a nook at the gallery entrance, was a pile of folded plastic wrapping and cardboard boxes, along with two of his cut-paper works laying on top. Although Kim has been interested in the packaging of his works since 1981, in the 2010s his fascination turned from art-packaging to funereal rituals. In *Ksitigarbha 2* (2015), for instance, a painting is packaged in blue bubble-wrap and laid inside a wooden crate with a transparent window on which Kim has drawn the outline of the robed Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva and his sutra. Nearby, *To Ilmin Museum of Art 2016* (2016) is a hanging bamboo stick and a brown-paper package bound in rope, apparently containing a folded-up “Plane Object” canvas, adorned with older images of the work and invitations for the exhibitions where it was previously displayed. The artist’s musings are everywhere in these works, most definitely in *Triptych* (2015), a crate hanging on the wall that contains two university-era paintings (a landscape and a self-portrait), other fragments of past works (including a polka-dot canvas) and a copper pot containing the ashes of incense. The crate has a transparent acetate side that features (from left to right) a drawing of the Fall of Adam and Eve, an unhappy looking Buddha, and a depiction of souls being tortured in Hell. On the surface Kim wrote his latest screed, which begins, “The modernist scheme that attempted to pursue freedom, equality and peace for all mankind has broken down,” and concludes, “The collection and re-arrangement of torn, broken, dirty and moldy artworks that are stained with suffering and corruption, death and abjectness, is bestowed to the artist who will usher in the forthcoming dystopian era [. . .] In my imagination, it is the art of a dystopian era that signals acquired creation where yang is transformed into yim [sic] and art it is political art in the form of low-entropic eco-anarchism.”



KIM YONG-IK, *Triptych*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, oil on canvas, cloth, cotton, wood, ink on paper, coin, incense, burner and oil-based ink on acetate film, 157 × 226 × 16 cm. Courtesy Ilmin Museum of Art, Seoul.

The death of Kim’s own work was in fact prefigured from the very year of its birth. The catalogue for “*Closer . . . Come Closer . . .*” includes a newspaper clipping that reports that on February 22, 1975, a student had apparently died during a graduation ceremony at Hongik University, transforming the scene into an impromptu funeral. The whole event was later revealed to be a happening by the fierce women’s experimental filmmaking club, Khai Du. The person who “died” that celebratory day and was carried out of graduation in a wooden coffin was Kim Yong-ik. The cycle of life and death (or killing and resurrection), which the Ilmin Museum’s exhibition described, revealed how Kim productively evaded Korea’s polarization while still advocating for avant-garde experimentation and social progressiveness. “*Closer . . . Come Closer . . .*” made clear how the iconoclastic figure has become an inspiration to several younger generations now: admired for his ability to be political without being partisan, and always brutally honest with himself and his audience.

Kim Yong-Ik’s “*Closer . . . Come Closer . . .*” is on view at the Ilmin Museum of Art, Seoul, until November 6, 2016.

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Nicholas Stephens *Thin Ice and Inbetweenness – A Conversation with Kim Yong-Ik* in COBO (online), March 29, 2019
<https://www.cobosocial.com/dossiers/kim-yong-ik/>

Thin Ice and Inbetweenness – A Conversation with Kim Yong- Ik



Kukje Gallery's (IC12) contribution to Kabinett is an intimate journey through close to five decades of creation by seminal South Korean artist Kim Yong-Ik, whose self-avowed despair at today's capitalist and neoliberal system did not seem to dampen his mood when we met him on the opening day of Art Basel Hong Kong 2018.

TEXT: Nicholas Stephens

IMAGES: Courtesy of Kukje Gallery



(<https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Screen-Shot-2018-03-29-at-11.46.22-AM-e1522295227313.png>)

Artist portrait of Kim Yong-Ik

Photography by Keith Park

Image provided by Kukje Gallery

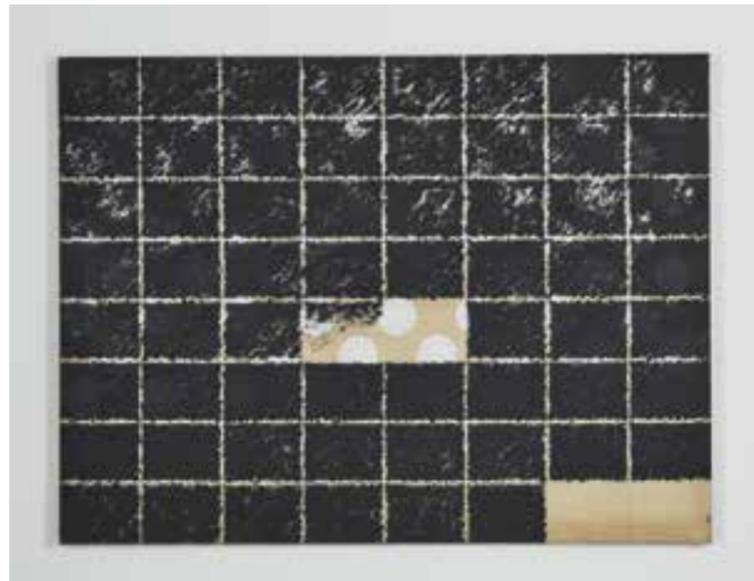
Kim's artworks employ a kind of visual trickery which may reflect his view of our world as a whole. In surrounding ourselves with the trappings of capitalism, are we being tricked, misdirected from what is truly important in life? Within such a framework, Kim's Kabinett may be visited as a visual remedy, a means of assuaging the poisonous ills of capitalism temporarily.

Few artists produce works which revel so much in their own incompleteness; indeed, Kim joyously revisits his earlier works to improve, or sometimes obliterate his original intentions or ideas. One work here, *Vowing Rebirth*, presents a 1995 painting cheerfully "buried" in a coffin in 2015, while another was begun in 1974 and was last added to in 2010 (to say "completed" may turn out to be inaccurate). His use of readymades (including a Spanish wine box) are fuel for his own gentle, optimistically hopeless battle with the prevailing norms of the capitalist world, and are unabashed homages to Marcel Duchamp.

When asked when he is at his most happy, he answered that it was when he was travelling between places, such as between his home in Seoul and Hong Kong. At first, we misunderstood his meaning, assuming it is the distraction of being busy that he enjoys. Kim rebutted this firmly, along with the idea that he likes flying (he hates it). Rather, the state of inbetweenness is what gratifies him – the

precariousness of being neither here nor there. As an artist, Kim remarks that his role is to be on thin ice – belonging completely to one place or to one artistic or political movement would jeopardize this precariousness. It would come in between him and the joy of inbetweenness.

The rest of the conversation went as follows:



(https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Kukje-Gallery_Kim-Yong-Ik_Despair-Completed-3-e1522295567515.jpg)

金容翼 Kim Yong-Ik (b. 1947) Despair Completed #3 1990-2002

Acrylic on canvas

194 x 259 cm

Courtesy the artist and Kukje Gallery Image provided by Kukje Gallery

In 1980, you refused to unpack the boxes of your artworks at the Young Artists' Biennial in South Korea, which was seen both as protest against the South Korean government, and a witty response to Marcel Duchamp. What should we be protesting about in today's world, and which artists still inspire you?

We should be resisting the globalizing force of capitalism known under the name of neoliberalism. This resistance should be more than just an act of protest; it should begin with the self—you have to

break out of your thoughts and daily existence that are closely bound to capitalism.

Marcel Duchamp continues to inspire my practice and many aspects of my life in general. Once he stops giving me inspiration, I will erase him from my mind. And that will be my very last homage to the great artist.

You would like us to resist this cataclysm (the end of the world) by fundamentally changing our lives by any means. What practical changes can individuals make to make the world a better place?

An abstract answer to this question would be “to step away from the modernist ideology of progress, development, and accomplishment, and to escape to your inner self.” The practical act an individual would take, however, must vary. As an artist, I strive to continuously doubt the art system, artistic practice, and even my life to create a dissonance within the world we live in.



(https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Kukje-Gallery-Kim-Yong-Ik_Endless-Drawing_installation-view_4-web.jpg)

Kukje Gallery K2 Kim Yong-Ik solo exhibition

“Endless Drawing” installation view

Image provided by Kukje Gallery

One of your definitions of a drawing is A work that is continuously in progress and does not remain static in a stage of completion. Why do you feel the need of continual change, and do you feel there is too much in the world which is static and unchanging?

I don't think the world is static and unchanging. I'm rather critical of how we have set the idea of completion and a fixed state as a goal to continuously and compulsively pursue. When we are running after these, many aspects of our life and the world get flattened. Just as gentrification wipes out the history of old towns and streets. A drawing gently embraces and glides with the traces of existing history, as it doesn't strive for completeness or a fixed state.

You once remarked that the world has exhausted its ability to create new art. Why do you feel that way, and is this a recent phenomenon or one which was already the case when you began as an artist?

I would say this idea has persisted since the very beginning of my practice. There was this seed of an idea and it constantly grew to this point. It's not so easy to tell why. As an artist, I must have intuitively felt that the epoch of Anthropocene is coming to an end. Around this time, I encountered and was mesmerized by Jungyeok, a book of philosophy from 19th century Joseon dynasty. According to the philosophy, the universe has passed the time of growth (spring and summer; referred to as former genesis) and entered the time of burial (fall and winter; referred to as latter genesis). My interpretation is that it was possible to create something visible out of the invisible during the former period whereas in the latter years, the only possible gesture of an artist is to edit and rearrange existing visible elements.



(https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Kukje-Gallery-Kim-Yong-Ik_Endless-Drawing_installation-view_1-web.jpg)

Kukje Gallery K2 Kim Yong-Ik solo exhibition

"Endless Drawing" installation view

Image provided by Kukje Gallery

You retired from teaching at Kyungwong University in 2012. Having seen different generations of students, how do you feel today's generation differ from you and your fellow artists in the 1970s?

Today's generation have more talent and are strikingly astute. I respect their ability to deftly manipulate the current information technology, including computer. It's a shame that they have to live at a time when any kind of growth is no longer possible.

What plans do you have for the future?

My goal is to have a "well-ending" to my career and my life.

Nicholas Stephens is from London and has lived in Hong Kong for the last nine years, where he works for a leading Hong Kong gallery, specializing in contemporary ink. His articles on diverse aspects of the Hong Kong arts scene have been published in "Art Hong Kong". A graduate in Modern Languages (European ones unfortunately!), Nicholas has authored translations of novels and plays by writers including Stefan Zweig and Hugo von Hofmannsthal.