

KUKJE GALLERY

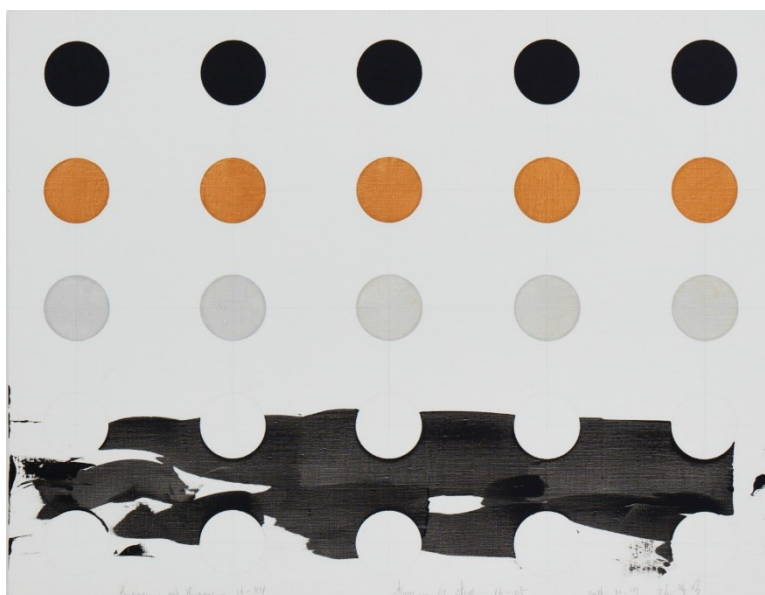
Press Release

Kim Yong-Ik Solo Exhibition

Press Conference: November 22, 2016 (Tue.) 11 AM at Kukje Gallery K2

Exhibition date: November 22 – December 30, 2016

Exhibition venue: Kukje Gallery K2



Thinner...and Thinner... #16-85

2016

Mixed media on canvas

91 x 117 cm

Photo by Keith Park, Image provided by Kukje Gallery

"This is an age where editing is a required process for art-making, in place of creating. Furthermore, the age of 'development-creativity' has come to a close, and one can now declare an age of 'collection-compilation.' As I move forward towards the 'deconstructed self' from my initial 'modernist self' I will no longer create new works. Instead, I will present those I have reinterpreted, restructured, and reappropriated from my previous works."

- Kim Yong-Ik

Kukje Gallery is very pleased to present the work of Kim Yong-Ik, November 22 through December 30. Installed in the K2 gallery, this is Kukje Gallery's final exhibition for 2016. Kukje Gallery has a long commitment to showcasing artists whose work has been instrumental in the development of Korean art. Kim Yong-Ik's practice perfectly embodies the vital importance of post-Dansaekhwa artists in Korea, and the exhibition will present approximately thirty new works, produced within the last two years, that present a clear reframing of his practices by reappropriating past ideas. While new, the works link directly to Kim's long career and his well-known practice of critically examining the role of art in society.

Kim Yong-Ik's practice spans most of the late 20th century art historical movements including modernism, conceptual art, the Minjung art movement, and public art of the 1980s and 90s. The artist has consistently identified himself as a modernist who endlessly questions his practice and existing art institutions, as well as searches for new solutions. His diverse studio practice has been characterized by his resolute stance of deconstructing the complex values of contemporary art. In this solo exhibition, Kim has escaped his former apologetic, ethical, "modernist self" whose focus was primarily on this critique. Instead, the work illustrates his transformation into a new embodiment of what the artist calls his lighter "deconstructed self."

The majority of the works in the exhibition were produced in 2015 and 2016. Each work shares one of the following five titles that directly frame Kim's transformation: *Apocalypse of Modernism*, *"In the lingering shadow" of Lies*, *Thinner...and Thinner...*, *After 20 Years*, and *Utopia*. Produced by reinterpreting and reediting past projects, the artist has used existing sketches and prints, transferring them to these new works on canvas. These paintings can be seen as a direct successor to Kim's extensive "polka dot" series, which the artist began in the 1990s.

Conceived in the early 1990s, Kim's "polka dot" series consists of paintings depicting simple and repetitive arrangements of circles, the simplest and most perfect geometric form. Kim juxtaposes this formal rigor by embracing subtle imperfections such as dust, fragments of his thought process, and doodles. In this way the life cycle of the artwork functions like a visual metaphor, illustrating his critique of aesthetics as advocated by modernism and the modernist society. In this new body of work the artist has further departed from his past strategies by engaging directly a more aestheticized vocabulary of marks using lilting gestures, rhythmic repetition and vivid colors. In so doing the artist has created a stunning new direction successfully bridging his critique of art with a new optimism and joie de vivre.

Apocalypse of Modernism is a grandiloquent title that foreshadows the "apocalypse of modernism" by completely oversetting modernist painting. The image of the "polka dot" paintings echoes the prototypical modernist syntax rooted in the grid. The artist takes it a step further, however, by piercing the canvas and spreading paint or juice from plants to stain the picture plane. This gesture against the smooth perfection of modernist painting embodies Kim's critical stance.

"In the Lingering Shadow" of Lies reveals Kim's feelings on the "polka dot" series which the artist recently reshaped, engaging with the "ghosts" of these past works of art. Meanwhile, it also ironically includes the pursuit of "yet another something," which was heretofore unseen in the artist's works from the 1990s.



Thinner...and Thinner... #16-83

2016

Mixed media on canvas

91 x 117 cm

Photo by Keith Park, Image provided by Kukje Gallery

Thinner...and Thinner... is a title that refers to the thin surface of a painting, that results from the laborious, repeated act of filling in a portion of the canvas every day. Kim alludes to the transformation the surface and the metaphorical releasing of the weight of his modernist self and “modernist principle” that has taken place over the past forty years, leading to a discovery of his more lighthearted “deconstructed self.”

After 20 Years, a title derived from the quote “...this artwork will be unveiled twenty years from now.” This work frames the importance that manifests in the layers of time. This history revealed by the old, discolored and soiled surfaces of the works implies their ongoing relevance after yet another twenty years of time passes.

The final title is ***Utopia***, featuring a group of works that explores the perfection of temporal relevance by deconstructing the origin of the word. *U-topia*, a spelling which highlights the Greek root words *ou* meaning “no” or “not” and *topos* meaning “place”, signifies “a place which does not really exist anywhere.” The artist reveals the necessary marriage between the “bright and airy” and the “far-off sense of the void” just like the duality that exists in the contradicting positive and negative definition of the word itself. Kim’s work anticipates the breath of fresh air when truth and falsity, happiness and unhappiness, beauty and ugliness are harmonized after the belabored criticism of the artist’s past.

Many of the new works featured in Kim Yong-Ik’s solo exhibition at Kukje Gallery are distinguished by having a thin, almost washy, surface and an overall, light-hued palette. This new painting style symbolically reveals relative “lightness” and “thinness” as compared to the epistemological questions and criticality that lies at the heart of contemporary art and characterized much of the artist’s earlier work. At a glance, it seems as if Kim is pursuing a different route from his past work. However, his strategy of “reappropriating” past ideas embodies the act of recontextualizing ideas based on their changing context – a stance that

shifts the emphasis from his past criticism to something else. In this way Kim demonstrates a broader, more inclusive, perspective that challenges even the act of criticism itself, and renders it obsolete.



Kim Yong-Ik, 2016

Photo by Keith Park, Image provided by Kukje Gallery

Kim Yong-Ik was born in Seoul in 1947 and graduated from Hongik University in 1980 with an MFA in Painting. He served as a professor of Painting at the Arts and Design College in Kyungwon University from 1991 to 2012. In 1999, Kim helped establish one of Korea's leading exhibition spaces known as "art space pool" (formerly known as "alternative space pool"), and was its representative from 2004 to 2006. In 2016 Kim was the subject of an extensive retrospective at Ilmin Museum of Art.

The artist first came to fame with his fabric series *Plane Object*, completed during his undergraduate studies in the Western Painting department at Hongik University in 1974. Immediately celebrated for this series of work, Kim's discomfort with the mainstream art world were immediately apparent, and he proceeded to "bury" the same project in a box in 1981.

When the domestic art scene entered into its transitional period with the polarization of the Minjung Art Movement and modernism during the 1980s and 90s, Kim rejected this dichotomy and proceeded to curate and write on public art exhibitions, as well as actively participate in environmental and local art movements. Kim's thoughtful texts brooded over the environment and institutions that surrounded the arts as well as the role of art in public spaces. Referred to as a post-Dansaekhwa generation artist, Kim played a vital role as a bridge between these competing movements.

Selected exhibitions of Kim Yong-Ik include his retrospective *Closer...Come Closer...* at Ilmin Museum of Art in 2016, the 5th Yokohama Triennale in 2014, *SeMA Gold 2012: Hidden Track* at Seoul Museum of Art in 2012, *Timidly Resisting the No-Pain-Civilization* solo exhibition at "art space pool" in 2011, the 1st Anyang Public Art Project *Tripping the Balance* in 2005, Gwangju Biennale in 2002, Sung-kok Art Museum group exhibition in 1999, Yokohama Museum of Art group exhibition in 1983, the 13th São Paulo Art Biennial in 1975, and a series of *Independents* exhibitions at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art from 1974 to 1979. His works are in the permanent collections the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul Museum of Art, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, and Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum among many others.

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