

**KOREAN ART  
AND THE AVANT-GARDE DILEMMA**

**KI-WOONG PARK**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements of  
Nottingham Trent University  
for the degree of Doctor of Fine Arts**

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## Abstract

The thesis covers Korean avant-garde art history and the dilemma that faced Korean artists at the end of the Japanese Colonial Period (1910-1945). Current literature adequately details avant-garde as progressive fine arts; however, there is limited literature on Korean art in this period. This thesis suggests the term avant-garde dilemma to indicate Korean artists' difficulty in style selection to follow a traditional aesthetical trend or progressive socio-political attitude for the foundation of Korean post-modernism. A salient démarche is found when Korean political avant-garde artists meet this dilemma in the midst of the Korean Demonstration Era (1976-1989) that initiates the decline of aesthetical activism and Demonstrative Art. Several styles of avant-garde dilemma after the Korea War are critiqued in the avant-garde evolution; subsequently, there arise hybrid styles between socio-political avant-garde and aesthetical avant-garde styles in Contemporary Korean Art. The examples included are Nam-Jun Baik's Video Art (a combination of art and technology), Do-Ho Suh's combination of meticulous sculpture with installation to satire Korean neo-capitalist society, Doo-Shik Lee's combination of oriental color with western gesture, and Suk-Chang Hong's free calligraphy to combine still-life, landscape, calligraphy, and scribbling.

Related artistic, political, and social developments since 2000, illustrate the climax of the Korean avant-garde dilemma and my artistic motivation to create *Iron Age* through a medium of stainless steel & plastic with polyurethane pigments. *Iron Age* exemplifies the development of a new hybrid style (painting and sculpture) to resolve the ideological avant-garde dilemma. This thesis develops the hybrid term *Aesthetical and Socio-political Avant-garde Art* to satisfy two aesthetical and socio-political ideologies. For aesthetical development, we consider Clive Bell's philosophy to create 'significant form'. *Iron Age* combines theories of Italian Arte-Povera, French Nouveau Realism (Fire Painting), German Neo-Expressionism, post-structural Conceptualism with free expression and varieties of composition. *Iron Age* that develops from Adorno's socio-critical expression to describe a dystopia through Material Language, Destroy Structure, Dissipative Void, Metamorphosed Texture, Letters and Personages, Smoke and Shade, and Symbolic Coloring. A visual Socio-political message is developed through metamorphosis and deconstruction skills under *Iron Age* that form a core motif of *Scrooge Repent* as the mirror image of Scrooge's redemption of in *A Christmas Carol* to show a futuristic material paradise destroyed through war, terrorism, and spiritual desolateness.

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## ***Introduction***

Successful style creation is identical to the creation of a new revolutionary practice expressed through postmodern avant-garde art such as feminism, conceptualism, German expressionism, Italian trans-avant-garde art, and UK sensation group art that developed after the 1980s in Europe and North America. Subsequently, it is a challenge to create my own personal and individual style as a Korean artist due to an inability to decide what is new. I desire to be a Korean contemporary avant-garde artist that experiments with innovative issues based upon new theories and methods. Personal motivation motivates me to study international idioms and traditional arts in order to reveal a new conception; however, it is difficult to decide the trend gap between local Korea and international causes of the dilemma. This situation is an avant-garde dilemma that creates three research questions.

1. Korean Artistic View: what is the conception of the Korean avant-garde dilemma and the importance to resolve it?
2. Korean Modern Art History: how Korean avant-garde artists have developed Korean style avant-garde art and how the avant-garde dilemma arises?
3. Contemporary Korea: what is my strategy to resolve the avant-garde dilemma and my *raison d'être* to create hybrid style avant-garde art?

To answer these questions this thesis argues how to resolve the Korean avant-garde dilemma for my personal practice. The research focuses on the following: First, a literature review provides the definition of the avant-garde dilemma. Second, compare how to create contemporary avant-garde arts between international and Korean cases. Third, introduce a self-critical view to overcome the avant-garde dilemma.

**Chapter 1** *Avant-garde and Relative Terms* reviews the debate between the terms, avant-garde to define the exact meaning of avant-garde dilemma and relative terms, such as mimesis, modernity, post-modernity, structuralism, and semiotics. During this review, this research studies Renato Poggioli's, Matei Calinescu's and other texts to define the term avant-garde, mimesis, and modernity.

Section 1.1 reviews the two faces of conception avant-garde through the meanings: militant (negative), revolutionary, progressive (positive) arises (Calinescu, 1987: 96-120). In cases such as Dadaism, where avant-garde artists create works through new art theories like anti-art or de-art or those are not in the aesthetical boundary at that time (Dario Gamboni, 1998: 312-313).

Section 1.2 reviews Poggioli's *Theory of Avant-garde* that distinguishes avant-garde as activism and antagonism (1968: 27-40). The research divides contemporary avant-garde art into aggressive and intellectual directions. This section also argues that the aggressive direction is activism direction or iconoclastic (anti-moral) direction and that the intellectual direction is either an antagonism style direction or a post-structuralism direction.

Section 3.2 defines the concept of the avant-garde dilemma through a literature review of avant-garde. This section examines a critical gap between avant-garde artists (creators) and the viewers (the audiences or collectors) who have not been informed of the new art theory (Burke, 2008: 95) because, misunderstood viewers do not love avant-garde arts. Thus, this section investigates the theory of structuralism and semiotics to explain my arts.

**Chapter 2** *Development of a Korean Avant-garde* introduces a short history of the development of Korean avant-garde art from the 1930s to 1980s through selected examples. Poggioli suggests two styles of avant-garde movements of activism and antagonism as well as two avant-garde motifs of cultural-artistic avant-garde and socio-political avant-garde (Poggioli, 1968: 8-10). Korean avant-garde is then conceptualized into three styles of socio-political avant-garde, aesthetic avant-garde, and hybrid avant-garde.

Section 2.1 introduces socio-political avant-garde from the perspective of Korean Modernism Art History. The first section details trends in the midst of the Japanese Colonial Era (1930s), Korean War (1950s), and Korean democracy period (1980s). Examples given of these periods are: 1. Sang-bum Lee's *Japan Flag Demolish Incident*. 2. Que-Dae Lee's development of a Korean socio-political avant-garde positioned between leftist and rightist ideology. 3. How activism artists developed Korean Mass Art (*Minjungmisul*), which is the first Korean post-modern style 'socio-political avant-garde' in the midst of the Gwangju Democratization Movement of the 1980s.

Section 2.2 introduces the development of Korean style aesthetic avant-garde. Why Jung-Seop Lee tries to express family separation after the Korea War, how Korean *Art Informel* arises in the 1950s-1960s, why Korean Informel artists metamorphose the *Informel*

into Korean natural colors to develop Korean Monochrome Art with the flexible materiality of *hanji* in the 1960s-1970s, and how Korean born Japanese U-Fan Lee develops Japanese style *Monoha* in 1970s. This section argues why certain Korean Mass Artists ignore aesthetical beauty to use images of disgust to create propaganda like art under the conception of socio-political avant-garde as the progressive attitude to attract mass-public action (political demonstration).

Section 2.3 argues why Soo-Keun Park combines cathartic theory, geometrical two-dimensional expression, *Informel*, and Korean traditional colors (white and ocher) to create a personally defined hybrid style. This section also argues the author's intention to create a hybrid, aesthetical and socio-political (socio-critical) avant-garde.

**Chapter 3** *Korean Avant-garde Dilemma and Several Cases to resolve the Dilemma* argues how Korean artists have tried to create Korean post-modern avant-garde art, the differences from international contexts, and how to solve the Korean avant-garde dilemma to create Socio-Critical Art.

Section 3.3 argues the two Korean hybrid cases to resolve the avant-garde dilemma as well as how Nam-Jun Paik and Do-Ho Suh overcome national barriers to develop avant-garde art into international artists. This section selects two artists (Doo-Shik Lee and Suk-Chang Hong) to argue how to create hybrid styles to resolve the avant-garde dilemma.

**Chapter 4** *A Subjective View of the Dilemma - The case of Ki-Woong Park* suggests the author's ideas on how to resolve the local avant-garde dilemma. These ideas include my theory of art to resolve the dilemma, self-critical viewpoint for my practice, and how these may be further developed in the South Korean context.

Section 4.1 focuses on to define what my avant-garde dilemma is and how I have struggled to solve it. This section introduces my early avant-garde dilemma and early aim to create a hybrid Aesthetical & Socio-Critical Art.

Section 4.2 argues what the theories and core conception to resolve avant-garde dilemma are. This section also argues, why I adopted iron, stainless steel, and plastic for my art, how the term *Scrooge Repent* is developed for my art and how is it possible to criticize permanent civilization.

Section 4.3 I argue how to approach the creation of hybrid styles in my practice. Several selected works are detailed through my work notes.

# Chapter 1

## Avant-garde and Relative Terms

Section 1.1 investigates the following three issues: terminological development of two avant-gardes, why it is similar to the term of modernity, and why it has arisen from the term mimesis. In addition, a review of historical debates of avant-garde, modernity, and post-modernity, rethink the conception of avant-garde in the postmodernism era.

To read Korean avant-garde arts, section 1.2 argues two styles avant-garde practices of activism, and antagonism that are profoundly related to a social or political situation. Section 1.2.C introduces the term structuralism and semiotics to my art.

## 1.1. Avant-garde

The terms avant-garde and modernity are identified as the antithesis of mimesis along with how the terms developed in the modern era. The significance of avant-garde has changed dramatically from negative to positive with aesthetic avant-garde developed from the 1870s to 1880s in French society. Thus, this section argues how avant-garde has developed two conceptions of socio-political avant-garde and aesthetic avant-garde.

Avant-garde practice has two attitudes of activism and antagonism (Poggioli, 1968: 26-40) that are introduced in the next section (1.2, A-B). For example, under Marxist ideology avant-garde sometimes protests a bourgeois consumerism society for equal opportunity. In the last part of the modernism era when the term avant-garde entered the lexicon of the postmodernism era, the term sometimes became confused into formal, geometric arts or abstract expressionism arts.

Critics describe that avant-garde loses the first original meaning of progressive, revolutionary and advanced conception. (Poggioli, 1968: 26-40; Calinescu, 1987: 24-120) In addition, the critics argue that the signified meaning of the term avant-garde develops into the meaning of old-fashioned modernism in the midst of the postmodern-era. This means that conception avant-garde as progressive and revolutionary has been co-opted into the intellectual relativism of modernity and is similar to the meaning to sustain the avant-garde partisan's act.

### A. Avant-garde: antithesis term of mimesis

This section examines the creation of the term avant-garde and the term *mimesis*<sup>1</sup> in the postmodernism era to rethink the conception of avant-garde and *mimesis* as an antithesis. In addition, it also examines why the relationship of the two conceptions have been deconstructed.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the conception of art is strictly in the boundaries of mimesis that is attached to the empirical and idealized imitation of nature (Puetz, 2002).

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1 For convenience, this thesis selects the old term *mimesis* as the representative conception of traditional representation, mimic, imitation, copying, following old masters works, lasting, provocative, very slow movement and other related meanings.

Different explanations for art are found in the 18<sup>th</sup> century where art is a similar term to pleasure (Giambattista, Vico, 1996: 278), elegance arts (Harris, James, 1801: 19), and beaux art or fine arts (Batteux, Charles, 1997: 102-104). After the 18<sup>th</sup> century only the fine arts (except crafts) are recognized as representative of art itself. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, fine art is considered to be in the field of mimesis; however, mimetic behavior (imitation) might designate the production of a replica in accordance to a given prototype (Spariosu, 1984: 34).

European industrial society develops many convenient modernizing facilities that are quite different from traditional *mimesis* culture. After the 1830s, *mimesis* was regarded as old fashioned by middle class Europeans because they negatively identified the term *mimesis* with continuity, immobile, fixed, stationary, motionless and traditional. For this reason, a new term (the antithesis of *mimesis*) is required to explain the new culture; subsequently, the concept avant-garde (the signified of moving or movement of modernity, and advanced progress) was established between the 1840s-1850s (Poggioli, 1968: 16). This conception of avant-garde remained appropriate to describe a progressive culture until the 1960s. In the midst of the 1960s, the concept of avant-garde met a crisis when the meaning of avant-garde decayed. Avant-garde is sometime regarded as geometrical abstract art that supports modernism aesthetics such as, Minimalism, Korean Monochrome Art, and Japanese *Monoha*.

Avant-garde is regarded as a continual imitation of God to make pure as art for art or pure poetry (pure form), abstract or non-objective (Greenberg, 1965: 5-6). Greenberg critically argues that, “where there is an avant-garde, generally we also find a rear-guard” (1965: 9) that highlights a severe contradiction within the avant-garde conception. In addition, after the postmodernism era, several critics such as Jacques Derrida, Kelley, and Poggioli show different ideas in the definition of mimesis. Subsequently, certain experimental artist, such as David Salle, Francesco Clemente, and Anselm Kiefer ignore the avant-garde partisan act to adapt pre-historical methods such as the skill of supplementation and adaptation traditionally within the boundaries of mimesis. That led to the development of postmodern deconstruction arts.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Walter Benjamin, Adorno, René Girard, and Derrida redefined mimetic activity as related to social practice and interpersonal relations (Adams, 2000). Contemporary mimesis artworks provide modernity with a possibility to revise or neutralize the domination of nature (Kelley, 1998: 234-236). For example, mimesis is defined by representation and expression of a fundamental human property (Benjamin, Walter, 1986:

333); and *mimesis* is not just merely imitation but is making oneself similar to another (Spariosu, 1984: 34). The antithesis conceptions between *mimesis* and avant-garde became ambiguous because the significance of *mimesis*-copy or imitation has changed into *mimesis*-create something or renew in the post-modernism era.

## **B. Two Avant-gardes and Two Modernities**

This section investigates how the term avant-garde and modernity are similarly used in many cases as well as why critics develop the term avant-garde to describe something instead of modernity. This section also argues why avant-garde developed into two types from modernity.

Terry Smith says that, “Modernity in art is more than merely the state of being modern, or the opposition between old and new” (2009) and represents one example why the term avant-garde is required to explain progressive art in modernism instead of modernity. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, modernity typically refers to a post-traditional (or post-medieval) historical period marked by the move from feudalism (or agrarianism) towards capitalism, industrialization, secularization, rationalization, and the nation-state with its constituent institutions and forms of surveillance (Barker, Chris, 2005: 444). The exact term of modernity: intellectual movement is similarly used as avant-garde: spirit of innovation or, “In context, modernity has been associated with cultural and intellectual movements of 1436—1789 and extending to the 1970s or later” (Toulmin, 1990: 3–5). Modernity arises earlier than the avant-garde of the 1860s to 1960s that extends past the neo-avant-garde and trans-avant-garde of the 1970s. The start of the avant-garde is later than the period of modernity; however, the last section showed that avant-garde is more closely describes a social or cultural phenomenon.

Some critics positively view that, “Modernity is the transitory, the fugitive, and the contingent” (Baudelaire, 1964: 13) that declares aesthetical modernity is a neologism that first, means the present time in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century France and second, the idea of personal fashion in the recent cast of the ideas and phraseology and modulation (Baudelaire, 1964: 40). This suggests that modernity comes from, “the confidence in the beneficial possibilities of science and technology” (Matei Calinescu, 1977: 41) that is similar to the suggestion by

“the illusion of constant change and innovation” (Fred Orton & Griselda Pollock, 1996: 142). However, Calinescu describes modernity negatively for 1830s France where the term signifies vulgarity philistinism: middle-class hypocrisy, or pedant to represent the extreme aestheticism as *l'art pour l'art* (Art for Art's sake), or later *décadentisme* (decadence) (1977: 43). Further, he argues, “The modernity describes as the meaning of Art for Art's sake for young Bohemian poets and painters modern kind of beauty” (Calinescu, 1977: 45) and different from canonical beauty of antiquity (Calinescu, 1977: 46).

Avant-garde in radical sociological or Marxist school explains the spiritual adventure of French culture of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century into the beginning part of 20<sup>th</sup> century that translates artistic and cultural facts into religious or political myths that contradict and run counter (Poggioli, 1968: 7-9; Calinescu, 1987: 54, 99).

The terms modernity and avant-garde have shown positively and negatively with similar worth. Calinescu develops ideas with two meanings for modernity: bourgeois idea of modernity or the avant-gardes: antibourgeois attitude (1987: 41-42). The former bourgeois idea of modernity: First, directs outstanding traditions of earlier periods in the history of modern idea. Second, establishes the doctrine of progress. Third, shows the confidence in the beneficial possibilities of science and technology. Fourth, the concern with time, the cult of reason, and the ideals of freedom defined within the framework of abstract humanism. Fifth, clarifies the orientation towards pragmatism, the cult of action, and success. These all promote key values in a triumphant civilization established by the middle class (Calinescu, 1987: 41-42). Subsequent modernity avant-gardes: antibourgeois attitude range from rebellion, anarchy, and apocalypticism to aristocratic self-exile. In addition, the rejection of bourgeois modernity with a consuming negative passion is similar to the concept of avant-garde.

Harrison & Wood support that, “modernity refers to firstly, the social and cultural condition these objective change, the character of life change; secondly, a form of experience or awareness of change and an adaptation of change” (2003: 128). This explanation is similar to the bourgeois idea of modernity found in Calinescu; however, it is different in the definition of avant-garde as the meaning of doctrine of progress. The term modernity develops similarly to the two avant-gardes of sociopolitical avant-garde and aesthetic avant-garde or cultural avant-garde (Poggioli, 1968: 8-9); subsequently, it becomes difficult to decide on the exact meanings of the two terms. Avant-garde is the fuel if modernity is a vehicle; in addition, modernism is time and space if modernity is a vehicle.

The avant-garde grows to support modernity time and space and the two terms identify as one if the vehicle moves. They are symbiotic and not easy to separate; however, they do retain subtle differences.

Despite what certain ideas have shown, this research summarizes that modernity directs a broader meaning than the similar term avant-garde to represent the social and aesthetical phenomenon. Compared to modernity, avant-garde is more forceful in the revelation of certain dynamic actions with constant change as innovation in society and culture. The distinction of modernity is an epoch in which economic, political and social elements meld in particular ways with avant-garde retained as a cultural production concept in response to the conditions of modernity.

### **C. Terminological Development of aesthetic avant-garde**

This research argues the historical change in the term avant-garde, the definition of avant-garde, and how the term develops from a negative to positive meaning (advanced opinion for aesthetic avant-garde). Between 1862 to 1864, the meaning of avant-garde metamorphosis was mocked in leftist ideology, “restriction of the formula to literature, which was negatively described as, “‘the dehumanization of art,’ ‘the decadent,’ ‘bourgeois culture,’ ‘silence, exile, and cunning,’ ‘antisocial character,’ ‘cultural crisis,’ ‘lost their original historical reference,’ ‘decadence’ or ‘secession’ ... and others” (Poggioli, 1968: 1-6). Poggioli suggests that, “It is rather rare to find the concept or term outside political literature in the 1870s’. ....As a matter of fact, one finds the phrase, “les littérateurs d’ avant-garde,” in the personal notebook kept by Baudelaire from 1862 to 1864 (Poggioli: 1968: 9-10).

*Mon coeur mis á nu* (Poggioli, 1968: 10) or as defined in this research as *My heart dressed with naked (bare)* – the very ashamed condition in mind. Poggioli interprets this as the predilection of French for military metaphors (1968:10). The meaning of avant-garde unfortunately starts from a negative conception. He also suggests two conceptions for avant-garde metaphors of *la presse militante* (The press activist) and *la littérature militante* (The literature activist) (1968: 10). The press activist means political avant-garde and the literature activist describes cultural avant-garde. However, the negative signified in the avant-garde has changed dramatically into a positive conception. During the 1850s-1870s, the term avant-garde finds meaning in constant change and innovation for the aesthetic avant-garde and, “The illusion of ‘constant change and innovation’ disguises a more

profound level of consistency,... first designated as a ‘cultural avant-garde’ in Paris in the 1850s-1870s” (Fred Orton & Griselda Pollock, 1996: 141-142). Poggioli suggests the meaning of avant-garde to accuse and critically mock or degrade is an aspect of the social and political phenomenon that changed in the 1880s to the advanced opinion of social and artistic avant-gardes. Poggioli argues:

This alliance of ...this parallel of two avant-gardes...., Significantly entitled *LA Revue indépendante*. This magazine, found 1880, was perhaps the last organ to gather fraternally, under the same banner, the rebels of politics and the rebels of art, the representatives of advanced opinion in the two spheres of social and artistic thought (Poggioli, 1968: 11).

In the 1880s, avant-garde approaches the meaning of advance opinion with an advance meaning in the 1870s-1880s. Edward Manet’s first aesthetic avant-garde painting, *The Luncheon on the Grass, 1863* should have had been regarded as positive; however, “The painting *The Luncheon on the Grass, 1863*’s juxtaposition of fully-dressed men and a nude woman was controversial, ...., an innovation that distinguished Manet from Courbet” (John Russell, 1981: 16). The Paris Salon rejected *The Luncheon on the Grass, 1863* for exhibition in 1863; however, the painting was later exhibited at *The Salon des Refusés* (Salon of the Rejected). Emperor Napoleon III initiated *The Salon des Refusés*, after the Paris Salon exhibited more than 4,000 rejected paintings in 1863 at the beginning of the modern art practice (King, 2006: 57-59). The decision by the Emperor was essential to motivate the aesthetic avant-garde movement.

Manet’s revolutionary art work was rejected by the Salon de Autumn; avant-garde decision making, as an advanced meaning for fine art practice, is not arrived at until the last part of 19<sup>th</sup> century when it is of a similar concept as Poggioli (1968: 12-14).

This research summarizes the critics ideas of the 1860s-1970s in the transition period when the young avant-garde directed political and cultural phenomena both positively (new, constant change, and innovation) and negatively (militant and dehumanized art). The avant-garde of advanced cultural phenomenon begins after the 1880s. This avant-garde signifies practices and representations that constitute a relationship to and a distance from the overall cultural pattern of time (Orton & Pollock, 1996: 141).

## **D. Deconstructed meaning of avant-garde in postmodern arts**

Post-modernity arises the 1960s because modern avant-garde art was regarded as a conceptually simple art form. Brandon Taylor (1995: 11) suggests that, "...because modernity is as if one-way traffic, too clear or simple, protocol, fixed rules former behavior." The consequence of these negative ideas, kitsch, schlock, fetish, and gender is that other terms arise instead of avant-garde.

Society entered a new global era after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s; subsequently, the traditional barriers of the nation-state were weakened and allowed for a more pluralistic international society. A global society free of Cold War ideology asked artists to pay more attention to women, the racially disadvantaged, the colonized, members of the working class, oppressed sexual minorities, and political minorities that converged with a singular purpose that reflected modernism and the inescapable representation of its own otherness (Harrison & Wood, 2003: 1017). In the revelation of postmodern attitudes that metaphorically described social issues in the critical void of reasonable identity, artists such as David Salle, Phillip Taaffe, adapted various texts, such as past history or foreign images under the theory of deconstructionism related in mimesis activities (Harrison & Wood, 2003: 1051-54). Post 20<sup>th</sup> century, Calinescu argues the recent American criticism of terminological distinction that recalls the continental distinction between avant-garde and neo-avant-garde with complex and long-term implications and consequences (1987: 132).

This research argues that avant-garde (regarded as modern pure art or a geometrical partisan act) (Greenberg, 1965: 5-6), is deconstructed to signify the experimental artists' new art, such as new figuration artist (Francis Bacon), Korean video artist (Paik Nam-Jun), activist Guerilla Group, and antagonism (Hans Haacke). This signifies how post-modern avant-garde relates the individual, community, and group exercise over the cultural realm. Calinescu suggests, "Postmodernism is not just a classifying label with a slightly derogatory connotation, but a highly controversial concept with enemies and adherents, which apparently involves a whole distinctive philosophical, political, and aesthetics program" (1987: 132-133).

UbuWeb is a completely independent resource dedicated to all strains of the avant-garde, ethno-poetics, and outsider art. This list of artists (from Dada to present day avant-garde) is considered to be a hallmark of modernism and distinct from postmodernism.

However, many artists continue to align themselves with the avant-garde movement and establish a history from Dada through the Situationists to postmodern artists such as the Language Poets around 1981.<sup>2</sup>

Calinescu argues that contemporary avant-garde associates with anti-traditional aesthetics or other aesthetic extremisms and focuses on expanding the frontiers of aesthetic experience, rather than wider social reform. It compels intellectuals and artists to redefine the conception of avant-garde in the contemporary art stage and postmodern era (Calinescu, 1987: 116-117). Further, he argues that, “But we should not disregard the fact that novelty was attained, more often than not, the sheer process of destruction of tradition; Bakunin’s “to destroy is to create”, is actually applicable to most of activists of twentieth-century avant-garde” (Calinescu, 1987: 117),

It is related in the conception avant-garde crisis or the destruction to create has signified avant-garde. The crisis can be explained by Roland Barthes (1962: 67) *Critical Essay* and Hans Magnus Enzensbergen *Aporias of the Aavant-garde* (1974) and *Issue in Literature Criticism* (n.y.: 734-753). Their explanations contain the conception no more new and the break-up of avant-garde. Important aspects of international postmodernism art are described as there is no more new (Calinescu, 1987: 123-132) and no more originality (Baudrillard, 2005: 1018-1023). Korean contemporary artists have to conceptualize what is avant-garde in their practice and this research decides that the arguments are profoundly related to the avant-garde dilemma.

This research summarizes the deconstructed signified meaning of avant-garde in the postmodernism era. First, avant-garde signifies revolutionary, innovative, new, and challenge in practice such as, Dadaist (Marcel Duchamp), new figuration artist (Francis Bacon), and Korean video art (Nam-Jun, Paik). Second, avant-garde pushes the boundaries of the cultural realm to involve whole programs of distinctive philosophy, politics, and aesthetics. Third, it meets crisis because once the term avant-garde is regarded as signified of too clear or simple, a protocol with fixed rules of behavior in modernism; however, instead of it, the term kitsch, Schlock, fetish, and gender arise with the death of avant-garde. Subsequently, intellectuals and artists try to redefine the conception of avant-garde in the postmodern era.

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2 [online] Available at: <<http://www.ubu.com/>> [Accessed 9th April 2011].

## 1.2 Relative terms of post-modern avant-gardes

This section argues why avant-garde gives the birth of two styles of movement and examines the arising conception post-structuralism after structuralism. Poggioli distinguishes contemporary avant-gardes as metaphysical & rational and irrational & anti-metaphysical directions (1968: 27-40). In accordance with a psychological attitude, Poggioli's explanation can be summarized that the former activist movement or antagonistic movement expects a positive or neutral result versus the nihilistic movement that expects a negative result (1968: 25-27). The conception of avant-garde has been deconstructed in the new direction of contemporary arts with the addition of a difference between a given linguistic signifier and the signified.

### A. Critical Arts

Art can usurp the aesthetical value with a critical inside into the direction of a future society. Art affects social feeling on the issues of justice and periods of political upheaval signified by events such as economic crises, unemployment, war, and terrorism. Further, it criticizes the policy or result of authoritarian governments and situations to protest against unreasonable social situations, such as unequal opportunity, unfair taxation, global hegemony, environmental degradation, and poor living standards.

Adorno suggested that art could show imaginative images for future positive aspects related to a present situation because the future is defined by hope (Bolaños: 2007: 26). His view reflects Nicholas H. Smith's theory of *Hope for a Better World* (2005: 45-61). Bolaños insists that, "an artwork can present itself as an opposition to the present and, further, opens up the present to the future" (2007: 31). Subsequently, art supports, "the spiritual constitution of the masses to provide 'standards of orientation' for society because art is a product of society" (in Jarvis Simonson: 1998: 104). Bolaños criticizes that the hope of Adorno is only negative because it is not based on humanism (2007: 27). To love avant-garde, Adorno argues that art is a counter-pressure on society that aids the nonidentical to confront the dialectic of enlightenment with the aesthetic conception of anti-art. In addition, the source to support society is, "power of resistance is that a realized materialism would be at the same time be . . . the abolition of the domination of material interest" (Bolaños, 2007: 28). This art can be called a critical art or critical avant-garde art that reinforces the

idea that present society is oblivious to pollution/environmentalism, abortion rights, pro-life, racism, government control, homelessness, AIDS, war, poverty, verbal abuse, bullying, depression, teen suicide, discrimination, and gay rights (Gant Sara, 2010).

In this critical role, art can be divided into Socio-Critical Arts and Socio-Political Arts. First, Socio-Critical Art is broadly defined as to reveal the critical ideas of artists for society where art responds sensitively to external changes as an extraordinary moment of history. Its method is developed to criticize certain phenomenon directly, metaphorically, or ambiguously. Thus, its skills are related in humor, farce, wit, satire, overtone, metaphor, and symbolism. Sometimes art is ambivalent in its public intent. Secondly, Socio-Political Art is defined as to get the public to understand or help with art and shows the arguing of particular points of view over a particular social or political issue (Cicely A. Richard, 2011). Its method is a kind of social propaganda or conceptual expression that can be seen in the expressions of Guerilla Group Girls or Korean Mass Art. Sometimes (despite the difficulty to distinguish) Socio-Critical Art and Socio-Political Art is slightly different because Socio-Political Art prolongs into political activism demonstration and clearly shows ideological differences.

This thesis argues that if the artist clearly reveals the antagonists (government or intruders), it can be socio-political; however, it can be socio-critical if the artist does not show the thickness but reflects social phenomenon ambiguously. Between the argument of activism and antagonism, I selected two styles for activism, Guerilla Girls and Korean Mass Art because they utilize street demonstrations without art or posters; while the antagonism in Barbara Kruger's case was because she uses allegorical sentences such as 'I shop so I am' (Fig 9) with propaganda style art work.

## **B. Activism**

Poggioli argues that Kurt Hiller originally coined the term activism to define the trends of neo-enlightenment (such as psychological revolt and social reform) diametrical opposition to the original one: the idea of a blind, gratuitous activity, the cult of the act rather than action. (1968: 27) Politically, activism signifies, "The tendency of certain individuals, parties, or groups to act without heeding program, to function with any method that includes terrorism and direct action, for the mere sake of doing something or of changing the socio-political system in whatever way they can." (Poggioli, 1968: 27).

Poggioli argues that avant-garde activism shares activism rather than antagonism (1968: 27). Related in the activism, Cohen-Cruz argues in his thesis *An Introduction to Community Art and Activism* that,

Art need not merely reflect large social, political and economic realities. But to bring about change, people must form blocs that, according to Gramsci, are heterogenous and loosely aligned through ideological belief as well as economic self-interest (2002: 7).

Social art can be created by the artist to criticize social phenomenon with the expectation of a certain response because the tendency of well-meaning activism controls people. This research argues that art serves best for the freedom of society to revive the lost, hidden, creative, spiritual, and intuitive capacities of human welfare. For this reason, art can be revolutionary because it is able to remind people of what they have forgotten. Socialist Marcuse (1969: 91) questions, “To support happiness in capitalist civilization, art serves best as an imaginative space for freedom to regenerate the lost, hidden, creative, spiritual and intuitive capacities of human life”. There are two conditions within Marcuse's concept of aesthetic dimension:

- 1) Art has a responsibility to help society deal with its hidden conflicts and contradictions
- 2) The work must embody hope; the human ability to imagine what doesn't exist and give it shape (Cohen-Cruz, 2002).

Between the two modes, “The avant-garde movements can be defined as the former activism or activistic moment” (Poggioli, 1968: 25). Usually, the activist movement anticipates good results as a positive success. However, Poggioli argues that:

The taste for action for action's sake, the dynamism inherent in the very idea of movement, can in fact derive itself beyond the point of control by any convention or reservation, scruple or limit. It finds joy not merely in the inebriation of movement, but even more in the act of beating down barriers, razing obstacles, destroying whatever stands in the way (1968: 26).

Poggioli (1968: 32) argues that dynamism comes from the joy of movement or taste of action such as sports and is similar to soccer hooligans.

Slight differently, activism is aggressively performed by the artists in expressing their art to criticize real living situations. Cohen-Cruz (2002) argues that activism shows, nuclear

power plants, epidemics and economic vicissitudes as well as participatory democracy, the condition of prisons, unions, schools, churches, daycare centers; thirdly, facilities for people with physical/emotional challenges, eating disorders, and terminal illnesses.

David Walls (1993) argues that activism is found in rallies, street marches, guerrilla tactics, and race propaganda. In addition, Nobriga (1993) suggests activism is community art rooted in a shared sense of place, tradition, or spirit. The community artist's work entails the actual shaping of information and ideas as well as images and feelings. For example, Schwarzman (2002) in *The Environmental Justice Project in New Orleans* is the response of a group of artists and activists to the contemporary legacy of slavery. One of the slogans of activism for the *Juvenile Justice of Louisiana* (2010) is described as, "Our Mission: To transform the juvenile justice system into one that builds on the strengths of young people, families and communities to ensure children are given the greatest opportunities to grow and thrive". Activism is based on to support communities. For example, *1988 Action* beseeches governments to spend more on AIDS research and development (Alisa Solomon, 1998). This activism movement is explained in the book *New Theatre Quarterly*:

The writings of most interest are by activists, performers, directors, and journalists who are recollecting the chemistry of performances in many contexts of social change – troupes of actors travelling with Red Army in the years leading up to the Chinese Revolution (Cohen-Cruz, 2002).

Their performances are done in the street and on public platforms with cultural contexts. The subject is prolonged to agitprop, witness, integration, utopia, and tradition. While, community artists find individual efforts more widely understood and validated than in the past (another form of activism). Additionally, there has been a relative proliferation of community-arts funding and policy initiatives, writings, conferences, and exhibitions as a movement (Kestler, 1995: 5-11). Cohen-Cruz (2002) argues the aesthetics of this activism has been one part agitprop, riling up the audience and directing them towards a particular, propagandistic (one-sided) agenda, another part communal ritual for the already converted, and a third rate education that sometimes represents activist strategies.

As contemporary socio-political avant-garde, activism has developed community arts and performance such as, Guerilla Group Girls activism art displayed by *Guerilla Group: Performance, 1989* (Fig 1). This exercise protests against a male centered society and demands an equal opportunity art society that is of a similar to the feminist movement.

Jenny Holzer's *Truism*, such as *A Survival \Sorozatból: Times Square, New York, 1985–86* (Fig 4) best serves as an imaginative space for freedom to regenerate the lost, hidden, creative, spiritual, and intuitive capacities of human life. The Korean Mass Art (*Minjung art*, Art of the Masses) such as *Demonstration Placard, 1980s* (Fig 5) (artists unknown) describes a student death during the Gwangju Democratization Movement massacre in May 1980 South Korea. The placard shouts "To rebirth Han-Yeul!" Mass Arts protest that utilize propaganda, placards, and direct illustrations agitate the Korean public to join the general strike and political demonstrations of the 1980s.

### C. Antagonism

This section introduces antagonism and identifies the conception of antagonism and difference between contemporary avant-garde: activism and antagonism. In the definition, antagonism represents, "A principle, force or factor hostility that results in active resistance, opposition, or contentiousness" (Ferrari, 1964: 62-63). Poggioli (1968: 30) suggests that antagonism has two different directions towards the public and towards tradition. Antagonism is the most noticeable and shows an avant-garde posture and sectarian spirit that encapsulates an ideological or religious difference. There are two styles of antagonism in art practice: Barbara Kruger's *Untitled (I shop therefore I am), 1987* (Fig 9) and *Your Body is a Battle Ground* (Fig 10) and Hans Haacke's Shapolsky et al. *Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* (Fig 11 & 12).

Antagonism parallels activism in expression because the two avant-gardes give a socio-political message to the spectators to use letter languages; art practice is not clearly divided between activism and antagonism.

Activism art (such as Guerilla Group Girls and Korean Mass Art) show active performances or demonstrations with propaganda in the public street, such as posters and placards. However, Hans Haacke and Barbara Kruger's art regards aesthetical expressions in the showy aspect of museums with minimal active performance. To compare their expression, activist Guerilla Group Girls, *Do women have to be naked to get into Met. Museum?* (Fig 2) describes a parody of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingre's work *La Grande Odalisque, 1814* (Fig 3) and Korean Mass People Art placard's 'To rebirth Han-Yeul!' (Fig 5) is more direct and stimulating; but antagonism in Kruger's *I shop so I am, 1987* (Fig 9) is philosophical and metaphorical.

## D. Structuralism and Semiotics

This research argues structuralism and semiotics in the 1940s and 1950s as well its relationship with post-structuralism developed in the 1960s and 1970s (Chaffee, Daniel and Lemert, Charles, 2009: 148). Terry Eagleton (1983: 82) defines structuralism as concerned with structures and examining how they work. He suggests that it has the system to identify the meaning by virtue of their relation to one another (ibid).

Related to structuralism, Timothy Quigley introduces the representative French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure as an expert on the language system of signs: the basic unit of language is a sign that is composed of a signifier as a sound-image (or its graphic equivalent) and a signified as the concept (or meaning). His investigation to the formal structure of language (*langue*) is employed in actual speech (*parole*) (Quigley, 2009). Hence, the term structuralism arises. His investigation any concern with the real, material objects (referents) to which signs are presumably related. According to Saussure's structural linguistics, each sign in the system makes up a language to find meaning only because of its difference from every other sign. Such a study of signs in the most general sense, whether visual or verbal, is called semiotics (McBride, 2011). Structuralism suggests that the meaning of a symbol, such as a sign, is determined by one-to-one correspondence with a concrete object or some aspect of reality to which it refers. A sign only finds meaning by virtue of the context of other symbols structured as a particular language. Structuralism has its basis in semiotics as the theory of signs. All systems are made up of signals to which the individual responds in an agreed or conventional way according to those who study semiotics, i.e. *green means to go* (Stuart Sim, 2001: 406).

Saussure's structuralism is that meaning in the signifier is made possible by patterns rather than by some correspondence between a name and a thing (Saussure, 1983: 66). Pattern-making is a fundamental component of human experience for fine art practice. Terry Eagleton (1983: 108) argues that things are not always obvious with important implications, "According to structuralism theory, a text or utterance has a "meaning", but its meaning is determined not by the psychological state or "intention" of the speaker, but by the deep-structure of the language system in which it occurs" (Terry Eagleton, 1983: 108). He compares that structuralism was not the only branch of literary theory that could trace some of its origins back to imperialism while post-structuralism calls into question what it sees as a profoundly Eurocentric metaphysics (Terry Eagleton, 2003: 29). Saussure

contends that there are three notions involved in a word: signified, signifier and sign. Stuart Sim (2001: 408) summarizes that a signified is the mental concept, a word is designed to convey and a signifier is the sequence of sounds or letters.

Timothy Quigley suggests that Saussure assumes it is the case that speech is closer to the natural inside of language while writing is an external form. If he tried to take the initial distinction between inside and outside into account, he would be obliged to notice a difference must precede and determine what he calls nature because nature is not foundational, it derives from and is produced by difference (Quigley, 2009).

Literary critics such as, Kari Boyd McBride (2011) utilize Structuralism to map the semiotics of genres and individual works and challenge the formalist/humanist criticism that dominated literary study in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps most influential was Roland Barthes (1915-1980) who proclaimed the *Death of the Author*. That is, if language speaks us, then the author is relatively unimportant to the process of writing.

Based on Stuart Sim's (2001: 406) 'structuralism' in his book, *Philosophical Aesthetics -An Introduction* this research reorganizes Structuralism Art as follows:

- (1) All artistic artifacts (or 'texts', as they are more usually referred to by structuralists) are exemplifications of an underlying 'deep structure'
- (2) Artistic artifacts are organized like a language with their own specific 'grammar'
- (3) That the grammar of a language in artistic artifacts is a series of signs and contentions that draw a predictable response from human beings

Structuralism theory, for (1) all arts have relative meanings that can be found in signs. For (2) as the signs, there can be signifiers, such as images, symbols, lines, and textures. In relative ideas, all signifiers have been read as the signified. For (3), the idea of structuralism is linked with individual correspondence with a concrete object or some aspect of reality to which it refers; however, it can be differ according to the readers. The author is relatively unimportant in the process of writing in Roland Barthes *Death of the Author*.

## ***Chapter Review***

This chapter identified avant-garde and modernity as the antithesis of mimesis as well as how the terms have developed in the modern era. Avant-garde has changed dramatically from the negative such as decadence (school of Marxism) to the positive (such as continual progress) that was revolutionary in French societies during the 1870s to 1880s.

Avant-garde has two facets of activism and antagonism. Activism is a psychological revolt and social reform with a diametrical opposition to the original form typified by gratuitous activity. Antagonism represents a principle hostile force or factor that result in active resistance, opposition, or contentiousness with two directions towards the public or tradition. For antagonism, avant-garde shows an ideological difference typified by Barbara Kruger. In addition, there are aesthetic avant-garde and socio-political (socio-critical) avant-garde.

Avant-garde under a Marxist ideology protests for equal opportunity in a bourgeois consumerist society. In the last part of the Modernism Era, the term avant-garde has been confused as a formal, geometric art or abstract expressionist art. Greenburg subsequently defines different aspects of avant-garde such as the rear-guard. In the post-modern era, the contemporary socio-political avant-garde activism has developed community arts such as Guerilla Group Girls activism art to protest for equal opportunity and Jenny Holzer's *Truism*. activism shows dynamic public street performances or demonstrations with propaganda such as posters and placards versus antagonism in Hans Haacke and Barbara Kruger's art that regards aesthetical expression found in museums; however, with minimal performances.

The next chapter examines the development of two Korean avant-garde trends.

# Chapter 2

## Development of Korean Avant-garde

Poggioli suggests two styles of avant-garde movements of activism and antagonism. In addition, there are two avant-gardes of cultural-artistic avant-garde and socio-political (socio-critical) avant-garde (Poggioli, 1968: 8-10). I have selected several examples from Korean avant-garde art history based on the ideas of Poggioli. Section 2.1 introduces how socio-political avant-garde developed from the 1930s to the 1980s. Section 2.2 introduces the development of aesthetic avant-garde such as Korean Monochrome Art and Korean Hyper-Realism. Section 2.3 introduces hybrid style avant-garde such as Park, Soo-Geun. From these three styles, section 2.4 argues why Mass Art, the first Post-modern Art of Korea, ceased and why I want to develop hybrid aesthetical and socio-political (socio-critical) avant-garde.

## 2.1. Socio-Political (Socio-Critical) avant-garde

This section details the conception and arrival of socio-political (socio-critical) avant-garde and how the style developed in Korea. Art critic Choi, Yeul (1994: 32-33) argues that there are three different styles of satire paintings in Korea during the 1920s that criticize landholders, usury, and the upper-class.

During the 1920s-1930s Korea, Bok-Jin Kim (a communist artist) and Suk-Joo Ahn (an anti-colonialism artist), criticize Japanese colonial activities to form a dystopia. In Dong-A daily newspaper, art critic, Deuk-Soon Hong (1931) explains that Sul-Jo Hwang's *Yeondol Sojebu, 1931* (Fig 14) is another example that describes the situation of the urban poor that live from day-to-day. Critical art such as *Gamrohwan* (Fig 13) that describes the *raison d'être* of the protesters against the atrocities of the Japanese police is rare in Korean art history (Choi, Yeul, 1994: 33).

### A. Sang-Bum Lee: Activism towards the Japanese Colonial Government (1936-1945)

Socio-political avant-garde is found in the midst of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Korean marathoner Kee-Chung Sohn won the gold medal; however, Sohn was not elated because he represented Japan and not Korea. He was forced to wear a Japanese Flag attached to his uniform during the awards ceremony; however, he protested during the playing of the Japanese national anthem. A brave Korean art reporter Sang-Bum Lee (1897-1972) altered the original photograph (right photo) and published a photograph of a picture with the Japanese flag erased (left photo) in the Dong-A daily newspaper. (Fig 15) This is a shocking example of socio-political performance in early Korean history because Lee aggressively and openly protest misconduct under Japanese colonialism classified in this research as avant-garde artistic activism towards the Japanese colonial government.

Despite the new method to use varieties of colors in painting, Lee did not accept Japanese coloring style even though he received a special bonus from the Japanese Chosen National Art contest. Instead of Japanese style, he usually draws one or two peasants working on the dry land with soft brush inking skill on Korean traditional paper *Hanji*. In his work *Early Winter, exact producing year unknown* (Fig 16), he paints yellow ochre over the

fields. This description of dry land and chilly weather represents a hidden antagonism towards the Japanese colonial government.

Why did Lee turn from activism *Olympic Photo, 1936* (Fig 15) to antagonism *Early Winter, exact producing year unknown* (Fig 16)? As is explained in the Korean colonial art history since 1927, he had to quit as a Dong-A daily newspaper art reporter and was imprisoned until 1938 (Choi, Yeul, 1994: 84-86). During Japanese colonial time, many artists like Lee were forced to repress their true feelings and not to describe social reality. Any independent act that revealed an unauthorized political message was very dangerous because of severe Japanese government surveillance and the censorship of rebellious Korean artistic expression. Lee was forced to covertly reveal his true feelings through art.

After Korean independence, he was selected as a Final Judge & Invited Artist of the National Art contest. He served as a professor of Hongik University and was selected for a Korean Master of Art membership (1954) and received the March 1<sup>st</sup> Cultural Award (1963), and Seoul City Cultural Awards (1966). The arrival of Korean avant-garde conception is in the midst of Japanese colonial term, 1930s and the expression of style is rooted in social activism avant-garde.

## **B. Que-Dae Lee: Socio-political avant-garde (1946-1955)**

This section argues the expression between leftists and rightists ideologies. Korean art critic Young-Na Kim explains the situation as follows, “From 1945 to 1948, Korea was literally torn between the ideological differences of the United States of America and the Soviet Union who occupied respectively the South and the North after the Second World War” (Kim, Young-Na, 2010: 16).

Que-Dae Lee (1913 -1965) is known an early socio-political artist in Korea during the Japanese Colonial era. After World War 2, he is caught in the midst of the ideological difference of the Cold War. His decision to side with left-wing causes him personal difficulty because he lives in South Korea (Kim, Young Na, 2010: 18). Lee later creates *People, 1948* (Fig 17) that describes the hardness of public living conditions and the ideological division of South and North Korea. Bum-Mo Yun (2011: 327-354) argues, “During the Colonial period, Lee emphasizes national identity by opposing pro-Japanese art. He is advanced in building the idea of New Art by breaking up pro Japanese art.” Yun also suggests (2011: 327-354) that, “Que-Dae Lee was an artist who endeavored to establish real democratic art

during a period of conflict and contradiction with tradition versus modern, East versus West, and the ideology of left versus right”.

Max Beckmann's *Night, 1918-1919* (Fig 18, left) describes a similar tragedy that manifests itself during the outbreak of the November Revolution of 1918. Dietmar Elger describes the painting “In Beckmann's *Night*, the violence of the streets has entered the home. Three bailiffs have invaded a little attic room and are now harassing a peaceful, helpless family” (1994: 212). To compare the two paintings: *People, 1948* shows prominent daylight space than that of *Night's* background. Secondly, in *People, 1948*, there are many naked women, men, and children; however, it is not easy to understand what the situation is. Thus, this research argues that the *People, 1948* is incapable of motivating the revolutionary heart because the true enemy remains obscure. This research argues that the reason not to reveal the true enemy is a conscious effort by Lee to leave the issue open-ended. The end of the colonial period in 1948 leaves a very short time before the transformation of the Korean Peninsula into two countries: South (rightist) and North (leftist). I believe that he is not clearly defined between left and right at that moment nor is able to draw who the enemies are.

In the *Night*, a man on the left is hung by one of the intruders and his arm is twisted by another. A woman (who appears to be the man's wife) is bound to a support beam after having been raped. Author Stephan Lackner (1991) writes,

But Beckmann sees no purpose in the suffering he shows; there is no glory for anybody no compensation, ... Beckmann blames human nature as such, and there seems to be no physical escape from this overwhelming self-accusation. Victims and aggressors alike are cornered. There is no exit.

Beckmann describes human suffering. To the right, the child is about to be taken away by one of the intruders. Thus, Beckmann's *Night* clearly shows who the enemies are, because there are three intruders that wear military uniforms. Kleiner et al (2005) suggests that *Night's* illogical composition relays post-war disillusionment and the artist's confusion over the, “... society he (Beckmann) saw descending into madness.”

*People, 1948* is a pioneer Korean socio-political avant-garde painting as Yun's description. However, I question if the expressions in *People, 1948* describes socio-political ideology because the true enemy is ambiguous and there remains only certain explosion motives. Further, it is slightly tilted in to express the nude sexuality of male and female (the

poses of them are not just describing human suffering. They are not thin but glamorous looking women or well muscled men to compare with Pablo Picasso's *Blue Era* paintings, such as *La Vie, 1903* (Fig 18, right) despite his aim is to criticize the anguish situation such as the poverty of the Korean Peninsula at that time.

### **C. Korean Mass Art: Activism towards Korean Military Government (1980s)**

This section introduces why 1980s' Korean socio-political avant-garde arts arise in the midst of Korean Demonstration era. From the last part of 1970s to the early 1980s (beginning term of the authors university career), many important demonstrations occur for the democratization of South Korea such as the May 1980 Kwangju Massacre. In 1980, the military brutally and ruthlessly suppressed an anti-regime demonstration where students demanded civil rights, free presidential elections, and direct democracy; it is estimated that up to 2,000 people lost their lives. To quote, "Amidst the 1980s' demonstrations against the military government of President Chun Doo-Hwan, Korean art turned to *Minjung art* (Art of Masses), which asserted that art must use a figurative or narrative style to represent the reality of the people and focus on the plight of the working class" (Kim, Young-Na, 2010: 18). Korean Mass Artists draw dying students (Fig 5), poor peasants, and ugly US military soldiers. For example, Bong-Jun Kim's *A Picture of Unification Wish, 1985* (Fig 7) and Hak-Chul Shin's *Korea Modern History 13* (Fig 6) describe the reality of Korea. In addition, "*Minjungmisool* (Art of Masses) was a definitive break from the dominant modernism of Monochrome Art and can be considered post-modern because of its strong social content and its prevailing political or economic situation" (Kim, Young-Na, 2010: 18). This concept was painted on banners and attached to buildings such as Yonsei University as a placard (Fig 5) that reveals their motivation to the masses and reinforces their desire to overcome tyranny.

The representative Korean Mass Art critic, Dong-Suk Won (1985: 33) argues that, "We need to differentiate who is our friend and who is our enemy." It directs the radical issue of how we are live together to find common happiness when we meet certain difficulties (1985: 33). Further, he argues that there is clear difference of living reality and artistic reality (1985: 34). Sometimes, he stimulates the Korean Mass Artists to do their artistic activity aggressively in dealing with political issues and that, "Instead of to express optical message in the art, I would rather just participate in political party" (1985: 35). Further, related to their methods of expression, he emphasizes that, "It is not necessary to emphasis on

individual identity, but to emphasis on traditional methods” (1985: 37). In Won’s argument, most of the Korean Mass Artists follow the technical expression to draw personages to wear Korean traditional white clothes instead of western style costumes to protest the Americanization of Korea. In addition, its relationship is to follow leftist ideology typified in the stimulating motives of the work Young-Jin Kim, *Lo! The Equal Earth, 1989* (Fig 8), the sentences “Struggling!” and “Labor Unification” stimulate the public. However, Bong-Jun Kim’s work *A Picture of Unification Wish, 1985* (Fig 7) is a relatively mild approach to display a Korean group dancing *Nong-ak* performance with Korean Folk musical instruments and children with pictures of a cow and a flying pigeon that represent a peaceful movement for the, “Unification of North and South Korea.”

More involved Mass People art is seen in Hak-Chul Shin’s *Korea Modern History 13, 1986* (Fig 6, left) that satires severe negative aspects of Korean society since the 1950s. Over the gallery walls, the Mass Art pieces are attached outside street walls and exploited for demonstration (Fig 5). When Chun Doo-Hwan military government orders combat police to arrest them and they are pronounced guilty because the artistic expression of Mass People reflects a communist and leftist ideology. These artists were left to endure severe physical beatings, jail sentences of 1 to 3 years, or even death. The result of the Korean Mass People case is quite negative when compared to the success of the Guerilla Group Girls. In the case of the Guerilla Groups, their social response is to influence a male-dominated society; however, the *raison d’être* of Mass People is to attack unbridled authority.

The Korean Military Government intends to divert the attention of Mass People as follows:

Former president Chun Doo-Hwan, who seized power in a military coup, is more widely credited with making it a popular sport. Under his rule from 1980 to 1988, baseball was actively promoted as part of his ‘3-S’ policy – sports, sex, and the screen- to divert people’s attention from democracy (Woo, Jae-Yeon, 2010)

Korea in the 1980s, (the beginning of postmodernism) culture and social life are once again closely allied (Terry Eagleton 1983: 30). It is related to the public diversion of politics to Sports (1988 Seoul Olympics) Sex (legalization of soft pornography), Screen (support for Korean cinematography); however, the Mass People artists would sometimes protest against the *Three S Policies*.

## 2.2. Aesthetical Avant-garde

The Korean War started June 25, 1950 and ended in an armistice that was signed in 1953. Art and business were impossible during the war because of poverty and the separation of families. However, two styles of art arose 3 years later: a catharsis style (which concretely illustrates the suffering of Koreans through human figures) and a Korean Informel style (which abstractly expresses human suffering).

### A. Joong-Seop Lee: *Cathartic avant-garde (1953-1956)*

At the trend of post-War, Korean cathartic style arises to reveal Korean peoples' poverty and separation of families. It is generally believed that the cathartic avant-garde art movement in Korea begins at the end of the 1950s (Oh, Kwang-Soo, 1994: 136) when the Korean government established the *National Art Exhibition* (similar to the French Salon).

Belifiore Elizabeth S. (2000: 300) explains that catharsis is derived from *katharsis* that means emotional cleansing, purging, or purification. Further, F. L. Lucas (1924: 24) argues that purification and cleansing are not proper translations for catharsis; that it should rather be rendered as purgation (Lucas, 1924: 24). As well, Glaab Sonja (2008) argues that, "The crucial point in *catharsis* theory is that the observed aggressive action does not necessarily need to be executed in reality – it can instead take place in the actor's fantasy or in the media (symbolic catharsis)" (Seymour Feshbach 1972: 318-45). A key proponent of the *catharsis* theory distinguishes between three conceptions of catharsis: the dramatic, the clinical, and the experimental models. The dramatic model goes back to Aristotle who used the term *catharsis* in his poetics to describe the effect of the Greek tragedy on spectators viewing tragic plays where the spectator's personal anxieties were projected outward and purged in a socially harmless way. The spectator is released from negative feelings of fear or anger.

Having a cathartic heart towards deep sorrow during the Korea War, 1950s, Joong-Seup Lee (1916-1956) wants to release the anxiety of the Korean people to combine material texture (such as silver foil) with western oil painting techniques. However, there is a need to understand why Lee had to draw on the tough texture of found papers. Many critics say that basic economic considerations could not allow him to buy traditional painting materials (Lee, Jun, 2005: 33-35); therefore, he relies on thin paper and cigarette foil (Fig 19). This research argues that his trial is linked with the personal aesthetic avant-garde of Lee to express a

cathartic emotional feeling because although destitute, it was always possible to select wood, cotton, and other cloths.

After his return from Japan to North Korea, Lee studied in Japan and worked as an art teacher in Wonsan Teacher School (now it is located in North Korea). He was able to understand avant-garde partisan acts and other modernism related arts. There remains a need to understand how he treated the motives to reveal a cathartic smoothening of the sadness in his art. In *Eunji-hwa, exact producing year is unknown* (Fig 19) he liquidates his sadness of separation to describe how his wife is surrounded by many babies.

This expression is quite different from the Austrian Expressionist Oskar Kokoschka's *Tempest, 1913* (Fig 20) which also represents spousal separation (Adamson, 2010: 22-24). According to Dietmar Elger, "Kokoschka's separation from Alma and his subsequent depression brought about another change in his painting style. He now applied his colours more thickly and in long, opaque, wavy streams. This made his paintings livelier and introduced an element of nervous restlessness" (Dietmar Elger, 1994:243). The level of expression in *Eunji-hwa* is softer than that of *Tempest's* found in the reputation, "he is not blaming the situation he is in or the materials he has to use" (Lee, Jun, 2005: 33). It is Korean modest style cathartic avant-garde art.

## **B. Seo-Bo Park's Korean *Informel*: Anti-Academism (1957-1965)**

Kim Young Na (2010: 16) explains that, "After War, the national Art exhibition (European style Korea Salon) contributes greatly to an expansion of the artistic population and plays an important role in bridging traditional Korean art with the latest trends of contemporary art." She argues that:

The National Art Exhibition favoured realistic works and gradually became synonymous with conservatism, academism and traditional values'...such as a standing or seated women or elderly man. Thus, the authorization National Art Exhibition soon faced strong opposition from younger generation (Kim, Young-Na, 2010: 16).

This quotation details that the young generation of artists such as Sang-Hwa Chung, Tchang-Yeul Kim, and Seo-Bo Park are the pioneers of Korean style *Informel* and Abstract Expressionism. In addition, "The avant-garde art movement has two kinds of motivations; one is an earnest trial to acquire new Western ideas, and the other is a trial to integrate the

experience of Korean War” (Oh, Kwang-Soo, 1994: 136). This explanation of Oh shows that the trial to get new western ideas leads to adopt the *Informel* style and the other to integrate the experience of Korean War to reveal a cathartic heart after severe tragedy.

Korean *Informel* begins as the extended line of European modernism and partisan’s art. Hee-Young Kim explains (2008: 69) the conception of *Informel* comes with many international magazines, such as *Life*, *Time*, *Art in America*, and *Art News* (all easily available in Korea).

The term *Informel* is first coined by Michel Tapié 1951 as the, “the use of plethora of definitions, such as Abstract expressionism and Abstract impressionism, Abstract sublime...art autre and tachisme... as the counter conception of geometrical abstract arts” (Pasini, Roberto, 1999: 113). This signifies anti-geometric, anti-naturalistic, and nonfigurative formal preoccupations of these artists that stress their pursuit of spontaneity, looseness of form, and the irrational (Tapiés, 1988: 495). Art is able to find new territory or in the words of Saint John of the Cross, “To reach the unknown, you must pass through the unknown” (Tapiés, 1988: 495). It also signifies, as the expression of existentialism, to describe the desolateness to use the tough texture, un-vivid outlines with using brown, ochre, grey, and white colors.

*Informel* is similarly used as the term *formless* in describing the effect of surface of a two-dimensional painting. These terms consider base materials (such as plasters, mud, and powder of wood) to support the surface effect of the painting in the practice. For example, Charles Harrison and Paul Wood use the term ‘formless’ to describe the Jean Dubuffet’s art in his surface expression as the stroke of color or ink, patches and lines (2003: 603). In addition, Yve-Alan Bois and Rosalind E. Krauss support that the ‘formless’ describes the trend from the late 1920s and early 1930s and the repertory of surrealist photography that can be characterized adequately through the operations of Bastaille’s *Informe* (1997: 9). The direction is shown in the art of Vols, Jean Dubuffet’s, and Jean Fautrier’s expression to use cement, plaster, and earth on the surface. All over the Europe the *Informel* movement spreads from 1940s-1950s (Leja, 1999: 51-65).

Around 1957, Korean artist Seo-Bo Park motivates the post-war Korean *Informel* vogue in an expressive abstraction that is defined as a forerunner of Korean Art *Informel* to protest the institutional aspects of the National Art Exhibition and its conservatism. In addition, Fautrier influences Korean artist Park in the development of post-war Korean *Informel* vogue through an expressive abstraction that is also a forerunner of Art *Informel*. In the

1960s, Korean international style *Informel* starts to represent materiality of textures and its various techniques, for example, spilling, spreading, and other related methods. For example, Park's *PRIMORDIALIS No. 1-62, 1962* (Fig 22) represents the human mashed body in a representation of the unstable Korean condition after the Korean War. This expression is similar to Jean Fautrier's series of paintings *Hostages Head No. 1, 1944* (Fig 21) that represents the horror of the Second World War through a decaying human head formed through pale powdery colors that evoke death. However, Korean *Art Informel* cools down completely after the mid 1960s. Young-Na Kim argues (2010: 17) that art movements in this post-*Informel* period reflect a conglomeration of influences from contemporary American art that includes Hard Edge, Op Art, Neo-Dada, Happenings and Hyper-realism. As the pioneer of Korean *Informel*, Park wants to create Korean traditional art such as Korean Monochrome Art.

### **C. Korean Monochrome Art: Color of Nature (1966-1975)**

At the beginning of the pluralist or globalized era in Korea, every Korean student has to study English and its related culture in the 1960s-1970s. Subsequently, mass-culture arises in the midst of Americanization. South Korea follows a democratic government; however, North Korea follows proletarian communism. Aggressive South Korean parents start to send their children to study abroad. The children start to build up a new tradition after they return and some separate into international and traditional. Arguably, the most prominent Korean artists are not from international academic artists.

In the 1960s, there was a conflict (that involved art movements from the United States and France) among Korean artists to sustain indigenous Asian art and culture. There was substantial debate by Korean artists to think of how to develop Korean style art. Korean art critic Jung, Moo-Jeong argued, "Asian art and culture unexpectedly emerges as a source of artistic independence, originality, and universality" (Jung, Moo-Jeong, n.y.). The 1960-1970's is significant for Korean art as the beginning of globalization; some Korean experimental artists, such as Ung-No Lee, Seo-Bo Park (Fig 23) and Chang-Sup Jeong (Fig 30) develop Korean traditional *Hanji* (mulberry tree produces a specific type of *Hanji*) arts and parallel international trends from *Informel* to Material Process and *Fluxus* group arts. They metamorphose Korean *Informel* into Korean Monochrome Art to create two dimensional *Hanji* texture-up style paintings or old materiality into new materiality transcending natural colors that emphasize prominence and depression; in addition, it reveals

the delicately controlled material surface on the canvas.

Barbara Bloemink (2008:11) argues that ‘Monochrome’ in this context refers to the use of pure colors as themselves and not in the service of depicting any image. This definition is quite different from the definition of the term in the West, where it refers to anything that is limited to only ranges of single color. For example, Seo-Bo Park’s work *Escriture, 890530-3, 1989* (Fig 23) and *Escriture, 228-85, 1985* (Fig 29) shows a similar painting format; however, this style is not just a painting but is a kind of hybrid style of two dimensional paper craft and painting. The expression is based on traditional *Hanji* (Fig 24) craft forms that include *jihō*, *jido*, and *jiseung*.<sup>3</sup> Park builds up, “layers of pigment and then carved the surface with a palette knife or swept over it with a fine comb to create shapes with relief-like contours against background” (Kim, Young-Na, 2005: 216). The textures of *dak* paper have many new uses, such as wrapping, handicrafts, and letter paper. The inner bark of paper mulberry to *dak* helps individual fibers in water. For 1,600 years, it has supported Korean daily life. *Hanji* is practically an everyday necessity for Koreans, from books, walls, windows, floors, and coffins.<sup>4</sup> *Hanji* helps papermaking, artisan crafts, paintings, and sculptures.

The new aspect comes from physical phenomena to combine *Hanji* with the other materials such as soil, fabric, wood, rubber, cement, plaster, stone powder, paper, and plastic. This expression of new materiality fuels a new concept of 1970’s post Korean Monochrome Art; in addition, Korean Monochrome artists find new ways to reveal more vivid, fresh natural colors. For example, Seo-Bo Park starts to use green, red, pink, and yellow instead of brown, gray, and ochre that are representative colors of early Monochrome artists. For the new concept, Young-Na Kim (2010: 17) suggests an ideal space to express calm and meditative harmony. Barbara Bomink (2008: 11) suggests merged western techniques and styles of their own roots (Confucian and Buddhist philosophy: a reverence of nature as well as classical Korean and Chinese Art, literature, and culture) and established a new manner of

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3 *Jihō* is a method that uses *hanji* scraps soaked in water and then added to glue, making a clay-like paste that can be molded into lidded bowls. *Jido* is the craft of pasting many layers of *hanji* onto a pre-made frame, which can be made into sewing baskets and trunks. *Jiseung* is a method of cording and weaving strips of *hanji* to make a wide array of household goods, including trays, baskets, mats, quivers, shoes, wash basins, and chamber pots. [online] Available at: <[http://www.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/CU/CU\\_EN\\_8\\_1\\_4.jsp](http://www.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/CU/CU_EN_8_1_4.jsp)> [Accessed 22<sup>th</sup> Feb 2011].

4 There are three slightly different kinds of mulberry trees in Korea that depend on climatic conditions. Each kind of mulberry tree produces a specific type of *hanji* with a specific use. *Mayopjong*, for example, is mainly found in the center of the country, has a tough but thin bark with relatively few fibers. It is chiefly used as wall and floor paper. *Yojojong* has a thick bark with smooth and long fibers, which makes it ideal for calligraphy. [online] Available at: <[http://www.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/SI/SI\\_EN\\_3\\_6.jsp?cid=260825](http://www.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/SI/SI_EN_3_6.jsp?cid=260825)> [Accessed 22<sup>th</sup> Feb 2011].

Monochrome Art. To quote, “It is going to different direction compared to that of other Korean avant-garde arts; their expression is moving from regular style of ‘painting and drawing’ to unusual style of ‘making’ 2 or 3 dimension” (Suh, 1994: 250). Korean Monochrome was quite related in the method of material construction with various Korean papers that contain various materiality and colors. Korean paper has several specific characteristics because it is a hand-made liquid pulp. Therefore, it is easy to transform when it is in liquid condition; however, it metamorphoses itself to the condition of united layers of wood when dry.

#### **D. U-Fan Lee’s *Monoha*: Antagonism Against Materialism (1970-Present)**

In the 1970s, Korean and Japanese avant-gardes were closely related to each other because the top leading avant-garde artist in Japan since the 1960s is Korean born Japanese artist U-Fan Lee. Lee rejects Western ideas of representation rather than straight expression or intervention and pioneers Japanese avant-garde *Monoha*. Focusing on the relationships of materials and perceptions, Lee advocates a method of antagonism towards westernization and modernization in both theory and practice. He acts as an antidote to the Eurocentric thought of 1960s postwar Japanese society and his activities are not limited to Japan but extend to Korea and worldwide. The movement’s goal is, “To embrace the world at large and encourage the fluid coexistence of numerous beings, concepts, and experiences” (Fenner, 2003).

Lee’s philosophy is to manifest the extremely meditative nature of his work. Lee’s *Relationship, 1979-1993* (Fig 25 right) sculpture (installation) represents an antagonism towards consumer-based materialism (Asia Pacific Triennial Contemporary Art, 2002). He argues that just to put a natural stone and iron (no additional artificial act) symbolizes the preservation of nature. The sculpture asks the public whether the object work is good relationship with stone and iron or not (Lee, U-Fan, 2002: 177). This work is the combination of rock and iron. Each element gives unique characteristics and the inherent ability to stimulate our understanding of the external and internal phenomena. The relationship between the elements provides tension, hope, love, and emotional feeling. It reminds the developed relationship between the two objects of the space (surrounding atmosphere) and the spectator. Arguably, he questions the central concept of this sculpture that is a unique being on each occasion when the two objects are exhibited as site-specific.

With his simple and meditative gestural and calligraphic painting series such as *From Spot*, 1978 (Fig 25 left), *From Point*, 1984 (Fig 26), *With Winds*, and *Correspondence*, Lee U-fan demonstrates, “His respect for traditional techniques and values” (Asia Pacific Triennial Contemporary Art, 2002). He strengthens this concept so that, art is a form to repeat the infinite as the unlimited difference (Lee, U-Fan, 2002: 19). In this series, Lee creates a series of moving brushstrokes (or touches) co-related with the background space. In this work, he argues the real expression of art under eastern philosophy. He strictly uses oriental water based pigments that do not glitter. He rejects western illusionism and symbolism that attempts to bring the spectators into a higher meditative state of mind.

The 1970s Korean avant-garde dilemma takes two directions, Nature of Color (materialism) and *Monoha* (anti-materialism). Japanese conception of *monoha* (to exhibit objects in natural way) (Asia Pacific Triennial Contemporary Art, 2002) is similar to the post-minimalism of western art, such as Pierro Manzoni’s installation *Base of the World*, 1961 (Fig 27) or land art like Richard Long *A Line in Scotland*, 1981 (Fig 28). Long alludes that his work has become a simple metaphor for life. (Robert Macfarlane, 2009) *A Line in Scotland*, 1981 (Fig 28) is a part of Heaven and Earth at Tate Britain. In the work *Relationship*, 1979-1993 (Fig 25 right), Lee asks people to understand why he put the heterogeneous two materials, such as iron and a round stone; in addition, he provides only one hint ‘relationship’. However, what does the ‘relationship’ signify in his work? For this reason, Robert Morris argues:

They simply separate, more or less, from what is physical by making relationships themselves another order of facts. The relationships such schemes establish are not critical from point to point as in European art. The duality is established by the fact that an order, any order, is operating beyond the physical things. Probably no art can completely resolve this (Art Forum, April 1968).

Two distinguish the relationship between the two given objects in European Art is futile; however, Lee U-Fan dashes forward to solve the question ‘relationship’ to put stone and iron to use in eastern meditative anti-materialism. Therefore, he dislikes labor, preferring to put natural objects itself if possible (dialogue with U-Fan Lee and Art critic Lee, Jun, Oct 2010).

Lee U-Fan suggests that stone is nature and that iron is a different form of nature, but originally the same as stone (Dialogue with U-Fan Lee and Art critic Lee, Jun, Oct 2010). U-Fan Lee suggests that the iron is not the important subject, but is the being of waiting.

Humans make it to use for some doing; additionally, it has to receive a certain order (2002: 178). Despite only a material itself to stay long in certain situation, rain and wind; however, the stone has certain unidentified feeling of being (Lee, U-Fan 2008: 180-181). Lee argues that the characteristic of nature (as it has a round shape) is not easily erased despite the stone moved from the riverside with a dialectic between stone and iron (2002: 181). This can be the important imaginative explanation of the relationship. U-fan Lee's one stone signifies true nature, whereas the iron signifies the human and artificial civilization; in addition, U-Fan Lee suggests that his art is related in Oriental Naturalism.

## **E. Korean Hyperrealism**

The hyperrealism (photo-realism and super-realism) movement originated in the late 1960s and early 1970s when artists started to produce paintings that simulated photographs. The movement was most popular in the United States and spread to parts of Western Europe and Asia. In the sculpture medium, artist often uses casts of the human figure to create true-to-form works.

Hyperrealism has its roots in the philosophy of Jean Baudrillard (1981), "the simulation of something which never really existed." Hyperrealists create a false reality, a convincing illusion based on a simulation of reality and digital photographs. Hyperrealism paintings and sculptures are an outgrowth of extremely high-resolution images produced by digital cameras. As Photorealism emulated analog photography, hyperrealism uses digital imagery and expands on it to create a new sense of reality (Thompson, Graham, 2007: 77-79; Horrocks, Chris & Zoran Jevtic 1996: 80-84).

Hyperrealism paintings and sculptures confront the viewer with the illusion of manipulated meticulous high-resolution images focused on details and subjects (Bredekamp, Horst, 2006: 1-4). Hyperrealism paintings and sculptures are not strict interpretations of photographs nor are they literal illustrations of a particular scene or subject. Instead, they utilize additional (often subtle) pictorial elements to create the illusion of a reality that are hard to detect (Fleming, John and Honour, Hugh, 1991: 680-710). They may also incorporate emotional, social, cultural, and political thematic elements as an extension of a painted visual illusion in a distinct departure from the older and the considerably more literal School of Photorealism (Meisel, Louis K., 1980: 12-13). Hyperrealism paintings and sculptures create a tangible solidity and physical presence

through subtle lighting and shading effects. Shapes, forms, and areas closest to the forefront of the image visually appear beyond the frontal plane of the canvas; in addition, details have more clarity than in nature in the case of sculptures (Daniel Boorstin, 1992).

The history of Korean Hyperrealism begins in the 1970s during the climax of Korean Modernism. The new movement of figuration arts shocks young Koreans as a reaction to Korean Monochrome Art (Hong, Kyung-Han, 2009). However, Korean Hyperrealism shows Korean style using Pop-Art motives based on individual thinking and emotions that are different from international trends in the 1990s (Hong, Kyung Han, 2009). Different from international directions, Korea Hyperrealism Artists draw the real aspect of our living and can represent the torn posters on the fences, stones in the railroads, and the trace of seashore sand. Korean hyperrealists often speak to society captivating small affairs that may not be seen or ignored and reveal phenomenon, personages or ordinary things in city life (Hong, Kyung-Han, 2009).

Seok-Chul Ji, Kang-Yong Kim, Tae-Seok Ju, and Young-Hoon Ko form the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of Korean hyperrealists and develop Korean style hyperrealism at the end of the 1970s. Korean Hyperrealism is explored by young artists that is related in American photo-realism or super-realism demonstrated by Tae-Seok Ju's, *Rail Road, 1979* (Fig 35) and Seok-Chul Ji's, *Contra Activation-7919, 1979*(Fig 36). Tae-Seok Ju's works in the subject of *Nature-Image* series have two important facets of shadow and light. Techniques are created to give the lost natural heart for contemporary people (Kyunghyang Newspaper, 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2011). However, Ji's trademark shows two styles, one that describes a large amount of miniature chairs and the other that illustrates an old sofa cushion. These works detail a deep past memorial feeling that arises during the hard times of the Korean people. His motives sometimes metamorphose to used cars, lost stones, or a heater in the district classroom (Kyunghyang Newspaper, 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2011). In addition, popular Korean Hyperrealism Artist Young-Hoon Ko developed his own book-based paintings such as *5 Years Later, 1991* (Fig 34). In his works, un-matched signifiers are floating upon the painting surface.

## **2.3 Hybrid Avant-garde**

### **A. Su-Geun Park's Hybrid Avant-garde (1960-1975)**

The term hybrid signifies the product (offspring) of mixing two or more different things or idioms. This research argues that hybrid art signifies the art of mixing the contents of international and spontaneous, avant-garde and traditional, past and present, classic and modern, and two different ideologies or methods such as aesthetical<sup>5</sup> and socio-critical or socio-political idioms<sup>6</sup>.

Soo-Geun Park (1914-1965)<sup>7</sup> was an important Korean hybrid style avant-garde painter who explored the painting surface (similar to the granite's irregular surface). Despite being self-taught, he combined four ways of cathartic theory, geometrical two-dimensional expression, *Informel* and Korean traditional colors (white and ochre) found in the work of Lee, Sang-bum's *Early Winter, exact producing year unknown* (Fig 16). A solitude girl takes care of a little brother in his work *A Girl Who Gives a Baby a Piggyback, 1953* (Fig 37). The absence of her parents represents a separation. He illustrated men as unemployed describes women as workers. His wife Bok-Soon Kim says, "Whenever to buy certain goods, my husband usually selects small hand-carry or cart merchant stuff to take care of the poor" (Park, In-Sook, 2002: 113). *Merchant Street, 1952* (Fig 38) describes poor Korean unemployed men and *Cleaning Place, 1952* (Fig 39) describes several hard working women. Art critic Yoo, Jun-Sang, (2010) describes, "Through his art we can learn the shape of earth and the face of our brethren." "His art is not an 'art for art' but is an enlightenment art and comes from a folk style of Korean traditional white clothes, lineal expression, Korean Buddhism Stone sculpture (surface expression) and white monochrome color" (Lee, Dae-Won, 2002: 108-109). The two dimensional geometric strict lines are compared to the Kashmir Malevich's geometrical lineal expression in the work *Taking in the Harvest, 1911* (Fig 40). He adapts the western avant-garde style and metamorphoses it into Korean folk style. Through hard texture, he expresses the toughness of Korean daily life; this relation to

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5 Art for art, as the representative word for modernism avant-garde, such as geometrical abstract art, minimalism, and Korean Monochrome art, in the argument of Chapter 3. 1A; Avant-garde is regarded as continual imitation of God to make pure as 'art for art' or 'pure poetry (pure form), 'abstract' or non-objective (Greenberg, 1965: 5-6).

6 Art for society, as the representative word for post-modernism avant-garde such as activism and Korean mass-people art that expresses agenda style in the argument of 3.1A.

7 He was a fulltime artist although he had no academic background and his life was extremely difficult. He did not stop his art despite his hard life. Even though he was not a soldier in the Vietnam War, his generation served as participants. Their sons participated and died in the Vietnam War because they had to experience the same sadness as the Korean soldier's fathers. During World War II he lost his brother Dong-Keun Park in 1941 and separated from his family. His family (wife and two children) had to be sent to a suburb area. Keum-Sung Park was the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of severe anguish due to family separation. After World War II, he lost his first son, Sung-So Park-and during Korea War he lost 3<sup>rd</sup> son, Sung-In Park. (Park, In-sook, (daughter of Park, Soo-Keun) (2002: 112-116).

the hybrid is why I desire to create a hybrid aesthetical and socio-political avant-garde.

## **B. My Aim: Hybrid Aesthetical and Socio-political Avant-garde**

This research develops the term hybrid aesthetical and socio-political avant-garde in the midst of various hybrid art to reveal the critical role of art in society as well as a good aesthetical reputation. I agree with Paolo A. Bolaños that, “Inasmuch as art is a critique of ideology, it becomes a revelation of the real status of society as dystopia” (2007: 26). However, artists have usually shown propaganda style images of disgust such as Korean Mass Art in socio-critical avant-garde art. In this case, the aesthetical point is not rooted in modernism order, such as harmony, simple, pure expression (Mondrian and Malevich), but is post-modern expression, such as creepy, ridiculous, and heterogeneous (such as Feminism). Aesthetical and socio-political art reconciles the two antithesis conceptions because, “Art itself is ambivalent” (Bolaños, 2007: 29). In addition, I agree with Bolaños’ explanation that, “Meanwhile, Adorno could also be regarded as a supporter of the avant-garde” (2007: 29). Adorno’s conception of, “aesthetics is by no means naïve” (Bolaños, 2007: 26-27) because Adorno writes that, “the qualities which the word ‘culture’ acquired [following the rise of the bourgeoisie to political power] allowed the rising class to achieve its goals in economy and administration” (Alex Tomson, 2006: 77).

The following questions arise if I create a hybrid style to combine the modernism style avant-garde and post-modernism avant-garde. How can you compensate the misunderstand situation of ambiguous socio-critical ideas or abstract socio-political avant-garde expression idioms? How to give the message to ordinary people who do not understand abstract signifiers? For these questions, (even though there are not exact evaluation criteria) history has approved it. In Korea, over expressing socio-political ideas such as Korean Mass Art in the 1980s is censored by the military government and is unfortunately relatively un-assessed. In satire, too much ugliness, such as straight propaganda style is not highly reputed by Korean spectators. Aesthetical morality in the socio-political avant-garde to satisfy aesthetical beauty with socio-political message in a work has been very difficult in the case of Korean Mass Art.

Suzi Gablik suggests that the art has to show exact morality in their surrounding society, “The artist has a basic choice as to whether or not he is to be an agent of moral transformation. In those situations where conflicting interests come together, unless we find

the right means to the goal, the ‘good’ that we seek escapes us” (Gablik, 1987: 100). This research also argues that reasonable aesthetical and socio-political avant-garde has to support acceptable moral standards despite the desire to reveal dystopia. To reveal a society with interest in mass people and high-level people is a dilemma because of the different viewpoints of society.

In Korea in the 1980s, mass people (ordinary people) need to overcome poverty, achieve democracy, and realize equal opportunity; however, the rich do not. Ordinary people see the dystopia of future through present Korean (1980s) society; however, the rich see it as a Korean utopia of future. Ordinary people protest against the military government for freedom; however, the rich do not. This situation is similar to “Adorno’s aesthetics of redemption” it is possible to conceive of art as a medium of creating a dimension of imagined freedom. An artwork can present itself as an opposition to the present and thereby open up the present to the future (2004: 26). Socio-political art is largely linked to satisfy the viewpoints of ordinary people and the usual socio-political avant-garde has criticized society the following ways:

- (a) To make easy Socio-Political Art rule (for uneducated persons, mass-people’s taste)
- (b) Use acceptable letter language on the visual language (for visual attraction)
- (c) Give a shock value (to stimulate a general strike)

There arises dilemma in the situations. For (a), if the art rule is too easy, people can think that it is without a certain mysteriousness and regard it as easy art or plain, trivial, insignificant, valueless, unworthy, or further stupid art. For (b), if the written letters are too easy or too strict, it can cause also similar situation of (a). However, it could be highly estimated if it has particular symbolic meaning that is very poetical and philosophical. For (c), if the shock value is low, it can be also less evaluated; on the contrary, if it is too much, it can be evaluated brutality, cruel or hardhearted.

For aesthetical morality for aesthetical and socio-political avant-garde, this research suggests that

- (d) Use aesthetical sexuality (to stimulate curiosity to get sensational response)
- (e) Use acceptable humor (to satisfy common peoples taste)
- (f) Give Fantasy (to notify that it is in the area of special aesthetics)

For (d), certain sexuality or nudity is merely described; it can be less evaluated as the

genre of pornography even though it has a special hidden meaning. It can be evaluated less highly if it is rarely described to match with the subject; however, it can be evaluated highly if the sexuality is aesthetically described or healthy with a special meaning. For (e), it can be also less evaluated highly if it is not linked with the real meaning and aesthetical beauty. There are certain levels of humorous expressions in fine art; however, it can be evaluated as a cartoon for the commercial arena if it is overt. For (f), it is very hard to distinguish its level; however, it could show mysterious feelings for spectators if it has certain level of delicacy like a fantastic illusion.

## ***Chapter Review***

Chapter 2 argued historical avant-garde arts on the Korean art stage. There arise two avant-gardes in the midst of the Korean modernism era: cultural-artistic avant-garde and sociopolitical avant-garde as well as aesthetic avant-garde and socio-critical avant-garde.

The two aspects of Korean modernism art history and Korean avant-garde movements are developed in the midst of Japanese Colonization (1930s) and the Korean War (1950s) and the Kwangju Democracy Period (1980s). These are Korean cathartic avant-garde, Korean *Informel*, and Korean socio-political avant-garde, such as Mass Art. In the midst of Korean Americanized era, there arises Korean Monochrome Art reputed as the Nature of Color that is the first Korean style of aesthetic avant-garde. In the 1980s, activism artists develop Korean Mass Art (*Minjungmisul*) or socio-political avant-garde in the midst of Korean demonstrations. The two representative avant-gardes conflict with each other in the avant-garde dilemma to develop Korean postmodernism because first post-modernism style Mass Art is regulated to history. This situation stimulates me to create a hybrid aesthetical and socio-political (socio-critical) avant-garde.

The next chapter introduces the trend changes in avant-garde art in Korea.

# **Chapter 3**

## **Korean Avant-garde Dilemma & Several Cases to Resolve the Dilemma**

In the 1980s, Korean first post-modernism of Mass Art caused a rethink of the reasons for the failure of gifted Korean artists. This reassessment created difficulties for the establishment of Korean post-modernism art. The term avant-garde dilemma in Korea was first coined by art critic Wan-Kyung Sung (1985: 92). This research questions why Korean avant-garde dilemma arises in a globalized society. For this question, Section 3.2 defines the term avant-garde dilemma. Section 3.3 argues why Korean avant-garde dilemma arises in globalism era. Further, Section 3.4 introduces four Korean cases to resolve the dilemma.

### 3.1 The First Korean Post-modern Avant-garde Art Dilemma

Art critic Dae-Hyung Lee (2010: 29) suggested in his thesis, *What makes Contemporary Korean Art* that, “Contemporary Korean art was situated outside the radar of the international contemporary art scene for a long time” as well, “In the 1990s, massive events inevitably brought about dynamic movements towards post-modernism in Korea; however, *Minjungmisool* (Mass Art) retreated into history” (Lee, Dae-Hyung, 2010: 31).

#### A. Rethink Korean Mass Art’s Short Life

This section argues why the first post-modern Korean art of Mass Art was short lived. As the post-modernism critic Dae-Hyung Lee suggests, Korean Mass Art adapts a “figurative or narrative style to represent the reality” (Kim, Young-Na, 2010: 18) to accomplish socio-political activism. In addition, there was the need to overcome the Korean Monochrome Art and Korean hyperrealism, “*Minjung* art was actively opposed to Monochrome Art, which was identified as inherently false and derivative of formalism of Western modernism” (Kim, Young Na, 2010: 18).

Monochrome artists, such as Seo-Bo Park and Chang-Sup Chung had the experience to overcome the *Informel* style of western modernism and create a Korean style modernism. However, their route to overcome was a kind of metamorphosis (1.3 D) that did not change the theory of the *Informel* and only changed the outside of the form to use Korean traditional *Hanji* (Fig 24). I think that their decision was wise and suitable for Korean bourgeois society because Korean Monochrome developed new styles, such as Seo-Bo Park’s *Esriture, No. 228-85* (Fig 29) *Esriture No. 991004, 1993* (Fig 32) *Esriture, 080219, 2008* (Fig 33) and Chang-Sup Chung’s, *No. 88015, 1986* (Fig 30). The common base materials for these works were Korean paper, Korean ink, and Oriental colors.

Monochrome artists think that Mass Art is mere propaganda with no aesthetical values, “Monochrome Art rebutted these accusations by claiming that *Minjung* art was merely propaganda. Consequently, there was extreme conflict between the art movements of the 1980s” (Kim, Young-Na, 2010: 18).

Korean Monochrome and Korean Hyperrealism Art were collected in Korean Museums and by individual collectors. Monochrome artist were able to become famous and rich; however, Mass Art artists did not see any financial benefit.

Except for several Mass Art artists (such as Hak-Chul Shin) most artists did not consider Korean traditional aesthetical methods such as Adorno's advise (last section 2.3 B). For this reason, Mass Art artist Yo-Bae Kang, who composed *Hanra Mountain People, 1992* (Fig 31), complains that, 'What is the condition to be real success for an artist? Is it just to be famous and rich?' (1985: 49) He argues that, "Art has to reflect just present society and give the spiritual touch to pierce through time-space" (Kang, Yo-Bae, 1985: 54). Kang's argument, the Korean Monochrome style was highly valued in the Korean Art community in 1980s as 'The color of Nature' or 'Achieving Oneness with Nature' (Bloemink, 2008: 11) is different from Mass Art artists.

In 1980s, the three arts (Mass Art, Monochrome Art, and Hyperrealism Art) were Korean representative avant-garde arts. Korean Monochrome Art and Korean Hyperrealism Art remain prominent in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; however, Korean Mass Art has waned. Art meets an unexpected Bourgeoisie response in contemporary Korean art society as it chases activism (Kang, Yo-Bae, 1985: 87). Kang has regretted that Korean artists have trouble with Korean modernism and postmodernism (Kang, Yo-Bae, 1985: 92). Art critic Wan-Kyung Sung (1985: 92) argued that the Korean avant-garde dilemma developed from this retreat of Mass Art and coined the term avant-garde dilemma to describe the situation. He argued that Korean bourgeoisies purchase art when they are qualified in their taste (Sung, 1985: 92-93). Korea's first post-modernism has had no success to resolve the avant-garde dilemma.

## 3.2 Avant-garde Dilemma

Chapter 1 introduced the development of the term of avant-garde in contemporary cultural aspects. The definition of avant-garde allows the next four sections to describe the conception of the avant-garde dilemma with relative terms: dilemma and avant-garde artist dilemma.

### A. What is the Dilemma?

A dilemma describes a situation that is a very difficult choice between things of equal importance and it can be defined as a "hard-to resolve but important issue" (Rickards and Clark, 2006: 3). Further, the dilemma (Greek: δι-λημμα *double proposition*) is a problem that offers at least two possibilities, in which neither is practically acceptable. Equally

uncomfortable and dangerous, the dilemma is sometimes used as a rhetorical device of “you must accept either A, or B”.

Fred Orton & Griselda Pollock (1996: 142) argue that, “... the transitional period of engagement and disengagement can be called the avant-garde moment” and is similar to the meaning of dilemma. The moment waits to be changed and avant-garde finds opportunity in revolution; however, it has to decide whether to remain in the past or seek the unknown future. A dilemma is not as same as white-and-black theory or fallacy theory but is a close and difficult conception based on an important decision. The term dilemma signifies a very difficult decision (a choice between preciousness or importance) and a hard to resolve certain important issue.

## **B. The Avant-garde Artist Dilemma**

Korean avant-garde artists had to overcome the difficulty to create art that would be internationally accepted as new or progressive. After the conception of avant-garde was signified to be new or to be progressive, it was deconstructed in many challenging trials of contemporary avant-garde artists. The signified meaning of avant-garde was unstable in the post-modernism era. For this terminological deconstruction, critics, such as Libbie Rifkin’s (2011) thesis *The Theory of the Avant-garde and Practice* suggests, “Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s classic “The Aporias of the avant-garde” (1962) consolidates this tradition’s typical moves. Enzensberger traces the military roots of the term “avant-garde,” breaking it down into its component parts and pushing each to its a poretic limit” (Libbie Rifkin, 2011). Here, something has changed in the conception of avant-garde and Enzensberger warns against the pretensions of movements such as the political ideology of fascism or political sloganeering (Steve F. Anderson, 2007:1). In recent cases, Leslie Fiedler’s essay, *Death of Avant-garde Literature* (1964) and Irving Howe’s essay *Break-up of the Avant-garde* argue that avant-garde is dead. Paul Mann also argues in *The Theory-Death of the Avant-garde* (1991), “the avant-garde both lives and dies by definition” (1991: 9).

Calinescu argues that avant-garde as the conception of experimentalism appears highly specialized in a changed situation of the 1960s and was absorbed into the surrounding culture of the war between modernist culture and bourgeois society (Calinescu, 1987: 123). This deconstructed thinking for the meaning of avant-garde is substantiated by, “The Middle class has discovered that the fiercest attacks upon its values can be transported into pleasing

entertainments, and the avant-garde writer or artist must confront the challenge for which has not been prepared: the challenge of success” (Leslie Fedler, 1964: 454-461). The old fashioned meaning of avant-garde has been attacked by other values because (as the speedy change of vogue) the style of avant-garde or new that started decades before becomes old fashioned now; in addition, avant-garde or new becomes old a few decades later. Despite the creation of new it could not be evaluated as avant-garde. To be successful, Korean avant-garde arts should be approved new as newly created avant-garde art. Subsequently, post-modernity changes the trend of contemporary art. The avant-garde artist dilemma is explained by, “The dilemma has proved powerful: and in the early 1990s it is still being insisted – rightly – that too few of the early feminist challenge reached the economic level” (Taylor, 1995: 13).

To find success, post-modernism avant-garde artists were challenged to develop more aggressive and experimental practices. In the local case, this new Korean avant-garde style exhibition is seen in Korea after the 1990s and is described as, “The start of new millennium witnessed the foundation for exhibiting ‘experimental’ and avant-garde style works” (Lee, Dae-Hyung, 2010: 31). Contemporary Korean avant-garde artists continue in the progressive attitude for the creation of new, despite the conception that avant-garde is in crisis. Unfortunately, Korean avant-garde artists are not easy to show their work in regular spaces but show, “Within various alternative spaces that began to be established from 1999, such as Alternative space Pool, Alternative space Loop, Project space Sarubia, Ssamzie Studio and Insa Art space” (Lee, Dae-Hyung, 2010: 31). This situation is representative of the Korean avant-garde dilemma; however, this new globalism avant-garde movement has been partly supported by the Gwangju Biennale and Media City Seoul.

Moving past the local artist dilemma is the next challenge for a local pioneer avant-garde artist. The avant-garde artist dilemma signifies that Korean avant-garde artists have to overcome difficulties to create internationally accepted art in the production of new or progressive. It also signifies the difficulties to create and find post-modern avant-garde art success in the deconstructed norm of avant-garde in the post-modernism era.

### **C. Definition of the Avant-garde Dilemma**

This research argues that the term avant-garde dilemma signifies the difficulty that Korean avant-garde artists face from several directions of practices in creating contemporary

avant-garde art. The avant-garde dilemma broadly signifies the difficulties to select a direction from the three trends: traditional, international and hybrid.

In the modernism era, the Korean avant-garde dilemma is to create successful modern art. However, in the postmodernism era, the avant-garde dilemma signifies to overcome Korean modern art or to overcome Korean modern avant-garde art in the creation of successful Korean post-modern avant-garde art. Contemporary Korean avant-garde artists stand in the midst of international trends (such as media art) and traditional Korean trends (such as Korean Monochrome Art). This produces a dilemma to follow-up the trends of international avant-garde in contemporary art. Korean contemporary avant-garde dilemma is a style selection between the international and the Korean traditional (or hybrid). For example, in Robert Joy Wolf's (1963) essay *The avant-garde dilemma Painting*, "The dilemma of American avant-garde painting is...the word 'painting' cannot stand alone. Inevitably it seeks a context in the word 'art'" (1963: 153). However, Dae-Hyung Lee (2010: 31) argues in Korean avant-garde dilemma style selection that:

They realized that they could not survive...they started to look at Korea as a national brand from an international perspective, carrying out in-depth contemplation, and they prefer to research for their own answers through communication with diverse media rather than receiving guidance and encouragement from previous generation.

Korean avant-garde artists have tried to experiment international perspectives such as the use of avant-garde dilemma in style selection. Tudor Rickards and Murray Clark (2006: 3) argue, "Every leader faces dilemmas, because leadership involves tough decisions, for which there are no obvious answers." Post-modern pioneer or avant-garde artists (such as David Salle, Francesco Clemente, and Damien Hirst) decisions involves researching unknown aesthetical areas such as the deconstructed norm of avant-garde such as kitsch, schlock, parody, pastiche, shock, and other unknown extra-artistic world theories and methods.

Certain postmodern avant-garde artists adapt the new avant-garde methods to be explained by a value-checking lexicon such as immoral or extremely immoral that could be compared to the meanings of disgust or blasphemy. For example, Susan Sontag describes Andrea Serrano's *Piss Christ, 1987* as blasphemy (Plate, 2006: 34), John Caldwell used the term sexually harmful, and pornography for Jeff Koons' *Made in Heaven, 1989* (Sontag, 1991: 53-54; Caldwell, 1992: 14) and Freeland, Cynthia evaluates Ron Athey's *Performance*

*in 1998 as panic (2001: 4)*<sup>8</sup>.

This research summarizes the term avant-garde dilemma as follows: First, for Korean avant-garde artists, it signifies that the difficulties of style selection to follow-up the trends of avant-garde in postmodernism such as antagonism and activism to criticize society. Secondly, the avant-garde dilemma is prolonged to the style selection between traditional or international idioms or to create a hybrid style to develop completely new art.

### **3.3 The Korean Avant-garde Dilemma in the Globalism Era**

This section argues several reasons of the occurrence of local avant-garde dilemma in contemporary art. The argument states how to successfully accomplish Korean post-modern avant-garde art. This argument is related in the theory of post-modernity, to criticize a social problem, successful taste control, to get popularity, and satisfy other artistic goals.

#### **A. Difficulties in Taste control**

This section argues the difficulties of taste control between rich and poor concerning, the difficulties to select the theory and method between national or international idioms. The international trend of modernism has changed into postmodernism since the 1960s. Modernism Art (which was simple and clean) has changed into the complex and ambiguous. For example, Minimalistic primary structure almost disappeared in the mainstream; however, tough textures and heavy paintings (such as those by Julian Schnabel's) appear after the 1980s. Modernism avant-garde (such as formalistic expression) has been replaced by postmodernism styles such as German neo-expressionism and Italian Trans avant-garde.

The bourgeois trend has changed into the middle class or mass people trend in the art market. Clemente Greenberg (1965: 5) argues the change of avant-garde taste as:

Courage indeed was needed for this, because the avant-garde's emigration from bourgeois society to bohemia meant also an emigration from the markets of capitalism... Upon which artists and writers had been thrown by the falling away

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<sup>8</sup> Athey, Ron (April 2007) [online] Available at: <<http://www.organart.demon.co.uk/intronathey.htm>> [accessed 23rd Feb 2011].

of aristocratic patronage. Ostensibly, at least, it meant this -- meant starving in a garret -- although, as we will be shown later, the avant-garde remained attached to bourgeois society precisely because it needed its money.

Avant-garde in modernity as the trends of bourgeois taste as well as capitalist market value changes into other tastes; however, the real trend is bohemia. If art reveals aesthetical beauty (such as minimalism) that is strongly suitable for bourgeois tastes, they are adaptable to be collected by the rich; however, if art reveals socio-critical identity, such as, the activism style of expression suitable for proletarian tastes, they are seldom collected by the rich.

Intellectual Korean Mass Art artists aggressively joined the May 1980 pro-democracy demonstrations against the military government of President Doo-Hwan Chun and shared in the hardship of struggle (Kim, Young-Na, 2010: 16-18), such as Yong-Jin Kim's *Lo The equal earth, 1989* <Fig 8> and Yo-Bae Kang's *Hanra Mountain people, 1992* <Fig 31> . Korean Monochrome style avant-garde artists escaped from this hardship to successfully reveal aesthetical beauty; however, they are now the subject of criticism by activist socio-political avant-garde Mass Art critics and artists criticize. Despite globalization, the modernism avant-garde dilemma to select between bourgeois tastes versus proletarian tastes is not completely resolved in Korean post-modernism society. This research argues that a Korean avant-garde dilemma arises that tries to satisfy traditional styles or follows international post-modern trends such as kitsch, schlock, fetish, and pornography.

Korean art critic Kim Young-Na argues that the borders between nations are disappearing due to the advances in information technology and communication systems. These technological advances have led to the development of a global market based on the activities of multilateral corporations and the rapid flow of workers (2010: 18). Similarly, Ratcliff (2003: 276- 277) suggests that arts are profoundly related in money in the thesis *The Marriage of Art and Money*:

A gallery often consigns works to auction houses, and of course the contemporary pieces we sell usually came into the market originally in gallery exhibition.---Western art since the Renaissance makes no esthetic sense unless we recognize that what we call 'esthetic' is only one aspect of works whose other aspects include those called 'entrepreneurial' or even 'commercial'.

Korean post-modern avant-garde artists also need money to continue their practices. They need to sell their arts in the open market in gallery and auction house as well, because

the selling boundary has magnified in the global economy.

## **B. Difficulty to Criticize the Aesthetics of a Global Society**

This section argues how contemporary socio-political avant-garde artists criticize a globalized society but fail to accomplish aesthetical art objects because these expressions are not in the boundary of the metaphysical area and can be a typical postmodern art weakness. One criticism is that, “Let’s make the world into a single place!” (Featherstone, 2000: 88). That denotes globalization. Negatively thinking, ‘world is a single place’ metaphors and original culture is disappearing; however, it is intermingled with international culture. Artists are confused as whether to continue traditional or international trends. In the South Korean context, the end of the Korean War in 1953 led to the Americanization of South Korea. Korean culture has entered the global culture in the quest for economic and political domination. Korean artists have to realize the speedy movement from Korean traditional culture into Americanized culture. This trend is explained as, “From this perspective the American way of life with its rapid individualism and confident belief in progress, whether manifest in Hollywood film characters such as Donald Duck, Superman and Rambo or embodied in the lives of stars such as John Wayne” (Featherstone, 2000: 87).

Korean society and culture is damaged when it is administered or removed from original culture (Adorno, 1991: 108). Adorno argues that art has a truth-content and that the art-content of a work of art inheres in the determinate negation of untruth (1998: 104). Paolo A. Bolaños supports Adorno’s claim that art is more than entertainment and has the critical role to participate in the dialectical dynamism of society and culture (2007: 26). However, Korean culture has pathologically developed a fetish character after Americanization. Mass Art artists Hak-Chul Shin criticizes an Americanized Korea in the painting, *Monegi: Rice Planting, 1987* (Fig 6 right) describes Korean peasants throwing away US cultural objects. *Times* comments as follows:

Never mind that Shin's work, “Rice Planting,” was painted in obscurity two years ago. Authorities now think it glorifies North Korea by depicting a Utopian scene of smiling peasants near Mt. Paekdu, an icon of the north, and vilifies South Korea with cartoon-like images of foreign imperialism being shoved into the sea. Shin, 45, a former high school teacher, was arrested Aug. 17 under the National Security Law for spreading anti-state propaganda with his brush (October 11, 1989).

The objective of Shin is to criticize the Americanized society (Shin, Hak-Chul, 2007); however, he is arrested for communist activities by the military government and imprisoned for 11 years by a military court. These trials and tribulations cost him everything and leave him destitute (Shin, Hak-Chul, 2007). These events are related in the Korean socio-political avant-garde dilemma. This research questions why he has to meet the dilemma and if there is a solution? What is Socio-Political Art, and what is the real purpose of it?

Edmund Feldman suggests what the role of Socio-Political Art or social functional, “There are, however, narrower and more specific meanings for the ‘social function of art’ and that “the meanings must be related in the character of social response” (1987: 43). Tatarkiewicz (1980: 26) argues that artists speak correctly, directly, vividly and simply; however, this research would suggest to speak ambiguously, ambivalently, complicatedly and metaphorically in the area of uncertainty. The activism style socio-political artists speak vividly and simply; however, antagonism style socio-political artists speak ambiguously.

Schoenberger’s comment (Mt. Paekdu, an icon of the north, cartoon-like images .... shoved into the sea) is explained by the term Tatarkiewicz’s (correctly, directly, and vividly). The work *Monegi: Rice Planting, 1987* need to be expressed ambiguously and ambivalently. Korean Socio-Political Artists need to control their expressions to protest Korean Americanized and global society and be intelligently critical of the power of the culture industry ideology.

This research argues that the expression comes from aesthetical smoothening and the support of aesthetical expression in creating Korean socio-political art. Bell proposes a work of art that is aesthetically valuable in the thesis *The Aesthetic Hypothesis* and comments that, “...to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions” (Bell, 1914: 27). The appreciation of art is far from how to correctly or simply reveal a social reality; Korean Socio-Political Artists need to rethink their view of art practices to control social reality.

Clive Bell (1913) argues that art has to be a significance of form or one that intellectually recognizes the rightness of its forms.<sup>9</sup> This explains a key complement of the

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9 Before we feel an aesthetic emotion for a combination of forms, do we not perceive intellectually the rightness and necessity of the combination? If we do, it would explain that passing rapidly through a room we recognize a picture to be good, although we cannot say that it has provoked much emotion. We seem to have intellectually recognized the rightness of forms without staying to fix our attention, and collect the emotional significance. If this were so, it would be permissible to inquire whether it was the forms themselves or our perception of their rightness and necessity that caused aesthetic emotion. Clive Bell, *The Aesthetics Hypothesis*, originally published 1914, [online] Available at:

claim in that the value of art lies in its ability to produce a distinctive aesthetic experience by the viewer. In the explanation, formalist theories differ according to how the notion of ‘form’ is understood. For Kant, it means the shape of an object or color is not an element in the form of an object (Kelake, 2008). For Bell, by contrast, “The distinction between form and color is an unreal one; you cannot conceive of a colorless space; neither can you conceive a formless relation of colors” (Bell, 1914: 19). Bell calls this experience an aesthetic emotion that shows the basic purpose of creating aesthetical art. Bell argues that significant form is required to describe the distinctive type of combination of lines and colors for a work of art to produce a distinctive aesthetic experience or aesthetic emotion in the viewer because we perceive form as an expression of the experience of the artist (1913: 45). Ordinary objects in the world are seen in the pure form, the experience one has; ultimately, the value of anything whatever lies only in its being a means to a good state of mind (Bell, 1913: 83).

Different from Bell’s modernist aesthetical expression, most of post-modern Socio-Critical Art theories are found in the expression of ridicule, satire, emphasizing, stimulating, exaggeration, and destruction. Spectators can easily accept the conceptions of critical ideas that Korean Socio-Political Artists combine in what Clive Bell suggests as aesthetical beauty (such as balance, harmony, systematic organization, and delicacy) with dialogue.

### **C. Difficult to retain Korean Originality in Post-modernity**

This section argues what kinds of trends have arisen in the post-modern era and how Korean avant-garde artists cope with the situation. This research selects three issues in post-modernity.

The first issue is how to keep or revise Korean originality in creating Korean post-modern avant-garde. Greenberg argues that, “If the avant-garde imitates the process of art, kitsch, we now see, imitates its effect” (1965: 15). There are similar conceptions of imitation (repetition) in modernity and post-modernity. This conception of adaptation, parody, and supplementation produces the modernist tautological repetition. Related to the ideas of Greenberg in regards to tautology and repetition, Jean Baudrillard describes that, “...all originality is almost gone, because post-modernity is reproduction, so is hyper-real” (2003: 1019). A certain explanation for art practices derived from post modernism found in Baudrillard’s book *The Conspiracy of Art*. These are described as, “Present non-use value

and non-exchange value—while still being sold very high prices. Overvaluation could cause phenomenal confusion. Nothing is beautiful or ugly.” (2005: 95). Baudrillard describes the international trend of post-modernism as a dystopia. Contemporary Koreans shift perspectives to consume the culture of different spaces and genres. Dynamic environments and multi-media real time communication separate fixed viewpoints of Korean traditional originality. Korean young generation artists (such as U-ram Choi and Ki-Soo Kwon) have used the motives of games, cartoons, and toys since the 1970s. Dae-Hyung Lee (2010: 32) argues that, “they no longer depend of one fixed frame to look into the world.” Korean avant-garde artists are now in crisis on how to protect the originality of Korean traditional art.

Second, is how to create Korean hybrid style post-modern avant-garde. Dae-Hyung Lee argues in his thesis *What Makes Contemporary Korean Art* that, “Korea never arrived at modernization autonomously but rather as a colony” (2010: 33). He further argues that:

Over the short 100 years there was super-compressed growth from being a colony to a war field, from the *Saemaedul* Movement (a commercial farming project led by former president Park Chung Hee) to the 1988 Olympics, and from the 2002 World Cup to 2010 G20 Summit. As a result, it is almost impossible to find artistic “mentality” running through contemporary Korean Art (Lee, Dae-Hyung, 2010: 33).

Despite the rapid growth of the economy, most contemporary Korean artists (including me) are ambivalent to traditional trends. Korean artists do not have the opportunity to discriminate the difference between international and traditional culture. Contemporary Korean young artists are exposed to international arts through computers, videos, movies, games, advertising, and cartoons; subsequently, there are limited opportunities to understand the importance of Korean traditional culture.

Pierre Bourdieu (2002: 1021) argues that post-modernity shows two aspects, “One side is the dominant figures, continuity, identity, and reproduction; on the other, the newcomers, who seek discontinuity, rupture, difference, and revolution.” Unfortunately, like Bourdieu’s explanation, the contemporary Korean arts are tilting into discontinuity and difference from traditional because they are accustomed to certain international trends. These trends are related in Victor Burgin’s *The Absence of Presence* (2003: 1068-1069) and Niklas Luhmann’s *The Work of Art and the Self-Reproduction of Art* (2003: 1076-1078) that directs post-structuralism ideology to separate signifier and signified in the expression of signs.

Their arguments direct that all traces, colors, images be separated or unified as a given signifiers. Most Korean contemporary artists (including me) use English letters instead of Korean letters in their work. If there is certain letter language in a work that can be combined in given representative signs (such as commercial styles or international images) and provides a more severe dilemma in the maintenance of Korean traditions.

Third, is how to approach new Korean post-modern avant-garde? In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Korean artists (including me) want to create their art independent of the national Korean identity. Tshong-Sung Chang (2010: 41) argues in his essay *Eye on Korea* that, "...what is interesting in contrast to the Chinese situation is the Korean interest in seeking a modern voice on a globalism platform." Chang (2010: 41) suggests that, "being aware that a national identity can only be forged out of global interactions, when subtle variations and inevitable negotiations converge to define self-understanding".

I agree with this argument to catch the real identity and to define the self-understanding of Korean nationality; however, what is real Korean identity and what is self-understanding? How can we do (follow) it? French critic Pierre Restany explains Nouveau Realism in the opening ceremony of the J Gallery that the trend is, "The poetic recycling of urban, industrial and advertising reality" (1990: 76) that connects itself to the new reality derived from an urban consumer society. This expression is rooted in the idea that all artists are free to represent their ideas using surrounding phenomenon, such as commercial goods and street market images. Jürgen Habermas' *Modernity – An Incomplete Project* theory argues that post-modernity is a new ideology of cultural aspects, sometimes the antithesis of modernity, sometimes the prolonged meaning of modernity, sometimes pluralism, deconstruction, post-structuralism attitude, simulacrum, iconoclastic controversy, and others (2003: 1123-1131).

Restany's and Habermas's ideologies are related in how to approach new Korean style post-modernism in expressing their ideas through the images of creating a new trend. For Korean post-modernism avant-garde, I would argue that to reveal the real Korean spirit is important despite the attempt to adapt materials that artists have adapted from their surroundings. For this reply, as to reveal Korean spirit, Tshong-Sung Chang (2010: 43) suggests, "As Korean art negotiates a legacy of western modernism and its own history, it has brought forth an art that is both about Korea and its unique vision of contemporary world. It is a voice that is eager to communication and is therefore conscious about its own difference and cultural character." Korean contemporary artists have to read the Korean identity through Korean history and a culture that reveals the lessons of what Korean

ancestors have shown in their art.

## **D. Difficult to be Unique**

This section argues the difficulties to create a unique style Korean post-modern avant-garde. Poggioli suggests, “To distinguish between diverse types and forms, different sequences of cause and effect, in which popularity or unpopularity is expressed” (1968: 43). Further, he argues that, “In contemporary civilization, the problem of popularity of art takes on a specific, wholly new and vital, significance” (1968: 43). It is also linked with unique art because avant-garde art is highly linked to the conception of new. In that case, the word new can direct and expand boundaries of the message or new art theory. It can show new fantasy that guides future aesthetics. To find uniqueness, certain internationally famous experimental artists such as Pierre Manzoni, Kiki Smith, and Ana Mendiata have experimented with outer boundaries of art or another areas (extra-boundary of art object world) of aesthetical objects: such as blood, dung, piss, and body fluids through the use of every difficult movement, action, and performance.

Korean critic Dae-hyung Lee (2010: 31) argues that, to be unique, Korean artists do not need to do every exercise the same as past artists have done. However, Young-Na Kim argues that, “Beginning in 1970s, ‘Koreanness’ could hinder the development of contemporary art and the internationalization of Korean art; in addition, “Things Korean is things Global” (2010: 17). In creating new style, local artists have the avant-garde dilemma to follow-up the international trends or to chase international avant-garde tastes. Koreans realized that they could not survive the regulations established within the institutional boundaries of art museums, galleries, schools and authorizes (Lee, Dae-hyung, 2010: 31).

This research selects four examples of Doo-Shik Lee and Suk-Chang Hong. Lee works of Korean avant-garde style that combines western abstract expressionism and five Korean traditional colors and gestures with several skills. Hong is noted for the combination of Buddhist style subjects with chaotic destruction style calligraphy.

## **3.4 Several cases of resolving avant-garde dilemma**

This section argues the contemporary avant-garde dilemma between three directions, to follow traditional or international trends to combine both directions. The area of

international globalization started in the 1990s also influenced the Korean peninsula. After the rapid industrialization of Korea in the 1970s (The Miracle of the Han River), the improved living standards caused a separation in society and individual selfishness. The raison d'être of the Korean Mass People Art vanished because of their vision of a Korean Democratic society was accomplished; however, the other counterpart Korea monochrome and Korea Hyperrealism artists survived.

Despite profound plural information, artists have lack evaluation eyes to criticize all the differences. The current postmodern ideology is very difficult for Korean artists and the lack of an objective view is a void in the ability to criticize unjust developments in a globalized world. Continual change gives artists a severe dilemma to select their artistic directions. Most international societies change slowly according to the desire of society; however, South Korean society struggles to evolve due to the constant threat from North Korea.

This research introduces the South Korean situation in the 1990s and the avant-garde dilemma of South Korea. What are the different aspects and relationship between Korea and international trends after globalization? This research argues what kinds of effort are found to resolve the dilemmas by selected Korean artists.

## **A. Chase the Trends of avant-garde**

### **Case 1 Contextualizing Art with Science: Nam-Jun Paik**

Nam-June Paik (1932-2006) is selected as the Korean International hybrid case. He was a Korean–German–American artist who worked with a variety of media and was the pioneer video artist of telecommunication motifs. How can his art be distinguished through a hybrid style?

In 1950, Paik and his family moved from Korea to Japan 4 months before the Korean War. He passed the entrance of Tokyo University exam and six years later graduated with a thesis based on the composer Arnold Schoenberg. He excelled academically and was able to study at Munich University where Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage, Joseph Beuys and Wolf Vostell inspired him to work in the field of Electronic Art. From 1979 to 1996, Paik was a professor at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. His strategy to overcome the local avant-garde dilemma was to network with important people.

Inspired by John Cage to use everyday sounds and noises in his music, he became a member of Neo-Dada (the Fluxus Movement). He used scattered televisions and with magnets that distorted their images in his debut exhibition *Exposition of Music-Electronic Television, 1964* (Fig 41). In 1964, Paik began to combine video, music, and performance with Charlotte Moorman. This was a new beginning of hybrid activity. His practice to resolve avant-garde dilemma is as follows: First, Combine Art and Music and TV system, as the work *TV Cello, 1971*. Second, Use mass media to become an international celebrity known for creative and entertaining works. Third, Cause sensation; in a notorious 1967 incident, Charlotte Moorman is arrested for going topless while performing in Paik's *Opera Sextronique, 1967*. Fourth, Represent pluralistic Social Aspects such as *Something Pacific, 1986* where a statue of a sitting Buddha faces its image on a closed circuit television. Fifth, International Publications that see any of Paik's early works and writings collected in a volume edited by Judson Rosebush titled *Nam June Paik: Video 'n' Videology, 1959–1973*, published by the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, in 1974. Sixth, Successful International Expositions such as the New Year's Day celebration on January 1, 1984 where he aired *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell, 1984* in a live link between WNET New York, Centre Pompidou Paris, and South Korea. A final retrospective of his work was held in 2000 at the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

Paik offers a commentary about an American Culture obsessed with television, moving images, and bright shiny things. His challenge is evaluated as follows: His unique core conception is speed, mass culture, and contextualizing art with science. However, even though his method is successful, the deep emotional feeling of a catharsis is not found in the combination of image texts. In the work *The More the Better, 1988* (Fig 42) made from 1003 TV monitors and shown on Korean National Memorial day with varieties of images, Merce Cunningham, Joseph Beuys, John Cage, Charlotte Moorman and Koreans represent a pluralist society. His other aim is to express, "As accurate as da Vinci, as free as Picasso, as glittering as Renoir, as profound as Mondrian and as rhythmical as Jasper Johns" (Paik, Nam-Jun: 2007). His method combines Korean traditional text and that of the international.

## **Case 2 Combination of Meticulousness: Do-Ho Suh**

Do-Ho Suh<sup>10</sup> is selected as a Korean hybrid Case. Large scale site-specific, Suh's work *Seoul Home/L.A. Home/New York Home/Baltimore Home/ London Home/ Seattle Home/L.A. Home, 1999* (Fig 43) attracts the attention the viewers. In genre, his usual works are located in the midst of installation and sculpture that can be described as hybrid or combined art. It reveals global situation of pluralism. Further, to represent a vinyl house of Korean traditional building, his art criticizes the economic bubble of contemporary Korean society.

In several floor sculptures (installation style) *Art Survey*, viewers are encouraged to walk on surfaces composed of thousands of miniature human figures upholding a large sheet of glass. The art shows the power of the masses. Another work *Some/One, 2001* (Fig 44), the floor of the gallery is full with a wide round shape of 3000 polished military identification tags made by the artist himself. To represent a larger troop or military body, these collective tags swell to form a hollow and ghost-like suit of vacant armor at the center of the installation. In the midst of the work, a vacant space or void shows a representative outskirts image that is similar to the armor worn by an oriental soldier or emperor. The longing for tradition combined with a criticism for the same appears in Suh's *Some/One, 2001* (Fig 44), a massive emperor's coat made of military dog tags that represents Korean history with through the use of modern tautological expression. Do-Ho Suh's sculptures represent a modern global society in the combination of personal space and public space. His art is distinguished as follows:

- a. Focusing on numerous particles together to criticize the mass civilization society.
- b. Combination of meticulousness, combined with a more conceptual Western sensibility.
- c. The craftsmanship, some because of the idea of memory and being between places, and some because of the idea of the individual versus the group," says David Maupin, owner of New York's Lehmann Maupin Galleries.<sup>11</sup>

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10 He is born in Seoul, Korea in 1962. Compared to other Korean artists, he has a proper academic background. After earning his Bachelor of Fine Art and Master of Fine Art in Oriental Painting from Seoul National University, Suh is able to continue his studies at the Rhode Island School of Design and Yale University after fulfilling his South Korean military service duty. His father is well known artist Seo, Se-Ok who is successfully support his son mentally and economically. Do-Ho Suh represents Korea at the 2001 Venice Biennale. He has a retrospective of the artist's work, which is held jointly at the Seattle Art Museum and the Seattle Asian Art Museum in 2002. Suh's major exhibitions are organized at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris 2001, the Serpentine Gallery, London 2002, and the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, MO 2002.<sup>10</sup>

11 Globalizing Korean Art; NEWS FLASH [online] Available at: <<http://connectcwt.com/2009/07/01/news-flash-5/>> [Accessed 28th October 2010].

## B. Create a Hybrid Style between Traditional and International Idioms

### Case 3 Combine Oriental Colors with Western Gestures: Doo-Shik Lee

Doo-Shik Lee<sup>12</sup> is successful in the fusion of western calligraphy with oriental colors. In his paintings *The Origin of Life, 1986* (Fig 45-46), he captures on paper, the shapes of animals, leaves, and sexual organs. Sometimes, he mixes shapes with mysterious landscapes and color field paintings that are not easy to distinguish and uses shadows, brush traces, and spots. His art is commonly located in the field of representation and abstract art. His paintings are prepared with a double structure of abstract and concrete forms; however, they are distant traditional works and remain difficult signifiers to the viewers.

His first avant-garde dilemma begins to overcome the Korean *Informel* and Monochrome Art that develops in Korea. Since his debut as an artist in 1968, Lee becomes a luminary figure in the world of art. His vigorous activities and the quality of his work increase. Many factors (natural talent, effort, and progress) contribute to his success. Art Critic Nan-Jie Yun argues, “The method of *Informel*, which sways the entire art world since the late 1950s, is gradually cooling at the time of his debut 1960s. Paradoxically speaking, *Informel* (which leads the vanguard of the avant-garde movement in Korea) is degenerating into Academism. Like Lee, many young artists are searching for a new language with which to express themselves” (1996: 12-19). Art critic Shin Hang-Sup argues that, “He has magnificently built up a formative world hardly comparable with others, and his arts are particularly complicated regarding the attribution of the contemporary art which is likely to be symbolized by monochrome and minimalism” (2005: 106-108).

In the early 1980s, Lee’s own peculiar traits are also evident in the popular artistic trends of the era and can be seen in his work. For example, his forms (unlike those of his

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12 Doo-Shik Lee was born in Yongju, Kyungsangbuk do in 1947, he graduated from the Hongik University Fine Art Department and the Hongik Graduate school 1979, later he graduated from the PhD course at Kyoto University Graduate School Art & Design Department in 2005. His dissertation is *Study of the Expression of Animated Atmosphere by the Intuitive Sensibility and Autonomy in Paintings: Combination of the Consciousness of Korean Traditional Color and the Strokes of the Brush*. He has had more than 40 solo exhibitions in Seoul, Tokyo, New York, LA, Taiwan, Switzerland, Bulgaria, and Bangladesh. He participated in more than 400 group exhibitions such as, Ecole de Seoul (1976-89), Touring Exhibition of Korean contemporary Art (1983, Japan), Cagnes International Painting Festival (1984, Cagnes) São Paulo International Biennale (1987), Miami Art Fair (1992), Davos, Swiss (1999), San Diego California, USA (1999), Sofia, Bulgaria (2000), Bangladesh (2001). However, it was the first time to have a solo exhibition in Germany.

contemporaries) are of internal organs and female genital that metaphorically invoke life and sexual feelings. The backgrounds he chooses for these forms are natural scenes of indoor spaces, yet remain obscure without any form of certainty. The use of ambiguous spaces with strange organic forms produces strange feelings slightly different from modern surrealist paintings. However, they have the breath of nature shown in his paintings and each particle or organ hidden in the earth ground represent the Power of God.

Nan-Ji Yun (1996: 12-19) argues that another difference of hyperrealism of Lee is the effect of color blots and swift brush strokes. These elements are a blend of western and oriental painting styles with daring omissions and spacious backgrounds; in addition, there is the *gusto* of a *literati*<sup>13</sup> artist's style developed by Chinese professional artists (Nanshunguga, 2011). The style represented with simple color and ink on traditional Korean paper. The combinations of heterogeneous elements, concrete shapes drawn with hyperrealistic techniques, and the abstract shapes formed with traditional brushwork provided a sense of excitement. This mysterious effect depicts the external shapes of seeds, leaves, flowers, fruits, and female genitalia as well as shows the organic life process of birth, development, and to death. Swift and rough brush strokes with distinct colors create unexpected effects. I call this, his keen discernment of the nature of life that contains heterogeneous shapes found all around world. They also express the phenomenon of life. The former expresses it through concrete forms, the latter through the process of drawing. From this point of view, we may confirm that his works in the period are rooted in the spirit of ancient Oriental Art that regards the process of painting as the unification of the artist with nature. Further, the *Origin of Life, 1986* (Fig 45-46) regards human and nature as a biomorphic phenomenon. We are able to see that he is beyond the current trend from his continuous willingness to express primitive expressions of surrealist *libido* as the motivational source of all creations.

His works post-1986 show great change and represent a complete break from the past. He starts to fuse scribbling and dripping skills. Most of the great effect is a broad use of canvas that uses speed stroke and spray. Many critics argue that his new series work, *Festival, 2008* (Fig 47-48) is accomplished with powerful brush strokes fused in red, blue green, and yellow colors displayed evenly on organic forms that are drawn in a hyper-

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13 The Southern School of Chinese painting. Composed of *literati* (scholars) as opposed to the Northern School \**Hokushuuga* 北宗画 of Chinese painting which was composed of professional artists (Nanshunguga, 2011) .

realistic way. Lee explained his coloring methods as, “My work shows a combination of formless stains and improvised strokes in free forms such as circles and squares within a whole composition of the canvas. Unlike the dark gloomy colors in monochrome era, I prefer primary colors, such as red, blue green, and yellow” (Dialogue with Park, Ki-Woong and Lee, doo-Shik, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2007).

Art Critic Jong-Keun Kim (2008: 121-122) alludes that Lee’s recognition of artistic colors began in 1972 through his work *Festival*. Since 1986, (even though all the scribbling artists have an improvisational process) Lee infuses new life into those unique forms, with his pencil drawings and watercolor works that represent a style that meets a significant turning point signified in the series of *Festival, 2008* (Fig 47-48) produced on canvas. Lee explains that:

Although I am using the western forms of art, the use of primary colors in my work roots from the *Oh Bang Saik*<sup>14</sup> and *Dan Chung*s<sup>15</sup> of Buddhist paintings. Therefore, the foundation is from our oriental heart. The primary high chromatic colors can be seen as the resurrection of the traditional colors, which is mentioned above. The fast, strong and sometimes slow, moving black strokes of lines are also from the heart (Dialogue with Park, Ki-Woong and Lee, doo-Shik, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2007).

Such aspects are further emphasized through the use of watery acrylic paint and brushes used for oriental paintings. In Oriental Painting, the white background implies a ray of light from the back or infinite space so that the emptiness could be understood as a reflection of the painter's spirit in an act of controlling strength and breath. Lee comments that, “While working on this ‘Festival’ I am thinking about the differences between our beautiful and gay festival with the western parties” (Lee, Doo-Shik, 2007). The use of brush strokes and shadow of grey color show his attempt to create instant forms is a true trait of the literati artist’s style. The traces of his brushwork that use improvisational process and the effect of inkblots that becomes rocks, birds, animals, flora, or people. Art critic Hang-Sup Shin comments that, “In addition to the above, it has been significantly noted that the objects appearing on the surface of his paintings are varied such as personal figure, nudes, birds, fish, dragonflies and bicycles, etc” (2005: 106-108). He sticks to the concept of drawing because

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14 The five basic colors of traditional Korean culture, blue, yellow, orange, green, red. [online] Available at: <[http://rogallery.com/Lee\\_Doo\\_Shik/lee-biography.html](http://rogallery.com/Lee_Doo_Shik/lee-biography.html)> [Accessed 19<sup>th</sup> Sep 2011].

15 This method uses patterns and colors to decorate the inner part of the roof of Chinese and wooden Korean buildings. [online] Available at: <<http://blog.naver.com/PostView.nhn?blogId=inmyseoul&logNo=120062965435&categoryNo=0&viewdate=&cpage=1&listtype=0>> [Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Sep 2011].

he draws figures without pre-calculation. Whether he draws concrete forms or abstract forms, the result is almost the same and allows him to fuse all kinds of subjects.

Nan-Ji Yun explains that through this unique creation of a formative beauty, Lee shows himself to be an exceptional contemporary artist (1996: 12-19). His approach to art is direct and intuitive without time for appreciation by the viewer. A painting is a common event in his everyday life; however, as in the case of his regular routine activity, he never shows the manner of mechanical behavior and he prolongs it as a devout religious ritual.

His use of bright colors in his early period is a kind of revival of the traditional color sense; however, his recent works are filled with lightly drawn and free brush strokes that resemble ink paintings. Thin acrylic watercolors drawn with an airbrush produce more of the atmosphere of traditional Korean ink paintings. The uncolored white background *Yeobek* (*vacant space or remain space as white in Korean traditional painting*) are suggestive of infinite light (void or space) is in accord with the concept of space in oriental paintings. We can distinguish that he is holding breath while drawing his forms and that his speedy instant brushwork technique was achieved through years of practice based on the principles of oriental paintings. The major motivating factors behind any artistic endeavor are imitation and expression with his works focused more heavily in the direction of expression (Yun, Nan-Ji, 1996: 12-19). However, Hang-Sup Shin (2007: 106-108) argues that characteristics based on red, blue, yellow, black and white that originates from the *Oh Bang Saik* (*Five Original Korean Traditional Colors*) are often seen in *Dan Chung* or *Buddhist Art* (Fig 47) or Shaman Art and folk crafts.

The two essential elements in his works are color and brushwork that allow us to experience instinctive and impulsive sentiments. In his recent works *Festival, 2008* (Fig 49), instinctive expression is the constant motivating power. His animated and vivid life finds common ground with the viewpoint of oriental paintings that spurt an instinctive desire with powerful colors and free brush works that are expressive landscape paintings of inner motivation. Jong-Keun Kim (2008: 121-122) argues that, “his primitive colors that were freely used, he longs for a more temperate use of colors, and in his unhindered form of passion, he searches for a new study of image through restricted reason.” He constructs a unique mode of abstract art developed from pure basic colors of blue, green, red, yellow, black, as well as line, form, and shadow. Even though it is highly linked with Western Abstract Expressionism Scribbling Art, most of the works express his simple and pure heart of reaching an oriental clean and mild life of an ancient village. In his PhD dissertation, he

writes that his works are strongly linked with the vibration or consonance of a weltgeist and movement of life as well as a cosmic, spiritual force that imparts life, character, and significance to material forms kindling the individual artist with a cosmic force (Lee, Doo-Shik, 2005: 54-56). Likewise, the *Festival* series are the arts of Korean people's energy and the dramatic heart of passion. The combination of western style strong dripping and scribbling brush strokes with five basic traditional Korean colors plus three basic white, black, and grey colors, creates the hybrid style *Festival* series.

The use of simple methods allows Lee to suggest his meditative heart. In the works, he provides a special message for us to live more free and happy even though there are many difficulties in everyday life. He wants us to overcome the trials of every living and the mundane. In *Festival*, he showers us with the warm and strong power of energy of an ancient society. However, Lee argues, "During 20 years, I am falling in to draw too much same style. Many collectors respond about my art has good feeling, so I am staying.<sup>16</sup> Now I regret. My new avant-garde style will meet my fans again."<sup>17</sup>

#### **Case 4 From Boisterous Dance to Nirvana: Suk-Chang Hong**

Suk-Chang Hong is an artist who draws diverse paintings after his apprenticeship and goes on to combine still-life, landscape, calligraphy, and scribbling that transform his style. He also draws factual paintings and freely paints traditional line paintings with modern-looking black and white expressionist paintings. In 1998, the usual titles are: *Art of Water and Ink*, (*Art of*) *Color and Ink*, *Wave of Energy*, *Flower Rhapsody*, and *Affliction and Deliverance*; from the procedure, the recent series of works are summarized as the five subjects: *Three Immersion*, *Boisterous Dance* (Fig 50), *Free from all Ideas and Thoughts*, *Deliverance* (Fig 49 & 51) and *Nirvana* (Fig 53). Through this series of development, he is able to create a Korean hybrid style avant-garde.

Art Critic Doo-Bin Im (2007: 9) argues that, "If this classification is to be forced onto

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16 From 1990 – 2009, He sells 4000 pieces of art. Among the collections in which his works are represented are: The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Kwachon; Ciging gallery, Seoul, Korea; Brewster Gallery, New York USA, Yeun-Sei Building (Seoul, Korea); Hilton Hotel (Seoul, Korea); Jimmy Carter Foundation (USA); Orlando City Hall (USA); Flaminio Underground Station (Rome, Italy); Lotte Hotel (Jeju); Marriot Hotel (Seoul); Hilton hotel (Seoul); Beijing art of museum (China); The National Museum of Art, and the Republic of Bulgaria (Republic of Bulgaria).

17 [online] Available at: <<http://biz.heraldm.com/common/Detail.jsp?newsMLId=20090921000360>> [Accessed 10 October 2011].

the world of Hong's artworks, then we might ignore the larger part of lively and free dynamics inherent in his painting world." As well, Art Critic Jae-Un Lee (2007: 52) argues that, "The trim use of the brush in the past often changes into free scrawling. We have seen chaotic aspect of reformative Korean painting." Such works shock people as he is still pushing the avant-garde direction at over 60 years of age. Jae-Un Lee (2007: 15) explains that, "Works at 1997's solo exhibition hold in Proxis gallery in Germany are revised for picture of vehement touch." The Beijing exhibition of Xiao Da Zhen in 1994, (1994: 9) identify that, "His paintings (before 1994) show a clear oriental color that is possible because he observes the world through the unique oriental experience in psychological and esthetic point of views that expresses his inner passion. He deeply understands it through the language of Ink Painting." Such brush stroke based paintings are a form intermingled with the sense of the *literati* artist's style or western style (Kim, Ji Ho, 2004: 52-53; Lee, Yong Jin, 2004: 88-91; In, So-Youn, 2004: 88-91). However, it is not welcomed by Hong and he argues, "...his style is to escape or overcome from them" (Hong, Suk-Chang, 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct 2006). It is important that his style not be regarded as the traditional *literati* artist's style or Korean traditional style.

There are many episodes to approach the present style; however, the style from the 2000's to the present shows chaotic scribbling, dripping, and strong brush strokes or uncombed brush effects on soft Korean paper. This unusual effect is a kind of revolution that upends traditional painting genre and is not found in the aesthetics of western abstract expressionism and calligraphy. It is a kind of new hybrid of Korean and western scribbling. Hong wants to realize reality to include or to exclude all he has accomplished and erase personal ego. His works remain similar to Korean traditional paintings despite the use of Korean papers and ink; however, they are also closer to western oil and acrylic paintings in appearance. Related to the globalization of Korean society, he combines *literati* styles, Korean traditional calligraphy and traces of action. Hong argues that, "I mix chaotic images and strokes as if the Korean traditional mixing food *Bibimbob*" (Hong, Suk-Chang, 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct 2006).

The image of Buddha shows his desire for the highest state of mind in the deliverance of mercy and self-renunciation. When compared to the surrealist's dream, the signifiers are neither certain ideal illusion, certain concrete shapes, or the representation of image. Hong argues, "Until 1970's, the automobile market of Korea is just beginning and gaining many technical skills from west, but now 2000s, on the contrary, Korean automobiles are exported

to the West and Europe” (Hong, Suk-Chang, 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct 2006).

To represent the Aesthetics of Transcendence, he erases the traces of himself to show the paradise of Buddhism Nirvana or the Celestial world. He considers all the things in the earth important and deals with them equally. Recent works show the procedure of secession and effect of *ecdysis*<sup>18</sup> and transcendence. A spectator asks, “May I call the brushing trace just an effect of accident?” Hong answers:

There are many essential things in the paintings. The arts are as the same as the stream of energy or circulation of God’s creation of everything in the Nature. The world of God’s creation is not to distinguish good and evil, light and dark, but to give order in the chaos. Usual and precious are on the same being; as it is compared to my art world: from lowest to most precious heavenly things are the same beings on the painting surface. They are the things from my free idea; as the veins of gold, which is found in a mine by chance; the things in the nature from the ambiguous brush strokes (Hong, Suk-Chang, 2006).

Lee, Jae-Un argues that, “Especially, *Nirvana* is simple and clear work of light and shade reminds Matisse’s *Dekopaju*. The peaceful mood of light and shade in Indian ink is as before in the combination of temperance and moderation in an oriental esthetic with western molding sense of restoration” (Lee, Jae-Un, 2007: 52). Free from the things and their base materials, he enjoys something to express everything. The contents are, birds, turtles, frogs, fishes, a Buddha, a *Bodhidharma*,<sup>19</sup> cucumbers, various flowers, a luffa and spiral sign. Hong uses various every day tools such as bamboo brush, paper, and newspaper.

Transcending Korean ink, he uses eastern and western materials such as acrylic, gold powder, silver powder and various coloring methods. Most of his works are based on the style of ‘all over’. He likes overlapping effects with various brush strokes, from side by side and edge by edge on the whole surface that is wholly covered by spots of pigments and dying pigments. The most important method is scribbling<sup>20</sup> that he describes as an action gesture that is different from Jackson Pollock’s; however, it remains close to Cy Twombly’s *Four Seasons, 1993-1994* (Fig 52).<sup>21</sup> In addition, it can be compared to the calligraphy of

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18 The shedding of an outer integument or layer of skin, as by insects, crustaceans, and snakes; molting.

19 Bodhidharma was a Buddhist monk who lived during the 5th/6th century and is traditionally credited as the transmitter of Zen (Chinese: Chán, Sanskrit: Dhyāna) to China. He is the patron saint of the Shaolin Monastery and to have begun the physical training of the monks that developed Kung Fu (Dumoulin, H, (2005: 86) .

20 This method appears in 3 to 5 year old children.

21 In the mid-50s, Twombly wrote a short statement for the Italian art journal *L’Esperienza moderna*: “To paint involves a certain crisis, or at least a crucial moment of sensation or release; and by crisis it should by no means be limited to a morbid state, but could just as well be one ecstatic impulse...” [online]

Franz Klein's or U-Fan Lee's *Encounter* series that contrast Hong's art effect. His styles are combined with eastern and western idioms as well as modernism and post-modernism that create a Korean hybrid of aesthetic and socio-critical avant-garde that represent the recent Korean global situation.

## *Chapter Review*

Chapter 3 rethought why the Korean Mass Art (first postmodernism or Korean socio-political avant-garde) were not successful versus the success of the Korean Monochrome (Korean style aesthetic avant-garde) arts. They see *Hanji's* flexible materiality in the midst of the struggle to adjust to Korean style abstract arts (Monochrome Arts). They overcome non-using color and to obtain the Color of Nature; however, international trends requires Korean post-modernism. Korean artists (including me) have had an avant-garde dilemma since the era of globalization.

In the 1990s, Korean art stage met the center of globalism or a pluralist postmodernism society. Korean artists are at the center of international trends (such as media art) and Korean traditional trends (such as Korean Monochrome Art). Korean Post-modern Artists achieve the four duties: taste control; to criticize globalism society aesthetically; to keep Korean Originality; and to be unique.

This research argues why the avant-garde dilemma started in the Korean post-modernism era. I define the term avant-garde dilemma as the difficulties of style selection to follow-up the trends of avant-garde in postmodernism such as antagonism and activism to criticize society. Secondly, the avant-garde dilemma is prolonged from the style selection between traditional or international idioms to create a hybrid style to develop new art.

The next chapter introduces my avant-garde dilemma between aesthetical avant-garde and socio-political avant-garde in the creation of Korean post-modern avant-garde art related to hybrid practices.

# **Chapter 4**

## **A Subjective View of the Avant-garde Dilemma: The case of Ki-Woong Park**

This chapter introduces my struggle to resolve avant-garde dilemma. Section 4.1 introduces why the avant-garde dilemma has arisen in my artistic life and what is the aim to resolve the dilemma, such as to create hybrid, Socio-Critical Art. Section 4.2 argues what is the strategy to resolve the dilemma and why I use the term Scrooge Repent. Section 4.3 analyzes several selected art styles.

## **4.1 My Avant-garde Dilemma: To create a hybrid style**

### **A. Infamous artist Dilemma Era 1986-1992**

In the midst of Korea War on Jan 4<sup>th</sup> 1951, my father, Sang-Byung Park (1928-1987) (a democratic activist working in North Korea) escapes from North Korea to South Korea to flee North Korean inspections. After the war, he joins the Korean Army and marries my mother, Young-Sook Kang (1936-) in 1956 in Kwangju city. I am born in 30<sup>th</sup> November 1958. During my childhood, my family moves frequently due to the nature of my father's position. I see many US military trucks, tanks, and unexploded bombs displayed on a stonewall while living in a small town Nulgori 40 km away from the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

I become a member of a student art group and dream to become an artist during my junior high school year. My close friend Jong-Kwan Yang teaches me pencil and watercolor drawing. My close friend Jun Lee (now vice president of Samsung Leeum Museum) tutors me in oil color paintings and sculptures during my final high school term.

I worked as an English translator for the Korean Augmentation to the United States Army (KATUSA) from 1980-1983. My duty as a soldier was to support the relationship between the Korea Army and US Army. Even though I am an undergraduate student and in the midst of Army service, I propose to my wife Hee Ahn (1960-) and live together since 1981. I become the proud father of three beautiful children Sung-Hoon Park (1982-), Soo-Yeon Park (1986-), and Soo-Min Park (1994-).

The onset of my artist dilemma begins in 1986. To get money, I have to draw theater board paintings and perspective drawings; however, it remains difficult to support my family. In my studio, I teach students who are trying to pass the university entrance examination. I spend almost 7 hours teaching students. It is difficult to concentrate on my art practice and I decide to spend 1-2 hours per day teaching only a few students. I spend 8-12 hours per day on my art practice; however, my wife unfortunately is forced to teach students privately in 1987 because of my low income. I continue my art practice and finally overcome my infamous dilemma.

### **B. Early avant-garde dilemma in Academic Life, 1986-1994**

I combine iron cables, wood, used iron, and clothes in the later part of the 1980s to create a mixed media style paintings. Further, to reveal material phenomenon, I destroy the surface using several tools (electric drills, hammers, and sharp knives) to show the hardness of people through the ugliness of my art. One Mass Artist requested me to join their activism group; however, I reject his proposal because I am dissatisfied with their aggressive activism and lack of aesthetical expression.

Why, I am dissatisfied with Mass Art? First, the challenging issue of democracy has been resolved through the establishment of a democratic government in Korea. Second, despite a socio-political message, the Mass Art style is one-sided and most art works of Mass People are quickly forgotten.

Unfortunately, I am not clearly educated by my teachers Seung-Won Seo, Myung-Young Choi, Jong-Hyun Ha, and Seo-bo Park; because they explore a Korean Monochrome Art that is different from my style. All of them have established reputations and are leaders in their field; however, I am not accepted by them. For this reason, even though my art is a kind of Socio-Critical Art, its style is not clearly known as Mass Art. My early avant-garde dilemma begins from approximately 1985-1989 because I am dissatisfied with initial Korean post-modernism styles; furthermore, the two styles, Korean Monochrome Art and Mass Art conflict with each other. Therefore, my early avant-garde dilemma begins in a style selection to follow the Korean Monochrome style of Mass People; however, I decide to create a hybrid style.

### **C. Early Aim: Create Hybrid, Aesthetical and Socio-Critical Art 1995-2000**

Related in the last section 2.3 B, this section argues why I decided to create a hybrid style. From the 1980s to 1990s, (the beginning term of my art history) the three main styles of Korean contemporary arts expand. Korean arts show pluralistic, deconstructive, and mixed media styles that are similar to international trends; subsequently, in the 1990s to 2000s, high-tech genres, such as video, film, laser holograms, and computer graphics appear. Several critics argue that this change in Korean art after the 1990s contrast shadow effects with two or three colors combined line composition or post Korean Monochrome Art (Suh, Sung-Rok, 1994: 281). Several Post Korean Monochrome Artists develop materialized expressions on the painting surfaces through free drawing lines (Oh, Kwang-Soo, 1988: 62).

Post Korean Monochrome Artists create painting surfaces with the energetic movement of gesture to show tough textures. Their expressions show tough strokes, strong colors, doubles illusion, and free composition. This recent trend stimulates me to create a hybrid style of Aesthetical and Socio-Critical Art to resolve the Korean avant-garde dilemma. For this reason, I struggle to create *Bangsan Market, 1996-1997* (Fig 54) and *Cosmism, 1998-2000* (Fig 55-57) series. However, why did I have to quit the two series?

First, the *Bangsan Market* series show layers of cardboard papers in the ‘Bangsan Market area’<sup>22</sup> to criticize Seoul’s hidden aspects. However, the work *Bangsan Market 2020-I, 1997* (Fig 54), to attach papers vertically from the painting surface shows certain natural surfaces and layers of wood or earth. I complete the *Bangsan Market* series after the creation of 20 pieces, My aim is to criticize urban living and the subsequent layers of wood are different. Second, the first Cosmism Sketch, *Rubbish Fragments of Spaceship, 1998* (Fig 55) and *Rubbish Fragments of Spaceship I, 1998* (Fig 56) shows space debris in a critical approach to a future human environment. I combine various machine-like particles such as aluminum pipes, hoses, electric lines, plastic particles, and cotton; however, the results are indistinguishable from regular Junk Art and I end the series after 12 works. Third, I rethink Piet Mondrian’s theory of art such as *Destijl*, based on universe that exists in a vertical and horizontal composition.

I want to reveal the real shape of the universe, “Schoenmaekers taught that it was possible to take a scientific peek into this eternal mystical world by means of meditation on simple geometric figures and their symbolic meanings. Basically he would muse a lot about horizontal and vertical lines, circles and ellipses.” (Schoenmaekers and Mondrian, 2009). However, unlike the Dutch De Stijl movement’s vertical and horizontal strict lines, in the work *Space of Universe 99-21, 1999* (Fig 57), I use curved lines of aluminum rods, to show free space. Different from the mathematician Schoenmaekers’s prospect of the universe, my *Cosmism* is based on the real space of the universe captured by the Hubble Telescope since the 1990s. In the telescope, the space of the universe is not a straight line; it is vertical and horizontal with a chaos formed by numerous stars, galaxies, gas layers, and black holes. My *Cosmism* is based on the hypothesis of Steven Hawking’s *The Universe in Nutshell* the universe is composed of 9–11 dimensional space layers and curvilinear structures that are affected by strong gravitation (Hawking, 2001: 143-148).

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22 In Seoul, Bangsan Market area is widely known to sell various goods and living materials, especially paper.

I spend 8-9 hours twisting aluminum rods per day in the desire to create space grids that will hold pigments and objects (Fig 57). Unfortunately, my wrist develops carpal tunnel syndrome a year later and the doctor advises me not to use my wrist anymore until it is healed. However, I am obsessed to finish this work and unfortunately my wrist suffers a serious injury that forces me stop this series.

One of my junior artists Hyun Na (2000) questions the reasons for the changing styles of his mentor and comments that, "Certain persons say that your identity is not clearly known, because you change your style frequently." Despite this advice, I again change my style with the aim to create a hybrid Aesthetical and Socio-Critical Art. To create a hybrid, I consider the combination of Korean two avant-gardes of Mass Art and Monochrome Art.

U-Fan Lee's *Monoha*, Italian Arte-Povera, such as Alberto Burri (Fig 58-59), Eve Klein's *Fire Painting* (Fig 60-62), German neo-expressionism, such as Anselm Kiefer, and USA Frank Stella (because Stella's method systematically changed from minimalism to deconstructionism). Stella's three Dimensional art works (1980s to 1990s) are compared to those of Jackson Pollock's two-dimensional action paintings. To represent this free expression, Stella uses honeycombed plates and iron; sometimes he combines the molding skills for big-sized three-dimensional pieces (Park, Ki-Woong, 2003: 131). The initial point for this is lineal drawing, calligraphy coloring, texture, and materiality in two-dimensional painting methods. His free expression in aluminum based three-dimensional art works may be also explained as similar to a painting:

Perhaps, but none of those things count for anything because there's the feeling that it's a painting. It's real as a painting, and that's all that counts. I used to have to work to keep such elements out, precisely for fear of those sort of association. But I've gotten to the point now where I can loosen up and let them in, because they can be there and they no longer threaten the painting's reality as a painting (Stella, in Guberman, 1995: 209).

Like Stella's example, I think my expression is not necessary within two-dimensions at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Work note, 21<sup>st</sup> Mar 2001). Arguably, all art pieces designed to attach to walls can be called pictures in contemporary art; in addition, it is unimportant to distinguish any art in a certain genre. I become free to adapt other genres' skills and base materials; in addition, I develop more free expressions like Francis Bacon because he desires to express himself as completely free (Bacon, 2003: 635). Like Bacon's expression, I do not hesitate to tear and burn materials and call this style Material

Phenomena Painting or Material Painting to criticize a material civilization. Thus, my practice starts to combine, two-dimensional and three-dimensional methods for free expression.

## 4.2 Strategy to Resolve the Avant-garde Dilemma

### A. Why I have to take Iron for my art?

This section argues the naming of the *Iron Age* series. The subject of *Iron Age* has two roots. One is Alberto Burri's *Ferro* and the other is September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. As the first explanation, Burri creates special iron based paintings almost 4 decades before my *Iron Age* series using thin iron. Widely unfolded spaces and the traces of welding and cut lines are distinguished as important signifiers to represent his ideas. Burri displays unorthodox materials through collages composed of stone, tar, burlap, and vinyl in works such as *Grande Plastica, 1963*, fired on a vinyl surface (Fig 63-64) and iron as a canvas that fulfill the third-dimension. These art pieces represent a good experimentation because of the evolution from the organic element of fabric or wood to steel Fire Painting *Ferro* (Fig 58-59). Further, his development has great potential of iron painting 'from the alchemical-phenomena' (Serafini, 1999: 188) as a different style of Arte-Povera to approach dematerialization using recycled, industrial and crude materials. The skill comes from a material that is neutral 'indifferently' tied as it is to consumption and industry (Serafini, 1999: 188). Burri uses several materials, such as charred wood and burlap works, and then welded iron sheets (*Cellotex*) from 1979-1990 to improve his abstract painting style. He sometimes uses a torch; subsequently, I also use fire produced by a welding machine (Fig 65). The skill comes, "from immaterial instrument capable of creating the material painting" (Serafini, 1999: 188). Unfortunately, Burri exercises the *Ferro* series only two or three years. Even though *Ferro* is not seriously important for Arte-Povera, the skill to use iron sheets in the formation of abstract paintings provides an important provision to develop a further extended potentiality of my hybrid practice.

The terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 occurred during my experimentation with the *Iron Age* series. The iconic 'iron structures' of the Twin Towers finally melted and collapsed. I think to describe the destruction of iron is a representative part of the reality in

this era and is linked with destruction of contemporary civilization. I then created *Lost Paradise, 2002-1, 2002* (Fig 66) to describe the terrorism. These attacks on civilians are different from the atmosphere of World War I, World War II, and the Cold War; 21<sup>st</sup> century terrorism has no boundaries or specified targets. The September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 and 7 July 2005 London bombings (7/7) showed that human targets are now indiscriminate, universally justifiable, and legitimate without moral consequences.

As I write the last section 4.1 C (after being reported by the surgeon not to use my wrist for a few months) suddenly unusual insight stimulates my brain to make another style of art. Since then I start to manipulate the effects of welding in attaching, melting, cutting, burning, scribbling, and hole making to the medium of iron and frames.

## **B. How Scrooge Repent is developed for my art?**

Viewing two basics: Alberto Burri's *Ferro* and September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 to express a contemporary vandalism society (such as Iraq) my challenge starts under the big title of *Iron Age* (Work note 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2003). I then metaphorically suggest the theme, Scrooge Repent found in the novel *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens.

I: What do you want to show in *Messenger's Voice* (Fig 68) series?

Myself: I think contemporary people are as same as the blind, such as Scrooge in the novel "A Christmas Carol" who does not know his future. However, he changes himself after seeing his future (Work note 30<sup>th</sup> Sep 2005).

In the novel, Scrooge is guided by three ghosts to the future, the past and the present that show what is life means. As a mirror of Scrooge's story, I want to show future situation of destroyed material paradise through war, terrorism, and spiritual desolateness for present people. I record the followings:

- (a) To exercise where so-called *ugly* or *extra artistic world*, which is in the area of self-destruction, Fire Painting, and dissipative void reconstruction.
- (b) To express positively or negatively.
- (c) Utilize the relationship of each signified or to use letter language, shape language, structure language, color language, and material-language (Work note, 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2003).

Since the 1970s, the artists Sol LeWitt, Joseph Kosuth and Mel Bochner develop a

new methodology to communicate their ideas with letters, marks, and numbers in the visual art world that constructs and forms Conceptual Art. Related in this argument, in *Terrestrial Glory*, 2005-302 (Fig 69 & 70), *Uncertainty*, 2005-103 (Fig 72), and *Tree of Life*, 2008-201 (Fig 71), I write letters *Lost Paradise*, *Despair*, and *Tree of Life*. The letters signify: first, contemporary society's problems and spiritual death; second, psychological emptiness; third, our final goal of eternal life.

The *Iron Age* series represents the future aspect if our civilization deteriorates. *Iron Age* uses the signified (a): as the novel Scrooge plot to go past and future, my art is able to describe our future as (b): the signifiers of *Iron Age* can be expressed as (c). Negatively or ultimately, this expression signifies the human tragedy related to the theme Scrooge Repent that has the intention to guide spectators to into the past and future for special instruction.

### **C. How is it Possible to Criticize Permanent Civilization?**

This section argues how my art criticizes the permanent civilization using the conception of Scrooge Repent. The most difficult and important idiom is to reveal the future aspect of our civilization. However, the future society is the extended line of present time. Thus, to be mindful of present society is to reveal the expectation of the future. I asked myself:

I: “What is your clear difference to compare with modernity?”

Myself: “I care for society, so I am.”

I: Your reply is as similar as to Heidegger’s explanation of Being and Time. It recognizes two things: (1) that understanding as such makes up a basic kind of Dasein Being, and (2) that this Being is constituted as care (Heidegger, Martin, 2010: 363). How your art take care of society?

I: Is it possible just to use a symbolic material to criticize society? What is your own skill to differentiate other non-critical methods? (Work Note, 21<sup>st</sup> Mar 2001)

In 2001, using iron and relative skills of destruction and deconstruction, I plan to criticize the positive and negative sides of material civilization or to take care of society, “If I combine certain image and texts with certain stuff, the art can approach new-avant-garde art” (Work Note, 21<sup>st</sup> Mar 2001). I have developed *Iron Age* series, accompanying 15 sub-

titles, from *Material Paradise* (2001) to ‘*Where is my Home?* (2010) (Table 3 – Subtitle of 14 *Iron Age* series). These practices are created to resolve the avant-garde dilemma in a global era (3.2 B). Most early *Iron Age* series consist of an iron and steel frame to create a significant socio-critical signifier to describe global social issues. I additionally adapt stainless steel and plastic to extend the critical boundary for the *Iron Age Stainless & Plastic* series, 2008-2011.

Subject	2001-2002	2003	2004-2005	2006-2009	Main skill, Image
Ambivalent	Material paradise	Metamorphosis	Rush Hour	Image of New York	Bum, melt, Personage
			Uncertainty		Letter Forest Image
Male Gaze	Void womb				Female Genital, Smoke Image
Negative		Nuclear Energy			Whirling, Circulation
		Reverse Assemblage	A Man of Isolation		Chain, Smoke Remaining personage,
Positive			Messenger's Voice	Emperor's Mace	Cock's Comb Deer's Horn, Whirling Branch
				Image of Temple	Prophet's Image, Temple, Horn
				Three glories	Contrast of plastic and Steel, Stairs, Personage
				Running Soldiers	Approaching Heaven

**Table 3, Subtitle of 14 Iron Age Series**

For the positive expression, I adapt the images of Catholic cathedrals and Mormon temples to represent high spirit in the subtitles *Messenger's Voice*, 2006-2007 and ‘*Where Temple is*, 2004-2006. For the negative expression, I adapt the destructive images of iron and frames, such as *Material Paradise* 2001-2002, *Uncertainty* 2003-2006. The most recent *Iron Age Stainless Plastic* series represent contemporary society's high technology. Stainless steel and plastic symbolize a permanent civilization that never ends (Work Note 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2003).

Art can be multi-codified of a significant object; however, the important thing is that there is critical gap between modern objects and postmodern objects. I try to create an ambiguous expression that is discussed in the deconstructed meaning of avant-garde in post-modernism in the last section 1.1 D. I think the combination of two or three texts can critique a complicated global society. Therefore, I ask myself:

I: How is it possible to criticize permanent civilization? Or how can the two materials symbolize eternity?

Myself: the plastic and stainless civilization may not permanently exist. It has depended on our behavior. If we destroy our civilization, it cannot stay any longer. To represent this idea, you need to understand how to end terrorism and war (Work Note, 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2002).

For this argument, I give symbolic sub-titles such as *Running Soldier* (Fig 75), *Flying Soldier*, *Eye of Soldier*, *Image of Castle*, (Fig 76) *Empire of Iron*, *Image of China* (Fig 77) and *Female Lip* (Fig 88). Each title signifies the danger of contemporary war, secularity in contemporary civilization, and chaos. I plan to use plural meaning expression to stimulate the spectator's insight with an uneasy combination of each signifier. As is done by contemporary material destructive artists such as Anselm Kiefer that establish symbolic shapes (direct signs and ambivalent signifiers) that are certain lines, areas, and textures from the destructive outer shapes to the remaining traces of welding lines and holes. I recorded the signified as:

Further, contemporary human-beings live in artificial material paradise. However, without spirit, the civilization is not perfectly established. Thus, material civilization has to stand with the heart of taking care of others. However, most of developed countries ignore the difficulties of poor countries (Work Note, 11<sup>th</sup> Sep. 2009).

This represents a nihilistic vision of this time when Jean Baudrillard (1994: 159-164) and other philosophers (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 1988; Borginho Jose, 1999; Reynolds Jack, 2001) have deemed postmodernity as a negative epoch. In addition, Lyotard (1984: 110) argues that the world is inseparable from the age and system where philosophers and artists catch the postmodern nihilistic world from meta-narratives of epistemic, cultural, and political trends.

To reveal this nihilistic view in then symbolic image of iron, the signifiers need to be damaged, irregularly melted and hardened and darkened by strong fire and smoke. To quote, "In lieu of meta-narratives we have created new language-games in order to legitimize our claims which rely on changing relationships and mutable truths, none of which is privileged over the other to speak to ultimate truth" (Lyotard, 1984: 110). This concept of the instability of truth and meaning, such as 'language game' leads to nihilism in the description of post-modern society.

The *Iron Age Stainless and Plastic* series show the combination of each material language in *Iron and stainless and Plastic*. In the logic of contemporary semiotics, Stephan Kunkler (2006: 44) describes this expression as, “And which language do Park’s paintings talk? According to Park, they talk the ‘letter-language’, the ‘shape-language’, the ‘structure-language’, the ‘color-language’ and the ‘material-language’: actually, a language that is included in all languages, and so are above all languages.” This theory of language game is related in Roland Barthes criticism *Death of Author* (1967) that influences French continental philosophy and in particular Jacques Derrida’s *Deconstructionism* (1978) and other post-structuralists such as Seán Burke *Birth of the Reader* (2008) to revive the multi source of the proliferation of meanings in the text.

Through plural meaning expression, the *Iron Age Stainless and Plastic* series direct positive and negative points towards material civilization. The series show the specifics of bright, glittering, and colorful images to explain the positive feeling; however, they show disgusting robot-like or cyborg-like images that come from brilliant stainless steel materiality to explain the negative feeling. My material experimentation can be explained by heterogeneity because the combination of plastic and stainless steel heterogeneously together represent a contemporary globalism society. However, the heterogeneity can be harmonized with varieties of composition and deconstruction of plural meaning expressions. The various meanings could be identified from each method based on steel and stainless steel and strong plastic, in special parts of *Celestial Glory, 2007-2008*, series and *Iron Age Stainless and Plastic* series, 2009-2010. For example, to represent imaginative places: such as the glory of God or the eternity of humans in the *Iron Age Stainless and Plastic* series, brilliant texture holding plastic is adapted as the work *Image of Material Paradise, 2009-1004* (Fig 78). The texture and materiality of it is as similar as ice in that it is illuminated, brighter, glittery, and relatively lighter than the dark part of iron.

I put plastic and regular iron and stainless steel together to show the different harmony of three materials in the situation of paralleling heterogeneous materials within a work to represent co-existence and reveal the pluralistic situation of contemporary society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, I can transmit special meta-narrative meanings to create harmony in paralleling different materials in *Iron Age Stainless and Plastic*. Iron signifies the naked or wounded hearts of contemporary humans or ugliness of this material culture’s hidden part; in addition, plastic signifies contemporary civilization and the quality of flexible and cheap (Work note 11<sup>th</sup> Sep 2009).

Since 1970, many Korean prominent artists, such as minimal, conceptual, and Japanese *monoha* artists seldom do a physical practice of art. Astonishingly, they try to find an easy way or non-expression and are eager to do nothing to express their art; however, they lust for fame. My exercise begins to overcome this streamline of non-doing and non-expression because I believe they imitate previous important works. They continually focus on their previous style. This trend parallels what Baudrillard argues, “It is nothing but useless aesthetics because, strictly, there are no originalities” (2005: 195). Therefore, how can I approve my unique identity in expressing, color, form, texture, and image in a postmodern simulacrum era?

Starting as a painter, I do not ignore individual labor to create an art piece. My motto is exercise with hard practice. For example, Allen McCollum has done thousands of hand-made art works (Surrogate series) that are very similar in shape and color. (Allen, McCollum, 2006; Fraser, Andrea und Wilmes, Ulrich, 1989)

This can be explained as follows:

Arguably, I do not imitate my previous arts. Despite, if a work of my previous is reputed highly and sold, I do not want to stay within the last work. Continually, I try to develop new form, new color and new feeling. I think my last works are not mine. Strictly yesterday I am not today I or now I am slightly changed being of yesterday me (*Work Note*, 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2002).

For one piece, I draw more than 10 drawings with 90% drawings sacrificed to create a work. I eagerly draw idea sketches for every piece. The following is related to this argument.

I: What is the best way to accomplish a successful practice?

Myself: You may think that the best way is to overcome the best artist's practice of today. However, I decide that it is to overcome myself yesterday.

I: Arguably, I think, constant systematic progress that moves from my previous work is the best way, don't you?

Myself: Further, I think more intelligent control of moving in the shape development is better than arbitrary change (*Work note*, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2005).

I decide to develop series practices like those of Frank Stella. I decide to make less than 30 pieces for one sub-title. For example, the *Iron Age* series has 10 more sub-titles that are distinguished in two faces of negative and positive style: for the negative such as *Material*

*Paradise* and *Void Womb* others; for the positive such as *Image of Cologne* and *Messenger's Voice*. Kunkler S. supports my coloring as, "Also, what the color is concerned, Park tried new ways: Smoke and shade-coloring which turn up at high temperatures must be handled differently from pigments in common paintings. The heavy mass and the natural colorings of the iron must be taken into account when working the material" (2006: 45).

Related in this method to make special effects such as to shown corruption, the surface is smoked by electric spark as the work *Uncertainty, 2005-103* (Fig 79). By strong heat, the outer shape of the iron changes and shows varieties of unexpected colors: brown, blue, grey green and ultra-marines with glistening hues. The artificial materiality (bright, glitter, shine, strong, and clean) of iron returns to its original materiality (dark, irregular, soft, and dirt). This material based coloring skill establishes meaningful signifiers that metamorphose the pre-conception of material iron (the secular world) that is blooming and glittering as the contemporary material of a shining civilization. Arguably, if the color changes, it deconstructs the relative cognition in our mind. For example, if a signifier changes into from bright to dark, certain possibility changes into impossibility.<sup>23</sup> Metaphorically, if one has money (material), one can do anything; however, if the iron (money) is shaded, it can symbolize that possibility is gone. Arguably, melted iron signifies the destroyed aspects of the present iron construction of skyscrapers that are as same as the ancient Tower of Babylon described as the hubris of pride in the Bible (1990: 14-15).

### **4.3 Analysis my recent practice with Argument**

In 1968, Barthes argues that any literary text has multiple meanings, and that the author is not the prime source of the work's semantic content. Thus, the meaning interpretation is depends on the subjectivity of the reader. The conception *Death of the Author* metamorphoses into the conception *Birth of the Reader* (Burke, Seán, 2008: 19-21) to revive the multi source of the proliferation of meanings in the text; however, I would suggest that this has been the original purpose of each of my practices. In *Iron Age and Iron Age Stainless* and *Plastic Series*, with 15 sub-titles, from *Material Paradise* to *Where is Your Home?*; subsequently, my practice separates into five parts: negative, positive, ambivalent, male & female gaze, and semiotic games.

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23 It is not able to construct everyday living condition or not able to reach material paradise.

### **A. *A Man of Isolation, 2005-710***

I want to reawaken Koreans who have almost forgotten the collapse of the *Sampoong Department* (Fig 74) on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1995 (500 deaths) and the collapse of Seongsu Bridge in Seoul on October 21<sup>st</sup> 1994. My meaning is interpreted as, “The aim of Park’s newest series is to create a monument for all those, who lost their lives in tragic construction-accidents in recent Korean history” (Kunkler, 2006: 17). I describe a man weeping in *A Man of Isolation, 2005-710* (Fig 73) because he could not find the exit, he can only breathe black smoke and does not know whether he will survive or not; in addition, it also represents the urgent moment when a skyscraper is destroyed by terrorism or war. I criticize the contemporary false belief of humanity through this art.

Kunkler suggests for the work *A Man in Isolation, 2005-710* (Fig 73), “After the process of *destruction*, there follows the search for true values, a way that Park is betaking himself in his works” (2006: 21). This time human beings believe too much the quality of their own iron constructions those are icons of modern culture or the evidences for a contemporary myth. Arguably, money (material construction) signifies pride, wealth, and everything. For this reason Kunkler argues, “With the method of destructing iron, Park can symbolically imitate the Iconoclasm of modern civilization which is under the spell of Materialism” (2006: 21). This work signifies the search for the true values of creation in the destruction of a material civilization.

### **B. *Messenger’s Voice, 2006-703***

I use large part of the void or unfinished in the work *Messenger’s Voice, 2006-703* (Fig 68), “Completed and uncompleted or finished and unfinished is very difficult to declare. Sometime, it becomes too simple if the expression is overly ugly or if it is short. To find the appropriate moment to finish art remains unsolved. (Work Note, 11<sup>th</sup> Sep. 2005) The methodology of using vacant space or remained or unfinished area in the art pieces is found in Auguste Rodin’s sculpture, *Victor Hugo, ca 1917* (Fig 67). For this work, I adapt images of angels, temples, horns, and prophets’ hairs.

I: What do you want to show in the *Messenger’s Voice* series?

Myself: I think contemporary people are as the same as the blind, such as Scrooge in the novel *A Christmas Carol* who does not know his future. However, after seen his future; he changes himself. Thus, “a man who wants to know the long distance place needs to see long distance” (Work Note 30<sup>th</sup> Sep 2005).

I want to show a future nihilistic image. The warning message often directs the situation or condition of our time and space that is described as a man who wants to know the long distance place needs to see long distance. Surely, the messenger, who experience a distance journey (like Scrooge) wants to talk about the present space and time. However, most of present people ignore their real meanings because they could not see. The message speaks very softly. I describe the silent and soft voice as follows:

O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus Christ, who stood with open arms to receive you! (...) And the day soon cometh that your mortal must put on immortality, and these bodies which are now moldering in corruption must soon become incorruption bodies; and then ye must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to be judged according to your works; and if it so be that ye are blessed with your fathers who have gone before you (Book of Mormon, 1990: 479).

This message signifies life and resurrection for the souls of this time and is arguably a warning for us.

### **C. *Void Womb, 2002-105***

In visual aspect, *Void Womb* series are compared to Alberto Burri's *ITA White S-64, 1964* (Fig 82) that produces female genitalia because the shape of the burning part is a symbolic signifier of the female sexual organ in his art. Similarly as Burri's work, using void space in *Void Womb, 2002-105* (Fig 84), I describe the mushroom cloud of smoke after an atomic bomb explosion to represent the cloud of smoke as well as describe female genital. From upper part to bottom, the point from which the upside-down arch, the dividing-line of the motif itself sets out and rejoins. The delta or narrow V line and tension of opposing forces, these two sources confront to mix the symbol of the female genitalia; however, the historical memory of the carnage of World War II is reflected in its vacancy with horrible rhythms and wanton destruction. In the work, even though the female genitalia illusion is applied, the image is intersected by the cloud of smoke image and the female genitalia image

is not clearly asserted. However, Burri's Fire Painting *ITA White S-64, 1964* (Fig 82) has a clear illusion of female genitalia. Lucio Fontana's *Concetto Spaziale, Multifil, 1968* (Fig 83) conception of sexuality shows his exorcism in the work is not same as the regular expression of matured female sexuality but is the sexuality of female youth. However, his image is just to represent aesthetical beauty, "His (Fontana's) exorcism is directed at history and reason; it is a purely conceptual formulation. ... In its definitive rigor, the slash bars the way to regenerative possibilities of beauty. One slash or a thousand slashes, it makes no difference, like Klein's blues, or Malevich's squares." (Serafini, 1999: 192). My practice shows more complicate meanings and is different from Fontana's eroticism. In the subject, the void is not the same as the conception of space and is linked with the conceptions of impotent or unproductive. In addition, I adopt the term womb to express contemporary trends in sexuality and criticize a fallen mass media and secular sides. Therefore, the total subject of void womb is allegorically deconstructed with the meaning of contemporary civilization's spiritual death or the impossibility to create eternal life.

#### **D. *Uncertainty, 2005-13***

If there is a certain signifier, how it criticizes unhappiness or unstable situation or what is the signifier to represent the unsafe feeling? From 2005 to 2008, I plan the *Uncertainty* series to represent an unstable contemporary vandalism society. The latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is related in ancient iconoclasm and vandalism. Dario Gamboni (1998: 265-275) argues in his book *The Destruction of Art* that self-destruction methods revive under the name of avant-garde. It is a kind of attack on works of art or image statues. The damage is done by hammers, chainsaws, knives, fire, dirt, graffiti, and vitriol that destroy pre-authority and obtain new political or religious benefit.

The purpose of each self-destruction is not same and for example Alberto Burri destruction represents eternity or permanence, "In the final destruction, I (Burri) am sure that something would remain in my work. Certain things are unlikely to be lost." (Serafini, p 113). However, Lucio Fontana cuts canvas using a sharp blade or spear to make a special destruction effect of sexuality, such as *Concetto Spaziale, Multifil, 1968*. (Fig 83) In addition, there are several willful destruction artists that create new art in the 1960s (Varian, Elayne H. 1968: 5). Gamboni (1998: 17-18) argues that the term vandalism has been already established since the French Revolution and 17<sup>th</sup> century England, "While, 'iconoclasm'

grew from the destruction of religious images and opposition to, any images of works of art” (Gamboni, 1998: 18). Destruction is clearly distinguished as two categories of iconoclasm (breaking of the religious or aesthetical background) and vandalism (propelled by the change of the political background).

Saddam Hussein’s statue (Fig 80) (an optical image for propaganda of the highest national authority) is destroyed and it reveals that the Hussein period is finished. The second example shows the Soviets of the 1950s where the statues of Stalin (Fig 81)<sup>24</sup> (Gamboni, 1998: 60) are destroyed by the people. A 20,840 kg bronze statue of Stalin is melted for political reasons (Gamboni, 1998: 58-60).

John Philips (1977: 82-99) argues that political revolution and iconoclasm are similar to the destruction of the art field. Philip suggests that in the modernism period that the iconoclastic controversy arises in the methods of Dadaism by Man Ray, Francis Picabia, and Marcel Duchamp. For the *Uncertainty* series I wrote:

Myself: However, many people are in the situation of ‘uncertainty’. I planned *Uncertainty* series to represent an unstable contemporary vandalism society, such as found in Iraq: Previous statues of Saddam were almost destroyed. If Saddam where to know if his future he would have changed his behavior.

I: *what kind of signifier is appropriate for the expression?*

Myself: Surely, it is appropriate to use military images, such as tanks, weapons, and bombs. However, the signifiers are too easy for the readers that the art pieces are too direct (simple) (Work Note, 30<sup>th</sup> Sep 2005).

I need to find more complicate signifiers. Finally, I decide to use iron chain and irregular iron cables because the signifiers are difficult for the reader; however, a hint is the statue of Stalin that is strong and heavy, so as not to be destroyed. The statue is chained and scribbled with profanity (Gamboni, 1998: 75). In the work *Uncertainty, 2005-13* (Fig 79), I mix the image of iron shields, female genitalia, wire webs, trees, chains, and other signifiers. In the centre, I describe a black hall (as the signifier of female genital or the devil) that controls the darkness of contemporary society.

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24 Twenty-five of the best Hungarian sculptors were invited to compete; the winner was Sádor Mikus. Recited, in *The Models* are reproduced in János Photo, Emlékművek, politika, and közgondolkodás: Budapest köztéri emlélművei. 1945-1949 így épült a Sztálin-szobor, 1949-1953 (Budapest, MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 1989). The finished bronze standing figure measured 8 meters in height, while its stone pedestal was some 26 meters long and 9 meters high. [online] Available at: <[http://www.rev.hu/history\\_of\\_45/ora2/index.htm](http://www.rev.hu/history_of_45/ora2/index.htm)> [Accessed 10 October 2011 ]. <<http://www.mementopark.hu/pages/home/?lang=hu>> [Accessed 10 October 2011 ].

The title *Uncertainty* can direct various phenomena that occur in a complicated society. I present an anti-communism heart against North Korean society that is similar to Kiefer's anti-Nazism. In addition, I hide the female girdle and genitals as ambivalent signifiers to situate the uncertainty of duty chaotic moment (such as Jean Baudrillard criticizes in *American Night*) (Baudrillard, 1986). Arguably, this work criticizes selfish leaders of international society using the signifier of chain.

### **E. *Celestial Glory, 2006-802***

*Iron Age* begins in 2000 and is finished in 2008. In 2006, night question if it is enough to criticize the material paradise of contemporary civilization through only iron? Arguably, the iron is good but it is too broad of a conception. To symbolize contemporary material culture, I need to select more strict material to symbolize this time. For this reason, I start to consider which material is good for my next practice.

I first consider wood but it is too easy to be broken; in addition, the material signifies the natural world. Second, vinyl is good but it is not enough to harmonize with iron. Alberto Burri once adapted vinyl to represent his art; however, I do not think his practice was successful, because the result of the practice is not strong enough to sustain heat and other natural phenomenon. Third, polyurethane or latex is good and was once adapted by Linda Benglis to create a new installation 30 years ago (Fineberg, 2000: 311), but it is not clearly linked with my art. Fourth, in 2006, I see one brilliant material that is a mysterious ice-looking irregular texture holding transparent plastic in the San Francisco design show glass.

I think transparent plastic can symbolize contemporary developed material paradise. Its materiality is as similar as the ice, jam, or kryptonite, which was introduced in the story of Superman. (Fig 86) Kryptonite is the ore form of a fictional element from the Superman mythos that covers a variety of forms of the substance; however, it usually refers to the most common green form (Byrne, Craig, 2007: 40). The work *Celestial Glory, 2006-802* (Fig 85) is created by this idea.

Under the denominator of the Iron Age, I include one more denominator plastic. To develop a mysterious form and color, I think, the signified of the work can be read as an antithesis argument such as steel versus plastic, solid versus transparent, black versus white; further, artificial versus naturalistic, and ghostlike versus fantastic. This work is created by the extended line of Korean monochrome; however, it is of different and shape and texture. In this practice, I design the narrative idea. In the work, there are four signifiers: (a) left thin

hand-like images, (b) left white ice-like plastic part, (c) middle monster-like grotesque black texture part, and (d) right straight and curve line parts.

Part (a) shows Alberto Giacometti-like slim hand image that describes the SOS message from the weakness of less developed country civilians crying. It is also a metaphor of the memory of war and terrorism in the destruction of earth. Part (b) shows the memory of clearness or the material of Superman's power Kryptonite. (Fig 86) Part (c) symbolizes the darkness of a material paradise or the devil. Part (d) imitates the material paradise of contemporary culture. The united image of left (a) + (b) and right (c) + (d) is humble versus pride, celestial glory versus terrestrial glory, and eternal versus temporal.

I decide on two materials to reveal my attitude towards contemporary civilization in the introduction of harmonizing heterogeneous materials in one text. It is intelligent action that criticizes a globalized society; however, I do not want to return to a naturalism society because we need to control rash decisions to ignore natural phenomenon.

## ***F. Flying Soldiers, 2009-403***

I started to use stainless steel and plastic after 2007. I select artificial pigments and a polyurethane-mixed medium to upgrade the *Iron Age Stainless & Plastic* series. It is natural to assume that the artist's concept is involved in the material if an artist uses the same material in a group of works. In addition, the result of the art is changed and you would clearly assume that the artist's concept is involved in the material if he changes the material. The chemical effect of polyurethane signifies the development of chemical civilization in my practice.

In *Running Soldiers, 2009-404* (Fig 75), *Image of castle, 2009-309* (Fig 76) the varieties of colors effect of acrylic and polyurethane is different and sometimes the coloring is done partly or wholly in each work to support surface, texture, and shape. The effectiveness of vivid chemical coloring is accomplished from the surface of dark brown regular iron to glittering stainless steel pipes. The bright glittering and colorful images signifies the positive and negative feeling as well. Gablik argues that, "Anything that calls attention to and interests the viewer in this physicality is a deterrent to our understanding of the idea and is used as an expressive device" (1987: 89). Therefore, I show an ambivalent *signifier* using polyurethane pigment on plastic and stainless steel structures different from Modern Abstract Expressionism. *Iron Age Stainless Plastic* series describes the objects of

the worldliness of a material based contemporary civilization and show an anti-humanistic chemical coloring that is a kind of critical *parole* in recent societies. I use a polyurethane pigment when coloring outer walls or automobiles so that the work is attachable to outside walls. To cut and assemble every different round stainless steel pipe and the work *Flying Soldiers, 2009-403* (Fig 87) shows a similar shape of a butterfly.

In the midst of an exhibition, a spectator says, “Is this a butterfly?” I reply “Yes, but there are other forms.” I use the butterfly form, but there is empty body in the centre. It remains a signifier of the collective moving forward to the center despite a whole shape similar to a butterfly. You may fall into error if you regard the first signifier of a butterfly because the body is already destroyed; however, you obtain the safe feeling if you think the shape is a second signifier assembling troops. Then, you can ask, “Why do you use the butterfly image?” I say, it is the first temptation of spectator’s eye and to get interest, with using easy signifier; however, many individuals dislike ugly and dirty forms. Therefore, I want to express nice looking first image; however, my idea starts to show the vacant space in the center of the work.

### ***G. Image of Female Lip, 2009-1008***

On the anniversary of Marilyn Monroe’s suicide in August 1962, Warhol used her image for his screen-printing as well as paintings. Warhol was fascinated with the reproduction of the human image. Sometimes, the results are astonishingly beautiful, such as the resonating brilliantly colored images of Marilyn Monroe. Different from his method, I adapt a female lip image for the beginning term of *Iron Age Stainless and Plastic* series.

Using stainless steel pipes and polyurethane pigments, I create Marilyn Monroe’s lip as the work *Image of Female Lip, 2009-1008* (Fig 88). A lip signifies a visible body part at the mouth that is soft, movable, and serves as the opening for eating. It is a tactile sensory organ of sound and speech; in addition, can be erogenous in kissing and other sexual acts. A lip is a very sensitive erogenous and tactile organ that becomes the signifier of sensuality and sexuality (*Times*, Science, 2005). Psychologically suggests sexual attraction, it mimics the appearance and the sexual swelling of female genitalia.

The work *Image of Female Lip, 2009-1008* (Fig 88) signifies the intake activity of the human desire. In the midst of the center, sharp arrow like top image of a building is swallowing into the mouth. This lip’s suction signifies, as an erogenous zone, kissing, and other acts of intimacy. To elicit the pleasure arousing female genital organs, a lip is a visible

expression of female fertility as an erogenous zone (*Times*, Science, 2005). Linked with the science of human attraction, the work stimulates the spectator's eye. As a biological indicator of a woman's health and fertility, a woman's lipstick takes advantage by tricking men into thinking that a woman has more estrogen than she actually has and that she is more fertile and attractive.

*Where is Your Home? II, III*, 2010 (Fig 89, and 90) shows the black image of a lip that is a juxtaposed meaning of female fertility that shows the destroyed image of female sexuality. *Where is Your Home? III*, 2010 (Fig 90) signifies a destroyed material paradise. The upper lip is described as the destroyed ancient city. A lip attracts men. In *Where is Your Home? I*, 2010 (Fig 91), why I make a lip bigger than the face as the work? Is it just to exaggerate? I think, that the size of a lip describes the desire of sexual appeal. To represent the big size of a female lip as bigger than outline of the face, I want to stimulate a spectator's eye and get their attention before I show the important situation. The work has united images: one is a female lip and other is a spectacular image of a blind man and a helper who are walking upon a dangerous bridge. The helper asks him "Where is Your Home?" This sentence signifies that the blind man is in a dangerous situation because he cannot see. The blind man asks the helper "Where is Your Home?" Ironically, it also signifies that the helper is in a dangerous situation because he can see. The blind man and helper signify anyone. Symbolically, I establish the situation in front of an open female mouth.

"Why are both of the two are dangerous?"

Myself: I describe the bridge not enough strong as a ladder, that is attached on the side of thin old wooden bridge. Secondly, I locate two men just in front of a sexual female open mouth.

I: What do you think is most dangerous between the weakness of bridge and sucking into a female mouth?

Myself: Surely, you can think, a blind man is more dangerous because of the unstable bridge. However, he cannot be tempted by sexual attraction from a female lip because of his blindness. Thus, he is safe from sexual attraction. However, the helper is safe from an unstable bridge but he is not safe from sexual attraction. Meaningfully, it also signifies that we are exposed to the ignorant sexuality of mass-communication and public journalism. Thus, it is very difficult to decide the situation.

I: However, is that all?

Myself: The blind man is the second signified who does not know how to overcome the avant-garde dilemma and the guide is Andy Warhol as the third signified who eagerly prints female images (Work Note 10<sup>th</sup> Oct 2010).

This situation is compared to David Hockney's work *The Artist and Model, 1974* (Fig 92). In the work, Hockney draws himself as a nude man and Picasso is a costumed captain, "A youthful David sits naked at a table with an aged Picasso, wearing the maillot of a French sailor. We are witness to a meeting of apprentice and master, the innocent and uncorrupted showing his work to the great artist of the century" (Geldzahler, 1988: 18). To show his painting to the great master Picasso, he is ashamed as nude person because he has to show his weakness.<sup>25</sup> Like the humility of David Hockney's heart, the work signifies my need of Warhol's guidance to overcome the barrier of difficulty to be a famous artist.

## **H. *Eye of Soldier, 2009-1011***

The term cyborg was coined in 1960 when Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline used it in an article about the advantages of self-regulating human-machine systems in outer space (Clynes and Kline, 1960). However, the term cyborg is seldom used in public idea because it is not practical for normal people's life. Different from the complete artificial machine, the Cyborg (as a cybernetic organism) is a being with both biological and artificial (electronic, mechanical, or robotic) parts. The cyborg body is the body of an imagined cyber spatial existence and is the place of possible being. In this sense, it exists in excess of the real; however, it is also imbedded within the real. The cyborg body is already inhabited, through which the interface to a contemporary world is already made. Visual representations of Cyborgs are utopian or dystopian prophesies as well as the reflections of a contemporary state of being (Gonzalez, 1995: 267).

As an artificial intelligence system, human creates the machine industry of cyborg that signifies the dis-humanity of a mere technological science based civilization. Similarly as a new frontier that is not merely space, but more profoundly the relationship between 'inner space' to 'outer space' -a bridge...between mind and matter (Halacy, 1965: 7), the cyborg is

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25 To show his admiration for Pablo Picasso, right after Picasso's death 1973, Hockney produces the etching in the Paris studio Aldo Crommelynck. Hockney's humility-picturing Himself as a nude model posing for the great master- is subverted slightly; otherwise naked, he wears his glasses, one artist observing another. From the heart to eye to end: The portrait of David Hockney, [online] Available at: <<http://www.lacma.org/art/exhibition/hockney/>> [Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> Mar 2011].

often seen as an organism that enhances ability due to advanced technology that is often associated with science fiction. In the film *The Spider Man*, Cyborg Alice Brucy owns artificial organs substituted for a human organism (Fig 93) that shows a horrible result if it is used for evil.

In art, aggressive contemporary avant-garde artists start to use the image and it becomes an extended line of fantasy with different images and shapes. Some artists such as Neil Harbisson, Patricia Piccinini, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, Steve Mann, Orlan, H.R. Giger, Lee Bul, Tim Hawkinson and Stelarc move from paintings to installations to promote public awareness of cybernetic organisms.

For example, Lee, Bul's work, *W5 Cyborg W5 / 1999* (Fig 96) shows the image of armor or mystic mollusk. Her art is compared to a grotesque unified image of H. R. Giger. Sometimes, the cyborg image develops as the monstrous beings and fantastical structures that chatter, whistle, rotate, and spin (Hawkinson, 2007-2008). Between 1976-1988, Stelarc completes 25 body suspension performances with hooks into the skin using medical instruments, prosthetics, robotics, virtual reality systems, and three videos of the inside of his body. For *Third Ear* he surgically constructed an extra ear in his arm that is internet enabled to create a publicly accessible acoustical organ for people in other places (Fig 93).<sup>26</sup> Tim Hawkinson promotes the idea that bodies and machines merge his combination of human features with technology to create the Cyborg. Hawkinson's piece *Nose Hairs 1995*, (Fig 98) presents a human nose that is dependent on technology. *Blastula 1999* (Fig 97) shows a hollow sphere of cells that is created through a cell division process known as cleavage (Forgács & Newman, 2005: 24).

I try to create my own style cyborg image to signify a negative aspect of a de-humanized material paradise in relation to the other artists experimental practices. I design *A Big Eye* that describes the artificial cyborg eye in the extended line of *Female Lip* as the human organism. In the work *Eye of Soldier, 2009-1011* (Fig 94) a white glittering plastic

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26 Stelarc has been extending his body through performances since the late 1960s. His performances include attaching a "Third Hand" to his body, extending himself into virtual space with a "Virtual Hand", and over 25 "suspension" events where he hung his entire body from hooks piercing his skin. Stelarc's artistic strategy revolves around the idea of "enhancing the body" both in a physical and technical manner. It originates as polarism between the "primal desire" to defeat the force of gravity with primitive rituals and a low-tech and the hi-tech performance with the third arm and the related cyber system. His intention in both cases is to "express an idea with his direct experience." Extended-Body: Interview with Stelarc, Paolo Atzori and Kirk Woolford, Academy of Media Arts, Cologne, Germany, [online] Available at: <[http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/stelarc/a29-extended\\_body.html](http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/stelarc/a29-extended_body.html)> [Accessed 10 October 2011].

plate based cyborg soldier's eye opens up to space. A square frame structure supports a round pipes angle to focus on the center apple of the eye as the antithesis of the previous free space image of the *Female Lip*. The work also signifies the sky view from megalopolis streets and is similar to the composition of *Running Soldier* and *Female Lip* that focuses on the center. Several strictly uprising constructions arise in the midst of the pupil of the eye.

To compare with other artists' cyborg images, most of them such as, Hawkinson's *Blastula, 1999* (Fig 97) and Lee Bul's *W5 Cyborg W5, 1999* (Fig 96) are a machine of disgust based mollusks or tentacle shapes. Therefore, I decide to design a healthy signifier of disgust to give a broad conception of fantasy to stimulate the spectators' imagination because the cyborg image needs to be contextualized with animal shapes so the image can become usual for their experience. I did not emphasis the machine paradise, but inter-mingle the futurism style dynamism in motivation and color; however, the flatness of the painting is less stimulating for the spectators' eye.

## *Chapter Review*

With selected art pieces, this chapter has argued my avant-garde dilemma that troubles the early period of my life until the present time. The first infamous artist dilemma is to get further money, time, and space to create a unique style of my practice. This first dilemma continues until 2000, then, I change my style from *Mandala*, *Bangsan Market*, and *Cosmism* series, and I start the *Iron Age* series at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I adapt iron to criticize contemporary material civilization. Humans forget god and worship a material god. In the worship of the material (such as money and artificial property) their belief is to rely on material (iron construction). Their sustaining this material god is prolonged to the real God's death in the nihilistic prophecy of Nietzsche. Therefore, to destroy or degrade the material god is to revive of the real God. In this ideology, I destroy the material god iron; however, the symbolizing period of *Iron Age* is too broad and I additionally adapt stainless steel and transparent plastic. I am able to upgrade the *Iron Age* series to the *Iron Age Stainless Steel* series. These three main materials allow me to criticize contemporary society with a post-modern idea to develop post-structuralism theories. I develop various signifiers, such as material language, letter language, and structure language within the theory. In this post-structural method, I develop natural coloring, shade and smoking to adapt to fire painting skills. This coloring is extends material destruction and metamorphosis skills to produce a more developed material language to create advanced signifiers. This coloring skill is mixed with chemical coloring such as acrylic and polyurethane pigments; subsequently, the *Iron Age and Plastic* series can be displayed in public.

# Conclusion

This thesis argued how to resolve the avant-garde dilemma in order to become a successful Korean post-modern avant-garde artist. Every artist has a dilemma because to create art is very difficult. The thesis argued the dilemma of Korean artists to create revolutionary art or avant-garde art develops from the very conception of modernity. After the arrival of the conception of the avant-garde, Korean avant-garde artists have dilemmas in creation because they have to select a direction between traditional or avant-garde that represents the most profound high dilemma for Korean avant-garde dilemma.

**Chapter 1** researched the actual definition of the term avant-garde and its development. The term avant-garde as the antithesis of mimesis has changed dramatically from the negative meanings of decadence in Marxist schools of thought to positive meanings of continual revolutionary progress found in French society from the 1870s to 1880s. There exist two avant-gardes of cultural-artistic avant-garde and sociopolitical avant-garde. First, the positive meaning of avant-garde begins as a cultural revolution from the 1860s-1880s. Second, the term avant-garde signifies an idea about the way in which art develops and artists act in relation to society in the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Third, avant-garde expresses broader attitudes of stylistic change, progressive, and revolutionary; however, after the 1960s the meaning is deconstructed. This research summarizes the deconstructed signified meaning of avant-garde in the postmodernism era. First, the term has been changed into an intellectual relativism of modernity similar to the meaning to sustain the avant-garde partisan act. Second, the avant-garde pushes the boundaries of what is accepted as the trend in the cultural realm. It affects individual, community, group exercise from modernism to postmodernism. While, the avant-garde's antithesis term mimesis originally signifies to create second nature, to copy, and imitate. Thus, the term is regarded as to slow, staying, and static. In 1830s, mimesis signifies, old fashioned, revival, and continuity. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the return to a conception of mimesis as a fundamental human property is most evident in the postmodern era, the signified meaning of mimesis became profoundly related in creating new aesthetical art and language. *Différance* is the principle of mimesis, a productive freedom, not the elimination of ambiguity. Mimesis contributes to the profusion of images, words, thoughts, theories, and action; without itself becoming tangible.

There are two modernities for the investigation of the avant-garde's relative term

modernity: industrial modernity and aesthetic modernity that can be respectively summarized as one that is to praise modern civilization and the other is the avant-garde doctrine of progress. First, it directs broader than the related term avant-garde to represent the social and aesthetical phenomenon. Second, compared to modernity, avant-garde is a more tough and strong term to reveal certain dynamic action or constant change as innovation towards society and culture. Activism is summarized (as follows) in the investigation of contemporary avant-garde practice: First, activism expresses participatory democracy in the common place for people with physical/emotional challenges. Second, activism art such as Jenny Holzer's *Truism* serves as an imaginative space for the freedom to regenerate the lost, hidden, creative, spiritual, and intuitive capacities of human life. The contemporary avant-garde practice of antagonism is summarized: First, antagonism is the most noticeable and showy avant-garde posture. Second, antagonism is a sectarian spirit that is an ideological or religious difference of, tough guy act—political, scandal—religious; futurism and imagism—genuine and purposeful scandals; hooliganism—a direct act, terrorism and plebeian transgression—kitsch over the morality.

This chapter argued the structuralism theory in the investigation of my art. Based on Stuart Sim's argument of structuralism, this research reorganizes the Structuralism Arts as follows: (1) All artistic artifacts (texts as they are more usually referred to by structuralists) are exemplifications of an underlying deep structure. (2) Artistic artifacts are organized like a language with their own specific grammar. (3) The grammar of a language in artistic artifacts is a series of signs and contentions that draw a predictable response from human beings. Further, in the structuralists' view: (1) All art works have relative meanings that can be found in the signs. (2) As the signs, there can be signifiers, such as images, symbols, lines, textures and others. In relative ideas, all signifiers are read as the signified. (3) The structuralist idea is linked with one-to-one correspondence with a concrete object or some aspect of reality to which it refers; however, it can be differ by the readers. The author is relatively unimportant to the process of creation in Roland Barthes, *Death of the Author*.

**Chapter 2** argued the development of Korean avant-garde since World War 2. Where two avant-gardes that arise in the midst of the Korean modernism era: cultural-artistic avant-garde and sociopolitical avant-garde or aesthetic avant-garde and socio-critical avant-garde. Most of Korean socio-political avant-garde movements are developed in the midst of the Japanese Colonial Period (1930s), the Korean War (1950s), and the Korea Democracy

Movement (1980s) from the perspective of the two styles of avant-garde in Korean modernism art history.

First, Sang-bum Lee creates *Japan Flag Demolish Incident 1936* that is activism towards the Japanese Colonial Government; just after Korean War 1950s, Que-Dae Lee develops Korean style socio-political avant-garde between leftist and rightist ideology. In the midst of the Kwangju Democracy Movement of the 1980s, activism artists develop Korean Mass Art (*Minjungmisul*) that is the first Korean post-modern style socio-political avant-garde. Second, Jung-Seop Lee try to express family separation after the Korea War in the development of Korean style aesthetic avant-garde and Korean style cathartic avant-garde in the 1950s-1960s. The new avant-garde conception has arrived in South Korea with Korean *Art Informel*, that displays a deep and dark color as well as horrible images of disgust and the pioneer artist is Seo-Bo Park; however, many artists do not follow the western *Informel* direction. For this reason, Korean Art Informelists metamorphose the *Informel* into natural Korean colors such as Korean Monochrome Art. In addition, intelligent artists, such as Seo-Bo Park and Chang-Sup Jeong try to develop *hanji's* flexible materiality. Many artists are eager to develop the new style of Korean painting that follows it. Later in the 1970s, Korean born Japanese U-Fan Lee develops Japanese style *Monoha*. U-Fan Lee's *Relationship*, is just a combination of iron and a natural stone that represents an antagonism against materialism.

In the midst of Korean Informel and catharsis avant-garde, Soo-Keun Park combines cathartic theory, geometrical two-dimensional expression, *Informel* and Korean traditional colors (white and ocher) to create his own hybrid style. From these three Korean trends, I aim to create hybrid, aesthetical and socio-political (socio-critical) avant-garde.

**Chapter 3** argued why the first post-modernism style Mass Arts disappeared into history. Mass Arts (*Minjungmisul*) is a kind of 'socio-political avant-garde' and after the Democracy Movement era of the 1980s, their militant avant-garde spirit vanishes. Further, aesthetic avant-garde artists think that Mass Arts are not aesthetical; however, Mass Artists think Monochrome Arts need to reveal a social reality and the two representative Korean avant-gardes that clash with each other.

Korean artists see various western developed art practices in the midst of globalism since the 1990s. There arises a crisis in developing Korean postmodernism. This research calls the crisis as the one of the reason for the Korean artists' avant-garde dilemma. The term avant-garde dilemma signifies the difficulty that Korean avant-garde artists face in front of

the choices among several directions of practices to create contemporary avant-garde art; in addition, the avant-garde dilemma broadly signifies the difficulties to select the direction from the three trends: traditional, international, and hybrid. In the modernism era, the Korean avant-garde dilemma is to create successful modern art. This situation is the Korean modernist's avant-garde dilemma. However, in the postmodernism era, the meaning avant-garde dilemma signifies to overcome Korean modern avant-garde art and create successful Korean post-modern avant-garde art. Further, contemporary Korean avant-garde artists stand in the midst of international trends (such as media art) and Korean traditional trends (such as Korean Monochrome Art). They have the dilemma to follow-up the trends of international avant-garde in contemporary art. Korean contemporary avant-garde dilemma is a style selection between the international and Korean traditional for the creation of a hybrid.

In the 1990s, the Korean art stage meets the center of globalism or pluralism postmodernism society. Korean artists are in the midst of international trends (such as Media Art, Feminism, Installation, and Site-specific) and Korean traditional trends (such as Korean Monochrome Art). Korean Post-modern artists meet the four duties: taste control, to criticize globalism society aesthetically, to keep Korean originality, and to be unique. The following four artists are selected as case studies to resolve the dilemma. First, Nam-June, Paik is selected as the Korean International hybrid case. He is a Korean-German-American artist and the first pioneer video artist. His art was born from hybrid activities such as the combination of Art, Music, TV, and mass media. His unique core conception is speed, mass culture, and contextualizing art with science to represent a pluralist society. Second, Suh, Do Ho is selected as a Korean hybrid case. He combines installation and sculpture with a conceptual western sensibility. The, nation of meticulousness is combined represents the vinyl house of a traditional Korean building; in addition, his art criticizes the economic bubble situation of contemporary Korean society. Third, Lee, Doo-Shik combines oriental colors with western gestures to form seeds, leaves, flowers, fruits, and female genitalia; in addition, he develops more powerful brush strokes to overcome Korean Monochrome Art. To use Korean *Oh Bang Saik* (red, blue, green, and yellow colors) rooted in *Dan Chung*s of Buddhist paintings; in addition, he attempts to create his own oriental literati artist's style. Fourth, Hong, Suk-Chang has tried to solve the dilemma with free expression or the combination of western abstract expressionism and Korean calligraphy. Further, he has tried to develop a personal *literati* style to merge traces of action, the image of Buddha, chaotic images and strokes like the Korean traditional mixing food *Bibimbob*. To represent the

Aesthetics of Transcendence, he erases the traces of himself in order to approach peaceful mood of light and shade of Indian ink.

**Chapter 4** argued my subject view of avant-garde dilemma that has arisen from the early period of my life until the present time. The first infamous artist dilemma is to overcome the difficulty to get money and time and to develop a unique style of practice. This first artist dilemma continues until 2000; subsequently, I continuously change my style from the *Bangsan Market* and *Cosmism* series. After creating 20-30 art works, I finished each series of practice. I start the *Iron Age* series at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I haphazardly adapt the iron to criticize contemporary material civilization. Humans forget their real god and worship a material god. Their belief is to rely on material (iron construction) in the worship of money and property.

I destroy the material god, iron based on the nihilistic prophecy of Nietzsche, and I develop the destruction skills based on the material iron. I additionally adapted stainless steel and transparent plastic because the symbolizing period of *Iron Age* is too broad. I am able to upgrade the *Iron Age* series to *Iron Age Stainless Steel and Plastic* series. I criticize contemporary society having a post-modern idea in order to develop post-structuralism theories, such as material language, letter language, and structure language using three main materials. In this post-structural method, I develop natural coloring, shade and smoking to adapt fire painting skills. This coloring is an extended material destruction and metamorphosis skills to produce a more developed mate-language to create advanced signifiers. This coloring skill is mixed with chemical coloring such as acrylic and polyurethane pigments.

This research argues the methods of several representative art works, such as *A Man of Isolation*, IA 2005-710, *Messenger's Voice*, IA 2006-703, *Void Womb*, IA 2002-18, *Uncertainty*, IA 2005-13, *Celestial Glory*, IA 2006-802, *Flying Soldiers*, IASP 2009-403, *Image of Female Lip*, IASP 2009-1008, and *Eye of Soldier*, IASP 2009-1011. I suggested the theme Scrooges Repent in the midst of the investigation.

## *For Future development*

Korean avant-garde art is a new phenomenon and global Korean art now is approaching the international art stage. Certain critics (Kim, Young-Na: 2010: 17) ask Korean artists to develop international avant-garde styles and reveal true 'Koreanness' without a contrary direction for this 'Koreanness'. I argue the Korea of yesterday is not the Korea today. This reality compounds the difficulty to find the real definition of 'Koreanness'; in addition, there is the problem of the Americanization of Korean culture and an ever present western influence. Nevertheless, my future vision is to find 'Today's Korean Spirit' that combines my personal vision of Aesthetical and Socio-Critical Art.

Young Korean artists, such as Chan-Hyo Bae, Joon-Sung Bae, De-bbie Han, Seung-Hyo Jang, Kyung-Koo Kang, Kil-Woo Lee, Sang-Kyoon Noh, Mee-Kyung Shin, and Soo-Kyung Yee have tried to combine Korean traditional idioms with western style cultural images. They can be the next generation to develop hybrid style contemporary Korean avant-garde art. I expect that they will show further developed art practices; they understand what contemporary 'Koreanness' is.

## *Originality and Contribution to knowledge*

In fine art practice the term avant-garde dilemma is not new and unfortunately the conception of it remains unstable. The original meaning of avant-garde entails militant, bourgeois art, revolutionary, experimental, extremely new, movement, decadent, very modern, blasphemous, deconstructive, and iconoclastic.

My contribution is to distinguish various meanings of the avant-garde dilemma in the Korean art stage after the Korea War as well as see the challenging examples in the avant-garde argument. These concepts include Korean aesthetic avant-garde and Korean socio-political avant-garde as well as the post Korea War (1950-1960) debate between Korean traditional art and the Korean *Informel*, of the Korean Democracy Movement era (1975-1985) debate between Korean Monochrome Art and Mass People art, and the Korea globalization era (present) a debate between Korea and international trends.

The avant-garde dilemma is profoundly related to the ideology of creating new art to satisfy the expectations of spectators; consequently, it has been substantially developed. This dilemma is related in certain conceptions such as Aesthetical Art, Art for Art, Art for Politics Socio-Critical Art, and Aesthetical & Socio-Critical Art.

From a critical chronological viewpoint, each period of avant-garde artists have to select their directions to create new art; however, for them to satisfy various aspects or views in their era was a different kind of avant-garde dilemma. This can be distinguished historically as the modern avant-garde dilemma, postmodern avant-garde dilemma or contemporary avant-garde dilemma. The highest avant-garde dilemma is found in how to aesthetically criticize right and left social aspects to create Aesthetical & Socio-Critical Art.

The contemporary avant-garde dilemma also exists in the core theories and methods that have arisen between the debate of modernity and post-modernity approved in the case studies of well-known Korean avant-garde artists. These include Nam-Jun Paik's anti-moral performances that combine science and art, Do-Ho Suh's humanistic and protesting of monopolist capitalism, Bul Lee's cyborg image, Doo-Shik Lee's free coloring, and Suk-Chang Hong's mixture of Oriental and Western calligraphy.

The challenge for Korean artists is to create Aesthetical & Socio-Critical Art and my new post-structuralism theory is to solve the avant-garde dilemma. I dedicate my practice to the readers and I plan to give certain meanings in each signifier that do not fit with the original idea. Audiences may regard me as *The Death of Author* and are free to read all the signifiers as they imagine.

## Appendix

### My Work Note: Selected Monologues since 2001

**21<sup>st</sup> Mar 2001**

I: Are you a painter or sculptor?

Myself: I started as a painter, like Stella's example, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; however, I think my expression is not necessary within 2 Dimension by pigments.

I: What is your clear difference to compare with modernity?

Myself: I care for society, so I am.

I: Your reply is similar to Heidegger's explanation of Being and Time. It recognizes two things: (1) that understanding as such makes up a basic kind of Dasein's Being, and (2) that this Being is constituted as care (Heidegger, Martin, 2010: 363). How will your art take care of society?

I: Is it possible just to use a symbolic material to criticize society? What is your own skill to differentiate other non-critical methods?

Myself: I specially create the critical signifiers that are clearly different from other objects.

I: I am dissatisfied with this explanation and angrily ask to myself: Is material based art able to become a new-avant-garde art?

Myself: Material based art itself is not new and it started almost 40 years ago. However, the art can approach new-avant-garde art if I combine certain images and texts with certain stuff.

**24<sup>th</sup> Jan 2002**

I: To reveal a socio-political message ambiguously in an abstract style or if your practice does not give any hint to the reader about this, is it possible to catch the real intention of the author?

Myself: Surely, it is very hard. However, I satisfy that readers do not understand the original signified, further, I (author) do not want to interfere the audiences' free imaginative understanding. This means that my practice is not the one way to go or only one-side negative or positive direction. In addition, it is not same as the one-side development of humanities speed culture. The pictorial language is to criticize the complicated international situation that surrounds the Korean peninsula and several difficult situations after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attack as well as give the optical message for the greatness of our culture.

**23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2002**

I: How is it possible to criticize permanent civilization? Or, how can the two materials symbolize eternity?

Myself: The plastic and stainless civilization may not permanently exist. It depends on our behavior. If we destroy our civilization, then we destroy everything. To represent this idea, you need to support the prevention of terrorism and war.

**1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2002**

I: Why you always change your art style?

Myself: Arguably, I do not imitate my previous arts; however, I do not want to stay within the last work if my previous work is reputed highly and sold,. Continually, I try to develop new form, new color, and new feeling. I think my last works are not mine. Humans change every day; I am not as the same being today as I was yesterday.

**21<sup>st</sup> May 2003**

I: What do you want to criticize by using steel in your art?

Myself: I want to criticize a modern civilization that has been built up by steel.

I: However, is that all?

Myself: On the contrary, the evaluation might be tilted to negative points from the work if you see a strong social problem like the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorism attack because the outlook of the work is close to ugly expression. If human civilization meets a selfish destructive consciousness then a ready-made material paradise could be destroyed within a short moment with a subsequent collapse of civilization. The idea was rooted from the response to the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 terrorist attack.

I: However, is that all, too?

Myself: I declare my practice is closely related in the *Death of Author* or the post-structuralisms' view of an unfixed signifier and signified relationship. If the outlook is closely related to shining or glittering as a beautiful signifier in transparent plastic, the reader's evaluation could change positively or ambivalently in the simultaneous attainment of aesthetical and socio-critical pictorial language. However, the more the readers try to catch the signified then the more profound meaning the readers find. Readers are free to read the signified meaning that is the final goal of my communication. If I hide the signified (such as to make weapon to destroy humans) our future is opaque. It brings the age of the last and the worst of the world and ambivalently suggests the joy to make tools with iron.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2003**

I: Can you explain the symbolic meanings of stuff?

Myself: To express society using three materials such as iron, stainless steel, and plastic. Then, iron signifies: base material, exist permanent, and material paradise; plastic signifies the solid form of petroleum gas, transparency, convenient, and spiritual paradise; and stainless steel signifies high technology, permanency, and eternity.

I: Can you explain any other strategies to create these works?

Myself: There are three explanations as follows: (a) To exercise where so-called ugly or extra artistic world that is in the area of self-destruction, fire painting and dissipative void reconstruction. (b) To express positively or negatively. (c) Utilize the relationship of each signified that use letter language, shape language, structure language, color language, and material-language.

**2<sup>nd</sup> May 2005**

I: What is the best way to accomplish a successful practice?

Myself: You may think that the best way is to overcome the best artist's practice of today; however, I decide that it is to overcome yesterday myself.

I: Arguably, I think, constant systematic progress moving from my previous work is the best way, don't you?

Myself: Further, I think more intelligent control of moving in the shape development is better than arbitrary change.

**11<sup>th</sup> Sep 2005**

I: Why I remain unfinished and void of extra space parts?

Myself: Before I answer above question, I would argue the following question:

.....

I: When is the best moment to finish my practice?

Myself: It is the moment to show the imaginative potentiality of suggestiveness. Complete and incomplete or finished and unfinished is very difficult to declare. Sometimes, if the expression is over then it is ugly; if it is short, it becomes too simple. To find the appropriate moment to finish artwork is unanswered.

**30th Sep 2005**

I: What do you want to show in the *Messenger's Voice* series?

Myself: I think contemporary people are as same those who are blind such as Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* who did not know his future; however, he changes himself after seeing his future. A person who wants to realize a long distance place needs to see long

distance. However, many people are in an uncertain situation of uncertainty. I plan the *Uncertainty* series to represent an unstable contemporary vandalism society such as that which exists in Iraq. If president Saddam knew of his future he would have changed his behavior.

I: What kind of signifier is appropriate for the expression?

Myself: it is appropriate to use disgusting military images, such as tanks, weapons, and bombs; however, the signifiers are too easy for the readers because the art pieces are too direct (simple).

**11<sup>th</sup> Sep 2009**

I: What does iron and stainless steel signify?

Myself: The materiality of iron shows varieties of flexibility. Secondly, iron signifies the weakness of contemporary civilization that uses high heat welding skills, shade, and dust of smoke effects that are different from the general meaning. In certain cases, the iron signifies the naked or wounded hearts of contemporary humans. Thirdly, despite brilliant and nice in everyday living, iron and stainless steel shows massive gravity and natural irregularity behind them after heat or destruction. In that case, they signify the hidden ugliness of a material culture's or the horrible social situations of today. Further, they remind us that the future may not be a material utopia or that of hell; the results depend on us. Finally, the important material of human civilization is the base material of human history. Iron based construction is permanent and is unable to be the representative whole of a current material paradise and spiritual happy paradise. Contemporary humans live in an artificial material paradise. However, the civilization is not perfectly established without spirit. Material civilization has to take care of others; however, most developed countries ignore the difficulties of poor countries. Just material (without spirit) paradise is not perfect; therefore, civilization is not perfect.

I: What does the plastic signify?

Myself: Plastic is possible to create goods, facilities, and broad styles of weapons more than imagination. It symbolizes contemporary civilization in the 1960s. The development of petroleum byproducts created unbreakable glass called plastic that is transparent, light, flexible, and cheap.

**10<sup>th</sup> Oct 2010**

I: In *Where is Your Home? I, 2010* "Why are both the two dangerous?"

Myself: I describe the bridge not enough strong as a ladder, that is attached on the side of a thin old wooden bridge. Secondly, I locate two men just in front of a sexual female open mouth.

I: What do you think the most dangerous between the two: weakness of a bridge and sucking into a female mouth?

Myself: Surely, you can think, a blind man is more dangerous because of the unstable bridge. However, he cannot be tempted by sexual attraction from the female lip because of his blindness and he is safe from sexual attraction. The helper is safe from the unstable bridge, but he is not safe from sexual attraction. Meaningfully, it also signifies that we are exposed to the ignorant sexuality of mass-communication and public journalism. Thus, it is very difficult to decide the situation.

I: However, is that all?

Myself: The blind man is I as the second signified who does not know how to overcome the avant-garde dilemma and the guide is Andy Warhol as the third signified who eagerly prints female images.

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## Illustrations



Fig 1, <Guerilla Group: performance, 1989>, in the exercise, they protest against a male centered society to get equal opportunity in art society, USA. [online] Available at: <<http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/ggirls/intro.htm>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2011]. Copyright 1995 by the Guerrilla Girls

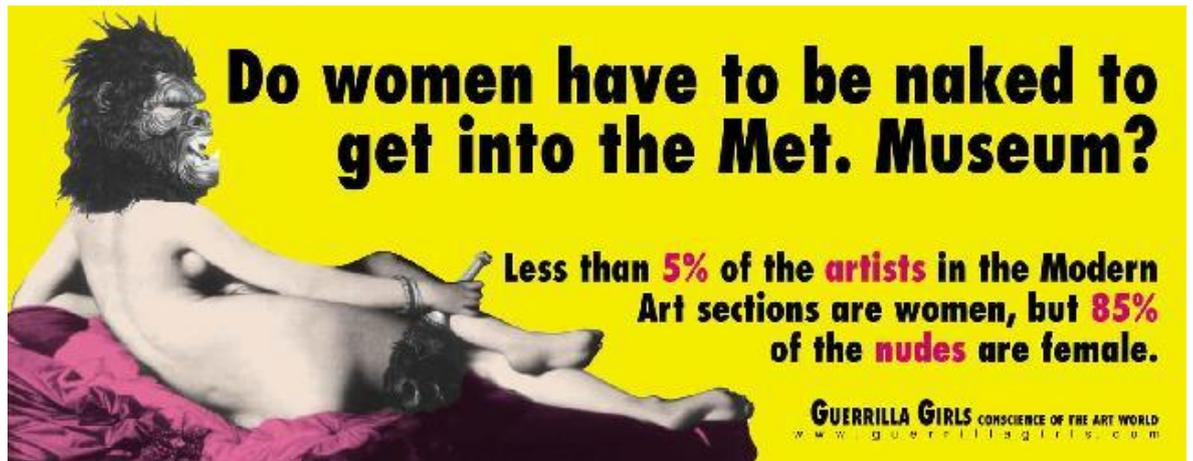


Fig 2, Guerilla Girls, <activism example: protesting against a patriarchal society for women's rights>. These posters first appeared in New York, 1989. [online] Available at: <<http://cheznamastenancy.blogspot.com/2011/06/links-for-hot-tuesday-in-june-pia-stern.html>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2011].

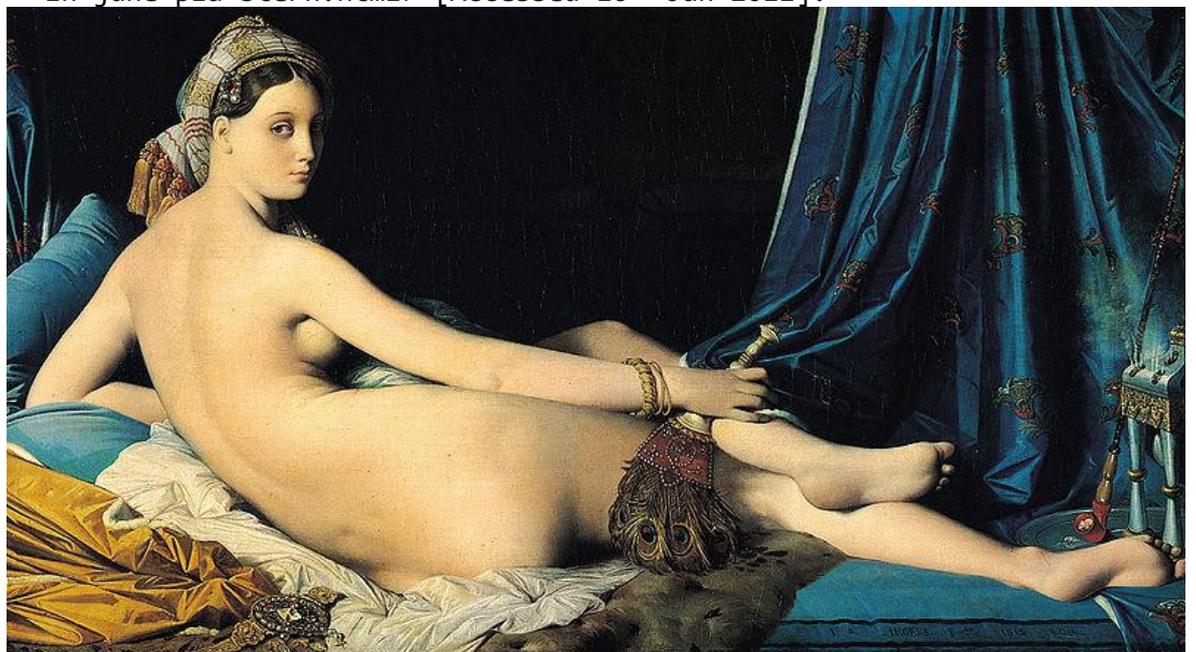


Fig 3, Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, <La Grande Odalisque, 1814>, Oil on Canvas, 91x 162 cm, Louvre, Paris, [online] Available at: <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jean\\_Auguste\\_Dominique\\_Ingres,\\_La\\_Grande\\_Odalisque,\\_1814.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jean_Auguste_Dominique_Ingres,_La_Grande_Odalisque,_1814.jpg)> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2011].



Fig 4, Jenny Holzer, <A Survival sorozatból>, Times Square, New York, 1985-86, [online] Available at: <<http://andmymouthisanhourglassofblood.tumblr.com/post/416560767/jenny-holzer-a-survival-sorozatbol-times>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2011].



Fig 5, Artists unknown; <Demonstration Placard, 1980s>, in front of Yonsei University Library Building, One student (Lee, Han-Yeul) is killed in the midst of the demonstration. In the placard, the sentence is “To rebirth Han-yeul!” [online] Available at: <<http://blog.naver.com/PostView.nhn?blogId=leezorba&logNo=30018493775>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2011].

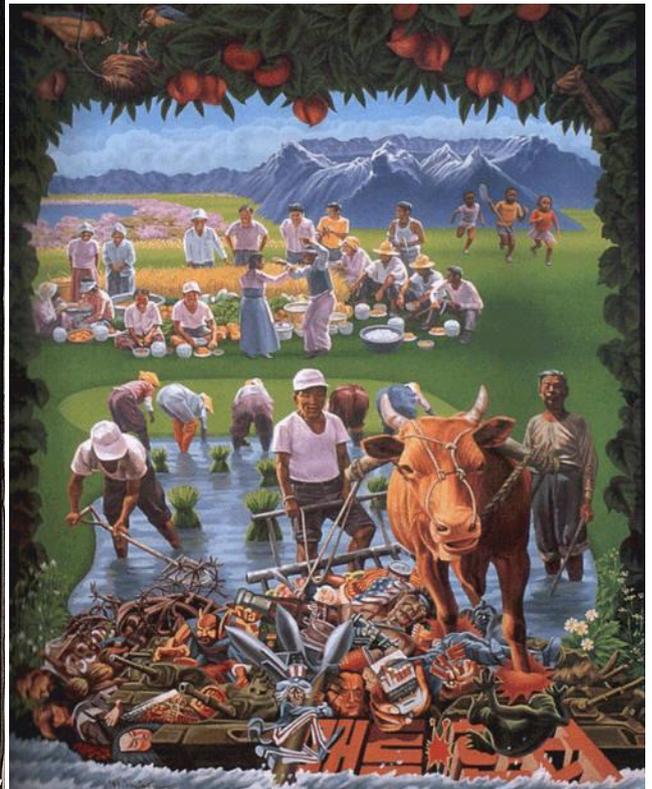
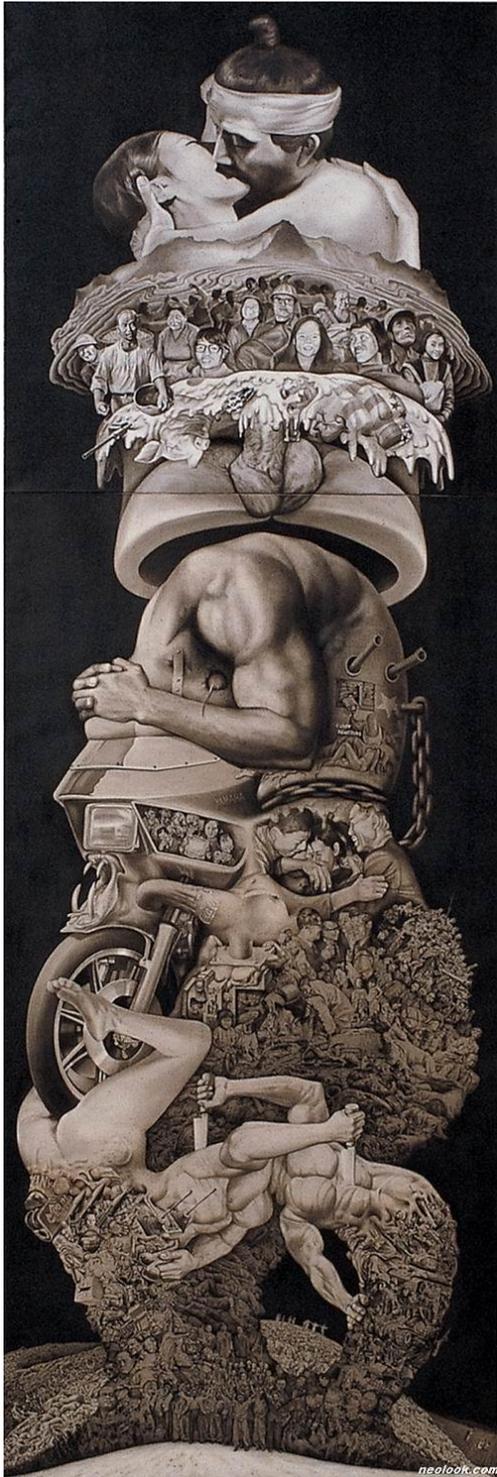


Fig 6, Hak-Chul Shin, <Korea Modern History 13, 1986> (left), Oil on canvas, 130x390cm. <Copyright; Permission From the artist, 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>  
 Hak-Chul Shin, <Monegi: Rice planting, 1987>, oil on canvas, 132x162.2cm, (right)<Copyright; Permission From the artist, 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>



Fig 7, Bong-Jun Kim, <A picture of Unification wish, 1985>, Watercolor on wood cut print, 70x40cm. [online] Available at: <<http://blog.naver.com/happybard?Redirect=Log&logNo=90050561439>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 8, Young-Jin Kim, <Lo! The equal earth, 1989>, Oil on Canvas



Fig 9 Barbara Kruger, <Untitled (I shop therefore I am), 1987> [online]  
Available at: <<http://fontsinuse.com/barbara-kruger-kim-kardashian-futura/>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].

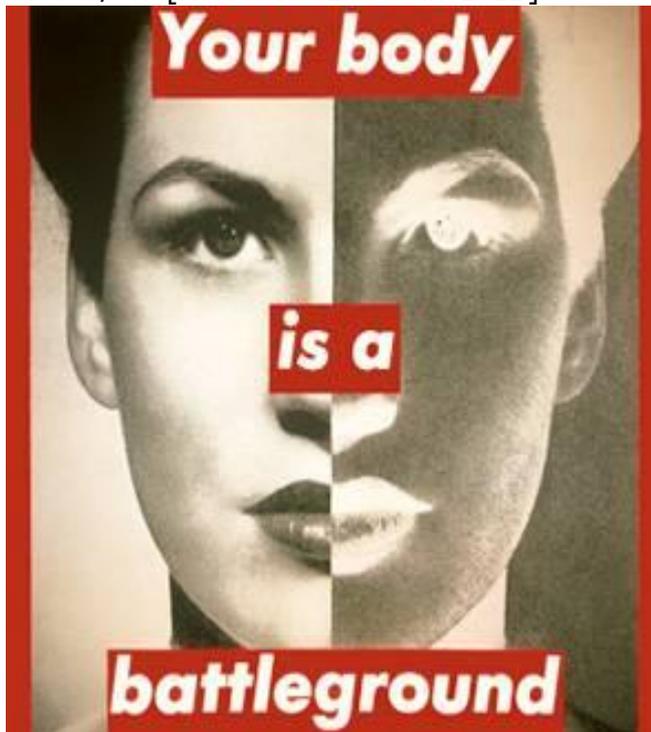


Fig 10 Barbara Kruger, <Your body is a battle ground, 1991> [online]  
Available at: <<http://www.barbarakruger.com/art/yourbody.jpg>>  
[Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].

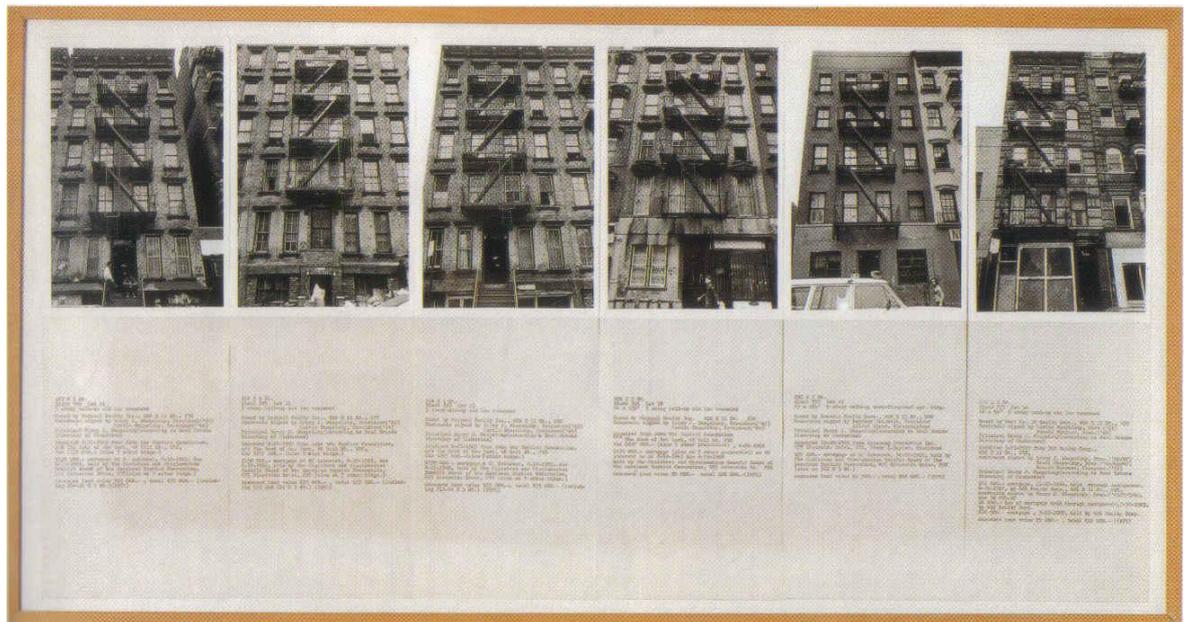


Fig 11, Hans Haacke, <Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971>[online] Available at: <<http://sineadconlon.wordpress.com/2010/02/15/relational-art-practice-and-its-discontents-towards-creating-waves/>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 12 Hans Haacke <Shalopsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a real-Time Social System as of May 1 1971>. (Detail) [online] Available at: <<http://sineadconlon.wordpress.com/2010/02/15/relational-art-practice-and-its-discontents-towards-creating-waves/>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].

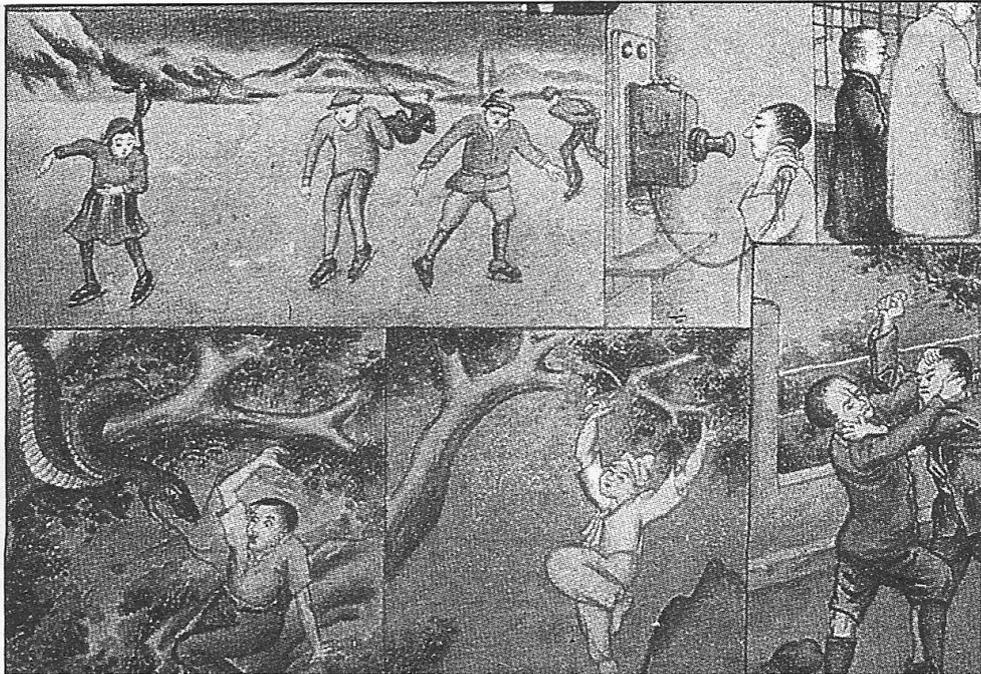


Fig 13, Artist Unknown, <Gamrowang>, Japanese colonial Era, exact year of production unknown



Fig 14, Sul-Jo Hwang, <YeondolSojebu>, oil painting, 1931

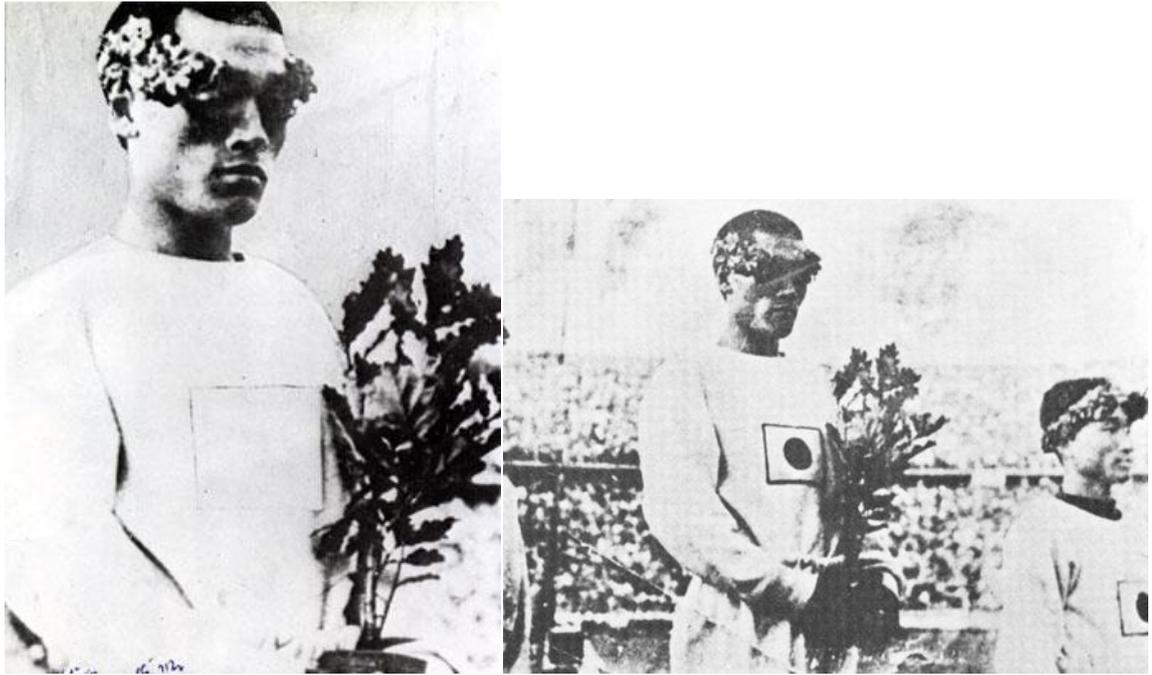


Fig 15, Ki-Jung Son, <Korean Marathon Champion in Berlin Olympic Game 1936> The Japanese National flag in the Original photo (right) is erased by Sang-Bum Lee (Art reporter) (left), and published in Dong-A daily newspaper in the midst of Japanese colonial era. [online] Available at: <<http://risa9722.tistory.com/48>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 16, Sang-Bum Lee, <Early winter>, exact producing year unknown, [online] Available at: <[http://imgv.search.daum.net/viewer/search?w=imgviewer&SearchType=total&ResultType=total&SimilarYN=total\\_Y&SortType=total&q=%C3%BB%C0%FC+%C0%CC%BB%F3%B9%FC&page\\_offset=0&page=1&lpp=10&od=QeC54500](http://imgv.search.daum.net/viewer/search?w=imgviewer&SearchType=total&ResultType=total&SimilarYN=total_Y&SortType=total&q=%C3%BB%C0%FC+%C0%CC%BB%F3%B9%FC&page_offset=0&page=1&lpp=10&od=QeC54500)> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].

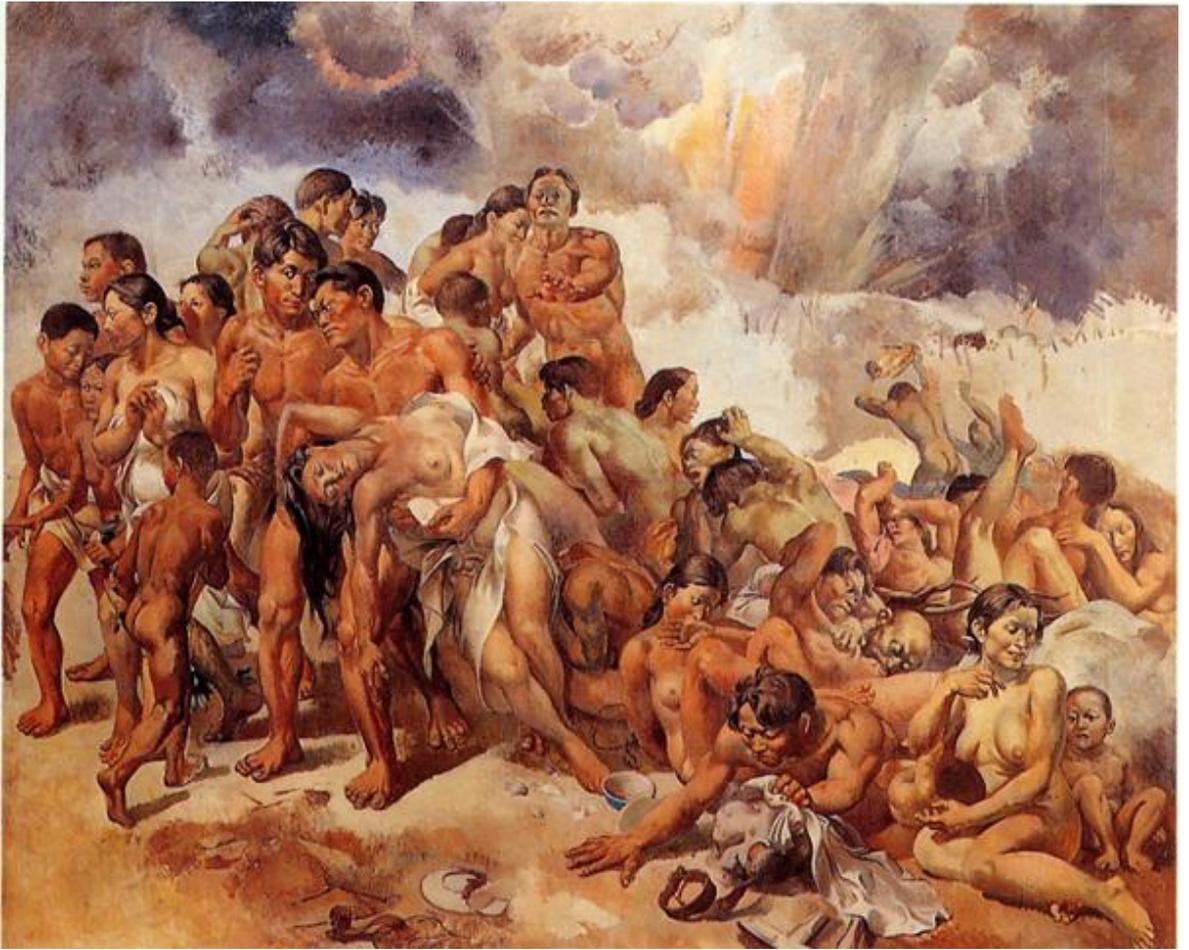


Fig 17, Gue-Dae Lee, <People>, 1948, Oil on canvas, 177x216 cm, [online] Available at: <<http://www.cyworld.com/escueladesy/5215304>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].

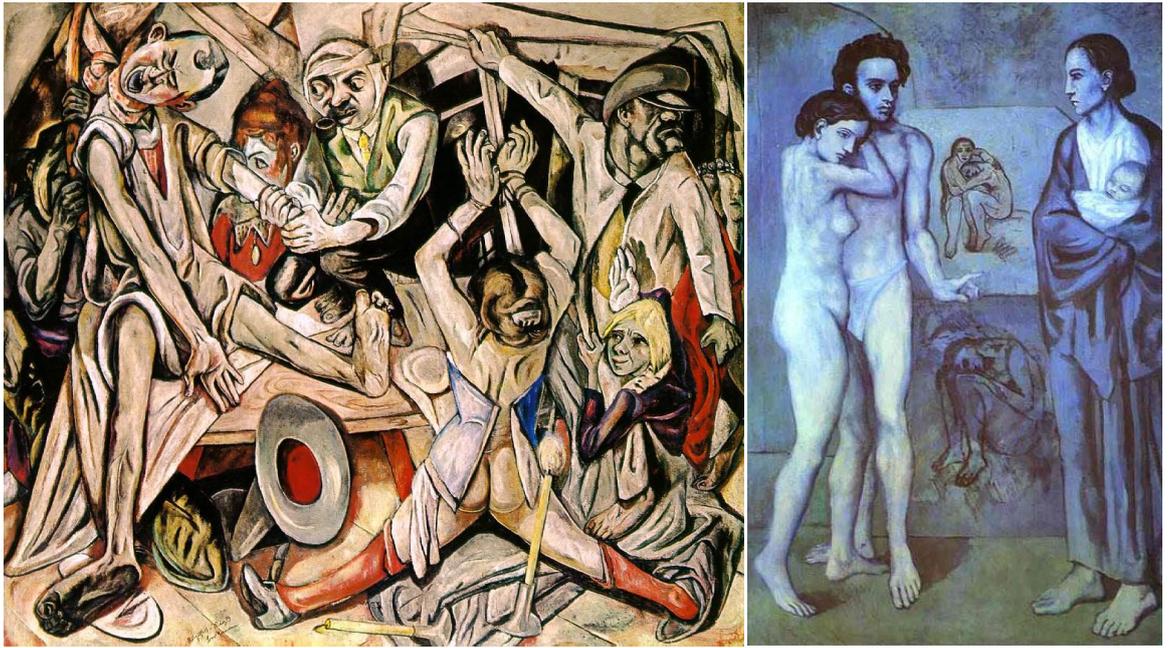


Fig 18 Max Beckmann, <Night, 1918-19> Oil on canvas 52 3/8 x 60 1/4 in.<Left> [online] Available at: <<http://www.google.co.kr/search?q=max+beckmann&hl=ko&newwindow=1&prmd=imvnsulo&tbn=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=1AkUT6L3I-GfmQXnm7D-CQ&sqi=2&ved=0CE8Q7Ak&biw=1268&bih=845>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2011]. Pablo Picasso, <La Vie, 1903>, Oil on Canvas, <Right> [online] Available at: <[http://www.artquotes.net/masters/picasso/pablo\\_lavie1903.htm](http://www.artquotes.net/masters/picasso/pablo_lavie1903.htm)> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 19, Joong-seop Lee, <eunji-hwa>, oil rendering on aluminum lining paper, 10x15.2cm, Exact producing date is not known, [online] Available at: <[http://www.fnnews.com/view?ra=Sent1301m\\_View&corp=fnnews&arcid=00000922048537&cDateYear=2010&cDateMonth=07&cDateDay=22](http://www.fnnews.com/view?ra=Sent1301m_View&corp=fnnews&arcid=00000922048537&cDateYear=2010&cDateMonth=07&cDateDay=22)> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2011].



Fig 20, Oskar Kokoschka, <The Tempest/Bride of the Wind>, oil on canvas, 181x221cm, 1913, Kunst Museum Basel, Switzerland. painting by Oskar Kokoschka, a self-portrait expressing his unrequited love for Alma Mahler (widow of composer Gustav Mahler), 1913, [online] Available at: <<http://desumi.egloos.com/10010296>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 21 Jean Fautrier, (1898-1964) 1944 <Hostage Head No. 1>  
(Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles) by RasMarley, [online]  
Available at:  
<<http://www.flickrriver.com/photos/tags/tachisme/interesting/>>[Accessed  
16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].

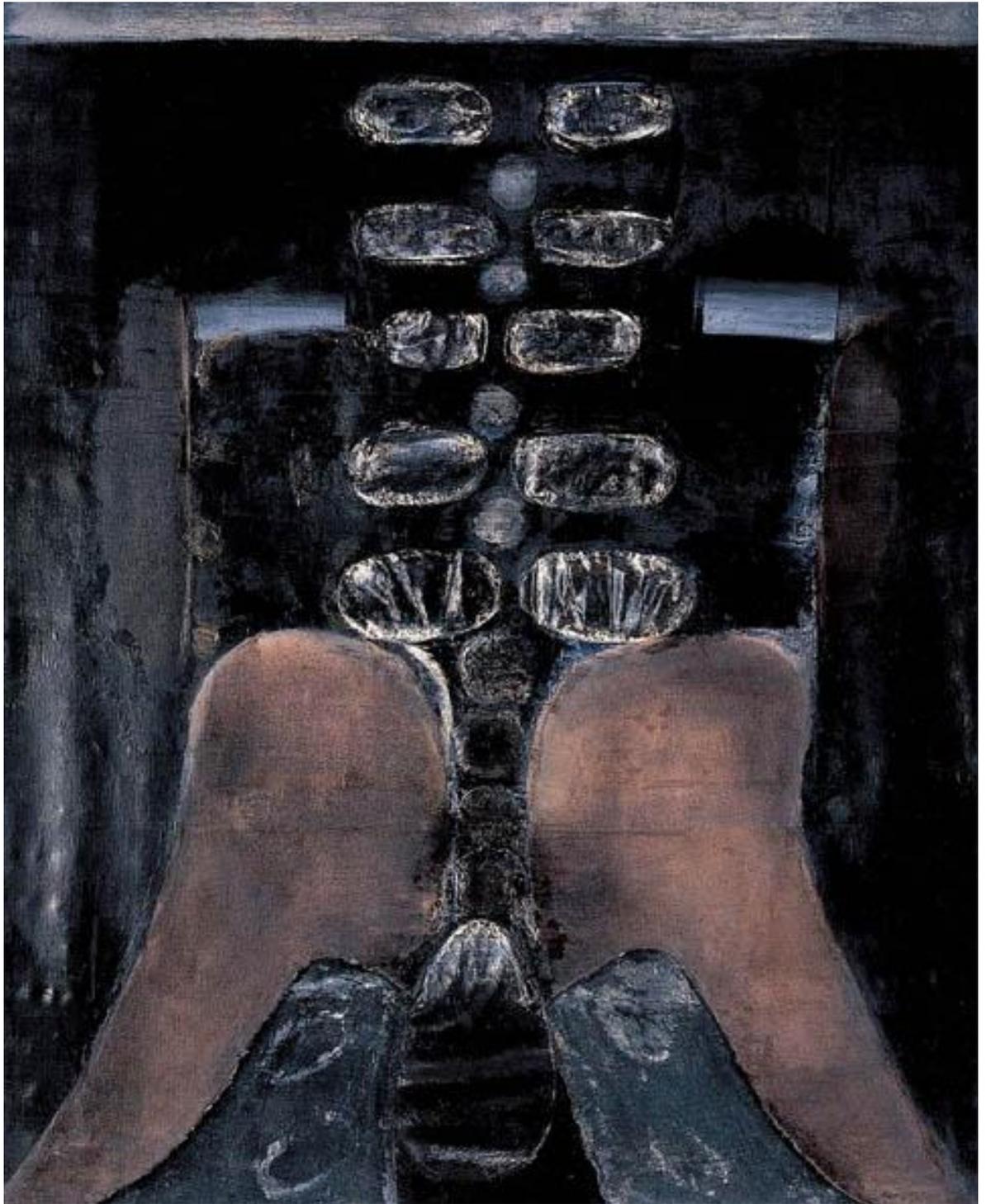


Fig 22, Seo-Bo Park, TITLE: PRIMORDIALIS (原形質)No. 1-62, 1962, Mixed Media & Oil on Canvas, 161cm x 131cm, PHOTO: MR. KWON BOO-MOON COLLECTION: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SEOUL<WonHyungjil 1-62>, mixed media on canvas, 1962 <Copyright, permission from the artist, 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>



Fig 23, Seo-bo, Park, <Ecriture (描法), 890530~3, 1989>, Mixed Media with Korean hanji Paper on Canvas, 300.5 × 228 cm, Collection: The artist, Seoul, <Copyright, permission from the artist, 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>



Fig 24, Hanji, Korean paper

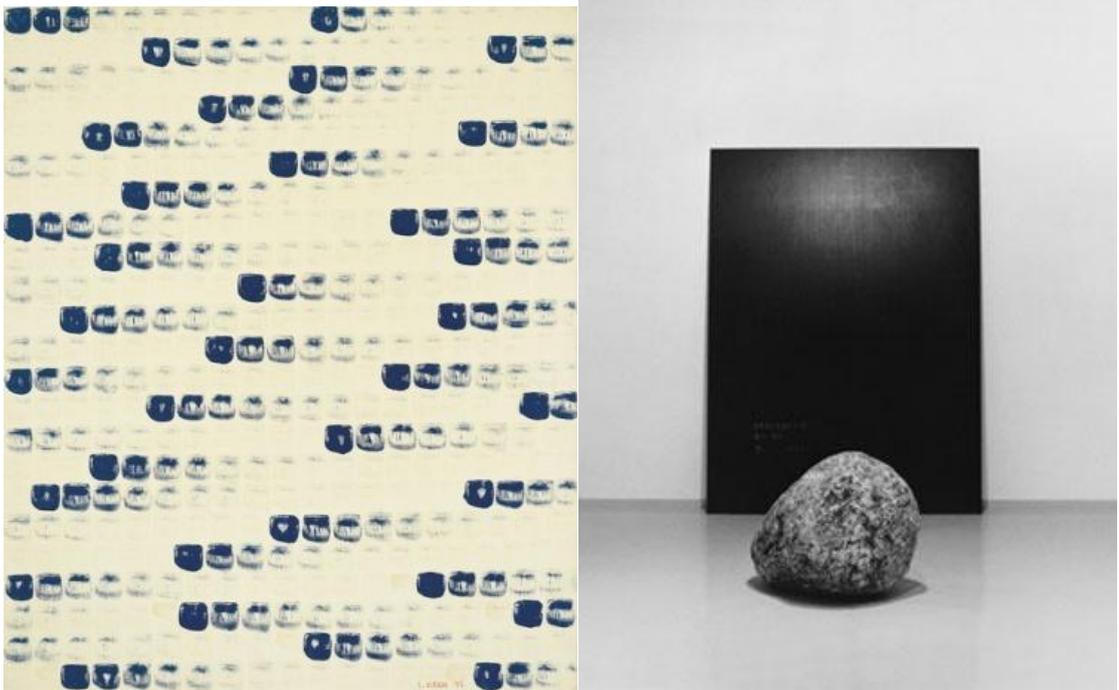


Fig 25, U-fan Lee, *From spot*, 1978 (left) 161,9x130.2cm, [online] Available at: [http://blog.koreadaily.com/media.asp?action=POST&med\\_usrid=yigura&pos\\_no=450207](http://blog.koreadaily.com/media.asp?action=POST&med_usrid=yigura&pos_no=450207) [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012]. U-fan Lee, *Relationship*, 180x120x240 Steel and Stone, 1979-1993, 2003 (right) [online] Available at: [http://www.plateau.or.kr/html/past/19/sub3\\_9.html](http://www.plateau.or.kr/html/past/19/sub3_9.html) [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 26, U-Fan Lee, *From point*, 1984, 182x228cm, Oil on Canvas, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, [online] Available at: <http://blog.ohmynews.com/seulsong/tag/inventeur%20du%20Moderne> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2011].



Fig 27, Pierro Manzoni, <Base of the world, 1961>, Steel and Letter, [online] Available at: <[http://homepage.mac.com/paulcdowling/ioe/interrogating\\_texts/page15.html](http://homepage.mac.com/paulcdowling/ioe/interrogating_texts/page15.html)> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 28, Richard Long, <A Line in Scotland, 1981> Photograph: Richard Long, [online] Available at: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/may/23/richard-long-photography-tate-britain>> [Accessed 25<sup>th</sup> May 2011].



Fig 29, Seo-Bo, Park <Ecriture (描法), 228-85, 1985>, Pencil, oil on cotton, 165 × 260 cm Collection: Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul <Copyright: Permission from the artist, 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>



Fig 30, Chang-Sup Chung <No. 86088, 1986>, fiber (Hanji on Canvas, 330x190cm National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea, [online] Available at:

<<http://blog.chosun.com/blog.log.view.screen?blogId=10361&logId=5356099>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 31, Yo-Bae Kang, <Hanra Mountain people, 1992>, 112x193.7cm, Acrylic on Canvas, [online] Available at: <<http://georgeorwell.tistory.com/338>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].

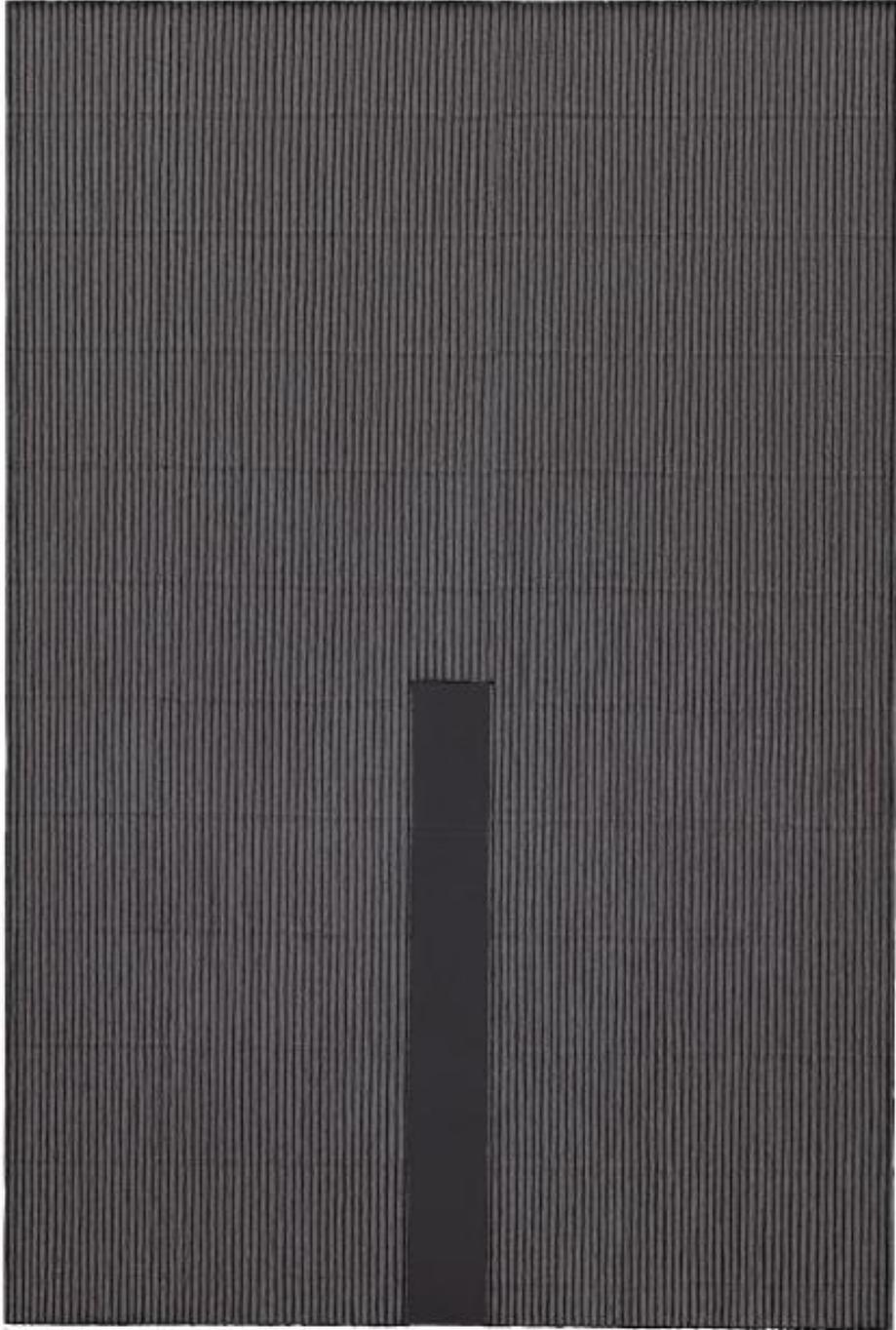


Fig 32, Seo-Bo Park, <Ecriture (描法) 991004, 1999>  
Mixed Media with Korean hanji Paper on Canvas, 330 × 220 cm <400P>  
Collection: National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea  
<Copyright: Permission from the artist>

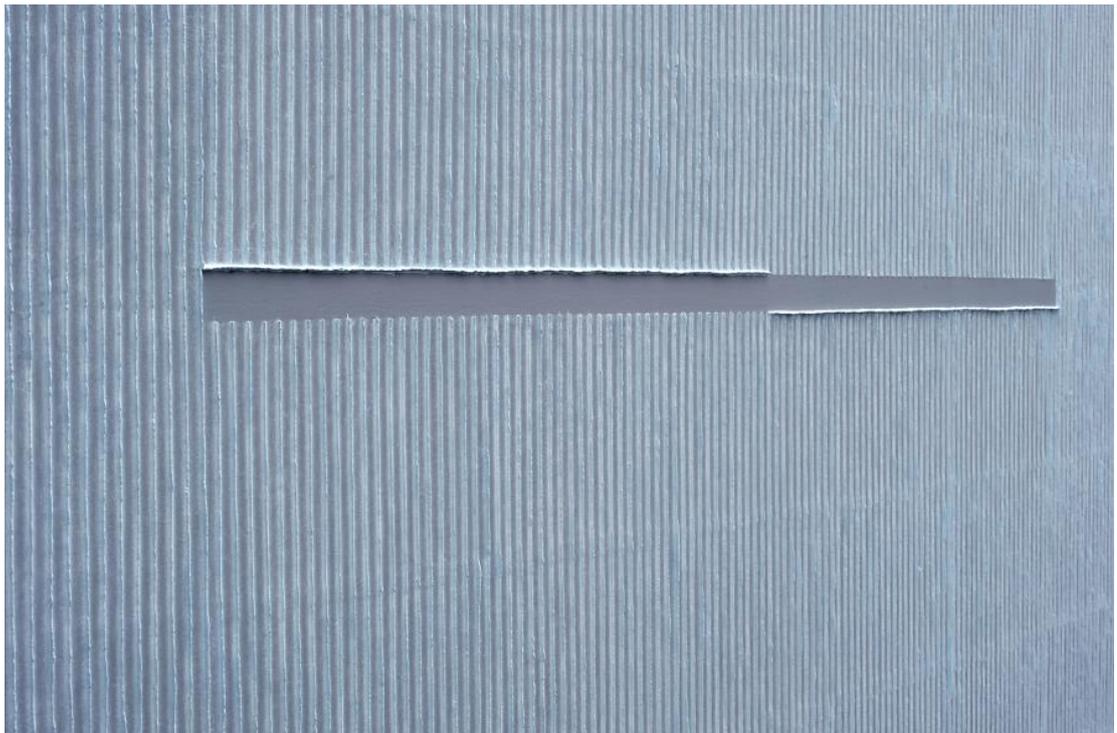
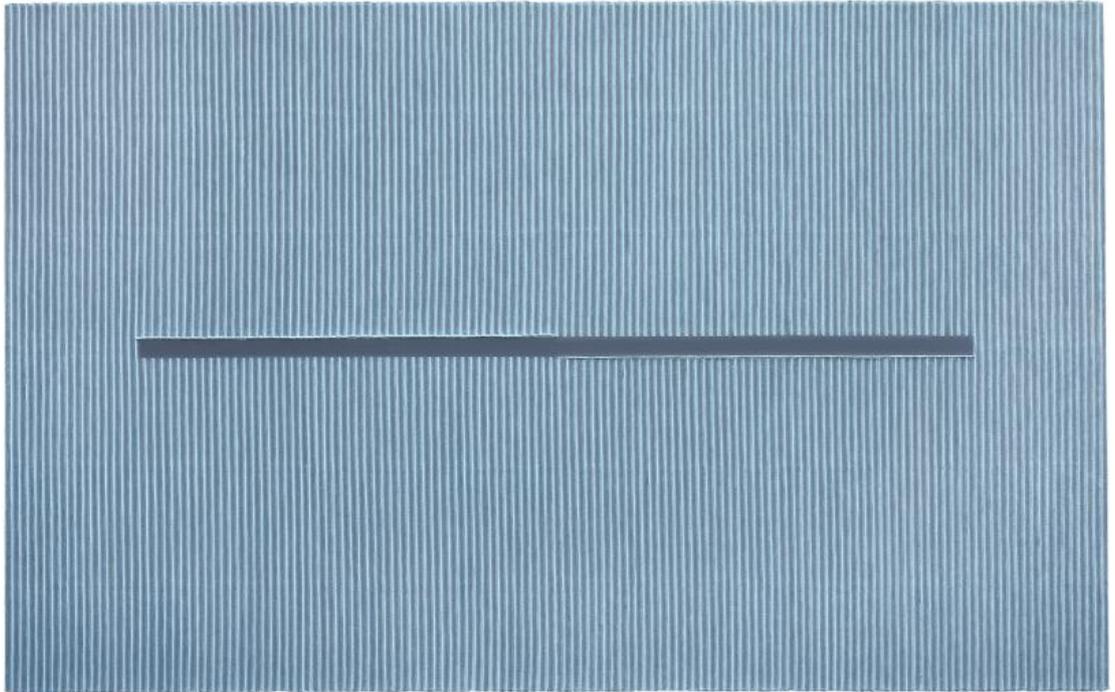


fig 33 Seo-Bo Park, *Ecriture* (描法) 080219, 2008, Mixed Media with Korean hanji Paper on Canvas, 165 × 260 cm, Collection: The artist, Seoul  
<Copyright: Permission from the artist, 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>

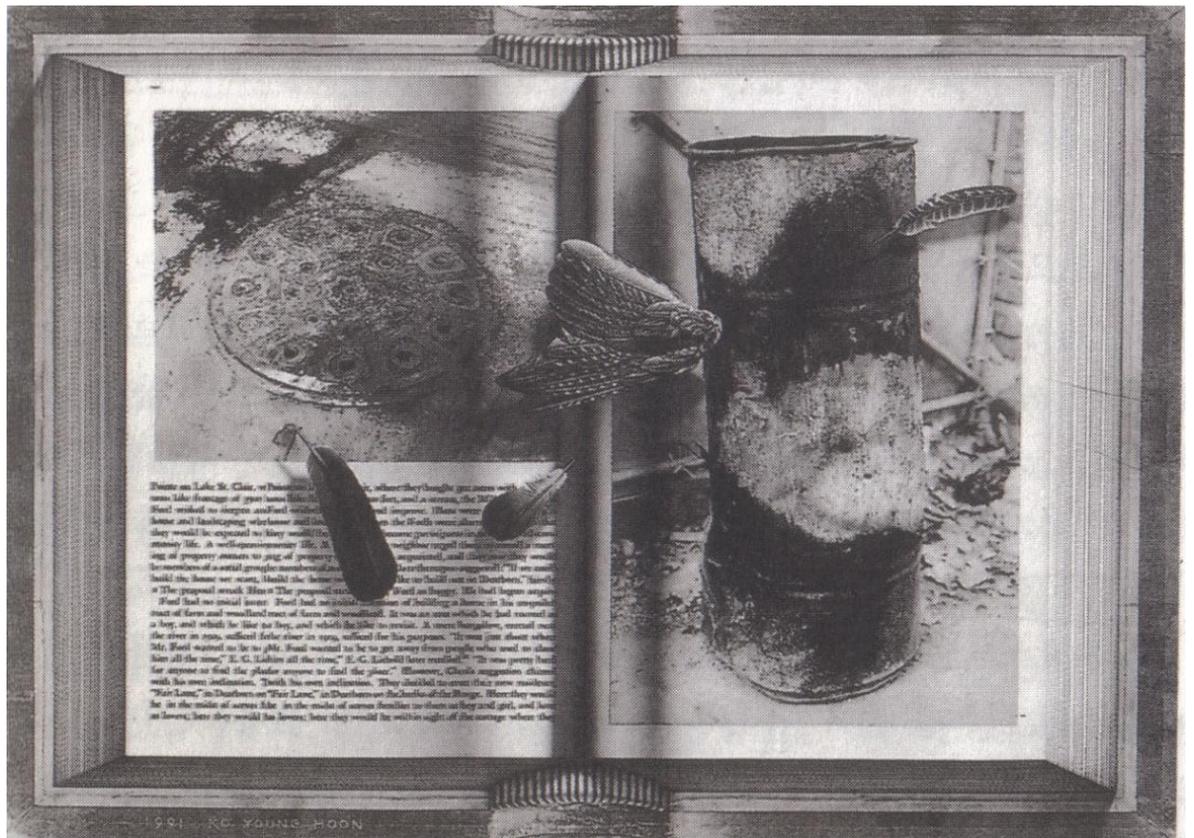


Fig 34, Young-Hoon Ko, <5 years Later, 1991>, 120x85cm, Acrylic on Mixed media.<Copyright: permission from the artist, 25<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>

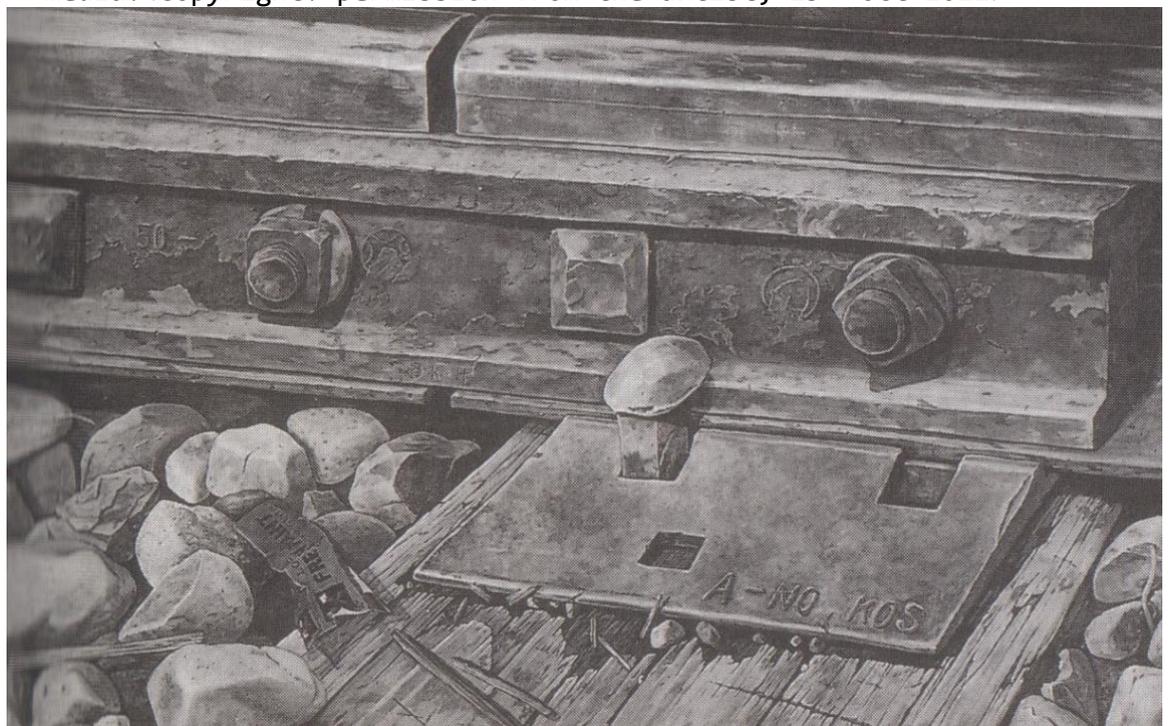


Fig 35, Tae-Seok Ju, <Rail road, 1979>, 97x160cm, Oil on Canvas, <Copyright: Permission from the artist, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>

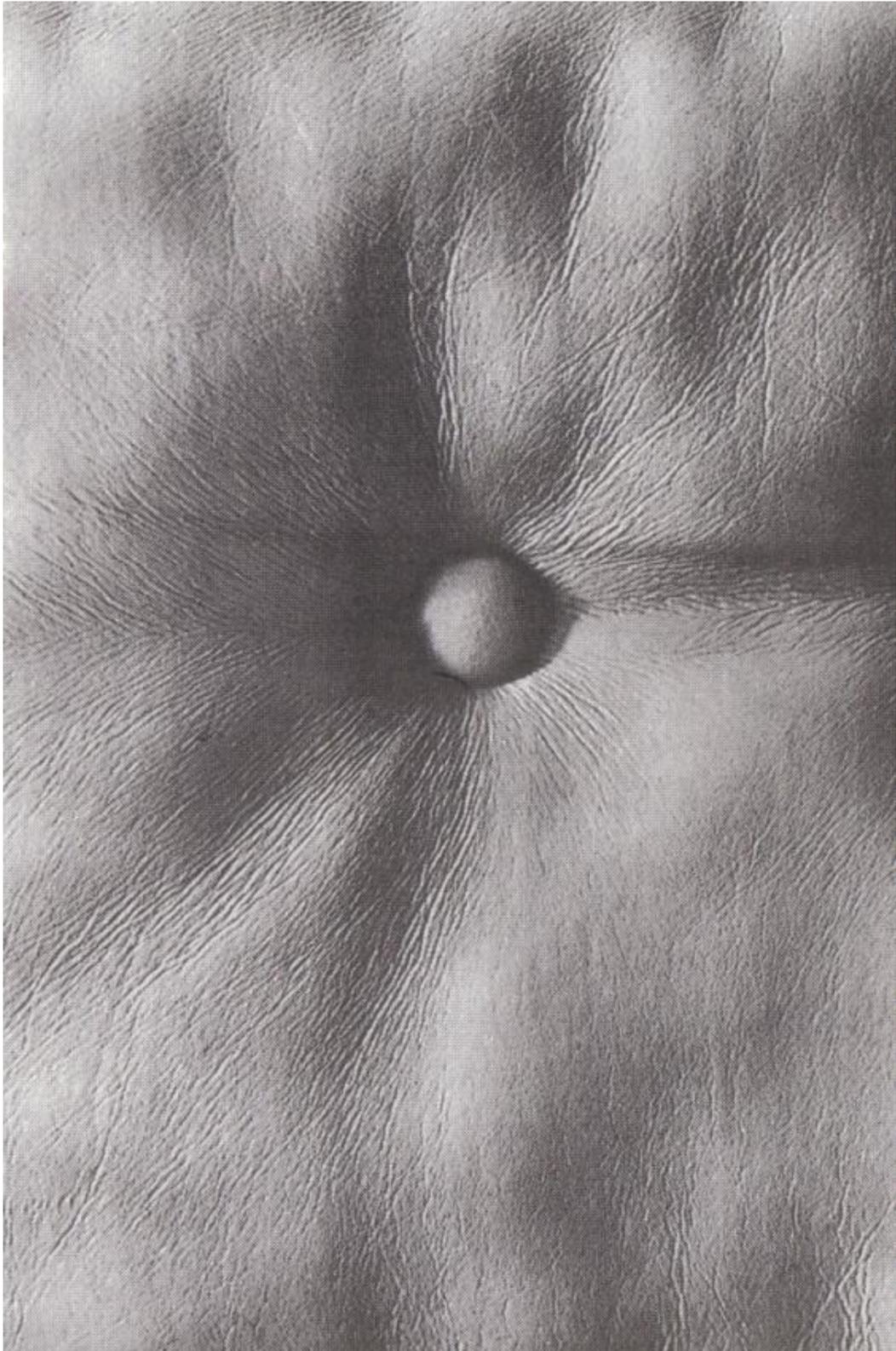


Fig 36, Seok-Chul Ji, <Contra Activation-7919, 1979>, 50x76cm, Oil and color pencil on paper. <Copyright, Permission from the artist 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>



Fig 37, Soo-Keun Park, *a Girl who gives a baby a piggyback*, 1953, oil on Canvas, [online] Available at: <http://blog.naver.com/PostView.nhn?blogId=jsasm1944&logNo=80139768784&parentCategoryNo=10&viewDate=&currentPage=1&listtype=0> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 38, Soo-Keun Park, *Merchant Street*, 1953, oil on canvas, [online]  
Available at: [http://www.carilite.net/paintings/Park\\_S\\_K/html](http://www.carilite.net/paintings/Park_S_K/html)  
[Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 39, Soo-Keun Park, *Cleaning place*, 1954, Oil on canvas, [online]  
Available at:  
[http://blog.daum.net/\\_blog/BlogTypeView.do?blogid=0STz5&articleno=1017&categoryId=14&regdt=20110930001306#ajax\\_history\\_home](http://blog.daum.net/_blog/BlogTypeView.do?blogid=0STz5&articleno=1017&categoryId=14&regdt=20110930001306#ajax_history_home) [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 40, Kazimir Malevich <Taking in the Harvest>, 72x74.5cm, oil on canvas. 1911, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, <[http://tars.rollins.edu/Foreign\\_Lang/Russian/maleharv.html](http://tars.rollins.edu/Foreign_Lang/Russian/maleharv.html)> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 41, Nam-Jun Paik (Baik), *Exposition of Music-Electronic Television, 1964*, [online] Available at:  
<[http://www.violaineboutetdemonvel.com/Lecture\\_Introduction\\_Video\\_Art\\_Emory\\_University\\_Frame.html](http://www.violaineboutetdemonvel.com/Lecture_Introduction_Video_Art_Emory_University_Frame.html)> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].

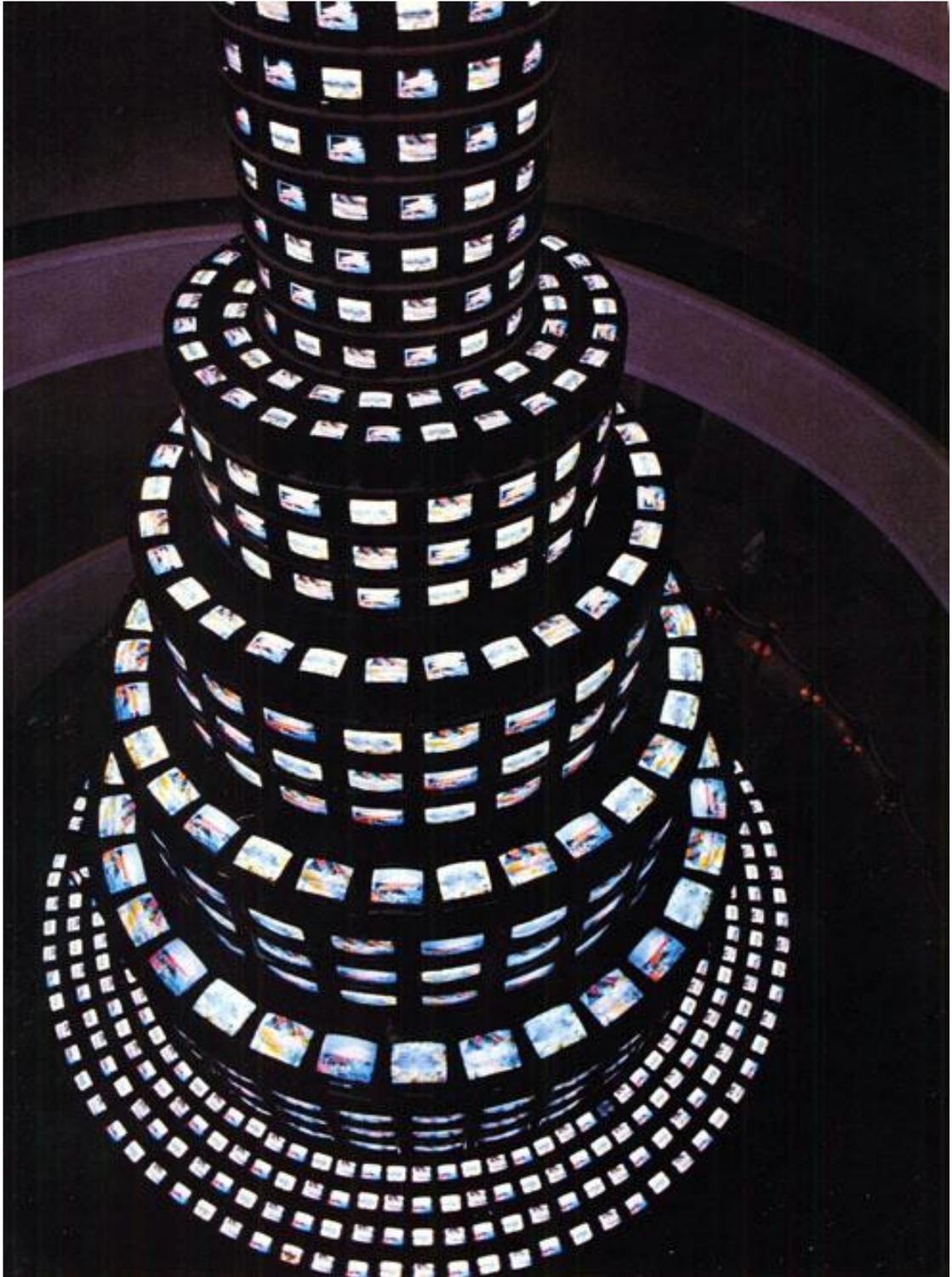


Fig 42, Nam-Jun Baik, <*The More the Better*, 1988> Three channel video installation with 1,003 monitors and steel structure; color, sound; approx. 60 ft. high, National Museum of contemporary Art, Korea, [online] Available at: <<http://replicants2019.blogspot.com/2011/01/nam-june-paik-more-better-courtesy.html>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 43, Do-Ho Suh, <Seoul Home/L.A. Home/New York Home/Baltimore Home/London Home/ Seattle Home/L.A. Home, 1999> Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, [online] Available at: <http://dbeve.wordpress.com/tag/do-ho-suh/> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 44, Do-Ho Suh, <Some/one, 2001> Made of stainless steel military dog tags, [online] Available at: <<http://drumofglass.blogspot.com/2011/04/do-ho-suh.html>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].

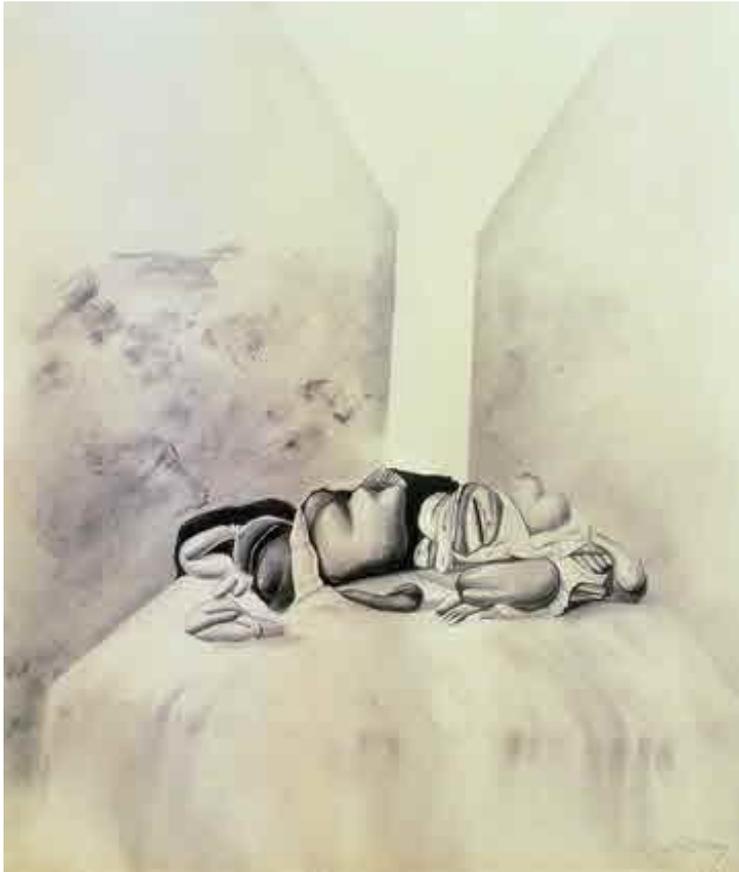


Fig 45, Doo-Shik Lee, <The Origin of Life, 1986>  
<Copyright: Permission from the artist, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>



Fig 46, Doo-Shik Lee, <the Origin of Life, 1986>  
<Copyright: Permission from the artist, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>



Fig 47, Doo-shik Lee <Festival, 2008>, Acrylic on canvas, 162.2 x 130.3 cm, <Copyright: Permission from the artist, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011> (upper) *Danchung* in the Buddhist Temple <bottom>



Fig 48, Doo-Shik Lee, <Festival, 2008>, Acrylic on canvas, 162.2 x 130.3 cm, <Copyright: Permission from the artist, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>



Fig 49, Suk-Chang Hong, <Deliverance, 2000> Korean ink on hanji, 146x78cm, <Copyright: Permission from the artist, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>



Fig 50, Suk-Chang Hong, *<Boisterous Dance, 2003>* 70x52 cm, Korean ink on hanji, *<Copyright: Permission from the artist, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>*



Fig 51, Suk-Chang Hong, *<Deliverance, 2006>* mixed media on hanji *<Copyright: Permission from the artist, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>*



Canadian Art  
**INTERNATIONAL**



LA PRIMAVERA  
1993-94, oil on canvas, 123 1/2 x 74 inches (313.7 x 189.9 cm), Museum of Modern Art, New York City, NY, USA. Photo: © Tate Modern, London, UK. Photo: © Tate Modern, London, UK.

**Cy Twombly**  
TATE MODERN, LONDON

Nicholas Serota's position as Tate's director has allowed him to reprise and amplify some of his favorite shows from his previous job at Whitechapel. Important exhibitions of the work of Alan Bockman, Howard Hodgkin and Frida Kahlo took place there under Serota's directorship and these artists have in recent years been treated to Tate retrospectives. The latest of these grand revivals involves Cy Twombly, for whom Serota's personal regard is such that he is (with Nicholas Collinson) curating the show.

The exhibition, "Cy Twombly: Seasons" traces Twombly's work chronologically since the 1950s, via discernible themes. The first room covers the early 1950s, showing the nascent artist's wobbly paintings with a selection of four sculptures and five canvases. At this early stage, Twombly's paintings were an apt patchwork of abstract Expressionist gestures, but his sculptures already

balance purity of form and elegant simplicity with deceptive chutzpah. By the end of that decade, Twombly's characteristically painterly style had developed. It has both horrified and delighted audiences ever since. A sophisticated knowledge of art, classical literature, travel and history, allied with a sensitive awareness of color, light and form, resulted in a body of work that has both subverted and reinvigorated the discipline. Paintings like *Olympus* (1957) and *Demals* (1958) brim with a subtle intimacy that is transmitted by Twombly's scribbly, automatic writing in pencil and canvas over whole house paint. Half a century ago these canvases heralded a new talent who simply and confidently set about redefining pictorial space in terms of his singular, tumbling vision.

His *Four Seasons* series (1961) is the work of an artist who is completely sure of his medium. The first painting is dominated by the pale, blank canvas; Twombly has crudely scribbled shadows and masses of pink, red and brown paint upon it. Over five paintings, the contents build to become a vibrant, cacophonous horreodischarge of impetuous colour, seeing this series in its entirety allows us to appreciate

Twombly's seemingly chaotic yet brilliant orchestration of form and idea, how he combines paint and literature to depict the emotional moment.

Not all of his series paintings work as well. Two versions of *Four Seasons* on the left (1968 and 1970) rely on their size for effect rather than their evocative black and white composition; and the three *Demals* canvases (2005) suggest a master who might finally have lost his muse. But these cannot tarnish the impact of the penultimate room, where the London and New York versions of *Quattro stagioni* (or *Four Seasons*) are lined for the first time. Each is a huge masterpiece; together they evoke a surprising vision of the sublime, making Twombly a modern Turner. No wonder Serota likes him so much. **MARK BATESON**

Fig 52, Cy Twombly, *Four Seasons 1993-1994*, 123½ x 74¾ inches (313.7 x 189.9 cm) each, Museum of Modern Art New York City, [online] Available at:  
<http://arianewtonthephotoproject.blogspot.com/2011/02/seasons-project-part-1-in-progress.html> [Accessed 16th Jan 2012].  
<http://www.canadianart.ca/art/intl/2008/12/01/cy-twombly/> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 53, Suk-Chang Hong, <*Nirvana*, 2006> Mixed media on *Hanji*  
<Copyright: Permission from the artist, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011>



Fig 54, Ki-woong Park, <*Bangsan Market 2020-I*, 1997>, 132x162x17cm,  
cardboard papers on canvas.



Fig 55, Ki-Woong, Park, idea sketch, *<Rubbish fragments of spaceship, 1998>*, Color pencil and pen on paper, 45x45cm

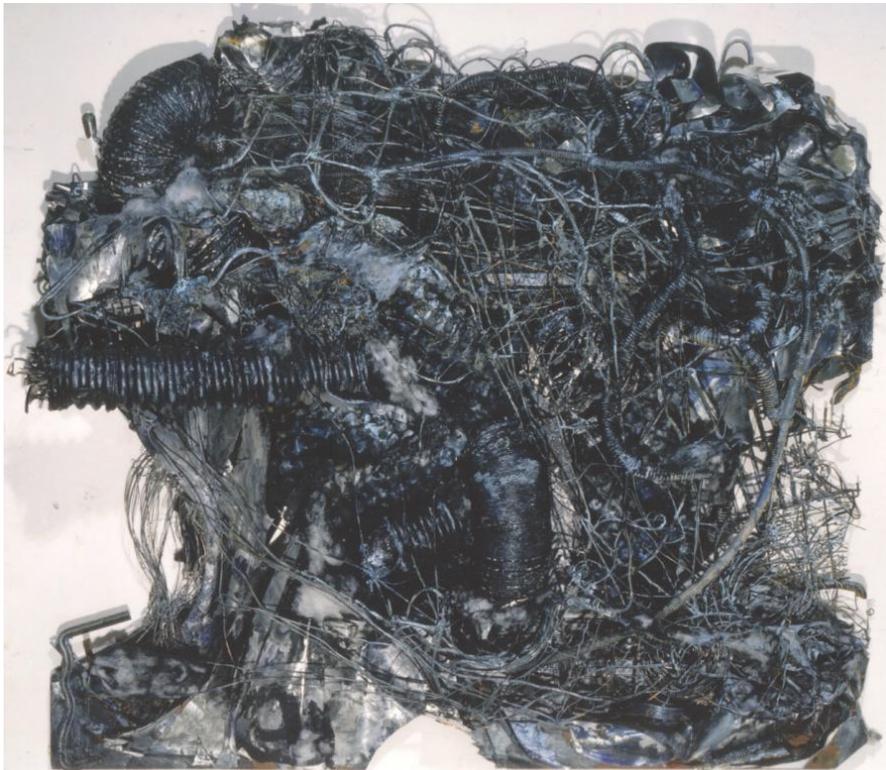


Fig 56, Ki-Woong Park, *<Rubbish fragments of spaceship I, 1998>*, 145x145x32cm, found objects.



Fig 57, Ki-Woong Park, *Space of Universe 99-21, 1999*, 153x127x32cm,  
Found objects on aluminum mesh.



Fig 58, Alberto Burri <*Ferro*, 1960s>, Steel Welding, signed and dated 'Burri 58' (on the reverse) , iron on painted wood mounted on iron 20 5/8 x 17 1/8in. (51.8 x 43.5cm.) , Executed in 1958, [online] Available at: <<http://gobha-uisge.blogspot.com/2010/10/dooyeweerd-dilthey-hartmann-aquinas.html>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 59, Alberto Burri (1915 to 1995), Iron (Ferro), 1960, Iron on wood stretcher, 36 x 38 cm, Private collection, © Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini, Collezione Burri, Città di Castello, 2012. [online] Available at: <<http://gabineted.blogspot.com/2011/12/alberto-burri-forma-e-materia.html>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].

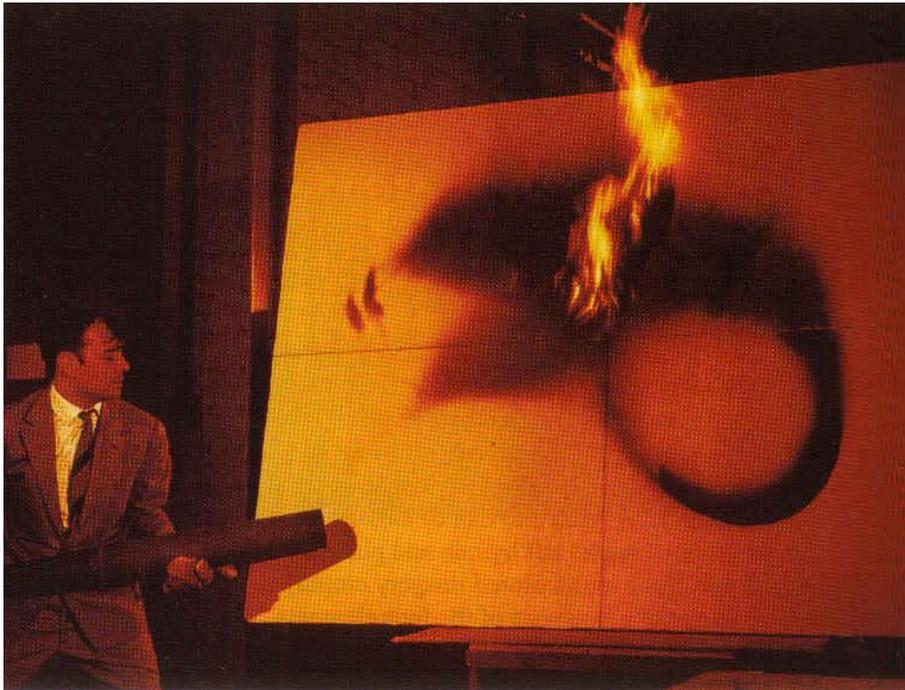


Fig 60, Eve Klein, working on <F 25, 1961>  
The result, <F25, 1961> [online] Available at:  
<<http://c4gallery.com/artist/database/yves-klein/yves-klein-fire-paintings.html>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 2012].

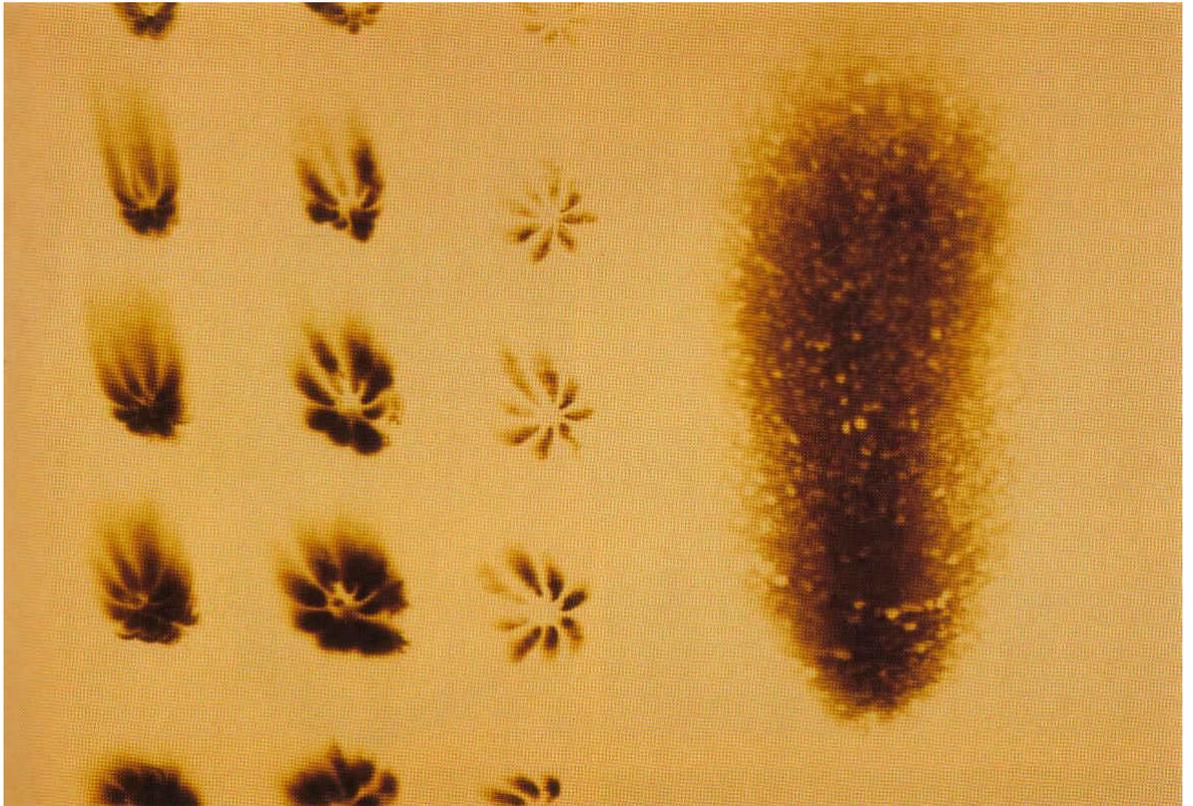


Fig 61, Eve (Yves) Klein, <F 43, 1961> [online] Available at:  
<<http://c4gallery.com/artist/database/yves-klein/yves-klein-fire-paintings.html>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 2012].



Fig 62, Eve (Yves) Klein, <F 6, 1961>, Fire Paintings

This artwork may be protected by copyright. It is posted on the site in accordance with fair use principles, [online] Available at: <<http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/yves-klein/fire-painting-f6-1961>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 63, Alberto Burri's Working <Grottarossa, 1962>.[online] Available at: <[http://trasalimentia.blogspot.com/2010\\_11\\_16\\_archive.html](http://trasalimentia.blogspot.com/2010_11_16_archive.html)> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 64, Alberto Burri, <Grande Plastica, 1962>, fired on vinyl surface.  
[online] Available at:  
<[http://www.katars.it/joomla/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article  
&id=46&Itemid=61](http://www.katars.it/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=61)> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012]

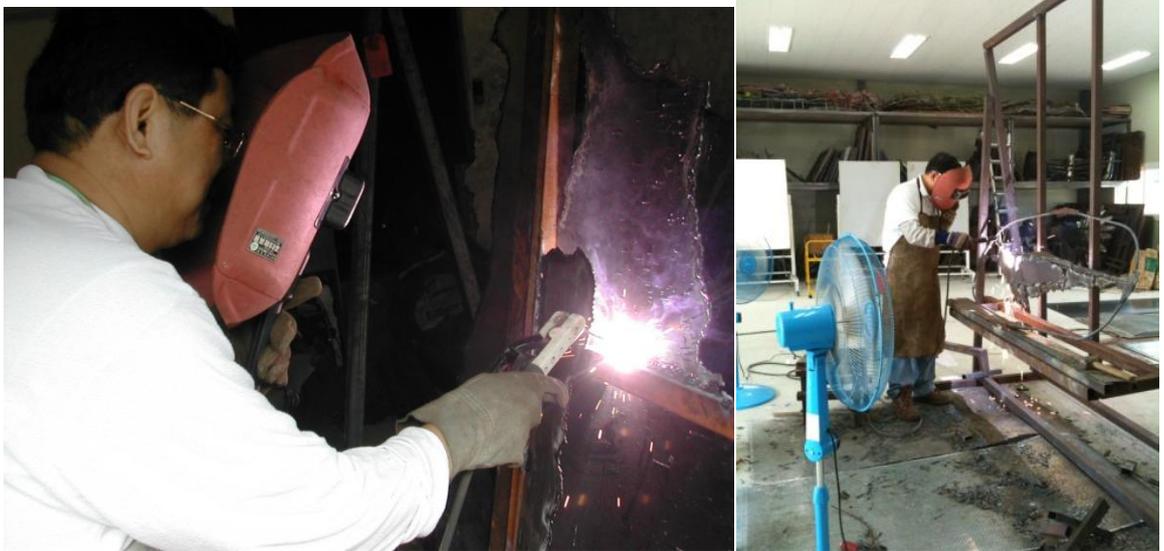


Fig 65, Ki-Woong Park's working with a welding machine to transform iron structures



Fig 66, Ki-Woong Park, <Lost paradise, 2002-1>, 270x112x6cm, steel



Fig 67, Auguste Rodin, <Victor Hugo, ca 1917>, marble, [online]  
Available at:  
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/harshlight/2211161882/>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012]



Fig 68, Ki-Woong, Park, *«Messenger's voice, 2006-703»* 102x83x7cm, steel

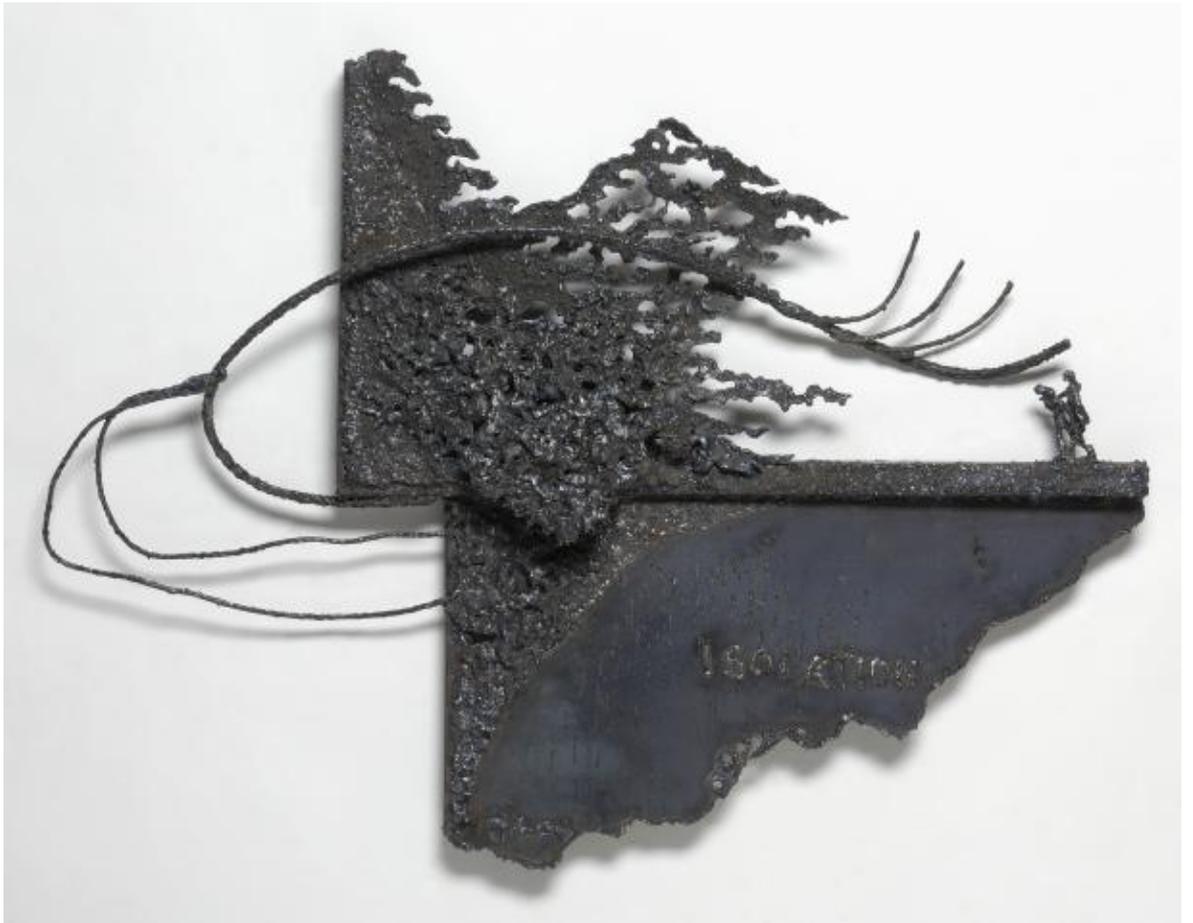


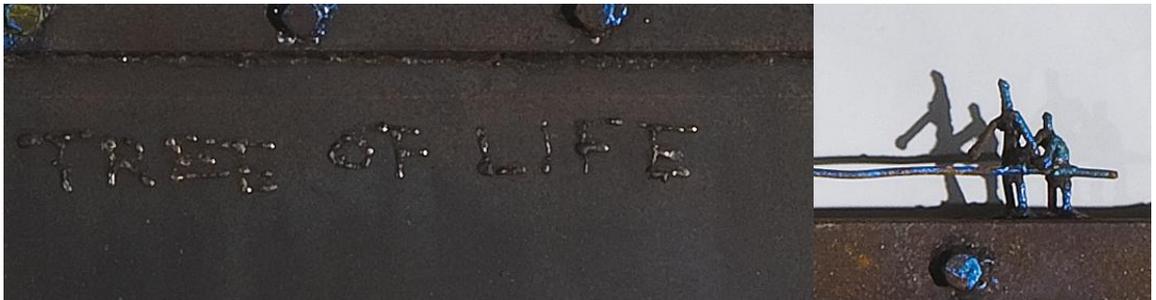
Fig 69, Ki-Woong Park, *Terrestrial glory 2005-302*, 102x81x15cm, steel.



Fig 70 Ki-Woong Park, *Terrestrial glory 2005-302*, Detail.



Fig 71, Ki-Woong Park, *<Tree of Life 2008-201>*, 241x95x21cm, Pigment on Steel.



Ki-Woong Park, *<Tree of Life 2008-201>*, Detail.

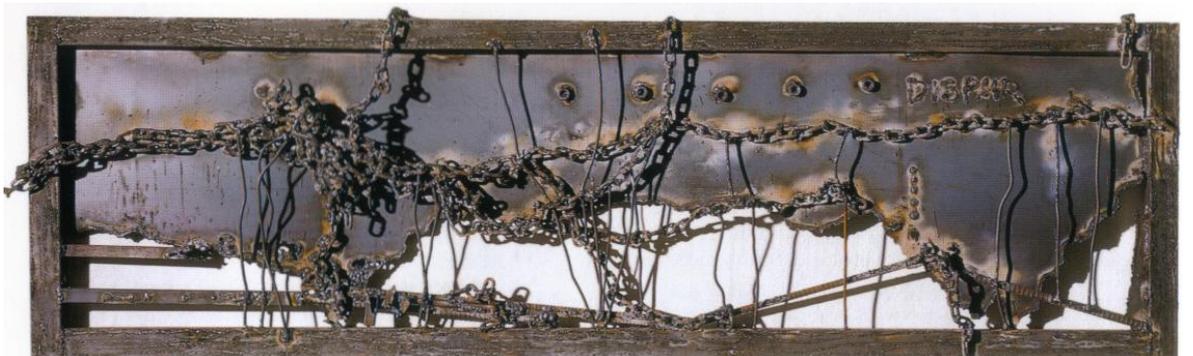


Fig 72, Ki-Woong Park, *<Uncertainty, 2005-103>*, 230x57x25cm, steel and steel chain.



Fig 73, Ki-Woong Park, *<A man in isolation, 2005-710>*, 134x65x7cm, steel.



Fig 74, The Destruction of *<Sampoong Department store, 1995>*, [online]  
Available at:  
<<http://baileybrosbuildingandloanabroad.blogspot.com/2011/04/incompetence-negligence-and-greed.html>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 75, Ki-Woong, Park, <Running Soldiers, 2009-404>, 270x91x41cm, Polyurethane Pigment on Stainless steel



Fig 76, Ki-Woong Park, <Image of castle, 2009-309>, 56x94x11cm, polyurethane pigment on stainless steel.

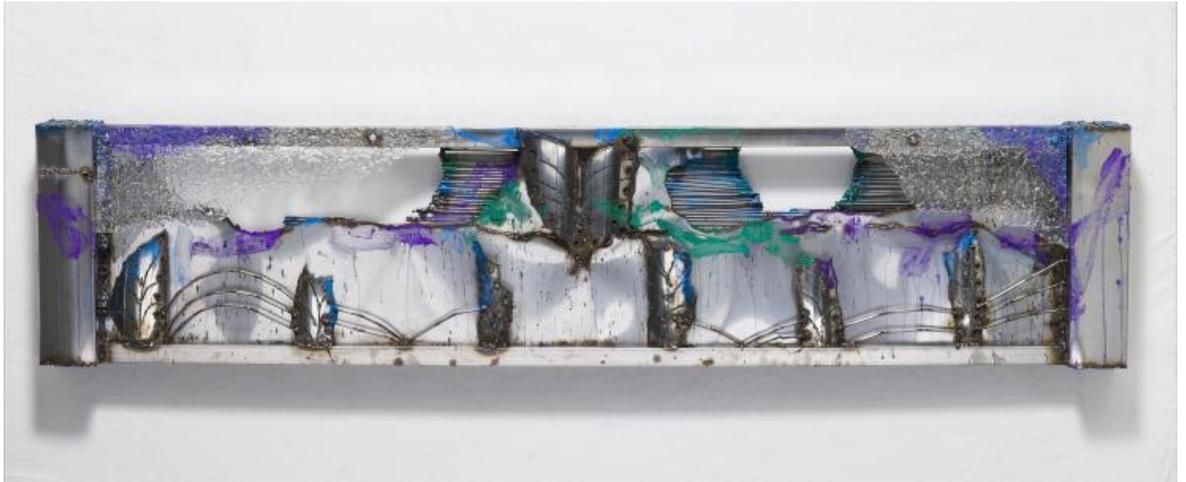


Fig 77, Ki-Woong Park, *<Image of China, 2009-1002>*, 224x50x12cm, Polyurethane Pigment on Stainless Steel & Plastic.



Fig 78, Ki-Woong Park, *<Image of Material Paradise, 2009-1004>*, 202x80x5cm, Pigment on steel & plastic, 2009.

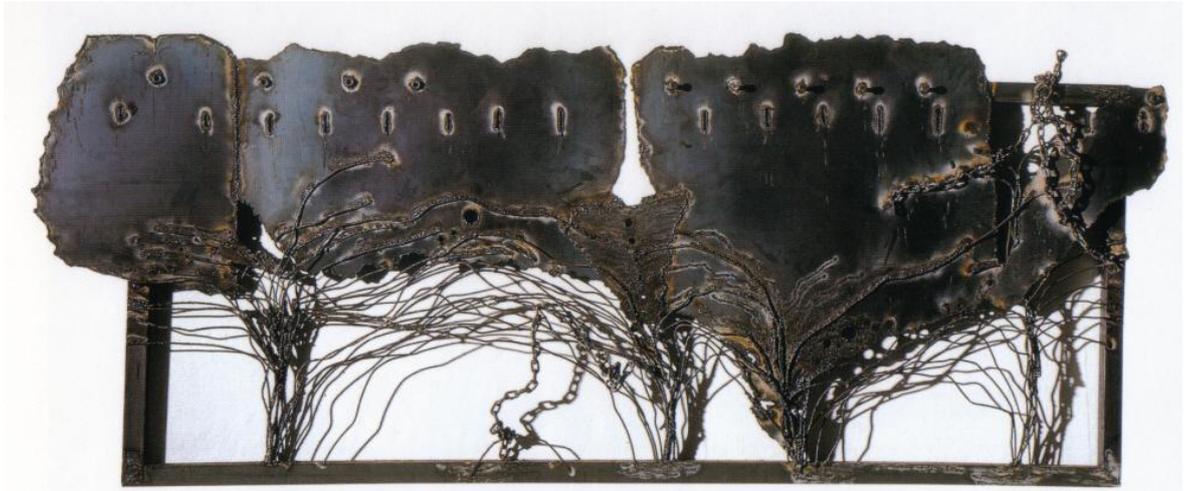


Fig 79, Ki-Woong Park, *Uncertainty, 2005-13*, 254x89x11cm, iron and iron chain.



Fig 80, *Saddam Hussein statue toppling*, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2003  
(Explosion and clashes kill 12 as clampdown fails to quell violence five years on from fall of Baghdad, Daily Mail Online, April 9, 2008).  
[online] Available at:  
<<http://lcbackerblog.blogspot.com/2011/03/sherry-roush-on-tommaso-campanellas.html>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 81, <Hungarian Stalin Statue (head's) Toppling, 1956>, [online]  
Available at:  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:1956\\_hungarians\\_stalin\\_head.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:1956_hungarians_stalin_head.jpg)>  
[Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 82, Alberto Burri, <ITA White S-64, 1964> [online] Available at: <<http://www.icom-macedonia.org.mk/en/zanim.php?vest=24>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 83, Lucio Fontana, <Concetto Spaziale, multiful, 1968>, 29x29x2cm, paper, [online] Available at: <<http://elopedelart.canalblog.com/archives/2011/07/01/21525429.html>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 84, Ki-Woong Park, <Void Womb, 2002-105>, 60x110x8cm, steel.



Fig 85, Ki-woong Park, <Celestial Glory, 2006-802> Steel & Plastic, 102x108x12cm.



Fig 86, Superman Kryptonite Crystal Soap, [online] Available at: <<http://skyejuice.blogspot.com/2010/10/clark-kent.html>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 87, Ki-Woong Park, <Flying Soldiers, 2009-403>, Polyurethane Pigment on Stainless Steel, 190x146x21cm, 2009.

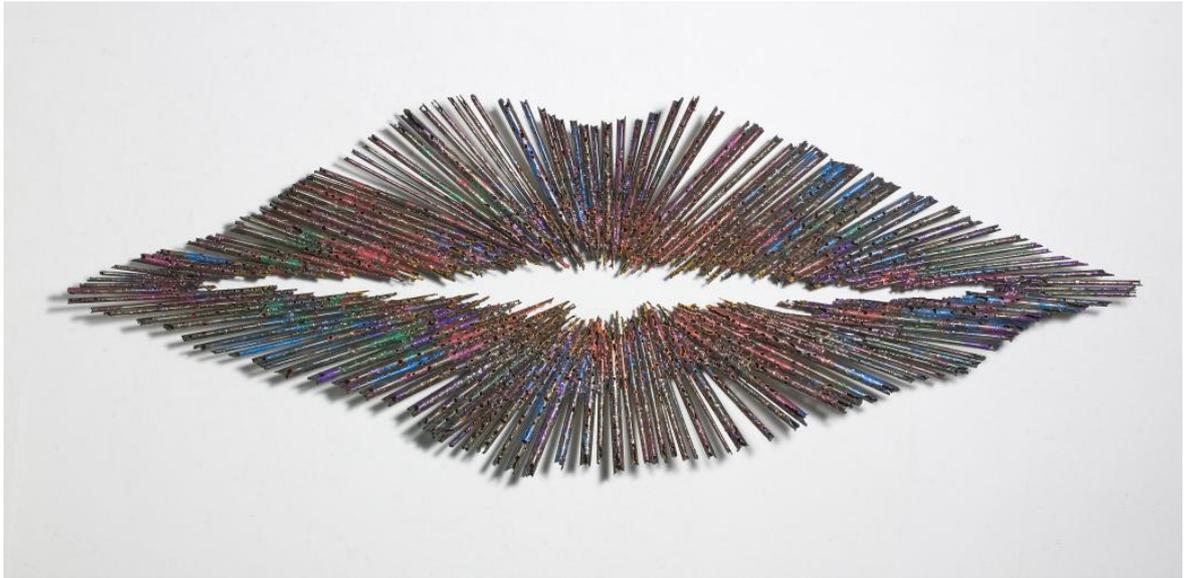


Fig 88, Ki-Woong Park, <Image of Female Lip, 2009-1008> Polyurethane Pigment on Stainless Steel, 230x92x21cm.



Fig 89, Ki-Woong Park, <Where is Your Home? I>, steel, 176x70x23cm, 2010.



Fig 90, Ki-Woong, Park, <Where is Your Home? II>, steel, 176x70x23cm, 2010.



Fig 91, Ki-Woong Park, *<Where is Your Home? I>*, Steel, 121x83x12cm, 2010  
(upper) Detail of the work, (bottom left).

Fig 92, David Hockney, *<Artist and Model, 1973~1974>*, Etching and aquatint, 57.4x44.3cm (bottom right), © Images are copyright of their respective owners, assignees or others, [online] Available at: <http://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Artist-and-Model/83787C9E1ACB3423> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 93, Alias Brucy, <Cyborg owned Genetische Überlegenheit> 18.08.2010 um 18:53, [online] Available at: <<http://www.allmystery.de/themen/fs60967-103#id4540191>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 94, Ki-Woong Park, *<Eye of Soldier, 2009-1011>*, Polyurethane pigment on Stainless Steel & Plastic, 224x50x12cm.

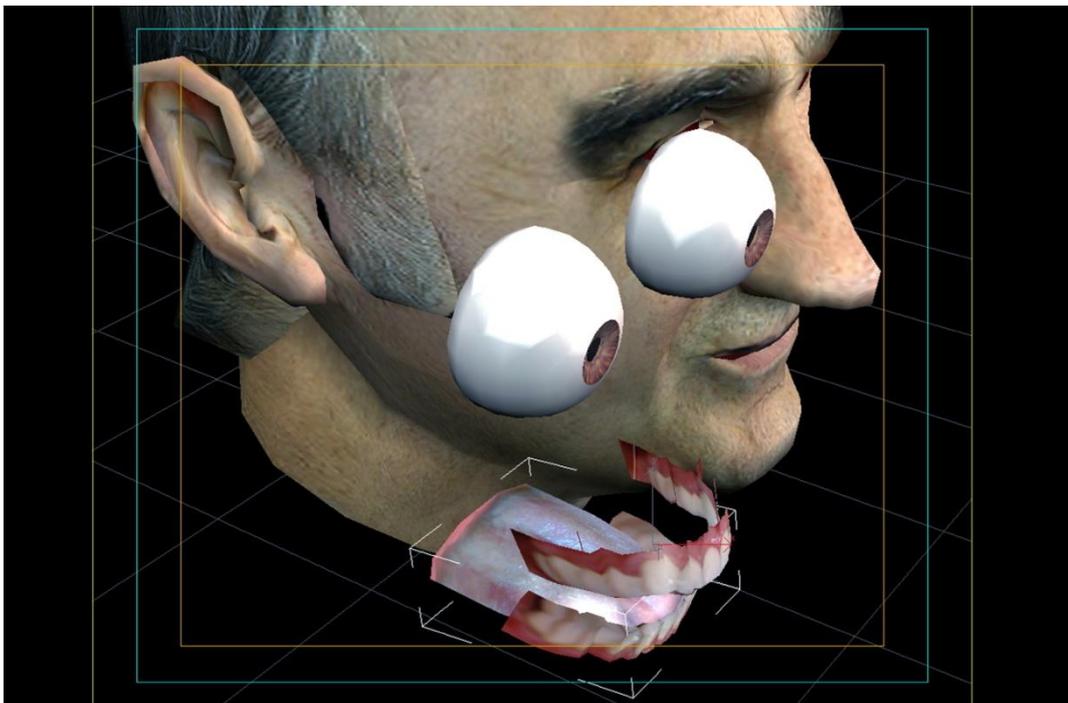
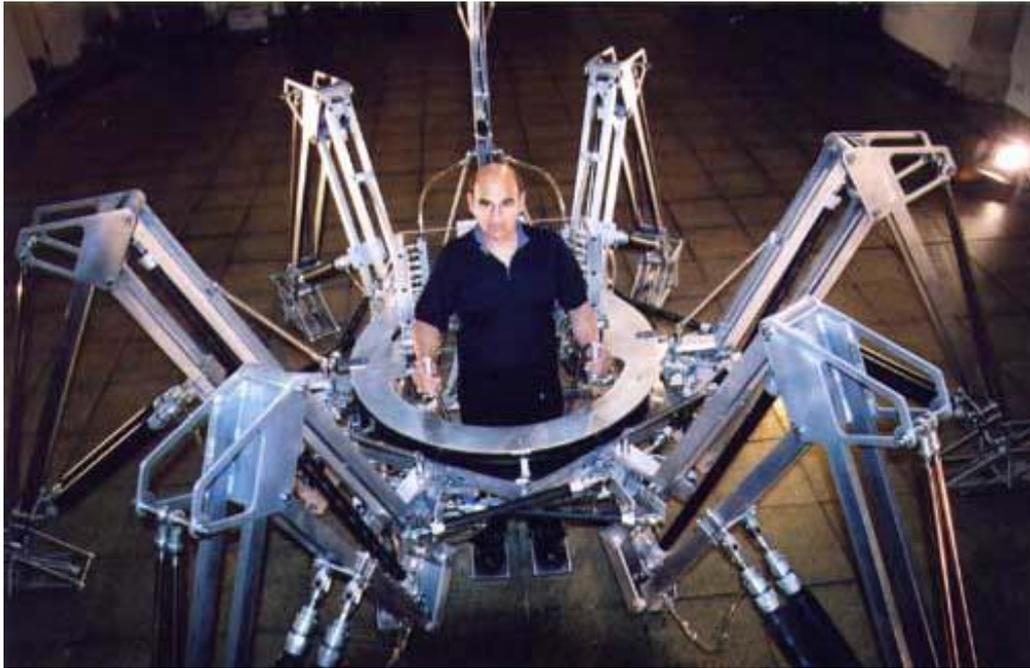


Fig 95, Artist Stelarc is renowned for his augmented body art forms. Here he has built a giant spider like walking frame. [online] Available at: <<http://www.oobject.com/category/exoskeletons/>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012]. <Image of Cyborg Eye and Mouth> (upper) <<http://sciencegallery.com/book/export/html/2693> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012] (bottom).

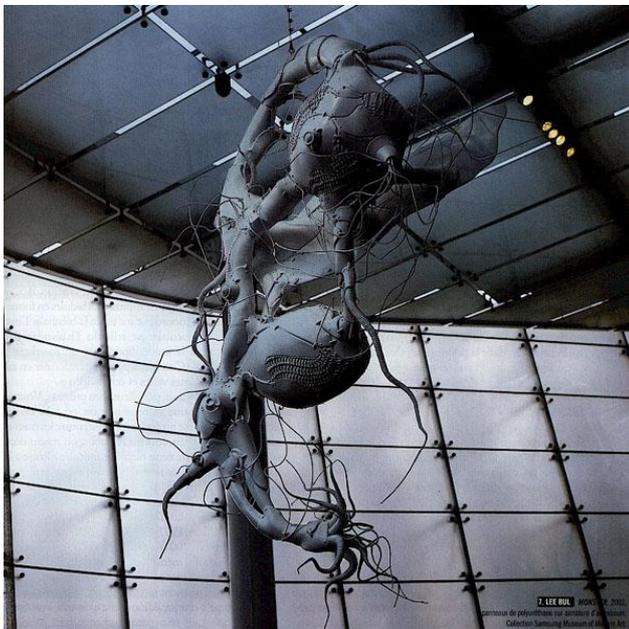


Fig 96, Bul Lee (Korea), <W5 Cyborg W5 / 1999> (upper)  
Hand-Cut Polyurethane panel on FRP, urethane coating 150x55x90cm,  
National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea, [online] Available at:  
<<http://blog.naver.com/PostView.nhn?blogId=qnup34347&logNo=150102549928&viewDate=&currentPage=1&listtype=0>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012]  
and installation.



Fig 97, Tim Hawkinson <*Blastula 1999*>, green pens, resin Private collection, New York ,Photograph by Ellen Labenski, courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York.  
Copyright: Tim Hawkinson, courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York [online] Available at: <<http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/tim-hawkinson/>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012].



Fig 98, Tim Hawkinson, <*Nose Hairs 1995*>, Shoes, blanket on wire armature, 76.2 x 50.8 x 33 cm, [online] Available at: <<http://www.2021.org/exhibitions/abnormal/>> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2011].