Exhibition Guide

Kim Yong-Ik
I Believe My Works Are Still Valid

30 September to 17 December 2017

Related Events

Exhibition Tour:
Dr Je Yun Moon

Wednesday 1 November, 6–7pm
Dr Je Yun Moon, co-curator of Kim Yong-Ik's exhibitions at Korean Cultural Centre UK (KCCUK) and Spike Island, leads an informal tour.

In Conversation:
Haegue Yang and Kim Yong-Ik

Tuesday 3 October, 5pm
at Korean Cultural Centre UK, Grand Buildings, 1–3 Strand, London, WC2N 5BW
Free, booking advised
Kim Yong-Ik discusses his influence on a younger generation of contemporary Korean artists with Haegue Yang. Yang (b. 1971) is a South Korean artist who lives and works in Berlin and Seoul.

Bring Your Baby Tours
Kim Yong-Ik

Tuesday 7 November, 11am–12pm
Thursday 7 December, 11am–12pm
£3, booking essential
Join Jane Porter to hear about the current exhibition by Korean artist Kim Yong-Ik. Bring Your Baby Tours create an affordable way for parents and carers of babies to engage with art in an environment that welcomes babies and at a time that fits with their daily routine. Best suited for parents and carers of under one year olds.

Book for events online at www.spikeisland.org.uk, call 0117 929 2266 or visit reception.

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Visitor Information
Gallery open Tuesday to Sunday, 12–5pm (during exhibitions only).
Admission to the gallery is free.
Café open Monday to Friday, 8.30am–5pm; Saturday and Sunday, 10am–5pm.
Spike Island aims to be a fully accessible building.

We wish to thank Kukje Gallery, Tina Kim Gallery, DSL Collection and Henry Moore Foundation for their support of Kim Yong-Ik’s exhibition.
Thank you to Korean Cultural Centre UK for their partnership on the Kim Yong-Ik exhibitions.
Kim Yong-Il

Kim Yong-Il was born in Seoul in 1947 and graduated from Hongik University in 1980 with an MFA in Painting. He served as a professor of Painting at the Arts and Design College in Kyungwon University from 1991 to 2012. In 1999, Kim helped establish one of Korea’s leading exhibition spaces known as ‘Art Space Pool’ (formerly known as ‘Alternative Space Pool’).

Selected exhibitions of Kim Yong-Il include his retrospective Closer...Come Closer... at Ilmin Museum of Art in 2016, the 5th Yokohama Triennale in 2014, SeMA Gold 2012: Hidden Track at Seoul Museum of Art (2012); Tidily Resisting the No-Pain-Civilization at Art Space Pool (2011); Tripping the Balance at Anyang Public Art Project (2005); Gwangju Biennale (2002); Korean Pap at Sung-kok Art Museum, Seoul (1999); Yokohama Museum of Art (1983); the 13th São Paulo Art Biennial (1975), and a series of independents exhibitions at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Gwacheon from 1974 to 1979. His works are in the permanent collections of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea; Seoul Museum of Art; Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art; Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum; and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, among many others.

Kim’s work in the 1980s saw him push painting into sculptural form, folding the two dimensional surface to dynamically interact with the surrounding architecture (11, 14, 16). A stack of damaged and rejected drawings from this period are used to create a floor-based installation that looks like discarded material waiting to be cleared away (15). The ambiguity of this work’s status is deliberate; for Kim, it reflects his political stance between socialist/populist art and modernism, never belonging to one or the other. He says of this work ‘it is also a metaphor for many of my parent’s generation who crossed the line of life and death based on their decision to be left wing or right wing.’ In art, as in life, Kim’s work resists any easy alignment with any group, maintaining instead an independent and sceptical stance.

Behind Gallery One are a series of drawings, including two works that are at once homages to, and parodies of the Dansaekhwa masters Lee Ufan (49) and Yun Hyong-keun (48). Alongside these drawings is the modest work from which the exhibition takes its title. Embossed into a dirty white board are a series of short texts, including one reading ‘I believe my works are still valid, I just have to decide to live within my monthly salary. One must work beyond self-consciousness and avant-garde traditions...’ (47). The text is a humble expression of self-belief at a time when the artist’s work had become unfashionable and was not widely known.

Following on is a series of drawings including the first use and subsequent evolution of the polka dot, which was to become a key motif. At first the polka dots are presented as a mass, obliterating almost everything; over time, they float apart, becoming distinct and individual(40-46). This space also includes the most recent works in the exhibition (36, 37, 38, 39). The suspended painting—combining polka dots with an image of palm trees on a sandy beach—is titled Wrapped and Erased and Bound (Utopia #16-0). ‘Utopia’ translates literally as ‘no place’ but is commonly understood as a perfect place (56). Kim holds onto these conflicting meanings that suggest both optimism and futility to imply that our ideals are unattainable fictions.

Gallery Two introduces a range of polka dot paintings from the 1990s including To Spike Island (2017), a reworking of an existing piece. Kim revisits his works repeatedly, painting over old canvases or leaving them outside to allow them to weather and age. He welcomes marks, stains and accidental damage. A way of rejecting the immaculate surfaces of modernism, Kim celebrates the evolution of his works, writing short notes on them to record these changes. Many of these writings have been translated and written on the gallery walls.

To the left of the gallery entrance lie the ‘Coffin’ series. Here Kim bids farewell to his own works, wrapping them in burial silk and presenting them in wooden coffin-like cases. The texts on these works include farewell songs, poems and stories about deities believed to accompany the dead to heaven. Triptych (24) brings together works from every period, creating a kind of personal museum including his first self-portrait, an early landscape, a polka dot painting and advertisements of previous exhibitions, viewed behind a text (handwritten on acetate) in which Kim argues that the modernist period is over, as signalled by the financial crash, 9/11 and the Fukushima nuclear disaster. He goes on to explain his thinking behind the works of this period. An important commentator on art throughout his life, Aerial Burial (1) contains all of the artist’s published writings and exhibition catalogues. When first shown, this work was hung outside, and the text on its surface declares the artist’s wish that the work be struck by lightning, destroying his writings and cauterising the earth.

A partner exhibition takes place at the Korean Cultural Centre UK (KCCUK), London from 26 September to 4 November 2017. The exhibitions are co-curated by Helen Legg, director at Spike Island and Dr Je Yun Moon, curator at KCCUK. They are the artist’s first exhibitions in Europe and are timed to coincide with Korea/UK season 2017-18, a celebration of the relationship between the UK and Korea which sees cultural events, exhibitions and activities taking place in both countries throughout 2017.
1 Aerial Burial (2015)
Wood, chain, oil-based ink on acetate film

2 1, 5, 2, 6, 7, 3, 8 (second version 2017, after lost original of early 1980s)
Site-specific installation
Pencil, paperboard on wall

3 9 (second version 2015, after lost original of 1982)
Pencil drawing on paperboard

4 5, 2, 6, 3, 7 (second version 2015, after lost original of 1982)
Pencil drawing on paperboard

5 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 (second version 2015, after lost original of 1982)
Pencil drawing on paperboard

6 Oblique Lines (1983)
Ink, pen on paper

7 Oblique Lines (1984)
Ink, pen on paper

8 Self-Identification of Plane Object I
(second version 2010, after lost original of 1974)
Airbrush paint on stretched cloth

9 Untitled (Dedicated to the Exhibition ‘Young Artists’ in 1981)
(second version 2011, after lost original)
Photographic ink on box

10 Plane Object (second version 2015, after lost original of 1978-79)
Airbrush paint on cloth

11 Untitled (second version 2017, after lost original of 1986)
Acrylic on MDF

12 Untitled (1990)
Pencil, plant juice on paperboard

13 Untitled (1990)
Pencil, plant juice on paperboard

14 Untitled (second version 2017, after lost original of 1989)
Acrylic on MDF

(second version 2017, after original of 2016)
Paper collage, packing material

16 Visual Pun (1986-1987)
Colour pencil on paper

17 The Coffin of a Hermit ‘Despair Completed’ (1993-2014)
Acrylic on canvas, wood, print on acrylic panel, brass ornament

18 Vowing Rebirth (1993-2015)
Acrylic on canvas, wood, oil-based ink on acetate film, brass ornaments

19 Untitled (2015)
Wood, oil-based ink on acetate film, wine box package

20 Untitled (1982-2015)
Drawing on paper, wood, oil-based ink on acetate film

21 My Collection #4 HOSANGUN’s Mat
(drawing 1990, added paint and dots 2016)
Oil-based ink on silver leaf wrap, ink, grid paper, acrylic, pencil, watercolor, LED light
  Acrylic on canvas, bubble wrap, wooden box, oil-based ink on acetate film

23 Ksitigarbha-1 (1990-2015)
  Acrylic on canvas, silk, wood, oil-based ink on acetate film

  Acrylic on canvas, oil on canvas, cloth, cotton, wood, ink on paper, coins, incense burner, oil-based ink on acetate film
  Loan courtesy of DSL Collection, Paris

25 Untitled (1990)
  Acrylic on canvas

26 Untitled (1990-2012)
  Acrylic on canvas

27 To Spike Island 2017 (third version 2017, after original of 1997, second version of 2016)
  Acrylic on canvas, mixed media on paper, wall drawing

  Mixed media on canvas, brass hinge, knob

29 Special Offer Set (2011-2015)
  Mixed media on canvas, wooden box, oil-based ink on acetate film

30 Closer... Come Closer... (1996-2013)
  Mixed media on canvas

31 Untitled (1990)
  Acrylic on canvas

32 Untitled (1990)
  Acrylic on canvas

  Acrylic on canvas
  Loan courtesy of private collection, Seoul

34 Untitled (1991)
  Mixed media on canvas

35 Deeply... More Deeply... (painting 1996, cardboard box 2013)
  Acrylic on canvas, box

36 Wrapped and Erased and Bound Utopia #16-0 (2016)
  Mixed media on canvas, packing material

37 Apocalypse of Modernism #17-6 (2017)
  Acrylic on wood, glass

38 Apocalypse of Modernism #17-3 (2017)
  Wooden panel, glass, PVC, paper

39 Apocalypse of Modernism #17-4 (2017)
  Wooden panel, glass, PVC, paper

40 Untitled (1994)
  Acrylic on paper

41 Untitled (1994)
  Acrylic on paper

42 Untitled (1993)
  Acrylic on paper

43 Untitled (1990)
  Mixed media on paper

44 Untitled (1990)
  Mixed media on paper

45 Untitled (1990)
  Mixed media on paper

46 Untitled (c. 1989)
  Acrylic on paper

  Pressed writing on paper

48 ... of Yun Hyong-keun: A Visual Model (1998)
  Acrylic and hair on paper

49 ... of Lee Ufan: A Visual Model (1998)
  Acrylic and pencil on paper

50-53 Oblique Lines (1987)
  Color pencil on paper; four drawings

54-55 Oblique Lines (second version 2015, after lost original of 1982)
  Ink, pen on paperboard; two drawings

Spike Island