

## 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.

Book for events online at [www.spikeisland.org.uk](http://www.spikeisland.org.uk), call 0117 929 2266 or visit reception.

## Spike Island

133 Cumberland Road, Bristol BS1 6UX

Tel. 0117 929 2266

[www.spikeisland.org.uk](http://www.spikeisland.org.uk)

[admin@spikeisland.org.uk](mailto:admin@spikeisland.org.uk)

 Facebook.com/SpikelIsland

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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.

### Bring Your Baby Tour: Kim Yong-Ik exhibition

Thursday 5 October, 11am–12pm

£5, booking essential

Join Jane Porter to hear about the current exhibition and meet other people interested in doing the same. 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.

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.



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**ARTS COUNCIL  
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**KUKJE GALLERY**



# Exhibition Guide

## Kim Yong-Ik *I Believe My Works Are Still Valid*

30 September to 17 December 2017

**Spike Island**

Doubt, continual questioning and playfulness characterise the work of Kim Yong-Ik (b.1947, Seoul). This, his first solo exhibition in Europe, brings together work from over four decades during which he maintained a subversive position, never fully aligning himself with any art movement or approach and always challenging the practices and assumptions of art's institutions.

As an art student in the early 1970s, Kim Yong-Ik trained under Park Seo-bo, a master of Dansaekhwa (Korean monochrome painting). Gallery One features an airbrush painting on canvas from this period (8). In subsequent works Kim removed the stretcher, simply hanging large cloths directly onto the wall (10). The spray paint lightly traces the bulges and folds made by the cloth when first hung, embedding a material memory onto the cloth.

These works were well received and Kim was lauded as the natural heir to the older generation of Korean Modernists. This was to change in 1981. The military dictatorship in South Korea had become violently repressive, and at that same time, Kim had been writing his thesis on the seminal French artist Marcel Duchamp – godfather of conceptual art. When invited to exhibit his paintings as part of the 'Young Artists Biennial', he folded his canvases into boxes, labelled them with the titles and dimensions of the works they contained, and on arriving at the venue simply exhibited the boxes (9). As a refusal, this gesture was both a retort to the political situation and to his identity as a modernist painter. The political climate in Korea saw artists fracturing into two clearly delineated and opposing camps – the modernists and the Minjung (people's art) artists, whose work was political and made use of popular forms such as murals and banners. Excited by Kim's gesture in 1981, the Minjung artists encouraged him to join them, but the artist instead chose a position that reflected his own uncertainty about the role art should play in society. Should it be autonomous, following its own rules and trajectory? Or should it engage with the wider world, even take an overt political stance? Describing himself as a 'modernist who has rejected modernism', these questions were to guide his practice.

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, 17). 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 (50) and Yun Hyong-keun (49). 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...' (48). The text is a humble expression of self-belief at a time when the artist's work had become unfashionable and was not widely shown.

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 individualised (41-47).

This space also includes the most recent works in the exhibition (37, 38, 39, 40). 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 (37). 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.

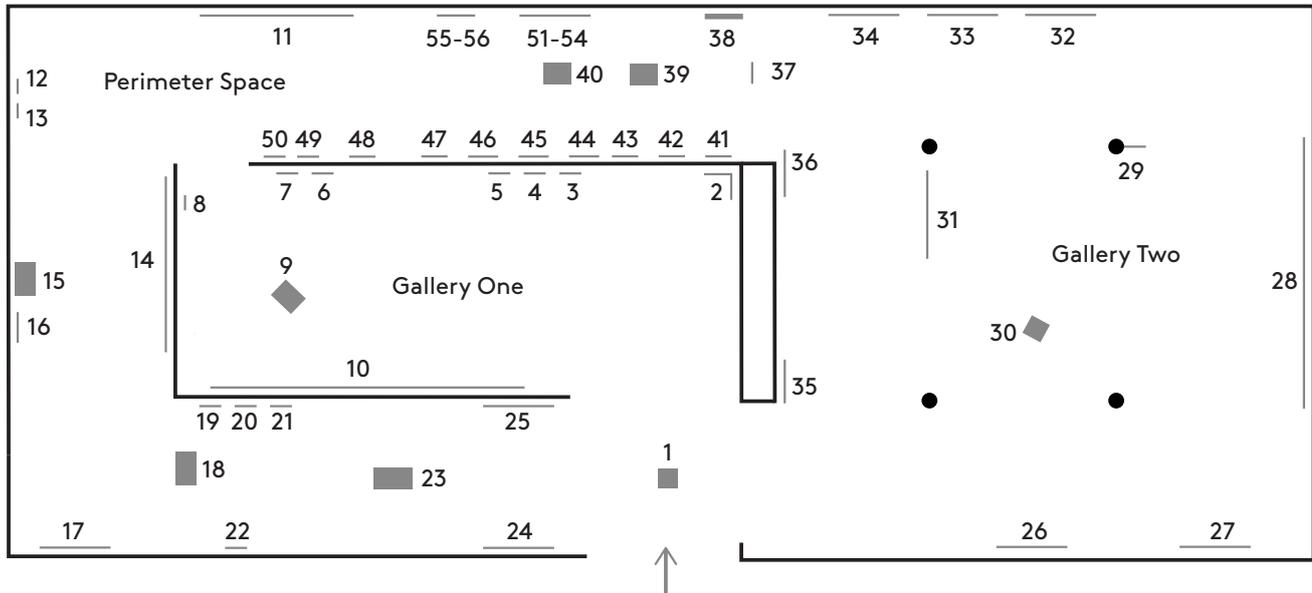
To the left of the gallery entrance lie the 'Coffin' series. Here Kim bids farewell to his own works, wrapping them in burial silk and presenting them in wooden coffin-like cases. The texts on these works include farewell songs, poems and stories about deities believed to accompany the dead to heaven. *Triptych* (25) 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.

## Kim Yong-Ik

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

Selected exhibitions of Kim Yong-Ik include his retrospective *Closer...Come Closer...* at Ilmin Museum of Art in 2016, the 5th Yokohama Triennale in 2014, SeMA Gold 2012: *Hidden Track* at Seoul Museum of Art (2012); *Timidly Resisting the No-Pain-Civilization* at Art Space Pool (2011); *Tripping the Balance* at Anyang Public Art Project (2005); Gwangju Biennale (2002); *Korean Pop* 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.



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| <p>1 <i>Aerial Burial</i> (2015)<br/>Wood, chain, oil-based ink on acetate film</p> <p>2 <i>1, 5, 2, 6, 7, 3, 8</i> (second version 2017, after lost original of early 1980s)<br/>Site-specific installation<br/>Pencil, paperboard on wall</p> <p>3 <i>9</i> (second version 2015, after lost original of 1982)<br/>Pencil drawing on paperboard</p> <p>4 <i>5, 2, 6, 3, 7</i> (second version 2015, after lost original of 1982)<br/>Pencil drawing on paperboard</p> <p>5 <i>1, 3, 4, 6, 7</i> (second version 2015, after lost original of 1982)<br/>Pencil drawing on paperboard</p> <p>6 <i>Oblique Lines</i> (1983)<br/>Ink, pen on paper</p> <p>7 <i>Oblique Lines</i> (1984)<br/>Ink, pen on paper</p> <p>8 <i>Self-Identification of Plane Object I</i> (second version 2010, after lost original of 1974)<br/>Airbrush paint on stretched cloth</p> <p>9 <i>Untitled (Dedicated to the Exhibition 'Young Artists' in 1981)</i> (second version 2011, after lost original)<br/>Photographic ink on box</p> <p>10 <i>Plane Object</i> (second version 2015, after lost original of 1978-79)<br/>Airbrush paint on cloth</p> <p>11 <i>Untitled</i> (second version 2017, after lost original of 1986)<br/>Acrylic on MDF</p> | <p>12 <i>Untitled</i> (1990)<br/>Pencil, plant juice on paperboard</p> <p>13 <i>Untitled</i> (1990)<br/>Pencil, plant juice on paperboard</p> <p>14 <i>Untitled</i> (second version 2017, after lost original of 1989)<br/>Acrylic on MDF</p> <p>15 <i>An Installation Made of Damaged Two Pieces (1998) and Packing Materials (2016)</i> (second version 2017, after original of 2016)<br/>Paper collage, packing material</p> <p>16 <i>Wrapped Utopia #17-2</i> (2017)<br/>Mixed media on canvas, packing material</p> <p>17 <i>Visual Pun</i> (1986-1987)<br/>Colour pencil on paper</p> <p>18 <i>The Coffin of a Hermit 'Despair Completed'</i> (1993-2014)<br/>Acrylic on canvas, wood, print on acrylic panel, brass ornament</p> <p>19 <i>Vowing Rebirth</i> (1993-2015)<br/>Acrylic on canvas, wood, oil-based ink on acetate film, brass ornaments</p> <p>20 <i>Untitled</i> (2015)<br/>Wood, oil-based ink on acetate film, wine box package</p> <p>21 <i>Untitled</i> (1982-2015)<br/>Drawing on paper, wood, oil-based ink on acetate film</p> <p>22 <i>My Collection #4 HOSANGUN's Mat</i> (drawing 1990, added paint and dots 2016)<br/>Oil-based ink on silver leaf wrap, ink, grid paper, acrylic, pencil, watercolor, LED light</p> |
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- 23 *Ksitigarbha-2* (1992-2015)  
Acrylic on canvas, bubble wrap,  
wooden box, oil-based ink on acetate  
film
- 24 *Ksitigarbha-1* (1990-2015)  
Acrylic on canvas, silk, wood, oil-based  
ink on acetate film
- 25 *Triptych* (1970-2015)  
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
- 26 *Untitled* (1990)  
Acrylic on canvas
- 27 *Untitled* (1990-2012)  
Acrylic on canvas
- 28 *To Spike Island 2017* (third version 2017,  
after original of 1997, second version of  
2016)  
Acrylic on canvas, mixed media on paper,  
wall drawing
- 29 *Despair Completed* (original of 1993 with  
additions made in 1998, 2005 and 2006)  
Mixed media on canvas, brass hinge, knob
- 30 *Special Offer Set* (2011-2015)  
Mixed media on canvas, wooden box, oil-  
based ink on acetate film
- 31 *Closer... Come Closer...* (1996-2013)  
Mixed media on canvas
- 32 *Untitled* (1990)  
Acrylic on canvas
- 33 *Untitled* (1990)  
Acrylic on canvas
- 34 *Untitled* (1992-2002)  
Acrylic on canvas  
Loan courtesy of private collection, Seoul
- 35 *Untitled* (1991)  
Mixed media on canvas
- 36 *Deeply... More Deeply...* (painting 1996,  
cardboard box 2013)  
Acrylic on canvas, box
- 37 *Wrapped and Erased and Bound Utopia  
#16-0* (2016)  
Mixed media on canvas, packing material
- 38 *Apocalypse of Modernism #17-6* (2017)  
Acrylic on wood, glass
- 39 *Apocalypse of Modernism #17-3* (2017)  
Wooden panel, glass, PVC, paper
- 40 *Apocalypse of Modernism #17-4* (2017)  
Wooden panel, glass, PVC, paper
- 41 *Untitled* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper
- 42 *Untitled* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper
- 43 *Untitled* (1993)  
Acrylic on paper
- 44 *Untitled* (1990)  
Mixed media on paper
- 45 *Untitled* (1990)  
Mixed media on paper
- 46 *Untitled* (1990)  
Mixed media on paper
- 47 *Untitled* (c. 1989)  
Acrylic on paper
- 48 *I Believe My Works Are Still Valid* (1997)  
Pressed writing on paper
- 49 *... of Yun Hyong-keun: A Visual Model* (1998)  
Acrylic and hair on paper
- 50 *... of Lee Ufan: A Visual Model* (1998)  
Acrylic and pencil on paper
- 51-54 *Oblique Lines* (1987)  
Color pencil on paper; four drawings
- 55-56 *Oblique Lines* (second version 2015, after lost  
original of 1982)  
Ink, pen on paperboard; two drawings