미래 미술관: 공공에서 공유로

Future Museum: Public to Commons
인사말
미래미술관: 공공에서 공유로

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Foreword

Jinsuk Suh (Director, Nam June Paik Art Center)

It is my great honor and pleasure to introduce The NJP Reader, an academic journal of Nam June Paik Art Center. Its 7th volumes published so far have dealt with historically and contemporarily important social and cultural issues. Nam June Paik Art Center annually holds a symposium, for which we invite domestic and international academics and artists from diverse fields. The symposium serves as a space where the participants’ valuable knowledges and information are distributed and shared, resulting in creative discourses, which we publish in NJP Reader.

This year, the 8th volume of The NJP Reader has the theme of Future Museum: From Public to Common. The contributors are: Massimiliano Mollona, Seon Ryeong Cho, Jinkyung Lee, Taehun Lim, Taeyoon Choi, Binna Choi, Ade Darmawan, Sohyun Park and Fraco Berardi ‘Bifo’ and In their writing, they discuss various social issues in the era of digital technology revolution, including the new responsibility of art and its role for the well-fare of the public and the search for social changes through artistic activities. Their in-depth discussions and artistic activities will enable us to envision the future direction of the museum.

Art has long been a natural part of our lives as public goods. Furthermore, the authority and power of professionalism of art, once monopolized by art museums, are being given over to and rearranged by the public. In this context, the value of art as public goods has become a crucial agenda of our time. Franco Berardi ‘Bifo’, key note speaker of this year’s symposium, stated “If the global debt becomes irrecoverable and, as a result, the time of violence and wretchedness comes upon us, the only way to pay the debt is to change our concept of the future as development.” Will the future museums, according to ‘Bifo’, “carry out the assisting role in changing our concepts? Will they move away from the hegemony of capitalism and politics and evolve into a commonland
of art?” I sincerely hope that NJP Reader will suggest meaningful answers to these questions.

Lastly, I give my deepest thanks to the contributors of NJP Reader: Massimiliano Mollona, Seon Ryeong Cho, Jinkyung Lee, Taehun Lim, Taeyoon Choi, Binna Choi, Ade Darmawan, Sohyun Park and Fraco Berardi ‘Bifo’. Also, I am profoundly grateful for the passion and hard work of our editor, Sooyoung Lee.
Nam June Paik Art Center hosted an international symposium under the title “Future Museum: Public to Commons.” It was the 10th event of Nam June Paik Art Center’s academic program, “Nam June Paik’s Gift.” Through the symposium, we looked back on the past ten years of Nam June Paik Art Center and, at the same time, looked ahead to the necessary experiments to find ‘models of commons’ as we envision new ontology and new ways of communication. Today, the term ‘commons’ are widely used in diverse fields from our everyday economics to theoretical realms, referring to any kind of forms that allow multitude of people, instead of one single person, to access and use something. Recently, the term is often mentioned as a model for business, economic systems and technology on the one hand. On the other hand, many art institutions and artists in the West are paying attention to commons and its power as practical action. In Athene Biennale in 2013, Professor David Harvey’s “The Creation of Urban Commons” was the central theme. And in 2017, the main theme of Seoul City Architecture Biennale was “Imminent Commons, The City as Commons.” Also, Seoul Media City in 2018, while its professed theme was “Good Life,” built its discourse round the subject of commons.

Members of Nam June Paik Art Center faced a lot of questions as we tried to decide whether we, as a museum, were eligible to study and practice the concept of commons. The first question was: Is there anything in Nam June Paik’s art and thoughts that we can identify as commons for the purpose of our research and study? The second was: What is the significance of Nam June Paik Art Center, a public institution founded and managed with tax, discussing how the idea of commons be redirected? Lastly, if we find positive answers to the previous two questions and reach an agreement in the community of Nam June Paik Art Center, what
will be the practical results? These three questions were as good as a kind of interim goals which we would reach step by step. First we had to find out how the idea of commons were realized in Paik’s art and gain greater intuition into the subject. Then the next step would be to decide where we would want to go with the concept of commons. And we would have to go through much thoughts and discussions and, at times, disagreements as well. In this process, the symposium would provide us with materials for ideas as the first step toward the goal.

The first link between Nam June Paik and the idea of commons that we found as we were designing the structure of the symposium was a phrase from his writing: “DNA is not racist.” It comes from Paik’s short essay in the art catalogue of Jos De Cock, French artist. As Paik discussed the issue of diverse races, languages and ethnic roots, he stated “I like to think of the ancient past before people discovered the private property system. Yes. Video art has another common factor with Neolithic people. Video cannot be owned by one particular person. It is a public property of a community, which everyone can share with ease.” In the same essay, he used the term, “negative science fiction,” while discussing the origin of racism. According to Paik, just like science fictions that deal with a far future, negative science fictions that deal with the ancient past can not only save us from wrong-gone science such as racism but also help us to draw the goodness of the past into the present. Originally, commons mean natural resources such as land, water and air. All gifts of trust, mutual helps people give each other and the roads and the fields people built and cultivated together as people began to form a community are commons.

Marcel Mauss, in The Gift, recorded in detail about *potlatch* which is an old tradition among indigenous peoples in America. *Potlatch* refers to the gift exchanges between families or villages. The givers are usually aristocrats. Because it is uncertain if the giver will be rewarded with what equals his gift in economic value, he earns respects and honour instead for his generosity. What is important is that Mauss proves through *potlatch* that an economic system alternative to Capitalism (here, a politico-economic system which evenly distributes capitals based on trust) is possible. His point can be supported by the principles of shared technology and communal advancement found in
early Internet culture, and also in the principles of survival found in nature. Furthermore, the economy of gift is attractive as an alternative to capitalism.

We know well how Nam June Paik intended his art to work against the economic system. Particularly, he did not hesitate to call *Good Morning Mr. Orwell* ‘an art for 50,000,000 people all over the world.’ He did so out of his belief that art should be for everyone to enjoy. You happily receive a gift, but you are not obligated to pay it back. In other words, economy of gift does not obey the rule of market economy, according to which you have to exchange or pay for a thing with a thing of an equal value. Seeing art as a gift means that art cannot be appropriated or owned privately. This is the most important ideology of art that Paik believed in throughout his career. One gives a gift out of trust and hospitality. And the person who is given a gift freely gives to others as well. This could be a social system that functions in ways different from capitalism. Furthermore, through *Good Morning Mr. Orwell* Paik wanted to break down the barriers to entry to satellites even for a very short time. Satellite communication technology at the time was developed as a cutting-edge military technology and only a few public broadcast station was able to use it for a highly expensive cost. Paik wanted to show that a layperson could participate in and create this technology. It is on the continuous line with *Participation TV*(1963) for which Paik transformed the internal circuit of a TV set in the early 1960’s so that the audience could participate. Paik, by entering the system which made the satellite program, attempted to change the ways in which monopolistic capital or a state privatizes technology.

his desire to openly share and participate in technology, and to communicate freely. We should not evaluate his vision of future simply by acknowledging that it was realized through the dissemination of internet in late 20th century, which he called post-industrial society.

Lastly, Nam June Paik’s art and his futuristic thoughts were possible due to his sharing and collaborative attitude. A good example is his flexibility that he showed when he collaborated with Shuya Abe, a technician, for *Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer*. Paik always expressed his gratitude for Abe for the development of the video synthesizer, and later he went public with his design drawings of the video synthesizer, putting this complicated machine in the realm of common land. His inclination toward collaboration and public sharing is also found in his works before *Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer* (1969): the collaborative creation process of Fluxus and their sharing of each member’s works including scores. It was because he was always concerned with the ways how public consumed art. His collaborative attitude made it possible for him to cooperate with broadcast stations and artists from various cultural backgrounds when he produced the grand scale satellite opera.

10 years ago, we titled Nam June Paik Art Center’s symposium series ‘Nam June Paik’s Gift.’ because we thought that we were given and enjoying his art for free. Also the title implies that ‘Nam June Paik’s Gift’ must not be possessed or privatized by one particular person. This is the very idea of art that Nam June Paik held on to. A gift is given out of hospitality and trust, and the person who is given it can give it away to others for nothing. This is how humans have lived from long ago. And we experienced that it is now possible again within the space of digital network. The digital resources are without limit and its marginal cost is close to nothing. Just like the nature in the past was. Hoping that the art in future will not be privatized, nor used up, but will enrich our lives, we collect writings and wisdoms of numerous people so that we can foresee the possibility.

Massimiliano Mollona, in “ART COMMONS: The Legacy of Nam June Paik for the Museum of the Commons” attempts to interpret Paik’s video art and essays as a post-capitalist anthropology, that is, non-anthropocentric, relational, and non-Eurocentric which Paik was
committed to. Here, post-capitalism means ‘modern economy which is a strange complex of market, state and communism.’ Mollona argues that Paik’s art “can produce material and immaterial ecosystem which breaks down capitalism from within, make producing methods cross each other and generate a network between human and non-human.” This can be interpreted in two ways. First, in terms of the crossing of producing methods, Paik’s video works considered commercial media market as a technology to reconstruct an expanded network which can be publicly shared for free just like a gift. Second, in terms of human-nonhuman network, Paik’s various works including TV Garden(1974) advance relational ontology which perceives human and nonhuman, nature and technology as interrelated entities. According to Molona, ‘the temporary yet existential state of non-human entities and the state of expanded empathy’ which Zen for Film(1964) presents can be compared to ‘the beauty of common land.’ In conclusion, he requires curators of today to solidify in practical actions.

While Molona explores the possibility of ‘common museum’ in Paik’s diverse projects, Seon Ryeong Cho extends the theme into her analysis of the works by Nam June Paik and his contemporaries. Using Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt’s concept of ‘common thing’ as theoretical frame, she vividly delineates the discourses and the history of Korean leftist community in relation to art. For her, the candlelight protest was a visual realization of a common thing. Thus she describes how the candlelight protest as an event influenced the new trends in art world. She sees ‘what Lancier calls ‘democratic subject’ in Okin Collective’s performance, and a fetal form of network and ‘a visualized common thing’ in Paik’s Good Morning Mr. Orwell. She concludes that Paik attempted to identify and use the ‘common thing’ before gigantic broadcasting companies or political states founded on capital seized networks such as television or satellite.

Jinkyung Lee suggests that we should distinguish the two terms: public goods and common goods. He connects the word ‘common’ to communality, which is a communal sense generated through group activities. He argues that what is ultimately important in art is to create a ‘new communal ethos.’ Seen from this point of view, Paik was an avant-garde artist who wanted to break down existent sensibilities and
dominant ways of living and ethos. He tore down the existent common goods while creating new ones.

Taehun Lim envisions the future of museum as a common land of non-human and human: germs, worms and humans. Describing mega-sized shopping malls and Google Art Project as a museum experience, Im demands us to seriously think about the characteristic of a museum as a place and to look at a museum from a new perspective. As if using a high-resolution microscope, he closely investigates a museum, describing it as a porous jungle full of insects, germs and viruses. *TV Garden* is exactly the case in point. Because we have to exhibit plants inside the museum building, certainly and realistically we have to accept as well the death of some of the plants and the existence of multiple insects and microorganism that live with and within the plant and the dirt. We cannot say we welcome them but it is true that the world of microorganism and parasites violently try to invade our body and propagate themselves there. It is the world of battles and survivals. By using a simile about their life force and strength, Im demands that, in order for a museum to exist as commons, it should allow different characteristics to form chaosmos, fighting one another and yet changing together. Museums must be a place of revolution, an ecosystem in the midst of chaos.

Franco Berardi ‘Bifo,’ our last speaker in part 1, diagnoses the present using excellent metaphors in “Art in the Hell.” The digital environment that shines and flickers encircle us, blinding us with its light. Furthermore, it continuously attacks our nervous system, and hurts our psyche. In addition, noises that pain our ears is closely related with our political reality. The political powers that encourage people to raise their individual voices, including the fake news, have turned everyone’s voices into white noise within chaos. In this reality, we have lost our faith in democracy, and our ability to make decisions in life as well. Anxious to find a place to belong to, the public demands an exclusive identity for themselves, which the ghost of fascism has revived. ‘Bifo,’ however, states that this kind of identity is false. He defines the present as a period of ‘spasm within chaos.’ ‘Bifo’ emphasizes that we must find a way to cure this spasm and survive, which is not in politics but in aesthetic.
Interestingly, the diagnosis of and the remedy for today are offered in the lectures in part 2 including Taeyoon Choi’s “Non-binary Future.” Choi is a technician-poet or an engineer-artist, just as what ‘Bifo’ mentioned in the past. Through his in-depth analysis of internet space, he reveals the fantasy and the inherent limitation of the narrative of the rule of technology—the dichotomous reduction and concentration. It is on the opposite side of the relational network which Nam June Paik sought after: a system that supports the expansion of ownership and power of huge capital. Choi himself, through ‘care distribution web,’ produces technologies that are self-centered and relational, and that cannot be dichotomously calculated into numbers. The common land Choi is practicing can be realized through encounters in which people actually meet each other and take care of each other.

Binna Choi is director of Casco Art Institute, which launched in 2003 with the official subtitle of “Art, Design, Theory Research Center” but had a new name in 2018 “Casco Art Instute: Working for the Commons,” announcing its new mission to research and practice commons. Choi, covering the changes in her field in the recent 10 years as she has cooperated with theorists and artists, suggests future directions for the institutes working for the commons. According to her, the practice of Casco began with *The Great Domestic Revolution* and matured through *Composing the Common*, resulting in diverse collaborations and practices. Through this process, Casco chose to solidify with the institutions which have the same goals, and to prioritize ‘study’ in order to effectively negotiate with the existent power institutions. Here, ‘study’ means, according to the concept of ‘under-commons,’ a community organized for revolution, ‘on the condition that the members work for each other in turns, and are allowed to own you.’ Choi still believes in the commons, which may be invisible now but will exist outside art institutions. She trusts the power of art to express the forms of commons.

Ade Darmawan is a member of ruangrupa established in 2000 in Jakarta. He has worked not only as an artist but in various fields, always in connection with the tradition and reality of Indonesia. His essay *From Living Room to Gudskul* closely analyzes the traditions and characteristics of art communities in Indonesia, and the strategies
to overcome the difficulties they face, and the networks based on studying. Gudskul is a public learning space established by three Jakarta-based art collectives: Grafis Huru Hara, ruangrupa and Serrum. Gudskul provides a space for group collaboration, giving artists opportunities to experience various parts in the process of art production—creation, facilitation and distribution. Also it functions itself as a rich and dynamic ecosystem.

Sohyun Park examines the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art through the concept of ‘the right to access’ and its opposite, ‘the closedness of system.’ In 2006, the MMCA was designated as Executive Agency, and went through reorganization. Park points out that the reason behind was the ‘custom of public ownership’ which enables the legal regulation of ‘national property’ and bureaucracy based on private ownership to treat national museums as private property. It is well known that, when the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism conflicted with the art world over the issue of open recruitment of the institution’s director in 2015, artists made their voices heard by solidifying and publishing “Our Position on the Appointment of the New Director of the MMCA, Seoul.” The significance of this action is that the artists involved realized the idea of commoning, which must precede in order for the museum to function as commons, and which extracts the common resources appropriated by the state or governmental institutions from the privatized public property system, according to Park.

Our international symposium “Future Museum: Public to Commons” attempted to explore contemporary practices of curating and other various forms and to approach their diverse strategies to create our future. The results of this symposium will be provided in the form which anyone can access and share. They will be useful materials with which we can think about how the future museums will function as commons as we hope. Nam June Paik said the artist’s job is to think about the future. Anyone can think about the future and become an artist.
ARTCOMMONS
The Legacy of Nam June Paik for the Museum of the Commons
Massimiliano Mollona

Massimiliano Mollona is a writer, filmmaker and anthropologist with a multidisciplinary background in economics and anthropology. His work focuses on the relationships between art and political economy. He conducted extensive fieldworks in Italy, UK, Norway and Brazil, looking at the relationships between economic development and political activism through participatory and experimental film and curatorial projects. His practice is situated at the intersection of pedagogy, art and activism. Mollona was the director of the Athens Biennale (2015-17), one of the artistic directors of the Bergen Assembly (2017); co-founder of the Laboratory for the Urban Commons (LUC) based in Athens and the initiator of the ongoing project Institute of Radical Imagination (IRI) supported by Foundation for Arts Initiative (FAI). In Goldsmiths, he teaches the courses: Political and Economic Anthropology; Ethnographic Film and Cinema Studies and Art and Anthropology.

In this text I discuss the relationships between art and politics particularly, how artistic movements come to embody and reproduce the conditions of life under capitalism but also how they can transcend them and prefigure, pre-enact and conjure up post-capitalist forms of valorization of life. I argue that the work of Nam June Paik is pioneering for its radical commitment to a post-capitalist anthropology - non-anthropocentric, relational, and non-Eurocentric - and to forms of art commoning based on expanded media ecologies, distributed agency, common media infrastructures and human/non-human solidarity.

In Feedback Television against Democracy art historian David Joselit discusses the uneasy relationship between visual art and late capitalism. The mass circulation of images in cinema in the 1920s and on TV during the cold war era functioning as a typical tool of state propaganda, capitalist consumption and ‘mass distraction’ (Krakauer 1930). Indeed, the curious by-product of the mass circulation and mass consumption of images under capitalism is the widespread iconophobia that images trigger with their magical spells, especially among some
intellectual circles. For instance, in *On Photography* (1977) the US cultural critic Susan Sontag famously argues that images objectify and spectacularize reality and that their grow and limitless expansion reflects the ideology of unlimited growth of capitalism which is also responsible for the destruction of the earth and animal species. Against the capitalist dogma of unlimited growth Sontag argues for ‘conservationist media ecology’ in which the flow of production and circulation of images is heavily regulated. Nam June Paik was also interested in the relationship between image circulation and commodification under capitalism and in forms of media and human ecologies. Unlike Sontag, he was committed to the open circulation of images. He believed that art could challenge their commodity status by diverting and disrupting their open flows away from the circuits of capital.

As member of the *fluxus* movement, Paik’s early career was shaped by an interest in process based and performative events which, in exploring indeterminacy, inter-modality and irreproducibility, went against the grain the commercial art system. Fluxus was an early form of institutional critique inspired by Kaprow’s famous Happenings – ritualised forms of social interactions and games taking place outside the museum often in the form of secretive meetings among initiates. Fluxus artists operated in social interstices, at the margin of capitalism, refusing the grand narrative of political engagement and class struggle and seeking to build transient and site specific communities and day-to-day micro utopias.

In parallel to the micro-utopias of fluxus, ‘artists-run spaces1’ proposed a more radical refusal of mainstream institutions and of retreat from both public museums and the art market. In seeking spaces of self-determination, shared practices, horizontalism and artisanal production artist-run spaces were products of the 1960s counter-culture cast in opposition to the hierarchic rationality of industrial monopoly capitalism. The paradox, according to Detterer and Mannucci, was that these non-profit organizations and cooperatives

1 Printed Matter and Franklin Furnace in New York; Zona in Florence; Western Front in Vancouver; Art Metropole in Toronto; La Mamelle in San Francisco and Artpool in Budapest.
were run like flexible capitalist firm, the equivalent of today’s Silicon Valley startups and somehow prefigured the ‘new spirit of capitalism’ (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005)

Indeed, these new artistic practices which proposed the retreat from the state and from the market and were small in scale, transient, ritualistic, spiritual, random, collective, grassroots and self-determined reflected the broader political economy of the 1970s. Fordism and monopoly capitalism – the heavy machines of capitalism – had broken down, imploded in multiple fragments of global commodity chains, deregulated capital flows and small scale and flexible sweatshops. The artistic fetishization of small-scale communities – ‘the clan’, ‘the collective’ and ‘the team’ – reflected this new cycle of capital reorganization. Thus, the new artistic imaginary of the 1970s at best inspired the middle class retreat from society - experiments of immediatism, urban nomadism and communitarianism. But more problematically, it prefigured and pre-enacted a new phase of institutional consolidation associated with the new spirit of capitalism of neoliberalism.

Under post-Fordism value is linked to circulation, finance and speculation and not to production or real economy. Here the enemy is not mass-production or the deadly rationality of corporate life but the general intellect - a new creative and horizontal capital, which outflows the factory and colonizes all aspects of life – especially reproduction and consumption. Nam June Paik had anticipated the condition of art production under post-industrial capitalism. He understood that in such context artistic value comes not from production but from post-production and circulation – sampling, D-Jeying, collaging and electronic disturbance. He was aware that there is no ‘outside to capitalism’ and that this can only be disrupted and ‘hacked’ from within based on a radically new anthropological imagination. Particularly, he conceived of video production as a social technique aimed at reframing the commercial media market into an expanded gift-giving network.

In 1974 Paik writes «Media Planning for the Post-industrial Society – The 21st Century is now only 26 years away» as Director of art programme for the Rockefeller Foundation. In the light of the
global energy crisis and of the ongoing ecological disruption modern societies had to transition into the post-industrial economy. The media sector will have a central role in the post-industrial economy. Post-industrial societies will both respect and valorise nature as well as human creativity. In fact, with its low level of automation the media industry will create unlimited employment of skilled workers and replace the boring and de-humanizing industrial labour. He writes: ‘People will take pleasure again in their work.’

We know that Paik’s utopian vision of the media sector was misjudged and that the alienating labour process of the industrial assembly line was replicated in the cultural and media industries creating equally alienating immaterial labour (Lazzarato, 1992).

Nam June Paik wrote this text in the same year sociologist Daniel Bell wrote *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society*. We know that Daniel Bell imagined the post-industrial society with a conservative agenda – to destroy the working-class, curb trade-unionism, fragment production across north-south and implement a global financial infrastructure. Paik’s vision of the electronic super highways “connecting New York with Los Angeles by means of an electronic telecommunication network that operates in strong transmission ranges, via continental satellites, wave guides, bundled coaxial cables and laser beam fiber optics” points to a different direction than Bell’s neoconservative utopia.

Paik was interested in the new skills of the post-industrial artists. In their ability to contaminate the circuits of the commercial TV; transforming the logic of ‘close circuits’ into that of ‘open circuit. (Joselit, ibid: 29) thus, hacking and imploding capitalism from within. In fact, Paik was part of a thriving video community of artists and activists in New York. In the pamphlet ‘Information Equal Revolution’ Joe Weintraub an artist close to Paik writes:

‘There exist right now the most powerful information network ever created by man on the planet. I am talking about the television. It is controlled by establishment creeps who are using to keep the masses in a state of moronic amnesia. But their grotesque Disneyland of the mind is being threatened by
underground video and the creeps are getting nervous’

The power of the media artist in disrupting, hacking and re-framing capitalist images is evident in Paik’s video “Waiting for Commercials.” – a humorous compendium of Japanese TV commercials. The short film begins with black-and-white images of a middle-aged male saying: ‘the age of the spectator had ended in our present time. For instance, television is an X-ray. Not a pictorial form. Not a visual form. People get inside things. They get involved and go inside themselves.” Then an abrupt cut lead us into the phantasmatic and coloured world of a Japanese Pepsi-Cola television commercial. The contrast is uncanny and eerie. Is the capitalist commercial reflective or subversive of the patriarchal voice we hear the beginning? What lies below the commercial’s shiny and colourful surface?

Nam June Paik, Waiting for the Commercials, 1966-1972

Below I sketch three strands of Paik’s anthropological imagination.

1. VIRAL AESTHETICS/MARKET COMMODITIES TURNED (POISONED) GIFTS
Nam June Paik role of activist artist emerges in his notion of “video common markets” intended as de-commodified visual circuits that break open the enclosures of capitalism and bring together different social constituencies – cutting across divisions of race, gender and generation. Think of his collaborations with Fred Barzyk with WGBH public television in Boston:
The effort to bring black and white children together by means of schooling is going awry. Desegregation strategies have become questionable. But television power can help achieve integration and understanding, and it has the added advantage that it happens over the air, unhampered by our polluted and complicated earth. I wonder what would happen if two day care centers for preschoolers, one in a black neighbourhood and the other in a white one, would be able to hear and see each other by means of a two-way cable television set-up, so that the children of the two different cultures could start to play with one another over the air waves, without having to cope with stressful bus trips and their negative side effects. (Paik, 1973)

Paik’s notion of “video common market” closely resembles the anthropological notion of the gift. When western colonialists travelled to the south they witnessed societies whose economy was not based on money but on free circulation of objects without value. Because of the care they put in the circulation of useless objects colonialists called these societies primitive. In fact, In his essay on The Gift in 1922 anthropologist Marcel Mauss shows that these networks of reciprocal exchanges and free circulation of objects fostered egalitarian social structures and sustainable communities. Unlike the capitalist market, which turns objects into commodities (fetishes with the power of give or take life away) and humans into anonymous economic agents, gift-giving develops a political economy of life in which capital, intended as social creativity, is evenly produced and shared. Moreover Mauss shows that modes of circulation are as important as modes of production because they reveal and valorize the relational nature of objects and the social relations attached to them. In this sense, ‘video common market’ is a vision of a new media infrastructure where artistic images circulate in-between the circuits of art and the circuits of commercial television and in so doing, create a new form of relational value.

Besides, in the late 1970s in parallel to the development of the financial economy, the art market was booming. The commercial artist was cast as the ‘author’ of original and unique artwork valorised according the capitalist economy of scarcity. Whereas in Paik art images
proliferate out of an economy of excess erasing the very distinction between art and life. This erasure is often ironical and playful, combining Zen Buddhism and the Duchampian readymade. Indeed, Paik considered video as the heir of the Duchampian readymade. In an interview in 1975 he declares: “Marcel Duchamp was genius he made everything except video. He made a large front door and a very small exit and that exit is video”. (Joselit, ibid: 51)

But unlike Duchamp’s subjective ready-mades, Paik’s ready-mades consisted of “electrons and protons” – they are “sub-objective”, trans-corporeal and biopolitical. Joselit calls such contamination of life by art, such queering of commercial TV ‘viral aesthetics’ (ibid: 48).

This viral aesthetics is evident in Video Tape Study No 3(1967–69). The film begins with a blurred image. On a heavy background noise we hear a distant voice ‘ladies and gentleman as president of the united states....’ Then the spectral image of President Lyndon Johnson appears shaking through flashes of electronical disturbance. The anchorman says: ‘it seems to me that we are going backward in this country towards a more segregated racial system rather than one of real integration, in this country. What do you think?’ the answer is confident, marked by emphatic elliptical endings. But we cannot understand it because of the sound disturbance. The anchorman continues: ‘there is really no cure for serious diseases of our body.... there is no serious cure for the serious disease of our body politics... do you think that your diseases...’ President Johnson’s answer is muffled by the noise. But we can hear ‘yes...every time we make some progress..... progress creates new problems... ’ Through digital manipulation the face of the president becomes increasingly, abstract, pixilated and spectral the eyes sockets become skeletal holes. First, he becomes an avatar. Then a monster.

2. ONTOLOGICAL RELATIONALITY/ALTERNATIVE MEDIA ECLOGIES/POST-HUMANISM

Paik’s complex media ecologies also speak to such alternative anthropological imagination. TV garden is a single-channel video installation in which TV monitors are surrounded by lush tropical nature. The sharp colour of video, its electronic noise mixing
effortlessly with the surrounding nature reveals a magical post-human ecology. Here we enter the realm of non-capitalist societies; we experience their relational ontology, which imagine humans and non-humans, nature and technology as mutually entangled rather than pertaining to separate realms.


Paik’s anthropology continuously quests to explore the meaning of being human. We know that Paik was strongly influenced by anthropologist Gregory Bateson one of the early contributors to the science of cybernetics together with Norbert Wiener. Combining cybernetics, psychoanalysis, anthropology and politics Bateson was interested in mapping the structures of imagination of non-capitalist and non-western societies. He argued that in the mental ecology of non-capitalist societies humans and non-human are mutually entangled in complex networks. Such relational entanglement undermines the reductive capitalist and western notion of the person as self-contained and self-interested individual. In the west the person is a “mask” - from the Latin root personare (resounding through) whose exterior body is inauthentic and deceptive and hides inside a precious and authentic soul. This self-contained and self-interested person – split between a public and a private self – is endorsed with the power of
agency and self-determination – as market subject, head of the family or citizen of nation states. Unlike the western person, in non-western societies personhood is dispersed, fractal – individual not individual – out of control, contaminated. Under capitalism we are what we make of us. In non-capitalist societies we are what other people make us. Body politics is a central concern in performance and feminist art of the 1970s. In feminist performance art, following Andrea Fraser’s suggestion that “we are the institutions” bodies become site of artistic experimentation and anti-capitalist struggle. These performances aimed at challenging the “un-aesthetic regime of modernity” (Susan Buck-Moss, 1982) and capitalist individualism by emphasizing bodily pain, self-defacement and scarring, erotic pleasure or the abject (think Carolee Schneeman, Yoko Ono, Marina Abramović). Whereas from the 1990s onward, body politics goes towards the opposite direction – towards the depersonalization, corporatization, and institutionalization of the persona. People become institutions or institutional conduits, working for institutions or like institutions.

It can be said that Paik led the transition from the first kind of body politics above to the second strand. Paik toys with ways of abstracting the person, turn flash into pixels, human emotions into vibrant matter. David Joselit writes: ‘in Nam June Paik bodies and objects are absorbed and abstracted into scan lines and pure abstract electronic patterns.’

But I do not think that Paik’s philosophy was post-humanist. Like Judith Butler he was rather interested in the politics of body performativity, and how the virtual world of appearances and micro-encounters, projected on the phantasmatic bodies of the other, clashes with the entrapments of materiality and the everyday. He was interested in the fantasies and fears of a humanity which, as the virtual world takes over the material world, is challenged by its own disappearance. His avatars and robots are makeshift, manmade, imperfect and ultimately human.
As a displaced cosmopolitan, Paik was also critical of taken-for-granted notions of ethnicity, race and kinship. For instance, *Family of Robots* series explore critically what does it mean to be a traditional Korean extended family, consisting of the mother, the father, the baby, the grandmother, the grandfather, the aunt and the uncle. Or what does it mean to be any nuclear family?
Abstraction can go either way – either towards the commodification, de-humanization and objectification of the other. Or towards its celebration, by casting a calming distance on it. Ultimately, Paik techniques of bodily abstraction were meant to celebrate the human body. His video *Electronic Moon*, starts with colorful abstract patterns of electromagnetic charges mirroring and complementing the rhythmic motion of water. As they dance to the tune of Glenn Miller’s classic *Moonlight Serenade* these living patterns slowly move to the background, bringing the silhouetted bodies of two naked lovers into the foreground – first a breast and then a foot touching it. In the way the raw energy of the sexual encounter is abstracted in color-saturated patters and shadows, *Electronic Moon* anticipates the celebration of erotic love in the *video Fuses* (1956) of performance artist Carolee Schneemann.

3. EXPANDED CONSCIOUSNESS: OWARDS A NON-EUROCENTRIC INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE

In criticizing art institutions Fluxus and similar artistic movement of institutional critique run into a problem. In fact, human cultures cannot exist in a state of flow – in an unmediated state and without institutions. In other to survive every society must externalize drives, fears and desires into institutions – kinship, warfare, religion – that allow them some degree of self-organization. But mechanisms of institutionalization vary between capitalist and non-capitalist societies. Gregory Bateson (1972) showed that societies are traversed by flows of unconscious and contradictory desires, emotions and projections which take the form of antagonistic and mutually reinforcing oppositions – between good and evil, insider and outsider, male and female, the individual and the collective. With time these opposition grow and become violent internal forces that push societies to the brink of self-destruction. Gregory Bateson described the spiralling trajectories of these forces as schismogenesis.

Non-capitalist societies are able to bring these unconscious contradictions into the open and neutralise them through shared rituals and cosmologies – often violent and terrifying. (Clastres, 1972 and Viveiros de Castro, 2014). These open and public performances of
the unconscious – blurring base and superstructure – are conductive to democratic structures and institutions that are transient, collective, and open, in continuous movement and transformation. Non-capitalist societies are rhizomatic and infinitively plastic, but also stable and ‘auto-poietic’.

Unlike non-western and non-capitalist societies who deal with human contradictions by bringing them into the open, capitalist societies are schizophrenic – unable to keep these contradictions in balance and mentally split between them. Under capitalism the unconscious is crystallized, compartmentalized and ossified in the institutions enthused with the of power to produce the economy and democracy – the state, the factory, money and the market. This violent and schizophrenic institutionalization creates inequality, repression and depression.

The 1960s the art and hippie community in the US was drawn by the work of Bateson He was a member of the Esalen community in the Big Sur in the west-coast of California, which subscribed to a rigorous programme of psychedelic drugs, free sex, yoga, and veganism. At the time Bateson was experimenting with LSD for his theory of expanded consciousness: the ability to cross boundaries between conscious and unconscious; the real and the imagined, the human and the non-human and to externalize and socialize thoughts and emotions.

Nam June Paik was part of a group of New-York-based video artists, experimenting on video synthesizers and LSD to develop and share forms of expanded consciousness.

In “Video Synthesiser Plus” (1970) Paik argues that art consists of three different parties: the creator (active transmitter), audience (passive recipient) and critic (the judge or carrier band). But in the drug experience is the person is at the same the creator the critic and the audience. He asks:

“Can we transplant this ontology of drug experience to the safer and more authentic art medium, without transplanting the inherent danger of overdose? Participation TV – the one-ness of creator, audience and critic – is surely one probable way for this goal.”

Global Groove (1974) can be considered one of such experiments, of shared expanded consciousness and of synthetic ontology. Here
humanity is captured in the spaces ‘in between’ – in the ebb and flows of feedback and retroactions generated by simple gestures (such as dance) and in the fluid and blurred boundaries and borders – their dissonant patterns of movement and colour frequencies.

‘Dancing patterns..... Here the mind is turned inside-out. I appreciate these images precisely for their deconstructive and reflexive openness, for their horizontal inclusions and their valorisation and celebration of the lines, boundaries and fragments in-between. That’s right you can be on LSD every day.’(Paik, 1974)

4. UTOPIA TIME
Art historians have noted how the art of Nam June Paik reflects on the time acceleration brought forward by modern technologies. Accelerationism, a theory proposed by sociologist Darmunt Rosa(2015), argues that technological changes under capitalism, sparked a progressive and irreversible acceleration of social life – people and objects travelling at incredible speed and to greater distances. In the 1980s such acceleration reached its apex, due to the new financial, political and media infrastructure of late capitalism. In experiential terms, the technological acceleration of late capitalism generates extreme displacement and hyper mobility and at the same time, a sense of impotence and stasis vis-à-vis the energy and mobility of capital. But for some left-wing revolutionaries technological acceleration can destroy capitalism from within, through viral self-contamination, parasitical finance and the abolition of human labour.

Despite his faith in the electronic super highway, Paik was not an accelerationist. On the contrary his work is informed by an aesthetic of ‘active boredom’ intended as a radical subversion of the linear time of capitalism. Discussing the time Paik writes(1993):

Boredom itself is far from being a negative quality. In Asia, it is rather a sign of nobility. To repeat, the confusion [surrounding video art] finds its origin in our confusion of INPUT-time with OUTPUT-time (this is the experiential time)

In 1964 at the mythical Filmmakers’ Cinematheque in New York. In
an endless loop unexposed film runs through a projector. Initially, we only see a surface illuminated by a bright light. Then we see the flow of film emerging and disappearing in the form of scratches and dust cumulated on the damaged surface of the film material. We experience the film mutating from a state of transparency to one of opacity. Our experience is challenged all the time. The circular and slow time of the film is a time of active transformation, one in which human mastery is challenged and the viewer is left floating in-between image and materiality. This existential space between stillness and movement opens a window into the realm of the non-human. Heidegger considered boredom as the temporal and existential status of the non-human, the animal, the abject and the outcast and as such, a state of expanded empathy.

*Zen for film* poses a challenge not only to the spectator, but also to the curator. How can museums constitute, sustain and circulate those gestures of commoning and solidarity, which are by definition impermanent, opaque and transgressive?

*In conclusion how does the art of Nam June Paik contributes to a post-capitalist anthropology and to the museum of the commons?*

- Going beyond capitalocentrism. Paik’s exploration of alternative economies of production and circulation recalls the notion of ‘diverse economies’ by feminist theorists Gibson-Graham. They argue that contemporary economies are ‘post-capitalists’ that is to say, they consist in a mixture of communism, capitalism and state-controlled economies, of queer subjects driven by diverse impulses and rationales – self-interest, generosity and corporate loyalty. How can we crate complex material and immaterial ecologies, which disrupt capitalism from within, at the intersection of markets, states and communism? This transversality of modes of production and complex networks of human-non-human entanglements enact new and complex class configurations.
PROPOSITION ONE: Think of the art-market as a circuit of reciprocity.

- Generating solidarity out of grassroots practices instead of using ideology or religion. Paik’s notion of complex ecology reframes solidarity, commoning and sharing through a post-representational, relational and non-anthropocentric framework.

PROPOSITION TWO: Think of solidarity in terms of politico-ecological practices.

- Rethinking the spaces of art. Is Paik’s art located in the physical video monitor or in the virtual space of the imagination of the viewer? Was his commitment to Rockefeller private or public? What kind of space is the super electronic highway? Paik complicated the Eurocentric and western distinctions between public and private.

PROPOSITION THREE: the space of the commons is neither public nor private – it is a space in-between – not of stasis of active dialectical agency.

- Rethinking the temporality of art. Capitalism is split between superfast present and catastrophic future. Paik shows an experiential time that is both present and linear but also expands in the long term in circular feedbacks and loops. How can we shift from the economies and ontologies of survival to those of sustainability? From institution to instituting?

PROPOSITION FOUR: The time of commons is processual and operate in the middle-term, not as continuation of the same (logic of capitalism) and neither as eternal presents. The middle term is where the melancholic past is reactivates as revolutionary future.

And finally, to museum curators the art of Paik asks:
How can museums constitute, sustain and circulate those gestures of commoning and solidarity, which are by definition impermanent, opaque and transgressive?

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Community, The Common, and Art
Seon Ryeong Cho

Seon Ryeong Cho received Ph.D. on The Concept of Lacan's Fundamental Fantasy and Art Theory. She began her career studying psychoanalysis and this eventually led to contemporary art and general image culture. Recently Cho is surveying the interactive relationship among autonomy, technology, image and authority. Her publications include Lacan and Art and Image Apparatus Theory, which will be published soon. She also curated various exhibitions that dealt with an intersection between artistic scene and social scene such as Dream House, Monumental Journey, Catastrophology, and Dancers. Her most recent project is an exhibition called, Allegory, Objects, Art of Memory, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, which interpreted archive as 'object's allegory.

A contemplation on commons or the common are becoming important issues in social movements and artistic practices. But the discourse of community has always been an important topic. What is the difference between the conventional discourse of community and the current one? Or how should they be different? This essay examines how a matter of ‘the common’ is thought and practiced in contemporary art, centering on the notion of ‘the common’ introduced in the book “Commonwealth”(2011) written by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt. Changes in the discourse of community and the status of political art in Korea will be discussed here especially with a focus on the Korean situation.

What is ‘the common?’ According to Negri and Hardt, it refers to resources which do not belong to specific individuals or groups and with which free access, free use, free expression and free interaction are available. Historically, the common means natural resources such as air, water and soil. In addition, it also includes immaterial assets co-produced by a number of people in today’s networked society - knowledge, information, image, affect, sign, code, and so on. These are usually produced and shared through the internet, including those created by the urban life. Negri and Hardt emphasize the common in

2 ibid., p.16.
the latter sense: the scarcity of these assets does not decrease and their value even increases, even if their users and frequency of use increase. But what is important in thinking about the common is the fact that it reverses the perspective of seeing the dynamics between domination and resistance.

“It is important to see that from the standpoint of the common, the standard narrative of economic freedom is completely inverted. According to that narrative, private property is the locus of freedom that stands against public control. Now instead the common is the locus of freedom and innovation—free access, free use, free expression, free interaction—that stands against private control, that is, the control exerted by private property, its legal structures, and its market forces.”

The common is the foundation of society but its existence rarely comes into view. Nowadays, in fact, neoliberalism continuously seizes the common and makes it belong to a minority of people. Negri and Hardt argue that the duty of today’s revolutionary forces is to get the common back from this private capture. Their argument can be seen as a kind of paradigm shift because it reversed the political direction of the modern world, which was the freedom of the individual in opposition to the group. They note the dilemma that individual freedom can no longer be radical under capitalism which is based on the principle of privatization. Now the essential is the common, not the private. The private becomes a reactionary force going counter to the circumstance. And privatization is redefined as the ‘failure of the common.’ Capitalism, which privatizes the common becomes the obstacle to production. Then, what is necessary is to take back things that have already existed as the basis of society (and that are becoming more significant) instead of forcibly creating things that do not exist. Therefore, Negri and Hardt state the revolution they say is ‘immanent.’ Revolution is not about adopting a different order, but about changing the direction of things that already exist.

Negri and Hardt do not deal with art directly, but according to
their arguments, the features of the radical value that art pursues has also changed. In the era of modernism, ‘the private’ was at the forefront of resistance. It was founded on the aesthetic value dating back to the romanticism of the 18th century. One can find the root of this value in the famous passage “the free and self-conscious being as well as the world come out of nothing,” from “Earliest System-Programme of German Idealism.” Afterwards, art was regarded as a program preserving the personality in standardized society. Culture industry that Adorno and Horkheimer criticized was a cultural version of the identity and totality of capitalism. Art went against it under the names of non-identity and individuality. For Adorno, the irreducible individuality of art per se was both a means and an end. Nowadays, however, this front is changed. Apart from Negri and Hardt, there is a universal recognition that the ideal of modernism, which is the freedom of individuals, is ultimately nothing but another version of a capitalist republic built on private possession.

It is also important to understand that the notion of the common does not mean ‘the public’ opposite to the private. Negri and Hardt are not Marxists. Pointing out the way socialism functioned as the shackles of social production, they reject all kinds of national regulations including socialism. The proposition that “the common exists in a dimension different from the private and the public, and is basically free from the two” shows the impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union and of Eastern Europe after the 1990s on the Western leftists. Thoughts of Negri and Hardt resulted from the efforts to search for the values that Western leftists needed to pursue after the collapse of socialism as well as the criticism about the liberalist concept of the subject. They talk about an exodus or a revolution escaping from capitalism, while stressing that their political line is neither Marxism nor Leninist theory of the extinction of the state. Negri and Hardt claim that the revolution they say is a sort of transformation and re-appropriation powered by the elements immanent in capitalism. In this regard, it is a revolution and a reform at the same time. Then,

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can we apply the same trajectory to the history of Korea and Asia? These days, there is a lot of criticism about the view of considering the history of Asia as a unique (or distorted) form while seeing Western history as a universal one because of its dichotomous frame. According to this new perspective, modernity is not a subject of the West, but a matter of both the imperialistic West and the colonial Asia. Asia did not owe Western modernity. Rather, Western modernity depended on the existence of the colonial Asia. In this sense, the phenomenon of ‘heterogeneous coexistence of different times’ in Korean modern history may probably be a driving force that created a imaginary object of ‘Western linear time’ rather than a Western-style distortion or failure. Then we can discuss the characteristics of history without a model of Western modernity.

In Korea, the discourse of community appeared as a natural, and sometimes a proclamatory base, not as an alternative to the evils of liberalism. Since the Korean resistance movement was based on the historical experience of forced modernization by others, it was supported by a combination of nostalgia about communitarianism and a socialistic prospect. However, considering the fact that a rural community in the past was maintained by the reign of men/seniors/noblemen far from a group of free individuals based on equality, one can understand why the discourse of left-wing nationalism is easily combined with regression. The student movement and labor movement in the 1980s in Korea took place in the name of another group against the group of state power. Not only the perception of ‘private capture of the common’ but also the notion of ‘individual opposing to the group’ rarely existed. The most urgent goal was to obtain a democratic procedure at a political level. The notions of freedom and creativity were not the slogans of resistance forces. Furthermore, they were criticized as something bourgeois and elite. The idea that art should portray the “reality of the people” prevailed at that time.

The representative artworks of the time were the hanging painting showing the essence of collective creation and the print, a medium of “educating” the people. In 1989, the hanging picture entitled *The History of the National Liberation Movement*, created
by art movement groups in 5 cities of the nation and 30 college art movement clubs together, was the typical output of work during this period. This series aimed at establishing a nationwide association of Minjung Art Movement consists of 11 hanging paintings dealing with the subjects from Donghak Peasant Movement to the prospect of reunification with a strong nationalist sentiment. The slogan “popular content in the national form” directly shows the objectives of Minjung Art. ‘National form’ means that it was newly processed and borrowed from the perspective of left-wing nationalism instead of imitating the patterns of traditional society as they are (Artist Oh Yoon provides a model example of this work). With the advent of the period of political stability after the 1990s, collective activities in Minjung Art faded away. Minjung Art that survived individually got as individualistic as the wave of ‘postmodernism’ which appeared at the time; it got rid of political features rapidly and some of it retrograded as a nostalgic indigenousness.

Candlelight vigils that took place between autumn 2016 and early 2017 in Korea brought a huge change in the characteristics of Korean resistance movement: a shift from collective resistance movement to liberalist resistance movement. It was meaningful because liberalist forces obtained political power for the first time after Korea’s liberation. The candlelight rally was different from resistance movements of the past characterized by a group-versus-group struggle for power. There was neither an official organizer nor a ‘steely formation.’ Many people joined the rally by themselves. Protesters freely walked around without shouting slogans or forming a scrummage. A candlelight vigil was not a struggle propelled by a solid organization or a single cause, but a temporary event in which individuals with different desires and tastes got together in pursuit of a temporary goal. Citizens gathered at the plaza in order to transform and monopolize, not to subvert the state. The state here appears as a universal space, ‘a forum where popular sovereignty is realized,’ not as a high-rank organization ruling over the people.

Those who share the sentiments of the past activist movement criticized the candlelight protest as they believed its peaceful nature was an conservative way of admitting the framework of the current
law. Meanwhile, citizens with a liberalist political sensibility had a
different viewpoint in regards to the interpretation of its nonviolence
and legality. For them, the observance of the law did not mean an
obedience to power, but a principle to follow to take the public space
back from those who took the public property, nation. The concept
of legality was interpreted as a warning to those who endangered the
existence of a community, and took and ‘privatized’ public property.
The perception of ‘resistance to privatization’ emerged for the
first time in Korean modern political history. Of course, when the
legality in itself has a radical value, it is an exceptional case; the law is
considered conservative in that it basically excludes the weak who are
not protected by the law. However, the law in that circumstance was
regarded as a common regulation, not a documented power.

Meanwhile, it is paradoxical that reasonable and rational citizens
who participated in the candlelight protests are not different from
those who took the lead against the hatred towards refugees, women,
Korean Chinese and the weak. Whereas the era of political movement
that does not suppress individual freedom has just arrived, the extreme
egoism, absence of social consciousness as well as sentiments of
hatred and fear are pervasive in our society; it makes Korean society’s
topography more complicated. This hatred and fear overwhelm the
Korean society again in the form of another nationalism. This hate
and nationalist sentiment on the basis of setting a boundary between
ourselves and others erased the notion of ‘the common’ again and the
‘common subjectivity’ that has just begun are in danger of coming
back to the retrogressive collectivism.

Negri and Hardt believe that ‘the common’ can exist as a
permanent order through ‘multiple’ self-organizations and educations,
but I agree more with Jacques Rancière’s view that the political subject
appears unexpectedly in an exceptional manner. Rancière contends
that politics is not about winning power, but is an exceptional work of
creating a forum of discord. For Rancière, democracy is derived from
the possibility6 that is always open to the new appearance of this
subject that ‘appears and disappears.’ In my opinion, the demands for
‘the common’ in which the power of the crowd erupts are supposed
to be temporary. And after the explosive power ebbs away, in other words, after the common identity is institutionalized, the subjectivity becomes the value to be sought repeatedly. Above all, it must be art that can undertake such a role in this era.

Rancière claimed the homogeneity between politics and art through the concept of “the redistribution of the sensible” (le partage du sensible). According to him, politics and art are the acts of redistributing the sensible because they disturb the spatiotemporal order created by ruling powers and involve new sensibilities so that they can be seen and heard. 7 Apart from Rancière’s argument, art is no longer confined to the name of autonomy today. In society in which image, sign, code and act are the outcomes of the production, art is not placed at the edge of society any longer. Nowadays, art interacts with ordinary acts, symbols and relations at the center of life. It is also related to the fact that contemporary labor is “relational and immaterial” in the words of Christian Marazzi. 8 Such an overlap of art and everyday life in contemporary society is theorized as a notion of “relational aesthetics (esthétique relationnelle) by Nicolas Bourriaud. According to Bourriaud, art no longer dreams of an autonomous private space, while intervening in daily life and establishing new relations. The forms of art overlap with those of life.

“Therefore, artists focus on inventing models of relations and sociability that their work will build among viewers more obviously... I want to emphasize that the forms indicating the sphere of human relations beyond the relational characteristics inherent in artwork now become a perfectly qualified artistic ‘form.’ Rallies, meetings, demonstrations, a variety of cooperations among people, games, parties, venues of banquets, to sum up, the whole ways of establishing meetings and relations are the models of aesthetic objects to be explored in itself in today’s society.” 9

However, when it comes to the question of art, there is an important

7 ibid., p.226
point to know: Although art seems to be located at the heart of life, it is not life itself. As Hal Foster pointed out in the text on the dilemma of the avant garde, art is an act that takes the distance with life itself as its basis of existence.10 The fact that the common exists and the act of making it seen and heard or ‘visualizing’ it are two separate matters. As explained previously, the existence of the common is easily hidden in daily lives. Capital privatizes the common and the state makes it the object of public regulation. To expose the common that continues to be hidden, or to “visualize the common” is one of the contemporary roles of art today.

The idea that art reveals the things that life itself does not show while intervening in life has existed throughout time. In this sense, today’s art is not different from that of the past. Its paradigm and directions only changed. One of the most radical tasks that political art faces now is to expose ‘the common’ that is hidden and invisible in society dominated by private possession and public regulation. Then the way of revealing it is sensible and sensitive rather than conceptual or cognitive. It enables viewers to experience something that is considerably unconscious but with a stronger potential within ordinary bodies, images, signs, space and time. It is a way of revealing the existence as ‘the generative’ rather than reenacting something that already exists. In a Heideggerian sense to some extent, the existence of the common is presented as an experience of the ‘truth as an event.’

Will it be possible to create a genealogy of visualizing the common in Korea? Korea has little history of art movement with slogans of freedom and creativity, and the distinction between the notion of the common and that of the communitarianism of traditional society is often blurred; these are different from the fact that individual artists and artworks can be regarded as the ‘visualization of the common.’ Instead of applying the concept of causal continuity and of development between one era and another era, one can understand the existence of a ‘different time’ that coexists in the same era or the arrangement of different relations. To create the genealogy of Korean art in pursuit of the ‘visualization of the common,’ two types

of forms can be discussed: flashmob and network. These two are
directly and indirectly connected to and nourished from political acts
such as demonstrations. Among a few reasons why a demonstration is
considered as an important event, we can deal with it from the aspect
of ‘crisis’ because the question of the foundation of society appears
when fractures are found and a smooth flow of everyday life is stopped.
The two areas are overlapped in that art also contributes to interrupting
daily lives at times.

The answer to the question “Did art as a visualization of the
common take place as an event in candlelight protests?” is ambivalent.
Meanwhile, a new kind of political art rarely appeared in candlelight
rallies. Most of the artists who occupied Gwanghwamun Square
were those who shared the sentiment of the past activist movement.
In addition, there were not particularly new modes of expression,
either. On the other hand, however, it showed the possibility that
the characteristic of the candlelight vigil itself was similar to art or
could be the bud of new art. Temporary and sporadic properties
of the candlelight community can be explained as a kind of play,
‘flashmob.’ This decentralized and random community was similar to
the play group gathering for a flashmob. (Besides, musical actors also
got together in the form of a flashmob and sang together.) In terms of
image making, sprouting sensibilities of new political art were found
in ordinary citizens. There were many people who held the eccentric
banners saying ‘Korean Confederation of Cats’ and ‘The United States
Racoons Union Korean Branch,’ which seemed to be irrelevant to
politics. These protesters were not resolute and serious fighters, but
individualistic players. These sporadic plays demonstrated that the
protesters did not gather under the same goal and slogan. They also
showed a harmonious combination of the playful aspect of ordinary life
and the seriousness of political acts. For them, participating in protests
was not a resolute behavior giving up everyday life, but an act that
coexists with daily life.

The candlelight movement was a case that visualized the common
from the case itself. On the other hand, artists should create a symbolic
situation. Can we find this kind of work in contemporary Korean art?
It is not common but we can see some notable new tendencies. The
exhibition *Urban Ritornello* (September-December 2017) held at Ilmin Museum of Art presented works including such tendencies: The Seoul version of *Complaints Choir* that began in 2005 by the Finnish artist couple Kalleinens and the joint project filed-timeline that 8 twitterians recorded the event at their own place. New types of works are seemingly an extension of the old community art in that they are a sort of collective creation, but they show new features by not situating themselves as the representatives of a specific status or class. In other words, these works are differentiated from the political works of the past because of their ‘democratic’ characteristics.

Even though democracy has been criticized by those who point out the limits of its liberalistic subjectivity, Rancière advocates this notion by claiming that the elimination of democracy is equal to that of politics. According to Rancière, democracy is a notion, which is not based on a certain characteristic. Instead it has a sole characteristic of not having a characteristic. He argues that a democratic subject or the subject that was called ‘demos’ in ancient Greece is an exceptional existence that cannot be included in a group in terms of quantitative calculation and that disturbs the quantitative order. The shift of this paradigm of “an exception is universal” justifies art’s dealing with the matters of democracy. Art has always been an area of exceptions.

A flashmob type of performance is compatible with democratic work. Such work has its basis on ‘whoever’ with specific characteristics eliminated instead of supporting or making a model of certain classes. In other words, there is no fantasy about others. A series of performances (by Kim Soo-kyung, Song Ho-cheol, Jung Woong-sun, Kim Duk-jin, Kim Jin-seon, Yoo Hye-won, Choi Ra-yu, etc.) that took place at the rooftop in Moonrae-dong, Seoul as part of the project *Politics of the Roof* (2014) are interesting cases. They occupied the rooftop, which was considered as an exceptional and redundant space in our everyday life and turned redundancy into universality. In this regard (in that they showed the rooftop could be a democratic space that can be occupied by anybody), this project appears similar to the redistribution of the sensible that Rancière argued.

The performances by the artist group Okin Colective (Lee Jeong-min, Jin Shiu, Kim Hwa-yong) presented in the recent few years,
including *Okin Manifesto - 5 Minute Revolution* (2010), *Operation - For Something White and Cold* (2010) and *Operation - For the Beloved and Song* (2014) are good examples of a flashmob. What they show are the simple motions that one can easily follow, such as gymnastics, shouting slogans using a microphone, snow removing, among others. Even if manuals are given and audience participation is encouraged, their work is not about accomplishing a particular goal or creating a certain aesthetic form. Rather, these performances provide the audience with an experience of becoming ‘anybody.’ Audience is just counted as one person, rather than being treated as a special one.

In ordinary life, an experience of anybody has been oppressed as we have a number of statuses and names given by the nation, family, ethnic group and society. Okin Collective’s performances disclose this ‘anybody’ hidden in our daily lives, namely, a democratic subject in a Rancierian sense. The democratic subject means an empty place or a pure form that is not filled with certain characteristics. In this regard, it represents the subjective aspect of the common. In other words, a flashmob plays a similar role in the aspect of the subject. However, Rancière’s subject of democracy is like an empty blank; it is not premised on the abstraction, but is revealed as a concrete form. It expresses its appearance as an unnecessary redundancy under the current order (for instance, the existence of a ‘poor man’ in a republic). It is embodied as a different sentiment that invades the dominant order. There are some relevant cases of physical actions including discord and contradiction that can be observed in some contemporary performance works.

Okin Collective’s performance is often presented in the form of ‘gymnastics,’ whose goal is to promote health. Nowadays, however, the promotion of health is supposed to abide by the system instead of having a significance in itself. On one hand, improvement of health is neoliberalistic challenges of self-management and self-improvement. On the other hand, it is a duty of improving one’s physical fitness that the people need to seek as the object of state’s management. However, from the viewpoints of Negri and Hardt, the body is the foundation of social solidarity that all humans have in common, namely, ‘the common,’ before it was captured by capital and nation. Performances
by Okin Collective aim to visualize the common characteristic that the body has by creating a ‘crisis of identity.’

For instance, in *Operation - For Something Black and Hot*(2011), the movements looking like simple Gi(Chi, energy) gymnastics begin to feel somewhat awkward and uncomfortable over time. These gymnastics are created by a unique mix of the motions extracted from the disaster response manual of a local government. This hybridity has a status of ‘one more’ (un-en-plus) in a Rancierian sense. As it were, the body produced by this performance is a kind of redundant body. The redundancy breaks up the order of the system because it cannot be counted within the existing system. But it does not mean the victory of individuality over universality. On the contrary, Rancière claims that something that is not included in redundancy, exception and calculation is an embodiment of universality. In the body which is subordinate to the system (the body as an object of private possession and public management), the ‘anybody’s body, that is, the power of separating the common body operates here. When exceptions appear, an ordinary life is suspended and the common is revealed in a place where everyday life is suspended. The common is visualized from the cracks of the juxtaposition of daily lives and disasters.

The candlelight vigil also showed the sprouting form of the second type, which is network. It can be classified into two forms. First, it is the role of a huge screen that takes up the space where the hanging paintings used to be placed in the past. The screen is a place where images and videos are played as well as a medium of ‘networked images, information and affects’ that projects the movements of protesters in real time. For example, the screens placed in Gwanghwamun Square played a role of showing not only video messages that citizens from different areas sent, or the images or performances of performers to widely scattered participants, but also the images of some demonstrators who moved towards the Blue House in real time. Second one is the citizens’ actions that diffused the candlelight vigil online by producing, sharing and transforming photographs, images and texts on the internet including social media. These acts of producing flexible movements of images, information

11 Rancière, J. *ibid.*, p.115
and signs showed the possibility of network-based political art more than any other artwork. The activities of citizens were ahead of those of professional artists. As a result, professional artists had to come up with the responses to the citizens’ explosive activities.

Currently in Korea, it is not easy to find the cases of network-based political art. However, one cannot say there were none in the past. Some artists predict the future. Nam June Paik is one of them. No artist has been as pioneering as Paik in presenting a network type of work. Paik had already shown remote ‘communication art’ via satellites before the world-wide web was invented. Good Morning Mr. Orwell (1984), directed by Paik who connected New York and Paris live via satellite, was broadcast in Seoul and Berlin, etc. and the show watched by around 25 million spectators was his signature work.

Paik’s works are closely linked to the ‘visualization of the common’ even though they are not directly network-based. In the case of the gallery work using TV monitors, so-called video sculpture, it is more than the point of taking monitors as an art object. What is important is that it was an attempt to appropriate and transform TV culture. For instance, In his piece Nixon (1965-2002), Paik collects the clips of President Nixon’s speech (from his inaugural speech to resignation address) and distributes them in two monitors. Then he distorts Nixon’s face one by one by attaching magnetic coils to the screens. Paik showed a playful transformation of electronic signals while criticizing the passivity of TV culture in this work. In fact, Paik discovers the possibilities of freedom in it beyond a simple refusal or destruction of TV culture. Paik believed that large-scale broadcasting stations and state-owned broadcasting network should be the common. In other words, he discovered the potential of network immanent in the medium of video itself. His texts, especially “Global Groove and the Video Common Market,” 12 reflect his objectives well.

“‘Videoland’ on this spaceship Earth resembles the divided state of European countries before 1957. Many TV stations around the world are hoarding videotapes totaling thousands of hours and

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asking impossibly high prices or compliance with complicated procedures to obtain some commodity for which they have almost no prospect of selling... Should video culture stay as divided, nationalistic and, protectionistic as the block economy of the Thirties, which amplified the depression, instigated Fascism and helped promote World War II?... What we need now is a champion of free trade, who will form a Video Common Market.”

It seems Paik saw video network in terms of the market only when we focus on the word ‘free trade,’ but in the following passage, Paik clearly points out that the monopoly of network is connected to political issues of information poverty and exclusivity of images.

“Most Asian faces we encounter on the American TV screen are either miserable refugees, wretched prisoners or hated dictators. But most middle-class Asians are seeing essentially the same kind of clean-cut entertainment shows on their home screens as most American Nielsen families. Did this vast information gap contribute to the slightest degree by the All-American TV screen of the Mid-West before landing in Saigon, which necessarily has all of the miseries of a war-torn country?”

In this respect, the concept of a Video Common Market that Paik proposed can be interpreted as an attempt to liberate network from capital and state ownership, namely, at the level of internal revolution. It can be inferred from the term ‘ecology’ that Paik mentioned in the latter part of the essay. Paik states “Ecology is not ‘politics’ but a devoutful Weltanschung (worldview) and “which believes in the shift of our attitude” while emphasizing the fact that the Video Common Market is the domain of ecology.

In No Exit: Video and the Readymade (2007), David Joselit said Paik’s work could be described as a “readymade as network.” In

13 ibid., pp.276-277.
14 ibid., pp.277-278.
15 ibid., p.279.
16 ibid., p.279.
this essay, Joselit presents three patterns of readymade arts: readymade as objet (Marcel Duchamp), readymade as act (Jasper Johns) and readymade as network (Nam June Paik). He considers these three patterns as three methods of art dealing with relations between objects and symbols. According to Joselit, Paik’s work shows “an authentic mutation of readymade in which the code itself with the appearance of commercial television signal is reentered.”

What Joselit intended was to show Paik’s readymade is based on a combination of the subjectivity and objectivity, a unique phenomenon in the age of media, but the expression “readymade as network” is in fact the essence of Paik’s work as ‘visualization of the common’ beyond Joselit’s intention. Readymade is not only an avant-garde symbol that transforms art into life, but also a social product, in other words, the symbol of the common. Readymade is the social in that it is a product of capitalist mass production. Besides, readymade is ‘the common’ (after removing its appearance of private possession) because society is essentially built on the relations between people. Paik knew that new media including television, video and satellite were, first of all, networks before being viewed as material assets. What Paik intended was to verify the fact that network had a property of ‘the common’ before the huge broadcasting stations, markets and state took network as their possession.

18 ibid., p.44.
Art as Commons, Museum as Commons
Jinkyoung Lee

His original name is Taiho Park. When he published Social Structure Theory and the Methodology of Social Study and Science in 1987, his pen name Jinkyoung Lee became more famous than his original name. He entered university when the ghosts of the citizens of Kwangju were still hovering in the air, which possessed and caused him to spend his university days in the street instead of classrooms. As a result, he became a Leninist, wanting to build an ‘organization of professional revolutionists.’ In 1990 and 91, thanks to the sudden collapse of socialism that struck upon the socialist in prison, he saw the abyss. Since then, he has been living, thinking and writing, in pursuit of the answers to the questions that faced him at the time. The questions began from his doubt about socialism and ‘modernity,’ developed into an exploration of the nature of a community, and is now transforming into a deep thinking about ontology. While Marxism and Modernity and The Birth of Modern Residential Space deals with the first questions, Communism expresses the critical transition from the exploration of the nature of a community to ontology. Writing Ontology of the Rebellious was his own effort to describe his ontological thinking. Recently, he wrote A Philosophy Class for Life, which contains his belief in ‘ethics of beyond’; Exceptional Classics, which is a collection of exceptional analysis of Korean classic literature; and Philosophizing Buddhism, which reinterprets Buddhist philosophy as modern philosophy. Now he is in a transitive phase from ‘the ontology of the existing’ toward ‘the ontology of existence,’ looking for his way again. As an effort to do so, he is preparing a book about Sijong Kim’s poetry and ideas. He is an active member of ‘Suyunomo 104,’ an intellectual community, and professor at Seoul National University of Science and Technology.

1.
The theme of this year’s symposium is to connect the concept of “commons” to the museum and to Nam June Paik. The presenters before me have discussed important issues related to the theme. For example, the observation that “the museum has now become a banal place” can lead to the idea of the crisis of the museum. Also the observation is right on target that, although there are so many museums and so many exhibitions, they have now become a place where people go “for fun” and take a picture, rather than a place where people enjoy art in serious ways. Also the concept of public ownership, which is different from that of public goods has been pointed out as well. Rather than making critical comments on the dicussions that
have taken palce, I would continue to add to the discussion by pushing them forward. I believe it would be more positive and productive.

I agree with the idea that we should discern the two concepts, Commons(公有) and Public(共有). I suggest, instead of using these words which sound the same (in Korean) but written in different chinese characters, that we use the terms public goods and common goods, in order to differentiate the two concepts in an easier way. The word ‘public’ is often used in art as well. This children’s museum where we are in now, or Nam June Paik Art Center, the holder of this symposium, can be considered a public space.

When we say a place is ‘public,’ it means that it is open to whoever satisfies certain conditions. Whoever satisfies certain qualities can enter and use it. Thus it may seem to be open to everybody, but it is actually closed to those who are not qualified for the same reason. On the other hand, “to be open” here means possibilities, in other words, possibilities to use it in this or that way. So what really happens is that it becomes hollow very easily. Unless someone comes and uses it for a particular event, people might simply come, look around and leave.

Only when something is constructively used, publicness, as availability for use, can be turned into practical usability. Inversely, when something is open, that is, available for use, what is called ‘the tragedy of common goods’ often happens. In other words, when something is simply open to those who are qualified to use it, it is likely to be occupied and monopolized by those who use it most often. The well known example is the case in which the common meadow was ruined due to the users’ competitive usage. Of course, this case is quoted everywhere against the author’s intention to emphasize the necessity of socialist or public management of common goods. What is important is that we should understand that public goods either becomes hollow due to its open possibility or possessed by a few and destroyed as a result. In this sense, while the concept of common goods has created a space away from such privateness, it may still move away from it only as an abstract possibility.

Therefore I would like to examine the concept of Commonality (共同性), borrowing the word “common” from “common goods.” It should be differentiated from Publicness(公共性). I want to use
the term commonality to refer to an abstract idea of community. In order to discern the two words, I want to repel the word using a hyphen, “commun-ity.” Commonality means a certain ‘feature’ that gathers individuals into one group. In the sense that it makes the individuals move together and act together, we could also use the term commonality. The term commonality implies common sensibility generated through common activities. It is formed when individuals move together or share a rhythm which is necessary for moving together. In the sense that commonality is formed when different things move together(協) to common rhythm(調), we could use the word cooperation(協調).

Cooperation is not the same as Common features(共通性). Common features means the common property among certain individuals. For example, the audience here and I have many biological common features (共通性). Because we have not done anything together, common features between you and me may be far less than common features between me and my car. Common features between a horse and a jockey may be a better example. I may have a lot more common features with the jockey than with the horse because we are fellow human beings, but the jockey may have so much more common features with the horse than with me. When you ride a horse, you move together with the horse in oneness, and you don’t need a lot of common features in order to do so. In this sense, common features is a kind of potentiality which is formed when we move together in one rhythm, combining different elements in one.

I believe that common goods should be understood in relation to common features. We often mention knowledge, softwares, language, natural resources and so forth as the representative examples of common goods. The most important characteristic of them is, in fact, that they become common goods because people use them. Such common activities make them exist as common goods. A software, however excellent it may be, cannot be common goods unless it is used. ‘Simple’ programs such as Windows or DOS before it, became common goods simply because many people use them. Although there are many softwares, people use Windows because many people use them. How many times something is shared decides its ‘value’ as
common goods. Therefore, we can conclude that the value of common goods is judged according to how much it is shared.

Land is another example. The reason why the land near Hongik University or in the center of Seoul is expensive is because many people use it. The fact that many people use the land has decided its value. Certainly, infrastructure also matters. In order for a land to be used by many people, there ought to be roads, subways and public transportations. This infrastructure is built with the tax, which is common goods. Therefore, the value of a certain piece of land is made by the common activities and common goods.

Here I want to point out that the ‘value’ of common goods is different from the ‘price.’ The price is in the form of money to which the value generated by the public activities of sharing transformed. The producer of the value takes the money because he supposedly produced it through the activities of the public who share and use the property. The rent, which is calculated based on the price of the land, works in the same way. The legal owner of the property personally takes away what has been produced by common goods through common activities. This is, strictly speaking, an extortion by an individual of the value generated through common activities. It is a personal extortion of communal property by enclosing it, when it should be shared.

Anything of which the value is decided by common activities works in this way. Knowledge, for example, works in this way too. When we judge an academic journal or an essay, the most important criteria is how many times it has been quoted. It shows that how often something is used decides its value. In this sense, even an ‘unimportant thing’ can have great value if it is used by many people. What is unique in the concept of common goods is that even a good thing may lose its value if it is not used. Therefore the justice of common goods should be shared. Because it is made by common activities, it should belong to the community. Personal ownership should be restricted.

2.
We can apply the same approach to art. Beauty, which artists depend
on or which is created by artists, is formed through common goods, that is, common sense. It is said that an artist’s personal creative sense is important in art, but I believe that such sensibility is in fact shaped and developed based on the common sense shared with others in the time and space within which one lives.

The famous book *Basic Concepts of Art History* by Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945), who is well known in pattern history, proves this point. In this book, he finds the common styles shared by the artists in Renaissance and Baroque period in spite of their personal differences. Even though these artists aspired to create their own individual style, not wanting to share it with others, they still shared common senses without knowing. The people of that time and their art works drew from these common senses and in this sense they are common goods. Another example is mathematical perspective in western art after the Renaissance. After 1425 when it was first used, perspective was common goods every western artist used up until impressionism. Because everybody used it, it was a common sense and the technique everyone must use in order to use art.

What is important to artists, however, is that they should not stop at using these common senses. I believe that the task of modern artists is to break away from these common goods and continue to create new common goods. It is their implicit but critical mission. The modern art in the 20th century aims to invent new senses that break the existing common senses, instead of creating art considered beautiful according to the already shared senses. By breaking conventions, it intends to provoke new ways of thinking. In this sense, we can say that modern art destroys common goods. But it does not simply destroy but creates as well. The result is that only the senses from the past are destroyed and new senses are suggested. Thus it would be fair to say that it creates new common goods. In fact, those who create new software and new style of language work in the same way.

From this point of view, let us now think about the activity to appreciate and enjoy art. If we talk about appreciating and criticising that depart from common sense and follow instead avant-guardian sensibility, which is different from ‘public’ possession, that is, embracing only what can be understood within the existing common
sense, these are activities to commonly possess new senses and new styles of art that break existing common sense. These are the activities to expand our senses and explore new fields. In other words, it is to build a foundation upon which new art can emerge. The new art that will make its appearance here will break itself and will become something else in an ironical way. The new sensation, which is the result of this activity, will enter the field of acceptability, finding its way into common sense. Thus we make an avant-garde sensation common goods, that is, common sense of beauty. I mentioned earlier that common features is the result of common activity. If artists’ creative activity to break and move beyond the existing common sense is a personal one, the activity to possess it together and make it new common goods is a communal one: moving together in one rhythm and sharing it together. In this sense, the activity to possess and enjoy art together is to make art common goods.

3.
Let us go back to the beginning. To treat art or art museums as common goods is to form a space in which communal activities to possess and enjoy art can happen. This is the very reason why museums are absolutely necessary for art to thrive. If an art work cannot be enjoyed by people, it loses its reason for being. All art works are made or written to be read by people, even if a few.

They are meant to please and delight their audience. This is what should happen in museums: sharing of art works. In this sense, museums serve as a space where the new sensations created by artists are turned into common goods, which make museums themselves another common goods. This is not the same as to say that they are built and managed by taxes.

For this reason, museums naturally take different shapes and forms according to specific conditions of time or the conditions upon which art is created. Although there are different kinds of arts, we tend to group them under one term: art. But there are diverse forms of art within western art. In each historical period, there is a dominant style of art. This is the historical condition upon which artistic activities happen. For example, before 15th century when mathematical
perspective was invented and developed through public usage and theoretical justification, western art was ‘religious.’ Art at the time wanted to visualize the invisible, that is to say, to show what is called God in specific forms and shapes. What was important then was to maximize the religious feelings. Thus styles were judged and chosen accordingly for this purpose. People almost instinctively decided that the Romanesque would be good because its fortress-like dark, heavy and sturdy style was expected to engrave upon human body austere somberness. On the contrary, the Gothic style drew in splendid lights through large and colorful stained glass window and showed various images that would lead people to God’s world. These styles had to justify themselves making theological argument for themselves.

On the other hand, mathematical perspective which was used by Filippo Brunelleschi, (1377~1446) and Masaccio (1401-1428) in 1425 and mathematically justified by Leon Battista Alberti(1404-1472) in 1435 was firmly established as the correct method of representation and became the basic grammar in art. The mission of art afterward was correct representation through sensuous visualization. In this sense, art now took a ‘scientific style.’ We tend to believe that art naturally pursues beauty but at the time it pursued (scientific) truth, which was a rare phenomenon. That artists of the time studied anatomy for correct representation directly proves this point. Similarly, impressionists pursued truth as well. The faith in science, again, ignited their new senses and styles.

In the 20th century, however, perspective representation-the ‘scientific’ representational style-was overturned by artists like Matisse, Picasso and Braque, science ceased to be the foundation of art. Duchamp clarified this concept. He believed that true art, including his own, should break the existing styles and concepts, and, in this sense, that artists were those who would break the artistic convention and senses. From then on, art took off from scientific foundation, transforming into a philosophical and conceptual types. When Duchamp emphasized intellectual, rather than sensual, aspects of art or when he drew ready-made goods into the realm of art, huge scandals arose. And these scandals concretized the changes in art at the time. In this type of art, what is important is a ‘concept.’ With the term
‘concept,’ I don’t simply mean the central ‘idea’ of an art work, but how the concept actually works to break the existing boundary of art. While concept art foregrounds this purpose, it existed even before it was conceptualized. And even though ‘concept art’ stepped back from the front line, it still remains as a part of the foundation of art.

Even though ‘concept art’ is now out of fashion, ‘conceptual’ art is still dominant. It may be a meagre example, but recently I was asked to write an essay for an exhibition by an artist from England. I had to write only from hearing about the basic concepts of the works to be exhibited, and the usual creative process of the artist. Although I had not seen the works yet, I was able to write an essay because I had detailed explanation about the concept they were based on. And the museum and the artist loved my writing so much that I was invited to give a lecture as well. I saw the works for the first time on the day of the lecture, which made me feel a little awkward and embarrassed. I think my little happening shows that art today is standing on a philosophical and conceptual foundation. A philosopher like me can write about an art work without actually seeing the it.

The reason I am telling you this story is not to criticize today’s art. There is no reason to say that scientific art is better than philosophical art, or that philosophical art is better than religious art. I am not trying to say that we need ‘artistic art’ either. The point I want to make is simply that we need other types of art and that we need to consider the differences between types when we create or enjoy art. For example, scientific art which is formed on the foundation of perspective gives power to those who see in distance. What is important is to observe. By seeing and observing art works, one perceives what is expressed in them. To the contrary, in philosophical and conceptual type of art, art should break people’s ideas and senses, suggest new ones and thereby spark off new ways of life. From this point of view, I would argue that philosophical and conceptual art has ethical aspects in that it aims to change ethos.

In this type of art, communal activities to create communal ethos, therefore, are very important. In other words, commun-ity activities to create ethos is more important than observational activities. I believe that the increasing importance of performance in modern art
is related to this point. Even religious art, which centered on ethos unlike scientific art which emphasized observation, did not have performance-type art. Performance seems to be on the continuous line with everyday activities, in other words, a continuation of performative activities. Performance is, in fact, an activity that actually changes people’s ethos through different kinds of practices that break and disturb everyday activities. In religious practice, it was necessary to teach and keep the existing ethos since most people were illiterate. Breaking or changing everyday practices should have been avoided. In our time, the opposite is required. Therefore performance art has found its role to carry out.

It certainly goes without saying that Nam June Paik’s contribution in this context is revolutionary and progressive. Because modern art has moved forward by shattering the existing ethos, it is always avant-garde.

As art changes in types, the ways to create it and the ways to enjoy it change together. In order to say that the ways to enjoy art should change, we should also say that the way art museums function should change as well. Maybe observing art in distance only with eyes, without being allowed to touch even those that are meant to be touched, should change. Since such observational way to appreciate art is only suitable for the classical art from the 15th to 19th century, which I titled as scientific art. Museums of today still works this way, though. However, since the foundation of art has changed now, in other words, since philosophical and ethical type of art is dominant now, observing art in distance may be out of date, belonging in the past. Should how we enjoy art change as well since art itself has changed into something philosophical and ethical in the 20th century? Then should museums, where people enjoy art, change its ways of functioning accordingly? Shouldn’t we innovate communal activities to change communality? It seems that most museums stay with the old way, forcing us to simply observe art, in continuation with the history made long ago. Maybe we can find the reason why museums have become a place to go for fun and take pictures in their outdated ways.

Of course, exhibition and observation of art are not the only things that happen in museums. For example, Nam June Paik Art
Center, besides exhibitions, hold an annual symposium and other diverse events in which people participate. Usually a symposium is for academics, but the reason Nam June Paik Art Center holds one every year is not simply to memorialize and let known Nam June Paik and his contribution to art. I want to believe that the aim is to think again how people can use his art and to invent new ways of using it, and that it is another way of enjoying art. In this context, I want to suggest that Nam June Paik Art Center should make up and try all different kinds of experiments, other than symposiums, to break the existing ethos and to enjoy and possess new ethos and new sensations through communally using and possessing those that are crystalized in Nam June Paik’s works. For example, I would recommend you to design performances that will change people’s every day performative activities in diverse ways. These performances will be different from the avant-garde performances which are meant to draw public attention to the farthest end of newness. I hope that Nam June Paik Art Center will be a space where different ways of enjoying art are created and tried, where people will be swept away into the enchanting power of the new sensations and new ways of thinking created by artists like Nam June Paik. Thank you.
A Future Museum: The Commons of Germs, Worms and Humans
Taehun Lim

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“We meet strange friends through politics”
Nam June Paik, from “Satellite - The Light of the Future
Asate(あきて) - Literally, the Day after Tomorrow”

1. A huge museum
Can a museum be as huge as the scale of the Earth? Can a museum embrace the whole world beyond a limited and confined space within the walls and glasses? It is only capital throughout human civilization that has made possible this global-scale extension with this much ambition. On the other hand, the space that art can squeeze into becomes gradually narrow - not only physically but also at the level of imagination.

Then, where on earth is art? A museum located under the unfrequented overpass in a commuter town, a hipster kind of art museum depending on the money of conglomerates, incomprehensible public art that occupies its own space in many entrances of apartment buildings, a classroom of an art college... If such things only occur to our mind, our imagination of the future of the museum might not be beyond this boundary.

Marx defined capital as a self-replicating mechanism of value.1 In the valorization process, our consciousness and unconsciousness are dominated and the range of our ability to act is confined to specific places and flows. However, art is a release from it and a challenge of returning the world to the things that we have never done before, the events that never happened and the relations that we have thought

impossible. What kind of artists can do this? There is no reason that it should be people only. The effects of the Sun and the Moon, the gravity of the Earth and the actions of the particles in the air per se are a vast museum as well as irreplaceable artistic actors.2

The legendary English science fiction novelist J. G. Ballard’s apocalyptic trilogy shows the most radical vision of the future museum. In The Drowned World (1962), water is equal to artist and the Earth is a museum. The novel is set in the year 2145 when the Earth is drowned due to climate change and the environment regresses into a neo-Triassic period in which dinosaurs flourished. Human beings who managed to survive are becoming extinct, while going through regression and retro-evolution because of a fatal change in their nervous system. In The Drought (1965), water and air can be compared to artists. It depicts a future world in which chemical waste having formed a thin and strong skin that prevents water from evaporating and destroys the atmospheric circulation. As the long and terrible drought continues, human society gradually changes into the worst political system where plunders and murders are widespread. The Crystal World (1966) portrays a situation the whole solar system is crystalized due to the anti-matter phenomenon. Mankind in this world is willing to face the ecstatic end. In these three books, everything that humans have cherished disappears and the Earth changes into an environment that is irrelevant to human survival. Art performed by non-human actors extends into the universal space and time beyond the time of capital and that of humans.

While the science fiction ascends to the universe, the gravity of the capital of the entire world presses down the ordinary life of contemporary people. We try to seek a little but definite happiness, rules as a means of getting compliments, prosperity, dream, love and impression, while hovering around the world like a movie set.

2 Deleuze explained the relation between the Sun as the artistic actor and human beings based on the concept of affect. It is an insight on the effects of solar particles on my body and furthermore on the transcendence of Gogh (art) and Lawrence (literature) to reach a state of communicating with the Sun. “A ray of sunlight that affects me, it is a ray through which myself affects me. A ray from myself affecting me, it is a ray of sunlight which affects me.” The commons of germs, worms and humans also focuses on variations of drawing the abilities by penetrating into each other. Deleuze, G., “What is an Affect?”, Immaterial Labor and the Multitude, trans. Suh C.H., Galmuri Publishing, 2005, pp. 135-138.
Unfortunately, humans are incompetent in finding a way out of this place. Without knowing how to do, most of them just live as they have done so far as consumer bystanders. Places that flatter such an attitude and a feeble mind are everywhere. Not only a shopping mall but a museum are not exceptions.

However, little and impolite beings which pollute the world as they want and freak out people have accompanied humans. These invisibly small things are ambitious explorers as well as conquerors that have circulated the Earth all over from the prehistoric era till this moment. What can their art do? What kind of changes can mankind seek together with them? This essay explores art and the future of a museum with a focus on the commons of germs, worms and humans.

2. From the opposite side of the super-sized shopping mall

A museum has become a banal place. What visitors enjoy doing in this place is to take photos regardless of age and gender. People don’t afford to appreciate the artwork carefully. They are busy selecting the keywords to create hashtags and using their smartphones. Even if the real ‘Mona Lisa’ painting is in front of their eyes, they will not be surprised. They are just interested in taking a picture first and posting it on their social media.

We cannot just blame visitors for not appreciating artworks seriously. The more artworks are famous, the more people they attract and these works are regarded as useful tourism resources. To make it a profitable business, high ‘turnover’ is required like gourmet restaurants. If more and more people visit a tourism resource for a shorter time, this business is successful.

The product as well as by-product of a turnover process is also photograph. These photos moved to social networks attract somebody to the museum, while exaggerating a false reputation of the artwork. Appreciations are indicated as hashtags instead of sentences reflecting thoughts. Such posts move around all over the internet at the speed of light. And they compete with all sorts of pornography that is widespread everywhere in the digital world and are output somewhere in a display device. A museum is located on a side of this vain circuit diagram.
Seeing the artworks of the museum through Google image search is an attractive service. Above all, we don’t have to be annoyed by distracting ones hanging around the works on exhibit. For example, if you log on to the Google Art Project website, you can view and appreciate more than 30,000 artworks with high quality resolution offered by 151 art institutions from 40 countries. We can pay attention to the details that we might have missed if watching the artwork on the site. There is no time constraint and no closing date. The monitor screen has become the closest and most familiar museum. Can a museum be a field of more impressive artistic experience than this place?

Ordinary administrators would compare a museum to a shopping mall. Be it a museum or a shopping mall, if it is not to the taste of the public, they believe it is supposed to be placed in a death or life situation. Even Gilles Deleuze could not ignore this kind of theory of crisis. In an era in which the only event is an exhibition space and the only concept is salable goods, philosophy and marketing deserve to be in fierce competition as a creative planner preparing for the future.3

However, Deleuze deplored that even philosophy hurriedly follows the market trend that marketing drew up. The reality of contemporary museums is not far from a sense of shame of philosophy in the end of the century.

A traditional shopping mall can be classed with a museum because it is one of the places that are gradually disappearing in the landscape of the time. The number of small and medium sized shopping malls that have played a role of a node of local commercial districts and distribution network for a long time is rapidly decreasing.4 Meanwhile, the influence of super-sized shopping malls and online retail companies has increased. Although the two seem to have a competitive

4 It is a global trend. According to the report that the Credit Suisse, a Swiss multinational investment bank, published on January 2017, up to 25% of the shopping malls across the U.S. will go out of business within 5 years. In Japan, starting from the bankruptcy of the department store chain Sogo in 2000, the Seibu Department Store was also closed down in January 2010. The department store market in Japan has shown a negative growth for 23 years. In England, more than 200 shopping malls are in danger of being closed down. Song M.H., "Up to 25% of the shopping malls across the U.S. will go out of business within 5 years", KBS News, June 2, 2017, www.goo.gl/eSrz8E
relationship, they are the Hydra’s heads sharing super-monopoly capital.

The two clearly demonstrate what kind of places capture us beyond the boundaries of online and offline, while living as a consumer nowadays. Super-sized shopping malls use anything from easy public culture to the latest trend of abstruse contemporary art as an engine for a differentiation of its brand value. A mega shopping mall is a place in which one can get all the necessaries of life, which we want to visit whenever we are influenced by different kinds of sentiments and which can become a reference for artistic intuition. It is the whole of life allowed by capital and is admired as the fortress of the “winner-takes-all” economy of neoliberalism. As people and their desires are concentrated on this space, commercial development and culture outside the shopping mall become devastated. While conglomerates’ successive victories continue all over the nation, other places that consumer choose disappear. Among the places that disappear are not only small and medium sized stores, but also museums. Museums are not in crisis because they lost in direct competition with mega shopping malls. These two places are subjugated to politics and economy that reorganize the landscape of the time and the way of life. In order to maintain and reinforce this system, they are also allocated a place and role as much as they can mobilize.5

In every place to be a mainstream of consumption culture, humans who stick to certain patterns and the range of behaviors are mass-produced. Nevertheless, people who attempt to live as a different body other than a life as a consumer constantly appear. They are desperate for a place. Where can we establish a laboratory in which we experiment with all sorts of provocations that connect things and humans, subject, abject and the other as well as matter and non-

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5 For sharp criticisms on the reality of contemporary art relying on capital, please refer to the following articles: Kim J.Y., “Art and Money, Close and Distant”, Le Monde diplomatique, September issue, 2018; Kim J.Y., “Conglomerates’ Museums, can they be places for all?”, Le Monde diplomatique, May issue, 2018. “The fact that the museums run by conglomerates can be fertile grounds for illegal gift, tax evasion and slush fund has been a long-time issue. The investigation on Samsung in relation to slush funds showed that artistic support under the pretext of social contribution can be a way of seeking profits of companies. In addition, they tend to place their family members in important positions as a way of building their careers rather than hiring and training manpower for creative planning, research and management required to run a museum.” (an excerpt from ‘Conglomerates’ Museums’).
matter, while emitting the rhythms and speeds of a diverse life? These days, addressing the future of a museum is to ask the direction of the dominant order of the time and to build a camp that supports life, while not being accustomed to power at the same time.

Can a ‘museum’, a sort of conventional and cliched place and system answer this question properly? It cannot take a step even if it criticizes the current circumstances, while belittling the vulgar taste of the public. What else can a museum be, if it is not a customized place to take a photo for social network? It is time to fundamentally consider placeness of a museum.

3. Museum’s CESCOSCAPE
The future is already predetermined. It is not difficult to figure out on which circuit of money it is placed. The end of the museum is the moment when the bank account is suspended and its vigor is also relative to the dynamics of money. There is almost no place that can be liberated from the financial control.

Those in debt who are confined in the coordinates of X as time to borrow money and of Y as time to pay back money are visitors, artists and curators of the museum. Although the subject of the artwork is a course on the bridle of a postcapitalist society, it is either a product to be sold to a collector under the influence of money or the final outcome of an art support project.

It is human that is far from new the most among all the things constituting a museum. However, another side of museum is crowded with a group of things that are unpredictable and difficult to control. These are a different kind of monsters living outside the circuit of money. The white cube of the exhibition space is effective protective coloration concealing their activities. The wall of the museum is an assembly of numerous paths with a number of holes. For monsters, a museum is a porous jungle.6

Even a dichotomy of city and nature is only valid for humans;

6 Alain Badiou analyzed the vitalism of Deleuze who explored the ‘life as a relation’ as the dynamics of neutrality and porosity. In the surface of creation, the world with more holes is created in the middle of a vortex of all sorts of heterogeneous powers emitted by ambiguous and indistinguishable things. The essences of Deleuze’s vitalism are impersonal dynamics, dynamic balance and neutrality of life with holes. Badiou, A., Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology, trans. Park J.T., Ehaksa Publishing, 2018, pp. 78-94.
there is no place where monsters cannot live from the beginning. Whenever humans look at the whole world, they tend to overlook details absurdly. Even the outside of capitalism that Marx and Lenin boys strongly argued in the past century is the world with a concrete entity for these monsters. It can be reached just by trying to get without involving an abstract ideology.

These monsters are also the most violent artists in the museum. Survival, movement and propagation are the highlights of their art. If we posit that a museum is a space for humans, we will lose the opportunity to appreciate them. The concept of art judges the world within a framework of secular gains and losses and just regards it as the whole universe.

We cannot think these people are pathetic because it is not because of ignorance or prejudice, but a limitation derived from abandonment. Even though making an example of mites, our debts are not written off. If we put our cards on the table in an interview for a job, we might be treated like a crazy person. To be judged as a normal person who can earn his or her living, one needs to be ordinary. We should follow typical guidelines that the state and capital recommend and accept the repetition of these ordinary contents and patterns. Abandonment has become a masochistic engine that motivates human forms that this time mass produces. However, art is not only all the attempts to deny an expected submission from a fundamental level, but also the history of failure and madness to repeat reckless challenges with a belief that we can be reborn as a different being. Most of artists who are good at this art are not human beings throughout the entire ecosystem.

On Mondays when museums are closed, the white cube of the exhibition space undergoes a sanitary inspection and care. It is a day of a regular battle for sanitation workers to fight monsters using sprays provided by a pest control company. It is a seemingly calm and quiet scene. But in fact it is an odd site where a vicious cycle of humans winning the battle and monsters winning the war is repeated.

Monsters keep breeding voraciously at a tremendous speed. Invisible little paths are crowded with running monsters. The new generation overcomes the hostile environment by evolving into the
body that does not give in to the wormicide. The real rulers of the museum are the monsters even if the bodies of their species that are smashed to pieces are stuck and accumulated in the dust bag of the vacuum cleaner and the sterile filter of the air purifier. It is the art of survival of the great species qualitatively different from humans who mortgaged their life to the numbers in the cashbook.

How about calling the camp of the monsters that settled down in the museum ‘CESCOSCAPE’? It is necessary not to be swayed by familiar notions in order to see beyond the surface of a familiar object. A kind of dissonance that occurs when using an unfamiliar word gives inspiration to the finding of the monsters’ place.

CESCOSCAPE is a coined word that is named after the representative pest control service company. The CESCO, which was established in 1976, has eradicated rats, cockroaches, ants, viruses and germs in all kinds of places for more than 40 years. It had the name of Junwoobangjue Co., Ltd. (meaning pest control of the whole universe) until 2000. However, CESCO needs to have a antagonistic symbiotic relationship with rats, cockroaches, ants, viruses and ants. Whereas there are endangered animals to be protected such as tigers, elephants, rhinos and bears, for the symbionts of the CESCO, an extinction is a matter of the distant future as much as the end of the Sun.

What CESCO can do for prevention is to make worms and germs circumvent the pest control areas or keep their numbers and frequencies as low as possible. It is also the level that their clients expect because our ordinary life should be interrupted for a certain place to be kept completely sterile. Living together with worms and germs somehow is the basic condition of life. The place that instigates the state of self-immersion to the extent that we forget that the process of getting dirty unavoidably at every moment is the time of life is a sanitary and immunologically safe place that people want. The ‘CESCO Clean Zone’ stickers seem to provide spiritual service like an amulet of the corps defeating the evil spirit. This business requires both entrepreneurs and consumers to have faith. The smooth contact surface shows the illusion of sanitation, prosperity and health like the screen in the theater.

CESCOSCAPE is attached tightly to the back of this illusion. The
white cube of the exhibition exhibits the hollow fear and emptiness of the bourgeois interior without artworks as it is. Here, the monsters explosively multiply both death and life regardless of the fear of human beings.

4. Artistic alliance of humans, worms and germs

CESCOSCAPE resembles the world of the Cthulhu Mythos created by Lovecraft. Worms and germs, which had already existed long before mankind appeared, are strange species far beyond human imagination. Humans are not the species that receive the attention of God. They are nothing but little things that are tortured by the madness and fear of money in their whole life and finally vanish into ashes.

The art history of CESCOSCAPE is also the family story of worms and germs. When The Last Supper was unveiled at the Church of Holy Mary of Grace (Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie), the hidden hero was taking a deep breath out surrounded by paints. Leonardo da Vinci painted murals using both oil and tempera together. Tempera painting mixes color pigments with egg yolk.\(^7\) In other words, it is the best environment for germs to enjoy their supper. The Last Supper we see today is close to a dirty dish that worms and germs left after the meal.

It is said that Da Vinci did not like painting The Last Supper. The wall of the refectory of the monastery was not an appropriate place to paint such a great work. There were continuous damages to the painting throughout the course of work. He wanted to run away if he could. The painting had to be showcased unfinished in the end. But the hidden achievement that he made here was to invite worms and germs as artistic partners. He was a biopunk curator in the Renaissance era.

By the year 1977, The Last Supper became so damaged and of a low resolution that people could hardly see it. It was the outcome caused by worms and germs who nibbled away Da Vinci’s original work. It was a magnificent landscape that the artistic alliance of worms

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and germs reached beyond the limit of times. *The Last Supper* had to be maintained as it was. However, the Italian government restored the work over 22 years. In a strict sense, it was not a ‘restoration’ but a merchandising process for tourism. It was in fact the outcome of an immunological obsession that damaged the art of time as a result of decomposition, erosion and weathering over a period of 479 years. *The Last Supper* in 1977 was not an ill and disfigured body to be remedied. After the restoration, *The Last Supper* became a must-visit travel destination. It was put on the circuit of money.

Art can be rotten. It can smell and bleed while leaving a stain, and its surface can break. A museum is not a sterilized laboratory. An object of art is not an industrial product that went through processes of vacuum packing and radiation sterilization, either. Like all the members of the ecosystem that live, die and then decay, art can get dirty as much as it likes. The front of CESCOSCAPE is to oppose the stereotype of making an exception for the museum from this natural logic.

A representative case of collision between the artistic alliance of humans, worms and germs and the immunological obsession of the museum is the *Majestic Splendor* (1997) by Lee Bul. Lee exhibited a raw fish (sea bream) decorated with glittering sequins put in a plastic bag with water at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. As time goes by, the fish began to rot creating a fetid smell, dominated by germs and worms. Visitors were embarrassed and shocked by the smell that they did not expect to experience at the museum. Their expectation of artistic experience was not this kind of thing. As a result, the museum had to remove this work.

The stench of a rotting fish causes the fear of infection. The museum visited by a number of unspecified people is vulnerable to infection. Someone with an influenza may walk around the exhibition hall coughing, or someone with a waterborne infectious disease may have used the public toilet. Most places that our skin touches are filled with such things as saliva and cuticles. The example of human

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beings vulnerable to the fear of infection are modern people in the age of postmodernism. Anyone can be occupied by microbiophobia or hypochondria like the actor Jack Nicholson in the movie *As Good as It Gets* (1997). It is hard to accept that one can do something in league with worms, germs and viruses.

However, humans are infected and infecting others at the same time throughout their entire life. Most of them overcome diseases without a particular crisis because the immune system of our body not only defends the antigen, but also renews our body little by little while adapting to changes of the external environment. If our immune system only defenses and keeps the state of the body of a certain point in time, antibodies to ourselves are formed inside our bodies causing antibody-antigen reaction, resulting in autoimmune diseases. 10

Art is an experiment on various forms of (non-)humans and a stern warning about the crisis of contemporary people who are driven to the state of self-addiction. It is necessary to change the body, which is a tremendous means of potential. The appearance of the body can look the same yesterday and today. However, transformations continue in the unit of cells and in the delicate context of mind. It is possible without special efforts. We should have belief in the ability of life and must not be afraid of contacting strange beings. To escape the bondage that confined us in the chart of a specific behavior, we need to deviate from the patterned ordinary experience, thought as well as a series of events. New senses and thoughts originate from a new relation. Not the network of only humans, but the extreme adventure extended into worms, germs and all sorts of objects becomes available. It is the CESCOSCAPE of the museum where one can experience basic training of this work.

5. Commons of combat, infection, parasitism and mutual destruction
I still remember a scene from an animation TV series that gave me a strong impression. What would happen if a dracula bit a werewolf? Such a situation happened in the 16th episode of “No One Comes to

Lupusville” of “The Real Ghostbusters” that was broadcast under the Korean title of “Ghost Blitz” on MBC in 1987. In the end, the dracula becomes the werewolf and the werewolf becomes the dracula. They keep changing during the course of biting and being bitten. This fight finally ends after they turn into a hybrid species which is neither a werewolf nor a dracula. Looking back, it was not an animation series that elementary school kids could watch on Sunday morning at 8:00 a.m. What many kids watched in “Ghost Blitz” was a promiscuity party of asexual reproduction by the medium of contagion.

Infection is an exchange for opportunities to change. A group is formed, develops and transforms through infection. Illusion, belief, emotion, language as well as worms and germs can change the social body as much as contagious or infectious diseases. Therefore, an intense art is a highly contagious one. From the moment of experience, the body before and after cannot be the same. An invisible thing becomes visible and vice versa. Thus, Senses of hearing, smelling and tasting are all mixed and relocate to a new place.

We are already infected by a number of things. Our craving for and dependency on money is a serious infectious disease that controls groups of people. How can we change people who are confined in the body accustomed to financial control into the body of a different ability? Can a museum be the commons to perform this duty?

It is a task that can start from the soil. Soil is a mixture of rocks and the remains of animals and plants over a long period of erosion and weathering. 1 kg of sound soil includes more than 3 billion microorganisms. Can a museum bring the soil into it? Pouring the soil to the white cube of the museum is something that will freak out the pest control company like CESCO and it requires a careful decision because it might contaminate hygienic artworks in other exhibition spaces. The smooth surface of the museum’s floor coated with chemicals by removing the soil is a concrete surface of the paradigm of a modern museum.

Nam June Paik’s TV Garden (1974) is a video installation with color television sets, live tropical plants and soil. Although the Guggenheim Museum made a decision to bring plants and soil inside the museum, it was very difficult to keep tropical plants alive in the exhibition
Controlling normal operations of television monitors was relatively easy. Much more soil and water were required to maintain the artificial tropical forest inside the museum, but the museum could only provide an environment like a photogenic movie set. The plants kept dying. The trash bin in the backyard of the museum including the dead plants and the order forms of the greenhouse factory supplying substitutional plants became the derivative products of TV Garden that could not be disclosed. From 1974 to 2000, Paik’s TV Garden was exhibited in many museums around the world including the Guggenheim Museum, but with the same difficulty in managing the plants. The work characterized by a blend of technology and nature as well as a deconstruction of dichotomy between technology and nature has a significant meaning, but Paik’s experiment inside the museum was a dark ecology in which deaths and substitutions were repeated. How did the reputation of the contemporary artist intervene in and influence the cycle of death? What viewers can see in this dark ecology are nothing but a few fragmented minutes, dozen of minutes or a couple of photos of the pamphlet. Indifference and forgetting of people are also a chain connecting the dark ecology of TV Garden. Can a museum become such a cold-hearted place? There is no reason not to be. Death is widespread outside the museum in all forms. On the contrary, we should ask if art can embrace such diverse deaths.

The Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson’s Riverbed(2014) drove Nam June Paik’s experiment into a moire extreme state. He created a natural environment similar to the riverbed in the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark by filling it with rocks and water. Visitors were surprised to see an extraordinary landscape that appeared in an unexpected place. It was a chaotic scene as if a landslide or flood swept the museum. What Olafur Eliasson created inside the museum were both a similar natural landscape and the dynamics of lives living on water and soil. There may be nothing like Riverbed for worms and germs to conquer the museum. Regardless of the views of human

11 In TV Fish(1975/1997) consisting of 24 television sets, 24 fish bowls and live fish, it was also difficult to keep fish alive long as in TV Garden. The work Real Fish/Live Fish(1982/1999) is a work of a similar kind with the same problem. TV Fish, TV Garden and Real Fish/Live Fish are all housed in the Nam June Paik Art Center.

visitors, the museum was occupied by non-human artists that are true to their greedy instinct.

Through water and soil, Toxoplasma gondii, spiny-headed worms or ranunculus might be brought into the museum. This kind of thing happens all the time. 80 percent of the Earth’s life forms are parasites and there are more than 2,380 species of flea and more than 30,000 species of mites on Earth. At least millions of mites are living inside the house apart from a museum. More than 30 percent of children are the infected hosts of parasites. Today’s people may search for something to see, hear and play with probably because they desperately want to avoid and forget such a reality.

In front of parasites, humans, cattle, pigs, fish and birds are just ordinary hosts of several options. Parasites uses the host as a transportation system. They need the objects with an excellent ability to work and survive in order to move further in search of a better host. The strategy to transfer to the body of the host with a better condition encourages behaviors that have not been done. As a result, the present host becomes easily exposed to a natural enemy. It is necessary to make the host excited and pleased so that it is willing to do a behavior that it is instinctively reluctant to do. Another way is to have the nervous system emit an enormous amount of narcotic substances. In this way, parasites continue to move and breed throughout all sorts of bodies of fish, birds, dogs, cats and men.

The smaller the parasites are, the more ways of occupying a new body they have. The world unfolding before them consists of a bunch of pipes with holes all over and blind aspirations for running through them do not die down easily. Parasites move to attain a certain power of more influence while restlessly changing directions.

If many unspecified bodies of the visitors of the museum are infected with parasites, they may show odd and unusual behaviors.

15 Paul Virilio who criticized human civilization from the viewpoint of movement and speed argued that modern society was dominated by dromocracy. In that speed is a “destination as well as a destiny”, the worms and germs living in the extremely accelerated world prior to human beings seem to preoccupy the vision of Virilio. The idea of ‘管世界 疾走景’ is derived from this view. Virilio, P., Negative Horizon: An Essay in Dromoscopy, London: Continuum, 2005, p.42.
They may start to speed up and drive violently or be immersed in having sex due to an irresistible sexual desire. Biologists who study the mechanism of parasitic organisms have found that the appearance of many kinds of mystery and insanity might be caused by a different organism penetrating into our body.16 This perspective is useful both as a hypothesis and as a new idea of art. Then what can change people and lead them to act?

The commons of the museum should relate to the states of combat, infection, parasitism and mutual destruction to connect to the original state of chaos of this world rather than the area of a harmonious arrangement and of peace without fight. The vision of the future museum would be to establish a place of a fundamental and thorough embrace where heterogeneous characteristics form a chaosmos while getting along well with each other and even being able to destroy each other.

Whenever social changes were highly required in history, an immunological crisis was repeated.17 The Spanish flu and the 1919 Independence Movement of Korea happened around the same time and the time of MERSC, avian influenza, foot-and-mouth disease and that of candlelight vigils happened overlap. It wouldn’t be a coincidence. As demands for social change increase and become intense, the body that cannot be accustomed to the old and insignificant social order becomes in discord with the world and pursues change. People who did not use to gather get together, march on the street that was not allowed to do so in the past and are awake at the time they could not be awake. Then the risk of infection increases, but it is not just germs and viruses that can be passed among people. There is a possibility that our bodies get ill and die, but at the

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16 Toxoplasma gondii is a representative parasitic organism playing with human minds. There have been researches on the correlation between traffic accidents, suicides, various kinds of social crimes and incidents and Toxoplasma gondii. Kathleen McAuliffe’s *This Is Your Brain on Parasites* provides a good introduction to this field. Chapter 10 on moral judgments and political influences of parasitic organisms is a highlight of this book. “Someday, one may teach geopolitics from the viewpoint of parasitic organisms.” (p. 311)

17 According to the *Chosun Government-General Statistical Yearbook*, in 1919, there were 258,222 people with contagious diseases and the death toll amounted to 11,000. In 1920, the number of the patients was 39,434 and that of the dead was 13,000. From 1910 when statistics began until 1945 before liberation, these numbers of the patients and the dead were the highest. From June 1918 to March 1920, there were 355 articles on contagious diseases in total published in *Maeil Shinbo*. 
same time, there comes another possibility of the new world and the renewed social body. The commons of combat, infection, parasitism and mutual destruction is the dynamics of a revolution as well as the ecosystem of a square.

The museum should prepare for the future in the middle of it.
Art in the Hell
Franco Berardi ‘Bifo’

Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi is an Italian philosopher who played a central role in the movement of Autonomia in Italy. In 1975, he published *A/Traverso*, an avant-grade magazine and also in 1976, established ‘Radio Alice’, the first free pirate radio station in Italy. He is considered to be a media theorist and activist transcending various media as he created ‘Recombinant’, a mailing list exploring social activism and new technology in 2000 and constructed ‘Orfeo TV’ in 2002 by organizing the ‘Telestreet’ movement against Berlusconi government. Berardi has been presenting critical theory on psychoanalysis, information technology, and capitalism since the 1990s. His books including, *After the Future*, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*, *Precarious Rhapsody* and etc. are translated published in Korea.

During the world Summit of Hamburg, in July 2017 a group of young protesters carried a banner with the words: “Welcome 2 Hell”.

What hell were they talking about? What is the contemporary hell, in which we dwell? And, finally: what is use of art in the hell?

In order to answer these questions I will go through some metaphors that can help us to outline an imaginary map of the contemporary hell. A map that is needed if one wants to look for a (possible?) line of escape.

 Darkness, white noise, breathlessness are three metaphors that I’m using in order to outline this imaginary map. However, I’ll also speak of chaotic spasm and of vibrational chaosmose in order to grasp the evolutionary dimension in which (thanks to the activity of artists) we may overcome the present Chaos.

**Darkness**

In the imagination of Dante Alighieri, the hell is, first and foremost, dark (selva oscura). Darkness is the main feature by which we
recognise the hell, when we think of it.

Some books recently released are speaking of the relation between light and darkness.

James Bridley has just published a book titled *The New Dark Age* where he writes: “we find ourselves connected to vast repositories of knowledge, and yes we have not learned to think. In fact the opposite is true: that which was intended to enlighten the world in practice darkens it.” (James Bridley: *The New Dark Age*, Verso 2018, p. 10).

Knowledge, technology, information have long been tools of enlightening the surrounding world, flows of light that were supposed to illuminate our individual path and our social existence. But the expansion and intensification of those enlightening flows have resulted into dazzling stimulation of the mind and finally have provoked an effect of blindness.

In the words of James Bridley the apparent progress of the technical enlightenment of the world has provoked “.. the inability to see clearly what is in front of us, and to act meaningfully, with agency and justice, in the world.” (p.11).

In the book *Black Transparency*, (whose Author is the collective Metahaven) we read the following words:

“We are the opposite of blind. We have absolutely nothing left but our vision.” (Metahaven: *Black Transparency*, Sternberg Press, 2017, p X), then they add:

“For all the advocacy for transparency, the world in general never appeared as opaque as now.”

The irrepressible boundless dissemination of light, the proliferation of images in the uncountable screens that besiege our attention, are provoking an effect of bedazzlement, and the world has grown
incomprehensible.

One more book is devoted to the metaphor of light and darkening dazzlement: *Stand Out of My Light* authored by James Williams, one of founders of the Google corporation. The title of the book is based on an ancient legend: according to legend, Alexander the Great came to visit the Greek philosopher Diogenes of Sinope, who used to lie in the sun, on a sidewalk. Alexander wanted to fulfil a wish for Diogenes and asked him what he desired, but Diogenes replied “Stand out of my light.”

James Williams is reflecting on the gesture of the philosopher, and rejects the panoply of goods that new technology offers in order to restore the intimate order of the self. Light, the deployment of techno media machine has spread a dazzling light everywhere, but it is blinding us, so that we are entering a sort of new age of darkness. The Williams’ book is about the siege of our attention, the constant stimulation of our nervous system that is provoking the chaos of the mind.

The dialectics of light and darkness is the core of the famous book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, by Adorno and Horkheimer. In 1942 the German philosophers reflected on the relation between the rationalisation of the world purported by modern science and modern politics, and the coming back of irrationalism and violence in the years of German Nazism and Italian Fascism.

The metaphor of light in the shape of Reason has been crucial in the progressive dimension of the Modern culture. The Enlightenment emphasised rationality as the source of illumination in the field of scientific thought and in the field of politics.

Then the expansion of knowledge resulted into technical acceleration of information, and the XXth Century has been marked by the euphoria of acceleration, expansion, enhancement of the horizon. This acceleration, however led to a paradoxical effect, that in the last
decades of the Century has been described as the disappearing of future.

The modern idea of future was based on the Futurist euphoria of speed, while the late modern acceleration turned future into a nightmare. In the new Century, thanks to the shift from Internet to the web 2.0, we have been taken in a sort of whirlwind: permanent acceleration of the info-sphere and following intensification of the neuro stimulation.

The permanent acceleration of the info-sphere led to a collapse of the psychosphere.

**White Noise**

The political forms of representation that emerged during the modern age are now empty, deprived of effectiveness and of meaning.

Political sovereignty can be described as a condition in which the sound of law is topping the noise that proceeds from the social environment. Nowadays, instead, the construction of power is based on the boundless intensification of noise: social signification is no more exchange and decoding of signifiers, but saturation of listening, neural hyper-stimulation.

The political order used to be based on the voice of power proclaiming law amid the silence of the crowd. The contemporary post-political power, on the contrary, is just a statistical function that emerges from the noise of the crowd.

Referring to the swarm-like behaviour of the networked culture, Byung Chul Han summarises the transformation with the following words:

“..According to Carl Schmitt sovereignty is a matter of deciding when a
state of exception holds. This doctrine may be translated into acoustic terms. Sovereignty means being able to produce absolute quiet, eliminating all noise and making all others fall silent in a single stroke. Schmitt’s life did not coincide with the era of digital networks…” (Byung Chul Han: *In the swarm*, MIT Press, 2917)

Actually in our age of digital networked communication, power does no more correspond to sovereignty, and is no more based on silencing the surrounding environment. On the contrary, it compels people to express themselves, it incites people to rise their voices up to the point of white noise.

In the words of Byung-Chul Han shit-storm is the prevailing form of social communication:

“Shitstorms occur for many reasons. They arise in a culture where respect is lacking and indiscretion prevails. The shitstorm represent an authentic phenomenon of digital communication…”

And finally:

“Following the digital revolution, we need to reformulate Schmitt’s words on sovereignty yet again: Sovereign is he who commands the shit-storms of the Net.”

Starting from the notion of shit-storm, we may explain the ascent of the Emperor of Chaos to the highest place of world power, the presidency of the United States of America.

Modern power was based on the force to impose one’s own voice and to silence others:

“Without the loudspeaker, we would never have conquered Germany,” wrote Hitler in 1938 in the Manual of German Radio.

The new Hitlers emerge from the storm of inaudible voices. Power is no more based on eavesdropping and censoring. On the
contrary it acts as proliferation of flows of non-sense, it stimulates expression, and it draws rules of control from the Statistical elaboration of data that emerge from the noise of the world.

The social sound is turned into white noise, and the white noise is the source of social order.

In this whirlwind of info-flow Democracy is losing its meaning, as the human ability of governing reality has been thwarted, as the critical mind has turned unable to process the expanding dimension of the accelerating media-sphere.

In the aftermath of the Donald Trump’s triumph, left-wing commentators have repeatedly asserted that the political machine of democracy is rotten because the fake news are invading the public discourse. I think that this judgement is downplaying and misinterpreting the catastrophe that democracy has suffered. The problem, in my opinion, is not fake news. Fake news have always been part of the public discourse. Obviously the volume of fake news has enormously increased in the last decades, but this is only an effect of the enormous enhancement of the volume of information that we receive every day.

The new phenomenon in the domain of social communication is not fake-news, but the information overload that has led to the disablement of critical discernment. The extinction of the critical mind is the problem, and the extinction of critical mind is the effect of a systemic change of the semiotic environment, that results in a new kind of destruction of Reason: a systemic disablement of the critical procedures of rational thinking and of conscious decision.

The inability of the human mind to elaborate (ethically and emotionally) the flow of neuro-stimulation is the source of the present explosion of rationality.

The political machine, that in the age of democracy was based on the
conscious participation to the process of decision, is broken forever. Chaos, and identitarian aggressiveness are the consequence of this disablement of the critical mind.

The question now is: what should be done when Chaos erupts everywhere?

We should never forget that those who wage war against chaos will be defeated, because chaos feeds upon the war.

In their last book titled “What is philosophy,” (in the last chapter devoted to chaos and the brain) Deleuze and Guattari write that we should consider chaos as an ally not less than a foe. When chaos breaks out, indeed, we should be able to find in it the conditions of a chaosmotic shift.

Identity

Everywhere in the world people have grown unable to decide about social life in a democratic way, because their life and their mind are taken in the permanent turmoil of mental chaos.

The financial machine has been the main accelerator of chaos in the social business, and the technomedia system has provoked a pathogenic acceleration of mental time. Micro-trading, financial domination of the economy have replaced political decision and critical reason. As a result, the ability of citizens to decide about their own life, and about the distribution of labor and wealth, has been jeopardised. Consequently people have lost any faith in democracy, and feel impotent and unsafe, as they cannot control the implications and effects of the techno-financial assault.

This is the hell: impotence, precariousness, fear of the future, spreading violence. The only ground for escaping precariousness and
anxiety is to build on identity: belonging to a nation, to a religious community, to an ethnic group becomes the only certainty, intrinsically based on exclusion, and aggressiveness.

This is why Fascism is spreading everywhere: not the old Fascism of the past Century, which was based on the euphoria of young persons looking forward to the bright future of economic growth and national glory. That old kind of Fascism is over, as the futurist spirit of Marinetti and of the Vanguard has been replaced by depressive No Future of the punk sub-cultures.

Contemporary fascism is a desperate attempt to re-enact a no more existing community, and to restore a youngish potency that will never come back. It is the Fascism of young men who live in a condition of precariousness and of loneliness, and it is the Fascism of old people who long for their potency (sexual and political). That potency will never come back.

The only thing that the new form of fascism has in common with the fascism of the past is the racist assertion of identity, the aggressive assertion of what we think we are. As we are frightened by what we are becoming we try to focus on the common origin, ethnic, religious and otherwise.

But the question: who are we? is a fake question. Identity is a fake concept. We are nothing, as human nature is based on becoming.

**Vibrational Chaosmose**

Reason and critical discernment can only exist in a situation in which time for decision is compatible with the rhythm of the techno-machine.

It’s a problem of temporality, of relation between time of the machine and time of the human mind. When the rhythm of the techno-financial
automaton grows too fast for the elaboration time of the human mind to elaborate, chaos prevails.

Chaos is not something that exists in nature. It is not a real thing. Chaos is a relation between the temporality of info-sphere and the temporality of the human mind.

Chaos is painful for the mind, and the kind of pain that we feel in chaotic environments is defined as “spasm” by Felix Guattari.

The concept of Chaosmosc may be explained in terms of a continuous interplay between cosmic respiration and refrains (retournelles) of singularity. In a chaotic environment the conscious and sensitive organism is desperately looking for an order, for a regularity, and this desperate search results into the stiffening of the vibrational oscillation of singularity. Spasm is the effect of this stiffening of the conscious and sensitive organism in the vortex of the chaotic environment. In medical language spasm means a painful intensification of the rhythm of a muscle, and of the organism as a whole. We may speak of brain spasm, when we refer to the painful perception of an artificial acceleration of the rhythm of our cognitive activity, of our mental reaction to the accelerating Infosphere. We live in the age of chaotic spasm. But the spasm is chaotic in as much it is inviting the organism to re-modulate its vibration, and to re-establish an harmonic order by way of re-singularisation. Music, and poetry are the field of the vibrational search for a possible con-spiration beyond the limits of the dominant order. Now, in the hellish time that has been prepared by thirty years of Neoliberal competition and unbridled intensification of the rhythm of productivity, the sound of the modern order has collapsed, and in the digital sphere sound has evolved into noise: the public discourse is a tangle of inaudible voices. Steve Goodman (*Sonic Warfare*, MIT, 2009) speaks of sonic warfare in order to describe the invasion of the acoustic sphere of society by sonic
hyper-machines that besiege the acoustic attention imposing rhythm in which singularity is cancelled. Sonic warfare is a way to define the contemporary hell. Darkness and white noise. And breathlessness.

**Breathlessness**

Do you remember that man who has been killed in Staten Island some years ago. He was illegally selling cigarettes in the public sidewalk, and the police came to arrest him. Garner was killed on July 17, 2014 in Staten Island, New York City, when a New York City Police Department officer put him in a chokehold for about fifteen to nineteen seconds while arresting him. The words “I can’t breathe”—which Garner panted eight times, less and less audibly, before expiring—have been chanted by thousands of demonstrators all over the country following the death of Garner.

In many ways, these words express the general sentiment of our times: physical and psychological breathlessness everywhere, in the megacities choked by pollution, in the precarious social condition of the majority of exploited workers, in the pervading fear of violence, war, and aggression. Trump is the perfect emperor for this baroque empire of unchained vulgarity, glamorous hypocrisy, and silent, widespread suffering.

Respiration is a useful point of view for discussing contemporary chaos while searching a line of escape. The metaphor of breathing is useful for a conceptualisation of chaos. Chaos in fact is provoking an effect of dis-rhythmia, and of panic. It is all about rhythm: the relation between the body and the surrounding world is disturbed by the acceleration of the surrounding rhythms, and by the confusion provoked by infinite multitasking.

For Henri Bergson, time is defined from the point of view of our
consciousness of duration. Time is the objectivation of a biological organism’s act of breathing, which is sensitive, conscious, and singular. Singular respiration is concatenated with the breathing of the others, and this co-respiration we name “society.” Society is the dimension in which singular durations are rearranged in a shared time-frame. Consciousness is located in time, but time is located in consciousness, as it can only be perceived and projected by consciousness. Therefore “time” can be defined as the duration of the stream of consciousness, the projection of that dimension in which consciousness flows. The stream of consciousness, however, is not homogeneous: on the contrary, it is perceived and projected according to different rhythms and singular refrains, and sometimes it is codified and arranged into a regular, rhythmic repetition. In the contemporary hell, the stream of consciousness is overwhelmed by the jumble of stimulating flows of noise.

**Reactivation**

How can we overcome the spasm, how can we survive, and relax, and reactivate the erotic body of the conscious and sensitive organism which is affected by spasm? It’s a political question, as the political mobilisation of social subjectivity is impossible as long as the body is stiffened and separated from the networked brain.

It is also a therapeutic question, as the stiffening and loneliness of the body provokes a suffering that is manifest in the epidemics of depression and panic that looms at the horizon of the XXIth Century.

It is also, and foremost, an aesthetic question. In fact poetry, music, and dance dwell and find their scope in the prospect of reactivation of the erotic body. Artists are the actors of a possible process of reactivation of the erotic body of the cognitive labor. There is no political way out from the hell that financial capitalism has
imposed over the world. The way out is not political, but aesthetic, in the broadest sense of this word.

The evolution of the neuro-aesthetic dimension of the human organism is the dimension in which a line of escape may be found. But the problem is: can human mind have control on the evolution of the human mind itself? Can we consciously reframe consciousness, can we consciously act on the evolution of the brain?

A French philosopher and psychoanalyst whose name is Katherine Malabou, in a book titled *What should we do with our brains?* elaborates on this subject, building on the concept of “neuroplasticity”. How can we find a new harmony a new sintony between the rhythm of the brain and the rhythm of the infosphere. This is not a question for political thinkers. This is rather a question for those people who deal with sensibility, I mean artists, and poets. I’m not sure that the word “artist” are adapt define those person who can reshape the vibrational dimension of the neurological evolution. I would prefer to say “psycho-artists”, or may be “neuro-poets”.
Non-binary Futures
Taeyoon Choi

Taeyoon Choi is an artist, educator, and activist based in New York and Seoul. His art practice involves performance, electronics, drawings, and installations that form the basis for storytelling in public spaces. He has published artists’ books, including *Urban Programming 101* and *Anti-Manifesto*. Choi’s solo exhibitions include *Speakers Corners*, Eyebeam Art and Technology Center, New York (2012); *My friends, there is no friend*, Spanien 19C, Aarhus (2011); and *When Technology Fails, Reality Reveals*, Art Space Hue, Seoul (2007). His projects were presented at the *Shanghai Biennale*, Shanghai (2012) and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2015). He curated *Resistance and Resilience* at Usdan Gallery, Bennington College, Vermont (2012) and directed *Making Lab* at Anyang Public Art Project, Anyang (2013). Choi holds a B.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a M.S. from the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology. He teaches at the Interactive Telecommunications Program in the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. Choi co-founded the School for Poetic Computation where he continues to organize sessions and teach classes on electronics, drawings, and social practice. Recently, he’s been focusing on unlearning the wall of disability and normalcy, and enhancing accessibility and inclusion within art and technology.

I don’t know about your first experience with the Internet, but mine was not a feeling of liberation. It was not like connecting to an unlimited matrix. It was not a moment of revelation. The Internet offers amazing possibilities to discover new ideas and connect with people but it can also be used as a space of deliberate control. I was always curious why people—technologists and innovators, engineers and theoreticians, and historians and futurists—talk about the “good ol’ days” of the Internet when it was a free, vastly open space. Perhaps it’s related to the belief that the Internet was created to be a space free of regulations, like the Wild West. I question why the American frontier metaphor is so appealing, and to whom it is appealing.

When I think of the American frontier, an image of John Wayne from the 1972 film *The Cowboys* pops into my mind. In this film, set in the Wild West, there is a noticeable absence of Native Americans and other people of color. I see a connection between Wayne’s frontierism,
and the contemporary iteration that’s often called innovation as both are based on the notion that uncharted territory is an opportunity waiting to be discovered. But an opportunity for whom? Which people and natural environments are exploited and erased in the process? It’s not surprising that John Wayne, the archetypical cowboy, held conservative political views in the later part of his life. The imagination of the frontier is limited to what pioneers know. They go to new places only to recreate the world they left behind and the violence they fled from.

The prevailing narratives of technology, innovation, efficiency, and scale share a sense of optimism. John Perry Barlow, Grateful Dead lyricist and co-founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, said “We will create a civilization of the mind in cyberspace. May it be more humane and fair than the world your governments have made before” in *A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace*. Since its creation thirty years ago through today, the Internet continues to be considered a new frontier, decentralized public space, and distributed commons. Today, the Internet is an important part of public life for many people, from libertarians seeking investment opportunities, mining coins, and training automata to communities who are concerned about their privacy, autonomy and freedom online.

What is the Internet, really? The Internet is a computer, just the largest computer that’s ever been built. The Internet is a decentralized network of computers that operates on binary computation. Binary is a powerful numeric system that represents all numbers in zeros and ones through repetition and abstraction.

The predominant narratives of technology often obfuscate crucial details and material conditions of computation. This reduction results in misrepresentation. For example, cloud computing is a clever branding of decentralized databases that disguises physical realities. When we order a product from the Amazon.com, the order goes through a complex chain of computational systems, physical infrastructures, and supply chains that we can’t see. Ingrid Burrington
writes, “In part, the success of Amazon’s web services, arguably the success of Amazon itself, lies with its ability to abstract a infrastructure into a logistics problem” in Why Amazon’s Data Centers Are Hidden in Spy Country. When we are anxiously waiting for update from our Amazon Prime, 2-Day Free delivery, we don’t think about physical infrastructures or the consumption of energies and natural resources. Our interactions on websites or mobile apps, misrepresents all human, animal, and environmental interactions as a transaction of information.

Who builds the Internet? To revisit the Wild West, there are the cowboys, white male engineers on the bleeding edge of innovation, and there are the miners, such as the Chinese American miners photographed in the Colorado School of Mines near Idaho Springs, Colorado in 1920. These folks were often referred to as “coolies,” immigrant laborers working in extremely impoverished environments, often extracting natural resources or building physical infrastructure that would make transportation and communications possible. Just like the Native Americans and Chinese American miners who didn’t make it into The Cowboys, there are wide range of erased people who build the technologies that are inherent parts of the reality we live in today. The lack of representation of the diverse people involved with computing and network technologies leads to the general disregard of their labor and reinforcement of the stereotypical image of the tech innovator as a white man. The tech innovator’s world views are based on binary division: Zero and One, True and False and Profit and Loss, which offers little space for non-binary identities.

Essentially, what I want is for the Internet to be a non-binary, non-centralized space. This is an oxymoron because the internet is computation, and computation is primarily digital, which is binary. I’m trying to imagine the Internet that is non-binary, which may not be possible. However, this quest for impossible types of space is what we should do as artists.

Why does this matter? A non-binary future is important because the Internet is built from binary reduction and centralization. While tech
giants salute the concept of decentralization and distribution (two different but closely related concepts), they are actually looking to extend their ownership and power via the centralization of control. There is a slide from Microsoft's acquisition of Github which says, "Intelligent cloud, intelligent edge." At the center of the image is a cloud and on the periphery of this cloud it says, "The world is a computer," and the developer is at the center. Arrows are pointing up towards "marketing, operations, etc" to other infrastructures around the space. This is the type of worldview that tech companies believe in and one that they want us to subscribe to. However, the world is not a computer. The world is messier and unpredictable and it requires intimate care. For technical and political reasons, the Internet stops working in different parts of the world.

Autonomy and access to information is crucial. We don’t have a lot of control over the data on the Internet. As much as it seems like we can share our data conveniently, most data will disappear in a few years and some of that data (that perhaps we don’t want around) may stay online forever. This is what Wendy Chun calls the "Undead" of information. A type of, "walking dead" data that we just can’t seem to get rid of but that we also can’t acquire when we need it. A great example is the EPA data that the U.S. administration changed and made inaccessible. When we rely on commercial platforms or government facilities, they can stop working at any time.

What kind of internet do we need to build? If we are challenging the computable future – a world where everything presents itself as orderly and computation seems to be a mode of operation for every kind of governance and human relation – what kind of computing technologies and software do we want to build to preserve humanity? There are uncomputable aspects of human life and the natural environment that we need to respect and preserve.

**Distributed Web of Care**
As a person who spends a bulk of their time on the Internet, I’m concerned about the hyper-commercialization of attention (via social
media applications), surveillance and privacy, libertarian tendencies of pro-deregulation, and guarding the basic code of conduct on the Internet. I want to ask how to create a habitat of care and rigor where we flourish as a community. Decentralization, in itself, is not enough. There are striking similarities between decentralization and structurelessness. Jo Freeman, one of the key figures in first-wave feminism explains how the idea of structurelessness can become the ultimate liberative model intentionally trying to mask the power structures that exist in the Tyranny of Structurelessness. She suggests that the authority should be distributed among as many people as possible. Distribution, delegation, and empowerment are important considerations in my work as a teacher and organizer.

This brings me to the final point of the distributed web. Distribution is different from decentralization because decentralization offloads agency and responsibility via delegation while distribution obligates everyone to care and need each other because it fosters interdependence. We can think about dandelions and the different proliferation of ideas over space. One project I've been looking at is Dat Project, a distributive data community and peer to peer protocol. The project was started by a group of scientists trying to share environmental data and is sometimes explained as a forkable web. Fork means that you can create your own clone of a project. The way Dat protocol can be used to share data is different from how we typically use email clients or file sharing services. Each user can share or sync data directly with another user by accessing a particular address to retrieve that data. The Dat project is providing alternatives to traditional peer to peer file sharing, such as Bittorrent, by making it easy to have a version controlled history of a file and also keeping the integrity of the large data set.

There are a lot of activities in this space right now. There are people building shared documents or livestreaming toolkits that share the DIY ethics and independence of grassroots communities. I've been working on the Distributed Web of Care, inviting a diverse group of writers and
artists to imagine different types of the Distributed Internet from their perspectives, which are often marginalized identities in this space. The result of our collaborations can be workshops and performances, or educational and technical.

**Last part**
The pioneers were searching for their future in the Wild West. Their future was a binary future. We can draw an equation between a few parallel concepts of the binary. Binary is zero and one, digital is on and off, dialectical is truth and false. These are all computable states. Therefore, the binary future is, essentially, a computable future.

The computable future is a brightly light space filled with glossy possibilities. The uncomputable future is a space of darkness. However, this is not a darkness of pessimism or negativity. Instead, it’s the darkness inside of the forest, potentialities of dark matter, darkness of the unknown, indescribable, and, ultimately, unknowable future. The unknowable future is a humble place. We need to accept that we can not know the future, and the act of speculation often reveals more about the desires of the present. The unknowable future invites people who don’t fit in binary identities. Human nature is essentially uncomputable and the efforts to quantify the sense of self leads to great reduction. In fact, most people don’t fit into the reductive binaries of man or woman, abled or disabled, privileged or marginalized.

Non-binary futures are not limited to the XYZ Axis, Cartesian coordinates. Instead, they have multiple interlocking knots of encounters.
In this space, we find the sense of commons and common sense.
How do the Commons Look like? An incomplete story from a slow metamorphosis of becoming Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons

Binna Choi

Binna Choi is director at Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons whereby she has curated a number of long-term, collaborative/cross-disciplinary artistic research projects and programs, such as Grand Domestic Revolution, co-curated with Maiko Tanaka (2010–13), Composing the Commons (2013–16), and Site of Unlearning (Art Organizations), with Annette Krauss and the Casco team (2014–18). In conjunction with her position at Casco Art Institute, she also teaches at the Dutch Art Institute masters program, and works for and with the trans-local network Arts Collaboratory. Besides, she worked as a curator for the 2016 Gwangju Biennale titled *The Eighth Climate (What Does Art Do)* and, in that context, co-organized with Maria Lind the global forum and fellowship of experimental art organizations called *All the Contributing Factors*. Choi is also the Member of the Academy of the Arts of the World, Cologne.

1.

“The plethora of images” is an expression that stuck in my head from reading the curatorial statement by Catherin David for the 1997 Documenta X. That felt like the defining term of the late nineties and gave all the reasons for art to be, while also giving it a way to survive. I’m not sure how successful art became for that mission by giving critical analysis, antidotes and alternative imaginaries to the plethora of images since the media industries have been only expanding and ubiquitous with apps and social media. For sure, since then, we have passed several turns and “trends” concerning contemporary art production, such as the social, relational, educational turns, in which art has come to focus on the act of imagination, rather than the visual production. Now, what we in art deal with is less of the spectacle itself but another kind of a plethora of which cannot be well captured in the optical or visual regime or contained in the visual cultural realm. Climate change and the planetary catastrophes, political extremism, war, and massive migrations, and every day over production/consumption/extraction (also think of data mining) and the
increasing economic inequality and insecurity make the cases of the excessiveness. All of these became palpable just over the last couple of decades, which came after a decade of transition from the cold war and communist era to the (financial) capitalist globalization. Facing this overwhelming and disconcerting reality, a more fundamental intervention into society, or as some call “impact” with art, feels increasingly necessary. This has triggered, I believe, the “institutional turn” as well, in which art focuses on what supports and mediates it, the institution of art, along with the institution in general in which the institution of art is implicated.1 There rises a clear necessity to configure other ways of organizing and instituting if the existing ones are not able to make a change in the entropy or rather are responsible for it.

“Institutional critique” was established as an artistic genre in the late 60s and has been evolving in the 90s and 2000s with the notions like new institutionalism. That is to indicate that some of the art institutions themselves took on the role of critique to the art institution, the institution of art on which the category of art relies, and the institution in general. The present attention to the art institution could be seen in this lineage yet in practice there are many differences and another “new” to be noticed. One notable distinction is the adaptation of the discourse and practice of “the commons.” Autonomy and self-organization are other neighboring buzzwords, but to me the commons better captures what’s at stake, giving the orientation as well as means for new forms of organizing. Several art organizations have taken on the commons as their focus, including the Nam June Paik Art Center, TimeLab in Ghent, Casa do Povo in Sao Paolo,

1 To indicate this “turn”, I can list some of the most recent discursive occasions I had an opportunity to contribute include, How Institutions Think at Arles Foundation in Arles, organized by Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College in New York; De Appel Curatorial program in Amsterdam (Feb 2016); Rethinking Institutional Critique: A View from the South at the Athens Biennale (Apr 2016); Perpetual Invention: Searching for Institutional Practice at Hordaland Kunstsenterr in Bergen (Dec 2016); To All the Contributing Factors, 11th Gwangju Biennale (Sept 2016); Autonomous Fabric at Willem de Kooning Academy Rotterdam (Feb 2017); Desiring institutions March Meeting, at the Sharjah Biennale 2017, (Sharjah, March 2016); Art, Art Publics, and the Public Sphere, Nieuw Dakota / Valiz, Amsterdam (June 2017); De-colonizing Art Institutions at the Postgraduate Program in Curating at the ZHdK, with the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Basel (June 2017); The Agency of Art at Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA), Oslo, organized by Foreningen af Kunsthaller i Danmark, Klister in Sverige and Kunsthallene i Norge (March 2018).
Picha Art Center in Lubumbashi, KUNCI Cultural Studies Center in Yogyakarta, and Ker Thiossane in Dakar.

I would like to elaborate on why it is so as well as some thoughts and possibilities on how art and art institution could work on and for the commons. I would do this by examining “Casco,” a non-profit art institution based in Utrecht, the Netherlands, where I have been working as a director since 2008. About ten years after I started working there, our board and team were determined to bring an institutional shift in which the commons act as the central focus of the institutional mission and the core principle for its operation. This might be said as a direct consequence of working on the program that researches the commons – “Composing the Commons” or the longer trajectory of the institution. “Casco” was established in Utrecht in 1990 by three local artists and art historians as a non-profit foundation and gallery for a brief mission of presenting art for the public, yes, with the one-word name Casco. In Dutch, “Casco” refers to a building still incomplete and awaiting the installation of its components like floors and windows, meaning an open and flexible structure in the process of becoming a completed building. The name works. Casco as an art institution has been acting like such a structure by moving along an ongoing self-transformative path in response to the development of contemporary art and society. The first visible renewal took place after a five-year cycle of exhibitions and events. In 1996, Casco appointed the position of directorship and adopted a trans-disciplinary and project-orientated program of trifold structure: Projects, Salon (discursive platform), and Issues (publication). From then on Casco was mostly named Casco Projects. In 2003, it gave itself a new, official subtitle, Office for Art, Design and Theory, highlighting its international, trans-disciplinary, and collaborative character. In 2018, we re-launched “Casco” as Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons.

2.
Before taking a journey on the story of “becoming” of Casco as Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons, I don’t think I can avoid this question. What are the commons? Ironically the concept of the commons seems to be popular but not so common in the
understanding and use. Indeed, it’s a buzzword that resonates and at the same time confuses many. In brief, the commons can be defined as a collectively managed common resource with a certain autonomous rule of that managing community, from the tangible objects, such as land, to the intangible such as knowledge and culture. Keeping this definition in mind, a collective farm under the communist regime could well be distinguished from the commons as the rules are not created by those who labor on the farm. A gated community could well be the commons but not. It might be comparable to the cases of Air B&B or Uber, which constitute the so-called “sharing economy.” They become popular, adopted by the state to promote, and often treated as the synonym of the commons. Korean political scientist Hyo Jeong Chai argues how the sharing economy and commons is not actually for “sharing” and elucidates the four reasons. The first reason is the commons are what belong to everybody and everyone. The commons in Uber is merely the sum of each own resource. This sum is not shared but only the information on each own resource. Secondly, the rules of management are created by the ones who create the platforms, not by the users. Thirdly, the “profits” from the platform are not shared for the community – again this is for mere individual profits, which leads to the last point that those platforms do not cultivate or sustain relations and their qualities like trust. In fact, at the bottom of the blockchain technology, a key figure in the trend of the sharing economy, lies technology to ensure trust, instead of unreliable human relations. On these grounds, Chai concludes:

Nowadays, a sharing economy is a new stage and another name of privatization. The slogan “Let’s share instead of possessing - In fact, let’s’ borrow” sounds like a praise of non-possession of individuals, but it conceals the avoidance of employment and irresponsibility of capital in reality. At the same time, it justifies the techniques of isolating and incapacitating individuals through a symbolic manipulation of ‘sharing’ by depriving them

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2 Thanks to the founder of P2P foundation Michel Bauwens.
of solidarity and relationship. Not everything with a form of sharing only can be regarded as sharing; philosophy and value of sharing are required. From the beginning, a sharing economy was a mistranslated term and its indiscriminate use has caused great confusion. Therefore, its original concept of sharing has been damaged. What we call a sharing economy now is nothing but a methodological innovation of making a form of sharing to be traded in the market. It is ‘an economy destroying sharing’ as well as a ‘marketization of sharing.’

In my view, this “big chaos” created by the misuse of the notion of sharing, and possibly the notion of the commons is not only negative or positive. Instead we can see them making a paradigm shift, which evokes each single citizen to recognize their agencies and challenges the concentrated power and authority that the state and institutions have enjoyed. We could call this paradigm shift as the commons. The question is whether we would leverage this to another advanced level of privatization and capitalism or something radically different that stops the exploitation of the earth and body and affirms the joy of life for more. So again, we have to make a distinction in the notion of the commons. Rather we need to refine it as we use the commons. Italian legal scholar and activist Ugo Mattei gives a relevant framework for the commons, by positioning it in the Western legal tradition or “a legality that is founded on the universalizing and exhaustive combination of individualism with the State/private property dichotomy.” Furthermore, his crucial insight is in articulating the fabricated clear-cut opposition between the state and the private is in fact made in an even more fundamental hierarchal, binary structure, “the rule of a subject (an individual, a company, the government) over an object (a private good, an organization, a territory).” The commons are conceived beyond the objects-resources, he continues to argue:

Commons lie beyond the reductionist opposition of “subject-object,” which produces the commodification of both. Commons,
unlike private goods and public goods, are not commodities and cannot be reduced to the language of ownership. They express a qualitative relation. It would be reductive to say that we have a common good: we should rather see to what extent we are the commons, in as much as we are part of an environment, an urban or rural ecosystem. Here, the subject is part of the object. For this reason, commons are inseparably related and link individuals, communities, and the ecosystem itself.

On this basis, the critical task for the commons is to set up “a qualitative relation” that connects many, from individual human beings to institutions, companies and even to the earth itself. Yet, how? We know it’s a daunting task. The relationality is not always pleasant as in the “relational aesthetics” and can be peaceful as dreamed with the satellite image of the “whole earth” transmitted to the world in the 60s hippie culture. The commons often accompany a circle shape to represent themselves. The circle gives an idea of the holistic completeness and integrity. However, we may better imagine the commons in an indefinite, non-static grid structure. Although the grid might be considered a shape of control, like Excel sheets making things quantifiable and calculable, we also can use it for caring – sometimes strategic - attentiveness to various human and non-human actors, situations and environments. Or think of another image-shape of the commons. Belgian philosopher Pascal Gielen who designates the commons as a new radical, practice-based ideology again reconfiguring many binary and oppositional relations, imagines the commons as monsters. Eventually a forbidden love:

Compared to the smooth and monochromatic, marble aesthetics of neoliberalism and virtual capital, commonism, at first sight, seems to be giving birth to a particularly ungainly child. What it presents is truly a monster, reconciling everything that is in fact irreconcilable. Those who immerse themselves in social life for the first time indeed tend to miss the simplicity of numbers,

the helicopter view of statics and the abstract beauty of sound mathematical proof. In addition, the working, stressed-out bodies that populate the social domain produce a bouquet of sometimes poignant odours. The financial economy can only maintain its clean, pure form by keeping bodies and polluting practices at a safe distance. In the commons, however, economy and labor are reunited, as things are reunited with people, people with animals, culture with nature, the young with the old, including colors and shapes that frequently clash. People sometimes engage in verbal fights, only to embrace each other intimately at other times. Perhaps the best analogy for commonism is forbidden love.

Yet is the love, especially that forbidden love, a visible matter? Does it have a shape? What do the commons look like?

3.
The program at Casco Art Institute for last few years, especially under the program title “Composing the Commons,” has been a process of searching for clarity of the definition and the practical methodologies of the commons. Along with the conception of (research) projects, the commission or co-production of artworks led by artists, divergent forms of public programs, we came to map out the various notions and aspect of the commons. It was however yet before we more consciously explore the relation between art and the commons: art was taken as the means for the above mentioned research. Furthermore, even before consciously studying the commons, we started using the term, which drew us into the commons venture and brought the basis for all the possible definitions of the commons. It was through the long-term project Grand Domestic Revolution we develop since the end of 2009 till 2012.

The project was driven by the famous feminist tenet “Personal is Political” and wanted to investigate what was going on in the contemporary domestic space. Teasing out the public and the private boundaries, we sought the possibility of social change from within the home space. For this, we “ran” an actual domestic space, a 50 square meter flat next to our building - as a project space and started inviting
artists and other practitioners for residency and interventions into the flat, both as a physical and symbolic space. Together with them, we were finding how the public and the private were divided and related, recognizing the rapid privatization of housing in the Netherlands and exploring different ways of collective artistic creation and actions to question and intervene. The main inspiration throughout was the late 19th century feminist movement in the US which was researched and published by American architecture historian Dolores Hayden who referred to the movement as the “Grand Domestic Revolution.”

At the turn of the century, there were attempts to collectivize so-called “women’s labor” such as childcare, cooking, and laundry as to influence the spatial design including home and cities. Touching upon the various issues around the contemporary domestic space, it was not a coincidence that what became central for the project is domestic labor.

While finding out the power of domesticity – cooking together, sharing such space – for the formation of interpersonal relations and their collectivity, the question of labor, even the division between work, labor and artworks has occupied us. Speaking of women’s labor, even in a seemingly progressive country like the Netherlands, it turned it was still women who do most of the domestic labor. At the same time, in place of more women who are now in the so-called “productive” workforces and in a position of power, have been a significant number of migrant workers who clean, cook, and take care of the children of working parents. The problem is that the domestic, reproductive works, whether women or migrant workers do them, are not still as valued as other work, as many of those migrant workers living and working “illegally” and being underpaid - under the basic wage - tell. At that time, the domestic workers in the Netherlands began to collectivize with the trade unions. A group of artists and other practitioners through the project, including artists Matthijs de Bruijne, Werker Magazine, and Annette Krauss, also began relationships with the workers in the movement, which resulted in a collaborative video piece and some campaign materials. These relation still exist and have been finding various minor moments of exchange and support, than projects.
Through and through this, we cannot help but take the commons from a feminist perspective, as one of the co-founders of Wage for Housework movement, Silvia Federici, elaborated on. Critiquing the idea that knowledge organized through the Internet and other digital technology is the natural condition for the commons without asking the materials basis and economic activities such as mining, microchips, and rare earth production, she argues it’s important to focus on the reproduction of everyday life, as inseparable from production. She brought to light her invaluable observation that it was the colonial-capitalist venture that increased the division and separation between productive labor and reproductive, domestic labor while devaluing and making invisible the latter. Federici, arguing for collectivization of housework, food production, land and waters, and so on, tells us how the commons can be the basis for an alternative to a capitalist economy.

... the “commoning” of the material means of reproduction is the primary mechanism by which a collective interest and mutual bonds are created.

... For the distancing of production from reproduction and consumption leads us to ignore the conditions under which what we eat or wear, or work with, have been produced, their social and environmental cost, and the fate of the population on whom the waste we produce is unloaded.

We may call this “reproductive commons” for the sake of simplicity. Here, besides the images we collectively created, we can invite another work of art that remains the inspiration for the Grand Domestic Revolution. American artist Mierel Laderman Ukeles published a text piece “Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!, Proposal for an exhibition ‘Care’” (1969) with the subsequent series of her performances of doing maintenance work herself at home or museums and photo

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documentation. By claiming her domestic labor as art, she makes an argument of its value to the extent of the care and maintenance for the earth.

4.
What is after the Grand Domestic Revolution? With the “reproductive commons” in mind, we have realized that we’d need to delve into the commons. The co-creation and cooperative works were not all smooth, and we’d better build further knowledge on what enables collectivities, rather than organizing it with blind love, and on how to practice the commons. Hence, the program “Composing the Commons” as a multi-year research trajectory (2013-2016) was conceived. The program unfolded with the artists whom we invited exploring various possible historical and contemporary strands for the commons practice as well as with the collective research projects. Among them some artists were already familiar with the existing discourse and practice of the commons, contributing to the articulation of our positions in relation with the commons. For example, artist Adelita Husni-Bey conceived the project White Paper: Law with us, which organized a series of joint drafting sessions of a legal document to challenge the recent law that banned/illegalized squatting in the Netherlands. The unfamiliar language for art, that’s the law, was met with artistic imagination for another kind of organization and ownership of space yet with the participation of various positions and actors with regards to squatting: from lawyers and anthropologists to squatters, activists for refugees and a formerly squatted old art studio complex. The project resulted in the “Convention for the Use of Space” which is made available on a special website as well as in art form in which Husni-Bey revisualized the co-writing process in collaboration with a local printing collective Kapitaal. This project not only continued the query from The Grand Domestic Revolution, which dealt with the squatting ban that happened at the very moment of the project development. It also brought us to introduce and exercise what theorist Marina Vishmidt
called “militant commons.” 7 She argues that rather than creating an autonomous realm of collective organization and takes a refugee in it, the commons should act to intervene and change the existing legal system and institutions.

Fernando Garcia Dory’s Inland, Christian Nyampeta’s How to Live Together, Aimee Zito Lema’s Body at Work, Mellanie Gilligan’s Common Sense, The Otolith Group’s In the Year of Quiet Sun, Ayreen Anastasi & Rene Gabri’s Commoning Time, I cannot even name all the projects here, but they show how artists could facilitate and stir forms of cooperation with other social actors and communities, and let us map out the broad terrain of the commons geographically, historically, and politically. Importantly, the artists and growing communities around not only shaped the program Composing the Commons but also the organization to a certain degree. In fact, more and more artists through this long-term development became closer to the organization too and communities started using Casco’s space and facilities for their gatherings. Along with this, more and more remarks on the organization were made in relation to the knowledge on the commons it produces. In other words, how much is your organization the commons?

5.
In “Composing the Commons,” two “projects” may well be singled out to address this issue of art institutions not only representing the commons but becoming the commons. One is Site for Unlearning (Art Organization), a collaborative project by the shifting, entire Casco team and Annette Krauss, Utrecht based artist whom Casco has been working together for a long while for several different projects, and Arts Collaboratory, a network project with 23 art organizations all of which are based in so-called “Global South.” Casco first joined the network as an associate partner to facilitate the “networking” process and later joined as one of its members. Both projects are inter-twined as uroboros and have in common their work on the wide spectrum of

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art from the formal aesthetics to rather invisible work of imagination for another kind of social imaginary towards the commons. Here how do the commons get configured?

The Site for Unlearning is based on long-term artistic research by Annette Krauss which problematizes the accumulative, capitalist notion of learning along with the idea that learning always gets embodied. Hence, she put forwards unlearning as a requisite for learning which has to do with changing habits – not only of doing but also of thinking. With Site for Unlearning (Art Organization), Annette and our team agreed on taking Casco as a case study. As with other unlearning cases, what to unlearn and the unlearning process especially with the idea of practicing the commons within an art institution has been collective throughout. The collective finding led us to unlearn “busyness,” and as we analyzed further, the capitalist value of productivity as the root of such temporality, that keeps us from appreciating reproductive labor from maintenance work to relations among the team. The project proceeded with two or three weekly collective meetings to come up with ideas of exercises for unlearning and reflect on them after trying those exercises. Those exercises include weekly collective cleaning of our office gallery which now has become the expanded habit of our organization, to rethinking of the wage system and organizing collective planning and learning moments. These are certainly behind the reshaping of Casco to the present in many and interlinked ways. Above all, unlearning busyness, such temporality and the underlying logic of productivity, has been manifest in proclaiming where our commitment and social vision with art lie in - the commons – and the possible drive by this commitment to the organization, from the team members to the extended teams, collaborators and communities to engage with, to operate with the commons as well as proliferate the commons. In other words, commoning has become a process of materializing the above mentioned learn knowledge of commoning such as reproductive commons and militant commons through the ongoing unlearning process.

The Arts Collaboratory network might be seen a similar effort

as Site for Unlearning (Art Organizations) in a broader collective dimension in search of modes of solidarity to practice. Since 2013, Arts Collabatory has been undergoing an experimental process of transforming itself from an artificially constructed network brought together by funders into an interdependent and trans-local cooperative ecosystem operating in solidarity with each other and each other’s networks. Such experimentation is slowly garnered through mutual trust, shared resources, and responsibilities, in order to achieve a common wealth and to become practically and actively engaged in “paradigm shifts” concerning the way successes of member organizations have been judged in the funder-fundee relation. This relation is especially important given that most of the AC member organizations work under the legacy of colonial heritage and its persistence. They also get their funding resources from the West, in particular, the Netherlands, which consciously and unconsciously embodies the exploitative, judgmental, controlling mechanism rooted in the colonizer. And so, the colonizer-colonized relation continues, keeping the organization’s production and presentation machinery running without space for questioning its fundamental structures or for radically imagining an alternative reality of relations through which to produce and present (which meet the desire from Casco’s own unlearning project). To transform it is thus to collectively reimagine a future vision complete with a set of ethical principles for guidance in the process of self-governance. AC’s co-written future plan, for example, was used to convince our primary funders to relinquish their control, in practical terms, of the system of judgment, selection, and progress and evaluation reports, allowing instead for AC to report to one another without dressing it up and to also be transparent when it comes to struggles and failures, and all in the spirit of self-governance and collective study.

Speaking of the study, another aspect of the commons that has become crucial for both projects alike is so-called “the undercommons,” the concept brought by Fred Moten and Stefano Harney.9 They warn us against the institutionalized commons with

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9 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, Minor Compositions, 2013.
its potential to be trapped into a logic of (bureaucratic) management and control and correctness by policy, which contains the logics of an enclosure and induces it. Instead, the “under-commons” happens in the study, as they describe, of prophetic being together against oppression and in constant collective planning, their mending, and change (fugitive!) and the accompanying joy. “Study” is closer to collective cleaning, than learning a new skill or knowledge at a job training center or doing Ph.D. research, and closer to occasions of passion driven and self-organized gathering for “revolution.” It is “not where everybody dissolves into the student, but where people sort of take turns doing things for each other or others, and where you allow yourself to be possessed by others as they do something.”

According to them, it is the commons but these commons are only possible beneath of institution – hence “undercommons.” Then, one could ask here, how could you institute the (under)commons? Could art institutions, unlike any other institution, allow study to happen? Again, what do the commons look like? Could they ever be visible?

6.

Many of the institutions within the Arts Collaboratory network, notably including the Casco Art Institute, reduced the number of production and exhibitions they used to do over the last few years: instead, they invested time in understanding their modus operandi and their possible ecosystem towards more communal, more politically effective approach with and through art and artists. Many diagrams were drawn in this process, overlapping one circle to another and filling them with messy connections. Gradually and recently, a new structure of the program, a new form of organization, and new relations have been created as a result, many of which prioritizing “study,” be it with the public or within the organization (concretely speaking many schools and learning programs were conceived). They may not be totally new as they are born within the negotiating space with the existing institution of power (that judge and value or undervalue art and the commons). Furthermore, the space of the commons never remains stable with a clear boundary. Yet what I am nearly convinced

10 Ibid. p.115.
is that this vulnerability would be the force for forms of solidarity for widening the commons. The vulnerability as accompanied by the invincible desire for study or, reproductive commons, undercommons, undercommons – say it! – as the values of life, would be in fact the needle to stitch fragmented territories, respective art institutions. What eventually would come out is not determined. Any image or shape is still undergoing the examination and concept proofing. What’s certain is here art would be omnipresent and come in all the variety of the forms, but they won’t be as visible they used to be – not simply in the institutional exhibitions but rather in all the possible outsides where the commons would inhabit anew. The paths we take now are to materialize this form of solidarity act and prove the power of art as the “look” of the commons.
From the living room to Gudskul
Ade Darmawan


Within the Indonesian context, to gather and to assemble an organization or a collective is not a new activity. In the history of Indonesian art, gathering and joining an organization have also had a long and thrilling tale that began in the 1930’s with PERSAGI (Persatuan Ahli-Ahli Gambar Indonesia – Indonesia - Union of Indonesian Painters, or Union of Indonesian Drawers) and followed by many others with diverse visions in conjunction with the political and social tensions in each period.

In the last two decades, the development of Indonesia’s contemporary art’s infrastructure has been quite dynamic. The vigorous growth is marked by the emergences of independent art groups or organizations in various cities, and large-scale art activities, such as museums, biennales, art fairs and art festivals that are held in major cities like Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Semarang, and Bali. At the same time, we have the phenomenon of artist initiatives, collectives, and art spaces which sporadically developed in different cities. With a small amount of financial support (self-funded) they are active in conducting art project, research, and artistic collaboration focusing on local social-political issues especially about cities and the urban environment. But unfortunately, these dynamics are facing significant problems in sustaining the long-term vision, strategy, and
financial support of the organization. These problems make it difficult for organizations to survive for more than three years. All these factors contribute to the lack of certain discourses or ideas to be developed regularly and continuously since the discourses or ideas will disappear before they can be developed. It also means we cannot hope that certain issue or ideas that can be developed in an intense and broad discussion.

One of the most fundamental failures of infrastructure was its failure to make and hold a relevant role in the accelerating field of art practices and the accelerating developments/changes in social cultural and political realities in the society. It should be able to continue to work, continue to build and manage its relevancy, which includes aspect of appreciation, criticism, education, and mediation, facility, which of course is supported by good management. However, insufficient support from the government made the situation go from bad to worse. In reality, the presence of government art institutions offered no systematic support to the movement of the discourse of art in the society, due to the lack of the human resources capacities, facilities, funding and further problems that were caused by bureaucracy.

We can keep complaining about the system that does not run well, or the structure that stays incomplete or imperfect. However, in all those circumstances, we can label anything as an alternative model. In the recent decade, efforts have been emerging people who were trying to complete or build and develop an art infrastructure or platform, which were derived from the needs caused by the acceleration of art, and social, political, and critical ideas. These were different from the government-built infrastructures and other infrastructures that held a different orientation. This lack of support can also be a failure of the prior support system which failed to respond to the acceleration of art ideas that had moved just as quickly as the cultural and social changes in society. As an example, we can see how backward the concepts of art that are applied in the current art education institutions as we compare them to the visual culture that is happening in the public by artists who have been profoundly influenced by the development of technology and the media.
Infrastructure development and their role, which was taken by the various collectives and artists who run spaces and initiatives to complement the deficiency or the infertility of the existing infrastructure, had become very sporadic and were done according to personal agendas. It certainly did not guarantee a synergic relationship between them. The path to a non-centric network, one based on collaboration and horizontal partnership, is a long and winding one. During this time, the various forms of cooperation between groups and organizations, which had involved informal infrastructures from the many disciplines, were executed frequently. Mostly, the emergence of these groups or organizations were not intended as a direct opposition, nor an antithesis, or a resistance, or even an immediate reaction from the mainstream, but instead can be more appropriately seen as an urgent need that grew as an implication of idea development. This infrastructure/practice, even when it was small, was mostly run by an independent agenda and not too concerned or did not give any attention to the existence of prior art infrastructure. It is conceivable that a group of creative workers who were very active with their ideas would not be too directly affected by the presence or absence of an art center in another city or region. This lack of influence happened because there was no prior relationship with mutual influence, which can also be a failure of the preceding art infrastructure who failed to understand the movements in their vicinity. A need triggered most initiative or activity, and then, through experimentations and according to reality, a collaboration structure or a model that was deemed the most appropriate was formed. Then it becomes a survival strategy of these groups to fill in the gaps in the absence of a system or structure, even if the gap was imagined or dreamed, sporadic, and even temporary.

These collaborations call for a need for research and mapping that should be done intensely and persistently, regarding the birth and development of collectives and or institutions in the fields of art and culture, so that a foundation for networking and cooperation can be established. This foundation can, in turn, help form networks consisting of small units engaged in each of the localities and strongly connected.
The art scene of Indonesian contemporary art has grown more
dynamic with the increased activity of the alternative spaces or artist’s
initiative spaces that were initiated and managed independently by
artists in cities other than Jakarta, Bandung, or Yogyakarta such as in
Makassar, Semarang, Malang, Cirebon, Jatiwangi, Surabaya, Lombok,
Medan and Padang. Also, many art activities were organized by artist
and networker groups, which offered new and exciting ideas in the
discourse of Indonesian contemporary art, such as art biennales,
festivals, video and new media art, performance art, and project-based
art activities. Events which took form as art projects, with their emphasis
on the process, study, artistic collaboration, and social-political issues
with the city and urban environment as the main subject, generated
many creative new ideas. These are the signs of the concern of artists
on the surrounding social situation, in the local and global context and
in the effort to clarify the position of artists and their critical ideas in
society.

The collectives have become a knowledge sharing and
transformation platform for different people and practices that lasted
intensively and continuously. Collaborators and members have woven
organic artistic collaborations and exchanges of ideas. The relationships
have grown at both the individual and communal (organizational)
level through diverse activities and approaches. All these forms of
collaborations could happen because of the intention and basic impulse
to share, collaborate, and exchange ideas and friendship. This pattern
has also been accompanied by the need to create cross-disciplinary
artistic collaboration. A creative practice could not exist without
involving other fields of knowledge that take part in constructing
various discourses and social practices. These forms of collaboration
are conducted by recognizing the functions and needs of each party
without emphasizing other interests. These processes always use the
opportunity to share knowledge among the communities so that they
can fulfill the requirement of network development. A fact shows
that differences in focus and interest have played a significant role in
constructing the forms of relations amongst the initiatives. It’s worth
noting that every relation that happened shows specific dynamics and
characteristics. It is worth the effort to look back at various forms of collaborations that occur both locally and internationally.

Constant and intense artistic practices and negotiations with the state, privates, and surroundings have shaped the learning process. Finding a strategy to survive with all the limitations and benefits of local resources and uncertain things that always have to be faced is a challenge for these communities. One approach to surviving and facilitating the learning process is to find sources of knowledge and experiences from many sources that include either informal or institutionalized networks. The building of networks among art collectives and initiatives from several different cities with a similar vision can serve as a platform for exchanging knowledge and artistic strategy and can inspire each other. It becomes a forum or a platform that can strengthen the bargaining power of these organizations in the broader social, cultural, and political context. One consideration in building up networks is to think of them as an expansion of learning activities, as well as enriching the knowledge resource. However, developing a regional network project is almost impossible without seeing the local networks in other countries, that have been developed in another way, both formal and informally. These regional networks play an important role in supporting and mediating the local network in each country. Imagine the regional network is an extension of the local network. The regional network is developed and set with the consideration to support the local network. By this constellation, both networks will find their essential roles and positions and relate and be relevant to each other.

The path to a non-centric network, one that is based on collaboration and horizontal partnership is a long and winding one. During this time, the various forms of collaboration that were done between groups and organizations. Building a decentralized network, based on collaboration and horizontal partnerships, will have a lot of types of cooperation carried out between institutions that will also involve the formal infrastructure of various disciplines. In the end, it can form a network that consists of small units that are exciting and vibrant in every region and are intensively interconnected. It can also provide sufficient content or issues to share so that each network
member can relate and be relevant to each local context. It makes each member have a strong reason to share or discuss specific issues. The network becomes a platform that is conducting a map of what issues are relevant and important regionally and furthermore develop it into a more significant discourse by producing, sharing, and distributing the knowledge as an essential contribution in the region.

The onset of the exchange of practices and knowledge have made a collective space as a forum for gathering a wide range of knowledge; it’s a process of merging. In the process of realization and artistic practice, the merging and fusion of diverse knowledge are proceeding. This knowledge is simulated through events and experiences and flows through the network. A lot of speculation done in daily practice because the situations are often faced with uncertainty, in terms of funding, time, and human resources. The ability to consider all these uncertainties becomes a luxury. However, failure and success are equally important in the process. Accepting failure as part of the process becomes experience and knowledge that can be passed on to others.

The diverse academic backgrounds of the members of the collective and the intensity of the meeting create a new space and ideas, it propagates knowledge and becomes a place of learning for all involved. This new knowledge is discovered through intense, sporadic, spontaneous meetings, and even through manageable conflict. The collectives become an open educational platform based on the desire to share and are non-centralized. They have much knowledge that formed from the practice operating the collectives for many years that has to be formalized for better accessibility and replicable. The hybrid and experience-based learning that has spread and extends through artistic practices, events, and engagements liberates knowledge production and distribution from the power of the elite.

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Living room

Ruangrupa is an art organization founded in early 2000. We have developed ourselves into a collective with various divisions, each focusing on exhibition, festival, research, and networking. All these
were achieved by mastering the art of organizing. Being true to our interdisciplinary vision, besides visual artists, we are now composed of individuals from various disciplines—such as architects, musicians, researchers, writers, designers, and journalists. For more than 17 years, Ruangrupa has been advancing visual art’s creative works that are critical to urban surroundings, based on collaboration work. Ruangrupa has also become an organization that is consistent in bringing city discourse as its primary focus and continuously elaborates it further through research as a part of the creative process. Art projects and workshops that involve many artists and people from diverse fields of studies that always center on city issues discussions has created many visual artworks in the form of various objects in public spaces, installations, photographs, and audio visual. In this setting of urban society, Ruangrupa also emphasizes expanding studies and provides a place for video and new media works, which in the last developments are very relevant in seeing art and technology and its relation to society. Several activities that Ruangrupa has developed since the beginning of 2000 are Jakarta 32’c– Jakarta Students Art Festival, OK Video – Jakarta International Media Arts Festival, ArtLAB that focus on artistic research and social issues-based art projects, Karbon- arts, and a culture online journal. Ruangrupa sees that its function as a ‘laboratory’ is not supported with the sustainability and development of other elements such as visual art critics and research, education, publishing, and exhibition spaces as requirements to form discussions, appreciation, and information distribution, in both national as well as international forums.

As previously mentioned, many artist groups, organizations, and initiatives are appearing nowadays to realize visual art creative works, deal with their obstacles and find ways to survive. These organizations, although many are small, have shown their awareness in management and in extending the scope of discourse to the public. However, the sporadic movement surely will not be seen or heard if the artists or the creative projects do not have a space to grow and develop as well as discover their critical exploration. Not many of the artists that have participated and created original works continue to create works since it is difficult for them to find the next platform where they can
continue a deeper discussion. This state also prevents new discourses to be expanded.

At least two common tendencies could be observed among the organizations and groups involved in the exhibition. First, their artistic practices, whether collaborative or individual, constituted their artistic statement as a group. Secondly, these artists’ groups and organizations played the role of a support system within the art ecosystem, through activities or programs that raised public awareness aimed at the broad public, such as exhibitions, workshops, festivals, discussions, publications, film and video screenings, websites, archiving, and research. The combination of these two practices, as artist collectives and as support systems in the art ecosystem, clearly distinguishes the role and type of these artists’ groups and organizations emerging at this time from those of previous generations.

Meetings and sharing through conversations have become important, and a house provided a very comfortable space for allowing these things to happen. Such meetings most often took place in the living room, since it is the largest room in most typical Indonesian homes. All the groups and collectives above used the living room of a house as the starting point and the center of their activities, altering and adapting the domestic space into a more public space, converting the living room into a meeting space and exhibition space; and the bedrooms into working spaces or studios, a library, and a space for archives. Typically, it is a rented house in a middle-class residential area—a secular area, a melting pot of people from various backgrounds. There are practical reasons behind the choice of a rented house as a working place: these are easy to find and the rents are affordable. As such, an initiative’s space has a better chance of surviving financially. The lease usually applies for a year, and the rent is paid with money collected from members of the group. The rented house is often also used to serve the various combined interests of the group, as a living and working space. Thus, the house can have two functions: as a space for living and a space for working and gathering.

The financial ability to rent in a certain area also shows that the artists come from more or less the same social and economic class as other residents in the area. Most artists usually also divide their time
as workers in the creative or media industries, part-time freelancers, or students. Most groups choose a working-class housing area or mixed areas with residences and small to medium businesses. A mixed area is particularly suitable because it is also a place for diverse kinds of independent enterprises.

From a simple living room, the group positions itself as a vital part of the supporting infrastructure for both art and the community, becoming a stand-alone citizen’s initiative. This kind of group, this type of initiative, which typically uses a residential house as its basecamp or meeting ground, imagines itself as living among the people. Its presence in a residential area is an opening, or a call for a skill, to negotiate and dialog with the values of the community surrounding it. Living together with the people, its activities are naturally carried out with an awareness of, and alongside these values, and may even tap from them. The direct or indirect involvement of the nearby residents can be a strategy of artistic exploration, influenced by those residents.

The position of “living together with the people” imagines an art institution’s relationship within a society: it exists within the community and becomes a part of it—a strategy built on friendship and collective enjoyment.

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Lumbung and Study process in GUDSKUL Ekosistem -
As sustainability of ideas

Our biggest challenge is how to create a platform that can sustain this artistic practice and translate it within the increasingly rapid changes in society. The new model we propose is a form of an ecosystem. Conceptually, Ruangrupa and together with the web we have developed throughout our existence, have established a collective living-working culture that is collaborative, mutual and based on friendships. Organically, we have been sharing resources in the forms of human, time, energy, knowledge, besides financial and other tangible materials. The most valuable shared wealth we possess is our diverse approaches. We have been working together for the past 17 years, beyond just developing further our web of networks, but also
developing a replicable ecosystem to guarantee the sustainability of these webs.

Since the establishment of our ecosystem, we have introduced what in Indonesia is referred to as a lumbung—literally, a rice barn, a term commonly used by farmers in Indonesia’s village-based agricultural system. A lumbung is a collective pot, where all resources owned by each collective/group are deposited and stored. These resources include all tangible and non-tangible elements, including our specific programs and human resources.

Gudskul: contemporary art collective and ecosystem studies is a public learning space established by three Jakarta-based art collectives: Ruangrupa, Serrum, and Grafis Huru Hara (GHH). All three have actively immersed themselves into the contemporary art realm since the early 2000s, by practicing a collective and collaborative mode of working. In 2015, they further collectively formed a co-ecosystem, to practice an expanded understanding of collective values, such as equality, sharing, solidarity, friendship, and togetherness.

Believing that art and artists can no longer exist for their own sake, practicing collectivity and working collaboratively are methods to take a stand in society—practically and discursively. In the contemporary art realm, these methods of practice are consequential, through which understandings towards notions such as interdisciplinary practice, openness, pluralism, collaboration, exchange of ideas and experimentations of power are formed. We established Gudskul to encourage the initiative spirit in artistic and cultural initiatives in society. Using this approach, artists then simultaneously and organically act as producers, mediators, distributors, and networkers.

To achieve these goals, we designed Gudskul as a space for study, performed collective practice simulations, advocated the importance of the process through critical and experimental dialogues, and produced experience-based learning and sharing. This non-degree and unaccredited one-year study program has a dynamic curriculum. In Gudskul, participants will be involved directly in an artistic ecosystem while collaboratively determining the shared road ahead, while access to existing resources and networks maintained by the founding collectives serves as a support.
We established Gudskul to encourage the initiative spirit in artistic and cultural initiatives in society. We are looking for future agents who put their focus on local necessities while contributing actively in international spheres. We are opening Gudskul for those who are interested in learning together, to develop collective-based artistic practice and collaboration-focused artistic production methods, such as (but not limited to): artists, art managers, curators, researchers, and other cultural practitioners interested in networked praxis. Gudskul is our new platform established in 2018 as an educational platform. It is conceived to be a space for participants’ experimentations and simulations to work collaboratively as a collective. Collaborative work is an operating pattern or method where togetherness and equality are practiced to produce something together.

On the other hand, a collective is an organizational system or management model based on the agreement of many individuals with various backgrounds to achieve and sustain specific objectives, values, and intentions (distribution). To achieve the aforementioned goals, Gudskul employs a series of experiential learning process using face-to-face meetings, studio works, field trips, internships, and residencies as our methods. Gudskul participants are operating within an Ekosistem environment, in which many actors are co-operating: artists, curators, art writers, managers, researchers, musicians, film directors, architects, cooks, filmmakers, designers, street artists, among many other individual skills. This diversity renders Gudskul as a rich and dynamic Ekosistem, a fertile ground in enriching participants’ learning experience. Gudskul consists of collectives focusing on different artistic practice and media. This diversity also contributes to diversifying the issues and actors involved in every collaborative project happening within.
The Publicness of Post-public: National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Petition 4 art, Commoning 
Sohyun Park

Sohyun Park studied journalism in college and receiving master degree in art history, museum studies, cultural policy and arts management, Park has continued research and lectures on the respective areas. While working at the Korea Culture and Tourism Institute, she became more interested in the re-regulation method of the nation, arts, politics and policies in the field of policy administration. As a contact point for all the areas of studies, Park continues her research in institutional critique, art movement and civil rights, bureaucratic system and cultural politics. In addition, she is also studying digital environment, cultural diversity and gender issues.

1. To whom does a museum belong?: A question about institutional closed-ness or the lost publicness.

In 1964, Hi-Red Center, of which the founding members are Jirō TAKAmatsu, Genpei AKasegawa, Natsuyuki NAKAnishi did a performance at the entrance of a gallery in Tokyo1. They blocked the entrance door with wood and nails. This event that took place long time ago was not a protest against the gallery where it took place. It was a strong protest against what happened at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, which was founded and managed by Tokyo city. the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum was known for experimental works by young artists during the 1960s. It was the place for ‘Yomiuri Indépendant.’ But now it forbade the experimental works which established a part of modern Japanese art using the authoritative museum rules as excuses. The museum went ahead and drew in police force. Eventually the museum pushed the artists on to the streets. The performance of Hi-Red Center was an artistic action of protest against the museum. It was a silent reproach that a museum could be closed even with an open door, when it separated art from the society instead of connecting them. It is not difficult to imagine how embarrassed the

1 More detailed discussion of this issue can be found in Sohyun Park’s essay. “Genealogy of Anti-Museology or Cultural Revolution: The Invention of Gendaibijyutsushi(History of Contemporary Art and the Institutionalization of Art)” Journal of History of Modern Art. 25, 2009.6, pp. 59-94
audience must have felt at the closed door of the gallery when they had been invited to come. I believe that Hi-Red Center expected that the surprise the audience felt at this physical closed-ness of the door would lead them to a realization of the ‘institutional closed-ness.’

In our everyday experiences, however, it is quite difficult to imagine a museum being accused of this ‘institutional closed-ness.’ From its birth, the modern museum opened itself to the public. And being open to the public is the very reason for its existence: because it is open to the public, it is ‘public.’ For this reason, at the heart of the relationship between a museum and the public as imagined by most people is the public ‘right to access’ to art housed by the museum. One of the important characteristics of modern state is that it gives its citizens, without discrimination, the right to access and enjoy art. Art is freed from exclusive ownership and isolation from public due to it. This right to access art is so important that it was registered in human right law in the mid 20th century. In this sense, a museum is a very special institution that represents what mankind have accomplished since the establishment of modern nations.

What is interesting is that the publicness or the human right, which the museums embody, has developed so far depending on the right to access art. I emphasize this because the right to access is not the same as ownership. And just as the concept of the right to access defines the idea of publicness, it is true that the question of “To whom does a museum belong?” has not been asked earnestly yet. For example, Le musée du Louvre, which appeared at the historical moment of French Revolution and the establishment of a modern nation, took its mission of education (or enlightenment) of the citizen, in order to control the public memory of the past of the nation and the Revolution. This may be the historical evidence that tells us why the modern public museums prioritized the right to access art, and how it substituted the revolutionary subversion of private ownership of art with the question of accessibility. In spite of their beginning, however, the museums in the late 20th century have continuously faced the challenging questions like “Whose art is it?” or “Whose history is it?”,

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being involved in court battles around the ownership of artworks. Along with the moral question of whether or not the ownership of relics or artworks which were obtained illegally or unfairly through colonization or pillage can be justified in the name of public accessibility, return law suits of relics or artworks are continuously being filed.

But I am not raising the question of “To whom does a museum belong?” to bring up the problem of the morality of the ownership of the artworks collected in museums. To me, the real problem is that museums have recently strengthened their existence through ‘institutional closed-ness’ except for the expansion of accessibility in ways that can be materialized in the number of the visitors. Especially, national museums as governmental organization or national institution have relied on the authoritarianism of the bureaucrats. This demands us to look back on how the concept of the ‘public’ works.

Junichi Saitō, quoting Hanna Arendt, suggests two political values related to public space: freedom and resistance against exclusion. Public space is a place where freedom is expressed through speech or action. Furthermore, just like Rene Char’s phrase “The chair remains empty, but the place continues to be set,” public space is where the ‘place’ for everybody, in other words, the place for freedom is set. And the word ‘private’ is used when life loses public space or publicness. Arendt, in ‘The Human Condition, brings up the fact that the origin of the word ‘private’ is ‘deprived.’ She emphasizes that private life is a life deprived of the existence of Other. Those who are deprived of the experience to be seen and heard by others, those who have lost the possibility to be answered by others are displaced or expelled from public space. Therefore, freedom in public space is the political right not to be deprived of the right to action and the right to opinion. In the sense that public space is where the answers to autonomous actions and opinions are given, it represents the political value-the resistance to exclusion.3

When we consider the concept of ‘publicness’ or public space, we need to reflect on whether the laws and the administration of Korean public museums have worked in ways to empty and close down the space for freedom and the place for the right to opinions and actions,
the access to which should be guaranteed to both audience and artists. Especially the frequent political scandals in the 21st century, in which national and public museums and their systems, including the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA), were the main characters, give us all the more reason to seriously think about the issue. The controversy round the appointment of the director of MMCA, the debate round the authenticity of the collections, and the problem of censorship are a few examples of the situations that showed how museums had lost publicness. Certainly, to bring up these past situations now may look anachronistic when the concept of museum as commons is being explored. But the attempt to redefine a museum as commons may be the outcome of our positive reactions to the danger signal—the institutional closed-ness or the loss of publicness.

2. Legal imagination and bureaucratic control of museums: museums as state/public property

〈Museums and Art Museums Promotion Act〉, which was first established in 1984 under the title of 〈Museum Act〉 and have been revised about 20 times so far, classifies museums and art museums according to the founding/operating body. This act categorizes museums and galleries as follows: national museums founded and managed by the state; public museums founded and managed by local government; private museums founded and managed by all other kinds of corporate body, group or individual; and university museums founded and managed by university. This act, by dividing museums according to the founding/operating body, seems to endow the ownership of museums to the founding/operating body based on the private ownership of the capitalistic society. National museums are national properties as defined by 〈National Property Act, public museums are public property of the local government according to 〈Public Property and Commodity Management Act〉. The law defines state property as “property owned by the state according to a charge on the state, contributed acceptance, legislations, or agreement.”

Therefore, the state as the founding and operating body of national museums is the owner as well.

Because the division of legal ownership is postulated in this way, the agent of management and disposal of national property is decided within a chain of administration: the president-Ministry of Strategy and Finance-the heads of the offices of the central government. Henceforth, all the right to decisions about the existence and management of national museums are easily considered to belong to the state-their owner. «Museum and Art Museum Promotion Act», in fact, identifies the founding and operating body as the owner. This means that the state-the founding body and the legal owner-has the exclusive right to make decisions as to the management of MMCA. Furthermore, according to the item number 2 of «Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism Organization», MMCA is an institution set up in order to “support the Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism in carrying out his duties.” In other words, MMCA is not an independent administrative institution, but an institution set up in order to ‘support’ the Minister’s business, therefore, located in a subordinate position within the organizational system. Thus the museum director must report all matters of personnel and budgets to the Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism and have them approved by him. Although «National Property Act» postulates the three principles of management and disposal of national property as the profit of the whole nation, the common value and the use value, and the transparent and effective process, in reality, the main agent who has the right to make decisions is the chief of the state’s administrative organ. When the law identifies the state both as the owner of and the agent to operate MMCA, there is always the danger for the national museums to be an exclusive property of the administrative organ which is in charge of its management. The legal concept of the owner-the state, in reality, is substituted by the governing institutions/organization. In this sense, MMCA which is the only national museum in Korea, is fettered by the institutional imagination based on bureaucracy.

On the contrary, «Library Act» applies concepts and categorization different from those of «Museum and Art Museum Promotion Act». In «Library Act», the legal concept of ‘public library’ overrides the
principle of classification according to the founding and operating body or the user service of each library. Even when a new kind of library, founded and operated by a new subject, offers new user services, it is still a ‘public library.’ Naturally, Library Act sees a public library founded and run by private fund as a public library as well. This act has stipulated in law ‘the social responsibility and the role performance of the library’. And a ‘public library’ must realize this legal concepts. What Museum and Art Museum Promotion Act does not have but Library Act has is this very concept of ‘public.’ Can anyone say that the absence of the concept of the public in law and the actual function of the museums founded and operated by national or local government are not related at all? The fact that national and public museums, especially MMCA has neglected their communal roles but only claimed their public authority clearly shows the problem of institutional closed-ness and loss of publicness.

During the IMF crisis, the government introduced market principle into its organization, thereby hoping to improve administrative efficiency. Since then, bureaucratic dominance was all the more reinforced in MMCA, which was already under legal and administrative regulations. So called neoliberal administrative reform expanded the bureaucratic dominance over it. The Korean government adopted New Public Management, reducing the government spending and using the private sector management models in public sector. Also it adopted performance-based systems such as privatization of public institutions, performance evaluation based on competition principles, annual salary system based on performance appraisal, team system, and Executive agencies. In case of Executive Agencies, since the enactment of Establishment and Operation of Executive Agencies Act, a number of public institutions have been designated as Executive Agencies. MMCA was appointed as Executive Agency in 2006.5

The government explained that the advantages of MMCA

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5 According to law, Executive Agency is “an administrative department, of which the head is given administrative and financial autonomy to make decisions about some of government-affairs that need to strengthen performance management due to professionality or that are desirable to operate in accordance with the principle of competition while retaining publicness.” (Item number 2)
becoming Executive Agency could be many. While maintaining its position as an administrative institution, it could now openly employ the head of the organization. And the head can run the museum in democratic ways, having the autonomy to plan the budget and to make decisions about personnel. Furthermore, it could undertake profitable business without recourse to government’s cultural policy. It could increase entrance fee and space rental fee expecting short-term synergies. On the other hand, there were criticism and worries about designating MMCA as Executive Agency that it was simply for administrative convenience. Already within the existing system, the director’s right to decide personnel and budget was quite limited. The government was sugar-coating the reality by advocating the advantages it alleged. Furthermore, the decision might cause the museum to be restrained in its role to establish the modern and contemporary art history. Also the rights of the low-income and underprivileged citizens to enjoy arts and culture might shrink. And other problems that might arise were: securing its own resources would be limited due to the nature of the museum; supporting artists’ creative activities would become more difficult; it would ultimately cause the decline of fine art and inhibition of the balanced development of art.6

At the time, a lot of people found it problematic that the government had not discussed the issue with the party in concern.7 They brought up the question many times. In 2004, a task force was organized by the staff of MMCA. They stated that making MMCA Executive Agency was “an irresponsible action only for administrative convenience, without regarding the public opinion.” Thus they opposed the government’s decision.8 In the same year, Korea Professional Artist Association, Korea Gallery Association, Korea Art Critic Association jointly released a statement Our Position about National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Becoming Executive Agency, in which they demanded the government to have a conversation with and collect opinions from the artists when

they make arts policy. 9 Criticizing the government’s unilateral execution of policies, Junghoon Kim argued that the only possible interpretation of this situation is that the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs each slashed down the most powerless agency as recommended by each ministry. He strongly criticized that “Government’s designation of MMCA as Executive Agency without consulting public opinions or ensuring the institution of full responsibility for operation violates the citizen’s cultural rights” and “disrupts the communication between artists and citizens.” 10 In spite of these worries and criticism, the government went ahead and appointed MMCA as Executive Agency.

Simultaneously, MMCA was reorganized. In this process, Executive Office (Museum Policy Department, Education and Culture Department, Management Support Department), Curatorial Research Office (Investigation and Research Team, Exhibition Plan and Management Team) were newly established. At the same time, the organization of Deoksugung Palace Museum was reformed as well: Plan and Management Division (Museum Policy Department, Education and Culture Department, Management Support Department), Curatorial Research Office (Investigation and Research Team, Exhibition Plan and Management Team), Preservation and Management Office (Collection and Management Team, Preservation and Restoration Team). Thus the dual system of Planning and Management Division and Curatorial Research Office was completed. In the meantime, while the chief of Plan and Management Division set up in 2006 was senior civil servant (grade 3) dispatched from the higher level institution-Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the highest position in Curatorial Research Office was the Chief Curator (grade 4). The organizational hierarchy of administrative functions and curatorial research functions was asymmetrical. It signified that Executive Agencies system was intended to strengthen administrative

10 Joenghoen Kim, Ibid.
and bureaucratic domination. Later, the position of the chief of Plan and Management Division and the Chief Curator were upgraded. On the surface, it seemed that the hierarchical rank of the both parties were improved. On the other hand, however, the ranks of the chief of Plan and Management Division-Senior Executive Service (level 2) dispatched from Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism- and the director of the museum, appointed through the process of open competition were not differentiated. This is the reason why it has been urgently required to raise the position of the director upward since the first director Kyungsung Lee.

What was worse was that, as a part of the reorganization, the curatorial staffs were to be paid as contract employees, and the curatorial staffs and the administrative staffs were now interchangeable. For this, Jeongheon Kim strongly criticized ‘The Ministry of Culture and Tourism Reorganization Plan.’ He argued that curators are professionals and should not be hired as contract employees and that if the plan should be carried out, the insecurity of their position will harm their performance. He also maintained that allowing the placement of administrative staffs as curators and vice versa was not different from elimination of the research function of curators. In fact, when Myungbak Lee government took office, they began to discuss incorporating Executive Agencies. Then all institutions stopped hiring new full-time positions. As a result, when the Seoul branch of MMCA opened, all newly hired curators were contract workers. The government excluded the parties in concern such as MMCA or the artists themselves in the process of decision making. The government justified the policy forefronting ‘publicness’ but it turned out that

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11 See National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art White Book. As to the inverted hierarchy between the Planning and Management Division and the Curatorial Research Office, Sangsu Kim criticized that it was a "structure that fundamentally hinders the development of the museum" and "the greatest irony of the current institutional system of the museum." He added that the current system of the museum is "against the universal common sense when it comes to operating a museum. since it is a common sense that, in order to enhance expertise, Curatorial Research is at the heart of the operating system of a museum. It will only result in bureaucratization of the museum by making office functions more expansive, which is already a chronic illness of MMCA." (Kim, Sangsu. [Kim Sangsu Column] Talking about National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art ② "National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art does not have a 'heart.'" Pressian. 2008.8.25.)

12 Joenghoen Kim, ibid.
they appropriated the term simply as their empty slogan. Bureaucratic dominance was strengthened overall and the function and the position of curatorial staffs within the organization were weakened, put under the bureaucratic control. Executive Agencies did not set up any ‘place’ for anybody. It deprived many people of the right to speak and act. Violently, it expelled them from the public space. Those who did not have a ‘place’ in public space were outcast into insecure existence, like the position of contract employee.

Finally in 2008, after the 10-year-long debate, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism gave up incorporating MMCA. Nonetheless, the status as Executive Agency and the trauma still remain in the institution. A research report published in the same year by the National Institute for Labor Policy and Research writes that organizations designated as Executive Agencies had limited operational autonomy due to the intervention of the higher departments and performance evaluation system. They became “subcontractors of the competent authority,” subordinated under bureaucratic control. Exactly the same thing happened with MMCA. If we call it a practice of ‘publicness’ when the legal provision of “state-owned property” based on the concept of private ownership monopolizes the decisions about National Museums’ operations, this kind of ‘publicness’ cannot coexist with public interest or public space aforementioned. So far the idea of open public space was beyond the reach of museums and artists, giving them experiences of frustration and helplessness. For public space to be truly open, we need to actively seek public interest in ways that surpasses the existent practice of ‘publicness.’

3. The citizens’ right to museums
While the debate about incorporating MMCA was going on, the suspicion was raised through a state audit of 2015 that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism changed the ‘Basic Operating Rules of MMCA’ in order to involve its overall personnel and operation. Congressman Jinhu Jung pointed out that the Chairman of Human Resources had been replaced from the director of the museum to the chief of planning.

and operation department. The director of the museum and the chief curator were excluded from the Committee of Human Resources. He also paid attention to the fact that the chairman of collection committee was replaced from the director of the museum to an outside specialist while the director of the museum was excluded from the collection committee. Furthermore, the choice of the outside specialist should be consulted with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Concerning this, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism explained that the appointment of those above grade 5 is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and that the change was intended to reduce the multitudinous duties of the director of the museum so that he could focus on his creative works. In the same context, they explained that the planning and operation committee of MMCA took care of odd jobs, which the director of the museum did not have to concern about. In addition to this, Jongdoek Kim, the Minister of Culture and Tourism at the time stated that “the position of the director of the museum is just the same rank with a general manager of a bureau, it is quite strange that such minor thing became a hot issue.”

These explanations clearly show how the Ministry of Culture and Tourism thought of MMCA and its director. In conjunction with the public recruitment of the director of the museum, the Ministry’s attitude raised severe criticisms. Hyunmi Yang pointed out that the current personnel system, which had the Minister of Culture and Tourism at its summit was the very reason why one could not expect long-term operational performance of MMCA. Kyehun Ha pinpointed that “it seems that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism thinks putting a seal on the decision of the committee is the same as the authority over personnel affairs. If one has a clear mind, he would not take the position of the director of the museum under the current operational regulation.” Furthermore, the possibility was suggested that the members of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism schemed it: They wanted the position of the director of MMCA to remain the second

grade rank. Yeol Choi castigated, “In any institution, its ability comes out from the authority over personnel and budget. ... What is surprising is that the authority was taken away by the upper echelon. ... Beside, since the former director of the museum resigned, they have left the position empty for over a year.” Simultaneously, he suggested that the authority over personnel and budget should be restored to the director and Executive Agencies and incorporation should be nulled, and that the rank of the director of museum should be raised to that of vice-minister.

And again it was pointed out as a problem that the government would not listen to the voices of the art world. Sunyoung Lee denounced that the fundamental reason behind the controversy over the open recruitment of the director of MMCA lied in that it was a competition among a small group of officials and professors at the power center, regardless of the opinion of the majority of the members of the art world. Someone resented that “they wasted 8 months recruiting the 2-year tenure position, and those who are responsible never apologize to artists. It is a total disregard.” In other word, the question was “why would the government not listen to the opinions of the art world?” Thus, people began to think that “the art world must strengthen its own capacity to collect public opinions about important issues and to put them into action” (Sunyoung Lee) and that “the identity of MMCA should be built through all artists’ autonomous expression of their opinions and participation (Jiyun Yang).” Soon, the public statement titled “Our Position on the Appointment of the Director of MMCA” signed by 831 artists was released and an open forum was held. It was a joint reaction of the artists to the news that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was considering Bartomeu Mari Ribas, who was the president of CIMAM, as potential candidate for the

position of the director of MMCA. He was notoriously involved in the controversy of censorship at MACBA. The artists asked for the rights to act and speak about important issues of MMCA and demanded responsible answers from the government. What they demanded of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was as follows.

- The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Bartomeu Mari should clarify their official position about Mari’s attempt to cancel the exhibition The Beast and the Sovereign.
- The government should stop its bureaucratic administration that is in disregard of the reality of the art scene. Instead, they should create a space for open discussion about the issues such as the delay of the appointment of the director of MMCA and for public debate on the process of and criteria for selecting a new director.
- The total independence of public art institutions, including MMCA, should be fully expanded. Support but do not intrude.
- We are against all kinds of censorship and surveillance that destroy the autonomy of art. We will do everything to restore the freedom and independence of art.

Right after the publication of this statement, Petition 4 art (The shortened term in Korean for “Our Position on the Appointment of the Director of MMCA”: Translator) held a forum, in which they made it very clear why they opposed Mari’s appointment as the director of MMCA. They deprecated his appointment not because he was a ‘foreigner’ but because during his service as the director of MACBA he gave instructions to screen the entries of The Beast and the Sovereign and eventually canceled the exhibition. Especially when three members of board of directors of CIMAM resigned, publicly announcing their distrust in Mari, it was all the more clear that Mari broke the code of ethics of curators. For these reasons, Petition 4 art was against his appointment as the head of MMCA. What had been underlying in their actions were the critical consciousness that “censorship and bureaucracy is contaminating art world” and the hope that “Petition 4 art’s statement would bring about an opportunity for public discussion, although the art world had kept silence during the series of events,” just as Hyegyu Yang points out. Hyunjin Kim states, “it is no coincidence that suspicions of censorship spread throughout
the art world. It has everything to do with the maintenance of the dominant power.” She emphasizes, “When the dominating power oppresses the leaders of institutions and threatens the autonomy of artists with the conformist leaders in the lead, that is when we artists should form one community and act together.”

Following Chankyoung Park’s suggestion that it was necessary to gain the sympathy of the whole art world and let the citizens know the seriousness of the situation for practical system improvement, they opened an account called ‘Petition 4 art’ on SNS and internet and let known their activities. Their page on Facebook called ‘Petition 4 art’ was a kind of platform and a storage that recorded and promoted artistic activities as citizenship behavior to create a public space. Soeyoung Joeng, here, related her experiences of anger and helplessness in the face of bureaucracy which was ignorant of and indifferent to how art was created, or the citizenship behavior or artistic activities of Petition 4 art.” The issue of the appointment of MMCA’s director is not unconcerned with the individual issues of numerous artists who have experienced the oppression of bureaucracy.”

This consciousness resulted in one-man demonstration in front of MMCA. Chankyoung Park began one-man demonstration with a sansevieria leaf in his mouth in order to remind people of Mari’s censorship scandal. He criticized that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism did not react to the demand of Petition 4 art to explain Mari’s involvement in censorship. He also found fault with the fact that there were way more civil servants than curators in MMCA and that it reorganization was only to increase the authorial power of the civil servants. To him, suspicions of censorship was inseparable from the enhancement of bureaucratic control and authoritative administration which would not respond to the opinions of art world, let alone that of

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19 After long discussion, the artists decided to continue collective actions. They demanded the followings: Mari’s official position about the cancelment of The Beast and the Sovereign; an public debate about the process and the criteria of selecting a new director of National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art; establishment of National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Reformation Committee, which includes artists; expansion of autonomy of public art institutions; abolition of censorship damaging the autonomy of art. (Park, Jungwhan. ibid.)

20 Soeyoung Jung, Petition 4 art’s Facebook Page. 015.11.16.

21 “The history of political censorship... can the freedom of expression guaranteed?” Kyunghyang Shinmun. 2015.11.27.
the citizens.

However, one-man demonstration could not elicit answers from the government. It was simply another opportunity for artists to experience violence and exclusion. Yejin Kim, after participating one-man demonstration, wrote on her Facebook page as follows.

I’ve seen demonstrations before but it was the first time for me to do one-man demonstration myself. Although we did not attempt to enter the museum or do any violent action, we were immediately surrounded by the administrators. They said to us, “Excuse me, but the thing you’re carrying, is that something to do with our museum? You really shouldn’t do this!” “Our museum!” But I was not included in that “we” here and I felt upset. Isn’t MMCA a public institution? Certainly, I don’t visit MMCA often, but I can always come and see the exhibitions. To the administrators of MMCA, I was a kind of enemy. To think that they treated me like someone that should be expelled from their world makes me angry.22

On the panel Yejin Kim held up in her one-man demonstration was written, “MMCA under the control of Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Give MMCA independence and autonomy.” The moment she wanted to exert her right to speech and action as a citizen toward the Ministry and the museum, instead of being a visitor to the exhibitions, MMCA changed from a place of service and welcome to a place of animosity and exclusion, Authoritative silence of government institutions was a clear sign of the government’s will to hinder the formation of public space for discussion which the artists hoped for. And this kind of will could always turn to administrative or physical violence.

None the less, the artists who participated Petition 4 art continued ‘Poster Project,’ which Yuli Yoon suggested. It was a relay project in collaboration with designers to have small voices heard. The

22 Kim Yejin’s Facebook Page, 2015.11.29. (Petition 4 art’s Facebook Page quoted, 2015.12.1.)
poster by Youngeul Kim and Jiyoen Yu\(^{23}\) well shows that revealing the ‘limit’ of the politics of animosity and exclusion overwhelming MMCA and believing in the possibility of the artists to be political agents pursuing critical agreement were the impetus behind the solidarity of Petition 4 art. They tried to create a public space, that is, “a better environment in which individuals can freely express their opinions, in spite of the risks of oppression, misunderstanding and conflict.”\(^{24}\) For them, public space for discussion meant a place of resistance where they could raise questions in the name of citizens about the thick wall of the power, about the unilateral and closed administration of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to choose the director of MMCA without giving any explanation. Youngeul Kim states that “for the subordinate to form a public space for discussion is not to complain to the dominant but to officially raise a question.” It is also an attempt to “openly put a brake on the government, regulations, and customs, which make it impossible for art to exist at all.” The public space for discussion would be generated by continuous discussions and interventions by numerous artists (or those who askwd what art was and who artists were) about what to do and how to do it in order to stop the bureaucratic administration by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.\(^{25}\)

As Petition 4 art criticized the government for not answering to the voices of the citizens, and demanded a public space for discussion about the problems of authoritative bureaucratic system, the national museum began to be seen as a public space for discussion about civil solidarity. The Poster Project by Black Panther and Euteum Yang connected MMCA and Youngman who was sacrificed in the Sewol disaster. They stated that MMCA, as public space for discussion, was responsible for “remembering the boy’s ordinary but unique life, and for reflecting on the truth of this country, revealed through his innocent death.” They believed that a new public space for discussion could be created only on the base of solidarity among those who had not heard answers from the government, and maintained that

\(^{24}\) Petition 4 art. “Our Position on the Appointment of the Director of MMCA.” 2015.12.3.
\(^{25}\) Youngeul Kim, Petition 4 art’s Facebook Page. 2015.12.23.
“Youngman’s mother calls me, and I call you. You need to call another you. We need to keep calling ourselves.” As Charles Esche, the director of Van Abbe museum, wrote to Petition 4 art, it was an effort to reestablish MMCA as “a place of deviation from and dissonance about all agreements made in the society” and “a space where we can freely and openly discuss and share all ideas and opinions of the minority.”

The citizen’s/artists’ action of Petition 4 art was officially finished at the end of December in 2015 with ‘Greetings from the Petition 4 art Working Group.’ In it, they stated that in their short but intensive activities, they did their best to unite the diverse powers of the participants into one and to produce an ideal result. In order to do so, they consciously avoided managing their activities and making decisions. Instead, while respecting everybody’s opinion as much as possible, they kept the value they expressed in their statement. They also proclaimed that they would not monopolize the right to decide on the 2nd and the 3rd citizens’/artists’ actions or the right to define its significance. As to the serious question of how collective resistance movement should work, they set up an example by refusing to have a fixed identity as a group and maximizing the moral of public space or the space for public opinions.

Their strategy was not to shirk away from the discord and the tension rising out of many different voices. Instead they opened up a space for diverse voices. They also actively demanded responses from the state and its administrative institutions. More importantly, they carried out their strategies very sensitively round the state-owned property, that is, MMCA. Just as Yejin Kim’s question “Isn’t MMCA a public institution?” reveals, what Petition 4 art did was to problematize the deprivation and exclusion that the citizens

27 Charles Eche’s message was translated and posted on Petition 4 art’s Facebook Page by Hyunjin Kim. “Art is the most expanded sensation. And it has more than economic values. Art measures and releases social tensions. Cultural institutions must be a place of deviation from and dissonance about all agreements made in the society. In this way, they allow individual expressions and form conditions for evolvement and change of social values. If we do not protect the areas of dissonance, the tensions are restrained and positive social changes will be more difficult. Therefore, this indicates the interest in the space where we can freely and openly discuss and share all ideas and opinions of the minority. (Petition 4 art’s Facebook Page. 2015.11.14.)
experienced when they were denied the joint ownership of public property against their rightful expectation. Their collective action started from the painful recognition that national/public museums could not be “the commons” simply on the general ground that, “the national and public art museum is operated by tax, so it is a common place.” Just like the phrase “There is no commons without commoning”, a state-owned property, as long as it is fixed in the material definition of ‘common resources’ based on the ownership of the state, does not allow room for citizens’ participation in its public ownership. Public ownership can be realized only through commoning, which is “an act of the public to produce common things in democratic ways.”

Negri and Hardt hold that “what is common” is neither private nor public. In other words, it is “against the dominance of private ownership and the strategies of neoliberalism, on the one hand, and on the other, it is against the dominance of public ownership, that is, the regulation and control of the state.” What they mean is that the alternative of private ownership is not public ownership and vice versa. In spite of the differences between the two, they both systematically restrict the access to the common by monopolizing decision making process. Republicanism, which is founded on sacrosanctity and inviolability of the private ownership of property, therefore, excludes or subordinates those without means. This republicanism, in other words, the concept of the republic of property emerged after the

29 Chaeyoung Lee, “Curators’ Round Table Talk.” p. 83.
30 Commons is a concept that is defined and explored in diverse areas. For example, Hunkyo Jang suggests to use the term “(social) movement for common resources.” He defines the concept as a social movement for building practical systems for individual and collective progress. He translated the term ‘commons’ as ‘common resources system’ and defined the term as ‘a system to secure resources from which a multitude of individuals can profit and to sustain them.’ On the other hand, Pascal Gielen, agreeing with Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt’s political plan, applies the concept of commons to the museum. He redefines the museum as a ‘space where multiple voices and their opposing voices resonate together.’ “The emergence of common resources movement and its significance in Korea.” Now, Here Commons’ 2018 Commons Network Workshop Source Book. Jeju University Common Resources and Sustainable Society Research Institute-Seoul National University Asia City Center-Kyunguisoen Commons Citizen’s Action. 2018.5.2.—5.4, p. 20. Lee, Suyoung. “Curators’ Round Table Talk.” p.83.
modern bourgeois revolution and it combined law with capital. Negri and Hardt emphasize that ‘the republic of property’ as such was established through denying the power of people to constitute a new political system or political community spurred by revolution or through constraining mechanisms of autonomy expressed through new, dynamic and open political forms. Instead, it absorbed the constructive power or impulse into “something like the national hereditary property, or like the government property that the state is in charge of.” As a result, the constructive power was “blocked by the property right”, and “expelled from the everyday lives of citizens.”

Thus, within the ‘republic of property’ which is a modern political system founded on the priority of ownership, legal provisions of ‘state-owned property’ is the core concept that represents the political dynamics of MMCA. Furthermore, just like in Executive Agencies, the boundary between private ownership and public ownership since neoliberalism have radically broken. Negri and Hardts point out that in recent decades neoliberal policies have made cultural products private property, in an attempt to privatize what is public. Privatization as such was manifested in bureaucratic dominance more strongly enforced in our lives.

The problem is that this republic of property—a world created through globalization—is what we all share and that it is a world without ‘exterior.’ Thus, Negri and Hardt maintain that we cannot resist it by taking refuge in an ‘outside’ or imagining an outside for our alternative. Instead, we need to focus on discovering or producing democratic social relations and institutional forms that can be realized in our given reality, or “the process of people learning the techniques of autonomy and inventing sustainable forms of social organizations.” The process will be, on the one hand, a practice of public sharing through commoning the common resources that have been privatized by state or government agencies through bureaucratic domination.

Siwoo Jin and Hyunsong Lee dissected a photograph of Geunhye Park, the former president, into several pieces and combined only four

34 Negri, Antonio and Michael Hardt. ibid. p. 17.
pieces out of them in their poster project. By manipulating a face of power, they question the state power and the necessity of discussion and intervention, demanding us to think about how the constructive power works. According to Siwoo Jin, the constructive power of Petition 4 art was a movement like a small ember lit by artists’ reflections on a chronic problem stemming from their compromise with the power and their actions to fix the problem themselves.36 This small ember, however, has the capability to disassemble the power to broken pieces, which can never be restored to its original state. In this sense, the citizenship/artist behavior of Petition 4 art should be commemorated as an important practice of commoning--how they tried to reorganize and reestablish the power structure surrounding MMCA, its fixed bureaucratic control system and the legal concept of public property (state property), which supports the former two, by drawing them into a space of expanded solidarity.

NJP 리더 제 8호
미래미술관: 공공에서 공유로

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