Manifestations of a Zombie Avant-garde:

South Korean Performance and Conceptual Art in the 1970s1

Sooran Choi

Abstract

By the early 1990s, multiple Euro-American authors proclaimed the death of the avant-garde, but this was paradoxically followed by its various revivals. This essay examines the performance and conceptual art practices of several South Korean art collectives in the 1970s during the Cold War military regime, to argue that they appropriated and re-purposed Western theories of the avant-garde and its various post-war manifestations—including happenings, land art, conceptual art, and Fluxus—to mask their socio-political resistance. Their association with Western avant-garde art forms functioned as a subterfuge that protected them from censorship and persecution from the anti-Communist, and pro-American, but authoritarian government. This alternative view of 'avant-garde art as covert political agency' challenges dominant centre/periphery paradigms in global art history, and complicates and expands discourses on the avant-garde after its alleged death in the West.

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> The teleology of the avant-garde can no longer be reduced to a thematic(s) of success or failure, of revolt or complicity, of truth or illusion, of sincerity or hoax, of existence or non-existence. The death of the avant-garde is not its termination but its most productive, voluble, self-conscious, and lucrative stage.
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> -Paul Mann[2]

By the early 1990s, multiple Euro-American authors proclaimed the death of the avant-garde, albeit paradoxically followed by the avant-garde's various revivals.[3] For instance, literary critic Paul Mann acknowledged the so-called death of the avant-garde, but also questioned whether it left "anything vital behind."[4] It was suggested that true avant-garde art had 'died,' because it was no longer radical or politically potent.[5] They argued that throughout its history, the avant-garde had been regularly absorbed by the very status quo it attacked, which in turn, had reduced its critical agency to institutionalised categories, such as Dada-*ism.* These vanguard movements and the critical challenges they posed were incorporated into a canonical art history, and further co-opted as if they were a genre of fine art. Eventually, the avant-garde became integrated into the system it originally challenged. Marxist critiques also demonstrated that the discourse on the avant-garde and its valuing of originality, were indelibly rooted within the capitalist system's cycle of renewal (it continuously transforms and expands itself by incorporating not only the new ideas that feed into the market consumption of materials and ideas, but also its opposition and competitors).[6] Within the context of the expansion of global capitalism in the post-World War II period, this constant failure of the avant-garde to subvert the status quo was one of the main reasons

for various authors to claim its passing. However, the premise of this article is that one example of the effective resurrections of the avant-garde is evident in South Korean art practices of the 1970s. This article examines the performative and conceptual art practices of three South Korean art collectives of the 1970s—The Fourth Group (1970), the Avant-Garde Association (1969—1974), and Space and Time (1971—1979), all active during the harshest decade of the authoritarian regime of South Korea's Cold War period. The various military dictatorships that operated in South Korea from 1961 to 1993 were anti-Communist, pro-Western, and authoritarian.[7]

While the administration of President Chung-hee Park (1963–1979) promoted rapid economic development, it was also responsible for the most repressive socio-political policies of the 1970s. In April 1971, Park won his third presidential bid in an allegedly rigged election after having forcefully amended the South Korean constitution, which originally permitted a maximum of two terms, to allow him multiple terms. This proved highly unpopular, which led to multiple protests and demonstrations. As a result, in December 1971, Park proclaimed a state of emergency, censoring the press and freedom of speech.[8] These actions culminated in October 1972 when Park proclaimed martial law, disbanded the National Assembly, closed the universities, prevented political factional activities, political gatherings and protests, and imposed censorship on the press, publications, broadcasting, and media.[9] The period from 1972 to 1979, was the most repressive period under Park's regime. Early during Park's reign, he formed the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA, 1961) and The Korean Public Performance Ethics Committee (KPPEC, 1962) which suppressed political dissent, often by framing dissenters as Communists and placing heavy censorship on the press, media, art and culture, which continued until 1979.[10]

However, Park's legacy is complex, controversial, and conflicted. On the one hand, he is

still recognised and respected as a hero, and as a brave and efficient leader who brought rapid economic development (referred to as "the Han River Miracle") and who lifted the country out of extreme post-war poverty.11 On the other hand, the Park government was extremely repressive, restricted human rights, carried out Communist witch hunts, and jailed and executed political dissents.12 As will be discussed throughout the article, not only the political dissidents, but artists who were under suspicion of creating art with any anti-governmental associations were under surveillance and often even subjected to torture and physical violence. It was against this backdrop that the South Korean art collectives, considered in this article, were operating.

These South Korean art collectives are little known or studied outside of the country. The subject has been completely omitted from extant Korean Modern art history surveys published in English.13 The rare reference in English relating to the South Korean avant-garde is the catalogue *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s–1980s*, which accompanied the eponymous exhibition at the Queens Museum of Art in New York in 1999.14   However, it discusses South Korean Conceptualism, mainly focusing on Minjung Art in the 1980s, and dismisses the art activities of the early 1970s as superficial derivatives of Western art, therefore, claiming they were not a Korean Conceptual art, nor an avant-garde.15 Within South Korea, while the art collectives have been previously written about in monographic catalogues and periodicals, their performative and conceptual works have been historically ignored and dismissed as 'derivative' Western avant-garde art by both the South Korean government and the art establishment.16 As an example, South Korean art historian Gwang-soo Oh (who originally furnished positive assessments of Happenings), and art critic Yil Lee, both writing about South Korean art from the 1970s to the 1990s, regarded the late 1960s and the early 1970s in South Korean art as a "transitional" phase,

an "age of confusion and depression," and a period "without major art movements, caught in between the established Art Informel movement of the mid- 1950s and the Tansaekhwa (Monochrome painting) movement of the mid-1970s."[17] The artists who were involved in these performance-based activities in the late 1960s and the early '70s were not part of the mainstream art establishment, whose works centred around painting; they were also restricted by state-sponsored censorship, which the military government justified with Cold War rhetoric on the one hand, and ethics and morality laws on the other.

Doubly marginalised by the art establishment and the military government as derivative and decadent, these artists were considered a "lost generation" within the political and social milieu of that time.[18] However, in this article, I contend that their implied association with Western avant-garde art itself functioned as a form of subterfuge that protected them from censorship and persecution. The proposition to be explored here is that these artists appropriated and re-purposed Western theories of the avant-garde and its various post-World War II manifestations—including happenings, land art, post-minimalism, conceptualism, and Fluxus—to mask their socio-political criticism in order to survive and evade the authoritarian military regimes' repressive measures, which included imprisonment, torture, and even execution. Due to its perceived exoticism and global artistic aura, Western forms of avant-garde art functioned as a shield. The motives of the anti-Communist, pro-American South Korean government were to rapidly industrialise and catch up with global culture and artistic trends. Initially avant-garde art did not raise any suspicions in government circles, press, or media.

Since Western avant-garde art appeared exotic, benignly 'artsy' or ambiguous to local audiences, South Korean artists used these styles to protect themselves from censorship and

persecution during this period. They shifted away from painting and sculpture—the dominant media of the South Korean art establishment—using instead text, photography, and performance—the alternative media of the avant-garde. However, these South Korean artists differed from their Western counterparts in that they included covert and coded socio-political messaging in their work, obscuring their critical commentaries from state authorities by promoting and referring to their work as 'global avant-garde art,' catering to the government's desire for modernisation and global recognition.

My argument here is that South Korean artists of the 1970s repurposed Western avant-garde art as artistic genres and styles, in order to protect themselves in their non-violent political resistance to the military regimes. This alternative view of 'the Western avant-garde art/discourse as covert political agency' nuances and expands the discourse on the avant-garde after its alleged demise in the West, by articulating how this dead form of the avant-garde as an institutionalised/recuperated 'style' was resurrected and repurposed by South Korean artists and intellectuals. My approach debunks the theory of the avant-garde as a specific set of Euro-American constructs. It elaborates the complex dialectic between the autonomy and the dependence of the avant-garde arts vis-à-vis the status quo in South Korea, and the role it played as a coded tactic of socio-political resistance of South Korean art collectives.

This paper resurrects South Korean art collectives as examples of what I describe as a 'zombie-avant-garde.' A zombie is an apt metaphor for the South Korean version of the avant-garde, because as a member of the living dead, a zombie has technically expired, but still operates as a living being, aggressive in its attack. Though the Western avant-garde had been rendered inert, and had become an institutionalised style or art form, South Korean artists resurrected and

repurposed it and brought it back to life, like a zombie. The vibrant avant-garde should constantly elude institutionalisation, keeping its criticality alive. However, it was this dead form of the avant-garde—as a 'zombie' that had come back to life—which was useful as a shield for South Korean artists, and which protected them from governmental censorship for their critical and radical activism.

Newspapers and weekly magazines (from 1968) were utilised by these South Korean art collectives and were the main vehicles for dissemination and circulation of their avant-garde activities, since there were few contemporary art magazines or conventional art criticism in the 1970s in South Korea.[19] Furthermore, establishment South Korean art historical sources did not address them as 'serious art.' The South Korean Museum of Contemporary Art (the only modern art museum in South Korea at the time) established in 1969 was mainly compliant with governmental oversight in order to avoid scandals, and therefore it was conservative in its approach to art in the 1970s. The fact that the newspaper dailies, and later the tabloids, often reported on these events as 'scandalous' only further propagated interest in them among the general public.[20] As will be suggested here, artists used this strategically to circulate their message to broader publics. They also relied on the popular media to distract from the criticality of their messaging, which was obscured by their label of 'avant-garde art,' which often appeared in the media at the time.

An Avant-garde Funeral: The Fourth Group and the South Korean Happening

In the summer of 1970, an innovative, radical, and somewhat whimsical group of artists from various disciplines joined together to form The Fourth Group (The Fourth).[21] The group is considered one of the most radical art collectives in South Korean theatre history,[22] with their performances not only featuring female nudity, but also cultural and political satire.[23] The Fourth wanted to dismantle what was considered 'art' by eliminating the conventional artistic categories of painting, sculpture, music, and theatre, and substituting them with more universal and inclusive terms such as 'the visual arts,' or 'programs.' Due to their radicalism, The Fourth only officially lasted for two months before being forced to disband due to pressure from the authorities. In their brief existence (from June to August 1970), they produced a series of controversial performative events often described by the artists themselves and by the local press as 'Happenings.'[24] I contend that these artists promoted their events as 'Happenings' not only to exploit public interest in international art trends, but also to covertly satirise South Korean politics, which they viewed as corrupt and anti-democratic.[25] I also argue that framing their activities as 'Happenings' helped to save them from more serious repercussions from the government censorship, because they were able to covertly insert politicised messaging within the obscure artistic language of fashionable Western art trends, which was, for this reason, perceived to be illegible and overlooked by the Korean regime's disciplinary apparatus.

On the morning of 15 August 1970, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, five members of The Fourth staged a public 'funeral' procession titled *The Funeral of Culture and the Art Establishment* (1970) (purportedly for the 'death' of art and culture, but also

implicitly for the 'death' of democracy during the regime) [fig. 1]. At around 10:30 a.m., artists Kang-ja Jung, Ku-lim Kim, Chan-seung Chung, Il-gwang Sohn, and Tae-soo Bang gathered in front of a public sculpture depicting a respected historical Confucian scholar and national hero, Yul-gok (Lee) Yi, in Seoul's city centre. Around 11 a.m., after reading their manifesto aloud, they buried a printed copy of their manifesto in sand, filling the interior of a coffin and covered it with flowers and a white flag. As they began the 'funeral procession,' they saluted the flag, performed patriotic gestures, and paid tribute to past national heroes and political martyrs, so they would not be viewed by onlookers as subversive.

Fig.1
Ku-lim Kim, Chan-seung Chung, Kang-ja Jung, Il-gwang Sohn, and Tae-soo Bang, *The Funeral of Culture, and Art Establishment,* Seoul, South Korea, August 15, 1970, personal archive of Tae-soo Bang. © Tae-soo Bang

Assemblies of many people in public space were interpreted by the regime as a 'protest,' which was illegal, so to avoid being seen as a protest group, they created a lot of physical space between their bodies. Kim, leading the procession and holding one white flag, was followed by Jung, fifty meters behind him, who held one white and one South Korean flag.[26] Fifty meters behind her followed Sohn and Chung, carrying the flower-covered coffin. Lastly, Bang followed

them carrying a shovel. According to the artists, the coffin symbolised 'all contradictions,' the flowers, 'hypocrisy,' the white flag 'purity,' and the ideal of non-violent unification.[27] The manifesto reiterated The Fourth's proclamation of the death of the art establishment and the independence of Korean culture.

The symbolic funeral procession continued to Gwanghwa Gate (the historical centre of downtown Seoul) before police stopped it in front of the National Assembly Building. The original plan for the funeral was to continue to the first Han River Bridge, where the flags were to be burned and the coffin buried. However, because of police interference, this was not achieved. The incident was covered in a local weekly magazine titled *The Weekly Woman* (*Juganyeoseong*) published on 26 August 1970, which reported the conversation between the artists and the police as such:

> Police: What kind of art is this?
> Artists: What we are doing is called a 'Happening.'
> Police: What is a 'Happening,' then?
> Artists: It is a sort of spontaneous art, and now we are creating one with these materials.
> Police: How is this art? This is a coffin!
> Artists: It is also sand and flowers. They are all materials for our artwork. It is also called 'land art.'[28]

A court hearing was held the next day, and the artists were lightly charged with violating traffic laws. In their own defence, the artists claim that their activity was a 'Happening,' and 'land art,' annoyed and puzzled the authorities, but they set them free with no further charges.[29]

Process and Land Art: Ku-lim Kim's 'Art that Makes One Think'

Four months earlier in 1970, the two members of The Fourth, Ku-lim Kim and Chan-seung Chung, ventured out into public space. Experimenting with the concepts of impermanence and

ephemerality, Kim characterised the art of the 1970s, as "art that makes one think."[30] Kim put these conceptual ideas into practice in his work *From Phenomenon to Traces* (1970), in which he went to a riverbank near Hanyang University in Seoul in April 1970 and burned sections of grass [fig. 2]. Over five hundred feet of grass, Kim inserted several large nails into the ground and connected them via a rope in the shape of seven large zigzagged triangles with sides of about twenty-three meters. After laying pieces of gasoline-soaked toilet paper on the ground alongside the triangular roped lines, he set the paper on fire, hoping to burn alternate sections of the triangles.

Fig. 2
Ku-lim Kim, *From Phenomenon To Traces*, A riverbank near *Salgogi* Bridge and Hanyang
University, Seoul, South Korea, April 11, 1970, personal archive of Ku-lim Kim. ©Ku-lim Kim

Kim referred to this work as an example of *Daeji Misul* (variously translated as 'Earthworks' or 'land art'), explaining to onlookers that "art can be found or created outside of the walls of the museum, amid nature."[31] As Kim's three-and-half-hour burning event continued and people gathered around him, he explained to the confused spectators that it was "an impossible art[work], as the burnt grass [would] eventually disappear, and nothing [would remain] permanently."[32] The 19 April 1970 issue of the weekly newspaper, *Sunday Seoul* initially reported on the onlookers' puzzled responses to Kim's actions, quoting them as saying: "What person wastes gasoline?", "I need that toilet tissue to wipe my nose!" or "This is boring and strange."[33] These comments reveal South Korean audience's complete lack of acquaintance with process art and land art in the early 1970s. Eventually, however, there was an interesting turn of events when Kim's trousers caught fire and he burned his hands attempting to put the fire out. As the *Sunday Seoul* reported:

> Surprisingly, with burnt pants and hands, Kim chose to continue the event unperturbed. Viewing the sincerity of Kim's actions, and the fact that he almost burnt himself in the process, for what to the audience seemed as purposeless 'land art,' the people were nevertheless moved, and began to pay closer attention to Kim's words and activities.[34]

Similarly, the 22 April issue of *Weekly Trends* also reported on the fire as a catalyst for audience engagement, this time as something humorous:

> . . . as the smoke emerges . . . a policeman from a nearby police station hurried over only to go back laughing when he found out it was an art event. . . . Many were relieved and there was laughter as some people jokingly commented that it may have been [a dead] body art rather than land art.[35]

Lighting a fire in a public space, such as a riverbank in the centre of the city, could have provoked a serious penalty, yet Kim's explanation that it was a form of art variously called 'land art' or 'process art,' caused the policemen to not take him seriously. Meanwhile, the audience was moved by Kim's earnest engagement with his seemingly useless and pointless actions, enabling them to observe and think about their deeper meanings, without easily pinpointing what exactly the artist was criticising. Burning the grass on the developed riverbank, which stood as a symbol of the government's economic progress, could have been viewed as undermining governmental authority. Yet, by burning it in a zigzag design, Kim rendered his action as an artwork rather than as destruction or resistance, rendering the performance metaphorically beyond the law.

Sitting on the burnt grass and smoking a cigarette afterward, Kim responded to a *Weekly Trend* reporter who asked why he was embarking on such a difficult undertaking. He explained, "There are easier ways to make art. It is a lonely job, and it does not make money. But if we stop doing it, pure art will be buried under authoritarian art."[36] When he was asked "What is authoritarian art?", he responded, "all of the establishment art that is involved with politics and power games."[37] In short, he associated the art establishment as complicit with the authoritarian regime, and through his artwork intended to metaphorically critique both.

Collectivism as a Mode of Survival under the Military Dictatorship

Two other art collectives: the Avant-Garde Association (AG) and Space and Time (ST), were well-known art collectives in the 1970s. They were formed by loose associations of artists who engaged in various post-minimalist and conceptually oriented art practices that were gaining international

traction at the time. Like The Fourth, both AG and ST exploited the anonymity of their collective identities to avoid the dangers of punishment by the regime. However, unlike The Fourth, which used the avant-garde form of 'Happenings' to render its critiques, AG and ST turned to post-minimalist and conceptual approaches, as a form of heightened protective measures in the face of the increasingly harsh censorship of the Park regime. These art styles were perceived as subtler avant-garde art forms.
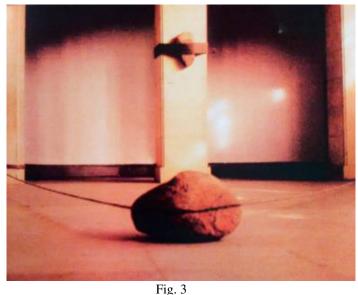
Formed in 1969, AG consisted of over a dozen artists and art critics of the post-war generation, who sought to represent the ideas of the avant-garde, as indicated by their name. Formed a year later, ST was mainly led by artists who were five to ten years younger than most members of AG (although several members belonged to both groups).[38] The name Space and Time referred to the warped and non-objective sense of space and time described by Alfred Einstein's Theory of Relativity, as well as the relativism described in the *Zhuangzi* (476–221 BC), an ancient Chinese collection of fables that is one of the foundational texts of Daoism.[39]

AG's specific approach to the avant-garde is exemplified by one of its main theoreticians, art critic and historian Yil Lee. Having studied and majored in art history at the University of Paris between 1957 and 1966, and before returning to South Korea, Lee was one of a small number of art historians active in the South Korean art scene since the end of the 1960s. In his essay, 'A Discourse on the Avant-garde: an Essay about its Transformational State and Limitations,' published in AG's first journal in June 1969, he offers a comprehensive and detailed historiography of the avant-garde in its Euro-American artistic context.[40] He suggests his own visionary views on the avant-garde by citing Pierre Restany who stated that: "Today's avant-garde is not an art of resistance, but an art of participation."[41] He also argued that in contrast to the earlier historic avant-

garde, the post-war avant-garde was not motivated by destruction, but rather by optimism within the system and strived for a critical renewal.[42] Published in 1969, Lee wrote his essay five years earlier than another major text on the avant-garde, *Theory of the Avant-Garde,* by German literary critic Peter Burger, originally published in 1974.[43]

Lee's upending of the typical rhetoric of the avant-garde as an art of participation and constructive optimism, rather than one of destruction, sheds light on AG's artistic direction. One must keep in mind that in South Korea, 'participation' in any type of activity that was not endorsed by the government was in itself a radical political act and was viewed with suspicion. In his text, Lee downplays the apparent confrontational sentiment of his statement, by displacing the words 'resistance' and 'destruction,' usually associated with avant-garde art, with 'participation.' Participation for Lee, as well as for AG, was positive, yet also vague and ambiguous enough to retain its criticality without being targeted by governmental surveillance.

Kun-yong Lee's Post-minimalism under the Avant-Garde Association

Fig. 3
Kun-yong Lee, *Relation 72-1*, AG Third Exhibition, National Museum of Contemporary Art,
December 11-24, 1972, personal archive of Kun-yong Lee. © Kun-yong Lee

In 1972, AG held a group exhibition at the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul, in which Kun-yong Lee (who was also one of the founders of ST) exhibited two post-minimalist-type works, titled *Relation 72–1* (1972) [fig. 3], a stone tied with ropes to a column, and *Corporal Term* (1972) [fig. 4]. *Relation 72–1* was, and *Corporal Term*, an uprooted tree trunk with its roots embedded in a block of earth. Lee stressed that his artistic approach was based in phenomenology, specifically Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1944) and Ufan Lee's *Phenomenology of Encounter* (1970).[44]

Fig. 4
Kun-yong Lee, *Corporal Term*, Installation scene, Ku-lim Kim and Kun-yong Lee standing next to *Corporal Term*, AG Third Exhibition, National Museum of Contemporary Art, December 11-24, 1972, personal archive of Kun-yong Lee. © Kun-yong Lee

Merleau-Ponty's discourse on phenomenology was also an important text for the Minimalist artist Robert Morris, during the period when he transitioned away from what James Meyer has described as "Cagean process aesthetics," to "phenomenological aesthetics of perception."[45] Key to Morris' Minimalism was his desire for the subject to perceive his work via their body. While Morris and Minimalist artists were grappling with phenomenology, Kun-yong Lee was also reading foreign texts on phenomenology translated into Korean and Japanese in the mid-1960s. Ufan Lee shared with Merleau-Ponty an interest in the embodied character of

experience and the belief that the physical body is the primary source of all perception. In response to Ufan Lee's ideas, Kun-yong Lee created *Relation* and *Corporal Term* to identify the body as the point of contact between the individual and the object, as well as to indicate space as the site of consciousness, where this contact is mediated. Embodying Ufan Lee's theoretical ideas, *Corporal Term* sought to separate language from objects and things.

In preparing *Corporal Term*, Lee uprooted a tree trunk along with the earth underneath measuring one by one-and-a-half meters from the yard behind the museum, promising to put it back once the exhibition was over. However, during the installation, two military guards approached Lee and began to interrogate him, stating, "This is near the Blue House (the residence of the South Korean President). Are you trying to mark the site by digging a hole in the ground so that the Blue House may be identified from the sky? There may be explosives hidden inside the exhibit, so we must investigate."[46] Taken aback, Lee explained, "I am an artist . . . This is only an uprooted tree and soil."[47] Later, the *Joseon Daily* reported that when confronted with the finished work in the museum, a spectator gestured an imaginary gun with their hand and 'shot' at it, remarking "It looks like a hood placed over one's head before execution."[48] Ironically, this unknowing audience member may have correctly interpreted Kun-yong Lee's hidden message. He intended the pulled-up tree trunk cut in half to symbolise an 'uprooted' and divided Korea. While the authorities and audiences alike sensed a subversive meaning, Lee was able to get away with the explanation that the work was merely an avant-garde art piece that brought natural materials into the museum.[49]

Neunkyung Seung's Conceptualism under Space and Time

Another work that utilised the tactic of tautology and incorporation of the quotidian of Conceptualism was Neung-kyung Sung's *Newspapers: From June 1, 1974*, *On*, an installation in the third ST exhibition at the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul (1974). Utilising daily newspaper pages and performances, Sung installed the pages of each day's newspaper onto four white panels on the gallery wall [fig. 5]. He then proceeded to cut out all of the text and left only the white margins, pictures, and advertisements. The removed text was placed in a blue acrylic box positioned in front of the work while the remnants of the previous day's newspaper were collected in a transparent white acrylic box positioned next to the blue one. These actions were repeated every day of the exhibition from 21 to 27 June, although Sung already began cutting the newspapers two months before the exhibition.

Fig. 5
Neung-kyung Sung, *Newspapers: From June 1, 1974, On*, ST Third Exhibition, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul. June 21-27, 1974, personal archive of Neung-kyung Sung. ©Neung-kyung Sung

In some ways, the work resonates with other conceptual performances such as On Kawara's *Today/Date Paintings* series (1966-2013), in which he painted the date of each day onto a small painting. Similarly, the use of newspapers was not uncommon in global in conceptual art practices, as evidenced by Italian *Arte Povera* artist Luciano Pabro's *Floor-Tautology* (1967) and Japanese artist Kanezaki Hisori's *Newspaper* (1972). However, while Pabro's and Hisori's

conceptual use of newspapers focused on the intrusion of the everyday into the art realm, and the intervention of information into the visual sphere, Sung's intentional repurposing of these kinds of conceptual gestures was a deliberate critique of press censorship, masked as conceptual art. The press and media at the time were heavily censored, and any activity involving media and public exhibitions were under surveillance. By using newspapers as mundane items and repositories of information and claiming the rhetoric of 'art as a process,' Sung safely interjected a critical and political dimension of critiquing the government's media censorship to his work.

Sung's critique of censorship in *Newspapers* foreshadowed an event that occurred four months later in October 1974, historically referred to as 'the *Donga* Newspaper Incident.' It traces its roots to 1972, when President Park declared martial law and dissolved the National Assembly. These actions propelled intellectuals, religious leaders, and journalists to protest. As a result of these protests the government enacted very severe media censorship.[50] In response, student activists burned the censored newspapers in front of the *Donga Daily* newspaper building. In a show of support for the students, sympathetic reporters from the *Donga Daily* held a 'Free Press Conference' on 24 October 1974, during which they declared their right to free speech, especially the freedom of the press.[51] Fearful of the government's retaliation, the *Donga Daily* executives attempted to interfere with the publication of the declaration in the 24 October newspaper issue. However, the journalists resisted the management's obstruction by refusing to produce any articles. Finally, on 25 October, the declaration was published despite the executives' prohibition.[52] The Park government reacted by forcing commercial advertisers to withdraw their advertisements from the *Donga Daily*. By 25 December, the *Donga* TV Broadcasting wing of the company also lost its advertisers. By 8 March 1975, the *Donga Daily* was forced into a mass layoff

of reporters and other employees using the excuse of cutting costs, while most fired employees were advocates of free speech. The situation grew worse when the *Donga* company hired thugs to forcefully oust employees.53

The *Donga* newspaper incident shows how punitive governmental censorship was at the time, and how dangerous it was to resist it. Afterwards, other newspaper companies reluctantly complied with censorship in order to survive. Referring to *Newspapers*, Sung stated, "at the time, I wanted to comment on the gap between what happened [in real life] and what was eventually published by way of government censorship."54 He also confessed that he feared reprisal when he cut off the newspaper pages. These statements underscore the ways that *Newspapers* was intended as a direct critique of government censorship of the media and the press, expressed in the ambiguous language of conceptual art. In this way, Sung's reliance on the rhetoric of the avant-garde gave *Newspapers* an artistic aura that protected him from censorship or punishment.

Kun-yong Lee's Conceptual Performances under Space and Time

After his involvement in the third AG exhibition, in 1975 Kun-yong Lee began presenting performances that involved tautologies, and simple acts of measuring, counting, and body movements, which he described as 'Events' or 'Event-Logicals.'55 Lee purposely used these terms to differentiate his performances, from 'Happenings,' which were popular in South Korea during the late 1960s, but had fallen out of favour in the 1970s, due to repressive measures by the government. Performing over fifty Event-Logicals throughout the 1970s, Lee emphasised the difference between them and happenings by explaining that happenings were "accidental,

impulsive, and somewhat shocking," while his 'Events' were "pre-planned, logical, and conceptual."[56]

According to Lee, the term 'Event' was borrowed from John Cage's comment that "an event is what reveals something as it is."[57] While this is similar to the rhetoric used by Fluxus artists like George Brecht and Yoko Ono, for Lee, the concept of 'logic' was an important notion that he used to critique the random, subjective, and illogical state of 'business as usual' in South Korean politics and society. Though the term 'Event' was already well established in artistic and Fluxus lexicons, Lee repurposed it differently: his concept of the 'Event' relied on logic to avoid artistic subjectivity. This translated into Lee's use of logic as an antidote to the subjective ill-treatment of South Korean citizens by the authorities. In an interview he asserted,

> No one [in South Korea] followed any rules, objective policies, or logical thinking . . . it was all subjective . . . it was a mess . . . I wanted things to be objective, and follow logical rules, without the subjective manipulations of the powerful.[58]

Ultimately, Lee used Fluxus-type events for their foreign aura, which enabled him to critique society and politics under the guise of conceptual art.

Lee's interest in logic and philosophy began early in his life. He was introduced to the theories of logic during his middle and high school years and from the books in his father's library.[59] Like artists Neung-kyung Sung and Joseph Kosuth, he was interested in the artistic possibilities and ideas contained in the analytic philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) in which the self-referential nature of linguistic tautology was examined. Wittgenstein's aim in *Tractatus* was to analyse the relationship between language and

reality, and thus, defined the limits of science. Kosuth, who was well versed in Wittgenstein's analytic philosophy, and translated Wittgenstein's ideas to art, wrote in his essay:

> Works of art are analytic propositions. That is, if viewed within their context—as art—they provide no information whatsoever about any matter of fact. A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is, he is saying that a particular work of art is art, which means, is a definition of art. Thus, that it is art is true a priori (which is what Judd means when he states that 'if someone calls it art, it's art').[60]

The importance of Kosuth's realisation of the tautological aspect of art was that it greatly expanded what could be considered art. Art could now be stripped of its aesthetic qualities and other attributes that were traditionally assigned to art's definitions. Kosuth reduced the definition of art to a simple linguistic statement that art is art. Building upon both Kosuth and Wittgenstein, Lee went one step further, I contend, by adopting a Conceptualist artistic tautology to ambiguously comment on the nature of reality as it was distorted and to critique the social and political situations in South Korea at the time. Lee later developed what I term a 'theory of misinterpretation' from these early forays into analytic logic, arguing that there was value in new and different interpretations of Western philosophies.[61]   In contrast to several South Korean art critics, Lee advocated the importance of his idea of "deliberate misinterpretation." Lee stated,

> Misinterpretation is important . . .During the early 1970s, while I was studying Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, I tried to reinterpret it. I blame the South Korean art historians and critics of the time for not understanding the importance of misinterpretation; by using their authority as art critics and having studied in the West that they understood the Western context [of the avant-garde], so they viewed different South Korean interpretations of the avant-garde as valueless and mistaken.[62]

Also noted for championing deliberate misinterpretation—or détournement—as early as 1956, was Guy Debord and the Situationist International. The idea of détournement was to divert images, texts, and events toward subversive viewings, readings, and situations. Derived from Dadaist and Surrealist collage, détournement was not aimed at a univocal appreciation, but rather at a dialectical devaluing/revaluing of the diverted artistic elements.63 It was meant to simultaneously expose the ideological nature of the mass-cultural image or the dysfunctional status of high-art forms and repurpose them for a critical and political use. Debord's détournement resonates with Lee's deliberate misinterpretation.

Fig. 6
Kun-yong Lee, *Place of Logic*, AG Fourth Exhibition, December 16, 1975. The picture was taken several months earlier when Lee staged *Place of Logic* in the playground at the Hong-ik University, from which, a majority of the artists in this chapter graduated from, personal archive of Kun-yong Lee. © Kun-yong Lee
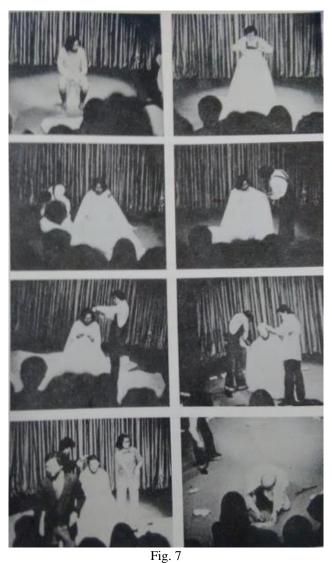
During the AG exhibition on 16 December 1975, Lee presented seven events. One of them, titled *Place of Logic* (1975), merits further analysis, as Lee incorporated less subtle socio-political critiques in this work, which led to unwelcome consequences [fig. 6]. In *Place of Logic* (also variously titled *Location A*, or *There+Here+That Place+Where*) Lee drew a circle on the floor, and shouted 'there,' while standing outside of the circle, then 'here,' while standing inside of the circle, and then 'there,' pointing to the circle behind his back while standing outside of it again, and then, 'where, where, where,' as he walked on the circle following the line on the ground. This work epitomises his interest in the form of the 'Event-Logical' as a means of exploration into the possibility of an "objective" reality, as well as, promoting thinking "outside of the box," when everything in South Korea, including politics, was intentionally manipulated, and rules and policies did not have any objective logic or meaning.64 Lee noted, "I was obsessed with logic and this type of indifferent approach to the world around us, because in South Korea at the time, nothing seemed to be objective at all, and all was subjectively manipulated."65 Although Lee's framing of his critique within the framework of conceptual art saved him from the major punishment usually imposed on Communist suspects or political activists, in the suppressive milieu of the mid-1970s, his mild satire still got him into trouble. Shortly after these performances, Lee was escorted by government security agents to a building's basement, where he was violently beaten and tortured over a period of several hours. Even after being released, he was kept under government surveillance. He then received an official notice declaring that his Events would therefore be considered illegal examples of avant-garde art, and that they could not be performed at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art.66 In comparison to the numerous other

incidents in which innocent people who were suspected by the government of being Communist conspirers, were quickly tried and executed, Lee's punishment was rather mild.

Wrapping Up the 1970s

On 1 May 1978, in a now infamous meeting between a 'Happening,' and an 'Event,' the leading member of The Fourth, Chan-seung Chung, and of ST, Kun-yong Lee, together showcased a performance titled *Tonsure Happening* (1978), a playful and satiric swipe at the Korean government and media's suppression and criticism of 'longhairs,' 'happening artists,' and 'avant-garde artists' [fig. 7]. *Tonsure Happening* entailed Chung, reading from his writing *The Aesthetics of Long Hair*, while seated in a chair, wearing a shoulder cover made on the spot from a simple blanket cut by Lee to create holes for Chung's head, and two arms. As he read, Lee began cutting off Chung's long locks of hair. Shortly thereafter, Chung, with his head freshly shaven, asked the audience if they too wished to cut their hair. Some members of the attending audience decided to participate in support. After the shaving was done, Lee cut the blanket that Chung was wearing into smaller bits and used the cut fabric to wrap Chung's cut hair and arranged the wrapped hair bundles in a circle. Chung then signed each bundle and distributed them among the audience as a souvenir.[67] Shaving one's head was a symbolic act of rebellion and protest in South Korea, but also a sign of commitment, like that of a Buddhist monk shaving his head, or a type of discipline, such as when one joins the compulsory military service in South Korea. While this happening/event resonated with Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964) and American Fluxus artist Alison Knowles shaving Dick Higgins' head (1962), Chung and Lee's quasi-ritualistic hair cutting

performance symbolically marked the united resistance of the South Korean avant-garde art, and

the wrapping up of the tumultuous avant-garde activities of the 1970s.

Fig. 7
Chan-seung Chung and Kun-yong Lee, *Tonsure Happening*, Gogan Sarang Theater, Seoul, May 1,
1978. personal archive of Kun-yong Lee. © Kun-yong Lee

After this performance, Chung left South Korea for New York, and Lee continued to pursue

his career in Gunsan, a city in North Jeolla Province, southwest, and a good distance from Seoul.

One year later, in 1979, President Park was assassinated by his own security chief and director of the South Korean CIA, ending a dictatorship that lasted over two decades. Chung's hair wrapped in the scrap of blankets, as a remnant of the performance ritual *Tonsure Happening*, may have been kept as a souvenir and *memento mori* of this moment in the frame of a Fluxus event, and a cathartic reference to the numerous young Korean soldiers who were in the military whose own fate was decided by the government, and politics.

In conclusion, I have maintained that Western avant-garde strategies were not blindly imported and transposed into South Korea by these artists, with the goal of duplicating Western art activities. The danger and sheer life-threatening conditions in South Korea turned their avant-garde art activity into a risky venture. In the West, the avant-garde was the avant-garde either for aesthetic or political reasons. In South Korea, the avant-garde was a mask to hide behind while being politically subversive. South Korean artists had a conflicted relationship with the Western avant-garde, pushing it away while pulling it in—on the one hand, they rejected being framed as part of the Western avant-garde, but on the other, they embraced it for different specific critical ends.

As I mentioned previously, most art critics have summarily dismissed the Fourth, AG and ST as a "failed avant-garde."[68] In counterpoint, I pose the question: is there such a thing as a failed avant-garde? In terms of political success or failure, these artists did not overthrow the government, but this, I believe, is beside the point. The point being made was raising the consciousness of South Korean society through these artistic performances during a time of repression. In the Daoist tradition, people must be aware of reality, before any change happens. The change does not have to be immediate but can be gradual. Although short-lived, these art

collectives, through their inventive theatrics and imaginative manipulation of the weeklies, were able to get their message out to a large portion of the population. Perhaps the legacy of these art collectives ought not to be remembered in terms of their success or failure, but rather, to be viewed as a catalyst for the eventual transformation of South Korean democratic society.

It is important to remember that at the height of governmental intolerance, members of The Fourth, AG and ST had the courage to protest against the government's anti-democratic policies under the veil of various forms of Western avant-garde art. In the notable words of critic Gilbert Keith Chesterton, "'My country right or wrong," is like saying, "My mother drunk or sober."[69] These courageous South Korean artists, tried to get mom back to sobriety through the message and medium of the institutionalised 'dead' avant-garde discourse and the exotic notion of Western avant-garde art 'styles.'

Sooran Choi received her Ph.D. in Art History from the Graduate Center, The City University of New York (CUNY) in September 2018, with an emphasis on contemporary East Asian art, global art, and post-war transnational networks in art. Her dissertation, *The South Korean "Meta-Avant-Garde," 1961–1993: Subterfuge as Radical Agency,* is an interdisciplinary and transnational study that examines post-war global artistic exchanges among artists in East Asia, the United States, and Europe, with case studies of South Korean renditions of "avant-garde art." It was awarded the 2018 College Art Association (CAA) Professional Development Fellowship in Art History. She is currently in the process of revising it into a book manuscript. She has taught Art History courses including East Asian art, non-Western Art, and Islamic art at various campuses of the City University of New York (CUNY), the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), New York University, and the Museum of Art (MoMA, NY).

Notes

1 All English translations of Korean terms, names, and quotes in this article are mine unless otherwise indicated.

2 Paul Mann, *The Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 3.

3 Since the 1990s, the discourse has taken a self-reflexive turn, coinciding with the claim of the death of the avant-garde. Art historian T J Clark questioned the efficacy of modernism and avant-garde art beyond its relative temporality and locality. T J Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). Critics such as Paul Mann, and more recently, literary and cultural critic Mike Sell, suggested that the theorisation of the avant-garde itself resulted in its death. They also warned against the limited radical position of authors writing on the avant-garde in academia because of their roles as part of the art institution. See Mann, *The Theory*, and Mike Sell, *Avant-garde Performance and the Limits of Criticism* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2008). Similarly, emerging from the post-colonial and global expansion of the discourse on the avant-garde, Larry Shiner has argued that the avant-garde was a European historical construct and ideology. James Harding's concept of the avant-garde's pluralism after its alleged death, has also been addressed by multiple authors such as Leslie Fiedler and Mike Sell in their analyses of the "migration of the avant-garde." See Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); James Harding, T*he Ghosts of the Avant-garde(s): Exorcising Experimental Theater and Performance* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2013); Leslie Fiedler, "Death of Avant-Garde Literature," in *The Collected Essays of Leslie Fiedler*, ed. Leslie Fiedler, vol. 2 (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), 454–461.

4 Mann, Ibid., 3.

5 Fiedler, ibid.; Mann, Ibid.; Sell, ibid.; and Harding, ibid.

6 See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), and David Harvey, *The Art of Rent: Globalization, Monopoly, and the Commodification of Culture, Generation Online,* unpaginated, accessed 12 May 2017, http://www.generation-online.org/c/fc_rent1.htm.

7 See Yong-jick Kim, 'The Security, Political, and Human Rights Conundrum, 1974–1979,' in Byung-kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (eds), *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011): 457–483; and Clyde Haberman, 'Seoul Student's Torture Death Changes Political Landscape,' *The New York Times*, 31 January 1987, accessed May 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/1987/01/31/world/seoul-student-s-torture-death-changes-political-landscape.html.

8 "Guk-ga bisangsatae seoneon" [Declaration of State of National Emergency], *Joseon Daily*, December 1, 1971: 1; "Geungeoeomneun somune gwagyeokan hyeongbeol" [Severe Punishment for Groundless Rumor], *Joseon Daily*, December 11, 1971: 2.

9 Hyung Baeg Im, "The Origins of the *Yushin* Regime: Machiavelli Unveiled," Kim and Vogel, eds. *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, 243–247.

10 Byung-kook Kim, "Introduction: The Case for Political History," in Kim and Vogel, eds. *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, 7.

11 Kyung Moon Hwang, *A History of Korea* (London: Macmillan, 2010), 232–233.

12 Byung-kook Kim, "The Leviathan: Economic Bureaucracy under Park," Kim and Vogel, eds. *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, 200–205.

13 Jae-young Roe, *Contemporary Korean Art* (Australia: Fratsman House, Ltd., 2001); Young-na Kim, *Modern and Contemporary Art in Korea* (Seoul: Hollym, 2005); Christine Starkman, et al., *Your Bright Future: 12 Contemporary Artists from Korea* (LA: Los Angeles County Museum, 2009); Hong-hee Kim, et al., *Double Fantasy: Korean Contemporary Art*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: FOIL, Co. Ltd., 2009); Jung-rak Kim, *Diaspora: Korean Nomadism* (Seoul: Hollym, 2011); Serenella Ciclitira and Dae-young Lee, *Korean Eye 2012*, exh.cat. (Milano: Rizzoli, 2012); Miki Wick Kim, *Korean Contemporary Art* (New York: Prestel, 2012); Shine Choi,

Re-imagining North Korea in International Politics (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); and David Shim, *Visual Politics and North Korea: Seeing is Believing* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

14 Luis Camnitzer, et al., eds. *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s–1980s* (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999).

15 Wan-kyung Sung, "From the Local Context: Conceptual Art in South Korea," in *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s – 1980s*, 119–125.

16 Ibid.

17 Yil Lee, "Hanguk Hyeondaemisul, Geu 10 Nyeonui Baljachwi—1966 Nyeoneseo 76 Nyeonkkaji" [Korean Contemporary Art, its Trajectory of 10 Years--from 1966 to 1976] in Lee, *Hyeondaemisurui Sigak* [Contemporary Art and Vision] (Seoul: Mijinsa, 1985), 341–343; and Gwang-soo Oh, *Hanguk Hyeondaemisurui Mihak* [The Aesthetics of South Korean Contemporary Art] (Seoul: Jaewon, 1995), 39–77.

18 In the West, the "Lost Generation" refers to the artists who came of age during and after World War I, including expatriates or those who died during the War. William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future: 1584 to 2069* (New York: Quill, 1991), 247–260; Similarly, the South Korean young artists who came of age after the Korean War and experimented with avant-garde art in the late 1960s had witnessed the devastation of the Korean War (1950–1953) and were disillusioned. They were chafing under the social, political, and cultural restrictions imposed on them by the Cold War. Many of these artists eventually left South Korea by the end of the 1970s for socio-political reasons.

19 Because of this lack of art magazines and journals, the dailies and entertainment-oriented weekly magazines that began to emerge in the late 1960s played an important role in propagating the avant-garde arts in South Korea in the 1970s.

20 'Bizarre Happening Show,' *Joseon Daily,* December 15, 1967, 5; 'Extreme Avant-garde Art, Seoul's Happening Show,' *Joongang Daily,* June 1, 1968, 5; 'A Report on the Three Dimensional and Performance Art in South Korea: The Meaning of Object, Three Dimensional, and Performance Art,' *Space* (June 1980): 18.

21 Members in the group included artists, actors, journalists, a theater director, a pantomime artist, a screenplay writer, a film director, a musician, a Buddhist monk, a seal engraver, a music effect designer, and a composer.

22 Young-suk Suh, *Geukdan ejeotto yeongu* [A Study on the History of the Theatrical Company "Ej[e]otto], MA thesis, Dongguk University, Seoul, 2008.

23 The group based its name on the 'fourth dimension' referencing time as a universal, non-objective element. They also intended to reference a taboo surrounding the number four in Korea. The sound of the Korean pronunciation of number 4 is the same as the sound of the word of death, so the number 4 has been associated with death, and has an ominous association (like the number 13 in Western culture). In South Korea, there is rarely a 4th floor in a building, or room numbers bearing the number 4 in a hotel. People are reluctant to be the 4th in line at work due to its association with bad luck, etc.

24 Soo-jin Cho, 'The Whole Story of the "Fourth Group": The Challenge and Frustration of Korean Happening,' *Misulsahakpo,* vol. 33, no. 6 (June 2013): 147.

25 Not only did the artist promote their performance as a Happening, but also, the print media picked up the term in their reports.

26 Jung, phone interview with author, 7 September 2015.

27 Ibid; Kim, interview with the author, 23 July 2016.

28 Sung-mi Lee, 'Yeonhaengdanghan jeonwimisul' [Avant-garde Art Hauled to the Police Station], *Juganyeoseong* [Weekly Woman], 26 August 1970: 26.

29 Ibid.

30 Ku-lim Kim, quoted in Young-sook Park, 'Je 4 hoe S.T. geurup jwadamhoewa igeonyong ibenteuui uimi' [The Fourth S.T. Group Roundtable, and the Meaning of Kun-yong Lee's Event], *Space* (October 1975): 77.

31 Ku-lim Kim, quoted in 'Jeonwiyesulga bul butida jukdaga salhanada' [Avant-garde Artist Narrowly Escaped Death Setting Fire to Earth], *Sunday Seoul*, 19 April 1970: 14–15.

32 Ibid., 14.

33 Ibid., 14–15.

34 Ibid.

35 'Gangduge bulbutigo yesul' [Called It Art After Setting Fire at Riverside], *Weekly Trends*, 22 April 1970: 20–21.

36 Ibid, 20.

37 Ibid., 21.

38 Artists Hoon Gwak, Ku-lim Kim, Cha-seop Kim, Han Kim, Dong-gyu Kim, Seok-won Park, Jong-bae Park, Seung-won Suh, Hak-cheol Shin, Moon-seop Shim, Seung-taek Lee, Gang-so Lee, Kun-yong Lee, Seung-jo Lee, Myeong-yong Chi, and Jong-hyun Ha, and art historians Gwang-soo Oh, In-hwang Kim, and Yil Lee were AG members; The members of ST included artist Kun-yong Lee, Jeong-moon Han, Won Yeoh, Sung-hee Shin, Won-joon Park, and Moon-ja Kim, and art historian Bok-yong Kim. Ku-lim Kim and Kun-yong Kim were members of both AG and The Fourth Group.

39 This also resonated with The Fourth's interest in the 'fourth dimension.' Kun-yong Lee, interview with the author, 24 July 2016.

40 Yil Lee, 'Jeonwimisullon: geu byeonhwaui yangsanggwa hangyee daehan esei' [A Discourse on the Avant-garde: An Essay about its Transformational State and Limitations], *The First AG Journal* (June 1969) in *Rereading Korean Contemporary Art II*, 97–168.

41 Ibid., 100.

42 Ibid., 103.

43 Lee's argument that the term 'Neo-Dada' is not appropriate to describe the work of post-war American artists like Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, resonates with Burger's contention that the American Neo-Dada artists were not the real heirs of the historical avant-garde. Even so, Lee was not altogether dismissive of American Neo-Dada as an avant-garde form. See Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

44 Kun-yong Lee, interview with the author, 24 July 2016. See also Ufan Lee, 'Mannamui hyeonsanghak seoseol' [A phenomenological Introduction to Encounter] in *Rereading of Korean Contemporary Art II*, 289–291.

45 James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001): 161.

46 Kun-yong Lee, interview with the author, 24 July 2016.

47 Ibid.

48 'What Helps? After Seeing AG Exhibition *World Beyond Idealism*,' *Joseon Daily*, 17 December 1972: 6.

49 Kun-yong Lee, interview with the author, 24 July 2016.

50 Jin-suk Chung, *Hanguk sinmunui yeoksa* [*History of Korean Newspapers*] (Seoul: Communication Books, Inc., 2013): 99.

51 'Gyeongjikdoeneun saeroun jeongchisanghwang' [A New Phase of Hardening Political Situations], *Donga Daily*, 30 December 1974: 2.

52 'Jarangseureon dongailboneun ireohge churakhaessda' [This is How Our Proud Dong-A Daily Went Down], *Hangyeorae Daily*, last edited on 25 November 2012, accessed 3 June 2017, http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics_general/562075.html.

53 "Jarangseureon dongailboneun ireohge churakhaessda" [This is How Our Proud Dong-A Daily Went Down], *Hangyeorae Daily*, last edited on November 25, 2012, accessed June 3, 2017, http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics_general/562075.html.

54 Neung-kyong Sung, interview with the author, 1 August 2014.

55 See also Kun-yong Lee, 'A Report on South Korean Three-Dimensional Art and Happenings: from the 1960s Happening to the 70s Event,' *Space* (June 1980): 13–14; Lee, 'The Development of South Korean Performance Art,' *Art of Young Adult* vol. 12 (December 1987): 8–12: and Lee, 'The Development of Korean Performance Art and its Surroundings: Trajectory from 1967–1989,' *Art World* (September 1989): 48–53.

56 Yong-suk Bak, 'Igeonyongui ibenteu' [Kun-yong Lee's Event], *Space* (October/November 1975): 80.

57 Kun-yong Lee, interview with the author, 24 July 2016.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 Joseph Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy," *Studio International*, vol., 178 (October 1969): 134.

61 Kun-young Lee quoted in 'Roundtable on Kun-yong Lee's Event': 158.

62 Ibid.

63 Tom McDonough, ed., *Guy Debord: Situationist International: Texts and Documents* (New York: October Books, 2004), 98.

64 Kun-yong Lee, interview with the author, 24 July 2016.

65 Ibid.

66 Kun-young Lee quoted in "Roundtable on Kun-yong Lee's Event," 158 Earlier in 1970, as the Fourth Group launched more Happenings that included female nudity, the media began to turn against the avant-garde artists, and the government eventually passed several laws against and suppressing so called 'avant-garde artists' and 'Happening tribes.' For more detailed accounts on this issue, see Sooran Choi, *The South Korean 'Meta-Avant-Garde,' 1961–1993: Subterfuge as Radical Agency*, PhD Dissertation (New York: The Graduate Center, The City University of New York, 2018), 153-159.

67 Kun-yong Lee, and Soek-won Jang, 'A Report on South Korean Three-Dimensional Art,' 20; Han-seung Ryu, '1970 nyeondae junghubanui ibenteu' [Event in the mid- and late 1970s], *Journal of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art*, Korea, vol. 7 (December 2015): 121–122.

68 Art historian Mi-kyung Kim, who first positioned the 4th within Korean avant-garde art history when she compared the 4th Group with later Minjung art, still viewed the group as a failed political avant-garde. In 2013, Soo-jin Cho analysed the 4th as a subcultural group and advocated it as an example of the cultural avant-garde, but a failure as a political avant-garde.

69 Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *The Defendant* (New York: Random House, 1901), 117.