

Incomplete

The world order is crumbling in the wake of COVID-19. Binaries of prey and predator, non-human and human are increasingly losing significance. The novel coronavirus outbreak is a result of human intrusion into the non-human environment, and is rapidly making the current world order a thing of the past. This catastrophe known as COVID-19 is unlike wars or tsunamis in that it occurs not outside of us, but rather within us. The narrative of survival of the fittest is losing ground. As the virus shows no signs of abating, we must now find ways to live with it.

What can artists do in this age of unprecedented transitions? One possibility is for artists to materialize or give form to specific stances or responses that address what is actually happening in society. Actual social events are, paradoxically, amorphous. Artists give specific form to reflection, resistance, and alternative imagination in accordance with their own aesthetics. Artists can, critically and through their aesthetic and epistemic gaze, capture certain aspects of amorphous reality.

In 2015, RYU Biho interviewed eight survivors and surviving family members of tragic disasters that have marked Korea's contemporary history for his work "*Inner view*(2015)". The interviewees included survivors of Busan's Hyungje Bokjiwon(Brothers' Home) and the Yongsan tragedy, and the families of victims of the Sealand Youth Training Center fire and the Daegu Subway fire. To the interviewees recounting their experiences with composure, the artist asked the same question: Who are the perpetrators behind the disaster and, as victims, who should the interviewees unequivocally reproach? A question to which there is no simple answer, as causalities and principal agents continue to shift from the moment a disaster first occurs. Those that must be held responsible can variably be the state, the relevant public

officials, or journalists. Taking this ever-changing disaster narrative as his departure, RYU recommences his critique of the values and systems of our times.

RYU's solo exhibition *Incomplete* begins with the last of the sixty-four hexagrams of the *I Ching*. *Incomplete* in the sense of: "a fox crossing a river gets its tail wet and fails to cross the water." In other words, the last hexagram doesn't complete the cycle; a new hexagram recommences because the cycle has failed to complete. The cycle doesn't fulfill itself then carry on repeating; the premise is that new transformations are possible precisely because the cycle does not complete. RYU exhibits incomplete buildings that take the hexagrams of *I Ching* as their motif, reflecting the cyclical nature of the East Asian epistemological world view. Variable scaffolding structures that reveal the extent of incompleteness are installed in the exhibition space, then video images and prints are hung over these structures. The state of unfinishedness as a precondition for the creation of something new—the installations not only visualize this, but will continue to shift and reshape into different forms throughout the exhibition period.

In the aftermath of COVID-19, the so-called "Age of Uncontact" is said to be the new normal. In this age of non-contact, what forms of contact might still be possible in an exhibition space? Considering how the exhibition space has historically been a space for physical and intellectual interactions between humans and between humans and works of art, i.e. a contact zone, this question must be raised anew. As part of an experiment, a seminar entitled 'Capitalism for Artists 1' will be held on three separate days within the exhibition space. On the understanding that COVID-19 is nature's response to capitalist civilization, participants will be invited to study the nature and mechanisms of the capitalist system. From a somewhat cursory grasp of the phenomenal forms of

capitalism, the goal is to reflect critically on the clichés surrounding the creative process that was once widespread in the contemporary art world. The exhibition space will transform from a space for visitors into a space for practicing artists and their colleagues.

Incomplete criticizes the mindset endemic to the domestic and overseas art world. From around the time of real socialism's collapse, when even dreaming of utopia became senseless, the art world has focused on the relational. Exhibition spaces came to be referred to as platforms in which people converged and diverged, and hollow discursivity and sociability became popular concerns. But trite criticism of capitalism and sociability leading to sexual harassment and assault proved a far cry from the vision of democratic community and non-hierarchical, egalitarian society past exhibitions had claimed to pursue.

RYU conceives of the present as a sort of sci-fi world careening towards an unknown future in *Incomplete*. The scaffolding structures, primarily used to complete construction, give material form to an as-yet-unfinished event. Risky as they may sometimes appear, the variable structures present another contact zone where visitors can encounter draped, unfamiliar images. The exhibition space becomes a real space in which coexistence is realized within the context of hazards and problems, rather than a space for pipe dreams about harmonious, peaceful coexistence.

Written by Ji Yoon Yang

The Director of Alternative Space LOOP

Translated by Emily Won Lee

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