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MELBOURNE
FESTIVAL
OCTOBER
2017

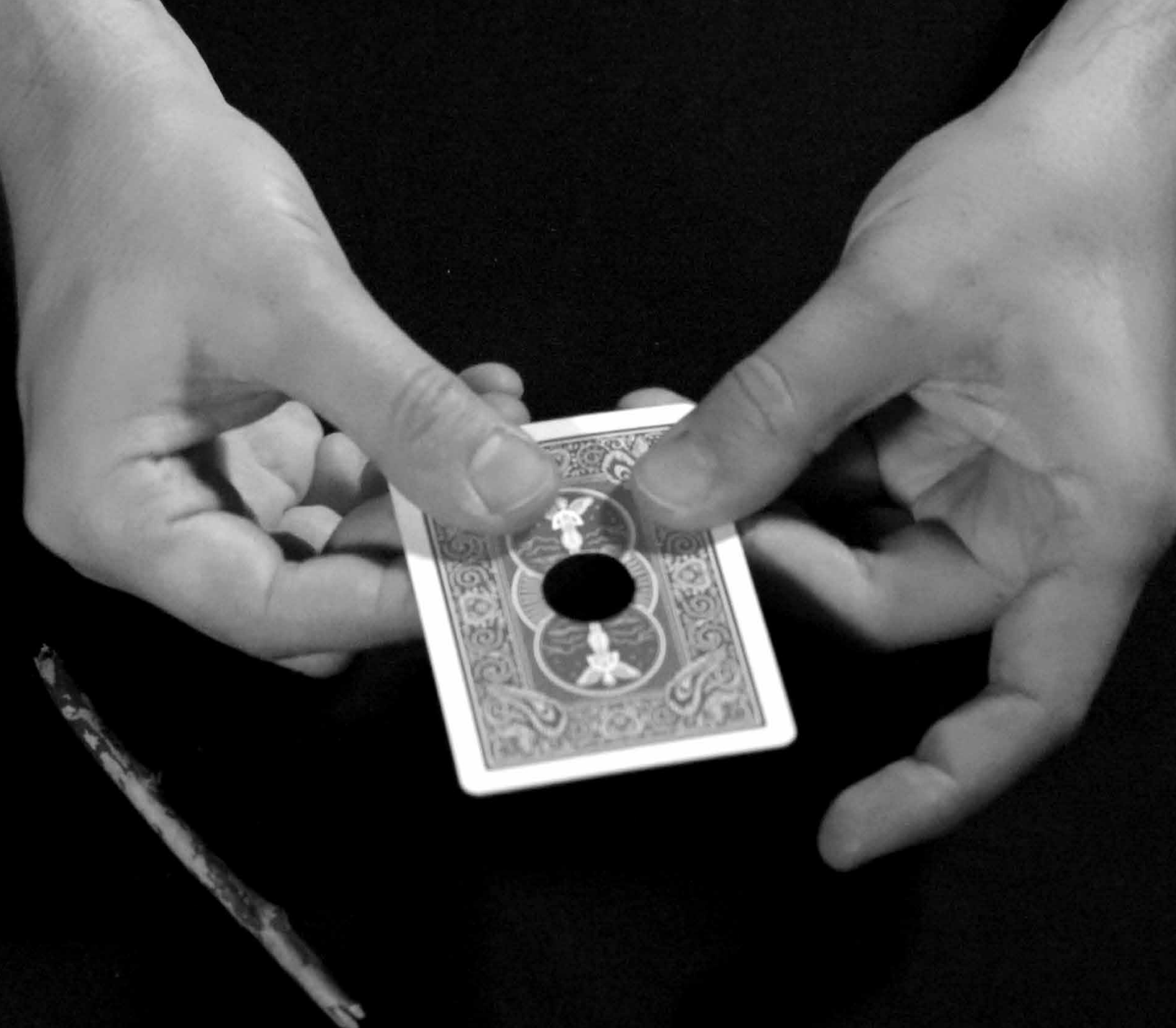


AYOUNG KIM

FRI 06—SUN 22 OCTOBER



Melbourne Festival's free program
proudly supported by the City of Melbourne



Creating new spaces for alternative thinking on our present human condition is at the centre of the work of Ayoung Kim.

Working closely with composers, musicians and performers, Ayoung's method is—in her own words—"a criss-crossing collective working process." In Melbourne, it includes her audience—in a subtle and fluid sense—through the presentation of key works in two locations: at the Collingwood Arts Precinct, and at Mueller Hall, Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Gardens.

In these exhibitions, Ayoung's use of sound and immersive staging achieve an uneasy balancing act between experiential uplifting—a sense of floating—and an incredible sense of depth and grounding, by questioning how the history of technology connects with ancient myths, religion, opera, war and today's intense flux of migration. Ayoung explores contemporary times' sense of drama, human tragedy and destruction. Ayoung's work brings awareness of political and technological events that is both poetic and profound.

In the exhibitions that you are about to visit, the artist subverts narratives and plays with traditional notions of time and history. Both works are grounded in the artist's research in the Middle East, as well as a common attention to the role of information today, questioning whose story is being told, whose voices are being heard, and how. In our interconnected world, these works may be calling for a certain unleashing of the divisive structures perpetrated by colonialism, imperialism and modernisation. These works strive toward an understanding of society as one, and a renegotiation of what is perceived as *other*.

—ANABELLE LACROIX



POROSITY VALLEY, PORTABLE HOLES

**POROSITY VALLEY,
PORTABLE HOLES**
Video installation,
Single channel HD, 2017

Writer and Director
AYOUNG KIM
Assistant Researcher
& Script Editor
ALEXANDRA PEDLY

Production Manager
HYESEON JEONG
Video Production
KHRÔMA FILMS

Camera
HUGO BERNATAS
(Khrôma Films)

Editing
BENJAMIN LARGE
(Khrôma Films)
AYOUNG KIM

Post-Production
ATELIER PIERRE-PIERRE
BENJAMIN LARGE
(Khrôma Films)
AYOUNG KIM

3D Modelling
FLORENT PIERRE
ATELIER PIERRE PIERRE
STANISLAS BECOT

Original Music, Sound
Design and Mix
DANG-KHOA CHAU AKA D.K
Represented by Savoir Faire

Portable Hole Magician
MATHIEU BICH

In this commission for Melbourne Festival, **Ayoung Kim** shifts her investigation of subterranean forces to Australia.

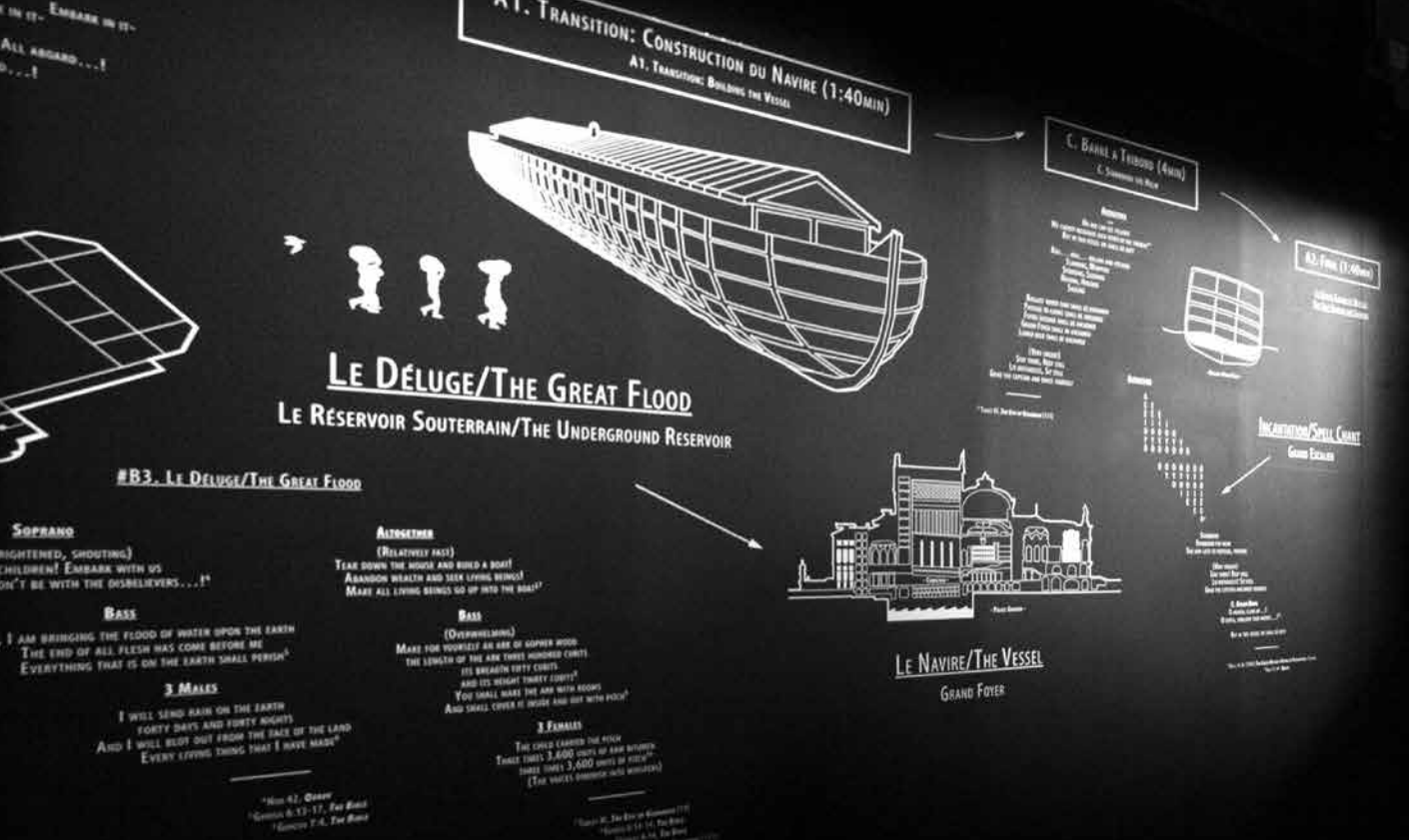
For the artist, Australia 'migrates' seven centimetres every year as its territory moves north. What are the underlying physical and ethical forces at play? Through the character of quasi-mythical genderless entity Petra Genetrix, this work also questions the coming of our future selves (our data-selves) and possibilities for shelter.

This work is a speculative fiction founded on the notion of porosity—the quality of material to be porous, to 'let through'. It weaves holes in a storyline with the visual quality of a magic 'Portable Hole' to suggest that things may not be as they appear, and that everything is always in motion—bodies, ideas and histories.



IMAGES | *Porosity Valley, Portable Holes*, video still. Courtesy of the artist.

Commissioned by Melbourne Festival.
With support from CAC Bretigny, France and Ilmin Museum of Art, Korea, Arts Council Korea.
In association with Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria and Institut National de l'audiovisuel, France.



IN THIS VESSEL WE SHALL BE KEPT

**IN THIS VESSEL
WE SHALL BE KEPT**
6-Channel Sound
Installation, 13min, 2016

Writer and director
AYOUNG KIM

Composer
HYUN-HWA CHO

Choirmaster
CHRISTINE MOREL

Singers
CHARLES BARBIER Tenor
VIOLAINE BARTHELEMY Alto
ALESSIA THAIS BERARDI
Soprano

RENAUD BRES Bass
ROMAIN DAYEZ Baritone
LUCIE LOUVRIER Mezzo

Sound mixing
DAEWOONG LIM
SISU PARK
AYOUNG KIM

6-channel surround mixing
ALOMÉ DAMIEN
from GRM (Groupe de
Recherches Musicales)

Commissioned by
PALAIS DE TOKYO, PARIS

Supported by
INA-GRM, FRANCE

Entering The Gym at the Collingwood Arts Precinct you are faced with the map for *In This Vessel We Shall Be Kept*.

This diagram presents Ayoung Kim's rethinking of historical events through one material: petroleum. It connects the Middle East, the Palais Garnier Opera in Paris and the capsizing of the Korean ferry Sewol in 2014, with a surprising butterfly effect.

Ayoung Kim found that the most important religious books made reference to a great flood and to 'pitch'—an ancient material derived from petroleum. Pitch was used by Noah to seal the arc and at the Palais Garnier Opera in Paris, where the artist was working in 2016 when this work was commissioned. The opera resides on an underground lake that was built to prevent the building from flooding; is it the same lake that inspired the legendary tale of The Phantom of the Opera. The underground spaces also host capstan structures for controlling stage sets that were built by shipbuilders. The Opera was completed in 1875 under Napoléon III, who was also known as The Last Emperor.

Grand Deuil (Deep Mourning)

For Ayoung Kim this mural acts as a visual and conceptual metaphor of her work. It presents figures from paintings and prints of The Great Flood in the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Quran and the Bible, together with images of the Opera. The 'Grand Deuil' also known as 'Grand Antique', is a rare type of decorative marble with high contrast of black and white. Its name comes from its resemblance with female mourning garments of the time. This marble is found in the Opera and for Ayoung Kim it suggests grief, death, catastrophe or misfortune. This precious material was fully mined, but can be artificially created using carbon or oil derived material.

In This Vessel We Shall Be Kept, 6-Channel Sound Installation

This Opera Libretto presents a choir singing verses taken from the Epic of Gilgamesh and the Old Testament, as well as quotes from safety announcements that were made on the Korean ship Sewol as it sank. This work addresses Opera as a form and what constitutes a tragedy. It was created in collaboration with the composer Hyun-Hwa Cho.

IMAGES | Left: Map for *In This Vessel We Shall Be Kept*; Right: *Grand deuil (Deep Mourning)* Digital Print, Size Variable, 2016.



AYOUNG KIM

Ayoung Kim (b. 1979, Seoul) is a Korean artist whose works draw on forms across artistic disciplines—sound, installation, film and theatre—to explore the embedded relationships between apparently distant subjects. Ayoung uses processes of transmission and translation between sonic, linguistic and visual levels to create engaging articulations or collisions that become her artworks.

Ayoung moved to Paris in 2015 as an artist-in-residence at the Palais de Tokyo Pavillon Neuflyze OBC, a creative research laboratory. Ayoung's investigation resulted in a solo exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo, paired with a performance at the Palais Garnier Opéra in collaboration with choreographer Sébastien Bertaud. Ayoung is now based at the Cité Internatioanle des Arts in Paris.

Ayoung has presented a critically acclaimed installation and performance based work at the Venice Biennale in 2015, as well as several works at institutions such as MMCA Gwacheon National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Korea (2016), the Seoul Museum of Art in Korea (2014), the Museum of Arts and Design, New York (2011) and the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro (2011).



IN CONVERSATION

**WITH JONATHAN HOLLOWAY,
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, MELBOURNE FESTIVAL**

I discovered Ayoung Kim's work a year ago in Paris. I was there seeing performances, having meetings and exploring the galleries.

I left a meeting with the Artistic Director of the Paris Opera Ballet (about *Tree of Codes*) at the Palais Garnier, and had a little over an hour see the group exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo.

Moving swiftly from exhibit to exhibit, I went deeper and deeper into the bowels of the beautiful, sprawling building, and in the small pavilion just past the entrance to the catacombs I came across *In This Vessel We Shall Be Kept*, and it quite simply stopped me in my tracks. I sat in a deckchair in this beautiful space, transfixed. I just sat, listening to the complex and exquisite piece of choral music, taking in the exhibit.

Then, exploring the walls, reading and looking at the diagrams, I realised the rich ideas and connections involved. The Great Flood, the modern parallels, and of course the stunning link to the Palais Garnier where I had been just an hour earlier.

As I left, I hoped that Ayoung Kim would be as enchanting and complex as her work, and that the wit and lightness that couched a fierce

intellectual and artistic rigour would be a part of her character as well as her work.

I was delighted to discover that this was indeed the case, and so we invited Ayoung Kim to bring that work to Melbourne, complimented by a new work, *Porosity Valley*, *Portable Holes*, exploring migration and communication, land and peoples.

During her time in Australia earlier this year, Ayoung spoke with me about her work and her practice. The whole interview will form part of a broader podcast in the future, but here is an edited excerpt of that conversation.

JH: Ayoung Kim, tell me about your life. Specifically, how did you come to be in Paris?

AK: Well, it was in 2015 that I moved to Paris. It was for a residency, at the Palais de Tokyo, a part of the cultural exchange between South Korea and France, commemorating 130 years of friendship.

JH: What inspired *In This Vessel We Shall Be Kept*?

AK: The work in the Palais de Tokyo—the choral music, the diagrams and images—all derived from the architectural idiosyncrasies and specificities of the Palais Garnier, that gigantic monument based in central Paris. It (the Palais Garnier) has a huge underground lake underneath it, which is actually a quite mystical artificial reservoir that was made by natural floods.

I wanted to mix it with my own viewpoint and the ancient mythology around the Great Flood. The story is very commonly found in different mythologies around the world. What we know as the Noah's Ark story is also in the Islamic Quran. And many people believe that the epic of Gilgamesh was the original of these stories. Imagine ... the Palais Garnier, this huge building made of heavy marble stones, is floating on water...

JH: To clarify, Palais Garnier is the opera house about which *The Phantom of the Opera* is written, and the lake in the basement is the one immortalised by Gaston Leroux, and Andrew Lloyd Webber?

AK: That's right.

JH: Going back to just before you were an artist, you worked in motion interactive graphic design?

AK: Yes, in the early 2000s, it was booming, the bubble of IT industries in South Korea and all of the world. I worked on many promotional videos for MTV, and ads, some just 30 seconds, made to be promoted online.

JH: So what was your "eureka" moment about being an artist, the first moment that you decided to turn right towards pure art, instead of left towards commercial or paid work?

AK: There were many moments actually, while I was working. I subconsciously knew that I had to make my own artwork, but I denied it. In my younger years I thought that I had to do it because I was doing so well, but after 2—3 years of experimenting, I was really devastated. I was doing well, but in contrast to my spirit. How could I be unhappy while doing something I was very good at? I can do something that makes me very happy, which I'm very good at as well. I went to London to study further, and studied fine art and photography there.

JH: So, is the difference between working in advertising/TV and being an artist all about the impetus? Is the difference that now you start with an idea rather than a demand, you focus on where you want to go rather than where you must end up?

AK: Yes, definitely. There's such a huge difference. At least you start from your own origination, your own drive, and you are pulled on by your own certain energy. You never know what's going to happen, what kind of artwork you are going to make. Sometimes you get lost, but that is part of the process, and you don't need to prove it to yourself or to someone else.

JH: About 10 years ago Enrique Vargas (director of *The Echo of the Shadow* in the 2016 Melbourne Festival) said to me "Jonathan, you are always so certain, you always know exactly where you are going, you have such direction, you know your route, your journey, and how to get there." I said "thank you", and he said "no, its a terrible thing! If you are not prepared to leave the path, leave what you believe, to try and find something that you had absolutely no idea was there, if you are not prepared to just wander in a different direction to that which everyone thinks you are taking, how will you ever find anything new. If you don't get lost, it's not really art".

Now, that idea of setting off on a journey not knowing where it will lead... what is your current journey?

AK: For the last three months I have been investigating research materials around Australia at large, including its geological formations, this vast nature. In particular I've explored subterranean geologies. There is something that I can call a profundity and an incomprehensibility about the nature in Australian state of mind, and if I'm right, there seems a strong connection between the land and the people's self-consciousness. I'm exploring all types of heterogeneous materials, to

see how they can be montaged in one frame and superimposed layer by layer, in order to convey a certain slice of Australian essence.

JH: And one of the things you've talked about is migration in many forms...

AK: Yes, crossings, transpositions and transnationality have been major topics of my practices, particularly at this time of global and universal issues of migration, conflict and terrorism. Also data migration. If we put them side by side, physical migration and data migration, a lot of allegories emerge. I think speculative fiction will be a very nice solution to merge and bind everything together.

JH: You have talked about the idea of reproduction and cloning in your work...

AK: A few years ago, an international digital archaeology institution based in London reproduced one of the most valuable artefacts destroyed by ISIS, The Arch of Triumph, [Palmyra's Arch of Triumph] in Syria. It was reproduced using 3D printing technology, the same shape and textures but different materials. I am exploring how to bring that idea to my very unlikely narratives. Imagine a live spirit or entity is living inside the sculpture. Then imagine that this structure is destroyed by a certain force, or by accident, and that the spirit has to live somewhere, in another form of structure, but in a way, the spirit is in a detention now, because it doesn't have any place to live and any platform, so a lost soul is lingering.

And imagine reproducing the structure on the rock mountain, so that the lost soul, the lost entity, can live in the same structure once again. But imagine that this spirit finds out that someone else is living in there already, that another soul was reproduced, the same entity as that soul. If you encountered an exact clone of yourself, what would you do with it, would you fight it? Fall in love with it? I've read some articles, that the most basic human desire and essential value to be a human being, is to be one singular unique entity. So, if you encounter a being exactly the same as you it creates a lot of confusion.

JH: I'm interested in your advanced use of digital technology. I remember a decade ago, everybody thought that digital technology would transform the arts, that it meant that anybody could be an artist. The truth seems to be that yes, anybody can make art, and yes, digital technology can enhance the way the art is realised or delivered, but nobody has yet invented an app or a digital platform that can transform terrible art into great art. The skills

and techniques are only as good as the inspiration you have and the talent you apply.

You have worked between digital and the analogue, from advanced technology to classic choral forms. With one of these works you are working with digital rendering, with the other you have worked with singers from the Paris Opera and dancers from the Paris Opera Ballet. It doesn't get more divergent than that—was that a plan?

AK: I think previously there was a notion amongst contemporary artists that developing one certain skill, one artform in a certain medium, was classical, whilst at the other end of the spectrum was conceptual art, which is more idea led, leaning towards modern art notions. But 21st century contemporary art is intermingled with everything. In my case, the digital was very good background, as I was quite used to dealing with all these technologies, but there were certain gaps in my practice, and it was very important that I know all the processes and how they function. I think this kind of keynote is vital, that you know how to do it, even though you don't do it all by yourself.

JH: I've always loved the instruction "don't learn the tricks of the trade, learn the trade". So, what do you do and where do you go when you need to be re-inspired? When you need to recharge your batteries?

AK: There are several things really, and they often come from everyday experiences. I go out to a lot of theatre and contemporary performance. Sometimes I lock myself in my house or studio, and work hard on developing certain ideas, to grow them further. And sometimes, when the demands are particularly strong, I get the desire to go out and meet people, to discuss the work... but you know that you never get the perfect advice from anyone that will save you—only you can save you. And that's the hardest thing, actually.

JH: You come from Seoul, which is really vibrant, and now you live in beautiful Paris, but if you could live in any city, which city would it be?

AK: Well, this is a really boring answer, actually, but I can only imagine one city – Berlin. For practical reasons like studio rent, but also, as an artist, the constant stream and the diversity of art in Berlin is fascinating.

Recently, at the Berlin Biennale, there was a discussion about the end of the critical art of the last decade, the end of conceptual art. When I was younger, I really truly believed that art was something that was everlasting, that shouldn't change at all. But now I think quite differently,

and it's changing so rapidly. This re-examining and re-evaluating of what contemporary art is, and the very notion of contemporary art was very interesting. I think Berlin is a city in which this kind of discussion can really happen well.

JH: Do you think this is because of the number of artists living there, or do you think it is the nature of a city that was once divided, that has an incredibly complex history?

AK: Both, for sure. The strong political background, and the fact that now there is little proper industry apart from media industry and art, but even then it doesn't have a proper market for it in the city itself. For sure, this lack of extreme capitalism has helped, but now it is changing, moving towards capitalism little by little. Still, this historic freedom, this liberty from the market, is a strong power.

JH: Can art save the world? Can we, as people working in and around the arts, actually save the world?

AK: That's one of the reasons I started to be an artist actually. I wanted to comment on the world and the human condition, the way we live in the world, and all the conflicts. Perhaps a decade ago I would have said that of course art is changing the world, and art should change the world, that bringing about change is the very basic function of the art.

Nowadays, though, I can't say that this rigid belief is still my drive. I definitely still want my work to contribute to changing the world, but arguably art is something that shouldn't have any kind of responsibility. You shouldn't be responsible for commenting on society or politics. So there is a very thin line between artistic autonomy, aesthetic autonomy, and the political statement or artistic statement. Finding the balance between these tensions is a really key point for me these days.

JH: I agree. My issue is that when major politicians—including the President of the United States—also claim no responsibility for their actions, when we see politicians argue that they should be free from all constraints, or when they pass on responsibility for the big decisions they have been elected to make, then somebody's got to nail this thing, and the best people today are activists and artists.

What is your most brilliant, epic failure?

AK: I think I regularly have them. The process of making art has ups and downs, highs and lows. I confront new challenges every time. Challenge and failure is just daily life I think.

Edited by Emily Goad

AYOUNG KIM

IN THIS VESSEL WE SHALL BE KEPT

Fri 06—Sun 22 October

Open daily 10AM—7PM (closed Mondays)

Collingwood Arts Precinct

35 Johnston Street, Collingwood

Ayoung Kim's 2016 solo exhibition at Palais de Tokyo in Paris is sewn from sources as varied as the Epic of Gilgamesh, the story of Noah's Ark and the tragic capsizing of the Korean ferry Sewol in 2014.

POROSITY VALLEY, PORTABLE HOLES

Fri 06—Sun 22 October

Open daily 10AM—7PM (closed Mondays)

Royal Botanic Gardens, Mueller Hall, Herbarium

This Melbourne Festival commission furthers Ayoung Kim's signature fascination with the invisible forces that underwrite the world, here imagining subterranean geologies as living beings and underground stories pushing and pulling beneath the ground on which we stand.

www.festival.melbourne/ayoungkim

MELBOURNE FESTIVAL

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Artistic Director Jonathan Holloway

Executive Director Kath M Mainland CBE

04—22 OCTOBER 2017

www.festival.melbourne #melbfest

Melbourne Festival acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, learn and work. We pay our respects to the Kulin Nation and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders.

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