

POROSITY VALLEY 2: TRICKSTERS' PLOT

FORUM EXPANDED

by KIM Ayoung

To a World Beyond Hostility

In June 2018, the arrival of 561 Yemeni asylum seekers on Jeju Island sparked a huge social controversy in Korea. A heated debate ensued among Koreans over the acceptance of refugees. The influx of international refugees posed a serious threat in light of the country's historical context that emphasized the notion of "ethnic homogeneity" or "pure blood". Those who raised objections regarded the refugees as outsiders or aliens here to rob them of their work and jeopardize public safety. Visual artist KIM Ayoung's *Porosity Valley 2: Tricksters' Plot* (hereinafter *Porosity Valley 2*) stems from that collected hostility against foreign beings, which originates in impregnable close-mindedness. *Porosity Valley 2* is a new addition to KIM's *Porosity Valley* series that follows up on her previous work *Porosity Valley: Portable Holes* (2017).

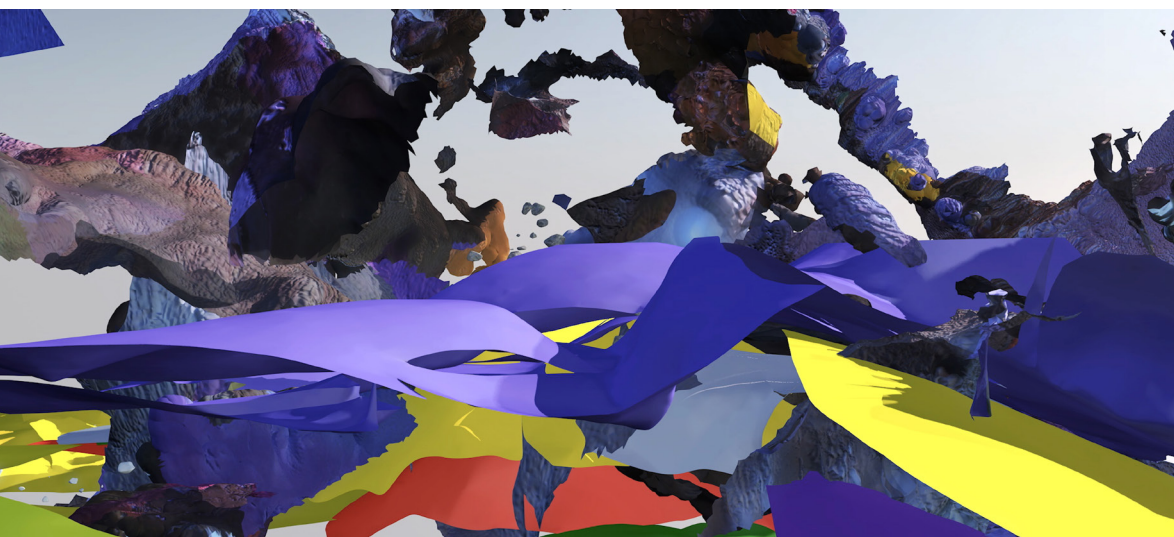
A Narrative of Division and Amalgamation

Porosity Valley 2 has been selected for Forum Expanded at the 70th Berlin International Film Festival—a section that provides a platform for exchange and convergence between cinema and other audiovisual media. In Berlin, the work will

be presented as a two-channel video installation, whereby images effortlessly split and merge across two screens of different sizes. The protagonist of the series is Petra Genetrix—a combination of both minerals and data clusters which may also be a new creature. Petra is shaped like a lump of golden cubes jumbled together. This is the origin of the concept of "porosity", which refers to an empty space or crevice left in the ground after extraction of minerals. The tangled form of Petra makes it difficult to surmise any organizational order or rules. However, at times, Petra splits into pieces or reassembles into one. This fictional creature embodies the concept of irregular amalgamation, and portrays a being whose background cannot be deduced.

Petra Genetrix comes into existence in an imaginary place called Porosity Valley. Following an inexplicable explosion, Petra leaves Porosity Valley and travels to the mysterious territory of Crypto Valley. Considered an illegal maritime immigrant, Petra is subject to an entry screening, and ends up in detention in the Smart Grid Camp, which is controlled by an autonomous immune system. Petra is then governed by the Cloud Passage Integrity Program, which manages existence as data for identification purposes. In the end, under the guidance of Tricksters, Petra escapes by the means of auto-fragmentation and reaches Mother Rock.

Porosity Valley 2 imagines a narrative of reactionary forces. According to KIM Ayoung, her worldview in the series is based on "her interest in geologic structures and the violence of immigration policy that she's encountered during her wanderings across Western Europe." KIM's firsthand experience overlaps with the 2018 Yemeni refugee crisis in Jeju. The issues of migration and displacement, long thought to be irrelevant to Korea (due to society's preoccupation with the notion of monoethnicity), erupted due to the said crisis. In response to this urgent question that drove Korean society into unprecedented chaos, KIM came up with a sequel to *Porosity Valley: Portable Holes* that she'd created two years before.



Director KIM Ayoung

On the synesthetic track where polyphonic voices compete with one another, KIM ambitiously seeks to create an unrealistic landscape embedded in the real world, while at the same time appealing to the senses of the generation accustomed to multitasking. In terms of form, the artist aligns the contemporary issue of diaspora with various other profuse elements such as the fanciful imagination of science fiction, digital graphics, techno music, multilingualism and radio dramas. Just as sedimentary layers accumulated over a long period of time are condensed into one scene, multiple layers pile up and co-exist within a single scene.

In light of artistic traditions, whereby interpretative and semantic works have shaped the dominant current, the work of KIM Ayoung, whose messages lie in the creative process rather than the results, gives an unfamiliar impression of witnessing the emergence of a new species.

The Aesthetics of Emancipation and Transcendence

In *Porosity Valley*, KIM Ayoung employs a creative methodology called “speculative fiction”. Inspired by Octavia E. Butler’s fictional works, especially those of Afrofuturism (a branch of science fiction that combines African traditions and futuristic imagination), speculative fiction is a kind of super genre, which opts for multilayered narratives and contains speculative elements absent in the real world. Non-existent stories rooted in reality propose imagination that leads to new speculations beyond the reality or the world that we are aware of. The expansion of imagination required to change or renew the sanctions taken from the existing world encompasses alternative history, porous and meandering stories, a dystopian world view and time travel. By maximizing all the synesthetic elements found in isolated spaces of extremes in everyday life, *Porosity*

Valley 2 shows how precise sensory records can be transferred to the dimension of reality. Unlike sci-fi stories based on scientific prospects, the work makes a speculative use of science and technology for the purpose of creating new situations that respond to contemporary issues. The narrative, which focuses on social commentary rather than technology, speculates on the state of humanity in the apocalyptic world, thereby highlighting social crises and risks.

Porosity Valley 2 aims for the aesthetics of emancipation through an undefined liaison between a narrative that is not yet enacted but deals with potential possibilities of society, science and fantasy, and disparate objects. To this end, in *Porosity Valley 2* the artist departs from her previous style of working with experts in art, photography, design and visual arts, turning instead to those in film production. Taking the sanctions imposed in real life as a starting point and grafting together geology and geopolitics, mythology, religion, literature, fables and visual arts, the narrative of distortion and translation moves across a vast atmosphere and dramatically embodies the “ideals” of Petra who mocks boundaries.

by JANG Byungwon(Film critic) | photographed by MIN Gyungbok