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Toward a Space of Dissensus: *The Oasis's Performance in Urban Space, Scriptive Things and Relational Aesthetics*

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Abstract

This paper reappraises the Oasis project's performance of occupying the Mokdong Artists Hall in Seoul in 2004, utilizing the concept of scriptive things within relational aesthetics and politics as dissensus. The construction of the hall originated in the election pledges of former President Kim Young-sam and was led by the Federation of Artistic & Cultural Organization of Korea to allow artists to rent spaces for their activities. In 2003, a Korean parliament audit was conducted on a corruption allegation raised against the federation, following which the government subsidies to the federation for the project were confiscated. In January 2004 the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism took over the project to establish a fair and transparent process for the building's construction. Despite the ministry's intervention the hall was abandoned due to its suspended construction. This triggered Oasis' decision to occupy the hall in 2004, with the aim of raising awareness of fundamental issues related to artists' work spaces. Employing a space of dissensus where what is registered as mere noise by the police is turned into voice, I conclude that the reality of appearance illuminates the politics in the Oasis project's performance, pointing attention as to why art space matters in Korea and focusing on the issue of artists who were expelled recently from urban regeneration areas due to the problem of gentrification.

Keywords: art space, dissensus, performing remains, relational aesthetics, scriptive things, squat, urban space, urban regeneration

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Introduction

The Oasis project (hereafter Oasis), initiated by Korean squartists in 2004, aimed to infuse life into neglected or dead spaces through squatting. According to the Oxford dictionary, "squart" means to "unlawfully occupy an uninhabited building or settle on a piece of land." Squartist then is a compound word made up of "squart" and "artist," and is used to describe an artist squatting without the landowner's permission to produce a work of art. As squartists, Oasis members explored how artists contribute to transforming space in a desert-like city into an oasis. Kim Youn-hoan and Kim Kang, the founders of the project, wrote in *Art of Squat: JeomGeo menyueol buk (A Manual for Occupying)* that "beyond just illustrating didactic critical art, the key to Oasis is to cross the borders between art and life in terms of activism" (Y. Kim and K. Kim 2007, 334).

From 2004–2007 Oasis attempted squatting in urban spaces, thereby changing the artists' identity. First, in 2004, Oasis occupied Mokdong Artists Hall in Seoul. The construction of the hall originated in the election pledges of former President Kim Young-sam and was led by the Federation of Artistic & Cultural Organization of Korea to allow artists to rent spaces for their activities. In 2003, a Korean parliament audit was conducted on a corruption allegation raised against the federation, following which the government subsidies to the federation for the project were confiscated. In January 2004 the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism took over the project to establish a fair and transparent process for the building's construction. Despite the ministry's intervention the hall was abandoned due to its suspended construction. This triggered Oasis' decision to squat in the hall in 2004, with the aim of raising awareness of fundamental issues related to artists' work spaces. Second, in 2005, the Oasis artists discovered an empty restaurant building at the Marronnier Park in Dongsung-dong, which was famous for having housed a number of theatres. They submitted an application to the Arts Council Korea, requesting that Oasis be permitted to take advantage of the empty space for the purpose of holding cultural and artistic events for one month. Citing plans to demolish the building, the council refused permission. Once again, the artists occupied the building, a

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decision that led Oasis into negotiations with the council. As a result, Oasis was successful in receiving permission to use the space for one month. In the same year, Oasis established a kind of *Pojangmacha*. Naming this "Art Pojangmacha Oasis," they attempted to squat in the street, using it not as a capitalistic space for trading, but instead as an open, public space, despite disapproval from the ward office. In 2006, Oasis held a workshop entitled "Dwelling Sculpture–Attack the Empty Space in Seoul!," during which Oasis members along with invited European and Korean artists attempted the guerrilla practice of art production in occupied spaces in Seoul (K. Kim 2008, 228–262).

Evaluations of the activities of Oasis have been largely positive. For example, the Korean sociologists Kim Dong-il and Yang Jung-ae have analyzed their activities in terms of the struggle for symbol. They argue that "if art is a kind of struggle for symbol, that is, artistic practices are a resistance to the contradiction of the social space and the recognition of struggle in the production and accumulation of symbolic capital in the field of art, Oasis can be referred to as a typical example of the artist as a symbolic struggler" (D. Kim and Yang 2013, 215). Art critic Kim Joon-ky asserts that "the squatting performance of Oasis shows the possibilities of art as more than art, in light of the feature of Korean society that has a greater reluctance to accept occupy movements."[1] Another art critic, Lee Kwang-suk, concludes that "Oasis is expanding the scope of artistic practices in regressive late-capitalist Korea by not only exposing the operational logics of capital but also by examining the relationship between art and power" (Lee 2016, 137).

This paper examines how the performance and occupation by Oasis of Mokdong Artists Hall in Seoul in 2004 can feed into a discussion of why art spaces matter. To tackle the issue, I first draw upon the idea of the "scriptive thing," which Bernstein (2009) has explored. Despite their unmovable materiality, scriptive things indicate performative material substances that transform the relationship between a subject and an object, humans and nonhumans. Oasis's occupation of the hall as the scriptive thing forcefully

1. Joon-ky Kim. "Haengdong yesul I: jeomgeo" (Activist Art: Squat), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, May 8, 2015.

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demonstrates performance at the nexus of humans and nonhumans. Second, the insights of Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) is drawn upon to form a useful theoretical spine with which to deal with the subjectivation produced by the agential power wrapping together organic bodies and inorganic materials. This material encounter provides a more sophisticated analysis of the subjectivation that tends to deterritorialize subjectivity, that is, to generate a gap, a void and a hiatus in the midst of becoming a subject. Third, such subjectivation echoes Jacques Rancière's inspiration of "dissensus," namely, "the demonstration (manifestation) of a gap in the sensible itself" (Rancière 2010, 38). In the conclusion, I suggest that performance encompassing the holistic view of both human and nonhuman should "extend to that which conditions what is appearing next, itself never appearing" (Massumi 2010, 66) for the vital tenet of the politics of art spaces. In the space, the dissensual subjectivity traveling across the ebbs and flows of the materialistic encounter marks an emergent futurity as alien temporality consisting of constructive and deconstructive time, mindful of bindings and unbindings, becoming and unbecoming, belonging and non-belonging, from one side to the opposite side of humans and materials. Therefore, the emergent futurity of dissensusal space could serve as a useful resource for the central concern of why art spaces matter, focusing on the issue of artists who were expelled recently from areas of urban regeneration due to the problem of gentrification.[2]

2. Gentrification indicates the process of repairing and reconstructing old buildings in a degenerating urban area accompanied by an influx of middle-class or affluent people, while at the same time causing the displacement of earlier, usually poorer, residents. Artists are typical victims of the gentrification in present-day Korea. Since gentrification is a starting point of urban regeneration, many artists have participated in the movement to take the dialogic approach between artistic practices and everyday life, guaranteeing the pragmatic resonance of their artistic activity. Thus, they have moved into urban regeneration areas to create their artworks, deeply involved in real life. However, the artistic presence in certain neighborhoods has triggered rising property values. The effect, paradoxically, has been a main reason for poorer artists being expelled from the area, despite their artistic creativity having made a major contribution to regenerating the urban area's vitality through the recovery of its economic condition.

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The Performance Context

Since the 1960s Korea has undergone a rapid urbanization process in which labor and capital flowed into cities, according to the government's economic development plans. As a result, a large amount of residential space became necessary, leading to the mass construction of apartment buildings. As redevelopment was required to restore old buildings, the Korean government implemented a policy of renovating standard multi-story apartment buildings during that time. This city redevelopment policy caused most local residents to lose the infrastructure that supported their life and migrate into more underdeveloped regions, causing the region's native history, culture, and collective heritage to start disappearing. However, in the new millennium, new urban redevelopment projects were no longer the focus of attention. As Choi Mak-jung and Yun Jung-sun note, because Korea faced a low birthrate and an aging society in the early 2000s the flow of people into cities finally stabilized, and the housing supply ratio reached 100% (Choi and Yun 2011, 60).

Government urban regeneration projects have therefore been implemented as alternatives to urban maintenance and redevelopment projects, in order to solve problems caused by earlier urban planning—for example, 2013's "Dosi jaesaeng hwalseonghwa mit jiwon-e gwanhan teukbyeolbeop sihaengnyeong ipbeob yego" (Enforcement Decree of the Special Act on Promotion of and Support for Urban Regeneration) appeared, replacing urban renewal-related laws (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, 2013). In 2018, "2018-nyeon dosi jaesaeng nyudil saup baek got naeoe seonjeong chujin" (100 Projects Under the Urban Regeneration New Deal Policy) were planned by the government (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, 2018). Unlike prior urban redevelopment policies that sought to demolish old buildings and reconstruct new ones to improve housing, boost the competiveness of the national economy, and demonstrate the efficiency of government administration, the government's new urban regeneration projects attempt to revive and support diversity, creativity, and a sense of place in the city. Nevertheless, according to urban planning scholar Cho Myung-rae, the present urban regeneration projects

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have also prolonged the problems of traditional urban redevelopment policies in that, in reality, they follow a functionalist perspective of city planning that is focused on real estate speculation (Cho 2011, 52).

This article pays close attention to the occupation of Mokdong Artists Hall in 2004. This performance was important as it was the first performance of Oasis to publicize the crucial question of where artists could get their own housing to facilitate their ability to create art. Oasis's occupation of the hall occurred at a crucial juncture, where discourse on urban regeneration was about to replace the discourse of urban redevelopment. At that time, poor artists as well as local residents were losing control of the places where they lived and worked due to urban redevelopment policies pursuing standardized urban planning and the desire for real estate developmental gains. Most artists could not pay the expensive rental fees of galleries, art studios, concert halls, and so forth. This situation plunged them into a state of wandering from place to place trying to secure a space where they could devote themselves to their art. It was in the late 2000s that the Seoul government came to consider the importance of art spaces and changed its art administrative policy from directly supporting individual artists to indirectly supporting art spaces for artists. As a result, new art spaces sponsored by the local authority appeared in Seoul: Geumcheon Art Factory, Seogyo Art Experiment Center, Sindang Creation Arcade in 2009,and Mullae Art Factory in 2010.

Oasis thus provides a substantial and distinguished platform from which artists can have a clear answer to the oft-asked questions: Where do you work? Where can you work? Oasis marked the real start of social discussion on space for artists in Korea, considering the fact that space itself functions as an empowered realm with the risk of depriving artists of their creative environments. Thus, Oasis illuminates how artistic practices could generate works to break down the barrier between art and life, invoking many voices for art space.

Nevertheless, Oasis's artistic practices might be situated as performances with a remaining part or trace of ruined buildings, places, and streets. In other words, their performances traverse different terrains entangled with humans and nonhumans: human actors confront stone, steel, and air in the

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falling-down edifices and human participants connect to, dance with, and sometimes relate inharmoniously to materials. If Oasis carries currency, it results from this polyphonic interanimation; that is, the construing of organic bodies and inorganic materials as respective agencies. Here Oasis, following Rebecca Schneider, can be referred to as troubling "any distinction between live arts and still arts that relies on an (historically faulty) absolutist distinction between performance and remains" (Schneider 2011, 168).

Theoretical Background

Bernstein's study (2009), "Dances with Things: Material Culture and the Performance of Races," illustrates the idea of the animacies of material culture. He assumes a significant role for material factors in explaining the driving force for human identity formation:

> When I describe elements of material culture as *scripting* human actions, I am not suggesting that people lack agency. Rather, I am proposing that agency, intention, and racial subjectivation co-emerge through everyday physical encounters with material culture. (Bernstein 2009, 68–69)

Material experience as "scripting" human action has the capacity to reopen what have so far been neglected material phenomena and processes, as a particular stage in the construction and deconstruction of identity. Although material reality cannot be distilled into a coherent narrative of qualifying language, our daily interaction with the material world has provided wide-ranging and pragmatic resonances for the unarticulated process of individualistic and collective identity development. However, as Bernstein suggests, the material as a "scriptive" thing does not provide a predetermined, unvarying direction, but rather an unsettled psychodynamic fluctuation that impacts on identity performance.

> The term *script* denotes not a rigid dictation of performed action but, rather, a necessary openness to resistance, interpretation, and

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> improvisation. ... That which I call a *scriptive* thing, like a play script, broadly structures a performance while simultaneously allowing for resistance and unleashing original, live variations that may not be individually predictable. (Bernstein 2009, 68–69)

Bernstein's scriptive thing thus "names less an object than a particular subject-object relation" (Bernstein 2009, 70). It is not an object that is "beyond to understand something human" (Bernstein 2009, 69) but a thing that "demands that people confront it on its own terms" (Bernstein 2009, 69); thus, it embraces a far-reaching event, rearranging the limits between humans and materials in a different way. As a result of the transformative process, Bernstein argues that "objects are 'constatives' in that what is most important lies beyond the material. ...whereas things are performatives in that they do something: they invite humans to move" (Bernstein 2009, 70).

Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics could lay the groundwork for a greater elaboration of these performative things. In his exploration of artistic behavior in exhibitions held in the 1990s, *Relational Aesthetics*, Bourriaud insists on "an art form where the substrate is formed by inter-subjectivity, and which takes being-together as a central theme, the 'encounter' between beholder and picture" (Bourriaud 2002, 15). In Bourriaud's words, "[a]rt is the place that produces a specific sociality. … [a]rt is a state of encounter" (Bourriaud 2002, 16–18). According to him, relational art is defined as "a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relation and their social context, rather than an independent and private space" (Bourriaud 2002, 113).

Thus, it can be said that inextricably linked encounters make the process of subjectivations emerge. Bourriaud addresses how "[a]rtistic practice forms a special terrain for this individuation,… involving the 'de-naturalisation' of subjectivity, its deployment in the area of production" (Bourriaud 2002, 89), and values the way in which "[n]ew forms of subjectivation are created the same way that a visual artist creates new forms from the palette at his disposal" (Bourriaud 2002, 89). Here, with reference to Félix Guattari, Bourriaud (2002) casts non-human as the constitution of the subjectivity produced.

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> Guattarri's contribution to aesthetics would be incomprehensible if we did not underlie his effort to de-naturalizing and deterritorializing subjectivity, expel it from his earmarked domain, the sacrosanct subject, and tackle the disconcerting shores with their proliferation of mechanistic devices and existential territories in the process of being formed. *They are disconcerting because the non-human is an intrinsic part of them*, contrary to the phenomenological plans with which humanist thinking is riddled. (Bourriaud 2002, 90)

This opinion has roots in his emphasis on the "materialism of encounter" (Bourriaud 2002, 18). When he argues that "[subjectivity] does not form a 'territory' except on the basis of the other territories it comes across" (Bourriaud 2002, 91), the core otherness is from nonhuman, surrounding materials, and vital environments. Moreover, he terms the "mental ecosophy" (Bourriaud 2002, 92) of individual subjectivity "as outcome of *dissensus*, of gaps and differences, of alienating operations, [that] cannot be separated from all the other social relations, just like problems connected with the environment cannot be detached from all other production relations" (Bourriaud 2002, 92). Despite the social implication of this, mental ecosophy can also be defined as the sphere of subjectivity pursued in the fabric crossing at particularly materialistic encounters beyond simply social relations, in so far as Bourriaud crafts nonhuman factors as being essential for these subjectivations. Hence, for such an ecosophy, when Bourriaud indicates "[a]rt is the thing upon and around which subjectivity can reform itself" (Bourriaud 2002, 97), his intention might lie in art as a material revolving around the thing for the subjectivity produced.[3] In sum, borrowing Bourriaud's phrasing, artistic practice is an ecosophic practice "geared to ideas of globalness and interdependence" (Bourriaud 2002, 101) across humans and materials for the production of subjectivity. The ecosophic practice triggered by artistic practice as itself materialization confers onto us the ability to deal with the subjectivation of the "ordeal of barbarity, mental implosion, and chaosmic spasm…to turn them into riches and unforeseeable pleasures" (Guttari's *Chaosmosis* qtd. in Bourriaud 2002, 104).

3. Therefore, Bourriaud says, "An artwork is a dot on a line" (Bourriaud 2002, 20).

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As a result, we arrive at ambiguities of subjectivation in installation art as being lifted from a viewing subject who is a fragmented subject dispersed by the installed materials. The fragmented viewer becomes a decentering viewer, embracing their own displacement. Such a dramatic aspect of decentered subjectivation is registered in mingled differences by interacting humans and materials can be deployed as the politics of materials, calling for Jacques Rancière's discussion on dissensus.

Rancière postulates the relationship between aesthetics and politics in opposition to the way in which politics is normally regarded as the art of government and aesthetics as a particular theory of beauty or art. His aesthetics can be referred to as a distinct behavioral manner to assign certain limits to our sense experience. Aesthetics can therefore chart the trajectory of the visible and invisible, the speakable and unspeakable, marking on/off the limit of spaces and times related to such sensory experiences. As Rancière notes, "[a]rtistic practices are 'ways of doing and making' that intervene in general distribution of ways of doing and making as well as in the relationships they maintain to modes of being and forms of visibility" (Rancière 2006, 13). According to Rancière, politics engages with the police's controlled and regulated system of distributing the sensible, that is, as dissensus:

> The essence of the police lies in a partition of the sensible that is characterized by the absence of void and of supplement: society here is made up of groups tied to specific modes of doing, to places in which these occupations are exercised, and to modes of being corresponding to these occupations and these places. … The essence of politics consists in disturbing this arrangement by supplementing it with a part of those without part, identified with the whole of the community. …The essence of politics is *dissensus*. Dissensus is not a confrontation between interests or opinion. It is demonstration (manifestation) of a gap in the sensible itself. Political demonstration makes visible that which had no reason to be seen. (Rancière 2010, 36–38)

Rancière claims that emancipation begins when this dissensus as the essence of politics disrupts the existing visible and sayable, leaving a void in the

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policed sensible system; "when we understand that self-evident facts that structure the relations between saying, seeing and doing themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection" (Rancière 2009, 13). It is clear here that he bears in mind that the emancipated spectator must be human. Nevertheless, we can address differently the question as to why non-humanistic materials must not be regarded as those that contribute to the dissensus. Should we not call the vitality of materials—that is, something exceeding a centered subjectivity—the most political demonstration? In line with this point, Jane Bennett rightly observes: "Rancière's model contains inklings of and opportunities for a more (vital) materialist theory of democracy. … Does not the protean excess that Rancière invokes flow through nonhuman bodies?" (Bennett 2010, 106). More materialistic perspectives on politics in its unpicking of the complex relationship between humans and materials might offer copious descriptive details on dissensus.

Let us bring together and elaborate all facets of these theoretical approaches. Scriptive things are vital materials that facilitate the process of the viewer's decentered subjectivity during materialistic encounters. Scriptive things help us to explore the dynamic nature of a particular subject-object relationship, constructing and deconstructing a subject. This subjectivation emerging from the unclean, non-linear, and complicated relatedness of humans and materials could offer a void, a gap or a discontinuity to the process of becoming a subject. In other words, such subjectivation as an outcome of dissensus is driven by relational antagonism,[4] the togetherness of identification and non-identification, humans and materials, and notions of "this is me" and "this is not me." As a result, scriptive things with the most to gain from dissensus are able to forge venue-articulating aesthetics as politics, namely, Rancière's "dissensual re-configuration of the common experience of the sensible" (Rancière 2010, 140).

In order to address Oasis's dissensus squatting in Mokdong Artists Hall in 2004, this paper will focus on its spatial dimensions. I term the squatting space "a space of dissensus," because Rancière's dissensus is

4. To grapple with more sophisticated concept of 'relational aesthetics,' I borrow Bishop's term (Bishop 2005).

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particularly relevant to an arrangement for unleashing spatial delimitation, considering that dissensus is the marking of the "gap in the sensible itself" (Rancière 2010, 38). He specifies that dissensus "places one world in another - for instance, the world where factory is a public space in that where it is considered private, the world where workers speak, and speak about community in that where their voices are mere cries expressing pain" (Rancière 2010, 38). More voices inspired by this concept have provided illuminating discussions on the issues between Rancière's politics and space (Bassett 2014; Boano and Kelling 2013; Dikeç 2012; Sevilla-Buitrago 2015; Swyngedouw 2011). I thus deploy a space of dissensus as a space for proclaiming disagreements, borrowing from Swyngedouw's the notion that "the spaces where what is only registered as noise by the police is turned into voice" (Swyngedouw 2011, 6) due to the ambiguous relationship between humans and materials.

A Space of Dissensus in the Oasis Project

First, I offer a chronological history of Oasis's period of squatting in Mokdong Artists' Hall in 2004, to contextualize its organization and purpose.[5] The construction of the hall by the Federation of Artistic & Cultural Organization of Korea began in 1996 to help foster the welfare of artists and their creative environment through government subsidies. However, in 1998 construction was halted due to various problems, and by 2004 only 53% of the construction process had been completed. The building, with its five underground and 20 above-ground floors, had been neglected for six years and had fallen into ruin.

After returning to Seoul from Paris in 2003, Kim Youn-hoan, a key member of Oasis, did not seek to acquire his own studio due to the high rents in Korea. In jest, he casually posted an advertisement on the Internet to obtain a free studio. Kim reported the situation during that time as follows:

5. This chronological history greatly benefits from the summary of Oasis's occupation of the Hall in *Squat: Sam-gwa yesul-ui silheomsil* (my translation; K. Kim 2008, 228–261).

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> Many artists reacted unexpectedly. … One day somebody declared that there was an excellent option. There was a building in Mokdong that had been under construction, but was now abandoned. At that moment, the artists exchanged glances with each other at the speed of light. (K. Kim 2008, 229–230)

This was how Oasis was born. Before occupying the hall, on April 16, 2004, Oasis occupied Café October in Seoul to immediately experience the meanings and processes of artistic squatting, and to build a base for future planning. On June 18 they published an advertisement in an Internet magazine, stating their intention to lease the hall prior to squatting in it, because they wished to share their performance praxis with participants. On July 1 a preparation meeting for council tenants was held. On July 12 a meeting was held at Ssamzie Space, which functioned as an alternative art space in Korea at the time, to divide and allocate sections of the building. On July 17 there was an event held, visiting the hall as a model house to feel the reality of the hall. During the visit, an excavator performance by Kim Youn-hoan and Kim Kang made for a fascinating occasion.

Eventually, on August 15, the artists attempted to squat at the hall. In an interview with the author on September 28, 2016, Kim and Kim explained in detail the happenings of that day (Y. Kim and K. Kim 2016). Initially, the plan was to take over the hall in the morning or afternoon of August 15. This was already known to the officials affiliated with the federation. However, ensuring that the performance would be unexpected, Oasis decided to change the plan so that the twenty artists sneaking in to occupy the building did so at 1.00 a.m. on August 15. On the evening of August 14, they flocked to prepare for their squatting at Ssamzie Space, with each of them gathering personal effects, artwork tools, water, and even mini-closets as a substitute for portable toilets so that they could actually inhabit and create art in the ruined building. They arrived at the building at 1.00 a.m. on August 15. At approximately 3.00 a.m. they reached the rooftop, unrolled their mats, lit candles and drank wine. They then partied until 6.00 a.m., before falling asleep for a few hours. Upon rising, they spent the morning working on their respective creative works, continuing to work until 1.00

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p.m.—when Oasis attempted to replace an existing banner that hung in the hall with its own self-made banner. At that moment an unexpected yet important event occurred: the secretary general of the federation appeared in front of the Oasis artists, accompanied by the police. As the police removed Oasis's banner, the secretary general exclaimed "Why are you coming into our Artist's Hall?" and attacked the artists with a long stick. Then, under the watchful eye of the police and the secretary general, the artists came down from the rooftop dancing to waltz music on the radio, joined the other artists who were waiting for them outside the building, and they all performed together. Eventually, that evening, they returned to their homes. They were not immediately arrested by the police for occupying the building. However, in June 2005 Seoul Western District Court ruled that the artists must pay a fine under the Laws on Punishment of Violent Acts.

The next sections analyze Oasis's performance from the perspective of scriptive things and dissensus as relational aesthetics.

The Mokdong Artists Hall as a Scriptive Thing

The hall was like the Tower of Babel built to reach heaven. It was a symbol of human desire for power and capital (Fig. 1). It was a reminder of the sharp contrast between the problems of corruption in art policy administration and the actual conditions of poor young artists. The hall is a still thing, yet the still thing is not an unmovable object, but rather has a smashing effect in situating frozen time within a conversation about its future possibilities with the viewer who observes it. In other words, the building itself intimidated the viewers—especially the Oasis artists. At the same time, this intimidated reaction led the artists to do something happy, joyful and exciting to overcome, or at least diminish, the fear.

Obviously the appearance of the hall, the abandoned and haunted house itself, might have been felt as a threat to Oasis artists, foreshadowing the eradicated artistic autonomous spaces. According to Massumi, threat "does have an actual mode of existence: fear, as foreshadowing" (Massumi 2010, 54). In Massumi's words, the hall triggered threat as "an impending reality" (Massumi 2010, 54) to the artists. It was a fearful thing. With the hall

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still a fearful thing, like a continually recurring depression, the scene of an abandoned building still called for more than silence; it called for a potential human response. Hence, despite its seeming fixity, the hall's material factor unpacks the futuristic unstable life in an encounter with its viewers. This encounter built reperformances of the remains across past and future, things and viewers, materials and humans. The re-performing of the stills, traces, and remains becomes a *scriptive* thing. In sum, the fearful appearance of the building as scriptive thing imposes a futuristic action on the artist as both viewer and participant.

Figure 1. The Mokdong Artists Hall (2004)
Source: Courtesy Youn-hoan Kim and Kang Kim.

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(1) Rehearsal

The scripting of the hall's materials, facilitating open human actions, first appeared as a rehearsal for the occupation of the building. In light of scriptive things, that rehearsal could be defined as a re-performing of the materials for resisting the original bureaucratic intention of the building construction. Before real squatting began, the artists published an advertisement (Fig. 2) stating their intention to lease the hall prior to squatting in it:

> A dream art space with five underground floors and twenty above ground floors!!! The first lease on the Artists Hall by Oasis project (building subdivision)!!! A blessed artists base camp, three minutes away from the Mokdong subway station!!! (Refer to Fig. 2)

The artists were very happy imagining that they would inhabit this building in the future, despite the impossibility of realizing this dream. Moreover, they also felt happy on April 16, 2004, when Oasis squatted at Café October in Seoul to immediately experience the meanings and processes of artistic squatting, before occupying the hall. Although one company had a plan to demolish the old café, which had a tiled-roof house shape (of the traditional Korean kind), and to construct a much taller modern building, the artists began their works of art, after succeeding in occupying the café. For instance, Kim Youn-hoan built nests similar to birds' nests, utilizing construction waste (K. Kim 2008, 233–235). The pleasurable experience of squatting in the café contributed to converting the future squatting in the hall from a threat into happiness. In short, in a state of not-yet squatting in the hall these preliminary artistic practices made the hall feel like a source of happiness entangled with fear. Therefore, the artists' feeling of happiness in the midst of fear was triggered by the scripting of the hall. It was the live variation of the material that certainly could not be foretold, resulting from the interactive ontology between matter and human in rehearsal as performance.

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Figure 2. The advertisement for the building subdivision (2004)
Source: Courtesy Youn-hoan Kim and Kang Kim.

(2) An Excavator Performance

This troublesome situation (happiness in fear) in a process through performative reiteration of the building as a scriptive thing continued on July 17 when a visit to the hall (Fig. 3) occurred as a model house with an excavator performance by Kim Youn-hoan and Kim Kang.

Figure 3. Event of visiting the Artists Hall as a model house (2004)
Source: Courtesy Youn-hoan Kim and Kang Kim.

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In an interview with the author on September 28, 2016, Kim Kang recollected the performance thus: Kim Youn-hoan and Kim Kang did not originally intend to hold the excavator performance; that is, it was a highly improvised performance. It occurred to them that they would like to declare the building an autonomous space for artists with an excavator, similar to how people generally say the site is where they live, after having viewed a model house. The impromptu excavator performance amazed the other artists at the scene. The appearance of an excavator gave them the joy of combining art with machines; and yet at the same time they feared they were in danger. Kim Youn-hoan and Kim Kang jumped into an excavator bucket wrapped in two long, colored pieces of fabric. As the excavator moved gradually upwards away from the ground, Kim Youn-hoan and Kim Kang went up with it. At a height of twenty meters, where the machine stopped, they blew soap bubbles in the direction of the building and read a poem for the artists' space (Fig. 4). On the ground, the police did not know what to do. Due to the unexpected sight, passersby paused to watch in amazement and the excavator driver left quickly after the performance, fearing punishment. Although the onset of light rain made them feel cold and the height gave rise to fear, they stated in the interview that it had been a salient experience that made a compelling argument for their squat (Y. Kim and K. Kim 2016).

Figure 4. The excavator performance (2004)
Source: Courtesy Youn-hoan Kim and Kang Kim.

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The excavator performance can be understood as a performance of installation or artistic action combined with machine operation, thereby imitating, parodying, and criticizing the logic of capitalism that engages in urban construction solely for profit. Here, the building first proffered an "archive" of supposedly enduring material. All building construction processes begin with forming a cavity or hole in the ground by an excavator machine. Thus, the excavator appeared in the construction site installations, and represented the construction processes being aggressively driven by capitalistic ideologies that destroy and reconfigure earlier economic conditions. In other words, the manifestation of an excavator machine on the site refers to a convention in building construction. However, as the artists approached the excavator, moving gradually upwards, and blew soap bubbles and read a poem dedicated to the artists' space from a great height, a performance of the building's archive with embodied practices was implemented, giving distinct content and form to the archival memory and the embodied memory. The embodied performance played with capitalistic ideology by making fun of the construction process and subverting the ideology. In sum, functioning as a practice of ephemeral and non-reproducible embodied knowledge, the excavator performance in visiting the building questioned, corrupted, and resisted the fixed archival knowledge of the hall building. As a result, the archive of persistent materiality of the hall as a scriptive thing has the potential for a tangled inter-animation of the still with the living, with a sense of openness and flux.

(3) Occupying Performance and Dissensus as Relational Aesthetics

What, then, was happening during the squatting in the hall? According to my interview with Y. Kim and K. Kim (2016), they arrived at the building at 1.00 a.m. on August 15. Their aim was to climb to the twentieth floor (the rooftop) of the building along with their baggage. The building had only been half-completed, so the elevators were not installed, and concrete with metal bars and wires were exposed as ugly sores inside the walls of the building. Kim Youn-hoan mentioned that he thought they deserved to scream, then breathe a sigh, and take a break at least once. However,

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according to his report, they said nothing, just breathed hard with sweat pouring down their faces, gave encouraging looks to one other when they locked eyes and, in the end, reached the rooftop without a single break. Kim pointed out that although they felt they were in a desperate situation due to the risks of being indicted and imprisoned for their squatting, this event demonstrated the great potential of human bodies. I think this potential originates from relational aesthetics working in the materialism of the encounter. The building's structure and "modus operandi," devoid of the appropriate constructive elements and surfaces, paradoxically valorizes the artists' firsthand presence to make up a deficiency in the building, generating the porous boundaries formed by inter-subjectivity in the material encounter between the participative beholder and the installed materials. It was a part of the material's "scripting humans" action.

After reaching the rooftop at approximately 3.00 a.m., they continued celebrating until 6.00 a.m., before falling asleep for a few hours (Fig. 5).

Figure 5. Oasis occupying the building (2004)
Source: Courtesy Youn-hoan Kim and Kang Kim.

Once they had risen, they spent the morning engaging in their respective creative works. For example, Y. Kim and K. Kim constructed vinyl birds' nests. With colorful sprays, some artists left traces of their feet, drew architectural designs, and decorated the walls of the building. Other artists made vinyl windows, built rooms, and modeled an altar with bricks. Some stuck straws between walls, while others adorned a blank space with

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balloons. All of the works they produced that morning celebrated their arrival and occupancy of the building (Figs. 6–9). In essence, they behaved as if they had acquired studios. The artists seemed to feel a joy, excitement, and vigor that were markedly affected by occupying the hall. That is, the crumbling rooms of the ruined building played a significant role in forging their agency, intention, and subjectivation. Through the physical encounter, the remains of the building served to script the artists' psychodynamic fluctuation for performing the identity of squatting artists (squartists) in the real ruins, while simultaneously scripting the artists' identity in the virtual studio.

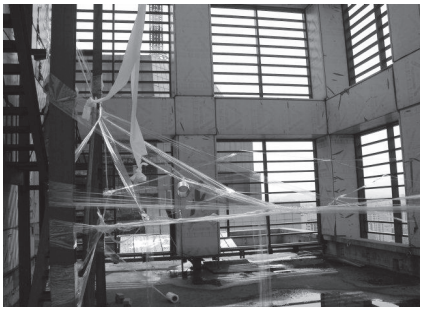

Figure 6. Creative work 1 inside the building (2004)
Source: Courtesy Youn-hoan Kim and Kang Kim.

Figure 7. Creative work 2 inside the building (2004)
Source: Courtesy Youn-hoan Kim and Kang Kim.

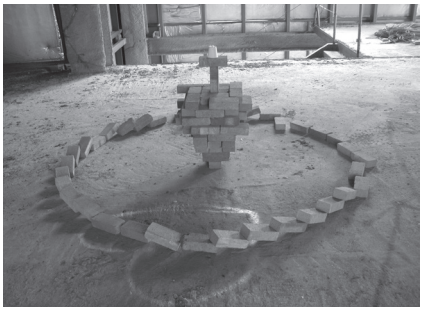

Figure 8. Creative work 3 inside the building (2004)
Source: Courtesy Youn-hoan Kim and Kang Kim.

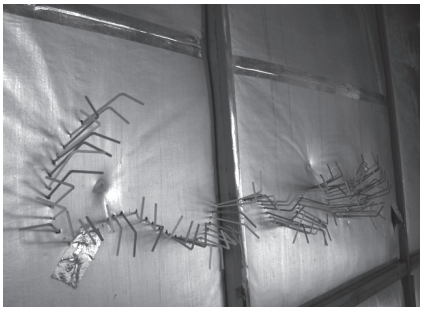

Figure 9. Creative work 4 inside the building (2004)
Source: Courtesy Youn-hoan Kim and Kang Kim.

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The production of these works of art continued until 1.00 p.m., when Oasis attempted to replace an existing banner hung in the hall with Oasis's self-made banner. They cut the existing banner for pre-sale advertising by the federation and instead hung a new banner with the words "Culture for citizens! Studios for artists!" As they were hanging the banner and blowing a balloon from the top of the building, the declaration of artists' independence was read (Fig. 10). Artists inside the building began dancing while wearing self-made shirts decorated with a portrait of an artist they admired and their works of art. The other artists not involved in the squatting, who were waiting outside the building, delivered their respective performances. They tied a safety line around the construction site and performed the act of cutting it in front of passersby, an audience and cameras. This behavior outside demonstrated on a symbolic level Oasis's occupation of the building. After cutting the line, the artists outside organized a protest march, dressed in self-made clothes with demands written on them.

These scenes conjure an image of "dancing with things: emerging performative materials" that invite human movement. The actions of hanging self-made banners and the cutting of safety tape "do" something to unleash and change the artists' social reality, tentatively producing and declaring their new art space. The active performance navigates divergent yet overlapping fields of humans with materials, resurfacing in the building as a particular relationship between subjects and objects, namely the transformation of the building from a transcendental object governed by authority to a scriptive thing forming a special terrain for artists, illustrating a rhythmical moving up and down across the human body and the nonhuman material. Eventually, in the performance a human as "a thing among things" (Bernstein 2009, 70) worked, danced, and performed with the hall, the ruined materials, and traces of some animacies. It was "an encounter with the next atom and from encounter to encounter a pile-up, and the birth of the world" (Bourriaud 2002, 19), structuring "mental ecosophy… as outcome of dissensus" (Bourriaud 2002, 92).

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Figure 10. Banner hanging performance (2004)
Source: Courtesy Youn-hoan Kim and Kang Kim.

Therefore, the artists' subjectivity with regards to dissensus, or gaps in their own sensibility, formed a sharp contrast to the police's identity of acting to control and regulate the general order of the hall building space. For example, when the secretary general of the federation, at the moment of Oasis's banner performance, exclaimed, "Why are you coming into our Artist Hall?" and attacked the artists with a long stick, trying to expel them from the building, he could be regarded as a representative of the police. In Rancière's words, he is a typical example of a police force that fixes a partition of the sensible, featured by the absence of gaps, voids and supplements. He stands for a police system that attempts to dominate the special sensible mode of the visible and the invisible, the sayable and the unsayable, which correspondingly led to the establishment of a censored spatial field or activity (Rancière 2009, 13). Hence, the artists' occupying performance embracing the interaction between humans and materials imposes disturbance, commotion and disruption in the governed hall's spatiality by supplementing it with the demonstration of a gap in the sensible. In other words, the hall was situated on the borders between the abandoned and the welcomed, the restricted and the unleashed, and a raw reality and an imaginative fiction, because the artists' squatting oscillated between destruction and creation, death and life, and self-containment and excess within the encounter with both the still and the live mode of

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the building material. This aspect manifested a political demonstration of dissensual space as the aesthetics of a relational antagonism, marking the unique place of togetherness configured as identification and non-identification, humans and materials, and "this is me" and "this is not me."

Conclusion: The Reality of Appearance for Urban Regeneration via Artistic Practices

The dissensual space displays radical alterity to being outside. In other words, the space allows humans' experiences of being entangled with vibrant materials to be derailed outside the previously shackled delimitation of space. The outside spatiality of the dissensual space might be infused into another radically alien temporality, namely the reality of appearance. According to Massumi, "The reality of appearance is the ontogenetic effectiveness of the nonexistent. It is the surplus of reality of what has not happened, paradoxically as an event, and in the event happens to be productive of a startling transition toward a more determinate thing" (Massumi 2010, 86). The reality of appearance might be revealed as "casting illumination upon the 'not yet' of a body's doing, casting a line along the hopeful (though fearful) cusp of an emergent futurity" (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 4). In the view of the author, the temporality of an emergent futurity is implicit in the process of generating the outside spatiality of the dissensual space. This temporality is actualized through a deconstructive time when human identity will be at risk of being a non-identity to itself by engaging otherness, and simultaneously through a constructive time when the non-identity will be secure in forging a human identity for itself by embracing otherness in a procedural manner through bindings and un-bindings, becoming and unbecoming, belonging and non-belonging, from one side to the opposite side of humans and materials.

The engagement of an emergent futurity of dissensual space crossing "not-yet" and "next" can be important in that it might highlight the thought-provoking issue of why art spaces matter for urban regeneration movement policy, rising as an alternative to urban redevelopment projects. In short,

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to facilitate urban regeneration instead of top-down bureaucratic plans, the designation of dissensus space enhancing an emergent futurity is necessary. It could offer the primary impetus of contributing to attracting diversity, creativity, and a unique sense of place in a city due to its ability to weave beings outside with an emergent futurity. This building of art spaces will also shine a much-needed light on the artists who were expelled recently from urban regeneration areas due to the effects of gentrification.

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