



FIG. 1 Dew Kim, *Latrinxia: A New Utopia*, 2019, 3D printed plastic, silicone tube, water pump, dimensions variable. Photograph courtesy of the artist © Dew Kim.

The Promise of Parasites: Queer Currents, Currencies of Queerness, and Dew Kim's *Latrinxia: A New Utopia*

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*Parasites are typically maligned: they take without giving, weaken the individual or social body, and produce disorder. However, in *Latrinxia: A New Utopia*, a 2019 installation by South Korean artist Dew Kim in which future humans have been transformed into 'anus worms' (ttongkkoch'ung), the parasite is mined for its potential, in Michel Serres' words, to 'generate a different order' (1982). This article traces in *Latrinxia* and the homophobic slur of ttongkkoch'ung the legacies of colonial capitalism and Cold War geopolitics, and the formation of rigidly sexed, gendered, and ideally healthy and impenetrable bodies implemented partly through medical interventions such as the anti-parasite initiatives of the late twentieth century. Examining the installation's markers of cleanliness and filth, gay sexual subcultures, and shamanism, I argue that *Latrinxia* offers a queer understanding of the body as penetrable, with implications for sex, gender, desire, and the human. This constitutes one promise offered by the image of the 'anus worm' parasite. I conclude by situating *Latrinxia* in the economy of so-called global contemporary art and the growing currencies of the 'queer' and the 'local', weighing up the economic and cultural promises of queer visibility against the gains for LGBTQ+ people.*

1 Henceforth, 'Korea', 'Korean', and so on.

2 Schober notes the 'long tradition' of the neighbourhood's 'intensely foreign quality', dating at least as far back as the sixteenth century. Elisabeth Schober, 'Itaewon's suspense: masculinities, place-making and the US Armed Forces in a Seoul entertainment district', *Social Anthropology*, 22.1 (February 2014), 36–51, 40, 43.

3 Schober, 40–3.



FIG. 2 Dew Kim, *Tongkko-Chung (Anus Worm)*, 2019, Silicone casting, silicone tube, dimensions variable. Photograph courtesy of the artist © Dew Kim.

In the last few decades of the twentieth century, the neighbourhood of Itaewon in Seoul occupied a peculiar place in the eyes of the South Korean state as a hotbed of impropriety, disease, and the foreign – or, as Elisabeth Schober has put it, a 'containment zone' for 'unwanted cultural forces'.² The supposedly insalubrious ingredients of Korea's modernity coagulate on the Usadan Road and its offshoots, home to various gay bars and sex worker clubs whose clientele was typically represented as composed of American soldiers on leave from the army base located nearby.³

More recently – and in the last few years in particular – the presence of gay-friendly venues and the appearance of multiculturalism in a gentrifying Itaewon has been held up by the government as a yardstick for the country's progressiveness and evidence of its 'global' status.⁴ Independent art spaces have begun to emerge in the neighbourhood too. One such space is 5%, which is located on the Usadan Road.

From September to October 2019, 5% hosted an exhibition featuring an installation of works grouped under the title *Latrinixia: A New Utopia* by South Korean contemporary artist Dew Kim. Kim's recent exhibitions have revolved around the post-apocalyptic narratives written to accompany them. In *Latrinixia*, humans have survived ecological destruction through a shamanic fire ritual that has transported them to a new planet and transformed them into sexless beings. The installation unfolds across three spaces. What greets the visitor as they first enter the gallery space is a sculpture of a landscape made of 3D printed plastic, sitting on artificial grass, and representing the planet, called 'Latrinixia' (2019, Fig. 1). A form spews up from the ground like a frozen fountain; a thin stream of water is channelled along a pockmarked silicone tube, and trickles onto a silicone cast of an anus with thin, tentacle-like appendages, which Kim calls a *tongkkoch'ung* or 'anus worm' – humanity's parasitical new form (Fig. 2). After the water collects at the bottom of the sculpture, it is pumped back into the room behind into the second space of the installation: a lavatory, with its toilet bowl and sink populated by more anus worms (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4). The third and final component of the installation is located in the gallery's outdoor space, where we find the remnants of the shamanic ritual mentioned in the narrative of *Latrinixia*: a talisman inscribed with Chinese characters arranged in the shape of a human figure, skewered into the soil next to a stainless-steel flame (Fig. 5). The broader space of the neighbourhood acts as the backdrop to the exhibition and is invited into it (Fig. 6).

This article explores the 'promise' of these parasites: namely, the ways their presentation in this exhibition opens up an understanding of the body, and relations between bodies, that is more accommodating of queer desires and embodiments. Here, I mean 'queer' partly as an umbrella term for LGBTQ+ identities, and also as the underside of normativity, including fixed categories for identity *tout court*.⁵ My consideration of the 'queerness' of *Latrinixia* is, as this article will shortly elaborate, also heavily indebted to José Muñoz's understanding of queerness as the 'not yet', as a 'mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present'.⁶ My intention in using the English terms 'queer' and 'queerness' is neither to suggest that non-normative desires and gender expressions in Korea or East Asia more broadly are direct and belated translations of those found and theorised in North America and Western Europe, nor to affirm nativist responses to the homogeneity and cultural imperialism represented by the purported globalisation of queerness, which, as Howard Chiang has argued, tend towards 're-Orientalization' and a 'quarantining'

4 Jieheerah Yun, *Globalizing Seoul: The City's Cultural and Urban Change* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 124.

5 My understanding of queerness here is informed by David Eng, Jack Halberstam, and José Muñoz's description of queer epistemology as a 'continuous deconstruction of the tenets of positivism at the heart of identity politics' and by David Halperin's definition of queerness as 'not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative' (emphasis in the original). See David L. Eng, Jack Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, 'What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?', *Social Text* 84–85, 23.3–4 (Fall–Winter 2005), 1–17, 3; and David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62.

6 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2019 [2009]), 1.

7 Howard Chiang, 'Introduction', in Howard Chiang and Ari Larissa Heinrich (eds), *Queer Sinophone Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 32. For a discussion of belatedness and Queer Theory in the Korean context specifically, see Jung Minwoo, 'Kwiō iron, sulp'ūn mogūō (Queer Theory, Sad Native Language)', *Munhwaui Sahoe*, 13.11 (2012), 53–100.

8 Dew Kim in correspondence with the author (17 March 2020). See also Dew Kim, 'Latrinxia: A New Utopia', *HornyHoneydew* (n.d., accessed 9 October 2020, <https://www.hornyhoneydew.com/Latrinxia-A-New-Utopia-2019>). Note that the transliteration of 'queer', *kwiō*, is in limited use in certain academic and activist circles, as evidenced in initiatives such as QueerArch (Kwiōrak) and the Seoul Queer Culture Festival (Sōul kwiō munhwa ch'ukche).

9 'Latrinxia'.

10 For the productive possibility between Queer Theory and Asian Studies, see, for example, Howard Chiang and Alvin K. Wong, 'Asia is Burning: Queer Asia as Critique', *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 58.2 (2017), 121–126.

11 Ed Cohen, *A Body Worth Defending: Immunity, Biopolitics, and the Apotheosis of the Modern Body* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

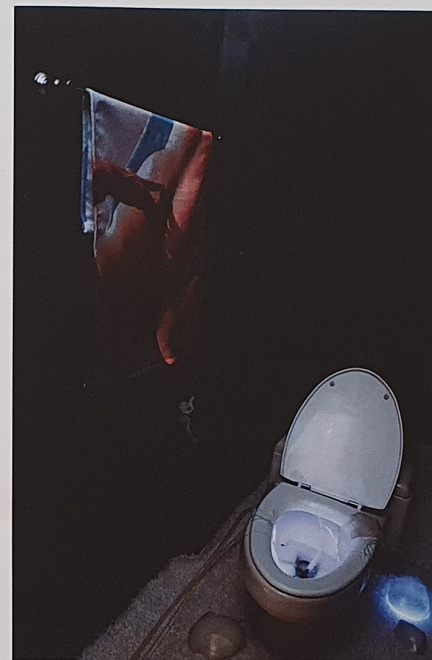
12 Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 30.

13 Muñoz, 1, 2.

of non-Western cultures from one another and from 'the West'.⁷ In contrast, while Kim himself has repeatedly framed his practice in terms of 'queerness' and refers to the thinking of Paul B. Preciado (among others), in *Latrinxia* queerness is anchored in histories of sex, sexuality, and gender moulded by Korea's colonial and, later, militarised modernity, as well as regional cultural flows, in particular between Korea, Japan and Taiwan, a point that emerges in this article.⁸ Kim has voiced his desire to 'express ... my queer culture' and to 'break away from the inertia of dichotomous cultures'.⁹ Likewise, in my own use of 'queer' here and elsewhere, I want to attend to the ways in which understandings of queer subjectivities and theories, channelled by the uneven forces of globalisation, travel between different contexts with overlapping histories of non-normative desires, gender expressions, and practices, and are transformed and reshaped in the process.¹⁰

This article mines *Latrinxia*'s queer currents, arguing that the work elaborates a queer critique of the naturalised notion of the body as a bounded and discrete entity that is rigidly gendered and sexed, as well as its attendant discourses on hygiene and toxicity, all of which emerged as hegemonic in Korea over the course of the twentieth century. I refer to this conception as the 'modern' body after Ed Cohen's research on the history of biomedicine, disease, and immunology.¹¹ In *Latrinxia*, there is the suggestion that the conception of the 'modern' body is inadequate for capturing the body in all its complexity, porosity, and enmeshment with other bodies and lifeforms. Instead, through its engagement with parasites, the exhibition theorises the human body as queerly composed, that is, as intimately enmeshed with 'the inanimate, deadness, lowness, nonhuman animals (rendered as insensate), the abject, [and] the object', as Mel Y. Chen writes.¹² In its celebration of the body's permeability, *Latrinxia* envisages ways of being in the world beyond stultifying understandings of desire and the human. In this way, the exhibition recalls Muñoz's understanding of queerness as 'something that is not quite here', as a glimpse of 'new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds.'¹³

Two primary vehicles for the work's critique of the notion of the modern body are the anus worm and the invocation of shamanism. These markers of queerness and local cultural traditions are also precisely what makes the artwork appealing in the economy of global contemporary art according to the logic of neoliberalism – the same logic that permeates the urban space of Itaewon and fuels its gentrification. My conclusion, then, addresses a further 'promise' encapsulated by *Latrinxia*'s parasites in the context of the global networks of the display and circulation of contemporary art.



LEFT:

FIG. 3 Dew Kim. Left: *The Creation of Adam*, 2019, Digital printing on fabric, 80 x 40 cm. Right: *Tongkko-Chung (Anus Worm)*, 2019, Anus silicone casting, silicone tube, 3D printed plastic, LED lighting, dimensions variable. Photograph courtesy of the artist © Dew Kim.

ABOVE:

FIG. 4 Dew Kim. Above: *Anus Baptizes Me*, 2019, Mirror, digital printing on adhesive sheets, stainless steel, plastic, 30 x 58 x 2 cm. Below: *Tongkko-Chung (Anus Worm)*. Photograph courtesy of the artist © Dew Kim.



Foreign Bodies

As the interpretation provided by the artist makes clear, the posthuman protagonists of *Latrinixia* are the 'anus worms', or *ttongkkoch'ung*.¹⁴ *Ttongkkoch'ung* is a pejorative term used in South Korea usually to describe gay or effeminate men; as the artist emphasises, it is similar in meaning and severity to the English word 'faggot'.¹⁵ Its usage suggests one can be a *ttongkkoch'ung* or else contract a *ttongkkoch'ung*, as with macroparasites like the tapeworm or roundworm.¹⁶ The English term calls to mind the bundles of sticks used in the Middle Ages to burn at the stake women and men found guilty of various heresies, homosexuality among them – a commonly accepted but historically disputed connection, since the homophobic connotations of the term emerged only in the twentieth century.¹⁷ The Korean term, though, crystallises assumptions and anxieties that mark certain bodies as queer and cast those bodies as parasite-ridden, diseased, and perversions of the idealised human body, understood as rigidly gendered, sexed, and bounded.

Ultraconservative framings of the *ttongkkoch'ung* and homosexuality which circulate online evoke sci-fi horror. In 2017, for example, one blog user invited readers to 'learn about the social evil of *ttongkkoch'ung*' and recounted, in impressive detail, the story of Hong Seok-cheon, one of South Korea's first publicly gay celebrities who came out in the early 2000s and consequently retired from public appearances for almost a decade.¹⁸ The user wrote that Hong 'contracted an anus worm at the age of eleven, before infecting over three hundred more people', spurred on by the worm's thirst for prostate stimulation with the help of objects 'the size of a man's penis'. In the same blog post, the user declared with a similar confidence that homosexuality is 'one hundred percent acquired' and alleged that, since prostate stimulation apparently does not occur in heterosexual sex, 'in over ninety percent of cases, infection results from sexual relations between men'. This particularly vivid account pictures the homosexual male body as infiltrated by a foreign body – the parasite – and possessed by its inhuman, voracious appetite for non-reproductive, anal sex. The obsession with the worm's desire for stimulative penetration and the foreclosure of the penetration of the male body in heterosexual sex, coded as normal, both suggest a conception of the body, and particularly the male body, as ideally impenetrable, discrete, and sovereign.

Such a conception was consolidated over the course of the twentieth century and the period of accelerated modernisation in Korea. Under the rule of the Japanese colonial government in the first half of the century, bodies came to be delineated along increasingly binary and biologically dimorphic lines: the male body became an icon of good health, associated with strength and virility, while the female body – the icon of disease and in need of remedy and reform – was cast as the privileged vehicle for biological reproduction, for the maintenance of colonial capitalism and

14 'Latrinixia'.

15 'Latrinixia'.

16 The corresponding expressions in Korean are *ttongkkoch'ungida* and *ttongkkoch'ungphant'e tanghada*.

17 'Faggot', *Online Etymology Dictionary* (n.d., Last accessed: 18 November 2020, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/faggot>).

18 hi7ju12 (username), 'Sahoek ttongkkoch'unge taehae alabocho (Let's learn about the social evil of *ttongkkoch'ung*)', *Naver Blog* (16 July 2017, accessed 29 October 2020, <https://blog.naver.com/hi7ju12/221052292268>). For another example linking homosexuality, promiscuity, disease, and social parasitism, see 30zlf (username), 'Eichūū chinsil (ttongkkoch'ungū chinsil) feat. kwiō ch'ukche (The truth about AIDS [the truth about *ttongkkoch'ung*] feat. Queer Festival)', *Naver Blog* (Published: 11 July 2018, Last accessed: 14 July 2021, <https://blog.naver.com/bestjsh/221317198845>).

OPPOSITE:

FIG. 5 Dew Kim, *Fire Will Keep Your Heart Beating in the Future 2*, 2019, Stainless steel, rope, skewer, queer talisman, dimensions variable. Photograph courtesy of the artist © Dew Kim.

19 Jin-kyung Park, 'Managing "dis-ease": Print media, medical images, and patent medicine advertisements in colonial Korea', in *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 24.4 (2017), 420–439, 431–432.

20 Todd A. Henry, 'Introduction', in Todd A. Henry (ed.), *Queer Korea* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 1–52, 12.

21 Park, 'Managing "dis-ease".'

22 Cohen, 6.

23 Cohen, 14.

24 Seungsook Moon, *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 8.

25 Moon, 8–12.

26 John P. DiMoia, *Reconstructing Bodies: Biomedicine, Health, and Nation-Building in South Korea Since 1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

27 DiMoia, 7.

28 Junho Jung, Youngin Park, and Ock-Joo Kim, '1960 nyōndae hangukūi hoech'ung kamyōnūi sahoesa: saramgwa hamkke hanūn illyōngesō such 'isūrōun chilbyōngūro (A Social History of Ascariasis in 1960s Korea: From a Norm to a Shameful Disease)', *Usahak*, 75 (August 2016), 167–204.

for supplementing Japanese forces.¹⁹ Japan's 'imperial subjects' in Korea (*hwanguksimin*) also came to be categorised as abiding by or deviating from bodily norms aimed at maintaining colonial capitalism through reproductive heterosexuality.²⁰ As Park Jin-kyung observes, print media – including patent medicine advertisements and medical images – became a key means by which ideas about new knowledge regarding the body and bodily norms were disseminated by the Japanese colonial powers and in Korean nationalist circles.²¹ Biomedicine became vital for the production and consolidation of bodily norms and ideals in the service of reproductive heterosexuality and colonial capitalist modernity. The model for the body on which biomedicine operates is, as Cohen has argued, fundamentally militaristic, informed by a 'bellicose ideology' which posits the organism as 'a defensible interior which needs to protect itself ceaselessly from a hostile exterior'.²² Biomedical knowledge and practices are antagonistic towards what Cohen, after Bakhtin and Rabelais, calls the 'grotesque body': 'a body radically open to the world ... simultaneously eating, shitting, fucking, dancing, laughing, groaning, giving birth, falling ill, and dying' (emphasis added).²³

The military model for the body discussed by Cohen was, in the Korean context, bolstered by the dynamics of Cold War binary logic in the second half of the century, which saw the end of Japanese colonial rule, the division of the Peninsula into North and South, and growing militarisation. In the South, the key imperative of postcolonial modernisation was strengthening the military to ward off the Northern communist aggressor.²⁴ This required novel amalgamations of Foucauldian disciplinary power and militarised violence, an arrangement that Seungsook Moon refers to as Korea's 'militarised modernity'. In accordance with the cisheteropatriarchal bases of anti-communist development, the state constructed its subjects as a unified people composed of *kungmin* (nationals) divided along rigid gendered and heteronormative grounds. Men were interpellated as 'providers', employed by the military to fulfil various roles in service of industrialisation; women worked in factories, where their labour was marginalised, and were mobilised primarily as 'reproducers' or 'breeders'.²⁵

One new and extensive system that was innovated for biopolitical governance was the family planning programme (*kajok kyehoeck*), which entailed the passing of an anti-abortion law and the mass distribution of new birth control technologies and knowledge about contraception.²⁶ Another consisted of the anti-parasite initiatives (*kisaengch'ung pangmyōl*), which involved the passing of a Parasitic Disease Prevention Act in 1966 and a programme for which schoolchildren were required to send stool samples twice annually until 1995.²⁷ In the 1960s, Korean miners dispatched to Germany were reported to have been riddled with roundworm, and in another event, a Korean child had four kilograms of roundworm removed from her bowels; photographs of the excised parasites were spectacularly displayed in newspapers.²⁸ Mediatized events such as these were



central to the task of eliminating public apathy to parasite eradication and instilling a more widespread hostility towards parasites and infectious diseases whose annihilation became a question of national security, prosperity and propriety. These events also reinforced the notion that Korean bodies were, to echo Cohen, 'defensible interiors' that should remain bounded, discrete, and sovereign.²⁹

Parasites such as the roundworm were not the only foreign bodies against which the Korean state waged war. Authoritarian president Park Chung-hee, in power from 1963 until 1979, once lamented that the country was in the grip of 'a monstrous, chronic disease' aggravated by the introduction to the country of 'American things, Western things, [and] Japanese things'.³⁰ During this time, images of the nation in popular screen culture began disavowing queer subjects displaying non-normative expressions of gender and desire in order to bolster the cisheteropatriarchal bases of anti-communist development.³¹ Young-Gwan Kim and Sook-Ja Hahn describe the enduring perception of homosexuality as foreign, despite the various examples of non-normative sexual practices, intimacies, and expressions of gender that can be found throughout Korean history.³² Associations between homosexuality, disease, and the foreign congealed

29 Moon, 21.

30 Cited in Schober, 41.

31 Henry, 18.

32 Young-Gwan Kim and Sook-Ja Hahn, 'Homosexuality in Ancient and Modern Korea', *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 8.1 (January–February 2006), 59–65.

FIG. 6 Dew Kim, *Fire Will Keep Your Heart Beating in the Future 2*, installation view. Photograph courtesy of the artist © Dew Kim.

33 Youngshik D. Bong, 'The Gay Rights Movement in Democratizing Korea', *Korean Studies*, 32 (2008), 86–103, 89.

34 Schober, 43.

35 For more on the politicised nature of homophobia in Korea, see Ju Hui Judy Han, 'Kwiō chōngch'wā kwiō chichōnghak ('Queer Politics and Queer Geopolitics'), *Munhwa/Kwahak*, 83 (Autumn 2015), 62–81.

36 Seo Dong-jin, 'Mapping the Vicissitudes of Homosexual Identities in South Korea', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 40.3–4 (2001), 65–78, 66.

37 See, for example, Jesook Song, *South Koreans in the Debt Crisis: The Creation of a Neoliberal Welfare Society* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 61.

38 Hyun-young Kwon Kim and John (Song Pae) Cho, 'The Korean Gay and Lesbian Movement 1993–2008: From "Identity" and "Community" to "Human Rights"', in Gi-wook Shin and Paul Chang (eds), *South Korean Social Movements: From Democracy to Civil Society* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 206–223, 219–220.

39 Ruin, 'Mobile Numbers and Gender Transitions: The Resident Registration System, the Nation-State, and Trans/gender Identities', in Henry, 357–376.

40 See Timothy Gitzien, 'Ripple of Trauma: Queer Bodies and the Temporality of Violence in the South Korean Military', in Henry, 323–356; and Horim Yi and Timothy Gitzien, 'Sex/Gender Insecurities: Trans Bodies and the South Korean Military', *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 5.3 (2018), 378–393.

41 Henry, 4.

42 Si Woo, *K'wīd Ap'ok'allipsū. Sarangwa Hyōmōi Jōngch'ibak* (*Queer Apocalypse: The Politics of Love and Hate*) (Seoul, South Korea: Hyunsil Munhwa, 2018).

43 Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, transl. Lawrence R. Schehr (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 3.

in 1988 when fears about AIDS collided with South Korea's hosting of the Olympics, the occasion for a newly democratising South Korea to reveal to the world the fruits of its modernisation efforts. Men who have sex with men, women sex workers, and American soldiers were all the targets of AIDS-related anxieties: one scholar writes that the perception of gay men during this time was as 'AIDS-spreading aliens hiding in the dark'.³⁵ All, too, were the typical denizens of Itaewon, a neighbourhood which through a series of policies had become, as Schober describes, 'a de-facto buffer zone that was to absorb potentially dangerous foreign influences, but which in the end functioned more as a fermenting container' for these influences.³⁴

These same discourses inform far-right homophobia today, particularly from the Protestant Right, who have become an influential anti-LGBT (and anti-Muslim) voice in Korean politics in the last two or three decades.³⁸ Even as South Korea transitioned to democracy in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the enduring legacy of heteropatriarchal values and disciplinary mechanisms from the colonial and authoritarian periods meant that 'homosexuality had no social existence', as activist and academic Seo Dong-jin recounted a few years later.³⁶ Subsequent years have been punctuated by anti-queer legislation, such as the passing of the heteronormative 'Healthy Family Act' in 2003 and the effective decriminalisation of discrimination on the basis of sexuality in 2007.³⁷ On the other hand, LGBTQ+ activists have responded with renewed vigour, organising the Queer Culture Festival and actions to raise awareness about discrimination they face.³⁹

Nonetheless, queer individuals and communities continue to be marginalised by cisheteropatriarchal norms justified through the politics of national division. The resident registration system, structured around dimorphic conceptions of biological sex, renders transgender and intersex Koreans as 'internal exiles', as Ruin has argued.³⁹ During military service, which remains compulsory for those assigned male at birth unless they receive a 'severe' diagnosis of gender identity disorder, people suffer persecution and even 'pre-traumatic stress' when their sexual practices and gender embodiments defy the norms established by the military.⁴⁰ As Todd A. Henry puts it, 'high-ranking leaders [in the military] have transformed the private practice of anal sex (*kyegan*) into charged matters of public concern and national security.'⁴¹ And as Si Woo has demonstrated, queer people are often framed as apocalyptic threats by the Christian Right in Korea.⁴² Kim's visualisation of the *ttongkkoch'ung* in *Latrinxia: A New Utopia* responds to this context and to the normative conception of the healthy body as rigidly sexed and gendered, as heterosexual, and as a bounded, 'defensible interior'. *Latrinxia* subverts enduring associations between disease and queer desire in Korea, demonstrating, in Michel Serres's words, the potential of the parasite to 'produce disorder and generate a different order.'⁴³

Latrinxia as Anal Utopia

The first space of the exhibition visualises the planet Latrinxia, to which the former humans have been transported and where they are now living as *ttongkkoch'ung*. Here, a series of contrasts are played out and collapsed: natural and artificial, solid and liquid, durability and fluidity, human and nonhuman. The pure white land formation, grass, and worms depict natural forms using synthetic materials – three-dimensional plastic, white AstroTurf, and silicone, the latter of which also evokes cosmetic surgery, body modification, and sex toys. The landscape erupts from the ground, solid yet geyser-like, glistening with water directed onto it from the silicone tube above. The play between liquid and solid is captured, too, in the worms' forms, many of which are arranged stretched out or hanging off surfaces as if to emphasise their malleability, strained taut by gravity. The worms appear conspicuously gooey and amorphous, and barely hold their form; at the same time, the silicone from which they are composed is suggestive of durability and non-decomposability. The puckered shape at the centre of each form is an imprint, a memory of the human body from which it was cast (specifically, the artist's anus), while the worms' searching tendrils evoke the nonhuman, alien forms of sea anemones.⁴⁴ The nonhuman associations are sustained in the idea, stated in the text accompanying the exhibition, that the worms use 'light energy for metamorphosis' and also for 'breeding' (*bōnshik*), a word which in Korean equally suggests the asexual propagation of plants or the multiplication of viral cells.⁴⁵ It is implied as well, then, that the orifice lying between the folds of each worm's sexless form is not for nutrition, nor for reproduction – but for pleasure. Moreover, as the silicone catches the light, the worms are limned with translucency, making their skin appear less like a border protecting interior from exterior, and more like a porous boundary. These bodies are visibly more 'radically open to the world', more obviously imbricated in it and penetrated by it, than Cohen's modern body.

The first space establishes the themes of the exhibition: purity and filth, bodily metamorphosis, and the withdrawal and eruption of pleasure. The sight of the anus worms, the reference to utopia, and the preponderance of silicone together evoke Preciado's writing on the anus and its relationship to sex, gender, and desire, principally his *Countersexual Manifesto* (first published in 2000) and the essay 'Anal Terror' (published in 2009 as an introduction to the Spanish-language translation of Guy Hocquenghem's *Homosexual Desire*). Kim recounts that he was introduced to Preciado's thinking by Luciano Zubillaga, an Argentinian artist with whom Kim has collaborated.⁴⁶ Preciado understands sexuality as a 'technology' or 'machinery' which frames how the organs are understood, bestowing them their 'meaning', 'nature', and proper use.⁴⁷ Both in the western European context Preciado describes and, as this article has argued, in Korea, the meaning, nature, and proper use of the organs relates

44 Kim (17 March 2020).

45 'Latrinxia'.

46 Kim (17 March 2020).

47 Paul B. Preciado, *Countersexual Manifesto*, transl. Kevin Gerry Dunn (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018), 29.

48 Paul B. Preciado, 'Anal Terror', in *Baedan*, 3, Journal of Queer Time Travel (Contagion Press, 2015), 123–168, 123–126.

49 Preciado (2018), 12.

50 For a discussion of Duchamp's urinal, *Fountain*, see Francis M. Naumann, *The Recurrent, Haunting Ghost: Essays on the Art, Life and Legacy of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Ready-made Press, 2012), 70–81.

to reproduction. Hence, the reproductive organs – the penis and the vagina, organised into a hierarchy – become the only 'natural' sex organs, and erotic practices involving other organs, marked as nonsexual, are cast as deviant and abject. In Preciado's playful, epic account, the anus needed to be 'close[d] up' or 'castrate[d]' for the 'honourable and healthy' expression of sexual energy. 'Open' bodies – male-assigned bodies that desire anal sex and female-assigned bodies, for example – therefore came to be considered as particularly in need of discipline and intervention, as evidenced in psychoanalytic, medical, and legal discourses.⁴⁸ Several of the anxieties about homosexuality, the anus, and the 'open' body resonate in the homophobic framing of *ttongkkoch'ung* mentioned above – an obsession with the repeated anal penetration of the body sexed as male, with non-reproductive sexual practices, and with health and disease.

In response to the disciplinary mechanisms of compulsory reproductive heterosexuality, Preciado proposes an 'anal' or a 'countersexual' politics, enacted by reclaiming as sexual 'any organ (organic or inorganic) that has the capacity to channel the *potentia gaudendi* [orgasmic force] through a nervous system connecting a living body to its exteriority'.⁴⁹ By acknowledging the body's porosity, its openness to penetration and pleasure by means of various erogenous zones beyond the reproductive organs, we might be estranged from predominant topographies of the body and its desires, and invent other, more equitable and pleasurable topographies – such as those represented by the anus worms in *Latrinixia*. The anus is particularly useful for Preciado, as it was for Hocquenghem, because it has historically been maligned, unlike other orifices such as the mouth, for example; because it is an organ shared by bodies of any sex; and because sexual practices involving the anus allow for fluid and reversible sexual roles – that is, through the use of dildos and other prostheses (or 'inorganic' organs), any body, regardless of its genitalia, can penetrate or be penetrated. In short, the goal of an anal politics is the end of the social and bodily order predicated on phallocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality.

While the first space of the exhibition visualises the landscape of *Latrinixia*, the second space stages a literalisation of the metaphors of purity and disease, alluding more obviously to sexual practices associated with an anal or countersexual politics. Led by the suspended silicone tube into this room, the viewer discovers the source of the clear water covering the *ttongkkoch'ung* – described in the exhibition text as 'humans in their pure and ideal state of being' (emphasis added) – and the untainted white landscape in which they languish: a toilet bowl. The toilet, of course, recalls the irreverence of Duchamp's urinal, itself plagued with accusations of indecency and a test of moral (and aesthetic) standards.⁵⁰ In Kim's installation, the toilet bowl stands in for the wider 'utopia' of *Latrinixia*, a word derived from the Latin *lavatrina*, which can equally mean 'washing place' or 'privy', and has etymological connections to the English 'latrine'. Next

to the toilet stands a sink, also connected to the water from the toilet bowl and using which visitors are invited to 'cleanse' themselves below a stylised, stained-glass image of hands cupping water.⁵¹ This clearly parodies certain discourses in Christianity, including in the vociferously anti-LGBT Protestant Right in Korea, regarding purification and the washing-away of moral and physical contaminants accumulated through queer sexual practices.

Allusions to these practices, and more specifically to gay subcultures and public sex, can be found in the UV light that partly illuminates the space, which evokes the backrooms and dungeons of fetish bars and clubs. The lavatory cubicle, too, is steeped in gay resonances, recalling the acts of cruising (walking or driving around a public space in search of a sexual partner, a practice historically associated with gay men) and cottaging (cruising in a public toilet, specifically).⁵² For Preciado, cruising articulates an anal politics because it enables the 'public redistribution of pleasure': by transforming public space into the site of an erotic act, it defies the binary between public and private and the confinement of the sexual to the realm of the private, naturalised under conditions of heteronormative, patriarchal capitalism and its 'castration' of the anus.⁵³ The towel hanging on the wall, depicting a hirsute finger sensually grazing some muscular buttocks, acts as a further suggestion of cruising – including, perhaps, a specific cruising sites near the gallery in Itaewon where *Latrinixia* was installed.⁵⁴ Nestled within *Latrinixia*'s orgy of plastic and silicone, the terrycloth fabric serves as a nostalgic relic of the *Latrinixians*' past in their human form, and marks cruising as a precursor to social, political, and bodily life on *Latrinixia*. In this sense, *Latrinixia* gives form to what José Muñoz called the 'ideality', the 'horizon imbued with potentiality' of the queer utopian future, 'distilled from the past' in order to imagine 'new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds'.⁵⁵ And for Muñoz, the 'blueprints' of queer utopian futurity can frequently be glimpsed in the realms of art and the aesthetic.⁵⁶ The 'utopia' of *Latrinixia*'s title, it seems, is a world in which the body's porosity is acknowledged, even celebrated, rather than denied. In such a world, heterosexual reproduction is *not* a biological imperative along whose lines bodies and lives are stratified, valued or devalued, according to which bodies can and cannot, or should and should not, reproduce.

Latrinixia's prolific use of silicone and its visualisation of the parasitic anus worm suggest, as well, that to acknowledge the porosity of the body is to recognise its existing entanglements with toxins, microbes, bacteria, viruses, and a variety of other nonhuman presences. These entanglements are 'more than horizon', Chen contends, invoking Muñoz. They are '*already here*', and thus 'it is not so much a matter of queer political agency as a queered political state of the present' (emphasis in original).⁵⁷ Discussing the toxic metal particles lead and mercury, Chen observes that toxicity is generally 'understood as an *unnaturally* external force that

51 'Latrinixia'.

52 The public toilet stall is also the setting for Kim's work *Can-can boys* (2019). See Dew Kim, 'Can-can boys', *HornyHoneydew* (n.d., accessed 13 October 2020, <https://www.hornyhoneydew.com/Can-Can-Boys-2019>).

53 Preciado (2015), 124–125, 165.

54 I am thinking of Hamilton Hotel sauna, listed (along with many other examples) on *Utopia Asia*, a website which provides information regarding gay-friendly hotels, saunas, and cruising spots for visitors to countries in the region. See *Utopia Asia* (n.d., Last accessed: 8 February 2021, <https://www.utopia-asia.com/seousaun.htm>).

55 Muñoz, 1.

56 Muñoz, 1.

57 Chen, *Animacies*, 220.

58 Chen, *Animacies*, 194.

59 Neel Ahuja, *Bioinsecurities: Disease Interventions, Empire, and the Government of Species* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 8.

60 Ahuja, *Bioinsecurities*, 8–9. Ahuja's observations echo Jane Bennett's earlier comment that the 'flesh is populated and constituted by different swarms of foreigners. ... [I]t is thus not enough to say that we are "embodied." We are, rather, an array of bodies, many different kinds of them in a nested set of microbiomes' (emphasis in original). Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 112–113.

61 Heather Davis, 'Toxic Progeny: The Plasticsphere and Other Queer Futures', *philosO-PHIA*, 5.2 (2015), 231–250, 235, 237.

62 For environmental racism, see, for example, Nancy Tuana, 'Viscous Porosity: Witnessing Katrina', in Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (eds), *Material Feminisms* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 188–213; for structural vulnerability to disease, see, for instance, Tak Kyu Oh, Jae-Wook Choi and In-Ae Song, 'Socioeconomic disparity and the risk of contracting COVID-19 in South Korea: an NHIS-COVID-19 database cohort study', *BMC Public Health*, 21 (2021), n.p. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10207-y>.

63 Ahuja, *Bioinsecurities*, 8.

64 'Neok (널)', in Myung-sub Chung (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Beliefs: Encyclopedia of Korean Folklore and Traditional Culture Vol. II*, transl. Ha-yun Jung (Seoul: Kiljabi Midio, 2014), 236.

violates (rather than informs) an integral and bounded self' (emphasis in original).⁵⁸ Similarly, Neel Ahuja notes that the policing of disease typically frames disease-causing microorganisms as 'parasite[s]' that, like the fictional anus worm, 'threaten the body's functions, even life itself', where both 'the body' and 'life' are understood in heteronormative, racialised, and rigidly gendered and sexed terms.⁵⁹ The silicone form of the future humans or anus worms in *Latrinxia* is suggestive, however, of the body's 'plasticity'. While for Preciado bodily plasticity refers, for example, to the potential mutability of understandings of the body and sexuality, for Ahuja plasticity captures the body's 'transitional' form, its interminable constitution and reconstitution through other nonhuman bodies such as disease-carrying microorganisms.⁶⁰ Combined with the exhibition's apocalyptic storyline, the appearance of a plastic geyser (Fig. 1) evokes plasticity in another, more literal sense, too: namely, the increasing prevalence of plastic and other (near) non-decomposable materials in the ocean and the effects of these materials on the body. Heather Davis, for instance, writes that plastics in the ocean host their own microbial communities and develop their own ecologies. As plastics make their way back into the human body, they slowly 'contribute to queerness, causing mutations and inhibiting sexual reproduction'.⁶¹

Latrinxia's unbridled celebration of the body's porosity and plasticity vis-à-vis toxins, microbes, and other supposedly 'foreign bodies' registers as unsettling in light of the structural and involuntary vulnerability of certain demographics—typically, the economically disadvantaged and negatively racialised—to conditions of environmental toxicity and disease, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic.⁶² In its attentiveness to toxicity and contamination, though, the exhibition shores up and counters the 'bellicose antagonism' between self and world, between the (human) body and (nonhuman) matter, that characterises the modern body theorised by Cohen. To quote Ahuja, *Latrinxia*'s emphasis on the possibilities of the parasitic body 'calls life itself "queer"', 'dislodg[ing] it from commonplace pro-life discourses that compress biological life into the able-bodied, individuated, and anthropomorphized reproductive form of the body'.⁶³ The queer body theorised by *Latrinxia*, then, not only exceeds fixed and striated categories of sex, gender, and desire, but also confuses sharp divisions between the human and the nonhuman.

Moving, finally, into the third space of the exhibition, the viewer is greeted by the sight of a metal rod skewering a crumpled piece of yellow paper into the ground. Behind it, a stainless-steel icon in the shape of a flame leans against a tree, which has neon laces tied around its trunk and branches (Fig. 5 and Fig. 6). The paper can be likened to a *neok* – a shamanic prop symbolising or temporarily housing the soul of a dead person, here inscribed with Chinese characters arranged in the shape of a human figure.⁶⁴ In the exhibition's narrative, the flame represents metamorphosis: the objects in this outdoor space are the remnants of the shamanistic rit-

ual by fire that transformed humans and transported them to *Latrinxia*, with its novel conception of the body and social relations. The flame's cold, thorny form invokes the pain involved in this act of transformation, recalling both the immolation of men and women accused of sexual transgression in the Middle Ages, and redemptive attitudes towards suffering, sacrifice, and corporeal transcendence in Christianity, whose iconography is evoked in the previous room.⁶⁵ As Robert Mills has noted, medieval displays of the wounded bodies of Christian martyrs emphasised the 'spiritual transcendence', 'special status', 'intercessory power', and 'incorporat[ion] into the heavenly community' granted through their suffering and disfigurement.⁶⁶

By contrast, in *Latrinxia*, the humans' transformation can be characterised not as an ascent, passage onward, or progression, but as a descent, return, or regression, particularly in the context of Korea's anti-parasite efforts in the second half of the twentieth century, which positioned parasites (and specifically the roundworm), as backward, as antithetical to the Korean nation's modernity.⁶⁷ Kim's worms, moreover, vividly recall Preciado's tongue-in-cheek description of the human organism in its early, undeveloped stages, which he calls a 'dermic tube' held together by skin, with plentiful possibilities for sensuality, for rubbing up against things, and for pleasure.⁶⁸ In *Latrinxia*, then, the sacrifice and metamorphosis represented in the fire ritual marks a queer directionality, not up but down, not progressive but regressive. This perverse directionality is matched by viewers' movement: as they progress through the exhibition, proceeding from the landscape and lavatory to the outdoor space, they regress in the teleology of the exhibition's narrative, moving from the present to the past. The various objects that comprise *Latrinxia* require the viewer to lower themselves, to crouch down in order to inspect them – a gesture which mimics the downward movement of the transformation from human to anus worm, or from higher to lower on Chen's hierarchy of animacy.

The invocation of shamanism is another way that Kim enacts his critique of the modern body, its 'bellicose ideology', and its attendant discourses on sex and gender. Kim has framed shamanism as 'transcending binary thinking and overcoming it': life and death, human and nonhuman, but also male and female, as shamans use their bodies to channel spirits of any gender.⁶⁹ It is worth noting that shamanistic practices in Korea predate the more rigid understandings of the body that became hegemonic in the twentieth century with colonisation, market capitalism, and the spread of Christianity. But before labelling Kim's focus on shamanism here a radical decolonial gesture, it is important to note the shaman's spectacular and global pull, particularly in the context of modern and contemporary art from Korea. Notably, the figure of the shaman has been deployed in the work of some of Korea's most globally successful artists of the last few decades, notably Paik Nam June, Lee Bul, and Park Chan-kyong. Concurrently, the Korean government has in recent years

65 The flame, skewer, and paper previously appeared in Kim's 2019 work *Fire and Faggot*, alongside several medieval-looking tapestries depicting immolations. See Dew Kim, 'Fire and Faggot' (n.d., Last accessed: 10 February 2021, <https://www.hornyhoneydew.com/Fire-and-Faggot-2019>).

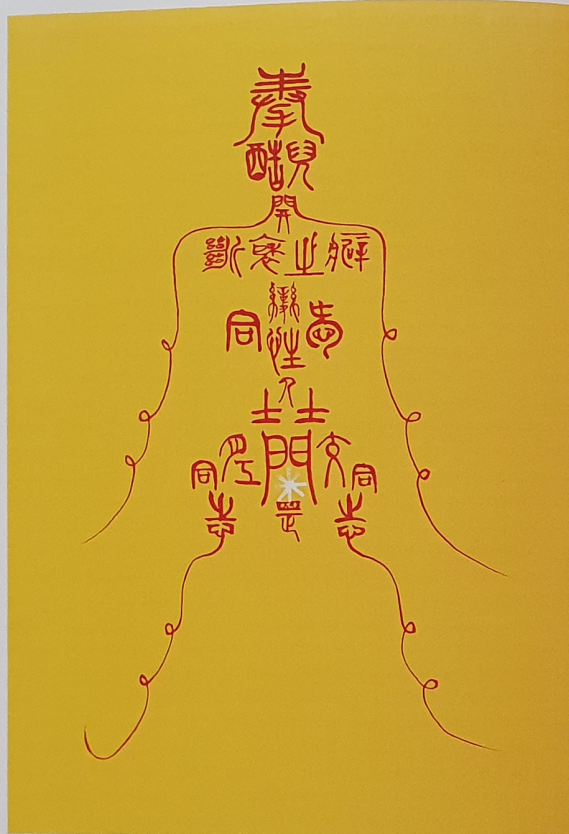
66 Robert Mills, *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure, and Punishment in Medieval Culture* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), 106, 150.

67 DiMoia, 145–176.

68 Preciado (2015), 125.

69 Kim (17 March 2020).

70 Jecheol Park, 'Korean Shamanic Experience in the Age of Digital Intermediality: Park Chan-kyong's *Manshin*', *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies*, 43.2 (2017), 107–132, 125.



attempted to institutionalise, regularise, and reclaim shamanism, alongside other oppositional aspects of Korean culture such as the *minjung* movement of the 1980s. Jecheol Park has observed a marked tendency by the government to render these practices and cultural products 'spectacles of [neoliberal] consumption', as expressions of indigeneity and national identity.⁷⁰ The invocation of shamanism in *Latrinxia*, then, raises questions about the growing economic and cultural currency and frustrated critical potential of (formerly) minoritised figures and practices – not just

what is framed as 'local' but also the 'queer'. By leading the viewer into the gallery's outdoor space, *Latrinxia* moreover invites the viewer to reflect on the surrounding neighbourhood of Itaewon, whose buildings frame the display of the ritual's remnants. By way of conclusion, I want to take up this invitation, and consider the more recent changes that have occurred in the neighbourhood, what this has to do with global contemporary art and questions of neoliberal consumption, and what might be at stake for queer art in particular.

The Promise of Parasites

In recent years, both the urban space of Itaewon and its position in the hegemonic cultural imaginary have undergone a transformation. With globalisation and economic prosperity, Korea has seen an explosion in both its foreign population and the number of so-called 'international marriages' since the early 1990s. With this, there has been an increased emphasis in political rhetoric on multiculturalism (*damunhwa*) and 'multicultural families' – partly in an effort to preserve notions of 'Koreanness' and 'local' identity historically based on ethnic nationalism.⁷¹ Other forms of difference are ostensibly being celebrated as well, notably sexual difference and LGBTQ consumer lifestyles. In light of this, the appearance of multiculturalism and LGBTQ venues in Itaewon are welcomed as an indication of the country's 'global' status and its cosmopolitan tolerance of different lifestyles.⁷² In a marketplace that increasingly values the culturally exotic and the queer, Itaewon has become another experience to be sampled and consumed. Meanwhile, the neighbourhood's gentrification and urban redevelopment diminishes cultural diversity, pushes out poorer residents, and ignores the neighbourhood's history of grassroots LGBTQ activism.⁷³

In the global art world, difference is being celebrated, too. 2017 saw two major exhibitions of queer art: *Queer British Art 1861–1967* at London's Tate Britain and *Spectrosynthesis: Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now* at Taipei's Museum of Contemporary Art. For his part, Kim has commented that

Honestly, when I was studying in London in 2016, I was worried about where I could show my art ... after I returned to Korea. When I move back to Korea in 2017, I witnessed a rapidly changing moment. For the past two years, feminism and queer has exploded onto the art world [*sic*].⁷⁴

Of course, the greater interest in works dealing overtly with the experiences, histories, and concerns of queer people presumably means more numerous opportunities for queer artists, a more widespread awareness of

71 See, for example, Nora Hui-Jung Kim, 'Developmental Multiculturalism and Articulation of Korean Nationalism in the Age of Diversity', in Sungmoon Kim and Hsin-Wen Lee (eds), *Reimagining Nation and Nationalism in Multicultural East Asia* (London: Routledge, 2017), 143–159.

72 Yun, 124–125.

73 Yun, 124–125.

74 Kim (17 March 2020).

OPPOSITE:

FIG. 7 Dew Kim with Tacyeon Kim (calligraphy), *Fire Will Keep Your Heart Beating in the Future 2*, detail of 'queer talisman'. Photograph courtesy of the artist © Dew Kim.

75 David Joselit, *Heritage and Debt* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2020), 111–112, 193–194.

76 'Looking for Another Family', Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Seoul (n.d., accessed 17 February 2021, <https://www.mmca.go.kr/eng/exhibitions/exhibitionsDetail.do?exhId=202001140001261>).

77 Erke Guo cited in Hongwei Bao, 'Metamorphosis of a Butterfly: Neoliberal Subjectivation and Queer Autonomy in Xiyadie's papercutting art', *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, 21.2–3 (2019), 243–263, 245.

78 Bao, 245.

79 See, respectively, David Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); and Audrey Yue, 'Queer Singapore: A Critical Introduction', in Audrey Yue and Jun Zubillaga-Pow (eds), *Queer Singapore: Illiberal Citizenship and Mediated Cultures* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 1–26. See also Rao's theorisation of 'homocapitalism', which he calls 'the weapon of choice wielded by a global queer liberalism', in Rahul Rao, *Out of Time: The Queer Politics of Postcoloniality* (2020), 12.

80 Beyond Preciado and Hocquenghem, see, for example, Leo Bersani, 'Is the Rectum a Grave?', *October*, 43, AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism (Winter 1987), 197–222, and Jennifer C. Nash, 'Black Anality', *GLQ*, 20.4 (2014), 439–460.

81 For more on some of these terms see Hongwei Bao, *Queer Comrades: Gay Identity and Tongzhi Activism in Postcolonial China* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2018), 1–35. For the list of characters, see Dew Kim, 'Honbaek', *HornyHoneydew* (n.d., Last accessed: 23 November 2020, <https://www.hornyhoneydew.com/Honbaek-2019>).

queer perspectives, and a greater concern for issues affecting queer people, impossible as it is to measure the extent of these consequences. Yet, there is reason – indeed, a critical need – to temper hope with cynicism, for art that registers as queer also represents an economic promise. If, as David Joselit argues by way of Arjun Appadurai, economic value attaches itself to the alien and the strange, then in a global contemporary art world still largely shaped by Euro-American tastes and expectations, it is the spectacle of the local which increases in value, without necessarily posing any meaningful challenge to the neo-colonial structures of neoliberalism.⁷⁵ I would add that the value of queerness, while not analogous to the 'local', is accruing, too: the 'queer artist' has emerged as a category celebrated by global-facing museums whose numbers have mushroomed since the late 1980s, including Seoul's own Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, where, incidentally, Kim exhibited work in 2020.⁷⁶

Hongwei Bao locates an illuminating example of this celebration in the reception of Xiyadie, known as the 'first queer papercutting artist in China' or 'China's Tom of Finland', and whose work was exhibited at *Spectrosynthesis*.⁷⁷ Bao argues that 'the transformation of Xiyadie's identity from a folk artist to a queer artist, and his papercutting artworks from folk art to queer art, has been facilitated by the articulation of his gay identity and his homoerotic-themed papercutting to a transnational LGBTQ ... movement and an international art market'.⁷⁸ The celebration or promotion of queer artists may indicate a flourishing 'queer liberalism' – the economic and legal empowerment of certain (principally white) LGBT subjects, and the denial of racial difference – or, in certain contexts, 'illiberal pragmatism', whereby queers are granted visibility, but not legal protections or recognition, in order for states to access transnational networks of capital without threatening conservative, heteronormative, nationalist agendas.⁷⁹

As we have seen, *Latrinxia* is resplendent with markers of queerness and the local identities whose currency in the economy of global contemporary art is on the rise. As well as recalling debates about the anus in queer studies from Western Europe and North America in the last half century, the anus worms also index one particular way that homophobia has been articulated in the Korean context specifically.⁸⁰ The characters on the neok, moreover, suggest transnational networks and genealogies of non-normative desire within East and Southeast Asia (Fig. 7). There are references, here, to self-identificatory terms used by queer communities across the Sinophone world (*tongzhi*, 'comrade') and to other terms denoting or connoting sexual non-normativity (*tongxinglian*, 'homosexuality'; *biantairen*, 'pervert'; *ku'er*, a transliteration of 'queer', mainly used in academic contexts or in Taiwan; *duan xiu zhi pi*, 'passion of the cut sleeve', an idiomatic phrase evoking homoeroticism and referring to an account of a relationship between a Han Dynasty emperor and a court official).⁸¹ In gesturing towards non-normative expressions of desire beyond the West,

Latrinxia provincialises Western accounts of queerness and contradicts liberal progressive narratives, circulating in the West and elsewhere, that posit queer identities, acceptance, and liberation as emanating uniformly from 'the West' to 'the Rest'.⁸² Moreover, as well as localising queerness, *Latrinxia* also works to queer the local through its invocation of shamanism and exploration of the queer potential of shamanistic worldviews. As much as it is possible to read in *Latrinxia* a rebuttal of capitalism and the normative identities (including LGBTQ identities) that it has enabled, and locate in the work an alternative orientation to queerness than that accounted for in much of the existing scholarship, it is precisely the work's display of a putatively Korean articulation of queerness that makes it vulnerable to appropriation by those eager to capitalise on the shifting currencies of the local and the queer.

With the rise of queer visibility, queer liberalism, and illiberal pragmatism – when a certain brand of 'queer' (like the local) risks being neatly packaged and sold as a commodity – it is important for contemporary art historians, curators, and viewers to ask: should the increased currency of queerness in the artworld be welcome unequivocally? What, exactly, is offered to queer people in exchange for the global, progressive, and tolerant status that is promised to museums, cities, and governments by art that is visible or legible as 'queer'? A recent episode offers an answer. In May 2020, a person who had visited a nightclub about two hundred metres from the gallery where *Latrinxia* had been installed turned out to have asymptomatic COVID-19. The venue's clientele were mostly gay men. At the time, there were almost no cases in the country. Subsequently, the press was awash, once again, with insidious assumptions about gay men and disease, leaking information about the asymptomatic individual and whipping up hatred against them and their fellow club-goers.⁸³ Meanwhile, the law continues to permit discrimination against queer people in Korea more widely. Sexual difference is increasingly represented and celebrated in the art museum, biennial, or auction house. It seems that the cultural sector is more and more willing to invest in perspectives and critiques rooted in queer theories and life-worlds – but the returns on this investment are not yet substantial enough.

82 Neville Hoad, 'Arrested Development or the Queerness of Savages: Resisting Evolutionary Narratives of Difference', *Postcolonial Studies*, 3.2 (2000), 133–158, 133–4; and Rao, 38.

83 See, for example, Ock Hyun-ju, 'Korean media's focus on "gay" club in COVID-19 case further stigmatizes LGBT people', *The Korea Herald* (Published: 8 May 2020, Last accessed: 17 February 2021, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20200508000751>).