ART CRITIQUES AND ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES OF
CONTEXTUALITY, EQUITY, AND HARMONY: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
KOREAN ART EDUCATION

A Dissertation in
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by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to draw implications and develop recommendations for Korean art curriculum to achieve education that supports ecological sustainability. To do so, I critique Korean contemporary environmental art and the current Korean art curriculum from an ecological perspective, incorporating values of contextuality, equity, and harmony. Through interviews and document analysis, I particularly focus an ecological art critique on two Korean contemporary artist groups: Bagbat Art Group (BAG) and Korea Nature Art Association (KNAA). I analyzed BAG’s and KNAA’s artworks, exhibitions, and other activities, as well as related research or criticisms in terms of artist groups’ conceptualization of the environment and ways each group conveyed ecological concepts. In analysis of the current Korean art curriculum, I focus on nine art textbooks for secondary schools in Korea.

Using an ecological perspective as art criticism to analyze contemporary Korean artworks by KNAA and BAG members, I find that works of BAG and KNAA reflect and advocate ecological values of contextuality, equity, and harmony in different ways. Creating and exhibiting their works with natural materials found in the exhibition site, KNAA endeavors to represent the beauty and spirituality of local nature. Artworks of KNAA convey values of contextuality (i.e., valuing locality), equity (i.e., between human-beings and nature), and harmony (i.e., harmonious relationships between humans and nature). BAG expands and broadens KNAA’s conceptualization of ecology in social, cultural, and political life. Similarly to KNAA, BAG creates and exhibits their works with materials found in the exhibition site. However, the messages of the artworks are
mostly related to the socio-cultural or political issues of Jara Island, the site of exhibition. BAG brings social and political issues into their works and they raise their voices about those issues. BAG conveys the value of contextuality (i.e., valuing local tradition or culture), equity (i.e., empowerment of all members), and harmony (i.e., embracing diverse perspectives).

Analyzing the current Korean art curriculum as to how it reflects or does not reflect ecological values (using nine art textbooks for secondary schools), I focus on examining the notion of environment, sense of place, and aesthetics embedded in the Korean art curriculum. I find that the notion of environment in the current Korean art curriculum mainly regards physical and visual features of environment. Another finding is that the sense of place embedded in the current Korean art curriculum does not encompass distinctiveness or unique values of local place. Also, I find that the current Korean art curriculum is mainly based upon the perspective of formalism, which emphasizes visual attributes such as color and proportional relationships within artworks rather than contextual meaning.

Finally, I propose three suggestions for Korean art education to be more responsible to practice education for ecological sustainability. First, I argue that Korean art curriculum should convey broader ideas of environment and ecology beyond environment as physical surroundings. Second, I propose that Korean art curriculum guide activities that explore local issues of equity and harmony. Lastly, I suggest that Korean ecological art curriculum interpret environmental responsibility through an ecological lens of contextuality, equity, and harmony.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Study

In this study, I develop recommendations for Korean art education to incorporate an ecological perspective of contextuality, equity, and harmony in art criticism practices. I explore an ecological perspective in a critical analysis of two Korean contemporary environmental artist groups—Baggat Art Group (BAG) and the Korean Nature Art Association (KNAA; also known as Yatoo). Many contemporary artists in Korea identify themselves as environmental artists. They regularly or irregularly exhibit their artworks and hold art activities such as art competitions, biennales, and forums. They define their own ideas of environment, ecology, or nature, and present them to other artists and public viewers through their art activities. In order to explore BAG’s and KNAA’s works from an axiology of ecological values such as contextuality, equity, and harmony, I ask the following questions: How do BAG and KNAA conceptualize the idea of ecology and environment? How do BAG and KNAA reflect ecological values in their artworks, exhibitions, and other activities? How are BAG’s and KNAA’s works different from other contemporary environmental artworks? What kinds of pedagogical aspects of ecological values can be found in BAG’s and KNAA’s works?

I also analyze, from an ecological perspective, the current Korean art curriculum focusing on nine art textbooks currently in use for secondary schools in Korea. In this process, I ask the following questions: How does the current Korean art curriculum conceptualize and perceive the idea of ecology and environment? What kinds of aesthetics and pedagogical values does current
Korean art education reflect and advocate? How can Korean art curriculum apply and reflect eco-pedagogical values?

In Chapter One, I discuss the significance of this study, definitions of terms used in the study—environment, ecology, sustainability, ecological sustainability, and ecological perspective—and I discuss why I focus on and how I perceive an axiology of contextuality, equity, and harmony. In Chapter Two, I discuss the research design of this study. These preceding discussions about the analytical lens of this study provide grounds from which I conduct an extensive analysis of Korean contemporary environmental artworks and the current Korean art curriculum presented in chapters three to six. From chapters three to five, I examine how Korean contemporary environmental art conveys the value of contextuality (Chapter Three), equity (Chapter Four), and harmony (Chapter Five), focusing on BAG’s and KNAA’s works. With an axiology of ecological values (contextuality, equity, and harmony), I explore how an ecological perspective conveys these three values and how the axiology of an ecological perspective can be applied to artworks as art criticism. I apply an eco-critical discussion to works of BAG and KNAA, as examples of environmental artworks that convey ecological values. In Chapter Six, I analyze how the current Korean art curriculum conveys, or does not convey, the values of contextuality, equity, and harmony. I discuss how the current Korean art curriculum conceptualizes the notion of environment and reflects a sense of place and eco-aesthetics. I examine nine art textbooks for secondary schools in Korea because I find that the art curriculum for secondary schools reflects the national art curriculum. Based upon my analysis of the current Korean art curriculum, in Chapter Seven, I develop implications and suggestions for Korean art curriculum to practice education for ecological sustainability. Lastly, in Chapter Eight, I discuss
findings in terms of the research questions for this study, and conclude with recommendations for further research.

1.2 Significance of the Study

There have been several studies about ecological art education in Korea. However, most research studies about ecological art education are based upon a notion of environment as physical surroundings (Park, 1999; Kim, H. K., 2004; Kim, H. M., 2004; 2009; Jang, 2006; Lee, 2005; Ryu et al., 2009; Kim & Ahn, 2011). I apply an ecological perspective, which encompasses social, cultural, and political aspects of ecology and environment, to examine how the current Korean art curriculum reflects or does not reflect multilateral aspects of ecological values. This study critiques and extends the discourses of environmental art education in relation to the practices of Korean art curriculum.

Also, this study contributes to the pedagogical potential of environmental art from art critical strategies that I, as an art educator, propose in order for Korean art education to be responsible toward education for ecological sustainability. In that regard, this dissertation is significant as the first study about Korean environmental art movements through an axiological and pedagogical lens of contextuality, equity, and harmony.

1.3 Definitions of Environment, Ecology, and Sustainability

Definitions of environment, ecology, and sustainability vary. For example, the term ecology is most often used to refer to the scientific study that explores relationships among living
organisms. However, philosophers such as Capra (2002) and Morton (2010) use the term ecology as a metaphor to explain social, cultural, and political interrelatedness of the world. With his notion of deep ecology, Capra (2002) advocates a more holistic view of ecology, which includes reconsideration of ethics and value systems of modern societies. In his book titled *Ecological Thoughts*, Morton (2010) insists that ecology is more than science involving global warming and the food web. Arguing that ecology is a matter of perspective by which each individual perceives the world, he claims that ecology should be about all the social, cultural, and political features of living beings on Earth. The notions of environment and sustainability also vary in meaning within and between fields such as policy studies, landscape architecture, environmental science, resource management, tourism, and marketing. In the next three sections, I examine meanings of the concepts environment, ecology, and sustainability in order to form an operating definition for this study.

### 1.3.1 Environment

*Environment* is a broad concept. In common usage within Korean environmental education, environment generally refers to physical surroundings of human-beings. Textbooks of environmental education for middle school students in Korea state that environment means everything that surrounds us (humans), which include every element on Earth such as air, water, soil, trees, buildings, and roadways (Choi et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2009; Park et al., 2009). According to those textbooks, environment consists of the natural environment and human-made environment, which are physical elements. In this perspective on the notion of environment, environmental education often tends to focus on caring for nature (natural environment) that has suffered from human civilization (human-made environment). Natural environments such as
water, air, and soil have been polluted by human activities (mostly by unsustainable industrialization) causing environmental changes that now threaten the survival of human beings on Earth. So it is urgent that we attend to the illness of Earth and bring it back to a healthy state, which is ecologically sustainable. From this point of view, the purpose of environmental education is to help students become aware of the urgency of the environmental crisis and to care for nature, thus creating a better future. Considering the future environment that the next generations will inhabit, it is important to address practices that promote ecological well-being for all.

However, such practices require more than attention to physical surroundings of human beings. Environment not only indicates physical substance on Earth but also includes social, cultural, and political dimensions of the surroundings. Palmer and Birch (2005) argue that research on environmental education has developed and changed significantly over the past half-century. From the 1960s through early 1970s, it had been based upon the tradition of nature study or natural science. However, having been influenced by action research and social sciences-oriented perspectives since the 1970s, the concept of empowerment, communication, problem solving, and action aimed socio-environmental movement has emerged. In particular, a focus on human rights, peace issues, and education for the benefit of future generations has become a part of environmental education practice. Environmental issues are deeply intertwined with issues of human rights and justice. For example, social issues such as wars, arms race, overconsumption, inequity, and disparity are both causes and results of unsustainable environments marked by pollution, overpopulation, climate changes, energy deficiency, and lack of self-sustainability. From this perspective, environmental education is not only teaching and
learning about human beings’ natural and built surroundings, but also about social, political, and cultural relationships of every being on Earth. Disinger and Monroe (1994) state that:

EE [environmental education] is fundamentally different from “nature education” because it addresses interrelationships between humans and the environment. It also differs from environmental science—the scientific study of those interrelationships—because EE is concerned with values and skills as well as knowledge. (p. 3)

According to their definition, environmental education is interdisciplinary and encompasses every subject of study—such as sociology, engineering, philosophy, art, and science. In this sense, Orr (1992) says that environmental education is “the opposite of the specialization and narrowness characteristic of most education” (p. 92). Environmental education aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of human life in terms of social, political, and cultural aspects; and eventually, to develop attitudes of care and stewardship of and with every entity on Earth. In this study, the term, environment, not only designates physical surroundings of human-beings, but it also includes social, cultural, and political aspects of the surroundings.

1.3.2. Ecology and Ecological Perspective

The word ecology literally means a study that explores relationships between organisms and their environment (ecology, 2009). Nowadays, many fields of study such as biology, sociology, and education use the term ecology to refer to the notion that all species (e.g., humans, animals, and plants) in the world are connected in important life-sustaining ways (Bateson, 1972; Capra, 2002; Jardins, 2005). In other words, nothing can exist by itself or in isolation from an eco-system. Jardins (2005) argues distinct characteristics of ecological study as follows:
Unlike botany and zoology, which tended to focus on discrete plants and animals, ecology emphasized the connections that exist in nature. Individual plants and animals are connected to other individuals in their own species, to individuals of other species, and to the physical environment in which they live. (p. 38)

Morton (2010) also emphasizes interconnectedness of all life forms in the world by harnessing the metaphor of the mesh. Like a mesh, in which all threads are interwoven together, he explains that our world is comprised of interrelationships. In this point of view, Morton (2010) states that “Nothing exists all by itself, and so nothing is fully ‘itself’” (p. 15).

Relationships, relationships are a matter of perspectives and contexts. Value, respect, and harmony change according to perspectives in specific contexts. This variability is because relationships are fundamentally relational. For instance, in the food chain, carnivores are dangerous species to herbivores from the perspective of herbivores. However, the immediacy of the danger for those eaten by carnivores may contribute to the survival of the species to balance population with the area’s food resource. Herbivores are vital to carnivores from the perspective of carnivores. Harmonious relationships are always contextual and complex. Hence, ecology, the study of different positionalities within contextual relationships, is not about what to think regarding the existence of individuals, but about how to perceive relationships. In this regard, Morton (2011) argues that:

It’s [the ecological thought] not simply a matter of what you’re thinking about. It’s also a matter of how you think … It isn’t just to do with the sciences of ecology. Ecological thinking is to do with art, philosophy, literature, music, and culture. Ecological thinking has as much to do with the humanities wing of modern universities as with the sciences, and it also has to do with factories,
transportation, architecture, and economics. Ecology includes all the ways we imagine how we live together. Ecology is profoundly about coexistence.

Existence is always coexistence. No [hu]man is an island. Human beings are each others’ environment. Thinking ecologically isn’t simply about nonhuman things. Ecology has to do with you and me. (p. 4)

Morton emphasizes that ecology is fundamentally based upon how to perceive and understand the world, which encompasses all the relationships of entity on Earth. In the statement, he also makes it clear that ecology is profoundly about coexistence of all life forms on Earth. Coexistence is more than survival. Coexistence achieves, according to Morton (2010), harmonious well being of all entities in the world. In a 2010 publication, Morton says that understanding how humans think of others is the first step to reach harmonious coexistence.

Code’s (2006) notion of ecological thinking correlates to Morton’s (2010) argument. She states that:

Ecological thinking is not simply thinking about ecology or about “the environment,” although these figure as catalysts among its issues. It is a revised mode of engagement with knowledge, subjectivity, politics, ethics, science, citizenship, and agency that pervades and reconfigures theory and practice. (p. 5)

In her perspective, ecology is in every facet of living as humans (such as producing and building knowledge, ethics, and social systems) in the world. I find Code’s and Morton’s perspectives on ecology significant in that they both consider ecology as a way of thinking or understanding of the world. In their perspectives, ecology is no longer only about what to know, but also, more
importantly, how to perceive and understand myself and others in the world in relationship to one another.

In this regard, I apply the term ecological perspective as ecological lens to perceive and understand the world. Since an ecological perspective is a viewpoint to see the world, it not only indicates connections between human and non-human, but it also encompasses every aspect of human activities. Morton (2010) states that:

Ecology isn’t just about global warming, recycling, and solar power—and also not just to do with everyday relationships between humans and nonhumans. It has to do with love, loss, despair, and compassion. It has to do with depression and psychosis. It has to do with capitalism and with what might exist after capitalism. It has to do with amazement, open-mindedness, and wonder. It has to do with doubt, confusion, and skepticism. It has to do with concepts of space and time. It has to do with delight, beauty, ugliness, disgust, irony, and pain. It has to do with reading and writing. It has to do with race, class, and gender. It has to do with sexuality. It has to do with ideas of self and the weird paradoxes of subjectivity. It has to do with society. It has to do with coexistence. (p. 2)

Like Morton’s (2010) understanding of ecology, ecological perspective has to do with how I view and understand myself and other species, people, gender, and societies: How do I perceive love, beauty, ugliness, race, class, gender, and our world? What do I value and devalue?

Answering these questions is different from figuring out what are love, beauty, ugliness, race, class, gender, and our world because answers are in relationship to individual positionalities within specific social contexts and value systems that are within networks of other contexts and systems. What is defined as beautiful or ugly is based on social and cultural beliefs. Also,
perceptions of race and class are based upon social and cultural values. From this point of view, an ecological perspective should incorporate understanding of contextual difference manifested in cultural, social, and political values. In this regard, I define ecological perspective as a worldview that entails ecological values. Knight (2006) defines worldview as “ways in which we look out on the universe. It consists of our values, beliefs, and assumptions, or the way in which we perceive ‘the other’” (p. 40). Acknowledging that worldview is a way to understand the world, which consists of values, beliefs, and assumptions, I define ecological perspective as a worldview to look at and understand diverse contextual relationships among all life forms on Earth.

1.3.3 Sustainability

Literally, in a general sense, sustainability means the ability to be maintained or sustained. The word sustainability, in environmental science, means “the quality of not being harmful to the environment or depleting natural resources, and thereby supporting long-term ecological balance” (sustainability, 2013). In this definition of sustainability, I believe that the word “ecological balance” is the keyword to understand sustainability. Ecological balance is a condition of equilibrium among elements of natural communities. Every living being on Earth is interconnected to each other in a systemic way, and this is called ecosystem. In an ecosystem, each species lives in relation to other species, like in a food chain. Plants are vital to herbivores. Carnivores survive by eating herbivores or smaller animals. In order to sustain an ecosystem, adequate numbers of species are critical. If a particular species flourishes, the number of a species in a lower level of the food chain decreases. When the animals in the lower level of the food chain become scarce, animals in the upper level of the food chain suffer from the lack of
food. Eventually the whole ecosystem is in peril. Ecological balance is a state in which every
component sustains other components, so that one component does not become dominant or
diminish. In this regard, ecological balance is a harmonious tension of all components for their
survival. However, since the environmental condition of each region varies according to
environmental alterations such as climate changes, ecological balance is not a fixed point. Rather,
ecological balance is a tensional state that constantly alters or shifts.

I define the term sustainability as an ecologically balanced state that encompasses social,
political, and cultural, as well as physical, aspects of environment. Like ecological balance,
sustainability is a state of tensional harmony among people, animals, plants, and other organisms.
Like ecological balance, sustainability also alters and shifts according to the context of a region,
society, or people. In this regard, sustainability is not an end point with a goal, but a process.
Orr’s (1992) notion of Ecological Sustainability supports this view of sustainability. Orr argues
that there are two meanings of sustainability, technological sustainability and ecological
sustainability. He states that:

Advocates of technological sustainability tend to believe that every problem has
either a technological answer or a market solution. … Ecological sustainability is
the task of finding alternatives to the practices that got us in trouble in the first
place; it is necessary to rethink agriculture, shelter, energy use, urban design,
transportation, economics, community patterns, resource use, forestry, the
importance of wilderness, and our central values. (Orr, 1992, p. 24)

He differentiates these two meanings of sustainability and argues which one is a fundamental
approach to resolve environmental crises that the world is currently facing. According to his
argument, technological sustainability is based on a mindset that the more improved technology
becomes, the better a solution for sustainability can be realized. Eventually this approach requires more rapid economic growth in both industry and capital. Meanwhile, he argues that ecological sustainability is based on the notion that human beings are part of the world so that ecological sustainability has to do with the active role of the global citizen, as well as a part of nature, for a sustainable future. In other words, it is not technology that can make the world sustainable but, ultimately, the human being’s active role for sustainability. Orr (1992) states that ecological sustainability has the following characteristics: (a) acknowledgement of human beings as limited and fallible creatures, (b) emphasis on the active role of citizens in the creation of a sustainable future, (c) a root of sustainability coming from local indigenous knowledge and tradition, (d) the perception to see nature as a model for human dwelling, (e) decentralization of human systems, and (f) recognition of interrelatedness. His notion of ecological sustainability resonates with an ecological perspective in that, fundamentally, both notions require reconsidering the values of human activities and social systems.

In this study, the term sustainability refers to an ecologically balanced state, not only physical connections, but also social, cultural and political relationships among all components of the environment. In this regard, sustainability is not the end of the goal. Rather sustainability is a state of the goal.

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1 Orr (1992) claims that technological sustainability has the following four beliefs: (1) Nature can be measured and managed by science, (2) to be insatiable or have no limit of sufficiency is human nature, (3) economic growth is essential for a better future, and (4) poor technology has caused an unsustainable environment.
1.4 An Axiology of Contextuality, Equity, and Harmony as Art Criticism

After reviewing literature about ecology, three predominant elements of ecological values surface: (a) a focus on contextual interpretation, (b) values of equity, and (c) values of harmony. In the following discussion, I talk about why and how I posit contextuality, equity, and harmony as important ecological values among others, as well as an axiology of each value that formed my art criticism approaches applied to contemporary Korean environmental art and art curriculum.²

1.4.1 Contextuality, Equity, and Harmony as Core Values of Ecological Discourses

After studying literature about ecology, I have found that there are several ideas and terms that many ecological discourses share in common. Diversity, coexistence, equilibrium, locality, indigenousness, justice, and democracy are common terms that can be found in discussions of ecology. In incorporating these notions in the formation of an ecological perspective to critique art and art curriculum, I have organized a pedagogical approach into three umbrella notions: contextuality, equity, and harmony.

In my discussion to form a definition of ecology, I take the position that every entity in the world is interconnected with each other. Also, I argue that relationships are always contextual and relational rather than static. The value of contextuality reflects relationships of time and place as connections among every element in the world. Heinen (1994) states that “No single approach to ‘sustainable development’ or framework is consistently useful, given the variety of scales inherent in different conservation programmes and different types of societies and

² Extensive and in-depth discussion of axiology of contextuality, equity, and harmony is provided in chapters three to five in relation to Korean contemporary environmental arts.
institutional structures” (p. 28). In his statement, Heinen argues that approaches of sustainable developments are different in every region or society because conditions or contexts of every region or society are different. In this regard, values of locality—such as emphasis on local indigenous knowledge, tradition, and place-based education; and diversity—such as biodiversity of species in ecosystems and cultural diversity of a society—correlates with the value of contextuality. For instance, let us think about energy consumption in different situations. At the beginning of 2013, the Korean government announced their plan to raise the price of electricity. They said that high cost of electricity in Korea will reduce overconsumption of energy, and eventually it will help environmental restoration through less usage of fossil-fuel and nuclear power plants. However, many people are concerned about the plan because there are still many people who cannot afford the current electricity cost. Especially in winter, numerous people in Korea depend on heating systems that run on electricity for their survival because other heating systems that burn oil or gas are more expensive than electricity. In this case, it is arguable whether it is a sustainable approach to raise the cost of electricity in order to encourage people to use less energy regardless of each person’s conditions because reducing energy use could be fatal for some people. For this reason, different approaches for sustainability should be applied according to the context of each person, society, or culture.

Acknowledgement of contextual values in an ecological perspective leads to the consideration of the value of equity. In a sense, it would be equal to raise electricity cost to all people. However, it is not an equitable plan for people who suffer from lack of electricity because they already cannot afford it. Values of equity concern fairness and can be achieved through understanding and acknowledgement of each individual’s context. In this regard, education scholar Chet Bowers (2001) emphasizes values of equity as an important element of
ecological values. With his notion of *eco-justice*, Bowers argues that ecological discourses such as sustainable development should encompass social issues like poverty, inequity, and disparity because those issues are intertwined and cannot be solved separately. Environmental problems of landfills are not just about pollution of a specific place, but also about people who live in and depend on the resources of that place. Issues of toxicity are not just about chemical contamination of the environment, but also about people who have no other choice but to work in specific toxic environments. In this perspective, values of equity such as human rights, justice, and social issues should be considered as an important element of an ecological perspective.

Every living organism on Earth, like every human-being, has equal rights to be in a wholesome environment for their living. In this regard, an ecofeminist, Shiva (2005) advances a notion of *Earth Democracy*. In her perspective, democratic values are not only for human beings, but also for all living organisms in the world. Her notion of *Earth Democracy* is notable in terms of the value of equity, as what Shiva endeavors to argue is not only about the importance of all living forms as useful components of Earth’s ecosystems, but, more importantly, all living forms’ inherent authorities and rights to live on this planet. In this perspective, human beings do not have any authority to kill or harness a species beyond the limit of sustenance. Acknowledging living forms’ equal rights to live on this planet, the value of equity becomes an important aspect of ecological values because each individual organism does not have the same needs. Essential necessity for sustenance of each being is different, and, in many ways, is in conflict with each other, such as the relationships of prey and predators in an ecosystem. In this regard, ecological balance, which correlates to the value of harmony, is interconnected with the value of equity.

I find that Shiva’s notion of *Earth Democracy* is also a good place to begin a discussion about values of harmony. In democracy as a political system, one of the important and
fundamental principles is a distribution of powers and authorities such as division of political power among a legislature, an executive, and a judiciary. In this tripartite system of powers, no one governmental division can abuse their power because two other divisions have authorities to restrain it. This democratic system is based upon a harmonious tension among separated powers. I find that this balanced power tension in democratic systems is a good metaphor of the value of harmony as well as ecological balance in an ecosystem. In an ecologically balanced ecosystem, the number, power, and dominance of every component should be in perfectly harmonious tension, so no one species flourishes beyond the limit that overwhelms other species in the ecosystem. The value of harmony is similar to this ecological balance. Since every individual’s need for sustenance is different—and often times, oppositional or conflictive—it is critical to understand, care for, and consider others’ contexts and positionalities, and not to pursue one’s need to the point of infringing on others’ rights.

In terms of values of contextuality, equity, and harmony, it is noteworthy that these three values are also interconnected and depend on each other. The value of harmony can be achieved through respecting rights of others (the value of equity). Also the value of equity is based upon acknowledgement of context and relative positions of others (the value of contextuality). None of these values can be fulfilled without the other values. They complete each other. I discern that three ecological values of contextuality, equity, and harmony encompass core notions in ecological discourses such as diversity, coexistence, locality, equilibrium, balance, and justice.

1.4.2 An Axiology of Contextuality

Ecology as an exploration of relationships and interconnectedness of entities on Earth requires comprehensive and broad perspectives. It is somewhat different from looking closely at
objects one by one and then putting them together as in a reductionists’ perspective. Rather it requires a holistic and comprehensive way of thinking. Emphasizing that ecology is a study about relationships, Capra (2002) states that “understanding living systems leads us to the understanding of relationships” (p. 162). Furthermore, he exemplifies Gestalt psychology. In his explanation, the German word Gestalt means “living form.” And what the Gestalt psychologists found was that living systems cannot be understood by reducing them into smaller parts. “The whole is more than the sum of its parts” is a fundamental underpinning of holism. He goes further, arguing that the study of ecological relationships leads us to a study of patterns. What he means by patterns is different from universal patterns of living forms. Rather it means contextual specific patterns of living forms. Capra emphasizes unique and contextual connections of living forms by explaining living networks, which “continually create or recreate themselves by transferring or replacing their components” (p. 164). He also argues that there are always hidden connections, which are contextual, when we look at the relationships of living forms at the social level.

The word ecology is derived from the Greek word oikos, which means household, home, or place to live. Hence, understanding of place or a sense of place is a crucial aspect of ecological perspective. From an ecological perspective, however, a sense of place not only means acquiring geographical knowledge about a place, but also understanding all the relationships among land, animals, plants, and people. Gradle (2007) asserts that “place is no longer the simple locale, it is a relational nature of people and environment” (p. 393). In his notion of Place-Based Education, Sobel (2004) argues that developing a sense of place is not

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3 It is interesting that the word ecology is translated as Saeng-Tae in Korean, which literally means “living (Saeng) form (Tae)” as well.
only learning about the physical location, but also understanding the cultural, social, and political context of the place, which includes every living being’s ways of living and their relationships. Having the notion that every place has its unique and distinctive history and culture, an ecological perspective pursues the value of contextuality.

1.4.3 An Axiology of Equity

Another common shared value in ecological discourses is the value of equity. From an ecological perspective as a worldview, issues of social justice such as gender, class, and power relations are all related to the ecological issues of global warming and air pollution. From this point of view, Bowers (2000) brings in the term *eco-justice* rather than social justice. He argues that:

Social justice issues of class, race, and gender are often understood in terms of providing equal opportunity within an individualistic, work, and consumer dependent society. While various forms of discrimination remain unresolved, I think it makes more sense to frame these issues as well as a number of other issues ignored in the social justice discourse in terms of the root metaphor of an ecology rather than in terms of the root metaphor of the autonomous, self-directing individual. (pp. 14-15)

In this statement, Bowers claims that discourses of social justice are limited to issues of inequity and injustice because it can only be discussed within the social systems that human beings currently have such as capitalism, consumerism, industrialization, and market-driven globalization. He posits three aspects of eco-justice that have the most direct implications for educators: (a) the right of economically and politically marginalized groups to live and work in
environments that are free of toxic contamination; (b) the need to recover the noncommodified aspects of community, including the right of minority cultures to renew what remains of their non-commodified traditions rather than be pressured to assimilate fully into the dominant culture of consumerism, technological dependency, and self-centered individualism; and (c) the right of unborn generations to live in a viable environment that can sustain morally coherent, community-centered lives. In his definition of eco-justice, one thing is significantly clear: ecology encompasses values of equity.

Scoones (1999) claims that each of the central areas of ecological theories has the characteristic of equity at its core. In her notion of Earth Democracy, Shiva (2005) posits the value of equity as the most important aspect of ecology. Under the maxim that every entity has equitable rights to live well on Earth, she brings democratic values into the discourses of ecology.

Ecofeminism is a good example of eco-justice in that ecofeminists consider connections between oppression of women and oppression of the environment (Manion, 2002). From the perspective of ecofeminists, oppression of women is not so much different from oppression of environment because both were originally derived from the belief that Western White men are superior and should dominate or control everything. What and who has been ignored and marginalized in societies, and by whom? Is it fair, ethical, or righteous? Such discourses are important aspects of an ecological perspective with the value of equity.

1.4.4 An Axiology of Harmony

Lastly, an ecological perspective conveys values of harmony. Diversity, multiplicity, sharing, partnership, and pluralism are terms often found in ecological studies. And those terms convey ideas of cohabitation and coexistence in accordance with one another, that is, the value of
harmony. Harmony is in accordance with sustaining every life form’s uniqueness. It is no longer harmony if everything is the same. From an ecological perspective, multilateral aspects of harmony such as harmony between humans and nature, harmony among peoples, cultures, and societies can be considered as important elements. Morton (2010) believes that coexistence is the core of ecology, coexistence with other people as well as coexistence with every other entity in the world. What he means by coexistence not only means survival or biological existence, but also harmonious cohabitation or well being in togetherness. Orr’s (1992) notion of *ecological sustainability* relates to the value of harmony. In the discourse of *ecological sustainability*, Orr (1992) claims that ecological sustainability is to achieve collaborative relationships or partnerships among all the entities on Earth. According to him, accepting, caring for, and acknowledging others rather than conflicting with or dominating others can achieve ecological sustainability. Considering all the discourses of coexistence and partnerships, an ecological perspective encompasses the value of harmony.

Discourses of this study are based upon definitions of *environment, ecology, ecological perspective, and sustainability*, and an axiology of contextuality, equity, and harmony, which I discussed throughout this chapter. In Chapter Two, I present the design of this research to show how I conduct and draw conclusions of this research as well as its limitations.
CHAPTER TWO
RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study is to develop recommendations or suggestions for Korean art curriculum to become responsible for providing an education in ecological sustainability. In doing so, I explore how Korean contemporary environmental artists—focusing on Baggat Art Group (BAG) and Korean Nature Art Association (KNAA)—and current Korean art curriculum involving art textbooks for secondary schools in Korea, reflect or advocate ecological values of contextuality, equity, and harmony. In this chapter I discuss how I designed the study. I begin with why and how I selected the two groups and research participants in each group. Next, I reflectively disclose my own position and the situated knowledge that I bring to this study. I discuss the specific nature of the data sets in this study and the process of analysis and interpretations, and conclude this chapter with discussing limitations of the research design.

2.1 Baggat Art Group and Korea Nature Art Association

Many Korean contemporary artists identify themselves and their works as environmental artists and environmental art. Since 2000, several exhibitions or art festivals under the theme of environment or ecology have been newly designed and held by various environmental artists groups or local governments. To explore Korean contemporary environmental art, in this study, I focus on Baggat Art Group (BAG) and Korean Nature Art Association (KNAA) because (a) they are the oldest environmental artists groups in Korea, so looking at their activities from the beginning to the present could provide an overview of the history of Korean environmental art,
and (b) I find that their artworks and activities reflect and advocate ecological values well compared to other Korean contemporary environmental artworks.

The year 2011 was BAG’s and KNAA’s (also known as Yatoo) thirtieth year. Both BAG and KNAA formed in 1981. In order to have better understandings of the two groups’ formations and histories, it is necessary to be aware of the Korean socio-political milieu in the 1970s and 80s, which is designated as a period of *Winter Republic* in Korean history.

A Korean art critic, Kim (2005) describes the period of 1970s and 80s, the so-called *Winter Republic*, as the time when many artists agonized about social and political meanings and roles of art and artists under the dark military regimes and dictatorships in Korea. During this period, numerous demonstrations emerged sporadically throughout the nation against the military government that usurped the regime through coup d’état in the 1960s and their dictatorship afterward. Most journalists were under control of the government, which enforced strict governmental censorship. Studies about peoplehood or critical pedagogy were designated as communism, and literatures about those studies were prohibited. Art was no exception to the censorship. The mainstream art field was formed by governmental control through censorship and a national art competition called “국전 (Kukjeon)”. Having been supported by the government, academic art based upon certain colleges became a mainstream art form, mainly represented as monochrome abstract paintings. Artists who did not graduate from certain colleges or pursued other types of paintings found there were no opportunities to exhibit their artworks. In the established art world of Korea, BAG and KNAA were formed in this Korean socio-political milieu in opposition to the censorship.

These two artist groups have much in common in that they both create and exhibit their artworks at open and public outdoor natural environments such as riversides and mountains.
Both groups collect most of the materials for their artworks from the exhibition site and exhibit the artworks in the place from which the materials were gathered. Most of their works are not permanent and are biodegradable. Currently, in 2013, BAG consists of ten members and their largest annual event is *Jara Island Baggit Art Exhibition*. KNAA also has ten members and their large scale bi-annual event is called *Geumgang International Nature Art Biennale*. Despite their similarities, there are several differences between the two groups in terms of their sense of place, relationships among members, and so forth. Those differences are discussed in the analysis of their works in relation to an axiology of contextuality, equity, and harmony from chapters three to five in this dissertation.

Since the beginning of the year 2000, an awareness of environmental problems and ecological crisis in Korea and around the world has increased throughout Korean society. Many 21st century artists in Korea take environmental issues as themes for their artworks, and identify themselves as environmental artists. Although this recent environmental art movement presents and conveys diverse promising messages to the public, I find that it does not fully entail ecological, probably more fundamental, values, which I find from works of BAG and KNAA. Art education scholar Song (2008) adds another type of environmental art, which is to engage with the community through activities. Song states that this type of environmental artwork is adequate to bring contextual values into the works and to directly engage with the community. I find BAG’s and KNAA’s works are close to this type of environmental artwork. All things considered, I find that BAG’s and KNAA’s works differ from recent environmental artworks in Korea in that they convey ecological values—contextuality, equity, and harmony—being engaged with the local communities, culture, and people.

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4 More discussion about this issue is provided in chapters three to five.
2.2 Research Questions

In order to develop implications and recommendations for Korean art curriculum to achieve education for ecological sustainability, I apply an ecological perspective as an art criticism strategy to examine Korean contemporary environmental art and current art curriculum. I posit the following research questions:

1. From an ecological perspective with values of contextuality, equity, and harmony, how might BAG’s and KNAA’s notions of ecology, environment, and sustainability, as well as their activities, be interpreted or critiqued?

2. From an ecological perspective, how might (or might not) current Korean art curriculum focused on art education for secondary schools in Korea reflect or advocate ecological values (contextuality, equity, and harmony)?

3. In order for Korean art curriculum to achieve education for ecological sustainability, what implications and suggestions might be drawn from the study of these two environmentally focused art groups and from the analysis of current Korean art education?

2.3 Research Framework: Qualitative Interpretive Research

This research consists of three parts overall: (a) exploring Korean contemporary environmental arts, (b) analyzing current Korean art curriculum, and (c) developing recommendations for Korean art curriculum to achieve education for ecological sustainability. In
order to draw implications and develop suggestions for Korean art education to promote education for ecological sustainability, I firstly develop art criticism strategies for exploring BAG’s and KNAA’s art activities. From an ecological perspective as a lens of art criticism, I looked at (a) how they perceive the idea of ecology, environment, and sustainability, (b) how they initiated and have developed their group, (c) how they convey the concept of ecology, environment, and sustainability through their art activities, and (d) what kinds of ecological values they do (or do not) advocate. To do so, I interviewed four members of each group and one guest member of two groups, participated in attending their exhibitions and seminars, and read articles, critics, and literature about the groups.

Secondly, I analyzed how current Korean art curriculum advocates or does not advocate ecological values focusing on nine art textbooks for secondary schools in Korea. I examined (a) how current Korean art curriculum conceptualizes the notion of environment and (b) how current Korean art curriculum advocates or does not advocate ecological values. Specifically, I analyzed nine contemporary art textbooks used in 2012 in secondary schools in Korea. The art curriculum for secondary schools adheres to the national art curriculum of Korea. I analyzed these books based upon an axiology of contextuality, equity, and harmony, and develop suggestions for Korean art curriculum to practice education for ecological sustainability.

5 Elementary art curriculum is incorporated with multiple study subjects such as music, sociology, and gymnastics. For that reason, elementary art curriculum is less standardized than secondary schools and, therefore, a study of ecological perspectives in the curriculum is beyond the scope of this study. However, future action research studies in elementary schools such as how to introduce ecological perspectives might impact changes in the national curriculum.
Lastly, I develop recommendations and suggestions for Korean art curriculum for ecological sustainability based upon findings from analysis of Korean contemporary environmental art and current Korean art education. Figure 2.1 is a research map of this study.

![Research Map](image)

Figure 2.1 Research Map

In large part, my analysis of two significant Korean environmental artist groups and the Korean art curriculum is a process of my own understanding and meaning-making from my own perspective, what I call an ecological perspective in this study. In that regard, this study is qualitative research. Qualitative research is based upon an assumption that meanings of phenomena are subjectively (yet systematically and logically) constructed by researchers, not objectively discovered by researchers. Merriam (2002) claims that meaning does not exist in the object, but human beings construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) liken qualitative researchers to bricoleurs. They state that “The researcher, in turn, may be seen as a bricoleur, as a maker of quilts, or, as in filmmaking, a
person who assembles images into montages” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 4). Like a collage, film, quilt, or montage, social phenomena can be described, interpreted, and evaluated differently by an individual researcher according to his or her perspectives, values, and experience. In this regard, revealing the researcher’s positionalities and biases, and discussing the role as a researcher and an art educator in Korea, is part of the qualitative research methodology of this study.

For this study, I interviewed members of BAG and KNAA and interpreted the two groups’ activities and notions of ecology, environment, and sustainability based upon my theoretical framework for an ecological perspective involving: contextuality, equity, and harmony.6 I explore each individual artist’s experience, and examine what meaning each group attributes to their groups’ designation as environmental artists and their interpretation of their art. In this regard, questions that I raise in this study are about my interpretation and understanding of the participants’ experiences, perspectives, and lives as environmental artists. Also, I explore what kind of values the Korean art curriculum for secondary schools advocates by examining the art textbooks currently used in secondary schools. In this process, my position—as a participating observer of two groups, an art critic, and a secondary school art educator in Korea—provides an important aspect to the research procedure. In order to observe events of two groups during 2011 and 2012, I took a role as a participating observer (see Table 2.2). I participated as a translator in 2012 Jara Island Baggat Art International Exhibition and Yatoo-i Workshop, on a discussion panel in 2011 Baggat Art Seminar. By participating in these events, I could build rapport and gain affinity with members of the groups while preparing and conducting events together with group members. Also my role as a translator of the events and on a discussion panel of a seminar

6 The theoretical frames and interpretive lens is introduced in Chapter One and elaborated in Chapter Three.
provided me access to see documents that they created for the events, and such opportunities led me to gain a deeper understanding of the two groups’ activities. In the process of analysis and interpretation of the collected data about the two groups and about art textbooks for secondary schools in Korea, my positionality as an art critic and an art educator in a Korean secondary school provided a critical part. As an art critic, I hold a perspective that ecological artworks should carry ecological values—contextuality, equity, and harmony—from various perspectives such as social, cultural, and political, not just conveying messages about environmental issues. So-called environmental artwork, in general, refers to artwork made out of natural materials or takes themes of environmental issues without considering how the artwork relates to the place as local people, as a community, and as an ecosystem; how environmentally the artwork uses natural materials; and how harmoniously the artwork is situated in the site. Ecological artworks, which convey ecological values, are artworks that advocate local values or contextual meanings of the place (contextuality), respect the idea that all living beings in the place have the equal rights to live in the place (equity), and reflect coexistence of all living beings in the site (harmony). Also, as a secondary art educator in Korea, I hold a belief that the Korean art curriculum should apply those ecological values in order to achieve education for ecological sustainability. My positionality in this research—as a participating observer, an art critic, and an art educator of Korean secondary school—provided important considerations throughout the overall qualitative research procedure of this project.
2.4 Data Collection

In order to have a better understandings of the artist groups’ activities, I endeavored to collect a variety of data about them such as documents (books, pamphlets, websites, reviews, criticisms, and periodical articles), interviews with members of each group, field notes about events that I have participated in (exhibitions, forums, and seminars), and photographs of exhibitions and artworks. Also, I collected art textbooks currently in use for secondary schools in Korea to examine how current Korean art curriculum conveys or does not reflect ecological values of contextuality, equity, and harmony.

2.4.1 Interviews

Among the data sets, in this study, interviews with the participants and observation of the artist groups’ activities played important roles to have analyzed their perspectives of an axiology of ecology, and to develop an ecological perspective based art criticism for application in Korean art education in secondary schools. Kvale (1996) posits that conversation is a basic, yet important, tool for understanding people’s worlds and lives, and interviewing is a professional conversation to conduct research to understand participants’ experiences and lives. Glesne (1999) also emphasizes that the interview can be the sole basis of a study or it can be used in conjunction with data from participant observation and documents in the interpretive tradition. The interviews that I conducted in the study focused on participants’ perspectives about the values in regarding to ecology, and their experience as members of environmental artist groups. Thus, the interviews were topical interviews. Glesne (1999) comments on these as:

… topical interviews in which questions focus “more on a program, issue, or process than on people’s lives.” … Topical interview approaches seek “opinions,
perceptions, and attitudes toward some topic, for example, asking teachers their opinion about the substance of the state-mandated changes in the middle school science curriculum. How do they perceive the impact of the changes on their work as teachers? What is their attitude about the impact?” … Such an approach would “obtain data that will be instrumental for understanding teacher conceptions of science and the obstacles to implementing proposals for reform.” (p. 69)

The main focus of the interviews in this study was to look at participants’ axiology (i.e., study of values) toward ecology, environment, and sustainability, and their experience as members of BAG and/or KNAA.

I interviewed four members of each group. Firstly, I included group members in leading positions of the groups to learn practical and overall information about the groups. In BAG’s case, every member takes a turn to be a leader of the group in every other year. Kwanghyun Wang has been a leader since 2010, so I included him for an interview. KNAA is not an organization with top down leadership, but they do take turns as a director of the Geumgang Nature Art Biennale, which is the largest biannual event of the group. In 2011, when I conducted interviews for the study, Eungwoo Yi was a director of the Geumgang Nature Art Biennale, so I decided to interview him regarding his leadership of the group in terms of an axiology toward environmental art. Also I included group members who have been actively involved in each group since the beginning of the groups so that they could provide me an overall history of the groups. Among members of BAG, I chose to interview Woonyoung Choi because he is the only member who has been in the group since the beginning. Most primary members of BAG left the group at the beginning of 1990s because of disagreement about management of the group among
members. Current members, except Woonyoung Choi, have joined the group throughout the 1990s.

Most of the KNAA members joined at the formation of the group, but I chose to interview Seunghyun Koh because he has been in a role of the leader of KNAA for most of the time. I also interviewed female members of each group—Youngkyung Koo in BAG and Haesim Kim in KNAA—because there are few women with membership in these two groups. Their experiences are likely different from male members. Male members are dominant in both groups; seven out of ten members are male in BAG and eight out of ten members are male in KNAA. Kwangwoo Kim in BAG and Wonkil Jeon in KNAA were included as interviewees because they are members who actively and practically run and organize each group. While Woonyoung Choi in BAG and Seunghyun Koh in KNAA are eldest and leader-like members of both groups, Kwangwoo Kim and Wonkil Jeon are considered to be the practical organizers. They are considered as second leaders by group members. Lastly I interviewed one more environmental artist, Soonim Kim, who has actively participated in both groups’ exhibitions as a guest artist from 2006 to 2012. Her experience in these two groups might reveal comparative insights of the axiology of the groups.

Interviews were conducted from June 2011 to February 2012. Each interview took one to three hours. After the first interview with each participant, I had one more follow-up interview with some participants when more information was needed to clarify interviews. The interviews were conducted in face to face discussion, email, and telephone in the Korean language. I conducted semi-structured interviews, which are based on prepared open-ended questions to be asked, but with flexibility as to the order of the questions and with an openness to new questions that arose to probe deeply into axiologies of ecology (see Appendix A). For instance, I
interviewed Haesim Kim (for the first interview) and Woonyoung Choi (for the second interview) together because Haesim wanted to meet me at Woonyoung’s house. Since Haesim is a female member of KNAA and Woonyoung is a male member of BAG, I noticed that Haesim was cautious talking about BAG and her experience as a female artist during the interview. I asked her if she would like to talk more about those issues at other places. She agreed and we had one more interview later through telephone communication (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Interview Date, Time and Place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>Date and Time</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BAG</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwanghyun Wang</td>
<td>1. July 7, 2011: 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Studio of the interviewee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. February 4, 2012: 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Exhibition site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwangwoo Kim</td>
<td>1. Oct. 16, 2011: 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Studio of the interviewee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. February 3, 2012: 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Exhibition site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Date and Time</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woonyoung Choi</td>
<td>June 20, 2011: 2:00 – 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Studio of the interviewee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 12, 2011: 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Youngkyung Koo</td>
<td>August 1, 2011: 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October 13, 2011: 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haesim Kim</td>
<td>July 12, 2011: 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Studio of Woonyoung Choi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October 13, 2011: 5:00 – 5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Through telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eungwoo Yi</td>
<td>July 13, 2011:</td>
<td>A restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To develop interview questions, I tried to avoid direct questions about their notion of environment or ecology such as “How do you conceptualize ecology?” Instead, I asked open-ended questions concerning values they hold about ecology such as “How do you envision an ecologically just world?” “What do you think are the most important things that we as artists and art educators should do for our environment?” (See Appendix A or the interview questions.)

2.4.2 Documents and Photos

Along with interviews, observation of the participants’ activities such as art making, exhibitions, and forums was important to better understand the groups. Each group has an annual event that represents each group’s distinguishing characteristics as an environmental artist group: BAG organizes Jara Island Baggat Art International Exhibition every January: and KNAA holds
the Geumgang Nature Art Biennale biannually. They also have a pre-biennale exhibition every other year when the biennale is not held. Besides the main events of the groups, each group also organizes several activities such as forums, workshops, and exhibitions throughout a year, regularly or irregularly. I visited Korea and observed these main events throughout the years of 2011 and 2012. While observing every event, I made fields notes documenting what I observed and experienced in the field—oftentimes, I had opportunities to talk with several artists at the exhibition sites as well. For some other events that I was not able to visit and participate in, I tried to ask about them through interviews and obtain documents such as art books, pamphlets, booklets, artists’ statements, posters, critiques, and articles in the media.\(^7\)

Table 2.2 Visited Events of BAG and KNAA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of Researcher</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title of the Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td>2011 Jara Island Baggat Art International Exhibition</td>
<td>January 28 and 29, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td>2011 Baggat Art Seminar</td>
<td>January 30, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td></td>
<td>2012 Jara Island Baggat Art International Exhibition</td>
<td>February 2, 3, and 4, 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^7\) I have Penn State Institute Review Board (IRB) approval (#35962) to conduct the study and written permission from each person I interviewed for full disclosure of their identity for my dissertation research.
Images of artworks by BAG and KNAA are scanned from exhibition books of BAG and KNAA with their permission. I took some pictures of artworks exhibited in *Jara Island Baggat Art International Exhibition* in 2011 and 2012, and *Geumgang Nature Art Pre-Biennale* in 2011 at the exhibition site with their permission.

### 2.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

I analyzed and interpreted the collected data about the groups such as interviews, observations with field notes, and other documents from an ecological perspective of how the groups reflect values of contextuality, equity, and harmony. In the process of data analysis, I focused on the following points: (a) history of the groups—how each group was initiated and has been developed, how and why the identity of each group has been developed or changed, and how each group envisions their identity in the future; (b) membership—how each group’s members relate to each other, who leads the group or not, and whom they include or exclude as a member or a guest member; (c) artworks of each group—what are distinguishing characteristics of each group’s artworks (commonalities and differences), what kinds of themes and content each groups’ artworks convey, and what kinds of art forms are usually harnessed; and (d) art
activities—how they organize their activities (exhibitions, forums, competitions, and educational programs), who is involved or excluded, and whose voices are dominant or neglected.

In order to examine the current Korean art curriculum, I focused on the following three points: (a) How the nine art textbooks conceptualize the idea of environment—whether they perceive the notion of environment as physical surroundings or socio-political and cultural settings: (b) What kinds of sense of place the current art curriculum is based upon—whether they perceive and encourage students to learn site-specific and place-based artworks conveying local values, or whether they perceive and encourage a general sense of place including globally well-known artworks conveying general values of artworks, and: (c) What kinds of aesthetics the current Korean art curriculum holds—if they advocate ecological values of contextuality, equity, and harmony, or universal values of artworks from modernists’ perspective such as formalism or other values. I examined the nine art textbooks page by page and, especially, the sections on Nature and Art. The national curriculum of art in Korea categorizes educational content into three areas: Artistic Experience, Artistic Expression, and Art Appreciation. The focus on Nature and Art is placed under the area of Artistic Experience. I especially analyzed the sections on Nature and Art in terms of the idea of environment, sense of place, and aesthetics values.

2.6 Trustworthiness and Validity

I used member-checking and triangulation strategies in order to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of this study. Member checking is an opportunity for members (participants) to check (approve) particular aspects of the interpretation of the data they provided

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8 More extensive discussion about the organization of national art curriculum in Korea is provided in Chapter Six.
(Doyle, 2007; Merriam, 1998). For member-checking, I shared the transcripts of the interviews with each participant in order for the interview data to be validated by each interviewee as well as for participants to be motivated to provide some follow-up conversation. I transcribed the interviews, and then each participant reviewed for any incorrect transcription or any other parts that the participant wanted to change in the transcript. In this way, the interview can be mutually educative in the preparation for analysis. However, Woonyoung Choi, Eungwoo Yi, and Youngkyung Koo were not willing to review the interview transcripts. They told me that it would not be necessary to review the transcript together and asked me to question them if I had any additional questions later. For those interviewees, I tried to briefly explain what we discussed in the first interview, and I asked questions or made comments about the first interview instead of sharing transcripts with them (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Data Member-Checking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>Member Checking Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Did not want member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwangwoo Kim</td>
<td>1. March 5 – April 30, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. March 5 – April 30, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woonyoung Choi</td>
<td>Did not want member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngkyung Koo</td>
<td>Did not want member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seunghyun Koh</td>
<td>1. August 30 – September 3, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. December 2 – December 5, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haesim Kim</td>
<td>1. August 15 ~ August 30, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. November 5 – November 6, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eungwoo Yi</td>
<td>Did not want member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonkil Jeon</td>
<td>1. December 2 – December 4, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soonim Kim</td>
<td>1. September 2 ~ September 8, 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For triangulation, I compared and validated all the interpretations and findings that I made from all data to those from other types of data or information. Creswell and Miller (2000) define triangulation as “a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (p. 126). I cross-checked what I found and interpreted from multiple data sources—interview data, documents (pamphlets or booklets of each group’s exhibitions or seminars, articles of periodicals, criticisms about each group, and so forth), and artworks (including educational activities during the exhibitions). In this way, the findings and interpretations that I made were validated with different forms of data interpreted from a specific theoretical lens (see Figure 2.2).
2.7 Limitation of the Study

This study has revealed the scope, form, or absence of ecological perspectives with values of contextuality, equity, and harmony in Korean environmental art groups focusing on BAG and KNAA. However, I must acknowledge that it does not include all the various understandings of environmental arts. There are multiple interpretations and definitions of environmental arts. However, I believe that the issues that I have discussed in this study provide depth of understandings of environmental art.

I also acknowledge that viewers create their own interpretations about any artworks in their contexts, and I am aware that what the viewers see, feel, and learn from any of the artworks that I included in this study could vary. This study does not include varied aspects, rather it focuses on what kinds of messages the artists want to convey to viewers from their artworks; how those messages relate to an ecological perspective with values of contextuality, equity, and harmony; and what kinds of pedagogical applications can help the Korean art curriculum to practice education for ecological sustainability. In addition, even though this study has developed
and communicated about valuable and sustainable approaches to Korean art education for the future, the study is limited in that it does not directly discuss the practical policy making, immediate curriculum change strategies, and actual art classroom practices. These issues are important follow-up research.
CHAPTER THREE
THE VALUE OF CONTEXTUALITY

3.1 Jara Island Baggat Art International Exhibition

When I imagine a typical image of an art exhibition, I picture places of art museums and galleries surrounded by numerous buildings in downtown areas. With an entrance made out of thick glass doors, inside of an exhibition place, several paintings and sculptures are displayed on the white walls lit by spot lights. The exhibition room is usually quiet, or sometimes subtle music is playing. Visitors tend to move carefully trying to avoid any physical contact with artworks. Also, I could easily find parents asking their children not to touch anything and not to run in the space. People who do not follow these implicit (or explicit) regulations might be considered as uneducated or uncultured by others. The spaces of high art exhibition—as a counter term of kitsch in modern aesthetics—are, in general, regarded as sacred places that only allow visual aesthetic interaction between artworks and people with few exceptions of some interactive artworks. This is what I picture as a typical art exhibition.

Meanwhile, I would like to think of a different image of an art exhibition. Unlike typical art exhibitions in downtown areas, the exhibition is held at rural and remote places from an urban city such as riverbeds, forests, or mountain regions. Surrounded by a natural environment, there is no officially designated entrance and exit, but I find a couple of trails with signboards, which indicate the title of the exhibition and artworks. Following the trails, I hear sounds of winds, tweeting birds, raindrops, or my own footsteps on fallen leaves or snow. There are no white walls surrounding me and directing my attention to the eye level artworks as in typical art museums. I am supposed to actively look for artworks within the place following the trails
because sometimes they are not easily noticeable. Visitors and children are welcomed to walk around freely and touch anything in the exhibition site, including artworks, if they are interested in them. Nobody in the place worries about being labeled as uneducated or uncultured because there is no such implicit rule with few exceptions of safety regulations. These environmental artworks are impermanent and often change due to weather conditions and various life forms including human interaction with the work. The works actually decompose, enriching the ecological systems that are entangled in the site.

These two types of exhibitions promote and convey different values of art and aesthetics. In the case of the former, art is regarded as purely aesthetic and the artwork should be kept from any disruption such as background noise or a competing visual environment. The value of art is universally believed to be appreciated by educated connoisseurs of art, who decide what is good art for everyone else regardless of time and place or cultural and individual differences of people. In the case of the exhibition in remote environments, however, art is considered to be valuable in different ways through interacting with its environment and viewers. The worth of art is not embedded in universal aesthetic values. The meanings and values of artworks vary with interaction with the place of exhibition, its environment, and viewers.

The contemporary Korean environmental artist group called Baggat Art Group (BAG) held their annual exhibition in February, 2011. The exhibition was held outside in the camping site, called Jara Island, which is located in a suburban area of Seoul. During the time period of the exhibition, the weather was not benign to visitors. It was very cold with an unusual amount of snow for the place (see Figure 3.1).
Jara Island is a small island in a river called Buk-Han River. It had never been touched by human civilization until the middle of 1990s. It was a natural habitat of wild animals, migrating birds, and indigenous plants. In 1994, the local government decided to take advantage of its unique ecological environment. The government began to develop the island as an ecological park. During the last decade (2001 – 2012), many trees had been cut down and plants had been moved to other places in order to make roads, auto camping sites, and a museum for Korean soap operas. BAG has annually exhibited their artworks on Jara Island since the beginning of the development in the first decade of the 21st century. Having a dialogue with Kwangwoo Kim, a member of BAG, at the exhibition, I noticed that BAG was concerned about the changes of Jara Island. He said that it is no longer Jara Island that they used to know. Some of the artworks were based on environmental changes of the island. For instance, Woonyoung Choi’s work, titled *With a Cottonwood* [%미류나무와 함께%], is a remembrance of a cottonwood that was recently cut. Jinhyung Cho’s work, titled *Someone Stays There* [%그곳에 머물다%], is about wild animals that used to live on the island (see Figures 3.2 and 3.3).
To me, BAG’s artworks were their artistically sublimated anger or antagonism to inhumane industrial development of Jara Island. Their art cannot be understood and interpreted without comprehending the context of Jara Island. The value of their art is found from BAG’s reactions to the cultural and historical changes of the island. BAG tried to be humble in the place,
trying not to overcome its surroundings with their artworks, and endeavored to awaken viewers’
attention to take care of the place.

Yijung Ban (2011), an art critic in Korea, however, had a different opinion about the
exhibition. He stated about BAG’s exhibition in 2011 that:

The exhibition seems desolate because the artworks are scattered in the place. The
endeavor to harness materials that can be found on the exhibition site (which is a
tradition of recycling art), creation of human figures stacking up stuff [natural
objects found in the place], transmitting a message of ecologist chauvinism are all
beautiful and good, but not creative and new. Also, some of the artworks had lack
of craftsmanship, technique, and completeness. Isn’t the era that unprofessionality
can be excused by any good reasons or intentions already passed? … A habitual
event that creates and lines up figurative artworks with rocks and twigs in the
place where nobody visits should be re-considered in the first place.⁹

Ban’s (2011) criticism about BAG’s exhibition brings up multiple issues about perspectives on
valuable and good art. According to his statement, good art should have expertise of technique,
craftsmanship, completeness, newness, and uncluttered arrangement of exhibition, which he
refers to as professionalism. At the end of his criticism, he added a postscript saying that:

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⁹ Translated into English from Korean: “듬성듬성 놓인 출품작과 해설판이 화장기 황량하게 느껴진다. 아외
미술품은 예의 준비된 경검다리를 빼내서 오가는 것 같았다. 현장에서 수집한 재료로
최종완성품을 구성하는 재활용예술의 전통, 무언가를 놓거나 조립해서 결국 도달하는 인체 형상, 생태
제일주의 메시지. 모두 아름답고 선하지만 참신도가 멀어졌다. 더구나 출품작 일부는 거기나 환경도에서
서물거나 무성의했다. 선한 취지로 이런 불성실이 용서되는 시대는 지나지 않았나. … 아무도 찾지 않는
허허벌판에 나무가지와 돌을 주어다가 조형품을 지어, 여기저기 놓거나 늘어놓는 오랜 관행장 원점에서
재고해야 한다.”
I tend to assume a group’s level of professionality by looking at their website. …

Their website is not maintained and updated well. It was uncomfortable to look for certain data. Although I understand that they had a lot of things to take care of,

I think they should have professional care for their website at least.10

His statement adds one more feature of good artists, a professional website management. In his perspective, BAG’s exhibition in 2011 was not good enough in that: (a) organization of the exhibition was not arranged well (too scattered): (b) artworks lacked skilled technique and craftsmanship: and (c) BAG was unprofessional and inattentive to online presentation to the public.

What made some audiences, like me, love and find valuable meanings about BAG’s exhibition? On the contrary, what made viewers like Ban understand BAG’s works as unprofessional and unqualified? Like the saying, “Beauty lies in the eyes of beholder,” I believe it is because of differing perspectives of viewers, which are embedded in values that people pursue.

Today, the so-called “greening movement,” “environmentalism,” or “ecologism” has been one of the most important issues of the 21st century. Many fields of study such as economy, business, science, humanities, and education have become interested in those movements, and art is not an exception. In Korea, during the last decade, numerous art exhibitions, such as Yang Pyeong Environment Art Festival, Poem and Picture Environment Art Festival, and Suwon Environmental Art Exhibition have been held under the theme of environment or ecology as well

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10 Translated into English from Korean “상태의 상태/수준을 추정하는 데, 공식 사이트 운영 실태를 둘러보고 조직의 나이를 점착한다는 것이다. 바깥미술회도 사이트가 있어서 들었다가, 자료 업데이트 실태는 고구했고, 말은 불편했다. 연례행사여서 사이트 손볼 일이 많지 않을 계다. 그래도 온라인 사이트는 제대로 다루는 담당자에게 말가라.”
as several art competitions, such as Korea National Environment Art Competition and Children’s Environmental Art Competition. This kind of phenomenon could be considered as promising in that, as the interest about environmental issues increases, there would be much more possibility to grasp communal agreement to solve the environmental problems. Unfortunately, however, I find that some of these greening actions or movements do not reflect, or even conflict with, multiple aspects of environmental or ecological values.

3.2 Contextuality: Site-Specific and Place-Based Relationship

In terms of discussing contextuality, Rachel Carson’s values of the need for site-specificity, offers insight. In her book Silent Spring, Carson (1962), a biologist and considered by many as a founder of the contemporary environmental movement in the USA, examined the negative effects of chemical pesticides such as DDT, one of the most well-known synthetic pesticides. She disclosed that chemical pesticides created specifically to kill mosquitoes, ants, and other insects do not break down quickly, but actually accumulate in species higher in the food chain. Her work was sensational. It awakened people as to how humanity’s environmentally careless activities can harm nature as well as themselves. However, there were many criticisms about Carson’s work at the time. Probably the most injurious one was that her work was not scientific enough because it was simply situated in specific places (De Steiguer, 2006). During the 1960s, her research was not considered as a good or appropriate scientific approach because it could not be generalized to other places. On September 18, 1962, a Time magazine article criticized her work as “unfair, one-sided and hysterical” (De Steiguer, 2006, p. 35). Code (2006) explains that:
Carson began to write about different types of shore–rock, sand, and coral–about
‘each geographical area as a living ecological community rather than about
individual organisms.’ . . . This focus on habitat as a place to know is central to
ecological thinking. (p. 37)
Like Carson’s work, seeking contextual meanings through exploring site-specific relationships in
a place is an important aspect of ecology.

From an ecological perspective, the understanding of place (or the sense of place), upon
which every entity on Earth relies, is crucial. Orr (1992) claims that it is fundamental to know
and understand the place in which people live. Arguing that ecological literacy “implies a broad
understanding of how people and societies relate to each other and to natural systems, and how
they might do so sustainably” (p. 92), he states that it is the most important and crucial first step
for each person to know and understand the place that they live. In this regard, he emphasizes
local values such as local traditions, life styles, and knowledge as the most important educational
content. Orr’s argument about ecological literacy relates well to the notion of place-based
education. In environmental education, developing a sense of place through connecting with the
local environment, which Sobel (2004) calls place-based education, is a crucial way of
understanding the relationship between humans and nature (Grunewald, 2003). However, what
Grunewald means by place not only means the physical location, but also encompasses all the
relationships among every entity that lives in the place. Grunewald claims that place-based
education is an approach for the education of citizens that might have some direct bearing on the
well-being of the social and ecological places that they actually inhabit. Sobel (2004) explains
that “Placed-Based Education is not simply a way to integrate the curriculum around a study of
place, but a means of inspiring stewardship and an authentic renewal and revitalization of civic
life” (p. 3). Hence, according to Grunewald and Sobel, understanding place is not only to acquire knowledge about local environment, but also to understand every beings’ ways of living on Earth such as ecosystems, culture, history, and traditions. The notion of critical pedagogy of place is a synthesized term of critical pedagogy and place-based education that emphasizes social and cultural dimensions of place-based education (Gruenewald, 2003). Bowers (2001) states that critical pedagogy of place concerns:

- the causes of poverty and the creation of wealth at the community level, which requires an understanding of how to regenerate the sense of local responsibility and mutual support that has been undermined by national and international market forces. (p. 11)

- How have human industries ruined the ecosystem of the place? How do people’s ways of living affect others? Why do people in a place live in specific ways? How can human beings live with others harmoniously in a way that sustains the place? These are examples of questions about place at a socio-cultural layer of inquiry.

- Considering the discussion about contextuality, an ecological perspective with values of contextuality focuses on: (a) the understanding of contextual relationships, rather than searching for universal connections; (b) embodied knowledge of the place such as culture, tradition, and history, rather than abstract and decontextualized knowledge about the place; and, (c) ultimately, an awareness of diverse sustainable ways of living in places.

### 3.3 Sense of Place in Korean Contemporary Art

Figures 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6 are examples of environmental artworks by Korean contemporary artists. Moonhee Park’s painting Landscape (Figure 3.4), is a representation of a
natural creek in Korea, which is unknown to public viewers. The work of Hyun-Hie Ko (a member of KNAA) titled *Between* (Figure 3.5) is about a boulder in the exhibition site called Yeonmi Mountain. *Deconstructed Nature* (Figure 3.6) is represented by Kwnaghyun Wang (a member of BAG), which refers to the deforested exhibition site called Jara Island by the government’s development of the place. Basically these works are about places.

Figure 3.4 Moonhee Park, *Landscape* [풍경], 2010

Figure 3.5 Hyun-Hie Ko, *Between* [사이], 2010
However, each artwork reflects different understandings or perspectives on place; place in a generally typified notion in Moonhee Park’s work, place as a physical location in Hyun-Hie Koh’s work, and place as a social and political site in Kwanghyun Wang’s work. In the painting Landscape by Moonhee Park, it is not possible to recognize the specific place that she depicted in her painting. Rather, by entitling the painting Landscape, Park generalizes and typifies the specific image of the creek that she painted as a typical landscape of a Korean natural stream—abundant and clear water flowing down the stream on bedded rocks. In her painting, understanding the specific site is not an important aspect to appreciate because the place is not identified in the painting.¹¹

Meanwhile, in the work of Hyun-Hie Ko, Between, the specific site of the artwork is important. Hyun-Hie Ko states about her work that:

¹¹ Important aspects of her paintings would be the artistic skill in using conventional painting materials such as oil colors and a canvas.
With small branches I filled the gaps between large boulders. An important aspect of my work is the contrast between the old boulders which talk about early history and branches from just last season. Branches are filled with sunlight, water, wind and over time they just disappear. Just like us. (The Organizational Committee of Geumgang Nature Art Biennale, 2010, p. 64)

Collecting clusters of twigs that she found at the exhibition site and inserting them into the gaps of the boulder, Hyun-Hie Ko tries to look at and play with the specific site where the boulder is located. In this way of creating art, the specific site becomes a content of the artwork, also the artwork becomes a part of the place. In this regard, the place of the artwork plays a role as physical location, materials, and content of the artwork.

In the work of Kwanghyun Wang’s (a member of BAG), Deconstructed Nature, the notion of place goes further than physical location. Kwanghyun Wang explains about his work that:

Everything on Earth comes from and goes back to Nature. However, human beings, as a part of Nature, impact on nature for their convenience, rather than conform to the laws of nature. …When human beings unnecessarily interfere in the laws of nature for the logic of development and economy, this is more or less than insolence of human beings without any reverence for nature.12 (The Committee of Baggat Art, 2010, p. 24)

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12 Translated into English from Korean: “모든 것들은 자연에서 태어나고, 소멸되어 다시 자연의 일부로 돌아간다. 그러나, 자연의 일부인 인간은 자연에 순응하기 보다는 인간의 권익을 위해 인위적인 행위를 자연에 가한다. 그 행위는 인간을 위한, 인류문명을 유지하기 위함이라는 이유로 정당화 된다. 이러한 행위에 대해 무조건적인 비판을 가할 수는 없다. 나 또한 문명에 혜택을 받고 살아가는 존재이기 때문이다.”
Poking all the peeled off barks into the tree trunk with a metal stick, Kwanghyun Wang tries to convey a message about how the development of Jara Island is hurting and eventually makes the place unnatural and ugly. Working with a tree that he found at the exhibition site, and raising issues of environmentally harmful development of the place by the Korean government, he perceives the specific place, Jara Island, in social and cultural levels.

The perspectives on places that each artist conceives are related to how contextually or site-specifically each artist understands the places. In Moonhee Park’s painting, the place is a typical landscape of nature, which has commonly and generally characterized images without a unique context. Like people who considered Carson’s work as worthless because it was just only about a specific area (not applicable to general places), place is universal and general in Moonhee Park’s sense of place. In the case of Hyun-hie Ko’s artwork, the place is not general and universal. In this regard, Hyun-hie Ko’s work is place-based. According to Grunewald (2003) and Sobel (2004), however, place not only means geological and physical location, but also encompasses entire social and cultural relationships of all entities in the place. From this viewpoint, Hyun-hie Ko’s work does not include social and cultural aspects of the place. In Kwanghyun Wang’s work, the place is a social and cultural site that encompasses socio-cultural and politically unique contexts of the place.

I find that the three artworks, Moonhee Park’s Landscape, Hyun-Hie Ko’s Between, and Kwaghun Wang’s Deconstructed Nature, represent different notions of sense of place in Korean contemporary environmental works: (a) place in a general and typified sense, (b) place in a physical and geological sense, and (c) place in a socio-cultural and political sense. From an
ecological perspective, every place has its uniqueness and distinctiveness as every individual’s life is different from others. Gradle (2007) argues about contextual characteristics of place, saying that “Place is no longer the simple locale, it is relational nature of people and environment. Places have unique features and characteristics” (p. 393). Considering contextual characteristics of place as a fundamental and crucial value in ecology, being site-specific and place-based, is a distinctive characteristic of an ecological perspective. Acknowledging this value of contextuality, Hyun-Hie Ko’s work Between, and Kwnaghyun Wang’s work Deconstructed Nature reflect and advocate the contextual value of an ecological perspective.

3.4 Works of KNAA: Geological and Physical Sense of Place

Advocating site-specific, community-based, and place-based aesthetics, the value of contextuality is a postmodern approach, which promotes diverse meanings, interpretations, and uniqueness. The value of contextuality does not comply with modernistic aesthetics, which advocate universal values of art. Jokela (2004) states that:

I received a modernist art education. This dislodged my local identity, questioning its significance. At that time, art was seen as a universal phenomenon, with no real place for the voice of local people. Good art was independent of its surroundings. (p. 5)

His statement of modern art education is still embedded in current perspectives on environmental art in Korea. Art textbooks in Korea, which are based upon national curriculum standards of Korea, are filled with explanations and images of good art, which conveys universal values of art. In this context, so-called environmental art is considered as one of the art genres that concerns
the environments of human beings discovered from values of modernistic aesthetics. Works of the Korean Environmental Art Organization (KEAO) are examples based upon modernistic aesthetics. Every year since 2000, KEAO has selected good environmental artworks through the National Environmental Art Competition. However, their perspective on environmental artworks is based upon modernistic formalism, which determines artistic values of artworks exclusively by their forms. In the statement of evaluation for the National Environment Art Competition (환경미술대전) in 2008, Shin, the head evaluator, emphasized realistic representation of subjects, techniques, uniqueness, and visual attraction of the artwork (Korea Environment Art Organization [KEAO], 2009). In the perspective of KEAO, good environmental artworks are supposed to have technically professional skill to depict objects realistically, and to be unique and visually attractive. Their aesthetics are based upon modernism that focuses on universal values of art (Figures 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9).

13 Extensive discussion about current Korean art curriculum in relation to an ecological perspective is provided in Chapter Six. Briefly, modernist aesthetics refers to universal values of significant form.

14 Compared to BAG and KNAA, KEAO is a relatively new environmental artist group. KEAO was founded in 2000 by 20 artists. In subsequent years, they have arranged various events such as the Exhibitions of Women Artists, the National Environment Art Competition, the Green Art Exhibitions, and the Han River Art Competition in which hundreds of artists participated. Currently, in 2012, they are one of the largest artist organizations in Korea, with one national and sixteen local organizations. According to their website, KEAO’s primary mission is to send out messages about the importance of environmental problems in the world to general viewers, as well as to artists (Korea Environment Art Organization, 2006).

15 Moonhee Park’s work, Landscape (Figure 3.1) was also selected by KEAO in 2009.
Figure 3.7 Sungdong Min, *A Trip to Prague* [프라하 기행], selected by KEAO, 2008

Figure 3.8 Jongim Beak, *In a Forest* [숲속에서], selected by KEAO, 2008
Like Shin, the head evaluator of the competition in 2008 stated these works are technically professional in terms of realistic representation. Among these awarded artworks for the environmental art competition, it is hard to notice any site-specificity or place-based contextuality. As Moonhee Park’s work, Landscape (see Figure 3.4), Sungdong Min’s A Trip to Prague, and Jongim Paek’s In a Forest portray generalized and typified images of Prague and a forest. To me, they seem to be commercial tourism posters or postcards. In Yeonjae Choi’s work, Crying Maria, I even find it difficult to interpret the painting as an environmental artwork. Compared to environmental works embedded on modernistic aesthetic views such as KEAO’s works, KNAA’s works advocate and reflect the values of contextuality. Hyun-Hie Ko’s work Between (Figure 3.5) is a good example of KNAA work that focuses on locality and site-specific values of specific place.

KNAA was formed and has developed in the city called Gongju. Most of the members are from Gongju and their main activity titled Geumgang International Nature Art Biennale.
takes place in Gongju area. They also have *Nature Artist Residency Program* and hold several nature art exhibitions throughout a year, but all these activities take place in Gongju only. In this regard, KNAA’s works seem to be place-based. According to Seung-hyun Ko, a member of KNAA, KNAA was formed in 1981 and most its members were from Gongju City area. Eungwoo Yi, a member of KNAA, claims that KNAA was formed in order to begin a local art movement against the mainstream art field, which is exclusively based upon Seoul, the capital of South Korea. He states that:

> Since the mainstream art field is so much focused on Seoul, we [KNAA] intended to begin a local art movement based upon local and rural culture and characteristics.\(^{16}\) (Eungwoo Yi, personal communication, July 13, 2011)

As Eung-woo Yi stated, KNAA endeavored to create artworks in relation to the characteristics of an exhibition site, a river in Gongju called Geumgang. While the mainstream art of Korea in the 1980s was predominantly exhibited in the art galleries and museums in Seoul, KNAA’s works were artworks that could only be exhibited in the specific location, the Geumgang riverbed. Figures 3.10, 3.11, and 3.12 are examples of early artworks by KNAA in 1981. Through their works, Heesoon Kang, Jongwoo Lee, and Bongsook Jung tried to play with and carry the aesthetic and spiritual values of Geumgang River. Considering Korean mainstream art in the 1980s, in which abstract paintings were dominant based upon modernistic formalism, KNAA’s works were considered by the public viewers as too regional and parochial.\(^{17}\) However, from an

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\(^{16}\) Translated into English from Korean: “우리는 그냥 우리 아까 얘기한대로 서울이라는 곳에 너무 집중되어 있으니까 우리 시골은 시골대로 문화가 있고 특성이 있으니까 그걸 갔다가 하겠다 그래서 지역문화운동으로 시작한건데”

\(^{17}\) The background context of Korean mainstream art in the 1980s was discussed in the section four, Chapter One.
ecological perspective, their works are valuable environmental art, which reflect and advocate the value of contextuality carrying and conveying locality of Geumgang River in Gongju city.
Even though KNAA’s works carry contextual values of an ecological perspective, their sense of place is limited to the notion of place as physical and geological aspects of place rather than its social and cultural context. With their idea of place oriented toward local nature in general, their artworks do not convey contextual and site-specific cultural, social, and political aspects of the place. Even in the setting of international biennale, it becomes difficult for artists from *out-of-town* to carry and include site-specific meanings and values in their artworks.

Designating their artworks as *nature art*, KNAA advocates the notion of environment that mostly indicates nature. Eungwoo Yi, a member of KNAA (also a director of Geumgang International Nature Art Biennale in 2010), emphasizes “empty hands” and “empty minds” as the most appropriate attitudes when they work with nature. He states that:

> It is fairly satisfying when I put off any intention to manage or control nature, and start to play and engage with it. … So, eventually, we began to go out to nature with empty hands and empty minds. Before then, we tend to go out to nature with
several ideas to create something out of nature such as hanging something on
trees. However, when we were actually in nature, those ideas became obsolete.
Ideas come from the field of nature and lots of materials are filled in the field.18

(Eungwoo Yi, personal communication, July 13, 2011)

What he means by “empty hands” and “empty minds” is that nature art can be done by engaging
and playing with nature without any artist’s intention to manage or control it in order to make
something out of nature. Dongsik Lim’s statement about definition of the term nature art also
reveals KNAA’s notion of environment as nature. He states that:

Nature Art is art that represents pure images of nature in nature itself through
diverse artistic expression, unlike other types of art that represent the beauty of
nature through artists’ alteration.19 (Lee, 2011, p. 17)

Figures 3.13 and 3.14 are examples of KNAA’a artworks, which reside in the place and
plays with the physical and geological characteristics of the place, not with social and
cultural context of the place. Heejoon Kang represents mountainous landscapes of

18 Translated from Korean “그래서 언제 시간이 갈수록 차츰차츰 그런 인위적인 요소를 제거하고 그
현장에서 발견되는 것들을 가지고 이렇게 하기 시작해서 그런 광장히 만족 스러워요. 그럼이 좋고, 잘
어울리고, 또 그렇게 농고 왜도 전혀 침해를 줄 이유가 없고. 그래서 인제 결국은 나중에 우리가 그야말로
empty hand로 자연 현장에 나간거예요. 그날 맨손으로 가서 그리고, 전에는 무슨 막 월할까이나에도 필
매달을까. 이런 막 많은 아이디어를 가지고 갔었어요. 그런데 가서 현장에서 보면 그것도 거의 즐모가
없더라도. 현장에서 미오르는 아이디어를 가지고 작업을 하나가 그래서 인제 결국 나중에 또 empty mind로
가서 마음을 비우고 손을 비우고 가서 그냥 현장에서 뭐야서 있다 보면 원가가 자꾸 눈에 들어와요.
그러니까 자연에 대한 현장에 대한 이해가 이뤄질 수록 말하자면 그 절서 안에 내가 들어갈 때 많은 것들이
보이고. 가져갈 수 있는 오브제들이 진짜 마다 차있더라도. 자연 현장에. 그걸 가지고 작업을 하기예요.”
19 Translated into English from Korean: “자연미술이란 기존의 다른 미술처럼 한 단계 뒤어서 자연의
아름다움을 표현하는 것이 라니라 자연의 현장에서 있는 그대로의 느낌이나 혹은 여가되지 않은 순수한
자연의 모습을 다양한 방법을 통해 예술적 행위를 동원, 표현하는 것이다.”
Gongju area, especially around Mountain Gongju through his work *Line of Woods* (Figure 3.13). Eungwoo Yi’s work, *Episode 2*, is a representation of traditional local crafts made out of wickers (Figure 3.14).

Figure 3.13 Heejoon Kang (member of KNAA), *나무들의 선 [Line of Woods]*, 2008

Figure 3.14 Eungwoo Yi (member of KNAA), *에피소드 2 [Episode 2]*, 2010

Seunghyun Ko says that:

When we first named our group “Yatoo,” we didn’t think of an environmental or ecological approach. It was because there are many things to study such as
innocence, vitality, potential, and messages from Nature.\textsuperscript{20} (Seunghyun Koh, personal communication, July 13, 2011)

Saying that KNAA is not an environmental movement, but an artist group that hopes to help people get closer to and feel more about nature through their works, Eungwoo Yi defines their works as a passive environmental movement (Eungwoo Yi, personal communication, July 13, 2011).\textsuperscript{21}

Given that KNAA’s works do not directly relate to the environmental movement, there is a criticism about KNAA’s work from an ecological perspective. A Korean ecological aesthetcian, Kyungseo Kim (2006) claims that KNAA relatively minimizes and leaves ecological ethics as potentials while maximizing rapport and interacting between human beings and nature. In addition, he makes the criticism that KNAA’s artworks sometimes tend not to be environmental and ecological. KNAA’s works are often not environment friendly, therefore, members of KNAA mostly agree with the criticism. Haesim Kim says that:

\begin{quotation}
We [KNAA] cut down some trees and chiseled the mountain a little bit in order to make space for several installation works. From the perspective of outsiders, it
\end{quotation}

\textsuperscript{20} Translated from Korean: “처음에 이 그 자연미술이라는 쪽으로 이름을 정했을 때는, 환경 쪽, 생태 쪽은 생각 안했어요, 자연이 주는 순수성, 생명력, 무한한 자연이 주는 가능성을 파헤쳐, 이것만 가지고 연구할 게 무진장 있거든.”

\textsuperscript{21} Translated from Korean: “우리가 어떤 환경 운동가로서 나서지는 않았지만, 그래도 우리가 희망한 게 있다면, 우리가 자연현장에서 했던 그런 작품들을 통해서 사람들이 자연을 좀 더 천식하게 들여다 보고 원가 자연을 느끼고 이해할 수 있도록 하는데, 내 작업이 도움이 될거라는 생각을 가지고 있죠. 그런데 조금만 소극적인 자세로 환경운동을 하는 거라고 보아요.”
could look like deforestation of the mountain.\textsuperscript{22} (Haesim Kim, personal communication, July 12, 2011)

In this criticism, Seunghyun Ko raises issues of the Korean government’s financial support and their expectations for a visually attractive local art event. In the discussion about \textit{Geumgang Nature Art International Biennale}, he states that:

[Ecological artworks] tend to be weak in terms of visual and artistic attractiveness. They are very good and meaningful works, but from the perspective of audiences, they are too difficult to understand and not satisfying enough to enjoy as visual works. From the standpoint of the director of the Biennale, it is a difficult situation.\textsuperscript{23} (Seunghyun Koh, personal communication, July 13, 2011)

According to Seunghyun Ko’s and Hae-sim Kim’s statements, KNAA acknowledges their passiveness on environmental and ecological ethics.

\textsuperscript{22} Translated into English from Korean: “근데 우리가 그 때 산을 많이 깎아 냈어요. 현장 작업 한다고, 언제 모작가들을 작품 여기저기 설치 해야 되고, 그런 환경들을 만들기 위해서,, 누가 보면, 제 3 자가 보면 환경 엄청 파괴한 것 처럼 그렇게 막 어느 장소는 가면 막 가슴이 막 멀릴 정도로 막 아플 정도로 그렇게 많이 파괴를 한 그런 테가 있었어요.”

\textsuperscript{23} Translated from Korean: “에코 쪽으로 가다 보니까. 그래서 별로 언제 설치성이라든가 전시성이 희박한 거야. 가시적으로 비주얼적이지 않은 거지. 내용적으로 엣냇에 우리 쪽보다 더 깊이 들어간 것도 있지만, 평강히 가치있고 중존은 작가들이지. 그런 쪽만 하다보면, 비엔날레 열어 놓고, 야외에다가 전시 해냈는데, 이게 무슨 작품인지 모르는 상황이 되어 버리는 거야. 그래서 일반인들이 소화를 못하는 거지. 돈을 쏟서 해라고는 했는데, 가봤더니 볼게 없더라. 그렇게 되는 거지. 그랬을 때 오는 운영자 입장에서는 상당히 난감한...”
3.5 Works of BAG: Social, Cultural, and Political Sense of Place

Compared to KNAA’s works, BAG’s works tend to perceive place as socio-cultural and political sites as well as physical locations. In January 1981, 31 artists gathered together and named their group “Baggat Art Group” (Kim, 2006). Baggat can be directly translated as “outside” in English. Like KNAA, BAG creates their works to interact with outdoor natural environments. They have always exhibited their works in open outdoor places such as riversides and mountains. According to the proclamation of their organization in 1981, however, what they mean by “outside [Baggat]” is not only physical outdoor place, but also social, cultural, and political outside (Kim, 2006).

In this regard, BAG’s works often tend to raise cultural, social, and political issues of the place through their artworks. Figures 3.15, 3.16, and 3.17 are examples of BAG’s works in the 2010 Jara Island International Baggat Art Exhibition: Harmony, and the Forest of Metaphor. In order to understand BAG’s artworks, it is first necessary to know the cultural and social context of the exhibition site called Jara Island.

Figure 3.15 Woonyoung Choi, A Bird with Broken Wings [날 수 없는 새], 2010
Figure 3.16 Jungsoo Ha, *A Scene, What Else is Necessary* [바람을 본다. 풍경 (風景) 무엇이 더 필요한가], 2010

Figure 3.17 Kwangwoo Kim, *The Way of Evergreen Tree – A Little Gravestone* [상록수 가는 길 – 작은 비석], 2010
Jara Island is a relatively small Island—about 204 acres—in the river called Bukhan River. Jara Island was untouched by human civilization until the late 1990s—it did not even have an official name until 1986—so the ecology of the island was enriched. In 1998, the local government had a vision to make Jara Island into an ecological public park and began to develop the place as a park. From the year 2008, Jara Island has begun to be re-developed by the Korean government’s green growth project called, The Four Major Rivers Restoration Project (대강 사업). Even though the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project was planned as a green growth project, there are many criticisms about the project: fundamentally, the project is planned wrong, so it eventually ruins the natural ecology of the rivers.

Figures 3.15, 3.16, and 3.17 are artworks that raise these criticisms against the governmental developments. A Bird with Broken Wings by Woonyoung Choi symbolizes the fact that Jara Island has been deforested by governmental developments. Observing several pieces of heavy equipment drilling and bailing soil out of Bukhan River even during the exhibition periods, Choi expressed his feeling about Jara Island as resentment and miserableness in his journal (The Committee of Bagga Art, 2010). Juxtaposing his paintings of Jara Island before the development and the actual scenery of the place today (in the development), Jungsoo Ha’s work, A Scene, What Else is Necessary, encourages audiences to re-consider the development of the place. Kwangwoo Kim’s work, The Way of Evergreen Tree – A Little Gravestone, has an interesting story behind it. Kwangwoo Kim actually planned to install an artwork at a certain area in the island, and had permission for it from the local government. However, when he went to the site in order to install the artwork, he found an excavator digging the area. After having found out

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24 The World Wetland Network awarded the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project the Grey Globe Award in 2012, which indicates the poorest environmental restoration project around the world.
that the construction was for the *Four Major Rivers Restoration Project*, he requested the local government to delay the construction during the exhibition period. However, the government denied the request to delay construction. Eventually, Kwangwoo Kim changed his plan, and ended up having a performance that symbolizes a condolence ritual for dying Jara Island. Also, his work raises political issues of Korea during that period in a yellow gravestone, which symbolizes Korean former president Moohyun Ro who killed himself in 2009. In this regards, BAG’s sense of place encompasses socio-political aspects of the place.

Among the members of BAG, Woonyoung Choi and Kwangwoo Kim have strong opinions about the social and political role of their artworks. Woonyoung Choi identifies himself as a BAG artist who is inclined toward the Minjung Art Movement that raises social issues through artworks at that time.\(^{25}\) In 1981, when BAG was formed, the social and cultural milieu of Korea was tumultuous. Politically, many democratic protests erupted and the Korean government at that time attempted to control the protests with military forces. Socio-culturally, Korean society was becoming acclimated to modernistic elitism, material commercialism, industrialization, and westernization. BAG tried to refuse those social, cultural, and political situations. Kwangwoo Kim finds BAG’s tradition to raise social voices through their artworks from this background of the group’s foundation. He states that:

> The beginning of BAG was interrelated to the political and cultural situation of Korea during that period. BAG tried to speak more about Koreanness like traditions and our own culture. That’s the base of BAG and that is why we [BAG]

\(^{25}\) Minjung Art is an art movement that actively participated in social democratic protests raising social issues at the beginning of the 1980s. More discussion about Minjung Art is in Chapter Four on values of equity.
still use the proclamation of BAG in the 1980s.26 (Kwangwoo Kim, personal communication, October 16, 2011)

According to this statement of Kwangwoo Kim, BAG tried to relate socio-cultural and political issues to the artworks that take place in specific sites. Figures 3.18, 3.19, and 3.20 are examples of BAG’s artworks, which conveyed Korean traditional values: Younghee Chun’s work, Sound, and Kangchuk Choi’s work, Human and Nature, as representations of local traditional shaman religion, and Iyoung Lee’s work, Untitled, as criticism about the disappearance of locality of the site.

![Image of artwork](image)

Figure 3.18 Younghee Chun, *Sound [소리]*, 1988

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26 Translated from Korean: “어떻게 보면 저희는 대성리가 처음 시작했던게 아시겠지만 아무래도 우리나라의 정치성향과 그 때 민중 성향의 것들이 굉장히 맞물려 있었고 그리다 보니가 우리 것 이런 것들에 대한 애기들이 많이 나왔던 때 기기에 베이스를 깔고 있기 때문에 지금 창립선언문을 보시면 그런 성향의 말들이 고대로 있어요. 그래서 아직도 쓰고 있거든요.”
I find another statement of Kwangwoo Kim critical in terms of exploring BAG’s notion of place. Kwangwoo Kim also states that:
The important thing about what we [BAG] do is not only the fact that we [create and exhibit our artworks] in nature, but we try to bring site-specific things happening in the place regardless of whether it is nature or society.²⁷ (Kwangwoo Kim, personal communication, Oct. 16, 2011)

In this statement, he clarifies that BAG’s artworks not only perceive the place as a physical location, but also as a place which is cultural, social, relational, and contextual. Woonyoung Choi testifies that there was an event that made BAG think more about the site-specific issues in cultural and social levels. In 1999, BAG held their exhibition in an island called Jebu Island, which is well-known for wide tidelands around the island. BAG planned to study and have an exhibition about Jebu Island’s ecology and history. When they arrived at the exhibition site, however, local people did not let BAG come into the site despite the fact that BAG already had permission to have an exhibition at the site from the local government. BAG tried to persuade the locals, but it was not easy. After several long conversations with local people, BAG realized that the people did not want outsiders to ruin the tideland because the tideland was their primary living source. Woonyoung Choi remembers the exhibition:

In the end, we [BAG] realized that we were ignorant to people in this area just thinking about the Jebu Island and its tideland. It was a good opportunity to realize that [social aspects of place].²⁸ (Woonyoung Choi, personal communication, February 3, 2012)

²⁷ Translated from Korean: “저희가 지금 하고자 하는 것은 가장 중요한 것은 자연에서 그냥 하는 게 중요한 것이 아니라 강에서 하는 게 중요한 게 아니라 그 장소에서 벗어지고 있는 그 자연의 현상이든 어떤 안의 다르게 얘기하면 장소특정적인 것을 하고 있다고 생각하고 있거든요.”

²⁸ Translated from Korean: “결국에는 이거 우리가 이 지역 사람들에 대한 이해가 너무 없었구나. 제부도, 갯벌이라는 것에 대해 서만 생각했지 사람들을 생각 못했었구나. 하고 깨닫게 된 게기가 되었죠.”
This happening at Jebu Island in 1999 reinforced their notion of place, which encompasses social, cultural, and political relationships among all entities in the place.

In this regard, BAG tries to include local people in their art-making and exhibition. Seongryul Choi’s works are good examples of this (Figure 3.21 and 3.22).

Figure 3.21 Seongryul Choi, *Making a Jewoong [제웅 만들기]*, 2004
Jewoong (제웅) is a Korean traditional ritual to make a human figure that is considered as a local spirit that protects the place from the evil. Also Samjok-O and Samtaegeuk are Korean traditional patterns that carry specific meanings about Korean culture. In the process of making his artwork, Seongryul Choi invites and works with local people in collaboration. In this process, he tries to bring local people into his works and the exhibition.

Kim (2006), an ecological aesthetician and art critic, claims that site-specific artworks are artworks that are meaningful in the site but become less meaningful in other sites. From this point of view, BAG’s works are site-specific, especially bringing social, cultural, and political issues of place.

3.6 Summary

In relation to the value of contextuality of an ecological perspective, in this chapter, I explored how Korean contemporary environmental artists perceive place. I categorized the sense
of place that Korean contemporary environmental artists advocate into three types: (a) environmental artworks such as KEAO embedded on modernist formalism, which values artistic forms more than contextual and local values of the place; (b) environmental works such as KNAA, which reflect local value of place, however, without encompassing social, cultural, and political aspects of place; and (c) environmental works such as BAG, which advocate contextual values of a specific place, which encompasses social, cultural, and political aspects of place as well as geological and physical values of place.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE VALUE OF EQUITY

4.1 Equity: All Life Forms’ Equal Rights to Live on Earth

In her notion of Earth Democracy, Shiva (2005) emphasizes that all beings on Earth have rights to live well as much as human beings do. Discussing the interconnectedness of all beings in the world, Morton (2010) also emphasizes that interconnectedness is basically democratic. He states that:

It [ecological thinking] is a practice and a process of becoming fully aware of how human beings are connected with others beings – animals, vegetables, or mineral.

Ultimately, this includes thinking about democracy. (p. 7)

In the perspective of Morton (2010), the interconnectedness of all beings on Earth can be sustained only by democratic relationships among them. No elements have a right to dominate others.

A good example of an ecological perspective with values of equity is the movement of ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is an approach of feminism that considers oppression of women and oppression of the environment in correlation (Manion, 2002). Gaard (2009) states that:

ecofeminism is a perspective that sees social and environmental problems as fundamentally interconnected. Beginning with a recognition that the position and treatment of women, animals, and nature are not separable, ecofeminists make connections among not just sexism, speciesism, and the oppression of nature but also other forms of social injustice–racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, and colonialism–as part of western culture’s assault on nature. (p. 323)
According to Manion (2002), ecofeminism has four main features: (a) on a very basic level, ecofeminism is grounded upon the notion that primarily male Western dominance has caused gender oppression and environmental degradation; (b) generally men are related to culture while women are related to environment; therefore, women and environment share a common inferior position while men and culture are posited as superior; (c) the oppression of women and the oppression of nature have occurred simultaneously; and (d) ecofeminism seeks to combine feminism and ecological thought, as they both work towards egalitarian, non-hierarchical structures. In terms of relational concepts about men and women, I find Bigwood’s (1993) discourses are helpful. Bigwood claims that:

The culture/nature opposition is not just one metaphysical dichotomy among others within which women are entangled but is a central dichotomy that underlies many modes of western existence and our white conception of being in the world. (p. 9)

Arguing that the dichotomy of culture and nature is core to understanding the tradition of Western male dominance, Bigwood discusses related concepts between *Phusis* (Greek goddess of nature) and *Techne* (Greek word for art, craft, and technology). Following is a table of dichotomized concepts in relation to nature and culture according to Bigwood’s (1993) argument.

### Table 4.1 Bigwood’s Dichotomized Concepts in Relation to Nature and Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phusis</th>
<th>versus</th>
<th>Techne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td></td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the perspective of ecofeminists, oppression of women is not different from oppression of nature because it was originally derived from the tradition of Western male dominance. In Western tradition, nature (woman) was considered as uncultured (inferior) and something that should be managed and developed by man (superior). From the ecofeminists’ view, this notion of nature is associated with the premise that women are emotional, irrational, and inferior.

Issues of gender also encompass cultural hegemony between Eastern and Western cultures. Bigwood (1993) categorizes three aspects of culture: (a) a general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development; (b) a particular way of life, whether of a people, period, group, or humanity in general; and (c) the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. In terms of a cultural aspect of intellectual development, Code (2006) argues that Western philosophy is an example of a cultural hegemony. She states that:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultivating</th>
<th>Constructing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological health</th>
<th>Physical health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(psychological and social well-being, preventive approach to medicine)</td>
<td>(survival, curative approach)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This table is arranged by Hong Kyu Koh from *Earth Muse: Feminism, Nature, and Art* by Bigwood (1993).
The dominant model of knowledge and epistemology in Anglo-American philosophy produces an epistemological monoculture both in the academy and in everyday life, whose consequences are to suppress and choke out ways of knowing that depart from the stringent dictates of an exaggerated ideal of scientific knowledge making. (Code, 2006, pp. 8-9)

Orr’s (1992) argument about Western materialism could be a cultural aspect of a way of life. Orr perceives that Western tradition is based on materialistic and imperialistic views, which have considered nature to be barbaric and crude, so that it needs to be governed and developed by humans. In his words, “It is now widely acknowledged that the classics of the Western tradition are deficient in certain respects” (Orr, 1992, p. 99). By respect, he means respect for nature, humans, cultures, and differences. Western capitalism has not respected either humanity or nature. Capital growth has been the main matter with which modern industrialized societies have been concerned. Western imperialism has not allowed different cultures or different ways of living because it only respects Western culture in terms of a way of life. In relation to the cultural aspect of intellectual and artistic activity, Said’s (1979) notion of Orientalism is exemplary. Orientalism is a Western notion that privileges Western culture over Oriental culture and produces superiority of the Occident and inferiority of the Orient. Said describes the imbalance of cultural strength between the Occident and Orient; the Orient as inferior (feminine) and the Occident as superior (masculine) (Said, 1979). For instance, the term “primitivism” refers to indigenous painting styles of non-Western art and artifacts. From the perspective of Western tradition, indigenous non-Western art is primitive, old, undeveloped, uncultured, and inferior.
All these discourses in ecology such as eco-justice, ecofeminism, and cultural hegemony are important aspects of an ecological perspective with values of equity. And the aspect of equity in the ecological perspective is one of the core values in order to achieve ecological sustainability. Defining the meaning of sustainability, the World Commission on Environment and Development (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987) emphasizes that sustainability is a basic human right. WCED states that:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet [their] own needs. … The satisfaction of human needs and aspiration is the major objective of development. The essential needs of vast numbers of people in developing countries—for food, clothing, shelter, jobs—are not being met, and beyond their basic needs these people have legitimate aspirations for an improved quality of life. A world in which poverty and inequity are endemic will always be prone to ecological and other crisis. Sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life. (pp. 43-44)

Therefore, the value of equity is a core aspect of ecological perspective because, as WCED (1987) states, many problems of resource depletion and environmental problems arise from disparities in economic and political power, in other words, injustice and inequity. Bowers (2000) calls this equity characteristic of an ecological perspective eco-justice. He claims that eco-justice is a more comprehensive term than social justice in that eco-justice encompasses social justice issues such as class, gender, and race as well as environmental issues. He claims that ecological issues are fundamentally connected to social issues, and thus they are intrinsically inseparable.
In sum, the value of equity from an ecological perspective encompasses all the power relationships, which are physical, cultural, and political equity. Equity entails justice issues among all beings on Earth: between human beings and other living beings, between people and other people, between culture and other culture, and between societies and other societies.

4.2 Value of Equity in Korean Contemporary Art

Issues of equity are carried through Korean contemporary artworks in various ways. One of the most well-known art movements conveying social justice issues through their artworks is the Minjung Art movement. Minjung Art is one of the most important social movements in Korean art history. “Minjung (민중)” means “people” in Korean. It emerged in the beginning of the 1980s, the period of upheaval and democratic protests. Minjung Art was an important element in mass democratic protests. Kim (2005), an art historian, states that the Minjung movement was democratic action of the Korean people that fought against the governmental dictatorship in the 1980s. In protests, there were often large paintings that portrayed images of democratic values, peoplehood, and Korean nationality in the form of pictures hanging on public walls. This kind of painting, so-called “Geolgae (걸개)” painting (meaning “hanging painting” in Korean), had realistic features, allowing everyone to easily understand the meaning of the painting. As well, it was usually done by a collaboration of people in the demonstrations. Figure 4.1 is an example of Geolgae painting by Byoungsoo Choi. This kind of artwork was also done

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29 Extensive discussion about the social and political milieu of Korea in 1970s and 80s was presented in Chapter One.
by some of the Minjung artists and created a new form of art in 1980s, the so-called Minjung Art movement.

![Image of a banner with Korean text, depicting a protest scene]

Figure 4.1 Byoungsoo Choi, *Bring Hanyeol Back Alive* [한열이를 살려내라], 1980s

In an article in 1988, Kwak, an art historian, summarized three important characteristics of Minjung Art; (a) its realistic style; (b) its relation to marginalized genres such as folk art, Buddhist art, woodcut printing, and genre paintings; and (c) its utopian idea of collaborative farms. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 are examples of Minjung Art.
Marketing V-Scenes of Hell by Yoon Oh (Figure 4.2) is an image of hell that realistically portrays the cultural and political milieu of Korea in the 1980s. In the painting, monsters,
inscribed with commercial products such as Coca-Cola and Maxim coffee, condemn and punish Korean people. It is a metaphorical image of Korean society, which is obsessed with Western values and cultures, especially North America. Also, Yoon Oh mainly used a woodcut painting technique, which is one of the traditional Korean art forms. In addition, Minjung artists’ utopian image of a collaborative agricultural society often criticized the Western capitalistic agricultural system. For instance, *Modern Korean History–Rice Planting* by Hakchul Shin (Figure 4.3) conveys traditional agriculture as a valuable local culture. It also conveys values of manual labor, criticizing the industrialization of the nation. The Minjung Art movement was a radical art movement during the 1980s in that the Minjung artists were actively and directly engaged in the social movement. Many of them were charged with violation of national security and frequently imprisoned.

A Korean artist, Byoungsoo Choi, is one of the well-known Minjung artists in the 1980s and now constantly works with issues of social equity as well as environmental issues. Figure 4.1 was painted by him. His works have mostly dealt with unrighteous living conditions of manual laborers. In the middle of the 1990s, he began to connect his works to environmental issues. Through his environmental works, the main message that he conveys is to reveal the greediness of modern human societies and all living beings suffering from that greed. His work titled *The Time of Chairs* is a metaphorical depiction of highly capitalized society (Figure 4.4). According to Byoungsoo Choi, the word *bank* is originally from the word *banco*, which means a chair in Italian. So, in his work, chairs represent banks (capital). Depicting a big chair with a voice magnifier and small chairs all facing the big one as if listening to it, Byoungsoo Choi

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30 In her work titled *Deep-Seated Culture: Understanding Sitting*, Keifer-Boyd (1992) examined the idea that the formation of chairs and sitting is a nonverbal communication, which reflects social and political values.
metaphorically represents highly homogenized society under one dominant voice, big capital. It is also a metaphorical representation of globalization, modern industrialization, education, and capitalistic slavery. Through these kinds of artworks, he raises questions about equity; whose voices dominate in our society; who are marginalized and have lost their voices; and how modern societies reinvigorate slavery with capitalism.

Figure 4.4 Byoungsoo Choi, *The Time of Chairs* [*시간의 의자*], 2011

In terms of values of equity, one of the internationally well-known environment artists, Alan Sonfist, has a different approach from Minjung Art and Byoungsoo Choi. While Minjung Art and Choi directly deal with social and environmental issues, Sonfist’s works seems somewhat subtle. Through his works, Sonfist has been trying to give indigenous nature equal rights to be in the place. Grande (2004) says “Sonfist brings a much needed awareness of nature’s parallel and often unrecorded history and presence in contemporary life and art” (p. 165).
In Sonfist’s well-known land art project titled *Time Landscape*, he restores indigenous natural environment by removing foreign plants and trees, and plants vegetation that was native during the pre-colonial times in the midst of urban areas of New York in Manhattan (Figure 4.5). By creating *Time Landscape*, Sonfist gives the indigenous nature equal right to live in the place where it originally used to reside.

Figure 4.5 A. Sonfist, *Time Landscape*, 1978 – Present

I find that the difference between approaches toward social issues of Sonfist and Minjung Art correlate to the ways that KNAA and BAG approach values of equity. KNAA’s and Sonfist’s works advocate for the equitable rights of nature to exist on Earth. While BAG (Figure 4.4), like Minjung Art (Figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3), reflects social, cultural, and political aspects of equity.
4.3 Works of KNAA: Equity between Human Beings and Nature

Similar to Sonfist’s work *Time Landscape*, KNAA’s sense of equity is mainly focused on nature, the relationships between humans and nature. As Eungwoo Yi designated their works as “indirect environmental movement,” KNAA does not directly deal with environmental issues or social issues in their works. Rather KNAA raises issues of equity between human beings and other living creatures. Figures 4.6 and 4.7 are examples of KNAA’s works, which convey a message of equity between human beings and nature. Directly interacting with nature, Eungwoo Yi and Seunghyun Koh both endeavor to be a part of nature as well as include nature in their artworks.

Figure 4.6 Eungwoo Yi, *A Halo* (후광), 2006
Eungwoo Yi emphasizes that human beings are a part of nature. He states that:

We [nature and humans] are partners that coexist equally. If something fails to live, I cannot live by myself. We cannot directly talk to nature such as trees, woods, plants, water, and wind, but, in some ways, we are able to coexist communicating with them.\(^{31}\) (Eungwoo Yi, personal communication, July 13, 2011)

From this point of view, Kim (2006), an eco-aesthetician, interprets that KNAA works relate to the notion of *deep ecology*, which considers human-beings as a part of nature, rather than human as a distinguished creature from nature. The term *deep ecology* was coined by Naess, an ecologist, in 1973 (Foundation for Deep Ecology [FDE], 2010). According to the FDE, the term *deep ecology* is an approach to question deeply, right down to fundamental roots of causes of the

\(^{31}\) Translated from Korean: “근데 인체 우리는 적어도 대등한 동등한 입장에서 같이 살아가는 파트너다. 모이쪽이 무너졌을 때는 나 혼자 못살거든요. 그래서 적어도 그 나무나 숲이나 들이나 물이나 바람이나 이런 것들이 맨을 못하지만, 직접적인 대화는 안되지만 그러나 우리가 생각하기에 따라서는 권장히 많은 이야기를하면서 같이 공생할 수 있다.”
ecological crisis, while *shallow ecology* often promotes technological fixes such as recycling, increased automotive efficiency, export-driven global economy, and monocultural organic agriculture. *Shallow ecology* tends to be a short-term approach based upon consumption-oriented values and methods of the industrial economy. By contrast, *deep ecology* is a long-range deep approach involving redesigning our whole social system based upon values and methods. Capra (2002) states that:

> The notion of “deep ecology” recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings and views humans as just one particular strand in the web of life. Unlike “shallow ecology,” which is anthropocentric viewing humans as somehow above or outside of nature, deep ecology does not separate humans from natural environment, nor does it separate anything else from it. It does not see the world as a collection of isolated objects but rather as a network of phenomena that are fundamentally interconnected. (p. 161)

According to this statement, the basic assumption of deep ecology is that nature does not belong to human beings; rather, human beings are just a part of the world in deep relation to other entities on the Earth, and the relations of human beings with other beings are equal, not superior to others and vice versa.

In addition to the value of equity between nature and human beings, KNAA’s works carry the equity issues about the Korean art field between mainstream and non-mainstream art. According to the preface of the *Geumgang Nature Art Pre-Biennale* in 2009, KNAA was formed as a reaction to the elite academic mainstream Korean art field in the 1970s. The preface of the *Geumgang Nature Art Pre-Biennale* in 2009 states that KNAA tried to find alternative ways to practice art that is based upon Korean and human natural spirit being distinguished from Korean
mainstream art, which has been strongly influenced by Western art. Defining mainstream art as “too much empowered” and “commercialized,” Wongil Jeon explains KNAA’s works as follows:

We [KNAA] have stepped away from mainstream art, which has been too much empowered and commercialized. Rather we wanted to influence a new and alternative impact to the secular art field [mainstream art] with our fresh energy.  

(Wongil Jeon, personal communication, Oct. 13, 2011)

Eungwoo Yi also says that Korean mainstream contemporary art is difficult for the public to understand. He states that:

Art that we pursued is not difficult to understand [for the public viewers]. It is because our works are just representation of our love for pure nature and our artistic approach toward issues between human beings and nature.  

(Eungwoo Yi, personal communication, July 13, 2011)

As discussed in Chapter Two, Korean mainstream art in the 1980s was dominantly based upon modernist formalism, and abstract art prevailed. Also, with the exclusive governmental support for the capital Seoul, this mainstream art was formed and expanded in Seoul. According to the preface of the Geumgang Nature Art Pre-Biennale, in 2010, and statements of Wongil Jeon and Eungwoo Yi, KNAA’s works imply the inequality between regional and marginalized art, and Seoul-based and mainstream art. In KNAA’s perspective, mainstream art based upon Seoul is privileged in terms of exclusive support from the national government and local art is

32 Translated from Korean: “권력화 되고 상업화된 기존의 미술계의 세력과는 거리를 유지할 것이며, 오히려 세속화된 미술계에 충격을 줄으로서 신선한 에너지를 공급하는 역할을 하게 되리라 기대됩니다.”

33 Translated from Korean: “우리가 표방한 자연미술은 결코 난해한 현대미술이 아닙니다. 그것은 바로 순수자연에 대한 깊은 애정의 표현이며 자연과 인간에 관한 문제를 미술적으로 접근하려는 것입니다.”
marginalized and considered by the public viewers as worthless. In this regard, KNAA’s works are their endeavor to value local art equally to the mainstream art.

4.4. Works of BAG: Social, Cultural, and Political Aspects of Equity

While KNAA carries a social level of equity about marginalized local art and Seoul-based mainstream art, BAG’s works, like Minjung Art, take more expansive aspects of equity such as socio-political levels of equity. I find that the preface of BAG’s exhibition catalog in 2010 points out these aspects of equity. The following is quoted from the catalog for the Jara Island International Bagbat Art Exhibition in 2010:

Rampant materialism and commercialism have caused spiritual destitution and human alienation, ceaselessly generating immoral crimes even amongst material abundances. Our defiance against and conquest of nature have devastated living spaces, and mechanical civilization has forced us to conform to an inhuman way of life, which warns of the future extinction of our race. Our agriculture based society has long been transformed into freakish urban culture under the influences of industrialization and mechanization. In addition, our [Koreans’] view of the world, that formerly embraced the order of nature as the basis for life, has changed to a human centered view of nature, which has served to separate humans from it and has caused them to see nature from an ideal conception. (Bagbat Art Committee, 2010, p. 2)

In this statement, BAG argues that “rampant materialism and commercialism” cause “immoral crimes” such as human being’s dominance of nature and inhumane ways of living. In BAG’s
perspective, Koreans’ traditional worldview, which perceived nature as a vital foundation on which to live, has changed to an anthropocentric perspective, which considers human beings as the most important entity of the universe, in the process of industrialization and mechanization of Korean society. When we look at BAG’s early works in the 1980s, it is easy to find several artworks based upon Korean indigenous cultures such as Korean traditional totemic rituals or agricultural customs (Figures 3.18, 3.19, and 3.20).

Emphasizing the importance of Korean traditional and indigenous culture, BAG also criticizes the Westernization of Korean society. Following is another part of the catalog preface of the *Jara Island International Baggat Art Exhibition* in 2010:

Art has also been idealized and conceptualized under the influence of blindly accepted Western thought. It has been increasingly denaturalized and our unreserved, creative thought has been degraded. Formalist aesthetics represented by monochrome and Minimalism were the mainstream in the 1960s and 1970s. Art in the context of environmental art and Land Art, through which we enjoyed and experienced the outside and shared living spaces with natural creatures, have been seriously distorted. So-called outdoor art has taken on problems concerning preservation, deconstruction, artistry, consensus, and scale. What is significant here is not to set up biased theories, but to appreciate artworks in harmony with all creation in open space. Baggat misul [art], or exterior art, is an outgrowth of an act to call out to nature and an invaluable process to nurture our natural mind.

(The Committee of Baggat Art, 2010, p. 2)

In this statement, BAG argues that Korean modern art in the 1960s and 70s, which is represented as monochrome paintings and minimalistic installation works, was formed by senseless and
mindless adaptation of Western culture. From this point of view, BAG raised their voices against Westernization of Korean society through their early works in the 1980s. In addition, their criticism against the mainstream art field is based upon their belief that art should be shared with the public, not just enjoyed by the elite and upper class people. Former member of BAG Jeongsik Kim explained the purpose of the Baggat Art as follows:

Baggat Art is not art for artists. … We need to think over our [BAG members’] purpose of living [as artists] through picturing the public engaging in Baggat Art harmoniously. (Kim, 2006, p. 36)

This statement of Jeongsik Kim shows what BAG meant by their art (Baggat Art) in terms of openness to the public. Their tradition to exhibit their artworks only at open and outdoor places is driven from their intention to be closer to the public viewers, not just viewers who can visit art museums or galleries.

Considering that BAG endeavored to convey messages about Korean traditional and indigenous values, and their criticisms against Westernization of Korean society through their artworks, BAG’s works seem to have several things in common with the Minjung Art movement. Minjung Art and BAG both began during the early 1980s, and several Minjung artists participated in BAG’s early exhibitions as well. According to Woonyoung Choi (personal communication, June 20, 2011), the only BAG member from the beginning, BAG was formed mainly under the leadership of artists who participated in A.G. (Avant-garde Group) and the exhibition titled Independent (앙데팡당) in the 1970s. 34 A.G. is an artist group that experimented

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34 “There was an exhibition called Independent. We met there mainly and it fitted to us [early BAG members]. I participated in the exhibition during the middle and the late 70s. … We all had in our mind to deny a sort of mainstream art” (Woonyoung Choi, June 20, 2011). Translated into English from Korean: “그 양데팡당이라는 그런 단체 있었어요. 인제 그렇게 막 잘 맞았지. 거기서 주로 많이 만났고. 나 같은 경우는.. 70 년대 말에
in the 1960s and 70s with non-traditional art forms such as performance art, installation, body painting, and happenings. Criticizing mainstream Korean art society in the 1960s and 70s, which was centered on the governmental art competition called Kukjeon (국전) and controlled by governmental censorship and academism, A.G tried to hold their exhibitions of new art forms without being controlled by the Korean government. The exhibition titled *Independent* in the 1970s was an exhibition where artists like A.G could exhibit their artworks against governmental, formal, and academic art forms. Most of the Minjung artists and the early members of BAG participated in A.G and *Independent* exhibitions. Hence, BAG and Minjung Art both had in common that they advocated socio-political issues of equity against governmental dictatorship and censorship. Yet there was a difference between the two groups in that BAG tried to raise their voices through their artworks, engaging with the natural environment while Minjung art actively participated in political actions such as democratic protests.

Considering aspects of equity, BAG’s works tried to deal with the socio-political issues of equity in relation to environmental issues. In this regard ecofeministic views relate to BAG’s works. Ecofeminism concerns the oppression of nature and oppression of women. BAG artworks address the oppression of nature and oppression of people by the Korean government in the 1980s. I interpret that BAG’s works took three approaches in terms of equity: between human-made environments and natural environments, foreign (Western) culture and indigenous culture, and rights of all living beings and humans.

Woonyoung Choi’s work (Figure 4.9) titled *Things Being Born Newly* (새롭게 태어나는 것들) raises questions about entities that used to reside in the place. Creating spiritual
representations of willow trees with wire nets, Woonyoung Choi tried to represent spirits of willow trees that were cut down for the development of the site. His work tries to make viewers re-consider human’s sense of equity, arguing that the willow trees—which are often considered as just materials for human beings—were also living beings like humans. Minchul Kwon’s work (Figure 4.8) titled *This ‘Soil’ is ‘Soil,’ not ‘Soil’* is about human-made environments that oppose natural environments. In the process of developing the exhibition site, Jara Island, into a public park, large amounts of soil from other places were used for making paths and recreational grounds. In his artist statement, Minchul Kwon (The Committee of Baggat Art, 2007) says that:

> Jara Island has been changed. [People] made paths and empty lands with soil that used to belong to other places over the original ground that nature made. … I want to peel off the human-made ground in order to see nature’s ground.35 (p. 4)

Minchul Kwon collected soil that covered over the original ground of the site and made human figures with it. He then placed these figures on the original ground. Exposing the original ground by digging out foreign soil, he questions to viewers if we, as humans, have the right to alter and reshape natural surroundings just for our convenience and for a better looking environment. In addition, Minchul Kwon’s work can also be interpreted as a metaphorical way of depicting Westernized Korean culture and society. Why is it considered nicer and cleaner to reshape the original natural settings (Korean and local indigenous values), trimming and covering them with foreign substance (Western and foreign values).

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35 Translated into English from Korea: “자라섬이 변해있다. 자연이 만든 땅을 흔으로 메꿔 길을 만들고 터를 만들었다. …터의 흔을 한꺼품 갚어내 자연의 흔을 보고자 한다.”
BAG’s perspectives on equity can also be found in their relationships among members. Haesim (a member of KNAA), as an outsider who has been participating BAG’s annual exhibition as a guest artist since the beginning of the 1990s, says that relationships of BAG members are “equal” without any authority consciousness or age-based hierarchy. She states that:
When I come to BAG, I feel that they are all equal without any authority consciousness. That makes me comfortable. ... They look very close to each other. They do not seem to care for formality as they have been friends since they were young despite their age difference.\(^{36}\) (Haesim Kim, personal communication, July 12, 2011)

In Korean culture, age is a critical element in terms of making personal relationships with other people. There are numerous different words, expressions, and ways to act regarding age difference in Korea: generally younger people are supposed to use honorific terms and expressions while older people use regular expressions. Haesim described the relationships among BAG members as “they do not seem to care for formality,” which does not mean that they are rude to each other. What she meant by the statement is that BAG members are close enough to go beyond the social formality. Soonim Kim, a guest artist of BAG’s exhibition, answered my question “You must have been the youngest artist among all the participated artists for the 2010 Jara Island Baggat Art Exhibition,” as follows:

Yes, I think so. But they do not ask how old I am. And they were always nice, and they treated me respectfully. So I have not felt that I was the youngest one among them.\(^{37}\) (Soonim Kim, personal communication, July 15, 2011)

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\(^{36}\) Translated into English from Korean: “여기 오면, 일단은 사람들이 다 권위 의식이 없고, 평등해요. 그래서 항상 오면 마음이 편하고, ...그리고 면날 만나면, 정말 친하게 보이고, 앞에서 본 때, 근데 어떤 회원과 회원이라든지, 약간 뭐 격식을 채리고 이제 전혀 없고 정말 어렸을 때 친구들 만난거처럼, 나이가 차이가 있어도 그래요.”

\(^{37}\) Translated from Korean: “그렇 것 같아요. 주로 나이 안 묻어보기 때문에...왜의 갓추지느라 선생님 선생님 해주시기 때문에 제가 제일 어리다는 느낌은 안 받고 작업은 하는데 제가 제일 어린 것 같아요.”
BAG’s sense of equity in terms of member relationships regardless of age difference and authority consciousness can be found in their process of decision making. BAG has a unanimous way of making decisions. According to Kwanghyun Wang, the reason that they chose unanimity as a decision making system is that they want every member to raise their voice about any issue. He states that:

We [BAG] think that every member needs to understand well what we do, why we do, and how we do. The process of unanimity is a process of persuading and confirming every member’s understandings and agreement about any issue. We do not want anybody in our group to feel marginalized in the process of decision making.38 (Kwanghyun Wang, personal communication, February 4, 2011)

Kwanghyun Wang perceives unanimity as a systemic process of empowering every member in the group in terms of decision making. In this group policy, they try not to overlook or ignore any opinion of any member even though unanimity is not an efficient and fast way to decide something compared to general decision making by the majority. In this regard, I found that BAG is very careful to have somebody as their permanent member, especially, in terms of an applicant’s personality. According to Kwanghyun Wang, Youngkyung Koo, Kwangwoo Kim, and Woonyoung Choi, they review an applicant’s personality as the most important aspect of membership. In their words, they examine thoroughly whether the person is a “kindhearted person (착한사람)” and gets along with the members of BAG well. Woonyoung Choi said that:

38 Translated into English from Korean: “우리는 모든 멤버가 우리가做什么, 왜 하는지, 어떻게 하는지 이해하길 바래요. 만장일치제는 이런 것들을 모든 회원들에게 이해시키고, 설득하고 하고 해서 동의를 구하는 작업입니다. 우리는 회원 중에 어느 누구도 제외되길 바라지 않거든요.”
We [BAG members] look at the person’s personality first: how good and nice the person is. Things like what kinds of artworks the person does and how s/he has developed his or her career as an artist are secondary. … It is good to have good people as members. It is like a marriage.39 (Personal communication, July 12, 2011)

The term marriage seems to me the perfect term to explain their membership process because BAG always invites applicants into their exhibitions for several years before they accept them as formal members of BAG. This is similar to dating before marriage.

In addition, it is also interesting to me that BAG sees an artist’s educational and career background as secondary, after the person’s personality. Kwangwoo Kim states that:

BAG originally talked about openness that goes for artists as well. We ignore specific school ties [alumni relationships] and regional ties [regional connections]. We want new people. … We do have some procedure to examine the applicant like listening to their thoughts about art, discussing them in the member meetings, and so forth. But the most important thing is their personality as well as honesty about art.40 (Personal communication, October 16, 2011)

39 Translated from Korean: “우선적으로 사람을 보죠. 착한 사람인지 아닌지들. 기본적으로 착해야, 모 작품을 얼마나 했는지, 얼마나 좋은 작품을 하는가 결정 문제지. … 좋은 사람은 이렇게 불러서 회원되면 좋죠. 결혼하는 거나 똑같지 모.”

40 Translated from Korean: “왜냐하면 사실 바깥미술이 처음부터 얘기했던 부분이 오른손을 얘기했고 작가들도 마찬가지지 오른손을 한거지. 어떤 특정한 장르의 현대가 현대이라든가 이런 것 다 무시하고 새로운 사람들을 모아서…여러 과정들이 있어요 사실…나름대로 회원들의 검증 작업을 거치죠. 작업도 보고, 회원들의 이야기도 들어보고, 그 분들의 작업에 대한 생각은 어떻게.. 또 우리같은 경우는 또 착한 사람이어야 된다. 꼭 성품이 그렇다고 보다는 작업하는데 순수함.. 그런 것들…”
During interviews with members of BAG, what was interesting to me was that BAG members did not seem to care for my educational background such as which schools I went to for my undergraduate degree and what I majored in at school. As a Korean adult within various social relationships, I often find myself accustomed to Korean social culture to make social relationships by figuring out somebody’s educational background as well as age. Hence, I feel comfortable starting a conversation with somebody by saying and being asked about my major, school, and age. For example, when I interviewed KNAA members, they were curious about my educational background and I felt it was natural and I was comfortable to describe my educational credentials. However, when I had conversations with BAG members, nobody asked me what I majored in and which school I went to for my undergraduate degree. In fact, it was even somewhat uncomfortable to me that they did not ask anything about me because it seemed that they did not want to make a closer relationship with me. However, soon I realized that it was their culture not to care about each member’s educational background and major. I also realized that they do not list their educational backgrounds in their biographies in the booklets of exhibitions and their website. Kwanghyun Wang stated that:

I think other members would not know which school I graduated from and what my major was. We do not care about those.41 (Personal communication, July 7, 2011)

In his response to my question that “I noticed that you [BAG] do not list educational backgrounds of members for their biographies in the booklets of exhibitions,” Woonyoung Choi stated that:

41 Translated from Korean: “아마 다른 멤버들은 제가 어느 학교를 나왔고, 무슨 전공을 했는지도 잘 모를 거예요. 별로 그런테에 신경을 쓰지 않으니까.”
I did not even know that we did not put that information in the booklets. We [BAG] have never discussed and decided not to put those things in the booklets. It just happened naturally.\(^{42}\) (Personal communication, July 12, 2011)

I believe that these kinds of characteristics of BAG in terms of member relationships—such as family-like relationships, unanimous decision making, and emphasis on kind personality and honesty to art as most important aspect of memberships—shows their sense of equity in that they try not to ignore and marginalize any opinion of any member, and not to judge people according to their career and educational background. Rather they try to look at their sincerity and attitude to others. These kinds of characteristics of BAG relate to the values of harmony as well.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, I examined how the value of equity is conveyed through Korean contemporary environmental art focusing on KNAA and BAG. The value of equity has been carried through diverse art works. In Korean history of art, the Minjung Art movement has exclusively dealt with social justice issues in Korea in the 1980s. Emphasizing the reverence for nature and its spirituality, KNAA puts forward nature itself rather than any intentional narrative that the artworks convey to the public viewers. BAG, however, engages a multilateral contextual narrative in creating their artworks such as social and political issues of the place.

\(^{42}\) Translated into English from Korean: “우리가 그런 걸 도록에 싫지 않는다는 걸 몰랐는데요. 그거에 대해서 서로 이야기 한 적도 없고, 그냥 자연스럽게 그렇게 된 것 같아요.”
CHAPTER FIVE
THE VALUE OF HARMONY

5.1 Harmony: Democracy, Balance, and Diversity

Pondering of values of equity in an ecological perspective leads to the next questions (values of harmony). Since every living being on Earth has a right to live freely and happily, how can all beings on Earth equally coexist in a respectful manner?

There are certain terms that are often found in ecological studies: biodiversity, multiplicity, various species, sharing, partnership, and pluralism. In ecology, all of these terms represent values of cohabitation and coexistence in harmonious ways. Harmony is a status of different species, sounds, or objects being together in accordance. The beauty of harmony is that every single element exists together differently. It is no longer harmony if everything is the same.

In the book entitled *Harmony*, HRH the Prince of Wales (2010) claims that the fundamental crisis of all so-called environmental crisis or financial crisis is what he calls a *crisis of perception*. Defining the term *perception* as the way humans see the world—which refers to the worldview—he argues that the perception is ultimately at fault and in crisis. Throughout the book, the Prince of Wales discusses properties of harmony as the most important value of a worldview, which he calls perception of the world—such as recognition of interconnectedness (relationships), awareness that we are a part of the world (equity), and understanding of how the way of nature sustains (balance). Berry’s (1983) statement about harmony relates well to what the Prince of Wales posits as the notion of harmony. Berry states:
Nothing exists for its own sake, but for a harmony greater than itself which includes it. A work of art which accepts this condition and exists upon its terms honours the creation and so becomes a part of it. (p. 85)

With an ecological perspective as a worldview, there are multilateral aspects of harmonious ways of living with other beings such as physical, spiritual, cultural, social, and political aspects. I too believe that there are multiple ways to achieve harmonious living because it is always contextual, situational, and local.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that harmony can be achieved by understanding the relations with each other. Orr (1992) designates the ability to see and understand the relationships among nature, environment, and society as ecological literacy. He states that:

Ecological literacy is driven by the sense of wonder, the sheer delight in being alive in a beautiful, mysterious, and bountiful world. … The sense of wonder is rooted in the emotions or what E. O. Wilson has called “biophilia,” which is simply the affinity for the living world. … Ecological literacy, further, implies a broad understanding of how people and societies relate to each other and to natural systems, and how they might do so sustainably. … The basis for ecological literacy, then, is the comprehension of the interrelatedness of life grounded in the study of natural history, ecology, and thermodynamics. … Ecological literacy requires a comprehension of the dynamics of the modern world. … Ecological literacy, then, requires a thorough understanding of the ways in which people and whole societies have become destructive. (Orr, 1992, pp. 85-93)
According to his statement, ecological literacy is the understanding of how we as humans are related to the world including nature and human societies. He argues that, through being ecologically literate, we can realize the crisis of environment as well as the crisis of humanity.

While Orr’s notion of ecological literacy focuses on understanding, Shiva (2005) pays attention to how the value of harmony could be achieved. To Shiva (2005), *Earth Democracy* is a social system or a way of thinking that every entity, including humans as well as other beings, can sustain together harmoniously in the world. She argues that:

> The people’s project is unfolding in an atmosphere of dialogue and diversity, of pluralism and partnership, and of sharing and solidarity. I have named this project Earth Democracy. … Earth Democracy’s success concerns not just the fate and well-being of all humans, but all beings on the earth. … Earth Democracy evolves from the consciousness that while we are rooted locally we are also connected to the world as a whole, and, in fact, to the entire universe. (Shiva, 2005, pp. 4-5)

Through achieving *Earth Democracy*, every entity including human beings and nature can be sustained in harmonious ways. Thinking about democratic values as features of harmony, the idea of balance stands out to me as one of the most important aspects of democracy: the balance of powers, the balance of freedom, and the balance of fairness. Morton (2010) argues that ecological thinking is not just about brightness, beauty, and positivity, but also encompasses thoughts about darkness, ugliness, sickness, and negativity in a holistic perspective. He states that:

> Environmental rhetoric is too often strongly affirmative, extraverted, and masculine; it privileges speech over writing; and it stimulates immediacy (feigning one to one correspondences between language and reality). It’s sunny,
straightforward, ableist, holistic, and “healthy.” Where does this leave negativity introversion, femininity, writing, mediation, ambiguity, darkness, irony, fragmentation, and sickness? Are these simply nonecological categories? … I don’t think so. If the ecological thought is as big as I think it is, it must include darkness as well as light, negativity as well as positivity. (Morton, 2010, p. 10)

Morton’s argument clarifies that discourses about darkness and negativity are as important as those about brightness and positivity. In this statement, Morton argues that negativity and darkness of the world are fundamentally all parts of ecological thoughts.

Morton’s argument about brightness and darkness reminds me of the notion of Yin and Yang in the Eastern philosophical tradition. Yin, which literally represents darkness and negativity, and Yang, which literally refers to brightness and positivity, are bipolar concepts. However, in the Eastern philosophical tradition, they are different from dualism in Western Cartesian philosophical tradition. From the perspective of Eastern tradition, Yin and Yang are not incompatible or oppositional, rather, they depend on and complete each other. And the symbol of Yin and Yang, called Taijitu, represents the perfect balance of two.

![Figure 5.1 Taijitu, the Symbol of Yin and Yang](image-url)
In the form of pushing and pulling, both Yin and Yang interweave with each other with a perfect balance, harmony. It is not about conflict with each other, rather accepting or acknowledging each other. Hence, harmony is about inclusion rather than exclusion, understanding rather than ignorance, interconnectedness rather than detachment.

5.2 Value of Harmony in Korean Contemporary Art

I find that a Korean artist, Sooja Kim, reflects diverse aspects of harmony value upon her works.\(^{43}\) Sooja Kim’s works are based on her notion of Koreanness, womanhood, and motherhood. Dealing with womanhood as a Korean woman, she is often considered as a feminist artist who criticizes injustices toward womanhood in a Korean patriarchal society. Oh (2002) states that:

In feminists’ perspective, Sooja Kim’s fabric works imply political meaning. When female artists, rather than male artists, work with fabric material, and even when the fabric was used as crafts, it implies political meanings beyond its spiritual meanings. It is because fabric works are directly associated with the rights of womanhood, and working with fabric material as a female artist indicates a negative meaning to refuse to support females against the male dominated style of arts. (p. 57)

According to the statement, Oh interprets that Sooja Kim’s works convey political and negative meanings against a male dominated style of art through harnessing fabric materials as a female

\(^{43}\)Sooja Kim is not related to KNAA and BAG. However, I find that her works illustrate the ecological value of harmony, which correlates to the value of harmony conveyed through artworks of BAG and KNAA.
artist. In my understanding, however, the most distinguishable feature of Kim’s artworks is compassion, which is often associated with the notion of motherhood, and deeply relates to values of harmony in an ecological perspective. In her lecture at Penn State University in 2010, Kim’s own interpretation of her works, such as *Bottari* and *A Laundry Woman*, focused more on motherhood as encompassing sentiments of caring, loving, including, embracing, and devoting. Following is a part of my notes after listening to her lecture held at Penn State University.

Since she is well-known as a feminist artist in Korea, I always tended to look at her works as critical works about Korean womanhood. Listening to her lecture and after a short conversation with her, a different impression about her works started to be formed in my mind. Her works might be more than just unrighteousness of womanhood in a patriarchal Korean society. Soon I realized that her works were more about caring and compassion than criticism. For example, she talked a lot about her warm memories of her mother. And she used the word “motherhood” repeatedly during the lecture. In my understanding, by motherhood she meant caring, compassion, and devotion like “Bottari” that embraces and wraps everything inside.

Kim’s works are about loving rather than criticizing, embracing rather than pushing away, and including rather than excluding. In her interview with Bourriaud in 2003, she also emphasized her warm and positive memory about her mother.

One day, as my mother and I were sewing a bed sheet, I made a surprising discovery, whereby my thoughts, my feelings, and my activities of the moment seemed to come into harmony. And I discovered new possibilities for conveying
buried memories and pain along with the quiet passions of life. (Zugazagoitia & Bourriaud, 2003, p. 29)

In the interview, she clearly discloses memories of her mother and warm feelings conveyed by the fabric materials in association with words such as sleeping, loving, suffering, dreaming, and harmony. I find that her symbolic concept of fabric materials and her installation work based upon her notion of motherhood, relates well to the value of harmony. One of her serial works titled *Bottari* is a good example (Figure 5.2).

![Figure 5.2 Sooja Kim, Bottari Installation, 1998](image)

*Bottari* is a kind of wrapping fabric to carry things in Korea. Traditionally, it is one of the symbols of womanhood in Korea. But in her work, it is dominantly associated with motherhood in relation to sentiments of loving, caring, and embracing. As *Bottari* wraps up, covers, and encloses all things and makes them as one, her notion of motherhood associated with loving, caring, and embracing is a perfect metaphor of harmony, which completes the sustainable world. In this perspective, Kim’s works correlate well with values of harmony of an ecological perspective.
While Sooja Kim’s works portray conceptual meanings of harmony in relation to the notion of caring and embracing, KNAA’s and BAG’s works carry out values of harmony through their works in relation to nature and environment. In the works of KNAA and BAG, the value of harmony can be found in the ways of creating and exhibiting their works in accordance with the exhibition site in that KNAA and BAG endeavor to create artworks that can reside in the place in harmony. Comparing to well-known outdoor installations such as *Wrapped Coast* by Christo and Jean-Claude (Figure 5.3) and *Hase/Rabbit/Coniglio* by Gelitin, a group of four artists (Figure 5.4), KNAA’s and BAG’s works do not seem to be easily noticeable, visually striking, or massive in the location (Figures 5.5 and 5.6). Making their works massive and visually dominant, artists such as Christo and Jean-Claude, and Gelitin distinguish their works from surrounding environments.

Figure 5.3 Christo and Jean-Claude, *Wrapped Coast*, 1968-9
Unlike these visually dominant artworks, KNAA’s and BAG’s works are not easily distinguishable from the surrounding environment. Eungho Yi’s work titled *Come Back Home* ([집으로 돌아가다]) is created by arranging a bunch of pinecones found in the exhibition site toward a pine tree (see Figure 5.4). Kwanghyun Wang’s work titled *Please Step on Me Gently* ([사뿐히 증려밟고 가시옵소서]) is also made of carved tree trunks from the exhibition site, lining them up as stepping stones. Since the artists harness the materials for the artworks without any alteration, the artworks tend not to be visually conspicuous as a part of the place.
Figure 5.5 Eungwoo Yi, *Come Back Home* [집으로 돌아가다], 2010

Figure 5.6 Kwanghyun Wang, *Please Step on Me Gently* [사뿐히 즐리밟고 가시옵소서], 2012
The ways that KNAA and BAG create and exhibit their artworks are also different from the general art exhibition in the galleries and museums. As I have stated at the beginning of Chapter Three about the typical art exhibition, generally in art exhibitions that take place in galleries or museums, artworks are exhibited on white walls, which distinguish artworks from their environment. This typical way of art exhibition is based upon the notion that artworks should be appreciated without any visual interference from the surrounding environment. KNAA and BAG, however, advocate and convey the value of harmony by using materials found in the exhibition site and create artworks in the place with goals of harmony, as discussed with nuance and specificity in what follows in this chapter.

5.3 Works of KNAA: Harmony between Artwork and Nature

As stated above, KNAA’s perception of harmony can be found in their way of exhibiting and creating artworks in the place in accordance. According to Seunghyun Koh, KNAA endeavors to create artworks that can reside in nature in harmony revealing the beauty of nature. He states that:

Nature is already perfect. As a nature artist I realized that there is nothing I can do better than nature. So I gave up trying to create any artworks better than nature. Afterwards, I create my artworks in order to show the perfection of nature, which is God’s creation, while coexisting with nature as a part of it. It is my duty, as a nature artist, to help audiences find the beauty of nature through looking at my works. I am not insisting that audiences look at my works, but to look at nature
through my works. That is the concept of my artworks.44 (Seunghyun Koh, personal communication, July 13, 2011)

Seunghyun Koh’s work titled I meet Jesus in Sukseom (see Figure 5.7) reflects his notion of nature disclosing his religious belief, Christianity. Eungwoo Yi’s work titled A Leaf (Figure 5.8) is a typical work of KNAA artists in that they collect materials from nature and create something artistic with them in the place. I find that this way of creating artworks is derived from their endeavor to make artworks that can reside in the place in harmony.

Figure 5.7 Seunghyun Ko, I Meet Jesus in Sukseom [석섬에서 예수를 만나다], 1993

44 Translated from Korean: “자연은 이미 완벽하잖아요. 자연이라는 것은 더할것도 빼것도 없이 완벽하잖아요. …그래서 저는 그 뒤부터 아무것도 만드는 것에 대해서 포기를 했습니다. 멋지게 만드는 것에 대해 포기 했어요…. 나는 이미 자연의 신이 만드는 자연 속에서 내가 한 부분이 되어서 같이 작용할 수 있는 역할을 하는 것이 내 역할이다. 나는 자연에서 위대하고자 내 작품을 멋지다라고 얘기하는 것이 아니라 나는 자연 속에 들어가서 움직이는 자연과 더불어서 하나로 같이 이루는 하나의 한 파트로서 하고 있다는 것을 보여주자는 것이 내 작업이다. 그리고 그런 자세가 일반인들에게도 내 작업을 통해서 자연을 들어다 보게하는 것이 내 역할이다. 작가로서 역할이다. 여기에서 내 작품을 보시오가 아니라 내 작품을 통해서 자연을 들어다 보시오. 그러니까 내 작업의 컨셉은 그것입니다.”
In the catalog preface to the exhibition *Geumgang International Nature Art Pre-Beinnale* in 2009, using their nickname of Yatoo, KNAA states that:

Yatoo’s work in the 1980s was an endeavor to find a balanced place between living nature and humans’ art activities, not just pushing humans’ artistic ideas into natural circumstances. It is an important characteristic of KNAA’s works that the works had a structure of interacting with nature remaining intact of their natural aspects.\(^45\) (KNAA, 2009, p. 11)

According to the statement, KNAA’s works reflect and advocate the value of harmony between human art activity and nature. I find that KNAA’s perception of harmony is

\(^{45}\text{Translated from Korean: “1980년대 야투의 작업은 자연공간속에 단지 인간의 미술적 아이디어를 밀어넣기보다는 살아있는 자연과 인간의 예술 의지가 균형을 이루는 지점을 찾으려 하였다. 즉 자연성이 그대로 유지되는 가운데 인간의 생각을 부족함 없이 받아내는 상호작용의 구조를 지닌 것이 야투작업의 중요한 특성이라고 할 수 있다.”}\)
related to their sense of place. As I have discussed in Chapter Three, KNAA’s sense of place is embedded in the notion of place as geological or physical location while BAG refers to place as socio-political sites.

The difference of the sense of place between the two groups may influence their different perceptions of harmony: BAG expands their perception of harmony on a socio-political level, while KNAA tries to look at nature itself. In fact, KNAA tends to avoid social and political issues in their activities. From the beginning of the 1990s, KNAA began to exchange their artworks with German environmental artists, having exhibitions in Germany and Korea biannually. KNAA’s biggest biannual event, *Geumgang International Nature Art Biennale*, has been developed from this experience of exchanging their artworks with German artists. However, as their international exchange program has grown, their financial dependence on local and national governments has been greater as well. In this progress, KNAA has had government’s requests such as having some artworks that can be enjoyable to the public—not too aggressive, provocative, and critical against the government—and permanent so that the local region can have the art exhibition site, Geumgang River and Yeonmi Mountain, as an art park throughout the year in order to attract tourists from other places. KNAA members generally acknowledge that they are supposed to conform to what the government requests them to do in terms of the *Geumgang International Nature Art Biennale*. Seunghyun Koh comments on it as follows:

As we [KNAA] have worked like an organization of the *Geumgang Biennale*, it was inevitable for us to be institutionalized like mainstream art is. It has become a little bit stiff. … We see that some ecological artists’ works are not visually
attractive enough to exhibit their works in the Biennale. I understand that their works are valuable and meaningful, but from the standpoint of a coordinator for the biennale, we [KNAA] need to consider the perspectives of audiences. Those kinds of artworks are too difficult for the public to understand as an artwork. So we consider the artworks’ visual attractiveness when we organize the biennale. It is inevitable.46 (Personal communication, July 13, 2011)

According to his statement, Seunghyun Koh also acknowledges that KNAA’s biggest annual event, Geumgang International Nature Art Biennale, does not reflect KNAA’s fundamental notion of nature well enough, but that they need to conform to governmental and public pressures.

According to Eungwoo Yi, Seunghyun Ko, and Haesim Kim, KNAA changed their name from Yatoo to KNAA (Korea Nature Art Association) for that reason as well. KNAA, was originally called Yatoo before 1991. Seunghyun Koh says that:

We needed to become an incorporated association in order to get financial support from the government. In that process, we changed our name to Korea Nature Art

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46 Translated from Korean: “조금 위란가 제도권에서 하는 둘 속에 들어갈 수 밖에 없잖아요. 그러다 보니까 예산이 늘어나고 더 많은 걸 이렇게 지원해 주고 하다 보니까 그들은 그들 대로 더 밥밥해지기 시작하는 거야. 조금은 닥락해지기 시작했어요, ... 외국같은 경우는 그 쪽 면서 상당히 우리 쪽 성향으로 작업하는 사람이 굉장히 많이 늘어났어요. 예로 쪽으로 가다 보니까. 그래서 별로 인제 설치성이랄래가 전시성이 희박한 거야. 가시적으로 비주얼적이지 않은 거지. 내용적으로 옛날에 우리 쪽보다 더 깊이 들어간 것도 있지만, 굉장히 가치 있고 좋은 작가들이지. 그런 쪽만 한두면, 비엔날레 열어 놓고, 야외에다가 전시 해봤는데, 어 이게 무슨 작품인지 모르는 상황이 되어 버리는 거야. 그래서 일반인들이 소화를 못하는 거지.”
Association because our former name “yatoo” sounded a little bit aggressive.\(^{47}\)

(Personal communication, July 13, 2011)

Yatoo literally means “throwing something out to (or from) the field” in Korean. The connotations of the word Yatoo are associated with strife or fighting, especially implying the democratic protests in the milieu of Korea in the 1980s. Seunghyun Koh told me an episode that happened back in the 1980s when several police officers came to their exhibition site to monitor whether their exhibition was about political issues against the government because their group name Yatoo sounded related to a slogan of democratic protest. In order to receive financial support from the government, they changed the name of the group from Yatoo to KNAA, and they try to reflect requests of governments when they create and exhibit their artworks for *Geumgang International Nature Art Biennale*. Based upon their sense of place, which mostly focuses on place as a geological and physical site, and reflecting government’s demand to create artworks that are not critical and aggressive to the government, KNAA’s works tend not to imply socio-political aspects of harmony. Rather KNAA’s works are focused on nature itself and human beings’ relationship with nature.

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\(^{47}\) Translated from Korean: “이런 행사를 국가에서 지원할 때에 개인 한테, 임의 단체한테 주지 않고, 적어도 사단법인 정도가 되어야 만이 지원을 해주는 것이야. 그래서 행정 쪽에서 그런 형식을 좀 취했으면 좋겠다 해서 그런 법인체를 만들었고, 그 예산을 좀 지원 받고, 그런 것이 아니었다면 곧이 이렇게 사단법인까지 만들어서 할 이유가 없었죠. 그러니가 투자가 단절 투자를 투정할 때 투자로 보니가 아니, 굉장히 강했던 말이야. 그래서 바꿨어요. … 자연미술을 네이처 아트란 말로 표현하지 말고 그냥 발음 나느데로 자연 미술이라고 했어야 한다. 이런 얘기들이 나왔었는데, 그때 그렇게 했어야 하는데, 이미 지금은 자연미술이라는 것이 네이처 아트 쪽으로 표기되어서 많은 사람들이 외국에서도 그렇게 써요.”
5.4 Works of BAG: Harmony on the Social and Political Level

Because they create and exhibit their artworks in surrounding environments as harmoniously as they can, BAG’s works share a similar perception of harmony to KNAA’s. According to Kwangwoo Kim, BAG’s works are to help audiences look at, enjoy, and understand the Jara Island better, rather than view the artworks as distinguished and visually dominant subjects in the place. He states that:

The artworks are not supposed to be visually striking inharmoniously with their surroundings. For that reason, our works sometimes are not easily noticeable. It is because our works should be avenues for audiences to look at Jara Island.48

(Kwangwoo Kim, personal communication, October 16, 2011)

Figures 5.9 and 5.10 are examples of artworks created to help audiences look at the exhibition site rather than at the artworks themselves. Donghwa Jeon’s work titled *Fire that Flowed and Resided Within* (흘러들어와 자리잡은 불) is a visual representation of foreign species such as bullfrogs and bluegills that have been imported from foreign places for various reasons, and now destroy indigenous ecosystems of the local place (Figure 5.9). Hyeryung Jung’s work titled *Growing Up* is the artist’s endeavor to revive cut-down trees during the developmental process of turning the place into a public park (Figure 5.10).

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48Translated from Korean: “그래야 되는 거죠. 작품을 통해서 자라섬을 보게 해 줘야 하는 것이니깐요. 매개체죠…”
Since BAG uses materials found at the exhibition site without any alteration for their artworks like KNAA, BAG’s works easily sit in the place harmoniously with the surrounding environment. However, their works not only convey visual accordance with the environment, but also raise social and political issues of the place. For instance, through his work entitled *Fire that Flowed and Resided In*, Donghwa Jeon raises issues about destruction of the indigenous
ecosystem caused by imported foreign species such as bullfrogs and bluegills in the place called Bukhan River. Also Hyeryung Chung’s work, *Growing Up*, criticizes the governmental inhumane development of Jara Island. Through such artworks, BAG carries a message that the value of harmony should not only be achieved in terms of visual harmony between artworks and environment, but also social and political harmony should be attained.

Like KNAA’s case, the local government demands several requests about BAG’s works for the annual *Baggat Art Exhibition*. The local government wants BAG to make some monumental and permanent artworks so that visitors to Jara Island can see and enjoy throughout the year like an art park. Also the local government wants BAG to make artworks enjoyable, not raising social and political controversy. Even though BAG needs to make a compromise with local government like KNAA, BAG often struggled with what the local government requested for them to do. Woonyoung Choi states that:

> There have been some struggles between the local government and us because they want us to make some monumental and permanent artworks. However, as artists who love the place, we do not want to create any artworks that alter or visually dominate the original environment of the place. (Personal communication, July 12, 2011)

He also said that the financial support has been decreased for recent years because of the struggle with the government. Unlike KNAA, despite decreasing support from the government, BAG tries to raise their voices about social and political issues through their artworks.

In addition, BAG’s notion of Baggat (outside) encompasses the perception of harmony as embracing and inclusion that Sooja Kim conveys through her works. According to Jeongsik Kim,
the former member of BAG, the word Baggat not only means “outside” against “inside,” but
“outside” that encompasses “inside.” Jeongsik Kim states that:

Baggat [outside] Art is not a concept that is against “inside.” Rather it reflects
spiritual meaning that includes “inside.” 49 (Kim, 2006, p. 158)

Explaining features of BAG, Youngkyung Koo states that:

I want BAG to be a group that has more various characteristics regardless of left
wing or right wing [ideology]. … I want BAG to be a group that can embrace
different opinions from the majority of people. … I want BAG to have some
people who can raise different opinions from the majority of people. 50 (Personal
communication, August 1, 2011)

I find that her statement well represents BAG’s perception of harmony, which includes
and embraces diverse standpoints and perspectives like the Eastern philosophical
traditional, Yin and Yang.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed how BAG and KNAA reflect and advocate the value of
harmony, which I defined as coexistence of all beings on Earth in accordance with every single

49 Translated from Korean: “‘바깥미술’은 ‘안’의 반대 개념이 아니며 ‘안’을 수렴하는 내재된 정신적 의미가
포함된다. (…) ‘바깥미술’은 원초적 자연에서만 행해지는 것이 아니다.”

50 Translated from Korean: “저는 좌파의 성향을 갖고 있던 우파의 성향을 갖고 있던 두 가지 성격을 다
갖고 있는 다이내믹한 그룹이었으면 좋겠다는 얘기를 언뜻 드렸어요….소수의견도 존중하고 꼭 أثن고 갈 수
있는 그런 성향의 집단이었으면 좋겠어요….한 두명의 쓴 소리를 할 수 있는 사람이 있었으면 좋겠다는
얘기를 한 적이 있어요.”
being’s uniqueness and singularity. Acknowledging Morton’s (2010) idea of ecology, I claimed that harmony is not only about brightness and positivity, but also it is about embracing and accepting darkness and negativity. In this regard, I found that the traditional notion of Yin and Yang in Eastern philosophy, Taoism, correlates to the notion of harmony. In Taoism, Yin—which generally refers to brightness and positivity—and Yang—which generally refers to darkness and negativity—are not separable from each other, but they are actually together as one.

I found that a Korean contemporary artist, Sooja Kim, portrays and convey this kind of idea of harmony through her works. Sooja Kim is generally known as a feminist artist whose works criticize Korean patriarchal society. However, based upon her lecture and interview with Bourriaud, I interpreted and understood her works to convey values of harmony with notions of caring, embracing, and loving like motherhood. Especially, a series of her works titled Bottari, which is a piece of fabric that wraps and carries things, represents this notion of harmony well.

While Sooja Kim’s works are about representation of the value of harmony, BAG and KNAA try to carry out the value of harmony through placing their works in the exhibition place as harmoniously as they can. However, I found that the scope of harmony that the two groups advocate is different between the groups. Creating and exhibiting their artworks with natural materials found in the exhibition site without any alteration, KNAA endeavors to carry pure beauty and spirituality of nature itself. However, BAG brings social, cultural, and political aspects of the place into their works, yet creating and exhibiting their artworks in the same way as KNAA. Designating their works as Bagagat Art—which literally means “outside art” in Korean—and perceiving “Bagagat (outside)” as outside that encompasses inside rather than excludes inside, BAG reflect values of harmony that encompass all the aspects of the world regardless of darkness and negativity.
CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT KOREAN ART CURRICULUM

During the last decade, the awareness of environmental issues and the necessity of environmental education in Korean art curriculum have grown. Several art educators have conducted research about environmental art education (Park, S. Y., 1999; Kim, H. K., 2004; Kim, H. M., 2004, 2009; Lee, S. K., 2005; Jang, 2006; Kim, C. S., 2009; Ryu et al., 2009; Park, S. H., 2010; Kim H. N. & Ahn, H. R., 2011). Although their research has proposed and suggested promising approaches for Korean ecological art education, most are based upon limited ideas of environment or ecology that primarily regard natural surroundings or physical aspects of environment, which does not encompass socio-cultural and political aspects of environment and ecology. Similarly, I find that the practice of the current Korean art education is based upon narrow ideas of environment as physical and geological features, and does not espouse ecological values.

In this chapter, I analyze the current Korean art curriculum, focusing on nine art textbooks that Korean secondary schools in 2013 use for art classes (Ahn, H. et al., 2009; Cho, J. et al., 2009; Koh et al., 2009; Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2009; Ahn, G. et al., 2010; Cho, I. et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2010; Noh et al., 2010). In 2009, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Korea revamped the Korean national curriculum of art. Based upon the revision of the Korean national curriculum in 2009, several art educators have written new

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51 I find that the secondary art education fully reflects the government’s art education policy compared to elementary art education. Elementary art education is integrated with other disciplines such as sociology, gymnastics, and music. For this reason, the art subject in the textbooks for elementary schools is limited and often invisible. I explained the reason that I analyzed art textbooks for Korean secondary schools in Chapter Two.
versions of art textbooks and nine art textbooks for secondary schools have been published since 2009. Korea has a centralized education system, which means the Korean government decides all the educational content from elementary schools to high schools. The *Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Korea* has authority to approve textbooks if they comply with the national curriculum. Secondary schools, which consist of middle schools from 7th to 9th grade and high schools from 10th to 12th grade, are supposed to select one of the accepted textbooks by the *Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Korea* for their classes. Considering this centralized education system of Korea, I find that analyzing art textbooks for secondary schools could provide an opportunity to look at general landscapes of current Korean art education.

In order to analyze the current Korean art textbooks, I focus on how nine art textbooks conceptualize the idea of environment, and convey concepts of place and aesthetics. From an ecological perspective with values of contextuality, equity, and harmony, I endeavored to analyze the idea of environment embedded in the current Korean art curriculum. I looked for how the sense of place in the curriculum brings contextual values and meanings of place, and how aesthetic education in the curriculum communicates ecological values. Also I focused on sections titled *Nature and Environment* and *Visual Culture Environment* in the current Korean art curriculum. The Korean national curriculum of art categorizes three fundamental areas of art education: *Artistic Experience, Artistic Expression*, and *Art Appreciation*. All the content of art education such as traditional Korean art, sculpture, printing, design, and so forth in art textbooks are arranged under the umbrella of these three basic categories. The subcategories titled *Nature and Environment* and *Visual Culture and Environment*, which belong to the area *Artistic Experience*, mostly relate to approaches of environmental education (Figure 6.1).
Focusing on the area *Artistic Experience*, which consists of sections of *Nature and Environment* and *Visual Culture and Environment*, I examine the notion of environment, sense of place, and aesthetics embedded in the current Korean art education.

**6.1 Notion of Environment: Emphasis on Physical and Visual Attributes of Environment**

From my analysis of the current Korean art curriculum, I find that the notion of environment embedded in the art curriculum is focused on physical and visual attributes of environment. Disinger and Monroe (1994) differentiate environmental education from “nature education,” which they perceive as the earlier versions of environmental education. They argue that environmental education should address interrelationships between humans and the environment, but “nature education” only focused on teaching nature itself.

Environmental solutions are not only scientific—they include historical, political, economic, cultural, and many other perspectives. This also implies that the
environment includes not only pine trees and coyotes but also buildings, highways, and ocean tankers. (Disinger & Monroe, 1994, p. 3)

According to Disinger and Monroe’s statement above, environmental education is not just about teaching nature, but encompasses historical, cultural, and political relationships between humans and the environment. However, I find that the approach of environmental education in Korean art curriculum is more likely to be what Desinger and Monroe call “nature education” in terms of the current Korean art curriculum’s emphasis on physical and visual attributes of nature and environment.

*The Middle School Art* written by Kim, Lee, and Kim (2009), the section *Artistic Experience*, consists of two chapters: *Natural Environment*, which regards natural surroundings, and *Visual Culture Environment*, which regards human-made environment focusing on visual features of it. The content of these two chapters is mostly to find inspiration from beautiful scenes or images of nature and human-made environment. Kim, Lee, and Kim state that the educational goal for the chapter *Natural Environment* is to “find the beauty and the characteristics of nature” (p. 8). With this educational goal, the authors present several beautiful images of Korean (also foreign) landscapes and wild animals. The main activity in this chapter, *Natural Environment*, is to appreciate beautiful images of nature provided in the text and find various colors and forms from them. From an ecological perspective, however, I find that Kim, Lee, and Kim’s notion of environment is limited to physical and visual attributes of environment that does not bring social, cultural, and political values of environment into the curriculum. Images of nature presented in the text such as insects, flowers, mountains, and rivers are not associated with socio-cultural issues, focusing only on their visual beauty. For instance, one of the activities that Kim, Lee, and Kim include in the chapter is about beehives. The authors
encourage students to find hexagonal shapes of beehives, and to think about how the hexagonal shape is applied to graphic designs and architecture (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 Activities included in the chapter Natural Environment of the textbook by Kim, Lee, and Kim (2009, p. 12)

But there is no information or discourses about habitat of bees and relationships between bees and humans. Considering contextual, cultural, and social aspects of relationship between bees and students, the following questions could be asked to students: Do bees live in the place where students live? When and where do students see bees, their names, or the product of their activity? What do bees look like? How do bees live? How do bees affect human living? And how do human life styles affect bees?

In the chapter Visual Culture Environment, Kim, Lee, and Kim also emphasize the visual beauty of human-made environment. The authors state that the purpose of education for the chapter is to “find visual culture environment around students, and understand its [visual culture environment’s] functions and roles” (p. 20). What the authors mean by “functions and roles of
visual culture environment” is generally about the visual attractiveness and convenience (or usefulness) of human-made environment such as urban buildings and various manufactured products. They state that “the visual culture environment not only provides visual inspiration to us, but also usefulness for people’s everyday living. Visual culture environment with convenience and visual beauty makes our lives abundant” (Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2009, p. 20). With these educational purposes, the authors present several images of visual culture environment as examples (Figure 6.3).

![Figure 6.3 Examples of images included in The Middle School Art by Kim, Lee, and Kim (2009, pp. 23-4)](image)

The picture on the left in Figure 6.3 is a bridge in London. Kim, Lee, and Kim state that “Electric lights, instead of solar light, produce another beauty of the bridge” (p. 24). Also the picture on the right in Figure 6.3 is fitness equipment installed in a public park in Korea. Kim, Lee, and Kim explain that this fitness equipment is a good example of visual culture environment that provides convenience (or usefulness) for human living. However, Kim, Lee and Kim’s notion of environment here is limited to the physical and visual attributes of environment, not raising any social, cultural and environmental aspects of them. Who does receive the benefit from the bridge lit by colorful lights? Why is it important to light the bridge? How much energy is consumed for lighting? Why should the fitness equipment be in the public park? Who uses this equipment? Are
the local people satisfied with the equipment? Does the equipment harmonize in the place? How can students design these environments better according to answers to the previous questions? Those fundamental questions are not asked by the authors in the textbooks.

The conceptualization of environment that emphasizes physical and visual features is embedded in other secondary art textbooks as well. For instance, *The Middle School Art* written by Cho et al. (2009) has three sub-chapters titled *Understanding of Environment, Natural Environment and Art*, and *Visual Culture Environment and Art* under the chapter titled *Art and Environment*. Cho et al. divide the sub-chapter of *Understanding of Environment* into two parts: *Natural Environment* and *Human-Made Environment* (Figure 6.4).

![Figure 6.4 Structure of Chapter One, Art & Environment, of The Middle School Art by Cho et al. (2009)](image)

In the sections *Natural Environment* and *Human-Made Environment*, the authors encourage students to find beautiful scenery and interact with the natural environment through various senses, and to find beautiful images of human-made environments. Like Kim, Lee and Kim, Cho et al. focus on physical attributes and visual beauty of the environment. The authors do not
broaden the discourses of environment to the level of cultural and political aspects of environment.

Having this limited notion of environment as physical surroundings focusing on visual attributes, art activities and educational contents related to environmental education in the current Korean art education are mostly to interact with natural materials and find visual beauty of the environment. In her research, Changsik Kim (2009) points out that Korean ecological art education is typified as a kind of art activity to create artworks with natural or recycled materials. Kim and Ahn (2011) posit similar problems of environmental approaches of Korean art education: stereotypical art making with natural or recycled materials, and the limitation that cannot connect the activity to students’ behavioral changes for ecological sustainability. For instance, *The Middle School Art* written by Koh et al. (2009) suggests an activity in the section titled *Learning from Nature*. The activity is to feel the beauty of nature and to express students’ feelings through making artworks with natural materials. Figure 6.5 is an example of artworks by students provided in the book.
This activity that Koh et al. suggested in their book is a good example of typified activity for the approach of environmental education in Korean art curriculum. After having students make a spiral or a turtle shape with rocks found on the riverbed, Koh et al. encourage students to think about visual characteristics and aesthetic values of nature, and to find some artworks made out of natural materials as well as consider the aesthetic values of those artworks. As Kim (2009) and Kim and Ahn (2011) claimed, these kinds of typified activities are commonly included in all nine art textbooks. Compared to BAG’s and KNAA’s works, those typical activities from the textbooks and the works of BAG and KNAA have in common that they are all made out of natural materials found in the place. However, the differences among them is that BAG’s and
KNAA’s works advocate values of nature as living partners with human beings, and especially, BAG’s works convey social and political aspects of environment through their works.

In Chapter One, I explained that an ecological perspective is not just about recycling and conservation of nature, but it is rather a worldview that entails certain values of understanding and perceiving the world. From an ecological perspective, environment is not just about physical surroundings of human beings. Rather environment is about relationships—not just material relationships, but also socio-cultural as well as political relationships—among all life forms on Earth. And an ecological perspective strives for contextual, equal, and harmonious relationships. From chapters three to five, I have explored how BAG and KNAA reflect values of contextuality, equity, and harmony through their artworks. Especially, BAG straightforwardly raises their voices about social and cultural issues in the place. Even though typified activities included in the current Korean art curriculum and artworks of BAG and KNAA have in common that they all emphasize interacting with natural materials in the place, the current Korean art curriculum is limited to the notion of environment focusing on physical and visual features of environment.

However, activities in Korean art textbooks could be a good initial approach to lead students to think about multilateral relationships between environment and human beings. In The High School Art written by Noh et al. (2010), for instance, one of the activities under the theme of environmental design is to find objects designed in harmony with their surrounding environment. An example in the textbook is about a sidewalk kiosk. Noh et al. state that the kiosk was previously unorganized and did not harmonize with its surrounding environment (see the picture on the left in Figure 6.6), so it has been redesigned to be placed in the area in accordance with the environment (on the right in Figure 6.6).
The main argument of Noh et al. is focused on the visual harmony of the kiosk with its physical environment. In their discussion, there is no other consideration of socio-cultural and political perspectives of the area and the kiosk. In 2008, the government of Seoul City initiated the project called “Design Seoul.” The maintenance of streets, including kiosks, was a part of the project. The administration of Seoul City argued that the previous kiosks obstruct pedestrian flow and derogate aesthetic values of the city because of their unorganized and old-fashioned design. The government redesigned the previous kiosks and replaced most of the kiosks with the new ones. However, in the process of decision-making of the kiosk design, there was no consideration of vendors’ standpoints and the diverse characteristics of local areas. In his article titled *Kiosks of “Design Seoul” became obsolete in one year*, Ahn (2011) reports that numerous redesigned kiosks have been abandoned for their inconvenience for the vendors and now they became a white elephant of the city. Noh et al.’s perspective on the new kiosk design does not encompass these cultural, political, and historical backgrounds of the kiosk. Considering those various perspectives, the following questions could be raised in the classroom besides visual attributes: Who owns the kiosk and how does the redesigned kiosk concern space for the vendor in the kiosk? Who decided to redesign the kiosk and, in the process of decision-making, whose voices
were dominant or ignored? What would be the distinctive characteristics of the surrounding area? How does the redesigned kiosk reflect those unique characteristics of the local area? Considering various aspects of the kiosks, how would you redesign it?

6.2 Sense of Place: Lack of Contextual Meaning-Making

In Chapter Three, I have analyzed the sense of place from a study of Korean contemporary environmental artist groups. In Korean Environment Art Organization’s (KEAO) works, I found that they generalized a sense of place by de-emphasizing site-specific and unique local values of place. KEAO’s works mostly portray beautiful images of nature or rural areas. For instance, Samsoon Lee’s work titled *Smile of Nature* is an imaginary scene of nature portrayed by the artist, which does not exist in the real world (Figure 6.7). In her work, Samsoon Lee creates beautiful underwater scenery juxtaposing several natural objects such as lilies and fish. Her work does not indicate any specific site or place, but rather conveys nature through idealistic visual beauty. Most KEAO works are similar to Samsoon Lee’s in that they do not draw attention to site-specific meanings of the place.⁵²

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⁵² I provide extensive discussion of KEAO’s sense of place in chapter three.
From my analysis of the nine art textbooks for secondary schools in Korea, I found that the sense of place embedded in the current Korean art education is similar to KEAO’s in that Korean curriculum does not focus on local (or contextual) values of place. Emphasis on visual features of nature and human-made environment deprives students of their personal and contextual connections to the local places. I examined the sense of place in the current Korean art curriculum, looking at what kinds of images art textbooks include in the texts and how they interpret those images. I found that nine art textbooks have in common that they all include images of well-known places in Korea and abroad, encouraging students to find visual inspiration from them. Only one textbook focuses on a local place where students actually live.

*The Middle School Art* written by Kim, Lee, and Kim (2009) also provides images of well-known places in Korea and other countries, focusing on visual features. The authors state that “Nature around us [human] has diverse forms and colors. … Humans have tried to express the beauty of nature, and this expression is artistic experience” (Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2009, p. 8). The textbook authors only refer to the value of nature’s visual beauty, and do not encompass
other contextual meanings and values of the specific places to students. Also the chapter titled *Natural Environment and Aesthetics* in the textbook *The High School Art*, written by Cho et al. (2010), includes images of beautiful natural scenery in foreign countries such as the USA and Australia, and some well-known scenery in Korea. Cho et al. state that nature possesses beauty derived from its visual order of colors and patterns. The text advocates that humans can create beauty from nature as inspiration.

The Korean high school curriculum textbooks focus on nature as visually beautiful as well as on elements and principles of art that can be found in nature. For instance, Cho et al. present eight images relating principles and elements of art as follows: images of a galloping horse with movement, mountains with harmony, bamboo with lines, luster of lotus leaves with repetition, colorful fallen leaves with accentuation, reflection on a lake with balance, and skin of a rhinoceros with texture. In this activity, pictures are mostly from places, which most students probably have not visited before, such as Mongolia (an image of a horse), Spain (an image of fallen leaves), and Japan (an image of reflection on a lake). At the end of the chapter titled *Art and Environment*, Cho et al. suggest students explore local places where they live. However, the purpose of the suggested activity is to find visual aesthetics of the local place in relation to elements and principles of art, rather than searching for unique values of or making personal connection with the local places. The activities of Cho et al. might be effective to acquire knowledge of relationships between nature and elements/principles of art. However, it hardly

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53 The Korean art curriculum does not indicate how they define elements and principles of art. However, according to the textbook by Cho et al. (2010), elements of art are point, line, plane, form, color, shade, volume, and texture, and principles of art are variety, unity, balance, rhythm, movement, proportion, contrast, gradation, repetition, and harmony.
touches students’ personal artistic experiences or encourages students to have stewardship of nature.

Considering these limitations of Cho et al.’s activity, I find that the activity titled *Adopt a Tree*, in the book titled *Pre K-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide*, would be a good example of encouraging students to have a personal connection to the local place (American Forest Foundation, 2007). In this activity, *Adopt a Tree*, students are encouraged to explore and choose a tree in a place nearby their living areas, and observe and draw it in various perspectives, such as its bark, leaves, branches, colors, textures, and forms for a certain period of time. Also, students are asked to research about what kind of tree it is, how the tree grows in the place, how local people have harnessed the tree in their living, and so forth. Through this activity, students could acquire knowledge of a specific tree and its relationships to elements/principle of art as well as finding unique values of and personal connections to the tree and the place. Eventually, students could develop their personal sense of place, which is to be aware of unique and special values of the place through this activity.

Activities in *The Middle School Art* by Ahn et al. (2009) show a good starting point to bring the sense of place into Korean art curriculum. In the sub-chapter titled *Stepping Forward to Nature* under the chapter, *Nature and Us*, Ahn et al. guide students to explore the local nature such as trees, flowers, and insects. Students are supposed to take pictures of beautiful images in local places and attach those pictures to the textbooks. The activity also includes drawing flowers and trees, listening to nature, and sharing feelings and experiences about local nature with other students. I find that one of the distinguishable characteristics of this activity from the typified activity in other textbooks is that this activity does not provide exemplary images of beautiful nature in relation to the activity. In the activity, finding and distinguishing the beautiful images
of nature around students’ local places are their own decision. Unlike Cho et al.’s (2009) activity to explore visual and aesthetic values of local nature (which mostly focuses on aesthetic forms such as shape and color), Ahn et al’s activities are more open to students’ contextual meaning-making process. Their activity provides opportunities to discuss and make personal connections between the local environment and students’ own feelings and experiences beyond emphasis on formalist aesthetic forms for students.

### 6.3 Aesthetics Focused on Formalist Perspectives

Conceptualization of environment and the sense of place embedded in the current Korean art curriculum also relate to aesthetics that Korean art curriculum holds. For the analysis of aesthetics that the current Korean art curriculum is based upon, I examined what kinds of environmental artworks the nine art textbooks include, and how they appreciate and understand those included artworks.

In *The High School Art* by Cho et al. (2010), the authors explain principles and elements of art such as color, line, repetition, and texture as important aspects to examine in order to understand values of nature and environmental artworks. Cho et al. state that:

The reason that nature is beautiful is that elements and principles of art can be found in nature. The elements of art are basic components that make people perceive beauty (point, line, plane, form, color, shade, volume, and texture), and principles of art are what elements of art organically relate (variety, unity, balance, rhythm, movement, proportion, contrast, gradation, repetition, and harmony). …
People have created architecture, painting, sculpture, and so forth according to these principles and elements of art found in nature. (pp. 4-6)

According to this statement, Cho et al.’s aesthetics to evaluate and appreciate nature and artworks are derived from a formalist perspective, which values the forms of art rather than contextual meanings and values. In the formalist perspective, the beauty of nature and the value of artworks rely on principles and elements of art. Art activities such as finding patterns and colors from nature are based upon this formalist perspective because the purpose of those activities is not to understand nature itself, but to find and apply artistic forms and colors to human designed environments, objects, and images.

I believe that the formalist perspective in the current Korean art curriculum is also associated with the fact that most art textbooks include images of environmental artworks by globally well-known foreign artists rather than Korean artists. For instance, in The High School Art by Noh et al. (2010), all the included example works are foreign works by Andy Goldsworthy, Agnes Denes, Walter De Maria, and Jim Denevan. Also, The Middle School Art written by Cho et al. (2009) includes artworks of Goldsworthy and Jeanne-Claude and Christo in the text as exemplars of environmental artworks (Figure 6.8).

Figure 6.8 Goldsworthy’s works (two on left) and Jeanne-Claude and Christo’s work (right) included in The Middle School Art by Cho et al. (2009)
When it comes to understanding and interpreting environmental artworks from an ecological perspective with values of contextuality, equity, and harmony, I believe that it is important to consider what messages and values artists convey through their works, how artworks harmonize with their environments, and how ecologically the artworks are created. However, Cho et al.’s discussion about artworks focuses on materials that those artworks used. They state that those works are called *Earth Art*, which uses the natural environment to create artworks with natural materials such as rocks, leaves, and water, without mentioning any the meanings or other interpretation of those artworks. In my understanding, Cho et al. focus more on forms and materials used in the artworks rather than what kinds of meanings and values those works carry to viewers.

From this point of view, *The High School Art*, written by Cho et al. (2010), shows their endeavor to relate the discussion of environmental works beyond a formalist perspective. In the sub-chapter titled *Beauty of Ecological Environment* under the chapter *Natural Environment and Art*, Cho et al. bring an issue of polluted and harmed nature exemplifying the artwork titled *The Flare* (타오르는 불꽃) by Woonyoung Choi, a member of BAG (Figure 6.9).

![Figure 6.9 Woonyoung Choi, The Flare (타오르는 불꽃), 2002](image-url)
*The Flare* is a work about Nanji Island in Seoul. Nanji Island used to be a landfill from 1978 to 1993. Trash was sent to Nanji Island by the local government. The site came to be called Mountain of Garbage. In 1993, the government decided to recover the island from the devastation to the site itself, and to clean up the pollution that Mountain of Garbage caused to surrounding water tables, air, and soil health. However, the plan was not conceptualized by environmental experts. Nanji Island was literally covered by about a two-foot depth of soil and big sheets of vinyl. Underneath the cover, there were still large amounts of remaining garbage. In 2002, BAG held an exhibition titled Nanji Island Project, and they disclosed the irrationality of the government’s revival plan of Nanji Island. Woonyoung Choi’s *The Flare* criticizes the government’s restoration and ideas of new ecological systems in the project of Nanji Island. I found that the art textbook by Cho et al. (2010) is the only textbook that connected the environmental artworks to environmental issues, and it is notable that it includes a work of BAG’s for that. This indicates that the Korean art educational system could embrace ecological perspectives of contextuality, equity, and harmony. In the next chapter, I discuss implications and suggestions for Korean art education to practice ecologically sustainable education.
CHAPTER SEVEN
SUGGESTIONS FOR KOREAN ECOLOGICAL ART EDUCATION

Based upon what I found from the analysis of the current Korean art curriculum in Chapter Six, and the analysis of ecological values embedded in Korean contemporary environmental art (see chapters three to five), in this chapter, I propose three suggestions for Korean art education to be responsible in educating for ecological sustainability. Firstly, Korean art curriculum should convey broader ideas of environment and ecology beyond the notion of environment as physical surroundings. Secondly, Korean art curriculum should guide activities that explore local or contextual issues of equity and harmony. Lastly, Korean ecological art curriculum should interpret environmental responsibility through an ecological lens of contextuality, equity, and harmony.

7.1 Toward an Ecological Perspective

In Chapter Six, I indicated that the notion of environment conceptualized in the current Korean art curriculum emphasizes physical and visual attributes of environment, which does not encompass socio-cultural and political aspects of environment. This limited conceptualization, however, guides the approach of environmental education in art curriculum to include art activities such as making artworks with natural materials without consideration for cultural and social aspects of the environment. The Korean art curriculum is, therefore, limited in teaching students to understand, communicate with, and have stewardship toward their environment. In order for the Korean art curriculum to educate for ecological sustainability, I suggest that Korean
ecological art curriculum apply an ecological perspective as a worldview that entails values of contextuality, equity, and harmony in order to attain much richer and more valuable eco-pedagogical outcomes. Acknowledging that an ecological perspective is a worldview about how we, human beings, understand ourselves and others, education for ecological sustainability should not only concern education about physical surroundings, but also sustainable relationships of every entity on Earth.54

For instance, the activity titled *Adopt a Tree*, which I discussed in Chapter Six, could be a good initiative to explore relationships between humans and nature. In observing and researching about a tree that a student adopts, students are encouraged to be aware of how closely they are connected to trees and what valuable living partners the trees are in the students’ lives. Observing and studying diverse changes of trees—such as seasonal changes, reactions to their environment, or symptoms of sickness—students can learn how trees grow. Also, observing and researching how trees interact and coexist with other living beings—such as insects, fungi, and animals—students can realize that they live in an ecological community in which every component of the community has a mutual reliance. In this process, artworks like KNAA’s could be well applied to the activity in that the important aspect of KNAA’s works is to interact with nature through art and, eventually, understand and respect nature as a living partner of human beings. Seunghyun Koh, a member of KNAA, defines their art activities as playing with nature. He says “What we do is a kind of playing with nature in nature” (Personal communication, October 13, 2011).55 As Seunghyun Koh mentioned, KNAA puts emphasis on enjoyment being in and interacting with nature. KNAA’s annual workshop program titled Yatoo-i Workshop

54 Extensive discussion about an ecological perspective as a worldview is in Chapter One.
55 Translated into English from Korean: “우리가 하는 것은 자연에서 자연과 노는 것이라고 볼 수 있어요.”
especially discloses this characteristic of KNAA’s works. KNAA holds Yatoo-i Workshop annually. What they do in the workshop is to visit a certain place where participants can enjoy nature and create small scale artworks individually for the day. The main purpose of this workshop is to be in and interact with nature, so they are not supposed to create a work of art. Anyone who wants to join in the workshop can participate. Figures 7.1 and 7.2 are artworks produced in the Yatoo-i Workshop in 2011.

Figure 7.1 Eungwoo Yi, *Untitled* [無題], 2011

In the Yatoo-i workshop in 2011, Eungwoo Yi took several photos of his hand and foot submerged in a stream reflecting ripples of it (Figure 7.1). Pokorny Atilla, a Hungarian artist, who was a visiting artist for the workshop created untitled works with a tree and twigs in the place (Figure 7.2).
Figures 7.1 and 7.2 clearly show the characteristic of KNAA’s works that puts an emphasis on enjoyment interacting with nature. However, the important assumption that KNAA holds in terms of this kind of activity is that they eventually endeavor to be aware of values of nature as a living partner in Earth. Eungwoo Yi says about their art, what KNAA calls nature art:

The important message of nature art is in what relationship humans and nature would live together and how we would set the relationship. I believe that we, humans and nature, are partners that cohabit equally on earth. I hope viewers receive this message [through my works]. (Personal conversation, October 14, 2011)

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56 Translated into English from Korean: “자연이 주는 핵심적인 것이 자연과 인간이 어떤 관계로 소위 같이 살아갈 것이냐, 그 관계형을 어떻게 정리할 것이냐, 근데 적어도 우리는 대등한 동등한 입장에서 같이 살아가는 파트너다. …[우리의 작업을 통해서] 사람들이 그런 걸 알았으면 좋겠어요.”
In his statement, Eungwoo Yi claims that KNAA’s works deal with the equitable rights of human beings and other living beings in the place. In this regard, KNAA’s works advocate Shiva’s (2005) notion of *Earth Democracy*, which emphasizes the idea that all beings on Earth have the right to live well as much as human beings do. Saylan and Blumstein’s (2011) argument that all beings on Earth have a right to live in an environment that is not threatening to any single individual also correlates to an ecological perspective that KNAA’s works reflect. In the comparison with the notion of environment that current Korean art curriculum reflects, which perceives nature only as physical surrounding, KNAA’s perception of nature is based upon an ecological perspective, which focuses more on how to perceive rather than what to see. Applying an ecological perspective and dealing with environmental artworks like KNAA’s, I believe that the Korean art education should focus more on the relationships among human beings and nature—to promote values of *Earth Democracy* and equity—beyond education for knowledge of visual attributes of the environment.

In addition, applying an ecological perspective rather than the notion of environment as physical and visual surroundings, Korean art education can guide students to realize their social, cultural, and political responsibilities about issues of environment. Let us think about the *Adopt a Tree* activity again, discussed in Chapter Six. Researching and studying about cultural, social, and political context of the trees that they adopt, students can understand how human civilization has influenced the trees and vice versa. How and why are the trees planted in the place and by whom? What kinds of indigenous plants were in the place and what happened to them? How have local people used the trees? These kinds of questions in relation to the trees can guide students to explore and understand the cultural, social, and political aspects of the trees. In this perspective, bringing artworks like BAG’s into the art curriculum can be a good approach in that...
BAG’s artworks reflect various aspects of an ecological perspective. Kwangwoo Kim, a member of BAG, states that:

Before making my artwork, [I] research about the exhibition place such as local people and history of the town through meeting with a researcher of the place or visiting the cultural center of the town for about two weeks. I consider the relationship between my work and the place as the most important thing.57

(Personal communication, Oct. 16, 2010)

According to his statement, the most important element of Kwangwoo Kim’s work is how his work relates to the place of the exhibition on a socio-cultural and political level. Through researching about the local place and interacting with the local people, Kwangwoo Kim tends to carry his understandings and meanings of the exhibition site or community through his works, and oftentimes he conveys his political standpoint through his works as well. Compared to the idea of environment in the current Korean art education, BAG’s perception of environment encompasses much richer and broader meanings and values of an ecological perspective on the socio-cultural and political level. Figure 7.3 is Kwangwoo Kim’s work titled *Choyeonjung* [초연정] exhibited at the Baggat International Art Exhibition in 2012. In this work, Kwangwoo Kim endeavored to represent *Choyoendae* [초연대], which has been documented as a famous place to inspire poetic thoughts to all visitors to the place during the Chosun Dynasty, but now replaced by a steel tower, Choyoendae remains only in historical documents.

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57 Translated into English from Korean: [나는] 작품을 구상하기 전에 작품이 전시될 지역의 마을에 대해, 그리고 주민에 대해 2 주 정도 향토학자라던가, 마을 센터 등을 통해서 리서치를 해요. 그리고 내 작업과의 연관성 등을 중요시 생각하죠.
Hyeryoung Cheong, a member of BAG, also brings socio-political issues of Jara Island to her work titled *Transform* [변 형]. According to Cheong, she felt guilty witnessing that numerous indigenous trees such as the willow tree had been cut down in order to make roads and parking
spaces, as well as indigenous trees being replaced with other types, such as pine trees, in order to make a public park. Transform (변형) is a representation of her wish to provide feathers to the tree, so the tree can fly away before being cut down. BAG’s works like Kwangwoo Kim’s and Hyeryoung Cheong’s are mostly related to the social, cultural, and political issues of the place. Bringing artworks like BAG’s works into the Korean art curriculum can provide opportunities to think about multilateral aspects of environmental issues and what their responsibilities would be to students. I believe that eco-critiques of artworks, such as BAG’s that encompass social, cultural, and political aspects of the environment, should be included in the Korean art curriculum. Through an ecological perspective, Korean art education can help students reconsider social and cultural values that they take for granted, connecting their everyday living and other learning experiences to environmental artworks.

7.2 Sense of Place Focusing on Contextual Values and Meanings: Place-Based Art Education

Generally in environmental education, developing a sense of place through connecting with the local environment, what Sobel (2004) calls place-based education, is a crucial way to understand the relationship between humans and nature (Grunewald, 2003). Grunewald claims that place-based education is an approach for the education of citizens that might have some direct bearing on the well-being of the social and ecological places those citizens actually inhabit. Sobel (2004) explains “Place-Based education is not simply a way to integrate the curriculum around a study of place, but a means of inspiring stewardship and an authentic renewal and revitalization of civic life” (p. 3). According to Grunewald and Sobel, understanding place is not
only to acquire knowledge about local environment, but also to understand every being’s ways of living in the place such as ecosystems, culture, history, and traditions. The notion of critical pedagogy of place is a synthesized term of critical pedagogy and place-based education that emphasizes social and cultural dimensions of place-based education. Saylan and Blumstein (2011) state that:

While increasing the quantity (and quality) of environmental curricula in our schools is necessary and important, such curricula cannot be effective unless they are relevant to the lives of those they are meant to affect. (Saylan & Blumstein, 2011, pp. 46-47)

They emphasize that school education can be effective (or pedagogical) only when school learning meets with the living experience of students.

The way to meet school education with students’ lives is to provide contextual learning experience, which is connected to students’ everyday living and the place that they live in. In this regard, the Foxfire approach in education is exemplary. Foxfire is the name of a magazine initiated by a high school English teacher, Eliot Wigginton, and his students. In order to encourage students to engage in school education, Wigginton and his students decided to produce a magazine about their community in 1966. Groups of student interview people in their community, asking about their living such as making soap or finding medicinal plants, research about histories and culture of their community, and then publish the information as a magazine titled Foxfire. Later Foxfire became one of the national best sellers, and has been a successful pedagogical approach, which is place-based, creating great student involvement with school, community, and their lives (Knapp & Wigginton, 1993).
Saylan and Blumstein (2011) assert that place-based education should be blended with school, environment, and community, which take form in local places. Sobel (2004) also emphasizes that importance of engaging students in solving real and current problems rather than preparing them for solving the theoretical problems of the future. In this regard, Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) state that “Art for Life” should: (a) make real-world connections; (b) involve the active construction of knowledge, as opposed to the passive reception of knowledge from authorities; and (c) develop intellectual, emotional, skills-based, and expressive knowledge, abilities, and sensibilities.

In art education, the approaches of place-based education could be applied in various ways. For instance, BAG's outreach program in the connection with an elementary school in Gapyeong area is a good exemplar. During the period of their annual exhibition, BAG invites some elementary students in Gapyeong area to their exhibition and gives them a tour of the exhibition. Explaining how and why the artists made those kinds of works, BAG tries to help students think about the place where the students actually live and realize what is going on in the place. In this process, students learn various meanings and values of the place, and understand how artists convey social, cultural, and environmental issues through their artworks because the issues are directly related to their everyday life. Nowadays several local governments hold art exhibitions in relation to the theme of environment or ecology such as Yangpyeong Environmental Art Festival, Sihwa Ecological Art Exhibition, and Nampo Environmental Exhibition. Developing educational programs between local schools and these local environmental art exhibitions, such as BAG’s outreach programs, would be a good approach for place-based art education.
Providing his learning and teaching experiences in his research, Ulbricht (1998) argues that ecological art education should bring two kinds of pedagogical values into the classroom. First, he claims that ecological art education should bring artists or artworks in the community into art classrooms because those artists and artworks are most relevant to students’ lives in order to help students have a learning experience that connects to students’ everyday living. Recalling art education that he was taught in his school years, Ulbricht argues that he was taught by teachers that the environment is studied and appreciated for its formal and aesthetic qualities from a modernist perspective. The perspective of the current Korean art curriculum is in the same context of Ulbricht’s past learning experience. Second, he suggests that ecological art education move toward conveying meanings about the local and greater environment. He states that what he learned about environment such as abstract shapes and designs in the environment had blinded him to one of the major functions of art, which conveys meanings of the places. The current Korean art education, however, fails to include local or site-specific values—which are embedded in students’ everyday living—in the curriculum, instead providing images of beautiful nature and knowledge detached from living places of students.

I find that one of the important reasons that the Korean art curriculum cannot encompass local values or place-based educational approach is that the Korean educational system is centralized. In other words, the government decides what to teach and how to teach in the public educational systems. For instance, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology sets up the national curriculum every few years (the latest modification of national curriculum was in 2009) and, according to the national curriculum, several publishers publish textbooks. However, all the textbooks are reviewed and approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology before published. Even with these centralized controls of national curriculum, Korean art
curriculum could still focus inquiry into local values or place-based approaches of education by raising different questions in activity such as the examples I provided in Chapter Six.

For instance, I find that an activity titled *Stepping Forward to Nature* in *The Middle School Art* by Ahn et al. (2009) is exemplary (Figure 7.5). In the activity, students are encouraged to go out and explore local nature such as flowers and trees. In the textbook, blank boxes are provided instead of the usual beautiful images of nature in other textbooks. While exploring local nature, students are supposed to draw, paint, or photograph what they look at, and the blank boxes in the textbook are spaces for students to fill out with what they drew, painted, and photographed. From an ecological perspective, this activity is inspiring. Firstly, this activity is based upon a notion that the beauty of nature depends on a student’s own perspective. Other art textbooks are filled with images of beautiful nature or environment such as images of well-known national parks, rivers, and architecture. However, presenting blank boxes for a space that each student fills out by exploring local nature, the activity *Stepping Forward to Nature* provides students opportunities to consider the beauty of nature as well as knowledge about local nature. Also, discussing and comparing to other students’ choice of beautiful nature, students can have a chance to understand different perspectives of other people. Secondly, the activity places more value on local context than on the universal value of nature. Having students go out and explore local nature, the activity guides students to interact with the real nature, which they can actually touch, smell, feel, and have emotional communication with, rather than looking at images of well-known (oftentimes foreign) natural area such as Niagara Falls or Yellowstone in the United States, which probably most Korean secondary students have never visited. Thirdly, this activity encourages students to have personal connections to a natural object such as flowers,

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58 Extensive discussion of the activity titled *Stepping Forward to Nature* is provided in chapter six.
trees or stones. In the process of exploring the local areas and selecting a single object or place in order to fill out the boxes in the textbook, students keep interacting with the objects or places with or without knowing, and eventually, the interaction leads students to have personal connections to the objects or places. The activity *Stepping Forward to Nature* is inspiring in consideration of ecological values in Korean art curriculum even though Korean art curriculum is strictly centralized. However, in order for Korean art curriculum to attain valuable learning experiences and achieve students’ awareness about importance of their environment, Korean art curriculum should provide flexibility for every school to modify and apply the national curriculum according to their contexts and situations.

![Image of students exploring nature]

Figure 7.5 The activity titled *Stepping Forward to Nature* in *The Middle School Art* by Ahn et al. (2009, p. 14)
7.3 Ecological Aesthetics with Values of Equity and Harmony

The important ecological values that BAG and KNAA convey through their works are the value of equity and harmony. When they create their artworks, BAG and KNAA always consider how their works harmoniously reside in the exhibition site. Trying not to make their artworks visually and physically dominant against the surrounding environments, they respect other living beings’ equal rights to live in the place and the people’s harmonious cohabitation with all the living forms. From the perspective of eco-pedagogy, helping students understand these values of equity and harmony is crucial. Asserting that every living being on Earth has the same right to live in a wholesome environment as humans do, Saylan and Blumstein (2011) argue that environmental education should lead people to realize that the world is a place that all people and other living beings should live together in accord. The values of equity and harmony from an ecological perspective are based upon this maxim that “we live together in this world.”

In his book titled The Ecological Thought, Morton (2010) argues that cohabitation or coexistence is the core aspect of ecological thinking. He asserts that ecological thinking includes all the ways that one can imagine how people live together harmoniously. Bowers (2001) also argues that eco-justice should care not only for people in the present, but also consider the future generations. Arguing that the future generations have the same right to have a wholesome environment, Bowers (2001) raises the issues of harmonious cohabitation between current and future generations. According to him, this world—all the materials that presently living people have in this world—also belong to the future generations.

In the current Korean art curriculum, activities like art-making with natural and recycled materials could be a pedagogical first step to bring an ecological perspective. However, the problem is that this kind of activity tends to be just a temporary or one-time activity and focuses
on a student’s individual work rather than collaborative group work. With these tendencies, the environmental approach of Korean art curriculum cannot have consistency to connect diverse aspects of ecological values such as socio-cultural and political equity and harmony. From this perspective, Saylan and Blumstein (2011) argue that environmental education has failed because it has only considered teaching people knowledge about their physical environment. According to Saylan and Blumstein, environmental education should be comprehensive, integrated, revitalized, and revised as an umbrella term of education, and should also teach how to live and flourish in sustainable ways, which correlates to the values of equity and harmony. United States art educator Congdon (2000) states:

I believe that art teachers should teach their students to make art from discarded objects, but not necessarily because it does anything directly to help the environment. If students are taught about the many layered meanings that recycling can have for artists, a viewer, and a community, lessons can go beyond the “I saved an egg carton” notion. The lesson can be linked to culture, spirituality, heritage, transformation, the fluidity of life, the roots of creativity, as well as aesthetic concerns. (p. 12)

In order for the Korean art curriculum to achieve diverse eco-pedagogical outcomes, Korean art education should have more comprehensive and coherent educational settings in the curriculum instead of focusing on formalist aesthetics and individual academic achievement. To do so, I suggest that Korean art curriculum focus more on: (a) teaching equity relationships among human beings and other living beings, and (b) helping students learn the value of harmony by encouraging them to work collaboratively, providing them with group projects in the classroom.
7.3.1 Value of Equity into Art Curriculum: Eco-Justice Education

Through his notion of eco-justice education, Bowers (2001) focuses on the equity value of an ecological perspective. In his book titled *Educating for Eco-Justice and Community*, Bowers (2001) claims that eco-justice is a more comprehensive theory than social justice issues of class, race, and gender. He defines eco-justice as a conceptual and moral framework for guiding educational reform which supports involvement of minorities in addressing environmental issues. In the notion of eco-justice pedagogy, Bowers (2001) concentrates on the decision-making processes in educational practices. He asks whose voices dominate over the process of decision-making, or on the contrary, whose voices become ignored. Bowers asserts that the “educational goal is to widen the circle of decision makers to include all the groups affected by the decisions” (p. 149).

Bowers also argues that eco-justice can be applied to the style of teaching. Exemplifying the seating and standing positions of students and teachers, Bowers explains the power balance in the classroom. He states that a teacher who stands in front of the room and looks down rows of seated students conveys a message that the teacher is the source of control. In her research titled *Deep-seated Culture: Understanding Sitting*, Keifer-Boyd (1992) examines the cultural and social meanings of sitting. Keifer-Boyd (1992) states that positions of chairs and sittings are environmental forms of nonverbal communication reflecting culturally constructed perceptions of time and space. For instance, she states that “chairs aligned in a row facing front suggest an emphasis on authority and order” (Keifer-Boyd, 1992, p. 74). Keifer-Boyd (1992) argues that there is verbal communication among people and, also, nonverbal communication from environment to people. A work of Byoungsoo Choi titled *The Time of Chairs* (Figure 4.4) portrays the power relationships between people with power and people without power.
The value of equity in an ecological perspective also relates to the high- and low-status forms of knowledge. Bowers (2001) explains how Western science is considered high-status knowledge and maintains a human-centered perspective of nature in which the individual—rather than the community—is the basic social unit. Overemphasis on science and mathematics, and marginalization of art and music in the school curriculum are symptoms of what Sterling (2001) calls modern education. Who decides the high- and low-status of knowledge and forces to educate in the school curriculum? In the case of Korean educational settings, the Korean government (The Ministry of Science and Education) decides what to teach as important or less important knowledge for students’ lives. According to Orr (1992), sustainable living “will not come primarily from homogenized top-down approaches but from the careful adaptation of people in particular places” (Orr, 1992, p. 32).

7.3.2 Value of Harmony into Art Curriculum: Collaborative Group Work

According to United States art educators, Anderson and Milbrandt (2005), the roles of art are “to help us understand ourselves and others and to engage with one another in the process of making, receiving, and embracing important meanings that are carried by the elegance of aesthetic form” (p. 232). In their statement, Anderson and Milbrandt argue that school should help students learn how to value diversity and acquire the skills to live with others. In order to achieve harmonious ways of living, they claim that it is crucial to understand the relations with each other. From this point of view, emphasis on collaboration with and care for others in educational practices is crucial. A member of BAG and an art teacher in a high school in Seoul, Youngkyung Koo states the importance of students’ collaborative work in the classroom as follows:
[In the art curriculum of Korea] environmental education is to have artworks through interacting with natural materials. However, this kind of approach is limited to convey a message that controlled and managed nature is beautiful to my students—mostly born and raised in urban city, Seoul. … I believe that having students work as groups is crucial. In this era of smart phones, interaction and communication among students is getting scarce. But the group activities can bring students together and facilitate them to interact and engage with each other in the classroom.\(^\text{59}\) (Personal communication, August 1, 2009)

In her statement, Youngkyung Koo emphasizes the importance of collaboration among students through art in the classroom. In art education, for instance, having students get involved in various public art projects—such as a collaborative mural—based upon the place they live could be a good attempt to bring the value of harmony into art education. Engaging with a public art project, students could learn and understand better about the place, people, and society they are involved. Also, through working collaboratively with other people, students could learn and experience the value of togetherness.

Gaard (2009) claims that eco-pedagogy should include: (a) teaching ABOUT the social and natural environment, (b) teaching IN the social and natural environment, (c) teaching THROUGH the social and natural environment, (d) teaching the connections of sustainability, and (e) urgency. Emphasis on teaching *about, in, and through* social and natural environment is

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\(^{59}\) Translated into English from Korean: “[공교육]에서 환경미술교육은 자연의 소재를 통해 그걸 작품으로 승화시킨다는 건데, 도시에서 나고 든 아이들에게 이러한 접근은 그저 구매한 자연이 예쁘다는 라는 것 밖에는 전달 할 수 없어요. ...중요한 것은 아이들을 편안하게 공통체로 공동 프로젝트를 진행시키는 것이라 생각해요. 스마트폰 시대에 아이들끼리 점점 더 대화가 없어지고 있는데, 이러한 공동 프로젝트를 통해 아이들의 소통을 유도해야 한다고 생각합니다.”
based upon the value of harmony, which encompasses harmonious ways of living between human beings and nature as well as members of society. Emphasizing “harmony,” in which humanity flourishes, he argues that the value of harmony is based on acceptance and appreciation of an interrelationship between living things and their environment. Implementing collaborative group works in Korean art education can help students understand and learn values of cooperation, sharing, partnership, and coexistence in harmony.
CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP STUDY

8.1 Reflection on the Dissertation Problems

This dissertation explores how Korean contemporary environmental artist groups, BAG and KNAA, convey ecological values through their works. As an analytical lens, I applied an ecological perspective with values of contextuality, equity, and harmony. Based upon an axiology of these ideas, I examined how BAG’s and KNAA’s works and activities reflect and advocate those ecological values. Finally, I suggested three recommendations for Korean art curriculum to responsibly practice ecologically sustainable education. I analyzed nine art textbooks for secondary education in Korea to understand and grasp problems in the current art curriculum. The research questions that I posed for this dissertation are as follows:

(1) From an ecological perspective with values of contextuality, equity, and harmony, how might BAG’s and KNAA’s notions of ecology, environment, and sustainability, as well as their activities, be interpreted or critiqued?

(2) From an ecological perspective, how might (or might not) the current Korean art curriculum, focused on art education for secondary schools in Korea, reflect or advocate ecological values (contextuality, equity, and harmony)?

(3) In order for the Korean art curriculum to educate for ecological sustainability, what implications and suggestions might be drawn from the study of these two environmentally-focused art groups (BAG and KNAA) and from the analysis of current Korean art education?
To response to the first research question, I examined extensive literature about ecology. After reviewing various writings about ecology, I found that the definition of ecology has been expanded and broadened from the scientific term as a part of natural science to the epistemological term as a part of philosophy (Palmer & Birch, 2005). Today, the term ecology has become a kind of worldview that entails various values and perspectives. Many scholars argue that one of the most important assumptions of ecology is that every entity on Earth is interconnected (Bateson, 1972; Capra, 2002; Jardin, 2005). Hence, ecology not only focuses on finding out information or knowledge about individual subjects, but also, more importantly, tries to explore multilateral relationships. In this regard, Morton (2010) claims that ecology is about how to perceive the world, rather than what to know about the world. Having the notion of ecology as a perspective to understand the world, I defined an ecological perspective as a worldview that entails ecological values.

Based upon an axiology of contextuality, equity, and harmony, in chapters three, four, and five, I discussed several Korean contemporary artists that reflect and advocate each value. In Chapter Three, I discussed one of the Korean contemporary environmental artist groups, KEAO (Korean Environmental Art Organization), as environmental art that does not convey and carry ecological values through their works. KEAO’s works mostly represent typified landscapes of nature, and advocate modernist aesthetics such as formalism, which values visual forms of artworks rather than narrative or meanings embedded in the artworks. In the comparison to KNAA’s and BAG’s, KEAO’s conceptualization of ecology, environment, and sustainability is limited to the idea of environment as natural surroundings.

In Chapter Four, I discussed the Minjung Art movement as artworks that convey the value of equity through their works. Against the military governmental dictatorship of Korea in
the 1980s, Minjung artists tried to raise issues of injustice and inequity in Korean society. Through their artworks, Minjung Art placed more value on traditional culture of Korea rather than on Westernized culture, on traditional agriculture rather than on industrialization, and on empowerment of the Korean people rather than on an overpowering governmental regime. In terms of social and political issues that Minjung Art has dealt with, BAG’s works correlate to Minjung Art in that BAG raises their critical voices against governmental policies through their works.

In Chapter Five, I discussed works of globally well-known Korean contemporary artist Sooja Kim, as artworks that well reflect the value of harmony. Her series of artworks titled Bottari—which is a piece of fabric that women use to wrap and carry things with them—is generally interpreted and understood by Korean art critics as a feminist artwork that challenges devaluing and oppression of women’s work within patriarchal Korean society (Oh, 2002). However, based upon what Sooja Kim stated about her works in the lecture held at Pennsylvania State University in 2010, and her interviews with Bourriaud (a French curator) in 2003, I found that her works represent motherhood with the notions of caring, embracing, and loving rather than criticizing or fighting against Korean patriarchal societal value of hierarchy in households and institutions, competition, and formalities. I perceived these characteristics of Sooja Kim’s works as important aspects of the value of harmony.

I also compared works of KNAA and BAG from an ecological perspective. In Chapter Three, I discussed that KNAA and BAG reflect and advocate contextual values—which entail site-specificity and a place-based approach—in that they always focus on the exhibition site when they create their works, trying to use materials found in the exhibition site and dealing with local issues for the theme of their works. Even though their works have much in common, the
aspects of contextuality that each group reflects are different from each other. While KNAA focuses on physical and geological site-specificity, BAG brings social, cultural, and political aspects of the place. The sense of place of each group was also associated with the value of equity that each group reflects and advocates.

In Chapter Four, I discussed the value of equity that KNAA’s and BAG’s works imply. KNAA and BAG create artworks that convey equal rights of nature and human beings. They try not to make their works visually and physically dominant over surrounding environments. Additionally BAG’s works expand aspects of equity on a social and political level. Evoking issues of inhumane development of the exhibition site, Jara Island, by the Korean government through their artworks, BAG raises their critical voices about social and political issues of the place.

In Chapter Five, I discussed how KNAA and BAG reflect and advocate the value of harmony. Situating their works in the exhibition place as harmoniously as they can, they advocate and reflect the value of harmony. As Seunghyun Koh, a member of KNAA, states, KNAA and BAG encourage the audiences to look at the surrounding environment through their works. Their way of creating and exhibiting works is different from typical ways of exhibition, based upon modernist aesthetics. BAG in particular expands the value of harmony on the socio-cultural and political level and brings social and political issues about the place into their works, raising their critical voices through their works.

In order to answer the second research question in this study, I analyzed art textbooks used in secondary education in Korea. From my analysis, firstly, I found that the notion of environment embedded in the current Korean art curriculum is limited to physical and visual attributes of environment. From an ecological perspective as a worldview that entails ecological
values (contextuality, equity, and harmony), environment is not just about physical surroundings of human beings, but also includes social, cultural and political circumstances of the world. However, most activities included in many textbooks were focused on finding visual attributes of the physical environment—such as colors, shapes, and patterns—and applying those features to making artworks with natural materials.

In my analysis, secondly, I also found that the sense of place embedded in the current Korean art curriculum deemphasizes site-specific and unique local values of place, which is contextuality. Through providing images of beautiful nature, which are mostly well-known national and foreign places, emphasis on visual features deprives students of their personal and contextual connections to the local place.

Lastly, I found the aesthetics that current Korean art curriculum reflects and advocates are based upon formalist perspectives, which do not encompass ecological values such as contextuality, equity, and harmony. However, I also found that several activities included in textbooks would be a good starting point to achieve education for ecological sustainability.

In order to answer the third research question in this study, I proposed three suggestions for the current Korean art curriculum to responsibly practice ecologically sustainable art education based upon what I understood from the analysis of the. First, I proposed that Korean art curriculum apply an ecological perspective rather than the notion of environment as physical and geological surroundings. I found that the current Korean art curriculum conceptualizes and perceives the environment as a physical and geological place. With that perspective, environmental education in the current Korean art curriculum is limited to art-making using natural and recycled materials as isolated activity. For that reason, art education fails to involve
other valuable eco-pedagogical outcomes such as ecological stewardships and behavioral changes to ecological sustainability. BAG’s and KNAA’s works are products of artists’ endeavor to bring social, cultural, and political aspects of local values into their artworks. Applying an ecological perspective and dealing with artworks such as BAG’s and KNAA’s, I believe that Korean art curriculum can bring diverse aspects of ecological values into the classroom.

Second, I proposed that the Korean art curriculum place more value on local context and the importance of relative knowledge to students. The Korean educational system is centralized, meaning that the Korean government, the Ministry of Educational Science and Technology, decides what to teach and what not to teach in schools. From an ecological perspective, however, the valuable aesthetics of BAG’s and KNAA’s works are site-specific and place-based approach. Their works are meaningful as they exist in relation to the place. Providing and presenting images of landscapes in Korea and artworks done by foreign artists, which most of the students probably have never visited or looked at in their lives, the textbooks convey messages that there are certain beautiful environments outside of Korea, and well-known artworks by foreign artists are more valuable to know than local artists conveying site-specific values such as with the works of BAG and KNAA. This kind of approach fails to bring contextual values of an ecological perspective. In this regard, I suggest that Korean art curriculum acknowledge local context and be flexible to educate students according to that local context.

Third, I proposed that Korean art curriculum bring the value of equity and harmony through implementing a democratic decision-making process and using collaborative projects in the curriculum. Acknowledging that coexistence or cohabitation among all beings on Earth is one of the most important aspects of an ecological perspective, helping students understand the partnerships among human beings and other living beings is a critical goal of education.
Focusing on individual learning and competition among students, the current Korean art curriculum hardly reflects the values of equity and harmony. Martusewicz and Edmundson (2005) states that:

Teaching for ecojustice is based on the recognition that “to be human is to live engaging in a vast and complex system of life, and human well being depends on learning how to protect it.” (p. 71)

In their statement, Martusewicz and Edmundson emphasize that education to help students understand how they are associated with others and how to protect relationships is crucial in terms of teaching for eco-justice. In this regard, in order for Korean art curriculum to teach values of equity and harmony, I proposed that the Korean art curriculum include collaborative projects that connect classrooms to the communities in which students live.

### 8.2 Recommendations for Follow-up Study

This study has revealed the scope, form, or absence of ecological perspectives with values of contextuality, equity, and harmony in Korean environmental art groups focusing on BAG and KNAA. However, I must acknowledge that it does not include all the various understandings of environmental arts. However, I believe that the issues that I have discussed in this study provide depth of understandings of environmental art.

Also I acknowledge that viewers create their own interpretations about any artworks in their contexts, and I am aware that what the viewers see, feel, and learn from any of the artworks that I included in this study could vary. This study does not include those aspects, rather it focuses on what kinds of messages the artists want to convey to viewers from their artworks,
how those messages relate to an ecological perspective with values of contextuality, equity, and harmony; and what kinds of pedagogical applications for Korean art education can be found.

In addition, even though this study communicates valuable and sustainable approaches to Korean art education for the future, the study is limited in that it does not directly discuss the practical policy making needed to implement immediate curriculum changes, and actual art classroom practices. These questions are directions for follow-up research of design and implementation of ecological perspectives in Korean art education.
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APPENDIX

Interview Protocol

1. About artists’ background
   - Could you tell me your story about how you became interested in today’s environmental issues including sustainability?
   - What or who is the most influential event or person (Quotation? Text? Artwork?) that played the biggest role in forming your environmental concerns? Why and how?
   - How are environmental issues, awareness, concern, etc. infused in your career history as an artist?

2. About artwork
   - Could you tell me how you began to work with the theme of sustainability in your art making? If there have been any changes of your works of art, under the theme of sustainability, how have they been changed so far?
   - What important messages do you want to convey with your artworks? For what reasons do you present the messages in the ways you choose? What specific techniques do you use in your artwork to convey your environmental messages?
     - What is some of interesting feedback on notions of environment, ecology, or sustainability that you have had about your environmental artworks so far?

3. About group involvement
   - How did you get to know about this group? Could you tell me your story?
   - What other artists groups have you been involved in?
If the interviewee is involved in any other artist group

- What are the reasons that you have joined the groups?
- What do you think the differences are between them? What are each group’s strengths and weaknesses?
- How do you think the groups represent their notions of environment, ecology, and sustainability?

If the interviewee is only involved in only one group

- What other environmental artists groups do you know?
- Have you considered being involved in any other groups? If so, what are the reasons that you decided not to join them? How do those groups differ from this groups that you are involved in? What are each group’s strengths and weaknesses? How do you think the groups represent their notions of environment, ecology, and sustainability?

- What are some things that you like or dislike most about this group?
  - What are five things that you like most about the group?
  - What are five things that you dislike most about the group?

- How would you improve overall function (such as exhibitions, education programs, forums and so forth) of this group?

4. About the notion of ecology/environment

- What is your vision of a sustainable world?
- What do you think are the most urgent things that we as human beings should do? How do you think art and art education can play an important role?
VITA

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