

ARTIST NAME

KIM Jongku

PROJECT NAME

## *Large Iron Powder Carpet*

From *Iron Powder Landscape* to Carpet

2005–2026 · Cotton, iron powder, PVA glue, water · 390 × 810 cm



### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

*Large Iron Powder Carpet* was first made in Seoul in 2005 and unfolded again at the Monnaie de Paris in 2026. Its initial production took place on site in the exhibition space, corresponding to the work's actual scale.

The starting point for this work can be traced to a grinding project undertaken during the artist's 2002–2003 residency at P.S.1 in New York. While continuously grinding a solid iron bar, the artist was forced to stop the project after an unexpected accident and returned to Seoul. Later, while preparing a report exhibition for the Korean Culture and Arts Foundation, the artist spread a piece of unbleached cotton fabric across the exhibition floor. Iron powder left over from grinding pieces of solid iron was scattered across it, and words that had remained within were written out as if being expelled into the world. The movements of the writing body and the process by which the iron powder fell and dispersed were recorded in their entirety on the fabric. Here, the iron powder is not merely a material but a substance separated from iron through labor, as well as a trace of that labor.

The work, initially placed on the floor, was later mounted on a wooden frame and hung vertically, exhibited together with pieces of solid iron under the title *Iron Powder Landscape*. The writing performed on the floor and the irregularly scattered iron powder were transformed within the vertical plane into a single landscape. Yet this landscape is less a representation of nature than a record composed of repetitive labor—the grinding of iron—and the residue generated through that process. In 2008, the work was presented to audiences as a wall-mounted piece at One and J. Gallery in Korea. It then remained stored in the studio for many years.

In 2026, the artist spread out the unbleached cotton fabric once again and added new writing to it. French and Latin, Russian and Swahili, Chinese characters and Hangul were placed among the earlier traces. Questions

directed toward the present world now overlap with the words that had flowed from the artist's inner life at the time of the work's original production. Iron is a material that has sustained civilization and industry, but it is also a material that has made weapons and war possible. The act of grinding iron does not abstractly symbolize this duality; rather, it reveals that the material forming the foundation of civilization is processed through labor, leaving residue and loss in its wake. The iron powder is a minute residue left after the production and use of iron, while also evoking the bodily labor involved in handling the material and the history of violence. By adding the language of the present to these traces, the 2026 work invites us to reread the relationship between iron and violence, labor and memory.

The site of the Monnaie de Paris is also connected to a childhood memory of the artist. When playing with a magnet to pick iron powder out of the soil, adults would say, "You're picking out money." The childhood phrase that called iron powder money is revived here, at a place that has produced coins. Iron powder is not actual currency, but this memory recalls the fact that both iron powder and money become connected to value through processes of extraction and processing, labor and accumulation. At the mint, currency is produced as a unit of exchange guaranteed by the state, whereas the iron powder in the work is a material left outside that system of value. As the two materials meet in one place, questions arise about what is recognized as valuable and what kinds of labor and histories support that value.

The work previously exhibited as *Iron Powder Landscape* is presented in this exhibition under the title *Large Iron Powder Carpet*. New writing from 2026 has been added to the unbleached cotton fabric bearing the actions of 2005, extending the work's date of production to 2005–2026. This carpet holds together the moment when the iron powder was first scattered, the years it spent in the studio, and the artist's renewed intervention in Paris. The iron powder is the residue of labor performed on iron, while the language written upon it connects personal memory with the violence of civilization and the order of value organized by currency. The work exists not as a completed product of the past but as an ongoing record, continually layered over time by material and place, labor and language, memory and value.

PRESENTED BY

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