

Humor and Emptiness

[Fantastic Remnant] PT&Critic: 2016 Reunion Byun Sang-hwan, Han hwangsu
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Fine dust and yellow dust is all over Seoul which has made this spring gray instead of green. Because of the volatile weather, the hospital is full of patients. Not only the weather but also news on the television make us enrage. Me-too movement which disclose sexual violence are updated every day and the former president is placed under arrest. The emptiness, and feeling of melancholy is wide-spread among people. The weight of life we all share in the state of ruins is those. Young people, including me, are frustrated and drifting in the reality that it is difficult to prepare a house to live in even if we do not spend any money for 20 years and save all we earn. In order to survive, one has to prove one's ability by constantly competing with others. We dream of escaping in a vicious circle, but it seems impossible to do so. The 'romance' that our parents' generation has talked about has disappeared long ago in the struggle of 'survival' that seems not to be solved forever. In this society, how do the two artists try to 'make art'?

As an audience, I have felt two characteristics from these artworks. One is a humorous tendency and the other is a feeling of emptiness. Byun Sang-hwan's <Five senses> is a work that takes the form of a color table made to test color-blindness and color weakness. He used the green waterproof urethane used for waterproofing the roof of the house as a paint. It showed the delicate color difference by using the waterproof urethane made by four domestic distributors. <Bi Mi Meo Moo Gi> is also a piece of graphic resources that can be found in a table made for eyesight test, enlarged or cut out a part of it, and moved to the canvas by using stencil technique. The 'paint' used in this work is also waterproof urethane. Not using the traditional art materials such as oil paintings and acrylics, Byun borrowed images that are used for concrete purpose in daily life.

In this exhibition, Byun who has painted waterproof urethane on a large object made of floral foam, concentrates more on the characteristics of the material on a flat surface. Byun breaks down boundaries such as artistic and non-artistic, poplart culture and high culture, and focuses on the materiality. <Live rust>, a preview of the upcoming series, shows the attitude of completely eliminating elements other than material characteristics. Byun uses geometric patterns on paper by using anticorrosive paint. Even this image was made by H beams which used in building projects. He used H beams as a stamp in this painting. The combination of the H beam and the anticorrosive paint gives a laugh, but at the same time gives a kind of emptiness. As an audience, one's attitude toward the

work will change after knowing the production methods and the materials used.

The work that maximized the humorous elements in this exhibition is <I mean> by Han Hwangsu. This video work, which has a running time of 2 minutes and 30 seconds, is based on various animation images. "I do not know where to go, but ... I was fine even if I was trapped. As long as you are together." Text is played with the image, which is written by the artist himself, and the artist directly recorded the voice and recorded it on the image. These texts are like rap lyrics and every phrase rhymes. This video humorously conveys the serious aspirations of the artist. In this work, Han reveals narcissistic aspect and shows an optimistic attitude. He does not lose his laughter even in this gloomy reality. Another work by Han-, <I handed the baton to me> is a set-up work that re-arranges still images taken from three different movies. Each image was arranged to match colors and shapes to create a imaginary scene in a wall. Still-cut images were taken from three different films "Eternal Sunshine", "Under Water" and "Dunkirk" that share the theme of "escape". Rather than having a clear sense of purpose or critical attitude, it recreates the images extracted subjectively from the saturation world with amusing attitude.

People who visit the contemporary art space face difficulties in finding meaning from the artist's works nowadays. Oftentimes artists do not make art works which contain direct messages that are clearly readable. In this exhibition, Byun and Han constantly deconstruct the relationship between the signifier and the signified, distracting the characteristic. Artist's attitude trying not to lose humor, brings an experience to discover a different world even for a short period of time.