

A Crowd in the Digital Era, A Lonely Aside by the Audience

Kim Jiyeon(Exhibition Team Manager of Gana Art Center)

Upon entering the venue, viewers meet photographs featuring figures with a pure, lucid, yet pale complexion like that of a well made bisque dolls. Their eyes are dazzled, showing square lumps of light that are none other than monitors. They wander about in the sea of the Internet and are engrossed in dramas, films, and other worlds of monitors. As if opening a box containing this gleaming light in darkness, the light from the monitors brilliantly reflects their faces. This light may bring 'intelligent knowledge' to their brains. The artists produced and installed this work after making same-sized photographs with the screen images seen by the viewers. It appears like a metaphor for modern humans who live their everyday lives under artificial lights. Through this tool, they question the subtle, abstruse boundary between images and reality by creating a multi-layered structure that represents the video images of figures toward the world in photographs.

In the next space, there are three screens featuring 108 seated viewers. A small stage is seen before those screens. The stage is designed to lead viewers to step forward and view the screens. One, two, or three people appear on the screens in a full scale and talk about their stories. They are all making their own comments, not in conversation with one another. They sometimes seem to reply to other people or to have heated discussions with multiple counterparts. Each person, however, is actually narrating in different space and time. Their narrating scenes are edited and reconstructed by the artists. The viewers behind each close-up figure, functioning as an audience as well as a performer, are seated in lines following the same motion.

They show various reactions such as simply paying attention to what each viewer-cum-performer says, looking over towards something far away, or clapping their hands together. These viewers, who seem to show their response in the same space and time, are virtually edited and reconstructed after the artists videotaped each one separately. The images of the viewers who acted in a different space-time are intentionally utilized by the artists and presented as if they are under the same roof through the technical control and manipulation of the artists. It means that

each fragment is joined in the same space-time, thereby creating a virtual reality.

An audience is a group of people who intentionally gather at a specific place to see something and the ways of their behavior are usually stipulated by social customs. Such rules include clapping or applauding after the end of a performance and not making any noise or moving while viewing a performance. The behaviors of these virtual audiences are closely adjusted and governed through the artists' act of synthesis and editing. This situation implies the possibility of the Panopticon in the digital era.

A synthesis of the audiences is a symbolic apparatus to account for the aspects of a crowd or the masses in a contemporary society governed by a completely different paradigm. The synthesis that makes them believe in existent space and relations juxtaposes each figure in a different context. The 108 viewers perform the same act with their neighboring people without realizing other existence. Their actions are governed by something without realizing their own actions.

The aspects of these viewers show the fact that a crowd is no longer a large group of people who have gathered in a physical plaza or physically close space with the emergence of new communication vehicles like the Internet. In today's society each person influences others in a different manner. Unlike their previous work that addresses a crowd, the group artists Mioon focus their discussion on a crowd's obviously different way of existence in the digital media era and the boundary between reality and illusion within it.

The audience is a passive object in the situation of a play. An aside is a secret comment that a performer in a play makes to the audience, which the other performers who move in the same space-time are not able to know. This is a special theatrical vehicle for communication only with the audience who are outside the stage. In this work, however, those muttering an aside are spectators-cum-performers. Through this aside, the audience seems to become the leading role in a play. In this work, however, the audience appearing in the screens together with each spectator-cum-performer is unable to hear this aside. This is why they are merely virtual images. The real audience who came here to appreciate this work and are guided to stand on a stage before the screens can hear this aside. There was initially a communication gap between the spectators-cum-performers and the audience in the screens. The aside by each spectator-cum-performer can only be conveyed to the outside or real audiences.

Another interesting factor in this work is the content of this aside. They reply to many questions after supposing that they are artists. Although not real artists, they think and act like real artists and imagine and fabricate real situations. At this moment, the stage is a fictitious space or a virtual reality.

The audiences who act out the role of the artists are asked by many questions including some fundamental question like their attitude as the artists and the questions all artists have probably thought about or discussed such as their worries of the general public's understanding of art, the influence of art on society, and their satisfaction with life as the artists. The content of their reply is plausible. This implicitly shows all kinds of incidents and event in their daily lives are also based on universality like those of common people.

The reverse of this work seems to be effective for other artists. The artists, who appreciate this work in the process of self-confirmation that all other artists like me have the same worries and situations, are mostly embarrassed when realizing that spectators-cum-performers are all not true artists. This work explores the true and false images of artists spread in society through the comments of non-artists and at last probably reaches an awful conclusion that there is no gap between the universal image of art and its actual substance.

An aside supposes that no communication is available among people even if they are in the same space-time. The one who says a lonely aside is the artist himself or herself, not the viewers, tirelessly exploring the possibility of communication even in this situation of absurdity.