

Archive

Ahn, KyungHwa (Independent Curator)

Before and after World War I, works of montaging objects, images and texts first appeared in art history. Aleksandre Rodchenko's photographs and John Heartfeild's photomontages convey political messages directly. In contrast, a work of Kurt Schwitters' <Merzbau,1923> emits an air of vague, poetic nostalgia by the use of privately collected materials. Schwitters bases his work on the hypothesis of dialectics that a synthesis of fragments evolve into a more advanced unity. Schwitters' railroad ticket is a record and reminiscence of his travel.

Ahn Doo-Jin's Imaquark is an individual element like Schwitter's railroad ticket, leaf and food coupon . The word imaquark is a compound of image and quark, referring to the smallest unit of an image. As if in science matter and life is formed by the basic units, Ahn Doo-jin incorporates imaquarks to create his work.

Ahn Doo-Jin's <The Weird Boundary,2004> is not a work that demands lots of efforts for the viewer to grasp its implications. This is why in the work each imagery, namely each imaquark conveys plenty of narratives. The artist realizes that the imagery is a mediator of communication and thus does not provide any detailed explanations. He unfolds mixed, complicated and chaotic narratives after visualizing the poetically ideal and divine in a fairy tale-like, realistic or fantastic manner.

The mass of images remains fragmented yet linked as the one-and-the same like a dream in the same context. Unfamiliar images and scenes are like rhizomes that are creeping rootstalks spreading in different forms. An image is an independent individual and simultaneously a mediator to connect other images and the mass of such images shapes a network.

<The Observer,2004> is made up of paintings, drawings, photographs, objects and architectural structures. While <The Weird Boundary,2004> on a wall can be seen at a glance, <The Observe,2004> can be partly experienced even if the viewer enters it. This is a work of art demanding an active involvement of the spectator.

Ahn Doo-Jin's work, which forms a sculptural space with found and created objects big and small, resembles those of Thomas Hirschhorn and Sarah Sze. Hirschhorn's structure, a massive assemblage of mass culture and fashion related objects, appears to be overwhelming in its scale. In Sarah Sze's work, a laborious patchwork of readymades and her own sculptural objects, a space itself is metamorphosed into a site-specific sculpture. An aggregate of objects shares some similarities with Sarah Sze's space sculpture in that its implications are symbolic and ambiguous. In Sze's space, however, a poetic, restrained resonance is felt while Ahn's installation is in a plethora of fantasies in disorderly, humorous undertones.

The world of fantasies Ahn conceived is derived from his amusement and interest in work itself. The artist feels pleasure while seeking his own fantasy and imagination, as seen in <My Donkey,2004> and <Help Us!!!,2004> which present his dream as a child.

Since the <Heavenly Shadow,2005> Ahn's work shows different tendencies from his previous pieces. He remains more humorous and conveys plenty of narratives, lending his images a sacred quality. Ahn juxtaposes everyday objects and supernatural icons in an unfamiliar space. One of <Heavenly Shadow, 2005> murals appropriates a mode of religious painting. However, its world differs from that of a religious picture. The Absolute wrapped in aura looks like a monotonous cartoon character and the flower rain falls down on the layer of a colorful world.

<Chapel Pink,2005> and a ceiling painting in the venue of Brain Factory gallery are apparently spiced up with religious undertones. The basilica cathedral blended with the imagery of songhwang-dang (shrine of village guardian deity) is a combination of the sublime chapel and shallow, kitschy and comic pink.

Since World War II, a group of abstract expressionists focused primarily on doing enormous color-field painting as the means to provoke sublime beauty. Mark Rothko expected the viewer to have an experience similar to something religious before his monochrome painting "Rothko Chapel". He wished to bring about fundamental human feelings regarding tragedy, destiny and transcendence.

The place where Ahn's ceiling painting is set is not so spacious to evoke a grandiose feeling. While viewing the painting done in obangsaek (Obang stands for five directions; east, west, south, north, and center, and colors - saek in Korean - such as blue, white, red, black, and yellow, symbolize each direction), audiences feel like they are in a religious place. This space, however, is still dominated by a worldly atmosphere represented by pink. The colliding meaning of the sublime and pink is extended and exists in the boundaries between reality and imagination.

Ahn Doo-Jin's imagquark has evolved into a grandiose structure. Intermingled with fantasy, amusement and sublime beauty, it should have something to be added or subtracted. Through embracing the tradition of the past, it is expected the artist creates the new sublime and enhance his imaquark.