

Juissance of the Gaze

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Desiring the Subject

The subject of today is fragmented in the name of "diversity" and yet hopes to be "the subject of the real" at all times. The subject of today may be a sort of "machine-subject" that organizes its life with the networking in the globalized world. He continues to desire to be the subject. It creates a kind of quandary. Of course, all of us are the subjects with various individualities. But at the same time, we live so much similar lives as in a unitary flock. In addition, reality exists as a mere "change" in our hopes of future. Such experience, diverse and yet unified, floating in time just from the present to the future gives the very trouble. Of course, the subjects of today do not necessarily seek to have a certain total prospect, but we need to question if the image of totality already exists in a simply changed appearance.

What would be the way we enjoy this doubt about "the subject". At least the enjoyment is possible in a kind of reflection, which can draw a prospect of critical future out of the present. Today art repeats creating a financial bubble. It evidently demonstrates the fault of capitalistic system by exhibiting the dysfunctional capital as it is. It becomes just the waste. However, we truly see out of such waste, the symptoms of depression of our reality, appearance of machinelike life, and the time floating experience. And, we can enjoy the incessant game of "interpellation of the subject" not from a certain exceptional utopian setup, but from these troubles.

Now we will find one of the examples. It is about the possibility to write a collective narrative that is somewhat congregated in a group from the imaginary, visionary world of the segmented people of today. In the spectacular society of today, the work of art that expresses the inner world of the segmented individuals may open up a new narrative based on personal fantasy of our time. If so, at least, can't it be possible to find allegories of future narrative from every single contemporary work of art?

The Subject Floating in the Society of Spectacle

Yongju Ha's paintings in the exhibition titled of *Prepared Camouflaged* deal with the personal insights and individuality like other young artists do lately. He portrays images of the new subject in the contemporary life. He addresses his issues by questioning that each individual expresses and communicates in the field of "society". Especially in this exhibition, the artist focuses on how to depict the reality of "society" rather than the images of individuals. All paintings show combating people who are aggressively dealing with the social interpellation which seems like a yoke, even a pitfall. They depict the desperate and yet gauche survival games played by the subjects who are constantly being interpellated in the society.

Great Camouflage is the masterpiece in demonstrating the field of society that is intense and imperfect, changes constantly, and interpellates the individuals violently. It shows the individual subjects who are inseparably related to such a flawed society. The painting employs the relatively complicated structure. And thus it invites the viewers to take the time to observe and achieves a narrative effect to make imaginary stories. *Great Camouflage* is the piece in which we can (re)discover allegoric matters toward a new narrative, in addition to the composition and subject matters.

The vast pictorial space withdraws drastically into the background, featuring various activities of the subjects in a huge group. They are a-subjects who fail in the social interpellation, and at the same time they are people who are assimilated as part of "pattern" in the battle field of society, illuminating failure and success in the interpellation as the subject of reality. Including all these phenomena, the background color creates an unsettling, even gloomy and anxious atmosphere in general. In the meantime, colorful camouflage patterns in the background enhance the spectacular quality in the whole image.

In here no one has a personality, he is isolated and at the same time he exists in a group. Without exception everyone wears a mask, which takes his personality away. The artist seems to describe today's man as mask (pattern) human. Therefore, rather than being symbolized as a specific subject, men in general are expressed as an endlessly floating and slipping signifier, never anchored at a specific sign or symbolic meaning.

To say it in a word, it is a mechanical look of "the contemporary subject" who is floating, never granted a firm identity. Human beings appearing like a pattern, pattern-men, or mask-human shows the interpellation of the subject in the contemporary context. They all can be a kind of a-subjects. Everywhere in the painting, we can observe the subject of today, as an a-subject living parasitic in the society of spectacle.

The Gaze Everywhere

One of the most interesting iconographies in the painting is a figure from behind who is most emphasized in rendering. The figure is the person who observes the entire panorama. "The person of rear view" is staring directly at what is going on. But in fact, we cannot find his eyes nowhere in the exhibition. Even his front face shown in *Desire of the Raw* is "the masked subject." He is a being of "mask-face" with the mask and the face indivisible. He has a human form, but he is also a kind of apparition which is composed of a mask and a black suit jacket. In addition, the apparitional back of the head leads us as the viewers into the pictorial space.

Such eyeless phantom is something that continuously follows our gaze, and makes our gaze stop at a certain place at all times, and takes it away from the place simultaneously. He guides our gaze and at the same time disturbs it. That is to say, he is a kind of screen placed in front of our eyes, and at the same time he watches our gaze closely at all times. In some ways, he is the mask itself which we put on. It can be our faces as in the "mask-face" in *Desire of the Raw*. He shows himself only from behind and looks directly at the whole pictorial world that is the whole society. He is the gaze everywhere. He is indeed the gaze itself. He is a mask-human, pattern, or the mask itself everywhere in the exhibition. By masks, through masks, without eyes, as apparitions, they stare each other. Their communication is based on anxiety continuously mistrusting each other. It is the survival battle field itself in between the screens.

The occasion of stare is the moment when our gaze stops for a short while. However, the moment of "stare" may exist as a kind of "the contemporary subject himself" rather than as an anamorphosis opposite to the normal image. Everything that looks normal

functions anamorphic latently without exception. That is to say, all exchanges of gaze are inundated with excessive gaze that disturbs the symmetry of the exchange. Indeed, how will we enjoy the moment of the stare? The moment of stare is an unfamiliar occasion of reflection. It can be a moment of sublimation of reality. However, it can be said that such moment of reflection is immanent in the subject-other rather than results from the other. The moment, therefore, is not given but revealed. It is just like we comprehend that the "camouflage" patterns hide something but at the same time reveal themselves. Like this, the machinery, prosthetic, camouflage and masked-face subjects of today live in the same world where the subject continues to be deconstructed as a-subject, machine-subject, other-subject, etc. For that reason, the reflection of today is not possible through the approach of the other, which method is distant as in the criticism, expatriation, resistance, opposition, etc from the absolute being or any new exceptional being. That is impossible. Today the moment of reflection to presage the future can occur as revelation just like the moment of stare.

The Moments of the Drives Weaving New Narratives

Since 90s when Korea entered a new era of freedom until now, new types of fantasy and bizarre cult films, literature and art have emerged tremendously dealing with personal imaginations and fantasies. A large number of those emerging artists in this movement of who were drawn to the fantasy and personal imaginations were young. Meanwhile, we observe a new group of art pieces that take on a kind of realistic approach for criticism lately. The approach is not realism in an old sense. Based on personal fantasy world, these realistic works illustrate the imaginary world just like reality in such a powerful and concrete depiction style. Additionally, we notice a certain unspecified narrative elements in there as well. I examine it as symptoms of unyielding desire. I would like to look into these minute changes as a sort of after-postmodernism phenomenon. I want to define it as a symptom of strong desire to weave a new collective narrative through the inner reflection in the personal fantasy world. I want to pay considerable attention to its moment of enjoyment. These symptoms are unique mostly based on personal sensibilities, have a narrative of fantasy and yet reconstruct

the reality with a critical perspective and remain open to a new narrative of future. It is by positive enjoyment of the moment of gaze everywhere that the symptoms are sublimated. In this sense, the paintings in this exhibition by Yongju Ha, a young Korean painter, function as allegories to construct a narrative in the future context. His work provides a place for the drive of new desire. The place for drive is where the desires of "the contemporary subject" show symptoms in the field of "society". Every element of anxiety in our society, the symptoms of pervasive angst and depression, new attempts to overcome them and the hopes for future inherent in the attempts will suggest a certain prospect in the experience of everyday sublimation and from the moment of "reflection", or "gaze" in the place for drive. It is truly the moment to have a prospect toward a collective narrative, which is revealed from the inside of individuals and from the personal fantasies.