

# An Artist's Hand - Yoon Kiun's Art

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The main motif of Yoon Kiun's work is the hand. While the five fingers of the left hand show diverse gestures, the right hand gripping a thin brush depicts the hand's various expressions and gestures. In his previous work the artist represented his self confession through self-portraits showing instability, isolation, and a lack of confidence. Since then, his face transformed into his friend's in a circle, losing concrete form by the confused use of dots and lines. He again embarked on exploring form through association and inference. He seems to discover this thread again by exploring his left hand with his right.

## **Gestures, escaping from conventional icons**

A gesture is a movement that you make with a part of your body to express your intentions or emotion. Gestures have long been a means for linguistic expression. Especially in Renaissance and Baroque art gestures formed a complete communication system through the inference of their meaning and intention. Gestures have had diverse roles and uses since ancient times. Gestures, often found in the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti, and Michelangelo da Carravaggio, were a means of communication between the Creator and man, and a conveyer of life, or divinity. Leonardo da Vinci wrote in his *On Painting* that gestures are important icons to express human spirit and intention. Conventionalized, schematized gestures, such as a gesture as a metaphor for confidence and sublimity discovered in Albrecht Durer's *Praying Hands* and a gesture as a slogan and demagogy in the art of Socialist Realism, have assumed a role in conveying messages and symbols.

In Yoon Kiun's work hands are used as new gestures separate from any pictorial narrative or conventional meaning. In *Let's Wash Hands* an act of washing hands as a preventive measure against swine flu is likened to an expression of affection and physical contact between lovers. In *Hand Gestures* representing subtle changes of facial expression with 12 kinds of open and clenched hands, the hand is used as a symbol to describe complex psychology. In *012345* --- hand gestures clash with existing icons, changing diversely through inference. The message a symbol typically has is replaced with a different form or removed.

## **Inference, Overlap and Modification of Form**

A gesture without meaning is nothing but an act or a visual form. A group of gestures featuring

diverse movements of the fingers is called 'barracuda', a species of tropical fish that swims in group. The shapes of a tiger, swine, a rabbit, a dog, or cattle are delineated through the gathering or dispersing of barracudas varying in color. Our eyes may anticipate their metamorphosis again into abstract forms. This overlap and arrangement of similar hand gestures is also found in his previous work. In the *Movement* series dots shaping hieroglyphics, faces, or other characters, spread like prayer beads. His friends' faces variously depicted in circles in the same way represent the positive, while in *Talk* visualizing the same theme in hand gestures, the discord and violence of one-sided talk is symbolically represented with rough hand gestures that look like they are insulting each other.

In Yoon's work hands as a reduced form of the body convey a sense of touch and hearing through their visual shape. In *The Hand Is Hot* the overlap of various hand gestures that appear startled as if crying Ouch, it's hot! take on the form of a larger hand. Like a paradox appearing in one of M.C. Escher's prints, this work blurs the boundary between part and whole through an infinite repetition and cycle of similar shapes. The visualization of the aural sense stands out in *Echo and Chorus*. In these works the artist creates the illusion that opening and gripping hands vibrate by sounds through the overlap of their gestures depicted on two pieces of thin Korean mulberry paper and the application of different shades of color.

### **Signs, absence of communication**

Through the motif of the hand Yoon symbolizes a world filled with conflicts and contradictions and the longing for new ideals. In *Spear and Shield* scissors grasping innumerable rocks imply a paradoxical form within which contradictions are contained. In *Where*, brimming with the outcries of hand gestures spreading in one direction, grasping, attacking, shouting slogans and insults, the artist shows a cycle of irrationalities like a Mobius strip. In *Oscillation* composed of swirling hands whose middle finger indicates a curse word, the artist symbolically represents the absence of communication caused by one-sided talk. The world of disorder where signs of communication confront and collide, escaping from the net of their original meanings shows the discrepancy between our body symbolized with the hand (the signifier) and our spirit inherent in the body (the signified).

Yoon's labor-intensive paintings focusing on the portrayal of the hand as part of the body, and created through tidy line delineation and color application lends extended meaning to the conventional icon of a hand gesture. This work uses the body as a sign, capturing its similarity with other objects, and removing or adding text to the imagery. Yoon's accomplishment is an outgrowth of his experiments to pursue new form after creating innumerable practice pieces.

