

## On the Boundary of Becoming a Bird

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Huh Yunhee's life is about scattering the traces of her body and soul in all places as if to scrape out a part of her flesh. Like a bird, a rock, a cloud, a leaf, or the ocean...The shape of the traces, like her own self leaves behind other traces of illusions everywhere. The traces of all actions that take place at a fleeting moment allow her to write a panoramic personal history by revealing aesthetic discoveries from there-outside, the world, and the virtual-to here-inside, the womb, base, and reality. I assume that 'Diary Drawing'-poetry and records, and drawings being respectively written and made here and there-is the base for the aesthetic discoveries. She dreams of longing for and challenging new dimensions, standing on the boundaries of frames (the retina of cognition) that she has divided. In a world of multiple viewpoints from wherever she stands, I wish to retrace the memory of her past 14 years.

It is solitude itself to make a journey of life in the world over 'there' alone. As she remains isolated in the garden and misses her homeland, she asks herself a fundamental question about where she comes from, and then writes a drawing diary while sitting blankly in a hut, looking at a mirror and listening to the sound from inside. She has an unquenchable thirst for someone to talk to, but the solitary life goes on as the residue image of her mother mirrored at the moon night scatters away across the waves which is the very root of life. Such lonely tightrope-walking has made her stand on her own two feet, holding closely to just a bundle of dreams. Nine years later, in the world over 'here', Huh Yunhee listens to the sounds of her memory from that period and takes flight, traveling back and forth from within to the world outside. Sowing, planting cabbages and trees, on a boat, and counting the starry nights. The diary draws out the memory of those days to mind. Life continues to heal the pain, the wound, and the suffering of those times.

(\*This passage is made up of the titles of her works listed in her catalogues from 1996 to 2007.)

I am writing this essay on her works between October of 2009 and 2008, when five years has passed since she returned from Germany where she had spent nine years. In less than a

year, there were three exhibitions at Sarubia (2008.11.19-12.19), Soma Drawing Center (2009.2.19-3.15), and Ga Gallery (2009.9.18-10.8). The titles of the three exhibitions were 'Traces of Days', 'Thought of a Leaf', and 'Taming', respectively. She tried different methods in terms of style and format at each exhibition. She did drawings with charcoals on the entire space of a cemented wall. She produced drawings on a white-cubical wall and on paper, and revealed her diary of leaves. She did oil paintings on canvas, too.

The source of the motifs dealing with those three different spaces stems from over 'there (Germany)' where she made artistic progress for nine years. That's why there were similarities despite some differences in the style, depending on the space, paper, and canvas where she had to unfold her thoughts. The works in the world over 'there' were about a gush of desire sorrowfully yearning for 'something' in a secluded island whereas those in the world over 'here (homeland)' were about embracing and calming such spouts of desire yet observing the world. This shows a change in her attitude. She used to interpret her own stories subjectively based on the existential weight of solitude. But the last exhibition 'Taming' dreams about a world of coexistence where she is making a connection between 'you' and 'me'. She wants to tame herself in encountering with the outer world, holds out her hands and talks to the world. She longs to see the world where the earth and the ocean meet, the boat floats into a house, and people entwined with each other continuously build their relationships.

Her way of 'relationship building' in the future is clearly revealed by the phase she scribbled down on the wall of her studio on June 23, 2009, "Body leads thoughts", rather than by the way she reads or interprets her objects. In other words, we are taught to read visual arts like we read a language, or make an assessment by confining them only to vision among the five senses. There are not only seeing, touching, hearing, smelling, and tasting, but also extrasensory perception and intuition. Is there any way to feel the arts with our whole body? Huh Yunhee's solitary yet enthusiastic approach to life in foreign places was meant to expand such sensory scope. She managed to gain the command of such sensory languages. She used to live on a bed of roses, but she matured to overcome all the pains and wounds by nurturing persistence typical of wild weeds. In that sense, such a process is interpreted as building a bridge that links 'there' to 'here' beyond the realm of senses, and collecting an enormous amount of episodes in between. The process is regarded as a philosophical thinking of body, which means that she does not attempt to merely interpret images but tries to search for the hidden objects (images plus phenomenon), feels and draws them with her body.

She expressed the space of Sarubia with this very idea of the body. There were two artists who interacted with the walls of Sarubia, Yi Soonjoo, and Huh Yunhee. While Lee interpreted her inner world from multiple points of view without covering the entire space, Huh created an effect of being immersed in feelings by covering the entire space except the ceiling with the charcoal drawings. Huh left her thoughts at the basement of Sarubia for a month and then conveyed the traces of the days into drawings. She pulled out the traces of thoughts and the bodily experiences that asked fundamental questions about life over 'there', and started to turn the appropriate language of imageries into drawings on the whole wall. To tell the truth, what caught my eyes were not the images of the traces she had spout out on the walls, but the charcoal dusts piling up everyday and the trails of her footsteps. By the time her unintended 'philosophy of emptiness' completed its mission as traces on the floor and towards the end of the exhibition, the footsteps of countless people made the traces vanish in silence. But since the traces linger about in my memory the images on all of the walls still shine with the pure lasting smell of charcoals.

Two months later, the exhibition 'Thoughts of a Leaf' was revealed at Soma Drawing Center. The images and stories about leaves that she was planning to show at Sarubia turned up as a portfolio on a table, and the lingering traces of her question about life during the show at Sarubia was translated into a mural drawing on the main white wall. The remaining wall was filled with a series of drawings, 'Island', and 'Flame'.

There is a wide gap and disparity between the two spaces, Sarubia where the traces of time stay untouched, and the white-cubical space of Soma. It is the difference between a metaphorical, non-analytical space and a pale rational space, a workable text and a text readable only like a story book, a refusal to elevate an art work and an enhancement to a work of art, a raw and wild feeling and the refined feeling of the color white. The history of the past exhibitions shows that the two spaces stand in stark contrast. That's why Huh needed to dedicate over a month to draw out the space as a workable text to express her work at Sarubia.

Only six months later, she held an exhibition titled 'Taming' at Ga Gallery. This time, oil paintings on canvas and paper replaced the mural drawings on the wall. It was not an easy decision. Huh has been known to draw directly on a white wall and a white sheet of paper at a fast pace without the slightest hesitation. Can the potential to express herself through paintings be realized? Is it worth saying farewell to the traces that disappear on the wall and its lingering images remembered as drawings? She decided to take that risk. How can she

reconcile the conflicting properties: charcoals and brushes, achromatic colors and multiple colors, and naturalness and unnaturalness? Of course, she had prior experience with paintings as a continuation of her drawings during the days in Germany, but the colors then were monotonous. She was fearful of the now unfamiliar medium which she had discarded for a long time, but decided to test her willpower to express herself through paintings as to demonstrate the motif in the work 'Taming'. The important factors applied to her new creations included the materials and colors with relative properties like the mind and actions that lean toward the outside from within, and the courage and will to overcome the sense of time and speed. The primary goal was to restore colors. By choosing colors that she had hardly used before, she created pictorial illusions and depth that were missing in the blank spaces of her drawings, and aroused profound feelings that welled up beneath the colors. Particularly, 'Journey' proves that she successfully resolved the boundaries between painting and drawing. After having spent all kinds of varying thoughts for the past 14 years, the work allows others to sense her feeling of composure as she came closer and deeper into her own boundless world.

Huh Yunhee relates and connects well with people although she may not seem to be on the surface. It is probably because of her innocent passion and her attitude towards others. She places the thoughts of others before her own. Combined with confidence and relentlessness, simultaneously she resolves the layers of a drawing (image+ poetry+ phenomenon) and connects to a painting to build a relationship. In the future to resolve the layers of a painting (the visible and the structural), shouldn't her subjective thoughts and passions, with all the inner and outer related images and phenomenon first take root in the ground and then build a new linguistic structure of images on it? To go beyond the repetitive behaviors within a recognizable frame work, shouldn't she head towards a multiple structured layer of imagery? Just as a bird in the air with an expanded view, can she from a phenomenological stand point like an unconscious song approach the relationship between a mountain and the ocean, the ocean and the sky, the sky and the city, the city and people, people and home, home and the earth, the earth and the soul?