

## **Won Seoung-won, Our Pippi Longstocking Who believes that the Artist is a Loyal Friend**

Boseul Shin (Curator, Total Museum of Contemporary Art)

Here is a child.

The child believes that her mom who died young has become an angel and is watching over her through a small hole in the heaven.

The child also firmly believes that her dad who went missing at sea has now become the king of cannibals in a desert island and is building a ship in order to fetch her.

The child lives with a horse and a monkey.

The child is a loyal friend who would do anything for Tommy and Annika.

With her red hair in tight braids, her face covered with freckles, and her legs in unmatched striped stockings,

She is an eternal friend of ours, tomboy Pippi, Pippi Longstocking.

As I did in my childhood, I still like Pippi Longstocking very much. I liked Pippi, the captain of 'urchins who rock the cottage, in and out, up and down, hither and thither, jumping and bouncing' more than I liked the wild rose girl, Candy, who would not cry even when she was lonely and sad. Pippi is a lonely kid living with a horse and a monkey, but without her mom and dad. Rather than cowering in loneliness, however, Pippi energetically goes around causing trouble, and opens up the great world of adventure for prudish and nice model students, Tommy and Annika, as a reliable friend who would do anything for them. Won Seoung-won is like Pippi. She is small and skinny, but shows off her muscles, bragging how strong she is; she is outgoing and energetic, but unexpectedly timid and vulnerable; above all, she wishes to be a good friend to the people around her. Won Seoung-won really is like Pippi.

### <Dreamroom>

Won Seoung-won dreamed of a wide open, spacious room while idling in a small, 8 square meter room. One day she discovers that her friends have the same dream and decides to present a dozen of them with their dream rooms. First, she presented to herself a room of tropical forests after experiencing the cold weather of Germany; to Lee Beikyung, who could not swim but adored the world beneath the sea, a room full of undersea scenery; to Ileana and Pabiang, who wished to live among primitive people in nature pounding the musical instruments of natives, a room of rock cliffs and waterfalls and; to her Taiwanese friend, Zushun, who would always play a practical joke by drawing animal bodies on the faces of her friends, a zoo. It took her four years to present twelve of her friends with rooms that they dearly dreamed of. One might wonder how special such a work of digital integration could be in this digital era. However, what is attractive in the works of Won Seoung-won is not the finite digital composition technique classified as so-called 'nogada (manual labor),' but the way or attitude with which she approaches people. She approaches the world as if she were an insect collector by talking with her friends and meticulously recording what they want in the dream space for each of the main characters. It would be easy and convenient for her to select the images to her taste by searching for data on the Internet, but she comes out to the world instead, sweating in the heat of summer and shivering from the cold in the dead of winter. And she presses the camera shutter toward the world with her friends in mind. Each time the shutter moves, the world that her friends dreamed of emerges little by little. Until the final digital work is completed, the dream room is yet to be made. The magician or the witch in a fairy tale makes a dream come true by casting a spell or swinging a magic wand, but Won Seoung-won approaches her dream space slowly and deliberately by ceaselessly editing and modifying her works. While the fantasy world is being made, the master of the dream room lives in Won Seoung-won's mind, nested in her head until the final save button is pushed at the first interview. I suddenly wonder how a person could endure such a long period of time if she were not really enjoying the absurd process of thinking of the 'master' from the moment she opens her eyes in the morning till returning to bed. Where does this absurd tenacity come from? Perhaps Won Seoung-won has already realized that the

relationship among people is not so easy and simple as to be ended by a tap on the 'delete' key and that our lives are so profound and sticky as to adhere to people for good. This is the joy of watching <Dreamroom>: There are not only plausible images made from flawless digital editing without a trace of composite work, but also the conversations the artist and her friends had in the process of making their dream spaces, time spent in creating the dream of her friends. There is also the pleasure of perceiving the layers of immense time running beneath a plane, and the delight of finding various stories hidden in the works, with emotions like friendship permeating throughout the spaces of fantasy woven by time.

### **<Tomorrow>**

Won Seoung-won, who wriggled in an 8 square meter room and made the dream rooms of her friends, this time comes out with the "tomorrows" of her friends.

Due to the similarities between its production techniques and those used in <Dreamroom>, those who have seen <Dreamroom> might, at first sight, take <Tomorrow> to be a repetition and hence find it somewhat disappointing. However, a more careful look will reveal that Won Seoung-won's <Tomorrow> takes on added depth in comparison to her earlier works, while still in line with them. Especially remarkable is the attitude with which she understands and deals with time. Her 'tomorrow' is not simply 'the day after today.' Her tomorrow is formed through the accumulation of the traces of yesterday, and the coexistence of yesterday and today.

Won Sung-won inserted small episodes into the concept of the future, which was spun off from the past and the present. Episodes, compounded in the various relationships such as 'the woman with rosy cheeks like an apple and the man who loves smelt fishing,' 'A husband who likes Mt. Bukhan and a wife who likes Mt. Seorak,' 'a village for abandoned dogs,' 'Goyang Studio 2006-2007 artists who were like family,' make up an organic story and make the audience concentrate on the story told by each image, rather than consume the visual image itself. In this sense, we might say that her photographs look like a three dimensional picture book which unfolds endless new spaces and times beneath the surface, rather than the flat surface of photography. That is

the reason people often forget that they are looking at a flat plane and indulge themselves in the stories of her photographs.

As such, the work of Won Seung-won is interesting and comfortable. Viewing her work, there is no reason to grimace whatsoever. Her work does not even attempt to be serious. But that does not mean it is insignificant. It could not be insignificant once she insisted on gathering the desired images in the actual world. Of course, one might embellish Won Seung-won's work with grand and pretentious terminologies such as 'illusion,' 'fantasy,' or 'reality' and 'ideal.' Such terminologies, however, might be rather cumbersome to her work. It might be better to think of her work as a world created by a friend who wholeheartedly listens to our stories in this tough and demanding world. Won Seung-won, like Pippi who wishes to see the bright smile of Annika, anticipates her audience standing in front of her works with a big wide grin even when she is getting tired of all these.