

The dead-end, isolated report about desires

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When I visited Bongcheondong studio, I could not help but notice a sculpture of an old man in the corner. The sculpture, relatively bigger than ones previously produced, were not yet painted and partially incomplete. The old man, stepping forward slightly, had deep wrinkles on his face. Xooang Choi told me that the sculpture is of his father.

Next to the old man's sculpture was a pair of widely spread wings in the making that will be fixed on to the old man's back. It was not complete either. Feathers were not what formed the wings, hands cut off at the wrist. Realistic hands that seem to be trembling were endowed with dynamic cruelty. It was nothing like the one of an angel depicted in the Annunciation. It seemed to be proving the absence of excellence. It was more human and realistic, even when compared to the wings of Icarus. The hands are not sufficient to take him off the ground. It could never be a flying device. Wings that cannot fly are absurd. The absurdity becomes extreme when you realize that each cut off hand symbolizes memories of real incidents. They are there for the remembrance of times flight failed. It is a temporal device, not a flight device. The artist said that it is related to the remorse of his father.

The wings signify aspirations of the artist towards the achievements and dreams of his father. At the same time, it is an abysmal allegory hidden in between his unsuccessful dreams and conditions for his failures that needed to be successful. It is also the poetry of despair that could not arrive to the destination knowing the values of the effort exerted to escape the abyss.

The portrait of the being that has wings of time formed with cut off hands instead of feathers are very Kafkian. Each hand is like a record of moments that tormented K so that he could not be successful and so that he could not enter *The Castle*. The wings are K's diary containing records of his failed attempts to enter the castle.

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It seems that it is the underlying mood of his art. Although the extent may vary, his works mostly handle despair and frustration. They vomit blood, drown, beg or are trashed in a bin. Death, crime and suicide.... Bowels pour out through the opening of a sliced abdomen and a head of an obese man is shattered to pieces by a gunshot. They are all failures in different settings without an exception. Their exaggerated forms and dramatic gestures tell the story of many tragedies in life. A man and a woman form a body in *The One* and their relationship is pathologic. Their relationship forms artificial and incomplete stitches. The relationship carries a deep wound on its own and is mutant like. It is because the suture is an extension of a break up.

Tragedies in some of them are relatively toned down. The depth of tragedy in an ordinary woman,

adolescent boy and girl are quite shallow. Despite that fact, it is not like they are living in completely different worlds. Children are still crying and their facial expressions may not be heavy but they are grey and neutral. Although they are wearing popular name brand underwear, they are certainly not jolly characters of fairy tales.

Because we have no clear understanding of their pain, the situations are more absurd. Their situations sometimes reach disastrous level but we don't quite know why. There are no descriptions in any of the situations. The only clear thing is that they are all powerless victims. They all reached a dead end and the exit is nowhere to be found. They all reached their limit as small beings. They remind me of a phrase in *Castle* by Kafka.

"In the village where the air of the hometown is nowhere to be tasted, people are suffocated by the feeling of the settlement, they are helplessly held prisoners of desires and they can't do anything but be lost."

The size and proportion of a body are important elements in Xooang Choi's works. First of all, aesthetics of adequate small size and scale must be perceived. The size is about adjusting radical ideas of texts and because of that, observers are more distanced from the subject. Despite the reality of the sculptures, observers can approach the art as audiences. Audiences can approach the art like Gulliver did when he visited the land of the pigmies. The art can be appreciated with ease. But as soon as you observe them closely, the observation becomes fatal confusion. The result of re-creating the situation with distinguished skills substantially reduces the effect of distance. The extreme reality intimidates audiences. Observers end up realizing that the sculptures are people that are always around themselves. The world of the artist is structured with tensions between surreal scales and realistic depictions, and aesthetic distance and the absence of distance.

There is an important aesthetic module that adjusts the nuance of Xooang Choi's work. It could be funny or outrageous. If I must specify, they are expressed with exaggerated proportions such as oversized hands or heads. Sometimes these are visualized by subtle facial expressions caused by a long brow. The penis of a boy is over erected and the breasts of an adolescence girl are too big for her age. The beggar's hands are too big. These elements sometimes act as methods to buffer the extent of tragedies. Of course, as you can see from *The Big Headed Fellow*, distortions are sometimes overly applied so that they seem overly mutated.

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Ks of Xooang Choi could not enter the castle either. That is more than something that is modern. Their despair is too great to assume that they are simply disappointed! The ultimate depth is closely related to the limit all human beings have. Of course, this question is quite faded. To Kafka, unlimited and universal problems in relation to *The Castle* are never mentioned. As a realist, his ability is about anatomizing situations. It is different from archeologists finding the

origins of things. Even so, all phenomena are reflections of origins. Great disappointments will lead to greater desires. Even if there is nothing specific to desire for, desires for serenity and sublimation always exist in the human heart. It is up to observers to find out the depth of desire for truths and invisible helping hands. You won't need to try too hard because the text of the artist is quite clear.