

Thoughts on Certain Ruins

In waste products they recognize the face that the world of things turns directly and solely to them. In using these things they do not so much imitate the works of adults as bring together, in the artifact produced in play, materials of widely differing kinds in a new, intuitive relationship. Children thus produce their own small world of things within the greater one.

Walter Benjamin, "Construction Site," *One-Way Street*

Imperfect empty ground and imperfect ruins. In Gyungsu An's paintings, ruins and empty grounds work as different names for 'imperfectness,' which means the landscape the artist takes as his subject of depiction are in the stage of the infinite 'middle' in between the start and end. It also means that the state of paintings the artist tries to achieve is directed towards a certain degree of imperfectness. Gyungsu An's paintings take Bogwang-dong as their point of departure. The area is a place in which the artist took many walks when he had an exhibition at a space called ccuull pool in the winter of 2012. For him, the area is not a place for living but a place for 'walking.' There, he sees the coexistence of people migrated from other places, worn out objects that are closer to waste, old buildings, and construction sites as landscapes with another possibilities. He might have captured these complex and confusing scenes while taking walks, a practice where one's body and gaze move together.

Gyungsu An brings the traces of time that has stood on empty grounds: different elements such as buildings along the street, construction sites, roadside trees, walls and floors in the interior of buildings. However, the actual sites that the artist has seen while he was walking become more and more omitted during the creation process of his paintings. In a more accurate sense, the artist omits the whole by depicting sections of buildings, ruins of construction sites, and walls and floors. Composed of arrangements of different parts, his paintings leave the perspective to see the whole as an imperfect attempt. In his works, fragmented landscapes are arranged in different places as pieces of a puzzle. Instead, the artist amplifies the accumulation of time and the imperfect atmosphere within such accumulation in terms of senses. There seems to be intentional 'neglect' in which the artist distances himself from the actual

landscape that he has encountered. In this sense, one might argue: Gyungso An's practice maintains the warmth in his paintings by neglecting the objects depicted on canvases to a certain degree. In an undefinable atmosphere that is neither warm nor cold, the artist draws empty grounds, ruins, and newly developed lands to coexist in paintings.

An does not treat landscape as an object of representation and illusion; his paintings disturb viewers' encounter with the sensibility of empty grounds or ruins. The white dots and dim marks of darkness in the interior of buildings are certain symptoms that artificial constructions give off right before they become obsolete, like a fossil. The landscape in the artist's paintings lets viewers only sense the soggy air and humid temperature while concealing or avoiding the reality of the street. The situation of construction sites where the ruins of buildings and grass coexist thus becomes a sole landscape that is detached from the noise of the street and the effect of its surrounding order.

a bunker portrays a common parking space of a building. Composed of two pieces of paintings, the work presents an interesting composition that bears difference and similarity at the same time. The artist's gaze does not enter the buildings and takes a view on the 'crack' of buildings that he has discovered while working along the street. He depicts them from outside: it is a landscape that is portrayed from the outside. The artist intuitively senses that there are unexpected things in the inside but does not bring them to outside. In *a bunker*, the artist surveys the landscape from the outside, from the red bricks and white walls to blue windows. The structures of parking lots which the artist represents in a similar composition bear difference in their textures yet share a common element: the existence of colors that run down both inside and outside of buildings. In the paintings, the colors are the only element that fills up the picture as if it was air that could go inside the landscape and move to any place. In *an empty lot* series and *forest*, there are also colors that run down from the top to bottom, sometimes with less presence, other times overwhelming the landscape. To a certain degree, it might be possible to say that the running colors imitate the state of atmosphere such as rain or snow, which affects the mood of time and space: they are not an artificial addition; they exist as traces of neglected time, or as an element that amplifies the dampness of paintings. Then, what is the subject that has created a

picture filled with a sense of dampness? It can be a painter, or it can be everyone that makes and sees roadside trees, sewerage, empty grounds and all the other objects. In An's paintings, the place of empty grounds is passed onto the ruins of left-out wares, nails, and disposed objects. Among them, the scene in which grass grows through the construction fence reveals the hidden material of landscape that shows itself when one pays a close attention to it. Such material manifests as marks of green dot that can be left only by the artist's brush stroke.

An's paintings starts at Bogwang-dong, then disperses through other empty grounds. But isn't also that an empty ground, meaning a place that is vacant, is actually impossible illusion? In the artist's works, empty grounds are scattered around many places that are not far from us. *Lightning* with the interior lightings, *stairway* with stained and old stairway, and *our flag* with a construction fence in a rainbow rice cake pattern are different expressions of an 'empty ground' if compared to the artist's other paintings. An leaves out many sections of a picture, depicting fragmented miniatures of a landscape. Through this, the place of an ordinary landscape raises the microscopic world embedded within it above the surface. The artist's landscape of 'the interior' draws what was once a 'background' of other things in front of one's eyes. However, the move is not dramatic nor spectacle. Rather, An's paintings reveal his will to share his fluctuating 'play' of relations that he might have felt. *a brick road*, a painting depicting a pattern of paving blocs, is an example of such characteristics. In the work, the dense surface of paving blocs that are carved with omitted traces of time exists as an instant of a landscape that changes and moves itself.

The landscapes depicted by Gyungso An take the leap among disparate materials rather indifferently. The question is that of the meaning of 'becoming a landscape.' Here, the notion of 'becoming' is a word that appears in the artist's own writing. In his writing, An added a condition of 'incomplete(ness)' before the phrase of 'becoming a landscape.' In the paintings, the incomplete places themselves construct the time that becomes a landscape within them. Is he asking about how the unexpected and the common and trifling landscape coexist? The contrasting sensibilities, such as dirtiness in cleanness, uneasiness within tranquility, and sharp lighting within dampness, remain in silence as if they were traces and remain left after a storm of heterogeneous objects. The artist does not pursue landscape as a

background that emphasizes something else but follow the scene of emptiness, which is 'the whole' as itself. Such emptiness is necessarily directed towards incompleteness. And this incompleteness might be certain anticipation for him not to give up watching, conveying, and rearranging the landscape of here and now. Moreover, it might be a promise for himself as a painter.

The landscape depicted by Gyungso An has been constantly changing. He has gone through an *artificial nature*(solo exhibition, 2008) and a *barricade*(solo exhibition, 2012). Now, he performs his paintings in a perspective of 'becoming a landscape.' Frequently appearing in the works in the current exhibition, the walls and floors with minute cracks are traces of An's thought on landscape: the artist excavates the repeated properties of landscape by depicting the streets he walked and the landscape he captures and is reminded of. As he paints the landscape with marks of time, An sees different conditions of landscape that are shaped by light and darkness changing in every hour.