

shade tree

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The theme that Byungho Lee consistently present in his body of works is ‘change and transmutation.’ The prominent feature of Lee’s previous works was the physical change devised by air compressor and silicon, a material which is flexible in its form, were prominent in the former works. But what is emphasized in the works presented in the current exhibition is a transition towards a psychological or spiritual change. In addition, different from the past body of works where each work maintained the same form of transforming sculpture with different narratives, the current exhibition takes a specific space of ‘an old house’ as its background and integrates each work into one narrative. The form of works also became more diverse, including photography and installation on top of silicon sculpture.

At a first glance, such a change seems to be an attempt to move away from the previous works that have been created under a consistent theme. But it is indeed an attempt to provide more detailed explanation on the theme of ‘change,’ which has been the main focus of Lee’s works, as well as a more concentrated and active attempt to illustrate the very ‘change’ that he wants to present. To realize such an attempt, the artist created casings and frames for his silicon works, using translucent glass. With each work, he created a drama where his works appear as theatrical characters residing in an old house.

The translucent glass used in Lee’s work is presupposed as a window of an old house, playing a crucial role in the transition from a physical change to a spiritual change. The figure that is housed in a translucent glass casing is in existence at the same time in non-existence. On the moment when one faces the work, one recognizes the object framed in the translucent glass. As one tries to look at it more closer, however, it merely becomes more blurry. Clearly an existential and physical existence, the object is blurred by a window, which is a product of the past, and deviates beyond reality. The change takes a step forward from an actual movement produced by mechanical apparatus to a psychological and spiritual movement, which is perceived differently by each viewer.

The translucent glass works as a medium that brings change in the object, reminding the existence of ‘air’ in the artist’s former sculpture works that were made of silicon. The

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artist's silicon sculpture is recognized by its physical change as a mass, which is brought by its own change of repeated contraction and expansion. However, it is indeed the air in the silicon sculpture that works as substance that brings such change. Lee focused not on the visible physical change, but on the spiritual existence hidden beneath the surface. The use of translucent glass has enabled a change of focus from the physical existence to spiritual dimension, exposing the reality of the invisible force that he has tried to present in the former works but has been screened by the very physical movements of his sculptures. Then it is very efficient in its own way, for it draws meanings implied in the previous works, rather than merely expanding the artist's working method.

In the current exhibition, Byungho Lee brings the venue for his exhibition deep into his works. Formerly an old two-story house, the gallery once again becomes an old house and bring characters that once lived or likely resided in the house in life. The exhibition itself is a fictional drama created by the artist himself, and every work in the exhibition appears as a person once stayed at the house. The works do not represent people lived the same period in one place but different people who lived their own times in different periods in the place. Such conflicting coexistence of time can be understood as an accommodation of 'change' in a different form. Different from the previous exhibitions where each work presented change in itself and existed independently, the current exhibition fuses the past with the present, indicating an additional attempt to richly present the process or the journey of change that has been accumulated over a long period of time.

Without the artist's explanation that 'people from the past and the present appear with no sense of reality (in my works),' there are no clues to notice that everything in the exhibition, including a figure of a woman repeating the youth and death, an old doll that contorts itself into an horrific form, a student wearing an old school uniform and a man in an obscure figure, is from different time periods. There even arises a worry that it might be a one-sided communication that one has to take the fictional drama created by the artist as a mere drama.

In conclusion, however, the works presented in the current exhibition possess power that makes one to return to one's own past or to a memory through a fictional drama created by the artist. Through silicon sculptures created with great efforts over a long period of time, translucent glass casings made using old windows, translucent glass in photo frames and somebody that becomes blurry in the very frames, viewers also create their own dramas.

Factual reality, such as an identity of a person or a doll in a photograph, does not matter at this point. Having gone through a transition to a spiritual dimension, Byungho Lee's work draws meanings that are accumulated through one's memory or experience, and generate s different meanings to each viewer. The drama created by the artist, which certainly contains a story but does not provide any of it, finally becomes each viewer's own drama.