

In 2001, Kim Soo Young depicted the RWI building, a famous architecture, in her painting. At that time, the architectural piece was a mere detail of her painting, whose main subject was a modern city scene. However, through this painting, Kim became interested in painting buildings that have been designed by famous architects – especially experimenting with the expansion of *parts* of those buildings and issuing them as the *subjects* of her work. After moving to Seoul, Korea Kim continued her study of parts of buildings with buildings located in Korea. Today, she is interested in buildings with symmetrical compositions – specifically, discovering the composition of ‘two sides’ and ‘both sides’ of such buildings.

Looking back at the path she has taken with her art, we can see that she has focused on the act of ‘painting’ itself, rather than an event. In her paintings, there is no story; there is not even an interesting element. What lies in front of Kim and her viewers is a ‘building’ – specifically, but not interestingly, a *picture* of a ‘building’. She’s been doing this work for over ten years. Does she know what she is up to? Although she has let us know what she is doing through occasional exhibitions, her intentions are not easily explained. In today’s world, her work seems so slow that it is almost invisible. In order to continue working in this way, she must have some kind of objective. I question what that objective is, as it is not easily discernible.

Her subjects are buildings – specifically, parts of buildings and their compositions and/or color. In this exhibition, we can see that the parts of the buildings that she has depicted are those that have symmetrical compositions and contrasting effects. The symmetry that she captured in her paintings consists of having two sides subordinate to the center or a hierarchical relationship between the top and down or left and right, with the center line as the axis. From the works shown in this exhibition, we can see two characteristics: One group of works deal with ‘both sides’ (except for one piece, they are apartment complexes, Jong-geun-dang, the old Children’s Center); another group of works deal with ‘two sides’, with a line in the middle and buildings on either side. More simply put, the both-sided works are those that have placed the corner of a building at the center of the canvas to look like the canvas is folded in half side ways, and the two-sided works are those that divide the canvas into two equal sides and place two buildings on each side. The two pictures seem like they simply divide the canvas in two, but this is not the case. In the ‘both side’ works, she used the contrast between colors and light to create a dynamic effect for otherwise simple symmetrical paintings. In the case of ‘two side’ works, the two buildings on the left and the right were painted from different distances. Instead of expressing the spatial aspects of the two buildings as they are, she attempted to emphasize their flatness on a two-dimensional canvas by comparing and contrasting the colors and light. This may be her way of reminding others that any and all paintings drawn on canvas can only be two-dimensional. It is conspicuous that Kim had to experiment with countless thoughts, calculations, juxtapositions and methodologies to arrive at today’s exhibition. Rather than calculating such variables in her head, she must have arrived at this conscious decision only through countless cases of trial and error and

comparison and contrast. Especially, in the case of the ‘both side’ works, she seems to have played with countless versions of differing contrast effects that are created through the divided canvas. I assume that doing so may have given her even more questions and possibilities to resolve as an artist. Compared to that, the ‘two sides’ works are an extension of the work that she had been doing and, therefore, are familiar scenes to her. What really captured my interest the most was the theme of ‘balance’ in the collection of ‘both side’ building paintings. The unique composition found in her works is a departure from general landscape paintings or figure paintings, and ‘balance’ seems to be the one of the most important subjects. If this subject of balance is not based on variety and unity or change and harmony, it could easily be rendered *dull*. However, Kim has driven a unique solution in her ‘both sides’ works to avoid such potential dullness: As she depicts the theme of conventionality of buildings through repeating the general structural concepts of buildings, Kim brings out the individual characteristics of the subject building by instilling its unique color and relationship with its atmospheric lighting in her paintings. Perhaps Kim’s curiosity lies in analyzing, and further balancing, themes of conventionality and individuality her subject buildings carry. Noting Kim’s efforts, time and studies devoted to her curiosity in her ‘double sides’ and ‘two sides’ works, I want to ask her a new question: *Is the building the subject of your painting?*

Painting a building

Paint a building

Painting a part of a building

Paint a part of a building

Painting a straight line

Paint a straight line

Painting a vertical line

Paint a vertical line

Painting a vertical line and a straight line

Paint a vertical line and a straight line

Painting the gap between two vertical, parallel lines

Paint the gap between two vertical, parallel lines

Painting the invisible vanishing point

Paint the invisible vanishing point

Painting the angle between a straight line and another straight line

Paint the angle between a straight line and another straight line

Painting the visible direction from the angle between a straight line and another straight line

Paint the visible direction from the angle between a straight line and another straight line

Painting a plane

Paint a plane

Painting a colored plane

Paint a colored plane

Painting the relationship between color and a plane

Paint the relationship between color and a plane

Painting the texture of paint

Paint the texture of paint

Painting the subject

Paint the subject.

She paints because she paints the subject.

What question does Kim ask herself while creating her works? Without Kim answering my question, I attempted to formulate an answer of my own with the elements found in her works. As I do so, I have come to focus on her attitude towards her painting as an artist. Kim has repeated the two acts of 'painting' and 'to paint' daily and habitually for over a decade. In these acts, Kim principally, yet plainly, confronts her buildings. Perhaps Kim's chief interest as an artist is not painting her subject, but embracing the moment and the ability to create an image from pigments she paints. May be Kim repeats her paintings of buildings over and over again to recapture such transitory, yet most basic, elements of painting. If so, I think I understand her a little better. Kim's attitude is like that of a master potter in front of white porcelain. The master knows how to handle clay better than anyone else. However, the master does not take his clay lightly. Even when the clay is out of his hands, finding its own color and self-emitting its hue in the kiln, the master wholeheartedly, even tensely, attends his mind to the clay. Kim practices similar kind of attitude to her subjects and mediums. Through the physical act of painting everyday, Kim has developed a unique set of methodology to approach her subject. However, her methodology is not easily revealed to others because Kim's unique mindset and methodology as an artist occupies the present progressive tense. In other words, she is *unfinished* with her study of buildings.

Kim paints buildings again today. I ask her once more: What *is* the subject in your painting?