

Embodiment : Existing anywhere yet nowhere

Beyond the layers of dimension, the interlocking existence

Aesthetics of Properties of Matter and Dimension

By adopting "dots" and "lines" extracted by the symbolized pixels, the minimum unit of digital image as main motifs, artist J. Park develops his artistic world embracing a variety of media, including paintings, sculptures, installations and media arts. In recent years, he does not confine himself to a specific media but gives one unified title to all his works. The titles of his works constitute "Encoding" of 2015, "Maze" of 2016 and "Embodiment", meaning "realization, archetype or incarnation" of 2017 which are exposed in this exhibition.¹⁾ This not only manifests the artist's artistic dispositions with consistent pursuit of the issue of "properties of matter and dimension", but also connotes his intention of which that consistency should be interpreted from diverse perspectives. In effect, the properties of matter represented through dots and lines in the works entitled "embodiment" are literally "embodied" in the changing aspect of crossing the two-dimensional surface, the three-dimensional objects and the virtual reality of the four-dimensional space, and reveal the concrete truth or express their sense of existence as an essential "archetype." In other words, the properties of matter revealed in the previous titles corresponded to some encoded indecipherable symbols or the ambiguous substances wandering about the four-dimensional maze, while the works of "embodiment" seem to provide a space of a more direct experience with respect to the concrete existence.

Artist J. Park started to explore the essence of "properties of matter and dimension" from his college days, when he was in his early 20s. Through connecting the landscape of the rails installed in the wall with the ironwork objects of the same shape as those of the rails as well as the spread timbers and pebbles, somewhat simple yet interesting works, the artist intended to show the cyclical connectivity between the materials existing in the flat surface and solid figures and the 2D and 3D substances. There were some decisive moments which triggered his exploration of this

1) The artist's' previous works were mainly entitled "Layers" and "Dimensions."

character, in particular, his arts were based on the local characteristics of Daegu, in which he was raised and studied arts. The art world of Daegu not only actively accepted minimalism since the 1970s, but also lively exchanged with Mono-ha artists as a referent agreeing with the environment in which the materials used to transcend the properties of matter. The Japanese artist Suga Kishio is one of the artists who maintains the special relationship with J. Park. According to Suga, the materials such as transparent plastic papers, tracing papers and tapes handled by J. Park lack significant properties of matter and they are substantial beings as "a form of betweenness" which are not completely transmitted to the substantiality by themselves, but are compatible as a recognition entity structuring the relative and reactive relations.²⁾ Another momentum traces back to the time he was studying at Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Paris from 1991 to 1996. The artist's advising professor Claude Vialat is one of the representative artists who led the Support-Surface movement, and he recognized the canvas as an objet and not as a mere support propping up the image of the surface of canvas of which the frame was eliminated, utterly integrating it into the real three-dimensional space.³⁾

Influenced by this, the exploration of properties and dimension still remains valid in the works of J. Park, applying the digital images of dots and lines which appear to be used in earnest since 2008. The properties of matter treated by the artist J. Park deviate from the materials existing isolatedly in the 2D or 3D world and expand toward non-materials in the 4D virtual space and create the cyclical relations. They evolve while forming the aspect embodying the concurrent existence in the three-dimensional space where the works meet the visitors appreciating the works. The "layers" composed of dots and lines on the canvas still maintain the flatness while integrating into the 3D world at the same time. They are exactly like the active materials which elevate, grow and multiply by themselves.

Expansion of the formative language through the digital media

2) Suga Kishio, "Putting in the halfway", *Layers, Dimensions: Park Jongkyu, 1994-2009*, Gallery Shilla, 2009, p. 29-30.

3) Apart from canvas, Vialat also uses a variety of supports with the 2D characteristics such as tarpaulins, tents, parasols and umbrellas as well as silk and velvet.

The digital paintings and installation works of objets in the art works of J. Park based on dots and lines, which now became the symbolic leitmotif of properties of matter, are the particular images symbolized by being transformed into pixels, the minimum unit of computer graphic images. This demonstrates that the artist is sensitive to the use of the latest technological elements for applying them in his arts. In effect, throughout the history of art, many cases can be found in that the progress of the contemporary science and technology influenced arts contributing to the epoch-making expansion of formative language.

For instance, in the Renaissance Age, in which people were absorbed in the idea of faithfully conveying the real world seen from the human eyes into the two-dimensional canvas, it was possible to perfectly "represent" the third dimensionality of the objects seen through one vanishing point in the reduced form, from the perspective of the artist based on the mathematical perspective invented in those times. The impressionist artists of the ninth century escaped from the obsession of the realistic representation due to the invention of photography and they applied the intrinsic techniques of photography to paintings by capturing the light and the instantaneity or introducing the audacious composition. Moreover, in the early 20th century, influenced by chronophotography invented by Etienne-Jules Marey, the special photographic techniques allowing the capture of the instantaneously changing movement, it was possible for futurists or artist like Marcel Duchamp to express the fourth dimensionality of the movement and time in the flat surface of canvas, the static space. Even after that, the appearance of new media reflecting science and technology such as video art of Paik Nam June countlessly influenced arts. However, the development of computer which started to be popularized since the end of the 1980s contributes to not only giving powerful influences on the overall society but also enriching and diversifying the new formative language through digital media arts and experience arts based on Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality.

The reason why artist J. Park cannot be defined as a typical digital media artist is that he actively accepts these new media while sticking to the traditional art realm such as paintings and sculptures. The abstract images of dots and lines symbolized through the program operation to blur the recognition of the original images by adopting the latest compound of

computer and digital technology inhere in non-materiality and temporality within the virtual space and are explicitly embodied as concrete materials such as acrylic paint on the canvas surface or Plexiglas. The complex media work of which line-shaped iron objects, contact papers of line paintings and LED monitor are connected altogether is considered quite an interesting work representing the new technology. In particular, this work reminds us of his rail installation work made in his college days, and it simultaneously links the 2D, 3D and 4D worlds in a cyclical manner. The three-dimensional iron objet was elaborately cut based on the processing technology of water jet, the high-pressure water abrasive substance. The work of images projected from the LED monitor is the images filmed by the drone camera, showing the images of the angles hard to be captured by us in reality.

The dots and lines as a formative language are the most fundamental elements of paintings, nonetheless, for J. Park, they give a special ontological meaning and are used as the concept of "noise" or "error." Though the original semantic interpretation of "noise" and "error" is dissimilar, artist J. Park considers them as an identical concept. He believes that, through the act of "choosing" the "excluded" noise as a worthless being, the value conversion is brought as "the essence" and not as "the error" and the binary frame such as "right and wrong" or "true or false" is destroyed. The shape of the chosen noise coincides with the location in which the dots and lines are put. As soon as the noise and error excluded in the marginal area for being secondary and unnecessary are chosen, the strained tension constituted by the orderly elements which were considered the essence is now totally disrupted.⁴⁾ Therefore, the noise created by J. Park does not stay in one place and follow the order of time and space, but stays in the impure, unstable and chaotic state, in other words, the state of increased "entropy." Entropy refers to the physical quantity of energy calculated by disorder or chaos in the second law of thermodynamics in physics, and all natural phenomena of the universe goes through the transition from order to disorder, in other words, the state of increased entropy. The reduction of entropy means the fall of energy, namely, the state of nought or extinction.⁵⁾ For this reason, the

4) Sung Shin-young, Interview with Park Jongkyu, on September 9 of 2017, at the artist's atelier

5) Rudolf Arnheim, *Entropy and Art: An Essay on Disorder and Order*, Translated by Oh Yong-rok (Jeonpa Gwanhaksa, 2017), p. 21-29. The writer explains "entropy", the second law of thermodynamics of physics, to apply to arts. According to him, the modernist arts of the 20th century are characterized by the

noise of J. Park represented in dots and lines, the state of energy emission by reducing the tension caused by the formation of order in the middle of disorder is considered an independent property of matter, differentiated from the original image and reveals its dynamics through obtaining vitality and sense of existence like a living organism. It seems that, not only the works of complex media we saw before but also the noise items such as the flat surface of canvas, objets installed on the wall or floor and the imaginary images of the video monitor, even though they originated from the media choice and work method of the artist, do not settle in the order of time and space of one particular work, but shift the dimension through the spontaneous energy obtained from disorder and metamorphose from materials into non-materials and later into materials again. They connote the potential power conveying from the 2D to the 3D space, from the 3D to the 4D space or from the 4D to the 2D space again.

Linking the parallel existence between the virtual reality and reality

The dots and lines dealt by J. Park have the abstract features with simple and purified forms, randomly obtained through computer despite the loss of concrete configuration and meaning. However, this does not mean that the connection link with the real world is completely removed. They sometimes remind us of minimalism due to their minimized simplicity and repetitive placement, however, they differentiate from minimalism which totally rules out the reference of reality and inquires into the property of things with self-referentiality. It is because the starting point of the works of artist J. Park is the real world and it is concluded as another reality again. In other words, regardless of the fact whether we can recognize the original real image of the artist or not, his works start from a concrete image of the real world and go through the computer operation process until they open a new reality as a different form of the figures of dots and lines. Here, it seems that signifié of the original image disappears and they only exist as signifiant of the artistic context, but they create a new signifié

contrast of tendency between the pursuit of extreme order and that of extreme disorder, The Suprematist art represented by Malevich, featuring excessive moderation and simple geometric abstract paintings belongs to the former case, while the Action paintings of Jackson Pollock belong to the latter. This is no different from the contradictory orientation between the instinctive propensity of humanity pursuing order and the universal law changing from order to disorder.

by themselves. It is because the digital code or programming language work as supracultural and universal symbols, beyond the digressive or peripheral symbols or language. In other words, in some sense, computers, digital devices and internet are considered signifié and signifiant as a cultural and social symbol representing the present time. For this reason, anyone who sees the works of J. Park can intuitively recognize that they belong to digital images. Also, in front of his works made of dots, we easily recall semiconductor circuit board. His works made of lines remind us of bar code images. However, paradoxically, we are not aware of what they exactly mean or in which state they exist.

In fact, most of today's people live not only in the physical world of reality but also in the digitalized virtual world. The physical "I" forms "multi-selves" with different IDs or numbers which can transform into digital symbols. Anyone is allowed to easily enter the virtual world and communicate through Smart phones and computer devices, and this virtual space like Cyber space or internet makes it possible to transcend the physical time and space of the real world and destroys the cultural, national and international boundaries. Moreover, numerous virtual images created through different softwares easy to manage enter our real world and are distributed and consumed. This way, the real world and the virtual world seem to constantly cross the mixed and indistinguishable boundary. Besides, we are amazed at the surprising capacity of the rapidly growing computers and artificial intelligence but it is true that we are sometimes overwhelmed by the indescribable uneasiness and fear. This may be caused by the fear of the unknown future of which the virtual artificial world, created as the product of challenge against the power of Creator of the Universe, can possibly influence the real world of humanity. In fact, the virtual reality we normally experience is nothing but a vivid visualization like the 3D physical space or environment inducing our immersion in beyond the computers or video monitors, and there is no such a physical substance at all. In particular, the information process operation or programming code by the algorithm of 0 and 1 facilitating its visualization is nothing but "something" which is imperceptible for being in the invisible base. The existence is known by everyone and it is everywhere, but at the same time, it is equivalent to a sort of mirage or illusion whose substance is impossible to be found anywhere. What J. Park captured is "something" like illusion without substance. By giving shape to this in the

multi-dimensional way, the artist's ultimate purpose is to realize "être-ensemble (being together)" with the audience.

The video work of scenery filmed by the artist's cellular phone from a running bus when he was staying in Hong Kong finally appeared when the numbers 0 and 1 as well as some particular symbols existent in the base saw the scenery outside the bus window. They allow us to see the dynamic images as if something suddenly distances and disappears. They are the symbols of operation representing the chromatic information of the scenery. When the colors disappear, the symbols reveal their strong sense of presence by overlapping on top of the real landscape which remains in the slight and vague form. These symbols turn into the substance of unique property of matter irrelevant to the existing colors. It seems that the two independent heterogeneous images, and not just one scenery, overlap. When the reality meets the virtual world, it creates a new dynamic "confluence entity."

Though we are not aware of the real image, the potential 4D virtuality transformed into the code of dots and lines becomes the 3D real physical substance as the painting space of the 2D surface or an incarnated objet. The virtual reality creates literally a new "reality." Moreover, it is even more interesting to see his hologram image works the artist newly displays in this exhibition. After installing the projector on the ceiling and laying the reflector on the floor, the hologram image is displayed through the transparent screen hanging in-between the space. The image portrays the aspect of which the dots, the virtual reality, move and enlarge until they gradually become the waterfall and pour in torrents. The dots enlarge like water drops and transform into the lines of stream of water. They change into the solid form like an architectural structure then destroy as if they explode until they finally disappear. The dots and lines which transformed into irre recognizable codes create a new real image again, and gradually cease to exist as the big bang of the universe insinuating the possibility of a new creation. In particular, due to the sound effects of the waterfall and the slight property of matter of the transparent screen, it seems that the waterfall made of dots and lines and its destruction occur in the 3D Exhibition Hall for real. This is the moment the incompatible virtual reality is connected with reality as one.

The works of J. Park can be explained by the theory of simulation of Jean Baudrillard in that an original disappears and simulacra substituting

an original becomes Hyper-réalité which looks more real than the reality itself.⁶⁾ The works of dots and lines, regardless of the real image, transcend the virtual reality. become reality and become omnipresent as a substantialized reality. In other words, the nameless and ordinary reality now becomes a reality with firm values of artistic status. When the world of dots and lines of self-reproduction opens beyond the wall of dimension, like the metaphor of "the butterfly of Zhuangzi", it can create an illusion that we fall into the chaos of consciousness, whether the reality we believe to be reality is the reality or the virtual reality is the reality.

Dehumanization- Rehumanization

The works of J. Park can possibly arouse the feeling of dehumanization due to the symbols mechanically placed according to the digital logics without any disorder. The images transformed into dots and lines by computers can be fortuitousness and contingency, and seem to be easily reproducible, for this reason, it is very probable that the long-standing argument of creativity of the artist or the uniqueness of the work can be raised. However, with a more careful look, we can realize that this concern is nothing but a secondary prejudice. It is because the ability of using the contingency as art is also part of creativity of the artist. Likewise, as we reviewed before, the execution method of which the artist realizes the images as diverse media through the act of "choosing" the worthless noise forms part of artistic value. Furthermore, even though the real image transforms into a dehumanized motif called "a digital code", we can find that there is an extremely "humane" aspect at the final destination.

There are two reasons for the interpretation of "rehumanization." Firstly, as we already saw, the artist utilizes the computer-based latest technology while sticking to the traditional media such as paintings and sculpture. In particular, in case of paintings, the final product is not about the mere printing of digital images but about completing them through numerous manual works. For instance, when it comes to dot paintings, on the contact paper attached in the canvas, the contact paper with dot design is added again. Then, you paint it densely to such an extent as to

6) Jean Baudrillard, *Simulation*, Translated by Ha Tae-hwan, (Mineumsa, 2001), p. 9-19

feel the daring brush strokes and take off the dot-shaped contact paper one by one. You repeat putting another dot-shaped contact paper again and removing it many times. This process requires a very hard and elaborate manual work. The work method of which the flat surface is protruded as the 3D space by making many layers contributes to closing the gap of bilateral interaction, the physical distance between the work and the audience, and crystallizing the mutual relationship sharing the same space.

The second reason for this can be found from the way of communication between the work and the audience. The sensory experience of the audience can be maximized when they face the properties of matter with different dimensions in the simultaneous way. The immersion that one can perceive from the 4D virtual reality can be equally felt in the 2D paintings. When we carefully contemplate blue-colored dot paintings, we come to recall the abyss of the ocean, the infinite universe or the unknown 4D world. The dots with different size in layers ripple as if they tickle our retinas creating some glimmering afterimage. They resemble meteors which go through incessant creation and extinction. When we look at them attentively, they seem to be ready to be made in a concrete form. They appear to expand toward the 3D space, beyond the boundary of the canvas, as if they protrude onto the flat surface of the canvas through the layers. The texture projected onto the flat surface of the painting not only provides you with a special visual experience but also stimulates your sense of touch to feel the depth of the layers.

Moreover, the dynamic images of works based on dots and lines form the waves of signals or visual rhythms. The fact that the artist expresses the visual elements such as dots and lines as "noise" related to sound shows his intuitive and instinctive acceptance attitude with respect to the experience of synesthesia. When we pass through the Exhibition Room where the video collage works with dynamic images of heterogeneous dots and lines are displayed through various video monitors unevenly installed on both walls in an irregular row, we can spread our sensory imagination full of newness and freedom, allowing the act of listening to music with "eyes" and seeing the images with "ears." Besides, we can have an unusual experience as if we are standing in the center of the space in which the 3D world overlaps with the 4D world, as if we are entering the 4D world. This way, we feel the virtual reality "like" the reality but "as" the

reality.

As we can see, the works of J. Park which seem to be dehumanized speak to the audience in the most humane way. The dots and lines in the 4D virtual reality which existed "everywhere" yet "nowhere" as non-materials outside our consciousness finally exist with us, right in front of us, in the reachable distance. That is what the "Embodiment" of J. Park is all about.

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