

Dialogue with PARK In-Hyuk

SIM Eunlog an art critic, visiting professor at Methodist theological university



〈Another landscape〉, Acrylic on canvas, 227x182cm, 2013

SIM Eunlog. I've heard that you are absorbed in taekwondo and actually you had taught it for quite a while since you came to France. I think you have a unique career trajectory as a painter.

PARK In-Hyuk. Yves Klein was also a master at judo. He even went to Japan in order to learn it. You know that Klein's performance on October 16, 1960 <Leap into the Void > (*Saut dans le vide*), which shows him jumping off a wall, arms outstretched, towards the pavement. He was able to do such performance since he knew judo techniques so well. In the same year on November 27 Klein wrote in his diary the title of such performance as "The Painter Throws Himself into the Void!" (*Un homme dans l'espace ! Le peintre de l'espace se jette dans le vide* »). As we could see his other performances or so called monochrome as consequences of those, a distinctive sense that Yves Klein possesses is expressed well.

SIM Eunlog I think oriental martial art, such as kung fu, taekwondo and judo perfectly express a relationship between body and space. Sometimes movements of the human body in space are like calligraphic lines. You know, such feeling could not be found in western sports. I guess Klein might have especial sensitivity on the space, and that is why he has more interests in oriental sports, rather than western sports. Although expression and colors are far different, I feel that your works are monochrome, but body is always connected.

While *The Blue Epoch* <anthropometries>, by Yves Klein, exudes strong physical energy and gesture, your work <Another landscape> is different from it. Yours is like nothing exists at first, filled with black color but not absolutely black, rather with a blackish hue. When I stare at painting, I can see the faces filling canvas with a rough brush stroke which is irregular and directionless. But honestly it is too weak to be named as

'movement'. Rather it is a kind of 'exposure', I think.

PARK In-Hyuk. You might not feel movement, or sort of gesture so easily only with work of <Another landscape> itself. As you just mentioned, however, I expect viewers to happen to find the portrait inside the painting from such blackish hue which is not clear and not simple black color, as they look this way and that. Once they perceive the existence of portrait, spectators again try to find something from the next painting with their moving eyes. At that time keen viewers could sometimes detect the fact that there exist white, blue, red and white, orange colors in the black. In fact, I paint the different colors on the base like this, then coloring again with real black many times so that even if it seems that black is the main color but you might feel that other colors also exist here. At times I divide the canvas diagonally, and then paint with different color on the base. For instance, half of the canvas would be black and the other half is painted in white on the background then paint with black color again several times. Most of the people are even not aware of it then just pass the painting.

SIM Eunlog That means an art work contains feature of monochrome, abstract painting which is concrete, and of geometrical as well. Such work makes spectators to be active for themselves. Last Beaubourg Gallery Exhibition (24 beaubourg gallery, Paris) I saw that one of the viewers just passed the painting, looking at it nonchalantly. However, you know what, at some point he just found something in the painting then turned back, so started to have a close look again from the first one. So how do you adjust the sharpness of portrait in case that people just pass the painting without detecting any portrait as this viewer did so at first?

PARK In-Hyuk When it comes to individual exhibition, there are many paintings so that portrait inside the painting is not even recognized at first but at some point it is eventually found. However when there is just one or two pieces of work exhibited, many times spectators just recognize it as a painting in monochrome and pass it. So I always agonize when I draw a painting. At times what concerns me is if viewers cannot recognize a portrait in a black colored painting so that I somewhat try to reveal it. And then I again worry about if it is revealed too easily so that I blur it, and then reveal it again. I constantly have such kind of inner conflicts until the last moment when the work is totally completed. Sometimes I would like to hide more, at other times I want to reveal it more. The thing is that it is also dependent upon the other elements such as light and condition in the exhibition hall, so that I need to consider many things, hovering on the brink of a decision some times.

SIM Eunlog In the works of <Another landscape> and of <Untitled> using a series of newspaper, face of people appears. I guess that must be those of young man. Is it your self-portrait? If not so, how do you usually search for a model?

PARK In-Hyuk I initially drew my self-portrait, but now usually Asians are my models. I would like to draw other races very soon other than Asians. When I draw portraits of other people, ideas have always come to me at the library, viewing a lot of photographic portraits all over the world. When I work with newspapers I draw myself not merely but also sometimes I extract the figures posted in newspaper used as matière, in my own way.



<Untitled> Oil on canvas, 47x32cm, 2011

SIM Eunlog When and how did you start working with newspapers as your material? And I suspected all the newspapers are Le Monde, is there a special reason for using specific one?

PARK In-Hyuk As many know, Le Monde is leading and representative newspaper of France and that's the reason I chose to read at first. There are quality art critic articles, photos as well as news about Middle East. The most important thing is that it suits as medium for my works; it is perfect size for a portrait and toned down advertisements fit well with my gray tone paintings.

Working with newspaper goes back to 2009, and there are two reasons behind. When time comes, all the foreigners living away from homeland must encounter confusion of identity. It is less discussed now, but at the time of my arrival in France, identity crisis was a big issue. So my way of breaking this problem was drawing self-portrait on the newsprint to express my existence and embody a foreigner's identity. However, on the contrary, identity became vaguer and a self-portrait became a portrait and then someone instead of establishing a clear one. In the case of <Another Landscape>, the portrait is spatialized in the dark.

Second reason, because of gray and blurry background, at first I experimented mixing

black and white oil paints to create gray tone. Simple dedication, one work a day. Maybe it was due to my conditions at the time, I wanted to assign more meanings to daily work and temporality than forms or shapes. Frankly speaking, however, I did not have clear reasons as I mentioned. Instead, from considering "Why am I doing work in this way?" I came to know them.



<Untitled>, Ink on paper, 800x200cm, 2013-2014

SIM Eunlog Now you are doing pure red color works which is completely different from your achromatic paintings, and I do not find any faces. From a point, it looks abstract but looking close, I see repeating dates stamped infinitely. This seems to take long time. Does it have common points, such as daily works or compilation of temporality, like your other works?

PARK In-Hyuk I chose red color because among red, blue and black ink pads, red would bring more vibrancy to my work than the other colors. The stamp I use is identical ones used in French government offices, with month and day (Jan, Feb, Mar). Every day at my atelier, I unconsciously stamp the date for one of two hours, which is like trying to fill bottomless pot. Today is February 9th (date of the interview) so I stamped "09 Feb. 2015" for about two hours. First put ink on the stamp and stamp it until there's no more ink left, then put more ink on and repeat. What I usually use is water Wattman 10 meter roll paper and at last exhibit I had 8 meter long work. I stamp the date unconsciously and mechanically and it turns out to be some kind of stratum or waves. Sometimes I deliberately stamp tree rings or fan shapes, but mostly I stamp unintentionally without any intents to make shapes. Time to time I record and use the sound of stamping on a paper on wooden board.

SIM Eunlog How did you start this "filling bottomless pot" or let's say infinitely time consuming work?

PARK In-Hyuk I weave and compile time over time until it overlaps too much to the point it look squashed. And this knitting time is an express of unconscious repetition. In my memories I remember my mother knitting. Since knitting was her side chore she couldn't knit much at once, but little by little she finished things. My works are express of respect for my mother who did daily chores behind the scene and my way of leaving

daily foot print by knitting time. I think it as a training.

SIM Eunlog Between Western and Korean monochrome, where do you place yourself?

PARK In-Hyuk It always has been my question and concern where to put myself between Western and Korean monochrome. From my part, Western monochrome is a material itself. On the contrary, Asian, more specifically Korean monochrome is more of harsh, self-carving repetition and Zen-like mental cultivation. Perhaps it's because I often watched working process of LEE Ufan. My newspaper works are more toward material monochrome and black works emphasize mental monochrome, so I go back and forth. I wander and explore contrary concepts; abstract and figure, or in between; vague and clear or in between.

Temporality and identity

An art critic, SIM Eunlog visiting professor at Methodist theological university



passage of time. 300 X 650cm mixed media on Daily newspaper. 2011

What artist PARK In-Hyuk had faced in his daily life since he came to France was Rene Descartes, rather than Dadaists or postmodernist. Despite the efforts toward the deconstruction of forms made by Dadaists or Postmodern philosophers, including Marcel Duchamp and Michel Foucault, Descartes modernism is still prevalent among French. An artist PARK might feel the difference much more perceptively as he came from South Korea where modernism and identity are not widespread yet. Facing French Modernism based on the thinking ego the artist firstly tried to search for ego through self-portrait and search for identity in the French time-space symbolized as Le Monde. In his portrait drawn in daily newspapers every day, from time to time his identity was clearly shown in the Le Monde, or sometimes it seems that its outline was dimly visible, or even he was not born, or sometimes it is like he just disappeared as soon as he was born. There exist various faces such as a face that already found his identity with being full of confidence, a face dimly recognized as if its identity was completely destructed, and the other is with a crushed shape with hurt mind and identity as a stranger and so on. Even if these do not say anything, every portrait with different impression shows how PARK lived from day to day, keeping a straight face without any expression. In the work of named 'Passage of Times' series PARK lists time, drawing a piece of work every day. Like this

time is vertically layered rather than being arranged just two-dimensionally.



<Untitled>, mixture with piled newspapers , 47x32cm,2011

One of his works, <Untitled-2013> uses 24 pages of newspaper. Using acrylic paint, each page is differently colored and after a paper gets hard, part of it is removed then it exposes layers of time. Another work, <Untitled-2013> also shows a layer of time vertically by drawing a face on cross section and then using thin coats of the paint on each paper after mixing with acrylic medium and piling them. Here, layers of time refers to 'vertically kairological' one rather than being 'chronological'. As a series of work comes out, face becomes more ambiguous. As the artist PARK just mentioned, anonymity is added to his own face and he becomes a stranger. Eventually it is spatially visualized.



<Another landscape>, Acrylic on canvas, 227x182cm, 2014

On the work of <Another landscape>, the artist PARK draws a face in charcoal on canvas and then paint over the drawing many times with pigments made by his own hands. Through such efforts, he tries to embed the image in layers of time. One thing in common between PARK's painting and that of Roman Opalka (1931-2011), which is a picture, is that an identity becomes more blurred and vague as time gets accumulated – while Park faced modernism and postmodernism at the same time, Roman Opalka had struggled to overcome modernism and eventually got to postmodernism. In terms of methodology and style, however, they are entirely different from each other like black

and white. Self-portraits of Opalka maintain the same environment and conditions for photo shoot (let's say fixed camera height, fixed distance from camera, all the same white background, and so on), the same hair style, a white shirt, facial expression hiding his emotion as much as possible in order to take exactly the same portrait. However, his portrait becomes in white and on white, eventually becoming spatialized. It seems that portrait of PARK also maintains the look with firmly closed mouth. However his posture and shape change. Above all, unlike Opalka, emotions are freely revealed without hiding through unrestricted brush touch on the portraits of PARK. Here, like those of Opalka, portrait of PARK becomes dim as well but it finds its way into the dark and chaos, not into a white margin. In case of the former, those of Opalka, it seems that it finally enters a phase of sublimity after undergoing all the things. Unlike those of Opalka, for latter, his works are densely condensed with dynamic energy, passion and hardships which actively rush for chaos. Such chaotic movement is expressed through his brush trace, and revealed silhouette of face in it appears through the brush touch and disappears at the same time.



<Untitled>, Ink on paper, 149x215cm, 2015

In his other works he tries to stamp the present, fixing a number of seals as if these could fix the present. It is the other scene gathered to the present. Sometimes sap of time which refers to the present, is collected and 'growth ring of the time' are formed. From time to time when stamping the time with improvisation and contingency, such work even happens to be associated with the forest of time, or flooded ebb and flood.

Since the year of 1965, Opalka used the number of $1 - \infty$ one by one. (OPALKA 1965 / $1 - \infty$). Since 1973 in which such number is 1 000 000, he started to write the numbers in white color (blanc de titane) on the man-sized canvas (196x135cm), recording each number into the microphone in Polish. Whenever one work was completed, he gradually lightened the previous background by adding 1 % more white (blanc de zinc) to the ground. So canvas became more and more white and eventually his last work was close to almost white monochrome. It is like the numbers are spatialized. Likewise, in his self-portrait picture, Opalka is becoming more and more made into a work of art or spatialized like a background of the picture; artist would be made into a work of art,

rather than work becomes artistic. For artist PARK In-hyuk, on the other hand, a work unit, formerly a white canvas [hanji] is getting more red as time goes by. In case of work of Opalka, his voice reading the number sounds as if the condition and change of artist are perceived and even it is like uttering an incantation. On the other hand, PARK In-hyuk recorded the sound coming from stamping so it seems that it is quite regular, but physical energy, motion and rhythm possessed by the artist could be felt at the same time. Ironically while Opalka presents 'the sound of number' symbolizing eternity, which is the time-honored tradition in the West, PARK resonates collision with external world here and now (*hic et nunc*).

The crucial common ground between Opalka, who intended diluted identity that is getting elusive in the postmodern era, and PARK, who wants to impede so as much as possible, would be about the perception on ambiguity of time. It is because personal identity must be revealed so well in the layers of time. Human being lives in the present, and such present is just a momentary point of contact between the past and future. As St. Augustine says, how can the past and future be, when the past no longer is, and the future is not yet? What we call 'the present' is just a 'passage of times' – it's like it exist yet does not exist, does not exist yet exist – placed between two not-beings. PARK In-hyuk voluntarily does the chores in daily life in order to place his own identity represented through face between the past that 'already' does not exist and the future 'yet' does not exist; in order to fix the present (which does not almost exist) as the passage between two of not-beings. At the same time he is raising a question on unintentionally becoming others and time-spatialized identity 'here and now' (*hic et nunc*)