

Review: Koon Kwon's solo exhibition 《The Return of the Lost Time》

We, In the Endless Reverberation

홍예지Yeji Hong (Art critic, Curator)

Early summer in Tong'oui-dong, Seoul. Buzzing green is everywhere. Someone stops walking in front of me. *I/Orchid*, hung on the 1st floor window of Boan1942, was what caught the attention of this passer-by. The bird's eye in the orchid is vivid violet. It glares like a flame. After an eye contact with the bird, the person crosses the threshold, as if hypnotized. It's not the first time it happened.

I attended Koon Kwon's exhibition every week, which lasted about a month. On each visit, I enjoyed watching the visitors. Whether they were a friendly group of friends or engrossed in their cell phones with indifference, they were drawn into Boan1942 once they discovered the bird; as if they noticed a sweet scent somewhere. In fact, *Pheromone Body* was also being shown on the 2nd floor. What was more interesting was that, as the exhibition approached its end, the entire Boan1942 gradually turned into something close to a beach or forest park. The ceramics and paintings, which absorb the sunlight all day, would exude a delightfully refreshing smell. Grass leaves young and moist, clay heated dry and crisp, salty wind dashing towards the end of the horizon... and the light that goes through *July(Summer Luxuriance in Pohang)*, *Pacific Sun*, and *Light Spinning Stone*. All of this was condensed into the atmosphere, gently embracing the bodies of visitors.

In the ecosystem that Kwon created with her own color and formal vocabularies, nature appears not as a 'background' or 'resource' for human actions but as "the world of fleshy beings, which possesses their own needs, claims and actions." Her painting *Sorceress* and sculptures *Speaking I/Orchid* and *Pheromone Body*, which are variations of *I/Orchid* on the 1st floor, look just like human uterus, raising the frequencies and clamoring here and there. In another room, *Startling Trees* and *Awakened Tree* give an unapologetic shout to those who enter. In this way, these "bodily natures" are connected to one another while carrying their own internal acoustics."¹ *My Nature*, placed next to the staircase leading up to the 2nd floor, lets us hear the splendid [dis]harmony of these lively beings. With light green, yellow, and orange colors flashing in zig-zags, this piece informs that the artist has acquired the exact method of "**seeing musical notes as colors and hearing colors musically.**"² In his theory of painting, Kandinsky said that people with "a heightened sensitivity" are

¹ Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*, translated by June Yun and Jonggap Kim, Greenbee, 2018, p19.

² See footnote in p61 of Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, translated by Youngpil Kwon, Youlhwadang, 2020.

like “good, much-played violins, which vibrate in **all** their parts and fibers at every touch of the bow,” which equally applies to Kwon. Her body and soul reverberate, as in “musical instruments which, without being touched, sound in harmony with some other instrument struck at the moment.”³ She bottled this reverberation as it is onto canvas.

Above all, she is in sync with the rhythm of the sun and the moon. On the wall facing the staircase hangs *Parabola of the Sun and the Moon*. Kwon says that her pulse became linked with the moon since she was hit by lightning on an upland field, allowing her to experience many mysterious incidents afterwards. She gradually recovered by doing the sun meditation at her hometown Pohang in 2020. The works created with the light-energy that was charged at that time welcome the viewers one by one, drawing a parabola. *Touching Eye*, at the starting point of it, depicts a finger penetrating through the middle of rainbow-colored concentric circles, implying the journey of the artist who is gaining an increasing level of understanding nature with her newborn body. Like a child, she “sees a light; wishes to take hold of it; and touches it with fingers.”⁴ Or you could say it in the opposite way: to Kwon of *Stone Axe Body*, who is now closer to the prehistoric age, the showering light is not merely a visual phenomenon but a tactile one that caresses the entire body.

Moreover, the infinite spectrum of color contained in light stimulates taste. “Color awakens a corresponding physical sensation, which certainly influence the soul in subtle ways. (...) Therefore, we can say bright yellow gives the impression of being sour by recalling the taste of lemon.”⁵ Cheery yellow that fits the description is found here and there on the 2nd floor: the face soaked in sunlight in *Pohang Sunrising Portrait*; the lotus pattern that brilliantly ripples in *Luminary Crown*.

Meanwhile, the overall color contrast that stands out is another way to feel the space. The 2nd and 1st floors of Boan1942 are dominated by ‘yellow(warm)’ and ‘blue(cold)’ respectively, and while yellow signifies ‘physical energy that approaches the viewer,’ blue signifies ‘mental energy that goes away from the viewer.’ In terms of circular motion, we can feel a ‘centrifugal force’ of expanding outwards on the 2nd floor, which is rich with yellow, and a ‘centripetal force’ of moving inwards in the works on the predominantly blue 1st floor. Another contrast is ‘black(darkness-death)’ and ‘white(brightness-birth),’ and here the movement is shown in a more rigid form, affected by centripetal force and centrifugal force respectively. The works downstairs symbolize the past that was dark and unstable as night; the ones upstairs symbolize a new life that explores the world of

³ *Ibid.*, p60.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p58.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p59.

light.⁶ However, one thing to note in all these contrasts is the truth that darkness contains light and light connotes darkness. There is a clue in *An Open Pottery - There is Love*, which evokes the most profound darkness before daybreak. (Look for the light that is repeatedly drawn.)

Kwon captures the rhythmic movements of nature with great sensitivity and brings them into colors and patterns that correspond to them. She tries to share with others the wisdom she has acquired while restoring the lost time; the fact that light/darkness, life/death and human/non-human beings are intertwined within one network, beyond dichotomies; and the fact that communication between 'fleshy beings' take place through sensory transmission, with bodies made openly available. What this amazing discovery points to is 'ancient futures.' In 2021, *Stone Axe-Body's Retaliation* began, which has flown from the prehistoric age, in order to awaken the other bodies that are completely frozen. The sound of axe at work is heard here. In that endless reverberation are 'we.'

⁶ *Ibid.*, p86.

W $\frac{\text{light}}{\text{pattern}}$ E

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Looking at *Light-Pattern Pottery*, I think about the 'light pattern.' A light pattern signifies the 'trajectories of light,' which tell us about the 'kinetic property of light.' Then, we might be able to say that 'light patterns' are 'traces of light's movement.' The important fact is that light transcends the stationary state when it is depicted as a pattern. It becomes possible to talk about 'temporality,' in motion between two points. In other words, it becomes possible to talk about relationships between things that are apart from one another.

'Light' already carries a different meaning of temporality. If the temporality of light pattern is one that 'progresses' towards temporality of motion, the temporality of light is one that is 'stays still.' Electromagnetic waves ranging 400-700nm, light is generated when electrons at the atom or molecule level lose energy. The energy lost here is the light. Thus, the visible spectrum we call 'light' contains the information of the point where it was generated, since it is a form of energy. It means that light has, unlike a light pattern, 'stationary temporality' of the starting point.

We can say that light patterns are the 'routes of energy moving from place to place with the natural information of itself.' Energy that conveys 'its own time,' light connects separate places, and different lights know how to face each other. We put our own stories in light, allowing for 'relationship building.' I would say a light pattern is 'what gives light in order for us to face each other, enabling warm and intimate relationships.'

However, the word is written as 'comb pattern(빗살)' instead of 'light pattern(빛살),' losing various contexts. First of all, the 'starting point' is gone; our own stories, which are the beginning of relationships, have disappeared. Also, 'energy' that warms each other up no longer exists. There is no energy, as the word has become what describes a shape. Furthermore, the 'temporality that progresses' is gone. That is why any kind of 'connectivity' isn't found in the places where there are now a comb pattern; stories about 'knowing,' 'feeling' and 'touching' one another have disappeared.

Light patterns tell us about the time when we remembered light. It signifies the time of 'light patterns' when we saw one another and connected with warmth through each of our 'own' stories. Light patterns are the traces of when light was remembered. And this time of light patterns is our 'lost time.' Only when we start to talk about the light pattern again are we able to reflect on the lost time, along with the lost relationships and connectivity.

Wave Meditation is another trace of 'lost time' contained in *Light-Pattern Pottery*. The swaying a

nd wiggly movements gain a sense of direction in *Enthusiasm*, and we begin, now aware of the 'lost time' through *Light-Pattern Pottery*, to move towards an encounter with the 'time of light patterns,' under the guidance of *Enthusiasm*.

The following two rooms talk about 'light's relationship building.' *0.99999999.....* and *Consolation*, shown only one wall apart, have completely different moods: someone is absorbed in different thoughts in one, and two people are sharing profound energy while emitting their own light in the other. This difference can be understood via *Otherside of Eclipse*, which is hung on the wall that separates *0.99999999.....* and *Consolation*.

Until quite recently, it had been our belief that the sun and light 'disappear' during a solar eclipse. However, this would only make sense in an age that has forgotten about light rays. Light does not disappear; it only hides from our view. The light is still splendid in *Otherside of Eclipse*. In a place that has forgotten about light, human beings cannot fully understand themselves, which become whole only in relationships, even if they don't go through changes. Thus, *0.99999999.....* is about intelligence losing its way because it is not fully aware of the fact that it is already and wholly '1.' But the two people in *Consolation* know that light never goes away. And the reason why they can console each other is because they can understand the uncovered light on the other side of themselves.

Now we see some light sources: *Sunlight-Pattern Pottery*, *Parabola of the Sun and the Moon*, *Touching Eye* and *Luminary Crown*! These works are bright, and have colorful lights. We encounter colors through the light sources, and become connected through these colors; we witness the light pattern, which are the 'kinetic property of light.' The light pattern that gotten into *Stone Axe Body* circles around along *Pacific Sun* and *Light Spinning Stone*. Along the way, various forces bloom in different corners. *Pheromone Body*, *Speaking I/Orchid* and *Sorceress* show how the relational energy initiated by the light pattern advances to the energy of creation, nurturing, understanding and tolerance. This is the life force that blooms with light patterns.

I get to feel the light pattern, which generates relationships in order for us to come face to face with one another, sheds a light to reveal colors and shares energy to nurture and embrace, is actually what 'love' is. Our 'lost time' is the 'time of love.' Expression of love is found in different places in the exhibition space. In particular, *An Open Pottery - There is Love* underlines the relationship between light pattern and love. With 'light' and 'love' intersecting, light pattern creates love, which encourages the pattern in turn. What was desired to be said through the light pattern was love; we see that the 'time of love' is our 'lost time.'

'The lost time' will return. For, just as the light we thought has disappeared in a solar eclipse was simply blocked from our view, love is something that gets forgotten, not something that disappears.

2021년 12월 30일 Bongjoo Jung (Writer)

ars. But in order to restore the forgotten 'time of love,' we need to realize that love exists regardless of time and place, just as light patterns are everywhere. *Stone Axe-Body's Retaliation* is the portrait of the version of ourselves we need to reclaim. It is highlighted that our first step, looking at the stone axe body with a light source on the crown of its head, is to realize that love begins from inside of us; it is stated that 'the lost time' will be shone through us and that it will make a return through us.

Solar Intuition, or on Methodology of *My Nature*¹

Zino Yang (Philosopher, Critic)

Sun Shadow

Let me tell you an old story. A long long time ago, people began to observe the sky and the earth, curious about how shadows changed their lengths according to how high the sun was. They learned that the highest sun made the shortest shadow, and the lowest sun the longest.

After continuous observation, they discovered a certain relation that was functional: the changes in solar altitude make shadows grow shorter or longer, and this makes periodic changes to how long the sun is in the sky. Furthermore, this relation between the sun, shadow and time was linked with the cycle of seasons, making the body of observer warmer or colder, or, energizing or withering all creatures.

'The height of the sun' is associated with 'the length of shadow,' and this *extensio* is related to the duration of daytime, implying *duratio* even. The sun's 'height' and the daytime 'length' struck a metaphor, enabling the ancient people to say the sun is 'long' or 'short.' The sun is the light but carries a shade and implies space and time. To know the sun's route, and thus the length of it, became a key for them to solve the equation that was cosmos or life; gazing the sun shadow taught them *yin*, which is one, *yang*, which is two, and the flow, which is three.

The people considered a range of ways to document this functional relation. At first, they fixed a stick in one position vertically, gave the name 'noon' to when the sun was the highest during the day and marked the length of the shadow each time. The sun moved along east-west direction throughout the day, but the shadow moved along north and south. There were days when the shadow began to get longer or shorter; on another day, its length would return to what it was in the very beginning. The shadow came back to

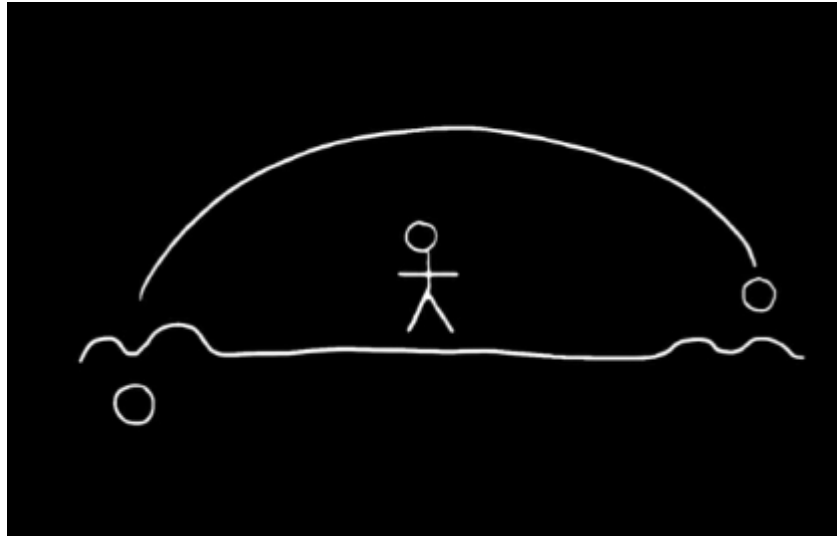
¹ This essay only deals with the 'method' of *My Nature*. For the analysis about the work, see "*From Nature to Natura: The Threefold Reversion*"(Covid-19 Documentation in Art, Arts Council Korea, 2021)

what it was - once, twice and many more times. Of course, the seasons kept returning as well. When they divided the cycle into smaller units and created solar terms, farming became much easier.

The problem was to communicate this elaborate data about the sun—shadow—time points to farmers, who didn't know how to read. Image would be better than text, but it shouldn't be complicated, otherwise it would not have any advantage. A circle would be appropriate, as it would be a symbol of cycle. How about drawing inside the circle the traces of the sun shadow that goes through changes and passes through a cycle? First, get a stick up and make a circular board the radius of which matches the biggest length of the stick's shadow. Attach the stick outside the board and fix the board's center so it can rotate. Align the line that connects the stick and the center of the board to north-south direction. Now, divide the central angle of the board equally into the number of sunrises in a year and rotate it by one space per day, drawing a line along the length of shadow at noon. When this begins on the summer solstice - when the shadow is the shortest- and reaches the winter solstice -the day of the longest shadow-, move the stick to the board's center this time, rotate the board through 180 degrees and continue with marking the shadow lengths(I will skip the details). When the shadow is the shortest again(summer solstice), the shadow stays on the center of the circle.²

After one full year of keeping up this task, the circle now had a dark area of shadows and its margin, a bright area. The bigger the shadow, the smaller the sun; the smaller the shadow, the bigger the sun. The parabola created by two spaces also looked like a day's trajectory of the sun and the moon that rise and set below and above the horizon. Moreover, this sun shadow curve seemed like an oracle bone that depicted how the clouds flew by(the letter 气/氣 later), while recalling the letter 易(change), which combined 日(sun) and 月(moon). When the sun and moon shine together, it must be so bright(明). Maybe this is easy enough for people to understand - let's name it 'taiji(太極)' and spread it wide.

² Helu Tian showed this cartographical technique and proposed that Taiji Diagram was the astronomical chart of ancient China. 田合禄, "论太极图是原始天文图," 晋阳学刊, 1992. No.5, p.22 and on.



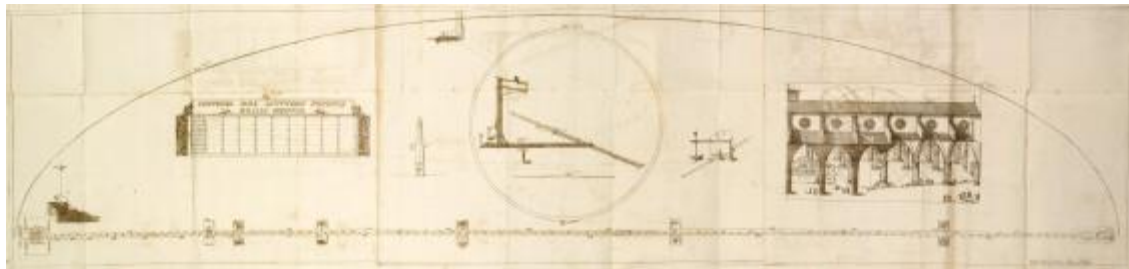
[Image 1] Koon Kwon-Namsoo Kim, *Parabola of the Sun and the Moon*
(Areumdaum, 2021), p.5.

Meridians

In fact, we do not know who first drew the Taiji Diagram for what purpose. Therefore, this supposed methodology and origin of Taiji Diagram might be nothing more than fiction. But it does inspire those who look up the sky with both feet on the ground and wish to understand the cosmology of the ancient people. First, I can recall the image of Fuxi(伏羲) and Nuwa(女娲), holding a dividers and square respectively. Many paintings of Fuxi and Nuwa usually have a circle that looks like the sun between these two measurement tools. The patterns in this circle, however, are a bit different. Could Taiji Diagram have been the complete version of these patterns? Why, the sundial invented during the time of Sejong the Great, *Angbu-ilgu*, that is, "a cauldron that looks up the sun shadow," is also not merely an instrument for telling time but that of calendar that indicates solar terms. It would not be a coincidence that a glimmering Taiji pattern would appear after a long gaze at *Angbu-ilgu* with half-closed eyes.

Were East Asians the only ones who desired to know the sun's route? People in the West called the moment when the sun was highest during the day *meridianus*, a compound word of *medius*(middle) and *dies*(day). Domenico Cassini, astronomer in the 17th century, made a small hole on the ceiling of the Basilica of San Petronio in order to figure out the sun's trajectory; each day at noon, he marked the different spots on the floor hit by the

ray of light at different angles and wrote a series of numbers. When these marks on the floor, lined up along north-south direction, were connected in the shape of a large stick, people were able to know the exact moment of noon and the date. The route of the noon sun moved up or down along this stick, providing more accurate astronomical data to the Europeans who were transitioning from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian one.³



[Image 2] The bar graph of the meridian at the Basilica of San Petronio invented by D. Cassini(bottom). Its two ends are connected with the sun parabola and various blueprints are in the margin. Domenico Cassini, *La meridiana del tempio di S. Petronio* (Bologna, 1695), p.85. @archive.org

Meanwhile, Western people invented the meridian by extending an imaginary line from this stick all the way along the Earth's surface to its two poles. The sun passes through the meridian when it is at its highest of the day. The observer can use this to tell if (s)he is on the east or west. The concepts of meridian and longitude, along with the chronometer invented in the 18th century, enabled position measurement without error. People all over Europe decided their own region as the prime meridian, which worked as the criterion for measuring their own time and managing their life.

The problem was the appearance of the steam engine and railroads. When these machines of contracting space that enabled unprecedentedly long trips traveled east or west extensively, time differences occurred without fail. There were some or other errors

³ We can still find these observational facilities at Santa Maria degli Angeli(Rome), Santa Maria del Fiore(Florence), Church of Saint-Sulpice(Paris) and Durham Cathedral as well as the Basilica of San Petronio(Bologna).

between the arrival time estimated at the departure point and the actual arrival time at the destination. Railroad companies and passengers were thrown into confusion; it caused substantial damage to the business. Soon, world powers were engaged in a heated competition to unify the prime meridians based on their business times and eventually the following resolutions were adopted at the International Meridian Conference in 1884: the existing prime meridians will be standardized into a single meridian that passes through the Observatory of Greenwich, UK(Resolution 1 and 2); a unified universal time will be adopted for enhanced convenience(Resolution 4).

This conference was attended by 26 nations. The rest were forcefully included into the standard time zone according to their business conveniences. Voluntary or not, any country that is part of the world political-economic system would have to continuously estimate its time and space according to the single prime meridian. However, some nations have maintained their own times separate from the standard time zone. Venezuela, India, Nepal, Iran, etc. still use their independent time zones, expressing the political-economic differences they are in. "The resistance to the time system is a definite way (...) of criticizing the ruling order of the world."⁴

Lost Times

Koon Kwon's painting *My Nature* was created with a distinctive methodology. The process is as follows: around the time when the sun passes above her head, Kwon goes outside, looks at it directly with her own (narrowed) eyes and transfer the afterimages that come up when she closes her eyes onto the canvas. She continues to paint the afterimages, which appear as she keeps opening and closing her eyes, onto one canvas. The process goes on for about an hour. When the sun goes past above the head, she stops her solar intuition and finishes up the work. Although it is not certain if this methodology is adopted by Koon Kwon 'for the first time,' it is hard to find its precedents.

⁴ Pascale Casanova, *"The Meridian of Greenwich: Reflections on the Time of Literature"*, *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1(Korean Association of Cultural Studies), p.102.

I am not sure if this methodology should be called the sun croquis or the solar intuition method. But in relation to our discussion, her method is distinctly different from old methodologies, in that she does not observe the sun shadow on the ground but gazes at the sun directly; does not record the time 'point' of the sun passing above her head but the bigger arc before and after the moment in one single frame; and, in particular, does not approach the objective attributes of the sun but portrays the internal human pattern that is activated via solar intuition.

"By contemplating the forms existing in the heavens we come to understand time and its changing demands. Through contemplation of the forms existing in human society it becomes possible to shape the world."⁵ Perhaps this sentence is a rhetorical elaboration of the realization that astronomy and humanities are not different from each other, and neither are changing(the cosmic laws) and shaping(edification); the cosmic equation and life equation are not separate, and a single key can solve both. Would this have been so different in the West? Besides some differences in the ways of representation, such as the condensation into Taiji and bar graph, wasn't the pursuit of wisdom by drawing the analogy between heaven and macrocosm and between man and microcosm a common task of humanity? If so, isn't *My Nature*, where the human is seen in the sun and the sun in the human, also an activity and outcome of the universal *philos-sophia*? Let us imagine. When such a task goes on day by day and the results are all laid out, it would be something beyond the physical meridian - it would be an aesthetic meridian. If this new meridian is condensed again in a single frame, that would be an unprecedented Taiji Diagram.

The world order after the Industrial Revolution separates astronomy and humanities to an extreme degree and, further, tries to govern the ethics with the physics. The new methodology of *My Nature* raises a radical question to such order. Is the prime meridian of the Observatory of Greenwich a legitimate standard for world time? Are we going to allow the imaginary lines fabricated for the interests of big powers to govern everything

⁵ Richard Wilhelm(tr.), *I Ching* (New York, 1950), XX.

including the layers of reality each country and each person have been intensely accumulating? Give up on the stories of life intertwined in space and time, on the locality and historicity? If not, we need to recover each meridian before there was the standardization.

Recapture of the prime meridian. What the artist tries to argue with this is not a revision of the physical time or domestication of the business time. She aims to summon again the times that such times above can never, or should never, release or deconstruct: the time layers; and the times of place - in other words, the time of poetry, of literature and of art.

Re-summoning the exploited times and turning them into new territories. Immigration into its own place. Could we call this 're-territorialization with re-historicizing'? Regardless of its name, no one can guarantee if this can be realized. However, it is evident what it will bring about again: the time of all humans and nature's beings whose histories and territories have been exploited; the time of goddesses in myths who were condemned to *damnatio memoriae* (condemnation of memory); the time of Hypatia murdered in Mouseion of Alexandria; and the time of Suyin Lee (李水仁) and Gabnyon (甲年) who were both killed in Dumulmeori of Yangpyeong... This is the time of women. Or, the feminization of time.

Kwon declares in *My Nature*: "The lost time will return." We ask again with impatience: "When, and how?" Maybe this would be her answer: "Only when we become art, precisely in that way." And the work has already begun.

"Together with the banished the meridians wander"

- Paul Celan, "Nobody's Rose" (1963)⁶

⁶ "Mit ihm [=dem Verbannten] / wandern die Meridiane," Paul Celan, *Die Niemandsrose* (Fischer, 1993), S. 81.

It Never Comes True If You Don't Believe
[Koon Kwon's solo exhibition: *The Return of the Lost Time*]
June 3-27, 2021, Boan1942, Tong'oui-dong(, Seoul)

Soyeon Ahn안소연
Art critic

Everything has eyes.

Eyes glow on the sun, lightning, sky, earth, trees, flowers, hearts, faces, open palms and burning stomachs, looking straight ahead.

Placing magical images to the entrance of the gallery and casting a spell saying “the lost time will return” like a certain prophecy for a new world, Koon Kwon finds a way to bring into reality the fantasy that surges into the two eyes on her body. For example, in *The Return of the Lost Time(2021)*, she brought a series of cosmic and spiritual experiences to the forefront, which converged into paintings and sculptures. And to guess from her choice of presenting *I/Orchid(2019)* and *Shining Wavelets(2019)* in the window spaces on both sides of the gallery entrance, one can intuit that it is certainly not something ordinary, seeing the phenomena at the edge of or beyond reality glimmering like illusions, like the traces of amalgamating two different worlds.

One of these two works is an oil painting on canvas, and the other is in the form of relief, fashioned in clay and completed in terracotta. The painting shows a perfect symmetry between a bird's head discovered in the pink petals of moth orchid and the two eyes that determine this image, achieving an impeccable peak of the sense of mystery. The surface of terracotta relief reflects onto the retina the mystery of shining wavelets, in which the sunlight does not plunge to the ground to disappear but accomplishes a fulfilling self-chain reaction on the spot where the sky and water surface touch each other. Juxtaposing the integration into a microcosmic world and the integration into a macrocosmic universe, this situation, while composing the general time-space of the exhibition *The Return of the Lost Time*, discloses that all this surreality is a series of phenomenal events that occurs via one “body.”

Just as *I/Orchid, Shining Wavelets* takes the sun as its axis and draws the wavelengths of circles amidst the lingering images, letting one notice the two or three (abstract) eyes that reflect a mysterious face. As if to foreshadow the encounter with two different worlds – microcosm/macrocosm, the still/the dynamic or the concrete/the abstract-, Kwon as their mediator allowed us to meet both faces respectively at the beginning of the exhibition. And here, the humorous tension of overlapping into one image onto a transparent glass between *I/Orchid* and I, and between *Shining Wavelets* and I would not go unnoticed by some.

Just as a window opens, as a door opens and as it lets us face a (strange) face, her painting and sculpture stand as a “window,” “door” and “face” that go back to an ancient origin and connect to another world.

If you look at *An Open Pottery – There is Love(2021)*, the identity of the painting does not serve to reveal a visible form but casts a magic spell of seeing infinitely overlapped images. Magical images surrounded by light follow a spiritual and monumental composition that could be found in the middle of a shrine, showing an illusion of bodily signifiers and their consecutive motion displaying a dynamic time and space as they mediate between “here” and “there.” Two eyes are endlessly repeated in the painting, and the meeting of their gazes opens up a world

that has not been seen. We could say Kwon, by taking a surrealist chain reaction as a referential rhetoric within a painterly space, unraveled into a series of spells the open pottery, the origin of love(♡) and the encounter of two cosmoses that conceives a visual desire. As the proposition “there is love,” which is the subtitle of the piece, this is a magical power that summons the presence of another world that “is.” Although it might seem a cliché, it is also an old possibility of painting.

And again, Kwon juxtaposes painting and sculpture within one powerful force field. At first glance, *An Open Pottery with the Frequency of Love(2021)* and *Look with the Eyes of Heart(2021)* seem handicraft forms based on the pottery prototype. The reason for a deliberate attempt to examine them in the dimension of sculpture is not only because they take the evident form of sculpture as three-dimensional objects with a series of sizes and volumes but also because it evokes the critical awareness about the potential and imaginary “sculpture size” in relation to an actual space. For example, there are complex sculptural attempts within the outline of pottery shape in *Look with the Eyes of Heart*. The circular frame decoratively attached on top has heart shapes carved on it, one embossed and the other engraved next to each other. And a head shape is added below, and interestingly a certain absurd and paradoxical figure gets realized here, with its profile and front continuously boasting a formal contradiction yet coexisting at the same time.

Meanwhile, the combination of the two –the decorative round frame and the shape of head– is a still figure but it also potentially visualizes a spinning motion, allowing one to wish for a completion/finalization into an intact form by the “horizontal movement” of this “vertical form.” In regard to this, the riddle-like incantation of “Look with the eyes of heart” becomes linked to a sculptural perception to propose a sculptural imagination through “eyes of heart” in place of the impossibility of visual comprehensiveness of three-dimensional sculpture. Therefore, although the pottery-shaped sculpture standing still on a pedestal plainly reveals visual absurdity and deficiency, Kwon had the imagination of potential and imaginary sculpture that would accomplish visual completion coexist with it.

Kwon’s sculptures *Solar Power Plant Hands(2020)* or *Stone Axe Body(2020)* were created with a ceramic technique, and they form a series of couplets with paintings like *Stone Axe-Body’s Retaliation(2020)* and *Kim Namsoo Between the Rainy Season and the Tropical Night(2020)*, renewing visual capabilities relevant to each medium. *Solar Power Plant Hands* in particular, which is two hands almost in full scale placed vertically, takes a mysterious form with holes on the palms and fingertips; it is as if it does not stop at being a visual object but emanates the capability to change into a visual agent.

As the limitation of sculpture as a three-dimensional form lies in the impossibility of comprehensive visual experience, the sculptural experience is ultimately about continuous imagining of the sides that aren’t visible and realizing a phenomenal perception through endless visual reflections between the subject and the object[sculpture]. Thus, in a way, Kwon got to compare this to a cosmic encounter and mysterious spiritual experience existing outside the visual realm and vicariously deal with the sculptural perception. In other words, the subject’s visual experience reflected on sculpture returns to the retina, enabling the perception of the form. What is important is the evidence that makes one believe that there exists an “eye” connected to rays of vision in every creature in the world and in every matter in the universe. Despite the rapid contraction of logic, Kwon seems to be figuring out the ways to materialize this within the realms of painting and sculpture.

Touching Eye(2020) does not evoke eyes that “see” but those that make “contact” with the world, similar to *Kim Namsoo Between the Rainy Season and the Tropical Night*. An important

element in sculptural experience is the substantial experience of this “contact,” which pursues a physical sensation where visual and tactile senses erase a causal relation and get restructured in a new way. Weighed against the “lost time,” it leads to a metaphor that urges the recovery of the potential power to integrate a world outside reality and imaginary power to approach the illusion of painting and sculpture.

Performance: *Sun Facing*

__Manifestation of the First Man by Facing the Sun in the Age of Post-History

Namsoo Kim (Choreography critic)

The performance *Sun Facing*, presented at the solo exhibition of Koon Kwon, *The Return of the Lost Time*(June 3-27, 2021, Boan1942), takes one step further from a new thesis asserted by the exhibition. We might say it was a declaration for a new world of rear-sky and actual manifestation of the threshold experience into that world. One premise of the exhibition is that we are in the age of post-history, that is, a certain historical vacuum in which historicism the Western metaphysics has been planning -which includes the basic design of Antiquity leading into Middle Ages and Modernity, disdain for the prehistoric age and the idea of future apocalypse- drastically severed its stem since postmodernism, preventing the historicist perspective from progressing any longer. Boris Groys argues that the historicist perspective, which has strongly informed art history, is about dealing with a horizon that only moves further away as you try to get closer to the history of artistic practice or fantasy about progress. To refer to *Soul and Form* by Lukács, there has been 'life,' which follows along the horizon, or simple 'living' without a horizon or orientation after historicism was discarded. In other words, we are currently in the state of 'living,' and what it tells us is that we are standing as the last humans under the post-historical condition. The last humans live, as Nietzsche said, in the world of rationalism where creation from instinct and sense of life are no longer possible.

Visual artist Koon Kwon responds to this situation by presenting a thesis that the ancient times of non-modernity and goddess civilizations will return. In order to tackle this ontological crisis under the state of 'living,' we need something more than celebrating the current state of nomadic freedom, or the state of both anticipation and anxiety about freedom that comes from romanticizing the vanished horizon. Further, Kwon proposes a performative life, which migrates, like a wandering island -Crete, for example- while generating its own ontological patterns of inflection and gradually unifies one's own physical state with a cosmic arrangement in a love-of-fate(*amor fati*) way. Why *amor fati*? It is about returning to the incident of expelling the goddess civilization by the so-called Kurgan civilization of Eurasian continent, characterized by wars, nomadism, conquest, massacres and patriarchal centralization of power from thousands of years before Christ, and considering and attempting *tikkun* -the concept of 'temporal turning back' in Hebrew theology- of that civilization as the zeitgeist of the present. Like archaeology of the prehistoric era, this is related to the actual and symbolic return of the goddess civilization that has been buried, mostly by modernity, and I would say the performance *Sun Facing* is what shows the basic framework of this return.

Sun Facing was presented at the rooftop of Boan1942, after noon of June 21, 2021. Widely open towards the sky, the space basically had the condition of physically-interactive connection of celestial bodies, along with the horizontal alignment with a view of Gyeongbokgung Palace, the Blue House and Mountain Bugak. It was rather a cloudy day, but because this performance had the potential of experiencing synchronicity, which was suggested by physicist Wolfgang Pauli and psychoanalyst Carl Jung, I would say 'sun facing'

was not a unilateral process of physically taking in sunlight for photosynthesis but rather provided a time for the sun itself to emerge corresponding to the human body. Thus, synchronicity refers to how the East-Asian correlative thinking appears not only as a complementary principle for modern physics but also as practical changes.

Performer Chae'eun Shin started to dance first, and somehow she completely took in the dance idiosyncrasies she had been seeking, that is, the state of chaos following her gender wavelengths; her dance looked like how butterflies flutter - especially the fluctuations of hind wings. In a way, she didn't make her body appear only as a feminine manifestation but subtly unfolded something asexual, something masculine or something unknown out of it. I say this because Shin seemed to charge her body with great sexual or libido energy and lead extremely interesting rhythms of dance while sweeping the floor and progressing horizontally, and to show those layers of gender and potentials that were tucked inside her female body. This is something of an ongoing dimension, as her choreography and performance *Bukdupalseong Sirutteok* in the previous year already showed her unique pursuit, conveying the gender polymorphism like the flapping wings of butterflies.

When the energy current in the rooftop space of dancing is designed and led in a horizontal way, performer Koon Kwon was standing firm in one position, taking a more static stance. She seemed like a priestess in a way, maybe a heretical or expelled one, with her short bowl-cut hair. At the same time, I would say she revealed a primary body that implies gender transience, or gender inclusivity. With her eyes closed, she held her hand down low vertically towards the open sky to face the sun, adjusting to the frequencies of the sun and the light, and apparently the sun meditation went extremely well even though it was cloudy. In any case, the continuation of this state of facing and its meditative quietness were being juxtaposed with Shin's dynamic dance sweeping the floor. And this first of all reminded me of a scene of leading the sun goddess out of the cave through making one's body available, dancing and other god's laughter that keep growing when she was hiding in the cave as she felt threatened by male violence - the dance of the Goddess Ame-no-Uzume, who decorates and weaves the sky, and a performance that restores the colors of the sky, responding to this dance.

In their performance, the kind of gender affect that is difficult to be seen in visual art vibrated with overwhelmingly intense sexual energy. Sweeping the floor and moving forward, Shin's dance indicated a direction of embracing the mother earth by extending her steps, while Kwon looked towards the sky and faced the sun with lowered hands as if the sky begins from anywhere above the earth; although they were two separate beings, they were merged in a both Blake and Novalis way like the marriage between heaven and earth in the age of post-history (in fact, they showed this alchemical sexual unification in a crucial scene with a kiss). This heaven-earth-eros was something very notable. More subtly, Kwon herself was presented, simply standing on the earth, as the figure of the lightning axe, that is, the figure of authority of the nomadic Kurgan war god who struck the sky. For the re-emergence of goddess civilization that seeks the integration of heaven and earth cannot be achieved by mere proclamation; a symbolic appropriation of such authority of lightning god/war god is crucial. The ideology of goddess civilization is that the sun can only physicalize the sky, the boundless body of the goddess, while ruling the lightning, and this is the most fundamental thought that Kwon pursues.

I would argue that the erotic darkness of the kissing, the scene where Kwon and Shin overlapped with each other as the moon and as the sun like a total eclipse, prepared a potential in the light-darkness intersection and its middle area through the purplish auspicious energy - a potential for a precise and specific experience, or an experience of loving experience, so that we escape the current ontological status man, the stage as the last humans. It is as if 7,000 people experienced the sun dance through a mysterious goddess on a tree -usually referred to as the Holy Mother- with the help of three young shepherds in 1917 at a field in Fatima, Portugal, an incident that renewed the realm of human spiritual wisdom. This was when the axis of post-history was fiercely spinning, in contact with the Russian Revolution of 1917, and as the rationalistic socialism was the most extreme practice of human reason, the sun performance after the goddess appeared was to a large extent something to foreshadow the end of history and a gateway afterwards. In the same year, WWI broke out. The involvement of machine as an actor since modernity led to genocides; the machine guns dealing with the raids in single files in the Napoleonic age was nothing but massacres, which was also how war as the zenith of modern reason took an extreme form of the absolute contradiction between man and machine. This way, the sun dance in Fatima of 1917 was a performance that heralded the historicist apocalypse of the world that was moving towards the establishment of socialist bloc following WWI and the Russian Revolution. Moreover, the fact that the Spanish flu pandemic, which broke out a year after and killed tens of millions of people around the world, took the lives of the two shepherds who enabled the sun dance performance in Fatima is related to our current pandemic. Heaven and earth are not generous.

In the same way, Kwon seems to propose in this current axis of post-history with the surging Covid-19 pandemic, in this current state where the outline of our horizon is no longer maintained but torn, a method for new meditation for the next phase of life. What it means is that the mind of someone in sun meditation was actually one with the original sun in the world of light they look up towards(本心本太陽 昂明), and that this is like a prelude to opening the world of sky goddess. This performance of sun facing, almost identical to the sun dance, foreshadows the return of the goddess civilization, which regards the sun as an object of heaven; at the same time it suggests, through the alchemic operation of two bodies unified, the first human that will appear with the opening of rear-sky, departing from the current state of 'living' where everything leads to ennui, plagiarism and abyss. This is about the sun pursuing the mother earth to the bottom of it via vertical lowness, and about the earth generating water routes itself in an intensely horizontal way, once again seeking the mythological truth of the earth giving birth to the sky. While this is on the level of ideology and authority, it is simply inevitable in Kwon's narrative, and in a sense even realistic.

"No change in the sky, though. I can hardly breathe. Strange to see the Moon still shining up there. (...) The light! From beneath me -inside the Earth- shining upward[.]" (Childhood's End, Arthur Clarke)