

[Humming Bird]

“Humming” is the charm by which Minsu Kim and Gieun Ro can be tied together. Humming comes out extemporaneously and somewhat unconsciously. That humming may be the very attitude we take when we view their works. Their works are based on the painting, but the ways they deal with materials and objects are different. Thus, at a first glance their works do not cross each other, but basically they share common concerns. They search in their works the equilibrium point between seriousness and light amusement, between tension and looseness, and between intuition and imagination. Now chanting low and light sound, let's enter into the *Humming*. This article, aiming at reviewing their works and their artistic attitude, may function as a sort of score for reading their work. But let's start humming without a score first.

Minsu Kim's working process begins with representing a strange sense she has experienced in ordinarily spending daily life. She elaborates that abstract sense till it is rendered into somewhat concrete images (*Two Trees*(2023)). For her, who said often she failed when she portrayed the object, the matter of importance is entire mood of represented image rather than the depiction of that. Let's review on mood itself. In this exhibition, Minsu Kim presents her new works, mainly focusing on paintings that combine birds and natural landscapes(*In the Rain 1, 2, Singing In the rain*(2023)). In the series based on her experience of running in the rain, only the senses imprinted on her gaze and body exist; running subject does not appear naturally. Her uses the acrylic paint as a basic material, which has the quality of soaking and blotting thinly. Thus as a glance, her painting evokes peaceful and static mood, but the final touch of another material¹, in other words, the intervention of another material, gives her paintings tension and dynamics. Basically oil painting can be retouched; erased and overlapped. But in Minsu's works this quality of oil painting is invalid. It has something to do with the process of her workings called 'Last'. In order to modify the touch of oil paint, which is strongly stroked or sprayed on the (sensory) landscape gently captured with acrylic paint, it can give rise to the case of erasing the work itself. By this context we can notice that a matter of importance for her is to harmonize two different aspects; the senses primarily represented on a canvas and the sense of rhythm she has felt at final touch. But final touch can't be always satisfactory. That is why Minsu Kim accepted her works completed with final touch as a 'next screen', and once again tries to find another equilibrium point on

¹ Another additive materials are oil paint and oil pastel <Riverbank>(2023), sticker <Water drops>(2023), and etc., and in her workings they function as a free experiment and the final touch.

the newly given condition. In this context it seems correct to say her paintings are always in the process of changing rather than being revised. In the process of reducing the abstractness of senses into images, Kim's works evoke tenderness and beauty of humming, and give an affirmative note to the quietness and idleness of daily life. But also Minsu Kim's workings allow both to artist herself and the viewer complicated feelings of tension and amusement and the sense of staccato-like rhythm. Minsu Kim's own artistic design of taking limit and overcoming only make it possible.

On the other hand, Gieun Ro's paintings begins from whimsical imagination. She asks, "let's imagine about the daily life of pigeons." "Fishes living in the water are curious about the world beyond the water, aren't they?" This somewhat whimsical imagination can be a key to comprehend her world view. Carps, pigeons, wild cats, and wild dogs are trivial objects in the town regardless of their aspect of existence (being taken care of or being discarded.) But in her paintings they are main characters as Ro projects human thoughts and feelings into them. She chooses as artistic objects a crouching bird with half-shut eyes, a lazily napping dog, and a cat with vigilant eyes. And her use of oriental ink as main material, and her style of commanding loose line and blotting with oriental ink, and the method of using clumsily scribed letters and of using oriental powdered paint for low chroma, all these suggests her way of thinking and a certain kind of attitude toward human beings. It may be needless to define clearly and simply such emotions as compassion, sympathy, attachment, loneliness, curiosity, idleness, etc involved in her delicate and complex view. Above all, her concerns are on human existence. But her paintings based on the observation of human beings does not represent human beings directly, instead indirectly representing them through the media of non-human beings. It is based on her imagination which passes beyond human limit stucked in the earth.

Let's examine the oriental ink she uses. Originally, oriental ink fits for painters to make thick light and shade and to command powerful touches. Thus, the standard of oriental painting is the vivid and realistic representation of objects with refined and sensitive touches. But Gieun Ro uses oriental ink in opposite direction to this standard. Lines drawn with oriental ink become turbid if it is drawn twice. That is why oriental paintings are usually drawn by one touch. Under this condition she draws lines into which such series of emotions and attitude as hesitation, trembling, tension and amusement, etc., are plainly projected. Naturally, there is not any sense of speed in his drawings. But her own way of using incorrigible oriental ink suggests other sign of her concerns and style. From the very first, Ro may choose oriental ink to represent herself plainly who is drawing, in other words, to represent her mind which is observing creatures in the society and to express her emotions

which she has felt for the creatures in the society. From her perspective-free screen produced by the effect of thick and high density, of cloudy coloring, of chiaroscuro, and intentional blotting, we can find the process of searching the balance between lines and oriental ink, in other words, between subjects and materials.

It is in some extent undeniable that Gieun Ro is influenced by traditional folk painting² as she uses Korean papers attached in many layers and oriental ink, and as she frequently portrays the humorous expression and behavior of folk people, and as she completes her drawings with simple depiction. Persistently using oriental ink as main materials, Gieun Ro organizes her screen in the direction of relaxing tension which her way of workings can produce by unraveling wittily her view of present time on a screen. On the other hand, basically representing a strange sense she has experienced at an instant in a daily life with pictorial sense, Minsu Kim chooses the direction of producing sense of tension and of solidness on her screen with the help of free experiments of materials. In this way they are different.

In this exhibition, the common imaginary object for Minsu Kim and Gieun Ro is the bird. And it meets once again with “humming”, which the attitude of viewing this exhibition naturally requires as I mentioned at the beginning. Two artists take flexible attitude when they inevitably meet the difficulties in their process of workings and try to overcome them in their own way. “Humming” is a sort of metaphor for that attitude. The moment when they accept the difficulties as new phases and aspects, and a new source of amusement rather than something burdensome, and the moment when they finally find out the equilibrium point through that process can be liken to the moment of “humming” done extemporaneously and pleasantly. By the way, if “humming” would meet with “bird”, it becomes “hummingbird”, namely, the real bird which is tiny but very fast. Vibrating its wings eight thousand times in a second, it changes directions and speed freely. Like humming in the hummingbird's free and incessant vibrating, senses and emotions stirred up by the images in their paintings move continuously along the track of daily life, searching for the equilibrium point which can be made when the images meet the most matching materials.

² <Neko> (2023) The composition resembles the Korean folk painting of tigers, Traditional Korean Painting of Flowers and Birds <Spring is coming> (2023), Traditional Korean Painting of Flowers and Plant <Congratulations> (2023), Traditional Korean Painting of Fish (<What a beautiful>, <Nice to meet you> (2023)) and Traditional Korean Painting of Bird and Animal <ZZZ> (2023).