

A crystal of profound and abstractive variation made out of soil and fire
- Study on the world of pottery arts of Junghoon Yoon

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A potter, Junghoon Yoon has been presenting the works with various spectrums as if he were a truth seeker. Starting by Cheolhwa Buncheong ceramic works based in Gyeryongsan pottery village in the northern part of Gyeryong Mountain with dreaming of revival of Cheolhwa Buncheong ceramic 25 years ago, he has been presenting unglazed pottery, glazed pottery using crack or crystal glaze through exhibitions. His works show that he has been doing experiments with various firing methods. Also his works cross the borderline between vessels and objects and continue seeking for truth and thinking about the origin of concreteness and abstractness. There are two types of artists in pottery; one is to handle soil and interested in the plasticity of clay and the other pays attention to those changes happening in the kiln and Junghoon Yoon is applicable to both for his wide range of works.

The pottery works of Junghoon Yoon are made by using Raku firing and roofless firing through burnishing process to get the texture of earthenware that is excavated from the ground and they have been improving step by step by going through interesting changes. The first exhibition previewed his wide spectrum of works with various vessels and conception structures for the future. So to speak, it was like an overture from opera that shows outline of the story or an introduction from a book or a thesis that tells the summary of the content or the purpose of study. The most outstanding work of his was the series of 'broken ceramics'. After completing clay formation, applying color-soil, drying and first firing, the artist broke the pottery in pieces on purpose to get visual effect and the broken pieces were put together into the original one. During glaze firing, the arrangement for fire exposure is changed for color change then reforming the pieces to make original formation. The series contained 'relation' in a semantic way. The characteristic of his 2nd exhibition after 7 year of break was 'telling the story' instead of 'showing.' The story in the first exhibition was about the relations between individuals or materials. The artist paid attention to metaphorical relations by contrasting or harmonizing the colors of natural soil. It was a message-oriented exhibition expressing delicate relation in depth by arranging each work as individuals. The characteristic of his 3rd exhibition can be defined as 'transition to abstractness'. It shows the color-field abstract which is expressed on the surface of objects made by roofless firing in addition to formation-field abstract. His series of angled bottles that are titled as 'Ggeomeokyi abstract angled bottles' takes on a different type of abstract from common angled bottles. They indicate that his works are transiting into abstract field unlike the meaning of the title.

In this exhibition, his works consist of the series of 'angled bottles' and the series of 'cubes', which have shown his accumulated techniques and have deepened abstractness. In terms of abstract angled bottles, they have strange shapes which look like upside down staircase but they remind me of the portraits from Picasso during his cubism period. It can be considered that the artist presented his works by certain motivation after his strong impression of nature was inherited and intensified either intentionally or unintentionally. The title of works of Junghoon Yoon still follows the pottery naming standards. However, I would like to name his series of 'angled bottle' as 'invisible road' or 'mysterious road'. It is because of the fact that his works remind me of our lives in modern times not knowing where we are going or where we are by seeing his upside-down staircase as Roland Barthes called it 'Punctum' (Interpreting the works based on viewer's experience regardless of the intention of the artist.) In terms of the series of 'cubes', each work is a mass in various shapes. The characteristic of this series is the coexistence of straight lines and curved lines in a mass. The surface and edge that are making shapes have both straight lines and curved lines. The series of cube has uneven left and right and top and bottom and it is represented as uneven round shaped mass. The common characteristic between those two series is 'tension'. The tension coming from improper shape of works makes viewers focus on enjoying works. Instability made from tilted center is well enough to produce tension. Tension is as important as stability for art works. For example, minimal correspondence series by Ufan Lee gives tension from relations between the spots and without tension, it is meaningless to speak about his correspondence series.

Unlike other vessels made by wheel throwing, Junghoon Yoon's pottery works are made by many different steps. To summarize the steps, 1) Forming by coiling method and slab method 2) Painting color-soil to get color-field abstractness 3) Burnishing the surface by using spoon or stainless to get smooth and shiny texture like marble 4) Firing individually by using roofless firing, Raku firing and a part of Raku firing 5) Completing the work by getting various colors through the reaction between fire and soil by using burning substances such as husk or sawdust.

Author's Note / Ambiguity of Concreteness and Abstractness! / I feel like I am standing on a border line every day. They are strictly two different concepts but I don't see the difference in terms of basis. What is the basis of concreteness? What is the basis of abstractness? Does the real shape of what we feel come from what we see? Or from its attribute? Or only feeling can substitute it? Expressing daily lives is to transmit the expression of certain behavior or consciousness into something we can see. So if the boundary of behavior or consciousness is defined, the expression method

has to be restricted so I must face limitation at some point. Sometimes, I would rather want to meet myself facing the silence in the woods than going to my workroom.

We can see how much thoughts he puts about abstractness and concreteness through his note. Junghoon Yoon is so into the abstract works by Mark Rothko and we can assume that his concerns are about the inner side by his saying "I would rather want to meet myself facing the silence in the woods." It is also connected to his motif of works that he wants to use underlying sub-consciousness as his motif by pulling it into the area of consciousness. In response to his long-time concerns, he tried the transmission to his unique abstractness shedding from ambiguity of concreteness and abstractness. I would say concrete shape and abstract expression of the surface are coexisting in his previous works but he is presenting complete abstractness even for formative elements this time. Furthermore, the quality of work is also improved in terms of color-field abstract by firing. Excellent works are produced by the harmony of color and formation. Since the civilization, the artists with aesthetic sense have been doing anything to get the most beautiful and noble colors. The colors from nature such as soil, minerals, plants or animals are made into painting colors after mixing with materials. Painters could accomplish the great works by using the painting colors made from nature. It is the same for pottery. In pottery, they make glaze by using minerals and make various colors from the harmony of fire and soil by using burning substances. However, making good colors out of the harmony of soil and fire is not easy at all. For this reason, the works of Junghoon Yoon which are made out of soil and fire without using glaze give us a big surprise and this is the core of his potteries. Also his colors resemble nature. Unlike artificial color system invented by Munsell, his colors are profound and mysterious. Containing the mysteries of the universe, the pure artistry of his profound works is the most remarkable achievement that he has ever made.

The question of 'Is pottery really a part of real art?' has been drawing a line between art which seeks for beauty and craft which seeks for utility since the announcement of 'Useful objects can't be art.' by Kazimir Malevich was introduced in the early 20th century. Eventually, the phenomenon produced by binary separatism has formed the atmosphere in which art and life are divided. But since then, there has been a creative union of a potter, Andre Metthey, Henri Matisse and Kees Van Dongen followed by the magical union of Josep Llorens Artigas, Raoul Dufy, Gorges Braque and Joan Miro in addition to the meeting between Georges Ramie and Pablo Picasso. So the artistic achievements made by these meetings between pure artists and potters are hard to be ignored. Also outstanding ceramic sculpture works beyond the boundary

of sculpture and pottery made by Arman and Anthony Caro as well as the utility achieved by functional potter provided the opportunity to experience art in an overall and in multi-sensory way to generate a new impression about artistry of pottery. Furthermore, academic field also played an important role to raise the pottery to the real art by holding 'Pottery art critic symposium' in 1992 with its announcement 'Pottery is an art.' A critic, John Pero mentioned, "The line between art and pottery has become a dotted line". However, the dispute between the groups of pro-pottery and pro-art is still continuing.

One thing we need to pay attention to is that there are still many artists who are focusing on working in their ways apart from this endless dispute. Junghoon Yoon is also one of the artists who is doing his work in the workroom instead of being involved in conceptual dispute. A potter, Peter Voulkos left a famous saying "The moment you touch the clay, it starts moving. You need to learn how to dance with clay." Junghoon Yoon has already begun his exciting dance with clay and watching his dance performance which will get more exciting will be very interesting.