

# Art Critic

by Lim Chang-seop

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Is This a Happy World to Live in?!

On the Exhibition 'Looking at... Being Looked at ...' Lim Chang-seop (Art Critic)

'Vision' is the source of consciousness. Within the sphere of subjectivity based on visual perception, the object is not a thing but a value. This kind of phenomenon is based on the departure of our experience to a perceptual phenomenon. Furthermore, phenomenological reduction requires a modification of our attitude toward intuitive knowledge of the essence that transcends any given condition of the individual object.

This process of phenomenology does not differ from that of painting in that it depicts the world seen through the artist's eyes. The artist believes the world is a source of rationality and fundamental attitude of Logos. I look at the world, in turn, the world is fused into my body and how I perceive. Therefore, the world, my perception and my body form an undivided field. At this point, the world and I form a multiple relationship. That is to say, the world and my body are one and I look at the world while being influenced by the world. Not only does the world look at me, but also I look at the world and I am looked at by the world.

The artist attempts to visibly reduce all aspects of being through this kind of intersection of visual perceptions, while assigning the invisible to the visible.

Realizing that 'Looking at... Being Looked at...', the title of Kim Jae-gyu's solo show, seems familiar, I consulted some books. Maurice Merleau-Ponty said in his <Phenomenology of Perception> that perception does not occur without physical interaction. Sure! It teaches us, for instance, no physical contact occurs without touch.

This kind of activity is developed around being. Nevertheless, without realizing that my perception is true reality, one does not realize birth and death.

Though one is aware that everybody has been born and will die some-day, one cannot ever recognize birth and death. This is because perception of the subject of experience starts at the moment of birth and then, ends up at the moment of death. As his philosophy is considered 'the Philosophy of Ambiguity', it is complex.

First of all, I suggest we observe Kim Jae-gyu's work as a perceptual phenomenon of experience. His work is made of white porcelain with no decoration. Only part of the Qianziwen – a thousand Chinese characters – in black, is transferred onto the surface. They are in the shape of houses. There are trees between the houses. There are also animals representing the twelve Horary Signs. Cloud-shaped objects are hanging above them like little clouds floating along a mountain ridge. All of these objects are about palm-size. Yet, the lamb-shaped object in the middle is exceptionally big compared with the others. Each part can be an individual piece, and at the same time, all the parts are a piece of the whole. Parts become the whole, while the whole becomes parts. It seems my visual perception and consciousness are mixed up like a confusion of what I look at and what is being looked at. Kim Jae-gyu firmly believes in his beautiful childhood memories and the origin of the Qianziwen. He has been cherishing for decades the memory of viewing the town from the top of the mountain with his father. It seems that he still remembers the scene from the mountain top as a happy place full of joy and beautiful things. It is generally said that the Qianziwen was created overnight in order to reveal on the truth of this world. His belief in the legend of the Qianziwen is so strong that he still talks about it with great enthusiasm, as if the sublime meaning of the text is still applicable to the present.

However, the visible and tangible world is not the world as a whole. In Merleau Ponty's words, there exists undefined time, that is to say, the moment when I do not know what I am. If I go beyond the limit, what is left behind myself does not exist without visual presence.

The straight lines in Mueller–Lyer's optical illusion theory, are not the same or do not differ in length.



What is visible or what is intended is not everything. From the moment of departure from the artist's hands, what the viewer perceives and what kind of value is endowed in the art become more important. That is the meaning and value structurally functioning inside the art. Kim's ceramic work has multiple meanings. The value and significance is given to his art not only by the artist himself but also by the viewers. That is the power, suppression and inconsistency of the reality. That is a misfortune.

The pale color of the white porcelain and the black ink forming the Qianziwen lead us to the pure perception after all desires and frustrations have disappeared. It is impossible to have anger and resistance against unexperienced inconsistency and authority. The only thing we have is pure perception of a little girl looking up at the blue sky with wide open eyes. That is the difference between what is looked at and what I look at. That is what 'difference' is – the differences in endless time and space between what I look at and what is looked at, between any given meanings. For this reason, it is said Kim's work contains multiple meanings.

Again in Merleau–Ponty's words, 'the visible contains the invisible. And the world consists with the antithesis of the visible and the invisible.' Through phenomenological reduction of perception and this awareness, we can see the essence of Kim's ceramic work. Perception through the body will enable us to observe the rationality and Logos of the world that transcends meanings given to individuals.