

## **Formative Language as an Exploration for Identity**

Park, Cheol-hwa (Professor, College of Art, Chung-ang University)

There are many conceptual frames such as representation, expression, form and system for explaining the secret of art works, but none of them seems to be an answer with universal persuasive force. The fact that there is no answer to a secret sounds unfortunate but, on the other hand, it can be a fortune. Although it may be regretful to have to embrace uncertainty with no clear answer, it is exciting that we may continue new exploration for unraveling secrets. This is why people compare art to a journey. Unceasing human efforts to find new features of beings and the world, that is, the journey of their souls are the essential nature of art.

Art after the French Revolution, namely, modern art find the meaning of its existence in the creation of 'newness.' While art in the old regime before the Revolution was primarily close to techniques for decorating the world, modern art was an adventure that left the old world to search for a new world by raising questions about the existing world and life itself. In many cases, they were parting as severing ties with old and, at the same time, embracing the new. Anyway, it was a mission and a privilege given to modern art to cast away the yoke of old-fashioned customs, to deny stiffened sense and perception, and to set out on a journey to find the possibility of new life and a new world. They leave in order to be new. This point was summarized by the words "Man has to wander as long as he struggles" in the great German writer Goethe's Faust.

Long ago, Moon Kyung Jung explained her works by using the theme 'road.' "My work in the past rubbed out layered colors and left the trace of a road in the empty space, and then drew something and wiped it away. It was giving shape to the uncertain road of life. At this time, I tried to depict my way roaming around the absolute value in my work." In fact, paper or canvas confronted by the artist is a mirror reflecting one's soul, and lines and colors running on it may be one's gestures for figuring out the face of the soul, namely, one's own identity. Of course, identity is not a fixed entity. Like nature, a being continues to change and be in motions. This is why art is a journey that is started newly every moment. I am 'I of the present' and not I. 'True I' can be met only through death, and we as beings are continuously evolving into a 'new I.' It is to meet ego who reaches the remotest and sublimates to the highest.

Moon Kyung Jung's works show the journey of such changes and generations. She majored in Korean paintings, but went over to New York early in her 20s and studied Western painting there. Since then, she has built her own world while moving the base of her work and life between Korea and the U.S. several times. Using various materials including paper and canvas, as well as various colors and techniques, her

work traverses East and West, arts and realities, traditions and experiments, and construction and dismantlement. Sometimes adding and sometimes removing, she explores an image exposed at a certain moment. The image must be her ego itself.

As mentioned above, however, ego is neither fixed nor single. In this sense, ego is something familiar and, at the same time, strange. As soon as it is named, its face is changed, and no sooner is it thought to have been caught than it slips away. In this way, ego is the composite generation of 'the unknown.' This is why Moon Kyung Jung calls her recent work 'Journey to the Unknown.' She is saying that the possibility to meet the 'true I' is obtained only through denying and leaving the 'I of the present.' Searching for the identity and the face of the soul through denial and generation is the journey as an art.

Her recent works are collages. The materials of her collages are not special but rather ordinary mundane things that we can see around easily. She starts from daily life. In a word, our ego cannot leave daily life, and even if it leaves daily life, in the end, it returns to it as all journeys in great myths do. Of course, it assumes a more mature ego on returning. Moon Kyung Jung's collages are in essence of a journey. By attaching, detaching and moving daily things, she is taking out her familiar ego and moving it to a new place and, through this, she is finding another ego. In this sense, it is exact and keen that Moon Kyung Jung summarizes her collages as "one plus one is one."

Accordingly, her collages are a ritual of love to daily life. Leaving daily life through parting from the familiar ego is an adventure of existence for 'being born again' with the daily life. Without such an adventure, daily life is nothing but a prison to the ego and our ego can attain 'flowing freedom' as a possibility of generation. Therefore, genuine leaving is love that is born again as a new ego and returns, and the journey is a joyful festival in that it is full of the energy of love. The frequent appearance of 'dance' in the names of Moon Kyung Jung's recent works indicates that her works themselves have a meaning as a festival.

What are particularly interesting in this exhibition are her drawings. They contain the colors and brush strokes of Korean paintings. Applying and washing out colors and drawing lines on paper in Korean paintings are similar by nature to attaching, detaching and moving in Western collages. Moon Kyung Jung's drawings are stepping stones that bridge between Korean paintings and Western ones in the dimension of technique and, at the same time, are tracks showing that her exploration for ego is consistent. Her 'flowing freedom,' which may look wild at a glance, is expressing the life force of the artist who sets out a journey in search of her identity. Thus, it is natural that this festival of formative language, which may be called 'A dance of existence,' invites us heartily to taste joy.

