

Sculpture of Mun Min

The portrait of modern people expressed through sculpture

Kho, Chung-Hwan art critic

Here's a bustling crosswalk full of people. Some encapsulated in their smartphones, some tapping their feet to the rhythm of music blaring in their earphones, some staring into the mirror fixing their hair and makeup, some sipping coffee from a take-out cup, and some gazing into the distance. They're all immersed in their own thoughts. Just a few steps away, there's another crosswalk, full of another group of people doing just the same. Though it's another crosswalk, with another group of people, not much seems different. This, probably is true with all the other crosswalks ahead of me. It'll be a new crosswalk, but it'll feel the same. It'll be a new batch of faces, but they'll look familiar. As if I were to rewind the tapes over and over again, it'll be the same.

Repetition is fascinating. Like a mouse on a wheel, repetition is fascinating, and the repetition of daily life, even more so. As a cynic, it's interesting how passive we've become to this repetition and how we've accepted it as our daily life and our reality. At this point, there isn't much that us humans can do. No one forced us to make these choices, no contract nor threat; but it's only through our own freedom that we all act as others do. No one actively tries to escape this reality. In fact, no one can escape. We don't strive for freedom and even in freedom we choose not to escape. It seems as though we all make a deliberate choice to stay within these boundaries. And it is exactly that, a set of boundaries. Unspoken, invisible, spiritual boundaries. These boundaries are grey between those who can't and those who won't escape, but just as effective. In reality these boundaries don't hold us enslaved, thus, they aren't true boundaries at all. Ultimately they too are built by ourselves.

Mun Min calls his latest work episode 2 of <You including myself> (previously there was an episode 1. He installed a pedestal in the middle of statues that looked like human for people to display themselves and look back upon themselves. Through this, he made oneself be part of the statue). It sounds like a theatrical play, not only the title, but the creative process as well. Like a theatrical play (dramatization of a situation), theater of the absurd (dramatization of irrational of human situation), and farcical play (compression of dramatic situation as a short story or a snapshot). Here, the artist offers a type of paragon. Georg Lukacs had referred to the model as creation in the past, probably in regard to the artist's ability to pull meaning and principle from the use of the strife in daily

life and incoherent reality as their ingredient. Thus, the artist offers the paragon, and in some cases creates them as well. As paragon means understanding based on the frames, everyone can figure out the meaning at a glance. Although the work is recommendation and modeling of the author's sense of identity (or a critical mind), it receives generality and sympathy along with powers of persuasion.

Then, how is the artist proposing the model. He shows the model of daily lives of modern people; the everyday life of people, the typical image. He suggests the life of endlessly repeated routine, caging themselves in a frame of a sieve, maybe satisfied with the cast molded by oneself. He shows the life's absurdities of our contemporaries who although have free will, stick to one's area of activity (maybe at the same time cannot break the wall which one created). According to Milan Kundera, the reason of tragic life of people is due to loss of 'Tragedy'. Traditionally, or typically, tragedy worked together with tragic life (of tragic recognition of life) and had deep relationship with fatalism. However, unfortunately, people no longer live a tragic life nor believe fatalism. Disbelieving in fatalism means not taking revelation for truth at the same time. That's why it is tragedy. It is irony of Kundera. Human beings living today lives the life of the very irony and the author shows the example of the life.

The intersection symbolizes microcosm of life. People can go everywhere that one wants to as the road is open in all directions. It is the free will of individual, but it can't be all explored. Only one can choose one way that he can go to. It is the trap of free will. Just like it, life is a trap. It looks like opened in all directions, but in fact, everyone chooses their own street and move on. The trick is this, once one chooses a street and take the road, the other streets close. It is another boundary. The people inside the boundary, they hang around just like an isolated island. As everyone falls into themselves, they do not meet each other and end up creating another crossroad individually. They are facing all four directions, still being in themselves. The stage fades out as the play ends, the author collects the scattering corners of the intersection and pieces it together. As well as seeking for life of communicating and living together, the author wishes to meet and recover the relationships although no meetings and connection happen in the reality.

Like this, the artist's work resembles a play as well as a theatre of situations. However, strictly, it is only an introduction of the theatrical element, not a drama (The conditions are same although it is seen as a performance rather than a drama). It is a sculpture, made based on memories about daily activities. It has a story, episode, and a representation of a situation. Especially, it shapes a common situation where everyone lives in the frame that one created by themselves. Everyone who visits the exhibition will act out another theatrical situation despite themselves. Although it is not exactly same, people will create a situation of a sort participate, and the repetition will complete the sculpture. It is

completed by the participation of the audience. Interoperability of aesthetic is working here as well, like episode 1.

Therefore, the sculpture acts as a stage props. When the act ends, nothing more than the props is life on the stage. This also happens when all the audience leaves after the exhibition. It is a pantomime to participate on the situation and set the scene through silence (Still here, the author's sculpture weaves around the play. It is theatrical). They are quadrangle people. Quadrilateral boxes, great and small are put together into form of a human being. The enclosed square boxes refer to the boundaries. The human figures molded symbolizes people trapped inside the frame they created by themselves. These figures have head but they don't have face nor features. Not even arms are created. In that way, it will probably represent an imperfect human being, but strangely, it has expressive face. With joint structure of the least, figures made through a box in a row and attached forms are looking, being lost in thought, and walking with hunched shoulder looks like having their unique sensibilities. It must be supported by persistent observation and affection of movement of people, as well as emotions and facial expressions.

Metal molding is used to create these people. The metal is ambivalent. It can create cold, mechanical, blank, and neutral atmosphere according to the way it is dealt with (especially stainless steel), as well as creating friendly, warm, organic and rich facial expressions (iron in particular). It probably will have some relationship with the nature of the author. The author decides to be friendly. In episode 1 forging is used, while in episode 2, aluminum casting is used to create the rich surface texture of soil and add organic taste. Although each lock themselves in a box, it will be an imagery of people who keeps one's wound inside oneself. It is the externalization of one's inside represented through texture. The author is illustrating the dual portrait of modern people who locked oneself in a frame of themselves, preserving the inside of each one, at the same time keeping oneself through trapping.