

## **Between What is Drawn and What is Being Drawn - On the Works of Lee Kang So -**

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2015

To say that Lee Kang So's works always have a start is also to say that there is only a start, lacking process and completion. Considering that painting on a canvas implies completion, Lee's works always aim for incompleteness. An incomplete painting is only possible while it is still in the process, but Lee daringly offers this as a state of completion. Is this not a paradox in that it aims to be not drawn while being drawn at the same time? Is this even possible? Lee's works are not born as a resulting objective being and lie somewhere between process and completion, in other words, exist somewhere between what is drawn and what is being drawn, then could it not be said that this assumption is the very reason for the existence of his works?

The experimental works from Lee's early days include the tavern which opened for a week in the Myeongdong Gallery in Seoul in 1973, and the exhibition at the Paris Biennale in 1975 where a rooster tied to a stake created a circle on white powder. Though the art medium and circumstance of these works are completely different from the canvas paintings of today, there is an interesting similarity in that the process was incorporated into the work. We can no longer see the perplexity on the faces of those that walked into the tavern within the gallery, but we can still witness people standing in front of Lee's works and tilting their heads, wondering if the work is unfinished. Just as those that walked into the tavern did not fully accept the fact that they were a part of the work, people do not realize that the very act of standing in front of the painting is one of the elements leading to the completion of the work.

The images in Lee's works may be limited, but there is a rich selection of images - duck, deer, boat, mountain, house, and cloud appear continuously. The images are right in the space between what is drawn and what is being drawn, to be better described not as being drawn but as being placed on the painting in the moment. So all beings exist not in full maturity but in their incomplete state of being created. It displays a much more novel approach than the deictic or objective state of existence, not to mention the extraordinary moment of birth.

The expression "being created" rather than "drawn" implies breaking out of the frame, or the flat

surface of the work. In a non-closed surface, the work is placed within an open space, or the universe. A space where massive dark clouds cover the skies above, and a flock of ducks grace the waters down below. Lightning and thunder will strike and heavy rain will fall any minute. Such passion and complacency, turbulence and calmness, and part and whole create a balance in the massiveness of the universe.

The originality of Lee Kang So's expression is inherent in the suggestive rise of all beings flickering in the work. This suggestive expression refers to no other than the depiction of the image using the stroke. The rapid stroke of the brush perfectly befits the suggestive rise of the image. The duck, deer and cloud are just a trace of the stroke before they become duck, deer, and cloud. Before they take the form of a being, they are just a form of stroke drawn freely. Thus Lee's paintings can also be considered writings. They aim to be in a state where writing and painting are not distinguished. Painting and calligraphy have long been considered the one and the same, from the same roots but with different names. Perhaps Lee's paintings are faithful to this belief. So the image rise as a situation rather than a description, and the writing rise as an energy that fills the entire work rather than a simple gesture.

In artist Lee Il Wha's discussion on paintings, It is said that "In drawing an object, acquiring description is no better than acquiring form, and acquiring writing is no better than acquiring grace." The same can be said of works of Lee Kang So, characterized by the fact that it aims for form over description and grace over writing.