

Artist's Statement

Flâneur Note

Reading Obsession and 'The Grave of Books' Series

While preparing for my second solo exhibition 'The Grave of Books' last year, I found that the namesake pen drawing series of the 110 pieces, which I had been doing from 2010 to 2012, was affecting my present work. And around that time I wanted to organize an exhibition that could put together the pen drawing series. 'The Grave of Books' series are works that emerged at the time when I had an obsession with reading. My reading obsession began with an obsession with time, and I thought at that time that what can materialize time is books and work. When I looked at canvases tucked into the shelves and stacked up in my studio, I was able to forget about anxiety because I felt my time was materialized and I had not just spent time but preserved some of it.

My first obsession with reading was to understand the world. The 'Charcoal' series of 2008, which was probably the starting point of my work, was a well-finished job much more than I had ever expected, and people around me wanted to hear about that work. Until then, I

was just worried about how to draw a picture, how to draw to have a handsome result. It was difficult for me to explain the work and I felt uncomfortable about having to explain the pictures in language. On the other hand, I also came to know that I could not find a clear reason for drawing these pieces myself. The words I found to understand why I had done these drawings were too superficial and abstract. And I knew too little to make it more clear. I turned to reading to understand my drawings. And I thought that to explain those pictures, I should know about the world around me.

'The Grave of Books' is the title that emerged when I was going out of the book obsession around 2013. There was nothing going well at that time, and I was becoming negative and pessimistic in everything. To justify my anxiety, I blamed the world, society, and the past. I had the idea that my work and books could get rid of the anxiety about the future, so I was obsessed with it. However, the stacked books and paintings came to my pessimistic daily life as a greater burden. Along with the thought that the time I preserved was not helpful to me at all who was restless, I was able to get away from the reading obsession. Perhaps this has affected the title of 'The Grave of Books'.

Works in the pen drawing series 'The Grave of Books', which was derived from the reading obsession, came out like scribbles. From one

image to another, I completed the drawings and expanded them on A5 paper without any worries or planning. It was as if the sceneries, time, and worlds that I saw through the books came out to my fingertips. Over the years, I categorized the 110 drawings, put titles to them, and looked for the sources of the reference, wondering why I did these drawings. And I wanted these drawings to be made into a book. I thought that the time spent on the work could be persuasive enough because it was time spent with books in the bookshelf, not the time used in the exhibition hall.

Painterly Expression

The 'painterly expression' I talk about here is something that comprehends the brushwork, often called abstract expression, which is used to blur the boundaries between the figurative and non-figurative and to coordinate the plastic or emotional lines without a specific meaning.

My priority when working in the past was to convey narratives. In order to communicate the narratives more efficiently, more and more constraints came into the process of drawing, and painterly expression was one of such constraints. Though it is a very personal metaphor, I saw the pictures in terms of sentences. I tried to put the image

elements into the pictures to make them clear-cut compositions like the subject, the object and the predicate in a sentence, and the painterly expression seemed to be a rhetoric that paid more attention to the appearance than the contents of the sentence.

Along with the increasing number of constraints, I thought that my images were becoming simple compositions too easy to turn into a linguistic medium. Since I changed my material from paper to panel recently, I have come to be able to use multiple layers and rough lines easily; and thanks to the funding and residency I secured, production costs and space constraints have been eliminated, allowing me to experiment with a variety of methods more freely. I am now resolving one by one the constraints created so far. For future work, I plan to make the most of what I have not tried along with painterly expressions. Further, I try to ponder over whether the constraints I had created to convey stories were really necessary.

Anarchism and Affirmation

My twenties were a period of efforts to understand things that I could not understand in the world that seemed absurd to me. The knowledge I had accumulated seemed like just words floating in the air, and the people in the reality seemed to create complicated

interests out of a simple passion of greed. It was strange that a lax and incomprehensible world was going on. From a certain moment, I thought that the whole thing would not change at all, and wondered how long I should watch what I do not understand.

Yet eventually, change has come this year. The rallies I participated in the hope that people would not get hurt have become like culture festivals where many citizens participate in, and the words that I felt abstract seemed to be getting increasingly meaningful. With a sense of relief and accomplishment, I once again looked back on my thoughts and attitudes I had. Interestingly enough, the first thing that came to my mind was the word 'affirmation'. Until then, I abhorred the affirmation that was consumed in our society. It was consumed in a very irresponsible and obsessive manner, and in some cases, it even assumed a form of Shamanism. Was it that the thin and irresponsible symbol suddenly came across my mind because it was related to my surroundings and social changes? Looking back, I always tried to start from negation, and the world I looked at was a dialectic of negation. Theories starting with rational and sensible criticism and negation. Perhaps in this negative attitude, I have tried to avoid frustration by thinking that it is natural to see the absurd world around me.

I was reading books about anarchism. In fact, I was attracted to

anarchism because I thought it was a form of skepticism, which was a more responsible attitude than an unconditional condemnation of everything, and I cannot deny that I was also attracted to the preconceived idea of anarchism. As I read those books, I found that anarchism was a very utopian idea representing a relatively high standard of human consciousness. Overall, I could not agree with that very much, but the point was interesting enough. In the end, anarchism could be summarized as the belief 'Human beings can make a better world.' I was somewhat puzzled to see 'affirmation' in the books I turned to in order to find a new kind of negation. And I was interested in the fact that the spirit of affirmation was creating such various layers and meanings.

Exhibition of Flâneur Note and Drawing Book

For this reason, I found I was hardly able to have an exhibition only with the initially planned 'The Grave of Books' drawing series. The past work and future work were likely to change in concept and attitude, and I thought 'The Grave of Books' series would not be able to explain them all. For my work was the result of my responses to the surrounding environment and social factors, and my future work was simply not likely to continue with these factors. I was looking for a more comprehensive concept, and what I found was 'flâneur.' The

idea of 'flâneur' might be too abstract, which can include all artists and urban dwellers, but I think that these drawings, which I have categorized and sorted out for seven years, can substantiate my 'flâneur.'

The title of the drawing book was changed from 'The Grave of Books' to 'Flâneur Note.' I wanted to make it a little more cheerful, and in order to match the temperature and weight of the drawings, I finished the drawings I have done this year in a lighter mood in material and expression. I added 80 drawings to the 110 sheets in 'The Grave of Books' series. And finally I have produced a drawing book of 400 pages that consists of a total of eight categories according to the subject matters, materials, and compositions including 'Strolling', 'Lousy Painter', 'Strange Tales', 'The Heavy Tree', 'The Crown of Fools', 'The Face of Ghost', 'To Be the Oriental', and 'The Grave of Books'. This volume consists of drawings about images, works on reinterpretation and reorganization of stories from folk tales and fables, the aspects of society as I look at, experience, and imagine, and the records of my struggle and doubt about my life as an artist.

The exhibition hall on the 3rd floor displays the pen drawing series and the drawing book that compiled them, and the 2nd floor shows a preview of my future works.

'Flâneur Note' is a record of my work for the last seven years as I observed the world and deliberated and ruminated on my role in it. Sometimes you may find my works done in 2010 and in 2017 in the same category. And there I am looking at the same theme with a different priority and attitude.

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