Meandering White Night: Yunkyung Jeong’s Solo Exhibition ≪Archetype of Night≫

By | Sujin Jeong

In 『Blue & Green』, writer Virginia Woolf paints with language abstract images of the colors blue and green. In the world of green, when sharp blades of palm tree glittering in the sun drop a pool of green, appear the camels lurching through the desert and the frog flopping over a white blossom.[[1]](#footnote-1) When green disappears, then unfolds the world of blue where a body with a mouth and nostrils, spouting columns of water, and blue scales appear along with a sound of waves.[[2]](#footnote-2) If you brood over the brush strokes of her language, the world of green resembles a room bathed in sunlight and that of blue resembles a boat in a fishing village. However, the worlds of green and blue, painted by Woolf, are very strange and unfamiliar while, at the same time, bearing resemblance to a scene in reality. For she has created a new world that doesn’t really exist in reality, namely, “the world of abstraction”.

Yoonkyung Jeong’s solo exhibition 《Archetype of Night》 also depicts a world of abstraction. In this exhibition, the artist focuses on the color of sea salt, reformulating the existing color in her own way. The new color seems to have spooned out some green and blue and, instead, swallowed a handful of tidal flats that reveal at low tide. Jeong’s “Sea Salt” series reminds us of various elements of her life, but definitely creates a new world on canvas that doesn’t have real existence.

Over the white night cast with sea salt color, countless lines and membranes overlap to build the new world. A bulbil[[3]](#footnote-3) that fell on the red roots of a mangrove floating through the middle of the night is born as an apricot-colored nepenthes boasting subtle patterns and fine hair. Black cascades flow to reach the water streams as fine as hair, and appear sleek protrusions and wrinkles in cherry-red or reddish-brown as those found in guts incessantly absorbing and digesting, which “do not simply fold the outside into an inside but rather produce the very sense of an outside by constructing an interior seemingly detached from it.”[[4]](#footnote-4) The set of different geometric patterns like a cross-section of a microbe. The skin of the canvas exposed as it is, dented, spilt, and scattered by the waves of color. The free-spirited columns of light like a neon sign that still holds the temperature of the fingers, which was first introduced by the artist in her “Finger Spell” series. The membranes thin paper creates over the marks of thick and thin lines. Each of the resulting unique areas, the exchange between in and out, and memories generated during the process.[[5]](#footnote-5) … Each object, which looks like it has broken through the breathing hole of the night, holds its place intact while building a new world on top of each other. Jeong’s paintings, composed of diverse colors, lines and membranes, are the artist’s spiritual excretion and gut of consciousness. At the same time, the meandering white night is a yearning for and imagination of the night the artist has lost.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Meanwhile, slowly following the unfamiliar world the artist has built with the bold and fine lines makes me infer that maybe this is the artist herself. In particular, when looking at the lines, it reminds me of the articulated words, never minding the grammar, of Clarice Lispector, who translated the vibration the writer could feel in her own hands into language, using words as baits.[[7]](#footnote-7) For further explanation, I believe a short phrase quoted by Lispector in Água Viva would do the job.

There must be a painting totally free of dependence on the figure-or object-which, like music, illustrates nothing, tells no story, and launches no myth. Such painting would simply evoke the incommunicable kingdoms of the spirit, where dream becomes thought, where line becomes existence.

-Michel Seuphor[[8]](#footnote-8)

1. Virginia Woolf, translated to Korean by Jihyun Min, 『Blue & Green』, Seoul: The Quest, 2023, pages 8-11 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Virginia Woolf, Op.cit., pages 12-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A bulbil is “a small scaly bulb that is formed at the edge of the axil of a leaf or in place of a flower. When it grows to its full size, it falls off and becomes an individual plant.” Naver Korean Dictionary, “Bulbil”. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Mark Wigley, “The Excremental Interior,” *e-flux Architecture*, (September 2022), <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/digestion/487070/the-excremental-interior/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See, Gregor Mobius, “Personal Entropy,” *e-flux Journal,* (April 2022), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/126/460209/personal-entropy/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Artist note. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See, Clarice Lispector, translated by Stefan Tobler, Edited by Benjamin Moser, Água Viva (New York: New Directions, 2012) 5, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Lispector, Água Viva. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)