

"TV Land" or Dystopia

Jung, Jung-Wha's new works are photographs of living rooms of Korean middle-class apartment s. In her photographs that show how various objects are placed in one side of each living room, she gives attention to TVs which in most cases take up the center of these objects in the living rooms. (She titles them "TV Land".) It is as if TVs lead other objects in the scenes. But, what needs more attention is each TV screen itself. For each TV screen shows the exact scene of the other side of the living room just as this screen mirrors it. According to the artist, she modifies and manipulates those photographs with a computer to maximize the effect of the images.

What does she want to express by seeing, photographing, manipulating, and modifying those scenes of the living rooms? In fact they are so familiar to us. But, when I saw them for the first time, I could sense that something was shining out and touching wounds deep-rooted in my mind. For me, they were like the photograph of the 17th century bourgeois living room I had seen sometime before. Maybe I felt ashamed. For the scenes of the living rooms in her photographs are so identical and so authoritative that it is as if the objects in the living rooms are displayed to be shown to somebody (or to themselves) far from their daily uses.

It is not quite sure whether she observes the scenes of the living rooms in the same way as I do. Does not she want to express sympathy to or irony of them through the title, □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

In any case, what she wants to focus on most is the way our life is controlled by the system of objects. Each object in the photographs is shining out. Everything in the photographs, such as TV or audio set or bookshelf, occupies its own place and asserts its own existence. I suddenly feel dizzy with their commanding appearances. Here human beings are only secondary to the arrangement of the objects. Or the former are absorbed into glaze of the latter. TV screens and their images are more interesting. The other side of the living room in the screens is supposed to be the place where human beings should look at the TV. But, there are only empty or gigantic sofas in most cases. It is empty. Thus, ones that look at objects are objects in the opposite side and they reflect each other. As an object or a machine for representation, TV becomes a site where objects or relations of objects can multiply themselves. In this way, as an authority or a master in the living rooms in the photographs, TV completes the world of objects.

Many thinkers point out that the contemporary world is made up of the system of objects or the system of simulacra. Also, many art works since Pop Art have represented various appearances of the world as such. What she represents in her works, however, is somewhat different.

As other nations that experienced modernization under the colonial policy did, Korea had difficulties, such as extreme social and economic confusion or upheaval, and especially cultural conflicts, ruptures, and hybridization. In only 100 years, Korea has changed from a far-east "secluded country" following Confucian principles to a "modern country" ranking in the 10th place in the volume of world trade. And the policy whose supreme end was a rapid development and growth made our culture more extremely controlled and colonized by the severe theory of capital and goods than any other places in the world.

I can see the differences in her photographs. They are heavy rather than light and rough rather than refined. From here, I can sense the wounds of extremely hybridized culture which cannot break through cultural conflicts and ruptures in the method of conflicts and ruptures. And I can read the system of objects which is doomed to be more powerful and standardized for such breakthrough. Then, what is this place where we are dwelling?

Youngwook Lee/ Art Critic