

Video Formalism in Junebum Park's Works

YOO, Jin-sang

Kaywon School of Art and Design. Time Art Dept.

YOON, Young-joo

Translation

What makes video artists in the 2000's? Video art is coming to be neither the newest art nor the exclusive area for intellectual artists any more. Today even many students have had equipment for digital editing and broadcasting such as the PD-150. How could a video artist survive having his or her own peculiarity? Is video art incapable of being fine art because of, as Dongjin Suh said, its performative characteristic? Does video art become pop art, which makes popularization of creation and generalization of visual production possible through the power of video techniques, such as recording a daily life, generalized shooting and editing, and simplified showing? Regarding these questions, Junebum Park is one of the artists who believes that creative art has been related to exceptional production methods, and who shows that video art has been developed through complex thought and ability, it has required hard efforts, and it is not just dependant on the medium itself. Junebum Park has developed an original formalism of his own beyond the features the genre of video art has. Specifically,

his works consist of three elements: theatrical distancing, perspective anamorphosis, and low-speed shooting.

Basically, in his video works, **theatrical distancing** has been achieved by the distance between body and camera. Keeping the camera at a right angle to a subject, he emphasizes its two-dimensionality. A subject photographed through a wide angle seems to be a plane through controlling the depth of field facing it directly. From his video works made around 2000, Junebum Park has performed mimic gestures, as if his hands drive objects across a flat background. Such a visual effect is quite an achievement. Looking down a parking lot from the top of a building, he made *parking*, as if his hands moved cars and passersby. He tried to connect 'parking' with mime performance, a painterly plane, and body as a theatrical device which have been seen in “분라쿠 (文樂 ぶんらく)”, a Japanese puppet performance. His intellectual direction has appeared in the series *crossing*, *excavator*, *escalator*, etc. This relates his works not only to some kind of contemporary creation but also to rather classical issues, which have been discussed in terms of the tradition of the optical angle, such as the meanings of backgrounds and subjects both near and far, camera obscura, and visual tricks. Junebum Park has made scenes full of wit in the series *warp gate*. Laying down the camera and then turning it sideways, he took a view of a city, which looks like conventional scenery of a science fiction film, that is, he regarded the city landscape as a planet or a space station irrelevant to gravity. Then he added situations in which he used his hands to make various cellular-phones and remote-controllers take off like spacecrafts and space shuttles slowly and repeatedly. Compared with his previous works, the hands

which indicate an omniscient view, come to play the part of a theatrical device in *warp gate*. Perhaps, it is as if he took a method from “분라쿠 (文樂 ぶんらく)”, which can be seen as the origins of Brecht type stage, such a method, one of the most radical examples in terms of theatrical elements, strongly intimated that the narrative in a video might be expanded by a possibility of “gray matter”, in Duchamp’s phrase, rather than arbitrariness and visual imagination.

Perspective anamorphosis is a technique dealing with the invisible actual in the visible actual, that is, a kind of a hypothetical condition. This technique, mainly used in paintings and sculptures from the 15th century, does not need any other arbitrary effects except an optical arrangement. Junebum Park intentionally has considered a video as an optical disposition, not an arbitrary device. Therefore, in the process of work, he has controlled the camera’s angle elaborately and performed with well-trained body again and again. About his work process based on taking scene from an actual location, he said, it is worth enduring such a severe work because it is consistent with his original intention to reveal the potentiality of the invisible world. From the fixed point of view, the distance of objects arranged in perspective makes transformation of the perception of the distance as well as a flat surface. **Low-speed shooting** is a method dealing with time, as perspective anamorphosis is a method dealing with space, for showing the invisible condition. The things that happen usually but we are not aware of become quite different things. Accelerating or reducing the speed is a good way to show that normal speed is just one of many possibilities in the real. Cut down to less than 2~3 minutes, his performance, which was actually taken for a pretty long time, admits of a different interpretation. The important thing in making his work is not the symbol of a

performance, but the relation of objects arranged in the form. The title of one of his works, 'Anchorage' means both a major city in Alaska and a harbor. In *anchorage*, after filming two ships at anchor collide with each other at night, he played it backwards and forwards at high speed. Such a fast film speed made the movements of the ships scale down, and transformed a frictional sound into a kind of morse code. He created a metamorphosed image with a camera angle and fast film speed, eliminating theatrical elements like hands.

In his recent work, *acrophobia*, Junebum Park tells his experience with sports. When he was young, a ball hit him, and such a memory of his childhood turned into fear. Acrophobia is an expression of a fear of a high-flying ball. His performance, throwing tens of balls in an empty basketball court at midnight, seems like an attempt to escape from fear of heights. Compared with his other works to date, *acrophobia* centers on his autobiographical performance instead of visual effects and formal elements. However, the angle of the camera and the direction of flying balls do seem to be distorted very subtly in the perspective space. The movement and reaction of many balls flying from the outside to the inside of the screen made the distance appear unreal in the very planar space made by lighting, and seem far off. The sound made by bouncing balls expresses a boundary of the contrary connection between the vanishing perspective and the angle of the plane, and action and the reduction of space. Junebum Park has emphasized that '**Formalism**' is about the relation of the formalistic elements playing a part in his works, not just about visual and repetitive elements.

Junebume Park is one of the rare video artists working with physical labor, which is closely related with the organization of reproduction. Although not exposed, the body related to a perspective structure has been perceived in the circle of suggestive images in a certain sense. This is an old question in the field of art, and also one of the questions brought up differently every time. How to approach and deal with a formalistic matter? He is carrying an admirable answer to these exceptional questions.