Distortion probability in recording: the singularity of Junebum Park's video

Today, amidst the rapidly increasing use of home videos and digital cameras, the young

generation has adopted camera equipment as one of its most beloved commodities. They

are using it to create a variety of visuals and are pouring them over the internet.

Consequently the privilege of producing images, which used to be reserved exclusively

for visual artists, has already lost much of its meaning. In this way, amateur videos

threaten the world of art. In an era when anybody can acquire the tools, distinguishing the

boundaries between amateurs and professional has raised the criticism that the existing

system has manipulated the barometer in defining the two. In order to overcome this

claim, one needs to keep questioning the nature of video as art. (In the end it will lead us

back to the basic discussion: what is art?)

Some artists, such as Junebum Park, create work through formal experiments rather than

focusing on detailed contexts. In this age of camera as a commodity, Junebum Park

started out playing with the visuals like everybody else. Accordingly a close reading of

his works' aesthetic characteristics is important to separate his work from the casual play

of amateur videos. Therefore we need to consider the work's complete aesthetic structure,

so that we understand the language to capture the text's singularity and the ground it

practices upon.

Junebum Park's works are based solely on formalism. Although it undergoes some

changes during production, it is common in his works to depend largely on the formal

elements of moving images and the nature of video as a medium.

While shooting his early work such as *Parking, window, warp gate,* and *crossing,* he methodically found situations in which he played with the depth of field between his hand and the objects, thereby creating a performative aspect. He then completed the work by playing the sequence at high speeds, etc. In this series, he mainly played with perspective, especially mobilized by the camera's rectangular frame.

In particular, when he placed his hand over streets, construction sites, buildings and the like, mostly shot in wide angle from a tall building, he created a paradoxical relationship between the background and foreground. What is interesting here is that this visual paradox refers directly to the *Gestalt* approach which concerns the typical relationships between forms and background. In other words, by reversing the authority conflict of host and guest, he challenges the system and its power of control. An individual's desire for control, now represented by the "hand" mimicking operation of the real world, leave us feeling thrilled, a kind of feeling that a cartoon might provoke.

In fact the optically arranged perspective distortions that appear in Park's work are often employed in cartoons, animations and commercial films, all of which are in the form of frames. This kind of emphasis maximizes the already fictitious situation thereby stimulating the visual sense. However Park's take on perspective is quite stable and traditional. He merely uses the differences in distance to provide the distortion of perspective. In this way he does not thrust upon us dramatic and unnaturally dynamic visuals which cartoons and fictional films often exploit. On the contrary, he takes objects and structures in the real world and uses the images to create the impression that they are miniature models in staged acts. In doing so, he takes the stance of an observer relating

unreality implicated in reality and mechanical aspects of our daily life exposed by distance. ~~spatial depth.~~

His recent works however display a few changes from his earlier ones. First, he has moved away from taking existing situations as his raw materials. Instead he stages situations and his hand does not appear anymore. The works *21 excavate* and *24 Anchorage* are examples of this transitional period. In *21 excavate* he shot a long take of moving cranes in wide angle, then he cut down the speed of the image, which in the end created an effect of miniatures. *24 Anchorage* is made up of images and sounds of two anchored boats bumping into each other at night, which were found and recorded by the artist, and then played at high speed. The distorted sound of the two boats colliding with each other rouses nervous tension. Although he still used the method of recording existing situations as in his earlier projects, he now manipulated the footage to maximize the movements and noise of the objects.

The action in his recent work, *Pick up Truck and ball,* is entirely directed. After fashioning a big soccer ball–like balloon he loaded it onto the rear of a truck. Then he produced an act in which the truck tried very hard to drive through a narrow three–way junction fenced in by nets. After shooting this scene in real time at a wide angle, he again played with escalating and reducing the speed.

His fear of flying balls is the central material of his work, *Acrophobia*, in which dozens of balls fly and hit the ground in a basketball court at night. Filmed on a rainy day with a relatively small number of balls, the balls seem heavy yet contrast sharply with the high-pitched sounds emanating from the balls bouncing off water, an effect achieved by

accelerating the speed of playing. In other words, the movement of balls, the tone and texture of the sound, and weight of the image, etc., the subversive use of the sound against the expected audio-visual relation, causes the unconscious friction in the steady flow of the images.

In viewing Junebum Park's works as texts, it is apparent that his approach to arranging and treating the formalistic elements in the text is a way of externalizing his view of reality. If his previous works display a subversive view using the extreme use of distancingspatial depth through the witty hand miming performance, his recent works treat sound, texture, relations of objects with more attention and therefore induce the imbalance and abrasion in the system. But this is neither caused by exaggerations nor unnatural force. He employs steady frames and general camera angles yet in this modest way he allows us to experience the strangeness. Through the camera eye, after observing an image at a wide angle in a long take, he questions those very sensible compositions and the situations. By manipulating the time he relativizes it while revealing the hidden sounds, new or undiscovered conflicts and visualizing the invisible.

Eventually, Junebum Park's work will lead us to discover the formal elements of moving images–the use of the camera frame, real-time wide angle shooting, the probability of distorting reality by accelerating speed and time, and the ironic re-discovery of the relative elements of reality, etc. As this writing has already been predicting, we will have to continue watching the artist's attempts through which his extraordinary potentials will show.

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