

## <The Uncanny Encounters>

Existence: Ambiguous Things That Are Not Identified by Language

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Kim Myung-joo is a ceramic artist. She has been consistently presenting her works in Europe and other countries before moving to Korea, building her unique artistic practice through ceramic sculpture, painting, and drawing at the same time.

Her works show a variety of narratives in terms of content, form, and technique. However, they are usually highlighted by their formativeness. Kim's unique ceramic sculptures come in unclear and semi-abstract shapes made of clay with an obvious sense of mass. The deep color development baked at high temperature and the thick and dynamic semi-vitreous glaze that flows down is applied with a sense of mystery as if it was alive. Her works are usually a combination of plants and humans, heads in semi-abstract shapes, or faces in which 'the flowing current itself becomes an expression'.

Regarding the reason why we are attracted to these mystical figures full of suggestive ambiguity, critic Frédéric Bodet explained, "Because the flowing, wandering, changing, ghostly being... awakens the primary fear inherent in us". The figures on the pedestals become sublimated beings that endure pain and violence like sacred scapegoats on the altar. They are filled with cruel beauty and noble pain as if they were severely punished for the original sin and desire committed by mankind.

In her works, conflicting concepts such as light and darkness, consciousness and unconsciousness, and control and acceptance are placed together at the same time. Light and darkness in her works encompass not only the combination of conflicting meanings such as beautiful pain, death and resurrection, and the sublime, but also the effect of physical shadows. The artist tries to create a solemn and pious effect by appropriating the dramatic contrast between light and dark when she stages the resulting works. Consciousness and unconsciousness epitomize Kim's creative process. The semi-automatic drawings are created while she is immersed in her inner world and conscious precision is exerted in the sculptural process of embodying them. Control and acceptance lead to an encounter between the tolerant nature of ceramics that accepts contingency and the artist's uncompromising resolution. Ceramics undergo irresistible changes during the firing process. The shape is contracted by heat, and the final color is determined by the environment inside the kiln. That it is impossible to realize everything as planned is the charm and inconvenience of ceramic art. The artist accepts the uncontrollable environment, but she strives to create works that are closest to her intention by maintaining rigorous standards and baking the ceramics several times. Works that are created through this method convey strong affect and a bizarre charm as they maintain disparate elements intact and position them at the boundary of differences.