< Solitude;
One Door Opens as
Another Door Closed >

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Solitude as a necessity for coexistence

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Kim Myungjoo: Rising forth through extreme self-depletion

Whether it is large, small, abstract or figurative, the entity created by Kim Myungjoo that the visitor sees is, based on visual convention, always human. In *Homme Plante* (2020), even the plant (Plante) element echoes the human due to its facing of the sun. The fact that Kim's creations are, in almost every case, standing indicates the in-betweenness of their identity. For Kim, the plant represents nature, whether locationally or temporally. She recalls being "wholly consoled" while living and working alone outside Korea by the "ample, mother-like shapes of nature and richness of diversity." She continues to exhibit in many European countries, and stresses that the "mountains, sky, land, trees and plants of Europe, which all look very different from the ones I'm accustomed to, awakened a new self—one that is captivated by nature." Kim always makes an effort to interact with greenery, an underlying entity that can be found anywhere in the world due to the solitude caused by leaving one country for another.

The figures before us have the unstable appearance of someone who's come hurtling through space from another world, the titles giving us a hint on the conversation that we may wish to strike up with them. Soft clay is used to achieve a jarring, thought-provoking blend of intent and non-intent, while the glaze, which does not take on the usual appearance of a finishing (as it does in traditional ceramicware) but drips because it was applied as if a paint, represents the weight of a life lived on Earth in two-legged form. Kim's creations maximize the characteristics of clay and glaze. In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that unless a material (paint) completely permeates perception or the emotions, there is no way for us to sense it. Unnamable colors of viscous substances that flow like body fluids and figures whose body fluids seem to have been removed long ago suggest the moment of rebound that comes after extreme depletion. The same is true of Kim's solitude. Solitude is a prerequisite for honest communication. It is only when one can stand alone that one can be part of a community.

The fact that much more time is required for contemplation than to complete an artwork turned Kim's attention to the bust. Her creations embody the process by which, of the many things that are born and die through such contemplation, only a small fraction are realized. We do not remember the dream we had last night except in fragments. A subconscious without the element of time, however, survives in some corner of our being to later float to the surface of our awareness. Potential as a weapon of practicality

always flows over what we regard as an appropriate dividing line, with such overflowing being the only thing that can define limits. Art moves freely back and forth over limits—something which, with the exception of perhaps war, festivals or revolution, is almost impossible in our daily reality. As Bataille argued, art is a waste and an extravagance. It also, however, enables communication at a profound level. Jacques Derrida referenced Bataille in *Writing and Difference*, describing art as "a kind of potlatch of signs that burns, consumes, and wastes words in the gay affirmation of death: a sacrifice and a challenge." Derrida's philosophy is in the same vein as those of Blanchot and Bataille. In *The Space of Literature*, Blanchot states that, by creating, the artist is "the creator of a new reality, which opens in the world a wider perspective, a possibility by no means closed but such, on the contrary, that reality in all its forms is enlarged because of it." According to Blanchot, the artist's life is not geared toward a particular goal that requires conquering. Rather, "he is a richer artist because of the trials he undergoes for the sake of his works […] and if sometimes he is exhausted and dying in the work, it is thereby only the more alive."

Tête pensive VI (2023) is a bust that visualizes thoughts forming and then flowing down. Kim said that when an artwork "enters a trance state," she allows herself to "swim around in the inner world," often taking "an aleatoric approach to not miss out on the chance element of the figure's shape." The artist, who shares with us as much baked clay as she can before it solidifies, seeks to make her creations a representation of process rather than a finished form that aims for one thing. This makes her artwork complex, with no possibility of similarity in color or shape.

The Light of the Heart through the Darkness (2018) brings to mind the journey taken by the young female protagonists of *The Wizard of Oz*, *L'Oiseau bleu* (*The Blue Bird*), and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*—riddled with adversity but not devoid of hope. The road taken is never safe or familiar but, rather, full of adventure and hardship. There is no boundary that separates the girl's head from her hair, and the girl seems to be dead or in a crazed state. Art, however, is not craziness, a disease, or the unconscious but a conversation with or overcoming of these things. The artist exists by standing on lines that divide. They have no choice but to move forward, whether physically or mentally, regardless of whether the path in front of them is a straight line or a maze. What is needed at this point is a light to illuminate things sunken in darkness—one in our hearts that glows on its own, like the luminescent lure employed by certain species of deep-sea fish. Kim describes her artworks as "clay expressions of vitality and the mystical realm that lies beyond understanding." They are independent beings that have left the artist's side for rebirth in a new world.