

Arata Tani (art critic)

Behind “Board Sculptures”

Muneyoshi Hase’s “sculptures” always seem “dissatisfied” in the space of sophisticated cities.

Dark, violent, and sometimes indescribable emotions can be received from those works’ expressions. Moreover, the size of works is so large which creates imbalance at general gallery spaces. Even with considering each condition respectively, the works are holding the “dissatisfaction” which is hardly fit to the modern city spaces. Is that because of the “Archeology” of the history of formative arts, or of the memories from those? Either or, is it the future tense which borrowed a form of a longing which has been born from the spirituality which responds to those notions?

Probably, it is from both. What Hase has been interested in, from when he was in college, is the “Sublime” of shapes which are created unintentionally by humans. In cultural legacies in history, pyramids and sphinxes can be applied to this. These historical remains bring some transcendent viewpoints by showing consummated styles, even they are just accumulation of humans’ everyday-life-activity. It gives an impression that they were created by something other than human and came from somewhere far out before landing at. Hase’s interest may slightly cross with the mentality which aspires or predicts the “Sublime” which was called in at each end of century during the early or modern periods of Europe.

In other words, Hase is shifting himself to the point which is different from the modern ideas of sculptures. This act sometimes makes his sculptures look awkward in a sophisticated city. Although seeking the “Sublime”, it does not quite fit into reality these days. It is because the structure of the “Sublime” in

20th century has totally changed from the one in the 19th century, and this timely viewpoint cannot avoid to include many contradictions to treat Hase's sculptures as hurt ones.

On the other hand, the mentality of seeking the "Sublime" has brought "unfortunate" into his art making. The very beginning of his art makings were the reliefs which were hang on gallery walls. Then, those reliefs came down and stood on the floor, and became the sculptural horizontal object with slightly inflating at the center part. At the next exhibition, the inflated part expanded more to upward and became the organic rounded shape. During the last exhibition prior to the current one, the organic rounded shape was cut down, and the geometric figure which is almost a trapezoid shape was presented.

Originally, I might have had to include the other conditions such as introducing painting like effect by working on the surface of materials, but above is the transition of Hase's previous works viewed from the aspect of forms, and conditions of exhibition.

For an artist who kept longing for something that does not have to be called as "sculpture" which comes far from the sculptural world, the modern city space has been treating his works unfortunate.

As long as it stays at the absolute value of that his works will not become visible unless they adopt the realistic principle, the mentality of seeking "Sublime", and the "unfortunate" that arises from the condition of exhibition space would become issues for Hase to overcome on his own.

Hase created a piece of work with 15 sheets of large-sized wood boards combined linear for this exhibition. They are painted either white or black depending on the character of surface, and combined alternately to form a piece. Although it is not important which is front or back, they can be roughly grouped into two; the ones have more strong visual character of two-dimensional picture by being painted, and the others are painted but the surface

is filled with narrow wooden boards. The whole piece sized 10 meters wide, and 2 meters high. If this work is viewed from either one side, the exhibition space would completely be shuttered.

“Installation” by Michael Asher at Pomona College in 1970 is the good example for creating a completely different space at an ordinarily rectangular space by installing an independent wall to shut off. This Hase’s work recalls the Asher’s experiment in terms of enhancement of space by splitting existing space. But, Hase shows not only the expansion of space by arranging simple wooden boards, but the obsession on the details of those planes which are unbalanced to the size of the whole piece. Though it has the consecutive tone overall, each of 15 boards can even exist as an independent art piece.

By listing up Hase’s intentions, you might notice there is an intense potential notion of “Objectification” separated from increasement of size or obsession with details. Yes, he is a sculptor. Even he makes his works giant, there will be a direction to acquire an identity with sculpting world.

If anything, this will be an important condition when considering Hase’s future development. The background pointed out by his sculptures (the viewpoint is cleared by this work by Hase), seeking the “Sublime”, and the “monologue” from the subject which are coming from deep inside of the work; they show up in totally different way depending on each era even if we let them have the decadent similarities. It might help in finding the next step again by understanding those relationships. It will also never be the one which demolishes the motivation Hase has built, on how he started making his works.

(Translated by Jun Itoi)