

Yukito Tanaka (art critic)

Breathing objects— The internal swaying of Muneyoshi Hase

It is a challenge to maintain one's own rhythm of life, as if you are floating on the wind. For example, even an observant botanist who would study flowers and plants daily, would find it hard to spot a mutant amongst the flowers by their feet. Just as a giant camphor tree could only gain its status in the woods by enduring harsh winds and storms, a sculptor's spatial and textural awareness needs to contain natural enduring qualities such as 'rhythm', 'swaying' and 'swirl'.

Nevertheless, it is a great pleasure to see so many amongst recent young sculptors, who have begun to create organic forms based on imaginative protoplasm. Their presence is encouraging in itself and in the sense of expanding the modernist sculpting concept. However, beyond their initial trials, their work tends to become stale when progress is observed over several years. Even if their creations contain an element of post-structuralism, there have been many occasions when I have been faced with hard and inflexible scenes that contain no 'rhythm' or 'swaying' in the expanse of presentation or handling of materials. To put it bluntly, they do not have a flexibility with their constructive (creative) language. There is one sculptor we should pay attention to, however. His name is Muneyoshi Hase. While studying his works for more than the last 10 years, what becomes apparent throughout his work is the kind of metaform attached to the cityscape, which is dying to peek out its head. The reason I have been so intrigued is because these are the results of practise with a hint of anxiety, and as a result are less complete.

The first time I encountered a sculpture by Muneyoshi Hase was in the beginning of the 1980s, more than a decade ago. This might come across as rude, but the sculpture appeared to be a little fragile at first glance. The creation

resembled a small wooden *yagura* tower, made by piecing together several thin burnt wooden plates. The small tower was slightly tilted on its three or four legs, and was placed in the middle of an entirely white gallery. The funny and awkward shape of a small tower contrasted with the backdrop of a contemporary urban space highlighted its unlikeliness, and in turn made it more intriguing. It was reminiscent of a single chair washed up by heavy floods on a riverside, or even an abandoned wooden shack. There was an interesting juxtaposition within the tower, between its charcoal-black interior and wooden patterned exterior. Even within its frail structure, the exceptional creative will of the artist was revealed.

Around Hase's studio, located at the base of the north west side of Mt. Fuji, cut wooden pieces of various sizes are being stacked up. They must surely be pieces cut as material for sculptures, or timber for the house. They look destined to endure harsh wind and snow, as they silently wait for their chances to shine. Without a doubt his works in recent years have utilised these wooden pieces adequately, without over-handling them. In his 1986 exhibition, the wooden panels were put together on the walls and the floor to create near rectangles, which began to unfold the visual surface like a relief. The following year in 1987, the same surface rapidly blows up to resemble a knoll, still with some of its thick black charcoaled panels. Violently, they are formed into some sort of a round shack, which resembles a yurt with an uneven surface. The wooden pieces with their original surface and roughly shaved thick panels are stacked up both in horizontal and vertical directions like building blocks. The internal space encased by the raised wood brings the spectator into a tomb-like historic hyperspace. Next came the sleek trapezium-shaped architecture made with thick wooden panels. Due to its flat surface, the evoked view of the inner space was likely to be equally as flat.

What is common to all these creations is the artist's intention to create a metaphorical interior space to encapsulate something. The interest is stirred up by these internal prospects. 'Rhythm' and 'swaying' within the internal space are felt as if they were breathing creatures. The wooden appearance of the exterior

and the prospect of internal space breaths together through the materials, and begins to grasp the reality of the creative language.

Mt. Fuji stands high, just outside Hase's studio. Hase explained the Fuji seen from here is occasionally transformed into 'Aka Fuji' (Mt. Fuji in Red) at the time of sunrise or sunset, due to its ground components. Bearing all this in mind (Nevertheless), Mt. Fuji is still Mt. Fuji regardless of when, where or who looks at it from whichever angle and never loses its grandeur. However much its surface changes and whatever different clouds it trails, it holds its majestic statue, with its magma contained inside. Whether the artist projects the statue of Mt. Fuji onto his creations is purely my figurative imagination, but it is clear that the internal space within the urban spatial perspective is not the only source of his creative language.

In the current exhibition, Hase made a rapid return to the relief-motifed creation. Meticulous, tactful attention has been paid to the surface, with aged material including old nails have been seared with a burner, or many white dots being applied onto them. The four reliefs do show differences in their material compositions, but it was clear how they were breathing heavily together to prepare for their next (three dimensional) space, as if they were warming up. To decide on how and what to encapsulate. This creation of reliefs are a practise work of the artist to take on the 'internal space'. The artist appears to be taking a step towards creating something that could be interpreted in various ways by anyone appreciating his work. Aiming for the pinnacle of space, the artist's creative endeavour sways as do his creations that follow their own path in swaying.

(Translated by Eri Kurasawa)