

Katsuhiko Yokoyama (art critic)

Muneyoshi Hase 2007

While viewing the current work, which seems used-building-material sticking out from wall, the movie “Blade Runner” by Ridley Scott which I used to watch numerous times came across my mind. In this movie, an android is called as a “Replicant”, and this work reminded me the agonizing feelings received from the movie which depicts relationships between human and replicants at a near future’s mega city where acid rain keeps falling. This movie is not just a sci-fi action film, but illustrates a tragical world arose from the situation of humans who living in an abandoned city are helplessly arrogant and ugly, and replicants are succeeding spiritual beauty of humans. Muneyoshi Hase’s work with old and used building materials has a common point with the beauty of replicants.

This work with its size of 224 centimeters high, 551 centimeters wide, and 225 centimeters deep would show overwhelming existence in a gallery space. It is not just because of its size. It is also, due to the numbers of timbers sticking out from the wall advance to viewers and the plates and pieces of woods are arranged like pointing to viewers’ eyes. This work seems capturing the moment of inflation to destruction from the center point of an object, like an explosion of a star or a satellite in sci-fi movie scenes; or countless old timbers seems rushing out from the single point at the other side of gallery wall.

Those old timbers overhang from the wall are installed as several layers forming a shape of a fan when viewed from above, but the timber itself is not speaking loudly its existence. Those timbers function as supporting material for the various parts attached to own, and create some figurative rhythm throughout at the same time. It rather catches an eye that various sized wooden parts are either installed on the timbers or hung under. Those wooden parts which were like thrown away after their roles, and left over accidentally at a place of nothing

particular seems giving monologues to our gaze about current status of their texture, and prior whereabouts. It might be due to the sense of Japanese, which is familiar to wooden things, some kind of nostalgia seems residing in the used wooden materials with various memories and time accumulated. The wood boards installed perpendicularly as if confronting to viewers becomes totally linear shapes if viewed from the different perspective. Once seemed thinly shaped object turns as a heavily thick material.

We will be able to acquire various visual experiences by changing our standing point while viewing each part of the work.

It is impossible to view the whole of Hase's work at a glance. It is more like reading each short stories line by line, and experiencing the whole book with an accumulation of those stories. Each part brought up here is a used building material, or processed by the artist as being looked as used. It does not have the artificial feeling like a newly processed timber has. Its surface texture, color palette, and form are scraped off throughout the time accumulation except the fundamental, and settled down calmly like a weathered object. But, they are quietly insisting their own uniqueness from the point of view as comparing each other. This work by Hase forms a three-dimensional piece as a whole by amplifying each detailed part, and it also can be compared to the Cubism paintings. In Analytical Cubism, each cubic shape gets integrated into a painting while asserting. Although respective parts in this Hase's work are scattered as self-existence, they are loosely ordered under the creator's concept as a whole. He reads expressions of each material, and controls them to merge into a single piece. It is not a self-expression as an artist, nor an act of casting the material out for no order. Various sized old and used building materials are organized and stored at his studio located at the outskirts of the mount Fuji. According to him, all the parts consist of this work can be put back together precisely like he installed for the first time based on the original plan. In his works, I feel the artist's intention which tames materials by controlling their assertion, towards a consolidation.

What kind of words should we prepare to correspond to this kind of art work

which cannot be categorized into genres of traditional sculpture or painting? Or, should we redefine the concepts of each genres? Hase's works are more like trying to simply pull out the meanings of act of viewing and feeling art works, from viewers. Like science fiction stories depicting future are only built on the pre-existing examples, Hase's works are constructed along with the tradition of the concept for the sculptural works, but may be freely forming out from the conceptual and fixed framework. His acts to create a single piece of art work by repeating the arrangements of the small wooden pieces in front and at back overlap with us as modern humans living by accumulating and layering various and miscellaneous information endlessly. Hase's works which take up old and used building materials can be said that are the result of handwork by this serious sculptural artist who is being active in present times, and also they were born by his robust, yet delicate sensibility which is similar to a replicant's one.

Using old and used building materials, this Hase's work which overwhelmingly rushes to viewers was actually created by accumulation of tremendous amount of handwork with subtle sensibility. Each detailed part speaking quietly to viewers, yet, it is difficult to grasp the whole at once. It is not only because this artwork is in large scale. Although it is understandable that this work is created by artist's concept, it is hard to know what it actually is clearly in the end. Does the artist want to present the power of expression or urge which each material has? If so, the whole piece does not have to be in this large scale. In opposite, does he want to show an assemblage of various details as a single three-dimensional piece? If so, does he have to stick to details? I consider there is a possibility that an artist's strength can directly become a shortcoming. Even he uses the same material, if those timbers were installed exact horizontally instead of slightly downward, the viewers' feeling of confronting towards artwork might get more strengthen. I end up having this kind of impression, because this artwork contains various factors which are contrary each other in some cases and offset at some point. What does this artist want to realize through this artwork which is free from the conceptual and restrained framework of sculptures?

This artwork using used building materials is filled with a nostalgic feeling which is like looking back a lost civilization, not with an optimistic feeling of looking towards a bright future. This is the reason why reminded me the movie “Blade Runner”. It is tragic and can be comedic in some cases, if a replicant with more capabilities than a human wants to become a human. A replicant at present aims past times, vice versa. It is all up to its choice or decision of how spends a life now. Muneyoshi Hase’s accumulation of skilled handworks gets strengthen more than ever once its direction is set clearly. That will come to fruition as a work which is complicated yet clear, delicate but gives strong impression. It should be his own decision to choose the direction of creation. I think I would like to look carefully over his whereabouts.

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(Translated by Jun Itoi)