

Tadasu Fujii (art critic)

Sculpture of Realism

Let me describe the works. There are two large scaled fallen trees placed in right side of the artist's working studio space. One still has branches and leaves, and the other's trunk is cut at close to its root. The one with branches is lifted at the root end by a hoist, and overall, the top end is slightly curved and pointing upward. On the left side of the space, black polythene garbage bags are torn open and fill the whole floor. The glossy surface of those garbage bags slightly waves, and reflects the fluorescent light of the ceiling.

The storage shack which stands in front of the studio, is divided by three. Various materials are placed, and almost filling up those rooms. Although, old lumber which is the most characteristic material for Hase is used at all rooms, daily things such as fluorescent light tubes and empty wine bottles can be seen in the space composed symmetrically in the right-hand side room. The eye-taker in the center room is his own child boy who just born in last November, is arranged in the middle of space. At the left room, old wooden materials and corrugated metal sheets are stacked and leant on the back wall.

There is a major awkward feeling along when I describe this exhibition in this way. Obviously, description on an art work reflects the experience of the describer, it naturally becomes subjective, instead of objective. Hence, the starting point is set at each individual's description of art works and confirmation of mutual difference, in the educational method called "Dialogical Appreciation" by Amelia Arenas. However, the issue brought by a "description" at here is distinct from those ones just explained.

The most definite reason why I stated like that, comes from what Hase does not put titles on his works. He decided not to add titles on most of his art pieces in

1982. He thought there would be some limitations caused by a special meaning, even if it is a “Untitled”. In result, for example, viewers now cannot judge if the fallen trees and the group of garbage bags in the exhibition space, are either two individual art pieces, or one whole piece of art work.

In addition, it is important that the exhibition takes place in his work space, which adjoin to his living space. If this were at a museum or in an art gallery, the architectural framework which provides the exhibition space, leads the decision of exhibition framework (in most cases of the installation arts, the scope of exhibition is determined like this). However, this framework will not work in this kind of location at Hase’s studio. In fact, Hase was not considering the arrangement of objects in the narrow space between the studio and the storage shack as a part of his art works in the beginning, but he started having it included in the exhibition from one day. Therefore, in one day, it is also possible that it would become not a his art piece. From this reason, art and everyday life cannot be separated from each other in his works.

"Art - not separated from artists’ own life"; I think we can recall two artists from that concept. One is Alberto Giacometti (1901 - 1966), and the other is Marcel Duchamp (1887 – 1968).

According to the conversation between Yoshitatsu Yanagihara - a sculptor - and Isaku Yanaihara - a philosopher, Giacometti used to keep rearranging the various things on the cafe table to pursue the “proper position”. In reality, it is impossible to find out the “proper position” of those items. Hence, an act of arrangement would be continuously going to be on without an end.

This episode can be linked to the Giacometti’s methodology in making pictures and sculptures. Something we can find from what Yanaihara who sat for him, wrote - is not “How he created his works”, but “How he could not create”. Most of the results, which were from the attempts of replicating models repeated

persistently every day were thrown away without hesitation. This comes from the Giacometti's purpose did not reside in creating art works.

“To me, the purpose is not for making tableaux, but for bringing out a shape of subject itself. A tableau is only the means to achieve it.”

(With Giacometti, Isaku Yanaihara, 1969)

This “bringing out a shape of subject” is the one which we can call it as a realism. But, those pictures and sculptures may not be looked as realistic ones. If so, that is not a realism as a format, but we should call it a realism as an attitude. In the same meaning, I think we also can call Hase's work which continuing connections and disconnections of each piece of objects as a realism.

Another artist, the name of Marcelle Duchamp is called up, because ready-made objects like wine bottles are included in Hase's works this time. Of course, this is not the first time for Hase to use machine-produced products (yes, black trash bags are as well). However, ready-made objects are presented as “ready-made objects” more clearly in Hase's works for this time.

It was Thierry De Duve who called the Duchamp's readymades as “Nominalisme Pictural”. It can become the Art by calling it as an “art”. In other words, that is:

“One object, nor a group of several objects, neither an act or intention of an artist, but an article - being attached on an absolute ordinary object - which speaks and concludes such as “this is an art”. (Au nom de l'art, Thierry De Duve, 1989.)

In that sense, the year of 1915 which a word “readymade” was introduced is said more worth to note than 1913 when Duchamp's first readymade work “Bicycle Wheel” appeared in public and 1917 when the “Fountain” caused the scandals.

However, from this point of view, we cannot call the factory-produced daily things which Hase included in this exhibition “readymades”. Those reject to be titled in all meanings. We cannot call his works of art as the Nominalism.

Giacometti and Duchamp are at their opposite positions. Their artistic difference overlaps the contrast between the Realism and the Nominalism. This comparison originates from the Problem of Universals in the Western Medieval Age, and it appears in the debate if the universal belongs either to the things or to the words.

Following De Duve analyzed by replacing the “beauty” in antinomy by Kant, to the “arts”, let us replace “universal” to “arts”. Paintings and sculptures can be applied to “universal”, and the genealogy from the conceptual arts to the art documentation is involved in the latter, “arts”.

Although, Giacometti mentioned himself as the “only person who creates pictures at this time”, that genealogy leads to Hase’s sculptures. Giacometti’s sculptures of groups of figures such as “The Glade, Square, Nine Figures” (1950) are closer to the Hase’s works, but the single-figure sculptures are close as well. In Giacometti’s thoughts, a human figure is not formed by adding each part such as eyes, a nose, or a mouth. It gradually nears to the truth simply by the whole figure. This kind of existence can also be seen in Hase’s sculptures.

The word “realism” becomes different meanings depends on its context such as philosophy, fine arts, or international politics. After becoming different from the other, it is hard to recognize that they are based on the same word. It also makes harder to recognize in Hase’s works. Even if the meanings and contents are removed from his works, it does not mean that they are removed from Hase’s life. Contrarily, that life can become a theme directly by that notion. Coexistence of the death of wind-fallen trees and the lineage of the birth of a child is, in that meaning, naturally accepted.

(Translated by Jun Itoi)