

The Relationship Between Tenacity and Vulnerability

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A number of Jaemin Jang's works presented in this exhibition have a kind of tenacity that causes different elements to adhere to each other like a single body. This tenacity applies to the background and objects inside the picture-screen, as well as the gaze between the scenery and figures, and the viewer and the picture-screen. This tenacity also induces a tactile response of the body, exceeding a visual reaction for the viewers.

In *<Totem Pole#3>*(2018), the background and objects are hard to differentiate, causing the whole picture-screen to appear as a single mass. Only after looking at the painting for a long time, the form of the totem pole appears through the flat plane of the camouflage. Here, the background and object are interactively linked to each other without a clear border. In the center of *<Twigs>*(2018), where the entangled leaves on the two twigs held together in front of rippling water, the two different qualities; the fluidity of the water and curves of the leaves interchange with each other.

The tenacity between the background and object also applies in the paintings where figures appear. In *<Tree, Figure #1>*(2018), the body of the figure is absorbed in the color and texture of the tree. Even the gesture of the figure, leaning back to back against the tree trunk and spreading both arms, genuinely imitates the horizontal and vertical configuration constituting the picture-screen, and overlaps with and adheres to the background. The edges of the figure's body leaning on the boulder fades away starting from the figure's shoulders, and seems to be integrating into the boulder in *<Boulder, Figure >*(2018).

Like so, in a number of Jang's works the background and objects, scenery and figures adhere to each other. The deformed sceneries due to the tenacity of background and foreground are difficult to comprehend at a short glance, attracts the viewer's eyes to look into the picture-screen for a long time. At the same time, they attain tactual depth that induces impulse for the viewers to enter the scenery to directly touch and feel its textures.

Meanwhile, the figures absorbed in the scenery do not seem to appear merely as implements for the accumulation of the traits of the scenery to convey its sentiments. It is impossible to rid of the impression that bodies of the figures assimilated with the form, color, and texture of the scenery are camouflaged and have become a part of the background as if trying to be hidden. This impression deepens in <*The Dawn of the Tree*>(2018). The figure walking through the trees, face covered by the leaves swathing the upper half of the painting, is concealed within the trees like a hidden picture puzzle. Here, the suspicion becomes closer to certainty.

The scenery is a form of sanctuary, where one may conceal one's face and be hidden anonymously. However, why do figures attempt to conceal themselves? Jang's intention of concealing figures within his scenes surely reveals a certain sentiment. We, as viewers, cautiously turn our interests towards the sentiments contained in the picture-screen upon the detection of this concealment. Jang's other paintings do not depict figures, however, they reveal specific sentiments through the state the embodied objects face, and the characteristics of the time and space represented in the suggested scene.

The tree root that was probably once rooted deep in the earth that has fallen on top of the surface of the river in <*The Tree by the River*>(2018) suggests the state of no longer being able to maintain life. The leaves filling the upper half of the picture-screen like a curtain obstructs the dispersion of the gaze. At the same time, the descending flow of leaves leads the eyes towards the lower half of the picture-screen and encourages the viewers to look at the roots protruding out of the earth again. The painting's composition controlling the course of the gaze from the tree's root to the trunk, trunk to leaves, and once again, leaves to the root, prompts the viewer's attention to focus on the vulnerability of a body that may no longer take in nourishment.

In <*The End of the Road*>(2018), the possessor of the painting's perspective is standing at the end of a road, blocked with a rock face, tinted red by the sunset. The impassably steep rock face takes up more than half of the picture-screen, tightly filling up to the top and both sides, and completely obstructs the forward and detour movement of the body, as well as the gaze's penetration and advancement. The rock face functions as a giant barrier and maximizes and amplifies the feeling of obstruction. Moreover, everyone looking at the mountain soaked in sunset will be confined in darkness after the sun sets. This scene also has a sense of time running out through the red light, converting

vulnerability into time and space. The title of this painting is not only the 'end of a road,' but the 'end of time' where the sunbeam is almost gone.

Returning back to sceneries that have figures, the intimate relationship between the sentiment of vulnerability and formality of tenacity becomes visible. The tenacity seems to be a kind of method of the helpless body engulfed with vulnerability to engage with the scenery. The vulnerable body does not have resistance to conserve and protect its individuality. Perhaps Jang depicts his figures absorbed, adhered to, and concealed in the body of the scenery and to convey the immensely passive body that has lost this resistance. The tenacity between the background and figure in Jang's paintings is at the least, the most appropriate method to maximize and express the sentiments of the body engrossed with a certain vulnerability.

- Translated by Yoonsung Cho