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충청남도 천안시 신부동 354-1 T. + 82 41 551 5100~1 F. + 82 41 551 5102 www.arariogallery.com

1. 전시 제목: 권오상 개인전: The Sculpture
(Gwon, Osang: The Sculpture)

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6. 전시 컨셉

본 전시는 1998년 사진조각 시리즈 “데오도란트 타입Deodorant Type”을 발표한 후, 2003년 평면조각 “더 플랫The Flat”을 발표하며 영 코리안 아티스트의 선두주자로 자리매김한 권오상의 개인전이다. 이번 전시에서는 기존의 “데오도란트 타입”이나 “더 플랫” 시리즈 외에 “더 스컬프처The Sculpture”라는 새로운 연작을 선보인다. 사진과 조각 사이에서의 연구를 마치고 등장한 새로운 연작의 발표와 더불어, 2005년 초 파격적인 계약으로 국내 미술계를 떠들썩하게 했던 아라리오 갤러리 전속작가 8명 중 첫 번째 개인전이라는 점에서 더욱 주목할 만하다. 아라리오 갤러리는 권오상의 개인전에 최적의 전시환경을 제공하고 전속작가를 프로모션하기 위해 그동안 지적 받아왔던 조명설비를 교체하는 공사를 대대적으로 진행 중이다.

권오상은 1998년 ‘가벼운 조각’의 개념에서 시작한 ‘데오도란트 타입’을 발표하면서 조각의 장르, 그 중에서도 물성과 재료에 관한 의문을 제기하며 현대적인 감각으로 조각에 도전장을 내밀었다. 석조, 목조, 청동 이라는 재료만이 아니라 플라스틱 류의 견고한 조각을 만들어내기 위한 근대적인 재료들을 외면하고, 얇은 사진들의 표면으로 이루어진 조각을 만들어낸 것이다. 사진이라는 매체는 이미지의 시대가 담고 있는 속성들, 파편적 속성과 무한한 복제의 가능성, 가벼움과 용이함을 표상하기에 더없이 적절했다. 또한 필름의 현상부터 인화까지 사진기술의 메커니즘은, 조각의 원형제작과 형틀, 주물의 과정과 매우 유사하다는 점에서도 사진 표면으로 구성된 조각은 다양한 지점을 시사하고 있다.

“데오도란트 타입”을 설치의 영역까지 확장 시키고 국내외 많은 전시에 참여하며 주목을 받

게 된 권오상은 2003년 “더 플랫폼” 시리즈를 발표하며 사진과 조각에 대한 개념을 다시 한번 진일보 시킨다. 잡지 광고에서 가장 빈번하게 등장하는 이미지인 시계, 보석, 화장품 등을 오려내 간단한 철사 구조물로 각각의 종이조각이 자립하게 만들어서는 조각의 지위를 부여한 것이다. 그리고 그것을 인스톨한 장면을 사진평면으로 제시함으로써, 그 자체로 사진이자 조각이 되는 작품을 등장시켰던 것이다. 잡지에서 오려낸 고급 브랜드 제품들을 소재로 한 “더 플랫폼” 시리즈는 사진과 조각이라는 장르에 대한 실험과 도전이자 광고 이미지로 대표되는 현대의 고도 소비문화를 가치 중립적으로 제시하는 작업이다.

현대적인 감각을 사진을 통해 조각이라는 장르와 결합시키는 이러한 시도들은, 권오상의 정체성을 사진가와 조각가 사이에 놓이게 했다. 그러나 이번 개인전의 신작 ‘더 스컬프처The Sculpture’는 지금까지 권오상의 작가적 행보가 의심할 여지 없이 조각가였다는 듯 제목 그대로의 ‘조각’ 작품이다. ‘로댕이 오늘날 살아있었다면 어떤 작업을 만들어냈을 것인가’를 생각했다던 권오상의 이야기처럼, ‘더 스컬프처 II’ 와 ‘더 스컬프처 V’는 전통적인 조각의 기법으로 가장 현대적인 소재를 다루는 작업이다. 길이 4미터, 폭 2미터가 넘는 슈퍼카 ‘람보르기니 무르시엘라고Lamborghini Murcielago’와 슈퍼 바이크 ‘듀카티 996 Ducati 996’을 청동으로 제작한 신작은 그의 모든 작품에 조각의 지위를 부여하는 상징적 의미와 함께 동시대의 시대 감성에 대한 오마주이다.

이번 개인전에 출품되는 ‘데오도란트 타입’과 ‘더 플랫폼’의 신작들은 같은 시리즈의 기존 작품들보다 훨씬 밀도가 높아졌음을 확인할 수 있으며, 새로운 연작 ‘더 스컬프처’는 오늘날 어떤 작가의 조각 작품에도 뒤지지 않을 만큼 견고하고 조각적이다. 권오상의 신작들을 바라보고 있노라면 ‘조각성’을 강조할 수 밖에 없게 된다. 그것은 작가 권오상의 정체성에 대한 오해가 풀리는 데에서 비롯되는 것이기도 하지만, 그보다는 사진을 통해 끊임없이 조각과 현대성에 대한 의문을 제기하면서 시작된 권오상의 연구가, 오늘날의 조각이 어떻게 더욱 조각다운 감동을 전해줄 수 있는지에 대한 답변을 제시하는 데에 가까워지고 있기 때문이다.

Return of the Sculpture

In this period when the ready-made cars come in galleries with the title of artwork, Gwon made a supercar in bronze. Here, Gwon, an artist who had been doing simple and light works as if he wanted to laugh at the heaviness of sculpture, chose the most traditional way and conservative material that we could think about in sculpture.

Along with painting, sculpture has been the most important genre in eastern and western arts. Even though they sometimes faced the crisis of being deprived of their title of art, painting and sculpture were always in the center of discourses in art switching the positions in the hierarchy. Even in the middle of 20th century when the wall between different genres in art was broken down, and fragmentary appropriation and mixed hybridization were prevalent, there were artists who persisted in the traditional way of sculpture. Even though it was not in the spotlight being pushed out by new values of the period, the very 'sculpture' survived. Before Gwon Osang presented "The Sculpture" to the public, it was an open secret that he actually was one of the artists who succeeded to the traditional sculpture. In 1998, when Gwon Osang presented 'Deodorant Type' composing a human body with photograph fragments, people thought that it was a contemporary artwork with very sophisticated sensibilities. Even if Gwon announced that he had tried to make a light 'sculpture,' 'Deodorant Type' seemed to go better with the label of 'three-dimensional work' using photography, rather than with the 'sculpture.' And 5 years later, when he presented 'The Flat' putting photographs in shining diasec frames, people thought that Gwon was really entering the way of 'photographer.' However, Gwon Osang still insisted that 'The Flat' was a sculpture. It really makes a perfect sculpture along with 'Deodorant Type' in his logic.

The story of sculptor Gwon Osang and sculpture begins with the photography sculpture. Gwon Osang was too frail to do the traditional sculpture, trimming stones with chisel and burin, making original form with clay, and casting it in bronze, and he also was too smart to do it in spite of all these hardships. Instead of being suffocated by traditional materials and producing process of sculpture, he searched for appropriate and modern materials which could be used as substitutes. And finally, in photography, he found the link with sculpture along with the contemporary visuality, and its fragmentary property.

From Charle-Pierre Baudelaire's modern eye to Jean Baudrillard's simulacre, photography is a medium which has been in the middle of the visual conception ruling the modern city. It contains the will to texidermize a transient moment into eternity, and separates image from reality. It was served as a tool to change the episteme of period. If Gwon Osang's 'Deodorant Type' satisfies the obligations of contemporary art depending on the property of photography as a signifier, it appropriates the possibility of transition into sculpture from its reproduction mechanism. On the mechanism of photography and sculpture, he said, "In sculpture, we make original forms and cast them in plaster, which is just like the process of making negatives in film. Moreover, the way we set up the plaster casts and re-make the original form is not different from the printing process of photography. " Here, he sharply points out that the mechanism of every analog reproductions including photography, after all, cannot choose but appropriate the system of 'Original-Mold-Reproduction.' A different approach to the mimesis of photography and sculpture refutes the criticism which insists that the way of representation in 'Deodorant Type' is based on the reckless laziness of the sculptor. Admitting that the essential purpose in the starting

point of visual arts like sculpture, painting, and photography is the mimesis of nature and object, we could say that it is creative and natural to substitute sculptor's representation with photographer's reproduction. Beyond the common areas in technique and meaning between photography and sculpture, what Gwon Osang presented through 'Deodorant Type' was the possibility of new sculpture keeping the pace with the times.

Pioneering a genre of photography sculpture in 'Deodorant Type,' Gwon Osang challenges a new one called still-life sculpture in 'The Flat.' Now, he calls the popular items in magazine such as watches, jewelries, cosmetics, shoes, purses as objects of sculpture. Considering the number of times these items are appearing in magazines, they are the icons of today's consumer culture. With these items, Gwon Osang condenses the process of sculpture into the simplest one. While he replaces the heaviness of sculpture with lightness, the volume and density with fragility in photography sculpture, now in 'The Flat,' he replaces the complexity in the process of sculpture with simplicity. Cutting out pictures from magazines, and supporting them with iron wires from the back, Gwon Osang puts flat sheets of paper in the three-dimensional spaces to stand alone and grants them the status of sculpture.

Here, the more interesting thing is that he ultimately shows us these simple sculptures in the photo plane. He even insists that these final photos are also 'sculptures,' which requires more complicated logical reasoning about the property of sculpture than in the case of 'Deodorant Type' where he tries to put it into the area of sculpture. 'Three-dimensionality,' one of the most important properties in sculpture, is based on the fact that objects that a work tries to represent are three-dimensional. Even if each sculptures that Gwon Osang called for 'The Flat' came in the three-dimensional spaces, they are still flat in essence, and so spectators would see them in the right way only when they could be in the front side. Human eyes, however, cannot see this right front side because they also watch the sides and imagine the back considering the spaces. On the other hand, camera lens, the single eye which estimates spaces only with the size, can show us these flat sculptures the way Gwon intended. In short, each sculpture could be seen as a perfect sculpture the way artist wants to show us when it is framed by the camera, and then, it could exist as a solid sculpture.

The solid and shining images of 'The Flat' which seem so vivid to our eyes are far away from us covered by various layers of curtain. The objects that they denote are mass produced industrial products whose originals are unknown. After these products are photographed by camera, the films are developed and printed, mass reproduced by magazine, and framed and casted in camera of the artist, then they finally presented to us. However, as any other things of today, these sculptures whose originals are unidentified appear before us more vividly than the originals themselves, and even than the direct object in the magazine advertisements. In 'The Flat,' Gwon Osang is doing an experiment with the possibility of flat sculpture, and he completes the study on today's images and on the elements happening between them, beyond the relations between vision and illusion, reality and image.

After the photography sculpture and flat sculpture. In this period when the ready-made cars come in galleries with the title of artwork, Gwon Osang made a supercar in bronze. Here, Gwon, an artist who had been doing simple and light works as if he wanted to laugh at the heaviness of sculpture, chose the most traditional way and conservative

material that we could think about in sculpture. Even though he says that he wanted to show what is sculpture, in front of this huge work, bronze cast of a supercar, 'Murcielago,' it is hard to expect the deep impression we could get from Greek sculptures, 'noble simplicity and calm grandeur' as J.J. Winckelmann said. However, from this artist who goes better with the cold reason, and in this period of fragmentation and mental dispersion, it might be nonsense to expect the impressive and emotional work. In front of Gwon Osang's new work covering a large space around it thickly painted in dark orange, people would rather feel overwhelmed and embarrassed than emotionally touched and impressed. This is somewhat caused by the density contained in the work of the sculptor who keeps studying on sculpture just like unique color developing effects made only by painters who keep studying on painting, or by the visual shock that we could have facing the sculpture sitting low and wide in a space for the first time. However, the root cause of this embarrassment and overwhelmed feeling is mostly in the more psychological part. This is a feeling close to the shivering we could have when something we desire but never expect to happen in real appears just in front of the eyes and the spirit of an age that we could feel when we face a work of art which, in our thought, should be there.

On 'The Sculpture,' Gwon Osang said, "In fact, it simply ends with the fact that I made a supercar in bronze." However, through this short essay, I try to add to his new series a word, "product of ceaseless study on the sculpture which can fit in the new period." Besides 'The Sculpture,' when I look at the new pieces of 'Deodorant Type,' and 'The Flat' with which he is still working on, I can see that they are denser and harder than ever and find myself stressing their sculpture-ness. Maybe it is partially because I clear up the misunderstandings about artist Gwon Osang's identity. However more than this, it is because Gwon's study which started with having ceaseless questions on sculpture and modernity through photography comes close to the answer to how today's sculpture could feel more sculptural being worthy of the name and deeply impressive. From Gwon Osang's works, I could feel the period of sculpture arrives. As painting recently led the 'triumph of painting' by combining traditional techniques and modern materials, Gwon Osang's works combining the most traditional techniques with the contemporary age step forward towards that(triumph) of sculpture. Return of the sculpture just began.