

1. Sewing my face

When I first started to sew my face, I wasn't able to think that this could disturb people.

I used to get over boring classes by drawing scars on portraits from textbooks or making over their faces totally different. Sewing my face was not too far from what I used to do.

To be honest, I was the one who was more shocked and more surprised by audience response when I first exhibited Rag face series.

Only very few people felt pleasure like how I felt. Most people felt unpleasant, shocked and even scared. Some asked me if I felt pain, some worried if I suffered from any trauma, some kibitzed I could make big issues if I sew celebrities' faces and some said I couldn't have done it if it wasn't my face. It was funny how artist felt about my work was not very different from how un-artist felt.

When you enter college of art, you are often forced to change your habitual behavior of 'seeing'. For example, they tell you the story about people from Joseon Dynasty (Korean Kingdom, 1392-1897) who believed that taking a photo was one of the great taboos since they thought it took away their souls. And then they give you one more example of people from somewhere in Africa still believe it and emphasize that these people are uncivilized while they think they are civilized and able to see 'image' or 'objet'. But, ironically, these civilized people tell me that my work reminds them of a charm from black magic?

Thanks to them, I have become more curious about 'seeing' and got reasons to continue to work on Rag face series. Moreover, I don't need to find another models beside myself.

You might appreciate more or less art according to how much background knowledge you have, but this is pretty much the same with any other things in our daily life. You can choose more fresh delicious fruit if you have more knowledge about fruit and you can understand better of TV drama if you have its time background. But I think senses of shame that you are feeling (feeling that you take without knowing it) from 'art' and 'everyday life' seem very different. For instance, as the way you eat depends on what food you eat, the way you see the art also depends on what artwork you see. But you never give up eating even if the way you eat is different and unfamiliar with others. On the other hand, you give up seeing the artwork so easily. Why do we give up seeing the art so easily feeling ourselves shame and stupid? (We even think we feel this way is polite to the art.) Why can't we just enjoy the art? Vanity, illusion and cultural toadyism that were so called 'ART' might have made us to give up 'Seeing' the art?

I hope my audience can think of 'Why did I give up seeing and just relying on reading or listening? Why did I give up imagination? Why can't I talk just as I see or as I feel?' I want my audience retrieve their freedom to 'see'. This is why I hesitate to explain my work before people see them because I don't want people think there is an instruction to see my work. I

just want them to see and feel what they actually see. So they can agree to disagree and they can be curious about disagreement.

As my work started from the fun, I really hope that anyone who sees my work can laugh and tell what they see and feel just as my niece said “Aunty! It looks like noodles are coming out of your nose!”

2. Painting, photo and sewing

I majored in painting.

I use photos very often when I work.

Man Ray once said, “I paint what cannot be photographed. I photograph what I do not wish to paint”. This perfectly explains why I use photos in my work. I use photos when I need images or meanings of photos. With many other reasons I use photos when I need them, and I paint when I need a painting. In fact, a great fear of painting made me to use more photos. I majored in painting at university and graduate school and I really wanted to paint. There are enormous amount of great paintings in the world since it has a long history. I was so devastated by unawareness of what I really wanted to paint. I blamed artists who have already done what I wanted. The more I wanted to paint, the more I got a fear for painting. I uncritically accepted any advice or compliment. In the end, before one knows, I was imitating someone’s painting as if it was mine and satisfied with sweet compliment. As soon as I realized myself like this, I felt so terrible so I couldn’t paint any longer. I was unable to do anything and became nervous just holding a brush in front of canvas. Come to think of it, I started to look for medium that nobody could kibitz about. So I’ve used various kinds of materials like bones, chicken feet, chicken skin, pig skin, photos, thread, papers, hair, etc. One of my co-workers, who knew my situation, once visited Rag face exhibition and told me. “The first letter of Chinese character of ‘painting (繪)’ is combination of ‘糸(thread)’ and ‘會(get together)’. This perfectly fits with your work.” The moment I heard what he said, I felt like crying. I was an idiot who was missing painting even though how I worked on my pieces wasn’t far from painting.

While I was working on Rag face series, I have been satisfied with many pros like tangling, dragging, shapeless of thread, having two different images of front and back in one action, freedom to hang in the air so you can enjoy both images or put on the wall so you can enjoy one side of image, taking long hours to finish one piece (it is good for me because if it takes too short, I need more expenses), light weight, it can be rolled so it is easy to store in a small work room and simple to move to other place and so on. Aside from these pros, I have been

actually doing 'painting' which I was always dreaming of. '繪' – Yes, this letter has been stuck to me all the time as if it was born to be with me, who happens to enjoy a play on words. It is absolutely amazing.

I first look at photos taken beforehand and then sew on them with images what the photos want. The images of photos are leaning to one side as if they are caught just after beaten up by someone, or staring at one point, or frowning. Sewing is leaving its traces moving back and forth over the photo, looks like it can be the reason to make faces frown. I like the mixture of timelines and the confusion so no one knows cause and effect.

3. Communication and understanding

Many artists say that they are hoping for communicating with people through their work. So I am often asked if I am the same. I don't think the artist is not the person who wants communication.

To be exact, I am not the person who wants to communicate with the audience.

I want understanding and support.

Communication means (sentences with underlines indicate the meaning of "communication" from a Korean dictionary) understanding each other well smoothly – it is possible when both have a strong will to understand each other and both carry out their will.

And then it can come to understanding without misunderstanding.

One-sided communication can never happen.

I am not open-minded, I am not consistent with what is right and I am not logical. I am not the person who aims for those.

I personally think that the attitude of hoping for communication is more suitable for designers than artists. Designers gather as much information as they can collect on age, gender, circumstance, taste, trend and usage of their potential customers. And then they create on the top of what they collect. So they can attract customers to buy their creations. When the customers realize that the creations are made for themselves, they take them. This is communication.

On the other hand, artists do not really care about the stories of their audience. Even if they care about it, they know they never satisfy the audience. This is one-sided.

An artist is a person who creates his/her story by using methods of what he/she found the most suitable for them.

Monet, Cézanne, Picasso and Rothko had their own stories. They didn't do art for others but themselves.

To put it simply,

An artist is,

For me, I want to officially announce my cowardliness, seriousness, humors and stories. And I want your understanding and support.

If you put the word 'understanding' in a Korean dictionary, you come up with 3 meanings.

1. Interpreting with a good sense
2. Realizing, or accepting by themselves
3. [Synonym] consent – Accepting others by generously considering stories of others

I think a traditional way of seeing the art was closed to number 3, (as amplification, for audience, views of the artists and art histories are stories of others. The audience had to generously accept the stories of others with or without understanding. It was more important for them to say what they 'know' about the art rather than 'understanding' the art.)

For my work, I prefer No. 2.

When the audience tries to understand my work (accepting it on their own), they will be free to tell how they feel. Some may sympathize with my work, some may have antipathy, and some may just not care about it.

Each person has his or her own ways to see and accept.

As the ways of seeing things are all different from each other, you can feel free to understand or misunderstand.

4. Relationship and thinking

People tend to have a biased point of view putting them in a limited territory of custom rather than expanding their imagination. A biased point of view takes away opportunities of seeing what we really make (things, objects etc.). We may fail to verify the exact object, however, we may verify our habits of how we make a relationship with the object when it turns out to be unfamiliar from familiar. This is what I focus on.

In 1999, my professor from college, Yoo Geunyoung wrote a preface of my first solo exhibition,

He mentioned in his preface, 'I see her uniqueness as she thinks through her prank by twisting and distorting things. Jiseon is like a child who plays alone with everyday things.'

In fact, I enjoy playing with my body, everyday objects and words. For example, I twist my body and then take photos from various angles so you never guess what parts of my body are or I create illusion with my bodies to make you confused. Based on the saying 'Taking bean sprouts out of beggars' assholes!' (A Korean saying, the same meaning as 'Skin a flea

for its hide'), I planted bean sprouts on genitals of my casting body making it looked like pubic hairs. Picked up the idea from '兔角龜毛 (A horn of a rabbit and hair of a turtle, a metaphor from Buddhism meaning things that can never happen in real life)', I planted my hair on a horn and a bone of a cow. I pierced many holes onto my photo from the back so my face skin looked like if I had goose bumps. Just like the saying 'Sew those lips with a sewing machine!' I actually sew on photos. It seems like I come up with these kinds of pranks in a wink, but if you go deep it doesn't happen that way. It comes out of a box filled with a full of things that have been piled up for sometime. When the box gets full, the last thing overflows from the box. This is how my prank happens.

This is a process of making a relationship between things (objects, words) and myself.

I'm not a tactful person and I'm not very good at reading between lines so I've had difficulty communicating with others. Perhaps I wanted to share this experience and explain how things or words have approach me and what kind of relationship I have made with them.

You should eat it if you want to know the taste. I want to work with things what I actually see and think. I want to express the relationship (the relationship that might change anytime) between things and myself. This is what I want to do.