

On the Eternal Moment : Temporal Possibility of Painting (2020)

By. It Hae Wan

1. Experiment of Thought

Introducing the artist Cheol-won Chang, the thought experimenter. His works in front of our eyes are traces of a fierce battle between the artist and a specific question point. It's not the result of reaching the final conclusion, but rather the 'visual-traces' extracted from the course of an experiment which is still in progress. When facing the geometric structure he put forth, this is why the 'generative principle' of the work are being curious more than enjoying the pleasure of the aesthetic pleasure that the pattern creates. 'So, what do those patterns mean?' He does not simply present a beautiful frame, but draws us into the middle of his concern. Artist Cheol-won Chang is an experimental thinker, and his works are question marks – hooks(?) which lure us with bait. So, what is the question mark he threw at himself, and also throwing at us? What problem consciousness are we invited to?

2. What Remains?

“What happens to my works if I die? What am I doing, and what are my works?” It will never be someone else's story to those who create works. It is an existential question stemming from the fact that my actions do not engage in consumption and usefulness that will be used once and discarded. No one living in a world of change and extinction can be an exception to this question. Individual things, things of senses, thinkings of you and me, actions of, and the consequences of, these traces I left on the canvas, no, this canvas will never last forever either. Then, what is 'remaining' in the abyss between creation and extinction?

What is the meaning of using my daily life, personal thoughts and feelings as the subject of my work? If someone sees a work that contains my very personal story in the distant future, wouldn't it be just a whining of someone who can't sympathize at all? It is that it will never be able to cross the wall without any subject that gets beyond the time and cultural constraints. What do I want to convey through the work?

3. Principle of Incorporeity

“I thought it would be nice if there is someone who could continue my work, even if the artist Cheol-won Chang no longer exists in the world after I died.” Concerns about the finiteness of me as a one person and the time limit of works lead to the thought that my works can be continued through other people than myself alone. Even if my works and I disappear or cease, if other people continue to do this beyond generation and culture, my work remains. Even if individual works are forgotten or disappeared, the principle of work itself can be shared, preserved, and delivered. Therefore, the pure principle of incorporeity itself, which is not restricted by the limitations of each work, medium, and material, becomes the first key.

‘Continuing the work’ cannot mean that someone fills up or transforms my work arbitrarily. Conversely, it is premised on sufficient understanding of the artist’s vision and intention. A form of “objective and universal working principle that anyone can understand and accept” is required. The clear and distinct principle of work itself, which can be passed on synchronically and handed down diachronically, must be shared. To this end, Cheol-won Chang develops a scientific methodology. The commensurable language of mathematics and physics, which is objective, universal, and easy to convey and share, is both a form and a content of the work process.

1) Mathematical and physical formal principles based on common rules and understanding can be understood, shared, and conveyed, so they exceed the survival limits of individual works. It is accepted through generations in itself, and it is born as a new work in the hands of others. This may be the reason why Cheol-won Chang applied himself to the study of modern physics or devoted himself to the work of extracting standard colors for a number of years, which are still in progress. “It is the same element, but depending on the arrangement of its atoms, substances with different properties can be formed. Likewise, it is the same figure on a plane, but different types of images can be created depending on the arrangement of the figures.” Prior to this exhibition, the commensurable principle presented by Cheol-won Chang is as follows.

- ① Make a basic figure.
 - ② Make a curved figure with the same starting point and ending point by referring to the basic shape.
 - ③ Make multiple copies of the shape.
 - ④ View the copied figures as one module and transform the gradients differently
 - ⑤ Rotate and accumulate the converted module at various angles
- ∴ Numerous cases-images are created according to several conditions.

2) “The visible things will disappear, but the invisible principles of nature are universal beyond the times and cultures.” Observe invisible natural principles according to these basic ideas, and visualize the structures abstracted from them. It can be roughly classified into three strategies.

- ① Geometry–structuralize by abstracting common geometrical principles hidden in natural objects that are not directly visible to the eye:
〈One and Four Oranges〉(2014), 〈Macro and Micro〉(2014, 2020), 〈Flash〉(2014), 〈Rondo〉(2016), 〈Sequence〉(2016), 〈Round and Round〉(2020), 〈Trot Trot Trot〉(2020), 〈Rotation, Copy, Drawing〉(2020), 〈Movement of Module O〉(2020), 〈A Triangle-ish Figure〉(2020), 〈A Square-ish Figure〉(2020)
 - ② Spatial–visualize mathematical developments such as time and infinite decimals of circumference that are not visible objects
〈Ticktack〉(2007), 〈Biological Analysis of Time〉(2013), 〈Ratio〉(2018), 〈Sestina〉(2019)
 - ③ Suggest the fact that completely different visual results are possible depending on the viewpoint of angle, distance, parallax, etc.
〈Circle〉(2014), 〈Diagram〉(2014), 〈Plane Curve〉(2015), 〈Splitting the Rainbow〉(2018), 〈Ten Colors〉(2018), 〈Stars from the CMY〉(2018), 〈Two Frames〉(2018)
- ※ In some cases, more than one strategy overlaps in one series.

4. ‘The principle is hereditary’, ‘The heredity is the principle’

The idea of ‘working principles that can be transmitted across cultures and generations’ reminds of genetic principles that are phylogenetic. The Artist Cheol-won Chang’s thoughts are inherited. The commensurable principle is inherited. The performers who received his ideas perform new working objects, and the gene-data (Cheol-won Chang’s idea) remains through them. If you only think up to this point, individual works in Cheol-won Chang’s world of work degenerate into simple media-means that are consumed while temporarily recording and storing ideas and principles. As if the reason for the existence of individuals is merely a vessel of genes for the continuation of the system. For universality, objectivity, and abstract promises that are assumed to be the principle of work, it seems that the specificity • subjectivity • autonomy and the materiality • directness of the working medium are sacrificed.

However, in another sense, it is confirmed that the metaphor of ‘Cheol-won Chang’s idea = heredity’ is correct. Inheritance does not mean copy as it is. Even as DNA-data is transmitted through generations, each individual created by the process

can never be exactly the same. The next object resembles the previous object, but it is not the same as it is. New individuals born through generations and performers have different aspects while using the same principle as a common denominator. Each individual is also affected by the specific and individual environment • situation given to them. Even among the works created by Cheol-won Chang himself, the same work never exists. Therefore, not only 'the principle is hereditary', but also 'the heredity is the principle.' The metaphor of 'hereditary' indicates not only the preservation and sharing of universal principles, but also the possibility of flowing and transmitting, and the specificity of each individual. One can never be repeated as it was.

5. Can it be different?

Still, the question of securing individuality remains. Cheol-won Chang uses graphic programs to devise the movement of modules and create it. If it is not 'hereditary principle' or 'principle of heredity', it can be argued that the result displayed on the monitor screen and printed out is also Cheol-won Chang's own work. However, many creators may produce the same results with the same principle. The uniqueness of the performer and the task are not preserved. The further question still remains. Even if the specificity of 'individual and different situations' is given to individual artists, it is still unclear in terms of 'what is the difference between you and me, who performed the same work principle?' The only thing that guarantees the difference between the performers A and B is the purely situational coincidence that they are just performers in different environments, times, and emotions. The problem becomes clear. 'How do we secure the autonomy and singularity that cannot be reduced only to the universal and objective principle, which is, the 'one's work' of the principle performer?

He considers "the infinite possibility of the genre of painting." Cheol-won Chang draws a structure in the pixel space of the monitor, shows the computer's results on the canvas with a beam-projector, and draws them along with his hands. In this process, the ontological layer transition takes place "from pixel graphic space to vector space." The performer puts materiality, directionality, temporality, concreteness, individuality, etc., on the visual structures of the pixel space that are nothing yet in the physical reality • vector space, which are mere shapes of nothing. The ideas that were merely hypotheses are realized in the artist's 'pulse of hand touch.' In the transition of the layer, the 'world of possibility', which is the realm of

different • uniqueness • probable • potential, is realized. Lines containing materiality can never be the same line, no matter how similar they are to lines in pixel space. Thus, the possibility of vector space guarantees the uniqueness of the performer. Choices such as ‘What ingredients to use? Which color to use?’ also add autonomy. “Because in the vector space where we breathe and live, there is never the same red, and there is never the same square. Just as the leaves of the same species have common principles but look different.” To borrow phrase from Augustinus, “I mistake [in the sense that I can never draw exactly like a graphic screen], therefore I [the performer of the task] am.”

6. The Original and The Imitation

In the above process, classical hierarchy of the original and the imitation occurs between the structure of the pixel space and the structure of the vector space. The superior and inferior relationship between shape and material: The asymmetric confrontation between correctness and error, right and wrong, between straight graphic lines without any disturbance and crooked – accidental lines with thin and thick pencil lead – strength and tremor of hands. This seems to be the inevitability of the principle of ‘drawing along’ the line of pixel space by hand. Is the hierarchy of the original and the imitation inevitable?

In <Rotation, Copy, Drawing>(2020) and <Round and Round>(2020), presented in this second solo exhibition, he attempts to reverse the rigid hierarchical order of the original and the imitation.

1) In the case of <Round and Round>(2020), the frame itself represented is considerably got bigger than the previous works. It becomes clear compared to the <Macro Micro>(2014, 2020) series, which has been produced on a similar principle 6 years ago. The aspect of the work has changed from detailed and accurate simulation of pixel lines, which were considered as the original, to ‘widely revealing’ the overall outline. This is because, as long as a person draws within physical constraints, if you draw along a much thicker and longer line, the line will be markedly different from the line in the pixel space. In fact, <Macro Micro>(2014) and <Circle>(2014) were able to be recognized that the work was drawn by the hand of the artist only if it was seen very closely. On the other hand, <Rotation, Copy, Drawing>(2020) and <Round and Round>(2020) are clear enough to see.

2) In *⟨Rotation, Copy, Drawing⟩*(2020) and *⟨Round and Round⟩*(2020), a shape resembling a rounded triangle, rather than an accurate and angled triangle, forms the basic figure that composes the modules of the two works. Cheol-won Chang processes the round curve point roughly and naively enough to look intentional. In *⟨Rotation, Copy, Drawing⟩* (2020), even at the point where the two line segments of two triangles are expected to meet, they do not meet but nearly do. The various points that have been missed are once again different from each other. It seems so obvious that the lines are drawn by humans. It is not a triangle but 'different figures resembling a triangle'. "They look sophisticated from a distance, but it's actually lines that are as sloppy as disappointment when viewed a little closer."

3) In the case of *⟨Rotation, Copy, Drawing⟩* (2020), the materiality itself is further emphasized by drawing with blunt and thick materials. Blue lines are not just only blue. The line passed by the colored pencil is technically blue and white. It is painted several times like an elementary school art homework and does not fill it very meticulously with blue. The red lines of *⟨A Triangle-ish Figure⟩*(2020) and *⟨A Square-ish Figure⟩*(2020) are also the same. It is not a trace of the line passing, but a trace of the passing is the line. The texture of the lines got more pronounced than before. Compared to the *⟨Macro Micro⟩*(2014, 2020) series, it is more certain. It was transitioned from a cold and impersonal line to a line that was likely to be approached and touched. The 'touch of the vision', as R. Arnheim called it, becomes clearer.

In the *⟨Macro Micro⟩*(2014, 2020) series, Cheol-won Chang also said, "I wanted to find an ambiguous point that seems to be objective but also to be not by intentionally leaving traces of a hand passing, that is, a fly in the ointment." At this point, the idea of the original image still pre-existed, followed by the hands and materials to be traced. And this year's two works push through the element that was expressed as 'a fly in the ointment' much further. By emphasizing ① Performer's touch, ② coarsely processed lines, and ③ the texture of the material, the work emphasizes its own differences and identity from the shape of the pixel screen that was its original. As a result, in order not to remain as the other to the original, each individual imitations seem to struggle to reveal the 'self' after defining the exemplarism as the other presented by the pixel line as otherness. There is a power struggle between the imitation and the original. The work seems to say to the original that became the foundation of his own. 'I may no longer be your alter ego. Of course, I owe you a lot, but it's not just a replica of you.' Could the hierarchy

between the original and the imitation be completely reversed someday? In other words, wondering that the cool and unobstructed lines of the graphic screen, may be the imitation of numerous lines drawn by the hands.

The singularity and autonomy of the task performer were also secured. This is because, while maintaining the frame itself created by the incorporeal principle, there is room for separation from it. In his joke, “I was so tired of life when I was trying to draw it meticulously,” it seems to be very intentional to dismiss as simply giving up strictness and delicacy. In the change of the balance of power between the proper form and the actual material, the subjective domain of the performer must be expanded.

7. Temporality

At the root of the first motivate question “What remains?”, there is a question “What is the time, which is the basis of finiteness?” What is time, that drives all things into finite beings? Can the principle of work be truly universal, excluding the fact that everything is created, changed, and extinguished? Can only static shapes be the object of work? These questions are also an overall challenge to the possibility of a stationary two-dimensional plane painting.

1) Cheol-won Chang has been considering these problems since the beginning. In the early days, what was used as the content of the principle of work assumed as the opposite term of creation, change, and extinction was paradoxically the flow of change itself called ‘time’. Early works <Ticktack>(2007) and <Biological Analysis of Time>(2013) visually-structure the answer to the question ‘Where is time?’.

2) The conceived module rotates, and the result accumulates. The accumulated result, visual-structure, presupposes motility, that is, the passage of time. It becomes more evident in the transition to vector space. The space of directionality, or vector space, is the space of motion possibility. The possibility of exercise carries the passage of time. Lines with different strengths and directions in <Macro Micro>(2014) are indicators of time development from the first time a pencil lead was sharpened, until the pencil lead was worn away and blunt, and the pencil was sharpened again. It leaves traces of time in materiality. The same applies to the lines of <Rotation, Copy, Drawing>(2020) as previously seen.

3) In this exhibition, Cheol-won Chang presents various attempts to represent the flow of time on the plane. It is directly related to seeking the possibility of stationary plane painting.

① <Rotation, Copy, Drawing>(2020) lists the progress and accumulation of rotational motion of modules in chronological order. A total of 12 paintings represent the time passage of the frame being created as the module rotates, from left to right. It states that the basic premise of the principle of moving modules to form a visual-frame is the passage of time.

② In <Trot Trot Trot>(2020), the footprints (lines) that the pencil passes through in a short and quick steps give a rhythmical and continuous feeling. You will experience Cheol-won Chang's rhythmical hand dancing with a pencil. It turns out that the basis for the sense of rhythm and continuity on the plane is temporality. The same principle is also confirmed in <Round and Round>(2020).

③ <Movement of Module O>(2020) shows the mobility and variability of Cheol-won Chang's structure as a video. The increase in materiality is the increase in temporality. In the fact that the texture and materiality of the work were emphasized, it is confirmed that the elements of finiteness and temporality, which were the objects of overcoming, are rather objects and cause of enjoyment. "Looking at things in a life attitude that enjoys the momentality of time, discontinuity, the principle of nature that everything changes, not forever, and finite, and making them brighter." Never can draw the same triangle – never can pass the same once – but in the finiteness – the encounter with this stroke I'm passing now – missing what just passed and will be gone forever – and enjoying it with joy at the same time. Finiteness is not an object to overcome, but a source of jouissance to be with for a lifetime and an object of jouissance itself.

8. Boundary, Enjoyment, and Hope

A.

Remaining · Eternal · Permanent ·
Invisible · Intellectual · Commensurable ·
Universal · Objectivity ·
Incorporeal mental · Shape ·
Structure · Principle · Essential ·
Systemic · Creator · Inevitably ·
Same · Pixel Space · Conceptual ·
Basic · Original · Cold ·
Closed · Pause · Space ·····.

B.

Disappearance · Momentary · Temporary ·
Visible · Sensation · Autonomous ·
Singularity · Subjectivity ·
Corporeal Sensation · Material ·
Chaos · Natural Object · Appearance ·
Object · Performer · Coincidence ·
Difference · Vector Space · Materialized ·
Unfolded · Imitation · Warmth ·
Movement · Open · Time ·····.

The first Cheol-won Chang's thought experiment began with the superiority of A and the exclusion of B. A is summarized as a 'transmissible working principle'. However, for Cheol-won Chang, B has never been given up. As he says, "It is aimed at crossing the ambiguous point, the boundary between A and B," he constantly moves the speculative process of B penetrating A into the experiment. The works presented in this exhibition seem to highlight B's point of view, which has dreamed of overturning. Before attaching a philosophical and grand title to this, it should be noted that the drama between B and A is not just the result of speculative thinking, but the result of long-term performance of contemplating, drawing, and placing lines. Isn't it because the A, Cheol-won Chang's mental composure toward B is reflected? In September 2020, ahead of his second solo exhibition, he seems to be going through the process of recognizing(accommodating) and embracing B as a companion to be with for the rest of his life, not just an object of overcoming. The world of work leads to the amusement between the creator of the working principle, Cheol-won Chang, the A, and the performer of the working principle, Cheol-won Chang, the B. It is 'jouissance with the finitness.'

The sign of A affirming B would be Cheol-won Chang's motif. A via B will never be the old A. A's passing through B is the process of opening himself toward (im)possibility and toward the other. "I want to see my work finished one day," says Cheol-won Chang. A completely affirms B. This may be why Cheol-won Chang emphasized 'hope' in connection with the probability that is close to impossible in <Disaster and Time>(2020). "The impossible probability of converging to zero can be discussed only by an artist, not a scientist." He says. Also "There will be no exact same repetition in the world. But since the universe is so wide, wouldn't there be exactly the same repetition somewhere!" and "Who knows if I constantly

bump into this wall, I'll be out the other way around one day," he says. It is a 'hope' that is expected with full positivity. In the midst of finiteness and impossibility, hope proves its existence. To embrace the finite reality while loving the uncertainty, to borrow Kierkegaard's expression, Cheol-won Chang's hope is 'passion toward the (im)possible'.

9. Addendum: (A) – Aesthetic Fit – (B)

The premise that A and B do not stay as a rigid confrontation, but also be the conditions of mutual amusement is 'beauty' that mediates both. Cheol-won Chang describes it as 'fit'. The number of frames drawn by the modules of 'A Triangle-ish Figure' totals 1,870. Among them, Jang Chul Won selected six or fewer frames and presented them as new works in this exhibition. What sorting principle is applied? "I wondered if the things what I see it beautiful could also be beautiful to other people." Can the sense of beauty, the subjective experience, ask for universal assent that anyone can accept? The question of this exhibition is 'the fitting form,' or 'the possibility that Cheol-won Chang's personal judgement of beauty is a universally common choice at the same time.' "If I can statisticize which frames other people, including myself, choose mainly out of the numerous frames, I think we will be able to estimate the objective standards of beauty." The thought experiment continues.

(Before the second solo exhibition)