

Art & Criticism

Quarterly Art Magazine
www.sinwonart.co.kr
www.artnc21.com

48 2017 4

미술과비평

문화체육관광부 선정 2018년도 우수 콘텐츠집지

표지작가 | 신기욱 초대작가 | 송영방
Special Artist | 권희연 김혜원 정현숙 Zoom in Museum | C-Art Museum



Human, Animal, and Machine

Text by Lee, Sun Young:

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Human beings seem to surpass animality in a bipedal manner, which enables their two arm limbs to be more functional and helps them to proceed with the evolution of their brains. The anthropocentric mindset cares deeply about the differences between human and animal. The distinct traits would be reasonable and worthy of each species, however, the idea of differential treatments creates a problematic issue. However, animality remains in human nature, often without the humans being aware of it, because the human body would still possess the animal latency alongside human traits. While the technology for increasing productive capacity has encoded all things in the world, the ambiguous identification of animality still remains in the nature of human body, an unconquerable disposition within technological progress. The concept of 'reason', as the theory of 'Instrumental Reason', reached its limit at the end of modernism, which took new aspects that follow the theory of Sigmund Freud's 'Return of Repression'. The body, for instance, drives the subconscious, which is one of the aspects. It was sensational that Freud's concept of subconscious has powerfully impacted the significance in the relationship between the subconscious and the body. Artist Doo-Sung Yoo is a contemporary artist who plainly exposes non-traditional and provocative articulations that break the nature of taboo. Taboo accompanies transgression. Although secrecy caused by taboo and transgression is used to present within the field of religions and rituals, the contemporary artists as successors revive taboo and transgression.

Contemporary art tends to focus more on transgression than taboo. The concept of 'return of repression', of course, mirrors the result of seeking industrial benefits, which have been maximizing and are more consumable in mass production. No one would be successful for increasing profitability in the capital market if the system of production and consumption is managed only by the concept of 'reason'. Instead, the successful capitalist strategy involves rational analysis as well as irrationalities, both within the body and the subconscious, because the two derive endless desires in the commercial market. Machines (and technology) are the other variable to determine humanity and animality in modern society, in which machines have developed at an extremely fast rate after the impact of industrial revolution. In Doo-Sung Yoo's art world, animals and machines are not mere objects. In other words, they are not classified as 'the Other' as Jacques Derrida's concept. In Yoo's

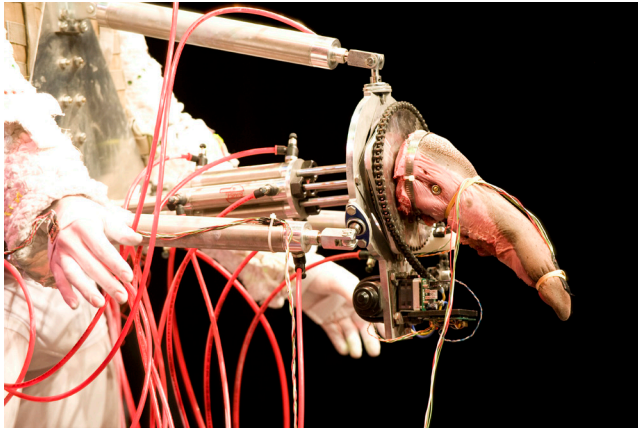
works, the boundary between 'the Self' and 'the Other' is disintegrated, which is one of his articulations in the realm of deconstructions. The tendency of modern science has moved toward to break the concept of dichotomy, as opposed to the traditional way in which science espoused a binary way of thinking in a strict sense for objectivism. In other words, modern science has dissolved the boundaries between human, animal, and machine. For instance, consider Doo-Sung Yoo's art animals, Pigs and leeches, which are animals that are typically utilized in organ transplantations and medical treatments for human health.

The advance of such technology dramatically enabled mankind to intervene in the evolution of animals and nature. Humans, machines, and animals are mingling within the interrelationship through a more visible process of co-evolution. Doo-Sung Yoo's works are condensed artistic forms that involve many animals and machines, which reflect the technological tendency within historical aspects. According to Yoo's e-mail correspondence, he says, "my research and investigation are a new form of New Media Art, involving robotics, bio-art, video, animation-based installation (electronic/mechanical, interactive video/animation), visual performance (action), performing arts (dance, music, theatre), which are experimental interdisciplinary art". These various art forms in his artwork explore the contemporary issues beyond the scope of traditional fine art. He not only creates art, but also implements many practical activities, such as curatorial works, journal publications, and article writing, which enable him to materialize his articulations beyond merely being stagnant and wishful thinking. His artwork accompanies an interdisciplinary research due to crossing over boundaries of fields beyond formative arts. While surpassing the old dichotomy between traditional and new forms of art-making, his interdisciplinary implementations attempt to be on forefront of a spectacular era that technologically develops through autonomous progress.

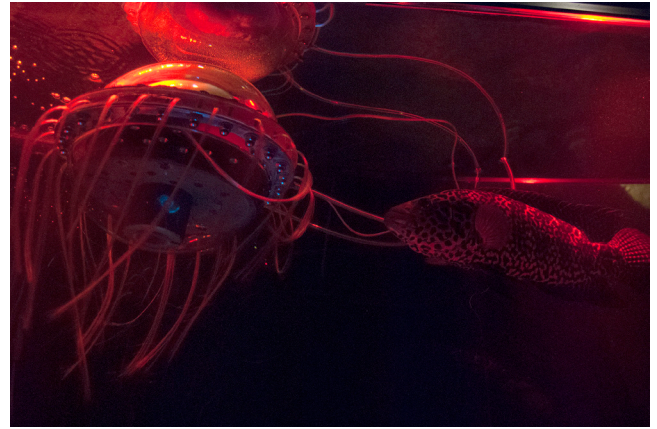
Since getting out of the frame, a canvas, the practice of interdisciplinary art surpasses the narrow norms of artistic beauty endemic to traditional fine art. Laboratories of Biology, Medical Science, and Engineering are beginning to overlap with art labs. Most science laboratories are closed to the public. The fields of science and technology are mired in fierce rivalries, which tend to be favor the result of creating very competitive products, rather than the focusing on the process of creation. Many behind-the-

scenes stories in scientific history involve some failures or mistakes that accidentally lead to inventions and discoveries. In the field of experimental art, however, the process holds the greater worth. Norms for distinguishing between normal (right) and abnormal (wrong) in art would be inaccurate, unlike in the norms of scientific analyses. Moreover, in art, the notions of progress and advance proceed in undefined terms. For those reasons, from those aspects and process, errors and contingency are positive products of the art-making process. Doo-Sung Yoo's art works show that inter-reactions between disparate organs are more significant than that the fact that animal organs anatomically establish a "shock" when viewing the work. As the concepts of Gilles Deleuze's 'connective, conjunctive and disjunctive', Yoo's artistic explorations preview the methodology of 'disjunctive' as an unexpected joint, which could continually develop into numerous and various articulations in his future works.

If Yoo's artwork can be compared with biology, his works would be categorized in physiology rather than anatomy. Anatomy would be talking about the concept of 'Spatiality', but physiology would be significantly focusing on the concept of 'Temporality', following Martin Heidegger's concept. The discovery of William Harvey's circulation of the blood was a major influence not only on physiology, but also on modern ideas, which would be not merely a coincidence. Temporality is the norm in terms of living things. The system of human society should also be considered being a living thing with circulation, beyond the concept of Thomas Aquinas' 'Analogy'. The most significant point in the 'Great Chain of Being' is to the complex network-based dynamic correlations, not only the metaphysical positions within the strict hierarchical structure, where God sits on the top and other elements are positioned down toward the bottom. The procedures of creating experimental art in Yoo's works, accompanying performing arts as well, would not be considered for seeking the artistic sublimation. His works look pretty creepy and sometimes gross, which are associated with rediscovered concepts, such as that of the 'uncanny', 'abjection', 'mutant', 'CsO' (Gilles Deleuze's concept, 'corps sans organes' – body without organs), 'rhizome' (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept) in modern cultures. Those concepts reassess concepts of purity and nature. Simultaneously, not just the concept of 'pollution', opposite of 'purity' as Mary Douglas' notions, those are



Doo-Sung Yoo, "Vishtauborg Version 2.6 - Reaction", 2012, robotic devices and cow tongues, photograph © 2012 Tony Shumski



Doo-Sung Yoo, "Aqua001.c02: Robotic Pig Heart-Jellyfish", 2009, robotic devices, pig heart and kidney, photograph © 2009 Cameron Sharp

re-contextualized further positive nuance, such as 'novelty', 'experiment', 'generation', 'expansion'. Because of the fluctuating boundary between the two, 'purity and pollution (danger)', they exist on one side, but are differently arranged every moment on the other side, like on a Mobius strip. This is because Yoo's articulations about 'body' and 'subconscious' deconstruct the traditional speculations such as Thomas Aquinas' notion 'Perfectio-nes Specifica', and reject the traditional order of historical hierarchical classification. The aspect of disintegration is apparent on the external appearance of Yoo's works. Due to visceral responses from animal organs in Yoo's artwork and performance, some art curators and art festivals push for refined display, which actually made for cancellations of opportunities within past art exhibitions. Since beginning his long-term exploration with this topic and visiting many slaughterhouses, he has also become a vegetarian. The machines in Yoo's works also expose their internal units as external features, associating visual similarities of animals' veins, which conjunct with disparate living things, humans and animals. The characteristics of monsters and cyborgs exist in the crossing boundaries. Humans, machines, and animals would be required to disintegrate each of differential characteristics that form the boundaries for creating interrelations and intercommunications. The parts of animal bodies, such as the pig bladders and cow tongues, in Yoo's art works exactly show those contexts.

However, Yoo's artistic explorations imply that animals, humans, and machines could be interconnected, and we are not as disparate as we think. In modern philosophical notions of Descartes, animals were regarded as automations because animals were also considered as a mere means towards consumption. As assumption of

expanding those concepts of Cartesian, all means might be machines and humans as well. According to Julien Offray de La Mettrie's concept, 'Man a Machine', as the autonomy of the soul, was advocated in the Age of Enlightenment, where 'Century of Lights (Enlightenment)' enables one to understand the universe and improve humanity. The ambiguity of boundaries can be found in not only the histories of religion and science, but also daily life experience. Eating and defecating animals, involving a human being, endlessly have relationships with 'the Other'. This is, of course, except for a few cannibals, "the man who eats human flesh", which "is a forbidden act", according to Georges Bataille.¹⁾ Also, Bataille says that the excretion is "to cast aside" from the other.²⁾ Like genetics and cytology's demonstrations, 'The Other' is actually inside. 'The Other' can be established depending on conditions; 'The Other' is our latent existence. Doo-Sung Yoo's creations, crossing over multi-boundaries, focus on establishing 'the Other's latent existence in ways of disintegrating the boundaries of limited 'identities'.

Yoo's art needed to articulate dynamic instead of static processes. In the process of deconstructing boundaries, Yoo's works exist within an atmosphere of the 'carnival'. Like the implication of Mikhail Bakhtin's literary theory, the concept of grotesque is related to the carnival mode. Yoo's art works articulate the characteristics of animals and machines, which are as distinct as we think, but are immanent in humanity. Animals and machines were considered as 'the other' for humanity. Humanity was defined through relationships with 'the others'. However, following new concepts regarding 'the other' in contemporary philosophy, Yoo's works demonstrate Jacques Derrida's concept, "the singularity of the Other; they are the same".³⁾ One of the motivating powers of Yoo's

works is the concept of Posthumanism (and the concept of reincarnation) that enables humans to expand their ideas. According to traditional Oriental philosophy, a current human being may or may not be a human in the past and future, which amazingly matches with the Post-humanism rejection of the anthropocentric stance. Artist Doo-Sung Yoo considers that animals and machines are immanent within us, while animals and machines used to be regarded as 'the other' to establish 'identity' for humanity themselves in traditional concepts. Immanence has become both artistic object and the subject of contemporary art. ♪

The Artist's Biography:

Doo-Sung Yoo explores hybrid art, synthesizing natural and unnatural technology, interweaving arts, science, and technology, and discovering aesthetic possibilities for interactions between human and technological nature, and interspecies communication between human and animals. His works have been exhibited, reviewed and published in many exhibitions, art festivals, conferences, journals, and art magazines, such as *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture* (England), *Art and Speculative Futures International Conference 2016* (Spain), *Borderlines IV: Resisting, Persisting, Performing 2016* (England), *Bodies on Stage: Acting Confronted by Technology 2015* (France), *Wi: Journal of Mobile Culture* (Canada), *NY Arts magazine* (USA), *Media-N Journal* (USA), *Prospectives.09* (USA), *Ingenuity Fest 2012* (USA), *International Symposium on Electronic Art 2012* (USA), the conference of *College Art Association 2013* (USA), *Intertekst* (Poland), and *Evolution Haute Couture: Art and Science in the Post-Biological Age* (Russia).

1) Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* (New York: Walker, 1962), 71.

2) Wright, Drew M., "The Impossible Thought of Georges Bataille: A Consciousness That Laughs and Cries," Thesis, Georgia State University, 2017. 49. http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_theses/214

3) Jason Powell, Jacques Derrida: *A Biography*, (A&C Black, 2006), 212.