

Oh Sewon (Director, CR Collective)

In 1999, as a curator, I met Kwon Hyuk along with a couple of other artists to create a public art project group called 'Ozone'. At the time, we were the so-called "aspiring youth(?)," fired up with the intent to attempt something brand new in the Korean art scene. We recruited voluntary participants via online platforms for the project and silk screen-printed our 'Ozone' trademark on aprons, boots, T-shirts, all by ourselves. We wished our work to carry a certain meaning with the element of fun, at the border between life and art. We pondered on our social role as female members in our late 20s or early 30s, as artist or curator. Kwon Hyuk was the eldest Ozone member and she inspired the rest of us in many ways.

Kwon worked on projects that reveal various phenomena since the millennium. Every two years since 2006, she had been constantly active with 'Moving Project' and exhibitions such as 'Nanuda Project'(2008), 'Journey'(2010), and 'Grasp the Phenomenon'(2011). One day, she was seduced by the strong glittering effect of special plastic film that she created pseudo-sunlight with a huge round disc. With the human-sized disc, Kwon travelled around various countries to document the reactions of the viewers when they see the disc installed on the street at different time and space. This was the 'Moving Project'(2005-2006). Then, Kwon moved on to the 'Nanuda(meaning 'to share' in Korean) Project' which consisted of asking opinions of people around the world on/offline about the colorful Korean patchwork designs with traditional patterns. This project of communication/exchange revealed numerous disparities among people from different cultures, languages and ways of thinking. Kwon's long-term visual experiments on people's impressions and ontological conceptual experiments on state-race-gender, have expanded the mental horizon to the order of disorder, and chaos-cum-cosmos under liberal restraint, and finally, her works reverted to the essence and fundamental elements of life. In other words, the artist's doubt about the ever-changing phenomena that she had observed through social culture and individual experiments of perception, triggered the exploration into the invariable essence of things which concluded as her drawings and stitch paintings. Kwon's questioning on the essence, life, and living beings, has earned historicity along with art historical context. This is the 'truth-seeker' side of hers.(As noted from the "Preface for Kwon Hyuk solo exhibition 2014" written by Lee Kwan-hoon, Project Space Sarubia) During her process of leaving traces of "energy(qi/氣)" as the movement of thinking, Kwon exposes the tension between the controlled and uncontrolled which respond to material and spirit, coincidence and the inevitable. The artist would express the movement or flow of live energy with water without any specific shape, whether it is a large-scale and meaningful one or a minute and trivial one. Kwon had continued her work with the theme of liberal

proliferation and disorder of order through sewing, by leaving traces made of thread. The fluid traces of water on a flat canvas depict tension of spreading and holding, and repetition and disparity produced by sewing labor are embodied into drawings. They resemble landscape paintings filled with flowers, or a waterfall falling from a rock, or choppy waters in the wind. The dynamic brushwork rich in texture, and overlapping stitch work on the bigger-than-human size canvas, allow the viewer to be immersed in the image with ample imagination. The artist who had trained herself for a long time had enhanced the completeness of her work by adding internal depth to her technical maturity. The depth consists of exploring the environment made by the living being with free will, and studying the principle of interaction among beings influenced by their environment.

The thread used by the artist is not the ordinary kind, but the specially thin and strong embroidery thread. With extremely repetitive sewing work, you can create various nuances in terms of effect. The presence of needle and thread and their soft image and inner strength, and the meaning of embroidery and scraps of thread(the residue) after the stitch work, display the surroundings divided by binary tension, as well as the constant kinetic energy which attempts to integrate again with the surroundings. Generally, contrary to the knife which divides an object, the needle and thread which sew up whatever was divided, not harming anything but rather helping, reveal a strong presence. At the same time, the gender factor is added to the work's perspective based on feminism. From her earlier works, the origin of such context can be found, such as in the sanitary belt, or in the video where Kwon denounces the lack of freedom with regards to the explosive popularity of plastic surgery. Furthermore, in reality where the society lacks imagination, you may discover the sincerity which the labor of sewing conveys along with the sense of eternal time, through the solidity of repetition and fine fluttering brushwork on the canvas. This is what Marx would call a creative art work as dealienated labor, work which could overcome alienation of man. In the end, Kwon Hyuk's labor-intensive work reminds us of the book on David Hockney, titled 'A Bigger Message' translated into Korean as 'Again, Painting.' Since the contemporary art scene where disparity is the rule of survival, requires 'again, labor.'

In the exhibition <Controlled and Uncontrolled> at Space Willing N Dealing, Kwon portrays the interest in human, thoughts on life, through fluid water painting symbolizing life and various forms of breath. The artist seeks the cosmic principles in Chaosmos(chaos+cosmos), and the invisible but absolute truth in the sacred book of cosmic mathematics. As the artists of Arte Povera who had criticized materialization and capitalization of artwork, Kwon had physically held captive the breath through her balloon and thread as media, to show an array of various forms of life. The chain of water-life-breath is thin but within the aesthetics of strong and firm labor of sewing, this experienced artist guides us with her serious and mature attitude toward endless ontological and philosophical exploration.