

## **The intimate life of darkness**

### **Gestures**

Soo Kyoung Lee is a painter, and like any painter, she draws. Simply, for her, drawings are not, strictly speaking, preparatory works but pieces of art per se. They come in a burst. Their realization matches moments of inspiration or meditation, a free and conscious meditation. Her paintings are carried by a double and apparently contradictory gesture : the gesture of digging the flat infinity of a monochrome until the other side of the color appears, and a gesture of overlaying, terracing strata of line-shapes which themselves, however, are part of an emptying process.

Her drawings, however, are first of all the works of an artist: it is clear that she delivers gestures that are not guided by a need for meaning, but moved only by the inscribing power of the hand's movement. These gestures are multifarious. They unfold according to a constant yet extremely variable concept.

First, in this unfolding, the gesture of throwing, applying a shape, usually black, sometimes of an intense blue, a tender and acid green, or a earth-like red, in general in a non-central part of the piece of paper. The shape that appears is essentially undecided, in the sense that it must not represent this or that, even from a distance. In that sense, it is a pure shape, that is to say it is both a completion: of the initial gesture; and a starting point, a platform made to host an indefinite world of transformation. For Soo Kyoung Lee, the gesture dictates the shape, or, more exactly, it is the action which determines the initial shape of each drawing, with the force it unfolds and the decision it embodies.

The second gesture is multiple. It consists in a set of movements that give birth to the lines. The multiplicity of these lines is the real indication concerning their status. In the strict sense, they do not draw anything, they open out, give birth to sets, nets, balls, stretched lines, but in a stratum where, in the form of signs, they have no sense. Not marking any shape out, but entering in relationship with the initial shape, these lines do not aim at placing themselves in the field of representation, but in the one of presence.

### ***Facing the enigma***

Soo Kyoung Lee, with her drawings, unfolds the shapes of a pure artistic language. This language, which neither signifies nor represents, allows nonetheless some sort of presentation. Because the shapes created here are directly issued from mental processes carried out by gestures emerging from rational and subjective thinking. What is at stake is a confrontation to the enigma by letting it appear from her fingers. After placing a primary shape, a stain in a random part of a blank piece of paper, Soo Kyoung Lee then attempts to let "it" express

itself, with precise and meticulous gestures where no reconsidering is possible. But what is "it"? Each line, a fragment in appearance, has its own life, lives a life other than the stain's. But at the same time, it is obvious that each colored line must be understood like a moment in the expression of the intimate and internal life of darkness.

By managing to put aside her subjectivity, by letting her hand free to glide, to drip, to pass on top or below the stain, Soo Kyoung Lee is able to make of each line a figure which would take shape in the language of the enigma itself. By seeming to escape from the pitch-black stain, it seems it's the mystery itself which starts to speak another language, not a human one, but one of shapes. It is a language thrusting towards the visible becoming of the night and not a language of words which would make readable the visible part of things. Because the enigma is not something inexpressible like we believe too often, but at least something that, in what we know or believe we know, is eternally out of our reach.

### **As...**

The enigma is that there is something rather than nothing. It's by the way the only enigma. It's by standing by it as close as it is possible, in the night of its mystery, of its indiscernible presence, that these gestures manage to approach it, and in their own way, to make it speak. Because beyond all of Kyoung Lee hand's gestures it is the enigma that expresses itself here. Not representing anything, the black figure, presence of the night of times in the middle of the dazzling light of the blank page, escapes the trap of signification. Soo Kyoung Lee's works consists however in leaving herself free to turn inwards and thus give a chance to what she remembers in her night to reach expression.

This enigma is the one of life itself, how to not become it?

And what can be seen in Soo Kyoung Lee's drawings if not the forces of life themselves, starting to vibrate under our eyes, only for us, in a discrete intimate yet powerful ballet? Each line is like a leaf's vein, like the shape of a cell, like the colorful twin of the stain, like a net stretched out on nighttime to maintain it in the light, like a discrete aura disguised into a cloud, like a second skin giving the native skin a snake-like beauty, like a cut in the nude flesh of night which awakens the inaccessible memory of uncertain colors. And then sometimes, there is no black, but a pale green, an earth-red, a deep-sky blue. And it is again the same process that starts over. With the exception that frequently, the native shape itself, rather than staying secluded in the night, seems to unfold, escape, and advance towards day, entering the visible world. The "as...", this name of all material or mental projection is not an empty metaphor but really the attempt to return to the source of any metaphor itself, by trying to understand what she holds on to in her night. In that sense, each line applied by Soo Kyoung Lee is one of these blind gestures that we make when we seek to understand the unknown

which assaults us in the evidence itself of life. And each of these gestures, by galvanizing the night of the enigma, makes it more enigmatic, more alive.

### ***The eyes and the hand***

Soo Kyoung Lee's drawings are invented with an unprecedented tension between hand and eyes. Indeed, the freedom of the gesture is not implemented in opposition with the eyes' power. It is quite the opposite : in order to allow the eyes to play their central role this freedom finds its true function. The eyes, seeing the lines appear, will both work with them and from them and as a result decide of their future. The eyes chisel, cut, launch, and finish by stopping the movement of the hand. The eyes decide, here that the hand's gesture will be pursued, there that it will stop. Without them, the gesture would be lost. Each drawing constitutes, in that sense, a genuine symbiosis of the both powers that constitute art: the liberating and libertarian power of the gesture, and the constructing and shaping power of the eyes. One then understands why Soo Kyoung Lee does not need to constrain eye and hand to try to produce shapes resembling this or that aspect of reality, but quite the opposite in fact. This is because, when focused on the enigma, she dives in the arcades of life itself, of which she reveals the lines of force.

Between repetition and projection, between duplication and overlay, between the precision of details and the impulse of a whole to transform itself in something unknown, she indeed invites us to attend to the enigma of a shape's emergence. It is exactly situated in this zone where what is visible is already present but not yet seized to become a recognizable and meaningful shape, and in which the night, which has already arrived, has not yet disappeared. Because it is towards this indefinable place that we are driven to, one by one, by each of Soo Kyoung Lee's drawings, and near this place they invite us to come again, to stay. Because this place is nothing else than the one where we stand, all of us, since the beginning of times, the mystery's threshold at the edge of the revelation in this one-on-one confrontation with the enigma.

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