

HORIKAWA Sunao

Universe of ambiguity

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“...Our view of man will remain superficial so long as we fail to go back to that origin, so long as we fail to find, beneath the chatter of words, the primordial silence and as long as we do not describe the action which breaks this silence. The spoken word is a gesture, and its meaning, a world.”

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*, Translated by Colin Smith, Routledge, 1962, 214.

HORIKAWA Sunao has been working on a drawing that looks like an engineering drawing for the last ten years. In about 2008, her early years as an artist, she selected motifs from everyday items that were used in the same way in any country or region such as plugs and lighters. Since around 2014, she has chosen bananas for the motif because it is eaten all over the world and the shape is simple. Using drafting support such as tracing paper and Mylar film that she used this time, she drew thin blue lines with a color pencil using rulers and a pair of compasses to make miniature images that looked like disassembled machinery.

Taking up apples as the motif for her residency, Horikawa invited collaborators to observe apples and investigated how they saw apples by asking them to express their views in words and pictures. She tried different methods, e.g. one-on-one conversations with collaborators and holding a workshop with a group of people at school, and in any case, she tried to have a conversation with them taking as much time as possible. The contents that people talked about apples were widely varied, from reference to the surface pattern of apples to apple cultivation. When she tried to have her collaborators talk to her, Horikawa repeatedly asked, “Why?” almost persistently. As words were exchanged many times between the collaborators and her, the conversations often developed from the mere observation of apples in front of them to their habits in understanding things and their customs in daily life.

That influenced her drawings, for example, in *Apple#2. Story of hollow and particle: o. Ms. Sugiyama: ad/ki:Aomori/2018.07.12. 11:26:48-11:50:12JST(acac)* [1], organic forms resembling ameba are randomly arranged like a celestial map as if urging us to connect stars and find some shapes. Also in other works, sizable blank spaces are left out so that they give us an impression that the arrangement of each image has some kind of meaning, while crossings or ensemble of lines form surfaces with ambiguous outlines, fluctuations of thick and thin lines make comfortable rhythms, and the flow of lines guides the viewer’s eyes. With such subtle differences in detail compared with her previous works, the breadth of play is added to the drawn lines and

compositions while they seem, at a glance, keeping the same outlook of an engineering drawing as before. Incorporated into the title are expressions including coined words such as “formation of particles,” “annual-ring points,” and “as air texture” that came up during her conversations with the collaborators. These new words are much more ambiguous in interpretation than existing words, and they shift meanings freely according to the viewer’s imagination while they promote the play reserved by the drawings. These drawing style and selection of words significantly increase the room for viewers’ imagination.

When we use words to have a conversation and communicate information, we do it on the assumption that the definition of a word is obvious to both of us. It often happens in daily life, however, that the definition differs from each other and inconsistency occurs. Not only communication between humans but also the word that is a tool for communication causes ambiguity and hence misreading. Horikawa, up until now, has tried to explore the essence of things by taking them apart, and it resulted in detailed design drawings. A design drawing that provides one correct solution to all viewers is appropriate as a form for exploring the definite essence. Her drawings this time, however, are not for exploring the only solution, but they show the uncertainty of words as a tool and of communication by conversations and at the same time, they show the richness of almost infinite interpretations that arise from one thing called an apple. It seems that the apple contains the chaotic universe like a cosmic egg, and from there, Horikawa and the collaborators present fragments found in their conversations there and then.

Hung in the center of the exhibit space is an apple on a silk gut, and looking from afar, it looks like floating in the air. The whole space is dim, and the drawings on the wall that are lit in spotlight emerge in white. It seems that the whole big universe is formed by planets gathering up like cosmic fragments found by people around the black hole of the apple. The sixteen drawings displayed by Horikawa show that each fragment is so awfully different that they make us think it would be impossible to understand each other. The universe, however, creates another universe and continues to multiply by urging the viewer’s imagination. We cannot know what others understand, and ambiguous communications cause misreading. However, Horikawa’s attitude to promote others’ diverse imagination and creation on the premise of misreading gives us great suggestions to live flexibly in this complex world.



[1] *Apple#2. Story of hollow and particle: o. Ms. Sugiyama: ad/ki: Aomori / 2018.07.12. 11:26:48 - 11:50:12 JST (acac)*