

The Mind-Scape of Hope

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1. Jhe You Sung as paint-writer: Painting is just one way to express yourself.

Maybe we all have the noble desires to frankly express ourselves. However, in Korea where one is constantly demanded to be demure, it is not so easy for anyone even to admit that she/he wants to be frank with herself/himself. For most Koreans, frankness has never been the first item of moral virtues. Only few courageous ones started to demand themselves of pursuing the virtue of frankness. Yet, admitting one's own desire to frankly express oneself is one thing, really attempting it is another because this involves the talent for expression. In this respect, Jhe You Sung is very lucky as she is blessed with both courage and talent. Her own works testify that.

Like a writer, but also unlike a writer, Jhe You Sung tells her stories. The colors, shapes, and depths of her paintings convey to us the following: the structure of the reality as she sees it, the ways she joyfully communicates with her world, and the metaphysical reasons why we should not give up hopes. Of course, we will be able to find these messages only when we eagerly reach out to connect with her works.

2. Many-layers of reality and many ways to interact with reality

Jhe You Sung seems to be firm in her belief that reality is a lot more than this actual world we live in. She paints many windows that are open to other worlds. Sometimes, the windows are connected with each other as if they make a bunch of grapes. One of the grapes reveals an empty chair and a curtain as if it is a small theatre, while another shows a ladder with which one can sneak into another world. Each grape comes with its own depth, so that we can see it as an independent and complete world. Jhe You Sung's postulation of separate worlds that we can mentally walk into to find different stories, is unusually philosophical. 17th-century philosopher Leibniz believed that there exist multiple number of possible worlds, the best of which is the world of God Himself. It does not seem to be a mere coincidence that Jhe You Sung's world view is as optimistic as Leibniz's Christian belief for a better world.

If one wants to represent the different stories of so many possible worlds, it would seem impossible to do it within a canvas. Yet Jhe You Sung exercises the economy of visual construction so wisely to tell us as many tales as possible. She might be more egalitarian about possible worlds than Leibniz, as any of her worlds is as interesting and rich in its story as any other. However, as a painter, she paints each world differently, therefore shows us the many ways she communicates with

each world. One should not forget that these worlds exist within the mind of Jhe You Sung. Therefore the landscape is in fact her mind-scape. With her paintings, she tells us that we can create many possible worlds in our minds, and communicate with them.

3. Invitation to more organic mind-scape

The mind-scape of Jhe You Sung now seems to be undergoing another new experiment. Different worlds and their stories used to stand side by side with each other revealing the structure of a bunch of grapes or swirl of parallel worlds. But in this exhibition, she introduces some works that manifest a new, more organic relationship amongst the different worlds. One of the unified possible worlds looks like a futuristic space town, while others look more like underwater scene or magic garden or theme park full of toys. Now, I just wonder if this new experiment will lead to another stage for Jhe You Sung where she might explore the styles for landscape of nature rather than mind-scape full of artificial forms and shapes. Only time will tell.

4. Power of imagination or power of hoping

Sometimes with different reasons, we feel suffocated within this world. But imagine there exist another possible world, whether it is in reality or in one's mind! Then this pain and misfortune will be only partial. Bubbly joy will be possible regardless of the darkness of this world. When you enter the white arch made of flowers, you will be in a new world of light. There is a pool full of shiny bright balls. Each ball is a story-egg. If you jump into this pool, you will be jumping into the stories with different colors. The various interesting worlds Jhe You Sung creates for us are the products of her imagination. As long as those worlds constantly appear to us, we don't seem to have reasons to despair. It is because, as long as creative imagination keeps operating in the way Jhe You Sung's imagination does, the hope for the brighter, better world will keep reemerging, too.