

나는
I
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나는 하나가 아니다

I Am Not One

오인화 개인전

2018. 9. 4 - 9. 28

SPACE:
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나는 하나가 아니다



나는 하나가 아니다 | I Am Not One, 설치 전경 Installation View

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Inhwan Oh's solo exhibition : I Am Not One

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전시장 스페이스 윌링엔딜링
Space SPACE WILLING N DEALING
서울시 서초구 방배동 777-20
F2, 777-20 Bangbae-dong, Seocho-gu, Seoul, Korea
02-797-7893
www.willingndealing.org

글: 오인환, 이규, 김인선
Text: Inhwan Oh, Kyoo Lee, Inseon Kim

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Picture: Inhwan Oh, Hwangsu Han

디자인: 오인환, 맹성규
Design: Inhwan Oh, Seonggyu Maeng

조판: 맹성규
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contact: iohoh2000@yahoo.com

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나는 하나가 아니다 | I Am Not One

오인환 Inhwon Oh

전시 제목 “나는 하나가 아니다”는 개인의 정체성이 하나로 규정될 수 없는 ‘복수’라는 것을 의미하기보다는 고정되지 않는 유동적인 상태임을 함축한다. 즉 단일하고 고정된 것은 최종 결론이 아니라 변환을 위한 대기 상태일 것이다. 이번 전시회에서 선보인 작품들은 타자의 경험을 통해서 정체성과 정체성의 수행이 유동적인 상태임을 제시하고, 나아가 주체와 달리 상대적이거나 불안정하기까지 한 타자의 삶이 오히려 개인을 규범화하는 문화 구조를 자각할 수 있게 하는 긍정적인 조건이 될 수 있음을 드러내고자 했다.

‘우리는 하나이다’라는 익숙한 문구는 표면적으로 공동체의 단결을 내세우는 듯하지만, 사실 이 문구는 ‘우리’라는 공동체가 하나의 원본을 공유하는 집단이라는 오랜 믿음을 현재화한다. 즉 한국적 문맥에서 개인은 우리라는 집단 정체성을 보유하고 있는 공동체의 일원 중 ‘하나’인 것이다. ‘우리는 어떤 공동체인가’라는 질문에 대한 답은 민족, 국가, 가족, 남성 등으로 달라질 수 있겠지만 그 답을 산출하는 공식의 작동원리는 ‘우리’와 ‘우리가 아닌 것’을 구분하는 이분법을 유지하는 것이다. 결국 한국적 문맥에서 개인은 우리의 일부 혹은 연장이다. 그러므로 ‘우리’의 상대어는 ‘개인’이 아니라, ‘하나’라는 일치된 정체성을 갖지 않은 타자, 즉 우리가 아닌 존재들이다.

타자는 자신과 집단 사이의 간극 속에서 불연속적인 삶의 실체가 될 수 밖에 없다. 간극이 야기하는 불편함, 불안정함, 또는 자유로움은 타자들이 이해하고 대처해야 하는 삶의 현실들이다. 타자의 삶의 가능성은 차이의 관계를 일치의 관계로 전환하여 다수, 보편, 주류가 되는 것이 아니며, ‘차이’를 타자의 삶의 가능성으로 인식하고 유지하는 것이다. 결혼과 함께 이름(姓)을 변경해야 하는 관습을 수용해야 하는, “나의 이름들”에 등장하는 일본 여성들은 불연속적인 타자의 삶을 자기 발견의 가능성으로 활용하고 있는 사례이다. 여러 개인의 이름(姓)을 갖고 살아야 하는 삶의 경험은 이들이 자신의 정체성에 대하여 자발적으로 숙고하도록 하는 조건이 되었고, 결국 어느 집단에도 귀속되지 않는 자신의 이름을 스스로 창작하기에 이른다. ‘우리’라는 집단의 정체성은 ‘나’라는 개인 이전에 이미 규정된 어떤 것이다. 이미 규정된 집단적 기의로서 설명되지 않는 타자는 ‘우리가 누구인가’를 대신하여 ‘나는 누구인가’를 자문해야만 하는 상황에서 ‘일치하지 않는, 일관되지 않는, 그리고 하나가 아닌 나’를 자각하게 될 가능성을 갖는다. 하나가 아닌 나에 대한 자각은, 곧 ‘우리’라는 집단적 정체성을 원본화하는 문화체계가 있음을 발견하는 지점이기도 하다. 한국 사회의 문화 체계가 일상에서 가시화되는 하나의 형태가 일치의 윤리학이다.

청소하기, 요리하기, 운동하기 등 일상의 행위는 가부장제의 젠더화된 사회 규범을 체화하는 방식이다. 젠더 및 섹슈얼리티와 같은 정체성과 일상 행위를 이분법적으로 배분하는 일치의 윤리학에서 내가 문제시하는 것은 예외를 허락하지 않는 배타성이다. 1:1의 연결 방식으로 역할 바꾸기를 시도할 때 관습화에 문제 제기를 할 수는 있겠지만 이 경우에도 여전히 일치의 배타성이 유지되고 있음을 포착해야 한다. 나의 작업에서 다양한 일상의 행위를 수행하는 것은 역할 바꾸기의 차원이 아니라, 일치의 윤리학을 통해 유지되는 배타성을 해체하기 위한 것이다. 일치의 윤리학이 배제하는 것은 다양성이지만 일치의 윤리학이 보존하고자 하는 것은 ‘배타성’이다. 나에게 한국적 문맥에서 퀴어미술은 ‘우리’라는 일치의 삶의 방식을 해체적으로 해석하는 것으로부터 출발하고, 배타성이 지속될 수 없는 열린 체계를 발견하는 것이다.

The title of the exhibition “I Am Not One” does not mean that an individual’s identity cannot be singularly defined, or is plural in its nature, but rather it signifies that it is not stationary but fluid. In other words, something that is simple and fixed is not yet complete, and is still waiting to change. The works showcased in this exhibition suggest that identity and the fulfilment thereof is in a state of fluidity, and furthermore, to illustrate that unlike that of the subject, the life of the Other which is subjective—unstable even can be a positive conditions that aid in the awareness of cultural structures that heard individuals into normativity.

The familiar phrase, “We are one,” seems to advocate the solidarity of the community at a glance. However in fact, it makes present the age long belief that the “we” are a community with one origin. To put this in Korean context, an individual is “one” member of a community that shares a collective identity. So, the question, “What community are we?” can be answered with a nation, a country, a family, men, etc. but the computational mechanism behind the formula for such conclusions is the maintaining the dichotomy of “we” and “those who are not we”. As such, an individual is a part or an extension of the “we”. Therefore, the relative term for “we” is not “individual” but rather the Other who do not share the same “one” identity—those who are not “we”.

Others are inevitably the embodiment of the discontinuous life within the gap between oneself and the community. The discomfort, instability, but also freedom that comes from the gap are in fact realities that all others must face. The Others’ the end create names for themselves who choose to not become a part of any group. The identity of “we” is predetermined even before the individual “I”. The Others who cannot be defined as a part of the collective signified must ask themselves, “Who am I?” instead of, “Who are we?”, and in these circumstances, they are given the potential to become aware of an “I who is not unified, consistent, and one”. This awareness of I not being one can also lead to a cultural system that originalizes the collective identity of “we”. One form of social system that can be seen in everyday life in Korea is its ethics of uniformity.

Cleaning, cooking, exercising, and other daily activities are ways for internalizing gendered paternal social norms. What one finds problematic in the ethics of uniformity dichotomizing identities such as gender and sexuality and daily acts is its exclusiveness. Social convention can be criticized by one on one role reversals, but even so the exclusiveness of unity is maintained. In my work, carrying out daily activities moves beyond interchanging roles but is about disrupting this exclusiveness. The ethics of uniformity shuns diversity but maintains exclusiveness. Queer art in the context of Korea starts from deconstructively interpreting the unformed way of life and exploring an open system in which exclusiveness can no longer be maintained.

iOneNot or I1Knot, Eyes Remain Queer Alter-native : The Art of Gap Gardening in the Work of Inhwan Oh

Kyoo Lee

Professor of Philosophy at City University of New York

나는 하나가 아니다
나는 하나도 아니다
나는 둘도 아닐거다
나는 이름같이 있다

- 이규 / Kyoo Lee

Two voices on a page. Or is it one? Now turning in on themselves, back into fiber and leaf, now branching into sequence, consequence, public works projects or discord. Now touching, now trapped in frames without dialog box.

[...]

Voices, planted on the page, do not ripen or bear fruit. Here placement does not explain, but cultivates the vacancy between them. The voices pause, start over. Gap gardening which, moved inward from the right margin, suspends time.

- Rosmarie Waldrop, Gap Gardening: Selected Poems

Enter the gallery, and you face a large projector screen, you see a woman, standing between a camera in front and a chalkboard behind, saying something, as if to you, and shortly after, you see another one talking, to you too. They are narrating their lives before and after getting married. Each scene punctuated by a 360 degree tracking shot around each body, each one is telling a different, differently complicated story. After each round, we are back to square one—in the room that becomes more or less of one's own or even your own.

In "My Names" (2012/2018, video) that aptly encapsulates the conundrum of multi-nominal serial existence of a person, the narrative body and the voice of each of four women, all Japanese, we are told, shows how and why "I," for one, hardly is or can be "one," single, if still singular. Quite simply, in a culture where being a "single" woman would almost

mean not yet having become a single person *per se* (unless and until hetero-sexually coupled up as such), the phallic unity of self-images into a self-representational "I," even into a micro-chipped "I," would be, especially for an F-gendered subject, an unaffordable luxury or a self-comforting fantasy. Yet, the legally enforced and naturalized adoption, in Japan, of the male spousal name by a female partner, this conjugal shift to and "sharing" of the husband's last name is not necessarily oppressive or always uni-directional; such is what one learns from these Japanese women married at least once, those remade at least twice, having once been born. There is, we see, some positively uncontrollable potential in that otherwise straightforward passive self-erasure or effacement: *so be it*—what will then become of it?

So have another look, give it a queer twist, now. You, too, I hope, will get to see, with all the interlocutors and interplayers here, the self-cancelling seriality of discontinuous self-identification, especially its auto-alterational non-linearity: the alter-native survival of metonymic selves under structured surveillance. Put differently, if "one is not born a woman but becomes one" as Simone de Beauvoir quips in *The Second Sex*, one's womanly natur (natality/nativity/naturality/nationality) and gendered significations by ex-tension could be altered, rendered alter-native. Theology can meet sexology alternatively as long as both are openly responsive to the manifold mysteries of time encountering, enduring, itself.

Inhwan Oh's turn to "Japanese housewives," not away from but, on the contrary, in alliance with his usual casts of "minority" or minor characters such as invisible buddies, gay men in the Korean military, the intricately cornered in social blind spots, etc., illustrates the structural site-specificity and capaciousness of the other-regarding, not othering, orientation in queer ethical and aesthetical imaginations and practices; or "disorientation" in that regard, as Sarah Ahmed points out in *Queer Phenomenology*, a mode of deviating from well-trodden paths in "phenomenal" existence including inner exile. Here, these disoriental ladies do not figure or function as some sort of exotic, sounding board or newly discovered mirror. Oh is not projecting his own autobiographical or authorial subjectivity into these seemingly double "others" (*les étrangers*, foreigners, others, strangers) in double translation, Korean and English, as if such a transgendering and

transnational gesturing of identification-with could automatically earn him, too, some privileged spot in the world of secondarized beings. Oh is not a flag waver out on the street, either, it must also be said, but more like a shaker or vibrator in your (other) room (cf. "The Flag and I" sound/video, 2009) where nothing natural-native-national can stay still, unstirred. Quite self-aware of "him-ness" as well, Inhwan is allowing his own ongoing, incisive queery into elusively auto-creative identity to resonate with other sonic bodies that literally are not one.

Oh's work (with those *per-sons* [figural voices] and female foreigners specifically) is then, you see, not analogical but rather allegorical; more precisely and carefully, this conceptual artist, often focused on a sort of folded vision that expands not just inwardly but in the corners and on the edges, is allowing his own ongoing, probing questions on identity and homogenizing domesticity, along with his experimental vision for alternative domesticity and egalitarian society, to be polyvocally ventriloquized through those *allegorical* figures from which he does not simply take a spectatorial stance or distance; allegoria, speaking about or gathering (*legein*) things on an-other or different (*al, allos*) register, is a u-topia.

(The) one behind the rotating camera, absent present here and there, a real guest-ghost, as it were, is engaged in a self-participatory ritual with *l'étranger* on-site, himself included in deed indeed, literalizing a queer care practice, akin to what the exilic translingual poet Rosmarie Waldrop calls "gap gardening," "the unbedding of the always" and, I would add, the already. "Writing Names by Ironing" (2012/2018, performance, video documentation) after the interviews, where the artist irons back "in" and out, as if calling in and cancelling out, all four names one by one is a quasi-anarchival exercise in futurity and futility, an aesthetically disciplined, evocative cinematization of a liminal life once lived and to be lived.

Back to the future then, as the cliché goes: "Flower Arrangement for the Human Male" (text and flowers, 2018) installed behind the screen takes the artist back to such an untimely time in some retro-futural imaginations, where the memory of receiving a floral basket from a man, once loving and loved, along with a concurrent desire for naming such a desire

suddenly come, flow, together. This gestural incompleteness or afterlife of a queer love is not entirely lost: can such a flower-arranging, receiving and giving moment, the social code of which is marked only female and feminine in Korea, be demonolinguized, demonopolized? Can a man, too, be tenderized, tenderly unlearning to be himself? The *manual*-like restaging of the autobiographical time almost forgotten performed in the form of a schematization of its alter-native masculine homosociality, this man-to-man messaging and massaging, gently textualizes queer gap gardening, an open book often read secretly, the title of which is brilliantly hidden in plain sight in "I Am Not One" (steel plate and LED bulbs, 2018), where one might end up pausing, feeling kind of at one with it, singular even, at least for a while.