

Gim Hong-sok challenges East-West dichotomy in exhibit 'Normal order aimed at failure'

Feb 13, 2024 | By Shin Min-hee

Page 1 of 1

Gim Hong-sok challenges East-West dichotomy in Kukjue Gallery exhibit

BY SHIN MIN-HEE

Artist Gim Hong-sok, 60, says that there are two types of art in the world: those that are normal and those that are abnormal. Everything else is non-art.

"Art is only perceived normal when it's been completed from the Western standpoint," Gim said during a press conference at Kukje Gallery in central Seoul earlier this month. The gallery is holding his solo exhibition, titled "Normal order aimed at failure."

"Art becomes abnormal when it's made from anything from the non-West. Even if its format is Western, if the process involves non-Western elements, it cannot be accepted as the Western modernity."

This notion stems from Gim thinking of himself as an outsider his entire

life, which is why "most of my artworks are based on the vicinity of the Western standpoint."

The exhibition explores Gim's critique of Eurocentrism in a conceptual framework that he refers to as "entanglement," which attempts to deviate from the binary thinking that designates something as either fit by Western standards or not, and searches for alternative answers.

An example is his "An Actual Villain" sculpture, which depicts a creature with a joker head and a cat body. Is it a cat wearing a joker mask? Or is it a joker wearing a cat costume? The world may never know, Gim says, because it may never be that simple of an answer. Acknowledging the "entanglement" of this situation and the dilemma it poses may just be the key to setting his audience free from any compulsion to ad-

here to the paradigm.

"This piece was influenced by my daughter," Gim said.

"She has a pet cat, but they have a hard time getting along with each other. Despite what my daughter wants, to be good friends with this cat, the reality falls short of her expectations. It's like with the West: No matter how close we want to get to them, we get rejected because we have black hair and they don't."

Throughout the exhibition are sculptures that cause confusion, like a pair of slippers with blocks of stone attached to the bottoms or floating hands that scrape a large rock from the walls. Other mediums, like paintings, are reminiscent of Eastern art, with bamboo and other plant motifs.

While such paintings were traditionally created with ink on *hanji* (tra-



KUKJE GALLERY

"Normal order aimed at failure," the solo exhibition of Gim Hong-sok at Kukje Gallery in central Seoul

ditional Korean mulberry paper). Gim opted to use acrylic paint on the canvas instead. And in that same section of the exhibition space filled with his paintings, Gim set blues music on in the background.

"It's much easier to use acrylic paint on a canvas, which liberated me from any sort of obsession of having to use traditional materials," Gim said.

"Music has always helped keep me calm while I work on my art. I usually listen to blues, so, to me, despite the two genres of Eastern art and blues being seemingly different, it feels completely normal."

"Normal order aimed at failure" continues until March 3. Kukje Gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day except Sundays and national holidays, which end at 5 p.m. Entrance is free. shin.minhee@joongang.co.kr