

## **Byung-hoon Choi's " Art Furniture "**

### **A Harmony of Craft and Poetry**

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Deconstruction of genres or invasion of boundary in art are not new terms any longer. In a way, it is a conception which generally represents the current fine art of plastic art. If this phenomenon continues, an overall revision of the conception of fine art of plastic art itself may be inevitable.

In craft art, the problem of deconstruction of boundary is more complicated than that in painting of sculpture as a pure art and so there can be conflicts. When craft art hoes off the original purpose of usefulness, the meaning of its existence itself can be seriously questioned. And still it is not too much to say that the phenomena of genre deconstruction started from craft art. The good examples are ceramic sculpture and soft sculpture. The term ceramic sculpture stems from the conceptual change of the ceramic work as a daily home instruments to a pure artistic creation. And in the case of soft sculpture, its purpose to create a purely plastic art form instead of the traditional work of textile or printing has broken the original concept of "hard" sculpture art. Thus, prior to the variation of methods and materials in painting and sculpture, the deconstruction of concepts and methodology in the craft art conversely has brought about the overal revolution in modern plastic art. However, as mentioned above, the search for plastic way in the realm of craft art where functions are to be emphasized can not but provoke conflicts. This is why experimental craft artists these days confront much more agony than painters or sculptors as pure artists.

While the terms ceramic sculpture of soft sculpture are not new to us any longer, the word "art furniture" seems to be still foreign to us. Furnitures of this concept have been produced for quite a while. In a way, they may have older history than the ceramic or soft sculpture. The idea of a furniture created by way of plastic art is still strange. It may be because of the traditional understanding of furniture, the "hard" say. And also, furniture is always connected with spatial functions of architecture and an indoor space, which delimits the plastic experimentation in the genre of craft art.

Historically speaking, the so-called "art furniture" was introduced along with the modern architecture. In the Western architecture and furniture, the change into the modern architecture and the modern furniture was made almost at the same time. We can see this inter-relationship in the fact that capable architects created excellent furniture. Specifically, the Bauhaus and the Neo-Plasticism movement made a great influence on the modern art as a whole by experimenting reconciliation of functional architecture and modern plastic art. The idea of "art furniture" steams from Bauhaus and Neo-Plasticism. While ceramic sculpture of soft sculpture can possibly be finished as pure plastic art works, art furniture can not disregard its practicality as a household instrument as well as its plasticity. All the more, it is a special realm in which plasticity and functionalism are closely interconnected. In other words, it has a double face of keeping a plastic form and at the same time satisfying functional needs. And thus it goes without saying that it requires a more sophisticated and philosophical mine than in other genres of art.

Professor Byung-hoon Choi is one of the artists who are experimenting "art furniture" and is a leading artist in revolutionizing the curriculum. It may not be proper to comment on the general craft art of this country. However, it is a common understanding that the current craft art or design is still in the old framework of the Japanese colonial style. It is lagging behind the other art genres. Specially in the case of wood craft there is a big gap between the so-called modern style wood craft and the excellent craftsmanship shown in the traditional furniture. Problems of discontinuity from tradition are not concerned only with the field of wood craft art. However, it should be noted that the being behind is most conspicuous in wood craft art. As is well known, our cultural pride lies not only in the ceramic art but also in the wood furniture. The present problems in Korean wood craft art probably is caused, because the traditional craftsmanship has not been properly handed down.

In this context, the "art furniture" experimented by Professor Choi is noted special in that it reminds us the traditional wood furniture. The simplicity and neatness come by way of not only his sensitive understanding of wood but also a proper learning of the specifics of the traditional wood crafts. It is made possible thru a collective harmony of function and plasticity, which is an ideal way of succeeding the traditional wood craft.

Professor Choi's works can be divided into two series; those of "Collected Insect" which he pursued during the period of 5 years of the early part of the 1980's and those of "Wind from the Beginning of the World" which have been continued since 1988. These two group of works show their own inevitable proceedings. Most of all, the "Insect" series are emotional and static, on the other hand, the "Wind" series are dynamic. A collected insect, as it is pinned and stuffed, is best represented in a static form. However, the peculiar thing about there "wind" and "Insect" is that they show life per se,

since insect, as well as wind, is an essential universal phenomena. While the sense of life represented in the symmetrical form of the insect gives concreteness and even materialism, works of the metaphoric wind render aesthetic beauty as they are made rhythmical and fantastic.

Generally, the "Insect" series symmetrical figures on a plane, while the "wind" series are perpendicular with a sense of ascending. So the latter looks ore cheerful. The will to ascend and fly always originates from the earth. And when it tries 飞翔 ascend from the earth, it takes a metaphoric dream of a plant. And also, the figures yield poetic imagination as they make vivid image of a flower or a piece of cloud floating gently along with wind. In front of the works, you are under an illusion of looking at a thick cloud wreathing upward the mountains across the field, or you feel as if there is a cuckoo cuckooing. A harmonious combination of ebony and zeikova and metal or stone produces an image of a beautiful Yi-Dynasty woman in front of a dresser. And moreover, the fantastic harmony of straight lines and circles adds lyricism and richness to the whole works. The root of all this imagination lies in the artist's plastic methodology and efforts to get out of the mechanistic satisfaction that the modern furniture limits itself and thus beatify our living.