

Chihiro Kabata:

Closed with Eyes Opened

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Confronting Kabata's artwork which obscure form made of ballpoint pen appears on the surface, one will be first attracted by its abstract form and shining surface. If one would more closely face the "painting", one will be stunned by the extraordinary indication. The thin lines of ballpoint pen are being layered, tangled up with each other to form mass with almost lunatic obstinacy. It is as if the darkness or space which is in the different dimension from mere paper or ink is appearing like a fog and forming a shape. One may feel that a black hall may be something similar to this. But rather than absorbing the viewers, it is more as if it is reflecting us like a mirror and thrusting us back.

More than ten years ago, Kabata tried to draw a 42.195km line using a ballpoint pen, a distance same as a full-marathon. It ended up in an accumulation of lines that filled the paper, scraping off and dully giving a shine to the surface. Integrating her body, time and invisible power in it, something extraordinary appeared from it.

Kabata who tries to "take out the vision of the other side of painting" and to see the invisible and draw it, does not use brushes even for oil paintings, but like sticking on the picture plane, she draws directly using her hands. The artist explains that her method is to dig out lines by covering the layers over layers with paint, and entering inside of it, like as if she is being "summoned". The impression to enter into the work is prepared for the viewers as an experience when facing her three-dimensional artwork and installation. However, the work is laid as a certain existence in front of us remaining incomprehensive, as she says in her terms "closed with eyes open". What does Kabata see on the other side of the painting and tries to enter in it? What does she try to see by her repetitious drawing which resembles the act of praying? What she sees may be a formless indication.

To my expression on her method's resemblance to literature, she replied mentioning her favor with Garcia Marquez and Kojiki ("Record of Ancient Matters"). The artist spoke about her sympathy with Japanese traditional animism, the idea of "Praying the invisible toward the mountain." I felt I grasped a little of something, something noble that is inhabiting inside Kabata's artwork which has its starting point on the opposition side of formalism.