

1. Artist Introduction

Stella Sujin (S.S) : I am an artist currently residing and working in Paris. At the moment, I am pursuing my doctorate studies at Université Bordeaux III, focusing on arts while working on individual projects simultaneously.

2. Exhibition Works

S.S : The exhibition "Memento Mori" focuses on the idea of a mechanism of death, which takes its form in human body and soul. Whereas 'death' refers to an altered, incomplete status, caused by missing some parts from what used to be one, combined unit of body and soul, being 'alive' can be described as a state where the connection between the two (body and soul) is still in existence; One can imagine physical parts like organs, nerves and hormones, fully functioning in accordance with its spiritual mind. Both of these two states belong to the same mechanism which functions as one big organical structure that circles continuously. "Organic" is the keyword for my work and therefore I've come to title my works "Organism". When expressing such feelings and ideas in drawings, I enjoy depicting pieces of slaughtered animals. This style was greatly influenced by anatomy and catholic religious art.

Especially, this exhibition features series of skull. This has developed by actively manifesting the religious inspiration coming from "Memento Mori" which originated in the 17th century in Europe as one of Vanitas themes. Such theme conveys a strong message, remarking on nihilism of all living things on earth, including life of mankind. It, therefore, tells humankind to serve God with modesty and humility. Skull is Vanitas's best representative allegory that symbolizes impotent human beings living the finite life. In such perspective, I've chosen to borrow the concept of skull.

If there is a difference to my works and the skull represented in Vanitas theme, I would say that my work is directed towards adornment of death while Vanitas stresses on the nihilistic meaning of life before death. I see death as a fascinating moment where one confronts pieces of body and soul after the separation from each other, just like the debris in the universe created after the Big Bang. This can be also compared to gateway that Mark Rothko had so strongly desired to enter so he could reach the "cosmos beyond the horizon". This fundamentally puts death as a ceremonial event. Therefore, I believe death must be expressed as something not fearful, but glamorous and fancy. This is why, I've colored my works with brilliant gold, equivalent to the colors of the armor that soldiers wear to battlefield. In addition to the brilliant gold coloring, I've also embellished the skull with drawings based on knowledge in anatomy and religious scenes such as the Annunciation, Assumption of Mary, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and more.

3. The theme of your exhibition is 'MEMENTO MORI', means "Remember, you will die". Is there any particular reason behind choosing this as the main idea? S.S : When I was young, there was a butchery right across from where I lived. Flesh of dead animals were delivered by the meat wagon to the butchery and then were cut into many little pieces. After all such process, they were hung all over the backyard of the butchery. I used to take a peep on the scene over the fence and my interest in 'death' was first intrigued. At that time, as a child, I merely related death to the dead flesh of animals hung in the backyard of the butchery. It was different from how people describes death as soul's detachment from the body and the body slowly decaying into nothing. In short, the death I witnessed via slaughtering cows and pigs were rather more explicit and the most existent at the moment right after the slaughter. From this, I started thinking upon the possibilities of more complicated mechanism between birth and death, body and soul.

4. Upon reading your biography, I've noticed that you studied Philosophy along with Fine Arts. I wonder what kind of impacts were brought to your Arts after studying Philosophy. S.S : I grew up with the dream of becoming a writer and naturally, I was more drawn to the literature and philosophy than I was to arts. Thus I think it would be more correct to say that I started working with arts because I studied philosophy, instead of saying that my works have been influenced by pursuing philosophical studies. Formless thoughts started forming in clear shapes after studying philosophy and I was captured by a strong desire to express the cleared thought of mind at that time. The reason I'm working as an artist is because art satisfies such desire I had as a philosopher. I believe I can go back to academic research settings or start writing again. The field I occupy does not matter much as long as I am expressing my thoughts.

5. Your audiences are interested in the history of your works. Could you describe your works in college or in the beginning stages of your career?

S.S : I originally studied oriental painting in Korea then became mesmerized with body art when I moved to Europe. I was especially inspired by Vienna actionism artists Rebecca Horn and Joseph Beuys, and their approach of studying the human body as an expressive instrument. Although my early works consisted of more performances than paintings, I still use the past experiments as contents for present works since they were ultimately dealing with the same subject.