

“Children of the Earth“

The painting came out of my personal despair. I started the painting with ink drawings of palm trees in the Schoenbrunn Palm House, which showed me a light in the midst of doubt. It was the first step of the will to get out of my despair.

However, the forms of the palm trees soon disappeared from the picture. The lines filled the whole surface of the picture, connecting the individual forms of the palm trees in different directions. One could see only the composition of vertical and horizontal lines. The picture surface is the mirror of the world: as the world in the view of the Buddhist philosophy arises from the network of relations, so the picture surface arises from the network of lines, and the forms place themselves on this fabric. The isolated individuals are expanded by this network. The long lines that connect separate individual forms are essential to my spatial composition. Through the horizontal line, community is created, a larger entity connected to an even larger entity. Through the vertical line is expressed the longing to be free of something, to overcome something, to come out of something. I draw the line as if praying that the new forms will be born from the interaction of the lines. Thanks to the patience and generosity of the Korean mulberry paper, which is very resistant and strong due to the many layers, I can stack or wash out several layers, lines and colors on top of each other without hesitation and pull away the surface layers again. Through this process of creating and destroying, the image slowly emerges.

My despair meets the despair of others. Through one's own despair, one takes the despair of others into one's heart. I saw in my inner space women gathered and crying out of their own despair. Near us are those women who weep because of unhealed wounds from war and power struggles, such as the "comfort women" during the Japanese occupation of Korea in World War II. In addition, the sobs of the earth, distraught because of the disruption of the ecological balance, are very next to us. Because of the current outbreak of the coronavirus, we as a community are experiencing a crisis and at the same time feeling the weight of life beyond the individual level. I see the crying women clearly in me, but they do not show themselves easily in the picture. I continue to paint the picture with the question in me if the hidden hope can be shown to the crying women, and with the wish that they can see this hidden hope. The palm tree of hope that made me start this painting is still isolated in the painting. How can the crying women in despair coexist with the palm tree? My painting is the process of searching for an answer.

Why do we despair? Because we love. If everything in the world is interconnected and despair and hope exist in their relationship, then hope cannot be free from despair, but neither is despair free from hope. I paint the picture to better understand the relationship between despair and love, and also to see hope in the subject of despair.

How will the women in my painting overcome grief? The fragmentary and superficial life can touch the original energy through the artistic process and thus be healed. I hope that through the painterly process, the women in my painting will become free from their pain and gain the strength to go out into the wider larger world.

Sung Min Kim, June 12, 2020