Born in Korea, ceramicist Bang, Chang Hyun studied ceramics and English language and literature at Kyung-Hee University and continued his studies (a master’s in ceramics) at the State University of New York, New Paltz. Bang was a literature student devoted to practicing novels in his mid-20s, dreaming of becoming a novelist. His career later helped him form his own distinctive visual grammar in his creative activities as a potter. Based on literary imagination, metaphor and symbol, Bang leads viewers to empathy with his personified swine characters. Bang employs expressionist content and minimalist visual elements in his work. His work represents the gaze at his soul through recollections of the past in unique narratives. Employing a dramatic narrative structure in which a swine appears as protagonist, Bang acutely captures our diverse daily emotions - depression, anxiety, desire, obsession, loss, hallucination, horror - from the viewpoint of an animal. His small, cute swine characters echo viewers who think of them logically and rationally as weak, poor animals. Viewers obsessed with the pigs come to contrast their own life with that of the pigs cast in a dark shadow.

"At my third solo show in New York I noticed a viewer shedding tears, seeing a swine that hangs itself. This is a most memorable moment, and makes me work on as an artist." (artist statement)

We usually fear confessing negative, non-daily feelings. Aren’t our lives a continuation of taking the others’ gaze, and waiting for the others’ appraisal, in a space others want? Bang’s fifth solo exhibition, My nights are more beautiful than your days at the Insa Art Center, Seoul, is an extension of his other show Wednesday morning 3 AM held in New York. Even though the artist could not sleep at night to compensate for exhaustion and busyness, why did the artist say night is more beautiful than day?

"At my third solo show in New York I noticed a viewer shedding tears, seeing a swine that hangs itself. This is a most memorable moment, and makes me work on as an artist." (artist statement)

"Flowers are beautiful, but flower patterns give me compulsive memories and horrors. I’d like to love flowers, but I can survive only if I forget them, and remain insensitive to the flowers engraved on my body.” (artist statement)

The more he loves flowers, the more he has obsessive memories and horrors. He intends to delete love from his heart with the mechanisms of insensibility and oblivion. He is obsessed with the irresistible idea of someone trying to deprive him of his love for flowers. His illogical fear and horror is represented through his antinomic visual language of the ‘flower-tattoo’. In A Noonday Demon, the artist unveils trauma hidden behind memories of his childhood and his unconsciousness. Two hogs appear in this work. Which one is a demon?

"My desire was more dreadful than my childhood memory of losing her," (artist statement)

The two hogs engaging in a sexual intercourse are fragments of his past loss and a wound carved in his brain. Bang discovers himself peeping at past images in the fearful memories governing his many nights of insomnia. The demon is the artist himself. The artist brings viewers to his work without concretizing or identifying the demon. This work represents self-denial, self-contradiction, and loss of objectivity. A night is for the artist a space manifesting his feelings accumulated unconsciously in his relation with the world through becoming an animal. In the space and time of night any categorized value that has sustained human civilization and society is deconstructed. This space, represented by architectural structures, is not an existing physical space but a floating space relying on his memory and is indefinable, and a phenomenological space, where new language is generated through an encounter between the artist and the world.

"Night is when these feelings most revitalize. My desire, covered by daytime consciousness, ancient.
wounds submerged in the unconscious, and unknown anxieties, reveal their entities in my night space.” (artist statement)

The artist becomes an unfamiliar observer of his feelings, which gives birth to his work. Bang unveils the mechanisms of customs, norms, desires, and power, suppressing himself in language produced through correlations between architecture and swine. Some pieces displayed at the exhibition signify a psychological state through deformed swine bodies. In Selfish Gravity a swine body represents a state of lethargy caused by trauma, while Sleepwalkers associates contemporary humans walking at night, relying on long, pointed legs like a needle. In Oxygen Shadow the artist is captivated by unfamiliar yet mystic senses in a harsh reality.

“There is an unfamiliar and mystic sense I felt intermittently even in extreme depression. At the moment my body becomes wind and a cloud enters my body, I can meet her within me again.” (artist statement)

This mystic sense within him all of a sudden is the world he meets her without feeling fearful memories and future anxieties. This sense stays for a while and soon disappears.

In Sizrabee a pig chooses death. While the swine death referred merely to a fear in his solo show Wednesday Morning 3 AM, death in this exhibition is interpreted as a return to absence, loss of presence, or expansion of present existence. Days governed by reason and logic are in contrast with his nights overshadowed by insomnia, depression, and self-contradiction.

Based on a literary imagination, Bang’s work is a trailblazer of narrative sculpture rarely executed in contemporary ceramics. 


CHANG HYUN BANG

# 311-3204, Apt, Song Hyun 2 - dong
Seo-gu, Youngin-si
Kwangju-do
South Korea, 448-130
happypig73@gmail.com
http://happypig73.wordpress.com/