

On Murayama and Hicosaka's Works

Yuko Hasegawa

Because painting is explored on a flat surface, high abstraction has been expected. Being a work of art itself has placed this genre under the most stringent of demands.

After mimesis, in relation to the preceding definitions and theories, Contemporary art has had to establish new definitions and theories, and inevitably has had to take on qualities of self-referential, self-reflectory Meta art. Behavior of art was involved in the renovation of definitions and theories of art.

After the advent of video, icons in our visual environment have been supplanted by flowing fragments of an overwhelming number of indexes. The unprecedentedness of the methodology and expression derived from processing, editing and collaging still images, which are situated at the midpoint of icons and videos, is also becoming overabundant.

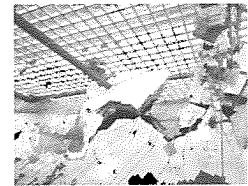
Within the context of contemporary art, the super-saturation of the index has thinned/worn the relationship between form and meaning, signifier and signified, and urged the promotion of abstract painting. This combined easily with topology and PC programming language. Which is to say, they shared the same goal of creating a new, self-contained diagram of order. This, however, could not disregard the ever-changing parameters of the world. In addition, designs for the visualization of data and art production made through computers that enable new visions and compositions became a source for creating new visual language; however, this was a mere method of "signage" and fell short of being comparable to Construction/Structure—Grammar, Denotation—Connotation.

It is not an easy task to express change and formation on 2-dimensional picture plane. Many of the new theories were valid in representing 2.5-dimensional to the 4-dimensional. This is evident through the exemplary works that are aware of the Chaos and Program theories, are autonomous whilst being open, such as that of Sarah Sze (3-dimensionality merged with temporality), Matthew Ritchie (transformation from 2.5 to 3-dimensional) and Julie Mehretu (2-dimensional, but with the complexity of the picture plane and the incorporation of layer of space formed by the crossing of lines, continues to shift the fixed center and focus).

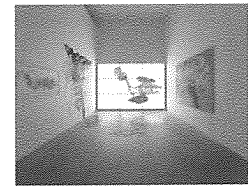
Within the context of 2-dimensional "painting" that requires the audience's intellectual and physical participation, consistent formation that brings forth "change" in the audience in the analysis of painting and the method of accessing painting must be guaranteed.

For example, to the audience, like how "the theory of schismogenesis" was appropriated in the creative process does not render a work a "forming" painting, but through the formative element that continues to take rise from various parts of the picture plane, and in the unfathomably big picture, the autonomy of contemporary abstract painting extends to the realm of existence.

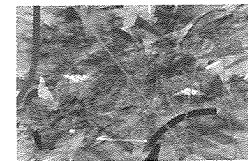
The commonality in the work between Murayama and Hicosaka is that both attempt to bring forth new methodology of painting, and that they start off without themes and meaning, and their titles given to "paintings" made through their systematic methods are irrelevant to what their instructions indicate. Their objective is to declare a realm in which new painting, formed by the system in the age of information era, exists.



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The Kaleidoscopic Eye, Thyssen-Bornemisze Art Contemporary Collection
2008/14/ 7/5
Mori Art Museum
Photo: Kikabara Osamu
Photo Courtesy: Mori Art Museum
Matthew Ritchie
The Factory, Paris
2001
Mixed media installation
Dimensions variable



Julie Mehretu
Mimbo Jumbo
2000
Ink and acrylic on canvas
95 x 124 in. (243.8 x 315.3 cm)
© the artist
Photo: Tim Thayer
Courtesy White Cube

While making the automatic system assume the burden of self-referentiality that contemporary art has taken on, the stories of identity and physicality that are weaved by the artist's own will, memory and desires, and their interaction with their own external environment can be reflected as "manual work" and "gestures and behaviors" during the execution of the system. To see if it is possible to yield a new painterly experience from this, let us examine its methodology and the interaction that occurs between painterly experiences through the two artists' works.

The Castration of Index and the Reactivation of the Painterly Picture Plane—Toshiaki Hicosaka

Hicosaka's method of making and transferring a draft with the use of a computer, then completing a painting with his own hand, can said to be a fairly familiar method to this generation of artists.

Hicosaka, who studied Information Design, uses Photoshop on his computer to apply filters on landscape photographs. Leaving only the consolidated framework of information of the images, he takes away the color, eliminates depth/perspective, and removes information until they are "like desiccated bones" (Hicosaka). Transferring images onto paper using methods such as photoengraving on copperplates and lithographs, they are later stretched into wood panel. Using this as the starting draft, he applies pencil and colored pencils, gouache, pen, and watercolors. The authors consider "selecting" and "tracing" as the major actions in this process.

Continually tracing the fragmented outlines forms the paintings. Here, meaning has been stripped from the index, and in relation to the appropriation of iconography that have been transferred to paper, what is at play is the continuous and constant selection of the material by Hicosaka to use and with what intensity. He has referred to the process as follows:

In this process, selecting and tracing are the basic actions.

First, I choose the medium with utmost care (1 type—such as a pencil, or a pen).

With the material in hand, I choose where and how I trace.

In repeating the rule, where will be traced and how will be selected by elimination.

When I am done tracing, I choose a new material, and where and how.

The colors are relatively free from constraints; some series have been made with the use of Munsell color system, and each material (pen, pencil) are of standardized colors, and are not mixed colors.

On the picture plane, the traced lines are the most impressionable element, and activates the picture plane. They may be consisted of complex undulations like the fractal geometric lines that are analyses of shapes found in nature; or like rugged irregularity and mosaic repetitions; or like the corroded surface of copperplates. And the original "landscape" image at times vanish in the distance, and at times suddenly appear in the viewer's mind unawares.

The manual act of tracing always intersects with the artist's body, memory, and narrative.

Hicosaka simultaneously resists and complies to this, and while his course may be rerouted away by his "system," he leaves his own ripples in the sea. Often epic-like and symbolic, he claims his work titles are "nicknames" to the set of series, and are not there to describe the contents/subject matters. For example in his early work *Burning House*, the bright red and the unsettling form of the "house" gives a strong impression of the narrative to the viewers. The lines that Hicosaka traces corrode or shake the contours of the universe/world, and shift to a completely different phase before anyone is aware.

The contours are not longer contours, but a different phenomenon. Something all together different appears and is generated. Whether that solidifies into "fear" or "flames," the change does not tire the viewer.

Let's take a look at a work exhibited as another system that "imitates" a form from this world, depicting a Neoplastic-style picture on a yellow monotone surface. "I have stretched over a camouflage patterned canvas on the wood frame, and following the contour lines that construct the camouflage pattern, and using gold paint on each part, I am repetitively filling them in. This process considers the loss of the system that represents "camouflage" as the final accomplishment" says Hicosaka.

The process, of how the patterns and the lines guided him, remains in the works as remnants of the tracing. The

development of the methodology and diversification of the rules are there to avoid the "d  j   vu" of the forms. It is when the resolve and the process can be relived by the viewers, that the way into the other phase of these works can be opened.

In Search of a Meta System that is Inherent to the Act of Drawing—Goro Murayama

The numerous theories to which Murayama refers to (i.e. Schismogenesis, Autopoiesis) were theories that originally targeted the discourse of life phenomenon, cultural interrelativity, thus involved with time and space; however, the artist has interpreted this and appropriated this to make a system of picture plane. Cellular automata (programming theory) are applied as is, so as to automatically guide images to unprecedented forms.

What is characteristic of his paintings is their emancipation from the frame.

Expanding across the walls and the floor, almost in 2.5-dimension, combining hemp yarn, chalk and paint, his early works, which generatively expand on the relationship between the surface and the picture, was an attempt to establish a sophisticated intellectual system, which was deceived by and what at first glance appears simple and even crafty.

The picture A drawn on surface A lays an impact on the following surface B, and that as a result, connects to picture B. His systematic painting reveals this extremely simple fact of how the structure of painting is a new weaving of the relationship between the act that forms the support medium and act of sketching.

The hemp yarn, which is the supporting medium, exhibits eloquence as a painterly element, and each individual element of the "cell" has its own difference, and creates a mutually connected whole. When Murayama speaks of the theory or possibility, this brings to mind a repetition of a more simple Bayesian estimation at play. Through sensory information, the nervous system can estimate (prior probability) the external condition and through this decides what action to take. And through the decision (posterior probability), the nervous system takes action on the external world, which includes its own physical body. Posterior probability, through Bayesian updating, impacts prior probability so that the following Bayesian estimate is that of a higher quality.

The viewer's experience, is comprised of the ambiguous and chance-filled activities of this nervous system, which takes in the parameter of the external world, and is simultaneously spoken in analogy to this.

The work that Murayama is exhibiting at this time, *wall drawing-coupling* that freely evolved on the exhibition space was a maze inspired by Gregory Breton's symmetry of schismogenesis, and a one-dimensional cellular automaton derived from self-replicating drawings were drawn by different people assigned to each. This experimental act to couple two disparate systems, and even entrust to separate people presents not more so like a unified big picture, but more like expanding closer to the aspect of situation islands. This may appear like a complex topological map but the lightness in which the colors unfold and the hidden order skillfully guide and incorporate the variable in the viewer's gaze.

Here, it appears as though the physicality is born from the physical contention of the individual strokes, rather than an immediate operation.

There probably will be new attempts at, and new paradigms will be set in the maintenance of the two artists' methodology to new painting,. And within the system, there maybe feedback and integrations that take place that will be beyond the artists' intentions.

The viewers, also, will also seek for works to be more complex and powerful, as well as side effects that speak to them unrelentingly. How deep will one's narrative that had been tucked away in the back and the external world integrate willingly, as well as the generated feedback and correlation between paintings, the audience and the works, the relationship within the audience.

Artists and the audience are all part of a chain, and as it is party of the whole, it cannot take on a Meta-like positional relationship. The thought that, the motive to cut out and to form unknown forms through the ambiguity and the complexity that reveal unknown parameters that describe the world, is actually a simple system is rich and pleasant.

Yuko Hasegawa (Chief Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Research Professor, Tama Art University)