

Speculating Text as a Beginning of Spirituality

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Text in every civilization is the best form of culture, which represents the quintessence of spirituality. Text is not simply a means of communication but a universal tool conducive to understanding cultural context of a civilization or a state group. Yoan makes the most of text in his work. He uses text not only as an ontological tool that reveals his artistic orientation but also as an experimental vehicle that offers the possibility of talking about the truth of life.

Indeed, text is not just a tool of civilization but a structural field of spirituality, which encompasses time and space throughout human evolution. Text can infer meaning from the spatial point of view while it is an effective tool to reflect on human acts and explain various phenomena of life from the viewpoint of time. Thus, text as a spatial-temporal phenomenon acts like a spiritual lever to indicate progressive achievements of civilization and support conceptual expansion of meaning.

In post-internet art, technical media not just serve as an extended form of media but also take spatial media such as painting and sculpture to temporal expression. In fact, physical media are still contemplative as Kant says although they express their own dynamism and freedom through art works. Nevertheless, visual images created by media art penetrate the surface of substances. Material substance is entirely transformed into visual media. Yoan's images as well go beyond the fixed meaning of text, but they still remain on the surface of things due to the cultural weight of text over his style of media expression. He makes the meaning of text and cultural causes of image interpenetrate by letting text float between substances and image. Here – although seemingly unwittingly so – he adds a symbolic dimension. He eliminates the context of text by adopting textual combination of pictographs (*Words without Meanings*, 2016-17), and introduces art-historical sensitivity of automatism through random-looking pictograph arrangement of symbolic images (*What You See is What You Get*, 2016-17). Yet, text does not lose its intrinsic cultural significance in his work. The artist tries to embrace two streams in art history, surrealism and virtual reality, as cultural phenomena for his ongoing media work (*Play/Read*, 2016). That may not be much different from the way Yoan remembers his life. For himself and anyone else, written knowledge is a medium of remembrance. Hidden characters and images in *Play/Read* appear when a page of a book he created on the desk is

turned. Given text as image, characters may be regarded as subordinate to image. But Yoan transforms a culture of letters and the context of image in his work into an anthology of short narratives to talk about the social mode of films he borrows for his work or carry a textual atmosphere. Text as a floating cultural signifier is not just a symbol but a catalyst that combines virtual reality and surrealism into a single signified context. However, the signifier and the signified do not end up being hierarchical from a certain point of view. Rather, they stay in the context of art with cultural equivalence. The artist interprets this as a cultural heritage in the context of spirituality.

His spiritual attitude can be witnessed in *Trying to Make Things Simple* created in Nepal in 2015-2016 as well as *Nomad Movie Screening on The Walls of Patan*, a video performance delivered around the same time. He asks about the origin of culture by presenting text as a tool of spirituality with pictography, and turns the meaning of art into the spiritual act by performing sweeping of cultural fragments with a broom.

In his work, meaning cannot go before reality and artistic performance becomes a journey of life to the original state of spirituality that follows the transcendental order of the universe.