

## Cycle of Sensation – Civilization and Landscape

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If we gaze at the man-made and the natural outside of the loophole of time, where will the division be? If our spirit is separated from matter, where will the dividing line be? As Einstein suggested, matter is energy, and energy is an invisible substance like the spirit. It is civilization that distinguishes between the natural and the man-made. The intoxication of superficial luxuries and the comforts of materials, rather than civilization itself, may have lead human beings to seek to be something other than part of nature, and to deny their origin.

The ragged and shabby shoes in Vincent van Gogh's painting are seen as a signifier that represent the hardships of human life, and are interpreted by Martin Heidegger as a way of existence – materials playing a mediating role in existence, rather than being components of existence. However, when existence is separated from material, where does the sensation that mediates spirit and material belong, between the two? As the fundamental division between spirit and material serves as a cause for the solitude of human existence, existence drags sensation here and there like it is an illusionary buoy, and human beings were probably destined to be crouching at the corner of a city they built by themselves.

Kim Jeong-beom's upcoming exhibition accesses the substance of existence through the medium of shoes and high heels, using them as symbols of contemporary society. While van Gogh's shoes represent someone's harsh reality, and Magritte's painting of a shoe that has thin veins alludes to something that crumbles the border between the body and the material, Kim's shoes identify the substance of existence by casting a gaze upon civilization and humanity as a type of natural landscape, as in *Yellow Landscape I*. Shoes and high heels do not represent an individual to him, rather they are men and women living in these current times. In other words, shoes and high heels symbolize men and women, and contemporary civilization

Taking contemporary civilization outside of the loophole of time, the yellow high heels in *Yellow Landscape I* yield a number of sensations of a landscape that is quite different from normal natural scenery, leading the viewer to feel the solitude of human beings.

From this perspective, to Kim civilization is not something that is distinguished from nature, but a substance that is whole and organic – as seen *Look I*, where shoes and heels are disintegrated one by one, and simultaneously formed into a circular loop. Civilizations which, for their own sakes, resemble invincible fortresses, are possible to break down gradually as time passes, like an electricity pole that is destined to return to cement, to its origin. That is also true with ceramic insulators, a found object used here as a symbol of contemporary civilization, and the pieces of high heels that are dangling in the electricity lines of these insulators. As seen in *Multiple Sensations*, where heels and shoes are stacked up and taking turns, civilizations are regarded as highly fragile by Kim, not knowing whether they might crumble even with the slightest touch, They seem glittering and solid, but with a little closer look, they are seen as as vulnerable as the shoes in *Inner Mass* that show thin veins.

It is noteworthy that shoes and heels are supposed to need the other identical pair to work properly, thus drawing attention to the inherent characteristics of human beings, who need others to reflect one another like mirrors. Therefore the shoes in *Our Impression* are distinct from those of van Gogh's, which allude to something invisible. The pair is probably attainable through the open possibility for humanity to be transformed into a variety of other forms in nature, instead of being confined within a solidly constructed fortress of humanity's own, as in *Clayzoo*, or *Sacred Fragments*. As such, Kim constructs out of clay a structure symbolizing civilization, then disintegrates it piece by piece, and shows the process of a cycle of reduction, thereby returning drifting human sensations to their origins, and addressing the source of the inherent solitude of human existence under civilization.