

Sound Looking

Sound is the primary formal element of my work. And because of the physical aspects of sound – that it cannot be seen and that it acts upon a different part of the brain than does visual media - I feel it is a very expressive method of working. Through my work I am searching for a way to “look” at sound. The starting point of my idea is based on the Lotus Sutra in Buddhism.

若有無量 百千萬億衆生 受諸苦惱 聞是觀世音菩薩
一心稱名 觀世音菩薩 即時 觀其音聲 皆得解脫

法華經/普門品 中

It says: When we are suffering, we listen to the name of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and speak his/her name. Then he can hear that and instantly save by helping us to reach Nirvana. If I exactly and really believe in this Sutra, I think it could be a way of relieving our/ my suffering. Therefore, I try to build objects that are always Avalokiteśvara as a meaning, which tell us his/her name. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva's translated name in Korean is Kwan Eum, and the meaning of his name is Sound Looking.

觀 = Kwan = look

音 = Eum = sound

Reaching to Nirvana, I usually simulate the sound field (space) or form (shape). For example, to depict the rain in the gallery, I use a matrix of loudspeakers, wires and monofilament that hang from the gallery ceiling and the collaged eight-channel rain sound that fills the space.

Moreover, I want to deal with “Sound Drawing” that can be visualized. The reason why I want to draw with sound is to show the strength that pictures have through sound as well. Whereas a picture leaves trace, sound doesn't. I guess this is the element that differs mostly even though sound and visual media have many similarities. Thus, I want to create trace of sound. Although sound is marked on an audiotape or on a Compact Disc, it cannot be seen. I think I need a new system that can show the sound and can draw as well; searching for a sound trace might be categorized my work.

And the water is my favorite medium for explaining a sound. For example, there are three transparent glass bottles of water, which is collected from different places: rain, stream and tide, but we cannot know what the bottles have visually. However, we definitely know the sound of rain, stream and tide. Sometimes sound is more three-dimensional medium because sound has volume, height, and tone color (timbre).

Although my ultimate goal is an extremely personal issue: how can I reach Nirvana. An interaction with viewer and participant will be a good category of introducing my recent work. During an interaction, the viewer can meet the same as what I feel and intend. “Sound Talking” is one of the examples. We can talk to our own voice that is different from everyone. Furthermore I try the sound (voice) activated movement that can translate our mind.