

## Sangbin IM: ěnergía

Sangbin IM

Everything is changing. An object, an organism, or a phenomenon (shape/state/tendency) in nature ought to follow its bounding environment (condition/context/need). This force is not a past tense but what is valid in this very moment. A force reveals itself through a tool. Taking advantage of various media, I intend to express ěnergía. Photography works will be presented on the first floor and painting, drawing, and video works will be on the second floor. The four types of media can be compared as different tools in art tool box. A man is inclined to bang with a hammer, tighten with a plier, stick with glue, and clasp with a clip. Hope this show is a chance to embrace and share various types of ěnergía.

### 1. The story of force

We often use the word 'energy' in daily life. When the word refers to a person, it relates to strength/power/will such as stamina/vitality. Some examples can be shown when a person says 'energy is overflowing' or 'there is no energy'. When the word refers to a material, it relates to potential power resources such as light / heat / matter. Relevant examples are 'Solar / nuclear energy' and 'energy conservation / consumption / crisis'.

In this exhibition I focus on five implications relating the Latin word ěnergía: 1) 'present progressive' (process of being recharged/discharged) 2) 'locationality' (area being cumulated/consumed) 3) 'specificity' (particularity in location/characteristics) 4) 'collectivity' (tendency to get crowded/concentrated) 5) 'destructibility' (hyper influencer and resolution).<sup>1</sup> Specific discussion for each concept is as follows.

1) In relation to 'present progressive', use of the suffix '-ia' emphasizes the current concept of 'state'. This suffix is often used to emphasize abnormal state such as disease symptoms.<sup>2</sup>

2) In relation to 'locationality', use of the suffix '-ia' emphasizes the territorial concept. The suffix is

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<sup>1</sup> 1) ~ 4) originated from the interest in specific characteristics of '-ia' itself, yet 5) originated from the implication relating to the word 'energy' that is combined with the suffix. Nonetheless all five pertains to 'conatus' of Spinoza which is the force sustaining the state as inertia. Further, they are closely related to 'qi' in oriental philosophy which is the working principle of nature and fuel that boosts life's organic activities.

<sup>2</sup> Examples are malaria, pneumonia, anemia, anoxia, aphasia, paranoia, and phobia.

sometimes used in defining a country/district with territory.<sup>3</sup>

3) In relation to 'specificity', use of the suffix '-ia' emphasizes the distinctiveness of specialness. This suffix often refers to the status of a specific place, the affiliation / position of a particular person, or a specific event.<sup>4</sup>

4) In relation to 'collectivity', use of the suffix '-ia' emphasizes the concept of 'cluster'. The suffix is often used to refer to plural/compound rather than singular object.<sup>5</sup>

5) In relation to 'destructibility', use of the suffix '-ia' with regards to 'present progressive', 'locationality', 'specificity', and 'collectivity', poses a strong 'destructiveness'. This suffix is often used to express an object/phenomenon/organization that are highly influential or tend to become highly influential.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Examples of territories include Italia, Romania, Albania, Serbia, Nigeria, Somalia, Columbia, and Australia.

<sup>4</sup> Some examples are utopia and distopia, insignia for individuals, and Lupercalia, a festive event for Lupercus. The concept is also closely related to 'present progressive' and 'locationality' that are mentioned above.

<sup>5</sup> In relation to pluralism, amphibia and reptilia are some examples. Especially in Latin, words ending with -ium, -ion are often take plural form with -ia suffix. In relation to compositeness, Militia (militia: a group of civic group collective organizations in an emergency situation) differs with military which is an integrated organization composed of regular soldiers.

<sup>6</sup> The church has often used the term to mean God's work and power, and the sacred aura of the Holy Spirit. Nowadays, we often use this word to refer to the most destructive energy sources available, such as the Sun and nuclear energy. In Russian, the term refers to the Soviet's propulsion rocket system capable of launching space shuttles, nuclear bombs, etc., and is also the name of an organization investing in the space tourism industry (RKK Energia, RSC Energia). On the other hand, ENERGIA organization in the Netherlands has developed a project linking energy policy with gender equality possibly to the point that the word takes a female form.

## 2. Scenery from a photographic creation: surreality of hyperrealism

The power of photography is to present 'surreality of hyperrealism' in scenery boasting itself in front of our eyes as if it has never been shy. 'Surreality of hyperrealism' refers to a state that is too real to be transcendental (or more real than real), or to exceed reality (which is now far away from reality).<sup>7</sup>

My favorite photography is scenery that creates peculiarly creative and critical distance, while reality and image continue to connect and tense up their relationship, collide with, and slip over and shift from each other. For photography to be high art, the intention of artist should naturally reach out to actual meaning beyond mere motivation. Moreover, meaning of the work should continue to develop and evolve beyond a singular interpretation and toward multi-faceted understanding by deepening/expanding/colliding/segmenting/upgrading initial thoughts.

I would like to express particular *énergía* through photography medium. It is quite exciting to see the divergence of destructive power generated by a particular group gathered in a particular place. For some time period, my focus was on crowd of people, high-rise buildings, masterpieces or grandiosity in nature. In this exhibition, however, I ponder on human affairs by expanding the subjects especially to other life forms such as fish. With observation, I began to feel compassion for other living organisms thinking that all life forms share much commonality.<sup>8</sup>

'Persons' is a scenery when the candlelight rally in Korea was just about to begin. It is an event that any person living in Korea was aware of in late 2016 to early 2017. 'The 1st Day' is a scenery of people from a small village gathering together in an open place. I encountered this event at dawn of January 1<sup>st</sup>, on my way back home after visiting the East Sea on December 31<sup>st</sup> to observe the first sunrise. 'Pool and the Sea' is a scenery of an outdoor pool adjacent to the sea on Bondi beach, Australia. 'Yachts and the Sea' is a scenery created by numerous yachts in the sea, which I viewed from a cruise ship departed from Sydney coastal pier. 'The World's 10 Tallest in

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<sup>7</sup> By developing black and white or color films, photography medium has traditionally fueled the belief that photographic images come from actual events by reproducing details of physical scenes in which objects are actually placed at specific time or place. However, as the printing techniques of the darkroom gradually developed and the use of digital languages became more advanced, photographic images were no longer restricted to specific moment or place. Now, a photographic image can be a virtual illusion itself that has nothing to do with reality. Nonetheless, a well-established illusion sometimes tempts us to come in as if it is real, or even more real than the real itself. Fascinatingly enough, it stimulates the ironies of modern people who believe while they tend not to believe, and who tend to believe but cannot believe.

<sup>8</sup> No matter what species we are, living organisms are more or less alike in their tendency to live together while competing against each other. Humankind would be top ranked when it comes to desire to make a decent living or more like having limitless desire to make a better living.

2020' is a scenery from a hotel room window in Tokyo, where the world's 10 tallest buildings of 2020 are gathered up in expectation as of 2016. 'Fish-Pond' is a scenery of numerous carps gathering and competing for food in a pond at Hawaii Dole Pineapple Plantation. 'Fish-Tank 2' is a scenery of numerous squids in a fish tank, which I observed at a sushi bar nearby Sokcho beach, Korea.<sup>9</sup>

Regarding the format of photography works in the exhibition, 'The World's 10 Tallest in 2020' follows a usual single-section format, but it structurally distinguishes indoor and outdoor. 'Pool and the Sea' and 'Yachts and the Sea' follow a multi-section format that I have developed to emphasize the virtuality and materiality while enhancing structural rhythm of the image. In addition, this exhibition presents two new formats. First format is the 'frame distortion.' When you imagine a photo image, it is natural to think of rectangular print and frame. However, I wanted to make the outer part of the image actively interact and respond to inner image by distorting rectangular shapes in 'Persons' and 'The 1st Day'. Second format is the 'image puncture.' Of course, 'Persons' and 'The 1st Day' show a certain level of image transformation, yet 'Fish-Pond' and 'Fish-Tank 2' go further by departing physical holes on the surface of the image to violate the virtuality of the image and grant its materialistic existence. For this reason, aluminum was chosen in place of general photo paper.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Usually, my photographic work has a significant time gap between when the pictures are taken and when the final work is completed. For example, 'Fish-Pond' was initially completed in 2013, but it was not until 2016, when I performed rework, the work was revived. In fact, many other works of mine bear such time interval. This phenomenon is conceptually related to the methodology, 'granting new life', which will be described later in discussion of painting works.

<sup>10</sup> The actual 'hole' of the image is related to the notion of Heidegger and Derrida's 'sous rature', which means to be erased but cannot be eradicated for an expedient of human understanding. Of course, I wanted to give it a visual impression that it actually exists even though it cannot be seen, rather than it should be erased since it does not actually exist. By making a hole, rather than deciding the space closed and completed, I welcomed open aesthetics that creates a rhythmic variety of ever-changing thought-making processes, since the empty space of the x function may be filled up with imagination by whatever it is that makes sense. The material chosen for this purpose is aluminum. At first, aluminum is easy to cut into an organic shape. Besides, its physical properties are obvious before our eyes, so it could enhance the peculiarity in comparison to general photo paper.

### 3. The Painterly Nature of Covering Process: Materiality of Spirituality

The power of painting is to present 'materiality of spirituality' which gradually reveals itself before our eyes. 'Materiality of Spirituality' does not refer to two extremes, one of which is so materialistic that spirituality disappears or vice versa. Rather, it refers to a possibility (expressive manifestation) of using materials to make visualization as intended, or to a limitation (impressive acceptance) of human condition confined and conditioned by materials around us.<sup>11</sup>

My favorite painting is a place where material evidence and spiritual breath create rich and vibrant fragrance while the material (various elements) is painted to accumulate traces on the base (a picture ground) with a set of techniques (a way of construction). In order to be a high-art painting,<sup>12</sup> profound spiritual aspects should make sense in peculiar material aspects as if having the aha moment.<sup>13</sup>

I would like to express particular *énergía* through painting medium. In the exhibition I present the painting project, 'resurrection'. This project provides a new dose of encouragement to the uncompleted old paintings halted at some point by covering parts or the whole of the works. In fact, an act of brushing is the process of manifesting the bodily charm by itself. Therefore, whatever type of painting it may be, it would contain and reveal a certain type and level of energy. However, the dance I wanted to perform in the art was not a common one such as

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<sup>11</sup> Painting medium has been expanding and developing its territory for a long period making its position between the two major confrontations of 'sensational representation (physical description)' and 'conceptual expression (ideological projection)'. An example of the former is a way of describing objects primarily based on feelings as commonly seen in primitive cave paintings. The latter is a way of composing things as you see Egyptian art or medieval art. Another example of the former is reviving 'sensational representation' by Greek art or humanism of Renaissance art. On the other hand, development of science and technology and popularization of education led modern art toward 'conceptual expression.' In the long history, painting medium has challenged itself through continuous experiment to the extent that it has reached the limit in novelty. But for me, who has been exposed to art since I was a child, painting is like sweet hometown, artistic sanctuary filled with all kinds of anxiety and amusements by humankind.

<sup>12</sup> The attributes of previously mentioned high-art photography also apply to high-art painting.

<sup>13</sup> Examples of profound spiritual aspects would be 1) a mode of irony (multi-facet) that cannot be clearly defined by a singular perspective, such as 'so sweet and dreary,' 2) incomprehensible yet breathtaking fascination of sublimity (spirituality) that cannot be described in words, such as 'so lost to do anything meaningful,' or 3) allegorical understanding (compassion) based on humanity, such as 'helpless since it is a human being.' On the other hand, an example of a peculiar material aspects would be 1) state of being exaggerated, distorted, and deformed (pusher), 2) a blatant appearance hiding behind (ambiguity), 3) attitude making viewers feel uneasy and uncomfortable (frustration), 4) inexplicability as if it is extraterrestrial (abnormality), 5) traits that strangely irritate emotions (shivering), 6) consistency that is timeless and always consistent (timelessness), 7) perspectives that make sense in context (understanding), or 8) emptying-out without much action (nothingness).

stirring a brush energetically on the screen. I wanted to perform a special massage of slowly rubbing both of my hands on the skin of a painting. By doing so, I wanted to show a unique methodology of renewing a life through granting a new breath to the once-failed paintings. Since I started touching and erasing the past, the transformation (the new) came into being from the original (the old). Then, the old and the new became apostles to testify the resurrection since they started to rely on each other, whether the old is still visible or not. The old and the new necessitate each other as there is no old life if there is no new life.<sup>14</sup>

The 'Residue, Water, and 5 Years' project had slowly continued the process of accumulation from time to time from 2011 to 2016. The left-over acrylic paints after completing other works were grouped by 4 colors, red, yellow, green, and blue then they were diluted in water and poured over each canvas. The 'Museum' project was produced in 2010 and in 2017 thick and translucent membranes have been dumped over several times. The 'City' project was initially produced in 2010 and in 2017 the painting was covered with a thin layer of greasy and moist black membranes. The 'Covered' project was initially produced in 2008 and in 2017, a number of thin and transparent membranes have been repeatedly wrapped over, leaving a small trace of the original piece. The 'Blue' project and the 'White' project were initially produced in 2011 and in 2017 the paintings were covered over with semi-transparent membranes leaving little or almost no trace of the original. The 'River' project and the 'Road' project were produced in early 2008 and half a year later, specific parts were polished to enhance the level of texture and glossiness, highlighting the difference in the properties among visual elements.

A project consists of multiple relatively small paintings. As a matter of fact, this project came to life from the unrelated works that I had stopped working on in the past. First, by placing works together, I intend to produce a structural rhythm on a large wall. Second, I wanted to maximize the intricate difference presenting sometimes similar and sometimes different modes of progression by showing what was painted over and what was painted under.

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<sup>14</sup> The origin of the paintings in exhibition goes back to the 'Veil' project, carried out in 1999 during my undergraduate years. For the project, ruined works were laid down on the floor and a large amount of oil was poured, then the process of drying out was repeated several times. When I poured oil on the stretched canvas, I remember the canvas producing a strange but peculiarly attractive phenomenon of wobbling and waving between the stretchers due to the weight.

#### 4. Expression & Articulation of Drawing: Releaser & Cleaner

The power of drawing is being able to freely 'release' the idea of a sudden impression at any time, or to 'clean' thoughts that have been muddy for a long time. In general, 'releasing and cleaning' may be considered contrasting ideas. However, in this exhibition I would like to induce the win-win harmony of Yin and Yang by combining an act of delicately caring and firmly holding with an act of throwing away or letting go.

The set of drawings in the exhibition, 'The Trace' project is a series of No. 1 to No. 17. Each work follows two steps. First, it is a stage of de-heart (coincidence). It leaves a clear trail in the screen with a good amount of paint in brush. Next, it is a step of on-heart (inevitability). With a delicate pen, I tune and supplement some coarse parts of the initial traces for further treatments.<sup>15</sup>

Regarding the format of drawings in the exhibition, white background and black marks move from No. 1 to No. 16 to create a flow of intensity on their own. Suddenly, the last No. 17, a full-black space is presented. This is the point of chaos and integration where the traces of beginning and rigidity of the process no longer make a difference. My intention was to compose this series as a piece of music.

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<sup>15</sup> If the previously mentioned methodology of painting is to cover up unsatisfied traces of past, the methodology of drawing is to elaborate coarse traces of past. However, the methodologies of painting and drawing are all intended to achieve higher level of completion.

## 5. Over-Collected videos: Illusion of Vividness

The power of video is to present 'illusion of vividness' that creates the feeling of happening right before your eyes while emanating raw charm of dynamic process with a gigantic bundle of related images. Of course, the bundle of images in video may have nothing to do with an actual specific event. However, the experience of video can be very vivid and realistic if it shows the rhythm of structural flow naturally through the magic of video editing.

The single-channel HD video, 'Persons' is a data-based project that I have structurally organized collected images of people photographed from 2003 to 2017. I intend to create a wonder of why I had persistently collected the number of humans. I wanted to ask whether human is the ultimate answer after all.

I have been taking numerous pictures of cities for my work since 2003. However, many pictures have been erased or lost due to the limitations of storage size, sudden death, theft, intentional deletion of bad pictures, and pictures used in works. Therefore, in this exhibition, I want to bring together and celebrate those who have still survived. Surely, I do not consider them as seasoned actors in theater. Rather, I want to give a raw impression of awkward and nervous actors forever-waiting for a show.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> In this age of single-person media, it is not impossible to completely control a still (single) image even if you are an individual artist who does not have a production team. However, it is not easy to completely control numerous moving images at once. It is almost impossible for moving images to have the same level of resolution as a still image. In other words, if you are an individual artist, you would not want to obsess over high-tech production only. A great art may be found by making achievement autonomously with what can be done rather than trying to do a bit of something that cannot be done alone.