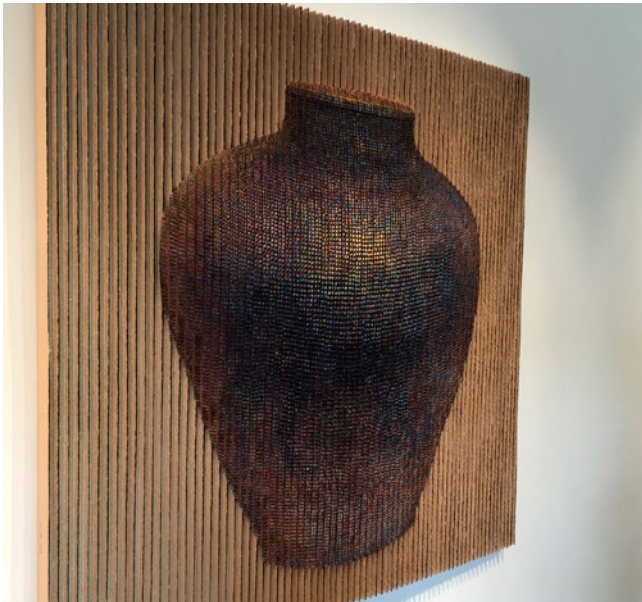


ART REPUBLIK DOES A DOUBLE-TAKE AT
THE ARTWORKS OF SON SEOCK. BY TYEN FONG

Visual Pleasures



Korean artist Son Seock's (b. 1955) art pieces give its viewers both visual and tactile pleasure. Like the skin of a chameleon, his works yield different images and textures when viewed from different viewpoints. The visual pleasures we derive from viewing his paintings are a result of our own movements and how we choose to experience his artwork. These changes of colours and disappearing of images according to the movement of the eyes are comparable to the technique of Rayogram in photography. In fact, we might even get the illusion that the images are disappearing from the picture-plane and floating in mid-air.


This multi-sensory experience is a result of his exquisite painting technique that involves complex mathematical concepts and logic. In order to create such effective illusions, he divides the painting with straight vertical lines. The vertical lines look as if they were drawn with a ruler, suggesting that the layers of paintings are not drawn at random, but as a result of precise mathematical calculations and logical rules.

These dynamic art pieces are also tactile in nature. The picture-plane is covered with numerous dots to resemble a cement-like surface. The multiple layers of paint dots stacked on top of each other create a magical 3D effect, resembling sediments accumulated over a long time. Coupling the vertical lines with these layers of dots gives life and movement to the subjects of his paintings. For example, by arranging subjects like elephants and ceramic vases on these multi-layered tactile surfaces, Seock establishes an organic relationship between shape and background, highlighting the wrinkles of the elephant's skin and the crack-covered porcelain surface.

Seock also chooses to minimise the narrative contents of his paintings. He does not represent his elephant and ceramic figures for the sake of narration, but chooses to place them on the picture-plane as anonymous objects instead. However, the non-existence of narrative content is not meant to represent the non-significance of these objects. By taking away the narrative quality of these

subjects, he reinforces the concentration of viewers on the visual-sensuous technique of the picture, and draws their attention to the exciting interplay of colours, textures and lines. His works contain hidden possibilities, and in adopting this stylistic approach, Seock invites his viewers to compose their own narrative.

Paradoxically, his purpose for these tactile works is to actually reveal the non-materiality of objects. He instead questions the ways and perceptions of being. Even though he is painting simple vases and animals, his method of portraying these objects shows how it could be interpreted to hold different meanings. The non-materiality surrounding a simple porcelain vase makes the viewer notice the gap between the false image of the vase and the actual image of the vase. Seock explores the visual collision between the actual and virtual object, the non-existing and the existing, thus challenging the notions of perception and relativity. This suggests his attempt to create a system that overturns logic.

In a world increasingly focused on digital media and photography, Seock gives great meaning to value of manual work, developing a unique method that yields a magical, multi-dimensional effect. The viewer also becomes part of the artwork, experiencing the various perspectives and multiple images that can be derived from the picture-plane. The tactile nature of his work also stimulates the viewers' experience, enticing them to explore the gap between the existing and the non-existing, the visible and the invisible. Showing how an object can be observed from various viewpoints could be reflective of the perspectives of artists in the world, but could perhaps also be representative of the perspectives of our times; that absolute beings do not exist. 

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