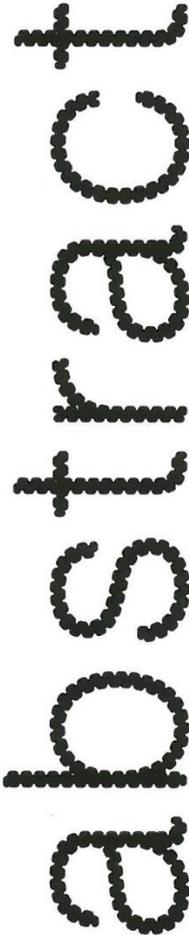


Grooming history against the grain: photographs by Koo Bohncchang

January, 2019 | Rhii Sangyeop

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| Artist I



CLÉMENT COGITORE

Cogitore first established his presence in the film industry. When he first came on the scene, he took international film festivals by storm, in France and multiple other European cities, and even the Americas, taking director's awards and film awards. His artistic and directorial capacity was firmly established and recognized when he was invited to the *Director's Fortnight (Quinzaine des Réalisateurs)* held in parallel at the 2011 *Cannes Film Festival*. That same year in 2011, he won the *Grand Prix* of the 56th *Salon de Montrouge* in France, famous for discovering talented young artists, turning heads in the art industry as the quintessential next generation artist. Clement Cogitore's honors and awards continued and he won the *2018 Prix Marcel Duchamp*, an award given annually to an artist working in France. As a Paris-based artist, this positioned Cogitore as the quint essential French artist. -Page 68

| Artist II



KOO BOHNCHANG

Koo Bohncchang has been an artist for more than 30 years. During these years, Koo photographed things. His photos were compiled into works, and some were brought together in the framework of exhibitions presented to the world. The chronology of his diligent shutter-works have become an integral part of Korea's photographic history. Among them, his *Vessels* series is his most popularly recognized body of work.

Not at all surprising, because his *Vessels* series is his both his current and quintessential work. Applying the belief that history is progressing in a

linear fashion to Koo's photographic history, the *Vessels* series is at the apex of his photographic history, the *essence* of his works. Chronologically viewed from past to the most recent, his works have a certain grain to them that adds to the overall sense of continuity to the oeuvre. -Page 76

| Artist III



CHO HOYOUNG

The works of Cho Hoyoung are filled with busyness. Visually expressing what the artist felt from the countless movements conducted in everyday life, that is, "verbs," her works exude unique energy generated from his way of expression. Cho is still at a stage where she wonders what kind of "artist" she is. Although she has firmly established about what she would like to tell and deal with as an artist through long contemplation, what she would realize with

which tool still feels like homework to her, according to the artist. To the artist, the exterior of a work is merely a "tool" or a "device." To her, focusing on a certain object, recognizing a "motion" oozing from the movements and changes of the object itself, and expressing it into artwork is the point of making art. -Page 84



Grooming history against the grain: photographs by Koo Bohnchang

• Article by Rhii Sangyeop • Image provided by KOO Studio

Walter Benjamin writes in *On the Concept of History* (1940), that a true historian "regards it as his task to brush history against the grain." The grain was in fact the gentle but inescapable tide of time pulled by the victors and their ruling descendants, and to brush against it meant to pull against the flow. It deviates from the understanding of history as a homogeneous and hollow continuum. To go against the flow was to abstain from the urge to narrate continuity into history.

Photos that do not converge

Koo Bohnchang has been working as an artist for more than 30 years. During those 30-something

years, Koo Bohnchang photographed things. His photos were compiled into works, and some were brought together in the framework of exhibitions presented to the world. The chronology of his diligent shutter-works have become an integral part of Korea's photographic history. Among them, his *Vessels* series is his most popularly recognized body of work.

If we were to create a timeline of photographs by Koo, from left to right, past to present, then the points furthest to the right would represent photos, most likely the *Vessels* series. Not at all surprising, because his *Vessels* series is his both his current and quintessential work. Applying

the belief that history is progressing in a linear fashion to Koo's photographic history, the *Vessels* series is at the apex of his photographic history, the *essence* of his works. Chronologically viewed from past to the most recent, his works have a certain grain to them that adds to the overall sense of continuity to the oeuvre. For example, Koo's earlier works candidly projected his anxiety and inner turmoil, such as in *Clandestine Pursuit in the Long Afternoon* (1988), *In the Beginning* (1990-1998), and *Breath* (1995). As he began working on *Portraits of Time* (1998), *Pencil of Nature* (2000), and *Ocean* (2002), he eased away from the fauvist choices and began capturing more abstract images

국재갤러리 부산점 구본창 (Koo Bohncchang) 설치 전경 이미지 제공: 국재갤러리

in a more contemplative fashion. The *Vessels* series carries on with the contemplative poise, maintaining a certain objective distance, interpretable as a certain maturity in his works. The pitfall of this interpretation is that it presumes that his works are on a continuum of contexts with a certain common denominator underlying it all. This presumption overlooks the non-continuous aspects of his works, some of which cannot be explained within a continuum. Is Koo Bohncchang's oeuvre reducible to his *Vessels* series? Let us assume that it is not reducible, and groom his chronology of works the *wrong way* with the proverbial brush. There are certain points where the brush meets a knot, not

easily passed over, and it is there we need to pay attention to what the brush brings out of the grain.

The glaze and cracks of the *Vessels* series

In the middle of a milky sand-pink background in a large square frame, situates as white porcelain of the Joseon Dynasty. At first glance, the frame appears to encourage the viewer to appreciate the simplicity and beauty of the Joseon white porcelain of the 15th or 16th century. Some, mesmerized by its beauty, may conjure a marquee of adjectives of "our traditional beauty, embodied in such a regal and beautiful grace..." and so on and so forth. As the qualifiers continue, the gaze might wander to where

the description of the artwork lies. The title of the work, its year of creation, and such details will be skimmed over, but surely pause and fixate on where and what collections they belong to. A museum in Kyoto, another museum in Osaka, another museum in the United States, the United Kingdom, and France... As soon as it occurs to the viewer that the gracious white porcelains from the Joseon Era are in fact not in a Korean museum but in some foreign land, the previous adjectives and qualifiers immediately become strange. This uncanny realization causes fine cracks and fissures in the appreciation of the white porcelains in photographs, as if the years have finally taken a toll on its glazed surface. ■