

2023.10.26(thu)-11.29(wed) Seungean Cha Solo Exhibition《Your love is better than life》

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In her new solo exhibition, *Your Love Is Better than Life*, Seungean Cha presents twelve new pieces of her “Weaving Draft” series, which are code designs to weave fabric patterns into machines, along with installation work. She focuses on not only the materialization process of weaving and canvas mounting but also the production process of the weaving industry through coding drafts and the invisible conceptualization process that reveals the contemporary demand for the use of technology media and the institutional situation.

The artist has explored “the plane,” the essence of painting, through her performative weaving work in conjunction with the grid, a major tool and concept that emerged to reveal the contradictions of originality in the Modernist era. Her grid weaving work breaks away from Modernism, which pursued the essence of painting through “flatness” as a limitation as well as infinite freedom. She challenges the self-reference of Modernists by reinterpreting the works of existing artists and patterns of designer goods to find alternative meanings. In her new work “Weaving Draft,” Cha appropriates AI program output text along with traditional patterns and Bible passages. This does not mean that Cha only focuses on preoccupying a consistent plane like Piet Mondrian’s yin and yang method influenced by Theosophy, or using the grid as an identical type of repetition like some minimalists. Unlike their uses of grid, Cha reveals her interest in social, cultural, and art systems that she has encountered as an artist. Through “repeating on/off of warp and weft,” she wants to shed light on the contemporary meaning of the weaving system in comparison to the binary system and computer programming. (From the author’s note)

By entrusting machines for fabric production and then exclusively focusing on code language design itself, the artist demonstrates a meta-attitude to confirm the change in perception of the creative industry and questions the nature of innovation. Her approach is influenced by the “Wall Drawing” series by Sol LeWitte, a representative minimalist. Sol LeWitte’s designs and drawing manuals enabled the art method of linguistic concepts. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh conceptualizes this method as “aesthetics of administration” and “imitation of the production method” in the late capitalist era. In addition, Beryl Korot, a video art pioneer who tracks the essential meaning of communication from ancient to modern technology, has applied specific grid structures in weaving machine programming to several video channels for giant digital tapestries. In this context, Cha also traces the semantic link of etymology and genealogy in “text,” “textualization,” “textile,” “weaving,” and “programming,” and explores the implementation of the method and the meaning of contemporary communication through the weaving draft method called “code design.”

The grid, a visual order for reproduction of objects on a 2D surface or image as well as a physical foundation that maintains its consistency, is already a tool used not only in art but also in computers, architecture, and anthropology. The design of "Weaving Draft" explores fluctuating contemporaneity by using weaving patterns on graph paper. For example, Korean-English Bible passages as a pattern, or various texts transforming these verses in AI programs such as ChatGPT are used. In particular, the title of this exhibition, *Your Love Is Better than Life*, is a phrase from the artist's struggle during her illness. It is taken from the Bible passage that praises God's love in a desperate situation where David is chased by his son who wants to kill him. Through conversations with AI programs such as ChatGPT, the artist intervenes with patterns of repetitive answers such as 'mercy' and 'Kindness' as marking drawings on the fabric, a gesture to transition to another narrative while discovering the meaning of a modern plane as an object-centered material. She borrows the world's longest-read global common text, widely-known Bible passages such as *You are beautiful, my love*, and *My lord is already done for me* and codes them into consonants. In another way, she contemplates cultural and human origin through the conversion process of coding Korean traditional patterns. The different patterns were highlighted by coding and weaving the fabrics *Neung* produced from the Three Kingdoms period to the Goryeo period. Like two sides of a coin, the code itself is a pattern and image for a piece of fabric that has different front and back, and the pattern is weaving itself as if the fabric has acquired autonomy. Behind this practice, one can see a change in emotion and sensibility to replace a helpless subject with a giant being when an individual life collapses and the daily grid stops working. She might use biblical texts to exclude subjective things or reflect on temporary minimized herself through technology and media. Cha's works referring to Western painting history externally provide no information of the inhumane works and internally provide only reference information in silence and skills without any dialogue. Hyun Siwon once considered Cha's previous work "Wall Hangings" a transition of the fragmented fabric form as a technological support of a destructive nature into a canvas. Unlike Hyun, this exhibition focuses on the "affect" of the fabric itself.

"Weaving Draft," where she installed drawings like twelve apostles, is a process in which drawing intervenes on a completed machine weave. It betrays institutional critical expectations dealing with material and socio-political conditions. It rather considers an agent in action who is situated beyond the experience of time, event, and extreme dualism. This is Cha's attempt to delete a "suspicious" subject between daily life and the practice of the artist, distinguished from her previous period. And it also implies the inherent change of the artist not to be related back to politics and knowledge. The futility and emotional state of skepticism of an institutional artist, requested by contemporary society, may ironically reaffirm the desires of the artist's subjectivity and even encourage the process of breaking the boundary between invisible and visible actions. The CR Collective hopes this solo exhibition will serve as an opportunity to resonate with the freedom of "affect" through Cha's coding work collaborating with machines and AIs.