

HACHIRO KANNO : THE LYRICISM OF DISCONTINUITY

A strange lyricism inhabits the works of Hachiro Kanno, a lyricism that aims to open the viewer's soul to a sublime experience. To do so Kanno borrows forms from song and dance without, however, bringing into play the fluidity of discourse that characterizes them. Although Kanno uses ample one-off gestures he is careful to break their continuity in his finished works. For example, if we look at the recent triptyches on paper, in each case the three panels together form a single composition but Kanno separates them from one another by an empty space, thus breaking the continuity of the white painted surfaces. We could say that Kanno's lyricism is a syncopated lyricism. What he refuses to do is obvious: that is to make paintings where, as in song or dance, the magic of imperceptible transitions functions to make the onlooker forget the passage of time. For Kanno beauty has meaning only in its relation to the ephemeral. Thus his passion for what is discontinuous, which alone allows the viewer to make out and to combine in a single emotion the beauty of the work from its first radiance to its final decline. This is why it is always necessary for him to signal the moment of danger and even better, the instant when the tragic attains its highest point before toppling over into nothingness. The hiatuses that fracture and fragment his work function in as an economy of means. They are there to create an effect of interruption, to fix the form in its move towards perfection, or to interrupt the concert of colors, for it is only at the edge of the precipice that dizziness develops, a dizziness resulting from the combining melancholy, fear, and the fascination with what is happening.

But these pauses, these interruptions of discourse, are not only ephemeral figures or the expression of the painter's sensitivity to ruin. They also reveal that for Kanno the world does not possess the unconditional stability of a substance, that it is constantly between disappearance and appearance. This is echoed in the singular fashion with which he makes use of calligraphy in his works. He is not only interested in using the traditional form of calligraphy to fix the illuminations of thought and because he uses powdered mother-of-pearl the forms created take on new properties and new meaning. The effect of variations in light changes and transforms them. The almost unreal infinite shimmering of the arabesques sometimes transforms itself into a glacial, diaphanous pearl grey, inviting the viewer to see beyond the significance of these forms the evidence of an uncertain world that seems to hover between being and nothingness, without ever definitely moving toward one or the other. The powdered mother-of-pearl works wonders. As an indestructible powder it is eternal, and in the impalpable iridescence it produces it is on the brink of non-existence. It is the ideal material with which to fully express the impermanence of the world of phenomena.

But Hachiro Kanno has not limited his dialectic of discontinuity only to the painted surface. He believes that the « *raison d'être* » of this dialectic requires consideration of the third dimension. In effect, the breaks in continuity in the triptyches that symbolize the impermanence of the world cannot be reduced to their negative aspect. These breaks are not simply blanks or gaps. They are also, in the primary sense, openings. First of all, the opening created by the two vertical spaces runs down the entire surface of the works. It disturbs and attracts the eye, questions the viewer and finally puts him off balance. And the color also has the same effect. The grey can become a milky mist in which the light intermittently seems to disappear under the effect of the calligraphy. Here, the effect of the indecisiveness of the color is to cancel out the material surface of the works and to open a space of a totally different nature.

It is as if we are being told that it is possible to go beyond the world of phenomena. In fact, the eye plunges into the space beyond the work, the signs of which were produced by the work and the eye no longer has an object on which to fix itself. One could speak of a total suspension of thought and intuition, of time abolished to the advantage of the eternal present and of whole that remains positioned in definitive immobility. With this reversal of perspective, everything that was fluctuating and perishable, marked by discontinuity, reveals itself as illusory. A Buddhist would say that the veil of Maya has been pierced revealing true reality; the unchanging reality of being and the reality of emptiness, the one being perhaps the reverse of the other. Here, a work of art evidently becomes a rite of initiation.

Fernand Fournier, Paris, April 2009

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