

Intermediate (but of what and what?)

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We think it's only natural to get rice pudding after we put rice pudding mix in the microwave and the bell rings, but to me, that is just a presumption. I would be kind of relieved if, every once in a while, after you put rice pudding mix in the microwave and it rang and you opened the top, you got macaroni gratin.

--Haruki Murakami, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Book Three: The Birdcatcher

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I apologize for the personal tangent, but I bought a washer-dryer. It was a big purchase. As soon as I got home, I threw my laundry inside the streamlined white box and pressed the button. The machine apparently automatically calculates the amount of detergent necessary once you put it inside the tank--you can even control it remotely via your smartphone--but I still had quite a few individually sealed sachets, so I decided to use them first. The machine didn't make a sound. When I looked inside the circular glass to make sure it was actually running, I saw my clothes and towels going around and around. It was unsettlingly quiet, but seemed to be working. A few hours later, I took out the warm clothes. Just as advertised, there wasn't a wrinkle in sight. The rapid development of home electronics astounded me. As I folded my clothes, I noticed that a favorite black knitted sweater that I bought in the fall of 2015 had shrunk two sizes. My third time using the machine, it tripped my circuit breaker. No matter how much the functionality improves, or how quiet the machine gets, the clothes still shrink. And the dryer uses an exorbitant amount of electricity.

β

I saw an abstract and minimal exhibition in Sapporo amid the coronavirus pandemic. The city was experiencing the heaviest snow it had seen in the last decade, but it was miraculously sunny during my stay (though I did slip and shatter my iPhone screen). Below a set of stairs, the exhibition space was separated into six small rooms that were evenly lit by colored lights. Inside, abstract objects quietly stood in place, and some rotated so slowly that you'd only notice if you paid close attention. Every so often, some of them produced sound as well. The objects were meticulously crafted like industrial products, and it was hard to believe the streamlined curves were produced by hand. In the space upstairs which also served as the reception area, there was a display of framed drawings, with each surface filled in using colored pencils. I saw that these two-dimensional abstract forms were connected in some way to the abstract three-dimensional objects downstairs. Suzuki didn't seem to be hiding the origins of these things, what they constituted.

Suzuki wanders around and observes cities, taking photographs of found images and things as concrete fragments. His drawings come from a deeper assessment of all the photos he's amassed. He then uses these drawings to create three-dimensional objects. Whenever he switches the medium and material, the original thing is abstracted. But this must not be diminished to a process of information

reduction. On the one hand, it is clear that Suzuki's intention intervenes. On the other hand, these works are also created by the tug and pull of each medium's and material's physical characteristics. To give a simple example, if you take a diagram in which the upper half is larger than the bottom half, the three-dimensional object would turn out imbalanced by gravity, unable to stand without support. Just as many sculptures depend on the balance between such shapes, gravity, and equilibrium—to stand on their own despite difficult conditions—Suzuki's objects contain traces of his approach to various physical conditions. He defines this process as drawing out a city's unconscious. There is no way to work out the original source from the individual images. The works are abstracted to the point that one cannot determine whether the city represented is Berlin, Taipei, or Sapporo. Ultimately these objects seem to have a right to be, as creatures that have existed in these forms since ancient times—like the squids that live in the virtual world of Greg Egan's science fiction, coincidentally born from a colony of single-cell organisms at the bottom of the ocean. Conversely, the objects look like an autonomous closed system with no connection to any provenance. The lighting projectors that slowly shift and the motors that allow for rotation have both been installed to reinforce this autonomy.

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The coronavirus started with the discovery of the Alpha variant in the United Kingdom, in September 2020, and continued to mutate into its Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Epsilon forms. When I saw the exhibition, the Omicron variant, originally discovered in Africa in November 2021, was increasing in numbers in Sapporo. The forms truly continue to change. The ad hoc application of the Greek alphabet exposes the fact that the virus will eventually mutate into its Omega variant and will not, of course, stop even then—that it will continue to change. There is no endpoint to this transformation. The virus behaves as if going as far as it can, and changing as much as it can, is some kind of ethical imperative. I'm not trying to make an easy connection here with Suzuki's work via contemporaneity. What I want to consider is the idea of an intermediate.

An intermediate: something in a state of transition between two things. This framework certainly brings to the forefront fixed preconceptions and textures of images often set outside of one's consciousness. For some reason, unstable and indeterminate things that are rooted neither in reality nor fiction, consciousness nor unconsciousness, appear in the exhibition space as physical and contoured existences. Suzuki is betting on this. By stripping any elements that enable individual identification from the three-dimensional objects and providing a title that could be interpreted in many ways, he carefully robs the objects of traceability. What stands before the viewer is an autonomous image without any associated geotags, one in harmony with the various conditions of its physical space.

Now, picking up on the fact that the title of this painstaking exhibition is Intermediate, we must ask, "but of what and what?" The images vacillate between two things and enter a state of limbo, as if to say that the two sides do not change, or rather, the images always float out to a different time and location. Even at this exact moment. As if to create presumptive targets for their own potential future mediation. As if to rewrite the cities of which they once constituted a part. These creations start from the assumption that the viewer, the artist, and the work have the same rights when it comes to change. This is the kind of pulsating abstraction and minimalism carried in Suzuki's work.