

Aiyoung Yun's Secret Garden

The "Secret Garden" is a sheltered nook, a place of oblivion and a magical sleep, reminiscences of the future and prevision of the past. Here there is no succession of day and night - a "black" light, rhythmically allotted by flashes of video projections, equally illuminates the entire space.

Here there is no place for the customary order of things. On the branches of the flowering almond tree, instead of nuts there are screens with images of the naked artist levitating above a flow of water. The noise of a waterfall is mingled with gusts of wind. Video projections bloom among artificial flowers. Aiyoung Yun metaphorically calls her installation, the "Secret Garden", a dream. "All night long in my dreams I swim like a fish, I fly in the clouds like a bird...My soul soars with the wind, not knowing what it will meet...and where to find the meaning of life...The "Garden" represents my dreams, and the trees with the images my soul", she says.

The secret garden is a poetic metaphor embodied by Yun in a multi-media installation. The space of the "Secret Garden" is filled with "real" objects, transparent video images, and sounds. These images, such as, for example, a figure hovering in the air, or a travelling wayfarer, have a multitude of meanings. "Many of the images which I use in my videos don't have the concrete signification, they permit me to transmit the feelings and the impressions which I will not be able to describe nor show by another way. The video is for it an ideal medium" (artist's words). Never the less it can be said that the image of the wayfarer is related to the metaphorical representation of the artist about the "endless journey, when we do not know where we are going", in which Yun's enthusiasm for Krishnamurti's philosophy is reflected. The portrayal of the artist herself, repeatedly appearing in video installations, symbolises her division into the Aiyoung Yun who lives in real time and the Aiyoung Yun who exists only in dreams, fantasies, and memories. Speaking of this installation, the artist recalls the renowned Chuan Tzu, when the philosopher, suddenly waking up, asked himself whether he was Chuan Tzu who slept and saw himself in a dream as a butterfly or a butterfly that is having a dream about Chuan Tzu.

Tangible objects, such as the tree and the flowers, bring the artist back "down to earth" to the material world of logic and consciousness. The natural sounds of the water and the wind symbolise for Yun the world of unconsciousness, the understanding of which might be attained by following the "royal road of dreams" Memories and dreams are the artist's basic material. Having grown up in Seoul, Yun has lived and worked in Paris for more than 10 years, with the sense that she is a wanderer passing through the no-man's land between cultures, East and West. In her bewitching multi-media installations, the viewer has the feeling of being a traveller who has suddenly found himself in an enigmatic country of dream, where things change places, where the garden' soul cultivates the viewer's soul (Secret Garden, 2001), where the naked artist flies above Paris (Abyse, 2000), where a child endlessly walks through a landscape shrouded in fog (Intersection, 2000).

Yun's installations "populated with the dreams in which the sensations of strangeness and ubiquity cross themselves as in the dreamy experience, and retranscribe the daily world by subjective way". The borderline condition between the world's tangible nature and its illusive character, between reality and dream, is substantiated in the three-dimensional space of a "dark" room, where sculpture and video performance, immobile objects and mutable images are united. Video art became an exclusive medium for Yun, making it possible to imprint the moment of returned time. The artist began to work with video in the mid 90's, making time one of the subjects of her creative work. Video art is one of the most revolutionary achievements of the 20th century, which also, like cinematography, in its time changed the very relationship to actuality, presenting to the viewer the opportunity to perceive the works of art in "real" time.

For Yun the metaphor of time is a river, continuing on its way, or a cloud drifting in the sky, the cycle of birth and disappearance. Precisely video art permitted her to embody

the multi-dimensionality of the world, the possibility of simultaneously existing in several parallel spaces, in particular, in the space of dream and fantasy. The topography of her multi-media installations is the Secret Garden of memories, scrupulously reconstructed by means of video projections, lasers, three-dimensional images, and sounds, where every one feels that he is a wanderer, making a journey into the depths of time returned by the artist.

Olesya Turkina
Curator at The State Russian Museum