EXPLORING THE ESSENCE OF ENERGY THROUGH ART

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MAY 2019
My interest is in the examination of the spatial and sensory perception of energy in relation to the artistic experience. I focus on the relationship of the phenomena and aura of all existences that instinctively leads me into my studio practice. What is energy to human beings? I concentrate more on a primordial and fundamental spiritual energy than on scientific theories and concepts. The root of spiritual energy I perceive is the cosmic vitality that penetrates ecology in general. The vigor of all living things, called vitality, is too vast to be defined by the word "energy." The closest terminology that accurately explains is the word “Ki (氣)” which is based on Oriental thought. The meaning of the term, grounded in the Eastern philosophy, understands the deep sense of interactions between nature and human beings as a phenomenon.

The Sulmoon hyeja (設文解字, Shuowen Jiezi), which was written in the early 2nd century in China, demonstrates the history of Ki in Eastern philosophy. The origin of the concept of Ki was from the aura of cloud, better understood as not just a cloud, but air or breath. The ancients anticipated various natural phenomena through the observation of the aura and it led to the study of acupuncture, which applies the same sense of the understanding of the human body. How I perceive and understand energy is based on the wisdom and research of the ancestors. I first became curious about energy when my grandfather passed away when I was a child. The adults used to say, “His energy has run out.” I was afraid of how energy determined the death of my grandfather, and at the same time I was curious about this. I recognized the energy that adults had mentioned as spiritual energy closely aligned with vitality. In addition, losing energy means once the spiritual energy, which is distributed naturally
around a human being, is weakened, the balance between the spiritual and physical body has been lost. In the end, the body can no longer be maintained without energy (Teilhard 120). I became aware that energy should be understood as a phenomenon of the surroundings, whether it exists inside or around the organism. Continuous questions have led me to study how energy in my inner world has a physical form. This has been the starting point of my concerns about how I embody the form of energy that is internal but also incorporated into my studio practice.

Energy, which is the vigor of the living organism, called vitality, depends on the natural distribution of living beings. This vital energy is the cornerstone of my inspiration. This is the foundation of my energy. Whether or not energy is present inside or around the vitality, it is discovered as being perceived as a phenomenon of one's surroundings. This quest for perception is how I explore the physical form of the energy in my inner world. Moreover, this is the beginning of my engagement with how I embody the form of energy that is internalized in my studio practice.

I spontaneously recognize the energy around me. The sources of my material are ones that are prevalent everyday occurrences, such as the cold wind that blows to my face, a wet fog that comes out of rain, the splash of water, a gold luminescence of light spreading around the intense sunlight, or the pressure felt in tense situations. These natural phenomena are a vehicle that leads me to the realm of the sensorial. I am sensitive to subtle variations in air flow, pressure, temperature, smell, and so on. These moments are when I recognize and, at the same time, question the existence of all living things, including myself. I explore the fundamentals of all phenomena arising from my surroundings and apply them to my work in connection with the
universal life. I strive constantly to accept energy sensually, to be sensually aware. The warmth that comes from the pink glow of the setting sun, the dark clouds passing through the cold fogs of the dawn, and the heat haze from the showers on the asphalt road in summer, are magical phenomena around us, and are the most touching moments. All the beings that live with us have potential energy, and may suddenly emit energy at any moment. Because the process by which I sense energy is not uniform, I am always prepared to perceive/receive energy and channel it into my art. Making sketches and taking pictures are ways to capture that energy at specific moments. I perceive these phenomena and take them into my work. This is a stage of awareness to embody the energy in my work process. In the process of embracing this phenomenon, I recognize the core of that energy and emphasize it by repeating brush marks. For me, the process starts from the moment when I breathe anywhere in that space. This is an experience of spatial perception through energy. The energy is gathered at the central point, that becomes a core of massive energy like a black hole. In all my works, I build out more expansively from this nucleus of energy to create a space that feels infinite.

In *L’état d’ébauche*, Noel Arnaud writes:

“I am the space where I am” (137)

I crave and discover my own place in that spiritual energy. Maybe I seek my spiritual place through the bioenergy around me. Either way, the conscious starting point does not matter to me at all. Instead, I focus more on the process of discovering it. My spiritual journey is aligned with my studio practice. When I embody this form of energy, I spontaneously recognize a spot. This process is the birth of my spiritual place and it becomes my fortress. Like the philosopher Bachelard, I believe that meditation of the spirit takes the shape of refuge
(Bachelard 137). The most central point in my work resembles the corner in my space in reality. I often have a desire to stay in the corner of the room, and that corner is where I feel at rest because that is where I feel safest. I feel warm and comfortable there. My work conceals its role as my refuge. A vortex of energy and mystery surrounds it. It looks like the shell of a snail, or cosmic energy condensed into a black hole. Paradoxically, however, energy is emitted from the center core, energy of the inner self. I practice to reach the place in my unconscious. I accomplish this by meditation. I explore more intensively where it is perceived as the nucleus of energy in order to create a space that permeates my work. My drawing begins with the initial recognition of energy and expands that space, but the space is not something that is recognized from objects nearby or from past memories. I am absorbed in one point to empty my consciousness and to be clear...empty...void. This is the central axis of energy in my mind space.

As a composer, John Cage was “seeking a place to hear the sound that he demands from somewhere inside the heart” (Larson 213), I had also thirsted for my spiritual place to explore the notion of chance. Chance was Cage’s first idea to break the limits of music theory in the cultural recognition of the Western arts. Chance operation drove him into a wider world and gave him a new set of tools to help him with the most fundamental questions. Chance does not occur in his expectations and habits. It breaks or changes one’s psychological and body memory about what movements should follow. Applying chance approaches to music gave Cage more creative possibilities, beyond working with knowledge and intention. “Chance let things be what they are.” (Larson 212) A completely identical phenomenon in the universe cannot happen again. This means that my surroundings do not have a completely identical moment, and there is no equal energy in my work. They are all different energies, and are caused by self-
generated phenomena created by being in different spaces at different times. All phenomena are always beyond my expectations and will be. For me, the notion of chance is indispensable to exploring the unpredictable phenomenon.

Through my studio practice, I create the space of mind to have serenity. This space of mind is the seat and center of spiritual energy and it gradually expands from the core. As my space expands, my spiritual energy becomes more powerful. Moreover, that energy shapes itself becoming increasingly complex, darkened, deeper, and denser. Through my quest for ever-deepening energy, my practice explores the depth of mysterious and fundamental phenomena. I unconsciously focus on it, and it feels more than ever that I am sucked in, but also this energy pulls me out. There is nothing deep and dark in the center of that energy; rather, it is a mental state of nothingness. The nothing in the center of that energy is the void and emptiness I occupy through my art. I challenge myself to get deeper into the mind through my studio practice. In there, I can hear the sound of a primordial deep void that is the center of mind. As a result of this echo, my creativity spreads out gradually. This is a state of elimination of material, ideological, and stereotypes in the mind. Emptiness doesn’t mean denying everything or being nothing, but embracing all beings of the present world. In order to explore the essence of the energy, it is the state of abandoning obsession. It is the way to look at the real truth and to study myself to reach emptiness.

According to Anish Kapoor, he empties out in order to fill up more (Jacob and Bass 181). This is an important experimental process for me to explore chance. At Cloud Gate of Kapoor, clouds are driven by air itself because they have their own lives and energy. Cloud Gate can be a part of everyday life and a place many people discover for themselves. This is the concept of
the chance to meet with something for the first time. This is the way to reach inward, deeper or greater consciousness. So, through the mirror of Clouds Gate that confronts us, we become more aware of how much more "emptiness" reflects itself (Jacob and Bass 177,179).

My process of reaching out to the state of the absolute void in my mind is related to the meditative state of Buddhist’s Śūnyatā. In my version of meditation this is the process of self-enlightenment and at the same time, leads my experience in the process of my studio practice. I simultaneously recognize the spiritual energy inside, and in this process, a chance is generated. Furthermore, it flows into my art naturally and sensibly. Experience is to trace the individual interrelated with the outside world and to draw new experiences from the present. This is different from cognition and is a sense of immediate and active response by sensory organs and stimulation (Jacob and Bass 218).

As mentioned earlier, energy is vitality. Energy is the spirit that God endows to Adam via the end of his hand in *The Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo. This vitality is an unexplainable, very mysterious, and noble force from the past, and it was believed to be transmitted only through God. The disappearance of this sublime vitality is a natural, universal fear. We instinctively become obsessed with energy. Energy is breath to me because we would not be able to live without it.

Everything that exists reflects the universe in its place. We are also involved in the universe. Man cannot resist the flow of this universal power. However, that is why we can all live together. This happens naturally just like air flows, it is there even if we don’t notice it. All of the biologics in the environment can be my material. In my artwork, the glorious phenomena by these are discovered and the process of recognition of energy is a natural cycle by following
the laws of the universe for my art. As I perceive and accept the surroundings, the environment is sucked into the surroundings itself by the power of the universe. The energy is gathered at a central point and the part becomes a core of massive energy like a black hole that has the appearance of spiritual energy.

A star of the universe is born and disappears, and the starry sky goes on; in the cycle of nature, life is born, lives, dies, and is reincarnated, and the cycle continues. I use all the nature material as tools to approach my spiritual energy as a material substance. It is the contact between my essence and reality. By embodying my cognitive system as a studio practice, it becomes the contact between my essence and reality. This captured by the act of repeating the circulation of material and intangible spirit. They are communicated and re-created and new energy is generated in it. I believe these processes are linked to the infinite cosmic cycle.

My work is the process of exploring uncharted spaces to seek hidden spiritual energy. Energy, however, is not found by anyone, but by self-empowerment, and I focus my personal space on it for a new birth, recognize it, and sublimate it into art. My studio practice is a repetition of the connection between my physical reality and consciousness. The state of emptiness in my work is how I approach and communicate with deep spiritual places. For this process, I concentrate on one point in order to empty my consciousness and become void. This one point is the central axis of energy in my mind that I recognize. This space of mind is located at the center of mental energy, and from this center, my mental space gradually expands. The more my space expands, the more powerful that energy becomes. That's when my work gets more complicated, darker and deeper.
[Installation]
Spiritual Space
Vortex No.11
Vortex No.10
Vortex No.12
[Installation: Sculpture and Projector]
Spiral No.02
Bibliography