

A Form of Life/Life of Form—The Art of Choi, Man Lin

최만린 조각전 (Gallery ART · DUNE, 1991. 12. 1~12. 6)

The movie recently shown in Japan bringing about a sort of sensation entitled “Why did Daruma go to the east?,” 1989, which was named after one of the essential questions of Zen Buddhism, “Why did the founder of Zen (=Monk Daruma) come from the west?,” showed the beautiful image watching closely to the monks practicing various disciplines of Zen, wordlessly in the quiet and severe nature. It was an excellent movie which in a way invited the audience to meditation. In it there was an impressive sequence; a child lost in the woods fell off a cliff into the mountain stream. Struggling hard in it for a while, he gave up doing so. Instead, he let himself flow in the quiet stream as it goes. Not knowing when, he was finally brought to the shore. And then this child was led back to the mountain temple by an ox. Especially the scene showing the child floating on the waters with the reflection of the trees and light manifested the essence of Zen, that is, “the perfect perception of the truth” is reached only in the midst of the meditation. The director of this movie, Pen, Yon Gyun, has put the emphasis on the importance of “reevaluation of Oriental philosophy”. Thus, it is the most noteworthy fact now, in the last years of 20th century, that the works based on the Oriental mysticism are created in the various fields of the art, and that they are positively accepted in the Western world.

Choi, Man Lin is one of the pioneers of the artists whose works are based on the Eastern mysticism. Since the starting point as a sculptor, he has long been proposing the creation of “Korean sculpture,” and has worked with his

conviction as a Korean artist. Based upon Oriental philosophy and Oriental viewpoints of nature, he has been searching for an art uniquely Korean which takes the different position from the theory and a form of Western art. Watching intently at nature, Choi struggled in search of the origin of life in the object and in pursuit of the primary matrix of forms. But his continuous struggles bore fruit in his series of works after 1965 entitled ‘the Heavens,’ ‘Earth,’ ‘Darkness,’ ‘Light,’ ‘Sun,’ and ‘the Moon’. Also through his experience in the U.S. since 1973, he could not help but realize his own spiritual root again. As is reflected in his saying, “Life is a form and form is a manifestation of life’s activity,” the series of ‘Placenta’ show forms full of energy which remind us of it as the root of human life. These are the works molding momentary forms of the organic life. With balls as the kernel of the organic life, it goes on growing forever by inner explosion of energy. Although its material is unchangeable and unmovable metal, it never fails to make us feel the existence of the energy which continues to flow and change infinitely being the essence of a form. The series ‘Dots’ followed by that of placenta are on the extended life of placenta in pursuit of the origin of forms. They, however, opened the new viewpoints. ‘Dots’ symbolize the birth and organic development of all kinds of forms based on more abstract and more universal concept, while ‘Placenta’, from its title, reminds of rather limited concept like ‘motherhood’ or the origin of the power of life. ‘Dots’ are denotative, emitting the active energy into space, while

'Placenta' is connotative, containing the mass energy inside. 'Dots,' linking with each other, bring about the multifarious derivative phenomena of forms into space and then become one body with space as if Choi's creative consciousness transcended and responded to the pulsation of the universe. Thus, the series 'Dots' are not only the summit of Choi, Man Lin's art, but also the manifestation of Choi's 'perfect perception of truth' that he reached by becoming one body with universe through the art of sculpture. And now Choi, Man Lin keeps on creating 'A Form of Life/Life of a Form' more and more freely as will.

It is said that the newest viewpoint of the universe brought by modern physics which is based on the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics is quite similar to that of Oriental mysticism (religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Zen, etc.). Western philosophy and science, which are based on the concept of division and independence as well as faith in the principles of mechanism, have molded the modern world, its society and culture. On the other hand, however, we must admit that it has inclined to lead the modern civilization into collapse. And now as we have come to the last years of 20th century, the earth as a planet is facing the crisis of continued existence. It's been a while since the end of modernism has been advocated. In the viewpoint of the universe

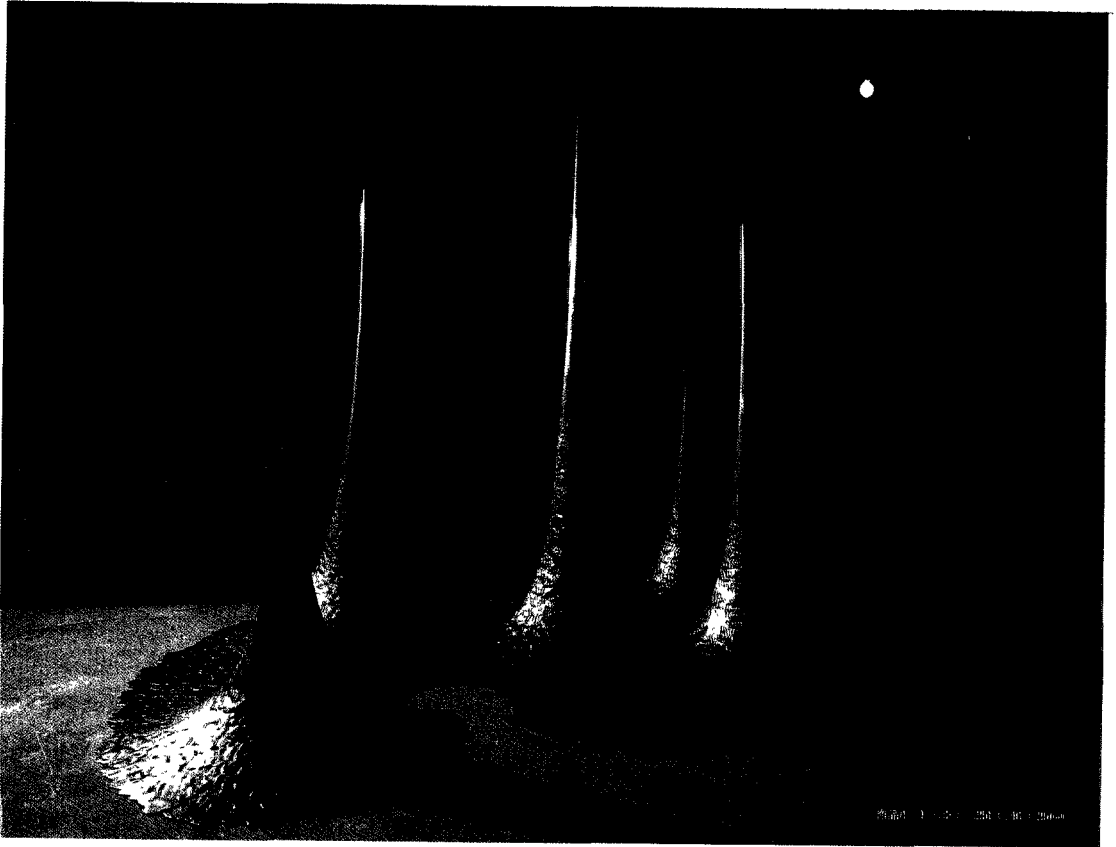
in Oriental mysticism, there are two basic concepts different from those in Western viewpoint: All creation has undividable oneness in which it metamorphoses, linking each other in mutual complement. Secondly, the universe as a whole has a dynamic character, that is keep eternal activities as an organic life body. It is only this viewpoint of the universe containing these concepts of Oriental mysticism that is expected as a hope to lead the world to 21st century. Science and religion (as well as art) which once formed a perfect whole in ancient days are now synthesized again over far so long period of time. And now Western and Oriental viewpoints of the universe are to be unified for the first time in history.

Today when we are about to have 'the century of Orient', Choi, Man Lin is certainly expected to be a hope of Oriental artists.

***Bibliography**

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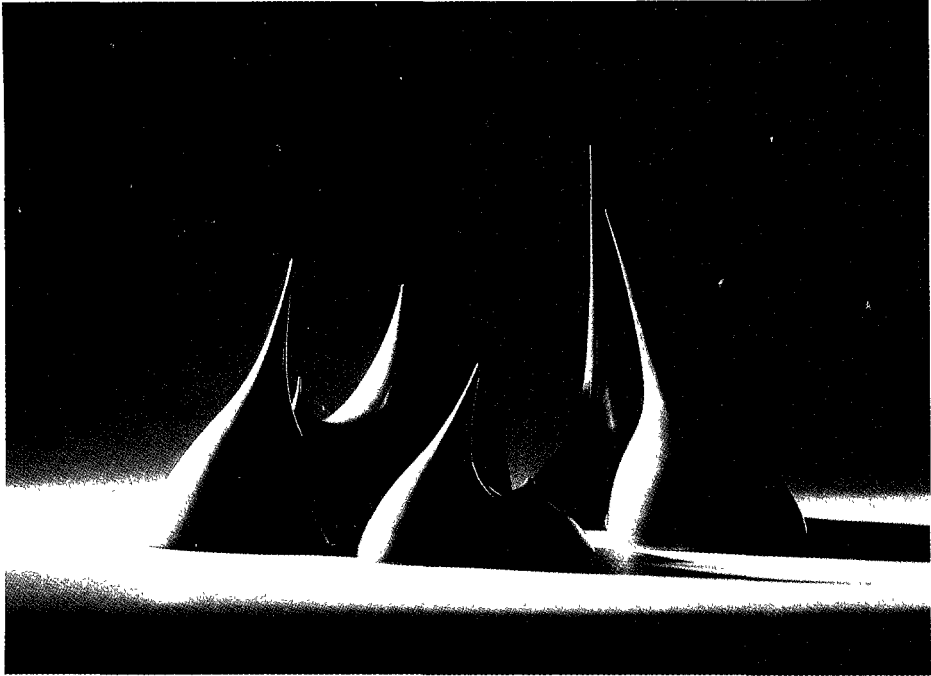
Satoshi Yamada
Curator of Nagoya Museum of Art



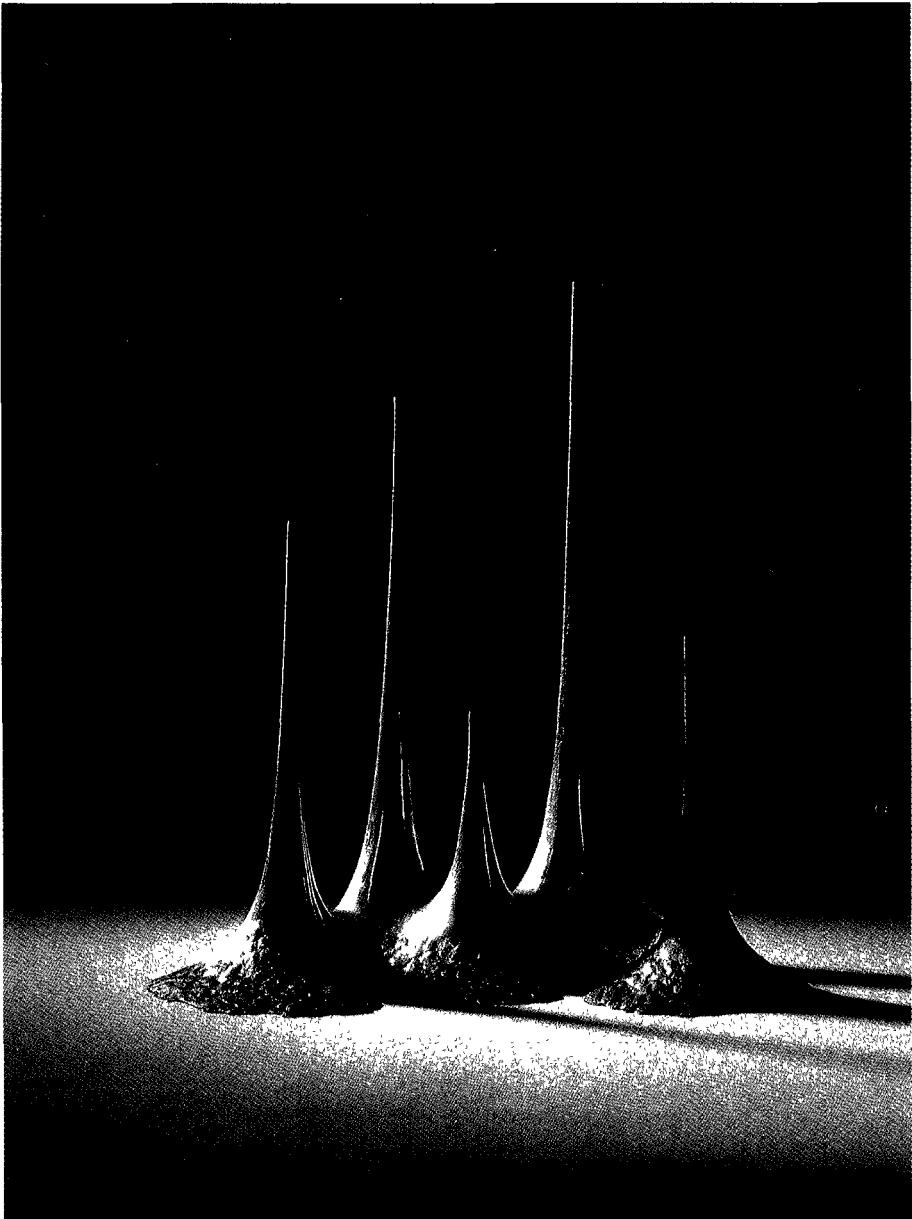
작품 O 91-10-1 (브론즈). 250×190×204cm 1991 최만린 작



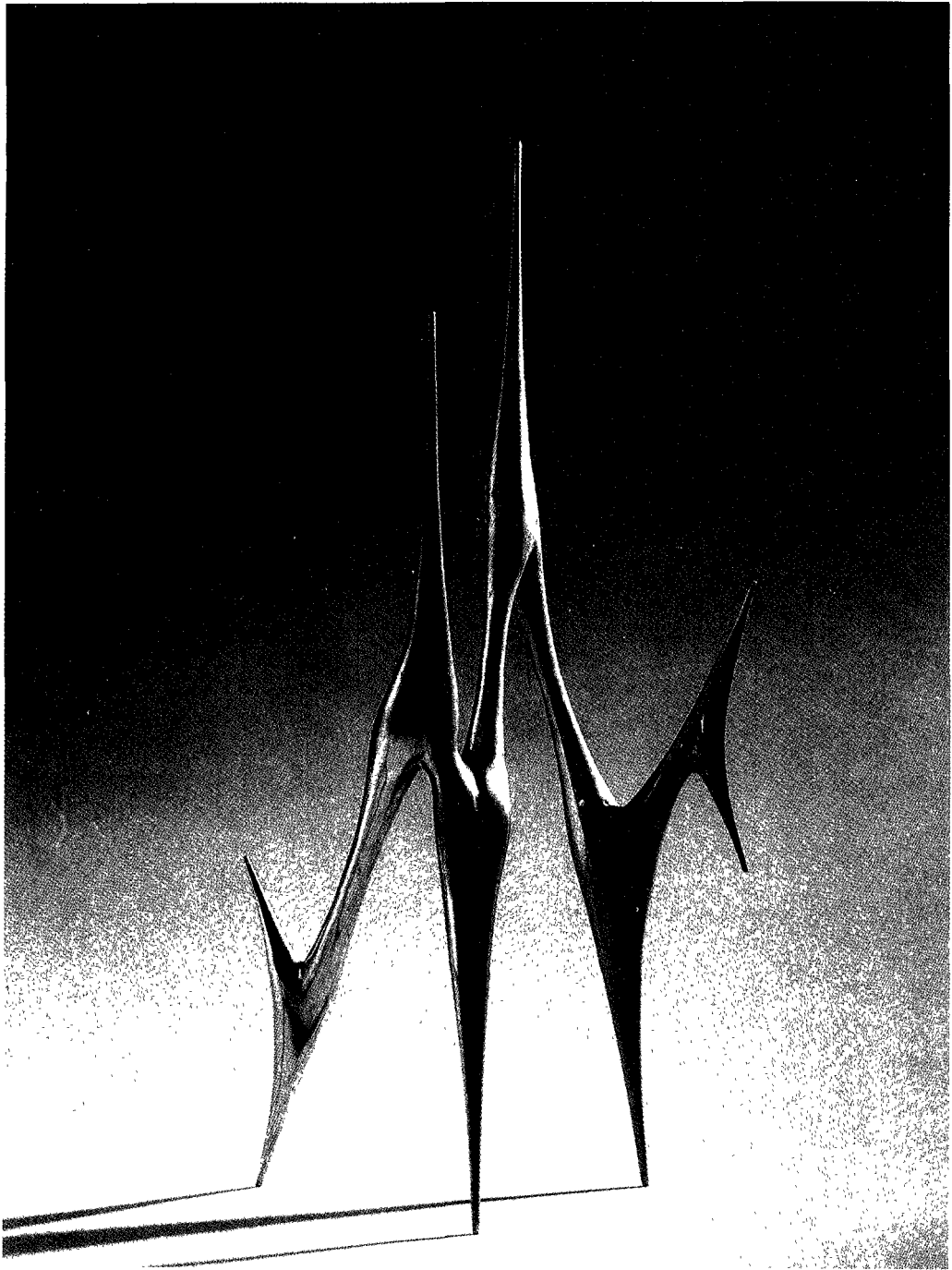
작품 O 91-3-1 (브론즈), 69×12×58 cm 1991 최만린 작



작품 O 90-3-1 (브론즈), 46×46×30 cm 1991 최만린 작



작품 O (브론즈) 35×25×40 cm 1991 최만린 작



작품 O 91-6-1 (브론즈)·30×20×62 cm 1991 최만린 작