

Practices | Nov 2018

## Seoul Art Space GEUMCHEON. Choi Goeun: Defensiveness by Tiago de Abreu Pinto



White Home Wall, 2018. Standing air conditioner. Image courtesy of the artist

### Overview

Since 2016, Residency Unlimited has been selecting three international curators to contribute with critical essays on the work of artists who participated in the **Seoul Art Space GEUMCHEON residency program** (Seoul, South Korea). The initiative, which runs on a yearly basis, is aimed to promote cultural exchange and support the development of young artists from South Korea by providing a valuable opportunity for conversation. Hereby, we present **Tiago De Abreu Pinto's Defensiveness**, a critique on artist **Choi Goeun's** practice.

*I was in a group comprised of a very small number of individuals with touristically gazes listening to a calm, a little astonished, museum guide. And, he said to them with a rare force of mind the following words:*

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the 90s were marked by Fukuyama's The End of History and the Last Man and an expansion and diversification of the media sustained by technological advances. The Soviet collapse provided superpower status to the United States, along with mass segmentation and market niches in liberal democracies offered a wide selection of products and services to consumers. In the turn of the centuries, there was an increasingly pressure on the advertising system as well as an acceleration of consumption. Particularly, the acceleration of consumption is also associated with the emergence of the image as a commodity, which entails special production systems, developed by capitalism, especially in the role that advertising plays in production and consumption. In regards to the systems of production and marketing of images, how the 50's planned obsolescence notion comes to play? Right about the moment of its fall, did German kitchens gravitated towards being minimalistic white? What does this colour mean in this context? Are there any kind of universalism in colour? Isn't colour a situated kind of knowledge in which universal and particular don't inform one another? How can one speak of a color if we are not even able to see what is behind words? What does a word assigned to a color conceal? Who sees a coopertus in the word color (from Old Latin, a covering)? How to transmit that color in words? The Chinese ideogram for red is constructed by four others: cherry, rose, iron rust, flamingo. Ultimately we reach a color through the elements that are familiar to us all. But, familiarity is regional, isn't it? And, where are the traces of its individuality to guide me towards a specific regional's personality? Can all that be seen on this greenish to reddish pastel gradient air conditioner lineup? The extent of white applied in pastels neither withdraw nor trespass in this specific context. It could be said that in any, actually. Leaving up an overtone of sound judgment, of common sense or of belonging. Looking carefully in its surface words such as severity, coldness, rigidity, monotony, dullness, flatness and subordination comes to us. Its friendly, unbiased, neutral, uncommitted character makes it appropriate for any given space. A rather tamed, dully routinary piece you would think. It adapts and complies with any given situation. This displacement of the industrial component, oriented to another end, loses all its utilitarian value, but gains a symbolic function, without neglecting the distinctive sign of the industrial culture. If we get tired of big symbolic structures in our society should we grow indifference towards them? If through the encounter with the everyday mass-produced commodity we find a reason to be, isn't that a way to ontologically relate to it? Or is it a Kafkian prometheus case that instead of becoming the mountain it resets once again into ideology? Isn't that the realm of mental images? Reminiscences of a universal-particular dichotomy? Kojève's universal and homogeneous state of things? Which kind of home could we discover in an aesthetic that finds a relative in Minimalist sculpture? Could you describe your home to me, as if I were someone who had never seen it? Where in your home do you feel most at home? Isn't that home part of the original chaos? Or maybe home begins outside. In travel novels, through the history of literature, we have always at the beginning a the author's own real homeland, I think Bakhtin said that. For him, it "serves as organizing center for the point of view, the scales of comparison, the approaches and evaluations determining how alien countries and cultures are seen and understood". We are in Korea ladies and gentleman and here white, home and wall have a totally different meaning then in any other places. The Russian critic would unfold this comment by saying that "the individual feels himself at home,

his private sense of self begins to take its bearings from these petty details. The human begins to shift to a space that is closed and private, the space of private rooms where something approaching intimacy is possible, where it loses its monumental formedness and exclusively public exteriority". It is mass produced and produced uniformly, but is it used in the private space even though we can't see its traces? In case she told us they were, where are the reminiscences? Can we see them? Was that something that she has to believe that would happen by chance, like, let's say, when she saw the back of the various kinds of mirrors stacked in front of the glass shop? Certainly, for her it wouldn't be a special thing. Nevertheless, we could believe that it was the feeling of accidentally discovering the secret beauty that she only knew. As we only know something. In her words, that I heard somewhere, the unintentionally, unnecessarily beauty of the contentions of mercury through painting. Well, if everyone had a room inside ourselves, according to Kafka, following this womb/home contrast, it could be proved by means of the sense of hearing while walking "fast and one pricks up one's ears and listens, say in the night, when everything around is quiet, one hears, for instance, the rattling of a mirror not quite firmly fastened to the wall".

*We really get stuck with the gravity of the unanswered questions. That said, there we were before a White Home Wall that was not on its feet, but was still standing.*

**Tiago de Abreu Pinto** is an independent curator based between Madrid and São Paulo whose practice is shaped by an ongoing dialogue with literature and philosophy. Previously gallery manager and director at NoguerasBlanchard, he is also the co-founder of the art magazine Revista Claves de Arte (Madrid), focused on contemporary art galleries. Nominated Special Correspondent of The Future Generation Art Prize Pinchuk Foundation (Ukraine), he is the recipient of the Gwangju Art Biennale scholarship (2012) and Art Curatorial Award Se Busca Comisario (2014) awarded by the Spanish Government. Tiago has curated exhibitions in museums, commercial galleries, biennials etc. in Spain, France, Morocco, Netherlands and Brazil, among which: Notes for a Shell, parallel project for Art-O-Rama, Marseille, France (2017); A spear, a spike, a point, a nail, a drip, a drop, the end of the tale, Ellen de Brujine Projects, Amsterdam (2016); Within the Sound of Your Voice, parallel project for the 5th Marrakech Biennale (2014).

The **Seoul Art Space Geumcheon** is a workspace exclusively dedicated to visual arts. The location is a former printing factory in Doksan-dong, Geumcheon-gu, which has been renovated following the guidelines of the current Seoul's culture-nomics urban strategy. Since its foundation, 397 artists from 48 countries across the globe have benefited from the programs offered at Seoul Art Space Geumcheon.

<http://geumcheon.blogspot.com/p/project.html>