

## BEYOND THE LANGUAGE --- EXISTING WITHIN SPACE-TIME

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Within the long history of life on Earth, humankind created the structures of a language possessed by no other life form, and built a rich civilized society utilizing those structures. We began by fractionalizing spoken sounds, and then combined them to apply specific meanings. As the next step, handwritten marks, which evolved from pictures to pictorial symbols, were more distinctly divided and simplified to ideograms and phonograms. Via combining and modifying those symbols, each word came to describe its own particular meaning.

The sustainable letters and symbols that were visually objectified enabled people to make a detailed articulation so as to understand the holistic external world. The repeatedly refined complex combinations of letters allowed people to deepen their intellectual ideas, resulting in an advanced culture unbound by any biological environment. However, as the image of the world underwent temporary articulation and reconstruction via language, people began to confuse it with the external world itself. Thus, once “ideas” and “concepts,” which are merely provisional products conceived by languages, were substantialized, people conversely came to be shackled by words, hindering their desirable way of life as natural physical existences.

Female artist Cécile Andrieu, who was born and raised in France and later moved to Kanazawa, Japan, has held many solo and group exhibitions in various countries. Her artistic production is founded on her motive to visualize “the strength to live” that derives solely from the elemental structure commonly found in languages, which are necessary to effectively face the external world. This is realized through her traversing between different languages, while also releasing herself from the adverse effects of the nominal framework of conventional languages. She adopts a physical method of actually deleting individual “meanings” of words that restrict people. Thus via languages, she indirectly manifests “the strength to live” within actual time and space.

Andrieu’s works around the early 1990s utilized a great number of books, as well as copies of the Heart Sutra. Each and every letter of those works was erased with white correction fluid. They were then arranged uniformly on walls and floors of exhibition spaces. Her recent works include: *OPENED WORDS* (2011, cat. inside front cover), for which she cut French dictionaries with a paper shredder, and then filled a myriad of glass test tubes with the shredded pieces, before then installing them radially on the wall; *BURSTS OF LIGHT* (2012, cat. pg. 44), in which she wrapped pieces of gold-colored cloth around each trunk of a cluster of green bamboo trees, and which was not directly connected with words; and *SILENT POINT* (2014, cat. pg. 8), which took the form of a huge circular vessel with a concave surface, and was filled with with fragmented pieces of Japanese, Chinese and French dictionaries mixed with lime powder. Surveying the great many works she created up until 2014 manifests common features that apply to most of those works.

Such features are “an aggregate of many of the same forms,” and “an aggregate of an enormous number of similar fragmented pieces,” which are both contained in many of her works. For instance, the feature found in the work with gold-cloth-wrapped bamboo trees is the “aggregate of many same forms,” while the feature in the concave vessel filled with shredded pieces of dictionaries is the “aggregate of similar fragmented pieces.” The radial-form work that adopted test tubes filled with pieces of dictionaries encompasses both of those features, as do her 1990s works in which all letters are erased from books.

Generally speaking, the most elemental structure commonly found in languages is composed of countless square shapes that are orderly and linearly arranged in a vertical or horizontal line, to which vertical lines are successively added on the left side, or horizontal lines are successively added below each line. The common features (the “aggregate of the same forms” and the “aggregate of similar fragmented pieces”) in Andrieu’s works allow the viewers to perceive the manifestation of the common, elemental structure of languages, which is realized through her erasing of the “meanings” of languages and by her placing a certain distance from languages.

The artist also takes interest in Japanese manuscript paper, which is composed of successive square forms. *CULTURE*<sup>2</sup> (2010, cat. pg. 36) was an installation of an enormous-sized succession of square forms as found in that type of paper. Namely, Andrieu used agricultural seedling trays, each filled with shredded pieces of newspapers. She then connected and hung them in a form that was over ten meters in width and depth. As the French word “culture” means both “agriculture” and “culture,” the dark bottom part of the work seen from below reminded one of cultivated soil; from above, one found that the square forms were similar to Japanese manuscript paper. This led one to feel that the once-erased letters in the paper had returned to the origin of culture and had begun to sprout again.

In preparing for her show, Andrieu always creates a precise model of the exhibition space, in which she places miniature models of her works. She undertakes this task because the space-time that enwraps viewers is where her works belong. All her works clearly reveal the attribute that they are the inner substances of space-time. The revelation of that attribute is the manifestation of the artist’s will for literary languages to return to being the inner, physical marks within space-time, while also regaining the strength of human activities that dwell within space-time. In *SILENT STONES* (2013, cat. pg. 12), in which she placed twenty-six large, stone-like Go forms in a gallery space, each surface covered with shredded pieces of dictionaries silently unified space and time as it seemingly floated.

Cécile Andrieu aims to transcend the restrictions of words so as to seek “the strength to live” in the origin of words. Thus, without her being content to be confined in conventional artistic frameworks, she opens new visual expressions based on the viewpoint of the history of humankind. Her artistic attitude to consciously position herself between different cultures, such as those of France and Japan, will further broaden her scope and increase the possibilities of her works through her insight to see through every culture.

(Translation Taeko Nanpei)