

YOSHIYASU HIRANO

Excerpt from:

Characters and Letters as Brushstrokes

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There is a Japanese expression "the rip changes" used to describe a situation of inevitable change caused by a great power. A rip is where two different currents meet and this expression literally means how the rip changes its position or behaves differently affected by tides and weather. It is maybe because I visited Yoshiyasu Hirano's studio near the sea, this expression came to my mind when I looked at Hirano's oeuvre.

Hirano's recent works are all filled with Japanese and Chinese characters and sometimes English letters. When he first started showing his works, however, Hirano was making animal drawings. Starting from around 2010 when he was selected for numerous open-call exhibitions and became known to the public, his works from that time all had animal motifs, such as deer and elephants, and they were depicted clearly and humorously. However, around 2013, he appeared to start having trouble with making his favorite animal-motif drawings. There were only small, almost barely noticeable signs in the beginning. Obscure, spiral lines, looking like doodles, started to appear in his animal drawings. The situation eventually became obvious to everyone's eyes. Fish or animal forms, which used to be clearly recognizable, almost diminished completely. Abstract composition of colored squares started filling the drawing surfaces instead. If I am to continue using sea as a metaphor, it was as if a storm had hit. It started as small waves on a calm sea surface, gradually becoming larger swells, eventually swallowing people and ships, and violent winds dominating the surrounding areas. And these winds took the animals away from Hirano's drawings.

Mr. Yuichi Higaki, who assisted Hirano's artistic activities for a long time, thought that Hirano was in a slump. Mr. Higaki observed the works closely, however, he could see various unnatural and uneven color spots, which seemed as if Hirano drew characters and covered them over with colors. Great companions never fail to notice slight signs like this, just like talented fishermen are great at reading rips. Mr. Higaki put a pile of newspapers within Hirano's sight, and created an encouraging atmosphere for Hirano to make drawings with characters if he felt like it. Since Hirano was highly praised with his animal drawings, it was perhaps hard for him to take the courageous first step, to leave them behind completely and move towards creating works with characters. Nonetheless, tides sometimes swallow even the artist and takes him to an unexpected place. Under these internal inevitabilities, characters entered into Hirano's works.

The meanings of characters are not very important for Hirano. He does not particularly manipulate the characters he uses to the extent of creating his own verbal or written language system. There is no character that appears more frequently than others, thus he does not seem to have a strong fixation with their shapes either. The unique application of characters in his work is that they function as brushstrokes filling the entire drawing surfaces. In calligraphy, beauty depends on a fine balance between the characters and empty space around them. For Hirano the contrary is true, he fills any empty space with characters. He escalates this to the point where he even fills spaces within characters with other characters. As a result, characters lose their orientation and the sense of top and bottom, and they are liberated from any meaning.

As if a storm swallows everything and tides sweep everything away, characters now dominate Hirano's entire drawing surfaces. This torrent is getting bigger and bigger and for the time being, but there is no telling of when the rip may change again. Imagining so, I cannot take my eyes off from Yoshiyasu Hirano's works.

Selected Exhibitions:

- 2022: Art Osaka, represented by capacious, Osaka, Japan
- 2021: Art Osaka, represented by capacious, Osaka, Japan
- 2020: Yoshiyasu Hirano Solo Exhibition / capacious Exhibition #13, Calo Gallery, Osaka, Japan
Art Osaka, represented by capacious, Osaka, Japan
Outsider Art Fair, represented by Yukiko Koide Presents, New York, NY
- 2019: Art Osaka, represented by capacious, Osaka, Japan
- 2018: Yoshiyasu Hirano Solo Exhibition / capacious Exhibition #07, Calo Gallery, Osaka, Japan
Art Osaka, represented by capacious, Osaka, Japan
- 2017: Art Kaohsiung 201, represented by capacious, Kaohsiung City, Taiwan
Affordable Art Fair, represented by capacious, Brussels, Belgium
capacious Exhibition #3, Japan Information and Cultural Centre, Embassy of Japan in Belgium, Brussels, Belgium
- 2016: Art in Park Hotel Tokyo, capacious, Tokyo, Japan
YELLOW (There is laughter, there is snoring, and there is occasional snoring), A/A Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
3331 Art Fair 2016, Arts Chiyoda 3331, Tokyo, Japan
- 2015: capacious Group Exhibition #01, Calo Gallery, Osaka, Japan