

Native Mumbling: *Ga, Na, Da, Ra*

October 14, 2010

Ga, Na, Da, Ra: is the gathering of consonants and vowels from the Korean alphabet, Hangeul. Together, these letters have no specific meaning, just as the English alphabet's letters have no specific meaning until they are formed into words. For example, Ba, Ca, Da, Fa would be just mumbling. Native Mumbling is an exploration on the inner mind of these Korean letters.

In her recent paintings, Hyunmee Lee uses both actual Korean letters in their complete forms, as well as the gesture and essence of the letters shapes. So lovely is her ability to convey harmony on canvas, it seems effortless --there are no signs of struggle or forced effect. What results is poetry. Limiting her work to words is like describing the subtleties of a personal occurrence to a stranger. So nuanced, the experience cannot be clearly defined, and perhaps one should not try. To simply allow the work to wash over you is to discover the connection that engages, inevitably, the heart and mind. Lee's apparent subconscious gestures come from a meditative state that envelopes you in another realm. Her gestural markings seem to float on an undetermined plane in subtle vibration with their sumptuous background, intermittently bold and delicate, the surface so refined that in some cases imagery nearly disappears into an ethereal pool of cream. Taking in the whole there is a sense of spatial balance created

not just by layering but also by the contrasts found within. What may seem a simple abstract from afar is replete with delicate passages when viewed up close. And although one may be able to glean the occasional recognizable form in order to categorize a rendering, the moment is soon lost to indefinability, a poetry that compels the viewer to engage again and again.

At once ancient and modern Lee's paintings are glimpses of Zen. We invite you to take pause and observe the result of Hyunmee Lee's confident intuitive sense. It is Phillips Gallery's pleasure to present *Ga, NA, Da, RA: Native Mumbblings*.

Meri DeCaria (Director of Phillips Gallery. Salt Lake City. 2010)