

大地に「時」を刻む。

The Human Mean

"Mean (mēn) n. Logic: The middle term in a syllogism."



図面は引かない。パソコンも重機も一切使わない。棒を拾って線を描き、線と線の間を熊手や鍬で掻いて、濃淡のコントラストを浮き立たせる。“世界最大のランドアート”と称されるジム・デネヴァンの砂アートは、かくも単純な手法で生み出される。

しかし、驚かされるのはそれだけではない。この広大な地上絵はすべてフリーハンドで描かれているのだ。ここぞと決めた場所に立ったジムはおもむろに砂へ棒を突き刺し、そのままずると線を引き始める。まるで気の向くまま踊っているかのような、即興的にも見える動きはそのまま何時間も続く。やがて数十キロの線を引きした後、この写真のような巨大な絵が現れるのである。まるで上空はるか彼方

神の視点から描かれたように精密な、幾何学模様。

ジムのランドアートは、そもそもビーチで始まった。北カリフォルニアの海辺で育ちサーファーだった彼にとって、海は幼い頃から心のよりどころであった。5歳の時に父親が病死し、母親は9人の子供を女手一つで育て上げた。孤独や葛藤を抱えた少年ジムの救いとなったのが、砂に絵を描くことだったという。「教会や祈りを魂の慰めとする人もいるが、僕の場合はビーチアートだった」と語る。

長年サーファーとして海で暮らした彼には方位や距離、位置関係を知覚する能力が身についている。だから周囲の景色を目視するだけで巨大な構図を脳内で正確に描き、砂の上にそっくり起こせるのだ。

彼が本格的に砂アートに向き合ったのは、今から約20年前。母が認知症を患い始めた頃である。「母を元には戻せないという無力感。砂に向かってひたすら線を引き続ける以外、何もできなかった」。数学者でもあった母は若い頃、フィボナッチ数列に関する論文を発表している。オウムガイの渦巻きや銀河、木の枝葉など、自然界に見られるパターンと深い関わりを持つ数式だ。ジムが描く図形がやはりフィボナッチ的なのは、単なる偶然だろうか。

彼は自らの一步一步を、“瞬間の造形作品”と見なす。棒を砂に刺す瞬間が“今”。あとに続く線は過去、遠ざかる時間そのもの。まさに“時”の芸術である。「動きながら、頭の中に様々なリズムが奏でられる。海や風、足音、そして熊手で掃くリズムだ」。舞い、奏でるアート、とジムは呼ぶ。

ビーチから砂漠へ、そして凍てつくシベリア・バイカル湖の氷上をキャンバスに、描き続ける。が、描くそばから波に消され風に飛ばされ、氷は溶ける。丹精込めた作品がその痕跡を残すことなくみるみる消え去っていく。「美はきわめて移ろいやすいもの」、そう語るジムにとってランドアートとは“極私的・砂マンダラ”なのかもしれない。

It begins with the body. He is a surfer. That means that he stands on water with the aid of a primitive tool, sites his position against landmarks on the shore, judges the disposition of the water by its height on the horizon, feels his weight upon it, waits. Then the force that is inexorable to all mortals, that drives the heavenly masses, wells up beneath him, drives him, he strikes a balance, sets his eye on his endpoint, waits. And when it's over he knows something more than before, but not in the province of words. He'll always have the surge to throw his body against, and each time he'll learn anew, and the force that imbued him with that knowledge will have vanished from the senses.

Other times, the artist Jim Denevan will stand on the shore wielding a primitive tool, a stick or pole, a board or an old rake. He'll check his weight against the tool, assess the force required to make a mark in the hard-packed sand. He'll set his sights on the landmarks, site the point of beginning, nominate an end. Then he'll begin to make his line. He is the force now. There is no measurement, just the distance the tool travels when held just so and his body pivots, and one foot falls before another. “My movement has a present. Where I want to be, that's the future. When I move, the line has a past.”

He doesn't plan his images in some other medium because they belong only to the sand, ice, soil, or whatever other transitory surface he imprints them on. They live in the making. “I live to dance,” he says of his relationship with the earth, wind, and water. The dance can be a very precise one, but not because he is mediating it through intellection. His curves, for example, are sometimes illustrations of a *Fibonacci* series, the numerical order in which each number is the sum of the previous two. He's always known this, his mother was an accomplished mathematician. But the math exists because it correlates to quantities such as the length of the legs that comport Denevan's 195-centimeter body. His art is formed of a map of his body

scaled upon a map of the world.

Then there is the other part of Jim Denevan's life, the part that has earned him the means to make ephemeral art. He is a chef whose guiding culinary concept is that food should not come to us, but we should go to it. (An idea perhaps cultivated by his brother – one of his eight siblings – a leading organic farmer in the northern California region where he's spent his life). He leads a traveling feast, *Outstanding in the Field*, that treks the nation from farm to farm, orchestrating impromptu dinners in a manner not unlike the way he makes his art. Food, the result of relentlessly organized human movement, is there, we're there. It's gone, we're gone. Again, the line spirals back to the dictates of the body.

It's true that he began his earth art at the time his mother fell ill with Alzheimer's disease, but it's too facile to connect the nature of his art with the progress of that affliction as it dispossesses the mind of its cognitive power. Yes, the model serves, but the urgency with which Jim Denevan makes his art preceded the history. He did not site the endpoint when he began the line.

There is math, there is order, rhythm, music. There is the phantom of love that invades life and consciousness and draws us in, and there is the inevitable tide, or wind, or change of temperature that wipes the world clean to begin again. Or not – life is real, but fleeting. It drives through us and leaves its traces. We know something more, but not in the province of words.



地上絵を撮った写真シリーズは北米や欧州の美術館で広く紹介されている。なお1本の熊手は距離にして8,000~1万kmほどつそうだ。
<http://www.jimdenevan.com>

At the ocean's edge, the desert floor, or upon ice, the artist will walk for five or six hours, as many as 25 miles in a day, etching patterns then erased by wind or the tide.



