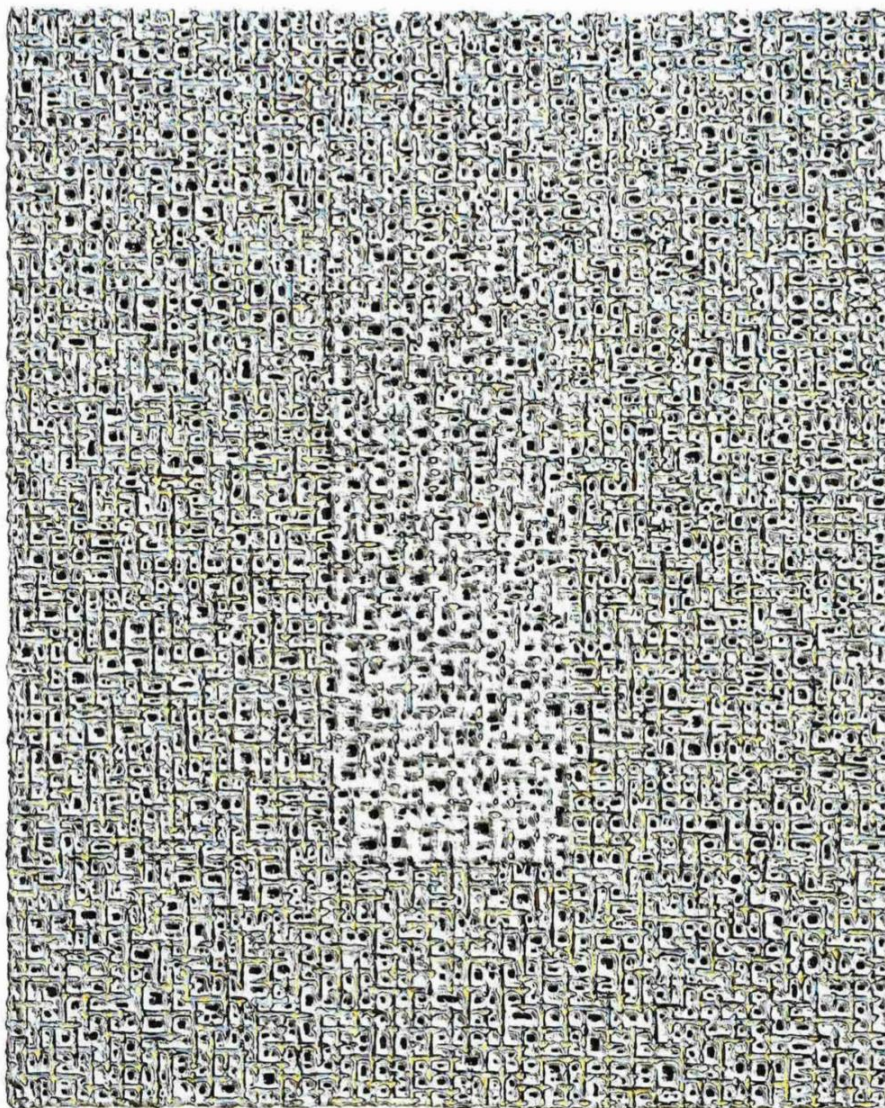


MEDITATIONS IN MONOCHROME

Dansaekhwa, Korean minimalist painting, is in the spotlight this month, with exhibitions opening in New York and Los Angeles.

By RACHEL CORBETT



Internal Rhythm, 2014, a multi-layered monochrome by Kim Tae-He is on view this month in an exhibition at LA Art Show presented by SM Fine Art Gallery of Seoul and New York.

After seeing blockbuster sales for works from the 1970s Japanese avant-garde artists of the Gutai and Mono-ha groups in recent years, some art market speculators are predicting that Korean minimalist painting from the 1970s and '80s, known as Dansaekhwa, will be the next movement to undergo such revitalization. The trend emerges from a harmonic convergence of South Koreans longing to reclaim their art history after decades of political erasure and an insatiable hunger in the West to capitalize on fresh narratives.

Although Dansaekhwa began quietly to break through Europe after the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, the term itself was only coined at the 2000 Gwangju Biennale, when curator Yoon Jin Sup staged a special exhibition within the biennial titled "An Aspect of Korean and Japanese Art." However, it wasn't until the 2015 Venice Biennale that the movement gained widespread visibility

outside that nation. That year, the New York-based art historian Yongwoo Lee curated a three-floor exhibition collateral to the biennial in the Palazzo Contarini-Polignac. The show examined the artistic development of Dansaekhwa in the '70s and traced its connections to concurrent movements taking place elsewhere in the world, including Abstract Expressionism and Gutai. Since then, the market has ecstatically followed suit.

In early November, David Zwirner gallery announced it would be representing the estate of Yun Hyong-Keun, who worked with just a two-color palette. Zwirner is opening a show of the artist's large-scale paintings at its Chelsea location in New York on January 14. Yun is represented in

DANSAEKHWA IN AMERICA

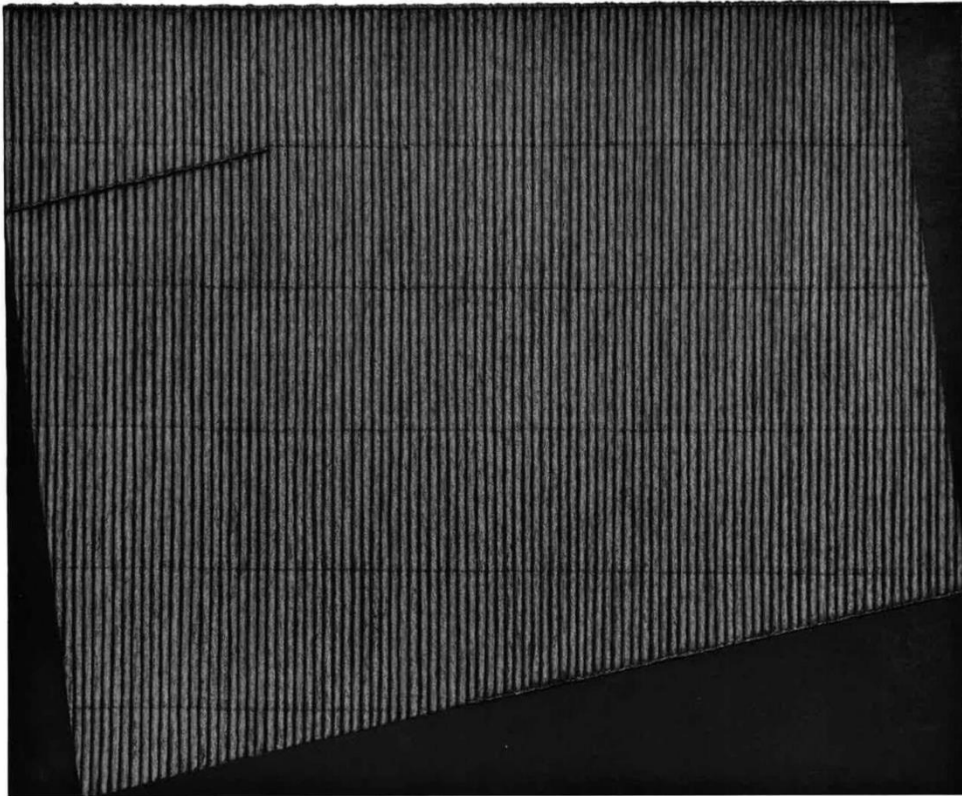
■ **LOS ANGELES: "DANSAEKHWA III: FORMATION AND RECURRENCE"**
KIM TAE-HO AND KIM TSCHANG-YEUL
LA Art Show, January 11-15

■ **NEW YORK: YUN HYONG-KEUN**
David Zwirner
January 14-February 18

Installation view of works by Ha Chong-Hyun at Kukje Gallery in Seoul. His works go on view at Almine Rech, in Paris and London, in June.



SANG-TAE KIM, KUKJE GALLERY, SEOUL, AND HA CHONG-HYUN

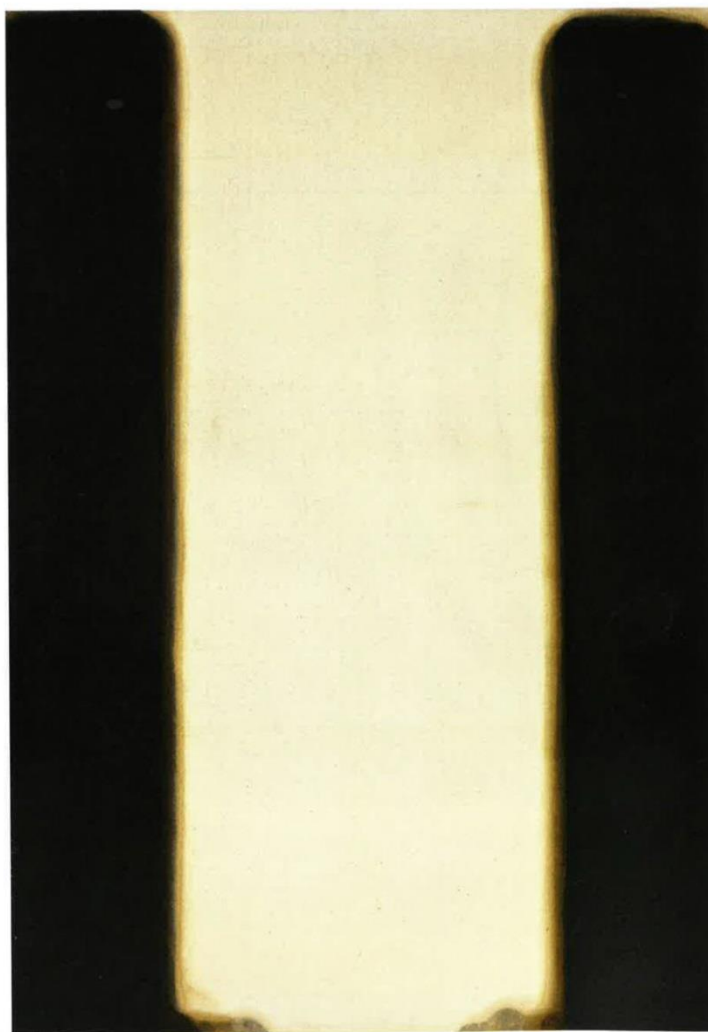


Los Angeles by Blum & Poe, which recently held a show for another Dansaekhwa painter, Ha Chong-Hyun. Meanwhile, this past fall, Tina Kim Gallery in New York presented a show of tectonically tactile “almost black” and “almost white” canvases by Park Seo-Bo, whose second exhibition at London’s White Cube opens January 20. Such recognition has begun to evince itself at auction, where prices for Dansaekhwa artists have now reached seven figures. One of Park’s canvases, *Ecriture 3-82*, 1982, which sold for \$56,750 in 2013, was flipped less than two years

later for \$631,972. Park’s works at Tina Kim were similarly tagged, ranging in price from \$350,000 to \$750,000.

The Dansaekhwa aesthetic is hyper-disciplined and process oriented. Much of it is reminiscent of prison-made art—that of someone who has all the time in the world but few resources, characterized by canvases of rough hemp; muted, earthy tones, often gray on white; paint that is methodically, obsessively dripped or streaked; and repetitive pencil lines that look like hatch marks on a cell wall. The resemblance isn’t coincidental. The economic

Park Seo-Bo’s mixed media with Korean Hanjo paper on canvas, *Ecriture No. 981206*, 1998, was among the works presented this fall at Tina Kim Gallery in Chelsea.



Yun Hyong-Keun's
oil on cotton
Umber-Blue, 1977,
is on view at David
Zwirner's Chelsea
location this month.

“A monk chants all day at a Buddhist temple to empty himself, an action that has no purpose. Like chanting, the rhythm of painting is an action that has no purpose, which enables one to empty the mind.”

and political conditions under which many Dansaekhwa artists worked were dire. “I found objects from the remains of war,” says painter Ha Chong-Hyun, who will stage concurrent exhibitions at Almine Rech in Paris and London in June. “It was difficult to get a proper canvas or oil paints,” he adds. “We wanted to also avoid Western tools.” So he incorporated found materials like barbed wire and he “pushed” paint around by hand. In lieu of canvas he used hemp, which was widely available thanks to the food rations that were imported in hemp bags.

Ha’s contemporary, Park, had a similarly makeshift practice. “When I was poor I had no money to buy wooden frames,” he says, “so I bought Styrofoam and cut it into blocks” to mount the works a few inches off the wall. “It is still one of my trademarks to this day.” Without a market, he continues, the process became the product, and that, in turn, invited a meditation on the nature of the materials, which allowed him to find the soul of the canvas. “A monk chants all day at a Buddhist temple to empty himself,” says Park. Like chanting, the rhythm of painting is “an action that has no purpose, which enables one to empty the mind.”

Seoul’s Kukje Gallery has played an instrumental role in popularizing Dansaekhwa artists both at home, with its landmark 2014 exhibition “The Art of Dansaekhwa,” and abroad, partnering with blue-chip galleries like Blum & Poe and Almine Rech to show its artists in the West. Kukje founder Hyun-Sook Lee says that historically, when her gallery sold at art fairs, “the proportion used to be 70 percent Western art, but over the past couple of years there have been more clients asking where the roots of this new generation of Korean artists come from. That’s why we started to introduce and strengthen the history of Korean art,” paving the way for the resurgence of Dansaekhwa. #

Recurrence, 2010, an iconic water drop painting, in acrylic and oil on canvas, by Kim Tschang-yeul is among the works presented at the LA Art Show.

