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“The Art of Dansaekhwa” at Kukje Gallery

By Darryl Wee

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Park Seo-Bo (1931-), *Ecriture*(描法)No. 41-81, 1981, Pencil and Oil on Hemp cloth, 181.6cm x 227.3cm
(Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery)

SEOUL — On August 28, Kukje Gallery opens an exhibition entitled “The Art of Dansaekhwa” featuring works by seven key artists who pioneered the development of Korean monochrome painting during the 1970s.

Curated by Yoon Jin-Sup, a specialist in both Dansaekhwa and the Japanese Mono-ha movement, the exhibition will bring together pieces by Kim Guiline, Park Seo-Bo, Yun Hyong-Keun, Lee Ufan, Chung Chang-Sup, Chung Sang-Hwa, and Ha Chong-Hyun, with a particular focus on earlier works that will give visitors a sense of the urgency and dynamism of the movement's nascent phases.

Dansaekhwa, which roughly translates to "monochrome painting," was initially conceived as a reaction to the ponderous academic style of the National Art Exhibition and a clarion call to responding to the wider philosophical concerns embodied by abstract art movements elsewhere in the world. Although Dansaekhwa partially emerged out of a respect for and desire to vindicate the strengths of indigenous Korean materials, such as raw burlap, hemp, and tak and hanji paper, what really distinguished it from other abstract traditions was its focused studio process that functioned almost as a form of hyper-aware meditation.

More broadly, this exhibition is an attempt to reexamine the legacy of postwar modernization in Korea and the particular social and political contexts that accompanied the rise of this modern art movement, especially the ways in which Dansaekhwa crystallized a central cultural dilemma of the time — how to reconcile Western cultural imports and idioms with native Korean equivalents.

"The Art of Dansaekhwa" runs at Kukje Gallery from August 28 through October 19, 2014.

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