

BLUM & POE

Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kwon Young-woo

Blum & Poe, Tokyo

April 3 – May 22, 2021

February 9, 2021, Tokyo—Blum & Poe is pleased to present a solo exhibition of ink on paper works by Kwon Young-woo, one of the founding figures of Dansaekhwa, the Korean monochrome painting movement of the 1970s. This is Kwon’s second solo exhibition with the gallery and his first solo presentation in Japan.

Schooled in ink-painting traditions, Kwon forged a new direction in the 1960s by abandoning the use of ink and scratching the surface of the delicate, multilayered *hanji* paper with his fingernails, creating all-over compositions of rips that emphasized the primacy of the ground. For Kwon, paper, like ink or the brush, was only a “tool” or a “method.” Indeed, although Dansaekhwa literally translates as “monochrome painting,” it is better understood in terms of the processes the artists employed. Various ripping paper, dragging pencils, pushing paint, and soaking canvas, the artists manipulated the materials of painting in ways that questioned the terms by which the medium was known.

Kwon’s unprecedented style and experimentation helped him rapidly gain recognition overseas. In 1965, his work was included in the Tokyo Biennale, and in 1975 he was featured in the landmark exhibition *Five Korean Artists, Five Kinds of White* at Tokyo Gallery. In 1978, sponsored by the French government, he moved to Paris, where he remained until 1989. There he began experimenting variously with puncturing the surface of the paper with the end of a paintbrush, an awl, or a pair of scissors—sometimes perforating it from behind or tearing it into more ragged strips. Although the paper he used was white, layering and discoloration of the material through time gave unique qualities to each piece. While in Paris, he also reintroduced the use of color, pouring gouache and ink into and around the incisions to further accentuate his mark making.

The most recent presentations of Kwon’s work in Tokyo were in 2017, when he was featured with Rakuko Naito and Dorothea Rockburne in *Systemic Paper*, an exhibition of artists who have methodically explored the material properties of paper, held at Blum & Poe, Tokyo. This exhibition was followed by *Rhythm in Monochrome: Korean Abstract Painting*, at Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, the largest survey of Korean art in Japan in decades. Whereas those exhibitions focused on Kwon’s all-white works, this solo presentation at Blum & Poe Tokyo introduces later tableaux that feature the artist’s return to experimenting with ink—a body of work never previously seen in Japan.

Kwon Young-woo (1926–2013) has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions. The Seoul Museum of Art held a major retrospective in 2007. Previously Kwon was featured in the survey *From All Sides: Tansaekhwa on Abstraction* held at Blum & Poe, Los Angeles in 2014, and the traveling exhibition *Dansaekhwa and Minimalism*, held at Blum & Poe, Los Angeles and New York in 2016—the first overview of Korean monochromatic painting with American Minimalism. He has been featured in important surveys such as *Topologies*, The Warehouse, Dallas, TX; *Korean Abstract Art: Kim Whanki and Dansaekhwa*, Powerlong Art Museum, Shanghai, China (2018);

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When Process Becomes Form: Dansaekhwa and Korean Abstraction, Villa Empain - Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Belgium (2016); *Dansaekhwa*, Palazzo Contarini Polignac, Venice, Italy (2015); *Dansaekhwa: Korean Monochrome Painting*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, South Korea (2012); and *Korean Contemporary Art of the 1970s*, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japan, which traveled to Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts, Tochigi, Japan; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Osaka, Japan; Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, Sapporo, Japan; and Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan (1983). His work was included in the São Paulo Art Biennial (1973), and the Tokyo Biennale (1965). Public collections of his work include the British Museum, London, UK; M+, Hong Kong; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, South Korea; and Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea.

About Blum & Poe

Blum & Poe was founded by Timothy Blum and Jeffrey Poe in Santa Monica in September of 1994 as a space to show local and international contemporary art in all media. Blum's extensive experience in the Japanese art world combined with Poe's keen knowledge of emerging artists in Los Angeles, together resulted in an international program of influential artists. Throughout a twenty-six-year history, Blum & Poe has shaped the trajectory of contemporary art by championing artists at all stages of their careers—cultivating the lineages that run between emerging and established practices, and working with artist estates to generate new discourse surrounding historical work.

In 2003 the gallery moved to a larger space in Culver City, and in 2009 Blum & Poe purchased and renovated its current 22,000 square foot complex on La Cienega Boulevard. In this location the gallery has since held museum-caliber surveys, examining the historical work of such movements as the Japanese Mono-ha school (2012); the Korean Dansaekhwa monochrome painters (2014); the European postwar movement CoBrA (2015); Japanese art of 1980s and '90s (2019); a rereading of Brazilian Modernism (2019); and a revisionist take on the 1959 MoMA exhibition, *New Images of Man* (2020). To produce these exhibitions, Blum & Poe has worked with celebrated curators such as Joan Kee, Mika Yoshitake, Sofia Gotti, and Alison M. Gingeras.

In 2014, Blum & Poe opened galleries in New York and Tokyo to focus on intimately scaled projects in tandem with an expansive program of exhibitions, lectures, performance series, screenings, and an annual art book fair at its base in Los Angeles. In 2015, Blum & Poe was certified as an Arts:Earth Partnership (AEP) green art gallery and consequently became one of the first green certified galleries in the United States. Blum & Poe's own publishing division focuses on sharing aspects of its program via original scholarship and accessible media ranging from academic monographs, audio series, magazines, and artists' books. In 2020, the gallery launched Blum & Poe Broadcasts, an online platform showcasing artists' projects in conjunction with physical installations or as standalone digital endeavors.

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