



Lee Bae. *Brushstroke* (detail), 2024. Charcoal ink on paper. Photographer: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

LEE BAE *BETWEEN*

September 6 – October 19, 2024

Perrotin New York is pleased to present *Between*, an immersive exhibition of new work by artist Lee Bae (b. 1956 in Cheongdo, South Korea). The exhibition follows two major installations by the artist: in 2023, Lee Bae was the first Korean artist to be commissioned for a colossal project at Rockefeller Center in New York, and currently, his work is the subject of a solo exhibition at the Wilmotte Foundation as part of the official collateral program of the 60th Venice Biennale. Building on these recent presentations, at Perrotin, the artist unveils a site-specific paper installation painted with charcoal ink alongside several bronze sculptures. These bodies of work explore the liminal space between cultural past and contemporary moment by using minimalist forms to capture lost fragments of time.

As a leading Korean minimalist artist, Lee Bae pursues a pure expression of form. The core of his practice is a formal study on the color black and materiality. Over the last four decades, he has mastered the use of charcoal as a medium for his work. In

his practice, charcoal acts as a physical representation of the cycle of life, renewal, and personal histories. Until the early 2000s, Lee Bae worked exclusively with raw charcoal to create minimal, mosaic-like assemblages of charred wooden shards and sculptural arrangements of carbonized trunks. In the last five years, he has experimented with charcoal ink painting as well as the material possibilities of bronze.

Since 2019, the artist has been experimenting with simple actions in his *Brushstroke* paintings, executed with singular continuous black gestures on paper. The paper itself was adapted for various uses in ancient Korea, the inner bark of the mulberry tree combined with Hibiscus meniot crucial in everyday objects and living spaces. In these paintings, shades of ink create depth on a flat surface, conjuring three-dimensional space through swooping translucent strokes. In grand motions, one trace is followed by another, each building off the previous, creating an archive of condensed energy.



Lee Bae. *Brushstroke*, 2024. Bronze. 285 x 165 x 200 cm. Photographer: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



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Central to the exhibition is a paper-based installation to which the artist meticulously applied a large brushstroke, informed by ink wash painting and calligraphy. In East Asia, calligraphy is a rigorous artistic practice that is deeply connected to the author. Similarly, in the tradition of Korean monochrome painting, the creation process involves intense physicality where mind, body, and material become one. Lee Bae reworks traditional calligraphy's legibility to something intangible, allowing for the viewer to adjust their perceptions of what was once familiar. Wielding the brush is of utmost importance, as he listens to the tools as much as himself. Once started, he cannot hesitate as each stroke records his movement over time on the paper. In this way, the performance-based gestures of *Between* are a visual concretization of the fleeting temporal experience.

Building upon the artist's *Brushstroke* series are new bronze sculptures that punctuate the gallery space and extend the dimensionality of his paintings by occupying physical space. The organic forms of bronze, recalling charcoal in both color and texture, stand in repose on the gallery's first floor, contrasting against the white walls and leaving room for contemplation within the intermittent empty space. One sculpture, *Brushstroke* (2024), an intertwining mass of black appendages, casts heavy shadows while simultaneously reflecting the light against its textured surface. By utilizing the resistant material of bronze, his sculptures become artifacts that withstand the passage of time.

Lee Bae's *Between* invites viewers to live in the now, to reconsider our relationship with past, present, and future. By creating physical space for reflection, his work materializes the immaterial, preserving time through gesture and form.

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