

LISSON

HA CHONG-HYUN

PRESS RELEASE

EXHIBITION DATES:

24 SEPTEMBER – 7 NOVEMBER 2026

52 BELL STREET, LONDON

OPENING: 24 SEPTEMBER, 6 – 8PM

This autumn in London, Lisson is honoured to present an exhibition of one of the world's foremost abstract painters, Ha Chong-Hyun, surveying his experimentation and mastery over the past six decades of pioneering work. The Korean artist's inaugural show with the gallery and his first in London since 2020 amounts to a wide-ranging yet succinct survey of Ha's practice from some of his earliest extant works up to the present day.

The display begins with a geometric composition featuring woven, painted strips from the early *Naissance* series and an equally colourful folded and rippled canvas, dating to the late 1960s. These both signify his early positioning of painting firmly within the realm of objecthood – exploring it three-dimensionally and in the round – although he never claimed them as sculptural in intent, preferring to simply question where the painting's surfaces and supports might really begin and end. Further pushing the possibilities of material and action within the now contested field of painting, Ha began burning his impasto surfaces and adding coiled springs or barbed wire directly to works made in the 1970s, reflecting South Korea's protracted periods of martial law and military dictatorship, as well as the paucity of materials available to artists at the time.

At the beginning of the 1970s, Ha alighted upon his signature method of pushing paint through the reverse of coarse hemp canvas – literally turning the painting process inside out. Rather than applying paint onto an image plane, Ha forces pigment through the woven structure of the canvas, allowing pressure and material resistance to shape the final form. The resulting surface is determined less by expressive mark-making than by compression and persistence. This innovation, known collectively as the *Conjunction* series, continues to this day, with an array of different textures, gestures, tones and techniques that also vary in terms of orientation from vertical and horizontal, to perpendicular, radiant and freeform in gesture.

Over subsequent years, Ha has expanded and refined this inquiry, showing a sustained commitment to experimentation that has significantly shaped broader discussions of postwar abstraction. In the 2000s, his practice evolved into what has been described as the *Post Conjunction* series, extending his exploration of colour, scale, and spatial rhythm while maintaining the foundational principle of pressure and surface.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Ha Chong-Hyun has gained international recognition for combining elements of monochromatic, minimalist and gestural abstraction with the conceptual, performative and material aspects and possibilities of painting. He is best known for developing a distinctive approach to painting in the early 1970s with the initiation of *Conjunction*, a series in which he pushes dense oil paint from the reverse side of coarse hemp canvas to its surface. Through this technique, often referred to as the reverse pressure painting method or linked to the Buddhist use of colouring or staining the reverse of images to produce transparency (known as *baechaebeop*), Ha altered the conventional relationship between front and back, surface and support, allowing material resistance to generate structure.

For over five decades, he has continued to refine this method, exploring variations in density, rhythm, and scale. Through sustained repetition and restraint, Ha has emphasized painting as a physical act grounded in labour and material presence rather than illusion or narrative.



Ha Chong-Hyun (b. 1935, Sancheong, South Korea) graduated from Hongik University in 1959 and has lived and worked in Seoul throughout his career. During the 1960s, he engaged in experimental practices that extended beyond conventional painting, exploring material assemblage, abstraction, and spatial construction in response to rapid postwar transformation. These early investigations established his enduring interest in structure, surface, and the physical conditions of form. After a period of painting loosely referred to as his *informel* period, in 1969 Ha became a founding member and Chairman of the Korean Avant-Garde Association (AG) and was later also regarded as one of the key figures associated with the Dansaekhwa movement of Korean monochrome painting, despite never being entirely convinced by its definition.

Ha Chong-Hyun is subject of a major retrospective opening this autumn at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (25 September 2026 – 25 January 2027). Recent solo shows include: Château La Coste, Le Puy-Sainte-Réparate, France (2025); Art Sonje Center, Seoul, Korea (2025); House of Dior, Seoul, Korea (2024); 59th Venice Biennale Collateral Event, Palazzetto Tito, Venice, Italy (2022); Daejeon Museum of Art, Daejeon, Korea (2020); National Museum of Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, Korea (2012). Select group exhibitions include: 'Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s', Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA (2024); 'The Journey to the Venice Biennale: 1986–1993', Space21, Seoul, South Korea (2024); 'Geometric Abstraction in Korean Art', National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA), Gwacheon, South Korea (2023); 'Perfectly Imperfect: Korean Buncheong Ceramics', Denver Art Museum, Denver, USA (2023); 'Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s', National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA), Seoul, South Korea; traveled to Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA (2023); 'Meeting the Monochrome ZERO and Dansaekhwa', Zero Foundation, Düsseldorf, Germany (2021); 'Beyond the Light of East and West', Korean Cultural Center Los Angeles, Los Angeles, USA (2021).

ABOUT LISSON

Lisson is a global gallery dedicated to shaping the art of today. Creating meaningful dialogues and robust markets between artists and audiences across six venues in the UK, US and China, Lisson exhibits the most engaging and challenging work, adding value and narrative through decades of experience and innovation.

Building significance and reputation with our artists, Lisson nurtures and amplifies their vision at every turn, supporting opportunities to show beyond the gallery's walls in museums, the public realm and through international partnerships. The gallery's heritage and its foundational role in contemporary art since 1967, allows for a deeper perspective and more thoughtful relationships when furthering the career and voice of an artist.