

W H I T E C U B E

Mason's Yard

Press Release

Park Seo-Bo

ZIGZAG: Ecriture 1983-1992

Curated by Katharine Kostyál

20 January–11 March 2017

Preview: 19 January 2017, 6-8pm

White Cube presents its second exhibition by the leading exponent of the Dansaekhwa movement, Park Seo-Bo. This exhibition will feature Park's signature 'Ecriture' series of paintings, which have remained his focus for the past fifty years. This exhibition focuses on one particular group within the overall series, informally referred to as the 'zigzag' paintings, which were produced between the mid-1980s and early 1990s. A number of his most recent 'Ecriture' works will also be on display.

Park's work draws on the history of Western abstraction in painting, as well as the tradition of Korean calligraphy, enabled by an introspective methodology that has its origins in Taoist and Buddhist philosophy. Begun in the late 1960s, the 'Ecriture' series embrace this spiritual approach and are inextricably linked to notions of time, space and material, concepts which underpin all of the artist's work. In the early works, Park used repeated pencil lines incised into a still-wet monochromatic painted surface, and the later works expand upon this language through the introduction of *hanji*, a traditional Korean paper hand-made from mulberry bark, which is adhered to the canvas surface. This development, along with the introduction of colour, enabled an expansive transformation of his practice while continuing the quest for emptiness through reduction.

Park studied Korean brush painting during the Korean War. When he moved to the Western region of Korea he became familiar with the culture of indigenous papers. It was during this time he learned of paper's inextricable connection to every aspect of domestic life: mulberry paper, for example, is often sealed with oil and used for flooring in traditional Korean houses.

The 'Ecriture' works from the 1980s onwards feature several layers of *hanji* strips soaked with paint and applied to the canvas when the surface is still wet. Using sharp wooden sticks, pieces of iron or sometimes his own hand, he incised it with patterns to create dynamic, diagonal compositions or simple overall grids, adding coloured pigment during the final step. Created from repeated, sustained pressure in the manner of calligraphy, the lines push out the pulp in the paper, contributing to the overall surface texture of the work and enabling a fusion between image and the work's material, physical composition. Notably, in one of the most monumental works in the exhibition, *Ecriture No. 870907 (1987)*, the artist added to the pigment a powder made from thousands of crushed seashells, which over time give the work a distinctive patina.

'I think colour, which is organic, can be used as a tool for healing,' he has said. 'Images dissolve; I believe in the power of colour itself.' (1) Though predominantly white, grey or black, in some works Park uses bright, primary colours, allowing pockets of colour from different layers to punctuate the finished surface. In two recent works from 2014 and 2016, he uses bright red pigment and furrowed vertical lines to animate the picture surface. Although the rhythmical, dynamic patterns of the later 'Ecriture' paintings might contrast formally to the monochromatic language of the earlier works, ultimately their methodology remains the same and as Lee Yil has observed, all are the product of 'formative time', requiring fine technical skill and sustained focus within a limited amount of time.

(1) Lee Yil, 'Park Seo-Bo's *Ecriture* Revisited – On Park Seo-Bo's Solo Exhibition', 1991

ENDS

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Notes to Editors:

- Park Seo-Bo graduated from the painting department of Hong-Ik University in Seoul in 1954 from where he received an Honorary Doctorate in 2000. He has been widely lauded throughout his career for championing Korean art, and was awarded the Silver Crown Cultural Medal in Korea in 2011. His work has been exhibited internationally, including the Venice Biennale (1988 and 2015); Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul (2014); Busan Museum of Art, South Korea (2010); Portland Museum of Art, Oregon (2010); Singapore Art Museum (2008); Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2007); The Miyagi Museum of Art, Sendai (1993); Tate Liverpool, UK (1992); Brooklyn Museum, New York (1981), and Expo '67, Montreal (1967) and is currently on view in the collection displays at Tate Modern, London. His work is included in the collections of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; M+, Hong Kong; Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, UAE; The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, amongst others.
- Admission to White Cube is free.
- White Cube Mason's Yard is open Tuesday–Saturday 10am–6pm.
- White Cube's exhibition programme extends across its three gallery spaces: Bermondsey in South London, Mason's Yard in St. James's, London and Hong Kong Central district. Since its inception in 1993, the gallery has exhibited the work of many of the world's most highly acclaimed contemporary artists.
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