

# WHITE CUBE

## Mason's Yard

Seung-taek Lee

Curated by Katharine Kostyál

25 May – 30 June 2018

Preview: Thursday 24 May 2018

White Cube is pleased to present a survey exhibition of South Korean artist Seung-taek Lee at Mason's Yard. Curated by Katharine Kostyál, Lee's first comprehensive solo show in the UK includes recreations of his major installations from the 1960s alongside sculptures and drawings.

Lee has been at the forefront of Korean avant-garde art since the 1960s. Although formally trained as a sculptor, he describes his practice as 'non-sculpture', 'non-material' or 'anti-concept'. His work has challenged established forms of contemporary Korean art in response to rapidly transforming conditions in South Korea - from its emergence as a divided nation following three decades of Japanese colonisation (1910-45) and the Korean War (1950-53), to its development into a modernised, global nation. Yet his locally-specific experiments, especially those of the 1960s and 1970s, can be compared to concurrent movements such as Land Art, Art Povera and Post-Minimalism.

Central to the exhibition is the recreation of Lee's early vibrant sculptures, which are shown publicly for the first time since their destruction. Towering, geometric installations, some reaching over three metres in height, were originally created with sheets of cheap, factory-produced vinyl, which embodied the modern lifestyle of the late 60s in South Korea. Stretched over wire frames, the taut surface of the structures highlights the shiny, plastic quality and versatility of the material.

Also on display are Lee's reconfigured, large-scale *Oji* sculptures from 1963. Inspired by earthenware jars traditionally used in Korean households to store condiments, Lee constructed a series of painted abstract structures. Protruding from the ground on pedestals, the vibrant works vary in size with the largest reaching almost two metres.

Lee is known for his *Tied Stone* sculptures which involve binding architectural or natural structures with string, rope or wire to render them malleable. Granite, for example, one of the most ubiquitous sculpting materials in Korea, takes on a soft, bodily presence in the exhibition.

An untitled series of ropes on canvas, which Lee refers to as 'canvas drawings', also bring the binding material to the forefront and portray sinuous lines traditionally drawn on paper. In contrast, a site-specific installation from 1982 expands into the gallery with iron rods to create temporary lines across the space.

Seung-taek Lee opens at White Cube Mason's Yard on 25 May and continues until 30 June 2018.

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Notes to Editors:

- Seung-taek Lee was born in Kowon, Hamkyung Province of North Korea, in 1932. Since the Korean War he has lived and worked in Seoul, South Korea. Following his studies at Hong Ik University, Lee taught Fine Art and Art History at Ewha Womans University, Mokwon University, Dankook University and University of Seoul for over two decades. During this period he published *Woman Sculpture of the World* (1975), a 400-page visual compendium on the theme of female nude in the history of sculpture. He has exhibited internationally including solo shows at Palazzo Caboto, Venice (2017); Frieze Sculpture Park, London (2014); Sungkok Art Museum, Seoul (2012); Seoul Museum of Art (2005) and National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul

(2005). In 2004 he participated in the 5th Gwangju Biennale. He has won a number of awards including Eunkwan Award, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Korea (2009); Nam June Paik Art Center Prize (2009) and the Grand Prize of International Outdoor Sculpture Festival, Aomori Museum of Art, Japan (1985). His work is included in numerous international public collections including Tate Modern, London; The Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney; The Rachofsky Collection, Dallas; Echigo-Tsumari Art Field, Niigata Prefecture, Japan and Seoul Museum of Art.

- Admission to White Cube is free. **White Cube Mason's Yard is open Tuesday–Saturday 10am–6pm.**
- Address: **25–26 Mason's Yard, St. James's**, London SW1Y 6BU, United Kingdom. +44 (0)20 7930 5373 [whitecube.com](http://whitecube.com)
- **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.**
- Join the conversation with White Cube: [#SeungtaekLee](https://twitter.com/SeungtaekLee)
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