

# GUGGENHEIM

## PRESS RELEASE

### **The Guggenheim Museum Presents *Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s***

**The historic presentation examines artistic production from an era of remarkable transformation in Korea.**

**Exhibition:** *Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s*

**Venue:** Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York

**Location:** Tower Galleries 2, 4, and 5

**Date:** September 1, 2023–January 7, 2024

(NEW YORK, NY—September 1, 2023) The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presents *Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s*, the first North American museum exhibition dedicated to Korean Experimental art (*silheom misul*) and its artists, whose radical approach to materials and process produced some of the most significant avant-garde practices of the twentieth century.

On view from September 1, 2023, through January 7, 2024, this historic presentation examines artistic production from an era of remarkable transformation in South Korea, when young artists who came of age in the decades following the Korean War reflected and responded to the changing socioeconomic, political, and material conditions that accompanied the nation’s rapid urbanization and modernization. The exhibition is centered on a network of key artists, including Ha Chong-Hyun, Jung Kangja, Kim Kulim, Lee Kang-So, Lee Kun-Yong, Lee Seung-taek, and Sung Neung Kyung, who, in addition to creating boundary-pushing works of art, pursued exhibitions, performances, publications, and public seminars, often under the rubric of self-organized collectives. Porous in nature, groups such as the Korean Avant Garde Association, Space and Time, and the Fourth Group, as well as nationwide exhibition platforms such as the Daegu Contemporary Art Festival and international biennials, provided fertile grounds for innovative – and often provocative – practices that broke definitively with those of their predecessors. While the artists never formally announced a movement, the term “Experimental art” was first historicized in a landmark publication by Kim Mikyung based on her doctoral dissertation *Experimental Art and Society in 1960s and 1970s Korea* (2000), which has since propelled a reexamination of this influential but understudied group of artists.

*Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s* is thematically sequenced and features approximately eighty works across various mediums, including painting, sculpture, ceramics, photography, video, installation, and film, most of which are being presented for the first time to an international audience. It offers visitors an unprecedented opportunity to experience the creativity and breadth of this generation of Korean artists, illustrating how they harnessed the power of contemporary visual languages to explore pressing issues shaped by an authoritarian state at home and a globalizing world beyond.

On the occasion of this presentation, a series of special performances will be re-staged in the exhibition's galleries: Lee Kun-Yong's *Snail's Gallop*, October 13–14; Sung Neung Kyung's *Reading Newspapers*, November 17–18; and Kim Kulim's *From Creation to Extinction*, December 1–2.

The exhibition is accompanied by a full-color scholarly publication, the first in the English language on Experimental art, with contributions by Cho Soojin, art historian; Joan Kee, Professor of Art History, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Yoon Jin-sup, artist, curator and critic; and curators Kyung An and Kang Soojung. In addition to incisive new scholarship and lavish photography of works drawn from public and private collections across the globe, the volume also brings together translations of articles, artist manifestos, and other primary sources that offer a firsthand perspective on the ideas then shaping artistic discourse in South Korea.

*Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s* is co-organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea. The exhibition is cocurated by Kyung An, Associate Curator, Asian Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, New York, and Kang Soojung, Senior Curator, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea. The exhibition will open at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, on May 26 and close on July 16, 2023. It will travel to the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, from February 11 to May 12, 2024, following the Guggenheim presentation this fall.

## Support

Lead support for *Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s* is provided by the Samsung Foundation of Culture.

The Leadership Committee for this exhibition is gratefully acknowledged for its support, with special thanks to Jae Won Chey, KoRICA, Kahng Foundation, Mimi O. Kim, Kukje Art & Culture Foundation, Gay-Young Cho and Christopher Chiu, Dow Kim Family Foundation, Tina Kim Gallery, Miyoung Lee and Neil Simpkins, Lehmann Maupin, Cindy and Howard Rachofsky, Yang Won Sun Foundation, Boris Yeung, Alyssa Yoon, and those who wish to remain anonymous.

Support is also generously provided by The E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Korea Arts Management Service, The Kate Cassidy Foundation, The W.L.S. Spencer Foundation, and Byucksan Cultural Foundation.

Funding is also provided by the Korea Foundation.

Additional funding is provided by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's Asian Art Circle.

## **About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation**

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation was established in 1937 and is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of modern and contemporary art through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The international constellation of museums includes the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao; and the future Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. An architectural icon and “temple of spirit” where radical art and architecture meet, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum is now among a group of eight Frank Lloyd Wright structures in the United States recently designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. To learn more about the museum and the Guggenheim's activities around the world, visit [guggenheim.org](http://guggenheim.org).

#ExperimentalArtInKorea

@Guggenheim

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### **For additional information:**

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# GUGGENHEIM

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s-1970s (Artwork Checklist)

## Tower 2 | A New Beginning

Ha Chong-Hyun

b. 1935, Sancheong, South Korea

*White Paper on Urban Planning 67*, 1967

Oil on canvas

44 1/8 × 44 1/8 inches (112 × 112 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2018.338



Kim Kulim

b. 1936, Sangju, South Korea

*Death of the Sun II*, 1964

Oil and vinyl on wood

35 13/16 × 29 5/8 inches (91 × 75.3 cm)

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

X.2018.335



Kim Kulim

b. 1936, Sangju, South Korea

*Tombstone 6-63*, 1963

Vinyl, steel, oil and plastic on wood panel

71 7/16 × 35 13/16 inches (181.5 × 91 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2019.342



Lee Seung-taek

b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea

*Untitled*, 1960

Gouache and watercolor on paper

13 9/16 × 16 15/16 inches (34.5 × 43 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Hyundai

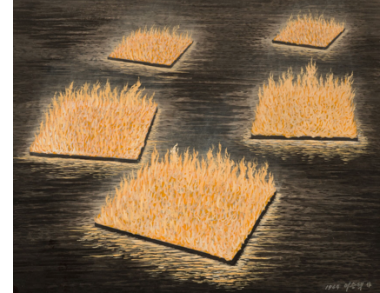
X.2019.328



Kim Hanyong  
b. 1924, Seongcheon, South Korea; d. 2016, Seoul, South Korea  
*Seoul*, 1966/2008  
Gelatin silver print  
17 11/16 x 17 11/16 inches (45 x 45 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2018.356



Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*Untitled (Burning Canvases Floating on the River)*, 1964  
Watercolor on paper  
19 x 23 7/16 inches (48.2 x 59.6 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea X.2019.2



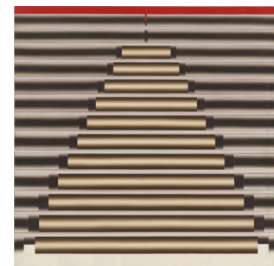
Limb Eungsik  
b. 1912, Busan, South Korea; d. 2001, Seoul, Korea  
*Short Pants*, 1971  
Gelatin silver print  
18 5/16 x 10 7/16 inches (46.5 x 26.5 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea X.2018.383



Limb Eungsik  
b. 1912, Busan, South Korea; d. 2001, Seoul, Korea  
*Scream*, 1960  
Gelatin silver print  
16 9/16 x 22 1/16 inches (42 x 56 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2018.362



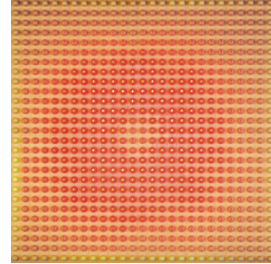
Lee Seung Jio  
b. 1941, Yongchon, South Korea; d. 1990, Seoul, South Korea  
*Nucleus-F-G-999*, 1970  
Oil on canvas  
63 3/4 x 63 3/4 inches (162 x 162 cm)  
The Museum of Modern Art, Committee on Painting and Sculpture Funds,  
and gift of Richard Roth, Kukje Arts and Culture Foundation,  
and Miyoung Lee  
X.2021.372



Kim Kulim  
b. 1936, Sangju, South Korea  
*The Meaning of 1/24 Second*, 1969  
Color video, transferred from 16 mm film, silent, 9 min., 14 sec. edition 2/8  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York  
Gift, the artist, 2020  
2020.11



Kim Kulim  
b. 1936, Sangju, South Korea  
*Electric Art A*, 1969/2013  
Light bulbs, plastic on panel  
71 1/2 × 71 1/2 × 6 11/16 inches (181.6 × 181.6 × 17 cm)  
Collection of the artist  
X.2019.346



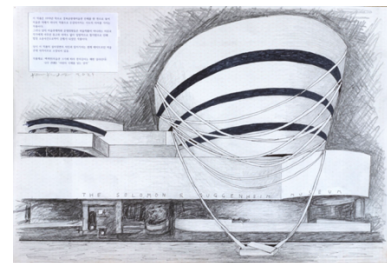
Kang Kukjin, Jung Kangja and Chung Chanseung  
*Murder by the Han Riverside*, 1968  
Digital images (e-ink display)  
Dimensions variable  
Documentary images courtesy the Art Research Center, National  
Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2018.10644



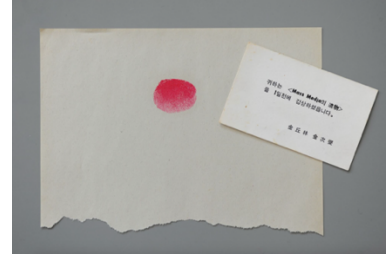
Kim Kulim  
b. 1936, Sangju, South Korea  
*Re-enactment of From Phenomenon to Traces: An Event through Fire and Grass*, 1970/2016  
Single-channel video, silent, 4 min. 59 sec.  
duration: 4 min. 59 sec.  
The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2018.341



Kim Kulim  
b. 1936, Sangju, South Korea  
*From Phenomenon to Traces: Tying the Guggenheim*, 2021  
Pencil on paper (unframed)  
11 11/16 × 16 9/16 inches (29.7 × 42 cm)  
Collection of the artist  
X.2021.550



Kim Kulim and Kim Tchahsup  
*The Relics of Mass Media*, 1969  
Ink on paper and card  
Paper: 7 11/16 × 10 13/16 inches (19.5 × 27.5 cm)  
Card: 2 3/8 × 3 7/8 inches (6 × 9.8 cm)  
Collection of the artist  
X.2021.554



Kang Kukjin, Jung Kangja and Chung Chanseung  
*Transparent Balloons and Nude*  
1968  
Pigment print  
10 1/4 × 4 3/4 inches (26 × 12.1 cm)  
15 5/16 × 9 3/4 inches (38.9 × 24.8 cm) (framed)  
JUNG Kangja Estate Collection, courtesy ARARIO Gallery  
X.2021.552



*Happening with a Plastic Umbrella and a Candle*  
1967  
Digital images  
Documentary images courtesy the Art Research Center, National  
Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2023.55



Kang Kukjin  
b. 1939, Jinju, South Korea; d. 1992, Seoul, South Korea  
*Visual Sense I, II*, 1968  
Neon, stainless steel  
Each: 110 1/4 × 18 1/8 × 18 1/8 inches (280 × 46 × 46 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2018.10713



Jung Kangja  
b. 1942, Daegu, South Korea; d. 2017, Paju, South Korea  
*Kiss Me*, 1967/2001  
Mixed media  
47 1/4 × 78 3/4 × 19 11/16 inches (120 × 200 × 50 cm)  
ARARIO Collection  
X.2021.478



Ha Chong-Hyun

b. 1935, Sancheong, South Korea

*Work 73-13*, 1973

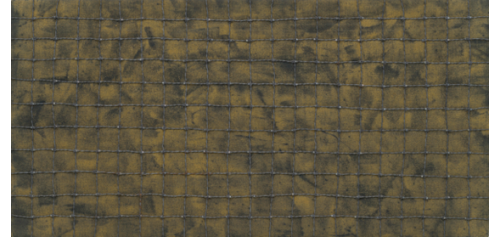
Barbed wire, screws, and oil on jute over foam-covered board

47 1/4 x 94 1/2 inches (120 x 240 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Gift, the Samsung Foundation of Culture, 2015

2015.51



Ha Chong-Hyun

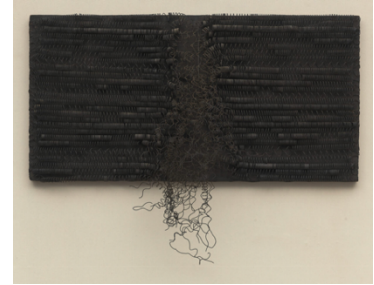
b. 1935, Sancheong, South Korea

*Untitled 72*, 1973

Metal springs and paint on wood panel, enclosed in Plexiglass 29 1/8 x 26

5 7/8 inches (74 x 68 x 15 cm)

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea X.2019.161



Moon Bokcheol

b. 1941, Gunsan, South Korea; d. 2003, Gunsan, South Korea

*Situation*, 1967-1968

Oil and gourds (bak) on canvas

47 1/4 x 36 5/8 x 6 11/16 inches (120 x 93 x 17 cm) National Museum of

Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea X.2021.565



Lee Taehyun

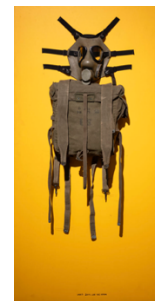
b. 1941, Yecheon, South Korea

*Command 1*, 1969/2001

Gas mask and backpack on panel

55 1/8 x 27 9/16 x 5 1/2 inches (140 x 70 x 14 cm) Collection of the artist

X.2021.386



Choi Myoungyoung

b. 1941, Haeju, South Korea

*Pen 69-Y*, 1969

Oil on canvas

63 9/16 x 51 inches (161.5 x 129.5 cm)

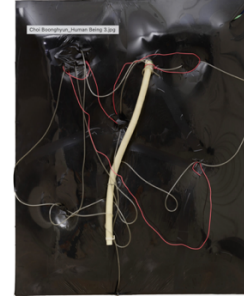
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea X.2022.405



Suh Seungwon  
b. 1941, Seoul, South Korea  
*Simultaneity 67-1*, 1967  
Oil on canvas  
63 3/16 × 51 9/16 inches (160.5 × 131 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2021.475



Choi Boonghyun  
b. 1941, Seoul, South Korea; d. 2010, Uiryeong, South Korea  
*Human Being 3*, 1967/2001  
Mixed media on wood panel  
63 3/4 × 51 5/16 × 5 7/8 inches (162 x 130.3 x 15 cm) National Museum of  
Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea X.2018.394



Song Burnsoo  
b. 1943, Gongju, South Korea  
*Take Cover I, II, III, IV, V*, 1974  
Five serigraphs on paper  
5 sheets. Each sheet: 40 9/16 × 40 9/16 inches (103 × 103 cm)  
I, II, III: National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea IV, V:  
Collection of the artist  
X.2018.375



### **Tower 4 | The Logic of Resistance**

Lee Hyangmi  
b. 1948, Daegu, South Korea; d. 2007, Daegu, South Korea  
*Color Itself*, 1970s  
Three panels of acrylic on paper  
3 panels. Each: 63 3/4 × 51 3/16 inches (162 x 130 cm)  
Daegu Art Museum  
X.2019.400



Lee Kang-So  
b. 1943, Daegu, South Korea  
*Painting 78-1*, 1978  
Color video, silent, 29 min., 25 sec.  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2018.10799



Park Hyunki  
b. 1942, Osaka, Japan; d. 2000, Daegu, South Korea  
*Untitled (Reflection Series) No. 2-6*, 1979  
Color video, with sound, 16 min., 43 sec.  
Collection of the artist's estate  
X.2021.1088



Kim Youngjin  
b. 1946, Daegu, South Korea  
*1978-1*, 1978  
Color video, silent, 14 min., 53 sec.  
Collection of the artist  
X.2023.118



Lee Kun-Yong  
b. 1942, Sariwon, North Korea  
*The Method of Drawing 76-1 (Drawn from Behind)*, 1976  
Oil-based marker pen on plywood  
66 5/16 × 35 13/16 inches (168.5 × 91 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2023.285



Lee Kun-Yong  
b. 1942, Sariwon, North Korea  
*The Method of Drawing 76-1-79-1*, 1979  
Oil-based marker pen on plywood  
67 7/16 × 35 13/16 inches (171.3 × 91 cm)  
Wilks Family Collection  
X.2021.422



Lee Kun-Yong  
b. 1942, Sariwon, North Korea  
*The Method of Drawing 76-1-78-1*, 1978  
Oil-based marker pen on plywood  
64 1/2 × 35 7/8 inches (163.8 × 91.2 cm)  
Private Collection, Seoul  
X.2021.423



Kim Youngjin

b.1946, Daegu, South Korea

10/2/1978, 1978

Twenty-eight chromogenic prints, forty-four plaster sculptures,  
and vitrine of aluminum and wood

Vitrine: 30 5/16 × 77 5/16 × 29 1/2 inches (77 × 196.4 × 75 cm); 44 plaster  
sculptures: dimensions variable

28 sheets. Each sheet: 13 15/16 × 16 15/16 inches (35.4 × 43 cm)

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

X.2021.557



Lee Kun-Yong

b. 1942, Sariwon, North Korea

*The Method of Drawing 76-4 (Drawn while Untying the Splint)*, 1976 / 1980

Pencil on paper and gelatin on silver print (framed)

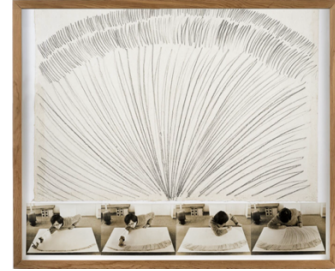
27 9/16 × 35 7/16 inches (70 × 90 cm) (Drawing)

6 7/8 × 9 13/16 inches (17.5 × 25 cm) (Photograph)

39 3/8 × 42 1/2 inches (100 × 108 cm) (Overall (Framed))

Private Collection

X.2019.466



Lee Kun-Yong

b. 1942, Sariwon, North Korea

*Logic of Hand*, 1975/2018

Four chromogenic prints, edition 1 of 2

4 sheets. Each sheet: 33 7/16 × 33 7/16 inches (85 × 85 cm). Overall  
dimensions variable

Leeum Museum of Art, Seoul

X.2018.347



Lee Kun-Yong

b. 1942, Sariwon, North Korea

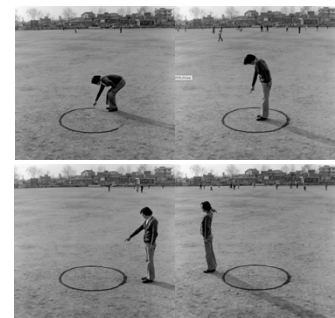
*Logic of Place*, 1976/2019

Four chromogenic prints

Each: 19 5/16 × 19 5/16 inches (49 × 49 cm)

Seoul Museum of Art

X.2018.10669



Lee Kun-Yong

b. 1942, Sariwon, North Korea

*The Method of Drawing 76-1*, 1976/2019

Seven c-prints mounted to Kappa board, edition 3 of 12

Frame: 11 × 11 inches (28 × 28 cm)

Image: 10 3/8 × 10 3/8 inches (26.3 × 26.3 cm)

Lee Kun-Yong, courtesy of Pace Gallery

X.2021.7



Nam Sanggyun

b. 1947, Daejeon, South Korea

*Matter I*, 1973/2001

Acrylic and cigarette butts

47 1/4 × 29 1/2 × 1 3/8 inches (120 × 75 × 3.5 cm)

Collection of Nam Eun Sol

X.2022.342



Nam Sanggyun

b. 1947, Daejeon, South Korea

*Matter II*, 1973/2001

Acrylic and matchsticks

47 1/4 × 29 1/2 × 1 3/8 inches (120 × 75 × 3.5 cm)

Collection of Nam Eun Sol

X.2022.343



Sung Neung Kyung

b. 1944, Yesan, South Korea

*Newspapers: After 1st of June 1974*, 1974

Two acrylic boxes and four newsprint panels

4 Wood panels: 24 13/16 × 34 1/4 × 1 15/16 inches (63 × 87 × 5 cm)

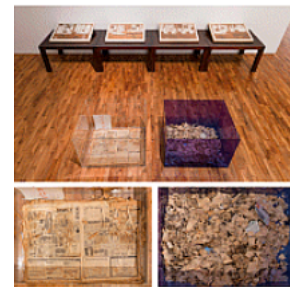
each

2 Acrylic boxes: 27 9/16 × 35 7/16 × 25 9/16 inches (70 × 90 × 65 cm)

each

ARKO Art Center

X.2018.370



Sung Neung Kyung

b. 1944, Yesan, South Korea

*Reading Newspapers*, 1976

Twelve gelatin silver prints mounted on wood panel with masking tape

Each: 10 3/8 × 10 3/8 inches (26.3 × 26.3 cm)

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

X.2021.556



Sung Neung Kyung

b. 1944, Yesan, South Korea

*Apple*, 1976

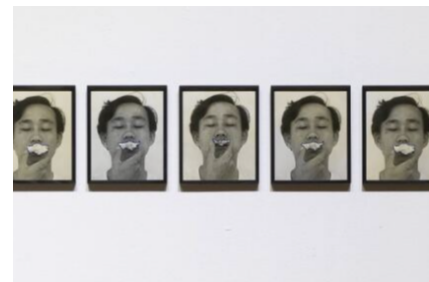
Seventeen gelatin silver prints (framed) with marker pen

9 7/16 × 7 5/8 inches (24 × 19.3 cm)

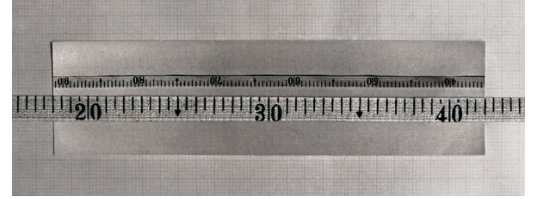
10 × 8 inches (25.4 × 20.3 cm) (framed)

Daejeon Museum of Art

X.2019.217



Sung Neung Kyung  
b. 1944, Yesan, South Korea  
*Ruler*, 1975  
Gelatin silver print (framed)  
12 1/2 × 4 3/4 inches (31.7 × 12 cm)  
Collection of the artist  
X.2022.406



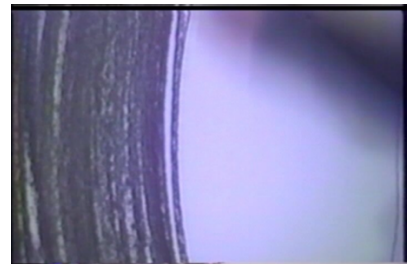
Sung Neung Kyung  
b. 1944, Yesan, South Korea  
*Here*, 1975  
Eighteen gelatin silver prints (unframed)  
18 sheets. Each sheet: 4 × 6 inches (10.2 × 15.2 cm)  
Collection of the artist  
X.2019.220



Sung Neung Kyung  
b. 1944, Yesan, South Korea  
*Mirror*, 1975  
Gelatin silver print (framed)  
12 15/16 × 9 1/16 inches (32.8 × 23 cm)  
Collection of the artist  
X.2022.407



Choi Byungso  
b. 1943, Daegu, South Korea  
*Untitled 9870000*, 1978  
Color video, silent, 6 min., 35 sec.  
Seoul Museum of Art  
X.2023.120



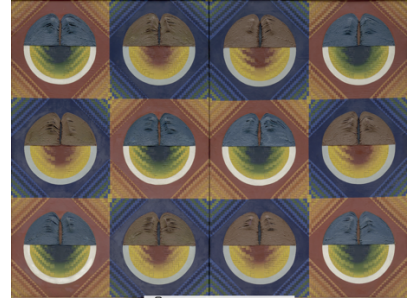
Lee Hyeonjae  
b. 1947, Daegu, South Korea  
*Untitled*, 1978  
Color video, silent, 13 min., 47 sec.  
Collection of the artist  
X.2023.119



Han Youngsup  
b. 1941, Kaechon, South Korea  
*Dancheong and Concrete*, 1969  
Oil on canvas  
Image: 63 9/16 × 51 1/8 inches (161.5 × 129.8 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2021.561



Ha Chong-Hyun  
b. 1935, Sancheong, South Korea  
*Naissance B*, 1965  
Oil and collage on canvas  
57 5/16 × 76 5/16 inches (145.5 × 193.9 cm)  
Collection of the artist  
X.2019.377



Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*Paper Tree*, 1970s  
Mulberry paper (hanji) and tree branch  
crate 56 1/2 x 77 3/4 x 26 in.;  
crate: 52 1/2 x 80 1/2 x 22 1/2 inches;  
crate: 63 x 64 x 48 inches;  
crate: 52 1/2 x 66 3/4 x 31 3/4 inches  
Rachofsky Collection  
X.2019.278



Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*Untitled*, 1969/early 1990s  
Gelatin silver print  
29 1/16 × 37 3/8 inches (73.8 × 95 cm)  
Guggenheim Abu Dhabi  
X.2019.294



Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*Torso*, 1978  
Bronze  
34 5/8 × 12 5/8 × 9 13/16 inches (88 × 32 × 25 cm)  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai  
X.2021.514



Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*Untitled*, 1979  
Paper and wood frame  
18 7/8 x 22 inches (47.9 x 55.9 cm)  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai  
X.2019.284



Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*Tied Ceramic*, 1975  
Ceramic  
13 3/16 x 13 9/16 inches (33.5 x 34.5 cm)  
Obayashi Collection  
X.2021.518



Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*Tied White Porcelain (Liquor Bottle)*, 1975  
Porcelain  
15 3/4 x 7 7/8 x 7 7/8 inches (40 x 20 x 20 cm)  
Kim Minjung Collection  
X.2023.28



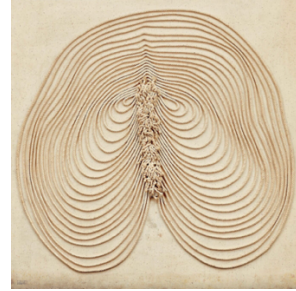
Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*White Porcelain*, 1979  
Porcelain  
7 1/16 x 10 1/4 x 10 1/4 inches (18 x 26 x 26 cm)  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai  
X.2018.351



Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*Tied Art Magazine Gonggan*, 1976  
Canvas, magazine, and rope  
25 5/16 x 19 1/2 x 2 3/16 inches (64.3 x 49.5 x 5.5 cm)  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai  
X.2021.547



Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*Untitled*, 1972  
Rope on canvas  
34 1/4 × 34 1/16 × 2 5/8 inches (87 × 86.5 × 6.6 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2023.176



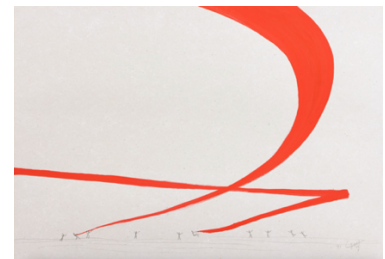
Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*Tied Stone*, 1958  
Stone, wire  
11 × 20 1/2 × 10 5/8 inches (28 × 52 × 27 cm)  
Kim Minjung Collection  
X.2018.369



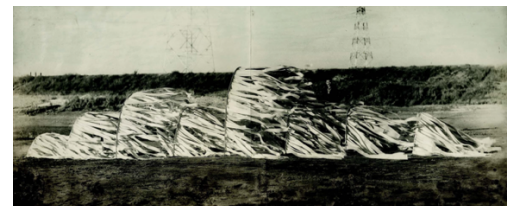
Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*Untitled*, 1962  
Metal, wood, and rope  
18 3/8 × 7 11/16 × 1 1/8 inches (46.6 × 19.5 × 2.9 cm) (right)  
18 1/8 × 8 7/16 × 1 1/4 inches (46 × 21.4 × 3.2 cm) (left)  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai  
X.2023.179



Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*Wind Series Drawings*, 1971  
One of six watercolor drawings on paper  
20 7/8 × 30 1/2 inches (53 × 77.5 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2020.79



Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea  
*Wind*, 1971  
Gelatin silver print  
17 5/16 × 39 3/8 inches (44 × 100 cm)  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai  
X.2023.177



Lee Seung-taek

b. 1932, Kowon, North Korea

*Untitled (Sprout)*, 1963/2018

Paint and earthenware, edition 1 of 5, 2AP

40 3/8 x 16 3/4 x 16 3/4 inches (102.5 x 42.5 x 42.5 cm)

46 7/16 x 18 1/2 x 18 1/2 inches (118 x 47 x 47 cm)

64 3/8 x 24 x 24 inches (163.5 x 61 x 61 cm)

57 1/2 x 26 3/4 x 26 3/4 inches (146 x 68 x 68 cm)

70 1/2 x 26 15/16 x 26 15/16 inches (179 x 68.5 x 68.5 cm)

75 9/16 x 26 15/16 x 26 15/16 inches (192 x 68.5 x 68.5 cm)

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi

X.2019.226



## Tower 5 | The Global Village

Lee Kun-Yong

b. 1942, Sariwon, North Korea

*Corporal Term*, 1971/2023

Tree, soil, gravel, and concrete

Dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai

X.2018.348



Kim Kulim

b. 1936, Sangju, South Korea

*Wiping Cloth*, 1974/2001

Color video, silent, 2 min., 7 sec.

Courtesy the artist

X.2019.347



Shim Moon-seup

b. 1943, Tongyeong, South Korea

*Opening Up*, 1974-75

Twelve cloth panels abraded with sandpaper

Overall: 47 5/8 x 118 1/8 inches (121 x 300 cm)

23 13/16 x 18 1/8 inches (60.5 x 46 cm) x 3

23 13/16 x 19 11/16 inches (60.5 x 50 cm) x 9

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

X.2021.60



Lee Kang-So

b. 1943, Daegu, South Korea

*Disappearance - Bar in the Gallery*, 1973

Ten digital chromogenic prints

10 sheets. Each sheet 31 × 42 13/16 inches (78.7 × 108.8 cm); each

frame: 33 1/16 × 44 7/8 inches (84 × 114 cm)

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

X.2018.10645



Park Hyunki

b. 1942, Osaka, Japan; d. 2000, Daegu, South Korea

*Untitled (TV Stone Tower)*, 1982

Color video (silent), CRT monitor, and stones

Dimensions variable

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi

X.2021.9



Lee Kang-So

b. 1943, Daegu, South Korea

*Untitled 75031*, 1975/2016

Wood, plaster, iron, rope, straw mat, onggi bowl, flour, chalk, and ten

digital chromogenic color prints

Each: 15 3/4 × 23 5/8 inches (40 × 60 cm) (Image)

Each: 21 1/2 × 29 1/4 inches (54.6 × 74.3 cm) (Framed)

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

X.2018.339



Park Hyunki

b. 1942, Osaka, Japan; d. 2000, Daegu, South Korea

*Inclining Water*, 1979

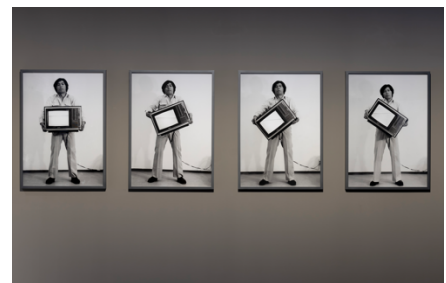
Four chromogenic prints, edition 3 of 10

Each: 23 5/8 × 19 11/16 inches (60 × 50 cm)

Each: 30 7/8 × 26 3/4 inches (78.4 × 67.9 cm) (Framed)

Collection of the artist's estate

X.2021.2



Lee Kun-Yong

b. 1942, Sariwon, North Korea

*Drawing for Corporal Term*, 1971

Pencil on paper

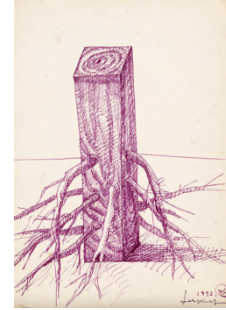
13 9/16 × 9 13/16 inches (34.5 × 25 cm)

Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai

X.2018.349



Lee Kun-Yong  
b. 1942, Sariwon, North Korea  
*Drawing for Corporal Term*, 1972  
Pencil on paper  
13 9/16 × 9 11/16 inches (34.5 × 24.6 cm)  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai  
X.2018.350



Shin Hakchul  
b. 1943, Gimcheon, South Korea  
*Scissors*, 1974  
Ink, scissors, and colored thread on mulberry paper (hanji) on canvas  
18 1/2 × 15 9/16 × 1 1/8 inches (47 × 39.5 × 2.8 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2021.59



Shin Hakchul  
b. 1943, Gimcheon, South Korea  
*Naught No. 5*, 1974  
Newspaper clipping and colored tassel on canvas  
18 1/2 × 15 1/2 × 1 1/8 inches (47 × 39.3 × 2.9 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2021.57



Shin Hakchul  
b. 1943, Gimcheon, South Korea  
*Naught No. 3*, 1974  
Mulberry paper (hanji) and colored thread on canvas  
18 1/2 × 15 9/16 × 1 1/8 inches (47 × 39.5 × 2.8 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2021.56



Shin Hakchul  
b. 1943, Gimcheon, South Korea  
*Naught No. 4*, 1974  
Leather and plastic wallet containing paper fragments on canvas  
18 1/2 × 15 3/8 × 1 1/8 inches (47 × 39 × 2.9 cm)  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea  
X.2021.58



Sung Neung Kyung  
b. 1944, Yesan, South Korea

*세계전도, 世界顛倒, An Upside-Down Map of the World, 1974*

Paper map

70 7/8 × 70 7/8 × 3 15/16 inches (180 × 180 × 10 cm)

frame (Hanging frame): 67 × 88 1/2 inches (170.2 × 224.8 cm)

Seoul Museum of Art

X.2018.10697



Yeo Un

b. 1947, Jangseong, South Korea; d. 2013, Seoul, South Korea

*Work 74, 1974*

Wood frame with metal fittings and collage of magazine and newspaper clippings

28 3/8 × 44 1/2 × 1 inches (72 × 113 × 2.5 cm)

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

X.2018.10665



Lee Kang-So

b. 1943, Daegu, South Korea

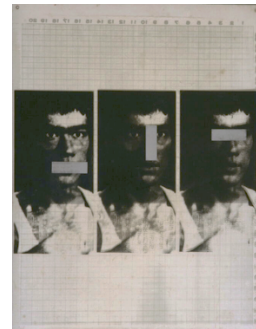
*Untitled-075104, 1975*

Serigraph on acrylic board

21 7/16 × 16 5/16 inches (54.5 × 41.5 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2022.143



Lee Kang-So

b. 1943, Daegu, South Korea

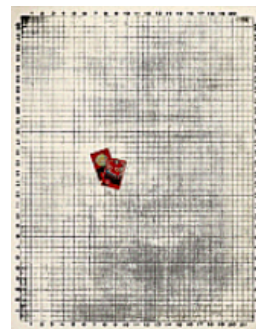
*Untitled-075111, 1975*

Serigraph on acrylic board

22 5/8 × 17 11/16 inches (57.5 × 45 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2022.145



# Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s

This exhibition presents the groundbreaking body of avant-garde practices from Korea known broadly as Experimental art (*silheom misul*). Beginning in the mid-1960s, young artists of the era, who came of age in the decades immediately following the Korean War (1950–53), coalesced in search of the new. Both as individuals and in collectives, they broke definitively—in form and discourse—with the dominant abstract style of their predecessors, which had been embraced by the Korean art establishment but no longer embodied the spirit and urgency of the avant-garde. Encountering novel visual languages in newly available print media from abroad, these artists redefined the boundaries of traditional painting and sculpture and embraced innovative and often provocative approaches to art through performance, installation, photography, and video. Their genre-defying output, which waned in momentum in the late 1970s, would gain wider recognition only later, in the early 2000s, when it was given the name “Experimental art” by the influential art historian Kim Mikyung.

Through a loose network of self-organized groups, in the city of Seoul and beyond, Experimental artists created alternate frameworks for making art and organizing exhibitions, shunning state-established platforms like the annual National Art Exhibition (Gukjeon). They engaged with pressing issues such as subjectivity in an age of modernization and globalization and the expression of individual will at the fringes of an authoritarian state. The 1960s and the 1970s were a period of exceptional change in South Korea. Civil unrest paved the way for Park Chung Hee to seize power in a coup in 1961, while the young republic grappled with ongoing tensions with North Korea, the normalization of relations with its former colonizer Japan, and an unpopular military involvement in Vietnam. At the same time, rapid urbanization, the rise of a middle class, and a sudden influx of foreign goods and cultural influences collided with the nationalist ideology and increasingly repressive censorship of the state. Yet, even as their challenges against the status quo were at times met with backlash, Experimental artists never lost sight of themselves as the protagonists of a living history and a burgeoning interconnected world, practicing at the forefront of the international avant-garde while developing a form of expression that was rooted in local, everyday experience. What emerges is the story of how this generation of young Korean artists harnessed the power of art to confront and reimagine an ever-shifting present.

## A New Beginning

When the art critic Oh Kwang-su declared, in 1967, that “a new moment in art history has arrived with the advent of the art of the everyday,” thus closing off “a decade of abstract painting,” he was referring to artists incorporating objects, motifs, and experiences from daily life into their work. More importantly, he was asserting how their doing so rejected the staid formalism of Informel, a style of abstract painting predominantly in oil-based “Western” painting (as opposed to ink-based “Eastern” painting) that had been the hallmark of the previous generation. This gallery introduces works by members of three collectives that organized, in 1967, the *Union Exhibition of Young Korean Artists*, widely considered to be the first manifestation of Experimental tendencies. Some of those who participated went on to form the Korean Avant Garde Association, or AG, a group of artists and critics that produced not only exhibitions but also seminars and a journal, thus proving wide-ranging in its influence on contemporary Korean art and discourse. Members of the similarly multifaceted Fourth Group went one step further, organizing often-controversial performances in the public arena that took incisive aim at the existing art and societal infrastructure.

The artworks exhibited here all emerged from an urgent desire to embrace innovation stoked further by artists’ encounters with artistic forms and discourses from Europe, the U.S., and Japan in newly available magazines such as *Bijutsu Techo*, *Time*, and *Life*, as well as influential domestic serials such as *Space (Gonggan)*. Frequently invoking the changing cityscape of Seoul, where many of them were based, artists experimented with industrial materials like neon and plastic, novel techniques such as film and performance, and unorthodox processes including burning and burying, embodying the simultaneous anxiety and thrill underpinning this moment in Korean history. As artists and citizens alike witnessed the construction of high-rise buildings and the country’s first highway and absorbed a sudden wave of foreign cultural influences, they also faced a clampdown by the state on nonconformist expression, all in pursuit of its political and ideological goals.

*Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s* is co-organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea. The exhibition is cocurated by Kyung An, Associate Curator, Asian Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, New York, and Kang Soojung, Senior Curator, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, and supported by Bellara Huang, Curatorial Assistant, Exhibitions, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation.

Learn more about this exhibition from curator Kyung An on the Guggenheim Digital Guide, available for free on the Bloomberg Connects app. Content is available in English, Español, and 普通话.

📖 400 📖 401

Join curator Kyung An as she discusses the artists’ collectives who initiated Experimental art.

#ExperimentalArtInKorea

Ha Chong-Hyun

b. 1935, Sancheong

*White Paper on Urban Planning*, 1967

Oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

“The obvious characteristic that distinguishes the art of this century from that of the previous era is the fact that it is art of the city,” wrote Ha Chong-Hyun in 1970. The painting series *White Paper on Urban Planning* encapsulates the artist’s fascination with the visible impact of urbanization on late-1960s South Korea, a result of a nationwide regeneration program undertaken by President Park Chung Hee’s administration. The painting appears to transpose into multicolored planes bird’s-eye views of swirling traffic intersections and densely built-up clusters of high-rise buildings in Seoul—similar to the scene captured in Kim Hanyong’s aerial photograph of the capital, also on this wall. The city’s skyward expansion is further represented through Ha’s physical manipulation of the canvas, which is folded like an accordion. At the same time, the colorful stripe-like composition, which strongly evokes *saekdong* (a banded arrangement of vibrant colors often used on the sleeves of traditional Korean dress) and *dancheong* (a form of decoration seen on royal or religious architecture), hints at Ha’s struggle to negotiate the rapidly evolving present with the not-so-distant past.

From left:

Kim Kulim

b. 1936, Sangju

*Death of the Sun II*, 1964

Oil and burnt vinyl on wood panel

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

*Tombstone 6-63*, 1963

Vinyl, steel, oil, and plastic on wood panel

Collection of the artist

*Death of the Sun II* reflects the sensibilities of the post-Korean War generation, marred by national trauma, civil unrest, and rapid industrialization. Kim painted a black circular form at the center of a wood panel, then overlaid it with petroleum-doused vinyl before setting it on fire. As the plastic melted, the artist smothered the surface with a blanket and reset the circle aflame, repeating the process until he achieved a rough, skin-like texture. Presented together with *Tombstone 6-63*, an arrangement of small mechanical parts that invokes a gravestone (on view nearby), this work boldly declares the death of the past and the ushering in of a new beginning. Its significance also lies in Kim's radical transformation of readily available, prefabricated materials through action, illustrating the artist's embrace of performance. As early as 1964, Kim broke free from the stronghold of the paintbrush, setting the path for a unique practice that would come to encompass film, installation, performance, and theater.

Clockwise from left:

Lee Seung-taek

b. 1932, Kowon

*Untitled*, 1960

Gouache and watercolor on paper

Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai

Kim Hanyong

b. 1924, Seongcheon; d. 2016, Seoul

*Seoul*, 1966/2008

Gelatin silver print

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Lee Seung-taek

b. 1932, Kowon

*Untitled (Burning Canvases Floating on the River)*, 1964

Watercolor on paper

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Limb Eungsik

b. 1912, Busan; d. 2001, Seoul

*Short Pants*, 1971

Gelatin silver print

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Limb Eungsik

b. 1912, Busan; d. 2001, Seoul

*Scream*, 1960

Gelatin silver print

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

The collection of photographs by Limb Eungsik and drawings by Lee Seung-taek provides a glimpse into the changing climate of Korean society and the country's art scene after the Korean War. Limb, a pioneer of "life-centered" photo-realism, captures the clamor of optimism felt by young people following the April Revolution of 1960, which led to the removal of Syngman Rhee, the first president of South Korea. Through the lens of women's fashion, *Short Pants* documents the tension between traditional Korean and modern Western values and ideologies in civilian life at that time.

Lee Seung-taek's drawings demonstrate a fresh direction for art in this new era. *Untitled (Burning Canvases Floating on the River)* is based on a performance in which Lee lit large canvases on fire and pushed them downriver. The act evokes the violent erasure that the artist believed was required to quell the dominance of painting and to dissolve perceived hierarchies between the arts. For Lee, who trained in traditional sculpture at Hongik University, immateriality is at the center of his concept of "non-sculpture," through which he sought to break from the conventional notion of sculpture traditionally based in materials and instead present a "situation" or a "condition" as art. His practice would expand to incorporate mediums like smoke and wind, with Lee exhibiting examples of such works as a member of the Korean Avant Garde Association (AG).

Lee Seung Jio

b. 1941, Yongchon; d. 1990, Seoul

*Nucleus F-G-999*, 1970

Oil on canvas

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Committee on Painting and Sculpture Funds, and gift of Richard Roth, Kukje Art & Culture Foundation, and Miyoung Lee

Lee graduated from Hongik University with a degree in “Western,” or oil-based, painting in 1965. As a member of the artists’ group Origin, which he cofounded with several classmates, he participated in the groundbreaking *Union Exhibition of Young Korean Artists* (1967). There, he first presented the series *Nucleus*, which features illusionistically rendered cylindrical shapes that resemble sleek metallic pipes. Lee would continue exhibiting these “pipe paintings” as a member of the Korean Avant Garde Association, or AG, in the early 1970s, and he thereafter devoted his practice to the development of the *Nucleus* series. These abstract geometric paintings stood in stark contrast to the gestural style known as Informel that had been dominant in Korea. Many observers considered Lee’s pipe paintings to be an expression of a mechanized age, but Lee himself contended that they were not a symbol of modernism but an investigation into painting itself. Even so, the title *Nucleus* connotes breaking down an object to its most basic elements and illustrates the artist’s questioning of the fundamentals of materiality.

Kim Kulim

b. 1936, Sangju

*The Meaning of 1/24 Second*, 1969

Color 16mm film, silent, 9 min., 14 sec.; edition 2 of 8

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Gift of the artist  
2020.11

Produced by Kim Kulim (director and editor) with Ban Daegyul (camera), Choi Wonyoung (script), Chung Chanseung (actor), and Jung Kangja (lighting), this film captures the palpable energy and pulsating life of Seoul at the time of its production. It is composed of twenty-four individually spliced frames per second—hence its title—and presents a visual montage of South Korea's capital city at a moment when all signs pointed to Seoul becoming an ultramodern metropolis of production and consumption. The film juxtaposes scenes shot from a car driving along the newly built Samil Elevated Expressway (since torn down) with an array of vibrant images of urban life, including children enjoying amusement parks, electrical towers, and laborers working in the streets. At the same time, it shows a city caught between the past and the present, haunted by the casualties of urbanization: a displaced figure sleeping on the street, an elderly woman selling flowers curbside, an old gate fallen into ruin. The camera stops for no one except the artist Chung Chanseung, dressed in a suit, who yawns or stares into the camera. His presence interrupts the film's relentless movement forward, forestalling surrender to the excessive stimulation and exhaustion of contemporary existence.

For *The Meaning of 1/24 Second's* premiere, on July 21, 1969, at the Academy Music Hall in Seoul, Kim intended to project the film onto the bodies of multiple dancers and other objects he had made, but this presentation was canceled due to technical difficulties. Instead, slides of images were projected onto the moving bodies of Kim and his fellow artist Jung Kangja, who were dressed in white bodysuits (see "Performance Art in Korea" on the wall nearby).

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Access a slow-looking exercise related to this work.

Kim Kulim

b. 1936, Sangju

*Electric Art A*, 1969/2013

Light bulbs and plastic on steel panel

Collection of the artist

# The Fourth Group

The Fourth Group was formally founded in June 1970 by practitioners of art, theater, fashion, design, and film, some of whom had previously worked together on projects such as Kim Kulim's Experimental film *The Meaning of 1/24 Second* (1969), on view nearby. Their manifesto announced a commitment to *mucheo*, or “non-corporeal,” art as a means to “liberate the innate state of humanity” and create a new form of art that could unify politics, society, culture, music, film, dance, and literature. Critical of the conservative climate in art and beyond, they held a series of performances in public arenas that confronted spectators (see the chronology “Performance Art in Korea” on this wall). In *A Funeral for Mainstream Art and Culture* (1970), one of their best-known happenings—the term “performance art” had not yet entered general usage—they staged a mock funerary procession to criticize a society that clung to the status quo.

The Fourth Group's provocative performances and methods were almost immediately at odds with the Korean authorities. In the case of *A Funeral for Mainstream Art and Culture*, for which participants planned to carry out a cremation ceremony on the sandy beach below the second Hangang Bridge, artists were instead arrested for obstructing traffic and violating traffic laws. The group's “chief,” Kim Kulim, was even interrogated by the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, which suspected that the white flags used in the performance somehow signaled surrender to North Korea. Group members observed, “the police not only do not understand our art, they fear it, too.” Under the pretense that the group's embrace of nudity and long hair was indecent, as well as its alleged fomenting of social unrest, the authorities pursued a crackdown. *A Funeral for Mainstream Art and Culture* was the final performance of the Fourth Group, which disbanded soon afterward.

Kang Kukjin

b. 1939, Jinju; d. 1992, Seoul

*Visual Sense I, II*, 1968

Neon and stainless steel

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Jung Kangja

b. 1942, Daegu; d. 2017, Paju

*Kiss Me*, 1967/2001

Mixed media

ARARIO Collection

Jung Kangja studied “Western,” or oil-based, painting at Hongik University, graduating in 1967. That same year, as a member of Sinjeon Group, she presented the sculpture *Kiss Me* at the *Union Exhibition of Young Korean Artists*. Trapped within two blocky rows of bared teeth and framed by enormous, brightly painted plaster lips are a woman’s head donning a pair of sunglasses, a domestic-use rubber glove, and a glass flask with an eye drawn on it. The sculpture was exhibited alongside another of Jung’s works, *Murderer*, which is no longer extant but incorporated a row of prosthetic hands and a painted leg wearing a woman’s shoe. Together, the two pieces commented on the flight of modern-day women from the duties of motherhood, sexual fidelity, and family loyalty.

One of the few women artists active in Korea at the time, Jung often turned to the female body as both evidence of discrimination and an instrument of criticism. She sought to give platform to “the sexual desire of women as subjects,” rejecting their more customary portrayal as objects of the male sexual gaze. The female bodies—whether whole or in fragments—in Jung’s work defy the established dichotomy of chastity versus profanity that dictated Korean society in her day.

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Access a slow-looking exercise related to this work.

# Korean Avant Garde Association (AG)

The Korean Avant Garde Association, or AG, was founded in December 1969 by a group of Seoul-based artists and critics who aimed to “contribute to the development of Korean artistic culture by creating a new plastic order within the visionless Korean art world, on the premise of a strong consciousness toward avant-garde art.” They made these intentions clear in the four issues of their collectively produced journal, also titled *AG*. The journal published contributions by Korean authors as well as translations of important texts, including David Shirey’s *Art in America* article “Impossible Art” (1969), which introduced Land art, and Lee Ufan’s “In Search of Encounter” (1971). They also embraced the possibility of “international simultaneity” as advances in telecommunications and travel opened up a more connected world at the dawn of the new decade.

Between 1970 and 1975, AG mounted four exhibitions (see the related catalogue in the vitrine nearby). Together with the works by Ha Chong-Hyun, Song Burnsoo, and Lee Seung Jio on this level, as well as those by Lee Kang-So and Lee Kun-Yong on Tower Level 5, they make clear that the practices of AG artists, though diverse, were unified in their pursuit of a true avant-garde, one that stood shoulder to shoulder with instances of installation and Conceptual art taking place internationally. One media outlet, reporting on the second AG Exhibition, *Realization and Reality*, held at the National Museum of Modern Art in Seoul (now the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea) in December 1971, lauded the works on view—which filled the gallery space with bricks, soil, and trees—for demonstrating the cutting-edge potential of “Experimental art,” even while the administrators of the museum argued that the works on display were “too avant-garde to look like art.”

From left:

Ha Chong-Hyun

b. 1935, Sancheong

*Work 73-13*, 1973

Barbed wire and screws over oil on jute and foam-covered board

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Gift, Samsung Foundation of Culture 2015.51

*Untitled 72*, 1973

Metal springs and paint on wood panel, enclosed in Plexiglas  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Ha Chong-Hyun first presented works incorporating barbed wire and metal springs at the third AG Exhibition, in 1972. Looking to push beyond the traditional bounds of painting, the artist stretched single lines of coiled or barbed wire across a painted or covered board, as seen here, while in others, he amassed coils toward the center of the composition, letting them project outward, as seen in *Untitled 72* (1973), to the right. While the mass-produced materials—jute, barbed wire, screws, and nails—attest to Ha’s ongoing fascination with the changing urban landscape, they also would have evoked for the average Korean citizen the U.S. military bases, fenced in by miles of barbed wire, that had become a permanent fixture in Seoul after the Korean War. The cage-like format of the present work, as well as the sharp edges burrowing into the fleshy cushioned backing, might also be read as a representation of President Park Chung Hee’s repressive regime. Throughout 1973 and 1974, Ha expanded this series at differing scales and with additional found elements, including nails. He was grappling with the issue of materiality in painting, striving “not to paint pictures, but to try and destroy, in [my] own way, the structure known as a picture.”

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Access a slow-looking exercise related to *Work 73-13*.

Moon Bokcheol

b. 1941, Gunsan; d. 2003, Gunsan

*Situation*, 1967–68

Oil and gourds (*bak*) on canvas

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

As South Korea industrialized in the 1960s, thatched roofs were replaced with tin ones and hollowed-out dried gourds (*bak*), traditionally used as bowls or vessels, were supplanted by plastic ones. Moon Bokcheol, one of Zero (Mu) Group's earliest adherents, incorporated *bak* into the painting *Situation*, which he presented at the *Union Exhibition of Young Korean Artists* in 1967. *Bak*, which had once been ubiquitous objects of daily use in rural, preindustrial Korea, had, by that time, become rare and elusive objects, evocative of the past and of Korean folk culture. By combining *bak* as a symbol of Korean tradition with Western-style abstract painting, Moon was engaging with a persistent topic of discussion among artists and critics at that time, one that questioned the place of tradition and "Korean-ness" within contemporary art practice. The theme manifested as both material and subject of the artist's later work incorporating *hanji*, a traditional paper made from mulberry.

Lee Taehyun

b. 1941, Yecheon

*Command 1*, 1967/2001

Gas mask and backpack on wood panel

Collection of the artist

In 1962, while still a student of “Western,” or oil-based, painting at Hongik University, Lee Taehyun cofounded the Zero (Mu) Group. He premiered his series *Command*, including the present work, at the group’s second exhibition, in 1967. At the time, the conflict between the Korean people and the military government was at its height. The corrupt election of 1960, rigged by the ruling party to ensure a repeat victory, had given rise to widespread student demonstrations on university campuses. Moreover, beginning in 1964, Korean men, all of whom are required to perform some form of military service, were being forced to deploy to the battlefields of Vietnam. *Command 1* incorporates the same type of gas mask and military-issue backpack used by Korean soldiers. Thus invoking the warlike nature of daily life in 1960s South Korea, Lee illustrated the complexity of personally opposing the government’s repressive measures while at the same time serving as a conscripted soldier who had little choice but to follow this same government’s commands. Indeed, the very word “command” (*myeong*) cited in the series title connotes both an order (*myeongryeong*) and a mission (*samyeong*).

Choi Myoungyoung

b. 1941, Haeju

*Pen 69-Y*, 1969

Oil on canvas

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Suh Seungwon

b. 1941, Seoul

*Simultaneity 67-1*, 1967

Oil on canvas

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Suh Seungwon cofounded Origin in 1962, while still a student at Hongik University. Origin was one of the three Experimental artists' collectives that organized the landmark *Union Exhibition of Young Korean Artists* in 1967, where Suh first presented *Simultaneity 67-1*. To create the work, Suh applied paint to the canvas, placed tape onto the still-wet surface, then removed it before the paint dried, generating variations in hue within a single field of color, as well as an uneven surface that interrupts the otherwise smooth expanse of the canvas.

Suh has continued to apply the title *Simultaneity* to all his works created since 1967. He defines “simultaneity” (*dongsiseong*) as a state in which the fundamental elements of painting—shape, color, and space—coexist on a single plane, while each assumes the same value when merged with another. The bright primary colors and two-dimensional shapes featured in the earliest works in the series, dating from the 1960s, evince the impact of geometric abstraction, a decisive turn away from the gestural qualities of Informel, a style of painting that dominated the Korean art world at the time.

Choi Boonghyun

b. 1941, Seoul; d. 2010, Uiryeong

*Human Being 3*, 1967/2001

Mixed media on wood panel

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Choi Boonghyun presented *Human Being 3*, one of five works in his *Human Being* series, at the second Zero (Mu) Group exhibition, in 1967. As a founding member of Zero Group, Choi adopted ordinary objects as his primary medium, employing discarded scrap metal, medical equipment, and household supplies. The artist once cited “the weariness of the canvas” as his reason for using objects, drawing a comparison between his paintings and the human experience during the mass industrialization of 1960s South Korea.

The present work consists of a veneered wood panel wrapped in cotton batting, covered in black vinyl, then adorned with plastic piping and a dizzying jumble of intravenous-drip tubes. The juxtaposition of the gnarled tubes—reminiscent of blood vessels—against the glossy black vinyl suggests, cynically, that the human form has been reduced to an industrial machine. Choi’s work reflects on a highly industrialized era, when people became mere husks as their humanity vanished, leaving behind only the flesh.

# The Union Exhibition of Young Korean Artists (1967)

Our work is [an] experiment.

It starts from nothingness (*mu*).

It is an action only for the purpose of creation.

—Zero Group (June 1967)



Artists Suh Seungwon (left) and Choi Boonghyun (right) leading the street protest on the opening day of the *Union Exhibition of Young Korean Artists*, Seoul, December 11, 1967

The *Union Exhibition of Young Korean Artists*, held at the National Public Information Office in Seoul from December 11 to 15, 1967, is often heralded as the beginning of Korean Experimental art. It was organized by the Association of Young Korean Artists, which was itself composed of three artists' groups—Zero (Mu), Origin, and Sinjeon—most of whose members were recent fine-arts graduates of Hongik University. True to its intention to initiate a rupture with the existing art establishment, the exhibition began with a street protest by the artists, who held picket signs bearing slogans that criticized the strictures of the Korean art world.

At the exhibition itself, visitors were met with a range of unexpected sights and sensations through works that were in dialogue with international movements such as Fluxus, Op Art, and happenings. The artists of Origin, founded in 1962, remained committed to painting but rejected the style of gestural abstraction they had been taught at school. Group members such as Suh Seungwon and Choi Myoungyoung instead drew from the geometry of the industrializing environment around them. Zero Group and Sinjeon Group artists, by contrast, shunned the canvas and employed in their object-based works materials and imageries that captured the perils and pleasures of everyday life. An engorged pair of lips by Jung Kangja, the neon lights of Kang Kukjin, and Choi Boonghyun's plastic pipes and intravenous-drip tubes all attest to their radical sensibility.

The photographs in the vitrine in this gallery document works that have not survived, such as Choi Boonghyun's *Colored Stovepipe* (1967). That work became the backdrop for *Happening with Plastic Umbrella and Candle*, enacted at the *Union Exhibition* and widely regarded as the first instance of performance art in Korea.

Song Burnsoo

b. 1943, Gongju

*Take Cover I, II, III, IV, V*, 1974

Five serigraphs on paper

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art,  
Korea (*I, II, III*)

Collection of the artist (*IV, V*)

Song Burnsoo once said that Korea of the 1970s was under sustained threat—not only from a North Korean military attack but also from pollution, disease, and repression. He compared living amid such potential dangers to “taking cover” after hearing an air-raid siren. Here, Song evokes this environment of upheaval by repeatedly portraying an ominous masked figure and appropriating the colors of the air-raid siren’s warning system: yellow indicates a “warning alert”; blue, a “take-cover alert”; and green, an “all clear.”

Song’s body of work includes many pieces, like *Take Cover*, that were created using serigraphy, a form of silkscreen printing. Throughout the 1970s Song experimented with variations on basic printing methods and employed repetitive imagery so as to break the traditional boundaries of the medium. An example of this effort is his contribution to the second AG Exhibition, held in 1971. This enormous print, measuring nearly three meters tall and thirty meters long, was also illustrated on the cover of the exhibition’s accompanying catalogue (on view in the vitrine across the gallery). Song thus transformed a single print into an outsize object, elevating it into the realm of installation art.

# Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s

This exhibition presents the groundbreaking body of avant-garde practices from Korea known broadly as Experimental art (*silheom misul*). Beginning in the mid-1960s, young artists of the era, who came of age in the decades immediately following the Korean War (1950–53), coalesced in search of the new. Both as individuals and in collectives, they broke definitively—in form and discourse—with the dominant abstract style of their predecessors, which had been embraced by the Korean art establishment but no longer embodied the spirit and urgency of the avant-garde. Encountering novel visual languages in newly available print media from abroad, these artists redefined the boundaries of traditional painting and sculpture and embraced innovative and often provocative approaches to art through performance, installation, photography, and video. Their genre-defying output, which waned in momentum in the late 1970s, would gain wider recognition only later, in the early 2000s, when it was given the name “Experimental art” by the influential art historian Kim Mikyung.

Through a loose network of self-organized groups, in the city of Seoul and beyond, Experimental artists created alternate frameworks for making art and organizing exhibitions, shunning state-established platforms like the annual National Art Exhibition (Gukjeon). They engaged with pressing issues such as subjectivity in an age of modernization and globalization and the expression of individual will at the fringes of an authoritarian state. The 1960s and the 1970s were a period of exceptional change in South Korea. Civil unrest paved the way for Park Chung Hee to seize power in a coup in 1961, while the young republic grappled with ongoing tensions with North Korea, the normalization of relations with its former colonizer Japan, and an unpopular military involvement in Vietnam. At the same time, rapid urbanization, the rise of a middle class, and a sudden influx of foreign goods and cultural influences collided with the nationalist ideology and increasingly repressive censorship of the state. Yet, even as their challenges against the status quo were at times met with backlash, Experimental artists never lost sight of themselves as the protagonists of a living history and a burgeoning interconnected world, practicing at the forefront of the international avant-garde while developing a form of expression that was rooted in local, everyday experience. What emerges is the story of how this generation of young Korean artists harnessed the power of art to confront and reimagine an ever-shifting present.

## The Logic of Resistance

In 1972, third-time president Park Chung Hee suspended the constitution and abolished presidential term limits, all in the name of the Yushin—literally, “Revitalization”—Constitution. These extreme measures cemented Park’s grip on power and intensified the already growing censorship of free speech and expression.

In Seoul, members of the artists’ group Space and Time, or ST, employed simple, ordinary items and actions to gauge the structural mechanisms of power and to investigate how language and systems influenced their immediate artistic and social experiences. In the southern city of Daegu, away from the prying eyes of the Park regime and the academic art establishment in the capital, the Daegu Contemporary Art Festival opened in 1974, providing artists with the freedom to create Experimental artworks that embraced new technologies like video and to harness the natural environment as an alternative site for making art, outside the gallery and beyond the city.

Tides of resistance also extended to capitalist ideas of progress built on a brewing technophilia and foreign cultural influences. Works in the adjoining Thannhauser Gallery explore how Experimental artists such as Lee Seung-taek incorporated materials and methods grounded in fast-disappearing folk and traditional culture, and how they challenged preconceived ideas of art by transforming them into works of art. Altogether, they draw attention to the tension between tradition and modernity, art and non-art, and assimilation and inheritance at a time when many were targets for eradication as part of the state’s modernization project.

*Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s* is co-organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea. The exhibition is cocurated by Kyung An, Associate Curator, Asian Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, New York, and Kang Soojung, Senior Curator, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, and supported by Bellara Huang, Curatorial Assistant, Exhibitions, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation.

Learn more about this exhibition from curator Kyung An on the Guggenheim Digital Guide, available for free on the Bloomberg Connects app. Content is available in English, Español, and 普通话.

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Join curator Kyung An as she discusses how artistic experimentation evolved amid Korea’s changing sociopolitical scene of the 1970s.

#ExperimentalArtInKorea

# Daegu Contemporary Art Festival

From 1974 to 1979, the Daegu Contemporary Art Festival became the preeminent venue for Experimental art in Korea. It was launched in the city of Daegu, in southeast Korea, through the collective, voluntary participation of local artists, including Lee Kang-So, a former member of AG. Seventy artists took part in the first festival, which, by the time of its last installment, in 1979, would grow into a large-scale event featuring works by more than two hundred artists from Korea as well as Japan. The passion of the festival's founders reverberated nationwide, inspiring the emergence of similar festivals in different cities.

The Daegu festival was unique in that the surrounding natural environment constituted the backdrop for many site-specific artworks. For example, to create *Poplar Event* (1977), documented in photographs in the nearby vitrine, Park Hyunki sprinkled quicklime on the shadows cast by eight poplar trees, demonstrating how the movement of the branches and the shift in the shadows over time revealed the vitality inherent within nature. The festival also emerged as an important early venue for video. Its fourth iteration, in 1978, was the first to include works of video art, many of which investigated notions of temporality and corporeality by recording the passage of time or the repetitive movements of the body.

Lee Hyangmi

b. 1948, Daegu; d. 2007, Daegu

*Color Itself*, 1970s

Three panels of acrylic on paper

Daegu Art Museum

Lee Hyangmi graduated from Hongik University, Seoul, with a degree in “Western,” or oil-based, painting in 1971. Soon afterward, she moved back to her hometown, Daegu, where she participated in smaller-scale exhibitions with other local artists. At *Exposé* (1973), for instance, she presented *Dribbles* (1973), which she created by applying paint to vinyl and glass and allowing it to drip downward in thin streams. This process of dripping or spilling paint onto a surface would become Lee’s primary method of pursuing the “objecthood of color,” as she described it, and anticipated the creation of her later series *Color Itself*. As seen here, cascades of paint overlap by chance, transforming from mere colored materials into veritable objects composed of “color itself.”

Lee was an active participant in the Daegu Contemporary Art Festival from its inception in 1974, and in 1975 she cofounded the Daegu-based artists’ group 35/128 (the name refers to the latitude and longitude coordinates of the city of Daegu). When asked why she practiced Experimental art, Lee answered, “At a time when so many well-known artists have already enjoyed so much freedom and achieved so much, I wanted to do something a young person would do.”

Lee Kang-So

b. 1943, Daegu

*Painting 78-1*, 1978

Color video, silent, 29 min., 25 sec.

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Lee Kang-So spent some time in Seoul after graduating from Seoul National University in 1966, actively partaking in the erupting avant-garde art scene as a member of AG and the leader of the group Sincheje (New System). He eventually moved south to his hometown of Daegu, where he played a key role in founding the Daegu Contemporary Art Festival. In 1978, with fellow artists Choi Byungso, Kim Youngjin, and Park Hyunki, Lee made his first foray into video with *Painting 78-1*. All these artists' films (on view in this gallery) debuted that same year at the fourth Daegu festival.

Here, we see Lee position a pane of glass in front of the camera and then film himself painting onto the glass, filling the screen with paint. The viewer's vantage point is set between the camera and the glass, allowing one to observe the act of painting from the back of the canvas, thus inverting the typical relationship of viewer to artwork. By confronting painting, one of the oldest forms of creative production, through the new processes of performance and video, Lee traversed all three mediums while contemplating the relation between transience, transformation, and presence, a question that would preoccupy him throughout the 1970s.

Park Hyunki

b. 1942, Osaka; d. 2000; Daegu

*Untitled (Reflection Series) No. 2-6*, 1979

Color video, with sound, 16 min., 43 sec.

Collection of the artist's estate

Leaving Seoul in 1974 for his hometown of Daegu, Park Hyunki looked to the natural environment to experiment with the new medium of video. In 1978, alongside Lee Kang-So and Kim Youngjin, he exhibited works of video art at the fourth Daegu Contemporary Art Festival, the first group exhibition of this medium in Korea. To make *Untitled (Reflection Series)*, Park placed a rectangular mirror onto the Nakdong riverbed, shooting the movement of the water from sunset to sundown. Filling the picture with only the mirror and the surrounding wavelets, Park created a frame within a frame—in effect, a smaller screen set within the larger screen of the monitor. Boundaries blur or demarcate, depending on the moment. As gentle ripples wash over the screen in broad daylight, the outer edges of the mirror seem to dissolve; at twilight, however, the shiny surface of the mirror contrasts distinctly with the darker colors of the river. The mirror allows Park to create layers of images: the background riverbank, the image of the trees captured by the mirror, and the reflection of the mirror itself back onto the water. Park's incorporation of the Nakdong River into the work also offered an engagement with nature at a time when Korea's postwar program of modernization was at its height.

Kim Youngjin

b. 1946, Daegu

*1978-1, 1978*

Color video, silent, 14 min., 53 sec.

Collection of the artist

# Space and Time (ST)

The Space and Time Fine Arts Group, known more commonly as Space and Time, or ST, came together in 1970 with artist Lee Kun-Yong at its helm. The group was soon joined by the likes of Sung Neung Kyung, Kim Yongmin, and Nam Sanggyun. Alongside exhibitions of their work, ST members organized discursive gatherings focusing on art theory and philosophy, such as artist Brian O'Doherty's "Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space" (1976), originally published in the monthly magazine *Artforum*.

ST artists worked across diverse mediums and styles, and while they never professed to having any overtly political intentions, according to the art critic and ST Group member Kim Bok Young, their work was shaped by the tumultuous sociopolitical landscape of the 1960s and the repression of civil liberties in the 1970s. Some ST artists came to be known for their performance-based works, or "events" (for more, see the chronology "Performance Art in Korea" in this gallery). Using simple actions drawn from the everyday—walking, eating, reading, measuring—they turned to the body as a site of existential affirmation, liberated from the habits or purposes dictated by social conventions or capitalist principles. Photography, with its ability to capture and document precise gestures, emerged as another medium of choice. The ST ceased its activities in 1981, unable to sustain momentum against the politically oriented realism of Minjung, or "people's," art.

Counterclockwise, from nearest:

Lee Kun-Yong  
b. 1942, Sariwon

*The Method of Drawing 76-1 (Drawn from Behind)*, 1978  
Oil-based marker pen on plywood  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

*The Method of Drawing 76-1-79-1*, 1979  
Oil-based marker pen on plywood  
Wilks Family Collection

*The Method of Drawing 76-1-78-1*, 1978  
Oil-based marker pen on plywood  
Private collection

To create the series *The Method of Drawing*, Lee Kun-Yong stood behind a plywood panel as tall as himself and reached over its top edge, using a black marker pen to fill in the front of the panel to the extent that was physically possible. As evident in the photographs comprising *The Method of Drawing 76-1* (1976/2019) nearby, once finished, he sawed off the colored-in section of the panel and repeated the act until he had produced five such fragments. These sections were then restacked and the plywood board reconstructed. The stacked format of the works accentuates their human scale, while the plywood, a commonplace material, serves as an index of the artist's body.

Lee carried out *The Method of Drawing* between 1976 and 1979, which was a period of intense output for him as a leading figure of the ST Group. His performance-based works often repeated seemingly mundane gestures—standing, mark-making, counting—within set parameters, such as the physical restrictions he put in place to make *The Method of Drawing 76-4 (Drawn While Untying the Splint)* (1976/1980), hanging nearby. It is worth noting that the series was created at the height of the authoritarian Yushin regime, when the reach of state power affected not only one's physical being but also one's ideological and psychological realms.

Lee is also one of the first Korean artists who considered photography to be instrumental to the experience of performance art, as seen in *Body Drawing 76-1*. Part drawing, part performance, it offers a choreographed documentation of the work's creation for which the "method" used is as essential as the final output.

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Access a slow-looking exercise related to *The Method of Drawing 76-1 (Drawn from Behind)*.

Kim Youngjin

b. 1946, Daegu

*10/2/1978*, 1978

Twenty-eight chromogenic prints, forty-four plaster sculptures, and vitrine of aluminum and wood

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

To create *10/2/1978*, Kim Youngjin poured plaster onto recessed parts of his body and allowed it to dry. The work itself is composed of the resulting forty-four plaster sculptures, displayed in a tablelike vitrine, as well as twenty-eight photographs Kim took to record the process. By combining three-dimensional sculpture with photography, *10/2/1978* allows the viewer to relate the sculptures to both the body and the artist's actions while also laying bare the duality of existence and absence.

*10/2/1978* premiered in 1978 at the fourth Daegu

Contemporary Art Festival, where it appeared alongside the video work *1978-1*, on view nearby. The latter records

Kim pressing his naked body against a pane of glass and then tracing the area of contact with a pen. As an early

participant of the festival and a member of the Daegu-based artists' group 35/128, Kim's experiments integrated a range of techniques, including sculpture, photography, video, and performance, eventually arriving at action itself as a medium of art.

Lee Kun-Yong

b. 1942, Sariwon

*The Method of Drawing 76-4 (Drawn While Untying the Splint),*  
1976/1980

Pencil on paper and gelatin silver print

Private collection

Lee Kun-Yong

b. 1942, Sariwon

*Logic of Hand*, 1975/2018

Four chromogenic prints; edition 1 of 2

Leeum Museum of Art, Seoul

Lee Kun-Yong introduced “logic” as the frame for his performances, applying it to the concept of an “event,” which he described as an encounter that was unburdened from a predetermined purpose or context. By repeating mundane acts according to his own logic, this body of work sought to entirely rethink action itself.

*Logic of Hand* shows how the movement and form of two hands can, through logic, be transformed into a single entity. Opening and closing the fingers so that they touch, separate, and come together again in various combinations and permutations illustrates the significance of social hierarchy—that is, how the status of each finger changes depending on its position in relation to the thumb, the privileged site that conjoins two hands. It has been suggested that by reworking his structural understanding of his own body, Lee covertly manifested his resistance to Park Chung Hee’s authoritarian regime, which insisted on standardizing people’s thoughts and controlling the body.

Lee Kun-Yong

b. 1942, Sariwon

*Logic of Place*, 1975/2019

Four chromogenic prints

Seoul Museum of Art

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In *Logic of Place*, Lee drew a circle in an athletic field and repeatedly moved into and out of it. When inside the circle, he spoke the word “here”; when outside, he said “there.” Walking around the circle, he repeated the words “where” several times and then left the scene altogether, in effect, disappearing. The positions of “here” and “there,” as defined by the artist’s words, changed according to his movements, creating a new relationship between body and place while also demonstrating how language can be used to differentiate contexts.

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Access a slow-looking exercise related to this work.

Lee Kun-Yong

b. 1942, Sariwon

*The Method of Drawing 76-1*, 1976 / 2019; edition 3 of 12

Seven chromogenic prints mounted on Kappa board

Courtesy Pace Gallery

# “Events” before “Performance”

In the 1970s, many Experimental artists reimagined the body as an artistic medium, embracing corporeality as the most effective means to overcoming the separation of mind and body that constituted the defining premise of modernism. They used the term “event”—which entered the Korean art lexicon alongside “happening” in the late 1960s and was emblematic of that period’s international Fluxus movement—to describe a variety of action-based performances. In specific, ST artists pursued an art of pure action by simply reenacting mundane gestures and carrying out everyday activities. Artist Lee Kun-Yong did so within a prescribed “logic” that was free from a predetermined purpose and preexisting system. This concept, which he called “event logical,” became the dominant theory behind a series of his performances that began with *Indoor Measurement* and *Same Area* in 1975.

Other examples of events, documented in the vitrine and the chronology “Performance Art in Korea,” include Chang Suk Won and Yu Sangseon’s *Marriage Event* (1977), in which the couple turned their own wedding into a work of art, collapsing art into life. Outdoor “event” thrived as well, in particular at the Daegu Contemporary Art Festival, which inspired artists like Kim Munja to imitate the actions of washing laundry in nature while wearing the traditional costume *hanbok*.

From left:

Nam Sanggyun  
b. 1947, Daejeon

*Matter I*, 1973/2001  
Acrylic and cigarette butts  
Nam Eun Sol

*Matter II*, 1973/2001  
Acrylic and matchsticks  
Nam Eun Sol

Nam Sanggyun, a member of the ST Group, considered himself unfortunate to be an artist living in what he described as “uninspiring times.” He created *Matter I* and *Matter II* from a desire to engulf his lived reality in flames and to leave behind traces of his artwork, thus choosing extinguished cigarettes and burnt matchsticks as his mediums. To acquire these materials, he scoured music venues to collect cigarette butts discarded in ashtrays, and he set fire to full boxes of matches. Nam then stacked the materials inside framed acrylic boxes, in which domestic and foreign cigarettes, yellowed filters, and partly burnt matches commingle to create unexpected shapes. The artist’s intention was not to present a particular arrangement of materials but, rather, to display a process by which forms emerge by chance, acted on by circumstances outside our control. The cigarettes and matches thus express the sense of futility that much of Korean society felt at this time in their nation’s history.

Sung Neung Kyung

b. 1944, Yesan

*Newspapers: After 1st of June 1974, 1974*

Two acrylic boxes and four newsprint panels

ARKO Art Center

An active member of the ST Group, Sung Neung Kyung used the technique of cutting to clandestinely resist the Korean government's efforts to suppress and control the public. In *Newspapers: After 1st of June 1974*, Sung specifically addressed the Park Chung Hee administration's censorship of the press throughout the 1970s. To stage the monthlong performance, which took place during the third ST Exhibition, Sung affixed four white panels to the gallery walls and positioned one blue and one clear acrylic box before them. Each day, the artist used a razor blade to cut out all the articles from the daily newspaper *Dong-a ilbo*, leaving behind only the broadsheet's masthead, advertisements, and comic strips. The excised articles were placed in the blue box, and the skeletal remnants of the paper were pinned to the wall, where they would remain for the rest of the day. On the following day, they would be taken down and thrown into the clear box, to be replaced on the wall by that day's newspaper.

This performance offered a means of criticizing the dictatorial regime at a time when open dissent was not possible. The artist proved prescient when six months later, *Dong-a ilbo* printed an edition of the newspaper with all the advertisements left blank. This was organized in protest against the coercive move by the government to make advertisers withdraw from *Dong-a ilbo* as the newspaper began to openly criticize the state's tightening control over media. As Sung explained, he "sought to invalidate the social power structure through the act of clipping newspapers . . . during a period of time when there was only one path of communication."

Sung Neung Kyung

b. 1944, Yesan

*Reading Newspapers*, 1976

Twelve gelatin silver prints mounted on wood panel with  
masking tape

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Kim Youngjin

b. 1946, Daegu

*10/2/1978*, 1978

Twenty-eight gelatin silver prints, forty-four plaster sculptures, and vitrine of aluminum and wood

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

To create *10/2/1978*, Kim Youngjin poured plaster onto recessed parts of his body and allowed it to dry. The work itself is composed of the resulting forty-four plaster sculptures, displayed in a tablelike vitrine, as well as twenty-eight photographs Kim took to record the process. By combining three-dimensional sculpture with photography, *10/2/1978* allows the viewer to relate the sculptures to both the body and the artist's actions while also laying bare the duality of existence and absence.

*10/2/1978* premiered in 1978 at the fourth Daegu

Contemporary Art Festival, where it appeared alongside the video work *1978-1*, on view nearby. The latter records

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participant of the festival and a member of the Daegu-based artists' group 35/128, Kim's experiments integrated a range

of techniques, including sculpture, photography, video,

and performance, eventually arriving at action itself as a medium of art.

Top row, from left:

Sung Neung Kyung  
b. 1944, Yesan

*Apple*, 1976

Seventeen gelatin silver prints with marker pen  
Daejeon Museum of Art

*Ruler*, 1975

Gelatin silver print  
Collection of the artist

Bottom row, from left:

Sung Neung Kyung  
b. 1944, Yesan

*Here*, 1975

Eighteen gelatin silver prints  
Collection of the artist

*Mirror*, 1975

Gelatin silver print  
Collection of the artist

To create *Here*, Sung Neung Kyung dangled a rectangular mirror from a homemade portable stand, which he positioned in the middle of his neighborhood alley. He stood before the mirror and captured himself in the act of taking the photograph, with the street as his backdrop and the image itself framed by the view in front of him. He then proceeded to pivot by a small degree at a time, each time taking a shot until he had made a 360-degree panorama of sorts, with his faceless, enigmatic self at the center.

The profundity of the question “Where is here?” resonates particularly strongly when we note that the world surrounding Sung—one-story brick houses with windows made of *hanji* (mulberry paper) and bicycles bearing straw baskets—was fast disappearing. The notion of “here” is as nebulous as it is unchanging, displaying Sung’s interest in the idea of tautology, which dictates that a statement is true by virtue of its own logic. In this light, photography, with the camera as a tool for documenting the truth, emerges as a vital medium of choice. This work debuted together with *Ruler* and *Mirror* (both 1975) at the fourth ST Exhibition.

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Access a slow-looking exercise related to *Apple*.

From left:

Choi Byungso

b. 1943, Daegu

*Untitled 9870000*, 1978

Color video, silent, 6 min., 35 sec.

Seoul Museum of Art

Lee Hyeonjae

b. 1947, Daegu

*Untitled*, 1978

Color video, silent, 13 min., 47 sec.

Collection of the artist

# Inverting Tradition

As the young nation grappled with the lingering impact of the Japanese occupation (1910–45), the division of the peninsula into north and south after the Korean War (1950–53), nationwide programs of modernization, and an influx of Western culture, the question “What is Korean-ness?” inevitably emerged among artists and citizens alike. The Park Chung Hee regime actively sought to foster a collective nationalist identity through culture, reinventing traditions and evoking past glories to serve its own ambitions.

Even though avant-garde art originated in the rejection of existing traditions, a rediscovery of the latter provided a path forward for some Experimental artists. In the late 1950s, Lee Seung-taek, inspired by folk objects and artifacts he saw at the National Folk Museum, turned to godret stones (loom weights), the *seonghwangdang* (a sacred stone cairn), and *onggi* (earthenware pots) to create, in the words of the artist, “my own Korea within the world.” Declaring that “the most local is the most universal,” he attached artistic value to shamanistic and folk traditions, which were targeted for eradication as part of the state’s modernization project. Others turned to the aesthetics of *saekdong* (the colorful stripes seen on traditional Korean clothing) and *dancheong* (decorative multicoloring used on religious or royal architecture) to explore questions of identity in this period of unprecedented change.

Han Youngsup

b. 1941, Kaecheon

*Dancheong and Concrete*, 1969

Oil on canvas

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Han Youngsup presented *Dancheong and Concrete* at his first solo exhibition, in 1969, which was also called *Dancheong and Concrete*. A daring white space bisects the canvas, which is painted with bluish hues and colorfully patterned areas resembling *dancheong*, a form of decoration seen on traditional Korean architecture. By juxtaposing the motif of *dancheong* with that of the most prominent building material of his time, concrete, Han embraced a distinct form of artistic creation that married past and present understandings of “Korean-ness.” Alongside a handful of other abstract painters in the Nonkkol Group, a precursor to the Sinjeon Group whose object-based works and happenings are shown downstairs on Tower Level 4, Han’s creative process continued to explore the union of the traditional and the modern through material and form in painting.

Ha Chong-Hyun

b. 1935, Sancheong

*Naissance-B*, 1967

Oil and collage on canvas

Collection of the artist

Lee Seung-taek

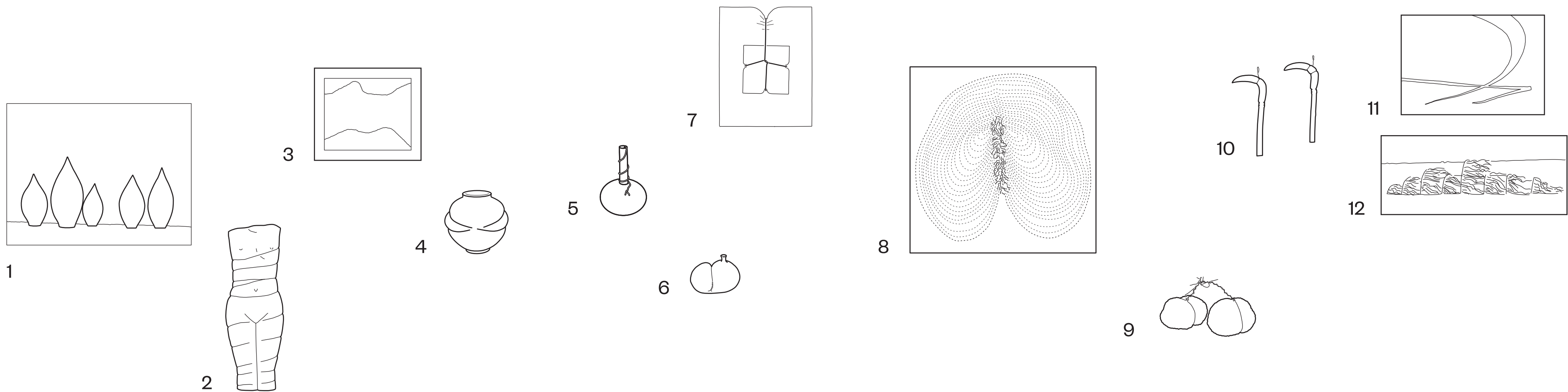
b. 1932, Yesan

*Paper Tree*, 1970s

Mulberry paper (*hanji*) and tree branch

The Rachofsky Collection

After studying sculpture at Hongik University, graduating in 1965, Lee Seung-taek received several commissions from the Korean government to create works of public sculpture. This task honed his interests in large-scale pieces that incorporated a diversity of materials, including pottery, plastic, and glass. In the 1970s, however, immateriality became the center of Lee's concept of "non-sculpture," in which he sought to break away from a conventionally materials-based practice and instead present a "situation" or a "condition" as art, most often by embracing fire, smoke, and wind as his mediums of choice. Works in his *Wind* series employ strips of *hanji* (mulberry paper) or fabric that are allowed to flap and flutter in the blowing wind, alluding to the traditional Korean pastime of kite flying. The actual works of art, however, are as much these physical materials as they are the flow of air embodied by their movement. Lee showed the *Wind* series at the second AG Exhibition, in 1971, and went on to present the works internationally at the eleventh São Paulo Biennial that same year.



Lee Seung-taek  
b. 1932, Yesan

1. *Untitled*, 1969/early 1990s  
Gelatin silver print  
Guggenheim Abu Dhabi GAD.2021.00040
2. *Torso*, 1978  
Bronze  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai
3. *Untitled*, 1979  
Paper and wood frame  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai
4. *Tied Ceramic*, 1975  
Porcelain  
Obayashi Collection
5. *Tied White Porcelain (Liquor Bottle)*, 1975  
Porcelain  
Kim Minjung Collection
6. *White Porcelain*, 1979  
Porcelain  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai

7. *Tied Art Magazine Gonggan*, 1976  
Canvas, magazine, and rope  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai
8. *Untitled*, 1972  
Rope on canvas  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea
9. *Tied Stone*, 1958  
Stone and wire  
Kim Minjung Collection
10. *Untitled*, 1962  
Metal, wood, and rope  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai
11. *Wind Series Drawings*, 1971  
One of six watercolor drawings on paper  
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea
12. *Wind*, 1971  
Gelatin silver print  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai

Lee Seung-taek's radical experiments with "non-sculptures" shun the modern in favor of the folkloric and the vernacular. Notable among the techniques represented by the works on this wall is his practice of tying or binding. He began tying in the 1960s and continues to do so today in his pursuit to transform an object "from a shape (*hyeongtae*) to a condition (*sangtae*)." He has drawn inspiration from godret stones (*godeuraetdol*), the hanging warp weights used in traditional Korean textile weaving, and has stated that his wish to bind objects of all kinds is motivated by the idea that "any object will transform its shape by contracting and expanding if it is tied with string, meaning that ordinary material can become a work of art through the act of tying things together." *Tied Stone*, for example, transforms a solid object into something malleable, while in *Torso*, the act of binding reveals the latent contraction and expansion of the human body. In *Tied Art Magazine Gonggan*, Lee took as his subject Korea's leading journal of contemporary art and architecture, making a subtle critique of popular domestic and foreign trends in art.

Lee Seung-taek

b. 1932, Yesan

*Untitled (Sprout)*, 1963/2018

Six painted earthenware sculptures

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi GAD.2021.00038

The *Onggi* series, which Lee Seung-taek began in 1961, turns to the eponymous glazed-earthenware vessels that are traditionally used in Korean households to store, ferment, and serve food. To create the works, Lee sought out specialists skilled in this particular craft at a time when artisanship was disappearing, giving way to the increasing demand for mass-produced goods. Removed from their intended function, Lee's *onggi* appear unconventional in size and shape, though their blaze-like patterns in terracotta red are reminiscent of regular *onggi*. Works in the series have been exhibited in various ways. At times, as here, they are placed on the gallery floor, like traditional sculpture; at other times, they are hung on the wall or from the ceiling. A related photograph, on view nearby, illustrates how Lee originally arranged *Untitled (Sprout): en plein air*. Taking art outside, Lee released his “non-sculptures” from the physical, conceptual, and commercial confines of the gallery space.

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Access a slow-looking exercise related to this work.

# Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s

This exhibition presents the groundbreaking body of avant-garde practices from Korea known broadly as Experimental art (*silheom misul*). Beginning in the mid-1960s, young artists of the era, who came of age in the decades immediately following the Korean War (1950–53), coalesced in search of the new. Both as individuals and in collectives, they broke definitively—in form and discourse—with the dominant abstract style of their predecessors, which had been embraced by the Korean art establishment but no longer embodied the spirit and urgency of the avant-garde. Encountering novel visual languages in newly available print media from abroad, these artists redefined the boundaries of traditional painting and sculpture and embraced innovative and often provocative approaches to art through performance, installation, photography, and video. Their genre-defying output, which waned in momentum in the late 1970s, would gain wider recognition only later, in the early 2000s, when it was given the name “Experimental art” by the influential art historian Kim Mikyung.

Through a loose network of self-organized groups, in the city of Seoul and beyond, Experimental artists created alternate frameworks for making art and organizing exhibitions, shunning state-established platforms like the annual National Art Exhibition (Gukjeon). They engaged with pressing issues such as subjectivity in an age of modernization and globalization and the expression of individual will at the fringes of an authoritarian state. The 1960s and the 1970s were a period of exceptional change in South Korea. Civil unrest paved the way for Park Chung Hee to seize power in a coup in 1961, while the young republic grappled with ongoing tensions with North Korea, the normalization of relations with its former colonizer Japan, and an unpopular military involvement in Vietnam. At the same time, rapid urbanization, the rise of a middle class, and a sudden influx of foreign goods and cultural influences collided with the nationalist ideology and increasingly repressive censorship of the state. Yet, even as their challenges against the status quo were at times met with backlash, Experimental artists never lost sight of themselves as the protagonists of a living history and a burgeoning interconnected world, practicing at the forefront of the international avant-garde while developing a form of expression that was rooted in local, everyday experience. What emerges is the story of how this generation of young Korean artists harnessed the power of art to confront and reimagine an ever-shifting present.

## The Global Village

Experimental artists exhibited extensively abroad, notably at the Paris and the São Paulo biennials, but also in Japan, Australia, and beyond. Artworks exhibited on this level, including Lee Kun-Yong’s deracinated tree *Corporal Term* (1971/2023) and Park Hyunki’s *Untitled (TV Stone Tower)* (1980), speak to styles and concerns that were central to global trends in art and critical discourses of the era. The practices of these artists invite dialogue with those of their international contemporaries working in Mono-ha, Arte Povera, Conceptual art, Supports/Surfaces, and Land art—all movements with which Experimental artists intersected, both at home and abroad, facilitated by increased commercial travel and advances in telecommunication.

Experimental artists harbored ambitions to be at the forefront of this shifting landscape and to position Seoul at the center of the international avant-garde. In 1974, members of the Korean Avant Garde Association, or AG (active 1969–75), organized the Seoul Biennial, featuring the work of more than sixty artists as part of its effort to “foster global artistic exchange while pledging to become the genuine platform for Korean contemporary art.” The first Seoul Biennial would, however, also be the last, although the fifth and final edition of the Daegu Contemporary Art Festival, held in 1979, would partly achieve this goal of internationalization by welcoming the participation of Japanese artists. In fact, in 1975, the AG, which played an influential role in the development of Experimental art, would hold its fourth and final exhibition, with only four artists participating, signaling the waning momentum for the movement. And yet, many would continue to develop their own individual artistic practices, in a testament to their unwavering vision and spirit of experimentation.

*Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s* is co-organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea. The exhibition is cocurated by Kyung An, Associate Curator, Asian Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, New York, and Kang Soojung, Senior Curator, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, and supported by Bellara Huang, Curatorial Assistant, Exhibitions, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation.

Learn more about this exhibition from curator Kyung An on the Guggenheim Digital Guide, available for free on the Bloomberg Connects app. Content is available in English, Español, and 普通话.

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Join curator Kyung An as she discusses the international reach of Korea's Experimental artists.

#ExperimentalArtInKorea

# In Paris

The Paris Biennial, founded in 1959 by the French Ministry of Culture, distinguished itself from other international biennials by imposing an age limit of thirty-five on participating artists, thus signaling its commitment to young and emerging practitioners. When Korean artists first took part, in 1961—their debut at any biennial of contemporary art—artists, critics, and the press celebrated their long-awaited initiation into the “Olympics of avant-garde artists.” While Korean artists exhibited widely within the proliferating biennial circuit of the 1970s, including at the influential São Paulo Biennial, the Parisian event’s age restriction meant that the artist selection was more focused, providing an unparalleled opportunity for the young Experimental artists to show their work abroad.

As made evident by the archival materials on view in the vitrine on this wall, Lee Kun-Yong, Shim Moon-seop, Lee Kang-So, and Park Hyunki were embraced as exemplars of the “international avant-garde” in Paris, affirming the expansion of geopolitical and cultural centers informed by theories of communication and the emerging global media network. The world, as prominent Korean art critic Kim In Whan argued, had become “synchronous . . . in thought and in time.” However, the Western critics’ gaze sometimes betrayed orientalist assumptions that overlooked local contexts of production and grouped Korean artists together with their Japanese counterparts.

Lee Kun-Yong

b. 1942, Sariwon

*Corporal Term*, 1971/2023

Tree, soil, gravel, and concrete

Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai

Lee Kun-Yong's *Corporal Term* presents a fragment, or "term," of the world's "corporal" body that exists interdependently with its surroundings. It was first created onsite at the National Museum of Modern Art (now the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea) for the Korean Fine Arts Association Exhibition in 1971. There, Lee hauled in a tree that had been uprooted as part of a nationwide development project. Exploring the boundaries and interplay between the body and its surroundings, the work has since existed in various iterations, remade almost every time it is shown. Such was the case at the eighth Paris Biennial, in 1973, at which Lee was one of only two Korean artists invited to participate, and for which he obtained a local tree from a city park to recreate the work onsite.

*Corporal Term* garnered much acclaim, as evident in the selection of press clippings and articles in the vitrine nearby. However, Lee and his fellow Korean artist at the biennial, Shim Moon-seup, could not escape the orientaling gaze of European critics, who not only tended to group them with their Japanese contemporaries but also perceived in their practices a supposed return to or rumination on nature. To Lee, however, his use of raw materials indicated a desire to explore the present relationship between the body and the world rather than to meditate on natural forms or traditions.

*This work was fabricated with a sustainably sourced Norway spruce, which was already intended to be felled following its natural death. It was acquired locally from Milanville, Pennsylvania.*

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Access a slow-looking exercise related to this work.

Kim Kulim

b. 1936, Sangju

*Wiping Cloth*, 1974/2001

Color video, silent, 2 min., 7 sec.

Collection of the artist

After the Fourth Group disbanded in August 1970 due to government surveillance, the group's "chief," Kim Kulim, relocated to Tokyo, holding a solo exhibition at the Shirota Gallery (1973) and participating in the ninth International Biennial Exhibition of Prints (1974). Kim had already shown his work on the burgeoning international circuit, including at the seventh Paris Biennial (1971) and the twelfth São Paulo Biennial (1973), at each event presenting works that continued his investigations into ideas of cycles and transference. In *Wiping Cloth*, he took a clean cloth and wiped a dirty table, in silence, until the cloth itself became completely tattered and disintegrated. Kim's action transferred the grime, dust, and soot of everyday urban life from the tabletop onto the ragged pieces of cloth left lying on the surface, remnants that affirm the phenomenon of transference. Kim documented his performance via the new medium of video, which he premiered at the exhibition *Impact Art Video Art 74* (1974) in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Shim Moon-seup

b. 1943, Tongyeong

*Opening Up*, 1974–75

Twelve cloth panels abraded with sandpaper

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Shim Moon-seup's sculptures started garnering attention in the Korean art world soon after his graduation from Seoul National University in 1965. He furthered his reputation by participating in each of the exhibitions organized by the Korean Avant Garde Association (AG) between 1970 and 1972, showing works that incorporated his interest in material transformation. At three consecutive Paris Biennials (1971–75), as well as the thirteenth São Paulo Biennial (1975), Shim presented works that embraced natural materials such as dirt, trees, iron, and rocks. For instance, at the eighth Paris Biennial, in 1973, he showed *Relation*, a work composed of a large sheet of paper hanging from the wall, ripped in two pieces, with small stones placed onto the fallen bottom piece. An image of the work in the biennial catalogue can be seen in this gallery's vitrine.

*Opening Up*, which was included in the ninth Paris Biennial, in 1975, consists of twelve bare, uniformly sized canvases, sandpapered by the artist to varying states of worn-downness. The frayed surfaces embody the artist's time and labor and affirm the canvases' materiality; the work's title in Korean, *Hyeonjeon*, literally translates to "revealed before one's eyes." The temporality of action captured by the process of artistic creation, as Shim explains, "establish[es] new relations between different materials. The unknown uncertainty generated at this point even changes the surrounding environment and structures."

Above:

Lee Kang-so

b. 1943, Daegu

*Disappearance—Bar in the Gallery*, 1973

Performance, June 25–30, 1973, Myongdong Gallery, Seoul

Documentation from ten digital chromogenic prints

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

For nearly one week starting on June 25, 1973, Lee Kang-So staged a bar during the run of his solo exhibition at Myongdong Gallery in Seoul. Having purchased fixtures from his local bar, or *seonsooljip*, he installed them in the gallery space; there, Lee served *makkeolli* (traditional rice wine) and *anju* (bar snacks). Surviving black-and-white photographs of the opening night, as seen here, capture strangers and friends—among them artists Kim Kulim and Chung Chanseung—mingling, drinking, and conversing. These visitors, together with the fleeting experience of quotidian life, were the true subject of the work. Presented less than a year after Park Chung Hee's October 1972 declaration of martial law and the implementation of the Yushin Constitution, which banned political gatherings and censored the press, *Disappearance—Bar in the Gallery* turned the art gallery, if not art itself, into a sovereign space for the formation and enactment of individual and collective speech and expression. This work was originally meant to be presented at the ninth Paris Biennial, in 1975, but due to spatial constraints was replaced at the last minute with Lee's *Untitled 75031*, also on view in this gallery.

Park Hyunki

b. 1942, Osaka, Japan; d. 2000, Daegu

*Untitled (TV Stone Tower)*, 1982

Color video (silent), CRT monitor, and stones

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi GAD.2021.00043

Park Hyunki first encountered the art of Nam June Paik and other pioneering video artists in 1974, at the library operated by the United States Information Service center in Daegu. This experience had a lasting impact on his practice and developed his curiosity about television, a global commodity then becoming ubiquitous in Korean households. Park premiered his series *Untitled (TV Stone Tower)*, at the fifteenth São Paulo Biennial, in 1979, the first time a Korean artist was invited to exhibit in the video category. *Untitled (TV Stone Tower)* consists of several large stones and a CRT monitor, piled on top of one another in the shape of a *doltap* (stone tower). In Korea, *doltap* were traditionally erected at entrances to villages and temples to drive away evil spirits and beckon good fortune. The artist's first encounters with *doltap* occurred during the Korean War, when his family fled southward. The young Park saw the stone piles left by other refugees who had taken the same route, interpreting them as symbols of peace. By appropriating an architectural form harking back to cultural practices in premodern Korea, Park, who had graduated with a degree in architecture from Hongik University in 1961, seemed to interrogate the technophilia of the postwar era and the Park Chung Hee administration's ambitions for accelerated modernization.

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Access a slow-looking exercise related to this work.

Lee Kang-So

b. 1943, Daegu

*Untitled 75031*, 1975/2016

Wood, plaster, iron, rope, straw mat, *onggi* bowl, flour, chalk,  
and ten digital chromogenic prints

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

According to Lee Kang-So, when he conceived *Untitled 75031*, his creative production spoke to an awareness of his subjectivity in a world that was constantly forming and changing. Accordingly, this work considers transience, transformation, and the fluidity of presence, as evidenced by documentation of the work's initial installation at the National Museum of Modern Art (now the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea) in 1974. These photographs taken at the original presentation depict a chicken that had been borrowed from a local owner and placed in the gallery space, tethered to a wooden feeder on a straw mat. Spread across the floor was a white powdery substance that made visible the chicken's movements within this environment. The accompanying installation comprised these traces of presence minus the animal itself, which had been returned to its owner.

*Untitled 75031* is a tangible reminder of what is absent and of the past. The chicken's physical restriction, and ultimate disappearance, may be a metaphor for the severe censorship imposed on Korean citizens by Park Chung Hee's Yushin regime. Such nuances were, however, lost on a European audience when Lee presented *Untitled 75031* at the ninth Paris Biennial, in 1975. Although he received wide attention, the media were mostly fascinated by the live component of the piece, some even reporting, incorrectly, that Lee was monitoring the laying of an egg.

*No animals were used in the installation of this work at the Guggenheim.*

Park Hyunki

b. 1942, Osaka, Japan; d. 2000, Daegu

*Inclining Water*, 1979

Four digital prints; edition 3 of 10

Collection of the artist's estate

From left:

Lee Kun-Yong

b. 1942, Sariwon

Drawing for *Corporal Term*, 1971

Pen on paper

Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai

Drawing for *Corporal Term*, 1972

Pen on paper

Courtesy the artist and Gallery Hyundai

Documentary video of the fifteenth São Paulo Biennial  
featuring Choi Byungso, Lee Kun-Yong, and Park Hyunki, 1979  
Color video, silent, 28 min., 22 sec.

Art Research Center, National Museum of Modern and  
Contemporary Art, Korea, Gift of Park Sungwoo

# Remapping the World

Eager to partake in a globalizing world, Seoul hosted its first International Biennial Exhibition of Prints in 1970. Sponsored by the daily newspaper *Dong-a ilbo*, the exhibition featured works by artists from twenty-four countries. Likewise, Experimental artists also harbored ambitions to organize a biennial that would “foster global artistic exchange while pledging to become the genuine platform for Korean contemporary art.” Thus, in 1974, members of the Korean Avant Garde Association (AG) organized the Seoul Biennial, with participation by more than sixty artists from across the country.

According to AG’s statement of intent in the accompanying exhibition catalogue, while the biennial would begin as a domestic event, they hoped for a “global expansion” in subsequent years. Although the 1974 showing would ultimately be the Seoul Biennial’s only iteration, the desire to connect with artists outside Korea persisted. In 1979 the fifth and final Daegu Contemporary Art Festival, co-organized by Lee Kang-So (a former member of AG) and titled *The Artists Who Are Searching after the Future*, invited twelve Japanese artists to exhibit alongside their Korean contemporaries. Such efforts disempowered the mentality that true critique and validation could come only from outside, not from within.

Clockwise from left:

Shin Hakchul  
b. 1943, Gimcheon

*Scissors*, 1974

Ink, scissors, and colored thread on mulberry paper (*hanji*)  
on canvas

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

*Naught No. 5*, 1974

Newspaper clipping and colored tassel on canvas

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

*Naught No. 3*, 1974

Mulberry paper (*hanji*) and colored thread on canvas

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

*Naught No. 4*, 1974

Leather and plastic wallet containing paper fragments  
on canvas

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Shin Hakchul, who, as a key figure in the Minjung, or “people’s,” art movement of the 1980s, is thus in fact better known for his realist paintings, joined the Korean Avant Garde Association (AG) after graduating with a degree in “Western,” oil-based, painting from Hongik University in 1968. He is the only artist to have participated in all four AG Exhibitions, which took place between 1970 and 1975.

Shin premiered his *Naught* series at the Seoul Biennial in 1974. The title manifested a critique of the dominant style within the AG: although his fellow artists embraced the use of everyday objects, Shin recognized a tendency to intellectualize or neglect these objects’ relation to society and daily life. His work thus seeks to expose not only the physical properties and intrinsic nature of objects, but also the implicit messages they convey in ordinary contexts. The series often combines various images and, at times, multiple objects within a single composition, all the while incorporating aspects of Pop and Conceptual art. For example, by inserting torn pieces of paper into a plastic wallet in the manner of a child’s plaything, Shin commented on rampant consumerism and questioned the value of money in an increasingly capitalistic society.

Sung Neung Kyung

b. 1944, Yesan

세계전도, 世界顛倒, *An Upside-Down Map of the World*, 1974

Paper map

Seoul Museum of Art

More so than any other Experimental artist, Sung Neung Kyung exposed the machinations of power at work in the production of contemporary reality. For 세계전도, 世界顛倒, *An Upside-Down Map of the World*, the title of which repeats the same phrase in Korean, Chinese, and English, Sung carved a large paper map of the world into three hundred pieces, leaving intact only the original framing borders. He then pinned a random selection of the fragments onto a mount of the same size, creating a nonsensical, unreadable cartographic configuration.

When Sung made this work, he was investigating the contours of suppression and control in a series that relied on the technique of cutting. Among the works in this series is *Newspapers: After 1st of June 1974*, on view on Tower Level 4, which involved his cutting out all the articles from a daily broadsheet, leaving it devoid of any journalistic content. Indeed, when Sung first presented the work at the first Daegu Contemporary Art Festival, in 1974, he hung the new arrangement next to the hollowed-out, skeletal original; in subsequent exhibitions, he opted to place it on a platform. Carried out at a time of intense government surveillance and press censorship, Sung's works warn against the violence of deletion and comment on the paradoxes of a reality that was caught between immense possibility and unyielding constraint. In this work, the artist reimagines a new world order free from the centuries of geo- and cultural politics that had produced the world map as we know it. In the end, however, Sung's reworked map remains trapped in yet another frame.

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Access a slow-looking exercise related to this work.

Yeo Un

b. 1947, Jangseong; d. 2013, Seoul

*Work 74*, 1974

Wood frame with metal fittings and collage of magazine and newspaper clippings

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Yeo Un's *Work 74* responded directly to a tumultuous year—1974—one marked by runaway inflation and recession as a result of the worldwide oil crisis. In Korea, these economic conditions increased the gap between rich and poor as prices rose and growth dipped sharply, engendering calls for the end of the Yushin Constitution and prompting emergency corrective measures. Domestic social unrest was heightened by a number of corruption scandals, including the blacklisting of editors at the influential newspaper *Dong-a ilbo* for their critique of the government.

In *Work 74*, Yeo affixed clippings from newspapers and magazines to a double-casement window, forming them into a haphazardly piled-up mound resembling a trash heap. The battered window was then closed and fastened with a padlock, leaving the viewer able only to peer inside from an outside vantage point. Locked within it were articles from conservative newspapers, which failed to report accurately on the social realities of the day, as well as consumerist images from third-rate magazines portraying foreign politicians, nude women, and luxury goods. Presenting *Work 74* at the third ST Exhibition, and another similar work at the Seoul Biennial, both in 1974, Yeo, harnessed the powerful act of looking, laying bare a subjective point of view and presenting the complex accumulation of sociopolitical issues that marred this era. The work anticipated the figurative paintings for which he would become celebrated in the 1980s as a prominent figure in Minjung, or “people’s,” art, a realist movement that focused on lives of ordinary citizens.

Lee Kang-So

b. 1943, Daegu

*Untitled-075104*, 1975

Serigraph on acrylic board

Collection of the artist

Lee Kang-So

b. 1943, Daegu

*Untitled-075111*, 1975

Serigraph on acrylic board

Collection of the artist