

PYO GALLERY LA

PRESENTS

LEE, KANG-SO



Lee, Kang-So *From A River 99184 (1999)* Acrylic on Canvas 259 x 194 cms

JUNE 03, 2009--In Korea during the 1970's, an innovative stylistic movement in contemporary art was manifested among the young artist's of a post-war generation. While their society's culture was being dictated by an oppressive ruling regime as it had been for centuries, several young artists began an experimental feat to expand the boundaries of expression. In a time where even their thoughts and moralities were ruled by an iron fist, these artists dared to exploit social and political realities through alternative mediums and styles. Among this new generation of artists was Lee, Kang-So.

Like many Korean artists from this era, Lee, Kang-So was influenced by European and North American schools; specifically Impressionism, Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism and Conceptualism. In addition to his Pop Art prints, Lee produced large

scale conceptual installations, for example, *Untitled 75031* exhibited at the Paris Biennale in 1975. This was a conceptual project consisting of a live rooster tied to a stake and encompassed by a white chalk circle. Such works were less well received by Korean art critics and enthusiasts, much like how the French Impressionists were shunned just 50 years earlier. Lee understood that it was one goal to master foreign technique, but more important to create an identity for Korean contemporary art. To synthesize the East and West, Lee returned to painting, the most well respected art form in Asia, and continued to delve into the depths of conceptualism.

Inspired by contemporary movements while honoring tradition without appearing too conservative, Lee Kang So began a series of monochromatic, abstract seascapes while diluting oils and acrylics to emulate ancient Oriental ink painting. Lee's intent was to pay homage to naturalism. Naturalism in Asian art differs from the Western definition in that it refers to nature and not realism. Motifs of ducks, boats, and deer donned his canvases and soon individualized his style. With an impasto method, Lee "built" his seascapes with layers of calligraphic and painterly brushstrokes. The context is far from obvious, purposely forcing the viewer to ponder its complexity. A monochromatic palette further induced intrigue.

Scholars believed color restricted the imagination. Monochromatic tones have always been a distinctive characteristic of Asian paintings and in the 1970's it took a whole new direction. Vigorous, rhythmic brushstrokes on a gray, blue, or black and white scale were intended to ease the viewer into a meditative state. It is believed that eliminating "distractions" from color and contour induces a sense of reflection.

Lee, Kang-So's most recent ethereal paintings will be exhibited in Los Angeles for the first time since 1993 at **PYO GALLERY LA**. Be among the first to see works that helped shape an entire movement of contemporary expression at the opening reception on July 28, 2009 at 6:00 pm.

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