

## Planning on the "Lee Kang So 1989-2009 Exhibition"

Yongdae Kim

The exhibition "Lee Kang So 1989-2009" was organized to illuminate the paintings of the artist Lee Kang So, who has worked actively in the forefront of Korean contemporary art.

GALLERY HYUNDAI will present the artist's paintings dating from 1989 to 2009, while gonggan purple at Heyri, Paju exhibits over 100 pieces—mainly new paintings from 2009 and installations on the theme of Bunhwang Temple.

From the 1970s, when Korean contemporary art was in its early stage, Lee Kang So experimented with diverse genre including painting, printmaking, sculpture, video and performance. Particularly, his "The Chicken Performance (1975)," in which he borrowed a chicken from the home of the guard of the exhibition hall at the 1975 Paris Biennale, was an epochal incident that opened a new era for Korean contemporary art.

Such avant-garde works served as a momentum in art history, newly constituting a trend of Korean conceptual art, which then developed side-by-side with Mono-ha of Japan, Arte Povera of Italy, and Minimalism of the United States.

During his artistic career of more than 40 years, he has focused on two-dimensional works from around 1985 to the present. His paintings of this period broadened the possibilities for expressive paintings that are unique to Korea, and served as a process of interpreting the relationship between "the image and reality," which is an important topic in contemporary art.

The ducks, boats and houses that appear in these works were a perceptual freedom as they maintained their original meanings while they also created "independent realities of themselves." In his creative process, which rejected fixed definitions and endlessly strived for change and challenge, we can meet the world of the unknown and create "imaginary realities," one by one.

This means that based on his experimental and avant-garde attitude, he leaps over the dual structure of image and reality, and creates a simple and humble world. Here no process is intentional and only free imagination and infinite possibilities exist, not restricted by any image existing there.

Through this process, his works compress and purify diverse areas of art. By means of coexistence of dual factors such as east and west, past and present, image and reality, special and general, concept and perception in a single picture-plane, he reduces them to a "free process." Even amidst the endless conflict and pressure between the images that appear in the works and the reality, he creates a "delightful sense of place" through painterly acts of reconciliation. He discovers a fresh "wave" between the image and denial of the image.

He has an attitude that maintains independence in the act and methodology of painting, rather than resorting to tangled images, and objectifies such action. He has a sense of circulation, in which it is different from the first image, but does not leave that image completely. Furthermore, he has achieved a state of "emptiness" in which even the speed of his excellent brushwork and technique are used as a tool for modesty and simplicity. This means a "world of emptiness" in which one longs for nothing even in the most passionate moments.

Thus, this exhibition is intended to reveal the real appearance of true nature and serve as an artistic proposition in an era of hybridity and chaos through the most abundant period during Lee Kang So's 40 years of art work—his paintings from 1989 to 2009, and the Bunhwang Temple installation of 2009.

Yongdae Kim / phidias