

Press Release

Lee Kang-So

February 24th (sat) – April 7th (sat), 2024

Tokyo Gallery+BTAP | Tokyo

Tokyo Gallery+BTAP is pleased to announce a new exhibition by Lee KangSo, which marks his first solo exhibition in 24 years in Japan. Opening on Saturday, February 24th, the gallery will feature 8 new pieces from the artist.

Lee KangSo was born in Daegu, South Korea, in 1943. In 1965, he graduated from the painting department at Seoul University. He currently lives and works in Anseong, Gyeonggi-do. In South Korea in the 1950s, informalism was rising in popularity, led by the first post-war generation of artists. Lee, who came after this generation, left the authoritarian art circles of Seoul in 1969 and founded the avant-garde group Shincheje (New System), despite the difficult, repressive political circumstances. In 1974, he opened the Daegu Contemporary Art Festival in his hometown of Daegu, and contributed to the vitalization of experimental art in non-urban areas. To this day, the Daegu Contemporary Art Festival is highly regarded as a place where emerging artists present new avant-garde works. Lee is known for his experimental avant-garde works in performance and installation. One of his representative works is “Disappearance - Bar in the Gallery” which he first presented in Myongdong Gallery in 1973. The performance consisted of old bar furniture placed throughout the gallery with the artist serving drinks and food, as a way to co-experience the formation and disappearance of a moment between artist and viewer.

After this period, Lee began to research painting, and aspired to materialize the process of performance onto the flat, traditional painting surface. In the 1970s, he began experimenting with the medium of painting by pulling out the threads of the canvas, and using canvas that had been silkscreened. In the 1980s, he searched for new ways to create which deviated from the conventional uses of the brush acquired through traditional art education.

In the late 1980s, Lee began to take interest in nature, particularly its purity and liveliness. Since the 1990s, he has frequently used distinctive motifs such as ducks, floating boats, and deer. However, Lee does not simply depict them as subject matter, but rather elevates them creatively following strokes and the flow of energies. By ridding himself of the desire to depict, he applies a refined spirit and flexible physicality to create a world born from unfaltering brush strokes, reflecting the traditional Korean ideology of aestheticism (pungryu). Lee aspires to deviate from Western worldviews and share an intuition for truth and peace with viewers, in order for his work to be not simply a vehicle for communicating an ideology, but to become a structure in which the act of dialogue and participation creates energies that interact with each other.

Lee’s and other artists’ works of his time were part of a traveling exhibition titled “Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s–1970s” that was shown at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA) in May 2023 and New York’s Guggenheim Museum in August 2023. This year, the exhibition will travel to UCLA’s Hammer Museum in February. Additionally, a large-scale retrospective of Lee’s work is scheduled to open at the MMCA this October.

Join us for the exhibition’s opening reception on Saturday, March 8th, at 4 pm, with the artists in attendance. We eagerly anticipate your presence.



< The Wind Blows 22026 > (2022) Acrylic on canvas, 130 × 162 cm



< Serenity 220914 > (2022) Acrylic on canvas, 80 × 100 cm

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Opening Hours | (Tue–Sat) 12:00–18:00

Closed | Sun, Mon, Holidays

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