

2016 in Retrospect : 10 Asian Artists Who Made Their International Breakthrough

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Making it a year of career breakthrough: In 2016, international institutions all over the globe have hosted a high number of solo and group presentations and projects for the up-and-coming artists from the Asian continent, including some key moments in the artists' career up to date. We have made a list, in no particular order, of the 10 artists from the region for whom 2016 has been a busy and big year! And it goes without saying that these are also the artists to look forward to in 2017!

Kim Yong-Ik (b. 1947, Korea)



Artist Kim Yong-Ik. Courtesy of Kukje Gallery

For Kim Yong-Ik, a former student of the proclaimed Dansaekhwa artist Park Seo-Bo, 2016 is the year of "coming back". Kim Yong-Ik entered Korean painting circles in the mid-1970s with work influenced by Dansaekhwa, employing optical illusion of cotton cloth. Yet Kim perfectly displays the diversity of post-Dansaekhwa art in Korea through his deconstruction of values in modern and contemporary art. His works critique the outward perfection of the modernist ideal in the form of plant juice and doodles (displaying his stream of consciousness) onto a canvas of tediously calculated rows of perfect circles; a subversive disruption of the much studied art historical movement. In the late 1990s, the artist put a temporary halt on the production of his own art to concentrate his interest on local concerns and environmental art, while at the same time undergoing a critical review of his own art activities in light of Korean art history. This self-reflection led the artist in the 2010s to immerse himself in a new project consisting of the construction of a box, which is reminiscent of a coffin, and sealing inside, the residue of his work of four decades.

This year, Kim held a major retrospective spanning his entire artistic career at Imin Museum of Art (Seoul), which is also the first retrospective of Kim Yong-Ik's work in nearly 20 years, since his last solo exhibition in Kumho Museum of Art in 1997. Along with rave critical reviews of his solo exhibition of new works at Kukje Gallery (Seoul) which came shortly after, Kim has been recording stellar results at art fairs — selling out at Frieze Masters, FIAC, ART021, and Art Basel Miami Beach. This prominent rediscovery of a unique artist is a foreshadow of what more is to come next year.