

Exploring materiality of paper

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Chung Chang-sup's early works on view at Kukje Gallery in downtown Seoul

Courtesy of Kukje Gallery

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Along with the international attention on the Dansaekhwa, or the Korean monochrome movement, artist Chung Chang-sup (1927-2011), who devoted his life exploring the materiality of paper, is being rediscovered at a solo exhibition.

The exhibit, held at K1 and K2 of Kukje Gallery in downtown Seoul, features some 21 of Chung's works from his early works to the works he created a few years before his death in 2011. Spanning the artist's life, the exhibition offers a comprehensive perspective on Chung and his work, which changed and evolved over his life.

Yoo Jin-sang, professor at Kaywon School of Art and Design, said Chung changed his style about once every 10 years, broadening his experiments on the materiality of paper.

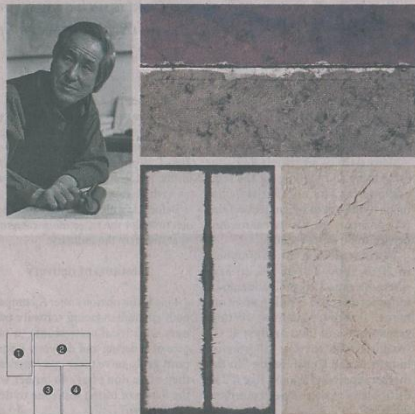
Born in Cheongju in 1927, Chung is one of the artists who led the modernization of Korean art. He

studied at the College of Fine Arts of Seoul National University. Back then, the curriculum was not divided into Oriental or Western painting. Chung was more attracted to Oriental techniques such as ink splash.

His earliest works in the 1950s and 60s were traditional oil paintings influenced by the Art Informel.

Chung's paper experiments began in the '70s, as he started using "dakjongi," or the Korean traditional mulberry paper. The encounter with mulberry paper was a turning point for Chung's artistic world. The artist described his connection to the Korean traditional paper as almost instinctive.

"When I first found dakjongi in the 1970s, I did not think 'I might just try this,' but it immediately made sense to me so naturally that I felt as though I had known dakjongi all along and something in me clicked. No sooner had I found it then I found myself absorbed in it," Chung said during a retrospective at



1 Artist Chung Chang-sup 2 Chung Chang-sup's "Meditation 91108" 3 Chung Chang-sup's "Tak 86921" 4 Chung Chang-sup's "Return 77-M" Courtesy of Kukje Gallery

the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in 2010.

Yoo explained the working process of the artist, which requires physical contact with the paper mache, which is clear in the "Return" series from the '70s.

"Chung purchased dakjongi dissolved in water and placed it on the canvas on the floor. He beat the paper paste endlessly until the fiber coagulates and takes shape," Yoo said. "While doing this, the artist's handprints are all over the canvas. The indentations created with hand movements are like brushstrokes of a traditional painting."

In the "Meditation" series, which he made in the '90s, Chung used more diverse dyes to add depth to the pieces. Previously he mainly used fiber from paper and the color was natural pale yellow, but he started to use natural pigments such as tobacco leaves and charcoal to reflect profoundness.

Chung's works embody his strong pursuit of the ideal of removing the

ego. The practice emphasizes a return to fundamental form in order to express an abstraction of Korean consciousness, the gallery said in a statement.

Chung's works have been received well internationally, including exhibitions at Galerie Perrotin Paris from June to July 2015 and Galerie Perrotin New York in November to December 2015.

Titled "Meditation," the Galerie Perrotin exhibitions shed light on the simplicity of Chung's work, which question the infinite depth of the painting, like an inner landscape.

Yoon Jin-sup, Honam University professor and Dansaekhwa expert, referred Chung's work as "placed within an ecological, cosmological and terrestrial perspective which is diametrically opposed to the formalist vision of Westerners."

The exhibit is on view through March 27. For more information, visit www.kukjegallery.com or call 02-735-8449.