

## The silent power of familiar landscapes

Artist **Roh Choong-hyun** devotes self to conventional painting in an art scene characterized by strong and varied use of different media and styles

By Lee Woo-young

Just as many people wish to escape from the usual routine and travel to remote places, many artists travel far in search of inspiration and a new style.

But for artist Roh Choong-hyun, the place where he lives is what motivates him to paint.

Since 2005, the artist has focused on portraying what most people would find mundane and familiar — landscapes of the capital city of Seoul — for his series “Prosaic Landscape.”

“I have always wanted to paint the Hangang River Park where I often go for walks,” said Roh during the press tour of his solo exhibition at Kukje Gallery in Seoul last Thursday. “I wanted to depict the places that seemed so fierce or serene to me depending on season changes.”

Starting from the northwestern neighborhood of Mangwon-dong, where his studio is located, he walks along the Hangang River and captures scenes with his old digital camera and transfers the images onto a canvas.

His portrayal of the features along the river — chain convenient stores, swimming pools and disaster relief centers — appear different to how we usually see them.

“A new scene emerges in me when I look at the photos of the river,” he said.

Through his reinterpretation, a snowy day at the reservoir in Mangwon-dong in “A Night in Reservoir” dons a mys-

terious yellow tone with buildings and structures barely showing through. A summer flood scene in “Flooded 3” is depicted like a faded photograph seen in an old newspaper.

Roh’s landscape paintings rarely feature people. “A Walk” is the only one featuring a person. But the person adds a variation to the otherwise mundane landscape.

Roh’s style hasn’t received much attention from the public because his faded, serene images are still unfamiliar to eyes more accustomed to colorful paintings.

But his paintings hold much significance in Korean art, which has seen few artists depicting social and political sentiments unique to Korean society, said Yoo Jin-sang, art critic and professor of Kaywon School of Art and Design.

“The 1990s is called the ‘absence of painting’ in Korean art. Paintings were led by the South Korean ‘Minjung Art’ movement that was resistant to political power in the modern history of Korea. It lacked artists who painted pure forms of paintings that portrayed people, places and things that are unique to Korea.

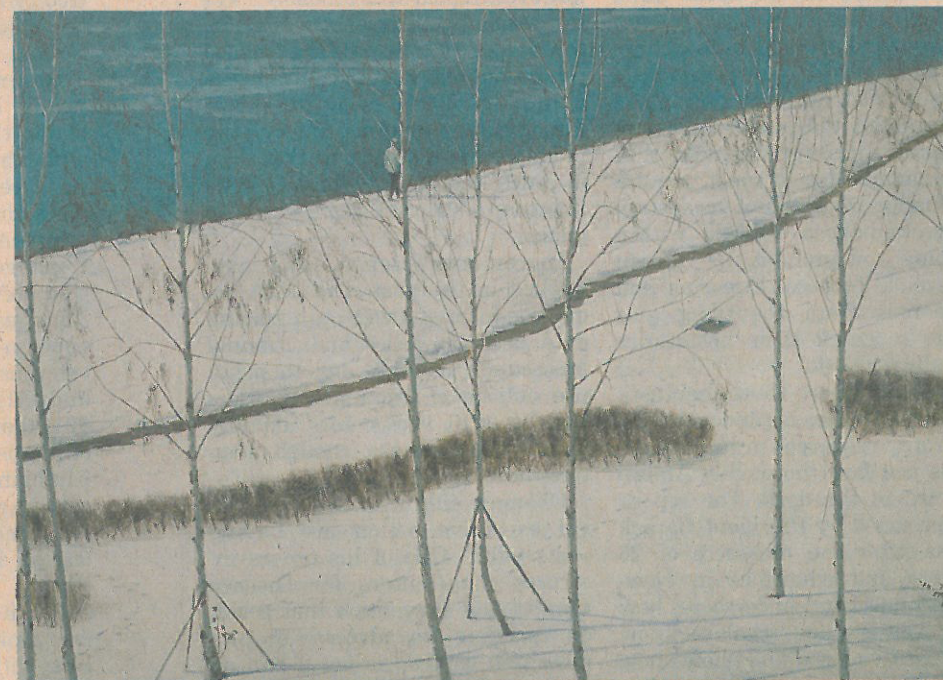
“Then in 2000, various art forms like pop art and conceptual art emerged. It got even harder to find artists devoted to painting,” he explained.

Roh Choong-hyun’s solo exhibition “Prosaic Landscape” continues through July 14 at Kukje Gallery in Jongno, Seoul. For more information, call (02) 735-8449.

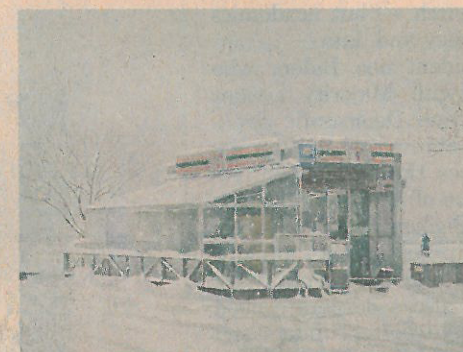
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Artist Roh Choong-hyun poses in front of his painting Kukje Gallery



▲ “A Walk,” 2013 by Roh Choong-hyun  
Kukje Gallery



◀ “Convenience Store,” 2013 by Roh Choong-hyun  
Kukje Gallery