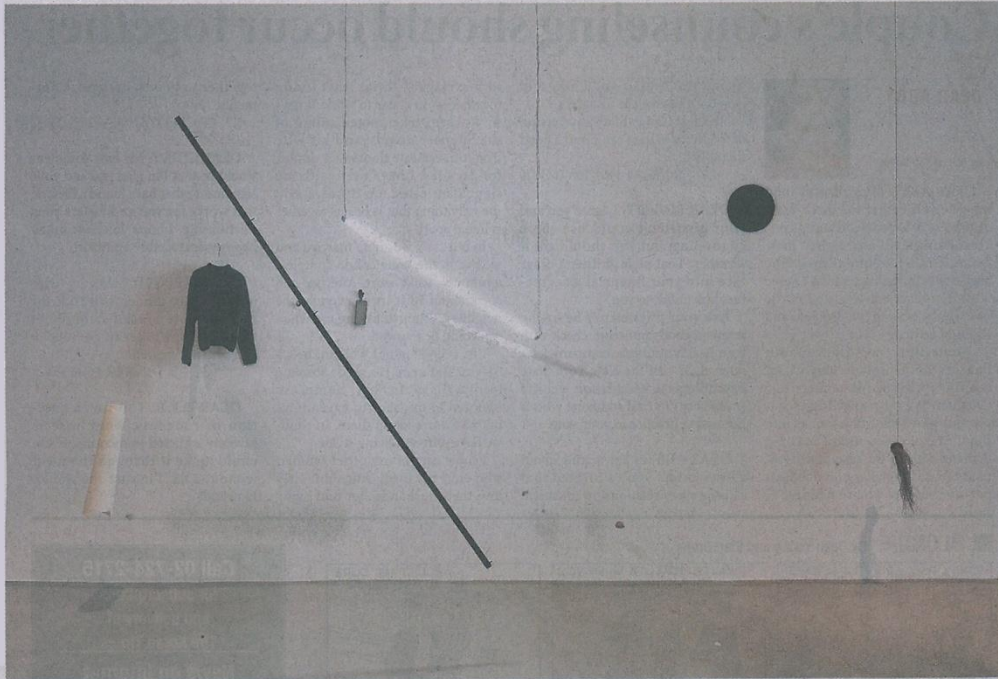


U Sun-ok pursues ultimate inaction

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U Sun-ok's "Untitled" (1989/2016)

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

U Sun-ok pursues ultimate inaction

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Citizens of modern cities live fast-moving, busy lives, but they are often aimless at the same time. Artist U Sun-ok questions the dreary prospects of modern life, asking where it is that people are rushing to.

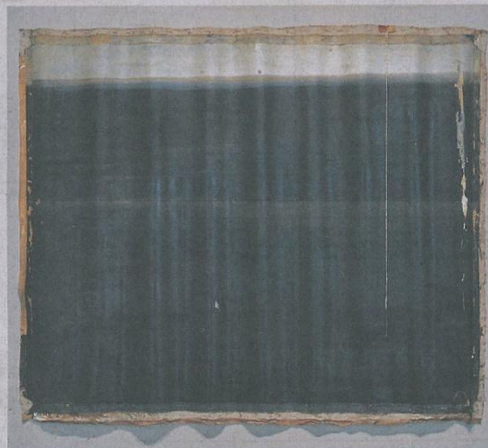
"In this era of excessive competition and desire, tired people dash at full speed, without knowing where they are heading to. I want to reflect on if we are living well," U said at a press conference earlier this month.

The 58-year-old artist found the key to the answer in inaction.

"Inaction" ironically means 'to achieve everything by doing nothing,' and to me is a practice of the way of existing and an ethical attitude in my hope of achieving ultimate value in harmony with nature," U stated in an artist's note.

Placing work created in her 20s, 30s alongside recent ones altogether, U found "inaction" running through all of them. "Painting of Time" (1983/2016) represents the theme through accumulation of time.

"When I headed to Dusseldorf, Germany back in 1985, I brought some of my previous works, including this 1983 painting. I thought it would be of help while studying abroad. I visited Korea in 1993 and stayed longer than expected until today and the works were store in a warehouse in Germany," U explained.



"Painting of Time" (1983/2016)

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

The painting was removed from canvas frame, rolled up and stored away for decades, before U brought them back to Korea recently.

"This painting is the face of me in my 20s. The black symbolizes an unfathomable abyss after the May 18 pro-democracy movement when 'minjung misul' (propaganda folk painting) prevailed. The white thread, hanging in front of the painting represents the existence or maybe the artist myself," U said.

Instead of throwing away the old, battered and unsightly painting, U chose to show it as it is. She did not frame it but hung it on the gallery wall, revealing the crumpled canvas.

"I had an indescribable sentiment when I saw the painting again. It had this trace of time with wrinkles and stains," the artist said. "I thought it was the painting of time."

She placed matching works, also tracing the lapse of time with the painting.

"Untitled" (1989/2016) is a collection of objects from the German storage and her studio. The objects are poetically arranged in the white cube.

"The round, black moon was in the same warehouse where the painting sought for the existence of youth. It is a symbol of utopia," U said.

"Empty Space — We Are All Passengers" is a 2007 video of the artist's performance, putting up the sentence "We are all passengers" on windows of an old factory building in Seongbuk-dong, Seoul.

U added plant pots around the video, giving a new life to it.

Her search of time and temporality continues in more recent works.

"The Landscape of Inaction" is a 10 and a half hour video, which portrays U's journey to Bruder Klaus Field Chapel in Germany designed by Peter Zumthor. She extended the video 100 times, questioning the concept of time.

U is known for her conceptual works, but her works are not abstruse. They are rather simple, inspired by ordinary yet poetic observations of daily experiences.

"U has a detached, philosophical view of the world. It is like a micro-form, which contains the universe in a small, mundane object," critic and Kaywon School of Art and Design professor Yoo Jin-sang said.

The exhibit runs through June 12. Admission is free. For more information, visit www.kukjegallery.com or call 02-735-8449.