

# OCULA

## Kwon Young-Woo

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*Press release courtesy Kukje Gallery.*

One of the few artists associated with Dansaekhwa trained in the historic art of Chinese ink painting, Kwon invested in exploring the possibilities of abstract expression using traditional Korean mediums. Kwon developed Hanji (Korean paper) and Muk (Korean form of Chinese ink) into vital modern materials for his work, experimenting with and refining these traditional materials. Removing himself from the act of drawing early in his practice, the artist turned to a process based method where he cut, ripped, tore, and layered paper, choosing to use it both as a ground and as a sculptural medium. Kwon challenged the traditional role of paper by employing his fingernails to scratch and tear the fibers, developing his own highly refined gestural vocabulary; he then glued the paper onto panels establishing a base for his compositions and transforming the flat surfaces into three-dimensional reliefs. Upon closer observation of his work, the viewer can see clearly the artist's intense physical gestures embedded in the paper and the way the torn layers interweave and are stained by the Muk and inks. Kwon was able to achieve this effect based on his technique for channeling the ink, applying it to carefully torn and folded edges in the paper. Joining his material mastery with chance and the

mercurial movement of the liquid ink, the artist was able to develop a totally unique practice and instantly recognizable style that contains tremendous power and elegance.

Kwon Young-Woo was born in 1926 in Riwon County, South Hamgyong Province, in North Korea. He entered Seoul National University in 1946 as the first class in the College of Fine Arts and studied Oriental painting, and received his MFA from the same school in 1957. He taught at School of Art, Chung-Ang University, from 1964 to 1978, then moved to Paris that year and spent about ten years until 1989 to fully devote his life to studio practice. He has had solo exhibitions in major venues including Jacques Massol Gallery, Paris (1976); Ho-Am Art Museum, Yongin (1990); National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Gwacheon (1998); and Seoul Museum of Art (2007). His work has also been featured in international biennials and group exhibitions, such as Tokyo Biennale (1965); São Paulo Art Biennial (1973); Five Whites from Korea at Tokyo Gallery (1975); and Dansaekhwa, an official collateral event of the 56th Venice Biennale (2015). He received numerous awards including Korean Minister of Culture's Artist Award (1958 and 1959); National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art's Artist of the Year Award (1998); Silver Crown Medal, Order of Cultural Merit from the government (2001); Heo Baek-ryeon Art Prize from Gwangju Culture & Art Center (2003). His works are also included in the collections of major art institutions, such as National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea; Seoul Museum of Art; Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul; and British Museum, London. Kwon Young-Woo died on November 14, 2013.

Installation view of Kwon Young-Woo solo exhibition at K1/2

Photo by Sang-Tae Kim

Courtesy of Kukje Gallery

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**URL:** <http://ocula.com/art-exhibitions/kukje-gallery/kwon-young-woo/>