ALMINE RECH

Minjung Kim
Mountain

Nov 9, 2024 — Feb 23, 2025 | Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul de Vence, France

From 9 November 2024 to 23 February 2025, the Fondation Maeght will present the exhibition *Mountain* by the contemporary Korean artist Minjung Kim. Internationally renowned for her poetic and minimalist works, the artist subtly weaves connections between tradition and modernity. Working primarily with ink on large-scale traditional Korean Hanji paper, she creates compositions of great delicacy, where the repetition of motifs resembles a meditation on time, nature, and spirituality.

"I visited several times the Fondation Maeght (...) First time was in 1990, and I was truly overwhelmed by the charm of the place and its natural surroundings. The artists there and their works were extraordinary, especially in the beautiful setting of the South of France. It made me thought about how a group of such talented artists, bound by their friendship, could create a legacy like one of Europe's most renowned private art foundations. It was a completely new experience for me. The museum's size was perfect; the sun, the light, and the artworks created a flawless environment. I never imagined that one day I would have the opportunity to exhibit there. Back then, artists would gather, exchange ideas, and share experiences in person, creating a strong community. Today, unfortunately, we are more isolated, relying on digital communication, like SMS, which make us lose this collegial power we once had. As artists in the art world, we can feel quite lonely. I am very pleased to have the chance to show my work at the Fondation Marguerite and Aimé Maeght. Since 2006, I have a studio in Saint-Paul-de-Vence where I periodically spend time, creating artworks inspired by my surroundings. I came here to escape the city and immerse myself in a different kind of creativity. It's my joy to be part of this world, and words cannot fully express my excitement about this exhibition at the Fondation Maeght".

Minjung Kim, a Korean artist born in 1962 in Gwangju, studied traditional painting at Hongik University in Seoul. In 1991, she decided to continue her studies in Italy at the Academy of Fine Arts of Brera in Milan. It was there that her work evolved from traditional Asian painting toward abstraction, with a focus on Hanji paper - a Korean paper made from mulberry bark. Minjung Kim's art is characterized by large-scale ink and watercolor works, and in some pieces, a meditative process of burning and cutting the Hanji paper, exploring the effects of fire to represent time, space, and natural decay. Through burning the paper, she creates abstract works that merge destruction and creation, evoking both the fragility and resilience of nature. This approach allows her to reinterpret Asian ink painting traditions by incorporating more contemporary and experimental elements.

Minjung Kim devotes hours to intense concentration, repeating precise, delicate gestures that become a meditative ritual for her. The fire, colors, and shapes created by these layers of paper suggest a silent harmony, a tranquility that reflects her state of mind. For her, this repetition is a form of spiritual practice, a way to lose herself in the act of creation and to explore deeply within. Through this unique technique, Minjung Kim creates works that do not reveal a precise subject but invite numerous interpretations depending on the viewer's experience. Remaining true to natural materials like Hanji paper, ink, and fire, she combines tradition with experimentation, striving with each piece to express the beauty of passing time and the inherent incompleteness of life.

“For Mountain series, I use a unique brush. With each layer, I add more ink to achieve a darker shade. The challenge lies in estimating the right amount of ink that will progressively darken the layer towards the bottom of the paper. There are no measurements involved; it’s purely a matter of intuition”. Minjung Kim