ALMINE RECH

Kim Tschang-Yeul
A Retrospective

Aug 22 — Dec 21, 2025 | National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, South Korea

This retrospective exhibition on Kim Tschang-Yeul (1929–2021), one of the most prominent figures in Korean contemporary art, offers a comprehensive look into the artist's creative vision. It reexamines his body of work within the historical and art-historical context of modern and contemporary Korea. The rapid modernization of South Korean society in the midst of war, division, industrialization, and urbanization in the mid-twentieth century left profound emotional scars on the artist. His experiences were eventually transformed into a unique visual language.

In the 1950s, Kim played a leading role in the Korean Art Informel movement, pioneering efforts to blend Western modernist idiom with a Korean sensibility. His journey passed through New York in 1965 and culminated in a relocation to Paris in 1969, where he continued his commitment to artistic experimentation and exploration in search of his voice.

The early 1970s marked the beginning of his iconic *Water Drop* compositions, which became the hallmark of his artistic identity. Explored over a lifetime, these water drops came to symbolize Kim's distinct visual lexicon.

This exhibition invites viewers to look beyond the aesthetic allure of the water drop and engage with the artist's underlying memories of trauma and search for fundamental beauty. Featuring previously little- known early works from his New York period alongside rare archival materials, the exhibition allows a more nuanced understanding of Kim's artistic evolution. It also seeks to discover the diverse formal vocabularies embedded within the motif of the water drop, encouraging a renewed appreciation of his art. Moreover, the exhibition aims to offer a meaningful opportunity to reaffirm the distinctive spirit of Korean contemporary art and its place in the broader context of global art history.