ALMINE RECH

# The Winner of 17th LEE Donghoon Art Award : Ha Chong-hyun

## Sep 29 — Dec 20, 2020 | Daejeon Museum of Art, Daejeon, South Korea

The Daejeon Museum of Art presents the work of Ha Chong-hyun, the winner of the 17th Lee Donghoon Award. The Lee Donghoon Award was established to commemorate the artistic legacy of Lee in shaping the Daejeon art scene, and it is awarded each year to an artist for their outstanding achievement in the development of Korea's modern and contemporary art. Ha is one of the Korea's foremost avant-gardists and is internationally acclaimed for his monochromatic paintings. This exhibition is the first major show of Ha's artwork in Daejeon and a rare chance to discover his latest painting.
The 13 paintings on display were carefully chosen to show the essence of Ha's artistic practice, which spans over 60 years from the early 1960s to the present. His lifelong exploration into new visual language was closely interlocked with the contemporary transformation of the Korean art scene. Hence, looking at his work will lead the audience through some major moments and shifts in the history of the Korean contemporary art.

Having graduated from Hongik University in 1959, Ha began his abstract experiments, inspired by Art Informel, an important modern art movement in Europe. These experiments laid the foundation for his most famous painting series Conjunction, begun in 1974. For the series, Ha developed a unique method: using a canvas made from coarse burlap, he pushed oil paint through the fabric's loose weave from the backside of the canvas and then spread the paint across the canvas in the front. When a paint seeps through the strands of the weave, the canvas reveals the aesthetic materiality of the medium. Here, the artist adds a minimal gesture to it to finish each painting. Breaking from the fixed idea of painting in front of canvas, this method implied a new relationship between 'medium' and 'body' and ultimately opened up a new chapter in the history of Korean abstract painting practice.

Refusing pre-existing ideas and hierarchies, Ha pursued a newer and more experimental artistic language, reinterpreting the elements of Western abstraction into the method of painting from reverse side, which recalls similar traditional Korean painting methods. The surface of a painting created by the so-called bae-ab-bub (背壓法: from-the-back method) that he developed evokes the mud walls of traditional Korean houses or hemp cloths seeped in herbal extracts, as he observed in his childhood, expressing a beauty imbued with the life of Koreans.

The exhibition shows a chronological display of Ha's works from his 'Informel and Geometrical Abstraction period' (1960-69); to his 'A.G. (Korean Avant-Garde association)' period (1969-74); to his 'Conjunction' period (1974-2020). The series Conjunction has been continuing for nearly 50 years and is divided further into Conjunction (1974-2009) and Post Conjunction (2010-ongoing). The four paintings from Post Conjunction on display deliver the undying passion of the artist now in his mid-80s as he continues his artistic journey to complete his own world of art.