

Press Release

In Lieu of Higher Ground

Park Suk Won, Park Jang Nyun, Song Burnsoo

2020. 1. 30 - 2. 29

Gallery Baton, Seoul

Gallery Baton is pleased to present 'In Lieu of Higher Ground', a group exhibition by three Korean contemporary artists, Park Suk Won, Park Jang Nyun and Song Burnsoo, from 30th January to 29th February, 2020. The exhibition attempts to highlight the life-long commitment to creation by three masters who have a great influence upon the process of establishing the current hybrid cultural-geography of 'Korean contemporary art' from its beginning period to the present phase which conveys diversified identities and zeitgeist. The title, 'In Lieu of Higher Ground', implies the remarkable achievement of the three artists whose life consequently became their artistic trajectories by embracing an attitude of seeking unity of the physical and the spiritual. As they have dedicated their entire life to investigating into aesthetic accomplishment and manifestation of their own creative world instead of chasing after personal fame and materialistic advancement, we dare to speak that they have silently but stubbornly broadened the scope of their artistic territories by exploring unknown realms from a perspective of a seeker rather than trying to set up another monument on the existing land—Korean contemporary art.



Park Suk Won, *Mutation-Pair 7918*, 1978

Park Suk Won (b. 1941) presents wooden sculptures produced in the 1970-80's when he was successfully establishing his practice's keyword and theme—'Accumulation'. In this period, Park paid attention to authentic properties of natural objects such as trees and rocks and he combined artificial elements and rhythm with the properties to focus on 'visibility of reduction': revealing natural features inherent in the properties. His 'Mutation-Relation' series demonstrates that wooden figures carefully cut in particular patterns several times still maintain their original colours and grains. In this context, the wood operates as a mediator underlining sculptural symbols stemmed from certain shapes by passively accepting the artist's intended physical alterations including wavy shapes, layered diagonal lines or junctions reminiscent of human joints. Despite these interventions, the wood remains as a plain material for sculpture. It is why the artist has actively employed the medium to construct and develop his concept of 'Accumulation'.

This exhibition introduces major paintings which clearly suggest each piece's temporal characteristics by Park Jang Nyun (1938-2009), who occupied himself with representing shapes of hemp fabric with a hyper-realistic manner. One of his 60's works depicting deep-colored faces building borders and floating is a fine example of Art Informel. Since then, Park had concentrated on describing various different appearances of

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the fabric regardless of its status as a material. It is intriguing that hyper-realism referring to an extremely detailed description of targets does not practically dominate his paintings, as the target of representation, the sheets of hemp in this case, still keeps its distance from the figurative domain in spite of its visual lucidity. Thus, his approach seems to accurately represent the surface of an object, while it deliberately avoids a theoretical interpretation of it. In his practice, creases which distinguish one work from another play a role of his unique visual language. They ultimately indicate the artist's intention to provide his practice a notional connection to 'illusions' by reminding us of the creases' paradoxical condition in the painting which has to stay untouched but makes the rest of their background painted for its own presence.

Park Jang Nyun, *Hemp Cloth 89-1*, 1989

Song Burnsoo (b. 1943) displays his late paintings and a large-scale tapestry produced in the early 90's in which his religious introspection into existence as not only an artist but a human being progressed into his works of art. At that time, his techniques began to show radical growth after consistent efforts since he tried to switch his major interest from prints to tapestries in the 80's. The central subjects of the works produced in this period were the Cross and the crown of thorns—the Christian icons symbolizing the Passion of Christ and the Atonement. Being delicately and deftly dealt with by the artist, the colourful strands of thick yarn create particular little ridges which produce a dramatic effect allowing spectators to earnestly contemplate on connotations of the directed images. His fascination with the symbolic significance of the thorns emerged as new forms of expression in paintings of the 2000's; the assemblage of thorn-shaped reliefs generates a keen sense of tension as though they penetrated the actual surface of the canvas. In addition, it encourages the audience to appreciate multi-layered psychological states such as pain and sacrifice or despair and hope with a more tangible approach.



Song Burnsoo, *Know Yourself*, 2007

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The works of three masters—the early wooden sculptures of Park Suk Won who is one of the members of the Korean Avant-garde Association, Song Burnsoo's tapestry and his late paintings and Park Jang Nyun's paintings of hemp cloth—evoke an uncanny impression as if the exhibition in the 70's, 'Ecole de Seoul', was reoccurring. At the same time, the practice of the senior artists who have been sincere and passionate about artistic ideals throughout their entire life will offer the viewers an opportunity to encounter that contemporary values transcending time and space of their works are still valid.