

## Yun Hyong-keun

January 17–March 7, 2020  
537 West 20th Street, 2nd Floor, New York

Opening reception:  
Friday, January 17, 6–8 PM



Yun Hyong-keun, *Burnt Umber & Ultramarine*, 1991. Image © Yun Seong-ryeol.  
Courtesy PKM Gallery, Seoul, and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings by Yun Hyong-keun, on view at the gallery's 537 West 20th Street location in New York. Focusing on the artist's work from the late 1980s and 1990s, the exhibition will feature a selection of Yun's distinctive abstract paintings from this late period in his career.

One of the most significant Korean artists of the twentieth century, Yun is widely recognized for his signature abstract compositions, which engage with yet transcend Eastern and Western art movements and visual traditions. Using a restricted palette of ultramarine and umber, Yun created his compositions by adding layer upon layer of paint onto raw canvas or linen, often applying the next coat before the last one had dried. He diluted the pigments with turpentine solvent, allowing them to seep into the fibers of the support, staining it in a similar way to traditional ink on Korean mulberry paper. Working directly on his studio floor, he produced simple arrangements of intensely dark, vertical bands surrounded by untouched areas. The division was softened by the blurred edges caused by the uneven rates of absorption of oil and solvent, and the compositions often developed over several days, even months, with the artist adding additional layers or letting the pigments bleed out gradually.

Yun is associated with the Dansaekhwa (monochrome painting) movement, the name given to a group of influential Korean artists from the 1960s and 1970s who experimented with the physical properties of painting and prioritized technique and process. Yun met Donald Judd during Judd's visit to Seoul in 1991, and both artists immediately felt a connection with each other's work. Judd hosted the first exhibitions of Yun's paintings in the United States in 1993 at his Spring Street studio in New York, and the following year at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas.

The paintings in the exhibition reflect a subtle evolution from Yun's earlier canvases. The abstract forms in his works from the early 1990s become larger and darker. In the middle of the 1990s the lines in some of Yun's paintings become tighter and straighter, and the edges of his forms appear less diffuse and more defined. While his art shows clear affinities to Minimalism, it also recalls the sublimity of Barnett Newman's zip paintings, and the balance and diffuseness of Mark Rothko's canvases. At the same time, Yun's work exhibits the sophistication and restraint of traditional Korean scholarly painting, while also reflecting the artist's unique sensitivity to color and material. As Yun wrote in 1976, "Nature, however you look at it, is always unadorned, fresh, and beautiful. I wonder if my paintings

could capture the beauty of nature. No, it would be impossible. Even so, I want to make paintings that, like nature, one never tires of looking at. That is all that I want in my art. Canvas is still made just from those old and familiar materials: cotton and hemp. Looking at it, I always feel its warmth and familiarity. This affinity comes from the absolute simplicity and freshness of the natural fiber. This in itself is a work of art.”<sup>1</sup>

Yun Hyong-keun (1928–2007) was born in Miwon-ri, Chungcheongbuk-do, Korea and received his BFA from the School of Fine Arts at Hongik University, Seoul, in 1957. This presentation marks the artist’s second solo exhibition with David Zwirner since the gallery began representing his work in New York, in 2016.

Yun has been the subject of solo exhibitions at prominent institutions worldwide, including the Total Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul (1994); Stiftung für konkrete Kunst, Reutlingen, Germany (1997); Musée d’Art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg, France (2002); and Art Sonje Museum, Gyeongju, Korea (2001). Other notable solo exhibitions have been held at Inkong Gallery, Seoul (1989); Locks Gallery, Philadelphia (1991); Galerie Humanité, Nagoya, Japan (1991–1992; which traveled to Galerie Humanité Tokyo; Gallery Suzukawa, Hiroshima, Japan; and Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan); Jean Broly Gallery, Paris (2002); Blum & Poe, New York; and PKM Gallery, Seoul (both 2015). In 2018, the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Seoul hosted a major solo exhibition of the artist’s work that traveled to the Palazzo Fortuny in Venice (on view from May 11 through November 24, 2019).

His work has been included in the São Paulo Biennial (1969 and 1975); the 46th Venice Biennale (1995); and the Gwangju Biennale (2000).

Work by the artist is represented in permanent collections internationally, including the Art Institute of Chicago; Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas; Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan; Glenstone, Potomac, Maryland; Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea; Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum; and Tate, UK.

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<sup>1</sup> Yun Hyong-keun, “A Thought in the Studio,” in *Yun Hyong-keun* (Seoul: PKM Gallery, 2015), p. 10.