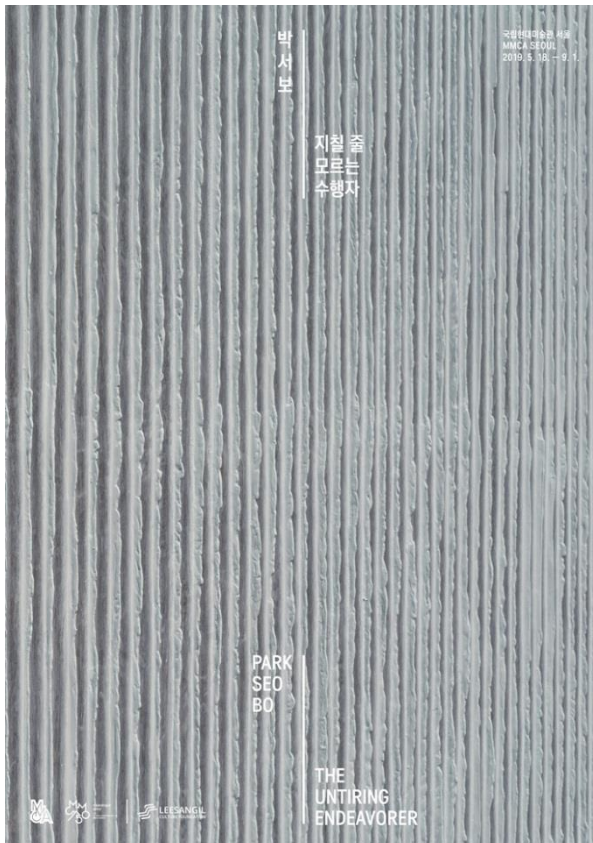




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Park Seo-Bo: The Untiring Endeavorer

18 May –1 September 2019

MMCA Seoul

The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA, Director Youn Bummo) presents a retrospective of *Park Seo-Bo: The Untiring Endeavorer* from Saturday, May 18 through Sunday, September 1 in Gallery 1, 2 of MMCA Seoul.

A pioneering figure in Korean abstract art, Park Seo-Bo (b. 1931) has established an artistic world all his own through his *écriture* series, while devoting his life to cultivating Korean contemporary art and sharing it with audiences at home and overseas as a critic, administrator, and educator.

After challenging the artistic establishment with a 1956 declaration of the anti-*Kukjon*, *National Art Exhibition (Kukjon)*, Park Seo-Bo presented the 1957 work *Painting No. 1*, which has led to him being viewed as Korea's first informel artist. From there, he embarked on an exploration of the relationship and meaning of material and abstraction. Through his Primordialis and Hereditarius periods and his full-scale pursuit of an *écriture* (E with accent) approach since the 1970s, he has guided the development of Korean abstract art, a field where he continues playing a central role to this day.

This exhibition is a large-scale retrospective surveying Park Seo-Bo's life and artistic world, which have been driving forces for trends in Korean contemporary art. **The exhibition title *Park Seo-Bo: The Untiring Endeavorer* refers to a career of over 70 years in painting as someone who has endeavored to use *écriture* (E with accent) to pursue the ultimate goal of art to heal the anguish and suffering of modern individuals.**

Divided into five periods, the exhibition features more than 160 artworks and archival materials ranging from his earliest works in the 1950s to recent work from 2019. The **first period** is his **Primordialis period**. Works from this period include *Painting No. 1* (1957), an expression of the anxiety, loneliness, and negative feelings caused by scarring experiences, and his Primordialis series, which is seen as a preeminent example of the Korean informel painting work that Park Seo-Bo shared after his 1961 sojourn in Paris. The **second period** is his **Hereditarius period**. Works include his Hereditarius series, which incorporate Op Art and Pop Art elements in the late 1960s and apply geometric abstraction combined with a

traditional Korean color sense, and his Hereditarius series, which was inspired by the 1969 moon landing and the state of zero-gravity. The **third period** is his *early écriture period*. Works include his “pencil écriture” pieces from the 1970s, for which he drew inspiration from his young son’s unschooled handwriting to apply countless pencil lines on a canvas painted in white. The **fourth period** is his *mid-écriture period*. Dating to 1982, his work during his period has been referred to as “zigzag écriture” for its approach that involves making maximum use of the material qualities of Korean dakjonggi (mulberry paper) through repeated actions of rubbing, scratching, and pushing before the paper dries. This was also the period that saw him stay away from his colorless pencil écriture work and restoring color with the use of shades decocted from wormwood, tobacco, and other ingredients. The **fifth period** is his *late-écriture period*. Also referred to as Park Seo-Bo’s “color écriture,” this period dating to the mid-1990s may be seen as a premier example of emphasizing a deeper and rich color sense through the removal of any traces of the human hand and the use of sticks, rulers, and other tools to create furrow-like spaces at regularly spaced intervals.

The exhibition will also offer a first-ever look at some previously unexhibited works and two new works from 2019, as well as his installation piece *Void Space*, which has not been shown since 1970. The artist’s life of active efforts as an art administrator and educator supporting exhibitions by Korean artists on the global stage is also shared through various materials offering a glimpse at activities spanning the past 70 years.

Additional tie-in programs include international symposium on May 31 bringing together Korean and overseas experts to examine Park Seo-Bo’s artistic world, along with a “Conversation with the Artist” (scheduled for July 5) and “Curator’s Talk” (July 19). Prospective attendees may apply through the MMCA homepage.

An audience participation workshop program has also been organized during the exhibition

period to allow for a greater understanding of Park Seo-Bo's artistic world and an experience with the attitude of "cultivation" that he has pursued. These include 'Writing the Heart' , in which participants can try his *écriture* methods for themselves, and 'Color of the Heart, Color of the Air' , in which they find and produce their own unique air colors.

A "Park Seo-Bo Special Menu" of seasonal noodle dishes, a drink, and a dessert will also be offered at the Food Lounge operated by CJ Freshway on the museum's first floor, with a "healthy menu from nature" concept inspired by his artistic work.

Youn Bummo, director of the MMCA, notes, "This exhibition will be an opportunity not only to explore the creativity of Park Seo-Bo's work as an artist employing his own unique methods to interpret the spirit and artistic language inherent to Korean art, but also to gain a three-dimensional perspective on his stature within the currents of Korean contemporary art and examine its significance within art history."

■ Park Seo-Bo

Park Seo-Bo was born in Yecheon, Gyeongsangbuk-do, in 1931. After graduating from the Department of Painting at Hongik University, he joined Kim Choogsun, Moon Woosik, and Kim Younghwan in organizing the Exhibition of Four Artists and declaration of the anti-*Kukjon*, *National Art Exhibition (Kukjon)* in 1956. Park spearheaded avant-garde currents in Korean art and is considered the flag-bearer of Korean informel and *Dansaekhwa*. Having paved the way for Korea's participation in the Biennale de Paris, he played an integral role in the exhibition of Korean contemporary art abroad as well as the introduction of Western art trends in Korea. He has been honored with the Seongnyu Medal for Civil Merit (1984), the Okgwan Medal for Cultural Merit (1994), and the Eungwan Medal for Cultural Merit (2011). He also devoted himself to education as a professor and department chair at Hongik University's College of Fine Arts. He founded the Seobo Art Foundation in 1994.



Park Seo-Bo



Park Seo-Bo. Photo By An, Ji Sup

Please check the line below for the images and further information and feel free to contact us via either email or phone for any inquiries.

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