

BAIK ART

Sangchul Choi (b.1946)

Choi Sang Chul (1946-) received a BFA in painting from Seoul National University in 1969 and was a professor of painting at Chugye University for the Arts. His works have been collected by Seoul Arts Center, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Korea, and Daejeon Museum of Art. Choi has had fifteen solo exhibitions to date: Art Council Korea Art Center in 1982; Kisshodo Gallery, Kyoto, in 1996; AV Modern & Contemporary, Geneva, Switzerland, in 2020; and Art Space 3 Seoul, Korea, in 2021, among others. His group exhibitions include twenty occasions of Korean Art Association Show at the MMCA from 1971-89 and four occasions of Shincheje Group Exhibition at Myeongdong Gallery, Seoul, from 1973-76. He took part in various international exchanges, such as the Sao Paulo Biennale, Brazil, in 1981; Asia Modern Exhibition at Fukuoka Art Museum, Japan, in 1989; Common & Discommons on Korean-Japanese Modern Arts at Art Council Korea Art Center in 1990; Korea-Middle East Forum 'The Beauty of Korea' at Cairo Opera House, Egypt; and Japan-Korea Contemporary Artist Show at Seoul Arts Center in 1992. Choi has taken part in more than 160 group exhibitions to date, including large-scale exhibitions such as Decade of Transition and Dynamics at the MMCA in 2001, Korea Drawing 50 Years at Seoul Arts Center in 2012, and Geometric Abstraction in Korean Art, currently ongoing at MMCA Gwacheon in 2024.

The birth of various experimental art groups marked the 1970s in Korea. During this period, Choi took part in Shincheje Group Exhibition led by a core of Seoul National University alumni artists such as Lee Kangso, Oh Sufan, and Kwun Suncheol and concentrated on creating geometric abstract works. (The works from this show are currently on display at Geometric Abstraction in Korean Art, MMCA Gwacheon.) But from the late 1970s, Choi severed himself from everything that could be identified as zeitgeist, trend, or category. He intended to capture the pure moment that a painting is "painted," the world in its most natural state instead of the fabricated world and artificial aesthetics. Toward this aim, Choi stopped using the "brush" altogether — the best painting tool — and started using objects that were not suited to painting and methods that could introduce randomness into his works. Choi creates his works by repeating the exact same action countless times on one canvas. His works present the traces of time accumulated by repeating a set of actions. Objects are stamped, dragged over, or rolled for a set number of times on his canvas, and every such movement is preserved forever; this is the art of Choi.

Choi has continually created unfamiliar tools and rules for himself over fifty years to prevent himself from relaxing into familiarity and adeptness. Starting from the 2010s, Choi has been working with small, round stones. To prevent his intentions from influencing his works in any manner, he places a stone on

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his canvas according to his “rule of randomness.” The stone is free from human concepts or intentions. After choosing left or right at random, Choi tilts the canvas in that direction and allows the stone to roll by its natural shape. He repeats the action one thousand times, waiting for the “uncontrived and relaxed order of nature” to accumulate involuntarily on his canvas. Hoping that his images — and contemporary painting — could regain the unadulterated, overflowing vitality of “the moment when painting was made for the first time,” Choi continues to erase and empty himself at every moment so that he could, one day, arrive at “the time of uncontrived innocence.”