

# PearlLam Galleries

Hong Kong

## Equilibrium Shifts: a Solo Exhibition by Kim Tae-Ho

In conjunction with Hong Kong Art Basel Spotlight

Exhibition Dates                    25 November, 2020 – 14 January, 2021. Monday – Saturday, 10am – 7pm  
Venue                                    Pearl Lam Galleries, 6/F, Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong

Pearl Lam Galleries is delighted to present *Equilibrium Shifts*, a solo exhibition by one of Korea's leading post monochrome artists. Kim's art practice started in the 1970s and stood in stark contrast to Dansaekhwa, the monochromatic movement that swept across South Korea during the latter part of the decade. Kim's creative trajectory is marked by three distinct periods: his *Form* series from the 1970s, followed by experimental works on paper from the 1980s, and the signature *Internal Rhythm* series that the artist has continued to pursue since the late 1990s until today. *Equilibrium Shifts* surveys the artist's early works and the formal development of the *Internal Rhythm* series.

As early as 1976, the artist has invariably tackled with the figurative subject. Not affected by the dominant aesthetical tendency at the time, he stubbornly articulated his own language in *Form*. Early *Form* works display the unusual aspect of combining opposing horizontal and vertical weaving with an illusionary image of the human body. The methodology is akin to a theatrical approach of conjuring up an actress emerging under a spotlight from darkness. In *Form 85-39*, multiple figures do not emerge all at once. Instead, parts of the body simply suggest a lapsed presence in front of a metallic shutter background, a possible reference taken from Marcel Duchamp's *A Nude Descending a Staircase*.

In the 1990s, Kim began an overall material transformation in his paintings, where shape and composition became more introspective in character as the artist began the action of chiselling on the canvas. These works were initially composed of interwoven lines with a pre-determined order. The artist then scrapes away the dense accumulation of paint, resulting from a process of iteration. The fine lines or delicate touches in these new works were produced by patiently chiselling many coloured layers of paint. The surface of these works consists of numerous small holes, arranged in a criss-cross format. Through deep and monotonous chiselling, his method of reduction deviated from the painting concepts of his contemporaries. What he aimed to achieve was to reach the point where the materiality of the thick plane vanishes. The colour hidden beneath rhythmically comes alive. On close inspection of the work, the surface not only fluctuates, but brings a polyphony of multicoloured dots. These works paradoxically expose heaviness, sincerity, eternity, nobility, and slowness. The more we examine his canvases, the more we get to appreciate the vitality of life that breathes through them.

Kim Tae-Ho states, "Internal rhythm is a series of irregular relief paintings composed of a grid of vertical and horizontal thread. First, I drew a line on a canvas. And then with even breath and order, I applied paints with brushstrokes on it, which accumulated into a pile of paint layers. Usually, I will cut through the surface of the layers of 20 or more colours with a palette knife. The colours hidden underneath come alive; they carry both the internal rhythm, and the external composition. It is almost like a window frame of a traditional Korean window house, the stone wall

in a countryside, or a densely woven fabric. In the course of piling and scraping of colour layers, countless square rooms are built. Each room like a beehive has a microcosm bursting with its own energy, namely, life.”

The concept of Kim’s work is simultaneously constructing and de-constructing. The laborious action of scraping off the paint is not only to reveal what is hidden beneath the surface. The real contention is to regress the artwork to its more fundamental or even primordial state. Fully aware of the influence of abstract expressionism of his peers, Kim’s alternate “action painting” refuses to use art as a vehicle merely for self-expression. Artist and teacher Hans Hofmann coined the phrase “push and pull”, which posits, “Only from the varied counter play of push and pull, and from its variation in intensities, will plastic creation result. Push is answered by pull, and pull with push.” *Internal Rhythm* resonates with this theory, where forms must be balanced by space and the two must exist together in a three-dimensional unity. The result is a continual mediation and tension between alternatives, so that the “space” and “flatness” become all but synonymous with the verbs “push” and “pull”; where plastic depth is never static but, like natural depth, is active like a shift in equilibrium.

## About the Artist

Kim Tae-Ho was born in 1948 in Busan, Korea. He graduated from the College of Fine Arts at Hongik University in Seoul, where he majored in painting, in 1972, and he received his MFA from the Graduate School of Education at Hongik University in 1984. Currently, Kim lives and works in Paju-si, Gyeonggi-do, Korea.

Kim Tae-Ho has been at the forefront of Korean monochrome art since the 1970s and is highly celebrated for having expanded the possibilities of the art form. His bold experimentation across media—sometimes incorporating traditional handmade hanji paper within his heavily textured, monochromatic works—has strongly allied his practice with the legacy of his fellow Dansaekhwa painters. Kim’s paintings retain the unique characteristics of their vivid palette; they are a product of the artist’s meticulous working method to accrue a dense sediment of colour within the picture plane itself.

Kim’s early series of work *Form*, which he began to create in 1977, featured an abstract figurative subject buried within geometric and illusionary forms. The series took inspiration from building shutters that stood strong as a symbol for resistance. Moving into the 1990s, the artist shifted his focus to spatial structure through his *Internal Rhythm* series. The series is characterized by a meticulous, labour-intensive process where the artist creates a grid made up of interwoven lines by layering over 20 heavy brushstrokes onto a canvas according to his own set rhythm. He deconstructs the mass of paint that has built up to reveal the colours beneath each layer with each cell within the grid possessing its own unique properties. His paintings can be viewed up close and from afar, revealing something different depending on the perspective.

Kim Tae-Ho’s works have been collected by The British Museum, London, UK; the National Museum of Contemporary Art and Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea; Busan Municipal Museum of Art, Busan, Korea; Daejeon Municipal Museum of Art, Daejeon, Korea; Shimonoseki Museum, Shimonoseki, Japan; and the Museum of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, Guangzhou, China, among others.

## About Pearl Lam Galleries

Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia’s contemporary art scene. Founded in 2005, the gallery plays a vital role in stimulating international dialogue and cross-cultural exchange between the East and West.

Following a rigorous programme, Pearl Lam Galleries presents museum-quality exhibitions that re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice in Asia. With a thoughtfully balanced roster of Chinese and international artists, the gallery is strategic in its curation, positioning itself as an educator.

The gallery maintains a flagship space in the historic Pedder Building in Hong Kong, whilst the Shanghai gallery is situated in the heart of the Bund district. With a team of international staff, Pearl Lam Galleries' reach is global, having presentations at major international art fairs including The Armory Show, Art Cologne, Art Basel Hong Kong, Frieze Masters, and West Bund Art and Design.

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#### Press Enquiries

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