

ARTS FINE ART

Reimagining tradition: Park Dae Sung's ink art at the Wang Center

CLARE GEHLICH | OCTOBER 15, 2023



Artist Park Dae Sung's painting titled "Magnificent View of Samneung" (2017) from a private collection displayed in the Charles B. Wang Center. Park combines traditional Korean calligraphy and ink implementation techniques into his artwork that resonate with modern audiences. *PHOTO COURTESY OF CONOR HARRIGAN*

The Charles B. Wang Center is presenting a new exhibition titled "Park Dae Sung: Ink Reimagined," showcasing captivating ink-based paintings by the renowned Korean artist Park Dae Sung. Through his artwork, Park breathes life into ancient landscapes and objects, inviting viewers to consider the relationship between tradition and modernity, as well as the influence of the past on the present.

Park demonstrates expertise in combining traditional Korean calligraphy and ink implementation techniques into pieces of artwork that resonate with modern audiences. Some of the featured paintings in the exhibition extend beyond 25 feet in length.

Jinyoung A. Jin, director of Asian art and culture at the Wang Center, curated the exhibition. The collection features three sections: “Landscapes,” “Birds and Animals” and “Still Life.” Each section encapsulates Park’s diverse artistic expressions, allowing viewers to delve into the rich East Asian tradition of ink-wash painting and appreciate the meditative yet dramatic stroke styles associated with this timeless medium.

“Park Dae Sung: Ink Reimagined” offers a unique opportunity for the Wang Center community to personally connect with a world-class artist and experience his remarkable creations up close,” Jin said in a press release statement. “Park possesses a humble and deliberate personality yet his passion and exuberance shine through when he’s immersed in the world of painting.”

Korean-American painter Sungsook Setton from Setauket, Long Island offers a free guided tour for Park’s exhibition in the Skylight Gallery. Setton’s tour provides attendees with cultural insights into Park’s art, allowing viewers a deeper understanding.

Following Setton’s workshop collaboration with Jin, she learned that Park would not be able to attend the Wang Center exhibition before its end. Over the summer, Setton personally visited Park when she traveled to Korea. She vividly described her exploration of Park’s art studio since she had the exclusive opportunity to become immersed in his private creative space.

This visit allowed Setton to better acquaint herself with Park’s art and enabled her to become a knowledgeable and qualified tour guide.

The Wang Center will also host a symposium titled “Rethinking Contemporary Ink Art Through Park Dae Sung” to further explore Park’s art. Featuring Jin, the symposium will include brief presentations given by esteemed scholars and curators such as Dartmouth College’s Sungrim Kim, the University of Cincinnati’s Jungsil Jenny Lee, the University of Mary Washington’s Suzie Kim and Peabody Essex Museum’s Jiyeon Kim.

These intellectuals will offer fresh perspectives into Park’s artistic vision and focus on techniques and themes that highlight the diverse subjects present throughout Park’s fascinating oeuvre, including calligraphy symbols, landscapes, animals and still lifes.

The symposium is set to open on Wednesday, Oct. 18 from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the Wang Theater, followed by the opening reception from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the Skylight Gallery.

Setton encourages individuals to attend the upcoming symposium in addition to her gallery tours.

"If they see the work they can appreciate it," Setton said. "But obviously, [a] gallery tour or the symposium can help them to really [explore the] inside story, [understand] what this painting is about, what his talents are and his whole life."

Park's artwork provides a new perspective on the relationships between nature, identity and homeland, encouraging visitors to reevaluate the notions of beauty that could allow them to envision a more inspiring future moving forward.

The Wang Center expressed its gratitude to the Gana Foundation for Arts and Culture for its support and the Korea Foundation for its generous contributions to the exhibition.

"Park's still life series serves as a work that reflects the scars of [the] early loss of his parents and his yearning for a vanishing past," Jin said. "These two contrasting aspects of audacity and sensitivity in his work not only deepen our understanding[s] of Park's artistic style but also ignite newfound interest[s] in the rich tradition of East Asian ink painting, contemporary ink art and the enduring aesthetic culture it embodies."

"Park Dae Sung: Ink Reimagined" will be on view at the Wang Center from Sept. 14 to Dec. 10.

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Clare is the assistant arts and culture editor for The Statesman and a senior journalism major with a minor in political science. Since transferring to Stony Brook University in 2022, she has written for both Herald Community Newspapers and WSHU Public Radio.