



Kavi Gupta ADAA Art Show 2021

Kavi Gupta

The Art Show 2021

November 4–7, 2021

Almost a year has passed since the death of the artist Young-II Ahn. Born in 1934 in Gaesong—a North Korean city near the demilitarized zone, then part of colonial Japan—Ahn endured his allotment of trauma, from political pressure and war, to his sister's death from drowning in a stream as a child. He found his oasis in the arts. His father, a painter, and mother, a musician, eagerly shared their vocations with their son. Ahn's first solo painting exhibition came at age six, in Tokyo. He won the First Korean National Art Exhibition at age 15, just months before the Korean War began.

Ahn took refuge in the United States at the start of the Korean DMZ Conflict in 1966, choosing Los Angeles as his adoptive home. His earliest California paintings depicted birds, beach umbrellas, and the musicians he counted among his newfound friends. Those paintings were beloved by viewers and quickly snapped up by collectors, until a legal dispute between dealers robbed Ahn of the agency to sell his own work. Enraged and depressed by the situation, he destroyed much of his remaining work and rejected the commercial art field for many years.

Yet, even through continued personal losses, including a profound near-death experience and the painful repercussions of a late-life stroke, Ahn continuously found respite in painting, exemplifying the triumph of art over misery.

As he wrote in his memoir, "If I didn't paint, I would not have known love and sensitivity for beauty, which have long enriched and broadened my life."

THE *WATER* SERIES

Ahn's welcoming persona and calming social presence convinced many who met him that he was as cool and serene as his beloved paintings. This comparison between an artist and their work is one we all feel compelled to make at times. It is simplistic and frequently off-base, but in the case of Ahn it is not entirely without merit. Consider his *Water* paintings, which initially read like minimal, monochromatic studies. Closer examination reveals innumerable impasto ridges casting ominous shadows upon the placid surface, along with hundreds of tiny, multicolored dots. These seeds of chaos hiding within the calm challenge any first impressions that these paintings, or the artist who painted them, represent tranquility.

In the aftermath of his initial discouraging experiences with the American art market, Ahn sought sanctuary in his other childhood pastime, fishing, often taking long solo boat trips between Santa Monica and Catalina Island. On one such fishing trip, he had the harrowing experience of becoming lost at sea in a dense fog, and nearly dying. He writes in his memoir about the moment the fog finally lifted, and the brilliant sunlight illuminated the water's surface:

"My favorite colors from nature stretched to infinity. The sunlight crashed and reflected against the water every moment, dispersing splendid and sparkling colors in layers."

That phenomenal moment inspired Ahn to return to his studio, whence began his *Water* series, a nearly

40-year-long endeavor to put that profound experience of color and light into the canvas.

Like a psychiatrist driven to the field by their own mental illness, a yoga practitioner turned Yogi by weathering personal pain, or a scrapper turned world champion through pugilistic mastery, Ahn confronted and quieted his torturing demons through his disciplined and methodical approach to painting.

ERASURE

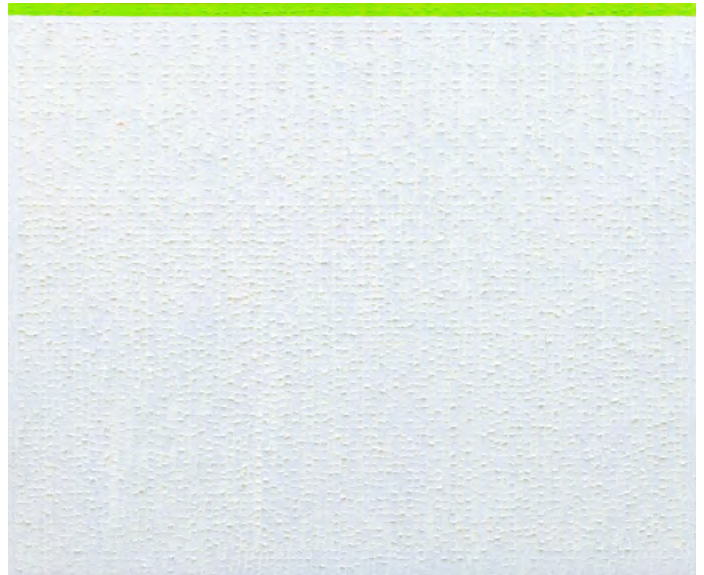
Among Ahn's most enigmatic paintings are those in his *Self-Reflection* series. Featuring abstracted linguistic symbols, most of which reference Hangul text, these works share the idiosyncratic, methodical technique and compositional framework Ahn developed in his *Water* series. Also in the vein of his *Water* paintings—which came from a compulsion to convey an ethereal memory through immutable objects—his *Self-Reflection* paintings are rooted in the struggle to find an effective visual language to express something that is ultimately perhaps inexpressible.

The text in these paintings is readable at times, in segments, if the reader is willing and able to fill in the gaps and deploy the imagination. But even for those unequipped to deconstruct what may or may not be written on the surface, certain concepts, such as erasure and fragmentation, remain conspicuous in the work. These paintings are reconstructed sanctuaries crafted by the mind and hands of a refugee.

Few works in Ahn's *Self-Reflection* series speak more poignantly to this notion than the paintings he created in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks against the US on September 11th, 2001. Not only did Ahn feel a deep sense of mourning for this assault on his chosen homeland, he had also married his wife Soraya just two days before the attacks, and Soraya's three adult daughters had flown to California from New York to attend the wedding. Contemplating the emotional weight of these events, Ahn created a series of chilling compositions that combine erasure and fragmentation; a nuanced, red, white, blue, and green palette; heavily abstracted, smoky grey clouds; and hints of falling lines and crashing forms.

DANSAEKHWA

A question sometimes asked about Young-Il Ahn's work is, "Are these paintings Dansaekhwa?" The art movement Dansaekhwa originated in Korea in the 1970s. Its name translates into English as "monochrome painting." It was coined by art critic Lee Yil to describe a trend he observed among artists such as Kim Tschangyeul, Cho Yong-ik, Chung Sang-Hwa, Lee Dong Youb, Lee Ufan, Park Seobo, and others, towards non-objective, earth-tone paintings incorporating a limited range of hues.



Young-Il Ahn, *Water AHSW 19*, 2019, oil on canvas, 60 x 72 inches

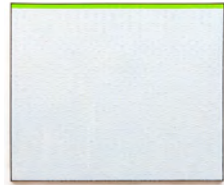
Although Ahn was already living and working in the US when Dansaekhwa emerged in Korea, his work eventually caught the attention of Dansaekhwa expert Yoon Jin Sup, who in 2015 curated Ahn into the exhibition *Dansaekhwa II: The Traces of Four Artists*. In a critical essay accompanying the exhibition, Yoon wrote, "Young-Il Ahn's canvases are comprised of small, repeating square-shaped dabs of color. This repetitive feature of his work comes from the same artistic tradition of the first-generation Korean Dansaekhwa painters."

Additional connections between Ahn and the first-generation Dansaekhwa artists of Korea include their mutual reliance on nature as inspiration and their shared desire to escape the oppressive aesthetic expectations of the market by developing new styles and techniques. And yet, the extremely individualized aspects of Ahn's work, along with his occasional forays into figuration and his largely solitary creative life, position him as more fully understood not only in context with his contemporaries or outside movements, but as an artist who confidently, quietly forged his own way.

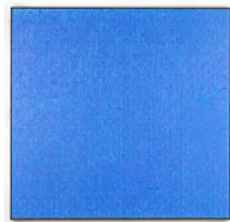
Available Works



Young-II Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water A-6, 1996
Oil on canvas
90 x 80 in
228.6 x 203.2 cm
(7614)



Young-II Ahn 1934–2020
Water AHSW 19, 2019
Oil on canvas
60 x 72 in
152.4 x 182.9 cm
In artist-made wood frame
(7473)



Young-II Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water GLGV 20, 2020
Oil on canvas
60 x 62 x 2 in
152.4 x 157.5 x 5.1 cm
(7470)



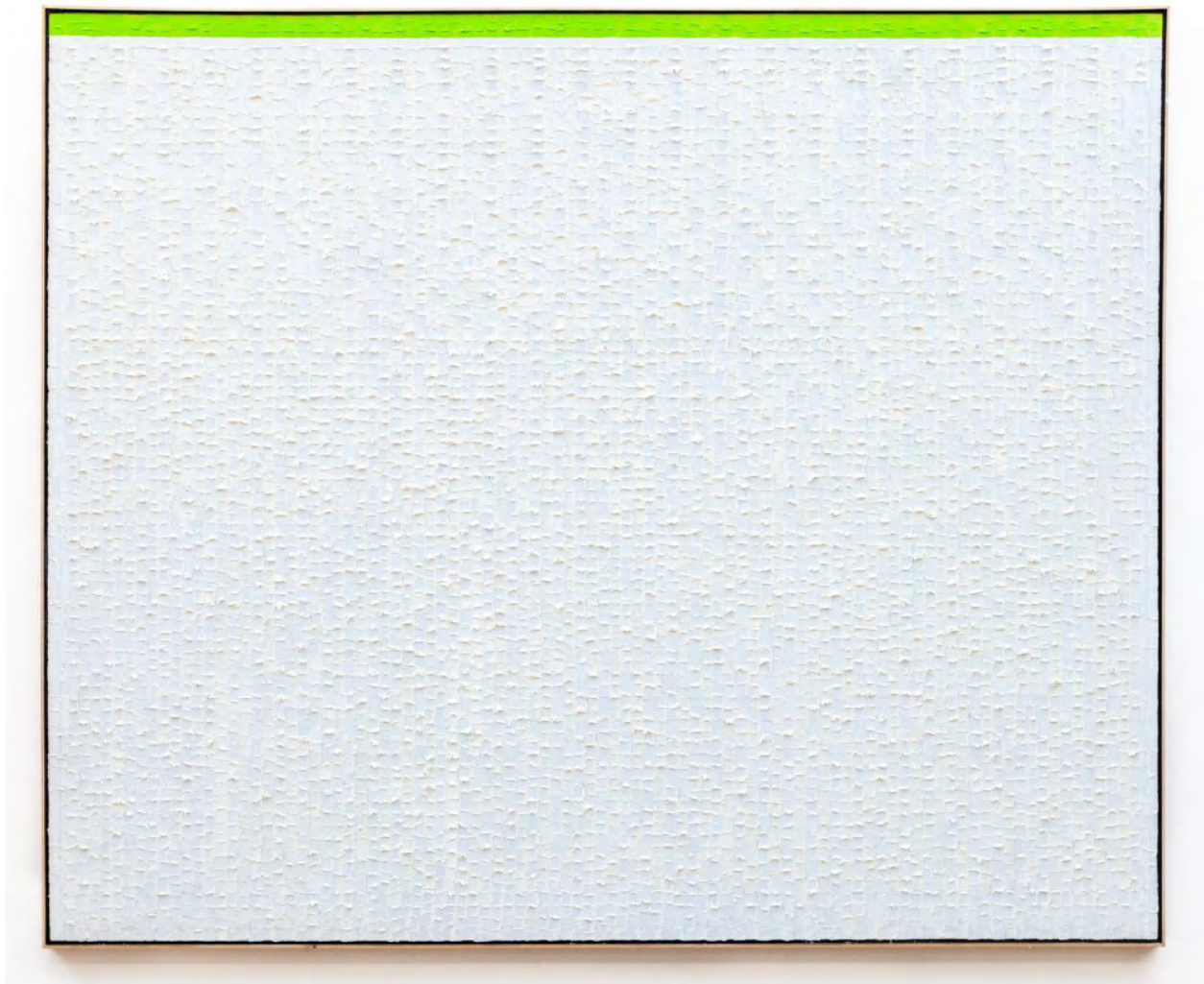
Young-II Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water BLSC 16, 2016
Oil on canvas
64 x 52 x 2 in
162.6 x 132.1 cm
(6570)



Young-II Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water DLMN 18, 2018
Oil on canvas
56 x 36 x 2 in
142.2 x 91.4 x 5.1 cm
(7467)



Young-II Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water CLW 99, 1999
Oil on canvas
50 x 44 x 2 in
127 x 111.8 x 5.1 cm
(6702)



Young-II Ahn 1934–2020
Water AHSW 19, 2019
Oil on canvas
60 x 72 in
152.4 x 182.9 cm
In artist-made wood frame
(7473)

Image 1/6



Image 2/6

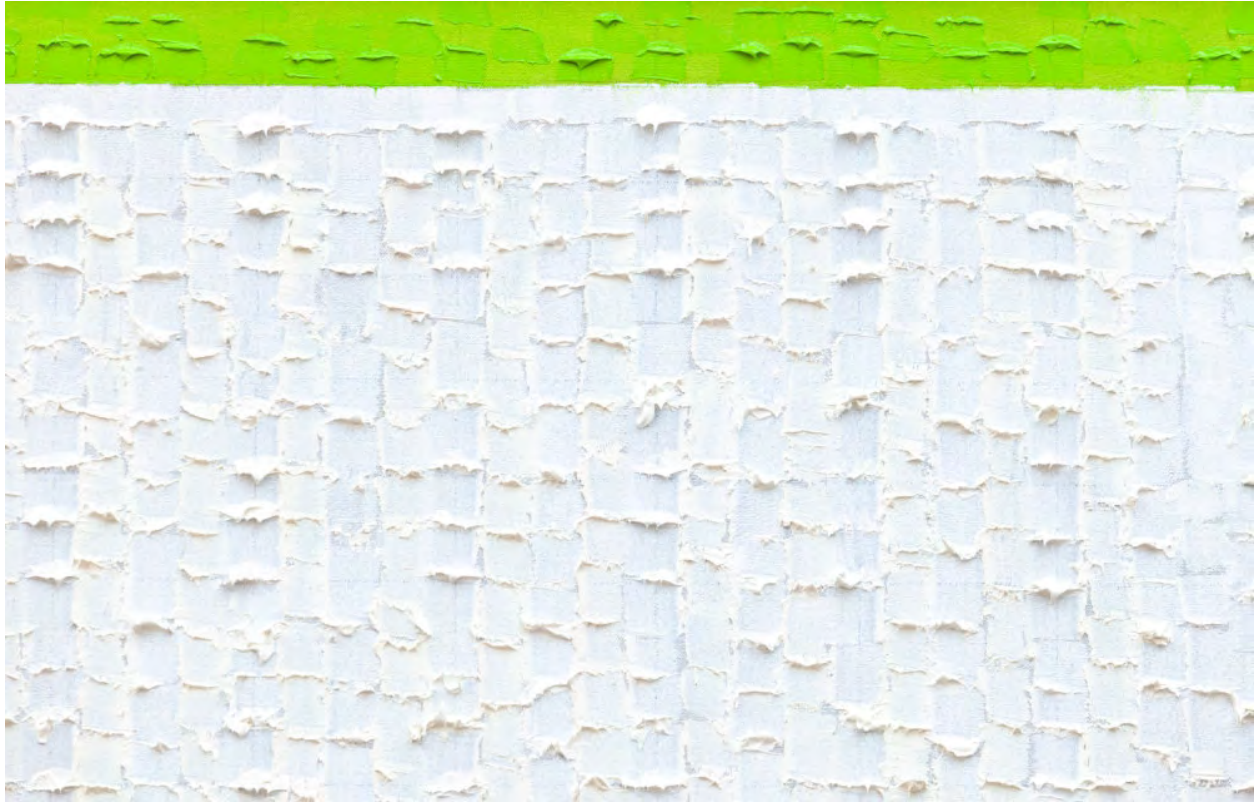


Image 3/6



Image 4/6

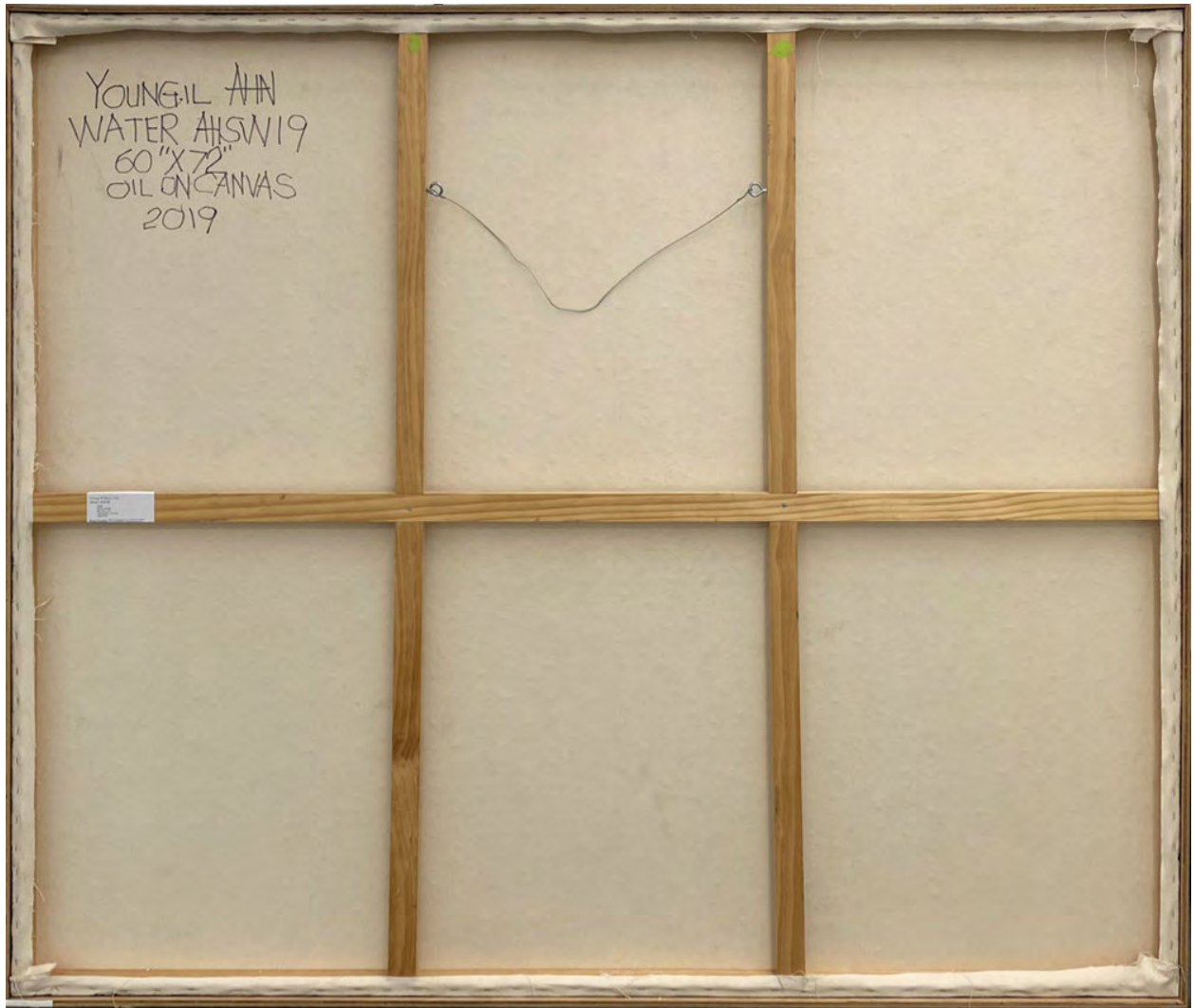


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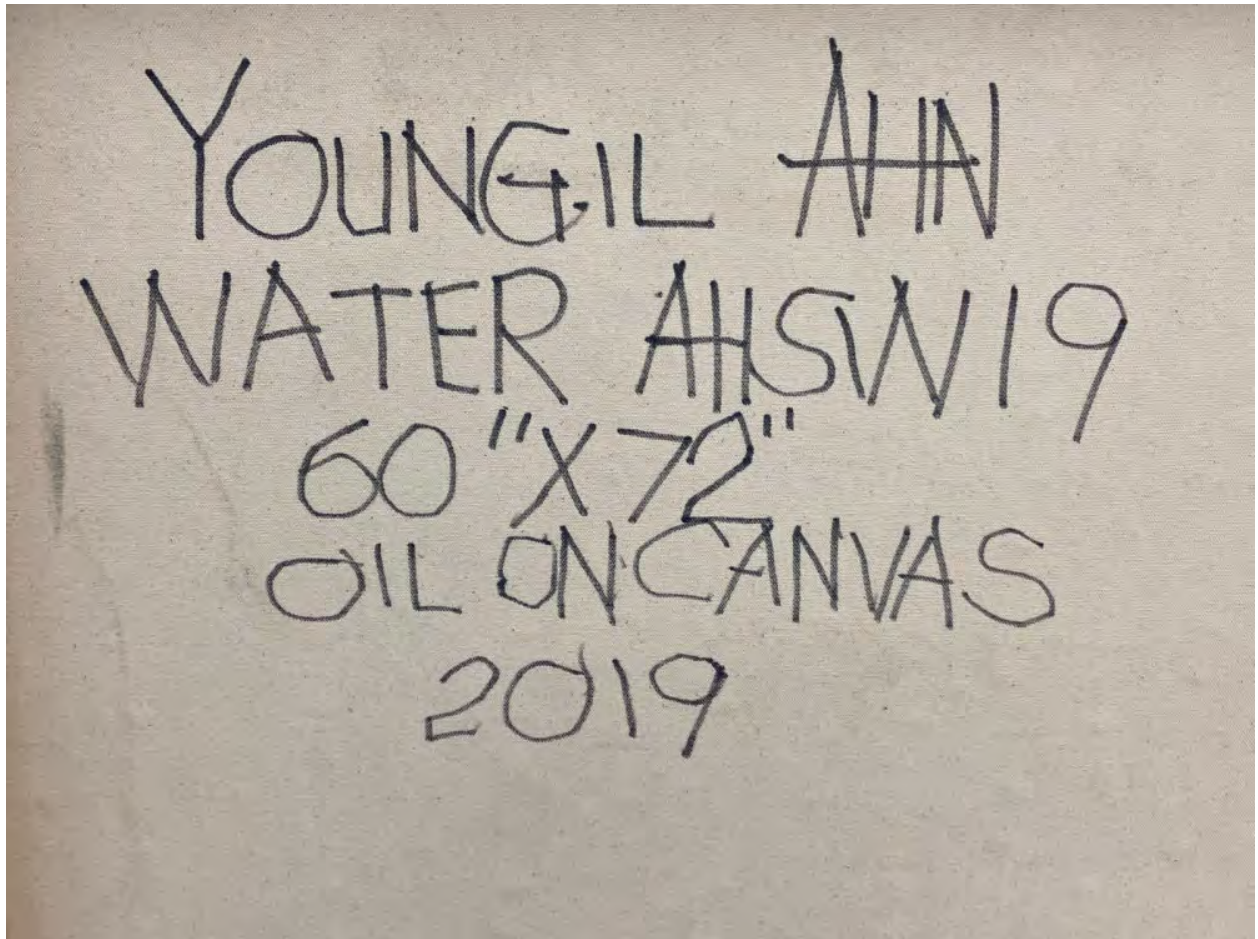
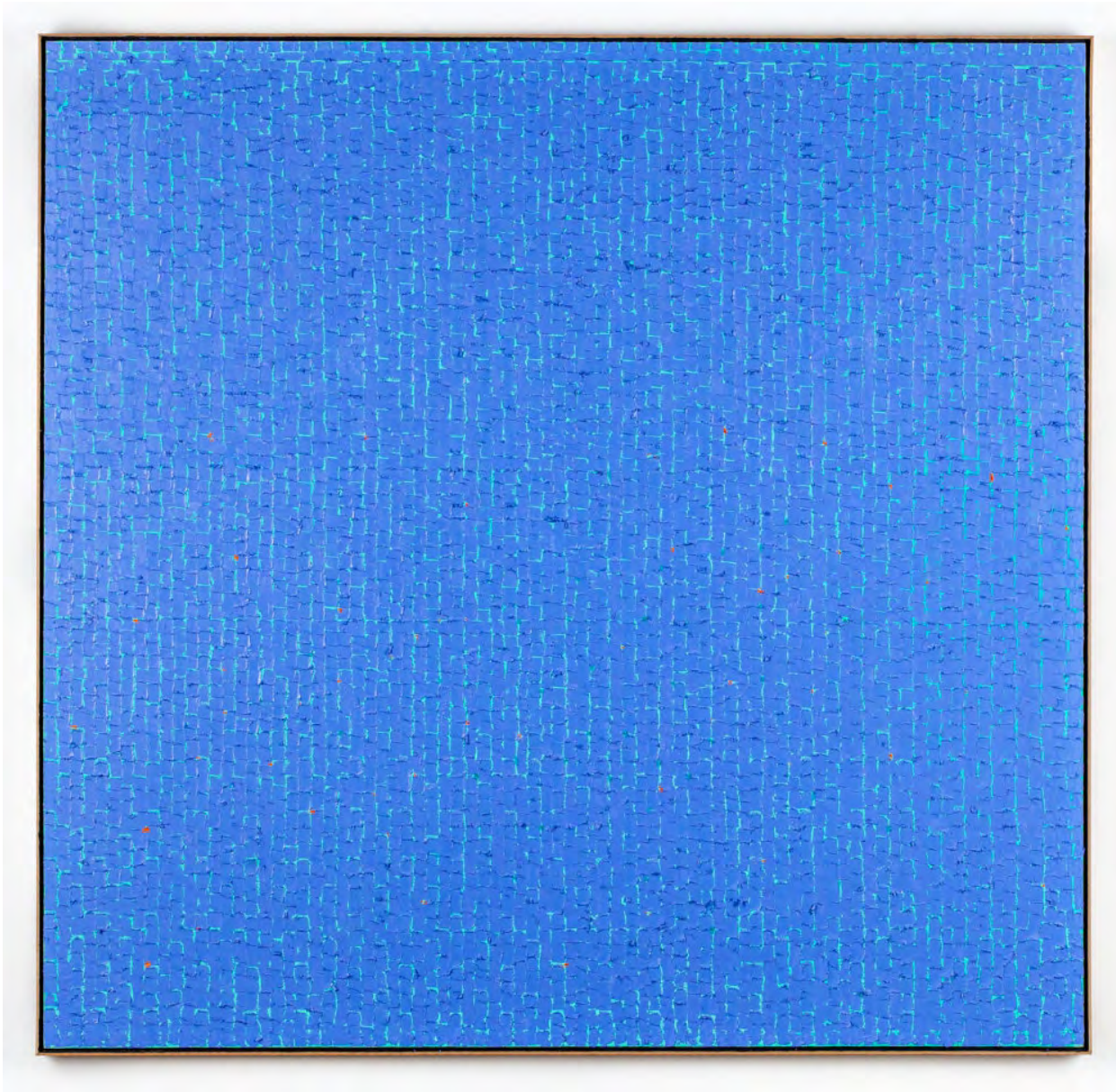


Image 6/6



Young-II Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
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Image 1/4

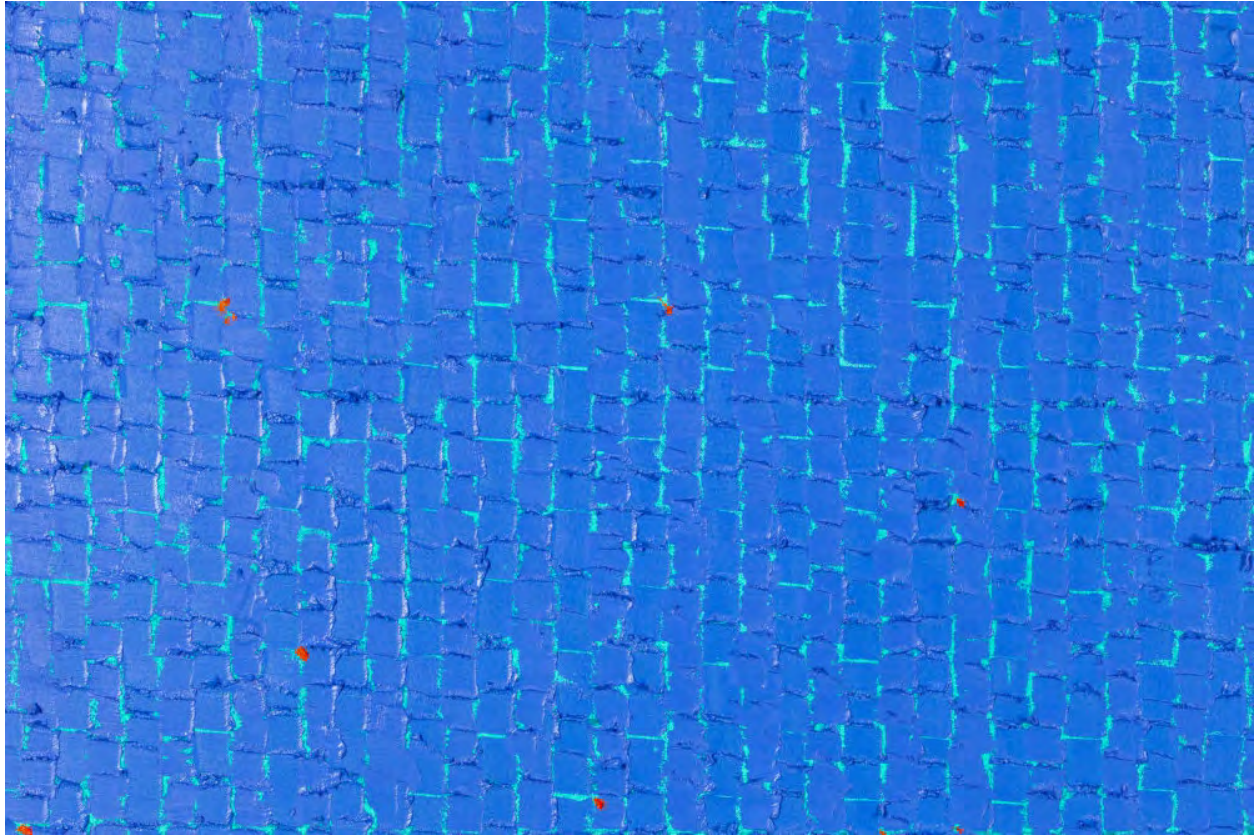


Image 2/4

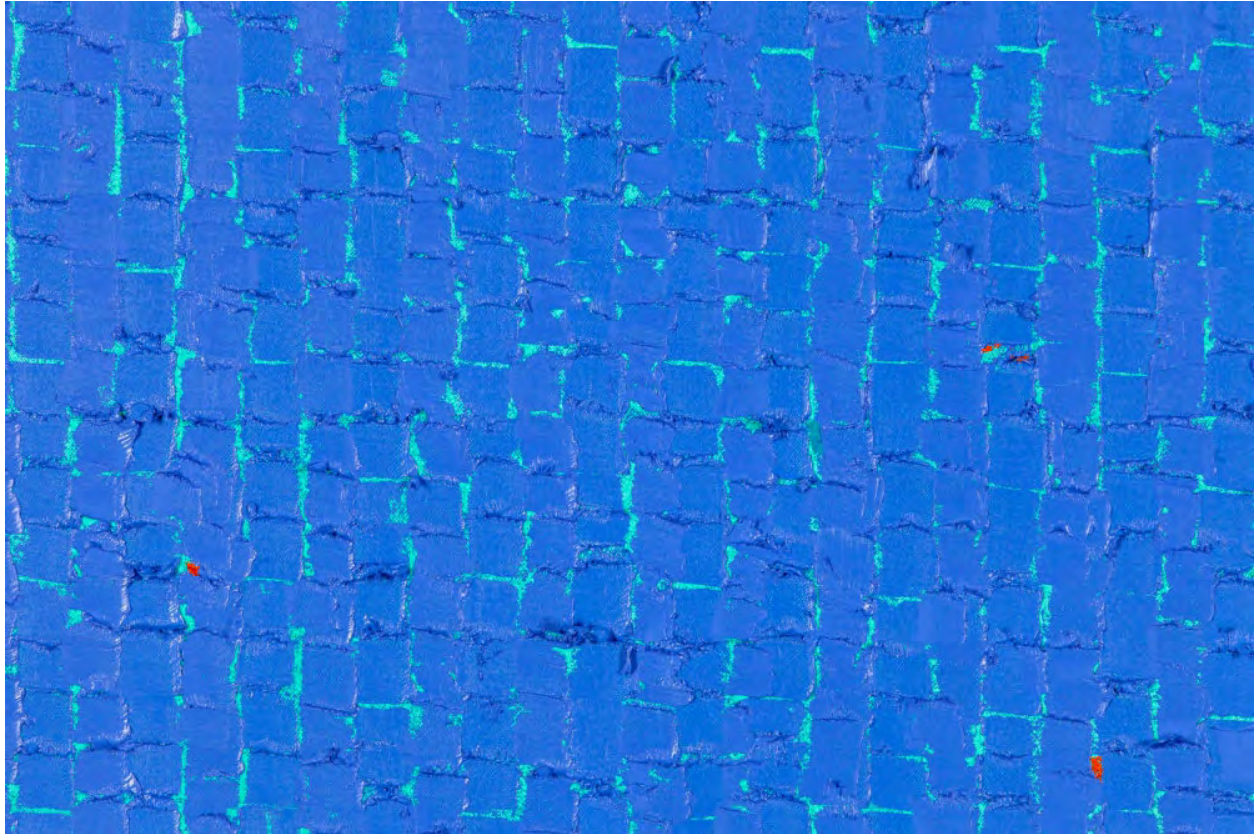


Image 3/4



Image 4/4



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Image 1/3

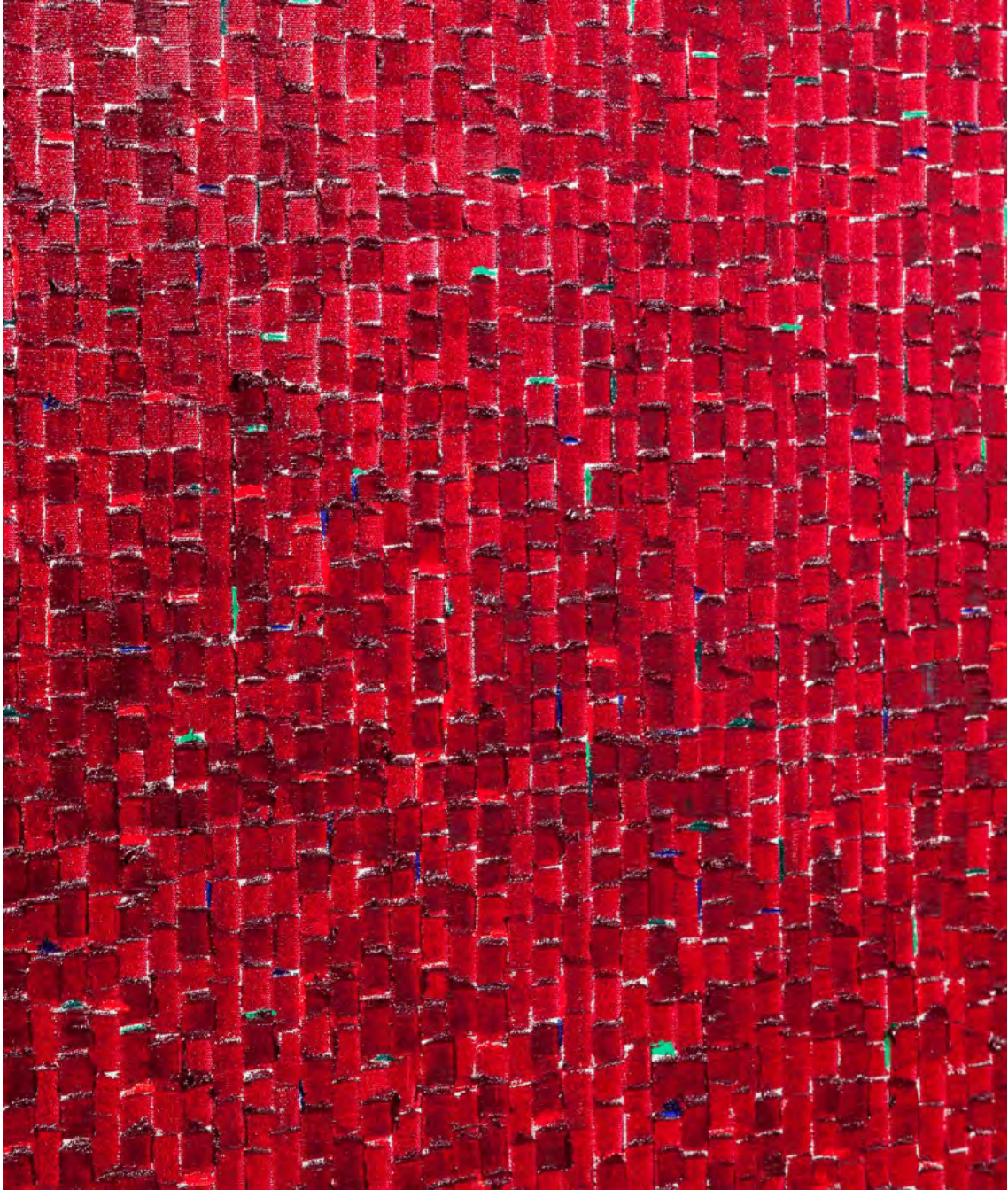


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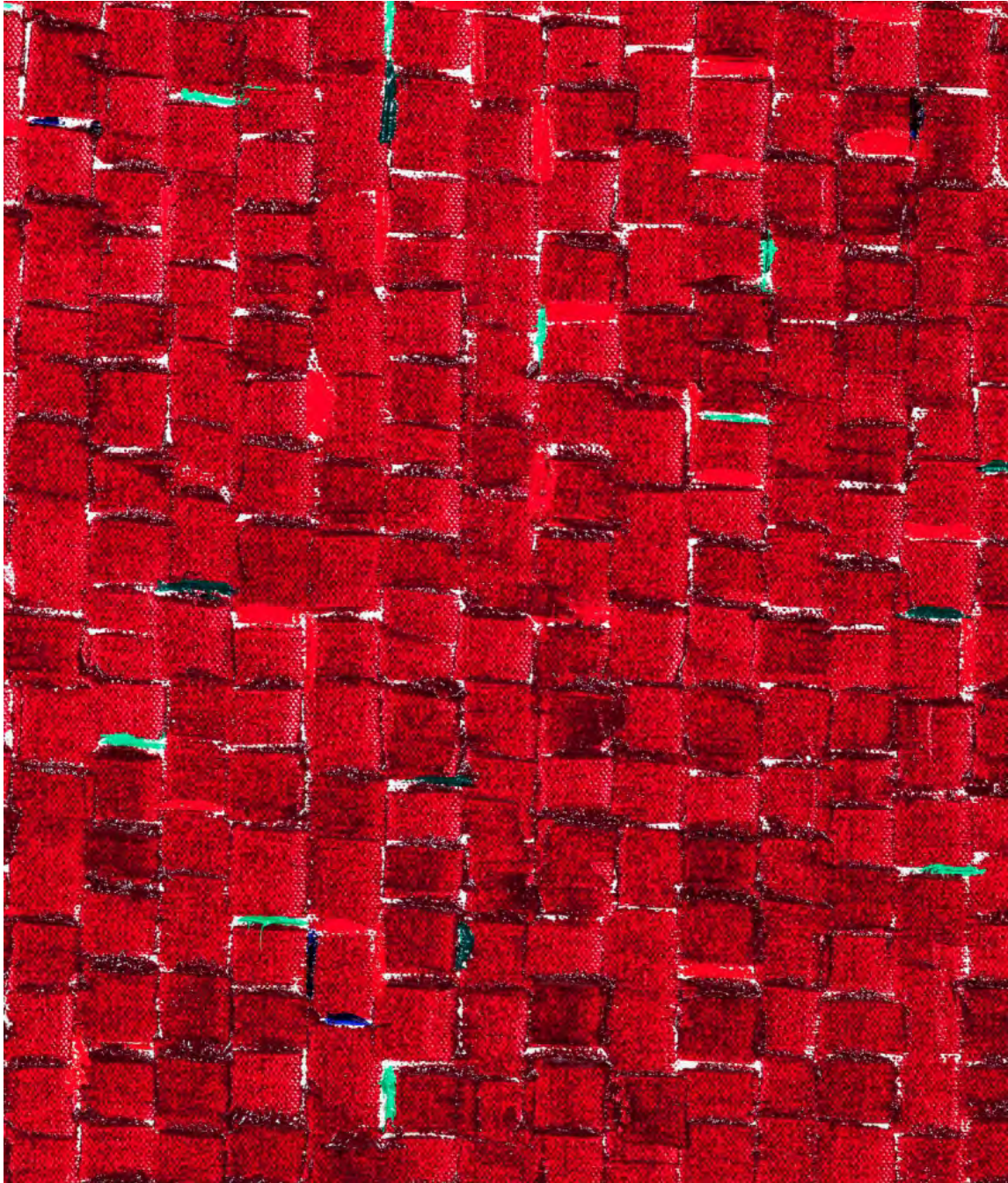


Image 3/3



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Image 1/4



Image 2/4



Image 3/4

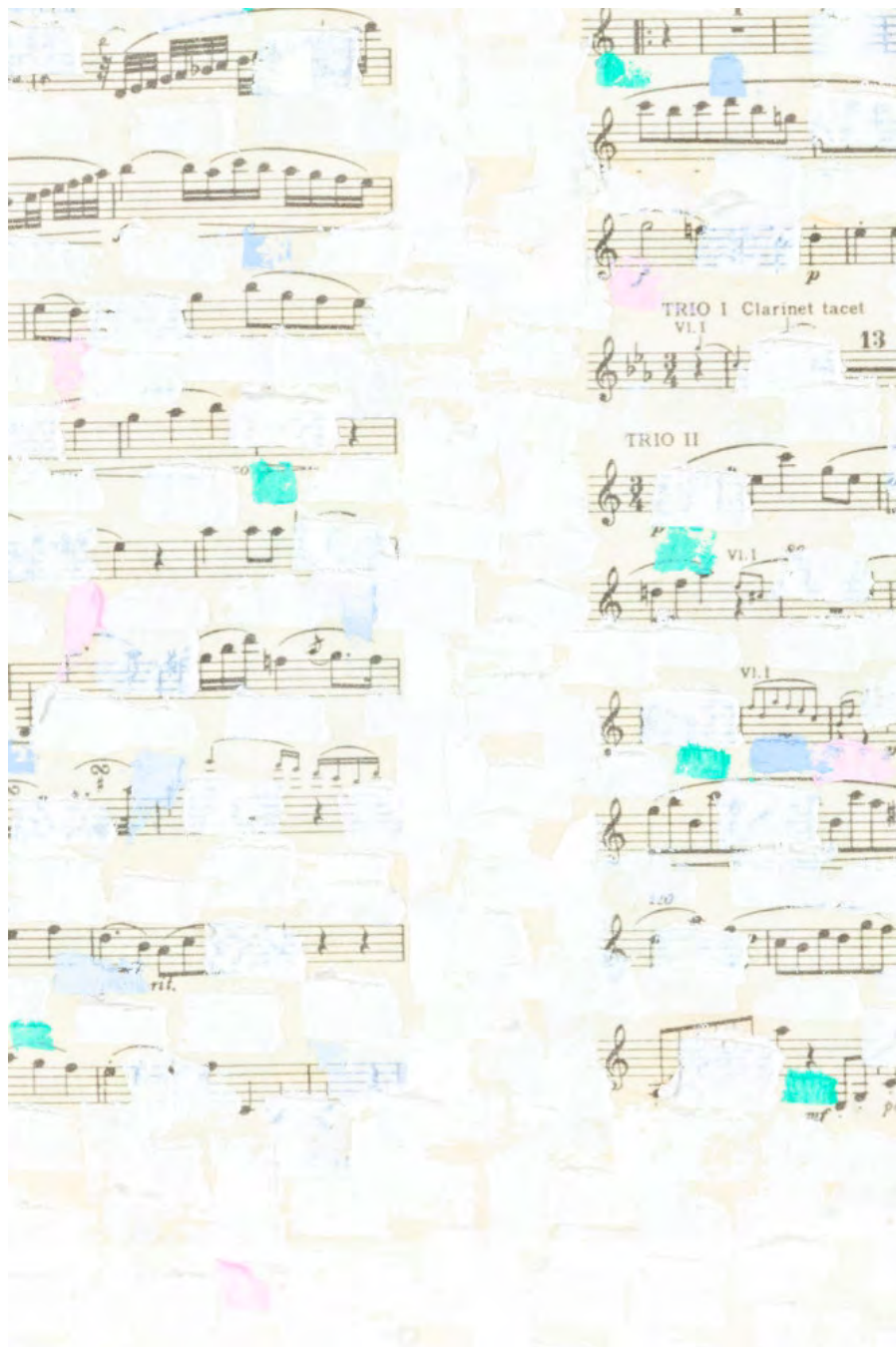
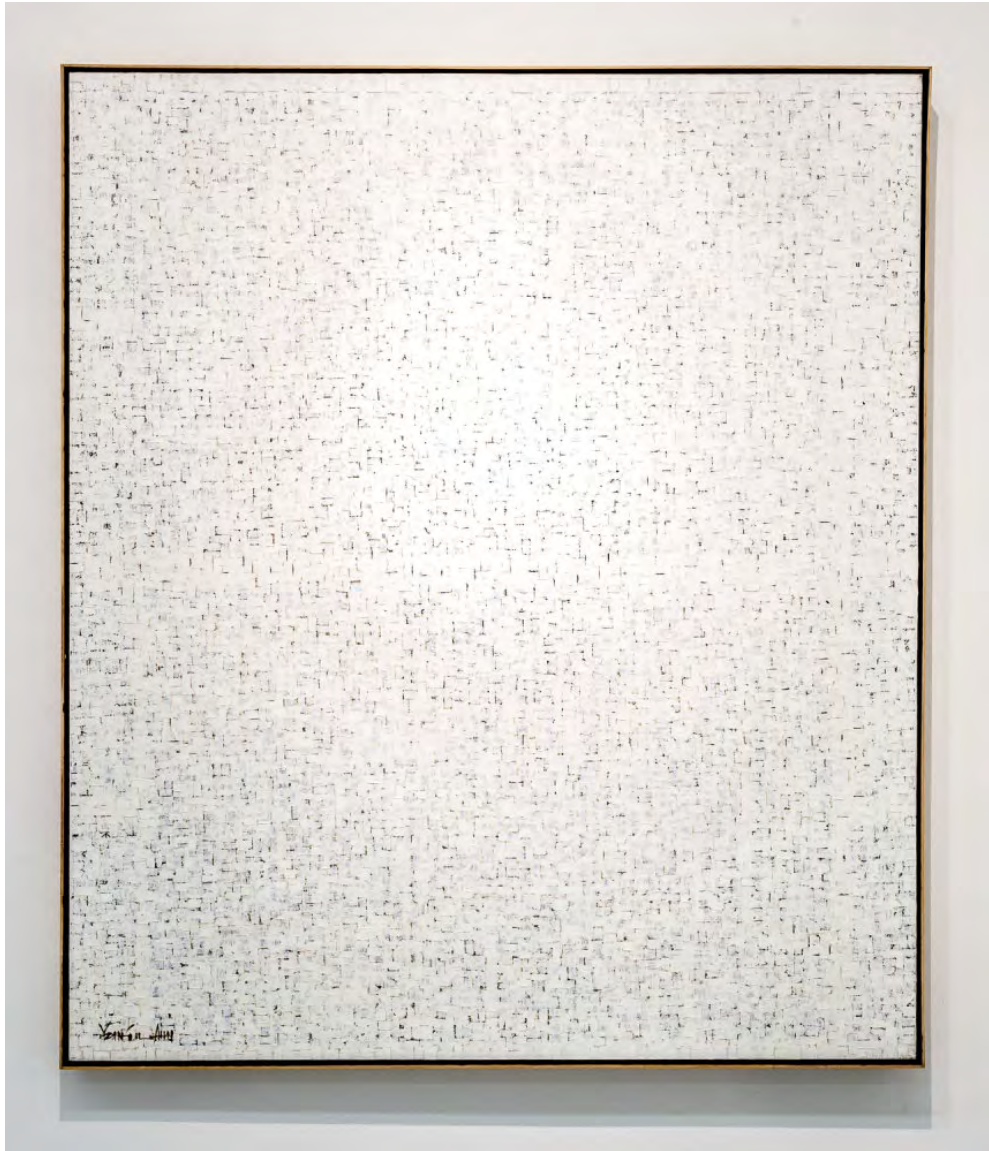


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Oil on canvas
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Image 1/3



Image 2/3

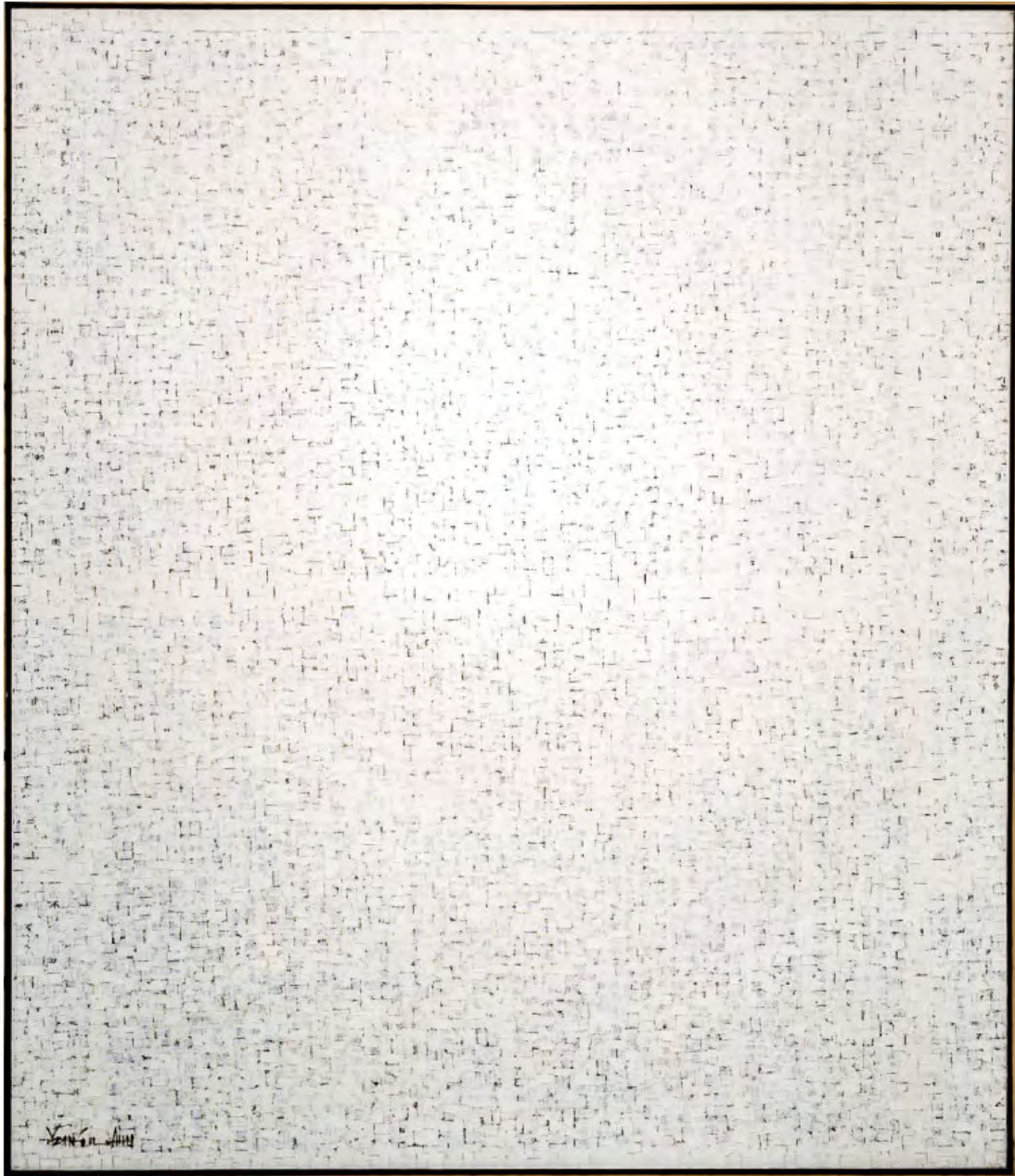
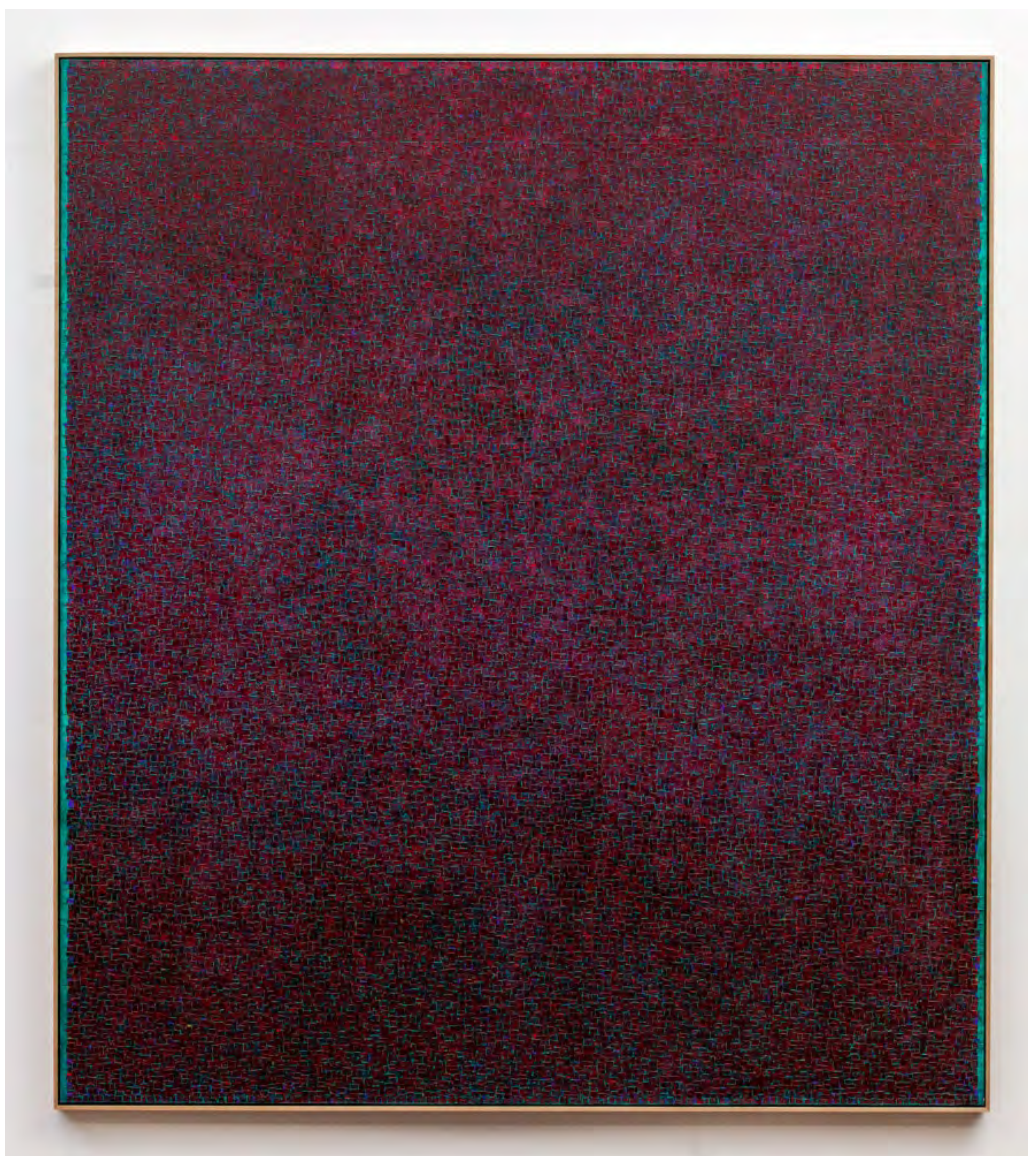


Image 3/3



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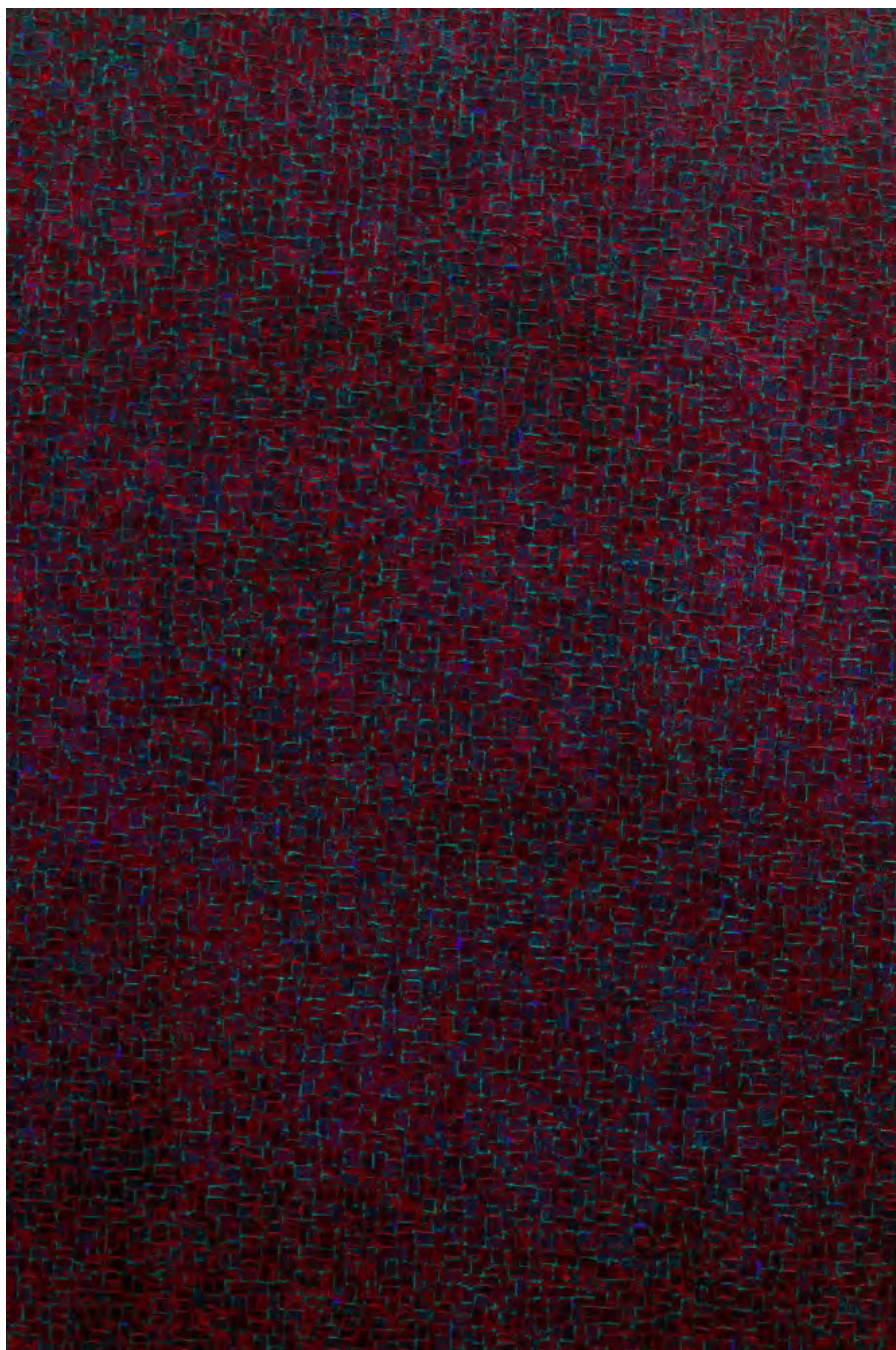


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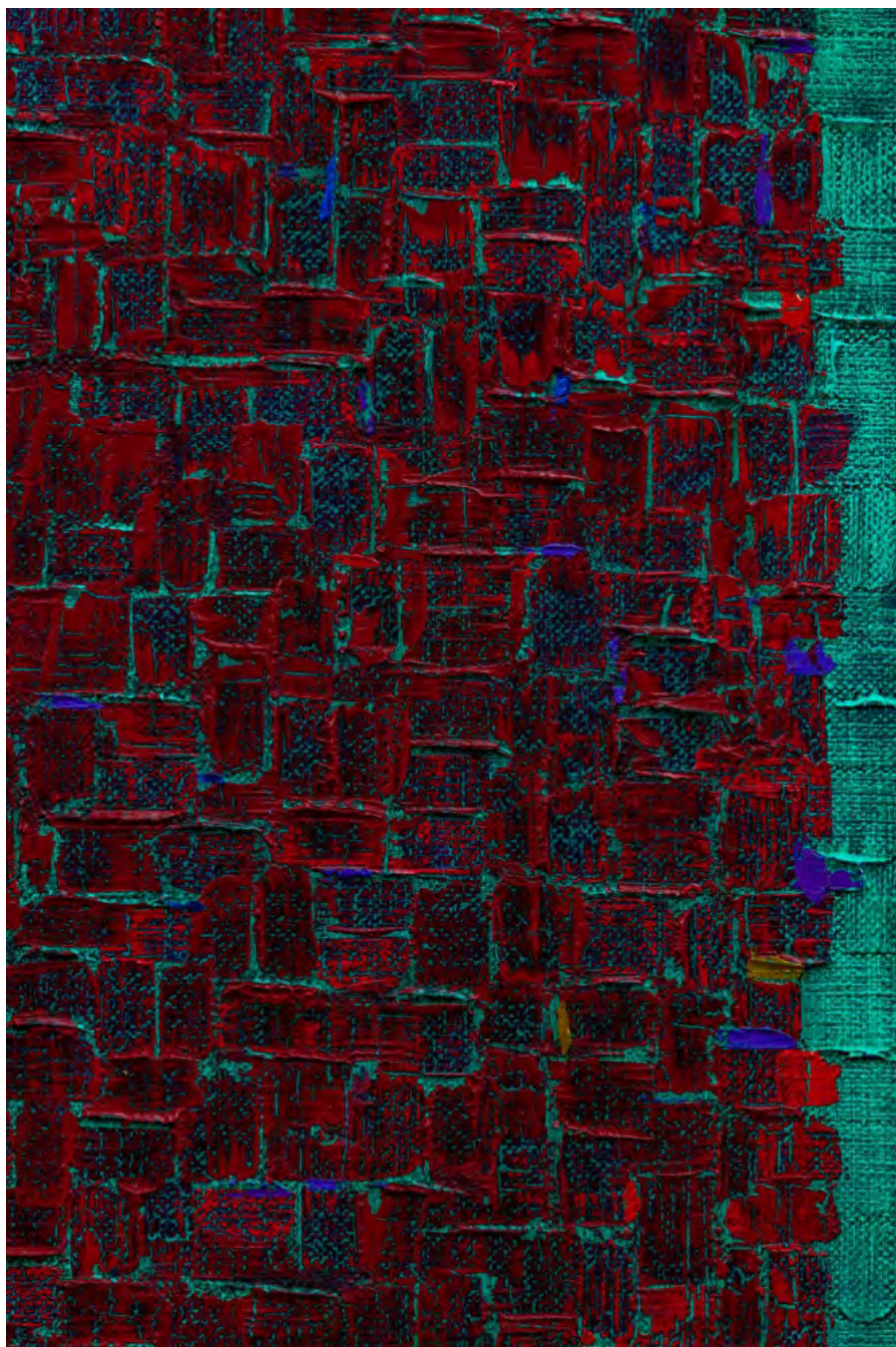


Image 3/4



Image 4/4

Additional Works

Additional Works



Young-Il Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water LLSV 16, 2016
Oil on canvas
68 x 148 x 2 in
172.7 x 375.9 cm
(6302)



Young-Il Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water YLRB 18, 2018
Oil on canvas
66 x 82 in
167.6 x 208.3 cm
(7336)



Young-Il Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water YLGG 19, 2019
Oil on canvas
66 x 82 x 2 in
167.6 x 208.3 cm
(7471)



Young-Il Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water BLMB 17, 2017
Oil on canvas
64 x 52 x 2 in
162.6 x 132.1 cm
(6353)



Young-Il Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water BLWB 18A, 2018
Oil on canvas
64 x 52 x 2 in
162.6 x 132.1 x 5.1 cm
(6697)



Young-Il Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water CLW 99, 1999
Oil on canvas
50 x 44 x 2 in
127 x 111.8 x 5.1 cm
(6702)



Young-Il Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water CLPG 17, 2017
Oil on canvas
50 x 44 x 2 in
127 x 111.8 x 5.1 cm
(7240)



Young-Il Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water SQRB 18A, 2018
Oil on canvas
24 x 20 x 2 in
61 x 50.8 x 5.1 cm
(6717)



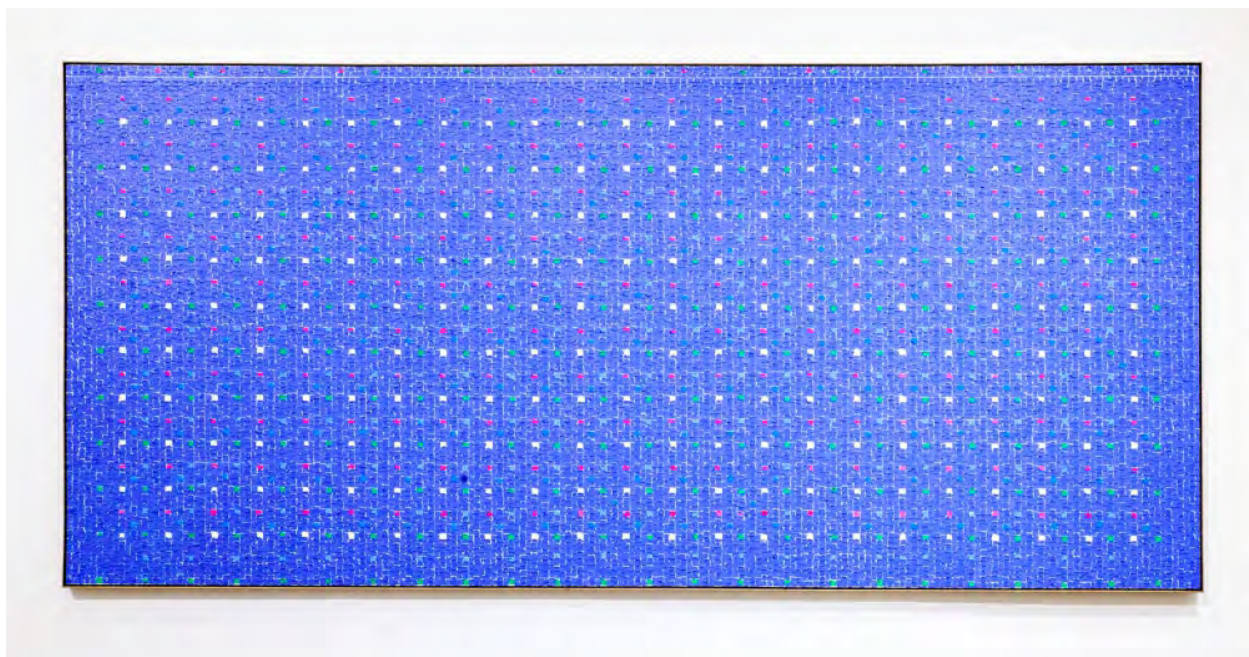
Young-Il Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water SQGO 19, 2019
Oil on canvas
24 x 20 x 2 in
61 x 50.8 x 5.1 cm
(7468)



Young-Il Ahn 1934–2020
Water SQBR 19, 2019
Oil on canvas
24 x 20 x 2 in
61 x 50.8 x 5.1 cm
In artist made wood frame
(7469)



Young-Il Ahn 1934–2020
Water SQBB 19A, 2019
Oil on canvas
24 x 20 x 2 in
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(7573)



Young-II Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020

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Oil on canvas

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Image 1/4

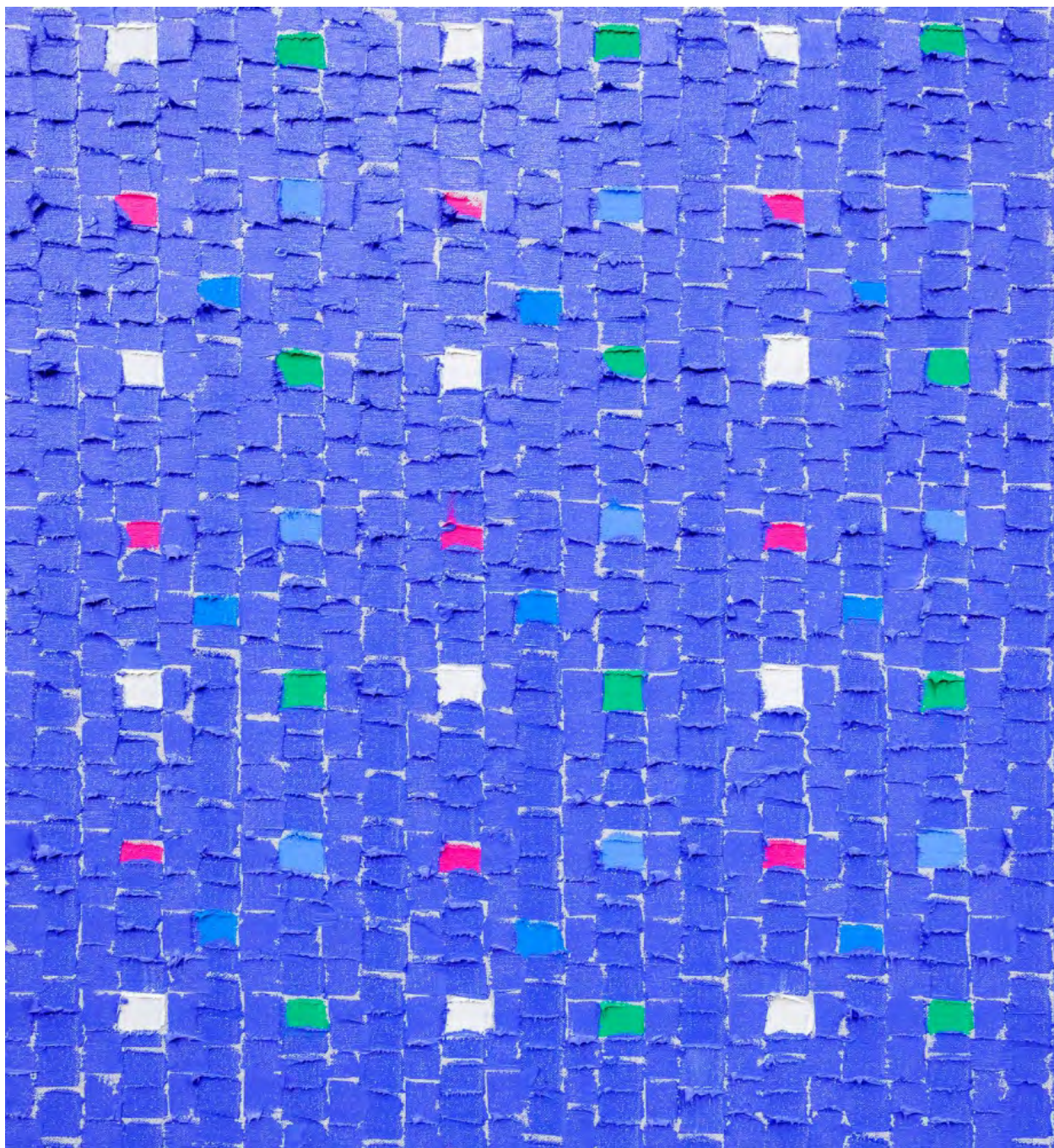


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Image 3/4

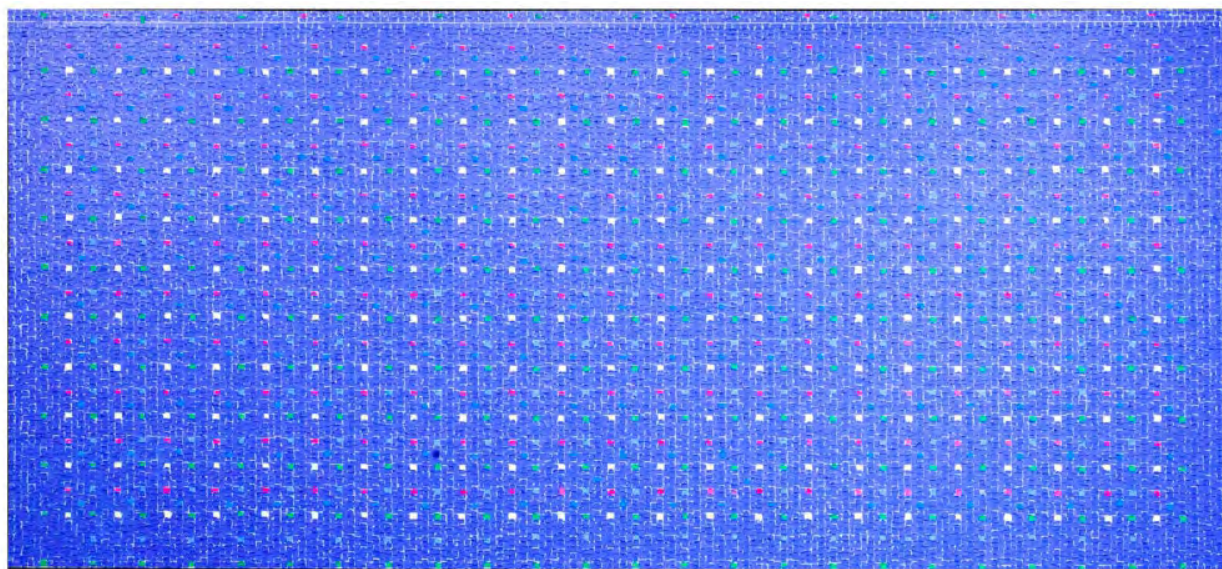
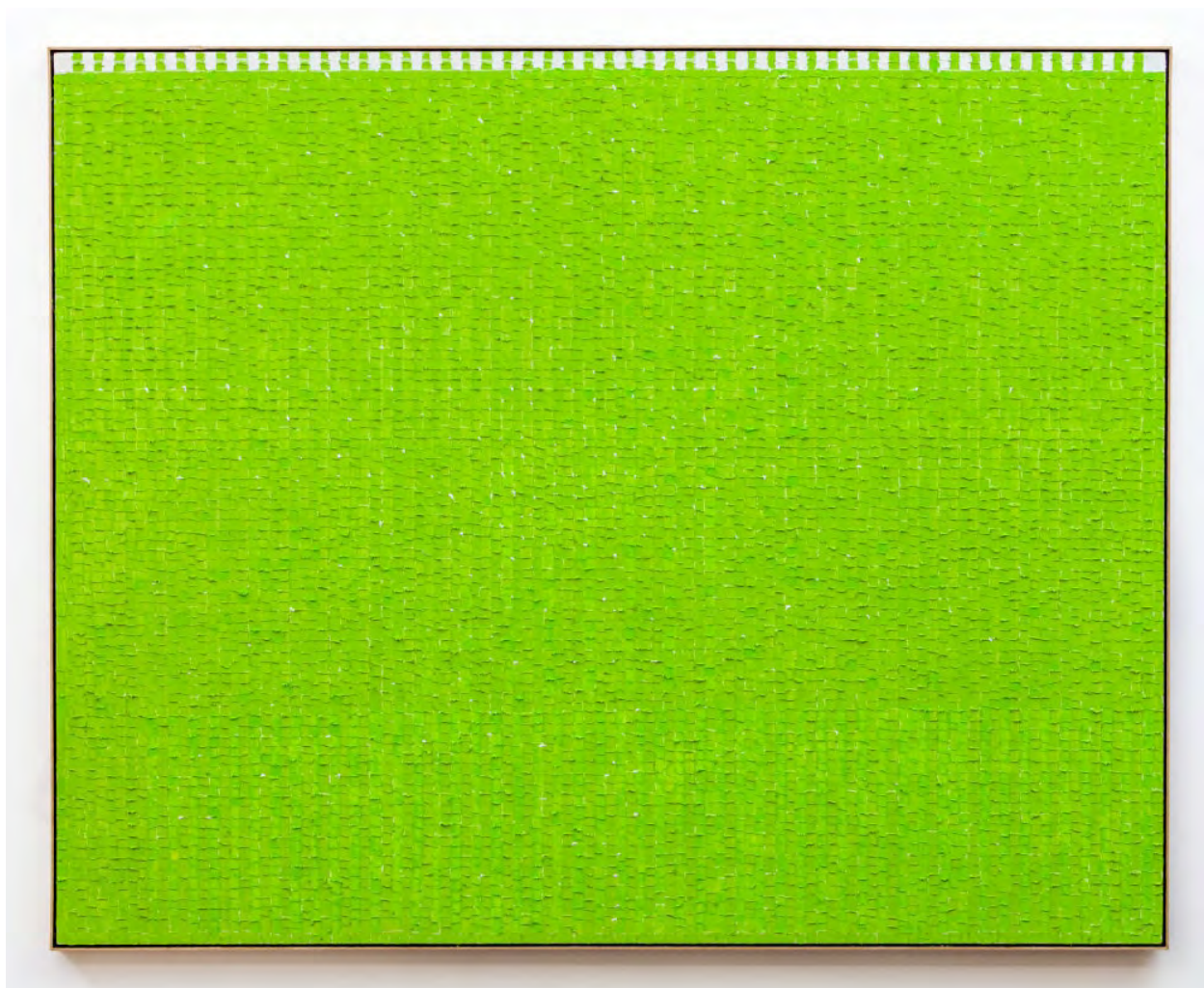


Image 4/4



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Oil on canvas

66 x 82 x 2 in

167.6 x 208.3 cm

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Image 1/3

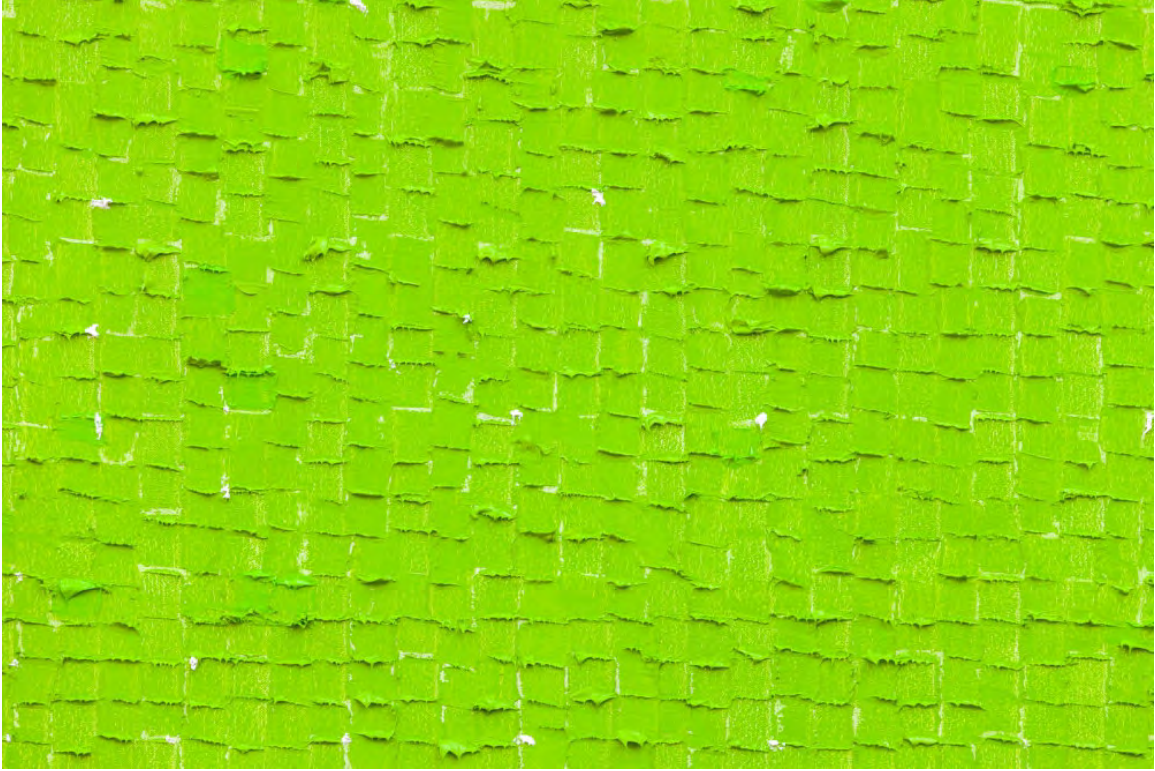


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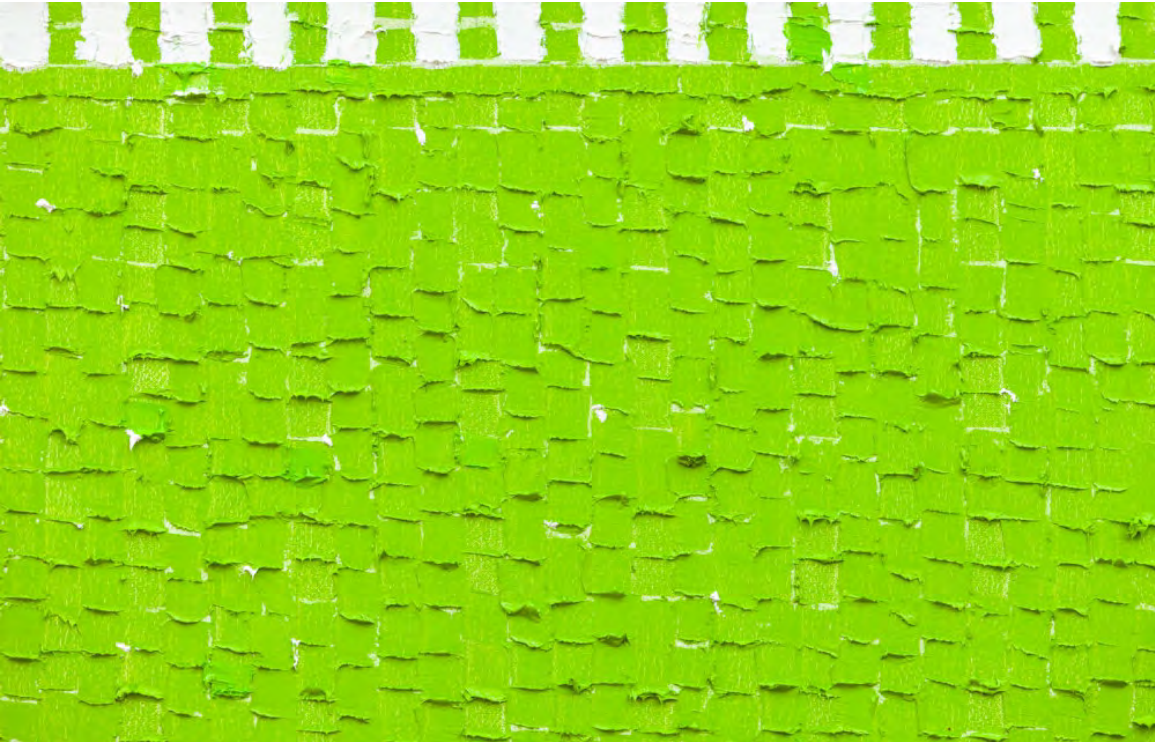


Image 3/3



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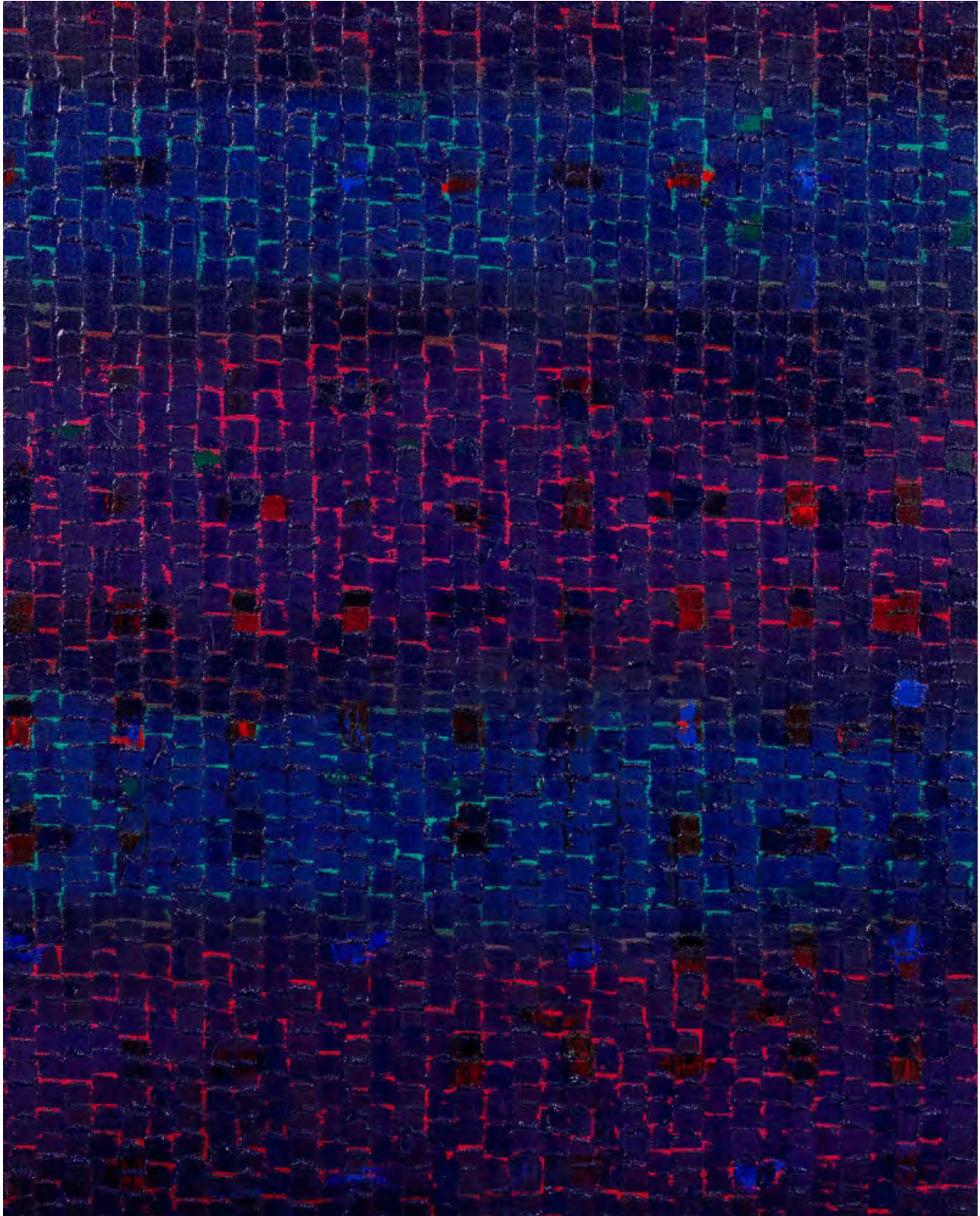
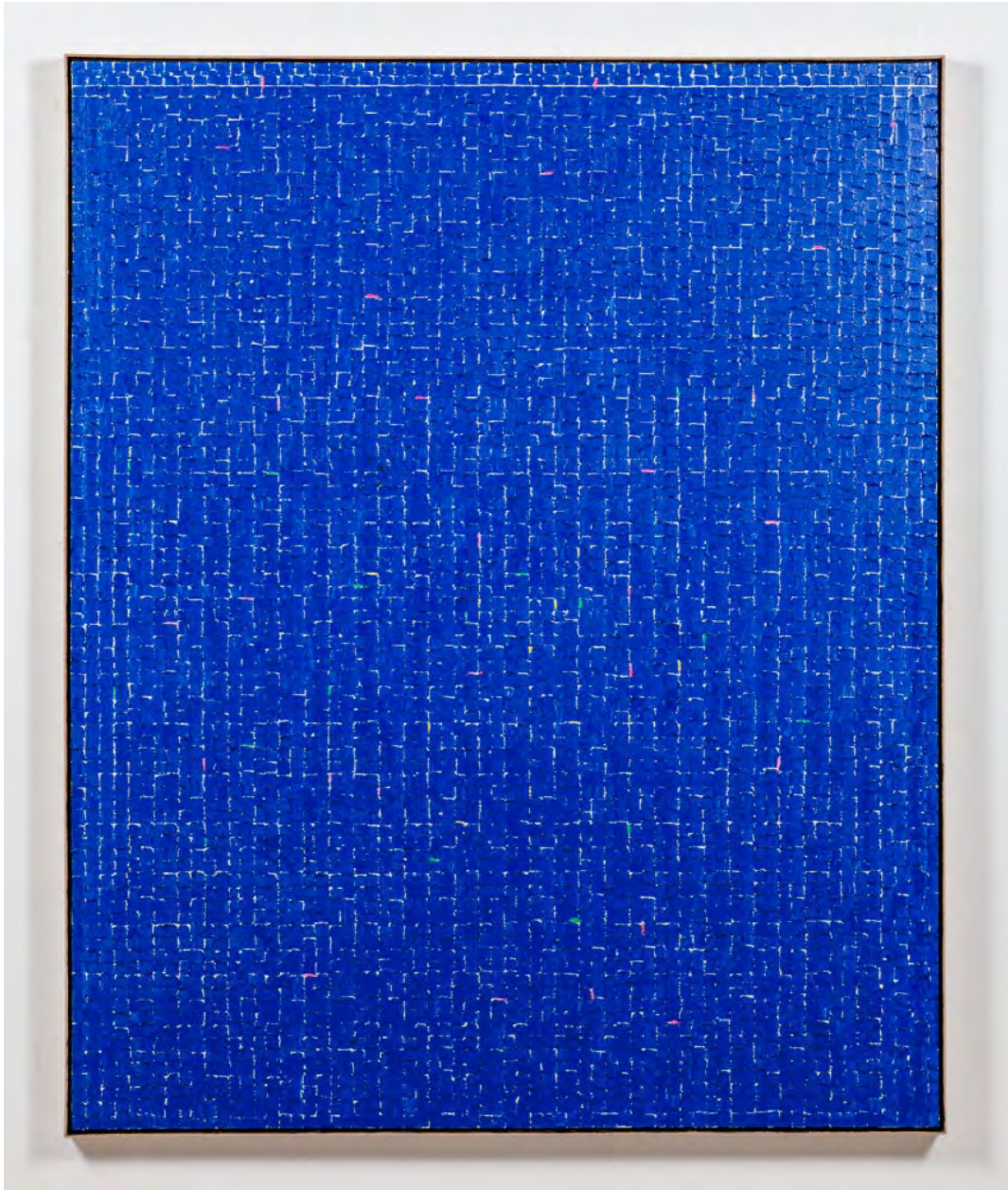


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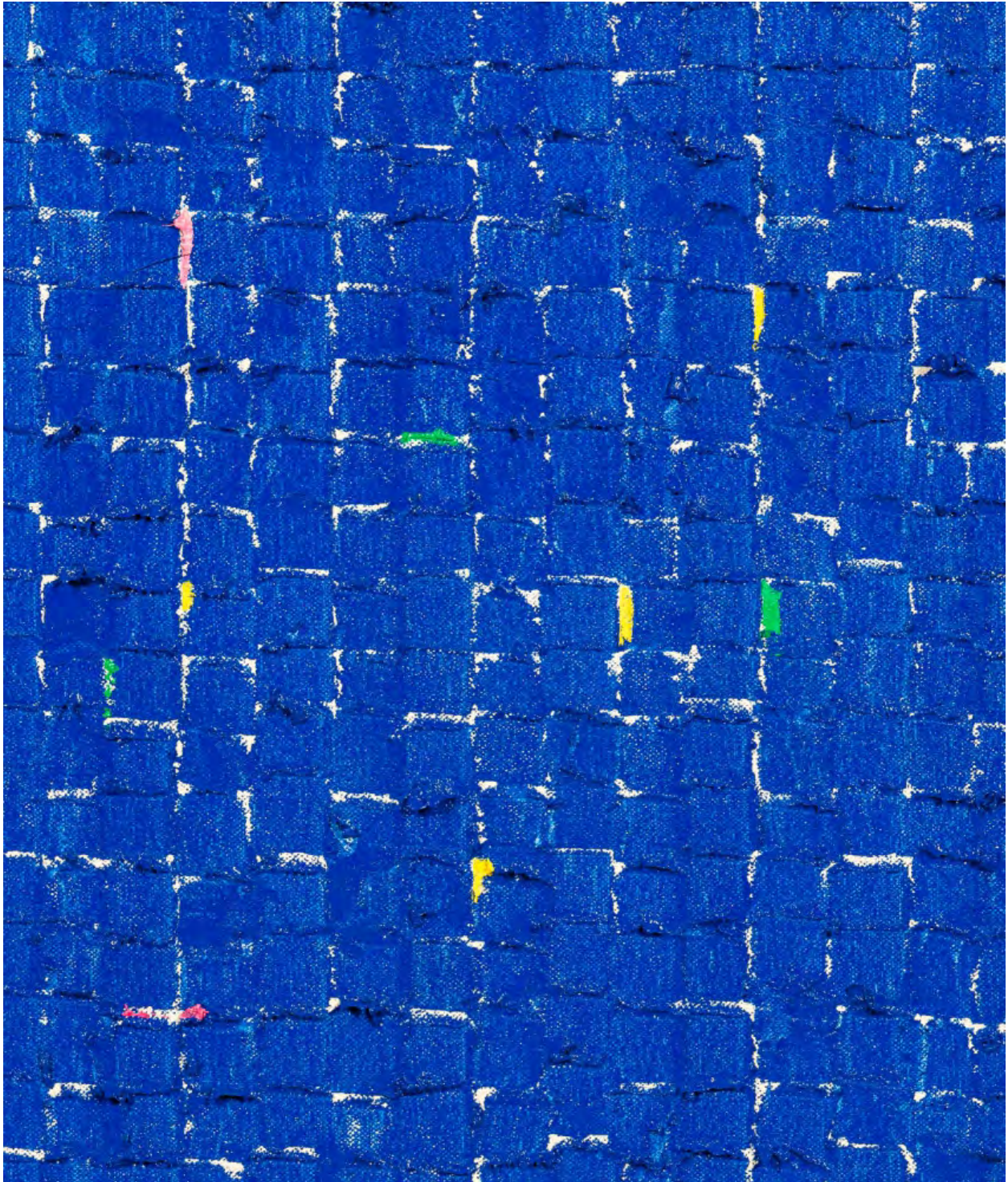
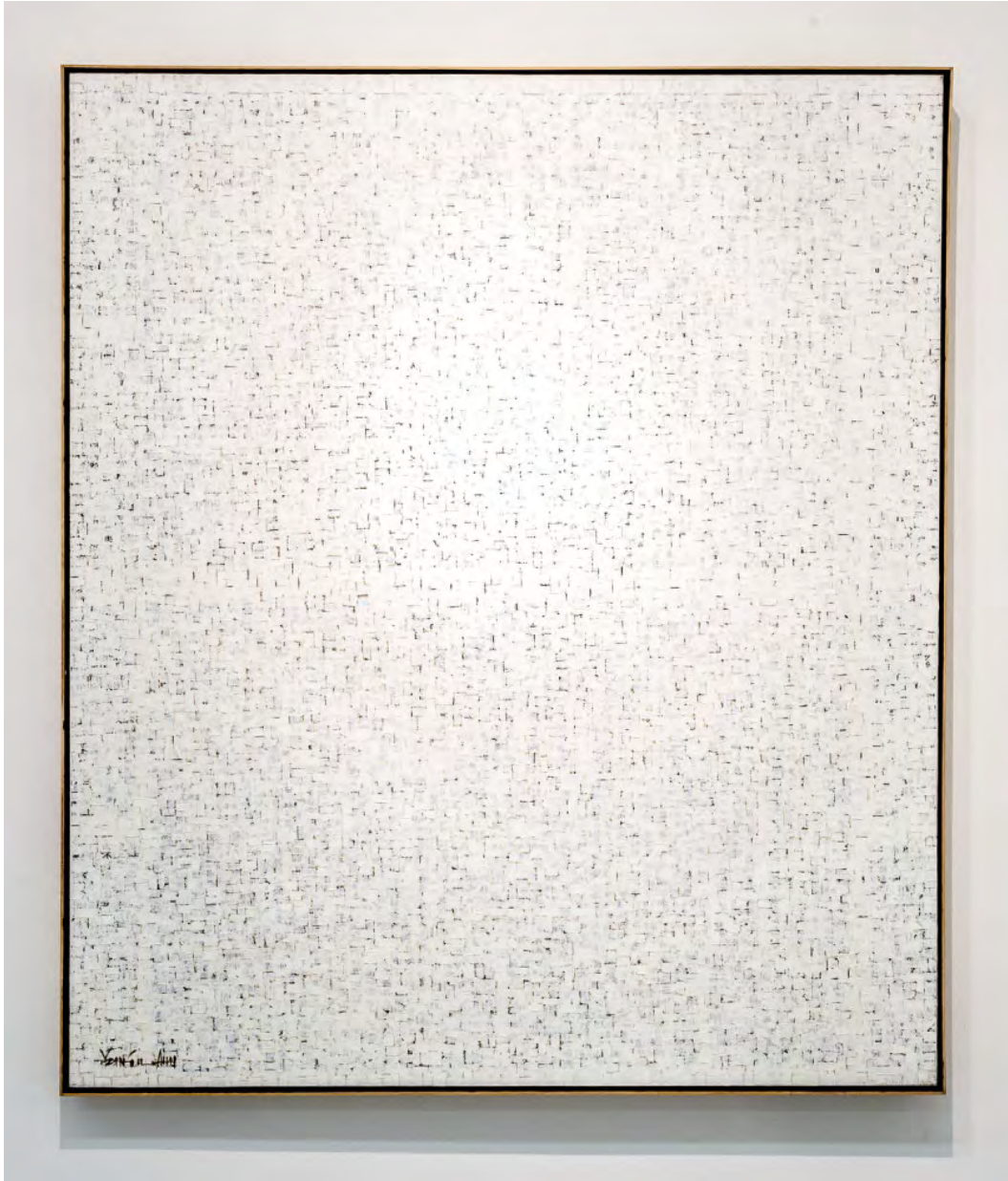


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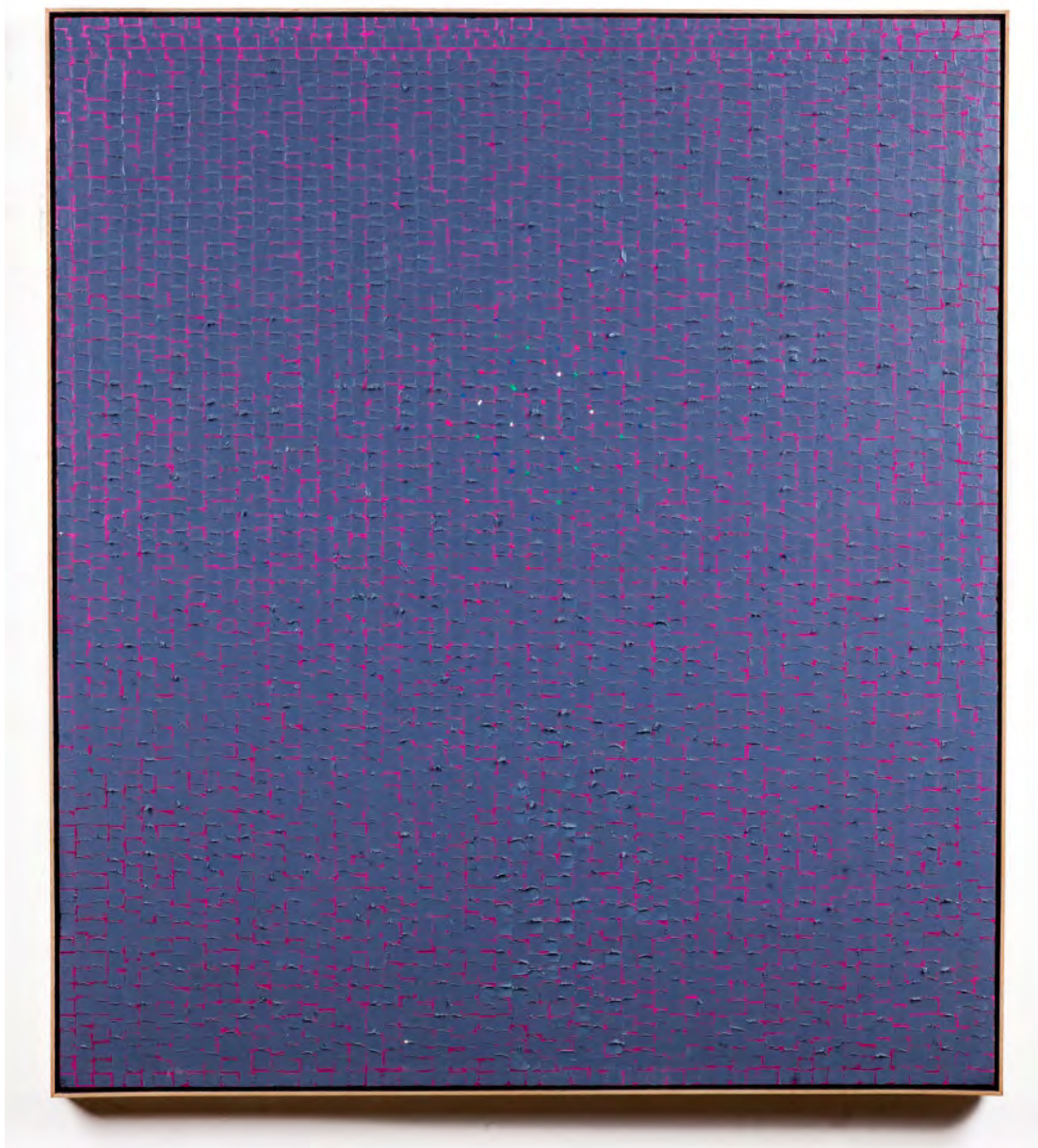


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Image 1/2



Image 2/2



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Image 1/3

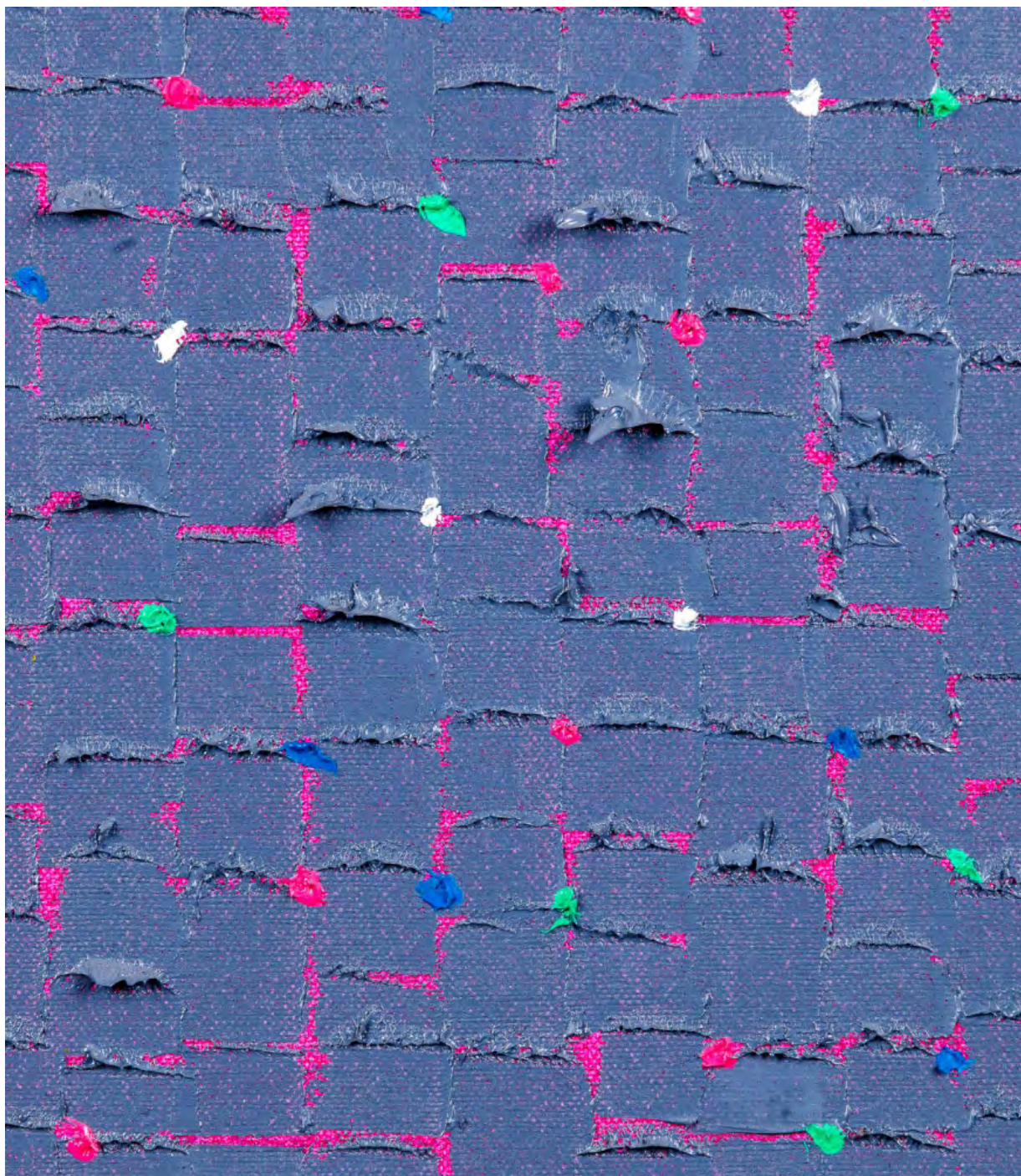
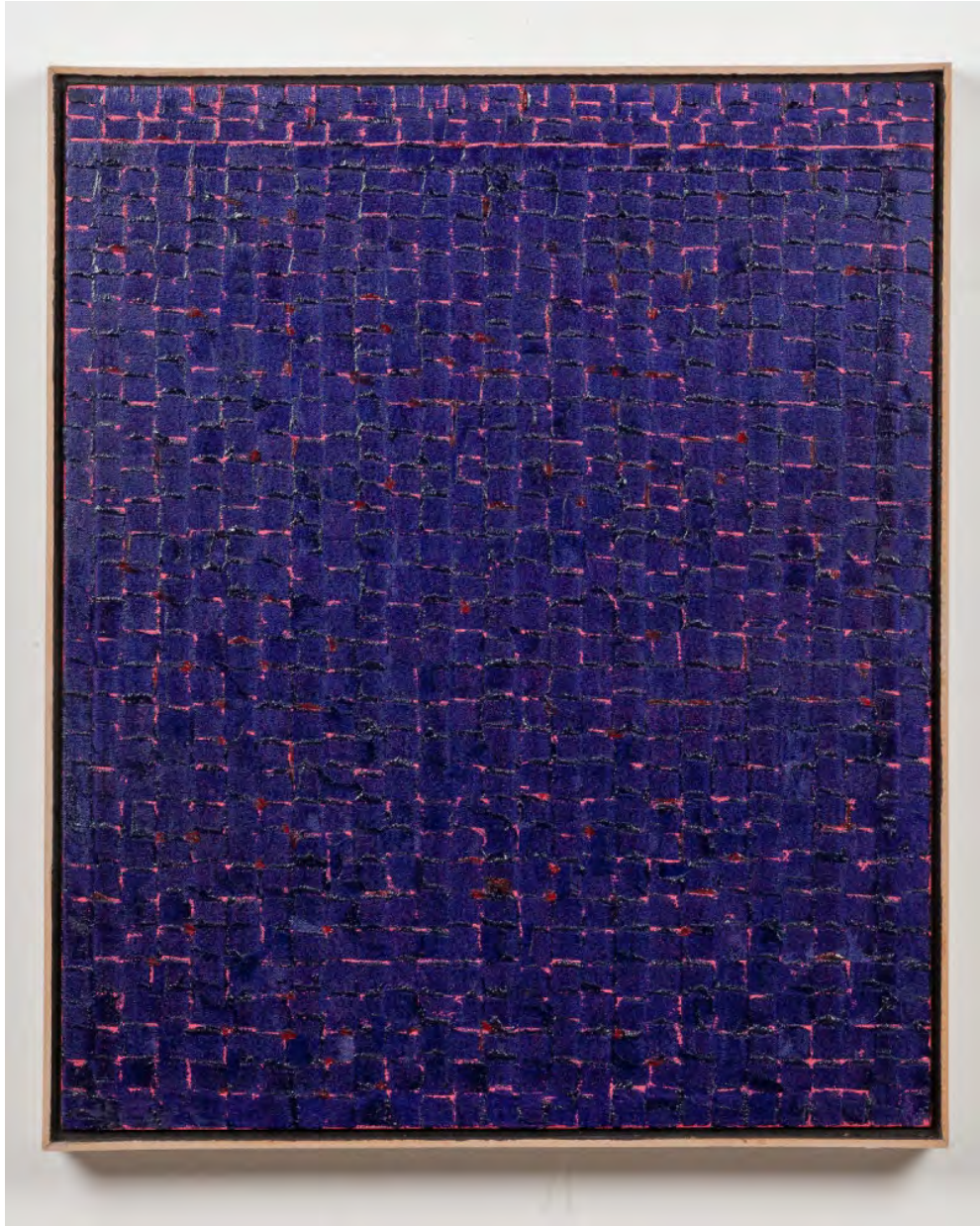


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Young-II Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
Water SQRB 18A, 2018
Oil on canvas
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61 x 50.8 x 5.1 cm
(6717)

Image 1/2

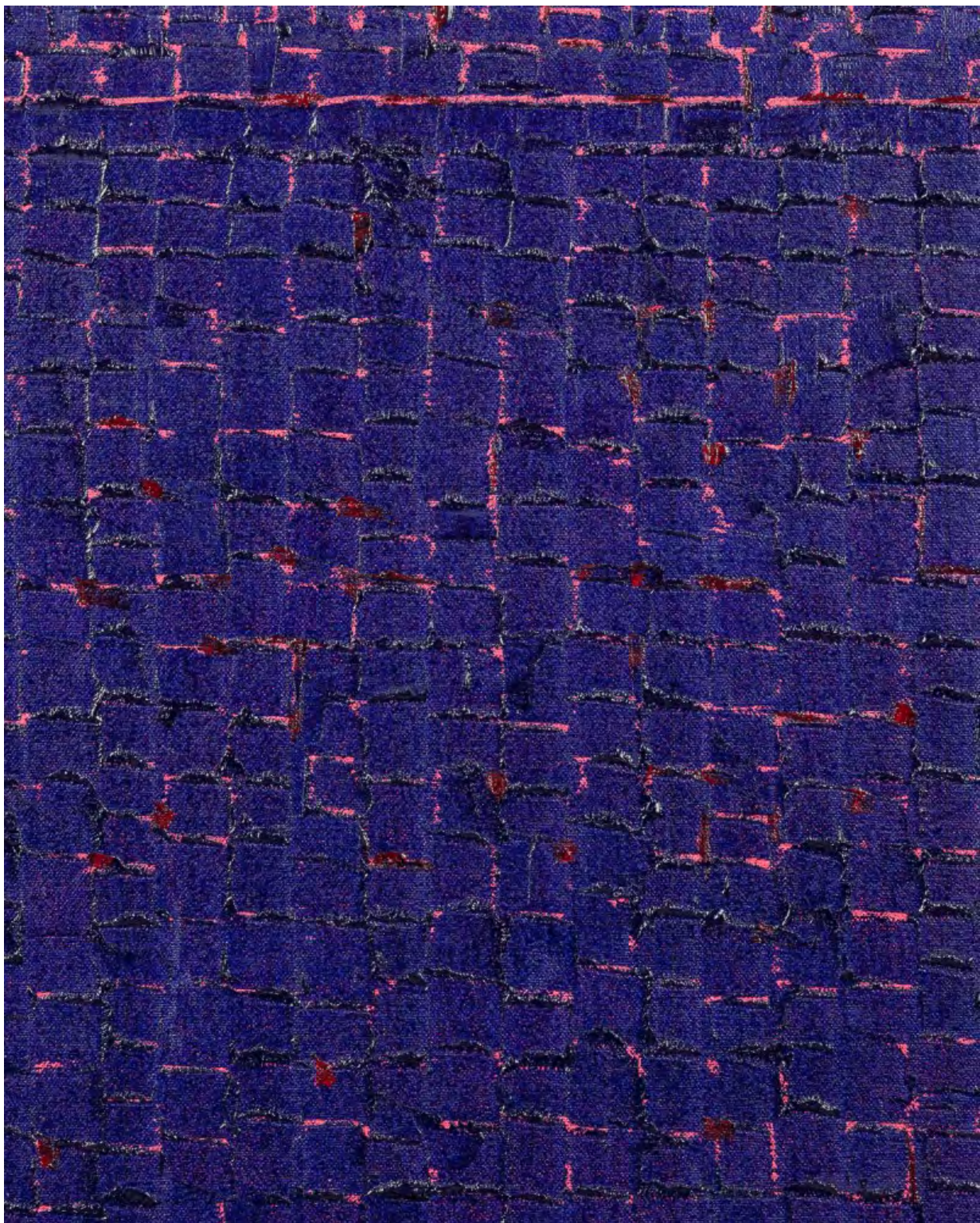
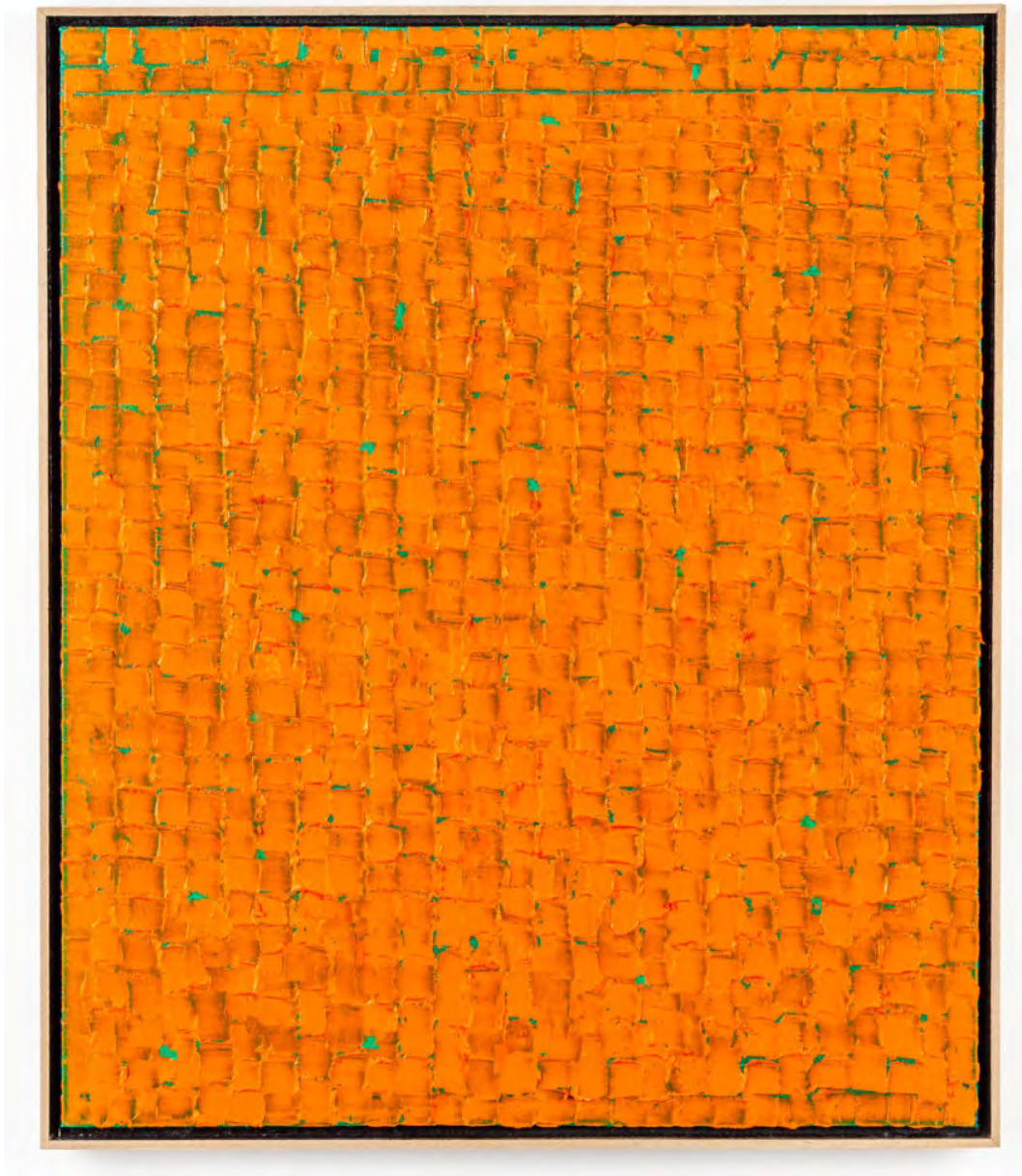


Image 2/2



Young-Il Ahn b. 1934 - d. 2020
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Image 1/2

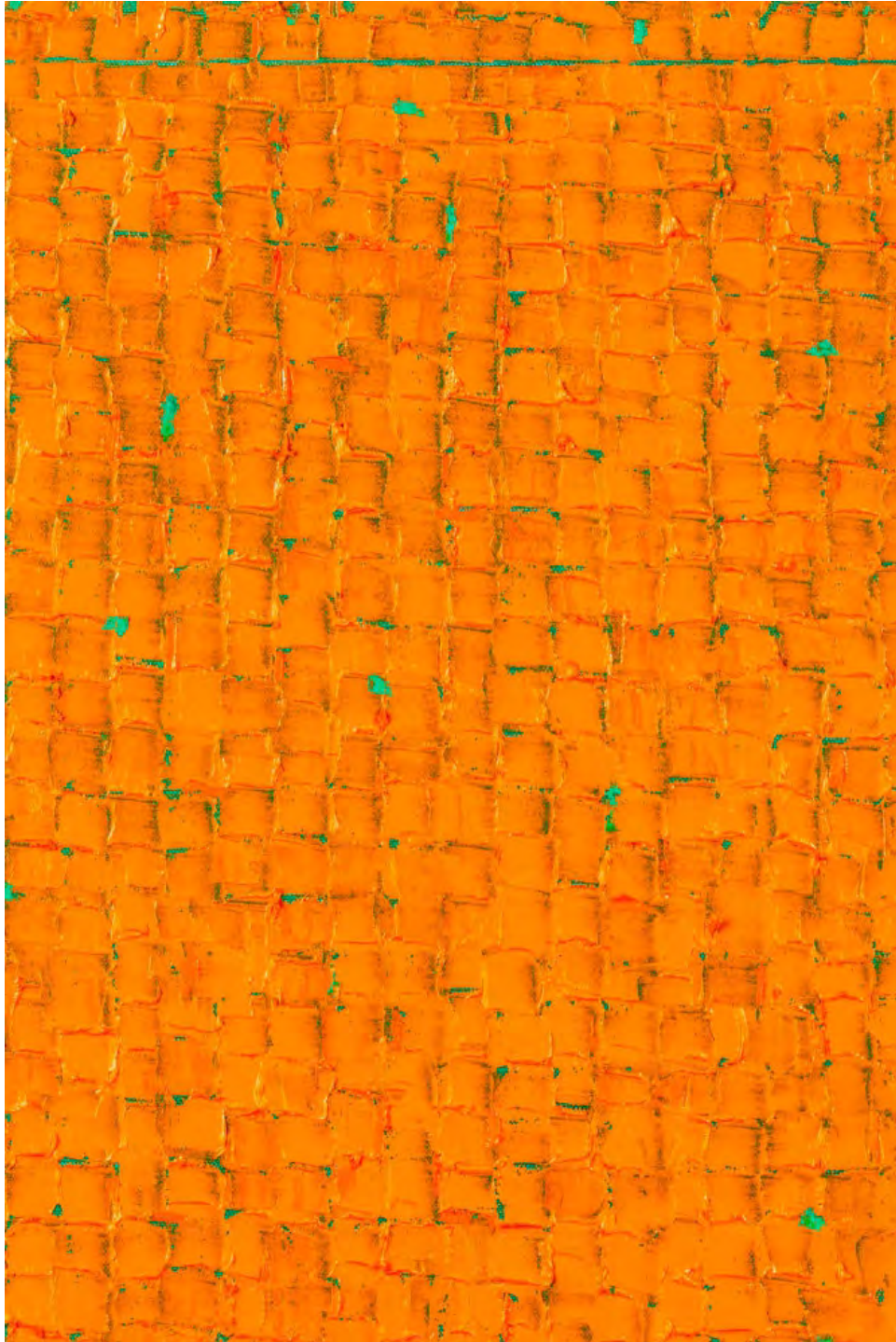
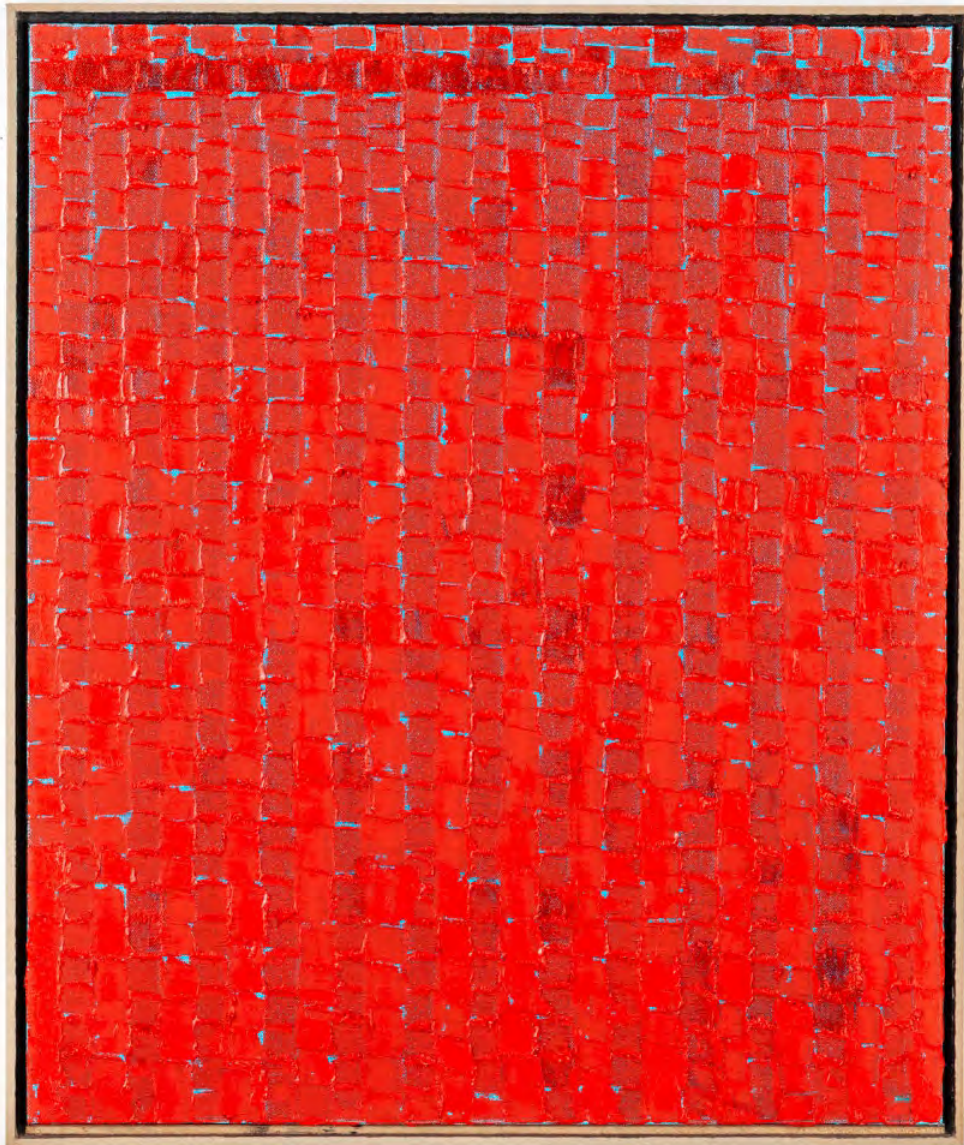


Image 2/2



Young-Il Ahn 1934–2020
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Image 1/3

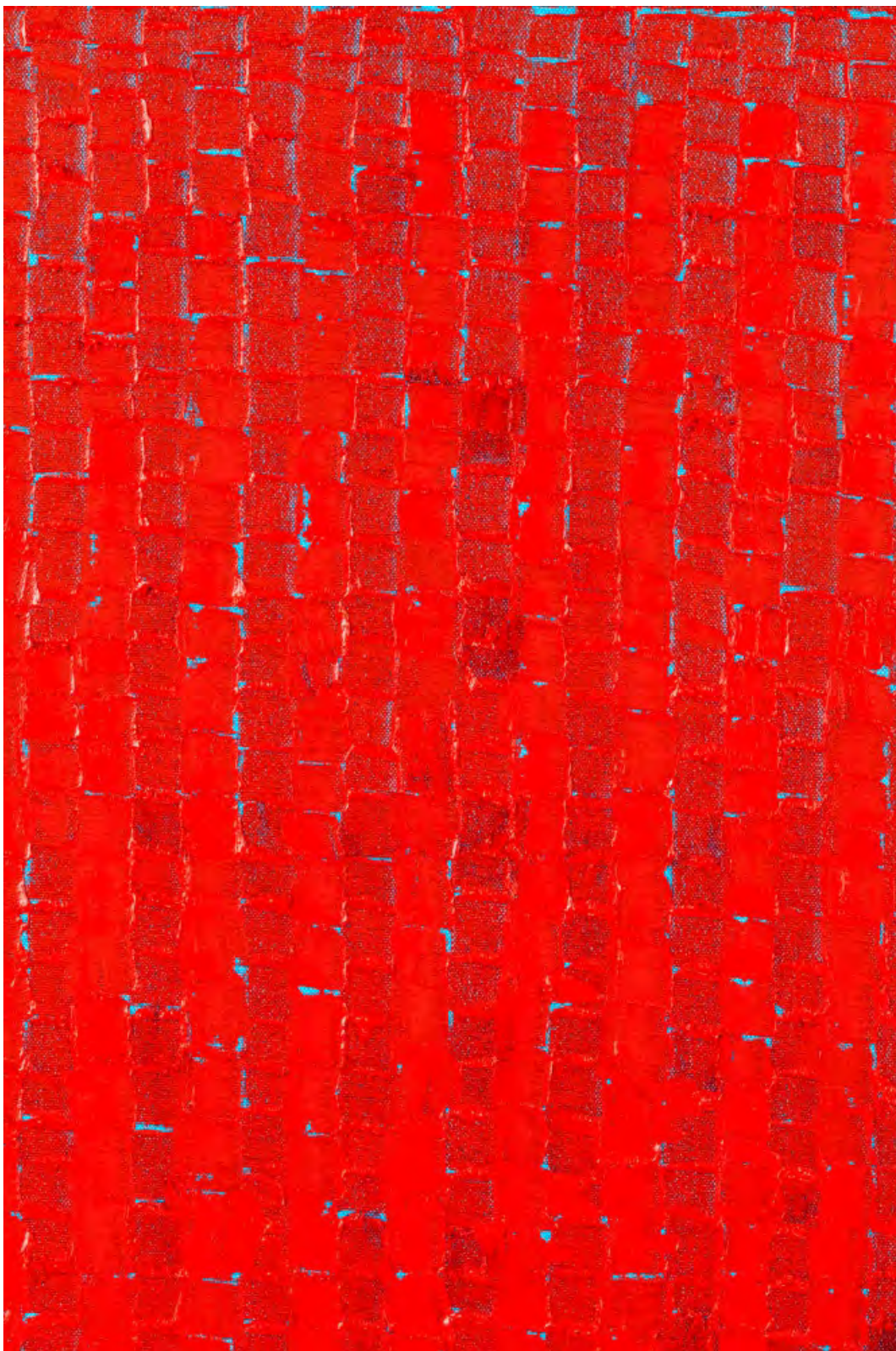
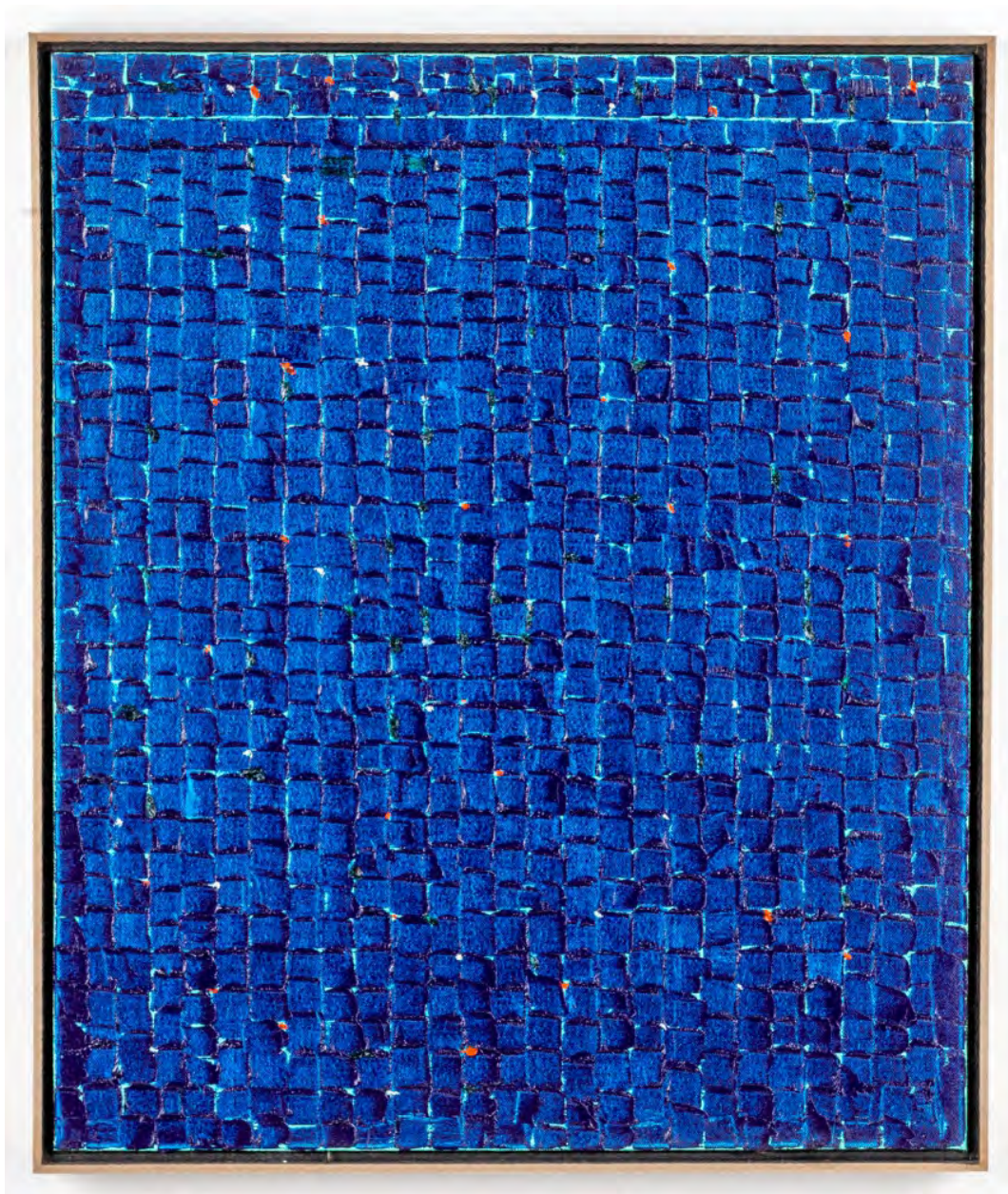


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Image 3/3



Young-II Ahn 1934–2020
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Image 1/3

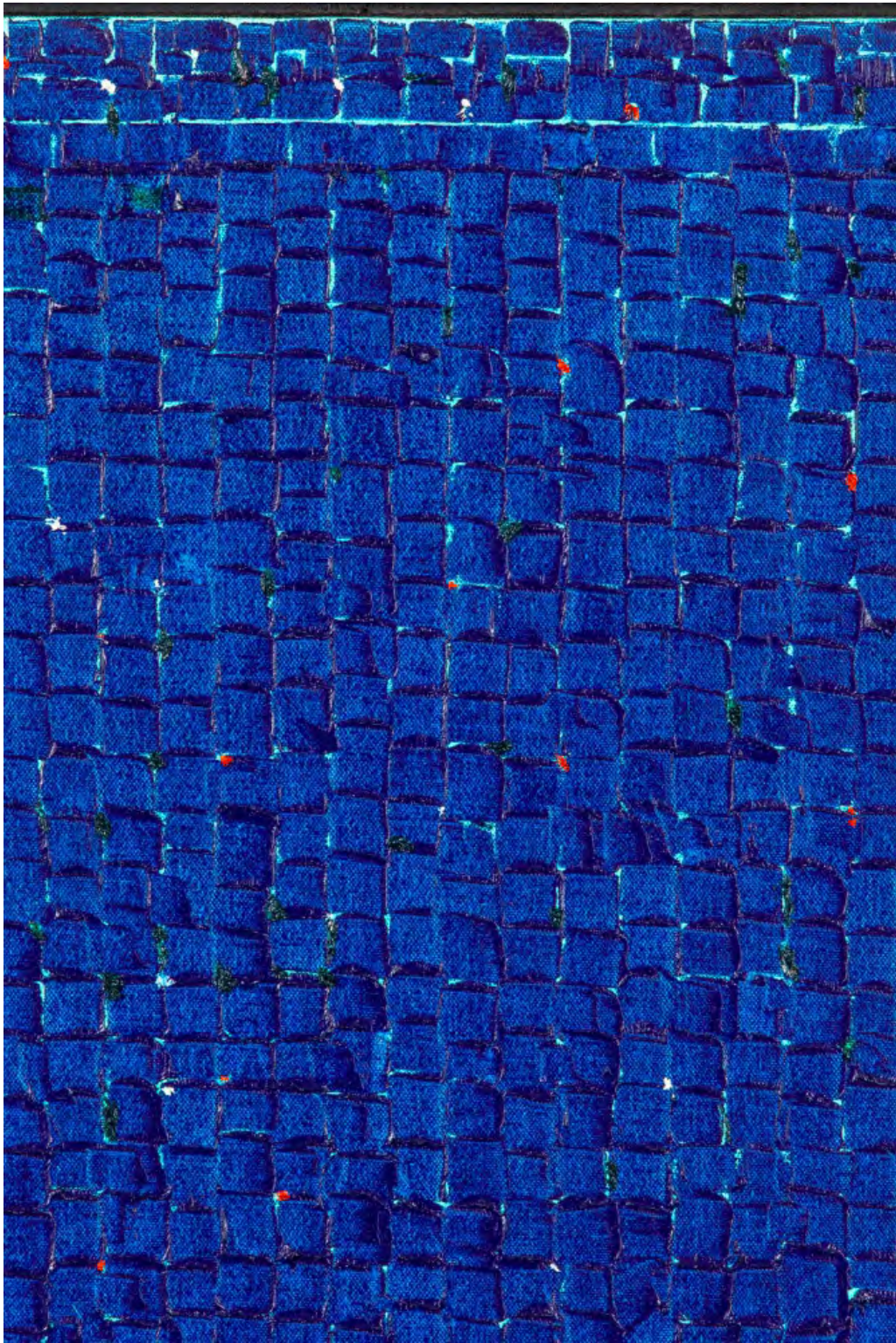


Image 2/3



Image 3/3

Background Information

Young-Il Ahn



- *Unexpected Light: Works by Young-Il Ahn*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), CA, USA
- *A Memoir of Water*, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA, USA
- *Young-Il Ahn*, Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL, USA
- Art Busan 2018, Busan, South Korea

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Young-Il Ahn (b. 1934, Gaeseong, Korea; d. 2020, Los Angeles, CA) developed a distinctive oeuvre defined by meticulous, abstract paintings that explore his relationship with beauty, nature, and music. Ahn's most famous body of work, the *Water* series, has been associated with Dansaekhwa, an aesthetic position specific to Korea characterized by the expression of natural processes through a monochromatic palette.

In Korea, Ahn's first mentors were his father, who was a painter and art teacher, and his mother, a musician. His early paintings tended towards expressionist figuration, but after relocating to Los Angeles in 1966, he became enamored with the Southern California sunlight. His early *California* paintings were semi-abstract, light-filled studies of beach umbrellas, sails, birds, and musicians.

Ahn's new life in California included frequent long fishing trips in the waters between Santa Monica and Catalina Island. On one such trip, he had the harrowing experience of becoming lost in a dense fog. When the fog finally lifted, the sea around him was calm and shimmering. Ahn wrote of that moment in his autobiography, *And still it flows towards me*: "My favorite colors from nature stretched to infinity. The sunlight crashed and

reflected against the water every moment, dispersing splendid and sparkling colors in layers." The experience inspired Ahn to create his *Water* series, on which he worked for over 30 years, until his death.

Additionally, Ahn created the *Self-Reflection* series, a semi-abstract body of work. Some of the paintings include fragments of Korean Hongul text; others take stock of the personal sadness and shock Ahn felt when his adoptive nation was attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001.

Ahn had his first solo exhibition in a gallery in Tokyo at the age of six. While in middle school in 1949 he won the First Korean National Art Exhibition, and in 1950 he took the exhibition's Special Prize. Ahn was included in an invitational exhibition at the World House Gallery in New York in 1957; earned his BFA from Seoul National University in 1958; and in 1959 had his first American solo show, at Hull House in Chicago. In 2015, Ahn had his first solo museum exhibition, *A Memoir of Water*, at the Long Beach Museum of Art. In 2018, he became the first Korean American painter to receive a solo exhibition at LACMA. Ahn's paintings are in the collections of LACMA, the Long Beach Museum of Art, and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, among others.

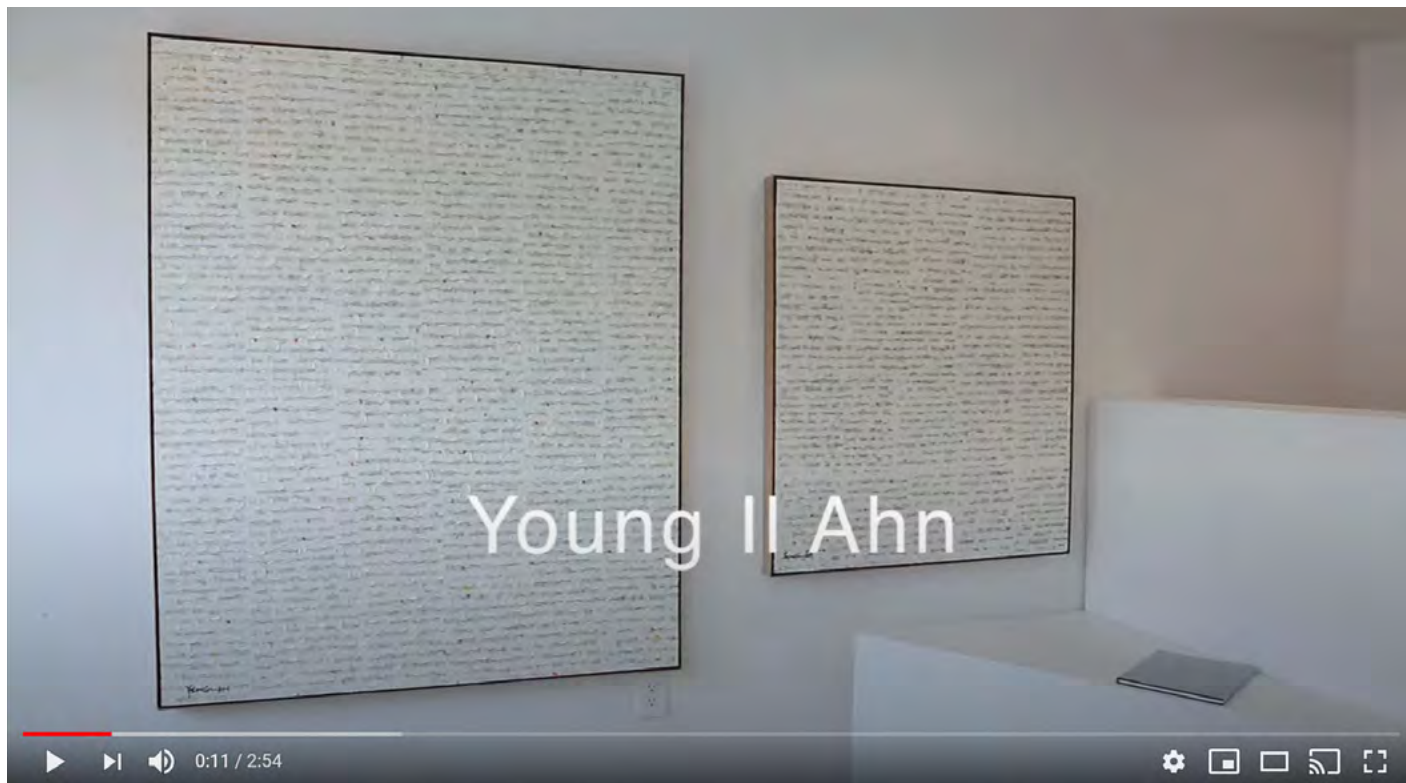
Video Links



Young Il-Ahn: A Memoir of Water, Long Beach Museum of Art | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-T44SoD_pv4



The History of Dansaekhwa with Yoon Jin Sup, presented by Baik Art | <https://vimeo.com/155742384>



YOUNG IL AHN | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CgB_w4qGRE



YOUNG IL AHN : NEW ACQUISITION AT LACMA | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkmdz7rPGMA>



ARTIST - YOUNG IL AHN PROFILE, LA This Week | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1ZgL0nPgBk>



Unexpected Light: Works by Young-II Ahn | <https://vimeo.com/216060844>

Select Exhibitions

HARPER'S

Young-Il Ahn: 20 Years After



The series of *Memorial to September 11*, in *20 Years After*, 2021, Harper's Chelsea, New York, NY

Harper's is honored to present *20 Years After*, the late Young-Il Ahn's first solo exhibition in New York City. *20 Years After* brings together six paintings from Ahn's Memorial series, created in 2001 following the devastating events of 9/11. This presentation also inaugurates the gallery's New York representation of the artist's estate. Harper's Chelsea 534 is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday, 10am–6pm.

Born in 1934 in Gaeseong, in what is now North Korea, Ahn lived through tumultuous times, including Japanese colonial rule, civil war, Western influences, dictatorship, and rapid industrialization. Mentored by his parents—his father was a painter and his mother a musician—Ahn was both a visual artist and a musician whose practices gained recognition at an early age against all odds. In 1966, he immigrated to Los Angeles, where he lived for over 50 years, enamored by California's vast spaces and brilliant light, and the

deep, glittering Pacific Ocean. According to Ahn's writings, his new home in the United States filled him with a sense of relief and joy that had seemed all but lost in war-torn Korea.

Ahn is best known for his *Water* series, which first associated him with Korea's Dansaekhwa movement. Much like his contemporaries, Lee Ufan or Park Seo-Bo, his works bridge the space between meditative restraint and gestural freedom. In the *Memorial* series, Ahn's paintings utilize this ability to give form to the inner turmoil in response to the national tragedy of 9/11. Together, in *20 Years After*, the series expresses an attempt to aesthetically process the life-altering event while paying homage to the destruction and lives lost in Ahn's adopted homeland.

The underlying diagonal grids of the *Memorial* paintings are reminiscent of Ahn's *Self-Reflection* series, some

HARPER'S

of which fragment characters from the Korean written language (Hangul) and renderings of traditional Korean masks (Tal), perhaps in reference to his own bicultural identity in flux. Yet in the *Memorial* paintings, Ahn's meticulous mark-making techniques depart from the *Self-Reflection* series. The structure of the grids and representational forms appear and disintegrate within dynamic arrangements, veiled among layers of dripping black paints, carefully titrated to control viscosity. Black amorphous forms, splattered points, and dripping lines punctuate and consume the surfaces, deviating from Ahn's geometry as if they are yielding to the organics of the medium. As nonrepresentational paintings, Ahn's use of color, value, shape, and line are abstracted from any explicit pictorial references, opening up the *Memorial* series to a wide array of interpretations while maintaining an elegiac mood.

In *20 Years After*, the first-ever singular presentation of the *Memorial* series, the healing process that followed 9/11 echoes Ahn's path that led him to find solace as an immigrant in the United States. The painting titled

Memorial to September 11 (E) is masked with thick black marks emoting a darkness that recalls the havoc wreaked upon a place that represented freedom and sanctuary for Ahn. In stark contradiction, the black marks dissipate in *Memorial to September 11 (H)*, revealing a clear canvas and sparse, colorful notes behind wisps of smokey gray and inky lines that weep from horizontal bands. As a joint expression in the intimate gallery space, Ahn's paintings affirm a deep compassion for the overwhelming destruction and grief that continued even as the dust settled after 9/11.

Amidst the ongoing hardships of a global pandemic, *20 Years After* resonates with profound emotion, offering a contemplative space that encourages the viewer to travel inward and find hope in the boundless horizon of the future. Presented in New York for the first time, on the 20th anniversary of 9/11, Ahn's *Memorial* paintings are a lightning rod—diverting shared traumas and diffusing them with empathy.



Installation view of *20 Years After*, 2021, Harper's Chelsea, NY



Installation views of *Young-II Ahn: 20 Years After*, 2021, Harper's Chelsea, NY

Kavi Gupta

Young-Il Ahn: Reflection



Installation view of *Young-Il Ahn: Reflection*, 2021, Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL

Kavi Gupta proudly presents *Young-Il Ahn: Reflection*, an exhibition examining three key bodies of work—the *Water*, *Self-Reflection*, and *Memorial to September 11th* series—from the pioneering Korean-American abstract painter Young-Il Ahn (1934–2020). The artist passed away unexpectedly in the midst of planning this, his second solo exhibition with the gallery.

Since his critically acclaimed retrospective *Unexpected Light: Works by Young-Il Ahn* at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in 2017, Ahn has been receiving steadily increasing attention for his luminous *Water* paintings. More than 30 years in the making, the series grew out of a formative experience the artist had in 1983, when he was lost at sea aboard a small fishing boat off the coast of Santa Monica. The fog became so dense that he could not even see his own hands, but when the air finally cleared, sunlight illuminated the surface of the ocean. The indelible visual and emotional

impression of that moment is what inspired Ahn to devote himself to capturing the sea's illusive, shimmering color and light in his *Water* series.

The *Self-Reflection* series shares many of the organizational hallmarks of the *Water* paintings, including similarly worked surfaces, impasto mark making, and compositional reliance on a grid. The autobiographical content of these paintings, however, lends them a unique character within Ahn's oeuvre, making them one of his most personal bodies of work. Woven into their abstract grids are references to linguistic symbols, including the logically ordered, alphabetical Korean writing system, called Hangul, and the borrowed Chinese characters in the system, called Hanja.

Ahn's *Memorial to September 11th* series grew out of the artist's profound emotional response in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States on

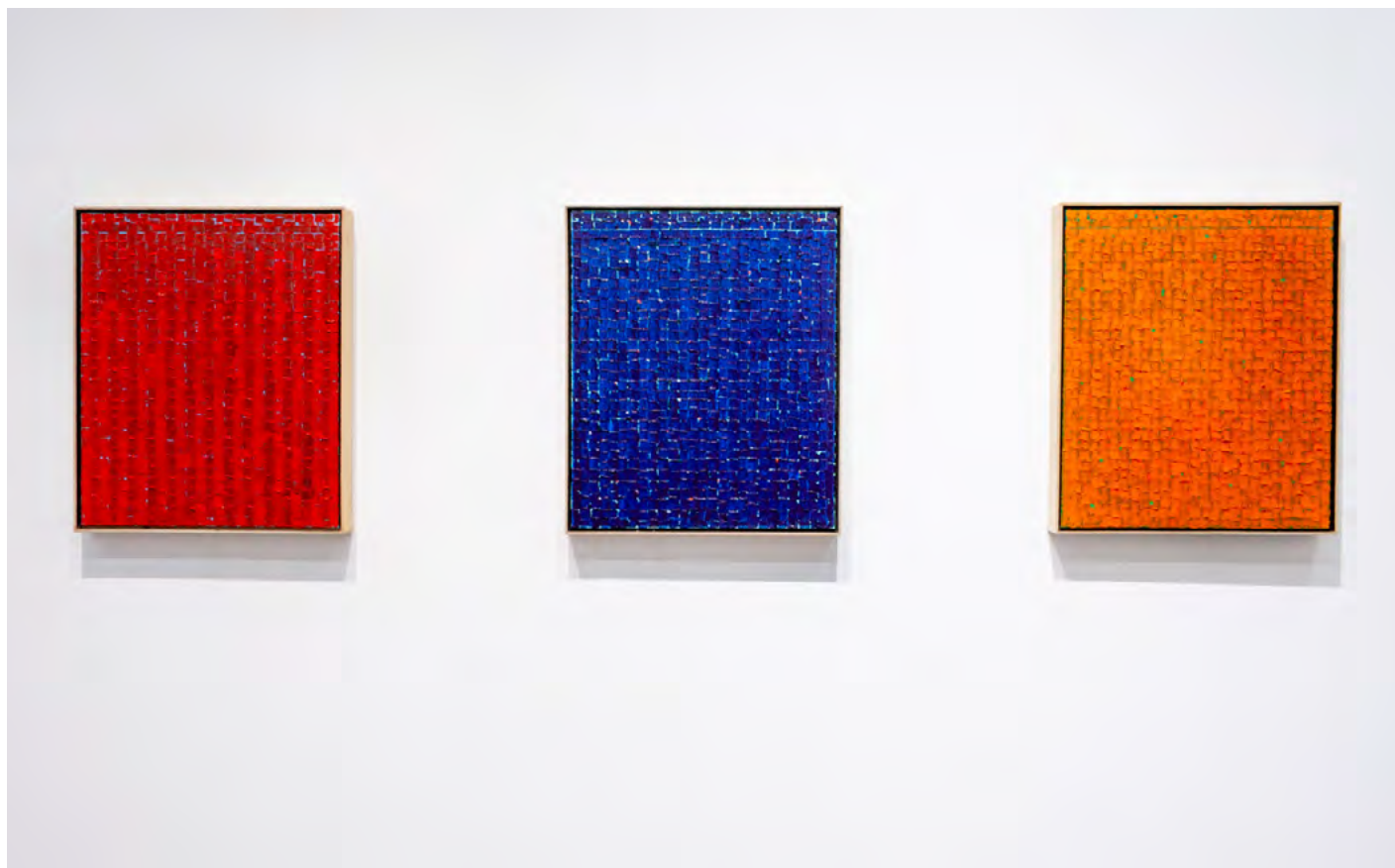
Kavi Gupta

September 11, 2001. Ahn felt a deep reverence for his adopted American home, and like all Americans he was horrified at the events of that sad day. Adding to his personal experience of the event was the coincidence that Ahn married his wife Soraya on September 9, 2001. Soraya's three grown daughters had flown from New York to California for the wedding. This close brush with the attacks charged them with all-the-greater weight for Ahn and his new family. The mysterious, grim paintings he created in remembrance of the tragedy emanate a sense of pain and sorrow, rather unlike the jovial rhythms of his other canvases.

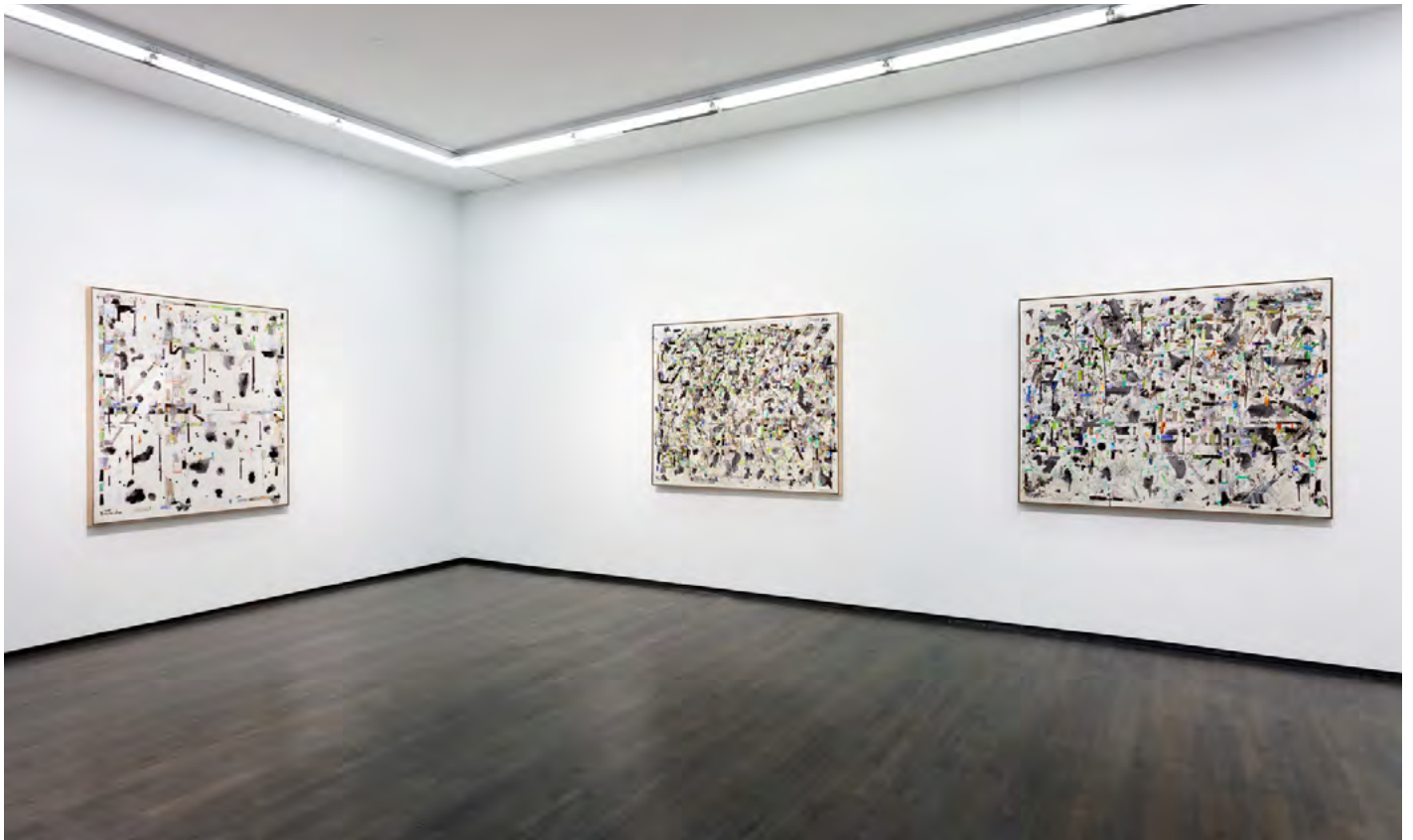
Young-II Ahn: Reflection aims to expand the scholarship and recognition of all three of these unique and highly personal facets of Ahn's practice by exploring the formal and technical parallels across his diverging bodies of work. It is an honor to celebrate the life and work of our departed friend and colleague with this, the final exhibition he helped plan in his lifetime.

Born in Gaeseong, Korea, in 1934, Ahn earned his BFA from Seoul National University in 1958 and relocated to California in 1966. He is renowned for making intricate, large-scale paintings that explore his relationship with beauty, nature and music. His work is frequently associated with Dansaekhwa, an aesthetic position specific to Korea, which expresses natural processes through a mostly monochromatic palette. However, as a Korean-born painter who lived and worked in the US, Ahn was unique among Dansaekhwa artists.

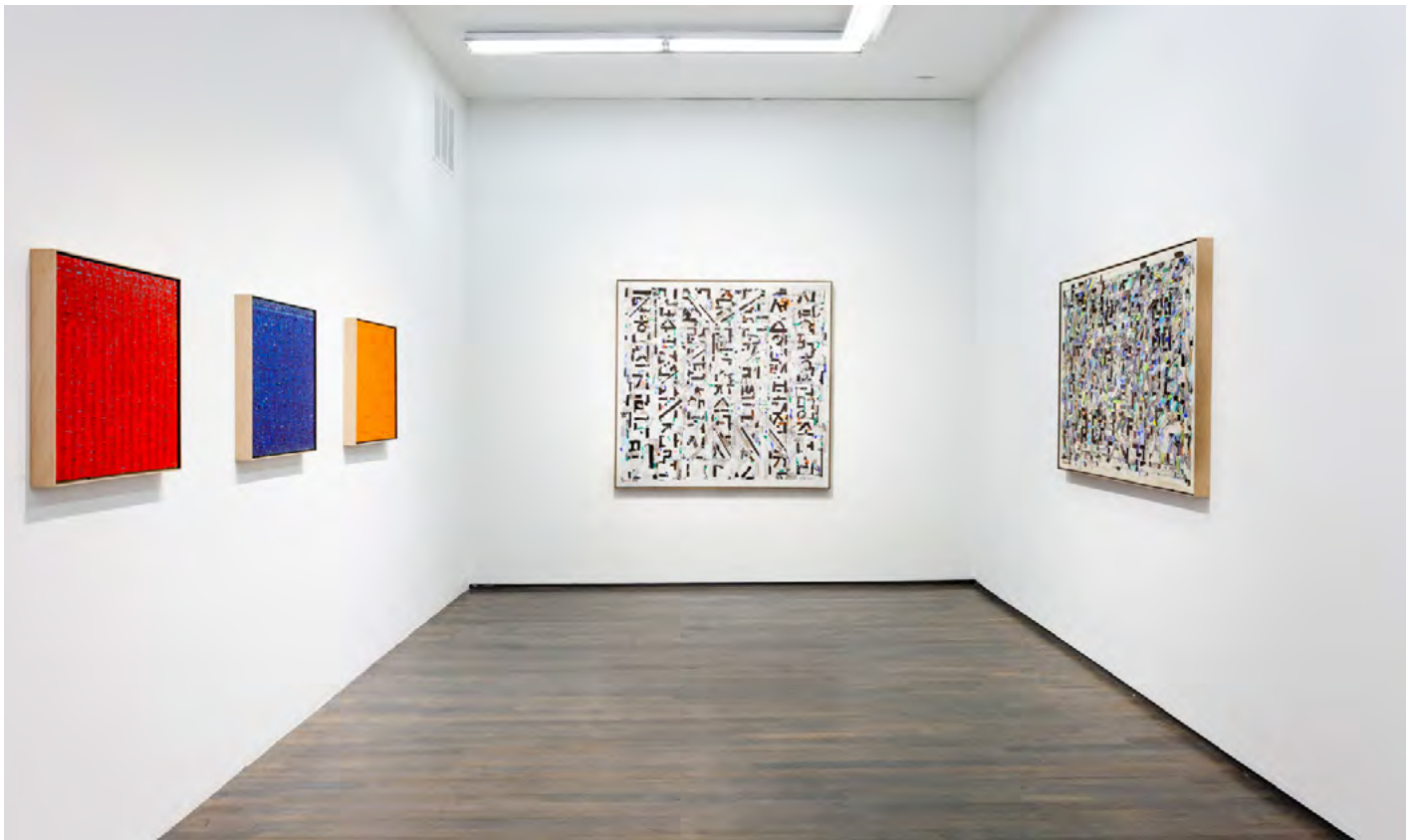
Recent exhibitions include the retrospective *Young-II Ahn: When Sky Meets Water* and the solo exhibition *A Memoir of Water* at Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA, and *Unexpected Light: Works by Young-II Ahn*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA. Ahn's work is held in numerous private and public collections around the world.



Installation view of *Young-II Ahn: Reflection*, 2021, Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL



Installation views of *Young-II Ahn: Reflection*, 2021, Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL



Installation views of Young-II Ahn: *Reflection*, 2021, Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL

Young-Il Ahn: *Theme and Variations*



Installation view of *Young-Il Ahn: Theme and Variations*, 2019, West Hollywood, CA

Louis Stern Fine Arts is pleased to present “Young-Il Ahn: Theme and Variations.” Ahn’s profound reverence for and preoccupation with the ocean and its environs carry the central theme at the heart of these paintings. Independently, each work sings its own love song to the sea, while together they form a polyphonic chorus as powerful, patient, and boundless as the waters that have inspired it.

Born in Gaeseong, Korea in 1934, Young-il Ahn was recognized as a child prodigy from the age of six, when he had his first solo exhibition in Tokyo. The son of an artist father and musician mother, he excelled in both, and wrestled with which to pursue for a career. Ahn is as skilled in piano, clarinet, and cello as he is in oils, and it shows in his measured yet dynamic compositions. The artist commands a palette knife on canvas with the clarity and expressiveness of a master cellist’s bow on the strings, using the instrument like an extension of

his spirit. Colors are his musical notes, arranged with a technician’s skill and a virtuoso’s soulful attention into compositions that hum with unexpected harmonies.

Incited by a harrowing boating incident off Catalina Island in 1983, Ahn has been generating his Water series for over 30 years. The inscrutable depths and infinitely mutating colors of the Pacific Ocean provide the artist with an inexhaustible trove of color and texture relationships to explore. Gridded blocks of staccato paint resemble choppy waves, floating on an undercurrent of layered hues and speckled here and there with bright beats of color. While anchored in this theme, every painting is a self-contained movement, resonating with its own melodic variation of colors – atomic orange rhymes with seafoam green, cool cobalt thrums atop a drone of shocking pink.

Ahn’s *Composition* series continues these maritime

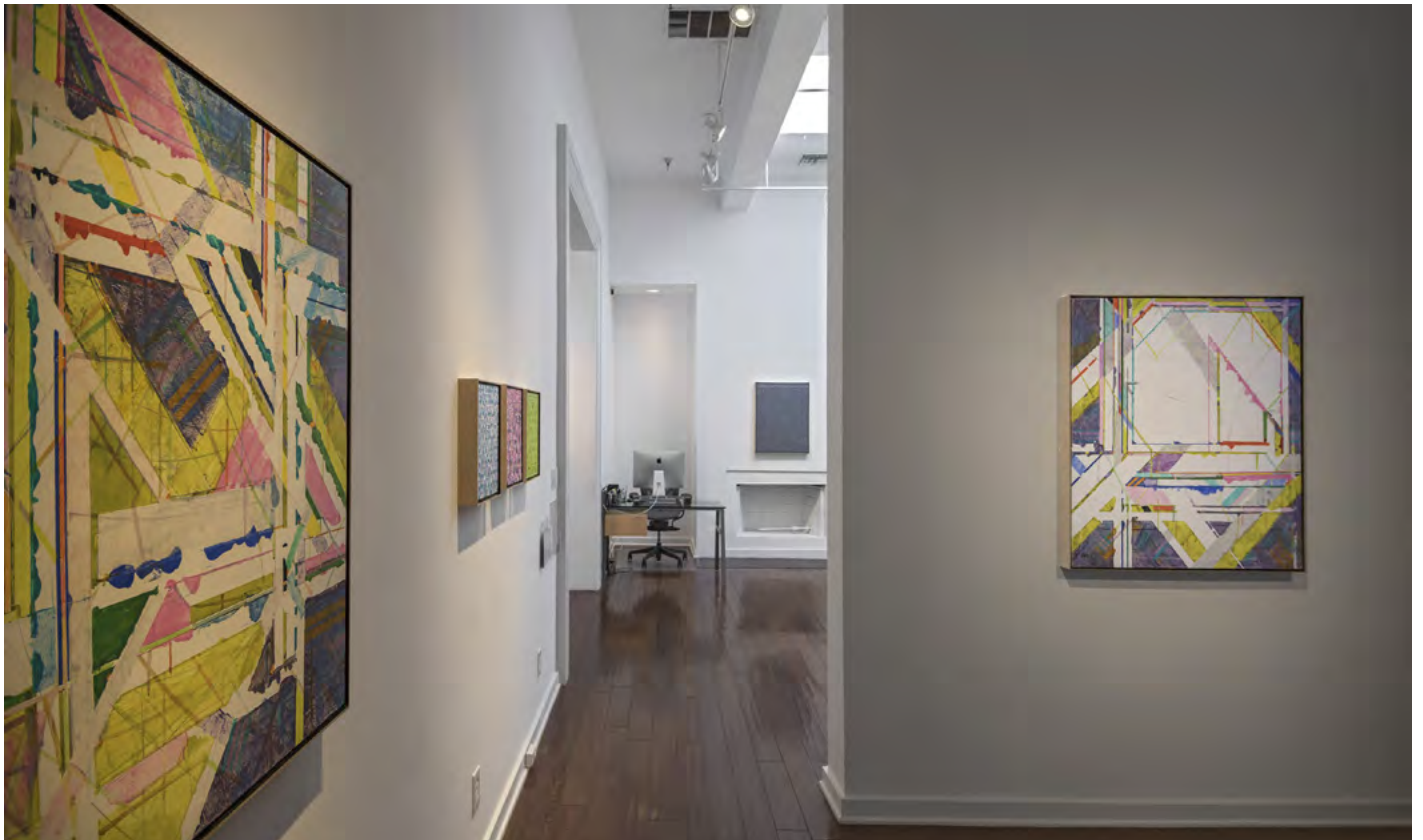
Louis Stern Fine Arts

investigations, probing the intersections of the sea's fluidity and vastness with the linearity of the built urban environment. Rigid geometric organizations in warm tones of yellow, orange, and pink recall the deconstructed masts and sails of boats in a marina; their translucent, watery rendering against wedges of cool, choppy blues and purples suggests the constantly shifting reflections of a constructed world in the ceaseless movement of the Pacific Ocean.

Young-il Ahn has lived and worked in Los Angeles for over 50 years. His works have been exhibited across California, Chicago, New York, and Korea. He was a US Artist Ambassador to Vienna, Austria from 2002-2005, and in 2017 he became the first Korean-American artist to have a solo show at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.



Installation view of *Young-il Ahn: Theme and Variations*, 2019, West Hollywood, CA`



Installation views of *Young-II Ahn: Theme and Variations*, 2019, West Hollywood, CA`

Kavi Gupta

Young-Il Ahn



Installation view of *Young-Il Ahn*, 2018, Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St., Chicago, IL

Kavi Gupta is pleased to present a monographic exhibition of paintings by Young-Il Ahn.

Born in Gaeseong, Korea, in 1934, Ahn is renowned for his intricate, large-scale paintings, which explore his relationship with beauty, nature and music. His work is frequently associated with dansaekhwa, an aesthetic position specific to Korea, which expresses natural processes through a mostly monochromatic palette. As a Korean-born painter working in the US, Ahn is unique among Dansaekhwa artists.

This exhibition at Kavi Gupta's Elizabeth Street gallery in Chicago marks a triumphant moment in the career of this vital artist. Ahn was recently honored with a large-scale solo exhibition at LACMA—the first time a Korean artist has received the honor. Titled *Unexpected Light: Works by Young Il Ahn*, it shined a spotlight on his *Water* series, which Ahn has been developing for more than 30

years. In addition to the LACMA show, Ahn's work was also recently explored in depth in a 35-year retrospective at the Long Beach Museum of Art, titled *Young-Il Ahn: When Sky Meets Water*. These celebrations befit the accomplishments of a man who has, for five decades, called Southern California his home.

Yet, Chicago was actually the first American city to recognize the talents of this extraordinary artist. That recognition came nearly 60 years ago by way of the Hull House, an arts and culture organization dedicated to social equality and justice, which was founded on Chicago's south side. The Hull House offered free art classes for many decades. Numerous working class Chicago artists in the early and mid-20th century credited the Hull House with their education. It was in the Hull House Gallery that Young-Il Ahn had his first US solo exhibition in 1959.

Kavi Gupta

Young-II Ahn at Kavi Gupta brings this remarkable connection full circle, welcoming the artist back for the first time to the city where his American legacy began. The exhibition will explore Ahn's entire oeuvre, premiering several new works from the *Water* series, as well as paintings from his *California* series, *Sunset* series, *Musicians* series, and *Birds* series.

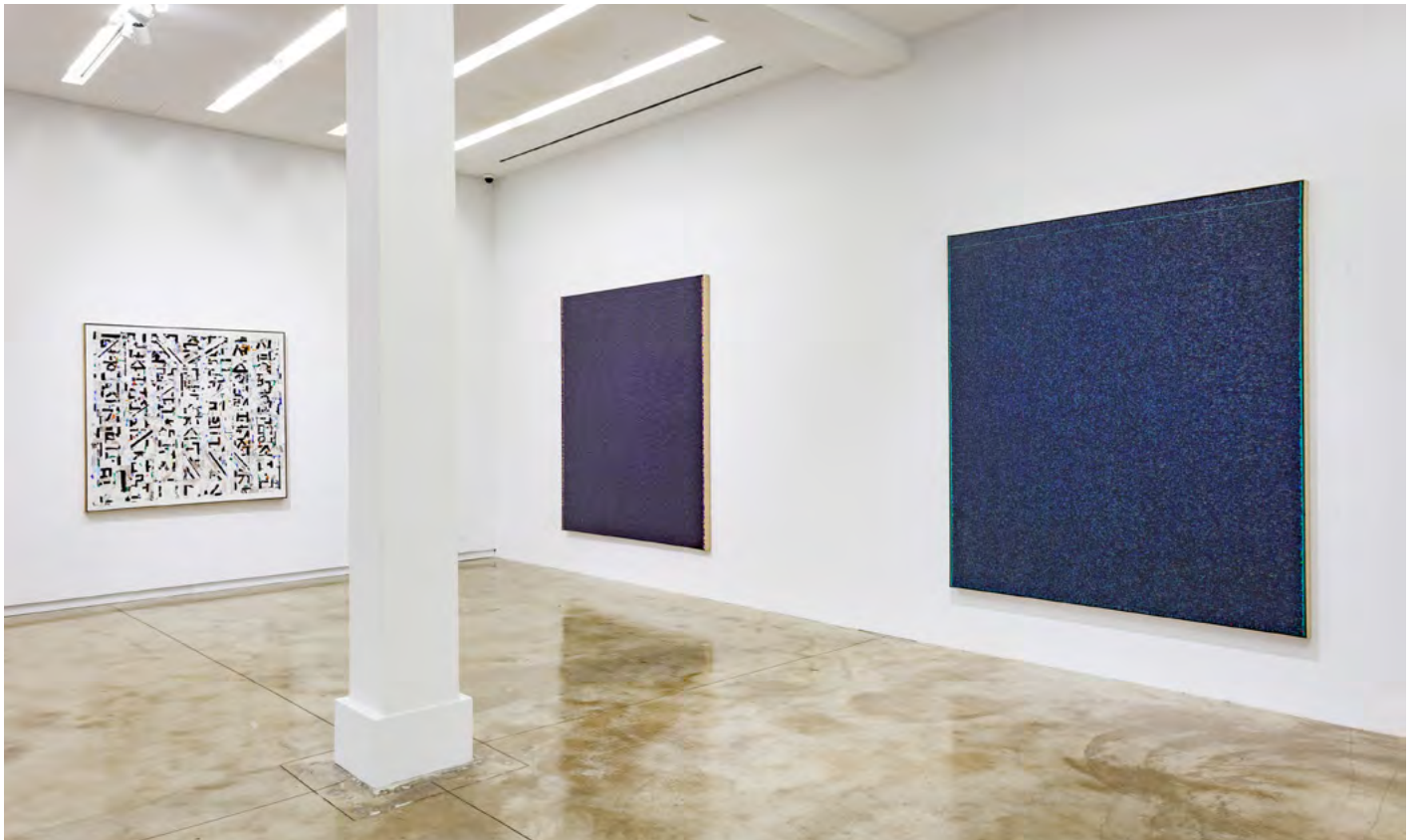
These works are the latest manifestations of the meticulous, painterly method Ahn has developed, which mobilizes careful, methodical brush strokes, building up impasto layers of vibrant, colorful paint. They show an

artist whose brilliance has not diminished with age, and who even now, at age 84, is at the height of his talent.

It is our honor to be able to bring these new expressions of this living master's relationship with nature and humanity to Chicago.



Installation view of *Young-II Ahn*, 2018, Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St., Chicago, IL



Installation views of *Young-II Ahn*, 2018, Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St., Chicago, IL



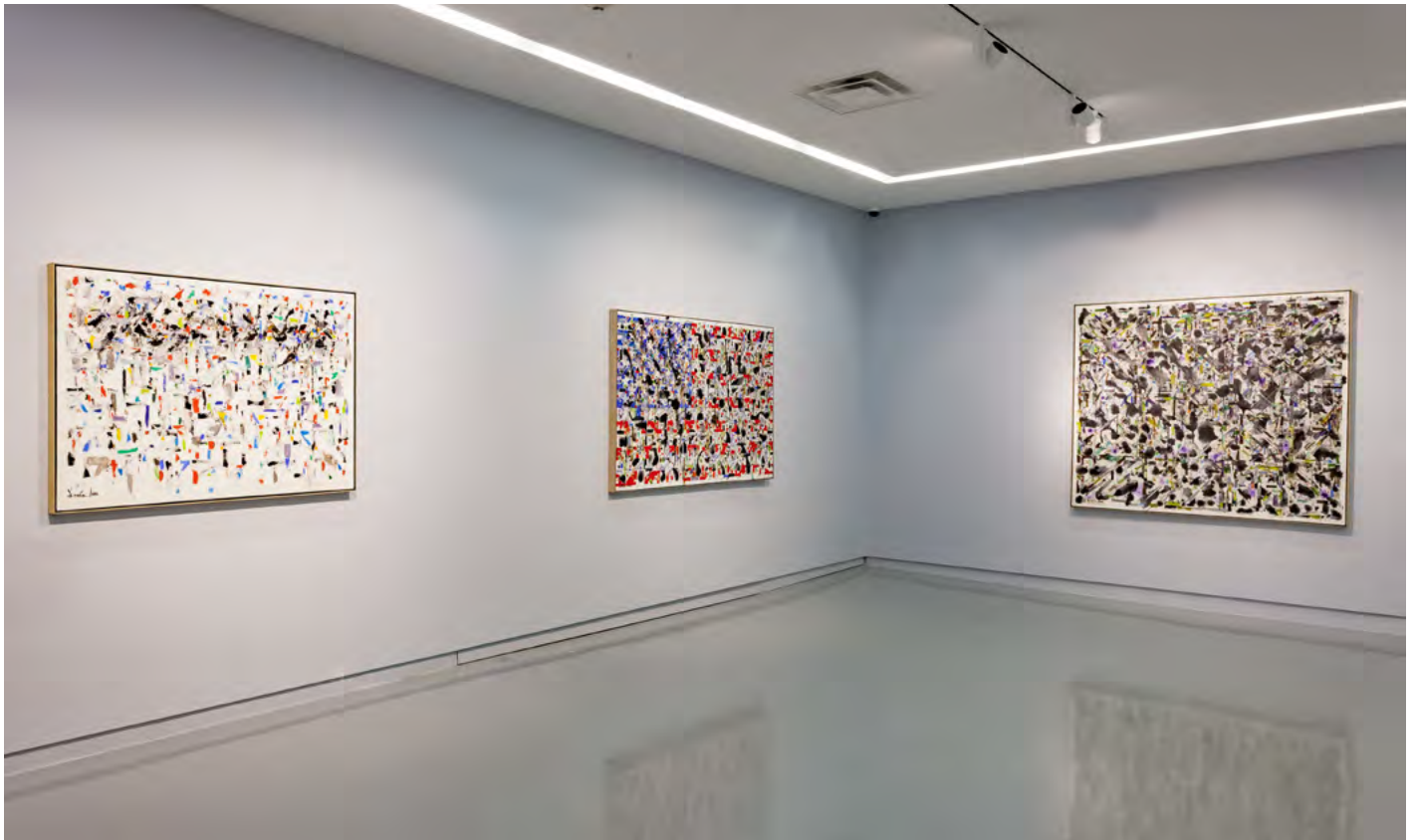
Installation views of *Young-II Ahn*, 2018, Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St., Chicago, IL



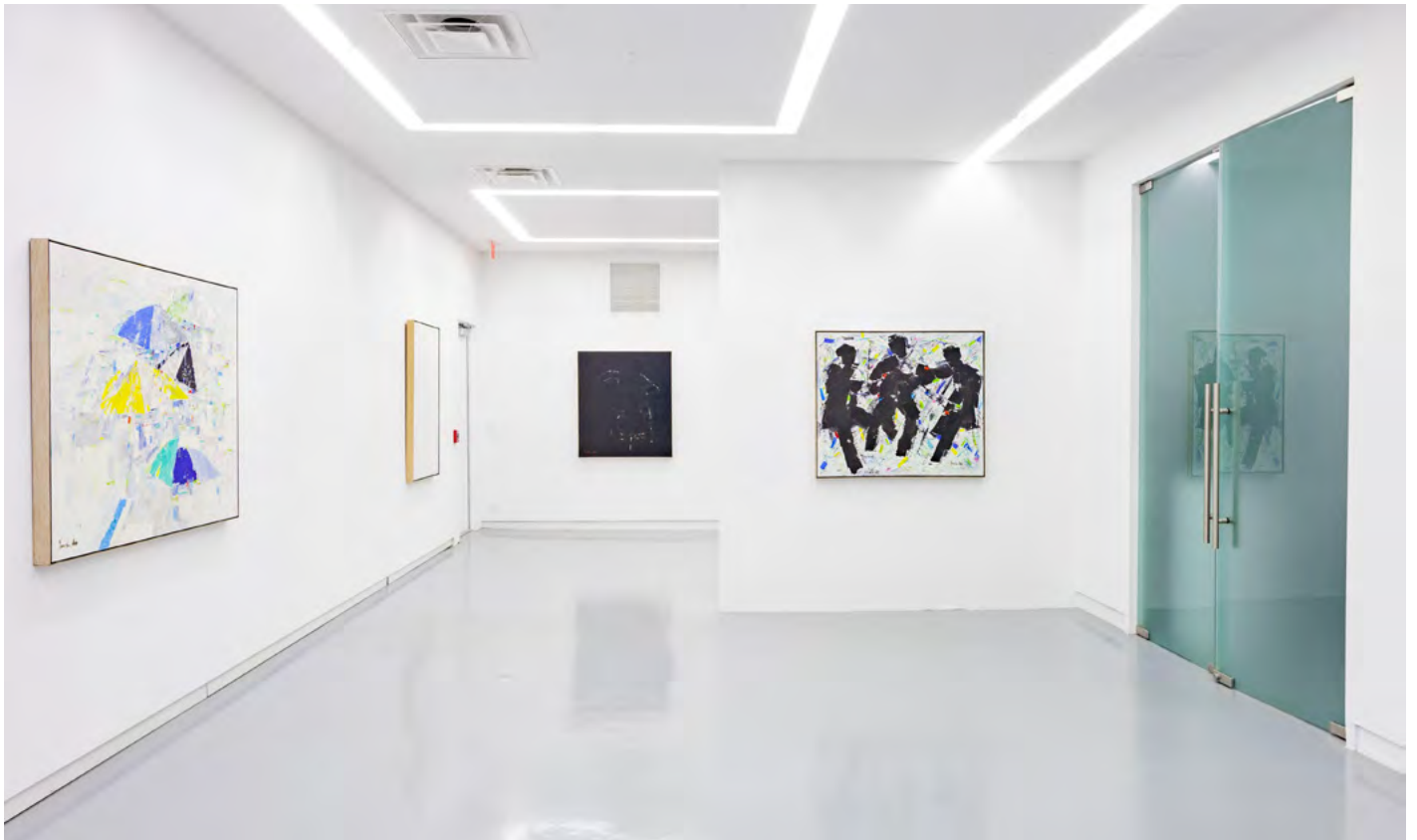
Installation views of *Young-II Ahn*, 2018, Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St., Chicago, IL



Installation views of *Young-II Ahn*, 2018, Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St., Chicago, IL



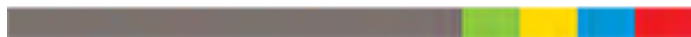
Installation views of *Young-II Ahn*, 2018, Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St., Chicago, IL



Installation views of *Young-II Ahn*, 2018, Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St., Chicago, IL



Installation views of *Young-II Ahn*, 2018, Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St., Chicago, IL



Young-Il Ahn: When Sky Meets Water



Installation view of *Young-Il Ahn: When Sky Meets Water*, 2017,
Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA

This exhibition is the second show of Young-Il Ahn's work at the Long Beach Museum of Art. It honors the celebrated South Korean artist with a major thirty-five-year retrospective, presenting a selection of abstract paintings from 1983 to the present. Ahn, who lives and works in Los Angeles, has focused much of his career on the meticulous depiction of water and the ocean.

In the summer of 1983 he suffered the traumatic experience of being lost at sea in a small shing boat, engulfed by dense fog that lifted only after he had drifted alone in the water for many hours. Plagued by depression and professional disappointments, that forced him to destroy most of his earlier paintings, Ahn experienced the terrifying incident as profoundly transformative. In presenting a key selection of Ahn's late *Water* series and other paintings, this comprehensive exhibition explores both the sharp-edged existentialism and immersive spirituality inherent in Ahn's large-scale abstractions.



Installation views of *Young-Il Ahn: When Sky Meets Water*, 2017, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA



Installation views of *Young-Il Ahn: When Sky Meets Water*, 2017, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA



Installation views of *Young-Il Ahn: When Sky Meets Water*, 2017, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA



Installation views of Young-Il Ahn: *When Sky Meets Water*, 2017, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA



Installation views of *Young-II Ahn: When Sky Meets Water*, 2017, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA



Installation views of *Young-Il Ahn: When Sky Meets Water*, 2017, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA



Installation views of Young-Il Ahn: *When Sky Meets Water*, 2017, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA



Unexpected Light: Works by Young-Il Ahn



Installation view of *Unexpected Light: Works by Young-Il Ahn*, 2017, LACMA, Los Angeles, CA. Photo: Michael Underwood.

Korean-American artist Young-Il Ahn was born in 1934 in Gaeseong, historically known as the capital of the Goryeo dynasty (912–1392) and geographically located in North Korea today. While acknowledged as a child prodigy, Ahn carried out his most prolific work in Los Angeles since his arrival in the US in 1966.

Since then, Ahn's works have consistently focused on his interest in the local surroundings rather than the country he left. This exhibition showcases many works from his best-known series, *Water*, which was inspired by a near-death incident on the Pacific Ocean in 1983, as well as his most recent works.

The *Water* series marks a notable shift in Ahn's style from semi abstraction to complete abstraction, which has continued to define his style to this day. This exhibition marks the first-ever introduction of a

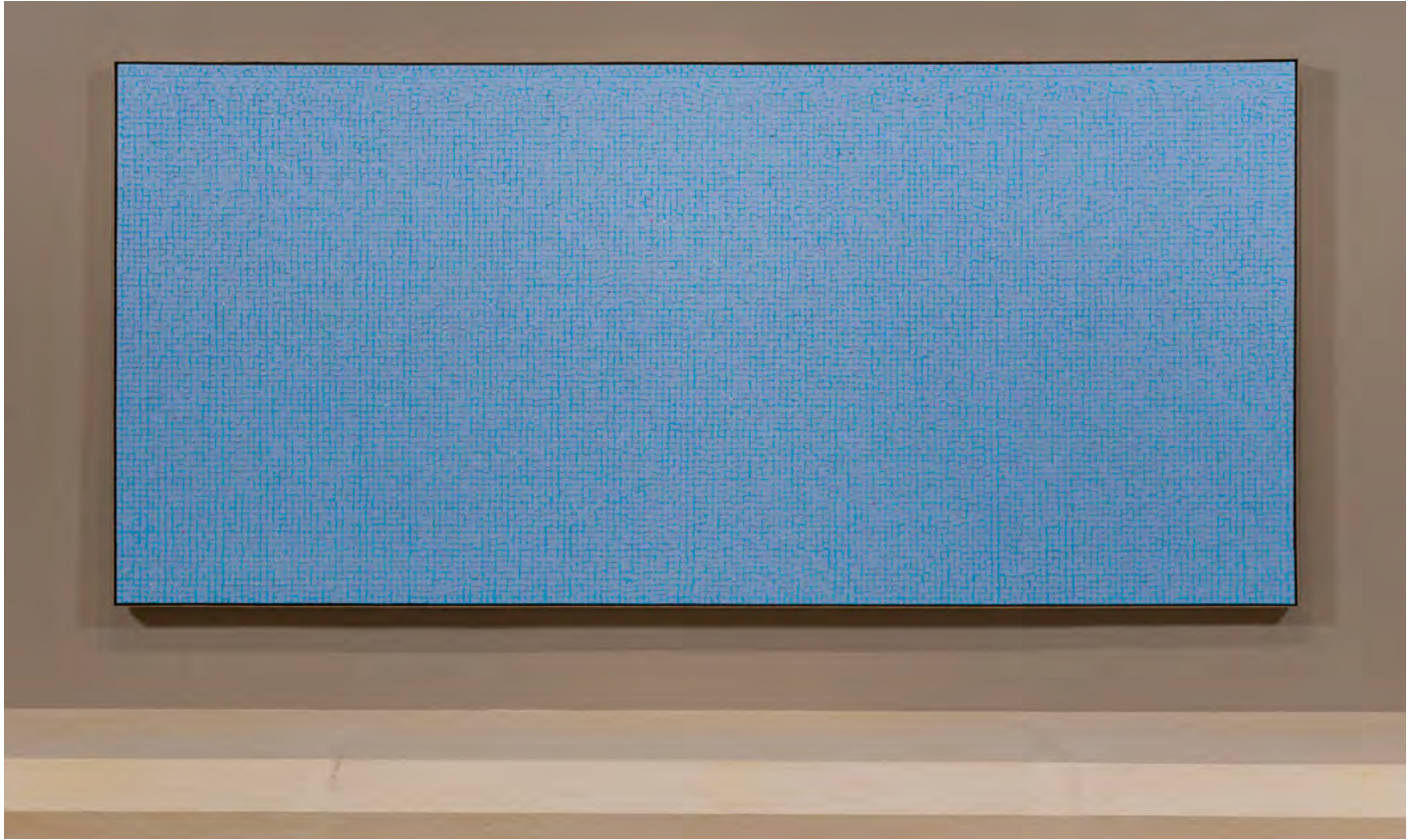
Korean-American artist at LACMA, highlighting the ever expanding diversity and realities within the ethnic Korean population in Los Angeles.

This installation was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Hammer Building, Level 2, February 25, 2017–June 2018.



Installation views of *Unexpected Light: Works by Young-Il Ahn*, 2017, LACMA, Los Angeles, CA

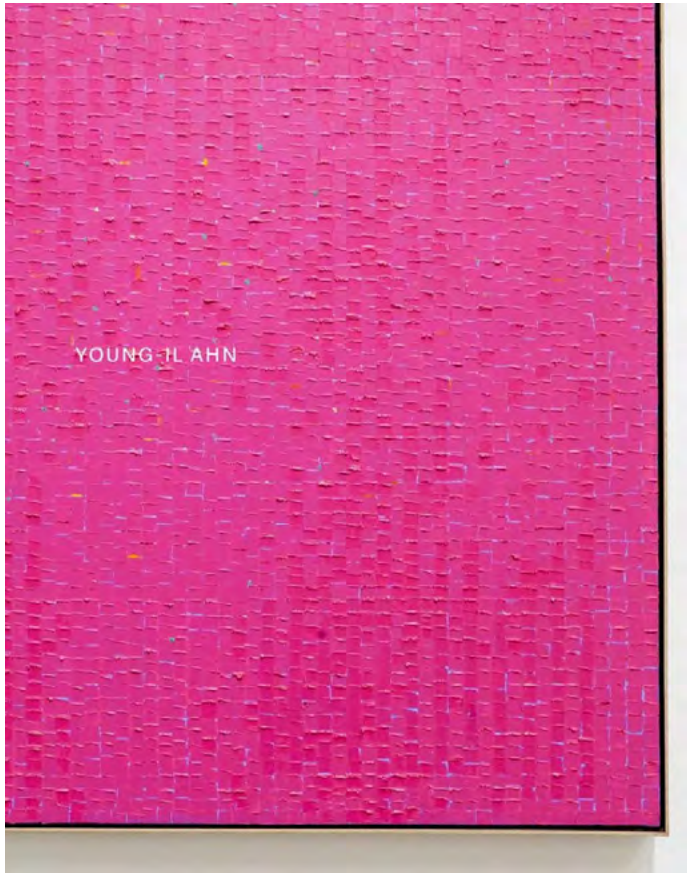


Installation views of *Unexpected Light: Works by Young-Il Ahn*, 2017, LACMA, Los Angeles, CA



Installation views of *Unexpected Light: Works by Young-Il Ahn, 2017*, LACMA, Los Angeles, CA

Publications & Editions



Young-Il Ahn

Exhibition Catalogue, Kavi Gupta

Published by Kavi Gupta

2018

100 pages

Unexpected Light: Works by Young-Il Ahn
 Edited by Virginia Moon, Susan Baik

Exhibition Catalogue, Los Angeles County
 Museum of Art (LACMA)

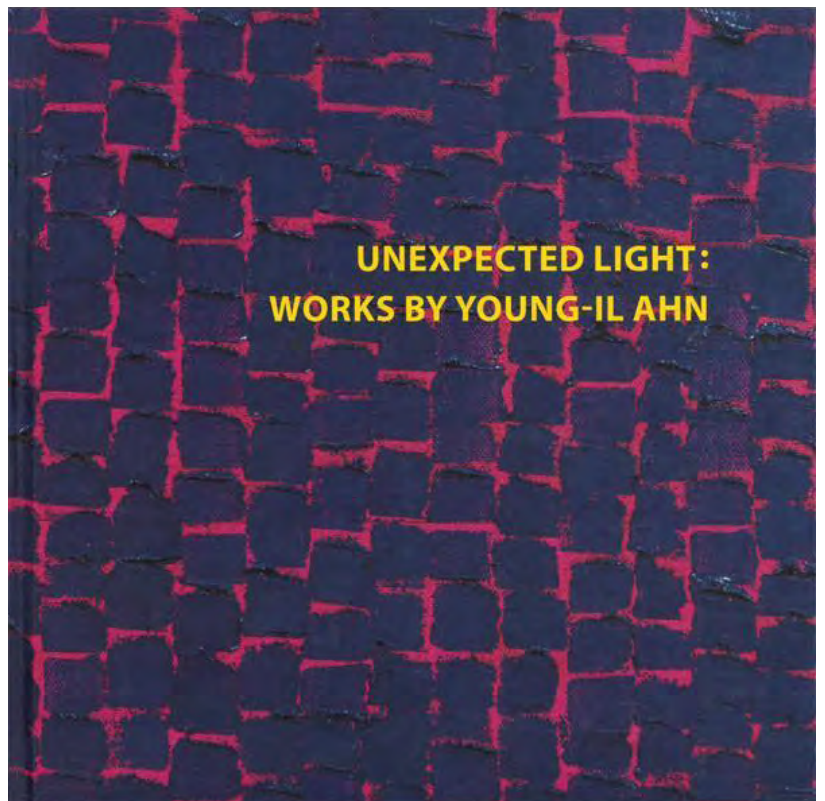
Published by Baik Art

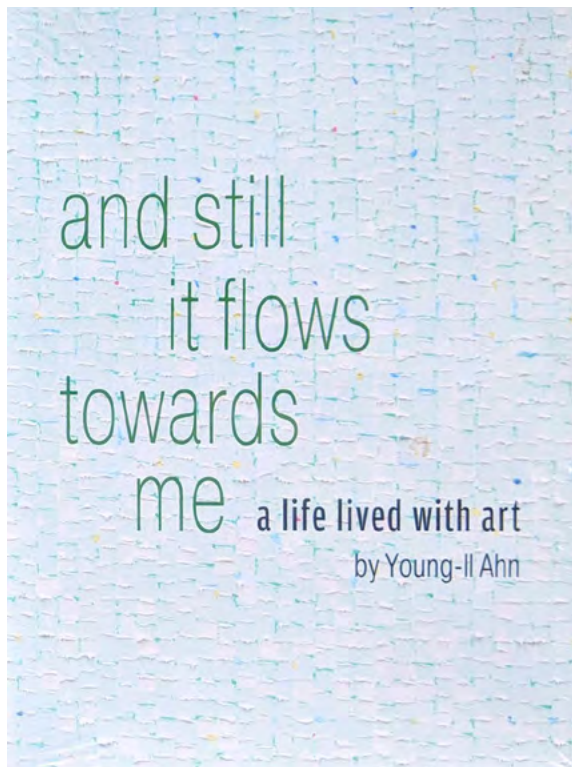
2017

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ISBN

978-0-692-86108-0





And still it flows towards me: a life lived with art

Young-Il Ahn

Memoir

Published by Ahnart, Inc.

2017

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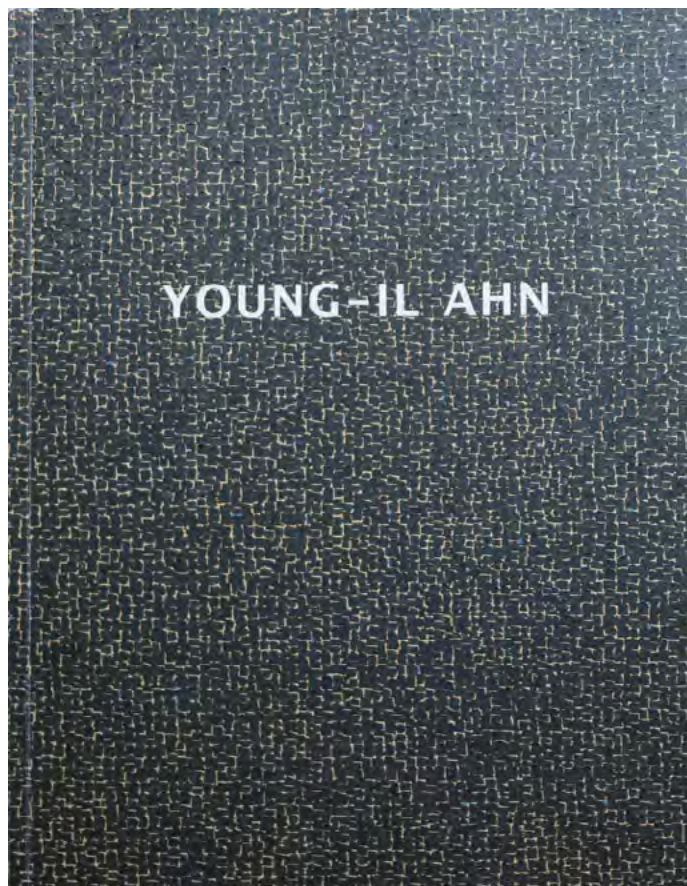
Young-Il Ahn

Exhibition Catalogue, Gallery Hyundai

Published by Gallery Hyundai

2017

54 pages





Young-Il Ahn

Exhibition Catalogue, Korean American History Museum

Published

2004

32 pages

Select Press

ARTnews

Young-Il Ahn, Trailblazing Painter of Radiant Abstractions, Dies at 86



Young-Il Ahn with, left to right, Soraya Ahn, Jessica Moss, and Kavi Gupta in 2018.

BY ANDREW RUSSETH, DEC. 16, 2020

Young-Il Ahn, the pioneering Korean-American painter who channeled a harrowing experience at sea into entrancing, atmospheric canvases, died this past weekend in Los Angeles, according to his Chicago gallery, Kavi Gupta. He was 86.

Over the course of more than 60 years, Ahn pursued a range of intricate abstract styles, with his meticulous,

deliberate marks sometimes sharing space with dashes of legible imagery, like birds, musicians, and landscapes.

But it was Ahn's beguiling "Water" series, which he developed in the latter part of his career, that secured his place in recent art history. Using a knife to apply repeating blocks of oil paint atop fields of color, he created meditative pictures in which light shimmers and space is in flux.

Tiny magenta rectangles dance atop sky blue, or jet-black ones struggle to contain a deep lilac, with minute daubs of other colors enlivening the scene in some cases.

The “Water” works resulted from a traumatic incident—and an epiphany. While sailing a fishing boat off the coast of L.A. in 1983, Ahn found himself caught in a fog, unable to see even his hands. With his engine off, he drifted for hours, until the world finally became visible again. He sought to capture that sublime moment of clarity in his art.



Young-Il Ahn, *Self-Reflection 1*, 2000. Oil on canvas, 60 x 62 in.

After that, “painting the ocean became a kind of meditation for me, a conversation within myself extended to part of the universe,” Ahn once wrote.

“He told me he saw, at that moment, everything that he was looking for his entire life,” his second wife, Soraya Ahn, told Yonhap News in 2017. That year, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art staged a solo exhibition with Ahn that featured his “Water” pieces. It was the first-ever one-person show there by a Korean American artist.

Young-Il Ahn was born in the city of Gaeseong, which is now part of North Korea. His parents were artists—his father a painter and his mother a musician. They moved to Tokyo early in his life, where he had a show of his paintings at the age of 6, and they moved back to Korea in the mid-1940s. He graduated from Seoul National University in 1958 and found success in the city’s art market.

In 1966, seeking a wider audience for his practice, Ahn decamped for the United States, and after stays in Hawaii

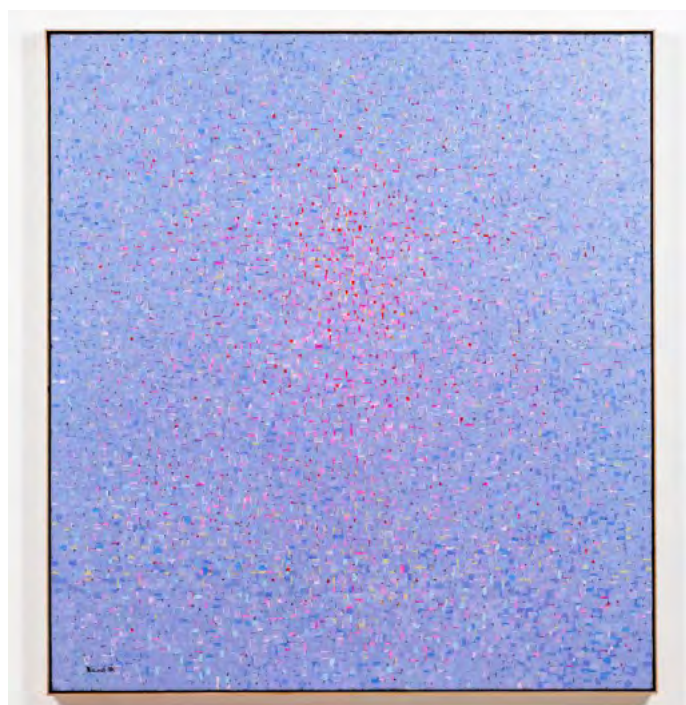
and New York, settled in Southern California, which would be his home for the rest of his life. There, too, his paintings quickly found buyers, enabling him to bring his then-wife and three daughters to the U.S., as Victoria Kim recounted in a 2017 profile of the artist in the Los Angeles Times. However, a legal tangle between his dealer and a benefactor led him to stop exhibiting between 1971 and 1982.

Beyond the “Water” series, which can bring to mind the luminosity of Alma Thomas and the hard-won grids of Chung Sang-Hwa, Ahn created gestural paintings that harbor traces of human faces or fractured bits of Hangul, or that even evince explosive sunsets or fireworks.

Ahn was the subject of two solo shows, in 2015 and 2017, at the Long Beach Museum of Art in California, which holds his work, as does LACMA and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in South Korea. Despite a stroke in 2013 that limited his movements, he continued working during his late-career renaissance.

Besides being a painter, Ahn was an accomplished musician, adept at piano, clarinet, and cello.

“Music helps me paint,” he told Yonhap in 2017. “I create beats and variations, like in a score. People might think that it would be simple to do that, but actually I put all my energy into every touch I do until it is filled with power.”



Young-il Ahn, *Water SM187*, 1987. Oil on canvas, 60 x 55 in.

Los Angeles Times

The Pacific has been filling Young-il Ahn's canvases for decades. At 83, the L.A. artist is getting belated recognition.



Young-il Ahn in his studio in downtown Los Angeles. Ahn, who this year became the first Korean American to have a solo exhibit at LACMA at age 83, moved to California half a century ago and is as much a product of Los Angeles as of his homeland. Photo: Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times.

BY VICTORIA KIM, NOVEMBER 6, 2017

In the summer of 1983, artist Young-il Ahn set off in a rented dinghy toward the horizon.

The painter frequently sought solace in the waters between Santa Monica and Catalina Island, taking only a fishing rod and sketchbook. That day, he was soon enveloped in fog so thick he couldn't see an inch in any direction.

A crushing fear set in, and the fog felt like a heavy weight on his chest. He turned off the engine and left his fate to the waves.

Then in an instant, the ocean revealed itself in all its colors — like pearls of all shades scattered as far as the eye could see. In a moment at once rapturous and humbling, Ahn felt himself a part of the ocean, the ocean a part of him.

Los Angeles Times

He's been painting what he saw in that instant ever since, calling his evolving body of work the "Water Series." They are canvases of all sizes filled with meticulous square knife strokes that leap off the canvas like waves — at once still and dynamic, monochromatic and iridescent.

Now, at age 83, the Korean American artist is getting recognition after half a century of relative obscurity in his adopted home of Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art is showcasing Ahn's "Water Series" in its first solo exhibition of works by a Korean American artist, and on Friday, the Long Beach Museum of Art will open a 35-year retrospective of his paintings. High-profile galleries are featuring him in Seoul, where his works are in great demand.



Water SZLB15, by Young-il Ahn, is on display at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The museum announced it had acquired the piece as part of its permanent collection in February. Photo: Museum .Associates / LACMA.

The acclaim has changed little of Ahn's days.

Today, as he has for decades, he sits in front of a canvas in his studio, a converted furniture factory near the 10 Freeway where the air is rich with the scent of spike lavender oil he uses to thin paint. He steadies the right hand impaired by a stroke, subtly tilts his head left and right like a bird, and takes his painting knife from palette to canvas, palette to canvas.

And once more the Pacific bubbles up before him.

Born in prewar North Korea, Ahn was a prodigious child who painted and drew throughout his childhood in Japan and South Korea.

He studied art at the nation's premier Seoul National

University. Art materials were so difficult to come by that he and other students resorted to cloth used to wrap dead bodies in lieu of canvases. Yet he always found a way to paint.

Ahn won national awards and was a darling among foreign collectors in postwar Seoul. Even so, he grew eager to get out from the shadow of his father, a painter and art professor.

He and a handful of artists left South Korea when it was still a dirt-poor nation that was mostly sending miners and nurses abroad to earn foreign currency.

"They came at a time when people would have asked, 'What's Korea? Where is Korea?'" said Virginia Moon, a curator at LACMA.

"They were rebels, these harabojis," she said, using the Korean word for "grandpa." "They came here to map their own ground."

With an invitation from an American lawyer who had purchased one of his paintings, Ahn boarded a plane for Hawaii in 1966. After traveling in Hawaii and a brief stay in Laguna Beach, he went to New York, where a few of his compatriot artists had settled.

New York was exciting, but it wasn't for Ahn. A lifelong fisherman, he relishes silence. After eight months, he came to Los Angeles, a place that would both inspire and entrance him, and serve as the backdrop to his darkest moments.

He rented an apartment in 1967 at the corner of Pico Boulevard and Spaulding Avenue and took his paintings to the nearby row of galleries dotting La Cienega Boulevard. The first one he walked into, Zachary Waller, wanted to sign him to exclusively sell his works.

He thought he misunderstood because of his still elementary English. But the gallery was serious, and by the next day, his piece had already sold. He signed a 10-year deal with the gallery. Soon he brought over his wife and three daughters from Korea.

Over the next three years, Ahn's career was off to a promising start. He painted beach scenes, the harbor, Lake Isabella, the sunset over San Pedro, and the colors of California.

Moon, the LACMA curator, said many other Korean diaspora artists of his generation were often inspired by their yearning for their homeland.

"Young-il never did that. That's why his view and his paintings are all very California. They are very Los

Los Angeles Times

Angeles,” she said.

His work started getting noticed. A Christian Science Monitor critic wrote in 1969 that Ahn was “one of Korea’s foremost young painters.”

“Korean Young-il Ahn composes grids of pale, neatly puttied color, often sensitive arrangements but diluted by cute scenes; cows, children, cityscapes and umbrellas in the rain,” an L.A. Times gallery guide the same year noted.

Hee-Jin McClain, the youngest of Ahn’s three daughters, says her memories of her father are mostly of him in the studio. She’d sit doing her homework; he’d hum as he painted.

When he wasn’t painting, he was playing the clarinet or piano, later teaching himself the cello. In the evenings, he listened to Vin Scully and Chick Hearn call Dodgers and Laker games, respectively, on the radio.

In 1970, a lawsuit brought his career to a halt. Stanley Hietala, an early benefactor he had met in Seoul who lived in Laguna Beach, sold Ahn’s works unbeknown to the gallery or the artist. The gallery sued Hietala, and all sale of Ahn’s works were frozen.

It would be a decade before the litigation fizzled to an end. By then, the gallery was broke, Hietala had moved out of state and Ahn was left in financial ruin and a deep depression.

He filed for bankruptcy, and his wife, whom he’d met as a fellow art student, started working as a manicurist. His marriage fell apart, and he moved alone to a downtown studio where he lived for years without a phone. In the throes of a deep depression, he slashed hundreds of his paintings.

Susan Baik, a gallerist who has been working in L.A.’s Koreatown since 2002, first heard of Ahn a few years ago from a client interested in buying one of his works.

By the time Baik met Ahn, he’d suffered a massive stroke in spring 2013 that affected the right side of his body, leaving in doubt his ability to continue painting. She visited his studio, filled with canvases he’d painted over the years.

“I felt like I walked into an untouched cave with all these gems,” she recalled.

She wanted the world to see what she saw in Ahn’s studio. Earlier this year, she and her husband donated funds for LACMA to acquire one of Ahn’s paintings from the “Water Series.” The acquisition was announced shortly before the opening in February of



Portrait of artist Young-il Ahn in his home in downtown Los Angeles. At 83, Ahn still spends most of his working hours painting canvases large and small in his studio. Photo: Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times.

“Unexpected Light” — 11 paintings from the series that will be on display until January.

Among the paintings is “Water A-14,” the first work he painted eight months after his stroke. His wife Soraya, a novelist and children’s book author he married in 2001, said he insisted on testing himself with a 90-by-80-inch canvas to see if he could still paint. He’s had to make concessions. He gave up going up ladders after he fell, and hired a carpenter to stretch out his canvases.

Sitting in Ahn’s studio on a recent Tuesday, Soraya muses out loud if recognition and success would have come decades earlier had he remained in New York, with its ’60s art scene, as a young artist.

Ahn, a man with wild eyebrows and few words, smiles and nods. The mid-morning California sun filters into the brick-walled studio, gently lighting his canvases.

“New York beaches are too cramped,” he finally says.

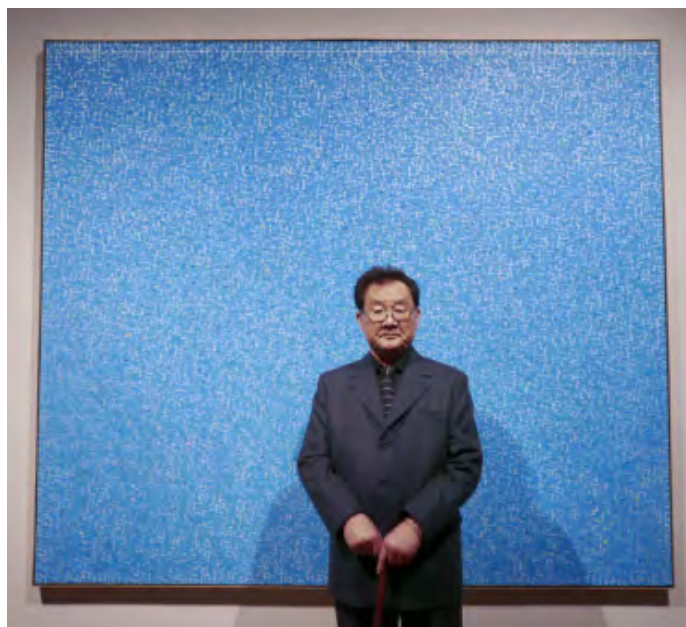
New Acquisition: Young-Il Ahn's *Water SZLB15*

BY JESSICA YOUN, FEBRUARY 9, 2016

Upon entering the Korean galleries on your way to see the greatest hits of traditional Korean art—from a Joseon moon jar to textiles to hanging scrolls—a breathtaking burst of blue to your left will stop you in your tracks. This is Young-Il Ahn's *Water SZLB15* (2015), the newest addition to LACMA's growing Korean contemporary art holdings and the first work of art by a Korean painter active in Los Angeles to enter our collection. One of the leading abstract Korean artists working in Los Angeles today, Ahn has explored the theme of water over the past 15 years, producing a series of works (almost 400 paintings) inspired by his memories of being lost in the Pacific Ocean on a small boat in July 1983. This large-scale portrait of the sea is dominated by the color blue, but if one looks closely, Ahn has interpreted the subject of water—its fluidity, its mystery, its beauty—through an array of colors and textures. (Take a closer look at the water in *Rain Room*; what do you see?) Seemingly or misguidedly simple, his practice is meticulous, encouraging a meditative state during the artist's creative process as well as later for the viewer. Significantly, the addition of Ahn's work to LACMA's collection represents a growing area for the museum's holdings and further solidifies the presence of Korean art in Los Angeles.

Who is Young-Il Ahn? He was born in Korea in 1934, but spent much of his childhood in Japan with his family. His father was a painter and his mother a musician, and Ahn's work began to attract attention as early as the age of six, when his paintings were first shown in a solo exhibition in Japan. In 1945 the family returned to Korea, and Ahn graduated from Seoul National University in 1958 with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

As you find yourself submerged in Ahn's captivating depiction of water, it's worth noting that this painting has some interesting ties to the city and our community. Ahn moved to the City of Angels in 1966, which was around the time LACMA opened on Wilshire Boulevard, as well as when the first major gifts of Korean art were presented to the museum. In this way, the artist and LACMA share a symbiotic history. *Water SZLB15* is a generous



Artist Young-Il Ahn in front of his *Water SZLB15*, 2015, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of Susan Baik and Prem Manjooran, © Young-Il Ahn. Photo by Eric Minh Swenson.

gift of Susan Baik and Prem Manjooran, Angelenos dedicated to elevating the presence of Korean art in the city.

LACMA curators Stephen Little and Virginia Moon recently welcomed guests to a reception honoring the artist. "I speak through paintings, not in words," the 80-year old Ahn confided as he stood proudly in front of his painting. "And I think my best days are still ahead."

"This is not just a special moment for Mr. Ahn," Susan Baik added. "It is an equally heartwarming moment for the Korean community here, which is the largest outside of Korea. To me, it feels significant that LACMA, an international museum as well as our local museum, is recognizing the talent of a local Korean American by adding his art to their collection. I hope this inspires an even closer relationship between LACMA and the Korean community."

Visit the Korean galleries to see *Water SZLB15* in person!

“The Best of Variation of Water and Light”



BY SOOKEE CHUNG (ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY
JOE MCDEVITT), DECEMBER 2014

I'm sometimes asked, "Which artist do you like?" When it comes to non-Korean artists there are just so many I struggle to answer, but when it comes to Korean artists I don't hesitate to answer—it's long-respected *Water* artist Ahn Young Il, who just turned eighty this year. It's been almost thirty years since, as a cub reporter for the culture section I first interviewed Ahn Young Il. I immediately fell in love with his work and personality—and that feeling continues to this day.

Ahn Young Il was the first Korean artist to have a solo exhibition in the US. In 1957, in his senior year at Seoul National University, his work was shown at a US embassy sponsored exhibit and was awarded a prize by the American judges, which led to an invitation to show his work

at New York's World House Gallery. In 1959 it was Hull House Gallery in Chicago, in 1962 the USIS Gallery in Helsinki, Finland where he had a solo exhibition. These shows were groundbreaking events for a Korean artist.

It's difficult to imagine how thrilling it must have been for university student from a poor, war-scarred Asian country to be invited to exhibit his work in the United States when, at a time in Korea, there were no galleries or even people who could afford art, where canvases and paints were scarce and could only be obtained from Japan with difficulty. In fact, from his very early days as an art prodigy he built a resume which is impressive to consider: From age four he'd spend time in his artist father's studio looking at Cezanne's work and discussing drawing,

and at age six he had his first solo show in Japan, at thirteen while still in middle school he was awarded first prize at a national art exhibition, only for the award to be downgraded to third place when the judges learned of his young age, then at age 20 another award at an invitation-only national exhibition—the list goes on and on.

In his early adulthood Ahn supported himself selling his paintings through the only art gallery in Korea at that time, The Bando Gallery, in what is now the Chosun Hotel in Seoul. Around that time, in 1967, an American art collector who admired Ahn's paintings sponsored his move to the United States. The following year, Ahn made a contract with the Zachary Weller Gallery on La Cienega Bou-



levard in Los Angeles. His paintings sold well and he was able to focus happily on his painting, but this euphoric period was not to last.

In the early 1970's a lawsuit was filed by Ahn's gallery against Ahn's original supporter, the American collector, who was selling some of his paintings through a gallery in Laguna Beach. The case dragged on for ten years with Ahn caught in the middle like a shrimp between two

fighting whales—he was unable to sell his work in the United States for all those years. There were no winners—the collector eventually lost the case, the gallery closed, and Ahn's work was blocked from sale.

Ahn was forced into a kind of isolation, retreating into his painting. Already a man of few words, he became even more taciturn, letting his contacts fade and living the life of a hermit. Day after day he'd sit in front of his easel and paint, allowing himself only the occasional diversion to play his beloved clarinet, cello, or piano. Through everything he could never put down his paintbrush because painting was his life, his salvation, his existence.

Ahn is a difficult artist to stay connected to. I tried to get him out of his shell from time to time, but artists like Ahn can be particularly stubborn. A few efforts at new exhibitions failed to bring back the glory days. In recent years, the world of modern art has become vastly more commercialized with artists needing to act as marketers to promote their work. Gone are the days when an artist could just paint and let his paintings sell themselves.

And this is no doubt the reason the name of this pioneering and accomplished artist, Ahn Young Il, is no longer as well known as it once was in the art galleries of Beverly Hills. It's not because of personal misfortune but rather his lack of marketing ability. In my thirty years as an art reporter I've met countless artists and I've never met one who makes such a minimal effort at self-promotion as Ahn Young Il—which is perhaps why I respect him so much and have made an effort to follow him so closely.

The reason I'm writing this article today is because the artist Ahn Young Il is reemerging. In late January the Korean Cultural Center in Los Angeles will hold a major retrospective of Ahn's work, and in February The Long Beach Museum will hold an invitational exhibit of his work. He's also been invited to the Palm Springs Art Fair and inquiries are coming from Korea about possible exhibits there. And with these various shows in the works various collectors are showing interest which is raising the spirits of Ahn's long-time supporters. It seems his time has come.

Mr. Ahn has always said, "An artist has to die." He also says his best work is still ahead of him. Though Ahn says the true value of an artist's work is only known when he's gone, I want to see this artist shining brightly while he's still going strong. Let 2015 be the year the art community rediscovers the artist Ahn Young Il.

Curriculum Vitae

Young-Il Ahn

Born 1934, Gaeseong, Korea

Died 2020, Los Angeles, CA, USA

EDUCATION

1958 Bachelor of Arts, Seoul National University, Korea

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Young-Il Ahn: 20 Years After*, Harper's Chelsea, New York, NY
Young-Il Ahn: Reflection, Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL, USA
- 2019 *Young-Il Ahn: Theme and Variations*, Louis Stern Fine Arts, West Hollywood, CA
- 2018 *Young-Il Ahn*, Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL, USA
- 2017 *Young-Il Ahn*, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA, USA
Young-Il Ahn, Gallery Hyundai, Seoul, South Korea
Unexpected Light: Works by Young-Il Ahn, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2016 *Before Water*, Gallery Sesom, Changwon, Korea
- 2015 *A Memoir of Water*, Solo exhibition, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA, USA
Korean Cultural Center, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2007 CJ Gallery, San Diego, CA, USA
- 2005 Klapper Gallery, West Hollywood, CA, USA
- 2004 Dosan Hall Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2000 Eamew Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 1998 Sackville Gallery, London, UK
- 1997 Dosan Hall Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 1995 John and Joe Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 1992 Gallery 365, Beverly Hills, CA, USA
- 1986 Hyundai Art Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- 1985 Korean Cultural Center, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Artist Loft Gallery, Beverly Hills, CA, USA
- 1983 Artist Loft Gallery, Beverly Hills, CA, USA
- 1982 Hyundai Art Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 1971 Zachary Waller Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 1969 Newster Gallery, Denver, CO, USA
- 1968 Zachary Waller Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Muckenthaler Center, Fullerton, CA, USA
- 1966 National Press Center, Seoul, Korea
Daegu Gallery, Korea
- 1965 Bando Art Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 1964 Salon Pagodong, Seoul, South Korea
- 1963 Bando Art Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 1962 USIS Gallery, Helsinki, Finland
- 1959 Hull House Gallery, Chicago, IL, USA
- 1958 Dong-Ah Gallery, Seoul, South Korea

SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 *The Written Word*, online exhibition, Kavi Gupta
- 2017 *LA Art Show*, Los Angeles, CA, USA, curated by Baik Art
- 2016 *LA Art Show*, Los Angeles, CA, USA, curated by Yoon Jin Sup
Art Busan International Art Fair, Busan, Korea, curated by Gallery SESOM
Korea International Art Fair, Seoul, Korea, curated by Baik Art

2015 Palm Springs Art Fair, Palm Springs, CA, USA
 2012 Korean Cultural Center, Los Angeles, CA, USA
 2011 Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA, USA
 2010 CJ Gallery, San Diego, CA, USA
 Artist Ambassador of United States to Vienna, Austria
 1988 Sole Invited Artist in the third International Contemporary Art Fair
 (Represented by Hyundai Art Gallery, Seoul, Korea)
 1987 Sole Invited Artist in the third International Contemporary Art Fair
 (Represented by Hyundai Art Gallery, Seoul, Korea)
 Chosun News Daily Gallery, Seoul, Korea
 1986 Korean National Museum of Art
 1957 Invitational Exhibition, World House Gallery, New York City, New York

COLLECTIONS

Los Angeles Contemporary Museum of Art
 Long Beach Museum of Art
 National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

SELECT PRESS

"Remembering September 11 Through An Immigrant Artist's Eyes." *Harper's*, September 9, 2021
 "Young-Il Ahn: Reflection." *Art & Object*, January 27, 2021
 "Young-Il Ahn: Reflection." *Chicago Gallery News*, January 22, 2021
 "Young-Il Ahn, Korean American Painter of Light and Surface, Dies at 86." *Ideelart*, December 23, 2020
 "Young-Il Ahn, Trailblazing Painter of Radiant Abstractions, Dies at 86." *ARTnews*, December 16, 2020
 "Obituary: Young-Il Ahn (1934–2020)." *ArtAsiaPacific*, December 22, 2020
 "Adrift in Abstraction: Young-Il Ahn at Kavi Gupta." *New City Art*, August 22, 2018
 "The Pacific has been filling Young-il Ahn's canvases for decades. At 83, the L.A. artist is getting belated recognition." *Los Angeles Times*, February 9, 2018
 "Two New LBMA Exhibitions Interpret Coastal CA, USA." *The Hello*, November 9, 2017
 "Young-Il Ahn: When Sky Meets Water." *Long Beach Museum of Art*, October 25, 2017
 "Unexpected Light: Works by Young-Il Ahn." *Art Satva*, August 23, 2017
 "Look to the Sea: The Water Paintings of Young-Il Ahn." *Western Humanities Review*, Issue 71.2, Summer 2017
 "The Darker Meaning Behind Young Il-Ahn's Colourful Canvases at LACMA." *the Artling*, May 8, 2017
 "Exhibition of works by Young Il Ahn on view at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art." *ART DAILY*, March 1, 2017
 "LA Art Show 2017 Concluded Successfully." *Korea Daily*, January 18, 2017
 "Dansaekhwa II: The Traces of Four Artists Exhibition Curated by Yoon Jin Sup." *LA Art Show: Modern + Contemporary*, 2015
 "Long Beach Museum of Art to Open Three Exhibitions on February 19." *Long Beach Museum of Art*, January 23, 2015