

Je Yeo-ran makes squeegee art

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Je Yeo-ran's "Usquam Nusquam" (2018) / Courtesy of 313 Art Project

By Kwon Mee-yoo

Artists Je Yeo-ran's abstract paintings have unique, thick textures resulting from the artist's use of a squeegee and her performative painting process.

In her solo exhibition "Usquam Nusquam" at the 313 Art Project in Seongbuk-dong, northeastern Seoul, Je presents paintings in the namesake series.

The most iconic part of her work comes from that she uses a squeegee, instead of a traditional brush, to paint on canvas.

"A squeegee is made of a flat rubber blade, unlike paintbrushes consisting of bristles or hair. When you place the squeegee on a canvas, there's a certain feeling of resistance. In other words, when used for painting, there's a difference between stiffness and softness," Je explained during a press conference on March 8.

"I need the resistant feeling of an inconvenient tool. I tame the tool until it gets natural for me as if it is an extension of my body," Je said.





Artist Je Yeo-ran uses a squeegee instead of a brush to create unique, dynamic textures. Courtesy of 313 Art Project

The artist said she uses multiple squeegees offering a wide variety of widths and degrees of wear, which provides more options for her. "I can use a long squeegee of 1.5 meters or cut it down to 1 centimeter. A new squeegee has a keen edge, which is good for deep, sharp lines, while a worn-out squeegee can produce softer curves."

Though her latest works can be recognized by the signature thick texture of the oil paint, the style is achieved by the artist's lifelong pursuit and research of the flatness of the picture plane.

"In my early days, I experimented with lithography, which is very flat and closely related to printing technique. As I maximized the flatness of a painting, I deepened my study on the characteristics of painting and started using a squeegee for my works," Je said. "You can see thick textures in my latest works, but I experimented with minimal, monochromatic squeegee paintings in the early 2000s and the results were exhibited at the Total Museum of Contemporary Art in 2006."

However, Je always recognizes the importance of color for an artist. "After wrapping up a phase in 2006, I felt the need for using colors from inside. For me, there are certain turning points in my career and the demand for changes comes from my paintings, not outside," she said.

Though Je's paintings are abstract, her inspiration comes from everywhere. "I am influenced by even trivial things when painting. It could be the season, weather, a dominant feeling of the day or the music I want to listen to. Even a breeze or a color of someone's scarf or dress can stimulate color selection," the artist said.

Je said the aesthetic pleasure of her work comes from how the material embraces the passage of time.

"A freshly painted canvas has a certain viscosity like moisture on a just bathed baby, while older paintings are drier and have wrinkles of time. I wish for my paintings to keep the dynamics of rise and fall in time."

The exhibit runs until April 10. Visit 313artproject.com for more information.



Je Yeo-ran's "Usquam Nusquam" (2016) / Courtesy of 313 Art Project