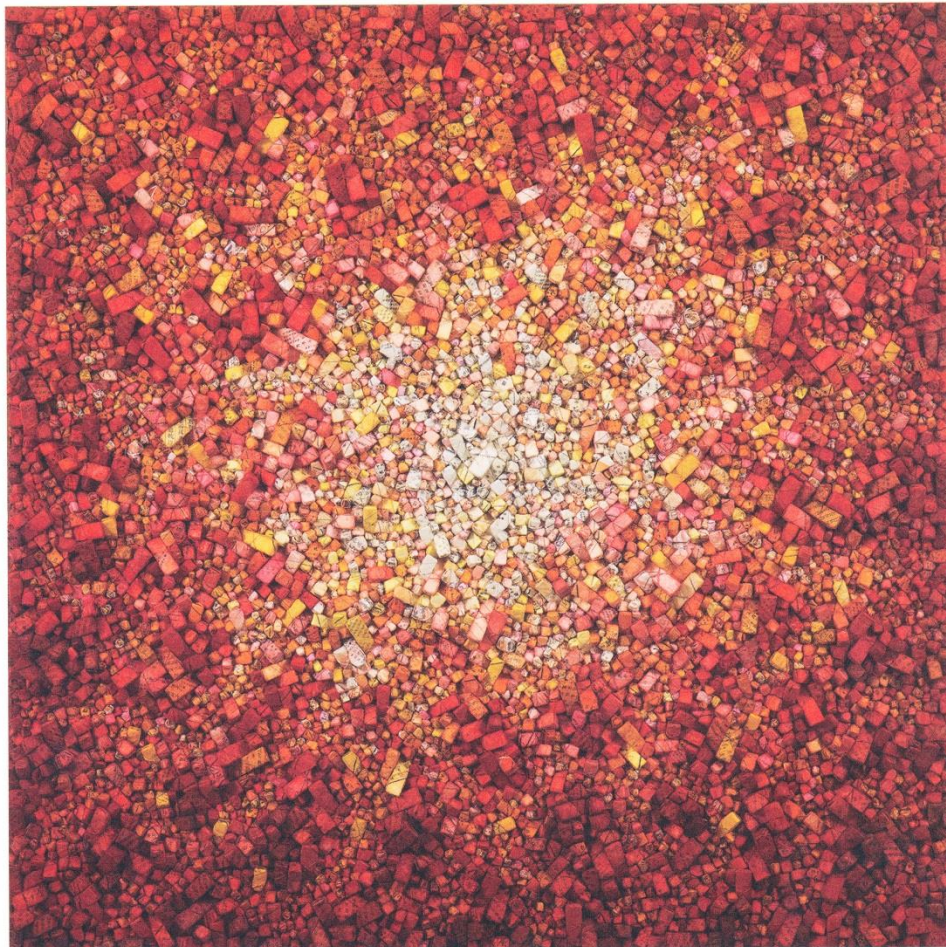


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Aggregation 13 – MA003, 151 x 151 cm

DIALOGUE

THREE SIDES TO A STORY

Words: Valerie Wee
Images: Art Plural Gallery Singapore

Korean artist Chun KwangYoung is obsessed with the shape of a triangle. In fact, his latest exhibition *Assemblage* which will run until July 27 will feature 22 of his latest works and explore his distinct structural work that marries his dual sojourn into Abstract Expressionism and his Asian roots. The Hanji, the Korean mulberry paper, a commonplace household necessity that ensconces everything from food to medicine, is the stepping point for his art, “I think the thing I first saw [as a child] was my mother’s face, and then there was mulberry paper. This paper is not just for writing and drawing, but is like the spirit and soul of Koreans.”

In Chun’s work, the devil is not only in the details, but also in the expansive sum of its triangular parts. His large canvas amasses a collage that depicts micro aspects of the human relationship and the sociopolitical upheavals around it. These organically textured landscapes are intended to vividly symbolise the epic turns, destruction and turmoil in our modern society that are caused by our environment, economic policies and that endless conflict within and amongst ourselves.

We find out what Chun Kwang Young is thinking about these days.

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Did you choose the basic shape of triangle for a specific reason?

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I was inspired by its shape in the form of medicine packages hanging from the ceiling that I saw as a child. And then I thought it could be a great shape to construct my work entirely. When they are applied and collected on the canvas in various different directions and sizes, they create dynamic flow, individual forms and gestalt. Moreover, each sharp edge of a triangle expresses the image of emotional pain, conflict, or scar on the human body.

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What's your take on the relationship between Korean and Chinese culture? The old books you used in your artworks appear very familiar for Chinese audience because of the Chinese characters on them, what's your opinion on that?

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Actually, at first, I did not deliberately mean to include Chinese characters in my work. It was a natural result rather than intention. It is well known that China and Korea have a deep relationship historically and culturally. The contents of old books are also involved with Chinese literature and philosophy. Also, the idea of triangular form wrapped in mulberry paper was also from the traditional Chinese medicine herb package. So, there is no wonder that Korean and Chinese are familiar to my work.

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Do you have any requirement on the content of the old books you use? Are the books themselves very valuable? Where did you get the large amount of old books?

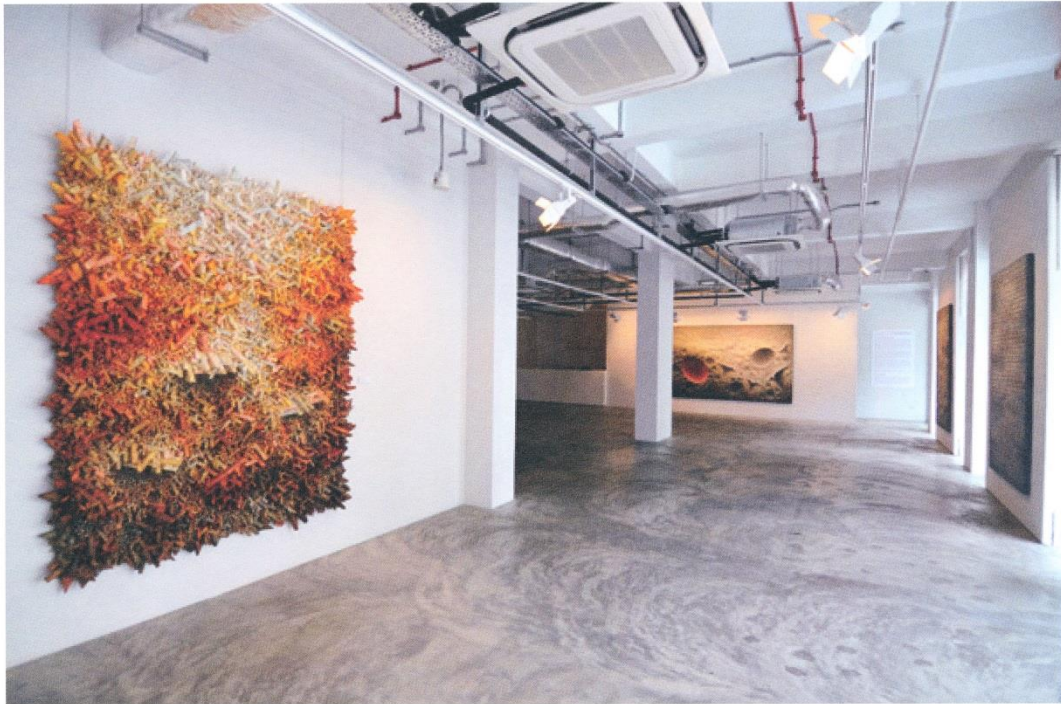
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I do not require any specific content from the old books I use. They are usually from 70-80 years ago. And it includes various contents of the Analects of Confucius, Mencius, pandect, protocol, fiction, poetry and prose. They involve the trace of time, history and memory. So, they are totally valuable as themselves and when they are collected on my canvas, they create a wider meaning as a whole.

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What inspired you to start doing assembled art pieces?

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I created Aggregations in 1995. At that time, I had given up the Abstract Expressionism movement and tried to find my own artistic way. I sought my creativity and originality and felt that Abstract Expressionism was not my real calling as a Korean artist. I asked myself what is my authentic art. And then after a long deep deliberation, I found the traditional material, mulberry paper (Hanji) and remembered the herb medicine packages I saw as a child. From traditional material and memory, I was finally able to seek my real own art.

—
Many artists try to use some cultural elements of their own country for art, what are your thoughts on this?

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I think that artists should consider their own identity and it might be based on their country and origin. Every person has his own origin and this differs from one to another. But when one considers his origin, though it starts from a personal history, memory, and culture, it should arouse sympathy from the public. It goes beyond the personal story and this is what my art is about.



Art Plural Gallery

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Does your experience creating abstract impressionism painting about 20 years ago in any way have an effect on your today's collection *Assemblage*? Is there any relationship between them either in form or content?

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There were huge changes between my works of Abstract Expressionism and Aggregation - from the materials to the form. For example, if Abstract Expressionism eliminated the illusion of depth and claimed the flatness of plane canvas, the Aggregation creates the illusion of depth and protrusion. It is a form of relief, it even looks like a sculpture. However, despite these differences, there is still a relationship between them. I still work on vast all-over patterns and want to express inner emotions and conflicts of mine and others. I continue to convey messages through my work and they flow through my whole art career.