

Louis Stern Fine Arts is pleased to present

**Young-il Ahn: Theme and Variations**

September 14 – November 2, 2019

Los Angeles, 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 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.