

Remembering Nobuo Sekine on a Warm Spring Day

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I was able to spend time with Nobuo Sekine over the years in Japan, South Korea and Los Angeles. Together we visited exhibitions, and over dinner and drinks we spoke deeply about our respective artworks and practices (with regards to materiality, space, environment). We were friends and colleagues who shared our thoughts on what it meant to be an artist and related concerns, as well as our personal matters.

In the 1980s, Sekine always came to congratulate me at openings for my solo exhibitions with Kamakura Gallery in Tokyo; this would continue for decades, and I was grateful to him when he attended the opening of the Dansaekhwa exhibition at Blum & Poe Los Angeles in 2014. Of course, I also remember very well his visits to South Korea.

At exhibition openings and events that we both attended, Sekine introduced me to his contemporaries, and through him I was able to meet many wonderful Japanese artists. As we got to know one another through these conversations and as our fates continued to intertwine, I believe we developed a sincere fondness for one another.

When Sekine visited me at my studio he brought me an artwork as a gift, and I returned this kind gesture to him with a work of mine as well. The work he gave me is proudly on display in my library, where I am sitting now and recalling these memories.

On May 13 it will be one year since Sekine passed away. Writing this tribute is bittersweet, as I still feel a great loss over his passing. But in this sadness there is also gratitude that we were able to know this representative figure of Mono-ha, and I am comforted that we will forever be connected to him through the artworks he has left behind.

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Translated by Patty Nam