

Season Lao: From Sensibility to a Space of Contemplation

The current curator of the Busan City Museum of Art and former director of major Korean art fairs such as KIAF, ART BUSAN, and G SEOUL

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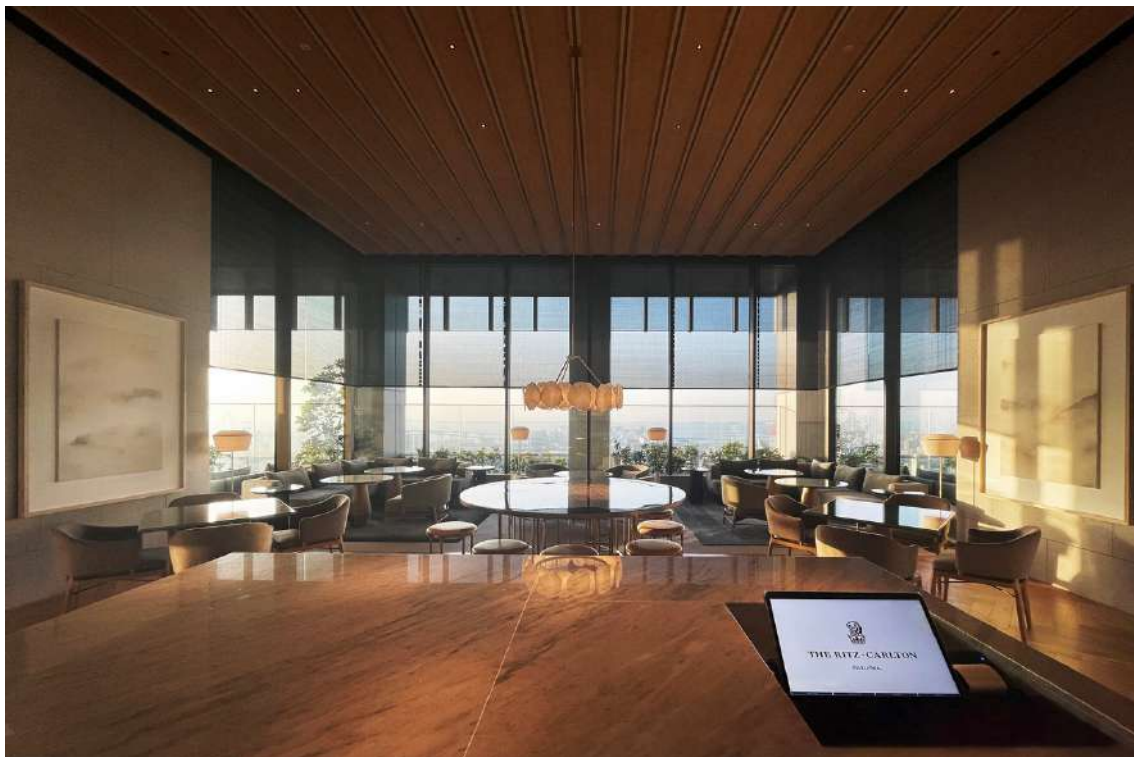
One of the defining characteristics of contemporary art is the artist's endless attempts to internalize novelty. Yet both the physical and conceptual pursuits of the "new" have reached their limits. Since Gustave Courbet declared, "I cannot paint an angel because I have never seen one," attempts at new forms of expression have continued. After Marcel Duchamp chose a readymade urinal, countless artists thirsted for new media to incorporate into their work. This repetition of avant-garde gestures and the exposure of limits in the postmodern era revealed the exhaustion of novelty through media alone.



the Asian Art Museum in Nice, France

Within this situation, what began to emerge in the work of Asian artists was a distinct "orientalness." The dual character of Eastern materials and concepts became a privilege of Asian artists, though some Western artists had already incorporated Eastern thought and philosophy. Among these, "blank space" (yohaku) and "ma" (間, relational space) are indispensable. Blankness opens toward ma, and ma leads into emptiness. Yet true emptiness is not sheer nothingness. It exists in the process of removing the superfluous and returning to essence, or in preparing to be filled by something else.

Season Lao's work is thus closely tied to the aesthetics of the East. His artistic process unfolds through four crucial stages. First, he internalizes ordinary memories from daily life. For instance, he has transformed precious memories of his childhood home into a shared recognition with those around him, sublimating them into a force that preserves the space. The same holds true for landscapes framed through the camera's lens. Amid everyday movements and encounters, he discerns what is truly his own. Second is the act of capture. To sublimate the ordinary is a task more difficult than expressing the extraordinary. The instant he captures an image from the commonplace landscape, the imagination is already connected to the exhibition space. Third is the judgment of what to retain and what to remove. This ability operates from intuition and sensibility. Here his consciousness intersects with Eastern philosophies of *ma* (間), and the environment is shaped to maximize the image he has captured. Finally comes the time of contemplation offered to the one who enters.



Ritz Carlton Fukuoka

What Lao pursues in “maximization” is not a vertical relationship in which either work or space dominates, but rather a flat coexistence where both are amplified together. Works hung across the gallery walls appear like landscapes seen through windows. The *ma* (間, interval) between the artwork and the viewer recalls the very site the artist once encountered. This oscillation between interior and exterior cannot occur without mutual acts of emptying and filling.

In the space where his captured images quietly unfold upon paper, the time of contemplation belongs entirely to the viewer. This is the world of Season Lao's art, a trajectory that extends from sensibility to a space of contemplation.



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