

ARTIST REVIEW

Rainer Koehl (2005)

Traditionally, for Koreans, landscape painting expressed the very essence for a cultured life. In most instances, however, little if any attention has paid to the human beings in the natural world as depicted in Korean landscape painting. At the most, there was a sense conveyed that Human beings and any objects they had constructed were overwhelmed if not completely lost in the midst of an overpowering nature. This is what comes to mind when I view the works of my friend Daniel Park. As someone who once lived in Korea for several years, I have been fascinated by the way Daniel interprets his artistic vision from a vantage point of a Korean who has now been a resident of Indonesia for about a decade. Despite the change of venue, both literally in terms of his decision to take up residence and symbolically in terms of the Indonesian scenes that now form an integral part of his representational palette. I detected a strong current continuity in his work as an artist. It seems to me it is this quality of continuity that makes viewing his artistic work in an Indonesian setting especially fascinating.

Indeed, whether the scene is Indonesia or Korea, human being as actors are either absent or subordinated to the absolute of the world itself. His style remains apparent even in those works that depict scenes that are not representative on the natural world. Even when Daniel is painting a street scene, whether in Korea or in Indonesia, what comes through most vividly is the sense of exceeding the conditions of human existence.

What is new about the paintings included in this exhibition is that Daniel obviously doesn't limit himself exclusively to the purely natural settings of mountains, streams and forests and the sea. Rather, in many of his paintings we see depicted a world that has been constructed by human beings, and yet, it is still a world that stands apart from human beings in what appears to be a nearly total state of independence. In this sense, Daniel must be said to be depicting a vision of the world that is the result of human activity, but nonetheless still retains a capacity to restrain or perhaps even overwhelm human beings. In this respect he appears to be suggesting the inevitable limitations of human existences, which after all is subjected to the overwhelming power of nature.

I hope these suggestions for one possible way of viewing the work of Daniel Park will help you to appreciate his distinctly Korean vision as an artist. What is reflected, both directly and indirectly, in Daniel's work can serve as a salutary lesson for today's humanity.