

Alan Artner

Senior art critic of Chicago Tribune, on Friday, November 24, 2006

South Korean artist Kwang Jean Park's second solo exhibition in the United States--like the first, in 2002, at the Andrew Bae Gallery--is of paintings, collages and woodblock prints that soften and vary geometric motifs but are most concerned with something beyond the formal arrangements.

For a decade, the artist has been engaged in giving visual form to the Taoist concept of yin and yang, and several of these pieces bearing lavish textures are on view. However, new to the artist is a concern with sound that goes back to some of history's earliest painted abstractions, by Arthur Dove as well as Frantisek Kupka, Mikolajus Ciurlionis and, of course, Wassily Kandinsky.

Several large woodblock prints with extensive handwork explore the theme most lyrically, with series of wavy lines that merge with densely textured areas, creating visual equivalents for the inter-penetration of sound and silence. The pieces are, to this viewer, as satisfying as the artist's larger, free-hanging paintings, and though they begin as prints, the many layered additions give each piece a subtle, insinuating uniqueness.

This sort of work, which is "about" something greater and deeper than its own construction, is nowadays in the West sometimes considered old-fashioned, given that such abstract, inward-looking art was created most powerfully by early moderns. Like theirs, the work shown here strives toward some inner truth beyond fashion in a universal geometric language that has been intensely, gratifyingly personalized.

At 300 W. Superior St., 312-335-8601