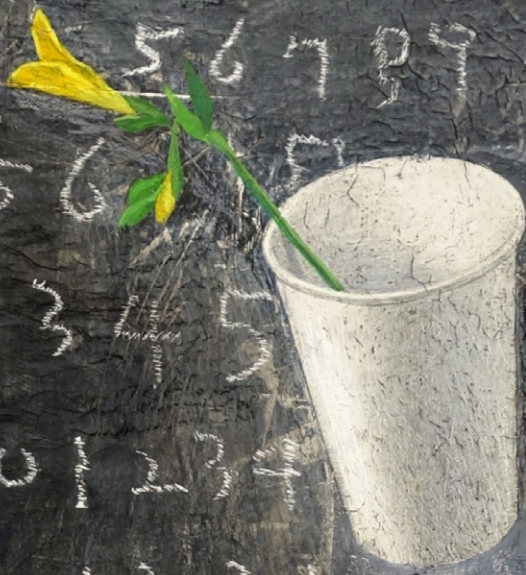


Pontone

GALLERY



Oh Se-Yeol **The Layers Of Memory**

**COVER – Untitled**

Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas

61 x 50 x 3cm (24 x 19.5 x 1in)

2002

## INTRODUCTION

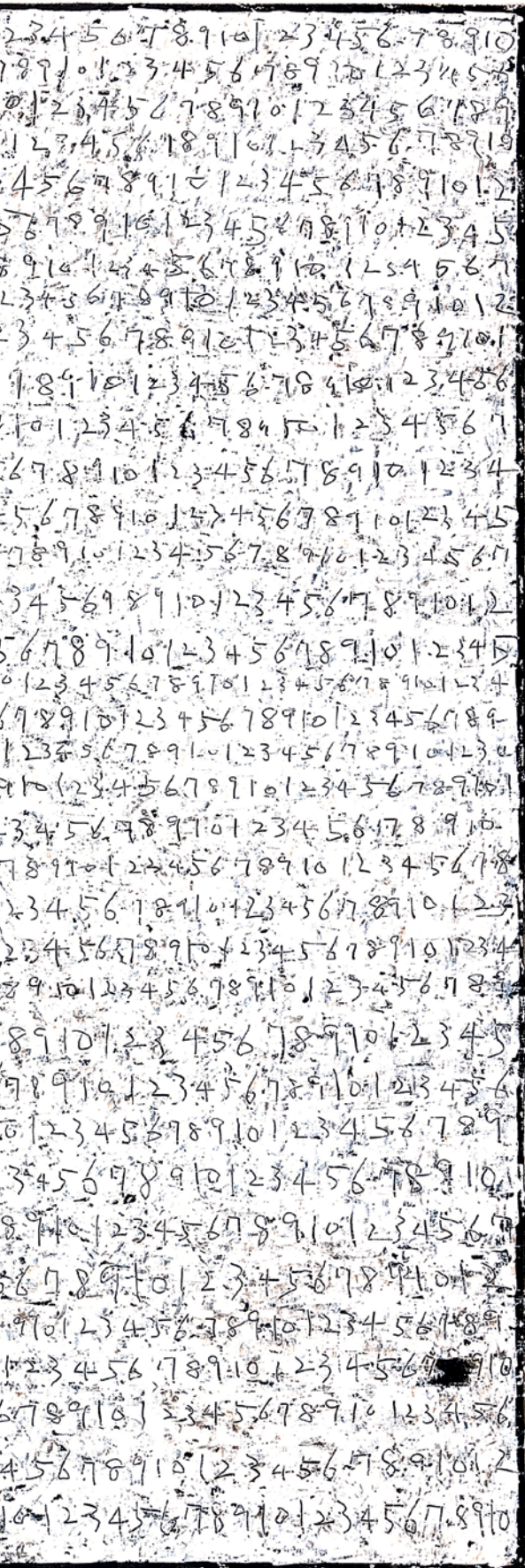
The directors of The Pontone Gallery are proud to present the first solo exhibition in the UK by this South Korean artist of international standing. Known as a 'master painter' in his homeland and represented in many museum collections, this is a unique opportunity to view his subtle, densely codified paintings.

The paintings are palimpsests, surfaces on which later information has been superimposed on earlier. The picture plane is defined by sequences of drawn or painted numbers. These files and rows, determined by a mysterious set of rules, are set into flat fields of colour. Delicate images of everyday objects are applied over these surfaces, setting off intriguing associations. There is a sense of the fleetingness of the present moment in the fragile images of flowers, pebbles and other ephemeral items deployed across the underlying grid.

These are densely worked paintings, exploiting the dramatic contrast between regular and irregular marks and signs. The handling of the media with its scuffing, cancellations, accretions and bursts of naïveté makes allusions to all sorts of evocative sources like notebooks, diaries, chalkboards and children's paintings. This, in turn, gives rise to significant correspondences for the viewer.

On encountering this work one is aware of a concern with memory, of its capture and expression, and of how this artist sees it as a profound, but fugitive, task. What lies behind is the unrolling of a code, a list, a literal counting out of intervals. The paintings express the tension between holding onto a moment, and its passing, as the numbers scroll relentlessly on.





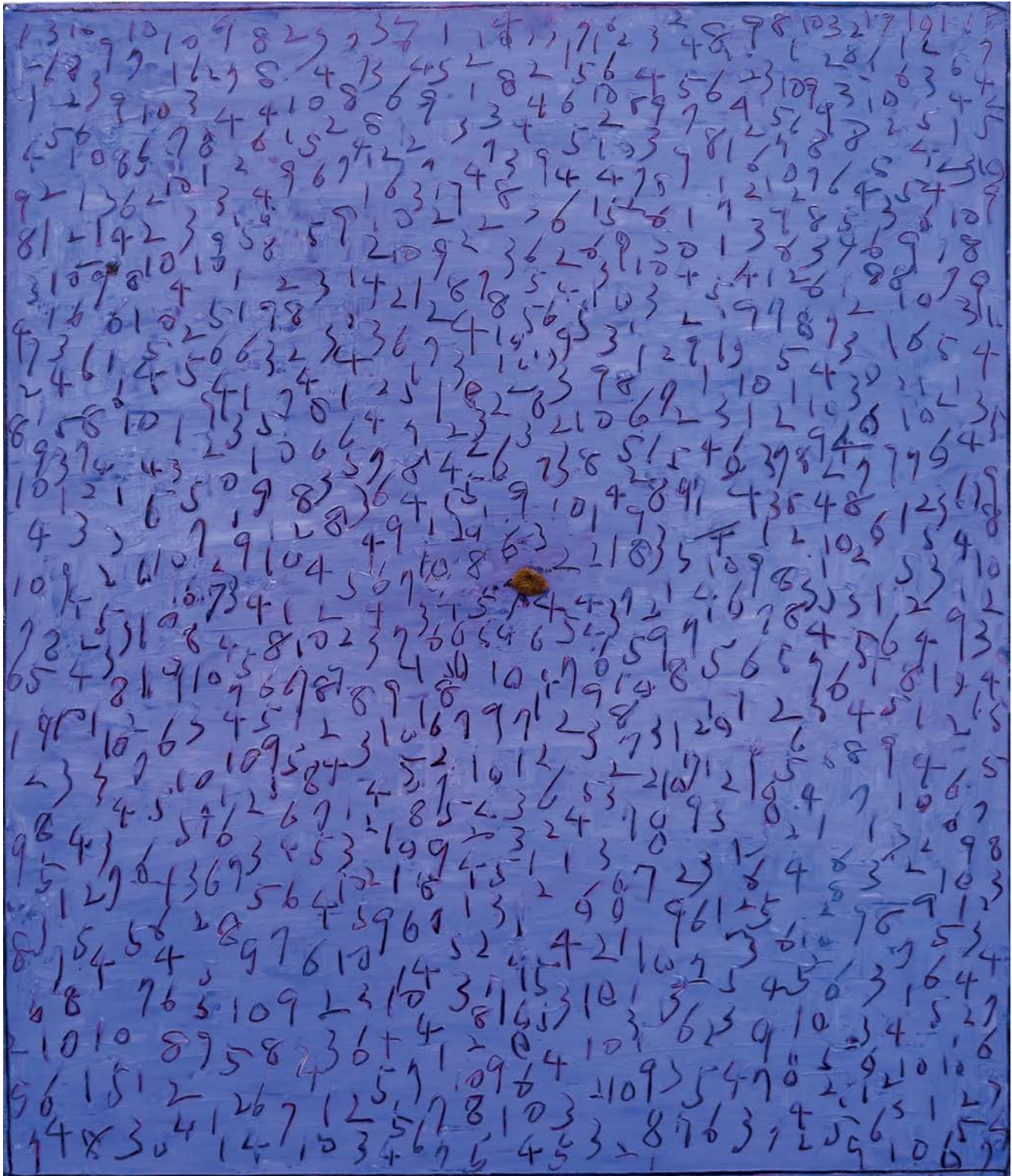
**Untitled**

Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas  
130 x 162 x 3cm (51 x 64 x 1in)  
2015



**Untitled**

Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas  
65.5 x 53 x 3cm (26 x 21 x 1in)  
2015



Untitled

Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas

53 x 46 x 3cm (21 x 18 x 1in)

2016



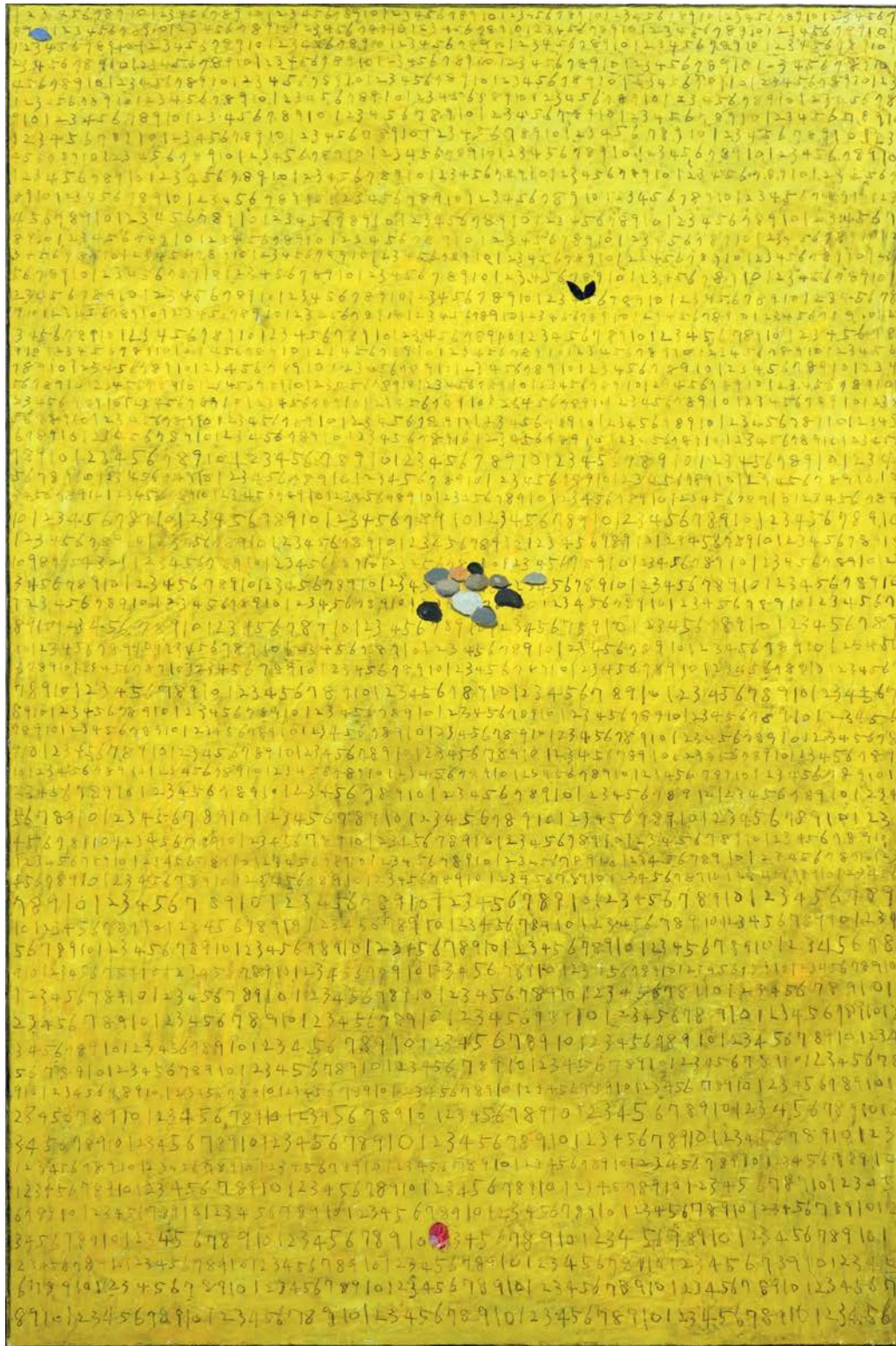
**Untitled**

Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas

100 x 73 x 3cm (39 x 29 x 1in)

2014





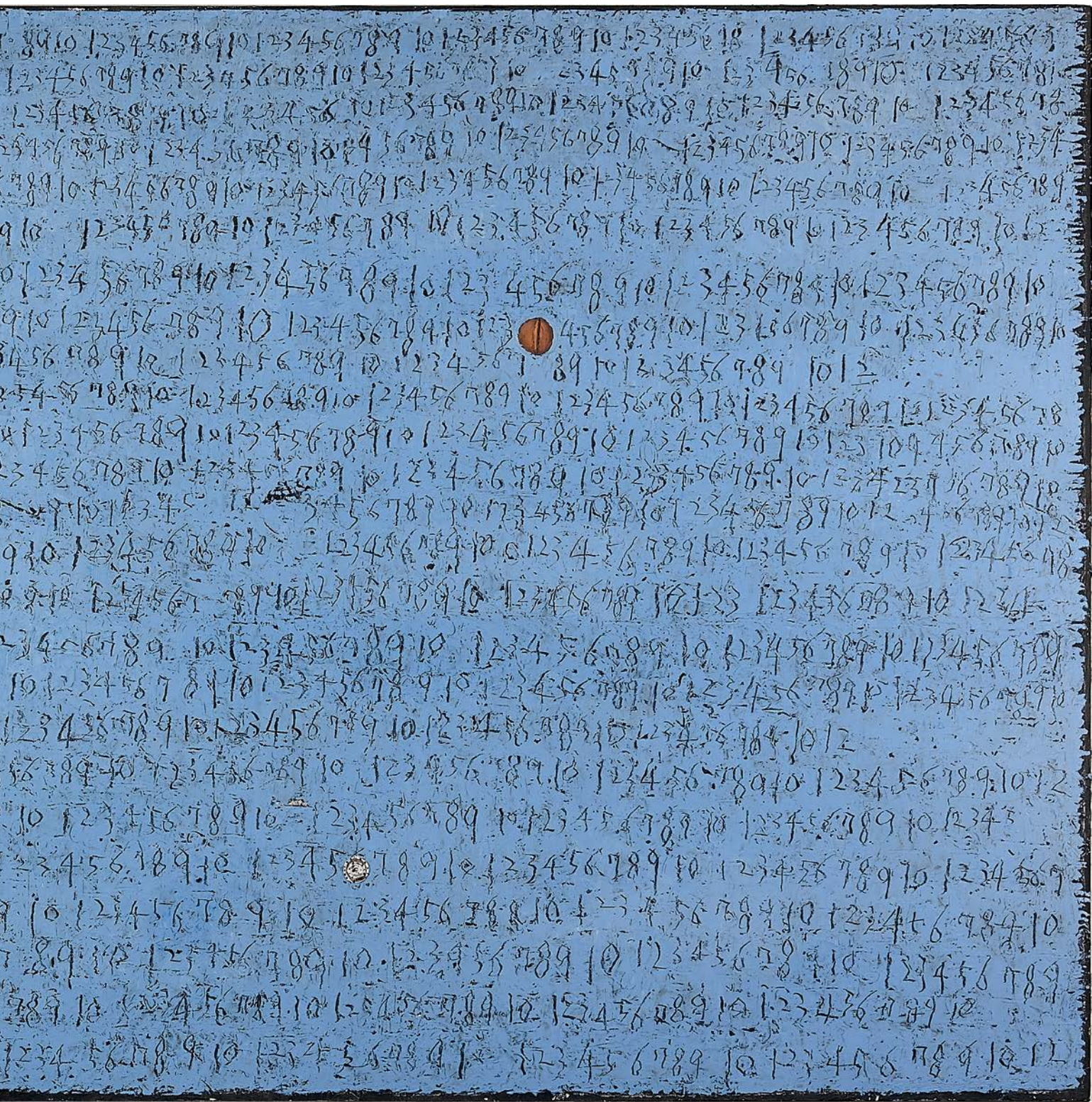
Untitled

Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas

146 x 97 x 3cm (57.5 x 38 x 1in)

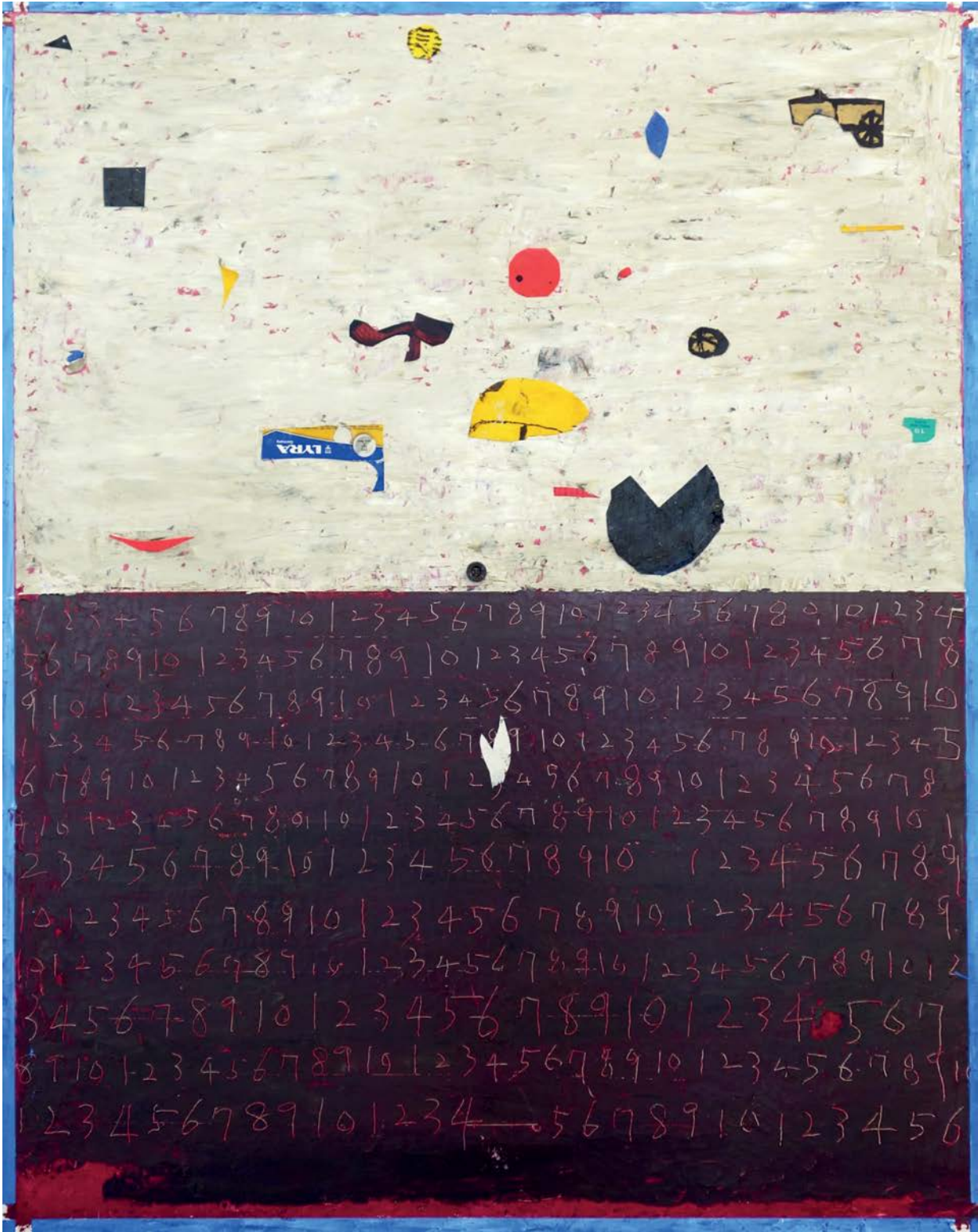
2015





Untitled

Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas  
122 x 244 x 3cm (48 x 96 x 1in)  
2014



**Untitled**

Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas

91 x 73 x 3cm (36 x 29 x 1in)

2015

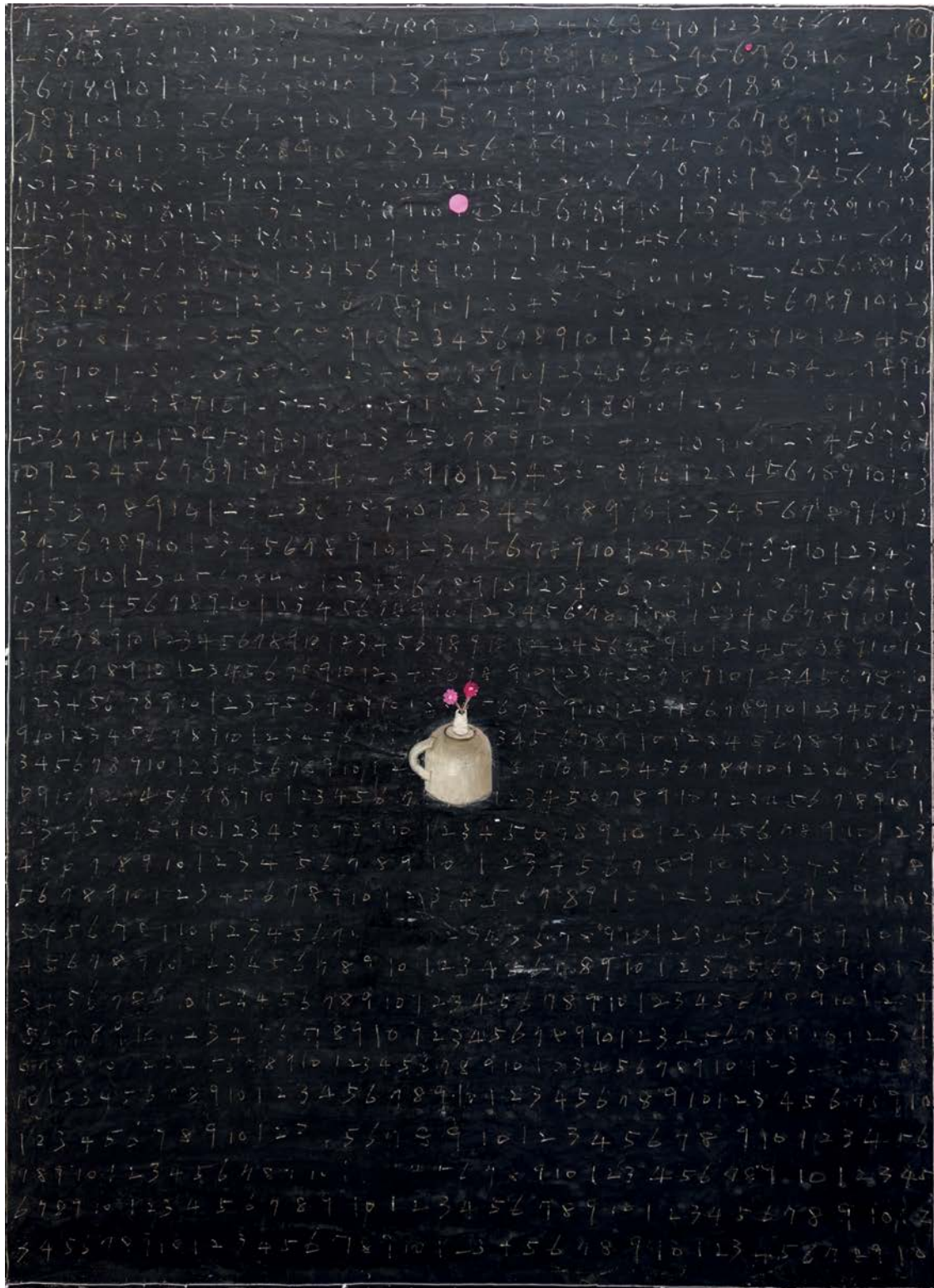


Untitled

Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas

92 x 73 x 3cm (36 x 29 x 1in)

2015

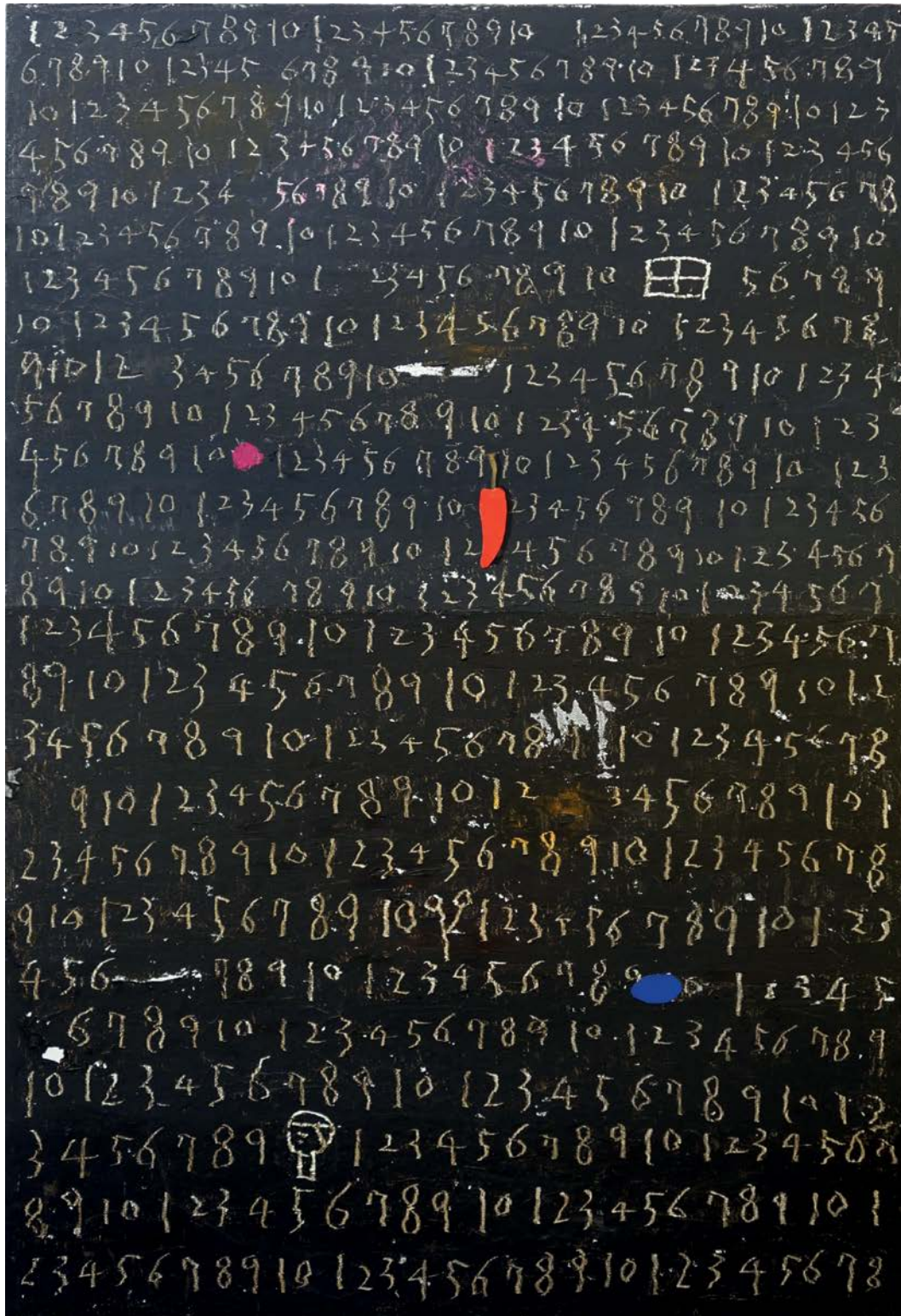


**Untitled**

Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas

100 x 73 x 3cm (39 x 29 x 1in)

2015



Untitled

Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas

117 x 80 x 3cm (46 x 31.5 x 1in)

2015



**Untitled**

Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas

61 x 46 x 3cm (24 x 18 x 1in)

2015



### **Biography**

1945 Born in Seoul, South Korea

### **Education**

1969 Graduated from painting dept. of Surabeul Art College

1974 MFA, College of Arts, Chung-Ang University

### **Awards**

1965~80 The Korean Artist Competition – nine times prize winner,  
five times winner of Special Prize

1976 The 3rd Korean Prize, Best Artist Prize

1969~72 Representational Paintings Competition – Gold and Silver  
prizes

### **Museum Collections**

The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Gwa-cheon, South Korea

Daejeon Museum of Art, Daejeon, South Korea

Leeum Museum, Seoul, South Korea

The Museum of Han-Kook Ilbo, Seoul, South Korea

The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, South Korea

Frederick Wiseman Collection, Los Angeles, USA

### Solo Exhibitions

- 2016 Korean Culture Centre, Brussels, Belgium  
Korean Culture Centre, Paris, France
- 2015 Galerie Baudoin Lebon, Paris, France
- 2008 Wellside Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 2000 Wellside Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 1997 Gallery Yeh, Seoul, South Korea
- 1991 Gallery Yeh, Seoul, South Korea
- 1987 Gallery Garam, Seoul, South Korea
- 1986 Gallery Jean, Seoul, South Korea
- 1984 Gallery Jean, Seoul, South Korea
- 1982 Shinsegae Museum, Seoul, South Korea
- 1977 Munwhagallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 1975 Chosun Hotel Gallery, Seoul, South Korea

### Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2016 Art Paris, Galerie Baudoin Lebon, Paris, France
- 2015 Art Élysées, Galerie Baudoin Lebon, Paris, France  
KIAF, Galerie Baudoin Lebon, Seoul, South Korea  
Art Fair Busan, Galerie Baudoin Lebon, Busan, South Korea
- 2014 Form As Thinking Rediscovery of Drawing, Museum San, Gangwon, South Korea  
KIAF, Wellside Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 2013 Oh Se-Yeol and Liang Quan Exhibition, Shinsegae Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 2012 Art Toronto, Wellside Gallery, Toronto, Canada  
KIAF 2005, Wellside Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 2011 Art Fair Messe Fair Moderne & Aktuelle, Kunst Cologne, Germany  
KIAF, Wellside Gallery, Seoul, South Korea  
Korea Art Show, Soho, New York
- 2010 Oh Se-Yeol and Vernon Fisher Exhibition, Seomi Gallery, South Korea
- 2009 KIAF, Wellside Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 2008 Oh Se-Yeol Solo Exhibition, Wellside Gallery, Seoul, South Korea  
Seoul Art Fair, Wellside Gallery, Busan, South Korea

- 2007 Oh Se-Yeol and Yoo Jong-Ho Joined Exhibition, Wellside Gallery, South Korea  
KIAF 2007, Urban Art Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 2006 Melbourne Art Fair, Wellside Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
- 2005 Seoul Art Fair, Seoul Art Center, Wellside Gallery, Seoul, South Korea  
KIAF 2005, Wellside Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 2004 Melbourne Art Fair 2004, Wellside Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
- 2003 The Landscapes Within Me, Busan Metropolitan Art Museum, South Korea  
Contemporary Art Exhibition Association, Gallery Yeh, Seoul, South Korea
- 2001 7th Seoul Print Art Fair, Seoul Art Center, Seoul, South Korea
- 1999 The Indignity of Korean Art, POSCO Art Museum, Seoul, South Korea
- 1998 The Traveling Art Museum, National Contemporary Museum, South Korea  
The Body In Painting, Hanlim Museum, Seoul, South Korea
- 1997 LA International Art Festival, Los Angeles, U.S.A.
- 1996 New Delhi International Contemporary Fine Arts Festival, India
- 1994 Contemporary Painting Exhibition – 3 Artists, Chung Art Gallery, Seoul, South Korea  
Seoul International Art Festival, Seoul Art Center, Seoul, South Korea
- 1992 Today's 7 Painters Exhibition, Tokyo Art Expo, Harumi, Japan  
Oh Se-Yeol and Antoni Camarasa, Wellside Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 1987 LA Art Fair '87, '88, Los Angeles, USA  
Seoul Art Fair, Hoam Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 1985 The 7th Cannes International Painting Festival, France
- 1984 FIAC '84, Paris Grand Palais, Paris, France
- 1982 The 5th India Triennale, New Delhi, India
- 1975 Gong-Gan Art Grand-Prix Exhibition, National Contemporary Museum, Gwacheon, South Korea
- 1969 The Korean National Arts Exhibition (five Special Prize Awards)
- 1965 The Korean National Arts Exhibition, National Contemporary Museum, Gwacheon, South Korea  
The 3rd Korean Art Grand-Prix Exhibition, Han-Kook Ilbo, Seoul, South Korea

## THE LAYERS OF MEMORY – On the paintings of Oh Se-Yeol

The image is either monochrome, the entire frame filled with one colour, or is sometimes split into two. It is extremely monotonous, and yet covered with figures of abundant implication. Exuding a tranquil energy engaged in the constant act of creation, the image has the power to comfort. Figures flicker along the filaments, aligned and spaced regularly like a rice seedbed in early summer. The dense rows of seedlings await the coming summer heat, followed by the autumn cool when the paddies are full of rice ready for harvest. A sparrow sweeps through like the wind, swirling the filaments here and there into a whirlwind. Of course, this is no ordinary seedbed, as a wild flower, a window frame, an automobile often rises to the surface as if playing hide-and-seek. None of these figures could have been painted for a specific purpose. It is difficult to identify any sense of inevitability in the figures chosen or any sense of context between the figures. And yet, they are sure to arouse within us a faint sense of longing.

The traces of figures erased or lightly sketched look as if they could disappear at any moment, making it hard not to feel pity or sympathy. The figures are so ordinary, but together they look precious as if they should be treasured for a long time. A small flower, an unfinished sketch of a bird—such figures remain afloat in our memories, constantly paddling near the surface, their traces impossible to erase.

Like this, the images by Oh Se-Yeol carefully unfold in front of us the pages of a memory that had been skimmed or skipped through. They are bundles of memory that could belong to anyone. Those pages of memory drift back and forth between existence and absence, keeping us from ignoring the fact that they, as Go Chung-Hwan put it, “enrich our lives with meaning.” Where does this alchemy of the mind originate? Memories exist in even layers, accumulated like rows of rice in the passing of time. Just like an underground spring that supplies water, the source of our memories exists deep down at an invisible depth and from there enriches and refreshes our lives.

The paintings by Oh Se-Yeol are dominated by one colour, and the more it is, the more accentuated is their two-dimensionality. The figures or their traces that surface to visibility obey such orders of a two-dimensional world, barely managing to keep their balance. While the images are conspicuously flat, each image consists not of a single plane but of multiple layers of matter, adding a sense of dignity to the notion of flatness. They are not merely flat images with a wide surface, but beneath the surface they also become structures with depth. This characteristic is what distinguishes them from what is commonly referred to as a monochrome painting, as well as from other monochromatic paintings in Korea that emerged as a trend.

Here is a child. Standing bashfully against a monochrome background, she somehow makes us pity her, but also feel proud. She does not shout for attention, but rather manifests herself as a figure of monumental status. Quiet but dignified. This is how the world of Oh Se-Yeol unfolds before us.

– Oh Gwang-su (art critic)

**Pontone**

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GALLERY

**Pontone Gallery**

43 Cadogan Gardens

London SW3 2TB

+44 20 7730 8777

[gallery@pontonegallery.com](mailto:gallery@pontonegallery.com)