

Park Seo-Bo

*Korea JoongAng daily,
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KOREA JOONGANG DAILY

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2023년 3월 20일
 16면 (공정/서울/경시)



Park Seo-bo, 92-year-old master of the Korean abstract art scene, speaks during the groundbreaking ceremony for his upcoming museum at the JW Marriott Jeju Resort and Spa in Seogwipo, Jeju Island, on Tuesday.

floors: one above ground and the other two underground. Menis said that "85 percent" of the building is designed as a "sunken" structure.

He stressed that the lobby will be full of the "spirit of Mr. Park" and that the underground floors will strongly utilize natural shadows and light and be arranged like a "multi-functional" space.

"It's going to be a service for the local people," Menis said. "[I want to] show to them that Jeju is more than landscapes. I think that it's very similar to my island and that this is not just beaches and beer; this is something more. I want to show to visitors that this center can have good interactions with the world and Jeju."

Park talked about his cancer diagnosis during the press conference. Though he sounded calm and composed on social media, he said he felt like "the sky was falling."



Fernando Menis

"There's still so much to do, and I was wondering why I was being punished like this," he said. "But I'm strong. I have a knack at accepting whatever I face. I decided to treat my cancer as a friend and to just live together with it."

Menis said Park will have nothing to worry about, as "we are going to make [him] a house on Jeju forever."

Park has dedicated his career to dansaekhwa since the 1970s. His works are centered on repetition, drawing countless pencil lines on fresh paint that have been brushed onto a canvas, then layering another coat of paint and redoing the process all over again.

He soon called his paintings "Myobeob" in Korean (*myo* means "writing" and *beob* means method) or "Ecriture" in French, meaning "writing."

The basic spirituality of Park's "Ecriture" series lies in the seemingly endlessness of repetition, illustrating minimalism but at the same time, its depth.

His work is largely divided into two eras — pencil myobeob and color myobeob. Over the years Park has used different tools, like *hanji*, or Korean traditional mulberry paper, to add a wider range of hues in contrast to his early colorless pieces.

In 2021, Park was named recipient of the Korean government's Geumgwan (Gold Crown) Order of Cultural Merit, the highest honor among the cultural merit awards, in recognition of his achievements as a kingpin of dansaekhwa.

The same year, nine of his works were sold through Seoul Auction, the nation's largest auction house, for a whopping 777.3 million won (\$596,700).

His works have gained recognition globally as well. For instance, last November, Louis Vuitton collaborated with Park as part of its Artcapucines collection, creating a deep red ecriture surface on one of its handbags.

"What I want from this museum is that every single visitor feels like the lumps in their hearts are healed," Park said. "That's also one of the purposes of why I paint."

Initially, Park had plans to build a museum in his hometown, Yecheon County in North Gyeongsang, but he has "practically given up" on the project because he said there were difficulties building such an artistic venue in a small area of 50,000 people, most of whom are elderly.

Park saved his breath when it came to elaborating on what pieces he is going to display in the museum, but the GIZI Foundation said it will hold educational programs and events to promote Park's artworks to the general public. JW Marriott said that it will be open to everyone, even those who have not made reservations in the resort.

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Park Seo-bo was recently diagnosed with lung cancer

BY SHIN MIN-HEE



SEOGWIPO, Jeju Island — Park Seo-bo, the 91-year-old master of *dansaekhwa*, or Korean monochrome painting, surprised his fans last month by announcing on his Instagram that he was diagnosed with lung cancer.

He wrote it's "not a big deal" and said he wants to use the time he has left to paint.

But there's something else that the artist wants to achieve before he "[leaves] this world," and that is to "build a museum."

"This is such a great location," said Park on Tuesday as he looked around the site where the museum of his dreams — the Park Seo-Bo Art Museum (tentative name) — would be built.

Other art masters, such as Kim Whanki (1913-1974) or Nam June Paik (1932-2006), already have eponymous museums across the country — the Whanki Museum is in Jongno District, central Seoul, while the Nam June Paik Art Center is located in Yongin, Gyeonggi.

The site is on the grounds of the JW Marriott Jeju Resort and Spa in Seogwipo, southern Jeju Island. The resort itself is entering Korea for the first time and is expected to open within the first half of this year. The museum dedicated to the artist is scheduled to be ready for the public in the summer of 2024.

Though the museum will be operated by the GIZI Foundation, a non-profit organization founded by Park to manage and archive his artworks, the plan to build a museum dedicated to the painter was JW Marriott's idea and Park said that the company reached out to him first.



"Ecriture No. 213-85" (1985), one of the earlier works by Park Seo-bo, was auctioned off for 650 million won (\$496,000) during K Auction in June 2022. Left: Aerial views of the Park Seo-Bo Art Museum (tentative title)

On March 14, the GIZI Foundation organized a groundbreaking ceremony for the new museum and released an overview of the space designed by renowned Spanish architect Fernando Menis.

Menis, 71, has designed major sites all over the world including the CCK Jordanki concert hall in Poland and the Burchen Square in Switzerland.

"It's such a special day," Menis said, who was also present for the ceremony. "I am from a small island too [Tenerife, Spain], that is like a twin of this island. I want to explain to you that this is like lasagna: it has many layers. For one side there is the JW Marriott hotel. For another [there is] the people of the island, and the more important [layer] of this lasagna, of course, is Mr. Park Seo-bo."

The building will be made from concrete and basalt from the island,

Menis said, as Jeju is famous for the later. The material will be *Picado*, from the Spanish word for "chipped," a new type of concrete developed by Menis that consists of mixing regular concrete with broken bricks. This material has higher durability and sustainability.

The museum will span across three

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