

PHI



LEE BAE

OPENING PLANNED FOR
February 2021

CURATED BY
Cheryl Sim

The PHI Foundation for Contemporary Art is pleased to present an exhibit by Lee Bae.

Born in South Korea, artist Lee Bae uprooted himself and relocated to Paris in 1989. He believed that immersing himself in a new environment would challenge him to look at himself more objectively. Displacing himself from the familiar surroundings of his home country activated an engagement with memory, which would become his main *matière*. An engagement with memory would elicit in Lee Bae a deeper union with the Self, which ultimately reacquainted the artist with charcoal as a physical, mental, and spiritual extension of memory.

Dissatisfied with the conventional slender sticks typically used in drawing, one day Lee Bae bought a simple bag of charcoal briquettes. Drawing with these compressed lumps of fuel brought him back to the very first time he started painting. He reconnected with the significance of the colour black in Asian civilization—the colour that expresses all colour. He was reminded of the soot-based India ink used in Korean calligraphy and recalled charcoal's use as a purifying agent in Korean homes. Furthermore, he recognized charcoal as a powerful metaphor for the cycle of life and death.

Engaging with the formal and conceptual properties of this ancient matter, Lee Bae creates drawings, paintings, sculpture, and installation. This major solo exhibition, his first in Canada, will feature more than 40 recent works that employ a range of approaches across figuration and abstraction. The exhibition will also feature a large-scale installation that calls attention to the corporeality of his work and its ability to connect us to a soulful place. In this way, the artist offers visitors a moment to quiet the mind at this time of intense turmoil.

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BIOGRAPHY

Lee Bae (b. 1956, Cheongdo, South Korea) has had more than 40 solo exhibitions and numerous group shows in museums and biennials in Europe, Asia, and the United States, including the 2016 Gwangju Biennale. In 2013, he received the National Association Prize of Art Critics (Korea), and in 2019, he was named a Chevalier of France's Order of Arts and Letters. He works and lives between Paris and Seoul.

PHI FOUNDATION FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

Established in 2007 by Phoebe Greenberg, the PHI Foundation for Contemporary Art, formerly known as DHC/ART, is a non-profit organization dedicated to the presentation of contemporary art. Housed in two heritage buildings located in the heart of Old Montréal, its programming has met with critical acclaim both at home and around the world. Each year, the PHI Foundation presents two to three major exhibitions, a series of public events, special collaborative projects and a forward-thinking education program. International in scope yet responsive to the Montréal context, the Foundation's programming is offered free of charge to reinforce its commitment to accessibility, while fostering discussion on how contemporary art is invested with the topics and ideas that reflect and touch our everyday lives.