

The Register-Guard / Eugene, Oregon / May 30, 2013

New York artist has retrospective show

“Light Journey: An Odyssey in Paint,” a retrospective exhibition of New York artist Su Kwak, is open through July 28 at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, 1430 Johnson Lane on the University of Oregon campus.

A reception will be held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Friday at the museum, which is also opening “Living Legacies,” an exhibit of works from Eugene area private collections.

“Light Journey” was organized by the Brauer Museum of Art at Valparaiso University and curated by Jungsil Lee. It will be presented in the museum’s Focus Gallery.

Kwak will lead an artist’s talk at 2 p.m. Saturday.

The exhibition brings together 31 pieces of work that affirm the artist’s distinctive use of light and color to capture her spiritual life.

Kwak’s sculptural canvases visually equate the light that gives definition to objects with an inner light that gives purpose and meaning, according to information about the exhibit.

“Viewers find that they can feel Kwak’s paintings as much as see them with their eyes; surfaces appeal to the sense of touch with their folds, tears, gestures and textures,” says Gregg Hertzlieb, Brauer Museum of Art director and exhibition curator, in the foreword of the exhibition catalog.

“Acrylic paint enhances and encases areas in her pieces, acknowledging the artifice of art but also transforming what we know into something entirely new that engages us with its inventiveness.”

Part of the exhibition includes the series “Beyond Light,” a series of 14 works that correspond to the “14 Stations of the Cross,” the commemoration of the passion and death of Jesus Christ.

Kwak created abstract images of each station using acrylic paint on plaster and paper. Combining paint and paper, sometimes incorporating Bible pages into the work, Kwak uses different overlapping shapes to create a highly sculptural painting.

The installation is meant to be viewed from the right to the left, analogous to written Hebrew.

In addition to their Christian connections, Kwak’s work also references spirituality, East and West, in a more general sense.

Born in Busan, a port city on the southeastern tip of Korea, Kwak grew up near the seashore and the mountains of her native country. She moved to the United States in 1973.

Settling first in Texas, Kwak became involved in an interdenominational church before attending the University of St. Thomas in Houston, where she majored in art.

In 1979, she completed her master’s of fine arts with honors at the University of Chicago, where she developed a semi-abstract landscape style.

Kwak is represented by the June Kelly Gallery in SoHo, New York, and the Sun Gallery in Seoul, Korea.