

Moo Do Art Do

by Perry Araeipour
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"Man must strive to train and develop his basic nature." Hwang Kee, Moo Do Chul Hahk.

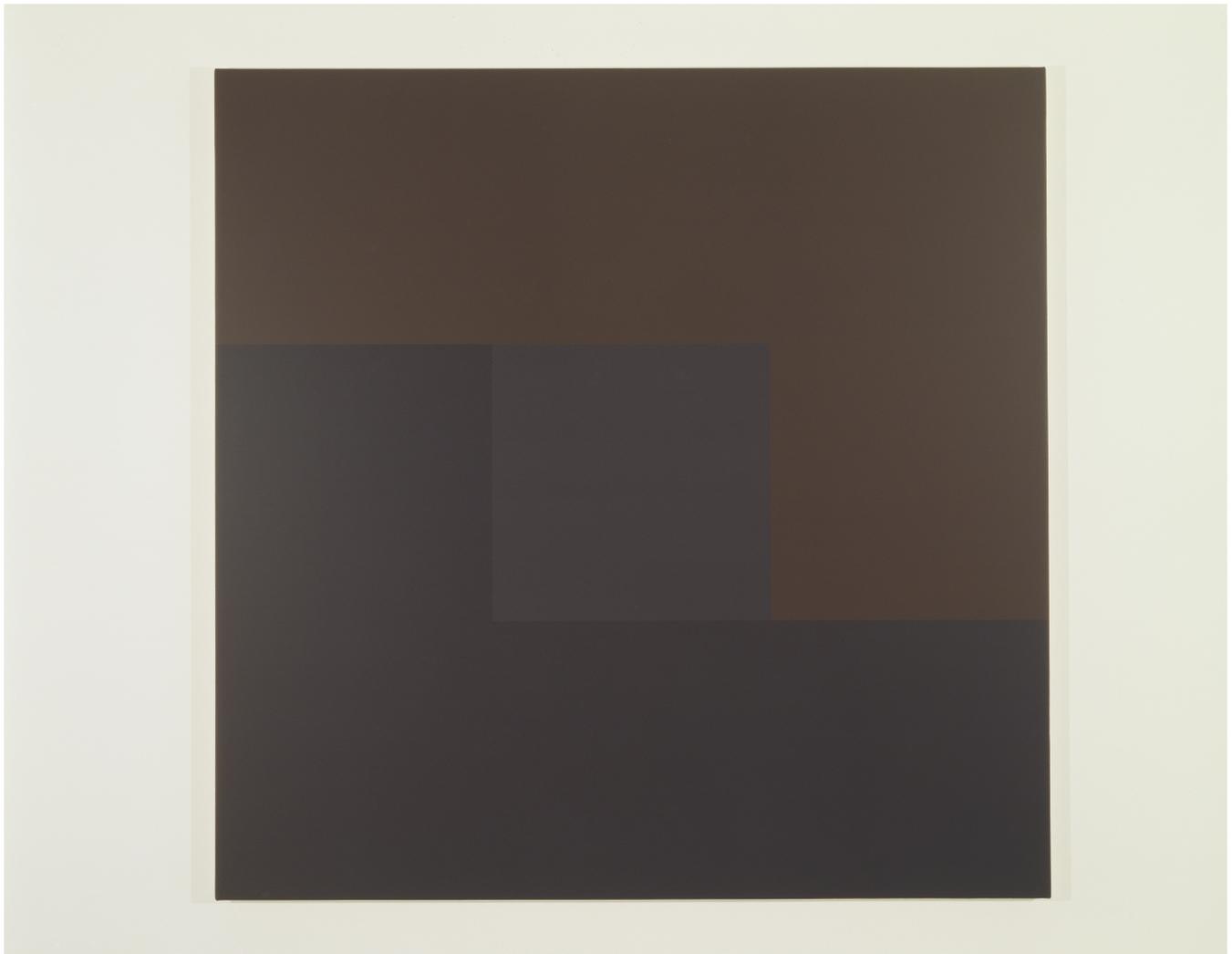
In his book of martial arts philosophy, Moo Duk Kwan Founder Hwang Kee writes about "...ones fundamental nature as endowed by Heaven," as our first nature like an infant arriving into this world being pure and free from presumptions. He states that our "second endowment" as being our habits that we develop thru life. I began to make a correlation with my training in Soo Bahk Do and my pursuit as an abstract painter of fine art. I found my participation in both activities took me on a similar journey to connect to my fundamental nature. As I matured, my art became more reductive. I wanted to express more by using less, causing the least amount of distraction. This attitude prevailed in my training too. I discovered that the ultimate achievement is to expend the least amount of energy while maximizing the effect it had while performing Soo Bahk Do. In this article, I write about some of the martial artists and visual artists who were influential and the effect they had on my ability to connect essential concepts training in Soo Bahk Do and making art.

The Founder expressed his wonder of the universe as he looked to the stars. The martial arts he created provided me structure and discipline and motivated me to pursue my need to understand the things I wondered about too. I began to look inward to explore the same universe. I learned that my outer space is infinite, and that my inner space reflects the same infiniteness. How I use my Shim Gung (intent or spiritual power) is simply how I choose to experience this world of infinite possibilities.

As I matured and began eliminating the unnecessary elements in my paintings, I also began to see the value in eliminating unnecessary movements in my Soo Bahk Do training. I enjoyed greater clarity as I began to develop better awareness though Shim Gung. Kwan Jang Nim H.C. Hwang expressed, "where the mind focus is, is where the ki (energy) will flow." My focus is that I want my paintings to serve as a catalyst that inspires the viewer to begin a personal dialogue between themselves and the painting. This visual dialogue initiates the process of introspection so a viewer can connect to their intrinsic "basic" nature. I want the extrinsic quality of my paintings to reflect nature.

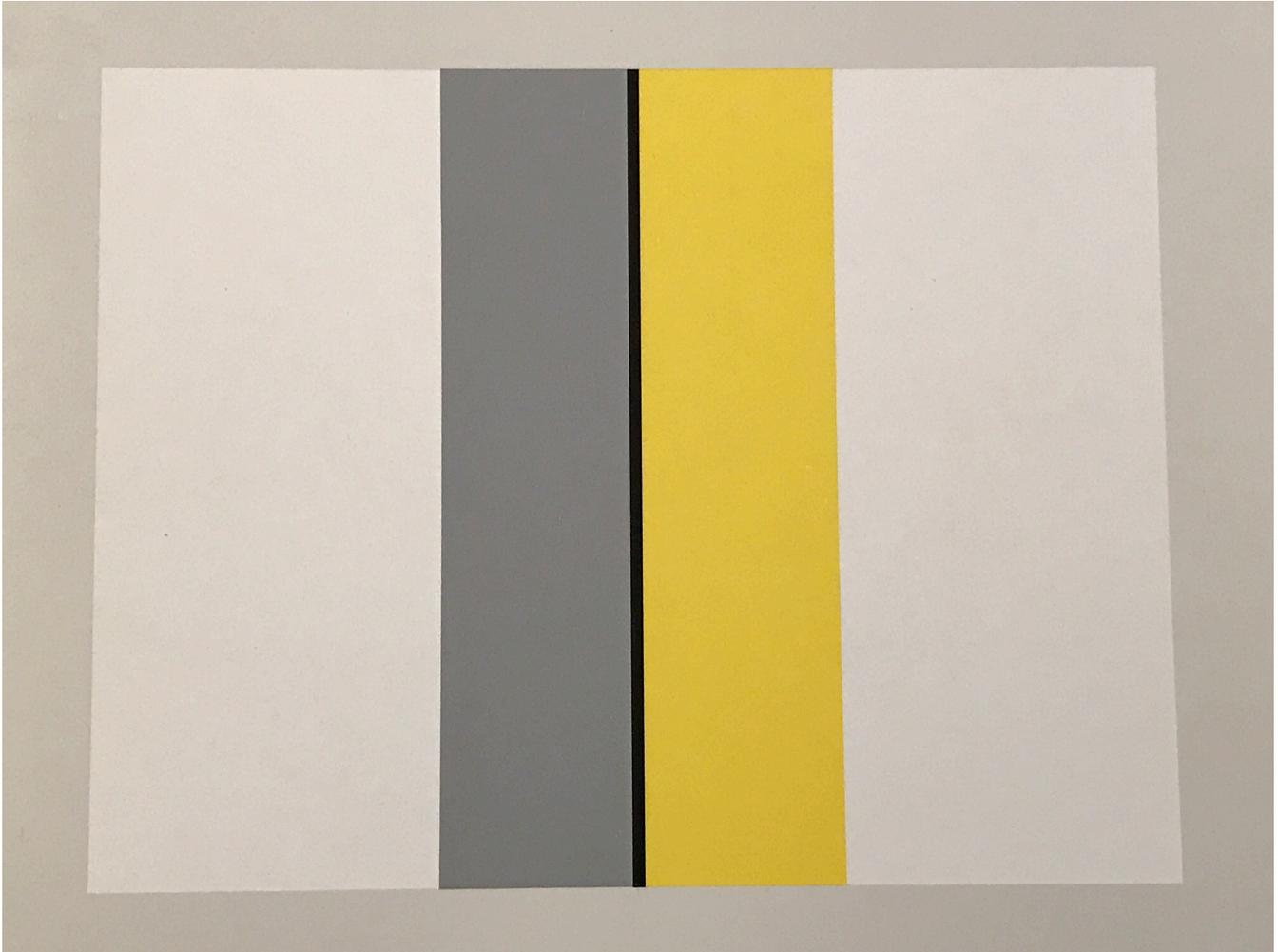
My ultimate hope is for the viewer to arrive at a peaceful and harmonious place. The art of Soo Bahk Do emphasizes a similar experience called Pyung Ahn. Pyung Ahn is an essential feeling during all Soo Bahk Do movement, because the ultimate goal for me as I train is to achieve peace and harmony thru awareness of my connection to nature both intrinsically and extrinsically.

The Song of the Ship Sam Seh (the "Thirteen Influences") is an ancient and influential martial arts document that guides practitioners to realize their full potential in Soo Bahk Do training. It comments "that stillness embodies motion, and motion stillness." It is the space between these two events I refer to as the void where I feel everything is possible. The painting I created in 1988, LA #18, (below) represents a series of paintings I made in 1988 and 1989. They attempt to understand and present this void thru a visual experience. The warm and the cool outer shapes create by design an inner square form. I created this form based on a square to represent the neutral or Do. A place I consider to have infinite possibilities where time and no time coexist. I feel that we are from and will return to the Do, the Mo che, the Mother-Body.



LA #18, Perry Araeipour, 1988, 45x45" Acrylic on raw canvas.

John McLaughlin, an influential California painter, was a pioneer in Minimalism and Hard-Edge painting. He was inspired by eastern philosophy and notion of the void in his work as well. In the Chul Hahk, the Founder describes, "the Do, being neutral gave birth to the Um-Space-Quietness and to the Yang-Time-Action." From Do, "Neutrality" the um-nature, and yang nature are produced. Hwang Kee continues to explore the close connection between science and philosophy as he describes that the mind is "Um," Spine is "Neutrality" and the physical body is "Yang."

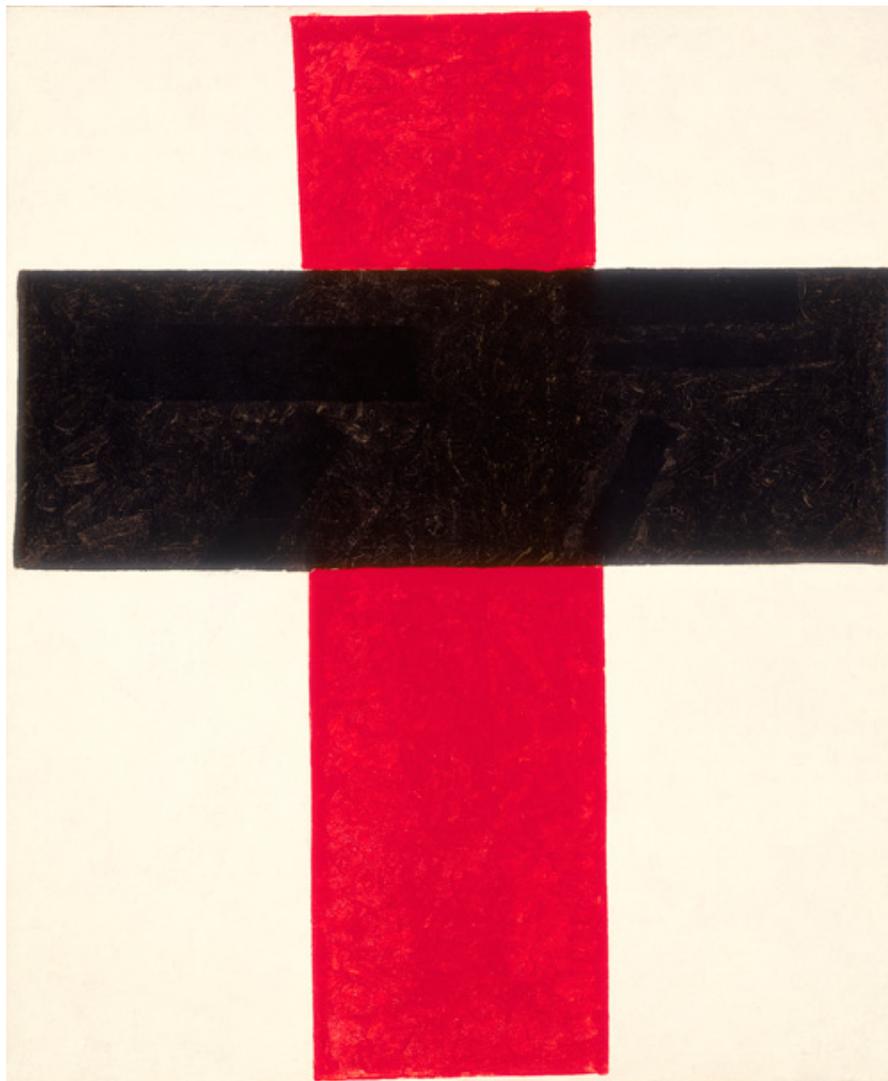


#3, John McLaughlin, 36x48", 1961, oil on canvas.

"Rather than assume that I have discovered a truth, I am much happier merely suggesting that the viewer himself look deeper and deeper into nature." John McLaughlin

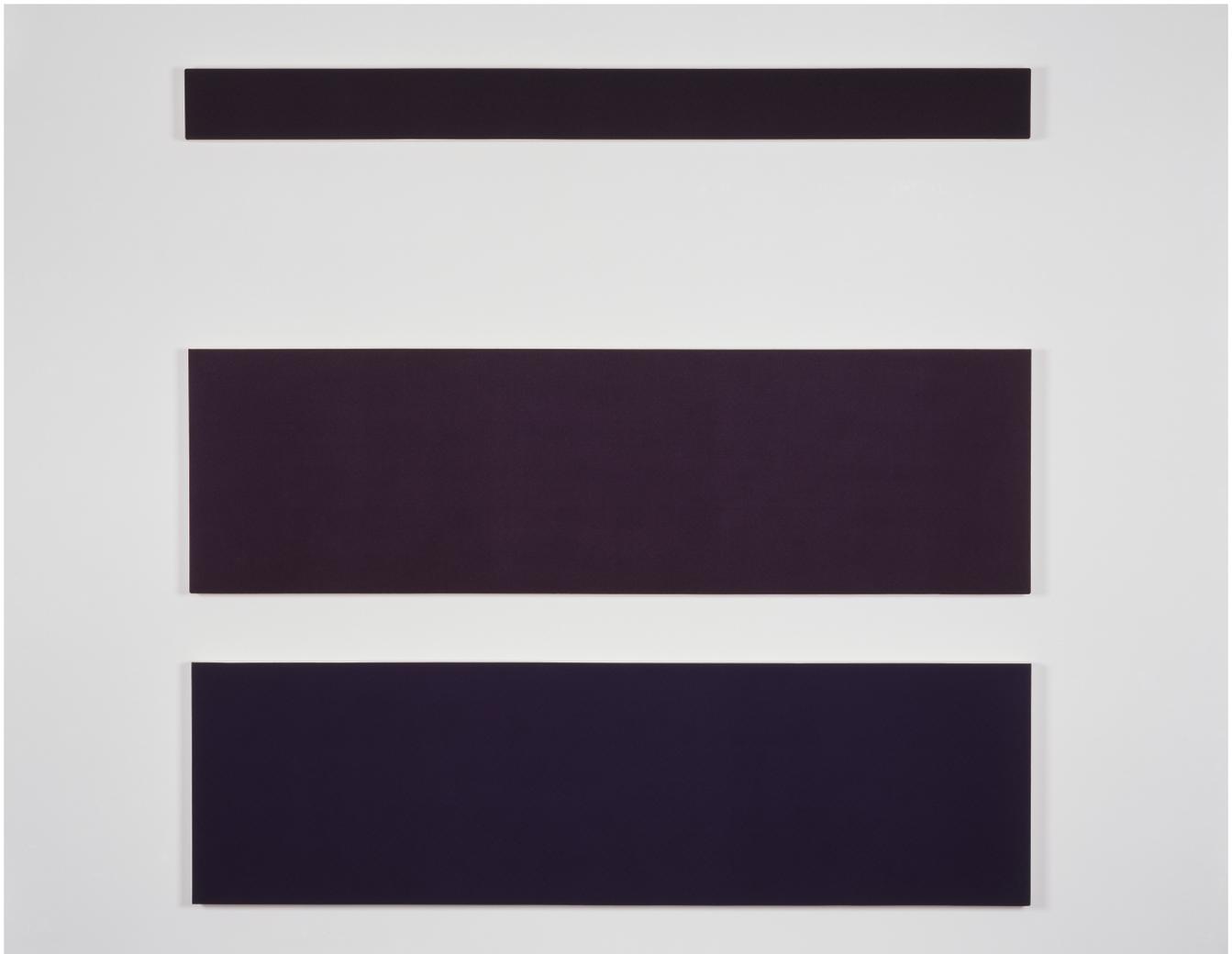
Russian artist Kazimir Malevich was a pioneer of abstraction. He developed a style called Suprematism. It was his intention this art would lead to the "supremacy of pure feeling or perception in the pictorial arts." Malevich's ideas about supreme feeling in painting and art inspired me to translate this idea to my Soo Bahk Do experience. I realized through consistent and intense training especially while performing a hyung I would experience the absence of thought. During this moment I began to understand the idea of a supreme feeling while in this elevated state of consciousness. I transcended the physical experience to a level of awareness where my heightened connection to the art was the supreme experience. I realized that shim gung (spiritual intention) is the motivating force behind both my martial art and fine art activities.

L.J. Seiberlich Sa Bom Nim explains: *Traditionally, martial arts have been described from a Phenomenological perspective – as the nature of the Phenomenon. Like “needle to the sea bottom” or “Crane Spreads Wings.” This doesn’t tell you how to do it, but how it feels to do it.*



Kazimir Malevich, 1921-1927, oil on canvas.

In my painting LA #33 (below), I begin to consider the relation of form and the formless (emphasis) in a work of art. My consideration of form is presented in the three painted canvas's which in the Ship Sam Seh describes as Yu Sung (Tangible Phenomenon). The empty space I created between them are Moo Sung (Intangible Phenomenon). I believe what we don't see is as important as what we do see. I brought unification to this painting by maintaining the appropriate spacing so the outer edges created four equal sides. This is evident in both paintings presented in this article. The square has been the structure I use in all my paintings. I feel this represents the neutral. I later learned reading the Chul Hahk, the Founder, Hwang Kee, writes that the neutrality (Do) serves as a mediating function, positively harmonizing um and yang to produce a new phenomenon beyond the duality.

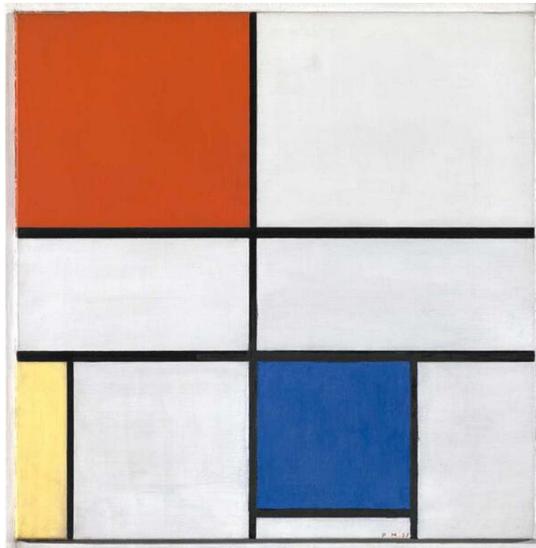


LA #33, Perry Araeipour, 1990, 3 panels, 72x72 overall, acrylic on raw canvas.

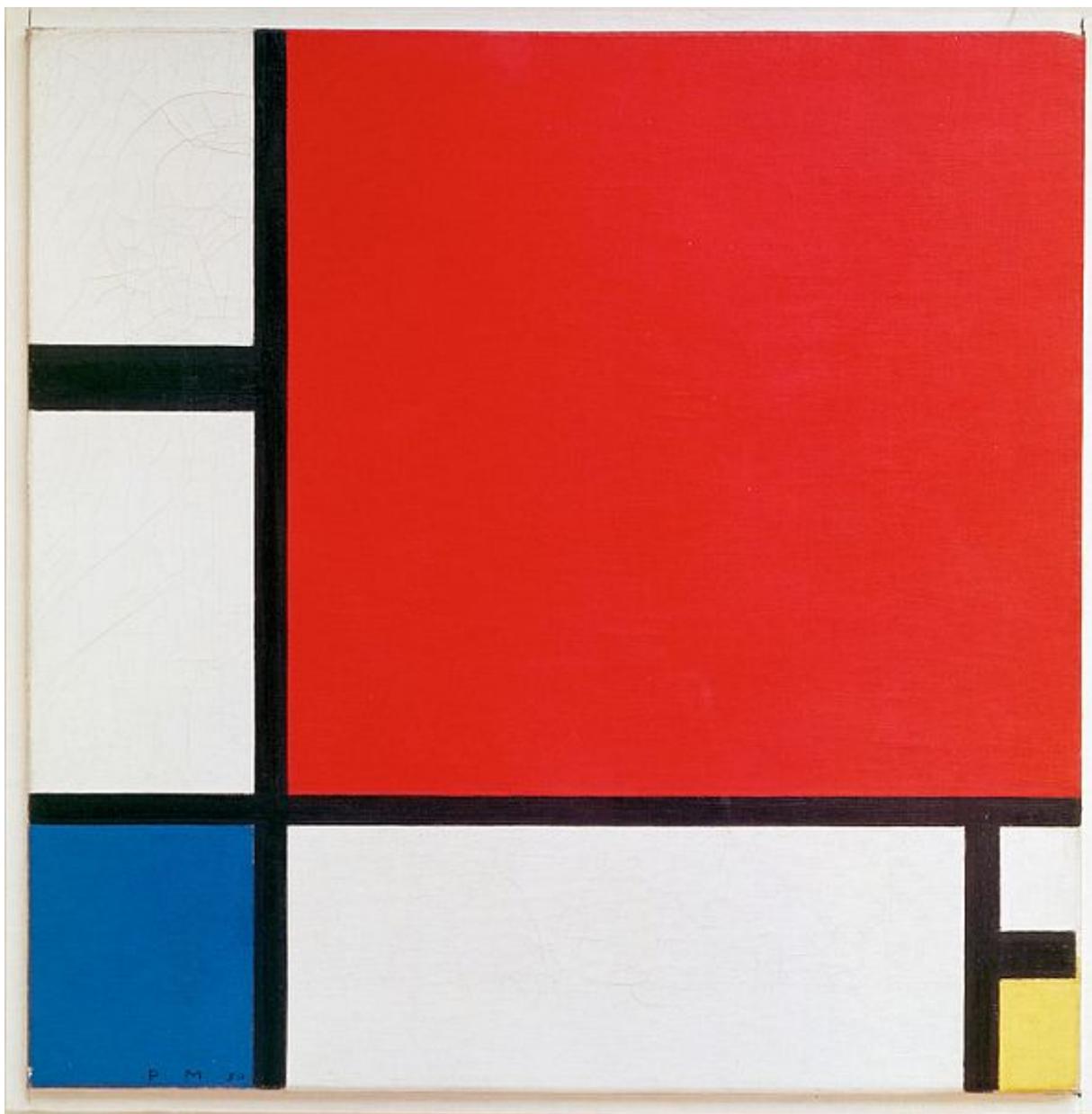
Piet Mondrian used shape and color to create a balanced composition that he called "dynamic equilibrium." Victor Martinov Sa Bom Nim advocated a similar philosophy in training. He felt that movement was a dynamic expression. He taught students to be aware that even if one's balance was disturbed during movement as one moved their mass or "Ja Seh" (literally stance or figure-force) between martial arts stances an experienced martial artist could retain a dynamic form of equilibrium to perform effective Soo Bahk Do technique. He defined four important points to be aware of while training which are mobility, direction, penetration, and power. Through my training I have learned that "dynamic equilibrium" is a fundamental quality of all Moodoin, and in reality, all successful organisms.

Mondrian believed that through pure abstraction by using basic forms and colors he could advocate a utopian ideal of universal harmony in all of the arts. Mondrian and artists in the De Stijl movement believed their vision of modern art would transcend divisions in culture and become a new common language based in the pure primary colors, flatness of forms, and dynamic tension in their art work. Moo Duk Kwan Founder, Hwang Kee advocated harmony and world peace through training in the art of Soo Bahk Do. Hwang Kee established Mission 2000 as a guide to all Moo Duk Kwan members to promote "World peace thru improved human relations."

As the De Stijl artists relied on basic elements found in painting to advocate universal harmony, Kwan Jang Nim H.C. Hwang has advanced the importance of applying the principles that exist in nature as the basis of all Soo Bahk Do movement. Sun Do or the natural way serves as a guide for the martial artist to find their inner peace and advocate for universal harmony.



Composition C, Piet Mondrian, 1920, oil on canvas.



Composition II in Red, Blue and Yellow, Piet Mondrian, oil on canvas, 1930.

"I wish to approach truth as closely as possible, and therefore I abstract everything until I arrive at the fundamental quality of objects." - Piet Mondrian.

Jackson Pollock was a major artist in the Abstract expressionist movement. His contribution to painting was enormous. He developed a unique style of drip paintings. By allowing the paint, to drip from his brush instead of having to make actual contact to the canvas allowed him to move freely and spontaneously while still maintaining control over his process. This should be the aim of martial arts practitioners: to move with grace and ease expressing both the Sun-Sok (Line-Speed) and Sun-Mi (Line-Beauty) inherent in themselves and the motivation of technique.

"The painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through." - Jackson Pollock

As Moodoin's we could also say: Soo Bahk Do has a life of its own, and we try to let that come thru.



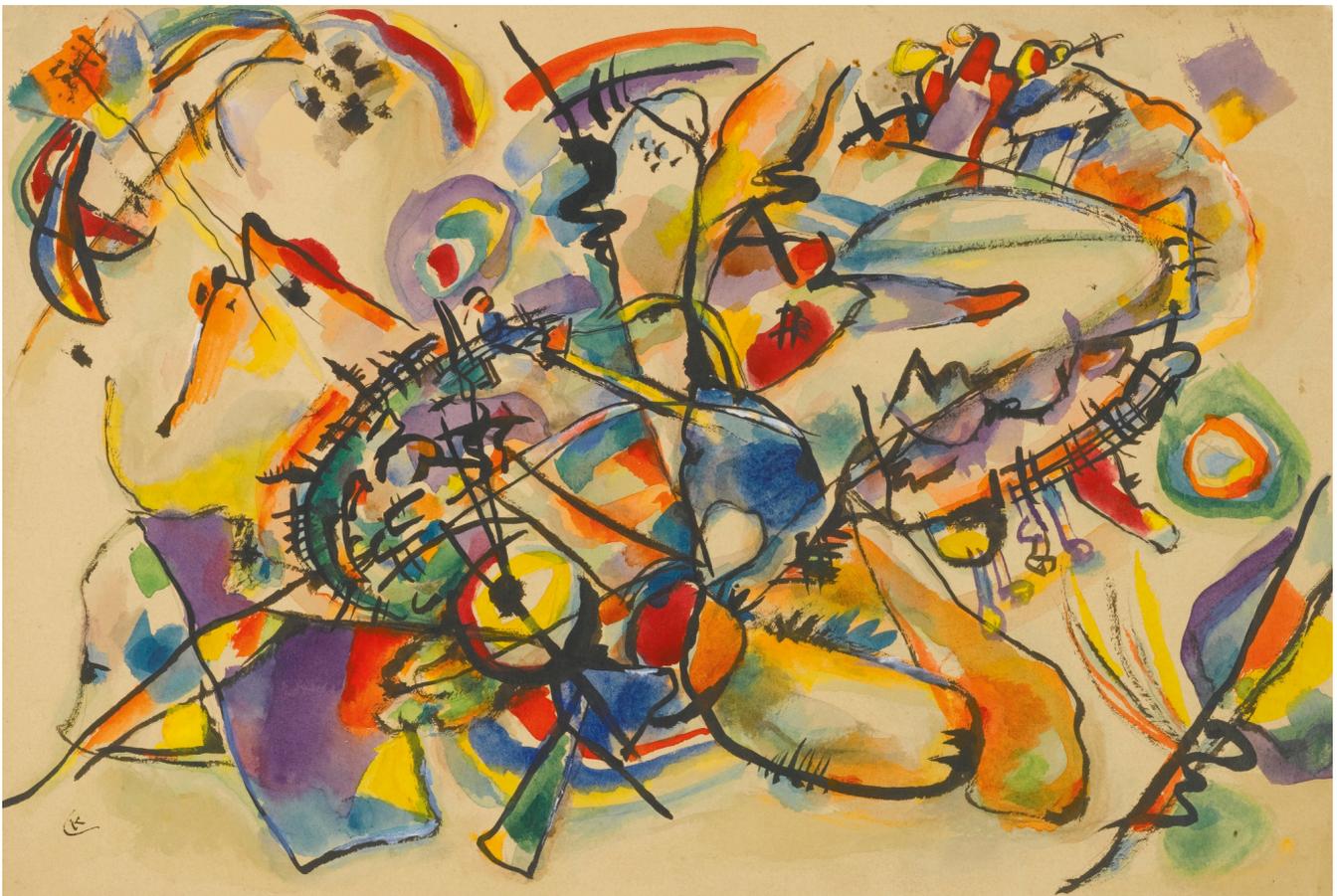
Autumn Rhythm (No. 30) Jackson Pollock, 1950, oil on canvas.



Pollock at work in his studio.

Wassily Kandinsky was a Russian painter and art theorist. He was attributed to painting the first non-objective painting as a visual mode to express "inner necessity." He was greatly influenced by music and felt music was one of the most transcendent forms of non-objective art. Kandinsky felt as musicians through the composition of notes could evoke images in the listeners mind, so could a painter through paint strokes and color on a canvas.

As Hwang Kee looked to the stars and the universe with wonder, he was inspired to create a series of seven Hyungs called the Chil Sung (Seven Stars.) These seven stars represent the Great (little) Bear constellation the Big Dipper. As collective notes in music and combination of paint strokes and color in painting express a universal language, the collective understanding of all seven hyungs serve the martial arts practitioner as a "guiding way" in their Soo Bahk Do training and path in life similar to how the Big Dipper has provided direction to travelers for centuries. As stars, notes and color can have infinite combinations, I can only assume that Hwang Kee perceived his art of Soo Bahk Do as having infinite possibilities.



(Untitled) Wassily Kandinsky, 1916. 9x13 inches, oil on canvas.

"There is no must in art because art is free." - Wassily Kandinsky



Perry Araeipour
Kiyohashi Gallery, Los Angeles, 1992.

We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.
- T. S. Elliot