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| **The White Savages Group** |
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| [Enter an **abstract** for your article] |
| The White Savages Group (Baek-man Heo) was founded in 1930 when Kim Yong-jun (1904-1967) published his manifesto ‘Upon Founding the White Savages Group’ in a major Korean newspaper. Along with Kim Yong-jun, the White Savages Group was organized by Kil Jin-seop (1907-?), Ku Bon-ung (1906-1953), Lee Ma-dong (1906-1980) and Kim Ung-jin (1907-1977), Western-style painters studying in Tokyo. Denouncing both Academic Realism (as represented by official government exhibitions) and proletarian art (which became popular in the late 1920s) the group pursued Purism in art. Although the various members of the group had different styles, they sought to convey the overall sensibility of the new era by embracing post-World War I European art movements, including Dadaism, Futurism, Russian Constructivism, and German Expressionism. In the mid-1930s, the group divided after the formation of the Mok-il Group in 1934, while those remaining were joined in 1936 by various Japanese artists in a new version of the White Savages. This group produced avant-garde art, with an emphasis on geometric abstraction, and became the Association of Free Artists after 1937. The geometric abstraction that they favoured continued to define Korean abstract art after independence was gained in 1945.  After the group split, the majority of the group’s artists (including Kim Yong-jun and Ku Bon-ung) joined the Mok-il Group. Condemning government exhibitions and Academic Realism, they began exhibiting independently and producing works in the style of Cubism, Fauvism, Expressionism, and Symbolism, seeking to express a subjective and sensory ‘oriental spirit.’ At the group’s first exhibition in 1934, for example, Ku Bon-ung presented *Nude* (1934) and *Face* (1934), both works in the style of Fauvism and Surrealism. The group would later change its name to the Mok-si Group, and later to the Western Painting Group, holding five exhibitions from between 1934 and 1939.  Meanwhile, in 1936, the new White Savages Group was formed, including Korean artists Kil Jin-seop and Kim Whan-ki (1913-1974), and Japanese artists Tsurumi Takenaga, Kanno Yui, and Funakoshi Mieko. Most of the members had trained in new artistic styles while attending private institutions like The Imperial Art Institute (Teikoku Bijutsu Gakko), and the Pacific School of Fine Arts (Taiheiyo Bijutsu Gakko), instead of national institutions like Tokyo School of Fine Arts. They held their first three exhibitions in 1936, the first at Kinokuniya Gallery in Ginza, Tokyo. The group members completely boycotted mainstream, government-sanctioned art activities, focusing solely on avant-garde pursuits.  In 1937, the White Savages Group transitioned into the Association of Free Artists. These artists had been primarily presenting works of Geometric Abstraction and Constructivism, starting with the 1932 Nika Exhibition (Nikaten) in Japan. The group held an annual exhibition in Japan, and in 1940, their exhibition held in Seoul Bumin Hall featured works by Kim Whan-ki, Mun Hak-su, Yoo Young-kuk, and Lee Jung-seop (1916-1956). |
| Further reading:  Ki, Hye-gyung. “Study of Mogil Group.” *Korean Modern Art and Visual Culture*. Seoul: Johyeong gyoyuk, 2002.  Kim, Hyun-sook. “Rise and Development of Orientalist Art in Korea.” *Korean Modern Art and Visual Culture*. Seoul: Johyeong gyoyuk, 2002.  Kim, Young-na. “Korean Students in Tokyo in the 1930s.” *Review of Korean Modern Art*. Seoul: Hakgojae, 1992.  -----------------. (2005) “Korean Avant-garde Group in Tokyo in the 1930s.” *20th Century Korean Art*. London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd, 2005. |