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*Ha Chong-Hyun 5975* offers an in-depth exploration of Ha Chong-Hyun's early works, spanning the years 1959 to 1975. It examines how the materials and painting techniques evolved in response to the historical context of South Korea at the time. Amid the turbulence of the mid-20th century, Ha expanded his experiments with diverse materials and materialities, forging a distinctive visual language. His work is driven by a relentless exploration of painting's possibilities, reconfiguring social reality and personal experience while pushing the traditional boundaries of the medium. This exhibition unfolds across four key stages, from 1959, the year he graduated from Hongik University, to 1975, shortly after he embarked on the *Conjunction* series, now recognized as his most definitive body of work.

The first section, "Post-War Devastation and Informel (1959–1965)," focuses on work that reflects the bleak social reality of the postwar years. Through material experimentation—applying thick layers of paint and scorching surfaces—Ha visualized the collective memories of war and the social unrest that followed. These early works became a crucial foundation for his later explorations into materiality and his redefinition of painting's boundaries. The second section, "Urbanization and Geometric Abstraction (1967–1970)," presents works that abstractly reflect the rapid transformations of South Korea's urban landscape during a period of economic

growth and industrialization. Structured forms, bold colors, and repetitive patterns convey the energy and dynamism of newly emerging cityscapes. At the same time, Ha explored the fusion of traditional aesthetics with modern visual language, incorporating elements inspired by Korean *dancheong* patterns and mat-weaving techniques. The 20th century brought sweeping political, social, and economic changes to South Korea, from the Japanese occupation and the Korean War to the country's accelerated industrialization and urbanization. This section spotlights the ways in which the artist's experimental and original artistic language was shaped and evolved within this historical context.

The exhibition continues with the third section, "The Korean Avant Garde Association (AG)—New Art Movements (1969–1975)," which highlights Ha's experimental approaches during his time with AG. The fourth section, "Conjunction—The Back-Pressure Method (1974–1975)," presents early examples from his renowned *Conjunction* series. During this period, Ha pushed beyond the limitations of painting, exploring the boundaries between two-dimensional compositions and three-dimensional experimentation. Refusing to settle into a single methodology, he continuously transformed his practice reflecting the shifting times. Using everyday materials such as burlap sacks, barbed wire, springs, and newspapers, he developed an original artistic approach that

merged the historical moment exemplified by the objects, their material characteristics, and his own physical interventions. The *Conjunction* series, initiated in 1974, shared new aesthetic possibilities as a condensation of his various experiments and material explorations. Ha pioneered a technique in which he used woven burlap sacks as canvases, applied paint to their reverse side, and pressed it through to the front. This innovative method marked a pivotal moment in his career, expanding the possibilities of materiality and expression in contemporary art.

Ha Chong-Hyun's early work was a journey through which he forged his artistic identity at the intersection of tradition and innovation, constantly redefining conventions rather than settling into a fixed form. Beyond reinterpreting traditional aesthetics, he cultivated a distinct visual language that dissolved the boundary between two- and three-dimensionality. His practice was not merely a reflection of his time but an exploration of how tradition clashed with and adapted to a rapidly evolving society. *Ha Chong-Hyun 5975* highlights how the experimental spirit that continues to shape his work today was already deeply embedded in his early practice. We hope this exhibition provides viewers with new perspective on the imprints of time within his art and the narratives embedded in his materials, while also revealing both the historical messages that run through his work and his profound engagement with materiality.

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—New Art Movements  
1969–1975

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Part 4 Conjunction—The Back-Pressure Method  
1974–1975

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Artist Bio

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General Information

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# Part 1: Post-War Devastation and Informel

1959–1965

Born in Japanese-occupied Korea, Ha Chong-Hyun spent his childhood years in Japan before returning to Korea after its liberation. Following a period of refuge during the Korean War, he moved to Seoul for his university studies, ultimately graduating from Hongik University in 1959. When Ha began his artistic career in the late 1950s, his work was influenced by the Informel movement that had emerged in Europe around that time. Informel, characterized by its rejection of rigid artistic frameworks in favor of materiality and spontaneity, resonated with the devastated postwar reality. Ha reinterpreted these ideas within a Korean context, giving visual form to the sentiments of his era. Through experimental techniques—such as scorching a thickly painted ball of thread to create a coarse, textured surface—he evoked the collective memory of social upheaval. This period became a crucial foundation for Ha's later explorations of materials and actions.

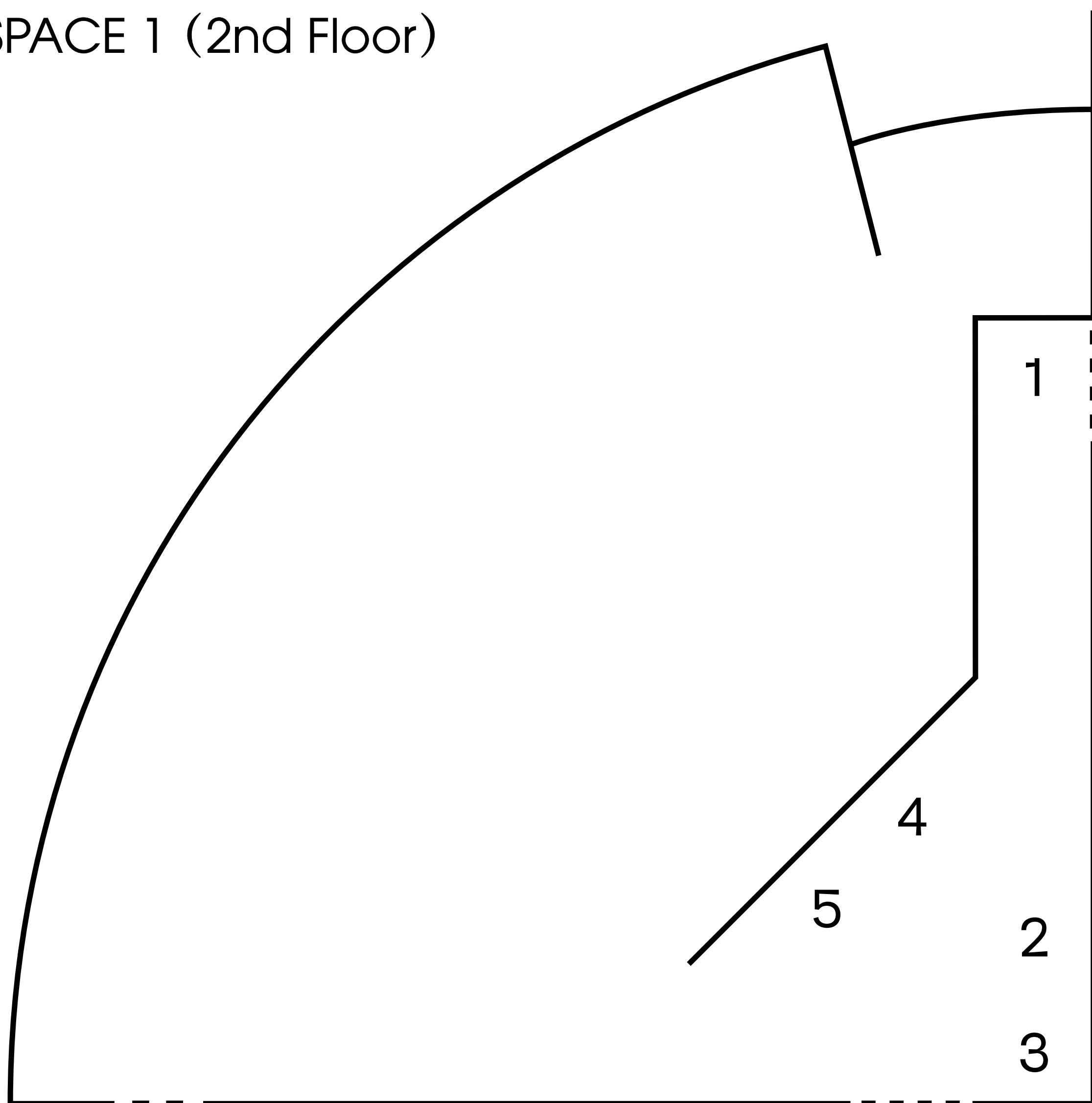
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## SPACE 1 (2nd Floor)



### Part 1: Post-War Devastation and Informel

1. *Self portrait*, 1959, oil on canvas, 63×40 cm.
2. *Amulette-A*, 1965, oil and collage on canvas, 163×113 cm.
3. *Work C*, 1962, oil and collage on canvas, 162×130 cm.
4. *Untitled*, 1965, oil and collage on canvas, 145.5×112 cm. Courtesy of National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea.
5. *Untitled*, 1965, oil and collage on canvas, 145.5×112 cm. Courtesy of National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea.

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## Part 2: Urbanization and Geometric Abstraction

1967–1970

By the late 1960s, Ha Chong-Hyun's work had shifted thematically to focus on the social transformations brought about by rapid urbanization and economic growth. He began creating highly saturated abstract works that stood in stark contrast to his earlier works. Among the most representative pieces from this period are those in his *White Paper on Urban Planning* series, where structured forms serve as abstract depictions of South Korea's fast-paced industrialization and modernization under the Second Five-Year Economic Development Plan (1967–1971). Using bold colors and repeating patterns, Ha captured the formation and evolution of urban landscapes, conveying their energy and dynamism. His series *Naissance*, which was produced around the same time, explored the fusion of traditional aesthetics with a modern visual language. Inspired by the patterns and colors of Korea's traditional *dancheong* designs, he cut canvases into long strips and wove them together, introducing a tactile, sculptural dimension to painting. Ha continued to challenge the fixed nature of the medium, experimenting with unconventional methods such as assembling canvases into cross formations and twisting their lower sections to create three-dimensional effects. These explorations reflected his ongoing pursuit

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## Part 2: Urbanization and Geometric Abstraction

of new modes of expression and an expanded understanding of painting's possibilities. Both the *Naissance* and the *White Paper on Urban Planning* series embody conflicting elements simultaneously: the traditions disappearing as a result of modernization, and the emergence of newly constructed urban structures.

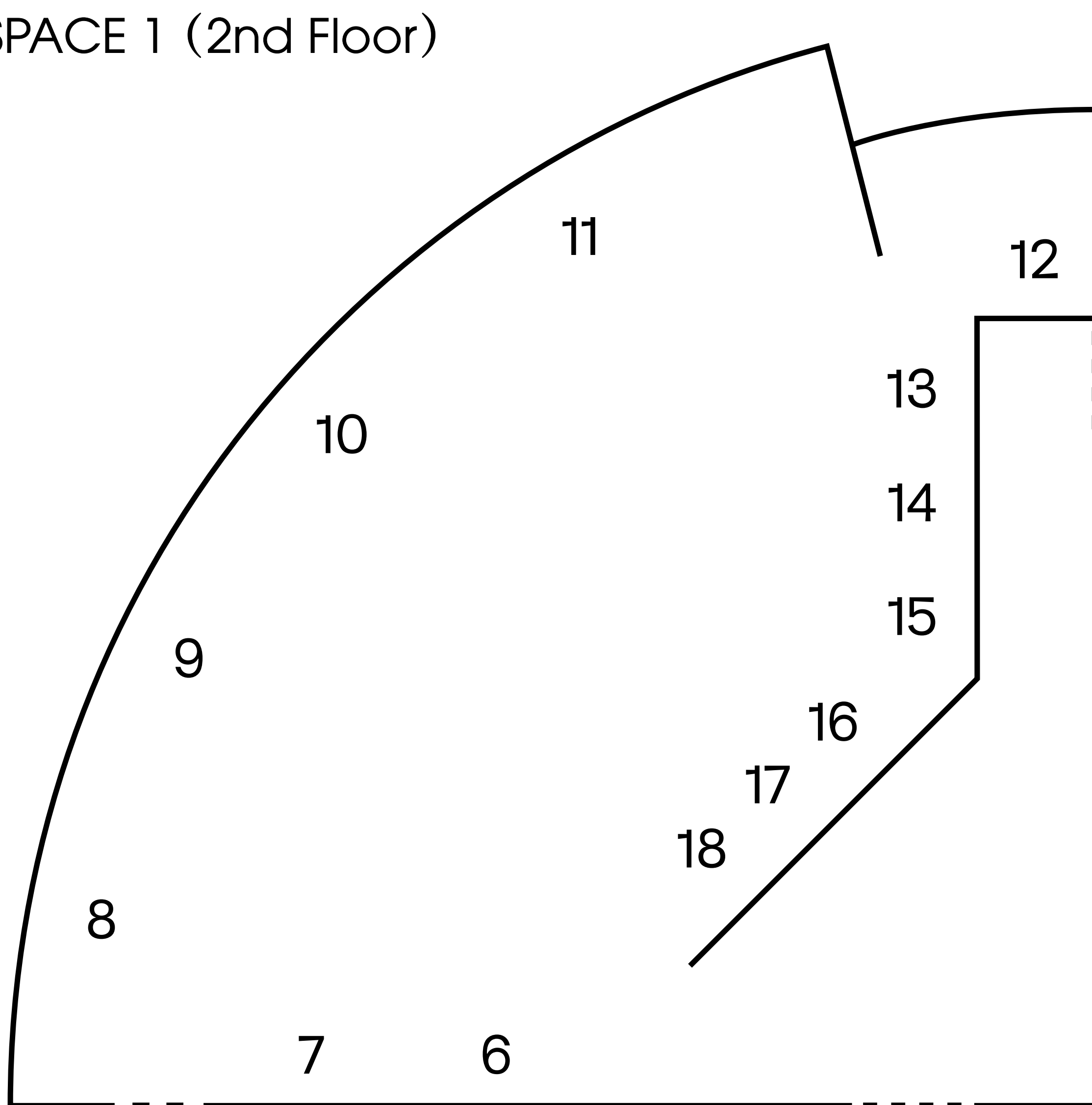
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### Part 2: Urbanization and Geometric Abstraction

6. *Naissance 67*, 1967, oil and collage on canvas, 94×94 cm.
7. *Naissance A*, 1967, oil and collage on canvas, 130×162 cm. Courtesy of National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea.
8. *Naissance 67-C*, 1967, oil and collage on canvas, 161×260 cm. Courtesy of Hongik University Museum.
9. *Naissance-B*, 1967, oil and collage on canvas, 145.5×193.9 cm.
10. *Naissance 67-A, B*, 1967(reproduction in 2000), oil and collage on canvas, 200×300 cm.

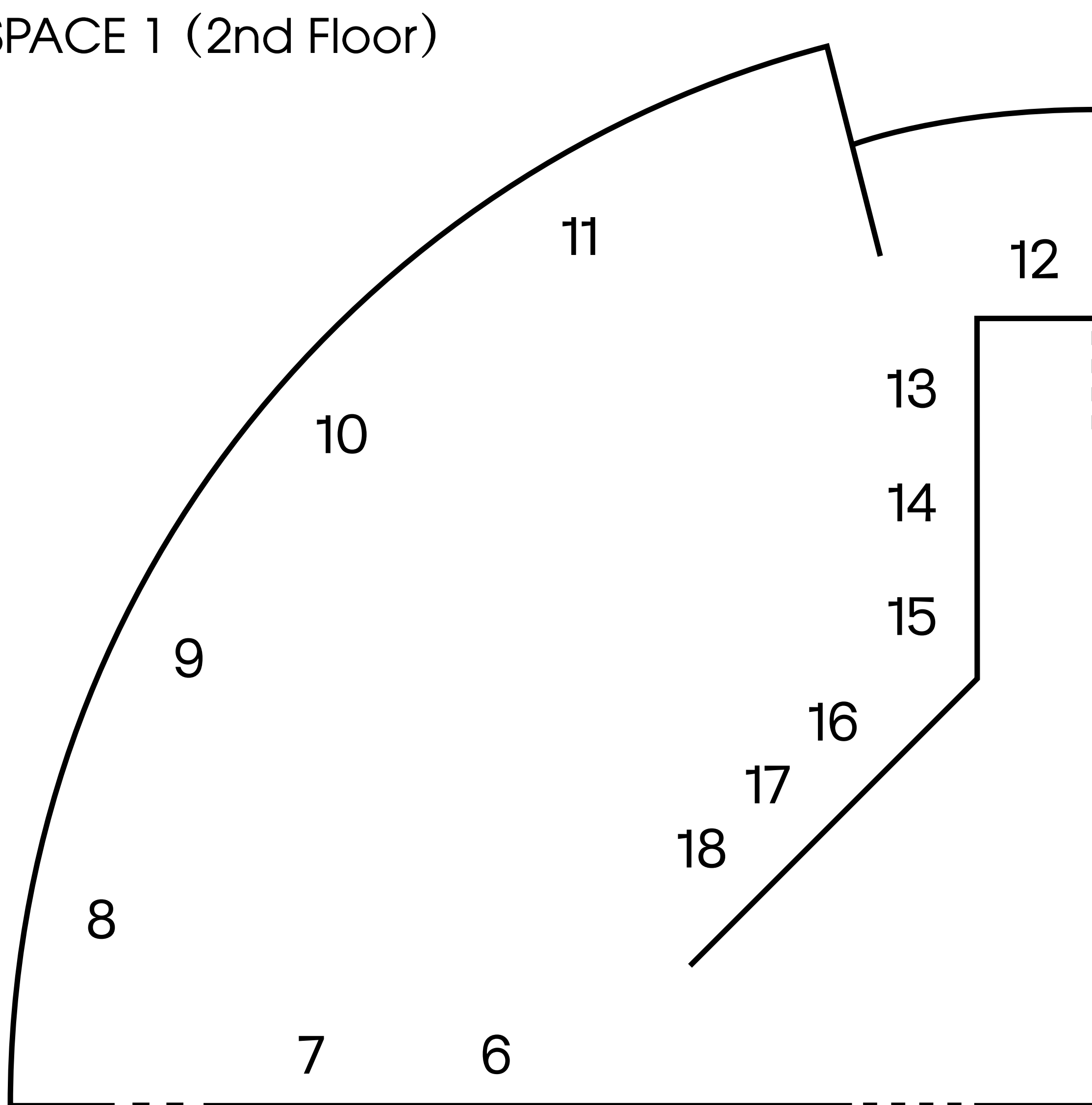
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11. *Naissance 67-1, 2*, 1967(reproduction in 2000), oil and collage on canvas, 200×300 cm.
12. *White Paper on Urban Planning No.1*, 1970, paper-based print and silkscreen, 50.9×34.4 cm. Courtesy of Hongik University Museum.
13. *White Paper on Urban Planning*, 1970, Oil on canvas, 80×80 cm. Courtesy of National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea.
14. *White Paper on Urban Planning No.5*, 1968, oil on canvas, 116×116 cm.
15. *White Paper on Urban Planning No.4*, 1968, oil on canvas, 120.7×120.7 cm.

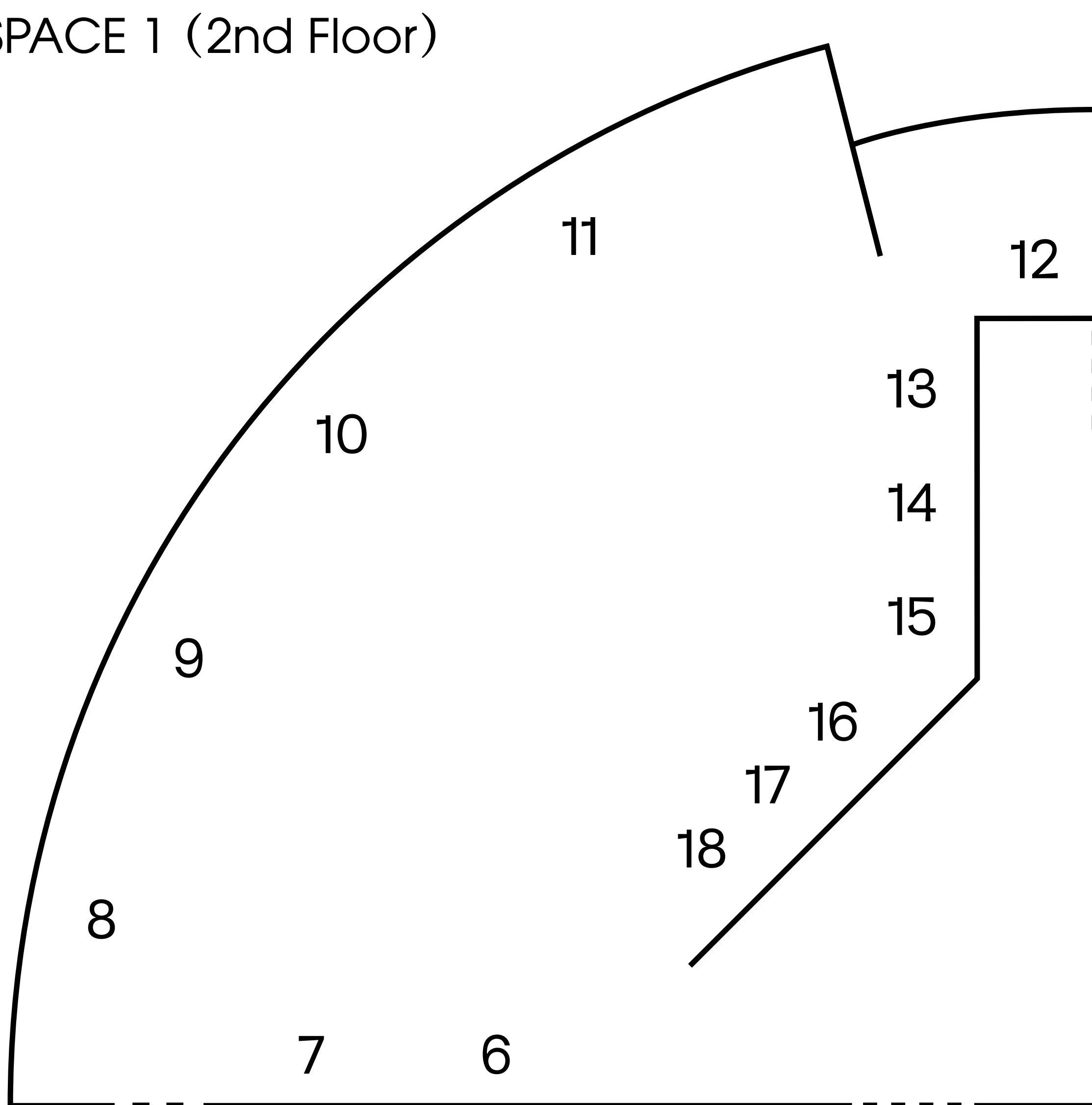
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- 16. *White Paper on Urban Planning 68*, 1968, oil on canvas, 120×120 cm.
- 17. *White Paper on Urban Planning 67-2*, 1967, oil on canvas, 120×120 cm.
- 18. *White Paper on Urban Planning 67*, 1967, oil on canvas, 112×112 cm.

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# The Korean Avant Garde Association

The Korean Avant Garde Association (AG) was founded in 1969 and remained active until 1975, introducing experimental approaches that redefined Korean contemporary art. AG aimed to “Established to contribute to the progress of Korean art and culture by exploring and creating a new plastic order in the visionless Korean art worlds on the basis of strong consciousness towards avant garde art.” (AG Manifesto, 1969). In pursuit of this vision, AG members embraced new forms and media, challenging artistic norms and expanding the possibilities of contemporary art. Comprising twelve artists and theorists, including Lee Yil, Oh Kwangsu, and Kim Inhwan, the association introduced a new direction for the Korean art world through journal publications and exhibition planning.

The four issues of *AG* published between 1969 and 1971, sharing international contemporary art discourse with Korean readers and establishing a theoretical foundation for avant garde art. The journal introduced major figures such as Marcel Duchamp, Lucio Fontana, and Christo, offering translations and critical discussions of their work. By critically examining artistic experimentation, the journal’s theoretical approach played a key role in shaping the identity of avant garde art.

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## The Korean Avant Garde Association

AG organized four exhibitions and the *Seoul Biennale* from 1970 to 1975, AG members deconstructed traditional artistic forms and presented new approaches and methodologies. The first exhibition was *1970 AG: Dynamics of Expansion and Reduction*, which took place in May 1970 at the Korean Information Center Gallery. It was followed by *1971 AG: Reality and Realization* in December 1971 and *1972 AG: Trans Ideal World* in December 1972. The group's final exhibition, held in 1975, featured only four AG members—Ha Chong-Hyun, Kim Han, Shin Hak-Chul, and Lee Kun-Yong. The *Seoul Biennale*, which was organized by AG in 1974, expanded the scope of the exhibition and its work with the participation of various other artists besides the AG members. With its final exhibition in 1975, AG officially concluded its activities, having gained attention for its experimental approach that transcended the constraints of media and introduced new forms of artistic work incorporating everyday materials. These avant garde activities played a critical role in shaping contemporary Korean art, opening up new creative possibilities and challenging existing artistic paradigms.

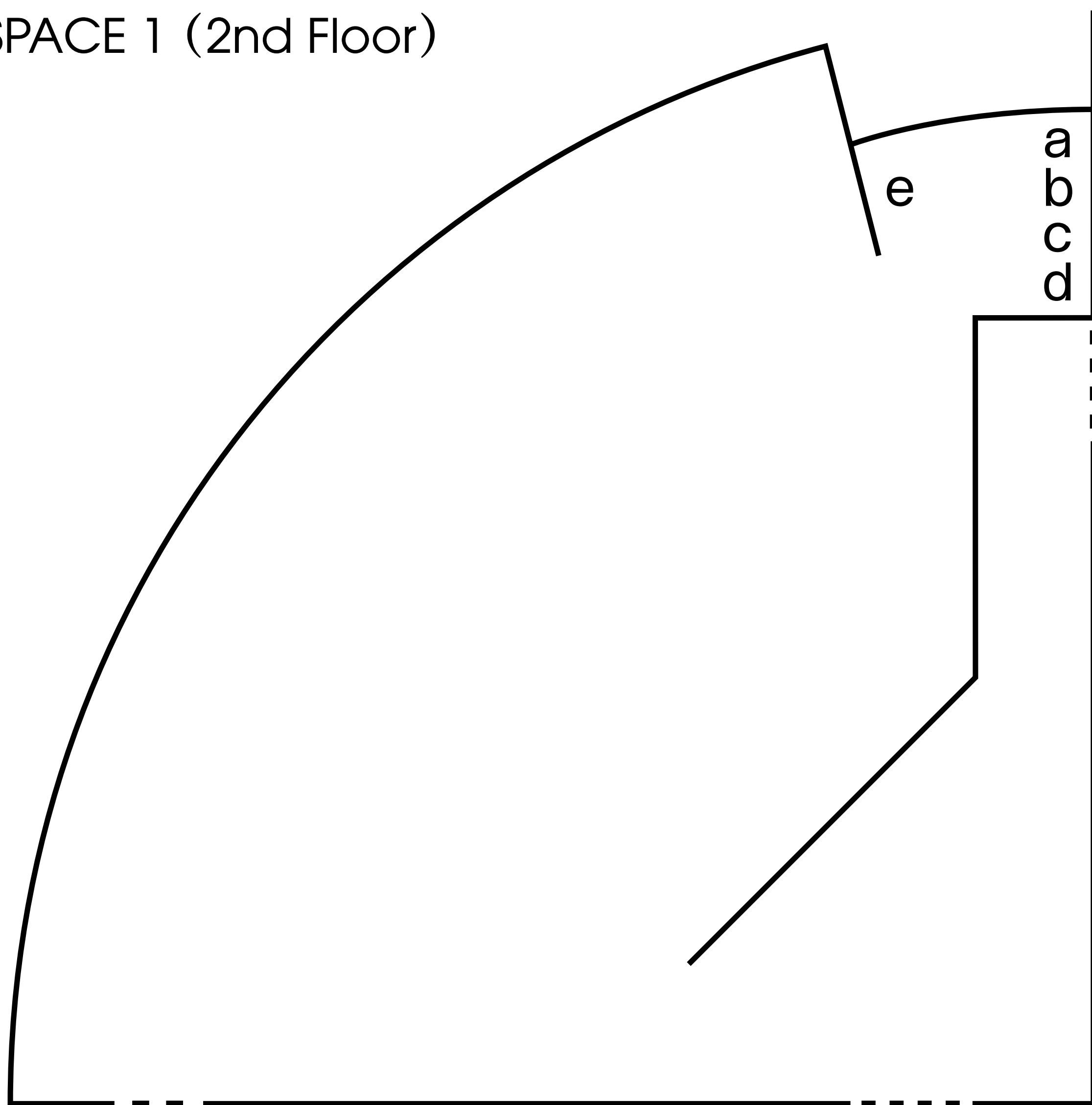
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## The Korean Avant Garde Association

- a. *AG* Vol.1, No.1, 1969, 25×18 cm. Courtesy of Kimdaljin Art Archives and Museum, donated by Kim Samrang.
- b. *AG* No.2, 1970, 25×19 cm. Courtesy of Kimdaljin Art Archives and Museum, donated by Kim Samrang.
- c. *AG* No.3, 1970, 25×19 cm. Courtesy of Kimdaljin Art Archives and Museum, donated by Kim Samrang.
- d. *AG* No.4, 1971, 25×19 cm. Courtesy of Kimdaljin Art Archives and Museum, donated by Kim Samrang.
- e. *71-AG Réaliser et la Réalité* (Dec 6 – 20, 1971, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Gyeongbok Palace) poster, 1971, 84×114 cm. Courtesy of Kimdaljin Art Archives and Museum.

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## Part 3: Korean Avant Garde Association (AG)—New Art Movements

1969–1975

In 1969, Ha Chong-Hyun joined Lee Yil and ten other critics and artists in founding the Korean Avant Garde Association (AG), broadening the scope of his practice through deeper aesthetic and philosophical exchanges. AG provided a platform for artists committed to experimental work and new possibilities in contemporary Korean art, fostering engagement through exhibitions, discussions, and the publication of its journal. During this period, Ha metaphorically addressed the rigid structures of society, media censorship, and political oppression through experimental works that incorporated everyday materials emblematic of Korean society, such as wire, newspaper, toilet paper, cement powder, and springs. By embedding wire into surfaces, crafting and affixing his own springs, and encircling canvases with barbed wire, he introduced three-dimensionality into painting. These inventive techniques reflect his pursuit of expanding the boundaries of pictorial expression and transcending conventional painting frameworks. This exhibition marks the first time since the 1970 AG—AG’s inaugural exhibition—that viewers will be able to see Ha’s mirror installation piece *Work* (1970), which had previously survived only through

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## Part 3: Korean Avant Garde Association (AG)— New Art Movements

archival images and has now been recreated. In this avant garde experiment, multiple mirrors and X-ray images of skull and pelvis interact, creating fluid and shifting relationships between material and image. Another installation, *Counter-Phase* (1971), consists of a pile of censored newspapers—collected by the artist over an extended period—placed beside an identically sized stack of blank, unprinted sheets of paper. This quiet yet powerful juxtaposition serves as a direct response to the media suppression of the time. Ha Chong-Hyun's work during his AG years extended beyond experiments with new materials and forms to stand up against the oppressive realities of the era.

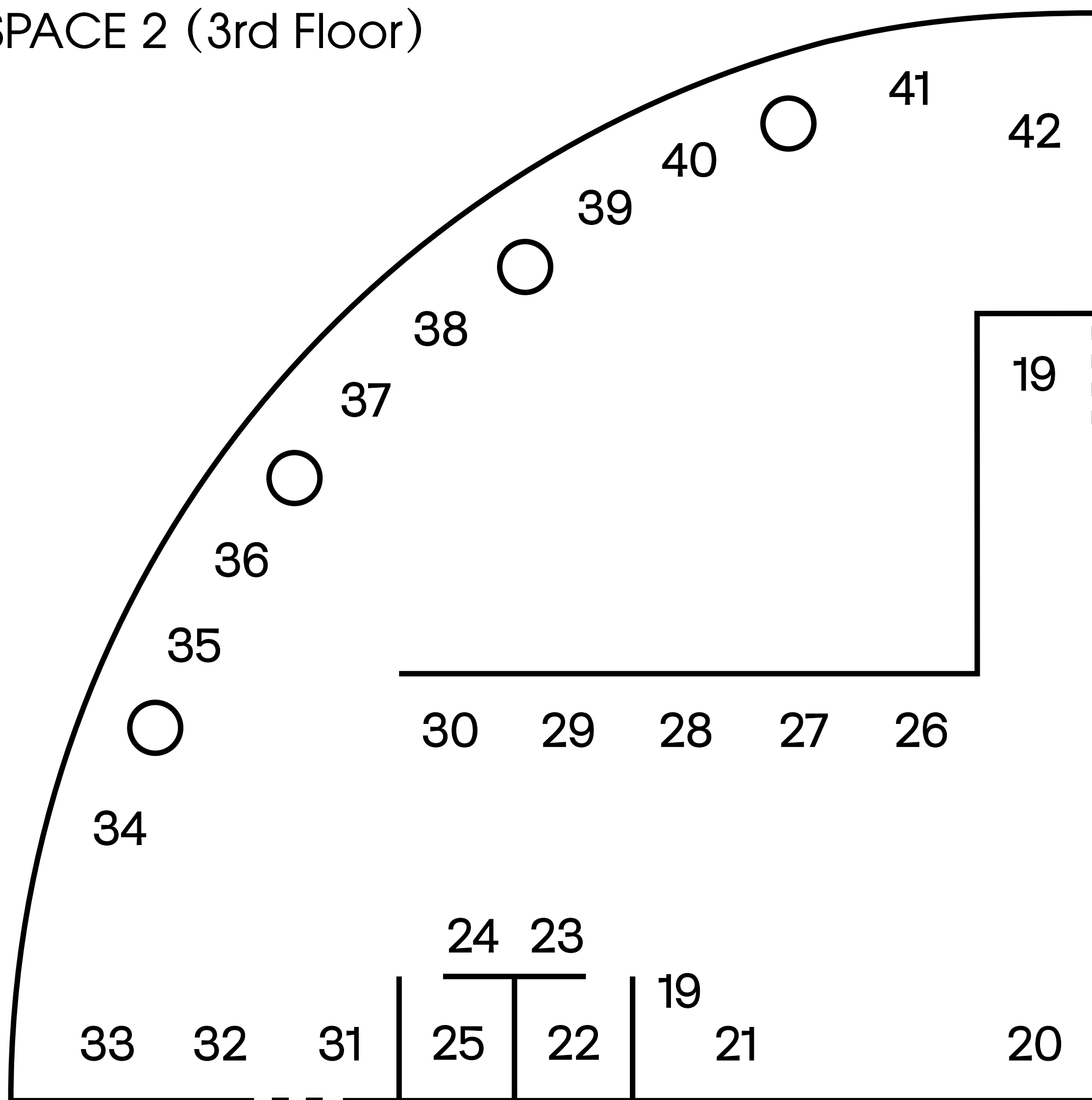
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### Part 3: Korean Avant Garde Association (AG)— New Art Movements

19. *Relation* (1971), installation view at Hongik University, undated, photography on panel, 99×99 cm.  
*Relation* (1971), installation view at Hongik University, 2025, photography on panel, 58.3×70 cm.
20. *Work*, 1970 (reproduction in 2025), mirror, skull and pelvis X-rays, mixed media, dimensions variable.
21. Installation view of *Counter-Phase* (1971), undated, photography on panel, 91×85 cm.  
*Counter-Phase*, 1971 (reproduction in 2012), newspaper, paper, 91.5 x 111.5×80 cm.

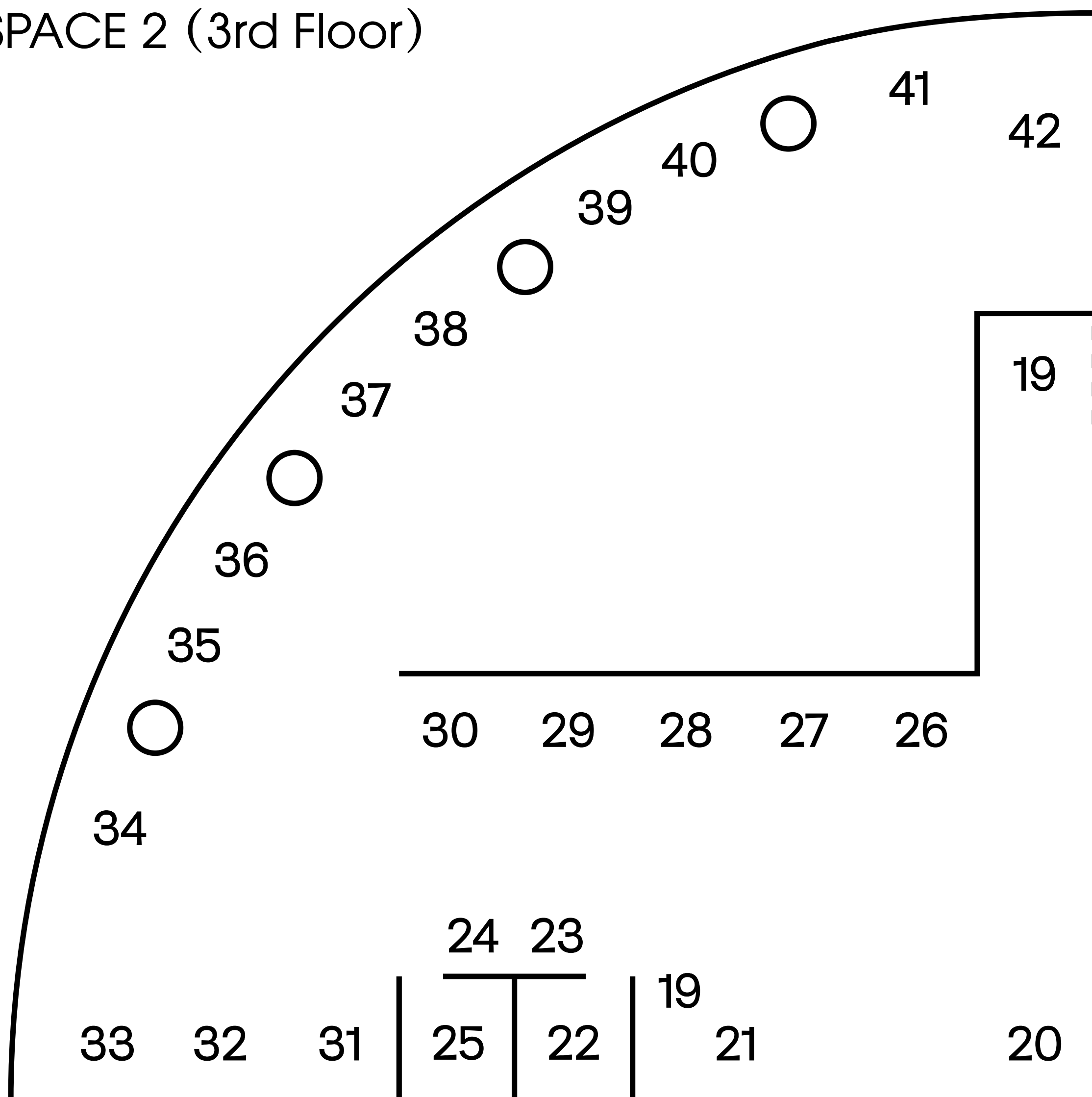
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22. *Relation 72-11* (1972), installation view at Tokyo Gin Gallery (March 6–12, 1972), 2025, photography on panel, 50×41.6 cm.  
*Relation 72-11*, 1972(reproduction in 2025), square timber, rope, dimensions variable.
23. *Work 72-A1*, 1972, oil on panel, 60×60 cm.
24. *Work 72-B1*, 1972, oil on panel, 60×60 cm.
25. *Relation 72-9* (1972), installation view at Tokyo Gin Gallery (March 6–12, 1972), 2025, photography on panel, 50×41.6 cm.  
*Relation 72-9*, 1972 (reproduction in 2025), square timber, rope, dimensions variable.

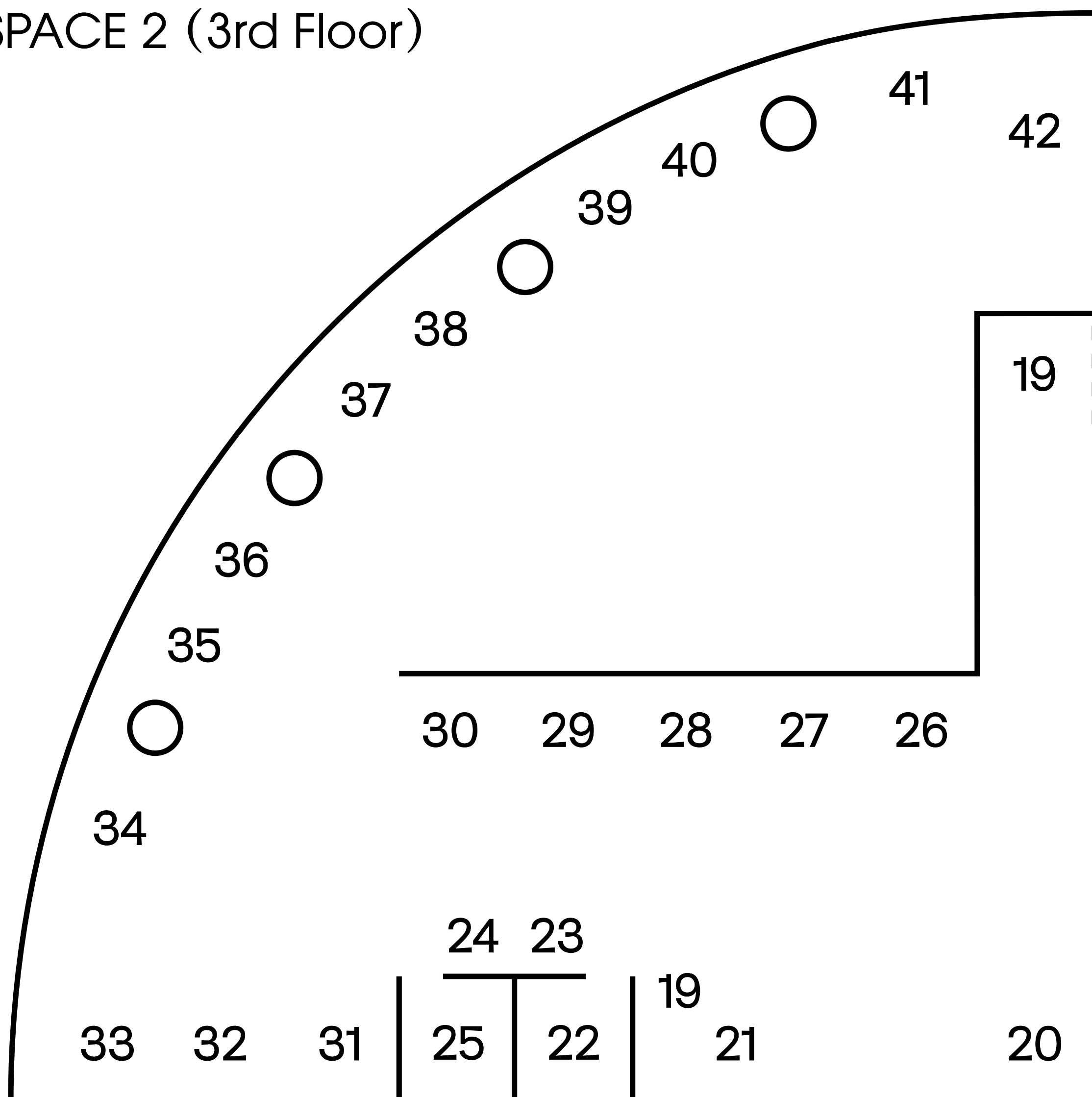
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26. *Untitled 72-3(A)*, 1972, spring on panel, 74×150 cm.
27. *Untitled 72-3(B)*, 1972, spring on panel, 74×150 cm.
28. *Untitled 72*, 1973, spring on panel, 74×68×15 cm.  
Courtesy of National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea.
29. *Work 73*, 1973, metal springs on canvas, 45.5×53 cm.
30. *Work 73*, 1973, barbed wire on panel, 60×60 cm.
31. Installation view of *Work 72-7* (1972), undated, photography on panel, 61×116 cm.  
*Work 72-7*, 1972 (reproduction in 2025), toilet paper, dimensions variable.
32. Installation view of *Work 72-7* (1972), undated, photography on panel, 115×81 cm.

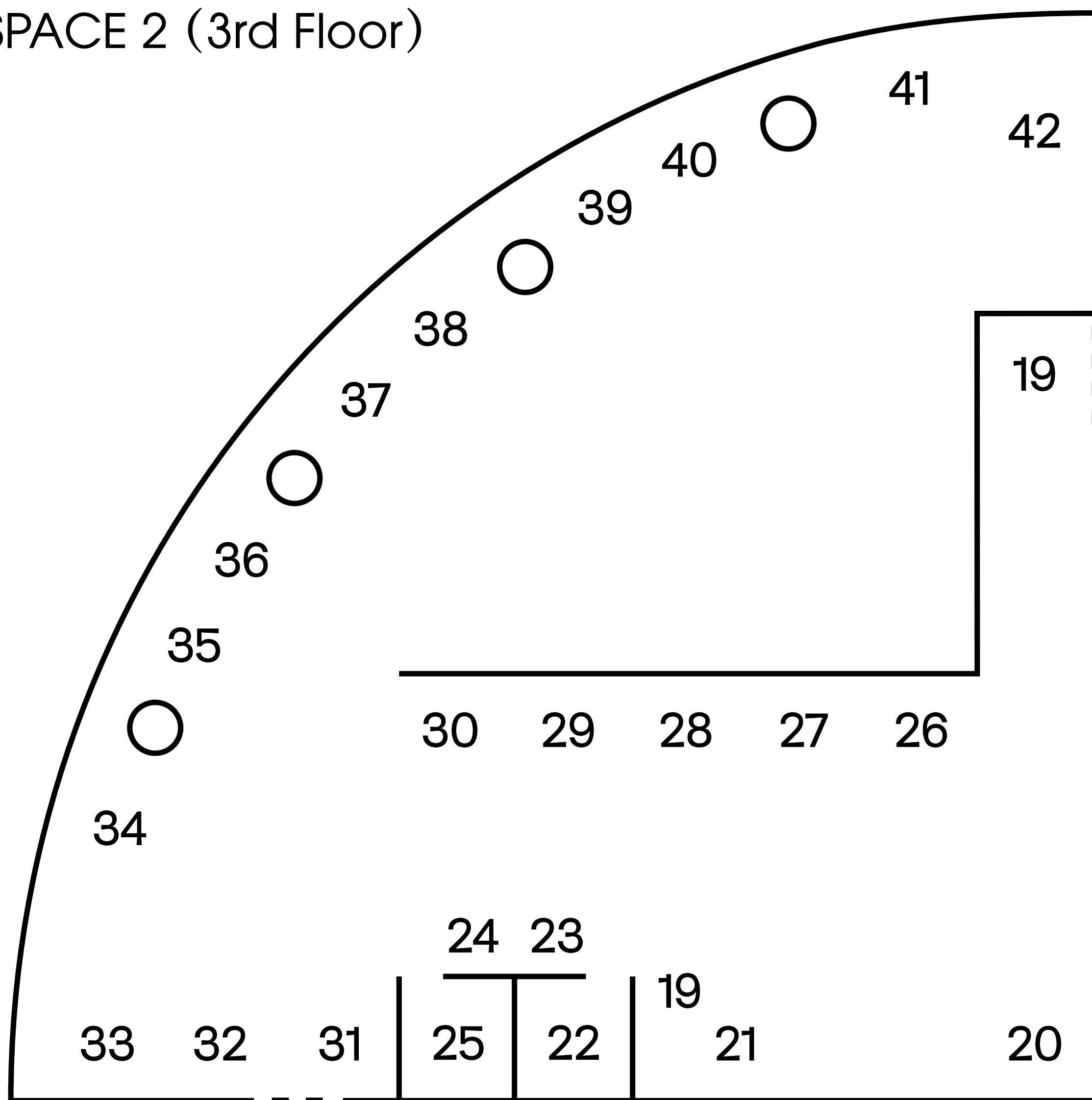
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33. *Relation 72-1*, 1972 (reproduction in 2025), wood, rope, 50×181×29 cm.
34. *Work 72(B)*, 1972, barbed wire on panel, 121.5×121.5 cm. Courtesy of Seoul Museum of Art.
35. *Untitled 72(A)*, 1972, barbed wire on panel, 120×240 cm. Courtesy of National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea.
36. *Untitled 72-C*, 1972 (reproduction in 1996), barbed wire on panel, 122×244 cm.
37. *Work 72-5(B)*, 1972 (reproduction in 2010), barbed wire on panel, 182×273 cm.

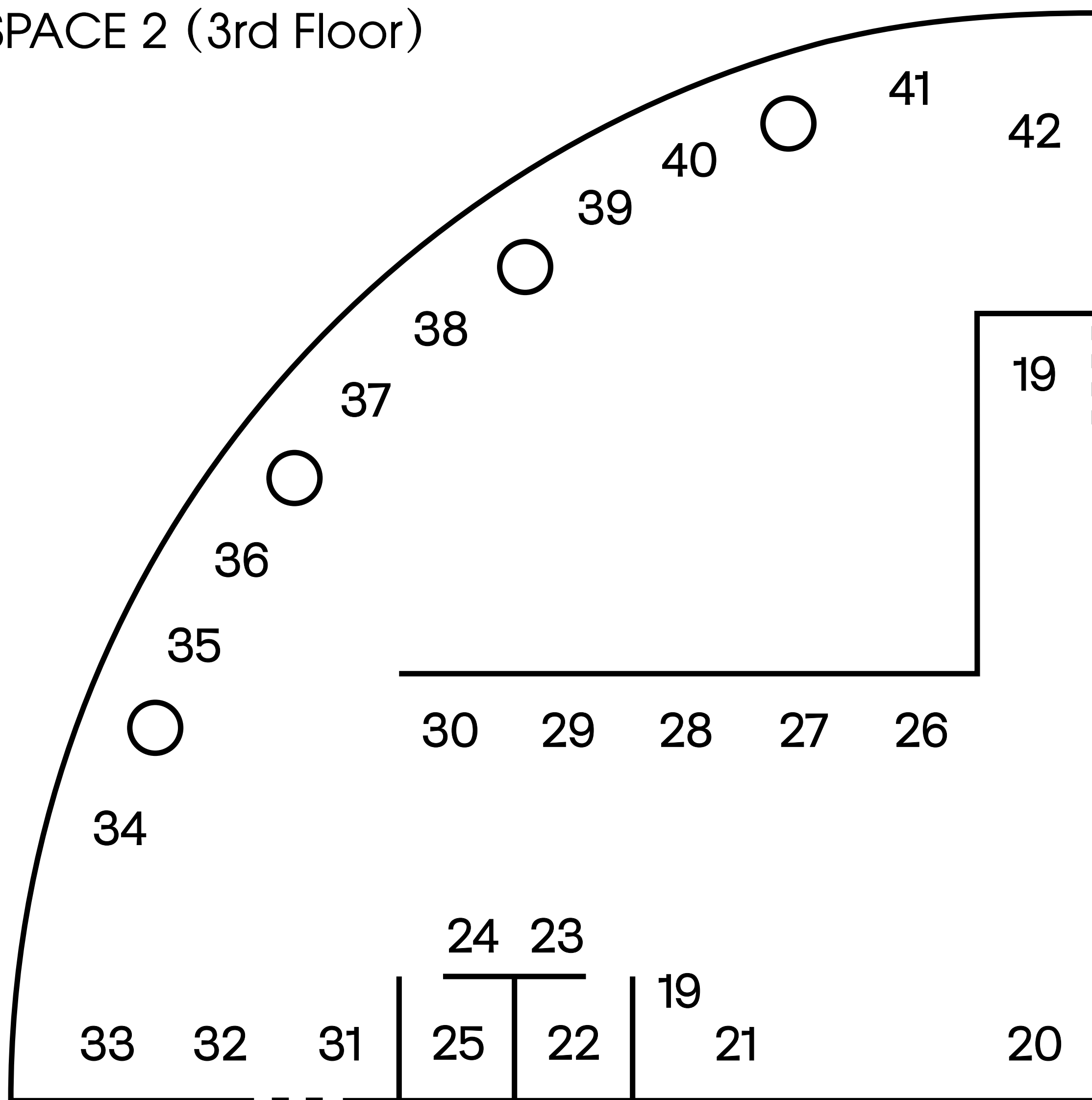
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38. *Work 72-5(A)*, 1972 (reproduction in 2010),  
barbed wire on panel, 182×273 cm.
39. *Untitled 73-1*, 1973, spring on panel, 122×244 cm.  
Courtesy of National Museum of Modern and  
Contemporary Art, Korea.
40. *Untitled 73-2*, 1973, spring on panel, 122×245 cm.  
Courtesy of National Museum of Modern and  
Contemporary Art, Korea.
41. *Work 73-2*, 1973–2000, spring on panel,  
124.5×247 cm.
42. *Work 73-15(A)*, 1973, barbed wire on panel,  
115×115 cm.

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## **Part 4: Conjunction** **—The Back-Pressure Method**

1974–1975

In 1974, Ha Chong-Hyun began his *Conjunction* series, emerging from the question of how the effects achieved through his three-dimensional experiments could be transferred onto a two-dimensional surface. As part of his exploration of painting's flatness, he devised the "back-pressure method" (*baeapbeop*), a technique that involved applying oil paint to the reverse side of a loosely woven burlap sack and pressing it through using a large wooden scoop or similar tool. This distinctive approach is defined by its reversal of the conventional painting process, as the final image on the front surface is shaped by actions initiated from the back. The vivid textures formed as paint permeates the burlap transcend mere visual effect, embodying the seamless interplay between the artist's physical gestures and the material's intrinsic properties. Since 2010, the *Conjunction* series has evolved into *Post-Conjunction*, a new body of work that builds upon Ha's foundational techniques and remains a defining part of his oeuvre today. While carrying forward the techniques and spirit of his early work, *Post-Conjunction* introduces a reinterpreted aesthetic language within a contemporary context, reaffirming that Ha Chong-Hyun's experimental spirit remains as vital as ever.

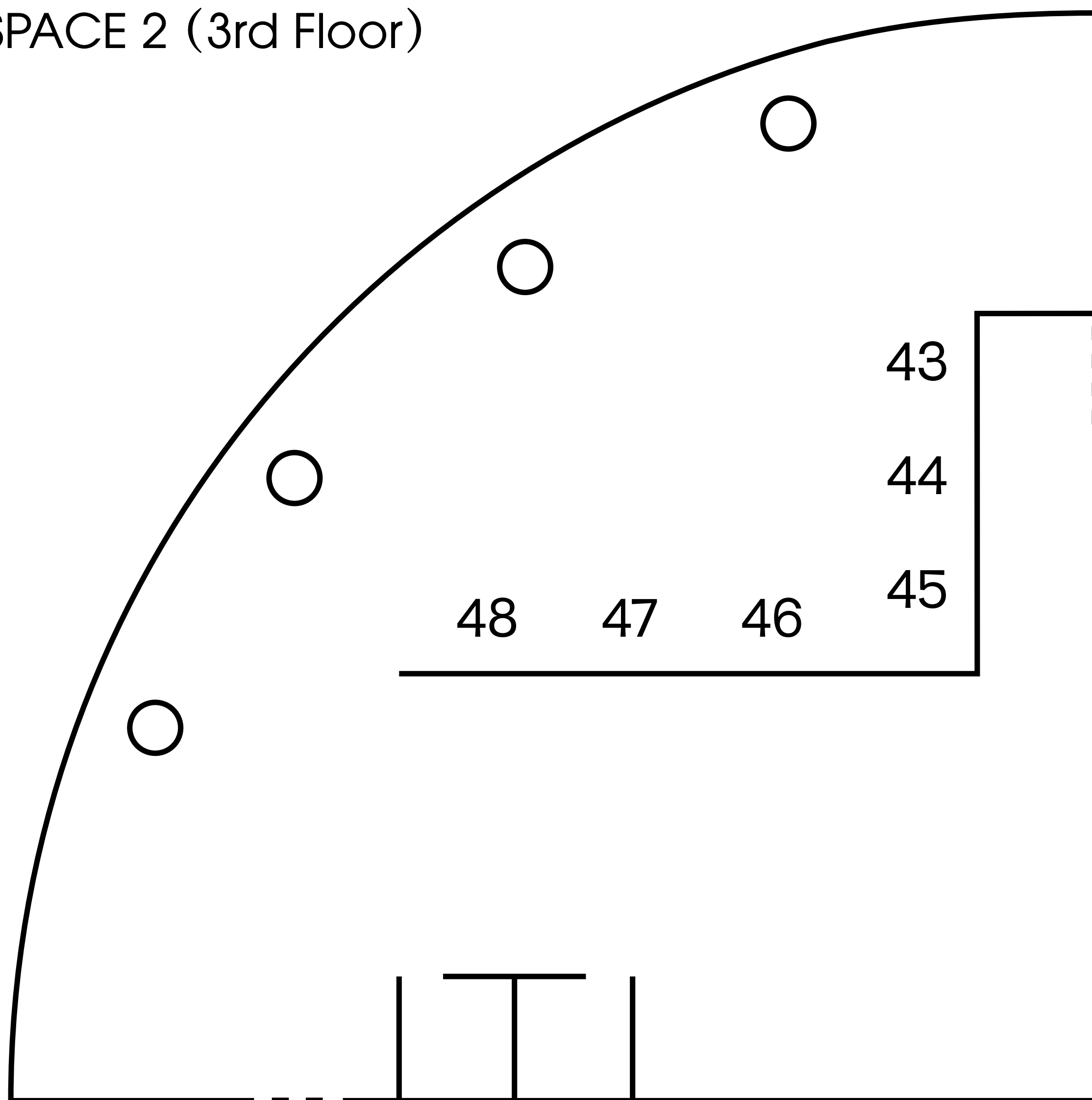
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### Part 4: Conjunction—The Back-Pressure Method

43. *Work 74-A*, 1974, oil on hemp cloth, 99.5×79.4 cm. Courtesy of Hongik University Museum.
44. *Conjunction 74-17*, 1974, oil on hemp cloth, 80×100 cm. Courtesy of Kukje Gallery.
45. *Conjunction 74-24*, 1974, oil on hemp cloth, 200×100 cm. Courtesy of Kukje Gallery.
46. *Conjunction 74-98*, 1974, oil on hemp cloth, 225×97 cm. Courtesy of National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea.
47. *Conjunction*, 1974, oil on paper, 120×172 cm. Courtesy of Leeum Museum of Art.
48. *Conjunction 75-1*, 1975, oil on hemp cloth, 170×245 cm. Courtesy of Leeum Museum of Art.

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# Ha Chong-Hyun

b. 1935

A 1959 graduate of the painting department at Hongik University, Ha Chong-Hyun served as dean of the university's College of Fine Arts from 1990 to 1994 and director of the Seoul Museum of Art from 2001 to 2006. Through his ongoing experiments in materials and materiality, he developed a unique painting style characterized by pushing thickly applied paint through the back of the canvas and leaving traces through sweeping and scraping gestures. Since the 2010s, he has continued to expand on his early experimental spirit by incorporating new materials such as various colors, mirrors, and fabrics. His work has been shown through various solo exhibitions at galleries in major cities such as New York, London, and Paris. He has also had notable solo exhibitions at the Daejeon Museum of Art (2020); the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (2012); Gana Art Center (2008); and the Gyeongnam Art Museum (2004). His work has been featured at group exhibitions at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2023); Denver Art Museum (2023); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2019);

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Yuz Museum Shanghai (2017); Brooklyn Museum (2017); National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (2012); Prague Biennale (2009) among others. His works are also part of the collections of esteemed art institutions, including Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo; Centre Pompidou, Paris; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea; and the Leeum Museum of Art.

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## Opening Hours

Tuesday–Sunday, noon–7 p.m. (closed Mondays)

## Admission

10,000 KRW (25–64 years) / 7,000 KRW (19–24 years, over 65 years, Art Pass cardholders) / 5,000 KRW (9–18 years) / Free (8 and under, Visitors with Disabilities, ICOM/CIMAM/SCM cardholders)

## Docent guided Tour

Every Tuesday to Friday, Sunday at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Every Saturday at 2 p.m., 3 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Duration: 40 minutes

Bookings can be made on-site.

\* Please note that Docent-guided Tour is only available in Korean.

## Associated Lecture

*Ha Chong-Hyun: An Enduring Spirit of Experimentation*

Dates: Saturday, March 22, 2025 at 14:00

Venue: Art Hall, Art Sonje Center

Lecturer: Kyung An (Curator, Asian Art Initiative and Head, Global Exhibitions Initiative, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation)

\*The lecture will be conducted in English, with English-Korean consecutive interpretation provided.

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**Ha Chong-Hyun 5975**  
**February 14 – April 20, 2025**

Organized by  
Art Sonje Center

Supported by  
Kukje Art and Culture Foundation

**Curator**

: Sunjung Kim

**In Collaboration with**

Heehyun Cho

**Coordinator**

: Seowon Nam

**Research**

: Ji Yeon Lee, Sooyoung Choi

**Exhibition Design**

: Seungho Choi

**Exhibition Construction**

: Samho Inc.

**Artwork Reproduction**

: Samho Inc., Jisung  
Construction

**Logistics and Installation**

: ARTIN

**Lighting**

: Hyun Sung Moon, Jae Il Yun

**Condition Check**

: artC&R

**Docent Program**

: Hyeonmi Kim

**Symposium Coordinator**

: Seoyoung Choi

**Communications**

: MAG PR&Image, SUTTON

**Graphic Design**

: WORKS

**Video**

: Euirock Lee

**Photography**

: Seowon Nam

**Translation**

: Colin Mouat

**Lenders**

: National Museum of Modern  
and Contemporary Art, Korea

Kukje Gallery

Kimdaljin Art Archives and  
Museum

Leeum Museum of Art

Seoul Museum of Art

Hongik University Museum

**Special thanks to**

Kukje Gallery

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Tina Kim Gallery

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Deputy Director

: Je Yun Moon

Head of Exhibitions

: Heehyun Cho

Assistant Curator

: Seowon Nam

Head of Operations

: Misun Lee

Educator

: Hyeonmi Kim

Facilities Management Division

: Hyun Sung Moon, Jae Il Yun

Intern

: Seunga You, Jungmin Lee

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