



# LEE UFAN

ONE MAN SHOW

14 November 2014—23 March 2015

**"If a bell is struck, the sound reverberates into the distance. Similarly, if a point filled with mental energy is painted on canvas; it sends vibrations into the surrounding unpainted space... A work of art is a site where places of making and not making, painting and not painting, are linked so that they reverberate with each other".**

**Lee Ufan.**

Painter, sculptor, writer and philosopher Lee Ufan was born in South Korea in 1936 and came to prominence in the late 1960s as one of the major theoretical and practical proponents of the avant-garde Mono-ha (Object School) group. Mono-ha was Japan's first internationally recognized contemporary

art movement that rejected Western notions of representation – focusing on the relationships of materials and perceptions rather than on expression or intervention, the artists of Mono-ha present works made of raw physical materials that have barely been manipulated.

Since his early Mono-ha period, Lee has restricted his choice of sculptural materials to steel plates and stones, focusing on their precise conceptual and spatial juxtaposition. The steel plate—hard, heavy, solid—is made to build things in the modern world; the stone, in its natural as-is state, "belongs to an unknown world" beyond the self and outside modernity, evoking "the other" or "externality."

In 1970 the artist explained that “The highest level of expression is not to create something from nothing, but rather to nudge something that already exists so that the world shows up more vividly.” Ufan’s installations space is at the same time untouched and engaged, it’s always the confines between doing and non-doing. The relationship between painted / unpainted and occupied / empty space lies at the heart of Lee Ufan’s practice. The dialectical relationship between brushstroke and canvas is mimicked in the relationship between stone and iron plate.

Using the means of abstract minimalism — seriality, the grid, and monochrome artist brings us to alternative ends, emphasizing the gestural mark, the edge, and surface as physical affirmations of existence. His distilled gestures, manifesting an extraordinary ethics of restraint, create an emptiness that is paradoxically generative and vivid.

**“If a heavy stone happens to hit glass, the glass breaks. That happens as a matter of course. But if an artist’s ability to act as a mediator is weak, there will be more to see than a trivial physical accident. Then again, if the breakage conforms too closely to the intention of the artist, the result will be dull. It will also be devoid of interest if the mediation of the artist is haphazard. Something has to come out of the relationship of tension represented by the artist, the glass, the stone. It is only when a fissure results from the cross-permeation of the three elements in this triangular relationship that, for the first time, the glass becomes an object of art”.**

— Lee Ufan, 1986.

Lee Ufan personal show at Gary Tatintsian Gallery includes artist’s Relatum-silence stone installations, his recent water-colour works and the Dialogue paintings. In his Dialogue series artist creates a site-specific works placing a single, broad, viscous stroke of paint on canvas, setting up a rhythm that exposes and enlivens the emptiness of the space, creating what Lee calls “an open site of power in which things and space do vividly interact.” Limiting his brush strokes to one, two, or three squarelike marks on the pristine white canvas, artist uses grey to express “a vague, ephemeral and uncertain world,” making the tactile marks vibrate, fading in and out of the margins of vision.

Over the several past decades he has held a wide number of solo shows in Tokyo, Seoul, London and Paris and during the past 15 years his works have been included in major group exhibitions at the New York Guggenheim and Tate Modern in London. Lee Ufan has been the subject of major shows at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (2009); the Yokohama Museum of Art (2005); the Musée d’Art Moderne de Saint-Etienne Métropole (2005); the Samsung Museum of Modern Art, Seoul (2003); Kunstmuseum Bonn (2001); the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris (1997); and the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul (1994). He was awarded the Praemium Imperiale for painting in 2001 and the UNESCO Prize in 2000. In 2010 the Lee Ufan Museum opened at Benesse Art Site, Naoshima, Japan. In 2011, Lee’s work was featured in at the Venice Biennale. This summer, Lee had a major solo exhibition at the prestigious Chateau de Versailles in France.

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