

## Press Release

### Lee Ufan Response

16 November 2021 – 22 January 2022  
27 Bell Street, London  
Private view: 15 November, 6 – 8pm

*These works have been created through a conversation between the canvas, brush and pigments of colour. I may start out with a concept or motif in mind but I am then influenced by externalities, and as a result, this expression is not about myself – it's an interaction directed by multiple elements. My intense touch across the canvas, coinciding with the untouched blank space, creates something bigger than myself, opening up new worlds of painting.*

- Lee Ufan, October 2021

For Lee Ufan's first exhibition in London since the unveiling of his outdoor public sculpture at The Serpentine Gallery in Kensington Gardens, the artist-philosopher opens a selection of new work at Lisson Gallery, presenting six new paintings and four works on paper. Alongside this in Arles, *Lee Ufan « Requiem »* opens from 30 October across the city's Alyscamps, a large Roman necropolis, curated by Alfred Pacquement. Here, the Korean artist's *Relatum* sculptures enter into dialogue with the ancient sarcophagi of the city, with works dotted along the path leading to the Saint-Honorat church, an unfinished Romanesque building, and in the chapels.

Lee Ufan (born in 1936 in Kyongnam, South Korea) is a transnational artist, living and working between Japan and Paris. He developed his practice in the 1960s as a founding member and pioneer of the avant-garde, Tokyo-based Mono-ha movement, a group that served as a touchstone in the development of contemporary art in Asia. Mono-ha ('School of Things') arose amid the collapse of colonial world orders and authoritarian protests, and served as a critique of Western notions of representation, with a collection of young artists opting to focus on the relationships between materials and perceptions rather than on intervention. Lee's works are characteristic of this school of thought, using natural stones and pigment to enhance the experience of the materials and to represent their interconnectedness. A crucial element of Lee's practice is a conscious reduction, with complete focus on the essential elements – in particular the body and gesture. The artist utilizes his body performatively in the creation of each work; painting from a position above the canvas, he lies on a wooden plank placed over the surface of the work, like a bridge. As such, Lee feels he is a part of the canvas and can immerse himself within it.

At Lisson Gallery, Lee brings together paintings and works on paper from a new series entitled *Response*, produced in recent years from the artist's studio in Paris. These minimal white canvases are defined by singular sweeps of acrylic, expanding on his concept to anchor the work to "the encounter", a moment in time and space when the brush marks the canvas. While a development from his *Dialogue* series, these new works adopt a refined palette of more complex, earthier tones, with enhanced movement within the expressive strokes. Lee's practice has always been deeply philosophical – inspired by a profound meditative practice where each work aligns the brushstroke and the breath – but these works are marked by a period of intense reflection for Lee. Ahead of opening this exhibition and the presentation in Arles, Lee stated: "Experiencing the pandemic, I felt the breath of life and death in the same moment, and with this in mind, the meaning of life and death was opened up to another dimension for me."

Following the exhibition, the artist presents *Lee Ufan Arles* next Spring, a permanent new exhibition center, open to the public and accessible via the Hotel Vernon in the heart of the city of Arles. The building, which dates back to the 16th century, has been renovated and redeveloped by the Lee Ufan Foundation, in collaboration with the Japanese architect

Tadao Ando. *Lee Ufan Arles* will be the next major venue to feature his work, following the *Lee Ufan Museum* in Naoshima opened in 2010 and *Space Lee Ufan* at Busan Museum of Art opened in 2015.

## About the artist

Painter, sculptor, writer and philosopher Lee Ufan 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. The Mono-ha school of thought was Japan's first contemporary art movement to gain international recognition. It 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. In 1991 Lee Ufan began his series of *Correspondance* paintings, which consist of just one or two grey-blue brushstrokes, made of a mixture of oil and crushed stone pigment, applied onto a large white surface. His sculptural series *Relatum* is equally minimal: each work is comprised of one or more light-colored round stones and dark, rectangular iron plates. The dialectical relationship between brushstroke and canvas is mimicked in the relationship between stone and iron plate. In Ufan's installations space is at the same time untouched and engaged, at 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.

Lee Ufan was born on June 24th, 1936, in Kyongnam, South Korea. He studied calligraphy, poetry and painting at the College of Kyongnam and the University of Seoul. His work has been shown at Dia Beacon, Beacon, USA (long term view); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Park, Washington, USA (2019-2020); Pompidou Metz, Metz, France (2019); Serpentine Galleries, London, UK (2018); Couvent de la Tourette, Eveux, France (2017); Centre de Création Contemporaine Olivier Debré, Tours, France (2017); Château La Coste, Le Puy-Sainte-Réparade, France (2016); Palace of Versailles, Versailles, France (2014); Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, USA (2011), Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, Belgium (2009); the Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama, Japan (2005); the Musée d'Art Moderne de Saint-Etienne Métropole, Rhône-Alpes, France (2005); the Samsung Museum of Modern Art, Seoul, South Korea (2003); Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany (2001); the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris, France (1997); and the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, South Korea (1994). He was awarded the Praemium Imperiale for painting in 2001 and the UNESCO Prize in 2000. In 2010 the Lee Ufan Museum, designed by Tadao Ando, opened at Benesse Art Site, Naoshima, Japan.

## About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, two in New York and one in Shanghai. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estates of Leon Polk Smith, Ted Stamm and Roy Colmer. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

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