

(NEW YORK, NY – June 23, 2011)—The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presents *Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity*, the first North American museum retrospective devoted to the artist-philosopher Lee Ufan (surname: Lee, given name: Ufan), a preeminent sculptor, painter, and writer active in Korea, Japan, and Europe over the last forty years. The exhibition positions Lee as a historical figure and contemporary master, charting the artist’s creation of a visual, conceptual, and theoretical terrain that has radically expanded the possibilities for Post-Minimalist art. Lee is acclaimed for an innovative body of work that revolves around the notion of encounter—seeing the bare existence of what is actually before us and focusing on “the world as it is.”

Featuring some ninety works from the 1960s to the present—including a new site-specific installation— the exhibition is installed throughout the museum, beginning with the rotunda floor and extending up the six ramps of the Frank Lloyd Wright–designed building and into two Annex Level galleries. Organized to reflect Lee’s method of working in iterative series, the selection of sculpture, paintings, works on paper, and installations includes Lee’s most iconic works, many presented in the United States for the first time. Objects are on loan from major public and private collections in Japan, Korea, Europe, and the United States. *Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity* is on view from June 24 through September 28, 2011.

This exhibition is made possible with lead sponsorship from Samsung.

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Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity is organized by Alexandra Munroe, Samsung Senior Curator, Asian Art, at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Sandhini Poddar, Assistant Curator, Asian Art, and Nancy Lim, former Asian Art Curatorial Fellow, provided curatorial support.

Richard Armstrong, Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, noted, “Lee Ufan is an artist of extraordinary creative vision. Admired, even revered, abroad, Lee is surprisingly littleknown in North America, and this late-career survey, which we offer to the public as part of the Guggenheim’s Asian Art Initiative, is overdue.”

"Samsung is proud to support this exhibition of the work of Lee Ufan. Samsung is a passionate patron of the arts, with many activities, from the opening of Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, in Seoul in 2004, to sponsored Korean art galleries and exhibitions in museums around the world. We are happy that *Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity* will bring the work of an outstanding and innovative artist to audiences in North America," said David Steel, Executive Vice President at Samsung Electronics America.

Artist's Background

Lee Ufan was born in southern Korea in 1936 and witnessed the political convulsions that beset the Korean peninsula from the Japanese occupation to the Korean War, which left the country divided in 1953. He studied painting at the College of Fine Arts at Seoul National University and soon moved to Japan, where he earned a degree in philosophy from Nihon University, Tokyo, focusing on phenomenology and structuralism.

Lee is an influential writer on aesthetics and contemporary art and is recognized as the key theorist of Mono-ha, an antiformalist, materials-based art movement that developed in Tokyo around a series of seminal writings Lee published between 1968 and 1971. In these and later essays (selections of which are featured in the exhibition catalogue for *Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity*), Lee constructs an aesthetic system that challenges the closed objecthood of modern art. He eschews objective form for a relational structure and spatial dynamic that induces us to encounter the bare existence of what is actually before us, to focus on "the world as it is." He promotes these mutual relationships between work, viewer, and surroundings by shifting the artist's role from an act of creation to a practice of mediation. Rooted in his philosophical stance and going beyond the binaries of Eastern and Western aesthetics, Lee's art and writings partook of the radical global rethinking that transformed contemporary art in the 1960s and 1970s, when terms such as "system," "structure," and "process" recast the object as a dynamic event occurring outside the studio confines in everyday time and space. His sculptures were shown in several group exhibitions at Tokyo's leading galleries and museums in the late 1960s and 1970s, a period when he also began presenting his work in Germany and France. Coincidental with the early recognition of his work in Europe, Lee's minimalist, systematic paintings gained critical praise both in Tokyo and Seoul, where he became a seminal figure in the Korean monochrome school.

Lee began working in Paris in the 1970s and has since split his time between Japan and France. He was a visiting professor at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris during the 1990s and

professor of art at Tama Art University in Tokyo from 1973 to 2007. From the 1971 Paris Biennale, which introduced Mono-ha to Europe, to his solo exhibition *Lee Ufan: Resonance* at the 2007 Venice Biennale, Lee has won great recognition for his work. He has been the subject of major exhibitions 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. Lee is the author of seventeen books, including the English-language anthology *The Art of Encounter* (2007). In 2010, the Lee Ufan Museum, designed by Tadao Ando, opened at Benesse Art Site Naoshima, Japan. Lee's work is currently on view in two exhibitions as part of the Venice Biennale.

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