



LEE in Tokyo, 1977

[LEE Ufan website](#)

[Lee at Pace Gallery](#)

[Lee at kamel mennour, Paris](#)

[The Guggenheim's 2011 survey of Lee's oeuvre](#) explored five decades of the artist's innovative visual, conceptual, and philosophical approach to painting and sculpture. Explore the museum's digital resources including installation views, audio guides, and a detailed timeline of Lee's career.

Lee created [ten new sculptures for a 2014 installation at Versailles](#), breathing new life into the 17th century landscape. About the experience, the artist reflected: "In East Asia, they approach garden landscaping by accentuating the presence of nature, but in Europe they sometimes transfigure nature to fit human concepts... What underpins the historic and man-made Gardens of Versailles are their hidden history and the power of nature. The tension within the duality of the visible and hidden stimulates me and rouses my imagination... The motive behind my work is to establish a relationship between the made and not made. This is an issue that rose out of lament and criticism against the modern notion of productivism."

Two museums have dedicated their interior and exterior spaces to Lee's enigmatic works, [Space LEEUFAN at the Busan Museum of Art in South Korea](#), inaugurated in 2015; and the [Lee Ufan Museum on the island of Naoshima in Japan](#), which opened in 2010. Though Lee was initially reticent to both proposals, [he has discussed his change of perspective](#), working in close partnership with each architect on the concept and design of each, overseeing the installation and selection of works, and seeking to create a harmonious, immersive environment conducive to a true understanding of his artistic practice.

"There is the untouched space on my canvas. If I make one stroke, there is suddenly a resonance in that space...where I put the strokes on the canvas is very significant, I hope viewers experience a moment where they can transcend themselves through the work," [Lee explained during an interview](#) at Pace Gallery, where [a new suite of works from his renown Dialogues series debuted in 2018](#). "Looking at the strokes can provide moments when people can experience something outside normal life or think different about the world. I think it is the role of the artist to create such opportunities. Artists offer new perspectives in an uncertain world."

The Hirshorn Museum in D.C. hosted [a site-specific installation from Lee in its sculpture plaza in 2019](#). The ten new pieces, which responded to the museum's distinctive architecture and continue [the artist's Relatum works](#), were historic: his largest outdoor project on US soil, his first exhibition in the nation's capital, and the first time the Hirshorn has dedicated its plaza to a single artist. [Lee discussed his Relatum](#) at the [Serpentine Gallery in 2018](#).

[Two exhibitions at Cahier's d'Art in Paris in 2019](#) highlighted a new ensemble of drypoint etchings and Lee's complete series of 1983 gouaches, *Acorns and Wildcat*, originally produced as illustrations for Buddhist writer Kenji Miyazawa's 1924 text.

[Lee contributed an elegiac essay](#) to Pace Gallery's *Artist's Respond Series* in May of 2020, considering the lessons and impact of the global pandemic: "When times are turbulent and cracks appear in the order of things, a division emerges in humanity's interior. Modern human beings have, in a sense, built their existence on division from the very beginning...humankind has arrived where it is today through an arduous process of development that reinterprets nature," he reflected. "Perhaps what people are searching for is neither devotion to nature nor the defiant reassertion of civilization, but an ambivalent awareness of existence that spans both...The joy we experience in everything we see comes from the vitality of nature—it is the very source of ourselves."



LEE, 2015

Photo: HYOWON Park



LEE Ufan 李禹煥 이우환 (Korean, b. 1936)

Response, 2024

Acrylic on canvas

Private Collection; L2025:53.1

Lee Ufan is a prolific artist and scholar with a nearly seven-decade career that has greatly impacted contemporary art in both South Korea and Japan. As an academic in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Lee theorized the Japanese Mono-ha (“School of Things”) movement, and his painting practice also supported the development of the Dansaekhwa (“Korean Monochrome”) movement in South Korea. **Response** is a new work from Lee’s growing series of *Response* paintings, which feature a single sweep of acrylic across the canvas. As with his other minimalist works, this painting offers an “encounter” of a particular moment in time. The artist describes: “Simple and complex exist at the same time.... It is not just an encounter with my work; I have an encounter with the world.”

On view June 12 – September 14, 2025

LEE Ufan 李禹煥 이우환 (Korean, b. 1936)

From Line, 1978

Pigment on canvas

Private Collection; L2023:105.1

Lee Ufan is a Korean painter, sculptor, and philosopher who has made a major impact on the development of contemporary art in both South Korea and Japan. He was a central figure and the principle theorist of the Mono-ha (“School of Things”) movement that emerged in the late 1960s in Japan as a counter-response to the rise of industrialism and aggressive commercial development, and his minimalist, monochromatic paintings of the 1970s were particularly influential for the Dansaekhwa (“Korean Monochrome”) movement in his homeland. **From Line** is part of a well-known series of paintings the artist created between 1973 and 1984. Lee would turn the canvas horizontally, regulate his breathing, and paint in rhythmic, fluid movements from left to right. In 1978, the year this painting was completed, Ufan said: “Load the brush and draw a line. At the beginning it will appear dark and thick, then it will get gradually thinner and finally disappear.... A line must have a beginning and an end. Space appears within the passage of time and when the process of creating space comes to an end, time also vanishes.”

On view January 19 – April 30, 2024





LEE Ufan 李禹煥 이우환 (Korean, b. 1936)

From Line, 1978

Glue and mineral pigment on canvas

Private Collection; L2022:97.1

“Load the brush and draw a line. At the beginning it will appear dark and thick, then it will get gradually thinner and finally disappear.... A line must have a beginning and an end. Space appears within the passage of time and when the process of creating space comes to an end, time also vanishes.” – Lee Ufan, 1978

Lee Ufan is a Korean painter, sculptor, and philosopher who has made a major impact on the development of contemporary art in both South Korea and Japan. As an academic, Lee theorized the Japanese Mono-ha (“School of Things”) movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As a painter, Lee’s minimalist works impacted the Dansaekhwa (“Korean Monochrome”) movement in the mid-1970s. **From Line** is part of a well-known series the artist created between 1973 and 1984. Lee would turn the canvas horizontally, regulate his breathing, and paint in rhythmic, fluid movements from left to right. This meditative process was deeply tied to Lee’s philosophical approach to artmaking and continues to inform his work today.

On view December 7, 2022 – March 12, 2023

LEE Ufan 李禹煥 이우환 (Korean, b. 1936)
Dialogue, 2019
Acrylic on canvas

Private Collection, Los Angeles; L2020:91.1

On view October 14, 2020 – January 17, 2021

