



Ungno Lee, People, 1988, Ink, vegetal and mineral colors on hanji paper, 34 x 47 cm - Courtesy Galerie Vazieux

Lee Ungno - Solo Show

Art Basel Hong Kong 2022

Booth 1D57

Galerie Vazieux is pleased to present a retrospective exhibition which pays tribute to Lee Ungno. It gathers an ensemble of works that have never been exhibited before.

Lee Ungno is considered one of the most important Asian painters of the twentieth century. Born in 1904 in Korea, he began at an early age to practise the art of calligraphy, a technique he constantly perfected, especially in Japan, where he lived from 1935 to 1945. During this decade, he also embraced Western art, which was highly appreciated at the time in Japan.

In 1945, Lee Ungno returned to his homeland, where, based on his discoveries, he taught his new approach to painting and calligraphy for fourteen years. He advocated a new art form, which he described as a 'modern tradition'. During this time, he was at the heart of the dynamic Korean art scene. Nevertheless, his desire to travel led him to leave the country for Europe. In 1958, he left South Korea and went to France with his wife, Park In-Kyung, and their young son.

Fascinated by the abstract art of the school of Paris, he conducted new pictorial experiments. The first abstract works executed by Lee Ungno in Paris were an immediate and huge success. In 1961, he joined and exhibited his works in Paul Facchetti's famous gallery, which was frequented by the Parisian avant-garde movements at the time.

In 1964, Lee Ungno established the famous Académie de Peinture Orientale de Paris, of which Zao Wou-Ki, Hans Hartung, Pierre Soulages, and Tsugouharu Foujita were members.

A new period began in the 1980s, during which his work led him to address the emblematic theme of crowds, which he saw as the symbol of democratisation.

A painter, engraver, and sculptor, Lee Ungno explored in his unique way the relations between calligraphy and abstraction. An essential aspect of his artistic approach was underlined by the following statement: 'Abstraction stems from expressive freedom'. He continued adopting this approach throughout his career, with ever greater freedom and boldness. His approach, which straddled Eastern and Western art, entirely revived a Korean art that was rooted in tradition. He played a pioneering role in the foundation of contemporary Korean art.

The Galerie Vazieux is exclusively presenting the artist's previously unseen works, executed between 1963 and 1983 for Art Basel Hong Kong.

Sabine Vazieux, in conjunction with the artist's family, has selected major works that represent the artist's different Parisian periods, including the famous crowd pictures that are the supreme culmination of his expressive freedom. The exhibition highlights the modernity and multifaceted nature of his work.