

# Dia:

Press release  
27 April 2026



La Biennale di Venezia

61. Esposizione  
Internazionale  
d'Arte

Eventi Collaterali

**Dia Art Foundation Stages a Major Presentation of Work by Lee Ufan at SMAC Venice, a Collateral Event of the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia**



Portrait of Lee Ufan. Photo by Claire Dorn, courtesy Studio Lee Ufan

27 April 2026, New York and Venice — Dia Art Foundation presents a major solo exhibition of work by Lee Ufan at SMAC Venice (San Marco Art Centre), an official Collateral Event of the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. Curated by Jessica Morgan, Dia's Nathalie de Gunzburg Director, the landmark exhibition will open on May 9, 2026.

Developed in close partnership with the artist, the Venice exhibition traces the evolution of Lee's iconic visual language. Staged across eight of SMAC Venice's galleries at the Procuratie in Piazza San Marco, the presentation brings together a striking selection of works from over the last six decades of his career, including new and historical paintings, a large-scale installation from the 1960s, and three new site-specific commissions. Lee is one of the foremost figures of the Japanese Mono-ha (School of Things) as well as a key contributor to the Korean Dansaekhwa (Monochromatic Paintings) movements. His work has consistently and innovatively explored the possibilities of representing space and time through painterly gestures.

The first of the eight galleries will be dedicated to Lee's groundbreaking early works from the *From Point* and *From Line* series. These works focus on the energized placement of the brush and how it unloads paint across the canvas, of which Lee has said, "It must be a living point, a living line." Between the late 1960s and the early '80s, Lee produced these works through a meditative and embodied process, holding his breath until the pigment gradually faded—a conceptual process that cemented him as a preeminent painter-philosopher.

Representing a shift toward a more rhythmic and expressive gesture, the paintings in gallery two, from the *From Winds* (1982–86) and *With Winds* (1987–91) series, build on and develop his animated brushstroke. For these works, Lee regulated his breath rather than holding it, describing the paintings as a "living composition of the empty spaces," wherein stark passages of empty canvas are contrasted by expressive and large-scale brushstrokes.

In the 1990s, Lee returned to the resolute placement of the brush with the *Correspondance* series, displayed in the exhibition's third and fourth galleries, and which features large, geometric brushstrokes on white fields. These works appear alongside the *Dialogue* series, which spotlights large-scale, single-brushstroke paintings.

Lee's most recent and ongoing series, *Response* (2021– ), explores vibrant color through large, expressive brushstrokes in bold reds and blues. In the sixth gallery, on the floor and wall, Lee will create two site-specific paintings that respond to both the space of SMAC and the context of Venice.

The final two galleries will be dedicated to Lee's sculptural practice, which began in the late 1960s. Spanning his career, the galleries feature large-scale installations including *Relatum* (formerly *Iron Field*) (1969/2026)—a field of steel rods standing in a bed of sand. In 1972, Lee renamed all his existing three-dimensional works *Relatum*, a philosophical term denoting the relation between elements.

The exhibition will feature the new site-specific *Relatum — Infinity* (2026), continuing the iterative series started in the late 1960s. Representing an interior garden, this large-scale work will feature two polished steel plates interrupted by two large stones at a central point.

The Venice exhibition opens concurrently with a major display of Lee's painting and sculpture at [Dia Beacon](#). Together, these two exhibitions celebrate the artist's 90th birthday, underscoring his extraordinary contribution across disciplines and geographies.

Significant support provided by Samsung Foundation of Culture, Pace Gallery and Mennour.

### **Press contacts**

International press:

Sam Talbot

[Sam@sam-talbot.com](mailto:Sam@sam-talbot.com)

Italian press:

Studio Esseci Comunicazione di Roberta Barbaro e Simone Raddi

[roberta@studioesseci.net](mailto:roberta@studioesseci.net)

T. 049663499

[www.studioesseci.net](http://www.studioesseci.net)

## **Exhibition details**

*Lee Ufan*

SMAC Venice (San Marco Art Centre)

Open daily (closed Tuesdays)

10 am–6 pm

Procuratie, Piazza San Marco, 105

Venice 30124

smacvenice.org

## **About Lee Ufan**

Lee Ufan was born in Gyeongsangnam-do, Korea, in 1936, while the country was under Japanese occupation. In 1956, following training in traditional ink-brush techniques at Seoul National University High School, he moved to Tokyo, where he studied philosophy at Nihon University. In 1967, he had his first solo show at Sato Gallery, Tokyo, and, in 1968, his work was included in *Contemporary Korean Painting* at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo. In 1969, Lee staged an ephemeral happening and made contingent structures for the *9th Contemporary Art Exhibition of Japan* at Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, which signaled a departure from his earlier optical, discrete paintings. This show brought together Japanese artists identified with Mono-ha (School of Things). Throughout the 1970s, the artist participated in several exhibitions that juxtaposed North American, East Asian, and European artists to highlight their shared concern with material, process, and site. A dedicated teacher and prolific cultural critic, Lee published 17 books. In recent years, acclaim for his work has brought him exhibitions worldwide. In 2010, the Lee Ufan Museum, designed by Tadao Ando, opened in Naoshima, Japan. Increasingly distilled and monumental, the artist's sculptures continue to combine natural and industrial materials, in keeping with his relational philosophy. Lee lives in Kamakura, Japan, and Paris.

## **About Dia Art Foundation**

Taking its name from the Greek word meaning “through,” Dia was established in 1974 with the mission to serve as a conduit for artists to realize ambitious new projects, unmediated by overt interpretation and uncurbed by the limitations of more traditional museums and galleries. Dia's programming fosters contemplative and sustained consideration of a single artist's body of work, and its collection is distinguished by the deep and long-standing relationships that the nonprofit has cultivated with artists whose work came to prominence particularly in the 1960s and '70s.

In addition to Dia Beacon, Dia Bridgehampton, and Dia Chelsea, Dia maintains and operates a constellation of commissions, long-term installations, and site-specific projects, notably focused on Land art, nationally and internationally. These include:

- Walter De Maria's *The New York Earth Room* (1977) and *The Broken Kilometer* (1979), Max Neuhaus's *Times Square* (1977), and Joseph Beuys's *7000 Eichen* (*7000 Oaks*, inaugurated in 1982 and ongoing), all in New York
- De Maria's *The Lightning Field* (1977), in western New Mexico
- Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), in the Great Salt Lake, Utah
- Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels* (1973–76), in the Great Basin Desert, Utah
- De Maria's *The Vertical Earth Kilometer* (1977), in Kassel, Germany
- Cameron Rowland's *Depreciation* (2018)



### **About SMAC Venice**

SMAC Venice (San Marco Art Centre) opened in Piazza San Marco, Venice, in May 2025. Every year SMAC Venice presents a dynamic and vibrant program of exceptional exhibitions across art, design, fashion, and film, offering opportunities for discovery for specialists and the public alike.

Situated in one of the most iconic locations in the world, SMAC Venice is located on Piazza San Marco inside the Procuratie, which was recently restored by Pritzker Architecture Prize–winning architect David Chipperfield. SMAC Venice’s location has been made possible due to a landmark agreement with Generali, the owner of the Procuratie. The Procuratie also hosts the Home of the Human Safety Net on the third floor, with the interactive exhibition *A World of Potential*.

Across its 16 galleries, SMAC Venice’s program sheds light on the unexpected, challenges conventions, and poses rigorous questions. Through research, dialogue, and experimentation, SMAC Venice critically examines contemporary visual culture and its relation to history, science, philosophy, and society. SMAC Venice is a spontaneous and experimental organization that tests traditional models of art institutions and exhibition making. It welcomes collaboration, providing institutions, artists, and creative practitioners with a platform in Venice.

SMAC Venice’s founding is rooted in the belief that the arts are more important than ever to the human experience, opening new possibilities for coexistence and allowing cities and communities to thrive.