

Pace Gallery Announces Global Representation of Pioneering Korean Artist Lee Kun-Yong

Pace will present a solo exhibition of Lee’s work at its Hong Kong gallery in 2022



Left: Portrait courtesy of ArtDrunk / Gary Yeh; Right: Lee Kun-yong, *Bodyscape 76-1-2021*, 2021 © Lee Kun-Yong, courtesy Pace Gallery

New York – Pace is pleased to begin representing the boundary-pushing performance artist Lee Kun-Yong on a global scale. The artist’s forthcoming solo exhibition at Pace’s Hong Kong space, which runs from January 14 to March 3, 2022, marks his third presentation with the gallery.

Lee, whose practice spans performance, sculpture, installation, and video, rose to prominence as a leading figure of the Korean avant-garde during the 1970s, a period in which the country grappled with authoritarianism and repression of freedom of expression. He was a founding member of the artist group Space and Time, and he is widely regarded as a pioneer of performance art in Korea. Works from one of the artist’s most iconic series, *Bodyscape*, which he began in 1976, will be on view in Pace’s exhibition in Hong Kong. For these works, Lee approaches canvases from various angles, creating records of his physical relationships to his chosen medium. Lee’s experimentations of this kind yield bold abstractions that document his body’s movements. The artist is known for sustaining his performances, like *Bodyscape*, over the course of many years of his career.

Pace’s exhibition will also feature videos of Lee performing *Relay Life* and *Five Steps*. With *Relay Life*, which debuted at the 1979 Bienal de São Paulo, the artist lays out his possessions in a line and ultimately lies face down at the end of the trail of objects. As art historian Joan Kee has written of the work, “The last image, in which he appears face down, encapsulates Lee’s ideas about the necessity of the unnecessary gesture, and seems to propose inaction as the most eloquent action of all.”

In *Five Steps*, first performed at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Seoul in 1975, Lee uses charcoal to mark his movements directly on the floor, five steps away in various directions from a single starting point. The artist counts his steps in Korean as he makes them. This work exemplifies Lee’s interest in the power of mark making as a record of the body’s movements and experiences.

Youngjoo Lee, senior director of Pace in Seoul, says:

“As one of the most creative artists in Korean contemporary art history, Lee Kun-Yong will leave a profound legacy for future generations. In the 1970s, when monochromatic art (*Dansaekhwa*) was prevalent, Lee was a trailblazer in

performance art, staging hundreds of performances that addressed the social climate of the time. He also cultivated a new and simplified drawing methodology that was more approachable for the public, emphasizing the importance of communication with his audience. Pace has shown numerous paintings and performances by Lee at our galleries in Asia, and we are very excited to show his work in the United States and Europe in the future.”

The artist’s work will figure in a forthcoming presentation at the Guggenheim Museum in New York and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Korea. This landmark exhibition will mark the first survey in North America highlighting the Korean avant-garde movement.

Lee’s work can be found in the collections of the Busan Museum of Art, Busan, South Korea; Daegu Art Museum, Daegu, South Korea; Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul; Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul; Tate Modern, London; and The Rachofsky Collection, Dallas, Texas.

Lee Kun-Yong (b. 1942, Sariwon, Korea) is known for his performances that reimagine the ways that the body and its movements can be understood across time. The artist cultivated his highly experimental practice during the 1970s, when martial law and authoritarianism presented a major affront to civil rights and freedom of expression in South Korea. Lee earned a BFA from Hongik University in Seoul in 1967 and an MA in art education from Keimyung University in Daegu in 1982. He is considered a key figure of the Korean avant-garde, and he was a founding member of the artist group Space and Time. Among the notable group exhibitions he has participated in are the Paris Biennale in 1973; the Bienal de São Paulo in 1979; the Gwangju Biennale in 2000; and the Busan Biennale in 2014. One of the artist’s most famous bodies of work is *Bodyscape*, in which he approaches his canvases from different angles and uses painting to record the motions of his body. Today, Lee continues to work on series he began in the early years of his career. Much of his ongoing performance work engages with the relationships between his body, his chosen artistic medium, and viewers of his work. The artist lives and works in Seoul.

Pace is a leading international art gallery representing some of the most influential contemporary artists and estates from the past century, holding decades-long relationships with Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet, Barbara Hepworth, Agnes Martin, Louise Nevelson, and Mark Rothko. Pace enjoys a unique U.S. heritage spanning East and West coasts through its early support of artists central to the Abstract Expressionist and Light and Space movements.

Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy as an artist-first gallery that mounts seminal historical and contemporary exhibitions. Under the current leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace continues to support its artists and share their visionary work with audiences worldwide by remaining at the forefront of innovation. Now in its seventh decade, the gallery advances its mission through a robust global program—comprising exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, performances, and interdisciplinary projects. Pace has a legacy in art bookmaking and has published over five hundred titles in close collaboration with artists, with a focus on original scholarship and on introducing new voices to the art historical canon.

The gallery has also spearheaded explorations into the intersection of art and technology through its new business models, exhibition interpretation tools, and representation of artists cultivating advanced studio practices. Pace’s presence in Silicon Valley since 2016 has bolstered its longstanding support of experimental practices and digital artmaking. As part of its commitment to innovative, technologically engaged artists within and beyond its program, Pace will launch its own dedicated NFT platform in November 2021. The gallery’s past NFT projects have spotlighted digital works by Lucas Samaras, Simon Denny, Urs Fischer, John Gerrard, and other artists.

Today, Pace has nine locations worldwide including London, Geneva, a strong foothold in Palo Alto, and two galleries in New York—its headquarters at 540 West 25th Street, which welcomed almost 120,000 visitors and programmed 20 shows in its first six months, and an adjacent 8,000 sq. ft. exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street. Pace was one of the first international galleries to establish outposts in Asia, where it operates permanent gallery spaces in Hong Kong and Seoul, as well as an office and viewing room in Beijing. In 2020, Pace opened temporary exhibition spaces in East Hampton and Palm Beach, with continued programming on a seasonal basis.






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Press Inquiries

Adriana Elgarresta
Director of Public Relations
aelgarresta@pacegallery.com
+1 305 498 1649

Rebecca Riegelhaupt
Communications Director, Europe
rriegelhaupt@pacegallery.com
+44 7917 909779

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