

**LEE UFAN**

**ENCOUNTERS**

## Personal Structures Art Projects # 06

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This book is the documentation of *Personal Structures Art Projects # 06*. It has been published as a limited edition. The edition comprises 150 copies of which 50 DeLuxe, numbered from 1 to 50, and 50 DeLuxe hors commerce, numbered from I to L. The 50 Standard copies are numbered from 51 to 100. Each item of this limited edition consists of a book and a DVD of two encounters with Lee Ufan's installation at the exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES as part of the Venice Biennale 2011 in a case, housed together in a cassette. The DeLuxe edition is stamped with a Japanese hanko stating Lee Ufan's name and additionally contains a metal plate.

This limited edition has been divided as follows:

# 1-50: DeLuxe edition: Luiscius Antiquarian Booksellers, Netherlands

# 51-100: Standard edition: Luiscius Antiquarian Booksellers, Netherlands

HC I-L: Not for trade

AP # 1-10: Lee Ufan

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JAPAN FOUNDATION 

# LEE UFAN

# ENCOUNTERS

KARLYN DE JONGH  
SARAH GOLD

**28 JUNE – 30 JUNE 2007**

**VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

In the late afternoon of Thursday 28 June 2007 we arrived in Venice. This was the first time that I visited this city, and the tranquil, romantic feeling is immediately present, when I think about this day.

The Dutch artist Rene Rietmeyer, initiator of the project PERSONAL STRUCTURES, and I would have an appointment on the island next to Venice, Murano, the next morning. Due to a previous meeting on an art fair in Austria, I had established contact to the owner of a glass factory, who had invited Rene to speak about a possible cooperation. For most of our two days in Venice, we were occupied in meetings, no time to see the city or visit the Biennale itself.

But sometime in those two days I think I have had my first encounter with Lee Ufan. I cannot recall the time or place, but I do believe to remember seeing the poster of his Biennale exhibition. Showing a large white canvas with a 'dark square', a boulder in front of the painting. Did the poster really look like that? Or did I imagine it all...

In hindsight I believe that this was the first time I met Lee Ufan. Little did I know that 5 years later I would be writing about this first *encounter*.

**11 SEPTEMBER 2007**

**VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

My first encounter with Lee Ufan is also the first time I saw Venice. It was on Tuesday 11 September 2007. I had just graduated in art history the week before and a few days later, my internship at the German Pavilion of the Venice Biennale would start. For me at that time, it felt like a fresh start, a 'new' life. I felt 'future'.

For budget reasons, I had taken the slow, indirect way to Venice and arrived at the Santa Lucia train station in the late afternoon. When leaving the train station, I saw Venice for the first time: the typical buildings, the Grand Canal, the boats and right in front of my face a large banner with *LEE UFAN*. I know Sarah has just described this banner differently, but in my memory the banner had a red Biennale stamp on it, and for the rest it was just white with big, black letters saying "Lee Ufan". At that time, the name looked strange to me, maybe that was partly because of the large surface and this short name. It looked interesting and it made me curious about this artist and his exhibition. At University, there had been lectures on Mono-ha ['school of things']. I knew about Nobuo Sekine. But Lee Ufan? Maybe my professor had told me about him, but it did not stay. Until that moment, I had never heard of the name "Lee Ufan" before.

In the weeks after, I passed this banner several times with the vaporetto [water bus] and each time it was intriguing, this large surface with this short name. Honestly, I do not remember whether I ever went to see the exhibition at the Palazzo Palumbo Fossati. Probably, I did not, because otherwise I would have remembered. In any case, this image of Venice, with Lee Ufan's name in huge letters in the center, was in my memory for a long time and will now stay with me, because of this book.

**OCTOBER 2007**

**GIARDINI, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

My internship at the Biennale was like a two-month holiday in Venice. I worked 24 hours a week and the rest of the time I went sightseeing. Working in Italy, I became acquainted with the 'lunch break'. In my case, it meant an hour of time in which I did not have to be at the German pavilion. At that time, I did not have much else to do, so, besides eating a quick sandwich, I used this hour for seeing some of the other pavilions in the Giardini.

One time, I do not remember the exact date, but it was in October, I went to the little bookshop next to the entrance. I love books and the small space was packed with piles of catalogues and other publications about art. In the midst of all these piles, I saw a simple, grey colored cover with a red Biennale logo on it. Somehow it stood out. *LEE UFAN*. I recognized the name from the banner in front of the train station. Flipping the pages in this book, I saw his work for the first time and was immediately drawn to it, especially because of its simplicity. I liked it a lot. For me at that moment, it was special. Although I did not know anything about him yet, I had the feeling he would fit in the project *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE*, a project initiated by the Dutch artist Rene Rietmeyer. I was not actively involved in this project myself at that time yet, but

having co-curated the symposium TIME in Amsterdam together with Sarah a few months prior in June 2007, I felt close to it. Whether or not Rene and Sarah wanted to include Lee Ufan in PERSONAL STRUCTURES or not, I wanted to know more about his work. But I had no money. The book was 40 Euro and way too expensive for me at that time. Instead, I wrote down his name hoping I would find some information on internet and left the shop.

## THE YEAR 2008

### SARAH GOLD

In 2006 we had started PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE, for which we cooperated with artists such as Roman Opalka, Joseph Kosuth and Lawrence Weiner. The project was planned as an ongoing platform and we were constantly looking for new artists to participate in our symposia, exhibitions and publications.

Eventually in 2008 we had the opportunity to conduct a written interview with Lee Ufan. The questions were in English and we received Lee Ufan's answers in Japanese. I remember that they had to be painstakingly translated. With the help of the Japanese artist Yuko Sakurai, working together with the comprehension of Rene Rietmeyer, it became a readable text after many hours of hard work. At the time we were in Miami, and the thoughtful, sensitive views of Lee Ufan did not coincide with the superficial American way you find in South Beach.

**1 – 15 JANUARY 2009**

**DUBLIN, IRELAND**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

One year after first hearing about Lee Ufan, I was scheduled for an interview with him at his studio in Paris. For about a year now, I was actively involved in *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* and my life had developed rapidly. In 2008, we had organized a symposium about *EXISTENCE* in Tokyo, several exhibitions in Miami and had traveled throughout Europe. Most of that year's winter I stayed in Dublin, to focus on my project *ON KAWARA: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS* as well as on preparing interviews for the publication *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE* that we were working on. This book would include interviews with Tatsuo Miyajima, Christian Boltanski, Peter Halley, Giuseppe Penone and several others, including Lee Ufan. At University I had already learned about these artists; now I could meet them and ask any question I wanted. What a chance!

Peter Loder Meyer, the Art Historian who was the main writer for this publication, had already done a fax-interview with Lee Ufan before. Now, he was welcome in Paris for a personal meeting with Lee Ufan and took me along with him. It was my third 'live' interview.

In order to prepare questions, I had received a first translation of this fax-interview with Lee Ufan. It was really only a draft and

not easy to read. I was told that Lee Ufan was very difficult to understand, but this text... At that time, I could not make much sense of it. However, it did make clear that there had been a complication between Lee Ufan and Lodermeier. Although I did not understand much of what he was saying, it was interesting for me to see how Lee Ufan reacted to Lodermeier's academic and philosophical questions. For me, it seemed better to choose another way.

The art library in Dublin that I used in preparation for my other interviews, had only one book and it was 'about' Lee Ufan, not including his own words. I read parts of the book, but did not find it helpful. Through the meetings I had had with other artists, I learned it was much better to rely on the artist's own words than on interpretations by art historians. As Lawrence Weiner said about one of the lectures in our Amsterdam symposium about TIME: "Cute story, but the information he is telling us is wrong. I was there. It was nothing like he is imagining it now." So, I was a little skeptical about the book and did not want to 'waste' time on it and let it color my 'opinion' too much. Better seemed a fresh approach, to just go with the conversation and come up with questions in the moment.

On 10 January the appointment with Lee Ufan was confirmed. Now the appointment was a fact, a 'fresh approach' suddenly felt more like 'being unprepared'. In principle it comes down to the same, but is taken from a different point of view and to me, in that moment, it did not seem so attractive anymore. So, I started to search for more information on Internet. It is only a few years ago, but for some reason there was not so much to find on Lee Ufan in English. Now, there is a lot of information available: short films and serious interviews. But at that time, it was different. I tried

various search options, but it was not a big success: apart from the usual sum of solo and group exhibitions, I found only one article that gave some outline of Lee Ufan's thoughts. And a small photograph that scared me a little: probably influenced by my own insecurity, Lee Ufan looked very serious and tough. I gave up searching for information. All the information I would possibly find would not be enough to understand him anyway. I counted on the knowledge I had gained the past year about other artists and their thoughts about time, space and existence. I stuck to my original plan of the 'fresh approach'.





**16 JANUARY 2009**

**LEE UFAN STUDIO, PARIS, FRANCE**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

On 16 January 2009 was my first personal encounter with Lee Ufan. The meeting was at 3pm at his studio on Boulevard de Clichy in Paris. I had a cheap Ryanair ticket and left my apartment in Dublin around 4.30am to catch my plane. A few hours later, I arrived at some airport far away from the center of Paris. It all did not matter: it was my first visit to Paris and I was very excited about this and having the chance to meet Lee Ufan in his studio—as well as Christian Boltanski a few days later.

An hour or two later, I arrived at my hotel in Montmartre. The neighborhood, everything, was so nice! I checked in and waited in my room for Peter Lodermeier and the Japanese artist Yuko Sakurai (who joined us as a translator and photographer) to pick me up a few minutes later. Together we went to a café on a small square for coffee and crêpes. It was cold, but sunny enough to sit outside.

Because it was the first time Lodermeier and I would do an interview together, we took the opportunity to discuss how we were going to do that. He seemed relaxed about the interview; I was not. This was only my third 'live' interview. Aware of my inexperience, I asked Lodermeier for information about Lee Ufan,

about the fax-interview he had done, about doing an interview in general etc. Hearing more and more about “the art of encounter”, helped me to relax and regain my trust and thoughts I had had the day before leaving: just let it happen.

Around 1.30pm we left the café and walked in the direction of Lee Ufan’s studio. We were not exactly sure where it was and did not want to be late. But Boulevard de Clichy appeared very easy to find as well as Lee Ufan’s studio. We were way too early! Because we just had coffee, we walked around the block, passing Lee Ufan’s studio three times. I called Boltanski to confirm the appointment we would have three days later and we went to the Carrefour to buy some paprikas and water. After approximately an hour, we decided to just sit on a bench in the green ‘park’ dividing the two lanes on the Boulevard close to Lee Ufan’s studio.

When it was three minutes to 3pm, we walked over to Lee Ufan’s door. Yuko had an access code to the door that opened to a courtyard. At the end, at the right hand side, was Lee Ufan’s studio. It looked very dark, as if no one was there. We knocked. No sound. Would Lee Ufan be at home? Then, after a few minutes, a tiny, fragile-looking man opened the door: Lee Ufan. It was a strange experience to suddenly see him in reality, but he was extremely nice! We greeted each other warmly, but not in what I knew as the Japanese greeting-ceremony: he shook our hands.

Lee Ufan invited us in and made tea. In the meantime, we prepared for the interview: voice recorders and questions on the table, the correct position for taking photos. It was only a very small table, just a simple desk. I sat in the corner; Loder Meyer opposite of me, so that Lee Ufan could sit between us. In that moment, I did not feel comfortable enough to start looking

around and satisfy my curiosity. But it was such a small space, that I could see a lot from this one position—In the back was a bathroom; behind the other door seemed to be a small kitchen where Lee Ufan was preparing tea. In my imagination this studio had looked completely different, more something in the direction of Antony Gormley’s giant space in the north of London. This was humble, quiet and modest. Almost too modest for an artist whose paintings sell for approximately half a million Euro. It made me wonder about Lee Ufan’s life.

From my chair, I looked at the paintings that were leaning against the walls—three walls were used for this purpose, leaving only space for the doors to the bathroom and kitchen, the fourth wall had the entrance door and the table we were sitting at. There were several paintings lined up against each of these three walls. On the wall next to the entrance door, the painting on the front was facing us. It was beautiful, the painting itself, but also the fact that I was seeing this painting in Lee Ufan’s own studio. From the paintings against the wall between the bathroom and the kitchen, I could only see the back side: *Dialogue*, with a year. And next to me were even more paintings until almost into the kitchen. High windows were above the little table, but not much light came in. Lee Ufan returned with tea, in what seemed to be Lee Ufan teacups.

Loder Meyer opened the conversation in what I thought was a very nice way, very honest and direct, asking Lee Ufan about encounter and communicating through language. Soon it appeared that Lee Ufan did not want to answer in English. The question required a serious answer and Lee Ufan preferred to give it in Japanese. But his English was fine enough to understand our questions. So, whenever Loder Meyer or I said something,

Lee Ufan replied in Japanese and Yuko translated. Of course, it was too much for her to translate everything Lee Ufan had said, in a few words she communicated what to her was the point of Lee Ufan's answer. The answers were quite different from what Peter and I discussed beforehand and from what I 'expected', but I listened carefully and had to change my previously formed opinion constantly when it differed from what Lee Ufan seemed to be saying.

After Lodermeier's good start, I felt the conversation was above the level I was capable of at that time and did not want to interfere. At a certain point, however, I noticed a turning point. Discussing the word 'Dialogue', Lee Ufan tried to explain his thoughts. The answer seemed very different from what we had discussed before our meeting, at the cafe. Lee Ufan's answer did not seem to 'fit' into the Western, philosophical background that we had been reading into it. Instead of accepting Lee Ufan's answers and throwing away previously made thoughts, Lodermeier seemed to stay with his position.

The discussion continued for some time, a to and fro about 'dia-logos'. It was an interesting sight: Lodermeier on the left, Lee Ufan on the right and between them in the background the title *Dialogue* on the back of Lee Ufan's painting. But even after some minutes, Lodermeier did not seem to bend. I felt ashamed and thought I had to do something about it, before Lee Ufan would put us back on the street—maybe this would have never happened, but to me, at that moment it seemed a serious risk that I did not want to take. So, I took my chance and asked a question. Of course, I did not understand anything of Lee Ufan's response, but I observed him, while he gave the answer to my question in Japanese. His appearance and attitude changed. He looked at me

with—what I interpreted as—a warm expression on his face; he smiled and it seemed he was enjoying it.

The situation seemed to have calmed down and we continued with what I thought was an interesting interview. Yuko's translation came each time after Lee Ufan's answer. It helped enough in finding a direction for the next question.

A slightly edited version of this conversation—without the 'Dialogue'-episode—was published in our book *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE* (Dumont, 2009) as follows:

Peter Lodermeier: Karlyn De Jongh and I would like to talk with you about what you call 'the encounter with otherness'. I think that language difficulties play a great role in the encounter with otherness, and therefore we have brought with us as translator the artist Yuko Sakurai. For me, 'the encounter with otherness', is an interesting subject: we both speak to each other now in a language that is not our own native language. This means that we always have to find words that do not really express what we want to say. One could generalize it and say that this always happens in communication because everybody uses words in his or her personal way.

Lee Ufan: In the western world, the perception of an 'encounter' is originally defined as communication with God; it is like a correspondence, but I do not want to start with such a difficult and complicated subject. I would like to approach this discussion simply as a talk about an encounter in a very normal way, such as when people meet other people, or when we see the moon, or when you meet a beautiful woman, or an encounter with an incident. In fact, it starts with facing each other, which is

simultaneously a passive and active encounter. In a sense, this concept is not necessarily about verbal communication. Also it is not about the differences in meaning between East and West. I want to start from usual things, like meeting people, seeing a beautiful flower or seeing an incident.

I was born in Korea and went to Japan when I was nineteen years old. I have lived in Japan for a long time now. I've walked around in many different countries, but wherever I am, I am a foreigner, all the time. I am a stranger, and due to this, my ability to communicate is disrupted: this in turn brings discomfort, and leads to misunderstandings. I have lived under these circumstances for a long time: that is 'encounter' for me. That's the reason why for me an encounter, as in *Waiting for Godot* [by Samuel Beckett], does not exist: these thoughts are nonsense. For me, our meeting here is also an encounter. Encounter is dealing with others; it is a very simple thing.

Lee Ufan 李禹煥: もともと、出会いというのは、西洋ではたぶん、神との交流というか、触れ合い (correspondence) みたいなことを言っていたんだと思います。それを、難しい話から出発しないで、僕は極めて普通に、人が人と会うとか、人が月を見てきれいだとか、彼女を見てきれいだとか、何か事件にあってびっくりしたとか、そういう次元から僕は考えたいのです。つまり向うとこから始まる、受動と能動の出会いということです。しかしこれは、コミュニケーションとは異なる出来事です。また東洋と、西洋が違うという意味ではなく、極めて普通に考える。誰でも人に出会ったり、きれいな花に出会ったり、あるいは大変な事件にぶつかったりする、そういうことから出発したいのです。

僕は、韓国で生まれ、19歳の時に日本に行ったんです。日本に長い間住んでいます。いろんな国を歩いているのですが、どこの国に行

っても僕は、外国人なんです。つまり異邦人なんです。だから、コミュニケーションも上手く出来ないし、いろんな違和感が出来たり、誤解を呼んだり、そういう物の中で生きてきた、そういうものが、出会いなんです。だから、出会いが存在しない、「ゴトーを待ちながら」(サムエル・ベケット著)、そういう考えは、ナンセンスで、こういう出会いも出会いなのです。だから、出会いとは他者との関係を出会いと言う、非常に簡単なことです。

Karlyn De Jongh: Do you mean that you want the viewer to experience your work in a more direct and pure way, without too much knowledge up front?

LU: Meaning and knowledge are just tools, that is all. 'Encounter' starts in the very moment of contact at a location—this is most important. The 'tools' are needed later on, so that is why it is sometimes disturbing to experience the encounter. 'Encounter' is not only related to art, but also to exchanging greetings, looking at a stone, watching the sun, experiencing an incident, etc. These things are outside of myself. It starts from the outside and then I am going to expand my own inside. To look at modern art needs knowledge. We require knowledge of history to understand classical art. If we do not know about Christianity and Greek mythology, we cannot understand western art. When I just look at the painting itself, I cannot understand it at all, it requires a broad depth of prior knowledge. Modern art also has many rules and artists are creating works by using those rules. I want to be different from those rules; I want to be free. This is why I want to have reactions from African, American, European and Asian people encountering my work like, "Wow, what is it?" The meaning does not matter, but I want to have these fresh moments; they are very important for me.

LU: 意味や知識, それは道具にすぎない。出会いとは、初めて見たその現場が大切です。道具は後で必要であって経験のためには邪魔になることもある。これは絵に関らず、普通、はじめましてとか、挨拶をしたり、石ころを見たり、あるいは太陽を見たり、事件にぶつかる、そういうところから始まる。だから、外の自分のことなんです。そこから出発し、自分の内側を膨らませて行くのです。

モダンアートの場合は、見るために知識が必要です。元々の、クラシックアートは知識が必要です。例えば、キリスト教とか、ギリシャ神話等を理解しないと、西洋アートは解らないわけでしょ。これは、本当の知識がないと、パッと見たって全然解らない。モダンアートもいろんな約束事があって、今日、アーティストはそういうことを利用して作品作っているけれど、出来るだけそういう約束事と違う、もっとフリーでやりたい。だから僕の絵を、アフリカの人、アメリカの人、ヨーロッパの人が見ても、アジアの人が見ても、その意味はともかくとして、ワー、これはなんだろうという、そういうぶつかり合いが出てくる、新鮮な場面が出てくる、そのことが大事だと思っています。

PL: When I look at your sculpture that, for instance, consists of a stone and a plate of steel; it is seemingly simple. On the other hand, once you become aware of the situation it becomes complex. In a way there is an encounter between the steel plate and the stone, but when you look at it there is an encounter between me, as a viewer, and the artwork; it becomes even more complex. At the same time, the surrounding space counts and there is an encounter with it too.

LU: Simple and complex exist at the same time. This is the character of the encounter, the 'intermediate section'. It is not just an encounter with my work; I have an encounter with the world. Iron and even steel have existed since ancient times, but a steel plate is

made in an industrial society. A stone is not man-made. Stones lay around anywhere by mountains and rivers. Whether you are from Africa, from Paris, or from America, everybody knows; stones are from nature, and a steel plate is industrial. I have thought about what the viewers can feel and see. I try to make the viewer feel the combination of things, those made by our industrial society and those that are from nature.

I don't make just massive objects; I create space: 'Ba'. All my works involve space and time; these are precisely my subject matter. Normally, in modern art, the work is the object itself. My art is not a painting and not a sculpture. I don't make just objects, I create space: 'Ba' and 'being there'. What is going to happen with the stone and the steel plate, what I can feel with them being together, that is very important.

LU: もちろん単純と複雑は同時にあります。それが中間項、媒介項の性格です。作品と出会うのではなく、それを見ながら世界と出会うのです。鉄そのものは、古代からあるけれども、鉄板は、産業社会が作ったものなんです。石は人間が作ってないものなんです。石は、どこでも転がっているものです、山やそこら辺でも。アフリカの人、パリの人、アメリカの人であろうが、誰でも、石は自然なも、鉄板は、産業社会が作ったものと知っているのです。僕には、産業社会の作ったものと、自然の中にあるものを、これを組み合わせることによって、何が見えるのか、そういう試みを感じさせことができるのか。こういうことをやっているんです。

僕は、塊となったオブジェを作るのではなくて、その一つの場を作る。僕の作品は全て、場の問題、空間や、時間、それはまさしく僕の問題であるのです。普通、モダンアートは、作品はほとんどオブジェクトなんです。ところが僕の絵画も彫刻も、オブジェクトを作るのではなく、場を作ることなんです。その場に居合わせることなんです。

す。この石と鉄板がどうなるのか、そういう場に居合わせることで、何か自分も一緒にワーと感じられるはずなんです。それが大事なことです。

PL: In one of your texts you mentioned that there should be some strangeness in a work of art and especially in sculpture. What do you mean by 'strangeness'?

LU: There exist unknown characteristics outside of myself and the community. This, in fact, is 'Otherness'. Humans want to perceive and understand this with all the knowledge gained from Modernism. But in reality, you feel a distortion, a gap between knowledge and reality. You see the separation in between them and you start becoming aware of the unknown. For example, we can understand a stone with knowledge, by analyzing it. But when you see a stone, you do not know at all; we often have the feeling "what is that?" It is like this meeting with you: now I know something about you, but still I do not 'know' you. This is not simply "I do not know"; rather, this is an unknown character. An unknown character always invites me to learn more about things in one or another way. The unknown part has not been set from the beginning. If somebody asks me where the unknown part is, it does not exist anywhere, because it comes from the relations you experienced. We can understand tomorrow as a mental construct, but the truth of how tomorrow will actually take place is ever elusive. We can construct information from knowledge about tomorrow, but we do not know it until it happens in real life. Constantly being with the world that is unknown means that there are a lot of variables. It happens outside of myself: that's why I can only understand the inside of myself, but because of that which exists outside of me, there is the unknown.

LU: 未知性というのは、自分、共同体の外のことです。つまり他者のことです。人間は、このモダニズムの中では全てを知識で見ようとする。ところが、知識と現実がずれていく、分離するこの分離する中で、未知性が出てくるんです。例えば、石は、知識としては、これは分析すれば全部解るんです。知識としては、解っていても、石を見るとやっぱり解らない。これは何だろう、そういう解らない部分が沢山ある。こうやって会っていても予備知識を持っていても、よく解らない、これが、未知性なんです。これはこうだろうか、ああだろうか。それは、たえず知ることを誘う、いろんなものを持っています。自然であっても人間であっても、未知性というのは、もともと在るのではありません。その未知性がどこにあるのかと聞かれても、どこにあるものでもない。それはある関係の中で出てくることなんです。僕たちは、明日のことは知識としては、解るけども、実際は解らないんです。

つまり、外の外部性を持っているということなんです。明日はどうなるか、知識としては、情報としては組み立てられる、でも、実際はわからない。絶えず変数だらけ、世界と共にあること、それが未知性です。それは、自分の外のことだから、だから、自分の内側のことは、解るんだけど、外のことだから未知なんです。

PL: What I find interesting is what you said about the body as interface between 'me and the outside world'. The otherness starts with the body because it is something we never can understand completely. There is a strong physical presence in your work. Can you tell me a bit more about the importance of the body in making your work and in receiving it?

LU: The meaning of 'body' is perceived differently in the Asian and the Western world. In English, the word 'body' simply means 'flesh and blood', but in Japanese, Korean and Chinese it has a more extensive meaning. The body itself is not just 'myself', it includes

the relations with the outside. In its contact with the outside, the body becomes something 'in the middle', or 'in between'. So, when you use your body as a channel, contact with the outside goes well. It does not go well when you want to contact your surroundings only with knowledge.

When I make a painting, I use my body as a channel, so I paint with my body. That I paint with my body means that it contains not only my knowledge, it contains much more. It is very important that the body contains more things than just knowledge. I think, Peter, you do not fully understand my meaning. The body is influenced by its relations with its surroundings: I do not completely 'own' it just by myself. I paint my relation to the outside naturally through this intermediate connection. My body is not mine, and my body is not just inside or outside, it is in between. This is very important.

LU: この英語のボディーとアジアで言う身体というのは、若干違います。英語のボディーというと、肉体だけを示すのですが、日本語、韓国語、中国語では、肉体だけではなく、身体そのものが自分のものではなく、外との関連的なものを含むのです。外との関連で、中間で固まっているのが身体なんです。だから、身体を媒介にすると外との関連が上手くいく、知識だけでコンタクトしようとしても上手くいかない。

僕は絵を描くとき、身体を媒介とする、身体で描くわけです。身体で描くと僕の知識だけが入るのではなくて、知識以外のものを、吸い込んでくれる、これは重要なことです。

ペーターにはわからないと思うんだけど、身体は自分の関りのあるものであって自分のものではない、自分の関りである、この中間項を通して描くと外との関連が出来やすい。身体とは、僕のものじゃない。内側や外側でもなく、その間なんです、それが重要なんです。間の関連性が、大変重要です。

KDJ: If you control everything, it seems difficult to have an encounter, because in that case nothing seems to come back to you. Do you need the openness for an encounter to take place?

LU: Each time I give an answer, I ask myself; "should I do this, or should I do that?" When I make a painting, I also have small encounters: a feeling of subtlety, questions and other things come up. It seems that you confuse 'encounter' with 'pure continuity'. 'Encounter' is non-continuous: always changing. It is important that it is a passive and active thing. That is the reason why I want to paint a multitude of seemingly the same paintings, endlessly. For me, perfection does not exist, nor does a work that can be controlled one hundred percent. I cannot know what will happen at the moment I start working in a certain location.

LU: 答える瞬間瞬間にこうかな、ああかなという、小さな出会いとか、小さなことで解ってくることや、疑問や様々なことが絶えず描くときに出てくるのです。あなたは出会いを純粋持続と錯覚しているようだ。出会いは非連続のものであり、絶えず変わる。そして受動と能動であることを忘れてはならない。だから同じ絵を無限に何枚も描きたくなるのもその理由からです。だから、完璧とか、あるいは100%コントロールすることはできないということはそういうことなんです。絶えずその現場で何が起こるかかわからないのです。

PL: What do you think about the concept of 'time'? I think an encounter is always something that happens in a certain moment. You can't hold onto it; if you tried to, it would completely change the situation. There is a moment and then a next moment and the next... Is this your notion of time?

LU: 'Ticking' time, next and next and next...; this is the nature of time. Is it like one continuous line, or does it break up by each tick? The theory of time is a very difficult subject. Henri Bergson

has spoken about 'homogeneous time' and 'duration'. As memory, we remember things in our brain which we have done before and we continue on from there. But this continuity will change as new experiences intermingle with stored memories. I do not know if it continues in purity. Time in memory and time as continuity change through new situations, and they overlap each other. Time has two faces. The first is time as a finite measurement, or 'clock time'; very matter-of-fact, or physical. The second is time as memory, as human based experiences. The two do not exist individually, sometimes they go together and sometimes they separate, all the while influencing each other.

LU: 時間の示す、次は次はというものは、一つの連続性を持つのか、それぞれ断ち切れているのか。時間論としては、大変難しいところです。でも、その中でハンリ・ベルクソンのような人は、純粹持続を言っています。記憶として、頭の中で、前やったこととの持続があるわけです。でもその持続は、新しい経験を得ることで、かたちを変えるのです。だから純粹に持続することがあるかは解らないけれど、Timeはメモリーの中のTimeと、そこで絶えずTimeというものが、記憶としての持続性ということと、それに刺激を与える現場性というものがダブっていることだと思います。

時間は二つの顔を持っています。一つは時計の時間、極めて物理的な時間。もう一つは、経験をベースにした人間の記憶の時間。この二つは、絶えず別々ではなく、付いたり離れたり刺激し合ったりするものだと思うのです。そこに想像力の働きがある。

KDJ: Do you see your work as site-specific?

LU: My work is decided in relation to a particular location, and in relation to the space. Normally fine spaces exist everywhere, be they a mountain, a riverside, a gallery, a home, etc. But this is

very complex, and raises many difficult questions. That is why the way my work relates to the space in which it will be presented is the most important aspect I consider. But the truth is, anywhere is fine. I do not place my completed work on the spot; my work is made ready through its relation with the space where I want to place it. The relation itself is infinite.

LU: 絶えず現場との関係、そのスペースとの関係、この関係で僕の仕事が決まって行くのです。元々は、どこでもいいはずなんです、山でも川岸でも、画廊でも、個人の家でも。でも、とても複雑で、たくさん問題を抱えている。だから、一番大事なのは、絶えずその発表する場との関係で、作品をどうするかが少しずつ変わって行くことです。でも本当は、どこでもいいはずなんです、僕は場との関係で作品が出来上がっていくのであって、出来上がった作品をそこに置くということではありません。だから、関係こそが無限なのです。

PL: In the interview we made before, you said something that I found very interesting. You said that modern times have forgotten about the death of the artwork, but that you think carefully about the life and death of the artwork. What are your thoughts about the life and death of the artwork?

LU: In modern society, many things get shut off: to exist, to talk, to see, etc. A conflict between life and death without a relationship to existence: such are the characteristics of modern ontology. We call this anthropocentrism. In the Universe, there constantly is birth and death, appearing and disappearing; we all live under these circumstances. These things are always happening in my life as well. Death is nothingness: untellable, invisible; but there is no doubt that it has a relationship with ordinary life and therefore it lives within me. Because we think about death in our life, we can have an awareness of infinity.



Death is not opposite from Life, it is a facet of life, helping us to understand a fragment of infinity.

LU: 近代は、存在すること、語ること、見ることの他は、皆、シャットアウトしました。そこで生と死を存在と無のように対立させるのは、モダンオントロジーの 特徴です。これを人間中心主義といえますね。宇宙では絶えずいろんなものが生まれたり、死んだり、現れたり消えたりしているように我々は、日常そのような現状の最中にいるのです。いつも自分の中にも起こっていることです。死は無であるとか、語ることができないとか、見えないとされますが、しかしそれは、間違いなく日常、自分と共にあり関係していることです。死を含むことで無限を喚起することが出来るのです。死は生の反対概念ではなく、生を補完する無限の破片なのです。

PL: When you speak about the life and death of an artwork, I think about the fact that the work of art can change, paintings in particular. I can imagine that in 100 or 200 years the white of your paintings will be yellowish or the surfaces cracked. Are these changes that you accept, or would you then say the artwork is destroyed?

LU: I have two answers for that. One is that the work has a social responsibility. For this reason, I try to make strong work that lasts. Second and more importantly, I do not mind so much that my works will slowly break down and 'die'. Man is always trying to ensure that human-made things exist, or 'live on' forever. But, nature always works to break them down and return them to their original elements. Thus we could say nature and humans are fighting. I have a social responsibility and that is why I should be firm about my work, but, no matter how much we take care of it, it will be break up and disappear someday. I am going to die and when I die, my work will also die. Between humans and nature there exists a kind of fight.

LU: これは、二つ答えがあります。一つは、もちろん作品というのは社会的責任があります。その責任があるから、あまり壊れないようにとか、長持ちするようにしっかり作ります。もう一つ言いたい事は、長い意味では、いずれ作品も自然に帰るといふか、死ぬ。人間が作ったものをしっかり永久に保存しようと頑張る。ところが自然は、元々の自然の破片に戻そうと、そういう力と関わる。だから自然と人間とが戦う。社会的責任があるという点では、しっかり作らなければならないと思います。どんなに頑張っても所詮、それは無くなってしまいます。自分が死ぬということは、作品も死ぬことなんです。人間と、自然との間の、戦いがあるんです。

KDJ: When you say that an artwork can die and the work is about an encounter, when would you say the work is dead? Is it dead when it cannot 'speak' anymore, when the encounter is no longer possible anymore?

LU: First of all, I was born in Asia and I received an Asian education. Asians have words like 'everything is transient' (諸行無常). Asia is a monsoon region: we have a lot of rain, and for that reason everything erodes quickly. We are very conscious of erosion. With art it is the same. We create wonderful things in our life, but it is just for a moment; it does not have a guarantee of continuance. Artists are greedy, and we are always trying to preserve as much as possible, but this has limits and eventually comes to an end. Westerners made buildings with stones, like pyramids, to prevent them from collapsing. When you think of 'eternity', your image for this concept is unending. In Japanese culture, 'everything is transient' (諸行無常): made from soil and wood; everything will break down. We see infinity as something slowly disappearing. You see infinity as the existence of things going on forever, but we see infinity as the disappearing of things.

LU: それはまず一に僕のアジアで生まれ得た教育によって、アジア人というのは「諸行無常」とかいろいろ言っているです。アジア人は、モンsoon地方だから、物が例えば植物が沢山育っても、雨が多いから、すぐ腐ってなくなってしまう、物はみんな無くなるという意識があります。絵についても同じです。どんなに素晴らしいものをやっても、一瞬であって、それが持続するとは限らない。芸術家は、欲張りだから、出来るだけ持続させようとするにはあるけれど、それは限度があって、そのうち無くなる。

西洋の人は、石で壊れないように作っていく、ピラミッドのようですね。永遠を考えると、永遠を壊れない中に見ようとする。日本では、諸行無常のように、土や木で作って、これがみんな壊れていく、スーッと無くなって行くことに無限を見る。本当に違うことなんです。そちらはあることに永遠を考えるけれど、こちらは、所詮なくなること永遠を考える。

PL: I have a question about the Japanese art movement Mono-ha in the 60s, in particular concerning Nobuo Sekine and his famous work, *Mother Earth*. Why do you think it was so important for Japanese artists at that time? For many artists it was the starting point. Was it a starting point for you as well, or did you, at that time, already have your concept about art?

LU: Nobuo Sekine is my friend. His work has changed over time, but around the time he made *Mother Earth*, people did not show any interest in his work and our art. I wrote many times about that work. I tried very hard to explain it. I brought up questions about the meaning of the work, and by doing so, *Mother Earth* became well known, as did our names. That work also shows both sides: the 'creating' and 'non-creating' part. In fact, the work was just soil dug out from a hole and then put beside the hole in the ground: that was all. After the exhibition, the soil was put

back into the hole, and the work disappeared. We knew from the beginning, that it would not be permanently exhibited, just for a short period of time. There was existence and non-existence, creation and non-creation, we could see both aspects. It was a very important work.

LU: 関根 信夫は、僕の友人です。だんだん彼は、仕事が変わって行きました。その当時、「Mother Earth」のような作品を作っていたときには、あまりみんなが関心を持たなかったんですね。

僕は、その作品について書き、意味をいろいろ問うことをしたのですが、それにより、だんだんとその作品が有名になり、僕たちの名前が少しずつ出るようになったんです。あの作品も、作ることに作らないこと、両方を見せるような仕事だった。つまり大地を掘って、横に置いただけです。だから展覧会の機会が過ぎたらそれを埋めてなくしてしまいました。それは初めからわかっていたことです。永久に保存するのではなくて、それは一回きりのもの。作品が在ったか、無かったかわからない。そういうあることと、ないこと、作ることと作らないこと、その両面が見えることで、あれは、すごく大事な仕事だと思います。

KDJ: Soon I will interview Giuseppe Penone. I have noticed that your work seems to display similarities to his and I believe the two of you are good friends. What do you think makes your art different from that of Penone?

LU: Giuseppe Penone is an artist from Italy. On the surface we are totally different, but we have a common theme in our work. His metaphor is in the use of wood: through the very use of wood itself he gives a message. The object itself is not so important in his work. When I see his work, I can see the forest and ordinary trees. I can link the outside world, such as the woods, to his work.

Similarly when you see a stone in my work you can link it with stones from outside in nature. Thus, we have similarities in the point of recalling the relation with the outside world. Richard Long uses stone, Richard Serra uses steel plates, we use the same materials, but we went different ways.

LU: ジョセフ・ペノーネというイタリアのアーティストです。表面的には作品は全然違うんですが、共通項があります。彼のメタファーは、木を利用することなんです、木を利用して、様々なメッセージを示すんですけど、オブジェクトが重要なのではなく彼の作品を見ると、森だとか、周辺の木を見ることができ、彼の作品を通して、外の木やいるんな物をリンクさせることの出来る考えやヒントになっている。僕の仕事の場合も石を見ると、外にある石とか、外との関連を想起させるという点で、大変似ている。リチャード・ロングという人も石を使うとか、リチャード・セラが、鉄板を使うとか、いろいろ同じものを使うけれど、同じ素材を使うといった面で親しくなっていますが、実際向いてる方向は、お互い違います。

KDJ: I think Penone is also about encounter, but he seems to use touch as the primary means to connect with the 'other'. For you the encounter seems to be more about a visual or conceptual encounter. Or would you say an encounter for you is also about touching an object?

LU: Many people want to touch my works. I am fine when people touch the stone and steel plate works but I am not pleased when people touch my paintings, because of dirt. For me it is important to create the feeling of wanting to touch. Actually, Penone has thought a great deal about the sense of touch; he uses wood to communicate sensations that question what has happened. That is not of primary importance for me. A kind of metamorphosis or a metaphor, that which excites the imagination; that is important to me.

LU: 私の作品は、絵画も彫刻も触りたがる人が多いんですよ、鉄板や石の場合は触ってもいい。絵画の場合は触られると汚れるので困る場合があるんですけども、触りたくなるということが大事なんです。ペノーネは、実際タッチングについてすごく良く考えているんですけども、実際木を使うので、どうなっているんだろう、いろいろ覗いたり、触れてみたくなるようなことがあるんだけど、そういうことが僕に大事なんではなくて、一種のメタモル・フォーゼというかメタファーとして、いろいろな想像を掻き立てることが大事なんです。

PL: In our first interview we talked about Jacques Derrida. You said that on the one hand you were very interested in his philosophy, but that, on the other hand, you think that he covers everything up with words. What's wrong with that?

LU: I think, Jacques Derrida is a fantastic philosopher, but I felt he was living in the 'sea of words' (language). According to him, only words are acceptable, so without writing, things do not exist. He tried to perceive everything through words, and that is not such a good thing.

I'll give an example: Buddha showed his disciple a lotus flower, then his disciple smiled. By seeing his smile, Buddha saw that he understood. That kind of communication also exists. They did not use any words; they understood each other without words; they could connect.

LU: ジャック・デリダは素晴らしい哲学者だと思うけれど、あまりにも彼は言葉の海に住んでいるようなもので、言葉以外はだめだ、だから語られていないものは存在しない。彼は言葉だけで全部を見ようとする。それはちょっと困る。

仏陀は、自分の弟子に、蓮の花を見せる、そうすると、弟子はにやっと笑ったんですね、にやっと笑っただけで、こいつはお互いをわかっているんだな。そういう、コミュニケーションもあるんです。それは、言葉では何も言っていない、それは何もいっていないんだけど、わかることが出来る。通づることが出来る。

Listening to Lee Ufan speaking Japanese, hearing the sounds that came out of his mouth and seeing him making hand movements... It was fantastic to observe him. Although I did not understand anything of it, from a human perspective it was very clear to me that Lee Ufan is a good human being, very warm and open to others.

Around the end of the interview Yuko asked Lee Ufan who his favorite artist is. Lee Ufan named On Kawara. The past two years I had been working on the project ON KAWARA: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS, a project that existed in collecting questions for On Kawara from people from all over the world who know the artist personally or know his work very well. Yuko knew this. From the smile on her face, I knew good news was coming my way. Yuko translated her conversation into English. Immediately I was completely alert: I had to get Lee Ufan into my project!

I tried to explain Lee Ufan the project and asked him, begged him for a question. He smiled. He did not give me a question, not yet. Lee Ufan started saying that On Kawara has a studio around the block, just a one-minute walk from his. We were all curious: was On Kawara in Paris at the moment?

Unfortunately he was not.

But Lee Ufan told us things: how he often met On Kawara, that he really respects On Kawara, that they drink tea together and have

discussions about art. Lee Ufan explained that he was sometimes also critical about On Kawara's art. Then came his question:

なぜ、数字を用いるのでしょうか。数字にこだわるのは、数字に信仰があると私は考えるのですが、温さんはどう思われますか。

I was so happy with Lee Ufan's participation in my project, that I did not really know how to act and thanked him with a combination of bows and "thank you's". We continued the conversation.

After one and a half hours, the interview was over. When we started packing our things, Lee Ufan left for a moment to the 'kitchen'. We took the opportunity to look around the studio, to the canvasses that were leaning against the wall.

After some time, Lee Ufan returned with three catalogues. It was the book that I so badly wanted to have! The one I saw lying in the Biennale bookshop at the Giardini last year and could not afford to buy. In one year's time, my life had changed so drastically, that now I got the book from Lee Ufan himself. I asked him for a signature. He sat down and took his time. He was quiet during the signing. Mine, he signed in Roman letters; Yuko's catalogue, in Japanese kanji.

When he had finished, we exchanged business cards and spoke about our project PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE. We showed him the preliminary cover of the book, which Loder Meyer had taken with him from Germany. It was nice to see how Lee Ufan carefully checked all the names, pointing to some that he did not know, from others—quite many—he said they are his friends.

A little later, he showed us his brushes and told us about the grinding of stones to make pigment. I was happy to be there together with Lee Ufan, Yuko and Loder Meyer in Lee Ufan's

studio. It was great sharing time together. But it was time to go. It was a strange goodbye: I did not want to leave and I had the feeling that Lodermeier, Yuko and even Lee Ufan himself felt sad that the meeting was over. I thought about inviting Lee Ufan for dinner, but mainly out of a lack of 'human experience', I was not sure whether I should and let it go. We said goodbye.

Feeling full and empty at the same time, we left Lee Ufan. The three of us walked next to each other without saying a word. Although I did not know what to say, I did not want to be alone either. It must have been around 5pm and we decided to go for a drink together in another part of Paris. I was exhausted. It was one of these moments where I had been looking forward to and experienced with great pleasure, but at the same time had to give my maximum to keep up a good conversation with Lee Ufan and to contribute in making it a success. Now it had come to an end.

We found a nice café close to the Centre Pompidou. Although it was much cheaper to order our drinks at the bar and it was only 1m away from me (I could have practically stuck my arm out and just take it), we ordered 3 large beers with the waitress. We were just that exhausted—for a Dutchman this means something... At a certain moment, the conversation broke loose again and for hours we discussed everything that had happened, trying to understand what Lee Ufan had told us about his work. Three individuals, experiencing the same situation together, but all having a very different view. Again, a real encounter.

**16 JANUARY 2009**

**MIAMI, USA**

**SARAH GOLD**

Because we really appreciated the sincerity of Lee Ufan we pursued the possibility to conduct an additional interview. For the first live, life meeting with Lee Ufan I was not in Europe. Peter Lodermeier and Karlyn went to Paris to meet the artist at his studio, and with the help of Yuko Sakurai to translate; they would conduct the interview in English/Japanese.

When I later saw the photos made during this meeting, to me Lee Ufan looked like a friendly older man, clearly Asian, serious but often also with a big smile, focused on the conversation, making gestures in order to emphasize his words. Apart from traveling through Thailand for a month when I was a lot less experienced in life, and living in Tokyo for one month the year before because of the symposium we organized about Existence, I did not experience many Asians and have little "insight" in their way of being and their different behavior; but Lee Ufan looked *accessible*.

**31 JANUARY 2009**

**MIAMI, USA**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

Some days after the interview with Lee Ufan, I went to Miami to visit Sarah and Rene there. We were preparing for our symposium in the New Museum in New York, that would take place in early April that year. Yuko Sakurai was there as well, working on the transcription of Lee Ufan's answers from the interview. We decided that I would send her the questions in English. Peter Lodermeier and I had prepared some questions beforehand, but the ones we had eventually asked were different and in a certain sequence that forced me to listen to the audio recordings of the interview. It was impressive for me to hear Lee Ufan's voice again. Still, I couldn't understand anything. But it was interesting to listen to the Japanese, without having the visual impact of Lee Ufan sitting in his studio, without being there in the 'moment', just listening in a relaxed way at a Miami Beach apartment overlooking the turquoise Atlantic Ocean with some pelicans flying over.

Since my experience of participating in Hermann Nitsch's *130. Aktion* in May 2010, I am trying to experience the world around me using all my senses. At that time, however, besides 'taste' and 'touch', I was usually mainly focussed on 'looking', often not pay-

ing much attention to my other senses, unless strong sounds or smells were impossible not to notice. The interview with Lee Ufan had been a very intense moment and looking back to the event of meeting him two weeks ago came with different emotions. Listening to the recordings, it was relatively easy to have a neutral approach to the interview. Listening to the sound of Lee Ufan's voice, included all my visual impressions of that moment in Paris. The sound brought me back to his studio and the chair in the corner that I was sitting on during our meeting. But although I could depict the situation in Paris as I had experienced it, it was possible to experience Lee Ufan's voice in a new, fresh way—as to 'how' I experienced him, I do not really remember.

But not only Lee Ufan, also listening to myself I had a relatively neutral experience. Since I started working with Rene and Sarah, my life had gotten a very different speed. Especially the honest and open conversations with Rene have influenced me in great extent. I was developing my character and my experience in life was growing day by day, with large steps. I learned so much each day, that a week already seemed enough to change my position towards a certain topic and to live this opinion as if it had always been like that. Listening to a tape of something that happened two weeks ago, hearing also my own voice, was like an encounter with a different person. I knew it was me, but 'I' felt different and very far away, even though I was quite happy with my own questions. Although, I still did not know what Lee Ufan had actually said and all my information was secondhand, I felt I began to understand more and more about the art of encounter.

**18 FEBRUARY 2009**

**PACE WILDENSTEIN, NEW YORK, USA**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

In February, we had an appointment at the New Museum in New York in preparation for our symposium in April that year as well as meetings with Lawrence Weiner, Robert Barry and my interview with Peter Halley. Because the four of us would go together, we decided to drive all the way from Miami to New York. It became a memorable trip. It was here in the car, somewhere in the middle of nowhere between South Carolina and Philadelphia that we decided to make this series of special edition books: PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS.

Just like the idea for HERMANN NITSCH: UNDER MY SKIN, the idea for a project with Lee Ufan came easily: "Encounters", to collect as many encounters as possible, with Lee Ufan himself, with his work, with his thoughts... At that time, we planned the project differently. Instead of Sarah, somebody else would be writing the book together with me. Because this other person was much older than I and I assumed he had already had many encounters, at least with Lee Ufan's work, it was time to catch up quickly. I started immediately.

The few days in New York were packed with appointments. At the New Museum, of course. On Tuesday we met Robert Barry at 'le Pain



Quotidien', where we had one of his favorite almond croissants. And the next day we visited Lawrence Weiner at his studio, a meeting that resulted in an idea for PSAP #01. After meeting Lawrence it was only 3.45pm. I had some time left. I knew Thursday would be impossible, because of my interview with Peter Halley and on Friday we would be driving back to Miami. So, it was my one and only possibility.

I called the gallery that at that time was still called "Pace Wildenstein", to ask if it would be possible to visit them and see some works by Lee Ufan. Half an hour later, Yuko Sakurai and I were at 32 East 57<sup>th</sup> Street for a meeting with one of Pace's directors, a young and nice, very handsome, real American guy who seemed a little nervous. It might sound stupid, but it was only in that moment that I realized that for him I was a potential client—but if someone would have described the situation to me as the start of a porn movie, I would also have believed it. He invited us into the 'sales room' for our 'private viewing'. This was much more serious than I had imagined this visit to be. So far, I had always been on the 'uncommercial' side of the art world and still the financial side of it is for me a 'necessary evil'. Until that moment at Pace Wildenstein, I had never done anything like this before.

When I entered the space, there was already one painting standing on an ingenious 'carrier'. I was a little uncomfortable with this situation. On the one hand I enjoyed it very much: an interesting new experience, starting this new Art Project, which would be published, seeing a painting by Lee Ufan, and—I am sorry to say—but I do like being pampered like this. On the other hand, I did not want to cause him so much trouble, especially for 'no reason at all'. Of course, I understand very well that they did their maximum best—I would have done the same. But I knew I was taking advantage of the situation; I was just there for an encounter.



The salesman offered us something to drink. While pouring some glasses with water, he asked me “what I do”. I explained that I am a curator, but that unfortunately I could not tell him the reason of my visit yet. I felt quite guilty, letting him work like this for me, for an encounter with Lee Ufan’s work for a book of which the idea was only three days old... He said he accepted my secrecy and started listing some works that he would have available to see, while pointing to some images in their catalogue: “I have two pieces that are in this size, I have two in that size, I have a smaller triptych and then I have a couple of larger ones in my warehouse. Unfortunately, we can only get up to a certain size into this building. I have two in the warehouse that are 2 and a quarter meters tall and—what is this?—1m80 wide. I do not know what you are looking for?”

Neither did I... I was not looking for anything. I just wanted to see some works and I did not want to make it complicated for him. However: I did want to see a large variety of things—when you are there, you had better make the most out of it! So, I asked for a painting, a drawing and hoped there was a chance to see a sculpture somewhere. “Well, the large paintings are in the warehouse and the sculptures you can see here in the catalogue... Some of the sculptures are available.”

Two men carried in another painting and placed it on the ‘carrier’. I complimented him on the system. “Yeah, it’s an oldie, but a goody.” He continued flipping through the catalogue, commenting on the sculpture, saying that they are actually all available and that they did sell some that were not in “the show”. He gave me the prices for the two paintings in the room and glued some Post-its in the catalogue for the prices of some other works. Both paintings in the room were

titled *Dialogue*, 2008, one with one brushstroke, the other with two, each work was 162 x 130,6 cm. “Are you doing a show?” he ‘casually’ asked, “Are you looking for a client?” I felt very guilty, but did not give in. He laughed with a sound of desperation in his voice.

I got up from the couch to look at the paintings more closely, and hoping to better concentrate on them. They were beautiful, comparable to the ones I saw in Lee Ufan’s studio one month before, but smaller. Unfortunately, I could not really focus on the paintings. For me, it was too uncomfortable being there in the space, having the feeling that my every move was being watched by this salesperson.

Instead I chose to focus on this young man and asked him some questions about his relation to Lee Ufan and what he thought of the paintings. He said he liked Lee Ufan’s work a lot and that he was very easy to work with and illustrated this with examples of when he was working with Lee Ufan for an exhibition at Pace Wildenstein just a few weeks ago. He also told me that the gallery had to collect stones for one of Lee Ufan’s sculptures. The stones were brought to the warehouse, where Lee Ufan was allowed to choose from this collection the ones which he liked most and wanted to use for the work *Relatum-Expansion Place*, 2008.

With regard to the paintings, he said that in his opinion, Lee Ufan was between Agnes Martin and Robert Ryman. From what he was saying, I was not sure whether he understood what Lee Ufan is about. At least he never mentioned the word encounter and in my opinion, he lacked the sensitivity and openness that to me seemed necessary to appreciate Lee Ufan. After maybe half an hour, it had been enough and I left the gallery carrying two catalogues.

**26 MAY 2009**

**HYDE PARK, LONDON, UK**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

On 26 May 2009, I had my interview with Tatsuo Miyajima. I was in London, as the meeting was at Lisson Gallery. Yuko Sakurai joined me for taking photos and for the necessary translations. It was an impressive 2-hour meeting. After the interview, Yuko and I went to Hyde Park to relax before continuing our travels. That night I would fly to Düsseldorf, Germany, for the opening of the ZERO foundation. I believe, Yuko went to Paris. At least, she had a chance to meet Lee Ufan somewhere and we decided it might be good if I would ask Lee Ufan a few more questions. There was only a small chance that we would use them for our publication personal structures time space existence, but it would at least be an encounter for this book. There, in Hyde Park, I tried formulating questions for Lee Ufan. It was difficult. We were sitting on the grass and I remember that I felt pressured because of the deadline: I had to come up with questions NOW. I was tired and my mind was somewhere between my meeting with Miyajima and the next interview with Otto Piene a few days later. Occupied by other interviews, I could not really concentrate on Lee Ufan. Besides, Yuko was still working on the translation of the interview in January and basically, I still did not know how Lee Ufan had answered my previous questions. Normally, you can use the knowledge that you have about other artists for an inter-

view. It should not be so difficult to come up with a question, but for some reason at that moment I could not do it. I forced myself into writing down 5 questions, but they were no good. I was so ashamed of these questions, that I did not dare to look into them.

Today, 22 January 2012, almost 3 years later, is really the first time I see them again. But, like Lee Ufan, I feel I have to be honest about the encounters that I had, I have to be honest about myself and my capabilities at that point in time. And the fact is that at that moment in my life when I was writing these questions in Hyde Park, I was not open. I did not look with an open mind at Lee Ufan. I was focused on his words, not on his work. I tried to understand what he was saying, but took it mainly from my own point of view. I was not curious enough about "otherness". In a way, I was trying to fit Lee Ufan in a certain context, not opening up for what the other person had to say, but at the same time sticking to his words. I mean: I was interpreting his words from my own perspective, from the 'knowledge' I had. I did not communicate honestly with myself; I did not go against my own thoughts. It was not meant in a bad way. At the same time, I was thinking about Lee Ufan and trying to imagine what he would like, instead of seeing myself as a different entity with my own thoughts and questions about life that by meeting with those of Lee Ufan could result in an interesting conversation. From hindsight, I think that it was the result of having too much respect in combination with the idea that 'I probably understand what he means'. At that time, whenever I met a new person for whom I had a lot of respect, I was incapable of having an open encounter. The respect created a barrier which made it impossible to decrease the distance between myself and that other person. Over the past years, I have changed a lot. Because of the active confrontation with Hermann Nitsch, Roman Opalka and especially Arnulf Rainer,

I learned to see inside the other human, staying flexible and taking and enjoying the 'other' as he is.

Lee Ufan took the time to answer my questions. He would give us his handwritten answers in Japanese a few days later in Venice, on a small piece of paper. Some time later, Yuko would give me a basic translation. The answers were very honest. Lee Ufan saw me exactly how I was at that time and was upfront about it. The way I was at that time, was the exact opposite of what Lee Ufan stands for. I was like a dust ball, keeping all the used and unused language with me, never having a fresh and open encounter. From the five questions, I had given him: he answered four by telling me this. The last question he might have liked. Here it is:

You mentioned that the body is in between inside and outside. Would you describe it as a membrane for experience—also of art— influenced by our inside and outside situation?

身体は、ぼくのものではなく世界の一部なのです。まるで芸術作品みたい。芸術作品は、内部と外部の媒介項である。特に僕の作品は、オブジェクトとして、閉じているのではなく、周りとの関係を開くものである。だから、作品は、一方的にメッセージを送るものではなく、刺激、影響を与えたり、受け取ったりする両義性を持つものでなければならない。

The body is not mine; it is part of the world. It is like the artwork. The artwork is like an intermediate section between inside and outside. Especially my work, it opens the relationship with my surrounding, it is not closed. That's why an artwork has to have ambiguity, a giving and receiving of influence and stimulation, it is not unilaterally sending out a message.

**4 JUNE 2009**

**PALAZZO CAVALLI FRANCHETTI,  
VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

These were the opening days of the Venice Biennale. I was living in Vienna at the time, but visiting Sarah and Rene in Venice, where we were working hard to finish our book *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE*. They were busy times, with so many artists now in our 'home town' that we took every opportunity to meet as many as possible and take as much out of them for our project—photos, interviews etc. We had also planned a symposium at Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti, next to Academia Bridge. There were hardly any visitors, but the speakers were fantastic, especially Marina Abramović. To sit next to this power-woman and be able to ask her questions... What an experience!

After the symposium, there was a reception going on in the garden of the Palazzo. The reception was mainly planned for the visitors to the Glass exhibition that was at the first floor. We ate and drank something in the garden, where a work by Dan Graham was prominently placed in the grass. For the interview section in our book, we still needed an introduction photo and Rene came with the idea to make a photo using this installation. Lodermeier and I stood inside, talking about Liam Gillick who I was supposed to meet

that evening at the opening of the German Pavilion. Sarah stood outside. When we were done, we collected our voice recordings and finished everything properly in the Palazzo. At 4:10pm, we wanted to go home.

Rene and Sarah waited at the exit, while I picked up some bags that we left in the garden. I squatted to pick up my bag from the floor... Still halfway between squatting and standing, I looked up. All of a sudden, I was face to face with Lee Ufan. "Lee Ufan!" I cried out with great surprise. We bowed and shook hands. I was a little confused by this sudden encounter, but we greeted each other heartily. He now spoke English. After hearing Lee Ufan speak Japanese all the time, I had forgotten about his ability to speak English. It was a great pleasure to have a direct conversation with him, without an interpreter. We chatted about his schedule for the next few days, about the weather, about where he was staying and fixed the appointment we had already planned for the following morning: 9.40am at Hotel Monaco. Sarah and Rene came to check what was going on. They had never met Lee Ufan and did not know what he looked like. To be honest, I do not remember whether or not they actually got introduced to each other. I think there was a moment where we were standing in a group of six, the four of us and Lee Ufan with a very beautiful Asian woman, but I am not sure anymore.

After a few minutes, we said goodbye. Lee Ufan was with a young woman and they had to leave. This had been such a surprise! Because I had already scheduled an appointment with Lee Ufan for the next morning, this felt like an 'extra'. To meet Lee Ufan in Venice just like that, was very special.

Slowly, we walked to the front entrance of the Palazzo and stayed there some time, discussing the schedule for the rest of the day.

We had the opening of Rene's Biennale exhibition, I had to meet Liam Gillick and at a certain point we were supposed to visit Joseph Kosuth. Peter Halley also called for an appointment and there were other meetings regarding our symposium that was planned for the next day, with Anish Kapoor, Roman Opalka and Tatsuo Miyajima.

We were in the middle of this discussion, when—fifteen minutes after we had said goodbye—Lee Ufan suddenly returned. We all became quiet, instantly. Lee Ufan now came from the side entrance of the Palazzo, where there is a nice cast-iron gate. It looked as if he was lost and did not realize he had passed that part only minutes before. He also did not seem to realize that we were standing there. Rather he focused on some people who were installing a sculpture, unwrapping it and taking it off a pallet. He seemed intrigued by this spectacle and circled around it for a few minutes. Then he walked away through the fence.

**4 JUNE 2009**

**VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

In order to have a base in Europe to work on completing our publication *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE*, Rene Rietmeyer and I had decided to move to Venice in May 2009. At the same time, Rene was invited to participate at the 53<sup>rd</sup> Biennale exhibition *Glasstress* at Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti, a beautiful Venetian Gothic building, located next to the Academia Bridge. We had organized a small symposium where also Marina Abramović had spoken.

I think still impressed by the sheer power of this woman and being told that Lee Ufan was standing 30 meters away from us, seeing him for the first time in *reality*, Lee Ufan made a fragile impression. He was accompanied by a good looking, younger Asian woman. Was that his wife? Yuko Sakurai had approached him to meet us, but he had declined. What was the reason he did not want to meet us? Was he too shy? Or were we too “brutally western”? Although I knew that Lee Ufan is by origin Korean—of which I had no experience at that moment—, most of his adult life he has spent in Japan. Having a little Japan experience, it seems that for them our behavior is often too *barbaric* and *direct*.



**5 JUNE 2009**

**HOTEL MONACO, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

Around 8am, Yuko Sakurai and I left our apartment in Murano to be in time for our meeting with Lee Ufan. Before 9.40am we were in Hotel Monaco, close to San Marco Square in Venice. It was only a short meeting, maximum ten minutes. Lee Ufan had answered my questions—the ones I made in London, a few days earlier. We would meet to pick up the paper with his handwritten answers.

We were early and waited in the lobby for his arrival. It was interesting to see Lee Ufan again, when he came walking in the lobby: this fragile-looking Asian body in a big, quite modern space. Especially after having seen him the day before and having so many meetings with other artists, it almost became 'normal' to pay him a quick visit.

When Lee Ufan came, he immediately apologized saying that he had another meeting right after. He gave Yuko the little yellow paper with Japanese characters on it, saying something to her that I could not understand. I watched Lee Ufan while they were speaking. He seemed tired. I thanked Lee Ufan for taking the time to answer my questions. We continued chatting about his program for today, while Yuko took some photos of us and portraits of Lee Ufan alone. A moment later, we were done and said goodbye.

**19 SEPTEMBER 2009**

**RIVA LONGA 17B, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

The last days before the printing of our book *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE*. It was September and for the past month Rene and I had been working together day and night to finish our book. I woke up at 6:45am, from the shouting in the room next to me. Amongst other things, Lodermeyer and Rene seemed to be fighting about the translation of Lee Ufan's interview, not about the content, but about whether or not it should be written in what we call "Shakespeare English".

First I stayed in bed: I hate fights and did not want to have anything to do with this negativity. Then I realized Lodermeyer would soon be leaving to return to Germany. I wanted to say goodbye to him and so I decided to join the group. It took a long time, the discussion—or maybe that was only my experience. Rene and Yuko had done their maximum best for this translation. It had been very difficult. In the beginning of August, I had done some basic corrections on the translation myself and already with these grammar and spelling changes I had a lot of difficulties: it requires a full understanding, openness, and the will and capacity to imagine what the other person is trying to say without taking in your own thoughts, but at the same time expressing these thoughts in your



own' words... The discussion was long and—in my opinion—useless. But once again it was made obvious, how difficult it can be to be open-minded and just let things be.

In the evening, I was writing introductions about the artists in our book, Rene and Yuko were checking the last things in the translation of the Lee Ufan interview as if nothing had happened that morning. I listened with one ear while focusing on my own work. Suddenly I realized the openness in my character that I had developed in the past months. I had changed. Again hearing the discussion about 'Dialogue', now in a slow way between two people who were neutrally and very seriously checking each word, I wondered the extent to which Lee Ufan had influenced me. More and more I understood the effect Lee Ufan has on my life.

**1 – 5 OCTOBER 2009**

**OBERLIMBERG, GERMANY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

The story around Lee Ufan's interviews had not come to an end yet. The entire discussion is not our 'finest hour' and I am not even sure if it can count as an 'Encounter with Lee Ufan', but at the time of writing, I feel there is one important aspect in the story that gives an insight in Lee Ufan.

From 1 to 5 October, I was in Oberlimberg, a tiny village in Germany. It was the weekend before the printing of our book. Sarah and Rene had already gone back to Venice, because of a meeting with a collector. I stayed to finish and oversee the printing of the book. Lodermeyer came to visit these days to help me proofreading all texts for a final check before publishing. In the first hour after his arrival until the very moment before the last metal plate went on the press, the Lee Ufan interviews were the point of discussion. But I let it go and let him sort it out with Yuko, who was there as well. Lee Ufan had 12 pages in our book; there were 436 other pages that needed to be finished proofreading before Monday morning 8 o'clock. Plus: for as far as I could judge, the translation was very good, just no Shakespeare English. It was readable for everybody with an average understanding of the English language, without a dictionary on the side. Lee Ufan himself was fine with the text and

had given his approval for its publication. Although we normally publish anything, for many different reasons, we decided not to publish the part about 'Dialogue' in our January 2009 interview and took it out. Lee Ufan had been fine with the text either way. He had commented that he did not like the section about 'Dialogue' either, but for him it was part of the encounter and so he let it be: this was the way it was.

**2 DECEMBER 2009**

**FLIGHT VENICE – LONDON**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

After the printing of our book and a visit to New York, I went to London. It was mainly a pleasure trip, since there was no real, logical reason for me to go there. I had a meeting with Antony Gormley about an article for Sculpture Magazine and there was an exhibition of Tatsuo Miyajima's *Pile Up Life* at Lisson gallery that I wanted to review for another magazine. But that was all: just some nice relax things. Now the book was published, there was the possibility to focus again on other things and my project with Lee Ufan was one of them. Since I was planning to go to Lisson gallery anyway, I had called them to ask if it would be possible to see some works of Lee Ufan. On the phone, they did not ask me 'why' and I did not tell.

My flight from Venice to London was at 5pm. During the flight, I read a book about Lee Ufan in preparation for my new encounter on that coming Friday, 4 December. Because it was light, I brought the book I had received from Pace Wildenstein. It was the catalogue from an exhibition one year ago. It can be opened from two sides. Maybe I am completely missing the point, but for me this system felt like a 'gimmick' and did not seem to fit to Lee Ufan. Anyway, I started with the gray-colored side. After the title page

there is a photo from Lee Ufan sitting on a stone, surrounded by metal plates, stones and split, on the background is the forest with for me unusual types of trees. Seeing Lee Ufan sitting on that stone, his hands on his knees, staring into the camera, felt strange to me. It is not like the friendly, smiling man I met in Paris and Venice. It was like a pose, it did not seem natural to me, especially in comparison to his sculptures. I wondered what he was thinking during the time he was doing his exhibition and publication for this gallery. For both parties, it must have been an interesting encounter between different cultures.

On the next page is a detail of a brush stroke, cut over two pages. Also the top is cut off. The brushstroke seemed broken, incomplete, like an incomplete encounter. At that moment in the plane, it felt to me like a lack of respect for Lee Ufan's encounter with the canvas. Whether it is or is not, it is perhaps more interesting to question whether something like a complete encounter exists. Maybe every encounter is incomplete, like every experience is incomplete. Maybe the experience as such is a complete experience, but from the moment you tell someone else about it, or you start writing about it or visualize it in an artwork, it is incomplete. In the moment, the time between experiencing and communicating the experience, certain elements get lost. Now as well: I am trying to write about my encounter with a book, but the moment of writing is much later than the actual experience. I do not remember everything anymore. Even my notes, which I wrote down during the encounter, are only a very small part of the total. But then again: if I would have instantly written it down or would have used a voice recorder like in my encounter of 26 November 2011 at Palazzo Bembo in Lee Ufan's Venice Biennale installation in our PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition, I would also have felt that I was missing something.

Sometimes, I even have the feeling that I am missing the most important part of the encounter. Some feelings or experiences are very difficult to describe and I do not know if—being in the moment—you can put all your feelings into words.

Naming your feelings forms these feelings and give them a direction which excludes other options. Wittgenstein would probably not agree, but dealing with my encounters, encountering Lee Ufan, I have often experienced certain feelings that I could not formulate and for me, these feelings do exist. They are there. They remain very personal, because I cannot communicate them and probably they will get lost over time, because I will forget.

Maybe for someone reading my texts now and having a distance, it is very easy to see. But for me... I keep having the feeling of not being able to say what it was 'really' like. I can write about the main elements of the situation. I can write about certain feelings and experiences. But still I feel I am missing the ability to communicate something that is essential and that maybe I can best describe as a confrontation that 'I do not know'. When I would have to describe very generally what is the feeling I had in every encounter in this book, it is this experience that 'I do not know'.

It may sound strange (and contradictory), but at other moments I have the feeling that this confrontation with 'I do not know' is exactly what the encounter is all about. Maybe the acknowledgment that you do not know is the start from which you would have to continue experiencing, experiencing who is this 'I', who or what is the 'other' and how these two are related.

Another question that I have asked myself is: when does the experience, the encounter stop? Now that I'm telling about my

encounter from reading and being in the plane two years ago, is this current moment not also part of the encounter? Are they two different moments or should I see them together? Should my life be seen as the umbrella for or the collection of all the encounters that I had?

I continue flipping pages in the book. There are images of paintings with brushstrokes that started from 'the side' rather than from 'the top' of the canvas. I wonder how Lee Ufan created these works. He told me, that he builds a wooden construction over the painting for him to stand on, bend over—I imagine him standing on this wooden construction in a perfect 90° angle—and pull the brush towards him, leaving a mark on the canvas. This is how I have it in my memory, but that would mean that Lee Ufan would encounter these particular paintings from the side. So that means: different from the way that I am looking at it now. Some brushstrokes are quite long. It probably depends on the length of Lee Ufan's arms, what the maximum length of one brush stroke can be. On two pages, there are still the Post-Its glued on them, with the price and the work's usual location—the prices seem appropriate to me for the artwork it is. They are the works that I had seen at Pace. Although I am not materialistic, looking at these works the thought comes up, that it would be nice to own a work by Lee Ufan. Then you can encounter it every day, confronting yourself every day that you should encounter with fresh eyes.

The woman from Lisson Gallery that I am supposed to meet for my encounter there, had sent me two images this morning of the works that will be installed for me in their viewing room. I was very pleased receiving them and felt great enthusiasm for this upcoming meeting. A new encounter, a new possibility to see Lee Ufan... This morning when looking at the images of Lee Ufan's works, the

paintings seemed fresh, lively. However, now I come to think of it: I was fresh and lively. Do I see only myself? Is how I experience the work only a projection of the feeling I already had? Do I stick to my interpretation, to my own thoughts? Or does Lee Ufan have such a positive effect on me that it influences my way of experiencing?—which would also indicate an un-fresh encounter... I do not know.

I focus on the book again and start from the other side. Also this part begins with a photo of Lee Ufan, probably in his studio in Japan. He is standing on his wooden construction, over a painting with a brush in his hands, painting. It looked as if the brush was really touching the canvas. I remember the situation with Roman Opalka in his studio in France, when Sarah and I wanted to take a photo of him while painting for our project ROMAN OPALKA: TIME PASSING. He told us that he never really paints, that he always fakes it, keeping his brush very close to the canvas. At first, he wanted to fake it with us as well. Then we convinced him otherwise: we like things to be real.

Here, seeing Lee Ufan on this photo, it looks as if he is really painting: the brush seems to be touching the canvas. Looking closely, it becomes clear that this brushstroke is made up of different layers of paint. This process of painting seems important to him. Maybe it is even that what it is all about. But what does that mean? Should the brushstroke not be one single stroke? One mark saying 'I exist'? Is aesthetics in the way when you make different layers over each other? I recently found a video on internet in which I saw Lee Ufan carefully touching up his brushstroke with a small brush. Maybe Opalka is right about Lee Ufan when he told us that for him Lee Ufan became too aesthetic. Or maybe an encounter exists of different elements and is this layered brushstroke for Lee Ufan a way to express this. Unfortunately, these questions only come to me now...

too late for this book. I have many questions that I wonder about now that I am writing this book: Would he still be interested in his paintings after he finished them? I do believe that he wants to create an awareness in others. Also I wonder: when the moment of painting, the moment of the encounter is so important, why does he only date his works with a year? And not with a specific date and time? Maybe even a location?

Reading the text next to the photo, I think about the possibility of giving a value judgment in relation to an encounter. Is it possible to have a bad or a good encounter? Or is an encounter always 'just' an encounter? Probably Lee Ufan answered this in an indirect way when we were dealing with the publication of his interviews. Probably, you can experience an encounter as good or bad, but you still have to see it as an encounter: it is the way it was at that particular moment in time. The 'art of encounter' seems like an ethics, it shows an answer to the question of 'how to live?'. ... I am the encounter. I am, my life is, a sequence of encounters, a series of experiences. When I encounter something on my own (a Lee Ufan painting, for example) without the presence of another person there, I have my experience. For the people who are reading or listening to my encounter, what comes out of my mouth or what is standing on this piece of paper, the way I tell it or write about it, is for them (part of) the encounter. And others can judge that, including myself.

My thoughts return to Lee Ufan's reaction to the final questions that I posed to him last May. Lee Ufan had had an encounter with me in the way I was that Spring of 2009. His answers to my questions seemed to include a judgement of the way I was. But this 'judgement' should not be a fixed judgement, it should be a temporary opinion that needs to be reviewed every time. Like Tatsuo Miyajima told

me in the interview of 26 May 2009: "Everything keeps changing, life keeps changing... Even 'keep changing' is constantly changing. It also has a link with 'continue forever'. The meaning of forever in Western theory is 'permanent'. In fact, the thoughts they have for it is that forever is unchanged, but my concept of forever is, that as a matter of fact, even the stages themselves of my concept of forever change." If I understand enough of Lee Ufan's philosophy, also his opinions and judgements are always changing and I hope that Lee Ufan is indeed living this philosophy.



**4 DECEMBER 2009**

**LISSON GALLERY, LONDON, UK**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

Today I was going to Lisson Gallery. I had a meeting at 11. The person handling all Lee Ufan affairs at that time was abroad; her assistant welcomed me. Exactly at 11am, she came down the stairs: a small, smiling young woman. We went next door, to the warehouse or 'viewing room'. It had nothing of the luxury at Pace Wildenstein. A large white door. It was cold in there, so I left my coat on. There were people working, dusting off some artworks. The space was clean, filled with art. There was no room on the walls anymore; on the ground were sculptures. There were especially lots of Anish Kapoor's. After turning a corner, I saw Lee Ufan. All the way at the back. Two paintings were hanging opposite of each other. On the left side was *Correspondance* from 2003; on the right, *Dialogue* from 2007. There was a lot of space between them. I do not remember exactly, but it must have been at least 10 to 15 meters of emptiness.

Although the warehouse was full of art, all of a sudden—when seeing Lee Ufan's works—the space felt empty. It was as if the paintings swallowed me. I was completely drawn into them. Before I was chatting with the assistant; now I was completely silent, for a long time. I was aware of her presence and found I

had to ask her questions, about her thoughts about Lee Ufan. But I could not. I was like a statue, just standing there between those two works. When looking at the one painting, I felt the presence of the other one in my back. Left of me the assistant was standing. I felt her looking at me. The paintings were pushing everything else away. It was interesting for me to realize that these 'simple' paintings, 'just' a brushstroke on a white surface, have such a strength that they overpower the bombastic colors of the often large Kapoors. Although in another situation, they (the Kapoors) might have been very impressive, now I did not notice these 20-odd works anymore. In the back of my head, I knew that they were there, but they were almost non-existent, just some vague colors without importance.

After a certain amount of time, I walked closer, put my bags on the floor and asked the assistant if I could ask her some questions. She said, "Yes," and I asked her why she likes Lee Ufan so much. She started shining; there was a sparkle in her appearance. "It gives me peace," she said. Then she tells me it was so hard for her to speak with Lee Ufan, because he hardly speaks any English. But she remembered he is a "sweet man" with a nice. She met him during Lee Ufan's exhibition at Lisson Gallery not so long ago. And once before, when Lee Ufan had come to the gallery some months earlier to prepare the exhibition. She brought him tea. Lee Ufan apparently was sitting in the center of the empty space, "contemplating". She did not see the installation of the show, but apparently Lee Ufan had mainly been supervising everything, not installing himself. Heavy stones that had to be carried down the steps to the cellar-room. [Now, at the point of writing, I know exactly what this means...] I asked her about how it was for her to see the Lee Ufan exhibition every day, how it was

for her to encounter the work on a daily basis. She said that some shows are eventually very boring, that she loses interest in them. However, Lee Ufan to her was great. She started shining again and said, "A little bit of peace every time."

For me, the presence of this woman (and generally: other people or other objects in the space) was very much part of the encounter. It gives a feeling of being together. It may sound strange, but looking at the Lee Ufan paintings together was even quite intimate to me, and gave a warm, loving feeling. It is a total experience and not only about the paintings as such. My attention was shifting between looking at the two paintings and being there with the assistant. I showed her the pages with Lee Ufan's interview in the book that I had brought with me. Also I told her about the Encounters project. We continued speaking about the paintings, the brushstroke and the white surface color.

I could not take my eyes off the paintings and kept turning around to look from the one to the other. At that moment, I liked the one with two marks, the one from 2003, better. Maybe because of the color of the paint or because the brushstrokes seemed more simple, but I have no other reason at this point. The later painting, with one brushstroke, had a thicker mark. The top of the brushstroke was at least 2 or 3 mm thick. At that time, I was not sure how Lee Ufan painted the brushstrokes. The assistant did not know either, but from the thickness of the mark on this 2007 painting, I got the feeling that Lee Ufan had painted another layer with color over a 'base'. I could not imagine how else he could have done it, with only one stroke—maybe by starting with a large amount of paint on his brush and softly pushing this paint up before pulling the brush towards him, but that seems to turn this 'mark of existence' into an aesthetic act. In

any case, it must require a tremendous amount of concentration and precision to make it like this.

The texture of the surface of the painting seems always very smooth. It looks like a special paint, which seems quite artificial, not like the natural ground stone used for the brushstroke—Lee Ufan had told us about this grinding of stone when we visited him for the interview in January that year. It is also quite thick and shines a little too. The sides of the canvas are covered with the same material. Still very much in our personal structures: time space existence publication, I think of my interview with Marcia Hafif, who does not paint the sides, because for her it is about the surface of the painting. Would Lee Ufan think differently about this? He might like the continuation inside the rest of the space, that the work or the encounter does not stop at the end of the canvas.

Time was flying. I had the feeling we were there only for a short time, but in fact it was 45 minutes. I could probably have looked longer, but I noticed that my focus was shifting more towards the presence of the assistant, rather than on Lee Ufan. It was time to go. We turned around and suddenly the colored objects became Anish Kapoor artworks again. After locking the door behind us, the assistant took me to the other gallery location, where Miyajima's *Pile Up Life* exhibition was. Inside, she gave me the book *The Art of Encounter*. After my own experience, I understood exactly the tremendous amount of work that it must have taken to translate Lee Ufan's words and was quite impressed by this book. The Miyajima exhibition was too much for me now. Instead, I went to a nearby pub to make notes about my encounter.

**6 JANUARY 2010**

**LEE UFAN STUDIO, PARIS, FRANCE**

**SARAH GOLD**

For our upcoming PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition at the Künstlerhaus in Bregenz, Austria, we decided that we would like to include a work by Lee Ufan. We arranged that this would be possible and because Lee Ufan was not in Paris at that moment, we had to meet with his assistant Mr Moon to collect the painting. The studio of Lee Ufan is close to the Moulin Rouge and driving there with a rental bus and little parking possibilities, I remember the feeling of becoming alive; *real life*. Because the work was not crated, Rene Rietmeyer had prepared a wooden frame, in order to place the large canvas inside. Until now, I had never seen any work by Lee Ufan in reality. All I knew was that the work was called *Dialogue*, which had been created in 2007 and the measurements were 227 x 182cm. After calling Mr Moon on his mobile he opened the big gate and we entered the courtyard. The mysterious Mr Moon turned out to be a friendly Korean man, maybe late thirties, early forties; he did not speak English, but could speak French with Rene. He guided us through the courtyard, to the right side of a building. When we entered, I could see to the left, in front and to the right, probably around thirty paintings leaning against the walls of the studio. They were looking at me as to communicate, "Take me with you", but without being unhappy with their present location.



What paintings: they conveyed curiosity, tranquility, stability and presence all in one. We took off our shoes and got given slippers, which were in abundance—as if awaiting a lot of guests—on the left of the door was the entrance. Now, the moment of truth had come. Mr Moon pointed to *Dialogue* and *Dialogue* looked huge. My worries about the frame being too small were steering up. We lay the transport frame on the floor, took the padding which we had packed before with special foam and carefully but without hesitation, placed it into the wooden structure. It fitted perfectly; what a relief! We handled the further packing very professional and finished with the paperwork, the famous *loan forms*.

Mr Moon and Rene carried *Dialogue* out of its safe environment of the studio over the courtyard, through the gate, crossed a two lane street, through a small park, again over a two lane street, turned right, walked for another 100 meters, to finally arrive at our bus. Mr Moon told us that he is an artist. We gave him as a present our *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE* publication and told him a little bit about our project. We thanked him for his time and asked him if his name is really “Moon”, to which he replied, “yes, like moon”, making a circled movement around his face, which is really moon-shaped.

**6 JANUARY 2010**

**LEE UFAN STUDIO, PARIS, FRANCE**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

The opening of our exhibition in Bregenz, Austria, would be on 15 January 2010. Although there had already been many world-wide exhibitions of the project *PERSONAL STRUCTURES*, Sarah and I had never organized a large and complex group-exhibition before and so, Bregenz was planned as a test for our Venice Biennale exhibition one year later, in 2011. With 27 participating artists, 700m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space, a very limited budget and only four weeks to prepare (which included Christmas and New Year), it was a challenge. Through the contacts we had built up thanks to our book, it was relatively easy to call a number of artists to participate: Giuseppe Penone, Lawrence Weiner, Arnulf Rainer... Lee Ufan was also included. I was excited about the presence of Lee Ufan's work in our own exhibition and a possible new encounter. Lee Ufan's assistant, Mr Moon, handled the affairs.

For different reasons, we decided to do the transportation ourselves, in the sense that we would actually drive 3000km to pick up most of the artworks. We rented a Hertz van and made a little tour through Europe.

On 6 January we drove to Paris to meet Mr Moon and pick up a painting at Lee Ufan's studio on Boulevard De Clichy. There was

a lot of traffic in Lee Ufan's street and it was difficult to find a good parking space. The neighborhood looked very familiar: the Carrefour where I bought my paprika's, the bench where we waited, the door of Lee Ufan's building. After a few rounds around the block, we stopped at the gas station near Lee Ufan's studio. From that position, we could see that Mr Moon was already waiting for us. He was smoking a cigarette in front of the door to the courtyard. Rene stayed inside; Sarah and I got out of the van to greet him.

Mr Moon took us to the studio to show us Lee Ufan's painting. The interview had made such an impression on me that I could still draw a picture of the space in my mind. To actually be there again, was like coming home, in the sense that everything had a history and felt very much part of my life. The paintings leaning against the wall, the table we had been sitting at, the posters on the wall, the little kitchen in the back... At the same time, I knew that it was only my, maybe unrealistic, perception. The feeling of familiarity I had, depended in fact on one meeting and Lee Ufan might not even remember me.

Mr Moon showed us the painting. It was beautiful. An immaculate white surface with one brushstroke approximately in the horizontal center, but a little bit down from the middle. In my best French, I asked Mr Moon if he could help us with the front door, so that Rene could drive the bus into the courtyard. Luckily, he understood and rushed away from me. I followed—carefully, because it had been snowing. He opened the doors to the courtyard, but they were too narrow for the van.

While Rene parked our van opposite Lee Ufan's studio on the other side of the green park that divides the two lanes, Mr Moon and I went back into the studio. Sarah waited outside. Now, I was

alone with Mr Moon. With hands and feet and in a combination of French and Italian, I tried communicating with him. From what I could detect, Mr Moon, a Korean, did not seem to speak French very well either. But we seemed to do fine together. From what I understood, Mr Moon was already working with Lee Ufan for 10 years, as his assistant. He arranges everything for Lee Ufan in Paris. With a smile on his face, he told me about a secret studio that Lee Ufan uses to 'make' his sculptures and where he himself works as a sculptor. I wanted to tell him how special it was for me to be here again. By pointing to the little desk in the corner, I told Mr Moon that one year ago I sat there during an interview. He smiled. A second later, Sarah and Rene entered the studio. Rene introduced himself and asked Mr Moon about his name. With his finger, he pointed at his face and made a circle: moon-face!

We packed the painting in a frame that Rene had built especially. It went very easily. Together, we brought the work to our van. Mr Moon and Rene carrying the painting; Sarah and I stopping traffic, so that the others could pass quickly. Over the street, crossing the little park to where our van was. We attached the painting in its frame to the side of the bus. After Mr Moon signed the loan form, we drove off. There we went, through the heart of Paris, over the Champs-Élysées in our rented van with a painting worth a quarter of a million in the back.

**7 JANUARY 2010**

**TRAVELING THROUGH FRANCE,  
GERMANY AND AUSTRIA**

**SARAH GOLD**

Normally when I am traveling with expensive items, I do not feel comfortable, but now with Lee Ufan in the back of the van I was not too worried; maybe also because we had picked up another work by the Japanese artist Toshikatsu Endo. The work by Endo felt the opposite of Lee Ufan. Endo's work was *Untitled*, a sculpture consisting of 5 pieces of wood, forming a four diameter circle with copper rings and weighing around 600kg. The wood had been brutally carved, smeared with tar and then burned. It had been *lost* for twenty years and got recovered by the persistence of Rene Rietmeyer. With quite some physical effort we had dragged the different parts from a storage, located somewhere in the centre of Paris, into our rental van. It felt as if it had been sleeping for twenty years and now it was coming alive, archaic, basic, waiting to be reassembled into its primal shape. For me it felt as if *Untitled* protected the subtle and in comparison fragile work by Lee Ufan, which was standing in the back. Lee Ufan's painting had never been asleep: since its creation, it had been always ready to communicate. Patiently the works traveled with us, waiting to be displayed wherever we would bring them.

**8 JANUARY 2010**

**KÜNSTLERHAUS BREGENZ, AUSTRIA**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

In the morning of 8 January, we started installing our exhibition in Bregenz, Austria. Since I joined our project PERSONAL STRUCTURES in 2007, we had organized a few small exhibitions and some symposia, but to me it felt as if we had spent most of our time in creating our publication. This feeling is probably not really correct, but at that time in January 2010 it felt like that to me. And that means that to me it felt that this exhibition was one of the first times that I could be part of presenting personal structures to the outside world. It felt like a turning point and to me it was a real start.

Unfortunately, the minute we arrived, the only person the museum had for doing the installation, became ill and would probably not get better until two days after the opening. We had to do everything ourselves: Rene, Sarah and I. To get into it, we started with the easy things: hanging Lee Ufan's painting. We wanted to have it out of the way, safely on the wall.

There is not much to say about it. It was only a short moment. We were busy and so, no quiet moment to contemplate. The painting was indeed very easy to hang; it did not take us more than fifteen minutes. But it was for me the first time that I was physically

'working' with a Lee Ufan artwork. I like this physical aspect of dealing with art. To do that with Lee Ufan, felt great. Also, I had not often been dealing with such an expensive artwork before. For as far as I can remember now, the only other time was a work from Roman Opalka that we exhibited in Amsterdam 3 years earlier. This made me a little nervous, especially when looking at this clean, white surface that was almost 'asking' for stains...

We measured everything out and hung the painting on a few screws. I stood on the right-hand side of the work, with my gloves on, and together with Rene I lifted the painting. It was heavy. Holding the painting and looking to the side of the work, I noticed Lee Ufan's signature. Before, I had wondered whether and where Lee Ufan signed his canvasses. "L. Ufan" it said in Roman letters, and "top", with a little arrow that was luckily pointing upward. It looked cute. Two seconds later we were done. On to the next!

**8 JANUARY 2010**

**KÜNSTLERHAUS BREGENZ, AUSTRIA**

**SARAH GOLD**

In the morning we started to unpack the van, dragging Endo out, leaving him in the snow outside of the museum: after twenty years he first needed a good scrub. After we brought the big, red and wild painted Boxes called *SHARK VALLEY, USA* by Rene Rietmeyer inside, together with 24 crates containing steal Boxes called *SAARLAND, GERMANY*. Finally *Dialogue* was freed and after we had carried the work inside, unpacked and hung it, the painting looked spectacular. What a big white canvas, pure, powerful, but without being overwhelming in a negative sense. Now I could see more closely the *mark* Lee Ufan had placed on the canvas; his *encounter*. What was this encounter made of? It felt natural. Little time I had to think about it all, we had a show to set up, and for one week we worked morning to night until the exhibition looked sophisticated, mature and surprising.



**16 JANUARY 2010**

**KÜNSTLERHAUS BREGENZ, AUSTRIA**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

It was Saturday, one day after the opening of our exhibition in Bregenz and exactly one year after the interview with Lee Ufan in Paris. It was a slow day: we had been working very hard the past week to finish everything in time for the opening and yesterday I had been going to a disco with the owner of our printing company in Germany to celebrate the publishing of the first tests of my book *ON KAWARA: UNANSERED QUESTIONS*. Still a little dizzy from last night's alcohol and lack of sleep, at 1:12pm I took my time for an encounter with Lee Ufan.

Lee Ufan's painting was hanging in the exhibition space on the ground floor. Except for some friends of the director, there were no visitors in the exhibition and so I closed the doors. The painting was hanging on the utmost right; in the center was a large work from Carl Andre: 32 units of Western red cedar wood. The blocks were placed in a curve that covered up most of the space, creating what felt like a separate area for Lee Ufan. After closing the doors behind me, it was quiet. The only sounds came from Carl Andre's wood that sometimes cracked and a more zooming sound from Heinz Mack's rotors that were hanging on the opposite wall. I was alone with the artworks and sat down on the floor at a 4m distance from

Lee Ufan. Maybe I was just floating, but my thoughts were jumping from one subject to the next, not really thinking about anything in particular... just a train of thoughts.

There was a meditative atmosphere, but maybe that was more my zombie mode. Staring at his painting, the brushstroke seemed to come loose from the 'background,' which disappeared in the wall. I let everything go and just looked at the painting, while listening to the cracking of the wood. The painting lured me in, while the cracking sound kept me aware of the space I was in. I felt my own size, my body in the space. Sitting down, I was smaller than the wooden sculpture. When someone would enter the space, he would not be able to see me. I felt small. Not only in size, but in meaning too.

I thought about 'the encounter,' in general as well as this particular one, and wondered about a 'fresh' encounter. I had seen this painting every day for the past week, but it felt different now that I took the time to look at it. The past days, I had been busy installing the exhibition, but each time I had looked at Lee Ufan, he reminded me that I should encounter in a fresh way. Not easy... I am not blindly following Lee Ufan's philosophy, trying to live a life in the way that he is prescribing. The thing is that since I learned about Lee Ufan's way of thinking, his way of living a life and dealing with others, elements that I found important in life anyway have been more accentuated and have triggered me to actively change myself into what I consider to be a 'good person.' I mean: there is a difference between thinking you should be open-minded about others and actually being open-minded. Lee Ufan (whether it is himself as a person, his work or his thoughts—if this is not 'one') triggered me in taking the consequences of my thoughts.

A little later, I got up to look at the painting from close-by. On the side it said: "L. Ufan '07", followed by a little arrow. Above the brushstroke, I could see the shine from what seemed to be 'glue.' It looked yellowish too. Now I was standing so close, I saw that for this brushstroke Lee Ufan used more pigment than in the one I had seen at Lisson Gallery. It was so strong and effective. The hairs of the brush. How much paint would be on the brush to make the stroke this thick? There were several small points next to the brushstroke—is it indeed ground stone?

I've become very cold, so I leave the space for a moment to get my cardigan. Upon entering the space again, I saw the Lee Ufan. The white background is a very soft and warm color, more yellow than the color of the wall. Most of the time, I looked at the brushstroke and often thought about my meeting with Lee Ufan in his studio last year. I visualize the way he looked. For me, Lee Ufan's existence is the same as the brushstroke on the canvas. They are one and the same. I do not make a distinction.

After some time, I felt so at ease with the painting that I started focusing on other things. I looked outside through the window to the beautiful, white, Austrian landscape, then at Carl Andre. Once more I felt small. Looking at the Lee Ufan again, I lost myself in the work once again as if I merged into it. Why, actually? A train of thoughts started again. I just let them come, without being ashamed. Honestly taking them for what they were: my thoughts from that moment.

Why is the brushstroke often placed so low on the canvas? What would Lee Ufan use as the basis for his brushstrokes? How would it be for Lee Ufan after he finished a painting? How would he feel? When is his encounter over? Does he still care about the work once

it is finished? Because of the thickness of the brushstroke there is often a strong shadow. Does Lee Ufan anticipate on this? Is it his intention that it seems as if the brushstroke comes loose of the background? Brushstroke, canvas, wall, room, building... world? Of how many layers does the brushstroke exist? How would Lee Ufan's movement be? Away from or towards himself?

I started to get hungry, which reminded me of a conversation I once had with one of my professors about the time of your body: as much as you would sometimes like to, you cannot eliminate your physical state from an encounter. I was already sitting there for more than one hour. Time seems to disappear when being with Lee Ufan. The encounter could be described as one moment that started when I entered the space and would finish when I would leave. In this moment, the time on the clock is moving, but for me—my experience of it—it seemed not to exist. I lost track of time. As if I am in isolation, for a moment away from it all, from the rest of the world.

I did not want the encounter to be over yet and started moving around in the space and to look at the exhibition we had created. Lee Ufan fitted well together with Carl Andre, Yuko Sakurai and Tatsuo Miyajima and I was happy with the way we displayed the works. Here Lee Ufan did not push everything else away. There seemed to be a balance with the other works in the space. There was quietude, silence and power. I wondered what others might think of Lee Ufan. Is he powerful for others as well? What would others think of his work and what would they experience when looking at it? To what extent would coincidence, feeling and mood play a role for Lee Ufan in the creation process? And in my own encounter? Lee Ufan made the impression of being a rational person and sensitive at the same time. Realistic.

Why is it that his work means so much to me? I have previously described his work as a 'reminder' and as a confrontation with 'I do not know'. Why do I find Lee Ufan's work so beautiful? Maybe the answer is the same... Probably, because to me, Lee Ufan's thoughts and work go beyond being works of art. It is not this particular object here, but it is connected to a philosophy or to ethics. They show a way to live. In this way, the work is not only this particular work of art here, but an encounter with myself. Plus: each work does not stand on its own. The body of work that Lee Ufan created, shows coherence. In addition, the quietude of his work relaxes me and opens up my brain to think about life, to allow a moment of reflection. The work even 'forces' me to do so. The simplicity of the work (just a brushstroke, a metal plate, a stone...) is a reduction to the element of art: a proof of existence. Nothing more, nothing less than that. It is what it is; it does not seem to tell any other story. It simply shows "this is me, Lee Ufan, and I exist".

To me, this humble message is very strong. And it takes me along with it. I believe Lee Ufan mentioned some time that an encounter with his work is also an encounter with the world...

Although I know Lee Ufan does not really like it, I touched the painting. Standing on a 10cm distance I could not resist. The wish to touch it was suddenly so strong...

My concentration (which was already limited that day) was gone and I felt empty. After that, thoughts did not come anymore. After more than two hours, I decided to leave.



16 JANUARY 2010

KÜNSTLERHAUS BREGENZ, AUSTRIA

SARAH GOLD

The exhibition had opened, Karlyn and I had given our first speech together, and looking at the photos seeing our red faces, you could tell that it had been exciting for us. Now there was a moment of calm, Karlyn had her encounter with Lee Ufan. I was doing all kinds of different things, sometimes entering the room where I saw Karlyn. Karlyn watching *Dialogue*, walking around in front of the painting; what was she encountering, what did she think?

Later that day Rene made photos from us for our documentation and whilst standing in front of Lee Ufan, I had a closer look at his trace; his "fingerprint". The grey-blue tones of the square shaped *brushstroke*, the thickness of it. All was very intriguing. On a photo, I had seen that he made his paintings whilst they were lying on the floor, and with a shelf system *hovering* above, he would create his encounter with the canvas. But was this a single encounter? It has such a *complete* feeling to it; can you achieve this feeling within one encounter? And to achieve this kind of gradation of the color combined with the immaculate thickness of the material demands serious expertise and craftsmanship. Some of the series of Boxes by Rene Rietmeyer also have this thickness, he works with oil paint and I know that they are placed in one *touch*, one *encounter*. But

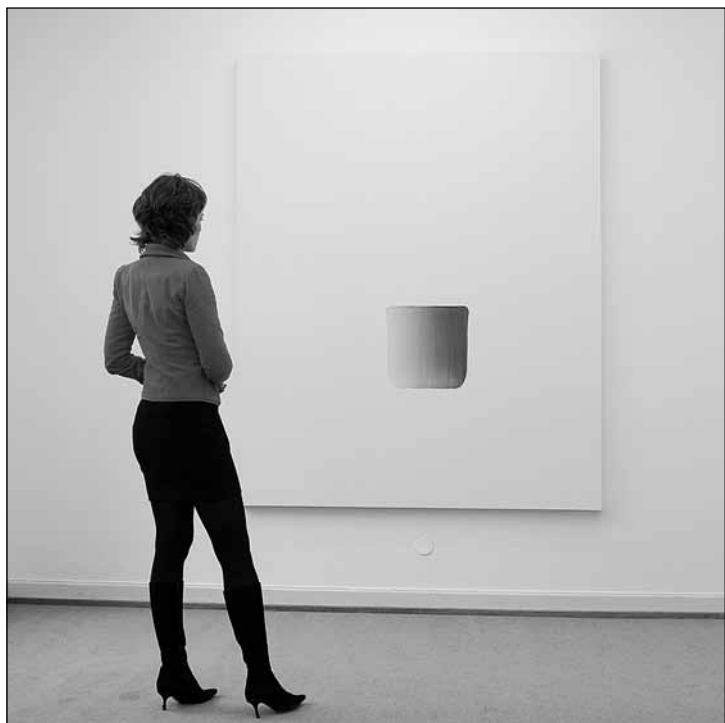
although the official descriptions on Lee Ufan paintings are: "oil on canvas", I am not sure, since oil paint can shrivel in that thickness and also it does not *feel* like it. Maybe it has been built up in thin layers, to avoid the shriveling. Anyway it does not matter, the look, the atmosphere and the thoughts which get created by looking at *Dialogue* are interesting; re-discovering the "thought of the thought to be known".

**4 FEBRUARY 2010**

**KÜNSTLERHAUS BREGENZ, AUSTRIA**

**SARAH GOLD**

On the way back from the Netherlands to Venice, we planned our trip so, that we could meet Gotthard Graubner at his opening at the Kunstmuseum in Vaduz, Liechtenstein. In the afternoon before the opening, we stopped in Bregenz to check how it was going with our exhibition. The museum staff were very happy and told us they had never had as many visitors as for our exhibition. It probably was the first time that Lee Ufan and also some of the other artists we had chosen were on display here. How would people from this region react upon his work? What would their thoughts be, would they judge and condemn or would they leave their *encounter* with the work *open*?



**4 FEBRUARY 2010**

**KÜNSTLERHAUS BREGENZ, AUSTRIA**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

After the opening of our exhibition in Bregenz and some meetings that we had there, we went to the Netherlands, where Sarah and I would have the 24-hour meeting with Lawrence Weiner for the first book in this series of PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS. We rented a holiday home in a park close to Amsterdam, where we prepared questions for Weiner. It was a highlight, to be with Weiner on his houseboat on the coldest day of the year... On the way back to Venice, we were supposed to meet Gotthard Graubner at the opening of his exhibition in the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in Vaduz that evening on 4 February. Because we were early, we decided to pass by our own exhibition in Bregenz to take some photos for future publications, and besides: it was a perfect 'excuse' for another encounter with Lee Ufan.

Rene took photos from me in front of Lee Ufan's painting. It was interesting to encounter the painting in this way and to me it made a difference that Rene was not only present, but was taking photos of me as well. It was beautiful to see the work again, but although I felt it was a part of me, I could not get close. The painting felt familiar and like a stranger at the same time.

Much more than the previous encounters, I became aware of my own body, my position in the space and my position with regard to Lee Ufan's painting. There have been many photos taken of me and I am relatively used to it. Also—with clothes on—I was usually not insecure about my body, but this time I was uncomfortable. I heard the camera clicking and felt my own body. I felt very aware of it: the space my body was taking in and the 'empty' space around it as well as the other 'bodies' in the room. How am I standing? Where am I standing? Where is Lee Ufan? And the camera? How is the camera seeing me in relation to Lee Ufan? In comparison to my encounter of 16 January, this was a very physical experience.

It was as if the camera was spying on me—indeed, it was as if Rene had disappeared and only the camera was left. My un-ease was because 'my encounter' felt 'staged', not 'real'. The camera was supposed to document my encounter with Lee Ufan. But its presence had changed the situation: there was no such thing as 'my encounter with Lee Ufan'; there was an encounter between the painting, the camera and me. The interesting thing was, that it was as if the viewpoint had shifted away from my body to that of the camera. I felt being observed; together with the painting, I had become an object in the space.

Despite this awareness of my own body in the space and the feeling of being watched, it was still relatively easy to be absorbed in the painting. It was as if the painting was pulling me towards it. At the same time, however, the camera pulling me back to my position again. By each click, it brought me back to reality, having no chance of losing myself in the painting and contemplating about my current situation in life. And—I am

sorry to admit—to me, in that moment, the camera was more important: the photos would be published! But, it was great seeing the painting again.

When Rene had enough photos from me, Sarah joined so that we would have different ones, a larger variety. With Sarah present, there was like a triangular shape between Sarah, the painting and me; three entities. Maybe I had gotten used to their presence, but Rene and his camera did not feel as if they were a part anymore—although the clicking sound was there the entire time. When he had finished, we continued to the next work in the exhibition.

**7 MAY 2010**

**GEORG KARGL FINE ARTS  
VIENNA, AUSTRIA**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

Several of the artworks from Bregenz were transported to our next exhibition, at Georg Kargl Fine Arts in Vienna, Austria. While Sarah already went to Vienna to oversee the installation, I finished the last details on our first Art Project, with Lawrence Weiner, which would be published that week. I arrived in Vienna on 3 May. Lee Ufan's painting was already hanging in the main space of the gallery. The encounter was like a quick "hey" between friends who know each other very well, relaxed and full of happiness and excitement. There was still a lot to do in the gallery and so there was no time to stand still for a moment. Until the opening night on 6 May, there were just quick looks, as if I was flirting with Lee Ufan. Each time I passed I tried to get a glimpse of the painting.

On 7 May we would be driving back to Venice. We had no other appointments planned in Vienna; it was time to go. In the morning, before leaving, I knew there was only very little time for an encounter.

We had placed a circle made of burnt wood from Toshikatsu Endo in front of Lee Ufan's work. In March 2010, I had been reading a lot about Endo for an interview and article I was writing for Sculpture

Magazine. With his work Endo addresses human existence. He wishes to return to the side of today's life that seems to have disappeared; his art being a device to go back to the essences of human existence. Although his way of expression is much different, Endo's thoughts are influenced by Lee Ufan. Like Lee Ufan, Endo wants to return to a pure encounter with Mono (the thing) and in order to have a pure encounter, we need to wipe away the dust of too much used, dead language.

It was a great, but also strange feeling to be standing in the center of Endo's circle and look at Lee Ufan's painting. I imagined how happy Endo must have been, being in this exhibition next to him. Honestly, there did not come much after this initial thought. Except for some questions that I had also had in previous encounters, my mind was sort of blank. I was just looking at the painting, no thoughts came up. Simply enjoying the moment of being here, in my own exhibition, in Vienna, looking at Lee Ufan, encountering him for the next book I would be making... I felt energy flowing through my entire body. What a life I have!

**7 MAY 2010**

**GEORG KARGL FINE ARTS  
VIENNA, AUSTRIA**

**SARAH GOLD**

Part of our PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition which was on display in Bregenz, we brought to Vienna to show at the gallery of Georg Kargl. So did *Dialogue*. Being in a new environment and having not seen each other for months, it felt more than familiar, without being boring. Placed in the most prestigious room of the gallery, with the whole ceiling being sky-lit, it looked at ease. The natural and sophisticated surrounding suited the painting and I was wondering how Lee Ufan himself would be as a person. On the right of *Dialogue*, on a curved wall the big, red, vividly painted *SHARK VALLEY, USA* Boxes of Rene Rietmeyer were hanging. Although both artists obviously come from different cultures and backgrounds, their work clearly communicates and does raise thoughts. Rene Rietmeyer is what he makes and what he creates in turn influences him. I had the feeling that Lee Ufan would also be *one* with his work.

Because of its subtleness and its meditative brushstroke, to me *Dialogue* feels "Asian"; Lee Ufan expressing his existence at that moment in time when he created the work. Also the Boxes depicting Shark Valley (a nature reserve in Florida that at the moment of visit

mostly consisted of aggressive mosquitoes and alligators) are an expression of Rietmeyer's existence at that specific moment in time and space. But not only because of the relation to the subject matter, is the work of Rene Rietmeyer "in your face" compared to that of Lee Ufan. Rietmeyer's work is far from Asian, typically Dutch. It was interesting to see these artists next to each other, so different yet so similar, and my curiosity to find out about the human being Lee Ufan grew.

**24 MAY 2010**

**TATE MODERN, LONDON, UK**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

In May, I was a few weeks in London. It was mainly for private reasons that I went there, but I could work there too. I was writing an article about Time in contemporary art for the scientific magazine *Kronoscope*, discussing the works of Roman Opalka, Rene Rietmeyer and Tatsuo Miyajima. The latter would have a presentation at Tate Modern on 24 May. Because I wanted to ask Miyajima a few more questions about his concept of time, I went to see him that day. His presentation was fantastic. He discussed his thoughts with a lot of charm and spontaneity.. Because of the interview I had done with him almost exactly one year earlier, I knew a lot of what he was saying already, but it was great to hear everything. Miyajima was speaking English this time and so it was a different experience, being actually able to 'understand' him.

Miyajima spoke about there being no focus, no goal in his encounters. Time just continues to exist: it keeps changing, continues forever and everything is connected. He explained about what he called 'personal time': the experience of time; that time can feel long or short depending on the situation. To elucidate his thoughts, Miyajima asks: "Can I show a film?" The lights went out. On the big screen behind him, first there was a projection of

Miyajima's desktop with different Kanjis. The film started to play and suddenly, in a 2 x 3 m size, I saw Lee Ufan sitting behind a bowl of water. He was wearing a red shirt and looked straight into the camera. I knew this project from Miyajima, *Counter Voice*, but I did not know that Lee Ufan had participated in it. It was a nice surprise!

It was fantastic to see Lee Ufan participating in the artwork of another artist, especially Miyajima whom I—like Lee Ufan—appreciate very much. To me it also showed that Lee Ufan respects Miyajima so much, that he would participate in this and show himself in such a vulnerable position.

I heard Lee Ufan's voice and thought he was speaking either Japanese or Korean. Because I had seen a similar video before, I imagined he was counting down from 9 to 1. At zero, he stuck his head in the bowl of water and—in comparison to the other people I had seen doing this—quite long. After a few seconds, he slowly took his head out of the water again. Water was dripping all over his face and Lee Ufan had difficulties looking into the camera. He was blinking with his eyes and was making faces as if he did not like it. He was supposed to start counting down again, but he seemed to have so much trouble with the water that he could not start. Miyajima commented: "It's very difficult!" and started to laugh at the look on Lee Ufan's face. More time elapsed before continuing the countdown. Then Lee Ufan caught himself again and started counting. While time was passing, it seemed to become easier and easier. In the meantime, Miyajima explained that this person on the screen is Lee Ufan, "A very important Korean artist."

After Lee Ufan, other people did the same thing. "Normal people," Miyajima comments. In comparison to these so-called 'normal'

people, Lee Ufan's movement and way of doing seemed very controlled. Counting down like this, was meant as a countdown until one's own death. I wondered how Lee Ufan's encounter would have been, what he was thinking.



**18 JUNE 2010**

**ART BASEL, BASEL, SWITZERLAND**

**SARAH GOLD**

We had some appointments in Basel and whilst walking the isles of the fair, we passed the gallery Nächst St. Stephan of Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, who also works with Lee Ufan. We stopped and spoke to her and from what she told in relation to Lee Ufan, I could not help the feeling that the contact between the artist and her was not based upon a *mutual understanding*. She had two canvases by him on display, but apart from a quick glance, I do not remember anything. My head was occupied by work issues, no time for contemplation.

**18 JUNE 2010**

**ART BASEL, BASEL, SWITZERLAND**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

After our Art Project with Roman Opalka in France, we continued our drive via Venice to Basel, Switzerland in order to visit the Basel Art Fair. We had several meetings in preparation for our Venice Biennale exhibition which was planned for 2011. In between meetings, Sarah and I walked around the fair, seeing familiar faces and lots of art. Two Lee Ufan paintings were hanging at Galerie Nächst St. Stephan. One of them attracted me immediately: a mini Lee Ufan, 14 x 18cm. The director told us it is “a suggestion”, made in 2010. What a cute and honest little work! While Sarah continued to another meeting and after I called Hermann Nitsch, and stayed behind for an encounter with Lee Ufan, before it was time for my next meeting.

The small painting was a great work, so spontaneous and so simple. I liked it very much. It gave me the feeling of a beginning, a new start. Its simplicity gave me goose bumps. The painting was glowing and shining and had a welcoming feeling, as if it was saying with an innocent voice: “Hello, here I am.” The tiny brushstroke was curved, having its stress on its upper left side. To me, it seemed like a little gesture that was dancing on the canvas. The brushstroke seemed pure and unconstructed. It seemed to be made of only one

layer, just a touch of the brush on the canvas: a straight 'I exist now'. It felt immediate, direct, quick and without hesitation; it felt light, uncomplicated and spontaneous, but at the same time very strong.

There was so much canvas used to cover the frame—it seemed double the amount that was actually needed—that it almost became like an object. Because of the large amount of canvas, the painting stood out relatively far from the wall and left quite a large, heavy shadow, one that was almost bigger than the painting itself. With so much extra canvas, it must have been difficult to stretch it, resulting in a quite bubbly surface. But to me it did not matter, with all these small imperfections, the work had something human, as if it was saying that mistakes are possible: everything is always imperfect and that is very fine; it is good as it is; you are fine the way you are. It brought relief in comparison to the sometimes more heavy, 'perfect' works. Everything about this painting was as if it was out of balance and that made it so great.

The painting next to it was like its elder brother, a work from the *Dialogue* series, from 2008. Its surface was even bubblier than that of the other painting. Only 73 x 92cm—again much smaller than the paintings I had seen so far—it looked plump and heavy. The work felt almost fake and unnatural. In comparison, this time, the brushstroke on the larger painting felt very constructed, almost static, much more than in other paintings. It was also a strange combination: this relatively large brushstroke in relation to the size of the canvas, and then this waved surface. It was as if this work was trying or pretending to be perfect, but it was not. In comparison to the small work it seemed dishonest about the way it was. It does not matter, of course. It is an encounter. But it was interesting for me to see the difference between these works.

On the side of both paintings there was the little "this way up" arrow again. It reminded me of a meeting I had with the artist Henk Peeters, from the Dutch ZERO movement, when I visited him to pick up some of his 'cowhide'-works for our exhibition in Bregenz, Austria, six months ago. The works consisted of a wooden frame with a cowhide stretched over it. With these abstract patterns, I was not sure which way Henk wanted to hang them. "Is there no arrow on the back?" Henk asked. He looked and then drew four arrows, one in each direction. "You can choose whatever you like." But for Lee Ufan there is a 'right' side up; he sticks to his own opinion and does not allow anyone to interfere.

I asked one of the gallery directors for the price, but he said that both works were already sold. Apparently, the small Lee Ufan was the first thing they sold at the fair. That was easy to believe. If I would have had money, I would probably have bought it too. In any case, it was interesting for me to hear that in these economically difficult times, Lee Ufan was apparently still sellable. Because of my interest in Lee Ufan, the director took me aside into the gallery's 'stockroom', where he showed me one of Lee Ufan's works on paper: a blue aquarelle. It was beautiful. The color was very intense and fresh, like water. For me, it had a similar spontaneity as the small painting. Briefly, we spoke about Lee Ufan's brushstrokes and he told me that my feeling that the brushstroke sometimes feels constructed, might lie in the difference between a European and an Asian way of thinking. "Maybe for Lee Ufan it is freedom." He had a point.

After Nächst St. Stephan, I continued my way over the fair until I saw another work from Lee Ufan at the booth of his Tokyo gallery SCAI The Bathhouse. It was a painting from the series *From*

*Line* from 1979, 100 x 65cm, placed in a beautiful metal frame. Lee Ufan was 43 years old when he painted it; his signature was on the front of the canvas this time. SCAI's description stated that the work consisted of oil and stone pigment on canvas. It reminded me of what Tatsuo Miyajima had said about stones: they have a life as well. Would Lee Ufan be of the same opinion? What would this mean for his painting? Does the painting itself also have a life?

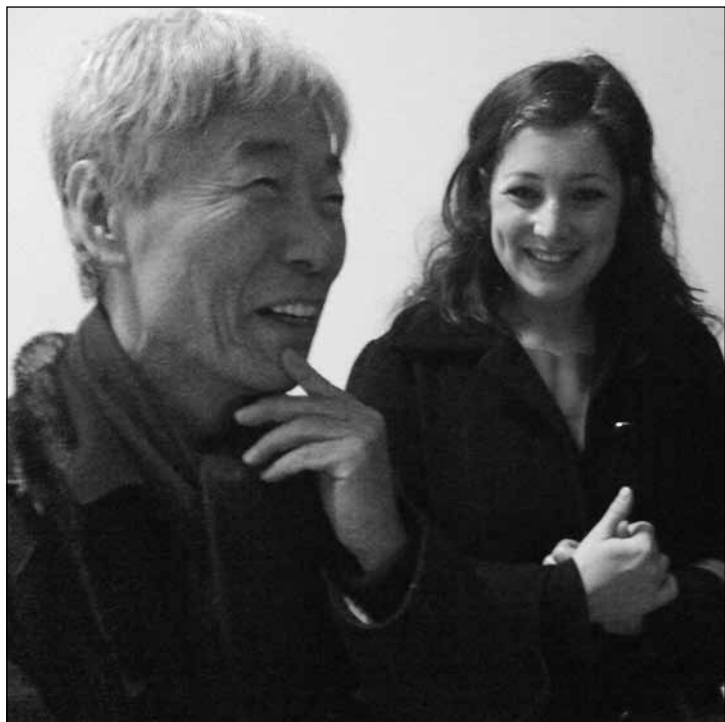
The blue lines were placed at different locations on the canvas, which had a rough, yellowish surface. The composition was beautiful. The blue color was as if it came from some sort of mineral. It was shining. Some lines seemed to have been accentuated at the top and painted in a downward, pulling movement. I wondered how much pressure Lee Ufan would have put on the brush while painting. It seemed to me that he would start with quite some pressure, so that he could push the paint slightly out of the brush. As he would be moving his brush, I imagined he would take off more and more of the pressure until the moment he would only be slightly touching the surface. In any case, I imagined it would have been a careful and slow movement, requiring a lot of concentration.

When looking at this painting, I was confronted with another—for me—interesting aspect about 'encounter': the moment. To me, 'now' is not only 'this moment', but extended to the (near) future and to the (recent) past. Over the years, I noticed, however, that when I am considering 'me today' the 'future' is most important—maybe it is because I am still relatively young and do not have that much 'past'. Looking at Lee Ufan's painting in this moment at Art Basel, I noticed that—although I was not actively thinking about it—the 'future' was present. That evening, I would be going on an erotic weekend with a lover. It may sound silly and it may

show that I have not been looking with an 'open' mind, but I could not help but notice that the blue lines on the canvas had the same color and shape as the vibrator I had at that time: straight, with a little curve at the top. There I was, standing next to the entrance of the booth, being aroused by blue lines on a canvas... I am not sure, if I would not have gone on this trip that evening, that I would have ever had that connotation—because, the connotation is maybe a little far-fetched... If I would be looking at the same painting today, I would probably be more concerned about the way the strokes were painted, that they seemed to be one line, one mark and not many layers...

The brushstrokes looked lively. The work gives the feeling of a dance, of freedom. Does Lee Ufan feel free? Would he feel a responsibility towards other people with his work, like Lawrence Weiner said he feels? How would Lee Ufan understand the 'now'? When making the work, would he consider past and future to have an influence on him? And what about his physical state?

When I ask a charming Japanese woman for the price, she tells me it is already sold. Apparently also this work was sold on the first day of the fair. Lee Ufan seems quite popular. I was happy for him, but on the other hand—thinking about his small, cramped studio in Paris—I wondered how much Lee Ufan would get from these sales—if anything at all.



**9 DECEMBER 2010**

**RIVA LONGA 17B, VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

Since the beginning of the year 2010 we had been developing and planning our exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES as part of the 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale. After nearly 8 months of negotiations we were on the brink of signing the lease for the space we had set our minds on: Palazzo Bembo, located just 70 meters from Rialto Bridge, overlooking the Canal Grande. Now we felt secure enough to actively invite artists to participate and get involved in our Biennale project, I received the following email:

Dear Sarah,

I'm delighted to inform you that Mr. Lee Ufan is planning to visit the space in Venice for the group show that you'll organize during next Venice biennale.

His stay in Venice will be from December 8 late afternoon to the morning of December 10.

Could you kindly inform me of the address of the place, and around what time he should come visit the space?

Also, could you please confirm that the following phone number is correct?: 39-3490889763

Sincerely yours.

Esra - Lee Ufan's assistant

Because of severe weather conditions in Paris, the flight had a serious holdup and our meeting was delayed for a day. We were supposed to meet Lee Ufan and his assistant just behind Piazza San Marco in hotel Monaco, where he apparently likes to stay. We waited in the lobby. When I saw an Asian woman walking towards us, I knew that must be Esra. I was amazed by her beauty; I could look at her for hours for sheer pleasure, what a delight. While we were waiting for Lee Ufan, she told us that she is Korean as well and that she had just moved to the United States, after living in Paris for a long time.

Some minutes later, Lee Ufan came walking through the hall of the lobby. He looked confident, and contrary to the first time I had seen him, he did not feel fragile at all. He seemed to be feeling free and was dressed fashionably but effortlessly. We went to the café area of the hotel, where we sat down; I believe we all ordered coffee and established the best language to communicate in, which was *basic* English. Rene started to put in plain words who we are and what our goal in life is; carefully he explained PERSONAL STRUCTURES and his Time-Space-Existence concept and goal. Although language was not a strong point in this meeting, Lee Ufan understood. He connected with Rene: quality recognizes quality. And he must have seen that he is, like himself, a *real* artist. After explaining our passion for what we do, and the need for us to *spread the word*, we walked over to Palazzo Bembo. At that moment, the Palazzo still was a real mess and I vividly remember how Lee Ufan had to climb through scaffolding, which he did with agility—I even had the feeling he liked it. We showed him all the rooms, and because we knew that he would prefer a room “from one of four corners”, we wanted to offer him the prestigious *corner room* in the front of the building with view to Canal Grande and Rialto. But he had looked

at it, grumbled something in a friendly way and had moved on. When he entered the room we had thought of dedicating to Rene’s work, he immediately made clear that this is the room he would like. It was set; Lee Ufan had made his choice and seemed satisfied.

Lee Ufan invited us for lunch. First we walked to *Fiaschetteria Toscana*, not far from Rialto, but it was closed. Now, Lee Ufan guided us, walking fast to *La Colomba*, a restaurant located behind San Marco, but also this was closed. We decided to enter any restaurant, of which there are many; I remember sitting in the back of a restaurant, checkered tablecloth and Lee Ufan being at ease, telling all kinds of stories of his life. It was a true pleasure to share *life and time* with him.



**9 DECEMBER 2010**

**VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

On 8 December 2010 Sarah, Rene and I had scheduled a meeting with Lee Ufan. We were supposed to go out for dinner together, but Lee Ufan was stuck in the snow at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris. He sat in the plane for six hours before it finally took off around 9pm. Instead, we met the next day at 11am in the lobby of Hotel Monaco, the hotel where he was also staying the last time I met him in June 2009. Lee Ufan had come to Venice to see Palazzo Bembo, to see if he wanted to participate in our Biennale exhibition and possibly to choose a space for his installation. Another thing we had to discuss with him, was the sales of one of his paintings to a German art dealer who had a client for it—Lee Ufan knew about this already and had sent us a photo of the work the week before.

It was going to be a tricky meeting: we were not sure what to expect, how Lee Ufan would react and we figured he might be tired and there was a chance that he might not be in a good mood because of the delays in his flight. Besides, it was cold and very dark outside; conditions were not at their best for viewing a Palazzo. But I felt fine about meeting Lee Ufan and was quite relaxed.

Five minutes before the meeting, the three of us took a seat in the lobby of the hotel. Around 11am, first the assistant of Lee Ufan

arrived—it was the same woman he was with last year. Then Lee Ufan came walking into the lobby. He seemed in a very good mood. Apparently, they landed in the airport of Venice around 11pm and it took them quite some time to reach the hotel. But it did not seem to affect Lee Ufan too much; he seemed fresh and lively. He was smiling a lot and it was great to see his friendly face again. We shook hands and told Lee Ufan that if he would like to we could see the Palazzo at 1pm—we did not have a key yet and therefore depended on someone from the real estate office to open the door.

Lee Ufan invited us for a coffee at the hotel bar. I walked next to him, while the others followed. It felt as if I was alone with Lee Ufan for a moment. For me, it was a little awkward and I did not know so well what to say. I had worried about this encounter, because of my bad questions of the year before. In principle I knew that if Lee Ufan would be living his thoughts, it would be fine and there was nothing for me to worry about. In that case, we could just continue in a normal way. And indeed: Lee Ufan seemed fine. My respect for him grew! Unlike some other artists I had met, Lee Ufan was living his thoughts: having a fresh encounter with me right now.

We were the only ones in the bar and we all had a cappuccino. I took a seat opposite of Lee Ufan, next to Sarah. Rene did most of the talking. From the three of us, he is the one with the most experience. He introduced our project PERSONAL STRUCTURES, who we are and our approach to life and art. Then, slowly, he told everything there was to know: that the Palazzo was still a disaster, the plans of the other exhibiting artists, the two rooms that we had in mind for him, that if necessary we could help him finding stones. It all seemed to be fine; Lee Ufan spoke very good English and seemed open for everything we told him.

We offered Lee Ufan that if necessary, Sarah and I could travel a week through Italy to find the right stone. “Finding stones in Italy is very difficult,” Lee Ufan commented and added, “A Japanese stone has a Japanese face; an Italian stone has an Italian face; an American stone has an American face. There is a difference. I have experience in this for over 40 years.” He started telling us a story—in Korean. It was remarkable to see the dedication with which he seemed to want to tell it. It was a story about one of the first exhibitions he had had in France. Lee Ufan needed stones for his installation and looked in a diameter of 500km around Paris. For about a week, he looked everywhere, but could not find anything that was ‘right’. Even though there were stones, he did not see any stones. When he returned empty-handed to the location of his exhibition, he found some ‘good’ stones in a garden close by. It appeared to be a Japanese garden. Lee Ufan said that, without being aware of it, he used to only have an eye for Japanese stones. From that moment, he opened himself up for ‘local’ stones. Now he can find stones anywhere.

It was interesting for me to hear this story from Lee Ufan and realized again that the same counted for me. Maybe I read too much into it, but I even had the feeling he was saying it to me. I became much more open than I used to be. Also in my first encounter with Lee Ufan, I was probably not open enough to see Lee Ufan for who he is, as a human being. I appreciated him now for who he is, I mean in the sense that I was looking at the person sitting opposite me now, without thinking of what he had achieved in the past.

Lee Ufan told us about the feeling he has, that he is always a stranger: in Korea they say he is Japanese; in Japan people say he is Korean. “I am a traveled man.” He continued: “My work is not Asian,



not Korean or Japanese; my work is Lee Ufan.” It was a statement that he also made in the fax-interview that I read in preparation for our meeting in Paris. That interview addressed the topic of Orientalism and so, it did not surprise me that Lee Ufan made a remark about it. This time, however, it came out of the blue. It seemed as if Lee Ufan felt he had to defend himself against being seen as an Asian artist. To me, his work is indeed Lee Ufan—I keep describing works as “Lee Ufan” rather than as “Lee Ufan’s painting” or “Lee Ufan’s sculpture”. But I must admit—and this might sound contradictory—that I do think that when seeing the work for the first time, you would guess it is made by an artist coming from Asia. I mean this in the way that, for example, Hermann Nitsch’s *Orgien Mysterien Theater* is born in a certain region at a certain time; and without giving any ethical judgment, you can know the artist did not come from Holland. In the case of Lee Ufan, I also feel that you can see the work is born from a person who was born in Asia—at least: to me it seems an American could never have made such a subtle work.

Rene showed Lee Ufan the application we had prepared for the Biennale office, with the names of the other participating artists inside. Lee Ufan knew many of them personally; the young, upcoming artists seemed to interest him. With our project *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* we go beyond our own personal taste and present different artistic statements next to each other without judging. Like us, Lee Ufan was curious about everybody. It was nice to see him appreciating all these different opinions. We explained Lee Ufan more and more about our project, about how it started and how and why it developed until where it was to day. Lee Ufan seemed to enjoy this very much. He was laughing and making in-between comments showing his approval. We spoke about the

painting for the German art dealer and also here Lee Ufan seemed fine. It all seemed to go in a ‘normal’, realistic way, with a great awareness about all aspects of the situation: we are doing a large project and need to finance this; it was not inappropriate to speak about money.

Because of our meeting at the Palazzo at 1pm, we still had some time after all the necessary things were discussed. We enjoyed our coffee, while Lee Ufan went to his room to pick up some books that he had brought for us. It was the catalogue of his new museum in Naoshima, Japan. Each of us also got a multiple that Lee Ufan had made for the museum: a beautifully folded carton with inside a note in Japanese by Lee Ufan and a white handkerchief with one blue and one orange ‘brushstroke’ on it. The idea of blowing my nose in a work by Lee Ufan, felt a little off—and I never did do it. But I was happy receiving this present.

Lee Ufan flipped through the catalogue with us and showed the works that he has in his museum. He commented that many Europeans are more toward the object. “There is a strong ontology there,” he said. In Asia people apparently look more at the relation between objects and their own relation to the object. According to Lee Ufan, we, Europeans, look more to the object itself, as if you are projecting your own position. Rather than showing objects, Lee Ufan said he preferred to show the space. Indeed, the catalogue had many photos of spaces in and around the museum. I wondered what he would be thinking of our Palazzo and the spaces we had given him as an option.

It was special to be sitting there with Lee Ufan. There was such a warm atmosphere, five people in a normal human conversation, being

open towards each other and enjoying this moment in life together. I felt very close to Lee Ufan. The worries I had had, were gone.

We left the bar at Monaco's to visit Palazzo Bembo. We had to take a special exit, because the street in front of the Monaco and Harry's bar was under water. They had built a bridge over a piece of metal that was supposed to keep the water outside. Without trouble, Lee Ufan stepped over it. It was cute to see and I realized Lee Ufan had become human, to me—or better: I had become more human and could now enjoy this in others, too. I had lost the blind respect for him I had had. I still had a lot of respect for Lee Ufan, but now it was based on experience, being able to see him for what he is.

Before our meeting, we had carefully checked the best route to Palazzo Bembo, so that our walk would be smooth and easy. But it was all for nothing. San Marco square was flooded. We took one of the walkways, but soon it appeared it would not be possible to continue in that direction. Venice was again like a labyrinth, where we were trying to find the right way without getting our feet wet. It did not seem to trouble Lee Ufan. We cannot go that way? Ok, fine! Or he would go through alleys that were actually closed off. "No entry"-signs did not impress him either.

We took the long route to Rialto, but I believe I never walked it in such a short time. Lee Ufan has a very quick pace. 74 years old, but he was the most fit of us all. We chatted about Venice; he had come here already since 1973—7 years before I was born. He was nothing like the helpless tourists that you often see wandering around; Lee Ufan knew his way.

At a certain point there was a big pool of water in an alley. There was no escape possible; we had to go through. Again Lee Ufan adjusted quickly. No other option? Ok. And he made a big jump,

to avoid as much water as possible. I may be giving a bit too many examples of how flexible and easy-going Lee Ufan was, but it is not often that we see somebody with such flexibility. Normally, we are the flexible ones.

Full of energy, Lee Ufan walked up the stairs of the Palazzo. Everything was still in a disastrous state. Our exhibition would be on the second floor, but one of the four corner-rooms that Lee Ufan indicated that he might like, was at that time only reachable through a separate staircase on the first floor. They were renovating that part of the building; a scaffolding blocked our route. We explained Lee Ufan the situation on which he took the initiative to climb through the scaffolding to the other side of the building. When we entered the space that we thought was suitable for Lee Ufan, he looked around and started measuring it, taking big steps. He did not say much; he just observed. At a certain point he asked about the windows, whether they could be closed or should stay opened. We clarified that he is the boss of the space, that he can decide everything himself and can do as he wishes. Lee Ufan commented that this room was quite narrow, but made also clear that he was pleasantly surprised by the space.

We went up to the second floor, where we showed him the other rooms and the horrible state they were in, each time telling Lee Ufan about the great plans we had for it. "Here comes Toshikatsu Endo." "Here comes Arnulf Rainer and we will build the space like this." "This room is for Kosuth." It is that I myself knew that we could make it happen, but thinking about it now, it is quite surprising that it did not discourage Lee Ufan. We went through the whole space quite quickly; Lee Ufan did not need much time to see it.

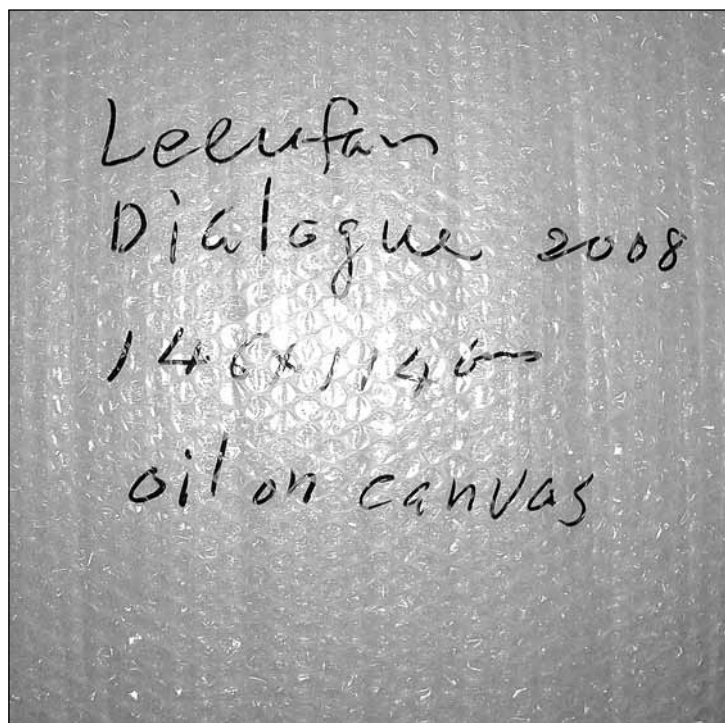
We entered the corner room that would become Lee Ufan's. He was quiet again for a few seconds and then said he wanted to

make an installation here, with marble split on the floor (like a Japanese garden), that he would place a medium size stone (we did not have to worry; it would only be 500kg) and one painting. I imagined how it would look and liked the idea very much. It seemed that Lee Ufan wanted to give his best to make a strong statement here, in our exhibition. We had opened the windows, because on the phone Lee Ufan had indicated that he wanted to have natural light coming in the space. But apparently he had changed his mind. He asked if the windows could be covered and said he wanted to hang his painting there. Lee Ufan explained that visitors would be allowed to enter the space and could sit on the 'marble floor'. Lee Ufan took quite some time, standing in the room, as if he wanted to feel its atmosphere. the feel. Taking large steps, he measured his room. To be extra clear, he again said: "I want this space."

Our visit to the Palazzo was over and Lee Ufan invited us for lunch. From one of the participants in my On Kawara project, a French cook, I had heard Lee Ufan was a very good 'taster'. In high speed, we walked through Venice on search of a good restaurant that was open at this hour. Lee Ufan had two favorites, but both of them were closed. Around the opera house, Lee Ufan seemed to have lost his orientation. We went back again and passed by a regular restaurant, operated by Chinese. It was great to be sitting there with Lee Ufan. We spoke about Toshikatsu Endo, who said that the basis of his thoughts comes from Lee Ufan. Lee Ufan knew him well and commented that Endo is living too much in his head, that he does not travel enough to see other countries and therefore is not open to new influences. We told him about Endo's text in our book and the time and effort it had taken to translate it. "Endo is very difficult..." From what I had heard

about Lee Ufan before I first visited him in Paris two years earlier, I had understood he was a philosopher, a big intellectual. Here it became again extra clear to me that to Lee Ufan all this theory is not most important. He just lets things go and be as they are.

It was so great, talking with Lee Ufan like this and being together, I noticed I had a smile on my face the whole time from sheer happiness. I sucked in the moment, trying to experience as much as I possibly could. It made me feel very present and alive. From this day on, the freshness of a 'fresh encounter' had something light, something easy and positive.



**16 DECEMBER 2010**

**LEE UFAN STUDIO, PARIS, FRANCE**

**SARAH GOLD**

In order to realize our Venice *endeavor* we had to raise an enormous amount of money. Until that time, we had financed all projects through the revenue of Rene's artwork, but this was going far beyond our possibilities. Other ways had to be found. We were in Naples at the moment to speak to Peppe Morra from the Hermann Nitsch Museum (and our car had just broken down), when I got a call saying that we would be able to place a Lee Ufan painting in a private collection. We contacted Lee Ufan; he had understood the needs for our exhibition. As a sign of goodwill he would allow our Foundation to place his work in a good home. On 15 December, Rene and I drove from Venice to Paris to meet Lee Ufan and pick up the painting. The weather condition worsened by driving to the north and at a certain moment the snow was tremendous, but we did arrive in Paris in time. Again we passed the Moulin Rouge and found a parking spot. When it was time, we went to the studio. I felt a little uncomfortable, this was the first time I had to *deal* with such an artist and while Rene brought the painting to our car, I explained Lee Ufan the situation. He understood and because he wanted to support our Foundation he was very generous. Drinking the tea I had been served, I could hardly believe what had just happened. This was a big help for our project.

Because of the severe weather conditions, we decided not to drive but to ship the work. We found a shipper in Paris and left the painting to be shipped safely to its new home.

**16 DECEMBER 2010**

**RIVA LONGA 17B, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

After Lee Ufan had gone back to Paris, the German art dealer sold the painting Lee Ufan had made available to us. As Sarah and Rene were planning to go to Belgium anyway, they passed by Lee Ufan's studio to pick up the painting and to make sure it would be correctly shipped to Berlin. Lee Ufan would be there himself to hand them the work. When their meeting was over, Sarah called. Lee Ufan had decided to give a donation to our foundation GLOBAL ART AFFAIRS. "To support your project," he had apparently said. I was perplexed by such kindness and for a while Sarah and I were both quiet on the phone, only sometimes interrupted with a "wow". What a gesture this was!

**4 MARCH 2011**

**RIVA LONGA 17B, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

There is not so much to say about it, but it was an encounter—however short it might be. I often write for Sculpture Magazine and now had arranged for the publication of our Paris interview with Lee Ufan in the March 2011 issue of this magazine. It was a good timing, with our exhibition at the Venice Biennale coming up as well as his solo-show at the Guggenheim in New York. A total of eight pages; they were beautiful, with images covering Lee Ufan's entire oeuvre. When I notified Lee Ufan of the appearance of Sculpture, he had already received a copy and—as his assistant replied: "Mr Lee Ufan was also very glad to see that article." Happiness over the positive reply.

**14 APRIL 2011**

**CANNAREGIO 4343, VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

Lee Ufan had expressed his thoughts on how he would like to display his work. At least one painting on the wall, a metal plate and a “medium” size stone—*medium*? And if it would be possible, a 5cm thick layer of marble split. “Our pleasure,” we told him. Now we had to find out what the total weight would be of 5cm marble split in that room. Because of the old Palazzo and the “rules and regulations” which are applied in plenty in Venice, we would need to have a static research done. After Rene determined the weight by calculating, we knew we needed roughly 2 ton. We gave Lee Ufan different possibilities of stone type, color and size, and he chose the *Bianco Carrara Chips*, the 9-12 mm ones. We decided to order, just to be sure, 3 ton. I wired the money for the stones and I received an email:

Thank You very much for the payment. The chips will be at S. Giuliano on the 20.04.2011 at 9,00 O'clock. Best regards, Davini

Now only the transportation of the works, the painting(s), metal plate and the *medium* size stone from Paris to Venice had to be realized. The date was already communicated and Mr Moon would assist. Our German transportation company had been instructed; two different locations in Paris, addresses and telephone numbers

provided. Now I had to double check if all was going according to plan and set the exact times of pick-up. I called the first number I had for Mr Moon, a landline. Somebody answered and I told him who I am and the reason for calling. I could speak English, which Mr Moon does not. After a short and polite talk, I was told to call Mr Moon on his mobile phone. When we were about to finish the telephone conversation, I asked with whom I had been speaking. He was the “Son of Moon, Moon-Son”.

After this cute intermezzo, I called the mobile number and Mr Moon answered. In my best, non-existing French, I explained who he was speaking to. It was interesting to see how, without language, if both parties have goodwill, you can connect. All was set; our transportation company would be awaited for at the two different locations. The first to pick up were the *medium* size stone and metal plate, in the northwestern suburbs of Paris called “Colombes” at 8 o’clock in the morning. After that, between 10 and 12, the paintings at the studio near Moulin Rouge could be picked up. I felt assured that everything would go well.

**20 APRIL 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

The number of things to organize and to keep an eye on was becoming a mountain and for the last months before the opening most nights I went to sleep at 2 in the morning and woke up at 5. When the stones for Lee Ufan arrived at Palazzo Bembo, I had no time for an *encounter*. There were too many important telephone calls to make and things to organize in order to get the exhibition ready in time. We had a small army of students from the university who helped us for the set-up, so they would be the one, together with Karlyn, to encounter Lee Ufan. I felt sorry, but had no time to dwell on it. The next call was waiting and my *To Do* list was endless.



**20 APRIL 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

Sarah gave me the exact date of this encounter, I could not recall it at all. We were so busy with the setup of our exhibition for the Venice Biennale that from the moment we received the key of our Palazzo on the Canal Grande on 15 April 2011 all the days are one blur, one total moment that covered six weeks of my life. So, I can just say that at a certain time at the beginning of this six week period, the marble split arrived for Lee Ufan's installation. Lee Ufan had chosen a certain color and size, which we had ordered from Carrara. We had calculated that we needed about 2000kg of split to cover the floor. Because 2000kg was not possible, we ordered a total of 3000kg in bags of 25kg.

We had students from the university in Venice working for us, to help with the setup of the exhibition, and about eight of them came to assist when the boat with marble split arrived on the Riva del Carbon. It was not really necessary for me to help, but I just wanted to be there and have this physical encounter. It was fantastic! The number of bags, their weight and the fact that they were meant for Lee Ufan's installation made it a real break in the stressful time that it was. Carrying the bags needed all my power and focus and so, for a moment I could not think of anything else than marble split and

Lee Ufan. It may sound silly, but carrying the bags was like carrying Lee Ufan. For me, it was as if he was present in that moment.

From the quay, the bags went through the hallway, up one flight of stairs and into the elevator. Because the architect was not finished covering some of the floors with linoleum, we could not put the stones in Lee Ufan's room yet. Instead we placed them in the entrance space, making only small piles in order not to put too much weight on one spot. Some of the bags functioned as 'chairs', until we could replace them with the furniture Sarah and I bought at the fair in Milan. Although they were just bags of marble split and we used them for many different purposes, it was one of the first 'works of art' to arrive. It was the start of the last phase in the preparations of turning this Palazzo into a beautiful world-class exhibition.

**21 APRIL 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

When I came to the Palazzo, two pallets of stones were standing in the main space. Several of the bags of Carrara marble split were in use as 'chairs' and they were spread through the main space in single and double stacks. Rene and several student were sitting on them, working. They had this function for quite a while until we received our furniture. After that they got *wheeled over* with little trolleys and were stacked along the wall of the corridor close to their designated room.

**END OF APRIL 2011**

**CANNAREGIO 4343, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

We were making great progress with the organization of our Venice Biennale exhibition. One of Sarah's tasks was to oversee the transportation of the different works of art, I finished the last texts for the exhibition catalogue. Most artists had written their own text; for others we wrote an essay ourselves and Lee Ufan was one of these. Because I knew it was not going to be easy, I postponed it until the last moment. But around the end of April the exhibition catalogue soon would be printed and I could not wait any longer, it had to be done.

Even after having had so many encounters with his work and with Lee Ufan personally, it was still difficult to come up with an 'understandable' text, one that 'made sense'... Even though I based the text on our Lee Ufan interview, it was difficult to 'explain' what he is about in my own words, making it a readable text for a wide, mostly non-native-speaking English audience. The 'matter' was difficult to get a hold of; sometimes I came up with a good way to phrase something, but it immediately slipped away again. It was a real struggle: reformulating and changing all the time. It was a confrontation with myself and how much—at that point in time and the stressful situation I was in—I actually understood from Lee Ufan. This was the result:

“Painter, sculptor, writer and philosopher Lee Ufan (\*1936, South Korea) is about Encounter. He focuses on the relationships of materials and perceptions; his works are made of raw physical materials that have barely been manipulated. Lee Ufan’s often site-specific installations centralize the relationship between painted / unpainted and occupied / empty space. With his work, Lee Ufan addresses Encounter in its relation to life in general, not only in its relation to art. Therefore, according to Lee Ufan, having an encounter with his work is not just an encounter with his work: it is an encounter with the world. This is his idea of ‘being there’ at a particular space at a certain moment. Through the relationship between the works and the spaces in which they are placed, he invites the viewer to experience “the world as it is.”

Lee Ufan was born in Korea and went to Japan when he was nineteen years old. During his life, he has been in many different countries and says he feels like a foreigner each time—wherever he is. “I am a stranger, and due to this, my ability to communicate is disrupted: this in turn brings discomfort, and leads to misunderstandings. I have lived under these circumstances for a long time: that is ‘encounter’ for me. [...] Encounter is dealing with others; it is a very simple thing.” Having an encounter, happens every time when experiencing something that is outside of yourself. It starts in the very moment of contact—when you meet other people, when you look at the moon or at a building. Facing other people is simultaneously a passive and active encounter: you encounter the other, but the other encounters you too. The artist explains that the concept of Encounter is not necessarily about verbal communication. Neither is it about the differences in meaning between East and West.

Lee Ufan prefers to start from ‘normal’ things. Encountering something is dealing with ‘Otherness’. Lee Ufan remarks that

humans usually want to perceive and understand the other with all the knowledge they have gained. “But in reality, you feel a distortion, a gap between knowledge and reality. You see the separation between them and you start becoming aware of the unknown.” The artist gives the example of encountering a stone. “We can understand a stone with knowledge, by analyzing it. But when you see a stone, you do not know at all; we often have the feeling “what is that?” This is not simply “I do not know”; rather, this is an unknown character. An unknown character always invites me to learn more about things in one or another way.”

The unknown of the encounter with the other, is in the relation. You experience the relation between yourself and the other. For his work, Lee Ufan therefore often uses the combination of materials that centralize this ‘relation’ and create the feeling of distortion—the feeling of ‘what is that?’. For example, the combination of a steel plate and a stone, which is a combination between nature and something that is created by human beings in an industrial society: “A stone is not man-made. Stones lay around anywhere by mountains and rivers. Whether you are from Africa, from Paris, or from America, everybody knows; stones are from nature, and a steel plate is industrial. I have thought about what the viewers can feel and see. I try to make the viewer feel the combination of things, those made by our industrial society and those that are from nature.” With the combination of these materials Lee Ufan creates space. “Normally, in modern art, the work is the object itself. My art is not a painting and not a sculpture. I don’t make just objects, I create space: ‘Ba’ and ‘being there’. What is going to happen with the stone and the steel plate, what I can feel with them being together, that is very important.” Being influenced by his surroundings, means that Lee Ufan’s work is decided in relation to a particular location,

a particular space. "Normally fine spaces exist everywhere, be they a mountain, a riverside, a gallery, a home, etc. But this is very complex, and raises many difficult questions. That is why the way my work relates to the space in which it will be presented is the most important aspect I consider. But the truth is, anywhere is fine. I do not place my completed work on the spot; my work is made ready through its relation with the space where I want to place it. The relation itself is infinite."

One learns with age and acquires more knowledge, but even Lee Ufan, having seen many stones, steel plates and having created many paintings, still has encounters when he makes a work. "When I make a painting, I also have small encounters: a feeling of subtlety, questions and other things come up. 'Encounter' is non-continuous: always changing. It is important that it is a passive and an active thing. That is the reason why I want to paint a multitude of seemingly the same paintings, endlessly. For me, perfection does not exist, nor can a work be controlled one hundred percent. I cannot know what will happen at the moment I start working in a certain location." When making work, Lee Ufan says he uses his body as a channel. The body is influenced by its relation to the surroundings: whether it is cold outside, whether the work is made in a large or a small space. Being influenced by his surroundings, means that Lee Ufan uses much more than only his knowledge to create art. "I paint my relation to the outside naturally through this intermediate connection. My body is not mine, and my body is not just inside or outside, it is in between." Lee Ufan remarks that this understanding of the body comes from the Asian understanding that 'body' is not just 'myself', but that it includes the relations with the outside. In its contact with the outside, the body becomes something 'in the middle', or 'in between'.

Lee Ufan prefers what he calls a 'fresh encounter', one that is not colored by previous knowledge or expectations of how something 'should be'. When he came to visit Palazzo Bembo to look at his space in December 2010, Lee Ufan told us an anecdote about an exhibition he once had in France and how he used to be when he was young. To make his work for this exhibition, he traveled the country in search for a stone. Looking for a stone, however, Lee Ufan admits he somehow could not find any—until he saw one in what appeared to be a Japanese garden. Later, he realized that at that time he was still too much influenced by his culture: a stone from the mountains in France did not feel like a stone to him; he was looking for something he knew; other stones did not feel 'right'. Nowadays, Lee Ufan chooses stones that are from the region or country where the work is exhibited—like the Carrara Marble we have in Palazzo Bembo. The feeling Lee Ufan described in the anecdote is exactly the feeling he wants to distance himself from. He wants himself and other people, to have a fresh encounter with the world around him. Lee Ufan explains: "If we do not know about Christianity and Greek mythology, we cannot understand western art. When I just look at the painting itself, I cannot understand it at all; it requires a broad depth of prior knowledge. Modern art also has many rules and artists are creating works by using those rules. I want to be different from those rules; I want to be free. This is why I want to have reactions from African, American, European and Asian people encountering my work like, "Wow, what is it?" The meaning does not matter, but I want to have these fresh moments; they are very important for me."



**14 – 21 MAY 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

The exhibition grew day by day. It was wonderful to see each day a bit more of what we had been working for every single day for the past year. One weekend, probably three weeks before the opening, there was little else we could do and so I started with Lee Ufan's installation. After covering the linoleum floor with an anti-slip cloth, I started with the first layer of split.

Apart from the weight of the bags, it was a simple job: putting the marble on the floor and spreading it out to an equal layer. But it was great to do it. Normally we sit for hours behind the computer; this was hands-on work. The preparation, the setup of an exhibition like this and seeing it grow, was great: each action you take brings you one step closer to a real, visible result. With each bag, the cloth got more and more covered, the piles in the corridor outside of Lee Ufan's room were getting smaller, and the room was getting more and more special.

But the act itself was an interesting experience too, that I enjoyed with almost all of my senses. I was part of the creation process of Lee Ufan's installation and it was great. The sound of the stones falling on the floor; the sound of them grinding over each other while spreading them out. The marble was still wet from the water

they had used for splitting it, which left a strong scent: the smell of the moist, the 'liquid marble'. The grey color over the white cloth. I used my bare hands to spread the split, making them white, wet and tingly. I wanted to feel the stone. When I was done, my hands were 'burning'—reminding me of Lee Ufan for the rest of the day.

The next morning the first layer of marble was dry and had become white. It looked very special! The sound in the space had changed. Now, it was soft, giving the room a quiet, contemplative atmosphere. But rather than contemplate, I continued with the next layer. There was no time to 'waste'. Again the sound, smell, feeling... and seeing the grey marble covering a white surface. This time the experience was slightly different. I heard my own footsteps over the white marble, softly grinding it. The sound of the falling marble and the spreading was less hard. The smell of the moist stones triggered the smell that was already hanging in the room. The grey, wet stones left a beautiful cover over the white, dried split, marking exactly where I had been. Even when Sarah joined me, I remember not thinking about much else than this experience, repeating it until only a few bags of marble were left.

**19 MAY 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

Because the Lee Ufan space had new linoleum, which we did not want to ruin straight away, we had decided to lay down a layer of tough plastic and a layer of special material—the one that looks like the *throw away* fabric that is being used in the health sector—which also acted as a safety to prevent people from slipping on the stones. The neatly packed strong plastic bags, each weighing 25kg, were looking at me when I walked passed to have a look in the room. Because the stones were quite moist, only a first layer had been spread on the floor, in order to give it a chance to dry. Awaiting the next layer, the room started to get body and character; it was coming alive. Together with Karlyn, I added another layer. The closeness to the material, the purity of the marble, and the exercise all did me well. It felt very good to lift *the pack of purity*, dropping it on the floor with a certain force, cut the sack open with a Stanley knife in a wide U-shape and tip over the bag to release the stones on the floor, to spread them equally with your bare hands achieving an instant result. What result? The feeling of *creation*, being part of shaping something *meaningful*.



25 MAY 2011

PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY

SARAH GOLD

In Venice everything has to come by boat. Today we would receive most of our shipments which had been collected in a warehouse on the mainland. All was arranged with Barbara from Interlinea with whom I shared so many emails and telephone calls that you could speak of a 'relationship' without ever having met each other. When the boat arrived the crew started to unload. The first from Lee Ufan to come out was—and finally we knew for certain—one very well packed painting. With a crane-jib the *medium* size stone got lifted from the boat onto the quay. It was flying in the air, strapped to a pallet. Now the size description of *medium* looked so obvious. But still it was a stone and luckily we had a functioning elevator in the Palazzo.

When it arrived at the second floor, the pallet was put on *dollies* (those plates with rolling wheels attached) and wheeled to the space where at least three men lifted the stone and placed it where we thought it should be placed. The painting was—still packed—leaning against the wall, being at ease in its new surroundings. After the metal plate was brought in, I guess that the weight was similar to the stone, around 250kg, but less *friendly*, difficult to handle. We had the plate placed in the



middle of the room, and in order to be able to lift it again, I had placed two unpainted Boxes of Rene on one side; like the person, unbreakable. The plastic that had been wrapped around it, was taken off, freed and able to breathe this “silent monster”, was what it was, an industrial produced metal plate. We left it to “rest”.

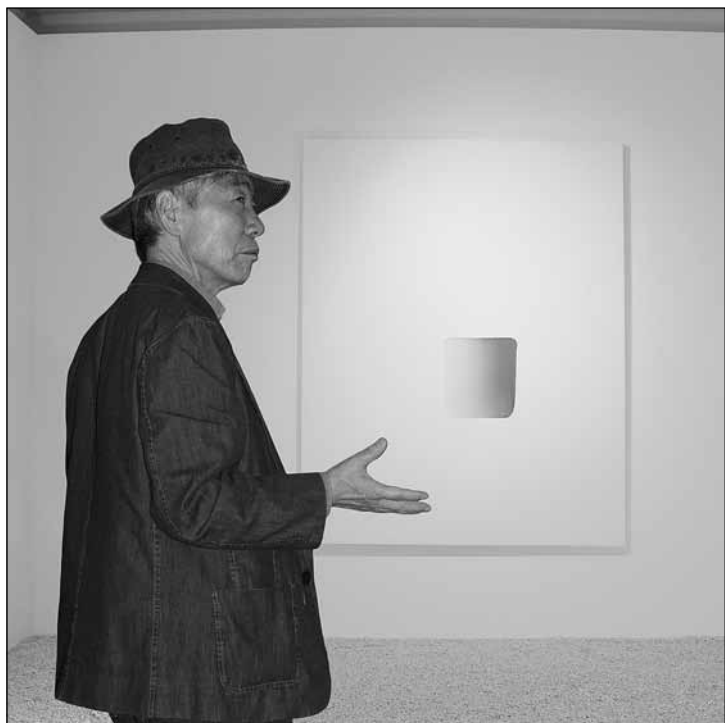
**29 MAY 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

When we met Lee Ufan in December the year before, he had told us, that he probably would not be able to come to the opening because he would have to attend the setup of his solo exhibition at the Guggenheim in New York. I remember having felt a little sad, because it is nicest when the artist is there for setup and the opening as well. It is also because PERSONAL STRUCTURES is alive, real and sincere and by meeting or seeing the artist, the right people will recognize how special this is, which will create *positive dynamics*.

We were in full *set up* mode, when Lee Ufan showed up. I was happy to see him and he was in a good mood. We walked over to his room where Rene had hung Lee Ufan's painting earlier. When entering the space he became very serious, he spoke in Japanese to Yuko Sakurai, maybe to express his thoughts more precise and freely. It felt like all was wrong. But it turned out less dramatic than it felt to me. The metal plate had to be re-placed, *off center* from the painting. Together with Rene, Toshikatsu Endo (who was installing his massive sculpture in the front of the building) and several other people, we re-placed the plate. Also the stone had to be adjusted, so its “face” was looking towards the plate and the stone—*Relatum*. Lee Ufan looked pleased and satisfied and so were we.



**29 MAY 2011 – 1 JUNE 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

During the days before the opening we were extremely busy: finishing the last installations, lighting, discussions with Joseph Kosuth, giving tours to unexpected guests, such as Günther Uecker, and many, many other things. Lee Ufan arrived in Venice around this time, before going to New York for the installation of his exhibition at the Guggenheim. For a long time, it was uncertain whether he would be able to visit Palazzo Bembo before flying off to New York for his solo-exhibition at the Guggenheim, but a few weeks before it was confirmed that he could come to Venice after all. Not exactly sure when he would come to Palazzo Bembo, it was a great surprise when he just came walking through the door. We greeted each other heartily, like old friends. He seemed very happy to be here as well. In between everything, we took the time for him. It was great to show him around our 'exhibition to be', sometimes meeting artists who were putting the finishing touches on their work. Lee Ufan and Kosuth did not seem to have met each other; with others, such as Toshikatsu Endo, it was an interesting rendezvous.

The stone, metal plate and painting as well as the 2000kg of Carrara marble were already in Lee Ufan's space. We knew where the painting was going to go—that one was easy—and of course



the marble was already 'done'; but the stone and metal plate? When walking into his room, Lee Ufan seemed to concentrate on his installation. He looked at the painting and marble split, commenting, "Good, good". The rest was no good, yet. The stone was lying on top of the metal plate; it had to be moved—it was only a medium size, but still approximately 200kg. Lee Ufan seemed to have a very clear idea of what he wanted. The metal plate, which was oblique on one side, had to be turned 180° to be with its widest side towards the painting. Now the place of the stone was adjusted: it had to be moved a little bit away from the metal plate in the direction of the wall opposite the painting. And it had to be turned. Lee Ufan explained that, "the face of the stone has to look that way," and pointed in the direction of his painting. At first, this way of expression surprised me, but then I saw what Lee Ufan meant: a pointy, upwards-looking part of the stone was indeed like a 'front'; compared to the rest of the stone, it felt like a logical way to talk about it as the rest clearly was not a 'face'. It was as if the stone was looking directly at the painting now; starting with its 'back' on the marble, going in an upward movement to the front. A few workers helped to place the stone where Lee Ufan wanted it. "Ok, ok," Lee Ufan said.

But when the workers left again to continue what they were doing, Lee Ufan did not seem convinced yet. He looked carefully at the stone and decided it had to be turned a few millimeters to his right. On his own, this thin, fragile-looking man bent over the stone, placed his arms around it and with what seemed all his power, tried to move the stone. This was no success. For four heavy-weights, it had already been difficult to move it; for Lee Ufan on his own, this was impossible—of course, the marble split floor did not help either. Lee Ufan stepped away from it, had another look at

the stone's position and waved his hands next to his body, "Ok, ok." He had another look and started—in a very gentle way—to flatten the marble split next to the metal plate, sometimes removing pieces that were 'out of place'. It indeed looked cleaner. When he straightened his back, he seemed satisfied: "Finished!"

It all went very quickly and there was still time to show Lee Ufan the exhibition rooms he had not seen yet, like that of Tatsuo Miyajima whose work was in one Lee Ufan had decided not to take. In comparison to what he had seen a few months ago, the building was transformed. He seemed to like it.

The next day Lee Ufan returned. I believe I was installing Lawrence Weiner's work, when he came to get me. "There is a big problem! A big problem." He immediately got my attention; a problem was the last thing I needed, and especially for Lee Ufan. I thought of some possible disasters, but nothing seemed plausible. Relaxed, I followed Lee Ufan to his room. There he pointed to the lights, clarifying their position was "no good." This was an easy one to solve. Someone got a ladder for us and started adjusting the position of the lights. An extra light was needed and the assistant went to get it. The ladder was free and Lee Ufan—as if it was nothing—climbed up with the greatest ease and continued finding the right lighting position: two spots, one on the stone and one on the plate. With an extra floodlight on the painting, Lee Ufan was happy. But there was another 'problem': the metal plate needed to be rubbed in with a little bit of baby oil to make it shine. That was the last thing; Lee Ufan's room was done.

In the next days, Lee Ufan returned several times, with collectors and the directors of his museum in Japan and his future museum in Korea. Instead of shaking hands, we greeted each

other with kisses now, which seemed a little bit unusual to him, but pleasant enough to do as often as possible. They were nice encounters, these surprise visits. Lee Ufan seemed to like being in Palazzo Bembo and to be proud of his installation in our exhibition, showing it to everybody. Unfortunately, there was so much to do that we could not spend more time together. Also at the opening, I recall seeing Lee Ufan and exchanging a few words, but that was the last time I saw him.



**30 AND 31 MAY 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

The last couple of days before the opening on Tuesday 31 May were one rush. Organizing, getting things done; everything at once. But I do remember that during these days, Lee Ufan came by several times, each time bringing friends along. One time, he was in such a cheerful mood, that he greeted me with open arms from a distance, hugged me and kissed me on my cheeks, as old friends. This was, for me, the ultimate proof that he was very happy with his presentation and that he was feeling comfortable with us.



**1 JUNE – 27 NOVEMBER 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

Throughout the duration of the exhibition, Karlyn and I gave many guided tours. It was interesting to see how different people reacted upon the room created by Lee Ufan. Mattijs Visser from a.o. the ZERO Foundation, who had even visited the Lee Ufan museum in Japan, told us that this was the best display of the work he had ever seen. Fumio Nanjo from the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, the curator of the Toyota museum Masahiro Aoki and many other Japanese visitors liked that we had “Japanese” artists, such as Endo, Miyajima and *Lee Ufan* in our exhibition. That was interesting and positive to hear, because by Japanese tradition you have to be born Japanese, you cannot become one.

For “western” visitors, I noticed that the *will* to understand, to *leave it open*, not to judge, to take it as it is and see the relation between the materials, the things, depended upon the type of person. And I have to admit, that the type of human that did not *like* the work of Lee Ufan, was also not my kind. But then again, you have to leave people their opinions, who am I to judge?

As for the maintenance of the installation, we had been told, to put a thin layer of oil on the metal plate. Baby oil works best, we had been told by Tobias from Lisson gallery. So armed with a

designated “Lee Ufan” cloth and the baby oil, the plate had to be *treated* nearly every day, because for some reason, our visitors liked walking over the metal plate and you could see their traces. Interesting behaviour: by the work of Carl Andre, where it is *no problem* to walk over it, people do not do it. And then when it is not the idea—at least that is how I think it is—they do, do it. Anyway, I think for many people, the Lee Ufan room has been a special experience and I hope that it gave *fuel* for new thoughts, new views without prejudice.

**1 JUNE – 27 NOVEMBER 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

Six full months Lee Ufan’s work was exhibited in our Venice Biennale exhibition at Palazzo Bembo. I was there every day: 7 days a week and at least 9 hours a day. Every morning I checked the installations to see if everything was still alright, and of course each time I saw Lee Ufan. To be honest, during these moments I did not really take the time to look, the maximum was probably one minute. The only time I spent there a bit longer, was when Roman Opalka had died. We had been good friends and somehow Lee Ufan’s installation gave me the comfort I was looking for. But also then, I did not allow myself to spend much time there, because, there was always so much going on. However, you could say each time they felt like small encounters, at least to me. It was an interesting situation to see the same installation every day and nice to come in the space and experience. I do not recall any particular encounter. As I remember it now from hindsight, each time it was like taking a deep breath. If only for these few seconds, seeing Lee Ufan’s work gave a positivity, peacefulness, liveliness and a feeling of freedom. The work never became just an object; it stayed alive.

During the exhibition, I gave countless tours: to the president of Austria, the board members of the Guggenheim, Fumio Nanjo from Mori

Art Museum in Tokyo, the friends of K20/21 in Düsseldorf, the supporters of the Städel in Frankfurt, many collectors, gallerists, museum directors, press and students. Each time, I tried 'explaining' Lee Ufan's concept of the art of encounter, giving in depth, or short general information (depending on the time) using a different vocabulary in various languages (depending on the group). I loved doing this and see the reactions of the visitors. It never became boring, not even to say a similar thing over and over again. It was always as if it was the first time, in the sense that I never repeated myself. It was nice to be so often in that room. When entering, I heard the sound of my footsteps change into a soft grinding. Sometimes I had to force myself to speak louder, because of the peaceful atmosphere that affected me so that I softened my voice.

Hearing myself speak about Lee Ufan, looking at his work and recalling the personal encounters I had had with him, my respect grew. I understood more and more of what he was saying and noticed that it had a great effect on my life, on my character. 'Lee Ufan' had turned from something general—something that I had learned—into something personal: it became part of me.

The reactions of visitors were different, but the overall attitude was a very positive one. The Lee Ufan experts all said it was a very special installation, very simple. Many of them had come especially to Venice to see it. Others who had never heard of Lee Ufan before, reacted that it was a peaceful room, that they did not understand anything of it, but that the work relaxed them. What surprises was that some of the visitors walked over Lee Ufan's metal plate, leaving a trace of white marble powder. It may be understandable in an exhibition where you first walk over the rolled steel plates from Carl Andre and then see Lee Ufan's work, but I was never attracted to do it myself. I cleaned these traces with baby oil. It was nice

doing this: feeling the plate under a towel and seeing the shine return. The plate was very beautiful: its different colours, the little lines inside and its shape. It was also quite large; my hand could hardly reach the center. I had to kneel down next to it and clean it from all sides. Doing this, made me more aware of the size of my body in comparison to the plate as well as the installation as a total. Kneeling down like this, also made me aware that the installation was actually very 'low': in a way only the stone stuck out, having the flat metal and the marble on the floor and the flat painting on the wall; there was a lot of 'unused space'.

In the last few weeks of the exhibition, we slowly started to focus on the transportation of the works back to the artists as well as on future projects. I did not organize the transportation, but the people who did, showed me Lee Ufan's warehouse on Google Earth. Later I realized this must be his 'secret' warehouse in Paris, the one Mr Moon had told me about. It was strange to see: the quiet street, the fence that did not seem so difficult to open and then the number of stones that were lying behind it, as well as some metal plates. It looked like nothing special, just stones lying randomly behind a fence. Thinking about the approximate value of Lee Ufan's installation, seeing this and knowing that 'our' stone would end up there, raised interesting questions about 'context' and 'location'. As Joseph Kosuth said: "Location, location, location..."

In in-between moments, I read some of Lee Ufan's text in *The Art of Encounter*, the book I had received from Lisson Gallery. I read only a few texts. We had been working non-stop the past 18 months and I was so exhausted that I could not really focus on reading Lee Ufan's philosophy; the letters were dancing in front of my eyes and the content did not stay in my mind for more than a few seconds. Instead, I read his encounters with a.o. Giuseppe Penone, Piet



Mondrian and Ulrich Rückriem: the texts were simple, honest and unpretentious. I especially liked the text of Lee Ufan's encounter with a work by Richard Serra: it was mainly the story describing what happened, without giving much 'background knowledge' or any critique. I worry too much sometimes and, now it became time to start writing them down, I had been worrying about my encounters with Lee Ufan. My encounters were the way they were, but I had often worried that for a reader it might not be interesting enough. Reading Lee Ufan's encounters meant for me, that there was a chance for my own encounters: also Lee Ufan describes situations in his life in a simple way and so, perhaps he would like reading mine. Like always, I just had to let them be.

**22 SEPTEMBER 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

I was getting pretty tired of being at the palazzo seven days a week non-stop, but afterwards I was very happy that I was there that day. I believe it was our operational manager Davide De Carlo, who came into the office and told us that the wife of Lee Ufan was visiting our exhibition. When she came into the office, she looked like a dear elderly Japanese lady. Is she Japanese? I do not know. But she made a very nice impression, soft, understanding. We told her about the book we are making with Lee Ufan and that, because of the high cost, we only can print it, if Lee Ufan signs 100 copies, in order to sell them for a higher price. Her answer to that was not very reassuring, "Muzukashii" she said, which means something like "difficult" in Japanese, which in reality means more like *impossible*.

**22 SEPTEMBER 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

On 22 September 2011, we had organized a brunch for a group of Belgian collectors on the first floor of Palazzo Bembo, which was followed by a tour by Sarah and me on the second floor, our PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition. Around 3 o'clock, when the Belgians had just left, I went downstairs to pick up something I had forgotten. In front of the closed door at the first floor stood a Japanese woman, about 40cm shorter than I am—I am quite tall anyway and was also wearing high heels. For as far as I could tell, she looked approximately 65 years old and seemed a little helpless. "Exhibition?" she asked. I softly guided her upstairs.

When I returned to the second floor a minute later, the same woman was in discussion with one of the students who was working for us. I checked what was going on. Apparently the lady wanted free entrance. "Sure," I said. "My husband's work is in this exhibition," she explained. It was not likely to be anybody else and indeed her husband was Lee Ufan. I was very happy that I came walking in at that moment, that I had a chance to meet her. "Where is my husband's work?" Together we walked through the exhibition. I wanted to take the opportunity to tell her about our project and show her the exhibition and its location, so I did not take a direct line

to Lee Ufan. We took a little detour, via Toshikatsu Endo, Carl Andre, Arnulf Rainer and the view over the Canal Grande. In the meantime, I slowly explained about PERSONAL STRUCTURES, the philosophical topics it addresses, that we offer artists a platform to speak about these topics and that we organize symposia, exhibitions and especially make books. It was clear she did not speak much English, but I think we both tried our best to communicate. At least, when she told me Lee Ufan fitted well in what we were doing, I took it as a confirmation that she had understood. I had the feeling she liked the exhibition, but that her eagerness to see Lee Ufan's installation was stronger. So, we went through relatively quickly.

When we passed François Morellet, I announced Lee Ufan's room. Not sure whether she could enter, she halted at the entrance, the point from where you can only see the painting, the metal plate and, of course, the marble split on the floor. "Dozo, dozo," I said, making a gesture that she could enter. With a Japanese surprise reaction, she carefully stepped on the marble. Another surprise came when she saw the stone, then she slowly moved her head in all directions. "Very special," she said. And then: "So simple." She quietly and carefully walked through the space, seemingly taking everything in, softly repeating: "So simple..." It was wonderful to see her move like that and I quietly observed her: a little bit bent, taking conscious, cautious steps, looking all around her. "The marble is new." I had never seen any image of an installation in which Lee Ufan used marble (or a different kind of split) like this, but I figured that did not mean anything. Hearing Lee Ufan's wife mentioning it, was for me a confirmation that Lee Ufan really made something special for us.

When I felt it was alright to say something again, I asked her whether she had already been to Palazzo Grassi to see Lee Ufan's installation

there. She had. "But this one is more special. It's better," she added. To be honest, I was happy to hear that. I felt that in comparison to Palazzo Grassi we were like 'the underdog': with relatively little money we managed to make an impressive exhibition. It may sound naïve—or like wishful thinking—but hearing her say this, felt as if we have a connection with Lee Ufan that Palazzo Grassi could never have.

Lee Ufan's wife stopped looking at the work and opened her bag. A camera came out, which she handed over to me. "Please, take a photo." She tried to take the most central position in the room. She straightened her back and stood there as a strong, proud and serious woman. I took a few photos of her, and included as much of the installation as possible. I figured she wanted to have the proof that she had seen her husband's work.

We continued with the rest of the exhibition: Lawrence Weiner, Marina Abramović, SASAKI, Roman Opalka and in the last room Tatsuo Miyajima. I asked her whether she knew Miyajima. "Yes, he is a funny man." She told me a story about him that I do not really remember.

Slowly, we return in the direction of the entrance. When passing Lee Ufan, again she says, "So simple..." In passing the other rooms, she looked in to the installation was presented there. I invited her for a Prosecco on the couch and showed her the publications we made: Lee Ufan's pages in the exhibition catalogue and the pages of our Tokyo symposium with Japanese text as well as the interviews with Miyajima and Lee Ufan. She seemed to like it very much. Rene joined us and showed her in great detail the books we had published until then, as part of our PSAP series: Lawrence Weiner, Hermann Nitsch, Roman Opalka and On Kawara. Rene

speaks a little Japanese; she understood very well and came herself with the thought of bringing Lee Ufan in this series. We told her we would love to, that we in fact were already working on it, but that it would not be easy to get what we need: Lee Ufan's signature. "Hmmm, muzukashii..." I do not speak Japanese, but I knew this one... and it means 'very difficult'. She had to smile about it herself and promised to try her best.

Lee Ufan's wife wanted to continue her way to Palazzo Fortuny. She did not know where it was and I offered to join her. Together we walked over to Fortuny. It was interesting to be with her like that. We could only communicate in a very basic way, but while talking I remember thinking what a nice woman she is, what a warm atmosphere she has. We chatted a little: about good shoes for walking in Venice, about her daughter who arrived the day before, about her plans for the upcoming days and how she liked Venice. She told me she does not travel so often, but that she had been in Venice four years ago, when Lee Ufan had his solo exhibition at Palazzo Palumbo Fossati, but that she still gets lost. Laughing, she told me that already after the second corner, she did not know where she was anymore.

Fortuny was getting closer and I felt I needed to try to take my chance to ask her more information about Lee Ufan. At that moment, I wanted to know how it is for her to encounter Lee Ufan's work, knowing him and his work so very well. It was not easy to make my question understandable; I tried it in several ways. But it did not matter. Lee Ufan's wife was talkative and did her best to answer the questions she thought I was asking. From her answers I understood that they were already together in the time that Lee Ufan was still writing texts for Mono-ha, before he made his first work, over 40 years ago. She smiles and tells me that Lee Ufan is

"very difficult". "He always goes his own way, always choosing the difficult way. Sometimes I wonder why. But he does not deviate from his path." When we reach Palazzo Fortuny, she halts: "Now, Lee Ufan's work became more simple. He found peace."

**20 NOVEMBER 2011**

**PALAZZO GRASSI, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

Today I took an afternoon off. Next week would be the last day of our exhibition. I was very tired, oversensitive and floating. Not good. I remembered so many enthusiastic stories from visitors to our exhibition, on the show in Palazzo Grassi and so I went there. But I was so floating, that I had completely forgotten about Lee Ufan's presentation there. I did not have any particular reason to go there, besides having the chance to not being in our own exhibition and at the same time doing something art-related. Most important for me at that moment was that Grassi had heating. After having spent hours and hours in our cold Palazzo, it was great to be warm.

I walked through the building, seeing many things I did not know what to do with. Some rooms were nice, such as the ones from Giuseppe Penone and Takashi Murakami. Then after having seen almost the entire exhibition, I noticed Lee Ufan's paintings. It was the last room. It struck me like lightning. Although I knew about this installation, I was so tired that I did not expect seeing it at all and nearly bumped against the Ger van Elk work that was in the room between Lee Ufan and where I was standing.

The exit was in the Ger van Elk room. Lee Ufan's room, however, was the last one in the exhibition. So, Lee Ufan's room had a

'door' on one side only. It was a quiet place, allowing for peaceful observation. The wall directly opposite the entrance, had three canvases on it, covering half of the wall. The installation consisted of a total of twelve small paintings, each approximately 40 x 50cm. They were hanging in a 3-6-3 combination, in a U-shape: the 3 and 3 were facing each other; the 6 were facing me. This time, the brushstrokes were quite large in comparison to the size of the canvas. The canvases were hanging at eye level. The top of the canvas was almost as high as the top of my head, which meant that I was looking down to the brushstrokes. From first glance, the paintings seemed very similar. For a short moment, the 'repetition' reminded me of Andy Warhol's work. I wondered why Lee Ufan had made it like this. It felt like an unusual Lee Ufan.

The brushstrokes seemed to have the same size, the same color and the same place on the canvas. The left part of all brushstrokes, was white; the right part was grey. And almost every brushstroke had a transition line from white to gray in its center. Although they were all slightly different, they did seem to function and feel as one total. It was almost as if you could not compare them. Maybe they were for me now one total encounter, but I wondered how it must have been for Lee Ufan to make them. Were these indeed 12 different encounters? Does he consider them to be 12 different paintings? Or could you speak of one encounter, one work, consisting of 12 elements or moments?

I wondered about how he conceived of this idea. What did he want with this installation? Did he come up with the idea first? Would he be making this type of series of small paintings more often? The encounters Lee Ufan must have had that resulted in this series of paintings, seemed similar, as if they were painted on the same day in approximately the same situation. How much time would Lee

Ufan need to paint one work? Did he paint the white background colour? I did not recall having seen any unpainted canvases in his studio, I mean having a white layer, but without a brushstroke on it and thought he ordered them, ready-made.

I experienced the situation with all my senses: hearing, seeing, feeling the atmosphere in the space. I looked at the paintings, the courtyard they were facing, the room itself; I heard the zooming sound of the ventilation system, the voices of the other people in the room, the footsteps of the guard; there was no particular smell here. My thoughts went criss cross, in all directions. I was just experiencing the work and finding it very difficult to say something about it, like always. There were many pauses between the sentences I spoke into my voice recorder. Whatever this encounter might be, I was experiencing the work.

But it felt as if my brain was shut off. As if I had an iron plate in my head, that there was something that I could not reach, that I could not grasp or understand. I had the feeling I was missing the point: that something else is there, a thought or idea, something that is very relevant in experiencing Lee Ufan, but that I could not reach it, that I kept missing it. Maybe the answer 'I do not know' is the best answer in relation to philosophical questions, because then you stay open, constantly questioning again without fixing yourself to a certain 'belief'.

This time, however, my feeling of 'I do not know' was slightly different. Perhaps because of my tiredness, this time it was more the feeling that I am not 'there' yet, that I am missing the 'knowledge', that I might still be a little too young and inexperienced to understand. Without the wish to defend myself, of course, also Lee Ufan needed time to develop himself. Roman Opalka and Tatsuo

Miyajima too, after years of searching, they came up with their main concept around the age of 35. It takes time.

A little later I looked at the painting that was hanging on the utmost right, and saw that it was marked "12 12 10 L. Ufan". Only that canvas was signed, the others were not. So, maybe Lee Ufan does see it as one work? Maybe all these paintings were made on 12 December 2010? Or would the date indicate the day it was finished? I did not recall seeing a specific date on any other of Lee Ufan's works that I had seen, not in reality, nor in any books. Could it be that he made one painting each hour?

I wonder about the wooden construction that he uses to paint the large works. How would he have made these small works? Does he make a vertical installation, like Arnulf Rainer does? Or does he still put the canvas on the floor? Thinking again about Lee Ufan in his studio, I did not believe these works were made on the floor. If he had placed the canvas on the floor, he would have almost had to hold it with his feet—or use another 'system'—to prevent it from sliding. Thinking about the date, I realized that the works were painted only three days after he had visited us in Palazzo Bembo last year. There had been only a very short time, three days, between meeting us and painting these works. Would that have had any influence? How does the past influence Lee Ufan when he is in the moment of making an encounter? Thinking about this, the work appeared different to me.

Often I am so much in my head, that I tend to 'forget' my surroundings. This time, being in Lee Ufan's room at Palazzo Grassi, I tried focusing on my surroundings also and not only on the paintings on the wall. Maybe because the 12 paintings were hanging in an embracing way, it was relatively easy to focus more

on the surroundings. I noticed people coming into the room, while thinking about the idea of 'being here now'. I was aware of the location I was at, the room in Palazzo Grassi in Venice, and what I was doing: looking at Lee Ufan's paintings, having an encounter and recording this encounter for our next Art Project. However, being in the moment then, everything else seemed to move to the background, it seemed to lose importance. How would that be for Lee Ufan? He has so many years of experience... Probably, after you have reached a certain development in your own character, your way of expression—you—does not change so much anymore: 'this is who you are'.

I did not know whether I found the work beautiful or not. It was just there. In this moment, to me, the work was stronger than I was. It felt as if I was the 13<sup>th</sup> painting, the 13<sup>th</sup> living entity in the space. It was as if I was surrounded by these paintings, they were like arms taking me in. It had the connotation of these buildings, such as the Louvre in Paris, with side-wings: majestic and powerful, taking you in, without the possibility to escape. On this small scale, for me it was almost more powerful, because it was close-by. When taking a little more distance, however, Lee Ufan's works did not seem so comforting anymore, they seemed more like an army. Unlike the installation at our Palazzo Bembo, this work missed the pleasant surroundings, the total space experience. I did not feel I was inside this work, not surrounded by it and therefore it stayed on a distance.

This army of paintings was facing me and the roof-covered courtyard with a giant, dramatic sculptural work made out of cloth, behind me, ready to attack. On the other side of the courtyard, there was a potato-house from Sigmar Polke and next to it an installation from Charles Ray, from a man, a woman, boy

and girl standing next to each other on the same height. Lee Ufan felt serious in comparison. The simplicity of his work seemed to be its strength. To me, the installation Lee Ufan had in our exhibition seemed, however, even simpler, more natural. This installation at Palazzo Grassi somehow felt forced.

The repetitiveness of the works did not feel natural. It did not feel as if Lee Ufan was presenting me 'the way it is', just letting the materials speak for themselves, just letting it be. Looking at the installation, I felt distant from Lee Ufan. In other cases, I felt very much drawn to the work, wanting to touch, wanting to get as close as possible and swallow it in, experience it with all my senses. This time I did not have that feeling. It was quite static: "I exist, I exist, I exist..." 12 times, each work was almost like a person, an entity. But it did not feel as if the person Lee Ufan was so strongly present.

The installation seemed like a presentation, showing that each encounter is actually different, as if Lee Ufan was actively teaching something to his audience: showing that it might look like the same painting, but it is not. And indeed, Lee Ufan's presentation in Palazzo Grassi was a good way to show the differences in encounters. Somehow it was not boring at all to look at 12 similar works. It was a strong, massive presentation that was almost coming towards you—but at the same time, it did not touch me that much.

With regard to the way the paintings were placed, they reminded me of Rene's Boxes: so strict and careful. 28 lights were pointed towards them. The light was quite yellowish, making the white wall look yellow too. From a distance, the canvasses looked almost brown. I liked it that you could see the shadow and light around

these small canvasses. Because of the thickness of the canvasses, the light reflected on the top. It was almost as if there was a neon placed inside the painting, lighting the top of the canvas. At the bottom, there was quite a heavy shadow. The floor was gray and a little bit polished and therefore mirroring the paintings. Because of this reflection, it was almost as if it was double.

Slowly walking towards the works again, I looked at the shadows. The brushstroke was so thick on the top, that you could see the shadow of this line on the painting. It felt very much constructed, the brushstroke. I remembered a conversation I had about this with one of the visitors to our exhibition. In that way, the tiny painting that I saw on the Art Basel last year was much more powerful: a spontaneous, single brush stroke, just one time touching the canvas—or so it seemed. As if it was just a lick of paint on the canvas, really just a brushstroke.

The brushstrokes on these paintings at Palazzo Grassi did not simply say "I am", in the sense of one mark. Although it might be a cultural difference between me and Lee Ufan, I agree with Opalka in that way and think that the only critique I have at the moment about Lee Ufan's work is the construction of the brushstroke. Because of it being constructed, it is static and loses its liveliness, its spontaneity and the simplicity that it pretends to have. Not that it really matters: in whatever way Lee Ufan made it, it is still a mark of his existence.

After having looked at the work for some time, I read a plasticized leaflet giving some information about Lee Ufan:

"Lee Ufan born in Korea in 1936, studied Oriental painting in Seoul before settling in Japan in 1956, where he studied philosophy.



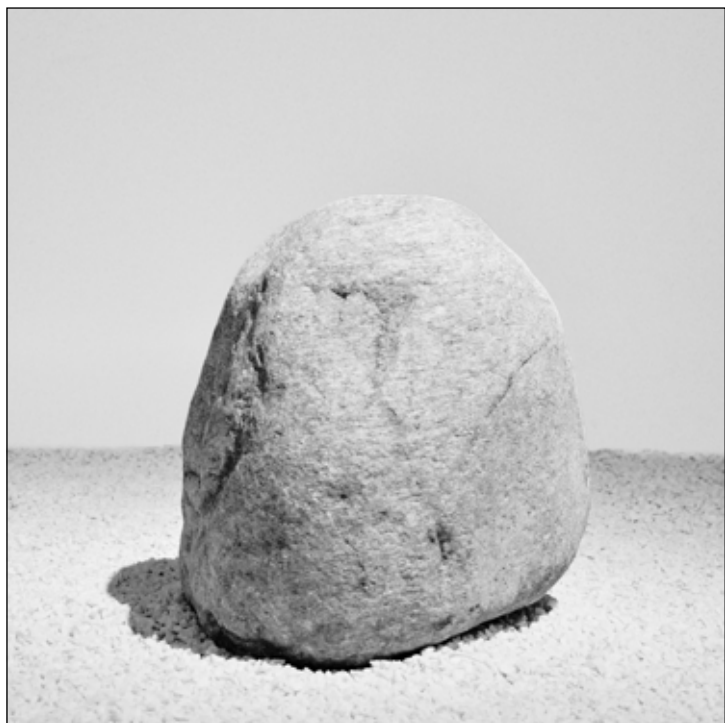
In the late 60s, Lee emerged as the key theorist of Mono-ha, a materials-based movement that developed in Tokyo. The Mono-ha artists created simple installations from natural materials, such as stone, glass, rubber or iron plates that they presented together as much as possible in an un-altered state, and allowing the juxtaposition of these materials to speak for themselves. They aimed at making the viewer aware of his position in space in relation to that of the work.

To create his works in the *Dialogue*-series, Lee Ufan lays his canvases on the floor marking their white surfaces with a stroke of gray-black oil paint mixed with mineral pigment. They are characterized by blank spaces resulting from the artist's decision to leave areas "un-made".

The viewer must bridge the off-white canvas and the white walls of the gallery space as well as the light, air and shadow that fall in and around the work to achieve a sense of continuity between the works and their surroundings. These paintings, best viewed with time and silence, offer a calming moment of reflection at the close of the exhibition."

It was becoming darker in the space. After spending more than one hour with Lee Ufan's installation, I thought it might be better to leave. I did not realize time had been passing so quickly. There were no longer new thoughts, just a 'repetition' of previous thoughts and experiences. Like every time encountering Lee Ufan, I had the feeling that I should stay. For some reason, it is not easy for me to move away from the work. I do not know whether it is because of the strength of the work or because of my own difficulties with saying goodbye. To me, leaving Lee Ufan's work is almost like saying goodbye to another person, when you know that you might never see him again. Although I normally do not have any difficulties

letting things go, it is very hard for me to let somebody go. Also this time, I really did not have anything to say anymore, but it would still take me another 15 minutes to actually leave. It is almost as if it is impolite to leave, as if I am leaving the work alone, in the sense of letting it down—now I come to think of it: that is quite 'Japanese', thinking that the work has a life too. I was basically waiting for the museum to close, just to have an excuse to leave.



**26 NOVEMBER 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

Tomorrow is the final day of our Venice Biennale exhibition, that was here in Palazzo Bembo for six months. I am now in the main space, where I spent most of my time these past months: sitting on the couch trying to meet as many people as possible, to see who they are in the hope of possible new cooperation. It is now 6:52pm. The exhibition is closed. Everybody went home; I am alone. All the lights, TVs and other installations are already switched off. Except for the Lee Ufan room. Because now at this very moment, I feel I have to take my chance to spend some time with Lee Ufan. An encounter with a work that I have seen almost every day, since its realization here in our Palazzo. It is my last chance and in the past six months, I have not really spent any time with Lee Ufan's installation. I decide to have the encounter just like that: speaking in my voice recorder, letting my thoughts come, communicating my experience directly as time is passing.

Slowly, I am walking towards Lee Ufan's room, passing the dark spaces with the artworks of Joseph Kosuth, Hermann Nitsch, François Morellet... It is incredibly cold here. I am wearing three layers of thick clothes and a cape, but still I am freezing. My hands are almost dead. I am actually a little nervous. I do not know why; there is no reason for it at all.

When I arrive in the Lee Ufan space, I become quiet and stop at the entrance, standing on the little wooden bar that we made to keep the Carrara marble inside the room. I look at the installation, it is just there... I do not want to say: "beautiful", that feels 'too easy'. I do not know... There is something about it. It is just special; it just takes over and forces a different atmosphere upon you—silent power.

There is 2000 kilo of Carrara marble on the floor. The marble, you can see that many people have walked over it. It is not straight anymore. I enter the space and hear the change in sound. The sound is different inside. I hear the grinding of the stone under my feet and the change in the sound of my voice. I hear it differently. It is muted.

It is perhaps because I am wearing boots with stiletto heels, but standing in this space is an interesting experience: you somehow have to deal with the fact that you cannot stand here—I am not sure how it would be with flat shoes on. In a way, it is uncomfortable. I am balancing on a small piece of stone. When moving too much, the stone will slip away, making me drop down a few centimeters. There is approximately 5cm of marble here; my heels are also approximately 5cm high, but I do not think I am reaching the floor. After slipping away like that, I start balancing on my forefoot until I feel secure enough again to stand on my heels too.

Somebody has just walked over the metal plate: the plate shows footprints of white marble dust. I kneel down to look at it. Probably, because we have a work of Carl Andre in one of the other rooms, people just sometimes walk over it. I have not done it. Normally, when it is clean, it is such a beautiful plate, with such beautiful colors. There is a reddish grey, a bluish grey, and a whitish yellowish grey... Apart from the work by Richard Serra

at Dia Beacon, I cannot recall ever having noticed the beauty of metal as such—besides its functionality—before having seen this plate. The part of the metal plate that is closest to the painting is really so beautiful, a bluish black. You could just hang it on the wall and it would be a wonderful installation.

The surface of the plate is so smooth and shiny that I do not even feel tempted to walk over it. But then I must admit that I used to have difficulties with the Carl Andre, but that is over now. By the way, it was nice to see that when I showed Roman Opalka the exhibition, he took a BIG step over the Andre. There was "too much respect" to step on it, he claimed—Carl Andre being one of Opalka's five 'true' artists. But the Lee Ufan plate... Even during the times that I was rubbing it in with baby oil, I did not lean with one hand in order to reach certain parts with my other hand. I went around it in order to reach the center from as many angles as necessary. But I never touched the plate with my bare hands.

Everything in the room is slightly off center: the brush stroke on the painting, the metal plate, which is also cut in an unusual shape (not square, not rectangular, taper on each side, but not on each side the same) is off center. I like the marks from the visitors on the plate. But I must admit: it irritated me quite often during the past months. I wanted the work to be like Lee Ufan had chosen it to be. With so many 'important' people coming to see the exhibition, most of the times unannounced, I wanted the work to be 'perfect' at any moment. So, I was the one cleaning the plate with baby-oil each time a visitor left his mark on it. A white trace: the marble powder sticks to the bottom of your shoes and the footprints are like a trace showing that at another moment in time, there were also people in this space. Does it make a difference for

my perception of the work? I do not know. At the moment, I feel it is still 'the same thing'. I had a discussion about this with Rene Rietmeyer. He told me that when there are too many fingerprints on his Boxes, he paints over the work, because the prints get too much in the way of the work being an expression of himself. If there are only a few fingerprints, he lets them be. When I see my own notebook, which I left lying close to the metal plate, it seems like a mark of myself in the installation. A trace of myself. It is very orange, a color I chose. Maybe this is the same as the footprints: small traces of other people in the space.

It is interesting how... Every time I am with a Lee Ufan work, I have difficulties finding words and describing what I feel and think. I am hungry and start eating an apple. In my other hand, I take some of the marble. Its color is so very beautiful. I like it that it leaves a mark on your hand when you have touched it. The inside of my hand is white. The sound of falling marble on the floor is soft. I like touching the marble somehow. I do not know why. It gives a strange, burning feeling on my skin. I also like its sound while walking over it. Although it consists of thousands of small little stones, the floor feels almost flat, it feels solid together, but when you walk over it with the shoes I am wearing, it is 'complicated'.

Looking at the medium-size stone, I see again how beautiful it is lit. It really stands out. It is like a star, with this white spotlight on it. It is like in the theater, where somebody is really standing out because of the strong light on him. I remember what Lee Ufan said about the face of the stone. It seems a little strange to me (still) to think that a stone might have a face, but looking at it, it does make sense.

My thoughts seem to go from one place to the other, without any direction. Sometimes, I feel I am not thinking at all. I am just blank.

Speaking directly in my voice recorder, this time I experience this feeling of 'not-knowing' stronger than in the other encounters I have had. Perhaps this confrontation with 'I do not know' would be there as well if I, at another point in time, would take a moment alone to relax and think about life. Maybe it is not so connected with Lee Ufan as I have described it in previous encounters. Maybe it is more connected to the moment of 'pause' that the encounter most of the times is. They stand out of the fast, pressured speed of life. Since I started working with PERSONAL STRUCTURES my life developed very quickly; I, my character, developed very quickly. It is around the same time that I started to become acquainted with Lee Ufan and started this project, collecting my encounters with him. Not that I feel on a daily basis that my life is so difficult. Rather I feel lucky to have the opportunities I have. It is just not always so easy to be 31 years old and work on international top level in the world of contemporary art. I feel there are still millions of things that I have to learn.

Walking closer to the stone, I see the carvings, the effect of time. It has a beautiful, interesting shape: roundish, but also almost rectangular. It has brownish lines going across. Trying to describe the stone, I realize I cannot say anything about it: I can say something about its color and shape, but basically I have no clue about nature. But I like it. It feels like a friendly stone. It has many interesting angles. I walked around the stone several times the past months, but looking at it more closely now, I can imagine why Lee Ufan chose this particular side as the "face" of the stone. The other side is quite flat and has a downwards-shape. The shape of the face is upwards; it is as if it is looking up to the painting.

Standing behind the stone, looking in the direction of the painting, the room really feels as a closed space. The entrance is hidden.

I am just seeing the white walls. It is a fantastic feeling. You can just be here, be only here, without realizing that you are inside a much larger Palazzo, an exhibition space where during the opening times 100s of people are inside. It is like an isolation cell. You do not notice anything other than what is here. A good choice! The room has many memories connected to it. I remember having painted the plinth and electricity line. The whole set-up of the exhibition. It were interesting times... Standing here in this small corner, where no one can see, I remember the moment I had here with Arnulf Rainer. It was during the opening days in June. He was here every day between 28 May and 4 June. Once, I was giving a tour to some visitors. When I was done, he called me away telling me he really liked Lee Ufan's space: "Look, I found a nice corner here." Memories from the past.

The stone has glitters on it. They really shine, with this spotlight on it. The light is quite strong and makes the marble under and around the stone look very white. Especially, because there is not so much light shining on the marble. Lee Ufan arranged the spotlights to light the painting, the metal plate and the stone, but that is it. Because of the spotlight, the stone feels alive. Immediately, I remember what Tatsuo Miyajima told me about stones having a life as well. It always sounded a little strange to me to think about a stone in this way, but looking at Lee Ufan's stone here, shining in the light the way it is standing out, the way it is presented here, it becomes alive. It has such a beautiful structure. It feels like a mountain on its own, like a world in itself. I feel like sitting next to it and looking to the painting together.

Sitting next to the stone, the metal plate seems less shiny. You do not see the footprints. It looks much softer. The metal plate has the same shape as Lee Ufan's brushstroke, sort of. But thinking about

the brushstroke, immediately brings me back to the stone next to me—because of the ground stone pigment that Lee Ufan said he uses. The colour of Lee Ufan's brushstrokes always looks sort of similar to me, but maybe that is not true. What kind of stone-pigment would he use to make this brushstroke?

You cannot stand in the center of the painting, because the stone is placed there. You always look at it from an angle. Somehow, I do not want to stand in front of the stone and choose a position behind it. Everything seems off center, although I am in doubt about the painting in this respect. The top of the fake wall on which the painting is hanging, is remarkable in comparison to the line of the ceiling. Everything suddenly seems to be strangely placed. It feels everything is moving. Again Miyajima. I would probably have placed everything centered, but Lee Ufan did not.

I lean against the wall and feel the cold coming through my clothes. It would probably have been quite boring if everything had been straight and centered. Maybe it is too bold to say that. Maybe because I am still balancing on my forefeet, that everything feels to be in motion. Maybe that is why I cannot look at one thing for a long time and my mind, my eyes go from one thing to the next. I am very cold. "Lee Ufan", I am reading his name in the room. The more I think about him and know about his work, the more respect and admiration I feel for him. I am learning more and more about myself as well, of course. That also helps. I mean, it is not only from looking at his work, but also when thinking about how I am, how I live my life, the way I am trying to be a good human being...

In the tours I have given, I kept taking the stone as the example of how to understand Lee Ufan's work and now, at last, I have taken a longer time to look at it myself. It really is different ev-

ery time. In my head, I sometimes hear Hermann Nitsch's music. It is switched off, but I can still hear it in the back of my head. The music from the 130. Aktion... I think about Rainer and the moments I spent with him. He will probably call me tonight. How many interesting people I met in this space: Essl, Fumio Nanjo... My thoughts are drifting away again. Last week, in Palazzo Grassi, I believe I was quite focused on the installation there. The work was powerful, like an army of little paintings. This work here in Palazzo Bembo is not more or less powerful, but I just feel comfortable being around it. Maybe it is also because here I have many memories connected to it, different, short encounters that all add up in the experience of the work. They are all part of the whole feeling.

Lee Ufan is so strong that he can very much keep me in the present. This may sound a little contradictory to what I said before, and the moments where I am drifting away with my thoughts. But normally I would probably never spend so much time with artwork work of art, at least not a contemporary 'conceptual' work. It often becomes too boring too quickly. Not like with a painting by an old master, where you can spend hours looking at all the little details in a Breughel painting, for example. I am sitting here in this space already for 45 minutes.

In a few days this will all be gone... One year after Lee Ufan visited this room, the installation will go back to Paris. Well, Miyajima just feels very appropriate at the moment: life keeps changing—even 'keep changing' keeps changing. I do not feel sad about it. It is just part of life. I also do not feel emotional about spending this last moment with Lee Ufan's work. I feel the installation has become part of me, part of my life. I feel very natural in the space. Maybe because I already experienced it for six months. I feel comfortable

with it. That is all I can say. The work is a part of my life that will end tomorrow. Part of Lee Ufan's work that will cease to exist.

Maybe I do feel a little melancholic now. But then again: I am tired, cold and hungry and it is nearly 8 o'clock. Maybe it is just time to go home.

**28 NOVEMBER 2011**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

Our exhibition is over, and all the works got packed and prepared for shipment. A shipper from Germany had sent some of their men to prepare certain works for transportation. Rene had offered them to take the little stones from the Lee Ufan room, for their garden in Germany. I was amazed and happy at the same time, to see that one of the men, a young boy, really did take the marble split. He was shoveling for hours with a dustpan, filling cardboard boxes with the stones and taping them tightly closed. He was totally white, which reminded me of how our car looked like when Rene and I drove through the marble mountains in Pietrasanta.

Finally, all the works were ready for shipment and the boat was loaded. I remember very well, that the last piece to be lifted from the quay was the medium size stone. I realized that we did not strap it to the pallet, but then again, it was not going anywhere. The jib crane neatly placed the stone on deck, just behind the cabin. Many feelings were going through me at that moment, but mainly I felt relieved.

**19 JANUARY – 9 FEBRUARY 2012**

**PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY**

**KARLYN DE JONGH**

Writing this book was an encounter in itself. As with the text for our Venice Biennale exhibition catalogue, I tried formulating my thoughts as clearly as I could. It was interesting to notice the differences in myself and how strongly each encounter—also writing it down—is influenced by the situation you are in. In any case, I tried to write down my thoughts as honestly and openly as possible. There are probably still many mistakes inside and, if I would have had more time, I might have been able to ‘understand’ Lee Ufan better. For this book, my encounters do not really ‘explain’ anything about Lee Ufan (which was also not the objective), but I do hope that some of them touch upon relevant topics or questions in relation to his work. The encounters do show me, how I am at this point in time and how I was at the moment of experiencing them. Writing them down, felt as if I was coming closer to Lee Ufan.

Thinking about Lee Ufan now, writing my last encounter for this book, many questions go through my head: What would Lee Ufan think when he will be reading this, my thoughts in encountering him? How would it be for him to encounter his own oeuvre? How would Lee Ufan see his own development, in his work and as a



human being? How would he look back at his life? Would he, like Arnulf Rainer, consider art to be more important than life? Would he have had a satisfying life or are there things he regrets to have done? Now being 76 years old, would Lee Ufan have something that he would still like to experience? Would he have had an encounter that is particularly strong in his memory? How would he look at the work that he is making today, having possibly less physical power, but more experience? And how would it have been for him to make his first work? What would be his motive in life? Creating his work or bringing a message across?... And I hope this questioning will never stop

**2 FEBRUARY 2012**

**SAN MARCO 4700, VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

On the second of February, I started to write down this text. Interesting to find out, what stays in one's memory, and to realize the many things you forget, *lost forever*. But I do think that the more impressive and pure aspects stay, could I say "the essence", or is that naïve? Nevertheless, I decided to have one last encounter, a *fresh one*.

5 FEBRUARY 2012

PALAZZO GRASSI, VENICE, ITALY

SARAH GOLD

I am ashamed to admit, but I had never been to Palazzo Grassi before, so now to have one last *encounter* with Lee Ufan gave a good stimulus and reason to go. The palazzo is restored into perfect condition. Judging by many of the items on display, it is clear that the owner, François Pinault, likes what I call 'gimmicks'. In order to give the unknown and often—in my opinion—not very promising artists credibility, some established artists get *mixed in*. After having walked through most of the museum, getting slowly hopeless because of the lack of *sincerity*, we entered the room of Giuseppe Penone. He is a *true* artist and his playfulness is something one has to understand, he is *Italian*. The next space showed a huge installation by Takashi Murakami and I must say, whether you like it or not, this is Japan, *this* feels truthful.

Finally we reached the Lee Ufan room. On three walls were hanging in total 12 paintings, 3-6-3, not a big size, maybe 50cm x 30cm—but I can be totally mistaken since estimating sizes is not one of my strong points. There were two benches in the room; I sat down to let the works *work*. They were perfectly hung, very esthetic; very clean, *too* clean? I got up and had a closer look. All canvases each had one *brushstroke*; they were placed so precisely and so similar

that you have to look very closely to see that they are not made *mechanically*. It felt to me, that these works had *less soul*. Might that be because of the background? It had a *plastic* feeling to it. I had never had that *feeling* before. The painting on the far right side, showed on the side the date it was made: 12-12-2012. That must have been just after he had visited us in Venice. He must have come back to Paris and made these immediately. Were they made for Pinault, with whom he might not have a *feeling*? Is that the reason why this Lee Ufan presentation feels *less* than usual? Still, however the work gets created and presented, it will always stay *real*. It always will be a meaningful *Encounter*.





## **Karlyn De Jongh**

Karlyn De Jongh (\*1980, Netherlands), M.A. Philosophy and M.Phil. Art History, independent curator and author. Since 2007 with the project *Personal Structures*, organizing symposia and exhibitions in a.o. Amsterdam, New York and Tokyo as well as at the 53<sup>rd</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale. With the Global Art Affairs Foundation, publishing books and documenting Art Projects, in cooperation with a.o. Lawrence Weiner, Hermann Nitsch and Roman Opalka.

[Photo: Misfat Al Abriyeen, Oman, 28 March 2012, 11:21.]



## **Sarah Gold**

Sarah Gold (\*1978, Netherlands), M.A. Art History, independent curator and author. Since 2005 with the project *Personal Structures*, organizing symposia and exhibitions in a.o. Amsterdam, New York and Tokyo as well as at the 53<sup>rd</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale. With the Global Art Affairs Foundation, publishing books and documenting Art Projects, in cooperation with a.o. Lawrence Weiner, Hermann Nitsch and Roman Opalka.

[Photo: Misfat Al Abriyeen, Oman, 28 March 2012, 11:23.]

## Personal Structures Art Projects # 06

### LEE UFAN ENCOUNTERS

*Personal Structures Art Projects* are projects which are documented as special edition artists' books. Each project centralizes one artist and emphasises his work. All books in this series will be published by Global Art Affairs Foundation, the Netherlands. An excerpt of each project will additionally be published in the ongoing series *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE*.

Previously published in this series:

LAWRENCE WEINER: SKIMMING THE WATER [MÉNAGE À QUATRE]

HERMANN NITSCH: UNDER MY SKIN

ROMAN OPALKA: TIME PASSING

ON KAWARA: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

ARNULF RAINER: UNFINISHED INTO DEATH

In discussion to appear as part of *Personal Structures Art Projects* in 2013 are:

JOSEPH KOSUTH

MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO



