

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DOMINIQUE LÉVY TO PRESENT FIRST US SOLO EXHIBITION OF KOREAN ARTIST CHUNG SANG-HWA JOINTLY WITH GREENE NAFTALI

Chung Sang-Hwa

June 1 – July 30, 2016

Dominique Lévy Gallery

909 Madison Avenue

New York, NY 10021



Chung Sang-Hwa, *Untitled 73-12-11*, 1973. Acrylic on canvas.
89 1/2 x 71 5/8 inches (227.3 x 181.8 cm).

Dominique Lévy Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of Korean artist **Chung Sang-Hwa** (b. 1932). Presented jointly with Greene Naftali Gallery, New York, this represents the first solo exhibition of Chung's work in the United States. The exhibition will span the artist's career, with a survey of Chung's work on view at Dominique Lévy and recent paintings displayed at Greene Naftali.

Dominique Lévy's portion of the presentation includes fifteen large-scale canvases spanning from 1969 to 2014. On view are two early paintings, *Untitled 69-3* (1969) and *Untitled 73-5* (1973), which exemplify the first stage of Chung's development, in which the artist tore segments of paint from the canvas substructure in freeform patterns. Beginning in the early 1970s, Chung's work increasingly addressed repetition, ritual, and process, typified in the 1973 masterpiece *Untitled 73-12-11*, a canvas of over seven feet tall comprised of faint vertical lines of opalescent white and gray.

Works from the following decade grow increasingly complex and incorporate systematic and rigorous grid patterns in darker and more vivid colors. Dominique Lévy will also present two paintings from 2013 and 2014, establishing a bridge with the recent work, from 2007 to 2015, on view at Greene Naftali. In conjunction with the exhibition, the galleries will publish a catalogue featuring a newly commissioned essay on Chung's work by art historian Tim Griffin, an original poem by Yuko Otomo written in response to the temporal encounter with Chung's painting, and a comprehensive chronology situating Chung's life and work within the context of postwar art and culture.



The group of artists Chung is associated with, Tansaekhwa, meaning literally “monochrome painting,” emerged in Korea in the mid-1960s. Dating from Korea’s emergence as an autonomous global and cultural power in the wake of the nation’s emancipation from Japanese rule in 1945 and the devastation of the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, Tansaekhwa is indicative of the new position of historical and international primacy that the country assumed at this time. During this time of independence, Korean artists entered into cultural exchange with various prominent art movements, including Abstract Expressionism in the United States, *art informel* in France, and Gutai in Japan. Following an initial period of influence from these movements, characterized by Korean *informel*, Tansaekhwa developed as a distinctly modern phenomenon, a blending of tradition and innovation exemplary of Korea’s new presence on the world stage. Although it has



Chung Sang-Hwa, *Untitled 14-3-12*, 2014. Acrylic and kaolin on canvas. 63 7/8 x 51 1/4 inches (162. x 130.3 cm).

ties to Minimalism, Tansaekhwa is distinct from the Western tradition of abstraction because of its engagement with such Eastern philosophies as Taoism, Neo-Confucianism, and Buddhism. Tansaekhwa was not a formally organized group, and did not have an artistic manifesto or clearly delineated objectives, instead functioning as a loose association of artists including Chung Sang-Hwa, Park Seo-Bo, Lee Ufan, Yun Hyong-Keun, Ha Chong-Hyun, Chung Chang-Sup, and Kim Tschang-Yeul, among others.

One of the most prominent Tansaekhwa painters, Chung is recognized for his innovative painting method, which the critic Kwang Suh Oh has described as “taking off/removing” and “re-painting.” In this highly meditative and meticulous process, the artist first coats the canvas with a mixture of glue, water, and kaolin clay, and then scores gridlines on its reverse. After the mixture has dried, he ritualistically and intuitively folds the canvas, and then strips the hardened material from the surface in narrow bands. Afterwards, he fills in the segments of bare canvas with acrylic paint. Chung repeats this process in succession to create multilayered, complex surfaces. In this way, the work embodies a temporal stratification, a multiplicity of processes that formally corporealize the experience of time and of an action in time that marks its passage. Art historian Lóránd Hegyi has theorized that Chung’s work initiates a “metaphorical archeology” within the viewer, entailing an internal excavation of the artist’s process that leads to self-realization. The monochrome surfaces that result from the continual application, removal, and reapplication of paint on the canvas can be read as multi-textural and complex landscapes, their hues ranging from light tones—which evoke sand and stone—to deep, bright, and even electric shades of blue, calling to mind the reflection and refraction of light over water.

Chung developed his signature process while living in Kobe, Japan in the early 1970s, and simultaneously pursued a different style of painting, which is closely related to assemblage and features brightly colored geometric shapes over untouched canvas. The latter exemplifies his engagement with the Japanese Gutai movement, bolstered by a close friendship with Jirō Yoshihara, the group's leader. In a representation of Chung's early period, Dominique Lévy will present paintings from both bodies of work.

Living in Paris, Kobe, and Seoul for extended lengths of time throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century, Chung enacted a genuinely cosmopolitan practice. In a manner unparalleled in modern East Asian art, his work calls into question the idea of painting as pure surface and introduces an internal, phenomenological aspect at the center of the viewing experience.

The exhibitions at Dominique Lévy and Greene Naftali are presented in collaboration with the artist and with Hyundai Gallery, Seoul.

About the Artist

Chung Sang-Hwa was born in Yeongdeok, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea in 1932. Graduating from the oil painting department of the Seoul National University in 1956, Chung first worked in the then-prevalent style of Korean *informel*. In 1967, he moved to Paris, at that time considered by the Korean artistic community as the center of the international art world. In 1969, he moved to Kobe, Japan, where his distinctive process of the repeated application and removal of paint from the canvas was conceived and refined. In 1977, he returned to Paris and finally settled in Seoul in 1992. There, he established his studio in Gyeonggi Province, where he continues to live and work today. Chung's work has been extensively exhibited in Korea and internationally since the late 1960s. Exhibition venues include the Poznań Biennale, Poznań; the Metropolitan Museum of International Art, Osaka; and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul. His works can be found in the permanent collections of the The Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; the Guggenheim Museum; the and the Musée d'Art Moderne de Saint-Etienne, France; Samsung Leeum Museum of Art, Seoul; the Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul; the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; the Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art, Yada Shizuoka City; and the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka. Notable exhibitions of Chung's work in recent years include the solo exhibition *Painting Archeology* at the Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Saint-Etienne Métropole, France in 2011; *From All Sides: Tansaekhwa on Abstraction* at Blum & Poe Gallery, Los Angeles in 2014; and *Dansaekhwa* at the Palazzo Contarini-Polignac, Venice, Italy in 2015.

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