

DOMINIQUE LÉVY

For Immediate Release

DOMINIQUE LÉVY TO PRESENT A TRIBUTE TO YVES KLEIN AT THE INAUGURAL EDITION OF NEW YORK'S INDEPENDENT PROJECTS

INSTALLATION INCLUDES RARE PARTICIPATORY WORK NEVER BEFORE EXHIBITED

New York, NY... From November 7-15, 2014, Dominique Lévy gallery will present a tribute to Yves Klein at the inaugural edition of New York's Independent Projects, taking place at the former DIA building on West 22nd Street in Chelsea. This presentation comes just one year after the gallery's own inaugural exhibition, *Audible Presence: Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, Cy Twombly*, attracted international attention for its re-contextualizing of Klein's work and contributions, including his historic *Symphonie Monoton-Silence* (1949). Dominique Lévy represents the Estate of Yves Klein.



Sculpture tactile (c. 1957) prototype. Installation view of "Yves Klein: With the Void, Full Powers," Walker Art Center, 2010. Courtesy Walker Art Center.

Curated by associate director Begum Yasar in collaboration with Daniel Moquay, director of Yves Klein Archives, the Independent Projects presentation will feature important works by this foremost postwar European artist, along with significant related archival materials. A centerpiece of the installation is *Sculpture tactile*, a work conceived by Klein circa 1957 and never before exhibited. *Sculpture tactile* remained unrealized in the tragically short career of Klein, who died prematurely in 1962 at the age of 34. But the



obscurity of this work owes equally to its daring sensuality and to the still relatively conservative attitudes that pervaded the European art scene in the late 1950s. In a way, the French art world at this time may not have been yet ready to fully encounter the ingenuity and audacity of the ideas of this young artist.

On view in the installation at Independent Projects will be facsimiles of Klein's ink-on-paper sketch of *Sculpture tactile* and the artist's typewritten journal entry about the work:

The Sculpture tactiles were never exhibited. I don't remember exactly why, especially because I had talked about them so much. They were boxes with two holes, and sleeves. The idea was to be able to reach in through the sleeves of the holes with your hands till the elbow, and touch, feel the sculpture inside without seeing it.

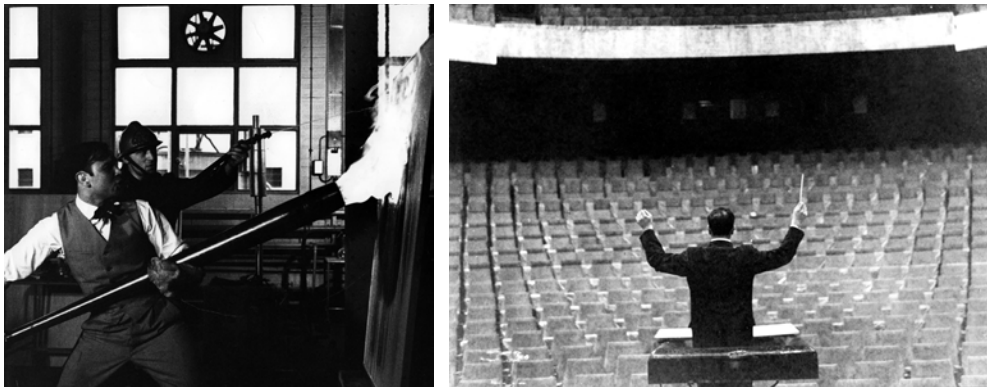
I believe now that the reason why I didn't show these boxes was because I very quickly reached such a level of perfectionism regarding these Sculpture tactiles that I thought it would be best to wait a little.

The point was simply to place living sculptures in these boxes – beautiful nude models, with generous curves, of course.

It was a little premature at the time. I would have had the police on my back right away. Today, however, it is not impossible that I show very soon to the public these Sculptures tactiles, hypersensitive to the touch.

Painter of Space, Architect of Air

Hailed as the ultimate “half shaman, half showman,” Yves Klein took the European art scene by storm in a career that lasted just eight years, from 1954 to 1962. A visionary innovator who embraced painting, sculpture, performance, photography, music, theater, film, architecture, and theoretical writing, his work anticipated many movements of the postwar avant-garde, including minimal art, conceptual art, land art, and performance art.



Left: Making of “Fire Paintings” at the testing plant of Gaz de France, La Plaine Saint-Denis, 1962. Courtesy Yves Klein Archives.

Right: Klein conducting his *Symphonie Monoton* in front of an imaginary orchestra, Gelsenkirchen Opera House, 1959. Courtesy Yves Klein Archives.

Klein identified himself as the “painter of space” and “architect of air,” seeking to achieve immaterial spirituality through unprecedented means. He adopted an ultramarine blue hue of his own invention—dubbed International Klein Blue or, simply, IKB—as a means of evoking the immateriality and boundlessness of his own particular utopian vision of the world. Through relentless experimentation he aimed to “overcome the problematics of art” and rethink the world in aesthetic terms, creating a pivotal transition between modern art’s concern with material objects and contemporary notions about the conceptual nature of art.

In the eight years that he was active, Klein accomplished more than many of his peers accomplished in careers of thirty or forty years. His color-saturated monochromes, seductive and sensuous sponge paintings, uncanny fire paintings, planetary reliefs, and “anthropométries,” with their haunting silhouettes of female bodies in motion, seemed beautiful and outrageous when they were first shown.



Left: Yves Klein and Master Asami, Koshihi-no-Kata, Tokyo, Japan, 1953. Courtesy Yves Klein Archives. Right: *Anthropométries de l'époque bleue*, Galerie internationale d'art contemporain, Paris, March 9th, 1960. Courtesy Yves Klein Archives.

The Presentation

Dominique Lévy’s exhibition at Independent Projects will include the first prototype of *Sculpture tactile* from circa 1957, which is smaller than a life-size version that would have been used if Klein had presented the work in his lifetime. While the box has been shown in exhibitions at the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the inaugural Independent Projects will be the first time that a re-fabrication of the box will be animated as a complete work of art with the inclusion of a living sculpture—male and female nude models alternately inhabiting the box.

Klein’s idea for *Sculpture tactile* was one of the very first examples of what has since come to be known as “relational aesthetics.” The visitor is invited to put their hand through the holes on the sides of the box and feel what is inside the box without seeing it. The tactile and sensuous and yet simultaneously uncanny experience of touching the nude skin of a stranger that one cannot see is what completes the box as a work of art. Since then several variations of this work have made their marks in the history of avant-garde performance art from the Japanese Fluxus artist Ay-O’s “Finger Boxes,” to Valie Export’s *Tapp- und Tast-Kino* (Tap and Touch Cinema), in which the artist wore a tiny “movie theater” around her naked upper body on the streets of ten European cities between 1968 and 1971, so that her body could not be seen but could be touched by

anyone reaching through the curtained front of the "theater."

The other component of Dominique Lévy's Independent Projects exhibition is an excerpt of the recording of Klein's own voice having a dialogue with himself, *Dialogue avec moi-même* (1961), which begins with the extended D major chord of the first part of the *Symphonie Monoton-Silence*. *Dialogue avec moi-même* is a spoken sequence of introspective self-critique by Klein, with the artist musing on the nature and enigma of artistic creation and his own practice. The English translation of the excerpt of the dialogue will be playing on continuous loop on a video screen with the voice of Klein synchronized. The dialogue video will be displayed side by side with a small close-up picture, photographed by Harry Shunk and János Kender, of Klein's face engulfed in an intense gaze. The beginning of *Dialogue avec moi-même* goes as follows:

In the process of creating something, by oneself ... the main thing is to know in sum that truth does not exist. Only honesty exists. Honesty is always in bad taste since, after all, honesty is so human; it is only ... a collection of laws, of learned ways of seeing, etc. etc. But honesty does sometimes go beyond the framework of the human; then it becomes, even in humans, something greater. It becomes life, life itself, a power, that strange life force that belongs neither to you, nor to me, nor to anyone. Life, it is life.

The first part of the installation will include the new living *Sculpture tactile*, the video, and the photograph.

From these works, the visitor will be guided into the second part of the installation, which consists of the original *Sculpture tactile* prototype as well as facsimiles of Klein's typewritten journal entry on the work and his ink sketch of it on "Martini" stationary paper, displayed in a glass vitrine. In this way, the installation is conceived in two parts that are intimately connected: first part being of the "present" with the active and living *Sculpture tactile* and Klein's voice audible throughout the space; and the second part being more of the "past," with the original box shown as an un-activated artifact accompanied by the documentary presence of the journal entry. Presented in dim and dramatic lighting conditions, the installation aims to provide the visitor with a glimpse into the creative psyche of one of the most innovative and visionary artistic talents of the twentieth century, simulating the feeling of a passage, an initiatory route through time.

Yves Klein

Born in 1928 in Nice, the child of two painters, Klein might have seemed predestined to become an artist. In 1947, at the age of nineteen, he developed an intense interest in an unlikely combination of topics: Rosicrucianism (a theological doctrine built on esoteric truths of the ancient past, which, concealed from the average man, provide insight into nature, the physical universe and the spiritual realm) and judo. In 1949, he composed the *Symphonie Monoton-Silence*, which consists of twenty minutes of a single extended sound produced by an orchestra and a chorus, followed by twenty minutes of silence. After intensive training in Japan, upon his return to France in 1952 he published a book on judo and opened his own school. Over the years, Klein had dabbled in painting, but only in 1955 did he begin to think seriously about becoming an artist. Refusing to play by the rules, he denounced both the academy and the avant-garde, proclaiming himself a revolutionary genius. In this regard, he was right. His career progressed with miraculous speed. By 1958, he had had solo shows in Milan, London, Düsseldorf and Paris, and

was commissioned to create a series of huge murals for a new theater in Gelsenkirchen, Germany. Over the next two years, he began to make a new kind of picture, the “anthropométry,” by covering models with paint and having them press their bodies against paper or canvas. He exhibited an empty gallery as an artwork. He invented another kind of conceptual art based on the sale of “zones of immaterial pictorial sensibility.” While painting his German murals, he became close to the artists of Group Zero in Düsseldorf, and in 1960 he helped found the Nouveaux Réalistes group in Paris. In 1961, the Museum Haus Lange, in Krefeld, organized a retrospective of his work, where he exhibited sculptures made from jets of fire. He then proceeded to make a series of canvases “painted” with a flame-thrower. In the same year, he had exhibitions in New York, Los Angeles, Rome, and Milan. In January 1962 he married the artist Rotraut Uecker; their happy union was cut tragically short in June, when Klein suddenly died of a heart attack at the age of thirty-four.

A true giant of the post-war avant-garde, Yves Klein left behind an impressive body of work that broke new ground and blended traditional artistic mediums with performance and spiritual exploration. Dominique Lévy is honored to represent the Estate of Yves Klein in North America. Previous exhibitions of the artist at the gallery include *Yves Klein: A Career Survey* (2005) and *Audible Presence: Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, Cy Twombly* (2013), which was accompanied by the first New York performance of *Symphonie Monotone-Silence* to a vast audience at the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in September 2013 to critical acclaim.

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