

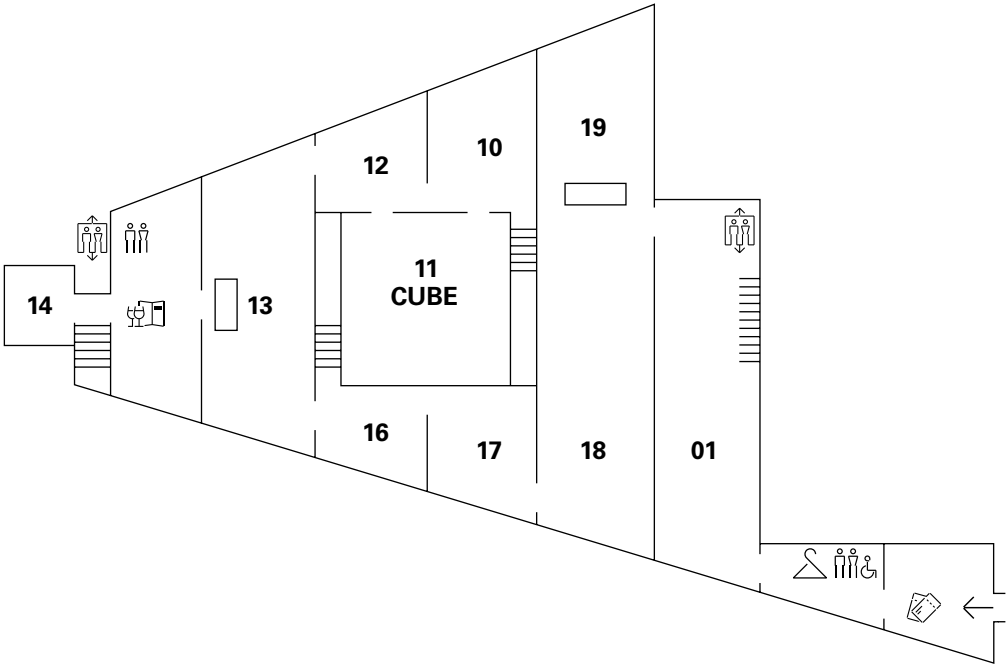
ICÔNES

at Punta  
della Dogana

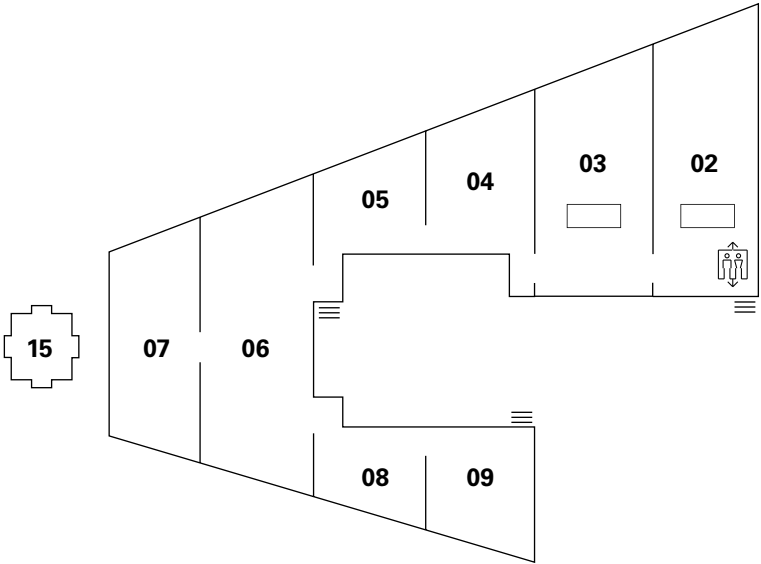
EN

Punta della Dogana  
Palazzo Grassi  
**Pinault**  
**Collection**

Ground floor



First floor



# ICÔNES

The *Icônes* exhibition presents emblematic works from the Pinault Collection, and proposes a reflection on the theme of the icon and the status of the image in the contemporary world. The word “icon” has two meanings: its Greek etymology defines it as an “image”, while it is used to designate a certain type of religious painting that characterizes in particular Eastern Christianity. The idea of a model or an emblematic figure is more contemporary. The status of the image—its capacity to embody a presence, between appearance and disappearance, shadow and light, to spark emotion—is at the core of this exhibition, conceived specifically for the Punta della Dogana and the Venetian context, marked by its tight links with Byzantium. The exhibition aims to reveal the icon as a vehicle of passage to another world or other states of consciousness (contemplation, meditation) through a selection of more than eighty works, among which masterpieces from the Pinault Collection and unseen works. The show is punctuated by spaces like places to pause or chapels in this era of saturation and trivialization of images, and invokes, between figuration and abstraction, all the dimensions of the image in the contemporary artistic context—paintings, videos, sounds, installations, performances. Furthermore it highlights new dialogues between emblematic artists from the Pinault Collection such as, among others, David Hammons and Agnes Martin, Kimsooja and Chen Zhen, Danh Vo and Rudolf Stingel, Sherrie Levine and On Kawara.

## MAGNETIC SPACE

The exhibition welcomes the visitor with *Concetto spaziale* by Lucio Fontana [room 01], a work, that, just as the icon, transcends the materiality of the image, by opening up—literally, with a sharp object—to another dimension, in which light becomes an integral part of the artist’s creation. Fontana’s work evokes as much the mystery of our origins as it does astral constellations.

Taking up the research initiated by the father of Spatialism, the Brazilian artist Lygia Pape with her work *Ttéia 1, C* [room 01]—an installation of golden wires stretched in spaces and that appear at the edge of the visible, according to the light and the position of the viewer—invites us to experience a “magnetic space” of rays of light that penetrate the darkness, in an almost surreal illumination. Donald Judd [room 01], in his Minimalist quest, strips the symbolism of the cross, of gold, to keep only the structure and the yellow color that radiates from four Corten steel cubes.

In Philippe Parreno’s *Quinta del Sordo* [room 02], sound and light reveal and bring to life the fourteen black paintings, created by Francisco Goya between 1819 and 1823, in his house near Madrid. In contrast to the mystical brilliance of the cycles of religious paintings Goya produced for the monarchy and the Church during his career, he painted directly on the walls oil paintings in which black predominates, shaded with ochre and earth.

## ROOM 01

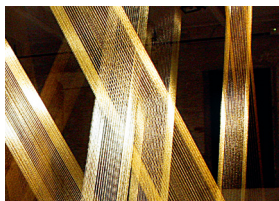
### LUCIO FONTANA (1899–1968)



*Concetto spaziale*, 1958  
Pinault Collection

In 1946, Lucio Fontana formulated the principles of Spatialism, freeing art from the contingencies of matter, space, and time. “I do not want to make a painting. I want to open up space, create a new dimension, establish a bond with the cosmos, which constantly extends beyond the confined plane of an image,”<sup>01</sup> the artist explains. It is with the primal gesture of slashing the canvas—iconoclastic at first glance—that he establishes a visual, perceptible continuity between the surface of the work and the surrounding environment. His reflections on the idea of the infinite call into question religious beliefs and even the purpose of art, while making concrete the essence of the form and space of the sacred.

### LYGIA PAPE (1927–2004)



*Ttéia 1, C*, 2003–2017  
Pinault Collection



*O Ovo*, 1967  
Performance at the beach of Barra da Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro, 1967  
© Projeto Lygia Pape  
Image above: Vintage photograph in black and white of the performance



*Divisor*, 1968  
Performance at Favela da Cabeça, Rio de Janeiro, 1967 (first performance)  
Image above: Vintage photograph of the performance at Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, 1990

An essential member of the Brazilian artistic avant-garde, a pioneer of performance-based art intimately tied to social and political issues, Lygia Pape opened the work of art and the exhibition space to territories and phenomena that challenge the abstraction of European modernity, in order to reevaluate its scope on a global scale. In *O Ovo* and *Divisor*, the immaculate surface of the white canvas and pure geometric forms inherited from European modernity are brought together with physical bodies that contest their validity. The work becomes a process of organic transformation, a dwelling where bodies meet and form one immense skin, a moving architecture, and, in *Divisor*, a collective body that dances, a procession for the present moment.

01 — Lucio Fontana, cited in: Jan van der Marck, Enrico Crispolti, “Lucio Fontana: From Tradition to Utopia,” *Lucio Fontana: Catalogue Raisonné*, Vol. I (Brussels: La Connaissance, 1974), 7.

DONALD JUDD  
(1928–1994)



Untitled, 1991  
Pinault Collection  
Donald Judd Art © Judd Foundation,  
by SIAE 2023

In 1988, Donald Judd acquired an abandoned ice plant and transformed it into a workshop. This unusual space was where the artist produced almost all his work in Corten steel. The unique qualities of this raw industrial material, with its patina resulting from oxidation, become both the subject and the object of the work. Most of his steel sculptures are part of a typology of forms established in the late 1960s, including “progressions,” “stacks,” and “boxes.”

This untitled work, composed of four large Corten steel boxes hung on the wall, the hollow spaces between them forming a cross, belongs to the last category. The interior surface of each box is painted in bright yellow, whose smooth, shiny appearance contrasts with that of the steel. These are “specific objects,”<sup>02</sup> as the artist called them in his eponymous article, in which he argued for an art rooted in reality that seeks to clearly express the specificity of each object.

ROOM 02

PHILIPPE PARRENO  
(BORN IN 1964)



*La Quinta del Sordo*, 2021  
Pinault Collection

In 1819, deaf, old and ill, Francisco Goya moved into a house known as the Quinta del Sordo, or House of the Deaf Man, on the southern outskirts of Madrid. He lived here for the next four years, principally working on the cycle of murals whose 14 images have come to be known as the “Black Paintings”.

Philippe Parreno’s film *La Quinta del Sordo* oscillates between surface and depth, light and shadow; between sound and vision, the pictorial spaces Goya created and the walls of the rooms they originally covered.

Parreno calls his film “science fiction”. This may seem contentious, until we learn about the 3D computer model he created of Goya’s house, which included the placement of the paintings in relation to windows and doors and to one another. Parreno was then able to make an acoustic model to simulate the way sound travelled through the building. It is a kind of speculative architecture, a ghost space.

The film makes us think how hearing affects sight, and how apprehending things is dependent on all our senses.

Excerpted from Adrian Searle, “Goya’s horrific ‘Black Paintings’ are brought to life—*La Quinta del Sordo* review,” *The Guardian*, 8 June 2022. Reproduction prohibited. All rights reserved.

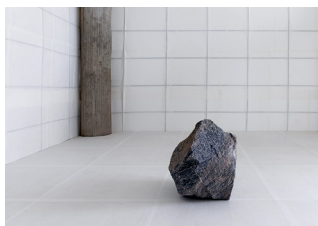
## ROOM 03

LEE UFAN

(BORN IN 1936)



*Dialogue*, 2007  
Pinault Collection



*Tea in the Field*, 2023  
© Lee Ufan, by SIAE 2023.  
Courtesy of Studio Lee Ufan  
Image above: *Relatum – Room (B)*, 2017.

The artist, poet, and philosopher Lee Ufan, who lives between Korea, Japan, and France, has always placed the concept of “resonance” (*yôhaku*) at the center of his practice. As he explains, “The space of resonance is not the void. It is an open field of forces where action, things, and space resonate. (...) The space of resonance thus exceeds objects or words; it makes men breathe the infinite and leads them to silence.”<sup>03</sup> In the painting on display, the space of resonance finds its expression in the balance between the painted areas and the void of the canvas.

Ufan has also covered the floor of a room with gravel; in the center, a tea room or meditation chamber. The rice paper walls have almost disappeared: stretched

and dried after their manufacture and installation, they are so solid they can be used as walls; but wet, they become so fragile they might tear. In Venice, a city particularly exposed to the power of water, both protective and destructive, the artist confronts us with this precariousness, and invites us to meditate on our relationship to nature. The icon (or anti-icon) he presents is a stone chosen by the artist, a work of nature several millennia old.

## ROOM 04

CAMILLE NORMENT

(BORN IN 1970)



*Prime*, 2016  
Tactile sound installation  
© Camille Norment, by SIAE 2023.  
Courtesy of the artist



*Untitled graphs*, 2022–2023  
Selections from the series  
*Deviations and Resonance*  
© Camille Norment, by SIAE 2023.  
Courtesy of the artist

Camille Norment’s sound installation *Prime* is composed of wood benches that emit vocalizations when activated by the visitors’ contact, and vibrate through their bodies.

We enter a space that welcomes communal rest, in which sound is an expression of energy, both felt and heard, and transmitted through air and wood, bodies and surfaces. The vibrational feedback elicits cathartic sounds that evoke varied meanings, from comfort and pleasure to redemption, or conversely, pain and misery. We connect to the visceral reverberations of a single voice as it moves around and within our bodies. The sounds produced summon a layered, spiritual sonic continuum. Also on view is a related series of works on paper made with iron filings, drawn with magnets, that trace the remnant imprint of Norment's hand shifting the oxidized red mineral—present in both the body and the earth—to specific sonic frequencies.

## **ROOM 05**

### **EDITH DEKYNDT** **(BORN IN 1960)**



*Ombre indigène*, 2014  
© Edith Dekyndt



*Nanthanwan Temple 004*  
(*Master Duangkamol Jaikompan, Shang Mai, Thailand*), 2014  
Courtesy of the artist

04 — Cécila Bezzan, "Are you experienced?," in *Edith Dekyndt. I Remember Earth* (Brussels: Éditions Facteur Humain, 2009), 107.

*Ombre indigène* captures the undulations of a flag made of black hair fluttering in the wind, planted on the island of Martinique near the shore where, on the night of April 8 to 9, 1830, a clandestine trade ship carrying a hundred African captives ran aground. In creating this work, Dekyndt composes a barely moving picture, a reference to slavery but also to martyrdom, with a languid, meditative, hypnotic rhythm, which, years later, in September 2022, became viral following the death of a young Iranian woman, and thus the symbol of the upheaval of this country's women. Dekyndt positions the video of this performance near a fabric whose fibers have been altered by its burial for months in the earth, and a black lacquer whose reflective effects invite a form of contemplation.



*Underground 17*, 2018  
Pinault Collection

This work is composed of a cloth that has been buried during several months. Minerals, roots, plants, insects, and bacteria have transformed it into an earth-made landscape. Some parts of the cloth were only slightly eaten away, others were completely destroyed. *Underground 17* opens up to "a fabulous dimension where inanimate things come to life."<sup>04</sup> This process of grafting the living onto the artificial is a recurrent practice of the artist who, in the almost complete absence of control over the result, repeats the experiment in



different places. Dekyndt seeks to capture the flow of life and its transformations.

acute questions than Sartre's dismissive answers, bears witness to the artist's faith in the power of art, above all.

## EXTERNAL WALLS OF THE CUBE

JOSEPH KOSUTH  
(BORN IN 1945)



*An Object Closed Upon Itself? (Adieux)*,  
2022

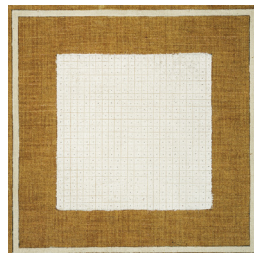
© Joseph Kosuth, by SIAE 2023.  
Courtesy of the artist

Joseph Kosuth's installation *An Object Closed Upon Itself? (Adieux)* was commissioned specifically for the *Icônes* exhibition. It is based on a dialogue between Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, entitled *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre*, an exchange recorded in the last years of Sartre's life and published in 1981 by Beauvoir after his death. The text presents the final theoretical and personal reflections of this "iconic" twentieth-century couple. Sartre and Beauvoir express doubts, in contrast with their better-known, more emphatic quotes. Kosuth conceives a presentation respecting both the delicacy and the complexity of Tadao Ando's work. To deposit an almost immaterial envelope on the external walls of the building's central cube, Kosuth makes use of manufacturing techniques that leave no trace on the delicate material emblematic of the Japanese architect. Presented in French, Italian, and English, this dialogue serves as an Ariadne's thread in the labyrinth of Punta della Dogana and, echoing more Beauvoir's

## ROOM 06

[DIALOGUE]

AGNES MARTIN  
(1912–2004)



*White Flower*, 1960  
Pinault Collection

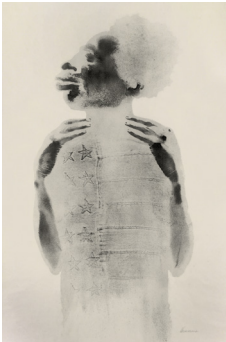


*Reflection*, 1959  
Pinault Collection

DAVID HAMMONS  
(BORN IN 1943)



*A Cry From the Inside*, 1969  
Pinault Collection



*I Dig the Way this Dude Looks*, 1971  
Pinault Collection

Like an alchemist, Hammons transforms abandoned objects, that he finds on the street, into powerful evocations of the urban imagination, bringing together disparate references from both art history and the urban space. Hammons uses his body, a leitmotif in his practice, to represent the Black body, which American society tends to obfuscate, in a tangible, direct manner.

Martin, meanwhile, paints metaphysical images inspired by different Eastern spiritual beliefs, including Vedanta, Zen Buddhism, and Taoism. Her approach is based on the repetition of regular motifs and eliminates all external references, in

order to emphasize the materiality of the painting and the energy associated with it.

Both artists deliberately chose to work at a remove from the artworld and its institutions. In 1967, when her career was at its peak, Martin decided to stop painting. She did not return to painting until 1974, remaining distant from the artworld. Hammons, too, is a nonconformist, which allows him to adopt unconventional points of view in his works.

DAVID HAMMONS



*Untitled (Mirror)*, 2013  
Pinault Collection

A large swath of black and used fabric, is draped over the baroque embellishments of a large gilded mirror. The apparent precariousness of this fabric, fraying into shreds, contrasts with the imposing presence of the mirror it covers. The splendor of this status symbol disappears under the folds of the worn fabric, expression of a much more modest condition. By preventing us from seeing our reflection in the mirror, Hammons confronts us all the more insistently with this threadbare textile surface, in which some will recognize themselves even more strongly than in the mirror.

Although Hammons's artistic work is based on a practice of self-representation, the images he produces in his series of "body prints" expose less the traces of his presence than of his absence. Hammons seems to have understood,

more than any other artist, the evocative power of absence and disappearance; this allows him to express what can hardly be seen or said, like the lack of visibility that affects certain bodies more than others, starting with Black bodies.

### AGNES MARTIN



*Blue-Grey Composition*, 1962  
Oil on canvas  
Pinault Collection

*Blue-Grey Composition* is representative of a pivotal period in Agnes Martin's work, marking the transition from her early, more fluid style, and the ethereal geometric visions on which she would focus later. Martin meticulously destroyed all her work of the 1950s, which had been characterized by the use of biomorphic shapes and expressive colors. *Blue-Grey Composition* captures an intermediate stage, before her later experiments with the grid motif and a refined geometric style. While the rectilinearity of this painting announces this evolution, the organic form in the center of the painting recalls her use of curved lines in her earlier work. Evoking an opening, like a slit leading to a pictorial beyond, this central shape enters into tension with the taut lines that unfold at the upper and lower ends of the canvas.

Animated by a deep spirituality, Martin explained that she was interested "in experience that is wordless and silent, and in the fact that this experience can be expressed for me in art work which is also wordless and silent."<sup>05</sup>

### ROOM 07

### ROBERT RYMAN (1930–2019)



Untitled, 2010  
Pinault Collection  
© Robert Ryman, by SIAE 2023

From the beginning of his career, in the 1950s, Robert Ryman pragmatically tested the means of painting, deploying a variety of supports and an equally catholic range of utensils and paints. In each of his small square paintings made from 2010 and 2011—presented here in a structure that evokes a chapel, offering an invitation to meditation—a rough square of white oil paint floats roughly off-kilter on a stretched square cotton canvas. This white paint is backed by a darkly saturated, light-absorbing ground. It becomes inextricable from the canvas's weave.

When discussing an artist's "late style," critics often note a tendency toward abrupt shifts in mode—radical changes in method or technique. Such shifts have arguably transpired here: In the past, Ryman allowed the properties of his supports, whether the dim sheen of steel or the fibrous brown of corrugated paper, to serve as pictorial incident. In his work from 2010 and 2011, by contrast, the ground is coated completely in paint. But rather than implying some kind of denouement, these pieces acknowledge that amid the "endless possibilities" Ryman once described as the richness of painting, there are only more questions.

Excerpted from Suzanne Hudson, "Robert Ryman," *Artforum*, no. 4 (December 2013), 260-261.

DANH VO  
(BORN IN 1975)



*untitled, 2021*  
Pinault Collection



*untitled, 2020*  
Pinault Collection

The life of Danh Vo, an artist of Vietnamese and Danish nationality, the child of boat people who emigrated to this Scandinavian country, is one marked by radical displacement. While this foundational event in his life forced him to adapt and live between two cultures, his story, he says, is also ours: each of us, in one way or another, carries within us the tears of the Vietnam War, of Christian evangelization, of political conflicts, of the mix of our origins. The works presented in the exhibition refer to these questions: *untitled* (2021), a refrigerator containing a cast of Heinz Peter Knes's feet in a position identical to that of Christ on the Cross; *untitled* (2020), a suitcase containing fragments of a religious sculpture, reminiscent of the small-format icons taken

on journeys, in war, or on pilgrimages across borders; or *untitled* (2021), which confronts the Christian ideal, a painting of the Virgin and Child that can be glimpsed in the tears of an American flag bearing the stigmata of war, soiled and pierced by bullets [room 09].

ROOM 08

JAMES LEE BYARS  
(1932–1997)



*The Golden Tower, 1974*  
Pinault Collection



*The Philosophical Nail, 1986*  
Pinault Collection

*The Golden Tower*, one of James Lee Byars's major works, is the result of a long process that began in 1974, going through multiple versions and sketches. Conceived as a monument dedicated to the entirety of humanity and its spiritual ascent, the imposing cylindrical monolith seems composed of light—an illumination, in every sense of the word. With this sculpture, the artist

hoped to establish a cosmic link between the earth and the sky.

Gold, as a materialization of the sacred, appears repeatedly in Byars's practice. His work *The Philosophical Nail* consists of a golden nail, presented in a mahogany display case, reinforcing the mystery surrounding the object by endowing it with the aura of a relic. The significance of the nail, which evokes Christian iconography, architecture, and the sensation of pain, is deliberately left open to interpretation by the artist. Transcendent, yet firmly anchored in their materiality, Byars's works unfold like enigmas to be interpreted.

### FRANCESCO LO SAVIO

(1935–1963)

*Spazio Luce*, 1960



Pinault Collection

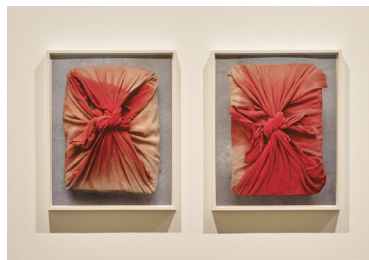
From 1959 to 1963, Roman artist Francesco Lo Savio developed his brief reflection on the perception of light through his use of the monochrome. The paintings and drawings in his first series, "*Spazio-Luce*" (1959–1960), each consist of a circle in the center of a rectangle, their slight chromatic variations creating the effect of a vibrating and unstable surface that absorbs the eye and offers a volumetric perception of light. Lo Savio adopted a radical vocabulary, dominated by simple geometric forms: rectangles, metal cubes painted black constitute the series "*Metalli*" (1960–1962), which anticipated the investigations of American Minimal art that soon followed. Lo Savio's profoundly essentialist work sought to de-

materialize the space of the canvas by studying light, structure, and vibration.

### ROOM 09

#### DAYANITA SINGH

(BORN IN 1961)



*Time Measures*, 2016

Pinault Collection

Image above: *Time Measure, Sequence VI*

"Time measures / Nothing but itself,"<sup>06</sup> noted the German writer W.G. Sebald, inspiring the title of this photographic series by Indian artist Dayanita Singh.

*Time Measures*, a set of thirty-four photographs that highlight the artist's longstanding interest in paper archives, is an atypical work in Singh's oeuvre, as she rarely uses color. These thirty-four knotted bundles, photographed from above, each in a different shade of faded red, bear witness to both the passage of time and the importance of their confidential contents, kept out of sight. They form an abstract landscape or a kind of iconostasis. Discovered in an archive in India, the bundles refer to an indeterminate time; the documents they contain remain unknown and inaccessible to us, folded in a cloth, itself closed by a knot. Like icons in many religions, these documents are conspicuous by their lack of embodiment, with only the bundle being shown, rather than the material contents of the archive.

06 — "Nichts als sich selbst/misst die Zeit," Winfried G. Sebald, *Giuliettas Geburtstag*, in *Über das Land und das Wasser: Ausgewählte Gedichte 1964-2001*, (Munich: Hanser, 2008) p. 28. English translation: *Across the Land and the Water. Selected Poems 1964-2001*, (New York: Modern Library, 2013), 24.

DANH VO



*untitled*, 2021  
Pinault Collection

ROOM 10

[DIALOGUE]

KIMSOOJA  
(BORN IN 1957)



*A Needle Woman*, 1999–2000  
Pinault Collection

CHEN ZHEN  
(1955–2000)



*Un village sans frontières*, 2000  
Pinault Collection

Kimsooja's work, like that of Chen Zhen, invites us to a profound experience of otherness, where the encounter with the other, born of exile and nomadism, opens up a shared aspiration to spirituality. Born in China in 1955, during the Cultural Revolution, Chen Zhen became interested at a very young age in the links between traditional Chinese philosophy and Western culture. Born in Korea in 1957, Kimsooja chose to live a nomadic life, in which the encounter with the Other is the mirror essential for an awareness of one's own existence. Both artists' approach is imbued with the precepts of Asian philosophies — Buddhism and Taoism, Confucianism and Shamanism.

Through the performance *A Needle Woman*, Kimsooja inscribes her body in its verticality and immobility, amid the tumultuous flows of the megalopolis and zones of political conflict, as a resisting, pacifying force, a needle making it symbolically possible to weave relations between individuals, to recreate a social fabric, a possible proximity. Using chairs and votive candles, like those found in the churches of Salvador de Bahia in Brazil, where he initiated the *Un village sans frontières* project with street and favela children, Chen Zhen builds small houses that for him are "altars of light." In China, the candle symbolizes the life of an individual; from the very fragility of this ephemeral material, Chen Zhen builds the imaginary cartography of a universal village, abolishing geographical and spiritual borders.



## VENICE AND THE ICON

Venice has always inspired the creation of new artforms, nourished by the city's unique atmosphere and context. Since the end of the Middle Ages, Venetian art has been a synthesis of various influences—notably Byzantine, Gothic, and Flemish—which reflect the role of bridge between East and West played by the Serenissima. Even today, Venice remains a crossroads where multiple horizons meet and hybridize, providing a fertile ground for creation.

It is thus a recurring source of inspiration for the Vietnamese-born Danish artist Danh Vo, who in the past chose to incorporate works by Bellini and Marescalco, a painter who belonged to Titian's studio, in his 2015 exhibition *Slip of the Tongue* at Punta della Dogana. The fragments of a statue of Christ, which he presented enclosed in a suitcase [room 07], resonates with the history of Venice, an important point of transit especially during the Crusades. The theme of migration is also addressed by the Chinese artist Chen Zhen [room 10], whose intercultural research recalls the profoundly cosmopolitan character of Venetian history.

Venice has also been home to many artists, such as James Lee Byars [room 08], who lived there intermittently for several years, during which time he presented various performances and exhibitions and collaborated with Murano glass artisans. Kimsooja [room 10 and 15], Edith Dekyndt [room 05], and Joseph Kosuth [external walls of the cube] have all produced site-specific installations in various places in the city. Each of them has participated in the Venice Biennale, an unmissable event in the artworld during which, as in Venice itself, a myriad of sensibilities and ways of being come together to form a microcosm.

## ROOM 11—CUBE

[DIALOGUE]

### DANH VO



*Christmas (Rome), 2012, 2013*  
Pinault Collection

### RUDOLF STINGEL (BORN IN 1956)



*Untitled, 2009*  
Pinault Collection



*Untitled, 2010*  
Pinault Collection

Suspended at the heart of the central space, pieces of velvet fabric faded by light and time, coming from the Vatican museums, show the traces of liturgical objects that had been placed on them. They reveal the original shine of the fabric where the crucifixes, chalices, ciboria, and monstrances

once hung, reproducing their elaborate shapes and geometric arrangements. Taken by Danh Vo, these delicate skins and their ghostly presence are now in tension when they are shown: in a shapeless heap, they are paradoxically protected from further degradation; if hung, they are inexorably exposed to their slow destruction by the light.

Rudolf Stingel's work calls into question the mysteries of the creation and appearance of images. The surfaces of his paintings, on which the traces of various gestures are preserved, oscillate between airy weightlessness and the thickness of the material. For *Untitled* (2009), Stingel also cast a fragment of one of his earlier works, a panel of a malleable wall on which the public was invited to make marks and leave traces. The more their handwritten inscriptions covered the material, the more it disappeared. Then, as a final gesture, the artist took this scarified skin and cast it in a solid material, conjuring its fate. Each in their own way, the prints and traces of Vo and Stingel are new objects of devotion, offered in their fragility, suspended between presence and absence.

## ROOM 12

### DINEO SESHEE BOPAPE (BORN IN 1981)



*Mothabeng, 2022*  
Courtesy of the artist, Pirelli  
HangarBicocca and Sfeir-Semler Gallery  
Beirut/Hamburg



Dineo Seshee Bopape's work radiates a sense of freedom and beauty, in which the human scale is overwhelmed by the vertigo of history—in particular that of the African diaspora—with its lacerating memories and the resolute longing for rebirth.

For *Mothabeng*, the artist resorted to her usual earthly vocabulary of materials—soil, clay, herbs, and marble dust—to create an intimate space. Flashes of light penetrate from the top of the dome through fissures in the dried materials, while the space within is filled with sound. The sharp and abstract tones of the recording diffuse the vibrations of the rocks and the manufacturing activity of a marble quarry.<sup>07</sup> The title of the work in Sepedi, meaning “at the mountain” or “of the mountain,” suggests a collective memory of space. The rhythms of narration and of time are fascinating routes into Bopape's work, expanding our comprehension of history. They project the present moment into the future, evoking Shigeko Kubota's words: “Mountain—womb / My womb is a volcano [...] / They sing of my history.”<sup>08</sup>

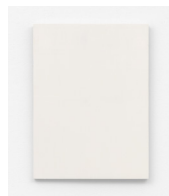
## ROOM 13

[DIALOGUE]

SHERRIE LEVINE  
(BORN IN 1947)



*Crystal Skull*, 2010  
Pinault Collection



*Meltdown: After Klein: White*, 1991  
Pinault Collection



*Meltdown: After Klein: Black*, 1991  
Pinault Collection

ON KAWARA  
(1932-2014; 29,771 DAYS)



*DEC. 1, 1974; DEC. 2, 1974; DEC. 3, 1974;  
DEC. 4, 1974; DEC. 5, 1974; DEC. 6, 1974;  
DEC. 7, 1974, 1974*  
7 paintings from the series *Today*,  
1966–2013  
Pinault Collection

Twelve glass skulls are presented in glass vitrines, reminiscent of those found in museums devoted to history or the natural sciences. Seven paintings by On Kawara feature a series of dates, painted in white on a black background. While Sherrie Levine's sculptural installation *Crystal Skull* examines the ephemerality of life and our fascination with death, On Kawara's conceptual paintings mark the passage of time and the

07 — The recording was made in the Apuan Alps, at the Henraux Quarry of Cervairole, Monte Altissimo, Seravezza.

08 — *Shigeko Kubota: Video Sculpture* (New York: American Museum of Moving Image, 1991), 35.

construction of the everyday. At first glance, the formal simplicity of these paintings contrasts with the refined, delicate nature of the sculptures presented by Levine. Each in fundamentally opposite styles and materials, these two artists initiate a reflection on time, this ineluctable force that gives rhythm to our lives.

It is not surprising that Levine, whose artistic practice has often involved the notion of repetition, became interested in the motif of the skull. Levine presents twelve of them, thus referring both to the cycle of the twelve months of the year of the Gregorian calendar and to the cycle of life and death. The calendar, like any other form of temporal division, only becomes the measure of our daily life through repetition. This is the basis of the seven paintings by On Kawara from his "Today" series. By exposing a social fact shared by everyone—our common organization of time—through the manual, solitary practice that is painting, On Kawara confronts the individual and collective dimensions of temporal experience, captured in their most pared down expression. In her "Meltdown" series, Levine follows a similar path to formal simplicity, bringing painting back to its material immediacy.

## **ROOM 14 – TORRINO**

### **MAURIZIO CATTELAN** **(BORN IN 1960)**



*La Nona Ora*, 1999  
Pinault Collection

09 — Maurizio Cattelan cited in Andrea Bellini, "An Interview with Maurizio Cattelan," *Sculpture* 24, no. 7, September 2005.

*La Nona Ora* is one of Maurizio Cattelan's most iconic works. This highly realistic wax statue of Pope John Paul II, pinned to the ground by a meteorite, is elaborately staged. The title refers to the last hour of Christ's life, a powerful image, allegory of the significance of the ecclesiastical function. In the artist's work, the pope is one of many embodiments of the contrast between power and vulnerability. The work was in fact vandalized in 2001, in the name of the Holy Father. But Cattelan denies that *La Nona Ora* is anticlerical: "It was certainly not anti-Catholic, coming from me, who grew up singing in the church choir, surrounded by saints and altar boys. The pope is more a way of reminding us that power, regardless of its nature, has an expiration date, just like milk."<sup>09</sup> Trapped in a moment of intense, silent suffering, eyes closed as if in prayer, the pope, who was almost assassinated, can also be considered a Christ-like figure, as the work's title suggests.



*Mother*, 1999  
Pinault Collection

Maurizio Cattelan's photograph *Mother*, is a trace of his performance piece at the opening of the 48th Venice Biennale in 1999. The Italian artist asked an Indian fakir to bury himself leaving only his hands, motionless and joined in a gesture of prayer, above the ground. This strong, open image allows him to explore spirituality, hope, eternity and agony while paying tribute to his mother, who died at an early age.

Cattelan was born in Padua, Italy, where religious aesthetics are omnipresent. “What interests me in art is the idea of permanence, an image that outlives us, something that goes beyond our own death,” he says. Often described as neo-pop, especially the sculptures, his provocative, unexpected works ask viewers questions.

## ROOM 15 – TORRINO

### KIMSOOJA



*To Breathe-Venice*, 2023

*Mandala: Zone of Zero*, 2004–2010

© Kimsooja, by SIAE 2023. Courtesy of Punta della Dogana and Kimsooja Studio

With *To Breathe-Venice*, Kimsooja creates a dizzying doubling of the interior volume of the belvedere of Venice’s ancient *dogana da mar* [sea customs], overlooking the basin of San Marco. Mirrors lining the floor unify the space, conveying an impression of weightlessness. The bay windows that open onto the lagoon are coated with transparent films that diffract light infinitely. These reflective surfaces convey the impression of walking on calm, clear water, thus extending the lagoon into the building.

Confronting our reflection in the mirrors allows us to perceive ourselves simultaneously as subject and object, encountering our own otherness. The polyphony of *Mandala: Zone of Zero*, intertwining Tibetan, Islamic, and Gregorian chants, completes this renewed spatial experience, which hints at transcendence.

## ROOM 16

### ÉTIENNE CHAMBAUD (BORN IN 1980)



*Uncreature*, 2022

Pinault Collection



*Stase*, 2022

Pinault Collection

Étienne Chabaud’s series “Uncreatures” and “Stase” exist, in his own words, “between absence and presence, between being and becoming, between here and elsewhere, between what exists, what is present and what could appear.”<sup>10</sup> By covering historical religious icons with gold leaf or 3D-printed materials, he transforms their original appearance, and our perception of them.

The difference in color between the original gilding and the gilding applied by the artist on his three “Uncreatures” paradoxically accentuates the presence of the figure he is attempting to hide. Taking as its starting point the found objects used to decorate and protect religious icons, the series “Stase” is an evolution of the “Uncreatures.” The title *Stase* refers to the notion of immobility, but also evokes the

medical term “metastasis.” These almost surreal white protuberances, developed from the space left vacant by the disappearance of the icon, are the result of computer simulations modeling mutant growths, between the organic and the mineral. Thus metamorphized, the icons become elusive enigmas, their presence stronger and more disturbing.

SERGEI EISENSTEIN  
(1898–1948)



*Ivan the Terrible*, 1943–1946

© Gaumont-Département Arkeion  
Total duration of the excerpts:  
12 min. 37 sec.

In 1941, Sergei Eisenstein was entrusted by Stalin with the task of making a film about Tsar Ivan IV, known as “the Terrible,” with the goal of exalting strong national figures. Rather than upholding his reputation as a bloodthirsty monarch, the aim was to emphasize his decisive role in the unification of the Russian state in the sixteenth century—and implicitly, to justify Stalin’s Great Purge.

To fulfill this delicate assignment, Eisenstein imagined a Shakespearean drama featuring a tsar plagued by doubt and loneliness: the first part of the film won the Stalin Prize in 1946, while the second part was censored, and the third part never realized. For this ambitious project, conceived as a total work of art, the filmmaker multiplies references, with a marked predilection for the Byzantine and Russian icon; the composition of many shots was based on its iconographic codes. Above

all, the film is populated with frescoes and icons that endow the film with a rich polysemy, including a range of political interpretations, which continue to be studied and analyzed to this day.

ANDREI TARKOVSKY  
(1932–1986)



*Andrei Rublev*, 1966

Courtesy of Films Sans Frontières.

All rights reserved

Total duration of the excerpt: 10 min.

In his film *Andrei Rublev*, about the fifteenth-century icon painter, director Andrei Tarkovsky questions the ability of images—over the centuries and through the vicissitudes of history—to embody the idea of the absolute freedom of mankind’s spiritual potential. In a fifteenth-century Russia under the thumb of cruel rulers and ravaged by Tatar incursions, the monk Andrei Rublev’s love and faith are sorely tested. He decides to paint his dreams of a better world on the walls of churches and leaves for the capital, where he has been summoned to decorate the cathedral. But the brutality, horror, and misery he encounters during his journey are so terrible that Rublev decides to abandon painting and take a vow of silence... This story, filled with love and hope, chronicles the life of one of the greatest painters of all time. It was only Tarkovsky’s second full-length film, but in spite of the difficulties he experienced with his country’s censors, it brought him international renown. The Russian director’s poetry, embedded in

the substrate of the images, reopens the question of the future of the invisible and the spiritual in a world saturated with images.

## **ROOM 17**

**PAULO NAZARETH**  
**(BORN IN 1977)**



*Antropologia do negro I*, 2014  
Pinault Collection



*Oblie*, 2016  
Pinault Collection



*Iroko de Bom Jesus*, 2017  
Pinault Collection

In the videos *Antropologia do negro I* and *Antropologia do negro II*, Paulo Nazareth stacks the skulls of Black and Northeastern Brazilian people over his face and torso, devising a symbolic burial rite for the unburied bodies of those unidentified people and opening a channel of communication with

their ancestral presences.

During a trek in Western Africa, Nazareth found a worn-out piece of cloth, which he embroidered with a silhouette resembling a tree and the word “oublié” [forgotten]. The deliberate misspelling of the title word *Oblie* is a reminder of the lasting impact of linguistic colonialism and of the artist’s penchant for corrupting idioms.

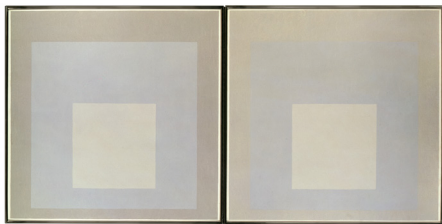
In Bom Jesus, in his native Minas Gerais, Nazareth stumbled upon a small Catholic church, overtaken by the roots of a massive hardwood Iroko tree, originally from the West coast of Africa, and venerated by the Ketu Yoruba nation. Nazareth poetically addresses the violent imposition of a European belief system, and endows with new meaning the magical proprieties of a West African tree, now found on the other side of the Atlantic.

## ASCETICISM

Some artists, ignoring fashion and the artworld, take refuge in a quest for the essential. This way of reaching aesthetic contemplation, through simple, pared-down forms, links them to the metaphysical origins of abstraction, developed at the beginning of the twentieth century by Vasily Kandinsky and Kazimir Malevitch; deeply marked by the Orthodox culture of the icon, they sought a pictorial equivalent to the experience of the transcendent. The challenge is to respond to an inner need, to put the human soul in vibration: in the way Agnes Martin's canvases [room 06], inscribed with lines marked by a slight tremor capture light; such as Robert Ryman's variations of white, his later work presented as in a chapel [room 07]. Roman Opałka [room 18] captures the passage of time at the edge of the visible; Josef Albers [room 18] varies his compositions endlessly around the square. Refuting any spiritual interpretation of his formal asceticism, Michel Parmentier [room 18] constantly repeats the inscription of horizontal lines that open up an expanded perceptual space. Although each of these artists was animated by distinct avenues of research—existentialist, philosophical, materialist, or simply optical—their works all aspire to silence and contemplation.

## ROOM 18

### JOSEF ALBERS (1888–1976)



*Study for Homage to the Square:  
Despite Mist, 1967–1968*  
Pinault Collection

In 1950, at the age of sixty-two, Josef Albers began, to paint his “Homages to the Square.” His straightforward technique involved applying each pigment straight from the tube of paint, unmixed, on carefully prepared fiberboard panels, with no overlapping colors. In this way, he presented “different color climates”<sup>11</sup> and demonstrated the changeability of our perception of color, showing how identical colors can be made to look different.

In the diptych *Despite Mist*, Albers brought together a pair of paintings, endowing them with the sacred quality of the hinged Russian icons he had admired since his youth at the Icon Museum in Recklinghausen. The two paintings are almost identical: Albers changed only the color of the outermost squares, but as a result, the hues of the central squares look entirely different in the two paintings. These paintings bear witness to Albers’s diligence and dexterity, and to his imagination, faith, and belief in the miraculous.

### MICHEL PARMENTIER (1938–2000)



*14 février 1990, 1990*  
Pinault Collection

Unfolding over a total length of 16.125 meters, *14 février 1990* is Michel Parmentier’s largest composition. Consisting of thirty-six gray charcoal strips, arranged at regular intervals in a progressive sequence from one to eight, it is part of a cycle of works, produced by the artist between 1989 and 1991, that explores the medium of tracing paper. Translucent, tracing paper veils the wall on which it is hung without concealing it.

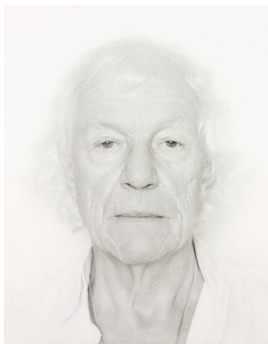
A veritable plea in favor of art for art’s sake, Parmentier’s work seeks to express the material properties of the mediums used in the simplest and most direct way possible. The repetition of horizontal stripes, the basic unit of his visual grammar, marks a neutrality devoid of any subjectivity. The quest for formal austerity that animates his work contributes to anchoring it in almost complete silence, through which he intends “to paint the fault, to scribble the lack,”<sup>12</sup> without ever resigning himself to it.

11 — Josef Albers, in conversation with Nicholas Fox Weber at Albers’s home in Orange, Connecticut, February and March, 1973.

12 — Michel Parmentier, “Dire, redire et bafouiller, me contredire, dévier en apparence, digresser, bref: rhizomer toujours. M’avouer,” in *Michel Parmentier*, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Centre National des Arts Plastiques, 1988), 72.



ROMAN OPALKA  
(1931–2011)



the spatial representation of “the space-time of an existence.”<sup>13</sup> We hear a recording of Opalka’s voice reciting a series of numbers as he paints them. This sound dimension, like his paintings, conveys the artist’s desire to capture and freeze the inexorable passage of time.

*Autoportrait photographique ad nombre*  
*4963115 peint sur la toile*  
*OPALKA 1965 / 1 - ∞*  
*Détail 4951385 - 4968511*  
Pinault Collection



*OPALKA 1965 / 1 - ∞*  
Pinault Collection

*OPALKA 1965 / 1 - ∞*, Roman Opalka’s magnum opus, consists of numbers painted on a succession of canvases that he referred to as “details”: the first begins, naturally, with the number 1, and ends at 35,327. In 1972, he decided to add an additional 1% of white to the dark paint he used as a background with each new canvas: his later paintings in the series became lighter and paler, gradually approaching a monochromatic white.

The octagonal architectural device that houses seven works from the series was conceived by the artist himself as

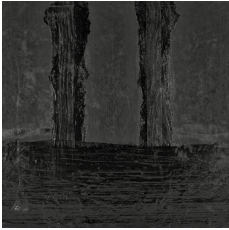


## RESONANCE

In an era of proliferating images, certain works generate sensitive spaces, places to pause, within which sound invites us to meditate. In the torino, covered with mirrors and light-diffracting films, the polyphony composed by Kimsooja amplifies a spatial experience that tends towards transcendence [room 15]. In Camille Norment's installation [room 04], music takes hold of bodies as sound waves vibrate through the visitors, seated on church pews; the moans of African American gospel choirs create a space of sensory knowledge that awakens the memory of Black communities. Filmed among the rubble of Saint Laurence's Church, in the African American neighborhood of Chicago's South Side, Theaster Gates's *Gone are the Days of Shelter and Martyr* [room 19] makes us experience the disappearance of places of communion. The music allows the artist to transform the scene into an experience of the sublime. Emotionally charged, the gospel singing carries the hope of rebirth. So do Paulo Nazareth's videos *Antropologia do negro I* and *Antropologia do negro II* [room 17], in which the artist presents a symbolic funeral rite honoring the memory of anonymous dead. In the work of Dineo Seshee Bopape [room 12], sound vibrates in a clay chapel, bathed in light, and reconciles the bruised bodies with the earth.

## ROOM 19

### THEASTER GATES (BORN IN 1973)



*Roofing Exercise*, 2012  
Pinault Collection



*Gone are the Days of Shelter and Martyr*, 2014  
© The artist. Courtesy, White Cube

The soulful melody of a cello and the sound of a gospel song mingle with the thuds of large wooden doors falling to the floor. Together they constitute the soundscape for the video *Gone are the Days of Shelter and Martyr*, made by Theaster Gates in 2014 at Saint Laurence Catholic Church, located in 1911 on Chicago's South Side, during its demolition. The artist pays homage to the architectural value of the building, and to the symbolic beauty and spiritual strength of a collective history. Through a protean practice in which materials from the urban fabric are reused or repurposed, Gates's projects aim to socially activate places and uses as much as to sublimate them.

*Roofing Exercise* belongs to a large series of works that, in the manner of paintings, rely on the materiality of tar, which

is used to make the roofs of houses. The artist works on the texture of the thick material, so that light reveals alternately shiny and matte strips. By displacing the usual uses of the material, the artist mobilizes, carefully and attentively, gestures he learned from his father, himself a roofer.

### TEATRINO DI PALAZZO GRASSI

#### ARTHUR JAJA (BORN IN 1960)



*akingdoncomethas*, 2018  
Video, color, sound  
1 hr., 45 min.  
Pinault Collection

*akingdoncomethas* is an epic montage composed of gospel songs and sermons recorded within Black congregations in the United States. The title refers to the arrival of the Kingdom of God, as announced by Jesus. A compilation of clips sourced on the Internet, the video features bodies transcended by the words they utter, as if an external force were taking possession of them. A message of hope is outlined through their often ecstatic vocalizations, declaimed with ardor and energy, pointing toward the possibility of redemption, toward a new era in which doubt, fear, and suffering would end.

The African American roots of the video fragments he selects allow him to sketch a portrait of the contemporary Black experience, marked by resilience, faith, and courage. When asked about his own relationship to religion, the artist indicates

that he does not believe in God, but that he believes “in Black people believing.”<sup>14</sup>

Screening schedule of *akingcondomethas* at the Teatrino:

— Saturday 1 April:

10.15am/12pm • 12pm/1.45pm •  
1.45pm/3.30pm • 3.30pm/5.15pm •  
5.15pm/7pm

— Sunday 2 April:

10.15am/12pm • 12pm/1.45pm •  
1.45pm/3.30pm • 3.30pm/5.15pm •  
5.15pm/7pm

— Saturday 17 June: Night screening  
on the occasion of Art Night Venezia.

— Friday 8 September:

10.15am/12pm • 12pm/1.45pm •  
1.45pm/3.30pm • 3.30pm/5.15pm •  
5.15pm/7pm

— Saturday 9 September:

10.15am/12pm • 12pm/1.45pm •  
1.45pm/3.30pm • 3.30pm/5.15pm •  
5.15pm/7pm

— Sunday 10 September:

10.15am/12pm • 12pm/1.45pm •  
1.45pm/3.30pm • 3.30pm/5.15pm •  
5.15pm/7pm

14 — MoMA [@themuseumofmodernart], Instagram post, May 28, 2020,  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CAtfISODkag/>.

**Lucio Fontana:** Photo Lucas Olivet. © Fondazione Lucio Fontana, Milano, by SIAE 2023 • **Lygia Pape:** Installation view, 53th Biennale di Venezia, Arsenale, Venice, 2009. Photo Paula Pape © Projeto Lygia Pape. Courtesy of Projeto Lygia Pape; © Projeto Lygia Pape; © Projeto Lygia Pape • **Donald Judd:** Photo © Christie's Images Limited • **Philippe Parreno:** Philippe Parreno, *La Quinta del Sordo* (film still), 2021. © Philippe Parreno. Courtesy of Gladstone Gallery, New York and Bruxelles; Esther Schipper, Berlin · Paris · Seoul • **Lee Ufan:** © Lee Ufan, by SIAE 2023. Photo Charles Duprat. Courtesy of Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London · Paris · Salzburg · Seoul; Courtesy of Frère Marc Chauveau / Couvent de La Tourette. 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## *Icônes*

Punta della Dogana  
Venice  
02.04–26.11.2023

Exhibition curated by  
Emma Lavigne  
and Bruno Racine

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