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Yves Klein, 1928–1962: A Retrospective. Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1982.

CHECKLIST

Yves Klein, French, 1928–1962
Blue Monochrome Sponge Relief (RE24), 1960
Sponges, pebbles, dry pigment, and synthetic resin on wood panel
Signed, dated and inscribed on reverse: 1960 Yves Klein/b monochrome
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hazen; P.961.288

Hioroshi Sugimoto, Japanese, born 1948
English Channel, Fecamp, 1989
Marmara Sea, Silivli, 1991
Gelatin silver prints
Purchased through the Sondra and Charles Gilman Jr. Foundation;
PH.994.38.1–2

Jennifer Moller, American, born 1959
Seas, 2009
Single-channel video projection with artist book
Purchased through the Sondra and Charles Gilman Jr. Foundation; 2010.4.2

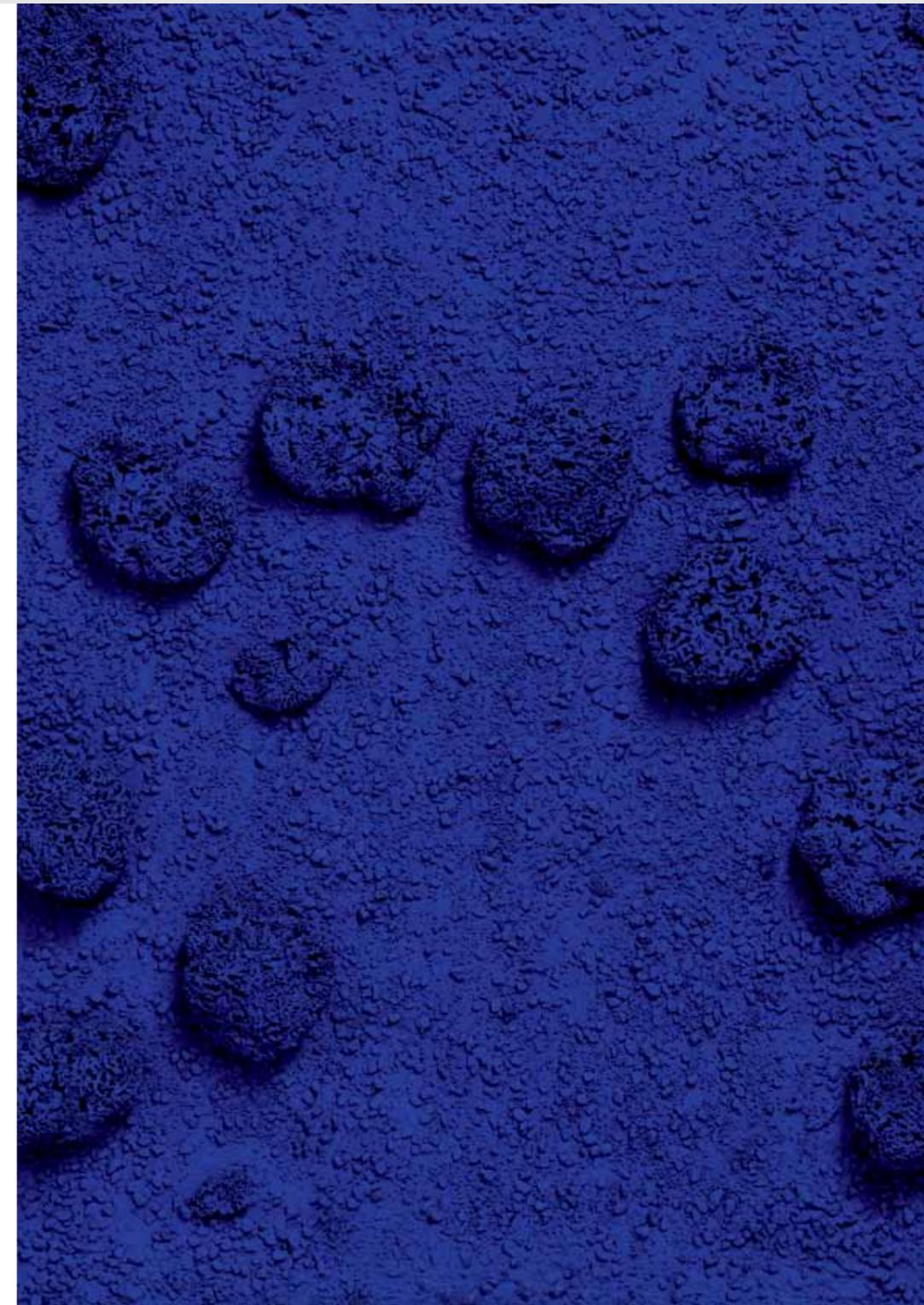
Front cover: Yves Klein, *Blue Monochrome Sponge Relief (RE24)* (detail), 1960, sponges, pebbles, dry pigment, and synthetic resin on wood panel. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hazen; P.961.288
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OKEANOS

International + Contemporary Reflections on the Sea



Hiroshi Sugimoto, Japanese, *Marmara Sea, Silivli*, 1991, gelatin silver print. Purchased through the Sondra and Charles Gilman Jr. Foundation; PH.994.38.2 © Hiroshi Sugimoto, courtesy The Pace Gallery

Imperfect sea stones underfoot, I look out past the expanse of blue toward the Aegean's horizon. In moments of introspection, my thoughts travel to this sea view from Chios's south shore, encountered during my childhood summers in Greece. Awe-inspiring and calming, the image of *okeanos* (Greek for ocean) stirs a variety of emotions. My response is not unique: for anyone who has witnessed its sublimity, above the surface or below, the ocean leaves a powerful, sensuous impression. The contemporary works of international artists Yves Klein, Jennifer Moller, and Hiroshi Sugimoto featured in this exhibition affirm the universality of this experience.

At the age of eighteen, French artist Yves Klein launched his exploration of monochrome. For Klein, pure, saturated colors focused sensory energy. After experimenting with various hues, he settled in late 1956 upon a deep ultramarine blue that became known as International Klein Blue (IKB), which he created by suspending dry pigment in a

synthetic resin. For Klein, IKB had associations with the sky and sea of Nice, where his family vacationed. Created just two years before his death in 1962, Klein's *Blue Monochrome Sponge Relief* (1960), part of a series, consists of scattered sponges and pebbles on a wood panel.

The composition demonstrates the influence of a Japanese spiritual aesthetic: it evokes Zen gardens and especially their seemingly random placement of rocks on a backdrop of gravel. The intense blue, in conjunction with the pebbles and sponges, creates a tactile surface reminiscent of the ocean floor. In *Blue Monochrome*, Klein transformed tool into subject: "While working on my paintings in the studio, I sometimes used sponges. Very quickly they obviously became blue! . . . Thanks to the wild living material of sponges, I was going to be able to do portraits of the beholders of my monochromes, who, after having seen them, after having traveled through the blue of my paintings, come back totally impregnated in sensibility, like sponges" (Baas, 141). Klein challenged viewers with subtle visual differences among the works. In encouraging the close examination of his pieces, Klein invites the viewer to ponder the ocean's depths.

Seas (2009), a new acquisition of the Hood Museum of Art, is a single-channel video projection by Jennifer Moller, an American multimedia artist who works primarily in photography and videography. *Seas* features monochromatic moving images of Cape Cod Bay's icy winter waters as they strike the shore and recede again. The rhythmic, thundering sound of breaking swells, along with the visual image of the dark, rolling surf, creates an elegiac and enveloping meditative experience for the viewer. Describing the process of acquiring this footage, Moller explains: "I noticed the extraordinary beauty of horizontal line, as the waves rhythmically rolled under the bulky ice. I watched as wave after wave cast its dark black linear shadow over and over again. The scene was a kind of live tracing of the vast ocean, the marks made in horizontal lines, a large moving drawing. I was entranced as I watched the repeated movement." Following the undulations of the waves, the work's audience too is lured into a ruminative state.

Hiroshi Sugimoto's photographs *English Channel, Fecamp* (1989) and *Marmara Sea, Silivli* (1991) represent two of the forty-four ethereal works in the Japanese-born artist's seascape series, begun in 1980. Each one of the monochrome but richly detailed, twenty-by-twenty-four-inch photographs is largely the same in composition: a vague horizon roughly bisects the image, so that the bottom portion contains dark, flat ocean, while the top depicts a lighter, hazy sky. The effect is Rothko-like in its abstraction and serene in its emphasis on silence and stillness. Sugimoto challenges his viewers to contemplate substance and void. The subtle variations among the works—principally the different tonal qualities and textural nuances of

the water's surface—are realized only upon close inspection. The austere minimalism exhibited in Sugimoto's photographs, each captured from far above sea level, is largely in line with both historical and contemporary Japanese aesthetics. Sugimoto describes how the oceanic subject matter connects him to his ancestral roots: "Mystery of mysteries, water and air are right there before us in the sea. Every time I view the sea, I feel a calming sense of security as if visiting my ancestral home; I embark on a voyage of seeing" (Sugimoto). As evidenced in the Hood's two Sugimoto seascapes, the artist's series depicts bodies of water as disparate as the English Channel and Marmara Sea. In that these waters can only be identified through their artist-given titles, the images posit the ocean as a universal experience and physical link among nations.

It is my intention for this installation to function in much the same way: whether concentrating on water's depth or surface, substance or void, stillness or motion, these monochromatic representations of the sea demonstrate the artists' similar faith in the shared human experience of *okeanos*.

Maria Fillas '11, Levinson Intern



Jennifer Moller, *Seas*, 2009, single-channel video projection with artist book. Purchased through the Sondra and Charles Gilman Jr. Foundation; 2010.4.2 © jennifer moller