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| Mono-ha |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Based in Japan, ‘Mono-ha’ refers to a unique art movement whose contributing artists were most visibly from 1968 to 1975. Translated as the ‘school of things’, these artists brought ‘things’ (*mono*) – earth, wood, metal, glass, cotton, stone, paper, and the like – together, usually with minimal artistic intervention and in an essentially unaltered state. Following a reductive logic, ‘arrangement’ was integral to Mono-ha activity, positioning the artist as a kind of coordinator attempting to bring about new perceptions of matter, materials, and the spatial relationships between them. Centred around approximately ten young artists, whose works were frequently sculptural and site-specific, the emergence of Mono-ha is usually cited as coinciding with the creation of *Phase – Mother Earth* by Tama Art University (or *Tamabi*) graduate Nobuo Sekine (b.1942–) in Suma Rikyu Park, Kobe, as part of the 1st Open Air Contemporary Sculpture Exhibition in October, 1968. The sculpture comprised of a cylindrically-shaped hole dug in the ground, 2.2 metres wide and 2.7 metres deep, beside which stood a tower of the hole’s excavated earth, compacted into the same cylindrical shape and mirroring the void from where it came. Later recalling it, Sekine remarked on being mesmerised by the sheer physicality of what stood before him upon its completion. |
| Based in Japan, ‘Mono-ha’ refers to a unique art movement whose contributing artists were most visibly from 1968 to 1975. Translated as the ‘school of things’, these artists brought ‘things’ (*mono*) – earth, wood, metal, glass, cotton, stone, paper, and the like – together, usually with minimal artistic intervention and in an essentially unaltered state. Following a reductive logic, ‘arrangement’ was integral to Mono-ha activity, positioning the artist as a kind of coordinator attempting to bring about new perceptions of matter, materials, and the spatial relationships between them. Centred around approximately ten young artists, whose works were frequently sculptural and site-specific, the emergence of Mono-ha is usually cited as coinciding with the creation of *Phase – Mother Earth* by Tama Art University (or *Tamabi*) graduate Nobuo Sekine (b.1942–) in Suma Rikyu Park, Kobe, as part of the 1st Open Air Contemporary Sculpture Exhibition in October, 1968. The sculpture comprised of a cylindrically-shaped hole dug in the ground, 2.2 metres wide and 2.7 metres deep, beside which stood a tower of the hole’s excavated earth, compacted into the same cylindrical shape and mirroring the void from where it came. Later recalling it, Sekine remarked on being mesmerised by the sheer physicality of what stood before him upon its completion.  [File: Phase.jpg]  Figure Nobuo Sekine, *Phase in the Sky (空相)*,stone, polished metal, 2004. Tama Art University, Tokyo. Photo: Neilton Clarke  Prior to the1968 exhibition, Sekine shared a Yokohama warehouse space with then Tamabi students Susumu Koshimizu (b.1944–) and Katsurō Yoshida (b.1943–) while the university was on lockdown during the late-1960s period of nation-wide student activism. Later that year Sekine met Korean-born artist Ufan Lee (b.1936–) who had moved to Japan in 1956 and studied philosophy at Nihon University. They and fellow *Tamabi*-schooled artists Kishio Suga (b.1944–) and Katsuhiko Narita (1944–1992) assisted in the formation of Mono-ha by beginning regular meetings at Top, a cafe in Tokyo’s Nishi-Shinjuku, where their discussions reportedly focused on ways to transcend Western Modernism among other topics. With his background in philosophy and aesthetics, Lee would become the group’s elder statesman and spokesperson. Other notable artists active in the movement included Tokyo National University of Fine Arts & Music graduates Kōji Enokura (1942–1995) and Noburu Takayama (b.1944–), and Nihon University graduate Noriyuki Haraguchi (b.1946–). The idiosyncratic tendencies and stylistic variety among these artists was underpinned by a shared commitment to minimalism and the poignant simplicity of their artistic works. |
| Further reading: (Studio Lee Ufan)  (Blum and Poe Gallery)  (Kamakura Gallery)  (Koji)  (Mono-Ha)  (Nakai and Minemura, Mono-ha Reconsidering)  (Nakai and Sakai, Reconsidering Mono-Ha)  (Rawlings)  (Studio Lee Ufan)  (Yi and Anderson, The Art of Encounter)  (Yi, Munroe and Tatehata)  (Yoshitake, Mark and Hyun) |