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| Yoshihara, Jiro |
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| Jiro Yoshihara was the founder — with Shozo Shimamoto and a younger generation of students — of the Gutai Art Association (1954-72). He organized the Association’s events, such as *Outdoor Exhibition to Challenge the Midsummer Sun* in 1955, promoting the event with his manifesto of 1956, and then a journal. He first showed his work with the Nika Society but, after the Second World War, rejected its orientation toward salon painting, and turned to a bolder, gestural abstraction, which accommodated his interest in calligraphy. His oils on canvas from the 1950s exemplify exchanges taking place at this time between the Japanese— proponents of Tachisme (Art Informel) — and Abstract Expressionism. This exchange may be seen in such works as Yoshihara’s White Painting, shown at New York’s Martha Jackson Gallery in 1958, Under the leadership of Yoshihara, Gutai (meaning ‘concrete embodiment’) picked up on the performative nature of these tendencies, taking a multimedia approach that encompassed happenings, installation, new media, everyday materials, and eliciting audience participation. With the exception of interactive works such as *Room* and *Please Draw Freely*, both shown at the second outdoor Gutai exhibition of 1956, Yoshihara was chiefly a painter, remembered today for his Zen-inspired minimalist rectangular and circular forms on black, red, or white grounds, to which he devoted himself through the 1960s. |
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