



**Chiyu UEMAE (1920-2018)**

Untitled, Black cloth, red thread, blue thread, 265x345cm, 1979-80, 1991, 1997

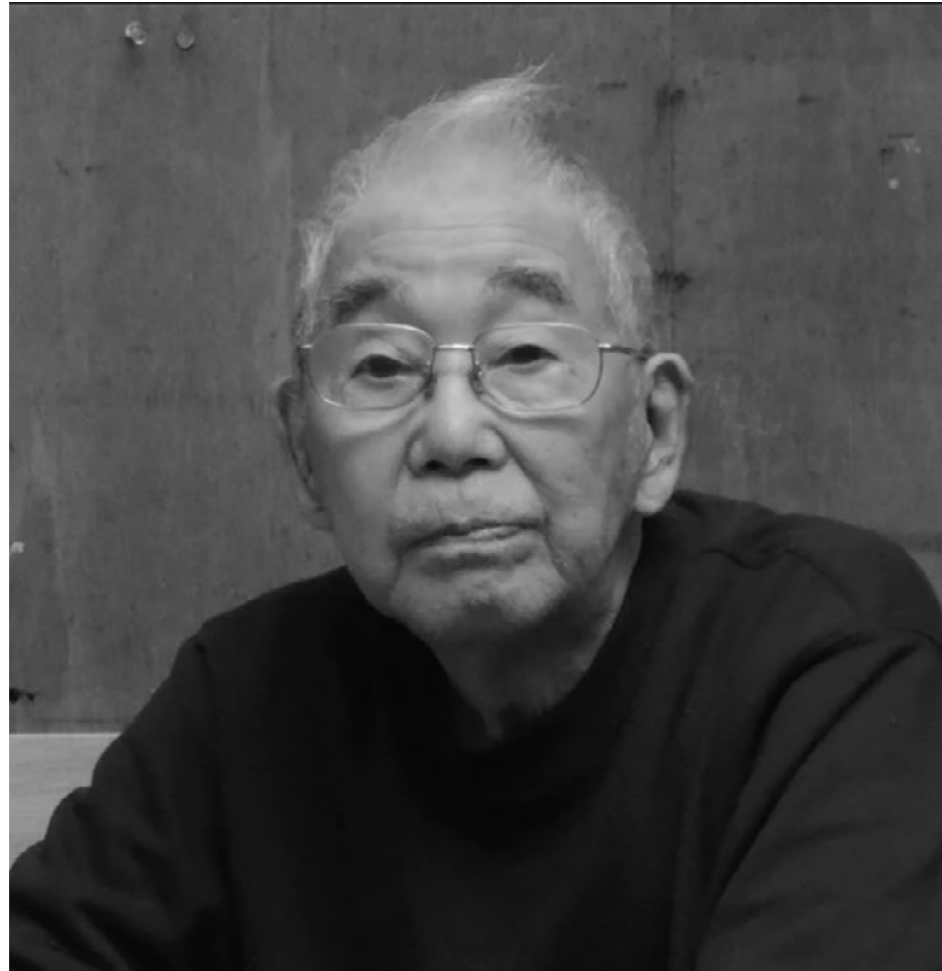
## **Chiyu UEMAE (1920-2018)**

Chiyu Uemae was born in Kyoto prefecture, Japan in 1920. Chiyu Uemae's career began with his involvement in the Gutai Group, which was founded by his mentor Jiro Yoshihara (the founder of the avant-garde Gutai group). In 1953, Uemae meets Yoshihara, since then, the artist takes part in every Gutai exhibition until its dissolution. Different from the performance-like works of other Gutai members, Uemae has always injected his own experience into his works, leaving a unique "trace of self" through careful and delicate superimposition.

Prior to joining the Gutai, Uemae had studied Nanga and Western abstract art, but his most formative experience was an apprenticeship at a dyeing workshop in Kyoto. Because of this training, as well as a childhood immersed in non-figurative design, the practice of stitching became paramount to Uemae's mature style. His mixed-media paintings sometimes feature textile elements, but are characteristically identified by his careful compositions comprised of fine dots or patterns. Chiyu Uemae's wide-ranging creations from two-dimensional works which are composed of pattern accumulation by painting knives or of sensitive stitches to sculptural works made of cloth or wood or sawdust. He remains active in his 80s and 90s, still producing etchings and silkscreens.

Uemae participated in several historical Gutai exhibitions including the International Art of a New Era: Gutai and Informel exhibition (given favourable comment by Mr. Michel Tapié) (1958); Gutai Art Exhibition in New York, Martha Jackson Gallery (1958); The Continuité et Avant-garde au Japon, International Centre of Aesthetic Research, Turin, Italy (1961); Groupe Gutai, Galerie Stadler, Paris (1965); NUL 1966 Art Exhibition, Netherlands (1966); Gutai Art Exhibition at Expo70, Osaka (1970). And recently his works were included the exhibitions: GUTAI: The Spirit of an Era, the National Art Center, Tokyo (2012); Destroying the Picture – Painting the Void 1949-1962, Los Angeles MOCA(2012); GUTAI: Splendid Playground, the Guggenheim Museum, New York(2013); Parallel Views: Italian and Japanese Art from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, The Warehouse, Dallas(2014).

## Chiyu Uemae's Profile



Chiyu Uemae was born in Kyoto Prefecture on July 31, 1920. After enduring a difficult and impoverished childhood, spending a dissolute adolescence, and being conscripted into the military, his desire to be a painter grew stronger. In a diary entry, dated November 6, 1947, when Uemae was 27, he wrote: "I have to work in order to eat. Nevertheless. I can only fulfill my life through the act of painting."

In order to support a family of five, Uemae worked as a crane operator at a blast furnace until he was 60. At the same time, he created various outstanding works outside of normal work hours, late into the night and early in the morning. His fellow artists rumored that Uemae never slept. His life was full of unique anecdotes. For instance, Uemae bought some land in the mountains, and over 10 years, he leveled the ground with a pickaxe and built a studio there on his own. On another occasion, Uemae narrowly escaped death when he jumped onto a moving train with his painting supplies. He then crashed into an electric pole as he was hanging from the side of the train car.

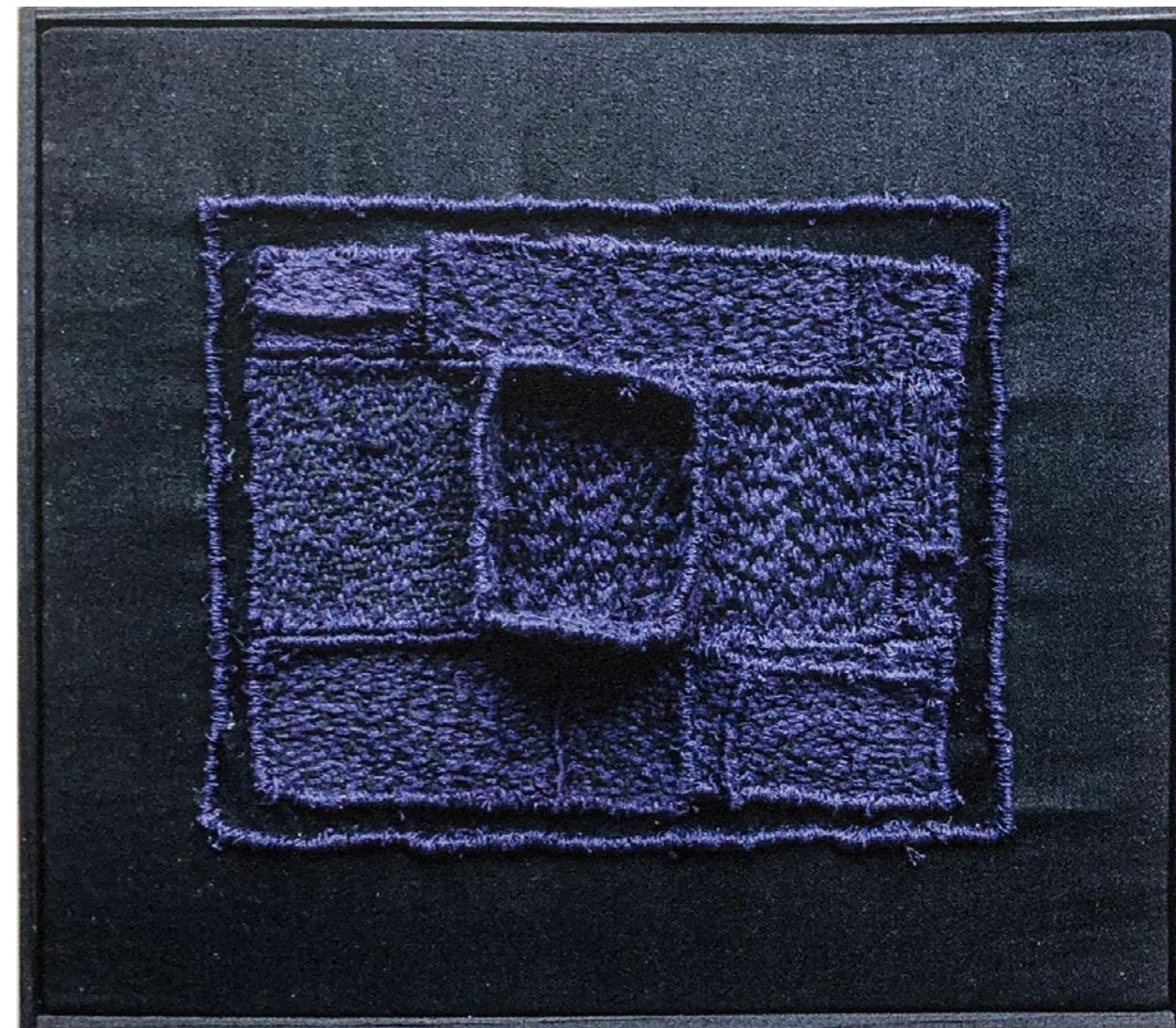
Just before graduating from elementary school, Uemae was sent off for an apprenticeship to a kimono cleaning shop. During the next five years, he began to dream of becoming an illustrator. He taught himself to make portraits and illustrations, and studied "nanga" painting (literati painting) in a correspondence course. In 1942, Uemae read Kimura Shohachi's book "Lectures on Art", and set his sights on becoming a Western-style (oil)

painter. Five years later, he was selected to display his work titled "Evening in Maizuru Port" in the 1st Niki-kai Exhibition. In the same year, Uemae began to attend Kansai Bijutsuin, an art school in Kyoto, where he was mentored by Kuroda Jutarō. Around the same time, inspired by an exhibition of abstract art called "the Art and Culture Exhibition" in Kyoto, he began making his own abstract paintings.

In 1952, after being deeply impressed with Yoshihara Liro's non-figurative crayon-pastel works, Uemae made a series of visits to the artist's house in search of guidance. Uemae subsequently became one of the few artists to remain with the Gutai Art Association from the time the Yoshihara-led group was formed in 1954 until it disbanded in 1972.

Uemae distanced himself from "action painting" which was known for its spontaneous dynamic performance, and became synonymous with Gutai art. Instead, he developed a body of non-figurative works through steady and repetitive strokes. The Gutai Manifesto (published in the December 1956 issue of *Geijutsu Shincho* magazine) contains the following line: "In Gutai art, the human spirit and the material shake hands with each other while remaining in opposition." This sentiment is splendidly condensed in the artistic outlook and work of Uemae. Though seemingly reserved, Uemae remained true to himself and embodied the true essence of Gutai art.

At a Gutai exhibit named, "International Art of a New Era: Art Informel and Gutai" (held at the Takashimaya Department Store in Osaka in April 1958), the internationally known French critic, Michel Tapié, praised Uemae's work as "the most notable work of the exhibit." As such, Tapié also rearranged the exhibit to display Uemae's painting in between the works by



NUI-95-2, Black cloth, dark blue thread, 30x35cm, 1995.3

Franz Kline and Jean-Paul Riopelle. As he stood back, he admired the arrangement. (Based on information in Shimamoto Shozo's "Hahaha Gutai No. 3: Uemae Chivu." published in the March 1974 issue of Misho magazine. This work is currently owned by "Les Abattoirs", a modern and contemporary art museum in Toulouse.)

In addition to Gutai Art Association, Uemae was a member of the Modern Art Association from 1954 to 1971, the Artist Union from 1975 to 1982, and Ge from 1976 to 2002. He displayed his works in exhibitions through these groups. Uemae also took part in the Ashiya City Art Exhibition almost every year from 1956 to 1996. Furthermore, he held numerous solo exhibitions at galleries and museums such as "A Cosmology of Aggregation and Density: Uemae Chiyu" (Osaka Prefectural Contemporary Art Center, 1999), and "Uemae Chiyu: Jigado" (BB Plaza Museum of Art, Kobe, 2012).

Uemae's works were also shown in various exhibitions outside of Japan. For example, he was selected by the curator Paul Schimmel to represent the Gutai group in "Destroy the Picture: Painting the Void 1949-1962" (MOCA (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles), 2012).

During the Gutai era, the artist created Uemae-style Pointillist works covered with thick layers of oil paint, and paintings with lines of pigment made with a palette knife. He also began producing mixed-media works by coating matchsticks, sawdust, and paint caps with oil and house paint. After the group disbanded, Uemae continued to explore new creative techniques well into his 90s, making three-dimensional wooden assemblages, "stitch work (NUI)" out of fabric and string, ink paintings, prints, oil paintings with

rectangular motifs, and mixed-media works.

In the later period, Chiyu Uemae cooperated with the printmaker, and worked with them in the workshop to study the production process suitable for his work. Due to the variability of materials in Uemae's works, the complexity of the process is constantly changing, and the artist is also inspired by such work to continue new creations.

In 1999, Uemae received a Medal with Dark-blue Ribbon from the Japanese government, and the Hyogo Prefecture Culture Award.

Uemae died of old age on April 16, 2018.



NUI-4, White strings on black cloth, 192x138cm (part), 1987

## Chiyu UEMAE (1920–2018)

1920 Born in Kyoto Prefecture

1932-38 Apprenticed to Kyoto Dyeing orchestrator, also to banner-dyeing shop to learn the usage of resist paste.

Self-educated illustrating, portrait painting, "nanga" painting (literati painting)

1948 Attend Kansai Bijutsuin art school in Kyoto

### Major Exhibitions

2019 Chiyu Uemae retrospective exhibition, Whitestone Gallery, Ginza Japan

2018 TEFAF TWENTY, Fergus McCaffrey, New York USA

2017 Gutai & The Japanese Avant-Garde: Small Painting and Drawings 1958-1996, W. Alexander, Brooklyn USA

Impasto: The Gestural and Sensuous in Japanese Abstract Paintings, SAKURADO FINE ARTS, Tokyo Japan

Gutai Spirit, H.ARTS COLLECTIVE, Singapore

2016 Gutai: Selected Small Works, Whitestone Gallery, Hong Kong China

Gallery Collection: GUTAI Group Show, Whitestone Gallery, Hong Kong China

2015 Exhibition "Chiyu Uemae- A Solitary Path", Whitestone Gallery, Hong Kong China

Gallery Collection, Whitestone Gallery, Hong Kong China

Gutai, de Sarthe Gallery, Hong Kong China

2014 Exhibition "Gutaijin in Karuizawa", Karuizawa New Art Museum, Karuizawa Japan

Parallel Views: Italian and Japanese Art from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, The Warehouse, Dallas

2013 Exhibition "GUTAI: Splendid Playground," at The Guggenheim Museum, New York USA

Chiyu Uemae Special Exhibition at The Armory Show Modern 2013, Pier 92 (Booth 454), New York USA

2012 Exhibition "Wind of Karuizawa" - 19 Uemae works, at Karuizawa New Art Museum, Karuizawa Japan

Exhibition "GUTAI: The Spirit of an Era," at The National Art Center, Tokyo Japan

Exhibition "Destroying the Picture - Painting the Void: 1949-1962," at Los Angeles MOCA, Los Angeles USA

Chiyu Uemae Special Exhibition at Los Angeles Art Platform 2012, Los Angeles USA

Solo Exhibition "Chiyu Uemae – Jigado", at BB Plaza Museum of Art, Kobe Japan

2011 Exhibition "Chiyu Uemae," Gallery LADS, Osaka Japan

2010 Exhibition "Chiyu Uemae," Miyazaki Prefectural Art Museum, Miyazaki Prefecture Japan

2009 Exhibition "Museum Collection 2009-1," Tokushima Modern Art Museum, Tokushima Japan

2008 Exhibition "Gutai to Contemporary", Gallery LADS, Osaka Japan

Exhibition "GUTAI and after", DOKA Contemporary Arts, Tokyo Japan

Exhibition of 3 Artists, Mie Prefectural Art Museum, Mie Japan

Exhibition "Dots Talk : UEMAE Chiyu, YAMANAKA Yoshikazu, TSUBOTA Masahiko," at Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama Japan

2007 Exhibition of New Prints, Gallery LADS, Osaka Japan

Collection of The National Museum of Art, Osaka Japan

2006 Exhibition "World of Chiyu Uemae", CASO Museum, Osaka Japan

2005 Exhibition "Chiyu Uemae and GUTAI Art Association", Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka Japan

2004 'GUTAI 1954-1972', Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Kobe Japan

'Traces: Body and Idea in Contemporary Art', Japan National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto Japan (Travelling Exhibition)

2002 Solo exhibition: Print (silkscreen), LADS Gallery, Osaka Japan

Solo exhibition: Print (etching), Gallery MAYA, Takatsuki Japan

2001 Solo exhibition of Print works, Gallery 1100, New York USA

Solo exhibition of Stitch, Civic Craft Center, Itami Japan

Solo exhibition of Print, Gallery Kuranuki, Osaka Japan

2000 Solo exhibition for the memory of "Kobekko Award: Dark-blue Ribbon Medal, Cultural Achievement Award from the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture, Kobe Japan

1999 Gutai Exhibition in Paris, Galerie Nationale du jeu de Paume, Paris France

Medal with Dark-blue Ribbon from the Japanese government, and the Hyogo Prefecture Culture Award

Solo exhibition "A Cosmology of Aggregation and Density: Uemae Chiyu", Osaka Japan (61 works went to Osaka Prefectural Public Collection after held by the prefecture)

Solo exhibition, Maizuru Municipal Administration Memorial Museum planned, Komei Shimizu Japan

1997 Contemporary Stitch Japan Style, Montclair State University, USA

1996 The Year of Avant-Garde Artists: Change and Continuity, Itabashi Art Museum, Tokyo Japan

1995 Publication at author's own expense "Koritsu no Michi", Collected works: An Independent Path

1991 Avant-Garde Japan: The Gutai Group in 1950s, Rome National Museum of Modern Art, Rome Italy

1989 Maboroshi no Yamamura Collection exhibition, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Kobe Japan

1985 The Exhibition of the Storm of Painting in 1950-60: Informel/Gutai/Cobra, The National Museum of Art, Osaka Japan

Publication at author's own expense "Jigado", Personal Artistic Way

1983 Solo exhibition "Ink Painting" and "Print-works", Contemporary Art Center, Osaka Japan

1982 Solo exhibition "Oil painting and Stitch", Contemporary Art Center, Osaka Japan

1976 Since around this year began producing stitching art Participated in Ge Exhibition, withdrew in 2002

1970 Gutai Art Exhibition, Expo'70-Midori-kan Entrance Hall, Osaka Japan

1966 Second International Art Exhibition in Lausanne, Switzerland (major work 162x130 cm was purchased) NUL 1966 Art Exhibition, Netherlands

1961 The Continuité et Avant-garde au Japon, International Centre of Aesthetic Research, Turin, Italy

1965 Groupe Gutai, Galerie Stadler, Paris

1958 International Art of a New Era: Gutai and Informel exhibition (given favourable comment by Mr. Michel Tapié), Osaka Japan

Gutai Art Exhibition, Martha Jackson Gallery, New York USA

1954 Participated in the formation of the Gutai Art Association (dissolved in 1972)

1953 Study under Jiro Yoshihara

1951 First Solo Exhibition

1947 Sent works to 1st Niki Group Exhibition

### COLLECTIONS

Ashiya City Museum of Art & History

Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art

Osaka Contemporary Art Center

Osaka Municipal Museum of Modern Art

The National Museum of Art, Osaka

Itabashi Art Museum

Niigata Art Museum

Fukuoka Art Museum

Kitakyushu Art Museum

International Print Museum in Machida, Tokyo

Municipal Administration Memorial of Maizuru City

Musée d'art modern et contemporain, Toulouse (France)

The Miyagi Museum of Art

Chiba City Museum of Art

Nerima Art Museum

Yokohama Museum of Art

The Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama

Old Hyogo Prefectural Office Building

Fukui Fine Art Museum

The Tokushima Modern Art Museum

The Rachofsky Collection, Dallas, Texas