

DOMINIQUE LÉVY

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Dominique Lévy Launches Upper East Side Venue

by Brian Boucher



Dealer Dominique Lévy had been searching without success for Upper East Side real estate for her new gallery for a year. "And what does a girl do when things get impossible? She goes shopping," she said at a press preview Monday. The retail therapy session turned out to be serendipitous.

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Trying on a pair of Rag and Bone jeans at a shop in the old Bank of New York building at Madison Avenue and East 73rd Street, she complimented a clerk on the space. The store was just a pop-up, she was told, and the space was available. Lévy was, at the time, parting ways with Robert Mnuchin, with whom she had previously run L&M Gallery, on East 78th Street (which continues as Mnuchin Gallery). Her new facility opens Wednesday on the second and third floors of 909 Madison Avenue. (Paris's Emmanuel Perrotin Gallery will open in the lower two floors this week.) Lévy plans to present four or five historical exhibitions a year of European and American artists; she represents Günther Uecker and Pierre Soulages, as well as serving as the U.S. representative of the estates of Yves Klein and Germaine Richier. Her debut exhibition, "Audible Presence: Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, Cy Twombly," (through Nov. 16) will be inaugurated with the debut U.S. performance of Klein's Monotone-Silence Symphony. The 40-minute work holds one note for 20 minutes and is silent for the second half of its running time. The piece inspired the present show, since it is "a symphony in which silence is as important as sound," Lévy said. Silence was hard to come by amid road work outside the gallery. "I apologize," she said at the

preview amid sounds of jackhammering, "because this show is all about silence, and you've come to visit on the noisiest Madison Avenue day." Lévy pointed out some of the notable works in the show, including an Yves Klein monochrome that Lucio Fontana bought at a Klein show at Galerie Apollinaire, Milan, and is now on loan from the Fontana foundation. "That purchase was the beginning of a long friendship," she said, which started when Fontana saw the show, which was "all monochrome paintings, each priced slightly differently. He fell in love." Klein's only white sponge painting, the 6-foot-wide *Untitled Sponge Relief (RE 23)*, 1957, is on view. Several Klein sculptures are also included; the small *Sculpture éponge bleue sans titre, SE 168*, from 1959, fetched \$22 million at auction in May, setting a new record for a sculpture by the artist. Another notable work is Fontana's ceiling-hung sculpture of stucco panels and neon lights, *Soffitto (Ceiling, 1949)*, created for a private residence in Milan and never before shown in the U.S. Daniel Moquay, head of the Yves Klein Archives, Paris, had been at the gallery that morning at half past seven, he said, helping to finalize the installation of Klein's *Pluie Bleue* (Blue Rain, 1961), a floor painting in which Klein Blue is spread thickly over the floor at one end of a gallery.

"You have to be careful with that blue pigment," he told *A.i.A.* "It's very, very nasty. If you don't take good care of it, it goes everywhere and you'll never get rid of it." He pointed out a work tucked away in a display case in a corner: a receipt for a "Zone of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility," made out to a Michael Blankfort. Buying the completely conceptual piece involved payment in gold leaf, which Klein ceremonially threw into the Seine at the completion of the purchase. "Blankfort was in the movie industry in Los Angeles," Moquay told *A.i.A.* "He said that he was told that the bells of Notre Dame cathedral were ringing when the ceremony took place, but he was so immersed, he didn't hear them."