

resonance



Resonance

Walter Leblanc (1932–1986) is an important Belgian figure in the history of European post-war art. Over the years, he built up an extremely coherent oeuvre, staging light without artifice and without the use of any disrupting elements. Within the international neo-avant-garde network of Nouvelle Tendance, ZERO, op art, kinetic art, Concrete Art and (neo)constructivism, Leblanc gained both national and international recognition. After graduating from The Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, Leblanc became a founding member of the Antwerp avant-garde group G58. After his first abstract paintings, Leblanc put the paint away for good and sought to explore alternative media in his reliefs. In 1959 he began to introduce the 'torsion'. This pictorial element — made from cotton threads, plastic or metal — allowed him to bring motion, light and vibration into his work. Leblanc actively participated in ground-breaking international exhibitions such as *Monochrome Malerei* (1960) in Leverkusen, *The Responsive Eye* (1965) in New York, and *Serielle Formationen* (1967) in Frankfurt am Main. Leblanc won the prestigious Young Belgian Art Prize in 1964. He took part in the 35th Venice Biennale in 1970 and in 1974, he was appointed Knight of the Order of Leopold II. In 1977 he was appointed lecturer at the Nationaal Hoger Instituut voor bouwkunst en Stedebouw (NHIBS) in Antwerp.

Keisuke Matsuura (Kyoto 1970) studied at Tama Art University in Tokyo and then studied with Christian Megert and Daniel Buren at the Düsseldorf Academy. During a trip to Europe, he discovered the artists of the ZERO movement whose spirit would mark him and influence his future research. Also inspired by Leblanc, his work particularly lends itself to this dialogue between two different generations.

For this, our very first in-house curatorial project, we gave Keisuke Matsuura carte blanche to imagine a conversation between his own works and works by Leblanc selected from the Foundation's collection on the theme of natural energy fields. Giving voice to an artist from a younger generation is a great opportunity to create a new discourse, but also to rediscover all the subtleties of Leblanc's work and reassess its enduring topicality.

An immersive installation, *Resonance*, has been created to mark the occasion and is visible in the Foundation's garden. The work invites the viewer to experience an ever-changing composition of lines integrated within the surrounding natural world. The elementary geometric figure made of straps seems to create a stable tension, yet is moved by the forces of nature to produce changes in structure, colour, and even sound, in a work that echoes the kinetic research of Leblanc in the fields of light and space.

Keisuke Matsuura at the Walter Leblanc Foundation

JEROEN CHABOT

Born in 1970 in Kyoto, Japan, Keisuke Matsuura attended art school at the Tama University of Art in Tokyo, where he achieved both a BA and an MA in fine art. During his somewhat traditional art studies in Japan, he became fascinated with the developments emerging in European art. Keisuke learned about the ZERO group of artists and all that happened in their wake. He decided to come to Europe and went to study at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, where he became a pupil of Christian Megert, who is regarded as being part of the extended circle of ZERO artists, before graduating under the aegis of Daniel Buren. Since the middle of the 1990s, Keisuke Matsuura has lived and worked as an artist in Düsseldorf, where he has steadily developed a rich and thoroughly personal body of work. That body of work can be characterised by the use of a very strong visual language derived from the tradition of Concrete Art (art concret), infused by a fascination for nature and the specific characteristics of the actual space in which the art object is situated. His studio practice is focussed on a step-by-step development of paintings, in which Keisuke investigates how forces of nature can be used to shape an image without the artist coming to the fore. In his site-

specific work, he is led by the visual information offered by the place, and works with that to create an installation that allows the spectator to experience, in an aesthetically refined setting, the energy and essence of the place in a new way.

Studio Practice

In his studio work Keisuke mainly focusses on what might best be called 'paintings', though it is clear from the outset that Keisuke Matsuura is not a regular painter. His work is a direct link with Concrete Art. This term was originally introduced by the Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg in 1930 and refers to abstract art that is universally understood and is the result of the conscious, rational mind of an artist. In a manifesto Van Doesburg laid down the following rules and principles:

1. Art is universal.
2. The work of art should be wholly thought through and envisaged before it is produced; no formal characteristics of nature nor sensuality nor sentimentality is allowed. Symbolism, drama, poetry and such should be avoided.

3. The painting should be construed out of pure visual elements, meaning planes and colours. It has no pictorial elements that refer to something outside the painting. It can only refer to itself.
4. The construction of the painting and its pictorial components should be simple and controlled.
5. The painting technique should be mechanical, and anti-impressionist.
6. Aim for absolute transparency.

In 1944, the Swiss artist Max Bill organised an exhibition of Concrete Art in Basel and he saw the use of colour, light, space, and movement as the means to solely realise and visualise purely rational creative concepts. Concrete Art soon became synonymous with geometrical abstract art, both in painting and in sculpture. There is often a focus on geometric shapes, grids and smooth surfaces. Mathematics or principles derived from natural sciences are often at the heart of the structuring principle of the work. The principles of constructivism are often used in the same vein as Concrete Art.

However that may be, this quest for objectivity, transparency and a lack of sentimentality is clearly apparent in Keisuke's studio work, along with the geometrical structure and structuring presence of natural science. As such, a close affiliation with this long and rich European tradition is obvious in his work. His studio work is not so much painting as working on a two-dimensional plane, using a painterly vocabulary. But like Piene, Mack, Schoonhoven, and all those giants of post-war contemporary art, one might just as well call it sculpting or staging, because it has nothing to do with traditional painting in the sense of arranging an illusion of space on a two-dimensional plane using lines and colours. Keisuke, however, has something to add to this modern post-war tradition.

On a closer look, his paintings reveal the faint but ever so important presence of a close and strong connection — on a different and perhaps personal level — with nature. In a careful, even painstaking process, Keisuke works with magnetism as a structuring power, behind and sometimes in front of the surface of the canvas. The force of magnetism, closely connected to the force of gravity, is used to attract paint and the surface of the canvas to the image: a well-ordered universe, kept together by natural, invisible forces, endowed with a painterly expression of its own. It shows in his paintings, where iron sand is attracted to little magnets placed in a geometrical structure behind the canvas. The work is objective. Anything personal or anecdotal is absent from the painting and as such it conforms strictly to the rules of Van Doesburg's manifesto. The way the iron sand attaches itself to the surface of the painting, the way it offers a dialogue with the colour of the painting and the strength with which it clings to the magnetic force, give the work its expression and suspense.

Using magnetism as a natural force and simultaneously as a structuring principle brings on memories of the work of Walter Leblanc. Influenced by ZERO and a member of the international movement Nouvelle Tendance (New Tendency), Walter Leblanc introduced the torsion as a basic element in his work in 1959. In his series of "Twisted Strings", Leblanc pulled cotton torsion lines on a white monochrome surface. This achieved a vibrant optical effect, dependent on the position of the observer relative to the work and on the light falling onto the work. The natural force of the torsion, made evident in the way the threads of cotton are pulled on the surface, give tension and meaning to the piece in a way that is similar to the magnetism at work in Matsuura's paintings.

The source of power — the magnets that are in the space behind the canvas — also relate in a way to the ZERO artist Lucio Fontana, who

tried to examine the mystery behind the work by physically slashing into the canvas. For centuries, painters have used the rules of perspective to create the illusion of space through the surface of the canvas. Fontana literally breaks through its surface. In the work of Keisuke Matsuura, magnets occupy the space behind the canvas and cast their spell on its surface. They determine what is being enacted on the pictorial plane. It is in this way that Keisuke uses the vocabulary of painting.

What becomes clear to the observer, however, is that should the magnets lose their power, or if one of them is removed, the whole image will disappear. It is the sheer force of nature that forms the image; we see its power demonstrated in the painting. It is a realisation so strong that it fills us with awe. This then is the area in which Keisuke chooses to experiment and he takes this theme further and further, one step at a time. Sometimes the structure of the placing of the magnets is not apparent, and sometimes he plays with the format of the painting, the number or even the strength of the magnets. Sometimes he places the magnets both behind and on the surface, making the surface undulate. Keisuke experiments with colour as well as size. As such he is more akin to those modern artists who use the two-dimensional plane as a place in which to conceptualise and assemble, construct or even tinker with the work in ways that depart from traditional painting.

Keisuke Matsuura recently started experimenting with the use of magnets and the iron that is part of the chemical substance of the paint. When placing the magnets, Keisuke throws pigment onto the surface, and the iron in the pigments attaches itself to the magnets, creating a bulb on the surface around which the traces of colour thrown onto the surface can be seen. It is a new way to allow nature to invade the structured world of science and geometry. The combination of the act of

throwing the pigment and the way this pigment and its residue attach to the surface form a subtle visual link to the flames and fire of ZERO artists like Piene and Yves Klein, and commemorate Concrete artists like Aubertin, albeit in a very controlled, essentially painterly way. It is here that Keisuke Matsuura adds something to the tradition of Concrete Art. He enriches the vocabulary of abstract constructivist art, by ever so subtly adding presence and action, without crossing over into the sentimentality or drama that Van Doesburg warned against.

Site-Specific Work

Keisuke does not limit himself in his work to just painting, or the two-dimensional object. In numerous other projects, he also created installations in which the spirit of the site is used as a theme that helps to shape an experience of space and time that does not exist outside the context of the place, but can at the same time be read — in keeping with Matsuura's visual vocabulary — as an objective, rational, and structured intervention. Time, space and existence become one.

Here too the connection with the work of Leblanc is interesting. Leblanc developed the theme of the torsion and used it for freestanding sculptures made from metal or wood. Rectangular geometric shapes rise up into torsions, which are sometimes enhanced with the use of paint. Leblanc wanted to break out of the two-dimensional plane and continue his investigations in the visual suspense that the power of the torsion gave to his fundamentally undramatic and objective forms. This is a theme that was later picked up by the famous Arte Povera artist Giovanni Anselmo. In his work, the torsion or torque is also the structuring power. Here, the stress and immense power becomes an overwhelming and dominant part of the piece. The extreme tension in his work can be understood as a sublimation of what

Walter Leblanc — in a far more subtle way — was also working on.

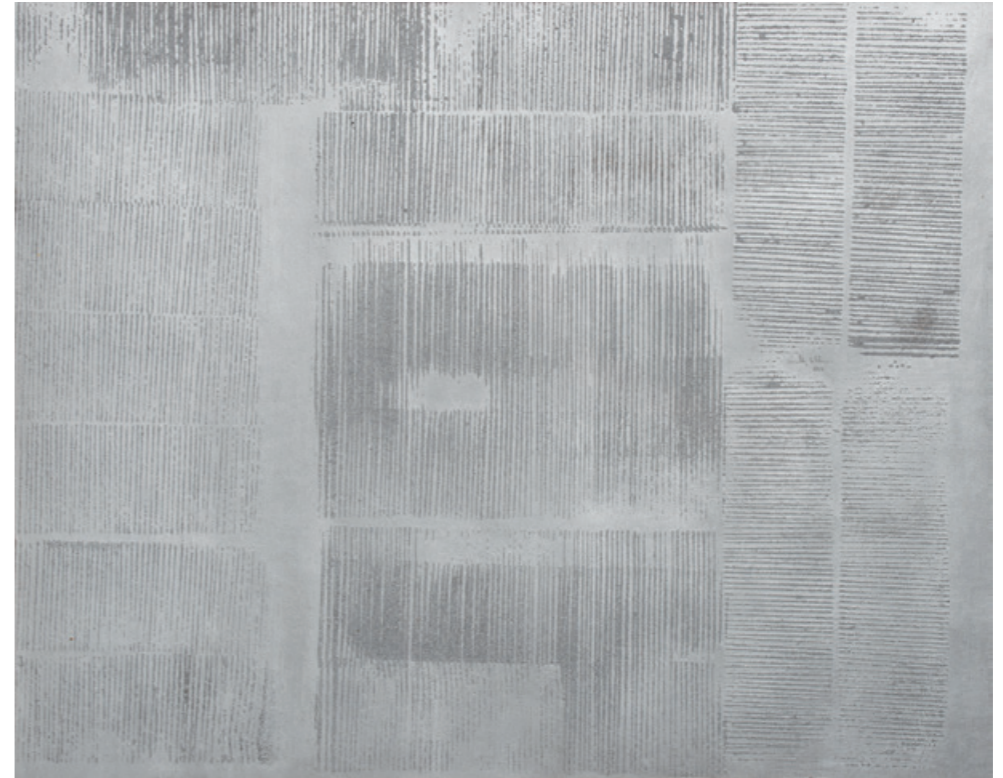
Matsuura and Leblanc

For this exhibition, Keisuke Matsuura has created work that is a direct dialogue with the work of Walter Leblanc. He refers to the torsion as an essential visual element in the work, but handles it in a way that is reminiscent of his site-specific pieces. He revisits the work of Leblanc and leaves a statement that not only pays homage, but also opens a way forward towards new possibilities and challenges.

A beautiful example is to be found in the installation *Resonanz/Leblanc*, which is located in the courtyard of the Walter Leblanc Foundation. In this large-scale work, 20 straps are 'tensioned' on a one-metre high base construction. They are stretched to an equal distance, parallel with one another. Seen from above, the work reveals a very concrete, dynamic form. The straps show tension, but are also the source of optical effects provided by the wind and the change of colours.

Sublime

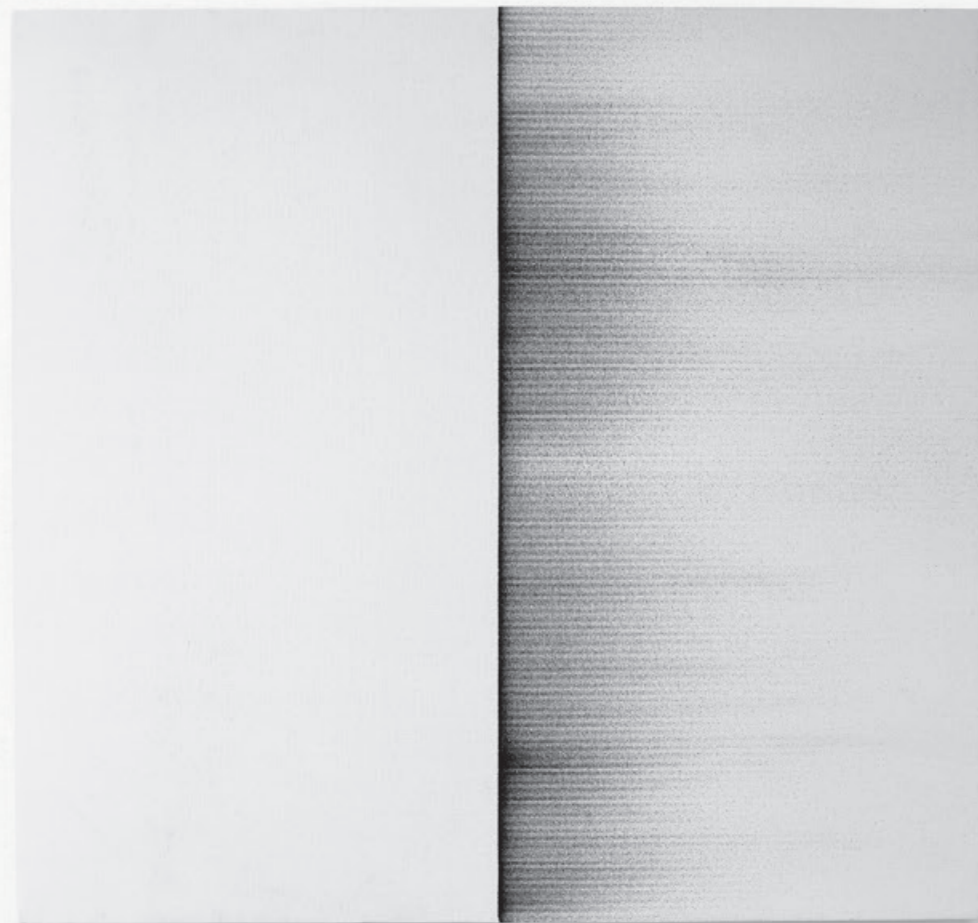
Following in Van Doesburg's footsteps, Matsuura uses a visual vocabulary that is true to his principles of objectivity and conceptualisation. Matsuura surpasses the individual, the anecdotal, and the dramatic, yet his work is certainly full of meaning. The work has the ability to inspire an awareness in its beholders about their actual existence in time and place. It materialises unseen powers that are kept in check by the will and artistic principles of the artist, thus offering visual manifestations of bigger truths than the works of man. In his work we see manifestations of the sublime, the overpowering forces of nature, and the impressive scale of time — compared to which we are nothing — while also succeeding in capturing the beauty that exists in art and nature. It is like listening to the music of Bach, where mathematical structures and the absence of discord, are able to convey a sensation of otherworldliness, heavenly perfection, and the promise of redemption for men.





Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba 982*, detail [2009]

Magnet, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
80 x 85 x 2.5 cm



Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba 982* [2009]

Magnet, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
80 x 85 x 2.5 cm



Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba kr 4* (2011)

Magnet, iron turnings on canvas
72 x 72 x 5 cm



Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba tb kr 1* (2011)

Magnet, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
72 x 72 x 5 cm



Walter Leblanc - *Twisted Strings, Progression Phase I*, 40F FX 63 (1973)

Cotton thread on cotton canvas, white latex
100 × 81 cm



Twisted Strings, Progression Phase II, 40F FX 81 (1973)



Twisted Strings, Progression Phase III, 40F FX 72 (1973)



Twisted Strings, Progression Phase IV, 40F FX 54 (1973)



Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba n 3* (2016)

Magnet, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
118 x 118 x 6.5 cm



Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba nagare 3* (2016)

Magnet, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
118 x 118 x 6.5 cm

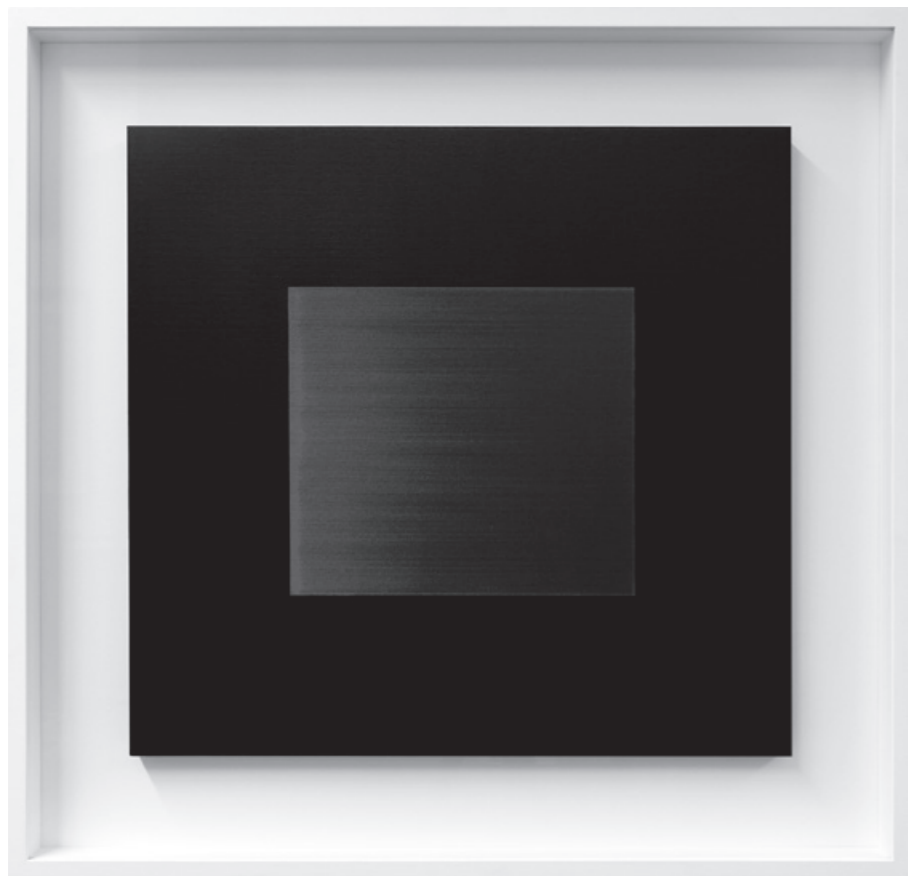




Twisted Strings, 130C X 522, Phase II (1978)



Twisted Strings, 130C X 522, Phase III (1978)



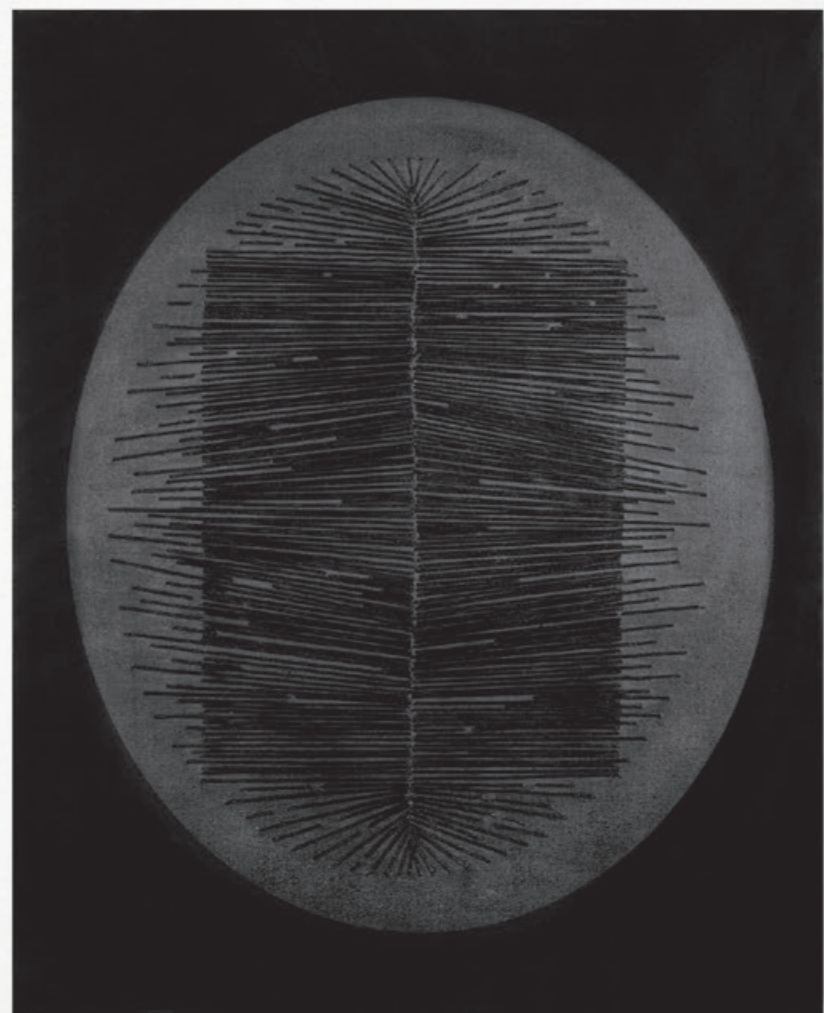
Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba tb 1* (2010)

Magnet, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
82.5 × 85.5 × 6 cm



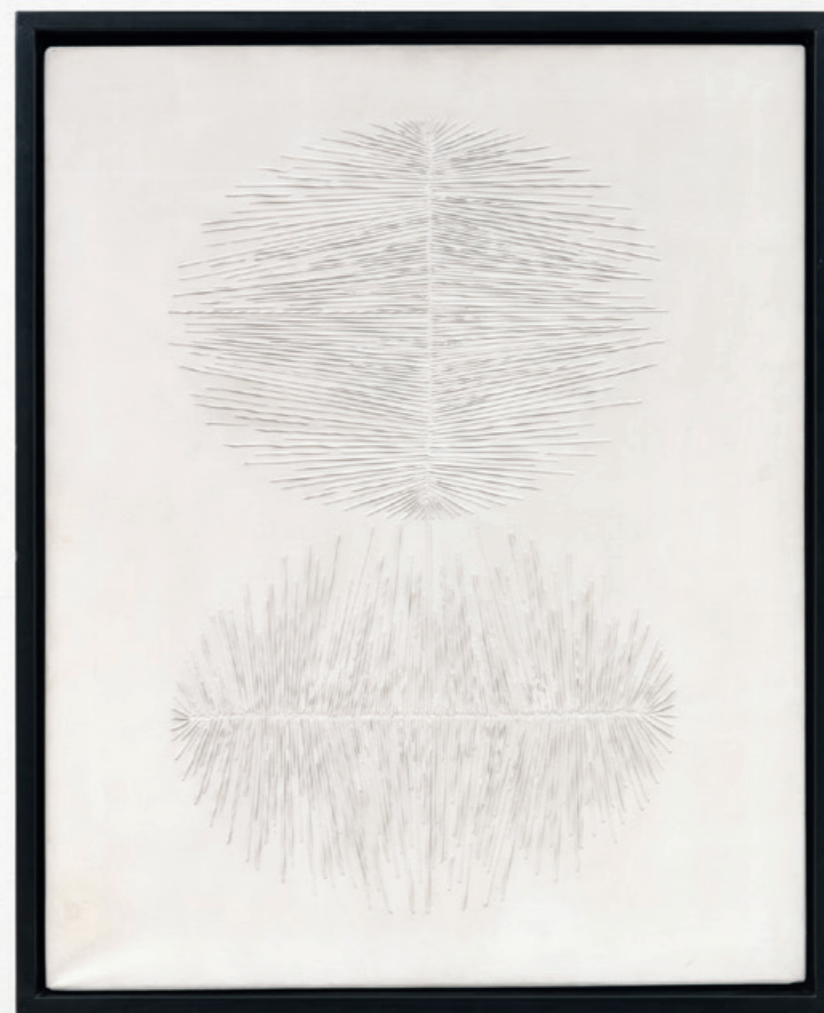
Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba tb 15* (2016)

Magnet, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
118 × 118 × 6.5 cm



Walter Leblanc - *Twisted Strings, 25F 0 X 36* (1960)

Cotton thread on cotton canvas, black latex
81 x 65 cm



Walter Leblanc - *Twisted Strings 25F X 369* (1962)

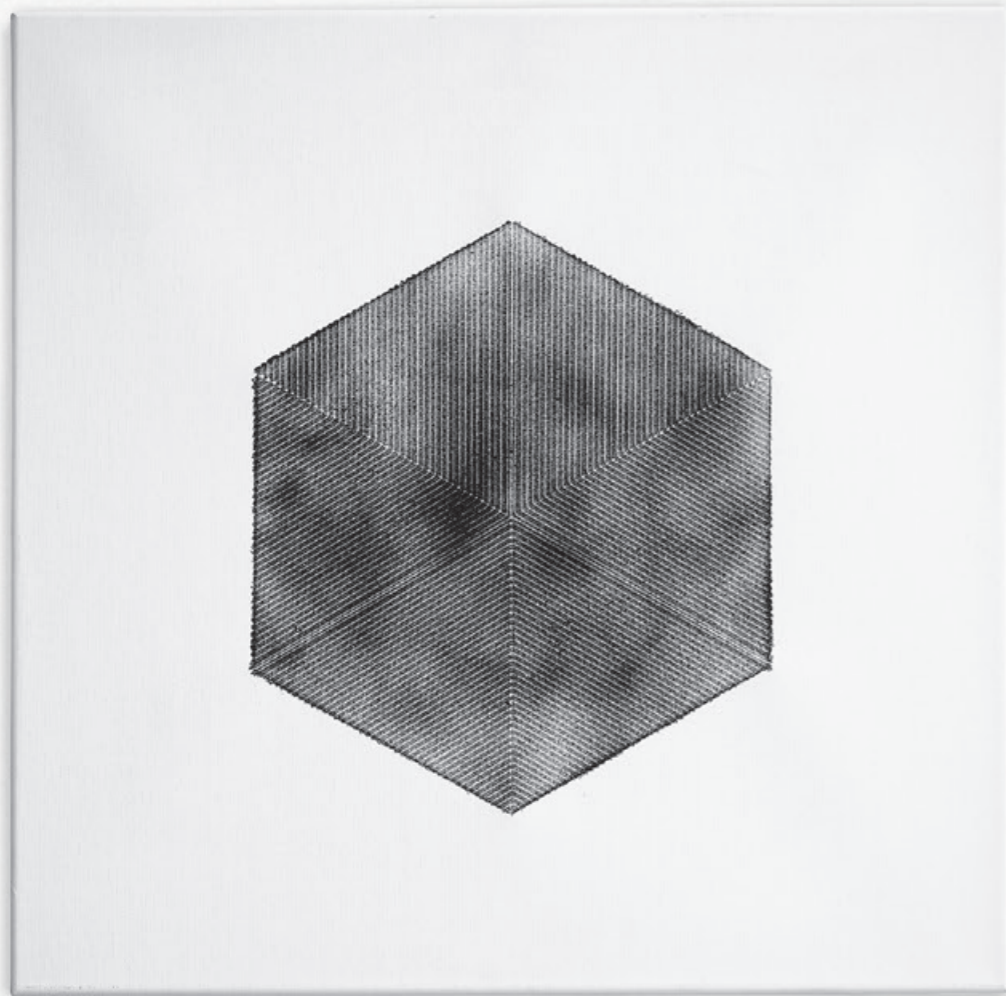
Cotton thread on cotton canvas, white latex
81 x 65 cm



Keisuke Matsuura - *resonance* (2017)
Installation
Socle du Monde Biennale, Heart Museum - Herning, Denmark

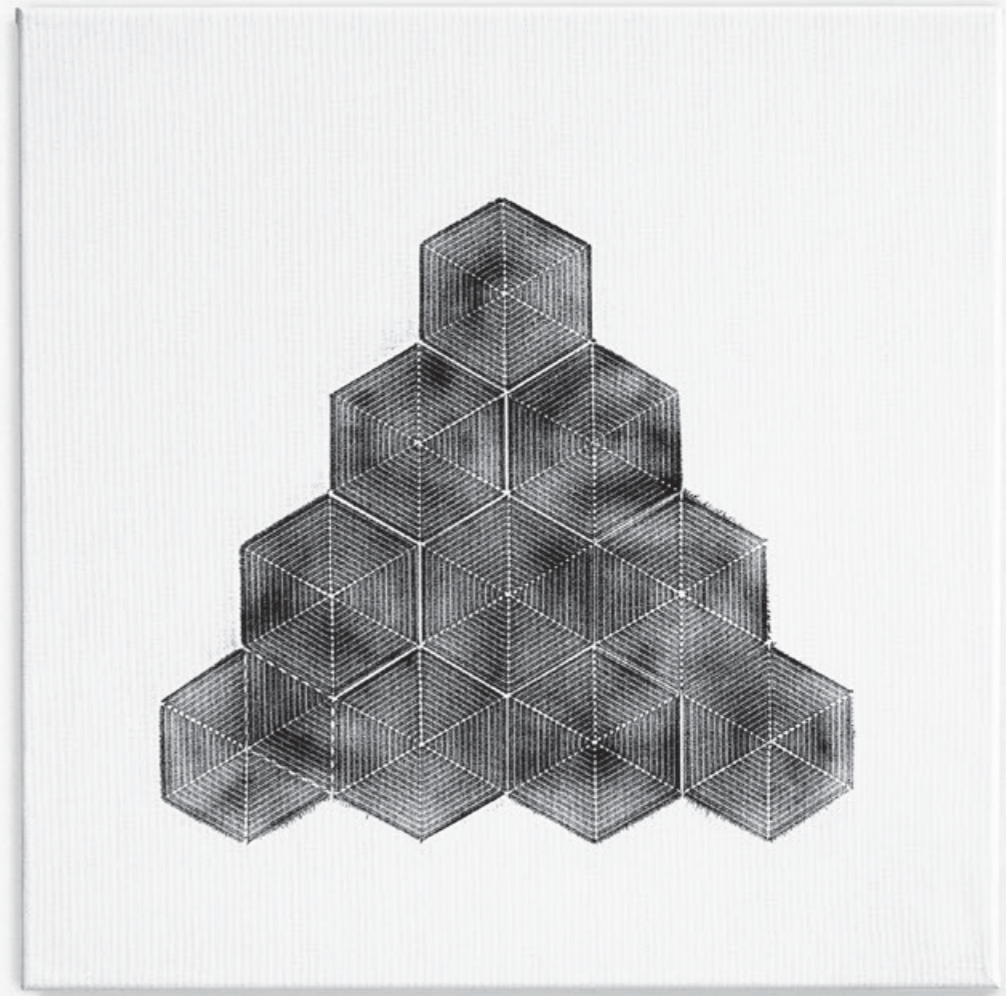


Walter Leblanc - *Twisted Strings* (1962)
Cotton thread on cotton canvas, white latex
100 x 80 cm



Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba hexagonal 5* (2005)

Magnet, iron turnings on canvas
53 × 53 × 4.5 cm



Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba hexagonal 4* (2005)

Magnet, iron turnings on canvas
53 × 53 × 4.5 cm



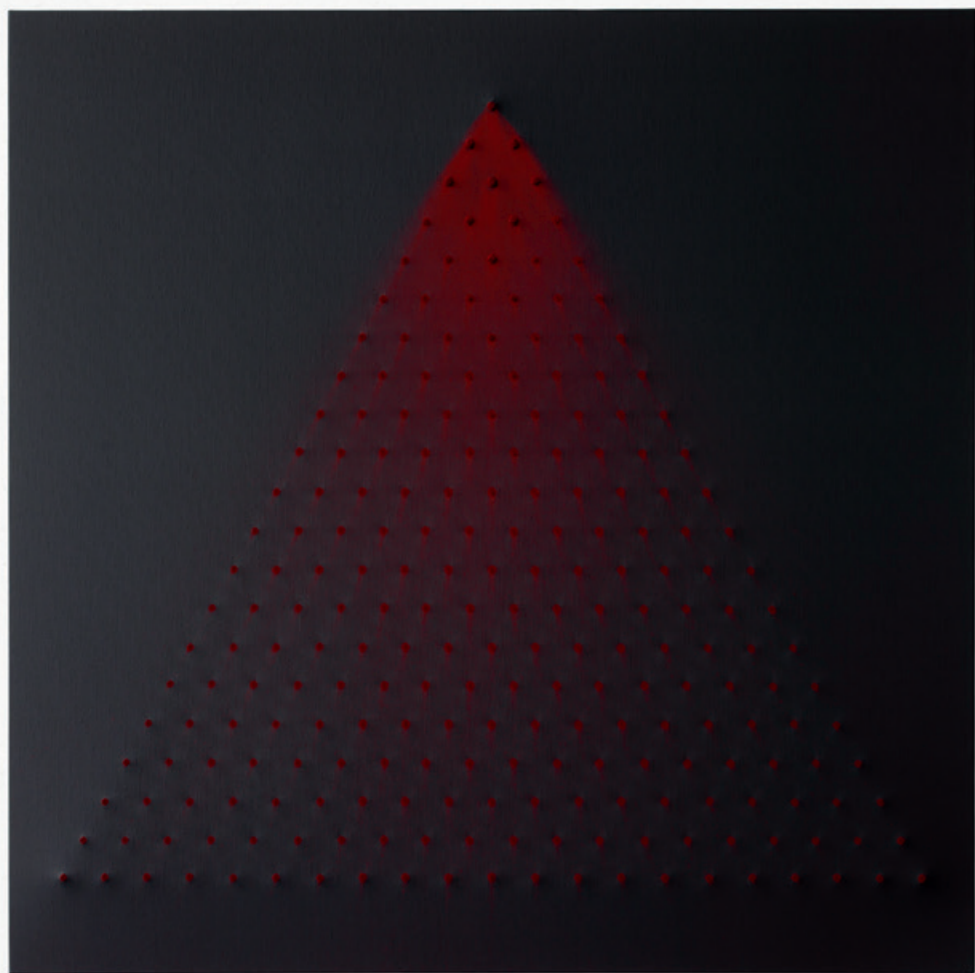
Walter Leblanc - *Twisted Strings*, 65C X 135 (1965)

Cotton thread on cotton canvas, white latex
65 x 65 cm



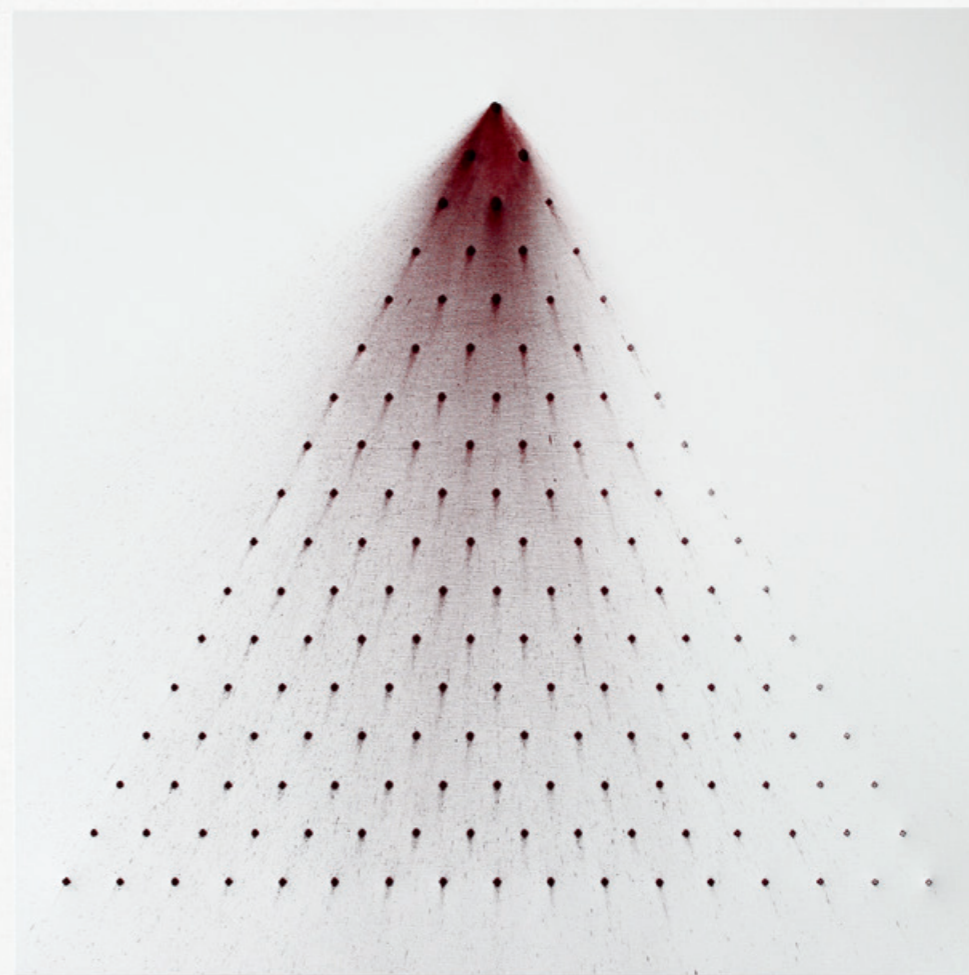
Walter Leblanc - *Twisted Strings*, 100C X 9 (1964)

Red and white cotton thread, white latex on cotton canvas
100 x 100 cm



Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba pp 20* [2020]

Magnet, acrylic, pigment on canvas
100 × 100 × 2.5 cm



Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba pp 21* [2020]

Magnet, acrylic, pigment on canvas
100 × 100 × 2.5 cm



Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba pb 7*, detail, (2019)

Magnet, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
112 × 102 × 8 cm



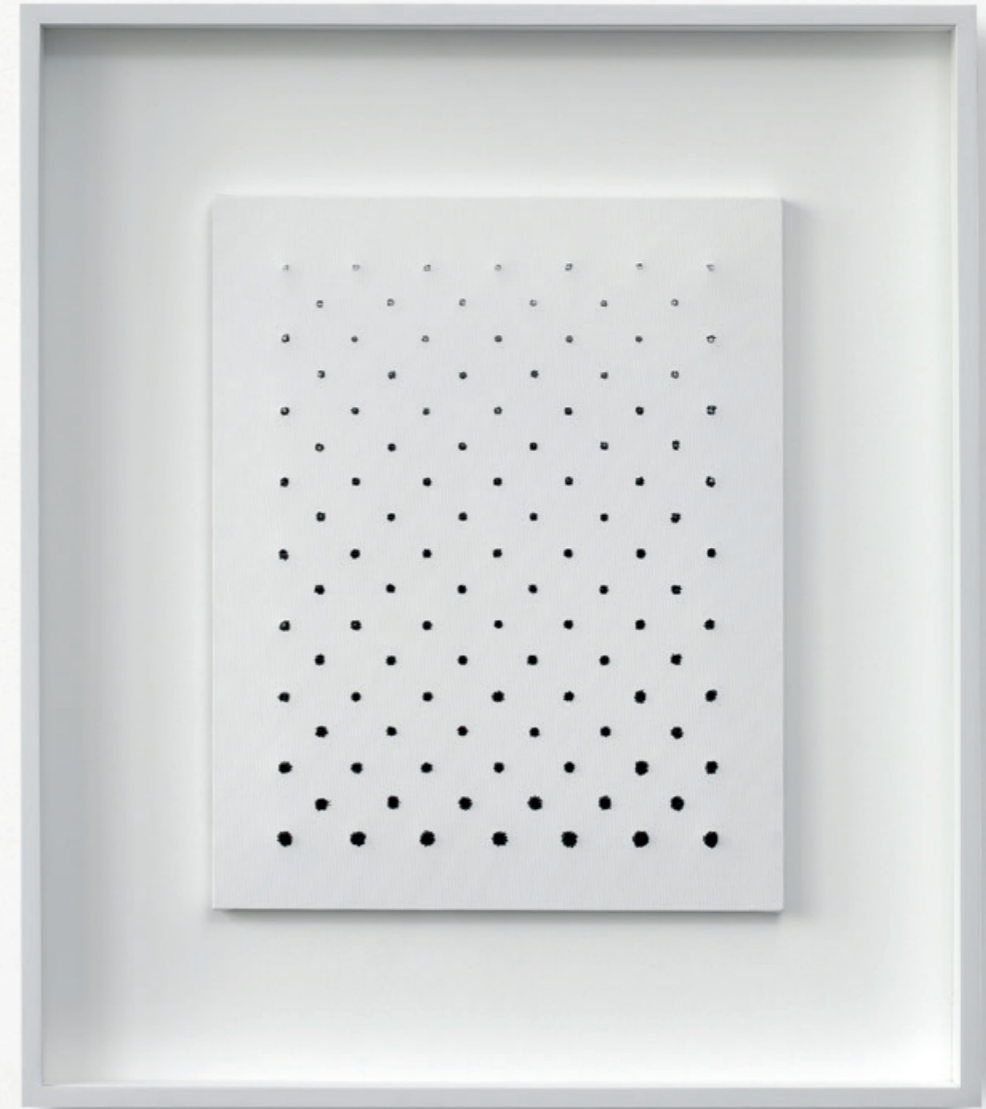
Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba pb 7* (2019)

Magnet, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
112 × 102 × 8 cm



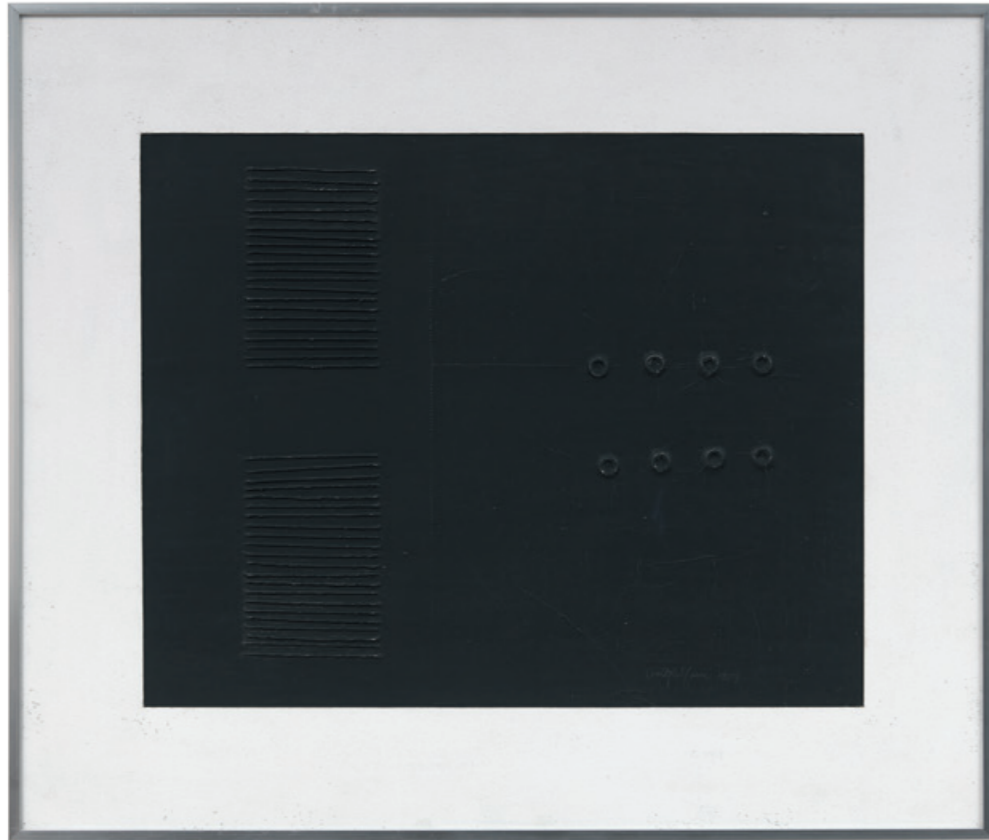
Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba pt s 4* (2010)

Magnet, pigment, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
50 × 50 × 2.5 cm



Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba pm 9* (2019)

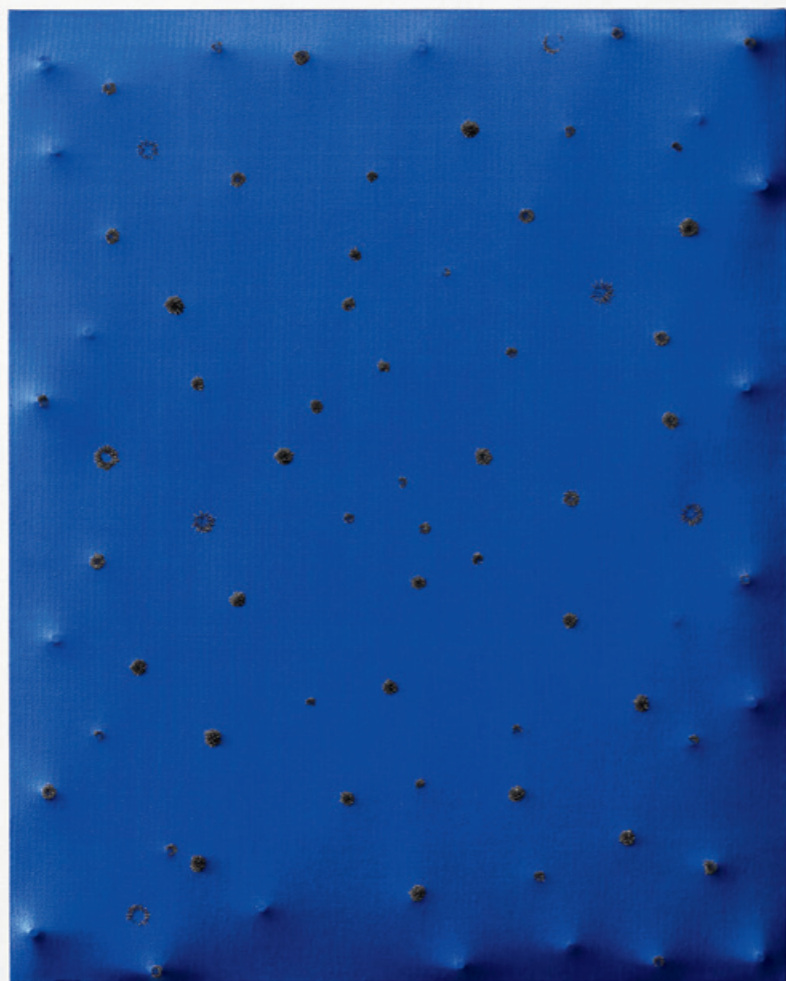
Magnet, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
77 × 67 × 6.5 cm



Walter Leblanc - *Gouache* (1959)
Cotton thread and mixed media on paper, black paint
40 x 50 cm

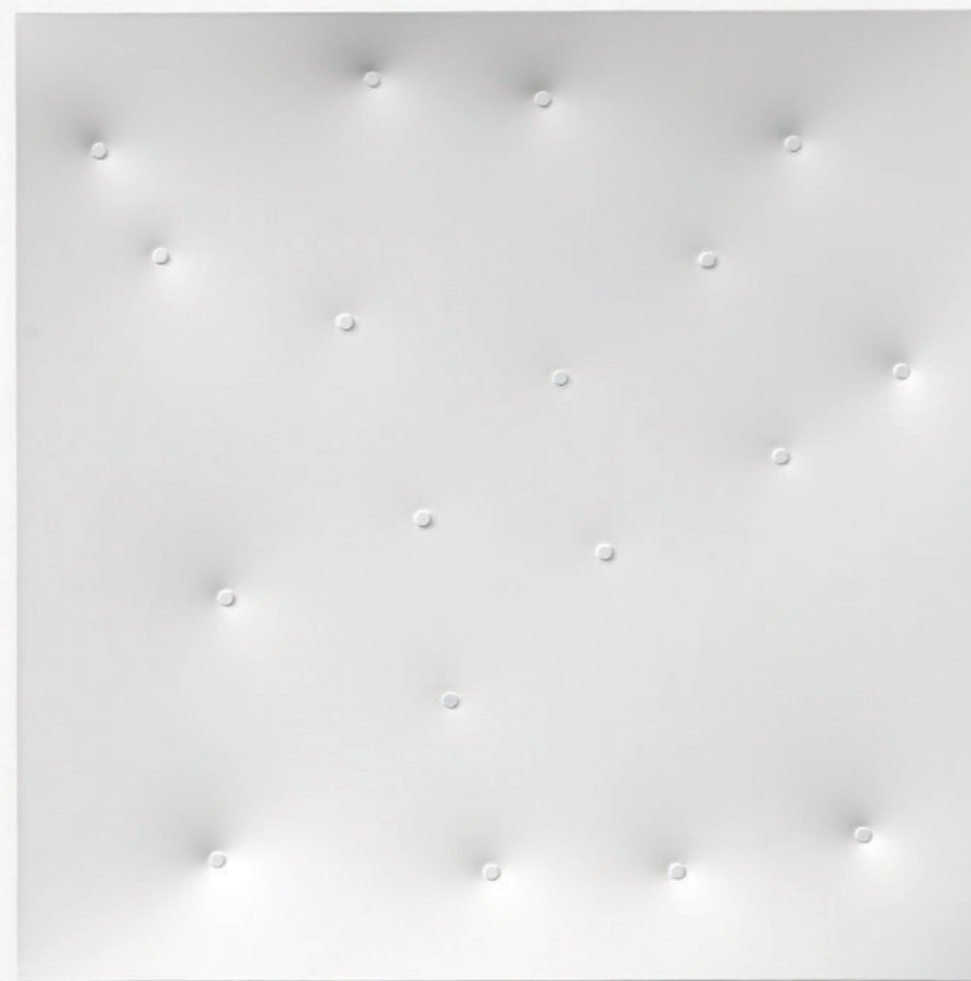


Walter Leblanc - *Twisted Strings* (1958)
Mixed media on cotton canvas
100 x 81 cm



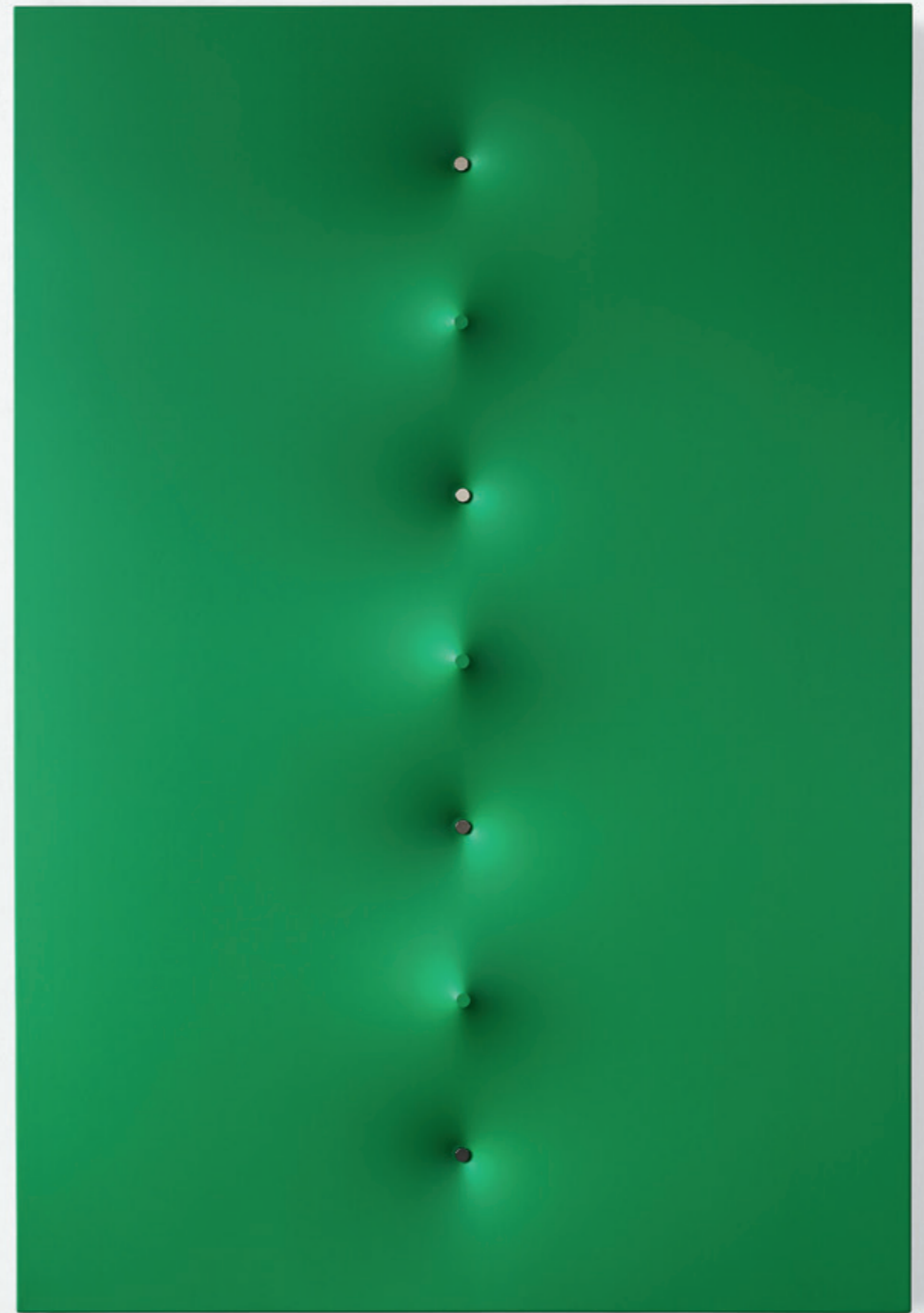
Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba bp 4* (2018)

Magnet, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
77 x 67 x 6.5 cm



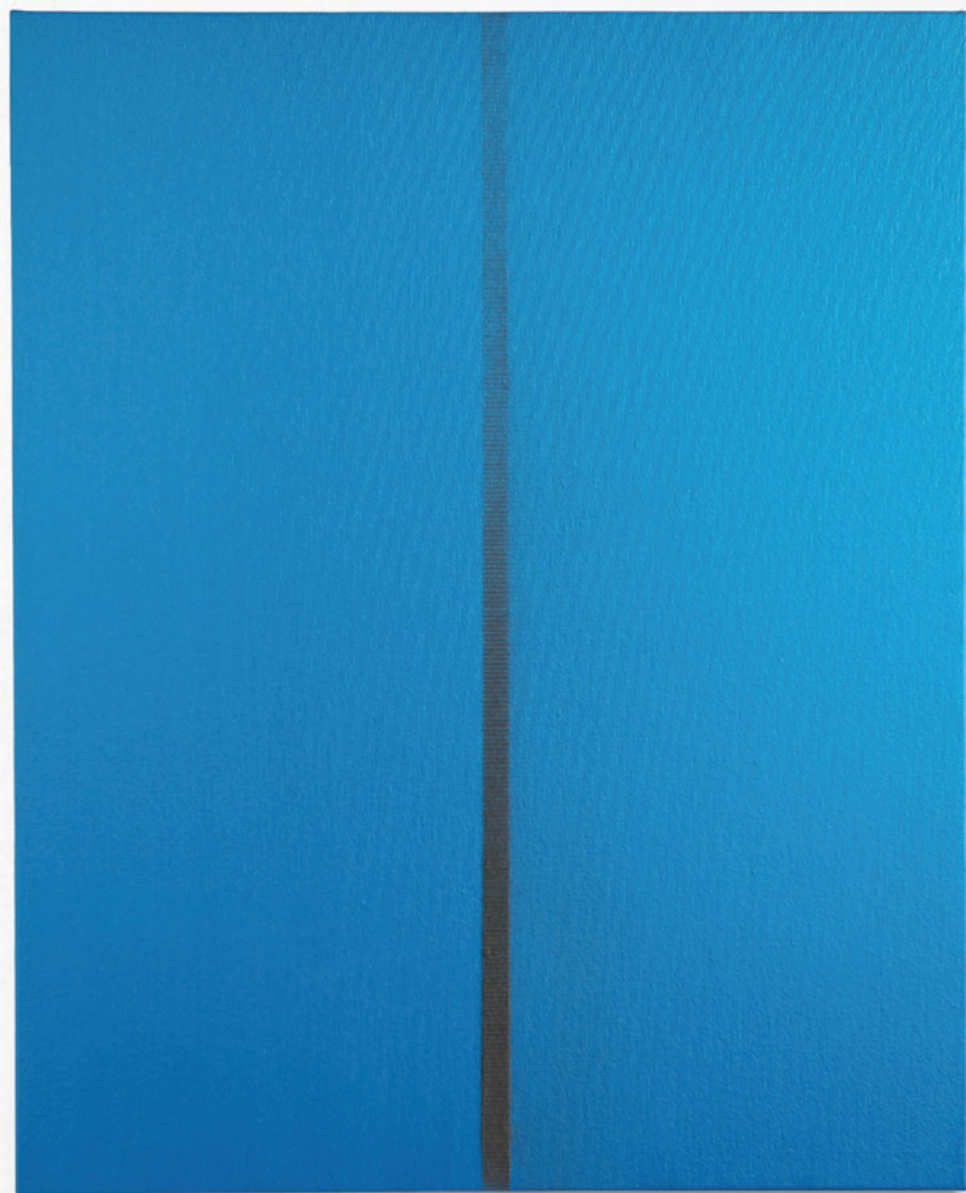
Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba pwe 1* (2013)

Magnet, acrylic, canvas
71 x 71 cm



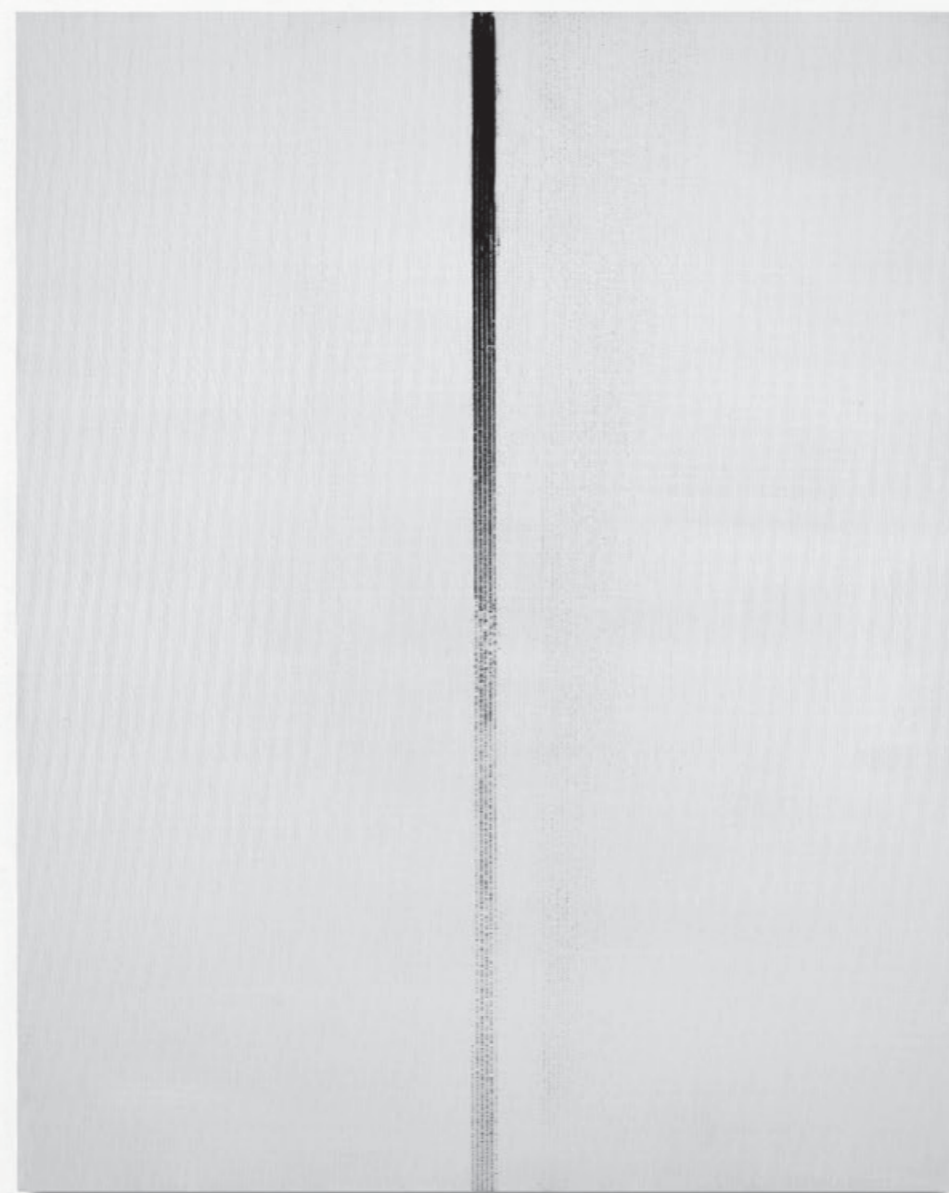
Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba midori* (2020)

Magnet, acrylic on canvas
190 × 130 × 7 cm



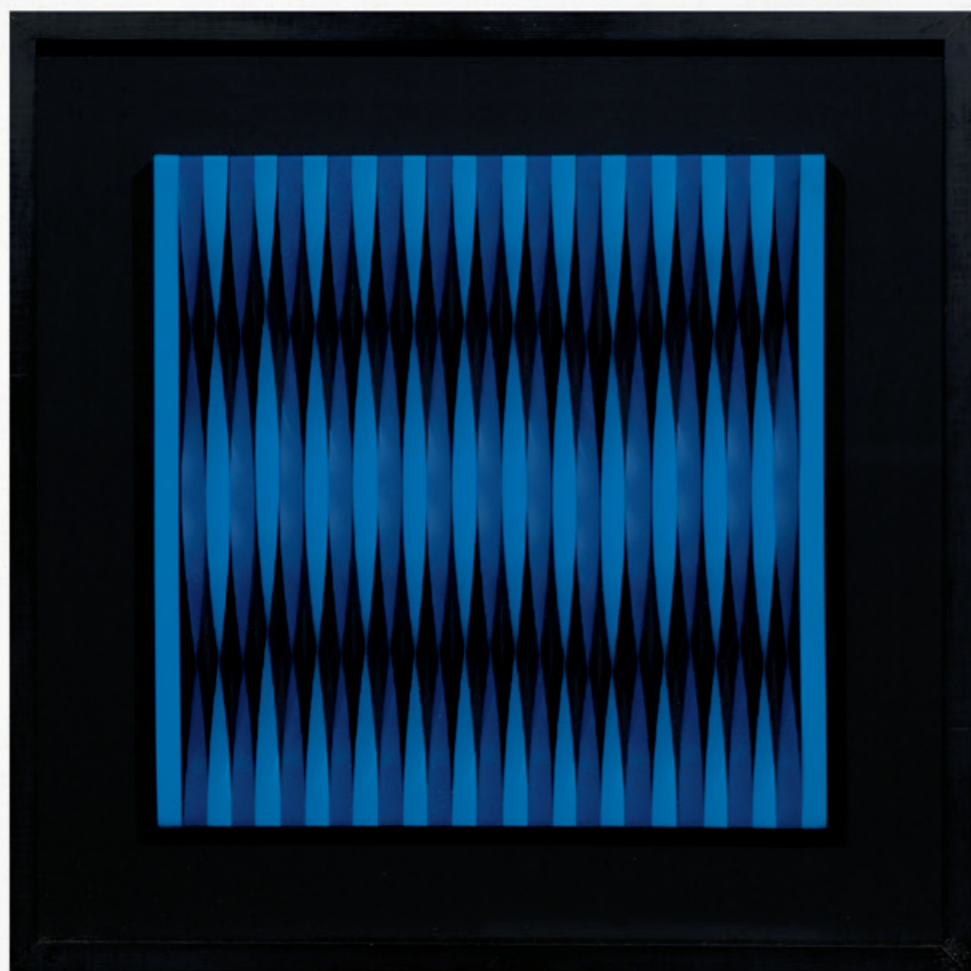
Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba 17 b* (2009)

Magnet, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
65 x 55 x 4.5 cm



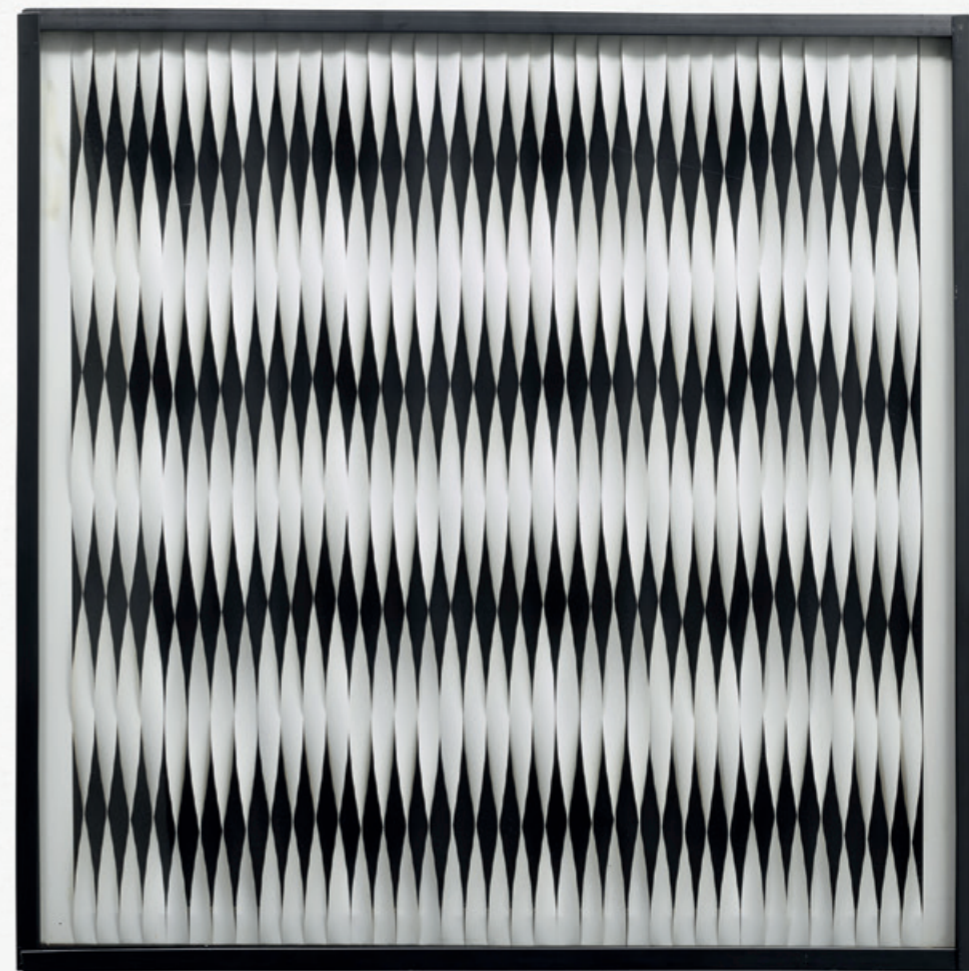
Keisuke Matsuura - *jiba 17 w* (2009)

Magnet, acrylic, iron turnings on canvas
65 x 55 x 4.5 cm



Walter Leblanc - *Torsions*, PF 342 [1963/72]

Blue polyvinyl on stretcher mounted on Masonite
40 x 40 cm



Walter Leblanc - *Torsions Mobilo Static*, SB 9 [1964]

Black and white polyvinyl on stretcher mounted on Masonite
62 x 62 cm



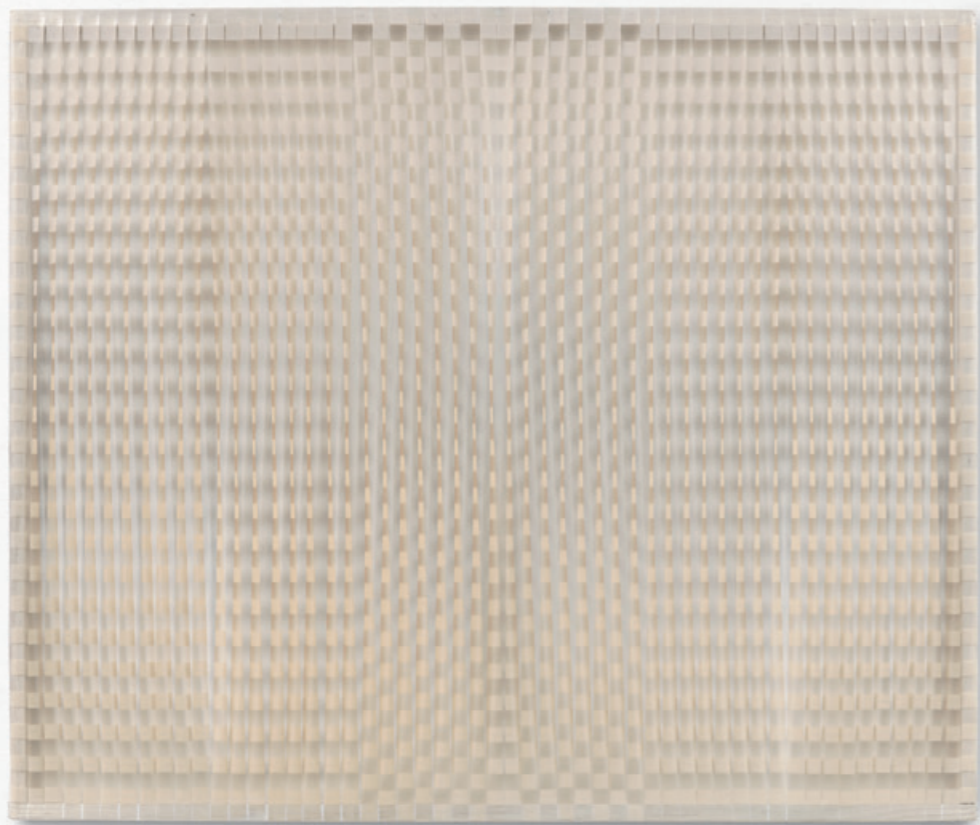
Keisuke Matsuura - *resonance breath* (2016)

String, plastic board, wood
75 × 54.5 × 8 cm



Keisuke Matsuura - *resonance wave* (2016)

Paper, cloth, nail on wood
108 × 71.5 × 6 cm



Walter Leblanc - *Anti-Peinture, 10F 441* (1962)

Transparent polyvinyl on stretcher mounted on Masonite
47.5 x 56 cm



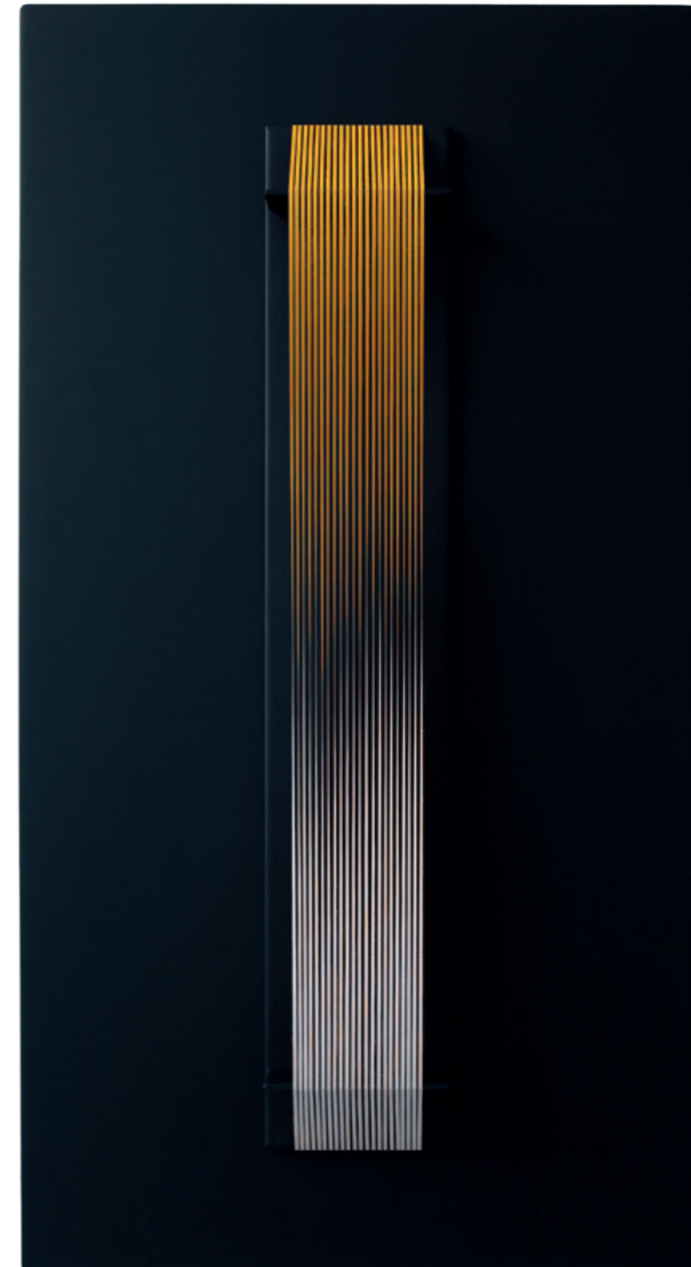
Walter Leblanc - *Torsions Mobilo Static, VB 09* (1963)

Transparent polyvinyl on stretcher mounted on Masonite
61 x 61 cm



Walter Leblanc - *Torsions* (1977/78)

Sculpture in black lacquered steel
200 × 130 cm



Keisuke Matsuura - *resonance/Leblanc* (2019)

Strips, acrylic on wood
100 × 54 × 8 cm



Walter Leblanc - *Torsions* (1977)

Sculpture in oxidised steel
275 x 15 x 0.3 cm



Walter Leblanc - *Torsions Schématiques*, 25F TS 270 (1963)

Airbrush on canvas, black paint
81 x 65 cm



Walter Leblanc - *Torsions* (1965)

Sculpture in black lacquered steel
150 x 12 x 0.3 cm

EXHIBITION

Curator

Keisuke Matsuura

Coordination

Géraldine Chafik, Eleonora Antico

Communication

Tine D'haeyere

CATALOGUE

Author

Jeroen Chabot

Copy-editing

Duncan Brown

Design and Layout

jurgenpersijn.com

Images

Keisuke Matsuura, We Document Art

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