

# GALLERY

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## *For Immediate Release*

### **Eric Jiaju Lee**

#### **SUCHNESS**

July 12 - Aug 15, 2002

Opening Reception: Friday, July 12, 6 - 8pm

Gallery Hours: Monday - Friday, 12 - 6pm

Contact: Sean Chen

**SUCHNESS** presents the paintings of Eric Jiaju Lee in his first solo exhibition in New York. Lee looks to traditions in both the East and West as sources for his work. Artistically, these traditions range from modernist and contemporary abstraction to 17<sup>th</sup> century Chinese landscape painting. Conceptually, Lee is interested in where the Continental philosophies overlap with eastern modes of thought. What he arrives at in his work is an organic synthesis of the visual language of abstraction with a radical notion of space or *shunyata* (sanskrit for "emptiness" or "nothingness"). Thus the seeming familiarity of western abstract imagery is re-contextualized within a Taoist and Buddhist concept. Emphasis on form is shifted to space where forms are seen as no more than various manifestations emerging from, and returning back to space. Lee illustrates this by employing different applications of paint, from a lightly stained puddle, to a gestural pouring, to a heavier painted texture, in a single work. The emphasis on space is supported by the minimal use of painted forms, which are carefully arranged within the emptiness of raw canvas or unprimed fabric such as silk, satin, or taffeta. The "heroic" tradition of abstract painting, with its egotism symbolized in painted form, is gently humbled and balanced by the tradition of ideological emptiness. Lee likens his work, where painted forms manifest in and out of space, to the cycle of life and death, where the assertion and dissolution of the ego is mitigated by one's relationship to the reality of their own mortality. Perhaps this is one aspect of "suchness" that Lee points to in his unsentimental yet lyrical paintings.

**Eric Jiaju Lee** earned his Master of Fine Arts degree at Hunter College in New York City where he has been residing for the past decade. He exhibits regularly and many of his works are in private collections throughout the country. A professional musician and rock climber as well, he is able to draw directly from his experience as a performer in another artistic discipline and his personal interaction with nature. Lee is also currently an adjunct professor of fine arts and art history at the County College of Morris in New Jersey.