

DOMINIQUE LÉVY



KAZUO SHIRAGA

No. 37 (T45)

1962

Oil on canvas

35 x 45 11/16 inches (89 x 116 cm)

Signed and dated (lower right)

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Untitled No. 37 (T45), 1962 (detail)

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Untitled No. 37 (T45), 1962 (detail)

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Untitled No. 37 (T45), 1962 (detail)

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Untitled No. 37 (T45) in Body and Matter: The Art of Kazuo Shiraga and Satoru Hoshino at Dominique Levy Gallery, New York, 2015

DOMINIQUE LÉVY

KAZUO SHIRAGA

No. 37 (*T45*)

1962

Oil on canvas

35 x 45 5/8 inches (89 x 116 cm)

Signed in Japanese and dated '62 (lower right)

PROVENANCE:

Galerie Stadler, Paris

Private Collection, Paris

Versailles Enchères, Versailles, December 5, 1993, lot 37

Private Collection

EXHIBITED:

Düsseldorf, Stiftung Museum Kunstpalast, *Le grand Geste! Informel and Abstract Expressionism, 1946-1964*, April - August 2010, no. 141 (illustrated, p. 154).

New York, Dominique Lévy Gallery, *Body and Matter: The Art of Kazuo Shiraga and Satoru Hoshino*, January - April 2015, no. 5, p. 35 (illustrated in color).

LITERATURE:

K. Kawasaki, M. Tiampo, J. Rajchman, et. al., *Kazuo Shiraga*, New York: Dominique Lévy Gallery and Axel Vervoordt Gallery, 2015, no. 27, pp. 96-97 (illustrated in color).

NOTE:

To execute paintings such as *T45*, Shiraga would suspend himself from the ceiling with a rope, and then use his feet to spread paint across canvas. This refusal to paint with brushes was endemic to the Gutai group, which the artist had joined in 1955. Shozo Shimamoto, one of the group's earliest members, stated, "paint can only be revived after brushes have been thrown out." In performances such as *Challenging Mud*, Shiraga physically wrestled with a metric ton of clay that had been deposited in the courtyard of Ohara Kaikan during *The First Gutai Exhibition*, which opened that same year. The inception of his foot paintings precede *Challenging Mud*, and while he continued to paint, Shiraga's ephemeral performances are illuminated by the Gutai philosophy, which asserted that the act of painting could occur beyond the confines of the canvas and the studio. As Shiraga described it in *Gutai journal no. 2*, "Omou Koto": "I want to paint as though [I am] rushing around a battlefield, exerting myself to collapse from exhaustion."

In 1957, Michel Tapié, an art critic at the forefront of the French Art Informel movement, expressed a profound interest in the activities of the Gutai group. Through Tapié's relationship with Gutai, the group became internationally renowned. Tapié's influence also prompted major conceptual changes in the organization and artistic production of



the group. Tapié requested that Shiraga send him twelve "foot paintings" to be exhibited in Europe. He advised that Shiraga create large-scale paintings, prompting a series of works ranging from 63 x 41 inches to 102 x 76 inches. Shiraga intentionally left his works untitled during the late 1950s and early 60s, insisting that "the title of the work hinders viewers from perceiving the visual sensibility the work presents; in fact, it destroys that perception." *T45* was made a few years after the artist's first ever solo exhibition in the west, at Galerie Stadler in Paris. Rodolphe Stadler had been introduced to Shiraga's work in November 1959, when he included a painting by the artist in the group show *Métamorphismes*. After his solo exhibition, Shiraga's practice began to gain an international audience, receiving further signs of interest from Turin, Italy, and New York. Shiraga often enlarged his canvases and gave them more traditional names at the advice of Tapié; the series Shiraga began the year before *T45* was created was the *Water Margin* series, wherein he sourced the titles of the works from the eponymous heroic Chinese saga. Thus, while he was clearly working through the ideas that led him toward more monumental canvases and traditional titles, in *T45* we observe Shiraga's steadfast hold onto the original principles for painting that he had developed upon joining Gutai: to paint on smaller canvases so that the action and energy of his foot-strokes extends beyond the material support's limits. In this way, *T45* is pure energy and embodied force, and a primary example of the violent meeting between body and matter that Shiraga dedicated his life to exploring.