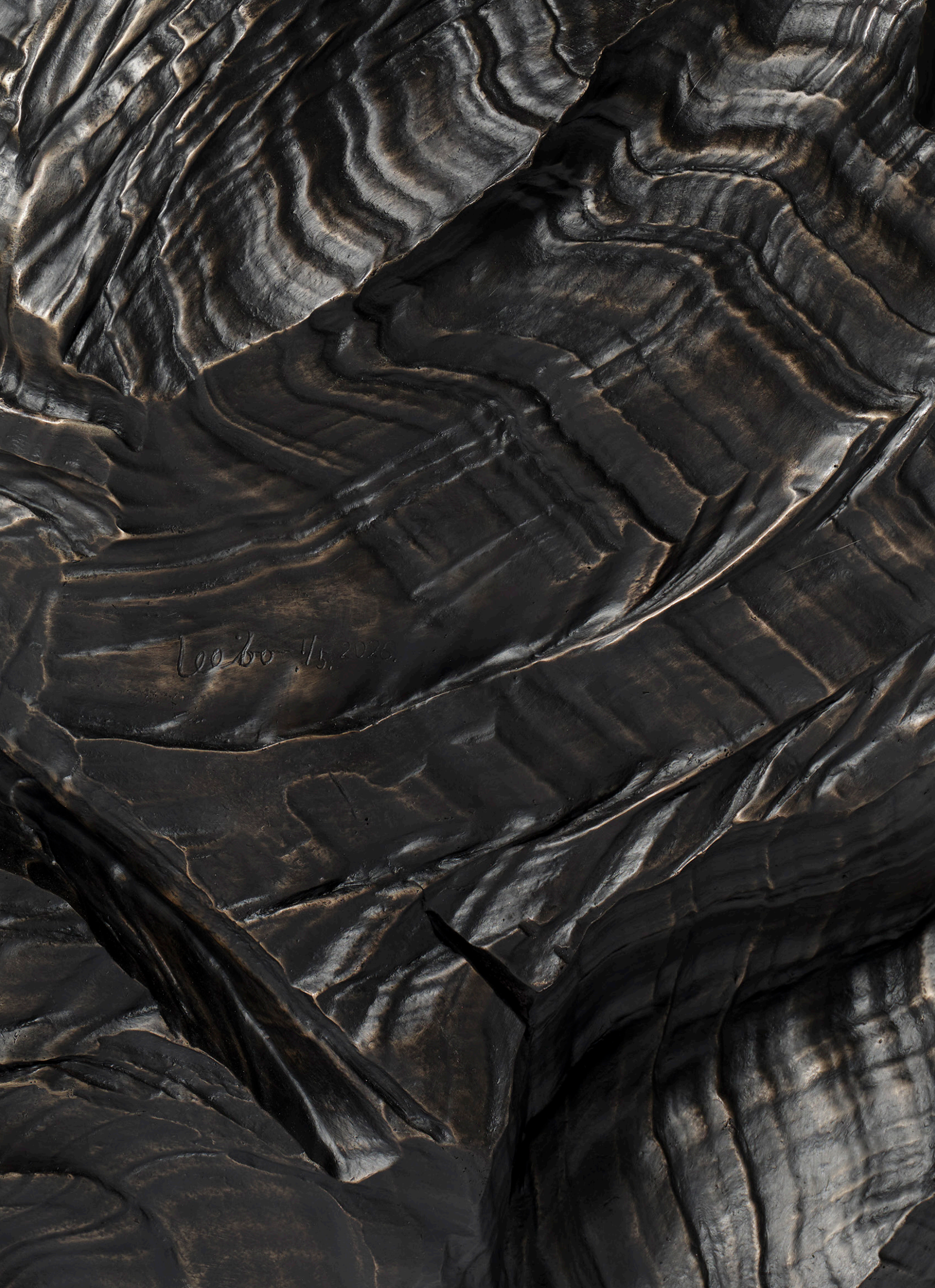




leo bo 4/5, 2026.

Johyun Gallery

FRIEZE SEOUL

Sept 4 - 5, 2026

VIP Preview: Sept 2 - 3

Booth A24

Lee Bae

b. 1956

Lee Bae focuses on the expressive potential of charcoal as a medium. Over the course of three decades, Lee has dedicated himself to creating a diverse range of iterations of Korean painting through his use of charcoal and abstract forms that are self-sufficient and rich in spiritual and energetic qualities. By exploring immanent notions such as yielding, respiring, and circulation, which are embodied by charcoal as a material, Lee's work resonates with themes of life and death, absence and presence, light and shadow, form, and emptiness. Lee's oeuvre spans a wide range of mediums and forms, from drawings to canvas-based works, as well as installations, with each new work serving to expand upon his unique vision and approach. Lee's works have been featured at museums and institutions worldwide including: Venice Biennale, Rockefeller Center, New York, Phi Foundation, Montreal, Canada; Indang Museum, Daegu, South Korea; Wilmotte Foundation, Venice, Italy; Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul de Vence, France; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Vannes, France; and Musée Guimet, Paris, France. Among many others, Lee's work is in the permanent collections of museums including the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, South Korea; Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea; Leeum-Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea; Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul de Vence, France; Musée Guimet, Paris, France; Baruj Foundation, Barcelona, Spain, and Privada Allegro Foundation, Madrid, Spain.

Lee Bae: The Origins of His Practice



Lee Bae's artistic practice of transformative intervention and environmental conceptualism emerges from the elemental history of Korea herself. Growing up in rural Korea as a farmer's son, the rituals of shamanism, folk culture, and craft were formative influences that informed the artist's development. Among them, the tradition of daljip taewooki (lit: burning the Moon House) has been especially poignant.

On the Korean Lunar New Year's Day of Seollal, communities of farmers gather and prop up a tepee structure of large pines to set ablaze. After the embers have cooled, each family carries a portion of the residual charcoal to ensure a plentiful harvest, hung above doorways and baby cribs to ward off evil spirits and even used as a purifying additive to soy sauce.

Apprenticed under the mono-ha master Lee Ufan, Lee Bae spent extensive periods in Paris where the distant yearning for home inspired the direction of his work. Wood, fire, hanji (Korean mulberry paper) are employed within a grand oeuvre of production that now spans sculpture, installation, drawing, and assemblage. His usage of Korean Pine is both practical and symbolic for all its longevity, virtue, honor, strength, and wisdom.

It is the chosen material for ships, caskets, and houses. Pine branches on doorsteps celebrated the arrival of newborn children. Pine trees sprout leaves for a century or more, but in charcoal form, gains a life of a millennium or more. Korean Pine is characterized by composition perfect for charcoal, and is known to maintain its form when subjected to high temperatures. And within Lee Bae's remarkable wholistic approach it has become both his method and the core meaning.





Installation view of *La Maison de la Lune Brûlée* by Lee Bae, Wilmotte Foundation, Venice, 2024
(Courtesy of Johyun Gallery and the artist)

Lee Bae's Sculpture



Lee mainly works with pine charcoal. He carefully selects verdant pine for the kiln to seal and fire for 2 weeks. This is then cooled for another 2 weeks to complete the process of pyrolysis. When fired for charcoal, oak keeps its form but develops cracks. Willow is nearly impervious to cracks, but the original form is mostly lost. Pine strikes a balance between the two with moderate cracks and moderate retention of its original form; and this is the reason why it is Lee's choice of material for charcoal. As pinewood transforms into a charcoal state and its form becomes ambiguous in the heat, it also gains abstraction and universality. Just as the cracks and blemishes present in hieroglyphic bones and tortoise carapaces are read in shamanistic rituals, the cracks in the charcoal can reveal a story.

The conversation that intersects all of Lee Bae's work, even the assemblage of the *Issue du feu*, is also what establishes a dimensionality of space. The same conversation in the Brushstroke drawings and paintings fill a figurative presence.

The supple and elegant strokes are created in direct relationship to the artist's height and reach, which in turn establish the framework for the sculptures and installations.

Lee began making sculptures in the 90s with charcoal, originally the types for cooking, connecting to his memories of community and the ritual burning of the moon house. His earliest pieces worked much like the early 2D work defining points of density within the context of a negative space. For 2D, this was the canvas or paper; in the sculpture and installation from this period, it was the ambiance of the exhibition space.

It is not until the artist returned to his personal landscape of Cheongdo, Korea, that he gained full access to the materiality of his source. Once back in his hometown, he rapidly expanded out into monumental scale, creating massive charcoal obelisks from entire trunks of Korean Pine. His works gained a greater variety of layouts, some suspended, some standing upright, while others were laid carefully supinated on the ground, bound together, clustered, sprawled out and formed into sentinels of greater purpose. Part stone ruins, part locational indicator, they continue to evolve and expand into the greater ecosystem and space-time continuum from which they come.



Installation view of *La Maison de la Lune Brûlée* by Lee Bae, Wilmette Foundation, Venice, 2024
(Courtesy of Johyun Gallery and the artist)



Lee Bae

Brushstroke ut1, 2026

Bronze

145 × 185 × 137 cm (57 1/8 × 72 7/8 × 54 in.)

315 kg (694 lb 7 oz)

Edition of 5 + 2 AP

\$160,000 USD



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut1*, 2026 (Detail)



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut1*, 2026



Lee Bae

Brushstroke ut2, 2026

Bronze

138 × 180 × 118 cm (54 3/8 × 70 7/8 × 46 1/2 in.)

315 kg (694 lb 7 oz)

Edition of 5 + 2 AP

\$140,000 USD



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut2*, 2026 (Detail)



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut2*, 2026



Lee Bae

Brushstroke ut3, 2026

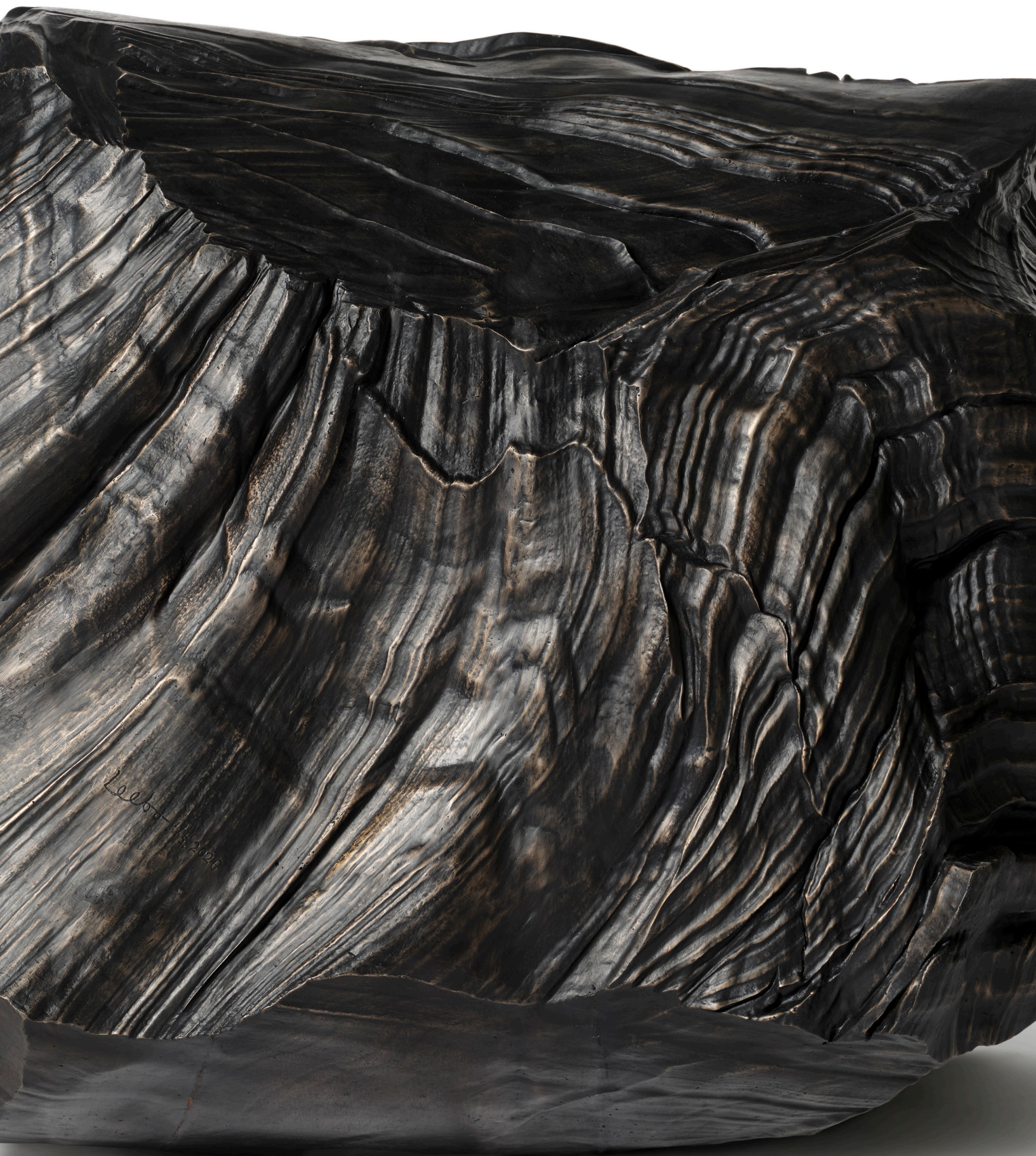
Bronze

92 × 140 × 87 cm (36 1/4 × 55 1/8 × 34 1/4 in.)

130 kg (286 lb 10 oz)

Edition of 5 + 2 AP

\$75,000 USD



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut3*, 2026 (Detail)



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut3*, 2026



Lee Bae

Brushstroke ut4, 2026

Bronze

96 × 111 × 110 cm (37 3/4 × 43 3/4 × 43 1/4 in.)

115 kg (253 lb 9 oz)

Edition of 5 + 2 AP

\$65,000 USD



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut4*, 2026 (Detail)



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut4*, 2026



Lee Bae

Brushstroke ut5, 2026

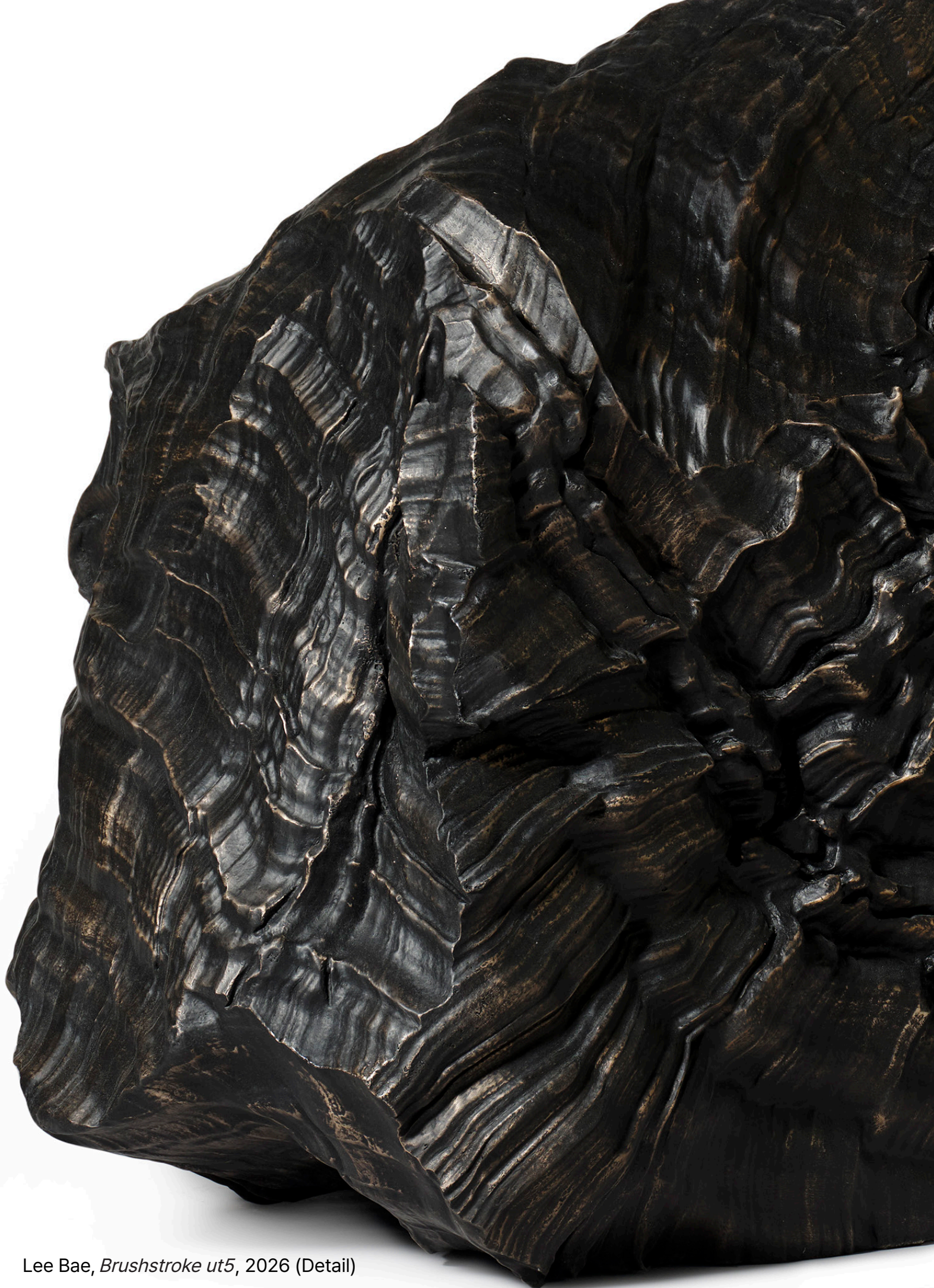
Bronze

78 × 115 × 70 cm (30 3/4 × 45 1/4 × 27 1/2 in.)

120 kg (264 lb 9 oz)

Edition of 5 + 2 AP

\$60,000 USD



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut5*, 2026 (Detail)



Lee Bae

Brushstroke ut6, 2026

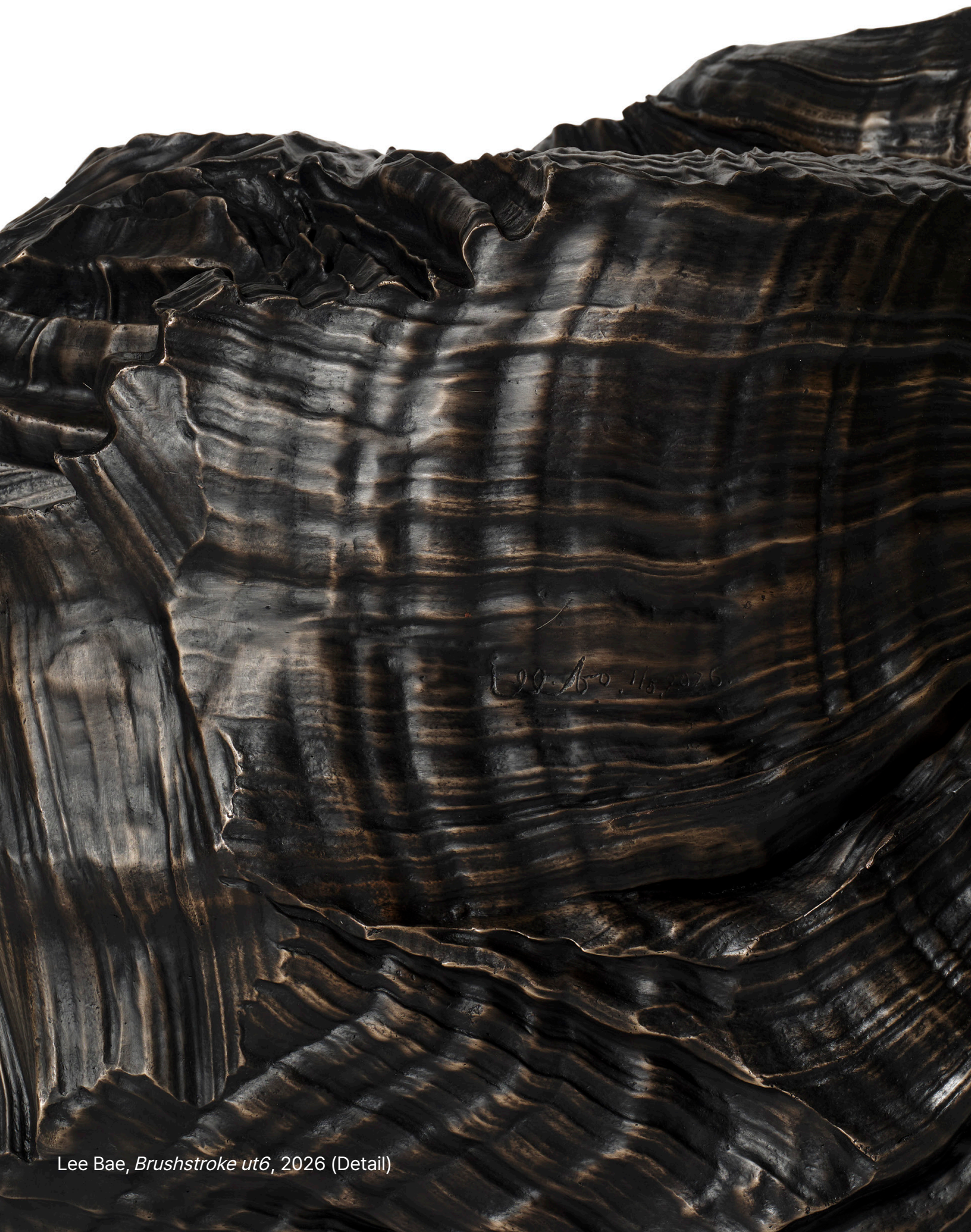
Bronze

68 × 83 × 66 cm (26 3/4 × 32 5/8 × 26 in.)

80 kg (176 lb 6 oz)

Edition of 5 + 2 AP

\$50,000 USD



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut6*, 2026 (Detail)



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut6*, 2026



Lee Bae

Brushstroke ut7, 2026

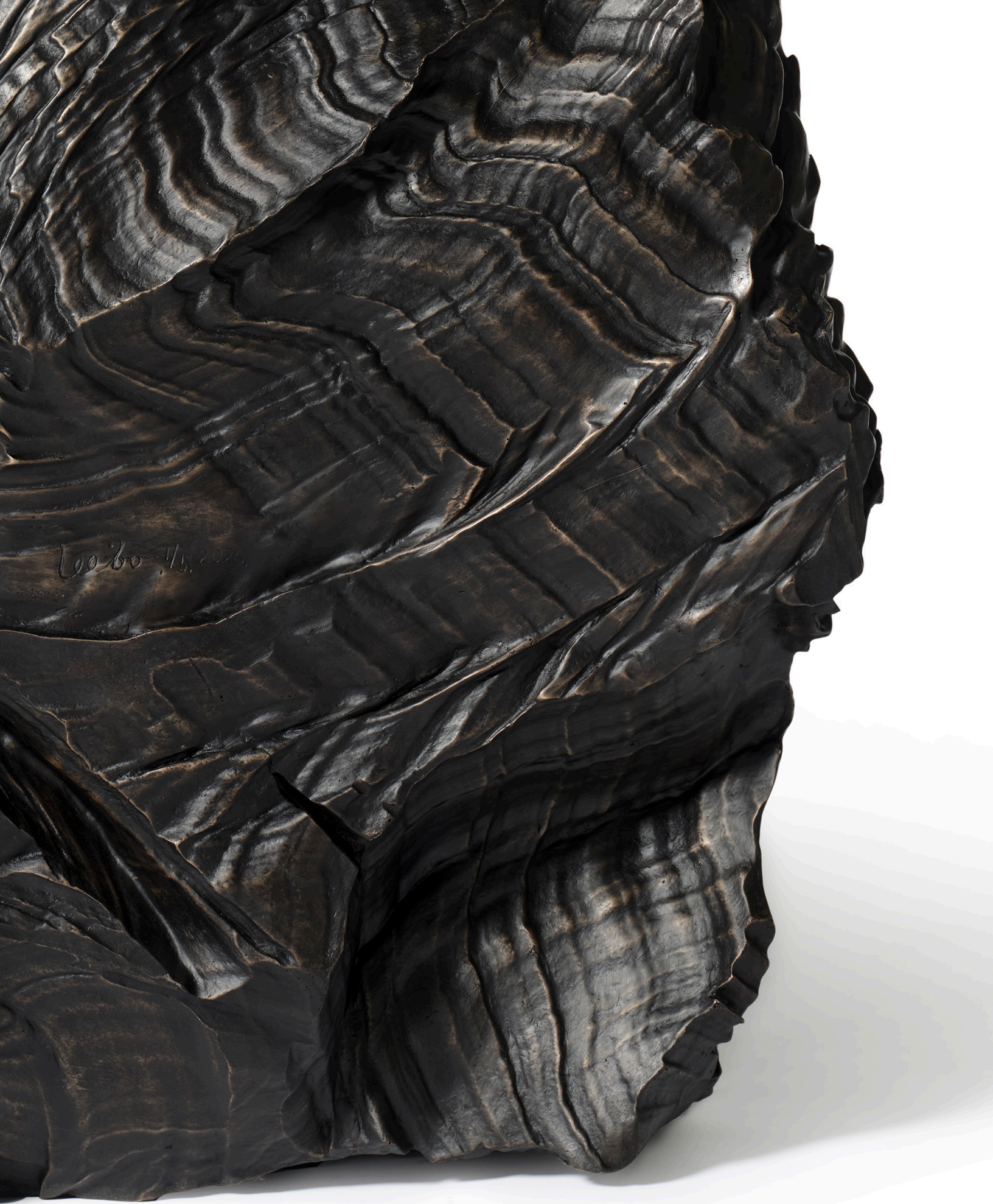
Bronze

91 × 75 × 73 cm (35 7/8 × 29 1/2 × 28 3/4 in.)

70 kg (154 lb 5 oz)

Edition of 5 + 2 AP

\$40,000 USD



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut7*, 2026 (Detail)



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut7*, 2026



Lee Bae

Brushstroke ut8, 2026

Bronze

78 × 86 × 71 cm (30 3/4 × 33 7/8 × 28 in.)

65 kg (143 lb 5 oz)

Edition of 5 + 2 AP

\$40,000 USD



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut8*, 2026 (Detail)



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut8*, 2026



Lee Bae, *Brushstroke ut8*, 2026



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