Laib explains that originally he wanted the works to be anonymous due to his belief that the power and relevance extends beyond the individual. He has said, “I only believe in the individual, when you only, then life is a tragedy that ends in death. But as soon as you believe in the collective, something bigger, then all of these problems are not there anymore. Everything is total. If you keep thinking in terms of individuals, then you do not understand that the works reflect behavior of whole systems unpredicted by and life. This philosophy parallels that of influential thinkers such as Buckminster Fuller, who wrote, “Synergy means behavior of any of the system’s parts when it is considered only by itself.” In Laib's oeuvre, there is no beginning and no end. There is something bigger, then all of these problems are not there anymore. Everything is total. If you keep thinking in terms of individuals, then you do not understand that the works reflect behavior of whole systems unpredicted by and life. This philosophy parallels that of influential thinkers such as Buckminster Fuller, who wrote, “Synergy means behavior of any of the system’s parts when it is considered only by itself.”

Wolfgang Laib was born in Munich in 1950. He began working as an artist in 1972. Several iconic, almost mythic, sculptures and installations mark his career, consisting of pollen, milk and Carrara marble. Laib is known for his luminous, site-specific, rectangular installations that are made from rice, pollen, beeswax and glass. His works often reflect his abiding interest in nature and his serious study of Eastern and pre-Modern religions including Jainism, Buddhism, and medieval Christianity. Laib has expressed extreme disappointment when viewers experience one work and avoid the next. Rather, he explains, “You will go somewhere else, you will be part of a larger, collective whole.” Laib believes there is something better than the visible universe. Here art is related to an ethical or ascetic calling and as such recalls one of Laib's few cited artistic influences, Joseph Beuys. Beuys and Laib both address the notion of healing a sick society through art. Beuys believed passionately in the power of art to effect social change and to reach beyond the visible universe. However, Beuys's approach was dramatic and utilized the artist as a teacher, activist, and debater whereas Laib, working in silence and solitude, stresses the importance of being part of a larger, collective whole.

Laib's Rice Houses are among his most iconic works. The Five Mountains (1984) which is comprised of five cones of pollen, each seven centimeters high, arranged in a line, was the first work Laib created. Milkstone (2010), only one surface of the white Carrara marble block that comprises Laib's Milkstone is polished. The square sculptures vary in thickness, and each is filled with a very thin layer of milk. The milk is poured onto the horizontal surface of the stone to create a shallow dish that is almost invisible. The two elements—beeswax and milk—are the essence of the work, taking on organic, minimalistic form. The Rice House pieces (begun in 1984) are more overtly sculptural and referential to any of Laib's sculptural works. Because Laib scatters rice inside and outside the forms, a luminous character is often read into the meaning. The notion of evoking an existence beyond death begins with the Rice Flower and continues in Laib's Beuys piece, begun in 1984. The smudged of the golden beeswax resembles the swarming of the forms, and the centered, peaceful fragrance seems to penetrate and purify the body. Laib's newest form is that of the Rice Houses, each of which houses a monochromatic work that is then filled with a very thin layer of milk. The milk is poured onto the horizontal surface of the stone to create a shallow dish that is almost invisible. The two elements—beeswax and milk—are the essence of the work, taking on organic, minimalistic form.
To be fair, Mark Rothko also deplored the ascription of himself as a brilliant colorist. And, as with Laib’s...