

Press Release

Tatsuo Miyajima *Art in You*

10 February – 9 April 2022
67 Lisson Street, London

Tatsuo Miyajima, the Japanese installation artist and sculptor, unveils three new bodies of work – *Painting of Change*, *Keep Changing (Mondrian)* and *Unstable Time* – for the first time in the UK, all created in 2020 and 2021 from his studio in Japan. Renowned for his profoundly spiritual work that explores Buddhist philosophy through technological installations, these new works include large single-digit works activated by the roll of a dice, executed for the first time; new LED gadgets mounted on fabric; and LED installations on panels, whereby the cycle of life is suggested through an evolving display of digits (1 to 9).

Numbers are Miyajima's unique artistic expression, an international language that traverses cultural boundaries. They symbolise the human life cycle, each digit individually signifying a body and soul. The first room of the exhibition is dedicated to the *Painting of Change* series, where oil on canvas or gold leaf on wooden board are utilised to depict a large-scale single digit, which shifts between 9 and 1. The number displayed is determined by a polyhedron dice exhibited alongside the work, activated throughout the run of the exhibition. This interaction through the use of the dice – an object known for its play with chance – speaks to Miyajima's foundational belief in the changing nature of life and the way in which everything, all atoms, are connected. For Buddhists, nothing is constant or fixed but rather in flux, a perpetual stream of change, of re-birth or Samsāra – the cyclical nature of all existence. The introduction of the die also engages with the paradox between the certainty of the object, undermined by its fate controlled by the indeterminate roll of the dice.

For this series, Miyajima was also inspired by John Cage's *Music of Changes*: a ground-breaking piano solo composed in 1951, described as 'indeterminate music', where the process of composition involved applying decisions made using the 'I Ching', a Chinese classic text that is commonly used as a divination system. The *Painting of Change* series also alludes to the 'Uncertainty Principle', articulated by the German physicist Werner Heisenberg in 1927, that informs us of the fundamental limit to what we can know, measure and control, and instead the need to rely on probabilities and contingencies, a perspective shared by Miyajima.

Upstairs is *Unstable Time*, a series of new LED gadgets mounted on nylon fabric for the first time. While we have previously seen Miyajima's digital language dance across typically static, sturdy materials such as a wooden panel, a boarded canvas or indeed a high-rise skyscraper, now we see the LEDs float across the surface of a much lighter, semi-translucent medium. Here, the diodes equally move from 9 to 1, but these lives experience a different existence on a surface that has the potential to be changed itself, to be moved by the wind. This adds to the state of flux and serves as a reminder not just of the passing of time but the interconnectivity between all matter in existence.

The final room of the exhibition sees the collection of works named *Keep Changing (Mondrian)*, LED installations on panels, arranged in a chequered pattern. On each work, tiny LED diodes count down from 9 to 1, in the signature Miyajima pattern, invariably omitting '0' – replacing it with a momentary dark void that represents the space between life and death – before beginning again, the cycle of reincarnation. In these *Keep Changing (Mondrian)* works, the colour is also reborn after each life cycle, where the sequence continues again at 9 but in a new colour, each with its distinct character. These colours – green, blue, red, yellow and white – symbolise earth, water, fire, wind and sky, the 'Five Elements'. With multiple

LEDs on the panel, each naturally journeys through its lifetime at differing speeds, so visitors observe this dynamic stream of colour change at intervals that is seemingly random yet metaphorically profound.

Miyajima has also attributed the series to Piet Mondrian, in honour of his late works where he pursued what he described as 'pure painting' – in particular, *Victory Boogie Woogie*. A departure from his previous absolute, metaphysical and static paintings, this represents a state of polysemy and mutual movement, the surface itself seeming to change from moment to moment, indicating the possibility of colour surfaces to interact with one another. Miyajima considers this a representation of painting in evolution, ever-changing – as his installations indeed are.

The exhibition is the artist's first show in London following his commission for the opening of the [new Japanese Galleries at The British Museum](#), and follows a recent collaboration with [A-POC Able Issey Miyake](#) in Kyoto, Japan, alongside solo presentations at Akio Nagasawa Gallery, Tokyo and Gallery Baton, Seoul.

About the artist

Tatsuo Miyajima is one of Japan's foremost sculptors and installation artists. Employing contemporary materials such as electric circuits, video, and computers, Miyajima's supremely technological works have centered on his use of digital light-emitting diode (LED) counters, or 'gadgets' as he calls them, since the late 1980s. These numbers, flashing in continual and repetitious—though not necessarily sequential—cycles from 1 to 9, represent the journey from life to death, the finality of which is symbolized by '0' or the zero point, which consequently never appears in his work. This theory derives partially from humanist ideas, the teachings of Buddhism, as well as from his core artistic concepts: 'Keep Changing', 'Connect with Everything', and 'Continue Forever'. Miyajima's LED numerals have been presented in grids, towers, complex integrated groupings or circuits and as simple digital counters, but are all aligned with his interests in continuity, connection and eternity, as well as with the flow and span of time and space. "Time connects everything", says Miyajima. "I want people to think about the universe and the human spirit."

Tatsuo Miyajima was born in 1957 and lives and works in Ibaraki, Japan. He finished undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music in 1986, after which he began experimenting with performance art before moving on to light-based installations. In addition to participating in numerous international biennales and important group shows, he has held solo exhibitions at Chiba City Museum of Art, Chiba, Japan (2020); SCAI The Bathhouse, Tokyo, Japan (2020); Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Espoo, Finland (2020); Minsheng Museum, Shanghai, China (2019); Buchmann Galerie, Lugano, Switzerland (2019); Lisson Gallery, New York, NY, USA (2018); William Morris Gallery, London, UK (2018); Fosun Foundation, Shanghai, China (2017); SCAI The Bathhouse, Tokyo, Japan (2017); MCA, Sydney, Australia (2016); The Met Breuer, New York, NY, USA (2016); Capsule Gallery, Tokyo (2014); Kunstmuseum St Gallen, Switzerland (2012); Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China (2011); Miyanomori Art Museum, Hokkaido, Japan (2010); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA, USA (1997); Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris, France (1996); and Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX, USA (1996). He has participated in the Venice Biennale (1988, 1999) and in numerous group exhibitions, including 'Change Connect Continue', Galleria Lorcan O'Neill Roma, Italy (2019); 'The Life of Buddha, the way to now', Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2018); 'Catastrophe and the Power of Art', Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan (2018); 'Everything at Once', The Store, London, UK (2017); 'Relight Days', Counter Void, Tokyo, Japan (2017); 'Kumamoto Admirable', Contemporary Art Museum Kumamoto, Japan (2016); 'Order and Reorder: Curate Your Own Exhibition', National Museum of Modern Art Kyoto (MOMAK), Japan (2016); 'Eppur Si Muove', Mudam Luxembourg (2015); 'Boolean Expressions', Lewis Gluckman Gallery, Ireland (2015); 'Logical Emotion, Contemporary Art from Japan', Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, Switzerland (2014); 'Asia Code ZERO', Seoul Olympic Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea (2013); 'Marking Time', Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia (2012); and 'Dome', Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Japan (2008). In 2006, Miyajima was selected to serve as Vice President of Tohoku University of Art and Design. His work is featured in numerous public collections including British Museum, London, UK; Tate, London, UK; La Caixa, Barcelona, Spain; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; and Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, three across New York City and East Hampton, and one in Shanghai. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estates of Leon Polk Smith, Ted Stamm and Roy Colmer. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public

for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes, Wael Shawky, Hugh Hayden, Van Hanos and Cheyney Thompson.

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