

Press Release

Richard Long

Drinking the river of Dartmoor

16 November – 21 January 2023

27 Bell Street, London

Opening: 15 November, 6 – 8pm

For his latest exhibition at the gallery, Richard Long presents a series of text works and photographs spanning his entire practice, from the 1970s to the present day. These works chart Long's innovative path through and alongside histories of conceptual art, centering the artist's life-long concern with walking as an aesthetic and philosophical practice. As textual and visual documentations of walks embarked worldwide, through mountains and deserts, shorelines and grasslands, rivers and snowscapes, Long's works give poetic form to the ineffability and ephemerality of human perceptual experience.

Text has consistently featured in the artist's practice, with the earliest of the five works shown here produced in 1987 (titled *Desert Flowers*) and the most recent dated 2022 (*A Path of Innocence*). These works emphasise Long's preoccupation with the physical engagement of the body in a variety of landscapes. He not only evokes the temperature and geological materiality of a given terrain, such as the fourteen rivers that flow out of Dartmoor or the lavender scents, howling coyotes and roaring winds of Joshua Tree, but additionally denotes a temporal specificity to each walk.

The varied formal structures of the text works further evidence Long's experimental sensibility. Each of the five works here differ in their layout, with some works taking on the form of a circle and others including coloured lines of text in red, yellow, and green. Such variations, which pay equal attention to the words' meanings and their formal attributes, reference conceptualist histories of concrete poetry. Further, in sculpting these words into precise arrangements to produce particular rhythms, imaginaries, and affects, some of which exude a spiritual character, the text works abstractly draw on the compositional logics of Japanese haiku. At times emphasizing the meditative power of repetition, akin to a mantra, and other times conveying the profundity of simple observed moments in the outdoors, the texts function as resolutely reflexive indexes of being-in-the-world.

Also featured in the galleries are a series of photographs taken by Long on his walks all around the world, from Spain and Norway to China and the Andes. These photographs are often paired with Long's signature textual meditations, which migrate from their typical large-scale, wall-based format into the intimate scale of the photograph. Beginning with his widely cited work, *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967, Long has for over five decades produced photographs that visually document his walks through landscapes as well as sculptures made along the way. Such minimal sculptural interventions have included placing rocks from the existing environment into circular or linear arrangements (*Circle in the Andes*, 1972, and *River Yangtze Stone Line*, 2010), documenting the mark left by his sleeping place on a walk across Spain (*Sleeping Place Mark, Spain*, 1990) and making a line with his boot heel in the Arizona desert in 1970 (*A Boot-Heel Line, Arizona*, 1970).

About the artist

Richard Long has been in the vanguard of conceptual art in Britain since he created *A Line Made by Walking* over half a century ago in 1967, while still a student. This photograph of the path left by his feet in the grass, a fixed line of movement, established a precedent that art could be a journey. Through this medium of walking, time, space and distance became new subjects for his art. From that time he expanded his walks to wilderness regions all over the world, including a walk in the

Alps that was documented by his first text work for the seminal exhibition of Minimal and Conceptual works entitled *When Attitude Becomes Form* at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1969. After 1969, Long began making journeys and sculptures in wilderness places all around the world. In the 1980s, Long began making new types of mud works using handprints applied directly to the wall. He also continued to make large sculptures of lines and circles from slate, driftwood, footprints or stone, often sourced from quarries near the exhibition sites. Long mediates on his experience of these places, from mountains through to deserts, shorelines, grasslands, rivers and snowscapes, according to archetypal geometric marks and shapes, made by his footsteps alone or gathered from the materials of the place. These walks and temporary works of passage are recorded with photographs, maps and text works, where measurements of time and distance, place names and phenomena are vocabulary for both original ideas and powerful, condensed narratives.

Richard Long was born in Bristol, UK in 1945 and he lives and works between London and Bristol. He studied at the West of England College of Art, Bristol (1962–65), then St Martin's School of Art, London (1966–68). Major solo exhibitions include M Leuven, Leuven, Belgium (2021); Chateau La Coste, Provence, France (2021); De Pont Museum, Tilburg, Netherlands (2019); Fondation CAB, Brussels, Belgium (2018); Houghton Hall, Norfolk, UK (2017); Arnolfini, Bristol, UK (2015); Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, Germany (2010); Tate Britain, London, UK (2009); Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, UK (2007); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA, USA (2006); National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan (1996); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA, USA (1994); and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, USA (1986). He represented Britain at the 37th Venice Biennale (1976) and won the Turner Prize in 1989. He received the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres from the French Ministry of Culture (1990), has been elected to the Royal Academy of Arts, London (2001), awarded Japan's Praemium Imperiale in the field of sculpture (2009), made a CBE in 2013 and was knighted in the 2018 Honours List.

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 in New York, and one in Shanghai, as well as forthcoming galleries in Beijing and Los Angeles. 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 estate of Leon Polk Smith.

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, Van Hanos, Hugh Hayden, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes, Wael Shawky and Cheyney Thompson.

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