

里森画廊

L I S S O N G A L L E R Y

Press Release

Lawrence Weiner  
*WITHIN A REALM OF RELATIVE FORM*

27 May – 14 October 2023  
4/F, Building D7, Yard No.3, Jinhang East Road, Beijing

Lisson Gallery is honoured to present their first solo exhibition in China with American artist Lawrence Weiner. Widely regarded as a trailblazer in the development of Conceptual Art in the 1960s, Weiner saw himself as a sculptor and defined his sculptural medium simply as 'language + the material referred to', by referring to language as a material for construction. Presenting a selection of wall-based texts dating from 1972 – 2013, alongside two video installations, the exhibition in the North Gallery of Lisson Gallery Beijing is Weiner's first presentation in China since the 2008 exhibition, 'TO ALLOW THE LIGHT' at the UCCA, Beijing, offering a chance to trace the contours of a career that spans over 50 years.

A central figure in the formation of the Conceptual Art movement, Weiner rigorously constructed an oeuvre that reflects and encourages the interaction of both linguistic and artistic themes, having worked with a multitude of genre that include installations, videos, films, books, sound works, sculptures, and performances. Weiner presented his art in language form, asserting that a construction in language can function as sculpture just as adequately as a fabricated object. Throughout his career, he investigated the nature of language as a three-dimensional material. While believing that the value of his practice exists within the language itself, rather than within a unique physical presentation, the artist provided guidance on how to present his words; Weiner wrote a DECLARATION OF INTENT in 1968, which established the conditions for serving his work:

THE ARTIST MAY CONSTRUCT THE WORK  
THE WORK MAY BE FABRICATED  
THE WORK NEED NOT BE BUILT

EACH BEING EQUAL AND CONSISTENT WITH THE INTENT OF THE ARTIST THE DECISION AS TO  
CONDITION RESTS WITH THE RECEIVER UPON THE OCCASION OF RECEIVERSHIP.

While Weiner never strayed from these guidelines, the forms and contexts for Weiner's works continue to develop, given the ever-expansive nature of language-as-material. Without restricting metaphors, Weiner believed that a work's existence requires a readership and social engagement rather than a physical presence, which leaves viewers with an interpretative autonomy. This concept radically reimagined the relationship between viewer, artist, and artwork, allowing the possibility for multiple iterations of the same piece.

Weiner insisted that the material concerns of the sculptures transcend the particularities of any one language, and can exist, and do exist equally, in any language. Thus, the four works featured in this exhibition are both rendered in their original English as well as in Chinese, including the earliest work in this presentation HAVING ROLLED BEFORE INCARCERATION... (1972), noting Weiner's response to labour protests happening at a printing plant in Turin, Italy.

Also featured in this presentation is an 18-minute, cartoon-styled video entitled SINK OR SWIM (2003). Combining live footage with animated drawings, text and diagrams, this collaged sequence comments on the relationship between knowledge, perception and language with recurring visual and linguistic references to water and the sky. The other video in this presentation is a recording of an early interview with CBC Television in Halifax, Canada in 1969, where Weiner enacted ONE STANDARD DYE MARKER THROWN INTO THE SEA (1968), articulating both the intention and function of his work.

Driven by a strong belief that art should be accessible to all, Weiner's interest in public art led to a substantial body of work produced in a variety of urban spaces throughout his career. To accompany the exhibition, beyond the gallery space, one large-scale participatory work by Weiner will be presented at the 798 Art District as part of Gallery Weekend Beijing's public programme (26 May to 4 June).

As curator Kelly Taxter wrote in the essay to accompany this presentation, "Weiner's contribution to Conceptual art was much more than a material innovation, it was a rebuke of institutional constraints that separated artists from their public. He also hoped that our role – as viewer, audience and public of his work – was to find a use for it."

## About the artist

Lawrence Weiner (1942-2021) was born in New York, NY, USA, where he lived and worked most of his life, while also housing a studio in Amsterdam, Holland. Solo exhibitions have been held at Holstebro Kunstmuseum, Holstebro, Denmark (2021), Museo Nivola, Orani, Italy (2019), Pérez Art Museum, Miami, FL, USA (2017); Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI, USA (2017); Kunsthaus Bregenz, Bregenz, Austria (2016); Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, UK (2015); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (1988, 2014); Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Spain (2013); Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2007); A major retrospective survey was shown at the Whitney Museum, New York; MoCA, Los Angeles, and K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2007-2009); Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City, Mexico (2004); Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany (2000); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA (1994); and Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC, USA (1990). He participated in documenta 5, 6, 7, and 13 (1972, 1977, 1982, 2012); the 36th, 41st, 50th and 55th Venice Biennales, Italy (1972, 1984, 2003, 2013); and the 27th Biennale de Sao Paulo, Brazil (2006). Among many honours he was awarded fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts (1976, 1983), a Guggenheim Fellowship (1994), the Wolfgang Hahn Prize, Museum Ludwig, Cologne (1995), a Skowhegan Medal for Painting/Conceptual Art (1999), an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the Graduate Center, City University of New York (2013) and recently the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation Prize (2015), the Wolf Prize and the Aspen Award for Art in 2017.

## 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 spaces in London, New York, Los Angeles, Shanghai and Beijing. 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.

For press enquiries, please contact

Victoria Mitchell, Head of Communications  
+44 (0)207 724 2739  
[victoria@lissongallery.com](mailto:victoria@lissongallery.com)

i: @lisson\_gallery  
t: @Lisson\_Gallery  
fb: LissonGallery