

Joseph Kosuth

'The Question'

January 24–March 15, 2025

Sprüth Magers, London

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Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are delighted to announce *'The Question'*, a survey exhibition honouring Joseph Kosuth on his eightieth birthday. On view at the London gallery, this exhibition celebrates Kosuth's profound contributions to conceptual art, underscoring his belief that art is not merely a reflection of the world but a dynamic, ongoing exploration of meaning itself. At the core of Kosuth's practice lies a radical interrogation of language, reality, and representation. His work challenges viewers to reconsider their engagement with the world, destabilising the boundaries between thought and material. Kosuth's enduring interest in the philosophy of language stems from his conviction that today's fragmented, unstable reality offers little certainty – calling instead for investigation and experimentation.

'The Question' offers a rare opportunity to trace Kosuth's artistic trajectory from the 1960s to his most recent works, including *'The Question (J.M.)'* (2024). It further includes seminal works such as *'Self-Described Twice [Pink]'* (1966) and *'C.S. II #11'* (1988), demonstrating how Kosuth's use of language exposes the limitations of traditional conceptions of art. These works delve into the notion that meaning is fluid and context-dependent, challenging our basic assumptions about communication.

Kosuth's work engages deeply with the political and cultural upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, placing his art within the broader social and political context of the time. His work evolved into, and continues to be, a powerful tool for critiquing societal norms and exploring how art can engage with issues of power, culture, and identity. His practice marks a critical response to the aesthetic crises posed by postmodernism: as traditional aesthetic categories collapsed in the latter half of the twentieth century, his work has offered a way to navigate this upheaval. Kosuth's approach can also be understood as a "geological" gesture – an investigation of both art history and knowledge itself. Notable works such as *'One and Three Shadows' [Ety./Hist.]* (1965) and *'Text/Context'* (1978–79) exemplify his deconstruction of the historical and social structures that shape art.

Doors have long been a multifaceted and complex symbol in the history of art, representing both literal and metaphorical transitions – the threshold between the known and the unknown. Marking the beginning of the exhibition, *'One and Three Doors' [Ety./Hist.]* (1965) offers an entry point that runs like a leitmotif throughout the

exhibition. As we traverse beyond the door and enter directly into Kosuth's artistic domain, we immediately engage with the prospect of unearthing hidden knowledge. It is tied to 'The Question': Why haven't we opened the doors to our consciousness much earlier?

Kosuth challenges the viewer to consider art as an archive of knowledge, prompting questions about how historical narratives are constructed and continue to shape our understanding of both art and the world today. His work is not a static artefact but a living, interdisciplinary challenge to the systems through which we interpret art, language, and society. In an era of oversimplified information and increasingly theatrical visual culture, his ability to question the complexity of meaning feels more urgent than ever. By positioning his art as a space where ideas of art, language, and politics constantly interact, *'The Question'* invites us to reflect on how these themes resonate in today's era of public deception and political polarisation. In this way, Kosuth's work encourages us to reconsider not only the world but also the very language we use to describe it.

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Joseph Kosuth (*1945, Toledo, OH) lives and works in New York and Venice. In spring 2025, Sean Kelly will open an exhibition in New York and Lia Rumma in Naples. All three shows are happening on occasion of Joseph Kosuth's eightieth birthday. Selected institutional solo exhibitions include Kunstmuseum Stuttgart (forthcoming 2025), MAMM, Moscow (2015), Kunstmuseum Thurgau, Kärntener Kunsthaus (2014), The Jewish Museum, New York (2012), Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2011), the ACCA - Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne (2010), the Louvre, Paris (2009), the Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2006), the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (2000), the Tokushima Modern Art Museum (1999), the Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels (1990), the Sigmund Freud Museum, Vienna (1989) and the MoMA PS1, New York (1980). He has participated in Documenta V, VI, VII and IX (1972, 1977, 1982, 1992) and the Venice Biennale (2007, 1999, 1993, 1976). Awards include the Decoration of Honor in Gold for Services to the Republic of Austria (2003), the Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres from the French government (1993), the Menzione d'Onore at the Venice Biennale (1993) and the Brandeis Award (1990). In February 2001 he was awarded the Laurea Honoris Causa, a doctorate in Philosophy and Letters from the University of Bologna.

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