

LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Tatsuo Miyajima

13 February – 19 April, 2025
508 West 24th Street, New York

Lisson Gallery presents the first U.S. solo exhibition in over five years by Tatsuo Miyajima, one of Japan's most celebrated sculptors and installation artists. Known for his innovative use of LED technology to explore Buddhist philosophy, Miyajima's work investigates themes of time, existence, and the cycles of life and death. The exhibition introduces four new series – *Many Lives*, *Changing Life with Changing Circumstance*, *MUL.APIN*, and *Hundred Changes in Life* – which build on explorations of 'Seimei', a Japanese concept encompassing life, being and consciousness.

These new works continue Miyajima's signature use of LED countdowns that omit 0, positioning death not as an endpoint but as a moment of transformation. In *Many Lives*, Miyajima employs full-color LEDs that count down from 9 to 1 before resetting to 9 in evolving colors and speeds. Each LED represents an individual 'Seimei' with its own rhythm and identity, symbolizing the cycle of life and death as an endless process of rebirth. Together, these elements form a larger interconnected world, evoking the Buddhist concept of samsara and reinforcing the idea that every life, visible or invisible, has value.

Miyajima understands his *Changing Life with Changing Circumstance* works as representations of quantum theory. This theory suggests that on the minute sub-atomic scale of the quantum, computational predications cannot hold, and instead, chance and probability dominate. This embrace of unpredictability, change and flux is integral to Miyajima's practice, and represented in the *Changing Life with Changing Circumstance* works by the colours of the LEDs which are in constant shift, and the timings of the LEDs, which differ from unit to unit, ungoverned by the whole. As in quantum physics, it is impossible to predict when and where the different colours will occur and how they will appear in relation to the whole.

MUL.APIN, named after ancient Babylonian clay tablets used for astronomy, links Buddhist philosophy with ancient cosmological systems. This series reflects the cycles of life and death through the sexagesimal (base-60) system of Babylonian timekeeping, using LEDs arranged to evoke celestial movements. As the LEDs reset from 0, their random color changes symbolize the dispersion and renewal of life across the cosmos. Through this synthesis of ancient and modern, earthly and universal, the *MUL.APIN* works situate human existence within the vast, interconnected framework of time and space.

In the *Hundred Changes in Life* series, Miyajima draws on the 'Ten Worlds of Buddhism' states of existence, ranging from Hell to Buddhahood, to represent life's constant transformations. Encased within mirrored cylinders, the LED numbers continuously shift in color, speed and sequence, creating an interplay between the viewer's reflection and the artwork. This interaction embodies En, the Buddhist concept of causality and interconnectedness, illustrating how individual states of existence influence and are influenced by external forces. The work's dynamic configurations suggest the endless potential for evolution and renewal, both within the self and the larger world.

While these new series reflect a bold evolution in Miyajima's practice, they are rooted in his foundational principles: Keep Changing, Connect with Everything, and Continue Forever. By merging cutting-edge technology with spiritual inquiry, Miyajima's work invites contemplation of life's impermanence and interconnectedness, offering a vision of continuity that transcends the boundaries of time, space and individuality.

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 void, 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 The Museum of Fine Arts, Gifu, Japan (2021); 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 70 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 and others of that generation, from Carmen Herrera and Olga de Amaral to Hélio Oiticica and Lee Ufan. 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, Liu Xiaodong, Otobong Nkanga, Pedro Reyes, Sean Scully, Hiroshi Sugimoto and Wael Shawky. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists including Dana Awartani, Cory Arcangel, Garrett Bradley, Ryan Gander, Josh Kline, Hugh Hayden, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost and Cheyney Thompson.

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