

MAX WIGRAM GALLERY

John Giorno *EVERYONE GETS LIGHTER*

20th November 2013 – 18th January 2014
Private view and performance: 19th November 2013

Max Wigram Gallery is pleased to present *EVERYONE GETS LIGHTER*, the first one-person exhibition in the UK by American artist and poet John Giorno.

For almost half a century, Giorno has been exploring and developing new media through which poetry can be disseminated and reach new audiences, an operation he continues with this exhibition. With twenty-four new watercolour *Poem Paintings*, a performance, and the iconic *Dial-a-Poem*, the exhibition offers an overview of how the Giorno seeks alternative ways of writing and presenting his poetry and connecting with an audience in powerful ways, inviting us to reflect on how we perceive words, and images.

In the *Poem Paintings*, Giorno transposes punchy sentences from his own poems onto paper in bold, white capital letters reminiscent of newspaper headlines - a font that he developed with a graphic designer, and has been using since 1984. The words are set off against painterly backgrounds of pastel-toned washes of colour. The viewer both reads and looks at the charged sentences like *thanks 4 nothing* or *just say no to family values*, engaging with the poem on two different, simultaneous yet exclusive levels. Giorno provides a visual and narrative anchor by presenting the watercolours in a sequence that follows the chromatic spectrum: from yellow to blue to green, a poetic narrative is developed through purely visual means. In these works thus, painting becomes a vehicle for poetry.

The search for new media for poetic dissemination led Giorno to integrate technology into his work, creating the seminal *Dial-a-Poem*. A project that was famously presented at MoMA in 1970 and again in 2012, *Dial-a-Poem* brings people over two hundred random poems read aloud by their authors, including musicians, artists and writers who were friends and colleagues of Giorno - including Charles Bukowski, William Burroughs, John Cage and Allen Ginsberg. At Max Wigram Gallery, visitors will be able to call poems from a telephone in the exhibition, or online.

These aural, visual and textual venues for the circulation of poetry conflate in Giorno's powerful performance, with which he will inaugurate the exhibition. The incisive pronunciation and forceful delivery recall the headline-style font of the *Poem Paintings*, and the presence of the poet's own body seems to transform the words into palpable entities, engaging with the audience in a physical, visceral manner.

All of Giorno's projects to date have had one purpose: to connect with an audience. In *EVERYONE GETS LIGHTER*, Giorno succeeds by presenting poetry that is not only read, but also experienced.

John Giorno (b. 1936 in Brooklyn) lives and works in New York. Giorno's solo exhibitions include *EATING THE SKY*, Broadway Billboard at Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island, NY; *Faux Movement*, Centre d'art contemporain, Metz; *Star 69: Dial-A-Poem Relics*, Venice Biennale, and gallery exhibitions at Galerie Almine Rech, Paris 2012 and 2009, Almine Rech Brussels, 2010, Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York, 2010, Galerier de Jour AgnesB, Paris 2005. Group exhibitions include *Imagine the Imaginary*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2012; *Ecstatic Alphabets/Heaps of Language*, MoMA, New York, 2012; *Traces du sacré*, Centre Pompidou, 2008; *Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art*, Barbican Centre, London, 2008. Giorno has been a prolific performer since the 1960s, and as Giorno Poetry Systems he released more than 50 albums of music and poetry. He famously was the subject of Andy Warhol's first film, *Sleep*. He is the author of several poetry collections including *Subduing Demons in America: Selected Poems, 1962-2007*. Giorno's work is part of important public collections, including Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris; MUDAM, Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg; MoMA, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Giorno will be the subject of a major retrospective of his life and work at Palais de Tokyo, Paris in 2015.

For further information, interviews, or images please contact Rebecca Gremmo on rebecca@maxwigram.com