

Robert Morris and Kishio Suga

Blum & Poe Tokyo

March 12 – May 7, 2016

Opening reception: Saturday, March 12, 2016, 6 – 8pm

Blum & Poe is pleased to present an exhibition of Robert Morris and Kishio Suga, two influential artists whose work has been central to the history of site-specific installation since the 1960s. This is Morris' first exhibition in Tokyo in nearly twenty years, and the first occasion to see Suga's work in a focused, two-person presentation with one of his American peers.

Robert Morris played a pivotal role in defining Minimalist sculpture, Process Art, and Earthworks. After concentrating his attention on rigid materials and angular forms in the mid-1960s, Morris began to use soft materials, most notably felt, which he piled, stacked, and hung from the wall in an investigation of the effects of gravity and tension on ordinary materials. Morris also explored other industrial raw materials such as dirt and thread waste, yet due to their scattered placement these works often appear light despite their heavy weight. One of the artist's principal concerns during these years was the notion of indeterminacy— for example, *Scatter Piece* (1969) simply consists of two hundred pieces of steel, lead, zinc, copper, aluminum, brass, and felt, which can be exhibited in any number of configurations.

Similarly, Kishio Suga gained recognition for arranging natural and manmade materials in unprecedented installations such as *Parallel Strata* (1969), a totemic enclosure made of paraffin wax. The notion of "release" is a defining aspect of Suga's philosophy: in *Law of Situation* (1971), he placed ten flat stones in a line on a sixty-five-foot-long pane of woven glass fiber and floated it on the surface of a lake. Suga describes his approach towards materials as an ongoing investigation of "situation" and the "activation of existence," focusing as much on the interdependency of these various elements and the surrounding space as on the materials themselves.

This exhibition presents a dialogue between two installations: Robert Morris' *Lead and Felt* (1969) and Kishio Suga's *Parameters of Space* (1978).

Lead and Felt was one of four works (including *Scatter Piece*) originally created for an exhibition held simultaneously at Castelli Gallery and Castelli Warehouse, New York, in 1969. Made of individual pieces of lead and felt that had been cut into L-shapes and laid on the ground in no specific arrangement, this installation was central to Morris' exploration of indeterminacy. After being included in *Against Order: Chance and Art* at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Philadelphia in 1970, the work was put in storage with *Scatter Piece* and eventually discarded. The *Lead and Felt* on display at Blum & Poe was remade in 2010.

Parameters of Space shares a similar history. Suga first created the work as the centerpiece of his solo exhibition at Gallery Saiensu in Morioka in 1978. Consisting of clusters of wooden boards arranged on the floor in a semi-regular pattern between five rocks, it embodies his interest in establishing so-called "boundaries," "edges" or "parameters," only to then deconstruct them. Like most of his early site-specific installations, *Parameters of Space* was discarded after the exhibition. Suga has remade his works on occasion since the mid-1980s, but while his re-creations are always based on an original core concept, they are not intended as exact replicas, and maintain a degree of flexibility in terms of scale and the number of components used each time. *Parameters of Space* was remade once in London in 2013, and

this exhibition is the first time the work is shown in Tokyo.

This exhibition offers an opportunity to consider the correspondences and contrasts between these two artists' explorations of material, anti-form, containment, indeterminacy, chance, intent, impermanence, and site. It also comes amid wider efforts by museums and galleries to broaden the typically Euro-American-centric narrative of Modernism through comparative surveys. Morris' work was featured in the first major exhibition of Minimalism, *Primary Structures*, held at the Jewish Museum, New York, in 1966. As a rejoinder to this legacy, in 2014 the Jewish Museum held *Other Primary Structures*, which examined minimalist practices by non-American artists, including Suga and other Mono-ha practitioners. Suga's work has also been featured in recent landmark surveys, such as *Prima Materia*, Punta della Dogana, Venice, Italy, 2013; *Parallel Views: Italian and Japanese Art from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s*, The Warehouse, Dallas, Texas, 2013; and *Tokyo 1955–1970: A New Avant-Garde*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2012.

Robert Morris was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1931, and currently lives and works in New York. After studying engineering and philosophy, he received his MFA from Hunter College, New York, in 1966. He was the subject of a major retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 1994, and has held solo exhibitions at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (1990), the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1986), the Art Institute of Chicago (1980), and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (1970).

Kishio Suga was born in Morioka, Iwate Prefecture, in 1944, and currently lives and works in Ito, Shizuoka Prefecture. He received a BFA in oil painting at Tama Art University, Tokyo, in 1968. Since then, he has had numerous solo exhibitions in Japan, including at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (2015), the Yokohama Museum of Art (1999), and the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art (1997). In January 2016, he was awarded the highly prestigious Mainichi Art Award. In September 2016, the HangarBicocca in Milan will present more than twenty-five installations from the 1960s to the 1990s, his largest solo exhibition to date and his first at a Western art institution.