

# LISSON GALLERY

LONDON

NEW YORK

27 Bell Street  
NW1 5BU UK

504 West 24th Street  
NY 10011 USA

67 Lisson Street  
NW1 5DA UK

138 10th Avenue  
NY 10011 USA

+44 (0)20 7724 2739

+1 212 505 6431

## Press Release

Santiago Sierra

*Impenetrable Structure*

14 July – 26 August 2017

27 Bell Street

London NW1 5BU

For the past two decades, Santiago Sierra has carried out provocative actions around the world. Known for his politically and socially charged work, Sierra returns to Lisson Gallery London to debut a large-scale, site-specific installation that continues the artist's interest in borders and displacement. Titled *Impenetrable Structure*, the grid-like installation is constructed out of military razor wire, similar to what is used to create security perimeters between countries and in war zones. The work fills the entire gallery space of 27 Bell Street, entered by visitors only one at a time, creating an environment in which access is restricted or entirely denied.

After studying Fine Arts in Madrid, Sierra moved to Hamburg as a guest of the Hochschule für bildende Künste (HFBK). It was there that he first became enthralled with the serialised arrangements of industrial containers while wandering around the harbour area of the city and where he also encountered a large community of immigrants and the mass displacement of foreigners for the first time. Influenced by the formal language of the Minimal and Conceptual art movements of the 1960s and '70s, Sierra then began making geometrical structures using industrial materials to comment on issues posed by the borders of nation-states, temporary settlements and military bases.

Transporting these concepts to an exhibition context – whether for *Space closed by corrugated metal, Lisson Gallery, London, September 2002* (2002), where Sierra shuttered the newly opened Bell Street location of Lisson Gallery for three weeks, or at the Venice Biennale in 2003, where he built a cement wall across the Spanish Pavilion to block all visitors except for Spaniards – provides an effective strategy for highlighting the issues of separation, polarisation and fear present in contemporary society. His latest work, shown for the first time as part of this exhibition, continues these themes and once again incorporates industrial materials found in defense technology to create a truly impenetrable structure.

Sierra's work shows how – despite assurances from authorities and governments – national and international frontiers are not being abolished but are instead being reinforced. The focus of the works is not only on the materials used or what the nature of the situation can inspire but also on the creation of an empty and inhospitable space. Unlike a minimalist work of art, this installation is not born out of a certain formal arrangement capable of producing aesthetic satisfaction, but from the frustration the spectator feels when he or she is subjected to such physical denial; the kind of frustration increasingly visible in our everyday lives, characterised by a globalised world that increasingly and counter intuitively needs to shield and divide itself in order to protect its stability.

Sierra states: “Fences, walls, razor wire, detention centres, restrictive laws against immigration and protests are now a permanent aspect of political agenda, at the same time that the fear of being invaded, besieged, contaminated, attacked or disrupted by external agents is extended among the population. I don't try to produce beautiful artefacts to satisfy our senses and console us from harsh reality but to bring that reality to the forefront of artistic representation and confront us with it.”

## About Santiago Sierra

The work of Santiago Sierra has gained notoriety for the uncompromising way it lays bare the power structures of an unbalanced society. With works such as *Person paid to have a 30 cm line tattooed on them, Regina Street # 51, Mexico City, May 1998* (1998) or *8 people paid to remain inside cardboard boxes, G&T Building, Guatemala City, August 1999* (1999), Sierra became well known for his actions in which underprivileged or marginalised individuals were hired to perform menial or pointless tasks in exchange for money. His recent durational, performance, *THE NAMES OF THOSE KILLED IN THE SYRIAN CONFLICT, BETWEEN 15th OF MARCH 2011 AND 31st OF DECEMBER 2016*, follows similar performances that take contemporary socio-political issues as their starting points while challenging the intrinsic mechanisms of reality.

Santiago Sierra was born in Madrid in 1966, where he lives and works. He studied Fine Arts at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid and at the HFBK in Hamburg between 1989 and 1991, as well as at the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City between 1995 and 1997. 'Mea Culpa', a major retrospective of Sierra's work, was recently staged at Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea (PAC) in Milan. Other recent solo shows include 'El Bebedero', Prometeo Gallery, Milan, Italy (2016); 'La Lona', Laboratory, Mexico City (2015); Helga de Alvear, Madrid, Spain (2016); Kunsthalle Tübingen, Germany (2013); Te Tuhi Centre, New Zealand (2013); Reykjavik Art Museum, Iceland (2012); Museo de Arte Contemporánea (MARCO), Vigo, Spain (2009); Museu Madre, Italy (2009); Centro de Arte Contemporáneo (CAC) Malaga, Spain (2006), Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Belgium (2004). Santiago Sierra has also been featured in numerous group exhibitions including the Museum of Modern Art, Poland (2016); National Gallery of Art, Poland (2015); Kunsthalle Dusseldorf (2014); Hamburger Bahnhof Museum for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2014) and the 55th Venice Biennale (2013).

## About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, it 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. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British artists, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a number of prominent Asian artists such as Liu Xiaodong, Lee Ufan, Rashid Rana, Ai Weiwei, and Tatsuo Miyajima, as well as a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Ryan Gander and Haroon Mirza. Today Lisson Gallery supports and develops 53 international artists across two exhibition spaces in London and two in New York.

## For press enquiries, please contact

Victoria Mitchell, Sutton PR  
+44 (0)20 7183 3577  
[victoria@suttonpr.com](mailto:victoria@suttonpr.com)

Allison Thorpe, Lisson Gallery  
+44 (0)207 724 2739  
[allison@lissongallery.com](mailto:allison@lissongallery.com)

i: [@lisson\\_gallery](https://www.instagram.com/lisson_gallery)  
t: [@Lisson\\_Gallery](https://www.twitter.com/Lisson_Gallery)  
fb: LissonGallery  
[www.lissongallery.com](http://www.lissongallery.com)