

Press Release

Colour in Contextual Play

An installation by Joseph Kosuth

Works by Enrico Castellani, Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, Joseph Kosuth, Piero Manzoni

Curated by Cornelia Lauf

19 May – 28 July 2017

Private View: Thursday 18 May 2017, 6 – 8pm

Mazzoleni London is pleased to announce 'Colour in Contextual Play', an installation by American conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth (b. 1945). Part of a series in which Kosuth installs contemporaries or forebears, the exhibition will incorporate a selection of work by artists proposed by influential Arte Povera artist Emilio Prini (1943–2016), namely Enrico Castellani (b. 1930), Lucio Fontana (1899–1968), Yves Klein (1928–1963), Kosuth himself and Piero Manzoni (1933–1963). The exhibition will investigate the idea of colour, a theme that is explored by each of these Post-War artists conceptually as well as technically. The exhibition is curated by Dr. Cornelia Lauf, an art historian based in Rome and Sicily.

The exhibition will juxtapose monochrome works by Castellani, Fontana, Klein and Manzoni with works from Kosuth's 1968 series 'Art as Idea as Idea'. This series made a conceptual investigation into the relationship between words, ideas and objects. It comprised photographs of dictionary definitions of words including 'meaning' and 'idea'. For 'Colour in Contextual Play' Kosuth will create a site-specific installation produced especially for Mazzoleni that places the examples 'white', 'black', 'grey', 'red', 'green', 'yellow' and 'violet', works never before exhibited, in company with works by the other artists utilising those colours.

Colour, or its absence, is a theoretical as well as aesthetic consideration in all the works displayed. The artists share an uncompromising analysis of conceptual structures that interrogate the nature of space, colour, form and time. From raised canvases punctuated by nail points (Castellani), to an indigo so profound it received its own Pantone number (Klein), explorations of the space beyond colour (Fontana) and natural colour that was also a non-colour (Manzoni), each artist explored the nature of vision in depth over the course of their careers.

Theories of colour link the study of optics, physics, and mathematics with philosophy, art and religion, providing insights into changing world views over millennia. Colour theories also show how thought can be condensed into visual models and all the artists included in this exhibition are or have been at the forefront of picturing cognition. The exhibition hopes to display their respective advances in a vibrant and new model of study. An homage to all five artists, the exhibition will be divided into chromatic and achromatic parts and will feature sections in which wall colours match works of the same hue.

The installation will also call to mind other cross-historical exhibitions by Kosuth, including 'The Play of the Unmentionable' at the Brooklyn Museum (1990) and 'The Play of the Unsayable: Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Art of the 20th Century' at the Vienna Secession and the Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels (1990), as well as installations of Magritte, Ad Reinhardt and others. Lauf was actively involved in several of these projects, and herself curated numerous cross-historical shows, beginning in 1989 with 'Natura Naturata', installed by Annabelle Selldorf and featuring Baroque still lifes juxtaposed with contemporary ones.

The artist selection in 'Colour in Conceptual Play' was the suggestion of Emilio Prini. Lauf initially invited Prini to mount a monographic exhibition for Mazzoleni London. In typical fashion, Prini counter-proposed a quintet of artists including himself. However, a few months before his untimely passing in 2016, Prini requested that Joseph Kosuth, a long-standing colleague, replace him. Cornelia Lauf has stated:

“Thus, one of the most important proponents of the Arte Povera group extended the notion of Italian art, to show the transnational dialogue uniting artists, evidenced also by his selection of Yves Klein.”

Prini's lifelong adherence to subtraction and economy distinguish him as one of the most radical, though least-known, members of Arte Povera, a movement identified by the influential art historian and curator, Germano Celant, in 1967. Prini often reflected on colour himself, confirming this exhibition's theme as a fitting theoretical matrix uniting all of the artists. He frequently demonstrated to Lauf how a simple comparison of two colours could reveal significant differences in meaning and importance. Despite speculation as to his actual output and a reputation for doing nothing that Prini himself underlined (often stating “non faccio mai niente,” – “I never do anything”), Prini was a consummate aesthete who dwelt on every aspect of the making process, finding meaning in each shade and nuance. On one occasion Prini scrutinised a Picasso harlequin painting, over days of discussion with Lauf, to analyse Picasso's use of grey. On another occasion, the whiteness of regular typing paper from the 1970s became a subject of inquiry. A few sheets of empty paper spread on a table acquired the majesty of any white monochrome.

The personal relationships among the selected artists are an additional sub-text to the exhibition. It is the nature of artistic inspiration, and the close observation of the work of friends and mentors, that is the curator's fundamental subject of study. The spiral-shaped or Greek meander patterns in the making process are ones that greatly fascinated Prini and witnessing this process firsthand inspired Lauf to propose this highly personal, yet simultaneously art historical, project.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication designed by Joseph Kosuth with an essay by Cornelia Lauf.

– ENDS –

Notes to Editors:

For all PRESS enquiries please contact Rees & Company:
Rosanna Hawkins | rosanna@reesandco.com | +44 (0)20 3137 8776 | +44 (0)7910 092 634

About Joseph Kosuth

Joseph Kosuth (b. 1945, USA) is one of the pioneers of Conceptual art and installation art, initiating language based works and appropriation strategies in the 1960s. His work has consistently explored the production and role of language and meaning within art. His more than forty year inquiry into the relation of language to art has taken the form of installations, museum exhibitions, public commissions and publications throughout Europe, the Americas and Asia, including seven Documenta(s) and nine Venice Biennale(s), one of which was presented in the Hungarian Pavilion (1993). Awards include the Brandeis Award, 1990, Frederick Wiseman Award, 1991, the *Menzione d'Onore* at the Venice Biennale, 1993, and the *Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres* from the French government in 1993. In June 1999, a 3.00 franc postage stamp was issued by the French Government in honor of his work in Figeac. In February 2001, he received the *Laura Honoris Causa*, doctorate in Philosophy and Letters from the University of Bologna. In October 2003 he received the Austrian Republic's highest honour for accomplishments in science and culture, the Decoration of Honour in Gold for services to the Republic of Austria. In 2012 Kosuth received *la classe des Arts de l'Académie Royale* from the Académie Royale Sciences des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts of Belgium. In 2015 the Instituto Superior de Arte, at the University of Havana, awarded him an *Honoris Causa* doctorate, presented during the 12th Havana Art Biennial where he exhibited an extensive installation at the Biblioteca Nacional.



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In 2015 Kosuth revealed *A Monument of Mines*, a major site-specific installation for the new cultural center in Kongsberg, Norway. Recently, Kosuth unveiled 'One Field to the Next' a permanent large-scale work at the Taipei Main Station. In October 2016 Kosuth's *ni apparence ni illusion*, which opened at the Musee du Louvre, Paris in 2009 was inaugurated as a permanent installation. Kosuth is currently working on a new public commission at the Miami Beach Convention Centre and his first publicly funded commission for a landmarked civic building in the US, on the facade of the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium in San Francisco.

About Cornelia Lauf

Independent curator and art historian with thirty years experience in contemporary art, Cornelia Lauf began her career at the Guggenheim Museum, and has edited publications, and produced exhibitions for institutions in Europe and the United States. Recent work includes "Wall to Wall: Carpets by Artists," (Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland), a traveling exhibition on certificates of authenticity by artists (De Vleeshal, Middelburg, traveling to The Drawing Center, New York, SALT, Beyoglu, Istanbul, among others), and extensive publishing and editorial work in the field of artist's books (Imschoot, uitgevers; Three Star Books). Lauf is currently working on a publication on Emilio Prini, as well as projects devoted to craft by artists, in Baku, Azerbaijan, and Matera, Italy. She advises private collections in the United States, and specializes in custom commissioned contemporary artworks, produced in collaboration with heritage artisans.

About Mazzoleni

Mazzoleni was founded in Turin in 1986 and opened a Mayfair-based London gallery in October 2014. Over the past three decades Mazzoleni has organised solo and group exhibitions of more than 150 prominent Italian and international artists from across the 20th century. The gallery evolved from the private collection of Giovanni and Anna Pia Mazzoleni who have been collecting since the 1960s. The collection brought together significant works from important international art movements including Surrealism, Futurism and Abstract Art. Italian Post-War art quickly became the primary focus of the collection and became the core of Mazzoleni's curatorial programme when Giovanni's sons Davide and Luigi joined the gallery in the 1990s.

Today the Turin gallery takes up three floors of Palazzo Panizza, overlooking the historic Piazza Solferino and occupying part of the original 19th century foyer of the Alfieri theatre. The London gallery is situated on Albemarle Street, in the heart of Mayfair's historic art district. The 3,000 square foot space – designed by architect David Trad – hosts exhibitions across two levels, presenting a programme focused on museum-calibre Post-War Italian art and art from the Seventies, working in close collaboration with artists' estates and foundations.

Recent critically acclaimed exhibitions have included the major solo Alberto Burri exhibition in 2015, 'Piero Manzoni. Achromes: Linea Infinita', curated by Gaspare Luigi Marcone in collaboration with the Piero Manzoni Foundation, and 'Fontana/Melotti. Angelic Spaces and Infinite Geometries', curated by Daniela Ferrari of the MART Museum Trento/Rovereto in 2016. All exhibitions are accompanied by fully illustrated monographs, often featuring newly commissioned research contributing to current critical and art historical discourse. In addition, in recent years Mazzoleni has been increasingly present at international art fairs, participating across London, Basel, Hong Kong, New York and Miami, amongst others.

27 Albemarle Street, London W1S 4HZ

+44 (0)20 7495 8805

london@mazzoleniart.com

www.mazzoleniart.com

Monday – Friday, 10am – 6pm; Saturday 11am – 5pm