ALMINE RECH

John Giorno

Oct 12 — Nov 13, 2021 | London

Almine Rech London, in collaboration with the John Giorno Foundation, is pleased to announce a solo exhibition by John Giorno, marking the artist's first posthumous solo show in the UK. The exhibition will open on October 12 and run through November 13, 2021 with an opening reception on October 12 from 5pm to 8pm.

John Giorno (1936-2019) is recognised as one of the most innovative poets and artists of the twentieth century. His kaleidoscopic work fused and furthered poetry, visual art and activism, pushing text off the printed page and into the social realm. Laura Hoptman, Executive Director of the Drawing Center, New York, writes in the publication for the Giorno retrospective at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, "What if concrete poetry and Pop Art merged, like perfect lovers? They would produce John Giorno, muse of the greatest single-word movie (Sleep, 1963) and author of found object word poetry…Giorno's friendships with Warhol, then Burroughs, and subsequently, his close liaisons with Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, indicate his presence in the orbit of visual art rather than literature in New York."

An originator of Performance Poetry, Giorno's interdisciplinary roles as a political activist, Tibetan Buddhist and performance artist culminated in a burst of creativity in the second half of his artistic career. From 1995-2019, the artist produced an impressive body of visual art in the mediums of painting, sculpture and works on paper. This led to strong support and critical acclaim by artists of younger generations, from Philippe Parreno, Ugo Rondinone and Rirkrit Tiravanija - yielding new museum tributes worldwide. Giorno's work is held in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art (New York), Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris), SF MoMA (San Francisco), Perez Museum (Miami) and other institutions internationally; as well as in private collections around the world. Giorno's autobiography, 'Great Demon Kings: A Memoir of Poetry, Sex, Death and Enlightenment' was published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in August 2020.

This exhibition will premiere two bodies of work entitled *Rainbow and Perfect Flowers* which the artist produced late in his career. A suite of eighteen paintings entitled *Perfect Flowers*, produced in 2017, reflect on the cycles of life and transcendence evidenced in Giorno's late writings. Elaborating upon a 2004 poem, *Welcoming the Flowers*, and an eponymous series of prints, Giorno physically transforms lines of poetry such as "daffodils / baptized in butter," "poppies . . . packed with narcotic treats," and "the cherry blossoms are razor blades, / the snow dahlias are sharp as cat piss" into poem paintings on heavily buttered coloured surfaces.

Giorno's *Rainbow* paintings first debuted in 2015 in New York at Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York and then at Palais de Tokyo, Paris. Many of the texts employed in these works were originally sourced from poetry that the artist has written, or lines that never made themselves into a final poem. In addition, Giorno's work *Dial-A- Poem* (1968-2019) will also be on display.

Concurrent with the London exhibition, *Dial-A-Poem* will launch in the UK in collaboration with the John Giorno Foundation. Phone line access to the audio work first produced in 1968 will be available free of charge to local callers. In 1968, Giorno created *Dial-A-Poem* using a telephone service to communicate poetry in a modern idiom. Previously it was shown at the Architectural League of New York in 1968, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in 1969, and the Museum of Modern Art in 1970. Giorno subsequently produced a series of LP and CD compilations called The *Dial-A-Poem* Poets in the 1970s and 1980s, encouraging people to start *Dial-A-Poem* in their hometowns, and to use cuts from the albums along with their local poets.

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