ALMINE RECH

Joseph Kosuth
Du Phénomène à la Bibliothèque

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For his installation in Paris Joseph Kosuth embarks on a completely new work, a total environment of texts but in a quite new departure within his recent activities. The form of his installation utilizes references to important early works such as ' The Information Room' (1969) which was seen this year in Art Unlimited in Basel. For the present work a sea of text is put into play in conjuction with the libraries and quotations of leading 20th century philosophers which provide the kinds of meanings that are characteristic of Kosuth's concerns as an artist. One of the two features of this new installation is comprised of works on glass and illuminated by warm white neon, with the other element being a floor component that establishes an horizon of language which contextualizes the wall installation. Joseph Kosuth, the artist that originated the use of text as a readymade more than forty years ago, has offered as a key to this work the following quote from Michel Foucault, written just shortly after the time when Kosuth initiated a practice of art since called Conceptual: 'Dreams are no longer summoned with closed eyes, but in reading; and a true image is now a product of learning: it derives from words spoken in the past, exact recensions, the amassing of minute facts, monuments reduced to infinitesimal fragments, and the reproductions of reproductions. In the modern experience, these elements contain the power of the impossible. Only the assiduous clamor created by repetition can transmit to us what only happened once. The imaginary is not formed in opposition to reality as its denial or compensation; it grows among signs, from book to book, in the interstice of repetitions and commentaries; it is born and takes shape in the interval between books. It is a phenomenon of the library'.

Joseph Kosuth is a key figure in the redefinition of the art object that took place during the 1960s and 70s with the formulation of Conceptual art, which questions art's traditional forms and practices, as well as the assumptions surrounding them. To do this, Kosuth was among the first to employ appropriation strategies, texts, photography, installations and the use of public media, as well as to write the earliest theoretical texts supporting it. With Kosuth, art itself is essentially a questioning process. As a result, all aspects of the activity of art has been reconsidered, from the function of objects to the role of the exhibition itself. The context of art - how it both produces meaning and is itself affected by the world - is reflected in his new installation at the Almine Rech Gallery. His activity poses questions about the presentation and reception of art by approaching the very categories that define what art is. For Kosuth, the 'visual' is but one part of a complex structure which produces meaning within art, and not its basis. Since the 1960's the elements in his work have all been employed from other contexts: philosophy, literature, reference books, popular culture, scientific theory and so on. He utilizes our inherited meanings to construct a new meaning of his own.