ALMINE RECH

Matter, Grey
Curated by Joseph Kosuth

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The exhibition ‘Matter, Grey’, consists of works chosen by Joseph Kosuth, that, as he has said, "represent a kind of ‘neuron’ within artistic practice." He is proposing as a chamber of discourse the brain cell as a kind of example - in contrast to the white matter which connect the brain cells. The exhibition title suggests a collection of levels, with the desired intention itself of putting the interface of meaning into play. ‘Matter, Grey’ offers as part of its projection the fact that it consists of works which are primarily achromatic, and as well, works which directly reflect the brain (and all, of course, engage the mind). Kosuth also sees the grey of the shadow cast by René Magritte's particular Modernity as an aspect which now colors what recent art practice has to say.

The more theoretical point, for Kosuth, of ‘Matter, Grey’ is " intended as a kind of reminder about what the track of priorities post-Modernist work demonstrates through its choices of what it borrows and re-plays from Modernity."

For many years Joseph Kosuth has included ‘curated installations’ as part of his practice as an artist. The first one was ‘15 People Present Their Favorite Book’, organized in New York for his own Museum of Normal Art, in 1967. Since that time he has made several curated installations, such as ‘The Play of the Unsayable’ in 1989, in celebration of Ludwig Wittgenstein's centennial curated for the Vienna Secession and the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Bruxelles, and ‘The Play of the Unmentionable’ in 1990 at The Brooklyn Museum, these being two of the most celebrated and influential. Kosuth has gone to great lengths to make it clear that these acts of curating are an extension of an appropriation strategy rather than an act of art historical scholarship.

Kosuth's point is that the artist can work with the ‘surplus’ meaning of juxtaposing works in a way which art historical scholarship cannot. As Kosuth has said, "Artists take subjective responsibility for the meaning they produce, while art historians cannot, as they must maintain the pretense of a scientific enterprise."Although smaller and more casual than his larger curated installations, ‘Matter, Grey’ should be seen as part of this history.

This is, of course, consistent with the work of Joseph Kosuth, seen for nearly forty years as one of the founders of Conceptual art, and one of its first practitioners and theoreticians, introducing the use of photography, texts, installations and appropriation as being a legitimate part of the practice of art. Indeed, Conceptual art is now acknowledged as the pre-eminent post-modernist art movement, with its influence reflected in most exhibitions of contemporary art exhibited in the world today.

In his chosen list of artists he acknowledges an important debt to René Magritte, who provides the centerpiece in the exhibition with the appearance of a never before seen presentation. The list also includes Hanne Darboven, a major artist of Kosuth's own generation, who has made a private mental process into a shared discourse. Haim Steinbach whose construction of his own unique 'text' comprised of objects established an alternative to the Transavanguardia reaction of the 1980's and expanded our concept of the conceptual. The practice of younger artists has established other roles even less expected. With Tino Sehgal, Kosuth has said,"we may have Bertol Brecht — but sitting in the audience not on stage, having a chat about institutional critique in a way which tries to resist its own institutionalization." Seamus Farrell, whose practice adopts a shifting strategy of presentational options, on this occasion goes to Marcel Duchamp's Large Glass as a play on the modernist moment within the post-modern context. Ann-Sofi Sidén, who in 'The Test Chamber' employs surveillance type video monitors to provide a psychological frame to the grey chamber of the exhibition itself. Part of a larger project, in these fragments we gaze at the interior of the mental process through the observation tools used in the fictional 'reality'. The surveillance monitors relocate the viewer: the position of the viewer is joined with the protagonist's interior location and the psychological scene becomes a narrative looping itself.

'Matter, Grey' will be comprised of:

~ A work by René Magritte, lent by special permission of the René Magritte Foundation. It is a wall-work that has never been shown in quite this way.
~ An historical work by Joseph Kosuth titled 'The Solution of the Riddle (Zero & Not)'. The paragraph employed in the work is from Sigmund Freud and was originally utilized in an exhibition at Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in 1986 as wall-paper printed for his celebrated installation at 112 Greene Street. The work for the present exhibition, a white neon work, is from 1987.
~ An important early work by Hanne Darboven, an artist long associated with Conceptual art.
~ A commissioned work for 'Matter, Grey' by Haim Steinbach, a pioneer of 1980's appropriation art.
~ A work by Tino Sehgal.
~ A commissioned work for 'Matter, Grey', an object-installation by Seamus Farrell.
~ A black & white diptych, a surveillanche video installation by Ann-Sofi Sidén, which can be seen as an inverted

silent version of the 35 mm color film 'Q M, I Think I Call Her QM'.
Thanks to Charly Herscovici, president of the René Magritte Foundation, Brussels.