

Press Release

Tatsuo Miyajima

Innumerable Life / Buddha

January 11 – February 16, 2019

138 Tenth Avenue, New York

Opening: January 10, 6 – 8pm

Tatsuo Miyajima opens his first solo exhibition in New York with Lisson Gallery, premiering his new series, *Innumerable Life/Buddha*. The exhibition will feature five works by the Japanese artist, introducing US audiences to his eastern philosophies and signature digital visual vocabulary. This new body of work, a series of glowing red installations, are inspired by a particular Buddhist teaching, reminding us of the power of the individual within a networked whole. A continuation of Miyajima's meditations on time and its passage, these installations invite reflection, addressing the fundamental concepts of change, death, connection and eternity. The exhibition follows on from recent large-scale public commissions including *Count Down Dialogue* (2018) launched during West Bund Art & Design Fair, and comes ahead of Miyajima's largest solo exhibition in Asia to date, opening at the new Shanghai Minsheng Art Museum in May 2019.

Numbers are at the heart of Miyajima's practice. An international language, digits transcend cultures: "Whether applied to mathematics and physics, or language and daily activity, they play a central role in our lives and are understood by all" (Miyajima, 2015). Miyajima's numbers have danced on walls, in water, on the façades of buildings, in forests and in ponds, on skyscrapers, in gardens and courtyards, and on the faces and bodies of men and women. To Miyajima, technology is an instrument, and perhaps even an organism, that allows the expression of poetry and spirituality through light and movement.

The five new works in the *Innumerable Life/Buddha* series are made up of glowing LED displays, with thousands of numbers counting down from nine to one at differing speeds, before going dark momentarily. These digits embody the human cycle and the eastern philosophy of change and renewal; each solitary, blinking diode signifying the individual body and soul. The counting sequence continues, as if everlasting, and yet '0', implying death, is expressed solely by darkness. Through this allusion, the numbers – or 'Life' – are destined to an everlasting cycle of regeneration. This idea is also reflected in the colour of the new works: the radiant red of the installations denotes the blood of life, love, fire, passion, strength and joy.

This new series is inspired by a legend told in the Lotus Sutra, one of the most important texts in Mahayana Buddhism, recalling the teachings of Gautama Siddhartha, the spiritual teacher who founded Buddhism. Siddhartha was preaching to a number of his disciples and, when asked who would be the chosen ones to propagate these philosophies after his death, he indicated towards thousands of Buddhas arising from a cleft in the earth. He prophesied that these people – the 'Bodhisattvas of the Earth' – were the enlightened ones, the 'Buddhas' who would continue his teachings in the future. By not selecting an elite follower, or one of his Ten Great Disciples, he rendered Buddhism a divine power for all – regardless of name, power or status.

Miyajima's philosophy, as told through these works, is that the future is not created by the genius of the individual, but by the collective body. Every tiny diode is small and seemingly insignificant, yet together creates the glittering web of the universe. For Miyajima, each life – no matter how brief – has meaning in the mass.

About Tatsuo Miyajima

Tatsuo Miyajima is one of Japan's foremost sculptors and installation artists. Employing contemporary materials such as electric circuits, video, and computers, Miyajima's supremely technological works have centred on his use of digital light-emitting diode (LED) counters, or 'gadgets' as he calls them, since the late 1980s. These numbers, flashing in continual and repetitious – though not necessarily sequential – cycles from nine to one, represent the journey from life to death, the finality of which is symbolized by '0' or the zero point, which appears in his work as black-outs. This theory derives partially from humanist ideas, the teachings of Buddhism, as well as from his core artistic concepts: 'Keep changing, Connect with Everything, and Continue Forever'. Miyajima's LED numerals have been presented in grids, towers, complex integrated groupings or circuits and as simple digital counters, but are all aligned with his interests in continuity, connection and eternity, as well as with the flow and span of time and space. "Time connects everything", says Miyajima. "I want people to think about the universe and the human spirit."

Tatsuo Miyajima was born in 1957 and lives and works in Japan. He finished undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music in 1986, after which he began experimenting with performance art before moving on to light-based installations. In addition to participating in numerous international biennales and important group shows, he has held solo exhibitions at William Morris Gallery, London, UK (2018); Fosun Foundation, Shanghai, China (2017); SCAI The Bathhouse, Tokyo, Japan (2017); MCA, Sydney, Australia (2016); The Met Breuer, New York, NY, USA (2016); Capsule Gallery, Tokyo (2014); Kunstmuseum St Gallen, Switzerland (2012); Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China (2011); Miyanomori Art Museum, Hokkaido, Japan (2010); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA, USA (1997); Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris France (1996); and Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX, USA (1996). He has participated in the Venice Biennale (1988, 1999) and in numerous group exhibitions, including 'Kumamoto Admirable', Contemporary Art Museum Kumamoto, Japan (2016); 'Order and Reorder: Curate Your Own Exhibition', National Museum of Modern Art Kyoto (MOMAK), Japan (2016); 'Eppur Si Muove', Mudam Luxembourg (2015); 'Boolean Expressions' at the Lewis Gluckman Gallery, Ireland (2015); 'Logical Emotion, Contemporary Art from Japan', Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, Switzerland (2014); 'Asia Code ZERO', Seoul Olympic Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea (2013); 'Marking Time', Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia (2012); and 'Dome', Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Japan (2008). In 2006, Miyajima was selected to serve as Vice President of Tohoku University of Art and Design. His work is featured in numerous public collections including Tate, London, UK; La Caixa, Barcelona, Spain; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; and Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and develops more than 50 international artists across two exhibition spaces in London and two in New York. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt and Richard Long, before introducing a generation of significant British sculptors, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. In addition to a number of renowned artist estates, including the Antonio Calderera Foundation, the Leon Polk Smith Foundation and the John Latham Foundation, the gallery represents leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller and Tatsuo Miyajima. It is also responsible for raising the profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost and Wael Shawky.

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