

## Tatsuo Miyajima: *KU*

21 November 2014 – 9 January 2015

Via Zenale 3, Milan

*"Is death really nothing?"*

Tatsuo Miyajima's first solo exhibition in Milan revolves around a new body of work that continues his pioneering use of technology in sculptural assemblage and interactive installations. The show is titled *KU*, a term that signifies 'empty' in Japanese, but which also stands in for the numerical starting point, zero, which has always represented a null state or death for the artist and has consequently not featured in his life-affirming work. For the first time in his career-long exploration of numerology and symbolism, Miyajima is questioning whether there is anything more to this nothingness, taking his cue from the Buddhist tenet that describes death as a period of rest or preparation for the next life.

A large wall-hung work – containing a myriad of Miyajima's familiar LED number counters, scrolling from 1 to 9 – briefly lights up the space after each blink or flash of a new digit. Suddenly and without warning, the lights all extinguish simultaneously, as if the 'gadget' (as Miyajima refers to his self-contained counting systems) had been abruptly switched off or unplugged. This shut-down, representing the idea of death or perhaps the aforementioned preparatory 'sleep', comes unexpectedly and seemingly randomly, and is only reversed when a viewer in the gallery nears the object, entitled *Life (KU-Wall)*, to bring it back to life once more. Miyajima has recently engaged in research as to the possibilities of creating artificial, non-organic life through technological means, in association with Professor Takashi Ikegami of Tokyo University, who developed a new processor to drive the speeds and programming of the individual counting units.

Nearby, another new work that acts like a sentient being, called *C.F. Loop*, mimics the infinite variety found in human bodies through its inter-connected cells, vein-like cables and fluctuating counting speeds, scrolling through every possible combination of life and death. An outdoor piece, *Moon in the Ground* (all works 2014), is Miyajima's meditative reflection on nature's cycles of time passing, expiry, re-birth and rejuvenation, with its LED counters waxing and waning like phases of the moon or twinkling like stars in the night sky.

### About the artist

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 1 to 9, represent the journey from life to death, the finality of which is symbolized by '0' or zero, which therefore has never previously appeared in his work. This theory derives partially from humanist ideas, the teachings of

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Buddhism, as well as from his core artistic concepts: 'Keep Changing', 'Connect with All', and 'Goes on 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 Ibaraki, 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 Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2011), Miyanomori Art Museum, Hokkaido (2010), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1997), Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain (1996) and Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (1996). He has participated in the Venice Biennale (1988, 1999) and in numerous group exhibitions, from the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2012) to the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art (2008). In 2006, Miyajima was selected to serve as Vice President of Tohoku University of Art and Design.

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## About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, it pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, as well as those of significant British sculptors from Anish Kapoor and Tony Cragg to a younger generation, led by Ryan Gander and Haroon Mirza. Lisson Gallery represents 45 of the most innovative and exciting artists working globally today. The *Lisson Presents* programme also extends a legacy of curatorial innovation beyond the gallery spaces, working with institutions and artists to present new initiatives around the world.

## Exhibition Facts

**Opening Hours** Mon-Fri 10am-6pm (closed 1-3pm) Sat by appointment

**Location** Via Zenale 3, 20123 Milan

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