

LEO CASTELLI 18 EAST 77<sup>TH</sup> STREET NEW YORK NY 10075

**Joseph Kosuth**

***A short history of 'Text/Context' 1977-1979***

Leo Castelli Gallery is pleased to announce Joseph Kosuth, *A short history of 'Text/Context' 1977-1979*. For the first time since its creation, this seminal work by the famed conceptual artist is explored in detail.

'Text/Context' was first realized in 1978 and 1979. The work consisted of text installed on two billboards, which created a visual dialogue with each other. It was installed in various cities in Europe and North America (including New York, where it could be seen in Soho, on Houston and Broadway).

As 'Text/Context' was produced as a public installation, the only way the work could be privately owned was to purchase fragments of the actual billboards. In Kosuth's words: "The relation of part to the whole is a device, in this case, which describes both the internal and external organization."

In the present exhibition, on view is an original billboard fragment, together with a set of 19 black and white photographs documenting the historical billboard installations.

On view also is 'Context/Text', a work which predates 'Text/Context' by one year and directly informed it. 'Context/Text' consists of text applied directly to the wall. Even before removing his work from the gallery/museum wall and taking it outdoors, with 'Context/Text' Mr. Kosuth already asserted that there is no such thing as a neutral space for art, and that the meaning of art always depends on where it is made and where it is exhibited. Here, it's not enough to simply put the meaning of this work *in context*. Instead, Kosuth self-referentially insists in the text 'messages' and diagrams of 'Context/Text', that *context* enables the meaning of content, puts that meaning in play. 'Context/Text' exemplifies Kosuth's vital engagement during the 1970's with the social context of art. The two essential questions that are posed as a pairing in both works are these: Where does art find its audience? What does art say to that audience?

The billboard installations of 'Text/Context', as well as Kosuth's use of billboards in 'The Second Investigation' from a decade earlier, have had an enormous impact on subsequent generations of artists including Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Jenny Holzer.

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