

*Joseph Kosuth: I Shall Offer It To You As A Ready-Made Product*

May 15 – July 30, 2026

24 W 40

Castelli Gallery is pleased to present *Joseph Kosuth: I Shall Offer It To You As A Ready-Made Product*, opening at 24 West 40th Street in New York.

The title of the exhibition comes from the neon work '*C.S. #31*', 1987, in which Kosuth appropriated a sentence from *Anxiety and Instinctual Life*, a lecture by Sigmund Freud published in 1933. In this work, Kosuth cancels Freud's sentence with a line, leading to what the artist called "a negated presence and positive absence."<sup>1</sup> Kosuth's appropriation of Freud's sentence is part of a larger dialogue with Freud that the artist described "as a kind of conceptual 'architecture' - a readymade order that, while anchored to the world, provides a theoretical object, a dynamic system."<sup>2</sup>

In 1981, Kosuth began a decade long investigation into the life and writing of Freud. '*Fetishism (Corrected)*', 1987, consists of a reproduction of Freud's text "Fetishism" with his handwritten marginal annotations. The text is framed and hangs in the middle of the work, while Freud's annotations are reproduced in neon, becoming both the site and subject of Kosuth's inquiry. Kosuth reframes the original subject through the lens of the art object itself. The Freudian concept of the fetish, understood as an object through which the subject forms a relationship to the self, often becoming a point of fixation, is turned back onto Freud's own thought.

In 2000, Kosuth produced a series titled 'Essays', in which the artist layered text onto an installation image of his own work; thereby adopting his own work as both subject and object. In the exhibition, an installation image of '*Fetishism (Corrected)*', 1987 appears in '*Essays #8*', 2000, together with text. These two works are presented together for the first time. One is reminded of Duchamp's practice of presenting his own works reconceived in miniature and stowed in suitcases.

Kosuth has consistently situated language as the content and subject of art by establishing philosophical inquiry as the basis for his practice, appropriating and decontextualizing text by others. Kosuth's appropriation of language has been associated with the term "ready-made", first coined by Duchamp in 1915. Together with the use of language as "ready-made", Kosuth's 1965 Proto-Investigations make clear Ludwig Wittgenstein's contention that meaning is use. '*One and Three Labels*' [*Eng.-Latin*], 1965 consists of a label, its photograph, and the dictionary definition of label. The title of the work is printed on the label, and therefore the label reveals both its practical use as a conventional label while at the same time assumes a status as an art object. There is a complexity in what might look like a simple alignment of the object, its photographic representation and its dictionary definition; for Kosuth, meaning is situated in the relationship between the three elements and the viewer's experience.

'*The Sixth Investigation*', 1969, features twenty-eight individually framed index cards with typewritten text from a series of language and logic games by Lewis Carroll. For Kosuth, a work of art is a proposition: the viewer must read and see at the same time. A work of art is different from a work of philosophy because it is not restricted to the readable.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Kosuth. *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> Hoet, Jan, ed. *Chambres d'Amis*. Ghent: Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, 1986.

This exhibition brings together a group of works that converge to highlight Kosuth's enduring sense of play embedded within his exploration of language, meaning, and the shifting relationship between words and objects. Including works dating from 1965 through 2000, the exhibition offers an opportunity to consider Freud's influence on the artist, beyond the often mentioned Duchamp and Wittgenstein, deepening the understanding of the artist's work.

Joseph Kosuth was born in 1945 in Toledo, Ohio. Selected solo exhibitions include Kunstmuseum Stuttgart (2025), MAMM, Moscow (2015), Kunstmuseum Thurgau (2014), The Jewish Museum, New York (2012), Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2011), the Louvre, Paris (2009). His exhibition *The-exchange-value-of-language-has-fallen-to-zero*. is currently at Casa dei Tre Oci until November 2026. Joseph Kosuth lives and works in New York and Rome.