



**JOSEPH KOSUTH**  
*'The Language of Equilibrium'*  
Monastic Headquarters of the Mekhitarian Order  
Island of San Lazzaro degli Armeni, Venice

Curated by Adelina von Fürstenberg



**52. Esposizione  
Internazionale  
d'Arte**  
Eventi collaterali

*A project by* ART *for The World*, Geneva – Milan, NGO associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information  
*In collaboration with* Hangar Bicocca, Spazio d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan

**Opening:** June 6, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Vaporetto n. 20 from San Zaccaria, departure at 6:30 and 7:50 p.m.

*On June 6-7-8-9 a boat service will be available from Giardini to the Island of San Lazzaro.*

**Dates:** June 10 – November 21, 2007

**Public opening hours of the Monastic Headquarters of the Mekhitarian Order:** every day from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**How to reach the Island of San Lazzaro:** Vaporetto n. 20

**Vaporetto timetable:**

from San Zaccaria to San Lazzaro h. 3:10 p.m.

from San Lazzaro to San Zaccaria h. 4:45 p.m. or 5:25 p.m.

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The Island of San Lazzaro degli Armeni is the location for a project by Joseph Kosuth, entitled *The Language of Equilibrium*, collateral event of the 52nd International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia. At the invitation of Adelina von Fürstenberg, the founder of ART *for The World*, Joseph Kosuth has intervened on different parts of the island, along the external perimeter wall to the observatory, from the promontory to the bell tower. *The Language of Equilibrium* is a project by ART *for The World*, a Non-governmental Organization (NGO) associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), based in Geneva and Milan, in collaboration with Hangar Bicocca, Spazio d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan. Joseph Kosuth has described the project as follows: *'This project, in yellow neon, has as its basis language itself. It is a work which is both a reflection on its own construction as well as on the history and culture of its location. This work is comprised of words from the Armenian, Italian and English language. Language here is used as a signifier of the history of the project of the Mekhitarian Order. Yellow neon is chosen for this work because of the symbolic understanding of yellow at the time of the founding of the monastery as meaning 'virtue, intellect, esteem and majesty' (Böckler, 1688). The two supportive components of the work are comprised of words arrived at through a view of their history and use. One aspect of this installation shows this relationship. The other part reflects the role of these words in the 'Haygazian Pararan', or Armenian Dictionary (1749) compiled by Abbot Mekhitar, founder of the Order. The structure of this installation has two elements, which are integrated on four diverse architectural locations: the bell tower, the northwest wall, the low octangular water tower, and the observatory. These four locations reflect both the diversity of the island's architecture as well as articulating its history and culture. The work engages the cultural and social history of the evolution of language itself, how the history of a word shows its ties to cultures and social realities quite distinct and disconnected. It is only in the present when a word is used, as it is with a work of art being experienced, that all that which comprises the present finds its location in the process of making meaning. Here, in this work, language becomes both an allegory and an actual result of all of which it should want to speak.'*

The island of San Lazzaro is the headquarters of the Mekhitarian Order, founded in Constantinople in the first years of the 18th Century by the Abbot Mekhitar of Sebaste, who settled together with his monks on the island in 1717 after escaping persecution. Mekhitar understood the implicit potential of the written word for the preservation of Armenian culture threatened by the vicissitudes of history. The monastery therefore not only has a rich library, consisting of over 140,000 volumes, but until 1993 it also contained an active printing office capable of publishing texts in thirty-six languages, making San Lazzaro a global reference point for Eastern and in particular Armenian culture. It is thanks to this printing office that the first translation of the Bible into Armenian was made, including a guide to grammar and a dictionary of classical Armenian. These books are archived in the library along with 4,500 precious manuscripts, including many illuminated works by Armenian miniaturists and by the Greek and Syrian holy fathers.

### *Biography Joseph Kosuth*

Joseph Kosuth is one of the pioneers of Conceptual art and installation art, initiating language based works and appropriation strategies in the 1960s. His work has consistently explored the production and role of language and meaning within art. His more than forty year inquiry into the relation of language to art has taken the form of installations, museum exhibitions, public commissions and publications throughout Europe, the Americas and Asia, including five Documenta(s) and four Venice Biennale(s), one of which was presented in the Hungarian Pavilion (1993). Awards include the *Brandeis Award*, 1990, *Frederick Weisman Award*, 1991, the *Menzione d'Onore* at the Venice Biennale, 1993, and the *Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres* from the French government in 1993. He received a Cassandra Foundation Grant in 1968. In June 1999, a 3.00 franc postage stamp was issued by the French Government in honor of his work in Figeac. In February 2001, he received the *Laura Honoris Causa*, doctorate in Philosophy and Letters from the University of Bologna. In 2001 his novel 'Purloined' was published by Salon Verlag. In October 2003, he received the Austrian Republic's highest honor for accomplishments in science and culture, the *Decoration of Honor in Gold for Services to the Republic of Austria*. Born in Toledo, Ohio, January 31, 1945. Educated at the Cleveland Institute of Art, 1963-64; The School of Visual Arts, New York City, 1965-67; The New School for Social Research, New York City (anthropology and philosophy), 1971-72. Faculty, Department of Fine Art, The School of Visual Arts, New York City, 1967-1985; Professor at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Hamburg, 1988-90; Staatliche Akademie der Bildende Künste, Stuttgart, 1991-1997; and the Kunstakademie Munich, 2001-2006. Currently Professor at Istituto Universitario di Architettura, Venice, Italy. Has functioned as visiting professor and guest lecturer at various universities and institutions for nearly thirty years, some of which include: Yale University, Cornell University, New York University, Duke University, UCLA, Cal Arts, Cooper Union, Pratt Institute, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Art Institute of Chicago, Royal Academy, Copenhagen, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, University of Rome, Berlin Kunstakademie, Royal College of Art, London, Glasgow School of Art, The Hayward Gallery, London, The Sorbonne, Paris, The Sigmund Freud Museum, Vienna. He lives in Rome and New York City.

### *Selected solo exhibitions*

*Fifteen People Present Their Favorite Book* (Robert Morris, Ad Reinhardt, Sol Lewitt, Robert Mangold, Dan Graham, Robert Smithson, Carl André, Robert Ryman, and others), Lannis Gallery (Museum of Normal Art), New York, USA, 1967.

*Investigations sur l'art et problématique 1965 - 1973*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France, 1974.

*Joseph Kosuth: Tekst/Kontekst*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands, 1978.

*Joseph Kosuth: Bedeutung von Bedeutung / The Making of Meaning*, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Germany, 1981. Traveled to Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Germany.

*The Play of the Unmentionable* [An Installation by Joseph Kosuth], The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York, USA, 1990.

*Guests and Foreigners: Goethe's Italian Journey. An Installation*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany, 1999.

*Artist, Curator, Collector: James McNeill Whistler, Bernard Berenson and Isabella Stewart Gardner: Three Locations in the Creative Process*, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, 2003.

*Re-defining the Context of Art: 1968-2004, The Second Investigation and Public Media*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands, 2004.

*Terra Ultra Incognita*, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, San Antonio Abad, Casa de Colón, El Museo Canario, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, 2007.

### ***Selected group exhibitions***

*Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form: Works-Concepts-Processes-Situations-Information*, Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, Switzerland, 1969. Traveled to Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany; Institute of Contemporary Art, London, U.K.

*Conceptual Art, Arte Povera, Land Art*, Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, Turin, Italy, 1970.

*L'Art Conceptuel, Une Perspective*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France, 1989.

*Ausstellung der Sigmund Freud Gesellschaft*, Sigmund Freud Museum, Vienna, Austria, 1989.

*1965-1975 Reconsidering the Object of Art*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA, 1995.

*The American Century: Art & Culture 1900-2000*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA, 1999.

*Giganti: Arte Contemporanea Fori Imperiali*, Foro di Traiano, Rome, Italy, 2001. Part of the installation traveled to Hangar Bicocca, Milan, 2006.

'*BIG BANG, Destruction and Creation in 20th Century Art*', Centre Pompidou, Paris, France, 2005.

### ***Biography Adelina von Fürstenberg***

In 1974 Adelina von Fürstenberg founded the Centre d'Art Contemporain in Geneva, which she directed until 1989, presenting several solo shows of artists such as Luciano Fabro, Christian Boltanski, Daniel Buren, Francesco Clemente, Alighiero Boetti, Sol LeWitt, Andy Warhol, Joseph Kosuth and Marina Abramovic. During the same period she organized performances of Laurie Anderson, Philip Glass, Joan Jonas, and many group exhibitions, among them the well known open air exhibition entitled *Promenades* (1985) on the Lake Léman shores at Parc Lullin, Gentod. In 1989 she coordinated exhibitions in the Geneva headquarters of international institutions, such as *The Line of Fire* at the ILO (International Labour Organization), where she presented a model by Daniel Libeskind that would later become the Jewish Museum Berlin. From 1989 to 1994, she directed Le Magasin, Centre d'Art Contemporain de Grenoble, where she organized solo exhibitions of many artists, such as Gino De Dominicis, Vito Acconci, Per Kirkeby, Alighiero Boetti and Ilya Kabakov, as well as conferences and lectures on architecture, science and art. Furthermore, for five years she directed the Ecole du Magasin. In 1993 for the 45th Venice Biennale she co-curated the show in the Italian Pavilion and in the Russian Pavilion (Ilya Kabakov). She also curated the exhibition *Trésors du Voyage* on the Island of San Lazzaro. On this occasion the Biennale jury awarded her a prize for her direction of Le Magasin and her work at the school of young curators. In 1995, on the occasion of the UN 50th Anniversary, she was invited to curate the exhibition *Dialogue of Peace*, an international exhibition presented at the UN Headquarters, in Geneva. Chen Zhen, Kcho, Tadashi Kawamata, Nari Ward, Robert Rauschenberg, Alfredo Jaar, Kingelez are some of the 60 artists who contributed to the exhibition. In 1996 she founded ART for The World, a non-government organization (NGO) affiliated with the UN Department of Public Information for the dissemination and promotion of the principles set down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through art, the organization of exhibitions and events around the world. She also curated the 1st and the 2nd edition of *Contemporary Art on the Lake Maggiore*, inviting Jannis Kounellis in 2005 and the artists Robert Wilson, Michael Galasso, William Kentridge and Liliana Moro in 2006 to present their works at the botanical garden and in the Palazzo dell'Isola Madre, Borromeo Islands. In 2006-07 she curated the large exhibition *Balkan Epic* by Marina Abramovic and *Collateral*, both presented at the Hangar Bicocca in Milan, and also *Balkan Erotic Epic* by Marina Abramovic presented at SESC Pinheiros in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Since 2006 she has been working as the International Adviser of Hangar Bicocca in Milan.

## ART for The World

ART for The World is a Non-governmental Organization (NGO) associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information. Founded in 1996 in Geneva by Adelina von Fürstenberg, since 1998 it has been Institutional Partner of the Regional Direction of SESC, Sao Paulo, Brazil. In 2005, the association ART for The World Europa was born in Milan at NABA (New Academy of Fine Arts). ART for The World is inspired by the article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims creative activity as an essential part of people's well-being, pluralism and the respect of other people's differences in any form of creative expression. ART for The World may be considered as a traveling museum, without walls. Its activities are not related to a permanent and defined space, but to the sense of the initiatives it promotes. Thus, Art for The World is a thread running through and uniting the promotion of contemporary art to the defense of universal rights and values. ART for The World is the only non-governmental organization in charge of projects specifically linked to contemporary art. ART for The World presents its exhibitions in places which normally do not belong to the traditional contemporary art circuit: old monuments, monasteries, public buildings, schools, islands, parks, stadiums, and other open spaces. It shows the work of both established and emerging artists from all over the world. All artists not only stand out for the quality of their work, but also for their civil and moral commitment to themes of humanitarian character. Since its foundation, ART for The World has organized exhibitions worldwide on the crucial issues related to its mission, such as *Meditations* in 1997 in Marrakech (with Alighiero Boetti, Anish Kapoor, Ilya Kabakov, Sol LeWitt, Sarkis, etc.) and *The Edge of Awareness* in 1998-99, a traveling exhibition for the World Health Organisation's 50° anniversary at WHO Headquarters in Geneva, PS1/MoMA and ONU in New York, SESC Pompeia in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Lalitkala Akademi in New Delhi (with Vito Acconci, Ghada Amer, Stefano Arienti, Henrik Hakansson, Ilya Kabakov, etc.). In 2001 ART for The World organized the exhibition *The Overexcited Body, Art and Sport in Contemporary Society* at Palazzo dell'Arengario in Milan and SESC Pompeia in Sao Paulo, Brazil (with Carlos Amorales, John Armleder, Wim Delvoye, Armin Linke, Sylvie Fleury, Joseph Kosuth, Barbara Kruger, Grazia Toderi, etc.) and in 2003 the exhibition of *Jannis Kounellis* at the Island of San Lazzaro degli Armeni in Venice. Since 2001, with the project *Playgrounds&Toys*, ART for The World has realized playgrounds designed by international architects, artists and designers (Andreas Angelidakis, Fabiana De Barros, Stefano Boccalini, Fabrice Gygi, Shirazeh Houshiary, Romi & Martand Koshla, Joseph Kosuth, Margherita Turewicz, Edgard Soares) in different countries: Yerevan in Armenia, Athens in Greece, New Delhi and Haryana in India, and in London. In 2005-07, on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Women declaration in Beijing, ART for The World organized *Woman Women*, a cycle of traveling exhibitions presented in Geneva, at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence and at SESC Paulista in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

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