

FROM PRINT TO SONG

Baldessari Sings LeWitt

Curated by Paola Nicolin

OPENING

Friday 14.05.2021, 11 am – 7 pm

DATES

15.05 – 10.07.2021

*"I'd like to sing for you some of the sentences that
Sol LeWitt has written on Conceptual art.
I feel this is a tribute to him in that I think that these sentences have been hidden
too long in the pages of exhibition catalogues and that perhaps, by my singing
them for you, it will bring these sentences to a much larger public.
I'll use the same ordering and numbering that he has.
I'll try to pause between each statement for clarity.
It may be that occasionally I will have to sing one sentence
over more than once, in that I might not get the phrasing correct."*

Da John Baldessari, *Baldessari Sings LeWitt*, 1972

Galleria Tommaso Calabro is pleased to present ***From print to song – Baldessari Sings LeWitt***, an exhibition dedicated to the American artists **John Baldessari (1931–2020)** and **Sol LeWitt (1928–2007)**, running from May 14 through July 10, 2021. A dialogue between two giants of contemporary art, the show investigates the communal transient nature of the artistic medium. This is the second chapter of a series of projects curated by **Paola Nicolin** for the gallery, investigating the relationship between art and the project.

In 1972, John Baldessari performed *Baldessari Sings LeWitt*, a videotape where the artist, sitting on a chair and clutching a sheaf of papers, sings the *35 Sentences on Conceptual Art* – the manifesto of conceptual art Sol LeWitt wrote in 1968 – to the tune of popular songs. The idea of this exhibition, which originates from the possibility to recall the **dialogue and exchange between the two artists** starting with the 1972 video, presents a selection of works showing the different yet similar sensibilities that guided LeWitt and Baldessari in their lifelong pursuit of art as project.

As Baldessari himself recalled, he first met Sol LeWitt when visiting his studio in New York at the end of the 1960s. He was struck by LeWitt's photographs of ordinary objects, by "his idea of having a strategy or ground rules to follow" (John Baldessari, "Sol LeWitt: Songs My Mother Never Taught Me", in *Sol Lewitt 100 Views*, Mass Moca, Yale University Press, 2009) and his way of turning art into a project on art. The encounter with LeWitt shaped Baldessari's way of constructing a theoretical discourse through visual research, and of conceiving artistic practice as a tireless investigation of images that become text and vice versa. LeWitt's structures, drawings and writings built a foundational baggage for an aesthetic and ethic that, for over fifty years, has encouraged reflection on the gist of art, which, in his

TOMMASO CALABRO

introduction to *Baldessari Sings LeWitt*, Baldessari defined as “the transformation of material from one medium to another, from print to song”. The work of both LeWitt and Baldessari results from a conception of the artist as creator of ideas – a “thinker” – rather than as creator of shapes – “a craftsman.” “If one used an analogy to music, this would place the artist in the role of a composer rather than player,” LeWitt affirmed (Sol LeWitt, “Progressive Colors four Walls”, 1970, in *Sol LeWitt*, The Museum of Modern Art, 1978). In regard to both Baldessari and LeWitt, one can speak of inventories, lists, series, annotations and notes, as well as of visible and invisible, combinations and schemes that allow for a multi-layered perception of the artwork. The interaction between text and image, or, as exemplified in *Baldessari Sings LeWitt*, between sound and text speaks, on the one side of Baldessari’s interest in marginality and manipulations of found images to create new narratives; on the other, it speaks of LeWitt’s research for a conceptual structure that produces sign variations.

From these premises, *From print to song – Baldessari Sings LeWitt* presents **works by Sol LeWitt and John Baldessari side by side across the gallery rooms, alternating grids and lines to images and texts.** A selection of LeWitt’s drawings, gouaches, sculptures, books and artist multiples, including *Muybridge I (Schematic Representation)* from 1964 and examples of the \$100 drawings, converse with prints, photographs, multiples and videos by Baldessari, including *Baldessari Sings LeWitt*, from which the exhibition unfolds, and *Teaching a Plant the Alphabet*, also from 1972. Such a dialogue visualises the impact of both artists on expanding the understanding of conceptual art, beyond its exclusively cerebral reading towards the inclusion of a sense of play, absurd, irony and, at times, irreverence.

OPENING TIMES

Tuesday – Saturday / 11 am – 7 pm

Monday / by appointment

PRESS REQUESTS

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INSTAGRAM

#FromPrintToSong #BaldessariSingsLewitt #JohnBaldessari #SolLeWitt

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