

# SIKKEMA JENKINS&CO.

**LESLIE HEWITT**

April 7 – May 13, 2017

Opening Reception: Friday, April 7, 6-8 PM

Sikkema Jenkins & Co. is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by Leslie Hewitt on view from April 7 through May 13 in the south galleries.

*Vanitas: Open system* could be a working title for Hewitt's eclectic installation of photography and sculpture. In the work presented here, she explores the "still life" through the prisms of history, art, and the contemporary moment, resulting in a decontextualization of visual references. A viewer might ask, to what end? Is it to reprise this art historical form with a questioning gaze and curiosity? Is it to consider the prefiguration of photography in the use of optics as it related to 1600-1800 still life painting of northern Europe? Is it to consider in contemporary life the history of Vanitas still-life paintings filled with objects addressing the impermanence of life, human skulls, books, bubbles, the spectrum of diverse flowers, fruit and often implied labor? What about the often unseen relationship the genre has to perceptual shifts relating to the effects of Colonialism, Slavery and Mercantilism?

Hewitt focuses her lens and material based practice on juxtaposition to locate a register between object and image, image and text, absence and presence. Her works take on multiple meanings through the exploration of perception rooted in individual and collective relationships to memory, history, and, ultimately, time.

*Color Study* (2016) continues Hewitt's post-conceptual approach to still life through color, texture, and inference interplay. Hewitt spent time researching at the Hasselblad Foundation in Göteborg, Sweden while simultaneously researching the paintings/drawings of Alma Thomas (1891-1978). The research solidified her interest in the shifting ideas around perception and observation tethered to photography. Drawing idiosyncratic connections to the work of botanist Anders Dahl (1751-1789) through the Dahlia flower, Hewitt uses repetition and subtle, almost indiscernible, shifts to play openly with the act of "searching" for a connection to the natural world or the conditions of nature through the monocular gaze of the camera.

In *Topologies* (2017), Hewitt exposes a range of optical variance in a playful exploration of the latitude made available within the photographic image-scape. Centered yet obscured are 20<sup>th</sup> century artifacts: books and personal objects, surrounded by wooden planks. Weighty titles hover on reprinted paperback books suspended inside nondescript interior spaces. Hewitt's use of appropriated texts point to the past, asking viewers to reconsider notions of progress and the human condition.

Presented concurrently with William Cordova's exhibition, *smoke signals: sculpting in time*, Hewitt and Cordova will present a collaborative project entitled *IWIWT (Extended Break)* (2017), in the front gallery space. Hewitt and Cordova began their collaborations in 2004, with a project titled *I Wish It Were True* (2004– ) which was subsequently included in the 2008 Whitney Biennial. *I Wish It Were True*, gained meaning as an act of collaboration between artists through the constructing of a monolith-inspired phalanx of some eight hundred found and dubbed VHS tapes and a rudimentary screening room—a social sculpture attuned to its context and audience. For *IWIWT (Extended Break)*, three videos are installed as independent viewing/listening stations. Though separate, the videos play in synchronicity, giving space to modes of dissonance and free form collage across space and time. The installation concerns connectivity and invite questions concerning the possibility of the creation of space (both physical and mental) and meta-narratives in opposition to constriction.

Leslie Hewitt studied at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York University and Yale University. Recent solo exhibitions of her work include *New Pictures: Leslie Hewitt, A Series of Projections* at the Minneapolis Institute of Art (2016-17) and *Leslie Hewitt: Collective Stance* which was co-produced by The Power Plant in Toronto and SculptureCenter in New York (2016).

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