

For immediate release

6 works, 6 rooms

Dan Flavin, On Kawara, Sol LeWitt, John McCracken, Fred Sandback, and Richard Serra

June 27 – August 14, 2009

David Zwirner is pleased to present *6 works, 6 rooms*, an exhibition featuring seminal Minimal and Conceptual works by Dan Flavin, On Kawara, Sol LeWitt, John McCracken, Fred Sandback, and Richard Serra. In a sparse installation that spreads across David Zwirner's main galleries at 525 and 533 West 19th Street, one work by each artist is installed in its own exhibition space, thus exploring the experiential possibilities of the works on view without distraction. While they also affect the viewer's physical or mental engagement, the individual works in the exhibition uniquely activate the spaces in which they are installed—for instance, through light (Flavin); reflection (McCracken); gravity (Serra); void/presence (Sandback); conceptually (LeWitt); or contemplatively (Kawara).

Five of the works on view reflect the shift in the formal concerns of sculpture that took place in the 1960s and 70s, where Minimal and Conceptual artists abandoned illusionism, reducing the components of sculpture to elementary, basic forms that questioned and shared the real space of the viewer or which revealed the processes of their making. **Richard Serra's** *Corner Prop*, 1969, for instance, experiments with gravity, process, and structure using the walls of the exhibition space to help suspend a heavy lead cube that is 'propped' against a corner by a rolled lead pole. This early work by the artist is the direct result of an action indexed in his legendary *Verb List* (1967-68): taking his distance with the prescriptions of classic sculpture, Serra enacted a series of transitive verbs (to lift, to fold, to prop, etc.) to create sculptures that served as the physical manifestations of clearly-defined procedures. In the artist's words: "I realized that lead, with its low order of entropy, was a gravity-bound material...My prop pieces are predicated on balance and equilibrium (no permanent joints)...These pieces utilizing the floor and the wall retained a memory of pictorial concerns even though their content was predicated on their axiomatic building principles."¹

Simultaneously activating and diffusing the corner of a room, **Dan Flavin's** *monument 4 for those who have been killed in ambush (to P.K. who reminded me about death)*, 1966, dramatically bathes the space in which it is installed in red fluorescent light. Here, an armature of 8-foot and 6-foot lamps projects out of the corner of the room in a kind of cross-bow formation. The work's evocative title, which memorializes those killed in the Vietnam War, contrasts with the Minimalist principles at work in Flavin's art. He has noted, "I came to these conclusions about what I had found in fluorescent light, about what might be done with it plastically. Now the entire room, the interior spatial container and its parts: wall, floor and ceiling, could support this strip of light, but would not restrict its active light except to enfold it. Realizing this, I knew that the actual space of a room could be broken down and played with...[My art can be understood as] a sequence of implicit decisions to combine traditions of painting and sculpture in architecture with acts of electric light defining space."²

The exhibition will include an early example of **Sol LeWitt's** "Modular Structures," a series of sculptures originated from the idea of the cube as a primary modular unit. In *Wall/Floor Piece ("Three Squares")*, 1966, three identical steel square structures are placed in a corner, one on each wall and one on the floor. Logically, this work evokes the volume of a cube, without physically forming it completely: "LeWitt's open modular cubes, inviting viewing from all directions, apportion their internal space into equal spatial segments that have no external barrier or façade."³ Here, the sides of the cube represent three spatial dimensions, each square standing in for one of the spatial planes of the "white cube" of the exhibition room. Painted white, this work seems to integrate with the exhibition space while also calling it into question.

A large-scale work by **Fred Sandback** will occupy one of the main exhibition spaces at the gallery. Though he employed metal wire and elastic cord early in his career, the artist soon dispensed with mass and weight by using acrylic yarn to create works that address their physical surroundings, the "pedestrian space," as Sandback called it, of everyday life. By stretching lengths of yarn horizontally, vertically, or diagonally at different scales and in varied configurations, the artist outlined planes and volumes in space, thus developing a singular body of work that elaborated on the phenomenological experience of space and volume. *Untitled (Sculptural Study, Five-part Construction)*, 1987/2009, is composed from twenty lengths of black acrylic yarn which form the outlines of one freestanding square and four freestanding rectangles. The five elements are installed perpendicular and parallel to the surrounding walls, creating the impression of three-dimensional spaces within the exhibition space, while engaging the tension between presence and void.

In keeping with the glossy, colored geometric forms he has best become known for, the surfaces of **John McCracken's** mirrored bronze sculptures are both, as the artist describes, "materialist and transcendentalist." A highly-reflective, freestanding rectangular bronze block, *Swift*, 2007, maintains its monolithic status while bordering on invisibility. As Eva Wittocx has noted, McCracken's mirrored volumes "catch images and immediately return them to their source. Like a range of optical instruments, the sculptures produce images of what can be seen around them. They appear to examine the surrounding space, turn it around and cut off a segment of it [...] and] absorb their surroundings."⁴

The exhibition will include an early example of **On Kawara's** "Today Series," an ongoing body of work begun by the artist in 1966. *JUNE 19, 1967* invites the viewer to contemplate the passage of time and the nature of consciousness: this painting bears only the date of its making, meticulously announced in white letters and numerals on a monochromatic, red surface. Following the same basic procedure and format, each painting from the "Today Series" is carefully executed by hand with the date documented in the language and grammatical conventions of the country in which it is made, uniformly painted in a *sans serif* typeface. The paintings conform to one of eight standard sizes, ranging from 8 x 10 inches to 61 x 89 inches. When available, a local newspaper clipping is used to line the interior of a cardboard box that encases the paintings when not on display. On Kawara, as Jonathan Watkins has noted, "regards the process of making the 'date paintings' as a form of meditation, a routine conducive to the loss of ego and distractions from fundamental truths equally if not more evident to our illiterate forebears. However, the vehicle for the meditation is not without distinguishing features or focus and these can be articulated. The date is about time, and surely and ultimately about human mortality."⁵

For further information, please contact the gallery.

¹ Richard Serra, "Interview by Bernard Lamarche-Vadel," in *Richard Serra. Writings. Interviews* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 114.

² Dan Flavin in *three installations in fluorescent light* (Cologne: Wallraf-Richartz-Museum and the Kunsthalle, 1973-74), p. 87. From Flavin's autobiographical account "...in daylight or cool white" which began as part of a lecture in 1964 and was revised several times, for instance in the December 1965 issue of *Artforum*.

³ Gary Garrels, ed., *Sol LeWitt: A Retrospective* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 70.

⁴ Eva Wittocx, "Variations on the Perfect Form," in Peter Doroshenko, et al., *John McCracken. Exh. cat.* (Ghent: SMAK/Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, 2004), p. 31.

⁵ Jonathan Watkins, "Where 'I Don't Know' Is the Right Answer," in Jonathan Watkins, et al., *On Kawara* (London and New York: Phaidon, 2002), p. 86.