

# Joseph Kosuth

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View of “The Mind’s Image of Itself #3, a play of architecture and the mind,” 2011.

*Since the 1960s, Joseph Kosuth has pursued a language-based conceptual practice, which has taken the form of publications, exhibitions, and public art commissions. His latest exhibition is at Sprüth Magers in London, where he has subtly altered the Georgian and Victorian architecture of the gallery. The show is on view until October 1.*

**THE WORK JUST CAME TO ME**, as it so often happens, while I was reading a book that was recommended to me by my partner. It had been a source for her own work these past months. The book is *Architecture From the Outside* by Elizabeth Grosz and it discusses the relationship between architecture and philosophy. It is a brilliant book. This relationship has been an interest of mine for many years and I’ve written about it in the context of my older installations such as *Zero & Not* and others since. For the series “The Mind’s Image of

Itself,” I’m using a wallpapered and slightly off-centered one-to-one line drawing of a room itself as a basis for a field of discourse about architecture, with the concrete example being the room one is standing in. What gets constructed is a self-reflexive work, something experienced as “whole” even while you know it is comprised of *apparently* contradictory statements going in various directions within the work’s textual field of play. This is along the way to a conversation about architecture and the mind.

The work process begins when I start selecting quotations from a large collection I already have, given that I use such texts often in my work and have for a long time. In fact, appropriation of this kind—along with other kinds—have been part of my work since the beginning in the ’60s. I go through hundreds of these amassed quotes from my own research and that of my staff, make my choices, and then continually add them in relation to the quotes I already have selected. The surplus meaning that is constructed by using the words of others in conjunction with each other, which is my goal, is a far more delicate operation than it may seem.

The first version of this project was a result of my taking advantage, very late, of an invitation to participate in the group show “Personal Structures” at the palazzo Bembo in the Venice Biennale. I had had an exhausting spring with shows in New York at Sean Kelly, in Madrid at Juana de Aizpuru, and a large museum show at the Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich, the installation of which finished only days before I would need to install in Venice. But I had the idea for this work, and the small room—the last one left at that late date—at the palazzo Bembo was an opportunity to test it in a limited way and on short notice within an interesting architecture context. But it is really with this version at Sprüth Magers that the full-scale work will stand on its own within a complete architectural setting.

The room (two rooms are used but only one is experienced at a time) is made present and not naturalized in the usual way we often experience architecture, through both the physical articulation of the architecture of the room you are in as well as through the discursive field on architecture in general. But that field is also a physical one and its physicality is hard to ignore since one is also standing in a drawing of the room itself. Its borders and contours, ends and beginnings, are literally drawn out in black and white. And then one is drawn into a sea of words that simultaneously connect and disconnect with each other, flowing from one direction to another, and doing so in a way that also physically articulates the room. The citations and references bring up many associations and thoughts that one has about that room as a reference to other rooms one has been in and will, perhaps, be in. In this way, one is forced to contemplate more than that room alone. Architecture is very psychological even when the walls are empty. Here one confronts a hall of mirrors, reflecting both what is on your mind concerning such spaces, and one’s reflections on the thoughts of others as well.