

KRZYSZTOF WODICZKO

A House Divided...

January 25 - March 7, 2020

Opening reception: Saturday, January 25, 6:00pm - 8:00pm



Installation view, *A House Divided...*, Galerie Lelong & Co., New York.

Galerie Lelong & Co. is pleased to present *Krzysztof Wodiczko: A House Divided...*, a new projection-installation work exploring contemporary political polarization in the United States and reflective of the world at large. This exhibition follows the opening of the artist's most recent site-specific projection, *Monument*, commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy and on view January 16 through May 10, 2020.

Wodiczko's lifelong investigation of speech in public spaces aims to give voice to the marginalized and thereby generate an impetus for systematic change. Wodiczko's practice, which he terms "Interrogative Design," combines art and technology with contemporary issues of urban, historical, and aesthetic culture. *A House Divided...* stands out as Wodiczko's first work that focuses on a population defined not by glaring injury, but by

painful disagreement. The citizens of New York's Staten Island were recorded expressing their deeply felt political views. Through video projection, these recordings animate the faces, hands and feet of two statues of Abraham Lincoln as the interviewees' voices fill the gallery. Looming at eight feet tall and positioned to face one another as if in conversation, these "Lincolns" engage in frank exchange, testifying to the divergent political views among members of a singular community and, in some cases, from within the same family.

The methodology behind *A House Divided...* was previously explored in *My Wish* (2017), a work commissioned and in the collection of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, South Korea. Similarly, Wodiczko brought members of Korean society together in unified social participation; participants sharing their unique experiences, hopes and dreams as their likenesses were projected on Kim Koo, the Korean independence activist. Wodiczko has previously given a public platform to marginalized voices such as mothers who have lost their children to murder (*Bunker Hill Monument*, Boston, Massachusetts, 1998), survivors of the Hiroshima atomic bomb (*A-Bomb Dome Projection*, Hiroshima Peace Memorial, Japan, 1999), and exploited female laborers (*El Centro Cultural*, Tijuana, Mexico, 2001) amongst many others. On view in the small gallery is Wodiczko's video-work *Four Public Projections* (2020) comprising *The Kunstmuseum Projection* (2008); *The Mechelen City Hall Projection* (2012); *The Homeless Projection* (2014) and *Loro (Them)* (2019).

The exhibition's title refers to the phrase "A house divided against itself cannot stand" from Abraham Lincoln's 1858 speech during an unsuccessful run for U.S. Senate, which quoted a passage from the Bible, Matthew (12:22-28). Lincoln borrowed a familiar phrase in order to garner support for the contentious proposition of unifying a rapidly expanding nation teetering on the brink of war. Wodiczko repurposes the statement in a contemporary setting to highlight the partisan contention. In 2019, Wodiczko conducted research of suburban social landscapes in the Tri-State area before choosing Staten Island, a New York City borough that is racially and ethnically diverse yet a simultaneously politically divided geography: north as liberal-leaning and south as conservative-leaning.

“Speaking to each other, they explain and exchange their positions and disagreements while expressing their mutual wish for careful and respectful listening to the opposite side,” says Wodiczko.

Concurrently at Madison Square Park is *Monument*, a site-specific public art installation that renders in high relief the diverse, difficult journeys of today’s refugees. Commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy, the work will project the likenesses and spoken narratives of resettled refugees—who have originated from different parts of the world—onto the Park’s 1881 monument to Admiral David Glasgow Farragut. A looping video projection will bring the monument to life with stories of displacement that illuminate how war, conflict, and political fallout impact individuals globally, encouraging visitors to consider how the history of conflict is memorialized.

A feature length documentary on Wodiczko’s practice, *The Art of Un-War* directed by Maria Niro, is anticipated to premiere in 2020.

On public buildings and monuments in more than 40 cities worldwide, Wodiczko has realized more than 90 site-specific projections. He has created projections on the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC (1988/2018); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York (1989); Kraków’s City Hall Tower, Poland (1996); Boston’s Bunker Hill Monument, Massachusetts (1998); Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland (2005); and Goethe-Schiller Monument, Weimar, Germany (2016). Recent survey exhibitions include *Krzysztof Wodiczko: Instruments, Monuments, Projections*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, South Korea (2017); *Krzysztof Wodiczko*, Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) for Liverpool Biennial, England (2016); and *Krzysztof Wodiczko: On Behalf of the Public Domain*, Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, Poland (2015). Wodiczko’s instruments, vehicles, and documentation of his projections can be found in over 20 museum and public collections worldwide including the Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Spain; National Museum of Modern Art Kyoto, Japan; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Museum of Contemporary Art in Kraków MOCAR, Poland; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; and Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC. Wodiczko is currently a professor and director of the Art Design and the Public Domain program at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. He was formerly director of the Interrogative Design Group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where he was a professor in the Art Culture and Technology Program. Amongst many recognitions and awards, Wodiczko received the Hiroshima Art Prize in 1999. Wodiczko has authored ten books amongst notable contributions to academic and artistic publications; his writings have also been translated to Polish, French, Spanish, and Korean. Born in 1943 in Warsaw, Poland, Wodiczko lives and works in New York City; Cambridge, Massachusetts; and Warsaw, Poland.

For press enquiries, please contact Grace Hong, (212) 315-0470 or grace@galerielelong.com.

Hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-6pm.

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KRZYSZTOF WODICZKO

Artist Statement for *A House Divided...*

Exhibited at Galerie Lelong & Co., New York, January 25 - March 7, 2020

During the past 50 years of my artistic practice, most of my projects have been “interventional” and at times, termed “contestations.” They aimed at disrupting public silence over neglected or unrecognized social and cultural issues. The voices of marginalized peoples were amplified and transmitted in official public spaces, and in doing so, the development of these projects exposed systems of injustice, exclusion and alienation.

The scale of socio-political divide across the world today is unprecedented in our living memory. Interventional and contestational approaches may no longer have a chance to reach anyone among those deeply entrenched on their own side of the politico-ideological barricade.

In today’s divided world, it is a dialogue itself that is neglected, excluded, silenced and marginalized. The narrative held by one side about the way it is perceived by the other side seems mutually false—grossly negative and simplified—due to the lack of trust and willingness to listen to each other. This is further conflicted by the faith placed in their respective political leaders who further enforce such perceptions and ideological positions.

A public dialogue must be valued, encouraged, respected, developed and cultivated as a vital function of democratic culture.

I strongly believe that in such a dangerous and progressively self-perpetuating situation, our artistic, cultural and pedagogical work must focus on establishing new conditions and methodologies for an informed and generous dialogue across the divide. This would bring about a new political culture through the art of mutual listening, building communicative trust among those who hold different positions, experiences, and views.

A House Divided... focuses on deeply diverged opinions, beliefs and perspectives on key social, cultural and political matters exchanged and voiced by a group of conservative and liberal residents of the politically divided Staten Island. Staten Island is evenly split between Republican and Democratic voters. The project’s participants include those who are close to each other as co-workers, old friends or even members of the same family.

Speaking to each other, they explain and exchange their positions and disagreements while expressing their mutual wish for careful and respectful listening to the opposite side. They question the present-day tyranny of uninformed and unfair opinions and a false, simplified image of political opponents that are perpetuated within their own isolated circles—taking too often the form of mindless and painful insults thrown at others publicly and privately. This is an appeal for themselves, for others and for the entire country.

In this project, the two divided sides have yet to reach a true open-ended dialogue, but they do share the same sentiments in agreeing that it is necessary, and even advocate for it.

I hope that *A House Divided...* is a first step towards my further response to such a need.