

**LEWIS BALTZ****SOL LEWITT**

1 JUNE – 24 AUGUST 2019

**Opening: Saturday, 1 June 2019, 4 p.m.****Introduction: Dr Heinz Liesbrock, Director of the Josef Albers Museum, Bottrop****Opening times: Tues–Fri 11 a.m.–6 p.m., Sat noon–6 p.m., and by appointment**

Galerie Thomas Zander is delighted to present selected works by Lewis Baltz and Sol LeWitt in dialogue, exploring structures of spatial processes with their reduced visual language. While Baltz was instrumental in conceptual photography taking its place as an equal among other media in the context of art, LeWitt helped shape the understanding of contemporary art as a pioneer of conceptual art since the 1960s. Their juxtaposition is the third in a series of themed two-artist exhibitions the gallery is presenting this year.

In the works on view, including *The Prototype Works* (1967–76), *The Tract Houses* (1971) and *Park City* (1978–79), Lewis Baltz describes places which were created as epiphenomena of a post-industrial society. Focusing not on the particular or idiosyncratic, but on standardised forms of appearance, his works reflect socio-economic structures and critically expand the documentary discourse. Baltz, who was born in Newport Beach, California, in 1945 and died in Paris in 2014, started his earliest body of work *The Prototype Works* while he was a student at the Art Institute in San Francisco. In it he looks for generic forms of his everyday environment such as walls and façades, signs, letterings and parking lots. The reduced aesthetic of the black and white gelatin silver prints show references to modernism and incorporate influences from his contemporaries in painting and sculpture from minimalism, conceptual art and land art as for example John McLaughlin, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Ed Ruscha and Robert Smithson. The influential New York gallerist Leo Castelli recognised the radicality of Baltz's practice and mounted his first solo exhibition when the artist was 26 years old. He also exhibited Baltz's first serial work *The Tract Houses*, which deconstructs a complex of suburban tract homes under construction, highlighting the lack of humanity in the mass-production and anonymity of American post-war capitalism. From this point forward, the series becomes the unit of Baltz's works. Their coherence relies on the context of the total work and their installation in grids to achieve significance, becoming spatial objects themselves. The individual image is only a fragment. Alongside Bernd and Hilla Becher, Stephen Shore and Henry Wessel, Baltz is among the most renowned artists of the exhibition *New Topographics* from 1975, which marked a paradigm shift in landscape photography. With *Park City* Baltz defines landscape in profitable sections of real estate. The work consists of 102 elements and surrounds a large-scale ski resort in the Utah mountains in various stages of construction, which is developed on the site of an abandoned silver mine. In clear, concentrated images of tar mounds, shell constructions and cables the houses rise out of the debris and at the same time, true to the throw-away mentality, they seem to sink back into it.

One of the major exponents of conceptual art, Sol LeWitt (1928 Hartford, Connecticut – 2007 New York) emphasises the ideas behind his works over their execution and thus shifts the notions of the artwork and its authorship. The artist puts the ideas down in clear instructions and drawings, but usually leaves the potential execution to others. Consciously moving from the traditional canvas to spatial environments, Sol LeWitt created numerous wall drawings, photographic works and three-dimensional free-standing sculptures, which he prefers to call structures. The vocabulary of his works consists of variations of geometric shapes and solids made of steel, polyurethane and concrete. His aesthetics correspond to the style of minimalism, although he opposed the movement. Much like Baltz, LeWitt is looking for general and recognisable elements and finds them in the square and the cube, using a single measurement as the basis for many of his works. "The most interesting characteristic of the cube is that it is relatively uninteresting," LeWitt states. This quality made them the ideal starting point for more complex constructions. From this basic component, LeWitt also developed his early and in this respect probably most ambitious work *Serial Project #1 (ABCD)*. Open cubes made from white aluminium proceed in regular, repeated cubes of nine units each and display the differences between their possible combinations. The variation *Serial Project #1 A 6* from 1967 is on view in the exhibition. LeWitt's *Black Cubes* however, of which one so-called structure is featured in the exhibition, were originally produced in 2000 for a solo show at Konrad Fischer Galerie in Düsseldorf. Their black colouring as well as the massive, oversized forms point to an absence of function with the presence of the object asserting itself in space. An early version of the work made of black concrete, *Black Form – Dedicated to the Missing Jews*, was created in 1986 for Skulptur Projekte Münster and is installed in front of Altona Town Hall in Hamburg today. With sober austerity, Lewis Baltz and Sol LeWitt's works rigorously explore and map how we interact with space. Through reduced forms and serial structures their works investigate the ambivalent processes of development and decay.

An exhibition catalogue will be published by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König.