

Press Release

In the Context of the Collection:

Brian O'Doherty

Phases of the Self

2 September 2022 – 15 January 2023

Opening: Thursday, 1 September 2022, from 6 pm

Kunstlichtsaal (artificial light gallery)

'I never see the self as a stable entity, but as a fluid, multivalent series of accommodations to inward and outward pressures, giving birth to different personae.'

—Brian O'Doherty

Born in Ireland in 1928, Brian O'Doherty is among the most intriguing figures in contemporary art. In the exhibition *Phases of the Self*, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein presents the many different facets and identities of this artist, art critic and writer who lives in New York. In dialogue with works from the museum's collection, the show affords an insight into the thinking of the second avant-garde from the 1960s onwards. On view is a selection of O'Doherty's early conceptual artworks along with books and magazines from his work as an art critic and writer.

***Inside the White Cube* – a standard work of museology**

In 1976, in his role as an art critic, O'Doherty coined the term 'white cube' in *Artforum* magazine, thereby writing an important chapter in recent art history. His essays, published later in book form, discuss and critique the alleged neutrality of white gallery and museum spaces that would become internationally established as a model in the latter half of the twentieth century. Today, the book is among the essential works of Western museology.

Masks and pseudonyms

O'Doherty assumed different roles and worked under various pseudonyms to broaden his field of action. As an artist, in protest to the United Kingdom's Northern Ireland policy, he signed his works as 'Patrick Ireland' from 1972 until 2008, when a devolved Northern Ireland government was formed and peace had been restored. He also published art criticism in *Art in America* under the pseudonym 'Mary Josephson' when he was the magazine's editor.

An observer and commentator of the New York art scene

An astute observer, O'Doherty not only reflects the sense of new departures in art and society in his art criticism of the 1960s, he also draws attention to the animosities and conflicts within the New York art scene – he operated from its very centre. He discusses the implosion of aesthetic criteria and describes the ephemeral nature of trends and careers.

Brian O'Doherty in a dialogue with the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein collection

In the exhibition, O'Doherty's work engages in a dialogue with works from the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein's collection, including works by Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Cornell, Louise Bourgeois, Joseph Beuys, Marcel Broodthaers, Marisa Merz, Sol LeWitt, Walter Benjamin, Matts Leiderstam, Kimsooja, Erik Steinbrecher, Paweł Althamer, Saâdane Afif, Latifa Echakhch and Louise Guerra. *Phases of the Self* presents O'Doherty as one of the pioneers of Conceptual art, demonstrating how his work is embedded in and reflects and comments on contemporary artistic practices.

Short biography of Brian O'Doherty

O'Doherty was born in Ireland in 1928, studied medicine in Dublin and attended Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., on a research fellowship. In the 1960s he worked as an art critic for the *New York Times*, as an artist he was among the founders of Conceptual art. In 1967 he published *Object and Idea: An Art Critic's Journal, 1961–67* (his collected art criticism), followed in 1974 by *American Masters: The Voice and the Myth*. O'Doherty gained fame in the German-speaking world thanks to his book *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (1986). Aside from writing on contemporary American art, he has also published works of fiction and taught art criticism and film at Columbia University, New York, until the 1990s. His novel *The Deposition of Father McGreevy* (1999) was shortlisted for the renowned Booker Prize (2000). Recent publications include the novel *The Crossdresser's Secret* (2014) and *A Mental Masquerade. When Brian O'Doherty Was a Female Art Critic: Mary Josephson's Collected Writings* (2019).

A production of Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, curated by Roman Kurzmeier.

Roman Kurzmeier is a curator and art historian. He teaches art theory and exhibition history at the Institute Art Gender Nature, Academy of Art and Design, FHNW, Basel, and is a curator of the Ricola Collection.

The exhibition is accompanied by a **booklet from the series *aus der sammlung*** (From the Collection) with contributions by Roman Kurzmeyer and Brian O'Doherty.

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