

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition: Sam Lewitt
COVER

Dates: March 9 – April 22, 2018

Reception: Friday, March 9, 6 – 8PM

COVER, Sam Lewitt's 5th exhibition at Miguel Abreu Gallery, follows and extends the artist's work *Stranded Assets*, shown first at the 57th Venice Biennale. The exhibition will be held at the gallery's 36 Orchard Street location.

For *Stranded Assets*, Lewitt obtained a set of lamps found in the stairwell of the recently decommissioned Giuseppe Volpi thermoelectric power plant in Venice's industrial port of Marghera.¹ In Venice, he installed these original lamps, which provided light to his exhibition section, alongside a number of reproductions of their decorative carapace and Murano glass shade.

The reproductions are made from pure compressed fuel ash: a particulate byproduct of coal refinement, which is utilized as a filler and substitute material for all manner of construction and consumer purposes due to its light weight and inherent cementing properties when molded with water and pressure.

For *COVER*, Lewitt has installed an original iron lamp from Marghera alongside several reproductions, wired to provide light to the gallery. These are hung alternately on unfinished gypsum and freestanding, aluminum-cladding walls, built to spec as cross sections of the layers of thermal insulation and environmental protection needed for new construction.

If the lamps here are pulled and compressed from the ash of a famously sinking city's energy infrastructure, the walls on which they are hung are similarly sandwiches of solid fuel. The synthetic gypsum out of which a large percentage of drywall is formed emerges from the chemical emissions systems of thermoelectric power plants. This is just as the polyethylene core of the ubiquitous architectural aluminum cladding used here flows from fossil fuel.

Lewitt focuses on conventions of support and shelter, of energy and infrastructure, in the context of the surplus matter that is up-cycled into the built environment: a process by which the material byproducts of global energy production is itself magically accounted for as a stock of supplies. The work in this exhibition is the result of shuttling these concerns between a historically specific order of matter, and the plasticity of its significance as it passes through various forms. From a bucket of formless ash, to the rationalized industrial standards of wallboard and cladding, to the inflated contours of an ornamental light, which, by having been switched on, commands the piling up of the particles from which the whole sequence of forms is the more or less coagulated result.

¹ Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata developed the Port of Marghera as the "lung" of the region's cultural and industrial modernization. As Mussolini's finance minister, he diverted state funds to military-industrial programs of land reclamation over the course of the 1920s and 1930s. This was an early echo of the campaign of *sventramento* or "disembowelment" which attempted to modernize urban infrastructure and clear away architectural eclecticism. Volpi eventually became the president of the Biennale — who in 1932 instituted the world's first international Biennale of Film — and acquired the Lido's Excelsior Palace Hotel, helping bring about Fascism's rapprochement with capitalism and the city's dependence on tourism.

Sam Lewitt was born in Los Angeles in 1981. He completed the Whitney Independent Study Program in 2005 after receiving his BFA from the School of Visual Arts in 2004. His work is currently in Crash Test: The Molecular Turn, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud, at La Panacée in Montpellier, France, and in 2017, his work was on view in ARTE VIVA ARTE, the 57th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale, curated by Christine Macel. Lewitt's exhibition More Heat Than Light opened in September 2015 at the CCA Wattis Institute in San Francisco, before then traveling in 2016 to the Kunsthalle Basel, and finally, under the title Less Light Warm Words, to the Swiss Institute in New York. Casual Encounters, Lewitt's fourth solo exhibition at Miguel Abreu Gallery, took place in the winter of 2014-15, simultaneous with his solo exhibition Verbrannte Erde: Second Salvage, organized by the Kunststiftung NRW as part of Project 25/25/25, at the Leopold-Hoesch-Museum, in Düren, Germany. Previously, Lewitt co-organized the exhibition and Materials and Money and Crisis at the MUMOK (Vienna) with Richard Birkett, a show in which he was also included, and drunken walks/cliché/corrosion fatigue/ebay at Miguel Abreu Gallery. His work "Fluid Employment" was exhibited in the 2012 Whitney Biennial. Solo exhibitions dedicated to Lewitt's work include FILLER (Galerie Buchholz, Berlin, 2017), International Corrosion Fatigue (Galerie Buchholz, Cologne, 2013), 0110__Universal-City__1010 (Galerie Buchholz, Berlin, 2011), Total Immersion Environment (Miguel Abreu Gallery, 2011), and From A to Z and Back (Galleria Franco Soffiantino, Turin, 2009). His work has also appeared in exhibitions at the Pulitzer Foundation, Fridericianum, David Roberts Art Foundation, White Columns, SculptureCenter, MoMA PS1, Artists Space, the Swiss Institute, David Zwirner, Elizabeth Dee Gallery, and Andrew Roth Gallery. His work is held in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Mumok, Vienna, and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Lewitt is a 2018 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grants to Artists award recipient, as well as the Spring 2018 Cornell University Teiger Mentor in Fine Art.

Fluid Employment, a monograph dedicated to Lewitt's eponymous work, was published in 2013, while his catalogue for More Heat Than Light was published in 2016. Stranded Assets – Modula 2: Protezione Ambientale was published by One Star Press on the occasion of Lewitt's participation in the 2017 Venice Biennale.