

## Ken Lum

6 April – 25 May 2012

We are delighted to present its fifth exhibition of Canadian artist Ken Lum's work.

Lum is part of the Vancouver school of artists along with Jeff Wall and Ian Wallace (who both were Lum's teachers), Rodney Graham, Roy Arden and Stan Douglas among others. Since the '70s, Ken Lum has developed a conceptual vision and critical take on society across media as varied as video, photography, sculpture, performance, and painting.

Ken Lum questions the mechanisms of our consumer society by drawing from a popularized aesthetic. He notably uses the visual codes of advertising campaigns, so as to more effectively undermine them. Language has a fundamental place in his work: Portrait Logos (1978-1991) and Language Paintings (1987-1988) are amongst the first series to play with it. He also addresses the relationship between modernity and the day-to-day, between public and private space, as exemplified by Photo-mirrors (1997-1998) and Mirror/text (2003). Through series like Photo/text Works (1993-ongoing) or even Shopkeeper Signs (2000-ongoing), Lum examines the core identity issues in our contemporary societies, and the challenges they pose.

For this exhibition, the artist presents two entirely new series shown for the first time. The first is inspired by the theme of the labyrinth, which Lum developed for the first time in 2002 at Documenta XI, Kassel, Germany, and twice after that in different versions at the Istanbul (2007) and Gwangju (2008) biennales. Within Chinese philosophy, the labyrinth represents the journey of life, an initiatory route whose meanderings symbolise the course of man's destiny, his pitfalls and his torments. At the Kassel Documenta, the Mirror Maze with 12 Signs of Depression already then made a direct reference to this philosophy. The installation, built on a human scale, was composed of fifty-one mirrors juxtaposed like equilateral triangles at 60° angles from one another. Twelve of the mirrors were engraved with one of the twelve symptoms commonly exhibited when someone has been deemed depressed: "I have no friends", "I cry for no reason", "I can't sleep at night"... Thus, Ken Lum played on the possibility of the viewer relating to the symptoms, on the conscious or unconscious fears of each person.

Entitled Maze, this new series is composed of two dimension works by 2 x 2 m each (painted aluminum, plexiglas and inkjet print) that take up again the journey of life motif. These computer-generated works, two-toned and incredibly graphic, come in red, blue, yellow, green shades—colours that are a visual echo of our consumer society in its cheapest way. In the Kassel installation, the spectators were physically involved. Here, Lum succeeds nonetheless to make us visually experience the journey. It pertains yet again—metaphorically—to finding a path amongst the different possibilities that present themselves to us throughout our lives; it is also about discerning reality from wild dreams. Each work bears a telling indication of the path travelled: The Path from Sanity to Madness ou The Path from Hope to Despair.

The second series, entitled Charts, also incorporates written language. It pertains to the idea of passing from one state to another: from childhood to adulthood, from rejection to acceptance, from comfort to fear. Geometric coloured forms (squares or rectangles) enable the transition via sliding scale or opposition. In The 12 Steps to Recovery from Alcoholism, the recovery of the dependent person is achieved through the transition from square to square, from red to blue.

Ken Lum was born in 1956 in Vancouver, where he still lives and works today. He has been part of numerous international exhibitions, notably the Shanghai Biennale (2000), Documenta XI (2002), the Liverpool Biennial (2006), the Istanbul Biennial (2007), the Gwangju Biennale (2008), and the Moscow Biennale (2010). A 20-year retrospective of Lum's work was held at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2011; and in September of 2012, the city of Toronto will inaugurate a new public commission by Lum.