

john giorno

*jasmine burn*

march 7 – april 13, 2024

opening

march 7, 6 – 8 pm

kurimanzutto is honored to present its first solo exhibition by the celebrated artist, poet, and activist John Giorno (1936 – 2019) at its New York gallery. Titled *Jasmine Burn*, this exhibition departs from Giorno's long-standing relationship to Buddhist spirituality and explores the ways in which it informs his work. It features his series *Perfect Flower Paintings*, *Black and White Poem Paintings*, as well as rarely-seen early silkscreen prints from the 1970s. Also included is his well-known *Dial-A-Poem*, a phone line connecting listeners to the voices of hundreds of poets, musicians, and activists, alongside archival materials related to Giorno's life as a Buddhist. On display in the gallery's viewing room are works by two artist-peers: Rirkrit Tiravanija's *JG Reads* (2008) a 10-hour film about Giorno, and a "target" painting by Ugo Rondinone, Giorno's long-time partner and husband. Giorno Poetry Systems (GPS), the nonprofit organization Giorno founded in 1965 that remains active today, will present a series of public events related to the exhibition in its iconic landmarked building at 222 Bowery. This exhibition is curated by GPS Director Anthony Huberman.

At the crossroads of poetry, visual art, music, and performance, John Giorno's work targets a broad audience, redefining the capabilities of linguistic forms. Born in New York, where he lived his entire life, Giorno is recognized as a pioneer in the field of performance poetry and spoken word, as well as a major activist for AIDS awareness, LGBTQ+ rights, and anti-war struggles. Giorno's relationships with artists such as Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, and Robert Rauschenberg profoundly influenced his work and encouraged him to bring poetry off the printed page and into visual, musical, and political realms.

The entire 25-part set of Giorno's luminous *Perfect Flower Paintings* transform verses into paintings. Phrases such as DAFFODILS BAPTIZED IN BUTTER, LILACS LUXURIOUSLY LICKING THE AIR, and JASMINE BURN are amplified by vibrant colored surfaces. In Buddhism, flowers are often used as votive offerings and represent the impermanent nature of life, the transient beauty of the natural world, and the cycles of birth, death, and reincarnation. In Giorno's paintings, the purity of these flowers is enmeshed within the politically- and sexually-charged context of an American pop/punk sensibility. In contrast to the brilliantly colorful *Flower Paintings* are the

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*Black and White Poem Paintings*. Done in the early 2010s, these silkscreen prints on canvas combined curt and contradictory messages excerpted from his poetry that strike readers as imperative, deadpan, sacred, and profane. A phrase like LIFE IS A KILLER rejects Western dichotomies that tend to cling to life rather than death, and instead embraces the fundamental emptiness and equal interdependence of all things. The early prints, which Giorno produced between 1968 and 1974, incorporated texts with political and sexual content that the artist found in newspapers, magazine articles, and personal ads. Many of these used double columns of text. Since his poems were scores, meant to be spoken and performed, the experience of listening to the two columns simultaneously recited recalled, for the artist, the sound of ritual Buddhist chanting.

Giorno was introduced to Buddhist thought through peers like Allen Ginsberg. In 1971, with Ginsberg and others, Giorno first visited India and Nepal, where he met the Dalai Lama to whom he gifted a copy of his book *Balling Buddha*. On a later trip, he met His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche, the head of the oldest of the four major traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Rinpoche gave Giorno the name Wisdom Jewel and became his teacher and close friend. In New York, with funds raised from wealthy American practitioners, he helped open Yeshe Nyingpo, a dharma center on West 16th Street. In 1982, he set up a shrine and invited lamas to give teachings at 222 Bowery in the loft of his downstairs neighbor and close friend William Burroughs. In Giorno's own loft on the third floor, annual fire pujas brought together hundreds of Tibetan Buddhists adherents gathered around the fireplace.

In addition to its inclusion in *Jasmine Burn, Dial-A-Poem* is on view in the collection galleries at the Museum of Modern Art. The work can also be experienced by calling +1 917 994 8949.

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John Giorno, *JASMINE BURN*, 2017-2024, Acrylic on canvas. 40h x 40w in

#### about the artist

(New York, 1936—2019)

Selected solo exhibitions include: *Perfect Flowers*, Thomas Brambilla Gallery, Bergamo, Italy (2023); *John Giorno*, Almine Rech, London (2022); *John Giorno*, Sperone Westwater, NY (2021); *John Giorno: DO THE UNDONE*, Sperone Westwater, NY (2019); *Ugo Rondinone: I <3 John Giorno*; traveled to Artists space, High Line, Howl, The Kitchen, New Museum, Red Bull Studios, Sky Arts, Swiss Institute, White Columns, Hunter College, (2017); *Un mois autour de la poésie- John Giorno*, Flux Laboratory, Geneva, Switzerland (2015); *Star 69: Dial-A-Poem Relics*, The Bauer Hotel, Campo San Moise, Venice (2011); *Eating the Sky*, Almine Rech Gallery, Brussels, Belgium (2010); *LIFE IS A KILLER*, Galerie Almine Rech, Paris (2009); *LA SAGEZZA DELLE STREGHE/ WISDOM OF THE WITCHES / LA SAGESSE DES SORCIÈRES*, Kaplan Project n°3, Naples, Italy (2005).

Selected group exhibitions include: *Everything gets lighter*, Museo Jumex, Mexico City (2023); *Llámalo de otra*

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*manera/ Something Else Press and Intermedia (1963-1974),* Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid (2023); *The Modern Institute: Space Forgets You,* Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh, UK (2022); *From The Archives: White Columns & 112 Greene Street - 1970-2021,* White Columns, NY (2021); *Petits papiers du 20e siècle,* Centre Pompidou, Paris (2021); *Group Show,* Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, Switzerland (2020); *You Got to Burn to Shine,* Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome (2019); *Voyage d'hiver,* curated by The Palais de Tokyo, the Palace of Versailles, Versailles, France (2017); *Looking Back/The 10th White Columns Annual,* White Columns, NY (2016); *The Exhibition of a Film,* Centre Pompidou, Paris (2015); *Artists and Poets,* Secession, Vienna (2015); *Ecstatic Alphabets/Heaps of Language,* MoMA, NY (2012); *15 Minutes: Homage to Andy Warhol,* Pollock Krasner House & Study Center, East Hampton, NY (2011); *Modern modern,* Chelsea Art Museum, NY (2009); *Traces du Sacré,* Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2008); *Renegades: 25 Years of Performance at Exit Art,* Exit Art, NY (2007); *Multiple Strategies,* Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, Ohio (2004); *Lowland Lullaby,* SI Swiss Institute, NY (2002); *Whatever Window Is Your Pleasure,* George Mulder Fine Art, London (1988); *Information,* Museum of Modern Art, NY (1970); *Software,* The Jewish Museum, NY (1969).

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