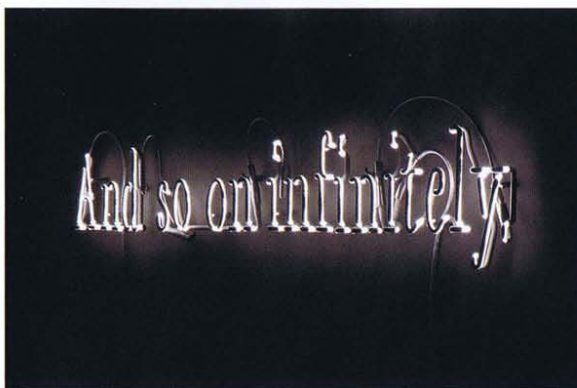


Verzotti, Giorgio. "Milan: Joseph Kosuth, Lia Rumma" (Review). *Artforum* (February 2011), p. 245.



Joseph Kosuth,  
*Texts for Nothing #3*,  
2010, glass, white  
neon, black paint,  
8 1/2 x 44 1/2".

overlooked by critics; according to Kosuth, it is one of the least narrative works by this author who certainly attenuated narration more than anyone else. And yet the passages selected for this exhibition are a rich source of mental associations and open up various possible narrative scenarios. Some function a bit like Lawrence Weiner's "statements," relating to pure states of things ("And so on infinitely"; "Light in a word that not only dims but blurs into the bargain"), while another speaks of a desolate landscape undergoing change: "Grey dust as far as eye can see beneath grey cloudless sky and there all at once or by degrees this whiteness to decipher."

In that "to decipher," and in other words or phrases ("*Ma non è silenzio*" [But it is not silence], "That's it, that's it, the bright side"), an energy of thought meanders freely, not trapped in contemplation of the negative, as the title "Texts for Nothing" might be thought to imply. Perhaps it is no accident that Kosuth has chosen passages that accentuate by their ambiguous, fragmented nature a conceptual flow that can no longer be reached, thus taking us back to a propositional, operational demand. Two long, beautiful Italian phrases convey, through poetic allusion, two kinds of acceptance: acceptance of death ("*Ultime domande di sempre, pose da ragazzina nelle lenzuola della fine, ultime immagini, fine dei sogni, dell'essere che viene, dell'essere che passa, dell'essere che fu, fine della menzogna*") [Last everlasting questions, infant languors in the end sheets, last images, end of dream, of being past, passing and to be, end of lie]), and acceptance of life, expressed in a serene tone that is surprising coming from Beckett: "*Ecco qui la mia vita, perché no, è una vita, se vogliamo, se proprio ci si tiene, non dico di no, stasera,*" which translates as, Here's my life, why not, it is one, if you like, if you must, I don't say no, this evening.

—Giorgio Verzotti

*Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.*

## MILAN

### Joseph Kosuth

LIA RUMMA

In this exhibition, Joseph Kosuth's newest work, "*Texts for Nothing*": *Samuel Beckett, in play*, 2010, occupies the first floor of Lia Rumma's new space in Milan. The other two floors contain older works, dating as far back as 1965—evidence of the American artist's long collaboration with the Italian gallerist, whose first exhibition of Kosuth's work took place in 1971.

To make his large new installation, Kosuth examined Samuel Beckett's "Texts for Nothing" (1958), transcribing brief excerpts from it into white neon letters, some in English, others in Italian, which he mounted on the uniform black of the gallery walls. The glass tubes of the neon phrases are themselves painted black, making it difficult to read them, and the wall seems sprinkled with flickering luminous bands. It is necessary to stand to the side of or below the words, some of which are installed very high up in the large room, in order to read them and glean the meaning of the phrases. Meaning, of course, is precisely what Kosuth brings into play; he constantly questions it through his use of quotations from philosophers, and particularly from the philosophy of language. Among twentieth-century writers, Beckett is one of those who did the most to foment the crisis of language, in his theater and above all his literary texts. Here Beckett himself is "in play." "*Texts for Nothing*" seems to be a work somewhat