

# McArthur Binion – Carl Andre

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In 1973 McArthur Binion moved from Detroit to the heart of the minimalist art scene, New York. In the same year, his work was exhibited at Artists Space, New York, in a show curated by Sol LeWitt Carl Andre and Ronald Bladen.

Inspired by this encounter, in November 2021, at MASSIMODECARLO Milano, *McArthur Binion – Sol LeWitt*, showed Binion and LeWitt's parallel practices in direct dialogue for the first time. With *McArthur Binion – Carl Andre*, we wish to again revisit this important, but overlooked, moment from minimalist New York. Shown side by side, Andre and Binion's works share a strongly linear visual language: the formal investigation of the grid, geometry, and a preoccupation with the nature of the surface of a work of art, all offer points of comparison.

Carl Andre's *Ninth Aluminium Cardinal* (1978), is a quintessential example of the now signature 'Cardinal' forms that Andre made throughout the 1970s. 'Cardinals' refer to the mathematical principal of cardinal numbers and consist of a number of square metal plates: *"The number of units in the rows is always a prime; the number of units in the squares is always a square; and the number of units in the rectangles is always the product of two cardinals."* [Oktagon, pp 188-189]. *Ninth Aluminium Cardinal* was notably made by Andre in Japan, as part of his first solo exhibition in Japan at Art Agency Co., Tokyo in 1978. The use of 50cm large plates in the sculpture gives the work the presence and substance of Andre's best work while its aluminium polished surface elegantly creates an interaction with the work's environment beyond the surface of the sculpture, reflecting the light that hits it back out into its surroundings.

*Visual: Ear* (2022) is part of Binion's ongoing *Visual: Ear* series, begun in 2021. A development from the *DNA* series, the works take as their underlayer, or as Binion refers to it as the 'underconscious', a piece of music titled 'Brown Black X' which he commissioned from his friend, the jazz saxophonist and composer Henry Threadgill whom he first met in New York in the mid-70s. Though the *Visual: Ear* series as it is now is a recent endeavour, Binion first began trying to visualize how he heard music while studying at

Cranbrook Art Academy and has used the terminology 'visual ear' since 1973. Jazz was an important feature of Binion's life during the 1970s in New York, and he counts his art as 'com[ing] from the same place' as his jazz musician contemporaries. The *Visual: Ear* series, like the use of his 1970s address book in the *DNA* series, conjures a particular insight into Binion's experience of the 1970s in New York, illustrating the music that provided the background to his daily life.

MASSIMODECARLO *Pièce Unique*, a space first opened by iconic gallerist Lucio Amelio, designed with Cy Twombly, in Paris in 1989, aims to respect and recast its Twentieth Century beginnings and initial concept into the present day, establishing the longevity of this historical project and infusing it with a new perspective. Showing two works, a new painting by Binion inspired by his life in the 1970s and an existing work by Andre, in conversation within this space honours a similar aim, drawing on historical encounters, and making it relevant to dialogues in art today.

## McArthur Binion

*Visual: Ear*, 2022

Ink, oil paint stick and paper on board  
121.9 × 183 cm / 48 × 72 inches

## Carl Andre

*Ninth Aluminium Cardinal*, 1978

Aluminum

1.27 × 149 × 149 cm / 1/4 × 58 3/4 × 58 3/4 inches

### McArthur Binion

McArthur Binion (b. 1946, Macon, Georgia) lives and works in Chicago, Illinois. Since the 1970's, he has sought an alternative to minimalist art, through his personal philosophy of the pictorial grids fused with his archival belongings, such as the pages of his phone books, personal family photographs, or found documents from the history of the Afro-American community. Binion's reduced combination of colors and forms enclose not only formal mastery but also layers of meaning, beginning with his search for modernist abstract painting's legacy in relation to a wider context, that of the need of human society to leave traces of itself and, at the same time, to project itself into the future. McArthur Binion's work is strongly political, although very subtle. In fact, curator Lowery Stokes Sims once described Binion's DNA series as 'notions of self-awareness and self-discovery, a conscious reflection on himself and to the historical discourse he has contributed to'. McArthur Binion's 40-year career has been a continual investigation of abstract painting. The artist distinctive insertion of narrative and personal history and his emphasis on content differentiates his work from a more traditional minimalist practice. Binion's works have been prominently included in the 57<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, VIVA ARTE VIVA, curated by Christine Macel. Recent solo exhibitions of his work have been organized at Museo Novecento, Florence; Massimo De Carlo, London (2019); Lehmann Maupin, Hong Kong and Seoul (2019); the Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills (2018); Galerie Lelong & Co., New York (2017); the Contemporary Art Museum, Houston (2012).

Binion's work is featured in several public and private collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC; Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills; Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Kemper Museum of Art, Kansas City; Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson; New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans; Strauss Family Collection, Santa Fe; Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo.

### Carl Andre

Carl Andre was born in 1935 in Quincy, Massachusetts. He lives and works in New York. Andre, one of the most influential artists of his generation who was known for expanding the limits of sculpture. While sharing a studio with Frank Stella in New York at the beginning of his practice, Andre begun one of his earliest series of works which were composed as typewritten poems. These poems used words and letters as sculptural materials which were often collaged together from newspapers and other forms of literature. These works anticipated the artist's practice as a sculptor and foreshadowed his first floor sculptures: both the works on paper and his subsequent sculptures demonstrate the importance of repetition in the artist's practice and his fondness for reappropriating existing materials by cutting and rearranging them. Andre's work has been shown in numerous solo exhibitions in prestigious institutions around the world, the most recent include the itinerant show Carl Andre: Sculpture as Place, 1958–2010, MOCA - The Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2017), Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, F (2016), Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, D (2016); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, E (2015) and Dia:Beacon, Dia Art Foundation, Beacon, NY (2014); A Friendship: Carl Andre's Works on Paper from the LeWitt Collection, The Dan Flavin Art Institute, Bridgehampton, NY, USA (2014). His work is held by prominent public collections such as the Tate Modern, London; Centre George Pompidou, Paris; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and the MoMA, New York.