

ART | NEED TO NOW

Seeing the light

Pearl Lam brings Jenny Holzer's work to Hong Kong



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CHARLOTTE ABRAHAMS

US-based artist Jenny Holzer has been projecting her large-scale, text-based light works into public spaces and exhibition halls across the world for more than 30 years. Influenced by contemporary mores, she plays with short, sharp declarations, quotations and statements that explore controversial, provocative issues around sexuality, morality and power.

On Thursday September 19 the doors of Hong Kong's Pearl Lam Galleries will open on her latest solo exhibition, bringing her work to the city for the first time. Part retrospective, part ground-breaking new show, *Light Stream* consists of new electronic signs and stone benches bearing text taken from three existing series – Truisms (her first body of text, produced in 1977-79, which played with aphorisms), Living (created in 1980-82 and referencing everyday, visceral topics such as the body and personal relationships) and Survival, which she began in 1983 and was the first series made specifically for electronic signs.

Holzer's work is thought-provoking and striking, and this exhibition is likely to continue in that vein, pushing its message with aggressively playful force. LED works such as *Torso* (first picture) and *Ribs* (second picture) wrap text into electronic representations of the body, words pulsing like blood through veins. Phrases from Truisms and Survival are presented in Chinese as well as English, a new, radical move that reflects their inaugural presentation in Hong Kong. However, the real highlight of this exhibition is its title piece. Born of Holzer's longtime desire to produce a writhing, interweaving mass of texts, *Light Stream* (2013) sees statements layered and wrapped around one another, their colours brightly beating – almost alive. Chinese and English texts appear alongside one other, reflecting and encouraging dialogue within the exhibition.

Juxtaposed with all this electronic wizardry is a collection of rather beautiful white marble benches, the first pieces that the artist produced with text in Chinese. Carved with short statements such as "Don't place too much trust in experts", they have a memorial quality that quiets this otherwise high-octane show.

Light Stream, from Thursday September 19 to Saturday November 2 2013 at the Pearl Lam Galleries, 601-605 Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong (+852-2522 1428; www.pearllam.com).