

Jenny Holzer



Biography

Jenny Holzer was born in the village of Gallipolis, in southeastern Ohio, USA, in 1950. She first visited New York City when she was eleven, and eventually moved there in 1977 when she was accepted into the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program. She had studied at the Rhode Island School of Design and at a certain point during her MA there, she began incorporating text into her paintings. She wrote her first Truisms in 1977. In an interview with Diane Waldman in 1989 (published in Jenny Holzer, Guggenheim Museum), Holzer talks about what motivated her decision to begin writing and more or less abandon painting as she had practiced and studied it up to that point: 'I wanted to see if I could make anything that would be of use to or have some kind of meaning for a general audience, people on their way to lunch who didn't care anything about art.' She also says that in incorporating her work into the signage and furniture of a city like New York (she has, over the years, placed work in many other urban spaces all over the world) she didn't want either complete control or complete chaos, 'but both there in their extreme forms, not averaged.' To this end, Holzer has employed every kind of public sign writing to make art that is incorporated into the public architecture of cities.

Holzer has been doing solo and collaborative installations and exhibitions in galleries and urban environments all over the world since 1978, including in New York, Berlin, Venice, Osaka, Lund, Boston, Hamburg, London, Paris, São Paulo, and Seoul. These works have taken the form of LED signs, pastings, posters, light installations, writing on stone, billboards, plaques, graffiti, prints, projections, t-shirts, and tattoos. She is also a painter and printmaker – her canvases are strongly text based – and has published books, essays, and stories. She has done a number of special projects for various cities and these include LED installations, electronic signs, projections, and engravings on benches. Holzer has won several major awards including honorary doctorates, the Leone d'Oro at the Venice Biennale, and the Goslar Emperor Ring.