

John Latham

THE LISSON GALLERY DOES NOT EXIST FOR 100 YEARS.

5 May – 5 June 2010

29 Bell Street

Forty years on from John Latham's first solo exhibition at Lisson Gallery in 1970, the gallery revisits works and actions from that seminal show in the wider context of the artist's work through the 1970s, a period of extraordinary innovation, productivity and influence.

The work Latham made during this decade, beginning with the Lisson show, confirmed his position at the forefront of the new conceptual and event-based artistic practices. Through the diverse work he was producing in sculpture, film, painting, text, and performance, he also began to distil his 'Time-Base Theorem'. At the heart of the theory is a scale or spectrum, a cosmological system for understanding all phenomena - physical and metaphysical - in terms of time and event. The current exhibition attempts a physical embodiment of Latham's concept of the Time-Base spectrum within the landscape of the gallery, from the smallest measurable event to the greatest.

In 1970, a motorcycle escort transported Latham's glass sphere work *Least Event as a Habit* through central London to Bell Street. This incredibly fragile object, constructed from one glass vacuum inside another larger glass vacuum, was so minimal as an object as to be almost nothing - a 'not nothing', no 'it', or 'noit' in Latham's terminology - and it embodied Latham's concept of Least Event - an event of the least duration measurable in science. *Least Event as a Habit* survived its first perilous journey but not its second. The work has been refabricated for this exhibition.

During the course of the original exhibition, Latham's acclaimed film *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Collections MoMA New York and Reina Sofia, Madrid), was being created as a performative, process-based art work. The operators (a role performed in 1970 by owner of the gallery Nicholas Logsdail and musician, writer and curator David Toop) diligently constructed the stop-frame animation, a frame per page of a volume of the Encyclopedia. Latham intended this as an ongoing process which is continued now after a short pause of forty years.

A section of *Britannica* is inserted into another of Latham's films, *Erth* (1971), a dramatic countdown through time and space to the surface of the earth. In this exhibition, *Erth* is the counterpoint to the *Least Event*, standing in for the cosmos, the longest event defined by the time-base spectrum. Between these extremes, the performance *The Government of the First and Thirteenth Chair*, first presented at Riverside Studios in 1978, provides a physical framework for the exhibition, summarising the position of humanity within Latham's theory of event.

The title of the exhibition appeared as a Time Sculpture during Latham's first show at Lisson Gallery in 1970. During the third week of the exhibition the gallery manifested itself for short periods in other places than Bell street, including Fiona's shoe, The Stock Exchange and the Insect House at Regent's Park. These places and times were documented on film.

The current exhibition at Lisson Gallery contributes to a wider re-evaluation of Latham's work in film and performance. A DVD publication of Latham's films will be published by Lisson Gallery, LUX, and Flat Time House in September 2010.

The exhibition continues at the late artist's home and studio

The Story of the RIO (abridged)

6 May – 13 June 2010

Flat Time House

<http://www.flattimeho.org.uk>

and coincides with

John Latham: Anarchive

2 April – 5 September 2010

Whitechapel Gallery

<http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/john-latham-anarchive>

John Latham works 1958 1995

5 May - 11 Jun 2010

Karsten Schubert

http://www.karstenschubert.com/exhibitions/_133/

Notes to editors

About the artist:

John Latham (1921 – 2006) has been associated with several national and international artistic movements since he started showing work in the late 1940s. Throughout the 1960s he was a vital force in the happenings and multi-media installations of the emerging counter culture; he was an important contributor to the Destruction in Art Symposium of 1966, and was a founder member of the Artist Placement Group (1966-89); as a tutor at St Martins School of Art he was a vital catalyst in the development of the first phase of conceptual art of the 1960s (pupils included David Lamelas, Barry Flanagan, Jeffrey Shaw, Gilbert & George), he was also responsible, with Malcolm LeGrice, for introducing film into the curriculum.

His work has been exhibited internationally, including recent solo exhibitions at Tate Britain (2005) and PSI, New York (2006) and has been included in numerous historic group shows and many important survey exhibitions of British Art since the 1960s including 'Live in Your Head' (Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2000), 'From Blast To Freeze' (Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany, 2003) and 'Art and the 60s: This was tomorrow' (Tate Britain, 2004). His work is held in collections worldwide, including the Tate Collection, MoMA New York, and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia.

FLAT TIME HOUSE:

Latham's former home and studio has been open to the public since October 2008 for a programme of exhibitions and events and as a research and study centre. Visit

<http://www.flattimeho.org.uk> or contact Elisa Kay, Curator, on 020 7207 4845 or elisa@flattimeho.org.uk for more information.

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Lisson Gallery:

Lisson Gallery, founded by Nicholas Logsdail in 1967, was then one of a small number of pioneering galleries in the UK, Europe and the USA to champion a generation of artists who were transforming the way art was made and presented, focusing on the idea or concept behind an artwork over expressive or descriptive aims. These young artists - including Sol LeWitt, Robert Mangold, Dan Graham, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Carl Andre, Lawrence Weiner, Art & Language, Peter Joseph, Lee Ufan, Giulio Paolini, Daniel Buren as well as John Latham - represented not a style but an attitude, an ethos concerning art's place in a wider intellectual, cultural and social context.

Latham's work has been influential on successive generations of artists represented by the Lisson and beyond. He had five solo exhibitions at the gallery between 1970 and 2005 and took part in numerous group shows, notably 'God is Great' with Anish Kapoor and Douglas Gordon, curated by David Thorp and presented by the Lisson during the Venice Biennale in 2005.