Liliane Lijn

28 April – 26 May 2006  Private View: 27 April, 6.30 – 8.30pm

Austin/Desmond Fine Art is pleased to present an exhibition of the work of multi media artist Liliane Lijn. Alongside representative works spanning the period 1959 to 2005, the exhibition will feature recent video sculptures never before shown to a London public.

Lijn's lifelong concern with light, time and energy coupled with her interest in the scientific discoveries and technological innovations of her time have driven her to constantly redefine the parameters of her art. Her work is a testimony to an exciting epoch: the exploration of space, evolving technology and new materials, utopian dreams, feminism and the issues of identity and gender equality which it raised. In the recent film on Lijn by Illuminations in their 'The Eye' series of interview-based profiles of prominent contemporary artists, Lijn says that 'the role of an artist is to constantly make discoveries and also to constantly be ignorant, to always be at the zero point, to never feel that you have accomplished anything.'

Born in New York City in 1939, Lijn lived in Paris from 1958 to 1964, where she began by studying Archaeology and History of Art but soon decided to dedicate herself to making art. As a young aspiring artist, she came to realise that female artists were not taken seriously. Far from being intimidated, she sought for a language to express her feeling of otherness but consciously refrained from using an imposed 'female' language of aesthetic and emotion. Her early association with the Surrealists opened her eyes to the possibility of tapping into her subconscious.

In Paris, Lijn sought inspiration in the Science Museum and worked with 'objets trouvées' like oil filters and the optics from submarines and tanks. Some of her first kinetic works, her startling Poem Machines, i.e. motorised or hand-turned cones or cylinders, were printed with letters, signs, words from newspapers and texts from Beat poets. With these she wanted 'the word to be seen in movement, splitting itself into a pure vibration until it becomes the energy of sound'. From 1959 to 1966 she worked with light, poetry, movement and liquids, experimenting with fire and acids. She became the 'resident artist' in a Canal street plastics factory using their machines and materials to create her work. With a circular saw she cut through blocks of acrylic, fractured, shattered and drilled Perspex blocks, at times injecting acetic acid into them. Lijn had the audacity to experiment with new everyday materials not hitherto associated with 'high art'.

By the time Lijn moved to London in 1966, she had above all established herself as a leading kinetic artist. She completed numerous public commissions of kinetic or static sculptures, the most recent being her Starslide for the new Evelina Children's Hospital in London. Since 1961, she has exhibited internationally. Recently, an important mid-career retrospective of her work was held at the Mead Gallery and toured to the Djanogly Gallery in Nottingham, accompanied by a monograph written by the curator Prof. David Alan Mellor. The Tate exhibitions Art and the Sixties (2004) and A Summer of Love (2005) included works by Lijn, as did the Lux Touring Project Describing Form (2005) and the show 60: Sixty Years of Sculpture in the Arts Council Collection (2006) at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Distinguished international collections hold her work, such as the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Fonds Nationale d'Art Contemporain, Paris, the Museum of New South Wales, Sydney, the Kunstmuseum Bern, Glasgow Museum Kelvingrove, the Henry Moore Foundation, the Arts Council of Great Britain. In London her work is to be found among others in the collections of the Tate Gallery, the Contemporary Art Society, Unilever PLC and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Liliane Lijn has widely published on art and feminism, both in the form of Artist Books (the epic Crossing Map) and in Journals such as Leonardo.

In May 2005, Lijn was the first recipient of an Arts Council England International Artists Fellowship at the Space Sciences Laboratory at the University of California, Berkeley, in partnership also with the Leonardo Network (Journal of the International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology) and NASA.

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