

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



John Chamberlain, *Tonk #15-86*, 1986, steel, painted, 26 x 54 x 36.8 cm 10 1/4 x 21 1/4 x 14 1/2 in

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN *Sculpture*

February 25 – April 15, 2023

Opening on Saturday, February 25, 2023, 5 – 8 pm

Galerie Karsten Greve is delighted to present *JOHN CHAMBERLAIN Sculpture*, a new solo exhibition in Cologne, devoted to the work of American artist John Chamberlain (1927 – 2011) – a master of metal-folding and transformation and an exceptional colorist. The exhibition thus perpetuates the long artistic collaboration between the artist and the gallery owner Karsten Greve, which dates back to the beginning of the 1970s. Featuring a selection of eleven sculptural compositions, in addition to works on paper and photographs, created between 1967 and 2007, – for the most part acquired by Karsten Greve directly from the artist –, the exhibition enshrines John Chamberlain’s most marked forms of expression, exemplifying the developmental trajectory of the artist’s oeuvre and allowing for a truly all-encompassing artistic experience.

The post-war *zeitgeist* (spirit of the time) propelled artists to experiment and seek new freedoms, liberating themselves from past dogmas. Abstract Expressionism, a post-World War II art movement in American painting, emerged in New York City in the 1940s. John Chamberlain espoused the movement, in which plastic language was considered self-sufficient through a new relationship to gesture. Quite rapidly he chose his material: steel, which he often scavenged and selected from abandoned cars. He would reshape it endlessly. The medium became an “arena in which to act”, to use Jackson Pollock’s expression. In a way, John Chamberlain managed to seize that new form of pictorial expression and convey it in a sculptural shape – incidentally, it is often said that his sculptures are the counterparts of Willem de Kooning’s canvases, in a certain symbiosis between shape, gesture, and color.

From his first solo exhibition at the Martha Jackson Gallery in 1960, John Chamberlain seduced a large number of collectors and artists (Robert Rauschenberg, Donald Judd, Andy Warhol) with his perception of matter. *Papagayo* (1967), one of the artist’s largest galvanized-steel sculptures, once owned by Andy Warhol, was subsequently exhibited at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 1971 on the occasion of the first retrospective for John Chamberlain. *Papagayo*, one of the highlights of the gallery’s exhibition, is a characteristic piece of John Chamberlain’s work in the second half of the 1960s. At the time he was experimenting by briefly choosing to forgo color and give free reign to the shadows and lights on the surface of the metal in a minimalist bent. That interlude accentuated the density of the metal that became so malleable in the hands of the artist.

John Chamberlain proclaimed himself a three-dimensional collage artist, because he assembled the most varied parts in a new structure (while preserving the initial properties of the medium). That was the case with *Double Hooded Jim* (1974) and *Silver Plait* (1976), which distinguish themselves by the assemblage

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of several parts that come to form one single entity. His sculptures shine with an inherent poetry on the sole basis of their shapes, demonstrating the importance of Chamberlain's artistic choice in assembling and balancing the parts: "Some seem to think that I work with found pieces, but I don't. They're chosen, you see. The idea is that there has been a lot of magic implied in the choice."¹ The idea of assemblage is central both to his working of metal and to his pictorial exercises. The series of works on paper *View from the Cockpit* (1976) shines with the intensity and pureness of the colors projected in a graphic whole – a nod to Robert Delaunay's orphism. His rarely exhibited monotypes date back to the middle of the 1980s and showcase yet another different exercise, which could be sculpture not in volume, but on a two-dimensional support to which he applied color through collage and assemblage.

A series of photographs will also be displayed on the occasion of the exhibition in Cologne, completing the overview of the various aspects of the artist's work. In 1977, John Chamberlain started experimenting with a Widelix panoramic camera. He captured wide-angle formats while spatially maneuvering the camera with vigorous manual movements during the gradual exposure period. It allowed him to capture a series of successive instants within a single frame, resulting in images depicting spaces in wild motion, by conflating outlines, structures, colors, and light into weightless forms, celebrating the unexpected outcome.

Born in 1927 in Rochester, Indiana, John Chamberlain attended Black Mountain College, North Carolina, in the mid-1950s, a space where a vivacious exchange among his artist and poet contemporaries of the likes of Charles Olson, Robert Creeley and Robert Duncan, was to profoundly impact his successive career. By the early 1960s Chamberlain's work had already found its ways into a number of significant collections; in 1961 it was exhibited at the São Paulo Biennale, in 1964 at the Venice Biennale. In 1971 both the Guggenheim Museum in New York City and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles dedicated major retrospectives to him, followed by prominent shows at the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (1991) and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (1996). Over the course of his creative period, he had studios in New York, Florida and finally Shelter Island, New York, where he worked until his passing in 2011.

Accompanying the exhibition, the following publications have been published by Galerie Karsten Greve:

John Chamberlain, with texts by Annette Grant, Dave Hickey and Klaus Kertess, Galerie Karsten Greve Cologne / Paris (editions: German / Italian; English / French), 2008, 85 euros.

John Chamberlain. Photographs, with text by Jenni Holder, Galerie Karsten Greve Paris, 2017, 10 euros.

ABOUT GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

Karsten Greve has been a successful art dealer for fifty-four years. He opened his first gallery in 1973 with a solo exhibition of Yves Klein in Cologne. He then opened additional premises, one in Paris (Rue Debelleye) in 1989 and one in St. Moritz (Via Maistra) in 1999. Galerie Karsten Greve ranked from the beginning as a leading gallery worldwide and is regularly represented at international art fairs such as the Art Basel shows, FIAC and TEFAF. The gallery organizes important individual exhibitions of renowned international artists such as Lucio Fontana, Piero Manzoni, Joseph Cornell, Willem de Kooning, and WOLS. Its program is determined by the owner's personal contact to artists of the international post-1945 avant-garde, such as Cy Twombly, Louise Bourgeois, Jannis Kounellis, John Chamberlain, and Pierre Soulages. Karsten Greve's long-standing collaboration with artists such as Gotthard Graubner, Pierrette Bloch and Leiko Ikemura has contributed significantly to them achieving worldwide recognition. The gallery, which is representing about thirty artists, is constantly expanding its portfolio to include rising young artists like Georgia Russell, Claire Morgan, Gideon Rubin, and Raúl Illarramendi. Galerie Karsten Greve is equally well known for its solo exhibitions and its highly ambitious accompanying catalogue productions published by the gallery.

MEDIA CONTACT

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We are happy to provide you with images of the works shown in the exhibition.

¹ Quoted from an unpublished transcript of a conversation with John Chamberlain, n.d. [ca. 1964], Courtesy of the Allan Stone Collection, n.p.