

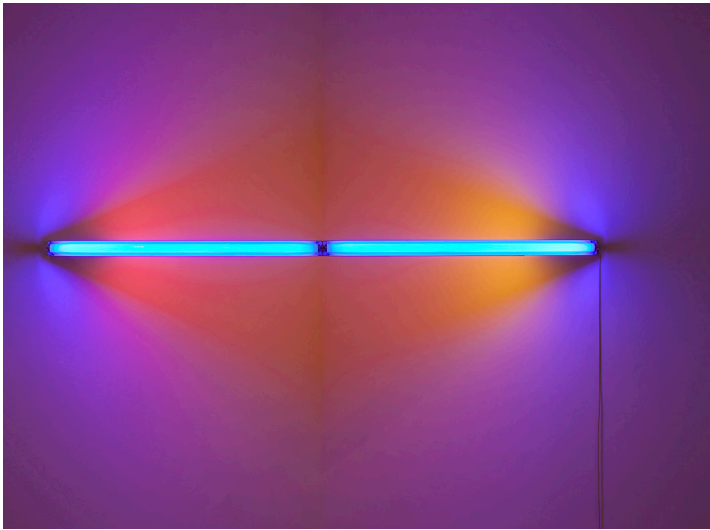
WADDINGTON CUSTOT

Press Release

Chamberlain, Flavin, Indiana

Found in America

5 May–30 June 2017



Waddington Custot is pleased to present an exhibition of work from three major American sculptors: John Chamberlain (1927–2011), Dan Flavin (1933–1996) and Robert Indiana (b.1928). Individually, they have each made a notable contribution to the development of sculpture in the twentieth century. Their parallels lie in the conscious use of found objects from an industrialised America, reflecting economics, consumerism and mechanisation. The three sculptors embraced these aspects of American society and revolutionised the concept of sculpture and sculpture-making.

John Chamberlain began to construct sculpture from scrap car parts in the early 1950s. He referred to these inexpensive and readily available materials as ‘chosen’ rather than ‘found’, selected for their particular look or fit as though the material in itself dictated the final form. Familiar with the assemblage sculpture of David Smith, Chamberlain would press and twist metal into shapes that would interlock and fit together with limited welding. He also appropriated the acidic, artificial colours of automobile paint, pioneering a change in the use of colour in sculpture. Chamberlain’s early use of car parts was ground-breaking in its use of urban, commercial materials, which would subsequently be exploited more explicitly by Pop and Minimalist artists. This exhibition includes an early example of this type of sculpture. *Waller*, from 1959, shows the assemblage quality of Chamberlain’s early work, sculptural elements used in their found state, with component car parts still definable. His work encapsulated the qualities of spontaneity, destruction and chance attributed to the Abstract Expressionists but articulated, for the first time, in sculpture. *Waller* will be shown alongside the later work *Avery Fair*, 1992, which displays the resolution of his mastery of sculptural volume, the manipulation of components to create a sculpture which appears to be made of one piece of metal.

Dan Flavin similarly incorporated industrial colours and materials in his work through the use of standardised fluorescent light bulbs. His light sculptures were prescribed by manufactured bulb colour and

length, which allowed for a non-hierarchical arrangement of parts. As well as the democratisation of sculptural material, he was interested in how light could be used to shape and define space. He investigated the qualities of colour and light and its reach beyond the physical limits of sculptural components. This is clearly articulated in Flavin's corner pieces, such as *Untitled*, 1969, which utilise an often neglected area of gallery space, mixing colours and reflecting artificial light to a limitless extent. The architecture of the space is integral to the work; in this sense the sculpture is site-specific in any environment in which it is hung. In the late 1950s, Robert Indiana began making sculpture from discarded wooden beams salvaged from buildings being demolished around his New York studio at the Coenties Slip. He modified these works in the following years, attaching discarded wheels and integrating text and numbers using found stencils for commercial packing, influenced by advertising and typography of new American consumerism. His lexicon of words and symbols is derived from many sources such as the signs of roadside diners, road signs designating route numbers, company signs and billboards, which had been a ubiquitous part of the Depression-era, Midwestern landscape of Indiana's childhood and, for him, closely connected to personal memories. Numbers have been seen in his work since the 1960s, in word and in Arabic numeral form, both singly and in groups. Thematically, numbers were central to Indiana's art as words. The ten number sculpture *ONE through ZERO (Cor-ten steel)*, 2003, utilises the formal aspects of numbers as individual sculptural objects. The simple, clear, universally understood nature of these symbols provided a base from which Indiana could explore formal possibilities as well as the significance, and narrative, numbers could be imbued with, both on a personal and public level.

The exhibition will be a unique look at key works from these artists' careers and how they revolutionised American sculpture in a way in which contemporary visual art is still very much indebted.

PRESS CONTACT

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Title: Chamberlain, Flavin, Indiana: Found in America
Address: Waddington Custot, 11 Cork Street, London W1S 3LT
Dates: 5 May–30 June 2017
Private View: Thursday 4 May, 6–8pm
Opening Hours: Monday to Friday, 10am to 6pm,
Saturday: 10am to 4pm
Admission: Free
Travel: Piccadilly, Green Park or Bond Street Tube Station

IMAGE

Dan Flavin, *Untitled*, 1969, two 48-inch blue, two 24-inch pink, one 24-inch yellow lights and fixtures, © 2017 Stephen Flavin / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

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