



Iron Stone, 1969

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN Early Years

May 5 - June 27, 2009



Socket, 1974

L&M Arts is pleased to present twenty-five works from this important artist, ranging from 1954's *Calliope*, to 1987's *Endless Gossip*. Following our previous exhibition *Project Space: Donald Judd Colored plexiglas*, this show highlights the connection between these artists. In 1962 Donald Judd wrote, "The only reason Chamberlain is not the best American sculptor under forty is the incommensurability of 'the best' which makes it arbitrary to say so."

Chamberlain's choice of materials gives a sense that these sculptures have been pushed against, fought with, and bound into their shapes through a process neither additive nor subtractive; the foam works are literally bound with cord. There is an enlivening tension between the obviously prodigious force used to create these works and the delicacy with which they pose and balance, just as there is a tension between the perceived harshness of the materials and the lushness of the artworks.

Where the color palette of any given work might be minimal, or the materials determinedly commonplace, as in the galvanized steel pieces, generous compensation is always made to the viewer through a balanced gracefulness, a dynamic sense of motion, or a surprising playfulness.

Volume is a primary consideration. Even *Rochester*, 1958 an early work completed before Chamberlain made car parts, his material of choice, is a truly three-dimensional work, branching out and defining its space. *Untitled*, 1961 and *Relief*, 1962 in particular, seem to make light of the idea of two-dimensionality as they explode out of their frames and tumble from the wall.

The hand of the artist is all but invisible. The viewer knows that choices were made, but all feelings of intentionality seem to come from the works themselves; they are as they have chosen to be. They are like animals flushed from their cover, startlingly full of life.

However, just as we become comfortable with the kinetic, nearly anthropomorphic grace of these works, *Miss Remember Ford*, 1964 surprises with its angularity, sleek lines, and its air of retro-futurism, evident in the gold and green sparkle finishes and the shapes reminiscent of the fins and vents of comic-book spaceships; and a good deal of the pleasure in *Iron Stone*, 1969 comes from a purely sensual appreciation of the thickness, shine and weight of the chromed steel.

While material and form may seem to trump color (the white of automobile under-paint is ever-present; a series of works are made from galvanized steel; the foam pieces are uncolored) the polychromatic run of blue in *Spike*, 1964 and the solidly blue foot the sculpture stands on, are an unexpected flourish of painterly confidence that sends us back to look at the palettes of previous works, giving us yet another angle from which to investigate these sculptures.

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN Early Works is the first New York survey of the artist in more than a year. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog with essay by Mark Rosenthal.

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