

Timothy Taylor



John Chamberlain, *Untitled*, 1962. Wall relief—painted steel and paper collage, 24 × 22 × 18 ¼ in. (61 × 55.9 × 46.4 cm)
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John Chamberlain

13 March — 12 April 2025
15 Bolton Street, London

Timothy Taylor is pleased to announce an exhibition of sculptures by John Chamberlain (1927—2011) at its London space. Opening 13 March, the presentation will feature works created between the 1960s and 2000s, providing insight into the artist's six-decade career. Ranging in size from tabletop to large-scale, the works in this exhibition exemplify Chamberlain's sculptural choreographies of balance and rhythm, exertion, and velocity.

In the late 1950s, Chamberlain came to prominence for his sculptures hewn from the remnants of junked automobiles. Bringing gestural Abstract Expressionism into three dimensions, he took an emotionally liberated and instinctual approach to his assemblages of car hoods, bumpers, fenders, and fins. He used the term “fit” to describe his mode of composing, which was improvised and spontaneous, prioritising inevitable and organic solutions to formal problems. Thinking in terms of volume, Chamberlain created works that unfold as the viewer moves around them; their surfaces, marked and patinated by their former lives on the road, tell additional stories and incorporate the conceptual dimensions of the pop readymade.

The earliest work in the exhibition, *Untitled* (1962), is a wall relief composed of painted steel and paper collage. Fragments of oxblood red, yellow, and turquoise metal undulate and fold into each other, resulting in petal-like forms. The shadows cast within the structure and on the wall add a dynamic dimension to the form. Chamberlain was one of the twentieth-century's great colourists. The year this work was created, Donald Judd wrote of Chamberlain's distinctly American palette as "the hard, sweet, pastel enamels, frequently roses and ceruleans, of Detroit's imitation elegance for the poor."

Two works from the '80s highlight the artist's use of painted steel. The smaller-scale *Gui 4 Fila* (1987) features heavy, dripping brushstrokes of primary blue and red alongside hunter green on chromed steel. Elsewhere, more ephemeral strokes of chartreuse suggest a lighter touch that reverberates against the welts and dents of manipulated metal. In the larger *Splendid Actor* (1989), broad, crimped strips of steel painted navy blue, white, and in sunset gradients drape over a central vertical form. The arched structure seems at once to be rising up and retiring; its surprising dimensions of colour send the viewer's eye roving.

In the monumental 2002 sculpture *All That Is Lovely In Men*, elongated metal strands in riotous colors seem to spring forth even as they are carefully bundled into place. This work shares its title with a 1955 collection of poetry by Chamberlain's lifelong friend Robert Creeley, whom the artist met during his studies at Black Mountain College in the mid-'50s.

The 2009 sculpture *Voiceaufondre* was created two years before the artist's death, representing a culmination of the artist's practice. Torqued strips of white and silver metal intertwine to form a near-anthropomorphic column. Anticompositional elements of patina and crushed folds introduce the concepts of time, entropy, and gravity to the salvaged industrial materials, which almost alchemically achieve an air of grace. Together, these works reveal Chamberlain's steady formal language, at once rugged, raw, and lyrical.

Press Inquiries

Ella Roeg ella@reiberpr.com +44 7900 576338