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As announced in the previous newsletter, we gladly continue dedicating our focuses to the artists represented by Galleria Fumagalli. Let's now concentrate on **Richard Wilson's** work.

On this special occasion, the video of *Butterfly*, a project made in 2003 and exhibited in the space The Wapping Project in London, will be streamed.

The link and password to watch the video are included at the end of this focus.

RICHARD WILSON



Richard Wilson, Galleria Fumagalli, Bergamo, 2007. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

Richard Wilson was born in London in 1953, where he lives and works. He studied at the London College of Printing, at the Hornsey College of Art and at the University of Reading. Born from a family of master builders and professional artists, he developed an interpretation of sculpture as a continual attempt to reshape and manipulate the environment around him drawing inspiration from the worlds of engineering and construction.

Almost all of his works are site-specific, but liable to be adapted to any architectural space. They are the result of real objects reshaped and reconfigured, daily materials deformed, in order to alter

the observer's perception.

Richard Wilson has been exhibiting his work in national and international art spaces in Japan, United States, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, Australia and China. He represented Great Britain at the biennials in Sydney (1992), San Paolo (1990), Venice (1986) and at the Yokohama Triennial (2005). He has been shortlisted twice for the Turner Prize and selected for the prestigious DAAD residence in Berlin in 1992/93. He is the only British artist to have been invited to take part in the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial 2000, in Japan. Since 2006 he is member of the Royal Academy and in 2008 he received the honorary PhD at the Middlesex University.

«I don't have a vocabulary of shapes and forms that I create to, I have to go to a real thing [...] and I'll manipulate it in some way, transform it so it no longer functions in the way you expect it to. But I need that initial thing from the real world because I've always been concerned with the way you can alter someone's perception.»

Richard Wilson

RESHAPED AND RECONFIGURED OBJECTS

Richard Wilson challenges the received order and the expected behaviour of recognisable material.

The combination of cutting, reorganising, insertion and hybridisation is the artist's primary tool. Collapsed caravans, dismantled taxis, stacked shacks and stairs that lead nowhere, are just some of his impressive creations.

The compositions reveal the friction between reality and fiction, the object and its image, creating a sense of disorientation induced by the ambiguity between the feeling of familiarity and at the same time of newness that makes the images recognisable, in part but not entirely.



Richard Wilson, *Shells*, 2018. Drum shells, plywood, metal fixings, 105x150x130 cm. Ph. Lucrezia Roda. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli



Installation view of *Richard Wilson. The Ape Piaggio*, Galleria Fumagalli, Bergamo, 2007.
Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

«You can test the received order of things and through doing that you understand things better, but you can also discover what they could become.»

Richard Wilson

SCULPTING THE SPACE

Richard Wilson has been always fascinated by the relationship between objects and their physical occupation of space.

Among his best-known sculptures, *Stealing Space Compressed* draws the attention to a “space” of which we have no concept unless we give it a reference or a measurement. In fact, it is a sculpture of a portion of the negative space or “space between” an hallway and staircase. The artist scanned a section of the stairwell to identify the area of space between the window and the entrance door.

He made the invisible space visible in material and challenged the viewer's spatial expectations.



Richard Wilson, *Stealing Space Compressed*, 2018.
Plywood, 210x240x64 cm.
Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli



Richard Wilson, *Direct Debit Sculpture*, 2018. Plastic debit card, plywood, 130x56x53 cm.
Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

Influenced by the Cubist and Futurist artists of the early 20th century who were enamoured of the new Machine Age, Wilson combined engineering design with abstract sculpture to represent speed and movement in the space.

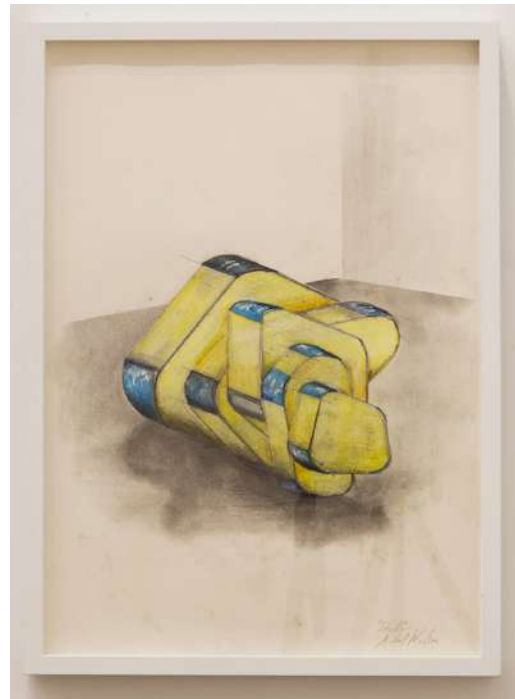


Richard Wilson, *Slipstream*, Terminal 2, Heathrow Airport, London, 2014. Courtesy the artist.

DRAWINGS

Richard Wilson's works always emerge from numerous sketches, drawing, models, tests. This approach may come from his upbringing influenced by his father's profession and practical attitude. When he was taking a foundation course at the London College of Printing, he considered whether to become a designer or a sculptor.

This way of making art allows him to best collaborate with engineers and implement his environmental projects.



Richard Wilson, *Shells*, 2018. Collage on paper, 67x48 cm. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli



Richard Wilson, *Stealing Space Compressed*, 2018. Collage on paper, 48x67 cm. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

ENVIRONMENTAL INSTALLATIONS

There are fascinating patterns that emerge in Wilson's environmental works. The artist challenges the way the viewer see and negotiate the surroundings, through the distortion of the usual appearance of things twisting, crushing, or riconfiguring them.



Richard Wilson, *20:50*, Matt's Gallery, London, 1987.
Courtesy the artist

A close connection with the surroundings is in *Turning the Place Over* (2008), constructed for Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture. It consisted of 10-metre section cut from a facade of a disused building: mounted onto a central spindle, the section rotated to reveal the inside of the structure before coming to rest flush against the building again, providing a surprising and unexpected sight for those viewing it from below.



Richard Wilson, *Turning the Place Over*, Year of Culture, Liverpool, UK, 2008. Courtesy the artist



Richard Wilson, *Hang on a Minute Lads, I've got a Great Idea*, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea, UK, 2012.
Courtesy the artist

«We believe architecture to be incredibly rigid but all time we see buildings being demolished and others being built over the top of them. We tend to think of concrete and stone and steel as terribly permanent material, but they are all temporary and adaptable in skilled hands.»

Richard Wilson

PERFORMANCES

Richard Wilson also shows interest in the creation of spectacles. This was particularly evident in the performances of the collective Bow Gamelan Ensemble in which he participated between 1983 and 1991, together with his fellow co-founders Paul Burwell and Anne Bean.

The group specialised in performances that exploited the "natural acoustics" of unique instruments constructed from salvaged components such as scrap metal, electric motors, industrial whistlers, horns and warning systems, along with pyrotechnic displays, to create intense plays of fire, light and noise.



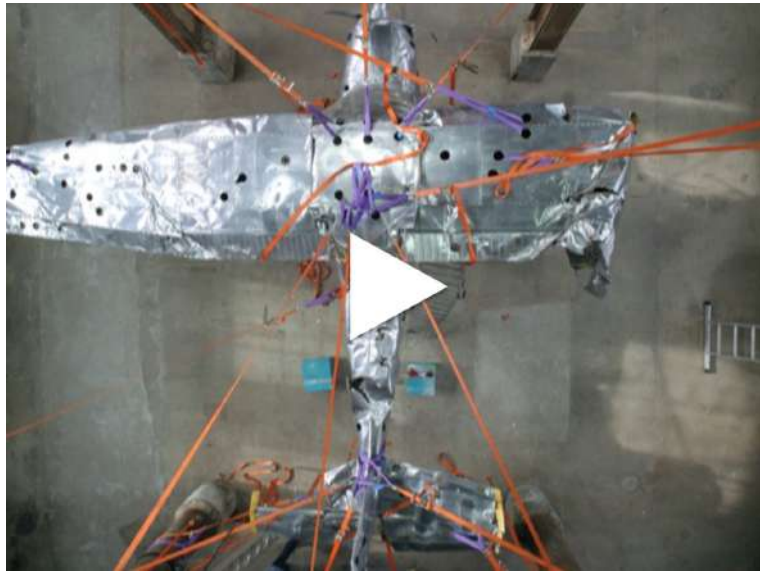
CD cover of Bow Gamelan Ensemble, *Great Noises That Fill The Air*, Klinker Zoundz, 1988

«I think if you're allowed to play you can really start to investigate your world [...] Play is enquiry; it's experimentation. And the really important thing is that it's self-governed. It's about not accepting restrictions and setting your own rules for engaging with the world.»

Richard Wilson

Speaking of spectacular performances, Galleria Fumagalli gladly shares the video of the project *Butterfly* by Richard Wilson, made in 2003 and exhibited at The Wapping Project in London.

A large cube of metal - an inarticulate volume - was placed on the floor of the Wapping Project's main space and exhibited for a set period of time. Then, the artist and a team of assistants attached cables to the cube, then stretched them by using pulling machines. The slow process of pulling the metal block apart was recorded by a stop-motion camera to create a film of the object unfolding. Slowly, this process begins to reveal the cube's original form: a crumpled light aircraft was revealed, like a butterfly unfolding from its chrysalis.



**The video of the project
Butterfly by Richard Wilson
exhibited at The Wapping Project, London in 2003
is on view at this [LINK](#) typing the password:
Butterfly2020**

To learn more on the artist's work, visit [Galleria Fumagalli's website](#) and [Richard Wilson's website](#).

Texts partially drawn from the monograph *Richard Wilson* curated by Simon Morrissey and published by Tate Publishing (London, 2005); from the catalog *Richard Wilson. Slipstream* edited by Jean Wainwright and with an introduction by Mark Davy, published by Futurecity Ltd. (London, 2014) on the occasion of the project *Slipstream* set at Terminal 2, Heathrow Airport, London, 2014.
