

**OBSERVER**

**John Latham and the Distant Perspective**

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**Private view: Tuesday 9 July, 6-8.30pm**

**Exhibition: 6 – 26 July 2019**



Aerial image of 'Niddrie Woman' site, 1970s. © John Latham Foundation

**Chelsea Space** is delighted to present ***OBSERVER: John Latham and the Distant Perspective***. For the first time, John Latham, a pioneer of British conceptual art, is the focus of an exhibition at Chelsea Space. This exhibition presents work by Latham that employs an aerial viewpoint and investigates how the use of this perspective is positioned in his wider thinking.

Whilst on an artist placement with the Scottish Development Agency in the 1970s, Latham was invited to suggest solutions for the problem of derelict land outside Edinburgh. When asked 'from which perspective would he be looking at Scotland', he apparently pointed to a map of the country and responded 'from this distance'<sup>1</sup>. The distant view allows for comprehension in a broader context and Latham believed an aerial viewpoint offered a mode of understanding

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<sup>1</sup> Craig Richardson, 'Waste to Monument: John Latham's Niddrie Woman: Art & Environment', in *Tate Papers*, no.17, Spring 2012

otherwise outside of human consciousness. His research in the Scottish Development Agency's aerial photography archive allowed access to huge resource of such material that became hugely important to his work. It is a viewpoint he felt was 'necessary if humanity is to see itself objectively'<sup>2</sup>. In the archival material, photographic and video works included in this exhibition we can understand the use of aerial imagery as a metaphor for an expansive mode of understanding, and as a means for locating oneself in the world and the universe.

This exhibition is a collaboration between **MA Curating and Collections** (Chelsea College of Arts, UAL) and **Flat Time House** (a London landmark that was declared a Living Sculpture in 2003). The show stems from extensive research of John Latham's archival material supervised by Flat Time House Director and Curator Gareth Bell-Jones.

The curatorial approach is based on Latham's interpretation of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's 1880 novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. According to Latham, each of the three brothers represents a kind of 'observing person.' Mitya is instinctive, Ivan is rational, while Alyosha relies on intuition in his observations. This third, intuitive perspective is held in wider society by the artist, referred to by Latham as 'The Incidental Person'. The Incidental Person encompasses the characteristics of the other two observers but has the ability to reflect and view things from a distance.

The layout of Chelsea Space invites viewers to navigate Latham's work and theories as one of these three brothers might. The Reading Room introduces a rational view of Latham through contextual material. As viewers instinctively follow the Ramp, they engage with the exhibition as Mitya. The Main Space presents a reflective and intuitive look at Latham's work, embodying the perspective of Alyosha.

**John Latham** (1921-2006) was a British conceptual artist and Chelsea College of Arts graduate (1947-1951). With a career spanning more than fifty years, he made significant contributions to contemporary art, blending science, art and philosophy. Latham has had numerous international exhibitions at institutions including the Serpentine Galleries, London, UK (2017); Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland (1973); Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf, Germany (1975); P.S.1. Contemporary Art Center, New York, NY, USA (2006). Latham's work is in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York and Tate Gallery, London. He was the subject of a solo show at Tate Britain in London (2005).

**This exhibition was made possible by the support of the Director and trustees of Flat Time House.**

**Flat Time House** (FTHo) was the studio home of John Latham (1921-2006), recognised as one of the most significant and influential British post-war artists. In 2003, Latham declared the house a living sculpture, naming it FTHo after his theory of time, 'Flat Time'. Until his death, Latham opened his door to anyone interested in thinking about art. It is in this spirit that Flat Time House opened in 2008 as a gallery with a programme of exhibitions and events exploring the artist's practice, his theoretical ideas and their continued relevance. It also provides a centre for

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<sup>2</sup> John A. Walker, unpublished manuscript, 1987, in Chrissie Iles, 'Introduction', John Latham: The N-U Niddrie Heart, exhibition catalogue, Lisson Gallery, London 1992, unpaginated

alternative learning, which includes the John Latham Archive, an artist's residency space, and the academic journal NOIT.

Curated by:

Philipp Abdullah, Ines Basille, Jingyi Chen, Yihuan Chen, Yingying Chen, Lena Czermak, Qiaoyi He, Beining Liang, Ying Ying Lin, Yuyang Lin, Bingjie Liu, Tianning Lu, Lourdes Mendez, Soojin Oh, Shalini Rajasegaran, Brandon Rickett, Santiago Simoes, Hingis Szewah Ng, Jing Wu, Xiaotong Xia, Yue Ying, Liting Zhang, Yao Zhao, Zeyu Zhao.

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## Acknowledgements

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Donald Smith, Cherie Silver, Gaia Giacomelli and Sarah Millet, Chelsea Space

Andreas Leventis, Lisson Gallery

Barbara Steveni

Athanasios Velios

Anna Ridley

Adam Lockhart, DJCAD Media Archives & Preservation Lab

## Ends

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**Publication:** Each exhibition at Chelsea Space is accompanied by a publication, published by Chelsea Space, available here: <http://www.chelseaspace.org/publication.html> .

**Press Information:** For further information, images or to discuss interviews please contact:

Gaia Giacomelli or Cherie Silver at Chelsea Space via email [info@chelseaspace.org](mailto:info@chelseaspace.org) or tel:020 7514 6983

## Notes to Editors

- **Images and further information** are available upon request.
- **About: Chelsea Space** is a public exhibiting space, sited on the Millbank campus of Chelsea College of Arts, UAL, where invited art and design professionals are encouraged to work on experimental curatorial projects. See: [www.chelseaspace.org](http://www.chelseaspace.org)
- In copy please refer to **Chelsea Space** and not 'The Chelsea space.'
- **Regular Gallery opening times:** Tues - Fri: 11:00 – 17:00 and by appointment.
- **MA Show Gallery opening time:**  
Private View | Friday 5 July | 6pm - 9pm (last entry 8.40pm)  
Saturday 6 July - Thursday 11 July  
Opening hours | Saturday and Sunday 11am - 4.30pm | Monday - Thursday 10am - 8pm  
Friday 12 July - Friday 26 July Opening hours | Tuesday - Friday 11am - 5pm
- **Private view:** Tuesday 9 July 2019, 6-8:30pm
- **Admission Free**
- **Chelsea College of Arts, UAL** is one of the world's leading art and design institutions.
- Located at Millbank, next door to Tate Britain, Chelsea specialises in Fine Art, Graphic Design and Interior and Textiles Design. Since its origins in the 19th century, the College has produced many of the greatest names in the arts, including: Quentin Blake (illustrator and author) Ralph Fiennes (film and stage actor), Anish Kapoor (sculptor), Steve McQueen (artist), Chris Ofili (artist), Alan Rickman (film and stage actor), Alexei Sayle (comedian) and Gavin Turk (sculptor).
- **MA Curating and Collections** is part of Chelsea College of Arts, UAL.

## Chelsea Space

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16 John Islip Street, London SW1P 4JU  
[www.chelseaspace.org](http://www.chelseaspace.org)

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# Chelsea Space

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