

BETTY CUNINGHAM GALLERY

PRESS RELEASE
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Christopher Wilmarth

July 7 – August 12, 2011

Summer Hours: Tuesday – Friday, 10 am – 6 pm

Opening 6 – 8 PM on Thursday July 7th



October Ladders, 1974, Etched glass and steel cables, 31 x 45 x 6 inches, 78.74 x 114.3 x 15.24 cm

On Thursday July 7, 2011, Betty Cunningham Gallery will open an exhibition of the sculpture and drawings of Christopher Wilmarth. To celebrate this exhibition, the gallery will remain open that Thursday until 8 PM.

The current exhibition will feature two major maquettes *Gift of the Bridge*, from 1975 (etched glass and steel, 36 x 36 x 29 inches) and *Days on Blue*, from 1974 (etched glass and steel, 24 x 60 x 16 inches) which is the maquette for the largest work ever done by Wilmarth. The larger version of the same name measures 7 x 17 ½ x 5 feet and is in a private collection. Also included in the exhibition will be the wall piece, *October Ladders*, from 1974 (etched black glass and steel cables, 31 x 45 x 6 inches).

The exhibition will include the etchings from *Breath*, the title Wilmarth gave to a group of seven blown glass works that he did in response to poems by Stéphane Mallarmé. Wilmarth was introduced to these poems by the editor of *The Hudson Review*, Frederick Morgan. In 1981, Wilmarth did the etchings and design and Morgan did the translation in a unique collaboration which produced the volume *The Seven Poems by Stéphane Mallarmé*. The Portfolio Edition will be made available during this exhibition.

In 1966, Wilmarth graduated from Cooper Union. He began exhibiting in New York at the Graham Gallery in 1968 and then at Paula Cooper in 1971 and 1972. By 1978, Wilmarth, disillusioned with the art market, departed from all dealer representation and established *The Studio of the First Amendment*, where he realized three shows: first in 1978 of his current work at that time, 1980 of the *Gnomon's Parade* sculptures, and then in 1982 of the *Breath* series. In 1982, Wilmarth joined Hirsch & Adler Modern, where he realized two major shows: *Layers* in 1984 and *Delancy Backs* in 1986.

On November 19, 1987, Wilmarth committed suicide at the age of forty-four. His short and distinguished career produced only 150 sculptures. The Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Philadelphia Museum and the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis) among others had acquired his work before he reached the age of 30.

As a testimony to his strong following, The Museum of Modern Art mounted the Christopher Wilmarth retrospective in 1989. His archive was donated to the Fogg Art Museum of Harvard University in 2001 by his widow, Susan Wilmarth-Rabineau. In turn, the Fogg Art Museum mounted

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the 2003 exhibition, *Christopher Wilmarth: Drawings into Sculpture*. In 2004, Princeton University Press published an award-winning monograph, *Christopher Wilmarth: Light and Gravity*, written by Steven Henry Madoff with essays by Edward Saywell and Nancy Milford.

The current exhibition will remain on view through August 14, 2011.

For further information, artist biography, and/or images, please contact the gallery.

Listing information: Betty Cuninghame Gallery is located at 541 W. 25th St, New York, New York 10001

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Public transportation: C or E train to 23rd St.

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Next Exhibition: Greg Drasler, September 8- October 15, 2011