

BETTY CUNINGHAM GALLERY

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Christopher Wilmarth

November 29th, 2007– January 19th, 2008
Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm

On Thursday, November 29th, 2007, Betty Cuninghams Gallery will open an exhibition of the sculpture of Christopher Wilmarth. Wilmarth, who died at the age of 44 in 1987, achieved significant recognition at a young age. At 30 years old his work was already in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Philadelphia Museum and the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis).

Wilmarth graduated from Cooper Union in 1966 and shortly thereafter began exhibiting in New York: first 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, a place where he could show his own works free from the demands of the commercial art world. He stated, “If it wasn’t magic, it was merchandise,” and Wilmarth did not produce “merchandise”. At The Studio for the First Amendment, Wilmarth 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. However, despite his idealistic view of being an “independent artist,” he found the demands of dealing his own work more than he had anticipated. In 1982, Wilmarth joined Hirschl & Adler Modern, where he realized two major shows: *Layers* in 1984 and *Delancey Backs* in 1986.

The current exhibition includes several works that have not been exhibited since the artist’s death: particularly *Everly*, 1969, named after the Everly Brothers, and composed of 18 twelve inch etched glass discs on a single rod, *Mesh*, 1971, a 16 inch square “wall drawing” composed of squares of glass laced with steel cable shown at Paula Cooper the year it was made and *Gnomon’s Parade (Side)*, 1980, one of the nine *Gnomon Parade* works shown at The Studio of the First Amendment in 1980.

On November 19, 1987, Wilmarth committed suicide at the age of forty-four. And as a testimony to his strong following, The Museum of Modern Art mounted a retrospective sixteen months later, opening in April of 1989. In 2001, Susan Wilmarth-Rabineau, his widow, donated the complete archive to the Fogg Art Museum of Harvard University. And in turn, the Fogg Art Museum mounted the 2003 exhibition, *Christopher Wilmarth: Drawing 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 exhibition will remain on view through January 19th, 2008.

For further information and/or photographs please contact the gallery at 212-242-2772 or info@bettycunninghamsgallery.com

NEXT EXHIBITION: *Rackstraw Downes, January 24 – March 1, 2008*

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