

Gilberto Zorio

Blain|Southern
4 Hanover Square
London W1S 1BP

9 August – 28 September 2013
Private View: 8 August 2013, 6–8 pm

"Gilberto Zorio has always worked with intensities: the intensity of speed, of light, of thrust, of shape – of the compressed energy contained and hidden in the properties and the shapes of the material world."

— R. Fuchs



Gilberto Zorio, *Leads II*, 1968, Sheets of lead, copper sulphate, hydrochloric acid, copper braid, rope, Dimensions variable

The directors of Blain|Southern are delighted to present the gallery's first solo exhibition by Gilberto Zorio. Bringing together seminal sculptures from the 1960s, a number of recent works and new site-specific installations, this is the artist's first UK show in five years.

Along with artists including Jannis Kounellis, Pino Pascali and Giuseppe Penone, Zorio was a pivotal member of the radical Arte Povera movement in Italy during the mid-1960s. While their practices differed, all were united in their use of modest, 'found' materials, such as wood, lead, copper, steel and concrete, which they deployed to challenge historic definitions of what constitutes an artwork, and in doing so raised profound questions about the relationship between life and art.

Zorio's early sculptures offered a new and vital engagement with form, which blurred the established line between art and the viewer, and subverted the traditional concept of the autonomous object. His sculptures often present form in a state of flux; an open-ended experience that plays on the boundaries between internal and external space, dynamism and stasis, renewal and dissolution, and that ultimately resists being labelled as 'finished'.

A typical example of this is *Leads II* (1968), which is comprised of buckled sheets of lead suspended from the ceiling by ropes. Inside the lead are pools of blue and yellow liquid – copper sulphate and hydrochloric acid – which actively begin to crystallise upon a copper braid, also suspended from the ceiling. Through chemical reaction, *Leads II* demonstrates Zorio's fascination with extremes of energies – both the gradual natural transformations seen in this work, as well as violent moments of energy in other works – whose immediacy is felt only in brief flashes before it disappears.

A work from the same year, *Microphones* (1968), presents a number of concrete breeze blocks on bases of ball bearings, above which microphones hang from the ceiling; viewers are encouraged to stand upon the blocks and to record their voices, before listening to the playback on speakers. An 'echo' effect then occurs, filling the space with repetitive sound that envelops the viewer and alters their auditory perception.

Featuring throughout the show is one of Zorio's most enduring and personal motifs: the star. Often regarded by the artist as a "kind of self-portrait", these works celebrate the violent transformation from impure to pure form. The artist has long been fascinated by the star's encapsulation of matter in a constant state of flux, and by its representation of the process through which base matter obtains an otherworldly luminosity. The five-pointed star is symbolic for the artist in many respects – of luck, time, ancient history and astronomical energy.

These ideas are brought together in a new star-shaped installation that Zorio has created for this exhibition, in which UV lamps reveal phosphorous marks that change in colour and nature in response to their environment, strewn across a large structure.

In *Voltaic Bow* (1968), a strip of leather is combined with a copper rod that conducts electrical current, triggering sudden flashes of light and invoking the life cycle and the fragile boundary of the skin. The rod introduces a violent elemental energy into the equation – one that becomes abstracted out of context, and made visibly alluring despite its unsettling juxtaposition: an uncomfortable merging of the functional and the aesthetic.

Canoe Ladle (2013) is a new work by the artist, constructed in the gallery prior to the exhibition opening. Using a metal ladle, Zorio implies material transformation and the passage from one state to another, while the canoe represents a metaphorical journey, invoking notions of dreams and desires through the intersection of art with science, industry with nature, and past with future.

This exhibition provides a major insight into the evolution of Zorio's practice, representing a dramatic reinforcement of the original impact of the artist's work, as well as an overview of how his ground-breaking visual language has developed throughout his career. Furthermore, it conveys a deep impression of the major influence that Arte Povera continues to maintain throughout contemporary art today.

For further information on the exhibition, please contact Mark Inglefield.
T: +44 758 419 9500 | E: mark@blainsouthern.com

Notes to Editors:

Gilberto Zorio (b.1944) held his first solo exhibition at the Piccola Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Turin, in 1963, and participated in a number of the definitive Arte Povera group shows of 1967-8, curated by Germano Celant. Zorio featured in the historically acclaimed 1969 exhibition curated by Harald Szeemann at the Kunsthalle Bern, *When Attitudes Become Form*, which has recently been recreated by Germano Celant at the Fondazione Prada, Venice (2013). The exhibition presented new art of the 1960s that elevated process over product. Zorio exhibited several works including *Torcìa* (1968-9), which consisted of flaming torches, suspended upon a line until the piece collapsed.

Zorio was included in group exhibition *Theodoron Awards: Nine Young Artists* at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 1969 and in 1976, the Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, recognised Zorio with a significant solo exhibition. A mid-career retrospective of the artist's work followed at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, in 1979. In 1985, the Kunstverein, Stuttgart, organised a major retrospective, which travelled in 1986 to the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris; Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva; and the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. In 1992, an exhibition was mounted at the Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato, Italy.

More recently, at Tate Modern in 2001, Zorio's work was represented as part of the group exhibition *Zero to Infinity: Arte Povera 1962-72* and his first UK solo exhibition was mounted at Milton Keynes Gallery in 2008. In 2010, a solo exhibition of his work was presented at the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma, Rome. His works feature within major public collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Castello di Rivoli Museo, Turin; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; and Tate, London.

Arte Povera, a term coined by art critic Germano Celant, encompasses a radical movement in Italian art, which lasted from 1967-1972. Reacting against established social, political and cultural institutions, the ostentation of Pop Art, and the perceived excesses of Italy in the 1960s, Arte Povera artists were defined by their utilisation of humble materials, by their interest in the relationship between nature and industry, and by a return to a revolutionary kind of simplicity that centred itself on action, inquiry and a new model of creative freedom. Key figures of the movement include Giovanni Anselmo, Alighiero Boetti, Jannis Kounellis, Pino Pascali, Giuseppe Penone and Gilberto Zorio.

Blain|Southern is a contemporary art gallery established in September 2010, representing some of the world's leading contemporary artists. Originally located at 21 Dering Street, London, the gallery moved to 4 Hanover Square, London, in October 2012. Blain|Southern also has a gallery in Berlin, and a sister gallery in New York, Blain|Di Donna.