

## Joe Tilson: **ALCHERA**

*Revisiting Works from  
the 70s and 80s*

Marlborough London  
17 June – 31 July 2021



Joe Tilson, *Mnemonic Device (Images)*, 1973  
acrylic on wood panel, 203 x 203 x 8 cm.

*Joe Tilson: ALCHERA* revisits the artist's wood relief, painting and sculptural works from the 1970s and 80s. Named after the ancient aboriginal concept of a timeless spiritual "Dream Time", this body of work marks a profound shift in his artistic practice. Having moved from London to the countryside of Wiltshire and Tuscany, Tilson abandoned British Pop Art tropes to explore timeless, natural and ecological themes, drawing on influences ranging from Ancient Greek and Australian Aboriginal history to the writing of James Joyce and W. B. Yeats among many others.

Fabricated through hand-building, burning, branding and painting wood, Tilson's works connect with natural materials on various time scales: his sculptures become memory devices for both ancient histories and recent events, employing simple words and linguistic techniques to become content-carriers and, ultimately, symbols of much grander concepts and associations.

The artist's political and cultural interest in ecology and the natural world is relevant now more than ever, as Tilson grapples with enormous environmental cycles and, at the core of this exhibition, the four ancient elements of

Earth, Water, Fire and Air. Seeking to establish a kind of order within the world and its ever-changing elements, Tilson uses poetic oppositions and subdivisions of time to present various helpful systems: the four seasons, the four elements, days of the week and letters of the alphabet. Navigating these familiar patterns and cycles, he invites us, as Marco Livingstone writes, 'on a journey that replaces a conventional understanding of 'linear' time with a more expansive concept of 'organic' or circular time.'

**Joe Tilson RA** was born in 1928 and trained as a carpenter and joiner before joining the Royal Air Force and then going to study at St Martin's School of Art (1949-52) and the Royal College of Art (1952-55). After graduating, he was awarded the Rome Prize for a year in Italy, introducing him to classical history and culture which would become important to his art and philosophy in later decades. Tilson went on to teach at St Martin's, the Slade School of Fine Art, the School of Visual Arts, New York and the Hochschule für bildende Künste in Hamburg.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue featuring an essay by Marco Livingstone.

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Gallery opening hours:  
Monday - Friday: 10.00 - 17.30  
Saturday: 10.00 - 16.00

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