

Joe Tilson Modest Materials A-Z Box of Friends & Family

28 April – 3 June 2023

Private View in the presence of the artist:

27 April 2023 | 6:00-8:00pm

Press Release

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Joe Tilson exhibitions 'Modest Materials' and 'A-Z Box of Friends and Family' at Marlborough London

Marlborough London is delighted to present two complimentary exhibitions opening 28 April 2023 to mark the 95th birthday of the British artist Joe Tilson RA.

Modest Materials on the ground floor and first floor galleries is an overview of Tilson's career, spanning seven decades and ranging from bold Pop Art pieces to political works and elaborate wood reliefs, through to Tilson's most recent body of work honouring his love for Venice and Tuscany. The exhibition title plays on Tilson's early training as a carpenter and joiner, and his unorthodox approach to art practice that led him to work with 'modest materials'.

Born in London to working-class parents in 1928, Tilson joined the Royal Air Force before going to study at St Martin's School of Art (1949-52), where he became friends with Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff amongst others, 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 become one of the foremost pioneers of Pop Art in Britain presenting his mixed media works in the British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1964 and moving in a circle of artists that included Richard Hamilton, Eduardo Paolozzi and Allen Jones.



Joe Tilson
Geometry 3, 1964
oil and acrylic on wood relief
74 x 74 in./ 188 x 188 cm

David Hockney was a neighbour in Notting Hill for a time, and Tilson is credited as having introduced Peter Blake to The Beatles.

At the end of the 1960s, tired of the London art scene, Tilson moved to the country where he began developing a new body of work inspired by nature and myth. In the decades since he has continued to work in a wide variety of media and styles, dividing his time between Wiltshire, London and Venice. Tilson has taught 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.

A-Z Box of Friends and Family on the second floor gallery is inspired by Tilson's 1963 work of the same title, and features original artworks by friends including Auerbach, Paolozzi and Hamilton, as well as some of his artist family members including his wife Jos Tilson and children Sophy, Jake and Anna. The exhibition, which also includes portraits of Tilson by fellow artists Blake and Hockney, is an eclectic celebration of an extraordinary life.

The Marlborough London exhibitions coincide with the publication of a major monograph by Lund Humphries. Written by Marco Livingstone and designed by Tilson's son Jake, the book provides a definitive overview of the artist's oeuvre.

Marlborough

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