

Press Release

Barry Le Va

In a State of Flux

26 April – 29 September 2024

Opening: Thursday, 25 April 2024, 6pm

Press conference: Wednesday, 24 April 2024, 10.30am

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, skylight galleries

"I guess at that time the body was a new territory, and it had to be investigated."

—Barry Le Va

Barry Le Va (1941–2021) is regarded as a moderniser of sculpture in post-1960s art. In his cross-disciplinary oeuvre, which is seen as beginning in the early days of process art and postminimalism, he succeeded in expanding the concept of sculpture. Not only did he break up the unit of form into countless particles, he also incorporated the principles of change, instability, and disruption as constants in his art.

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein presents the first retrospective since the artist's death, providing a survey of his work from the 1960s to his final groups of work. The thread running through this exhibition is the exploration of the relationship between the installations and the drawings.

Executed with care and following detailed plans, Barry Le Va's installations are defined by the principles of chance, chaos and order. All his life, the floor was the artist's "ground" and field for experimentation. First executed in 1966, his *Distribution Pieces*, scattered on the ground, gained him wide and instant public attention following a cover story in *Artforum* in November 1968.

Drawing is an integral part of Le Va's oeuvre. On the one hand, he saw it as part of his thinking process; on the other, he understood drawings as "diagrams that function almost like musical scores or compositions". In this sense they often pave the way for the sculptural work, sometimes serving as a kind of "plan view", while at the same time permitting interpretation and improvisation in situ. Other drawings are works in their own right.

From the outset, the relationship between viewer and artwork was of the utmost importance to Le Va. His installations, which he likened to crime scenes, challenge the viewers to search for

clues so as to reconstruct the act and the underlying concept. This approach is based on Le Va's profound interest in the crime genre: "I became intrigued by the idea of visual clues, the way Sherlock Holmes managed to reconstruct a plot from obscure visual evidence."

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, together with Kunstmuseum St. Gallen and MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt, holds several key early works by Barry Le Va from the collection of Rolf Ricke, the first gallerist to show the artist in Europe in 1970. These works form a central starting point of the show.

A production of Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, curated by Christiane Meyer-Stoll.

The exhibition is accompanied by a three-volume **publication** in which the artist's voice is heard in particular through his "Notes" (statements) and through the republication and first publication of interviews.

The exhibition will travel to Fruitmarket, Edinburgh (26 October 2024 – 2 February 2025), and Museum Kurhaus Kleve (spring 2025).

Barry Le Va was born in Long Beach, California, in 1941 and initially studied architecture and mathematics before switching to art. Spanning fifty years, his exhibiting career began in 1969 with a solo show at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and ended with a long-term installation at Dia: Beacon (2019–2021), New York, where he re-enacted installations from the 1960s. He took part in various exhibitions, including documenta 5, 6, and 7 (1972, 1977, and 1982).

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