

# bernard jacobson gallery

Phillip King

Living with Colour

2<sup>nd</sup> April – 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2008

'King is the one sculptor of his generation prepared to jettison what he has proved himself good at to explore what cannot be programmed'. - William Feaver, 1992

To look across Phillip King's long and prestigious career is to be confronted by a conflict between relentless experimentation, fluctuation and renewal on the one hand and an elemental consistency on the other; a tension between the formal heterogeneity of a diverse oeuvre and the consistent guiding principles from which it stems. Bursting into public consciousness in the 1960s with arresting, polychromatic sculptures fashioned from a range of unconventional materials, King has become one of the foremost British sculptors of our times. King's work was from the outset underpinned by an interest in the potential of colour, an uninhibited approach to materials and a connection with primary geometric forms that pushed him beyond the confines of his training with Henry Moore and Anthony Caro. His self-confessed desire to pursue broad general principles over any single line of development has allowed King to constantly reinvent his sculptural milieu, offering inspiration to generations of sculptors from Richard Long to Gary Webb or Jim Lambie. His most recent works on display at Bernard Jacobson Gallery give testament to Tim Hilton's observation that 'nothing is lost in King's sculptural life', with the artist combining the collective experience of some fifty years of experimentation to create some of the most vibrant works of his career.

The exhibition, King's first since retiring as the president of the Royal Academy in 2004, shows the sculptor taking his lead from a new material - Foam PVC. The versatility of the light, malleable and hardwearing material lends a playful vitality to the show. As though a counterbalance to the fraught figuration of the 1980s these new works present broad, brightly coloured surfaces and largely geometric forms, recalling King's iconic works of the 1960s and yet betraying an increasingly architectural approach to space, refined over the course of the intervening years.

In the upstairs gallery, complex, almost theatrical, settings will mingle with more minimalist reminiscences, whilst downstairs there will be a series of works that traverse the boundary

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between sculpture and furniture. These works grow from King's contemplation of a debate he had with the Russian constructivist Naum Gabo some years ago regarding the function and nature of art. Gabo insisted that if a shoemaker made a supremely beautiful pair of shoes he was an artist, whereas King posited that the distinguishing feature of most art, and sculpture in particular, lay in its uselessness. King's suite of sculptural furniture thus plays with this distinction, and yet, in typical King style, refuses to offer any comprehensive answers.

Phillip King was born in Tunisia in 1934. His work is included in a wide variety of public collections. He is the only British sculptor aside from Henry Moore to have been awarded a retrospective at the Forte de Belvedere in Florence. The show at Bernard Jacobson Gallery provides a fantastic opportunity to see an exciting group of work by this most celebrated and important of British sculptors.