



CANARY WHARF
ARTS+EVENTS

Sculpture at Work



LILIANE LIJN

Poemdrums and Koans

Curated by Ann Elliott for Canary Wharf Group

16 JANUARY – 11 MARCH 2017

Daily 7am - midnight

Lobby, One Canada Square,
Canary Wharf, London E14 5AB

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Cover: Liberate Heart Poemcon 2007. Photograph: Liliane Lijn

LILIANE LIJN

Poemdrums and Koans

Lightwaves, radiowaves, space and matter, performance, film, poetry, movement and an abiding interest in materials and what they can do are all part of Liliane Lijn's thinking and making in her art.

The cone, a satisfying sculptural form exhibiting strong line, curve and volume, has become one of Lijn's constant forms of expression through a range of materials from plastics to ceramic, wood, steel, resins and glass. Her use of the Zen Buddhist's *Kōan* in titling her work indicates further levels of meaning: this concept – used by Buddhists as a riddle to test the inadequacy of logical reasoning – has been adopted by Lijn to test the viewer's perception and understanding, through her use of words and movement, and her manipulation of different materials.

While developing her Koan sculptures, Lijn also started working with cylindrical columns. Her series of kinetic *Poemdrums* demonstrates a further dynamic progression of her use of words and the changes of meaning in written texts when read while spinning on a rotating vertical axis (or axes) at different speeds. All are lit from the inside.



Way Out Is Way In Poemdrum 2009. Photograph: Klaus Wehner



Faster Than Birds Poemdrum 2009. Photograph: Klaus Wehner

Faster Than Birds Poemdrum 2009, a laser-cut mild steel and motorised assembly, features a fragment from 'Homage to the Space Pioneers', a poem by Sinclair Beiles that he gave to Lijn in 1960. Three 'drums', each placed one within another, carry the text from the poem, laser-cut into their walls, each moving at differing speeds either clockwise or counter-clockwise. Reading the words as they cross-spin is almost impossible, although individual letters may be readily perceived. The poem is dissected, changed by movement and light from within the spinning drums.

Way Out Is Way In Poemdrum 2009, five words from 'The Naked Lunch' by William S. Burroughs, comprises black-painted steel solvent drums that carry a readily readable text, each word positioned vertically as many times as the circumference of the drum will permit. Lijn's treatment of the letters differs from the clear-cut whole typeface of those in *Faster Than Birds Poemdrum* in that each is transformed by small holes drilled into the drums through which the inner light penetrates. When rotating at increasing speed the words blur becoming virtual stripes then five strips of light.

By concentrating on how these pieces work, one is in danger of not thinking about the artist's intention on other planes, such as language and how that can be manipulated, which creates further layers of meaning in each piece. Light, movement and altered meaning as a result of constant change, have, for Liliane Lijn, parallels with the universe. Her *Poemdrums* may appear structurally quite simple, but her use of words, form, movement and light creates sculptures that are greater than the sum of their parts.

In *Essential Forest Poemdrum* 2011, which has a text by Liliane Lijn, the mechanics of the piece echo those used in *Faster Than Birds*. But here the great clarity of the typeface assists in reading first whole words in sequence; the layering of the three elements and increasing circular motion gradually reduces the text into fragments; then into radiant symbols.

Dark Matter Poemdrum, *Glass Feet Poemdrum* and *Who Will Say Poemdrum* are all of 2011 and of similar construction. The texts differ, *Dark Matter* is by Liliane Lijn, *Glass Feet* is from 'Drafts' by Rachel Blau Du Plessis and *Who Will Say* is from 'The Wanderer's Song' by Meng Chiao (751-814,

late Tang period). Each disconnects the structure of the text, so one becomes several poems, and as in the *Poemcons* described below, the rapid movement changes the metre of the poem.

Liliane Lijn has worked on groups of cones in varying materials, including wood, as early as the 1960s when she was living and working in Athens. The earliest versions of *Koans* in this exhibition are *Pink Koan Box* and *Lime Koan Box*, both of 1997. Made from Perspex, these boxes act as containers for a CD-ROM of Lijn's work, and are also striped conical sculptures in Perspex in varying degrees of opacity, colour and transparency.

Lijn also uses the cone as a vehicle for text in sculptures she titles *Poemcons*, some of which she made as early as 1966 at the time the form was gaining significance in her work. In *Jewel in the Wood Poemcon* 1999, gouache and Letraset applied on a turned mahogany cone, the text from a poem by Leonard D. Marshall, read while the cone is turning, may be read logically or randomly, depending on the speed of the revolutions and the speed with which the viewer is able to read. Movement of the text can alter both metre and, to some extent, meaning.

In *Revealing Poemcon* 2001, which is similarly constructed but with Vinyl transfers and gouache on the turned mahogany cone, Lijn has used a text from a poem by David Miller. She likes the words to float into the viewer's mind in continually changing sequences.



Jewel in the Wood Poemcon 1999.
Photograph: Richard Wilding 2014



Am I Who Poemcon 2010.
Photograph: Liliane Lijn

Liberate Heart Poemcon 2007 has words composed by Liliane Lijn, and again she intends that the words should float into the mind of the viewer in aleatory fashion. Like *Jewel in the Wood Poemcon*, the paint has been applied freely, although here she has layered paint over some of her words.

Am I Who Poemcon 2010, with the text again by Lijn, is one of the most ambiguous of her *Poemcons*. Read variously, the words - *I, who, you, are* - have differing meanings as they are read either sequentially or randomly. The off-centered vertical lines of yellow and black words are interchangeable according to their colour, which also enriches the experience of one's own interpretation of the text offered in this *Poemcon*. 'Who you are am I' - 'Am I who you are?'

Poemdrums: Glass Feet, Dark Matter, Essential Forest, Who Will Say 2011.
Photograph: Klaus Wehner





Liquid Koan 2003.
Photographs: Richard Wilding 2016



Layered Cones 2008.

In 2002 The Multiple Store commissioned Liliane Lijn to make a multiple. She chose to make a conical form in translucent resin and here we show both *Liquid Koan prototype* of 2002 and an Artist Proof from the sold-out edition of thirty, *Liquid Koan 2003*. Made in twenty layers of translucent resin in the final version, each colour is distinct while merging with both the one below and the one above it. The merging colours give the feeling of an inner fluidity to the solid conical form.

On a monumental scale, *Lost Koan 2007* is the largest piece in the exhibition. Made in glass reinforced polyester and Perspex, with a motorised drive and inner fluorescent lights, the cone revolves and alters through the elliptical coloured layers lit from within the outer shell. The lines appear to be moving, although only the cone revolves. *Lost Koan* refers to Lijn's NASA residency at the Space Sciences Laboratory, University of California, Berkeley in 2005. When making her film *Inner Space Outer Space*, Lijn interviewed astrophysicist and renowned expert on the Aurora Borealis, Dr. Stephen B. Mende. She was fascinated by the visualisation of his thoughts described on his whiteboard and asked him to explain their meaning. She found his explanation compelling as it connected to her own work, in particular his reference to the space above the earth's poles, where the solar wind meets the earth's magnetic field, as the *lost cone*.



The Dance 2013. Photograph: James O'Jenkins, courtesy Mayor of London

Layered Cones 2008 were made as a group of four. Clear Perspex divides the cones horizontally at varying heights giving lightness and transparency to otherwise solid-looking forms. The cone sculptures work especially well in clusters of varying heights, as seen here in *Mountain Koans 2009*, six hand-thrown and hand-painted ceramic cones, and *Striped Cones 2009* in glazed ceramic, both sets made in Italy by Lijn with Ceramica Rometti. To create each edition of *Mountain Koans*, multiple layers of colour are laid on the cone as it revolves at high speed on a turntable. The layers of successive colour give the impression of dynamic circular motion.

In contrast with these striped cones, the five *Black Cones 2009*, also made in glazed ceramic, are solidly static and dense. The disparity is telling, black absorbs light, while the colourful gloss of stripes gives the feeling of light being emitted.

The Dance 2013, a model made in plastic using a 3-D printing machine, was Lijn's proposal for a performing sculpture, shortlisted for the 4th Plinth Commission, Trafalgar Square, London. Although not selected for the commission, the model is a viable sculpture that works well in its own right. Driven by eight electric motors, elliptical cuts through the two identical conical forms are articulated to move separately, thereby creating a sinuous dance. Robotic, technological, architectural and strangely humanoid, they combine a number of Lijn's abiding interests.



Lost Koan 2007. Photograph: Heini Schneebeil



moonmeme 2014.
Photograph: Liliane Lijn



Above: Meteorite Ring 2009. Right: Fossil Necklace 2008.
Photographs: Heini Schneebeil

moonmeme 2014, a digital realtime program for pcDuino & monitor, is an interactive virtual installation through which the viewer can access the phase of the moon at the precise time and date of his or her birth. However, Lijn has projected onto the surface of the moon the word 'SHE', visible when the moon is full, changing to 'HE' or just 'S' or 'E' depending on the phase. As the lunar image is exactly what can be seen synchronously in the sky, at the New Moon, when the moon is not visible, the monitor will also be blank. *moonmeme* is part of an ongoing project started in 1991, of which Liliane Lijn commented in an interview with Anna McNay, published in the magazine STATE 23: 'I wanted to give importance to the feminine and traditionally the moon and the feminine have been linked in so many cultures. But then I realised that, as the moon waxed and waned the word "he" came out of it. I realised it was all about balance and that opposites are not opposites, they all come out of one whole. . . .'

Included in the exhibition is a selection of Liliane Lijn's *Earthart* – jewellery in the form of cuffs, necklaces, pendants, belts and rings. Each is formed in wax and then electroformed in silver, although the 'meteorite' ring is plated with ruthenium (a metal in the platinum group). Some of the pieces look as though they have been cast from parts of the earth, pressed into a form to fit onto an arm or to hang from a leather thong or silver wire around the neck. Rings refer to meteorites and rocks. Belts reference fossils and a magma clasp. These sculptural pieces are both of and about matter, transcending the merely decorative in favour of the elemental.

Ann Elliott
January 2017



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Liliane Lijn was born in New York in 1939 and now lives and works in London. She studied Archaeology at the Sorbonne and History of Art at the École du Louvre in Paris, where her interest in science and her friendships with artists and poets inspired her early works with the poetics of science and light. Internationally exhibited since the 1960s, Lijn's works are in major collections in America, Australia, Britain, Canada and Europe.

The recipient of many awards, one of the most important for her career was the ACE International Artist Fellowship, in partnership with NASA and the Leonardo Network in 2005 at the Space Sciences Laboratory, University of California, Berkeley. This residency led her to work with Aerogel, the material used by NASA to collect dust from outer space and to develop, in collaboration with astronomer John Vallergera, Solar Hills, a large-scale solar installation in the landscape.

Best known for her work with language and light, Lijn's recent exhibitions include *City Sculpture Project 1972* at Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 2016/17; *Beat Generation*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2016; and *A Lesson in Sculpture with John Latham*, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 2016. Lijn's *Power Game*, a socio-political word game and performance first staged in 1974, was enacted at the Southbank Centre, London, as part of the *Power of Power* festival, 2016. Projected exhibitions include *Spiritualized* at IMMA, Dublin, 2017.

For more information visit www.lilianeijn.com

Exhibition Tour

Tuesday 7 February, 6.30pm to 7.15pm
Curator Ann Elliott tours the exhibition
with Liliane Lijn

The tour is free but please contact Canary Wharf Public Art Office at visualart@canarywharf.com to reserve a place.

LIST OF WORKS

Pink Koan Box 1997

Perspex, CD-ROM 16.5 x 14

Lime Koan Box 1997

Perspex, CD-ROM 16.1 x 12.6

Jewel in the Wood Poemcon 1999

Letraset and gouache on turned mahogany cone, electric motor. Text from poem by Leonard D Marshall 21.5 x 11, turntable 5.7 x 11.5

Revealing Poemcon 2001

Vinyl transfers, gouache on turned mahogany cone, electric motor. Text from poem by David Miller 40 x 9.5, turntable 5.7 x 11.5

Liquid Koan prototype 2002

Polyester resin 27.5 x 15

Liquid Koan 2003

Polyester resin Edition of 30
Commissioned for The Multiple Store
30 x 12

Lost Koan 2007

Glass reinforced polyester, Perspex, motorised drive and fluorescent lights
250 x 150

Liberate Heart Poemcon 2007

Acrylic paint, Letrafilm, newspaper, vinyl transfers on turned mahogany cone, electric 20 rpm motor. Text by Liliane Lijn 35.6 x 12, turntable 5.7 x 11.5

Layered Cones 2008

Plywood and Perspex, unique group of 4
49.5 x 11.2
44.7 x 11.3
38.7 x 9.8
38.2 x 10

Mountain Koans 2009

Six hand-thrown and hand-painted ceramic cones in signed edition of 30. Made in Italy with Ceramica Rometti. Varying dimensions

Striped Cones 2009

Seven Artist Proof cones in glazed ceramic. Made in Italy with Ceramica Rometti
I) 75.2 x 26.5
II) 65 x 18.5
III) 55.5 x 19.5
IV) 49.5 x 11.5
V) 36.2 x 12.3
VI) 36 x 12 (Blue)
VII) 36 x 12

Black Cones 2009

A group of five black glazed ceramic cones
Varying dimensions

Faster Than Birds Poemdrum 2009

Laser cut mild steel, anodized aluminium, two motor turntable assembly with light. Text from 'Homage to the Space Pioneers', poem by Sinclair Beiles 44.2 x 30

Way Out Is Way In Poemdrum 2009

Painted steel solvent drums, 3 phase motor, inverter and programmed speed and direction control chip, halogen lighting. Text: 5 words from 'The Naked Lunch' by William S. Burroughs 300 x 60

Am I Who Poemcon 2010

Vinyl transfers on acrylic painted turned mahogany cone, electric motor. Text by Liliane Lijn. 28 x 10.8, turntable 5.7 x 11.5

Essential Forest Poemdrum 2011

Laser cut mild steel, anodized aluminium, two motor turntable assembly with light. Text by Liliane Lijn 96 x 30

Dark Matter Poemdrum 2011

Laser cut mild steel, anodized aluminium, three motor turntable assembly with light. Text by Liliane Lijn 63 x 30

Glass Feet Poemdrum 2011

Laser cut mild steel, anodized aluminium, three motor turntable assembly with light. Text from 'Drafts' by Rachel Blau Du Plessis 63 x 30

Who Will Say Poemdrum 2011

Laser cut painted mild steel, anodized aluminium, three motor turntable assembly with light. Text from 'The Wanderer's Song' by Meng Chiao (751-814 late Tang) 72 x 30

The Dance 2013

Model for a performing sculpture, shortlisted for the 4th Plinth, Trafalgar Square, London. 3-D printed plastic, LEDs, 8 motor computer programme
92 x 49.4 x 24.7

moonmeme 2014

Digital realtime program for pcDuino & monitor. Programming: Andi Studer. Digital imaging: Richard Wilding. Lunar phases source material: António Cidadão. Astronomical calculations and programming: Tom Ruen

EARTHART JEWELLERY

Magma Cuff 2008

Electroformed fine silver, edition of 8

Meteor Cuff 2008

Electroformed fine silver, edition of 8

Lunar Cuff 2008

Electroformed fine silver, edition of 8

Fossil Necklaces 2008

Four different necklaces, all electroformed fine silver with bands in sterling silver, edition of 8

Lava Necklace 2008

Electroformed fine silver, chain in sterling silver, edition of 8

Lava Pendant, Models H, G and N 2009-2015

Four different pendants, all electroformed fine silver on rubber thong or sterling silver chain, edition of 25

Fossil Belt 2010

Eight electroformed fine silver plates sown on black leather belt, edition of 8

Magma Clasp Belt 2010

Black leather belt with electroformed fine silver clasp, edition of 8

Folded Ring 2008

Cast sterling silver, edition of 25

Meteorite Ring 2009

Plated ruthenium, edition of 25

Rock Ring 2015

Electroformed fine silver on cast sterling silver band, edition of 15

Lava Earrings 2015

Electroformed fine silver with sterling silver stud, edition of 15

Most of the works are for sale

Dimensions in cm, height x base diameter/width