

# LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

## Richard Deacon: 'Flat Earth'

17 March – 29 April 2016  
Via Zenale 3, Milan, 20123

"Changing materials from one work to the next is a way of beginning again each time (and thus of finishing what had gone before)".

Richard Deacon, *The Size of It*, 2008

Richard Deacon's first exhibition with Lisson Gallery Milan brings together floor-hugging ceramic and modestly scaled but totemic wooden works: flat earth and standing trees.

Deacon has been at the helm of British sculpture for almost four decades, in this time moving voraciously between an extraordinary diversity of media – wood, stainless steel, corrugated iron, polycarbonate, marble, clay, vinyl, foam and leather. His sculptures call attention to their making and invite a bodily response from the viewer, while their vernacular titles create a tension between the visual and the poetic.

Ceramics have been an important area of Deacon's practice since the mid-90s. He uses clay to form sculptures that are variously organic or geometric, monolithic or assembled out of numerous components – all of which push the material to its limit. The ceramics in 'Flat Earth' represent a new departure. Each work presents a flat surface of clay, a horizontal support that bears exquisite glazes. In a letter to a friend, Deacon wrote that the works were an "accidental result of trying to make some bases and then thinking that they looked stupid with sculpture on top. I was left with this interesting, flat surface to deal with – one of the first fired badly, so we ground it down, suddenly becoming like a terrazzo floor, and I had an 'aha moment'. Some of the colour was applied as paint, the rest as powder."

The mineral-rich colours are unpredictable in nature and evoke shifting topographies, constellations and biological formations. "Clouds, swirls of water, shapes in the fire, strains, vomit, pebbles, smoke and various random devices", Deacon states, "that have all been both instruments and agents to artists" (*In Praise Of Television*, 1998. Association des Amis du Musée Départemental de Rochechouart). The works' abstract compositions relate to painting, yet their three-dimensional forms are read, map-like, from above and resemble aerial views of the earth, with their irregular shapes suggestive of a cluster of islands.

Accompanying the ceramics are new wooden works, their sinewy forms the result of an intricate process whereby the wood, a bundle of twenty-five wooden sticks, is first steamed and twisted, then elements of the bundle are selectively removed and the remainder fixed together. The resulting series of twisting profiles are satisfyingly simple and complex.

### About the Artist

Richard Deacon's voluptuous abstract forms have placed him at the helm of British sculpture since the 1980s and, hugely influential, his works are visible in major public commissions around the world. Deacon describes himself as a 'fabricator', emphasising the construction behind the finished object – although many of the works are indeed cast, modelled or carved by hand – and accordingly the logic of the fabrication is often exposed: sinuous curved forms might be bound by glue oozing between layers of wood or have screws and rivets protruding from sheets of steel, wearing their hearts on their sleeves. Such transparency highlights the reactive nature of the process: it is part of a

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two-way conversation between artist and material that transforms the workaday into something metaphorical. The idea of 'fabrication' also denotes making something up, of fiction rather than truth, and this knack for wordplay surfaces in Deacon's titles, which might establish juxtapositions or wreak new meaning from familiar sayings or clichés – see *Let's not be Stupid* (1991), *No Stone Unturned* (1999) or *Water Under the Bridge* (2008).

Richard Deacon was born in Bangor, Wales in 1949 and lives and works in London. He has a BA from St Martin's School of Art (1972) and an MA in Environmental Media from the Royal College of Art (1977). Solo exhibitions include Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Winterthur, Switzerland (2015); Tate Britain, London, United Kingdom (2014); Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany (2011); Musée de la Ville de Strasbourg, France (2010); Portland Art Museum, Oregon (2008); PSI Contemporary Art Center, New York (2001); MACCSI, Caracas, Venezuela (1996); Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (1989) and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1988). He represented Wales at the Venice Biennale (2007) and has participated in the Venice Architecture Biennale (2012), the Glasgow International (2006) and documenta 9 (1992). He won the Turner Prize in 1987 and the Robert Jakobsen Prize, Museum Wurth, Kunzelsau, Germany in 1995. He was awarded the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres by the Ministry of Culture, France in 1996 and made a CBE in 1999. Deacon's work is currently part of a touring exhibition 'On the Other Side', traveling to the Langen Foundation, Germany in August 2016.

### About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, it pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Sol LeWitt and Richard Long, as well as those of significant British sculptors from Anish Kapoor and Tony Cragg to a younger generation led by Ryan Gander and Haroon Mirza. With two exhibition spaces in London, one in Milan and a fourth to open under the High Line in New York in May 2016, Lisson Gallery supports and develops artists globally, including Marina Abramovic, Allora and Calzadilla, Ai Weiwei, Gerard Byrne, Liu Xiaodong, Tatsuo Miyajima, Rashid Rana, Pedro Reyes and Santiago Sierra.

**Opening Hours** Monday-Friday 10am-6pm. Closed between 1pm-3pm.

### Press enquiries

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