

Liam Gillick

(Aylesbury, UK, 1964)

Liam Gillick began defining his artistic direction in the late 1980s and early 1990s; he studied at Goldsmith College during a period that saw the emergence of the first group of Young British Artists, which included Damien Hirst, Sarah Lucas, Angela Bulloch, and Gillick himself. He soon defined an autonomous path and became one of the most well-known examples of the tendency Nicholas Bourriaud has called “relational esthetics,” where the objective nature of the work is secondary to the manner in which it can potentially serve as a catalyst to encourage the public’s participation, dialogue, and the exchange of ideas. It is no accident that Gillick utilizes a wide range of media: installations, photographs, videos, music, and, like many artists of his generation, collaborations of every type. He calls his work “applied art,” a project guided by reflection “applied to a specific place or set of concepts” (interview with S. Grammel, 1999, published in M. Archer, *Liam Gillick*, Herausgeber, 2000, p. 140).

Attention to the conceptual aspect and an emphasis on theoretical activity, supported by numerous texts and lectures, has never led Gillick to a dematerialization of the work, which always maintains a physical dimension.

Loaded Bay contains many of Gillick’s stylistic hallmarks, typical of works that relate directly to architecture: generally aluminum or metal structures, characterized by shrill colors, sometimes alternating with colored Plexiglas panels. Gillick began working in this manner in the late 1990s, in his *Discussion Island* series, creating temporary functional structures that create an environment that facilitates dialogue and discussion. The utopia of modernism is rendered even more radical since the architecture becomes the subject of interest only because of its social characteristics.

The references are obvious: architectural modernism, interpreted in an art historical key; the avant-garde of Neoplasticism; the minimalism of Barnett Newman and, above all, Donald Judd. Yet each of these references is in a certain sense contradicted. The structures are not regular and lack a uniform criterion other than seriality. The colors and shapes are arranged in combinatory fashion, as in *Loaded Bay*, but they are determined absolutely by chance, by whatever is available from companies in the vicinity. Many of these objects, as in the more classic sculptural tradition, are not finished. They remain open, to leading indirectly to new questions about art and about its function in society. (EV)