

John Chamberlain

American sculptor, painter, printmaker and film maker. He studied at the Art Institute of Chicago from 1950 to 1952 and from 1955 to 1956 at Black Mountain College, NC, where he was exposed to the modernist aesthetics of the poets Charles Olson (1910–70) and Robert Creeley (b 1926), with whom he formed a lasting friendship. His early welded-iron sculpture was heavily influenced by Abstract Expressionism and by the sculpture of David Smith. In 1957 he moved to New York where he made his first works out of crushed car parts, such as *Shortstop* (1957; New York, Dia A. Found.), a practice for which he became immediately recognized and recognizable. During the mid-1960s he continued in this mode, expanding its formal vocabulary to include larger free-standing complexes and wall reliefs, always emphasizing fit and spontaneity. This work earned him instant critical association with the Junk art movement.

In 1966 Chamberlain received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship. From 1967 he became interested in film and video, making his most ambitious cinematic project, *Wide Point*, in 1968. Around this time he returned to his crushed metal idiom after a brief fascination with a combination of stencil and Action painting, for which he used car spray paint. From that moment his materials began to include not only the familiar chassis, but also industrial rubber, plexiglass and polyurethane. Slightly later, near the height of the American fuel crisis, he made frequent use of oil barrels in such works as the *Socket* and *Kiss* series (1979; see Sylvester, nos 501–5 and 634–42). In addition to film and painting, Chamberlain produced and exhibited drawings and prints, for example *Time Goes By*, *Purple Disappears* (etching and aquatint, 1987; see *A. America*, lxxv/9, 1987, p. 90). Much discussion surrounding his work has centred upon his sympathy for the *objet trouvé* and his chance inventions, elements common to the art of Marcel Duchamp, John Cage and others. The relationship between his use of cultural waste and the implied violence of his constructions is an issue which harmonizes equally well with his perceived allegiance to modern American painting

Derrick R. Cartwright, *Oxford University Press*, 2007

Xavier Hufkens

Sint-Jorisstraat 6–8 rue Saint-Georges
Brussel 1050 Bruxelles
T 32 (0)2 639 67 30
F 32 (0)2 639 67 38
info@xavierhufkens.com
www.xavierhufkens.com