

MARK BORGHI

NEW YORK | BRIDGEHAMPTON | SAG HARBOR

John Chamberlain (1927 - 2011)

Untitled, 1981

4 x 6 x 4 inches (10.2 x 15.2 x 10.2 cm)

Urethane foam, staples, metal nail and spray acrylic on paper

Signed and dated 'J. Chamberlain 81'

Ex-collection :

The Artist

Lorraine Chamberlain, acquired directly from the artist

Private collection, Birmingham, Michigan, *circa* 1997

By descent from the above to the present owner until 2017



Born April 16, 1927, in Rochester, Indiana, Chamberlain grew up in Chicago and, after serving in the navy from 1943 to 1946, attended the Art Institute of Chicago from 1951 to 1952. At that time, he began making flat, welded sculpture, influenced by the work of David Smith. In 1955 and 1956, Chamberlain studied and taught sculpture at Black Mountain College, near Asheville, North Carolina, where most of his friends were poets, among them Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, and Charles Olson. By 1957, he began to include scrap metal from cars in his work, and from 1959 onward he concentrated on sculpture built entirely of crushed automobile parts welded together. Chamberlain's first major solo show was held at the Martha Jackson Gallery, New York, in 1960.

Chamberlain's work was widely acclaimed in the early 1960s. His sculpture was included in *The Art of Assemblage* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1961, and the same year he participated in the São Paulo Biennial. From 1962, Chamberlain showed frequently at the Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, and in 1964 his work was exhibited at the Venice Biennale. While he continued to make sculpture from auto parts, Chamberlain also experimented with other mediums. From 1963 to 1965, he made geometric paintings with sprayed automobile paint.

Made in 1981, this work relates to Chamberlain's series of rolled, folded, and tied foam sculptures dating from 1966. While the artist often uses industrial tools to form his many sculptures, *Untitled* demonstrates how some basic actions such as cutting, twisting, rolling, and ripping can give this material new form altogether. The foam is first rolled and pressed and its center part is then wrapped by a piece of paper sprayed with various pastel and bold acrylic colors, which is fixed by staples — all common household materials. Dubbed by Chamberlain as "instant sculptures," these simple yet creative small sculptures are full of inspiring energy, immediacy, and humor that are signature to Chamberlain's oeuvre. [1]

Endnote

[1] Phyllis Tuchman, "An Interview with John Chamberlain," *Artforum* 10, no. 6 (Feb. 1972), p. 41.