

PRESS RELEASE

exhibition: Robert Filliou *Seule la Fête est Permanente: Works 1962-1984*
dates: 3 March – 14 April 2018

Peter Freeman, Inc. is pleased to present a survey of work of French-born artist Robert Filliou (1926-1987). The first such comprehensive overview to be shown in the United States, *Seule la Fête est Permanente* (a phrase that the artist creatively translated into "The Eternal Network is Everlasting") has been organized in partnership with the artist's estate, which has been represented by the gallery since the 1990s.

A prolific artist beginning in the 1950s, Filliou was self-taught, embracing disciplines as diverse as economics (in which he first trained and worked), philosophy, linguistics, metaphysics, Buddhism, and science. Calling himself a "genius without talent," he developed a protean body of work comprising plays, happenings, poems, mail art, writings, assemblages, multiples, games, environments, films, and videos. He favored simple materials—cardboard, string, found objects, small cards, everyday hardware—to convey a "do-it-yourself" philosophy. Though Filliou had strong ties to and close collaborators in America—among them the earliest and key Fluxus members (George Brecht, Ben Patterson, Emmett Williams, and George Maciunas, and others)—audiences here have never been able to view at once so many works by this influential artist, ranging from his early performative pieces from the 1960s to his brick installations—*Briquolages*—from the 1980s.

Early works, such as *Danse poème collectif aléatoire* (1962), are performative. Here, the audience is invited to spin the two wheels on the wall, which stop randomly in front of six different words to form a poem. Throughout his work, Filliou sought to intertwine language and objects, just as he aimed to bring art and life into closer collaboration, to bring out the marvelous, the subtle, the paradoxical in each.

Punctuating the exhibition will be the boxes Filliou began making in the 1970s. Diptych assemblages in cardboard, recalling Marcel Duchamp's *Boîte en valise* (1935-41), they encapsulate the peripatetic nature of Filliou—in fact, nomadism underscores his entire oeuvre. He was constantly moving, and rarely had a studio. Early in his career, he walked the streets of Paris wearing a cap stamped with "Galerie Légitime" ("Legitimate Gallery") that he would doff to passer-by who wanted to stop, revealing an assortment of small objects, his own traveling gallery. Later, when Filliou and Brecht had been running for three years their own collaborative brick-and-mortar space in Villefranche-sur-Mer, France, conceived as a "Center for Permanent Creation," they closed it and announced the establishment of an open-ended non-place-based continuation on the idea: "La Fête Permanente/ The Eternal Network." There, art is seen as one activity among a network of others, a network that links the entirety of human activities as well as the cosmos beyond. Filliou's influence can be felt today on a generation of artists for which a work of art is an event, a social experiment, or even a philosophy for living.

Robert Filliou was born in Sauve, France in 1926. After serving in the resistance during World War II, he moved to Los Angeles, earning a Master of Economics at the University of California Los Angeles. In 1951-1954, he traveled to Japan and worked for the United Nations in South Korea, and there discovered the philosophies of Zen Buddhism that would change the course of his activities. He settled in Paris in 1959 where he met Daniel Spoerri who introduced him to his artistic circle. From 1969 to 1972, he lived in Düsseldorf, amidst a rich artistic scene including Dieter Roth, Dorothy Iannone, Marcel Broodthaers, and Joseph Beuys among others. In 1979, he moved to Dordogne close to a center for Tibetan studies. He died in Les Eyzies, France in 1987.

Robert Filliou, Un génie sans talent, a large retrospective, was shown at MACBA, Barcelona in 2003 and travelled to Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf and Musée d'art moderne Lille Métropole, Villeneuve d'Ascq. Last year, M HKA, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp dedicated an important exhibition to his work, *The Secret of Permanent Creation*. His work is in the collections of many international museums, including Museum of Modern Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp; and the Kunstsammlung Kunstmuseum, Basel.

"Every man is a genius, but most of us are too busy exercising our talents. Rather than confining ourselves to our skills, our achievements, we must appeal to imagination and innocence." -Robert Filliou

An opening brunch reception will be held on Saturday 3 March from 10 am to 1 pm.

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