

TAKIS (Takis Vassilakis)

b.1925 Athens, Greece

White Signal 1966

275 x 19 x 19 cm. Retractable antenna, automobile light, transformer in wooden box. Exhibited at Indica 1966

Yellow Magnetic Tableau 1959

23 x 50 x 40 cm Painted mild steel, canvas, sheet metal, magnet. Collection: Liliane Lijn

Signals painting, 1957

61 x 51cm. Mixed media on canvas, 1 & 2. Collection: Liliane Lijn 3. Private collection

The Signals are the most renowned trademark of Takis Vassilakis. They are an ongoing series of tall rods springing from a base on the ground and tapering towards a finial at the top. The finials are of particular symbolic significance and consist of either sculptures or found objects - machine parts, batteries, carburetors, radiators, ventilators - or parts of war-time equipment - bombs, guns, bayonets - that Takis transforms according to his needs.

Investigating the cosmic mysteries of electro-magnetism in the late '50s - Takis conducted experiments with mercury cathode lamps, aiming to make invisible energy visible. One of the most striking features of his art is the appearance, calling for a particular display environment and an initiatory mood. By entering the magnetic field to defy gravity the sculptor conquered cosmic energy. An early electro-magnetic experimental work is shown beside a rare oil on canvas displaying antenna and finials, the radar-like layout for *Signals*.

"I am responsible only for manufacturing the symbols. Their meaning depends for interpretation on each and every one of us."
Takis, 1966.

"Takis cannot identify the hardware nor does he seek to, for the pieces were merely required to serve as anchors appropriate to the composition. Takis' Signals are wonderfully ambiguous; somewhere between organic (reminiscent of botanical stems) and artificial (reminiscent of labarums used at war). In actual fact, Takis' signals are either discarded street and railroad signs from municipal depots, antennae from discarded war-time vehicles." H el ena and Nicolas Calas in Takis Monographies p.182.

Takis wrote of visiting Calais in the early sixties, *"The station was a huge feral center, a forest of signals. Monster-eyes went on and off, rail, tunnels, a jungle of iron ... I drew all those phenomena ... man constructs for his own use tunnels and exits, symbols for his evasion of death..."*