

Sculpture in a plane wrapper

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Cubist: Richard Wilson at work unravelling his crushed aircraft ()

For almost two decades, Richard Wilson has been one of Britain's most interesting and innovative installation artists. His best-known work is the remarkable 20:50, the room-filling, seemingly waist-deep pool of oil that was on permanent display at the old Saatchi Gallery.

Much of his other work is just as impressive; thoughtful, visually powerful and often technically astonishing, the pieces sometimes consist of a substantial change to the fabric of the host gallery, such as the displacement of a window or the sinking of an apparently unfathomable borehole into the gallery floor. Sadly, it is precisely Wilson's reputation for such technically difficult to execute work, combined with the timidity of our top curators, that accounts for the fact that he is woefully under-represented in our top contemporary art institutions.

Wilson's latest project, *Butterfly*, is the first work that he will execute in public. For more than a month, between noon and 7pm from Tuesday to Saturday, Wilson (who is 50 this year) and his team of assistants will be working on a "process based" piece of sculpture. They will slowly return the light, aluminum aircraft that they have had crushed into a crumpled cube to its original form. The wreck is suspended between the tall iron columns of the gallery, held by a lattice of ropes and pulleys. Over the weeks, its crushed wings will unfurl, and its nose and tail will be pulled back into position.

All the while, a ceiling-mounted camera takes images that will be spliced together into a film recording Wilson's activity, the natural cycles of night and day that govern them and the slow transmutation of the damaged metal into a recognisable shape.

The work is a fitting investigation into and celebration of the process of becoming and the rhythms of creation and destruction in which we are all caught up.

Richard Wilson, *The Wapping Project*, until 30 March. Information: 020 7680 2080. ■