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LUHRING AUGUSTINE

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Richard Pousette-Dart: East River Studio
October 28 – December 17, 2011

Opening reception:
Thursday, October 27, 6-8pm

Luhring Augustine is very pleased to announce the opening of *Richard Pousette-Dart: East River Studio*, an exhibition of the work of the American artist Richard Pousette-Dart (1916 – 1992). Included in this exhibition will be a group of rarely seen paintings and wire sculptures, many of which have not been exhibited in New York since their debut at the Betty Parsons Gallery in the 1950s. The exhibition is being organized by Christopher Wool, who studied with Pousette-Dart in college, in cooperation with the painter Joanna Pousette-Dart.

Richard Pousette-Dart was the youngest member of the Abstract Expressionist movement. Born in 1916 in Minnesota, Pousette-Dart was raised in Westchester County, NY. After briefly attending Bard College, Pousette-Dart moved to Manhattan to pursue painting independently. Over the next fifteen years, he actively participated and exhibited in the burgeoning New York avant-garde scene, showing first with the Marian Willard Gallery, then with Peggy Guggenheim's gallery, The Art of This Century, and later with Betty Parsons Gallery.

East River Studio will focus on a body of work Pousette-Dart produced from 1946-51 while living and working in a former brewery on East 56th Street. It was in this studio that he painted *Symphony Number 1, The Transcendental*, 1941-42, which now hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and which at the time covered an entire wall of the studio. In an address he once gave Pousette-Dart said, "The sizes of my paintings in the early days were often determined by the largest roll of canvas I could afford to buy and the largest wall I could tack it on." A number of the works in this exhibition began as larger canvases he cut down to accommodate both his working space and the gallery spaces in which he was exhibiting. Pousette-Dart then actively reworked these smaller canvases, later mounting them on supports to retain their edges. This direct, synthetic approach was characteristic of his approach to painting during this period. He experimented with and combined a wide variety of techniques and materials, from enamels to gold leaf, silver leaf, charcoal and sand, giving the works an almost alchemical quality.

Art historian David Anfam has described the palette of these works as "monochromatic chiaroscuro, modulated to more apocalyptic hues." In a notebook from the period, Pousette-Dart writes, "I've gone to black and white because of my need for a kind of intensity, the most intense light and the most intense darkness and the instantaneous balance between opposites." Within this essential range he was able to evoke all the natural and mythic associations of place, from the dazzling white light in *Bridge Horizon* and *East River Sun* to the frenetic but dissipated light of the reflected nocturnal city in *Night World*. The wire sculptures to be included in the exhibition provide a further extension of the artist's explorations.

The 56th Street studio would turn out to be Pousette-Dart's last studio in New York City. In 1951, the same year he was included in the now famous photograph entitled "The Irascibles", published in Life Magazine, the artist moved his family to upstate New York for the quiet and the affordable space he needed to focus on his work.

A catalogue will be published on the occasion of the exhibition, featuring an essay by Robert Storr as well as a conversation between Christopher Wool and Joanna Pousette-Dart.

For further information and image requests, please contact Lauren Wittels at 212-206-9100 or by email at lauren@luhringaugustine.com.

(Pictured: *Bridge Horizon*, 1950, Oil on linen, 75 x 47 ¾ inches)