

# *A CAPTIVATING MIND ON SHOW*

Nancy Durrant  
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At 85, the American artist's first major UK survey is fascinating, says Nancy Durrant

Now 85, and having lived in London since 1966, it seems bizarre that Liliane Lijn's *Arise Alive* exhibition at Tate St Ives is the New York-born artist's first major solo survey show in a UK museum.

It's not as if she's an unknown. In the late 1950s she knocked about with ageing surrealists Max Ernst and Andre Breton in Paris, a rare, prominent and much younger woman in that rather bitchy scene (some of her intricate, dreamy *Sky Scrolls* drawings from this period indicate a , fascination with that surrealist staple, the unconscious). Right now, one of her kinetic pieces has its own room in the *Electric Dreams* exhibition at Tate Modern.

This, though, is all her. Lijn's work combines art, technology, science and the spiritual, her interest in Asian philosophies and mythology complementing rather than contradicting the hard facts of science. It's all part of the same universe, she reasons, and it's not as if we can claim I to understand all of it.

Predominantly made up of drawings (mostly rather beautiful, if sometimes a bit baffling) and sculptures, the exhibition looks at three areas across her career: kinetic art (she was one of the first women to work in this area); light and energy, and the possibilities of giving visible form to immaterial and invisible forces; and, from the late Seventies onwards, feminism and the body, using materials to challenge ideas of the feminine in art and technology.

Her universe is a serene one. Even the kinetic works move with a meditative grace. There is something I mesmeric about *Lost Kaan* (2006), a huge revolving cone intersected by luminous lines of fluorescent acrylic,

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while *Liquid Reflections* (1968) - the result of five years of experimentation - is beautifully contemplative; in a dark room, spotlit, two balls of clear I acrylic travel inexorably over a rotating acrylic disc, shifted by centrifugal force, refracting the light, with the only sound the light hum of the motor and the occasional «tock» as they touch in passing.

Her more feminist pieces have more 00mph, an attempt to «create a different image of the feminine», with wit and strange imagination. The most effective of these is 1989's *The Electric Bride*, part of her *Cosmic Dramas* series whose figures seem part-machine, part-goddess.

A towering presence with a flashing glass head and 16 arms stacked with glittering sheets of mica, she stands in a steel mesh enclosure criss-crossed with red-hot wires, whispering a Japanese poem. Encountering her is like being Indiana Jones, coming across a representation of some powerful, ancient being in a cave. The overall impression is of a highly original, inquiring mind, roaming freely across a cosmos of ideas.

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<https://www.thetimes.com/culture/art/article/liliane-lijn-arise-alive-review-show-978xkcq7p?region=global>