

## Obituary for Robert Grosvenor

### ROBERT GROSVENOR 1937–2025

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Robert Grosvenor. With his passing, we have lost an influential artistic figure of recent decades. His varied and always surprising oeuvre inspired generations of artists. And yet he remained relatively unknown, at least in Germany. It is therefore all the more an honor for us to be able to pay tribute to him—a two-time documenta participant—with a long-overdue retrospective in this country at the Fridericianum. We would have very much liked to welcome him to Kassel in person on this special occasion and share our joy with him.

Since the 1960s, Robert Grosvenor developed a multifaceted oeuvre that includes sculptures, photographs, and works on paper. He always defied definition. At the start of his artistic career, he exhibited his first objects at the Park Place Gallery in New York, which he himself co-founded—a central location for the young, experimental art scene—and made a key contribution to the emergence of a movement that was to later become known as “Minimal Art”. His expansive works featured in the legendary show *Primary Structures* (1966) at the Jewish Museum in New York, as well as in the 1968 show *Minimal Art* at the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag. However, he never regarded himself as a minimalist: the intellectual rigor and gravity of the movement, as well as the formalistic discourse of his contemporaries, remained alien to him.

Instead, his works focus on immediate sensory experience and testify to his individual creativity and humor. They are an expression of intuitive play with materials, found objects, and surfaces, of artistic storytelling within the architectural space and of the experimental exploration of implicit contradictions: gravity and balance, inertia and movement, purposelessness and function, proximity and distance.

“I don’t want my work to be thought of as ‘large sculpture’, they are ideas that operate in the space between floor and ceiling. They bridge the gap.”

This is a concise statement which Grosvenor contributed to the catalog of the *Primary Structures* exhibition in 1966. Shortly thereafter, he left the gallery’s white cube and placed works in outdoor spaces: embedded in the context of “landscape,” the scope of his work also expanded—from floor to ceiling, from self-containedness to process, from here to the horizon.

As a formative experience and earliest inspiration, the passionate sailor Robert Grosvenor cited not only Frank Lloyd Wright’s architecture but also the vastness of the sea and the deserts of Arizona.

Robert Grosvenor was 88 years old.

## FRIDERICIANVM



### **Moritz Wessler, Director of the Fridericianum**

“When I visited Robert Grosvenor in East Patchogue at the end of July, he spoke enthusiastically about his upcoming exhibition at the Fridericianum, which would include works from 1965 to 2025, thus covering almost all his creative periods. He was particularly delighted that the show was to be held in Kassel, the venue of his participation in documenta in 1977 and 1987. His memories of these stays and presentations were as vivid as they were touching, and were a constant source of inspiration to my colleagues and me as we set up the exhibition—a retrospective that was eagerly awaited, not least by younger artists, since he is regarded as a shining beacon, an artist's artist. Grosvenor's death makes me very sad. It is a great loss. At the same time, I am glad and grateful for how much of him will remain—his work will continue to fascinate, inspire, surprise, irritate, and amuse us. It will remain an active and refreshing source of inspiration.”

### **Andreas Hoffmann, Managing Director of documenta and Museum Fridericianum gGmbH**

“With the passing of Robert Grosvenor, we have lost a remarkable personality and a highly respected artist. And we are now faced with his robust and at the same time enigmatic, dreamlike work, which has yet to be discovered in this country. There are so many questions we would have liked to ask him which will now remain unanswered. We will pose them to his work, contemplate it, circle around it, marvel at it, and question it. And we will honor him with a retrospective that we would have loved to open together with him – one which will now ensure that these ‘vehicles for thought,’ as an artist friend once called his works, unfold new discourses on art, space, balance, perfection, and the wonder of the inexplicable.”