

# IKON

## Exhibition Guide

**Massimo Bartolini *Triple Loop***

**19 July – 26 August 2007**

**Ikon Eastside**

Spheres, circles and circularity characterise this exhibition by acclaimed Italian artist Massimo Bartolini. *Triple Loop*, a combination of new works, at once unsettling and conducive to reflection, familiar yet shot through with incongruity. There is constant movement, but stillness, suggested as a counterpoint, is equally crucial to the artist's proposition.

*Sphere* is an installation which closely resembles a court for the French game of boules. An area inside the vast industrial space of Ikon Eastside has been prepared with soil and gravel, according to professional guidelines, and the boules, eight brass balls, are available for those wishing to play. Normally, also there is a 'cochon', a small wooden ball which is the still centre of the game, but instead Bartolini provides a walnut, a natural object. He explains: "Boules is a game of strategy, like a battle to gain the best position in relation to the core of the game itself. In this case, the core is a nut... it is not spherical, so that if it is hit too violently, it breaks. Something man-made is aimed at something not man-made." Furthermore, "Trajectory is the intention of the project and the strategy has an unpredictable gap – from when the ball leaves your hand until it stops." Bartolini refers to the Zen-like nature of boules, the idea that it engenders a philosophical quiet.

This conflation of movement and stillness is something that also has bearing on *Triple Loop*, the video installation here. It involves a short film extract of the renowned jazz pianist Thelonious Monk – whose middle name incidentally was 'Sphere' – head and shoulders, turning anti-clockwise. This, in turn, is circumnavigating the four walls of a darkened room. Three circular movements – that of the object, the projection and the film loop – thus refer to Monk's habit of 'whirling', like a Dervish, in order to arrive at the right psychological state, to lose a self-consciousness that would detract from his performance. By moving to achieve a certain gyroscopic stillness, Monk was able to realise his full musical potential.

The repetition of circular movement is also found in waves. The third piece in this exhibition, *Sala para uma onda*, consists of a shipping container with 10,000 litres of coloured water inside, all the time moving in waves, illuminated by a white spherical light. It is suspended, like a full moon over the sea, sometimes being submerged to suggest the cycles of setting and rising. Again, a natural phenomenon is foiled by a manufactured object – and the container, instead of being ‘on the waves’, has waves inside it. It is transporting in another sense, entrancing as a work of art that aspires to the condition of meditation.