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"monuments to the period we live in"
John Latham, 'Five Sisters' and Niddrie Heart.



Entranced and in awe of these forms, the conceptual artist John Latham determined that the West Lothian shale bings located in largely agricultural areas in West Lothian near the M8 motorway, when viewed from above through aerial records, could be re-conceived as 'monumental process sculptures'.

These vast material accumulations of waste originated from a mid-Nineteenth century destructive processes of retorting crude oil from oil-bearing shale, for use as paraffin fuel. Acting less as a cartographer or Land Artist and more as an early 'psycho-geographer', Latham's exhaustive series of terrestrial visits developed proposals relating to the preservation and development of a collection of five different bings' sites, resulting in an innovative Feasibility Study. The legacy of Latham's research is central to further understanding of his life's work and are contestably a central and important post-war conceptual artwork. I consider these works in their context of late 1960s Land Art and their place in Scottish art since 1960.

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Arts