

ESSEX STREET

ESSEX STREET is honored to present an exhibition of recent and historic works by Tony Conrad, Senga Nengudi and Toshiko Takaezu. Each is major. This exhibition focuses on their respective concerns and engagements with surface, with technics, and most significantly with developing an art form that conveys dynamic notions of performativity. Each object in the exhibition curves between the moment of its creation or initial activation and its present state of being awake.

Senga Nengudi emerged from the Southern California Funk of the 1960s and 70s African-American Avant-Garde. In the 1960s Nengudi studied Gutai in Japan, worked as a teacher at both Simon Rodia's Watts Tower and also at the Pasadena Art Museum in the era of Walter Hopps, Allan Kaprow et al. The works in this exhibition, one first made in 1976 and the other two more recent examples, are performance merged into artwork, their tension and engagement inherent in the rubber and nylons' torque and stretch. Gravity gives the objects an extant life, as weight struggles with elasticity. Without the performer, the work becomes its own body. They regard the forms and shape of African, Afro-Hispanic, and Native American sources, assembled like a diaspora rearticulated in the here and now: a tire, pantyhose, a shell, sand. They speak new phrases and new subjects in the mysterious language of Bourgeois and Hesse. They are ritual, the more worn the more vital.

Toshiko Takaezu, a master ceramist, was a protégé of Maija Grottel at Cranbrook in the 1950s. The works included in the exhibition are closed forms and moon pots made in porcelain, stoneware and ceramic. Without any semblance to pitchers, vases or bowls, they declare a divergence from traditional craft, asserting both autonomy as sculpture and a disavowal to function. Their oblique face wraps around as a site for painting glazes and treatments. Takaezu was a pioneer of gestural abstraction in ceramics. Their oversize scale and shape convey her exceptional skill in structuring and kilning. Inside each of these works, sealed in darkness, are clumps of extra clay, dropped in just before being fired. Holding one of her pieces rattles these interior and secret masses, producing a sound clattering notes from in to out. Though most of the time this song, like the coordinated forces which determined the shape of these onto themselves vessels, is inaccessible.

Tony Conrad has been reformulating the basis of video, filmmaking, musical composition and performance for half a century. After studying math at Harvard in the early 1960s, he was a pioneer of New York minimalism working with La Monte Young, John Cale, Henry Flynt and others. In 1965 he made one of his first masterpieces of structural film, *The Flicker*, which consists of only alternating black and white stills. This work goes beyond narrative capacity, beyond medium specificity and definition, into the very mechanics of audience reception, specifically how the brain of a viewer processes what is and is not seen. In 1973 Conrad made the *Yellow Movies* and the *Yellow TVs*, the later of which are included in this exhibition. These works boil down the phenomena of movies and television, into a durational screening and a viewing experience. The program of the screening is merely the yellowing of white or fluorescent paint. The making, exposure, exhibiting and screening of these programs are condensed into one ultra-elongated event. The speed of these movies and tvs does occur, albeit at a rate so much slower than our viewing habits. The program becomes psychedelic, as Diedrich Diederichsen has claimed; a radically deviant temporal relation. In comparison, they make Warhol's *Empire* a highly paced interlude.

The objects in this exhibition are *ON*, even and especially beyond the confines of our visual receptivity. They don't require just viewing, but a kind of spirit and cognitive unlocking.

This in now, how do it so?

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Toshiko Takaezu was born in 1922 in Hawaii. She died in 2011. She attended Cranbrook Academy of Art, MI in 1954 and taught at Princeton University, NJ from 1967–92. Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at the Racine Art Museum, WI; Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA; The Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Tang Museum at Skidmore College, NY; Neuberger Museum, Purchase, NY; The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu, HI; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, PA; Montclair Art Museum, NJ; Allentown Art Museum, PA; Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI; Lewis & Clark College, Portland, OR; Swarthmore College, PA; Cleveland Institute of Art, OH and numerous at Perimeter Gallery, Chicago, IL and Charles Cowles Gallery, NY. A touring retrospective of her work took place in 1995 at the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan; Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, OK; American Craft Museum, NY. She is in the permanent collections of American Craft Museum, New York, NY; Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, AK; Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Baltimore Museum of Art, MD; Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH; Contemporary Museum, Honolulu, HI; Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI; Detroit Institute of Art, MI; Everson Museum, Syracuse, NY; Honolulu Academy of Arts, HI; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Milwaukee Art Museum, WI; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; National Museum, Bangkok, Thailand; Newark Museum of Art, NJ; New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ; Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA; Racine Art Museum, Racine, WI; Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT.

Senga Nengudi was born in 1943 in Chicago. She received both her MA and BA from California State University, Los Angeles in 1971 and 1966 respectively, and studied at the Waseda University of Tokyo in 1966–67. Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at White Cube, London, UK; MCA Denver, CO; Galerie Anne de Villepoix, Paris; Syracuse University, NY; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA; Just Above Midtown Gallery, New York; Woods Gallery, Los Angeles; and numerous times at Thomas Erben Gallery, NY. She has been in group exhibitions at the Whitney Museum, NY; National Museum of Fine Arts Havana, Cuba; Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, TX; Grey Art Gallery, New York University, NY; Studio Museum of Harlem, NY; MoMA PS1, Queens, NY; MoCA Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Kunstverien Aschaffenburg, Germany; Hammer Museum, UCLA, CA; LACE Galleries, Los Angeles, CA; California African American Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, CA; ICA, Boston, MA; Tang Museum, Saratoga Springs, NY; 80 WSE, NYU, NY; National Museum of Art, Washington DC; Jack Tilton Gallery, NY; Creative Time, NY; Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, TX; Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA; San Jose Museum of Art, CA; La Crie Centre D'Art Contemporain, Rennes, France; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark; Artists Space, New York; Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD; Bronx Museum of the Arts, NY; Freeway Underpass, Los Angeles, CA; and in the landmark 1970 exhibition *Eight Afro-Americans* at the Musée Rath, Geneva, Switzerland curated by Henri Ghent. Her work is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, NY; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; Brooklyn Museum, NY.

Tony Conrad was born in 1940 in Concord, New Hampshire. He lives and works in Buffalo and New York. He received his AB from Harvard in 1962 and is a Professor at SUNY Buffalo. Solo exhibitions of his work have been held at Inverleith House, Edinburgh, UK; Kunsthalle Wien, Austria; Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Vilal Croce, Genoa; 80WSE, NYU, NY; Burchfield Penny Art Center, Buffalo, NY; SUNY Buffalo; The Kitchen, NY; Millennium Film Workshop, NY; and numerous at Greene Naftali Gallery, NY; and Galerie Buchholz, Berlin and Cologne, Germany. He has been in group exhibitions at Kunsthlerhaus Stuttgart, Germany; Musée de Louvre, Paris; Marco Museum, Vigo, Spain; Walker Art Center, MN; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; Cabinet, London; Pulitzer Foundation, St. Louis, MO; MUDAM, Luxembourg; Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Japan; Centre d'art Contemporain de Geneva; Albright Knox Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Art Institute of Chicago, IL; MCA Chicago, IL; MMK, Frankfurt; CCA Wattis, San Francisco, CA; MoCA Los Angeles, CA; Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz, Linz; 53rd Venice Biennale, Italy; Kunstmuseum aan zee, Otsend, Belgium; Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; Yokohama Triennale, Japan; MUSEION, Bolzano, Italy; Kunsthalle Dusseldorf, Germany; South London Gallery, UK; Lyon Biennial. His work is in the collection of the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; MUDAM, Luxembourg; and Museum of Modern Art, New York.

The exhibition is open from March 12 – April 26 2015.

ESSEX STREET is open from Wednesday to Sunday from 12-6pm and by appointment.

For further information or images please contact info@essexstreet.biz