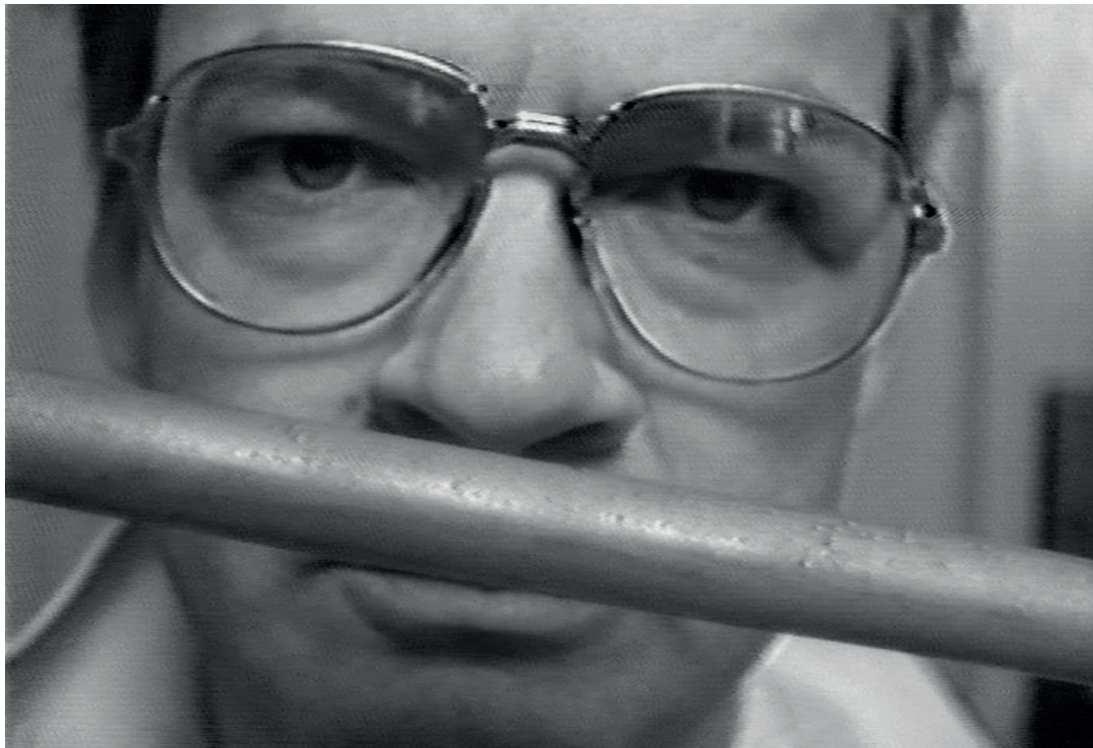




TONY CONRAD

KÖLNISCHER KUNSTVEREIN

February 15 – May 3, 2020



Tony Conrad, *In Line*, 1985, Courtesy: Tony Conrad Archives

TONY CONRAD

Throughout his career, American artist, musician, and professor in the Department of Media Study at the University at Buffalo Tony Conrad (1940–2016) forged his own path as an unparalleled innovator in painting, sculpture, film, video, performance, and installation, tenaciously working to challenge the boundaries between artistic categories while helping to define a vast range of culture, including rock music and public television. Conrad once declared in an interview, “You don’t know who I am, but somehow, indirectly, you’ve been affected by things I did.”

Conrad’s prominent first film, *The Flicker* (1966) – a stroboscopic experiment famous for its attack on both the filmic medium and its audience’s senses – soon led to projects in which he pickled, deep-fried, roasted, and otherwise treated film as a sculptural and performative material. He invented musical instruments out of materials as humble as a Band-Aid tin and presented these as sculptures themselves. Beyond that, the so-called “String Performances” find lasting recognition. They were created around the Theatre of Eternal Music (a mid-1960s musical group formed by La Monte Young) and still evoke associations with minimal music from the 1960s.

In the 1980s, his films about power relations in the army and in prisons assembled large casts of collaborators. Representative examples from these projects are joined in this exhibition by Conrad’s last sculptures and installations, which evoked and critiqued what he perceived as an emerging culture of surveillance, control, and containment.

This exhibition is accompanied by a public program including screenings, lectures, concerts, and performances. The invited guests, among them fellows of Tony Conrad himself, will honor the artist’s manifold oeuvre. For more information, please visit our website.

CINEMA

The Flicker, 1966

16mm film, b/w, sound, transferred to digital

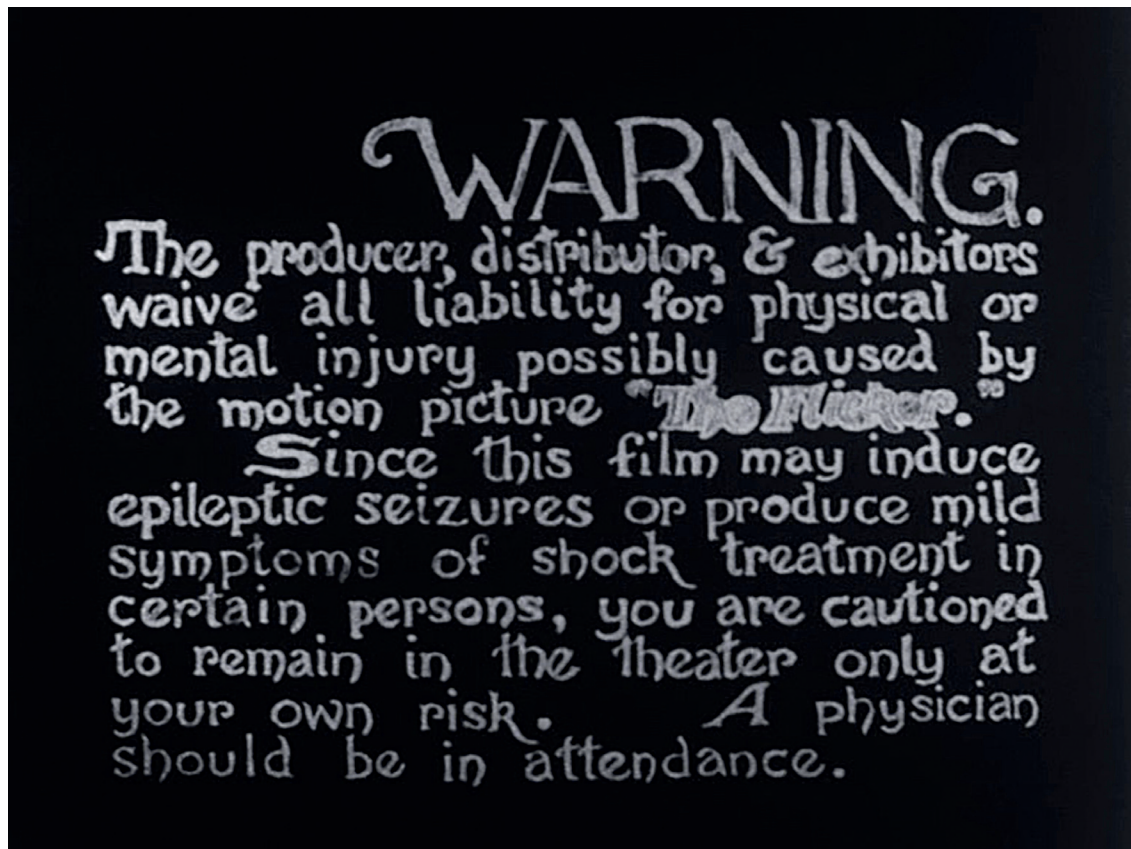
30 min

Courtesy: Tony Conrad Archives

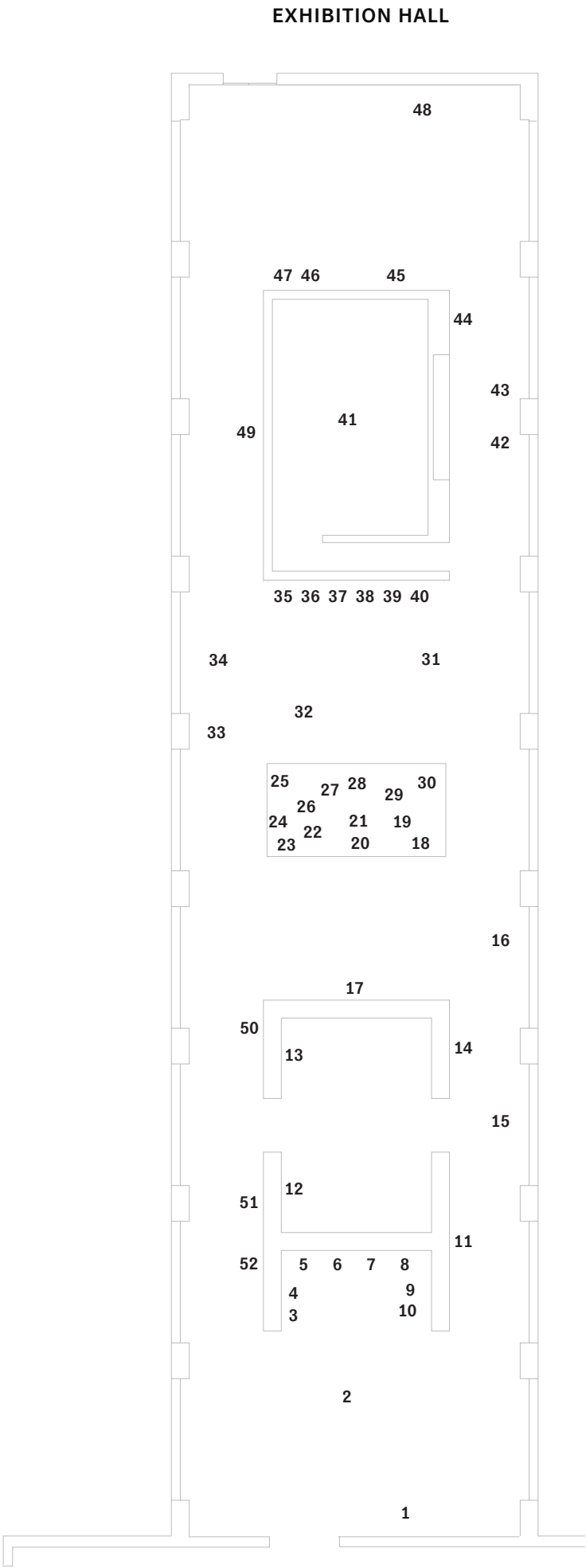
Special 16mm film screenings in the framework of the exhibition opening on
February 14, 9 pm and on March 6, 6 pm

In 1962, Conrad graduated from Harvard University and moved to New York City, where he associated primarily with experimental musicians and underground filmmakers. He even became roommates with the notorious filmmaker Jack Smith, who prompted Conrad to apply his musical experiments to making movie soundtracks. Conrad's own career as a filmmaker began on March 5, 1963, when he, Smith, and Mario Montez, Smith's muse, became entranced by the flickering light of an old projector. Conrad had learned in college about the effect of this phenomenon on brainwaves, and he was inspired to see if it would be possible to make a mind-bending film based on "harmonies" between frequencies of flickering light made by patterns of black and white frames, in a manner parallel to his work with harmonies between different sound frequencies.

The Flicker became an instant scandal and secured Conrad's lifelong reputation as a filmmaker following its premiere at the New York Film Festival at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts on September 15, 1966. While audience responses ranged from nausea to hallucinations and hypnosis, critics generally emphasized the "minimal" or "structural" qualities of the work, noting how it reduces cinema to its most basic element: the flickering of light through a projector. Although Conrad would go on to make more flicker films, he claimed to not be interested in distilling the essence of film (or any other medium); rather, he was fascinated by the relationship of sound and image, the experience of duration, and new states of consciousness.



Tony Conrad, *The Flicker*, 1966, Courtesy: Tony Conrad Archives



EXHIBITION HALL

- 1** *Infant Protective Gesture*, 1979
Polaroid, in wooden frame
Each 12.3 × 14.5 cm
All Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York

Conrad became a father in 1971 and a professor in 1973. In his 1979 exhibition at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center in Buffalo, he was interested in exploring and critiquing manifestations of power and authority through examples of common relationships; in this case, parent-child and teacher-student. In these four Polaroids, Conrad practices a pose he saw as a universal human gesture of protection and vulnerability: shielding one's head and face with one's hand. This is one of many works that reference the artist's own sense of vulnerability and submission in relationship to the viewer of his artwork.

- 2** *Gate*, 2016
Regalo Easy Step Extra Tall Walk Thru Gate
106 × 150.2 × 44.5 cm
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

The installation surrounding *Gate* recreates a number of details that Conrad designed for his first exhibition of these works: the wall is lined with a cheap fake tile that gives the installation a discomfitingly clinical character, and Conrad's sculpture of a baby gate is joined by his "underwear paintings". Rather than blocking an infant's path, this gate stands open, suggesting a precipice between childhood and old age, birth and death.

- 3** *Untitled (looking swell, dear)*, 2009
61 × 91.4 cm
- 4** *Untitled (having trouble)*, 2009
61 × 91.4 cm
- 5** *Untitled (female arithmetic[-])*, 2009
61 × 91.4 cm
- 6** *Untitled (. . . mine if you . . . yours [II])*, 2009
121.9 × 91.4 cm
- 7** *Untitled (these days 2009, these days)*, 2009
58.4 × 43.2 cm
- 8** *Untitled (...mine if you - - - yours)*, 2009
88.9 × 58.4 cm
- 9** *Untitled (forgotten treasures)*, 2009
61 x × 91.4 cm
- 10** *Untitled (after [thought])*, 2009
58.4 × 88.9 cm

All: Acrylic paint and underwear on bulletin board
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

In 2009, Conrad made forty-five “underwear paintings” with standard-sized pinboards, pushpins, various undergarments, and acrylic paint. The pinboards display and support the underwear, and the painted frames—which are reminiscent of the artist's Yellow Movie paintings —focus our attention. When he made these works, Conrad was preoccupied at times with the indignities of ageing. He told an interviewer that he chose extraordinarily unsexy and oversized underwear, as might be worn in the twilight of life, in order to challenge societal taboos on this subject: these are difficult works, evocative of ageing, incontinence, and the unforgiving passage of time.

11 *Group of 9 collages, 1977*

Untitled, 1977

Collage, photo corners on paper
Each 30.3 × 22.7 cm
Courtesy: Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York

“His photo corner collages from the late 1970s [...] use these simple scrapbook tools as a kind of raucous punctuation, evoking vernacular photography as well as the way in which images are both literally and discursively framed by their physical context, preoccupations of artists including Longo and Louise Lawler.” Chaffee, Cathleen (2018). *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective*. New York, London (Albright-Knox Art Gallery, in association with Koenig Books), p.19.

12 *Loose Connection, 1973/2011*
Super 8mm film, color, sound, transferred to digital
54:54 min
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

To make *Loose Connection*, Conrad built a camera that moved in two directions simultaneously: it could be rolled backward and forward on a waist-high rig made with baby carriage wheels, and it automatically rotated 360 degrees. Conrad recorded the sound continuously, but he set up the camera to only shoot several frames at regularly spaced intervals as it turned. This innovative apparatus was put to use only once, in a continuous shoot that followed Conrad and his family from their home in midtown Manhattan to the local A&P. Largely because Conrad did not have the money to finish the project, the collection of exposed rolls of 8mm film remained in storage for thirty-eight years. When he finally developed the film and transferred it to digital video in 2011, he was able to realize the project as planned: a jittery, flickering version of gritty, even intense everyday reality in New York City where the illusion of motion that film normally creates is shattered and sound and image remain only loosely connected.

13 *Tiding over till Tomorrow, 1977*
35mm slides with recorded piano performance by Tony Conrad and text by Anne Turyn, transferred to digital
35 min
Courtesy: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York

Conrad debuted *Tiding over till Tomorrow* as a live performance at The Kitchen in New York City in 1977, where it took the form of a dual slide projection with live piano accompaniment by the artist. In this 2012 installation version, the slides were transferred to digital projection and Conrad's live accompaniment was replaced by a contemporaneous recording of him playing piano.

The piano accompaniment belongs to a larger durational performance project that Conrad called Music and the Mind of the World. Between 1976 and 1982, the artist—who was known as a violinist and had no formal piano training – recorded himself experimenting at length on the piano. The photographs that make up *Tiding over till Tomorrow* were taken by Conrad and are joined by a number of enigmatic texts slides by the artist Anne Turyn.

The work's haunting and fractured narrative seems to depict different aspects of the art scene in Buffalo at the time; some images capture artists and performers gathered in Conrad's own studio and apartment. *Tiding over till Tomorrow* is remarkable for its use of still photography to show action from multiple, even conflicting, viewpoints, undermining the illusion of a stable or coherent narrative. The performers in the photographs include Dan Conrad, Malou Conrad, Ted Conrad, Leora Eiferman, Richard Henderson, Karen Kazinski, Fran Keeman, Steven King, Paul Lemberg, Jason, Tony, and Joey Lucca, Una McClure, Linda Neaman, Kevin Noble, Ken Pelka, Anne Turyn, and Conrad himself.

14 *Group of 5 collages, 1977*

Untitled
32.4 × 39 cm

Untitled (surface study ed. 2/77)
45.5 × 39 cm

Untitled (surface study ed. 12/76)
45.5 × 39 cm

Quadrilateral
48 × 40.5 cm

Untitled
45.5 × 39 cm

All: Collage, photo corners on paper
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York

15 *H, 1965*
60 pages of continuous-form IBM computer printouts
Each page: 37.8 × 30.5 cm
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

In 1962, one of Conrad's computer programming instructors proposed to him the idea of making a computer-animated film. After he graduated and moved to New York City, one of his first jobs was as a programmer for LIFE magazine's circulation department, where he used an IBM printer to make *H*, which he later called “a minimalist print work in a format analogous to film.” An early example of what was then called “computer art” and the first of Conrad's many objects that cross the boundaries between multiple artistic disciplines, *H* relates to computer programming, literature, printmaking, and even sculpture. As Conrad suggests, it is also like a film: its columns of capital Hs evoke successive rectangular frames on a filmstrip, and its scrolling pages create a continuous line of paper like celluloid on a reel. *H* relates to music, too, as the repetition of the same letter over and over recalls Conrad's drone music, in which a single note could be repeated or sustained for extended durations.

16 *Three Loops for Performers and Tape Recorders, November 8–21, 1961*

Ink and pencil on paper, ten sheets
8 sheets: 27.9 × 21.6 cm, 2 sheets: 29.2 × 23.5 cm
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

“In Tony Conrad’s *Three Loops for Performers and Tape Recorders*, musicians and tape players are equal partners. The score gives instructions for the performing musicians to choose from a number of instruments and play pre-defined intervals in an arbitrary order. The sounds thus produced are recorded with a tape recorder, with a short delay, that tape is played back on a second recorder. The sound created in that way not only mixes with the sequences of notes produced live, but is also immediately recorded again, with a small delay, and so on. During the only performance of this piece at the Harvard-Radcliffe Music Club in December 1961, each of the three sections (Chant, Aria, Din) ended in cacophonous feedback which, as Conrad remarked, provide an intrinsic part of the performance, and need not be deplored.” Höller, Christian. *Three Loops for Performers and Tape Recorders*. Online at: <http://www.see-this-sound.at/works/896/asset/497.html>, accessed January 6, 2020).

“The first composition of mine ever played in concert, *Three Loops for Performers and Tape Recorders* from 1961, used the same tape delay structure that Terry Riley discovered independently just a bit later. Tape delay was a technological system which had direct rhythmic and metrical implications. Steve Reich saw this during his early apprenticeship with Terry, and appropriated tape delay as the systemic foundation for his own later work. Perhaps it was my own good luck that I have never been very interested in rhythm, and so my piece, *Three Loops*, is primarily about timbre and process, not rhythm.” Conrad, Tony (1966). *Tony Conrad interview*, with Brian Duguid for EST magazine. Online at: <http://media.hyperreal.org/zines/est/intervs/conrad.html>, accessed January 6, 2020).

17 *Yellow Movie 12/14–15/72, 1972*

Emulsion: Citron tinted low lustre enamel, Speedflex Latex Colorizer, Brooklyn Paint & Varnish Co.
Base: White seamless paper
229.9 × 271.8 cm
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

In 1972, Conrad was still primarily known as a filmmaker. That year, however, he distilled his investigation of duration, process, and material into a body of work that led many to see him as a painter for the first time. Serendipitously, he had noticed how quickly the cheap white house paint on the walls of his loft would yellow and darken when exposed to light. To create his *Yellow Movies*, Conrad painted black rectangular frames in the same proportions as traditional movie screens on large pieces of rolled photographic backdrop. He coated the interior of the rectangle with paint he knew would yellow and darken with time, and directed viewers to wait. Although they looked very much like the Minimalist paintings emerging in the 1960s and '70s, Conrad saw these rather as incredibly long films that far surpassed previous durational works such as Andy Warhol’s *Empire*, 1964 (running time: 8 hours, 5 minutes) or **** (*Four Stars*), 1967 (running time: 25 hours). They are reminiscent of the way furniture pulled away from a wall after a period of years leaves a “photographic” impression—its darkened outline.

Even when they are not on view, Conrad’s *Yellow Movies* are always “screening,” their surfaces reflecting the passage of time itself. Conrad exhibited the *Yellow Movies* a few times in the 1970s, including at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center in Buffalo, but they were not seen again until the mid-2000s. It was only at that time, with the reemergence of the *Yellow Movies*, that Conrad came to be widely appreciated outside Buffalo for his work as a visual artist as well as a musician, filmmaker, and educator.

The *Yellow Movies* had first been shown on March 10, 1973 at New York’s Millennium Film Workshop as a “World Premiere Exhibition of 20 New Movies” in the form of a single evening screening.

18 *This Piece Is Its Name, 1961*

Ink on graph paper, three pages on two sheets
Each: 27.9 × 21.6 cm
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

In the 1940s and 1950s, the avant-garde composer John Cage attempted to overcome the constraints of musical conventions and his own taste by using eccentric instruments and chance methods in the composition and performance of his music. Inspired by his example, a younger generation of composers and artists emerging in the 1960s sought new ways to redefine ideas about authorship and art. These included Conrad and his friends La Monte Young and Henry Flynt, who all began composing scores made up of verbal instructions instead of traditional musical notation. Shaped by his study of mathematics, Conrad’s scores resemble abstract logic games or puzzles, but have absurd or even impossible outcomes: “to perform this piece, do not perform this piece,” reads one score, while in another score the phrase “... the instructions for performing this piece follow...” continues endlessly in a circle. Young and Conrad would continue to undermine the idea of composition through their collaboration in the improvisatory Theatre of Eternal Music (active between 1965 and 1966), while Flynt and Conrad would ramp up their critique of musical and artistic conventions by protesting against the very existence of New York’s elite Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

From the work series *Invented Acoustical Tools 1966-2012*:

19 *Slit Drum, ca. 2008*
Metal and plastic drum
Ø 40 cm

20 *Bowed Film, 2014*
16mm film
15.2 × 7.6 × 7.6 cm
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

“The *Bowed Film* [an early version from 1974] is a personal cinema work that is viewed only by me, with stereo sound produced by looping the film over my ears. The mirror is a wire with a small mirror to it that was bowed to agitate the mirror and recorded on video.” Conrad, Tony (2012). *“Invented Acoustical Tools” Instruments 1966–2012*, for the exhibition at Galerie Buchholz Cologne/Berlin/New York. Online at: <https://www.galeriebuchholz.de/exhibitions/tony-conrad-berlin-2012/>, accessed January 20, 2020.

21 *Grommet Horn II, 2005*
plastic bottle, rubber grommets
13.3 × 13.3 × 22.9 cm

22 *Bowstring, 2005*
Violin, violin string, wood, and clamps
122 × 56 × 41 cm

23 *Stereo Guitar Pickup, 1970*
Leather strap, electrical pickups

24 *Slit Drum, ca. 2008*
Metal, plastic, wood, cable, electrical pickup
H 6, Ø 22 cm

- 25

Harmonic Keyboard Oscillator, 1970
Electronic devices, wire
- 26

Stove Shield VHS Antenna, approx. 2008
Aluminum foil and TV antenna
52 × 100 × 11 cm
- 27

Slit Drum Head, ca. 2008
Metal, plastic
H 2.5, Ø 32 cm
- 28

Phonarmonica, 2012
Drill, pipe, drill press hardware, metal mounting flange, 25 cm LP records, plunger heads, and band clamps
145 × 100 × 70 cm

Conrad described this *Invented Acoustical Tool* as his version of the glass harmonica. Invented by Benjamin Franklin in 1761, the instrument consists of a sequence of glass bowls fixed to a horizontal bar; the musician touches the dampened edges of the bowls while rotating the bowls using a foot pedal. In place of Franklin's glass bowls, Conrad used LP records, and in place of a foot pedal's gentle spin, Conrad deployed the powerful motor of an electric drill. When performing with his *Phonarmonica*, Conrad almost parodied the familiar role of a DJ. But if Franklin's spinning bowls were designed to generate beautiful, haunting sounds, Conrad's impossibly fast-spinning records could shatter when touched with the phonograph's needle.
- 29

Slit Drum, approx. 2008
Metal, plastic, wood
Ø 23 cm
- 30

Ten-channel Analog Audio Synthesizer, 2009
Plastic photo frame, electrical wires, tuning knobs, cables
- 31

Double Cuirasse Amplified Wire for two players, 2010
4 metal armor breast plates, electrical pickup, 2 bows
218 × 46 × 60 cm
- 32

Fair Ground Electric Horn, 2003
Funnel, hose clamps, copper tubing, and metal mouthpiece
182 × 121.5 × 55.9 cm
- 33

Unprojectable: Projection and Perspective, 2008
Video
71 min, filmed on June 14, 2008 during Tony Conrad's performance at Tate Modern Turbine Hall
Courtesy: Tate Digital (c) Tate London, London 2020

Unprojectable: Projection and Perspective was a live performance specially conceived for the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern as an interplay of theatre, performance and film. Tony Conrad used a series of amplified strings, film projectors, electric drills and other machines to create a "high octane sound attack". The musicians and their unorthodox instruments were only visible to the audience as projections on large screens. The performance lasted seventy-one minutes and, like Conrad's renowned experimental film work *The Flicker* from 1966, this work tested the audience's stamina and combined the experience of the spectator with that of the producer. It brought theatre, performance and film together and made the creative process part of it.

- 34

Quartet, 2008
Wooden bench, wires, four-channel amplification
Bench: 78 × 108 × 59 cm
- 35

Metal Harp, Harp, approx. 1998
Toy piano chimes mounted on aluminium sheet
101 × 54 × 12 cm
- 36

Ear Bow (with half-size bow), approx. 2000
Bow, pin, string
47 × 3 × 1.2 cm
- 37

Tiny Zither with Matchstick Pegs (with short bow), approx. 2000
Wood, strings, metal hook
4.5 × 30.5 × 7 cm
- 38

L-Bracket with Three Strings, 2002
Bowed wire (hand stretched), L-bracket, electric pickup
35 × 40 × 26 cm
- 39

Metal Band In Tension, approx. 2004
Metal pipes, metal band
65.5 × 12 × 4.5 cm

All Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York

In late 1962 Conrad began playing improvised music with La Monte Young, Marian Zazeela, John Cale, and Angus MacLise in a group that was alternately called the Theatre of Eternal Music or the Dream Syndicate. Together, they pioneered the first drone music, utilizing “just intonation” and sustained sound, which sometimes created a hypnotic trance state and aural hallucinations. Their purpose, as Conrad later described it, “was to uproot and dismantle the cultural function of the Western serious music composer.” Throughout the 1960s, Conrad's exploration of sound extended beyond the group, however. As he later recounted, he would get together with friends and experiment: “I played a metal ladder with a baseball bat; I bowed on guitars and blew on a 'Tibetan' horn made out of a mike stand; I played feedback through a reverb chamber; I played through a swung loudspeaker in a can at the end of a wire; and I played my lute-guitar by completely loosening one string and hand-tightening it by pulling it against the lute-guitar's body.” It wasn't until 2011 that Conrad began exhibiting such radically improvised and playful instruments as sculptures. In these *Invented Acoustical Tools*, punctured milk jugs, PVC tubing, wood scraps, steel banding, cut drumheads, hardware of all varieties, handmade electronics, and refuse are often patched together with common wire, jerry-rigged seams, sloppy glue, and wayward tape. Conrad created subcategories for these works, which evoke the way they may have been used: “Very Quiet Instruments,” “Amplified Bowed Instruments,” “Instrument Players and Electronic Instruments,” “Wind Instruments,” “Other and Auxiliary Instruments,” and “Theoretical Instruments.”

- 40

Invented Acoustical Tools-Instruments 1966-2012
Video
78:10 min, filmed on September 7th, 2012, the opening day of the exhibition at Galerie Buchholz, Cologne
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York

“Since the mid-1990s I have had many opportunities to perform in public, both solo and with others either under my direction or in collaborations. For me the collaborative performances recalled the free inventiveness I had enjoyed during the 1960s, and frequently led me to perform on new instruments. (...) I had been fascinated for some time by the noisy sounds of bowed flat surfaces (rather than bowed strings), so while playing with a drummer I slit open several drums and bowed on the skins. I could also amplify the resulting sounds with a hand-held contact pickup, and this enabled the production of a surprising range of wild sounds. As a solo performance I decided to “play” some compositions by La Monte Young – not by performing the scores’ instructions, for which Young ordinarily requires a vast fee, but by bowing the stretched piece of paper on which the scores were printed. Similarly, I played dollar bills and other sheets of various materials.” Conrad, Tony (2012). *“Invented Acoustical Tools”* Instruments 1966–2012, for the exhibition at Galerie Buchholz Cologne/Berlin/New York. Online at: <https://www.galeriebuchholz.de/exhibitions/tony-conrad-berlin-2012/>, accessed January 20, 2020.

- 41** *Yellow Movie (video)*, 1973
Installation of twentyfour paintings of Citron Yellow Daylight Fluorescent Naz-Dar Screen Process Ink, Naz-Dar No. 5594, and Scrink Transparent Base, Craftint No. 493, applied over Super White Process Color, Art-Brite No. 700, on black cards; GE F40BL black lights; contact microphones/pickups; and guitar amps with built-in speakers
Each: 51 × 51 cm
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

Two months after the *Millennium Show*, Conrad opened *Yellow Movie*, a 40 Monitor Show at The Kitchen in New York City. At fifty by fifty centimeters square, these new paintings referenced the scale of televisions; the rounded edges and black borders of each painting mimic the look of cathode ray tube monitors of the era. In lieu of cheap white house paint, Conrad used a fluorescent yellow paint that glowed when the darkened installation was illuminated with black lights, and he hooked microphones and amplifiers up to the bulbs to exaggerate their buzzing sound. The difference between the original Yellow Movie paintings and the *Yellow Movie (video)* installation points to the difference between film and video – a film screen reflects light whereas a video monitor emits light. *The Yellow Movie (video)* installation is a sensory experience, one reminiscent of sitting too close to a glowing television screen.

- 42** *Window Enactment*, 2007
Video
28:58 min
Courtesy: Tony Conrad Archives

“The characters (‘two women, one of whom plays the viola, and three men, one of whom plays the violin’) are now physically present themselves, even if they are acting behind a stylized stage project.” In comparison to *Tiding Over*, 1977 (shown as a projection in this exhibition), “in *Window Enactment* the relationship between actors, pictorial objects, and viewers is reversed: the figures removed from the picture initially target the viewer in a demonstrative manner, before the motif of the searching play of light is repeated with simple means. Seeing is presented as an active action in order to make the spectators aware of their own viewing situation. A violin duet entitled ‘Wind Oh’ was composed especially for the performance, which aims to make the window perceptible as a viewing hole.” Lurk, Tabea (2015). Tony Conrad: Video – und darüber hinaus. Bern, p. 63.

Laughing at Leonardo, 2008
Video
51:02 min
Courtesy: Tony Conrad Archives

"Tony Conrad developed this string performance for the New York art space Monkeytown (Brooklyn).

At the beginning, the artist lies on the floor backwards in his prison suit and plays with his hands, feet and mouth those steel strings that were installed as a life-size instrument almost 30 cm above the floor. Four floating screens form a projection cube on which the images of two video cameras mounted on the ceiling are transmitted live. A black square with a circumferential circular line marks the field of action on the floor and provides the visual structure of the work. In the image of the four hanging projection screens, the components thus complete each other to form a prominent memorial image, which updates Leonardo da Vinci's famous study of proportion (around 1490) after Vitruvius. With a great deal of irony, the then 68-year-old artist stages himself as an idealized body. For 15 minutes, he remains a prisoner of his own art system, playing music, before standing up to continue the performance while watching it". Lurk, Tabea (2015). Tony Conrad: Video – und darüber hinaus. Bern, p. 63.

- 43** *Tony Conrad: Later Works in Video*, 1989–2011
Curated by Anna Scime and Laura McGough
Single-channel compilation of digital videotapes and videotapes transferred to digital, shown as an interactive video program
Running time: 83 min
Courtesy: Tony Conrad Archives

See video booklet for further reading.

- 44** *8 Pickled E.K. 7302-244-0502*, March, April, and May 2006
16mm film stock preserved in pickling jars with vinegar, vegetables, and spices
Each: 17.1 × 10.2 × 10.2 cm
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

Soon after Conrad made his series of *Yellow Movie* paintings he extended his interest in manipulating the process of filmmaking to make “movies” that he presented as objects. Photography's early pioneers had been kitchen-sink chemists and inventors, but as film production and processing had become increasingly mechanized and professionalized, Conrad wrote, “it seemed terribly corny that Kodak had taken all the fun in making the film, making lenses, making cameras, even processing the film for itself.” Like the *Yellow Movie* paintings, Conrad's pickled, batter-coated, stir-fried, electrified, shattered, deep-fried, woven, and roasted films were homemade productions that attempted to leave moviemaking's technological advances and mechanization behind.

Some of the food films can actually be screened and others are objects that one can see, and possibly smell, but usually cannot watch as movies. During this period, Conrad shifted his focus from the time involved in watching his works to the means and processes involved in fabricating them, and he equated the act of cooking to film processing. Rather than continuing to shoot film, labor over an optical printer, and project the results in a black box cinema, Conrad deliberately adopted what was traditionally considered “women's work” and set about adapting culinary recipes and cooking film in the family kitchen. The title of each work refers to the cooking method and often to the Eastman Kodak catalog numbers for the film stock used. His *Sukiyaki Film* performances famously featured him battering and cooking film before an audience and then “projecting” the result by throwing it at the screen, but most of these objects are too fragile to be screened any way. To rectify this problem, Conrad stored the films in padded film cans that he would hold up and display to the audience during lectures or include in exhibitions alongside his paintings.

- 45** *Waterworks*, 1972/2012
Projection of 16mm film, color, sound, transferred to digital
18:55 min
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

In June 1972, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs sponsored “12 Events for George and the Solstice”, a citywide series of public performances, dance workshops, film projections, and other art-related activities. Conrad organized one of the events, *Waterworks for the Summer Solstice*, with his wife at the time, the underground film actress and director Beverly Grant. Forty participants dressed in white gathered at 10:30 pm on a Wednesday night in the heart of a then-seedy Times Square to enact a kind of mock pagan ritual in honor of the summer solstice. To the surprise of passersby, the participants waved flowers, frolicked, and danced to music orchestrated by Rhys Chatham. Decades later, Conrad would edit footage of the event into *Waterworks*, a seemingly nostalgic celebration of the social misfits, outcasts, and transients of the neighborhood, as well as of Conrad and Grant’s bohemian circle. However, in making clear that the original event was a staged production rather than an organic gathering of friends, the project also explores how communities are formed, represented, and remembered through media.

46 *Deep Fried 7302*, 1973
Fried EK 7302 16mm film stock
Approx. 12.7 × 10.2 × 2.5 cm
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

47 *Roast Kalvar*, 1974
Roasted Kalvar 16mm film stock
Approx. 12.7 × 15.2 × 24.1 cm
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

During his time teaching at Antioch College in Ohio, Conrad learned about an alternative film product called Kalvar. Since Kalvar is only sensitive to UV light, the artist could manipulate the material under normal room light without affecting the image. Conrad made this work by winding, coiling, and oven-roasting great lengths of Kalvar, using the heat to “expose” it. This labor-intensive process was a parody of filmmaking and its deconstruction. Conrad presented the resulting *Roast Kalvar* as a film sculpture.

48 *Paul Sharits: Prescription und Collapsed Temporality*, 1976
Nine-channel audio recording on cassette tapes, played simultaneously
30:38 min
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

Performance of the audio recording on Friday, March 27 at 6 pm, Thursday, April 23 at 5 pm, and Sunday, May 3 at 3 pm

On October 5, 1976, Conrad gave a lecture at the Albright-Knox as part of his friend and colleague Paul Sharits’s solo exhibition. Sharits and Conrad ran in the same circle of structuralist filmmakers and knew of each other beginning in the mid-1960s. They first met in person when their films were screened together at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1975. When Sharits left Antioch College in Ohio to teach in the Department of Media Study at UB, Conrad filled his position there before ultimately joining Sharits in Buffalo in 1976.

Conrad’s lecture consisted of the artist setting up nine cassette players on the edge of the stage and playing the recordings simultaneously. The nine tapes were recorded in the days leading up to the lecture and vary in their contents. The first two tapes feature Conrad speaking about Sharits and his work while the third consists entirely of Conrad repeating the word “frame” over and over again. There are three interviews – one with Conrad and the late Brian Henderson (also a professor in Department of Media Study), one with Conrad and Sharits, and one with Conrad and Kathy King. The last three tapes feature Conrad speaking critically about Sharits and even singing at points.

Conrad’s overlapping “lecture,” which lasted approximately thirty minutes, quickly became incomprehensible to the audience. Decades later, Conrad published a transcript of the tapes that made them accessible in a way they had never been before. Subsequently, he designed this version of his original lecture for performance in a theater or gallery setting, as it has been installed for this exhibition. Here, the sound collapses in on itself, becoming a lived auditory experience that may be related to Conrad’s *Invented Acoustical Tools*, also on view in this exhibition.

49 *Yellow TV, February 3, 1973*
64.8 × 91.4 cm

Yellow TV, February 3, 1973
59.4 × 90.8 cm

Yellow TV, February 3, 1973
78.7 × 102.9 cm

Yellow TV, February 3, 1973
85.4 × 97.5 × 5.1 cm

Yellow TV, February 3, 1973
64.1× 91.4 cm

Yellow TV, February 3, 1973
78.7 × 91.4 cm

All: Citron Yellow Daylight Fluorescent Naz-Dar Screen Process Ink, Naz-Dar No. 5594, and Scrink Transparent Base, Craftint No. 493, applied over Super White Process Color, Art-Brite No. 700, on Saturated Felt
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

50 *Pi*, 1978
Audio recording on cassette tapes transferred to digital
Originally recorded at ZBS studio with Tony Conrad (voice) and Joe Kos (percussion)
8:57 min
Courtesy: Tony Conrad Archives

Pi (π) is an unusual number: while its digits (3.14159...) appear randomly, they in fact express the very specific ratio between the circumference and diameter of a circle. Because pi is a ratio, and ratios are the basis of both rhythm and harmony in music, Conrad decided to use the number to generate a song—one that would be both random and not random, just like pi itself. He devised a conceptual system that relates each digit of pi to a measure; as he later explained: “A measure of three beats is followed by a measure of one beat, then by a measure of four, then one, then five, and so forth, following the digits in pi. Since this interpretation of the digits leaves a zero ill-defined, I decided to use the zeros in pi as punctuation. When a zero appears, there is a brief interlude or cadenza, and when two zeros finally appear in a row, the piece ends” With this project, Conrad subtly argues that the use of certain ratios in music is a cultural convention rather than an immutable law; there is no fixed reason any ratio or system could or could not be used to compose a song or, by extension, a work of art.

51 *Tony Conrad painting in Cologne*, 2006
Video 2:03 min
Filmed by Todd Warnock

52 *Untitled*, 2006
Footprint on canvas
Each: 40 × 30 cm
Both Courtesy: Collection Daniel Buchholz & Christopher Müller, Cologne

First Floor: LECTURE HALL (Riphahnsaal)

53 *WiP*, 2013
Installation of wooden bars, locks, bunk beds, moving blankets, bedpans, sinks, chair rails, painted walls, and blinking overhead LED lighting, with digital projection of edited footage from *Jail Jail* (1982–83, unfinished; 16mm film, black and white, sound, transferred to digital; running time: 68 minutes, 40 seconds)
Jail set dimensions: approx. 305 × 305 × 365.8 cm
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

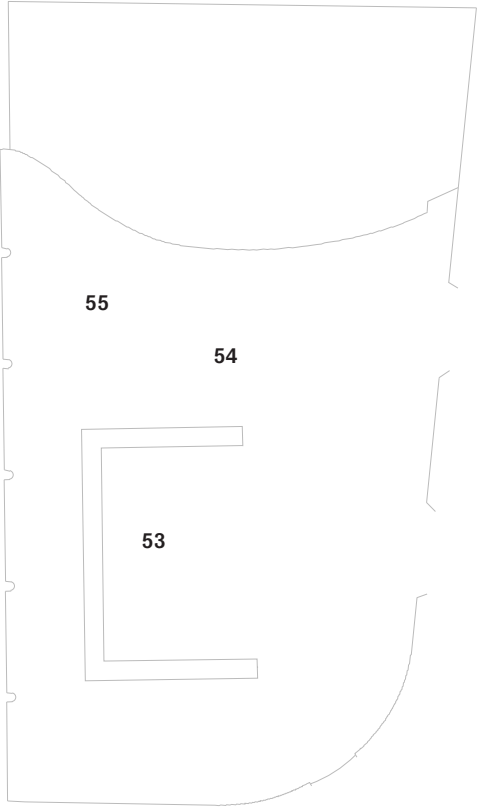
In 1982, Conrad invited a number of friends and fellow artists, including Tony Oursler and Mike Kelley, to act in a new film project. The artist envisioned the work as building directly on his investigation into authority and his attempts to dismantle and reenvision structures of power at the heart of *Beholden to Victory*, which was still in progress at the time. According to Conrad, we are “always already confined in many ways. We’re captured—under conditions of control and authority.” When the actors arrived at the artist’s studio, they found that he had built an elaborate jail set, complete with bunk beds, blankets, and sinks. Conrad had decided to engage with the tropes of the “women in prison” genre of B-grade exploitation films, and all of his actors were assigned female characters to play in a film he later called *Jail Jail*. The rules of this prison were explained, and the actors instructed to improvise within these restrictions; Conrad’s cameras captured evidence of what occurred when a small group of people created an imaginary penitentiary.

Conrad’s plan was to revisit this same set and actors years later with scripted versions of their improvisations from the early 1980s, emphasizing the inherently repetitive nature of prison life as well as the illusion of change and evolution in life outside prison walls. He continued to pay rent on the studio housing the set for decades, eventually buying the building itself. In 2012, Conrad transferred some of the footage to video and used it as part of this installation, *WiP*, which includes a recreation of jail cells from Conrad’s original sets and flickering overhead lights that intermittently interrupt the video image. He finally began shooting the long-planned new footage within this 2012 installation, but with the suicide of artist Mike Kelley that same year, *Jail Jail* remained definitively unfinished. *WiP*, which stands for both *Women in Prison* and the homophone “whip”, makes visible mechanisms of control and challenges the viewer to choose a place either inside or outside of these restrictions.

54 *Beholden to Victory*, 1980/1983
3/4 inch U-matic cassette tape transferred to digital medium, color, sound
24:54 min
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad und Galerie Buchholz, Köln/Berlin/New York

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Conrad created a series of genre films as part of his investigation into authority and his attempts to dismantle and reenvision structures of power. *Beholden to Victory* focuses on two military types: the officer and the soldier. Conrad filmed the work in 1980 during his time as a visiting professor at University of California San Diego, which is located on the site of a decommissioned Marine Corps base, Camp Matthews. He enlisted friends and students to act in the film, including artists Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler. Conrad presented situations for the actors to follow but did not give them explicit direction or dialogue. The film’s relatively improvised scenes include soldiers drilling and procuring supplies, officers prepping for battle, and soldiers getting lost in the desert. Conrad created several different versions of *Beholden to Victory*. A version from 1980–83 is on view here. In the version, completed in 2007, Conrad took advantage of digital technology to introduce variability into the

LECTURE HAL



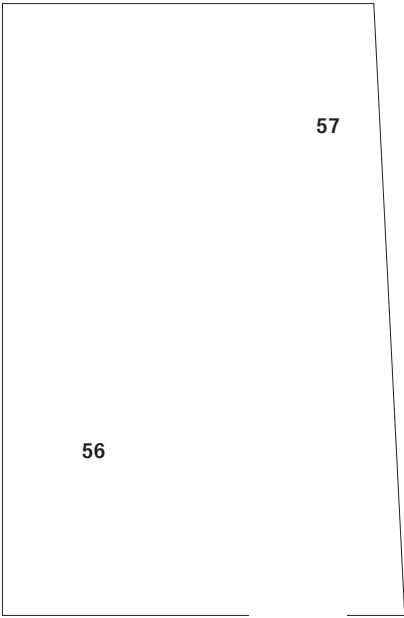
work’s sequencing, something he had long intended but had been unable to accomplish using older film or video technologies.

When making the film, Conrad imagined the viewers’ role as analogous to that of the officers: they hold the power to accept or reject his film. At many of the work’s screenings in the 1980s and in the 2007 version, Conrad gave material form to this power dynamic by requiring audience members to choose a “side”— military or civilian—before watching the video. In this way, the audience was forced actively to visualize power dynamics—not only between officers and soldiers but also between the filmmaker and the viewers of his work.

55 *Authorized to Surrender: A Video Retrospective*, 1977–90
Single-channel compilation of four videotapes transferred to digital
Running time: 210 min
Courtesy: Tony Conrad Archives and Greene Naftali, New York

See video booklet for further reading.

STUDIO



Second Floor: (STUDIO)

- 56 *Studio of the Streets*, 1991–93/2012
One-channel digital projection of footage from *Studio of the Streets* (1991–93, 246 min, color, sound) and acrylic panel with vinyl lettering; the work is accompanied by a site-specific installation of orange traffic cones, orange-and-white plastic traffic barricades, wheelbarrow with dirt, caution tape, and other elements
Acrylic panel: 365.8 × 66 cm
Courtesy: The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

Studio of the Streets began as documentation of a 1990 protest to demand space and resources for public television in Buffalo. However, it quickly evolved into a weekly event, filmed on Fridays in front of the City Hall in Buffalo and broadcast on Tuesdays. For three years, Conrad, along with collaborators Cathleen Steffan and Ann Szyjka, sought out and highlighted the concerns and interests of Buffalo citizens; in all, they facilitated interviews with around a thousand participants. As with many of his works featured in this exhibition, *Studio of the Streets* showcases Conrad's collaborative experiments in countering dominant media narratives and challenging the status quo. *Studio of the Streets* is an example of both media activism and community-run independent media, which Conrad was committed to throughout his career. He not only helped cofound Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center in Buffalo but also was actively involved with Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center in Buffalo and ISSUE Project Room in Brooklyn.

Conrad showed a video compilation of *Studio of the Streets* in several museums and galleries, starting with In Western New York 1991 at the Albright-Knox and at documenta IX in 1992 in Kassel, Germany. In this particular installation, first on view as part of his exhibition *Doing the City: Urban Community Interventions* at New York University in 2012, Conrad created an environment and experience for the viewer that hints at what is outside the gallery's white cube. His inclusion of construction materials was an attempt to create continuity between the outside and inside.

- 57 *Homework Helpline*, 1994–95
Excerpts of recordings of cablecasts of Homework Helpline, broadcast 1994–95 on Buffalo Learning Television
Video, color, sound, transferred to digital
10:49 min
Courtesy: Tony Conrad Archives

In 1994, Conrad took over the Buffalo public access television station to host a live call-in talk show for local school students. He realized that many parents did not have the ability to help their kids with difficult homework assignments and saw an untapped potential in broadcasting to address this issue. Although Conrad was a Harvard University–educated mathematician, he seldom solved students' assignments for them during episodes of *Homework Helpline*. Instead, he encouraged their fellow students to call in to help. In an era when students could not rely on the internet for assistance, Conrad facilitated teamwork and collaboration, and gave local students a small but impactful boost in their efforts to succeed in school.

Special thanks to: Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York, Greene Naftali Gallery, New York, The Estate of Tony Conrad, Tony Oursler, Tabea Lurk, and Hampus Lindwall.

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