

Carpenter Center

Introducing Tony Conrad:
A Retrospective

October 18, 2018 – January 6, 2019

INTRODUCING
TONY CONRAD:
A
RETROSPECTIVE



October 18 – December 30, 2018

Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts
Harvard University
24 Quincy Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

for the Visual Arts



MIT List Visual Arts Center

MIT List Visual Arts Center
20 Ames Street, Building E15
Cambridge MA 02139

listart.mit.edu

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Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective

Hayden, Reference, and Bakalar Galleries

October 18, 2018–January 6, 2019

Throughout his six-decade career, Tony Conrad (American, 1940–2016) forged his own path through numerous artistic movements, from Fluxus to the Pictures Generation and beyond. Conrad, a 1962 graduate of Harvard University, made visits to both Harvard and MIT over the years to present his work, and had formative experiences at both universities.

Although he was best known for his pioneering contributions to both minimal music and structural film in the 1960s, his work helped define a vast range of culture, including rock music and public television. *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective*, the first large-scale museum survey devoted to artworks Conrad presented in museum and gallery settings, is part of an ongoing reappraisal of his creative achievement. Indeed, because of the extraordinary scope of Conrad's contributions to art and culture, this retrospective may yet be seen as only an "introduction." Inspired by the spoken, written, and performed introductions Conrad regularly used to help frame screenings and presentations of his works, it shows Conrad to be an unparalleled innovator in the mediums of painting, sculpture, film, video, performance, and installation, tenaciously working to challenge the boundaries between artistic categories.

Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective is organized by the Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. The exhibition has been made possible through the generosity of Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York, and Greene Naftali, New York.

The Cambridge presentation is organized by Henriette Huldish, Director of Exhibitions & Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center and Dan Byers, John R. and Barbara Robinson Family Director, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts.



Office of
Graduate Education

Non-Event
EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC SERIES

ROOM 1

***Paul Sharits: Prescription and Collapsed Temporality*, 1976**

Nine-channel audio recording on cassette tapes, played simultaneously

Running time: 30 minutes, 38 seconds

Courtesy The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

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 the University at Buffalo, 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 gallery.

***Pi*, 1978**

Audio recording on cassette tapes transferred to digital

Originally recorded at ZBS studio with Tony Conrad, voice, and Joe Kos, percussion

Running time: 8 minutes, 57 seconds

Courtesy Tony Conrad Archives

Pi (π) is an unusual number: while its digits (3.14159 . . .) appear random, 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.

***Quartet*, 2008**

Wooden bench, music wire, pickups, and four speakers

Bench: $34\frac{1}{4} \times 42\frac{1}{2} \times 23\frac{1}{4}$ inches (87 × 108 × 59 cm); overall dimensions variable

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

This work was categorized by Conrad as an "Amplified Bowed Instrument." It sways gently, suspended just above the floor on four wires along the four corners of the bench. These wires, amplified through four channels, can be plucked or bowed. With

this work, Conrad eliminated the composer and transferred that responsibility to anyone who comes in contact with his artwork. Visitors are invited to sit down on the bench and gently "play" the strings.

***Cycles of 3s and 7s*, 1977**

Video, black and white, sound, transferred to digital

Running time: 12 minute excerpt of 23 minutes

Courtesy Tony Conrad Archives and Greene Naftali, New York

Conrad's first video work, *Cycles of 3s and 7s*, resembles much video art of the 1970s: recorded in a single take, the grainy footage documents the artist performing a repetitive action for the camera in his studio. Conrad was a math major in college and former computer programmer, and here he punches calculations into a handheld calculator, assuming the demeanor of a friendly math teacher. However, the video is as much about music as it is about math, building on Conrad's lifelong rejection of traditional methods of composition. By repeating the numbers three and seven, he creates ratios associated with non-Western music,

and as Conrad himself noted, the sound of his voice narrating the calculation of these ratios takes on a rhythmic quality, creating a kind of computer-generated song.

In addition to being a video about music, *Cycles of 3s and 7s* is also a video about computers. As Conrad later explained, although the digital hand-held calculator was a fairly new consumer product, it was nonetheless an accessible machine, something even a child could operate. By deliberately using a familiar technology, Conrad hoped to question the "fetishization" of computers by some media artists.

Compositions by La Monte Young, 2000

Frames, offset prints, and tape

Diptych: 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ × $\frac{3}{8}$ inches (31.5 × 26 × 1 cm) each

Courtesy The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

Conrad found reasons to look for sound in disparate objects throughout his career, perforating drumheads and canvases and bending a cheap metal stove shield in order to play them like instruments. For a festival at the Albright-Knox in 1976, he bowed a mirror's edge to give voice to its reflections in an outdoor performance called *Sunbow*. Much later, he turned a copy of La Monte Young's *Compositions* into an *Invented Acoustical Tool* by sandwiching the score in a frame and running a bow along the exposed page edges. As Conrad described it, "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."

In the mid-1960s Conrad was a member of the musical group the Theatre of Eternal

Music with Young (whom he had first met in 1959), John Cale, Marian Zazeela, and Angus MacLise. Although Conrad was friends with Young for many years, the two musicians had a falling-out over the recordings Young had made of those early, radically influential experimental sessions. Young was unwilling to make the tapes public unless he was recognized as the sole author of the compositions on the recordings. Conrad, however, felt strongly that the group had, from its inception, been a collaborative partnership without any one authorial voice. To this day, almost no recordings from the Theatre of Eternal Music have been heard. This particular *Invented Acoustical Tool* seems to be a clear response from Conrad to his old friend Young, a kind of argument that music will find its public—one way or another.

ROOM 2

Yellow Movie—35mm Format #3, 1973

Yellow Movie—35mm Format #4, 1973

Dispersion varnish on canvas

24 × 24 inches (61 × 61 cm)

Courtesy Marc Selwyn, Los Angeles

These two paintings are part of a group of four that Conrad made shortly after undertaking the larger *Yellow Movies* on view in this gallery. The *Yellow Movie* paintings are made using cheap white paint on photographic backdrop paper. All materials

used in art change—for example, even high-quality white paint can yellow over the decades and centuries—but these changes are so slow that the human eye generally cannot perceive them. For Conrad, the change that his materials would inevitably

undergo was analogous to an excruciatingly long photographic exposure. For him, these works were a bridge between the relatively marginalized world of avant-garde cinema and the elevated domain of abstract painters.

In some ways, this pair of small canvases served a very practical didactic purpose: in the early 1970s Conrad wanted to share his concept of painting as a kind of durational film, but the *Yellow Movie* paintings were often enormous and awkward to transport.

Selection of three Pickled 3M 150, 1974

Pickled 3M 150 16mm film stock in twelve canning jars with vinegar, vegetables, sugar, salt, and spices

6 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 4 inches (17.2 × 10.2 cm) each

Courtesy The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

Conrad made this series of celluloid sculptures by following a classic recipe for pickled onions from *The Fannie Farmer Cookbook*. By embalming a short strand of raw film stock in a vinegar-filled mason jar, he was, in effect, extending its duration for years beyond that of filmed, processed, and projected stock. As he once described, "It seemed to me that this was a mechanism for permanently implanting the film in a situation where it would be clearly unapproachable. The mystery, for example, of the fact that the middle part of the film is

If those works evoked the movie screen one might see in a theater, these diminutive and easily portable 35mm *Format* paintings are scaled to a small single frame of film. Conrad deliberately painted these on used canvases and left visible traces of the earlier materials. He described this as his response to people who had looked at a *Yellow Movie* and simply seen another painting. These somewhat messy 35mm *Format* works could not be confused with just another pristine Minimalist canvas.

never seen." As a first-time canner, Conrad made a few errors in his first batch of pickled film sculptures from 1973. For example, he used zinc lids, which corroded and allowed the liquid contents of the jars to evaporate. The artist prepared a second set of pickled film sculptures as part of his contribution to the 2006 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. He assembled new versions in a performance outside the museum's café, which were later displayed in a vitrine in the exhibition.

Flicker Matte, 1974

Kalvar 16mm film stock and microfilm

21 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 27 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches (54.5 × 69 cm)

Collection of Philip Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons

The vertical strands in this work are microfilm—they lack the sprocket holes that are required to screen film—while the horizontal strands are perforated Kalvar film: a material only sensitive to extremely bright light. Once he had completed this

weaving, Conrad exposed the mat to direct sunlight and then treated it with fixative chemicals in a bathtub. Conrad described how he envisioned the black and white frames of film could theoretically be unwoven and projected, but as a whole

the weaving could also be held up to the light and be “projected” in that limited way. “I thought that for me it made a much, much more effective and intimate kind of viewing experience in this form, so it remains [woven].” The title of this work, and its alternating frames of light and dark film,

directly connect it to Conrad’s best-known film, *The Flicker*, 1966. “Matte” is a technical term referring to film that restricts some light from passing through the camera lens, and it is often used when creating special effects.

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 Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

H, 1965

60 pages of continuous-form IBM computer printouts
Each page: 14 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 12 inches (37.8 × 30.5 cm); installation dimensions variable
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.

This Piece Is Its Name, 1961

Ink on graph paper, three pages on two sheets
11 × 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches (27.9 × 21.6 cm), each
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

ROOM 3

***Panopticon*, 1988**

Five-channel video installation on monitors (color, sound, transferred to digital) with foamboard and cardboard elements, motorized satellite model, two fluorescent lamps, spotlight, pine branch, and a sixty-foot triangular apron of orange plastic fencing
Dimensions variable, approximately 168 × 240 × 240 inches (426.7 × 609.6 × 609.6 cm)
Courtesy The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

Panopticon was Conrad’s most ambitious video art installation to date when it was first installed at Cornell University in 1988 as part of an exhibition about media art in Buffalo. In the project, Conrad stresses the way in which the public is increasingly subject to invasive forms of surveillance in social spaces as diverse as malls and art galleries. *Panopticon* reflects Conrad’s

reading of new cultural theorists in the 1970s and 1980s, including Michel Foucault. It most explicitly references Foucault’s writing on the influence of the panopticon, an eighteenth-century prison designed to reform prisoners’ behavior by making them fear that guards could be watching them at any moment.

ROOM 4

***Infant Protective Gesture*, 1979**

Four Polaroid photographs in wooden frames
5 × 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 4 inches (12.7 × 14.5 × 10.2 cm) each, framed
Courtesy The Estate of Tony Conrad and Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/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. The situation created is tense. In his 1979 Hallwalls exhibition and in the 2012 Albright-Knox exhibition *Wish You Were Here: The Buffalo Avant-garde in the 1970s*, Conrad showed these two works with *Time for the Hairbrush*, 1979, and *Examinations*, 1979—a pair of full-size

beds covered with enlarged drawings of a marked-up exam he had taken as a student. Together, these works present variations on how individuals are subject to and how they

perform authority while also referencing the artist's own sense of vulnerability and submission in relationship to the viewer of his artwork.

ROOM 5

Untitled, 2010

Untitled, 2010

Untitled, 2010

Untitled, 2010

Acrylic on board

16 × 20 inches (40.6 × 50.8 cm)

Courtesy The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

These four small paintings are part of a larger body of work in which Conrad investigates the origins of linear perspective. One painting includes a transfer print from a sixteenth-century

manual on linear perspective, and another includes a radically foreshortened version of Albrecht Dürer's (German, 1471–1528) woodcut *Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Reclining Woman*, ca. 1525.

Untitled, 2013

Untitled, 2013

Glass with metal hardware

72 × 36 × ¼ inches (182.9 × 91.4 × .6 cm)

Courtesy The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

These hanging glass panels, which Conrad alternately called "paintings" and "pictures," were inspired by his interest in the development of linear perspective in Western painting during the Renaissance. More than any other invention in the history of Western art, linear perspective has dominated the way viewers look at painting over the past five hundred years and has defined what makes a "good" work of art: the more successful the mathematically calculated perspectival illusion, the better the painting is deemed to be. In statements

related to this body of work, Conrad referred to many of the figures who helped codify traditional perspective, including Leon Battista Alberti (Italian, 1404–1472). The glass works—and Conrad's small diagrammatic studies for these on view in this gallery—should be seen as part of the artist's overarching artistic project of assailing authority of all sorts, including the almost invisible authority of mathematical perspective that governs the way we see in art.

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: approximately 120 × 120 × 144 inches (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. According to Conrad, we are "always already confined in many ways. We're captured—under conditions of control and authority." 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 in the elaborate constructed jail set, complete with bunk beds, blankets,

and sinks. Conrad captured evidence of what occurred when a small group of people created an imaginary penitentiary. The artist planned to revisit this same set and actors years later with scripted versions of their improvisations from the early 1980s. 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.

**PUBLIC PROGRAMS
LIST CENTER**

**Opening Reception
Wednesday, October 17**

6–7:30 pm at MIT List Center
6:30–8 pm at Carpenter Center for the
Visual Arts

**Curatorial Walkthrough
Friday, October 26, 12–2 PM**

Led by Henriette Huldish and Dan Byers
Locations: MIT List Center & CCVA
(Walkthrough starts at MIT List Center)

**MIT Graduate Student Talk
Thursday, November 1, 6 PM**

*Musical Experiments: From Science to
Experience*

Speaker: Hane Lee, MIT Media Lab Opera
of the Future Group

**MIT Graduate Student Talk
Thursday, November 29, 6 PM**

*"Always already confined": Tony Conrad's
Politics of Roleplay and Improvisation*

Speaker: Walker Downey, History, Theory
and Criticism of Architecture and Art
program at MIT

**Sound Performances
Saturday, December 1, 7 PM**

Performers: Henry Flynt, Lary 7, and
Damon & Naomi

In collaboration with Non-Event

**Weekend Video Program
Each Saturday and Sunday at 1 pm**

(except Nov. 10 and Dec. 1)

Tony Conrad's *Authorized to Surrender:
A Video Retrospective 1977–1990*

Bartos Theater

See opposite page for events taking place at Carpenter the Center for the Visual Arts.

All programs are free and open to the general public. RSVPs are required.

For more information about these events and to RSVP visit:
listart.mit.edu/events-programs.



#MITListArts

COVER Installation view of *Quartet*, 2008, in *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective*
(Albright-Knox Art Gallery, March 3–May 27, 2018).

Artwork courtesy of the Estate of Tony Conrad and Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York.

©The Estate of Tony Conrad. Image courtesy of Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York.

Photograph by Tom Loonan and Brenda Bieger.

Carpenter Center



for the Visual Arts

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Harvard University
24 Quincy Street
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Gallery hours
Tuesday–Sunday, 12–5 pm
Free and open to the public

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INTRODUCING TONY CONRAD: A RETROSPECTIVE

Throughout his six-decade career, Tony Conrad (American, 1940–2016) forged his own path through numerous artistic movements, from Fluxus to the Pictures Generation and beyond. Conrad, a 1962 graduate of Harvard University, made visits to both Harvard and MIT over the years to present his work, and had formative experiences at both universities.

Although he was best known for his pioneering contributions to both minimal music and structural film in the 1960s, his work helped to define a vast range of culture, including rock music and public television. *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective*—the first large-scale museum survey devoted to artworks Conrad presented in museum and gallery settings—is part of an ongoing reappraisal of his creative achievement. Indeed, because of the extraordinary scope of Conrad’s contributions to art and culture, this retrospective may yet be seen as only an “introduction.” Inspired by the spoken, written, and performed introductions that Conrad regularly used to help frame screenings and presentations of his works, this multi-venue exhibition shows Conrad to be an unparalleled innovator in the mediums of painting, sculpture, film, video, performance, and installation, tenaciously working to challenge the boundaries between artistic categories.

LEVEL 1

Tiding over till Tomorrow, 1977

35 mm slides with recorded piano performance by Conrad and text by Anne Turyn, transferred to digital
Running time: 35 minutes
Collection Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York
Gift of the artist and Greene Naftali, New York, 2012

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 text 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.

Beholden to Victory, 1983/2007

Super 8mm film shot for *Hail the Fallen* (1981) in 1980, color, sound, transferred to video and digital
Running time: 26 minutes
Courtesy Squeaky Wheel Film and Media Art Center, Buffalo

In the late 1970s and early '80s, 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 U.S. 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*, two of which are included in this exhibition. A twenty-six-minute version from 1980–83 is on view here. In the version on view at the List Visual Arts Center, completed in 2007, Conrad took advantage of digital technology to introduce variability into the work's sequencing, something he had long intended but had been unable to accomplish using older film or video technologies. In this version, the same sequences play in a different order each time the work is screened.

When making the film, Conrad imagined the viewers' role as analogous to that of the officers: they held the power to accept or reject his film. At many of the work's screenings in the 1980s and in the debut of 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 is forced actively to visualize power dynamics—not only between officers and soldiers but also between the filmmaker and the viewers of his work.

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 variable
Courtesy Tony Conrad Archives

As a complement to *Authorized to Surrender*—an anthology of Conrad's videos from the 1970s and '80s that was organized by the artist and is on view nearby—this compilation introduces Conrad's later body of video works from the 1990s and beyond. It is curated by Anna Scime and Laura McGough, who both worked with Conrad during his lifetime.

Authorized to Surrender: A Video Retrospective, 1977–90

Single-channel compilation of four videotapes transferred to digital
Courtesy Tony Conrad Archives and Greene Naftali, New York

In 1976, Conrad was invited by Woody Vasulka, head of the Center for Media Study at the University at Buffalo, to join the faculty as a professor of video. Although before taking the job Conrad had actually never made a video, he quickly immersed himself in the medium and by the early 1990s had created around two dozen video works. The sharing of videos on the internet would not become common for another two decades, so in order to show his works more widely, Conrad organized a six-hour compilation of his videos that could be easily shipped and screened. Entitled *Authorized to Surrender*, the compilation reveals the stylistic range of Conrad's video projects, including simple single-take videos, videos with special effects, and footage of performances. As indicated by the compilation's title, many of these works deal with questions of authority and power, often with a focus on the triangular relationship between Conrad, his work, and its audience. Produced in Buffalo with the support of Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center, and Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, where Conrad had his first retrospective in 1977, *Authorized to Surrender* notably was shown in New York City as early as February and March 1991, when it was screened daily in its entirety at The Kitchen, an experimental media space where Conrad presented his work on several occasions beginning in 1972.

Loose Connection, 1973/2011

Super 8mm film, color, sound, transferred to digital
Running time: 54 minutes, 54 seconds
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.

Yellow Movie (video), 1973

Installation of twenty 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
20 × 20 in. (51 × 51 cm) each; overall dimensions variable
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 back-drop. He coated the interior of the rectangle with paint he knew would yellow and darken with time, and directed viewers to wait. For Conrad, these were not paintings but, rather, incredibly long films that recalled the way furniture pulled away from a wall after a period of years leaves a “photographic” impression—its darkened outline. As part of this exhibition, a group of these works are on view at the MIT List Visual Arts Center.

The *Yellow Movies* were first exhibited in a one-day-only “screening” at the Millennium Film Workshop in New York City on March 10, 1973. Two months later, Conrad opened *Yellow Movie, a forty monitor show* at The Kitchen in New York City. At twenty-by-twenty-inches 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.

Studio of the Streets, 1991–93/2012

Four-channel digital projection of footage from *Studio of the Streets* (1991–93, color, sound) with installation of acrylic panel with vinyl lettering, orange traffic cones, orange-and-white plastic traffic barricades, wheelbarrow with dirt, caution tape, and other elements
Acrylic panel: 144 × 26 in. (365.8 × 66 cm); overall dimensions variable
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 majestic Buffalo City Hall 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.

LEVEL 3

Bryant Park Moratorium Rally, 2012 (recorded 1969)

Two-channel audio installation with speakers and vinyl wall panel
Wall panel: 50 × 107¼ in. (127 × 273.7 cm)
Courtesy The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

On October 15, 1969, approximately forty thousand people, including speakers Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm and activist Rev. William Sloane Coffin, gathered in Bryant Park in New York City to rally for an end to the

war in Vietnam. Conrad initially observed the protest from his home—he was living a block away on West 42nd Street—and subsequently joined the crowd later in the evening. The artist, who was making environmental recordings at the time, hung a Sony microphone out his window for several hour-long intervals during the rally to capture the hum of the protest mingled with the city sounds that drifted in through his apartment window five stories above the street. At one point, he added a second microphone to tape simultaneously the television coverage of the rally. Because of the distance between his apartment and the park, the broadcast voices of the protest actually arrived in Conrad's living room seconds before the sound from the event outside. Conrad's recordings demonstrate the disjuncture between reality and its media image, and highlight his interest in new forms of media and the documentary form. Conrad would go on to explore these themes in many later works, including *Studio of the Streets* (1991–93), on view here on Level 1.

Bowstring, 2005

Violin, violin string, wood, and clamps
48 × 22 × 16¼ in. (122 × 56 × 41 cm)
Courtesy The Estate of Tony Conrad and Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York

Phonarmonica, 2003

Drill, pipe, drill press hardware, metal mounting flange, 10-inch LP records, plunger heads, and band clamps
57 × 39½ × 27½ in. (145 × 100 × 70 cm)
Courtesy The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

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 them using a foot pedal. In place of Franklin's glass bowls, Conrad used LP records, and instead 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.

LEVEL 0

Selection of eight Pickled E.K. 7302-244-0502, March, April, and May 2006

16 mm film stock preserved in pickling jars with vinegar, vegetables, and spices
6¾ x 4 x 4 in. (17.1 x 10.2 x 10.2 cm) each

Courtesy The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

Selection of three Pickled E.K. 7302-244-0502, May 2006

16 mm film stock preserved in pickling jars with vinegar, vegetables, and spices
6¾ x 4 x 4 in. (17.1 x 10.2 x 10.2 cm) each

Courtesy The Estate of Tony Conrad and Greene Naftali, New York

Conrad made this series of celluloid sculptures by following a classic recipe for pickled onions from *The Fannie Farmer Cookbook*. By embalming a short strand of raw film stock in a vinegar-filled mason jar, he was, in effect, extending its duration for years beyond that of filmed, processed, and projected stock. As he once described, “It seemed to me that this was a mechanism for permanently implanting the film in a situation where it would be clearly unapproachable. The mystery, for example, of the fact that the middle part of the film is never seen.” As a first-time canner, Conrad made a few errors in his first batch of pickled film sculptures from 1973. For example, he used zinc lids, which corroded and allowed the liquid contents of the jars to evaporate. The artist prepared a second set of pickled film sculptures as part of his contribution to the 2006 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. He assembled new versions in a performance outside the museum’s café, which were later displayed in a vitrine in the exhibition. Here, these “preserved” films playfully illuminate the preservation mission of their temporary neighbor, the Harvard Film Archive, across the hall.

Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts Harvard University

Free and open to the public, the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts is the center for contemporary art and artists at Harvard University. Housed within Le Corbusier’s only building in North America, the Carpenter Center was built in 1963 to accommodate the university’s art and film studios alongside a dynamic exhibition program. Through exhibitions, public events, new commissions, publications, and residencies, the Carpenter Center is dedicated to artist-centered programming and building a vibrant community around contemporary art. This community is defined by an ethos of experimentation, diverse perspectives, and making connections across disciplines and fields. The Center’s projects are enriched by the educational mission of a dynamic department of art and film education, and the cultural resources of a large research university.

Dan Byers, John R. and Barbara Robinson Family Director
Anna Kovacs, Exhibitions Manager / Registrar
Daisy Nam, Assistant Director
Daisy Wong, Exhibition Production Assistant
Jessica Caponigro and Kiyoto Koseki, Gallery and Bookshop Staff

Public Programs
Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts

Wednesday, October 17
Opening reception
6–7:30 pm at MIT List Center
6:30–8 pm at Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts

Friday, October 19, 7 + 9 pm
Screening: Tony Conrad Films
7 pm: A program of Conrad's classic 16mm films,
including his legendary *The Flicker* (1965, 30 min.)
9 pm: *Tony Conrad: Completely in the Present* (2016, Tyler Hubby, 102 min.)
Location: Harvard Film Archive, Level 0
In collaboration with Harvard Film Archive

Friday, October 26, 12–2 pm
Curatorial Walkthrough
Henriette Huldish and Dan Byers
Locations: MIT List Center & CCVA (Walkthrough starts at MIT List Center)

Tuesday, October 30, 7:30 pm
In Response: Students Perform Responses to Tony Conrad's Works
Location: CCVA Level 3, Bookshop
In collaboration with Claire Chase, Harvard University Music Dept. Professor of the Practice
+ Neil Leonard, Artistic Director of the Berklee Interdisciplinary Arts Institute

Friday, November 16, 7 pm
Friday, November 30, 7 pm
Tony Conrad Video Work
A two-part program of Conrad's pioneering video work
Location: Harvard Film Archive, Level 0
In collaboration with Harvard Film Archive

HARVARD FILM ARCHIVE

See opposite page for events taking place at the MIT List Visual Arts Center

Cover: Tony Conrad performing *Bowed Film*, 1974.
Image courtesy Tony Conrad Archives.
Work © The Estate of Tony Conrad.