

PRESS RELEASE

Nasher Sculpture Center Announces Senga Nengudi as Winner of the 2023 Nasher Prize

American Artist Receives \$100,000 in Recognition of Outstanding Contributions to Sculpture



Left: Senga Nengudi, Photo credit: Ron Pollard; Courtesy of the Nasher Sculpture Center
Center: Maren Hassinger activating Senga Nengudi's R.S.V.P. at Pearl C. Wood Gallery, Los Angeles, 1977; Photographer: Harmon Outlaw; © Senga Nengudi, 2022; Courtesy of Sprüth Magers and Thomas Erben Gallery, New York
Right: R.S.V.P. Reverie "Scribe", 2014 (detail); © Senga Nengudi, 2022; Courtesy of Sprüth Magers and Thomas Erben Gallery, New York; Photo: Timo Ohler

Dallas, TX (September 21, 2022) – The **Nasher Sculpture Center** announces American artist **Senga Nengudi** as the recipient of the **2023 Nasher Prize**. Now in its seventh year, the Nasher Prize is an international award for sculpture, established to honor a living artist who elevates the understanding of sculpture and its possibilities. Nengudi will be presented with an award designed by Renzo Piano, architect of the Nasher Sculpture Center, at a ceremony in Dallas on April 1, 2023.

Nengudi is best known for her sculpture and performance works that speak to the fragility and resilience of the human body, individual agency, and the importance of collaboration and friendship. Her practice has come to encompass poetic, enigmatic objects and installations alongside performances, films, and photography. Over a career spanning more than five decades, Nengudi's achievements have had a significant impact on contemporary art history. Nengudi will be the subject of a major, long-term exhibition at Dia Beacon, opening February 17, 2023.

"We are honored to award the 2023 Nasher Prize to Senga Nengudi," says **Nasher Sculpture Center Director Jeremy Strick**. "Throughout her career, Nengudi has helped push the boundaries of the field of sculpture, inviting the world to reconsider the temporality of sculptural works, where these works can be displayed, and the materials out of which they can be composed."

Born in 1943, Nengudi spent her early years with her mother in California, where she developed a passion for art and dance. She went on to study both disciplines at California State College Los Angeles (CSCLA), where she earned a master's degree. Her career began in earnest in the mid-1960s, coinciding with many significant historical movements in the United States, including the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and second-wave feminism. These events had a deep influence on the artist, spurring her to produce ephemeral, abstract, and performance-based work taking issue with concepts of race, gender, ethnicity, labor, and the passage of time. While initially underappreciated Nengudi's work has since expanded the understanding of what can be defined as political art.

After traveling to Japan and New York, Nengudi returned to Los Angeles and became a member of Studio Z, along with artists David Hammons, Maren Hassinger, and others. Here they collaborated and experimented with discarded materials and overlooked spaces, including highway underpasses. In 1974, Nengudi began to employ used pantyhose in her practice. She often collaborated with Hassinger, who interacted with the artist's web-like sculptures of pantyhose, extending them as a setting for performance art.

Pantyhose remain a defining feature of Nengudi's art to this day. She stretches, fills, and knots them as an allusion to bodies and flesh – particularly that of women. The works elicit pain, age, violence, and temporality, and are prone to wear with time. Nengudi also evokes the physicality of the body's anatomy through other materials, such as water, sand and powdered pigment, many of which evaporate, disintegrate, or otherwise do not last. The transient nature of both her sculpture and performance work makes documentation an essential part of the art. Resisting the convention of permanence in sculpture, many of Nengudi's early works are only known through her notes, photographs, and film recordings.

"An artist's supposed greatest desire is the making of objects that will last lifetimes for posterity after all," said Nengudi. "This has never been a priority for me. My purpose is to create an experience that will vibrate with the connecting thread."

Some of Nengudi's most notable works include *Ceremony for Freeway Fets* (1978), a performance organized by the artist featuring Hassinger, Hammons, and Nengudi herself dancing under a Los Angeles freeway underpass, its support columns festooned with Nengudi's pantyhose sculptures; the *Water Compositions* series, made up of plastic sacs filled with colored water in shades of red, purple, green, blue, yellow, and orange; and the *R.S.V.P.* series, in which Nengudi filled secondhand pantyhose with sand, stretching and elongating them across the floors, walls, and corners, to suggest sagging or distended bodies. This series made its public debut at Linda Goode Bryant's Just Above Midtown Gallery in 1977, and an iteration (*R.S.V.P. I*, 1977/2003) is currently on view as part of the Museum of Modern Art's permanent collection in New York City.

"The choice of Senga Nengudi is both timely and wonderful," said **Nasher Prize juror Lynne Cooke**. "The fact that she makes work with these everyday means that had no history within sculpture and were of no great value is something that means a lot to younger artists as well as to a wider audience. Nengudi shows that you don't have to have massive resources or be working with expensive materials. You can take the everyday and use it to throw light on issues around how we as humans, as people, inhabit space and how bodies are conditioned and almost morphed by different forms of repetitive activities. Her work is truly remarkable, and we are delighted to honor her with the 2023 Nasher Prize."

Nengudi is the seventh artist to receive the Nasher Prize; previous winners are **Nairy Baghrahaim** (2022), **Michael Rakowitz** (2020-21), **Isa Genzken** (2019), **Theaster Gates** (2018), **Pierre Huyghe** (2017) and **Doris Salcedo** (2016). The 2023 Nasher Prize jury that selected Nengudi is comprised of **Nairy Baghramain**, artist; **Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev**, Director of Castello di Rivoli, Italy; **Lynne Cooke**, Senior Curator, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; **Briony Fer**, Professor, History of Art, University College London; **Hou Hanru**, Artistic Director, MAXXI, Rome; **Yuko Hasegawa**, Director of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa Japan; **Pablo León de la Barra**, Curator at Large, Latin America, Guggenheim Museum; and **Sir Nicholas Serota**, Chair, Arts Council England.

In conjunction with the Nasher Prize, the Nasher Sculpture Center presents an annual series of public programs exploring the climate of contemporary sculpture. Called **Nasher Prize Dialogues**, the talks gather interdisciplinary luminaries to discuss the most compelling topics regarding contemporary sculpture. By galvanizing international discourse, Nasher Prize Dialogues are an apt extension of the Nasher Prize's mission to advocate for and advance a vital contemporary art form. Recent talks have taken place in Copenhagen, Denmark in partnership with CHART; Reykjavik, Iceland in partnership with the Reykjavik Art Museum; and in Glasgow, UK in partnership with The Common Guild and Glasgow International 2018; and in Mexico City in partnership with Museo Jumex.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

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About Senga Nengudi

Senga Nengudi was born in 1943 in Chicago, Illinois; she lives and works in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Nengudi's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions organized by Henry Moore Institute (2018); the Baltimore Museum of Art (2018); Art + Practice, Los Angeles (2018); the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (2017); and the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans (2017), as well as her recent retrospective, *Topologies*, which originated at the Lenbachhaus, Munich in 2019 and traveled to Denver Art Museum, Denver (2020); Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Brazil (2020); and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia (2021). Her work has been prominently featured in international biennials including the 57th Venice Biennale (2017) and the 54th Carnegie International (2007).

Nengudi was elected as a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2020 and has been a recipient of Denver Art Museum Key Award (2019); Women's Caucus For Art Lifetime Achievement Award (2010); and the Anonymous Was A Woman Award (2005). Her works are held in institutional collections including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; The Brooklyn Museum, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Tate Modern, London; and Jerusalem Museum of Art, Jerusalem.

About the Nasher Sculpture Center

Located in the heart of the Dallas Arts District and designed by architect Renzo Piano, the Nasher Sculpture Center is home to the Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, one of the finest collections of modern and contemporary sculpture in the world, featuring more than 300 masterpieces by Calder, de Kooning, di Suvero, Giacometti, Gormley, Hepworth, Kelly, Matisse, Miró, Moore, Picasso, Rodin, Serra, and Shapiro, among others. On view in the light-filled galleries and amid the garden grounds is a rotating selection of works from the Collection, as well as important exhibitions of modern and contemporary sculpture, including *Sightings*, a series of small-scale exhibitions and site-specific installations that explore new work by established and emerging artists. In addition to the indoor and outdoor gallery spaces, the Center contains an auditorium, education and research facilities and a cafe. For more information, visit www.NasherSculptureCenter.org.