

MIT List Visual Arts Center

The MIT List Visual Arts Center and the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University co-present *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective*

August 21, 2018, Cambridge, MA—The MIT List Visual Arts Center and the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University are pleased to co-present *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective* on view October 18, 2018–January 6, 2019 (MIT List Center) and October 18–December 30, 2018 (Carpenter Center).

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. He once declared in an interview, “You don’t know who I am, but somehow, indirectly, you’ve been affected by things I did.” *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.

Conrad’s 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 treated film as a sculptural and performative material. In *Sukiyaki Film*, 1973, for instance, Conrad rapidly stir-fried film and hurled it at the screen, and in his *Yellow Movies*, 1972–73, he coated paper surfaces with cheap white emulsion paint and planned for them to be screened as slowly changing, fifty-year “films.” He invented musical instruments out of materials as humble as a Band-Aid tin or a park bench and presented these acoustical tools as sculptures themselves. In the 1980s, his ambitious films about power relations in the army and in prisons assembled large casts of collaborators. Such rollicking projects and performances (with artists including Mike Kelley, Tony Oursler, and Joe Gibbons) signaled Conrad’s lifelong pioneering of cooperative approaches to artmaking.

Conrad was a professor in the Department of Media Study at the University of Buffalo from 1976 until his death. His regular programs for public access television, such as *Homework Helpline*, 1994–95, made him an influential voice in the Buffalo community. Representative examples from all of 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.

Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective is on view at the MIT List Visual Arts Center (Oct. 18, 2018–Jan. 6, 2019) and the [Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts](#) (Oct. 18–Dec 30, 2018)

Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective is organized by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY. 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.

The exhibition will travel to the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania in February 2019.

Exhibitions at the List Center are made possible with the support of Fotene Demoulas & Tom Côté, Audrey & James Foster, Idee German-Schoenheimer, Jane & Neil Pappalardo, Cynthia & John Reed, and Terry & Rick Stone. In-kind media sponsorship provided by 90.9 WBUR. Additional support for the List Center presentation of *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective* was generously provided by Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York.

General operating support is provided by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Council for the Arts at MIT, Philip S. Khoury, Associate Provost at MIT, the MIT School of Architecture + Planning, the Mass Cultural Council, and many generous individual donors. The Advisory Committee Members of the List Visual Arts Center are gratefully acknowledged.

PROGRAMS

Opening Reception: *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective*

Wednesday, October 17, 5–8 pm

6:00–7:30 pm at MIT List Visual Arts Center

6:30–8 pm at CCVA

Screening: Tony Conrad Films

In conjunction with *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective*

Friday, October 19, 7 + 9 pm

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 Archives



Curatorial Walkthrough: Henriette Huldisch and Dan Byers

In conjunction with *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective*
Friday, October 26, 12–2 pm
Both locations: MIT List & CCVA

In collaboration with MIT List Visual Arts Center

In Response: Students Perform Responses to Tony Conrad's Works

In conjunction with *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective*
Tuesday, October 30, 7:30 pm
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

MIT Graduate Student Talk

In conjunction with *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective*
Thursday, November 1, 6PM
Location: MIT List Visual Arts Center

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

MIT Graduate Student Talk

In conjunction with *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective*
Thursday, November 29, 6 PM
Location: MIT List Visual Arts Center

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

Screening: Tony Conrad Video Work

In conjunction with *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective*
Friday, November 16, 7 pm + Friday, November 30, 7 pm
Location: Harvard Film Archive, Level 0

A two-part program of Conrad's pioneering video work. In collaboration with Harvard Film Archives.

Sound Performances: Henry Flynt, Lary 7, and Damon & Naomi

In conjunction with *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective*
Saturday, December 1, 7 pm
Location: MIT List Visual Arts Center

In collaboration with MIT List Visual Arts Center + Non-Event



About the MIT List Visual Arts Center

The List Visual Arts Center is a creative laboratory that provides artists with space to experiment and push boundaries, creating a context for understanding how the contemporary visual arts reflect and express the complex social and cultural issues in a changing world. The dynamic annual program of six to nine gallery exhibitions includes a program of work by emerging artists, known as List Projects, as well as a broad range of educational programs, events, and scholarly publications. As the contemporary art museum at MIT, the List Center also maintains and adds to MIT's permanent collection; commissions new works through the MIT Percent-for-Art program; and oversees a program that lends approximately 600 works of art annually to MIT students.

CONTACT

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