

CATSKILL ART SPACE

Livingston Manor, NY – Catskill Art Space (CAS) will present an exhibition of video art and photography from Mary Lucier, the pioneering video artist. Mary Lucier opens on Saturday, June 29 with an artist talk from 3-4pm followed by a reception from 4-5pm; the show remains on view through August 24. The opening will coincide with the release of the eponymous catalog, including new critical text from Hearne Pardee and an interview with the artist by Emily Watlington. Mary Lucier's wide sweeping exhibition at CAS marks the first time the organization has exhibited video art, an ambitious endeavor for an institution of this size. The presentation is grounded by major historical and new works, tracing the breadth of her career—from her experiments with early video camera technology of the 1970s, to recent installations reflecting on her personal lived experience and loss of her late husband and painter Robert Berling.

Bridging two room-sized installations, is a gallery of still photography from her installation Noah's Raven (1993), which captures catastrophic phenomena on the landscape and in the lives of individuals and cultures. Together, the exhibition examines the effects of ecological trauma, transformation, and resilience in the natural and artificial worlds. Lucier's work will be shown alongside long-term installations by James Turrell, Sol LeWitt, Francis Cape and Ellen Brooks on the second floor of the recently expanded multi-arts center.

For Equinox (1979/2016), a subversive meditation on nature and video, Lucier trained her video camera on the sun for seven consecutive days, burning the camera tube and leaving marks on the images, which are presented on seven pedestal-mounted monitors of increasing size. The burn marks track the movement of the sun, accumulating and creating a decidedly painterly effect with intoxicating washes of green over the glow of the rising sun. Presented nearly 50 years later, as we grapple with the impact of environmental degradation, the work reminds viewers of the orange glow that colored the city's skies amidst the 2023 Canada wildfires, underscoring the devastation of global change. In this context, the work is as much about the natural world degrading technology, as the inverse—a city laid vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

Leaving Earth (2023) is a multi-channel video and sound installation inspired by excerpts from the final journal of Lucier's late husband, the painter Robert Berling. In this journal, Berling fearlessly documented his thoughts on his impending death from a terminal illness. His writings reflect his appreciation of life with a remarkable lack of anxiety about the inevitable end—more curiosity than dread. The imagery in Lucier's work consists of sequences of protean video and still images filmed in both her domestic and working environments in Sullivan County and New York City. Most were shot after Berling's passing, reflecting the world as she experienced it during his final days and after. Berling's terse epigraphs appear throughout, serving as evocative companions to the flow of images in Leaving Earth.

Lucier describes this nine-channel installation as one where "words, pictures, and sound become interchangeable, not serving as descriptions but as a rumination on reality and a form of coping." Unlike much of Lucier's earlier work, it does not follow a synchronous and sequential internal structure, instead allowing for random juxtapositions, repetitive thoughts, and the possibility of chaos to occur, reflecting the potential disarray in the dying man's mind. The pictorial narrative in *Leaving Earth* is underscored by Berlind's description of his mental state:

*a succession of discontinuous moments occur
then disappear
without the elemental structure of sequence
And yet . . . I forget to fear death*

Mary Lucier (b. 1944, Bucyrus, OH) has been noted for her contributions to the form of multimonitor, multi-channel video installation since the early 1970s. Her work prior to her introduction to video was largely concerned with manipulation of the black and white image through a graphic performative process.

Lucier's video installations have been shown in major museums and galleries around the world. Many now reside in important collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; the Museum of Modern Art, NY; the Reina Sofia, Madrid; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany; the Milwaukee Art Museum; the Columbus Museum of Art, OH; and the National Academy of Design, NY, among others. She has also produced a significant body of single-channel works which have been screened in museums and festivals world-wide. From the austere black and white experiments of the 1970's to recent studies of Japanese Buddhist ceremonies and Dakota Sioux dances, these works acknowledge the influence of both Avant Garde and documentary practices in American art and cinema.

Lucier has been the recipient of many awards and fellowships, including the National Endowment for the Arts, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, Creative Capital, Anonymous Was a Woman, the Nancy Graves Foundation, USA Artists, the American Film Institute, the Jerome Foundation, the New York State council on the Arts, and the Japan-US Friendship Commission. Her teaching appointments have included the Distinguished Visiting Professor in Art and Art History at UC Davis; Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture; adjunct professor in the department of VES at Harvard University; and Visiting Professor in Video Art at University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, among others. She lives and works in New York City and Cohecton, NY, where she has established a studio and archive for video art.

Long-term Installations

Following a major renovation and expansion, Catskill Art Space reopened in October 2022 with a long-term presentation of **James Turrell's Avaar** (1982) in a custom-built gallery on the building's second floor. A room-sized installation, *Avaar* is an important example of the artist's early, wall-based "aperture" works, which function by creating two areas within a room. There is a "viewing space," where one stands to see and experience the work, and a "sensing space," which is an ambiguously defined area of diffused light. *Avaar* is one of the rare examples of Turrell's aperture works to make use of white lighting only; no colors will be present

in the installation. This work is in the collection of the Seattle Art Museum, which has granted CAS a special long-term loan to exhibit the work. The presentation at CAS marks the first time the work has been shown since the 1970s, giving audiences from the Catskills and beyond the rare opportunity to experience a major Turrell work that has not been seen in nearly five decades.

On the second floor's central landing, **Sol LeWitt's vibrant Wall Drawing #992** unfolds in three sections, each consisting of 10,000 straight lines drawn in color marker, to create a mesmerizing arrangement of primary colors. On the fourth wall, presenting LeWitt's Wall Drawing #991, straight, arced, and organic lines will encompass the wall in black marker and pencil. The conceptual, minimalist artist conceived guidelines for his two-dimensional works to be drawn directly on the wall. Much like Turrell's Avar, the LeWitt works were realized for CAS's space; in this instance, they are generously loaned by the artist's estate. This work was overseen by a draftsman, who determines the length and placement of the lines, and executed by five artists local to the area over nearly two weeks.

The newly realized performance space on CAS's second floor hosts British sculptor **Francis Cape's A Gathering of Utopian Benches**—an installation of meticulous copies of benches built and used by communal societies. Cape's installations have always argued that design and craft express belief. Utopian Benches, which has toured extensively throughout the US, was built from poplar grown near Cape's studio in Narrowsburg, NY. To be considered both as contemporary sculpture as well as furniture that visitors can actively use, the benches reference the societies who first used them, inviting visitors to utilize them for exchange, discourse, and community. The installation, which is meant to be used by visitors both for contemplation and may be used for performance seating, overlooks an expansive wall of windows onto the Willowemoc Creek.

About Catskill Art Space

Catskill Art Space (CAS) explores contemporary art practices of emerging and established artists. Through exhibitions, performances, classes, lectures, and screenings, CAS fosters\ creative community in the Catskills.

Established as Catskill Art Society in 1971, CAS reopened in October 2022 as Catskill Art Space following a major renovation and expansion of its multi-arts center, located in the picturesque hamlet of Livingston Manor in the Western Catskills.

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*Leaving Earth, 2023, Installation view. Cristin Tierney
Gallery, New York, NY Adam Reich.*



*Mary Lucier, Equinox, 1979/2016, Installation view.
Before Projection: Video 1995, Sculpture Center, Long
Island City, NY, 2018. Photo: Mary Lucier.*