

CRISTIN TIERNEY

MOUSSE

“Red, White, Yellow, and Black: 1972-73” at The Kitchen at Westbeth, New York

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The Kitchen presents an exhibition recognizing the 50th anniversary of performances organized by the multicultural, female-led coalition Red, White, Yellow, and Black. In December 1972 and April 1973, Shigeko Kubota, Mary Lucier, Cecilia Sandoval, and Charlotte Warren conceived of three multimedia concerts at The Kitchen, housed at the time in The Mercer Arts Center. Choosing a name that deliberately reflected the cultural identities of each member, the four artists conceived Red, White, Yellow,

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and Black as a group and inclusive platform that would highlight their individual backgrounds and experimental practices. The four women presented multimedia work which has notably dematerialized after the concerts, and has since been reconstructed only through scholarly text.

The exhibition “Red, White, Yellow, and Black: 1972–73” partially reconstitutes the ephemeral multimedia works presented by the group at the three evening concerts – the first time any of them have been presented since their original performances. Archival material, print ephemera, correspondence, oral histories, and re-staged works trace the energetic relationships of the four members of the coalition. The exhibition includes re-stagings of Kubota’s first foray into sculptural video from the December 1972 concert, *Riverrun–Video Water Poem* (1972); audio and video from Sandoval and Lucier’s collaborative performance work *The Occasion of Her First Dance and How She Looked* (1973) from the April 1973 concerts; as well as a recording of Warren reading poems included in *Black Voices* (1972).

Red, White, Yellow, and Black was initiated by Lucier and Kubota, who toured with the experimental music collective Sonic Arts Union in the late 1960s and began “discussing the need for women artists to come together” in the fall of 1972. Lucier invited Sandoval, a colleague from the ethnomusicology department at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, and Kubota invited Warren, an acquaintance from downtown theater and music ensembles in New York City, to participate in their first group performance. In the months prior to their first performances, the artists gathered in New York City, and, in lively correspondence, shared ideas about how to define their individual artistic practices and contextualize their life experiences within a shared program. Lucier wrote a letter to the other members in 1972, suggesting that “Each do what she does best. . . Shigeko, video, me slides and speech, Charlotte music and movement, and Cecilia tells stories in English and Navajo.”

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Although Red, White, Yellow, and Black was short-lived and the members's paths diverged following the concerts – Lucier and Kubota as successful video artists who exhibited extensively at The Kitchen throughout the 1970s and 80s, Warren as an educator and performer, and Sandoval as a nurse and activist – they maintained meaningful connections and mutual support systems established by the group.

The exhibition commemorates the 50th anniversary of the coalition and brings to the fore their contributions to the avant-garde histories of video, performance, sound, and poetry that are represented in The Kitchen's archive. The artists' radical foregrounding of self-identification in relation to their performance practices both anticipates and sets a precedent for the intersectional conversations around race and gender that continue to build momentum today.

at The Kitchen at Westbeth, New York
until April 29, 2023