

The Hammer Museum presents Charles Gaines: *Gridwork 1974-1989*, the first museum survey of the Los Angeles-based conceptual artist Charles Gaines's early work. On view February 7–May 24, 2015, the exhibition features eleven different series including more than 80 works and relevant ephemera from the early years of Gaines's career, which now spans over four decades. He is highly regarded as both a leading practitioner of conceptual art and an influential educator—first at Fresno State University (now California State University, Fresno) and beginning in 1990 at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). Gaines is celebrated primarily for his photographs, drawings, and works on paper that investigate systems, cognition, and language. Charles Gaines: *Gridwork 1974--1989* traces Gaines's career, from his groundbreaking work in the 1970s—some of which debuted in exhibitions at famed New York galleries Leo Castelli and John Weber—to his investigations of subjectivity in the late 1980s. The exhibition explores the ways in which Gaines's early works on paper can be viewed as a crucial bridge between first generation conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s and the conceptually-based practices of artists who emerged in the ensuing decades incorporating identity politics, subjectivity, and inequality. *Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974--1989* includes rare and never-before-seen works, some of which were presumed lost. Organized by The Studio Museum in Harlem, the exhibition is curated by Naima J. Keith, associate curator. The Hammer's presentation is organized by Anne Ellegood, senior curator, and Jamillah James, assistant curator.

“Charles Gaines is one of Los Angeles's most treasured artists, a deeply committed teacher, and an influential mentor to many artists of younger generations,” says Ann Philbin, director of the Hammer Museum.

“Gridwork is an incredible opportunity to see works gathered together from a period in his career that was both formative and highly productive,” explains Anne Ellegood, senior curator. “In addition to producing rigorous, intelligent, and formally astute works for the past several decades, Gaines has influenced the careers of many artists that have exhibited at the Hammer or are part of our Hammer Contemporary Collection.”

*Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974-1989* comes at a moment of renewed discussion about conceptual and postminimalist art. The exhibition presents selections from eleven early series, including *Regression* (1973–74), one of Gaines's first explorations of mathematical and numeric systems; *Walnut Tree Orchard* (1975–2014) and *Faces* (1978–79), which use photography as a foundation for graphic deconstructions; *Motion: Trisha Brown Dance* (1980–81), a collaboration with the world-renowned choreographer and dancer; and a series seen for the first time in the Hammer presentation, *Landscape: Assorted Trees with Regression* (1981), which shows a critical connection between

Gaines's work from the 1970s and his work from the 1980s. In each series he explores logic, pattern, linguistic systems and chance. Following a path set by influential composer and artist John Cage, Gaines finds poetry and the unexpected within prescribed processes.

Considered against the backdrop of the Black Arts Movement of the 1970s and the rise of multiculturalism in the 1980s, the works in *Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974–1989* are radical gestures. Eschewing overt discussion of race, they take a detached approach to identity that exemplifies Gaines's determination to transcend the conversations of his time and create new paths in artistic innovation.

In collaboration with *Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974–1989*, the Hammer is partnering with the nonprofit organization Art + Practice (A+P) to present Charles Gaines's *Librettos: Manuel de Falla / Stokely Carmichael* at the A+P space in Leimert Park. Employing a systems-based conceptualism so central to Gaines's practice, the new 12-part body of work brings together the score of a tragic love story, the opera *La Vida Breve* (c. 1904) by Spanish composer Manuel de Falla, and a fiery 1964 speech by the civil rights activist and Black Panther Party member Stokely Carmichael. The unexpected combination of music and text calls attention to the class issues at the center of the opera and foregrounds the long-standing class and race struggles in the United States while recognizing the power of music to bridge difference.

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