

*“Our work begins when we perceive an anomaly in the environment that is the result of opposing beliefs or contradictory metaphors. Moments when reality no longer appears seamless and the cost of belief has become outrageous offer the opportunity to create new spaces — first in the mind and thereafter in everyday life.”*

— The Harrisons (1987)

VSF is pleased to present the gallery’s first solo exhibition with Helen Mayer Harrison (b. 1929) and Newton Harrison (b. 1932), progenitors of the Ecological Art movement initiated in the late 1960s. The first gallery survey of five decades of pioneering work produced by this husband-and-wife artist partnership known as “The Harrisons”, this exhibition focuses on works that address ecological issues within the artists’ home state of California.

Since 1969, The Harrisons have collaborated with biologists, engineers, architects, urban planners and governments around the world to catalyze social, political and ecological problem-solving through a range of visual art modalities including minimalist sculpture, land art, color field painting, cartography, and video. The Harrisons’ art practice is fundamentally and uniquely interdisciplinary; they are historians, diplomats, ecologists, investigators, emissaries and art activists, proposing radical solutions and instigating public discourse, and often producing elaborate documentation of their proposals. Past projects have focused on urgent ecological threats and opportunities such as watershed restoration, climate change, urban renewal, agriculture and deforestation.

In the courtyard is *Notations of the Ecosystem of the Cargill Salt Works with the Inclusion of Brine Shrimp*, 2017, a new variation of a historically significant installation known as *Brine Shrimp Farm #2*, first presented in 1971 as part of LACMA’s landmark Art + Technology exhibition. Harnessing Southern California’s abundant sunlight, this six-month outdoor installation comprises five pools of sea water and algae in a minimalist wood frame, each pool’s specific salinity level breeding algae of a distinct hue. Brine shrimp are introduced to consume the algae and stabilize each pool as a self-contained, autonomous ecosystem. As did its original 1971 iteration, this installation will conclude with a performative harvesting of the sea salt and brine shrimp in a communal meal open to the public.

Gallery 1 contains *Composting in the Pentagon with Worms*, 2017, which complements the courtyard installation as a regenerative composting farm hosting 2,000 live worms, contained in a minimalist pentagonal wood structure, that will convert vegetarian refuse from neighboring businesses into prime topsoil over the course of the exhibition. Hanging on Gallery 1’s walls are six mixed-media works combining photography, paint, graphite and cartographic collage, which include

proposal texts handwritten by Helen explicating watercolor and oil overlays by Newton. Each work represents a larger conservation project that The Harrisons have tackled as commissioned advisors to various communal initiatives in California.

Gallery 2 displays hand-drafted annotated blueprints of the Harrisons' installations, including their most groundbreaking and iconic sculptural installations from 1970-1974. In Gallery 3 is a video projection of *Saving The West*, 2014, in which Newton Harrison narrates text and images depicting the mass degradation of forests across the eleven states of the American West.

Helen and Newton Harrison are both Professors Emeriti at University of California, Santa Cruz, and University of California, San Diego. During their prolific career, the Harrisons have been the subject of over 100 solo exhibitions, and have been included in over 250 group exhibitions. They have shown work at the 1976 and 1980 Venice Biennales; documenta 8 (1987); the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; The Tate, London, UK; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; The Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC; Cooper Hewitt Museum, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; PS1, New York, NY; Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA; The Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA; The Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA ; Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany; and Kunstverein Hamburg, Germany.

Works by the Harrisons are included in many major permanent collections including the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA; the Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV; the San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA; and The Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, GA. The Harrisons live and work in Santa Cruz, California.

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