Den Frie Press release

Senga Nengudi: *Sand and Water*
22.05. — 13.09.2026
Exhibition opening: 21.05.2026, 17.00 – 19.00



Senga Nengudi, *Water Composition*, 1967-70/2019. © Senga Nengudi. Photo: Thomas Barrat

With Sand and Water*, Den Frie presents Senga Nengudi's first solo exhibition in Denmark and the Nordic region. Senga Nengudi (b. 1943, Chicago) is a central figure in recent American art history, and in recent years her works have been the focus of several major exhibitions across Europe and South America.* Sand and Water *brings together a new site-specific installation and iconic water sculptures from the 1970s in a sensuous and energy-charged landscape created in close collaboration with the artist for Den Frie's exhibition space OSLO.*

For more than five decades, Senga Nengudi has developed a distinctive practice that moves across sculpture, performance, dance, and language, connecting humble everyday materials with philosophical and spiritual ideas. Her works are at once abstract, anthropomorphic, and vibrant. Pointing to social and political conditions without ever becoming illustrative, they instead insist on the spontaneous and existential encounter between artwork and viewer, grounded in a profound belief in the potential of every human being.

At the centre of the exhibition is a new site-specific installation conceived especially for Den Frie's lower-level gallery OSLO, composed of sand, metal, glass, rubber, textiles, pigment, sound, and found objects. The work appears as an abstract, fragmented landscape and at the same time as a pulsating visual field. The combination of elements from very different contexts and with different tactile qualities is thematically connected to memory, loss, industry, craft, labour, and nature. As a whole, the installation evokes a sense of a world coming to an end, while at the same time suggesting a world in the process of being born anew.

Also included in the exhibition is a series of sculptures made of pigmented water, temporarily enclosed within transparent plastic volumes. Originating in the 1970s, these *Water Compositions* must be recreated each time they are exhibited due to their temporary nature. They balance precariously between interior and exterior, the fluid and the fixed, the playful and the unsettling. Although composed of recognisable materials, they appear as strangely alien, posthuman bodies or beings — at once organic, vulnerable, and unfamiliar. They are balanced precariously between interior and exterior, the fluid and the fixed. Despite their grounding in everyday materials, they also seem like posthuman bodies or strange beings, in which the artificial and the organic are inextricably fused together. They not only embody space but also create space around them.

In her writings, Nengudi has pointed out this vital connection between space, energy and the expansion of the senses:

Now the concept of space appears to have something
to do with energy, energy in two ways.
Energy milling around trying to find its form
or/and pockets of energy that you feel and sense rather than see.



Senga Nengudi, *Sandmining B*, 2020. Dia Beacon, 2026. Photo: Thomas Barrat.

Senga Nengudi

Senga Nengudi (b. 1943, Chicago) lives and works in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Her recent solo exhibitions include Dia Beacon, Beacon, NY (2023–26), Philadelphia Museum of Art (2021), Denver Art Museum (2020), Museu de Arte de São Paulo (2020), Lenbachhaus, Munich (2019), Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (2018), Baltimore Museum of Art (2018), and Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (2017). In a Scandinavian context, Nengudi participated in the performance programme *Incandescent* as part of the exhibition *Now Here* at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in 1996. Her works are represented in public collections worldwide.

Curated by

Magnus Thorø Clausen

With support from

Danish Arts Foundation, The Augustinus Foundation, Det Obelske Familiefond, Dansk Tennis Fond, Beckett-Fonden and Glashoffs Legat

OSLO – Solo projects at Den Frie

OSLO is Den Frie's lower-floor exhibition space dedicated to solo projects. At OSLO, we produce and present new works by artists of different nationalities, generations, and media, made specifically for Den Frie and with a focus on social and political urgency, aiming at making sense of the world today. The name OSLO is a reference to Den Frie's location at Oslo Plads and an anagram of solo. Always free entrance for all guests.

Practical Info

Den Frie Udstillingsbygning
Opening: 21.05.2026,
17.00 – 19.00
Free entrance and happy hour
prices in Café Pegasus

Exhibition dates:
22.05. – 13.09.2026

Press Contact

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Press kit can be downloaded here.
Installation photos will be uploaded
on 27 May.