

**KEITH SONNIER: EARLY WORKS
LATE SIXTIES
September 11 – October 13, 2007**

Castelli Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of work by Keith Sonnier from the late Sixties, when the artist made his debut on the New York art scene. This show is comprised of neon wall sculptures as well as a cloth floor piece and several drawings that have never been exhibited before.

During the late Sixties, Keith Sonnier was one of the first artists to make use of materials not commonly associated with art in his unconventional sculptures. Such materials include neon, liquid plastic and latex, but, often, these materials were whatever happened to be available to the artist at the time: foam rubber, and discarded industrial materials or found objects. Sonnier took these cold industrial materials and discarded objects and infused them with an inner-life.

It should be noted that Keith Sonnier's first works of this nature were installed at the Castelli Warehouse space at 108th Street in New York City. Castelli Warehouse was one of the first experimental galleries to exhibit installation work and in doing so, preceded Soho and Chelsea.

During this early period Sonnier also worked with media, with television in particular, and with the help of assistants and performers, recorded the transformation of his manipulated objects. These early investigations formed the body of his work at the Castelli Warehouse. He was one of the first artists to use video and projection in large scale format and as well as his film and video work, "Live Video" and "Channel Mix" were created during this period as were a whole series of light works: "Mirror Act"; "Spotted Circle"; "Spotted Square" (made from theatrical spots through glass prisms) and the "Ba-O-Ba Series"(a neon and glass series based on golden section principles).

Sonnier's neon works such as "Untitled" from 1970, which is exhibited in this show, is from this early period. The spare use of line and color conveys a moodiness, which calls forth a variety of emotions that engage all five senses. It is almost as if the glow of the neon acts as the pulse of life inside the body. As Max Blagg says in his introduction to Sonnier's exhibition at the Liverpool Gallery in 1990, "It is an art that invites the viewer to step inside, to touch and feel, to be bathed in light..."

In addition to using industrial materials, Sonnier also employs the use of organic materials such as linen, satin and cheesecloth often used in floor sculptures such as "Lay-In", currently on exhibit, as is "Plaster Cast in Satin" and the "File Series", which refers to the shape of a nail emery board file. The use of these earthy, tactile materials in a space that is commonly occupied by the viewer rather than the art creates an intimate connection to the work. Sonnier likes to call this period of his work his "Hollywood Noir" period, but in fact these works are really the early investigative studies for the neon sculptures which, like the cloth and light piece "Hotel Delacourt", are psychologically loaded.

Complimenting the sculptures are several drawings and collage. Some of the drawings relate directly to fully realized works while others generate ideas that become something completely different. In either case, through these drawings one is able to share a moment of creativity with the artist.



For Further information please contact Jessica Mastro at: 212.249.4470 or info@castelligallery.com