

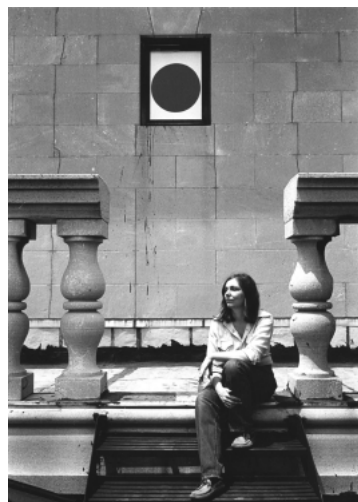
Press Release

Nancy Holt: Points of View

24 September —
14 November 2020

Preview Days

Mon 21 September –
Wed 23 September
9am–7pm by appt.



Portrait of Nancy Holt taken on the steps up to the Clocktower Gallery, New York (1974). Photograph: Gwenn Thomas

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Parafin is delighted to announce an exhibition exploring Nancy Holt’s use of language in her ground-breaking work of the late 1960s and early 1970s. This is the gallery’s second exhibition of Holt’s work. It presents for the first time in the UK the major video installation *Points of View* (1974) and a selection of early concrete poems.

Nancy Holt (1938–2014) was a member of the Earth, Land, and Conceptual art movements and a pioneer of site-specific installation and moving image work. Throughout her artistic practice language and systems of perception were key concerns. Holt’s earliest artworks were concrete poems, and many of her film and video works focus on communication, interpretation and the subjectivity of language.

In the mid 1960s Nancy Holt worked as an assistant literary editor at the magazine *Harper’s Bazaar*, and in 1966 began creating concrete poems and text-based works of art. These important early works announce many themes that would preoccupy her: sight, site, systems, place and geography. In her 1972 journal she noted a fascination with making words “concrete through vision.” Holt treated words as discrete entities to be deployed in spatial strategies that defy and confound conventional narrative meaning.

In the 1970s Holt’s interest in framing vision and making words material led her to explore the productive miscommunications that occur when information is imperfectly transferred from one medium to another. She addressed this in early 1970s video works, such as *Zeroing In* (1973) and her collaborations with Richard Serra and Charlemagne Palestine, *Boomerang* and *Match Match their Courage* (1974). The four screen video installation *Points of View* (1974) exemplifies this experiment, revealing — as she notes in her journal — “the wonder of place through verbal description.”

Points of View was made for the Clocktower Gallery in New York. Each of the four monitors is set to the circular windows of this iconic New York exhibition space, which look out to cardinal axes of the compass. The screens show four views of Lower Manhattan seen from each window accompanied by individual soundtracks of dialogues that, literally and conceptually, demonstrate different points of view. In the pairings Lucy Lippard talks with Richard Serra, Liza Béar with Klaus Kertess, Carl Andre with Ruth Kligman and Bruce Boice with Tina Girouard about what can be seen through respectively the north, south, east and west windows. As suggested by the title, *Points of View* underlines the subjectivity and fallibility of observation and communication. This process is expanded through time and space as we watch and hear these descriptions from Holt’s artist and writer friends in a different city some forty-six years later.

Alongside the concrete poems and *Points of View*, Parafin presents a group of photoworks addressing Holt’s use of words. *Wistman’s Wood* (1969) shows

the site of the first of Holt's *Buried Poems*, artworks dedicated to specific individuals. This one was made for Robert Smithson (1938–73) in Dartmoor. *California Sun Signs* (1972) comprises a series of photographs documenting the many signs incorporating the word 'sun' that Holt drove past as she travelled through California in 1972 to the Mojave Desert. *California Sun Signs* is both a conceptual project and a photographic document that speaks to the culture of the land through which she is travelling. Given her preoccupation with the sun in landmark works such as *Sun Tunnels* (1973–76), *Annual Ring* (1980–81), *Dark Star Park* (1979–84) and *Solar Rotary* (1995), Holt's focus on the word 'sun' in this work is both playful and prescient.

In 2021 Holt's work is the focus of an ambitious exhibition at Lismore Castle Arts in Ireland, and she will be the subject of a major retrospective at Bildmuseet, Sweden in 2022.

Nancy Holt

Born in Worcester, Massachusetts, Nancy Holt (5 April, 1938–8 February, 2014) grew up in New Jersey and graduated from Tufts University, where she majored in biology. In 1963 she married Robert Smithson (1938–1973). Holt is known for her earthworks, public sculpture and installation work. Best known for her large-scale environmental works *Sun Tunnels* (1973–76, Great Basin Desert, Utah) and *Dark Star Park* (1970–84, Arlington County, Virginia) her public sculptures are permanently installed in locations across Europe and North America. In 2018 *Sun Tunnels* was acquired by Dia Art Foundation, with the support of Holt/Smithson Foundation.

In 2010-12 the retrospective exhibition 'Nancy Holt: Sightlines' travelled from Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, New York to venues in Karlsruhe, Boston, Chicago, Santa Fe, and Salt Lake City, accompanied by a monograph by Alena J Williams (University of California Press). Other notable recent exhibitions include Dia Art Foundation, New York (2018); 'Nancy Holt: Locators', Parafin, London (2015); 'Nancy Holt: Land Art', Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (2013); 'Nancy Holt: Selected Film and Photo Works', Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2013); and 'Nancy Holt: Photoworks', Haunch of Venison, London (2012). Her work has been included in major survey exhibitions including 'Ends of the Earth: Land Art to 1974' at Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and Haus der Kunst, Munich (2012-13), and 'Light Show' at Hayward Gallery, London (2013).

In 2012 Nancy Holt was made a Chevalier of the of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Government. In 2013 she was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the International Sculpture Center in New York.

About Holt/Smithson Foundation

Active since 2018, Holt/Smithson Foundation exists to continue the creative and investigative spirit of the artists Nancy Holt (1938–2014) and Robert Smithson (1938–73). Holt and Smithson developed innovative ways of exploring our relationship with the planet, expanding the limits of artistic practice. Their Foundation engages in programs developing the artists' creative legacies, continuing the transformation they brought to the world of art and ideas. Holt/Smithson Foundation works in partnership to produce exhibitions, publications, public programs, and new research.

www.holtsmithsonfoundation.org

About Parafin

Parafin was launched in September 2014 by Ben Tufnell and Matt Watkins and is located at 18 Woodstock Street, just off New Bond Street. Parafin represents a broad selection of contemporary artists from emerging names to established international figures.

Gallery Artists

Fernando Casasepère	Nathan Coley
Hamish Fulton	Tim Head
Nancy Holt	Tania Kovats
Hynek Martinec	Melanie Manchot
Justin Mortimer	Hiraki Sawa
Indrė Šerpytytė	Melanie Smith
Fred Sorrell	Alison Watt
Hugo Wilson	Uwe Wittwer

Visiting Parafin

Parafin is open by appointment from Tuesday to Saturday, 11–5pm. Visits can be booked online at www.parafin.co.uk.