

PACE

For Immediate Release

Keith Sonnier

Ebo River and Early Works

32 East 57th Street, New York
November 26, 2016 – January 21, 2017

New York—Pace Gallery is pleased to announce *Keith Sonnier: Ebo River and Early Works*, featuring a new series of work. This exhibition will also include early pieces in neon and mixed media and two sculptures from his Tesla series, which have not been shown in over fifteen years. *Ebo River and Early Works* will be on view from November 26, 2016 to January 21, 2017 at 32 East 57th Street. Pace will publish a catalogue to accompany the exhibition, with a conversation between the artist and art historian Richard Shiff.



In his vibrant new Ebo River series, engaging compositions reveal new aspects of Sonnier as a colorist, with bold hues radiating from the lit neon tubes in complex harmonies. Flowing around one another, they are composed together with convex mirrors and found industrial materials that reflect, block or diffuse light, visually modifying their forms and the light cast from them. The Ebo River series is inspired by a river in the Congo, known to the local people as the Legbala, with works titled after towns and tributaries along the river. Sonnier's interest in African art and culture is long-standing, and dates to his time as a teaching assistant to Carroll Janis, who taught a course on African art while he was an MFA student at Rutgers University.

Sonnier has been creating works with neon and other industrial materials for over forty-five years, and can be said to have invented the use of neon light as a fine-art medium. A selection of foundational works from 1968 to 1970 incorporating neon and incandescent light will be included in the exhibition. Rather than creating closed sculptural masses, Sonnier composes open forms in three-dimensional space. Two works from the Tesla series dating from the 1990s will also be exhibited. Dedicated to visionary physicist Nikola Tesla, these sculptures feature live electricity that arcs between copper rods and continues his experimental approach to using electricity as a sculptural element.

According to the artist: "Neon has always been a material in signage that one lays flat, and one in fact writes with. But I began to lift it from the board, and pull it out into space, and use it in a much more three-dimensional form." Sonnier's sustained artistic work continues to be lyrical and innovative.

Keith Sonnier (b. 1941, Mamou, Louisiana) received his BA at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in 1963. He earned his MFA from Rutgers University in 1966, studying with Robert Morris and Robert Watts, inspiring him to become a groundbreaking Postminimalist artist, melding the influences of Minimalism and Fluxus. Following his graduation, he was included in the generation-defining exhibition *9 at Castelli*, organized by Robert Morris, at the Leo Castelli Warehouse on New York's Upper West Side in 1968. The

following year, Sonnier's work was included in the Whitney Museum of American Art's *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials* and in *When Attitudes Become Form* at the Kunsthalle Bern, which brought together Conceptual Art, Postminimalism and Arte Povera, and was recreated by Germano Celant at Fondazione Prada in 2013. Sonnier was a pioneering figure in his use of video and live-broadcast technologies, including a CB radio piece for the lobby of Andy Warhol's Factory. He has a long-standing practice of working internationally, blending indigenous cultures with technology in Bali, Brazil, India, Japan and elsewhere.

In summer 2018, the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, New York, will present a solo exhibition of Sonnier's work. Other solo exhibitions have been presented at the Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (1970); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1970); The Kitchen, New York (1973); P.S. 1 Institute for Art and Urban Resources, New York (1978, 1983); Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1979); Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (1984); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (1989); The Drawing Center, New York (1994); Kunsthaus Bregenz (1999); Neue National Galerie, Berlin (2002); Lever House, New York (2003, 2008); Arts Club of Chicago (2005); Artclub 1563, Seoul (2010); Louisiana Art and Science Museum, Baton Rouge (2010); BMW Museum, Munich (2012); Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum, Lafayette, Louisiana (2014); Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice (2015); Hall Art Foundation, Reading, Vermont (2015); and Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2016). A traveling survey exhibition of his work was organized by the Sprengel Museum, Hannover, in 1993.

Sonnier has participated in more than 360 group exhibitions throughout his career, including: Documenta 5, Kassel (1972); the Venice Biennale (1972, 1982); the Whitney Museum of American Art's annual and biennial exhibitions (1970, 1973, 1977); and *The New Sculpture 1965–1975: Between Geometry and Gesture* (1990), which traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Since 1981, Sonnier has completed more than twenty major public commissions worldwide, including *Lichtweg* (or *Lightway*), a permanent installation spanning more than half a mile in the New International Airport in Munich.

Sonnier's work can be found in dozens of public and private collections worldwide, including the Frankel Foundation, Bloomfield, Michigan; The Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld, Germany; Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz; Kunstverein St. Gallen, Switzerland; Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; New Orleans Museum of Art; Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Sprengel Museum, Hannover; Städtisches Museum Abteiberg Mönchengladbach, Germany; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Sonnier lives and works in New York City and Bridgehampton, New York. This is the fourth solo presentation of his work at Pace since 2005.

CHILA, 2016, neon, corrugated aluminum, wire, and transformer, 76" x 39" x 3" (193 cm x 99.1 cm x 7.6 cm). © 2016 Keith Sonnier/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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