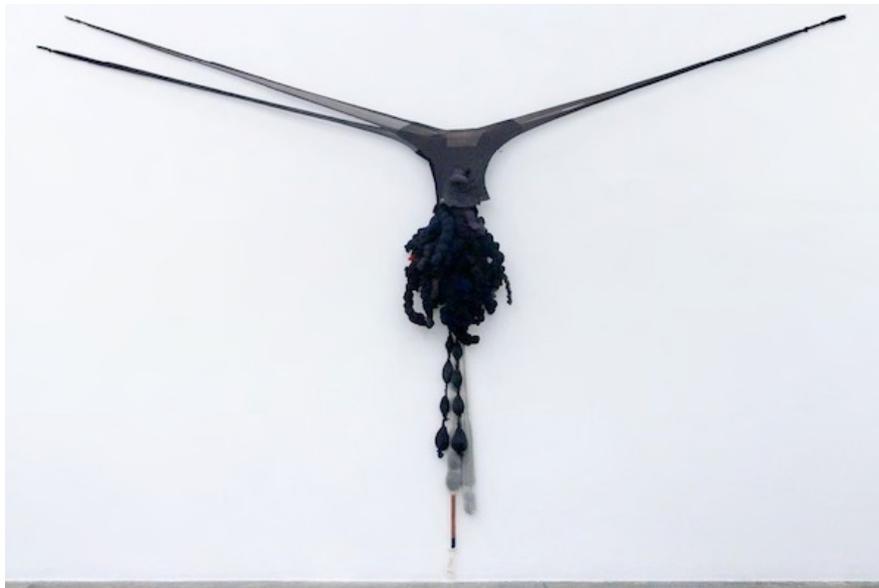


Senga Nengudi

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Senga Nengudi, *Untitled*, 2011, nylon, mesh, sand. 60 x 72 x 8”.

Los Angeles–based artist *Senga Nengudi* came to prominence in the late 1970s with her sculptural work—some of which will be on view in her latest exhibition, “*Senga Nengudi: The Material Body*,” at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver—and with her performance, which will be featured through documentation in “*Senga Nengudi: The Performing Body*” at *RedLine*, also in Denver. The exhibitions are on view from April 10 to July 13, 2014, and from June 6 to July 20, 2014, respectively.

WHEN I BEGAN WORKING, it was very personal. I wanted to express how I was feeling about my body and my mind. I had just had children, so I was investigating what my life looked like as an observer as well as a person experiencing it. This led me to work with nylon stockings because I wanted to find something that had the elasticity, the texture, and even the coloring of the body. Horrific things that are done to women, like rape, as well as what we women do to ourselves, like plastic surgery, are powerful afflictions that the type of distortions made by the nylons can directly speak to.

When I was in college, I was an art major and a dance minor. I studied modern dance but did not have a dancer’s body. Still, though, I appreciated this blending between the female form and a love of action. But in dance, there is only so much time to perform; with art, you can seemingly go on forever. In a sense, we all have our dance with materials on a day-to-day basis. Traditionally, pantyhose is worn in stressful situations: at a party, a job interview, a meeting. I’ve incorporated used pantyhose from friends and thrift stores for this very reason—because they contain a residue of energy of stress left over from the person that had worn them before. It’s an ideal material for this type of reflection because it can mostly come back into shape after it has been tested to its extreme limits.

After studying abroad in Japan in 1965, I began teaching at the Watts Tower Arts Center and the Pasadena Art Museum in California. At Watts, performance was being investigated and the medium was being opened up to new interpretations. That’s when this issue of materials came into the picture; we had literally begun stretching ourselves and our conceptions of what was possible in our practices. Some artists, like *Noah Purifoy*, created work from what was destroyed. *Jim Dine* and *Claes Oldenburg* created happenings out of nothing. I soon got involved with them—in this place between art and movement—and found people like *Lygia Clark*, *Hélio Oiticica*, and the Gutai group because of their sense of impermanence. There is permanence in the impermanence, however. Even though we as humans are impermanent, there is a continued sense of how events will unfold. History repeats itself, and that at first seemingly singular moment will just occur, perhaps in a different form, someplace else.