

# STUDIO MUSEUM HARLEM

## For Immediate Release

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## ***R.S.V.P.***

On view: July 16 – October 26, 2008



Senga Nengudi  
*R.S.V.P. V*, fall 1976  
The Studio Museum in Harlem; Museum purchase with funds provided by the Acquisition Committee 03.10.22  
Courtesy Thomas Erben Gallery, New York.



Rashawn Griffin  
*Untitled (detail)*, 2008  
Courtesy the artist  
Photo: Collier Schorr

**NEW YORK, NY, June 23, 2008** – Art is almost always in dialogue with work that came before it. This summer, The Studio Museum in Harlem is proud to present *R.S.V.P.*, the first in an innovative new exhibition series that brings this dialogue to life. *R.S.V.P.* pairs a work in our permanent collection with new work by another artist, created specifically for the exhibition.

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Fittingly, the inaugural exhibition will feature a work by Senga Nengudi (b. 1943) called *R.S.V.P. V* (1976). Former artist in residence (2005–06) Rashawn Griffin (b. 1980) will create a new work that responds to Nengudi's original piece. The exhibition is designed to encourage fresh thinking about contemporary art objects with lasting resonance.

Nengudi's *R.S.V.P. V* (1976) comes from her series of nylon mesh sculptures, "Répondez s' il vous plaît." Nengudi created these works, also known as "panty hose pieces," as reflections and expressions of the elasticity and malleability of women's bodies. Griffin is Brooklyn-based artist whose work, like Nengudi's, is marked by emotional use of humble materials, such as food and fiber, and both artists are deeply invested in creating objects from an abstract or concrete art tradition. For this exhibition, Griffin will attach several decorative tassels to the gallery wall to create an abstract "drawing." While a drawing is conventionally understood as a collection of gestural marks, Griffin's unique arrangement of objects will challenge traditional image-making, while echoing Nengudi's use of textiles. The artists have commonalities and differences, making them perfect candidates for the *R.S.V.P.* exhibition. Their pairing will evoke thought about the formal and conceptual longevity of Nengudi's work, and what makes her work, created four years before Griffin was born, relevant in 2008.

*R.S.V.P.* was collaboratively organized by the Museum's Curatorial Department, and is an extension of the Museum's commitment to studying, promoting and supporting contemporary art by people of African descent. An exhibition like this is a marriage of two of the Museum's most important components—its extensive permanent collection and its foundational *Artist-in-Residence* program.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### Senga Nengudi

Senga Nengudi (b. 1943, Chicago) is a truly multidisciplinary artist whose career has spanned dance, sculpture, installation, video, text and performance. In the mid-1970s Nengudi was one of the first artists—along with David Hammons, Lorraine O'Grady and Houston Conwill—to exhibit at the Just Above Midtown Gallery, the first African-American owned and operated gallery in New York. Yet Nengudi is both a key part of and foil to the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 70s. Nengudi's challenging work has always been international in scope—absorbing aesthetic lessons from Brazil, Japan and west Africa—and much of her conceptual practice has yet to be unpacked.

### Rashawn Griffin

Rashawn Griffin (b. 1980, Los Angeles) was raised in Olathe, Kansas. Though trained in the traditional media of painting and sculpture, Griffin's practice expands upon and integrates these traditions through his use of found materials containing a sense of history and narrative. Griffin studied at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine and the Center for Art and Culture in Aix-en-Provence, France. He received his BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2002 and his MFA from Yale University in 2005.

## ABOUT THE STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

The Studio Museum in Harlem is a contemporary art museum that focuses on the work of artists of African descent locally, nationally and globally, as well as work that has been inspired and influenced by African-American culture, through its exhibitions, Artists-in-Residence program, education and public programming, permanent collection, and archival and research facilities.

The Studio Museum in Harlem is committed to serving as a unique resource in the local community, and in national and international arenas, by making artworks and exhibitions concrete and personal for each viewer. The Museum provides a context within which to address the contemporary and historical issues presented through art by artists of African descent.



Photo: Ray A. Llanos

Since opening in a rented loft at Fifth Avenue and 125th Street in 1968, the Studio Museum has earned recognition for its catalytic role in promoting the works of artists of African descent. The Museum's Artists-in-Residence program has supported over ninety graduates who have gone on to highly regarded careers. A wide variety of education and public programs have brought the African-American experience alive for the public by means of lectures, dialogues, panel discussions and performances, as well as interpretive programs, both on- and off-site, for students and teachers.

The exhibitions program has also expanded the scope of art historical literature through the production of scholarly catalogues, brochures and pamphlets. The Studio Museum's permanent collection contains over 1,600 works, including drawings, pastels, prints, photographs, mixed-media works and installations. It is comprised of works created by artists during their residencies, as well as pieces given to the Museum to create an art-historical framework for artists of African descent. Featured in the collection is Terry Adkins, Romare Bearden, Skunder Boghossian, Robert Colescott, Melvin Edwards, Richard Hunt, Hector Hyppolite, Serge Jolimeau, Lois Mailou Jones, Jacob Lawrence, Norman Lewis, Philome Obin, Betye Saar, Nari Ward and Hale Woodruff, among others. The Museum also is the custodian of an extensive archive of the work of photographer James VanDerZee, the quintessential chronicler of the Harlem community from 1906 to 1984.

The Studio Museum in Harlem is supported, in part, with public funds provided by the following government agencies and elected representatives:

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation; New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency; Council Member Inez E. Dickens, 9<sup>th</sup> C.D.; Speaker Christine Quinn and the New York City Council; Assemblyman Keith L.T. Wright, 70<sup>th</sup> C.D. through New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; Manhattan Borough President, Scott M. Stringer.

### **ADDRESS**

The Studio Museum in Harlem is located at 144 West 125th Street, between Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard and Lenox Avenue. Subway: A, B, C, D, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 to 125th Street. Bus: M-2, M-7, M-10, M-100, M-101, M-102 or BX-15.

### **ADMISSION**

Suggested donation: \$7 for adults, \$3 for students (with valid identification) and seniors. Free for children 12 and under. The first Saturday of every month is free for everyone.

### **HOURS**

The Museum is open Wednesday through Friday, and Sunday from 12:00 to 6:00 p.m., and from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday. The Museum is closed on Monday, Tuesday and major holidays. Phone: 212.864.4500. Fax: 212.864.4800. [www.studiomuseum.org](http://www.studiomuseum.org).

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