The Studio Museum in Harlem presents Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974–1989
First museum survey of pioneering Los Angeles conceptualist’s early work

New York, New York, April 15, 2014—This summer, The Studio Museum in Harlem presents Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974–1989, the first museum survey of the Los Angeles–based conceptual artist’s early work. On view from July 17–October 26, 2014, the exhibition features seventy-five works from the beginning of a singular career that now spans four decades.

Highly regarded as both a leading practitioner of conceptualism and an influential educator at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), Charles Gaines is celebrated primarily for his photographs, drawings and works on paper that investigate systems, cognition and language. His early experiments examined the roles that systems and rule-based procedures play in the construction of forms, objects and meaning. Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974–1989 traces Gaines’s career, from his groundbreaking work in the 1970s—some of which debuted in exhibitions at famed New York galleries Leo Castelli and John Weber—to his investigations of subjectivity in the late 1980s. Exploring the ways in which Gaines’s early works on paper can be viewed as a crucial bridge between the first generation conceptualists of the 1960s and 1970s and the conceptually-based practices of artists who emerged in the ensuing decades, the exhibition includes rare and never-before-seen works, some of which were presumed lost.
Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974–1989 comes at a moment of renewed discussion about conceptual and Postminimalist art. The exhibition presents selections from ten early series, including “Regression” (1973–74), one of Gaines’s first explorations of mathematical and numeric systems; “Walnut Tree Orchard” (1975–2014) and “Faces” (1978–79), which use photography as a foundation for graphic deconstructions; and “Motion: Trisha Brown Dance” (1980–81), a collaboration with the world-renowned choreographer and dancer. In each series Gaines explores logic, pattern, linguistic systems and chance, following a path set by influential composer and artist John Cage.

Considered against the backdrop of the Black Arts Movement of the 1970s and the rise of multiculturalism in the 1980s, the works in Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974–1989 are radical gestures. Eschewing overt discussion of race, they take a detached approach to identity that exemplifies Gaines’s determination transcend the conversations of his time and create new paths in artistic innovation.

“These works, and this exhibition, are part of a larger story that still needs to be told about the many parallel streams of artistic practice that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s,” says Studio Museum Director and Chief Curator Thelma Golden. “I am so proud that The Studio Museum in Harlem can play a part in unpacking, uncovering and presenting the many aspects of this story.”

Charles Gaines (b. 1944) received his MFA from the Rochester Institute of Technology in 1967. Over the course of his career, he has been represented by Leo Castelli Gallery and John Weber Gallery, New York; Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles; Young Hoffman, Chicago; Richard Heller, San Francisco; and Galerie Lavignes-Bastille, Paris. He is currently represented by Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. In 2013, he received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship and presented a critically acclaimed solo exhibition, Notes on Social Justice, at Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. In 2012, Gaines was the subject of a mid-career survey at the Pomona College Museum of Art and the Pitzer College Art Gallery in Claremont, California. His works are in the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, Lentos Museum, Linz, Austria; Galerie der Stadt Esslingen, Esslingen, Germany; and Villa Merkel, Esslingen, Germany. Gaines’s work has been featured in recent major group exhibitions including Blues for Smoke (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2012) and *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960–1980* (Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2011). He has participated in the 2014 Montreal Biennial and the 2007 Venice Biennale, as well as group exhibitions at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; UCLA Hammer Museum; Lentos Museum; Deichtorhallen; Kunsthalle Basel; Contemporary Art Museum, Houston; and REDCAT Gallery. Gaines has published several essays on contemporary art, including “Theater of Refusal: Black Art and Mainstream Criticism” (University of California, Irvine, 1993) and “The New Cosmopolitanism” (California State University, Fullerton, 2008). He currently resides in Los Angeles and has been full-time faculty in the School of Art at the California Institute of the Arts since 1989.

*Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974–1989* is generously supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. The exhibition is organized by Naima J. Keith, Assistant Curator.

**Exhibition Catalogue**

Celebrating the Studio Museum’s long-standing commitment to the scholarly engagement of its exhibitions, *Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974–1989* is accompanied by a 160-page, full-color hardcover catalogue that includes newly commissioned essays by leading scholars and curators in the field, an illustrated chronology contextualizing Gaines’s life and work, and—for the first time—expository texts explaining the production process for each body of work.

Contributors include Naima J. Keith; Anne Ellegood, Senior Curator, Hammer Museum; Malik Gaines, artist and Professor of Combined Media, Hunter College; Courtney J. Martin, Assistant Professor, Department of History of Art and Architecture, Brown University; Bennett Simpson, Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Howard Singerman, Phyllis and Joseph Carloff Chair of Art and Art History, Hunter College; and Ellen Tani, doctoral candidate in the Department of Art History, Stanford University. The publication, designed by Kimberly Varella of Content Object, Los Angeles, also features an introduction by the Museum’s Director and Chief Curator, Thelma Golden; section introductions by Abbe Schriber; and an illustrated chronology by Jamillah James.

**Digital Engagement**

Several new media initiatives around *Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974–1989* build on the Studio Museum’s active and growing presence in the digital realm. In July, the Museum will unveil gainsesgridwork.tumblr.com, an interactive Tumblr page featuring Gaines’s work and ephemera from throughout his career. The site will also showcase other artists inspired by the grid, as well as crowd-sourced exhibition documentation. In addition to the Tumblr, the Museum will moderate a *Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974–1989* Facebook group to promote engaging discussion of Gaines’s art and ideas. Visitors are encouraged to take non-flash photography in the exhibition and share their experiences using the hashtag #gainesgridwork.
About The Studio Museum in Harlem

Founded in 1968, 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. The Museum 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.

Hours and Admission

The Studio Museum is open Thursdays and Fridays, noon–9 pm; Saturdays, 10 am–6 pm; and Sundays, noon–6 pm. The Museum is closed to the public but available for school and group tours on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Museum admission is by suggested donation: $7 for adults, $3 for students (with valid identification) and seniors, and free for children 12 and under. Sundays are free at the Studio Museum, thanks to generous support from Target.

For more information, visit studiomuseum.org and follow studiomuseum on Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr and Instagram.