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Small File Study, 1966



Lay In, 1967



Purple File, 1969

KEITH SONNIER FILES March 12 – April 23, 2011

Leo Castelli Gallery is pleased to announce Keith Sonnier, *Files*. For the first time since its creation this important early body of work will be the subject of a solo exhibition in New York City.

The *File* series was conceived and executed from 1966 – 1969. The name of this body of work is derived from a nail file. Both form and function of the file are simple; however, a nail file is an object that is also implicitly sensual. The file is inherently related to the physicality of the body. Although the file is at once intimate and corporeal, it is simultaneously cold and isolated. It alludes at once to growth and decay, life and death.

On view in the exhibition are works that encompass the range of the series and give insight into Sonnier's iconoclastic use of materials. Works include *Small File Study*, 1966, a small sculpture of a nail file intricately wrapped like a mummy in cotton thread; *Lay In*, 1967, a large satin floor sculpture enshrouded in cheesecloth like a body in state; and *Purple File*, 1966, a 10 foot long metal file sculpture.

In addressing a pivotal work from this series, *Small File Study*, Sonnier says:

Well, in order for this particular small work to have happened there were many other earlier investigations into different kinds of material and object combinations. This is one of the first pieces where the object is actually isolated and not combined with anything else. The idea of isolating an object in this way made me think about redefining the shape by wrapping it, kind of like adding drawing on top of it, but essentially wrapping it like a mummy. Then other ways of developing the work for the File series came after that. Things were layered. Things were stuffed. Things were filled. Touch, as opposed to concept, was crucial.

Keith Sonnier was born in Mamou Louisiana in 1941. He has a BFA from the University of Southwestern Louisiana and a MFA from Rutgers University. Sonnier is the recipient of numerous awards including the Guggenheim Fellowship. His work is included in the collection of many museums including in the US and in Europe including the Museum of Modern Art New York and the Tate Modern. He lives and works in New York.

A catalog featuring an interview with the artist has been published on the occasion of the exhibition. For additional information please contact Jessica Duffett at jessica@castelligallery.com