

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

NANCY GRAVES: *Mapping*

534 West 26th Street, New York, NY

February 21 – April 6, 2019

Opening Reception: Thursday, February 21 from 6 to 8 PM



NEW YORK, January 9, 2019 – Mitchell-Innes & Nash is pleased to present an exhibition celebrating the work of Nancy Graves, one of the key figures of post-war art. Titled *Mapping*, this exhibition is timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the first manned mission to land on the Moon, a subject Graves explored as part of her artistic and conceptual investigation of maps. This exhibition provides an in-depth look at this aspect of her art; one that she returned to throughout her career. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by Robert Storr, curator of the Museum of Modern Art's pioneering 1994 group show of the same name, which included Graves as one of the thirty artists whose work highlighted cartography as both source material and inspiration.

Focusing on works from the early half of the 1970s, the present show examines Graves's increasing fascination with maps, especially with recently available satellite imagery of the Earth, Moon and Mars. The artist used these images to create paintings and works on paper that bridge the arts and sciences; representation and abstraction. This will be the artist's third solo exhibition with Mitchell-Innes & Nash, which has represented the Estate of Nancy Graves since 2014.

During the 1970s, Graves made a substantial body of paintings, drawings, prints and a film that delved into the systems that underlie the production and legibility of maps. While her earliest works were based on illustrations selected from ethnographic studies of Polynesian and Inuit navigational maps, Graves's formal engagement with mapping took a new direction when she chose to depict detailed images of the topographies of Mars, the Moon, Mercury and Earth's ocean floors based on data transmitted by orbiting satellites, then a pioneering technology.

Ineffably removed, and unverifiable through direct experience, these distant locales were suddenly made visible through newly available NASA recording technologies such as bathymetric measurement, electronic video transmission and computer analysis. Graves's profound decision to include visual references to the satellite recording and transmission technologies themselves ultimately emphasized the arbitrariness of the images that they produced. Despite, or perhaps because of, Graves's detailed renderings of this scientific data, her paintings and drawings reveal these sources as expressive abstractions. Indeed, the works in this exhibition seize upon the map as an idea in which abstraction and representation overlap. In laying out un-seeable sources and an imperfect means of transmitting information, Graves raises questions about the literal authenticity of science and asserts the importance of the artist's intuition.

Along with drawings and prints, the exhibition will include approximately six important paintings, including one of Graves's largest and most complex pieces, *Mars* (1973), which measures 24 feet in length. On view in the United States for the first time in 45 years, this monumental work depicts the topography of the red planet based on NASA satellite data. Graves created this four-panel painting just as NASA was making images from the first Mars mission public. In contrast to the Moon, much less was known about the surface of Mars, and the painting's fragmented overall composition conveys the density and diversity of, as well as the lapses in, visual information that was being transmitted from space.

A further highlight of the exhibition will be *Indian Ocean Floor, II*, which is based on bathymetric recordings of the ocean floor by satellites that revealed previously unknown topographies on our own planet. Several works on paper, many of which have rarely been shown, will be exhibited alongside the paintings.

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

In his essay for the exhibition catalogue, Robert Storr emphasizes Graves's distinct approach to the representational yet abstract qualities of maps, writing:

For her part, Graves gazed wider still as well as higher and deeper, trying to capture the marvelous variety and immensity of environs, near and far, in a variety of formal modes beginning with sculpture and film, and ending with sculpture. In the middle of an all-too-short career she looked to painting to take the accurate measure of things that are all but incalculably vast. And she vividly succeeded.

Mitchell-Innes & Nash is also pleased to inaugurate its online viewing room with a selection of works on paper by Nancy Graves as well as an exclusive showing of the artist's film, *Reflections on the Moon* (1974).

About Nancy Graves

Nancy Graves (1939 – 1995) is an American artist of international renown. A prolific cross-disciplinary artist, Graves developed a sustained body of sculptures, paintings, drawings, watercolors and prints. She also produced five avant-garde films and created innovative set designs.

Born in Pittsfield Massachusetts, Graves graduated from Vassar College in 1961. She then earned an MFA in painting at Yale University in 1964, where her classmates included Robert Mangold, Rackstraw Downes, Brice Marden, Chuck Close and Richard Serra, to whom she was married from 1964 to 1970. Five years after graduating her career was launched in 1969 when she was the youngest artist—and only the fifth woman—to be selected for a solo presentation at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Graves's work was subsequently featured in hundreds of museum and gallery exhibitions worldwide, including several solo museum exhibitions.

She was awarded commissions for large-scale site-specific sculptures and her work is in the permanent collections of major art museums including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. A frequent lecturer and guest artist, her work was widely documented during her lifetime. Her brilliant career and life were cut short by her untimely death from cancer at age 54.

About Mitchell-Innes & Nash

Founded by Lucy Mitchell-Innes and David Nash, who previously headed the worldwide Contemporary and Impressionist & Modern Art divisions of Sotheby's, Mitchell-Innes & Nash places exemplary contemporary artists within a historical context, revealing a continuity of ideas and aesthetic virtuosity from the Modern era through the present day.

Mitchell-Innes & Nash's renowned exhibition program, in both their Madison Avenue and Chelsea locations, fosters excellence within artistic practice, while forging an informed dialogue between emerging and established internationally recognized artists. From acclaimed surveys of 20th century masters, such as Jean Arp, Anthony Caro, Jay DeFeo, Leon Kossoff, Kenneth Noland and Roy Lichtenstein, to solo exhibitions of Keltie Ferris, Pope.L, Martha Rosler, and Jessica Stockholder, Mitchell-Innes & Nash has proven expertise in both advancing the careers of emerging artists and maintaining the superior standard set by established artists.

Caption: NANCY GRAVES, [Untitled #127 \(Drawing of the Moon\)](#), circa 1972

© 2019 Nancy Graves Foundation, Inc / Licensed by VAGA at ARS, New York, NY

Press Inquiries:

Kevin Choe | Tel: 212-744-7400 | Email: kevin@miandn.com

Josephine Nash | Tel: 212-744-7400 | Email: josie@miandn.com