



March 6th, 2025

Artist Statement

Nancy Rubins- *Winnie's Pleasure*

In the 1980s, I began making sculptures and site-specific work that reflected aspects of their surroundings, were architectural in scale, permanently installed, and meant to be lived with and experienced by the public. Throughout my practice, I have transformed industrial objects such as airplane parts, playground toys, cast animals, and boats into the building blocks for my sculptures. Using these chosen materials at a specific point in their lifecycle, I hone these discrete components for their formal qualities. Held together by stainless steel wiring, the tension among these elements investigates a static moment in my artwork that serves as both a testament to their monumentality as well as the possibility of ever-changing plasticity. Sustainability is also important in my practice as I work with found objects, allowing these raw materials that have already had many useful lives to be given another opportunity to be experienced and viewed in a different light.

Winnie's Pleasure is a site-specific, permanent sculpture composed of found canoes and reflects the surrounding Brentwood community and the region, as well as nearby Burnaby Lake and its rowing center. Boats have remained a consistent element in my sculptures; not only do they represent humankind purposing raw materials to increase and expand their capacity for travel, but they also represent a way for humankind to be in concert with a functional object. Unlike modes of transportation where passengers might remain passive, the boats I use for my sculptures generally require people to be active participants. From these boats, I create organically shaped, blooming sculptures. While abstract in form, they are meant to invoke delight and optimism.

Winnie's Pleasure was conceived, designed, engineered, and built to respond to this site such that the viewer would have the pleasure of experiencing its presence with constantly changing points of view. When standing up close beneath *Winnie's Pleasure* it's as if looking up into a great tree. Yet, the sculpture can be viewed afar from multiple vantage points surrounding the plaza including walking down the sidewalks, driving on Loughheed Highway, above from the SkyTrain or the elegantly minimal residential Brentwood buildings, when coming off the elevator or ascending the grand staircase, and even from the bottom of the stairs by the children's school down the road below. Each vantage point provides a new opportunity for contemplation and reflection encouraging the viewer to assemble *Winnie's Pleasure* in their mind's eye as the whole sculpture can never actually be seen all at once and its shape changes with each new view.

Once the structure was engineered and the boats and wire elements were on site, my team and I built element by element or boat by boat to form the sculpture such that the whole is stronger than the parts. The boats are held together and in place with the compression and the tension of the wire cables. Buckminster Fuller and Kenneth Snelson referred to this as *tensegrity*, meaning the boat elements can develop exquisite tendrils and the whole piece cantilevers into space. The 8 Foot tall concrete plinth from

which the sculpture expands and blossoms into space connects to the ground in a small 30-1/4" x 40-1/2" rectangle. The massive sculpture exists and flows well above the viewer's head into the airspace, measuring 41' x 40' x 40'. The canoes themselves are elegant forms that have remarkable structural integrity with reference to the figure while remaining highly abstract. A portion of the canoes are used and have a high patina where each patinaed mark exposes the previous life of each particular boat while others are brightly colored and brand-new, referring to an all-embracing sense of time.

The name *Winnie's Pleasure* is a playful reference to names that astronomers might give to the ever changing and evolving galaxies.

Nancy Rubins Biography

Nancy Rubins creates dynamic sculptures and drawings that investigate the liminality between two-dimensionality and three-dimensionality, and the intersection of engineering and art. Through sculptures assembled from found objects and graphite drawings that assume a metallic appearance, she transforms quotidian objects into artworks that exceed the sums of their parts. Working with salvaged commercial and industrial materials throughout her career, Rubins creates dynamic works that are at once familiar and otherworldly.

In 1974, Rubins completed a BFA at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and then moved to the West coast to study at the University of California at Davis, where she received an MFA two years later. Around this time, she began collecting used appliances—from hair dryers to electric shavers, toaster ovens to televisions—which she included in large, semiflexible wall-like sculptures. Initially sourcing her materials from thrift stores, Rubins mined not only the vast quantities of objects at her disposal, but also the history of each salvaged item.

From her early-1980s accumulations of domestic devices, which she assembled into gigantic tornado- or tidal-wave-shaped forms, Rubins's practice evolved in the 1990s to include immense clusters of sizeable objects, such as boats, mattresses, or the deconstructed parts of enormously complex, manufactured machinery like airplanes and trailers. Rubins amasses these components into organic-seeming growth patterns that often cantilever over pedestrian traffic below. As she does so, she follows the life cycle of her chosen materials. Held together by stainless-steel wiring in tension, these aggregations appear to be suspended in a moment of temporary stasis. As a kind of palimpsest, Rubins's work reminds viewers that what appears to be solid and static is in fact in a constant state of change.

Mark-making is integral to Rubins's practice, both in her vast body of densely rendered works on paper and in her use of stainless-steel wire in her sculptures, which creates linear yet three-dimensional forms of "drawing in space." Throughout her career, Rubins has produced drawings of increasingly concentrated compositions, covering the entire surface of the paper with graphite to create shiny metallic surfaces that have endless depth of space as well as textured traces of the

artist's hand. While some iterations of these drawings comprise multiple large sheets of paper that are layered and affixed to a wall, others are volumetric, three-dimensional undulations that exploit the sculptural potential of the medium.

Rubins's work has grown in scale over the course of her career, resulting in a body of outdoor sculptures that have been permanently installed in prominent public locations throughout the world, including at: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Austrian Sculpture Park, Graz, Austria; City of Paris, France; CityCenter, Las Vegas, NV; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego, CA; Ruby City, San Antonio, TX; and University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX. She has had numerous solo exhibitions, as well as group exhibitions, including at the Venice Biennale and the Whitney Biennial. Among her many awards are the 2021 Artists' Legacy Foundation Award; 2013 Distinguished Women in Arts, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; and the 2003 Academy Award in Art from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Rubins resides and works in Topanga, California.



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Nancy Rubins

Born in Naples, TX | Lives and works in Topanga, CA

Education

- 1976 MFA, University of California, Davis, CA
1974 BFA, The Maryland Institute, College of Art, Baltimore, MD

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2022 *Agrifolia Majoris and Dense Bud*. Chicago Park District, Chicago, IL
2021 *Our Friend Fluid Metal*. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Fluid Space. Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills, CA
Sculpture & Drawing. Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, IL
2018 *Nancy Rubins: Diversifolia*. Gagosian Gallery, Britannia Street, London, England
2015 *Nancy Rubins Table and Airplane Parts*. Gare de Leuglay, France
2014 *Nancy Rubins: Our Friend Fluid Metal*. Gagosian Gallery, West 21st Street, New York, NY
Nancy Rubins: Drawing, Sculpture, Studies. Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC
2010 *Skins, Structures, Landmasses*. Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills, CA
2006 *MoMA and Airplane Parts*. Sculpture Center, Long Island, NY
Big Pleasure Point. Lincoln Center, New York, NY
2005 Fonds regional d'art contemporain de Bourgogne, France
Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York, NY
2001 *Chas' Stainless Steel, Mark Thompson's Airplane Parts, About 1000 Pounds of Stainless Steel Wire, and Gagosian's Beverly Hills Space*. Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills, CA
1999 Miami Art Museum, Miami, FL
1997 Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York, NY
Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO
ARTPACE, San Antonio, TX
1995 Galerie Philomene Magers, Cologne, Germany
Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, IL
Projects 49: Nancy Rubins, MoMA, New York, NY
1994 Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York, NY
Nancy Rubins: Airplane Parts and Building, A Large Growth for San Diego. Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA
1993 *Mattresses and Cakes*. Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York, NY
Kunstverein Lingen, Lingen, Germany
1992 Galerie Patrick de Brock, Antwerp, Belgium
Miller Nordenhake, Cologne, Germany
Burnett Miller Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
1991 The Drawing Center, New York, NY
1987 *Monument to Megapolises Past and Future* (collaboration with Chris Burden). Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (L.A.C.E.), Los Angeles, CA
1986 *Sprockets Moon* (collaboration with Chris Burden). New Langton Arts, San Francisco, CA
1982 *Worlds Apart*, Washington Project for the Arts, Washington, DC
1980 O.K. Harris Gallery, New York, NY
Big Bil-Bored. Cermack Plaza Shopping Center, Berwyn, IL
1979 Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL
1978 80 Langton Street, San Francisco, CA

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2020 *Seven Stations: Selections from MOCA's Collection*. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA
- 2019 *The Foundation of the Museum MOCA's Collection*. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA
Art Zuid, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2018 *Sculpture in the City*. London, England
- 2017 *Paper into Sculpture*. Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX
Gray Matters. Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH
Drawing: The Beginning of Everything. Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, NY
- 2015 *Prototypology: An Index of Process and Mutation*. Gagosian Gallery, Rome, Italy
- 2014 *tc: temporary contemporary*. Bass Museum, Miami, FL
Public Sector. Art Basel, Miami Beach, FL
Horror vacui. Gagosian Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland
- 2013 *The Black Mirror*. Diane Rosenstein Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2012 *BIGart at Navy Pier*. Gateway Park, Navy Pier, Chicago, IL
Prism. Drawings from 1990 to 2012. Contemporary Art Museum of Oslo, Oslo, Norway
- 2011 *Under the Big Black Sun: California Art 1974-1981*. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA
Mondes Inventés, Modes Habités. MUDAM Luxembourg, Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg
Salvatore Scarpitta: Trajectory. Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY
- 2006 *Los Angeles 1955-1985*. Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
Paper Trails. Howard House, Seattle, WA
Sixteen Tons. Eli and Edythe Broad Art Center, University of California, Los Angeles, CA
- 2005 *On Paper: Drawings from the 1960's to the Present*. Daniel Weinberg Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2004 *Sculpture*. Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York, NY
- 2003 *100 Artists See God*. The Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, CA
M_ARS Art and War. Neue Galerie, Graz, Austria
Belvedere dell'Arte Orizzonti. Forte Belvedere, Florence
American Academy Invitational Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture. American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, NY
- 2002 *Unknown Quantity (Ce Qui Arrive)*. Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France
Mesure de Mesure. Galeries Poirel, L'Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Art de Nancy, Nancy, France
Markings: Constructing Form Through Drawing. MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles, CA
- 2001 *Summer 2001*. Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York, NY
- 2000 *Metal: Austin Ackles, Ross Bleckner, Nancy Rubins*. Steffany Martz, New York, NY
- 1999 *The Great Drawing Show 1550-1999*. Kohn Turner Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Powder: The Myth of Mortality. Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO
- 1997 *Art on Paper*. Weatherspoon Art Gallery, The University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC
Trash: When Waste Materials Become Art. Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea d'Trento e Rovereto, Trento, Italy
Recent Acquisitions in Contemporary Drawings. MoMA, New York, NY
Sunshine & Noir. Art in L.A. 1960-1997. Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark
- 1996 *Serge Spitzer, Fred Sandback, Nancy Rubins*. Burnett Miller Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
- 1995 *Whitney Biennial*. The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
The Mind has a Thousand Eyes. Burnett Miller Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

- Summer 1995. Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York, NY
- 1994 *Country Sculpture*. Le Consortium, Dijon, France
(cut)-Los Angeles-90'ernes Kunstscene. Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen
International '94. Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, NY
- 1993 *Thoughts That Fit Like Air: Herbert Hamak, Noritoshi Hirakawa, Thom Merrick, Nancy Rubins*. Art & Public, Geneva, Switzerland
Aperto. 45th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy
Differentes Natures: Visions de l'Art Contemporain. Etablissement Public pour l'Amenagement de la region de la Defense, Lindau, France
Ordnung und Zerstörung. Kulturreferat der Landeshauptstadt, Munich, Germany
The Elegant, Irreverent and Obsessive: Drawing in Southern California. Arts Gallery, California State University, Fullerton, CA
Simply Made in America. The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT
- 1992 *Lax*. Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna, Austria
Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA
- 1991 *Marking Time: Nancy Rubins, Angela Bulloch, John Reilly, Jacob El Hanani*. The Drawing Center, Center for the Studio and Exhibition of Drawings, New York, NY
Lost & Found. Sculpture Center, New York, NY
Object/Context. The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, PA
- 1990 *Art in the Anchorage 1990: In the Vaults of the Brooklyn Bridge*. Creative Time, New York, NY
- 1998 *Sculpture at the Point*. Three Rivers Arts Festival, Pittsburgh, PA
- 1987 *Spatial Considerations*. Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD
Artist's Statements. U.N. Plaza, Vienna, Austria
Southern California Assemblages. Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, CA
- 1985 *A Decade of Visual Arts at Princeton: Faculty 1975-1985*. The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ
- 1983 *Urban Site: Art in the City*. New Langton Arts, San Francisco, CA
- 1982 *Sculptors at UC Davis, Past and Present*. University of California, Davis, CA
- 1980 *Art on the Beach*. Battery Park Landfill, Creative Time, New York, NY
- 1977 *Works in the World*. University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, IL

Selected Awards

- 2021 Artists' Legacy Foundation Award, Artists' Legacy Foundation
- 2013 Distinguished Women in Arts, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA
- 2003 Academy Award in Art, American Academy of Arts and Letters
- 2000 Alumni Award, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD
- 1997 Visual Artists Award, Flintridge Foundation
- 1998 Rockefeller Foundation Travel Award
- 1991 The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, Awards in Painting, Sculpture, and Printmaking
- 1981 National Endowment for the Arts
- 1981 Creative Artists Public Service Grant, New York State Council for the Arts
- 1980 National Endowment for the Arts
- 1977 National Endowment for the Arts

Selected Public Collections

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
City of Paris, France

CityCenter, Las Vegas, NV
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art,
Bentonville, AR
FRAC Bourgogne, Dijon, France
Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL

Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA
Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San
Diego, CA
Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
Ruby City, San Antonio, TX

Österreichsher Skulpturenpark, Graz, Austria
University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX
Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC