

## Rashid Johnson, George Ohr, Keith Sonnier, and Nari Ward

Nicole Klagsbrun is pleased to present an intergenerational exhibition of works by four American artists: Rashid Johnson (Chicago, Illinois, 1977), George Ohr (Biloxi, Mississippi, 1857-1918), Keith Sonnier (Mamou, Louisiana, 1941-2020), and Nari Ward (St. Andrew, Jamaica, 1963). The show brings to the fore themes of process, materiality, and abstraction.

Ohr is represented by four ceramic pieces made in the late 1800s. He is best known for his manipulations of clay through folding, indenting, and ruffling. The exhibition features a work from his studio that was severely burned in 1894, one of his “burned babies.” After the fire, Ohr doubled down on his new approach to form by producing his renowned thin walled, crushed, folded, and dented vessels. Ohr’s practice serves as an important predecessor to later movements, including postminimalism.

Resonating with Ohr’s material folds is Sonnier’s wall-based *Curtain Study*, 1964/1968, a double stainless steel mesh sculpture, exemplifying the artist’s previous use of materials that were restricted to hardware stores. In the 1960s, Sonnier was “investigating techniques common to such everyday experiences as wrapping, stuffing, mixing and even upholstering.” His use of transparent and translucent materials emphasizes his layered but still polished approach to postminimalism.

Constructed of discarded fire hoses and tires, Ward’s *Anon; Three Boxes Two Tires*, 1993, explores processes of memorialization through his sensitive approach to materials and form. Ward is well known for his sculptural works created from objects found in his longtime neighborhood, Harlem. By combining these materials, he re-contextualizes their original meanings, and in turn provides powerful symbols of community, history, and the passage of time.

Johnson exercises a range of material techniques such as scoring, scraping, engraving, and branding, often with self-made tools. His *Prayer Song*, 2011, is made of black soap and wax and features an all-over composition of marks that recall both Abstract Expressionism and postminimalism. “I’ve always considered,” he has noted, “the artist as almost a magician-like character who grants agency to materials to allow them to be elevated into objects that we admire.” This concept permeates all his works on view, especially his ability to elevate common objects through deeply material investigations.

