

Press Release

Nancy Holt

Echoes & Evolutions: Nancy Holt's Sun Tunnels

September 5–October 25, 2025

Public Reception: September 4, 6–8pm

Sprüth Magers, New York

Sprüth Magers

An innovator of site-responsive installations, Nancy Holt expanded the notion of where art can be found and what art can be. Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are delighted to present *Echoes & Evolutions: Nancy Holt's Sun Tunnels*, the first solo exhibition of the late artist (1938–2014) at the New York gallery. Holt's large-scale earthwork *Sun Tunnels* is a landmark in the artist's oeuvre and encapsulates her investigation of perception, systems and site. Showcasing many previously unseen drawings, collages, photographs and two of her Studio Locator sculptures, this exhibition offers insight into the process and ideas behind the creation of *Sun Tunnels*.

Developed over a three-year period, *Sun Tunnels* (1973–76) is comprised of four concrete cylinders arranged in an X-formation in a remote valley in Utah's Great Basin Desert. Based on meticulous calculations, the tunnels are positioned precisely to frame the sun as it rises and sets during the summer and winter solstices—the longest and shortest days of the year. Configurations of circular holes puncture the concrete surfaces, and through them light emanating from the sun and moon cast projections of specific star constellations inside the tunnel interiors. The circle is a recurring shape in Holt's oeuvre, which she uses to direct the gaze and evoke the continuous movement of celestial bodies.

Drawing for Positioning of Holes in the Perseus Constellation for One Tunnel of "Sun Tunnels" (1975) is one of the drawings that serves as a study for these perforations. In selecting the respective constellation for each tunnel, Holt carefully chose star clusters of different magnitude, allowing for views from both inside and outside the tunnel. "With those criteria there were only a few constellations that I could use, and from them I chose Draco, Perseus, Columba, and Capricorn. Together, they encompass the globe – Columba is a Southern Hemisphere constellation which slips over the edge of the horizon for a short time each year, but can't be seen because of the dense atmosphere near the Earth. Capricorn is visible in the fall and early winter, and is entered by the sun at the winter solstice. Draco and Perseus are always visible in the sky." (From Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels*, originally published in *Artforum*, April 1977, Vol. 15 No. 8).

Echoes & Evolutions: Nancy Holt's Sun Tunnels includes photographic material that reveal the development of Holt's ideas for *Sun Tunnels*. Part of the process involved using cardboard tubes to model potential configurations, which she then photographed to understand the shifting shadows and scale of the work. In these photo studies from 1975, Holt experimented with the layout of the tunnels, trying out sizes and configurations of the star constellations. On the back of each photo study are Holt's annotations about the orientation, time, and constellation she was testing in each image. Through this expansive series, patterns in her practice emerge that illustrate her systematic approach to making sculpture. This is emphasized again in *Sunlight in Sun Tunnels* and *Sun Tunnels: Shifting Shadows* (both 1976) in which Holt charted the evolving light and shadow at regular intervals over the course of one day respectively, bringing together the process into a single photographic composite.

Also on view are two of the artist's Studio Locators, Holt's first sculptures made in 1971 that show her consistent interest in light and location and directly led her to create *Sun Tunnels*. A simple structure made from a steel pipe mounted at eye-level, the Locators can be understood as a telescope without a lens, framing a particular field of vision in space. Holt's Studio Locators focus on specific details and, when presented today, their position sustains her careful choice of locating vision, highlighting her interest in the sculptural forms of the often overlooked systems in the built environment. Originally directed out of a window in Holt's New York studio on Greenwich Street, the view from the Locator always features the architectural detail noted in the work title. *Locator (Exhaust Pipe)* looks up to a roof ventilation pipe, while *Locator in Window* – the first of her Studio Locators – focuses vision on a single point directed by the Locator.

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Nancy Holt (1938–2014) is known for her concrete poetry, installations, public sculpture, photography, work in experimental film and video, and earthworks, such as environmental *Sun Tunnels* (1973–76, Great Basin Desert, Utah) and *Dark Star Park* (1970–84, Arlington County, Virginia). Recent solo exhibitions include Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus (2025); Art Institute of Chicago (2025); Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2024); Bildmuseet, Umeå, Sweden (2022), which toured to MACBA, Barcelona (2023); Western Washington University (2022); University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth (2021); and Dia:Chelsea, New York (2018). An earlier important retrospective traveled from Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, New York (2010) to Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe (2011), Graham Foundation of Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago (2011), Tufts University Art Gallery at The Aidekman Arts Center, Boston (2012), Santa Fe Arts Institute, Santa Fe (2012) and Utah Museum of Fine Arts, University of Utah, Salt Lake City. Recent group exhibitions include presentations at Maxxi Museum, Rome (2025), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2024), Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas (2023); and Ballroom Marfa (2022).

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