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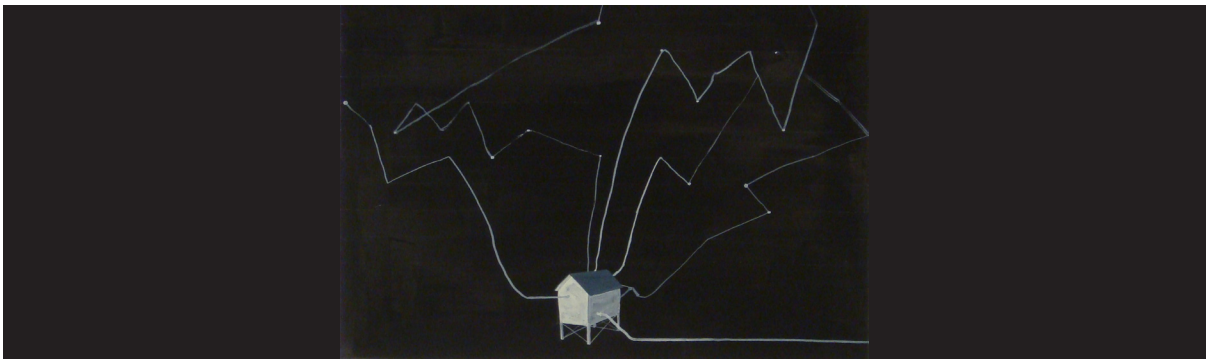

Donna Dennis
Studies for Little Tube House and the Night Sky

November 19 – December 22, 2015
Opening: Thursday, November 19, 6-8pm

Mixed Greens is honored that its last exhibition will be a solo show by renowned sculptor Donna Dennis. *Studies for Little Tube House and the Night Sky* is an arresting installation of gouache paintings, dioramas, and an architectural sculpture that will transform the gallery space into a poetic contemplation of friendship, death, and connection.

Donna Dennis is one of a small group of groundbreaking women—including Alice Aycock, Jackie Ferrara, and Mary Miss—who pushed sculpture toward the domain of architecture in the early 1970s. Deborah Everett writes in Sculpture magazine "When Donna Dennis created her earnest, plain-spoken Tourist Cabins at the outset of her career, they had the impact of cultural icons." Drawing from overlooked fragments of rural and urban vernacular American architecture, her sculptures—tourist cabins, hotels, subway stations, roller coasters—have represented stopping places on the journey through life. Human scale (most of the structures are directly proportioned to her body), the structures induce an in-between feeling for viewers: familiar, yet otherworldly; inert, yet bodily; inviting, yet inaccessible. Interior spaces are illuminated and visible though entered by the imagination alone.

Two years ago, Dennis saw a diminutive structure with tubes and wires protruding, on the shores of Lake Superior. When a young friend became ill and passed away, Dennis began a series of gouache paintings depicting a small, pale house with pipes and cables frantically reaching out into a large and formidable darkness. The images now form a poetic narrative representing her friend's energy, spirit, and connection to the Universe. In a larger sense, they represent a final journey. While always remaining grounded and connected to Earth, the house's searching tubes eventually allow it to stretch to reach the stars.

In addition to the gouache paintings, Dennis built small-scale dioramas of the little tube house and a sculpture, as large as life. Existing as the studies for a more expansive exhibition, Dennis's installation at Mixed Greens will fill the darkened gallery. Viewers will enter a night sky that hints at the larger universe the little tube house longs to occupy.
While this piece specifically references her friend, it also references our collective journey into the unknown.

Donna Dennis (b. 1942) was born in Springfield, OH, and grew up outside of New York. She received a B.A. from Carleton College and later studied in Paris and at the Art Students' League. She is best known for her complex sculptural installations with sound. BLUE BRIDGE/red shift, a 24-foot long evocation of railway drawbridges was exhibited at SculptureCenter in NY in 1993 and her subway-inspired Deep Station filled the lobby of the Brooklyn Museum in 1987. In 2007, the outdoor sculptures Tourist Cabins on Park Avenue, exhibited on Park Avenue, NYC. Most recently, Coney Night Maze was seen at the Neuberger Museum. Her work is included in Phaidon Press' Sculpture Today, which overviews sculpture worldwide during the past 40 years. In 2004, her work was seen in "Architecture & Arts 1900–2004," at the Palazzo Ducale in Genoa, Italy, curated by Germano Celant. Dennis has collaborated with poets Anne Waldman, Kenward Elmslie, and Ted Berrigan and with performance artist/puppeteer Dan Hurlin. Jazz composer Carla Bley wrote Roller Coaster for the opening of the Coney Night Maze. Her work is in prominent collections including the Brooklyn Museum, the Cleveland Art Museum, the Microsoft Collection, the Walker Art Center, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst in Aachen, Germany, the Indianapolis Museum, the San Diego Museum of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Neuberger Museum, and the Martin Z. Margulies Collection. Permanent public art commissions are located at John F. Kennedy Airport, P.S. 234, Queens College, and at the Wonderland MBTA Station in Boston. Grants and awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, several National Endowment Fellowships, and Pollock-Krasner Foundation grants. In 2012 she received the prestigious Artists' Legacy Foundation Award and in 2014 the Merit Award in Sculpture from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She is Professor Emerita at Purchase College, SUNY and lives in NYC.

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