

Senga Nengudi

I live in the fourth dimension when I create landscapes.

These landscapes are made out of materials that are discards and commonplace. I like to dance with the spaces I occupy, creating a triad. Partnering, we show what each other have to offer. Selection of a site and materials is critical to my creative process. They are my way into a concept that seems to usher forth (take form) from my manipulation of them.

I prevail with "what is at hand". My installations are subtle and intimate, involving issues of time and personal change. They are durable like a bird's nest with viewers feeling welcome enough to shift from observers to participants. Utilizing masking tape, gravel, dirt, newspapers, powdered tempera, seedpods, stripped pantyhose, photos and found stuff is a statement in itself.

To shape shift paradigms, I find different ways to use materials others consider useless or insignificant providing proof that the disregarded and disenfranchised may also have the resilience and reformative ability to find their poetic selves.

In many ways my installations are informed by my performances. An ongoing performance that I began about three years ago is my *What's in a name* personas. What is in a name? I propose plenty. That is why I have a different name for each medium I use.

Propecia Leigh – Photographer
Harriet Chin – Painter
Lily Bea Moor –Writer

In Black culture naming has great significance. We have been "called out of our names" so much that controlling that aspect of our lives with a "B'rer Rabbit" sensibility is important.

Each name has personal significance. But more importantly I wanted to explore the fact that many of us fall into the trap of what an artist's work "should" look like related to their ethnicity. An ethnic name attached to an artwork assumes us into an unconscious shorthand way of understanding the style or subject matter with expectations of what the style and subject matter should be.

Walk a mile in my shoes is another in-progress performance project. The idea came from an old Japanese folktale that spoke of villagers that were complaining about the weight of their individual problems. The wise man of the village told each villager to write down their problems on a piece of paper and tie them to a large tree that was situated in the center of the village. Each villager was to take down the problem of another and live with it for a while with the option of returning in a month and retrieving their own problem back. Well within a month not only one but all of the villagers hurried to retrieve their own problem back seeing that they were uniquely able to handle their own problems.

My concept is similar. In response to this folk wisdom, I have been mailing shoes out in all directions to people of all sorts with the instructions to the recipient to move, dance or walk a mile in the shoes they receive, document the event, send the documentation back to me, then send the shoes on to someone else. The concept is to explore how uncomfortable it is to try and fit into another's shoes and show that no matter how complicated or difficult our problems, we are well suited to handle the twists and turns of our own lives. In addition to shoes traveling to parts of Colorado, California, New York, Maryland etc., one pair has already changed feet twice on the way to Denmark. An artist's book is in process to be completed upon receipt of 100 pieces of documentation.