

REGGIE MADISON AND JUDY PFAFF:

TRANSFORMERS 2025

May 31 - June 30

One of the first challenges we ran into when we were installing this show had to do with electrical transformers. Baba Yaga is a squat -we have not paid rent on the space in over 5 years, and so when our electricity is on the fritz we have to be creative. And the pressure was on because Reggie Madison and Judy Pfaff were in the house, and Judy had installed 10 tubes of neon that needed juice. Judy's assistant Jeff Kitchens measured about 70 volts total coming from our outlets, not enough to power the neon, so we used a generator instead and powered Judy's work with gas. Reggie's work did not require any electricity, but he very certainly brought the noise, responding to Judy's install with a series of interconnected (deep black) panels (covered in sparking silver dots) over which he attached what could be described as three dimensional drawings. Judy and Reggie are transformers; they are the kinds of artists who transmogrify material without questioning what it means. The works on view in Transformers are materially composed of tar, wire, foam, carpet, LED and neon lights, stencils, wire, imitation flowers, steel, paint, and so on, but what matters in these works is not material, but formal composition. Combined, these two artists have over 100 years of experience intuitively processing materials in search of the unexpected. And while their approach could easily be taken for granted by artists today, it wasn't one chosen for convenience or marketability. These are artists who have been experimental in their work since the early 70s (late 60s) and to their credit, they still are today. Creative integrity has its benefits: Madison and Pfaff have not fallen into clearly defined "styles" but rather, have developed idiosyncratic voices. They stretch, tear, bellow, whisper, illuminate.. they conceal as well as reveal. Whatever constellations emerge in these works is largely up to chance -a reaction taking place between the material, the artists, and ultimately, the viewer. The invisible undercurrent powering the transformation from mundane material, to art, is imagination. The images we dream as we experience these works, as well as the waking labor of these creative grandmasters who move and recombine matter, are fueled by the same energy that enables us to play pretend or visualize our fears. Arguably, all of the work we do is a bid for transformation: personal, material, spiritual. For anybody still reading: Transformers are electrical devices that transfer electrical energy between two or more circuits... Transformers are also a bunch of robots from outer space that disguise themselves as normal things -cars, animals, etc. and then suddenly transform into giant battle bots! TRANSFORM AND ROLL OUT!

BABAYAGA HUDSON
NEW YORK

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Reginald Madison (b. 1941, Chicago, IL) is an American painter and sculptor who came to prominence in the emergent art scene of the Black Arts Movement in Chicago (1965-1975). Self-taught, he has studied art independently in Paris, Venice, and Copenhagen. After moving to Western Massachusetts in the 1970's, Madison was represented by Phyllis Kind Gallery. Madison's work has been exhibited at the experimental art center Art & Soul (1969), 57th Street Art Fair, Phyllis Kind Gallery, NYC (1975-2009), Ace Hotel Chicago, Smart Museum of Art at University of Chicago (2018), SEPTEMBER Gallery, Historic Hudson Hall, CR10 Arts, False Flag Gallery, and Rachel Uffner Gallery, among others. Madison's work has been featured in The New York Times, Times Union, Upstate Diary, and Whitehot Magazine. In 2020, Madison curated Art & Soul, an exhibition at Historic Hudson Hall that included the work by David Hammons and Tschabalala Self. He organizes Melodius Thunk, a Jazz Music Festival in Hudson, NY. Madison is a 2021 recipient of the NEA Artist Residency at Basilica Hudson. His work is in the collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody, Vinny Dotolo and Michael Sherman, Museum at UC Santa Barbara, Museum of Fine Arts St. Petersburg, and The Baltimore Museum of Art. Madison currently lives and works in Hudson, NY.

Judy Pfaff (b. 1946, London) Pfaff received a BFA from Washington University Saint Louis (1971), and an MFA from Yale University (1973) where she studied with Al Held. Her work spans across disciplines from painting to printmaking to sculpture to installation, but is perhaps best described as painting in space. She exhibited work in the Whitney Biennials of 1975, 1981, and 1987, and represented the United States in the 1998 Sao Paulo Bienal. Her pieces reside in the permanent collections of MOMA, Whitney Museum of Art, Tate Gallery, Brooklyn Museum of Art, and Detroit Institute of Arts, among others. She is the recipient of many awards including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Sculpture Center (2014), the MacArthur Foundation Award (2004), and the Guggenheim Fellowship (1983). Pfaff lives and works in Tivoli, New York.

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