



WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART

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Sculpture Meets Sound in Works by Naama Tsabar On View in MATRIX 189 at the Wadsworth Atheneum

Hartford, Conn. (May 24, 2022)—Naama Tsabar creates objects that function both as artworks and musical instruments. In the Wadsworth’s latest MATRIX exhibition, Tsabar will install site-specific works comprised of broken and restrung electric guitars. The works will be activated in closing-weekend performances where the artist will be joined by musicians from the regional community. *Naama Tsabar / MATRIX 198: Melodies of Certain Damage (Opus 6)* is on view at the Wadsworth June 3–September 11, 2022.

Artist Naama Tsabar has been challenging the hyper-masculine bravado of the guitar break—made famous in 1964 by The Who’s Pete Townshend—since 2008 through sound sculpture and performance art. Tsabar’s MATRIX project continues this ongoing dialogue through an installation of new sculptures that will set the stage for her performance *Melodies of Certain Damage (Opus 6)*.

With the help of local women and nonbinary musicians, the composition for Tsabar's MATRIX performance will be written collaboratively using the sculptures as they are installed in the gallery space. Each performer will bring their own musical history, training, experience, and creativity to the instruments, which can be played with bows, picks, drumsticks, or fingers, but since the works are installed directly on the floor with no plinths, pedestals, or stages to elevate the sculptures they must be played on the ground.

Leading up to the closing-weekend performance, related events throughout the run of the exhibition include opportunities to hear from Tsabar in an opening reception gallery talk at the museum and in a virtual conversation with past MATRIX performance artist Laurie Anderson. Additional opportunities to engage include talks both in the exhibition led by curator Patricia Hickson, and throughout the galleries with composer and museum educator Adam Lenz who will reveal works in the Wadsworth's permanent collection with connections to sound.

"The MATRIX program has had a rich history in performance art with which Naama's project re-engages," says Patricia Hickson, Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art at the Wadsworth. "Her performance provides the opportunity for community engagement across disciplines, tapping the Greater Hartford region for contemporary string and percussion musicians to participate in its development and execution."

Tsabar's project marks a return of performance art to the MATRIX program since Vanessa German's 2016 MATRIX project. Over more than four decades, MATRIX exhibitions have featured notable performance artists including Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Laurie Anderson, Andrea Fraser, and Janine Antoni.

Beyond the MATRIX gallery two single-channel videos by Tsabar will play in the Wadsworth's dedicated video gallery. The videos, titled *Untitled (Babies)* (2008), the iconic inception of Tsabar's *Guitar* series, and *Stranger* (2017) document performances, allowing visitors to imagine the duality of the sculptures encountered in the MATRIX gallery as instruments.

Like the art world, the music field is traditionally gendered male. Tsabar's awareness of the male-dominated music field is based on her experience as a member of an electro-punk band in which she performed while attending art school. Through her investigation of these traditionally male-gendered fields, Tsabar positions her work as feminist, upsets traditional gender norms, and questions prevailing hierarchies of power.

Related Events

Artist Talk with Naama Tsabar

Thursday, June 2; 5pm gallery viewing, 6pm talk—In museum

Listen in as Tsabar discusses her approach to creating interactive sound sculptures and her process for building site-specific performances with local communities of women and gender non-conforming performers. Free with required registration.

Curator Talk with Patricia Hickson

Thursday, July 21; 1pm—In museum

Explore Tsabar's immersive installation with curator Patricia Hickson as she illuminates Tsabar's feminist and political approach to artmaking. Free with admission.

MATRIX Past and Present: Naama Tsabar and Laurie Anderson in Conversation

Thursday, August 4; 6pm—Virtual

Naama Tsabar and Laurie Anderson (MATRIX 46 in 1978-79) discuss how they utilize sound as a medium for artmaking, challenge the stereotypes of musical genres through experimentation, and reveal the feminist dialogues at play in their work. Free. Register in advance via thewadsworth.org.

Gallery Talk: Sound Walk with Adam Lenz

Saturday, August 27; 1pm—In museum

Sound in an art museum? Join composer, sound artist, and museum educator Adam Lenz for an inside look at artworks in the Wadsworth's collection that engage with music, sound, and auditory histories, including *Naama Tsabar / MATRIX 189*. Free with admission.

Performances: *Melodies of Certain Damage (Opus 6)*

Saturday & Sunday, September 10 & 11; 2pm & 4pm—In museum

Tsabar's performances are realized in a landscape of smashed guitars, evoking male-dominated rock and roll, yet repositioned as feminist narrative. Join Tsabar and an ensemble of women and nonbinary performers from the Greater Hartford region as they activate Tsabar's installation through performance. Duration: 1 hour. Free with required registration via thewadsworth.org.

Exhibition and Program Support

MATRIX 189 is supported by the Wadsworth Atheneum's Contemporary Coalition: Dr. Duffield Ashmead IV and Mr. Eric Ort, Coleman H. and Jo Champlin Casey, The Cheryl Chase and Stuart Bear Family Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Raul de Brigard, Nancy D. Grover, Laura R. Harris, Marcia Reid Marsted and Jeffrey G. Marsted, Agnes and William R. Peelle, Jr., Susan and Joel Rottner, and Linda Cheverton Wick and Walter Wick.

Sustaining support for the Wadsworth Atheneum is provided by the Greater Hartford Arts Council's United Arts Campaign, and the Department of Economic and Community Development.

About the Artist

Naama Tsabar (b. 1982, Israel) lives and works in New York. She received her MFA from Columbia University in 2010. Solo exhibitions and performances of Tsabar's work have been presented at The Bass Museum of Contemporary Art (Miami), the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York), Museum of Art and Design (New York), The High Line Art (New York), Nasher Museum (Durham, NC), Kunsthhaus Baselland (Switzerland), Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Prospect New Orleans (Louisiana), Tel Aviv Museum of Art (Israel), The Herzliya Museum for Contemporary Art (Israel), MARTE-C (El Salvador), CCA Tel Aviv (Israel), Faena Buenos Aires (Argentina), and Frieze Projects (New York). Selected group exhibitions featuring Tsabar's work include The Andy Warhol Museum (Pittsburgh), The Jewish Museum of Belgium, Ballroom Marfa (TX), Schirn Kunsthalle (Frankfurt), Elevation 1049 Gstaad (Switzerland), TM Triennale, Hasselt Genk (Belgium), *Greater New York 2010* at MoMA PS1, Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens (Belgium), The Bucharest Biennale for Young Artists, Hessel Museum of Art at CCS Bard (Annandale-On-Hudson, NY), Casino Luxembourg (Luxembourg), and Extra City (Antwerp, Belgium). Tsabar's work has been featured in publications including *ArtForum*, *Art In America*, *ArtReview*, *ARTnews*, *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, *Frieze*, *Bomb Magazine*, *Art Asia Pacific*, *Wire*, and *Whitewall*, among others.

About MATRIX

Inaugurated in 1975, MATRIX is the Wadsworth's groundbreaking contemporary art exhibition series featuring works by artists from around the world. Many MATRIX artists, such as Christo, Sol LeWitt, Gerhard Richter, Cindy Sherman, Andy Warhol, and Carrie Mae Weems, are now considered seminal figures in contemporary art.

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

Founded in 1842 with a vision for infusing art into the American experience, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is home to a collection of nearly 50,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years and encompassing European art from antiquity through contemporary as well as American art from the 1600s to today. The Wadsworth Atheneum's five connected buildings—representing architectural styles including Gothic Revival, modern International Style, and 1960s Brutalism—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn.

Current hours are noon–5pm Thursday–Sunday. Berkins on Main café hours are noon–4pm Thursday–Sunday. The library is currently closed to the public. Visit thewadsworth.org for current safety guidelines. Admission: \$5–15; discounts for members, students, and seniors. Free admission for Hartford residents with Wadsworth Welcome registration. Free “happy hour” admission 4–5pm. Advance ticket registration via thewadsworth.org is encouraged, not required. Phone: (860) 278- 2670; website: thewadsworth.org.

Image: *Melodies of Certain Damage*, 2019. Performance view in *Dedicated*, Kasmin Gallery, New York. Composed and performed in collaboration with Rose Blanshei, Rosana Caban, Taja Cheek, Frederique Gnaman and Sarah Strauss. Photo: Christopher Stach. Image courtesy of Kasmin Gallery.

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