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KEITH SONNIER

CAT DOUCET AND PORTAL SERIES

31.01 - 15.03.2025

From Tuesday to Saturday, from 11am to 7pm

Opening on Thursday, January 30th 2025, from 6pm to 8:30p

79, rue du Temple, Paris III^e

PRESS RELEASE

Mitterrand | Temple is pleased to present a new exhibition of works by American artist Keith Sonnier, from January 31st to March 15th, 2025. Entitled *Cat Doucet and Portal Series*, the exhibition brings together a selection of large- and small-format drawings from the “Cat Doucet” series, reflecting the artist’s creative process, as well as a neon piece from the “Portal” series.

Internationally renowned for his sculptural work, Keith Sonnier belongs to a generation of artists who, since the 1960s, have challenged the categories and media of traditional art by experimenting with industrial materials such as felt, latex, glass flock, plastic and incandescent light bulbs. In 1968, he introduced neon into his work, bending and interweaving the tubes to form luminous drawings in space. In keeping with the legacy of abstract expressionism and minimal art, his work is characterized by strong narrative and emotional content,

and numerous references to popular culture.

The exhibition presents a selection of drawings from the ‘Cat Doucet’ series, produced in 1995-1996 and inspired by the legendary sheriff and politician Cat Doucet of Saint Landry Parish, Louisiana. Keith Sonnier learned from his father that during his re-election campaign in 1952, Cat Doucet drove across the county in a station wagon equipped with four large speakers mounted on the roof and the cut-out figure of a cartoonish cat. Sonnier immortalized him by tracing stylized, sinuous graphic signs that evoke female shoulders and hips (Doucet was reputed to be a womanizer), as well as cat ears and sheriff’s hats that recall the exuberant character who travelled the length and breadth of Saint Landry (from the swamps of the Atchafalaya basin to the areas inhabited by the Okaloussa Indians, all the way to Ouachita Parish, as indicated by the titles of the works). Sonnier’s series pays tribute to his childhood memories, using the

free, graphic style of the comic book to evoke the drawing of Cat Doucet's famous cat that crossed Louisiana. This series is thus one of Sonnier's most personal. Born in Grand Mamou, Louisiana, into a family of Franco-Acadian origin, he grew up in a community where the traditions of the descendants of French colonists merged with those of African Americans and Amerindians, creating an exceptional cultural, linguistic and architectural environment that inspired Keith Sonnier throughout his career.

In addition to the 'Cat Doucet' series, a light sculpture from the 'Portal' series (2013/14) is being presented for the first time in France. In this series, the neon is the subject of an architectural and iconographic study, serving as an entry point for readers to examine Sonnier's creative process. This series reflects his interest in simple architectural forms, the interplay of transparency and the use of neon as a

primary artistic medium. It refers to the idea of doors or passages between different worlds, both physical and symbolic.

Born in 1941, Keith Sonnier is a post-minimalist artist. Since the 1980s, he has received around twenty public commissions. Moreover, numerous exhibitions have been dedicated to his work, notably at the Pompidou Centre in Paris in 1979, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington DC in 1989, the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin in 2003, the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, New York, in 2018 and more recently at DIA Beacon in 2024. His works are featured in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art and MoMA in New York, the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, and MOCA in Los Angeles to name but a few.

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