

What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in March

TRIBECA

Yasunao Tone

Through March 18. Artists Space, 11 Cortlandt Alley, Manhattan; 212-226-3970, artistspace.org.



Installation view of Yasunao Tone, *Region of Paramedia*, 2023, Artists Space, New York. Photo: Filip Wolak.

The composer Yasunao Tone was born in Tokyo in 1935 and joined the improvisational music ensemble Group Ongaku (or “group music”) in 1958. Writing statements for the defense of a fellow artist, Gempei Akasegawa, arrested in 1963 for counterfeiting 1,000-yen notes that he incorporated in his artworks, convinced Tone to add criticism to his portfolio, and he quickly became a regular contributor to the influential magazine *Bijutsu Techo*. In 1973, he moved to New York, where he would go on to collaborate with artists like Merce Cunningham, George Maciunas and Senga Nengudi, and to help pioneer the use of “glitch” in art by altering CDs and other such media.

It isn’t easy to mount a retrospective for an artist like Tone, whose work is so context-dependent and ephemeral. But the curator Danielle A. Jackson of Artists Space manages it ingeniously. She gathers such physical objects and artworks as there are — a kanji-like character painted over a photograph of a baby; a prepared piano; a photograph of Tone playing an electric organ with a block of ice; a tiny handmade box for “used sandpaper” — and leans heavily on historical ephemera, like letters, scores, posters and a stack of Akasegawa’s notes. But she arranges it all in a lucid but nonlinear way, and by letting the soundtracks of several concert videos overlap, she adeptly recreates the feeling of being at a jokey but serious, delicate but discreetly profound performance.