

BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

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Blanton to Present First Touring Museum Exhibition of Works By Nina Katchadourian

Nina Katchadourian: Curiouser March 12–June 11, 2017



Austin, TX—February 6, 2017—The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin presents ***Nina Katchadourian: Curiouser***. This mid-career survey will explore approximately ten major bodies of work by celebrated Brooklyn-based artist **Nina Katchadourian** (b. 1968), including video, photography, sculpture, sound art, and a live performance. *Nina Katchadourian: Curiouser* is organized by Blanton curator of modern and contemporary art, Veronica Roberts, and will be the first touring museum exhibition of Katchadourian’s work. Following the Blanton’s presentation, the show will travel to the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, and the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University. Accompanying the exhibition is the first substantial catalogue devoted to the artist’s career, to be published in partnership with UT Press.

Katchadourian’s practice is at once conceptually rigorous and alluringly accessible. Her work reveals the creative potential, to use the artist’s words, that “lurks within the mundane” and underscores the remarkable freedom and productivity that can come from working within limitations. Using ingenuity and humor, her work invigorates our own ability to see our everyday surroundings as a site of possibility.

“It is an honor for the Blanton to present the work of one of the most inventive artists working today,” remarks Blanton Director Simone Wicha. “Katchadourian’s practice provides insightful, and often witty, commentary on the world around us. We are thrilled to share *Nina Katchadourian: Curiouser* with Austin and the UT community and to tour the show nationally following its presentation at the Blanton, allowing others to discover Katchadourian’s unique artistic vision.”

Katchadourian’s expansive practice plays out largely beyond her Brooklyn studio. She has made art in libraries, on airplanes, and in forests and parking lots. Enlisting help from both far afield and close to home, Katchadourian has collaborated with sportscasters, zookeepers, museum maintenance staff, United Nations translators, an accent elimination coach, various animals and insects, as well as her own parents.

Among her most widely known works is ***Accent Elimination*** (2005), a six-channel video installation inspired by posters advertising courses in “accent elimination” that the artist encountered around New York. Katchadourian, whose foreign-born parents both have difficult-to-place accents, hired a professional speech coach to teach them to speak with a “standard” American accent, and to teach her to speak in her parents’ accents. The video captures the hybrid cultures of the artist’s family, which she often describes as being like a “scrambled world map,” and characteristic of countless households in this country. *Accent Elimination* was featured at the 2015 Venice Biennale in the Armenian Pavilion, which won the Golden Lion award for “Best National Participation.” The Blanton recently acquired *Accent Elimination* for its permanent collection.



Central to the exhibition is “***Seat Assignment***,” an extensive ongoing body of photographs and videos Katchadourian makes using her mobile phone. The project began in 2010 on a flight from New York to Atlanta, when she tasked herself with creating art on the plane using only materials readily at hand. Katchadourian explains, “I thought: Here I am with two and a half hours of time and why am I not going to consider this time as time that counts? Why not think actively, be alert and attuned to possibility?”



It is hard to imagine a more restrictive environment for making art than the roughly seventeen-inch width of an airplane seat. And yet, more than seven years and 200 flights later, working between armrests and under self-imposed constraints, Katchadourian has amassed hundreds of photographs, three music videos, and several video animations as part of this significant project. Turning the airplane into her studio, she finds inventive ways to reimagine items in her carry-on bag, in-flight magazines tucked into seat-back pockets, and whatever snacks come down the aisle. She captures the results of these unexpected interventions with her camera phone.

Katchadourian has even found ways to make art in airplane restrooms. Paradoxically, their claustrophobic quarters have become the sites of some of her most imaginative work: *Lavatory Self-Portraits in the Flemish Style* (2011), twenty-one self-portraits that merge fifteenth-century Northern Renaissance oil painting with the then-nascent phenomenon of the selfie, and music videos in which she lip-synchs the lyrics to classic rock’n’roll and disco hits, such as the Bee Gees’ “Nights on Broadway” and Freddie Mercury and David Bowie’s duet “Under Pressure.”

Today, even when art is directly in front of us, it is often experienced through a smart phone—a reality that is easy to lament as an impoverished way of looking. In “*Seat Assignment*,” however, Katchadourian uses her phone to pay *closer* attention, and to harness the unique opportunities that the airplane affords.

Other highlights of *Nina Katchadourian: Curiouser* include:

- **Mended Spiderwebs** (1998), which are part of a group of works Katchadourian calls “Uninvited Collaborations with Nature.” To make them, the artist repaired broken spiderwebs with red thread. Each morning, following the repairs, she would find that the spider had discarded her patches in favor of their own restorations. This series documents the mended webs and discarded thread in a series of photographs and framed thread patches.
- **Paranormal Postcards** (2001–ongoing) is an active project consisting of over 250 postcards. Using red sewing thread, the artist connects various elements in each image; the cards are then grouped into an elaborate network of dotted red lines applied to the wall. A “world view” of extreme and almost paranoid interconnectedness emerges. Each time the project is exhibited, Katchadourian incorporates postcards from the city or town where it is on view. At the Blanton, several new cards featuring popular Austin sites will give visitors local points of entry.



Catalogue

The catalogue accompanying the exhibition will include an essay by *Curiouser* curator Veronica Roberts. Offering the first in-depth examination of “Seat Assignment,” the text was written exclusively in-flight in keeping with Katchadourian’s own methods of creation. The catalogue also include an essay by Jeffrey Kastner, New York–based writer, critic, and senior editor of *Cabinet*, and a lively interview between the artist and Stuart Horodner, director of The Art Museum at the University of Kentucky. In addition, the catalogue features the artist’s personal accounts of individual works, paired with creative essays by a multidisciplinary team of contributors.

Public Programs

Katchadourian will speak about her work in conversation with Veronica Roberts at the Blanton on Saturday, March 25, 2017, at 4 P.M., and will be available to sign copies of the catalogue immediately following the talk.

This exhibition is organized by the Blanton Museum of Art.

Generous support for the exhibition is provided by Suzanne Deal Booth; Eric Herschmann, Orly Genger, and family; and Jeanne and Michael Klein, with additional gifts from George and Nicole Jeffords, the Alice Kleberg Reynolds Foundation, Jenny and Trey Laird, Kathleen Irvin Loughlin and Christopher Loughlin, and Chris Mattsson and John McHale. Support also is provided by Lawrence Banka and Judith Gordon, Nick Debs, Deborah Green, Pamela and David Hornik, Martin Z. Margulies, Karen and Chip Oswalt, and the West Collection, Philadelphia.

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About the Blanton Museum of Art

Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art holds the largest public collection in Central Texas with nearly 18,000 objects. Recognized for its modern and contemporary American art, Latin American art, Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings, and encyclopedic collection of prints and drawings, the Blanton offers thought-provoking, visually arresting, and personally moving encounters with art.

The museum is located at the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Congress Avenue and is open Tuesday through Friday from 10–5, Saturday from 11–5, and Sunday from 1–5. Thursdays are free admission days and every third Thursday the museum is open until 9. Admission Prices: Adults \$9, Kids 12 and under FREE, Seniors (65+) \$7, Youth/College Students (13–21) \$5. Admission is free to members, all current UT ID-holders. For additional information call (512) 471-7324 or visit www.blantonmuseum.org.

Image credits:

Nina Katchadourian, *Lavatory Self-Portrait in the Flemish Style #3*, 2011 (“Seat Assignment” project, 2010–ongoing)

C-print, 13 5/16 x 10 5/16 in.

Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin; promised gift of Lawrence Banka and Judith Gordon in honor of Catharine Clark, 2016

Nina Katchadourian, *Mountain Climbers (Apple)*, 2011 (“Seat Assignment” project, 2010–ongoing)

C-print, 24 x 19 in.

Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin; purchase with funds from Judith Willcott and Laurence Miller, 2016

Nina Katchadourian, *Under Pressure*, 2014 (“Seat Assignment” project, 2010–ongoing)

Two-channel video with sound on monitors with headphones, 4:04 minutes, 30 x 45 in.

Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, purchase through a gift of Shirley Ross Davis

Nina Katchadourian, *Mended Spiderweb #14 (Spoon Patch)*, 1998

Cibachrome, 30 x 20 in.

Courtesy the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco

All works of art by Nina Katchadourian © 2017 Nina Katchadourian, courtesy the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco