

Allison Katz: Diary w/o Dates

Diary w/o Dates is a suite of twelve paintings that construct a mythical present. Simultaneously referencing the past while proposing the future, Allison Katz warps the organizing principles of time. She sees a parallel between the grid of the calendar and the grid of the canvas, in terms of structured intervals of time and their resemblance to the constraints of the surface of a painting. She plays within the borders of each, letting that which is beyond the grid encroach, framing painting and time as similarly expansive and constantly in flux.

In this recent body of work, Katz experiments with self-portraiture, negotiating memory and projection in figurative painting. In doing so, she complicates the viewer's relationship to the narrator and how a diaristic premise functions in relation to belief and doubt. For Katz, content is generated from multiplicity, with sources lifted from family, history, the city, the natural world, the mirror, and the mask. She draws from yet also resists the traditions of self-representation—attuned to the gendered implications and emotional charge often cast onto a female painter's output. Continually pitting the history of Western painting against the reality of a moment, she embraces the complex, absurd, and at times contradictory nature of making paintings today.

Broadly speaking, Katz refuses both formal and factual coherence, opting for difference, using opposing tones of color and character, and visual non-sequiturs across a single body of work. She considers each brush mark a quote, building conversations across time and space; her private thoughts transformed and translated into a public language. The subjects chosen are non-hierarchical and manifold—she is building a catalog of directions she might go in, making space for subterfuge and surprise.

Diary w/o Dates draws inspiration from the tradition and cultural significances underlying the form and use of the monthly calendar. She pulls material from a wide-range of interpretations, from the 18th century French Republican Calendar that radically reconsidered the structure of the year to the Pirelli tire company's iconic pin-ups that have hung in auto shops since the 1960s—Katz questions the calendar both above and below the fold. She considers the representation of time, and the allegorical role that women have traditionally been relegated, where "ripeness is all." Concurrently, she considers the seriality of days, weeks, months, years—the existential condition of existing within those cells—how curiosity, humor, frivolity, and inversion can be acts of resistance. Katz also engages the calendar more broadly, in relation to industrialization and economics, as a superstructure used to tether urban and rural communities to a shared understanding of time. Like her approach to painting, Katz seeks to destabilize the iconography and traditions around these routines. Her paintings chip away at convention, pointing to the layers and textures of life within and beyond the repetition of the day-to-day.

The installation at the List Center instigates an exercise in perspective. Post-impressionist painter Pierre Bonnard once stated, "I'm trying to do what I have never done, give the impression one has on entering a room: one sees everything and at the same time nothing." Pacing left and right and back and forth, the encounter with *Diary w/o Dates* crisscrosses between opticality and physicality, breadth and depth, distance and intimacy. The window of Hayden Gallery, containing its own changing pictorial composition, interrupts the suite of paintings and posits a final opposition: between the ephemerality of the natural world and the imprint of the artist's mark.

Hayden Gallery May 18–July 29, 2018

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Allison Katz (b. 1980; Montreal, Canada) lives and works in London.

Allison Katz: Diary w/o Dates is curated by Yuri Stone, Assistant Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center. This exhibition is organized in collaboration with Oakville Galleries, Ontario.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Public Reception

Thursday, May 17, 6–8 PM

Artist Discussion

Friday, May 18, 12:30 PM

Harvard Art Museums

Speakers: Allison Katz with Elizabeth Rudy, Carl A. Weyerhaeuser Associate Curator of Prints, Harvard Art Museums

Graduate Student Talk

Thursday, May 24, 6 PM

History Out of Time: Louis Lafitte's Republican Calendar

Speaker: Elizabeth Saari Browne, History, Theory, and Criticism of Architecture and Art Department at MIT

All programs are free and open to the general public. RSVPs are required.

For more information about these events and to RSVP, visit: listart.mit.edu/events-programs.



SUPPORT

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