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ALLISON KATZ
With Edna Katz Silver

Foundations

Opening: Thursday, October 2, 2025; 6pm-9pm

October 3 – November 29, 2025

From Tuesday to Saturday, 11am – 6pm

Gió Marconi, Via Tadino 15, Milan

It was only a matter of time before Allison Katz would realise *Foundations*, an exhibition that brings to the fore her continuous challenge to the myth of the artist and her containment as an autonomous voice. “There is no such thing as a blank canvas”, according to Katz. “Something is always already there, beginning with the unconscious (the ineffable). Then come the building blocks of our DNA, our structural conditions, the bodies of loved ones, the ghosts of those who left, and every painting already painted. All these forces lead one to form tastes, pleasures and fears; a self-portrait made by others. *Foundations* are our beginnings, the roots that lie below ground – and it is the same term (in English at least) for what might happen at the end, with the construction of a legacy.”

To make visible one dimension of this porous network of influences, Katz invites her paternal grandmother, the nonagenarian artist Edna Katz Silver, to present a suite of dynamic needlework as an integral part of the show. She also implicates her long-time gallerist, Gió Marconi, and the story of his family ancestry in the presentation. “Taking a closer look at what has been there all along, I invited my grandmother Edna to share in this ‘solo’ show with me. This was a way to realise a reciprocal exchange that began nearly a decade ago, when I first asked her to make a needlepoint composition based on my signature.” An important motif in many of her paintings, the name Katz is threaded throughout this show, asking which traits of her biographical past have passed on, accidentally or deliberately, into her art.

In turn, through imagery appropriated from scarves and frames crafted by Gió Marconi’s ancestors – a lineage of picture-framers and scarf makers turned art dealers – she raises questions concerning inherited style and vocation. Katz treats the frame and the ornament as more than chance biographical references: they become an opportunity to speak of what is foundational to painting. “The outline of the frame comprises the first four lines of any picture”, she explains. “To frame is to cut off endlessness; to extract the texture of life from the continuum.” The same applies to the arabesque format of the decorative scarf – yet another leitmotif that runs through the exhibition. It is drawn only on its margins or borders, encircling and teasing the centre, or leaving it blank.

Painted, printed, woven and sculpted in sequence – thought not a linear one – the works in this exhibition unfold the stories of numerous chance encounters and their varying consequences. The foundations they lay bare are not solid and durable substructures, but rather capricious, mobile and generative.

—Yuval Etgar

Edna Katz Silver

Edna Katz Silver was born in Montreal in 1930, the eldest of three daughters. Her parents had eloped and immigrated to Canada from a shtetl in what is now Ukraine. The family lived in a commercial loft, sharing the space with her father David Applebaum's burgeoning business of sewing blankets; this would later develop into a factory production of chenille bedspreads. Her mother Bella sewed and knit clothes for her children. Edna was taught these skills, finding she had both a natural aptitude and a flair for inventive design. Textile, textures and self-fashioning were the foundations of her childhood, and the circumstances of her family's survival.

She made her first needlepoint for me when she was eighty-seven. The long arc of her life was not exactly slowing down, but the intensity of her culminated experiences began to revive an interest in a form she had not visited for decades. Edna has worked and exhibited across almost every medium, from painting and printmaking to sculpture and jewellery. She has worn various professional and entrepreneurial hats throughout her life: teaching, founding artist-run galleries, designing furniture, creating sculpture for public buildings, and even film acting late in her career. The needlepoints function like a net, holding personal history – literally, as they're made in part made with the silk threads she saved from her father's workspace – alongside aspects of her varied interests. Geometric forms, architectural lines, embellishment and ornament are all channelled into the most-foundational act of using a needle and thread.

—Allison Katz

Allison Katz

Allison Katz (b. 1980, Montreal, Canada) lives and works in London. She studied Fine Arts at Concordia University in Montreal and received her MFA from Columbia University in New York. Katz's work investigates the ways in which aesthetic practices link and absorb autobiography, information systems, graphic icons, and art history. Her diverse vocabulary of motifs – including roosters, cabbages, mouths, elevators, noses, and the spelling of her own name – appears as recurring signs that build a constellation of ideas and references, which transmute across the mediums of painting, posters, and installation. Katz has held solo exhibitions at leading international institutions, including the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto, 2025), Camden Art Centre (London, 2022), Nottingham Contemporary (Nottingham, 2021), MIT List Visual Arts Center (Cambridge, 2018). Forthcoming in 2026, she will present a solo exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Recent group exhibitions include *From Cindy Sherman to Francesco Vezzoli: 80 Contemporary Artists* (Palazzo Reale, Milan, 2025), *In Focus: A Closer Look at Photorealism* (Centraal Museum, Utrecht, 2024), *Capturing the Moment* (Tate Modern, London, 2024), and *The Milk of Dreams*, 59th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale (2022). In 2024 she curated and featured in the major group exhibition *In the House of the Trembling Eye* (Aspen Art Museum, 2024). She has received numerous awards, most recently the Gershon Iskowitz Prize at the AGO (2023) and the Pompeii Commitments – Archaeological Matters digital fellowship (2022).