

LÉVY GORVY

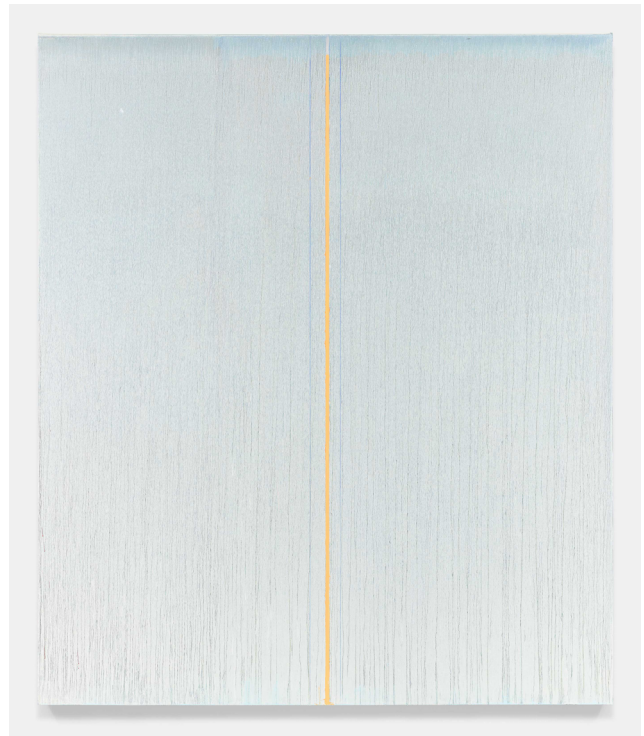
PAT STEIR'S FIRST EXHIBITION WITH LEVY GORVY
NEW YORK FEATURES A SUITE OF NEW WORKS

Pat Steir: Kairos

909 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10021

September 7 – October 21, 2017
Opening Reception: September 7, 6 – 8 p.m.

New York, NY— Lévy Gorvy's first New York exhibition with American artist Pat Steir will fill the public floors of the gallery's landmark building at 909 Madison Avenue with a suite of five eleven-foot tall oil on canvas paintings and eight smaller-scale works. This is the first New York exhibition of Steir since she joined the gallery in early 2016. Opening September 7th and running through October 21st, *Pat Steir: Kairos* will showcase paintings that manifest a methodological and philosophical continuity with—and slight formal departure from—her celebrated Waterfall series. Comprising Steir's first exhibition of new work in over three years, the paintings in *Kairos* are lush and sweeping in scale, with titles such as *Endless Sky*, *Aporia*, *Melancholy*, *Poros*, and *Rose Hip*, describing the states and senses they evoke. The featured works revisit the dialogue between intuition and accident that has defined Steir's work since the 1970s, renewing these themes for the present day. An opening reception will be held for the artist on Thursday, September 7th from 6 – 8 p.m.



Pat Steir, *Angel*, 2016-2017, oil on canvas, 132 x 113 inches (335.3 x 287 cm).
Image courtesy of Lévy Gorvy. ©Pat Steir 2017

The dialectics of intention and chance define Steir's five-decade long practice; in the *Kairos* paintings, Steir furthers her investigation of non-objective painting with planes of complex color and texture situated on and between a central fissure. The

exhibition title, *Kairos*—meaning a propitious moment for decision or action—originates from *Trance Abyss*, a poem by Anne Waldman written specifically with this body of work in mind and published in the exhibition catalogue. Observing their temporal dynamics, Waldman remarks, "There is a rupture in the fabric of Pat Steir's current paintings. The explosive Waterfalls offered a full-on stereophonic experience of entering spaces of celestial climatic 'pours' and one feels the visceral impact of her entities in space. But here we peer into the heavenly abyss, the beautiful, unsettling rift which is a contentious point of origin between two sides or bodies of similar yet severed wholes."

Although the results of Steir's work might signal a relentless pursuit of beauty and love of nature, her approach is inherently political. For the artist, politics and power are inexorably linked, and the source of all power relations is the individual ego. The foundation of Steir's practice remains deeply rooted in methodologies advanced by pioneering composer and her close friend John Cage (1912 - 1992). Furthering his conceptual openness to and use of chance, Steir applies Cage's theories to her process—from her preparatory mixing of the paint to its physical application. Steir's Zen-Buddhism similarly facilitates a move away from the ego and toward a practice that attempts to relinquish control. To an extent, Steir allows the paintings to form themselves, opening them to the influence of ambient material and natural forces. Climbing high up on ladders and lifts, Steir pours the paint down from the upper register of an upright canvas, surrendering her gestures to chance, allowing gravity and the viscosity of the paint—as well as the physical mechanics—to determine the direction and ultimately the final form of the work.

Steir recalls that her misunderstanding of the way traditional Chinese ink paintings were made led to her first Waterfall paintings. Initially, she thought the ink was splashed. Through subsequent research she learned that what appeared to be a splash was in fact meticulously drawn by the academically trained artist. "Sometimes the best ideas come from misunderstandings," Steir reflects, referencing her mode of working as "collaboration with gravity and flow."

New Works on View

The monumental painting *Angel* anchors the group of new works exhibited in *Kairos*. A tangle of whites and blues are traversed by an orange line, which Steir dedicated to the memory of her friend and mentor Agnes Martin. By turns

sensuous and austere, this painting and the series to which it belongs bring Steir's exploration of the possibilities of painting full circle. She first visited Martin in New Mexico in 1971 with Douglas Crimp, a trip to the mesa that inspired her iconic painting *Looking for the Mountain* (1971), which resides in the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. In the upper-left corner of that work, a gushing stroke of blue paint inaugurated Steir's sustained engagement with a gesture that led to figuration—not abstraction—and ultimately to her signature motif, the waterfall. Returning to these earlier moments in her career, Steir's new paintings extend their delicate balance of depiction and facture, positioning these less as binaries than as states along a fluid spectrum. Delighting in accident, each clears a space through which unforeseen possibilities might emerge.

Accompanying Publication

Pat Steir: Kairos will be accompanied by a publication comprised of over 100 illustrations of the artist's work and archival images, with an essay by Courtney J. Martin, Deputy Director and Chief Curator, Dia Art Foundation; a poem by Anne Waldman; and an interview conducted by literary critic, cultural theorist, and editor Sylvère Lotringer, Jean Baudrillard Chair and Professor of Philosophy at the European Graduate School and Professor Emeritus, Columbia University. Lotringer founded *Semiotext(e)* the influential journal for which Pat Steir was a founding board member.

About the Artist

Born in Newark, New Jersey in 1940, Pat Steir was among the first wave of women to gain prominence in the New York art world. Before moving to New York, she studied art and philosophy at Boston University and received her BFA from the Pratt Institute in 1962. In 1963, The High Museum in Atlanta invited Steir to participate in a group show. The next year, her work appeared in shows at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

In the 1970s, Steir taught art at Parsons School of Design, Princeton University, and at the California Institute of the Arts, where Ross Bleckner and David Salle numbered among her students, followed by an appointment at the School of Visual Arts, New York, where Amy Sillman was among her students. In the mid-1970s, Steir also garnered critical acclaim for her canvases featuring iconographic elements crossed out with "X" figures. Prominent among these symbols were roses, inspired by Shakespeare's aphorism, "A rose by any other name would smell

as sweet” and Gertrude Stein’s retort, “A rose is a rose is a rose.” Of these acts of effacement, the artist explains: “I wanted to destroy images as symbols. To make the image a symbol for a symbol. I had to act it out—make the image and cross it out.” While inspired and influenced by figures such as Sol LeWitt and Cage, she endeavored to find her own praxis that synthesized aspects of Conceptual art, French philosophy, and East Asian aesthetics and thought. In the mid-1970s, she began to create room-size installations which led, in 1998, to the creation of *Likity Split* and *Ghost Moon Mountain Water* for the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, respectively. It was during these years that she served as a founding board member of Printed Matter, *HERESIES: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics*, in circulation from 1977-1992, and *Semiotext(e)*.

Pat Steir: Kairos is presented during the 40th anniversary year of *HERESIES*. Beyond being a founding member of the HERESIES Collective, Steir contributed poetry to the publication. Poetry has served as a continuing influence on the artist. “I’m walking a thin line between image and not image, between flat and deep space. I want to help the viewer see the picture. And the poetry of the title is part of the picture for me, it’s absolutely the same thing.”

Over the course of her career, Steir has exhibited in myriad museums and other venues worldwide. Her most recent retrospective, *Drawing Out of Line*, traveled from the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, to the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York in 2010. Other important exhibitions include: the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (1996, 1994); the Centre National d’art Contemporain de Grenoble (1992); and the Musée d’art Contemporain, Lyon (1990). In 1988, *Pat Steir Prints 1976 - 1988* opened at the Cabinet des Estampes, Musée d’art et d’histoire, Geneva, and traveled to the Tate Gallery, London. In 1984, the Brooklyn Museum organized *Pat Steir: The Brueghel Series (A Vanitas of Style)*, which traveled to the Dallas Museum of Art; the Centre d’art contemporain, Palais Wilson, Geneva; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Des Moines Art Center; and the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague, among other venues.

Steir’s paintings, drawings, prints, and installations reside in the permanent collections of major international museums including: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art,

Washington, D.C; the Fondation Cartier, Paris; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; the Louvre, Paris; the Denver Art Museum; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the Tate Gallery, London.

In addition to lecturing at museums and universities, Steir has received several major awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship (1982) and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (1976, 1973). In 1991, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Art from the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York, and, in 2001, she received the Boston University School for the Arts Distinguished Alumni Award. In 2016, Steir was awarded the U.S. Department of State's Art in Embassies 2017 International Medal of Arts Award.

On November 6, 2017, Pat Steir will be among a group of artists The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden will honor in New York City for their influence and contributions.

About Lévy Gorvy

Lévy Gorvy cultivates a program devoted to innovation and connoisseurship in the fields of modern, postwar, and contemporary art. Formed by Dominique Lévy and Brett Gorvy, Lévy Gorvy maintains gallery spaces at 909 Madison Avenue in New York, expanded in January 2017, and in Mayfair, London, inaugurated in 2015. The gallery fosters continued dedication to the living artists and artists' estates it represents and pursues a robust program of exhibitions and multidisciplinary events. Lévy Gorvy produces ongoing art historical research and original scholarship, publishing exhibition catalogues, monographs, and other key publications.

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