

# MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

## LEON KOSSOFF: *A Life in Painting*

January 13 – March 5, 2022

Opening Reception: Thursday, January 13, 6 – 8 PM

534 West 26<sup>th</sup> Street, New York



Mitchell-Innes & Nash, Annely Juda and L.A. Louver are delighted to announce *Leon Kossoff: A Life in Painting*, a major touring retrospective of paintings by seminal British artist **Leon Kossoff** (1926 – 2019) that will open in London in September 2021 and travel to New York and Los Angeles in January 2022. Comprising 58 works, this touring show will be the first posthumous and largest exhibition of Kossoff's paintings in a commercial setting to date, and coincides with the publication of *Leon Kossoff: Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings* by Modern Art Press. The exhibition is curated by Andrea Rose, former Director of Visual Arts at the British Council and editor of the catalogue raisonné.

*Leon Kossoff: A Life in Painting* will be the third collaborative exhibition of works by Leon Kossoff organized in partnership between Mitchell-Innes & Nash (New York), Annely Juda Fine Art (London), and L.A. Louver (Venice, CA). Previous traveling exhibitions co-presented by the three galleries include *Leon Kossoff: Recent Works 1999 - 2010* (2010-2011) and *Leon Kossoff: London Landscapes* (2013-2014).

For the New York leg of the traveling exhibition, Mitchell-Innes & Nash will present 16 paintings by the artist, ranging in date from 1963 to 1993.

Leon Kossoff is recognised as one of the world's greatest Post-War figurative painters with an appreciation of life's everyday activities, finding poignancy and beauty in seemingly mundane urban settings. Born to a family of Jewish immigrants from Ukraine in Central London, his childhood was centered in his working-class experiences helping with his father's bakery, and then serving in the British military in the 1940s. Following his return to London, Kossoff attended St. Martin's School of Art, though he supplemented his studies attending David Bomberg's classes at Borough Polytechnic, where he was instructed to focus on experiences rather than just appearances.

Together with the artists Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach, Michael Andrews, and R.B. Kitaj, Kossoff became known in the late 1970s as part of the "School of London." Having lived his lifetime in London (from which he rarely traveled), his paintings of his native city are rendered with the familiarity of a close friend. Complicated, sometimes bleak, but always vital and teeming with activity, Kossoff's paintings reflected London's transformation, stretching from post-war desolation to international affluence towards the end of the 20th century.

"What makes Leon's works so singular, and indeed so contemporary, is that they give new life to the notion of representational painting," said exhibition curator and editor of the catalogue raisonné Andrea Rose. "We see in them the interplay between external reality and internal perception freshly achieved. Kossoff doesn't just perceive the world around him, he regenerates it. There's a thrill to it, the ordinary made momentous. 'Perhaps', as he said, 'everything is beautiful.'"

Spanning sixty years, *Leon Kossoff: A Life in Painting* casts light on some of the key moments in Kossoff's career. From post-war bomb and construction sites, to crowded swimming pools, churches, Underground

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stations and the restless bustle of street life, the paintings passionately chart over half a century of change and development, mostly centered by the London neighbourhoods of Dalston, Willesden, Kilburn and Whitechapel. What makes Kossoff's paintings so contemporary is their interplay between observed reality and imaginative zeal, where, according to Kossoff, "all the differences amount to a sort of presence."

The exhibition concludes with some never-before seen paintings of the Arnold Circus area and Kossoff's own back garden. In addition to London landscapes, the exhibition includes portraits of the painter's mother and father, his wife Peggy (also known as Rosalind), the writer N. M. Seedo, his painter friend John Lessore, his faithful sitters Fidelma, Pilar and Cathy, as well as several self-portraits. In all these works, Kossoff searches for a way to bring myriad experiences together in a single image, every brushstroke telling the story of doubt and opportunity that went into their making, all of them threatening to dissolve into fleeting abstraction at any given moment. "That's what all painting is about," said Kossoff in a rare interview in 2010. "It's space and light occupied by human presences."

## Related Publications

The exhibition coincides with the forthcoming 30 September 2021 release of *Leon Kossoff: Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings*, the comprehensive 642-page account of the artist's paintings, edited by Andrea Rose and published by Modern Art Press, London.

Additionally, a fully illustrated 120-page exhibition catalogue, titled *Leon Kossoff: A Life in Painting*, will be co-published by Annelly Juda Fine Art, Mitchell-Innes & Nash and L.A. Louver, and will be available through the three galleries upon request.

## About Mitchell-Innes & Nash

Founded by Lucy Mitchell-Innes and David Nash, who previously headed the worldwide Contemporary and Impressionist & Modern Art divisions of Sotheby's, Mitchell-Innes & Nash places exemplary contemporary artists within a historical context, revealing a continuity of ideas and aesthetic virtuosity from the Modern era through the present day. Lucy Mitchell-Innes is also a member of the selection committee of Art Basel and a former president of the Art Dealers Association of America.

Mitchell-Innes & Nash's renowned exhibition program fosters excellence within artistic practice, while forging an informed dialogue between emerging and established internationally recognized artists. From acclaimed surveys of 20th century masters, such as Jean Arp, Anthony Caro, Nancy Graves, Willem de Kooning, Leon Kossoff, Kenneth Noland, Roy Lichtenstein, and Nicolas de Stael, to solo exhibitions of Sarah Braman, Keltie Ferris, Daniel Lefcourt, Eddie Martinez, Pope.L, Martha Rosler, and Jessica Stockholder, Mitchell-Innes & Nash has proven expertise in both advancing the careers of emerging artists and maintaining the superior standard set by established artists.

**Image credit:** Leon Kossoff, *King's Cross, March Afternoon*, 1998, oil on board, 58 ¼ by 78 3/8 in. (147.5 by 198 cm). © The Artist's Estate. Courtesy Annelly Juda Fine Art, London; Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York; and LA Louver, Los Angeles.

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