

An abstract painting of a face, rendered with thick, expressive brushstrokes in a wide array of colors including yellow, orange, red, blue, green, and purple. The face has large, dark, circular eyes and a wide, open mouth showing a row of white teeth. The background is a dense, chaotic mix of these colors, creating a sense of intense energy and emotion.

Peder

Lucas
Samaras

Angry Beauty

September 17 - November 5, 2022

Lund



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
Untitled
December 26, 1984
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
Untitled
December 27, 1984
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
Untitled
December 28, 1984
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
Untitled
December 28, 1984
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
Untitled
December 31, 1984
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
The Art Critic
December 31, 1984
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
Untitled
January 6, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
The Political Artist
January 7, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
The Collector
January 16, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
Untitled
January 18, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
The Collector
January 18, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
The Collector
January 19, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
The Collector
March 19, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
Untitled
March 30, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
Untitled
May 21, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
Untitled
June 10, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



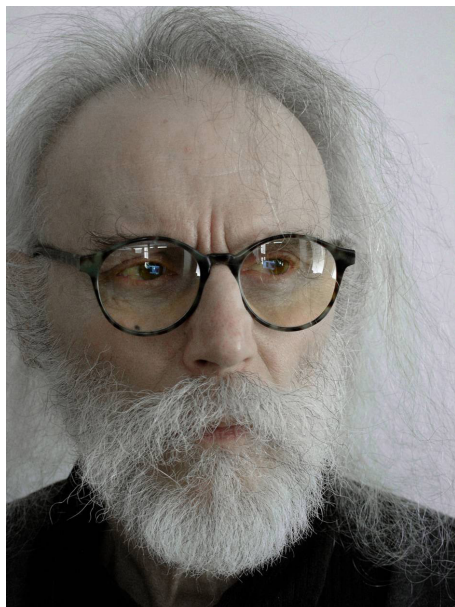
Lucas Samaras (1936-)
Untitled
June 12, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
Untitled
June 27, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
36 x 24 in./ 91.4 x 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 x 26 1/8 x 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 x 66 x 2.5 cm



Lucas Samaras (1936-)
Untitled
June 27, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 in./ 91.4 × 61 cm
Framed: 38 1/8 × 26 1/8 × 1 5/8 in./ 96.8 × 66 × 2.5 cm



Peder Lund is proud to announce its third exhibition with the Greek-American artist Lucas Samaras (b. 1936). The vastly productive sculptor, photographer, painter, filmmaker, writer, and performance artist has worked in such diverse materials as Polaroid film, acrylic and oil paint, pastel, aluminum, bronze, clay, fabric, precious metals and stones, razor blades, and pins. Across this large variety of media, he has managed to maintain a distinctively characteristic stylistic expression over the past six decades, regardless of contemporaneous artistic tendencies. The exhibition *Lucas Samaras: Angry Beauty* will feature a suite of nineteen acrylic on canvas works all completed between December 1984 and June 1985. These masterworks have never been shown before, and the exhibition is a product of a direct dialogue with the artist to finally bring these paintings to light. The exhibition opens on September 17th and continues through November 5, 2022.

Born in Greece in 1936, Samaras grew up amidst the turmoil and violence of foreign occupation during World War II and the ensuing Greek Civil War. He immigrated to the United States when he was 11, settling in New Jersey. He won a scholarship to study art at Rutgers University, enrolling in 1955, at a time when the Rutgers art department was a hotbed of innovation, with a faculty that included Alan Kaprow, who organized the first Happenings, and Geoffrey Hendricks, who, along with Kaprow, George Segal, Roy Lichtenstein, and students like Robert Whitman, was instrumental in the Fluxus movement. Upon graduation, Samaras received a fellowship to attend Columbia University's graduate department of art history, which afforded him the chance to get involved with New York City's burgeoning Happenings scene, where he met artists such as Jim Dine and Red Grooms. His interest in performance also led him to study acting with Stella Adler.

Since he began to make independent work in the late 1950s, self-representation has remained a core concern. "Some artists reject autobiography and psychology," he has said. "I try to keep them with me, no matter how embarrassing they are." Whether it be paintings or other installational works, the style of expression and aesthetic of





Samaras's art – from Minimalism, New Painting, Environmental Art, Assemblage, to Body Art – reflect all of the major art movements after 1960. This is partly the result of Samaras living and working in New York City in the 1960's, a particularly unique and creatively fertile environment. But in Samaras's case, this variegated development never came about as a result of his works being in search of content, but as a result of the content and his message, as part of the process of searching for self-identity, needing variety of expression.

Samaras's first New York exhibition was held at Reuben Gallery in 1959 and earned him rave critical reviews. Samaras debuted his assemblage boxes in 1961 at Green Gallery, New York. For the artist, the boxes possessed elements of sculpture, architecture, and painting, amplified by the inclusion of objects such as mirrors and photographs – additions that situated Samaras as one of the earliest artists to emphasize his ego and corporeal self in his art. His early boxes led to his inclusion in his first institutional group show, *The Art of Assemblage*, held at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1961.

Among contemporary artists, Samaras was the first to exhibit his studio in public, transferring it entirely from New Jersey to rebuild it inside the Green Gallery in New York. The work, entitled *Room #1*, dates to 1964 and shows, as frozen, the place that had been his bedroom and studio for 14 years. In this small 2 × 4 meter room, there are paintings, sculptures, personal objects, his bed, his clothes, his books, sketches, and personal reflections. For Samaras, the work is





configured as a sort of huge sculpture, an autobiographical collage that contains the essence of the artist, his present and his past. For its subsequent influence on the art world, the piece marked a capital moment in the history of art. Samaras spoke of the work in a 1966 interview with Artforum saying:

The idea, I suppose, was basically simple: a lot of artists have done the artist's studio, their studio; Van Gogh did his bedroom; I made an entire room in the Green Gallery. At that time, people were doing environmental things; Segal used furniture and plaster people, or Oldenburg used a bedroom set; and Kienholz had used furniture and other stuff. But none of them was really concerned with a complete environment, where you could open the door, walk in, and be in a complete art work.... Also, I was aware of this thing being done with dead artists. I mean, Brancusi's studio, let's say, was recreated in the Musée d'Art Moderne....¹ But I wanted to do this when the artist, me, would still be a young man, you know; they wouldn't have to wait for me to be old. I was sort of giving myself the honor and at the same time giving the audience the gift of myself, of as complete a picture as possible.²

The immersive *Room No. 2* would be produced by the artist in 1966. Also referred to as *Mirrored Room*, it was his first installation to become a part of a museum collection, acquired in 1966 by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. Samaras received his first major solo exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1969, which was followed by his first international museum exhibition, held at the Kunstverein Museum in Hanover (1970). By the mid-1970s, he had also



received his first large-scale commission for which he produced *Silent Struggle* (1976), a sculpture comprised of Cor-ten steel, initially installed at the Hale Boggs Federal Courthouse in New Orleans.

In Samaras's work, there is a fusion between art and life, that is represented without veils. Almost all of his artistic career is introspective, autobiographical, and self-referential: from the time of his film *Self* (1969); his *Autopolaroids* (1970-71); his *Photo-Transformations* (1973-76); and his *Sittings* (1980), the presence of the artist is the leitmotif of his work. In his morally didactic allegorical "portraits" of art-world types – curators, patrons, spectators, critics – Samaras offers fantasy images that psychodramatically strip specimens to a spiritual, pathological essence that was not seen in such essentialized imagery since Jean Dubuffet's portraits from the 1950s. Painting with a relentless, expressionistic verve, Samaras achieves a sense of starkness and emotional rawness once offered by the likes of Goya and Van Gogh; Samaras continues and carries to an extreme their modernist project of existential revelation. He creates pictures that reveal the innermost secret of his art and which demonstrate a kind of modern "heroism": his art is a kind of heroic madness, the madness innate in life.



Samaras's self-involvement and eclectic output have made him an unusually elusive figure despite his fame, however, his work was and continues to be vastly influential to artists like Yayoi Kusama, Carl Andre, Franz West, and Felix Gonzalez-Torres. In the art world of the late 1950s and 1960s, galleries and artist run spaces were fewer and smaller affairs, allowing for cross-culturation of artists like Miles Forst, Jean Follett, Myron Stout, and Hans Hofmann, whose handling of color Samaras was particularly impressed by.³ Andy Warhol once recalled Samaras as being part of a fledgling rock band he tried to join in the 1960s that included Claes and Patti Oldenburg, Jasper Johns, La Monte Young, and Walter De Maria. In the same vein of artistic exchange in the New York art scene of the 50s and 60s, one can see an obvious dialogue in the 1980s Neo-Expressionist paintings of a figure like Jean-Michel Basquiat and the work of Lucas Samaras.



Since the tumultuous 1960's, when artists as disparate as Warhol and Robert Smithson helped broaden the boundaries of art by challenging its accepted hierarchies, the medium in which an artist chooses to work has seemed less important than what that artist makes of it. But while many artists of the last 50 years, from Robert Rauschenberg to Sherrie Levine, have worked in several mediums during their careers, Samaras is an extreme example of the contemporary tendency to play in many fields of expression at once. The riotous multiplicity of means he uses is not inconsequential, nor is it accidental. "For Samaras, to be modern means to be hybrid: to recognize that there is no privileged style or medium among the many that constitute the affluence of modern art," the American art critic Donald Kuspit wrote in one of three essays found in the catalogue for the 1988 exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art, titled *Lucas Samaras: Objects and Subjects, 1969-1986*. This exhibition featured several works, in 1 to 12 panels, from the series *The Artworld Types*.

The element of Samaras's oeuvre that has probably received the least consideration is his paintings, however, in the nineteen paintings presented in the gallery, from the series *The Artworld Types*, Samaras achieves a kind of transcendent painterliness in the heads' intensity and serial nature. In these paintings, which the artist began in 1984, Samaras demonstrates a wildness and virtuosity beyond anything displayed in his pastels or photographs. He moves towards a radical new outspokenness of handling, which gives voice to the depths of his unconscious. The series *The Artworld Types* extends Samaras's subversive impulses onto the society that is reflected in the mirror. Using a skull image – linking his use of the X-ray photograph used



in his self portraits of the sixties and seventies — he portrayed patrons, critics, artists, viewers, and others of the art world. By doing so, Samaras depicts them as the living dead, declaring death to their masks of pretense. The images are attacked by being dismembered, but certain areas are also targeted narcissistically. For example, teeth are exposed mockingly, eyes are sunken in their sockets, and mouths are multiplied unsettlingly, all purposed for a dissimilating effect. The artists noted in 1985 in an interview with *The New York Times*:

I turned the sides of the mouth up, and it was like putting a key into a keyhole. It turned from a general character into a character type. It had a kind of horrible smile, one that wants to chop you up, that scares the daylights out of you. Somehow the word 'dealer' came through.⁴

Samaras's portraits keep the precarious balance between the stressed repetitions, which reflect Samaras's own self-torturing narcissism, and the violent abstractive methods which transcend the subjective world by means of denial. In presenting these once threatening monsters and elegantly grotesque clowns as a kind of demonic icon one might perhaps see in a Greek Orthodox church, Samaras tears down those within the world he himself occupies. He is perversely attached to them, however, simultaneously, wishes to free himself of their possessive power. The treatment of the paint — its wild application and extreme variation of color — as well as the horrifying visages themselves is perhaps the artist's attempt to burn them beyond recognition, thus, as Kuspit noted in 1986:



...destroying his own dependence — on patrons, speculators, critics, friends, even on artists whose failure brings his own success into doubt while throwing it into relief....His is an incendiary art, burning to death — purging the art world that is his necessary but reluctantly accepted mirror and arena.⁵

"There are times that art critics write something beautiful and elegant," Samaras noted in a 1985 New York Times interview. "But most of the time they are these horrible creatures. Monsters. Anybody who judges you is a monster. Anybody who says you exist or you don't exist is a monster."⁶



For their incisive critique against the oftentimes insipid nature of the art world and art collecting itself, it is amusing to note that a large multi-canvas work from *The Artworld Types* series is featured prominently in a scene from the 1987 film *Wall Street* starring Charlie Sheen as Bud Fox. In the scene, Fox has his apartment decorated with all of the latest trappings in 1980s high-end "yuppie" style, including gold leaf, faux brick wallpaper, and other expensive faux treatments. Throughout the film, artwork plays a key role, underscoring the characters' power. The film's antagonist, Gordon Gekko, is an avid collector, and some of the most memorable scenes feature impressive pieces from his collection, like a green and black Joan Miró painting that resides in his office, a Keith Haring wall work, a large painting by Jim Dine, several large sculptures by Robert Rauschenberg, and multiple paintings by Jean Dubuffet. In Bud's apartment, he and the interior decorator played by Daryl Hannah stop to admire Samaras's *The Collectors*; Bud refuses to commit to an answer when asked whether he liked the work. These pieces' inclusion in the film, in particular the painting by Samaras, is obviously meant to poke fun at the idea that exploded in the 1980s and has persisted ever since, of a kind of *nouveau-riche* sensibility towards collecting artworks almost like baseball cards, with no impulse to delve deeper into the respective artists' oeuvres. This can sometimes result in the purchasing of an art work, like *The Collectors*, which directly derides the purchaser, without even an awareness.



Work by Lucas Samaras is owned by some of the most respected institutions in the world, including the Art Institute of Chicago; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the Tate Gallery, London. The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York owns a stunning example from *The Artworld Types* series titled *The Patrons* (1985), among over 120 other photographs, paintings, and boxes by the artist. Before being acquired by the Whitney, *The Patrons*, along with two other recent paintings of Samaras heads, had been included in the *75th American Exhibition* at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1986. In 2004, the Whitney Museum mounted a major exhibition of the work of Samaras; titled *The Unrepentant Ego: The Self-Portraits of Lucas Samaras*, the show traced the development of Samaras's self-portrait leitmotif, from the late 1950s to the present. The exhibition was the first in an American museum in fifteen years, and the first major consideration of the artist's oeuvre in New York since 1972. The Metropolitan Museum, New York, has a particularly substantial holding of the artist's work and mounted a major exhibition of their collection in 2014.

Samaras has been the subject of numerous other solo exhibitions at institutions including the Museum of Modern Art, Chicago; Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, and Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo. His work has been represented at three editions of Documenta (1968, 1972, 1977); the Whitney Annual Exhibition (1965, 1968, 1970); and at the 1980 Venice Biennale. He represented Greece at the Venice Biennale in 2009. Samaras lives and works in New York.

List of notes:

- 1 Brancusi's studio has been reconstructed on the piazza opposite the Centre Pompidou, Paris.
- 2 "An Interview with Lucas Samaras," Artforum, October 1966.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Douglas C. McGill, "Interview of Lucas Samaras," The New York Times, Nov. 8, 1985
- 5 Donald Kuspit, *Lucas Samaras's Death Instinct* (exhibition catalogue). Athens: Jean Bernier Gallery, 1986: n.p.
- 6 "Interview of Lucas Samaras," The New York Times, 1985.

List of illustrations:

- 1 Portrait of Lucas Samaras.
- 2 Installation view, *75th American Exhibition*, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, 1986.
- 3 Lucas Samaras, *Room #1*, 1964.
- 4 Lucas Samaras, *The Collector*, March 19, 1985.
- 5 Lucas Samaras, *The Art Critic*, December 31, 1984.
- 6 Lucas Samaras, *Mirrored Room*, 1966. Collection Buffalo AKG Art Museum.
- 7 Francisco Goya, *A Pilgrimage to San Isidro*, 1819-23 (detail). Museo del Prado.
- 8 Lucas Samaras, *The Collector*, January 18, 1985.
- 9 Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Self-Portrait*, 1986. Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art.
- 10 Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, June 10, 1985.
- 11 *Wall Street* (still), 1987 directed by Oliver Stone.
- 12 Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, June 27, 1985
- 13 Lucas Samaras, *The Patrons*, 1985. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.