

Winter/Spring 2025 Exhibitions

Announcing solo exhibitions from Alex Katz and Dawn Cerny and a special artist intervention in the *Frye Salon*

Immersive and interactive presentations spark connections between visual art and performance

Seattle, WA
November 21, 2024

For its Winter/Spring exhibition program, the Frye Art Museum pairs solo exhibitions from New York painter Alex Katz and Seattle sculptor Dawn Cerny that create complementary dialogues about performance, theatricality, and visual art. Nationally touring *Alex Katz: Theater and Dance* is the first comprehensive museum presentation of Katz's extensive work with the performing arts. *Dawn Cerny: Portmeirion* presents a body of interactive sculptures newly created for the Frye presentation. Cerny's work spills into the adjacent *Frye Salon*, where a literal window will be opened between the two exhibitions. "This season, we invite Frye visitors to participate in holistic explorations of creative expression, both from the here-and-now of one of Seattle's preeminent contemporary artists as well as from one of the giants of twentieth-century visual culture," says Frye Executive Director Jamilee Lacy. "These exhibitions offer an opportunity to discover an unexplored aspect of a very well-known artist's career, and to rethink familiar museum spaces through an artist's eyes."



Dawn Cerny: Portmeirion

January 25–June 22, 2025

The Frye Art Museum is pleased to present *Dawn Cerny: Portmeirion*. In this solo exhibition, the Seattle artist (born 1979, Carpinteria, California) creates the illusion of a domestic space through her abstract yet functional sculptures, all made at a human scale from readily available components—what Cerny has called “preschool handicraft materials.” Visitors are invited to interact with her large-scale furniture pieces, newly created for the exhibition, which offer places to sit, rest, and reorient the body. The artworks’ bright, monochromatic paint surfaces elevate the perceived value of modest materials like plywood and cardboard, highlighting the role of artifice and theatricality in art and everyday life.

“Dawn Cerny revels in the theater of the home, exploring how we perform—intentionally or not—in our daily lives,” says curator Georgia Erger. The exhibition borrows its title from a faux Mediterranean village in North Wales, built in a mishmash of architectural styles. A tourist destination rather than a township, Portmeirion is an artificial, decorative structure with no specific purpose. The village has, however, served as a set for countless film and television productions, including the cult classic British series *The Prisoner* (1967). Portmeirion whimsically connects to the dual role of aesthetic pleasure and practical function at play in Cerny’s art. By softening the hard edges of the museum, the artist crafts a similar space, located at the intersection between art and routine existence.

Adorning the exhibition with rugs and translucent curtains, Cerny constructs a sense of domestic intimacy within the museum’s institutional architecture. *Portmeirion* opens a window into the adjacent *Frye Salon* exhibition. There, Cerny’s sculptures reside alongside paintings the museum’s founders, Charles and Emma Frye, lived with in their Seattle home. As Erger elaborates, “spilling into the *Frye Salon*, Cerny’s works facilitate the delightful prospect of intimately engaging or altogether ignoring the surrounding paintings—mirroring how we live with art in our own homes.”

Dawn Cerny: Portmeirion is organized by Georgia Erger, Curator.

Lead individual support provided by the Hayward-Hughes Family. Additional generous support provided by the Raynier Institute & Foundation and Frye Members.



Images: Dawn Cerny. From left: *Spider Web Trashcan I*, 2024. Wire, epoxy clay, enamel paint. 16 1/2 x 14 x 13 3/4 in. and *Kleenex Side-table for Simone Weil*, 2024. Wood, paint, cardboard, Aqua-Resin, epoxy clay, fiberglass, Kleenex. 28 x 30 x 14 in. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Dawn Cerny

Frye Salon + Dawn Cerny

January 25–June 22, 2025

Frye Salon features over one hundred paintings from the Frye’s collection hung floor to ceiling—a presentation referred to as salon style. The installation approximates the dramatic viewing experience enjoyed by visitors to Charles and Emma Frye’s Seattle home in the first decades of the twentieth century. The couple displayed the collection in private living quarters and in a purpose-built gallery attached to their house in First Hill.

Seattle artist Dawn Cerny stages her artworks in conversation with the *Frye Salon* to consider how we live with art. In the center of the gallery, the artist reimagines the nineteenth-century “gossip chair,” conjoined seats that facilitate intimate conversation. A window cut into the wall separating the two galleries further undermines the authority of the institutional architecture, offering unexpected sightlines that reshape our view of the museum space.

This intervention furthers the Frye’s ongoing repositioning of its Founding Collection, where invited contemporary artists experiment within the traditional collection display to reveal new perspectives and critical contexts.

Frye Salon + Dawn Cerny is organized by the Frye Art Museum.

Generous support provided by the Estate of Willis M. Kleinenbroich and Frye Members.



Alex Katz: Theater and Dance

February 22–June 8, 2025

The Frye Art Museum is pleased to be the first West Coast venue for *Alex Katz: Theater and Dance*, the first comprehensive exploration of Katz’s playful and inventive collaborations with choreographers, dancers, and members of avant-garde theater ensembles over six decades. The exhibition showcases rare archival materials, major sets and paintings, and previously unexhibited sketches from more than two dozen productions. In addition to presenting a range of works by innovators across the performing arts and poetry worlds, it spotlights fifteen productions that Katz produced with Paul Taylor, exploring a creative partnership that produced some of the most significant postmodern dance of the twentieth century. The exhibition, organized by the American Federation of Arts and Colby College Museum of Art, reveals how Katz’s singular creative sensibility lies in his spirited, iterative approach to theater and dance design and in fascinating crossovers between the artist’s studio and the stage.

Artworks from the show are drawn from the comprehensive Alex Katz holdings at the Colby College Museum of Art, home to a collection of nearly 900 works by the artist, and complemented by important sets and paintings from the artist’s collection, plus never-before-exhibited sketches and set pieces from Paul Taylor Dance Company, all attesting to the intertwined histories of painting and stage design in Katz’s works. This broad range of material, together with the insights of many Katz collaborators past and present, provides an innovative kind of retrospective: that of an artistic sensibility.

Alex Katz: Theater and Dance offers an unparalleled opportunity to experience Katz's designs and creative process. It demonstrates how the central qualities of Katz's art—his radical sense of scale and cropping, his unrivaled study of light and color, his eccentric imagination and sense of humor—have taken shape and been reflected across two dozen or more dance and theater productions in New York and beyond.

“As an audience member, we only get a brief glimpse at the creativity, ingenuity, and rigorous work behind each live performance,” says Pauline Forlenza, Director & CEO, American Federation of Arts. “*Alex Katz: Theater and Dance* showcases the deep and lasting influence visual artist Alex Katz had on the history of the American performing arts. Taking a look behind the curtain, museumgoers will see the interconnected nature of the visual and performing arts through the costumes, lighting, set design, props, and choreography Katz designed over the course of the last sixty years.”

PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by an exhibition catalogue produced by Rizzoli. The publication not only yields original scholarship on Katz but enriches histories of mid-twentieth century theater and dance in its deep research and comparative focus. Contributors include Charles Reinhart, a champion of modern dance, who writes about the textures of the Paul Taylor–Alex Katz creative partnership; David Salle, an acclaimed painter, writer, and set designer, who discusses the image and communication-focused design strategies that Katz adopted in distinction to his dance and theater design contemporaries; and Diana Tuite, a curator of modern and contemporary art who provides original research and indispensable context for Katz's varied engagements with theatrical productions. Entries for each production are supplemented by first-hand accounts of performances by Jennifer Tipton, an award-winning lighting designer and a stalwart of the Paul Taylor Dance Company, as well as by Alex Katz himself.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS

The American Federation of Arts is the leader in traveling exhibitions internationally. A nonprofit organization founded in 1909, the AFA is dedicated to enriching the public's experience and understanding of the visual arts through organizing and touring art exhibitions for presentation in museums around the world, publishing exhibition catalogues featuring important scholarly research, and developing educational programs.

Alex Katz: Theater and Dance is organized by the American Federation of Arts and Colby College Museum of Art. The exhibition is curated by Levi Prombaum, former Katz Consulting Curator, Colby College Museum of Art. The 2022 presentation was organized by the Colby Museum with curatorial guidance from Robert Storr.

The Frye Art Museum's presentation is organized by Georgia Erger, Curator, with Alexis L. Silva, Curatorial Assistant.

Generous support for the Frye's installation provided by Frye Members.



Image: Alex Katz. *Night: William Dunas Dance Company 4*, 1983. Lithograph in 13 colors on paper. 25 x 31 1/4 in. Colby College Museum of Art, gift of the artist, 1995.417. Photo: Peter Siegal, Pillar Digital Imaging LLC. © 2024 Alex Katz / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Courtesy American Federation of Arts

About the Frye Art Museum

Founded in 1952, the Frye is Seattle's only free art museum, bringing together art and new ideas within a stunning Olson Sundberg Kundig-designed building in historic First Hill. A founding collection of turn-of-the-century oil paintings is bolstered by a wide range of modern and contemporary art holdings, reflecting our region's evolving identity and a commitment to exploring the art of our time. Learn more at fryemuseum.org.

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