

Press Contacts

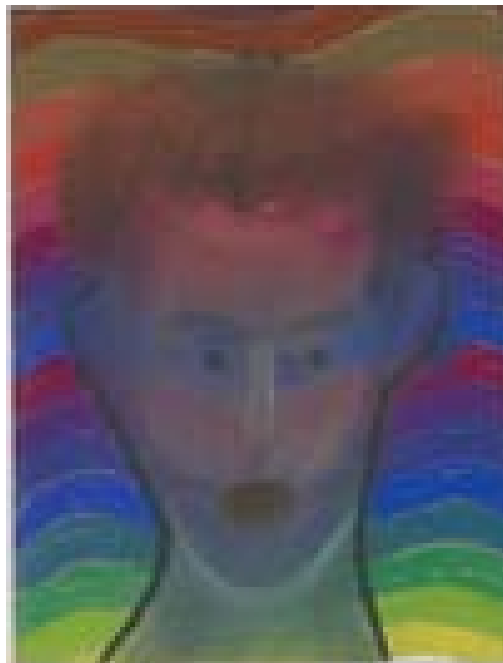
Michelle Perlin  
212.590.0311, mperlin@themorgan.org

Patrick Milliman  
212.590.0310, pmilliman@themorgan.org

## THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM TO HOLD EXHIBITION DEVOTED TO THE PASTELS OF LUCAS SAMARAS

*Dreams in Dust: The Pastels of Lucas Samaras*  
May 6 through August 21, 2016

**New York, NY, April 4, 2016** — During the first three decades of his long career, American artist Lucas Samaras (b. 1936 in Greece) turned to pastel to produce small, intimate works that explored themes present in his better-known paintings, sculptures, and installations. He was attracted to pastel's bright colors and shimmering surface, and also to the fact that it was an unfashionable medium in postwar American art. *Dreams in Dust: The Pastels of Lucas Samaras*, on view beginning May 6, celebrates the gift of forty-eight works to the Morgan from the artist and his dealer Arne Glimcher. Dating to the years 1958-1983, they range in subject matter from dreamlike seascapes and interiors to self-portraits, nudes, and still life. The installation of the exhibition was conceived in collaboration with the artist, who designed a wallpaper for it. The works will be presented in chronological order highlighting four successive phases of production. *Dreams in Dust* will remain on view at the Morgan through August 21.



Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, July 26, 1961, pastel on blue construction paper. The Morgan Library & Museum, Gift of Lucas Samaras and Arne Glimcher. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. © Lucas Samaras, courtesy Pace Gallery.

“The Morgan is delighted to present this exhibition of Lucas Samaras’s work in a medium noted for its vibrancy,” said Colin B. Bailey, director of the museum. “His pastels are extraordinarily diverse in subject and composition, and offer a highly personal look at the artist early in his career. We are deeply grateful to Lucas and to Arne Glimcher for their gift to the Morgan and for their involvement in this important exhibition.”

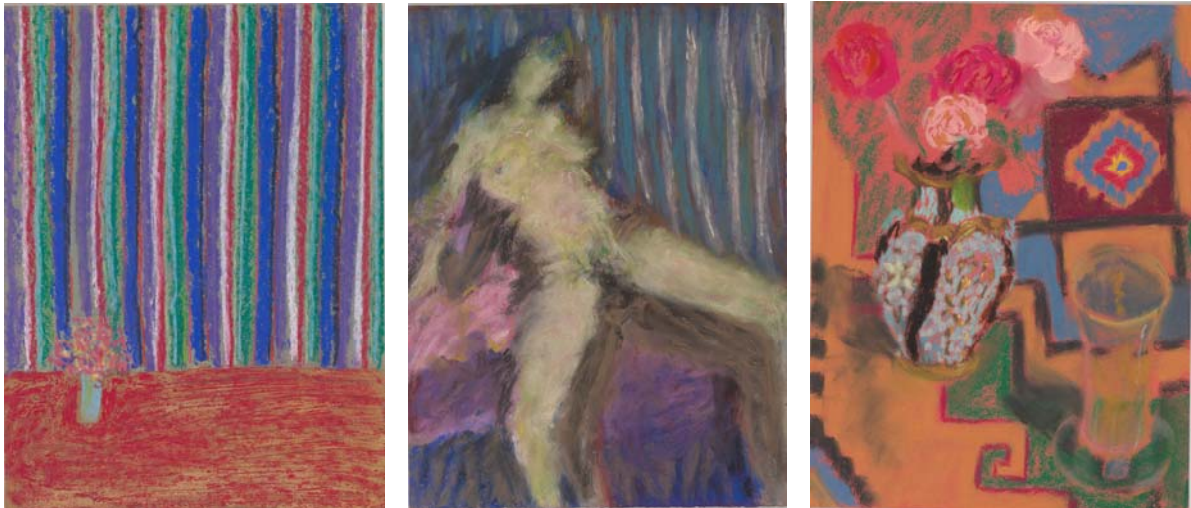
## THE EXHIBITION

### **1958–62: Early Pastels**

Samaras's earliest pastels, made on cheap, colored construction paper, reflect his love of patterns and rich color contrasts—especially deep blue and red. Their inspiration ranges from modern masters—notably colorists such as Henri Matisse and Hans Hofmann—to pornographic magazines. They also reflect Samaras's interest in theater with their imaginary scenes and stage-like compositions.

For Samaras, the shimmering effect of pastel—owing to the way the powdery substance catches the light from many directions—was as important as the vividness of its color. He recalled how during his childhood relatives who were in the fur business would bring back shiny fabrics from their travels. To recapture this fairy-tale atmosphere, the artist enhanced the jewel-like aspect of some of his early pastels with the addition of gold and silver metallic paint, which is apparent in his 1958 still life.

During this period Samaras was also taking classes at Stella Adler's acting studio, and became involved in loosely structured theatrical performances known as "Happenings" in lofts and



Left: Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, 1958, pastel and gold metallic paint on light green construction paper. The Morgan Library & Museum, Gift of Lucas Samaras and Arne Glimcher. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. © Lucas Samaras, courtesy Pace Gallery. Middle: Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, May 30, 1960, pastel on purple construction paper. The Morgan Library & Museum, Gift of Lucas Samaras and Arne Glimcher. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. © Lucas Samaras, courtesy Pace Gallery. Right: Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, July 16, 1961, pastel on red construction paper. The Morgan Library & Museum, Gift of Lucas Samaras and Arne Glimcher. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. © Lucas Samaras, courtesy Pace Gallery.



galleries. He also wrote plotless and irrational narratives though he never physically enacted them. He did, however, give visual form to some of these in his pastels—employing imagery associated with private fantasies, eroticism, and violence.

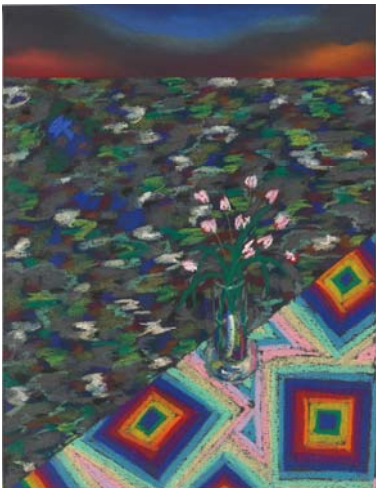
### 1965: Geometric Abstraction

In the 1960s Samaras's pastel work demonstrates engagement with the Pop Art and Minimalism movements through his use of close-up and geometric abstraction, though the small size of his compositions and the softness of the powdery pastel medium contrasts starkly with the large-scale, hard-edge aesthetic predominant at the time. Instead of a torchon, or stump, the traditional implement used for blending pastels, Samaras used his finger to achieve smooth color gradations. He considers this an advantage. " ... I didn't have to use a brush. I was using a finger. So there was a subtlety to the changes, there was a—it was almost a fog or something that emerged . . . there's a word for—the Italians use it: *sfumato*." A 1965 self-portrait of sorts depicts his own finger as a drawing implement.



### 1974: Vibrant Creativity

After a lapse of nine years, Samaras took up pastel again, creating one hundred works during the summer and early fall of 1974. Many include heavily patterned compositions combining interiors, flowers, and seascapes.



In the artist's seascapes dissolving figures eerily turn into hallucinations. In the left section of *Untitled*, August 14, 1974, two blue eyes peer at the viewer from the surface of the water.

### 1981–83: Psychological Intensity

Samaras's last phase of pastel production to date is dominated by self-portraits—of which he made approximately two hundred. The

Top: Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, June 2, 1965, pastel on black construction paper. The Morgan Library & Museum, Gift of Lucas Samaras and Arne Glimcher. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. © Lucas Samaras, courtesy Pace Gallery. Middle: Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, August 14, 1974, pastel on black bristol board. The Morgan Library & Museum, Gift of Lucas Samaras and Arne Glimcher. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. © Lucas Samaras, courtesy Pace Gallery. Bottom: Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, September 8, 1974, pastel on black bristol board. The Morgan Library & Museum, Gift of Lucas Samaras and Arne Glimcher. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. © Lucas Samaras, courtesy Pace Gallery.



Left: Lucas Samaras, *Chair with Figures #49*, June 7, 1981, pastel on black bristol board. The Morgan Library & Museum, Gift of Lucas Samaras and Arne Glimcher. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. © Lucas Samaras, courtesy Pace Gallery. Middle: Lucas Samaras, *Head #16*, June 19, 1981, pastel on black bristol board. The Morgan Library & Museum, Gift of Lucas Samaras and Arne Glimcher. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. © Lucas Samaras, courtesy Pace Gallery. Right: Lucas Samaras, *Head #142*, July 14, 1981, pastel on black bristol board. The Morgan Library & Museum, Gift of Lucas Samaras and Arne Glimcher. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. © Lucas Samaras, courtesy Pace Gallery.

broader palette and high-keyed colors applied in multiple layers create a rich texture while the expressionist handling—reminiscent of Van Gogh—heightens the psychological intensity of the images. In some of them a single eye in the center of the sheet stares at the viewer, epitomizing the hypnotic character of Samaras’s imagery.

### **ABOUT LUCAS SAMARAS**

Born in Kastoria, Greece, in 1936, Lucas Samaras immigrated to the U.S. in 1948, during the Greek Civil War. In the mid-1950s he enrolled at Rutgers University, then a hotbed of avant-garde experimentation, where he studied with Allan Kaprow.

In the 1960s, Samaras became known for his sculptures in which he transformed familiar objects, such as chairs and boxes, into artworks at once seductive and threatening with their combination of vivid colors, mirrors, pins, and knives. In 1966 he created one of the first immersive installations, a mirrored room that viewers could enter.

With the Auto-Polaroid and Photo-Transformation series of 1969 to 1976, photography became a central medium for Samaras, who produced dizzying images—typically featuring himself as a subject—by manipulating the surface of the film during development. Since 2001, he has continued his photographic experiments using digital technology to create haunting portraits.

Disguise, distortion, and transformation have remained at the core of his widely varied production, which, in addition to photography, encompasses painting, drawing, sculpture, films, videos, assemblages, and installations.

## **Public Programs**

### **GALLERY TALK**

#### **Dreams in Dust: The Pastels of Lucas Samaras**

*Isabelle Dervaux, Acquavella Curator and Department Head, Modern & Contemporary Drawings*

**Friday, May 13, 6:30 pm**

**Tickets:** All gallery talks are free with museum admission; no tickets or reservations necessary

### **ADULT WORKSHOP**

#### **Of Powder and Light: Pastel Fundamentals**

Join artist and Parsons Professor Ginger Levant for a workshop on the fundamentals of pastel drawing. Instruction will include application and color mixing of pastels along with color theory. The workshop will begin with a short visit of *Dreams in Dust: The Pastels of Lucas Samaras* followed by a demonstration. Participants will gain insight into ways color creates illusion of light, atmosphere and space.

**Friday May 27, 6–9 pm**

**Tickets:** \$25: \$20 for members. Limited availability, advance reservations recommended.

All materials will be provided.

### **FILM**

#### ***I Spend Time with Making: Lucas Samaras***

Directors: Tassos Rigopoulos and Joanna Yuen  
(72 minutes)

This documentary, a work in progress, sheds light on the life and work of Greek-born Lucas Samaras, called by some an ever-changing artist undefined by any one movement. It features interviews with the artist and those who know him most intimately, including Pace Gallery founder Arne Glimcher and noted art historian and critic Barbara Rose among others, set against a vivid backdrop of Samaras's own creations. The directors, Tassos Rigopoulos and Joanna Yuen will host a question and answer session following the screening.

**Sunday, June 5, 2 pm**

**Tickets:** Exhibition-related films are free with museum admission. Advance reservations for members only. Tickets are available at the Admission Desk on the day of the screening.

The exhibition *Dreams in Dust: The Pastels of Lucas Samaras* will be open for program attendees before and after the screening.



**GALLERY  
TALK**

**Dreams in Dust: The Pastels of Lucas Samaras**

Margaret Holben Ellis, Director of the Thaw Conservation Center  
Lindsey Tyne, Assistant Paper Conservator

**Friday, July 15, 1 pm**

**Tickets:** All gallery talks are free with museum admission; no tickets or reservations necessary

**Exhibition Catalogue**

The accompanying exhibition catalogue, *Dreams in Dust, the Pastels of Lucas Samaras* is ninety-six pages and includes sixty-nine color illustrations. The publication is by Isabelle Dervaux, Acquavella Curator of Modern and Contemporary Drawings at the Morgan with a contribution by Margaret Holben Ellis, Director of the Thaw Conservation Center and Lindsey Tyne, Assistant Paper Conservator at the Morgan.

**Organization and Sponsorship**

The exhibition is curated by Isabelle Dervaux, Acquavella Curator of Modern and Contemporary Drawings at the Morgan Library & Museum.

*Dreams in Dust: The Pastels of Lucas Samaras* is made possible with generous support from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation and Pace Gallery, with assistance from Nancy Schwartz and the Charles E. Pierce, Jr. Fund for Exhibitions. The catalogue is made possible by the Andrew W. Mellon Fund for Research and Publications.



The programs of the Morgan Library & Museum are made possible with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

**The Morgan Library & Museum**

A complex of buildings in the heart of New York City, the Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, music venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. A century after its founding, the Morgan maintains a unique position in the cultural life of New York City and is considered one of its greatest treasures. With the 2006 reopening of its newly renovated campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, and the 2010 refurbishment of the original library, the Morgan reaffirmed its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

The Morgan Library & Museum  
225 Madison Avenue, at 36th Street, New York, NY 10016-3405  
212.685.0008  
[www.themorgan.org](http://www.themorgan.org)