

galleria
raffaella
cortese

via a. stradella 4

kiki smith

the cat himself knows

PRESS RELEASE

february 17 – may 18, 2023
opening thursday, february 16, 6–8pm

Galleria Raffaella Cortese is delighted to present three solo exhibitions by renowned American artists Simone Forti, Joan Jonas, and Kiki Smith, opening on February 16, 2023. Each of their decades-long practices of experimentation across different media can be united through their common interests in and study of the human body, the animal kingdom, and movement as a vital force. Animals in particular have inspired a number of Simone Forti's works across photographs, drawings, and performances since the late 1960s; they have made appearances in nearly all of Joan Jonas' multimedia installations and have been the subject of countless drawings of hers; and finally, cats and pigeons are the main protagonists of the sculptures and drawings exhibited as part of Kiki Smith's latest show at the gallery.

Kiki Smith's fifth solo show with Galleria Raffaella Cortese, *The Cat Himself Knows*, presents for the first time a number of recent works by the acclaimed German-born American artist.

The Naming of Cats is a difficult matter,
It isn't just one of your holiday games;
You may think at first I'm as mad as a hatter
When I tell you, a cat must have THREE DIFFERENT
NAMES.
First of all, there's the name that the family use daily,
Such as Peter, Augustus, Alonzo, or James,
Such as Victor or Jonathan, George or Bill Bailey—
All of them sensible everyday names.
There are fancier names if you think they sound
sweeter,
Some for the gentlemen, some for the dames:
Such as Plato, Admetus, Electra, Demeter—
But all of them sensible everyday names,
But I tell you, a cat needs a name that's particular,
A name that's peculiar, and more dignified,
Else how can he keep up his tail perpendicular,
Or spread out his whiskers, or cherish his pride?
Of names of this kind, I can give you a quorum,
Such as Munkustrap, Quaxo, or Coricopat,

Such as Bombalurina, or else Jellylorum—
Names that never belong to more than one cat.
But above and beyond there's still one name left over,
And that is the name that you never will guess;
The name that no human research can discover—
But THE CAT HIMSELF KNOWS, and will never
confess.
When you notice a cat in profound meditation,
The reason, I tell you, is always the same:
His mind is engaged in a rapt contemplation
Of the thought, of the thought, of the thought of
his name:
His ineffable effable
Effanineffable
Deep and inscrutable singular name.

— T. S. Eliot, *The Naming of Cats*

When she started to develop her public art project for ArtLine Milano, in 2018, Smith first thought of pigeons, a quintessential presence in the city's most famous square, Piazza del Duomo, but it's a short walk away that the artist found the subject chosen for her two monumental bronze sculptures *Guardiane*. After seeing the cats living in the moat of Castello Sforzesco, Smith decided that they would be the protectors of the city. Following the unveiling of her *Guardiane* in 2022, Smith continued to work on the chosen subject – cats – in her series of drawings *Empath*. Feline figures are accompanied by pigeons, squirrels, trees, and abstract grids and lines, creating a polyphony of animals one can imagine inhabiting an urban landscape, a private home, or – in this case – the gallery itself. At the center of the exhibition space in via A. Stradella 4, a number of sculptures of cats and pigeons are instead joined by colorful figures of hands holding hearts, in an exchange of emotion and empathy between human and animal.

Kiki Smith's exhibition *Free Fall* at the Seoul Museum of Art, the artist's first solo exhibition in a public museum in Asia, is on view through March 12, 2023. Her solo show *From the Creek* is on view at the Albuquerque Museum, New Mexico, USA, through February 12, and a series of mosaics for the Grand Central Madison station in New York opened in late 2022.

BIOGRAPHY

Kiki Smith was born in 1954 in Nuremberg, Germany. She lives and works in New York.

Kiki Smith select solo exhibitions include: *Kiki Smith: Free Fall*, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul (2022); *Kiki Smith: From the Creek*, Albuquerque Museum, New Mexico (2022); *Inner Bodies*, Fondation Thalie, Brussels (2022); *Kiki Smith. Hearing You with My Eyes*, Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (2020); *Kiki Smith, Monnaie de Paris*, Paris (2019); *Kiki Smith: Procession* originated at the Haus der Kunst, Munich and traveled to the Sara Hildén Art Museum, Tampere, Finland and the Belvedere, Vienna (2018); Musée d'Art Moderne, Saint Etienne (2013); Brooklyn Museum, New York (2009); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2007); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2005); Museum of Modern Art in New York (2003).

Her work has been included in group exhibitions such as: *Nian Nian - The Power and Agency of Animal Forms*, Deji Art Museum of Jiangsu, Nanjing (2023); *Feminine power: the divine to the demonic*, The British Museum, London (2022); *Artists Need to Create on the Same Scale that Society Has the Capacity to Destroy: Mare Nostrum*, Venice Biennale, Complex of the Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Penitenti Fondamenta Cannaregio, Venice (2019); *The Moon – From Inner Worlds to Outer Space*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk and traveled to Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo (2019); *Like Life: Sculpture, Color, and the Body (1300–Now)*, The Met Breuer, New York (2018).

Smith's works are included in numerous prominent museum collections, such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Tate Gallery, London; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Her work has been included in five Venice Biennales (2019, 2017, 2009, 2005, 1993).