



Above: *Big Sur* in the series “Look Who’s Talking,” 2022 (“Sorted Books” project, 1993 – ongoing)

**Nina Katchadourian: *Sorted Books: Look Who’s Talking* and *What I Know About Magic***

On view November 18 – December 23, 2023 | EXiT

Opening reception: Saturday, November 18 from 3 – 5pm; artist talk at 4pm

**San Francisco:** On the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her “Sorted Books” project, Catharine Clark Gallery announces a special exhibition with Nina Katchadourian. The two most recent series in her “Sorted Books” project – “Look Who’s Talking” and “What I Know About Magic” – are on view November 18 – December 23, 2023 in EXiT, the gallery’s bookstore and space for artists’ editions and multiples.

In her project “Sorted Books” (1993 and ongoing), Katchadourian explores both institutional and personal libraries to create clusters of book titles that, when viewed together, form short phrases, stories, poems, or commentary. The resulting photographs ultimately serve as a portrait of the book collection or collector. Over many years, Katchadourian has explored both institutional and personal libraries, such as those of artist Isamu Noguchi, the writer William S. Burroughs, the rare book collections of the Delaware Art Museum (Delaware, MD) and the Morgan

Library & Museum (New York). A monograph of the *Sorted Books* project was published by Chronicle Books in 2013, marking the 20th anniversary of the ongoing project.



Above: *The Ways of White Folks* in the series “Look Who’s Talking,” 2022 (“Sorted Books” project, 1993 – ongoing)

Katchadourian’s exhibition features select photographs from the series “Look Who’s Talking” (2022), which debuted in the artist’s acclaimed solo museum exhibition, *Uncommon Denominator*, at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York, NY (February 10 – May 28, 2023). For “Look Who’s Talking,” commissioned by the Morgan, the artist delved into the institution’s Carter Burden Collection of American Literature. Amassed by the politician and arts patron between 1978 and 1995, these holdings reflect Burden’s interest in both high and low literary traditions. (Fourteen works from Katchadourian’s “Look Who’s Talking” series have entered the Morgan’s permanent collection.)

“I loved finding a paperback detective novel with a provocative title beside an archival box housing a letter from John Steinbeck,” Katchadourian writes of her explorations in the collection. “Burden often sought out every edition of a given title, and I sometimes took advantage of his ‘repeats’ to construct groupings featuring a reiterated word or phrase.”



Above: *More Magic* in the series “What I Know About Magic” 2022 (“Sorted Books” project, 1993 – ongoing)

In conversation with this series, the gallery presents select photographs from “What I Know About Magic” (2022). Commissioned by Brown University to create a new artwork for Friedman Hall, Katchadourian spent several years working with the H. Adrian Smith Collection of Conjuring and Magicana, held in the John Hay Library.

One of the preeminent private collections of magic in the world, it was bequeathed to the university by Smith (Class of 1930), who performed magic to help pay for his tuition at Brown. While the Smith Magic Objects Collection includes a great variety of items, from homemade props and wands to coins and commemorative Houdini busts, Katchadourian worked with the collection’s immense number of rare books—over 5,000—and created twenty photographs, twelve of which were chosen for display at Friedman Hall.

Katchadourian says of “What I Know About Magic:” “The books in the H. Adrian Smith Collection were fascinating historically, but also aesthetically: there were thick, gilded, leather-bound volumes from the late 19th century as well as slim paper booklets from the 1940s and 50s that often-provided instructions on how to perform just one trick. Magicians seem to be particularly playful in their use of language for the titles of their publications, and since my project focuses so much on language, it was utterly delightful to respond to these authors’ linguistic tricks with a few of my own.”

**Join us for an opening reception on Saturday, November 18 from 3 – 5pm, with an artist talk at 4pm. On Saturday, December 23, the gallery hosts a special holiday party and magic performance by Andrew Evans of The Magic Patio; details TBA.**