

Nina Katchadourian



# THE LANTERN

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## New Columbus Museum of Art Exhibition Brings A Story of Survival to Life

Interdisciplinary artist Nina Katchadourian's new exhibition, inspired by the true story of the Robertsons family's 38 days adrift at sea, went on view Saturday.

"To Feel Something That Was Not of Our World" will be on display at the Pizzuti Collection of the Columbus Museum of Art through April 24, 2022, according to the Columbus Museum of Art's website. Katchadourian said she first heard about the Robertson family's harrowing voyage and eventual rescue after a pod of orcas sank their sailboat in 1972 through the bestselling book "Survive the Savage Sea," written by Dougal Robertson, when she was a child.

Last year, she said she decided to reach out to Douglas Robertson, the oldest son, to create an exhibition featuring his family's story.

“He agreed not only to be interviewed once or twice, but needed to speak to me every day for 38 days, which corresponded to the 38 days that his family had been cast adrift,” Katchadourian said.

Katchadourian estimated she and Douglas Robertson spoke for upwards of 50 hours in total and said their audio interviews play a fundamental role in the exhibition.

“As viewer, you move through the same 38 days along with them and follow along with how they catch fish, how they invent ways of catching sea turtles and getting water, and what they talk about, and the tools they invent, and all kinds of different feelings they have, and the storms they survive,” she said.

The first thing attendees will see when entering the exhibition is a short film, created by Katchadourian, giving viewers the backstory behind the Robertson family’s voyage. She said the video gives viewers the chance to hear about parts of the story through Douglas Robertson’s voice.

Although Katchadourian said film and audio play an important role in the exhibition, it is not limited to these art forms. “To Feel Something That Was Not of Our World” features several different artistic mediums, including drawings and newspaper articles, as well as to-scale replicas of one of the orcas that sank the family’s ship and every creature they caught and ate while stranded at sea, she said.

Though it is unlikely any of the exhibition’s attendees will have gone through the same struggles as the Robertson family, Katchadourian said she feels the pandemic has made the exhibition more relevant now than ever before.

“It’s a project that I timed around the circumstance of COVID, because all of us have been kind of shipwrecked in this weird way, individually and collectively, during the last year and a half,” she said. “It sort of felt like a good time to think about this story. It’s a story about how you adapt, how you

survive and how you make judgements under really weird circumstances to a life that has completely changed from underneath you.

The Pizzuti Collection, currently housing Katchadourian's exhibition, was founded by Ron and Ann Pizzuti, who are internationally recognized for their commitment to supporting contemporary artists, according to the Columbus Museum of Art's website.

"It's a space that is really dedicated to contemporary art practice," Tyler Cann, director of exhibitions at the museum and the Pizzuti Family Curator of Contemporary Art, said. "We haven't really programmed much historical work in there. We do see it as, you know, a sort of laboratory space."

"To Feel Something That Was Not of Our World" is presented alongside "Bruce Robinson: Flutterby," an exhibition featuring the works of a Columbus-based artist and educator, according to the museum's website. Cann said these exhibitions are some of the first to be presented at the Pizzuti Collection building since the beginning of the pandemic.

We had some really great shows there, right up until the moment of the pandemic," Cann said. "We are really delighted to be reopening it with these two exhibitions."

"To Feel Something That Was Not of Our World" will be on display through April 24, 2022 at the Pizzuti Collection, located at 632 Park Street. Admission is \$5. More information can be found on the Columbus Museum of Art's website.

<https://www.thelantern.com/2021/08/new-columbus-museum-of-art-exhibition-brings-a-story-of-survival-to-life/>