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# LEON KOSSOFF A Life in Painting

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 2021

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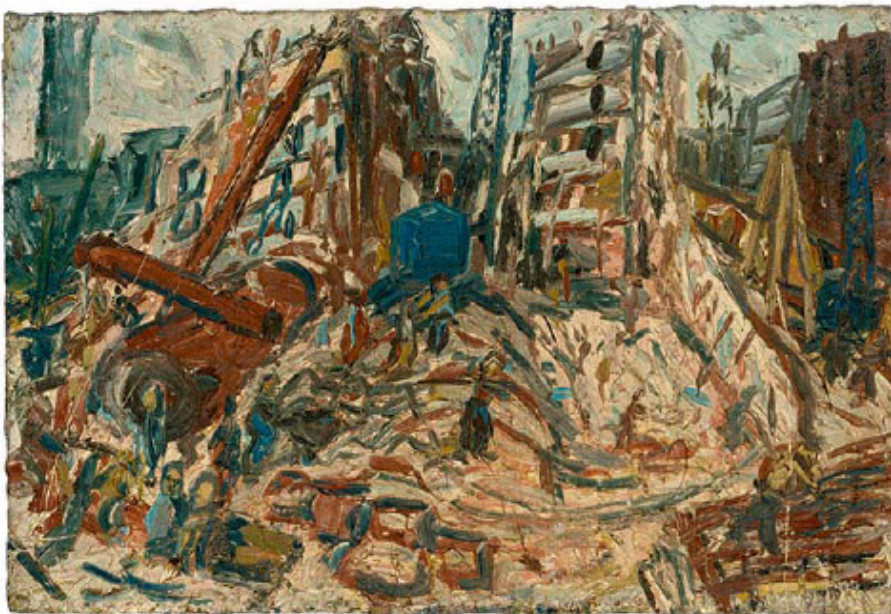
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*Self-portrait, 2005*

oil on board, 24 1/4 x 19 in (61.6 x 48.3 cm)



*Demolition of YMCA Building, No.2, Spring, 1971*

oil on board, 23 x 33 x 12 in (63.5 x 83.8 x 30.5 cm)

L.A. Louver is pleased to present *Leon Kossoff: A Life in Painting*, a major touring exhibition of paintings by the British artist Leon Kossoff (1926-2019), curated by Andrea Rose. The exhibition, which includes twenty paintings that span the breadth of the artist's career and represent his most celebrated subjects, has been organized in concert with the publication of *Leon Kossoff: Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings*.

L.A. Louver has represented Leon Kossoff since 1981. *A Life in Painting* will be the artist's seventh solo exhibition at the gallery, and the first posthumous solo exhibition. The exhibition travels to Los Angeles from Annely Juda Fine Art, London, and will be presented concurrently at Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York (13 January – 5 March 2022); it will also be the third collaborative exhibition of Kossoff's work shared by this trio of galleries, following *Leon Kossoff: London Landscapes* and *Leon Kossoff: Recent Works*, (2013-2014 and 2010-2011, respectively).

“Kossoff’s singularity – his ability to turn the ordinary circumstances of life into grand and momentous experiences – animates his work throughout ... It is as if he were fashioning a new sort of painting from earth and clay, and in a reversal of usual norms, turning abstraction into form rather than form into abstraction.”

– Andrea Rose, former Director of Visual Art at the British Council

One of Britain's most celebrated postwar artists, Kossoff's thickly layered impasto captures the changing landscape of his beloved London over nearly sixty years of close observation. Towering construction sites, crowded streets and tube stations, train tracks, and, in later years, tender portraits of one long-suffering urban tree evince the artist's deep affinity for his native city.

Kossoff captures the more intimate evolutions of longtime sitters and loved ones in candid portraits and classical reclining nudes. These are accompanied by a series of self-portraits completed over several

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*Cherry Tree in Spring*, 2015  
oil on board, 56 x 48 in (142.2 x 121.9 cm)

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decades that offer insight into the artist's own growth, both personal and formal. Early portraits, heavy in line and material, give way to airy, tender renderings in later years. Throughout, Kossoff seemingly wrests the figures from the painted surface, all of them threatening to dissolve into abstraction at any given moment.

The exhibition also includes two luminous paintings of subjects after Poussin, whose work Kossoff studied voraciously in the halls of The National Gallery, London. Both paintings radiate the bacchanalian energy of Poussin's originals while maintaining his compositional precision. Kossoff captures the dynamism of twisting bodies, the joy of revelry, and the energy of dancing figures in compositions full of vitality and pictorial rhythm, a modern distillation of Poussin's classical passions. Kossoff's artistic dialogue with Poussin is particularly poignant, as the gallery exhibition coincides with the opening of *Poussin and the Dance* at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (15 February – 8 May 2022). This association was previously celebrated in Los Angeles in 2000 with two museum exhibitions: *Poussin Landscapes by Kossoff* at J. Paul Getty Museum, and *Drawn to Painting and Leon Kossoff Prints and Drawings after Nicolas Poussin* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Leon Kossoff's deeply felt, intimate depictions of his beloved family, friends, and native London place him as one of the 20th century's most important figurative painters. Solo exhibitions worldwide include *Leon Kossoff: Drawing from Painting*, National Gallery, London, 2007; *Leon Kossoff: Selected Paintings, 1956-2000*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark, 2004- 2005 (traveled to Museum of Art Lucerne, Switzerland, 2005); a major retrospective at the Tate Gallery, London, 1996, and representing Britain in the XLVI Venice Biennale, 1995 (traveled to Düsseldorf Kunstverein, and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1995-1996). Kossoff's works can be found in important institutional collections worldwide, including Los Angeles County Museum of Art, J. Paul Getty Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Jewish Museum, New York, NY; Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Cleveland Museum of Art, OH; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Tate, National Portrait Gallery, British Council, British Museum, UK; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of Southern Australia, Australian National Gallery, Australia; Louisiana Museum, Denmark; Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Spain.

A fully illustrated catalogue, *Leon Kossoff: A Life in Painting*, has been published on the occasion of the exhibition and includes an introduction by curator Andrea Rose, former Director of Visual Art at the British Council.

*Leon Kossoff: Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings* is edited by Andrea Rose and published by Modern Art Press, London. It includes texts by Rose and Dr. Barnaby Wright (Deputy Head of The Courtauld Gallery and Daniel Katz Curator of 20th Century Art, The Courtauld), as well as an extensive chronology, exhibition history, public collections list, and selected bibliography.

For more information about or to purchase these publications, please contact L.A. Louver directly.