

TIBOR DE NAGY

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John Ashbery

Oh, What Fun!

September 5 to October 14, 2018



John Ashbery, *Dwelling-room of a room*, 2017, collage, 15 ½ x 21 inches

The Tibor de Nagy Gallery is pleased to present *Oh, What Fun!* an exhibition of John Ashbery's collages made from 2015 until his death in September 2017. This will be Ashbery's fourth solo exhibition at the gallery and his first at the gallery's Rivington Street location.

Oh, What Fun! consists of a group of works inspired, as with his previous collages, by Ashbery's long held fascinations, many since childhood, with cartoons, movies and other forms of popular culture. Much of the imagery and source material is culled from his personal trove of collections, such as board games, French puzzle plates, old postcards, and other treasured knickknacks that fill his homes in Manhattan and Hudson, New York. Ashbery became interested at a young age in surrealism, particularly the collage novels of Max Ernst and the work of Kurt Schwitters and Joseph Cornell. A more direct and collaborative influence was his friend Joe Brainard, at times making collages side-by-side with him in Brainard's house in Vermont and sharing found materials for future collages. Although Ashbery started making collages as an undergraduate at Harvard, with one appearing on the cover of the *Harvard Advocate* in 1948 (a collaboration with Fred Amory), he first publicly exhibited a single collage in a group exhibition at the Drawing Center in 1977, it is only in the past decade that his collages have become more widely known.

John Ashbery is recognized as one of the most important American poets of modern times, and his approach to poetry and collage follows parallel tracks. Often in an Ashbery poem, the sentences and phrases accumulate into abstract "collages" that cannot easily be paraphrased or explained. This practice of incorporating collage elements into his poetry began as far back as 1952. A more recent example of this creative process is the poem *They Knew What They Wanted* ([link](#)) composed of movie titles beginning with the word "They." Another earlier poem is *Hoboken*, published ca. 1953, subtitled (*A collage made from*

Roget's Thesaurus). In the poem *Daffy Duck in Hollywood* ([link](#)), Ashbery pulls together many disparate elements into a loose narrative. As fellow poet John Yau said in a recent interview with him: "In some ways, your Manhattan apartment and Hudson house are like the list in *Daffy Duck in Hollywood*, full of all kinds of things next to each other." To which Ashbery answers: "Yes, I'm firmly eclectic in these and in most things."

The exhibition also celebrates the poet's long association with the gallery and marks the 65th anniversary of the publication of Ashbery's first volume of poetry *Turandot and Other Poems*, which was published by the gallery's Tibor de Nagy Editions in 1953.

Concurrent with the gallery's show is a major exhibition of Ashbery's collages at the Pratt Institute's Manhattan Gallery ([link](#)) titled *John Ashbery: The Construction of Fiction*, which opens on September 20, and runs until November 14, 2018. This will be the most comprehensive exhibition of the poet's visual art to date, spanning seven decades of work and presenting over 120 collages and archival material. The exhibition is curated by Antonio Sergio Bessa, Director of Curatorial Programs at the Bronx Museum of the Arts. Bessa, who co-organized the recent Martin Wong exhibition at the Bronx Museum and the Gordon Matta-Clark exhibition at the Jeu de Paume, Paris, is a scholar of concrete and visual poetry and a translator of Brazilian poetry. A fully illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition.

A book on John Ashbery's collages and poetry was recently published by Rizzoli/Electa - *John Ashbery: They Knew What They Wanted, Poems and Collages*, edited by Mark Polizzotti, with an introduction and interview by John Yau.

John Ashbery (1927-2017) had more than thirty collections published in his lifetime. His *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1975) won the three major American prizes - the Pulitzer, the National Book Award, and the National Book Critics Circle Award. He served as executive editor of *Art News* and as an art critic for *New York* magazine and *Newsweek*. He was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he was a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets from 1988 to 1999. He received two Guggenheim Fellowships and was a MacArthur Fellow from 1985 through 1990. In 2012, Ashbery was awarded a National Humanities Medal by President Obama.

About Tibor de Nagy:

Since its founding in 1950, Tibor de Nagy continues to play a significant role in contemporary American art. In June 2017, the gallery moved to the Lower East Side, joining Betty Cuninghame Gallery in a shared space at 15 and 11 Rivington Streets.

Tibor de Nagy Gallery presents exhibitions of such contemporary artists as Sarah McEneaney, Trevor Winkfield and Jen Mazza, as well artists from the Postwar second generation New York School. Its long history includes the first exhibitions of Carl Andre, Helen Frankenthaler, Jane Freilicher, Red Grooms, Grace Hartigan, Alfred Leslie, Fairfield Porter and Larry Rivers. The gallery's program continues to present a broad overview of contemporary art including recent exhibitions of Hannah Wilke, Francis Picabia, and Jess. This unique history has also fostered collaborations between poets and artists. The gallery was the first publisher of the poems of John Ashbery, Frank O'Hara, Kenneth Koch and James Schuyler.

Listings Information:

Tibor de Nagy Gallery is located at 15 Rivington Street on the Lower East Side
Tel: 212 262 5050. | Web: www.tibordenagy.com | Email: info@tibordenagy.com
Gallery Hours: Wednesday - Saturday 10am - 6pm, Sunday 12pm - 6pm

Social Media:

Join the conversation on social media by mentioning Tibor de Nagy and using the hashtags #JohnAshbery and #tibordenagy when posting. Facebook: Tibor de Nagy Gallery | Instagram: @tibordenagygallery | Twitter: @TiborDeNagy