

PRESS RELEASE



Dana Schutz, *Sea Group*, 2021
Oil on canvas, 238.8 x 238.8 cm
© Dana Schutz/ Courtesy of the artist, David Zwirner,
Thomas Dane Gallery and CFA Berlin
Photo by Maris Hutchinson

Dana Schutz: The Island

Curated by Courtney J. Martin

16 June 2024 – March 2025

Opening reception Sunday 16 June, 11 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Guided tour with artist Dana Schutz, curator Courtney J. Martin and The George Economou Collection Director, Skarlet Smatana, Sunday 16 June at 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

The George Economou Collection is pleased to announce *The Island*, the first exhibition by American artist Dana Schutz (b. 1976) in Greece.

Across three floors of gallery space, the exhibition will feature salient works spanning more than twenty years, from Schutz's first mature paintings completed in the early 2000s to a composition finished this year, offering an unparalleled survey of the developments in her style. Throughout her career, the artist's work has stood in significant contrast to many others of her generation who took up the positions of American abstraction and minimalism or hewed towards the material concerns traditionally associated with sculpture. Her early affinity for figuration—whether single subjects, small, enmeshed groups, or expansive “crowdscape”—placed her at the forefront of the reemergence of representation in contemporary painting. Schutz's fantastic images, characterized by intense gestural maneuvers and vigorous colors, feature brushwork and a palette that have evolved in tandem with her work's increasingly intricate scope and broad scale. *The Island* brings together a concise group of fifteen paintings and five works on paper that demonstrate how the artist's skills have shifted and progressed, particularly over the last several years. The convergence of these mediums will shed light on the relationship between her approach to the monochrome format of charcoal drawing and the use of color in her paintings.

The exhibition title is a playful nod to both the show's location—Greece's geography comprising thousands of islands—and the visual motif of isolated figures that recurs throughout the artist's body of work beginning with the earliest paintings on view. In *Daughter* (2000), a single female figure in three-quarter length appears against a blue background. Schutz has resisted claiming that her images are either self-portraits or depictions of other specific individuals, largely due to the easy assumption that all of her figuration is a self-representation. As a counterpoint, *Swimming, Smoking, Crying* (2009) presents the head of an anonymous woman enacting the titular trio of verbs to equally comic and dramatic effect. Schutz's consummate ability to propose but not foreclose the possible meaning of her lone figures is evident in both early works—*Sneeze* (2001) and *Face Eater* (2004)—and later ones, such as *To Have a Head* (2017). Schutz's cropped bodies within tight framings focuses the viewer's eye on the way the face manifests action, whether it be the improbability of a head consuming itself or a very ordinary bodily function, like a sneeze.

For some years, Schutz has made works on paper that equal the dynamism of her paintings. The second floor of the exhibition juxtaposes a small group of charcoal drawings, including *Sleeping Head* (2024), with a group of oil paintings. While these works are not in direct correlation, Schutz's signature handling of faces and the complex emotions they might convey or inspire is a common touchstone, as evinced by the visages in *To Have a Head* alongside those in drawings such as *The Philosopher* and *Bowler* (both 2015). Their relationships to one another invite a comparison of the ability to render emotion within compositional depth regardless of medium that has become a mainstay of the artist's style.

Throughout the exhibition, Schutz's paintings of single figures are in conversation with group scenes. *The Island* includes examples of the latter from the early 2000s, such as the motley protesters of *Fanatics* (2005), in addition to the more recent *Sea Group* (2021), an ascending mass of bodies above a loose pile of bones. In the years that separate the two, Schutz's paintings point to the artist's ever-increasing understanding of how the individual becomes a part of a group and, in turn, how the group becomes a teeming, volatile crowd. The canvases' large-scale, rich coloration and rigorously worked surfaces draw the exhibition to a complex close.

Dana Schutz: The Island is curated by Courtney J. Martin in close collaboration with the artist and Skarlet Smatana, the director of the George Economou Collection. A publication with essays by Martin, art historian and writer Bice Curiger, and painter Andy Robert will accompany the exhibition.

Notes to Editors

Courtney J. Martin is currently the Paul Mellon Director of the Yale Center for British Art (YCBA) at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. In the summer of 2024, she will become the executive director of the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation in New York. Previously, she was the deputy director and chief curator at the Dia Art Foundation; an assistant professor in the History of Art and Architecture department at Brown University; and an assistant professor in the History of Art department at Vanderbilt University. Martin also worked in the media, arts, and culture unit of the Ford Foundation in New York. In 2015, she received an Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant.

In 2012, Martin curated the exhibition *Drop, Roll, Slide, Drip . . . Frank Bowling's Poured Paintings 1973–78* at Tate Britain. In 2014, she co-curated the group show *Minimal Baroque: Post-Minimalism and Contemporary Art* at Rønnebæksholm in Denmark. From 2008 to 2015, she served as co-leader of a research project on the Anglo-American art critic Lawrence Alloway at the Getty Research Institute and was co-editor of *Lawrence Alloway: Critic and Curator* (Getty Publications, 2015), which won the 2016 Historians of British Art Book Award. In 2015, she curated a comprehensive exhibition on Robert Ryman for Dia, where she also oversaw exhibitions of works by Dan Flavin, Sam Gilliam, Blinky Palermo, Dorothea Rockburne, Keith Sonnier, and Andy Warhol. Martin edited the book *Four*

Generations: The Joyner Giuffrida Collection of Abstract Art (Gregory R. Miller & Co., 2016), surveying an important collection of modern and contemporary work by artists of African descent. In 2022, she organized the first survey in America in over twenty years of Bridget Riley's work at the YCBA.

Martin is the author of essays on numerous artists, including Rasheed Araeen, Kader Attia, Rina Banerjee, Frank Bowling, Lara Favaretto, Sam Gilliam, Leslie Hewitt, Jacqueline Humphries, Asger Jorn, Eva LeWitt, Wangechi Mutu, Ed Ruscha, and Yinka Shonibare CBE RA.

The exhibition will be on view from 16 June 2024 until March 2025 at the George Economou Collection, 80 Kifissias Ave, 15125 Marousi, Athens, Greece. Our opening hours are Monday to Friday from 10 am to 6 pm, and Wednesdays until 8pm. For further information or images, please contact Souzana Fais at +30 210 8090559 or souzana@artesia.gr

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