

FRAENKEL

49 GEARY STREET SAN FRANCISCO 94108 415 981 2661

For immediate release:



PETER HUJAR curated by ELTON JOHN

September 8 – October 22, 2022

49 Geary Street, San Francisco

Fraenkel Gallery is pleased to present *Peter Hujar curated by Elton John*, a fifty-photograph survey of Hujar's celebrated career. Bringing together the sensibilities of two remarkable artists, the exhibition provides striking evidence of how one artist's eye can shed light on another. Elton John's selection includes works spanning nearly two decades, featuring portraits of Hujar's eclectic circle of friends, his landmark nudes, and atmospheric landscapes. A portion of the proceeds from the exhibition will go to the Elton John AIDS Foundation, and the exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue published by Fraenkel Gallery.

Known worldwide as one of the most revered and exhilarating performers of our era, Elton John is also a seasoned collector of photographs, and brings an acute and highly personal understanding of Peter Hujar's achievement to his selection. As he writes in the catalogue, "Hujar's humanity, depth, and sensual

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insights aren't for everyone, and don't need to be, but once his pictures get into your bloodstream they are impossible to shake.”

Peter Hujar documented the vibrant cultural scene in downtown New York throughout the 1970s and 1980s, photographing artists, musicians, writers, and performers. He died of AIDS in 1987, leaving behind a complex and profound body of photographs. While Hujar’s talent was recognized during his lifetime by a small but influential group of friends and admirers, his work has reached a wider audience in the years since his death. Elton John began collecting photographs in the early 1990s, and writes that “it wasn’t until 2011 that I acquired my first photograph by Peter Hujar. His work was not well known back then, and it took a while before I came across it.”

Among Elton John’s selections are portraits of acclaimed performers including Stevie Wonder, Peggy Lee, and Edgar Winter. Other photographs depict subjects from Hujar’s creative orbit, such as drag performer Ethyl Eichelberger and Warhol superstar Jackie Curtis. Along with the portraits are examples of Hujar’s deeply empathetic pictures of animals, and landscapes including austere views of the ocean and a New Jersey forest at night.

Peter Hujar (1934–1987) was the subject of the retrospective *Peter Hujar: Speed of Life*, which was exhibited at the Morgan Library & Museum, New York; Fundación MAPFRE, Madrid; and Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA. His work has been featured in major exhibitions at Museum Ludwig in Cologne, Germany; Punta della Dogana/François Pinault Foundation, Venice, Italy; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; MoMA PS1, New York; ICA, London; Fotomuseum, Winterthur, Switzerland; and Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany, among others. His work is in the collection of institutions including the Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Elton John (born 1947) is one of the most enduringly successful solo artists of all time. In 1992 he founded the Elton John AIDS Foundation, which funds programs to end the AIDS epidemic. He was knighted in 1998 by Queen Elizabeth II in honor of his service to music and charity. Since the 1990s he has avidly collected photography, and in 2016, Tate Modern organized the exhibition “The Radical Eye: Modernist Photography from the Sir Elton John Collection.” He is currently performing in Elton John Farewell Yellow Brick Road The Final Tour, which will travel throughout North America in 2022.

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Image: Peter Hujar, *John Kelly (I)* 1981

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