

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Nina Katchadourian: Origin Stories* exhibition opens at National Nordic Museum on June 21**

*Artist Nina Katchadourian exhibits five projects that explore
the impact of family history, traditions, games, and mythologies*

Seattle, WA (June 18, 2024) –This weekend, the National Nordic Museum will open *Nina Katchadourian: Origin Stories*, an original exhibition composed of **five projects spread throughout the Museum**—from the Library, which is typically accessed by research appointment only, to the newly renovated East Garden. Award-winning artist Nina Katchadourian is an astute examiner of the everyday and a keen interrogator of the ordinary. Her celebrated artistic practice has been described as one of “paying attention.” In *Origin Stories*, Katchadourian turns her focus toward the intimately familiar. She explores her family’s history, traditions, games, and mythologies. Many of the works in *Origin Stories* were made on the island of Bodö in the southern Finnish archipelago, where Katchadourian’s family have spent their summers ever since she was a child, as did the two previous generations of her maternal family.

“It is an honor to present Nina Katchadourian’s work at the National Nordic Museum. She observes and reflects on the seemingly mundane, yet memorable moments that make life rich and interesting. Our collaborative project has been thoughtfully developed, considering the Museum as a site for the preservation and retelling of people’s life stories,” said National Nordic Museum Chief Curator Leslie Anderson.

Opening on June 21 and running through October 26, 2025, *Origin Stories* **expands the Museum’s mission to tell Nordic-connected stories** through its exhibitions, programs, and collections, comprised primarily of physical objects of daily life, photographic archives, and oral history interviews. In this context, *Origin Stories* offers a personal narrative—an autobiographical account through art—engaging in a dialogue with its collections, spaces, and Ballard neighborhood.

The project’s centering on the ways in which family heritage and traditions create our understanding of the world and ourselves will resonate with all audiences. “During these summer months we will often be traveling with family and recreating our own unique rituals as a form of connection and intergenerational dialogue. *Origin Stories* captures a reflective artistic response to these deep relationships,” commented Lath Carlson, National Nordic Museum Executive Director/CEO.



Of all the pictures, this one feels like the closest match.

Photo: Nina Katchadourian, courtesy of Catharine Clark Gallery and Pace Gallery

The Exhibition

Origin Stories is installed throughout the National Nordic Museum. In the immersive installation *To Feel Something That Was Not of Our World* (2022), Katchadourian works with her intimate knowledge of the 1973 bestselling book, *Survive the Savage Sea*, which chronicles the true story of a family set adrift for 38 days in the Pacific Ocean after their sailboat was attacked by orca. Written by the father of the Robertson family, *Survive the Savage Sea* has preoccupied the artist since she first encountered it at age seven. In 2020, Katchadourian contacted the author's eldest child, Douglas Robertson, and initiated a 38-day, daily conversation corresponding to the Robertsons' time as castaways. Through audio excerpts, drawings, sculptures, and replicas of objects from the disaster, the gallery becomes a vessel for the story of the shipwreck and the intimate conversation between Robertson and Katchadourian. *The Recarcassing Ceremony* (2016), a 24-minute film about an invented game the artist played with her brother Kai during their childhood summers in Finland, her mother's country of birth. In this game, centered on two families of PLAYMOBIL figures, two key characters were lost at sea and Nina and her brother had to invent a ritual to bring them back to life.

Two works in *Origin Stories* focus on creative projects made by her Finlandswedish maternal grandparents during their summers in the Finnish archipelago. The photographic series *The Nightgown*

Pictures (1997 – 2003) responds to her grandmother Nunni's tradition of photographing Nina's mother Stina on her birthday. Each year, Nunni took a picture of Stina in a small handmade nightgown, ending the year when she could no longer fit into it. Beginning in 1997, Nina and Stina revisited the locations depicted in the photographs and documented them again. *Talla* (2025), a bronze sculpture cast in Maine by Dylan Farnum (formerly special projects director at the Walla Walla Foundry) and patinated by Walla Walla-based artist Squire Broel, will debut in the Museum's East Garden. The sculpture is an exact scale replica of a cow constructed of found wooden sticks, made for Stina by her father Lale when she was about 12 years old.

One of Katchadourian's best-known works, *Accent Elimination* (2005), will be exhibited in the museum's library, a space reserved for research on genealogy and cultural identity. *Accent Elimination* was displayed at the 2015 Venice Biennial as part of the Armenian Pavilion, which won the Golden Lion for Best National Participation. Via the subject of her parents' complex accents—often the subject of curious questions from strangers—the six-channel video work speaks to the intricacies of assimilation, cultural identity, and diasporic heritage.

This exhibition is organized by the National Nordic Museum in collaboration with the artist.

Programs

Alongside the exhibition, visitors can take part in additional complementary programming:

Wire Art Family Workshop

Saturday, June 21st, 10am – 3pm

Free with Museum admission

A family-friendly workshop inspired by the work in the special exhibition *Nina Katchadourian: Origin Stories*.

[Learn More](#)

Nina Katchadourian with Douglas Robertson

Sunday, June 22nd, 2pm – 3pm

Free for members/\$5 non-members

Artist Nina Katchadourian will discuss her work featured in the special exhibition *Nina Katchadourian: Origin Stories*. Following her talk, she will be joined by Douglas Robertson for a moderated conversation. Robertson is a shipwreck survivor whose family's ordeal was told by his father in the 1972 bestseller *Survive the Savage Sea*. This book inspired Katchadourian's immersive installation *To Feel Something That Was Not of Our World*, at the heart of which is her 38-day long, daily conversation with Douglas Robertson, tracing the events of each day that he and his family were cast adrift in the Pacific.

[Learn More](#)

10-Minute Chats with the Chief Curator

Fridays, July 11, August 8, September 12, and October 10, at 12pm

Free with the price of admission

Join Chief Curator Leslie Anderson for a concise overview and interactive conversation about the exhibition *Nina Katchadourian: Origin Stories*.

Support and Sponsorship:

Origin Stories is made possible by the Eldon Nysether Exhibition Endowment, The Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, and 4Culture, with additional support from Office of Arts & Culture Seattle, ArtsFund, ArtsWA Washington State Arts Commission and Scan Design Foundation.

Images

The Recarcassing Ceremony, 2016

Nina Katchadourian, courtesy of Catharine Clark Gallery and Pace Gallery.



Accent Elimination, 2005
 Courtesy of Pace Gallery



Installation View, Nina Katchadourian: To Feel Something That Was Not of Our World, Jul 8 – Aug 5 2022, Pace Gallery, London © Nina Katchadourian.
 Photo: Damian Griffiths, courtesy Pace Gallery.

Additional images for this exhibition can be found at nordicmuseum.org/OriginStories.

About Nina Katchadourian



Photo: Nina Katchadourian

Nina Katchadourian is an interdisciplinary artist whose work includes video, performance, sound, sculpture, photography, and public projects. Her video *Accent Elimination* was included at the 2015 Venice Biennale in the Armenian pavilion, which won the Golden Lion for Best National Participation. In 2016 Katchadourian created *Dust Gathering*, an audio tour on the subject of dust, for MoMA's "Artists Experiment" program. Major solo museum shows include at the *All Forms of Attraction* at the Tang Museum in 2006; *Works Made in Finland by Nina Katchadourian* at Turku Art Museum in 2008; the retrospective *Curiouser*, which opened in March 2017 at the Blanton Museum of Art and subsequently traveled, and *Uncommon Denominator* at The Morgan Library & Museum in 2023. Her work has been included in group shows at Serpentine Gallery, Turner Contemporary, de Appel, Palais de Tokyo, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Grey Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, ICA Philadelphia, Brooklyn Museum, Artists Space, SculptureCenter, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and MoMA PS1. Katchadourian has received grants and awards from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Anonymous Was a Woman Foundation, the Tiffany Foundation, the American-Scandinavian Foundation, the Grönqvistska Foundation, and the Nancy Graves Foundation. Katchadourian's work is in public and private collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Blanton Museum of Art, Morgan Library & Museum, Margulies Collection, Saatchi Gallery and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Katchadourian is Clinical Professor on the faculty of the NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study. She is represented by Catharine Clark Gallery and Pace Gallery and lives between Berlin and Brooklyn.

About the National Nordic Museum

The National Nordic Museum is the only museum in the United States that showcases the impact and influence of Nordic values and innovation in contemporary society and tells the story of 12,000 years of Nordic history and culture, across all five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) as well as three autonomous regions (Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Åland) and the cultural region of Sápmi.

Awarded a national designation by an Act of Congress in 2019, the Museum shares Nordic culture with people of all ages and backgrounds through exhibitions, a collection of over 80,000 objects, unique educational and cultural experiences, and by serving as a community gathering place.

For more information, visit: www.nordicmuseum.org.

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