

WIDEWALLS

Woodward Gallery Unveils Groundbreaking Exhibition Pairing Franz Kline and Richard Hambleton

Artist(s) in Focus, Art News, Exhibition Announcements



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In a bold curatorial move that bridges two distinct eras of American art history, [Woodward Gallery](#) presents "Franz Kline | Richard Hambleton: Portraits and Shadows," running through March 2025. This innovative exhibition marks the first time these two influential artists have been shown together, revealing surprising parallels in their artistic journeys despite working decades apart.

Rare Works, Fresh Perspectives

The exhibition showcases rare portrait works by Abstract Expressionist pioneer Franz Kline alongside previously unseen shadow paintings by street art legend Richard Hambleton. While Kline's intimate character studies from the 1940s and Hambleton's dramatic shadow figures from the 1980s might seem worlds apart at first glance, the show illuminates fascinating connections between these two maverick creators.

Both artists possessed an extraordinary ability to capture human essence through radically different approaches. Kline's masterful portraiture work, predating his famous black-and-white abstractions, demonstrates his exceptional skill in distilling personality through carefully observed detail. In contrast, Hambleton's shadow paintings harness raw energy

and movement to evoke human presence, creating powerful psychological impressions through absence rather than detail.

Urban Influence and Artistic Vision

The exhibition challenges conventional art historical narratives by highlighting how both artists operated as outsiders within their respective movements. While Kline is primarily celebrated for his abstract expressionist works, these portraits reveal his deep connection to human subjects. Similarly, though Hambleton is often categorized as a street artist, his shadow works transcend simple categorization, embodying a sophisticated understanding of human perception and spatial dynamics.

An intriguing aspect of the show is how it reveals shared experiences of urban artistic life across different decades. Both artists navigated the challenging landscape of New York City's art scene, finding inspiration in its nocturnal energy and urban geometry. Their work reflects not only their subjects but also the city's transformative influence on their artistic vision.

Curatorial Innovation

Curator John Woodward has thoughtfully organized the exhibition to create dialogues between specific works, allowing visitors to discover unexpected resonances between Kline's and Hambleton's distinctive styles. The careful juxtaposition of pieces highlights both artists' masterful use of black pigment, though employed to dramatically different effects.

The exhibition gains particular relevance in today's contemporary art discourse, as it examines how artists from different eras approached questions of identity, presence, and representation. Kline's direct observational portraits and Hambleton's ethereal shadows offer contrasting yet complementary perspectives on human presence in art, speaking to current discussions about portraiture in the digital age.

Exhibition Access and Future Plans

Available for viewing at Woodward Gallery's 60 Pine Street location by appointment, the exhibition is also accessible through digital platforms, including WoodwardGallery.net and Artsy.net. A comprehensive digital catalog accompanies the show, providing in-depth analysis of the artists' techniques and historical context.

This groundbreaking exhibition not only celebrates two significant figures in American art but also demonstrates how artistic vision can transcend temporal boundaries. By bringing together these rarely seen works, Woodward Gallery offers a fresh perspective on both

artists' legacies while suggesting new ways of understanding their contributions to contemporary art history.

The gallery has announced plans for the exhibition to travel to various museums, with locations to be revealed in the coming months, ensuring wider audience access to these important works and their unprecedented dialogue across time.

Featured image: Exhibition shot, Courtesy Woodward Gallery