

# **Samaras 1974 : [exhibition], March 3- April 13, 1975, the Museum of Modern Art, New York**

Author

Samaras, Lucas, 1936-

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primary documents, installation views, and an  
index of participating artists.



# SAMARAS 1974

MARCH 3-APRIL 13, 1975  
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART  
11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK

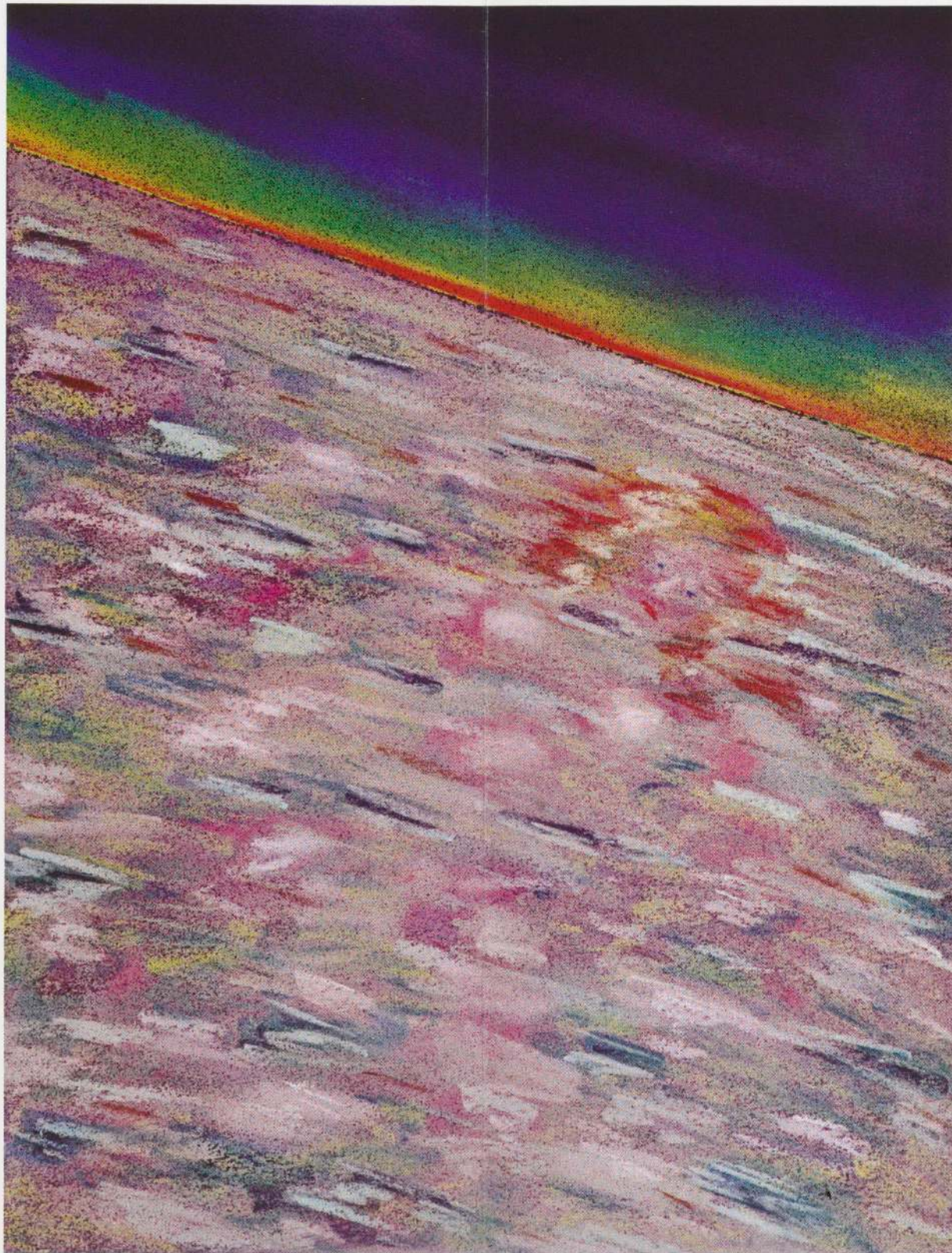


September 7, 1974

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The Museum of Modern Art Library



August 12, 1974

### First Try

On winter evenings when many relatives got together by the fireplace we often played cards and the person who got stuck with the Joker would be impressed on the cheek or forehead with the charcoal rubbed bottom of a small demitasse cup. By the end of the evening there were many flushed but happy people who lost their luck but gained black circles. Ashes.

Like ashes and other deathlike substances of mantic consolation soft pastels serve me as guides into restructured and represented scenes of contemplation and desire that I can then imprint on others.

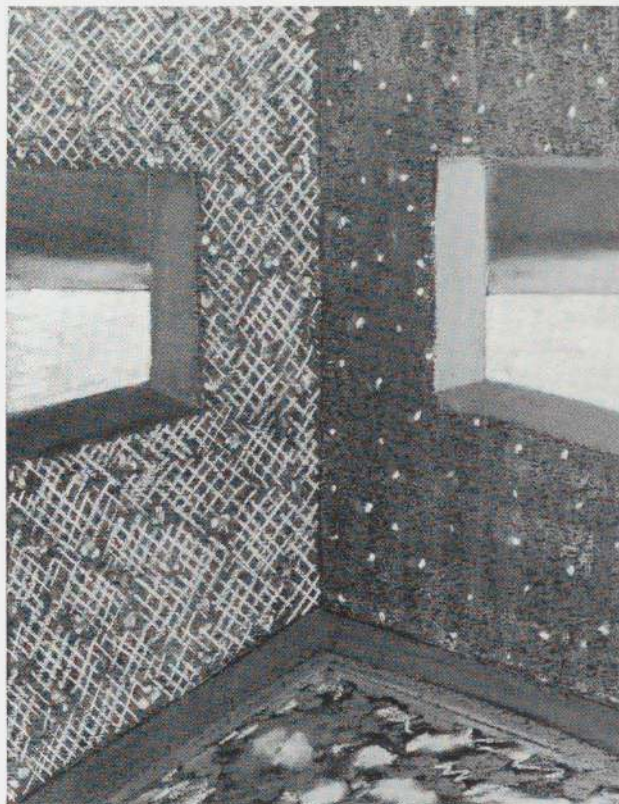
Making them is a kind of rapid tense breath holding descent without asking too many questions. They take from half an hour to two to do. After each one I wash my hands. The awareness of an unpleasant feeling in my fingers of clogged pores coincides with the completion of each pastel. I might do one or six at a sitting and that's that.

### Second Try

I have always been paced by a persistent "what else" quest in an attempt to escape the limits of a constricting definition of my art activities. Nevertheless, as necessary and unavoidable as this cynical modernistic drive to an expanding enigmatic future is, it has a country cousin partner in the gratifying "good to see you again" syndrome sensibility. Pastels are such a case. I stopped making them in '65 and started them again in '74. Whatever satisfactions and bedazzlements I got from other mediums and materials, the feel, the density, the dry delicacy of pastel could not be transferred. Vidiots, Acrylicsists, Integrity-of-the-picture-plane fanatics, Geographics and Sign-and-symbol stoolies were fine and dandy and like anything else a dreary deathless endless dopey daily staple. Happily there are no systems that can guarantee pictorial enravishments and philosophic aftertaste.

Other factors dimly perceived probably led the way to these new pastels. Every year at the anniversary of his father's death, an oriental looking shrink friend of mine used to go bananas. And I would think, what a crazy cyclical Mongolian. But dates, habits and numerical fixations probably affect all of us in weird and humorous ways. I stopped making pastels in August and began again nine years later in August. Nine years is the amount of time my father was away on business when I was a child. But even if this particular connection is too forced there are other hints of transferences and erotic primalisms in the pastels that connect them to my past with an intensity and a key that fits.

In the late 50's and 60's I used pastels to deposit-describe fields of organic daydreaming color girdled by a loose yet insistent geometry or I made up doughy chalky personae through whom I could release a string of strong unsophisticated psychic pictorialized needs. In my Polaroids I later transposed and continued these needs on my body in various states and stances. In these new pastels I wanted to approach the other, the strange



creature, the woman, the couple, the balanced environment. The amalgamation of black paper, pastels, digits and me manipulated into a quick presentment left me at the end with a stronger "where did this come from" attitude than the feeling I got when I materialized things with the aid of others or with elaborate mechanical means. These pastels are not symbols or impressions of things seen but brief fragile confronting suggestions.

### Third Try

If you can, by some mental dermascission lift off your facial skin intact letting it float a few inches from your head then you'd have perhaps a notion of the feel I often get from my pastels, a sensation of chromatic goose-pimples ready to attach themselves to the viewer. It's a hinderance, a blot, a last stop to the void or the outside, a territorial deposit, a substance to read my self from, a familiar form both strict and soothing that frequently makes me say, it's wonderful, I must kiss it. But if I were to kiss it it would become a smudge on my lips. I could put it under glass and then kiss it just like the regularly kissed icons in Orthodox churches. Under such esthetomagical conditions the glass sensation on the lips dissolves, the kiss reaches its mark. "But, but, but," you say, "that is idolatry." That's true, I say. Who'd want to kiss color field paintings.

*© Samaras*

"My logic consists in putting the logic of the visible to the service of the invisible," wrote Odilon Redon. "My drawings inspire and do not define."

Like Redon, Samaras is a poet who celebrates the night. During the past year he devoted principal energies to a suite of one hundred pastels on black Bristol paper. The sheets are uniform in size, each measuring thirteen by ten inches. Thirty-six of the drawings are shown here. The subjects of the untitled pastels orchestrate themselves into specific series of related images, a disquieting anthology of concurrent dreams.

Lucas Samaras was born in Macedonia in 1936. Nineteen years later he became a citizen of the United States. At present, he lives in New York City.

I wish to thank the artist and The Pace Gallery for their collaboration. The Museum of Modern Art also gratefully acknowledges the support of its exhibition program by the New York State Council on the Arts. The exhibition will be subsequently shown at other museums.

*William S. Lieberman*