Creative Growth The House That Art Built

This exhibition celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the first organization in the United States dedicated to supporting artists with developmental disabilities. Florence Ludins-Katz, an artist and a teacher, and Elias Katz, a psychologist, opened Creative Growth in Oakland in 1974 against the backdrop of the disability rights movement, which demanded full integration into all aspects of society. The Katzes believed that art was a way forward, and their vision was clear: in a large, shared studio, people with developmental disabilities would express themselves through art, work alongside each other in community, have access to mentors, and engage with the broader art world. The works they made would be presented in exhibitions and sold, with profits shared. In 1982, the organization moved to its current location with overwhelming support from Bay Area artists who donated works for auction, inspiring the Katzes to call Creative Growth "the house that art built."

The Katzes expanded on this model, founding NIAD (Nurturing Independence through Artistic Development) in Richmond in 1982 and Creativity Explored in San Francisco in 1983. These spaces now serve as leaders in the field of art and disability, and participating artists have had an enormous impact on the cultural richness of the Bay Area. Today, more than 140 artists work at Creative Growth, and this presentation features eleven of those whose artworks were recently acquired by SFMOMA as part of a historic partnership. Using every medium, from painting and drawing to ceramics, wood, fiber, digital media, and printmaking, their practices exemplify what the Katzes expressed in their founding documents: "Creativity is a vital living force within each individual."

This exhibition is co-organized by Jenny Gheith, Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture, and Nancy Lim, Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture, with Auriel Garza, Curatorial Assistant of Painting and Sculpture.

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