

LUIS DE JESUS LOS ANGELES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Robert Kushner: *Dahlias—Fields of Steadfastness*
April 19 – May 31, 2025
Opening Reception: Saturday, April 19, 4-7 p.m.

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It is with great pleasure that we present **Robert Kushner: *Dahlias—Fields of Steadfastness***, the artist's second exhibition with the gallery. I have known Robert Kushner for three decades, a serendipitous blessing that I chalk up to our mutual commitment to art and meditation. I'm equally pleased to share this personal note from him, below. This small window into his life and work captures the essence of who he is as a person and an artist: generous and kind, with a sharp, inquisitive mind and exquisite vision—but perhaps even more, a sagacious spirit and sense of self. This new series of paintings pays tribute to one of his favorite flowers, the dahlia—symbol of beauty, eternal love, resilience and inner strength—and marks a unique moment in his long and distinguished career. I hope you enjoy them as much as we do. — Luis De Jesus

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When I was a boy growing up in Arcadia, CA, things were decidedly different. Life was simpler. My father had a chicken ranch, and when he got rid of the 3,000 laying hens, he kept pheasants and sometimes peacocks because he liked caring for birds. Our neighbors kept horses and raised chinchillas.

But the most interesting to me in this town of large lots and no fences were the plants.

Mr. Wiseman kept a huge collection of epiphyllum succulents.

Mrs. Stoker had her own collection of mature camellias.

Mrs. Kloety had every imaginable fruit tree, and also giant bamboo and myriad African violets in her kitchen.

But in some ways the most exotic was Mr. Delkin and his dahlias, which he hybridized. Tall, majestic, mostly white and pale off-white colors, hidden from the street by a tall hedge.

Dahlias persevere till the end of the summer before blooming. They wait. They are steadfast. And when they finally present their floral ebullience — stand back, it's a glorious showstopper of colors, convoluted forms, perfect symmetry as well as lavish dishabille.

This past year I had the whole fall free to paint dahlias as they slowly came into bloom. Starting with six smaller paintings and then expanding their already expansive personalities to four larger paintings. I was in heaven, haunting the flower sellers at our nearby farmers market, looking for new colors and forms and then trying to capture their individual personalities on the canvas.

Afterwards I added a stripe of gold, the suggestion of a striped window curtain, and blocks of color against which the dahlia flowers could glow and scintillate.

Truly speaking we are living in some pretty devastating times. The wild fires that overwhelmed and devastated Los Angeles County this winter. The wars in various parts of the world and the huge weight of man's inhumanity. The uncertainty of just what will happen to the institutions of our own country. The ever present and always changing effects of climate change. The list goes on and on. Some artists are able to address these milestones in ways that call our attention to them in new, unique ways. But for me, I stick to flowers. Flowers are a refuge. For me, drawing them, capturing their ephemeral beauty is an antidote to the horrors of our external condition. Plant forms and, particularly flowers, offer solace, gentle kindness, beauty,

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transcendence to the heartaches of our daily lives. If through my work I can remain steadfast, and for a moment take you away to a safe haven, then I have been successful.

Robert Kushner
February 25, 2025

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Biography:

Since participating in the Pattern and Decoration Movement in the early 1970s, Robert Kushner (b.1949, Pasadena, CA) has continued to address controversial issues involving decoration. Kushner draws from a unique range of influences, including Islamic and European textiles, Henri Matisse, Georgia O'Keeffe, Charles Demuth, Pierre Bonnard, Tawaraya Sotatsu, Ito Jakuchu, Qi Baishi, and Wu Changshuo. Kushner's work combines organic representational elements such as flowers and fruit with abstracted geometric forms in a way that is both decorative and modernist. His use of simplified, graphic lines further accentuates his inquiry into the connection between organic and geometric spaces. By integrating stripped textiles, patterned kimonos, and suzani fabrics into the layered backgrounds of his still lifes, Kushner achieves complex harmonies of color and form, linking his contemporary practice to his foundational Pattern & Decoration roots.

Kushner's work has been exhibited extensively in the United States, Europe, and Japan and has been included in the Whitney Biennial three times and twice in La Biennale in Venice, Italy. He has been the subject of solo exhibitions at both the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Brooklyn Museum, and a mid-career retrospective of his work was organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. Most recently, Kushner's work was included in several national and international museum exhibitions focusing on the Pattern and Decoration movement: *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972-1985*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (2019-2020); *Less is a Bore: Maximalist Art & Design*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (2019); *Pattern and Decoration: Ornament as Promise*, Ludwig Forum, Aachen, Germany, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Vienna, Austria, and Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Hungary (2018-2019); *Pattern, Decoration & Crime*, MAMCO, Geneva, Switzerland, and Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2018-2019).

Kushner's works are included in many prominent collections including The Museum of Modern Art, NY; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; The Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; The National Gallery of Art, DC; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, DC; Tate Gallery, London; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu; The Denver Art Museum; Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence; J. Paul Getty Trust, Los Angeles; Museum Ludwig, St. Petersburg; and The Philadelphia Museum of Art, among others. A monograph on Kushner's three decades of artistic work, *Gardens of Earthly Delight*, was published by Hudson Hills Press in 1997. *Wild Gardens*, a selection of Kushner's recent paintings with an essay by Michael Duncan, was published by Pomegranate in 2006. Kushner also edited the publication *Amy Goldin: Art in a Hairshirt* (Hudson Hills, 2012) to much critical acclaim.

For further information, including images and previews, please call 213-395-0762, or email: gallery@luisdejesus.com.