June Leaf
November 4 – December 21, 2022

Ortuzar Projects is honored to present **"June Leaf,"** an exhibition of drawings, paintings, and sculpture by an artist who for over fifty years has worked in a studio on Bleecker Street in New York City and in a studio and forge in the remote rural community of Mabou, Cape Breton, in Nova Scotia. "June Leaf" is the artist's first solo exhibition in New York since the 2016 exhibition "Thought is Infinite" at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

June Leaf (b. 1929) is known for her very physical studio practice in which she moves agilely among painting, drawing, and sculpture, often made mechanical. Throughout her seven decade career, she has portrayed figures and landscapes, real and imagined. Leaf recently remarked, "I suppose I think like a dancer"; accordingly, the new exhibition renders movement literally and figuratively in many material iterations. Figures balance on thin wires, fly high above the ground, or in seemingly infinite space. Objects such as sewing machines, scrolls, and handmade wheels are rendered in both two and three dimensions, reflecting her endless investigation of movement.

June Leaf studied briefly at Chicago's Art Institute of Design, which was founded in 1937 as the New Bauhaus, before moving to Paris in 1948. There, influenced by Paul Klee (1879–1940) and Mark Tobey (1890–1976), she explored abstraction by making paintings and drawings that reflected her interest in patterns. Returning to Chicago a year later, she met Leon Golub when her work was included in the first Exhibition Momentum, a recurring juried show launched by students from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Institute of Design. In the mid-1950s Leaf's work grew more figurative, incorporating a diverse cast of people and animals within colorful, surreal landscapes. She became associated with the Monster Roster, a group of existentialist figurative artists including Golub and his wife Nancy Spero. Leaf was awarded a Fulbright fellowship in 1958 and returned to Paris for another extended sojourn, honing her drawing skills, and making copies of paintings in the Louvre. She then relocated to New York and began exhibiting with Allan Frumkin Gallery. In the following years, her body of work expanded to include kinetic figurative sculptures. She married the filmmaker and photographer Robert Frank (1924–2019) in 1975, and the couple lived together in New York and Nova Scotia until Frank's death. In 2024, Leaf's work will be included in "Americans in Paris, Artists Working in Postwar France 1946-1962" at the Grey Art Gallery, New York University, New York.

June Leaf (b. 1929, Chicago)'s recent solo exhibitions include "June Leaf: Thought is Infinite," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2016); "June Leaf," Museum Tinguely, Basel (2004); "A Survey of Painting, Sculpture and Works on Paper, 1948-1991," Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts (1991); and a retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1978). The artist's work is held in permanent public collections including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; DePaul Art Museum, Chicago; Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, Wisconsin; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv; Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut. Leaf is the recipient of prestigious awards including a National Endowment for the Arts Grant (1989), a Fulbright Grant (1958), as well as an honorary degree from DePaul University and an Honorary Degree from Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.