

ALEX KATZ

NEW LANDSCAPES

PARIS MARAIS

30 Aug 2016 - 10 Oct 2016



Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is pleased to announce the exhibition *New Landscapes* by Alex Katz. The American artist, currently exhibited at the Serpentine Gallery in London with his recent *Quick Light* series, had occupied the four halls of the Pantin gallery in 2014 with the exhibition *45 Years of Portraits, 1969-2014*. In the Marais gallery Alex Katz will unveil his most recent series. It features around twenty sketches of landscapes and several monumental paintings around the same theme.

From the early 1950s, Alex Katz anticipated the American Pop Art movement with images inspired by billboards, drawing from the principle of serial reproduction and creating portraits free from any psychological attribute. He quickly detached himself from the Pop Art movement, establishing his personal style. Well-known for his female portraits, landscapes, as well as outdoor and night scenes, Katz always paints with simplicity, creating clearly outlined forms. Some of his large-scale paintings, such as *The Black Dress* (1960) and *Blue Umbrella* (1972), have left a lasting impression in our collective memory.

The atmosphere of his paintings is rooted in the particularity of his style, at once rigorous, modernist, and refined, suggesting a both radical and simple realism. The clear-cut forms, and vibrant, monochrome coats of paint represent the essential elements of the artist's style. Always painting in natural light, Katz' is concerned with the subject of visual perception. In this way, he translates classic genres, such as portraiture, landscape and outdoor painting into a contemporary figurative style.

Referring to the artist's works exhibited at the Serpentine gallery, Jackie Wullschlager wrote in the *Financial Times* of 4 July, 2016: "Katz has over the years challenged yet absorbed something from every mainstream American movement: Abstract Expressionism's heroic dimensions, Pop's deadpan flatness, Minimalism's austerity".

The landscapes exhibited in the Marais gallery represent the fragile branch of a tree, the clearing on the edge of a forest, a house surrounded by nature. Regardless of the subject, Alex Katz paints with an economy of lines, simplifying form to convey an idea of painting based on the Essential. The different elements are part of a single plane, almost entirely losing any notion of depth.

A brushstroke suggests the silhouette of a branch, a touch of paint transforms into a leaf, two lines recall the shape of a window – Alex Katz develops a refined, allegorical style. The majority of landscapes were realized in Maine, USA. To the artist, the light of this particular region is richer and darker than the one evoked by the Impressionists. Regarding the subject, Katz says: "That helped me separate myself from European painting and find my own eyes".

Alex Katz was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1927. From 1946 to 1950, he studied painting at Cooper Union, New York, and later at the Skowhegan School of Painting, in Maine. While belonging to the Pop-Art generation, alongside Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, Katz' works did not receive international recognition until the early 1970s. Since the 1980s, Katz is the leading figure of *Cool Painting*. In 1997, he took part in the exhibition *Birth of Cool*, in Zurich and Hamburg, proving how the *coolness* of post-war, American jazz inspired a new way of painting in the United States. His works have been the subject of several solo exhibitions and retrospectives worldwide, also featuring in several private and public collections, notably the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tokyo; Tate Modern, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Nationalgalerie, Berlin, and Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid. From October 2015 to February 2016, The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao hosted the exhibition *This is Now* by Alex Katz, previously presented at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta. The Serpentine Gallery in London is currently presenting the exhibition *Quick Light*, on view until 11 September 2016.