

ALEX KATZ

NEW FACES

PARIS DEBELLEYME

31 Wednesday - 26 Monday



The Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is pleased to announce a new exhibition by American artist Alex Katz opening Wednesday 31 May. The show includes large-scale, panoramic portraits in which the subject appears dramatically close to the viewer. These extreme close-ups of faces appear in the very foreground, provoking a panoramic effect.

These new paintings illustrate Katz' signature style: a clean and modern point of view that embraces a realism which is simple yet radical at the same time. Extraneous details are of no interest to Katz. His reductive stance focuses instead on strong, straightforward likenesses of his subject rendered with vivid colours. He paints masterfully, using precise, broad areas of colour. His subjects appear bathed in a warm glow; and this light is the real essence of his style. His discerning eye fuses the traditional genres such as portraiture, landscape and scenes of outdoor life with contemporary figurative painting.

Katz first began creating these strong graphic portraits isolated on monochromatic backgrounds in the late 1950s. These works were strongly inspired by cinematographic images. On the occasion of his exhibit *Cher Peintre* at Beaubourg in 2002, Katz discussed the influence of this medium on his painting: " I think that it's mostly linked to the first Technicolor films that I saw at the movies and on television. In the United States in the 1960's, television was incredible- they wanted to bring the images right into the middle of your living room, so there were lots of extreme close-ups."

However, unlike the filmic image, there is no chronology or movement in the images represented, on the contrary there is a feeling of stillness associated with these figures in both his portraits and landscapes. It seems as if time has stopped for these characters; that they are caught in a decisive moment in which their expressions are fixed forever. Alex Katz's paintings capture the importance of this split second, like the clicking of a camera shutter or the blink of an eye. And it is deep inside the face, where he places this intimate knowledge of this single moment in time, there in the half light of the brow, the eyes, the nose, the pressing together of lips, we see the personality emerge and in an uncanny sense, you see the entire sensibility of the subject revealed for an instant.

Alex Katz was born in New York in 1927. He became a renowned figure in contemporary painting during the 1960's. He first emerged on the New York art scene during the heyday of Abstract Expressionism and before the birth of Pop Art, but always worked independently of these movements. Katz is best known for his portraits of sophisticated, irresistible women, bold, transcendent landscape paintings and his portraits of friends and family often painted in Maine. A number of larger-than-life paintings like *The Back Dress* (1960), *Blue Umbrella* (1972) and *White Visor* (2003) have entered into the collective consciousness. Alex Katz has exhibited widely all over the world and his works are featured in the collections of many major museums such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate, London; Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Nationalgalerie in Berlin