

ALEX KATZ

FASHION AND STUDIES

PARIS DEBELLEYME

14 Wednesday - 14 Saturday



"Fashion is dealing with the present tense and currents. Fashion is a no-no to people for whom the artist 'creates beauty forever'- beauty is a constant factor and will always be there. It's unstable when you get to fashion, because it changes. Nothing is stable." (Alex Katz)

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is pleased to announce the upcoming exhibition by American artist Alex Katz, opening on January 14th 2009. The exhibition will include recent works that focus on fashion, one of the recurring themes in his oeuvre.

In terms of portraiture this collection of paintings is archetypal of Katz's output. Throughout his extended career of over fifty years, glamour and 'styling' have been central to his work. Katz's sartorial discernment originates from his father's influence, who encouraged him to observe groups of people from an early age. But, as David Cohen states, "For this artist, sartorial presentation is as much a metaphor for painting as a motif. Like his own technique, his sitters' wardrobe is at once classy and casual, composed and nonchalant, high energy and cool."

His sitters are not the subjects of his paintings; instead they serve as a means to make style the content of each piece. He once stated that his aim was a style "emptied of meaning, emptied of content."

However there is an undeniable aspect of social commentary intrinsic to Katz's work considering he paints people that he naturally encounters in his milieu; almost exclusively actors, artists, models, celebrities as well as his wife and long term muse, Ada. Contradictory to his ambition to depict fashion, which he once defined as "ephemeral," Katz's output is relatively consistent, and is impossible to compartmentalize as subscribing to any specific movement.

A key source of inspiration are the woodcuts produced by Japanese artist Kitagawa Utamaro (1754-1806). He also references other arts; music, film, poetry, photography as well as showing a great interest in dance. Katz works quickly, using bold colours, resulting in a pared down final image. His paintings of people vary considerably in size and are often unexpectedly cropped, similar to a photograph or a film close-up. The choreography of his figures is often unconventional and the same figure is regularly depicted more than once within a picture.

Alex Katz was born in 1927 in Brooklyn, New York. From 1946 to 1950 he studied painting first at Cooper Union in New York and then at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. Although Katz belongs to the Pop generation of Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns, his paintings were not given international exposure until the 1970s. Since the eighties, Katz has been the protagonist of "Cool Painting," achieving global influence and becoming a virtual father figure for a generation of painters who are now between thirty and forty. A 1997 exhibition in Zurich and Hamburg called Birth of Cool demonstrated how the musical 'coolness' of post-war American jazz by Stan Getz or Miles Davis inspired a new style of American painting.

Katz has exhibited widely all over the world and his works are featured in many major museum collections such as that of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Tokyo, Tate Modern in London, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, the Reina Sofia in Madrid and many more.

An upcoming touring exhibition of his work will open at the Sara Hilden Art Museum in Finland on 21 February 2009, running through to May, and will travel to the Musée de Grenoble in France (July-September) and finally to the Museum Kurhaus Kleve in Germany (October-February 2010).

An exhibition catalogue, with essays by Arne Ehmann and Eric Troncy, will be published in conjunction with the exhibition.