

ALEX KATZ

DRAWINGS

SALZBURG VILLA KAST

06 Saturday - 17 Saturday



We are proud to announce an exhibition of roughly sixty rarely seen drawings by the legendary American painter Alex Katz. In their entirety, these portraits made between 1970 and 2006 make a retrospective of the drawings by Alex Katz.

The aloofness and minimalism of his works on canvas are already fully developed in his subtle drawings. »At first, it may seem surprising that the painter who exposes the eye to emptiness and attaches importance to skin and demarcation prepares his pictures in the manner of the old masters. That goes against the basic notion of Pop and media art« (Werner Spies).

It is characteristic of Alex Katz that he does not consider his drawings a means of gaining access to the actual idea of the picture. When Katz starts realising a drawing and finally applies the oil onto the canvas, he already has a very precise and clear idea of the picture in front of his inner eye. Carter Ratcliff once aptly called his drawings Paintings in Black and White. In the essay he wrote on occasion of the Alex Katz Drawing Retrospective (Museum of Art Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute 1991), he added: »Katz does not wander through the world with a sketchbook in hand, waiting for some object or effect of light to catch his attention. First he decides to paint a picture, then he makes a few drawings specifically for that work [...]. The casual look of the line in drawings [...] shouldn't lead us to assume that, in this early stage in the process, Katz is idly playing about, waiting for some large purpose to formulate itself. Before he picks up his pencil, he has a good idea of what he wants to do«.

Alex Katz was born in 1927 in Brooklyn, New York. From 1946 to 1950, he studied painting at the universities of New York and Maine. Although Katz belongs to the Pop generation of Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns, his paintings were not exhibited internationally until the seventies. Since the eighties, Katz has been the protagonist of Cool Painting and one of the most influential painters worldwide. For a whole generation of painters who are now between thirty and forty, Katz has virtually become a father-figure. Birth of the Cool was the title of an exhibition in Zürich and Hamburg (1997): it showed how the musical 'coolness' of the post-war American jazz of a Stan Getz or Miles Davis became a new category of American painting.

With his figurative pictures, Alex Katz was always a crossover artist between abstraction and realism. His paintings were figurative when the entire American art scene had turned away from representational art. In those days, Katz confronted the painters who insisted on an impulsive, individual style or on presenting hardly perceivable differences, with a subdued analysis of a visible, identifiable world. He himself said he wanted to defend himself against the abstract Expressionism and violent self-projection of a Jackson Pollock. »Without further ado, the young painter picks up the threads of America's utilisable past, of Georgia O'Keeffe, Fairfield Porter, Ralston Crawford, and Edward Hopper« (Werner Spies).