

ALEX KATZ

DANCERS

SALZBURG VILLA KAST

25 Nov 2017 - 20 Jan 2018



Opening: Saturday, 25. November 2017, 1pm - 6pm

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac presents an exhibition with the new series *Dancers* by Alex Katz, who has just celebrated his 90th birthday.

In the early 1950s, Katz was already preparing the way for Pop Art, with his American-billboard-style aesthetic, the principle of seriality and his representations of the human figure devoid of any kind of psychology. In the '60s, he collaborated for the first time with a dance ensemble, creating for the legendary Paul Taylor Dance Company stage-sets and portraits of dancers and dance formations steeped in the spirit of the age. Over the years, Katz repeatedly returned to his favourite themes and models, almost like mechanical reproduction.

In this new series, he portrays the New York dancer *Laura*. In contrast to his previous series of dancers, here he concentrates solely on her face and her expressions as she dances. Only suggestions of her shoulders and her neck, stretched or turned to the side, give an idea of the motion of her body. The pose "of his subjects [is] frozen in a moment of stillness that, beyond the canvas, is part of an ongoing motion. Their splayed fingers (...) tell us something of their profession, but the strongest impression is the artificiality the painter uses to depict the act of dancing." (Mark Rappolt, 2011)

On a formal level, however, the dancer's movements become clear in many ways – as for instance through the multiplication of the figure which, by means of a series of consecutive snapshots of *Laura* in different poses, suggests motion sequences to the viewer. The pictures are rendered dynamic through perspective distortion or a mainly diagonal and horizontal alignment of the compositions. *Laura*'s dark hair merges into the black background, so that the contrast makes the dancer appear illuminated by a spotlight.

The viewer is reminded of the famous Japanese woodcuts by Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806) and of Hellenistic reliefs. "Choosing to portray quintessential dance poses rather than the bending or turning of dancers, Katz minimises one thing (the ostensible subject) in order to maximise another (the process of rendering that subject in paint)." (Mark Rappolt, 2011)

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. Although Katz belongs to the pop generation of Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, it was not until the 1970s that his painting was exhibited internationally. Since the 1980s, Katz has been a protagonist of *Cool Painting*, and one of the most influential painters of our present time. His work has been exhibited worldwide, in solo-shows and retrospectives, and is to be found in the collections of many major museums, including the Museum of Modern Art/New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art/Tokyo, Tate Modern/London, Centre Georges Pompidou/Paris, Nationalgalerie/Berlin and Reina Sofia/Madrid. In spring 2018, the *Dancers* series will be exhibited at the Lotte Art Museum in Seoul.