



Alex Katz Portraits

Sarah Howgate, Sandy Nairne, Barry Schwabsky

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Alex Katz (b.1927) is one of the most prominent artists of his generation. Often described as a 'painter's painter', his influence is widely felt with many of today's most successful painters from Peter Doig to Elizabeth Peyton acknowledging their debt to his work. Setting his work in the context of the National Portrait Gallery, London creates a new opportunity to consider Katz's work alongside other portrait painters of the 20th and 21st centuries. Katz's distinctive portraits are informed by his interest in billboards and his familiarity with the process of physical enlargement. His minimal aesthetic, with pristine flat surfaces and economy of line, was developed in the 1950s and was at the time both an anticipation of Pop Art and a reaction to the prevalence of Abstract Expressionism, though he chose to work independently of both movements. The selection of works in this book demonstrates the variety Katz has brought to the portrait genre with dramatic variations in scale and abrupt cinematic cropping of images painted using precise, broad areas of colour. This book presents recent, intimate works of his immediate family including his wife, Ada, son, Vincent and daughter-in-law Vivien in which his bold clarity of vision and emphatic use of colour are revealed to powerful effect. Published on the occasion of Alex Katz Portraits, National Portrait Gallery, London 15 May-21 September 2010, Alex Katz's first solo display in a UK Public Gallery for 20 years. It features an interview with Contemporary Curator, Sarah Howgate, in which Katz discusses recent practice in a new and revealing light. Pre-publication wide-scale press campaign revealing his latest high profile commission in leading national newspapers.

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