

ALEX KATZ *Studies*

The exhibition *Studies* presents a selection of small oils on board by Alex Katz (New York, 1927), most of them landscapes.

Katz is better known for his female or group portraits of figures pertaining to his close environment, his wife Ada is a constant presence in this facet of his painting since his beginnings. However, on this occasion he offers what has been another favourite genre since he studied art in Maine between 1949 and 1950: landscape painting. For the artist, nature is not an allegory of order or chaos nor a substitute for the creative impulse but rather a unit of space and light in constant evolution, a mobile environment surrounding us.

Katz is able to free studies of their function as a secondary, preparatory medium with no pictorial value of their own. These oil paintings on board are independent of the final result on canvas, since in contrast, a gestural approach and matter invade their surface rather than the clean, transparent execution ("Cool painting") of his works on canvas.

Alex Katz was contemporary of the second generation of American abstract painters. In the early sixties and in coincidence with the emergence of Pop Art, his commitment to the objective figuration prompted many critics to consider Katz as one of the most ingenious precursors of this movement. Without doubt he shares with Pop the clear influence of mass media: the iconic transformation of its images, repetition and fragmentation of motifs are aspects that bring him closer to artists such as Rosenquist or Warhol. But his interest in exploring how light modulates the surface of the painting, in contrast to the graphic style of Pop Art, differentiates him from this trend. Nevertheless, his oeuvre is not easy to categorize among the established movements of the second half of the twentieth century. The real common thread of his painting is simplicity and apparent naivety, which serve him to hide its great sophistication.

Throughout his career, Alex Katz has had exhibitions at major museums and institutions in United States, Europe and Asia. His first solo show in Spain took place at the IVAM in Valencia in 1996, in 2004 the CAC Málaga hosted the exhibition entitled *Recent Paintings*. In 2008 Vienna's Albertina Museum presented a selection of his studies on board as part of the exhibition *Art after 1970*.

For further information or for images, please contact us.