

## ALEX KATZ *Cutouts*

This show featured for the first time in Spain a selection of Alex Katz's *Cutouts*, whose origin was accidental. Once, while painting one of his portraits, he was not satisfied with the relationship between the background and the figure, and, in his frustration, he cut out the outline of the figure, and mounted it onto a piece of wood, which he had previously cut to size, in what was a very 1960s act of pragmatism and immediacy, reminiscent of the early cut - out canvases by Frank Stella.

Nowadays, there is nothing casual about these cutouts, which Katz has incorporated into his work as if they were just another genre, which could be termed two-dimensional sculpture. These are carefully planned pieces, which are no longer mounted on wood, but on sheets of aluminium, cut prior to beginning the painting. They preserve a special freshness and spontaneity, and are less formal than his wall paintings. The figures - humans or animals - are painted on both sides, emphasizing its sculptural dimension, despite keeping that emphasis on the surface and the plane that defines Katz's oeuvre. It is a mise-en-scene that at first sight seems to present the subject personality as mere window-dressing and formally work against the pictorial depth. However, these paintings - and they are paintings after all - are infused with light and space.

Katz's work is difficult to classify, since we can find multiple influences in it. He was contemporary of the second generation of American abstract painters, we can see the influence in his work of the "action painting", as shown for instance in his preference for large formats. 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 exhibited 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*.

For further information or for images, please contact us.