

Marlborough

PRESS RELEASE

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ALEX KATZ: PORTRAITS

MARCH 12 – MAY 8, 2021

The Directors of Marlborough Gallery are pleased to present *Alex Katz: Portraits*, an exhibition of 31 iconic prints from the legendary New York native who pioneered the reinterpretation of figurative subject matter utilizing a sophisticated, modern approach. The exhibition will open on Friday, March 12, 2021, and will remain on view through Saturday, May 8, 2021.

Alex Katz (b. 1927), a leading figure in the Pop Art movement, first began experimenting with printmaking in 1947 while he was at The Cooper Union in Manhattan, where he received a BA in 1949. Though the artist moved away from printmaking for nearly a decade, Katz returned to the medium in the mid-1960s with vigor. Utilizing a wide variety of printmaking techniques, Katz has created more than 400 editions of lithographs, etchings, silkscreens, woodcuts, and linoleum cuts. Most often, Katz's prints are reworkings of his paintings, printmaking serves as a vessel to play with elements of color, shape, and form, creating works that deviate from their original.

Inspired by the grandiosity of the Abstract Expressionists, Katz was the first of his era to paint large-scale representational works. This new realism relied on the tradition established by painters like Courbet and Manet with *The Stonebreakers* and *Olympia*, respectively. Katz's insistence on flatness distinguishes him from the other New York School painters, as this extreme pictorial flatness breaks from an illusionistic representation without veering too far into abstraction.

This exhibition hones in on the subject that exists at the crux of Katz's oeuvre: portraiture. Through his portraits, Katz creates a vehicle for his subjects to exist as iconography for contemporary life, pulling inspiration from characters in his milieu. Figures such as Ada, Vincent, and Sunny become instantly recognizable, as they are elevated to celebrity-like status through Katz's repeated representation on "billboard" paintings. Katz identified the biggest challenge of portraiture as being its ability to instinctually capture the essence of his subject, stating in an interview, "Strangely enough, if you don't have a good likeness you don't have a good picture."

Alex Katz's work can be found in over 100 public collections worldwide, and has been in over 250 solo exhibitions and nearly 500 group exhibitions internationally since 1951. Katz will be the subject of a major retrospective opening in 2022 at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York.

Marlborough New York follows New York State's guidelines for physical distancing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Appointments are encouraged. To schedule an appointment, please call (212) 541-4900, or write gichan@marlboroughgallery.com. It is essential that visitors wear a face mask and observe the six-foot social distancing rule at all times when interacting with our staff or with other visitors. Contactless temperature checks and information for contact-tracing will be gathered at Reception upon entry.



Alex Katz, *Brisk Day I*, 1990, color aquatint, ed. of 150.
36 1/2 x 29 3/4 inches / 92.7 x 75.6 cm. © 2021 Alex
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(ARS), NY.

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