

GUGGENHEIM

NEWS RELEASE

Guggenheim Museum Presents *Alex Katz: Gathering*

Alex Katz's eight-decade retrospective will feature portraits, social scenes, and landscapes that capture the immediacy of visual perception in paint.

Exhibition: *Alex Katz: Gathering*

Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York

Location: Rotunda and Tower Level 7

Date: October 21, 2022–February 20, 2023

(NEW YORK, NY—October 21, 2022) The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presents *Alex Katz: Gathering*, a career retrospective staged in the city where Katz has lived and worked his entire life, and prepared with the close collaboration of the artist. On view from October 21, 2022, through February 20, 2023, the exhibition fills the museum's Frank Lloyd Wright–designed rotunda and an adjacent Tower Gallery. Encompassing paintings, oil sketches, collages, prints, and freestanding “cutout” works, the show opens with the artist's intimate sketches of riders on the New York City subway from his student days in the 1940s and culminates in the rapturous and immersive landscapes that have dominated his output in recent years.

Across eight decades of intense creative production, Alex Katz (b. 1927, Brooklyn, New York) has sought to capture visual experience in the present tense. Writing in 1961, Katz noted that “Eternity exists in minutes of absolute awareness. Painting, when successful, seems to be a synthetic reflection of this condition.” Whether evoking a glancing exchange between friends or a shaft of light filtered through trees, he has aimed to create a record of “quick things passing,” compressing the flux of everyday life into a vivid burst of optical perception.

Emerging as an artist in the mid-20th century, Katz forged a mode of figurative painting that fused the energy and distillation of Abstract Expressionist canvases with the American vernaculars of the magazine, billboard, and movie screen. He has turned to his direct surroundings in downtown New York City and coastal Maine as his primary subject matter throughout his career, engaging the traditional painterly subjects of portraiture, genre scenes of everyday life, and landscape.

The exhibition's title, *Gathering*, references the study of the visible world evoked in the 1951 poem “Salute” by Katz's admired friend James Schuyler. Equally, it summons the notion of a lifetime of work

assembled within the structure of a retrospective, and the gathering of Katz's sitters within the uniquely open space of the rotunda. Whether depicting individuals or social groups, Katz's portraits document an evolving community of poets, artists, dancers, musicians, and critics who have animated a downtown avant-garde since the midcentury, including Frank O'Hara, Robert Rauschenberg, Paul Taylor, LeRoi Jones (later Amiri Baraka), Joe Brainard, Kynaston McShine, Anne Waldman, John Ashbery, Meredith Monk, Allen Ginsberg, Mariko Mori, Bill T. Jones, and Joan Jonas. A number of portrait subjects recur in the course of the loosely chronological installation, most notably Ada Katz, the accomplished research biologist and Fulbright scholar whom the artist married in 1958 and has depicted over a thousand times since. Described by the poet Frank O'Hara as "a presence and at the same time a pictorial conceit of style," Ada functions as the iconographic heart of Katz's work, a physiognomy and a subjectivity studied across the arc of both the subject's individual life and the artist's creative development.

The exhibition is accompanied by a scholarly catalogue, featuring eleven newly commissioned essays by David Breslin, Katherine Brinson, Jennifer Y. Chuong, David Max Horowitz, Arthur Jafa, Katie Kitamura, Wayne Koestenbaum, Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, Kevin Lotery, Prudence Peiffer, and Levi Prombaum. In addition to an extensive plates section and comprehensive exhibition and publication histories, the book contains a Sourcebook of 36 reviews, texts, and poems from an eminent group of writers who have responded to Katz's work at different points in his career, cohering into an illuminating document of the artist's rich and mutable critical reception from the 1950s to the present day.

A series of digital productions will complement the retrospective, including a newly captured and intimate video portrait of the artist at work and an audio guide highlighting observations by Guggenheim curators and notable sitters who appear in Katz's paintings, including choreographer Bill T. Jones, poet Vincent Katz, composer Meredith Monk, and poet Anne Waldman.

"[Katz is] such an honest person," shares Monk for the audio guide. "And I think his art has an honesty. And I think his work has a lot of love in it, but it doesn't have to be explicit. The love is implicit, because he chooses what he loves to paint. [Laughs] You know, that's the key. His love is in his choice of his subject matter, but he doesn't have to do anything more than just have it be what it is. And then the love comes through."

The guide also features the Guggenheim's collaboration with the music house West Channel, with original compositions inspired by Katz's paintings by Rena Anakwe, Peter Bayne, Oli Chang, Elori Saxl, Michael Sempert, and Hoshiko Yamane. Visitors can enjoy a 40-minute version of these pieces while moving through the show.

Furthermore, Works & Process will present the Paul Taylor Dance Company in the Guggenheim on October 25–26 for three special performances of *Polaris*, a 1976 collaboration choreographed by Paul

Taylor and set and costumes designs by Alex Katz. Selected for the museum's rotunda by Michael Novak, Paul Taylor Dance Company Artistic Director, these performances of *Polaris* will offer audiences a unique and unprecedented opportunity to see Taylor and Katz's sculptural collaboration—normally performed on a proscenium stage—in the round. On October 27, a public program exploring three decades of their collaboration will take place at the New York Library for the Performing Arts, hosted by Works & Process and the Library's Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

Alex Katz: Gathering is organized by Katherine Brinson, Daskalopoulos Curator, Contemporary Art, with Terra Warren, Curatorial Assistant, and with additional support from Andrea Zambrano, Curatorial Assistant.

Funders

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About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation was established in 1937 and is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of modern and contemporary art through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The international constellation of museums includes the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; the

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