

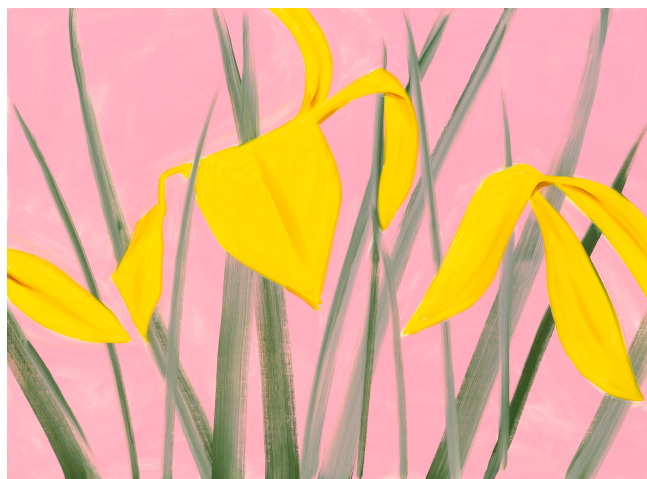
RICHARD GRAY GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Alex Katz: Flowers

November 11, 2019 - January 10, 2020

Richard Gray Gallery
875 North Michigan Avenue
Suite 3800
Chicago, IL 60611



Alex Katz, *Iris 2*, 2019

CHICAGO - Richard Gray Gallery is pleased to present *Flowers*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by Alex Katz. The exhibition will be on view at the gallery's Michigan Avenue location in Chicago from November 11, 2019 through January 10, 2020.

Widely acclaimed for his graphic portraiture and expansive landscapes, American artist Alex Katz showcases a new body of *Iris* oil paintings that continue his dedicated interest in the natural environment. This exhibition highlights the artist's process by showing Katz's intimately scaled painting studies alongside his larger works. Here, Katz depicts his floral subjects in tightly cropped compositions, deftly distilled down to their fundamental components. Created at the artist's studio in Maine, the *Iris* paintings recall his first encounter with painting *en plein air* in 1949 at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture. Painting studies are paramount to Katz's studio practice, as he works from life when drafting them in an effort to capture the fleeting inspirational moment. Only after refining the studies to convey the essence of his subjects does Katz translate the compositions to a larger canvas. This technique, poet and critic John Yau confirms, is "Katz's way of staying true to the shock of the original perception... His subject is the present tense of seeing, not something recollected in tranquility."¹

Within this focused exhibition, Katz's *Iris*es are depicted in his signature style—flower petals appear as splashes of yellow among broad criss-crossing strokes of blue-green stems, all overlaid on lively backgrounds of pink, orange, or green. Blending formal aspects of abstraction and representation, Katz allows each composition to operate as both an intimate still life and an enveloping landscape that, as author and critic Calvin Tomkins describes, "make us see the world the way he sees it, clear and up close, with all but the most essential details pared away."²

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Alex Katz (American, b. 1927) is one of the most recognized and widely exhibited artists of his generation. Often associated with the Pop Art movement, Katz began exhibiting his work in 1954, and since that time has produced an iconic body of work including paintings, drawings, sculpture, and prints. His earliest work took inspiration from multiple facets of mid-century American culture and aesthetics, including television, film, and advertising, and over the past five and a half decades he has established himself as a preeminent painter of contemporary life, whose distinctive portraits and lyrical landscapes bear a flattened surface and consistent economy of line.

Utilizing characteristically wide brushstrokes, large swaths of color, and refined compositions, Katz created what art historian Robert Storr has notably called "a new and distinctive type of realism in American art which combines aspects of both abstraction and representation." Since the 1950s, Alex Katz's work has been the subject of more than 200 solo exhibitions and nearly 500 group exhibitions around the world. His work can be found in more than 100 public collections worldwide, including the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Tate, London; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among many others.

CURRENT + UPCOMING

Leon Polk Smith: Endless Space, Gray Warehouse, September 13 - November 23, 2019

Art Basel Miami Beach, December 4-8, 2019

ADAA, The Art Show, New York, February 27 - March 1, 2019

For press inquiries, please contact Becky Daniel, 312/642-8877, bd@richardgraygallery.com

Gray's Michigan Avenue galleries are open 10 AM - 5:30 PM, Monday – Friday.

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¹ John Yau, "Alex Katz at 90," in *Alex Katz: Grass and Trees* (Chicago: Richard Gray Gallery, 2018), 20-21.

² Calvin Tomkins, "Alex Katz's Life in Art," in *The New Yorker*, August 27, 2018. <https://www.newyorker.com>.