

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**HIGH MUSEUM OF ART PREMIERES MAJOR U.S. EXHIBITION OF
ALEX KATZ LANDSCAPES**

*Featuring more than a dozen of the artist's large-scale paintings
on view together for the first time*

ATLANTA, April 7, 2015 – In summer 2015, the High Museum of Art will present a major exhibition of 60 works created between 1954 and 2013 by internationally acclaimed American artist Alex Katz, including 15 monumental landscape paintings to be displayed publicly together for the first time. “Alex Katz, This Is Now” is one of the largest exhibitions focused on the artist’s landscapes in almost 20 years. The High is the sole U.S. venue for the exhibition, which will also tour to the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

On view from June 21 to Sept. 6, 2015, the exhibition will trace Katz’s unique artistic treatment of the landscape throughout the trajectory of his career, from his 1950s collages that use the environment as a setting for the human figure, to the artist’s later works, which illustrate Katz’s shift to landscape as the dominant subject. Approximately one third of the paintings featured in the exhibition were created by Katz within the last decade, offering visitors an opportunity to view the artist’s contemporary works alongside early examples from his career.

“The works in ‘This Is Now’ reveal the absolute clarity and power of Katz’s vision, which has enabled his work to stand out among his contemporaries since the 1950s as new art movements were introduced,” said Michael Rooks, Wieland Family curator of modern and contemporary art at the High. “Today, at the age of 87, Katz seems as young as any emerging artist. He paints with gutsiness and a personal resolve that has driven his practice for six decades, but which has become increasingly accelerated in recent years, reflecting a uniquely American boldness and steadfastness of purpose.”

“We are delighted to build on the High’s commitment to engage our audiences with the work of living artists and to provide a platform for such a major figure in American art,” said Michael E. Shapiro, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr. director of the High.

Katz utilizes a signature shorthand of rapid paint-handling to convey essential, abridged imagery, which is even more urgent and powerful in the landscapes of his late career. “This Is Now” places particular focus on what Katz calls his “environmental paintings.” These works, in monumental size and scale, engulf viewers with their expansive, painterly surfaces that depict moments of intense observation in the landscape—what Katz describes as “flashes” of perception or “quick things passing.”

In these paintings, images are often cropped and lack a specific point of spatial reference, such as a horizon line, thus inviting a contemplative experience and generating the feeling of immersion in Katz’s open-ended pictorial space. Works in “This Is Now” will demonstrate the very

deliberate choices that Katz makes to translate the temporal nature of “quick things passing” into keenly observed and powerfully felt moments of perception—when the understanding of visual information and the construction of one’s relationship to it happen simultaneously.

Among the 15 monumental landscape paintings featured in the exhibition are two recent acquisitions from the High’s collection that exemplify Katz’s unique style: “Winter Landscape 2” (2007) and “Twilight” (1988). “Winter Landscape 2” depicts a stand of trees that have shed their leaves, which are set against a cool, snowy background. In the galleries, the painting will be complemented by works from Katz’s “January” series, which incorporate the same composition, demonstrating Katz’s repeated return to subjects and specific imagery. “Twilight” features small slivers of a moonlit sky as seen through the top of a grove of shadowy fir trees.

Other significant works in the exhibition include:

- **“10:30 am”** (2006) – Elements of this large-scale work demonstrate what Katz calls “environmental” painting. No horizon line or ground plane is indicated in the composition. Instead, it provides a vast, indefinable pictorial space that viewers are invited to enter. A series of tree trunks are rhythmically located across the surface of the painting, while an all-over pattern of leaves provides a counterpoint.
- **“Black Brook 16”** (2001) – This 30-foot painting looks minimal from a distance, but upon closer inspection contains detailed reflections on the surface of the brook.
- **“Blue Umbrella #2”** (1972) – Perhaps Katz’s best-known image, painted of his wife Ada beneath an umbrella, this work is an early example of Katz’s use of the environment as a setting for the figure.
- **“7:45pm Monday, 7:45pm Tuesday, 7:45pm Wednesday, 7:45pm Thursday”** (1998) – One of Katz’s largest paintings, the work consists of four large panels and depicts four separate moments of the same setting at dusk.

Fundamental to his artistic practice, Katz has cited landscape as “a reason to devote my life to painting.” Upon Katz’s graduation from The Cooper Union in 1949, he began studying at the Skowhegan School for Painting and Sculpture in Maine, where he was exposed to painting *en plein air*. That experience was pivotal in his development as an artist, and landscape painting has remained a fundamental aspect of his practice through subsequent decades.

In the late 1950s, Katz invented a new mode of painting, radically departing from the mainstream American art of the time. Working in a style that became his signature—characterized by the artist’s fixed concentration on a central subject, typically isolated against a monochromatic ground, or landscape—Katz created representational paintings that challenged the New York School’s critical authority, which championed the dominance of non-objective, abstract painting at the time. His paintings corresponded directly to the external appearance of the people and places around him—what American Abstract Expressionist painter Barnett Newman called “object matter.”

Katz applied a renewed focus on landscape as a central theme in his work in the 1980s. He began to produce his monumental paintings, stripping away unnecessary information and representing his subjects in a way that is as much about the essence of form as it is about light, time, and the

appearance of the world around him.

Accompanying “This Is Now” is a fully illustrated catalogue with essays by Rooks, art critic Margaret Graham, and artist David Salle, as well as poems by John Godfrey and Vincent Katz, the artist’s son.

About Alex Katz

Alex Katz (born Brooklyn, N.Y., 1927) is represented in more than 100 museums worldwide, including the Art Institute of Chicago; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; The Tate Gallery, London; the Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, among many others. Katz has been the subject of more than 200 solo exhibitions and nearly 500 group exhibitions around the world since 1951.

Setting out as a young painter in the 1950s, Katz immersed himself in the art world of New York, then populated with the larger-than-life figures of Abstract Expressionism to whom most artists of his generation aspired to emulate. However, in spite of the preeminence of that movement, Katz took a separate path that represented a new direction in painting. Inspired by the open structure of Jackson Pollock’s allover paintings, Katz made the radical decision to apply Pollock’s formal framework to representational painting, employing the idea of the color field as environmental space between and among the things that populated his canvases.

Katz began exhibiting his work in 1954, and since that time has produced a celebrated body of work that includes paintings, drawings, sculpture and prints. His earliest work took inspiration from various aspects of mid-century American culture and society, including television, film and advertising, and over the past five-and-a-half decades he has established himself as a preeminent painter of modern life. Utilizing characteristically wide brushstrokes, large swaths of color, and refined compositions, Katz created what art historian Robert Storr called "a new and distinctive type of realism in American art which combines aspects of both abstraction and representation."

Exhibition Support

This exhibition is organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta. Support for this exhibition is provided by Richard Gray Gallery and Sanford and Barbara Orkin.

High Museum of Art

The High is the leading art museum in the Southeastern U.S. With more than 14,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American and decorative art; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African-American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography, folk art, and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists. For more information about the High, visit high.org.

The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is one of the largest arts centers in the world, home to the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art, and Arts for Learning. Each year, these arts organizations play host to over 1.2 million patrons at the Woodruff Arts Center’s

Midtown Atlanta location, one of the only arts centers in the U.S. to host both visual and performing arts on a single campus. Through its work with educators and schools, the Woodruff Arts Center serves over 300,000 students annually and is the largest arts educator in Georgia.

#

DIGITAL IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Media contact:

Marci Tate
Manager of Public Relations
Tel: 404-733-4585
E-mail: marci.tate@woodruffcenter.org