

[Alex Katz website](#)

[Katz at Timothy Taylor Gallery, New York](#)

[Katz at Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac](#)

ARTnews charted [the progression of a painting during a studio visit in 1962](#), as Katz sketched, mixed paint colors, and refined details on an impromptu work depicting his wife Ada, writer James Schuyler, and photographer Rudolph Burckhardt in raincoats, as the artist's young son enlivened the intimate afternoon.

Katz reflected on his life, education, becoming an artist in New York, his chosen aesthetic and scale, in a [1969 oral history](#) with the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, and a televised interview for the program [Inside New York's Art World in 1978](#). "I wanted to see a new world in a new way...logically life size,"

[The Brooklyn Museum](#) organized an exhibition of Katz's often overlooked [printmaking practice](#) in 1988. The show included screen prints, lithographs, etchings, and woodcuts from the 1950s through the '80s, with a focus on his black and white works and second wave of printmaking beginning in 1965.

"I try to eliminate narrative from the painting. I think narrative goes in past tense, and I was trying to get the paintings into the immediate present." Katz remarked in a [2014 video interview](#) for Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac's epic solo exhibition, [45 Years of Portraits 1969-2014](#).

Katz discussed his life and work in a [conversation in Maine](#) in 2015, filmed in conjunction with an exhibition at the [Colby Museum of Art](#) showcasing his earliest work from the 1950s, and Guggenheim Bilbao's critically acclaimed [2015 exhibition of landscapes](#). The public program included a film made by Katz' son in 1992, of the artist [completing a painting](#) of his wife and muse, Ada, titled [January 3](#), which Katz also discussed with *Vogue* in a [candid 2015 interview](#).

"Sometimes it comes from other paintings, sometimes it comes from real life. But it's immediate. If I'm not thinking about it, it just comes. I'll be doing sit-ups, look at the window, and there's a big pop," Katz told [Phaidon](#) in 2016, a prolific year in which he displayed [new landscapes](#) at Galerie Thaddeaus Ropac, and transformed the [F train's Fifty-seventh Street Station](#) in New York with nineteen five-foot tall paintings, which were transferred to glass and embedded into the walls concrete walls of the underground tunnel.



Katz, 1965

Photograph: Jack Mitchell

"You get real motion when you manipulate [something]," [Katz told Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac](#) for an exhibition of his [Red Dancers](#) series and enduring relationship with performance, which the gallery previously showcased in a [2011 exhibition](#). "With the cropping, it gives you the feeling of a performance," where, he continued, "if the dancer is really good, it becomes life size."

Katz emerged from the sanctuary of his studio in 2019 for two rare long-form conversations about his background, career development, and painting process, which he defines as "quick," with the [National Gallery in D.C.](#) and [Fondation Louis Vuitton](#). "My paintings are about the initial flash of seeing something. I want the immediacy... eternity only exists in the present tense."

In November 2020, [The Gladstone Gallery](#) organized a small but stunning installation of three new tree portraits by Katz, creating an ethereal world that joined the artist's vision of New York winter with the church-turned gallery space of Sant'Andrea de Scaphis in Rome.

The Guggenheim is planning Katz' first [major career retrospective](#) in his home state of New York in 2022.



Katz, 2018

Photo: Gillian Laub

*On view May 5 – August 8, 2021*



Alex Katz (American, b. 1927)

**The Red Band**, 1978

Oil on linen

Private Collection; L2020:126.1

Shaded by an unseen table umbrella and a wide brimmed hat with a decorative red band, the poised figure of Ada Katz rests her chin gently on her hand and gazes pensively into the distance, composed by her husband’s artistic vision into a mirror image of perspectives. Ada is a central subject in Alex Katz’s prolific, seventy-year career, which began in 1950s New York with vivid, figurative canvases that delivered a naturalistic, albeit highly stylized, vision of everyday life utilizing flat planes of color and clean lines. Ada was born to Italian immigrant parents in the Bronx in 1928 and became a distinguished biologist—one of the only women with laboratory credentials—at Memorial Sloan–Kettering Cancer Center in New York. The couple met in late fall, 1957, and married three months after their first date at a Billie Holiday concert. Ada was instrumental in the management of Katz’ early career in New York through the 1960s. She also founded an Off Broadway theater company in 1979, creating an artistic haven for playwrights, poets, and visual artists.

Alex Katz (American, b. 1927)

**Vincent in the Afternoon, 1973**

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2020:30.4

Raised by artistic Russian émigré parents in Depression-era Queens, Alex Katz studied painting at the Cooper Union Art School in Manhattan and rose to prominence in the 1950s amongst the second generation of Abstract Expressionists and fellow figurative painters such as Fairfield Porter (also on display). Though known for his vivid close-up portraits and enigmatic landscapes, Katz is also a prolific printmaker and was a long-time collaborator with modern dance choreographer Paul Taylor, for whom he designed costumes and sets. Simplified forms, clean lines, flat surfaces, and bright, matte palettes constitute the essential elements of Katz's paintings, which frequently feature intimate depictions of family and friends. He captures visual truth without dependence on realistic detail, creating an aesthetic experience of the fleeting moment, which he refers to as "the quick things passing." **Vincent in the Afternoon** depicts Katz thirteen-year-old son, a frequent subject for the artist and now, as an adult and successful poet and art critic, a collaborative partner.



*On view May 13 – August 16, 2020*