



Teacher Resource Notes – KS3-KS5 Summer Season

19 May – 23 September 2012

Alex Katz: Give Me Tomorrow Alex Katz On The Tate Collection 1928: A Cornish Encounter

These notes are designed to support KS3-5 teachers in engaging students as they explore the art work. As well as factual information they provide starting points for discussion, ideas for simple practical activities and suggestions for extended work that could stem from a gallery visit.

To book a gallery visit for your group call 01736 796226 or email stivesticketing@tate.org.uk.

Season Overview

This season Tate St Ives is showing paintings and collages by Alex Katz, plus an eclectic display of works which Katz has chosen from the Tate Collection in Lower Gallery 2. In the Studio there is a one-room archival display *1928: A Cornish Encounter*, which documents this important year in the history of St Ives art. The display of Katz's work is a selected survey from the mid 1950s to 2011.

Alex Katz is 85 and had his first solo show in New York in 1954. His paintings at Tate St Ives explore themes including family portraits, friends and social relationships, style and the American Dream, flowers, seascapes and beach life. Katz's process involves making small studies from life, which he scales up using the traditional charcoal cartoon and pin-hole 'pouncing' method, then paints the final large scale work in one go, working wet on wet. Katz's paintings can be regarded as an antithesis to his contemporary American Abstract Expressionists; Katz chose to represent the cultural context of New York style, fashion and glamour. Alex Katz lives and works in New York and Maine.

Gallery 1 shows early work from the 1950s and early 1960s, including family portraits and landscapes, contrasting early expressionist-influenced works with later paintings using simplified forms and flat, bright monochrome backgrounds.

Upper Gallery 2 is a display of small works, often studies for larger-scale paintings. Katz works *en plein air*, or outside in the landscape, rather than using photography, to capture immediacy and heightened colour. These images of landscapes, seascapes, flowers, family and friends span the 1960s to 2000.

The Apse contains cut-out paper collages made with flat shapes and colour. During the late 1950s Katz experimented with small collages of figures in landscapes, cutting shapes from hand-coloured paper.

Gallery 3 brings Maine seascapes to St Ives with large-scale paintings depicting waves, light and boats.

Gallery 4 includes a large four-panel work, *Eleuthera*, which invites comparisons between art and billboards advertising fashion and lifestyle. Katz usually spends summers working at his beach house by the Maine coast.

Gallery 5 displays recent work in a graphic, colourful style, some shown for the first time, including work very recognisable as homage to Monet.

Lower Gallery 2 is a personal selection by Katz of work from the Tate Collection, showing his influences from Europe, the UK and the USA in an idiosyncratic cross-generational mix of artists. These include Howard Hodgkin, Gary Hume, Franz Kline, Piet Mondrian, William Nicholson, Henri Rousseau, Walter Sickert and Chaim Soutine. Some traditional works from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are also displayed.

The Studio features a display from Tate Archive about St Ives in 1928; a year of particular significance when Ben Nicholson and Christopher Wood had a chance meeting with Alfred Wallis. This is a rare opportunity to view photographs, letters, sketches, facsimiles and postcards as a social record.

Resources to support this show are available in the study area on level three.

Ways of Looking: ideas for KS3-5 groups

Listening to others/responding personally/sensory experiences

A huge amount of information can be revealed just by asking the question 'what do you see?' Once a few ideas are circulating, this often cascades into very imaginative and perceptive ways of viewing the work. Asking 'why do you say that?' invites more considerations and sharing of ideas from students.

- What word(s) does the work make you think about?
- Have you seen anything like this before?
- What do the titles tell you?
- How does it feel to be part of this space?

Visual experience/what can you see

What materials and processes has the artist used to make the work? Have you seen this material in art before? Do you think some materials have more relevance to art than others?

- Is the work part of a series; does the artist paint this subject frequently?
- What is it? (painting, collage, etc)
- How is it displayed? What space does it occupy and how does it relate to other work in the exhibition?
- What is the scale of the artwork and how does this affect our relationship to it?
- Is the work made to be permanent?
- What tactile/surface qualities does the work have?
- Does the work show signs of age?
- What do the archive materials add to your understanding?

Communication of ideas and meaning

- What do you think the artist wants to communicate?
- Is it about real life?
- Is there a story or narrative in the work?
- Does it communicate an issue or theme?
- Does it have cultural, social or political meaning?
- Does it relate to contemporary life?
- Does the title affect the meaning of the work?

Art in context/cultures/times. Local/national/global

- Is the work about a particular place or person?
- Who is the artist? Is it important to know who created the work? Does the artist's background inform the work?
- Does the work comment on contemporary society?
- Does the work relate to a particular period in history?

Gallery 1



Alex Katz

The Black Dress 1960

© Alex Katz/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Katz' muse has been his wife of 54 years, Ada, who features in many images. This room provides an opportunity to see how Katz's style developed from more gestural painting, with visible brushmarks, to a reductive style with flat, monochrome colour. Note the reference to Katz's own painting of James Schuyler (a New York poet in Katz' social circle) behind the model, firmly indicating the setting.

Fashion poses Would you agree that this contemporary figurative painting continues the tradition of social portraiture? Are you able to estimate the time and place from the fashion and hairstyle? Make sketchbook drawings of others in your group, indicating a setting, poses or objects you might include in the final image, to provide clues about time and place.

Cool or emotional? Make comparisons in your sketchbook between this work and earlier paintings, which are looser and brushier. Is there any difference in your emotional response to the more gestural paintings as opposed to those with flat areas of colour? Which do you prefer?

The more the merrier? Why do you think so many different poses are shown in this multiple portrait? Discuss how this compares with Andy Warhol's iconic Pop art repetitive portraits of celebrities.

Upper Gallery 2

ARTIST ROOMS collection is jointly owned by Tate and National Galleries of Scotland and was established through The d'Offay Donation with support from the Art Fund.



Alex Katz

Ocean View 1992

© Alex Katz/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Katz was introduced to the tradition of *en plein air* painting at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. This gallery provides an opportunity to contrast the directness and painterliness of many of these small works with Katz's more considered, but still quickly-executed, large scale images.

Local seascapes Have you seen beaches or sand dunes on your visit to St Ives Bay that remind you of this painting?

Outdoor artists Can you name any UK, USA or European painters famous for painting *en plein air*? What were their paintings about?

Atmosphere and light How would you describe the light in these paintings? Look out over Porthmeor beach and describe the light in St Ives on the day of your visit. Make sketches of the beach from Tate St Ives.

Same old - but different? How contemporary do Katz's paintings of traditional subjects, such as landscapes, seascapes, flowers and portraits, seem to you? Would you agree that Katz uses traditional methods for modern results? How would you reinterpret any of these images now in 2012? Make drawings of your ideas.

Is bigger better? Discuss scale – do you think Katz's work looks better as small images, or do you prefer the larger works? What differences do you think scale makes to the way you view a painting? Are you ever surprised when you view a large painting, previously only seen in a book or as a digital image on a computer screen?

Apse



Alex Katz

Roadmaster 1955-6

© Alex Katz/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Katz thought of his collages as drawings but, unlike the small studies, he made them from memory, working in the studio rather than directly in front of the subject. They recall Henri Matisse's large collages using a similar technique of producing flat, simplified areas of colour from painted paper.

Deconstruction Can you work out how these were made? Were shapes cut or torn? Are they layered or joined like jigsaws? Where did Katz use watercolour rather than coloured paper? Produce diagrams in your sketchbook about their assemblage.

Cartoon simplicity Have you seen images that remind you of Katz's collage work outside art galleries: TV, children's games or computer graphics? Discuss how artists' work influences commercial business and make a list of these related images.

Car advertising How many images from commercial advertising can you think of where cars are photographed in beautiful or exciting settings? Would you agree that Katz has produced an image about an aspirational American lifestyle of desirable cars and the freedom to drive and explore the land? How does *Roadmaster* connect with contemporary advertising?

Style icons and desire Make sketchbook drawings about your ideas that signify aspirational objects and locations today. How would socio/cultural contexts affect these ideas?

Gallery 3



Alex Katz

4.30pm 2007

© Alex Katz/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Katz produced large landscapes and seascapes during the 1980s which he called 'environmental' paintings. He wanted to place the viewer within his image of nature, rather than observing it from a distance. This recent large-scale work uses a reduced colour palette and simplified shapes, blurring the boundary between abstraction and realism.

Where are you? When you look at this painting does it make you feel present in the seascape, or do you merely observe from a distance? How does this work make you feel? Can you name other artists, figurative or abstract, who attempted to make the viewer feel enveloped by their paintings?

Observing process Look closely at the yacht and the fishing boats; do they appear like holes in the blue paint? Some yellow outlines can still be seen; can you identify the different stages in painting the boats?

Degrees of abstraction *4.30pm* might be said to be a more realistic image compared to other works in this gallery, which are painted in monochrome with more abstract markmaking. Would you agree with this statement and which style do you prefer?

Fixing a moment in time Why do you think Katz titled this work *4.30pm*? Is it possible in a painting, rather than a photograph, to capture one moment in time? Challenge yourself to make rapid sketches of Porthmeor beach; how do you decide as an artist to fix a moment in time when the light, wind and weather are constantly changing?

Gallery 4



Alex Katz

Eleuthera 1984

© Alex Katz/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

The paintings in this gallery depict summers Katz spent at his house on the coast of Maine, or family beach holidays further afield, inviting comparisons with the setting of St Ives and the Cornish coastline. *Eleuthera* is one of Katz's most monumental paintings (it is painted on four panels). It shows family and friends on holiday in the Bahamas, drawing attention to their stylish swimwear of the 1980s.

Billboard bathing beauties Does this work remind you of any large advertising posters? Do you think the women seem like posed fashion models rather than a group of friends at the beach? Could this work connect with poseurs who aim to make a visual impact in glamorous holiday settings? Are there any connections with the behaviour of people you have observed? Can you name fashion 'must-haves' for 2012 beachwear?

Framing and lighting Compare the artistic device of cropping some of portraits at the edge of the frame, with centrally-placed portraits in the other galleries. Why do you think Katz has cropped the models in this work? Make drawings of how you envisage the 'missing' parts of the image. Can you establish the light source in this group portrait, or do you think there are multiple light sources?

Time and place What can you surmise about these women and their social context? If you could not see the date on the label, could you guess the time and place this painting evokes? Is there any ambiguity in dating this image? For example, did women usually wear bathing hats in the 1980s or does the image have a retro feel? These bathing suits were designed by Norma Kamali. Do you know what other fashions or designers were trendy in the 1980s?

Panel arrangement Would you like to rearrange the panels in a different order? What difference would this make to the overall image? Would it still have a powerful impact?

Gallery 5



Alex Katz

Black Hat (Bettina) 2010

© Alex Katz/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Black Hat (Bettina) is a striking, graphic portrait. Katz fills the frame with the simplified shapes of the face and a large hat, reminiscent of a movie close-up or glossy, celebrity magazine shoot. The impact is heightened with an intensely monochrome background.

Graphic novels Imagine this painting reduced to the scale of an illustration in a graphic novel; would this image appear out of place? Discuss the differences between this painting and images in graphic novels. In your sketchbook invent storyboarding frames to go either side of this painting; what might happen before and after?

Cropping/proportions Make drawings in your sketchbook that investigate what happens when a figure is painted as a tiny proportion of the frame, gradually increasing the size until the image fills the frame and is cropped. How does this affect the impact and the way the figure is viewed?

Celebrity accessories Most of the canvas space is taken by the hat and sunglasses, rather than the model's face; does this affect your response and understanding of this portrait? Is the face less important than the accessories? The bright yellow background is ambiguous; do you think the model is outside or inside?

Pop art connections Can you make any links to the work of Pop artists? Would you place this painting in a gallery showing Pop art portraits? Make drawings from this work and then make comparisons with artists from the 1960s, like Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein.

Lower Gallery 2



Sir Thomas Lawrence

Miss Caroline Fry 1827

© copyright 2000 Tate, all rights reserved

Lawrence was a leading British portrait painter in the early nineteenth century, painting many important personalities of his time. He was self-taught as a child, though later studied briefly at the Royal Academy Schools, as well as being influenced by Sir Joshua Reynolds. He became an RA in 1794 and Painter-in-Ordinary to King George III in 1792. Lawrence was knighted in 1815. Caroline Fry was a theologian, a writer, a poet and a Christian educator from a wealthy Kentish family.

Social narrative Would you agree that Lawrence conveys Fry's spiritual background with her upturned gaze and the classical church architecture behind her? Compare this painting with Katz's *Red Blouse (Big Ada)* in Gallery 1; both women are portrayed in an outside setting – can you guess at Ada's social context from her portrait? Do you think these women work? Are they wealthy or important?

Tools of the trade Why do you think Lawrence painted in such detail, especially the fabrics worn by his model? Is there evidence of the size of brushes he used? Use your sketchbook to make studies in detail of this painting and compare them to a Katz portrait.

Dramatic enhancements Both Katz and Lawrence use rich colour; discuss how Lawrence uses a theatrical light in his painting to heighten the drama of the portrait. How would you describe the light in Katz's portraits?

Tradition revisited Lawrence was a society portrait painter in the Romantic tradition of the early nineteenth century; do you think that Katz is a re-interpreter of that tradition? How relevant do you consider painted portraits in today's society?

Studio



Christopher Wood

The Fisherman's Farewell 1928

© copyright2000 Tate, all rights reserved

Christopher Wood painted *The Fisherman's Farewell* during his time in Cornwall; the figures are said to be his friends Ben and Winifred Nicholson and their son, Jake, who were also visiting Cornwall and St Ives. Although a family portrait, the physical format of the painting is very much in the landscape tradition, with a busy harbour scene depicted behind the family.

Rich visual narrative The title sets the scene in this work; try describing the events happening in this painting to a partner. Do you think this is a sentimental painting?

Curatorial style Compare the Studio to the other galleries in Tate St Ives. What differences do you note in the way this display is presented? What decisions do you think curators might have to make in hanging a display?

Chance meetings Look around the gallery; why do you think Ben and Winifred Nicholson and Christopher Wood were so inspired by the work of Alfred Wallis?

St Ives Walkabout If you have time on your visit, make a sketch of Wood's painting and then walk to the harbour to find the spot where you think he painted this. How do the colours compare? What viewpoint do you think Wood had? Make a sketch at the harbour, identifying similarities and changes between the harbour today and 1928.

Ben Nicholson Trail Download for free from tate.org.uk/stives or iTunes – uncover the heritage of St Ives on a multimedia tour of the town, connecting places and spaces to Ben Nicholson, his work and his life.

Resources

There is a catalogue to accompany the exhibition *Alex Katz: Give Me Tomorrow* £19.99

Alex Katz

Alex Katz (1998) *Alex Katz*. Galerie Thaddaus Ropac

Alex Katz (1996) *Alex Katz Recent Paintings*. Marlborough Gallery

Alex Katz, Robert Storr, Carter Ratcliff, Iwona Blazwick (2006) *Alex Katz Paints Ada*.
Phaidon Contemporary Artists series

Beate Elsen-Wchwedler (2010) *Alex Katz – Prints, Paintings, Cutouts*. Swiridoff Verlag

Robert Storr, Lawrence Alloway, James Schuyler, Alex Katz (2006) *Alex Katz*. Jewish
Theological Seminary of America

Elke Solomon & Richard S Field (1974) *Alex Katz Prints*. The Whitney Museum

1928

Christopher Andreae (2009) *Winifred Nicholson*. Lund Humphries

Matthew Gale (2002) *Alfred Wallis*. St Ives Artists Series. Tate

Norbert Lynton (1998) *Ben Nicholson*. Phaidon

Peter Khoroché (2008) *Ben Nicholson*. Ashgate

Robert Jones (2006) *Alfred Wallis*. Halsgrove Publishing

Sven Berlin (2007) *Alfred Wallis: Primitive*. Sansom

Virginia Button (2007) *Ben Nicholson*. St Ives Artists Series. Tate

Virginia Button (2004) *Christopher Wood*. St Ives Artists Series. Tate

Tate Collection

Asmund Thorkildsen (2011) *Howard Hodgkin*. Milan: Skira Editore

Caroline Douglas and Dave Hickey (2012) *Gary Hume Flashback*. Hayward Publishing

Cornelia Stabenau (2005) *Rousseau*. Los Angeles: Taschen

David Peters Corbett (2001) *Walter Sickert*. |London: Tate Gallery Publishing

Julia Marciari Alexander and Anthony Lane (2007) *Howard Hodgkin.: Paintings 1992-2007*

Yale Center for British Art and Fitzwilliam Museum

Web links

www.tate.org.uk Visit the Tate website for glossary definitions and for work in the Tate collection.

<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-st-ives/exhibition/alex-katz>

<http://www.alexkatz.com/> Alex Katz' web site contains an extensive references list and links to useful websites

<http://www.architecturaldigest.com/celebrity-homes/2012/artist-alex-katz-manhattan-home-studio-article>

www.alfredwallis.org.uk

www.artfund.org/artistrooms

Definitions

Pouncing—a technique used by Renaissance artists, involving powdered pigment pushed through tiny perforations pricked into a paper cartoon, to transfer the composition onto the surface to be painted.

Ideas for follow up and extended projects

Expressionism/Pop Art connections As a representational artist, Katz chose not to work in the expressionist style dominant during his early career, and instead developed his own style, which was a precursor of Pop art. Where would you place Katz? Research artists from both genres and develop a workbook using digital imagery, your own sketches and altered images that reinterpret paintings you select in both styles. (Gallery 1)

Painting directly from nature Using ideas from Upper Gallery 2, make a series of small works *en plein air*, or painted directly from observation. Choose one image and scale it up using a grid method or projection, or try Katz's method of making a black and white drawing from the painted study and transferring it.

Printmaking from Katz Katz's paintings are defined by simplified forms, flat colours and economy of line: all characteristics of woodcuts, lino prints or foamboard prints. Using ideas from the exhibition develop a series of prints.

Contemporary advertising Katz began making large-scale paintings in the 1960s, influenced by advertising, television and films. Research contemporary advertising images on the internet, magazines, posters and television. Produce a body of work that responds to the aspirational, glossy style of advertisements. (Gallery 4 and 5)

Katz cutouts As well as paintings and collage, Katz made flat sculpture cutouts in painted wood and aluminium. Research this aspect of Katz's work and then develop a cutout freestanding sculpture project using recycled materials. Have you ever seen cardboard cutouts used in advertising or shop displays, or cardboard cutouts of famous people? Where would you display your cutouts? Take photos of your sculptures as 'pop-up' groups in different environments.

Collages Katz made collages between 1954 and 1960, reacting against the monumental scale of abstract expressionist painting predominant at that time. He investigated issues of scale and relationships between image, ground and frame, as well as trying to achieve colour equivalents for light. Research collages by artists like Ben Nicholson, Margaret Mellis and Henri Matisse, then develop a workbook using found papers in different textures, as well as painted paper. Experiment with similar images, either abstract or representational, with varied proportions. (Apse)

Fashion/textiles Many of Katz's images, such as *The Black Dress*, *Eleuthera* and *Black Hat (Bettina)*, are concerned with fashion and style. Reinterpret Katz's work using fabrics, yarns and textiles, using a technique of your choice, either 2D or 3D.

Flower paintings The exhibition displays both small-scale and monumental flower paintings by Katz in Upper Gallery 2 and Gallery 5. Investigate the way other artists, such as Claude Monet, Georgia O' Keefe, Henri Rousseau (Lower Gallery 2) and Vincent Van Gogh have used flowers as a subject, and develop paintings, photographs or sculptures that reinterpret these. Use ICT, video and digital photography with macro lenses to explore close ups and zoom possibilities.

Coastal environments Use your own studies and photographs, Google Earth and internet sources to make comparisons between the coastal environments of St Ives and Maine (Gallery 1, 2 and 3). Responding to these sources, produce ideas for an installation and develop artwork that will be included in your installation.

Chance art fusion Set up an imagined scenario where two or more artists, living or dead, have a chance meeting, as in the 1928 archive display in the Studio. Document and compare their individual work, then plan and develop work that could have arisen after their meeting, fusing ideas and inspirations. You can choose artists working in any media, across any time, from any continent. You might select artists from the Tate Collection in Lower Gallery 2.

Capturing a moment Katz spoke about his intention to capture the time, light and feeling of a place and fixing a permanent image in his painting, like *4.30pm*. He painted studies from direct observation, which recall the freshness of that moment, with the selective and subjective eye of an artist. Develop a body of work where you paint with immediacy from the subject, then record the same image in a photograph and compare the results. Which medium do you regard as more effective for capturing a moment in time as a permanent image?