



Teacher Resource Notes – KS1-KS2 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 KS1-2 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 KS1-2 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

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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 Do you think that this modern 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, standing in poses copied from this painting. Do any of the poses make you feel like a model?

Favourite Ada. How many paintings of Ada can you count in this room? There are many portraits of Ada in this gallery space; some have plain monochrome (one colour) backgrounds and some have a landscape behind the face or figure. Is there a favourite Ada in your group?

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

Upper Gallery 2

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Alex Katz

Penobscot 1999

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Katz was introduced to the tradition of *en plein air* (open 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. A wide range of traditional imagery is represented including flowers, landscapes, portraiture and seascapes. Penobscot is a town on the coast of Maine in the north-eastern United States.

Sunlight Where do you think the sun might be in this painting? Describe the type of brush strokes Katz uses to give the illusion of sun on water.

Different horizons Make a drawing of this painting, noting how many horizontal stripes there are. Make a second drawing of Porthmeor beach, looking out of the large curved window at Tate St Ives. How many similarities are there? What marks can you use to represent light on water? How do the colours in *Penobscot* compare with those at Porthmeor on the day of your visit? Write some words about the colours you see.

Holiday memories Talk about places you have visited for holidays and make word lists of colours, sights, feelings, smells and sounds you have experienced. Can you invent a soundtrack for this painting of *Penobscot*; what noises would you expect to hear?

Is bigger better? Discuss scale – do you think Katz's work looks better as small images, or do you prefer the larger works? 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

Clam digger 1958

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

Katz always paints in front of his sitter, rather than working from photographs. He explains that this assists him with colours. This 1950s work predates Pop art, but anticipates the boldness, simplicity and heightened colour of some 1960s art, especially in the monochromatic background of this painting.

Working on the beach Try getting into the same pose as the clam digger and imagine what it would be like to do this job. Discuss how you would feel after a day's work. Record keywords in your sketchbook. Although the weather looks fine in Katz's work, would you work in bad weather? Have you ever eaten clams? Would you like to be a clam digger?

Simplicity How many colours do you think Katz has used in this painting? Are you surprised by the answer? How do these colours make you feel?

Collage deconstruction. Collages by Katz are also displayed in this space. 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. Can you work out how the collages were constructed? Which pieces were laid down first? Which parts of the image have been painted using watercolour? Does this technique remind you of any cartoons you know?

Gallery 3



Alex Katz

4.30pm 2007

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

Katz made landscape paintings in the late 1980s and 1990s, which he called 'environmental', intending the viewer to feel they were in the landscape itself, rather than looking at the painting as a distant observer. This work develops this theme, with the viewpoint appearing to be somewhere on the sea itself. This work also invites closer investigation into Katz' process, with yellow outlining and underpainting evident, especially in the boats.

Huge horizons Discuss how the vast horizon and the large scale of this painting make you feel. Make a word list about your group's feelings. Do you think you would respond differently if the painting was much smaller or a different shape, such as a square format?

Viewpoints If you were in this seascape where would you be: low down on a small boat, high up on a cruise ship, watching from a harbour?

Perspective and deep space Compare this painting to other works in the show that have shallow space. How does the artist achieve the illusion of distance? Compare the sizes of clouds and boats. Next time you are outside on a cloudy day look at the size of clouds close to you and those near the horizon.

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.

Gallery 4



Alex Katz

Seagull 2010

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

The paintings in this gallery depict images from summers Katz spent at his house on the coast of Maine, or family beach holidays further afield. They invite comparisons with the setting of St Ives, the Cornish coastline and its wildlife.

Giant Did you think this was a painting of a seagull when you first saw this work – or maybe an albatross! Talk about the impact of the size of this bird. Why do you think Katz painted such a large seagull?

Flight and freedom Discuss how this painting makes you feel and make comparisons with your real life experiences of seagulls. Do you like seagulls? Record keywords.

Bird life Look out of the windows at Tate St Ives and make quick sketches from the birds you see flying around or perching on the gallery and nearby beach.

Favourites Which is your favourite work in this gallery? If you were going to interview a friend about their favourite, what questions would you ask? Write your ideas for questions in your sketchbook and then interview friends and record their answers.

Gallery 5



Alex Katz

Homage to Monet 9 2009

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

Alex Katz's studio at Maine is on the edge of a four-mile lake where water lilies grow. He made studies from observation of water lilies and produced works of exaggerated scale, dedicating a series of paintings to Claude Monet; this is one example.

Monet comparisons Make a careful drawing in your sketchbook from this painting, noting the colours. When you are back at school, look at images of water lilies by Monet using an internet search or art books. What differences are there between Katz's and Monet's paintings of water lilies and which do you prefer? Where did Monet paint his water lilies?

Strange Perspectives The lilies are painted as if Katz were viewing them from the side; how do you think Katz was looking at the leaves? Why do you think there is no horizon or pond edge in this painting? Would you paint them in?

Dark waters Are you surprised at the colour of the water in the lake and the colour of the lily leaves? What atmosphere does this dark water create? Would you like to change any colours?

Speed painting Once Katz has made his drawing on canvas he paints quickly, finishing the painting in one session. What size brushes do you think he must use? If he painted slowly, using tiny brushes, how do you think this would affect his work?

Lower Gallery 2



George Stubbs

Horse in the Shade of a Wood 1780

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Stubbs is known as one of the greatest British animal painters and may have taught himself to paint. He was curious about science as well as art, with a particular interest in the anatomical construction of animals, birds and humans; he performed dissections to further his knowledge. He published *The Anatomy of the Horse* 1766 which gained him a Europe-wide reputation.

Background choices Why do you think Stubbs painted such a dark background in this work, compared to his painting of a grey hunter, also displayed here? Can you make any links to backgrounds in any of Katz's paintings? Make connections with Katz's *Seagull*.

Painting speed How long does your group think Stubbs needed to paint this very detailed horse? Katz makes his large paintings in one go, mixing all his colours and preparing his brushes. He painted *Seagull* using this rapid technique. Try making a 30-second sketch of the horse, and then spend three minutes on a drawing. Which do you prefer?

Pets in places Make drawings in your sketchbook about your pet or animals you know. What backgrounds will you draw for them? Or maybe you prefer just one colour for the background?

Katz's selection Look at the date of this painting; are you surprised that Katz chose a work from the eighteenth century? Why do you think Katz is interested in *Horse in the Shade of a Wood*?

Studio



Alfred Wallis

Boats at Rest in Mount's Bay date not known

© The estate of Alfred Wallis

Alfred Wallis was a self-taught artist, much admired by Ben Nicholson and the early St Ives Modernists. His subjects were his own memories, especially the time he worked as a fisherman in the 1870s and the 1880s. Mount's Bay is a wide inlet on the south coast of Penwith. In this work Wallis depicts the fishing fleet, Lizard Lighthouse, Mousehole and St Michael's Mount, compressing the geography of the area within his composition.

Two places/two artists Compare *Boats at Rest in Mount's Bay* with Katz's *Penobscot*, discuss colour, brush strokes, the boats, the sea, and the landscape and then record which one is the favourite in your group. Make sketches from details of each painting.

1928 discoveries Look closely at the postcards and photographs in the archive display. Can you discover which artists wrote each postcard? What were they writing about? Imagine you had just met Alfred Wallis and wanted to write a postcard home; how would you describe your meeting and Alfred Wallis' paintings? Use your sketchbook to record your ideas.

Role play Alfred Wallis was an ex-fisherman; the Nicholsons and Christopher Wood were much more sophisticated and had lived in London and Paris. Start a conversation between them; do you think they understood each other easily? Apart from art, what do you think they spoke about?

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 with links to cross-curricular themes

Geography and Environment

Travels around Tate St Ives

- Make a list of all the places referred to in the exhibition and use the internet or atlases to locate these places. Mark these on a large world map using different coloured map pins and tape or thread.
- Use Google Earth and the internet to discover connections between the marine traditions and heritage of St Ives and Maine. How different/similar are the beach environments? What flowers could you find in these places? What are the temperatures? Contrast lifestyles and economies. Create a display using image, text and objects.

Literacy

Family days out

- Investigate the perfect family day out by interviewing people in your class. You could devise a questionnaire and record the interviews. Select and document text from the transcriptions and write about favourite family days out. Display photographs, advertising material, memorabilia and paintings. What is the favourite destination for your group?

Numeracy

Measuring the exhibition

During your gallery visit collect and record data that you can analyse back in the classroom. Produce graphs and charts, using ICT. Here are some ideas:

- How many different types of paintings are there in the exhibition, eg seascapes, landscapes, portraits, flowers, animals and abstracts?
- Shapes – how many square and rectangle paintings are there? Can you discover any other shapes?
- Which are the largest and smallest works in the show? What is the ratio between them?
- What are the dates of the newest and oldest works in the show? What is the time difference?
- What else can you count and record in the galleries?