

REVIEWS: *Maine*

ALEX KATZ: MAINE/NEW YORK

Colby College Museum of Art • Waterville, ME • www.colby.edu/academics_cs/museum • July 14–December 30, 2012

Since the Paul J. Schupf Wing for the Works of Alex Katz opened in 1996, the Colby College Museum has mounted numerous exhibitions in the artist's honor. The museum has drawn on its extensive Katz holdings and hosted traveling and focused shows, playing a variety of thematic angles, an M.O. similar to what the Farnsworth Art Museum has followed for the Wyeth family.

This time around, Katz's well-known dual citizenship—New York City and Lincolnville, Maine—is highlighted. The Brooklyn-born painter first found his green acres at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 1949, part of a distinguished line of artists who came, saw and stayed (at least seasonally).

The exhibition traces Katz's development as a painter of the pastoral, from several lovely small loose oils from the 1950s of fields, family,



Alex Katz, *West 2*, 1988, oil on linen, 126 x 240". Colby College Museum of Art. Promised gift of the artist. (c) Alex Katz/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

and Camden to the large and often stunning paintings of recent years—pieces like *Reflection with Lilies II* (2010), which, if you didn't know the title, might be viewed as an abstract composition. Katz's Maine can be soft focus and sweet; his airbrushed seagulls contrast sharply with Jamie Wyeth's demonic Monhegan variety.

The Manhattan work also starts out rather freely: *January 4* (1962), in oil, brings to mind Lois Dodd's painterly window studies. The stylized figures soon emerge (and arise): the iconic sun-glassed, evenly coiffed friends and family (including wife Ada) that are Katz's bread and butter. The painter's sense of place shines in several night views of the city where he has distilled Hopper's existential vision to a few lighted windows in a black surround.

Carter Ratcliff's catalogue essay ties the two bodies of work together through the idea of capturing an image "by a glance"—an idea echoed by the artist in a transcribed conversation with Colby Museum director Sharon Corwin, where Katz describes getting involved "in trying to paint the immediate present." This aesthetic often matches the viewing experience of comprehending Katz's fleeting moments.

—Carl Little

REVIEWS: *Massachusetts*

OFF THE WALL

Danforth Museum • Framingham, MA • www.danforthmuseum.org • Through August 5, 2012

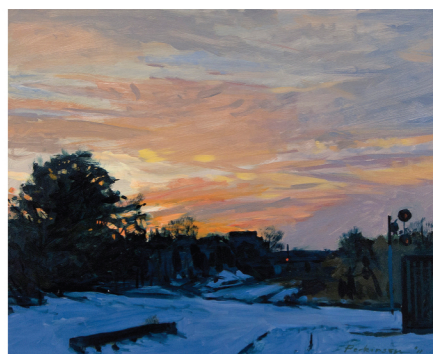
This annual juried exhibition at the Danforth has grown from fifty works when Director Katherine French arrived in 2005 to the present high-water mark of 477 works in the various media of painting, sculpture, drawing, and photography. The contemporary works shown feature experimentation in these media. Many of the show's entrants are well-known artists in the Boston area, such as Liz Awalt, Thaddeus Beal, Prilla Bracket, and Debby Krim. It's an exciting, anticipated exhibition that draws beyond the New England area to include artists as far away as Alabama, New York, Colorado, and Washington State. This year's juror is Cody Hartley, currently director of gifts of art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

In a time when gallery representation and museum exhibitions are increasingly difficult to obtain, the Danforth exhibition creates an opportunity for artists to be recognized. Two hundred of the entries were selected for the exhibition that attracts the attention of curators and gallerists as well as collectors. Last year's

event resulted in exhibition and gallery affiliations as well as the sale of at least twenty-five of the works shown.

One of the outstanding works is *Train Tracks, Winter*, an oil-on-panel painting by Roy Perkinson, in which abstraction and representation merge. It is a desolate snow scene of painterly brushstrokes, a deserted landscape at sunset in a matrix of abstract elements. Another evocative landscape appears in Mary Armstrong's oil and wax *Poet's Clouds (after Blakelock)*, which transforms the scenic views of the dark nineteenth-century painter into a modern vocabulary.

Three Vessels by Ellen Solari consists of suspended baskets in which the oval shapes are of



Roy Perkinson, *Train Tracks, Winter (Framingham)*, 2011, oil on panel, 16 x 20".

loosely woven vines with various projections, appearing more like sculpture than traditional basket forms. In the photographic entries *Cathedral Ruins #1*, *Antigua, Guatemala* is a traditional c-print from a color negative by Jennifer Uhrhane, the view through an opening in an ancient wall looks into a

courtyard, combining picturesque ruins with geometrically defined space.

There are a large number of innovative and original works in various media and approaches. The Danforth Museum is to be commended for giving this opportunity to many emerging artists well worth seeing and encouraging.

—Alicia Faxon