

AMERICAN
art
COLLECTOR





WOLF KAHN

Light and color



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In the 1980s and '90s, Wolf Kahn frequently led master classes at the Santa Fe Art Institute. Kahn, who will be 90 this year, escaped Nazi Germany in 1939 and came to the U.S. in 1940. This year he was awarded the U.S. Department of State's International Medal of Arts and maintains that he is painting more than ever.

LewAllen Galleries in Santa Fe, New Mexico, has assembled works from 1990 to 2016 for an exhibition titled *Wolf Kahn: Light and Color*—his first exhibition in Santa Fe in nearly 30 years. The show continues through September 10.

The gallery notes, "The objects he references—landscapes, trees, hillsides, pastures, streams, barns, sky—are not represented for their own sake but rather—

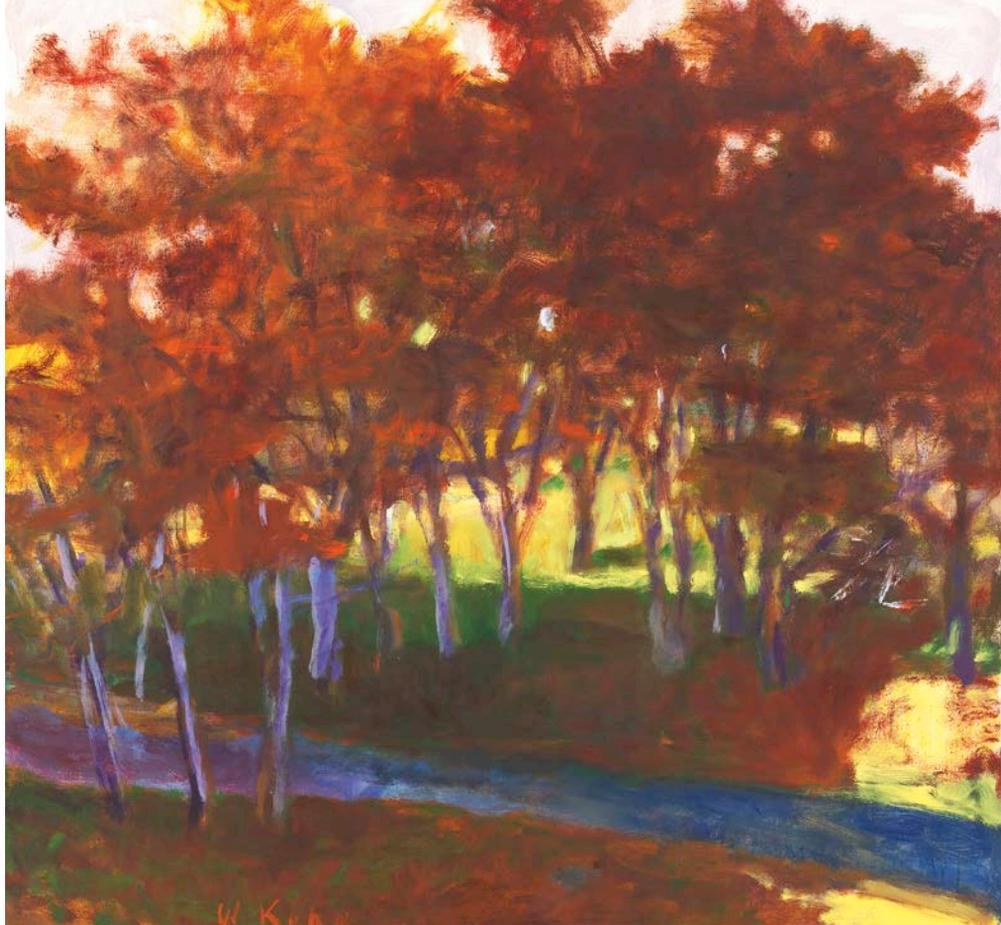
beneath the surface of their appearance—they contain resonance of larger ideas and deep feeling about nature that Kahn gracefully evokes. These transcend time and place and, inciting memory and imagination, they inspire ideas in others: nature as the source and sustainer of life; the land as that which is eternal, connecting past, present and future; and the world as a place full of beauty, no matter the turmoil that otherwise exists."

Kahn studied with Hans Hofmann in New York and later sought to take the best of abstraction, color field painting and representation and combine them. He said, "I don't need to make a tree look just like a tree. Everyone knows what a tree looks like." He calls himself a colorist who "abstracts" the elements of the

1
Spring Haze, oil on canvas, 16 x 24"

2
On the Bank of the Gihon River, oil on canvas, 40 x 42"

3
Apaloosa, oil on canvas, 26 x 32"



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3

landscape and, as a colorist, he pushes the color beyond what we might expect.

His distinctive use of color can be seen in *Spring Haze*, 1999, an oil. He particularly likes the juxtaposition of purple and green. He comments, “For the artist, purple has special qualities. The smallest variation in density of tone is significant. Purple can be made to appear airy or heavy. (Try to make a heavy yellow or an airy black.) It can describe a wide range of psychological meanings, from celebratory to tragic. It can be reticent or call extreme attention to itself—a most useful color.”

Spring Haze also contains a bit of his “scribble-scramble,” an uncontrolled application of lines; in this case suggesting trees. “The aim is to overcome the tyrannies of conscious intention, using intention to get beyond intention. As the Zen Master said: “The best control is no control.”

Kahn’s oils and pastels transcend representation and create what he calls “a field of coloristic excitement”—an experience that rouses the spirit to higher levels of awareness. ●