

# LewAllenGalleries

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## ***Wolf Kahn: Light and Color***

**Exhibition Dates:** July 28 – September 10, 2017

**Opening Reception:** Fri, July 28, 5 – 7 pm

**Gallery Hours:** Mon – Fri, 10-6  
Sat 10-5, Sun 11-4

### **LewAllen Galleries**

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*Deep Gap*, 2003, oil on canvas, 22 x 26 in



*Apaloosa*, 2009, oil on canvas, 26 x 32 in

**Santa Fe, NM** – Now in his 90<sup>th</sup> year, Wolf Kahn is a legend of American abstracted landscape painting, employing his signature interplay of glowing color, evocative form and resplendent light to create a brilliant personal vision of nature that is both expressive and contemplative. LewAllen Galleries is proud to present its first solo exhibition of Kahn's paintings since assuming representation last year of this towering figure of American painting. The show goes on view July 28<sup>th</sup> with an opening reception from 5 – 7 pm, and extends through September 10<sup>th</sup>.

Kahn's long painting career has brought him critical acclaim and an impressive resume of leading private and museum collections in the United States and abroad. Born in Germany in 1929, Kahn escaped the Nazis by immigrating first to England in 1939 and then to the United States in 1940. He studied with, and was studio assistant to, renowned colorist and Abstract Expressionist painter Hans Hofmann. In the 1950s, Kahn led a generation of artists in New York City that sought to reconcile the Abstract Expressionist and Color Field movements with traditional representational art. In contrast to the then-prevailing view in the art world that subject matter was unimportant to a painting's composition, Kahn sought to break down the idea that subject, composition, and color were mutually exclusive.

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Although Kahn was a frequent guest Master Artist in Residence at the Santa Fe Art Institute during the late 1980s to mid-'90s, his work has been largely unavailable in the local art market for nearly 30 years. The LewAllen exhibition is Kahn's first solo show in Santa Fe since 1988 and features more than 35 paintings in oil on canvas surveying the part of Kahn's virtuosic career from 1990 to 2016.



*Blue Ground Fog, 2010, oil on linen, 12 x 20 in*

This major exhibition demonstrates that, despite age, Kahn is at the pinnacle of his prowess as one of the finest and most unique visual interpreters of the land, blending realism with abstracted principles of color field and atmospheric luminosity. His vibrant abstracted landscape paintings celebrate nature while quietly embedding within their beauty powerful ideas about the land and its transcendent connections to the spiritual. Kahn's works are at once vivacious and pensive. They possess obvious joie de vivre but also quiet dignity – genial familiarity but also shrouds of mystery. It is in these counterpoints that Kahn's work attains its artistic greatness, wide appreciation and enduring importance.

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. Beyond its visual excitement, it is the meditative capacity of Kahn's compositions to arouse thoughts like these that infuses his distinctive imagery with its profound and lasting significance.

In a 1996 monograph about Kahn, art writer Justin Spring notes, "Kahn has charted his own course as a painter of landscape, drawing upon the techniques and concerns of abstract expressionism. By doing so he has remained true to an essential impulse: to create work that revitalizes the 500-year-old tradition of landscape painting, incorporating the artistic concerns, techniques, and materials of the immediate present."



*Last Light Along the River, 1990,  
oil on canvas, 52 x 66 in*

Critics have observed how, as he has gotten older, Kahn has become increasingly daring: "Kahn's use of outrageously artificial color schemes in the late paintings has appealed to critics who understand his use of them as the continuing innovation of a restless spirit," writes Louis Finklestein in a recent essay on Kahn's artistic evolution. Writing for the *New York Times*, critic Peter Schjedahl noted "Kahn is an artist concerned primarily with the direct,

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sensual experience of color ... [His] are not colors that sunlight finds in nature; they are colors that an aroused sensibility finds, with joy, in the act of painting."

Still actively working, Kahn spends his summers and autumns in Vermont on a hillside farm, which he and his wife, the painter Emily Mason (also represented by LewAllen Galleries), have owned since 1968. Kahn has received a Fulbright Scholarship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, an Award in Art from the Academy of Arts and Letters, and the U.S. State Department Medal of Art. His work is frequently included in museum exhibitions across North America and internationally, and is part of the permanent collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; the Hirshhorn Museum and the National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, among numerous others.



*On the Bank of the Gihon River*, 2005,  
oil on canvas, 40 x 42 in



*Spring Haze*, 1999, oil on canvas, 16 x 24 in