

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 22, 2018

Wolf Kahn: ***Reaching Up and Bearing Down***

Exhibition Dates: July 27 – August 26, 2018

Opening Reception: Fri, July 27, 5-7 pm

Gallery Hours: Mon – Fri, 10-6
Sat, 10-5

LewAllen Galleries

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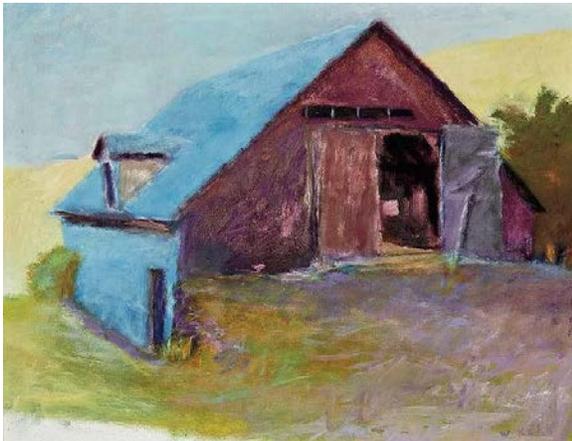
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A Light Blue Sky, 2006,
pastel on paper, 30 x 40 in



Blue Barn, 1975,
oil on canvas, 28 x 36 in

Santa Fe, NM – On July 27th, LewAllen Galleries opens *Reaching Up and Bearing Down*, an extraordinary exhibition of work spanning more than thirty years by acclaimed colorist and abstracted landscape painter Wolf Kahn. Now in his 91st year, Kahn is regarded as one of the leading figures of contemporary American art. This especially unusual exhibition features a never-before-seen group of 21 large-format pastels from various periods of his art-making career, as well as oil on canvas paintings—breathtaking, classic Kahn artworks that thrive in the liminal space between representation and abstraction. The show is on view through August 26th.

This major exhibition demonstrates Kahn’s virtuosity in blending landscape with the abstract principles of color field painting, which combine to make him one of the most distinctive visual interpreters of the land. Inclusion of the striking group of large pastels demonstrates the artist’s fluency with a medium that he describes as one of “immediacy” that allows him to make the most direct recordation of his experience of being in nature.

Central to Kahn’s artistic vision is the expressive interplay of glowing color, evocative form, and resplendent light, calling to mind the intangible, felt sensations of landscape. The subjects Kahn references in paint and pastel – landscapes, trees, hillsides, pastures, streams, barns, sky – are not related for their own sake, but resonate with deeper feelings about nature beneath the surface of their appearance. Transcending time and place, Kahn’s art inspires imagination and memory 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.

As the title *Reaching Up and Bearing Down* makes reference, Kahn's art is comprised of an array of contrasting elements: trees both weighed down by the grasp of their roots and stretching upwards towards the sky; a sense both of reaching up and of bearing down. He perceives his art similar to that of a dancer, whose art occurs both in her movement upward and in her nimble weight on the points of her feet. As such, Kahn's work exhibits a mixture of unexpected contradictions. "In one's highest aspirations," he writes, "one must still keep one's feet on the ground."



A Purple World, 2010,
pastel on paper, 30 x 40 in

The selection of pastels included in the exhibition offers further insight into Kahn's transcendent artistic impulse. Prized among his oeuvre for the inherent textural richness of the medium, they stand as intimate conduits for Kahn's eloquent technique and style. "I believe every artist has one medium that determines the way he uses every other one," Kahn wrote in 2000. "In my work, the determining medium is pastel. Pastel was the thread that tied me to my past." Furthermore, they act as a window into his artistic sensibility: they take on a more visceral, drawn quality that more directly reveals the gesture of the artist's hand and arm as he lays down his lines and shapes. This tactile quality also draws our attention more closely to the surface, and in turn, bends our visual sense of the landscape even further from specificity towards a transcendent sense of spiritual abstraction.



A Purple World, 2010,
pastel on paper, 30 x 40 in

Mara Williams, Chief Curator of the Brattleboro Museum, notes that "the mark a pastel stick makes, the way its powder sits on the page, its texture, its effects are the genesis of [Kahn's] painting style. His virtuosic handling of the medium . . . informs and expands all his artistic endeavors." The artist himself refers to pastel as "the dust on butterflies' wings. It is the milkiness of the haze over Venice, or the velvet darkness of a barn's interior seen through open doors on a brilliant summer day."

Kahn's long 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

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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 an artwork's composition, Kahn sought to break down the idea that subject, composition, and color were mutually exclusive.

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.