

Art in Review

Alex Katz

Gavin Brown's Enterprise
620 Greenwich Street, at Leroy
Street, West Village
Through June 13

Among the more moving art experiences is seeing a painter excel late in life. Alex Katz, 87, is well known for landscapes and portraits that combine direct perception; wet-on-wet speed-painting and scale; and a distinct merging of Pop Art, abstraction and the plein-air tradition. But now he is having one of the best gallery exhibitions of his career, a display of landscape paintings — lately his surest work — that while seeming to modulate his familiar style have a new, more emotional resonance.

"Black Brook 18" is classic Katz: a band of brown that is dotted and bordered with chartreuse, a diaphanous, nearly abstract close-up of nature that also conjures Mark Rothko. But in most of the canvases, Mr. Katz jettisons some of his bravura, inserting a more inward complexity between pure perception and paint that evinces the vastness and hallucinatory power of nature. You can see it in the flat, unyielding planes of green that encroach on the small home in "Red House 4," or the little white house in a work whose title — "Slab City 2" — seems to acknowledge the too-solid pine boughs jutting in from the right side.

"Untitled Landscape 1" depicts



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Alex Katz's "Snow Scene 2" (2014) is among his landscapes at Gavin Brown's Enterprise.

a diagonal hillside like one of Winslow Homer's, but with fish-like blue and gray clouds slaloming down its length that suddenly establish the hill as a tilted horizon. And in "Snow Scene," we

see, through a screen of bare saplings, a small cabin riding a swooping plane of white. A diagonal chunk of blue-gray pine (or spruce) intervenes from the upper left, like a descending cur-

tain. In this rare wintertime view of Maine from Mr. Katz, who has spent more than 60 summers painting away in that state, a harsh loneliness enters the picture.

ROBERTA SMITH