

Unsere Gastbloggerin Irene Mantel hat sich in New York die Ausstellung mit Arbeiten von Alice Neel in der Gallery David Zwirner angesehen. Eine Ausstellung mit Arbeiten von Alice Neel ist derzeit auch in London in der Victoria Miro Gallery zu sehen. Im Herbst werden die Deichtorhallen in Hamburg die beeindruckenden Werke von Alice Neel zeigen. Außerdem ist vor Kurzem das Buch „**Alice Neel – Painter of Modern Life**“ in Deutschland erschienen.

Hier die Eindrücke und Erinnerungen von Irene:

Alice Neel Uptown

It shows works by the artist made during her five decades of living and working in upper Manhattan. In 1938 Alice Neel made her home in Spanish (East) Harlem, and, later, in the Upper West Side just south of Harlem, where she lived from 1962 until her death in 1984. This show, curated by Hilton Als, triggered memories in me.

I remember Alice Neel as she walked erect and slowly through the elegant halls of the Rudolf Steiner School, the Waldorf School, in Manhattan. I was teaching there when her four granddaughters attended this school. Her two sons attended a generation earlier. Alice would not miss the annual school fairs, where she sketched the visitors in appreciation for the scholarships her sons were receiving. She could often be seen by the side of her son Richard's wife Nancy. When in 1980 the gallery across the narrow street from Steiner High School on East 78th Street displayed the nude self-portrait in its window, I, as a 26 year old teacher of German and art history, was in awe. My students' jaws dropped too. They giggled in embarrassment at its candor. It was breathtakingly daring and liberating. Her oldest granddaughter Olivia, in 7th grade at that time was already on the road to becoming a philosopher-scientist and was keeping her classmates on their toes with her polemical inquiries.



1980 Self Portrait, Oil on Canvas, 54 x 40 inches / 137.2 x 101.6 cm, National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.

Later I lived down the street from Neel's old rambling apartment where she had painted in the light-filled front room. It is a shrine today; access is granted only through the family. One still feels Neel's presence. The furnishings that inhabited her paintings are left untouched. This is 300 W 107th Street, a few doors up from where I lived. I still follow Alice when I can.

AUREL SCHEIBLER

Now on to the expansive Zwirner Galleries on East 19th Street between 10th and 11th Avenues. A number of Neel's personal possessions are displayed in neat vitrines at Zwirner: a well-read copy of Lenin, an autographed book by W. E. B. Du Bois, a handwritten letter to Fidel Castro asking permission to paint him in person, and some of her poems that are odes to Harlem. Her powerful paintings, with Hilton Als' accompanying commentary, line the walls.

Alice Neel showed her passion for Spanish Harlem and its residents by painting dignified African American and Latina mothers and their children. She painted artists, actors, poets, writers, the local boys and girls, every-day people, and the social activists. She lived as a white woman among people of color. Neel was always ahead of her time. Even in the late 70s when I moved to New York City to teach, we were told not to cross 96th Street on the East side. Here is a striking ballet dancer seen at Zwirner drawn in sensuous lines whose body looks as if it can just fold into itself.



Alice Neel, "Ballet Dancer" (1950) (© The Estate of Alice Neel, courtesy David Zwirner, New York/London)

You'll also find drawings of the boy Georgie Arce whom she made the subject of portraits between 1950 to 1959 in oil and drawings. He went on errands for her and is shown in several drawings. In the 40s and early 50s she befriended left wing activists. The social critic and academic Harold Cruse is seen in a sensitive, pensive portrait at Zwirner painted before he published "The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual." This book is still on the syllabus of university students in NY today. The activist, playwright and actress Alice Childress, the first black woman to win a Tony nomination, appears in a gorgeous portrait.



Alice Neel, "Harold Cruse" (c. 1950). © The Estate of Alice Neel. Courtesy David Zwirner, New York/London and Victoria Miro, London.

AURELSCHIEBLER

Neel paints her sitters with confident brushstrokes, a gorgeous sense of color, often with an interest in unusual garb, and an ease that sets aglow a celebratory spirit.

A number of Neel's personal possessions are displayed in neat glass cases at Zwirner: a well-read copy of Lenin, an autographed book by W. E. B. Du Bois, a handwritten letter to Fidel Castro asking permission to paint him in person, some of her poems that are odes to Harlem.



Alice Neel, *Building in Harlem*, ca. 1945. Oil on canvas. 34 x 24 1/8 inches. © The Estate of Alice Neel.

Her poems pay tribute to her love for the Barrio.

**I love you Harlem
Your life your frequent
Women, your relief lines
Outside the bank, full
Of women who no dress
In Saks 5th Ave would
Fit, teeth missing, weary,
Out of shape, little black
Arms around their necks
Cling to their skirts
All the wear and worry
Of struggle on their faces
What a treasure of goodness
And life shambles
Thru the streets
Abandoned, despised,
Charged the most, given
The worst
I love you for electing
Marcaronio, and for him being what he is
And for the rich deep vein
Of human feeling buried
Under your fire engines,
Your poverty and your loves**

AUREL SCHEIBLER

Hilton's book with fine essays and beautiful prints can be preordered. Alice Neel's current retrospective at the Fondation Vincent Van Gogh in Arles, France will travel to the Deichtorhallen in Hamburg. I invite you to follow Alice.

ALICE NEEL, Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles 4.3.–17.9.2017

HALLE FÜR AKTUELLE KUNST, Deichtorhallen Hamburg 13. Oktober 2017 – 14. Januar 2018



Alice Neel, *The Spanish Family*, 1943 © Estate of Alice Neel. Photo: Malcolm Varon, NYC. Aus der Ausstellung ALICE NEEL – PAINTER OF MODERN LIFE, 13. Oktober 2016 – 14. Januar 2017 in der Halle für aktuelle Kunst.

Alice Neel -Painter of Modern Life

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Erschienen bei Hatje Cantz.**