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In New York Galleries: Richard Serra, Katherine Bradford & Wolf Kahn

A monumental sculpture on view for only the second time ever, a painter heading in new directions, and captivating landscapes worth decoding.

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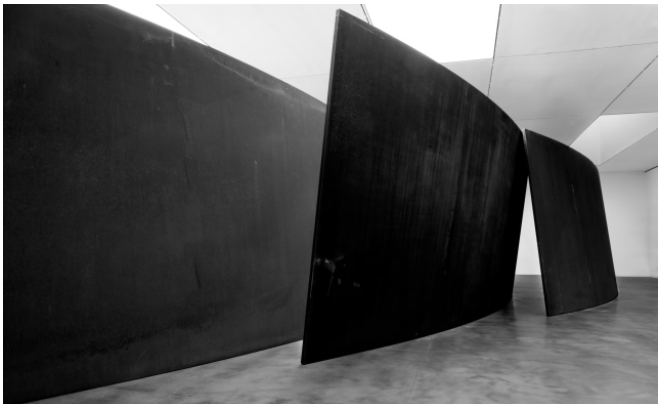
WOLF KAHN
Miles McEnery Gallery, New York
Without knowing the artist, it would be hard to place the paintings of **Wolf Kahn**. Many of his landscapes seem particularly American, though the influence of French Impressionism peeks through the flora; his palette feels indebted to figures like Alexei Jawlensky and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner; and one detects a camaraderie with the Color Field painters. This melting pot of influences makes sense considering Kahn (1927-2020) was a German-born immigrant who spent time in England, studied with Hans Hofmann, lived for a stint in Italy, resided in New York and summered in Vermont.

Wolf Kahn, *Barn at the Edge of the Woods V*, 1974.
Courtesy of The Wolf Kahn Foundation and Miles McEnery Gallery.

At Miles McEnery Gallery, visitors are treated to a brief overview of his mid and late career through a selection of works, curated by M. Rachael Arauz, from the mid-'70s onward, which emphasizes why it is so hard to categorize Kahn. Abstraction meets landscape; painterly application meets rough-and-tumble applications. Plants are gently rendered, branches and trunks vigorously scratched in. A jumble of rectangles snaps into a rigidly composed vista of a white gate set into an earthy wall.

Kahn's most representational works are his least interesting; it's in the careful dissection of his elements and the revelation of what we're looking at that the most joy is found. A sea of yellow—ocher, dandelion, goldenrod—seems to support a single tree backed by a dark vacuum, but as our eyes adjust, we realize a barn in deepest alizarin crimson dominates the scene. Elsewhere, a stripe of lemon yellow radiates against an inky background, interrupted by numerous dark patches. Looking up, we discover that these are the naked trunks of trees, their reedy, leafless tops scraping against a gray sky. Kahn's work is many things—study in color and juxtaposition, exercise in mark-making, celebration of nature. It defies quick definition, but beautiful is as good a word as any.



Richard Serra, *Running Arcs (For John Cage)*, 1992.
Courtesy of Gagosian.

RICHARD SERRA
Gagosian, New York

A month after the pioneering avant-garde composer John Cage died in 1992, **Richard Serra's** elegiac tripartite "Running Arcs (For John Cage)" went on view at Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf, Germany. For the first time since that presentation, it is being exhibited, this time at Gagosian's 21st Street location, and it is truly as powerful as any of the Minimalist's better known titanic works.

Comprising three identical steel sections, each roughly 52 feet long and 13 feet high, inverted and curved along one another at various angles, it is a daring tribute to Serra's friend and collaborator, and a meditation on death and what comes after. Walking between the hulking metal sheets in one direction, we see an outlet on the other side that looks sizable, but as we grow closer, we realize that this egress is smaller than it first appeared. Squeezing through its aperture, it's easy to reflect on the winnowing that happens at the end of our days, as physical, mental and other abilities slowly fade. Traversing the other path in the opposite direction, we spy no outlet, but forge ahead nonetheless, rounding a gentle corner to be greeted with an expansive opening to the outside world—an invitation to breath and relax after the metaphorical struggle that has come before; an intimation that after life's suffering, there is succor.

Circling the sculpture we are also treated to a sly autobiographical nod from Serra, who died last year. The slanting sides of the work appear as a yawing, rusted ship. A subtle reference to Serra's father, a pipe fitter at a shipyard near San Francisco, it also puts us in mind of Charon's ferry, shuttling souls across Stygian waters. For the mournful subject matter, this is a work that makes one feel very much alive.

KATHERINE BRADFORD
CANADA

Katherine Bradford (b. 1942) is well into the sixth decade of her career, but despite this veteran status and her success at developing an instantly recognizable style, she's still constantly experimenting. This is abundantly clear in her current show at the gallery Canada, a presentation of 15 paintings created this year that shows her diving deeper into themes she has explored before, riffing on art history and venturing into new realms of style, subject matter and palette.

Katherine Bradford, "Communal Table," CANADA, New York, NY, 2025.
Courtesy of CANADA.

Best known for aquatic scenes with brushily rendered figures in warm oranges and pinks, Ms. Bradford has also created a sizable body of work that plunges her characters into the cosmos, substituting the blues and greens of water for the purples and blacks of deep space. These have always been the weaker part of her output, and here she doubles down on her galactic pursuits by going bigger in multiple senses, filling hefty canvases with countless moons, stars and other celestial orbs. However, this upscaling

only underscores the shortcomings of these images, leaving us not in awe of the heavens but adrift in the void.

Of greater success are her more saturated works that crank up the figurative elements while also embracing more abstract settings. *The Gifting Bowl* includes a faceless, yellow figure holding a weighty book while a trio of colorful hands reach down from the painting's ceiling to grasp into a transparent bowl. The patchwork of multicolored figures in *Communal Table* brings to mind the grids of Stanley Whitney and Sean Scully. A hovering patch of light in *Low Shining Sun* seems to be a homage to both Rothko and Ron Gorchov. The composition of *Quiet Procession*, with bent, prone and erect figures, each subdivided into simmering blocks of color, is simply sublime. Ms. Bradford continues to take risks, and this show is rich in their rewards.