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ALEX KATZ

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Have you taken a yellow taxi in New York and as an ad played on the screen in front of you, were your eyes swinging from that screen to the view of the streets and the autumn trees sailing past? Alex Katz has. Those thirsty eyes were submerged in the vibrant colors of the New York Fall. Swinging back to the ad, Katz, the most pragmatic figure painter of the everyday, was intrigued to recognize something true and possibly ancient in the banality of the figures in the black Calvin Klein underwear. It was an unresolvable equation: the final degraded end of the neoclassical ideal, and a visceral unconscious sensation of seeing - each crashing against the other inside his 96-year-old skull.

These men and women, under Katz's eye and brush, are scooped out of that fifteen-second sad loop of contemporary aspiration to regain the timelessness of human flesh and form. In the monochrome restraint of the black backdrop, black garment and bare pale skin, an unbroken line is charted, from the unsullied beauty of Renaissance marble, through to the purity of the black-clad downtown cultured New Yorker of the late late 20th century. In fact, Goethe declared that only "uneducated people, and children have a great predilection for vivid colors" and that "people of refinement avoid vivid colors in their dress and the objects that are about them."

Yet what to do about our eyes, parched and yearning for the freshly squeezed juice of pure spectrum? Katz is here for you. These paintings of New York trees in October are the most exuberant and euphoric Autumn paintings of all time. Each panel is drenched in pure unabashed saturated color, punctuated by syncopated leaves dancing happily down in gravity's embrace.

Our apologies dear reader as this tale of binaries in opposition is a trivial conceit. These two moments of Katz-ian visual apprehension did not occur in unison, but some years apart. Calvin Klein was indeed in the back of that yellow taxi, while the sensory jubilation of Autumn was on foot, outside his West Broadway studio. However, they are now brought together here in Rome and the equation does have the chance to resolve. Only now inside the viewer's skull. In Rome, Alex shows us the full span of ourselves: the hungry animal, and the social human.

The leaves fall one by
One
And call the
Autumn time a fool.