



Alice Neel, *Marxist Girl (Irene Peslikas)*, 1972

Huile sur toile / 151.8 x 106.7 cm

Daryl and Steven Roth

© The Estate of Alice Neel

Courtesy The Estate of Alice Neel, David Zwirner, and Victoria Miro, London/Venice

Press release

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Communication and Digital Department

75191 Paris cedex 04

Director

Agnès Benayer

T. + 33 (0)1 44 78 12 87

agnes.benayer@centrepompidou.fr

Press Officer

Dorothee Mireux

T. + 33 (0)1 44 78 46 60

dorothee.mireux@centrepompidou.fr

centrepompidou.fr

Alice Neel An Engaged Eye

10 June – 20 August 2020

Galerie 4, Level 1

The Centre Pompidou is dedicating a major exhibition to Alice Neel (1900-1984), an important North American artist. Born with the century, this remarkable painter was largely overlooked during her own lifetime, but is now celebrated for how acutely she portrayed the different levels of American society. Her vast œuvre has even been compared to Balzac's *La Comédie Humaine* (The Human Comedy). Three years after the retrospective held at the Van Gogh Foundation in Arles, the exhibition, "Alice Neel – An Engaged Eye" presents the artist in a specific light, emphasising her political and social activism, in connection to her membership in the Communist party and involvement in the women's rights movement.

The exhibition reflects Centre Pompidou's commitment to furthering the study and understanding of the work of female artists, and to featuring a greater proportion of their works in the collection.

Throughout her life, Alice Neel painted marginalized individuals, those who were relegated to the fringes of American society, because of their origin, skin colour, eccentricity, sexual orientation or their radical political activism. As she became better known in the 1960s, Alice Neel widened the spectrum of her models to include those from more privileged backgrounds, but she always remained true to her convictions. A few weeks before her death, the painter stated, "In politics and in life I always liked the losers, the underdogs. There was a smell of success that I don't like."



Alice Neel, *Andy Warhol*, 1970
Huile et acrylique sur toile
152.4 x 101.6 cm
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Gift
of Timothy Collins 80.52
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Alice Neel painted a lot of women, particularly female nudes – far removed from traditional depictions of women as objects of the male gaze – and unsentimental portrayals of pregnant female nudes. She even went so far as to portray a victim of domestic violence. For this she became an icon of militant feminism. Foreshadowing contemporary discussions, in 1971 she explained, “I have always believed that women should resent and refuse to accept all the gratuitous insults that men impose upon them.”

Although she lived and worked through the heydays of triumphant abstraction, pop art, minimalism and conceptualism, Alice Neel, a free-spirited, independent woman, pursued her figurative painting, going against the tide of the prevalent avant-garde art scene of New York, a city she had called home since the early 1930s. As a resident of working-class multi-ethnic neighbourhoods – first Greenwich Village and later Spanish Harlem – Alice Neel, a single mother who lived on welfare, felt close to her sitters with whom she sought to identify. Her engagement was never abstract – it was shaped by real experiences. She had no interest in painting a story without the filter of close intimacy. Like the lens of a camera, Alice Neel brought those who had long remained in the shadows and been ignored by society into our field of vision. This was her first political act. The second was her choice of framing which reveals a striking frontality. The artist places us directly in front of her sitters. With great visual power, Alice Neel imposes them on us: look at them!

The exhibition is being shown exclusively in Paris and is divided into two parts loosely conceived, around the notions of the class struggle and the struggle for gender equality. Each section is presented as a thematic retrospective, starting with her earliest works in the late 1920s, which were painted in Cuba, and finishing with the final paintings made shortly before her death in 1984. In all, some 70 paintings and drawings are on view, along with two extracts from a film about the artist made by French artist Michel Auder - in the late 1970's. A selection of unpublished documents is also included in the show.

The exhibition opens with works by two other artists: a portrait of the painter by Robert Mapplethorpe and a work by Jenny Holzer drawn from Alice Neel's FBI record. In October 1955, FBI agents visited Neel to question her as she had been under investigation since 1951 for her ties to the Communist party.

In conjunction with the exhibition, a catalogue bringing together international authors and translations of unpublished interviews and texts by Alice Neel will be published by Les Editions du Centre Pompidou.



Appointments

Press opening
Tuesday 9 June, 11h – 13h
Guided visit by Angela Lampe
from 11h30

TV / Radio Day
Monday 8 June, 10h – 17h
by appointment

Practical information

The Exhibition

Alice Neel - Un regard engagé

10 June - 20 August 2020
Gallery 4, Level 1

Curator **Angela Lampe**,
curator at the Musée national d'art moderne,
modern collections department

Production Manager **Hervé Derouault**
Research Fellow **Nathalie Ernout**
Scenographer-architect **Jasmin Oezcebi**

The Centre Pompidou

75191 Paris cedex 04 / T. 00 33 (0)1 44 78 12 33
Metro: Hôtel de Ville, Rambuteau / RER Châtelet-Les-Halles

Opening times and Admissions

Every day from 11am to 9pm, except Tuesdays and May 1st €14, reduced €11 / Free for those under 18. Young people under 26*, teachers and students at schools of art, drama, dance and music and members of the Maison des artistes may visit the Museum for free and buy tickets for exhibitions at the concessionary rate. Free admission for Centre Pompidou members.

Reservations and print-at-home tickets on :
www.billetterie.centrepompidou.fr

* Nationals of Member States of the EU or the European Economic Area aged 18-25. Valid the same day for the Musée National d'Art Moderne and all exhibitions.

Press contact

Dorothee Mireux
T. 00 33 (0)1 44 78 46 60
dorothee.mireux@centrepompidou.fr

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[#ExpoAliceNeel](https://twitter.com/ExpoAliceNeel)

At the same time

Matisse - Like a novel
13 May - 31 August 2020
Galerie 1, Level 6

Hito Steyerl
24 June - 24 August 2020
Galerie 3, Level 1

Global(e) Resistance
24 June - 26 October 2020
Museum, Galeries du Musée et d'arts graphiques,
Galerie 0, Level 4