WATERVILLE, MAINE, MARCH 18, 2015 – The early work of artist Alex Katz (b. 1927) is the subject of a major new exhibition at the Colby College Museum of Art, on view from July 11 through October 18, 2015. *Brand-New & Terrific: Alex Katz in the 1950s* explores the first decade of the artist’s career, a period characterized by fierce experimentation and innovation from which Katz’s signature style emerged. The exhibition is the first museum survey to focus on the artist’s output from this formative decade.

Curated by Diana Tuite, Katz Curator at the Colby Museum, *Brand-New & Terrific* draws from the Colby Museum’s deep collection of artworks by Alex Katz and will include many rarely seen loans from the artist and other public and private collections.

“The Colby Museum is privileged to serve as a center for the exhibition and study of Alex Katz’s art,” said Sharon Corwin, Colby College Museum of Art director and chief curator. “Katz has such strong roots in Maine, where he started spending his summers in 1949, so we are proud to be able to present the first exhibition dedicated to his early work, much of which was made nearby.”

Installed chronologically in the museum’s 9,000-square-foot Paul J. Schupf Wing for the Works of Alex Katz, *Brand-New & Terrific* includes more than 60 paintings, collages, and cutouts that trace Katz’s technical and stylistic evolution over the course of the decade.

“We’ve borrowed the title from Alex Katz’s 1961 manifesto ‘Brand-New & Terrific,’ which affirmed his intentions to find the contemporary in the traditional form of painting,” stated exhibition curator
Diana Tuite. “What is especially significant about this work is how much it enriches our understanding of the fluid and adaptive exchanges taking place in the 1950s between New York School painters and artists like Katz who were working within a more figurative tradition.”

Born and raised in New York, Katz studied at the Cooper Union in the late 1940s and then attended Maine’s Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 1949 and 1950. There, the artist first began to paint from life and found the subjects that he would depict for years to come—the Maine landscape, his circle of friends, and domestic interiors. Within the same period Katz also turned to found photographs as a source for paintings, such as Group Portrait 2 (c. 1950). With faceless sitters and backgrounds reduced to bands of color, he found the essence of composition by paring it down to its most fundamental elements.

By 1954, inspired in part by the cut paper constructions of Henri Matisse, Katz began to make collages from pieces of watercolored paper. Intimate in scale and delicate in construction, these works were often created at the kitchen table of the Lincolnville, Maine, farmhouse where he still spends his summers. Collages such as Wildflowers in Vase (c. 1954-55), a small bouquet of bright flowers, explore the economy of line and form and the proportionality of color.

These early works helped to lay the foundation for Katz’s mature style—the vibrant palette, use of repetition, and the graphic placement of a figure against a solid ground—that emerged toward the end of the decade. In spite of their small size, paintings like Blueberry Field (1955) and Goldenrod (1955) rehearse the immersive experience of nature for which Katz has become so well-known. Katz’s portraits, often full-length depictions of friends and, after 1957, his wife Ada, primarily appear before chromatic backgrounds. In Ada (1959), Katz’s wife is rendered in blue against a brilliant green backdrop. Another example of work from this period is Irving and Lucy (1958), a portrait of art historian Irving Sandler and his wife set into a vigorously painted but neutral colored ground.

In 1959 Katz began to experiment with repetitions of the same figure within a single composition. These so-called “reduplicative portraits” include Ada Ada (1959), a painting with two images of his wife in a blue housecoat with arms crossed, and the equally conceptually sophisticated Double Portrait of Robert Rauschenberg (1959), in which the artist appears twice, almost mirrored across the center of the canvas. Multiplied but not identical, these figures inspire close examination, raising questions about copies and originals, reproduction, and representation. Also created in 1959, Katz’s first cutouts are freestanding or wall-mounted figures liberated from any ground whatsoever.

**Exhibition Catalogue**
A fully illustrated hardcover catalogue for Brand-New & Terrific features essays by Diana Tuite; Katy Siegel, professor of art history and chief curator, Hunter College and Galleries; Richard Shiff, Effie Marie Cain Regents Chair in Art, University of Texas at Austin; and Eva Díaz, assistant professor of history of art and design, Pratt Institute. The catalogue will be published by Prestel in July 2015.

**Related Exhibitions**
In conjunction with Brand-New & Terrific, the Colby College Museum of Art will present An Artist’s Gift: Acquisitions from the Alex Katz Foundation, curated by Alex Katz and featuring works gifted to the Museum from the Alex Katz Foundation. On view in this exhibition will be a selection of artworks
by contemporary artists including Elizabeth Peyton and Dana Schutz, artists of Katz’s generation such as Ronald Bladen and Al Held, whose reputations continue to grow, and foundational early 20th-century modernists such as Charles Burchfield and Marsden Hartley.

The work of Alex Katz also will be showcased in a number of exhibitions this summer, including Alex Katz, This Is Now at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia, (June 21–Sept. 6, 2015), featuring more than 40 works created between 1954 and 2013, including 15 monumental landscape paintings to be displayed publicly together for the first time. Also upcoming is Alex Katz: Landscapes at Gavin Brown’s enterprise in New York (May 2–June 13, 2015).

Exclusive Exhibition Media Sponsor

Colby College Museum of Art

The Colby Museum is an important center for the exhibition and study of Alex Katz’s art, with a collection of more than 800 works by the artist exhibited in rotating exhibitions in the Paul J. Schupf Wing for the Works of Alex Katz, designed by architect Max Gordon.

Founded in 1959, the Colby College Museum of Art comprises five wings, more than 8,000 works of art, and more than 38,000 square feet of exhibition space. Major works by American masters including John Singleton Copley, Gilbert Stuart, Albert Bierstadt, Winslow Homer, Mary Cassatt, and William Merritt Chase form the core of the historical collection, along with significant holdings of American folk art. The modern movement is represented by important works by artists including John Marin, Marsden Hartley, Georgia O’Keeffe, George Bellows, and Rockwell Kent. The museum also maintains a significant collection of contemporary American art, including works by Chuck Close, Agnes Martin, Sol LeWitt, Dan Flavin, Kara Walker, Elizabeth Murray, Richard Serra, and Terry Winters. Other principal areas of the collection include Greek and Roman antiquities, European prints and drawings, and early Chinese art. The museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

Admission is free. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. It also is open Thursdays until 9 p.m. during the academic year. The public is invited to join the conversation online via dedicated social communities on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (@colbymuseum and #colbymuseum). For additional information, please visit colby.edu/museum.

Colby College

Founded in 1813, Colby is one of America’s most selective colleges. Serving only undergraduates, Colby’s rigorous academic program is rooted in deep exploration of ideas and close interaction with world-class faculty scholars. Students pursue intellectual passions, choosing among 56 majors or developing their own. Independent and collaborative research, study abroad, and internships offer robust opportunities to prepare students for postgraduate success. More than 100 courses at Colby, from across the disciplines, integrate the Museum’s resources to enhance the academic experience. Colby is home to a community of 1,850 dedicated and diverse students from around the globe. Its Maine location provides easy access to world-class research institutions and civic engagement experiences.
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Alex Katz, American (b. 1927), Bather, 1959, oil on linen, 48 x 72 in. (121.92 x 182.88 cm). Paul J. Schupf L.L.D. ’06, Hamilton, N.Y. Lifetime Trust, Gregory O. Koerner Trustee. © Alex Katz/Licensed by VAGA, New York, N.Y.