

Avigdor Arikha

Landscapes

20 January – 24 February 2018

Private View: Friday 19 January, 6-9pm

Blain|Southern
Potsdamer Straße 77-87
10785 Berlin



Avigdor Arikha, *View from Rue de la Chaise*, 2005
Courtesy the Estate of Avigdor Arikha and Blain|Southern

Blain|Southern presents *Landscapes*, a selection of landscape paintings and drawings by Avigdor Arikha (1929-2010), one of the great observational artists of the late twentieth century. The gallery now represents the Estate of Avigdor Arikha and *Landscapes* is the first exhibition of the artist's work. The exhibition is on view in the Long Gallery, beginning a new programme of simultaneous exhibitions at the Berlin gallery.

While Avigdor Arikha is highly regarded for his interiors, still lifes and portraits, most of which he painted in his Paris studio, he also spent long periods in Israel and New York, and he never failed to take his pencil or brush along with him. Spending summers in Israel, he painted the warm walls, arid hills and desert vegetation, and during his frequent trips to New York City, the city's rhythmic, rising grids became a new view to stimulate his eye and hand. His adopted hometown of Paris was his most frequent subject, from iconic Haussmann cityscapes, to seemingly overlooked patches of the city. Wherever he landed his eye, he found a subject, or a structure, worthy of a picture. *Landscapes* allows viewers to travel with the artist, and to see places and perspectives that were important throughout the artist's life.

Window frames inspired the artist wherever he travelled. In *View from Rue de la Chaise* (2005), the warm glow of the interior window frames are contrasted with the cool burst of green from the tree beyond. *Open Window (Gan Rehavia)* (1993) shows a view into a square from an apartment in Jerusalem. The window frame becomes a geometric abstraction, juxtaposed against the picture of vegetation outside. In both paintings, the dry, thinly applied paint, nowhere overworked, brings to mind the luminosity of Pierre Bonnard. *A Path in the Morning* (1994) is a view of the Judean hills, and yet it could be almost anywhere, and it is the particular greyish blue of the shadows in the morning sunlight, so exquisitely observed by the artist, that gives the painting its peculiar power. In addition to the works on canvas, a large number of watercolours, pastels and drawings in pencil and ink will feature in the exhibition. The pastels have all the chromatic vibrancy of the oil paintings, while the ink and pencil drawings combine heightened observational powers with a virtuoso liveliness. The examination of the effect of line, colour and shadow is everywhere reinforced by precise looking, as if the act of perception itself were a form of understanding.

Arikha brings a number of influences to bear on his methods. Although he drew from childhood, his technique developed during his time in Jerusalem, 1944-49, at the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, under the director, Mordecai Ardon, a former student of Bauhaus artists Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Lyonel Feininger and Johannes Itten. An equally important influence are the frescoes of Giotto, Masaccio and Piero della Francesca that he saw for the first time during an Italy trip in 1950. His deep technical know-how allowed him to develop a fast-drying pigment and reconstruct the very difficult process of fresco work that had to be completed within a day before the "giornata" began to dry.

Few artists of the twentieth century could observe a vista and capture its mood with the precision and vivacity of Arikha. Yet no viewpoint is privileged. Everything is a potential subject for a picture. His work is always characterised by a heightened level of concentration, where the rhythm of interlocking rooftops of Manhattan or a shadow across the dusty road becomes a revelation. Each picture becomes an intensely observed place at a particular time, fixed forever against the fleetingness of experience.

Notes to Editors

The exhibition runs concurrent to Michael Joo *Simultaneity Biases*.

About the artist

Avigdor Arikha (b.1929, Bukovina, Romania) moved from Israel to Paris in 1950 where he was an integral part of the artistic and intellectual life of the city until his death on 29 April 2010. A painter, draughtsman, printmaker and art historian, he is known for working only in natural light and for producing each of his works in one day. He has been awarded many prizes and honorary degrees, and named *Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur* in 2005.

Arikha's work is in public collections worldwide including: British Museum, London, UK; Denver Art Museum, Denver, US; Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, IT; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., US; Israel Museum, Jerusalem, IL; The Jewish Museum, New York, US; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, US; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, FR; Musée du Louvre, Paris, FR; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR; National Portrait Gallery, London, UK; Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, UK; Tate, London, UK.

About Blain|Southern

Blain|Southern is a contemporary art gallery based in London and Berlin. The gallery represents an international roster of contemporary artists and is the world-wide representative of The Estate of Lynn Chadwick. The gallery's recent exhibitions include Jake & Dinos Chapman, Michael Simpson, Bernar Venet, Mat Collishaw, Jonas Burgert, Amy Feldman, Tim Noble & Sue Webster, Nasan Tur, Chiharu Shiota and the critically acclaimed group show, *Revolt of the Sage*.

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