

Barry Katz Artist Statement

Barry Katz tries to make objects that are inexplicably affecting. Operating simultaneously as both painting and sculpture, the work could almost be described as non-binary. At the same time, the layered application of color carries the suggestion of something furtive, something hidden beneath the surface, addressing themes of concealment and disclosure.

These pieces also touch on ideas about identity, alienation and belonging, and a sense of otherness, of outsider status, reflected in the work's overall oddness and a kind of imperfect, hand-made lumpiness.

These are all essential elements of what Barry would identify as a queer sensibility.

In both the sculptural pieces and in his graphic work, the motif of discrete forms arrayed across a horizontal field, which has been cropping up in his work for decades, serves a dual role. In one sense, it can be seen as a narrative element suggesting varieties of human interactions. Viewed through another lens, it bears distinct references to musical notation, paying homage to a family history that includes generations of musicians.

One of things Barry strives for is to make work that, to quote the critic Walter Pater, ". . . aspires towards the condition of music." Specifically, the balancing of shape, color, weight, sequence, and carefully calibrated spatial relationships provides an analog to musical intervals, dynamics, tone color, rhythm, and the individual notes that produce chords, melody, counterpoint, and an overall sense of cohesion, all of which conspire to produce an emotional experience for the viewer or listener.

Invoking elements analogous to those employed in music is, for Barry at least, one strategy for creating objects that convey meaning through non-objective means. One strategy among many, to be sure, but with deep roots in his own psyche and sense of self.

Artist Bio

Barry Katz was born in Baltimore and received a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), where he studied painting and graphic design. Following college, he pursued a spiritual quest for several years, becoming a teacher of the Transcendental Meditation technique.

Later, after moving to Connecticut, he devoted his attention to landscape painting and studied privately with Wolf Kahn. Around the same time, he started and for 25 years ran an award-winning homebuilding business in Westport, Connecticut, specializing in high end residences modeled on classical and traditional New England architecture. In the process, he developed an expertise in green and sustainable construction, and is the author of a book, *Practical Green Remodeling*, published by Taunton Press.

During all those years, making art remained a priority for him, and for the past decade it has been a full-time pursuit, creating non-figurative works of handmade, three-dimensional plaster forms with polychrome surfaces in either encaustic or his own studio-made blend of pigment, lime, and acrylic binder, as well as photographs and limited-edition prints.

He currently works and lives in Harlem.