

AUREL SCHEIBLER

ALICE NEEL – Pictures of People

September 28 until November 3, 2007 • Private view: Thursday, September 27, 2007, 6:00– 8:00 pm



Alice Neel, Dorothy Pearlstein, 1970
Oil on canvas 145 x 205 cm (57 x 81 in.)
© 2007 Estate of Alice Neel, Courtesy
Aurel Scheibler, Berlin

Aurel Scheibler is proud to present the first solo exhibition of paintings by the American artist Alice Neel (1900–1984) in Germany. Neel's work is represented in all major American museum collections and Tate Modern, London, yet has rarely been made accessible to a German audience and thus is little known here. The portraits on show at Witzlebenplatz encompass every stage of life—from guileless childhood to fragile old age—and were culled from nearly every decade of her prolific career.

“Every person is a new universe unique with its own laws emphasizing some belief or phase of life immersed in time and rapidly passing by.”

Alice Neel

Although Alice Neel's primary genre was portraiture, she was loath to refer to herself as a portrait painter or to her works as portraits, preferring to call them “pictures of people.” A self-described collector of souls, Neel strived to convey the inner essence of her subjects. An overweening interest in humanity lent her natural talent in analyzing her sitters. Her approach to portraiture combined this keen perception with incisive wit to produce works that were candid and insightful, if not always flattering to the sitter. She did without preliminary drawings, choosing instead to paint her immediate impression. The result, according to Robert Storr, Director of this year's Venice Biennial, is “seeing time happen rather than seeing time stopped.”

Neel was convinced that an individual's portrait could reflect the zeitgeist of its time. Sitters ranging from left-wing activists in Greenwich Village of the '30s to her neighbors in Spanish Harlem to the New York art world of the '60s and '70s offer a chronicle of American society spanning six decades. With the utmost tenacity and disregard for class status, gender roles, and the art world's disdain for portraiture and, eventually, even figuration, she remained true to an unpopular genre and her unconventional style. The life she chose was also free from conventions but exacted its price: Neel constantly struggled to meet the demands of her disparate roles as a single mother and single-minded artist. Despite some recognition early on in her career, it wasn't until the women's movement, which embraced her as a role model, and a return to figuration in art that she was fully acknowledged for her contribution. The Whitney Museum's major retrospective of her work in 1974 marked a turning point in her career.

This exhibition, organized in association with Jeremy Lewison Ltd, London, will be accompanied by **a catalogue** with texts by Elizabeth Peyton and statements by the artist.

In addition, Aurel Scheibler Gallery has organized several screenings in Berlin of the **new documentary film “Alice Neel”** directed by her grandson, Andrew Neel. The film will be shown during the Akademie der Künste's **Doku.Arts film festival** on **September 23** and will have its cinema premiere at **Kant Kino** on **September 26**. Andrew Neel will be present at all events.

For more information: