



AMERICAN  
*art*  
COLLECTOR



STEVEN KATZ

# City life

Steven Katz paints the idea and the feeling of “city.” Elements in his paintings may reference specific places and buildings in New York City where he has lived for 35 years. However, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to stand in one spot and find the scene he has created.

“I’m not talking about New York,” he says. “I think of it as a stage set for something more complicated where I can redesign shapes, lighting and composition. I’m not confined to what I’m actually seeing. I want to say more than you actually see.”

“I try to use abstract elements and work with shape and line,” continues Katz, “always reworking and reinventing.”

Katz often speaks of music in relation to his paintings—themes and variations, rhythm—and recalls that his teacher Aaron Rappaport had classical music playing when they worked together. Rappaport trained him in portraiture in the French academic manner, a training he

feels prepared him for painting and drawing any subject matter. “He gave me a great foundation in drawing in pen and ink,” says Katz.

His recent paintings and etchings will be shown at George Billis Gallery in New York, May 27 to June 21. His etchings harken back to Whistler and to Bellows and Hopper in the ’20s and ’30s during etching’s last heyday.

“My paintings are not true realism. They’re not photorealism because they look painterly,” he explains. “I enjoy seeing and I paint the way you see, not necessarily what you see.” His confidence as a draughtsman gives him the ability and the freedom to be more expressive in drawing lines and applying color.

“Etching had an influence on the way I paint,” he says. “Etching informs the hand to express differently. When you make an etching, you draw the scene in reverse so you look at things differently. You look at objects from another perspective and learn to approach familiar objects and

1  
*Ticket (86 Street),*  
oil on canvas,  
34 x 54"

2  
*Cooper Union,*  
oil on canvas,  
20 x 60"





1



2

draw them freshly each time.”

Several of the paintings in the exhibition are 60-inch-wide panoramas full of vignettes of city life and the distortions our eyes see but our brains correct. Katz feels they are like making a film with continuous movement and action happening in one area that you wouldn't normally see if you were concentrating on action in another area.

Katz makes lots of drawings on site and also takes photographs, returning to the studio to compose with his notes to create what has been called a “poetic whole.” Katz, himself, sees another parallel art form: “The paintings are telling a story. I’ve always been a storyteller.” ●