

Scott Kahn
Silent Night

537 West 20th Street, New York
September 10–October 17, 2026



Scott Kahn, *Silent Night*, 2026. © Scott Kahn. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition by Scott Kahn at the gallery's 537 West 20th Street location in New York. Focusing on the artist's singular landscapes—a genre that is central to his practice—the exhibition will bring together a significant group of new and recent paintings alongside works spanning the previous twenty-five years that explore Kahn's most enduring motifs.

Over more than five decades, Kahn has maintained a commitment to a representational mode of expression, using a distinctive formal language to achieve a nuanced and poetic rendition of the simultaneous splendor and mundanity of the world around him. Rooted in his everyday life and experiences, Kahn's enigmatic landscapes blend real and surreal elements. Many read as near facsimiles of lived experience shot through with electric color or ghostly shadows: billowing clouds that seem to come alive, ominous moonscapes, bare trees electrified by unexpected hues, and picture windows that

open onto worlds both known and unknown. Seasons turn and day recedes into night, change often sweeping across a single canvas.

Though many of Kahn's landscapes depict places he has lived and traveled—comprising, as he has called it, a visual diary—they transcend literal representation of those locales. Kahn suspends the ever-changing cycles and seasons of the natural world at precisely selected moments in time, composing these affective environments using his own well-honed pictographs for elements such as trees, clouds, and grass that are legible as both the thing itself and a universal stand-in. As the artist has described, "That's a kind of freedom for me.... I don't get too bogged down in what a landscape actually is. It's more a vehicle to express a mood. That, to me, is the value of a landscape. A feeling. A mood."¹

In Kahn's newest paintings, he plays with perspective in a way that subtly destabilizes the viewer's experience. *Melt Off* (2026) features a curving horizon that reinforces the windswept feeling of blowing trees and trailing clouds as the winter snow recedes. Bright daylight slips into dusk across the surface of the work, and a path seemingly to nowhere trails off into the twilight terrain. Likewise, *Fall into Winter* (2024) pictures a seasonal shift—the vivid colors of fall ceding to the more subdued tones of winter. The painting lacks a horizon line, collapsing both time and space to conjure the feeling of indeterminacy that frequently accompanies such passages. In *The Basement* (2025), waving red, blue, and green trees, their branches barren, encircle a centrally placed window that looks out onto an endless verdant wood. Based on a recurring dream of the artist's childhood home, the work seems to merge interior and exterior space.

Windows appear frequently in Kahn's body of work, often hovering in space or placed incongruously within a landscape as a harbinger of both the uncertainty and the opportunity of a new chapter. *Leap from the Balcony* (2003) features a golden sunset glimpsed through a wood frame that separates the space of the viewer from an expanse of sea and sky. In *The Leaves Have Fallen* (2024/2025), a tree bifurcates the canvas, creating two distinct compositions—at left, a sunny fall day and at right, a dark winter night—that mirror each other while a latticed window frame floats in the space between.

Another recurrent motif, the full moon is present in the background of a number of works as a sort of omen for the scene laid out beneath. In *Lunar Eclipse II* (2008/2009), the red orb hangs heavy in the night sky, positioned above a seemingly endless field of barren trees that balefully take on its unnatural, glowing hue. By contrast, *Blue Moon* (2021) presents a placid, daytime vista in which thin red cirrus clouds gently surround the outsized sphere. Here, Kahn cannily plays with the chromatic implications of this phrase, presenting a moonscape that pulls the viewer into another realm. As writer and poet John Yau has observed of Kahn's landscapes: "Standing before a painting by Kahn, we begin to see ourselves seeing a world, which, despite its plethora of precise details, remains a mystery, like a beautiful box that cannot be opened up."²

Scott Kahn was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1946. He received a BA from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, in 1967. The following year, Kahn took classes at the Art Students League in New York, where he studied under the painter Theodoros Stamos and encountered other influential artists such as Mark Rothko, though he soon moved away from working in an abstract idiom in favor of

the figurative style for which he has become known. Kahn subsequently completed an MFA at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, in 1970.

Kahn has since been the subject of numerous solo presentations, including *Now and Then*, Ober Gallery, Kent, Connecticut (2018); *Diary*, Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York (2019); *Diary Continued*, Harper's Gallery, East Hampton, New York (2019); *Soul States*, ATM Gallery, New York (2021); and *Afternoon of a Faun*, Harper's Chelsea and Harper's Apartment, New York (2021). In 2021 and 2022, Almine Rech held two solo presentations of Kahn's work in Paris and New York.

In 2024, David Zwirner Hong Kong presented *Scott Kahn: Once in a Blue Moon*, the artist's first solo presentation in Asia and his first with the gallery since his representation was announced earlier the same year.

Kahn has been the recipient of two Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grants (1986 and 1995) and a residency at The Edward F. Albee Foundation in Montauk, New York (1975–1977). His work is held in institutional collections including the He Art Museum (HEM), Foshan, China; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Long Museum, Shanghai; and the Rachofsky Collection, Dallas.

The artist lives and works in Westchester, New York.

Notes

1. Andrew Woolbright in conversation with Scott Kahn, unpublished interview (2025).
2. John Yau, "Scott Kahn's Inimitable Views," *davidzwirner.com* (2024).

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