

# Alice Neel, Uptown

Curated by Hilton Als  
February 23-April 22, 2017

# David Zwirner

525 & 533 West 19th Street  
New York, NY 10011

## 525 Front Gallery Space:



*Mercedes Arroyo*, 1952  
Oil on canvas  
25 × 24 1/8 inches  
(63.5 × 61.3 cm)  
Framed:  
33 3/4 × 32 7/8 × 2 1/2 inches  
(85.7 × 83.5 × 6.4 cm)  
Signed lower left recto  
Daryl and Steven Roth  
Collection

Mercedes Arroyo was a social activist in Spanish Harlem beginning in the 1930s. She was a leader within Harlem's Puerto Rican community, focused on organizing cultural activities, and established an art school for children living on the east side of Spanish Harlem. Jennifer Guglielmo notes, "By the 1940s and 1950s, Arroyo became a regular speaker on the history of cultural and political collaboration between African Americans and Caribbean immigrants, and the continued necessity of such alliances."<sup>1</sup> Arroyo was also a member of the Communist Party USA and taught at the affiliated Jefferson School of Social Science in the 1950s.

<sup>1</sup>Jennifer Guglielmo, "Mercedes Arroyo, 1952," in *Alice Neel's Feminist Portraits: Women Artists, Writers, Activists and Intellectuals*. Exh. cat. (New York: Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, State University of New York at New Paltz, 2003), p. 14.



*Julie and the Doll*, 1943  
Oil on canvas  
28 1/8 × 20 1/4 inches  
(71.4 × 51.4 cm)  
Framed:  
30 3/4 × 22 7/8 × 1 3/4 inches  
(78.1 × 58.1 × 4.4 cm)  
Signed and dated lower  
left recto



*Horace Cayton*, 1949  
Oil on canvas  
30 1/4 × 24 inches  
(76.8 × 61 cm)  
Framed:  
33 × 26 7/8 × 2 inches  
(83.8 × 68.3 × 5.1 cm)  
Signed lower left recto

Horace Cayton (1903-1970) was a sociologist, educator, author, and columnist. He is most well known as the co-author (with St. Clair Drake) of *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*, a history of Chicago's South Side from the 1840s to 1930s. The book was groundbreaking when it was published in 1945 and remains a landmark study of race and the urban experience. Cayton moved to New York from Chicago in 1949, the year this portrait was painted.



*Anselmo*, 1962  
Oil on canvas  
30 × 22 inches  
(76.2 × 55.9 cm)  
Framed:  
32 3/4 × 24 3/4 × 1 7/8 inches  
(83.2 × 62.9 × 4.8 cm)  
Signed and dated lower right  
recto

Anselmo was a neighbor who assisted Neel with handiwork in her apartment, helping her to build bookshelves.

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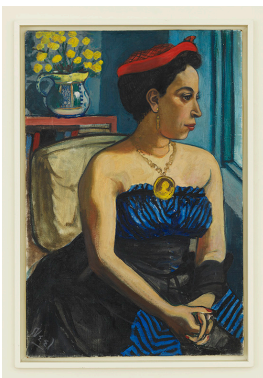
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*Armando Perez*, 1945  
Oil on canvas  
30 × 24 ½ inches  
(76.2 × 62.2 cm)  
Framed:  
32 ⅞ × 27 × 1 ⅞ inches  
(82.9 × 68.6 × 4.8 cm)  
Signed lower left recto

Armando Perez was a musician whom Neel knew, possibly through acquaintances in her neighborhood.

## 525 Back Gallery Space:



*Alice Childress*, 1950  
Oil on canvas  
30 ⅞ × 20 ⅞ inches  
(76.5 × 51.1 cm)  
Framed:  
38 × 27 ⅞ × 1 ½ inches  
(96.5 × 70.8 × 3.8 cm)  
Signed lower left recto  
Collection of Art Berliner

Alice Childress (1916-1994) was an actor, playwright, and novelist. As Hilton Als writes in his 2011 profile on Childress in *The New Yorker*, "Born in 1916, in Charleston, South Carolina, Childress moved to Harlem to live with her grandmother, in 1925. Dreaming of becoming an actress, she joined the American Negro Theatre in 1941, and in 1944 she was nominated for a Tony as Best Supporting Actress, for her role in the Broadway production of 'Anna Lucasta'... But, after that, Childress found little dramatic material that represented the lives of black women she knew, so she began writing it herself."<sup>1</sup> Childress's work was primarily concerned with issues of inequality. Notable plays and books by Childress include, *Florence* (1949); *Trouble in Mind* (1955); *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White* (1966); and *A Hero Ain't Nothin But a Sandwich* (1973). She was the first African-American woman to be honored with an Obie Award when *Trouble In Mind* was selected as the best original Off-Broadway production. In addition to her work in the theater and as a writer, Childress was involved with social causes and helped form an off-Broadway union for actors, working alongside the Actor's Equity Association and the Harlem Stage Hand Local Union.

<sup>1</sup>Hilton Als, "Black and Blue: A new look at Alice Childress." *The New Yorker* (October 10, 2011).



*Ballet Dancer*, 1950  
Oil on canvas  
20 ⅞ × 42 ⅞ inches  
(51.1 × 107 cm)  
Framed:  
24 ⅞ × 45 ¾ × 2 ½ inches  
(63.2 × 116.2 × 6.4 cm)  
Signed lower left recto  
Hall Collection



*Black Spanish-American Family*, 1950  
Oil on panel  
30 × 22 inches  
(76.2 × 55.9 cm)  
Framed:  
37 ⅞ × 29 ⅞ × 1 ½ inches  
(95.6 × 75.2 × 3.8 cm)  
Signed lower right recto  
Private Collection, Chicago

This family was likely from Neel's neighborhood.

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*Building in Harlem*, c. 1945  
Oil on canvas  
34 × 24 1/8 inches  
(86.4 × 61.3 cm)  
Framed:  
41 5/8 × 31 5/8 × 1 1/2 inches  
(105.7 × 80.3 × 3.8 cm)  
Signed lower left recto

This building was likely located on East 108th Street and Lexington Avenue. Many of the buildings nearby have since been torn down and replaced. Neel lived in East (Spanish) Harlem from 1938 and 1962, first on East 107th Street, and then, on East 108th Street from 1942 to 1962, before being relocated by her landlord to West 107th Street, on the Upper West Side, just south of Harlem.



*Harold Cruse*, c. 1950  
Oil on canvas  
31 × 22 inches  
(78.7 × 55.9 cm)  
Framed:  
33 3/4 × 24 3/4 × 1 7/8 inches  
(85.7 × 62.9 × 4.8 cm)  
Signed lower left recto

Harold Cruse would go on to become a key intellectual figure in civil rights and black nationalist movements, and is best known for his widely published academic book *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967). In the 1940s and early 1950s, he wrote plays and was a member of the Communist-affiliated Committee for the Negro in the Arts (CNA). After meeting and traveling to Cuba with LeRoi Jones [Amiri Baraka] in the early 1960s, Cruse taught at Jones's [Baraka's] Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School in Harlem. Neel likely knew Cruse from political and literary circles.



*Spanish Woman*, c. 1950  
Oil on canvas  
38 × 22 inches  
(96.5 × 55.9 cm)  
Framed:  
49 1/2 × 29 5/8 × 1 1/2 inches  
(125.7 × 75.2 × 3.8 cm)  
Signed lower left recto  
Private collection, courtesy  
Robert Miller, New York



*Two Puerto Rican Boys*, 1956  
Oil on canvas  
32 × 28 inches  
(81.3 × 71.1 cm)  
Framed:  
34 3/4 × 30 1/4 × 1 1/2 inches  
(88.3 × 76.8 × 3.8 cm)  
Signed lower left recto  
Jeff and Mei Sze Greene  
Collection

Neel knew the boys depicted in this double portrait from her neighborhood. She explained how, "They came to the door and said, 'We hear that you're painting some Spanish children. Would you paint us?' I remember being exhausted but thinking an opportunity like this will never come again, so I did."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Alice Neel, quoted in Patricia Hills, *Alice Neel* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1983), p. 94.

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*Rudolph Christian*, 1951  
Oil on canvas  
30 ¼ × 24 ⅞ inches  
(76.8 × 61.3 cm)  
Framed:  
33 × 26 ⅞ × 1 ¾ inches  
(83.8 × 68.3 × 4.4 cm)

Rudolph Christian was associated with the left wing political circles that Neel was affiliated with at the time.



*Georgie*, 1950  
Ink on paper  
11 ½ × 8 ½ inches  
(29.2 × 21.6 cm)  
Framed:  
18 ¾ × 15 ⅞ × 1 ½ inches  
(47.6 × 40.3 × 3.8 cm)  
Signed recto

Georgie Arce was a young Puerto Rican boy from Neel's neighborhood who would often run errands for her. He became the subject of several portraits between 1950 and 1959. Neel describes, "When I lived at 21 East 108th Street I had a boxer. One day I was walking along with him. A little Puerto Rican boy, nine or ten, asked me if he could come up and play with him, which was the beginning of a long friendship. His name was Georgie Arce, and I painted him in a number of pictures."<sup>1</sup> Later, in 1974, Arce was convicted of murder and was sentenced to a term of 25 years to life at the Auburn Correctional Facility in Auburn, New York. He was released from prison in 2011 and died shortly thereafter.

<sup>1</sup>Alice Neel, quoted in Patricia Hills, *Alice Neel* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1983), p. 93.



*Georgie*, 1958  
Ink on paper  
11 ½ × 8 ¾ inches  
(29.2 × 22.2 cm)  
Framed:  
18 × 15 ⅞ × 1 inches  
45.7 × 39.1 × 2.5 cm  
Signed and dated lower  
right recto  
The Estate of Alice Neel



*Georgie Arce*, 1955  
Ink on paper  
8 ¾ × 11 ½ inches  
22.2 × 29.2 cm  
Framed:  
15 ⅞ × 18 × 1 inches  
(39.1 × 45.7 × 2.5 cm)  
Signed recto  
Courtesy of a Private Collection

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*Georgie Arce*, 1955  
Oil on canvas  
25 × 15 inches  
(63.5 × 38.1 cm)  
Framed:  
31 × 21 1/8 × 1 1/2 inches  
(78.7 × 53.7 × 3.8 cm)  
Signed recto  
Collection of William T.  
Hillman



*Georgie Arce*, 1952  
Ink and gouache on paper  
13 7/8 × 10 7/8 inches  
(35.2 × 27.6 cm)  
Framed:  
23 1/2 × 20 1/8 inches  
(59.7 × 51.1 cm)  
Signed recto  
Collection John Cheim

## 525/533 Middle Gallery:



*Two Girls*, 1954  
Ink and gouache on paper  
29 1/4 × 21 1/2 inches  
(74.3 × 54.6 cm)  
Framed:  
36 5/8 × 29 1/8 × 1 1/2 inches  
93 × 74 × 3.8 cm  
Signed lower left recto  
Private collection, courtesy  
Robert Miller, New York

These two girls are likely children from Neel's neighborhood.



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## 533 Front Gallery Space:



*Benjamin*, 1976  
Acrylic on board  
29 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 20 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches  
(75.9 × 52.7 cm)  
Framed:  
32 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 22 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 1 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches  
(83.5 × 58.1 × 3.8 cm)

Benjamin was the son of the superintendent of Neel's apartment building on West 107th Street, south of Morningside Heights, where she lived and worked from 1962 to until her death in 1984.



*Yumiko Okamura*, 1976  
Ink on paper  
40 × 25 inches  
(101.6 × 63.5 cm)  
Framed:  
50 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 34 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches  
(127.6 × 87.6 × 4.4 cm)  
Signed and dated lower  
left recto

Yumiko Okamura was a college student at the time of this sitting.



*Cyrus, the Gentle Iranian*, 1979  
Oil on canvas  
39 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 30 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches  
101.3 × 76.5 cm  
Framed:  
43 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 33 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 1 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches  
110.5 × 85.1 × 4.8 cm  
Signed and dated lower  
right recto

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*Black Man, 1966*  
Oil on canvas  
44 × 28 1/8 inches  
(111.8 × 71.4 cm)  
Framed:  
46 3/4 × 31 × 1 7/8 inches  
(118.7 × 78.7 × 4.8 cm)  
Signed and dated lower  
left recto

### 533 Back Gallery Space:



*Ron Kajiware, 1971*  
Oil on canvas  
67 7/8 × 35 1/8 inches  
(172.4 × 89.2 cm)  
Framed:  
71 1/4 × 38 1/2 × 2 inches  
(181 × 97.8 × 5.1 cm)  
Signed and dated lower  
left recto

The son of Japanese immigrants, Ron Kajiware (1944-1990) and his family were detained in a California internment camp during World War II. He later became a design director for *Vogue* and worked as a set designer for a number of productions for the Theater for the New City and the Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theater, among others. In 1990, Kajiware died of AIDS.



*Stephen Shepard, 1978*  
Oil on canvas  
32 × 24 inches  
(81.3 × 61 cm)  
Framed:  
34 3/4 × 26 3/4 × 1 3/4 inches  
(88.3 × 67.9 × 4.4 cm)  
Signed and dated lower  
left recto

Stephen Shepard (who sometimes went by the name Étienne) was an art student at the time of the sitting.

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*Woman*, 1966  
Oil on canvas  
46 × 31 inches  
(116.8 × 78.7 cm)  
Framed:  
48 ¾ × 33 ¾ × 1 ⅞ inches  
(123.8 × 85.7 × 4.8 cm)  
Signed and dated lower  
left recto  
Private Collection, Miami



*The Arab*, 1976  
Oil on canvas  
44 ⅞ × 32 ⅞ inches  
(112.1 × 81.6 cm)  
Framed:  
46 ¾ × 44 ⅞ × 1 ⅞ inches  
(118.7 × 112.1 × 4.8 cm)  
Signed and dated lower  
right recto  
Cantor Arts Center at Stanford  
University, Museum purchase  
made possible by the Robert  
and Ruth Halperin Foundation



*Pregnant Maria*, 1964  
Oil on canvas  
32 × 47 inches  
(81.3 × 119.4 cm)  
Framed:  
40 ½ × 55 ⅞ × ¾ inches  
(102.9 × 140.7 × 1.9 cm)  
Private Collection

Maria was a friend of students who attended Columbia University who lived in Neel's building on West 107th Street.



*Abdul Rahman*, 1964  
Oil on canvas  
46 × 34 ⅞ inches  
(116.8 × 86.7 cm)  
Framed:  
49 ⅞ × 37 ½ × 2 inches  
(125.4 × 95.3 × 5.1 cm)  
Signed and dated lower  
left recto

Abdul Rahman was a taxi driver and self-described Black Muslim nationalist. Here, Neel depicts him wearing a *kufi*, a trench coat and with one glove on and one off. Neel painted two portraits of Rahman in 1964.



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*Ed Sun*, 1971  
Oil on canvas  
42 × 30 inches  
(106.7 × 76.2 cm)  
Framed:  
45 1/2 × 33 5/8 × 2 1/4 inches  
(115.6 × 85.4 × 5.7 cm)  
Signed and dated lower  
left recto

Ed Sun was a medical school associate of Neel's son Hartley.



*Ian and Mary*, 1971  
Oil on canvas  
46 × 50 inches  
(116.8 × 127 cm)  
Framed:  
48 7/8 × 52 7/8 × 1 3/4 inches  
(124.1 × 134.3 × 4.4 cm)  
Signed and dated lower  
left recto

At the time this portrait was painted, Ian Douglas and Mary Ball were seventeen and sixteen years old, respectively. Ian's father was Gavin Douglas, who was connected with the DeVine Gallery, and who was close friends with Neel. In March 1971, he introduced the couple to the artist. Ian's mother was Native American.



*Kanuthia*, 1973  
Oil on canvas  
40 × 30 inches  
(101.6 × 76.2 cm)  
Framed:  
43 3/8 × 33 1/2 × 1 3/4 inches  
(110.2 × 85.1 × 4.4 cm)  
Signed and dated lower  
right recto

In 1973 Neel traveled to Africa with her son Hartley and her life-long friend John Rothschild, where an exhibition of her work had been arranged by Peter Kanuthia, a local radio host and business associate of Rothschild's, at the Paa Ya Paa Art Gallery and Studio in Nairobi. This portrait was painted by Neel later that year, when Kanuthia visited New York.