

Robert Ryman
The Last Paintings

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34 East 69th Street, New York



Robert Ryman, *Untitled*, 2010. © 2022 Robert Ryman / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.
Photo: Bill Jacobson Studio.

David Zwirner is pleased to present *Robert Ryman: The Last Paintings*, on view at the gallery's 69th Street location. This will be the gallery's first exhibition of the artist's work since announcing exclusive global representation of the Estate of Robert Ryman. The exhibition will feature a group of works Ryman created in 2010 to 2011, the last paintings that he would produce before his death in 2019.

Ryman is widely celebrated for his tactile works using white paint, in all its many permutations, which he executed using a range of painterly media on various supports, including paper, canvas, linen, aluminum, vinyl, and newsprint. Emerging in the 1960s, Ryman eschewed self-contained representational and abstract imagery, instead giving precedence to the physical gesture of applying paint to a support. Unlike many of the artists and movements with which he is often associated, such as abstract expressionism and minimalism (labels to which he never subscribed), Ryman neither reveled in the emotive qualities of gesturalism nor sought to eradicate the painterly mark; rather, his works are novel and sensitive explorations of the visual, material, and experiential qualities of his media that exist in a dialogue with their surroundings. His lifelong commitment to working in shades of white served as a means of enhancing the specific and the mutable in the experience of his art, calling further attention to the subtleties that distinguished one composition from another, and also drawing associations to conceptual art practices.

The eight intimately scaled square works on view in this exhibition stand as the culmination of many of the artistic interests and impulses that guided Ryman throughout his career. In these

paintings, expanses of densely worked white, cream, and subtly muted tones of pale green and taupe widen and narrow at the edges of the support to reveal canvases primed in bold matte veils of vivid color. While Ryman often exposed the untreated canvas or ground in many of his works, the colors revealed beneath the loose squares and rhombus-like shapes of variegated whites in these compositions are the most pronounced to ever appear in his practice, harkening back to color elements in some of his earliest, most significant paintings from the 1950s and early 1960s. The burnt orange ground in several of these canvases directly recalls the color of *Untitled (Orange Painting)* (1955 and 1959; promised gift to The Museum of Modern Art, New York), Ryman's first mature painting.

Reminiscent of Ryman's brushwork in his early compositions, each heavily worked surface appears like a textured network of short, gestural daubs and strokes of paint that amass into a vibrant whole. Rather than undermine the visual qualities of the fields of white paint, the rich colors of the grounds draw out these textural and tonal nuances.

Though similar in format and execution, these final canvases continue to demonstrate the inexhaustible and probing nature of Ryman's singular approach to painting.

Robert Ryman (1930–2019) was born in Nashville, Tennessee. Ryman moved to New York in 1952 to pursue a career as a professional jazz musician. That following year, he took a job as a security guard at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, where he would work for seven years. His time working at the museum in part inspired Ryman to devote his life toward painting.

Ryman had his first solo exhibition at Paul Bianchini Gallery, New York, in 1967, followed by several solo shows at influential galleries in Europe and the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, including Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Munich and Cologne (1968, 1969, 1971, 1972); Galerie Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf (1968, 1969, 1973); Fischbach Gallery, New York (1969, 1970, 1971); Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris (1969); Dwan Gallery, New York (1971); and Lisson Gallery, London (1972–1973).

His first institutional solo exhibition was at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 1972. Subsequent solo presentations at museums include those held at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1974); Kunsthalle Basel (1975); P.S. 1, Institute for Art and Urban Resources, Long Island City, New York (1977); Halle für Internationale neue Kunst, Zurich (1978, 1979, 1980); Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (1986); Art Institute of Chicago (traveled to San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; 1987–1988); Tate Gallery, London (traveled to Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; 1993–1994); Haus der Kunst, Munich (traveled to Kunstmuseum Bonn; 2000–2001); Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art, Sakura, Japan (2004); Dallas Museum of Art (2005–2006); The Menil Collection, Houston (2007–2008); and The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC (2010). In 2015 to 2016, Dia: Chelsea, New York,

presented a retrospective of Ryman's work that spanned several decades of the artist's career. The exhibition traveled to Museo Jumex, Mexico City, in 2017.

Ryman's work can be found in prominent institutional collections worldwide, including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Art Institute of Chicago; Baltimore Museum of Art; Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, the Netherlands; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Dallas Museum of Art; Des Moines Art Center, Iowa; Dia Art Foundation, New York; Fundació "la Caixa," Barcelona; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Ho-Am Art Museum, Seoul; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art, Sakura, Japan; Kunsthaus Zürich; Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Switzerland; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; The Menil Collection, Houston; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; Philadelphia Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Seattle Art Museum; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Tate, London; Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, the Netherlands; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut.

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