

# GAGOSIAN

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February 20, 2018



## **CY TWOMBLY** IN BEAUTY IT IS FINISHED: DRAWINGS 1951–2008

Opening reception:  
Thursday, March 8, 6–8PM  
March 8–April 25, 2018

522 West 21st Street  
New York, NY 10011

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*The image cannot be dispossessed of a primordial freshness which ideas can never claim.*  
—John Crowe Ransom, “The World’s Body” (1938)

Gagosian is pleased to present the first career-spanning exhibition of drawings and works on paper by Cy Twombly, organized in association with the Cy Twombly Foundation.

The exhibition marks the completion of the *Cy Twombly: Catalogue Raisonné of Drawings*, with the eighth and final volume. Edited by Nicola Del Roscio, president of the Cy Twombly Foundation, the catalogue raisonné is published by Schirmer/Mosel with the support of the Cy Twombly Foundation. The catalogue’s first volume was published in 2011.

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Throughout his career, Twombly sustained an active engagement with drawing, gesture, and making marks on paper. His urgent, meandering lines embody the intimate energies that carry over into his paintings, sculptures, and photography. Despite their enigmatic qualities, Twombly's drawings are strikingly articulate in their rhythm, line, and allusions. At once economical and deeply sensual, they contain a timeless language, mediating between ancient and modern culture.

In the 1950s, when Twombly was a young artist, Abstract Expressionism radically disrupted the conventions of easel painting. Although he was a contemporary of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, his work eventually departed from the aims of American postwar abstraction. While prevailing movements of the period, such as Minimalism and Pop art, sought to abandon historical narratives altogether, Twombly, who began to spend time in Europe during this period, directed his focus to classical, modern and ancient poetic traditions.

One of the earliest works included in the exhibition is from a 1951 sketchbook. Several drawings feature cascades of pencil markings, subtle gradations, erasures, and other evidence of Twombly's intense contact with the paper. In the late 1950s Twombly moved to Italy, and works from volume 2, which documents this period, include colorful, diagrammatic works such as *Ode to Psyche* (1960), featuring erotic allusions and jokes while maintaining an abstract charge. Through the 1960s, sensuousness and color pervade the drawings, eventually evolving into more austere gray and blue "blackboard" works.

Works from later volumes present changing preoccupations in Twombly's work and thinking, as he plunged further into poetic and mythic sources. While continuing to work in various locations—including his hometown of Lexington, Virginia, and his final residence in Gaeta, Italy—places, landscapes, and natural forms came to figure prominently in drawings, collages, and watercolor series.

Volume 8 presents the final, valedictory phase of Twombly's works on paper. Many of these, which remained in his studio after his death, will be shown for the first time. With sebaceous materials such as oil stick and wax crayon, the late works reveal, in their lyricism and sensuousness, what Twombly described as his "irresponsibility to gravity." The work that lends its title to the show is a book, constructed by the artist with handmade paper, comprising thirty-four pages of markings, begun in December 1983 and finished in 2002, with unruly smears of red, orange, and blue flowerlike forms, a text from a Navajo night chant, and a haiku by Tan Taigi (1709–1771).

Marking what would have been Twombly's ninetieth birthday, this exhibition will coincide with the presentation of his epic ten-part painting *Coronation of Sesostris* (2000) and related works at Gagosian 980 Madison Avenue.

A fully illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition. The catalogue raisonné of drawings will be available for sale at Gagosian Shop and through Gagosian.

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**Cy Twombly** was born in 1928 in Lexington, Virginia, and died in 2011 in Rome, Italy. Collections include the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate, London; Menil Collection, Houston; Museum Brandhorst, Munich; Louvre Abu Dhabi; and Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Recent exhibitions include Tate Modern, London (2008); “Cy Twombly: The Natural World, Selected Works 2000–2007,” Art Institute of Chicago (2009); “Cy Twombly: Sensations of the Moment,” Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna (2009); “Cy Twombly: Sculptures,” Philadelphia Museum of Art (2013); “Cy Twombly: Paradise,” Museo Jumex, Mexico City (2014, traveled to Ca’ Pesaro, Venice in 2015–16); “Cy Twombly: Treatise on the Veil,” Morgan Library & Museum, New York (2014); and the major retrospective “Cy Twombly,” at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2016). In 2010, Twombly’s permanent site-specific painting *Ceiling* was unveiled in the Salle des Bronzes at the Musée du Louvre; at the same time he was made a Chevalier of the Légion d’honneur by the French government.

**Image:** Cy Twombly, *Untitled*, 2001, acrylic, wax crayon, and cut-and-pasted paper on paper, 48 1/8 × 38 3/4 inches (123.2 × 98.4 cm) © Cy Twombly Foundation. Photo by Rob McKeever.

For further information please contact the gallery at [newyork@gagosian.com](mailto:newyork@gagosian.com) or at +1.212.741.1717. All images are subject to copyright. Gallery approval must be granted prior to reproduction.

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