

Pearl Lam Galleries

Hong Kong

Form, Gesture, Feeling: Robert Motherwell 1915–1991

A Centennial Exhibition



L: Robert Motherwell, **Great Wall of China #4**, 1971, Acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 152.4 x 101.6 cm (60 x 40 in.)

R: **In the Studio**, 1984/ca. 1985, Acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 61 x 91.4 cm (24 x 36 in.)

Exhibition Dates

9 September–6 November, 2015

Monday–Saturday, 10am–7pm

Pearl Lam Galleries, 6/F, Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong

Hong Kong—Pearl Lam Galleries is delighted to present the first solo exhibition in Asia of works by pioneer abstract expressionist Robert Motherwell. Celebrating the centenary year of Motherwell's birth, the exhibition presents over 15 works from four decades and brings together works in various media from important cycles explored by the artist throughout his career.

Robert Motherwell (b. 1915 Washington, USA) was the youngest member of a group of artists that made the first truly international American art—the Abstract Expressionists—or as famously named by Motherwell, The New York School, which also included Philip Guston, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko.

Throughout his long career, Motherwell was drawn to automatism and conveying through his work the deeper, unconscious modes of human thinking. His work was heavily influenced by the time he spent with exiled Parisian Surrealists Max Ernst, Marcel Duchamp, and André Masson in the 1940s while studying at Columbia under the seminal art historian Meyer Schapiro. From his first exhibitions with Peggy Guggenheim's Art of this Century Gallery, and through major retrospectives in museums around the world, Motherwell displayed a tireless inventiveness, and rigorous attention to the principles of Modern Art, which he had done so much to bring to the United States with his *Documents of Modern Art* series. (He edited and translated the words and works of the Surrealists, bringing them to the American public.)

Although associated with the New York School, and indeed having instigated many of its founding principles, Motherwell's achievements over a five-decade long, successful and prolific career arguably surpass those of his fellow Abstract Expressionists. As well as in painting, Motherwell is recognised as one of the most important practitioners of collage, a medium he saw as one of the greatest innovations of the century, bringing it into the mid-20th century following in the traditions of Picasso and Matisse. Throughout his activities in painting and collage, Motherwell continued to return to the practice of automatic drawing, an interest which stemmed from his time with the surrealists. He had a fascination with Asian calligraphy and often painted with ink and a calligrapher's brush, focusing on rapid execution, and recalling his lifelong interest in Zen. Motherwell was also a gifted teacher and an enormously important influence on the younger generation, including Frank Stella, Cy Twombly, Robert Rauschenberg, and Kenneth Noland.

Exhibition highlights include an early work from his *VVV portfolio*, 1942, which is considered one of the highlights of Surrealist activity in New York in the early 1940s, and a 1958 painting on paper, *Two Figures No. 7*, which shows a sense of figuration that is later repeatedly imbedded in the hugely important *Elegies Series*, and in many other works executed in his later career. Several examples from Motherwell's major series of *Open* paintings will be represented in which the affinity between Japanese Zen painting and his own work is best seen through his animation of the void. The Galleries is delighted to be showing the last of five paintings in the *Great Wall of China Series* remaining outside of a private collection, *Great Wall of China #4*, 1971, which refers to Franz Kafka's short story about this most famous Chinese landmark. The latest work in the show, *In the Studio*, was started in 1984, and an early version was shown at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum that December.

"This exhibition celebrates Pearl Lam Galleries' long-standing commitment to presenting abstract art and exploring its disparate international origins. I feel privileged to bring to Asia for the first time a solo show of works by such a giant in American, indeed internal, art history."

—Pearl Lam

About Robert Motherwell

Robert Motherwell (24 January, 1915–16 July, 1991) was a Stanford University, Harvard and Columbia University educated American painter, printmaker, accomplished writer, editor, and eloquent speaker. Through his teaching, lectures, and publications, he became an unofficial spokesman and interpreter for the Abstract Expressionist movement, championing fellow artists and providing a critical link between European artists and his American contemporaries through his wide array of intellectual interests. Several key themes define Motherwell's work: the dialogue between repression and rebellion, between European modernism and a new American vision, and between formal and emotional approaches to art making.

Selected solo exhibitions include *Robert Motherwell, Lyric Suite*, Metropolitan Museum, New York, USA (2015); Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada (2011); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA (1985); Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, USA (1983, travelled); The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA (1983), Fundación Juan March, Madrid, Spain (1980); Royal Academy of Art, London, UK (1978); Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, France (1977); Städtisches Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf, Germany (1976); Museo de Arte Moderna, Mexico City, Mexico (1975); Princeton University Art Museum, New Jersey, USA (1973); The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA (1965); and Peggy Guggenheim's Art of this Century Gallery, New York, USA (1944).

Motherwell works are in the collections of major international institutions, including the Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, NY, USA; The Art Institute of Chicago, IL, USA; The Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain; The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA, USA; the Menil Collection, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX, USA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA; the Tate Gallery, London, UK; the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Hara Museum, Tokyo, Japan; and Kiasma—Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland.

About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. With over 20 years of experience exhibiting Asian and Western art and design, it is one of the leading and most established contemporary art galleries to be launched out of China.

Playing a vital role in stimulating international dialogue on Chinese and Asian contemporary art, the Galleries is dedicated to championing artists who re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice from the region. The Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore collaborate with renowned curators, each presenting distinct programming from major solo exhibitions, special projects, and installations to conceptually rigorous group shows. Based on the philosophy of Chinese Literati where art forms have no hierarchy, Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to breaking down boundaries between different disciplines, with a unique gallery model committed to encouraging cross-cultural exchange.

Contemporary Chinese Abstract art is heavily represented in the Galleries roster. Influential Chinese artists Zhu Jinshi and Su Xiaobai, who synthesise Chinese sensibilities with an international visual language, are presented internationally with work now included in major private and public collections worldwide. The Galleries has also introduced leading international artists such as Jenny Holzer, Jim Lambie, and Yinka Shonibare MBE (RA) to markets in the region, providing opportunities for new audiences in Asia to encounter their work.

Pearl Lam Galleries encourages international artists to create new work which engages specifically with the region—collaborating to produce thought-provoking, culturally relevant work.

Press Enquiries

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