

## ROBERT MOTHERWELL: ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

16 September – 26 November 2016



Robert Motherwell, *The Studio*, 1987, acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 152.4 x 182.9 cm

Bernard Jacobson Gallery is delighted to announce **Robert Motherwell: Abstract Expressionism** (16 September – 26 November 2016). The exhibition will be an opportunity to investigate the various forms of abstract expressionist art from Motherwell's long and distinguished career through carefully selected masterpieces in painting and collage, including his great final collage, *The Blue Guitar* (1990-91) which references Picasso's famous blue period painting, *The Old Guitarist*.

These remarkable works give witness to an era of unparalleled creative evolution, invention and energy in America, also demonstrated in the work of the Beat Poets and free jazz; a truly pivotal time in the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century art where the vanguard had moved from Europe to America as the predominant cultural force for the first time.

Arriving in New York from California in 1940 to study Art History at Columbia University, Motherwell was at the epicentre of that seismic change, and sensing the heady atmosphere of experimentation around him, had soon dropped out of academia to pursue his overwhelming interest in Modernism with a full-time career as an artist.

Although younger than the other artists, Motherwell was to become a cornerstone of the group later to become known as the Abstract Expressionists (or New York School) which also included Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Willem de Kooning - although unlike them, Motherwell's interest was exclusively for abstraction rather than beginning in figuration.

## bernard jacobson gallery

Motherwell's pursuit of Abstraction was in part influenced by his early interest and study in philosophy, honed with a post-graduate degree in the subject from Harvard University and later developed through his study of the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. It was his discovery of the principles of Surrealist psychic automatism however, gained through his friendship with Roberto Matta, that was finally to equip him with the physical process with which to create a new kind of dynamic, abstract art.

Selected highlights of the works on display at Bernard Jacobson Gallery include:

**A View Number 1** (1958) - A work which Motherwell himself considered the most Abstract Expressionist of his paintings and which has appeared in almost every major retrospective of the artist's work.

**The Studio** (1987) - A painting representing a recurring theme in Motherwell's art, which can be read both as a kind of self-portrait, as well as referencing Matisse's *Red Studio* and Picasso's *The Studio*, a work which Motherwell knew well from the collection of Peggy Guggenheim.

**Mexican Window** (1974) - A stunning work from the Open series of paintings in which the artist returns to his 1941 trip to Mexico with Matta and his discovery of the ochre walls of adobe dwellings and the heat of the desert that was to continue to influence his palette thereafter.

Bernard Jacobson is widely acknowledged as an expert on the life and work of Robert Motherwell, publishing in 2015 *Robert Motherwell: The Making of an American Giant*, the first biography of Robert Motherwell written by Bernard Jacobson. Over the last 10 years Bernard Jacobson Gallery has held a series of critically acclaimed exhibitions looking at different aspects of Motherwell's multi-faceted oeuvre.

This exhibition at Bernard Jacobson Gallery will provide an opportunity for visitors to the Royal Academy's *Abstract Expressionism* exhibition to look further into the art of one of the key members of the Abstract Expressionist movement.

*Robert Motherwell: Abstract Expressionism* will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue with text by Mel Gooding and a separate book looking at Motherwell's interest in Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy and its relationship to the founding principles of the Abstract Expressionist movement. **The gallery will also have a one man presentation of works by Robert Motherwell at Frieze Masters this October.**

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### NOTES TO EDITORS:

About Bernard Jacobson Gallery:

Bernard Jacobson Gallery's new premises are in a converted car park in Duke Street St James's, London, opposite the Royal Academy. Designed by Nick Gowing architects, the gallery occupies the ground and lower ground floor of an extensive, contemporary exhibition space. Bernard Jacobson Gallery was founded in 1969 as a publisher and dealer in prints. Over the last 45 years the gallery has exhibited many great British, American and European artists including: Helen Frankenthaler, Lee Krasner, Peter Lanyon, Robert Motherwell, Bruce McLean, Ben Nicholson, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, James Rosenquist, William Scott, Frank Stella, Pierre Soulages, William Tillyer, and Marc Vaux.

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