

CHARLES RIVA COLLECTION

American Abstract
28.09.18—01.12.18
Sam Francis
Sam Gilliam
Robert Motherwell
Cheyney Thompson
Christopher Wool

Charles Riva Collection is delighted to present *American Abstract*. This exhibition brings together five major American artists from three different generations - Sam Francis, Sam Gilliam, Robert Motherwell, Cheyney Thompson and Christopher Wool. Together, they tell a particular story about American abstract painting - its singular pictorial idioms as well as its direct contemporary resonances.

Pioneer of abstract expressionism, alongside Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell (born in 1915), throughout his career, drew an ongoing dialogue in between the European modernist tradition, the history of art and a more emotional approach. The majestic painting *Automatic Oracle* was achieved during the final years of Motherwell's life, showcasing the main themes he sought to perfect; the gleam of colours, the brushstrokes on the canvas, the physical sensation for the viewer.

Questions of spatial composition were also essential for Sam Francis (born in 1923). He liked to say "depth is all", and the blank canvas was for him, akin to infinite skies. Following a serious accident, he started painting and drawing by chance, while passing the time in hospital. Confined to bed, the surface of the pages became the possibility of seeking out the depth and to arise "the space that stretches between things". This bedridden experience was to be the catalyst for his career as a painter. With a refined gesture and an aspiration to plenitude, he overcame the bi-dimensionality of the canvas, valuing immensity and a certain physical immateriality.

The African American painter, Sam Gilliam (born in 1933), recently back in the limelight was already in the early 70s a major figure of the Abstract and Color Field movements. He undertook a series of works based on experiments and pictorial improvisations. Combining tones and deconstructing the space of the canvas, he reinvigorated with great subtlety, the highly codified ways forms and colours of paintings and sculptures. *White Gardenia*, 1990, a piece from a latter period presents a painted, cut up and reassembled canvas, which is afterward stretched across a bevelled frame. This technique, frequently used by the artist, produces a patchwork effect, and continues Gilliam's reflection on the materiality of the medium and its rhythms. Furthermore, the painting highlights his particular attention to colour and its vibrations, which is reminiscent of Impressionism, both in its subject and its visual abundance.

Series of paintings by the artist Cheyney Thompson (born 1975) often originate from a predefined process. With this very specific way of working he seeks to redefine the act of painting itself. It can also recall «Automatic» techniques (widely used by Motherwell for example) and dismisses any emotional dimensions. The core of Thompsons' work, is about the production, distribution and presentation of painting. The works create a strange poetry that shifts between its aesthetic qualities and the inherent friction in the circuits which inhabit them.

The full understanding of abstraction and a great interest for pop culture, allows Christopher Wool (born in 1955) to produce unexpected, troubling and exciting images, in the same way previous generations absorbed what was there before them. His paintings find their rhythm between thoughts and sensations, language and form, and as such, continue to feed the pictorial preoccupations of the abstract expressionists of the 1950s. Harold Rosenberg, writer and art critic, said: "At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act - rather than as a space in which to re-produce, re-design, analyse or express an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event"

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1- Robert MOTHERWELL
Automatic Oracle, 1989
Acrylic on Canvas
243,8 x 152,4 cm

3- Christopher WOOL
Untitled, 2006
Silkscreen ink on paper
182,9 x 141 cm

2- Sam FRANCIS
Sans Titre, 1987
Acrylic on paper
115 x 206 cm

4- Cheyney THOMPSON
Black (58.37ml, 24.07ml, 19.3ml, 14.77ml, 7.02ml, 29.99ml, 20.55ml, 16.89ml, 14.27ml, 6.01ml)
(211.22ml)
Blue (58.37ml, 24.07ml, 19.3ml, 14.77ml, 7.02ml, 29.99ml, 20.55ml, 16.89ml, 14.27ml, 6.01ml)
(211.22ml)
Red (58.37ml, 24.07ml, 19.3ml, 14.77ml, 7.02ml, 29.99ml, 20.55ml, 16.89ml, 14.27ml, 6.01ml)
(211.22ml)
White (58.37ml, 24.07ml, 19.3ml, 14.77ml, 7.02ml, 29.99ml, 20.55ml, 16.89ml, 14.27ml, 6.01ml)
(211.22ml), 2017
Acrylic on canvas
4 parts: 207x157cm each

5- Sam GILLIAM
White Gardenia, 1992
Acrylic on canvas
250x129,5cm