

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

456 NORTH CAMDEN DRIVE

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Tue – Sat 10:00am – 5:30pm



MASTERS OF THE GESTURE

Saturday, October 2 – Saturday, November 6, 2010

These are not paintings in the usual sense; they are life and death merging in fearful union.

--Clyfford Still

The painting is just a surface to be covered...My paintings have to do with feeling, yet it's pretentious to say they're about feelings, too, because if you don't get it across, it's nothing.

--Joan Mitchell

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to present "Masters of the Gesture", an exhibition of major Abstract Expressionist paintings, drawings and sculptures, including works by John Chamberlain, Willem de Kooning, Sam Francis, Arshile Gorky, Adolph Gottlieb, Franz Kline, Joan Mitchell, Mark Rothko, David Smith and Clyfford Still. The exhibition includes loans from key private and public collections.

Works in the exhibition explore the range of direct, individualized gestures and dominating physicality that became the distinguishing characteristics of the Abstract Expressionist movement. Critically championed by Clement Greenberg, by the early 1950s Abstract Expressionist art was firmly established as the dominant movement in American art of the post-World War II era, marking the emergence as an equal counterpart in the U.S. to the new tendencies in modern European painting.

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Influenced by their experiences during the interwar years that were marked by the detrimental effects of the Great Depression and World War II, the New York-based Abstract Expressionists viewed the world as emotionally barren and militated against political and social hegemony. This preoccupation with the human condition and the metaphysical became absorbed in their aim to build a new visual language, predicated on the immediacy of abstract forms, the monumental canvas, and the primacy of color. The many permutations of these principles can be seen in a work like Sam Francis's meditative *Red Over Gray* (1953). From 1957, Adolph Gottlieb simplified his iconic pictographic canvas in later works to make way for the "bursts" in *Antipodes* (1959), where luminous circular forms levitate above gestural eruptions, evoking a primitive, even cataclysmic, view of life.

In the Abstract Expressionist syntax, the expansive canvas became a support for large swathes of color in varying scales and textures to achieve the sublime in art. The jagged edges and boundaries of striated verticals in Clyfford Still's paintings appear to emerge from a richly dense background of color. The shifting red tones of *1955-d, Ph-387* (1955) reveal the many layers and hues that he used to create the illusion of depth in an essentially monochromatic work. Willem de Kooning's violent and chaotic brushstrokes, as typified by *Untitled XXIV* (1977), underscore a vibrant and unrivaled emotionality.

"Masters of the Gesture" coincides with "Abstract Expressionist New York" at The Museum of Modern Art, New York from October 3- April 25, 2011, and the announcement of the Clyfford Still Museum that is currently under construction in Denver, Colorado.

For further inquiries please contact Sarah Womble at swomble@gagosian.com or at +1.310.271.9400.