

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Cy Twombly: Third Contemporary Artist Invited to Install a Permanent Work at the Louvre

View of the The Louvre's large new gallery ceiling by Cy Twombly, known for his abstract paintings only the third contemporary artist given the honor of designing a permanent work for the museum, in Paris, Tuesday, March 23, 2010. (AP Photo/Christophe Ena.)

PARIS.- Selected by a committee of international experts, Cy Twombly is the third contemporary artist invited to install a permanent work at the Louvre: a painted ceiling for the Salle des Bronzes.

The permanent installation of 21st century works at the Louvre, the introduction of new elements in the décor and architecture of the palace, is the cornerstone of the museum's policy relating to contemporary art. This type of ambitious endeavor is in keeping with the history of the palace, which has served since its creation as an ideal architectural canvas for commissions of painted and sculpted decoration projects. Prior to Cy Twombly, the Louvre's commitment to living artists has resulted in invitations extended to Anselm Kiefer in 2007 and to François Morellet for an installation unveiled earlier in 2010, but these three artists also follow in the footsteps of a long line of predecessors including Le Brun, Delacroix, Ingres and, in the twentieth century, Georges Braque.

Twombly's painting will be showcased on the ceiling of one of the Louvre's largest galleries, in one of the oldest sections of the museum. It is a work of monumental proportions, covering more than 350 square meters, its colossal size ably served by the painter's breathtaking and unprecedented vision.

Twombly's two best-known trademarks are perhaps the incorporation of passionately scrawled words into his paintings and the energetic use of splashes or drips of vivid colors. In this work, Twombly leaves behind such romantic expressiveness. Here instead, the visitor discovers an immense blue sky, enlivened by the movements of spheres and punctuated by white insets inscribed with the names of the leading Greek sculptors active in the 4th century: Cephisodotus, Lysippus, Myron, Phidias, Polyclitus, Praxiteles and Scopas.

Twombly's aim was to create a work perfectly in harmony with the architecture and purpose of the space, this huge rectangular gallery housing the Louvre's collection of Classical bronzes. Thus the round shapes can be interpreted as shields, planets, or coins, while the blue background evokes either the sky or the sea.

Although certainly an American artist—Twombly was born in Lexington, Virginia in 1928—he is thoroughly Mediterranean in spirit and has lived in Italy since 1959, making frequent trips to Greece over the years. All of Twombly’s work finds inspiration in mythology, in the poetry and heroic figures of Antiquity. *The Ceiling* is the artist’s second commission in France, following the curtain conceived for the Paris National Opera’s new flagship theater at the Bastille in 1989. In 2001, Twombly received the prestigious “Golden Lion” award at the Venice Biennale. Commemorating the artist’s 80th birthday in 2008, the Tate Modern presented a major retrospective of his work, an exhibition that would travel to the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and the Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Rome later that same year and in 2009.