

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Cy Twombly's Monumental Festive Canvases Inaugurate Gagolian's Massive New London Gallery

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CY TWOMBLY Bacchus, 2006–08 Cy Twombly Foundation Collection © Cy Twombly Foundation

Following their now longstanding inaugural tradition, Gagolian Gallery is exhibiting works by Cy Twombly at their new location on Grosvenor Hill and in curatorial congruence at their nearby Davies Street location. The new gallery, designed by Caruso St. John who also designed locations in Rome, Paris and on London's Britannia Street, features two double-height gallery spaces, each day-lit with large windows. As I moved through the space, I sensed the lights change and was informed of the advanced lighting system that not only imitates the natural light, but also is complimentary to the windows and is adaptable to each exhibition and gallery space. The floor is a dark natural wood with a semi-matte finish that captures and reflects the aura of the hung works in such a way to emphasize the natural beauty of the space without distracting from our still reverence for Twombly's expressive works.

Hung in the first gallery on Grosvenor Hill are sixteen drawings completed in the summer of 1969. The untitled works vaguely imply architectural draftsmanship including abstract floor plans, measurements and landscaping akin to the preliminary drawings of Frank Gehry. The Palazzos (as they are labeled by Twombly on the brown paper) are nonsensical and discombobulated as if they existed in another dimension, only to be glimpsed in fractions and squiggles. Two untitled, bronze sculptures, one stack of three cubes and one black box with strange appendages seem only to further the architectural metaphor as maquettes. Between the first and second galleries, three of Twombly's workbooks are presented in a beautiful glass and wood case. They guide the visitor through a transition of mediums between the two spaces.

The second gallery presents the two highlighted Bacchus paintings (2006-2008) seen here for the first time. The monumental, festive canvases of Abstract Expressionism, like the christening of a ship including a titled reference to the god of wine, are exemplary inaugural works. Shown alongside two equally expansive diptychs, the four paintings fill the space to demonstrate the potential of the chapel-like height, while also encouraging a comfortably intimate experience without overcrowding the space. Another bronze sculpture, placed in front of one of the two large windows allows us to imagine the painterly contraption required to execute such physical actions on the monumental canvases. Together, the sculptures also indicate the period in which Twombly developed some of his most recognizable works and styles. Casts of assembled, inexpensive materials and painted in excess, his sculptures allude to his connections with the assemblages of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns.

To accompany the exhibition at the new location, a small collection of Twombly's photographs is displayed at the Davies Street gallery. Throughout his artistic career, Twombly photographed his daily life including landscapes, buildings, sculptures, studio interiors and still lifes. The Polaroid snapshots, enlarged, on matte paper of strawberries, flowers and sculptures are not only curatorially complimentary, but they also provide a glimpse into his practice. The granular, nearly abstracted and often-repetitive images such as the strawberries echo his Bacchus series through the repetition of circular, red forms, and one studio image even includes a corner of an unfinished Bacchus painting stacked behind his tools. Some of the images also document Twombly's sculptures placed on tabled in front of tapestries and oil paintings producing a museum nostalgia and historic place for his works. The small images hung in Davies Street on the three walls of the single room gallery welcomes natural light and fills in the space as carefully as the works at the new Grosvenor Hill location.

The impressive program of exhibitions at Gagosian Gallery often including loans and illustrated catalogues, as was done for this special event, are first and foremost concerned with supporting the artists they represent. Providing each artwork with space for appreciation and with the tools for individual interpretation, the new gallery space on Grosvenor Hill does not fall short. Gagosian's new gallery, diffuse with natural light, is a nearly spiritual space for art pilgrims in the center of an otherwise recklessly rushed city.