

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART TO ACQUIRE IMPORTANT GROUP OF PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURES BY CY TWOMBLY

New York, March 11, 2011—The Museum of Modern Art will acquire two landmark paintings from the 1950s and a group of seven sculptures ranging in date from 1954 to 2005 by Cy Twombly, widely regarded as one of today’s most important living artists, announces MoMA Director Glenn D. Lowry. All of the works are from the artist’s personal collection, and the sculptures will be the first by Twombly to enter MoMA’s collection. With these additions to the eight paintings and numerous works on paper by Twombly, the Museum will immeasurably strengthen its holdings of works by Twombly, representing all six decades of the artist’s career.

The nine works will be exhibited together in the Museum from May 20 to October 3, 2011.

“It has long been a priority for the Museum to build an in-depth collection of Twombly’s work, and the addition of these two major paintings and seven sculptures make a powerful statement about a transformative moment in the history of the American avant-garde,” said Mr. Lowry. “We are extremely grateful to the donors who have made this possible, and especially to the artist, who was willing to share with the Museum these great works, which he has kept in his own collection for many years.”

Tiznit, one of a small number of paintings that Twombly made in New York City during the summer of 1953, will become the earliest work by the artist in MoMA’s collection. Made just after a nine-month trip with Robert Rauschenberg in Italy and North Africa, the painting is named for a town in Morocco. Primitivist in character, *Tiznit* is made with lead white enamel house paint, pencil, and crayon. Evident in the painting are the connections it makes to the European and American artists crucial to Twombly’s formation, revealing the 25 year-old artist’s keen awareness of the work of New York artists such as Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, and Jean Dubuffet. It was shown at the Stable gallery in a joint exhibition with Robert Rauschenberg in 1953. The painting is a promised gift of anonymous donors.

Academy was painted in New York in the summer of 1955 and was first shown in January 1956 in Twombly’s second solo exhibition at the Stable Gallery. *Academy* presents the birth of Twombly’s own artistic language: legible letters and words give way to scrawling and scribbling, jittery lines, and scratches, with the artist reconfiguring the acts of writing, drawing, and painting in order to provoke a new way of seeing. This canvas represents the moment at which Twombly declared his independence from the Abstract Expressionist idiom and invented a mode of working that would govern his next half-century of his art. Made in the same year as Jasper Johns’s *Flag* and Robert Rauschenberg’s *Rebus*, it forms with these two paintings already in the Museum’s collection an astoundingly powerful statement about a transformative moment in the history of the American avant-garde. The painting was purchased for the collection by the Museum.

The Museum's last major acquisition of Twombly's paintings was on the occasion of the major 1994 retrospective of the artist's work, organized by Kirk Varnedoe, at which time the paintings *Leda and the Swan* (1962), *Untitled* (1970), and the *Four Seasons* (1993-94) entered the collection.

Twombly's sculptures are an integral but little known aspect of his practice over the course of the last six decades. These works generally are made from found materials, plaster, wood, and white paint, and their humble origins remain readily evident in the finished works. All are of relatively small scale, as Twombly has wished them to be things that he himself can construct, manipulate and move around the studio. Their dialogue with Twombly's paintings rests not only in the fact of the material of white paint, but in their classical sources and their expressive majesty. Like the works of Constantin Brancusi or Alberto Giacometti, they function especially beautifully in relation to one another, and the artist's preference is that they be presented in groups.

The seven sculptures represent the full span of Twombly's career, beginning with two of the few surviving sculptures of the 1950s: *Untitled (Funerary Box for a Lime-Green Python)* (1954) and *Untitled* (1955), which represent the beginning of Twombly's sculptural activity and show a relationship to his painting at this pivotal moment in his work. The remaining sculptures were executed between 1976 and 2005, all representing different moments during which Twombly has been at his most inventive and audacious as a sculptor. One of the sculptures is a promised gift of Steven and Alexandra Cohen, one is a promised gift of anonymous donors, and one is a gift of the Cy Twombly Foundation. Four were purchased for the collection with Museum funds and generous gifts from trustees.

Ann Temkin, the Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture, notes that, "Until the past decade or so, Twombly's sculptures have been overlooked in relation to his paintings. In fact the two practices are closely related, and we will now be able to present a fuller and more accurate portrayal of Twombly's achievements as an artist. Similarly, these two early paintings finally provide a true beginning to our account of this remarkable career."

No. 23

Contacts: Margaret Doyle, 212-408-6400, margaret_doyle@moma.org
Daniela Stigh, 212-708-9747, daniela_stigh@moma.org

For downloadable high-resolution images, register at [MoMA.org/press](https://www.moma.org/press)
