

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



Cy Twombly, *Silex Scintillans*, Oil, Oil crayon, coloured pencil and pencil on paper (Fabriano), 1981-1982

Accrochage

Louise Bourgeois (1911 - 2010) is known for her monumental sculptures and installations, such as her work *Maman*, representing a ten-metre-high spider, first exhibited at London's Tate Modern in 2000. Her work is characterised by a personal and autobiographical language, exploring themes of sexuality, the body, relationships between people, the family and motherhood. With her "Janus" series, developed in four variations, Louise Bourgeois evokes the god with two faces, and questions the metamorphosis of bodies, the logic of identity between masculine and feminine, and the polarity present in every being. Her highly evocative work *The Suicide* (1998) refers to an intimate experience. The artist herself attempted suicide when she lost her mother in her twenties. This is a unique evocation of that episode, confronting the viewer with death in a violent, raw simplicity that is characteristic of her work.

David Smith (1906 - 1965) was one of the most important American sculptors of the 20th century. Drawing, like welding, played a central role in the development of his art, influencing his vision of sculpture and opening up new perspectives, allowing him to detach himself from the physical contingencies and labour imposed by this practice. In this exploration of different media, David Smith draws on his own creative process: before assembling his sculptures, he would place elements of the work on the floor of his studio; the solder would then burn the floor, leaving accidental patterns. It was by taking inspiration from these involuntary forms that he began work on the "Sprays" series, to which the work *Untitled* (1963) presented here belongs. He used all the materials at his disposal, from machine parts to tree branches, and even the remains of his table, which he laid out on paper or canvas before spraying the composition with industrial paint. In this way, the artist, influenced by his early years working in a car factory, reappropriated techniques deeply linked to mechanics and industry.

The works of **Cy Twombly** (1928-2011) straddle the line between drawing and speech, to the point where the boundary between the two becomes vague before disappearing altogether. In his search for an immediate and intuitive visual language, the artist creates works with abstract compositions that conceal an expressive awareness that is absolutely touching. Words and texts, especially the fragmented and grandiose ones of ancient poetry, are integrated into the surface of the work through the letters and spontaneous signs of gestural calligraphy. The drawn word thus becomes the sign pronouncing the word. The elements of language found in his various series reveal mythological and poetic references. Cy Twombly travelled around the Mediterranean basin at a very early age, immersing himself in the ancient culture that punctuated his drawings. In this way, the artist played with abstraction, which he never fully achieved, summoning up the primitive force of a past that fascinated him, to the extent that he set up his studio in ancestral Italy.

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Pierre Soulages (1919 - 2022) is recognised as a master of abstraction, the painter of black and light. Since 1979 he has devoted himself exclusively to his *Outrenoirs*. This is how he describes his mostly monochrome paintings, in which black is merely a means of creating pure light, a black that goes "beyond black". The search for the absolute in painting, for the essence of the creative act, makes any title superfluous; this is why Soulages has always titled his works with the assertive word "Peinture", followed by the size of the canvas and the date of production. Using tools that he makes himself, he applies different layers of material, which he works to create smooth or deeply striated areas. The refraction of light on the matt or glossy texture of the paint makes the surface of his paintings vibrate, offering the viewer an infinite spectacle.

In her drawing, **Pierrette Bloch** (1928 - 2017) explore a new ground in contemporary plastic research, giving abstraction sensibility and poetry. She shares with artists of her generation, such as Cy Twombly and Pierre Soulages, the desire to get to the essence of art while using the morphological elements that make up pictorial creation. For over sixty years, the point, the line and the relationships established with the surface according to the material used have been the founding axis of Pierrette Bloch's work. Her works are characterised by an economy of means - ink, fat chalk, pastel, the horsehair of her sculptures - and colours - black and white - with which she has been able to create with freedom and spontaneity. In her works in Indian ink on paper - which Pierrette Bloch began to produce systematically from 1971 onwards - the traces left by the ink and the surface of the support have the same plastic value: it is the relationship between black and white, like full and empty, that creates unity.

Georgia Russell (1974 -...) works with surgical precision, turning the scalpel from its medical function into an artistic tool. "I cut, I lacerate the paper and I play with the gradations of tones, punctuated by the movement of my incisions through which the light seeps in," the artist says of her work. By incising surfaces, she creates a mirage at the intersection of the real and the illusory. Meticulous, repetitive cuts give rise to protean works whose abstraction appeals to the unconscious and flirts with the imaginary. His work embodies the permeability of matter. "The world is no less beautiful for being seen only through a slit or a hole in a board," wrote Henry David Thoreau, and the slits in Russell's canvases can be seen as portals to other universes, cells for the passage of air and light. *Child and flowers* (2018) is one of a series of works in which the artist works from photographs she finds in second-hand booksellers' shops, which are then printed on Kozo paper, creating a new work from a pre-existing medium. This work is opposite *Navigate I* (2021), in which the different layers of cut-out canvas seem to intermingle in a vibrant kinetic effect.

Joël Shapiro (1941-...) uses the emblematic materials of modern sculpture - wood, plaster and bronze - to explore the possibilities of form, which he liberates in an entirely new way. Reminiscent of the tradition of maquettes, he uses this medium to create small, dynamic studies based on the assembly of blocks, sometimes salvaged, assembled according to pre-existing angles and fractures that shape the final result and guide the artist's hand in defining a new sculptural concept. Instinctive and immediate, these assemblages breathe instantaneity. For the artist, it is important to leave traces of the creative process visible in the work: traces of glue, nails, joints, the grain of the wood. The geometry of these simple forms, and the absence of a base, have brought Joël Shapiro's sculptures closer to Minimalist art. However, the place given to man and the possibility of existence left to the imperfections of manual labour distance his approach from Minimalist artists such as Carl Andre or Donald Judd, who instead favour smooth materials in which the trace of human labour is erased.