

FONDATION LOUIS VUITTON



mark

rothko

exhibition

18 october 2023 → 2 april 2024

PRESS KIT

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MARK ROTHKO

From October 18, 2023 to April 2, 2024

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Press Release

Opening on October 18, 2023, the Fondation Louis Vuitton presents the first retrospective in France dedicated to Mark Rothko (1903-1970) since the exhibition held at the musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1999. The retrospective brings together some 115 works from the largest international institutional and private collections, including the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., the artist's family, and the Tate in London. Displayed chronologically across all of the Fondation's spaces, the exhibition traces the artist's entire career: from his earliest figurative paintings to the abstract works that he is most known for today.

"I'm interested only in expressing basic human emotions."

Mark Rothko

The exhibition opens with intimate scenes and urban landscapes - such as visions of the New York subway - that dominate Rothko's output in the 1930s, before his transition to a repertoire inspired by ancient myths and surrealism which Rothko uses to express the tragic dimension of the human condition during the War.

From 1946, Rothko makes an important shift towards abstraction expressionism. The first phase of this switch is that of *Multiforms*, where chromatic masses are suspended in a kind of equilibrium on the canvas. Gradually, these decrease in number, and the spatial organization of his painting evolves rapidly towards Rothko's "classic" works of the 1950s, where rectangular shapes overlap according to a binary or ternary rhythm, characterized by shades of yellow, red, ochre, orange, but also blue, white...

In 1958, Rothko is commissioned to produce a set of wall paintings for the Four Seasons restaurant designed by Philip Johnson for the Seagram Building in New York - the construction of which is overseen by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Rothko later decides not to deliver the paintings and keeps the entire series. Eleven years later, in 1969, the artist donates nine of these paintings - which differ from the previous ones on account of their deep red hues - to the Tate, which dedicates a room in its collections exclusively to Rothko. This series is exceptionally presented in the Fondation Louis Vuitton exhibition.

In 1960, the Phillips Collection dedicates a permanent gallery - the first "Rothko Room" - to the artist.

The room is designed in close collaboration with him and is also featured in the exhibition. In 1961, the Museum of Modern Art in New York organizes the first major retrospective, an exhibition that subsequently travels to several European cities (London, Basel, Amsterdam, Brussels, Rome, and Paris). In the 1960s, Rothko accepts other new commissions, most notably the chapel founded by John and Dominique de Menil in Houston, which is inaugurated in 1971 and named the *Rothko Chapel*.

While Rothko favors darker tones and muted contrasts since the late 1950s, the artist never completely abandons his palette of bright colors, as evidenced by several paintings from 1967 and by the very last red painting left unfinished in his studio. Even in the case of the 1969-1970 *Black and Grey* series, a simplistic interpretation of the work, associating grey and black with depression and suicide, is best avoided.

These works are displayed in the tallest room in the Frank Gehry building, alongside Alberto Giacometti's large-scale sculptural figures, creating an environment that is close to what Rothko had in mind for a UNESCO commission that was never realized.

The permanence of Rothko's questioning, his desire for wordless dialogue with the viewer, and his refusal to be seen as a "colorist" are all elements allowing a new interpretation of his multifaceted work in this exhibition - in all its true plurality.

Curators:

Suzanne Pagé and Christopher Rothko

with François Michaud

and Ludovic Delalande, Claudia Buizza, Magdalena Gemra, Cordélia de Brosses

Partner Institutions and Private Collections

The Fondation Louis Vuitton warmly thanks all the lenders that made this exhibition possible:

- National Gallery of Art, *Washington*
- Tate, *Londres*
- The Phillips Collection, *Washington*
- Art Gallery of Ontario, *Toronto*
- University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive
- Chrysler Museum of Art, *Norfolk*
- The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza Art Collection, *Albany*
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- Walker Art Center, *Minneapolis*
- Whitney Museum of American Art, *New York*
- Yale University Art Gallery, The Katharine Ordway Collection, *New Haven*
- Fondation Beyeler, *Bâle*
- Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, *Humblebæk*
- Musée national d'art moderne, *Paris*
- Yageo Foundation, *Taipei*

Private Collections:

- Adriana and Robert Mnuchin, *États-Unis*
- Collection Nahmad, *Grande-Bretagne*
- Elie and Sarah Hirschfeld, *Etats-Unis*

As well as anonymous private collections

And finally, Kate Rothko Prizel and Ilya Prizel, as well as Christopher Rothko.

Foreword

Bernard Arnault

President of the Fondation Louis Vuitton

Exhibiting such a broad, thorough, and representative set of works by Mark Rothko at the Fondation Louis Vuitton in the autumn of 2023 is the fulfillment of a long-standing personal wish. Rothko is one of my favorite artists. Yet he is still too poorly known and acknowledged in France and Europe. I therefore wanted the Fondation to redress this injustice, to fill an unfortunate gap largely explained by his under-representation in museums and collections here.

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who helped to bring this complex and ambitious show to fruition. The spectacular results - now before your eyes - contribute to our knowledge as well as our acknowledgment of an intensely rich oeuvre in which artistic and existential issues confront mystical ones.

I know that Rothko, despite the apparent simplicity of the shapes he arranged on canvas, was extremely exacting and precise in conception and invention. Although the shapes themselves may seem straightforward - to the point where we see only rectangles or stripes - the colors are elaborated with extraordinary skill. And yet color seems to have been less important to Rothko than the harmonies generated by the chosen hues: he had a true sense of music.

Whenever a given color in one of Rothko's abstract paintings, lacking any figurative allusion, reminds us of some other work by him, I've noticed that merely bringing them together in the same room shows us how different they actually are. Each work is absolutely unique. For Rothko, each one represented an entirely new experience, every time. They all follow and interact with one another in a constant drive for creativity, in the urgency and intensity of a moment, one matched only by the experience familiar to great composers and performers (to return to the sphere of music). Going to museums in the United States and, less commonly, in Europe, will give an idea of Rothko's painting, but rarely will it reveal the oeuvre as a whole. Whether in New York, Washington, D.C., or many other cities in North America, or in London or Basel, people who have seen Rothko's works where they now hang have been able to experience impressions and feelings that long remain in the memory. But only a retrospective makes it possible to follow the artist step by step, to see how his works interact, how they come together and sing in chorus as Rothko's unique music resounds.

Rothko realized that his paintings would create their own space. He needed an architecture that suited him. So shouldn't a building conceived by Frank Gehry for the Fondation Louis Vuitton have to face up, sooner or later, to Rothko's oeuvre in its entirety? On several occasions during his lifetime, Rothko had to imagine the future of his paintings in buildings designed by the greatest twentieth-century architects: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson for the Seagram building, and Johnson again for the chapel in Houston devised by John and Dominique de Menil.

The recently restored Rothko Chapel now enjoys the patronage and commitment of LVMH - to our great pride. Beyond this show at the Fondation Louis Vuitton, we intend to prove our deep and lasting attachment to Rothko's oeuvre as well as to the mission being carried out by his son Christopher Rothko, and by all those people working to preserve the Rothko Chapel and to develop the artistic and scholarly activities associated with it. The Fondation Louis Vuitton had to call on the skills and energy of everyone on its team in order to pull off a public retrospective of this sort.

The exhibition required a personal experience of Rothko's work and the way it should be displayed. The Fondation's artistic director, Suzanne Page, brought Rothko's paintings to the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris back in 1999 when she was director there - an exhibition that Christopher Rothko has openly acknowledged as a crucial experience for him. Furthermore, the plans for our retrospective would never have come to fruition without our good relations with the heads of major international museums. I would also like to thank Christopher Rothko for the intensity and enthusiasm of his commitment - so essential to the dazzling success of our show - and to the entire exhibition team, constituted over the four years of preparation, united by the same belief in an undertaking for which there are few precedents, bringing together all the paintings required to reveal to everyone the scope and diversity of a highly particular oeuvre. Today these paintings are being displayed thanks to the generosity of lenders who can never be adequately thanked. Several have now become the Fondation's regular partners, such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York and Tate Modern in London - who lent us the entire set of *Seagram Murals* - as well as the Philips Collection in Washington, D.C., which agreed to provide the Fondation with three works from the group that Duncan Philips originally assembled. Finally, we are proud to be able to present to the public the many paintings lent to us by the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and by Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko.

Foreword

(Extract from the exhibition catalogue)

Suzanne Pagé

Curator of the exhibition

How to say what cannot be said and yet is felt so intensely? How can words be used to introduce a body of work that brought pictoriality, a language irreducible to any other, to its incandescence? What are these viewers seeking, captivated by what speaks so powerfully to their eyes, to their heart, to their whole being? What is the artist himself so relentlessly seeking? Rare photos show him in the studio, tirelessly scanning the color fields to which he has gradually reduced his canvases. Why, even today, does this work seem so necessary in the timeless urgency with which it evokes the *human condition*, that *poignancy*¹ buried deep within each one of us, just as Rothko wanted it to be at the heart of his work, and as it figures constantly in his notebooks?

From the mid-1940s onwards, Robert Motherwell maintained an ongoing dialogue with the brooding, moody Rothko, based on a shared and acute *metaphysical angst*. After his friend's death, he described his work as having "a luminescent glow from within, not the light of the world." For Rothko, abstract art could draw on an unsuspected dimension in order to express *fundamental human emotions*. This is the very reason why this exhibition is being held today.

The first presentation of Rothko's work in Paris in 1962, with works from MoMA shown in the basement of the MAM, was a disaster, and a painful experience for the artist. Dora Vallier bore witness to this, visiting the closed rooms alone, where the frost had taken its toll. In 1999, in the same museum, the work received a triumphant welcome and visitors seemed hypnotized, coming back time and time again to the paintings. What were they looking for? What did they find?

Our exhibition opens in Gallery 1 with the artist's only self-portrait, dating from 1936. This dense, imposing figure exudes gravitas, his gaze hidden behind dark glasses. Impenetrable, he seems focused on an inner vision that reveals nothing of the man or the painter.

The sequence ends in Gallery 10 with a black and gray "Cathedral," (1969-70) marked out by sculptures by Giacometti, an artist with whom he shared, in a state of constant, nagging doubt, both humanism and a mastery of space. At the heart of the exhibition are abstract works from the so-called "Classic" period - from the late 1940s onwards - in which a unique colorist asserts himself in the radiant, mysterious brilliance of color raised to incandescence. This, his best-known period, will be particularly well represented here - Galleries 4 to 11 - by some seventy works, including two exceptional ensembles, one from the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., and the *Seagram Murals* from Tate Modern.

¹ Phrase in italics are Rothko's own words.

More broadly, this retrospective aims to present the full extent of his work, from the initial figurative paintings onwards, and to reach beyond its formal ruptures to the permanence and depth of that same quest, that same questioning.

Born Marcus Rotkovich, and having left his native Russia at the age of ten after a stint at Talmudic school, the artist was forever enriching his approach to painting with readings and reflections on art and philosophy. After leaving Yale, where he had studied a broad range of subjects (mathematics, economics, biology, physics, philosophy, psychology, languages), and driven by a permanent sense of social engagement linked to a constant desire to share his concerns (witness his diary), it was in the school of life that he next tested himself. He was briefly tempted by the theater before the chance discovery of painting at the Art Students League in 1923 inspired him to study there with Max Weber and become a member (he left in 1930). He became a naturalized American citizen in 1938, and took the name Mark Rothko two years later.

Our broadly chronological exhibition begins in these years, after a few attempts at landscape and the pivotal encounter with Milton Avery in 1928. The crisis atmosphere prevailing in New York at the time is perceptible in a series of figurative canvases in muted colors, centered on a few nudes, interiors, and urban scenes, notably the subway, where enclosed, coercive spaces encircle anonymous, solitary figures, stretched and trapped in architectural space, as if held back. While he acknowledged the impossibility of expressing what he was trying to say through the human figure, Rothko's questing spirit led him to compose the unfinished text that would be posthumously published as *The Artist's Reality*. This text attests to his constant concern to elucidate, for himself and others, the purpose of art as the language of the spirit.

In the 1940s, amidst dire international circumstances, his work evolved significantly. Along with others, the artist raised the crucial question of the "subject" of painting and of its tragic, timeless dimension, through unifying myths seen as universal. He was a great reader of Nietzsche - *The Birth of Tragedy* - and of the theater of Aeschylus, which offered him a repertoire with mythological resonance. He reflected back the distorted image of archaic heroes as monsters with hybrid, split, dismembered, shredded bodies. For Rothko, haunted by the secret memory of the pogroms of his childhood, the echo was personal, and soon intensified by spreading information about the Shoah. The animality and a certain fantasy expressed in these works also drew on Surrealist influences, perceived through the intellectuals and European artists who arrived in New York and the works presented at a landmark exhibition at MoMA in 1936 (including Ernst, Chirico, and Miró). Some of them also frequented Peggy Guggenheim. Rothko's paintings at the time were characterized by greater fluidity of space and vegetal and animal forms, in which plants and birds, totems and "organisms" drift through subaquatic spaces whose subdivision into differentiated zones would become a constant. The titles, which would later disappear, explained contents whose evolution was driven by the urge *toward clarity; toward the elimination of all obstacles between the painter and the idea, and between the idea and the observer.*

The years 1945-49 saw a decisive shift toward abstraction, with paintings freed from the easel and classified as “Multiforms.” Undefined chromatic fields were invaded by biomorphic elements, with thin layers of color everywhere replacing drawing in floating, transparent spaces.

Then, in the early 1950s, came the so-called Classic works, icons that have become an integral part of our identity. In a falsely monochromatic or highly contrasted chromatic field, rectangular shapes of radiant color with undefined edges are arranged, usually vertically, in a binary or ternary rhythm. Here, through multiple translucent strata - between dilation and concentration, opacity and reflection, surface and depth - infinite variants of tones, values, chords, and dissonances are played out, kept in motion or skillfully resolved into a flamboyant, chromatic apogee. Mysterious and magical, an atmospheric touch suffuses the entire space and generates emotion.

For the viewer, getting lost in these works is all the more delightful an experience because of their monumental, immersive scale. *I paint large pictures because I want to create a state of intimacy. A large picture is an immediate transaction; it takes you into it.*

This was partly the result of the fascination he, like Avery, felt with Matisse’s *The Red Studio*, recently acquired by MoMA, in which a space populated by objects is unified by monochrome color and flattened along the picture plane, to the point that *you became that color*.

This is also what Rothko was looking for in the mid-1950s (1954-57), when he told Duncan Phillips of his wish to present his paintings as a separate ensemble in his museum, in a dedicated space saturated with ochre and red mixed with grey, giving his collector the sensation of being absorbed in a “contentment suddenly darkened by a cloud” (Gallery 7).

Fearing that his works would be perceived as decorative, Rothko even refused to be described as a “colorist” and insisted instead on the notion of light. Yet he knew that his art lives and breathes, and Rothko was aware of the sensual power of his works, which he accepted as a *relationship of pleasure with what exists*. Likewise, he acknowledged their emotional grip, but makes a point of clarifying its nature: *I would like to say to those who think of my pictures as serene, whether in friendship or mere observation, that I have imprisoned the most utter violence in every inch of their surface.*

So what is it that really grips the visitor, a captive of the irresistible allure of these works whose reflexive effects help to trap them, even as the artist speaks of *wrenching*, or even *cataclysm*?

For this indeed is the depth at which Rothko touches us. It can be seen at work in the *Seagram Murals* (1958-59), whose meditative interiority is served by a darker range of colors. Made as a commission, this ensemble was intended to satisfy Rothko’s desire to create a place with his works alone, in a space and set-up of which he was in full control. The set of nine works presented here - the entire “Rothko Room” at the Tate, and in the artist’s intended configuration - was originally commissioned for a dining room designed by Philip Johnson in a building by Mies van der Rohe. Rothko eventually abandoned the commission, realizing that the context was decidedly at odds with his aim of recapturing the quality of the space/enclosure of the Laurentian Library in Florence, which he had once visited.

Punctuating the immersive field, the rectangle disappears in favor of a more or less open sign that some have read as a portal, others as a threshold or a ring. Color takes on a new gravity here. A range of reds and maroons takes precedence, with a muted intensity, while the relationship with architecture is accentuated, creating a contemplative hold on the viewer. These two parameters attain their transcendental finality in the Houston chapel. Those who commissioned his work there, John and Dominique de Menil, were initially attracted by the very inwards tone of the *Seagram Murals*. In the end, they agreed with Rothko's proposal to create a specific, global space that would engage the architecture itself, by creating an octagonal plan with filtered natural light. On completing this project, which occupied him fully for some three years, from 1964 to 1967, when he worked in a huge studio, the artist declared that he had learned to extend himself beyond what he thought possible.

For anyone who has experienced it the effect is unforgettable. Breaking away from the secular space, they are initially gripped by darkness, the colors - plum, black, purples - gradually emerging without revealing anything other than what the visitor gradually - delightedly - discovers within themselves in this encounter of great intensity.

In this same, much more austere order, the *Black and Gray* canvases of Gallery 10, punctuated by Giacometti sculptures, are shown as Rothko had thought of presenting them with *The Walking Man* as part of a commission for the new UNESCO building in Paris. The overall scale is reduced, with the surfaces delimited by a white border establishing a certain distance that makes us feel less like burying ourselves in them and more like looking at them. These turbulent paintings are clearly structured in two contrasting zones of black, brown, and blue- gray tones, separated by a continuous line. The restraint and apparent uniformity of these works, which form a series, met initially with incomprehension. Reconsidering them again today, the somewhat sketchy biographical interpretations based on the painter's health and depressive state now seem outdated. Here, in resonance with Giacometti's sculptures, they bestow a density and solemnity as well as a tension in which the *poignancy* sought by Rothko seems to reappear in a new form. A number of contemporary artists have expressed a preference for these late works, speaking of their esthetic advance, one that, for them, opened up the radical paths of a minimal art that broke with abstract expressionism.

In contrast, the works in Gallery 11, next door, have the bright high-keyed colors of his Classic paintings. These oil and acrylic canvases (1967-70) are enough to dismiss any attempt to equate Rothko's colors with his psychological state.

Such contrasting and always intense interpretations are at the heart of the visitor's personal experience of this exhibition. What did they come looking for? What have they found? For the artist, for today's visitor, what kind of exile does this art betoken? What kind of quest sealed deep within each one of us? The state of hypersensitivity exuded on the surface of the paintings and developed through the works - as if by an excess of beauty - arouses and sharpens both plenitude and incompleteness. At the same time as sensory rapture blooms so a sense of expectation deepens, followed by questions about transcendence that these works seem to authorize. Everyone will find their own words, whether seraphic or tragic.

Rothko does not choose between bliss and the nothingness relating to the obsession with morality.
If people want sacred experiences they will find them here; if they want profane experiences, they'll find them too.

.....

Aware of the responsibility involved in staging a Rothko exhibition today, and of the difficulty of bringing together rare and extremely fragile works by such an essential artist, I was keen to involve Christopher Rothko, the artist's son and custodian of the Rothko legacy, who expressed particular satisfaction when he visited the MAM exhibition.² This collaboration has enabled us both to fulfil our respective missions. A great deal of thought went into the hanging, taking into account the artist's repeatedly expressed wishes and interpreting them in the space, with the architects and collaborators striving to satisfy Rothko's desire to give space the greatest possible eloquence and intensity. This exhibition of an artist for whom music - Mozart, Schubert - was vital, and who wanted *to raise painting to the same pitch of intensity as music and poetry*, will be marked by an exceptional creation from composer Max Richter, inspired by Rothko's work.

² Where I was director and curator at the time.

“Not Nothing”

(Extracts chosen by the author, from the exhibition catalogue)

Christopher Rothko

Co-curator

Prelude: Tabula Rasa

Tabula rasa. A clean slate, a fresh start, a new beginning. Slough off the old to better observe the new; unfettered, unencumbered, unbiased, un beholden to what came before. We think of such an image when we think of Mark Rothko’s classic, color field abstractions of the 1950s and 1960s: broad, unblemished, undifferentiated expanses of near formless color, free of readily observable figures, distinct marks and distractions. And of content? But this is not necessarily what Rothko thought of. *Tabula rasa.* This was certainly the effect when the New York school finally won notice with their striking new abstractions of 1947-50. These artists were a fresh wind that blew through the New York art world, and Mark Rothko was amongst those at the center of the turbulence. Paintbrushes in one hand and philosophical manifestos in the other, the color field painters - Gottlieb, Motherwell, Newman, Rothko, Still and many others-produced work that immediately challenged the relevance of figurative painting and anything that smacked of the academic or sentimental. Their large, often muscular, forms pushed away the cluttered pictorial space of the previous generations and boldly announced their arrival. There was no going back, only forward.

Tabula rasa. We think of such an image when we imagine the effect these painters had on the art scene around them, and more broadly on the history of art. Their bold (non-)gestures resounded through the art establishment, demanding attention and a defense of artwork that lacked their works’ pioneering modernism. Their new aesthetic essentially deleted figuration from the discussion. Abstraction became not simply topical but de rigueur. In the 1930s, when his works still actively featured the figure, Rothko emphasized the abstraction in his paintings.¹ By the same token, when his paintings had become demonstrably abstract in the 1950s, he claimed that he was not an abstract painter.² The *tabula rasa* was not necessarily what Rothko thought of.

What, then, was on Rothko’s slate? First, let us remember that we are not speaking of a blank slate. *Tabula rasa* means an *erased* slate. In a world where, as my father would be the first to remind his viewer, there is nothing new, the difference between these two understandings is enormous. History is on some level indelible, in art as much so, if not more, than in other fields. That history consists not only of marks, but also of the action of making those marks, as well as the memory of marking and of seeing those marks. No matter how vigorous the erasing, the remnants remain, both obscurely on the slate and with varying amounts of clarity in memory: personal memory and cultural memory.

¹ Mark Rothko, *The Artist’s Reality*, ed. Christopher Rothko (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 28.

² Notes from a conversation with Selden Rodman in 1956, in Mark Rothk, *Writings on Art*, ed. Miguel López-Remiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 119.

Whether the process involves the archeological, the anthropological, or the psychoanalytical, those previous actions and thoughts can always be retrieved - fragmentary, distorted, and transformed, no doubt, but with lingering resonance. Those archived and exhumed memories endure on the societal level but also within the individual. That chalky residue is at once the Jungian collective unconscious and the personal unconscious, both of which these artists mined in their work, and experienced as fully present. That residue cannot be divorced from our understanding of the world. Ask the artist who has drawn the figure for twenty years to make an abstract drawing. Inevitably, her hand will be influenced - in some way - by what it has drawn before. It cannot be unlearned.

Why have I persisted with *tabula rasa* and engaged in what is arguably no more than an exercise in semantics? Not least because Rothko's work is frequently misunderstood as empty, and his iconic image mistaken for a void.³ I will spend many of the pages that follow helping the reader fill in that void, but as I have suggested above, that apparent emptiness is already filled with murmurs and shadows of what came before and what might be percolating just beneath the surface.

Similarly, that blank slate which that New York school apparently created with a single gesture at mid-century would have been unfamiliar to Rothko. My father saw no need to destroy, no need to erase art history (as the Pop generation was determined to do, but a decade later). He swept many superficial items away, but he certainly did not wipe his slate clean. His process was additive, involving an active conversation with the art of his predecessors. He consumed it whole and birthed something newly conceived but saturated with both the spirit and much of the substance of what came before.

Most importantly, I evoke the notion of the erased tablet because, with its lingering streaks and stains, echoes and suggestions, it is filled with the recombinant DNA of a Rothko painting. It is the material we must draw upon, from within ourselves and within the painting, to actively populate his work and make it personally present. Newly made and always was. Surprising, yet inevitable. Ultimately, to find the material in these "voids" involves a journey; a journey to the familiar by means of the strange and unfamiliar. By equal measure, ours is a journey to the unknown by means of what we know most intimately.

***Substance and Materiality: there is no such thing as good painting about nothing*⁴**

In 1943, Mark Rothko and Adolf Gottlieb, virtual unknowns outside their small circle of New York artists, had the audacity not only to rebut their critic, Edward Jewell of the *New York Times*, but to do so in the public forums of the *Times* itself and of New York arts radio WNYC). Jewell had published a dismissive review of their recent exhibition, expressing, as much as anything else, his bewilderment at what he saw on the gallery walls, and his inability to find real, communicative content in their work. Gottlieb and Rothko were quick to provide some help. While the exhibition featured Rothko works in a mythological vein, his comments from the radio broadcast apply equally to his later abstractions.

³ Indeed, Robert Rosenbloom, one of Rothko's most dedicated champions describes them affectionately as "luminous voids." Robert Rosenbloom, *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko* (Harper & Row, New York, 1975), p. 199.

⁴ Rothko and Gottlieb's letter to the editor, 1943, in Mark Rothko, *Writings on Art*, ed. Miguel López-Remiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 36.

In fact, more so. As I discovered consistently when editing his manuscript of philosophical writings (published in 2004 as *The Artist's Reality*), Rothko's ideas about art, often expounded early in his career, are indicative of an ideal, one he did not yet know how to fully express pictorially. A chronological examination of his career is, in fact, to witness a progression to more thorough, more fluent, and ultimately more impactful expression of those ideas in his painted subjects.

In their letter to the *New York Times*, the two artists were emphatic, not only about the centrality of subject matter in their artwork, but also the high seriousness of that subject matter: "Subject is crucial and only that subject matter is valid which is tragic and timeless."⁵ Their painting directed the viewer to those themes common to all human existence, the ideas most central to our beings but frequently only on the edge of consciousness. For Gottlieb and Rothko, it was the role of the artist to bring these existential questions into direct focus, to redirect us from the trivial and help us confront the real. Thus not only was their work not *nothing*, it was quite emphatically *something*, something of the greatest urgency.

For Rothko, that somethingness was not only the subject of his work, but it was also central to his artistic practice, a critical element in making a painting *believable*, a work that not only warranted, but demanded, engagement. He emphasized that his paintings were real, tangible objects - not a depiction or reference to something else - but substantial items in their own right. Rothko employed several mechanisms to reinforce the immediacy of his work but one of the most striking occurred in 1946, the dawn of his abstract, multiform works: he dispensed with the frame. While at first this appears merely an esthetic maneuver, for Rothko it transformed the viewer's interaction with the painting. By eliminating the frame, he undercut the sense that we were peering into another place from outside. By dispensing with the (gilded) border, he removed the aura of presentation, of decoration, or of something to be studied, and instead made his paintings tangible elements on the wall that we confronted directly. The "as if" was struck from the painting-viewer interaction so that we immediately encountered Rothko's piece of reality, not a semblance of what might be, once was, or could be imagined.

A painting is not a picture of an experience. It is an Experience⁶

My father's well-known statement makes explicit not only the actuality of his work, but the central role of the viewer in the work's purpose. Art is not something being told, a story related to us about someone else. Art is a process in which the viewer is engaged in the first person. Art has to be lived, an object/event that, through the viewing process, we make about ourselves. Not ourselves as the *object* of the art; ourselves as the *subject* of the art, actively finding those common, most human elements through the conversation with (a) Rothko.

To maximize these experiential factors, Rothko made his paintings as direct and genuine as possible. As he details in *The Artist's Reality*, he will not use illusory techniques such as linear perspective and foreshortening to create imaginary spaces that seem large or deep or impressive.

⁵ Ibid., p. 36.

⁶ Mark Rothko, quoted in Dorothy Seiberling, "Mark Rothko," in *LIFE magazine* (November 16, 1959), p. 82.

He will not, like Michelangelo, paint figures that give the visual impression of mass, intuited through their muscular build, while neglecting to illustrate convincing “tactile” elements of weight and substance.⁷ Rothko insists on creating real spaces that speak to our sense of touch - our first-developed and most fundamental sense that assures us most readily of the reality of things. This preoccupation was already apparent in his figurative work at the time of his writing. Here the flat perspective of the painting and the color maintained intensity throughout the expanse of the canvas, and the palpable presence of the figures, whether in the “foreground” or “background”, were all in the service of the communicative power of the piece, not manipulated to create an illusory scene or fictive place. Rothko’s abstractions are built from the same material. He creates a pictorial space that for all its mysteriousness, is direct and palpable, with color intensity that is maintained throughout and no sense that the painting is referring to something else (thus to see a Rothko as a “landscape” or a “window” is to violate its basic function, except insofar as those serve as metaphoric points of entry into an internal space). A Rothko painting is an object and it represents its own reality. Indeed, the seemingly miraculous leap to the classic work of 1949 is certainly not the consequence of a new embrace of color, and only tangentially related to his simplification of form. The impact of the fully realized classic image results from my father’s newfound ability to speak boldly, honestly, unequivocally, in a manner that became almost impossible to ignore. It is a revolution of communication, powered by his palpable sincerity.

The viewer can be forgiven if Rothko’s reality is not immediately perceived. The materiality is clearly there - he makes no attempt to disguise his media, or to suggest that we are looking at anything other than a painting. But if he is telling us about the world we live in, there may be some adjustment required. One key is to stop looking *at* the painting. One must look *through* the painting, Rothko having created in his classic format essentially a series of portals to foster that process. The horizontal fields stem from our fields of vision, the artist creating the most natural possible framework for looking. Starting in the late 1950s, my father made increasing use of reflective surfaces, in part to distinguish like-colored areas of the painting, but also to alter the relationship with his viewer. Yes, these canvases remain works to look through, and yet they are also mirrors, painted environments in which we can see ourselves. By the time we reach the Rothko Chapel (a project completed in 1967 but not built until 1971, a year after the artist’s death), the artist leaves only a hint of himself, inviting us to journey largely alone.

To find environs we recognize in a Rothko painting, we must also stop grasping for the familiar. The world of the painting is indeed *our* world, “ours” meaning the viewer’s and Rothko’s. We are seeing his distillation of the world around us. It is his job to render the familiar as unfamiliar so that we can look at it anew and recognize elements we may previously have missed. This is not done willfully or perversely. Instead, he is showing us, for example, the nearby things we do not see because our focus is consistently distal. A Rothko painting works to distract us from what we see, so we can entertain an alternate view. Most importantly, it interrupts our thoughts so we can find what has been there from the first.

⁷ Op. cit., *The Artist’s Reality*, p. 53.

My father spends some time in *The Artist's Reality* praising “Modern Art” (c. 1930-40) for its honesty:⁸ it does not pretend to be something other than what it is. Its techniques and mechanisms are fully on display. Nothing is hidden. It is perhaps ironic that Rothko would single out these aspects of modern art for praise, as he himself was accused, later in his career, of being secretive and guarding his studio methods jealously.⁹ It is true that my father created his own paints from dried pigments, using a variety of binders and additives that in some cases remain obscure. This is hardly unique. He also did not like people watching while he painted, no doubt creating a persona to some people of reclusiveness and guardedness. And there is no question that the rapid rise of the young Pop generation, so shortly after the hard-won, late-life recognition for the Abstract Expressionists, made him resentful and not especially welcoming to other artists in his studio.

However warranted his reputation for secretiveness may have been, I believe there was a much stronger motivation for Rothko's reluctance to speak of his technique. Materials, methods, even titles were a distraction from our experiential absorption in his art. He just wanted you to look, to *be* with his artwork. If he were here today, he would urge you to stop reading this essay, stop reading the wall label, stop wondering about where he bought his paints, whether or not he wore his glasses while he painted, or the lighting in his studio. Look at the painting. Look *into* the painting. My father does not want you to be preoccupied with how he made it, he wants you to experience what he experienced when he was making it.¹⁰ He does not want a student and he does not want an observer - he wants, he *needs*, a co-creator.

Christopher Rothko, the second of Mark and Mary Alice Rothko's two children, is a psychologist, writer and for the last thirty years, the custodian of the Rothko legacy in partnership with his sister, Kate. He is editor of his father's book of philosophical writings, *The Artist's Reality*. His own book of essays, *Mark Rothko from the Inside Out*, was published in 2015 by Yale University Press. Rizzoli published a new landmark monograph on Rothko in 2022, created by the two Rothko children. Dr. Rothko has helped prepare more than two dozen Rothko exhibitions at museums and galleries around the globe. He is Past Chair of the Rothko Chapel Board and is currently head of the *Opening Spaces* Campaign, guiding the restoration of the Chapel and enhancement of its campus.

⁸ Ibid., p. 110.

⁹ Unpublished text by Robert Motherwell, on Rothko, Shakespeare, and related subjects, 1970, p. 3. Courtesy Dedalus Foundation.

¹⁰ Notes from a conversation with Selden Rodman in 1956, in Mark Rothko, *Writings on Art*, ed. Miguel López-Remiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 119-20.

“It Lives and Breathes”: Depicting Human Drama

(Extracts chosen by the author, from the exhibition catalogue)

Riccardo Venturi

Critic and historian of modern and contemporary art

I. Invading human affairs

In the beginning was a memory that links the childhood of Markus Rothkowitz (1903-1970) to his painting, although it is hard to say how accurate it was. His friend, artist Alfred Jensen, recounted Rothko's recollection as follows: “The Cossacks took the Jews from the village to the woods and made them dig a large grave. Rothko said he pictured that square grave in the woods so vividly that he wasn't sure the massacre hadn't happened in his lifetime. He said he'd always been haunted by the image of that grave, and that in some profound way it was locked into his painting.”¹

In a lecture given at the Pratt Institute in 1958, Rothko ironically listed all the ingredients required to make a good painting, including “a clear preoccupation with death - intimations of immortality.”² The centrality of this preoccupation was confirmed by Rothko's reply to actor and director John Huston, who asked him - during the Houston chapel period - what he was painting. “The infinity of death,” he said, and then specified, “the infinite eternity of death.”³

[...] during his so-called Classic years, he told Dore Ashton that he “was creating the most violent painting in America.”⁴ To people who sought or found serenity in his paintings, he commented, “I would like to say that they have found enduring for human life the extreme violence that pervades every inch of their surface.”⁵ A note in a sketchbook from 1954 reads, “The manner of my pictures is violence - and the only balance admissible is the precarious before the instant of disaster... I am (therefore) always surprised to hear that my pictures are peaceful. They are a tear. They are born in violence.”⁶

Rothko was here referring to his painting's penultimate quality, as though he had halted just before the disaster, subdued and filtered by bands of color. This is suggested by a statement made in 1959 in which he went straight to the point: “Look again. I am the most violent of all the New Americans. Behind the color lies the cataclysm.”⁷

¹ Mark Rothko to Alfred Jensen, quoted in Budd Hopkins, *Art in America 61* (summer 1973), pp. 92-93. Jensen told this story to Ulfert Wilfe (*Diary*, October 12, 1962), who repeated it to Rothko himself, who then confirmed it (*Diary*, March 6, 1963). See also James E. B. Breslin, *Mark Rothko: A Biography* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 17, 326, and 567-68 (note 40).

² Mark Rothko, *Writings on Art 1934-1969*, ed. Miguel López-Remir o (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 125.

³ Sheldon Nodelman, *The Rothko Chapel Paintings: Origins, Structure, Meaning* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), p. 306.

⁴ Dore Ashton, *About Rothko* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996), p. 38.

⁵ Thomas Crow, “The Marginal Difference in Rothko's Abstraction”, in eds. Glenn Phillips and Thomas Crow, *Seeing Rothko* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2005), p. 35.

⁶ Mark Rothko, unpublished sketchbook, “The Property of (A. Selzer & Co., Inc.)”, 1954, pp. 34-35, quoted in Oliver Wick, “Do they Negate Each Other, Modern and Classical? Mark Rothko, Italy and the Yearning for Tradition”, in ed. Oliver Wick, *Rothko*, exh. cat., Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, 2007 (Milan: Skira, 2007), p. 9.

⁷ Rothko to Brian Corney, 1959, quoted in Chris Stephens, *Mark Rothko in Cornwall* (Tate St. Ives, 1996), p. 10.

[...]

Rothko did not claim that a childhood memory was the inspiration behind his paintings. More subtly, he was haunted by a memory even as he pointed out that he wasn't certain he actually witnessed the dreadful event; and this story, whether actually experienced or reconstructed later, invaded his surfaces of abstract color. What Rothko wanted to depict and convey to others - what truly interested him, as man and artist (if the two can be separated) - was human tragedy. That preoccupation, which remains hard to put into words, ran through his entire oeuvre, expressed through a painterly approach freed from easel painting and, from the late 1940s onward, through abstraction alone. Given this ambitious artistic project, at a historical moment and in a part of the Western world where painterly abstraction reached its zenith, the question of its execution remained open. Using the resources of non-representational painting, was it possible to convey the most violent aspects of the human drama, its most traumatizing events, whether experienced or invented as a screen memory?

[...]

Such was the watershed traced by Rothko's work: either you recognize his paintings' ability to convey formless emotions, bringing them to life in Rothko's own way [...]; or else you view them as the product - however brilliant it may be - of an obstinate, fulgurating conviction, to be analyzed with the historical tools of postwar American art.

5. Sensing presence

It may seem surprising, but even an artist we might never associate with Rothko's world, such as performance artist Marina Abramovic, has commented sensitively on his painting:

When you see a Rothko painting, you may not even know what colors it's made of, but as soon as you stand in front of it, it acts in a way that you cannot define rationally. A good work of art should make you turn around when you're not looking at it, the same way you can feel somebody looking at you when you're sitting in a restaurant. You're not sure, but you turn round and there is really somebody there. That energy is really beyond cultures.⁸

[...]

Abramovic went to Rothko and Pollock shows in New York in 1999. What struck her was the simultaneous view of a whole group of paintings by Rothko. "I found him to be a complete artist. From the beginning he explored different states of consciousness. It was so luminous. It was such a spiritual experience to see the progression of this work until its culmination in blackness. It was a kind of fulfillment. You see how the end of life comes and all that he went through. As an artist, you have to know how to live, how to die, and when to stop working."⁹

⁸ Interview by Bernard Goy in the *Journal of Contemporary Art* 3: 2 (Fall/Winter 1990), p. 51, quoted by Bojana Pejić, "Being-in-the-Body: On the Spiritual in Marina Abramović's Art," in Friedrich Meschede (ed.), *Marina Abramović* (Berlin: Neuen Nationalgalerie/Cantz, 1993), p. 36.

⁹ Janet A. Kaplan, "Deeper and Deeper: Interview with Marina Abramovic [December 3, 1998]", *Art Journal* 58, 2 (summer 1999), p. 16.

How to live, how to die. Beyond sensibilities, the visual arts sometimes manage to picture the drama of human existence. Rothko's work might be compared to Shakespeare's *Tempest*, not in relation to a particular character but in terms of what philosopher Richard Wollheim called "a form of suffering and of sorrow, and somehow barely or fragilely contained," which subtends the play.¹⁰

T. J. Clark's attempt to sum up Rothko's oeuvre in a single quip - "The Birth of Tragedy redone by Renoir"¹¹ - is misleading. There is only one way to recognize Clark's mistake, the way desired by Rothko throughout his career and his life: to experience his painting directly. Only then can we grasp the human drama, can we realize that, yes, we may be standing in front of the *Birth of Tragedy* - but as painted by Rothko. He alone, and no one else, could have painted it thus.

Translated from French by Deke Dusinberre

¹⁰ Richard Wollheim, "The Work of Art as Object," *Studio International* 180: 928 (December 1970), reprinted in eds. Charles Harrison and Fred Orton, *Modernism, Criticism, Realism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 16, and eds. Charles Harrison and Paul J. Wood, *Art in Theory 1900–2000: An Introduction of Changing Ideas* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1992, 2003), p. 809

¹¹ T. J. Clark, "In Defense of Abstract Expressionism," *October* 69 (Summer 1994), reprinted in T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 387.

Timeline - Mark Rothko

1903

Marcus Rotkovitch is born on September 25, in Dvinsk, in the Russian Empire (now Daugavpils, Latvia). The fourth child of a liberal Jewish couple, he will be the first in his family to receive a religious education.

1913-1914

In 1913, he emigrates to Portland, Oregon, with his mother and sister, to join his father and two brothers, who had left three years earlier.

He is enrolled in an elementary school class for migrant children.

1918-1923

Skips two grades and begins Lincoln High School. Receives a scholarship to Yale University, which is not renewed at the end of the first year.

In fall 1923, he leaves university without graduating and settles in New York.



Mark Rothko High School graduation portrait | © The Rothko Family Archive

1924-1925

Thanks to a friend, in January 1924, he decides to take classes at the Art Students League in New York. In spring, he returns to Portland, where he spends several months studying theater at the school run by actress Josephine Dillon. In October 1925, he returns to New York and the Art Students League, in the class of Max Weber.

1926

Becomes an official member of the Art Students League, where he will remain until 1930.

1927

Illustrates *The Graphic Bible*. Receiving no credit, he unsuccessfully sues the book's author and publisher.

1928

Meets painter Milton Avery, who will have a profound influence on his work.

First group exhibition, at the Opportunity Gallery in New York.

1929

Begins teaching drawing to children at the Center Academy of the *Brooklyn Jewish Center*, which he will continue until 1952. Meets Adolph Gottlieb.

1932

Marries Edith Sachar.

1933

Over summer, he holds a group show at the Portland Art Museum, exhibiting drawings and watercolors alongside works by his students.

In November, New York's Contemporary Arts Gallery presents his first solo show, with 15 oil paintings, most of them portraits.

1934-1935

In February, he is among the two hundred founding members of the Artists Union in New York. Alongside Gottlieb and other artists, he takes part in three exhibitions at the Uptown Gallery.

Publishes his first article, “New Training for Future Artists and Art Lovers,” in the *Brooklyn Jewish Center Review*.

Joins the Secession Gallery and with artists Ben-Zion, Ilya Bolotowsky, Adolph Gottlieb, Louis Harris, Yankel Kufeld, Louis Schanker, Joseph Solman, and Nahum Tschachasov, cofounds the independent group “The Ten,” which declares its opposition to the conservatism of the period’s regionalist artistic trends.

1936-1937

Shows with The Ten at the Municipal Art Galleries, New York; Galerie Bonaparte, Paris; and Montross Gallery and Georgette Passedoit Gallery, New York. Works for the Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), where he will remain until 1939.

1938-1939

Becomes an American citizen. The Passedoit, Mercury, and Bonestell galleries in New York organize exhibitions by The Ten.

1940

The Ten disbands. Rothkovitch begins calling himself “Mark Rothko,” though the change will not be formalized until 1959.

Participates in the creation of the Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors.

During the year, Rothko and Gottlieb begin researching mythological themes.

Rothko stops painting and dedicates himself to writing a book on his vision of art. Unfinished, it was found after the artist’s death, and published in 2004 as *The Artist’s Reality*.

1941

First Annual Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors Exhibition at the Riverside Museum in New York.

1942

Second Annual Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors Exhibition at Wildenstein and Company in New York.

1943

Meets Clyfford Still. Gottlieb and Rothko respond to a harshly critical article by Edward Alden Jewell in the *New York Times*. On New York radio station WNYC on October 13, the two artists explain the reasons for their interest in mythological subjects.

1944

Divorces Edith Sachar.

1945

First Exhibition in America of Twenty Paintings at Peggy Guggenheim’s Art of This Century gallery; she now represents him. At this time, his work reflects his interest in Surrealism.

Meets his future wife, Mary Alice Beistle, known as Mell. *Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Sculpture, Watercolors and Drawings* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

1946

With the series of paintings known as “Multiforms,” his style continues to evolve. Joins Betty Parsons Gallery, where he will show each year until 1951.

Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.



Henry Elkan, Mark Rothko holding a painting in his studio, 53rd Street, New York, 1953
© Henry Elkan © 2005 Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko

1947

Mark Rothko: Recent Paintings at Betty Parsons Gallery in New York.

In summer, he runs courses at the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute). *Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Publishes “The Romantics were Prompted” in the journal *Possibilities*, edited by Robert Motherwell.

1948

Second solo exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery; for the first time, Rothko uses numbers to title his paintings. With William Baziotes, David Hare, Robert Motherwell, and Barnett Newman, he founds the Subjects of the Artist school, which he will leave the following year, shortly before its dissolution.

1949

Third solo exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery. Returns to teach at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco. During this period, Rothko’s “Multiforms” are characterized by large flat areas of thin, diluted color.

He sees Matisse’s *Red Studio*, which MoMA had acquired that same year.

1950

Fourth solo exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery. Spends five months with his family in Europe, visiting Paris, Cagnes-sur-Mer, Venice, Florence (where they admire the Fra Angelico frescoes in the San Marco convent), Arezzo, Siena, Rome, and London. Birth of his daughter, Kathy Lynn.



Mark and Mell Rothko | Courtesy The Rothko Family Archive

1951

Rothko is one of the 18 artists in the iconic “Irascibles” photo published in *Life* magazine.

Appointed assistant professor in Brooklyn College’s Department of Design, where he will teach until 1954.

Fifth solo exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery.

1952

Participates in the exhibition *15 Americans* at MoMA.

1954

American Painters Today, Rothko’s first exhibition with Sidney Janis Gallery, which now represents him: the gallery organizes two solo shows, in 1955 and 1958. Meets curator Katharine Kuh from the Art Institute of Chicago, who organizes his first solo show at a major American museum.

1955

Newman and Still write to Sidney Janis criticizing Rothko’s painting as “salon.”

Over the summer, he is a visiting professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Reads Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*.

1957

Solo exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston. Duncan Phillips, collector and founder of the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, purchases two of his paintings.

Rothko’s palette begins to darken.

1958

Represents the United States at the 29th Venice Biennale, alongside Seymour Lipton, David Smith, and Mark Tobey.

On June 25, Seagram distilleries commissions a series of murals for the Philip Johnson-designed Four Seasons restaurant, in the Seagram Building, designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, in New York. The artist eventually renounces the commission.

1959

Second trip to Europe, where he visits England, France, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

1960

The Phillips Collection organizes a solo Rothko exhibition and purchases three works; these will become the first pieces to be permanently installed in a space dedicated to the artist.

1961

On January 18, his first retrospective, *Mark Rothko*, opens at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. It travels to London, Amsterdam, Brussels, Basel, and Rome, before finishing in Paris on January 13, 1963. Accepts a commission to paint murals for the new premises of Harvard's Society of Fellows.

1962

Leaves Sidney Janis Gallery in reaction to Janis's support for Pop Art.

1963

Before delivering the commission for Harvard University, he exhibits five of the panels at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Signs an exclusive contract with Marlborough Fine Art Gallery. Birth of his second child, Christopher Hall.

1964

First solo exhibition at the Marlborough Gallery in London. Begins work on his *Blackforms* series of paintings. On April 17, Dominique and John de Menil commission a series of paintings for the planned chapel of the University of St. Thomas in Houston. Philip Johnson designs the chapel, but the project will finally be realized by his associate architects Eugene Aubry and Howard Barnstone. In 1968, a new site would be chosen for the chapel, then under the auspices of the Institute of Religion and Human Development.

1965

In March, he receives the Brandeis University Creative Arts Award.

In October, he meets Norman Reid, director of the Tate Gallery in London, to discuss their acquiring paintings to be installed in a dedicated room at the museum.

1966

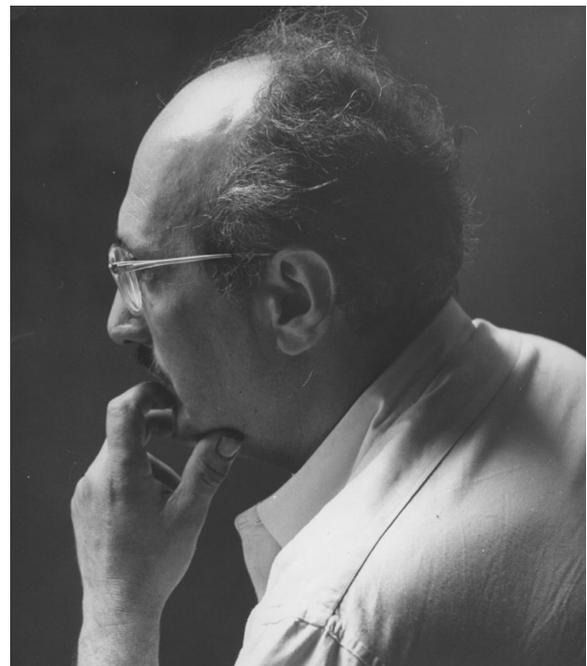
Third visit to Europe, where he stays in Portugal, Spain (Majorca), Italy, and France. He continues on to the Netherlands, Belgium, and England. In London, he sees the room in the Tate Gallery allocated to host his work.

1967

Completes the panels for the Menils' chapel in Houston. He is invited to teach at the University of California at Berkeley over the summer.

1968

Spends three weeks of April hospitalized with an aortic aneurysm. His doctor advises him to not paint canvases over one meter high. He works on paper and uses acrylic paint for the first time.



Henry Elkan, Mark Rothko in his studio, 53rd Street, New York, c. 1953
© Henry Elkan © 2005 Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko

1969

Leaves his family and moves into his studio at 157 East 69th Street.

Signs a contract with Marlborough Gallery; they will be his exclusive dealer for the next eight years.

Begins a series of large, dark paintings, in shades of gray, black, and brown, known as *Black and Gray*.

During this period, he considers a commission, finally unrealized, for the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, where his paintings would have hung next to a Giacometti sculpture.

The Mark Rothko Foundation is created in June.

Yale University award him an honorary doctorate.

Donates nine murals from the *Seagram* series to the Tate Gallery.

1970

Mark Rothko takes his own life in his studio on February 25.

On May 29, the Tate Gallery inaugurates its “Rothko Room,” hung according to the artist’s specifications.

1971

On February 27, the Rothko Chapel in Houston is dedicated as an interfaith place of worship.

Quotes of Mark Rothko

I'm interested only in expressing basic human emotions.

I became a painter because I wanted to raise painting to the level of poignancy of music and poetry.

Two characteristics exist in my paintings; either their surfaces are expansive and push outward in all directions, or their surfaces contract and rush inward in all directions.

My art is not abstract, it lives and breathes.

I have always maintained that if I should be given an enclosed space which I could surround with my work it would be the realization of a dream that I have always held.

It seems to me that the heart of the matter... is how to give this space you propose the greatest eloquence and poignancy of which my pictures are capable of.

I would like to say to those who think of my pictures as serene... that I have imprisoned the most utter violence in every inch of their surface.

Without taking the journey, the spectator has really missed the essential experience of the picture.

I'm not interested in color. It's light I'm after.

Since I am involved with the human element, I want to create a state of intimacy. Large pictures take you into them. Scale is of tremendous importance to me - human scale.

To us art is an adventure into an unknown world, which can be explored only by those willing to take the risks.

Visit of the Exhibition and visuals available for the Press

MARK ROTHKO

A major figure of American 20th-century painting, associated with the artists of Abstract Expressionism, Mark Rothko made his reputation with a paradoxical singularity: expressing “basic human emotions” exclusively through abstraction. With him, it found an unexpected dimension, both timeless and universal, representing “human drama.”

Born Marcus Rotkovitch in 1903, in Dvinsk, in the Russian Empire, now Latvia, into a cultured Jewish family, he attended a Talmudic school. At the age of ten, he emigrated with his family to Portland in the United States. A brilliant student, he attended Yale before leaving in 1923 to settle in New York. There he fortuitously discovered his vocation, joining the Art Students League, where he remained until 1930. He became a naturalized American citizen in 1938, and took the name Mark Rothko two years later.

While the iconic abstract works, known as “classic” (1950–1970), form the core of this exhibition, the overall chronological layout begins in the 1930s, with a group of figurative paintings. At the entrance, tellingly, the artist’s only self-portrait, a seeming withdrawal into an inner vision.

In the early 1940s, believing that he had failed to represent the human figure without leaving it “mutilated,” he stopped painting and devoted himself to writing a manuscript, posthumously titled *The Artist’s Reality*, before exploring new pictorial forms. Confronted with the turbulent international context, his work evolved. Along with other painters - such as Gottlieb and Newman - he questioned the subject in art, seeking to invent new foundational myths. This resulted in paintings inspired by his reading of Nietzsche and Aeschylus, depicting archaic heroes, deformed and duplicated, hybrid monsters that soon encountered a certain fantasy influenced by Surrealism, [Gallery 1](#).

In the years 1946-1948, Rothko moved decisively toward abstraction, with the paintings known as “Multiforms,” in which the colored fields - initially overrun with organic elements - tend toward a more structured composition, [Gallery 2](#).

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Rothko’s characteristic, fully abstract “classic” paintings appeared. Rectangular shapes with undefined contours and radiant colors, they are arranged in two or three registers. The entire canvas, and beyond, is permeated by an atmospheric touch. The enlarged formats produce an immersive effect on the captivated viewer, who surrenders to sensory revelation, [Gallery 4](#) and [Gallery 7](#).

From the late 1950s, his palette darkened, bringing a new gravity and a more meditative character to his work, as in the *Seagram Murals*, [Gallery 5](#), and *Blackforms*, [Gallery 6](#).

The works of the 1960s, mark the classic period’s high point, in their format and the complexity of their chromatic harmony, [Gallery 9](#).

In a space whose solemnity is enhanced by the presence of Giacometti’s work, the last series, *Black and Gray*, is distinguished by its restraint and a certain severity, thanks to a more austere palette, [Gallery 10](#). Rothko did not, however, abandon vibrant colors even at the end of his life, [Gallery 11](#).

Evoked at the end of the exhibition, the Rothko Chapel in Houston, on which the artist worked from 1964, represents an achievement “beyond what [he] imagined possible.”

Gallery 1

URBAN SCENES, SUBWAYS, AND PORTRAITS

From his beginnings until 1940, Mark Rothko developed a figurative body of work focused on the human subject and depicted anonymous figures: nudes, portraits, and urban scenes. He pushed the plasticity of figures to the limits of representation, moving toward ever greater reduction and simplification of forms. His expressionist brushwork evolved, influenced by painters whom he particularly admired, Milton Avery and Henri Matisse.

At the end of the 1930s, Rothko abandoned figuration, believing that he had failed to represent the human figure “without mutilating it”. He stopped painting and devoted himself to writing a theoretical text on painting, posthumously titled *The Artist's Reality*.



Mark Rothko,
***Self Portrait*, 1936**

Oil on canvas
81.9 x 65.4 cm

Collection of Christopher Rothko
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023

Mark Rothko,
***Untitled (The Subway)*, 1937**

Oil on canvas
61 x 91.4 cm

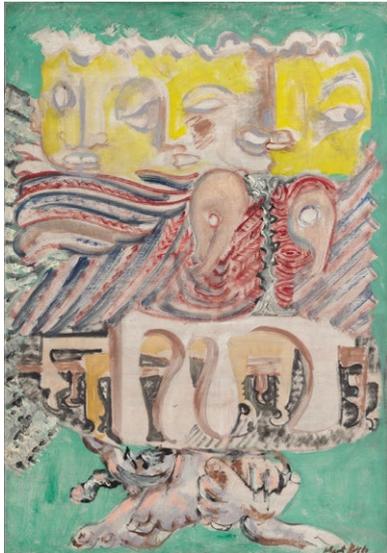
Collection Elie and Sarah Hirschfeld, New York
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023



MYTHOLOGY AND NEO-SURREALISM

In the horrific context of the early 1940s, Rothko returned to painting, and with his friends Adolph Gottlieb and Barnett Newman, looked to invent a “contemporary myth.” Drawing on ancient mythologies and certain totemic forms, he attempted to formulate a universal language in response to barbarism.

His vocabulary was filled with biomorphic elements thanks to contact with Surrealism - which American artists had become familiar with since the 1936 exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism* at MoMA, and the exile of its leading representatives to New York. Peggy Guggenheim promoted the aesthetic in her gallery, Art of This Century, where Rothko first exhibited in 1944.



Mark Rothko,
The Omen of the Eagle, 1942

Oil and graphite on canvas
65.4 x 45.1 cm

National Gallery of Art, Washington DC
Gift of the Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc., 1986.43.107
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023

Mark Rothko,
Slow Swirl at the Edge of the Sea,
1944

Oil on canvas
191.1 x 215.9 cm

Museum of Modern Art, New York
Bequest of Mrs. Mark Rothko through
The Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc.
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023



Gallery 2

MULTIFORMS AND EARLY CLASSIC PAINTINGS

In late 1946, Rothko entered an increasingly abstract phase with the Multiforms. While the first compositions remained dense and organic, from 1948, they became characterized by a more defined structure, thinner layers, and larger vertical formats. As early as 1949, distinctive composition of superimposed rectangles and a luminous, translucent palette appeared. The artist abandoned descriptive titles in favor of numbering his works.



Mark Rothko,
No. 21, 1949

Oil on canvas
238.8 x 135.6 cm

The Menil Collection, Houston
Acquired in honor of Alice and George Brown
with support from Nancy Wellin and Louisa Sarofim
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023

Mark Rothko,
No. 7, 1951

Oil on canvas
240.7 x 138.7 cm

Yageo Foundation Collection, New Taipei City, Taiwan
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023



Gallery 4

THE 1950S

In the early 1950s, Rothko's painting became immediately recognizable: two or three rectangular, colored shapes superimposed one on another, playing with an infinite range of tones and values, creating the vibration so typical of his work. The atmospheric brushwork gives the canvas a mysterious, almost magical quality. The artist asserted that behind the color, he was looking for light. The formats became even larger, until they enveloped the viewer.

Rothko was fully conscious of the sensual hold of his painting but refused to be called a "colorist", just as he refuted the apparent serenity of the work: "I have imprisoned the most utter violence in every square inch of their surface."



Mark Rothko,
No. 9/No. 5/No. 18, 1952

Oil on canvas
294.6 x 232.4 cm

Private Collection
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023

Mark Rothko,
Light Cloud, Dark Cloud, 1957

Oil on Canvas
169.6 x 158.8 cm

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth
Museum purchase, The Benjamin J. Tillar Memorial Trust
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023





Mark Rothko,
No. 10, 1957

Oil and mixed media on canvas

175.9 x 156.2 cm

The Menil Collection, Houston

© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023

Mark Rothko,
Green on Blue (Earth-Green and White),
1956

Oil on canvas

228.6 x 161.3 cm

The University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson

Gift of Edward Joseph Gallagher, Jr.

© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023



Gallery 5

SEAGRAM MURALS

From 1956, Rothko's colors darkened and his formats changed, as can be seen in the three groups brought together on this floor:

- beginning with five works from 1956 to 1958, whose composition and palette herald the *Seagram Murals*, 1958-1959, including *No. 9 (White and Black on Wine)*, 1958, the first of the series.
- The Tate's Rothko Room is then presented in its entirety, with its nine *Seagram Murals*.
- In the following room, the exhibition continues with *Blackforms*, 1964-1967.

In June 1958, Rothko accepted the commission for a series of murals for the restaurant architect Philip Johnson was designing for Mies van der Rohe's new skyscraper, the *Seagram Building*. The artist was captivated by the idea of having total control over a place, and he intended to create a work inseparable from the architecture.

In a new studio, he installed scaffolding at the same dimensions as the dining room. Some thirty works were produced before the artist was satisfied. Rothko restricted his palette to a duality of colors in each panel, and favored horizontal formats; altering his composition, he shifted from a closed to an open form, whose horizontals and verticals could suggest a window or a portal. The paintings would have had to have been placed high enough to remain visible behind the diners.

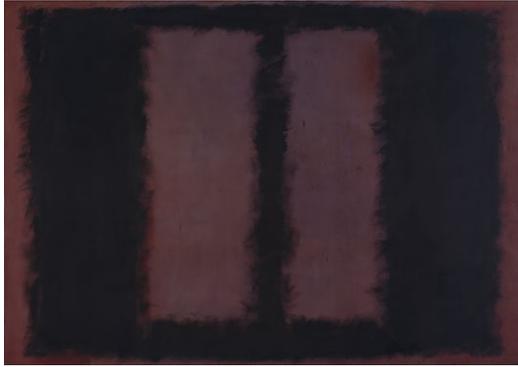
In December 1959, realizing that the site in no way corresponded to the spirit of the project that he had conceived, the artist ended the contract. Ten years later, he selected nine of these panels and donated them to the Tate, pleased with the idea of their proximity to Turner's work, which Rothko admired. The paintings arrived in London on the day of his death and were exhibited in the Rothko Room. Their presentation here, installed in accordance with the artist's guidelines, is an exceptional opportunity to see the works outside the United Kingdom.



Mark Rothko,
No. 9 (White and Black on Wine),
1958

Oil on canvas
266.7 cm x 428.63 cm

Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023



Mark Rothko,
Black On Maroon, 1958

Oil, acrylic, glue tempera,
and pigment on canvas
266.7 x 381.2 cm

Tate, Londres
Presented by the artist through American
Federation of Arts, 1968

© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023

Mark Rothko,
Red On Maroon, 1959

Oil paint, acrylic paint, glue tempera
and pigment on canvas
266.7 x 238.8 cm

Tate, Londres
Presented by the artist through American
Foundation of Arts, 1969

© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023



Gallery 6

BLACKFORMS

Over the course of 1964, as he has in the *Seagram Murals*, the artist experimented with the capacity of dark panels, bordering on monochrome, to generate their own light. Blending browns, reds, and purples with black, these paintings, known as *Blackforms*, demand that the eye becomes accustomed to them before they fully reveal themselves. These works coincide with the beginning of Rothko's reflections for the chapel in Houston, to which he devoted himself until the end of the 1960s.



Mark Rothko,

No. 8, 1964

Oil, acrylic and mixed media on canvas

266.7 x 203.2cm

National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

Gift of The Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc., 1986.43.139

© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -

Adagp, Paris, 2023

Gallery 7

THE ROTHKO ROOM AT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

Typical of the classic period - vibrant colors and *sfumato* effects from which two distinct rectangles emerge - the three paintings shown here are from the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. There they are presented together in a dedicated space, the Rothko Room, whose tight dimensions suited the artist, who wanted the works hung close to the floor, with subdued lighting. He added a simple bench to encourage contemplation. Inaugurated in 1960, the Rothko Room was the first museum space dedicated to Rothko, and the only one opened during his lifetime. For Duncan Phillips, founder of the Phillips Collection, it evoked a feeling of “well-being suddenly shadowed by a cloud.”



Mark Rothko,
Ochre, Red on Red, 1954

Oil on canvas

235.3 x 161.9 cm

The Phillips Collection, Washington DC

Acquired 1960

© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023

Gallery 9

THE 1960S

During the 1960s, Rothko continued creating individual paintings. Each one offers the viewer an immersive experience through a “state of intimacy”. This viewer, a co-creator as Rothko wanted, must “take the risk” of “taking the journey [or] miss the essential experience.”

As always with the artist, the colors are a vector. They became muted, and denser, with reds, blacks, and browns taking on a greater importance. Combined with deep blues, they create a contrast that reinforces the incandescence and accentuates the work’s luminosity.



Mark Rothko,
No. 14, 1960

Oil on canvas
289.6 cm x 266.7 cm

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art -
Helen Crocker Russell Fund purchase
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023

Mark Rothko,
Blue and Gray, 1962

Oil on canvas
201.3 x 175.3 cm

Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023





Mark Rothko,
No. 1 (White and Red), 1962

Oil on canvas
258.8 x 228.6 cm

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
Gift from Women's Committee Fund, 1962
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023

Gallery 10

BLACK AND GRAY, GIACOMETTI

The *Black and Gray* series, 1969-1970, is distinguished by a new composition, two sections, separated by a continuous line: a black rectangle in the upper area, and a gray rectangle in the lower area. Each painting, except for one, is surrounded by a white border, traced with the help of adhesive tape, enclosing the two shapes. Here we look at the work rather than enter into it. Rothko used acrylic, which he'd only utilized in his 1967-1968 works on paper. Marked by a certain severity, these paintings have too often been associated with Rothko's declining health and depressive state. A more contemporary reading, supported by artists, proposes another interpretation, connecting them to Minimalism.

Here, the presence of Giacometti is a reminder of the monumental painting commission UNESCO proposed to Rothko in 1969 for its Paris headquarters. The work was to have been installed close to a large sculpture by Giacometti, to whom Rothko felt an affinity, and whose paintings, according to Motherwell, inspired those of the *Black and Gray* series. Rothko renounced the commission in July 1969, but continued to work on the series until his death in February 1970.



Mark Rothko,
Untitled (Black and Gray), 1969

Acrylic on canvas
236.2 x 193.4 cm

Anderson Collection at Stanford University,
Gift of Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson,
and Mary Patricia Anderson Pence, 2014.1.023
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023

Gallery 11

AND STILL, COLOR

Rothko continued to use vivid colors - pink, red, orange and blue - right until the end, as can be seen in the three works in this room.



Mark Rothko,
No. 3 (Untitled/Orange), 1967

Oil on canvas
205.7 x 195.6 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven,
Katharine Ordway Collection

© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko -
Adagp, Paris, 2023

THE ROTHKO CHAPEL IN HOUSTON



Elizabeth Felicella, Interior view of the Rothko Chapel in Houston | Courtesy The Menil Collection, Houston © Elizabeth Felicella © 1998 Kate Rothko Prize & Christopher Rothko - Adagp, Paris, 2023

1960

Dominique and John de Menil - French art collectors who had settled in Texas - visit Rothko's New York studio, where they see paintings from the *Seagram Murals* series. They offer to buy them for a Catholic chapel they plan to build in Houston. The artist tells them that he would prefer to create new works.

Early 1964

Rothko begins a series of dark-toned paintings called *Blackforms*.

April 1964

Dominique de Menil contacts Rothko again, to officially commission works for the new chapel, to be designed by Philip Johnson.

Fall - Winter 1964

Rothko rents a new studio on New York's 69th Street, where he builds three walls at the same dimensions as those of the future chapel. He suggests to Philip Johnson that he change the square design to an octagonal one.

December 1964 - April 1967

Rothko produces a series of large-format paintings, 14 of which are intended for the chapel. They are conceived as an indivisible whole, and characterized by their plum and burgundy tones, reinforced by black grounds. Rothko specifies their location: a northern triptych aligned with a canvas on the south wall, two asymmetrical triptychs on the east and west sides, and four other paintings at the intercardinal points.

January 1, 1966

In a thank you letter to his commissioners, Rothko writes: *"The magnitude... of the task in which you have involved me, exceeds all my preconceptions. And it is teaching me to extend myself beyond what I thought was possible for me."*

November 1967

After a disagreement with the artist, Philip Johnson withdraws from the project, replaced by his associates Howard Barnstone and Eugene Aubry. The duo proposes a skylight some 9 meters high (30 feet), well below that initially proposed by Johnson (26 meters [85 feet]), who returns to design the chapel's entrance and reflecting pool.

February 1970

Two weeks before his death, Rothko approves Eugene Aubry's design for the chapel.

May - October 1970

The chapel is built by E. G. Lowry Construction Company. Barnett Newman's sculpture Broken Obelisk, an homage to Martin Luther King, Jr., is placed on the chapel's main axis, to the south, in the reflecting pool.

February 27, 1971

Inauguration of the Rothko Chapel, an ecumenical center open to all religions. A year later, the Chapel will become autonomous with the agreement of the Trustees of the Institute of Religions and Human Development.

2021

Faithfully restored, the Rothko Chapel celebrates its 50th anniversary. The lighting is optimized to meet the artist's wishes. The chapel's cultural and research activities will soon benefit from new spaces. The Rothko Chapel continues its pioneering work on human rights, social justice, and religious tolerance.

LVMH is a partner of the Rothko Chapel, supporting its cultural and research activities.

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Mark Rothko by Max Richter: Musical Creation

AS PART OF THE “MARK ROTHKO” EXHIBITION, GERMAN-BRITISH COMPOSER AND PIANIST MAX RICHTER CALLS THE FONDATION HOME FOR AN EXCEPTIONAL RESIDENCY. THIS UNIQUE PROGRAMME OF CONCERTS AND MUSICAL PROMENADES IS DIVIDED INTO THREE PHASES OVER THE COURSE OF THE EXHIBITION: IN NOVEMBER 2023, JANUARY 2024 AND MARCH 2024.

For this residency, the Fondation asked Mr Richter to compose a singular piece, a worldwide premiere intimately tied to the world of American painter Mark Rothko. An essential figure in neoclassical music, Mr Richter is considered one of the main influences for post-minimalist composers.

“The point where my work and Mark Rothko’s work meet is this concept of place, which he believes he invents when he creates a series of paintings. A musical work is an imaginary landscape; it is a space that one can inhabit.(...)”

Max Richter will fully take over the Fondation’s many spaces. In the galleries of the exhibition, a musical itinerary from the composer presents an original dimension of his creation. Recorded and then broadcast as a soundtrack in all the spaces, the work will also be played live by some twenty musicians in several galleries.

In the Auditorium, three pieces by Max Richter, including the world-premiere creation for orchestra, piano and electronics, can be heard in three original concerts.

“In my mind, this project exists in two parts. The first is something that’s more like a sound installation or a sound response to the Rothkos. You have live instrumentalists distributed throughout the building and they make the music. And then there’s a kind of locked version of the music, which is something that can be performed, or something that can be recorded. In one part there’s a kind of a fluidity in the structure, which is almost like a promenade, like a landscape, a place. And then there’s the one at the other extreme, which is a performed work.”

“I almost have synesthesia when I look at the Mark Rothko’s paintings, who rightly said ‘Silence is so accurate’.”

Max Richter, *piano and composition*

Orchestre Le Balcon

Matthew Lynch, *direction*

Grace Davidson, *soprano*

PROGRAMME

Musical promenades - Mark Rothko exhibition

To coincide with the “Mark Rothko” exhibition, composer and pianist Max Richter is taking up residence at the Fondation. Considered one of the main influences on post-Minimalist composers, the German-British composer is a key figure in neoclassical music.

This residency includes musical promenades in the galleries, a musical itinerary created by the composer that presents an original dimension of his creation: played throughout the Fondation spaces, the work will also be performed in several live musical interludes in the gallery. Max Richter experiments with the superposition of sound layers and media, associating electronics and live performance. The creation is given in the evening, from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., by some twenty musicians from the Le Balcon ensemble positioned throughout the galleries.

*23 and 25 November 2023, 25 and 26 January 2024, and 21 and 22 March 2024,
from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. without interruption.*

Prices : 20€ / 10€

Concerts in the Auditorium

As part of his exceptional residency for the “Mark Rothko” exhibition, composer and pianist Max Richter takes over the foundation for three original concerts.

The Fondation asked Max Richter to compose a singular piece, a worldwide premiere, intimately tied to the world of American painter Mark Rothko: *“The point where my work and Mark Rothko’s work meet is this concept of place, which he believes he invents when he creates a series of paintings. A musical work is an imaginary landscape; it is a space that one can inhabit.(...)”*

In addition to this commissioned work from Max Richter for orchestra, piano and electronics, two earlier Max Richter works will enhance the programme: *Exiles* (2015) and *The Waves: Tuesday* (2017).

Max Richter, piano and composition

Orchestre Le Balcon

Matthew Lynch, direction

Grace Davidson, soprano

24 November 2023, 24 January 2024, 20th March 2024, at 8:30 p.m.

Prices : 40€ / 25€

Max Richter

Piano and composition



© William Waterworth

Max Richter stands as one of the most prodigious figures on the contemporary music scene, with ground-breaking work as a composer, pianist, producer, and collaborator. From synthesizers and computers to a full symphony orchestra, Richter's innovative work encompasses solo albums, ballets, concert hall performances, film and television series, video art installations and theater works. He is classically trained, studying at Edinburgh University, the Royal Academy of Music, London, and completing his studies with composer Luciano Berio in Florence.

"Memoryhouse", Richter's 2002 debut, has been described by *The Independent*, and *Pitchfork Magazine* as a "landmark", while his 2004 album "The Blue Notebooks" was

chosen by *The Guardian* as one of the best Classical works of the century. "SLEEP", his eight- and-a-half-hour concert work, has been broadcast and performed worldwide, including at the Sydney Opera House, Berlin's Kraftwerk, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the Philharmonie de Paris, and at the Barbican, London. In 2012 Richter 'Recomposed' the infamous Vivaldi's Four Seasons, winning him the prestigious ECHO Classic Award, and an established place in the classical charts.

In recent years Richter's music has become a mainstay for many of the world's leading ballet companies, including The Mariinski Ballet, La Scala Milan, The Joffrey Ballet, New York City Ballet, The Paris Opera Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Semper Oper, and NDT, while his collaborations with Wayne McGregor for The Royal Ballet have been widely acclaimed. His most recent collaboration was with Margaret Atwood and Wayne McGregor, based on Atwood's Maddaddam trilogy of novels, premiering in Toronto in September 2022.

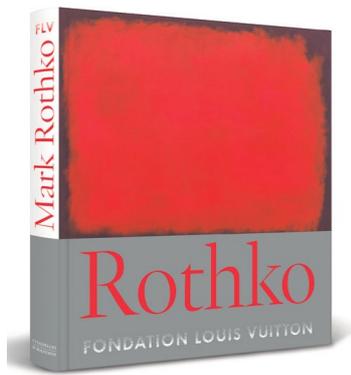
Richter has written prolifically for film and television, with recent projects including *Hostiles*, *Black Mirror*, *Taboo* - which earned him an Emmy nomination, HBO series *The Leftovers* and *My Brilliant Friend* and most recently *White Boy Rick*, *Mary Queen of Scots* and the sci-fi drama *Ad Astra* starring Brad Pitt. His music is also featured in Martin Scorsese's *Shutter Island*, Ari Folman's *Waltz With Bashir* and in the Oscar-winning *Arrival* by Denis Villeneuve.

Most recently, Richter's cinematic track 'In The Nature of Daylight' was featured in HBO series *The Last of Us* resurfacing the track to the top of the Spotify charts. He has worked on sci-fi drama *Spaceman*, directed by Johan Renck, due for release 2023.

A frequent collaborator in fashion, Max has worked with the creative director of Dior Homme, Kim Jones, for three seasons having produced music or performed at the brand's runway shows. Most notably a mesmerizing performance against the backdrop of the Pyramids of Giza in Cairo for the Fall 2023 show.

Richter's recorded project, *The New Four Seasons*, was released in 2022 marking ten years of his *Vivaldi Recomposed* project, re-recording the piece with period instruments. For his most recent release *SLEEP: Tranquility Base*, Richter returned to his celebrated eight-hour magnum opus *SLEEP* offering a glimpse into the original material from a more electronic standpoint ahead of World Sleep Day March 2023.

PUBLICATIONS



CATALOGUE

Dir: Suzanne Pagé and Christopher Rothko

Foreword by Suzanne Pagé

Authors: Christopher Rothko, Riccardo Venturi, Harry Cooper, Ludovic Delalande, François Michaud, Nancy Spector, Jeffrey Weiss, Annie Cohen-Solal, Claudia Buizza, Cordélia de Brosses and Magdalena Gemra.

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JOURNAL

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October 2023

Price : 7€

Edition Fondation Louis Vuitton

Visits, activities and workshops

SHORT TOURS

Every day at 11 a.m

Duration: 15/20 minutes

No reservation required: meet at the points marked “ShortTours”

Guided by cultural mediators, a micro-tour is an opportunity to get a quick look at the architecture of the Fondation Louis Vuitton or a selection of its works...Try out the concept on your own or with other visitors, and get a quick shot of culture to acquaint you with the building or the exhibition.

LATE HOURS EVENTS AT THE FONDATION

On the first Friday of each month, the Fondation closes at 11 p.m. Experience the venue like never before with an exciting and varied programme. Concerts, DJ sets, arts & crafts workshops, unique visits to exhibitions, dining and a bar service all make your experience at the Fondation something to remember.

ADULT CONTEMPLATIVE TOUR

This sensory experience offers an original adventure in the “Mark Rothko” exhibition! A Fondation Cultural Guide and a meditation instructor encourage introspection, reflection and observation to fully experience the monumental works of this American painter.

“MARK ROTHKO” BABY TOUR, *families with babies from new-born to 18 months*

Tour in French, every Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

Daily during French school holiday period.

How should you start getting babies interested in art? Gently and by using the senses, with the help of our Cultural Guide! The Fondation welcomes babies and their parents when the institution’s doors open for a warm, personal moment among the works of Mark Rothko. Then enjoy a relaxed visit of the exhibition with your family.

“MARK ROTHKO” STORYTELLING TOUR, *for children aged 3 to 5 years old*

Tour in French, every Saturday and Sunday at 11 a.m.

Daily during French school holiday period.

Follow the Cultural Guide through the “Mark Rothko” exhibition! Through their senses and emotions, children discover the artist’s colourful, monumental works. By listening to and interacting with the guide, families with children come to understand the exhibition in entertaining and exciting ways.

“MARK ROTHKO” CHILDREN’S WORKSHOP, *families with children aged 6 to 10 years*

Workshop in French every Saturday and Sunday, and in English every Sunday.

Daily during French school holiday period.

First, children and parents explore the “Mark Rothko” exhibition together and observe the artist’s singular work with the help of an expert Fondation Cultural Guide. Then, in the workshop, children compose their own creations, interpreting the artist’s colourful shapes!

“MARK ROTHKO” CHILDREN CONTEMPLATIVE TOUR, *families with children aged 7 years and up*

This sensory experience for children and parents alike is an original adventure in the “Mark Rothko” exhibition! A Fondation Cultural Guide and a meditation instructor encourage introspection, reflection and observation to fully experience the monumental works of this American painter.

Practical Information

Reservations

On the website:

www.fondationlouisvuitton.fr

Opening hours

Monday, Wednesday and Thursday: 11 a.m - 8 p.m

Friday: 11 a.m - 9 p.m (except on the first

Friday of every month, closed at 11 p.m)

Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m - 8 p.m

Opening hours (during holidays)

Open everyday: 10 a.m - 8 p.m

Fridays at 9 p.m

Access

Address: *8, avenue du Mahatma Gandhi,
Bois de Boulogne, 75116 Paris.*

Metro: *ligne 1, station Les Sablons,
exit Fondation Louis Vuitton. Bus 244, stops in
front of the Fondation on weekends.*

Fondation shuttle: *leaves every 20 minutes
from place Charles-de-Gaulle - Etoile, at the top
of avenue de Friedland. (Service reserved for people
with a ticket and transport ticket - return journey
for €2, for sale at www.fondationlouisvuitton.fr
or on board).*

*The map of the Fondation is available in French
and English on our website or at the information
desk.*

Fares

Full fare: €16

Reduced fare: €10 and €5

*Family pass: €32 (2 adults + 1
to 4 children under 8 years old)*

*Free for disabled people and people
accompanying them.*

*Every Thursday, free for students and teachers
in art, design, architecture, fashion and history
of art, on presentation of a proof of valid
school certificate.*

*Tickets give access to all of the Fondation's
spaces and to the Jardin d'acclimatation.*

Visitor information

+ 33 (0)1 40 69 96 00

The Apps of the Fondation

*New guide with previously unseen interviews
and videos. Also available for free on Smartphone
thanks to the application Fondation Vuitton from
the App Store and Google Play.*

Free WiFi access.

Twelvy the chatbot

*Twelvy, the Fondation's chatbot, answers the
audience's questions. To guide the visitors throughout
the exhibition, a specific path is also put in place.
Available on the Fondation's website.*

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