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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	TOMKINS	IV. C. 8

(7) Black Mountain (1952). Cage + Cunningham + the "event" - Cy Twombly - Weiss + Black Mountain

Washington and Lee University. Maturing during the artistically vital post-war

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	TOMKINS	IV. C. 8

Black Mountain

This was Albers' last year there. A scandal had broken out -- Dreier, one of the founders, was accused of mishandling funds; Albers left in protest against unjust charge. Many said, though, that it was his best teaching year, because he concentrated solely on teaching and ignored the fierce politics.

"He was a beautiful teacher, and an impossible person... He doesn't teach you how to do art. The focus is on the development of your own personal sense of looking. When he taught watercolor, for instance, it was about learning the specific properties of watercolor -- not about making a good picture. Drawing was about the efficient functioning of line. Color was about the flexibilities and the complex relationships that colors have to each other. All these things in a sense were about don't trust your own ideas about things, because things are more specific than that. It's funny, I consider Albers the most important teacher I ever had, and I'm sure he considers me one of his poorest students. Actually I know that -- I happened to see his comment on me at the end of the term, which was 'He'll never be a painter, he's too messy.' Coming from Paris, entering in the middle of the term, and having all that wildness and savage naivete and that hunger, I must have seemed non-serious to him, and I don't think he ever realized that it was his discipline that I came for...

"He wasn't easy to talk to, individually. I found his criticism in class so excrutiating and so devastating that I never asked for private criticism, which you could do there. Years later, though, I'm still learning what he taught me. What he taught really had to do with the whole visual world, and it applies to whatever you're doing, gardening or painting or anything. The technical exercises he had us you do were to help your own discovery of the properties of the materials, with emphasis on the differences between them. He's such a strong personality that it was hard for me to take advantage of what I learned from him, freely. As it turned out, my response to what I learned from him was the opposite of what he intended -- I realized that one color was as good as another, I found that I couldn't decide to use one color instead of another, because I knew there had to be some reason for the choice, and I had rejected all my reasons. That's why I did the all black paintings and the all white paintings, later. I did the blacks because all white wasn't enough, not from any nihilist viewpoint. The problen was how to use the various elements in such a way as not to exclude anything, and yet to use them in a way that would be independent enough to be recognized as a style.

R. had no clashes with Albers. "I was really on my good behavior, and I really wanted to please him. And then I was at least superficially affected by Albers' sense of order. His rule is to make order, that's the difference; I only consider myself successful when I do something that resembles the lack of order I sense." (R is curious to know what Albers thinks of his work now, when R. is as well or better known than Albers, especially in Europe).

In any case, R. spent that year doing mostly portraits -- with some distortion, but not really expressionistic -- and executing Albers' technical exercises in color and line. Didn't take Albers course in materials -- found about them on his own.

have to seek very far, outside painting, outside the West, outside history, at the very limits of meaning...."

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10,

*LIFE, April 9, 1951. Spread strips of blueprint paper on floor, put down ferns, etc., then made model. "Although the R.'s make blueprints for fun," said LIFE, "they hope to turn them into screen and wallpaper designs."

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R. once made a collage of toilet paper, then duplicated it in gold leaf. The illusion bothered him, and he threw it away.

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Black Mountain Event/ (Cage, in Kostelanetz)

"I planned the thing. Without my deciding to do it, it wouldn't have happened."

"What they were goingx to do I didn't know. I knew roughly, but not specifically. I knew that Merce would be dancing, but I didn't know what he'd be dancing."

"The cups were introduced (placed upon/ each seat) so that the audience had something to do. That is, when they encountered cups on their seats, what could that mean? It meant, of course, that they would be served coffee toward the end of thex piece."

organized by David Whitney. The exhibition catalogue, with a criti-
philosopher Roland Barthes, and gallery brochure were supported by a grant from the Best Products Foundation, Richmond, Virginia.

Among the works in CY TWOMBLY: PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS 1954-1977, on view on the fourth floor, are the artist's white paintings of the 1950s and his better-known gray paintings of the 1960s. His series of nine paintings, "Discourses on Commodus" (1963), will be installed as a group in the Lobby Gallery. Twombly's life-long interest in mythology and Greek and Roman history is evident in such works as the recent "Phaedrus" (1977), "Leda and the Swan" (1976), and the drawings "Orpheus," "Pan," and "Dionysius," of 1975. The artist's unique and complex system of personal pictographic signs is seen in such paintings and drawings as "Virgil" (1973) and "Mars and the Artist" (1975). Roland Barthes in his catalogue essay, "The Wisdom of Art," describes the ethic and great historic singularity of Twombly's work: "[it] does not grasp at anything.... If we wished to locate this ethic, we would have to seek very far, outside painting, outside the West, outside history, at the very limits of meaning...."

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The white and the black paintings were not unique. Lucio Fontana did a series of all-white canvases in 1946; Yves Klein made his first monochromes in 1950. To say nothing of Malevich...

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Merce On Black Mtn Event

"I do remember the audience being caught by it, because they were never sure what was going to happen next."

Also remembers himself being chased by a dog during his improvised solo.

organized by David Whitney. The exhibition catalogue, with a critical essay by philosopher Roland Barthes, and gallery brochure were supported by a grant from the Best Products Foundation, Richmond, Virginia.

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* Cage Manifesto, quoted in Genauer column Dec. 27, 1953 (on White Paintings in Stable show).

"To whom,
No subject
No image
No taste
No object
No beauty
No message
No talent
No technique (no why)
No idea
No intention
No art
No object
No feeling
No black
No white (no end)
"After careful consideration, I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing in these paintings that could not be changed, that they can be seen in every light and are not destroyed by the action of shadows."
JOHN CAGE

organized by David Whitney. The exhibition catalogue, with a critical essay by philosopher Roland Barthes, and gallery brochure were supported by a grant from the Best Products Foundation, Richmond, Virginia.

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Cy Twombly
Had come up from Virginia, with all that Southern elegance. "I think one of the things that drew us together was that we were still so inexperienced. It still looked like Sue had all the talent — it may turn out she does.

Cy still almost the same as he was then. "Sue and Cy and I can start talking, after e haven't seen each other in years, as though somebody just left thex room for a moment."

#348

that fall.

Originals shown at Stable in 1953.

In 1956, RR turned a 4-panel White Pntg. into a combine-painting. In 1961, he used the seven-panel one into his homage to Duchamp. The other all disppeared.

Twombly: "He felt that now was the time to remember them because so many people were doing ~~things~~ similar things, ad people are beginning to understand them."

(NYT, 10/13/68)

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White Paintings

Originals done 1951 at Black Mtn.
Replicas done 1968, shown at Castelli
that fall.

Originals shown at Stable in 1953.

In 1956, RR turned a 4-panel
White Ptg. into a combine-painting.
In 1961, he used the seven-panel
one into his homage to Duchamp. The
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WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Founded 1930 by Gertrude V. Whitney

945 Madison Avenue at Seventy-Fifth Street New York, New York 10021 (212) 794-0600

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CY TWOMBLY RETROSPECTIVE
AT WHITNEY MUSEUM

The first comprehensive New York exhibition of the work of Cy Twombly is being presented at the Whitney Museum of American Art from April 10 through June 10, 1979. Forty-five paintings and forty drawings comprise this retrospective of the painter who has long received wide international respect. Many of the works, on loan from the artist's collection and other collections abroad, are being shown publicly for the first time. CY TWOMBLY: PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS 1954-1977, which has been made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, was organized by David Whitney. The exhibition catalogue, with a critical essay by philosopher Roland Barthes, and gallery brochure were supported by a grant from the Best Products Foundation, Richmond, Virginia.

Among the works in CY TWOMBLY: PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS 1954-1977, on view on the fourth floor, are the artist's white paintings of the 1950s and his better-known gray paintings of the 1960s. His series of nine paintings, "Discourses on Commodus" (1963), will be installed as a group in the Lobby Gallery. Twombly's life-long interest in mythology and Greek and Roman history is evident in such works as the recent "Phaedrus" (1977), "Leda and the Swan" (1976), and the drawings "Orpheus," "Pan," and "Dionysius," of 1975. The artist's unique and complex system of personal pictographic signs is seen in such paintings and drawings as "Virgil" (1973) and "Mars and the Artist" (1975). Roland Barthes in his catalogue essay, "The Wisdom of Art," describes the ethic and great historic singularity of Twombly's work: "[it] does not grasp at anything.... If we wished to locate this ethic, we would have to seek very far, outside painting, outside the West, outside history, at the very limits of meaning...."

Cy Twombly was born on April 25, 1928, in Lexington, Virginia, where he attended Washington and Lee University. Maturing during the artistically vital post-war years, he attended Black Mountain College, where he met Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, and Ben Shahn. In 1950-51 he was the recipient of the Virginia Museum's annual fellowship for Education in the Arts, a grant awarded competitively in all areas of the arts. The same year he attended the Art Students League of New York, studying under Will Barnet , Carl Holty, and Morris Kantor. Between 1951 and

(more)

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1953 Twombly traveled in North Africa, Spain, and Italy. He has lived in Rome since 1957. Following his first one-man show at the Kootz Gallery in New York in 1951, his work has been presented in several one-man exhibitions in Europe and the United States.

PUBLICATIONS:

The exhibition catalogue, Cy Twombly: Paintings and Drawings 1954-1977, contains a critical essay, "The Wisdom of Art," by philosopher Roland Barthes, a chronology and bibliography. The 120-page, soft-cover book illustrates all the works in the exhibition, 16 of them in full color. Made possible in part by a grant from Best Products Foundation, Richmond, Virginia, it is available at the Museum Sales Desk for $12.50.

A gallery brochure, with brief text and a checklist of the exhibition, is being made available free to the public through a grant from the Best Products Foundation, Richmond, Virginia.

POSTER:

Cy Twombly: Paintings and Drawings 1954-1977 reproduces in full color an untitled 1973 collage. The poster measures 31 1/2 x 24" and is available at the Museum Sales Desk for $6.00.

GALLERY TALKS:

Lectures on current Whitney exhibitions are presented at the Museum Saturdays and Sundays at 2:00 and 3:30 p.m.

For further information:

Linda Gordon or Ruth Kavesh
(212) 794-0633

March 1979

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A number of black + white pts were stored in Tworkov's studio. Tworkov tried to get one in 1953 Stable Annual - heavy opposition. All the stored pts came out for Bob's 1953 Stable show.

Franz Kline at BMC that summer (1952). He liked the black pts. Told Cage he pre-ferred latter one, which made him feel "helpless."

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lack of scruples to
it's going to look
too much the other
ruples. ~~Xx~~ Seeing
ities of that sort
before -- I was grateful
like his work and

carried to t e final

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some of the hostility
as he wanted to be
sculptures, not collages.
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~~xexpxnnnxx~~ to use bits
of scrap paper, he asked, why couldn't you use tin, or wood, or even ~~an~~ goat with a tire? He keeps asking the question, and it's a terrific question philosophically, whether or not the results are great art.~~xx~~ He's influenced the whole new generation of pop artists -- ~~xoxhingxthxx~~ everything they've done has come out of something he'd already done first."

Says R. really got his encouragement from the Cage "in-group," never had any self-doubt. Cage's influence on two entirely different sensibilities, R. and Johns, really produced the new art. "Cage said, in effect, all you nice people will listen to anything so long as it's called music, but you won't listen if it's called noise; Rauschenberg said, you'll look at anything so long as it's called painting, but will you look at the real thing?" Nevertheless, Tworkov (like Johns) rejects the notion that chance has much to do with R's art. No matter how materials get used, R. makes the decisions in the end, and it is his taste (which Tworkov emphasizes, as being unsurpassed in his experience) that controls. Also, Tworkov adds, it is not generally realized how much any painter uses chance, even realistic painters. "I doubt if there's any more control being exerted by any abstract painter than there is by Rauschenberg."

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Jack Tworkov (check quotes with Tworkov)

Came to know Rauschenberg really at Black Mountain in 1952, when he was teaching there for a month. Was immediately sympathetic to his work. "There were two things about him in particular that impressed me. The first was his sense of comedy, his really high comic spirit, that allowed him to go into everything with such gaity. And then, the fact that there was absolutely no lag between his ideas and what he did with them. With so many artists, they get an idea, and then all sorts of things intervene before they can execute it. With Bob, there's none of that. He has a tremendous capacity for work, of course, and terrific energy -- and an amazing lack of scruples to get in the way. His attitude is, yo u never know what it's going to look like until you do it, so let's do it. If anything I'm too much the other way, I have a lot of trouble with ideas and a lot of scruples. Seeing Bob's way of working really educated me to the possibilities of that sort of thing, made me see things I hadn't been able to see before -- I was grateful to him, really, and it was natural after that for me to like his work and to try to get others interested in it."

The white paintings were really "Mondrianesque painting carried to t e final extreme, Albers too. It was kidding them in a way..."

Tworkov, alone of the older generation of abstract expressionists, actively supported R's work , and accordingly drew upon himself some of the hostility they felt toward R. "They never took Bob as seriously as he wanted to be taken. Bob always spoke of his things as paintings or sculptures, not collages. He was certainly as deeply involved in painting as anyone else was, and the fact that it was comic often comic didn't mean that it wasn't serious too. The comic spirit is very rare in art, of course, but I think it's particularly good that it should happen here in America, where people tend either to ignore something completely or to take it much too seriously. Bob was always putting booby traps in his pictures, but only for boobs."

"Bob has always been able to see beyond what others have decided should be the limits of art. Twentieth century art has been a constant expansion of these limits, of course -- people thought Cezanne had gone as far as you could go. And of course people are always ready to define the boundaries for other people. But Bob always goes beyond what people think of as the limits. That's what he did with collage. If it was all right to use bits of scrap paper, he asked, why couldn't you use tin, or wood, or even an goat with a tire? He keeps asking the question, and it's a terrific question philosophically, whether or not the results are great art. He's influenced the whole new generation of pop artists -- everything they've done has come out of something he'd already done first."

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Tworkov also more or less rejects the idea that R. is making a fundamentally different kind of art, i.e. non-expressionist. Says the abstract expressionists were really doing much the same thing -- opening up painting to new influences including chance. Rauschenberg just went a lot further, and this annoyed a lot of people who were wrapped up in the high seriousness of art. "Art can be pretty stuffy at times."

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John Cage - 6/22/63 (On Rauschenberg)

As he recalls it, his first meeting with R. was at Black Mountain, in the summer of 1952. Cage came to Black Mountain in 1948 and put on a Satie Festival -- he had spent the previous year in Paris doing research on Satie. At that time, he was invited to come back, and also asked to recommend an artist to come and work there. Cage recommended Bill de Kooning, who was very poor then and almost unknown.

Cage came back to Black Mountain in the summer of 1952. He was working on the Williams Mix. Kline was there, and so was R. "I always make a habit of running around and looking at other people's work," Cage says. "Bob was doing his Black Paintings, and I thought they were perfectly marvellous." Cage had a studio-apartment at the end of the Bauhaus-style building in which R. had his studio.

Speaking of his basic relation to Bob and his work, Cage says "I just have never had any problem. There was from the beginning a sense of absolute identification, or utter agreement. So much so that I can't tell whether his ideas are mine or mine are his. There have been times, for example on a lecture platform when Bob was answering questions from the audience, that I've had the feeling that I would have given the same answer, in almost the same words. I respond to circumstances in the way he would. Of course, we are also very different people in a great many ways, but there has always been this sense of identification."

"I remember one incident that first summer. Bob knocked on the door to my studio one day, and brought in a painting he had just finished. I think he felt my reaction to it was not sufficiently enthusiastic -- I had been so very enthusiastic about his work, and he may have felt I was disappointed. In any case, I suddenly realized that he was terribly upset, close to tears. He asked me if there was something wrong with the painting. Well, I gave him a good talking to about that. I told him he simply could not be dependent on anyone's opinion, that he had to stand on his own feet, and never, never look to another person for that sort of support."

In this Cage was speaking there from his own experience, and it was part of the sense of identification between them. Cage had been around longer, and he knew what R. was in for. He knew that for people of his and R's nature, it was necessary to develop an inner toughness that amounts finally to absolute indifference to the opinions of other people -- not a heartless indifference, not a go-to-hell indifference, but a deep conviction that the opinion of others is their own affair, not yours. But he also knew that for people like them, once you make something, almost anything anyone says can be disturbing until this toughness develops. "Even now I almost never have anyone saying yes to my work," says Cage.

The similarity extends to the main teachers of both men. For Cage, Arnold Schoenberg functioned in much the same role as Albers for R. Schoenberg told Cage once: "My purpose in teaching you is to make it impossible for you to compose." His reaction to Schoenberg was total rebellion. Largely because of Schoenberg's attitude, Cage decided to dedicate his life to music.

"At any rate," says Cage, "by the time I met Bob I had a good deal more experience of what to expect, and I could tell him he could not depend on me or anyone else." What had helped Cage through a lot of mental anguish was the teaching of D.T. Suzuki. He had been going to Suzuki's classes for

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Cage Anecdote: "I always believe things people tell me, even practical jokes. Somebody once called up to tell me that I had just won the Pulitzer Prize for the Fontana Mix. The only trouble, he said, was that they had made a mistake and were calling it the Montana Fix. I believed him. I spent the rest of the day trying to get it straightened out."