

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
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MASTERWORKS BY CY TWOMBLY ACQUIRED BY THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The Museum of Modern Art has acquired an outstanding group of paintings by the American abstract artist Cy Twombly, whose work is the subject of a major retrospective currently on view at the Museum, through January 10, 1995. The paintings, constituting some of Twombly's finest achievements, include: *Leda and the Swan* (1962) and an Untitled canvas (1970), both of which were purchased from the artist; and the multi-part work *The Four Seasons* (completed 1994), a generous donation to the Museum by the artist. The paintings will join the Museum's collection at the close of the exhibition, of which they are a part, in the fall of 1995, after completing a tour to Houston, Los Angeles, and Berlin.

Kirk Varnedoe, Chief Curator of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, and organizer of the Twombly exhibition, commented, "As the Museum moves toward the end of the century, one of its goals is to assure that its collection of major modern masters of the period after 1955 has the same depth and quality that characterize its holdings in earlier areas, such as Cubism, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism. This is a very large challenge, and we are happy now to have taken an important step toward that goal by adding to the two Twombly paintings we already own a key masterpiece of the 1960s, an unrivaled gray-ground work of the 1970s, and the exceptional recent series *The Four Seasons*, which shows the continued vitality of Twombly's distinguished career.

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"We are tremendously grateful to Cy Twombly," continued Mr. Varnedoe, "for the generosity of his gift of *The Four Seasons* and also for making available to us two other masterworks of such great quality."

One of the most important and admired artists of the past fifty years, Cy Twombly has dedicated himself to painting that combines abstraction, figuration, and writing in a highly personal manner. With its frequent allusions to poetry and to the heritage of classical culture, Twombly's work links the literary and the painterly and joins the concerns of contemporary creativity with the art of the past.

Leda and the Swan is widely regarded as one of Twombly's masterworks and has been featured in several exhibitions. Referring, in its furious tangle of pencil marks and white-and-pink paint, to the mythological erotic encounter between the beautiful maiden Leda and the god Jupiter disguised in the form of a swan, this impassioned painting provides clear evidence of the artist's interest in translating antiquity into earthy and immediate terms. Another powerful early work, the monumentally scaled untitled canvas of 1970, reconceives the legacy of Jackson Pollock's large "poured" or "drip" paintings of 1948-50 using writing-like strokes of white crayon on a gray field, so densely and complexly layered that they create an active, pulsating "atmosphere." Prior to the current exhibition, the work has never been seen in the United States (because of its scale, the painting will not travel to Berlin). The acquisition of the two paintings was made possible by the sale of one of the Museum's two casts of Joan Miró's bronze sculpture *Moonbird* (1966) to a private European collector. The recent bequest from the estate of Gordon and Nina Bunshaft included a *Moonbird*, which, therefore, had created a duplication of this work in the collection.

The Four Seasons, a recent series consisting of four canvases that meditate on the seasonal cycle of the year, beginning with the mellow richness of autumn, is the generous gift of the artist to the Museum. With a grand scale, vertical elevation, luminosity, and brilliant color fresh to this newest phase of Twombly's art, the canvases at the same time synthesize many of the elements of sign language and written poetry that have been hallmarks of the artist's earlier work.

After its New York showing, **CY TWOMBLY: A RETROSPECTIVE** travels to the Menil Collection, Houston (February 7 - March 20, 1995); The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (April 9 - June 25, 1995); and the National Gallery, Berlin (September 2 - November 14, 1995).

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