

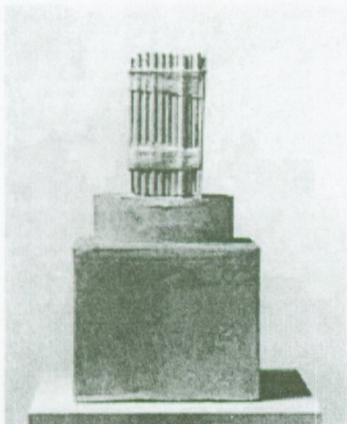
National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

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Untitled [Rome], 1959
Kunsthaus, Zurich

"CY TWOMBLY: THE SCULPTURE,"
FIRST MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE
OF ARTIST'S SCULPTURE ON VIEW
AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART,
MAY 6 – JULY 29, 2001

Washington, D.C. – Cy Twombly: The Sculpture, the first major survey of the artist's three-dimensional works, will be on view in the West Building of the National Gallery of Art from May 6 through July 29, 2001. The exhibition, previously on view at the Kunstmuseum Basel and The Menil Collection, Houston, brings together sixty of the artist's sculptures, spanning the years from 1946 to 1998. Before this retrospective, many of the objects had rarely been shown.

"Cy Twombly is one of the most distinguished artists of the postwar period. His sculpture is remarkable both for its haunting beauty and its poetic allusions to motifs and relics of classical antiquity," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "This first sculpture retrospective will certainly attract long-deserved attention to Twombly's substantial contribution to twentieth-century sculpture."

THE EXHIBITION

Cy Twombly: The Sculpture is devoted to an impressive but less familiar body of the artist's work than his paintings and drawings. The exhibition features works, mostly small and medium in scale, representing two major sculptural campaigns: 1948 to 1959 and 1976 to 1998.

Composed primarily of rough fragments of wood coated in plaster and white paint, Twombly's sculpture is rooted in various prominent movements in modern art, including the dadaist and surrealist traditions of assemblage and found-object sculpture. His work alludes to artifacts of the archaic past—tribal fetishes, reliquaries, altars, chariots, and architectural fragments—and incorporates poetry and mythological themes from Greek and Roman antiquity.

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The exhibition includes outstanding examples of Twombly's early works, such as Untitled [New York], 1954, which exemplifies his preoccupation with the themes of ritual and mortality. In this sculpture, Twombly uses both palm fronds, symbolic of eternal life, and a shrinelike plinth, suggesting the cult of the dead. Another early piece, Untitled [Rome], 1959, demonstrates the introduction of ancient mythology into his work. Formed by eleven bound rods placed on a corrugated cardboard box, this sculpture suggests an archaic panpipe resting on an altar, possibly alluding to Pan, a Greek god of fertility and carnal desire.

Several recurring motifs appear in later sculptures in the exhibition. Untitled [Bassano in Teverina], 1979 and Anabasis [Bassano in Teverina], 1980, recall ancient battle chariots—allusions to archaic warfare which Twombly explores in other works. Winter's Passage: Luxor [Porto Ercole], 1985, an important later sculpture, employs another prominent motif, the boat, and reveals the influence of Egyptian art on Twombly's work. Untitled [Bassano in Teverina], 1987, a two-tiered pyramid, shows the artist's special fascination with architectural elements.

THE ARTIST

Cy Twombly was born on April 25, 1928, in Lexington, Virginia. He studied at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Washington and Lee University in Virginia, and the Art Students League in New York. His subsequent study at the renowned school for the arts, Black Mountain College, in North Carolina, strongly influenced his early development.

In the early 1950s, following extended travel in Italy, Spain, and North Africa, Twombly returned to New York and emerged as a prominent figure among a group of artists working there, including Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. By the end of the 1950s Twombly had relocated to Italy, married, and discontinued his work in sculpture, preferring to focus on his drawings and paintings. In 1976 Twombly returned to sculpture, and since that time has consistently created both spare wooden constructions and bronze casts. To date, Twombly has created over 150 works of sculpture, the most significant of which are included in the Gallery exhibition.

ORGANIZERS AND CATALOGUE

Cy Twombly: The Sculpture was co-organized by The Menil Collection, Houston, and the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel. Jeffrey Weiss, curator of modern and contemporary art at the National Gallery of Art, is coordinating the Washington installation, which Twombly himself will supervise. A fully illustrated exhibition catalogue (in English and German) by Katharina Schmidt, director, Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, is available for \$55 in the Gallery Shops, or by calling 1(800) 697-9350.

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SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Slide Lectures

Sunday, May 6, 2:00 p.m.

The "in-two" of Twombly's Sculpture

Rosalind Krauss, Meyer Schapiro Professor of Modern Art and Theory, Columbia University, New York
East Building auditorium

Thursday, May 17, 6:00 p.m.

The Sculpture of Cy Twombly

Kirk Varnedoe, chief curator, department of painting and sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
East Building auditorium

Tours of the Exhibition

Tours begin at the West Building art information desk. For dates and times, please consult the calendar of events there, the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov, or call (202) 842-6706. No reservations are required. Tours by special appointment may be arranged for adult groups of twenty or more by calling (202) 842-6247.

For information about accessibility to galleries and public areas, assistive listening devices, sign language interpretation, and other services, please inquire at the art information desks, access the Web site at www.nga.gov, or call (202) 842-6690.

NATIONAL GALLERY INFORMATION

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden, located on the National Mall between Third and Ninth Streets, NW, are open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free. For information, call (202) 737-4215; Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176; or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov.

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