



Release Date: April 29, 2016

Catalogue Raisonné of Mark Rothko's Works on Paper to be Published by National Gallery of Art, Washington

Online Resource Scheduled for Launch by 2018; Two-Volume Set Slated for Publication, 2020

National Gallery Continues to Seek Information about Works on Paper by Rothko



Mark Rothko, American, born Russia, 1903 - 1970

Untitled, 1969

acrylic on paper

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of The Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc. Copyright © 2005 Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko

Washington, DC—The National Gallery of Art maintains the largest public collection of art by the American artist Mark Rothko (1903–1970). Following the publication in 1998 of its landmark catalogue raisonné of Rothko's works on canvas, the Gallery embarked on research into Rothko's works on paper. The culmination of this effort will be an online resource compiling the drawings, watercolors, and paintings on paper. Expected to be launched to the public in phases between 2016 and 2018, the online resource will be followed in 2020 by a two-volume catalogue raisonné print publication.

Mark Rothko: The Works on Paper will document and illustrate some 2,600 works by Rothko located in public and private collections worldwide. Demonstrating the range of the artist's creative achievements, the online and print publications will be the definitive scholarly references for Rothko's works on paper, an oeuvre largely unknown to art specialists and the public alike. The Gallery continues to seek information about drawings, watercolors, and paintings on paper to be considered for inclusion in the catalogue raisonné.

Anyone with information regarding works on paper by Rothko should contact Laili Nasr by e-mail at l-nasr@nga.gov or by phone at (202) 842-6779.

"Assistance from both public institutions and private collectors has been, and will continue to be, essential to the success of this project," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "In the interest of compiling the most comprehensive record possible, we hope that current and previous owners will contact us to provide information about drawings, watercolors, and paintings on paper by Rothko, a towering figure in 20th-century American art. We are grateful to private collectors, public institutions, galleries, and auction houses for their invaluable assistance to date. We are especially thankful to the artist's children, Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko, for their continuing support of this important project."

Mark Rothko: The Works on Paper follows the award-winning catalogue raisonné, **Mark Rothko: The Works on Canvas** by David Anfam, copublished in 1998 by the National Gallery of Art and Yale University Press, which documented 834 known paintings.

Rothko's Works on Paper

During the 1920s and 1930s Rothko produced more than 1,500 figurative works in watercolor, ink, graphite, and crayon on loose sheets of paper and in sketchbooks. These include landscapes of various locations, most prominently Portland, OR, to which he immigrated in 1913 from Dvinsk, Russia (now Daugavpils, Latvia), and places where he frequently summered, such as Lake George, NY, and Cape Ann, MA. From 1924, when Rothko settled in New York City, the geometries of the metropolis and the psychology of its inhabitants figure in urban views and subway scenes. Throughout this early phase

of his career, Rothko also produced dozens of landscapes, nude studies, intimate domestic scenes, and portraits of family and friends. Very few of these early works have ever been reproduced.

In the 1940s Rothko's work entered an experimental phase as he explored a range of styles rooted in expressionism, symbolism, and surrealism and utilized subject matter drawn from mythological, classical, biblical, ethnographic, scientific, and other sources. At mid-decade, he produced a remarkable body of luminous surrealist watercolors featuring biomorphic shapes; the fluidity of these works was integral to Rothko's transition toward complete abstraction.

Between 1947 and 1949 Rothko's works, which later came to be known as "multiforms," eschewed figural associations and were marked by asymmetrically arranged patches of color hovering within a chromatic field. The artist would eventually develop the so-called multiforms into his signature style: soft-edged rectangles set against a ground of uniform color in a vertical format.

Rothko worked on paper throughout the 1950s and 1960s, often mounting paintings executed in acrylic, oil, watercolor, or some combination thereof on panels or stretched canvases. After a debilitating illness he turned almost exclusively to painting on paper from 1968 until his death in 1970.

The Authors and Advisors

The catalogue raisonné is being compiled and written by Adam Greenhalgh, associate curator, National Gallery of Art, and Laili Nasr, project coordinator and contributing author, who has been involved with the Rothko catalogue raisonné project at the Gallery since its inception, with guidance from an advisory committee: Franklin Kelly, deputy director and chief curator; Judith Brodie, curator and head, modern prints and drawings; Harry Cooper, curator and head, modern art; and Judy Metro, editor in chief, all at the National Gallery of Art. All information associated with the ownership of works of art documented in the catalogue raisonné is held in confidence by the National Gallery of Art, and all wishes for anonymity will be fully respected.

Mark Rothko and the National Gallery of Art

In 1986 the Mark Rothko Foundation determined that its mission to conserve its collection of Rothko's art and to enhance and promote the artist's legacy through scholarly research and exhibitions would be best served by strategically placing his canvases and works on paper in selected major international museums. Before disbanding in the same year, the Foundation designated 35 institutions to receive the art, among them the Art Institute of Chicago; the Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, MA; the Menil Collection, Houston, TX; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; the Museum of Modern Art, NY; and the Tate Gallery, London. As the principal recipient of the Mark Rothko Foundation's largesse, the National Gallery of Art received more than 1,100 works—paintings on canvas and works on paper—as well as research materials, including conservation records and exhibition reviews.

In 2007 Rothko's children, Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko, further enhanced the Gallery's holdings by donating to its library an unpublished manuscript by their father, which was published as *The Artist's Reality: Philosophies of Art*, edited by Christopher Rothko (Yale University Press, 2006).

In 1984 the exhibition *Mark Rothko: Works on Paper*, circulated by the American Federation of Arts, opened at the Gallery and traveled throughout the United States. In 1998 Jeffrey Weiss, then the Gallery's curator of modern and contemporary art, organized *Mark Rothko*, a retrospective that traveled to New York and Paris. In 2003 a special installation, *Rothko's Mural Projects*, was mounted to mark the centennial of Rothko's birth. In the same year an exhibition was organized by the Gallery to commemorate the centennial of Rothko's birth; presented by the U.S. Department of State, it opened at the State Art Museum at Riga, Latvia, and traveled to the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg. In 2014–2015, a retrospective of some 50 works was presented at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, the Hangaram Art Museum in Seoul, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Since receiving the gift from the Mark Rothko Foundation in 1986, the Gallery has extended temporary and long-term loans of more than 300 works by Rothko to nearly 200 museums, galleries, and embassies worldwide.

A rotating selection of Rothko's canvases will be on view when the East Building galleries of the National Gallery of Art reopen on September 30, 2016.

Catalogue Raisonné Scholarship at the National Gallery of Art

The Rothko catalogues raisonnés join similar scholarly projects undertaken by the National Gallery of Art, including: *The Prints of Roy Lichtenstein: A Catalogue Raisonné*, by Mary Lee Corlett with Ruth Fine (1994); *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*, by Barbara Buhler Lynes (1999; in collaboration with the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation); *Gemini G.E.L.*, one of the first online catalogues raisonnés (launched 2001), compiled by Charles Ritchie, Claude L. Elliott, and Jonathan F. Walz, under the direction of Ruth Fine and Judith Brodie; and *Alfred Stieglitz: The Key Set*, by Sarah Greenough (2002).

Press Contact:

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt, Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc, and Instagram at <http://instagram.com/ngadc>.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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