

Press release

# *Expanded Horizons: American Art in the 70s*



Carl Andre	Sol LeWitt
Joan Brown	Mary Lovelace O'Neal
Rosemarie Castoro	Senga Nengudi
John Chamberlain	Irving Penn
Judy Chicago	Robert Rauschenberg
Dan Flavin	James Rosenquist
Sam Gilliam	Robert Ryman
David Hammons	Joan Snyder
Donald Judd	Frank Stella
Alex Katz	Andy Warhol

21 September 2024—25 January 2025

Thaddaeus Ropac  
Paris Pantin  
69 avenue du Général Leclerc, 93500 Pantin

Judy Chicago. *Woman with Red Flares from Women and Smoke*, 1971-1972; Remastered in 2016  
Performed by Nancy Youdelman. Original Total Running Time: 25:31. Edited to 14:45 by Salon 94, NY 2017.

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Photo courtesy of Through the Flower Archives Courtesy of the artist



Robert Rauschenberg. *Bank Job (Spread)*, 1979  
 Solvent transfer images and fabric collage with colored mirrors, cardboard, acrylic paint  
 and reflector on gessoed wooden construction, in 15 parts. 330,5 x 909 x 81 cm (130,12 x 357,87 x 31,89 in)  
 © Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Assembling major works by 20 of the most influential artists working in the United States of America in the 1970s, *Expanded Horizons: American Art in the 70s* retraces the radical artistic developments of this tumultuous decade. Bringing into conversation works across mediums that challenged the limits and expanded the horizons of artmaking, whether in scale, material, or subject matter, this landmark exhibition at Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Pantin encourages a re-examination of an often overlooked decade, and reflects on how the pioneering artists working during it interrogated and redefined contemporary conceptions of art.

In the United States of America, the ‘counter-cultural’ 1960s came to a close amidst socio-political unrest – protests against the Vietnam War, the climax of the Civil Rights movement, and an ever-accelerating rhythm of technological breakthroughs – and the dawn of the 70s was marked by upheaval and transformation. This was reflected by a search for new beginnings among artists of the New York scene, many of whom left the city and set up studios elsewhere: in 1970, **Robert Rauschenberg** (1925–2008) moved to Captiva, Florida and **Mary Lovelace O’Neal** (b. 1942) to California, and the following year, **James Rosenquist** (1933–2017) relocated to Florida and **Donald Judd** (1928–94) set up his studio in Marfa, Texas. In 1974, **Joan Snyder** (b. 1940) also left New York, relocating to a farm in Martins Creek, Pennsylvania. This exodus provided these artists with larger studio spaces that allowed them to scale up their practices in the image of their new open-skied surroundings

*I moved to California; I was sort of a part of that westward migration of flower children. I mean, I wasn’t interested in their thing, but with the upheavals at Columbia, I decided, I don’t have to be in this, I’m not going to jail. Tear the school down, I don’t care. Coming to the Bay Area, I immediately noticed the light out here. There could be these huge black, black, black spaces of flatness in the sky and then there would be a shot of light breaking through there.*

— Mary Lovelace O’Neal

Many of the works on view harness monumental scale and three-dimensional space to create art that functions as immersion. Among them is *Bank Job* (1979), a work from Rauschenberg’s *Spread* series, which, the artist explains, ‘means as far as I can make it stretch, and land (like a farmer’s ‘spread’)’. Made up of 15 panels, the work is one of the largest the artist ever produced. For Judd, who had abandoned the canvas entirely to work directly in ‘real space’, the transition to working in three dimensions liberated him from the pictorial conventions that working on canvas tied him to. ‘Actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface,’ he wrote in his 1964 essay ‘Specific Objects’.

Also on view are two *Drape* paintings by **Sam Gilliam** (1933–2022): acrylic-painted unstretched canvases that are draped from the wall, forming natural folds to give the traditional support an unprecedented sense of movement and depth.





James Rosenquist. *Horizon Home Sweet Home*, 1970  
 Oil on canvas, with aluminized polyester film (Mylar) and dry ice fog  
 27 panels: 259,1 x 101,6 cm (102 x 40 in) each  
 © Estate of James Rosenquist. Photo: Anders Sune Berg, courtesy of ARoS

Leading the way in the movement to free the canvas from the stretcher, the works from this significant series enter into conversation with the surrounding space, as does the hanging piece by **Joan Brown** (1938–90), whose rectangular form is turned on its side and suspended by its four corners from the ceiling, revising the traditional codes of the canvas.

James Rosenquist’s monumental 1970 installation *Horizon Home Sweet Home* takes the form of a ‘room’, made up of 27 distinct panels, which fills intermittently with knee-high fog, disorienting the viewer and challenging their assumptions about where a horizon line might fall. ‘It was an extension of my concept of dissolving the painting as an object, immersing the viewer in the painting, and making it an environment’, explained the artist. The curve of the monumental *Break in the Middle* (1970) by **Rosemarie Castoro** (1939–2015), meanwhile, fills out one corner of the Pantin gallery, transforming the way the visitor understands the space. A **Sol LeWitt** (1928–2007) *Wall Drawing*, meanwhile, intervenes in the space on an even more fundamental level, being executed on the gallery wall itself following the conceptual artist’s instructions.

This widening of the field in which art could be created and displayed, stemming from a desire for a deeper, more visceral connection to the world beyond the gallery wall, was taken to its logical conclusion by artists like **Judy Chicago** (b. 1939). Her pioneering work formed part of the Land Art movement,

which gained traction in the 1970s as a way of rejecting the traditional modes of exhibition and commodification of art. Her 1971–1972 video work *Women and Smoke, California*, which immortalises a pyrotechnic performance in the California desert, also speaks to contemporary feminist concerns – Chicago enveloped the landscape in a haze of coloured smoke to ‘soften that macho Land Art scene’ – as well as to the emerging ecological movement: temporarily filling and ‘reclaiming’ the landscape rather than altering or damaging it, in contrast with the interventions of the major male figures of the Land Art movement. An exhibition of Chicago’s work is currently on view at LUMA Arles, France, until 29 September 2024.

*I think a painting is more like the real world if it’s  
 made out of the real world.*  
 — Robert Rauschenberg

*Expanded Horizons* features artists who engaged with the ‘real world’ by integrating found objects into their practice, challenging contemporary definitions of what could be considered art. Rauschenberg’s *Cardboards* (1971–72), which he created in his then-newly opened studio in Florida, are made from found boxes that he cut and reassembled to form a wall sculpture, or stacked to form a freestanding installation. The artist’s later *Bank Job*, meanwhile, features as a central element a white shirt, collaged with its arms



Andy Warhol. *Piss Painting*, 1977-78  
Urine on linen. 198,5 x 492,1 cm (78,15 x 193,74 in)

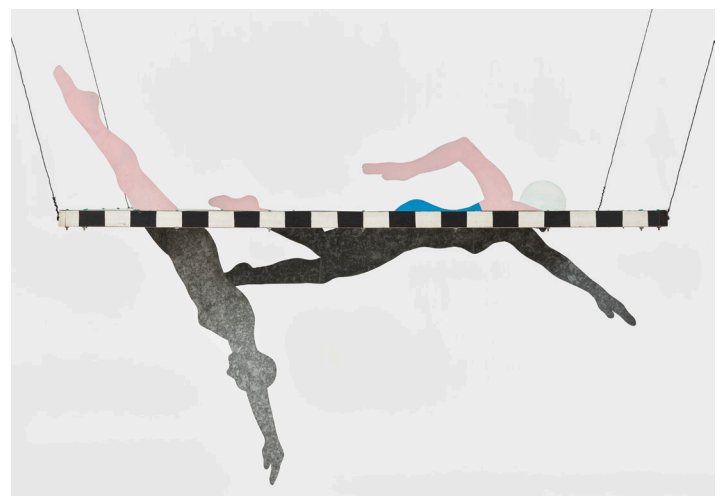
© The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / ARS, New York 2023. Photo : Ulrich Ghezzi

outstretched. In the artist's own words, 'a pair of socks is no less suitable to make a painting than wood, nails, turpentine, oil and fabric'.

Carving out a new terrain in contemporary American painting, Joan Snyder incorporated found materials such as thread, chicken wire and fake fur into her work, their tactile materiality creating a visceral sense of an implied narrative. In *Vanishing Theatre/The Cut*, the written text and the slanting gash that splits open the canvas infers and intensifies the sense of the unfolding drama. A **John Chamberlain** (1927–2011) sculpture belonging to his most notable series of works assembled from found scrap automobile metal is shown alongside a copper work by **Carl Andre** (1935–2024). Andre, who made sculptures made from ordinary industrial materials, arranged on the floor in simple linear or grid-like compositions, passed away earlier this year. After **Irving Penn's** (1917–2009) mentor and fellow photographer Alexey Brodovitch died of cancer in 1971, Penn began his best known series, *Cigarettes*, collecting discarded cigarette butts from the streets and taking them back to the studio. There, he carefully laid them out to produce photographic compositions, which elevated them from litter to art object, while uncannily personifying them in a comment on a society damaged by corporate irresponsibility and governmental negligence.

By working with scrap materials in their original condition, complete with stains, defaults or dirt, these artists draw attention to the character of the material itself. Other artists create a similar effect through paint, using expanses of

uniform colour to highlight their medium's specific qualities, exploring notions of surface, space and light. **Robert Ryman** (1930–2019) encourages an examination of the surface and boundaries of the picture plane by painting it entirely in white-on-white: 'I am not a picture painter. I work with real light and space'. Judd's deliberate use of colour, which he viewed as something physical – a concrete formal entity – conveys the shape of his objects, lending definition to their planes and edges. By painting expanses of the work on view in blue, he brings together its colour and its spatial dimension: 'Color and space occur together', as do light and space in the work of **Dan Flavin** (1933–96).



Joan Brown. *Divers*, 1974  
Sheet metal, acrylic, and aluminum on wood  
130 x 91 x 156 cm (51 x 36 x 61,25 in)

© Joan Brown. Courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery





Joan Snyder. *Vanishing Theatre/The Cut*, 1974  
oil, acrylic, paper mache, thread, fake fur, paper, chicken wire on canvas  
152,4 x 304,8 cm (60 x 120 in). © Joan Snyder

Rosenquist's installation rejects figurative imagery, alternating canvases painted with planes of flat colour with panels stretched with reflective silver Mylar film to create, in the artist's words, 'color as a state of mind'. Similarly, in paintings by Lovelace O'Neal and Snyder, panel-like blocks of colour which seem to jostle within the picture plane as if competing for room allow for a more focused meditation on surface, space and texture, from Snyder's pastose application to Lovelace O'Neal's expressive brushwork, reconciling the intimate and the monumental, encouraging at once a focus on intricate materiality and a sense of its place as part of a wider vision. As Snyder explained: 'I wanted more in a painting, not less'. Both Lovelace O'Neal and Snyder worked against the conventions of male-dominated contemporary Minimalism and Colour Field painting to explore the scope of abstraction to explore deeply personal and wider sociological narratives related to their lived experiences of womanhood, and, in Lovelace O'Neal's case, Black womanhood, in 1970s America.

In 1970, self-described 'paintersculptor' Rosemarie Castoro moved away from her previous colourful paintings in protest against the Vietnam War to dedicate herself to monochrome sculptural experimentation. The monumental works on view were made by applying gesso, modelling paste and marble dust to Masonite panels, giving the works a distinctive gritty yet refined texture. Castoro's approach to artmaking

was also informed by her background in dance, exhibiting a distinctly performative character and understanding of space and movement. With paintings depicting dancers, both Joan Brown and **Alex Katz** (b. 1927) bring this same sense of depth and movement into the two-dimensional realm. As Katz recounts in his autobiography, his collaborations with dancers and choreographers as a set and costume designer 'expanded the idea of what I could do. You're not just a painter, you're a person who has an idea about the art. Once you get that through your head, you have an expanded way of dealing even with your painting.' The figure of the dancer represents the multidisciplinary expansion of art in the 1970s, while testifying to the same understanding of motion, fluidity and the body in space evoked by Gilliam's *Drape* paintings and Brown's hanging work.

Other artists use a more direct means to explore the human body and to examine how it exists in space and the world. **Andy Warhol** (1928–87) employed urine to produce a series of audacious *Piss* paintings, which he made by inviting members of his circle to provide samples or urinate directly onto the canvases. A monumental *Piss* work, measuring almost five metres in length, is included in the exhibition, as is a *Body Print* by **David Hammons** (b. 1943). Made by greasing his own body and pressing it against the paper, before embellishing the print with minute details of skin, hair



Rosemarie Castoro. *Bangs (Brushstroke)*, 1972  
 Masonite, gesso, marble dust, modelling paste, graphite  
 243,8 x 609,6 cm (96 x 240 in)  
 © Rosemarie Castoro. Photo: Eva Herzog

or clothing through a process of one-to-one transfer and overlaying with accents in dry pigment, these works form intricate depictions of his own embodied experience as a Black man in America.

Bringing into dialogue an exemplary body of works from this transformative decade, the exhibition sheds light on the 1970s as a watershed. Through their unconventional and radically egalitarian approach to materials and their common desire to deepen the way their practice occupies and interacts with the physical and conceptual landscape, the distinct practices of the 20 artists on view are united by a search to forge new lines of expression that spoke to the rapidly changing world around them, expanding art-historical conversation in a way that remains relevant to this day.



Sam Gilliam. *Green Half Circle*, 1973  
 Acrylic on draped canvas. 269,2 x 118 cm (106 x 46,5 in)  
 © Sam Gilliam / ARS, New York 2023. Ulrich Ghezzi

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