

Press release

Expanded Horizons: American Art in the 70s



Carl Andre
Joan Brown
Rosemarie Castoro
John Chamberlain
Judy Chicago
Dan Flavin
Sam Gilliam

David Hammons
Donald Judd
Alex Katz
Sol LeWitt
Mary Lovelace O'Neal
Robert Morris
Senga Nengudi

Irving Penn
Robert Rauschenberg
James Rosenquist
Robert Ryman
Joan Snyder
Frank Stella
Andy Warhol

21 September 2024—25 January 2025

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

Judy Chicago, *Women and Smoke, California, 1971-1972*; remastered in 2016
Performed by Nancy Youdelman. Video MP4, original total running time: 25:31
Edited to 14:45 by Salon 94, New York in 2017
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Photo courtesy of Through the Flower Archives



Robert Rauschenberg, *Bank Job (Spread)*, 1979
 Solvent transfer images and fabric collage with coloured 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

...All these horizons searching for home.
 — James Rosenquist

Assembling major works by 21 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 pivotal decade. This landmark exhibition at Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Pantin highlights practices that challenged contemporary conceptions of art, whether through a radically egalitarian approach to materials or a deepened engagement with the physical space or the sociopolitical concerns of the world surrounding them. Brought into conversation, the works on view reflect how these pioneering artists broke down the conventions of artmaking in a historical rupture which, for art historian Rosalind E. Krauss, marked the opening up of ‘the expanded field of postmodernism’.

In the United States, the ‘counter-cultural’ 1960s came to a close amidst socio-political unrest – protests against the Vietnam War, the climax of the Civil Rights movement, as well as an ever-accelerating rhythm of technological breakthroughs. The dawn of the 70s was marked by upheaval and transformation. The art historian Jane McFadden observed: ‘As the 1970s evolved, the question of the place of art reverberated through an unstable social sphere; one key trope of developing practices seemed to be departure.’ Taken in its most literal sense, this observation reflects 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; the following year, **James Rosenquist** (1933–2017) relocated to Florida and **Donald Judd** (1928–94) set up his studio in Marfa, Texas. 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 expand the scope of the art object, in some cases even beyond the bounds of the work itself, to become environmental or immersive. Among them is Rauschenberg’s *Bank Job* (1979), a work closely related to his *Spread* series, which, the artist explained, ‘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 and is shown here for the first time in Europe, having been in the collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art until 2018. For Judd, who had abandoned the canvas entirely to work directly in ‘real space’, the transition



James Rosenquist, *Horizon Home Sweet Home*, 1970
 Oil on canvas, with aluminised 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

to working in three dimensions liberated him from the pictorial conventions of the two-dimensional canvas. 'Actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface,' he wrote in his 1964 essay 'Specific Objects'.

Frank Stella (1936–2024), meanwhile, had been pushing the boundaries of the picture plane since the 1960s through shaped canvases which adopted progressively more daring and irregular polygonal forms. In 1970, he commenced his decisive series of *Polish Village* works when his friend, the architect Richard Meier, gave him a book about wooden synagogues in Poland, whose striking angular forms Stella abstracted to make monumental wall reliefs. Building on the silhouettes of the shaped canvases of the previous decade, this series of *Polish Villages*, one of which is on view in the exhibition (*Parzeczew III*, 1972), was the first in which the artist added a third dimension to create works that transcend the limitations 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. This fog is an ephemeral yet integral part of the installation and its presentation, enveloping the work's lower half like a cloud, disorienting the viewer and challenging or unsettling their assumptions about where a horizon line might fall on the panels. The rarely exhibited installation, which was first presented in the year of its creation at Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, '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 fog, which, as a gas, dissipates in a state of constant random motion, fills the space beyond the typical bounds of a solid and static artwork, while the light that diffuses from a 1972 work by **Dan Flavin** (1933–96) also permeates and transforms the sur-

rounding environment. 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.

The broadening of the conception of 'art' and its display, which stemmed from a desire for a more visceral connection to the world beyond the gallery wall, was taken further by 'a new spectrum of work produced in the 1970s that struggled with the space of the gallery' as a site, reflecting another angle of the *departure* identified by McFadden. Notably, **Judy Chicago** (b. 1939) created pioneering performances outdoors that rejected the traditional modes of exhibition and commodification of art. Her 1971–1972 series of pyrotechnic performances, which took place in the California desert and are immortalised in the video work *Women and Smoke, California*, on view in the exhibition, 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: rather than altering or damaging the landscape, as did the interventions of the major male figures of the Land Art movement, Chicago's performance temporarily filled and 'reclaimed' the landscape. An exhibition of Chicago's work is currently on view at LUMA Arles, France, until 29 September 2024.

In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, **Robert Morris** (1931–2018) moved away from the rigidity of his previous Minimalist works and towards a softer materiality, epitomised by his use of felt. In the 1978 work *Untitled (Brown Felt)*, on view in the exhibition, loose pleats of the fabric fall away from the work's central rectangular form in a symmetric composition that recalls the folds of origami and demonstrates the effects of the natural and inevitable force of gravity on a pliable material. Also on view



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

are two *Drape* paintings by **Sam Gilliam** (1933–2022): acrylic-painted unstretched canvases that are draped from the wall, forming natural folds that give this traditional support an unprecedented sense of movement and depth. Leading the way in the movement to free the canvas from the stretcher, the works from this series enter into conversation with the surrounding space. The hanging piece *Divers* (1974) by **Joan Brown** (1938–90) functions in a similar way by turning the rectangular form of the canvas on its side to suspend it by its four corners from the ceiling, revising the traditional codes of painting.

*I think a picture is more like the real world
 when 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, an act that challenged and expanded contemporary definitions of what could be considered a work of art. Rauschenberg's *Cardboards* (1971–72), which he created in his then-newly opened studio in Florida, are made from found boxes that he either cut and reassembled to form a wall sculpture or stacked to form a freestanding installation. The artist's later *Bank Job*, meanwhile, features cardboard and coloured mirrors, as well as a white shirt, collaged as a central element with its arms outstretched. This use of non-conventional materials – particularly those considered 'poor' (Stella also makes use of cardboard in *Parzeczew III*) – reveals the consolidation of the influence of Dada and Arte Povera philosophies. In Rauschenberg's own words: 'There is no poor subject. Painting is always strongest when in spite of composition, color, etc., it appears as a fact, or an inevitability, as opposed to a souvenir or arrangement. Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made... A pair of socks is no less suitable to make a painting with than wood, nails, turpentine, oil, and fabric.' As art historian Robert

Rosenblum wrote: 'Every artist after 1960 who challenged the restrictions of painting and sculpture and believed that all of life was open to art is indebted to Rauschenberg – forever.'

After **Irving Penn's** (1917–2009) mentor and fellow photographer Alexey Brodovitch died of cancer in 1971, Penn began his pivotal *Cigarettes* series, collecting discarded cigarette butts from the streets and taking them back to the studio. There, he carefully laid them out to produce photographic compositions that, with their refined geometry, echo Rauschenberg's stacking and stapling cardboard boxes into pared-back and focused configurations against the wall. Penn's attentive composition and magnification of the overlooked details of the cigarettes elevated them from litter to art object while uncannily personifying them in a comment on a society damaged by corporate irresponsibility and governmental negligence. In this way, the significance of Penn's cigarettes goes beyond the status shift from generic debris to art: they are also imbued with a very particular narrative symbolism.

Joan Snyder (b. 1940) incorporated found materials – such as the chicken wire and fake fur seen in *Vanishing Theatre/The Cut* (1974), on view in the exhibition. Their tactile materiality, alongside the words and letters arranged in a storyboard fashion in three parts, creates a dramatic narrative: that of the artist's own experience of moving through the world. Snyder was a key figure in the women's art movement that flourished in the 1970s, developing as part of the wider Second Wave period of feminist activity that occurred between the early 1960s and early 1980s. The movement sought to place women's lives and realities at the heart of artistic expression, as well as calling for equality in the representation of women artists within the established art scene. As such, Snyder selected and integrated elements and materials that denoted 'a female sensibility', a concept she put forward as distinct from the dominant male sensibility and directly rooted



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

in the experiences – and indeed violences – faced by women. Forming part of her complex and personal vocabulary of motifs, these elements come together in her work to centre ‘the essence or feelings of a female body’.

It seemed to me that in order to go forward, I had to also push backward hard. To again embrace ideas that were at the very foundation of all my thinking about painting – about structure, about application, about meaning, about materials.

— Joan Snyder

In 1974, the year that Snyder painted the three-part work *Vanishing Theatre/The Cut*, she left behind her New York studio for a farm in Martins Creek, Pennsylvania. This year also marked a radically new painterly direction for the artist. Coming after a period during which she dissected the fundamentals of painting through intensive investigation of gesture and brushstroke, in this new series, Snyder gave the picture plane a new dimensionality through impasto layered with a lush materiality. This exploration culminated in the monumental, eight-panelled *Resurrection* (1977; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). In *Vanishing Theatre/The Cut*, Snyder dove still deeper into the notion of materiality by slicing open the canvas itself: an anguished gesture that seeks to get tangibly closer to truthful self-expression. As the artist stated, ‘I cut the canvas, stuffed it with cotton and then sewed it up again. It is like a big wound’. Fusing autobiography with abstraction and content with form, Snyder broke down aesthetic and material hierarchies to assert the place of feeling and female subjectivity at the heart of her practice. In the words of art historian Hayden

Herrera: ‘It is this absolute congruence of formal and autobiographical discovery that distinguishes Snyder.’

Just as Flavin repurposed commercially available fluorescent lights to make the sculptural object on view, **Carl Andre** (1935–2024), too, is known for his radical sculptures made from ordinary commercially available industrial materials, slabs or pieces of which he would arrange, as in the copper floor work *Tenth Copper Cardinal* (1973), on the ground in pared-back linear or grid-like modular compositions. **John Chamberlain** (1927–2011), meanwhile, created twisting sculpted forms by assembling crumpled pieces of found scrap automobile metal. By repurposing materials in their original condition – whether Andre’s unmodified, standardised units, or Chamberlain’s twisted metal forms complete with original paint and fabrication marks – these artists build on the notion of the readymade to draw particular attention to the character of the materials themselves. Other artists created 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’. His use of white across different supports – in the work on view, he layers gloss paint atop PVC – draws attention to their materiality rather than concealing it. When asked by art historian Phyllis Tuchman in 1971 whether he made white paintings, Ryman explained: ‘No, it may seem that way superficially, but there are a lot of nuances and there’s color involved. Always the surface is used.’



Rosemarie Castoro, *Climbing (Brushstroke)*, 1972
 Masonite, gesso, marble dust, modelling paste, graphite
 182.9 x 365.8 cm (72 x 144 in)
 © The Estate of Rosemarie Castoro. Photo: Eva Herzog

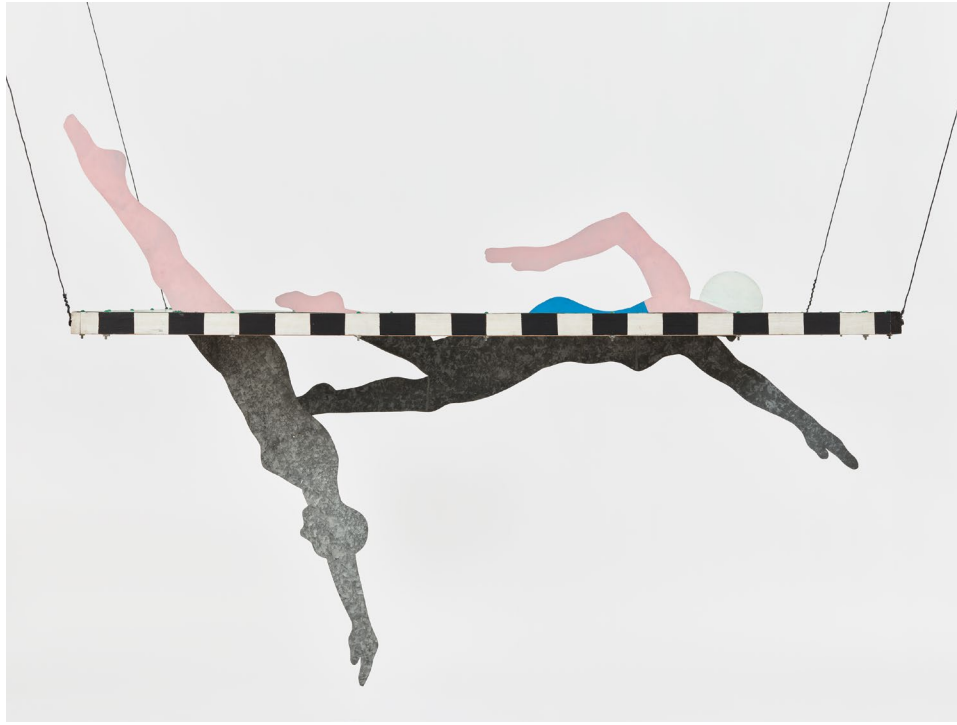
The monumental painting *Private Domain* (1969) by **Alex Katz** (b. 1927) depicts a tightly cropped scene composed of the artist's characteristic careful strokes and immaculate planes of colour. The figures of dancers fan out across the picture plane, their depiction interrupted, it seems, only by the edges of the canvas, forming a composition with no single dominant focal point that allows the viewer to imagine that it could be extended *ad infinitum*. As Margaret Graham wrote: 'Each image reads like a ripe, forceful slice of light that lives and dies comfortably within the span of the frame but still must be consumed promptly if it is to be caught.' Preempting the 'environmental' landscape paintings he made the following decade, so large that they almost literally envelope the viewer, in *Private Domain*, Katz transposes the 'all-over' treatment of the canvas found among Abstract Expressionists to create a figurative painting that gives a sense of a boundless, immeasurable reality.

Approaches relating to all-over or colour field painting can be found in other works on view. Rosenquist's installation rejects figurative imagery to present canvases painted with planes of flat colour alternated 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 seem to jostle with each other within the picture plane as if advocating for a more focused meditation on surface, space and texture, from Snyder's pastose application to Lovelace

O'Neal's expressive brushwork. Challenging the conventions of male-dominated contemporary colour field painting, these two artists instead used blocks or grids of colour to establish a ground on which to develop a complex mixed-media materiality. As Snyder explained: 'I wanted more in painting, not less'.

Judd viewed colour as a concrete formal entity, which he used to convey the shape of his objects, lending definition to their planes and edges. By leaving bare the copper surface of the jutting wall work on view, he brings its unified finish and colour together with its spatial dimension: 'Color and space occur together'. In his 1967 essay 'Art and Objecthood', Michael Fried elucidated this current, connecting Judd to Robert Morris: 'Judd and Morris assert the values of wholeness, singleness, and indivisibility—of a work's being, as nearly as possible, "one thing," a single "Specific Object." [...] For both Judd and Morris... the critical factor is *shape*.' This approach engendered works that, Fried continued, 'resist being grasped other than as a single shape: the gestalt simply is the "constant, known shape."' Discernable in the work of several artists across the exhibition is the pursuit to create and preserve 'wholeness' in an artwork as a means to achieving an art-object that, through its cohesiveness, requires nothing more than its own existence within the space to be understood.

Exploring the limitations of the two-dimensional picture plane in his essay 'The Recentness of Sculpture' (1967), Clement Green-



Joan Brown, *Divers*, 1974
 Sheet metal, acrylic, and aluminium on wood
 130 x 91 x 156 cm (51 x 36 x 61,25 in)
 © Joan Brown. Courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery

berg wrote that ‘the borderline between art and non-art had to be sought in the three-dimensional, where sculpture was, and where everything material that was not art also was.’ Michael Fried tied this not only to the growing currents of three-dimensionality and increasing scale seen across the exhibition, but also to the undetermined area of theatre and theatricality: ‘Everything counts—not as part of the object, but as part of the situation in which its objecthood is established and on which that objecthood at least partly depends.’

Robert Morris had actively engaged with the world of contemporary dance and performance throughout the 1950s and 60s, contributing to the Judson Dance Theater collective along with Rauschenberg and **Andy Warhol** (1928–87). His 1962 performance, *Column*, at the Living Theatre, New York, notably testified to the development of his phenomenological engagement with the body in space. The anthropomorphic qualities of the form created by the heavy industrial fabric in his *Untitled (Brown Felt)* continues Morris’s early concern with the body while reflecting the considerations of ‘process art’: a widespread preoccupation among artists in the late 1960s and the 1970s who made the process through which the artwork takes on its form – at the intersection between the artist’s actions, the inherent properties of the material and the external forces acting on it, such as gravity – a prominent aspect of the completed work. *Untitled (Brown Felt)* exemplifies what Morris called ‘anti-form’: a term the artist had coined a decade earlier in an article published in the April 1968 issue of *Artforum*. Breaking with the rigidity of both Morris’s and his Minimalist circle’s previous work, ‘anti-form’ sculpture worked from the principle that form should be derived from the inherent qualities of the material itself: valorising it by letting it determine its own contingent form.

In 1970, self-described ‘paintersculptor’ **Rosemarie Castoro** (1939–2015) moved away from her previous colourful paintings in protest against the Vietnam War to dedicate herself to monochrome sculptural experimentation. Applying gesso, modelling paste and marble dust to organically shaped Masonite panels, she lends her *Brushstroke* works a distinctive gritty yet refined texture, investing them with a bodily dimension rarely seen in the Minimalist context within which she was working. Castoro’s background in dance also informed her practice, which exhibited a distinctly performative character and understanding of space and movement: its ‘major impetus’, wrote critic Lucy R. Lippard in her essay *Working Out* (1975), ‘is kinesthetic’. With paintings depicting dancers and acrobats, both Joan Brown and Alex Katz 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 Morris’s *Felt* work, Gilliam’s *Drape* paintings and Brown’s suspended *Divers*. Known for her performative objects which she fills and weighs down with materials such as sand, stone and water, **Senga Nengudi** (b. 1943) gives visceral form to the weight and space of the human body. In her *Water Compositions*, early examples of which are widely considered to be the beginning of her mature work, heat-sealed vinyl pouches are filled with water dyed with

food colouring, illuminating the artist's early engagement with an 'emptiness' that can be filled to create slumping and bulging forms that evoke the human body. Following the birth of her child in 1974, which furthered her interest in human elasticity, Nengudi continued her reflection on Black womanhood, on the potency of her changing body and on the external factors that impact how it is viewed and understood. Several *Water Compositions* are on long-term view at Dia Art Foundation, Beacon, New York, as part of an extensive installation that spans the artist's work from the 1960s until to the present day.

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 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 in an act that replaced the paintbrush with the body. A monumental *Piss* work, measuring almost five metres in length, is included in the exhibition. The body also acts as the means of material application in a 'body print' by **David Hammons** (b. 1943). These works were

made by greasing his body and pressing it against paper, which was subsequently embellished with minute details of skin, hair or clothing through a process of one-to-one transfer and overlaying with accents in dry pigment. These body prints form intricate depictions of Hammons's embodied experience as a Black man in America. As Coco Fusco wrote in her article 'Wreaking Havoc on the Signified' (1995): 'His body prints of the late 60s and early 70s subverted the didactic elements of protest art by taunting the viewer/voyeur with identity politics whilst simultaneously pursuing a very real aesthetic agenda' through works that allude to and share concerns with Minimalism and Post-Minimalism.

Nengudi, a close friend and frequent artistic collaborator of Hammons', also undermined contemporary conceptualisations of what constituted activist art, seeking to harness the power of abstraction for political ends: 'I deal with stuff in an abstract way but it comes from a black place.' Her hybrid aesthetic constitutes a thoughtful inflection of prevalent approaches to artmaking that simultaneously allowed the artist to speak to contemporary socio-political concerns. Lovelace O'Neal and Snyder, too, probed the scope of abstraction to explore personal and wider sociological narratives related to their lived experiences of womanhood, and, specifically in Lovelace O'Neal's case, Black womanhood, in 1970s America. *Expanded Horizons* invites viewers to find connections between the approaches of the artists on view while also paying tribute to the challenge mounted by some against the false neutrality of dominant modes of artmaking. As such, the exhibition invites a holistic interpretation of the practices that developed throughout the decade and of the socio-political backdrop that shaped them.

Bringing into dialogue an exemplary body of works from this transformative decade, the exhibition sheds light on the multiform expansions and 'departures' of the 1970s. Through an unconventional use of materials and a common desire to deepen the way art occupies and interacts with the physical and conceptual landscape, the distinct practices of the more than 20 artists on view are ultimately united by a search to forge new lines of expression that spoke to the realities of 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. Photo: Ulrich Ghezzi

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