

# bernard jacobson gallery

Robert Motherwell

A Survey of Prints

17<sup>th</sup> January – 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Bernard Jacobson Gallery is delighted to announce an exhibition of prints by the American Abstract Expressionist artist Robert Motherwell (1915-1991). The exhibition will be the most comprehensive show of his editioned work to date. It assembles around 80 of his best prints ranging from very early experimental pieces, to images from the groundbreaking collaboration with Ken Tyler and the more intimate and rare editions produced in the artist's studio. Unique trial proofs will be on display as well as preparatory works for the colourful collaged prints.

Throughout his long and distinguished career, Robert Motherwell produced a remarkable body of work that ranks among the most notable achievements in post-war American art. In addition to creating his celebrated paintings, drawings and collages, Motherwell was a renowned and innovative printmaker, producing more than 500 works.

Motherwell first learned about printmaking through the surrealists, who having emigrated from a troubled Europe to the States had established workshops there for artists to work together and exchange their ideas and thoughts.

His interest in printmaking was re-ignited in the 1960s. Having worked in large workshops such as Universal Art Editions and Hollander Workshop and gaining extensive experience in the various printmaking techniques during this period, Motherwell decided in 1973 to buy his own etching and lithography press for his studio in Greenwich, Connecticut, where he was able to work independently and unburdened by the constraints of a large, commercial workshop.

During the fruitful collaboration with Ken Tyler Motherwell introduced his famous *Elegy to the Spanish Republic* theme into his printmaking. Five of these rare and powerful images will be on display in the show. These are shown alongside light collages of wine labels, cigarette packs which Motherwell created later in his life.

*"I do not smoke Gauloises cigarettes, but that particular blue of the label happens to attract me, so I possess it. ...For a painter as abstract as myself, the collages offer a way of incorporating bits of the everyday world into pictures."*

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Motherwell's inspiration through literature led him to create many livres d'artiste. Motherwell describes his idea of collaborating with poets: *"My vocabulary works only with poetry, that is to say with non-narrative writing to which my visual metaphors can be matched with verbal metaphors springing from the same kind of source...not illustration, but a series of explosions of fireworks, or oppositely, a kind of restrained silence"*, Octavio Paz who like Motherwell moved in surrealist circles in the late 40s was through his psychic automatism in literature the perfect inspiration for this artist book "Octavio Paz. Three Poems" which will be shown in the exhibition for the first time. The 27 lithographs were produced sparing no expense and had gone "beyond bookness" as Motherwell characterised the ambitious project.

This exhibition at Bernard Jacobson Gallery is a comprehensive display of the visual vocabulary of Robert Motherwell's oeuvre. Elegies, motifs from the open series, gestural prints and collages show the wide range of Motherwell's art and the creativity in his printmaking which make him one of the most prolific and adventurous printmakers of his time.

## **PRESS ENQUIRIES**

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