

# bernard jacobson gallery

## Bonheur de Vivre

18<sup>th</sup> March – 27<sup>th</sup> May 2016

Bernard Jacobson Gallery is delighted to announce *Bonheur de Vivre*, an exhibition of 16 works by some of the greatest masters of the twentieth century, titled after the seminal Henri Matisse painting *Le Bonheur de Vivre* (1905-06).

*Bonheur de Vivre* is the result of long-held desire by Bernard Jacobson to present work by some of the great artists who have particularly inspired and sustained his own love of modern art throughout a long and distinguished career as a gallerist. The exhibition is an unalloyed celebration of beauty, joy, colour and light; beginning with Henri Matisse, it traces the revolution in art that sprang from *Le Bonheur de Vivre* and the inspiration it proved to artists including Joan Miró, Alexander Calder, Sam Francis and Robert Motherwell, selected important works of which are included in *Bonheur de Vivre*.

Matisse is represented with three remarkable, light-filled paintings of single female sitters all originating from his long working sojourn in the South of France; *Jeune fille à la mauresque, robe verte* (1921), *Nu au peignoir* (1933) and *Jeune femme assise en robe grise* (1942). In the apparent simplicity of these three paintings Matisse fully demonstrates his virtuosity, both by the fluidity of line which captures the youth and supple grace of his sitters and by the brilliance of pictorial light, so redolent of the South of France, created by the juxtaposition of one intense hue against another.

The connection between Joan Miró and Matisse is both stylistic and familial, with Henri's youngest son Pierre representing Miró from the outset of his career through his influential and eponymous New York Gallery; two of the four works by Miró on show here were first exhibited at the Pierre Matisse Gallery.

The luminosity and colour in the dramatically reduced, linear forms of Miró's *Femme et oiseau devant le soleil* (1944) and four further representations of the female on show at *Bonheur de Vivre*, owe a parentage to the vision of the great master Matisse whilst still being alive with their own invention and dancing lines. Matisse declared: "Colour above all, and perhaps even more than drawing, is a means of liberation... Colour is never a question of quantity, but of choice... Colour attains its full expression only when it is organized, when it corresponds to the emotional intensity of the artist".

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This force is fully realised in the symbolism of his *Femme et oiseau* series, as well as *Femmes devant la lune* (1944), and *Femme amoureuse de l'étoile filante* (1966) where the boldness of Miró's line is charged with the artist's mythology of the human form and its elemental relationship to the cosmos.

The selection of works by Miró is completed by *Paysage* (1974), an almost celestial landscape reduced to its most simple elements of primary colour, line and form.

Alexander Calder, the artist who made enchantment his credo, stated "Above all, art should be happy and not lugubrious". He could not have provided a better description of the three sculptures included in *Bonheur de Vivre*; two hanging mobiles, *Blue Flower*, *Perforated Red* (1960) and *Sans titre* (1947) and one standing mobile, *Petit Mobile sur Pied* (1955).

Flickering with red, yellow, white and black discs, Calder's bold use of colour and linear fluidity are often described as 'drawings in space' and have much to connect them to the movement inherent in the lines drawn on paper and canvas by Matisse and Miró. In Calder's work, christened *mobiles* by Marcel Duchamp, colour and line is animated, made kinetic and liberated from the fixed pedestal - his mobiles sing with invention and are amongst the first three dimensional abstract art works to feature movement.

The paintings of Sam Francis, particularly those referred to as 'open paintings' also explore space, light and colour in a bold and original manner and are represented here with two paintings; *Untitled* (1959) and *EV* (1970). In these luminous works, the artist's own concoction of dyes mixed in transparent acrylic medium, applied through glazes and washes feature abstract shapes which seem to dance and revolve around the 'empty centre', rather as Calder's mobiles rotate around a central axis, creating in the process a meditative space for the viewer to lose themselves in.

The final selection for *Bonheur de Vivre* takes us back full circle to Matisse with an artist who said that seeing his first Matisse "shot him to his heart like an arrow" and titled an early collage *Joy of Living* in homage. Robert Motherwell plays with abstraction, colour and texture as animating forces of playful lightness and invention displayed here with two collages; *U.S. Art New York N.Y* (1959) - a title taken from the label attached to the paper wrapping for U.S. Art Canvas Company - and *Sacre du Printemps* (1975) which features a sheet of music from Stravinsky's score.

As one wanders through *Bonheur de Vivre* the viewer is struck both by the connection between these five giants of modern art but also that light, beauty and playfulness lie at the

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heart of artistic invention. *Bonheur de Vivre* is an exhibition to gladden the eye and lift the soul, redolent of the heat and sunlight of the Mediterranean even when transposed across the Atlantic to the masters of Modern American Abstraction.

## **PRESS ENQUIRIES**

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