

Artist Resources – Joan Mitchell (American, 1925-1992)



Mitchell, 1981
Photograph: Timothy Greenfield-Sanders

[Joan Mitchell Foundation](#)

[Mitchell at the National Museum of Women in the Arts](#)

[Mitchell at MoMA](#)

Listen to an [oral history interview](#) with Joan Mitchell for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, recorded on May 21, 1965.

In 1986, BOMB Magazine published an [interview](#) with Mitchell and Cora Cohen, edited by Betsy Sussler. In the interview, the artist evasively talks around her artworks and only hints at her approach, saying: “It’s just that interviews get so boring.”

The 2002 exhibition, [The Paintings of Joan Mitchell](#), was on display at the Whitney Museum of American Art. View installation images of the exhibition in the Whitney’s web archive.

Hauser & Wirth installed [Joan Mitchell: The Last Paintings](#) in 2012, with a survey of paintings that covered the late period of her career between 1985 and 1992.

Artsy pulled together some of Mitchell’s [most influential quotes](#) about artmaking. Read “Joan Mitchell on How to Be an Artist” by Alexxa Gotthardt.

Watch a [lecture](#) given by art historian Patricia Albers entitled “Joan Mitchell, Lady Painter,” presented at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art in 2012 and recorded by the Brooklyn Museum.

In 2015, the exhibition *Joan Mitchell Retrospective: Her Life and Paintings* traveled from the [Kunsthau Bregenz](#) in Austria to the [Museum Ludwig](#) in Cologne, Germany.

Joan Mitchell: Paintings from the Middle of the Last Century, 1953-1962 was on display at [Cheim & Read](#) in 2019 and was the ninth solo exhibition of the artist’s work with the gallery. Take a [video tour](#) of the exhibition with James Kalm.

A 2018 [interview](#) with Christa Blatchford, CEO of the Joan Mitchell Foundation, reveals the relationship between her foundation, legacy, and the art market that has exploded for her work.

In 2021, a monumental retrospective of Mitchell’s work was launched by [SFMOMA](#) and traveled to the [Baltimore Museum of Art](#) and the Fondation Louis Vuitton. Read an article in [ARTnews](#) about the exhibition and a review in [Frieze](#) about the Baltimore edition.



Mitchell in her studio, 1956
Photograph: Loomis Dean

Joan Mitchell (American, 1925-1992)

Sunflowers, 1990-1991

Oil on canvas in two parts

Private Collection; L2024:55.1

“Sunflowers are something I feel very intensely. They look so wonderful when young and they are so very moving when they are dying.” – Joan Mitchell, 1986

Born and raised in Chicago, Joan Mitchell became active alongside the Abstract Expressionist, New York School of painting in the 1950s before moving permanently to France. She was one of very few women artists to receive widespread critical acclaim in the 20th century, particularly for her colorful palette and gestural brushstrokes. **Sunflowers** was painted towards the end of Mitchell’s life. In her last years, the painter made a selection of large-scale diptych canvases about the flower, which grew abundantly around her property in Vetheuil.

On view October 16, 2024 – January 19, 2025





Joan Mitchell (American, 1925-1992)

Ready for the River, 1987-1989

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2023:103.2

American painter Joan Mitchell moved to France in the late 1950s after establishing herself in the loose postwar art circle known as the New York School. Her gestural brushstrokes often associate her with the Abstract Expressionist movement, but her bright color palette and interest in depicting memories of landscapes also engages with the legacy of 19th century Post-Impressionism in France. **Ready for the River** was painted towards the end of Mitchell's life, when she was suffering the effects of cancer and declining health. As with other paintings from her late career, the title hints at the passage of time and her active processing of the end-of-life experience.

On view November 29, 2023 – March 3, 2024

Joan Mitchell (American, 1925-1992)

Vent de Mer, 1961

Oil on linen

Private Collection; L2023:29.1

American painter Joan Mitchell was born in Chicago and rose to prominence as an Abstract Expressionist in the loose group of artists termed the New York School in the 1950s. Alongside Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011), Lee Krasner (1908-1984), Elaine de Kooning (1918-1989), and Grace Hartigan (1922-2008), Mitchell was one of very few women artists to receive critical acclaim in this male-dominated era. In the late 1950s, Mitchell moved to France, where she would remain for the rest of her life. **Vent de Mer (Sea Breeze)** was painted in the early years of her time in France. The painter later reflected that this was a “very violent and angry” period in her career. Mitchell once said: “I think women are inclined more than men to be self-destructive, and I really think I had the masochistic medal there for a while.”

On view March 15 – June 18, 2023





Joan Mitchell (American, 1925-1992)

La Grande Vallée XII, 1983

Oil on canvas

Private Collection, Courtesy of Guggenheim, Asher Associates; L2021:159.1

Abstract Expressionist painter Joan Mitchell was an active member of the loose group of painters referred to as the New York School in the 1950s before moving to Vétheuil, France. Her colorful palette and gestural brushstrokes often feature highly abstracted motifs of sunflowers, landscapes, and other elements of the natural world, while also instilling a sense of emotion or memory into the abstract scenes. **La Grande Vallée XII** is part of a 21-painting series completed between 1983 and 1984. The series was inspired by the grief Mitchell shared with her studio assistant and live-in companion, Gisèle Barreau, who had tragically lost her young cousin to cancer. Mitchell was also grieving the loss of her sister and decided to commemorate the lives of both in the wild, vast landscape of the French countryside where Barreau and her cousin played together as children.

On view June 15 – September 18, 2022