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

Joan Mitchell Foundation

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.”


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 Kunsthaus 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.
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
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**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*