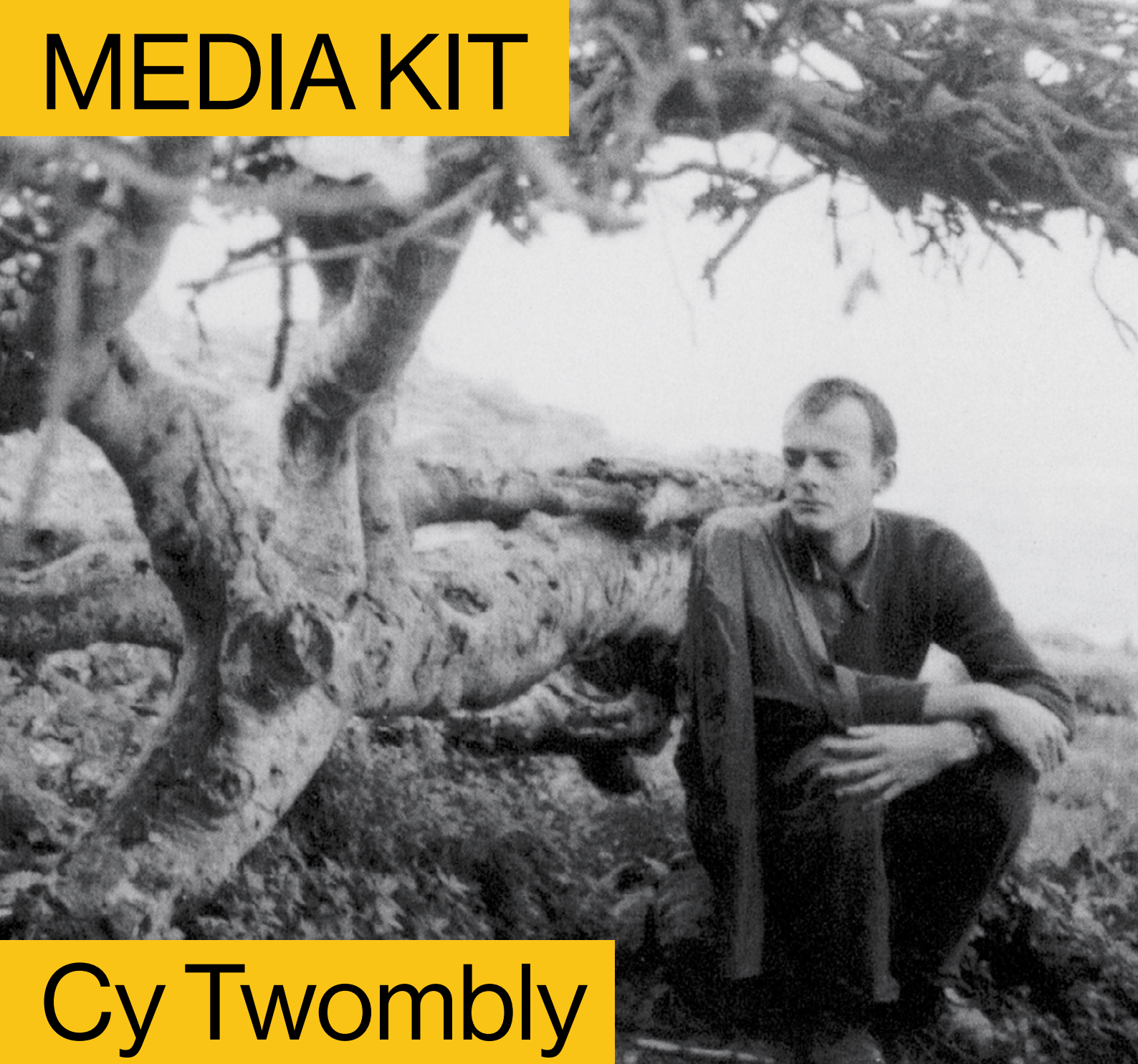


04/03 > musée
YVES SAINT LAURENT
marrakech

02/07/2023

MEDIA KIT



Cy Twombly

Maroc, Morocco, المغرب

1952/1953



FONDATION
JARDIN MAJORELLE



FONDAZIONE
NICOLA
DEL ROSCIO

CY TWOMBLY FOUNDATION

Robert Rauschenberg,
Untitled [Cy, North Africa (I)], 1952
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The **Fondation Jardin Majorelle** is pleased to announce the opening of his upcoming temporary exhibition dedicated to one of the greatest artists of the second half of the twentieth century **Cy Twombly, Morocco, 1952/1953** curated by Nicola Del Roscio.

This extraordinary exhibition has been mounted in partnership with the **Cy Twombly Foundation** and the **Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio**.

For this pioneering exhibition, the three partnering Foundations would also like to extend their deep gratitude to The Menil Collection in Houston, Texas for their loan of Twombly's 1953 painting *Volubilis* and to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts for the various archival materials that have enriched the exhibition.

The influential American artist Cy Twombly (Lexington, Virginia, 1928 – Rome, Italy, 2011), known for his fascination with the classical world of antiquity, was equally intrigued by the cultures of the *Amazigh* (Berber) tribes of Morocco.

Cy Twombly, Morocco, 1952/1953
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech
Rue Yves Saint Laurent
40090 Marrakech

Dates: 04.03.2023 – 02.07.2023

Online ticketing:

www.tickets.jardinmajorelle.com

***Online reservation is required since
January 30, 2023.***

Press Contact: presse@jardinmajorelle.com

At a time when the continent of Africa is garnering more and more global attention, a time when its diverse societies and cultures have become a source of fascination, we should remember that it has inspired numerous artists over the past centuries. Eugène Delacroix, Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso are but a few of the many renowned “Western” artists who have drawn inspiration from the continent, either from direct exposure to various African cultures or through objects produced in Africa and exported to Europe.

It is with great honor that the Fondation Jardin Majorelle, in partnership with the Cy Twombly Foundation and the Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio, mounts this extraordinary exhibition, *Cy Twombly: Morocco 1952-1953*. Considered one of the greatest artists of the second half of the twentieth century, the influential American artist Cy Twombly, known for his fascination with the classical world of antiquity, was equally intrigued by the cultures of the *Amazigh* (Berber) tribes of Morocco.

During a journey of discovery in the winter of 1952 and the spring of 1953, the young American artist traveled throughout the Kingdom of Morocco with fellow painter Robert Rauschenberg. Together they explored not only commonly visited cities such as Tangier, Casablanca and Marrakech, but also the relatively unknown vestiges of Berber sites at Tiznit and of classical antiquity at Volubilis, both of which lent their names to monumental works produced by the artist following his Moroccan sojourn.

Cy Twombly: Morocco 1952-1953 explores this relatively little-known moment when the twenty-five-year-old student was first exposed to cultural expressions of the rather uncharted realm of the indigenous peoples of Morocco. Less than a decade after the end of World War II, when Europe was beginning to emerge from the embers of mass destruction and bleakness, the graphic, almost raw, graffiti-like pictorial representations of the Amazigh culture fascinated the young artist.

For this pioneering exhibition, the three partnering Foundations would like to extend their deep gratitude to The Menil Collection in Houston, Texas for their loan of Twombly's 1953 painting *Volubilis*, to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts for the various archival materials that have enriched the exhibition. We equally acknowledge the exceptional work undertaken by Alexis Sornin, director of museums at the Jardin Majorelle, and his curatorial team, in bringing about this exhibition.

The renowned French couturier Yves Saint Laurent—known for his daring re-examination of the codes of fashion—would surely have been proud to welcome and be associated with the revolutionary painter Cy Twombly at the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech, where young Moroccans, other Africans and visitors from throughout the world will gain a richer understanding of the diverse and inspirational cultural heritage of the Cherifian Kingdom.

Madison Cox
Nicola Del Roscio



© Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, New York

In the fall of 1952, Cy Twombly receives a traveling scholarship from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and leaves New York for his first trip to Europe and North Africa. He meets up with fellow artist Robert Rauschenberg in Casablanca in October 1952, and the two of them travel to Marrakech and the Atlas Mountains, and then to Tangier. They pay a visit to the writer Paul Bowles in Tétouan and go on day trips with him to nearby villages and Roman ruins. Twombly conducts his first and last archaeological excavation there. Upon their return to Rome in February 1953, Twombly studies and sketches African artifacts he sees at the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico Luigi Pigorini. These sketches survive in the form of the *North African Sketchbooks*.

Much of the surviving work from this trip consists of photographs taken with a Rolleiflex shared by the artists and sketches preserved in the archives of the Cy Twombly Foundation and Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio; they provide a unique perspective on Twombly's lesser-known affinity for Morocco. In the fall of 1953, shortly after their return to the US, Twombly, and Rauschenberg mounted a joint exhibition at the Stable Gallery in New York City. Twombly's contribution included seven or eight paintings, half of them titled after Moroccan towns: *Volubilis*, *Tiznit*, and *Quarzazat*.

Cy Twombly

Cy Twombly (Lexington, Virginia, 1928 – Rome, Italy, 2011) was an American artist who spent most of his life in Italy. His original style, between drawing and painting, is inspired by ancient Mediterranean history and geography, Greek and Roman mythology, and epic poetry. Twombly created in his works an often-inscrutable world of iconography, metaphor, and myth, transcribing the ancient knowledge in contemporary art.

Twombly's Morocco paintings

Twombly's Morocco paintings stand to significantly enrich present understandings of the artist's engagement with the past, as well as his elaboration of those references. In their facture and handling, the Morocco paintings themselves activate a set of metaphors related to archaeology and excavation. These are canvases covered with a putty of white paint and scraped into, in a physical manipulation that echoes the archaeological processes of accumulation and subtraction, building up and unearthing. In the interpenetration of different historical periods witnessed in Morocco and then pursued in Rome, Twombly found an emblematic presentation of this conviction. The Morocco paintings stand as its visual culmination of this idea.

Volubilis

Volubilis is built up of many layers, with the surface actively worked up and agitated, again and again, by the artist. In some parts, the paint appears splashed on and poured; in others, gouged into and incised. A stray piece of charcoal protrudes from the thick layers of paint. On a visual level, then, the thickly slurried ridges of paint recall the furrows of the excavated Moroccan field, reproducing (in different materials) the appearance and the archaeological operations of the site it names. In its title, *Volubilis* names a city at the base of the Atlas Mountains that served as an important outpost of the Roman Empire. Rome in Tangier, pockets of Morocco in Italy: this permeability is emblematic of Twombly's conception of history. His work turns on the interpenetration of different levels of history, both temporal and spatial.

North African Sketchbook

Equipped with pencil, crayon, and paper – light materials to carry around – drawing enabled Twombly to register what he was unable to paint while exploring Morocco. Whether as single sheets or assembled into sketchbooks, the drawings display some of the discoveries that Twombly made during his trip—a trip that was, in fact, part of a larger educational journey that first gravitated around the cultural centers of the Old World. From the “hundreds of sketches” he mentions having done in Tangier, apparently, only one sheet survived. The others were produced when he was back in Rome.

As a collective body of studies, they all bear the same title: *Untitled (North African Sketchbook)*. The reference to the cultural-geographic area indicates that Twombly's previous encounters not only continued to work in his memory, but they also guided his actions in Rome. Many of Twombly's *North African Sketchbooks* make palpable this sensation of one thing shifting, even becoming another. Redirecting the gaze toward the ambiguous ground, the sketchbooks invite the association of further images.



© Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio

Cy Twombly's photographs

Rauschenberg and Twombly made the decision to document their travels using a secondhand Rolleiflex Twin Lens Reflex camera. The images were then printed on both Kodak Velox and Agfa Lupex paper, both of which are now discontinued. Given travel constraints and limited studio space, Twombly could not paint while exploring Morocco, making photography a practical, compact mode of artistic expression and method for capturing their surroundings. Twombly's photographic work was as much artistic as it was documentary. In some photographs, he situated Robert Rauschenberg in the physical landscape of Morocco others include close-ups of graves and tombstones. Some are covered in geometric, abstract, and symmetrical shapes, while others feature Hebrew inscriptions. Twombly clearly

absorbed these local symbols and would later translate these elements of vernacular culture onto his canvases.



© Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio

Vernacular Culture and Abstraction

Local artists in Morocco working in the 1960s and 1970s would undergo. Along with Belkahia, Chabâa, Bert Flint, and Toni Maraini, Melehi would launch the journal *Maghreb Art* (1966–1969), which featured photographic reproductions of Moroccan vernacular culture, such as Amazigh jewelry, tapestries, pottery, and metalwork. The images served a similar function to Twombly's photographs – they were references for formal experimentation. To this day, these modern artists are thought to have created work that was derivative of hard-edge abstract painters like Ellsworth Kelly or Frank Stella. However, as Chabâa previously noted, abstraction was inherent to Moroccan culture, found in both historical Islamic art and indigenous Amazigh visual culture. Over a decade earlier, Twombly had come to understand this through his fieldwork

Exceptional cinematographic screening

Dear Cy, film de Andrea Bettinetti, 2019, 92 min.

Saturday 4 March 2023 at 6pm

Auditorium Pierre Bergé

Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech

Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech

The Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech, which opened its doors in the fall of 2017, is a vibrant cultural center built around a central exhibition hall that showcases the work of the renowned couturier on a permanent basis. Much more than a simple retrospective of the iconic dresses YSL designed, one is led on a journey, with its focal point in Marrakech, through the many themes that inspired him. The fifty or so magnificent garments displayed – many rarely seen by the public – offer us an original reading of Yves Saint Laurent's œuvre and of his importance to the history of fashion. The dresses and other haute couture pieces are rotated every ten months in order to ensure their conservation as well as to offer the visitor a panorama that evolves on a regular basis.

The mYSLm also includes a hall for temporary exhibitions, a photography gallery, an auditorium, a reference library, a bookshop and a café-restaurant. The basement of the building houses the museum's collection and a state-of-the-art preventive conservation center.

The hall used for temporary exhibitions at the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech was conceived as a cultural and artistic showcase. It is where the museum displays talent from all over the world, with a special emphasis given to modern and contemporary Morocco.

Fondation Jardin Majorelle

The Fondation Jardin Majorelle is a nonprofit Moroccan institution that uses its own resources to ensure the conservation and functioning of the Jardin Majorelle, the Pierre Bergé Museum of Berber Arts and the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech.

The foundation's resources were used to establish the Berber Museum, inaugurated in December 2011, and the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech, which opened in October 2017. The foundation's earnings are entirely reinvested in Morocco to finance cultural, educational and social initiatives.



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