

# MNUCHIN GALLERY



## REDS

April 27 – June 9, 2018

Since the cave paintings of Lascaux, the color red has played a starring role in the story of art history. Through the centuries, it has conjured emotions such as love, lust, and rage, and served as a symbol of wealth, war, revolution, and religious sacrifice. Red is one of the most powerful tools in an artist's color arsenal. Its presence ensures bold visual impact and guarantees our immediate attention. Mnuchin Gallery is thus delighted to present *Reds*, an exhibition offering a focused look at artists' use of red over sixty years, from the postwar period to the present day. The exhibition will include paintings and sculpture by twenty-five artists, including Francis Bacon, Louise Bourgeois, Alexander Calder, Willem de Kooning, Jeff Koons, Yayoi Kusama, and Mark Rothko, to name a few. The exhibition will be on view from April 27 through June 9, 2018.

For thousands of years red has been prized for its striking effect. Historically, its value stemmed from the sheer difficulty of obtaining the color itself, as only a few species of insects and plants produced it. A popular extraction method involved drying the cochineal bug, and since 70,000 insects were required for a single pound of pigment a highly competitive system of piracy developed among

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European countries bringing it from the New World.<sup>1</sup> Its scarcity made it a luxury reserved for the only the wealthiest. Despite its availability today, red remains a color used to demarcate and distinguish objects of note.

This exhibition traces the myriad ways artists have harnessed red's force across abstraction and figuration, painting and sculpture, to achieve remarkable proof of the color's universal resonance. In paintings by Bacon, Bourgeois, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Andy Warhol, in which human figures or faces appear against intensely red backdrops, the color evokes narratives of love, violence, and tragedy for the paintings' subjects. Other artists use the color to create immersive, meditative experiences for the viewer, whether by bathing him in red light, as in Dan Flavin's *untitled (to Sabine and Holger)*, 1966-71, or by confronting him with an immense red void, as in Robert Motherwell's *Open No. 153: In Scarlet with White Line*, 1970. In works such as Arshile Gorky's *Agony*, 1947, and Yayoi Kusama's *No. Red A 1960*, 1960, the artists' use of red can be interpreted as an expression of their individual psychological experiences, whereas Franz Kline and Rothko's monumental abstractions speak to a more universal "scale of human feeling, the human drama."<sup>2</sup> Eliminating such gesture and expression from painting, Josef Albers and Ad Reinhardt pair subtle, almost imperceptibly varied shades of red to create conceptual studies on color itself.

*Reds* comprises twenty-seven masterworks on loan from museums, foundations, and private collections. It will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue authored by Clayton Press.

*Image: Mark Rothko, Browns and Blacks in Reds, 1957, oil on canvas, 91 x 60 inches (231.1 x 152.4 cm). Private collection. © 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.*

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<sup>1</sup> S. Bucklow, *Red: The Art and Science of a Colour*, London: Reaktion Books, 2016, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> J. Weiss, et al., *Mark Rothko*, Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1998, p. 346.