



The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection

Selected Works

Harry Cooper

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From 1958 to 2004, Robert and Jane Meyerhoff assembled one of the greatest collections ever to focus on American painting of the postwar era. Built around six major figures – Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Brice Marden, Robert Rauschenberg, and Frank Stella – the collection comprises some 300 works, almost half of which are included here. It reaches back to the leading Abstract Expressionists – Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Clyfford Still – and forward to younger artists such as Terry Winters, Julian Lethbridge, Mel Bochner and Joel Shapiro. A dazzling array of paintings is complemented by sculptural objects that incorporate the wall (or even hang from it), and the strong collections of prints and drawings highlight daring technical innovations in those media.

Rather than organize the collection by artist, chronology, or medium, Harry Cooper, curator of modern and contemporary art, identifies ten material and visual themes that crisscross it: Scrape, Concentricity, Line, Gesture, Art on Art, Drip, Stripe to Zip, Figure or Ground, Monochrome and Picture the Frame. A short essay devoted to each category begins with an early 20th-century work from the National Gallery's own collection to offer a broad perspective on the modernist enterprise that is both furthered and subverted by the brilliant artists of the Meyerhoff stable.

Jane Meyerhoff's untimely death in 2004 brought the Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection to a close. In addition to many important gifts already made to the National Gallery, the Meyerhoffs have pledged their collection to the US nation, together with their home and galleries near Baltimore, Maryland. Here then is a celebration of a historic act of philanthropy and, above all, a great gathering of modern art.

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About the Author

Harry Cooper is curator of modern and contemporary art at the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

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