

# MOTHERWELL

FIRST  
RETROSPECTIVE  
EXHIBITION

OPENING APRIL 24 - 8 P. M.  
APRIL 24 - MAY 23, 1959

IN  
THE NEW GALLERY

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

LIBRARY

APR 30 '59



this he means, I take it, not I. Q. so much as the ability to use the head in a time when mind seems derelict in a Sargasso Sea of dangerous conventions, and when art must be made out of "worst possible values". In this connection one might note that most of the best contemporary painting is expressionist, which to the larger public often appears savage and irrational, just as Delacroix' and Van Gogh's work did to the publics of their eras. Yet one need only think of the Journal and the Letters to realize that great painting is as much a matter of the head as of the heart. One could say that in art the difference between the tragic and the maudlin is intelligence.

The depth of Motherwell's vision comes across best in his least complicated images, the black balls and verticals of the "Elegies" and in the recently emerging lozenge-shaped window. In these he arrives immediately at his epiphany, the telling coagulation of components sometimes brutally, but always compassionately, exposed in a brilliance of light as cathartic as it is tragic. Unlike literature, where the progress is forward toward revelation, in Motherwell's art the progress is from epiphany back into the realities of its composition. The time sequence is reversed. (This is always true of pictorial art, but never quite so much as in some recent painting, particularly the Motherwell "Elegies").

By realities of composition I do not suggest simply the means to the forms, the organization and the technique, nor probably even the forms themselves, but rather the way the conception realized itself in a gradual series of imperfections until, composed of its own kind of flaws, it rose to the instant of illumination. The history of these uncertainties, these hesitations so entirely natural in the face of the "worst possible values", somehow to be reconciled while recorded, is exactly Motherwell's picture. Thus the very beauty of the

forms is pathetic and lies in the flaws they must accept as the condition of life. They know that to be awkward and ugly and anxious is their only chance of survival.

Just so the revelations in this retrospective. From the black interloper in the prophetic "Little Spanish Prison" to the impossible "Views" from the lozenge window we have stepped through the Looking Glass into the history of our times written in paint by a real man. "If I wasn't real, Alice said — half laughing through her tears, it seemed so ridiculous — "I shouldn't be able to cry."

—E. C. Goossen

## CATALOGUE

1 ENGRAVING	1941
<i>Collection Mme. Pierre Charcau</i>	
2 MEXICAN PORTRAIT	1941
3 WHITE PAINTING	1941
4 THE LITTLE SPANISH PRISON	1941
5 COLLAGE	1942
<i>Collection Mme. Pierre Charcau</i>	
6 DRAWING WITH PINK	1945
7 COLLAGE	1946
<i>Collection Paul Peters</i>	
8 BLACK AND OCHRE PAINTING	1947
<i>Collection J. Patrick Lannan</i>	
9 PAINTING	1948-9
<i>Collection Myron Simons</i>	

10	ORANGE COLLAGE	1948
	<i>Collection Mark Rothko</i>	
11	THE HOMELY PROTESTANT	1948
12	THE ELEGY	1948
	<i>Collection The Fogg Museum, Cambridge</i>	
13	PAINTING	1952
14	PREGNANT NUDE HOLDING CHILD	1953
15	JE T'AIME, DRAWING	1955
16	JE T'AIME	1955
17	ELEGY FOR THE SPANISH REPUBLIC	1954-58
	<i>Collection Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo</i>	
	<i>Gift of Scymour Knox</i>	
18	ASH WEDNESDAY	1957
19	FOCKINK	1958
20	IBERIA NO. 1	1958
21	IBERIA NO. 2	1958
22	SPANISH PICTURE WITH THE FACE OF A DOG	1958
23	VIEW NO. 2	1958
24	MADRID NO. 4	1958
25	AFTERNOON IN BARCELONA	1958
	<i>Collection Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Maremount</i>	
26	BLACK PAINTING	1958
	<i>Collection Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Ross</i>	
27	HELEN'S COLLAGE	1958
28	VIEW	1959
29	TWO FIGURES	1959