

GAGOSIAN GALLERY
KINFOLK



Untitled (Window with Helmets), 2012
From *Remembered Light* at Gagosian Gallery
Gelatin Silver Print, 8 x 10 inches
Edition of 5

REMEMBERED LIGHT

*In her memoir *Hold Still*, photographer Sally Mann wrote of the “tinge of sorrow” that permeates life in Lexington, Virginia, the sleepy Southern town where Mann created her most iconic images and where she and the artist Cy Twombly were friends and confidants for more than 20 years. Here Mann writes intimately of her relationship with Twombly and the photographs she made of his studio before his death in 2011, now on view at Gagosian Gallery in New York in the exhibition *Remembered Light*.*

The older you get as an artist the higher the risks of success. The more work that surrounds a career, the more likely that the entrapment of past production will constrict future work, tying us ever more tightly to our style, our themes, our aesthetic past.

For example, when I was just starting out as an artist, I’d take pictures of anything, just for the sheer joy of seeing what it looked like as a photograph. Over time I began to take pictures of subjects that I had an opinion about, or of subjects that illuminated an intellectual concept that interested me. I don’t mean I was illustrating a polemic; I always defer to the imperatives of beauty, lyricism and the universal resonance of felicitous proportion. But, all the same, much of my work is in service to a concept: the nature of childhood, of family, the haunted nature of the Southern landscape, death and so on.

But Cy approached art-making somewhat differently, and his rapturous delight in all things colorful (or marmoreally

white), in all that was vital, wacky, elegant or inelegant in his daily passage through life came to infect me—and it was a most welcome contagion. So when I happened by his studio one day with a few sheets of color film left from a trip to Mexico, I took a few snaps for the hell of it. To see what they looked like. Just like the old days. And it went from there... whatever camera I happened to have in the car at the time, whatever film was in it—I took casual, fast, easy snaps. No pressure, no agenda and certainly no exhibition in mind—just a tender, fun and casual embrace of Cy’s working world.

Interestingly, during the course of what I now realize is a narrative exploration of the evolution of a work space, I evolved from 8x10 color and black-and-white film to color digital and finally back to the same materials with which I started photography in 1968: 35mm Tri-X film in my ancient (even then) Leica. I think it was Cy’s influence that liberated me from the trap

—
“I was never particularly interested in having Cy himself in the pictures—he was there in spirit. And what a spirit it was. Audacious yet courtly, and always perfectly mannered.”

of my view camera and allowed me to begin messing around with different media, different cameras, different film. And of course I didn't care that the fluorescents screwed up the color balance, just as Cy himself didn't care about any of the manifold issues in the place—the great gashes of western sun streaming in, the impossibility of unimpeded movement. It was just fun, snapping away, or, in his case, loopily painting under those humming green bulbs. I was never particularly interested in having Cy himself in the pictures—he was there in spirit. And what a spirit it was. Audacious and yet courtly, always perfectly mannered. Soft-spoken, almost shy, but bold in his gaze, occasionally withering in his contempt or censure (as when he scolded me for an over-exuberant recitation of some miscreant behavior that I found hilarious). By turns embarrassed by the bawdy and delighted by it. Occasionally dismissive and grumpy, imperious at moments, but tender and sweet at others. Kind of like the rest of us, actually. Only bigger and better and smarter and more audacious and altogether magisterial.

I wish my parents were around still to tell me what he had been like as a kid. They had known him since he was a teen, and Cy once brought them a little sweetie of a sculpture as a thank-you for having him to dinner (I told you he was well-mannered). But my mature relationship with him only began when I was in my late 30s, so by then he was pretty well-formed.

But, in a certain sense, he was not fully Cy even then. He was mustering

his resources, gathering his strength for what turned out to be a last, extravagantly successful artistic homestretch sprint. I'm not a Twombly scholar and I hesitate to suggest his emotional motivations, but I had the impression that he had been hurt by his past experiences in the American art world, finding Europe more welcoming. I am not entirely sure he came back to Lexington to make work, but once he got started in that warehouse across from our home, he began a steady acceleration into the final romp to the finish.

In *Hold Still*, I make a big deal about the importance of the South and its ineffable quiddities and seductions, its artistic impossibilities and imperatives. Who the hell knows if my theories are correct about Cy and why he, too, loved the South. I know why I love it and derive such inspiration from it and, naturally, want to assume that he felt the same way I do about it. He certainly had many of the personal hallmarks of a Southerner and his work, I feel, reflected the much-cherished (in the South) and innately contradictory qualities of ambiguity and plain-spokenness, cruelty and kindness, illumination and obscurity.

Like all Southerners, he was keenly aware of the omnipresence of death, but the shadow of mortality failed to darken his brilliance, and the famous slow pace of Southern life only served to remind Cy of how much harder he needed to work.

Remembered Light, an exhibition of Sally Mann's portraits of Cy Twombly's studio, is on view at Gagolian Gallery in New York.



Untitled (Dancing Cherubs), 2011/2012
From *Remembered Light* at Gagosian Gallery
Platinum Print, 9 x 14 inches
Edition of 3



Untitled (Angled Light), 1999-2000
From *Remembered Light* at Gagosian Gallery
Gelatin Silver Print, 20 x 24 inches
Edition of 3



Untitled (Pencil Painting), 1999-2000
From *Remembered Light* at Gagolian Gallery
Gelatin Silver Print, 16 x 20 inches
Edition of 5