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## Robert Motherwell

Born: 1915 Aberdeen, WA  
Died: 1991 Princetown, MA

### 1918

Motherwell family moves to California.

### 1919

Family moves to Salt Lake City, UT.

### 1926

Family moves permanently to California. Receives scholarship to Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles.

### 1929

Attends Moran Preparatory School, Atascadero, CA.

### 1932–1937

Briefly studies painting at California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco before attending Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA. Receives Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy.

### 1937

Attends Harvard University for graduate studies in Philosophy.

### 1938

Travels in Europe. Spends summer at the University of Grenoble, France. Rents studio in Paris from October 1938 to July 1939.

### 1940

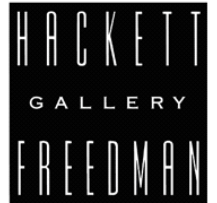
Returns to United States. Enters Department of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University, New York, as graduate student under Professor Meyer Shapiro, who encourages him to paint and introduces him to European artists in exile.

### 1941

Travels to Mexico with Chilean surrealist painter Roberto Matta. Does "automatic" drawings and paints first major paintings, including *The Little Spanish Prison*. Meets actress Maria Emilia Ferreira y Moyers, whom he marries the following year. Returns to New York and moves into Perry Street apartment in Greenwich Village.

### 1942

Permanently abandons university studies in favor of painting. Spends first summer in Provincetown, Cape Cod, MA. Collaborates on first surrealist magazine *VVV*. Included in *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition at Whitelaw Reid Mansion, New York.



**1943**

Father dies. Spends second summer in Provincetown. Makes first collages.

**1944**

First solo exhibition Art of This Century at Peggy Guggenheim's gallery, New York. The Museum of Modern Art purchases Pancho Villa, Dead and Alive. Edits and directs The Documents of Modern Art, a series of fourteen books containing writings by outstanding figures in art and literature. Writes for Partisan Review.

**1945**

Studies engraving with Stanley William Hayter. Signs exclusive contract with Samuel Kootz Gallery, New York. Spends spring in Florida with William Baziotés. Becomes friendly with Adolph Gottlieb. Teaches during the summer at Black Mountain College, North Carolina. Moves to East Hampton, Long Island, where he buys a studio designed by architect Pierre Chareau.

**1946**

Meets Mark Rothko in East Hampton. Included in Fourteen Americans at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

**1947**

Included in Introduction to American Painting at Galerie Maeght, Paris. Collaborates with John Cage, Pierre Chareau and Harold Rosenberg in publishing Possibilities.

**1948**

First use of image that will later become motif for Elegy to the Spanish Republic. Creates informal school, The Subjects of the Artist, with Rothko, Baziotés and Hare in New York, which closes in May 1949.

**1949**

Divorces Maria Emilia Ferreira y Moyers.

**1950**

Appointed to graduate faculty at Hunter College, New York, where he teaches until 1958. Meets David Smith. Joins The Irascibles in protest of the anti-abstraction policy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Marries Betty Little.

**1951**

Teaches during the summer at Black Mountain College—Robert Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly are students. Writes The School of New York for the Frank Perls Gallery, New York. Lectures at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University.

**1953**

Daughter Jeannie is born.

**1955**

Daughter Lise is born.

**1957**

Sidney Janis Gallery becomes his exclusive dealer. Separates from Betty Little.

**1958**

Spends summer in Spain and France. Begins Iberia series of black paintings. Marries Helen Frankenthaler.

**1960**

Interviewed by David Sylvester for BBC's *Painting as a Self-Discovery*. Interview published in *Metro* magazine as "Painting as Existence" (a title preferred by Motherwell). Included in panel on *The Concept of the New* with Philip Guston, Ad Reinhardt, Harold Rosenberg and Jack Tworkov at the Philadelphia Museum School of Art. Spends summer in Italy—starts *Summertime in Italy* series.

**1961**

Begins to make prints at Tatyana Grosman's Universal Limited Art Editions Studio, West Islip, Long Island. Retrospective exhibition at VI Bienal de Arte, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

**1963**

Marlborough-Gerson Gallery becomes his exclusive dealer. Visits London and Paris. Spends summer in Provincetown.

**1964**

Visits Paris, Venice and London. Awarded 4th Guggenheim International Award, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

**1965**

Interview with Byron Robertson shown on New York City Educational Television. Signs several protests against the war in Vietnam. Creates *Lyric Suite* (565 automatic paintings in ink on Japanese rice paper.) Closest friend, David Smith is killed in an automobile accident. Motherwell is designated as executor of Smith's estate. Visits Paris, Venice, Dubrovnik, Athens, Greek Islands and London with family during summer. Retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, which travels to museums in Amsterdam, London, Brussels, Essen and Turin through 1966.

**1966**

Executes very large mural for John F. Kennedy Federal Building, Boston, MA.

**1967**

Begins *Open* series. Illustrates edition of poems by Rimbaud for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, but project is abandoned. Becomes Fellow in Perpetuity of Metropolitan Museum of Art.

**1968**

Becomes Benjamin Franklin Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, London. Makes silkscreen prints for Spoleto Festival. Lectures on dada and surrealism at The Art Institute of Chicago. Summer in Provincetown. Mark Rothko rents a house nearby. Joins in a number of protests against the Vietnam War.

**1969**

Creates silkscreen for International Rescue Committee. Elected to National Institute of Arts and Letters, New York. Separates from Helen Frankenthaler.

**1970**

Moves his principal studio and residence from New York City to Greenwich, CT, but retains his Provincetown studio and residence for the summers. Death of friend Mark Rothko. Lecture at The Museum of Modern Art, *The Nature of Abstraction*. Lectures at Yale University. Conducts seminar with Anthony Caro and Alex Colville at Toronto University examining position of contemporary art in English speaking countries.

**1972**

Completes *Livre de Peintre, A la Pintura*, illustrating poems by Rafael Alberti. Lawrence Rubin becomes his exclusive dealer. Exhibitions at Knoedler and Co. in New York, London and Zurich. Kenneth Tyler becomes his major collaborator in lithography. Begins *In Plato's Cave* series. Marries photographer Renate Ponsold.

**1973**

Purchases etching press, begins making own editions in Greenwich studio with Catherine Mousley. Receives Honorary Doctorate from Bard College.

**1974**

Creates paintings *The Persian* and *The Spartan*. Severe illness and radical surgery.

**1975**

Retrospective exhibition at the Museo de Arte Moderna, Mexico City, Mexico.

**1976**

Retrospective exhibitions in Dusseldorf and Stockholm. Television interview by Robert Hughes for BBC London. Wine label commissioned by Baron Philippe de Rothschild.

**1977**

Retrospective exhibitions in Vienna, Edinburgh, and Paris. Receives Grande Medaille de Vermeil de la Ville de Paris. Begins mural commissioned by National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

**1978**

Retrospective exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts, London.

**1979**

Receives Gold Medal of Honor from Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Retrospective exhibition at William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT.

**1980**

Retrospective exhibitions in Barcelona and Madrid. Awarded Gold Medal of Merit from University of Salamanca, Spain. Received Honorary Doctorate from Rhode Island School of Design. Graphics retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, organized by the American Federation of the Arts.

**1981**

Receives Mayor's Award for Arts and Culture of the City of New York. Receives Skowhegan Award for Printmaking.

**1982**

Dedication of the Motherwell Gallery at the Bavarian State Museum of Modern Art, Munich. Lectures at University of Munich—exerpts published in *Die Kunst*, June 1983—complete text published in *Munchner Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunste*, 1983.

**1983**

Receives Gold Medal of Honor 1983, The National Arts Club, New York. Retrospective of 100 major works at Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York.

**1985**

Awarded Macdowell Colony Medal of Honor, Peterborough, New Hampshire, and Great Artist Series Award, New York University. Elected to American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Cambridge, MA. Receives Honorary Doctorates from Brown University, RI and Hunter College, NY.

**1986**

Elected to American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York. Awarded Medallo d'Oro de Bellas Artes, Madrid, Spain.

**1987**

Receives Wallace Award from American Scottish Foundation, New York.

**1988**

Elected Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Ministry of Culture, Paris, France.

**1989**

Receives Centennial Medal of Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University.

**1990**

Receives National Medal of Arts at the White House. Receives Harvard Centennial Medal.

**1991**

Retrospective at the Museum Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico; subsequently shown at the Museum de Monterey, Mexico and the Fort Worth Art Museum, Texas. Publication of The Prints of Robert Motherwell in association with the American Federation of the Arts. Robert Motherwell Dies in July.