

# ACQUAVELLA GALLERIES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Acquavella Galleries Presents  
*Masterworks: From Cézanne to Thiebaud*  
September 10 – October 16, 2020



Henri Matisse, *Nature morte aux mimosas sur fond noir*, 1944, oil on canvas,  
21 1/2 x 29 inches (54.6 x 73.7 cm)  
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**New York, NY, August 25, 2020** – Acquavella Galleries is pleased to present *Masterworks: From Cézanne to Thiebaud*, a group exhibition on display as the gallery reopens September 10–October 16.

On view will be works by Gustave Caillebotte, Paul Cézanne, George Condo, Jean Dubuffet, Jacob El Hanani, Ellsworth Kelly, Damian Loeb, Henri Matisse, Joan Miró, Ben Nicholson, Pablo Picasso, Camille Pissarro, James Rosenquist, Ed Ruscha, David Smith, Wayne Thiebaud, Bradley Walker Tomlin, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Tom Wesselmann in a variety of mediums. Though the exhibition spans multiple generations and movements, the artists included share a mastery of both space and color.

A highlight from *Masterworks: From Cézanne to Thiebaud* is Henri Matisse's 1944 work *Nature morte aux mimosas sur fond noir*. Matisse's use of the color black was integral to his mastery of color. It was after his early Fauve works, which were characterized by an overall use of riotous color, that Matisse began "to use pure black as a color of light and not a color of darkness," as he later recalled. He embraced black as a means to accent and highlight passages color and add a sense of boldness and intensity to his work. Instead of creating a void or sense of darkness, Matisse's skillful use of black enabled his colors to shine.

*Nature morte aux mimosas sur fond noir*'s two-dimensionality provides a tension between the bright colors and the darker ones, which imbues the still life with intensity and emotional impact. This impact is felt throughout the exhibition, including the 1882 Gustave Caillebotte seascape *La Seine à Argenteuil*. Though more subtle than Matisse's use of black, Caillebotte's oeuvre across a relatively brief 22-year-long career would employ color and truncated perspective - an approach learned from his study of Japanese Edo-period woodblock prints - to create works that strike a balance between realism and the Impressionism he is commonly associated with.

An avid yachtsman himself, Caillebotte's *La Seine à Argenteuil* depicts two sailboats bobbing in the Seine along Argenteuil, a favored setting among many of the key Impressionist painters. Yet the true subject of the painting is not the boats themselves, but the play of light on water contrasted against a sudden foreshortening where the two boats meet. The effect draws the viewer into a portal of dazzling yellows and reds within its quietly rendered sky and riverbank.

Tom Wesselmann's *Great American Nude No. 27* (1962) an important early example of his Great American Nude series, heralds the Pop movement of the early '60s while also being seeped in art historical references. Featuring a contemporary approach to the nude, a flowing ribbon of pink whose only identifying feature is a coy smile, the figure also recalls the art of Matisse, a key influence on Wesselmann throughout his career. The Pop imagery in the foreground—collaged ice cream sundaes taken from commercial advertising—is framed within a composition that recalls both the patterned interiors of Vuillard and Matisse and the flatness of a poster. An effect that was not lost on Wesselmann, who described his approach in a 1993 interview: “When I made the decision in 1959 that I was not going to be an abstract painter; that I was going to be a representational painter...I only got started by doing the opposite of everything I loved. And in choosing representational painting, I decided to do, as my subject matter, the history of art: I would do nudes, still-lives, landscapes, interiors, portraits, etc...”

*Masterworks: From Cézanne to Thiebaud* will initially be open on a by-appointment basis.

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