

“Monday Gallery.” *Harper’s Magazine* (July 12, 2023) [ill.] [online]

HARPER'S
M A G A Z I N E

Monday Gallery



An Allegory, 1964, a painting by Bob Thompson, whose work is on view through July 8 at 52 Walker, in New York City.

© Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York City. Courtesy 52 Walker, New York City. Collection Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City; gift of Thomas Bellinger 72.137

Halle, Howard. "Bob Thompson's Timeless Strokes: Navigating Identity and Tradition in Art." *Art & Object* (June 26, 2023) [ill.] [online]

Art & Object

Bob Thompson's Timeless Strokes: Navigating Identity and Tradition in Art

GALLERY | JUNE 26, 2023 | HOWARD HALLE



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Bob Thompson, *An Allegory*, 1964, Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York; gift of Thomas Bellinger 72.137

During the postwar era, movements were still a thing, and midcentury New York was the place where they were being minted. It mattered which program you were getting with, and in the late 1950s that still meant **Abstract** Expressionism, though Pop Art and Minimalism were waiting in the wings.

So, imagine how the work of painter Bob Thompson (1937–1966) would have fared. Figurative and focused on subjects adopted from European art history, it would have been out of place for any artist, let alone one among the few **African Americans** operating within a White-dominated environment.

Thompson's art didn't overtly reference racism in his art, though a Black artist raiding the cupboards of a racially exclusionary tradition was undoubtedly a loaded act, and he did limn bodies in hues that could be taken for skin tones other than Caucasian.

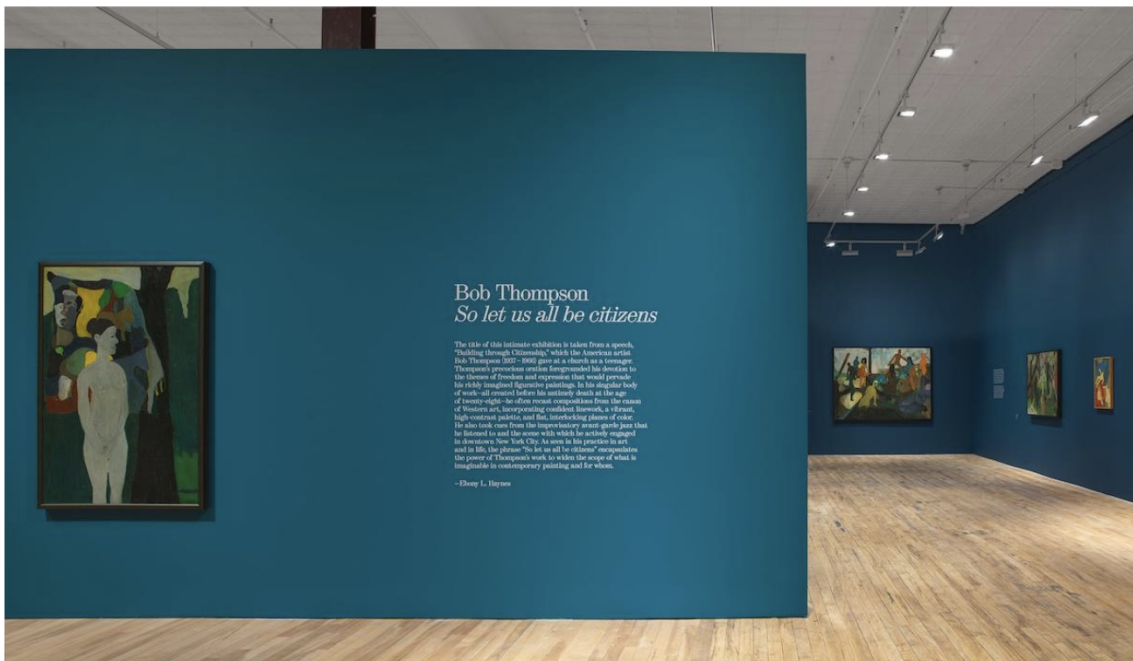
Thompson had been born in Kentucky and grew up under **Jim Crow**, which undoubtedly shaped his worldview. Had he lived beyond his 28 years, it's conceivable that he might have moved towards directly addressing race, much as his contemporaries Robert Colescott and Melvin Edwards did in the 1970s and '80s. But then again, maybe not. As it is, the show at David Zwirner offers a look into what Thompson was up to.



ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION. PHOTO BY CHARLES ROTMIL

Bob Thompson in studio on Clinton Street, NYC, 1960. Bob Thompson papers, 1949–2005.

With its wall painted a bottomless shade of blue, “So let us all be citizens” at 52 Walker evinces the kind of museum-quality presentation that only a mega-gallery like **David Zwirner** (for which this venue serves as Tribeca outpost) can mount. The proceedings are glossed with the kind of institutional sheen reserved for retrospectives, and indeed, the paintings here are all on loan from important collections, public and private—an undertaking not taken lightly considering the cost.



COURTESY 52 WALKER, NEW YORK

Installation view, Bob Thompson: So let us all be citizens, April 21–July 8, 2023, 52 Walker, New York.

Thompson’s style was a mix of Fauvism and Folk Art, leavened with motifs borrowed from Old Masters that included Fragonard, Breughel, **Titian**, and Poussin. He was especially drawn to the idyllic, allegorical landscapes popular in much of Baroque and Rococo painting during the 17th and 18th centuries. Thompson however, stocked his compositions with silhouettes that voided the naturalistic figures normally gamboling through such scenes. For instance, an early effort from 1960 (literally tilted, *The Gambol*) depicts a riding party of ghostly apparitions making their way through the woods; the center of the composition is occupied by what appears to be a statuesque nude while a couple fornicates on horseback to the left.



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Bob Thompson, *Caledonia Flight*, 1963 Private Collection

All of which is rendered with a brushier touch and darker tonality than later works such as *An Allegory* and *Triumph of Bacchus* (both 1964), where contours are solidly filled in with eye-popping pigments. While the exact meaning of the former, dominated by a horse-drawn cart transporting a group of people accompanied by birds, is obscure, the latter more evidently pictures an exuberant celebration of the Greek god of wine. The real point of each work lies in their syncopated arrangement of colors, and improvisatory spirit, both of which are inspired by jazz. The same goes for Thompson's appropriations from the aforementioned canonical artists, including his 1965 version of Fragonard's fanciful masterpiece, *The Swing*.

Thompson is having something of a moment in NYC: Concurrent with this exhibition, his longtime dealer, Michael Rosenfeld, is offering a selection of pieces, among them, several felt-tip marker portraits of jazz musicians that are, like Thompson's canvases, exceedingly fresh.

But then, why wouldn't they be? Today, **figurative** paintings by African Americans are common in galleries and museums, which wasn't the case when Thompson was alive. Ironically, an artist who seemed so out of touch with his time was remarkably prescient.


Smith, Roberta. "One Great Artist, Seen in Two Parts." *The New York Times* (June 16, 2023): C1, C8 [ill.] [print]

The New York Times

7 FILM REVIEW

Water, earth, air and fire create steam and sizzle.


BY AMY NICHOLSON



8 ART REVIEW

A double dose of Bob Thompson's saturated color.


BY ROBERTA SMITH



10 ART REVIEW

Beauty and dark truths lurking in the garden.

BY WILL HEINRICH



NEWS | CRITICISM

Weekend Arts

The New York Times

FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 2023 C1

MANOHLA DARGIS | FILM REVIEW



Forget Realism. Here's Magic.

Wes Anderson and his all-stars go meta with a TV show about a theatrical play that's about a small town.

"ASTEROID CITY" the latest from Wes Anderson, is filled with the assiduous visuals, mythic faces and charming curiosities that you expect from this singular filmmaker. It's comic and often wry, but like some of his other films, it has the soul of a tragedy. It's partly set in 1955 in a fictional Southwest town, a lonely four corners with a diner, gas station and motor inn. Palm trees and cactuses stipple the town, and reddish buttes rise in the distance. It looks like an ordinary pit stop save for the atomic cloud soon mushrooming in the sky.

Asteroid City
Directed by Wes Anderson
Written by Anderson, the film is about desire and death, small mysteries and cosmic unknowns and the stories that we make of all the stuff called life. It opens in black-and-white on an unnamed television host (Bryan Cranston, severe and mustachioed) in a studio. Tightly encased by the boxy aspect ratio and speaking into the camera, he introduces the evening's program, a "backstage" look at the creation of a new play,

"Asteroid City" that's been made "expressly for this broadcast." He then presents the playwright (Edward Norton), who rises from his typewriter to stand on a bare stage and present the characters.
The suited television host and the broadcast studio with its ticking clock conjure up 1950s live anthology dramas like "Studio One," and you may flash on Thornton Wilder's "Our Town" when the host and playwright start speaking. Anderson quickly fills up the stage and the film, too. A train chugs in under the opening credits carrying

Top, from left, Tom Hanks, Hope Davis, Damien Bonnard, Tony Revolori, Sam Marra and Liv Ullmann in "Asteroid City." Above, from left, Grace Edwards, Scarlett Johansson and Bonnard in the movie.

CONTINUED ON PAGE C7

Fine Arts

ROBERTA SMITH | ART REVIEW

One Great Artist,
Seen in Two Parts

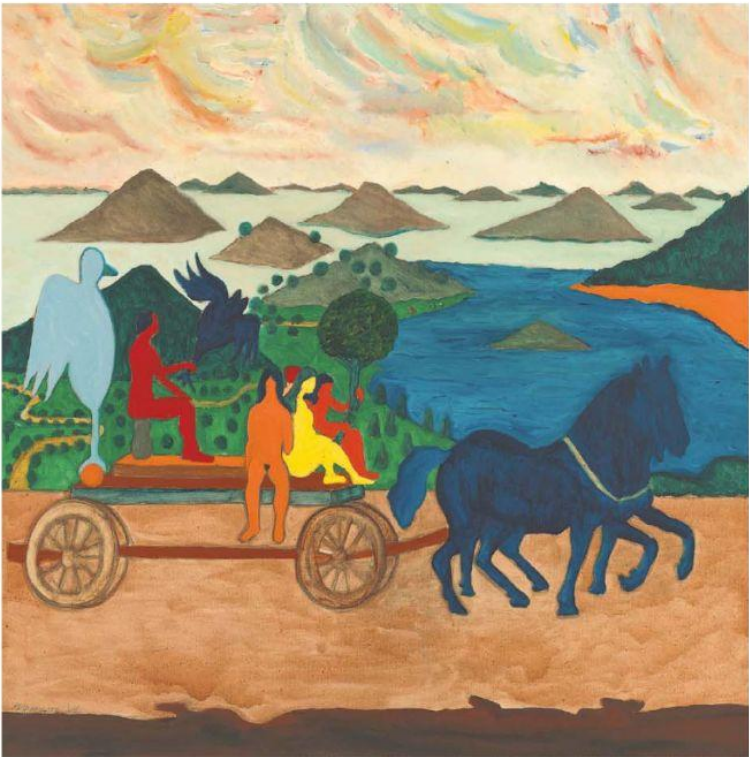
A pair of gallery exhibitions looks at the work of Bob Thompson, and features a total of 30 of his paintings.

FEW PAINTERS HAVE USED COLOR as vigorously or as variously as Bob Thompson, the remarkable, driven American artist who was born in Louisville, Ky., in 1937, and died in Rome on the brink of his 29th birthday in 1966, worn down by ill health, substance abuse and a seemingly relentless work ethic. But Thompson never doubted his talent and had a voracious appetite for culture in many forms: He consorted with New York's Beat poets and its free jazz musicians as well as a broad range of artists. His career lasted barely eight years, but he left behind several hundred paintings, drawings and oil studies — a fabulous horde whose magnitude is still not well known.

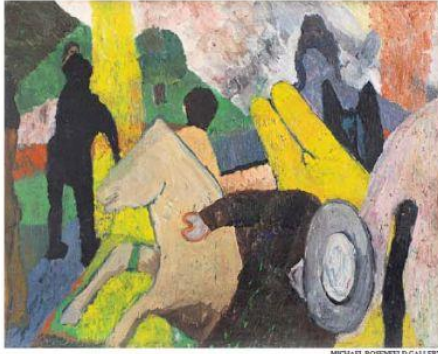
Thompson's art was fed foremost by the European painting canon. From Giotto to Manet, he appropriated, subverted and transformed their masterpieces by the simple act of recasting their figures and sometimes their landscapes into saturated colors that still are joltingly contemporary — and function in ways that can feel more fully narrative, spatial, psychological, political and retinal than colors generally do.

Some works are fairly true to the originals in their composition; elsewhere Thompson took liberties of all kinds. Frequent additions include large silhouettes of monstrous birds that protect, threaten or attack — either physically or spiritually. Sometimes the human figures grasp the birds by their feet, holding them aloft, like trophies or weapons.

Since 1998, there have been two major opportunities to study Thompson's greatness: In that year, Thelma Golden, now the director and chief curator of the Studio Museum of Harlem, and Judith Wilson, the leading Thompson scholar, organized a retrospective at the Whitney Museum, which un-



WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, NEW YORK; MICHAEL ROSENFIELD GALLERY LLC, NEW YORK, NY; VIA 52 WALKER, NEW YORK



MICHAEL ROSENFIELD GALLERY

Above, "The Entombment" (1960). Center, "Untitled (Oh Lawd!)" (1963). Right, "Wagadu" (1960). Bottom right, "The Circus" (1963). The artist died in 1966 in Rome, on the brink of his 29th birthday.



MICHAEL ROSENFIELD GALLERY: VIA 52 WALKER, NEW YORK

Bob Thompson: Agony & Ecstasy
Through July 7 at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, 110 11th Avenue, Manhattan; 212-247-0082, michaelrosenfeldart.com.

Bob Thompson: So let us all be citizens
Through July 8 at 52 Walker, 52 Walker Street, Manhattan; 212-727-1961, 52walker.com.

fortunately did not travel. In 2021 Diana Tu-ite curated a retrospective at the Colby College Museum of Art in Waterville, Me., that traveled to Atlanta, Chicago and Los Angeles, but skipped New York. Somehow, no New York museum saw the Colby show as an opportunity to measure the increasingly diverse art world, with people of color and female artists becoming more visible, that emerged in the nearly quarter-century gap between the two shows.

This spring New York has had a substantial consolation prize: a combined total of 30 Thompson paintings from 1959 to 1966 presented by two galleries whose notably different house styles and financial structures form an interesting subtext of their own — old school versus new school.

The more glamorous show is, no surprise, courtesy of a mega gallery. It's at 52 Walker, a space in TriBeCa established by David Zwirner's global franchise in 2021 to focus on Black artists, with the dealer Ebony L. Haynes as its director. Intended to function more as a kunsthalle — or alternate space — than a selling floor, 52 Walker was a savvy move: Four of its 14 paintings are from museums and the rest from private collections, and are not for sale.

The 52 Walker show, "Bob Thompson: So let us all be citizens," has a museum-like gravitas with the art in a roomy space with



MICHAEL ROSENFIELD GALLERY



WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART; MICHAEL ROSENFIELD GALLERY: VIA 52 WALKER, NEW YORK

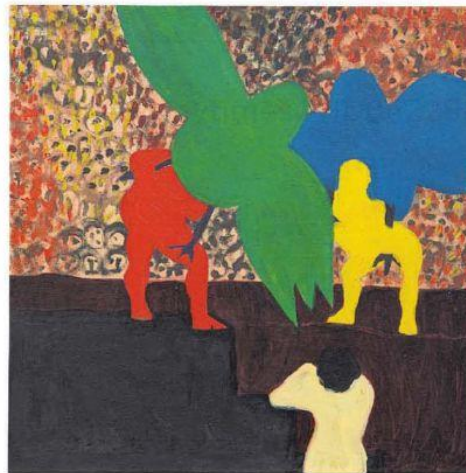
Top, "An Allegory" (1964). Above, "Triumph of Bacchus" (1964). Both paintings are from the Whitney Museum of American Art.

1963, which takes its theme from Piero della Francesca. Some of the kneeling figures seem like space aliens, but more disturbing are the three enormous birds looming over the scene and another peeking in from the right.

Sometimes you can imagine the artist looking at a painting and saying: "OK. That's done enough. On to the next. In 'The Circus' (1963), two large birds (green and blue) press down on two muscular male silhouettes (red and yellow). Is this a circus act? Tag team wrestlers preparing for a match? Two musicians in the clutches of their inner demons? Once these figures are in place, Thompson fills the background quickly, albeit with a casual flair you don't often see in his work. The circles and dots in green, black and pink reminded me of Vuillardian wallpaper; then I learned that they more likely are shorthand for a crowd of listeners.

Gauguin is evoked here, too. At the center of the topsy-turvy "The Entombment" — another brushy-surfaced work from 1960 — the yellow lower half of a body could belong to Gauguin's yellow Christ, although He seems to have been replaced by a She. There's a veritable spatial spin to "Untitled (Oh Lawd!)" (1963), a kind of inverted Pietà. The mother figure here seems to be a red Christ, whose truncated arms resemble a cross, holding a yellow female on his lap.

Thompson's legacy is complex. His action-packed scenes and irregular shapes can make color seem more intense and actively retinal than in most abstract painting. Along with artists like William H. Johnson, Stuart Davis, Nellie Mae Rowe and Robert Colescott, his work set a precedent for many younger representational painters using high-keyed palettes. Thompson emphatically opened the past as a living resource while claiming one of the pinnacles of white, male Western culture for future use by others. The borrowed compositions were for him ready-mades — armatures. Like his impatient, unfussy surfaces, they saved him time that he refused ever to waste, down to the last minute.



MICHAEL ROSENFIELD GALLERY

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Most of the paintings are great or close. The standouts include two early works: dark moody, expressionistic paintings from 1960 indebted to Gauguin, "Wagadu" and "The Gambol." They also indicate that Thompson's work from 1958 through December 1960, when he made his first and longest trip to Europe, deserve a show of their own. Also from 1960 is "Bacchanal," whose light brushy surface and violent tumult of figures reflect the speed of Thompson's growth at this point.

Two 1964 paintings from the Whitney Museum are overpowering. "An Allegory" is enchanting for the frieze-like progress of a stately wagon whose passengers are watched over by a large blue bird; behind them, the sweep of land, water, islands and sky is breathtaking. All except the Abstract Expressionist-style clouds echo settings from Renaissance paintings. "Triumph of

Bacchus" pushes forward a raucous band of celebrants (people, animals, birds) in fiery colors, offset by green. Two elephants in a deep purple-blue and the bright orange silhouette of a giraffe enrich the palette and remind us that Bacchus stopped in India. Thompson's small, nearly identical study for this painting, in the Hirshhorn Museum, is titled "The Indian Triumph of Bacchus (After Poussin)."

By coincidence more than by collaboration, "Bob Thompson: Agony & Ecstasy" can be seen at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in Chelsea. This veteran establishment with one location has represented the Thompson estate since 1996, owned it since 2019, and staged six solos of the artist's work. The Rosenfeld show is more intimate — thanks to a slew of energetic drawings and other material — but also more uneven in revealing ways.

Things turn sinister in some pieces, like "Untitled (The Proofing of the Cross)," from

Smith, Roberta. "The Great Bob Thompson, in Two Parts." *The New York Times* (June 15, 2023) [ill.] [online]

The New York Times

CRITIC'S PICKS

The Great Bob Thompson, in Two Parts

A big retrospective bypassed New York recently but two gallery exhibitions, at 52 Walker and Michael Rosenfeld, more than make up for it.



Bob Thompson's "An Allegory," 1964, in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, is now on view at 52 Walker in the show "Bob Thompson: So let us all be citizens." Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY; via 52 Walker, New York

By Roberta Smith

June 15, 2023, 12:26 p.m. ET

Few painters have used color as vigorously or as variously as Bob Thompson, the remarkable, driven American artist who was born in Louisville, Ky., in 1937, and died in Rome on the brink of his 29th birthday in 1966, worn down by ill health, substance abuse and a seemingly relentless work ethic. But Thompson never doubted his talent and had a voracious appetite for culture in many forms: He consorted with New York's Beat poets and its free jazz musicians as well as a broad range of artists. His career lasted barely eight years, but he left behind several hundred paintings, drawings and oil studies — a fabulous horde whose magnitude is still not well known.

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"The Entombment," 1960, in the exhibition "Bob Thompson: Agony & Ecstasy" at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery. via Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

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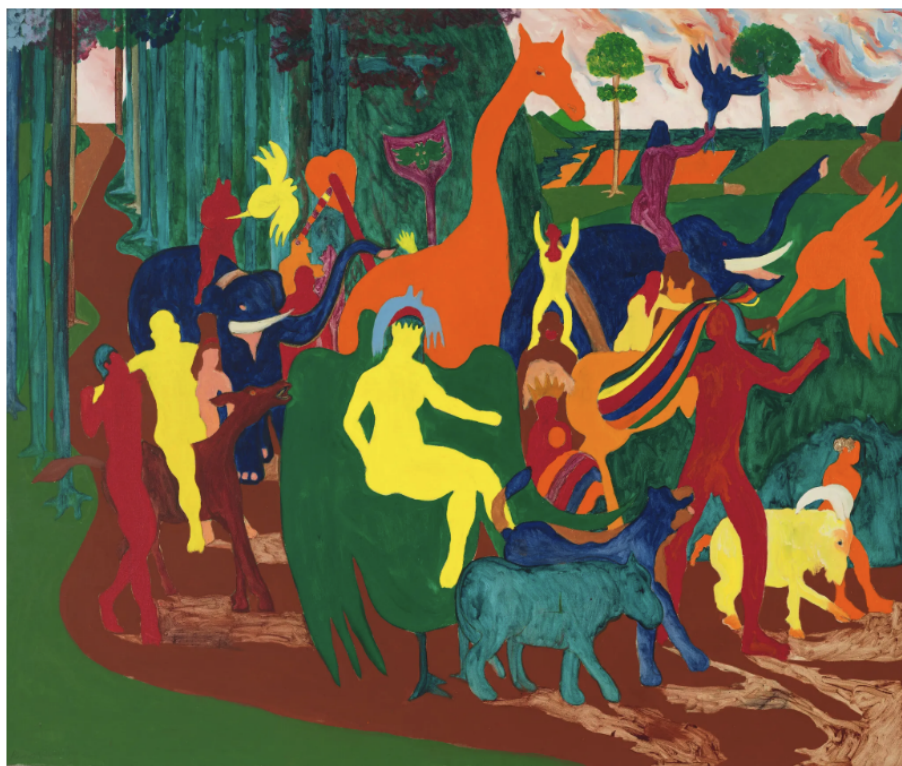
The 52 Walker show, ["Bob Thompson: So let us all be citizens,"](#) has a museum-like gravitas with the art in a roomy space with walls painted a gentle dark blue that offsets the aggressiveness of Thompson's palette.



“Wagadu,” a moody, expressionistic painting from 1960 indebted to Gauguin at 52 Walker. Thompson opened the past as a living resource for other artists. Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY; via 52 Walker, New York

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“Triumph of Bacchus,” 1964, from the Whitney Museum collection, at 52 Walker.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY; via
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“The Circus,” 1963, at Michael Rosenfeld. via Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

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Bob Thompson, “Untitled (Oh Lawd!),” 1963, a kind of inverted Pietà, at Michael Rosenfeld. via Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

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Bob Thompson: Agony & Ecstasy

Through July 7, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, 110 11th Avenue 212-247-.0082;
michaelrosenfeldart.com.

Bob Thompson: So let us all be citizens

Through July 8, 52 Walker Street, (212) 727-1961; 52walker.com.

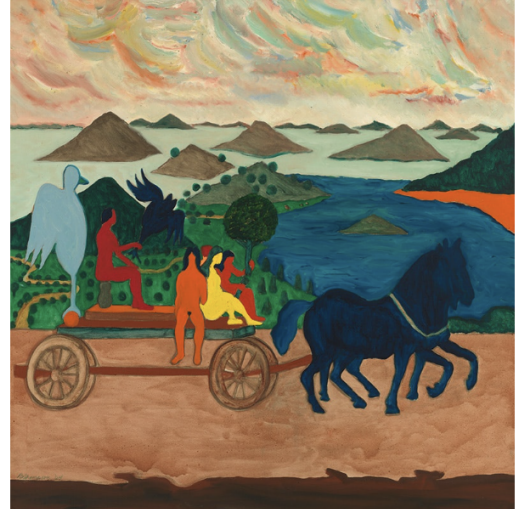
Siboni, Katherine. "Bob Thompson." *The Brooklyn Rail* (June 8, 2023) [ill.] [online]



ArtSeen

Bob Thompson

By Katherine Siboni



Bob Thompson, *An Allegory*, 1964. Oil on canvas, 47 3/4 x 47 3/4 in. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Thomas Bellinger 72.137 © Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY. Courtesy 52 Walker, New York.

In the dozens of paintings by the late Bob Thompson (1937–1966) on view this spring at Michael Rosenfeld and 52 Walker, the material realities of mid-century America appear only once, in *Stairway to the Stars* (1962). The painting, installed at Michael Rosenfeld, shows a cluster of multicolored figures descending an airplane staircase. The human forms are painted with the roving, energetic hand that pervades Thompson's canvases, each body a contained field of ochre, yellow, violet, teal, and pink. In contrast, the grisaille, steel staircase is represented using photostat, underscoring its mechanical alienness. Thompson withholds the emotive, humanist index of gesture, coding the industrial interloper with reproducibility and impersonality through his anomalous use of filmic media. At the painting's bottom edge is a hatted, silhouetted form, foregrounded to sit spatially between the viewer and the depicted scene. This figure recurs as Thompson's avatar, and it positions the painter as a simultaneous witness and narrator, an intermediary between the fields of reality and its depiction. Thompson's avatar suggests a messenger whose testimony can be believed, but whose stylistic inventions might arise in the process of transmission.

ON VIEW

52 Walker

So let us all be citizens

April 21–July 8, 2023

New York

ON VIEW

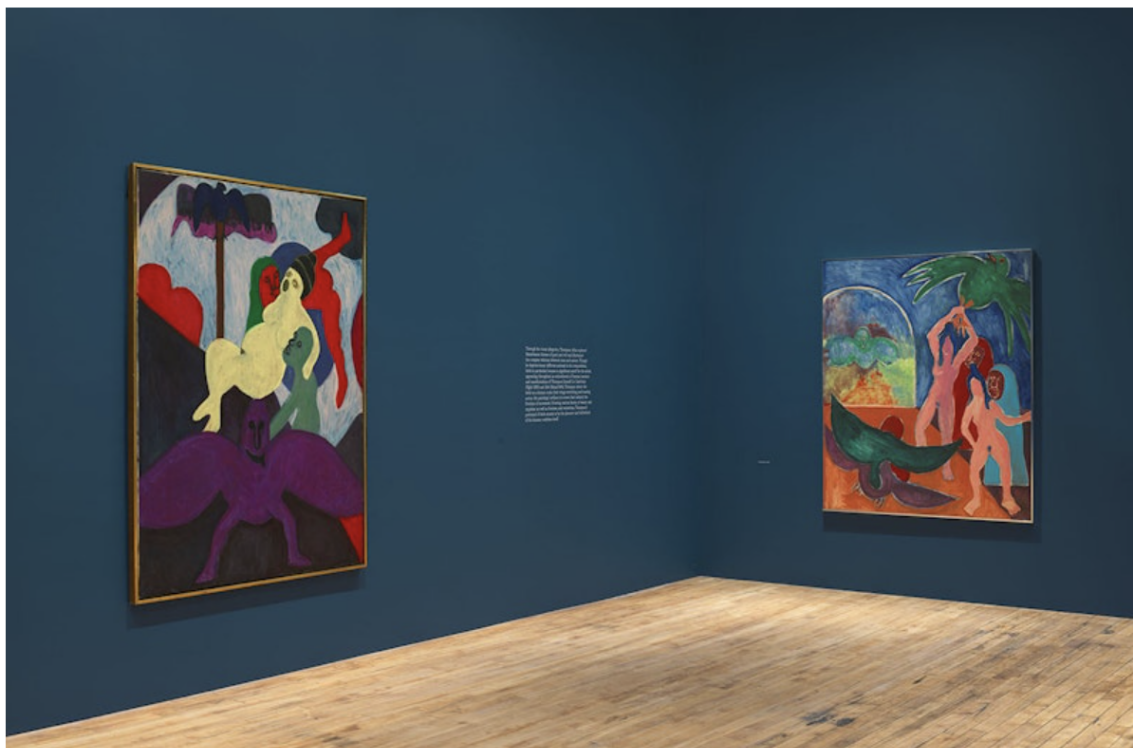
Michael Rosenfeld

Agony & Ecstasy

April 1–July 7, 2023

New York

Bob Thompson, who died weeks shy of his twenty-ninth birthday but was wildly prolific within his short career, painted allegorical, mythological content, modeling his compositions after those of the Old Masters but amplifying them with his fresh rehearsal. During his short lifetime, Thompson worked at the interstice of several contradictions and conflicts fracturing the art world and tearing through the nation. Within his immediate circle, painters were pitting figuration against abstraction, with many claiming that the arc of art history had irreversibly tilted away from illusion and toward the literal painted surface. But Thompson's gestural and chromatic improvisation within the sedate, rational scaffolding of Renaissance painting allowed him access to both picture and gesture, order and affect. A Black man living through segregation and the Civil Rights movement, Thompson took the binary of black and white and, with his paintbrush and palette, refracted it into a prismatic array, his boldly colored silhouettes fragmenting pigmentation beyond categorization and blunting alterity. Working along the fault lines of so many dualities and conflicts, Thompson's emulation of Old Masters frequently entailed that his subject matter would be the eternal conflicts of history's grand narratives, themes of good and evil, man and nature, order and chaos. The dualities that concerned Thompson were essential and philosophical in nature, eliding the politicized distinctions between bodies that permeated the national landscape.



Installation view, *Bob Thompson: So let us all be citizens*. April 21–July 8, 2023, 52 Walker, New York. Courtesy 52 Walker, New York.

At 52 Walker, *An Allegory* (1964) encompasses the formal hallmarks of Thompson's practice. A set of figures cloaked in solid skeins of cadmium orange, yellow, and red ride a carriage drawn by two ultramarine horses, the latter pair painted with such flatness as to appear a single chimeric beast. One bird is perched on the chariot caboose; another attempts to take flight while a seated red figure pulls it back to earth. The saturated planes of localized color align much of the painting's surface with the flatness that Clement Greenberg posited as modernist painting's apex. Yet across the top third of the painting, this restraint is unleashed, the sky a dense accumulation of gesture and paint. Among Thompson's classically ordered canvases, this turbulent sky recurs, rendered with churning, roiling brushwork and a full, accretive palette of reds and blues, yellows and greens. This treatment denotes the cosmos as mercurial and untamed, its interminable depths placing it in fundamental opposition to the solidity of earth and its inhabitants. With his deliberate brushwork, Thompson adjusts his surfaces according to the ontological registers they represent.

To shade difference into the sky aligns Thompson further with the Quattrocento artists whose compositions he emulated. For the Old Masters, celestial elements held divine significance and were partitioned from earthly events. In his 2002 book, *A Theory of/Cloud/*, Hubert Damisch describes the cloud as a formal device insulating the heavenly from the terrestrial. As linear perspective developed, the cosmos became more problematic, a vast space devoid of sites, and thus impossible to map to with the geometric lattices that would otherwise govern the organization of a picture. Thompson's measured, flat application when depicting the earth pits modernist rationality against a baroque sky.

In examining the web of contradictions that are alternately undermined and emphasized in Bob Thompson's work, the operations and tenets of allegory are instructive. In Walter Benjamin's 1928 treatise on the subject, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, the theorist likens the procedure of allegorical art to "the division between signifying written language and intoxicating spoken language." Like the musicians in the jazz clubs Thompson frequented, who used music theory as an armature for improvisation, Thompson's expressive brushwork energized the compositions he adopted, telescoping classical restraint with postwar authorial abandon. We see this in Thompson's *La Mort des Enfant de Bethel* (1964–65), fashioned after Laurent de La Hyre's 1653 rendition; and *The Gambol* (1960), which borrows its construction from Paul Gauguin's 1897–98 *D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous?* (both Thompson paintings are on view at 52 Walker). Each work is consistent with its source material in organization, but sharply divergent in texture and hue. For Thompson, classically orchestrated compositions became a quietly ordered template along which the artist could embellish, with purposeful gesture, an ecstatic rehearsal of a fixed script.



Bob Thompson, *Untitled*, 1961-1962. Oil on canvas, 60 x 72 inches. Private Collection. © Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY. Courtesy 52 Walker, New York.

In his 1980 two-part essay, “The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism,” Craig Owens revisits Benjamin’s principles, positing that allegory possesses “capacity to rescue from historical oblivion that which threatens to disappear.” Such a recuperative model of history would seem hardly radical for a Black painter working through the Civil Rights movement, were it not for the element of authority that such a recuperation entails. Owens continues, “The allegorist does not invent images but confiscates them. He lays claim to the culturally significant, poses as its interpreter ... the allegorical meaning supplants an antecedent one; it is a supplement.” Draining his scenes of geographic specificity while availing them to a multicolored body politic, Thompson’s appropriation of archetypal pictures was palliative, redefining notions of universality that the Western canon had so thoroughly claimed. What Thompson displaces, as an allegorist, is the presumed essentialism of the West, cracking open the canon to depict truer, more plural narratives.

Greenberg, Cement. "Cement Greenberg #6: Text is in the Air." *Cultbytes* (June 7, 2023) [ill.] [online]

Cultbytes

Contemporary

Cement Greenberg #6: Text is in the Air

Cement Greenberg
June 7, 2023

A bi-monthly collection of mixed reviews.



Bob Thompson. "An Allegory," 1964. Oil on canvas. 48x48 inches. Courtesy Whitney Museum of American Art and David Zwirner, NY.



Bob Tompson. "Untitled," 1961-62. Oil on canvas. 60x72 inches. Courtesy David Zwirner, NY.

Bob Tompson: *So let us all be citizens* at 52 Walker

Unlike with musicians—I am thinking here of the “27 Club,”—when a painter dies at a young age it is rarely a remarkable artist whose work leaves us deeply curious about what they could have brought to the world if they lived longer. The team at David Zwirner has found an exception: Bob Tompson, he died at twenty-eight. His show at 52 Walker is a world of rich colors and details with underlying melancholic undertones that at moments slipped my mind. The first thought that comes to mind when looking at the faceless, healthy bodied naked figures in Tompson’s paintings is utopia. True, the paintings are full of pleasure, be it the pleasure of swinging between two trees, holding a young child, or being tangled in an embrace. However, politics of being a Black individual in America resonates clearly in these works that portray pain and cruelty as much as affection and passion. Tompson does not follow the rules of figuration in his paintings. Gentle lines mark human facial features on an outline of a bird and most figures have a clear gender, but not all. His description of nature as well as man-made objects is lush, unexpected, and colorful in a way that is unexplainably touching, neither joyful nor sad, but simply vast in its sensitivity.

Bishara, Hakim. "20 Art Shows to See in New York This May." *Hyperallergic* (May 9, 2023) [ill.] [online]

HYPERALLERGIC

20 Art Shows to See in New York This May

This month: Wendy Red Star, Bob Thompson, Daniel Lind-Ramos, art by MFA students, and much more.



Hakim Bishara, Valentina Di Liscia and Hrag Vartanian May 9, 2023



Wendy Red Star, "Woman Chief (Biawacheeltchish)" (2023), fabric and archival pigment prints mounted on gatorboard, 44 x 44 inches (image courtesy the artist and Sargent's Daughters)

With such lovely spring weather, there's no better time to go out and see art in New York City. Our list of recommendations this month includes shows that will please your eyes, move your soul, and awaken your mind. It includes artists Wendy Red Star, Bob Thompson, Daniel Lind-Ramos, Ken Tisa, and more. We also listed a few MFA thesis shows around the city that you might want to check out. There's only one question left to resolve: jacket or no jacket?

Bob Thompson: *So let us all be citizens*



Bob Thompson, "An Allegory" (1964) (© Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY)

Lost too early at age 28 in 1966, Bob Thompson stood out as one of the most daring artists of his time. While most of his New York peers were stranded deep in the cult of abstraction, he developed a different figurative style influenced by jazz wherein humans, animals, and phantoms mingle about in intensely vivid colors. Though his short-lived career lasted less than a decade, it left an indelible mark on American art history. This show will provide a chance to celebrate his peerless legacy and mourn the void left in his absence.

—HB

52 Walker (52walker.com)

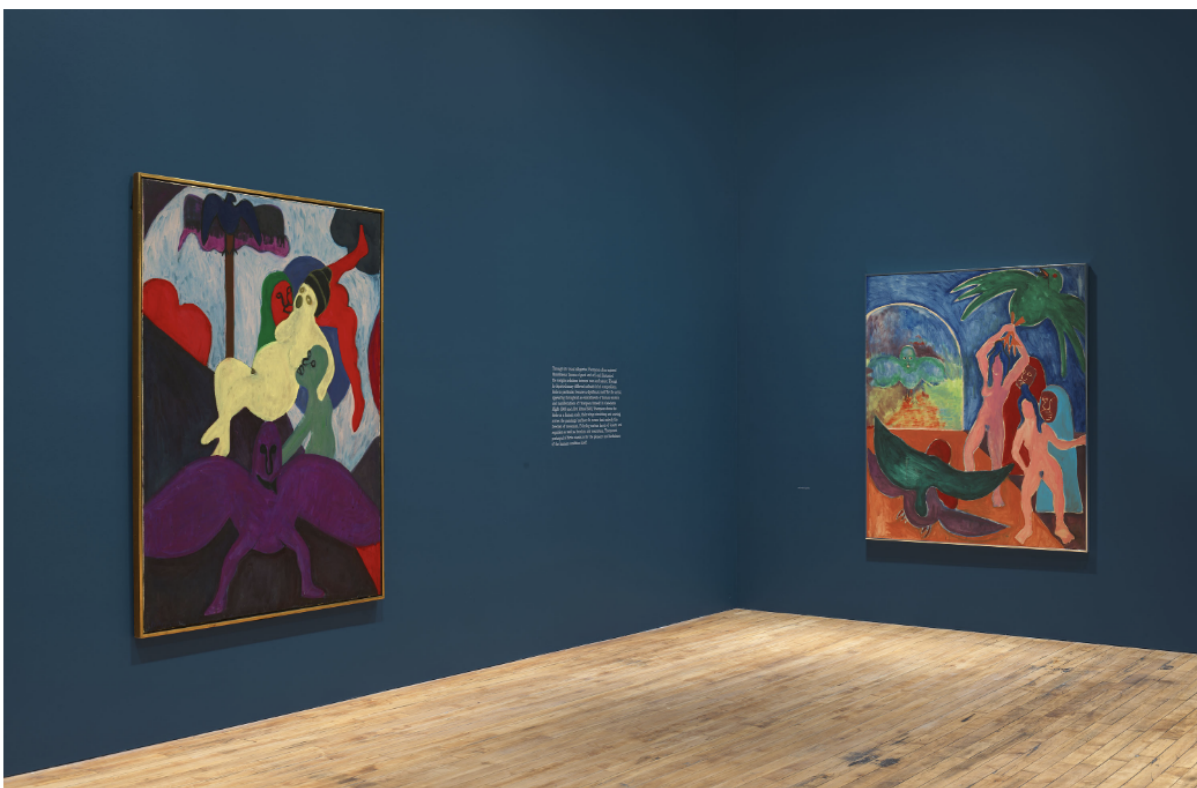
52 Walker Street, Tribeca, Manhattan

Through July 8

Mdivani, Nina. "Bob Thompson: So let us all be citizens at 52 Walker, New York." *White Hot Magazine* (May 4, 2023) [ill.] [online]



Bob Thompson: So let us all be citizens at 52 Walker, New York



Installation view, Bob Thompson: So let us all be citizens, April 21–July 8, 2023, 52 Walker, New York. Courtesy 52 Walker, New York.

Bob Thompson: So let us all be citizens

52 Walker

April 21 through July 8, 2023

By **NINA MDIVANI**, May 2023

Robert “Bob” Thompson (1937-1966) lived for brief twenty-eight years and yet, his bewitching, vibrant solo exhibition that just opened at 52 Walker last week shows a solid body of work of an artist who lived through many influences, but has successfully resolved his anxieties leaving a recognizable and distinct perception. Thompson was born in Louisville, Kentucky, studied education and later art. He was connected to Sam Gilliam, but also to jazz legends of the day Sonny Rollins, Nina Simone, Ornette Coleman, Milford Graves. Thompson received a grant to study in Paris, Ibiza and Rome. Here he was able to observe and rework the great European figurative tradition. What we have on view in Tribeca is his personal vision of unlearned classicism and an individual reality that takes on well-known compositions, yet revitalizes them through striking, mystical, beings.

Tintoretto, Poussin, Uccello, Watteau, Goya are all present, but Thompson manages to insert his figures without making this intrusion farcical or callous. His abstract human figures of scarlet red, lemony yellow or deep magenta create their own crescendos within the balanced compositions, not dissimilar to the principles of jazz variation he so often has listened to while living in New York. **WM**



Bob Thompson, An Allegory, 1964. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Thomas. Bellinger 72.137 © Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

“Bob Thompson. So let us all be citizens.” *Meer* (May 4, 2023) [ill.] [online]



Bob Thompson. So let us all be citizens

21 Apr — 8 Jul 2023 at the David Zwirner Gallery in New York, United States

4 MAY 2023



Bob Thompson, *An Allegory*, 1964, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Thomas Bellinger 72.137, © Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY. Courtesy 52 Walker, New York

52 Walker is pleased to announce its seventh exhibition *So let us all be citizens*, which will feature a range of paintings by Bob Thompson.

The works on view spotlight the artist’s jazz-influenced style and how he used this method to engage new audiences within the history of painting. Looking at his particular consideration for color, line, and figuration— developed during a period when abstraction was the dominant trend in American art — this intimate exhibition pays homage to the friction Thompson generated between his proximity to and deviation from cited and canonical sources.

The show's title is taken from a speech that Thompson gave at a church as a teenager, "Building through Citizenship." Forecasting the artist's passion for the tenets of freedom and expression, the phrase "So let us all be citizens" encapsulates the power of Thompson's work to widen the scope of what is imaginable in contemporary painting and for whom.

Though his career as a painter spanned only a brief eight-year period, from 1958 through his untimely death at age twenty-eight in 1966, Thompson left behind a singular and influential body of figurative work that remains vitally resonant. Taking cues from the exploratory and improvisatory music with which he was engrossed, the artist painted spirited, colorful compositions that considered the interplay of bodies, allegories, and natural landscapes while reconfiguring European masterworks. Including paintings from important public and private collections, this solo presentation at 52 Walker will be one of the first in New York City devoted to Thompson since his retrospective organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1998.

From the late 1950s onward, Thompson incorporated classical and art-historical references into his visual language. Early works by the artist, *Wagadu* (1960) and *Untitled* (1961), feature his confident linework and flat planes of color; the former's namesake references the Arabic term for the ancient Ghana Empire. The Ascension-like composition of *Caledonia Flight* (1963) is enlivened by fantastical creatures and its red-purple palette. *The Gambol* (1960), based on Paul Gauguin's *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (1897–98), is another example of Thompson's dynamic figuration, showing the artist exploring brushwork by layering quick strokes across the canvas and juxtaposing dark colors—a signature of this early period.

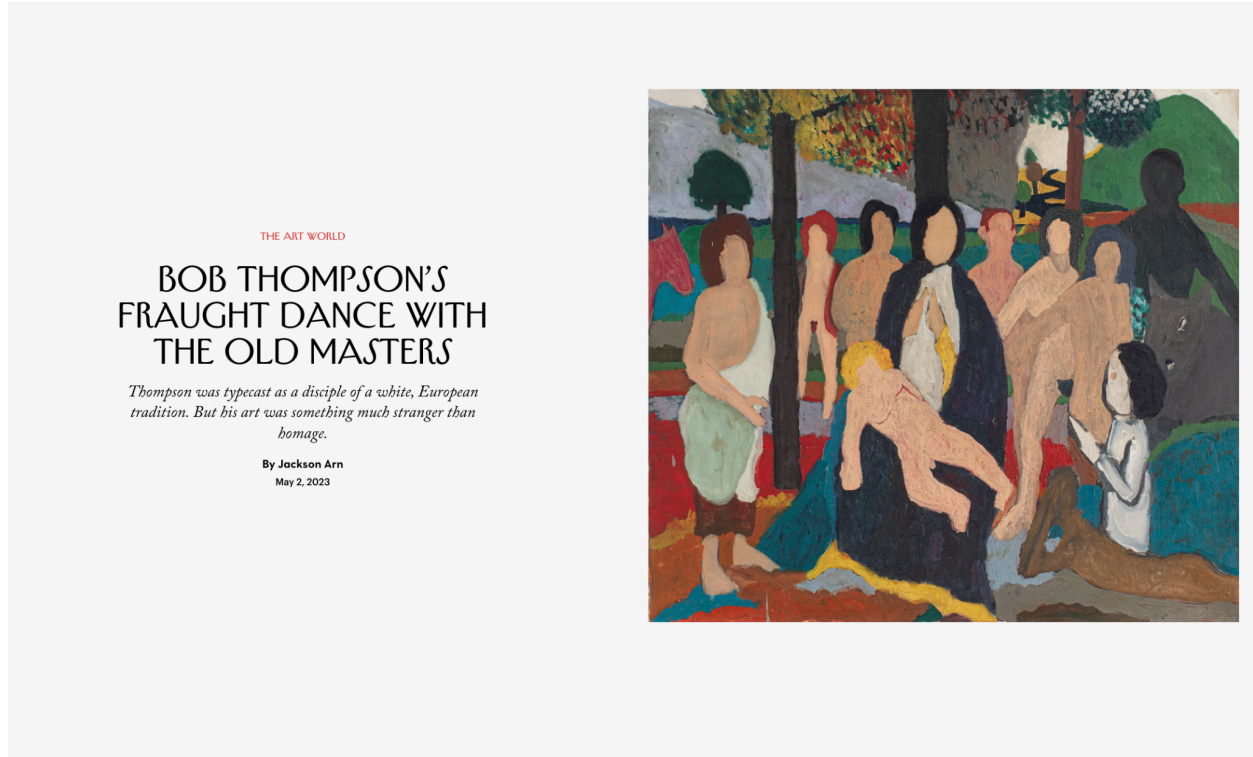
Bacchanalia, a prominent theme for renaissance and European modernist painters, also became a significant subject for Thompson from 1960 onward. *Triumph of Bacchus* (1964) references this topic explicitly and shows a "processional" composition—a hallmark of Thompson's later work—loosely based on history paintings akin to those by the French baroque artist Nicolas Poussin. Alongside Paolo Uccello, Giorgione, Tintoretto, Jean-Antoine Watteau, and Francisco de Goya, Poussin was a looming influence for Thompson in his mature period, and he would derive and combine much of these artists' compositions for his own. *La Mort des Enfant de Bethel* (1964–1965) takes its title from a seventeenth-century baroque Laurent de la Hyre painting and recasts the original composition into a more naturalistic setting—albeit with a vibrant, high-contrast palette.

Bob Thompson: So let us all be citizens is curated by Ebony L. Haynes and presented by 52 Walker. A companion group exhibition, *So let us all be citizens too*, which considers Thompson's influence on both his contemporaries and subsequent generations of artists, will be on view concurrently at David Zwirner London. Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, which represents the estate of the artist, will also have a Bob Thompson solo exhibition in New York that opens on April 1, 2023.

Born in Louisville, Kentucky, Robert “Bob” Thompson (1937–1966) first entered Boston University to study education before leaving for the University of Louisville to pursue art in 1957. There, he met painter Sam Gilliam and joined the more established artist’s collective Gallery Enterprises. After his sophomore year, Thompson spent a summer painting in Provincetown, Massachusetts, where he encountered Lester Johnson and Jan Müller, whose work Thompson particularly admired. Around 1959, Thompson moved to New York, where he mingled with jazz musicians Art Blakey, Ornette Coleman, Milford Graves, Sonny Rollins, and Nina Simone, among others. He also encountered Allan Kaprow’s Happenings as well as other developments in conceptual art; however, the artist would eschew these experimentations to engage more intimately with works by the established masters of European art history. After mounting his first solo exhibition in New York at Red Grooms’s Delancey Street Museum in 1960, Thompson received a grant to go to Europe; he would travel to and settle in Paris, Ibiza, and Rome for short periods of time, viewing works of art at museums and galleries firsthand while maintaining his studio practice. He returned to New York in 1963, joining Martha Jackson Gallery and presenting solo shows there in 1963 and 1965. He traveled to Rome in 1965. Despite warnings from his doctors and loved ones, Thompson continued to drink and use drugs heavily after an emergency surgery. After being hospitalized for appendicitis, he died in Italy at the age of twenty-eight in 1966.

Arn, Jackson. "Bob Thompson's Fraught Dance with the Old Masters." *The New Yorker* (April 23, 2023) [ill.] [online]

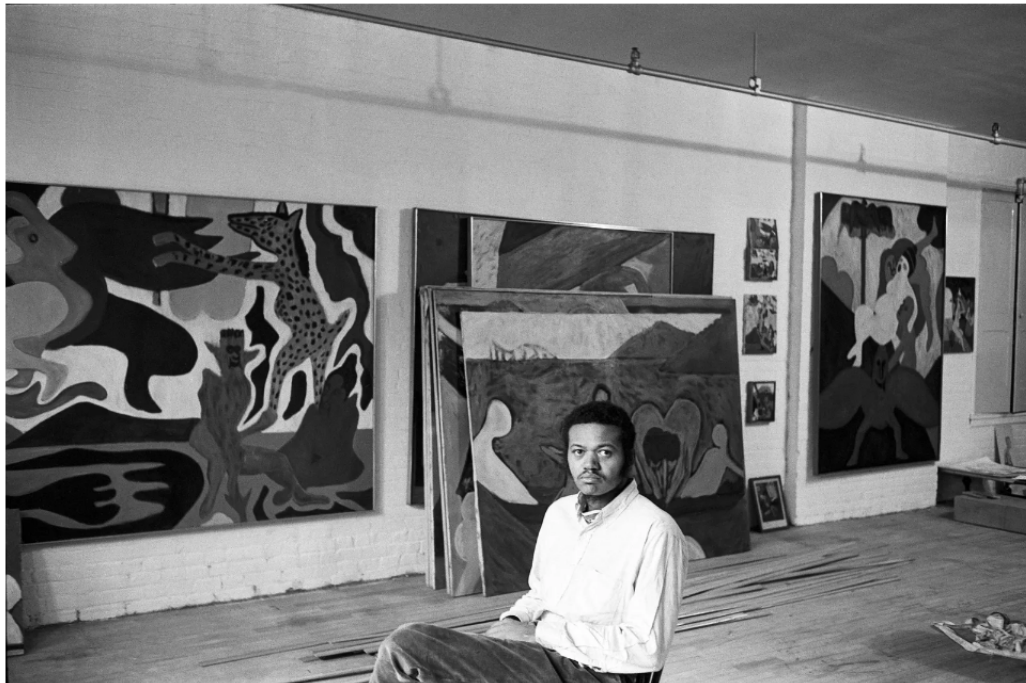
THE NEW YORKER



"Nativity," 1961. Art work by Bob Thompson / Courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

Bob Thompson died of a heroin overdose in 1966, a few weeks shy of his twenty-ninth birthday. In the course of the previous eight years, he'd painted more than a thousand pictures: on average, one every three days. God only knows what drove him, but I'd like to imagine that it was a B-minus on his college paper on Piero della Francesca. The paper itself, currently on display at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, is nothing special. Entire paragraphs are devoted to rambling quotations, and the professor's feedback seems pretty fair: "Often vague. Too completely dependent on one or two sources." Still—what perfect, Hollywood foreshadowing! Thompson's art is often vague, deeply dependent on famous European sources, and yet impossible to mistake for anything but itself.

There is no exact word for what Thompson does with the Old Masters. His paintings—the subject of “Bob Thompson: Agony & Ecstasy,” the unmissable show at Rosenfeld, and another, “Bob Thompson: So Let Us All Be Citizens,” at 52 Walker—contain hundreds of motifs snatched from the Western canon, wedged into dense compositions, and coated in bright colors. The results are too calm for parody and too self-secure for homage. Stanley Crouch thought that Thompson, a jazz fanatic, improvised on European art the way a saxophonist improvises on standards, but even that seems a notch too reverent. He doesn’t riff on masterpieces so much as rifle through them, grabbing a handful of Goya or Tintoretto as though reaching for the cadmium yellow. For “The Entombment” (1960), his painting of a hatted man tumbling off his horse, he seems to have taken the lifeless, drooping torso from El Greco’s “The Entombment of Christ” (which El Greco lifted from Michelangelo, but that’s another story) and cast it in a drama of his own making, so that every brushstroke whooshes toward the bottom like a waterfall.



Bob Thompson mixed the Old Masters and Pop-ish levels of appropriation, horsing around in the neutral zone between the passionately handmade and the coolly copied. Photograph by Fred W. McDarrah / MUUS Collection / Getty

Thompson grew up in Kentucky. His father died in a car crash when Thompson was thirteen. His mother dreamed of her son becoming a doctor—the idea, presumably, was to nudge him into a profession that could protect the family from any further misery—but he never made it past his first year in Boston University’s pre-med program. His career, like his art, has a giddy, go-for-broke tempo, as though making up for lost time. After a summer in Provincetown, Massachusetts, where he met key allies like the painters Red Grooms and Lester Johnson, he moved to New York. Within a year, Grooms had given Thompson his first solo exhibition. He was twenty-two.

The longer you hunt for resemblances between Thompson and his peers, the more of an orphan he seems. Visual borrowing was no rarity in the fifties and sixties, thanks to Warhol et al., and there were other folksy, faux-naïve figurative painters on the scene. Still, it took guts to mix chunky figuration *and* the Old Masters *and* Pop-ish levels of appropriation—to horse around in the neutral zone between the passionately handmade and the coolly copied. Other Black American artists have grappled with the ghost of European painting, often with an air of defiance, outrage, or naughtiness. (Hard to be serene about a club that’s scorned you for centuries.) What I find most moving about Thompson’s art is how rarely any of this comes across. He doesn’t seize his place at the table or proudly refuse it; he’s already seated.

Europe’s past does not blind him to America’s present. Nobody could look at “The Execution” (1961), inspired by Fra Angelico’s “Beheading of Saint Cosmas and Saint Damian,” and not see a lynching: the saint is now a Black figure hanging from a tree. Yet the horror of the act, and of the society that allows it, never extends to the canon; the Fra Angelico allusion magnifies the tragedy instead of grinding against it. There’s none of the spleen one finds in Robert Colescott’s prankish subversions of van Gogh and Géricault, to which Thompson’s paintings are frequently, misleadingly compared—Thompson subverts nothing, refuses to throw out the art-historical baby with the racist bathwater. Fra Angelico belongs to him because Fra Angelico belongs to anyone with eyeballs.

Thompson never stopped gorging on European art, and his peers never stopped scolding him for it. Judgments like “primitive” and “unsubtle” infest early reviews of his New York shows, as though his relationship to his influences were purely subtractive, a dumbing down of the classics. His friend LeRoi Jones (later known as Amiri Baraka) seems to have pushed him to be more overtly political, advice that Thompson reportedly summarized as “Get your head out of that dead, stale cave of Italians.” There were caves of Spaniards and Frenchmen, too: Thompson and his wife spent much of the sixties in Ibiza, Paris, and Rome, where he basked in Goya and Poussin.



"The Golden Ass," 1963. Art work by Bob Thompson / Courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

In an excerpt from one of Thompson's notebooks, included in the Rosenfeld show, he praises Donatello's David for its unified composition. You can sense him thinking about painting in the same sculptural terms. The critics who thought his canvases crude weren't looking hard enough—the best ones are as slyly engineered as skyscrapers. "The Golden Ass" (1963), loosely modelled after one of Goya's "Los Caprichos" prints, seems raucous at first, but there's a quieter order in place—the pyramid of people, donkeys, and grinning bat-angel-birds has a strong central axis, with limbs and heads evenly dispersed to either side. The brushstrokes, no matter how rough and frantic, don't disrupt the underlying shapes, and the bright-yellow forms imply a diagonal that's counterbalanced by a second diagonal of reddish ones. One foot or hoof or pigment out of place and the whole thing would fall apart.

But if the painting confirms Thompson's knowledge of the Old Masters, it also suggests his indifference to their central achievement. His art contains oceans of liveliness and not one drop of inner life. The drum set in one of his early drawings has more of a spark than the man who's striking it; the most animated thing in the people-packed "Untitled (Dormition of the Virgin)," from 1966, is a cross, which seems to wiggle to unheard music. When Thompson does give his figures faces, there's no light in their eyes. This isn't just a consequence of working fast and dirty; look at how much self-consciousness his peer Alex Katz could conjure with a similar palette and dearth of detail—or, to go all the way back to the source, how much Goya could do with a few quick lines. The vitality in these images is atmospheric, all on the surface, and some of the recent efforts to interpret them as complex networks of symbols strike me as tree-wise but forest-foolish. Scholars insist that the hatted man seen in "The Entombment," among other pictures, is a secret version of Thompson, or that some of the birds represent Thompson's yearning, sensual side. Maybe so, but you could tease out every bird and beast in "An Allegory" (1964) and still have no clue what it's an allegory *of*. Decoding it is like psychoanalyzing a bullet.



"Untitled (Dormition of the Virgin)," 1966. Art work by Bob Thompson / Courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

And yet these aren't shallow paintings. Taken together, they amount to a one-man show with endless costume changes and zero intermissions. You register the superhuman effort needed to sustain so much vitality for eight years, but it's the effort, not the superhumanity, that lingers. Part of the reason is biographical: the hand that launched a thousand pictures went cold soon after. But I think that Thompson was always in touch with the irony that sturdy-seeming things have the most to lose, and, in his best paintings, he relished it. Even when he's alluding to images that have lasted for centuries, there's something recklessly present-tense about his work, exuberance chased by the possibility of annihilation. For reasons I've struggled to tease out since, his depictions of unnameable flying creatures got me thinking about how there are no angels in the Bible. The word is in there, of course, but angels themselves—white-winged babies with harps—had to be invented by artists trying to make sense of a book written centuries before they were born. Thompson, who finally seems to be on fame's doorstep, invents in much the same way: he makes you feel how it might have felt to see a picture of an angel for the first time. The implicit subject of his paintings is the dizzy instant when fame or familiarity have yet to set in and anything might happen. See them now, while they're still strange. ♦



"Untitled (The Miraculous Draught of Fishes)," 1961. Art work by Bob Thompson / Courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

Takac, Balasz. "David Zwirner Celebrates the Legacy of Post-War American Artist Bob Thompson." *Widewalls* (April 20, 2023) [ill.] [online]

WIDEWALLS

David Zwirner Celebrates the Legacy of Post-War American Artist Bob Thompson

Exhibition Announcements



April 20, 2023

Balasz Takac

A short-lived yet very talented figurative Black artist, Bob Thompson, created a compelling body of work characterized by vibrant palettes and forms reminiscent of Henri Matisse. At the peak of his career, between 1958 and 1966, Abstract Expressionism was the most dominant tendency. While many artists chose to explore the possibilities of abstract forms, Bob Thompson remained committed to figuration and developed a distinctive style that was heavily influenced by jazz music. Through his dynamic canvases, Bob Thompson demonstrated his ability to reinterpret the art-historical canon by painting traditional figures and forms as fantastical silhouettes. His work addresses variations of the human condition, effectively capturing the essence of the human experience.

Curated by Ebony L. Haynes, two exhibitions celebrating the legacy of Bob Thompson are taking over David Zwirner galleries. Taking place concurrently in New York and London, these exhibitions will provide a fresh perspective on his work and explore the significant impact he had on subsequent generations of artists.



Bob Thompson - An Allegory, 1964. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Thomas Bellinger © Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

The Stunning Vocabulary of Bob Thompson

The New York exhibition will showcase the works illustrating the artist's jazz-inspired style in terms of his unique approach to color, line, and form. The exhibition title, *So let us all be citizens*, is drawn from a speech [Bob Thompson](#) gave at a church as a teenager, eager to stand for freedom and expression. This phrase highlights the enormous emancipatory capacity of Thompson's work to visually communicate with broad audiences while subtly addressing various social and political issues.

Titled *So let us all be citizens too*, the London show brings together Thompson's works drawn from private collections, including a rare self-portrait, alongside the works of his contemporaries. The display features the enigmatic abstract tondos of Betty Blayton, the artist, an educator, and a co-founder of the Studio Museum in Harlem, as well as the semiabstract painting by Vivian Browne, one of the founders of the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition and a member of the feminist collective Heresies.

On view will be the works of Naudine Pierre, a young New York artist who directly cited Thompson as an inspiration for the works reminiscent of Christian iconographies from Western art history. Marcus Jahmal, another burgeoning NY artist, will showcase the works evocative of the masters, such as [Francis Bacon](#) and [Francisco de Goya](#), whom Thompson emulated. *So let us all be citizens too* will also include works by [Chris Ofili](#), Michael Armitage, Emma Amos, [Beverly Buchanan](#), Lewis Hammond, Cynthia Hawkins, Danielle McKinney, Cassi Namoda, George Nelson Preston, [Devin Troy Strother](#), and Peter Williams.



Bob Thompson - Garden of Music, 1960. Oil on canvas, 78 7/8 x 143 1/2 inches; Collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art © Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

Bob Thompson at David Zwirner

The exhibition *So let us all be citizens* will be on view at [David Zwirner](#) in New York from April 21st to July 8th, 2023. The visitors to the gallery's London venue can see *So let us all be citizens* too until May 26th, 2023.

Featured image: Bob Thompson - Garden of Music, detail, 1960. Oil on canvas, 78 7/8 x 143 1/2 inches; Collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art © Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

“This Week In Culture: April 17-23, 2023.” *Cultured Magazine* (April 17, 2023) [ill.] [online]

CULTURED

This Week In Culture: April 17-23, 2023

From Lauren Halsey's monumental Met roof commission to an exhibition of a turn-of-the-century French female art star, here's what you should be paying attention to this week.



Bob Thompson, *An Allegory*, 1964. Image courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art, Thomas Bellinger, and Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC.

Welcome to *This Week in Culture*, a weekly agenda of show openings and events in major cities across the globe. From galleries to institutions and one-of-a-kind happenings, our ongoing survey highlights the best of contemporary culture, for those willing to make the journey.

WORDS

Cultured Magazine

April 17, 2023

“So let us all be citizens” by Bob Thompson**52 Walker New York**

Influenced by jazz, Bob Thompson infused his figuration with rich color and elegant lines at a time when abstraction dominated the art discourse. Although he died in 1966, at the tender age of 28, Thompson had a vast influence on many who came after him. The title of the show comes from a speech, “Building Through Citizenship,” that he gave at church as a teenager. A companion exhibition exploring the artist's impact on his contemporaries and those working today will be on view contemporaneously at David Zwirner London. “So let us all be citizens” will be on view from April 21 through July 8, 2023 at 52 Walker in New York.

Kazanjian, Dodie. "It's Spring! Time for Some Art." *Vogue* (April 10, 2023) [ill.] [online]

VOGUE

CULTURE

It's Spring! Time for Some Art

BY DODIE KAZANJIAN

April 10, 2023



Lois Dodd's *Cow Parsnip*, 1996, oil on linen, 38 x 80 inches. Courtesy of the Bruce Museum

Primavera. Printemps. Frühling, even. *Spring* sounds good—feels good—no matter what language you say it in. Plants get it; they start to grow. And springtime makes me want to get out and look at a lot of art. Here are some of the best art shows of spring that I'm excited to see.

Bob Thompson

Bob Thompson gets a doubleheader: “Agony & Ecstasy” at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery and “So let us all be citizens” at 52 Walker. Thompson’s life was cut tragically short by a heroin overdose at the age of 28 after gallbladder surgery, but in the eight years he painted, he managed to make about a thousand paintings and drawings—figurative, often reinterpreting works of the Old Masters, put through the Mixmaster of his imagination using fauvist-like colors. Five large paintings from 1963, an important year in Thompson’s oeuvre that summed up the two years of his travels in Europe, along with 10 other paintings, in addition to works on paper and archival photographs and sketchbooks, are in the Rosenfeld show. At 52 Walker, Thompson’s jazz-influenced style will be on view. His particular use of color, line, and figuration contrasts with the prevailing abstraction of his time.

“Bob Thompson: Agony & Ecstasy” at Rosenfeld Gallery, *through May 26*; “Bob Thompson: So let us all be citizens” at *52 Walker, April 21 through July 8*

Moretti, Mia. "Mia Moretti's Top Picks from Frieze Los Angeles Viewing Room 2023." *FRIEZE LOS ANGELES* (February 10, 2023) [ill.] [online]

FRIEZE

Mia Moretti's Top Picks from Frieze Los Angeles Viewing Room 2023

The DJ tells us about some of her favourites from Frieze Viewing Room, including a painting by Mika Tajima which seems to defy time and space, and 'a window soon to be teared down' by Tania Pérez Córdova

IN FRIEZE LOS ANGELES, NEWS | 10 FEB 23

Bob Thompson

Harvest Rest, 1964

Oil and graphite on canvas

45.7 cm x 61 cm

\$500k-1m

Presented by Michael Rosenfeld Gallery.



Bob Thompson, *Harvest Rest*, 1964, oil and graphite on canvas, 45.7 x 61 cm, signed. © Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY; Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

I love how ripe and delicious Bob's paintings are. They are a great life of their own. Worlds and worlds of vibrancy and depth that keep unfolding, like a harvest and the people it feeds.

52 Walker

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Saltz, Jerry. “7 Art Shows We Can’t Wait to See in 2023.” *Vulture* (December 19, 2022) [ill.] [online]

VULTURE

2023 PREVIEW | 9:00 A.M.

7 Art Shows We Can’t Wait to See in 2023 With new galaxies by Sarah Sze and an O’Keeffe show that will set the record straight.

 By Jerry Saltz, *New York's senior art critic*




Work in progress by Sarah Sze, 2022. Photo: Courtesy Sarah Sze Studio

It's not an exaggeration to say that art history is being rewritten before our eyes. Museums, galleries, collectors, and curators continue the rush to exhibit and acquire art by women, people with disabilities, underrepresented artists, and so-called outsiders. This is changing who sees art and how it is seen. Previously discredited narratives are changing what art looks like and does. Prices are still obscene and unsustainable, even while, in the wake of prolonged COVID disruptions, museums are still reeling from enormous hits to their attendance. This, along with rising costs, affects their budgets and what they can do.

Yet 2023 is a year of exciting museum shows that will continue the project of bringing under-known and overlooked artists into the light, and of confirming the greatness of some bygone and mid-career artists. Museums will not be smote — even if you'd never know how fragile some are. As for those multinationals known as megagalleries: They're here, get used to them. David Zwirner has a good podcast, while Gagosian and Hauser & Wirth have their own art magazines. (Hauser's is really good!) I've never missed a show at Pace Gallery, but it sometimes seems so big and all over the place, I get confused when I am there. It's the Fyre Festival of megagalleries!

As for the (*my*) beautiful dysfunctional family called the art world, during the pandemic much noise was heard about curtailing the nonstop carbon-burning global hamster wheels of the fairs, biennials, and other megaproductions. Judging from pictures of crowds at these events last year, none of that came to pass. People like being with other people. Antennae must be touched.



Bob Thompson

52 Walker (April 21–July 8)

Of the many great 20th-century artists who died too young — including Eva Hesse, 34, Ana Mendieta, 36, Jean-Michel Basquiat, 27, and Keith Haring, 31 — Bob Thompson, who died at 28, stands out. Thompson painted incessantly in the 1950s and 1960s and, shunning abstraction, created a powerful hybrid personal form of Fauvism and Neo-Impressionism that came on like great weather systems of Matisse-like color. See his idyllic figures in swelling nature, lynchings, scenes with demons and angels, and more. This new Tribeca gallery, already making a splash with its excellent programming that includes many lesser-known and new Black artists, will be showing ten paintings from the 1960s that track Thompson's faster-than-the-speed-of-life development. Had he lived, he would be 85 today, and possibly one of the most hailed and influential artists alive.

