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JOAN MITCHELL

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BEDFORD SERIES

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TYLER GRAPHICS LTD.  
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# JOAN MITCHELL

## BEDFORD SERIES

A group of ten color lithographs

Essay by Barbara Rose

Printed and published by Tyler Graphics Ltd.

1981

Preceding page: *Joan Mitchell in the workshop studio, March 1981*

# JOAN MITCHELL

Joan Mitchell is on a visit to New York. This time she is staying away from France, where she has lived since 1955, longer than usual because she is working on a suite of lithographs. Master printer Ken Tyler has persuaded Mitchell that she can translate her painterly vision into a print medium, and their collaboration is clearly a triumph for both. Mitchell is a painstaking and careful worker. No snap decision. She works on her lithographs as she paints, revising, considering, criticizing the work in a process that takes place over time.

"Ken," she says, "I want to try a color like the color of dying sunflowers." Her instructions are precise but not literal. What she has in mind is a sensation, not an object or even a place. Mitchell, with her roots in American action painting and the romantic subjective esthetic of the New York School, paints an inner vision. The "landscapes" she paints are expressions of emotions felt, not of things seen.

Joan Mitchell's lithographs are an extension of her recent painting. Her subjects are taken from nature—light, color, rhythm, space. They are light-filled fields animated by rhythmic strokes, contrasts of complementary colors, contained worlds of charged, yet controlled, personal calligraphy. Brush and crayon dance on paper as she distills the medium in which she works to its essence. The lithographs are concerned with calling attention explicitly to the nature of the medium. The greasiness, grittiness and oiliness of the lithographic crayon and the quicksilver liquidity of *tusche* are as much the "subjects" of her lithographs as the loaded brushstroke is the "subject" of her paintings.

This is not the same as saying that the nature and materials of a medium are the *content* of her art. In minimal art, materials and techniques are both subject and content. Mitchell is an artist who seeks in modernism not a reduction of experience, but an expressive authenticity. Her work is truthful. It tells the truth about materials, about how it is made and what it is made of—crayoned or brushed images inked onto and absorbed or held by porous paper. And it tells the truth of the emotional experience of the artist who made it, in an expression at once spontaneous and aware of limits—of the margins, of the page, of how much free reign can be given to motor action and how much the speed of gesture must be checked and curbed to achieve coherence.

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Designed by Roberta Savage

Photographs of the artist by Hans Namuth

In Mitchell's work, there is a special poignancy in the struggle between coherence and wild rebellion. She reigns herself in as much as, and indeed at the same time that, she lets herself go. This is a delicate balance, a precision of the heart and mind as well as of the hand.

Mitchell's are the marks of the civilized and disciplined hand, those of a master craftsman and a lover of the *malerisch*—the painting and sensuous surface—rather than the clean cut hard-edge of the cut-out shape. Her drama is the simultaneous acceptance and rejection of boundaries: the boundaries of paper or canvas, of her media, of her capacity to deliver her whole being and experience to her work. The transfer of energy between artist and paper in Mitchell's prints is a visible current of electricity, a physical vibration as intense as the optical vibration of the interaction of complementary colors.

In Mitchell's work, what the hand has done by revealing the record of revisions and corrections remain as permanent palimpsests of the artist's experience. This exposure of process, the acceptance of self in both its elegance and its awkwardness, this refusal to conceal, is the characteristic of Mitchell's style that links her to Abstract Expressionism. The image is not *a priori* or conceptualized; we have the rare privilege of reliving its formation in seeing. The artist communicates not a dead idea but a living sense of human energy. In the truth of an admission of fallibility, we are all made strong. The reworking and revising of the image teaches the possibility of self-perfection. I see Mitchell as a heuristic artist more than as a pure aesthetic: Her lesson is the identity of ends and means, the record of the struggle as the resolution of conflict. Her art is not gay or cheerful, but it dances and sings. She does not confuse energy with violence or techniques with content.

One could not say of Mitchell's art, no matter how brilliantly colorful or physically exciting it may be, that hers is an optimistic vision. But one could not say that Cezanne or Matisse were optimists either. In the transcendence of the mundane, the artist, and particularly an artist like Joan Mitchell, accepts the burden of translating vision into experience, with which we may empathize and from which we may all learn, to be the inevitable task of the serious and committed artist today.

Barbara Rose  
Summer 1981



Joan Mitchell and Kenneth Tyler checking a color proof.

This series of ten original multi-color lithographs was created by Joan Mitchell during part of February and March of 1981. By March 15th all color proofing from aluminum plates was completed and the edition standards for each of the ten prints was approved by the artist.

The editions were printed on 350 gram Arches 88 mould-made paper. Each print is signed and numbered by the artist in pencil and bears the chopmark of the workshop in the lower right corner.

The artist collaborated from February to September 1981 with Kenneth Tyler, Roger Campbell, Lee Funderburg and Lindsay Green during this project. Proofing and processing of the aluminum plates was by printers Tyler, Funderburg and Campbell. Edition printing was by Lee Funderburg and Roger Campbell.

Complete technical information for each edition appears on the print documentation sheet, available upon request.



*Sides of a River I*  
42½" x 32½"  
6 color lithograph  
Edition of 70





*Bedford I*  
42½" x 32½"  
10 color lithograph  
Edition of 70





*Sides of a River II*  
42½" x 32½"  
7 color lithograph  
Edition of 70





*Flower III*  
42½" x 32½"  
4 color lithograph  
Edition of 70





*Bedford II*  
42½" x 32½"  
8 color lithograph  
Edition of 70





*Flower II*  
42½" x 32½"  
2 color lithograph  
Edition of 70





*Bedford III*  
42½" x 32½"  
7 color lithograph  
Edition of 70



*Sides of a River III*

42½" x 32½"  
2 color lithograph  
Edition of 70





*Flower I*  
42½" x 32½"  
8 color lithograph  
Edition of 70





*Brush*  
42½" x 32½"  
4 color lithograph  
Edition of 70



*Brush—State I*  
42½" x 32½"  
4 color lithograph  
Edition of 30



## Joan Mitchell

Born in Chicago, Illinois 1926  
Smith College, 1942-1944  
Art Institute of Chicago, B.F.A., 1944-1947  
Columbia University 1950  
Art Institute of Chicago, M.F.A. 1950  
Lives in France

### One Woman Exhibitions

- 1950 St. Paul, Minnesota  
1951 New Gallery, New York  
1953 Stable Gallery, New York, 1954, 1955, 1957, 1958, 1961, 1965  
1960 Galerie Neufville, Paris  
Galerie del Ariete, Milan  
1961 B. C. Holland Gallery, Chicago  
Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles  
"Joan Mitchell Paintings 1951-1961", Southern Illinois University,  
Carbondale  
1962 The New Gallery, Hayden Library, Massachusetts Institute of  
Technology, Cambridge  
Galerie Jacques Dubourg, Paris  
Galerie Lawrence, Paris  
Klipstein and Kornfeld, Bern, Switzerland  
1967 Galerie Jean Fournier & Cie., Paris, 1969, 1971  
1968 Martha Jackson Gallery, New York, 1971, 1972  
1972 "My Five Years in the Country", Everson Museum of Art,  
Syracuse, New York  
1974 Ruth Schaffner Gallery, Santa Barbara, California  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York  
The Arts Club of Chicago, Chicago  
1976 Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, 1978, 1980  
Xavier Fourcade, Inc., New York, 1977, 1981  
1978 Ruth Schaffner Gallery, Los Angeles  
Webb & Parsons Gallery, Bedford, New York  
1979 Paule Anglim Gallery, San Francisco  
1980 "Joan Mitchell: The Fifties, Important Paintings", Xavier  
Fourcade Inc., New York  
"Joan Mitchell: Major Paintings", Richard Hines Gallery, Seattle,  
Washington  
1981 Gloria Luria Gallery, Bay Harbor, Florida

### Selected Group Shows

- 1950 "Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting and  
Sculpture", Kranert Art Museum, University of Illinois,  
Urbana, 1967  
1951 Ninth Street Show, New York  
Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting,  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1955, 1957,  
1959, 1961, 1965, 1967, 1973  
1955 "U.S. Painting: Some Recent Directions", Walker Art Center,  
Minneapolis  
1965 Group Show, Museum of Modern Art  
1957 Group Show, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.  
Japanese International Exhibition, Tokyo  
Annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture, Art  
Institute of Chicago, 1962  
1958 Pittsburgh International Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute,  
Pittsburgh, 1961, 1970  
"Action Painting", Dallas Museum of Contemporary Arts  
Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy  
"Nature in Abstraction", Whitney Museum, New York  
1959 Corcoran Biennial, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.,  
1975, 1981  
Documenta II, Kassel, Germany  
20th Biennale, Sao Paulo, Brazil  
"School of New York: Some Younger Artists", traveling  
exhibition organized by the Stable Gallery, New York and  
the American Federation of Arts, New York  
1961 "American Abstract Expressionists and Imagists", The Solomon  
R. Guggenheim Museum, New York  
"Sixty American Painters 1960", Walker Art Center, Minneapolis  
Group Show, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut  
1962 "New Acquisitions", The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
1963 "Three Young Americans", Allen Memorial Art Museum,  
Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio  
1967 "Large American Paintings", The Jewish Museum, New York  
1968 Invitational, Kent State University  
"Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Foundation Exhibition", The  
Museum of Modern Art, New York  
"Art for Your Collection", Rhode Island School of Design,  
Providence, Rhode Island  
1970 "Contemporary Women Artists", Skidmore Arts Committee,  
The National Arts Club, New York



- "American Painting, 1970", Virginia Museum of Fine Arts,  
Richmond
- 1971 "A New Consciousness—The Ciba-Geigy Collection", The  
Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, New York  
"Younger Abstract Expressionists of the Fifties", The Museum of  
Modern Art, New York
- 1972 "Fresh Air School: Exhibition of Paintings: Sam Francis, Joan  
Mitchell, Walasse Ting", organized by the Museum of Art,  
Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh
- 1973 "The Private Collection of Martha Jackson", Finch College  
Museum of Art, New York  
"Contemporary American Drawings, 1963-1973", Whitney  
Museum of American Art, New York
- 1976 "Painting Invitational", Hathorn Gallery, Skidmore College,  
Saratoga Springs, New York
- 1977 "New York: The State of Art", The New York State Museum,  
Albany, New York
- 1978 "American Painting of the 1970's", Albright-Knox Art Gallery,  
Buffalo, New York
- 1980 "The Originals: Women in Art", Graham Gallery, New York  
"The Fifties: Painting in New York 1950-1960", Hirshhorn  
Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.  
"One Major New Work Each", Xavier Fourcade, Inc.,  
New York