

Analysis of Interior Bassano in Teverina, by Cy Twombly

Jason Otoo

Hill Art Foundation

December 20th, 2023



Cy Twombly, *Interior, Bassano in Teverina*, 1985. Color dry-print, 17 × 11 inches (43.1 × 27.9 cm). Collection Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio. ©Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio, Courtesy Gagosian.

*Interior, Bassano in Teverina* by Cy Twombly suggests a sense of mystery. The piece lacks a clear focal point, making it akin to abstract art. Each element within the photograph may seem unrelated, yet they harmoniously contribute to the overall atmosphere. Concentrating on

the details can change one's perspective of the artwork, potentially leading to a fresh interpretation. Twombly's unique style of light and dark evokes a range of emotional responses.

This photograph is similar to Twombly's monumental abstract paintings, filled with rhythmic scribbles and evocative smears. In an exploration of Twombly's photography practice, Charmaine Li highlights how "his photographs contain a rich textural quality to imitate outbursts of expression. In both the paintings and candid snapshots, he unveils fragmented forms and rich hues that eschew representation for emotion."<sup>1</sup> Most of it abstract in its truest form, Twombly's work compels the viewer to consider the meaning behind it.

Edwin Parker Cy Twombly was born on April 25, 1928, in Lexington Virginia. Twombly began taking photographs early in his six decades-long career. During the summer of 1951, the fledgling painter studied at North Carolina's Black Mountain College, where he mentored under Aaron Siskind. Twombly was an artist who portrayed his understanding of ancient art to late twentieth-century modern art. Twombly began taking photographs of his daily life and continued to do so until he died in 2011. Yet, only in 1993 did he choose to publish and display these images.

Amidst the Great Depression, Twombly's life began during one of the most severe economic crises in American history, a challenging backdrop that significantly impacted the trajectory of his early years. Twombly served in the U.S. military for a year as a code breaker from 1953–1954. Twombly also lived through the AIDS crisis of the 1980s as a queer artist. Each of these life events significantly influenced his work.

---

<sup>1</sup>Cy Twombly, "Cy Twombly's Celestial Photographs," Another Magazine, accessed December 12, 2023, <https://www.anothermag.com/art-photography/8714/cy-twomblys-celestial-photographs>.

To understand Twombly's work is to see the connection between ancient and modern art that influenced the artist. According to *From State of Mind to the Tangible: The Photographic Cosmos of Cy Twombly* by Carlos Peris, "[Twombly's] photography was a conscious, assimilated practice, refined over the years and on the same level as any other medium in which he worked."<sup>2</sup> This goes to show that Twombly's artwork and pictures are not meant to be easily understood. Twombly used his artworks and photos to reflect his mood at the time and sometimes his larger life story. Twombly's *Interior, Bassano in Teverina* shows a range of turbid emotions. In many of Twombly's pieces, there is a reliance on shapes and unique hues that are combined to create scenes that evoke gloominess and curiosity in viewers. In *Interior, Bassano in Teverina*, Twombly contrasts the dark tapestry with the white statue to create a stark difference in tone that evokes feelings of melancholy and curiosity. Combined with the objects in the room, the picture depicts a peaceful space.

Twombly's art exudes a deliberate sense of obscurity, prompting viewers to dive into the depths of contemplation. To grasp and understand his profound connection between ancient and modern art, one must engage in a nuanced exploration, unraveling layers of meaning woven intricately into the tapestry of his creations. Twombly's use of light and darkness evokes multiple complex emotions to those who view his photographs. Twombly's deliberate ambiguity becomes a portal, inviting enthusiasts to embark on a cerebral journey.

---

<sup>2</sup> From state of mind to the tangible: the photographic cosmos of Cy Twombly - Gagosian, 2022

## Bibliography

Twombly, Cy. "Cy Twombly's Celestial Photographs." Another Magazine. Accessed December 5, 2023. <https://www.anothermag.com/art-photography/8714/cy-twomblys-celestial-photographs>

Cy Twombly. "Biography." Cy Twombly Foundation. Accessed December 5, 2023. <http://www.cytwombly.org/biography>

Twombly, Cy. From State of Mind to the Tangible: The Photographic Cosmos of Cy Twombly. [Uckfield, England, Gagosian, and Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio, January 1, 2022.