

Interior, Bassano in Teverina: A House Tour of Cy Twombly's Mind and Artworks
by Soefi Eusebio
Hill Art Foundation
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In his work, *Interior, Bassano in Teverina*, Cy Twombly evokes nostalgia and comfort through an unfocused lens. By highlighting a world of soft light and blurred lines, Twombly causes our minds to strain to finish the vagueness with which we are presented. The audience can see the objects and identify them by name, but the ways we describe them may become less sure

in themselves. In the case of Cy Twombly's studio practice, "visual information from everyday life... entered his work as a way to explore the potential of both structure and meaning."¹ He uses the surrounding objects to lure the viewer into a controlled and familiar room. Once captured by the physicality of his photography, the audience melts into his perspective, developing a new understanding of the purposeful world through his conceptions and eyes. It molds a power dynamic— he becomes the creator of their world. Twombly elicits quiet comfort in his viewers by choosing the bounds of the audience's perceived reality.

Cy Twombly draws inspiration from his environments. Born in Virginia, he first furthered his artist education with a Spanish artist, Pierre Daura. He continued his studies in New York, introducing himself to a world of people brimming with inspiration. His adult life is spent jumping around Italy, invoking ancient modes of art to intertwine with the modern.² By the time he moves out of the States, Twombly becomes rather protective of his photographs: "He kept his work for himself, stored and preserved... In photographs of his interiors, it is not unusual to see one of his sculptures or paintings. As a result of this attachment... Twombly's photographs remained under his roof for a long time before he allowed them to come to light."³ Twombly used photography to capture the sentimentality of each space he inhabited. The medium aids as a tool of memory— holding the events and rooms infinitely in the palm of your hand and molding it to your liking.

¹ "Cy Twombly: About," Gagosian, <https://gagosian.com/artists/cy-twombly/>.

² "Biography: Cy Twombly," Cy Twombly Foundation, <http://www.cytwombly.org/biography>.

³ Carlos Peris, *From State of Mind to the Tangible: The Photographic Cosmos of Cy Twombly* (New York: Gagosian and Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio, 2022), 29.



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 offers the audience an opportunity to abandon their physical worldview and connect with their base instincts and energies. He has a different take on photography— where it is usually made to reconstruct a scene exactly, Twombly revokes the dominion objects and furniture have on a setting and focuses more on the ether. He uses a special technique in order to achieve this reaction, “Beginning in the early 1990s, [Twombly] used specialized copiers to enlarge his Polaroid images on matte paper, resulting in subtle distortions that approximate the timeless qualities of his paintings and sculptures.”⁴ The texture of the matte

⁴ “Cy Twombly: About,” Gagosian, <https://gagosian.com/artists/cy-twombly/>.

paper emphasizes a softer quality to the image already supplied by the focus of the camera. In blowing up the photographs, he highlights the velvety texture of the work— the transfer in scale creates attention to the fuzzy qualities. These qualities are entirely thought out and purposeful: “Twombly’s own language... translates into images veiled by layers of grain and blurring, unconcerned with anecdotal detail, photos that exist to capture the essence of an object and its relation to the light, the atmosphere, and the presence of the objects surrounding it”⁵. The mind reaches out to what it can grasp and understand— namely, the semi-identifiable items. There is a black and gold tapestry, chairs, a statue of what appears human, a wood ceiling, and an object or two obstructing the view of the tapestry. Twombly controls the bounds of the frame through the pinhole, purposefully creating an experience where the audience struggles to see the whole room from this one picture, allowing them to yield their reactions to the part of the room presented to them. Each photograph offers a dreamscape fit to rest in by coaxing them through ambiguity. Twombly utilizes this particular process to spotlight the intentional indirection that graces his works.

Twombly’s intention for his works lies in the atmosphere. He is thoroughly consistent in the energy that permeates each art piece; they offer escapism for the viewers. “[Twombly’s works] were sometimes described as ‘rooms,’ which viewers could metaphorically enter, while the actual rooms he inhabited call to mind his paintings: whitewashed, spare yet dynamic, replete with references to worlds old and new.”⁶ In his photography, Twombly focuses his lens on parts of the room that no one considers special. He offers up nooks and crannies for spectators to get lost in. Critics have pointed out the amateur qualities of his photography, but this is intentional: “Despite the camera’s usefulness as something like a graphic memory aid or a sketchbook,

⁵ Carlos Peris, *From State of Mind to the Tangible: The Photographic Cosmos of Cy Twombly* (New York: Gagosian and Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio, 2022), 9.

⁶ “Cy Twombly: Making Past Present,” Getty, <https://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/twombly/explore.html#>.

Twombly's focus was on its ability to record his sensory experience and state of mind".⁷ His goal is in the feeling they invoke. To look at his art and feel or think nothing is not to consume it; the reason for Twombly's fame is discovered through the experience— to see the world through his eyes is the heart of his work.

Through sentimentality, atmosphere, and negative space, Twombly creates a unique experience through his photography. Where photography is typically utilized to cement a moment through interrogative words, Twombly unfocuses the camera to translate his emotional attachments to the setting he captures. He begs the eternal question: How may an emotion be immortalized? In attempting to reach his audience with his sentimentalism by tweaking the margins of his present moment, he effectively creates a fantastical setting of retreat.

⁷ Carlos Peris, *From State of Mind to the Tangible: The Photographic Cosmos of Cy Twombly* (New York: Gagosian and Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio, 2022), 41.

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Peris, Carlos. *From State of Mind to the Tangible: The Photographic Cosmos of Cy Twombly*. (New York: Gagosian and Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio, 2022).