

Media release  
Basel, 12 May 2022

**Brice Marden**  
**Inner Space**

May 14–August 28, 2022, Kunstmuseum Basel | Neubau  
Curator: Josef Helfenstein

Brice Marden (b. Bronxville, NY, 1938) is one of the most celebrated painters of our time. The exhibition *Inner Space* at the Kunstmuseum Basel | Neubau features more than one hundred works by the American artist from between 1972 and 2019. The presentation includes works on paper and paintings from the artist's own collection, some of which have never been on public display.

Marden emerged in the 1960s with monochrome paintings and drawings informed by strong emotions. His art melds two fundamental positions in the modernist painterly tradition: on one hand, a gestural quality characteristic of Abstract Expressionism; and on the other a reduction to the essential, which lends his work at least an outward resemblance to Minimalism. In *Inner Space*, the museum thus showcases a body of work that relates to the foci of American art after 1960 of the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, the public art collection of the City of Basel.

The monochrome panels that Marden created into the 1970s evolved a few years later into complex engagements with surface and color in diptychs and large-format multipart pictures that may be read as landscapes and architectures. His painterly and graphic practices are guided by an interest in lines, gestures, and the limitation to simple means and materials (in the artist's words: "there's no electricity involved").

He also indicated early on that his drawings—a medium that is often seen as ranking below painting in the hierarchy of media—warrant appreciation in their own right. In a 1979 statement, Marden asked beholders to think of his drawings "as spaces," emphasizing his belief that drawing is a medium that not only exists in more than two dimensions but is capable of reflecting the spirit and experience of a particular place.

By presenting graphic series and paintings side by side, *Inner Space* illuminates Marden's working methods. Its point of departure is a phase in his career whose origins

lie in Basel: the artist made a close study of the city and its culture for seven years beginning in 1978, when he participated in a competition to design new windows for the apse of the Basel Cathedral. In the end his designs were unrealized. The exhibition includes selected studies for the project from the Kunstmuseum Basel's collection as well as a number of related *Window Paintings*, a rare opportunity to see these works.

Despite the failure of the Basel project, these years proved a watershed for Marden, laying the foundation for his subsequent creative evolution: In the early 1980s, the exhibition "Masters of Japanese Calligraphy" at Asia Society in New York stimulated his interest in Asian calligraphy and poetry. In travels to Thailand, Sri Lanka, and India, and on the Greek island of Hydra, he produced drawings that echoed East Asian ideographs while incorporating observations of nature. These works mark the beginning of a new direction in Marden's oeuvre.

In the mid-1980s, Marden began work on the *Cold Mountain* series, for which he took inspiration from the writings of the famous poet Han Shan, known as "Cold Mountain," who worked in China during the Tang Dynasty period (618–907). Energized color grids and convoluted lines begin to dominate Marden's canvases and drawings, conveying a sense of motion through allusive forms. In later years, the lineaments consolidate, and color returns. A striking example is the monumental painting *The Muses* (1991–1993) from the Daros Collection in Hurden: the underlying calligraphic structure unfolds into an informal choreography of flowing lines in green, yellow, gray, and blue.

To retrace the evolution of Marden's art up to his most recent works, the exhibition *Inner Spaces* gathers 104 works on paper and eight paintings from the Kunstmuseum Basel's holdings and Swiss and international lenders.

*Brice Marden. Inner Space* is an expanded adaptation of the exhibition *Think of Them as Spaces. Brice Marden's Drawings* curated by Kelly Montana at the Menil Collection, Houston (February 21–June 14, 2020).

The exhibition is supported by:  
Foundation for the Kunstmuseum Basel

A catalogue has been published for the exhibition at the Menil Collection. You can download the PDF of the catalogue here:



## **Variation in Print American Graphic Art**

April 30–February 28, 2022, Kunstmuseum Basel | Hauptbau  
Curator: Judith Rauser

Concurrently with *Inner Space*, a special presentation of American fine art prints by Barnett Newman, Sam Francis, Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Frank Stella, and Brice Marden at the Hauptbau turns the spotlight on the so-called “graphic boom”: beginning in the 1960s, prominent American artists eagerly explored the potentials and challenges of printmaking. The exhibition features a diverse selection of prints by American artists, including works that are rarely on public view.

### **Images for both exhibitions**

[kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/museum/media](https://kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/museum/media)

### **Media contact**

Karen N. Gerig, Tel. +41 61 206 62 80, [karen.gerig@bs.ch](mailto:karen.gerig@bs.ch)