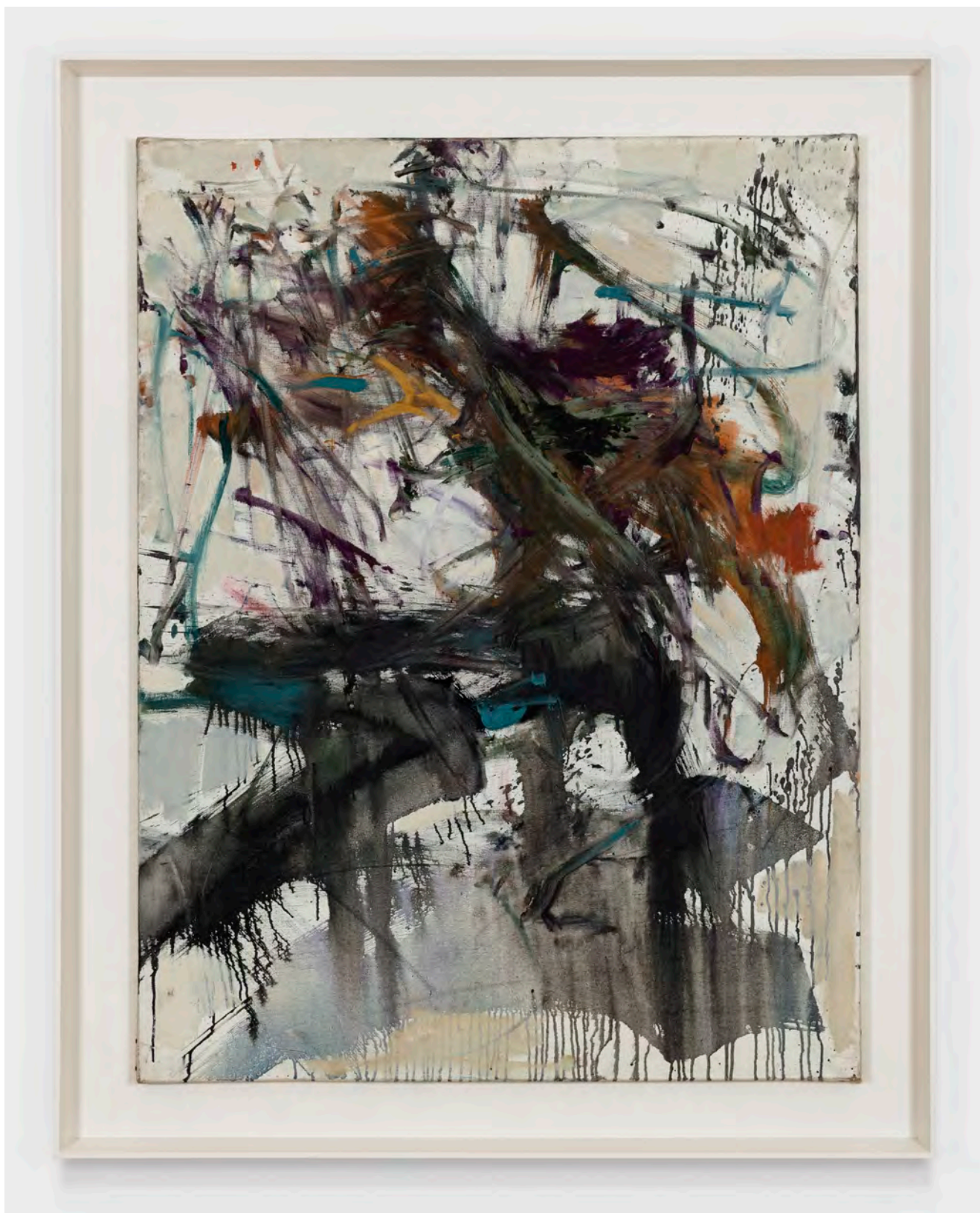




Joan Mitchell

GOULPHAR II, 1959

CHEIM & READ



Goulphar II, 1959. Oil on canvas. 45 1/2 x 34 3/4 in / 115.6 x 88.3 cm



JOAN MITCHELL

GOULPHAR II, 1959

Joan Mitchell's *Goulphar II*, 1959, is an unparalleled example of a pivotal moment in the artist's practice after she permanently settled in France. This relocation defines Mitchell's work in opposition to her peers. Her move away from New York both precipitates and symbolizes her departure from Abstract Expressionist brushwork toward a wider variety of painterly techniques, and her signature, associative color palette. Though Mitchell holds onto certain painted elements emblematic of artists like Jackson Pollock, wherein he splatters paint while working his canvas on the floor, Mitchell's scumbling, layering, and impasto accumulation of paint often at the center of her pictures sets her apart.

Port-Goulphar on the Belle-Île in France was a subject of two works from 1886 and 1887 by Claude Monet. One can only infer that Mitchell took an interest in the same site, particularly as she eventually settled in Vetheuil, very close to Monet's Giverny. As we can see in *Goulphar II*, 1959,



Jackson Pollock
Number 1, 1950 (Lavender Mist), 1950
 Oil, enamel, and aluminum on canvas
 87 x 118 in / 221 x 299.7 cm
 National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



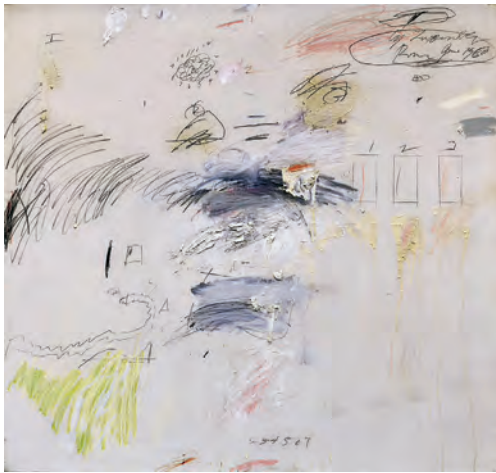
Claude Monet
Rocks at Port-Goulphar, Belle-Île, 1886
 Oil on canvas,
 26 x 32 3/16 in / 66 x 81.8 cm
 Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago



Arshile Gorky
The Leaf of the Artichoke Is an Owl, 1944
Oil on canvas,
28 x 35 7/8 in / 71.1 x 91.2 cm
Museum of Modern Art, New York

and throughout this period, Mitchell's paintings begin to expand both compositionally and materially, taking on a wide variety of associations and techniques. The poet John Ashbery—an old friend of Mitchell's—observed in his anthology of criticism, “You have a feeling that her paintings show a location, even though you don't know where it is.”¹

Peter Schjeldahl notes in his article on Mitchell, linking her to Monet, “Like the greatest Monets—the Rouen



Cy Twombly
Untitled, Rome, June 1960, 1960
 Oil stick on canvas,
 37 1/2 x 40 1/16 in / 95.7 x 101.8 cm
 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Cathedrals and some of the Giverny near-abstractions—her best paintings amount to metaphysical conundrums: you don't know what you're looking at. It's paint, of course, but as a medium of contradictory connotations."² Capturing the feeling a specific site rather than strictly representing it was Mitchell's greatest strength.

Mitchell's abstractions from this timeframe unquestionably evoke the tradition of landscape painting, however, there

are no strictly representational elements in her work. Mitchell absorbed Arshile Gorky's figurative forms, which he articulated by thin black lines interrupted by soft areas of color. Mitchell substituted Gorky's figurative forms with brushstrokes themselves. Here, Mitchell's expressionistic brushwork defines the composition of the canvas, and painted elements take on their own meaning. Mitchell's dispersion of marks across her heavily worked surfaces is more akin to Cy Twombly's scribbles and scratches rather than Gorky's crowds of figures. Indeed, Twombly and Mitchell are also alike in their escape from the United States to Europe. Mitchell's decision to leave the primed canvas exposed under thin veils of paint also echoes Twombly. However, in this time period, Mitchell comes into her own, her paintings now have an unmistakable signature despite the artist's relentless experimentation and risk-taking in the studio.

NOTES

1. Solomon, Deborah. "In Monet's Light." *The New York Times*, November 24, 1991.
2. Schjeldahl, Peter. "Tough Love," *The New Yorker*, July 15, 2002.
3. Twombly, Cy. *Untitled*, 1960, oil, graphite, and oil stick on canvas. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.





JOAN MITCHELL

Comparable paintings in museum collections



Joan Mitchell
Hemlock, 1956
Oil on canvas
91 x 80 inches
231.1 x 203.2 cm
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York



Joan Mitchell
Méphisto, 1958
Oil on canvas
71.65 x 64.96 inches
182 x 165 cm
Centre Pompidou, Paris



Joan Mitchell
Untitled, 1957
Oil on paper
19 1/2 x 17 1/2 inches / 49.5 x 44.5 cm
Museum of Modern Art, New York

I would rather leave Nature to itself.
It is quite beautiful enough as it is.
I don't want to improve it. I certainly
never mirror it. I would like more to
paint what it leaves me with.

—JOAN MITCHELL

Marcia Tucker, Joan Mitchell, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1974.





Joan Mitchell (1925 - 1992)

GOULPHAR II 1959

Oil on canvas

45 1/2 x 34 3/4 inches

115.6 x 88.3 centimeters

Dated, titled and signed on a label on verso: 1959, "*Goulphar II*" Collection

Springer, Joan Mitchell

CR# MI.39907

Provenance:

The artist.

Rudolf Springer Gallery, Berlin.

Private collection, New York.

Exhibition History:

Cheim & Read, New York, *In Honor of the New MoMA*, (11/21/2019 - 2/29/2020).