

CY TWOMBLY

b. April 25, 1928

d. July 5, 2011

PROMINENT PAINTER & SCULPTOR

*“Every line is the actual experience
with its own unique story.”*

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Edwin Parker “Cy” Twombly Jr. was among the most prominent artists of the 1950s. A photographer, sculptor, and painter, he is best known for his scribbling abstractions incorporating cultural, poetic, and historical references. Twombly inspired artists such as Julian Schnabel and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

Born in Lexington, Virginia, Twombly inherited both his birth name and nickname from his father, a former Major League Baseball pitcher nicknamed after the Baseball Hall of Famer Cy Young.

At age 12, Twombly took private art lessons at Washington and Lee University. He attended the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University in 1946, then studied at the Art Students League of New York on a scholarship. In 1951, he spent a summer at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where he met a lifelong friend and fellow artist Robert Rauschenberg. In November of that year, a Chicago gallery hosted Twombly’s first solo exhibition, showcasing paintings he created at Black Mountain.

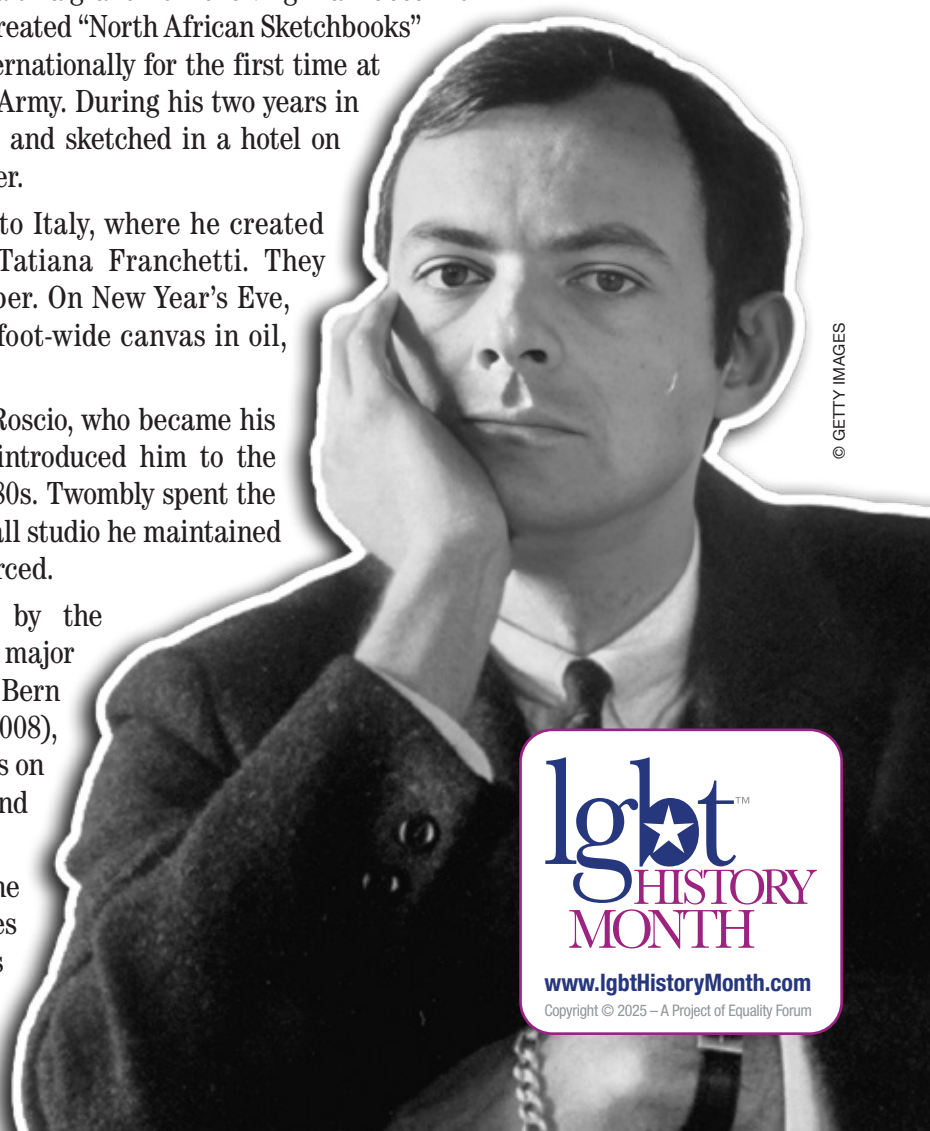
In 1952, Twombly traveled to Italy and North Africa on a grant from the Virginia Museum of Fine Art. Influenced by those cultures, Twombly created “North African Sketchbooks” in 1953. That same year, he showed his work internationally for the first time at a gallery in Rome, before being drafted into U.S. Army. During his two years in the service, Twombly worked as a cryptographer and sketched in a hotel on weekends—a period that shaped his artistic career.

Shortly after his discharge, Twombly returned to Italy, where he created “Olympia” (1957) and met the Italian artist Tatiana Franchetti. They married in April 1959 and had a son in December. On New Year’s Eve, Twombly created “The Age of Alexander,” a 16-foot-wide canvas in oil, crayon, and graphite.

In 1964, Twombly met a Roman man, Nicola Del Roscio, who became his assistant and longtime companion. Del Roscio introduced him to the Italian town of Gaeta, where he moved in the 1980s. Twombly spent the rest of his life alternating between Italy and a small studio he maintained in Lexington, Virginia. He and his wife never divorced.

Twombly’s first retrospective was presented by the Milwaukee Art Center in 1968, followed by major exhibitions at institutions such as Kunsthalle Bern (1973), Kunsthaus Zürich (1987), Tate Modern (2008), and the Art Institute of Chicago (2009). His work is on display at the Museum of Modern Art, The Tate, and other major museums worldwide.

Twombly died of cancer in Rome. A plaque in the church of Santa Maria in Vallicella commemorates him. His longtime companion, Del Roscio, serves as the president of the Cy Twombly Foundation.



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