

**Red Samurai, from Octavio Paz suite**  
**Robert Motherwell**



Date : 1987-88

Lithograph and linoleum cut in colors with chine appliqué on handmade Japanese Masa Dosa paper on Arches support.

25 1/2 x 21 1/4 in.

A.P. VII/X

Pencil signed and numbered

## **Artist bio**

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In 1940, a young painter named Robert Motherwell came to New York City and joined a group of artists — including Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko and Franz Kline — who set out to change the face of American painting. Their interest was in exploring the deeper sense of reality beyond the recognizable image. They sought to create essential images that revealed emotional truth and authenticity of feeling.

Robert Motherwell is one of the most recognized of the American Abstract Expressionist painters. In Abstract Expressionism the “act” of painting becomes the “content” of the painting. Through gestural movements the artist is attempting to unleash their raw emotions, not paint pretty pictures.

Motherwell created his first collages at Jackson Pollock’s Studio in Greenwich Village and, along with Pollock and Bazotes was invited to exhibit at the Peggy Guggenheim “Art of This Century” gallery in New York City. Their break with the traditional art conventions often provoked the harshest criticism from the establishment. His work often expressed the actions of the artist through dramatic and bright brush strokes. Valued for their energetic imagery, they attempted a pure emotional response made real in paint.

In 1961 Motherwell began making limited edition prints of his work. He was the only one of the original abstract expressionists to enthusiastically embrace printmaking. Motherwell worked with numerous print workshops in the United States and Europe. These collaborations between the Motherwell and the printmakers were a source of great satisfaction to the artist. He synthesized his unique abstract style, and the materials and technical characteristics of printmaking to create over 200 editions over the next 30 years.

Beyond his individual efforts as an artist, Motherwell played a major role in the intellectual and artistic development of the underground New York art world of the time. Like the great masters, Motherwell’s importance can be seen in his attempts at expressing something monumental. With the advent of Pop Art and its concentration on popular culture themes, the art public began to long for the idealism of the Abstract Expressionists. In relation to Andy Warhol’s soup cans, Motherwell’s large abstract paintings began to achieve a majesty in the public eye.

Though somewhat alone, Motherwell committed himself to producing highly experimental work of emotional depth for the rest of his life. On July 16, 1991, at the age of 76 he died: the last of the great Abstract Expressionists. From 1949, until the end of his life, Motherwell continued his search for a personal and political voice in abstraction. This search produced a body of work that remains a testament to the human soul and its persistence, and to the genre of abstract painting out of which it came.