

GRAY

Estate of Roger Brown



GRAY

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GRAY Announces Representation of the Estate of Roger Brown

GRAY is pleased to announce global representation of the Estate of Roger Brown (1941–1997), a pioneering artist whose vision reshaped the landscape of contemporary American art. A leading figure of the group known as the Chicago Imagists who brought bold, Surrealist sensibilities into postwar discourse, Brown forged a path that combined social observation with stylized visual language. His work, which spans the decades of the 1960s through the 1990s, offers a penetrating view of contemporary life, popular culture, and the evolving American landscape.

A seminal artist of his time, Brown was instrumental in shaping the creative dialogue that emerged around the Chicago Imagist movement while continually expanding its boundaries. Drawing inspiration from his Southern roots, the built environment, and the shifting social currents of his era, Brown developed an unmistakable visual vocabulary—graphic, theatrical, and incisively human. His practice transcended categorization, bridging the narrative and the formal, the personal and the political, and positioned him as one of the most distinctive voices in late twentieth-century art.

“Roger Brown dared to confront the complex politics of an America he cared deeply for with a sharply critical eye, but also with a grace, wit, and style that distinguishes his contribution to twentieth-century painting,” says Valerie Carberry, CEO and President of GRAY. “His powerful critique continues to resonate in our present time, and GRAY looks forward to expanding the audience for his work in new contexts and dialogues.”

Brown’s work is currently featured in two major exhibitions in the US: *Sixties Surreal* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, on view through January 19, 2026, and *City in a Garden* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, on view through May 31, 2026.

GRAY will feature works by Brown in the Kabinett sector at Art Basel Miami Beach in December 2025, and in April 2026, will present *Weathervane*, a monographic exhibition at GRAY Chicago focused on the artist’s engagement with the environment and fascination with weather systems.

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ABOUT ROGER BROWN



Roger Brown (1941-1997) was a pioneering artist and leading figure in the Chicago Imagists group whose vibrant and provocative works mine the depths of contemporary American life, popular culture, and art history with a biting sense of humor. Born in rural Alabama to a religious family who encouraged his art at an early age, Brown briefly considered becoming a minister before dedicating himself fully to art. He moved to Chicago and enrolled in the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, from which he received his BFA in 1968 and his MFA in 1970.

While studying at SAIC, he was exposed to and struck by a diverse range of art movements and styles, including Proto-Renaissance Italian art, Modernist architecture, Surrealism, American Regionalism, various indigenous art traditions, folk arts, and self-taught artists like Joseph Yoakum. Brown's SAIC instructors, Ray Yoshida and Whitney Halstead, and his cohort of fellow Chicago Imagists were also incredibly influential as he began to shape his singular aesthetic. Unfolding across painting, drawing, theater set design, sculpture, and object collection throughout the following three decades of his career, Brown's practice explored recurring themes such as urban and suburban isolation, social alienation, weather patterns and natural disasters, humanity versus nature, and global politics, all while always maintaining a signature wry sense of humor.

Deeply attentive to the contradictions and absurdities of American life and in particular as viewed from his perspective as a queer man from the South, Brown fearlessly reshaped the boundaries of visual culture and worked fastidiously until his death from AIDS complications at the age of 55.

Brown's work has been the subject of monographic exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Illinois; Museum of Arts and Design, New York; Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; and the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, United Kingdom. Additionally, he has been featured in group shows at Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy; Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; MoMA PS1, New York; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.

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His work is held in numerous institutional collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, and Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; Art Institute of Chicago and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts;

National Gallery of Art, and The National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands; Scottish National Gallery of Art, Edinburgh, United Kingdom; and the Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna, Austria.

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Cover Image: Roger Brown, *Cattails and Cardinal Flowers (detail)*, 1980.

Portrait: Roger Brown seated in living room, 1976. Photo: William H. Bengston. Courtesy of the Roger Brown Study Collection at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center. Gift of Kohler Foundation, Inc.