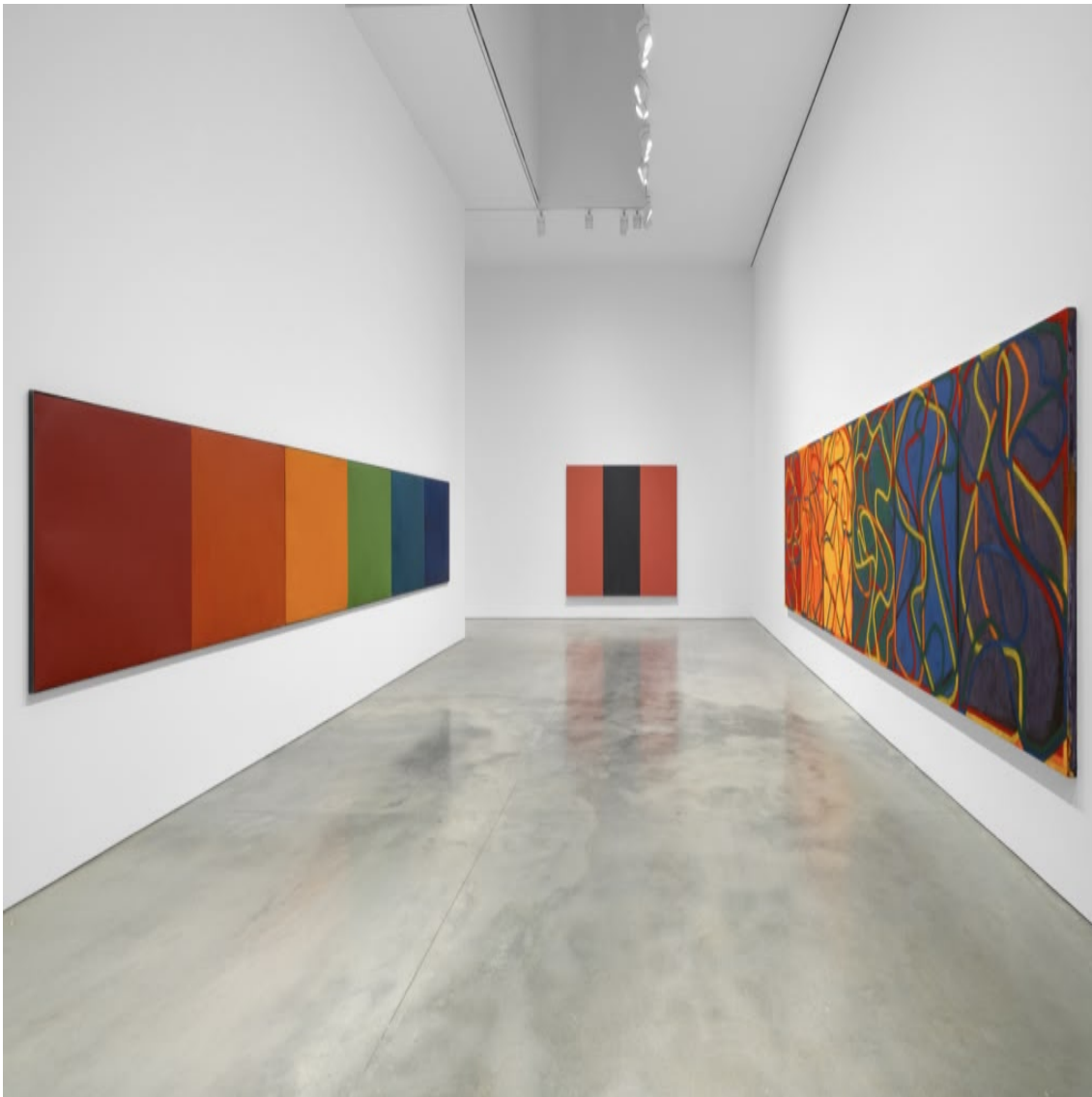


The Art Detective

Will Gagosian's Brice Marden Blockbuster Send His Market Soaring Again?

Museum loans and never-before-seen paintings have landed in Chelsea. Only one man knows what's for sale.



Brice Marden, installation of "I am Plane Image" exhibition at Gagosian. © 2026 Estate of Brice Marden/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York Courtesy the Estate of Brice Marden, New York. Photo: Owen Conway.

by **Katya Kazakina**

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Art advisor **Erica Barrish** had been asking her contact at **Gagosian** for information about its new **Brice Marden** exhibition for three months. Then on Monday, one day before the show's opening in Chelsea, the late painter's newly published catalogue raisonné arrived from the gallery, with a Post-it note attached.

"Let's talk," it read.

The anecdote seems to sum up Gagosian's strategy for bridging the divide between Marden's towering artistic legacy and his struggling market. Don't send out PDFs and JPEGs. Send out a lavish catalogue raisonné that lists 492 paintings (fewer than **Basquiat** made during his brief career). Get collectors into the gallery. Show them six decades of Marden at his best. Make them fall in love with the work for the first time—or all over again.



Brice Marden, installation view of "I Am a Plane Image" show. © 2026 Estate of Brice Marden/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy the Estate of Brice Marden, New York. Photo: Owen Conway.

Marden's first posthumous exhibition, "I Am a Plane Image," arrives three years after his death at 84. Organized in conjunction with the artist's estate, managed by his two adult daughters, **Mirabelle** and **Melia**, the exhibition celebrates the legacy of a revered American painter with 31 paintings that span his career.

It includes loans from the **Whitney Museum of American Art**, the **Guggenheim**, the **Art Institute of Chicago**, and the **Virginia Museum of Fine Arts** in Richmond, as well as from billionaire **Steven Tananbaum**, a trustee of the **Museum of Modern Art**, where the artist had a 2006 retrospective. Marden's widow, artist **Helen**

Marden loaned three paintings. The works that aren't designated in any way come from the artist's estate, a salesperson told me.

"There isn't a bad picture in that exhibition," Barrish said. "Some of the best examples are just coming out now."

Brice Marden



Catalogue raisonné of Brice Marden. Courtesy: Gagosian

The material is tightly controlled. There is no price list. Interested parties are expected to reach out with a query about specific works, after seeing them in person. Discussions may ensue. Patience is recommended.

How many works are available for sale? How much are they? Only **Larry Gagosian** knows, according to salespeople and advisors.

Barrish, who's been involved in the Marden market for 20 years, doesn't mind the lack of transparency.

"That's how you handle a masterpiece," she told me by phone on Thursday. "Control the market, have conversations, talk to really select collectors and advisors to strategically place work. Handle it with white gloves."



Brice Marden, installation view of "I Am Plane Image" show. © 2026 Estate of Brice Marden/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy the Estate of Brice Marden, New York. Photo: Owen Conway.

The show arrives at a delicate moment for Marden's market. His annual auction sales dwindled to just \$1.23 million last year from a high of \$37.6 million in 2022, according to the **Artnet Price Database**.

Market malaise be damned, there was plenty of excitement around Marden this week. Gagosian's opening on Tuesday was a mob scene of luminaries. Top New York collectors **Linda Macklowe**, **Glenn Fuhrman**, and **Tom Hill** rubbed shoulders with esteemed critics **Roberta Smith** and **Jerry Saltz** and artists **Stanley Whitney** and **Julian Schnabel**. **Glenn Lowry**, the former director of MoMA, made the rounds, as did **Donna De Salvo**, veteran curator of Dia and formerly of the Whitney. Art dealer **Mary Boone**, in a black dress with white polka dots, observed the crowd from the sidelines before ducking into a giant black SUV headed to the post-opening dinner at **Balthazar** in SoHo.

The paintings are breathtaking.

First come the early monochromes of the 1960s, whose smooth, sensual encaustic surfaces resemble ancient stone walls. The geometry in multi-panel paintings from the 1970s evokes the arches of Greek temples or the palette of a summer table by the sea (for many years, the artist lived part-time on the Greek island of Hydra, where donkeys are the main method of transportation). In the 1980s he expanded his refined painting plane to incorporate calligraphic shapes, sometimes on a heroic scale.

The tension between the picture plane and the image in painting remained Marden's preoccupation until the end of his life, as evidenced by two exquisite late paintings—*Lingerie* and *Ridge*—completed in 2023, the year Marden died of cancer. (His Instagram handle was @planeimage.)



Brice Marden with an early work. Photo courtesy of Gagosian.

The show “makes a very compelling argument for Brice Marden being one of the most important artists of the 20th century,” Barrish said.

There are discoveries even for Marden diehards like Barrish. *Lingerie*, an all-over composition of spidery grey lines on a pale-pink surface, took her breath away. “I nearly had chills up and down my spine,” she said. “I don’t remember that palette. It was so hopeful, so optimistic.”

Other works are more familiar. Advisors pointed out that *Santorini 1* (2010–18) appeared at Gagosian’s booth at **Art Basel** in June, with an asking price of \$8 million.

Most of the vertical canvas depicts a dense network of calligraphic lines in dark red and pink, while a narrower lower band of monochrome grey is interrupted with red drips.

Another painting, *Event* (2004–07), was last seen at **Christie's** in 2024. Consigned anonymously, the work was estimated at \$30 million to \$50 million. At the time, I broke the news that the seller was British collector **Richard Schlagman**, who bought the painting in 2007 from **Thomas Ammann Fine Art**, which had acquired it directly from the artist at an unspecified date.

Christie's guaranteed the work but—shocker!—it was withdrawn shortly before the sale. This week, a representative for the auction house declined to say what happened to it afterward. The provenance in the catalogue raisonné contains a tantalizing new line: another private collection. In other words, *Event* appears to have changed hands. To whom—and at what price—remains a mystery.



Brice Marden, installation view of “I Am Plane Image” show at Gagosian, with *Lingerie* (2022-23), left, and *Ridge* (2022-23), next to it. © 2026 Estate of Brice Marden/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Courtesy the Estate of Brice Marden, New York. Photo: Owen Conway.

Event belongs to Marden's six-work “Propitious Garden of Plane Image” group. Its most monumental works are two six-panel paintings, each stretching 24 feet across. When the pair appeared, fresh from Marden's studio, in his MoMA show, curator **Gary Garrels** described them as the show's “grand finale.”

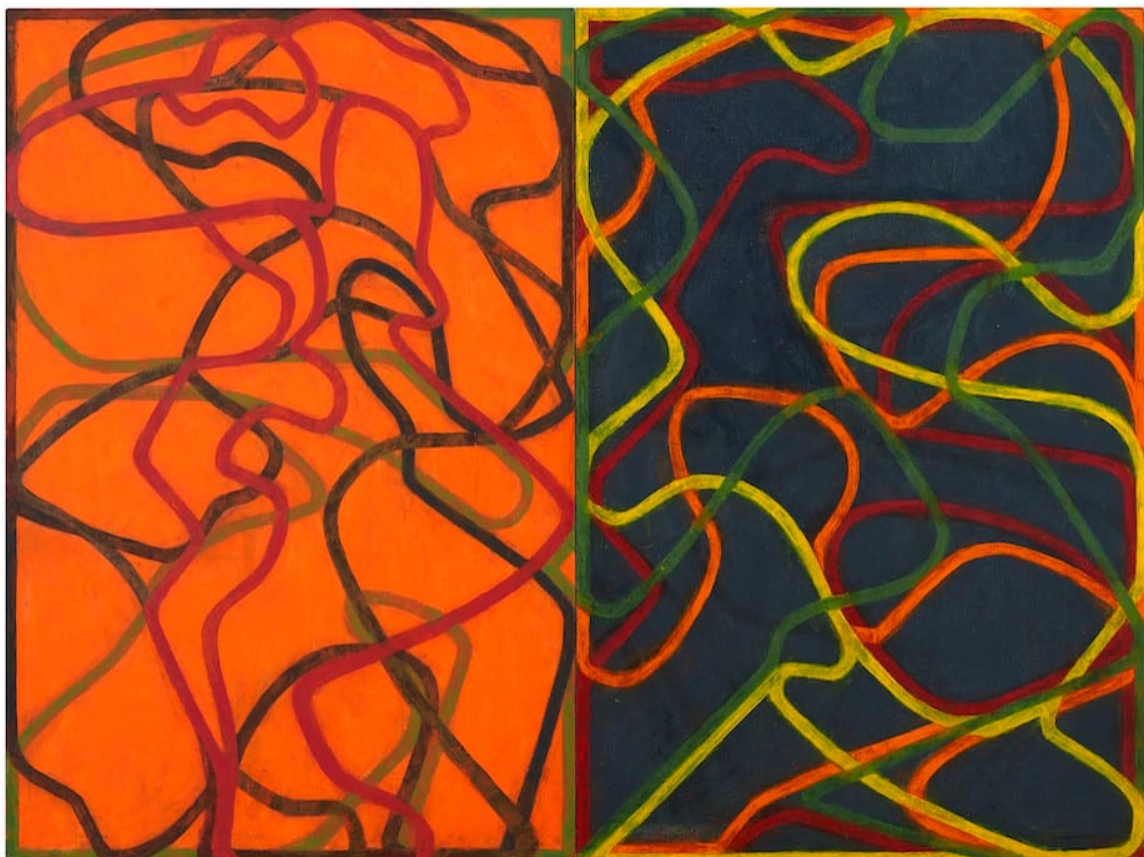
MoMA owns *The Propitious Garden of Plane Image, Third Version* (2000–06), a gift of financier **Don Marron** and his wife, **Catherine**.

The *Second Version* (2000–06) is on a wall at Gagosian’s gallery on West 21st Street. It’s a showstopper if ever there was one. The plane and the figure come together in a mesmerizing dance of color and gesture. Each of the six panels has a monochrome ground—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet—with looping lines of the same colors moving according to a system Marden devised and then reversed between the two paintings. It comes from Marden’s estate and, potentially, could be for sale. The correct price is anyone’s guess.

Since the pandemic, Marden’s auction market “went really haywire and then it retracted,” Barrish said.

In 2020, Marden’s painting *Complements* (2004–07) fetched \$30.9 million at Christie’s, still the artist’s auction record. But even that result came with a caveat: The work hammered below its low estimate on a lone bid from its third-party guarantor.

“Brice got hit in a crossfire” of bad timing and the backlash against white male abstraction, Barrish said.



Brice Marden, *Complements* (2004-2007). Image courtesy Christie’s

“Larry is not at all oblivious to that,” said a person familiar with the dealer’s thinking. “He’s a buyer as much as he’s a seller. He doesn’t want to buy anything overpriced.”

Another advisor said that the market is waiting for new information on pricing from the Gagosian show. Without this, “it’s still going to leave everybody as confused as before as to how you should price Brice Marden when it comes up,” the person said.

For Barrish, the show’s superb quality, ambitious scope, and the accompanying catalogue raisonné are the best defense of Marden’s market.

“The way that Larry has handled **Cy Twombly** in the past, where it’s been very precious, the way that he’s handled some of his **Picasso** shows and the **Jasper Johns** show that he did uptown, I think that’s what he did with Brice now,” Barrish said. “I hope to visit these paintings once every week until the show closes.”

Link to article online: <https://news.artnet.com/market/brice-marden-gagosian-market-2026-2810159>