

Tilton Gallery presents
EDWARD CLARK: BIG BANG
January 14 – February 22, 2014
Reception: Tuesday, January 14, 6-8PM



Tilton Gallery is pleased to present *Big Bang*, a retrospective exhibition of paintings by Edward Clark, accompanied by works by three of Clark's many lifelong friends, Joan Mitchell, Yayoi Kusama and Donald Judd. Curated by David Hammons, the show will take place from January 14 - February 22, 2014. An opening reception will be held on Tuesday, January 14th from 6 – 8 pm.

The title of the exhibition, *Big Bang*, says it all. Ed Clark's paintings are about impact, the explosion of energy, light and color. One of the early Abstract Expressionist painters who participated in the Tenth Street art scene, went to the Cedar Bar and was one of the founding members and exhibitors at the Brata Gallery, Clark's work is about movement and the expressive gesture.

In New York in the fifties, back from five years in Paris where he met all the great European artists of the time and knew all the American expats, Clark developed a process more in tune with the New York School, one that he continues to employ to this day. Clark paints on the floor, pouring acrylic paint onto his large canvases, letting gravity play its part. After trying to use wider and wider brushes, Clark began using brooms to push the paint around the canvas to achieve the grand sweeps of color that are his hallmark. What he calls the push broom technique of painting allows him to put the energy of body and movement into each stroke. Often referred to as a color field painter – and color, hue and light play a huge role in his work – Clark's work has more to do with that of the "Action Painters" of the New York School. It is the energy of his stroke that gives his paintings their strength and dynamism, their life and substance.

Born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1926, Clark's family soon moved to Chicago. After serving in World War II, Clark studied under Louis Ritman at the Art Institute of Chicago (1947-51) and then under Edouard Goerg at L'Academie de la Grande Chaumiere (1952), both under the GI Bill. He remained in Paris till 1956 and continued to return to Paris frequently, spending fifteen months with Joan Mitchell in Vetheuil in 1968-69. Clark knew the work of the great French abstract painters Jean Paul Riopelle, Georges Mathieu and Pierre Soulages. However Clark claims one of his greatest influences early in the fifties was Nicolas de Stael, whose flat swaths of color impressed him greatly. Clark also began painting in daylight, under studio skylights, when in Paris, something that remains crucial to his working methods. He has traveled the world to experience the effects of different types of light on his use of color. He still works in a studio in Manhattan filled with natural light and paints only during the day, stating emphatically that he'd never begin a painting after nightfall.

As an Africa American, Clark found Paris in the fifties to be relatively free of racism and felt able to first and foremost be seen as an artist. Back in the States, Clark is credited as being one of the most prominent African American Abstract Expressionists, and is also acclaimed as the first artist to create a shaped canvas (1956, exhibited late 1957). Clark knew them all, from de Kooning, Gottlieb and Norman Lewis to Al Held, George Sugarman and Jack Whitten, Ellsworth Kelly and Donald Judd. Yet Clark, now age eighty-seven, still deserves more widespread recognition. This is his first exhibition in New York since 2006.

Clark's work is in numerous museum collections, including those of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Detroit Art Institute, the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York and the John & Mable Ringling Museum, Sarasota, Florida. He exhibited at the Galerie Creuze in Paris, the Brata Gallery and Just Above Midtown Gallery in New York among others. He has been included in group exhibitions world wide and was given a retrospective at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1980 that traveled to New Orleans and Greensboro, North Carolina. He was also included in their *Explorations in the City of Light: African Americans in Paris 1945-1965* in 1996-97. He exhibited at the *Salon d'Automne*, Paris in 1952, the Whitney Biennial in 1973, the Hirschhorn Museum, Washington, D.C. in 1976 and again at the Whitney in *Beat Culture and the New America, 1950-1965* in 1995 that traveled to the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis in 1997. At Tilton Gallery, Clark was included in *No Greater Love: Abstraction* in 2002. His work was recently on exhibit in *Blues for Smoke* at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio (2013), on tour from the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Clark has received many awards, including the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award in 1998, and a National Endowment for the Arts grant for painting in 1972, and, most recently, the Legends and Legacy Award from the Art Institute of Chicago in 2013.

The Tilton Gallery is located at 8 East 76th Street, between Madison and Fifth Avenues. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday 10 – 6 and Monday by appointment. For more information, please visit our Web site at www.jacktiltongallery.com or call 212-737-2221.