

RED

26 February—24 April 2026



Robert Motherwell, *Untitled (Open Red)*, 1970

ORDOVAS

“If we touched it with the tip of a finger, it would feel like somewhere between iron and copper. If we took it into our palm, it would burn. If we tasted it, it would be full-bodied, like salted meat. If we took it between our lips, it would fill our mouths. If we smelled it, it would have the scent of a horse. If it were a flower, it would smell like a daisy, not a red rose.”

From *My Name is Red* by Ohan Pamuk (b. 1952), an excerpt of which is published in the exhibition catalogue.

From 26 February to 24 April 2026, Ordovas presents *Red*, an exhibition exploring one of the most symbolic colours in the history of art, and how it has been used in the work of significant artists from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The exhibition features works by a diverse and international group of artists including modern masters such as Joan Miró, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Motherwell and Lygia Pape, alongside contemporary artists including Bridget Riley, Cecily Brown, Eric Fischl and Sam Moyer who has created a new work specifically for the show. *Red* is the latest in a series of exhibitions held over recent years exploring the use of a single colour; previous editions were dedicated to white in 2017, blue in 2020 and gold in 2024.

Red is amongst the most powerful and vibrant colours in the history of art, representing a range of emotions from love and romance to power, danger and dominance. Its importance transcends time and cultural boundaries: one of the earliest pigments used by humans, red ochre from the earth is found in prehistoric cave paintings, linking the colour to humanity's earliest efforts at visual expression.

In ancient cultures, red carried both sacred and social weight: Egyptians used it to represent life and victory, while in China it became a symbol of luck, prosperity, and celebration. In Renaissance art, red drew attention to the most important figures in a painting, while modern and contemporary art movements have employed the colour for its expressive power and ability to convey raw emotion and intensity.

The earliest work in the exhibition is *Peinture (Les amants – Adam et Eve)* by **Joan Miró** (1893–1983). It was painted in Paris in 1925, a pivotal year for the artist and a seminal moment in the development of modern art; during this year, Miró's work was subject of a solo show at Galerie Pierre, Paris, before also featuring prominently in the inaugural Surrealist exhibition. Inspired through his friendships with surrealist poets including André Breton, Paul Éluard, and Robert Desnos, he was developing a style of automatic painting creating dreamlike forms which originate in the subconscious. These 'Dream paintings' often give a sense of space and are punctuated with bold colours, including vivid red, as in this work.

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GALLERY HOURS

Tue-Fri: 10:00-18:00
Sat: 11:00-15:00

Study for Three Color Panels by **Ellsworth Kelly** (1923–2015) was painted in 1953, a crucial period for the artist when he was living in Paris and absorbing the influence of its vibrant art scene, most notably from Constantin Brancusi, and his friend Jean Arp. During this time, Kelly explored relationships of colour and form through collages made from *papier gommé*, brightly hued and coated papers used by French schoolchildren for arts and crafts. Other similar examples from this year are now in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

A sculpture by the Brazilian modernist **Lygia Pape** (1927–2004) was made in 1965 from latex paint and acrylic on wood. *Untitled* is from the celebrated series 'Livro do Tempo (Book of Time)'; this originated in 1961-63 with the creation of an installation of 365 unique wooden tiles, each representing an unassigned day in the calendar year, and each painted in primary colours, turning time into a physical and sensory experience. The present example is from the second series which consisted of larger-scale works. *Untitled (Red Open)*, 1970, is a rarely seen work by the seminal Abstract-Expressionist painter **Robert Motherwell** (1915–1991) which is shown in the UK for the first time. An exemplary large canvas from the artist's 'Open' series which he began in 1967, it features a large plain of red punctuated by the outline of a blue outlined 'window'. This was a theme which fascinated the artist, heavily influenced by Henri Matisse's highly abstracted *Porte-fenêtre à Collioure*, 1914, and *View of Notre-Dame*, 1914, which he had seen at The Museum of Modern Art's 1966 retrospective of the French artist.

Works by living and contemporary artists include *Untitled* by the German abstract artist **Albert Oehlen** (b. 1954) which was executed in 1986, shortly after he had travelled to Brazil with his compatriot Martin Kippenberger. A student of Sigmar Polke, the artist's colourful and chaotic works push the boundaries of abstraction. *Rose Red*, 2012, is a large-scale canvas from the 'Stripe' series by **Bridget Riley** (b.1931), whose masterful use of pattern and colour creates a visual rhythm, and a sense of movement and depth. The horizontal stripes in this example evoke

the feeling of a landscape. *Red Hat, Red Shirt, Red Car: Storm's Coming*, 2025, is from a recent body of work by **Eric Fischl** (b. 1948), one of the most influential figurative painters working today. Painted in a dramatic and cinematic style, it is an atmospheric and highly charged depiction of two ladies and their car set against a brooding, stormy landscape. *The 5 Senses (red)*, 2025, a 5 colour silkscreen by **Cecily Brown** (b. 1969), is from a series which presented the artist's mediations on the five senses, and which was inspired by a group of allegorical paintings by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, now in the Prado Museum, Madrid.

Icarus in the Sunlight, 2024, is a powder coated steel sculpture by the conceptual American artist **Hank Willis Thomas** (b. 1976), whose work investigates themes related to mass media, popular culture and identity. In this work, the artist uses the figure of *Icarus* which featured in Henri Matisse's celebrated *Jazz* portfolio, and which had been inspired by the musical genius of Black artists during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s; it is shown together with a silhouette of a figure by the American painter Aaron Douglas, a key figure of the movement. *King Crimson, or, The Great Pretender. Hippolyte of Gonaives, pretender to the throne of Hispaniola, currently a hostage in Berlin waiting for his time in an uncertain sun. 1798.*, 2024, is a portrait by Chicago-born artist **Umar Rashid**, also known as '**Frohawk Two Feathers**', (b. 1976). His work reexamines European imperialism and explores alternative versions of post-colonial perspectives drawing on a wide range of historical influences, from Native American ledger drawings and Mughal miniatures to Egyptian hieroglyphs and African sculpture. The most recent work in the exhibition is a newly created marble painting by **Sam Moyer** (b. 1983). The Brooklyn-based artist's work features three red-hued stones from Italy and Spain, set against a checkered background that mimics the teetering balance between the fragility and weight of the work's materials. Moyer was recently the subject of a high-profile exhibition at the Hill Art Foundation in New York and will have a major institutional solo show in the US in 2027.

ENQUIRIES

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