

Gagosian Presents Exhibition of New and Recent Paintings by Stanley Whitney in Athens

Return to the Garden Opens October 2



Stanley Whitney, *The Courage of the Poet*, 2025, oil on linen, 60 × 60 inches (152.4 × 152.4 cm) © Stanley Whitney.
Photo: Owen Conway

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ATHENS, September 16, 2025—Gagosian is pleased to present *Return to the Garden*, an exhibition of new and recent paintings by Stanley Whitney, opening at the Athens gallery on October 2, 2025. This is Whitney's first exhibition in Greece since his participation in Documenta 14 in 2017.

The exhibition's title, *Return to the Garden*, evokes themes of arcadian innocence and harmony with nature. Unencumbered by preconceived subjects or narrative elements, these vibrant abstractions offer viewers the opportunity to engage with a heightened awareness of color and perception.

Whitney asserts the power of color through loose grids of roughly rectangular shapes, creating compositions of three or four rows separated by horizontal bands that traverse the canvas. Characterized by active brushwork, layered pigment, and jostling borders, each field is defined in relation to its neighbors and to each painting as a whole. In some works, he repeats variations of the same hues either between multiple blocks or extended across their lateral bands, establishing myriad formal connections and contrasts.

By sustaining this format, Whitney has developed a compositional framework from which to produce individual canvases full of unexpected, energetic harmonies between vivid colors and fluid gestures.

Influenced by traditions including Abstract Expressionism and quiltmaking, his paintings additionally parallel the polyphonies and syncopation of jazz, forming compelling expressions of creativity and freedom.

Whitney also admires ancient Greek vase painting, particularly of the preclassical Geometric and Archaic eras (c. 900–500 BCE). Painted by hand and divided into banded registers, the abstract linear patterns of these early vases underly the compositions of later, more figurative styles. In looking to such ancient sources when developing his stacked compositions, Whitney draws upon an interest in archaic forms that similarly motivated both the Abstract Expressionists and earlier modernists.

In another connection with Mediterranean antiquity, the title of the *Roma* series (2017–) speaks to the inspiration Whitney found in Rome, where he lived and worked for five years in the 1990s. It was then that he consolidated the approach to abstraction that he continues to explore, a method sparked in part by the ancient architecture and murals that he encountered there and in Egypt. Unlike the straight lines of modern construction, the weathered, hand-built structures of the ancient world possess irregular contours and surfaces that correspond with the gestural demarcations of Whitney's paintings.

Other works featured in *Return to the Garden* include new paintings from the ongoing *Stay Song* series (2017–), which Whitney debuted in Athens for Documenta 14, as well as the *Monk & Munch* paintings (2020–). In these rectangular canvases, he pays homage to jazz pianist and composer Thelonious Monk and expressionist painter Edvard Munch, highlighting essential relationships between art and music.

For Stanley Whitney's biographical information and exhibition history, [please visit gagosian.com](https://www.gagosian.com).

#StanleyWhitney

STANLEY WHITNEY

Return to the Garden

Opening reception: Thursday, October 2, 6–8pm

October 2, 2025–January 17, 2026

22 Anapiron Polemou Street, Athens

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