



Jasper Johns: Catenary

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After completing the installation of his 1996 retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art, Jasper Johns retreated to his studio in Connecticut to wipe the slate clean, beginning a body of work that was a dramatic departure from anything he had made before. The first painting in this new series included a string hanging from upper right to lower left, generating a curve called a "catenary," and this curve became the compositional backbone of the entire series. Johns produced a total of 61 paintings, drawings, and prints based on the catenary theme. The work is saturated with autobiographical references, both transparent and opaque, while it simultaneously encourages multiple layers of meaning. Sensual surfaces, fragile constructions, and formal rigor meet allusions to key moments in the history of modern art and motifs from Johns's earlier work. The poetry of Johns's catenary series is explored in an illustrated essay by the young scholar Scott Rothkopf in a catalogue published alongside the exhibition by steidl/mm. The publication reproduces all the works in the entire series.

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