

MODERN ART AND IDEAS 7
1950–1969

A Guide for Educators

Department of Education at The Museum of Modern Art

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM AND POP ART

Artists included in this guide:

Helen Frankenthaler, Richard Hamilton, Jasper Johns, Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, Roy Lichtenstein, Charles Moore, Barnett Newman, Claes Oldenburg, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Mark Rothko, and Andy Warhol.

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A NOTE TO EDUCATORS

This is the seventh volume in the Modern Art and Ideas series for educators, which explores the history of modern art through The Museum of Modern Art's rich collection. While traditional art historical categories are the organizing principle of the series, these parameters are used primarily as a means of exploring artistic developments and movements in conjunction with their social and historical context, with attention to the contribution of specific artists.

The guide is informed by issues posed by the selected works in a variety of mediums (painting, sculpture, prints, photography), but its organization and lesson topics are created with the school curriculum in mind, with particular application to social studies, visual art, history, and language arts. Lessons are accompanied by writing, research, and hands-on, art-based activities that encourage students to make connections between the visual arts and other disciplines.

The guide's purpose is not just to explicate works of art but also to demonstrate how images and historical information can be integrated into numerous subject areas and skill bases taught in the classroom. Students will be introduced to significant ideas in art and culture. By comparing a variety of mediums and artistic styles, students will be able to practice observation, articulation, and discussion skills, and to further develop their visual literacy.

The Modern Art and Ideas series was devised with the understanding that the history of modern art is not simply a progression of hermetic styles; rather, a complex matrix of intellectual, social, and historical factors have contributed to the creation of art. Modern art is not solely the product of artists who seek to overthrow convention at all cost. A work of art may be understood through a variety of approaches and offers multiple ways of understanding the historical moment in which it was made as well as the individual who created it.

USING THE EDUCATORS GUIDE

The five lessons that comprise this guide—*Revolutions in Painting*, *Color and Environment*, *Transforming Everyday Objects*, *Art and Politics*, and *Artist’s Choice: People*—may be used sequentially or as independent units. An introduction to the key principles of each lesson is followed by a close examination of the works, including historical context and information on the artist. Discussion questions based on the images lead students through formal analysis of the artworks and seek to create connections between information and visual evidence. The activities that conclude each lesson encourage students to synthesize what they have learned about the works, and carry the lessons into the broader curriculum or relate it to skills students are practicing in the classroom.

IMAGES

All of the questions, discussions, and activities in this guide are based on the accompanying CD-ROM. Please examine the images carefully before showing them to your students. Your classroom should be equipped with a computer and LCD projector. You may also print images from the CD-ROM to transparency paper for overhead projection.

ACTIVITIES

The Activities sections encourage students to make connections between their own experiences and the concepts presented in the lessons. Through these activities, students will begin to develop a language for discussing art. Feel free to tailor the activities to the age level of your students.

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION AND SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES

Additional discussion questions and research projects are included in this section. A bibliography and resources section has also been provided for teachers and students to use in conducting research. The resources recommended in these pages provide further information on the artists and artworks in this guide, general historical topics, and additional classroom activities.

GLOSSARY

A glossary of terms (bolded upon first mention in each lesson) is included at the end of the guide.

SETTING THE SCENE



IMAGE ONE: Franz Kline. American, 1910–1962. *Chief*. 1950. Oil on canvas, 58 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 6'1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (148.3 x 186.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David M. Solinger. © 2007 The Franz Kline Estate/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



IMAGE TWO: James Rosenquist. American, born 1933. *F-111*. 1964–65. Oil on canvas with aluminum, twenty-three sections, 10 x 86' (304.8 x 2,621.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alex L. Hillman and Lillie P. Bliss Bequest (both by exchange)

1950s

In the years following World War II, the United States enjoyed an unprecedented period of economic and political growth. Many middle class Americans moved to the suburbs, spurred by the availability of inexpensive, mass-produced homes. Elvis Presley led the emergence of rock and roll and television replaced radio as the dominant media outlet.

Many artists and intellectuals had emigrated in the years during and after the war from Europe to the United States, bringing with them their own traditions and ideas. It is in this climate that a group of artists that came to be known as the Abstract Expressionists came of age. These artists, including Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko, created diverse bodies of work. They explored new ways of painting, reinvigorating and reinventing the medium. They sought to express emotions, individual feelings, and personal experiences in their work. They were considered to signify or embody a distinctly “American” element of space, confidence, and creativity.

Franz Kline, another such artist who worked in New York City in the 1950s, was known for his large paintings with bold lines that exude a sense of movement and energy.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Begin by asking your students to define “painting.” Ask them what kinds of paintings they have created. Have them spend a few minutes writing down some of the choices artists make when they paint. They may come up with ideas such as **style**, **technique**, **setting**, **material**, **subject**, and use of **color**. Ask them to share their ideas with the class.

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

Franz Kline, *Chief*, 1950 (Image One)

- Ask students to spend some time looking at this image and then to describe what they see. Ask them to pay particular attention to the lines. How might they describe these lines?

- **Ask students to consider what choices Kline is making with regard to painting.**

In this painting, Kline used commercial paint and housepainter’s brushes to create thick black lines on a white background. Kline’s painting has been described as looking like tar smeared on slabs of concrete or steel girders twisted around canvas. It is evocative of shapes and structures found in the city, such as bridges, buildings, tunnels, engines, and roads.

- **Ask students if they agree with this description. Why or why not?**

It may look like Kline created this painting quickly. Actually, he took a long time to make his work. Before he painted, he often created drawings, which he then projected onto a wall. He got this idea from his friend, the artist Willem de Kooning, whom we will discuss later in this guide. He found that the drawn lines, when magnified, became more forceful and abstract. Thus, many of his painted canvases reproduce a drawing on a much larger scale, combining the improvised and the deliberate, the miniature and the monumental.

- **Give students one minute to create a small pencil drawing. Ask them to think about what parts of their drawing they would turn into a painting. Why? What is it about their lines that would look interesting or compelling?**
- **The name of this painting is *Chief*. Kline loved trains as a child, and “Chief” is the name of a locomotive he remembered. Ask students if this reminds them of a train. Why or why not?**
- **Ask students to define positive and negative space. What positive and negative spaces do they see in *Chief*?**
- **Kline said, “I paint the white as well as the black, and the white is just as important.”¹ Ask students to reflect upon this statement. What do they think it means? Why is the white as important as the black?**

During the 1950s, painters such as Jackson Pollock and Helen Frankenthaler also created large-scale abstract paintings. Lesson One of this guide will examine how Pollock and Frankenthaler created their work.

1960s

The growing political and economic stability in the United States in the 1950s led to experimentation and the rethinking of the social order in the 1960s. This so-called “cultural revolution” promoted antiauthoritarian education, women’s liberation, new career structures, and an increased climate of intellectual and sexual freedom. The Vietnam War incited mass protests and the Civil Rights Movement sought equality for African-Americans.

1. Franz Kline, quoted in *MoMA Highlights: 350 Works from The Museum of Modern Art*, rev. ed. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2004), p. 205.

In this climate, a new generation of artists rejected some of the ideas of the Abstract Expressionists and began to represent items from consumer culture and everyday life. Whereas the Abstract Expressionists were interested in abstraction and in representing emotional states, Pop artists favored realism and impersonal expression.

Artists such as Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein wanted to connect traditions of fine art with the images of popular culture offered through television, advertising, and film. As Warhol stated, “Pop artists did images that anyone walking down the street would recognize in a split second—comics, picnic tables, men’s pants, celebrities, refrigerators, Coke bottles.”² Artists made collages, prints, paintings, sculptures, and drawings. Their subjects were diverse, including representations of celebrities, political events, and consumer products. In contrast to the work done by artists in the 1950s, much of Pop imagery combines the painterly and photographic as well as the handmade and the readymade.

The American artist James Rosenquist was working in this time of turbulence, experimentation, and consumerism. His work responds to popular imagery, advertising, and politics.

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

James Rosenquist, *F-111*, 1964–65 (Image Two)

- Show students this work. Include details of the many different panels. Ask students to work in pairs and to pick one panel to observe closely. Ask them to look carefully and then write down their observations about that panel. Ask them to back up their ideas with evidence from the painting. Have them share their observations with the rest of the class. Ask them how the various parts contribute to an understanding of the entire piece.
- Tell students the title of this work is *F-111*, which is the name of an American bomber plane that was being planned when this painting was created. Although this plane was designed for war, Rosenquist felt that the mission of the F-111 should be economic, rather than military, designed to provide jobs to Americans.³
- Ask students to compare and contrast some of the images they see in this large work. Ask them to consider why Rosenquist might have juxtaposed images of war with emblems of entertainment and leisure. Ask students to discuss how Rosenquist addresses the Vietnam War and the politics of the time. Where does he draw his inspiration from? What do the students think his message or messages might be?

2. Andy Warhol, quoted in *Popism* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1980), p. 3.

3. Kirk Varnedoe, *High and Low: Modern Art Popular Culture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1990), pp. 365–67.

Before he created this painting, Rosenquist worked as a billboard painter in New York City. This work influenced the style, scale, and content of his paintings. He designed *F-111* to have twenty-three panels, which wrap around all four walls of a gallery, surrounding the viewer. The entire work measures 10 feet high by 86 feet long.

The artist was inspired by Claude Monet's Water Lilies paintings, Jackson Pollock's large paintings, and Barnett Newman's colorful paintings (see www.moma.org/collection). Pollock's and Newman's work will be discussed later in this guide.

- **Ask students to imagine standing in the middle of a room surrounded by *F-111*. How would this experience be different from viewing the work in reproduction?**

The years following World War II brought about many changes in American life. The artists included in this guide represent two major trajectories at this time. The first is the idea of freedom, space, and personal expression, as shown by the large, expansive, painterly work of the Abstract Expressionists. The other is a celebration of material culture, commercialism, and the everyday, as represented by Pop artists.

LESSONS

LESSON ONE: Revolutions in Painting



IMAGE THREE: Jackson Pollock. American, 1912–1956. *One (Number 31, 1950)*. 1950. Oil and enamel on unprimed canvas, 8' 10" x 17' 5½" (269.5 x 530.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection Fund (by exchange). © 2007 Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



IMAGE FOUR: Helen Frankenthaler. American, born 1928. *Jacob's Ladder*. 1957. Oil on unprimed canvas, 9' 5½" x 69⅞" (287.9 x 177.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Hyman N. Glickstein

INTRODUCTION

Jackson Pollock and Helen Frankenthaler were part of a group of artists known as the **Abstract Expressionists**. They changed the nature of painting with their large, abstract canvases, energetic and gestural lines, and new artistic processes.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will consider the choices artists make with regard to painting. They will focus on **line, material, scale, and the artistic process.**
- Students will learn how to discuss, compare, and think critically about nonrepresentational, or **abstract, paintings.**
- Students will think about the use of **line** in painting.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Ask your students to return to their definition of painting from the Setting the Scene section of this guide. Ask them what kinds of paintings they have created. Have them spend a few minutes considering and writing down some of the choices artists make when they paint. They may come up with ideas such as **technique, style, scale, material, and subject.**
- Ask students to define line. Ask them to look around the room and name the different kinds of lines they see. They may come up with ideas such as **curvy, straight, dotted, thick, thin, sinewy, or continuous.**
- Ask students to define the word abstract. Return to this definition as you proceed throughout the lesson.

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

Jackson Pollock, *One (Number 31, 1950)*, 1950 (Image Three)

Helen Frankenthaler, *Jacob's Ladder*, 1957 (Image Four)

- Show students Pollock's painting *One (Number 31, 1950)*. Ask them to spend time looking carefully at this work. Have them write a list of words that describe this work. Ask them to include nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.
- Now show students Frankenthaler's work *Jacob's Ladder*. Ask them to write down words that describe this work. They should include nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.
- Ask students to compare and contrast these two works of art, using some of the words from their list. What is similar about these works? What is different?
- Ask students to discuss how these artists use line. What different lines can they see? How might they describe these lines? Can they tell which lines were placed on the canvas first? How?

Pollock and Frankenthaler were both artists working in the 1950s. They both experimented with line, scale, and paint. In doing so, they created a new way of painting.

Pollock broke with the conventions of painting by taking the canvas from its traditional easel and placing it on the floor. He then worked around the canvas, dripping, splashing, flinging, and smearing paint. He put holes in the bottom of paint cans, squeezed paint from a tube, and even used a turkey baster or stiff brush. His process caused the paint to build up, layer upon layer.

Referring to his process, Pollock said: “My painting does not come from the easel....I prefer to tack the unstretched canvas to the hard wall or floor....On the floor, I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be *in* the painting. I prefer sticks, trowels, knives and dripping fluid paint....When I am in my painting, I’m not aware of what I’m doing. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well.”⁴

- **Ask students what it means for Pollock to say that he is “in” the painting. How is this way of painting different from the ways in which they may have painted?**
- **Ask students if they see evidence that this canvas was painted on the floor. Why or why not? They may notice that the paint does not drip down, as it would if it was created on an easel.**
- **Read the dimensions of *One (Number 31, 1950)* to the students. Ask students to measure out the dimensions using string or tape to get a sense of the size. Pollock, like many other Abstract Expressionists, painted very large works. The size of these works affects how the viewer interacts with the paintings. Pollock was interested in murals. He was influenced by some of the Mexican muralists, such as Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siquieros. He was also influenced by Pablo Picasso’s large painting *Guernica* (www.moma.org/modernteachers/large_image.php?id=130).⁵**

Like Pollock, Frankenthaler experimented with line and paint. She said that she was influenced by Pollock’s “concern with line, fluid line, calligraphy, and...experiments with line not as line but as shape.”⁶

- **Ask students to look again at Frankenthaler’s painting. How does she use lines to create shapes? What kinds of shapes do they see in her work?**

When Frankenthaler saw Pollock’s work for the first time, she said, “It was as if I suddenly went to a foreign country but didn’t know the language, but had read enough and had a passionate interest, and was eager to live there. I wanted to live in this land. I had to live there, and master the language.”⁷

Frankenthaler’s works are large in scale and often have expansive areas of paint. She developed a painting technique in which she thinned pigments with turpentine so that they soaked through and stained the unprimed canvas rather than resting on the surface. The images and colors then become embedded in the picture, in the fabric of the canvas, resembling giant watercolors.

- **Frankenthaler has spoken about opposites in her work—about a combination of freedom and restraint; accident and control. Ask students what opposites they notice in the work. Ask them to provide visual evidence for their ideas.**
- **Ask students to define the term landscape. Ask them to discuss the traditional elements of landscape.**

Frankenthaler found that a painterly form of abstraction tended to suggest ideas of landscape. She said that the paintings she used to make in the country were “filled with ideas about landscape, space, arrangement, perspective, repetition, flatness, light, all of which was trans-

4. Jackson Pollock, quoted in Kirk Varnedoe, *Jackson Pollock* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998), p. 48.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 33–34.

6. Helen Frankenthaler, quoted in *MoMA Highlights*, p. 219.

7. Helen Frankenthaler, quoted in *Helen Frankenthaler* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989), p. 37.

lated and carried on in my own work and experiments.”⁸ In 1957, Frankenthaler said, “If I am forced to associate, I think of my pictures as explosive landscapes, worlds, and distances held on a flat surface.”⁹

- **Ask students to identify parallels between this painting and a landscape.**

Inform students that this work is called *Jacob’s Ladder*. Jacob is a character in the Bible, the son of Isaac and Rebekah. As described in the Book of Genesis, Jacob, in a dream, saw a ladder reaching toward heaven. Like many of Frankenthaler’s paintings, this work combines abstraction with an allusion to a known reference. Speaking about this work, she said, “The picture developed (bit by bit while I was working on it) into shapes symbolic of an exuberant figure and ladder, therefore *Jacob’s Ladder*.”¹⁰

- **Ask students if they agree that the central shape looks like a ladder. Why or why not?**
- **Now that the students have some information about Pollock’s and Frankenthaler’s working processes, ask them to refer back to their lists of similarities and differences. Do they have any new ideas they would like to add with regard to the two artists’ working processes?**

ACTIVITIES

1. Your Turn!

Ask students to pick a work by Kline, Pollock, or Frankenthaler discussed in this guide and pretend that they are an art critic for a newspaper or magazine. Students should write about the work they chose. Ask them to consider the following questions: What do they like or dislike about the painting? Who is their audience? What tone will the piece take? Will they make comparisons or allusions to popular culture or to contemporary events or artists? Encourage students to use evidence from the work of art itself to support their comments and ideas.

2. Line Dictionary

After looking at and talking about these three artists, have your students create a line dictionary. You can give them a list of words, such as buoyant, calm, angelic, frenetic, conflicted, rolling, and sporadic, or you can create your own list. Ask them to create lines that correspond with the words. Ask them to add their own words and draw corresponding lines. Then have them present their lines to the class. An individual student can hold up a line and the class can guess what word they were trying to represent. The student can explain his or her choices.

3. Significant Others: Lee Krasner

Pollock was married to an artist named Lee Krasner. Ask your students to research Krasner’s work. How did she influence Pollock and vice versa?

4. Significant Others: Robert Motherwell

Frankenthaler was married to the painter Robert Motherwell. Research Motherwell’s work. How did Motherwell influence Frankenthaler and vice versa?

8. Helen Frankenthaler, quoted in *Helen Frankenthaler* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989), p. 120.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

10. Helen Frankenthaler, quoted in *MoMA Highlights*, p. 219.

LESSON TWO: Color and Environment

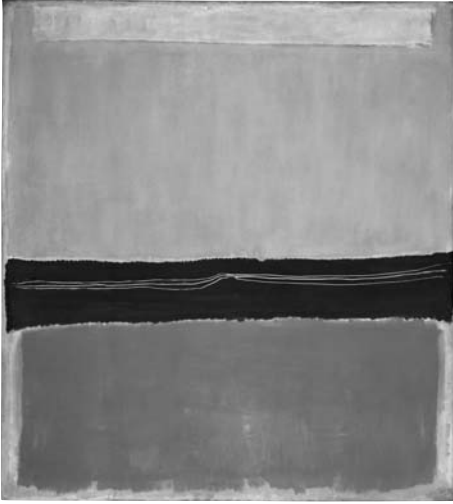


IMAGE FIVE: Mark Rothko. American, born Latvia. 1903–1970. *No. 5/No. 22*. 1950 (dated on reverse 1949). Oil on canvas, 9' 9" x 8' 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (297 x 272 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the artist. © 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

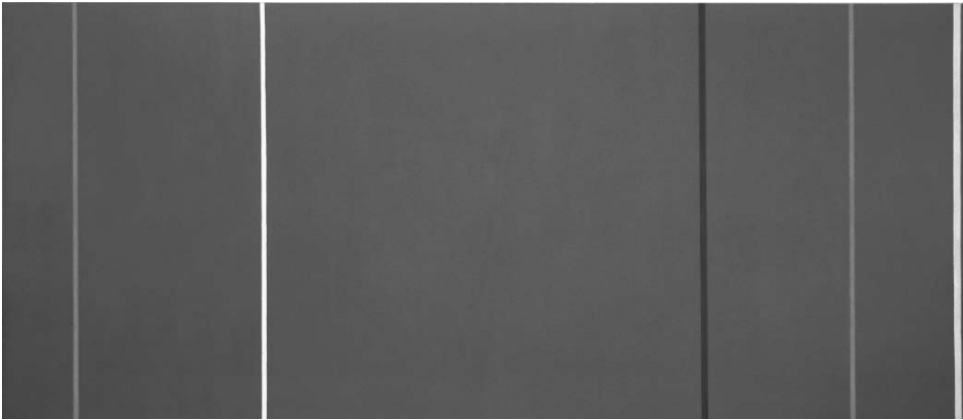


IMAGE SIX: Barnett Newman. American, 1905–1970. *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*. 1950–51. Oil on canvas, 7' 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 17' 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (242.2 x 541.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller. © 2007 Barnett Newman Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

INTRODUCTION

The artists Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman are also considered Abstract Expressionists. This lesson compares two of their large, abstract, colorful canvases and examines some of the ideas that informed their artistic processes.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will consider the choices artists make with regard to painting, focusing on **color, shape, composition, proportion, balance, style, and scale**.
- Students will learn how to discuss and compare nonrepresentational works of art.
- Students will think about their relationship as a viewer to works of art and will consider how an **abstract work** can evoke a sense of atmosphere or place.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Ask your students to review some of the artistic choices Kline, Pollock, and Frankenthaler (discussed earlier in this guide) made when creating their work. How did they use color? Line? Scale? Tell students that they are going to compare works by two different artists, Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, who were working at around the same time as Pollock, Kline, and Frankenthaler. They will be looking closely at the manner in which Rothko and Newman painted.
- Ask students to consider how they might represent an idea or emotion in paint, without showing a specific subject. How might their use of paint convey this idea? How might line or color convey ideas or emotions?
- Ask your students to discuss the ways that an artist might seek to convey a sense of place, atmosphere, or environment in an abstract work of art. We will return to this idea later in the lesson.

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

Mark Rothko, *No. 5/No. 22*, 1950 (Image Five)

Barnett Newman, *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, 1950-51 (Image Six)

- Ask students to spend some time looking at Rothko's *No. 5/No. 22*. Have them write down ten descriptive words. Then have them circle their five favorite words. Ask them to write these words on separate note cards. Split the class into groups of five and have each group create a free-form poem using their words. Ask them to refer back to the painting as they build their poem. When they are finished, ask them to read their poem out loud. Ask the other students to comment on each poem. Do these poems help them to see the painting in a different way? How so?
- Now ask your students to look at Newman's *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*. Ask them to write a few sentences describing this work. Encourage them to be creative with their description. Have the students share the sentences.
- Show both works to the students again. Lead students in a discussion comparing and contrasting the two works of art. Students may consider how each artist uses color, paint, proportion, composition, and shape. They may compare the two artists' brushwork, the horizontal and vertical aspects of the paintings and the sizes of the two canvases.

Rothko was a largely self-taught artist who experimented with many kinds of painting, including representational, social realist, Surrealist, and abstract. He once worked as a theatrical set painter. He is known for his Color Field painting, which has large areas of color with no obvious focus of attention. Rothko simplified forms as much as possible, creating rectangles that seem to float on a field of color.¹¹

- Ask students to look closely again at Rothko's painting. What do they notice about the colors? How many different colors can they list? How might they describe the brushwork? What kinds of shapes do they notice?

No. 5/No. 22 follows a compositional structure Rothko worked on for more than twenty years. In this painting, narrowly separated rectangular blocks of red, yellow, and orange color hover in a column against a background of yellow. The blocks' edges are soft and irregular and tend to fade and blur. Rothko applied the paint with a large, broad brush. The paint has differences in tone, intensity, and saturation.

11. Paul Wood et al., *Modernism in Dispute: Art since the Forties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 50.

- **Ask students to define horizon line.** Where do they usually see horizon lines in paintings? Point out the horizontal line in the red band toward the middle of the painting. How is this different from traditional horizon lines?
- **Rothko scraped lines into the painting.** This creates a sort of horizon line. Ask students why he might have chosen to do that. What effect does it have on their viewing experience?

Newman was an American painter, sculptor, printmaker, and writer who worked at the same time as Rothko. Like Rothko, he lived in New York and painted large, color-saturated canvases.

- **Read students the title of this work, *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*.** In English, this title means “Man, Heroic and Sublime.” Newman wrote an essay on the sublime. Ideas about the sublime have to do with beauty and elements in nature that might inspire awe. Newman was interested in how the sublime might exist in the modern moment.
- **Ask students how this title relates to the painting.**

Newman insisted that his canvases were charged with symbolic meaning. Like the artists Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich (for more information, see *Modern Art and Ideas 4* [<http://www.moma.org/modernteachers/>]), Newman believed in the spiritual content of abstract art.

Newman eliminated evidence of the action of the painter’s hand. He preferred to work with broad, even expanses of intense color.

- **Read students the dimensions of this painting.** Ask them to measure it out using string. Rothko once said, “I paint very large pictures...the reason I paint them, however—I think it applies to other painters I know—is precisely because I want to be very intimate and human.”¹² This quote applies to Newman’s work as well.
- **Ask students to close their eyes and imagine that they were standing in front of this vast red field broken by five thin vertical strips.** Ask students how the size of a painting can affect their viewing experience.

This painting is so large that when the viewer stands close she is engulfed in the environment it creates. In fact, at Newman’s first solo exhibition in 1950, a note from the artist advised, “There is a tendency to look at large pictures from a distance. The large pictures in this exhibition are intended to be seen from a short distance.”¹³

- **Newman called the vertical strips in his work “zips.”** Ask the students to look closely at the zips. What do they notice?

These zips have been compared to figures standing against a void. They vary in width, color, and intensity. The two coral-colored strips were applied directly to the canvas, while the other three lie on top of the red paint. The surfaces of Newman’s paintings were built up using many layers of paint that were applied slowly and carefully.¹⁴

- **Ask students to discuss what effect the zips have on their viewing.** How would the painting look different if they were not included? If they were moved to a different part of the painting?

12. Mark Rothko, quoted in Ann Temkin, *Barnett Newman* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2002), p. 41.

13. Barnett Newman, quoted in Temkin, *Barnett Newman*, p. 178.

14. Temkin, *Barnett Newman*, p. 178.

Newman believed that by looking at his work up close people could become more self-aware. He said, “I hope that my painting has the impact of giving someone, as it did me, the feeling of his own totality, of his own separateness, of his own individuality.”¹⁵

- **Ask students how they think someone could learn something about themselves by looking at art. Have they ever learned something about themselves by looking at a work of art? Ask them to share their experience.**

In 1952, Rothko stated, “A picture lives by companionship, expanding and quickening in the eyes of the sensitive observer. It dies by the same token. It is therefore a risky act to send it out into the world.”¹⁶

- **Read this quote to students and ask them to consider what Rothko might mean by this. Ask students to consider the role of the viewer. As a viewer, what is your “job”?**

In a 1957 interview, Rothko stated, “I’m interested only in expressing basic human emotions—tragedy, ecstasy, doom. If you...are moved only by...color relationships, then you miss the point.”¹⁷ In 1947, Newman stated that any art worthy of consideration should address “life,” “man,” “nature,” “death,” and “tragedy.”¹⁸

- **Ask students to consider these quotes. What emotion or idea might they assign to Rothko’s or Newman’s paintings? Why?**
- **Ask students to identify a powerful feeling, mood, or emotion. If they were to represent that feeling in paint, how might they do it? If time permits, have students create their own non-representational work based on an emotion or feeling such as tragedy or ecstasy. Ask them to carefully consider their use of shape, composition, and color.**
- **Now that your students have looked at these two works closely, ask them how the paintings might evoke a sense of place or environment. What kind of place? How does each work’s size, use of color, and composition contribute to a sense of place? Ask students to spend a few minutes writing about this, then share their ideas.**

ACTIVITIES

1. Art and Ideas

Newman said, “The basis of an aesthetic act is the pure idea...the idea-complex that makes contact with mystery—of life, of men, of nature, of the hard, black chaos that is death, or the grayer, softer chaos that is tragedy. For it is only the idea that has meaning.”¹⁹

Ask students what they think Newman means by this. How are Rothko and Newman translating ideas into paint? What choices are they making? How are the intentions of these two artists different from the intentions of Pollock and Frankenthaler?

2. Compare and Contrast

Ask students to select one of the works in this guide by Kline, Frankenthaler, or Pollock and write an essay comparing it to Rothko’s or Newman’s work. They can consider how these artists use paint. How are their working processes different? Similar?

15. Barnett Newman, quoted in Tate Modern, “Barnett Newman,” <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/newman/>.

16. Mark Rothko, quoted in *Visions of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2003), pp. 221–22.

17. Mark Rothko, quoted in *MoMA Highlights*, p. 196.

18. Barnett Newman, quoted in Tate Modern, “Barnett Newman,” <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/newman/>.

19. Barnett Newman, quoted in *The Ideographic Picture* (pamphlet) (New York: Betty Parsons Gallery, 1947).

3. Art and Spirituality

Rothko created murals for a chapel in Houston, Texas, which he considered one of his most important works. Ask students to research this project. How did he attempt to infuse his work with spirituality?

4. Monuments

Newman also created sculpture. He created a huge steel sculpture called *Broken Obelisk*, which is in MoMA's collection (see www.moma.org/collection). Ask students to research this work of art. What is it a monument to? If they had to create a monument, what would it be? What would it symbolize?

LESSON THREE: Transforming Everyday Objects



IMAGE SEVEN: Robert Rauschenberg. American, born 1925. *Bed*. 1955. Combine painting; oil and pencil on pillow, quilt, and sheet on wood supports, 6' 3 1/4" x 31 1/2" x 8" (191.1 x 80 x 20.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Leo Castelli in honor of Alfred H. Barr, Jr. © 2007 Robert Rauschenberg

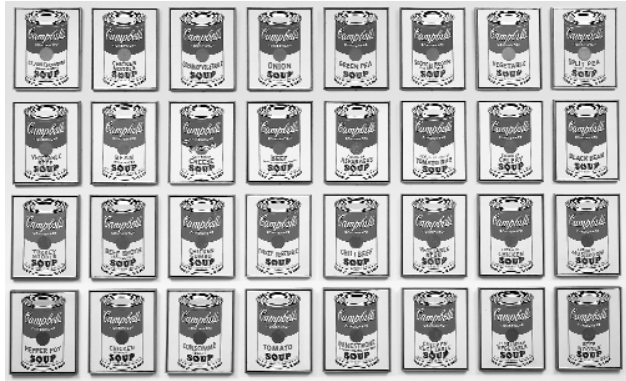


IMAGE EIGHT: Andy Warhol. American, 1928–1987. *Campbell's Soup Cans*. 1962. Synthetic polymer paint on thirty-two canvases, each 20 x 16" (50.8 x 40.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Irving Blum; Nelson A. Rockefeller Bequest, gift of Mr. and Mrs. William A. M. Burden, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, gift of Nina and Gordon Bunshaft in honor of Henry Moore, Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, Philip Johnson Fund, Frances Keech Bequest, gift of Mrs. Bliss Parkinson, and Florence B. Wesley Bequest (all by exchange). © 2007 Andy Warhol Foundation/ARS, NY/TM Licensed by Campbell's Soup Co. All rights reserved



IMAGE NINE: Claes Oldenburg. American, born Sweden, 1929. *Giant Soft Fan*. 1966–67. Vinyl filled with foam rubber, wood, metal, and plastic tubing, fan approx. 10' x 58 7/8" x 61 7/8" (305 x 149.5 x 157.1 cm); cord and plug 24' 3 1/4" (739.6 cm) long. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection. © 2007 Claes Oldenburg



IMAGE TEN: Roy Lichtenstein. American, 1923–1997. *Turkey Shopping Bag*. 1964. Screenprint on shopping bag with handles. Composition: 7 1/2 x 9" (19.1 x 22.8 cm); bag (irreg.): 19 5/8 x 16 1/8" (49 x 43 cm). Publisher: Bianchini Gallery, New York. Printer: Ben Birillo, New York. Edition: approx. 200. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Fractional and promised gift of Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder

INTRODUCTION

As the economic prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s brought about an increase in consumerism and the development of the media and advertising, artists began to look for inspiration in the world around them.

This lesson looks at two sources of inspiration for artists: everyday objects and **popular culture**. Artists begin to use everyday objects as inspiration, transforming them into works of art through the use of different mediums, such as paint, sculpture, and printmaking. Robert Rauschenberg's *Bed* combines the expressive brushstrokes and the layering of paint that characterized Abstract Expressionism with **found objects**.

Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, and Jasper Johns also drew inspiration from the everyday, particularly from objects and images from popular culture. Popular culture comprises the ideas, interactions, needs, desires, and cultural elements of a particular society.

These **Pop** artists presented objects from consumer culture, like soup cans, fans, and turkeys, in a straightforward manner, using bold expanses of unadulterated color and removing traces of the artist's hand.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will consider how and why artists use everyday objects as subject matter.
- Students will consider the choices artists make when creating works of art, exploring subject matter and sources of inspiration, **medium**, and **style**.
- Students will make connections between consumer culture and art.
- Students will learn about the technique of **screenprinting**.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Ask students to define popular culture. How is popular culture influenced by advertising? How are people influenced by the media and advertising? How and why do advertisers promote products? Ask students what affect the media has on their lives. Tell them we will return to ideas of the media's influence later in this lesson as we examine a group of artists who used elements of pop culture as their inspiration.
- Andy Warhol once said, "Everyone is an artist."²⁰ Ask students if they agree with this statement. Why or why not? Who gets to decide what is art and what is not art? Ask students to make a list of criteria for art. Write some of their answers on the board. Return to this idea as this lesson progresses. Do their ideas change? Why or why not?

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

Robert Rauschenberg, *Bed*, 1955 (Image Seven)

- Ask students to look at this work of art. Ask them how the artist may have made the work. What materials did he use? How did he use them? Ask them to provide evidence for their ideas.

20. Andy Warhol, quoted in *Pop Art* (London: Taschen, 2003), p. 8.

- **Tell students the title. Ask them how Rauschenberg has transformed this everyday object. Ask them how this is similar or different than their bed at home. Why would an artist put a bed on the wall?**

This is an example of a **combine**, a term used to describe Rauschenberg's technique of attaching found objects such as tires or old furniture to a traditional picture plane. In this work of art, we see a pillow, sheet, and quilt, scribbled with pencil and splashed with paint in a style similar to that of Jackson Pollock. These materials may have been the artist's own blanket and pillow, which he used when he lacked money to buy a canvas.

Although these are materials related to a bed, the artist has hung the work on a wall like art. Rauschenberg said, "Painting relates to both art and life....(I try to act in that gap between the two)."²¹

- **Ask students what they think Rauschenberg means by this statement. How does this quote relate to *Bed*?**
- **Ask students how this could be considered a self-portrait. What can we learn about the artist by looking at this? How is this different from traditional self-portraits?**

Andy Warhol, *Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1962 (Image Eight)

- **Ask students to look closely at this work of art. What do they notice?**
- **Ask them why they think Warhol might have chosen soup cans as a subject.**

Andy Warhol said of Campbell's Soup, "I used to drink it. I used to have the same lunch every day, for twenty years, I guess, the same thing over and over again. Someone said my life has dominated me; I liked that idea."²²

Warhol was a fashion illustrator, painter, printmaker, sculptor, magazine publisher, filmmaker, photographer, and archivist of his times. His early paintings used motifs taken from advertising and comics. Other subjects included Elvis Presley, Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, flowers, cows, self-portraits, nose jobs, and stamps.

When Warhol first exhibited these thirty-two canvases in 1962, each one simultaneously hung from the wall like a painting and rested on a shelf like groceries in a store. The number of canvases corresponds to the varieties of soup sold at that time by the Campbell Soup Company, with each painting featuring a different flavor of soup. Warhol did not indicate how the canvases should be installed. In this image, they are arranged in rows that reflect the chronological order in which the soups were introduced. The first flavor introduced by the company was "Tomato," from 1897.

- **Ask students why they think Warhol included so many canvases. What effect does the repetition have on their viewing experience?**
- **Ask students to discuss their list of criteria for art. What elements do they think need to be present in order to make something a work of art? Do they consider paintings of soup cans to be art? Why or why not?**

21. Robert Rauschenberg, quoted in *MoMA Highlights*, p. 207.

22. Andy Warhol, quoted in Wendy Weitman, *Pop Impressions Europe/USA: Prints and Multiples from The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), p. 56.

Claes Oldenburg, *Giant Soft Fan*, 1966–67 (Image Nine)

- Ask students to look at this sculpture. Refrain from telling them the title right away. What do they think it is? Why?
- Tell them that this object is almost eleven feet tall. Does knowing this change their ideas about the work? Why might the artist have chosen to make this so big?
- Ask students to describe the material used in this work. How is this sculpture different from more traditional sculptures they may have seen? Let them know it is made of vinyl, wood, metal, and plastic.
- Tell them the title, *Giant Soft Fan*. Ask them why they think that Oldenburg might have chosen to make a fan. How is this fan different from traditional fans? How is it similar? Like Rauschenberg's *Bed*, this fan is deprived of its purpose. Are there any other similarities between *Giant Soft Fan* and *Bed*? What are the differences?

In the 1960s, Oldenburg began expanding the subject and material of traditional sculpture. He recreated everyday objects as huge, soft, handmade sculptures. In 1968, critic Richard Kostelanetz said, “Like the human body, which it resembles in its lumps, bumps, folds and crevices, soft sculpture is literally subject to the force of gravity. Gravity, which Oldenburg calls his favorite form creator, determines the final form a work will assume.”²³

This sculpture is part of a larger series of sculptures of appliances and domestic objects that Oldenburg worked on in 1963. He has also created sculptures of cheeseburgers, a giant ice cream cone, and a large slice of cake, all of which are placed directly on the gallery floor.

In 1967 Oldenburg wrote, “The Fan’s first placement was on Staten Island, blowing up the bay. Later, I sited it as a replacement for the Statue of Liberty...[guaranteeing] workers on Lower Manhattan a steady breeze.”²⁴

- Ask students where they would choose to put this fan. Why?
- Like Oldenburg’s other soft sculptures, *Giant Soft Fan* was carefully planned before it was hand sewn by his wife, Pat Oldenburg. Ask students to consider how this kind of production differs from the factory production of traditional fans.

Warhol and Oldenburg both used mundane objects as subjects for their artwork. The artist Roy Lichtenstein also selected an everyday object—a turkey—for subject of one of his works, but he represented it in a different way.

Roy Lichtenstein, *Turkey Shopping Bag*, 1964 (Image Ten)

- Ask students to look at this work of art. What is the subject? What materials are used? Inform them that this work is called *Turkey Shopping Bag*.
- This is a print. Ask students if they can define a print. Have they ever created a print?

A print is a work of art made up of ink on paper that exists in multiple examples. Lichtenstein, who created this screenprint, is also well known for paintings that are based on comic strips and advertisements.

23. Steven Henry Maddox, *Pop Art: A Critical History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), p. 229.

24. Claes Oldenburg, quoted in *MoMA Highlights*, p. 249.

Many Pop artists, such as Lichtenstein and Warhol, used screenprinting techniques because they produced bold areas of unmodulated color, flat surfaces, and a commercial look. The ideas of transference and repetition that are inherent to this medium fit in perfectly with the Pop artists' ideas.

Warhol had a place called The Factory where other people created the prints he designed. Lichtenstein designed this image of a turkey, which other people executed. It was taken from a 1961 Lichtenstein painting and was most likely inspired by a newspaper advertisement.²⁵

- **Ask students if they would consider these prints to be works to be art. Does this fit into their criteria for art? Ask them if they believe that artists have to make a work with their own hands. Why or why not?**

The 1950s and 1960s saw a rise in the popularity of the big, self-service supermarket. With this came a new emphasis on packaging. Advertisements became bolder, using fewer words and larger, more colorful designs. An exhibition in 1964 titled *American Supermarket* highlighted the differences and similarities between the actual consumer objects and Pop artists' depictions of them. The exhibition was designed to resemble a supermarket, complete with aisles, shelves, and a checkout counter. On display were art objects next to plastic and actual food items. Lichtenstein made a series of his *Turkey Shopping Bag* for the occasion. Warhol also printed bags with a Campbell's Soup can on it. These bags were sold for twelve dollars each.²⁶

- **Ask students to discuss what items were for sale at this exhibition. What do they know about the ways in which art is usually sold? How is this different? Are there any similarities between art and items in a grocery store? What connections were these artists making between art and commerce?**
- **Ask students if such an exhibition happened today, what type of store would they choose to focus on? Would it be a small specialty store, an online marketplace, or a mega-store like Wal-Mart? What products would they feature? Why? If they were to select an image for a bag, what would they select? Why?**
- **Ask students how the Pop artists helped to "democratize" art. Did they make it more accessible? What did subject matter have to do with it? What did medium have to do with it?**

ACTIVITIES

1. Prints and Multiples

Direct students to research prints and multiples created by Pop artists in the 1960s. By using these mediums, Pop artists transformed the idea that art was only for a select few.

2. Transform an Object

Ask students to select an everyday object that represents the current time period. Ask them to transform this object into their own artwork out of nontraditional material(s). Before starting, they should make a sketch showing their plan. As artists, they have many choices to make. What is their subject? What material(s) will they use? How big will their work be? How will they incorporate an original idea into their work? What is the title?

3. Nontraditional Self-Portrait

Have students create their own nontraditional self-portraits using found objects. Ask them to create a sketch before they start and to write a paragraph outlining what choices they will make as artists. The choices may concern material, technique, style, and specific subject matter.

25. Ibid.

26. Weitman, *Pop Impressions Europe/USA*, p. 72.

LESSON FOUR: Art and Politics

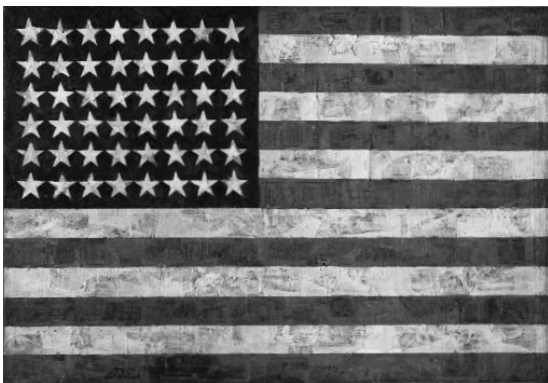


IMAGE ELEVEN: Jasper Johns. American, born 1930. *Flag*. 1954–55 (dated on reverse 1954). Encaustic, oil, and collage on fabric, mounted on plywood, 42¼ x 60⅝" (107.3 x 153.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Philip Johnson in honor of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.



IMAGE TWELVE: Charles Moore. American, born 1931. *Martin Luther King, Jr. Arrested*. 1958. Gelatin silver print, 8⅞ x 12⅜" (21.3 x 31 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Harriette and Noel Levine



IMAGE THIRTEEN: Andy Warhol. American, 1928–1987. *Birmingham Race Riot* from the portfolio *X+X (Ten Works by Ten Painters)*. 1964. Screenprint, composition: 19 ⅜ x 24" (50.7 x 60.9 cm). Publisher: The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut. Printer: Sirocco Screenprinters, North Haven, Connecticut, supervised by Ives-Sillman, New Haven, Connecticut. Edition: 500. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Harry C. Oppenheimer (by exchange)

INTRODUCTION

The years from the 1950s to the 1970s were turbulent times, which witnessed the Vietnam War, the assassination of President Kennedy, Mao Tse-tung's Cultural Revolution in China, and the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Many artists at this time represented political events in their work. This lesson looks at the work of three artists whose work represents ideas and specific events important to the political and social atmosphere of this time.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will consider the ways that artists respond to political and social events and ideas.
- Students will think about sources—where do artists get their inspiration?
- Students will learn about symbols and think about what they represent.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Discuss the political climate of the 1950s and the **Cold War** with students. Who was involved? What effects did the Cold War have on Americans? Tell them about **McCarthyism**. Have them consider how freedom of speech was affected by Senator McCarthy's crusades against alleged Communists.
- Discuss the issues and ideas behind the **Civil Rights Movement** of the 1950s and 1960s. They should consider the following questions: What were African-Americans and others fighting for? Who were the leaders? What did they want to achieve? How did they achieve it? What was the federal government's role?

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

Jasper Johns, *Flag*, 1954–55 (Image Eleven)

- Ask students to look carefully at this image. Direct them to work in pairs and talk about what an American flag might represent. What does a flag mean to them? What might it mean to others? Ask them to share their ideas.
- Ask them to talk about symbols. What are symbols? What can they mean? This flag is a symbol and its meaning can be different for different people.

Jasper Johns worked at the same time as Robert Rauschenberg. Johns transformed flat, recognizable objects such as flags, targets, numbers, and maps into paintings.

- Ask students to look closely at this work again. What do they notice about how it was made? Share with them the information about the materials Johns used—paint, newspaper, wax, glue, and plywood. This is composed of three canvases that are bound together. One shows white stars on the blue background, another includes the top seven stripes, and the last is the bottom half of the picture.

Johns said, “One night I dreamed that I painted a large American flag, and the next morning I got up and I went out and bought the materials to begin it....I worked on that painting a long time.”²⁷

27. Jasper Johns, quoted in *Pop Art: Selections from The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998), p. 46.

Johns declares that he never intended this picture to be overtly political. However, by looking at an image of a flag, the viewer has to consider the meaning of this symbol. Johns believed that knowledge blinds us to experience. He felt that by showing common things in unexpected ways art could challenge people to rethink their ideas and to become more self-aware. He said, “When something is new to us, we treat it as an experience. We feel that our senses are awake and clear. We are alive.”²⁸

- **Ask students if they agree with Johns’s statement. Has looking at a work of art ever changed the way they see things? Did hearing their classmates’ initial reaction to *Flag* cause them see it differently? Ask them to give examples.**
- **This was painted in 1954–55. Ask students to reflect upon what they have learned about the McCarthy era and the Cold War. Ask them to consider what it might have meant to make a painting of an American flag at this time. How does the meaning of this symbol change depending on when we view it? What does it mean to us today?**

Charles Moore, *Martin Luther King, Jr. Arrested*, 1958 (Image Twelve)

- **Ask students to look closely at this image. Ask them to spend a few minutes writing down their observations. They should consider the following questions: What do they see? What is happening at this moment? Who is involved? What kind of place do they think this is? Have students back up their ideas with evidence from the image. Ask students to share their ideas.**

This photograph was taken in 1958 by the photographer Charles Moore. Moore documented many of the events and people involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Tell students that the man in the center of this photograph is Martin Luther King, Jr. The woman to the right of him is his wife, Coretta Scott King.

- **Ask students to summarize what they know about the Civil Rights Movement. What do they know about Martin Luther King, Jr.? What was his role in the Civil Rights Movement?**

Inform students that Martin Luther King, Jr. was a pivotal leader in the American Civil Rights Movement. A Baptist priest and social activist, he advocated for nonviolence and equal treatment for African-Americans. For more information, including King’s writings and speeches, see www.stanford.edu/group/King.

Moore took this photograph in a police station in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1958. He was the only photographer present to witness King’s argument with local police that led to his arrest. King insisted on remaining in jail for the full fourteen days of his sentence, even though the Police Commissioner paid the \$10 fine himself to try to diffuse the publicity surrounding this event.

Moore continued to document the Civil Rights Movement in the South. He represented images of desegregation, voter registration, marches, protests, and police abuse. His photographs were distributed nationwide in *Life* magazine, which at that time was read by over half of the adults in the United States. These works helped people to learn about the events of the day. According to former U.S. Senator Jacob Javits, Moore’s pictures “helped to spur the Civil Rights Act of 1964,” which outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.²⁹

28. Jasper Johns, quoted in *Jasper Johns: A Retrospective* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1996), p. 17.

29. See <http://www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/features/moore/aboutCharlesMoore.shtml>.

- Ask students if they have seen an image in a magazine or newspaper that made them think differently about the world around them. What was the image? What was it about the image that made them stop and think?

Andy Warhol, *Birmingham Race Riots, 1964* (Image Thirteen)

- Show students this image. Ask them to look carefully and to describe what they see. Ask them to back up their ideas with evidence from the image. What does this image tell us about the time?
- Inform students of the title. Tell them that this work derives from a photograph by Charles Moore that was published in 1963 in *Life* magazine. It was taken in Birmingham, Alabama, when police unleashed attack dogs and fire hoses on a group of nonviolent African-American children and protesters led by Martin Luther King, Jr.

In the early 1960s, Warhol began to use images from newspapers and magazines that chronicled catastrophes, conflict, and death. These became known as the Disaster Series. In 1962, Warhol began to **screenprint** on canvas, matching mass-produced images with a commercial and easily repeatable medium. This allowed him to work directly from the photographs that inspired him.

- Ask students to compare Warhol's print with Moore's photograph *Martin Luther King, Jr. Arrested*. Ask students to consider what it means to look at a photograph in a newspaper versus one that is included in a print. How does the meaning of this appropriated image change? What remains the same?
- Ask students to discuss what kind of political statement this work makes. Are Warhol's ideas about using art to make a political statement similar or different to Johns's? How?

ACTIVITIES

1. Injustice Today

Warhol called the Birmingham Race Riots episode a "blot on the American conscience."³⁰ Ask students to write an essay about an instance of prejudice or injustice they have encountered or observed. Did it concern them or someone else? How did they deal with it? What steps can they take to try to rectify this situation or attitude?

2. Civil Rights

In order to learn more about the civil rights struggle, students can research one of the following figures, laws, or events: Jim Crow Laws, Martin Luther King, Jr., Fannie Lou Hamer, Lyndon Johnson, George Wallace, Brown vs. Board of Education, Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Selma to Birmingham March, the 1963 March on Washington, the Mississippi Freedom Summer, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, or the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

3. Make a Political Commentary

Ask students to select a photograph from the newspaper that has to do with a social injustice. Have them create their own political commentary. Advise them to think about the following questions: Why did they select this image? What relevance does it have to our society? What can they do to help fix this problem?

30. Weitman, *Pop Impressions Europe/USA*, p. 90.

LESSON FIVE: Artist's Choice: People



IMAGE FOURTEEN: Willem de Kooning. American, born the Netherlands. 1904–1997. *Woman, I*. 1950–52. Oil on canvas, 6' 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 58" (192.7 x 147.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase. © 2007 The Willem de Kooning Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



IMAGE FIFTEEN: Roy Lichtenstein. American, 1923–1997. *Drowning Girl*. 1963. Oil and synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 67 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 66 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (171.6 x 169.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Philip Johnson Fund (by exchange) and gift of Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright

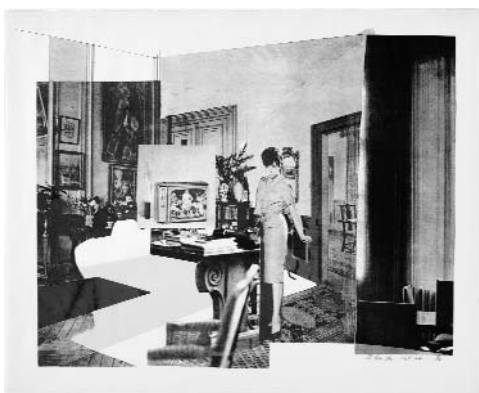


IMAGE SIXTEEN: Richard Hamilton. British, born 1922. *Interior*. 1964 (published 1965). Screenprint, composition: 19 $\frac{5}{16}$ " x 25 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (49.1 x 63.8 cm). Publisher: Editions Alecto, London. Printer: Kelpra Studio, London. Edition: 4 (final state, edition: 50). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Dorothy Braude Edinburg Fund. © 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/DACS, London

INTRODUCTION

This lesson examines three different representations of women. Willem de Kooning used expressive brushwork to create a distorted image of a woman surrounded by violent, layered, and scraped strokes of paint. With cool detachment, Roy Lichtenstein presented a cropped comic book image of a woman drowning. Richard Hamilton created a print out of a collage, using existing imagery to make a comment on domestic life. This lesson examines the radically different artistic styles of these artists and considers the stereotypes they present.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will consider the choices artists make when creating works of art that include people. They will consider **style, medium, background, color, technique, and composition**.
- Students will compare images of women as represented by different artists.
- Students will learn about where artists get their sources and inspiration.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Ask students to discuss the various choices an artist makes when creating an image of a person. They can talk about subject matter, style, composition, background, color, technique, and medium. They can consider why an artist might choose to create an artwork about a person.
- Ask students to imagine a “traditional” portrait of a woman. What would this look like? What makes it traditional? A portrait usually represents a specific person and gives some information about her personality. In this lesson, students will look at three paintings that have women as their subject matter, but which do not represent specific individuals.

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

Willem de Kooning, *Woman, I*, 1950–52 (Image Fourteen)

- Ask students to spend some time looking at this image. Ask them what they notice. Ask them to consider what materials this artist used. What do they notice about the process? How do they think de Kooning may have painted this? What do students notice about the application of paint and brushwork? The colors? The background?

De Kooning painted and repainted this work, working slowly and deliberately over a period of two years. A critic referred to de Kooning’s way of working as “almost like a birthing process.”³¹

- Tell students the title, *Woman, I*. How is this woman different from traditional representations of women? How is she similar?

This is the first of a series of six paintings of women de Kooning created. He was influenced by images including Paleolithic fertility sculptures, American billboards, and pinup girls. He reversed traditional representations of women, which he called, “the idol, the Venus, the nude.”³² De Kooning said that the Woman’s form reminded him of “a landscape—with arms like lanes and a body of hills and fields, all brought up close to the surface, like a panorama squeezed together.”³³

31. David Joselit, *American Art since 1945* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), p. 14.

32. Willem de Kooning, quoted in *MoMA Highlights*, p. 206.

33. Willem de Kooning, quoted in *An Invitation to See: 150 Works from The Museum of Modern Art*, p. 151.

Roy Lichtenstein, *Drowning Girl*, 1963 (Image Fifteen)

- Tell students the title of this piece, *Drowning Girl*. Ask students to compare this work with de Kooning's *Woman, I*. What is similar about the two works? What is different?
- How are the two artists' styles different? How does their use of paint differ? Background? Treatment of subject matter?
- Ask students to focus on the composition of this piece. How has Lichtenstein chosen to portray this person?

Drowning Girl is one of many canvases Lichtenstein created that is based on characters from comic books. This **composition** is taken from one frame in a comic book that shows a girl in the **foreground** with her boyfriend looking at her from a capsized boat.

To see the original illustration, published in November 1962 in the DC Comics series *Run for Love*, go to <http://academics.smcvt.edu/gblasdel/slides%20ar333/webpages/t.%20abruzzo,%20run%20for%20love.htm>. Ask students to compare this image to the Lichtenstein painting.

- Ask students why Lichtenstein might have chosen to include only the girl's head. Why might he have wanted to show only part of the picture?
- This is one of many paintings Lichtenstein created depicting women as helpless, desperate, and passive figures. Ask students how this might relate to what they know about the women's movement of the 1960s.
- Ask students to consider the effect of the words in the bubble. In the original comic book picture, the caption read, "I don't care if I have a cramp." How has Lichtenstein altered the meaning of the image by changing the caption? How might their understanding of this be different if the words were not included, or if different words were used?
- Ask students to write their own caption. How do their words change the way in which the work can be interpreted?
- Ask students to describe the way they think this was painted.

Lichtenstein said, "I was very excited about, and interested in, the highly emotional content yet detached, impersonal handling of love, hate, war, etc. in these cartoon images."³⁴

In order to imitate the "impersonal" process of commercial printing, Lichtenstein transferred a sketch onto a canvas with the help of a projector. He then drew in black outlines and filled them with primary colors or with **Benday dots** through a screen.

- How does the way in which this was painted contrast with the emotional content of the image?

Lichtenstein's image in *Drowning Girl* comes directly from a comic book. He appropriated it into his own work by cropping, enlarging, and painting it. Richard Hamilton, a British artist, also reinscribes images from popular culture in his print, *Interior*.

34. Roy Lichtenstein, quoted in *Pop Art Selections*, p. 50.

Richard Hamilton, *Interior*, 1964 (Image Sixteen)

- Ask students to look carefully at this image and then write a short paragraph about the woman in the center of the picture. They can consider the following questions: How might you describe this place? Where is this person? What might she be thinking? What might have happened before this moment? What might happen after? Who might be in the next room?
- Ask students what stereotypes they see represented in this work. How has the artist chosen to depict this woman? Where is she? What is she doing?

This work is by the British artist Richard Hamilton. He was interested in the impact of popular and commodity culture—such as television sets, movie marquees, vacuum cleaners, and comic books—on art. This print is based on one of three collages Hamilton made from newspaper and magazine advertisements. The woman is taken from a washing machine advertisement and the interior is taken from a photographic reproduction of Claude Monet’s daughter’s drawing room.³⁵

Hamilton took many steps to create this work of art. First, he created a collage. Then he took a black-and-white photograph of the collage and changed the color by using photographic screens. Then he layered screens of Benday dots under the photographic screens. From this layered image, he created a screenprint.³⁶

- Ask students how to compare and contrast how women are represented in the three works in this lesson.

ACTIVITIES

1. Comic Influence

Ask students to bring in a comic book. Ask them to pick a frame and create their own work of art inspired by that frame. They may want to reference contemporary artists who are inspired by comic books, including Inka Essenhigh, Barry McGee, Takashi Murakami, Yoshitomo Nara, Rivane Neuenschwander, Phillipe Parreno, Raymond Pettibon, or Gary Simmons. How have these artists taken ideas from comic books and transformed them?

2. Self-Portrait

This lesson looked at three different ways to represent people. Ask students to choose one of the styles discussed here and a particular medium and to create a self-portrait. Consider the following questions: What do they want to tell the viewer about themselves? What medium, style, and composition will they use? What will they include in the background? Foreground?

3. Collage

Ask students to create their own collage of an inside space that features a person and tells something about the consumerism of the present time. Have them think about subject matter, style, and composition. They can cut out images from magazines and newspapers. Have the students come up with a title for their work.

35. Weitman, *Pop Impressions Europe/USA*, p. 43.

36. *Ibid.*

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Time Capsule

This guide examines selected images with respect to the specific period of time in which they were made. Ask students to make a list of the objects that seem to correspond to the current period in time. Ask them to work together in small groups to create a time capsule that includes text and images from advertising, popular culture, the media, etc. What do they want future people to know about this period in time?

Marcel Duchamp and the Art of Ideas

Many of the artists in this guide were influenced by the work of artist Marcel Duchamp and his concept of the readymade. Ask students to research the work of Duchamp. What lessons did he have for artists such as Rauschenberg, Johns, Warhol, and Lichtenstein? Students may want to visit Red Studio [<http://redstudio.moma.org/>], MoMA's site for teens, to hear MoMA curators and students discuss Duchamp's work and legacy.

Design Your Own Podcast

MoMA's Youth Advisory Council created their own audio pieces on works of art in MoMA's collection. They focused on artists who worked in the 1950s and 1960s. Ask students to visit Red Studio [<http://redstudio.moma.org/podcasts/2006/>] and listen to podcasts on artists such as Jasper Johns and Edward Ruscha. Discuss these podcasts as a group. Ask students to refer to the Make Your Own Podcast section of the site and to create their own podcasts on a work of art represented in this guide. They can submit their podcast to Red Studio when they are finished.

Books

Ask students to select and read one of the following books: Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, or Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. How does each of these works reflect the time in which it was written?

Paint

This guide has examined a lot of different painterly styles, including the drips and splatters of Pollock, the allover color of Newman, the floating shapes of Rothko, the scraped brushwork of de Kooning, and the detached, comic book style of Lichtenstein. Ask students to pick one particular style and experiment with it. Ask them to consider the following questions: What will they paint? What ideas do they wish to express? They should think about style, composition, brushwork, etc.

Draw without a Pencil

Many artists have been influenced by Pollock's and Frankenthaler's nontraditional ways of applying paint. Ask students to brainstorm how they might create lines without using a pencil. What materials might they use?

Ask students to identify their own alternative way of mark-making and to create their own work of art.

New York School

Pollock, Frankenthaler, Rothko, and Newman were part of an informal movement of New York poets, painters, and musicians in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s called the New York School. Research the New York School. Pick a poet, musician, or artist and research their life and work.

Pop Art Is:

Hand out a copy of this letter the artist Richard Hamilton wrote in 1957:

“Pop art is: Popular (designed for a mass audience)

Transient (short-term solution)

Expendable (easily forgotten)

Low cost

Mass produced

Young (aimed youth)

Witty

Sexy

Gimmicky

Glamorous

Big business

This is just the beginning....”³⁷

Ask students how this letter relates to the work they looked at by Lichtenstein, Warhol, and Oldenburg. Then ask them create a collage of images from current newspapers or magazines that corresponds to this poem. Are these words applicable to our society today? Why or why not?

Printmaking Project: Photocopy Transfer

Ask students to select a photograph from the newspaper that has to do with social injustice. Have them create a photocopy transfer. For detailed information on this process, please visit MoMA’s Red Studio [http://redstudio.moma.org/in_the_making/diy/index.php].

Ask students to give the work a title and write a paragraph explaining why they selected this image.

Art and Politics: The Cold War and McCarthyism

The 1950s were controversial time in American politics. Ask students to research the Cold War and McCarthyism. One resource is the film *Good Night, and Good Luck* (2005), which portrays the political climate of the time.

In the introduction to the catalogue for The Museum of Modern Art’s 1959 exhibition *New American Painting*, which featured many artists from the New York School, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., wrote that the paintings were portrayed as simultaneously “autonomous” from the brute

37. Richard Hamilton, quoted in *Pop* (London: Phaidon, 2005), p. 15.

determinations of actual economic and political life in the Cold War and yet also as symbolic of a kind of “free,” “creative” cultural practice, as characteristic of a “free America” standing up against the threat of the Soviet Union to the western capitalist democracies.³⁸

Have a discussion with students about the political climate of the time. Ask them to consider how this relates to some of the ideas present in Abstract Expressionism. Ask them to compare what was going on in the 1950s to today’s political climate. What is similar? What is different?

Photographers and American Life

Photographers such as William Eggleston, Walker Evans, Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander, and Garry Winogrand also chronicled American life in the 1950s and 1960s. Ask students to select one of these photographers and one of his photographs. Have students create a story around one of the photographs.

European Artists

Many European artists during the 1950s and 1960s incorporated political subject matter into their work. Ask students to pick one of the following artists and research his work during this time: Eduardo Arroyo, Öyvind Fahlström, Richard Hamilton, Bernard Rancillac, Gerhard Richter, or Joe Tilson.

38. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., quoted in *Modernism in Dispute: Art since the Forties* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 57.

GLOSSARY

Abstract: A term generally used to describe art that is not representational or based on external reality or nature.

Abstract Expressionism: A movement composed of American artists in the 1940s and 1950s which was characterized by large abstract painted canvases. The movement had two groups—action painters such as Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, and Helen Frankenthaler, and Color Field painters such as Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman. The action painters' work is characterized by sweeping, gestural lines; the Color Field painters' work is characterized by large, unmodulated areas of color.

Background: The area of an artwork that appears farthest away from the viewer; also, the area against which a figure or scene is placed.

Benday dots: Dots used in the mechanical reproduction of images.

Cold War: The period of nonviolent but protracted conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union and their allies, which lasted from the late 1940s through the 1980s.

Collage: The technique and resulting work of art in which fragments of paper and other materials are arranged and affixed to a supporting surface.

Color: A substance, such as a dye, pigment, or paint, that imparts a hue.

Combine: The technique of putting together a cast-off item such as a tire to a traditional support like a canvas.

Composition: The arrangement of elements within a work of art.

Consumerism: A preoccupation with and an inclination toward the buying of manufactured goods.

Foreground: The part of the picture that appears closest to the viewer.

Found objects: An object that was not originally intended to be a work of art that has been included in an artwork.

Horizon line: A line in works of art that usually shows where land or water and sky converge.

Landscape: An image that has natural scenery as its primary focus.

Line: A geometric figure formed by a point moving forward and back in a fixed direction.

Material: An element or substance out of which something can be made or composed.

McCarthyism: A term used to describe attacks on a person's character or patriotism. It comes from the tactics of fear-mongering and baseless accusations employed by Joseph McCarthy, a Senator from Wisconsin from 1947 to 1957, during the early years of the Cold War. He was known for aggressively pursuing people he thought were Communist or spies for the Soviet Union.

Medium: The general or specific categorization of art based on the materials used (for example, painting [or, more specifically, watercolor], drawing, sculpture).

Multiples: A small-scale, three-dimensional work usually produced in a large edition.

Mural: A large, permanent picture, usually on a wall or ceiling.

Pigment: A substance that produces the color of any medium. When mixed with oil, water, or another fluid, it becomes paint.

Pop art: An art movement and style that started in England in the 1950s and moved to the United States in the 1960s. Artists were influenced by the media and advertising and used familiar objects from popular culture as their inspiration.

Popular culture: An ever-changing set of ideas that characterizes the desires, needs, and cultural elements of a particular society.

Print: A work of art made up of ink on paper and existing in multiple examples.

Proportion: Refers to the harmonious relation of parts to each other or to the whole.

Scale: A proportion used to determine the size relationship between an object and its representation.

Screenprint: Screenprints are a form of stenciling. The artist cuts out an image onto a sheet of paper or plastic film. The image is then placed on a screen of silk or fine mesh fabric. The image is coated with ink, which is forced through the mesh onto the printing surface with a squeegee.

Setting: The context or environment in which a situation occurs.

Shape: The form or condition in which an object exists or appears.

Style: An artist's characteristic manner of expression.

Sublime: Lofty or grand in thought, expression, or manner.

Technique: The method of working with materials to produce an artwork.

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www.moma.org

Red Studio: A Site for Teens
redstudio.moma.org

Destination: Modern Art
www.moma.org/destination

Grove Dictionary of Art Online (requires subscription)
www.groveart.com

What Is a Print?
www.moma.org/exhibitions/2001/whatisaprint/flash.html

Photographs by Charles Moore as well as information about the artist
www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/features/moore/mooreIndex.shtml?CID=go&idhbx=civil-rights

Tate Modern, London
www.tate.org.uk/modern

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
www.nga.gov

“Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Movement, 1954–1985,” website accompanying the PBS series
www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/index.html

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