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Action painting, Fashion Forward:

Is there beauty amongst chaos? And what do we perceive as 'art'? For my exhibition, I will be exploring the concept of abstract expressionism, the theory of social constructivism and Freud's views of the unconscious mind. I will be using some of the works from well-known artists from the design movement to showcase not only their work on canvas, but as a fashion statement piece on the runway. It is important to express both what we feel inside of ourselves and outside and I am hoping I can achieve that in this unique exhibition idea. Art and high fashion have a significant overlap, particularly with the art style I have chosen being so anti traditionalist and radical. I have chosen five abstract paintings from various famous artists as the focus of my exhibition which will be held in the La Piscine Museum. Starting out as a typical modern art gallery such as the Tate, but at night, transforms into a runway show inspired by Paris fashion week.

Abstract Expressionism – An Art 'Style':

Abstract expressionism is not really about the art produced, but rather the emotions and meanings behind them. The art movement started after the second world war around the 1940s and '50s and was mostly well known for its large, ambiguous canvases. The movement focused on the artists personal expressions over what was seen as traditional at the time. At the centre of this revolutionary style of art were artists such as Lee Krasner, Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock. They wanted to challenged peoples view on artwork and help them see that art is an experience rather than a representation of something. I wanted to try and embrace this message in my own exhibition and give these pieces of work another change to be seen and heard by people especially in a new and inventive way.

I will be focusing on the 'action painters' of the movement in my exhibition, who so call "attack their canvases with expressive brush strokes" and worked in a "spontaneous improvisatory manner" (Tate, 2017). This style of artwork best suits this idea of my exhibition of letting your emotions from inside go and feeling free. I also think this chaotic style of art will have the best outcome when trying to design fashion garments that work well together. The ideas and motives behind these artists when creating art relates very nicely to Freud's theory of the unconscious mind which states that behaviour is the "meaningful, expressive of emotional life and flowing from sources of which we are unaware" (Lear, 2015). Freud states that we have feelings and thoughts that are not known to our conscious but still

effect how we behave and act in the world. The book Freud by J. Lear goes into detail and uses the example of Mr R. and how his reactions and instincts from a child can still be similar as to his reaction and instincts as an adult but not exactly have a reason as to why which explains the unconscious mind. The 'action painters' in the abstract expressionism movement showcase this unconscious mind every time they painted one of their pieces. They did what felt right at the time without questioning what it meant. This concept is what I want to portray in my exhibit and showcase how it is ok to own these emotions and to wear them proudly.

Social Constructivism:

This philosophical concept links closely to abstract expressionism and Freud's unconscious mind concept well. This idea wasn't an overarching style; the movement was held together by the idea that art can convey profound thoughts and existential ideas far better than with words. It is the idea that multiple people can look at the same piece of work but have vastly different thoughts and feelings depending on their background or ways of life "because it makes you see that what you think is real, isn't necessarily real for some other people" (Jovanovic, 2021). This again links back to this idea of interpreting emotions in your own way expressing the fact that there are multiple ways of seeing or expressing the same thing which will be shown in the exhibition with the two styles of media.

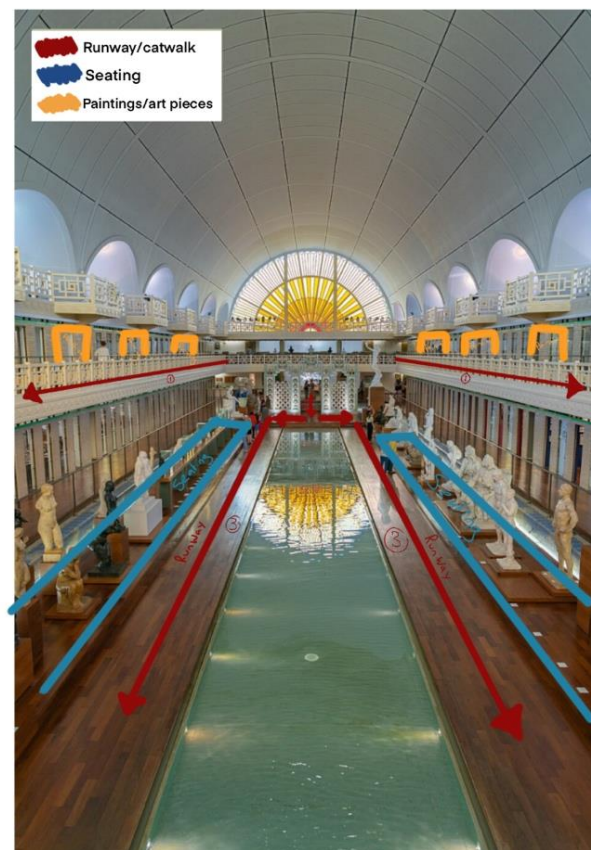
The Exhibit:

The paintings I have chosen for my exhibition are representations of the artists' unconscious minds coming into view which will then be shown on the body as garments, hinting at this idea of showing/expressing your emotions on the outside



Figure 1: The La Piscine Museum

Located in northern France, the La Piscine-Musée d'Art et d'Industrie André Diligent will serve as the venue for my exhibit. The former swimming pool was reopened as a gallery in 2001 and now holds the “treasures of Rodin and Picasso” (BBC, n.d.). While the gallery has had many extensions in the last few years the focus of the gallery is the refurbished swimming pool area where I would like my exhibit to take place. Having the exhibition in an old swimming pool suits nicely with my themes as it relates nicely to the idea of taking something that has been seen once and recreating it into something more.



During the day I would have all the artworks down on the ground floor on either side of the central water feature so visitors could view the pieces like a regular gallery. In the evening the artworks would then be placed on the first floor viewing balcony and chairs would be placed where the artworks once were. During the show the models would walk on either side of the first-floor balcony in black fitted one pieces to their designated painting. They would then take the painting off the wall and walk to the end of the balcony to the back where they could no longer be seen. The models would then put on their garments relating to the painting they took off the wall and walk down the runway on the ground floor in front of the seated crowd. The idea of this process is to show the close relationship between both media styles and to highlight this idea of showcasing your emotions and beautiful and unique it can be.

Artists and their Art:

Lee Krasner:

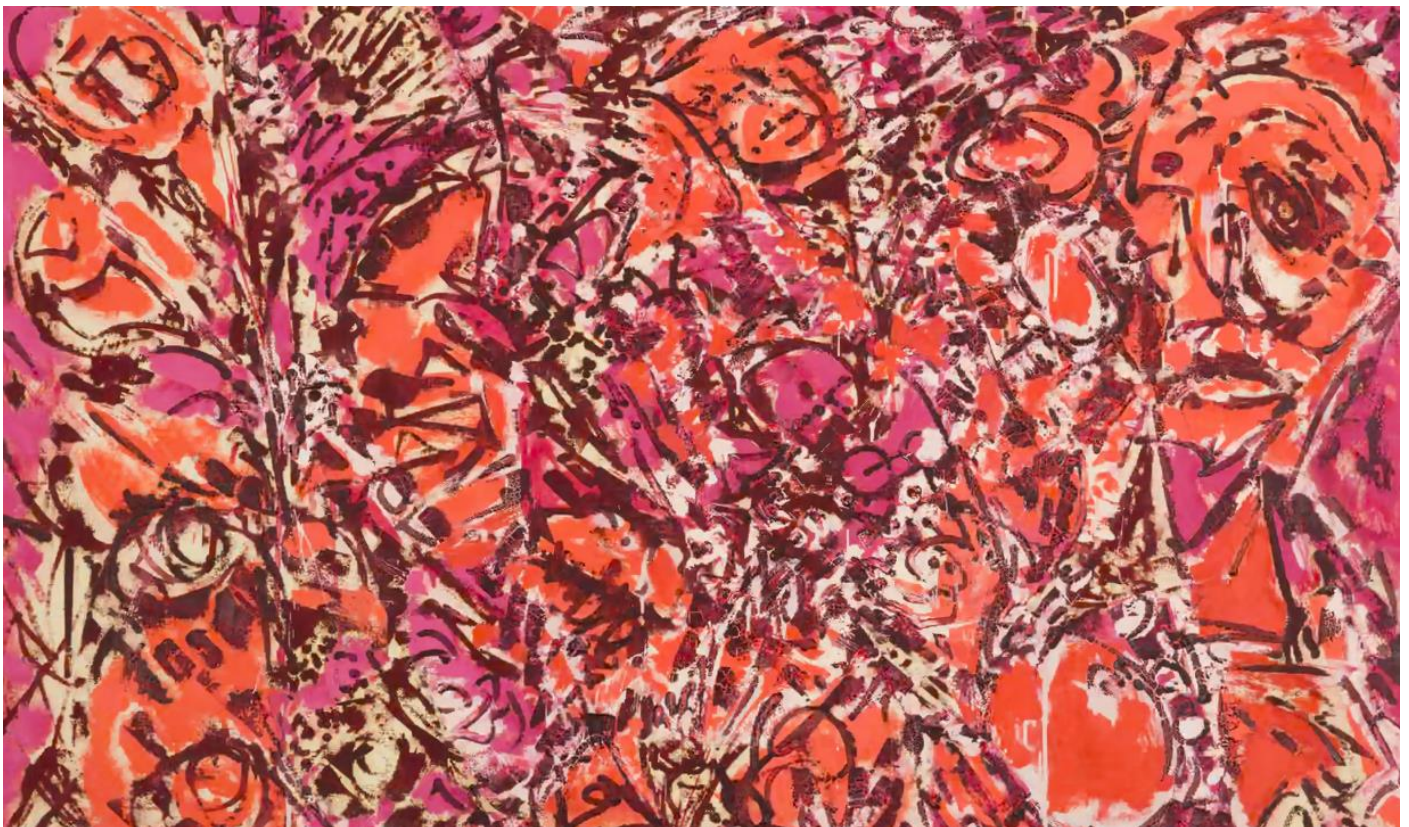


Figure 4: Combat by Lee Krasner

Lee Krasner was also an American artist who was massively associated with the abstract expressionism movement in the 1940s/50s alongside her husband Jackson Pollock. Her work was massively overshadowed by her husband's pieces but were just as inspiring and unique. Her work was influenced by cubism which makes her work in the exhibit more unique stand out to the others art pieces. I have decided to include Krasner's 'Combat' painting (fig 4) in my work from her collection called 'Living Colour' which according to New York Times brought her "out of the shadow of her

famous husband” (Searle, 2019). This piece is vibrant and colourful and will be shown in the fashion shown as a flowy jumpsuit held together by dark cuffs around the models’ waist, ankles and neck. This design of the garment relates to this idea that we are caused by our emotions and sometimes it’s a good thing to let them show sometimes although this can be a hard thing to do hence the black cuffs respecting the fabric.

Jackson Pollock:

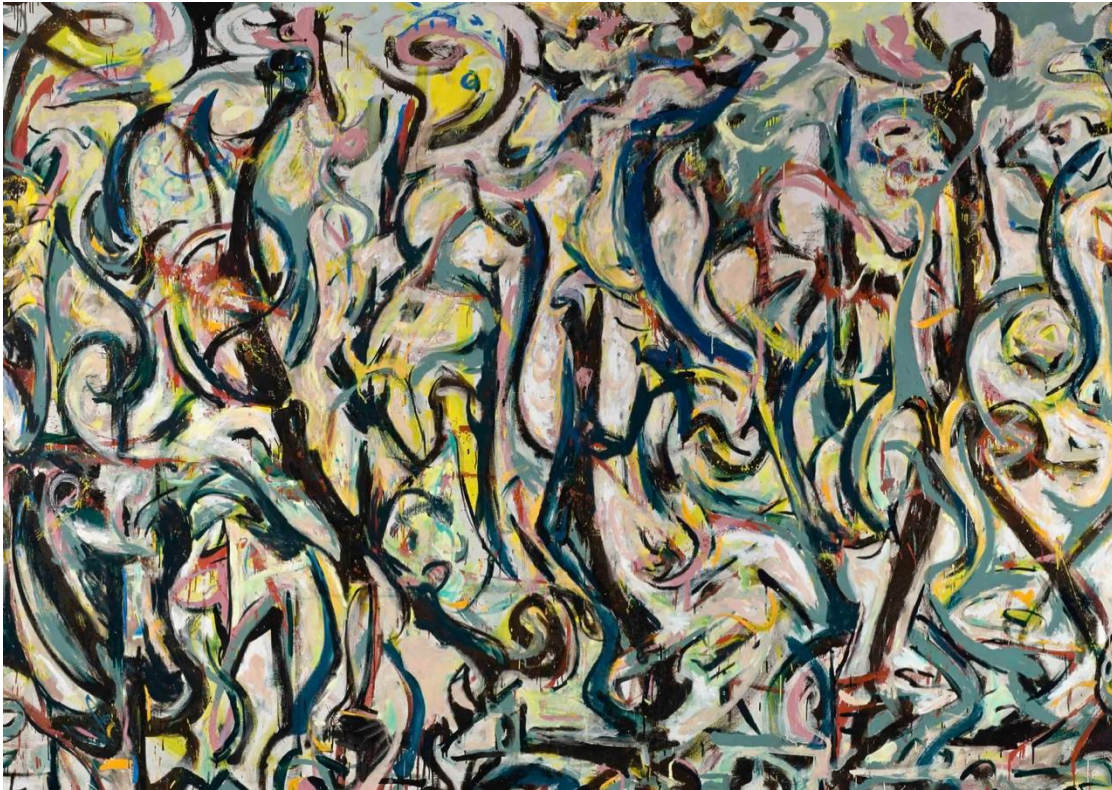


Figure 5: Mural by Jackson Pollock



Figure 6: Blue Poles by Jackson Pollock

Jackson pollock was an American painter known for his unique style of painting. He is described as the “pioneer and leading light of the abstract expressionist movement” (Pinnington, 2019) and helped to redefine the modernism of art. For my exhibition I have chosen pollocks ‘Blue Holes’ painting from 1952 (fig 5) and his ‘Mural’ painting from 1943(fig 6). Both these painting express his inner mind and emotions well and will be translated nicely into the fashion garments. For the fashion show the painting will be transformed into a 2 piece ‘Mural’ and a constructed oversized jacket ‘Blue Holes’. The sharp angles of both outfits relate back to the idea that the garments were once canvas painting redesigned.

Willem de Kooning:

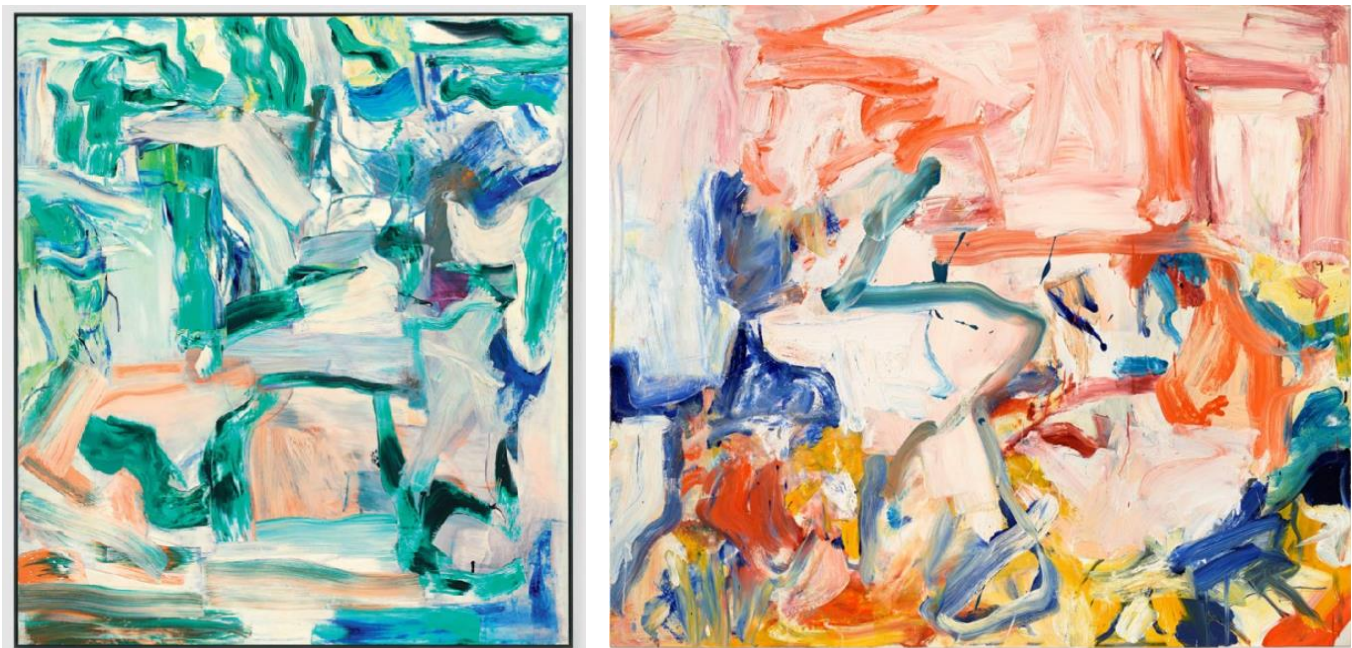


Figure 7 & 8: Untitled I (left) and Untitled XXI (right) by Willem de Kooning

Willem de Kooning is a Dutch American abstract artist. For my exhibition I have decide to select Kooning’s ‘Untitled XXI’ and ‘Untitled I’. The colour palette and composition of both paintings and amazing to look at and are colourful enough to be stunning garments. Both pieces in the fashion show will be two different styles of dresses. The ‘Untitled XXI’ will be a constructed skirt with a matching diamond shaped top to relate back to the fact that the garments came from paintings which were originally in the shape of a square. The ‘untitled I’ painting will be a wrap around dress signifying the relation we have to our emotions and how they can consume out whole body.

Fashion lineup:



Lee Krasner: figure 4
combate



Jackson Pollock: Figure 6
Blue Poles



Jackson Pollock: Figure 5
Mural



Willem de Kooning:
Figure 8 Untitled XXI



Willem de Kooning:
Figure 7 Untitled I

Figures:

Figure 1 – BBC. (n.d.). BBC Arts – BBC Arts – Creative Conversion: Bizarre buildings turned into great galleries. [online] Available at:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/ZMWn6Sk7zwv5kdM5LFMxMd/creative-conversion-bizarre-buildings-turned-into-great-galleries>.

Figures 2 & 3 – Alamy Limited. (2025). La piscine Roubaix museum hi-res stock photography and images – Alamy. Available at: <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/la-piscine-roubaix-museum.html?sortBy=relevant>.

Figure 4 – Guggenheim-bilbao.eus. (2025). Images of the Exhibition in the Museum | Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. [online] Available at:

Figure 5 - stanleymuseum.uiowa.edu. (n.d.). Jackson Pollock, Mural | Stanley Museum of Art - The University of Iowa. [online] Available at: <https://stanleymuseum.uiowa.edu/jackson-pollock-mural>.

Figure 6 – Noorhuis-Fairfax, S. (n.d.). Blue Poles The Works of Art » ACTION REACTION Jackson Pollock & Blue Poles. [online] ACTION REACTION Jackson Pollock & Blue Poles. Available at: <https://bluepoles.nga.gov.au/artwork/blue-poles/>.

Figures 7 & 8 – Christies.com. (2020). Willem de Kooning paintings | Willem de Kooning paintings for sale, auction results and history. [online] Available at: <https://www.christies.com/en/artists/willem-de-kooning/willem-de-kooning-paintings>.

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