

Modern Art Movements

Post WWII– Late 20th Century – Abstract Expressionism to Brit Art

Coexistent Perspectives

PG ONLINE SHORT COURSE



The Modern Age

The Evolution of Culture

How Did We Get Here?

- **Modern history** is the history of the world beginning after the **Middle Ages**. Generally the term "modern history" refers to the history of the world since the advent of the Age of Reason and the **Age of Enlightenment** in the 17th and 18th centuries and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.
- The **Early Modern Period (1500-1750)** lasted from the end of the 15th century to the **Industrial Revolution** at the end of the 18th century,^[1] circa 1450/92 to 1750/92.
- **Late Modern Period (1750 – 1945)** are the period from **Enlightenment** and the 18th century until today.
- **Modernity**, based on **Modernism**, explores the changes of society due to the **industrialization**.
- **Postmodernity** and **Postindustrialism** are theories to apply the art movement term of *postmodernism* to social and cultural history, or to refer to the rise of the **service sector** during the late 20th century when industry was no longer predominant; the **prefix "post-"** implies a reaction to modernity and in that sense does not cover all contemporary history.^[1]
- The modern period has been a time of many advances in science, politics, warfare, technology, and **globalization**. During this time, the European powers began expanding their political, economic, and cultural influences to the rest of the world
- **Modernism** - modernism is a term for an artistic, cultural movement, rather than era. **Modernism** refers to the artistic movement of late-19th and early-20th centuries that arose out of the widespread changes that swept the world during that period. Most notably, modernism questioned the limitations of “traditional” forms of art and culture.

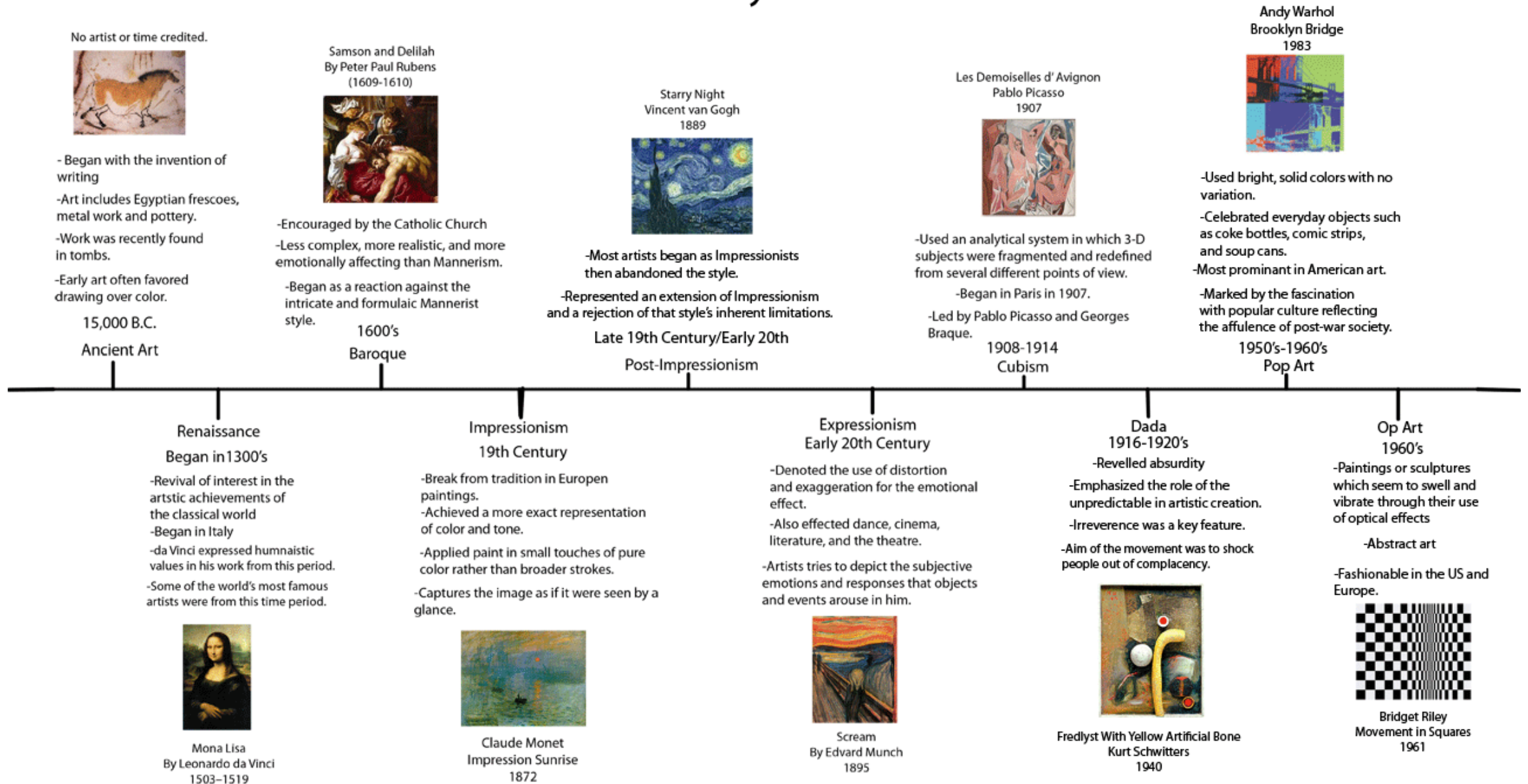
The Modern Age

The Evolution of Culture

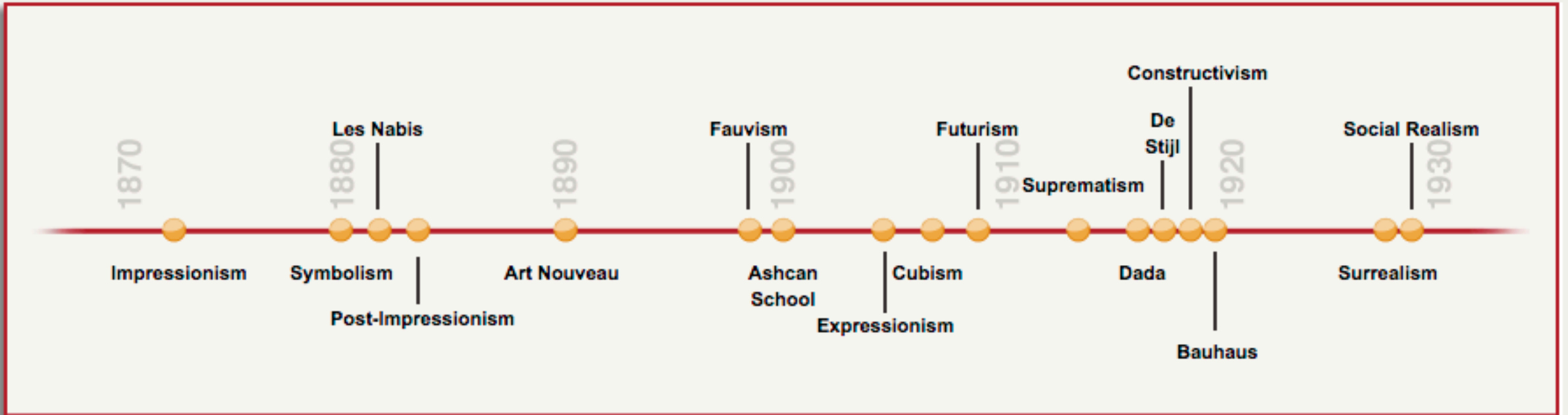
How Did We Get Here?

- **A cultural period is a time marked by a particular way of understanding the world through culture and technology.** Changes in cultural periods are marked by fundamental changes in the way we perceive and understand the world. **The modern era began after the Middle Ages and lasted through the early decades of the 20th century, when the postmodern era began.**
- **The modern era was marked by Enlightenment philosophy,** which focused on the individual and placed a high value on rational decision making. This period saw the wide expansion of capitalism, colonialism, democracy, and science-based rationalism. **The Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, the American and French Revolutions, and World War I** are all significant events that took place during the modern era. One of the most significant, however, was the **Industrial Revolution;** its emphasis on routinization and efficiency helped society restructure itself along those terms as well.
- **Postmodernity differed from modernity** in its questioning of reason, rejection of grand narratives, and emphasis on subcultures. Rather than searching for one ultimate truth that could explain all of history, the postmodernists focused on contingency, context, and diversity.

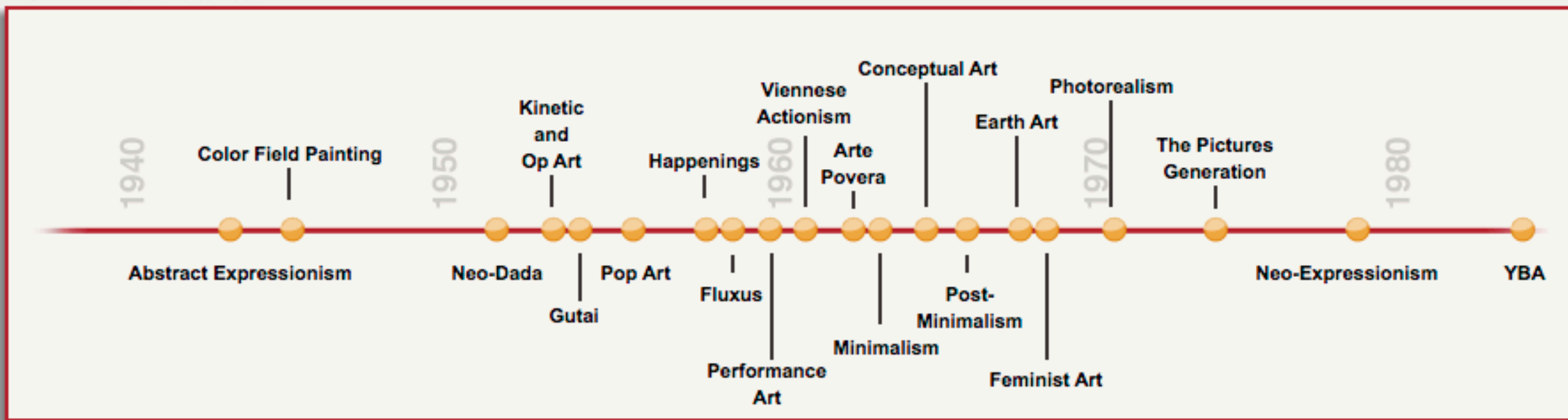
Art History Timeline



MOVEMENTS: 1870 to 1930

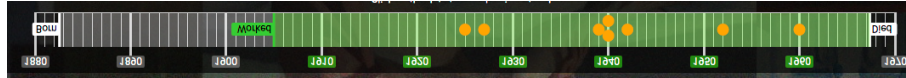


MOVEMENTS: 1940 to 1980



Edward Hopper

Born: c.1822 Died: 1967



No one captured the isolation of the individual within the modern city like Edward Hopper. His imagery of figures within urban settings go well beyond their role as modern cityscapes, exposing the underbelly of the human experience. So while his *œuvre* officially falls within the rubric of (American, New) **Realism**, it offers a far more evocative look at life between the World Wars. Indeed, by providing a minimum of action, stripping away almost any sign of life or mobility, and adding dramatic means of representation with striking lighting schemes in claustrophobic spaces, Hopper suggests something of the psychological inner life of his subjects, leading the way towards **Abstract Expressionism**. He injected significance, and the weight of the individual's existential being in the modern metropolis or in country life, into what otherwise might appear to be straight-forward images of everyday life.



House by the Railroad (1925) Edward Hopper

Edward Hopper's Paintings Inspired Alfred Hitchcock



Alfred Hitchcock was a 20th-century film director, often called the “Master of Suspense.” Hitchcock is best known for his iconic movies that rely on instilling anxiety and fear in its viewers. The home of Norman Bates in Hitchcock’s *Psycho* was directly modeled after Hopper’s *House by the Railroad*. Unsurprisingly, Hopper’s paintings were inspiring to multiple filmmakers. Hopper’s work often reflected cinema and film noir, making his style an obvious choice for inspiration.

Edward Hopper

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Gas (1940) Edward Hopper

- Hopper's imagery is consistently restrained, presenting part of a story or one suggestive aspect. By leaving many clues but no specific answers, he forces the viewer to complete the narrative. This element of his art would have major repercussions for the development of postmodernism wherein the viewer has a major role in the understanding of the artwork.
- Hopper's individuals, usually depicted isolated and disconnected from their environments either literally by glass windows or metaphorically through formal means, are manifestations of the artist's focus on the solitude of modern life. The starkness of detail and unmodulated revelatory light in many works builds a tension, drawing the viewer's attention away from the given subject, and suggesting much about his emotional experience. In this way, the artist's work acts as a bridge between the interest in everyday life exhibited by the contemporary Ashcan School and the exploration of mood by later existential artists.
- Many of the houses depicted by Hopper, animated through artistic means, set apart from their environs, lit with a blanching light which dramatically highlights and casts into shadow, viewed from evocative angles, have provided inspiration to the film making industry.

Nighthawks (1942)

Edward Hopper

Nighthawks depicts four figures in a sparsely furnished diner at night. A single light source illuminates the interior and spills outward toward the exterior. This work, with its simplicity of setting and dramatic lighting, excellently illustrates Hopper's interest in the **themes of alienation, melancholy and ambiguous relationships**. None of the four figures in this picture interact with one another and we are given to understand that this is the norm and that we are witnessing an unfolding narrative with limited emotional development. Open-ended narratives of this nature are typical of Hopper and demand the active role of the viewer in completing the story.

Nighthawks is considered **the embodiment existential art, capturing the alienation and loneliness indicative of modern urban life**. While Hopper did not set out to express a particular emotional state in the image, he did acknowledge that "**Unconsciously, probably, I was painting the loneliness of a large city.**" The sense of the figures' isolation is heightened by the large window which creates an implicit barrier between the viewer and subjects. The viewers are outsiders, voyeurs, not privy to the real story, but, nevertheless, urged to draw our own conclusions regarding the drama depicted. While mostly devoid of revelatory details, a few familiar objects in this picture, such as the salt and peppershakers, napkin holder, and coffee urns, provide a bit of context. Hopper claimed that the setting was loosely based on a restaurant on Greenwich Avenue, in New York. Yet, like most of Hopper's oils, what started as an image of a place became, through his process of executing numerous studies, more a suggestion of that place, a composite of many he knew and the work of his imagination.



Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* is one of his most popular and recognized paintings. According to Josephine Hopper's documentation of *Nighthawks*, Hopper completed the work just weeks before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Undeniably, this pivotal event in US history became commonly associated with the painting. It highlights the feelings of wartime alienation. Before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States was not directly involved in World War II. This work walks the line between the **Modernist movement** and the **American Realism movement**. It addresses the coldness of isolation and the impact that isolation has. One of the reasons Hopper earned his success during the Great Depression and World War II was that his work became relatable to Americans. This was a time of distress and impending doom. The feelings that carried over from World War II led to the rise of **Abstract Expressionism, Cubism**, and more as attempts to rationalize and contemplate the brutality of war.

Morning Sun (1952)

Edward Hopper

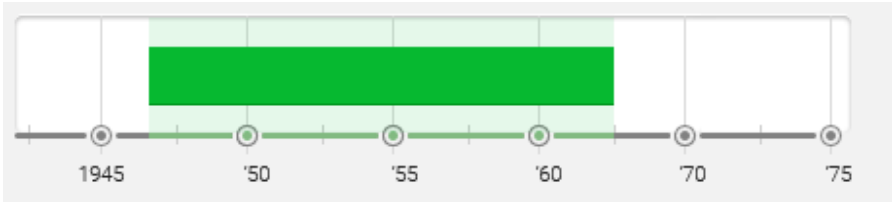
This work was produced late in Hopper's life, when he was nearly 70 years old. Nevertheless it embodies the same themes of **existentialism** noted throughout his *oeuvre*, connecting him with the parallel efforts of contemporary artists such as Andrew Wyeth. The latter's exploration of Christina's world shares much of the same sentiment and effect. In Hopper's painting a woman (his wife Jo at age 68), is noted sitting upright on a neatly-made bed, staring out the window. The morning sun streams through the window, raking over the figure and onto the blank wall behind.

The artist obscures details of her aging face and figure by a distinct lack of detail; her expression is ambiguous, perhaps pensive, perhaps regretful. As in much of his work, the figure is included to capture a mood or suggest a psychological effect, rather than to serve as the portrait of a specific individual. Beyond embodying dramatic means of delineation noted in other works of early modernism, including stark light, he adopts the window motif in order to add psychological weight, open to varied interpretation, as was done a century earlier by Romantic artists such as Caspar David Friedrich.



Abstract Expressionism

Started: c.1943 Ended: 1965



"**Abstract Expressionism**" was never an ideal label for the movement, which developed in New York in the 1940s and 1950s. It was somehow meant to encompass not only the work of painters who filled their canvases with fields of color and abstract forms, but also those who attacked their canvases with a vigorous gestural expressionism. Still **Abstract Expressionism** has become the most accepted term for a group of artists who held much in common. All were committed to art as expressions of the self, born out of profound emotion and universal themes, and most were shaped by the legacy of **Surrealism**, a movement that they translated into a new style fitted to the post-war mood of anxiety and trauma. In their success, these New York painters robbed Paris of its mantle as leader of modern art, and set the stage for America's dominance of the international art world.



Zone (1953-54) Philip Guston

Abstract Expressionism

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Excavation (1950) Willem de Kooning

- Political instability in Europe in the 1930s brought several leading Surrealists to New York, and many of the Abstract Expressionists were profoundly influenced by Surrealism's focus on mining the unconscious. It encouraged their interest in myth and archetypal symbols and it shaped their understanding of painting itself as a struggle between self-expression and the chaos of the subconscious.
- Most of the artists associated with Abstract Expressionism matured in the 1930s. They were influenced by the era's leftist politics, and came to value an art grounded in personal experience. Few would maintain their earlier radical political views, but many continued to adopt the posture of outspoken *avant-gardists*.
- Having matured as artists at a time when America suffered economically and felt culturally isolated and provincial, the Abstract Expressionists were later welcomed as the first authentically American *avant-garde*. Their art was championed for being emphatically American in spirit - monumental in scale, romantic in mood, and expressive of a rugged individual freedom.
- Although the movement has been largely depicted throughout historical documentation as one belonging to the paint-splattered, heroic male artist, there were several important female Abstract Expressionists that arose out of New York and San Francisco during the 1940s and '50s who now receive credit as elemental members of the canon.

Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)
(1950)
Jackson Pollock

The piece is exemplary of Pollock's famous "**drip**" works in which paint was poured, splattered, and applied by the artist in an extremely physical fashion from above to a canvas which lay on the ground. This process of expressing an **internal emotional turbulence through gesture, line, texture, and composition** represented a breakthrough for Pollock in his career and helped put the New York School of painters on the map. These paintings became the impetus for critic **Rosenberg's coining of the term Action Painting**. And this unlikely **combination of chance and control** became tantamount to Abstract Expressionism's evolution.

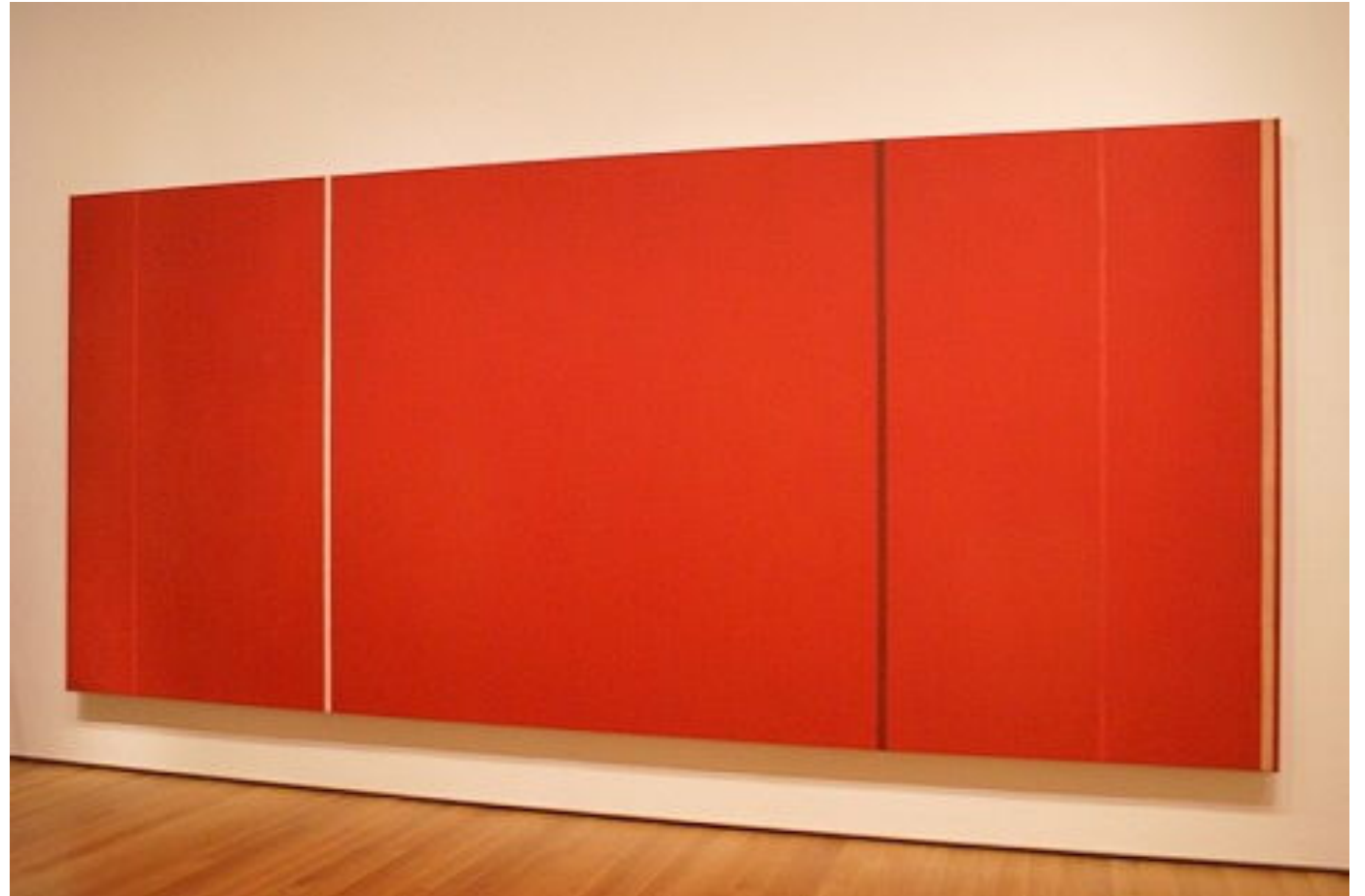


Vir heroicus sublimis (1950-51) Barnett Newman

Translated as "**Man, heroic and sublime**," *Vir heroicus sublimis* was, at 95"x213", Newman's largest painting at the time it was completed, although he would go on to create even more expansive works. In it we see a vast field of dark red punctuated twice with vertical lines that Newman coined "zips." He believed that this abbreviated signature motif could communicate qualities of humanity which found echoes in ancient art. He intended audiences to view his paintings from a close vantage point, allowing the colors to fully surround them - hence he was considered to be a Color Field painter. He also felt the intimacy the painting provoked was much akin to two people meeting and the kind of inherent chemistry that evoked.

Although Newman's work was important to the movement for its scale and simplicity, it was this relationship between painting and viewer that was most notable. Mel Bochner, an artist associated with Conceptualism, remembered encountering it at MoMA in the late 1960s and realizing that its size and color created a new kind of contact between art and the viewer. "A woman standing there [looking at it] was covered with red," he recalled. "I realized it was the light shining on the painting reflecting back, filling the space between the viewer and the artwork that created the space, the place. And that that reflection of the self of the painting, the painting as the subject reflected on the viewer, was a wholly new category of experience."

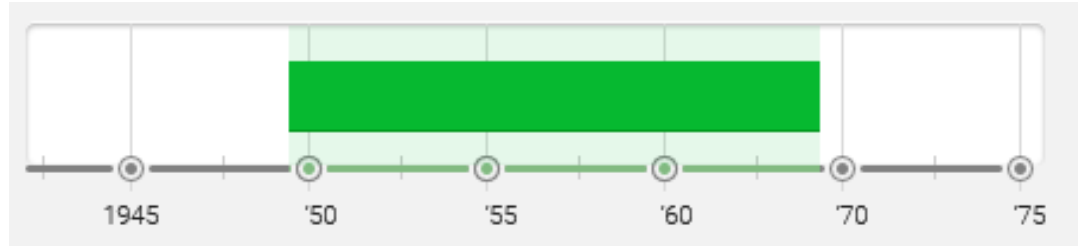
Similar philosophies, of a stripped down experience between painting and onlooker, would be seen later in the work of the Minimalists.



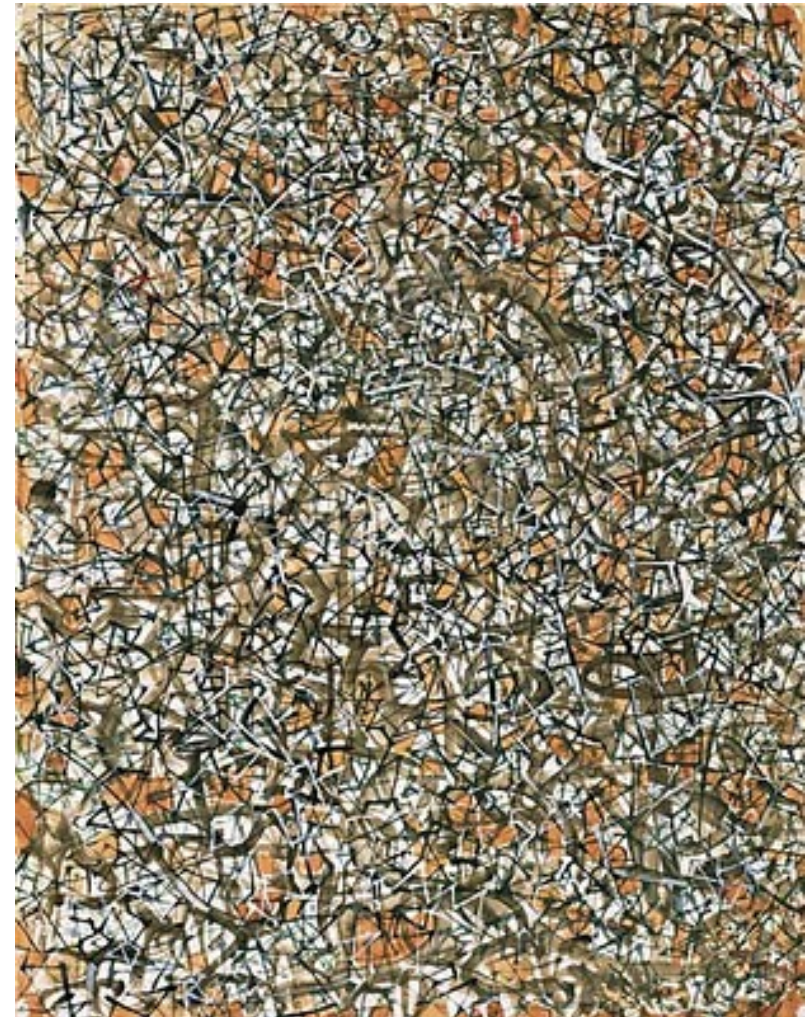


Color Field Painting

Started: Late 1940s **Ended:** Mid 1960s



Color Field Painting is a tendency within **Abstract Expressionism**, distinct from gestural abstraction, or **Action Painting**. It was pioneered in the late 1940s by **Mark Rothko**, **Barnett Newman**, and **Clyfford Still**, who were all independently searching for a style of abstraction that might provide a modern, mythic art and express a yearning for transcendence and the infinite. To achieve this they abandoned all suggestions of figuration and instead exploited the expressive power of color by deploying it in large fields that might envelope the viewer when seen at close quarters. Their work inspired much **Post-painterly abstraction**, particularly that of **Helen Frankenthaler**, **Morris Louis**, **Kenneth Noland**, and **Jules Olitski**, though for later color field painters, matters of form tended to be more important than mythic content.



Advance of History (1964) Mark Tobey

Color Field Painting

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



East-West (1963) Kenneth Noland

- Color Field Painting emerged out of the attempts of several artists in the late 1940s to devise a modern, mythic art. Seeking to connect with the primordial emotions locked in ancient myths, rather than the symbols themselves, they sought a new style that would do away with any suggestion of illustration.
- The style was championed most enthusiastically by critic **Clement Greenberg**, who acclaimed the advances it achieved in the realm of form and composition. Bemoaning what he saw as the increasingly imitative, academic qualities of some action painters, he argued that Color Field Painting represented the way forward. His advocacy of the style proved highly influential.
- Color Field Painting marks a major development in abstract painting, since it was the first style to resolutely avoid the suggestion of a form or mass standing out against a background. Instead, figure and ground are one, and the space of the picture, conceived as a field, seems to spread out beyond the edges of the canvas.

No. 2, Green, Red and Blue (1953)
Mark Rothko

Although Rothko never considered himself a Color Field painter, his signature approach - balancing large portions of washed colors - matches up to critics' understanding of the style. Rothko considered color to be a mere instrument that served a greater purpose. He believed his fields of color were spiritual planes that could tap into our most basic human emotions. For Rothko, color evoked emotion. Therefore each of Rothko's works was intended to evoke different meanings depending on the viewer. In the time *No. 2, Green, Red and Blue* was made, Rothko was still using lighter tones, but as more years passed and Rothko's mental health increasingly declined, his Color Fields were constituted by somber blacks, blues, and grays.



Mountains and Sea (1952)

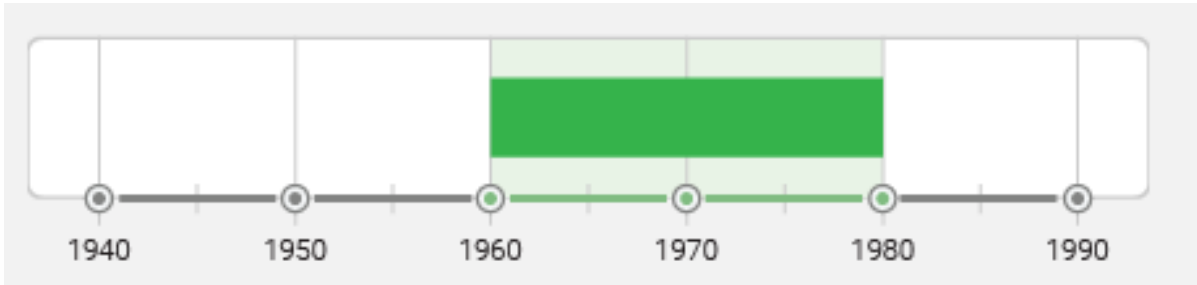
Helen Frankenthaler

Helen Frankenthaler played a crucial role in the evolution of Color Field Painting. Some time in or around 1952, Clement Greenberg invited Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland to pay a visit to Frankenthaler's studio in order to witness her technique of staining untreated canvas with paint. This seminal moment marked a turning point for Abstract Expressionism, and soon this new group of artists were simplifying the painting process by applying large bands (or waves, circles, lines, etc.) of uniform color to the canvas, and Color Field Painting advanced further.



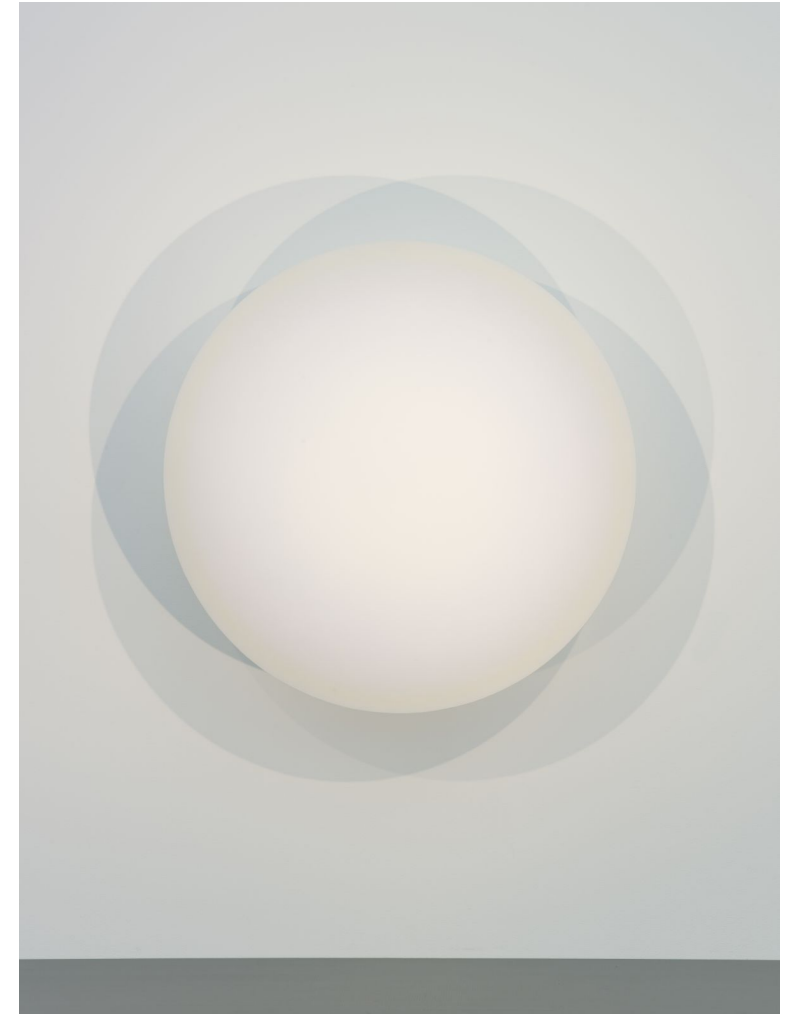
Light and Space

Started: Late 1960 **Ended:** Mid 1980



Ethereal and atmospheric, yet often equally geometric and analytic, the experiences of the Light and Space movement present a striking paradox to the viewer, one that requires active, and often multi-sensory, participation. There is no single defining aesthetic amongst the loosely affiliated group of Los Angeles-based Light and Space artists, but instead a preoccupation with the viewer's perception and participation. Their work ranges from site-specific installations washed in radiant, neon light, or even projecting from the wall, to mysterious glowing columns placed within a darkened room, to totemic sculptures made of glass, acrylic or resin, which reflect and absorb ambient light and shadows, instead of radiating their own.

The genesis of the movement occurred in the late 1950s and lasted through the 1970s, with a wide array of artists following similar conceptual philosophies, including **Peter Alexander**, **Larry Bell**, **Craig Kauffman**, **Mary Corse**, **Frederick Eversley**, **Helen Pashgian**, **De Wain Valentine**, and perhaps the best-known **Robert Irwin** and **James Turrell**. The group found inspiration in idyllic popular notions associated with Southern California: sun, cars, surf, and sand. Yet, in equal measure, there is an embrace of psychology and technology that unite these artists in explorations of materiality and human perception throughout their distinct bodies of work.



Untitled (1964) Robert Irwin

Light and Space

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

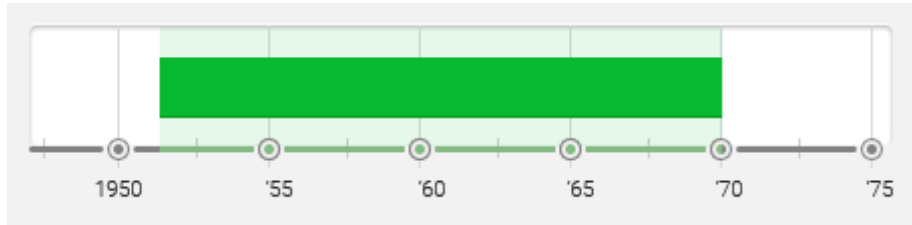


Meeting Room (1980-86) James Turrell

- Light and Space developed in parallel to the dominant **Minimalist** movement in New York in the early 1960s, each characterized by industrial materials and a hard-edge, geometric aesthetic. However, where seriality and repetition was a key component of Minimalist works, artists associated with Light and Space usually created singular objects, whether sculptural or environmental in scale.
- One of the signature characteristics of the Light and Space movement is the choice of alternative materials employed in the creation of both two- and three-dimensional works of art. In lieu of paint and canvas, or marble and bronze, these artists looked to alternative materials as seemingly mundane as glass and plastic as well as experimenting with newer technologies, particularly polyester resins, cast acrylic, neon and argon lights, influenced by the flourishing aerospace industry.
- The term "Light and Space" derives from a 1971 exhibition at the UCLA University Art Gallery, titled *Transparency, Reflection, Light, Space: Four Artists, including Peter Alexander, Larry Bell, Robert Irwin and Craig Kauffman*, in which, as described by the catalogue, "the works displayed served as liaison between the artists and the spaces they chose to animate." Through this idea, the connection of Light and Space to **Kinetic Art** is revealed, as it is the experience, over the object, which the artists emphasized.
- The movement has also been called **California Minimalism**, because, as art critic **Sascha Crasnow** wrote, it is similarly defined by Minimalism's "qualities of stripping down the object... but added in a uniquely Californian spin - the interaction of light and space." The movement is also closely related to Finish/Fetish, a term first coined by John Coplans in the late 1960s referencing a trend toward the use of plastics with glossy finishes and highly polished surfaces, perhaps best exemplified by artists **Billy Al Bengston, Craig Kauffman, and John McCracken**.
- The concept of **The Sublime** resonates within the all-encompassing aesthetic experience of a Light and Space installation. Feelings of timelessness permeate the multisensory event, overwhelming and nearly transcendental, evoking the definition offered by German philosopher **Emmanuel Kant** who describes the sublime as "**found in a formless object insofar as limitlessness is represented in it.**" Therefore, the sublimity of the Light and Space experience does not reside in the physical object or even the space where the work is situated, but in the ethereal phenomenon of light itself.

Neo-Dada

Started: 1952 Ended: 1970



The term Neo-Dada was applied to the works of artists such as **Jasper Johns**, **Robert Rauschenberg**, and **Allan Kaprow** who initiated a radical shift in the focus of modern art during the 1950s. Neo-Dada artists are known for their usage of **mass media and found objects**, as well as a penchant for **performance**. These artists rebelled against the emotionally charged paintings of the **Abstract Expressionists** that dominated the art world in the 1950s. By introducing mundane subject and emphasizing performance, the Neo-Dada artists ushered in the radical changes modern art underwent during the 1960s and paved the way for **Pop art**, **Minimalism**, and **Conceptualism**.



Theater Piece No. 1 (1952) John Cage

Neo-Dada

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Suite for Five (1956-58) Merce Cunningham

- Unlike the militant declarations of Dada artists, Neo-Dada artists provoked through covert strategies more suitable to the cold war climate. Neo-Dada simultaneously mocked and celebrated consumer culture, united opposing conventions of abstraction and realism, and disregarded boundaries between media through experimentation with **assemblage**, performance, and other hybrid fusions.
- Neo-Dada artists often encouraged viewers to look beyond traditional aesthetic standards and interpret meaning through a process of critical thinking generated by contradictions, absurd juxtapositions, coded narratives, and other mixed signals, rather than the internal emotions the action painters referenced in their abstract works.
- Neo-Dada artists adhered to **Marcel Duchamp's** premise that works of art are intermediaries in a process that the artist begins and the viewer completes. In the historical context, Neo-Dada revived this long dormant theoretical framework and provided the foundation for many of the contemporary art movements that followed.
- Encouraging the shift toward the viewer as part of the artwork, many Neo-Dada artists adhered to a notion that the viewer's interpretation of a work - not the artist's intent - determined its meaning. This was emphasized through the use of chance, found objects, and mass media, which helped eliminate the artist's predetermined significance and instead placed the focus on the viewer's reading of the piece.

Flag (1954-55) Jasper Johns

Johns' use of newspaper and other media dipped in encaustic made each mark distinct and visually linked his work with the Abstract Expressionists, despite the very different processes that were involved. Rather than creating an abstract work like the action painters before him, Johns relied upon the images and signs common to American culture. He shifted the focus from the artist's mark to the interplay of emblems, language, and the media through his use of found objects embedded within the hardened wax "brushstrokes" that constitute the larger image of the American flag.

Furthermore, Johns emphasized his interest in semiotics through his use of this familiar symbol and relied upon the viewer's familiarity with the flag to imbue the work with meaning. Johns, who has referred to his paintings as "facts," does not provide an interpretation or critique of the media, language, or signs he paints - he instead relies upon the viewers to derive their own analyses. Through his revolutionary use of mass media and his focus on familiar signs, Johns moved the course of modern art away from formalist abstraction and towards Pop's attention to mass-produced objects, Conceptual art's focus on language, and, ultimately, to postmodernism's deconstruction of language.



The State Hospital (1964-66)

Edward Kienholz

With the whole sculptural environment encapsulated within a shipping crate, Kienholz created a self-contained tableau that incorporated diverse materials such as fish tanks, plaster casts, fiberglass, hospital beds, bindings, a bedpan, and neon tubing for this particular installation. With these found materials, Kienholz presents the viewer with two emaciated figures bound to their beds, sharply recreating a scene he witnessed as an orderly in a psychiatric ward. Unlike the New York Neo-Dada artists, Kienholz did imbue his works with a pre-determined meaning, which always related to his critiques of contemporary society and culture. However, through his use of found materials and his emphasis on the viewer's experience of, and dialogue with, the artwork, his connection to the Neo-Dada aesthetic and its emphasis on the surrounding world is clear.



Kinetic Art

Started: 1954

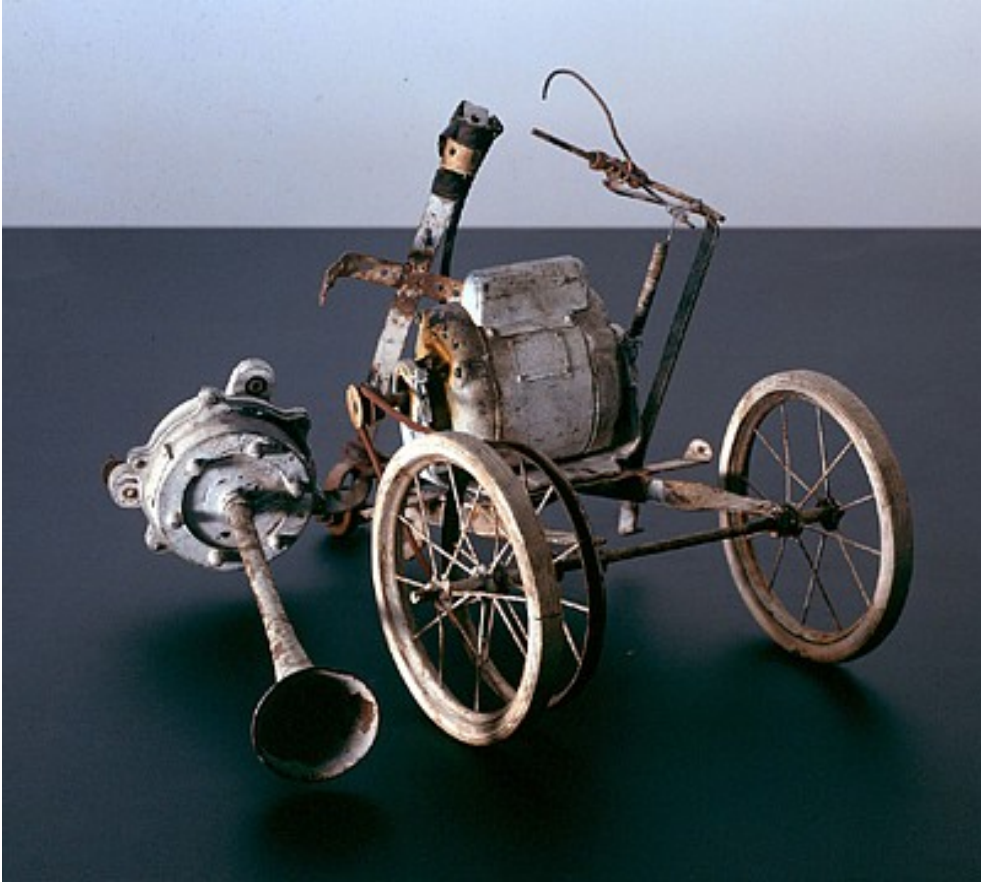
Kinetic art is a manifestation of the fascination with motion which defines a whole swathe of modern art from **Impressionism** onwards. In presenting works of art which moved, or which gave the impression of movement - from mobile, mechanical sculptures to **Op art** paintings which seemed to rotate or vibrate in front of the eyes - Kinetic artists offered us some of the most quintessential expressions of modern art's concern with presenting rather than representing living reality. Tracing its origins to the **Dada** and **Constructivist** movements of the 1910s, Kinetic art grew into a lively **avant-garde** after the Second World War, especially following the genre-defining group exhibition Le Mouvement, held in Paris in 1955. The group was always defined by division, however, and after thriving for around a decade, interest in the style faded; however, its ideas were carried forward by subsequent generations of artists, and it continues to provide a rich source of creative concepts and technical effects up to the present day.



Bicycle Wheel (1913) Marcel Duchamp

Kinetic Art

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Homage to New York (fragment) (1960) Jean Tinguely

In creating paintings, sculptures, and art environments which relied on the presentation of motion for effect, the Kinetic art movement was the first to offer works of art which extended in time as well as space. This was a revolutionary gesture: not only because it introduced an entirely new dimension into the viewing experience, but because it so effectively expressed the new fascination with the interrelationship of time and space which defined modern intellectual culture since the discoveries of Einstein.

Kinetic artists often presented works of art which relied on mechanized movement, or which otherwise explored the drive towards mechanization and scientific knowledge which characterized modern society. Different artists expressed a different stance on this process, however: those more influenced by Constructivism felt that by embracing the machine, art could integrate itself with everyday life, taking on a newly central role in the Utopian societies of the future; artists more influenced by Dada utilized mechanical processes in an anarchic, satirical spirit, to comment on the potential enslavement of humankind by science, technology, and capitalist production.

Many Kinetic artists were interested in analogies between machines and human bodies. Rather than regarding the two entities as radically different - one being soulless and functional, the other governed by intuition and insight - they used their art to imply that humans might be little more than irrational engines of conflicting lusts and urges, like dysfunctional machines. This idea has deep roots in Dada, but is also related to the mid-century concept of cybernetics.

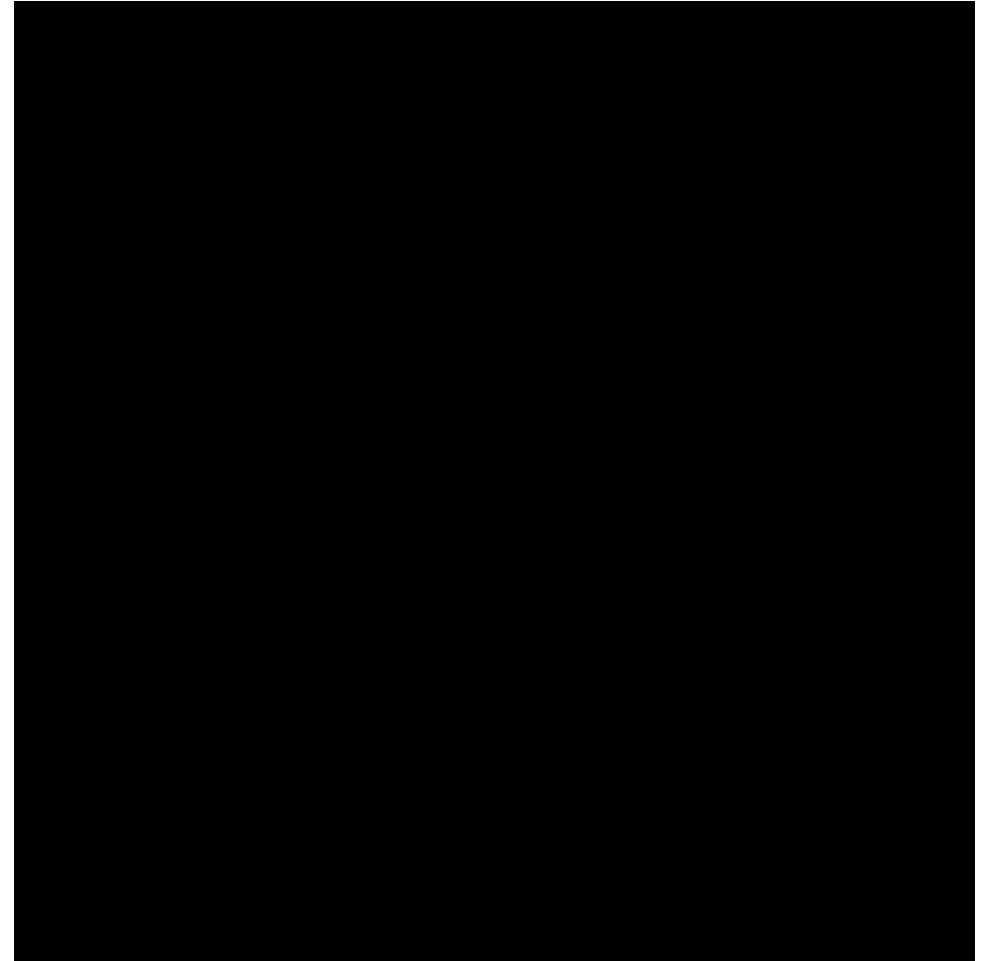
Arc of Petals (1941)

Alexander Calder

Arc of Petals is one of many examples of the **free-standing or hanging "mobiles"** - so christened by **Marcel Duchamp** - for which the American sculptor **Alexander Calder** became famous. Looking somewhat like an inverted, suspended tree, the piece comprises a central spine of iron wire with various petal or leaf-like appendages budding off from it; these pieces are largest and most solid-seeming at the top, smallest and most tentative-seeming at the base. The movement of the piece in the breeze is intended to play with the readers' associations of heaviness and lightness, providing a counterintuitive, irregular pattern of motion. **With works such as *Arc of Petals*, Calder defined an important and unique sub-genre of Kinetic aesthetics, one that was concerned with the movement and dynamism of nature rather than of the mechanized, urbanized world.**

Calder came from a family of sculptors and painters, and before training as an artist took a degree in mechanical engineering, learning various technical processes which he would later put to use in his Kinetic art. In the late 1920s he moved briefly to Paris, where he befriended many of the prominent modern artists of the day; his construction of mobiles as art-objects commenced at the start of the following decade. Whereas early works in this medium rely on motorized or hand-cranked mechanisms to create pre-determined patterns of movements, by the time *Arc of Petals* was made, Calder was generally producing mobiles set in motion by passing air currents. Initially he used materials such as glass or pottery to create these pieces, but later works such *Arc of Petals* were constructed from pieces of hand-shaped aluminum, painted in solid reds, yellows, blues, blacks, and whites. In this case, we can see the influence of his painter friends Joan Miró and Jean Arp in the biomorphic forms of the leaves, while a single aluminum petal left unpainted reminds the viewer of the weight and roughness of the compositional material.

Constructed with artisanal care and intended to be set in motion by natural forces, Calder's mobiles express quite a different aspect of Kinetic art to the futuristic, mechanical contraptions of other artists. The element of chance or contingency introduced into the viewer's encounter with the piece by its interaction with the atmosphere might be described as post-Dada, but there is also a lyrical engagement with nature evident in this effect, and in the graceful organic curves of the piece, while something of the aura of the fine-art object is imbued by Calder's hand-crafting process. In its interaction with the natural world, Calder's work predicts post-Kinetic developments such as Light Art.



CYSP 1 (1956) Nicholas Schöffer

The title of *CYSP 1*, created by the French-Hungarian artist Nicholas Schöffer, is an abbreviation of "Cybernetics" and "Spatiodynamics". Designed in conjunction with the Phillips electronics company, *CYSP 1* was a construction of black steel and polychrome aluminum plates mounted on a base with four rollers. In this base was set an 'electronic brain' which used photo-electric cells and a microphone to record variations in the light intensity, color, and sound levels in the sculpture's surrounding environment. Variations in these atmospheric factors triggered different types of movement when the sculpture recognized the color blue, for example, it would move forwards, retreat, or turn quickly. Designed partly for use on the stage, *CYSP 1* was incorporated into a performance given by Maurice Béjart's ballet company at the Festival of the Avant-Garde in Marseilles in 1956.

Many of the earliest works of Kinetic art had utilized mechanical movement as the basis of their time-bound element, and since the late 1940s Schöffer himself had been creating what he called "spatiodynamic" sculptures, equipped with electric motors allowing remotely-controlled movement. But the integration of an environmentally responsive, unpredictable element into that movement was a major step forward for Kinetic art.

Schöffer was familiar with the **new field of "Cybernetics"** defined in **Norbert Wiener's** 1948 book of that name, which proposed that the behavior of both humans and machines was based on "feedback loops" established with external environments. Not only did this theory provide a model for artificial intelligence, but it also proposed that the intelligence of humans was no different from that of machines, and that, theoretically, thinking life-forms could therefore be constructed. *CYSP 1* represents perhaps the first concerted application of this theory to modern art, and thus signifies a radical advancement in the conceptual and technical scope of Kinetic art.

If Kinetic art was split between those who saw the machine as humankind's potential savior and those who saw it as the potential source of its ruin, Schöffer's work from the 1950s onwards presents the more radical proposition that there is no clear distinction to draw between human and mechanical life in the first place. Through works such as *CYSP 1*, and more ambitious projects such as his *Cybernetic Tower*, installed in 1961 outside *Liège Conference Centre*, he used Kinetic art as the springboard for projects which blurred the boundaries between art and AI, ensuring the longevity and significance of the Kinetic art movement itself.

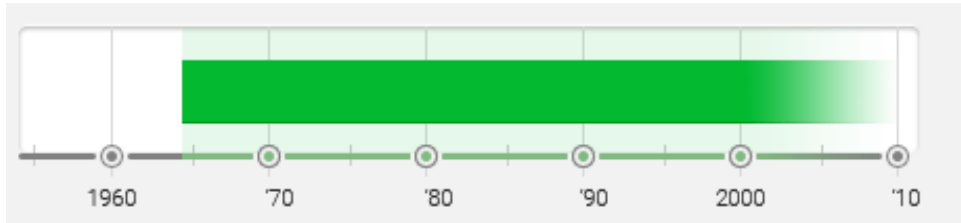




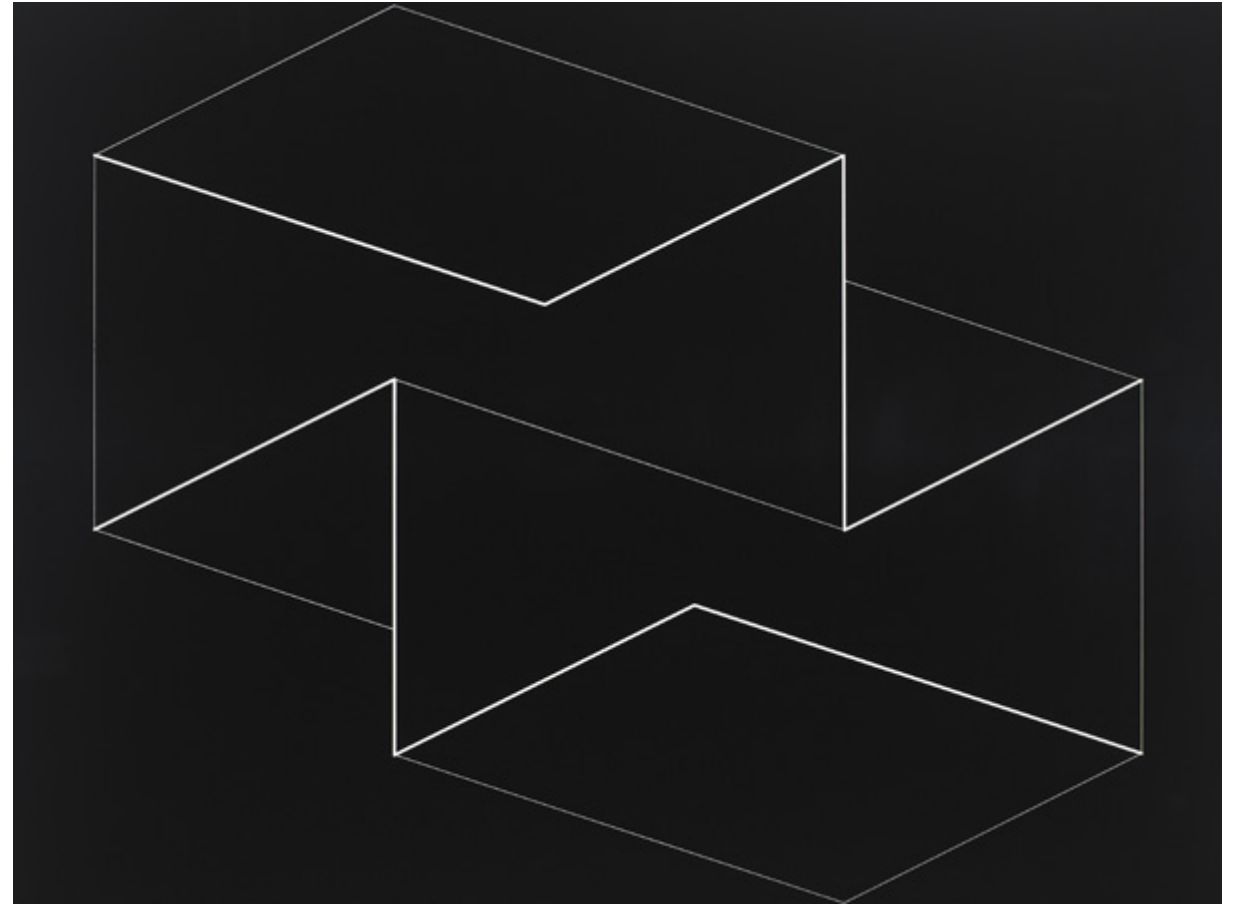


Op Art

Started: 1964



Artists have been intrigued by the nature of perception and by optical effects and illusions for many centuries. They have often been a central concern of art, just as much as themes drawn from history or literature. But in the 1950s these preoccupations, allied to new interests in technology and psychology, blossomed into a movement. Op, or Optical, art typically employs abstract patterns composed with a stark contrast of foreground and background - often in black and white for maximum contrast - to produce effects that confuse and excite the eye. Initially, Op shared the field with **Kinetic Art** - Op artists being drawn to virtual movement, Kinetic artists attracted by the possibility of real motion. Both styles were launched with *Le Mouvement*, a group exhibition at Galerie Denise Rene in 1955. It attracted a wide international following, and after it was celebrated with a survey exhibition in 1965, *The Responsive Eye*, at the **Museum of Modern Art** in New York, it caught the public's imagination and led to a craze for Op designs in fashion and the media. To many, it seemed the perfect style for an age defined by the onward march of science, by advances in computing, aerospace, and television. But art critics were never so supportive of it, attacking its effects as gimmicks, and today it remains tainted by those dismissals.



Structural Constellation (1913) Josef Albers

Op Art

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Blaze (1964), Bridget Riley

The Op art movement was driven by artists who were interested in investigating various perceptual effects. Some did so out of sheer enthusiasm for research and experiment, some with the distant hope that the effects they mastered might find a wide public and hence integrate modern art into society in new ways. Rather like the geometric art from which it had sprung, Op art seemed to supply a style that was highly appropriate to modern society.

Although Op can be seen as the successor to geometric abstraction, its stress on illusion and perception suggests that it might also have older ancestors. It may descend from effects that were once popular with **Old Masters**, such as *trompe l'oeil* (French: "deceive the eye"). Or indeed from anamorphosis, the effect by which images are contorted so that objects are only fully recognizable when viewed from an oblique angle. Or, equally, Op may simply be a child of modern decoration.

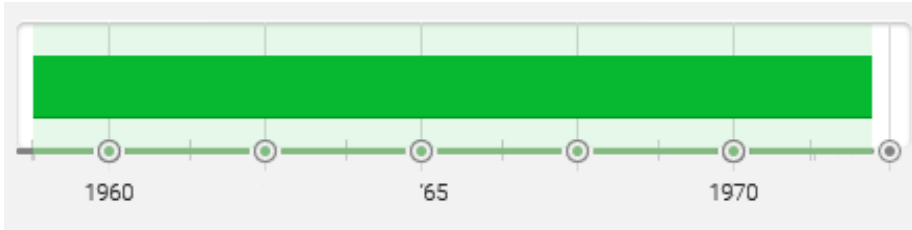
During its years of greatest success in the mid-1960s, the movement was sometimes said to encompass a wide range of artists whose interests in abstraction had little to do with perception. Some, such as **Joseph Albers**, who were often labeled as Op artists, dismissed it. Yet the fact that the label could seem to apply to so many artists demonstrates how important the nuances of vision have been throughout modern art.

Long after Op art's demise, its reputation continues to hang in the balance. Some critics continue to characterize its designs as "retinal titillations." But others have recently argued that the style represented a kind of abstract **Pop art**, one which emulated the dazzle of consumer society but which refused, unlike Pop artists like **Andy Warhol**, to celebrate its icons.



Pop Art

Started: 1950s **Ended:** 1970s



Pop art started with the New York artists **Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, and Claes Oldenburg**, all of whom drew on popular imagery and were actually part of an international phenomenon. Following the popularity of the **Abstract Expressionists**, Pop's reintroduction of identifiable imagery (drawn from mass media and popular culture) was a major shift for the direction of modernism.

The subject matter became far from traditional "high art" themes of morality, mythology, and classic history; rather, Pop artists celebrated commonplace objects and people of everyday life, in this way seeking to elevate popular culture to the level of fine art. Perhaps owing to the incorporation of commercial images, Pop art has become one of the most recognizable styles of modern art.



President Elect (1960-61) James Rosenquist

Pop Art

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Just What is it that Makes Homes So Different, So Appealing? (1956) **Richard Hamilton**

- By creating paintings or sculptures of mass culture objects and media stars, the Pop art movement aimed to **blur the boundaries between "high" art and "low" culture**. The concept that there is no hierarchy of culture and that art may borrow from any source has been one of the most influential characteristics of Pop art.
- It could be argued that the **Abstract Expressionists** searched for trauma in the soul, while Pop artists searched for traces of the same trauma in the mediated world of advertising, cartoons, and popular imagery at large. But it is perhaps more precise to say that Pop artists were the first to recognize that there is no unmediated access to anything, be it the soul, the natural world, or the built environment. Pop artists believed everything is inter-connected, and therefore sought to make those connections literal in their artwork.
- Although Pop art encompasses a wide variety of work with very different attitudes and postures, much of it is somewhat emotionally removed. In contrast to the "hot" expression of the gestural abstraction that preceded it, Pop art is generally "coolly" ambivalent. Whether this suggests an acceptance of the popular world or a shocked withdrawal, has been the subject of much debate.
- Pop artists seemingly embraced the post-World War II manufacturing and media boom. Some critics have cited the Pop art choice of imagery as an enthusiastic endorsement of the capitalist market and the goods it circulated, while others have noted an element of cultural critique in the Pop artists' elevation of the everyday to high art: tying the commodity status of the goods represented to the status of the art object itself, emphasizing art's place as, at base, a commodity.
- The majority of Pop artists began their careers in commercial art: Andy Warhol was a highly successful magazine illustrator and graphic designer; **Ed Ruscha** was also a graphic designer, and **James Rosenquist** started his career as a billboard painter. Their background in the commercial art world trained them in the visual vocabulary of mass culture as well as the techniques to seamlessly merge the realms of high art and popular culture.

Campbell's Soup I (1968)

Andy Warhol

Warhol's iconic series of *Campbell's Soup Cans* paintings were never meant to be celebrated for their form or compositional style, like that of the abstractionists. What made these works significant was Warhol's co-opting of universally recognizable imagery, such as a Campbell's soup can, Mickey Mouse, or the face of Marilyn Monroe, and depicting it as a mass-produced item, but within a fine art context. In that sense, Warhol wasn't just emphasizing popular imagery, but rather providing commentary on how people have come to perceive these things in modern times: as commodities to be bought and sold, identifiable as such with one glance. This early series was hand-painted, but Warhol switched to screenprinting shortly afterwards, favoring the mechanical technique for his mass culture imagery. 100 canvases of Campbell's soup cans made up his first solo exhibition at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles, and put Warhol on the art world map almost immediately, forever changing the face and content of modern art.



Drowning Girl (1963)

Roy Lichtenstein

In the early 1960s, Lichtenstein gained renown as a leading Pop artist for paintings sourced from the popular comics. Although artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns had previously integrated popular imagery into their works, no one hitherto had focused on cartoon imagery as exclusively as Lichtenstein. His work, along with that of Andy Warhol, heralded the beginning of the Pop Art movement, and, essentially, the end of Abstract Expressionism as the dominant style.

Lichtenstein did not simply copy comic pages directly, he employed a complex technique that involved cropping images to create entirely new, dramatic compositions, as in *Drowning Girl*, whose source image included the woman's boyfriend standing on a boat above her. Lichtenstein also condensed the text of the comic book panels, locating language as another, crucial visual element; re-appropriating this emblematic aspect of commercial art for his paintings further challenged existing views about definitions of "high" art.

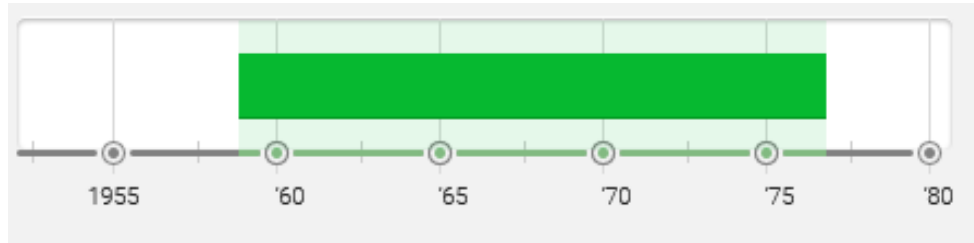
As with the rest of Pop Art, it is often unclear whether Lichtenstein is applauding the comic book image, and the general cultural sphere to which it belongs, or critiquing it, leaving interpretation up to the viewer. But in *Drowning Girl*, the ridicule of the woman's situation (as is made clear by her ridiculous statement) is evident.





Happenings

Started: 1958 **Ended:** 1970s



What began as a challenge to the category of "art" initiated by the **Futurists** and **Dadaists** in the 1910s and 1920s came to fruition with **Performance Art**, one branch of which was referred to as Happenings. Happenings involved more than the detached observation of the viewer; the artist engaged with Happenings required the viewer to actively participate in each piece. There was not a definite or consistent style for Happenings, as they greatly varied in size and intricacy. However, all artists staging Happenings operated with the fundamental belief that art could be brought into the realm of everyday life. This turn toward performance was a reaction against the long-standing dominance of the technical aesthetics of Abstract Expressionism and was a new art form that grew out of the social changes occurring in the 1950s and 1960s.



The Thousand Symphonies (1968) Dick Higgins

Happenings

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

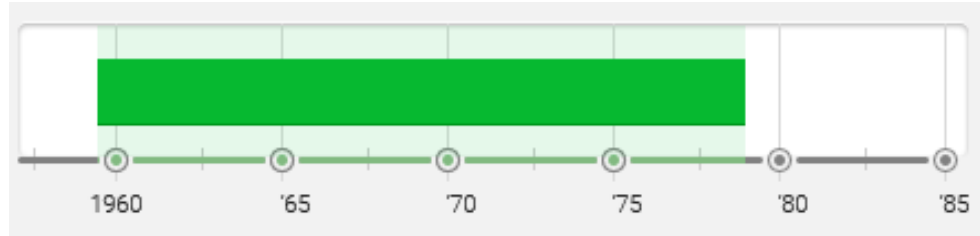


Yard (1961) Allan Kaprow

- A main component of Happenings was the involvement of the viewer. Each instance a Happening occurred the viewer was used to add in an element of chance so, every time a piece was performed or exhibited it would never be the same as the previous time. Unlike preceding works of art which were, by definition, static, Happenings could evolve and provide a unique encounter for each individual who partook in the experience.
- The concept of the ephemeral was important to Happenings, as the performance was a temporary experience, and, as such could not be exhibited in a museum in the traditional sense. The only artifacts remaining from original Happenings are photographs and oral histories. This was a challenge to the art that had previously been defined by the art object itself. Art was now defined by the action, activity, occasion, and/or experience that constituted the Happening, which was fundamentally fleeting and immaterial.
- The purpose of Happenings was to confront and dismantle conventional views of the category of "art." These performances were so influential to the art world that they raised the specter of the "death" of painting.

Fluxus

Started: 1959 Ended: 1978



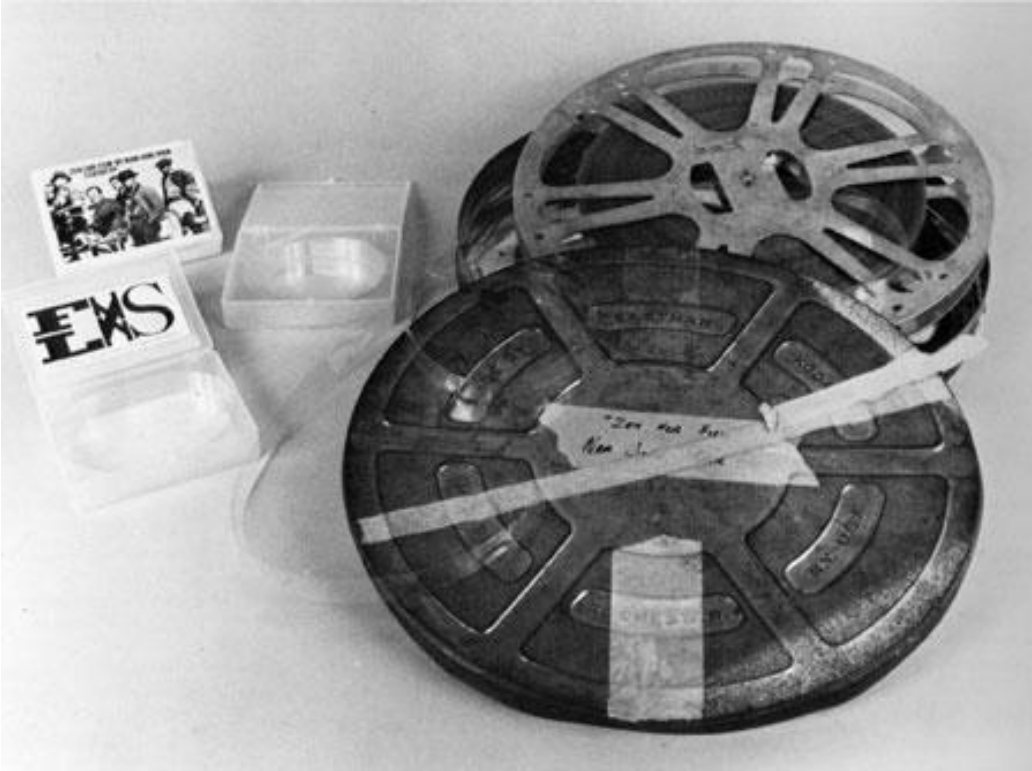
Fluxus was a loosely organized group of artists that spanned the globe, but had an especially strong presence in New York City. **George Maciunas** is historically considered the primary founder and organizer of the movement, who described Fluxus as, "a fusion of Spike Jones, gags, games, Vaudeville, Cage and Duchamp." Like the **Futurists** and **Dadaists** before them, Fluxus artists did not agree with the authority of museums to determine the value of art, nor did they believe that one must be educated to view and understand a piece of art. **Fluxus** not only wanted art to be available to the masses, they also wanted everyone to produce art all the time. It is often difficult to define Fluxus, as many Fluxus artists claim that the act of defining the movement is, in fact, too limiting and reductive.



Cut Piece (1964-66) Yoko Ono

Fluxus

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



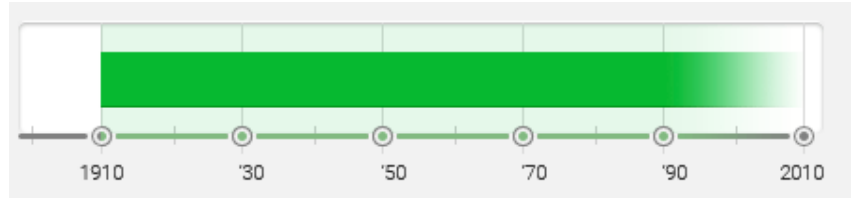
Zen for Film (1964-65) Nam June Paik

- Unlike previous artistic movements, Fluxus sought to change the history of the world, not just the history of art. The persistent goal of most Fluxus artists was to destroy any boundary between art and life. George Maciunas especially wanted to, "purge the world of bourgeoisie sickness...." He stated that Fluxus was "anti-art," in order to underscore the revolutionary mode of thinking about the practice and process of art.
- A central Fluxus tenet was to dismiss and mock the elitist world of "high art" and to find any way possible to bring art to the masses, much in keeping with the social climate of the 1960s. Fluxus artists used humor to express their intent and, along with Dada, Fluxus was one of the few art movements to use humor throughout history. Despite their playful attitude, Fluxus artists were serious about their desire to change the balance of power in the art world. Their irreverence for "high art" had an impact on the perceived authority of the museum to determine what, and who, constituted "art."
- Fluxus art involved the viewer, relying on the element of chance to shape the ultimate outcome of the piece. The use of chance was also employed by **Dada**, **Marcel Duchamp**, and other performance art of the time, such as **Happenings**. Fluxus artists were most heavily influenced by the ideas of **John Cage**, who believed that one should embark on a piece without having a conception of the eventual end. It was the process of creating that was important, not the finished product.

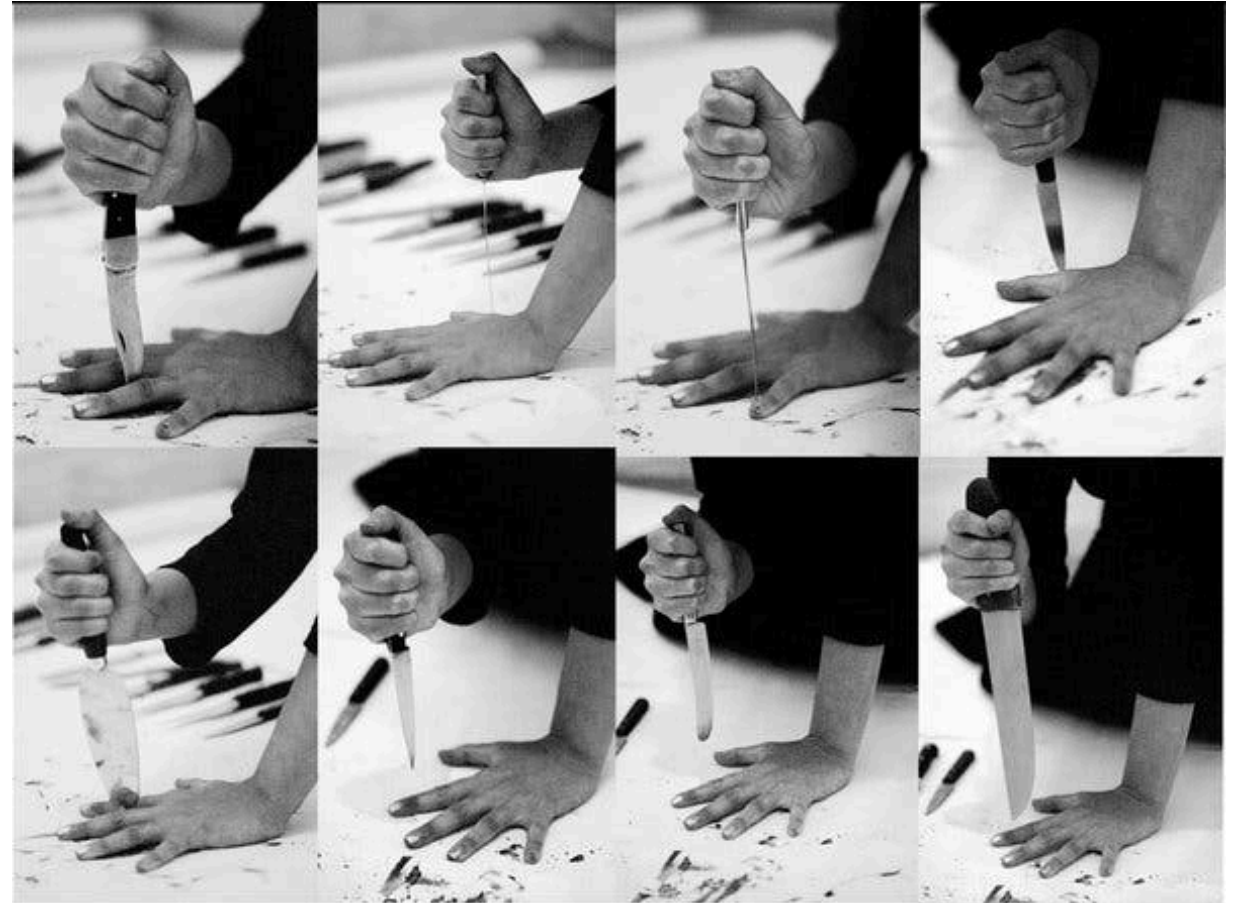


Performance Art

Origins: 1910s Movement: 1960s



Performance is a genre in which art is presented "live," usually by the artist but sometimes with collaborators or performers. It has had a role in **avant-garde art** throughout the 20th century, playing an important part in anarchic movements such as **Futurism** and **Dada**. Indeed, whenever artists have become discontented with conventional forms of art, such as painting and traditional modes of sculpture, they have often turned to performance as a means to rejuvenate their work. The most significant flourishing of performance art took place following the decline of modernism and **Abstract Expressionism** in the 1960s, and it found exponents across the world. Performance art of this period was particularly focused on the body, and is often referred to as **Body art**. This reflects the period's so-called "**dematerialization of the art object**," and the flight from traditional media. It also reflects the political ferment of the time: the rise of feminism, which encouraged thought about the division between the personal and political and anti-war activism, which supplied models for politicized art "actions." Although the concerns of performance artists have changed since the 1960s, the genre has remained a constant presence, and has largely been welcomed into the conventional museums and galleries from which it was once excluded.



Rhythm 10 (1973) Marina Abramovic

Performance Art

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



The Anthropometries of the Blue Period
(1958)
Yves Klein

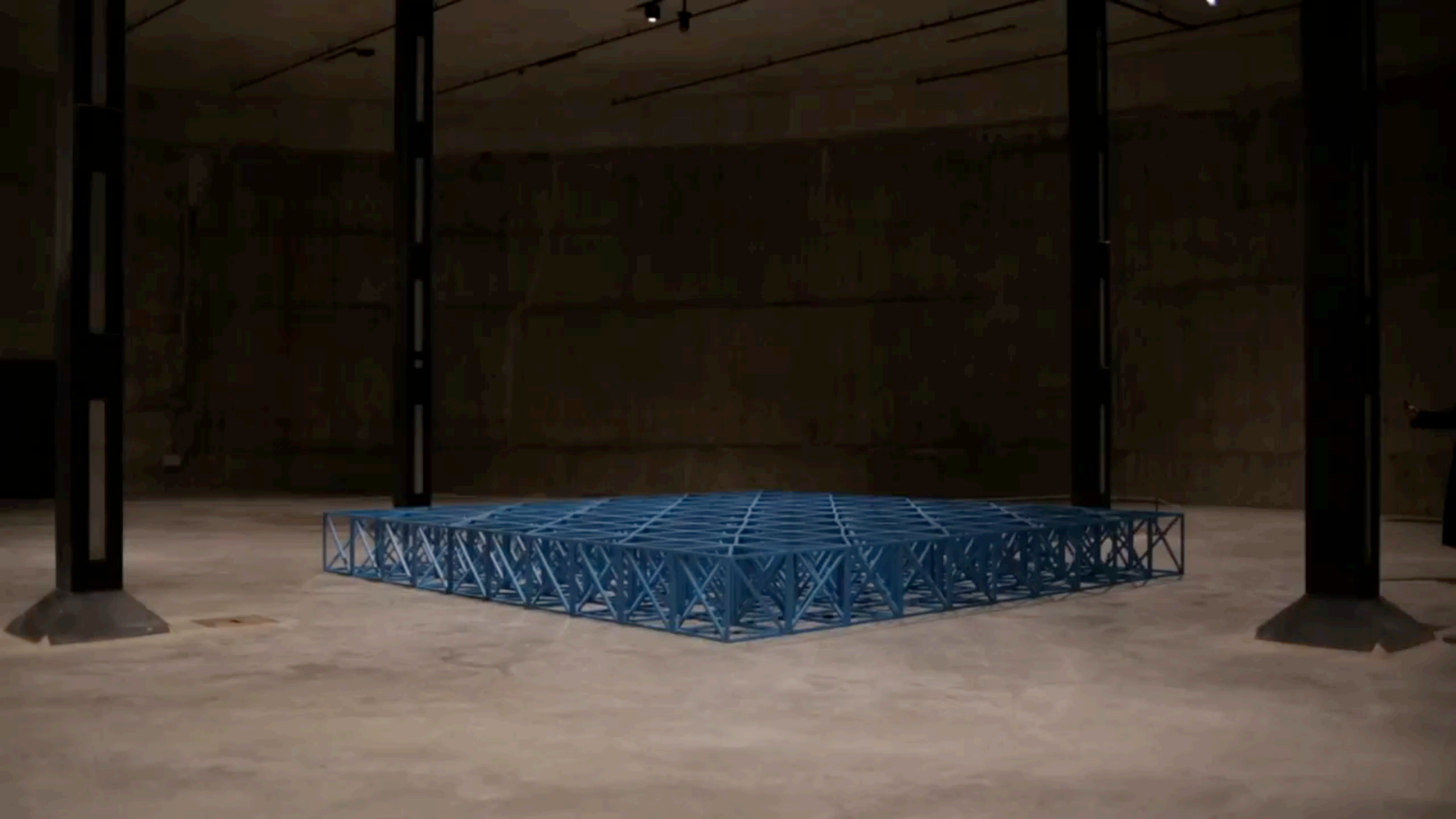
The foremost purpose of performance art has almost always been to challenge the conventions of traditional forms of visual art such as painting and sculpture. When these modes no longer seem to answer artists' needs - when they seem too conservative, or too enmeshed in the traditional art world and too distant from ordinary people - artists have often turned to performance in order to find new audiences and test new ideas.

Performance art borrows styles and ideas from other forms of art, or sometimes from other forms of activity not associated with art, like ritual, or work-like tasks. If cabaret and vaudeville inspired aspects of Dada performance, this reflects Dada's desire to embrace popular art forms and mass cultural modes of address. More recently, performance artists have borrowed from dance, and even sport.

Some varieties of performance from the post-war period are commonly described as "actions." German artists like **Joseph Beuys** preferred this term because it distinguished art performance from the more conventional kinds of entertainment found in theatre. But the term also reflects a strain of American performance art that could be said to have emerged out of a reinterpretation of "**action painting**," in which the object of art is no longer paint on canvas, but something else - often the artist's own body.

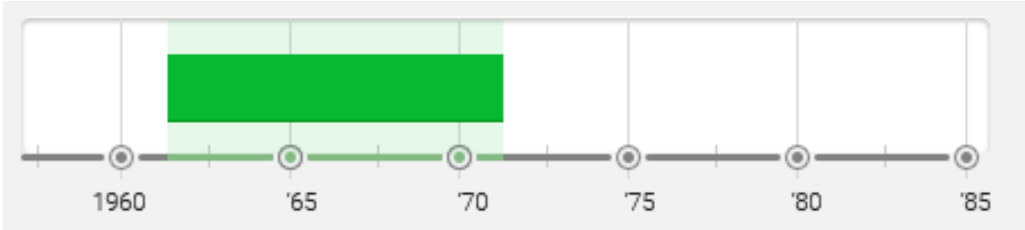
The focus on the body in so much Performance art of the 1960s has sometimes been seen as a consequence of the abandonment of conventional mediums. Some saw this as a liberation, part of the period's expansion of materials and media. Others wondered if it reflected a more fundamental crisis in the institution of art itself, a sign that art was exhausting its resources.

The performance art of the 1960s can be seen as just one of the many disparate trends that developed in the wake of **Minimalism**. Seen in this way, it is an aspect of **Post-Minimalism**, and it could be seen to share qualities of Process art, another tendency central to that umbrella style. If Process art focused attention on the techniques and materials of art production. Process art was also often intrigued by the possibilities of mundane and repetitive actions; similarly, many performance artists were attracted to task-based activities that were very foreign to the highly choreographed and ritualized performances in traditional theatre or dance.



Arte Povera

Started: Early 1924 **Ended:** 1966



Arte Povera - the Italian phrase for "poor art" or "impoverished art" - was one of the most significant and influential **avant-garde** movements to emerge in Southern Europe in the late 1960s. It included the work of around a dozen Italian artists whose most distinctly recognizable trait was their use of commonplace materials that evoked a pre-industrial age, such as earth, rocks, clothing, paper and rope: literally 'poor' or cheap materials that they repurposed for their practice. These practices presented a challenge to established notions of value and propriety, as well as subtly critiquing the industrialization and mechanization of Italy at the time.

Their work marked a reaction against the modernist abstract painting that had dominated European art in the 1950s, which they distinguished themselves from by focusing on the sculptural work rather than painting. The group also rejected American **Minimalism**, and in particular what they perceived as its enthusiasm for technology and dominance over the art world. Whilst in this respect Arte Povera echoes **Post-Minimalist** tendencies in American art of the 1960s in its opposition to **modernism** and technology, its evocations of the past, locality and memory have distinctly Italian aesthetic and strategic characteristics.



Artist's Shit (no. 4) (1961), Piero Manzoni

Arte Povera

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



32 Square Meters of Sea (1967) Pino Pascali

- Some of the group's most memorable work comes from the contrast of unprocessed materials with references to the emergence of consumer culture. Believing that modernity threatened to erase collective memory and tradition (key aspects of Italian cultural heritage) Arte Povera sought to contrast the new with the old in order to complicate its audience's sense of passing time.
- In addition to opposing the technological preoccupation of American **Minimalism**, artists associated with Arte Povera rejected what they perceived as its scientific rationalism. In direct contrast to its methodical and almost clinical approach to spatial relations, they conjured a world of myth whose mysteries couldn't be easily explained.
- Artists presented absurd, jarring and comical juxtapositions, often of the new and the old or the highly processed and the pre-industrial. By doing so, they evoked some of the effects of modernization, with its tendency to destroy experiences of locality and memory as it pushed ever forwards into the future.
- Arte Povera's interest in "poor" materials can be related to several other artistic movements of the 1950s and 1960s. The artists grouped under the term shared some techniques and strategies with movements like Fluxus and Nouveau Realisme in their combination of easily accessible materials with mischievous and rebellious subversions of their usual function. Germano Celant, whose critical practice shaped the definition of the movement, regularly placed Arte Povera in dialogue with these movements.
- Arte Povera is most often related **Assemblage**, an international trend that used similar materials. Both movements marked a reaction against the abstract painting that was perceived as dominating art in the period. This abstract work was viewed as too narrowly concerned with emotion and individual expression, and too confined by the traditions of painting. Arte Povera proposed an artistic practice that was much more interested in materiality and physicality and borrowed forms and materials from everyday life. Arte Povera can be distinguished most from Assemblage by its interest in modes such as performance and installation, approaches that had more in common with pre-war avant-gardes such as **Surrealism**, **Dada** and **Constructivism**.

Arte Povera: Sculpture

Arte Povera is most notable for its use of everyday materials, referred to as poor due to their ubiquity and affordability. The use of materials like soil, food, water and cheap building materials contrasted with the industrial sensibilities of American Minimalism, which was seen by the artists as unsuited to the cultural context of post-war Italy.

At the same time the movement employed subversive avant-garde tactics, such as performance, and unconventional approaches to sculpture, which often included elements of installation. In their mission to reconnect life with art, Arte Povera artists strove to provoke a subjective and personal response to each of their pieces, stressing an interaction between viewer and object that was unrepeatable and purely original.

Sculpture is the artistic medium most closely associated with Arte Povera. Stemming in part from the artists' rejection of abstract and minimalist painting styles, which dominated the international art market of the 1960s, artists created objects that required interaction from the audience or institution to function.

An example of this might be Giovanni Anselmo's *Untitled* (1968), which required the gallery to continually replace the lettuce at the heart of the sculpture to maintain its integrity, or Michelangelo Pistoletto's series of *Minus Objects*, which required the viewer to engage and/or manipulate the object in order to extract its meaning, literally filling the void or 'minus space' in the sculpture.

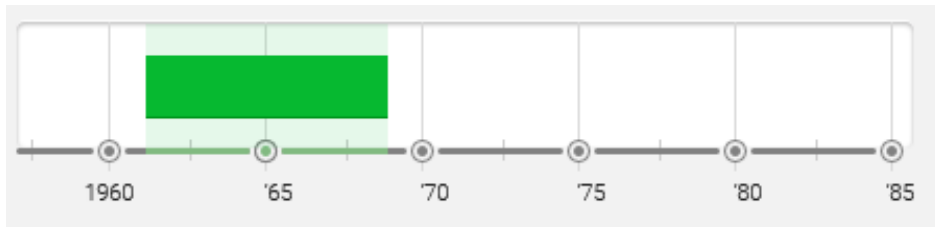
Sculpture by Arte Povera artists also often attempted to bridge the natural and artificial, or at least draw attention to this distinction. This can be seen most clearly in their choice and display of materials, with works where, for example, water and earth might be constrained by geometric frames or structures. This contrast or dissonant pairing of materials can also be seen in the juxtaposition of industrial processes with bodily fluids, waste or things that would otherwise be discarded. **By disrupting the then prevalent notion of the "grand object" the artist drew attention to the contradictions inherent in the system of value placed on art objects and the gallery space itself.**



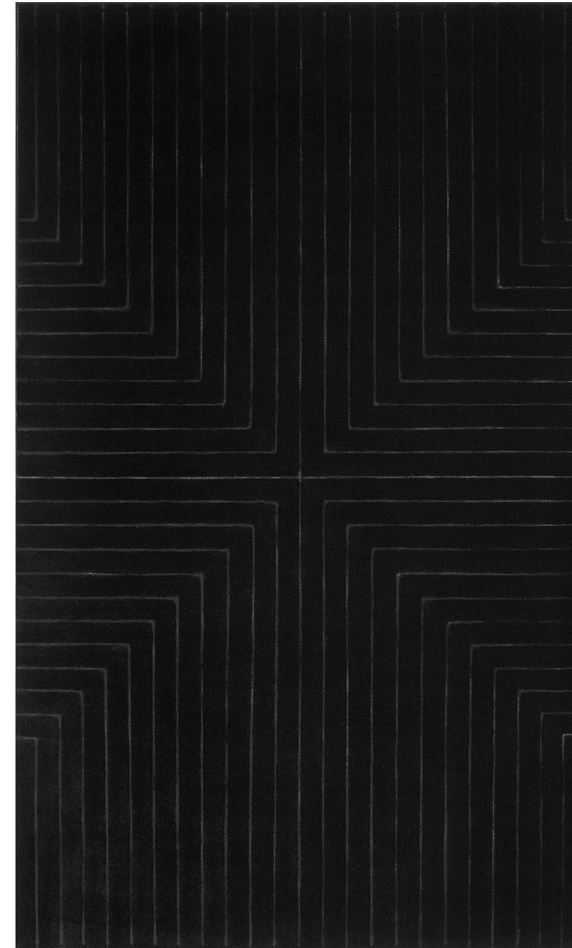
***The Igloo di pietra* (1982) Mario Merz**

Minimalism

Started: early 1960s **Ended:** late 1960s



Minimalism emerged in New York in the early 1960s among artists who were self-consciously renouncing recent art they thought had become stale and academic. A wave of new influences and rediscovered styles led younger artists to question conventional boundaries between various media. The new art favored the cool over the "dramatic": their sculptures were frequently fabricated from industrial materials and emphasized anonymity over the expressive excess of **Abstract Expressionism**. Painters and sculptors avoided overt symbolism and emotional content, but instead called attention to the materiality of the works. By the end of the 1970s, Minimalism had triumphed in America and Europe through a combination of forces including museum curators, art dealers, and publications, plus new systems of private and government patronage. And members of a new movement, **Post-Minimalism**, were already challenging its authority and were thus a testament to how important Minimalism itself became.



Die Fahne Hoch! (1959) Frank Stella

Minimalism

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



One Ton Prop (House of Cards) (1969) Richard Serra

- Minimalists distanced themselves from the Abstract Expressionists by removing suggestions of biography from their art or, indeed, metaphors of any kind. This denial of expression coupled with an interest in making objects that avoided the appearance of fine art led to the creation of sleek, geometric works that purposefully and radically eschew conventional aesthetic appeal.
- The post-Sputnik era revived active interest in **Russian Constructivism**. The Constructivist approach led to the use of modular fabrication and industrial materials in preference to the craft techniques of traditional sculpture. The **readymades** of **Marcel Duchamp** were also inspirational examples of the employment of prefabricated materials. Based on these sources, Minimalists created works that resembled factory-built commodities and upended traditional definitions of art whose meaning was tied to a narrative or to the artist.
- The use of prefabricated industrial materials and simple, often repeated geometric forms together with the emphasis placed on the physical space occupied by the artwork led to some works that forced the viewer to confront the arrangement and scale of the forms. Viewers also were led to experience qualities of weight, height, gravity, agility or even the appearance of light as a material presence. They were often faced with artworks that demanded a physical as well as a visual response.
- Minimalists sought to break down traditional notions of sculpture and to erase distinctions between painting and sculpture. In particular, they rejected the formalist dogma espoused by the critic **Clement Greenberg** that placed limitations on the art of painting and privileged artists who seemed to paint under his direction. The Minimalists' more democratic point of view was set out in writings as well as exhibitions by their leaders **Sol LeWitt**, **Donald Judd**, and **Robert Morris**.

White Cubes (1991) Sol LeWitt

LeWitt was a key intellectual of the Minimalist group and is most known for his open-air, modular structures. He once wrote that "the most interesting characteristic of the cube is that it is relatively uninteresting." This comment speaks to what Minimalist artists aimed to achieve, which was to use objects in and for themselves, not as symbols or as representations of something else (as Frank Stella put it on another occasion: "What you see is what you see."). This lack of meaning is especially the case in works that remain untitled or that have purely descriptive titles, as do LeWitt's. Despite claiming the cube as uninteresting in itself, LeWitt would most often use this form as a jumping off point for his works, often employing them in a grid-like format that underscores his interest in systems and modules that could be repeated and expanded indefinitely, sometimes to the point of irrationality or visual chaos. The modularity, absence of color, and geometric starkness of his pieces all fit within the Minimalist aesthetic.



Untitled (mirrored cubes) (1965-71)

Robert Morris,

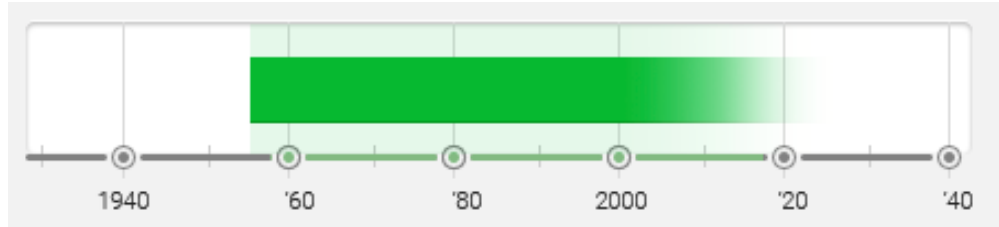
This group of four mirrored cubes illustrates the artist's development as both a Conceptual artist and a Minimalist over a five-year period. Robert Morris began by producing large grey painted plywood boxes that were first used as stage props for a ballet company where he also performed. Their regular geometry and inexpressive surfaces allied his art with the developing Minimalist style, winning him both a solo exhibition and a slot in the landmark 1966 Primary Structures show. By that time Morris had achieved the status of a spokesman for the group with a series of academic essays on sculpture published in *Artforum*, which were widely debated.

These mirrored cubes advanced his interest in the visual properties of materials and modes of perception. The fact that Morris covers his cubes in mirrors forces the viewers to confront themselves in the act of looking rather than simply and placidly admiring the work of art. The size of the piece is roughly the height of a table or countertop, so, like Carl Andre, Morris offers the viewer a kinesthetic or somatic experience that is also outside the traditional art experience. It is this invasion of the center of the gallery space by an object and the concomitant evolving of the art experience beyond the purely visual that led Michael Fried to call the movement "theatrical."



Conceptual Art

Started: 1960s



Conceptual art is a movement that prizes ideas over the formal or visual components of art works. An amalgam of various tendencies rather than a tightly cohesive movement, Conceptualism took myriad forms, such as performances, happenings, and ephemera. From the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s Conceptual artists produced works and writings that completely rejected standard ideas of art. Their chief claim - that the articulation of an artistic idea suffices as a work of art - implied that concerns such as aesthetics, expression, skill and marketability were all irrelevant standards by which art was usually judged. So drastically simplified, it might seem to many people that what passes for Conceptual art is not in fact "art" at all, much as **Jackson Pollock's** "drip" paintings, or **Andy Warhol's Brillo Boxes (1964)**, seemed to contradict what previously had passed for art. But it is important to understand Conceptual art in a succession of **avant-garde** movements (**Cubism**, **Dada**, **Abstract Expressionism**, **Pop**, etc.) that succeeded in self-consciously expanding the boundaries of art. **Conceptualists** put themselves at the extreme end of this avant-garde tradition. In truth, it is irrelevant whether this extremely intellectual kind of art matches one's personal views of what art should be, because the fact remains that Conceptual artists successfully redefine the concept of a work of art to the extent that their efforts are widely accepted as art by collectors, gallerists, and museum curators.



Erased de Kooning Drawing (1953)
Robert Rauschenberg

Conceptual Art

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

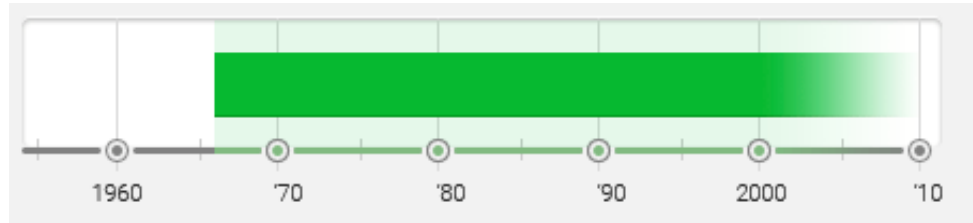


One and Three Chairs (1965) Joseph Kosuth

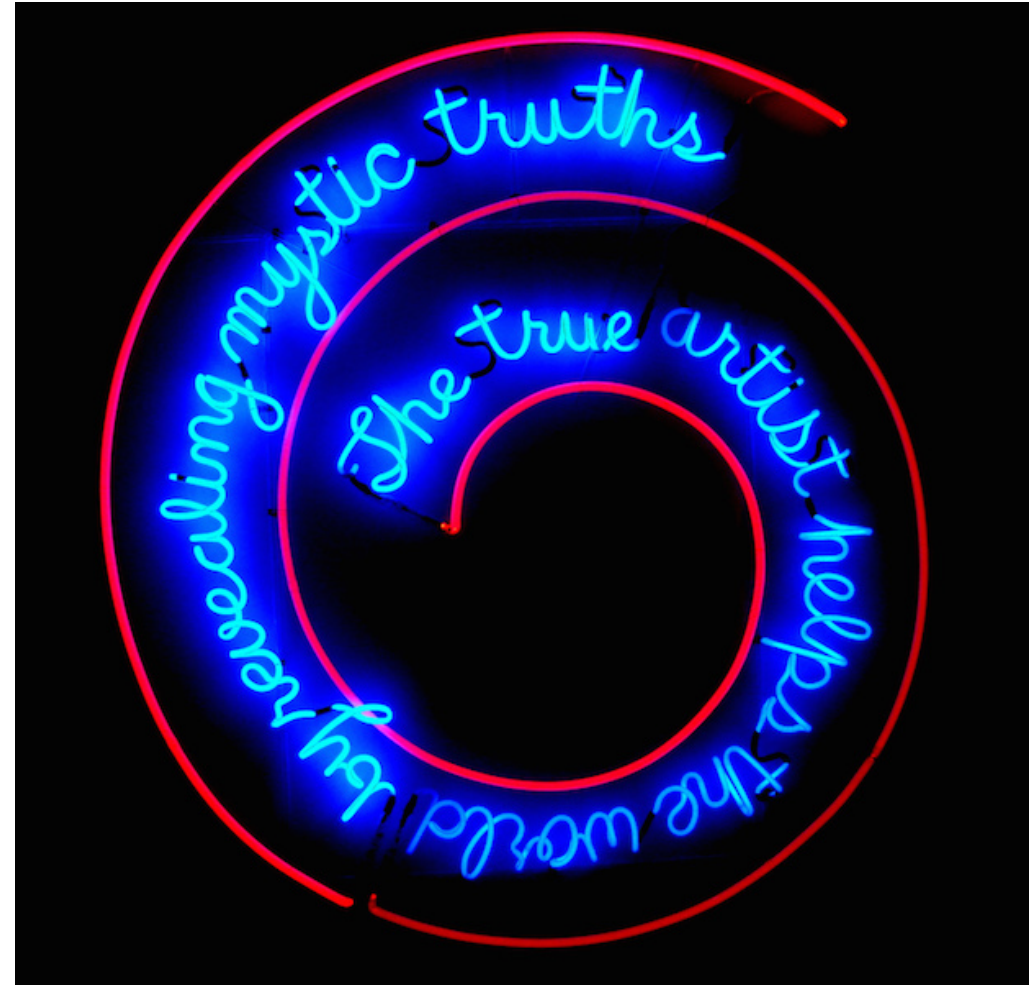
- Conceptual artists link their work to a tradition of **Marcel Duchamp**, whose **readymades** had rattled the very definition of the work of art. Like Duchamp before them, they abandoned beauty, rarity, and skill as measures of art.
- Conceptual artists recognize that all art is essentially conceptual. In order to emphasize this, many Conceptual artists reduced the material presence of the work to an absolute minimum - a tendency that some have referred to as the "dematerialization" of art.
- Conceptual artists were influenced by the brutal simplicity of **Minimalism**, but they rejected Minimalism's embrace of the conventions of sculpture and painting as mainstays of artistic production. For Conceptual artists, art need not look like a traditional work of art, or even take any physical form at all.
- The analysis of art that was pursued by many Conceptual artists encouraged them to believe that if the artist began the artwork, the museum or gallery and the audience in some way completed it. This category of Conceptual art is known as 'institutional critique,' which can be understood as part of an even greater shift away from emphasizing the object-based work of art to pointedly expressing cultural values of society at large.
- Much Conceptual art is self-conscious or self-referential. Like Duchamp and other modernists, they created art that is about art, and pushed its limits by using minimal materials and even text.

Post-Minimalism

Started: 1966



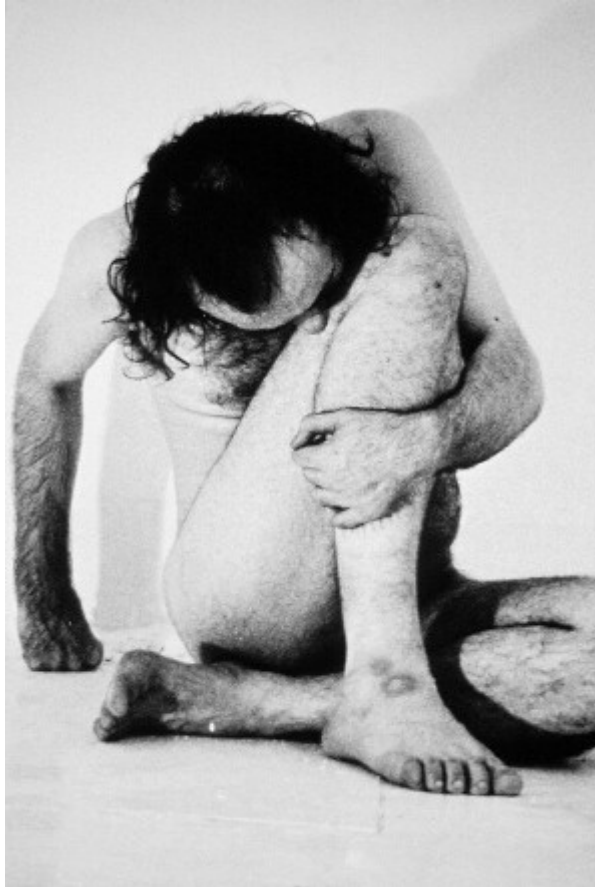
The term "Post-Minimalism" was first used in reference to a range of art practices that emerged in the wake of **Minimalism** in the late 1960s. In a similar manner to the term "Post-Impressionism" it serves to gather together a range of styles that are related, yet which often have very different, even opposing interests. Post-Minimalism refers to tendencies such as **Body art**, **Performance**, Process art, Site-Specific art, and aspects of **Conceptual art**. Some artists associated with this tendency sought to extend the Minimalists' interest in creating art objects that do not have the representational function of traditional sculpture, objects that are abstract, anonymous in appearance, and have a strong material presence. But other Post-Minimalists pursued very different goals: many reacted against the earlier movement's impersonality, trying to invest sculpture once again with emotionally expressive qualities. While the formal and theoretical interests of this period are no longer so influential, many of the themes and strategies of Post-Minimal artists remain very current, making it one of the most enduring styles of the last half-century.



The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths, (Window or Wall Sign) (1967)
Bruce Nauman

Post-Minimalism

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

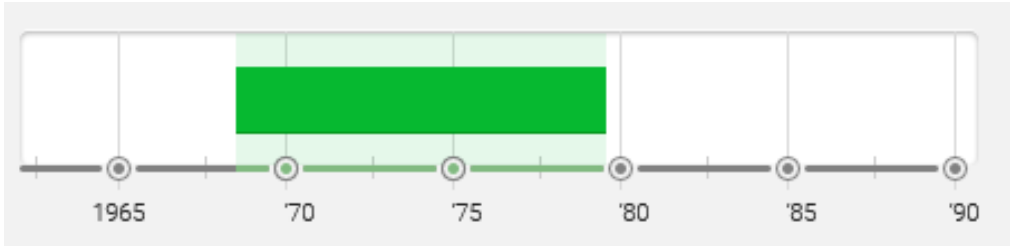


Trademarks (1970) Vito Acconci

- Some Post-Minimal artists were interested in extending Minimalism's interest in anonymity and in emptying artwork of the artist's personal expression. Instead of using industrial materials and impersonal methods of fabrication to achieve this, they used other strategies. They presented material in ways that seemed unprocessed or uncomposed, or the material drooped and sagged, clearly governed more by the character of the material rather than the artist's intentions. To distinguish it from Minimalism's perceived concern with form and composition, this is referred to as "anti-form."
- Some Post-Minimalists shared the Minimalists' interest in abstraction and materiality, yet rejected their preoccupation with industrial materials. They also rejected the movement's mood and rhetoric, often perceived as cold, over-intellectual and even authoritarian, responding with sculptures of more expressive qualities, often evoking the body and aspects of sexuality.
- Many Post-Minimal artists admired Minimalism's break with conventional formats of painting and sculpture, wanting to investigate new limits or traditions in the making of art. Some believed that the chosen material should govern the character of the art object. Others believed in a more expanded sense of technique that encompassed the artist's processes, the materials and even the way gravity operates on materials.
- Some artists also took the cue to get out of the gallery and install art in new environments. This led to a new interest in the relationship between the artwork and its site, called Site-Specificity. Others took artwork into the natural environment in the **Land art** movement.

Earth Art

Started: 1960s



Earth art, also referred to as Land art or Earthworks, is largely an American movement that uses the natural landscape to create site-specific structures, art forms, and sculptures. The movement was an outgrowth of **Conceptualism** and **Minimalism**: the beginnings of the environmental movement and the rampant commoditization of American art in the late 1960s influenced ideas and works that were, to varying degrees, divorced from the art market. In addition to the monumentality and simplicity of Minimalist objects, the artists were drawn to the humble everyday materials of **Arte Povera** and the participatory "social sculptures" of **Joseph Beuys** that stressed performance and creativity in any environment.



Pebbles, broken and scraped white with another stone (1985) Andy Goldsworthy

Earth Art

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



A Line Made By Walking (1967) Richard Long

- The favored materials for Earthworks were those that could be extracted directly from nature, such as stones, water, gravel, and soil. Influenced by prehistoric artworks such as Stonehenge, Earth artists left their structures exposed to the elements. The resulting ephemerality and eventual disintegration of the works put them outside of the mainstream where works of art were typically coddled and protected in controlled environments.
- Earth artists often utilized materials that were available at the site on which their works were constructed and placed, honoring the specificity of the site. Locales were commonly chosen for particular reasons. **Robert Smithson**, for example, picked damaged sites for his works in order to suggest renewal and rebirth. This idea of site-specificity was something introduced to the art world by Earth art, again placing the artists at the vanguard because their pieces often required wide, open spaces, meaning that many of their works were not available to the average viewer and thus questioned the very purpose of art as something to be viewed.
- The rejection of traditional gallery and museum spaces defined Earth art practice. By creating their works outside of these institutions, Earth artists rebuffed the commodity status these venues conferred on art, again challenging traditional definitions of art as something to be bought and sold for profit.

Spiral Jetty (1970)

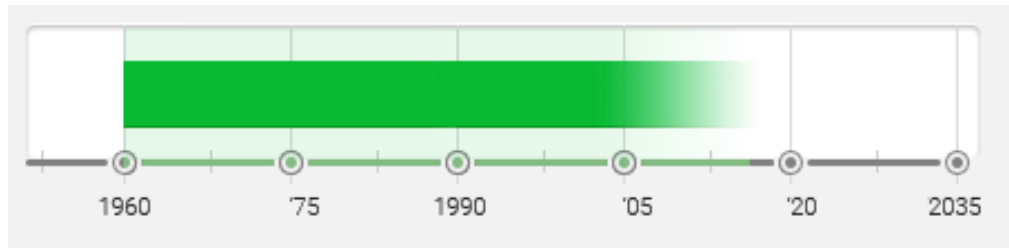
Robert Smithson

Realized in April 1970, Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* is one of the most recognizable works from the Earth art movement. Smithson constructed a 1,500-foot-long and fifteen-foot-wide spiral made of stones, algae, and other organic materials (6,000 tons in all) in the northeastern part of Utah's Great Salt Lake. The Ace Gallery of Vancouver and Dwan financed an earth-moving company to create the spiral out of basalt rock and earth from the surrounding area. In 1972, when the water level rose, the work became submerged. Thirty years later, as the lake's water levels changed, *Spiral Jetty* became visible again, revealing the basalt rock crusted over with white salt. The work was inspired by the Pre-Columbian structure *Serpent Mound*, which Smithson had seen on a site visit in Ohio. *Spiral Jetty* and Smithson's body of work as a whole were typical of Earth art in their protest against the commodification of the art market since it was impossible to buy or sell the work. The physical mutability and even invisibility of the work resulting from natural processes, such as water currents and erosion, were essential to its meaning. As a work of art that was not only remote, but also at times impossible to view because of the forces of nature, *Spiral Jetty* is one of the best examples of Earth art and also underscores the movement's roots in Conceptualism.



Feminist Art

Started: 1960s



The Feminist art movement emerged in the late 1960s amidst the fervor of anti-war demonstrations and civil and queer rights movements. Harkening back to the utopian ideals of early-20th-century modernist movements, Feminist artists sought to rewrite a falsely male-dominated art history as well as change the contemporary world around them through their art, focusing on intervening in the established art world and the art canon's legacy, as well as in everyday social interactions. As artist **Suzanne Lacy** declared, the goal of Feminist art was to "influence cultural attitudes and transform stereotypes." Feminist art created opportunities and spaces that previously did not exist for women and minority artists, as well as paved the path for the Identity art and Activist art of the 1980s.



Womanhouse (1972) Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro

Feminist Art

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

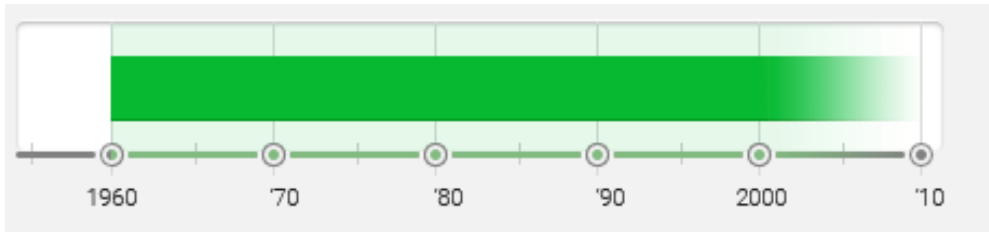


Semiotics of the Kitchen (1975) Martha Rosler

- Feminist artists sought to create a dialogue between the viewer and the artwork through the inclusion of women's perspective. Art was not merely an object for aesthetic admiration, but could also incite the viewer to question the social and political landscape, and through this questioning, possibly affect the world and bring change toward equality.
- Before feminism, the majority of women artists were invisible to the public eye. They were oftentimes denied exhibitions and gallery representation based on the sole fact of their gender. The art world was largely known, or promoted as, a boy's club, of which sects like the hard drinking, womanizing members of Abstract Expressionism were glamorized. To combat this, Feminist artists created alternative venues as well as worked to change established institutions' policies to promote women artists' visibility within the market.
- Feminist artists often embraced alternative materials that were connected to the female gender to create their work, such as textiles, or other media previously little used by men such as performance and video, which did not have the same historically male-dominated precedent that painting and sculpture carried. By expressing themselves through these non-traditional means, women sought to expand the definition of fine art, and to incorporate a wider variety of artistic perspectives.

Photorealism

Started: early 1960s



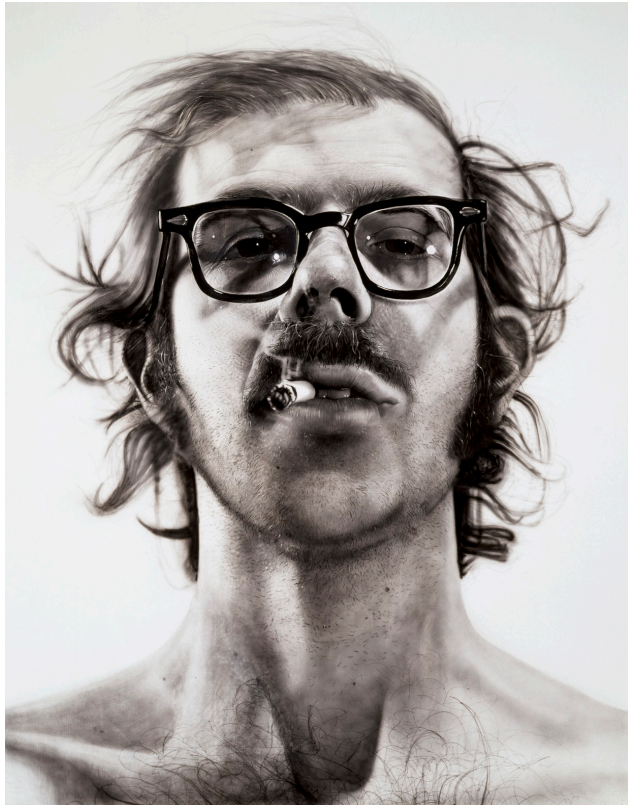
The name Photorealism (also known as Hyperrealism or Superrealism) was coined in reference to those artists whose work depended heavily on photographs, which they often projected onto canvas allowing images to be replicated with precision and accuracy. The exactness was often aided further by the use of an airbrush, which was originally designed to retouch photographs. The movement came about within the same period and context as **Conceptual art**, **Pop art**, and **Minimalism** and expressed a strong interest in realism in art, over that of idealism and abstraction. Among several male practitioners of Photorealism there is an interest in themes of machinery and objects of industry such as trucks, motorcycles, cars, and even gumball machines, whereas **Audrey Flack**, the sole female practitioner, infuses her works with greater emotionality and the transience of life. Ultimately, the Photorealists were successful in attracting a wide audience, but they are often overlooked by art historians as an important **avant-garde** style.



Circus Act (1995), Charles Bell

Photorealism

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

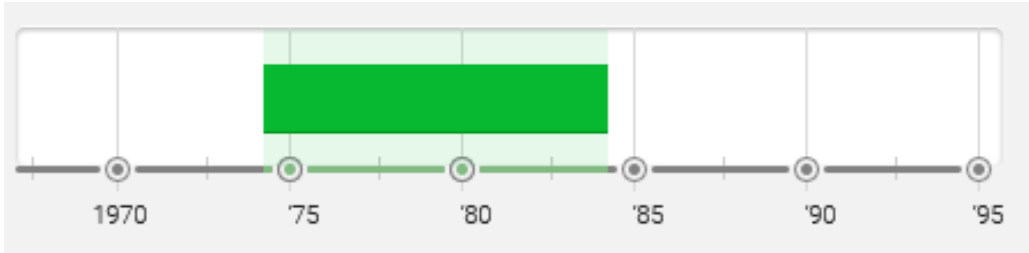


Self-Portrait (1967-68) Chuck Close

- To a degree not previously accomplished, Photorealism complicates the notion of realism by successfully mixing together that which is real with that which is unreal. While the image on the canvas is recognizable and carefully delineated to suggest that it is accurate, the artist often based their work upon photographs rather than direct observation. Therefore, their canvases remain distanced from reality factually and metaphorically.
- Many Photorealists adamantly insist that their works, which are laden with such mass and consumer culture icons as trucks, fast food restaurants, and mechanical toys, are *not* communicative of social criticism or commentary. However, it is hard to deny that these works are recognizably American. At times, the actual work rather than the artist's words is our most useful guide. In this manner, there is the contrast between the reality and primacy of the word or text, over the visual within our society.
- Since the advent of photography in the early-19th-century artists have used the camera as a tool in picture making; however, artists would never reveal in paint their dependency on photographs as to do so was seen as "cheating". In contrast, Photorealists acknowledge the modern world's mass production and proliferation of photographs, and they do not deny their dependence on photographs. In fact, several artists attempt to replicate the effects of photography (getting away from the natural vision of our eyes) such as blurriness or multiple-viewpoints, because they favor the aesthetic and look. Therefore, while the resulting image is realistic, it is simultaneously one-stage away from reality by its dependence on the reproduced image. These works question traditional artistic methods, as well as the differences between reality and artificiality.
- The representation of light, as well as the interaction of light and color together has concerned artists throughout the ages. By using slide machines to project images onto bare canvas Photorealism for the first time unites color and light together as one element. The capturing of light is most especially evident in the highly reflective surfaces of steel and chrome.
- Photorealists, along with some practitioners of Pop art, reintroduced the importance of process and deliberate planning over that of improvisation and automatism, into the making of art, draftsmanship, and exacting brushwork. In other words, the traditional techniques of academic art are again of great significance, and painstaking craftsmanship is prized after decades of the spontaneous, accidental, and improvisational.

The Pictures Generation

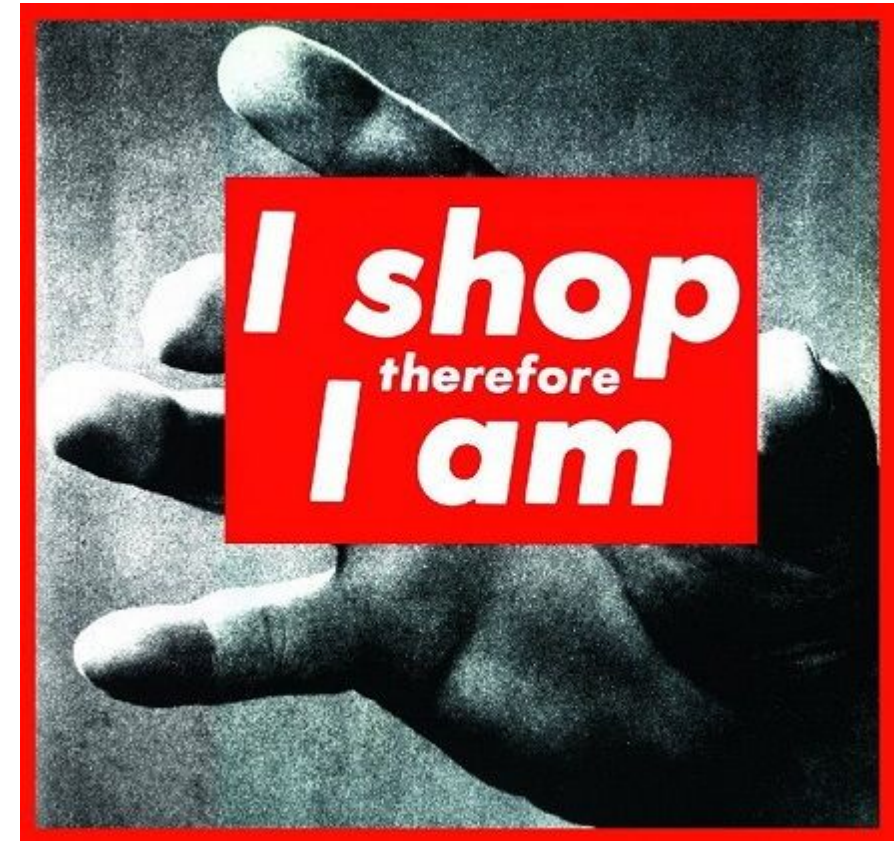
Started: 1974 Ended: 1984



The Pictures Generation was a loose affiliation of artists, influenced by **Conceptual** and **Pop art**, who utilized appropriation and montage to reveal the constructed nature of images.

Experimenting with a variety of media, including photography and film, their works exposed cultural tropes and stereotypes in popular imagery. By reworking well-known images, their art challenged notions of individuality and authorship, making the movement an important part of **postmodernism**.

The artists created a more savvy and critical viewing culture, while also expanding notions of art to include social criticism for a new generation of viewers saturated by mass media.



Untitled (I Shop Therefore I am) (1987)
Barbara Kruger

The Pictures Generation

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

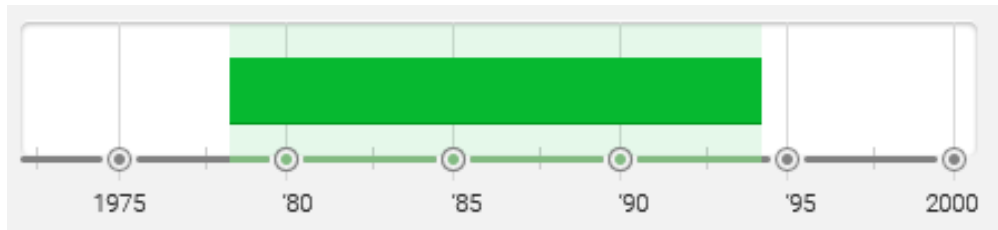


Men in Cities (1979) Robert Longo

- Influenced by the ubiquity of advertising and the highly saturated image culture of the United States, Pictures Generation artists produced work that itself often resembles advertising. In thus challenging traditional art forms that appear handcrafted, these artists situated themselves at the center of postmodern debates about authenticity and authorship while in the process creating art that is slick and has the appearance of mass production. Their works blur the lines between high art and popular imagery.
- Though many artists in the group were trained formally in traditional disciplines such as painting and sculpture, they elected to utilize their skills in unorthodox ways - re-examining composition, particularly within popular image production. The ready availability of cameras allowed artists to reconsider photography's stance as an artistic medium, composing images with conceptual frameworks.
- Like photography, video is the perfect medium through which to explore the blurry boundaries between originals and reproductions. The advent of the portable video camera along with the first examples of video art in the 1960s allowed Pictures Generation artists to analyze and critique television for the first time.

Neo-Expressionism

Started: 1970s Ended: 1990s



Many artists have practiced and revived aspects of the original **Expressionism** movement its peak at the beginning of the 20th century, but the most famous return to Expressionism was inaugurated by **Georg Baselitz**, who led a revival that dominated German art in the 1970s. By the 1980s, this resurgence had become part of an international return to the sensuousness of painting - and away from the stylistically cool, distant sparseness of **Minimalism** and **Conceptualism**. Very different artists, especially in the United States, from **Julian Schnabel** and **Francesco Clemente** to **Jean-Michel Basquiat**, turned in expressive directions to create work that affirmed the redemptive power of art in general and painting in particular, drawing upon a variety of themes including the mythological, the cultural, the historical, the nationalist, and the erotic.



Georg Baselitz

Neo-Expressionism

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

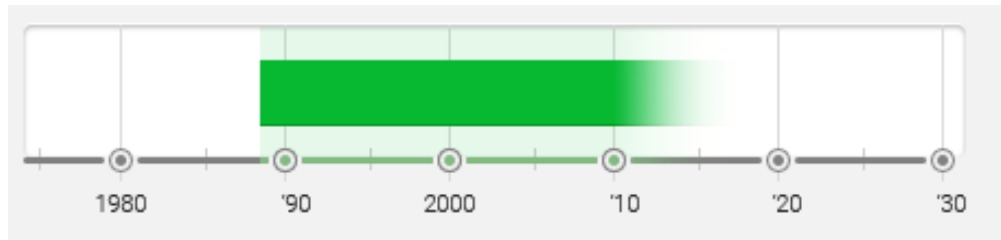


Anselm Kiefer

- The Neo-Expressionist artists depicted their subjects in an almost raw and brutish manner, newly resurrecting in their frequently large-scale works, the highly textural and expressive brushwork and intense colors that had been rejected by the immediately preceding art movements.
- Because the work of the Neo-Expressionist artists was so closely linked to buying, selling, and the commercial system of art with its galleries, critics, and media hype (typical of the Reagan era in the United States), some in the field began to question its authenticity as art that was as purely motivated as was, say, that of the **Abstract Expressionists**. Thus its popularity was also the seed of its demise.
- Because Neo-Expressionism accepted and rejuvenated historical and mythological imagery -- as opposed to the modernists' tendency to reject storytelling (witnessed especially in **Clement Greenberg's** theories of art) - some scholars believe that Neo-Expressionism played an important role in the transition from modernism to postmodernism.
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Young British Artists

Started: 1980s



The Young British Artists (YBAs) are a loosely-affiliated group who met in London in the late 1980s and participated in two of the most shocking exhibits of the late-20th century: Freeze (1988) and Sensation (1997).

The group is known for their entrepreneurial spirit, their use of shock tactics, and their wild partying - especially during their 1990s heyday.

The most financially successful YBAs are now some of the richest artists in the world, and remain brash and incredibly media-savvy - their choice of subject matter and perceived lack of artistic skill makes their work **postmodern**, but has been widely criticized in the media.



Pop 1993, Gavin Turk

Young British Artists

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



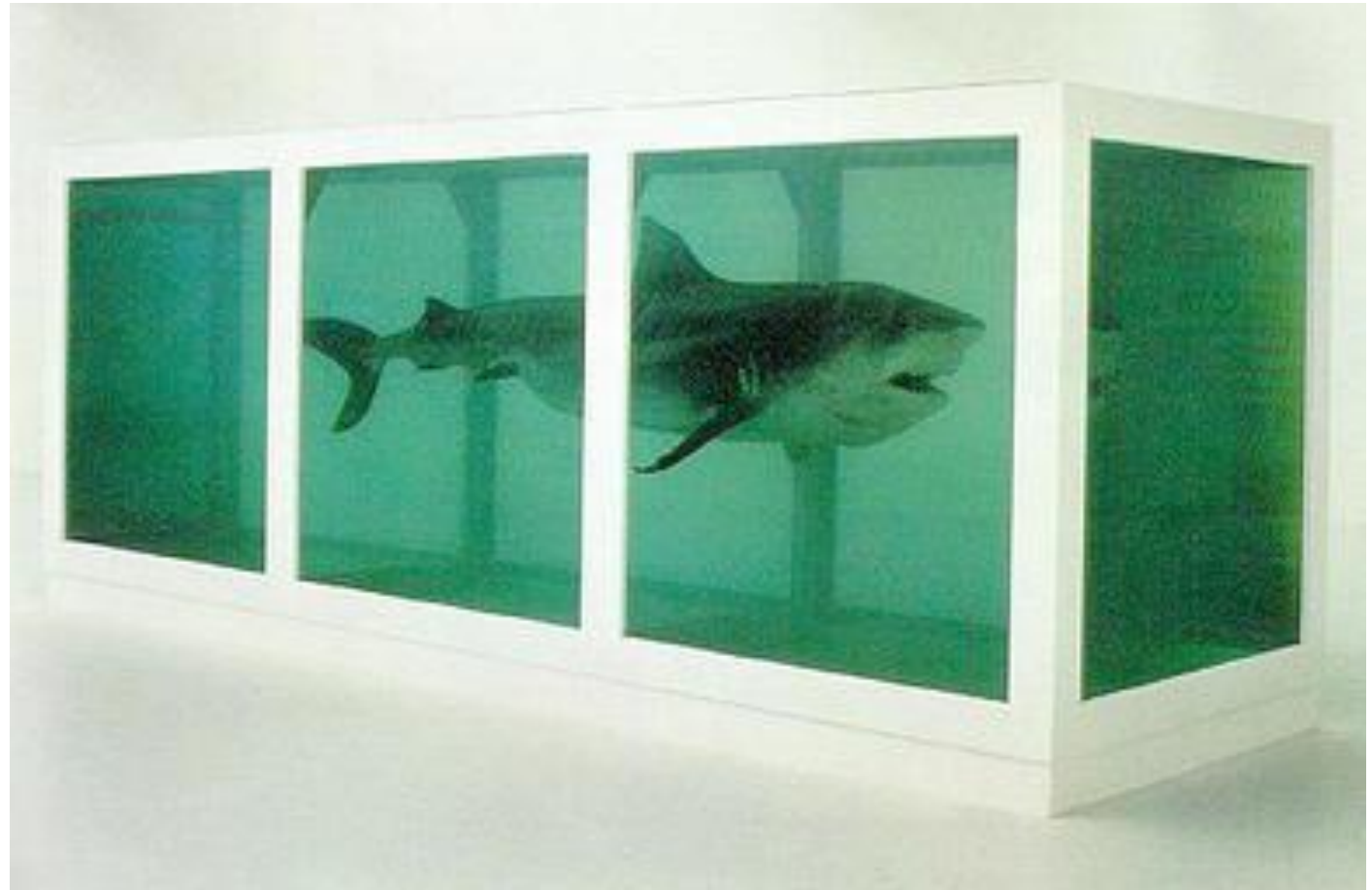
Preserve (beauty) 1991-2003 | Anya Gallaccio

- The YBAs are notorious for their willingness to shock audiences with gratuitously violent imagery, brazen use of pornography, and their desire to push beyond what many consider the limits of decency. Derogatory UK tabloid press coverage was an important component of their success, as it was all most people knew of the group.
- The works of the various YBA artists are characterized by their open approach to process and materials, something that can be attributed to the structure of the B.A. Fine Art program at Goldsmiths College where many of them studied. Their courses abandoned the traditional segregation of artistic training into painting, drawing, photography, and sculpture classes in favor of mixed studios.
- YBA works fit well with the many postmodern experiments that dominated the art of the 1980s and 1990s in both Europe and America. Postmodernism is characterized by the breakdown of distinctions between high and low culture, the use of appropriation, a rejection of fine art materials, and a focus on spectacle. All of these elements can be found in the works of YBA artists.

**The Physical Impossibility of Death In The Mind of
Someone Living (1991
Damien Hirst**

Probably the most emblematic work of the movement (it's now often referred to in art circles as simply 'The Shark'), *The Physical Impossibility of Death In The Mind of Someone Living* consists of the body of a tiger shark suspended in formaldehyde. The monstrous fish floating in its tank appears alive and dead at the same time, and is typical of Hirst's brashly conceptual postmodernism and unapologetically direct style in the tradition of Dada. The piece was commissioned by Charles Saatchi for the *Young British Artists* show at his gallery in St John's Wood, London in 1992, and was sold in 2004 to collector Steven Cohen for a reported \$8 million. After the original shark started to deteriorate, Cohen paid for a replacement, raising the philosophical question as to whether it could now be considered the same artwork. Hirst, as a conceptualist whose focus is on the intention rather than the piece itself, argued that it was, while traditionalists (especially art conservators) had a different view.

The piece is one of the most potent examples in popular culture of an artwork that deals so unashamedly with concepts of death and the greatest human fears (following in the footsteps of artistic greats such as the romantic artist Francisco Goya and figurative painter Francis Bacon). It has entered the public imagination and become one of the most recognized examples of contemporary art because it symbolizes all that the YBA movement stood for - huge production value, the use of shock tactics to produce an instant reaction in the viewer, and the use of non-art materials.



My Bed (1998)

Tracey Emin

My Bed is Tracey Emin's own bed and its surrounding detritus, removed from her home and installed in a gallery space. Emin claims it is a faithful reconstruction of the scene she witnessed after coming round from a four-day stint of depression caused by a relationship breakdown - complete with used condoms, dirty underwear, stained sheets, old Kleenex, and cigarette butts. The piece is typical of Emin's distinctive brand of confessional art, where even the darkest and most embarrassing details of her life are used as artistic fodder for drawings, installations, and sculptures. *My Bed* caused huge controversy in the British tabloid press when it was nominated for the Turner Prize for contemporary British art in 1999. Japanese performance artists Yuan Chai and Jian Jun Xi enhanced the piece's notoriety when they jumped and pillow fought on it while it was on display at Tate Britain, London.

While the media frenzy around the work has assured *My Bed* a place in the artistic canon, the piece is also seen as a significant postmodern artwork in its use of non-art materials and its exploration of what it meant to be a young woman at the turn of the 21st century. It follows in the footsteps of other important feminist works such as Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro's *Womanhouse* installation of 1972 - similarly challenging traditional expectations as to how women should present themselves by blurring the boundaries between art and life, public and private.





Modern Art Movements

Post WWII - Late 20th Century Abstract Expressionism – Brit Art

- Realism (Edward Hopper)
- Abstract Expressionism
- Color Field Painting
- Light and Space
- Neo-Dada
- Kinetic Art
- Op Art
- Pop Art
- Happenings
- Fluxus
- Performance Art
- Arte Povera
- Minimalism
- Conceptual Art
- Post-Minimalism
- Earth Art
- Feminist Art
- Photorealism
- The Picture Generation
- Neo-Expressionism
- YBA – Young British Artists