

Art historit 300-2

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Assignment 08 AR300 Art History May 18 Discuss the development and characteristics of Expressionism; be sure to include Gorky, Pollock, and de Kooning in your discussion, using examples of their work as discussed in the text.

Art critic Robert M. Coates coined the word Abstract Expressionism in a review of a Hans Hofmann exhibition. Coates wrote Hoffman “ is certainly one of the most uncompromising representatives of what some people call the spatter-and-daub school and I, more politely, have christened abstract Expressionism” (Warholstars. org, n. d.). Similar to other historical movements, Abstract Expressionism does not have any specific definition. Nevertheless, some scholars agreed that Abstract Expressionism represents a “ cohesive intellectual and artistic experience” that started in New York, where individuals frequently interacted with each other, and share a common approach to making art, even when the appearance of their paintings diverged in many ways (Carr, n. d.). This common approach married the forms, purposes, colors, and shapes of Expressionism and Abstract Art.

After World War II, a small group of American painters who lived in New York developed an artistic innovation (Carr, n. d.). They were called the “ Rebel Painters of the 1950s” and included Jackson Pollock, Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning, Philip Guston, Adolph Gottlieb, Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt, Mark Rothko, and Clyfford Still (Carr, n. d.). These artists rejected both social realism and geometric abstraction, two leading strains in American art in the 1930s (Carr, n. d.). Abstract Expressionists focused on expressing elusive ideas and experiences. For Pollock, Gorky, and de Kooning, their subjects were autobiographical and

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came from their sheer need to paint and express themselves. In Gorky's "The Artist and His Mother" paintings, they were often compared to Ingres for simplicity of lines and to Picasso for color and structure. Pollock is known for his abstract expressionist paintings, such as Number 1, 1950 (Lavender Mist), where his subconscious seemed to have controlled the flow of action in the painting. de Kooning's Woman V (1952-53) has Gorky's surrealist style and Picasso's form and shape. Mark Rothko fluently described their Abstract Expressionist art: "Art was not about an experience, but was itself the experience" (Carr, n. d.).

Abstract Expressionism developed in the social setting of the Depression era. During this time, artists like Gorky and de Kooning, for instance, lived near each other and became good friends (Carr, n. d.). de Kooning also befriended Rothko, Philip Guston and Barnett Newman (Carr, n. d.). The friendships and solidarity among the Abstract Expressionists were strengthened by the closeness of their studios. In the 1940s, the Hans Hofmann school was at 52 West Eighth Street, while Pollock had a studio at 46 East Eighth Street (Carr, n. d.). De Kooning's studio was on West Twenty-second Street, Kline worked at a studio in West Fourteenth Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, and Mark Rothko worked at Twenty-eighth Street near Fifth Avenue (Carr, n. d.). The proximity of these artists clearly fertilized the development of Abstract Expressionism (Carr, n. d.).

2. Discuss the development and characteristics of Pop Art; include Hamilton, Johns, Rauschenberg, and Warhol in your discussion.

British curator Lawrence Alloway coined the word "Pop-Art" in 1955 to portray a new type of "Popular" art, a movement that used images of consumerism and popular culture (Visual-arts-cork. com, n. d.). Pop-Art
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developed in New York and London during the mid-1950s and became the leading avant-garde style until the late 1960s (Visual-arts-cork. com, n. d.). Its main characteristics are “ bold, simple, everyday imagery, and vibrant block colors” that created a modern “ hip” vibe (Visual-arts-cork. com, n. d.). Some of the basic sources of pop iconography were advertisements, consumer product packaging, photos of film-stars, pop-stars and other celebrities, and comic strips (Visual-arts-cork. com, n. d.). In American Pop art, some of the famous proponents were Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008), Jasper Johns (b. 1930), Roy Lichtenstein (1923-97) and Andy Warhol (1928-87).

During the middle of the 1950s, some artists diverged from Abstract Expressionism and used non-traditional art materials to emphasize the popular culture of their times. Robert Rauschenberg, Ray Johnson, Richard Hamilton, and Jasper Johns engaged a radical new subject matter. Johns painted flags, such as *Flag*, 1954-55, targets and numbers, and made sculptures of objects like beer cans.

Rauschenberg made collage and assemblage art, as well as “ combine paintings,” where a painted canvas incorporated different items or photographic images, such as his *Monogram* that includes a stuffed goat with a tire around its middle and spattered in paint (Hudson, 2011).

Rauschenberg specialized in employing “ found” materials like trash and other debris which he collected from the streets of New York (Hudson, 2011). Using pop-culture images and materials made him a Pop-artist, but his artistic statements also earned him the label of Neo-Dadaist.

Richard Hamilton is a co-founder of the Independent Group at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, the artist discussion group that produced Pop-
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art in Britain. He is well-known for his 1956 collage entitled Just What Is It that Makes Todays Homes So Different, So Appealing?

Andy Warhol is often called the High Priest of Pop-art (Visual-arts-cork. com, n. d.). He had a thriving career as a commercial illustrator, before becoming famous for his pop-style painting, screen prints, and avant-garde films (Visual-arts-cork. com, n. d.). Some of his works included Green Coca-Cola Bottles, Campbells Soup Can, Big Electric Chair, and Marilyn. His views on the effects of TV on art and life are appropriately summarized in his famous statement: " Anyone can be famous for 15 minutes" (Visual-arts-cork. com, n. d.).

Many Pop artists continued the Dadaist tradition of Conceptual Art. They highlighted the impact of the work more than the process in making it (Visual-arts-cork. com, n. d.). By using low-brow materials, they aimed to debunk the importance of expensive art materials in expressing art (Visual-arts-cork. com, n. d.). Unlike the anti-art sentiments of Dadaists, however, Pop artists was " more positive and more concerned to create new forms of expression, using new methods and new pictorial imagery, than to denigrate tradition" (Visual-arts-cork. com, n. d.). Many of them see their works as adding to fine art, instead of repelling it completely (Visual-arts-cork. com, n. d.).

References

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