

# Color field painting



Color field painting, an abstract style that emerged in the 1950s following Abstract Expressionism, is characterized by canvases painted primarily with stripes, washes and fields of solid color. The first serious and critically acclaimed art movement to originate in the nation's capital, Washington Color School was central to the larger movement. During the early sixties, painting was the term used to describe younger artists whose work were related to second generation abstract expressionism yet clearly pointed toward a new direction in American painting.

Artist such as Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Helen Frankenthaler, Leon Berkowitz, Frank Stella and others eliminated recognizable imagery from their canvas and presented abstraction as an end in itself with each painting as one unified, cohesive, monolithic image. Helen Frankenthaler is often identified mainly with her fragile, luminous Mountains and Seas of 1953. The early 1960s was the period of serial painting. Helen Frankenthaler was one artist who chose not follow critical requirement to develop and explore a dominant signature image. At the time Frankenthaler was requested by collectors to sign her paintings on the front of the picture rather than the back.

They requested this to be done so her work would be more identifiable by the collectors and their friends. In today's decade Frankenthaler's paintings do not need a visible signature in order to allow collectors to identify her works as hers. Her combination of style, techniques, and stained colors has gradually increased over the years. For many years, when Helen was little known, she insisted on painting on large-scale canvases, even though there

was little chance of selling them in a world which was not yet willing to commit important wall space to her art (Emmerich, 2004, 29).

The significance of the painting is it tests the limits of how completely art can address peoples emotions and mind through the eye, just like music through the ear, without the need of help to interpret. Painting is an important aspect of American culture. As described by Clement Greenberg painting describes large-scale canvases dominated by flat expanses of color and having a minimum of surface detail (Emmerich, 2004, 29). I would describe painting as unique artworks that expresses ones intellectual ability to see certain objects in their point of view. This artwork subject matter is color and proportion, which has a pure impact on viewer's sensibilities.

The concept of Color Field painting was to separate this type of work from the earlier work of Abstract Expressionism. This means that the artists did not want the painting from Color Field to be classified as Abstract Expressionism. Materials used in Color Field painting are unprimed canvases and other supplies. Frankenthaler adopted Pollock's practice of pouring thinned-out pigment onto unprimed canvas, but instead of skeins and tangles, she created fluid lines and spreading pools of pale color. She fused painting and drawing without resorting to conventional painting or drawing marks (Wilkin, 2007, 44). What I think I have learned about Color Field painting is that just because it may look easy does not mean it is easy.

For example, my experience in trying to recreate the Mark Rothko painting "Orange and Tan" was very challenging. I thought that just because it looked easy I could recreate it, but I could not. There were more than just the 2

colors I seen. There was about 3 or 4 different colors, not including the color variations and hues.

The color varied from orange, light orange, dark orange, red, light red, dark red, and a little amount of black. Therefore, I decided not to try to recreate Mark Rothko's "Orange and Tan" painting. Instead I recreated Helen Frankenthaler "Air Frame", which I thought was little bit less challenging. The situation that help me understand Helen Frankenthaler's artwork a little was the use of colors and variation of the shapes present. Color Field painting is a type of contemporary art. It is also is Postmodern.

It qualifies as Postmodern because it occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. I believe postmodernism describes movements which react against, and arise from trends in modernism. Some specific trends of modernism are medium specificity, authenticity, and originality. Postmodern abstraction highlights ways that abstract painting references the world (Perry, 2005, 20).

Postmodernism is to recall traditional elements of style.

It is also a reaction to the most profound spiritual and philosophical crises of our time-the failure of the Enlightenment (Powell, 2007, 17). Another Color Field artist is Mark Rothko. Mark Rothko was a painter that emerged from the early 1940s. His work is best known because of his accurate attention to formal elements such as color, shape, balance, depth, composition, and scale. In these terms, measure is to color as scale is to size-something experiential, a subjective response rather than an objective (Anfam, 1998).

Color Field painting initially referred to a particular type of abstract expressionism, especially the work of Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, Barnett

<https://assignbuster.com/color-field-painting/>

Newman, Robert Motherwell and Adolph Gottlieb. Art critic Clement Greenberg perceived Color Field painting as related to but different from Action painting. Color Field painting sought to rid art of superfluous rhetoric. Artists like Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko, Hans Hofmann, Morris Louis, Jules Olitski, Kenneth Noland, Helen Frankenthaler, Larry Zox and others often used greatly reduced references to nature.

They painted with a highly articulated and psychological use of color. In general these artists eliminated recognizable imagery. Certain artists quoted references to past or present art, but in general Color Field painting presents abstraction as an end in itself. In pursuing this direction of modern art, artists wanted to present each painting as one unified, cohesive, monolithic image. In distinction to the emotional energy and gestural surface marks of Abstract Expressionists such as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. Color Field painting initially appeared to be cool and austere, effacing the individual mark in favor of large, flat areas of color.

These artists considered this to be the essential nature of visual abstraction, along with the actual shape of the canvas. Frank Stella in particular achieved this in unusual ways with combinations of curved and straight edges. David, A. 1998).

The Classic Years: 1951-1970. Jane Hawell (Eds. ), Mark Rothko: The Works on Canvas(pp. 81).

Washington: Yale University Press. Emmerich, A. (2004) Recollections: Greenberg & Frankenthaler. (Clement Greenberg)(Helen Frankenthaler) (Excerpt).

<https://assignbuster.com/color-field-painting/>

New Criterion, 23(4), p. 29(4). Perry, V. (2005). The Tradition of Abstract painting. In Julia Moore(Eds.

), Abstract Painting: Concepts & Techniques(pp. 8). Watson-Gupill. Powell, J. (2007). What is postmodernism? Postmodernism for Beginners (pp.

17). For Beginners. Wilikin, K. (2007). Notes on Color Field Painting. (Art) (Post-Painterly Abstraction).

New Criterion, 26, pp. 44(5).