Nikos Kessanlis, was a very important Greek artist of the 20th century (1930-2004). He was born in Thessaloniki and studied in Athens' school of Fine Arts from 1950 to 1955. In 1952, he participated in the national exhibition (Panhellenio) with three of his own artworks. From 1955 to 1960, he continued his studies in Rome at the School for the Preservation of Works of Art and worked as a preservationist on the works for the restoration of the wall paintings in the church of the Eremitani in Padua. In Rome, he also did his first personal exhibition of his works. In 1961 he won the Premio Lissone European Prize and honorable mention at the Sao Paolo Biennale. Kessanlis decided to stay in Paris and continue his work there, until 1981. Then, he was elected professor at the Athens School of Fine Arts and settled permanently in Athens at the beginning of the following year. He also served as Rector of the School until 1996. Kessanlis' work belongs in the Informalism movement (Art informel). He would experiment with different supplies, creating distorted images of a dramatic scale that were on the border between illusion and reality. A restless artist, who never stopped experimenting with techniques and methods, he has managed to transcend traditional painting materials and has found himself on the forestage of the avant garde throughout his career, moving from informel to mec art and then on to his photomechanical works done on sensitized cloth or cement.

Sources: National Gallery of Corfu, Wikipedia

Mark Rothko (1903-1970) was a Latvian-born American abstract painter. He’s best known for his color field paintings that depicted irregular and painterly rectangular regions of color, which he produced from 1949 to 1970. He’s associated with the American abstract expressionism movement of modern art. He supported artist’s total freedom of expression, which he felt was compromised by the market. He was often at odds with the art world establishment, responding to critics publicly, refusing commissions and exhibitions, etc. In 1968, he suffered a mild aortic aneurysm and spent three weeks at the hospital. He became resentful that his work wasn’t paid the proper reverence he felt it deserved, and he also started to believe that his art wouldn’t have a major legacy. Those beliefs led him to create his last major series, “Black on Grays” (25 canvases), which marked a clear deviation from his previous work. In the end, during 1970, at the age of 66, Rothko committed suicide, which his friends didn’t think of as much of a surprise as others, saying he had lost inspiration and passion and ended up falling victim to the tortured artist’s ritual of self-annihilation.

Sources: Wikipedia, The Art Story.

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) was a great and very important artist of the 20th century and the modern art movement. From 1920, up until 1933, he would teach at the school of Bauhaus as a professor, guiding and teaching young students and artists at the time. He managed to explore the, basically endless, possibilities of artistic abstraction in depth, focusing on the various elements of an artwork, mainly the form, the colour and the combination of the two. He showed an interest in the occult, mysticism and anarchy, which was evident in his later work as an artist. This interest was often associated with a negative attitude towards political and social changes that were happening at the time in his life. He appreciated greatly all forms of art and would surround himself with various artists, from musicians, to poets. Sometimes he would take a musical note and associate it with a colour, he even encouraged his students to listen to music while they work. He would make up his own theories and philosophies on lines, form, shapes and colours, and would try to connect them all together. His work, philosophy and unique way of seeing and experiencing the world around him is something that is still being studied to this day and his art will always continue to inspire today’s artists.