

# Other Early-Twentieth-Century Developments

## Futurism

Related to Expressionism was a contemporary movement called Futurism, which originated in Italy. The Futurists were inspired by the dynamic energy of industry and the machine age. They argued for a complete break with the past. In February 1909 a Futurist Manifesto, written

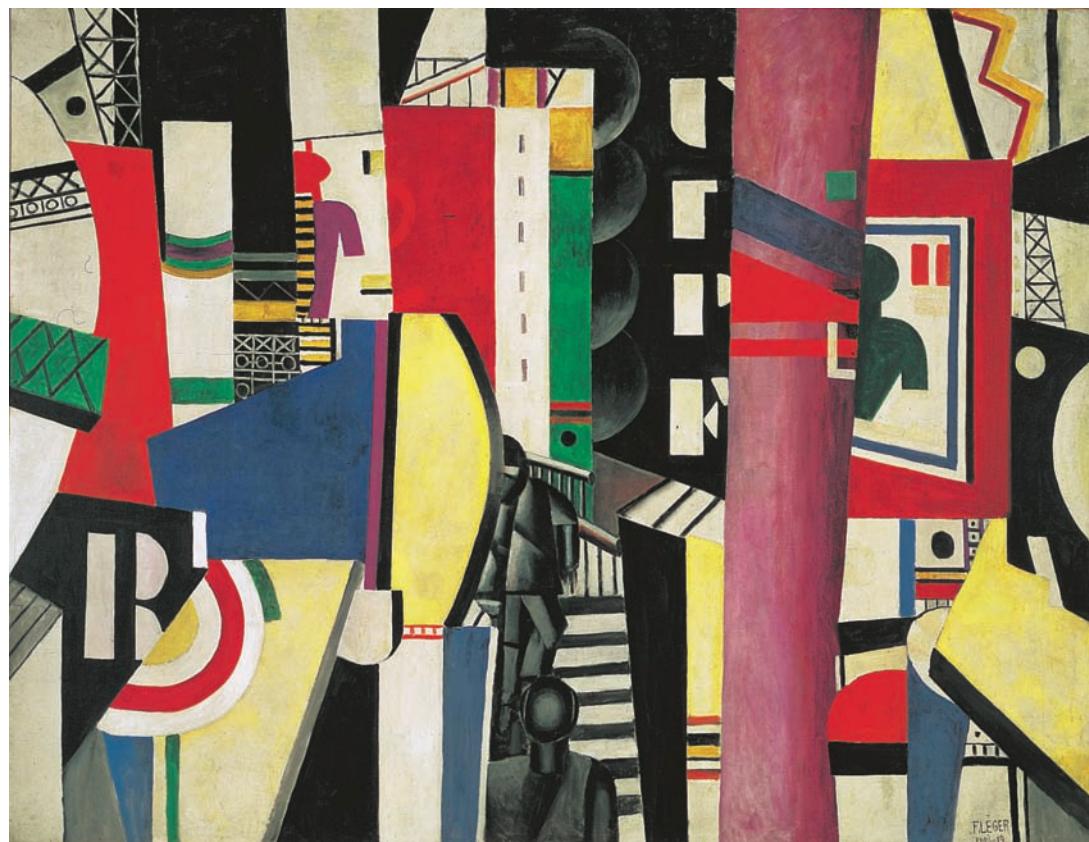
by Filippo Marinetti, the editor of a literary magazine in Milan, appeared on the front page of the French newspaper *Le Figaro*. The Manifesto sought to inspire in the general public an enthusiasm for a new artistic language. In all the arts—the visual arts, music, literature, theater, and film—the old Academic traditions would be abandoned. Libraries and museums would be abolished, and creative energy would be focused on the present and future. Speed, travel, technology, and dynamism would be the subjects of Futurist art.

Futurism was given plastic form in a 1913 sculpture by Umberto Boccioni (1882–1916) titled *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (fig. 27.12). It represents a man striding vigorously, as if with a definite goal in mind. The long diagonal from head to foot is thrust forward by the assertive angle of the bent knee. The layered surface planes, related to the fragmented planes of Analytic Cubism, convey an impression of flapping material. Organic flesh and blood are subjugated to a mechanical, robotlike appearance—a vision that corresponds to Boccioni's aims as stated in his *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture 1912*. Sculpture, he said, must “make objects live by showing their extensions in space” and by revealing the environment as part of the object.

In the Futurist Manifesto, Marinetti's language was apocalyptic in its determination to slash through the “millennial gloom” of the past. “Time and Space died yesterday,” he declared. “We already live in the absolute, because we have created eternal, omnipresent speed.”



**27.12** Umberto Boccioni, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, 1913. Bronze (cast 1931),  $43\frac{1}{8} \times 34\frac{1}{8} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$  in. ( $111.2 \times 88.5 \times 40.0$  cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York (acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest). Boccioni fought for Italy in World War I and was killed by a fall from a horse in 1916.



**27.13** Fernand Léger, *The City*, 1919. Oil on canvas, 7 ft. 7 in. × 14 ft. 9½ in. (2.30 × 4.50 m).

Philadelphia Museum of Art (A. E. Gallatin Collection). Léger described the kinship between modern art and the city as follows: "The thing that is imaged does not stay as still . . . as it formerly did. . . . A modern man registers a hundred times more sensory impressions than an 18th-century artist. . . . The condensation of the modern picture . . . [and] its breaking up of forms, are the result of all this. It is certain that the evolution of means of locomotion, and their speed, have something to do with the new way of seeing."<sup>2</sup>

## Fernand Léger's City

The work of Fernand Léger (1881–1955) is more directly derived from Cubism than is Boccioni's sculpture. Léger's *City* of 1919 (fig. 27.13) captures the cold steel surfaces of the urban landscape that reflected the new artistic awareness of the city. Harsh forms, especially cubes and cylinders, evoke the metallic textures of industry. The jumbled girders, poles, high walls, and steps, together with the human silhouettes, create a sense of the anonymous, mechanical movement associated with the fast pace of city life. In *The City*, Léger has taken from Analytic Cubism the multiple viewpoint and superimposed solid geometry. His shapes, however, are colorful and recognizable, and there is a greater illusion of distance within the picture plane.

## Piet Mondrian

In 1911, the year of the two Cubist exhibitions, Piet Mondrian (1872–1944) came to Paris from Holland. He had begun as a painter of nature, but under the influence of Cubism he gradually transformed his imagery to flat rectangles of color bordered by black edges.

In his early pictures he plays on the tension, as well as the harmony, between vertical and horizontal. He rejects curves and diagonals altogether and expresses his belief in the purity of primary colors. According to Mondrian, chromatic purity, like the simplicity of the rectangle, had a

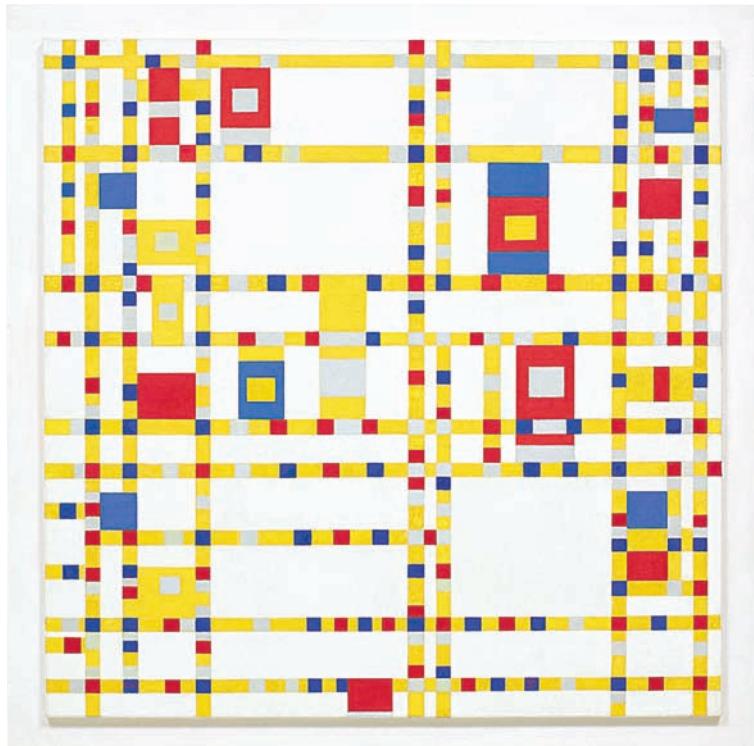
universal character. To illustrate this, he wrote that since paintings are made of line and color, they must be liberated from the slavish imitation of nature.

Later, while living in New York in the 1940s as a refugee from World War II, Mondrian painted *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (fig. 27.14). This was one of a series of pictures that he executed in small squares and rectangles of color, which replaced the large rectangles outlined in black. The grid pattern of the New York streets, the flashing lights of Broadway, and the vertical and horizontal motion of cars and pedestrians are conveyed as flat, colorful shapes. Fast shifts of color and their repetition recall the strong, accented rhythm of boogie-woogie, a popular form of music. In combining musical references with the beat of city life and suggesting these qualities through color and shape, Mondrian synthesized Expressionist exuberance with Cubist order and control.

## The Armory Show

The burgeoning styles of the early twentieth century in Western Europe did not reach the general American public until 1913. In February of that year, the Armory of the Sixty-ninth Regiment, National Guard, on Lexington Avenue at 25th Street in New York was the site of an international exhibition of modern art. A total of twelve hundred works by Post-Impressionists, Fauves, and Cubists, as well as by

**27.14** Piet Mondrian, *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, 1942–43. Oil on canvas, 4 ft. 2 in. × 4 ft. 2 in. (1.27 × 1.27 m). Museum of Modern Art, New York (Given anonymously, 73.1943). © 2010 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust c/o HCR International, Virginia, USA.



American artists, filled eighteen rooms. This event marked the first widespread American exposure to the European avant-garde.

The Armory Show caused an uproar. Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) submitted *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (fig. 27.15), which was the most scandalous work of all. It was a humorous attack on Futurist proscriptions against traditional Academic nudity. The image has a kinetic quality consistent with Futurist speed and motion. At the same time, the figure is a combination of Cubist form and multiple images that indicate the influence of photography. She is shown at different points in her descent, so the painting resembles a series of consecutive movie stills, unframed and superimposed.

Various accounts published at the time ridiculed the *Nude*'s début in the United States. Descriptions by outraged viewers included "disused golf clubs and bags," an "elevated railroad stairway in ruins after an earthquake," "a dynamited suit of Japanese armor," an "orderly heap of broken violins," an "explosion in a shingle factory," and "Rude Descending a Staircase (Rush Hour in the Subway)." Duchamp recorded his own version of the *Nude*'s place in the history of art: "My aim was a static representation of movement—a static composition of indications of various positions taken by a form in movement—with no attempt to give cinema effects through painting."<sup>3</sup>

**27.15** Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 4 ft. 10 in. × 2 ft. 11 in. (1.47 × 0.89 m). Philadelphia Museum of Art (Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection).



These two versions of *Mademoiselle Pogany* show how different viewpoints can change the effect of certain sculptures.

The influence of Futurism, Cubism, and African sculpture is evident in the style of the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957), who was also represented in the Armory Show. A version of his *Mademoiselle Pogany* (fig. 27.16), listed for sale at \$540, created a stir of its own. Her reductive, essential form was described as a “hard-boiled egg balanced on a cube of sugar.” The last stanza of “Lines to a Lady Egg,” which appeared in the *New York Evening Sun*, went as follows:

Ladies builded like a bottle,  
Carrot, beet, or sweet potato—  
Quaint designs that Aristotle  
Idly drew to tickle Plato—  
Ladies sculptured thus, I beg  
You will save your tense emotion;  
I am constant in devotion,  
O my egg!<sup>14</sup>

In Chapter 1 we discussed Brancusi’s bronze *Bird in Space* (see fig. 1.2), which achieved notoriety in a legal debate over whether it was a work of art or a “lump of manufactured metal.” In *Mademoiselle Pogany*, the emphasis on quasi-geometrical form allies the work with Cubism and related styles. Brancusi’s high degree of polish conveys the increased prominence of the medium itself as artistic “subject.”

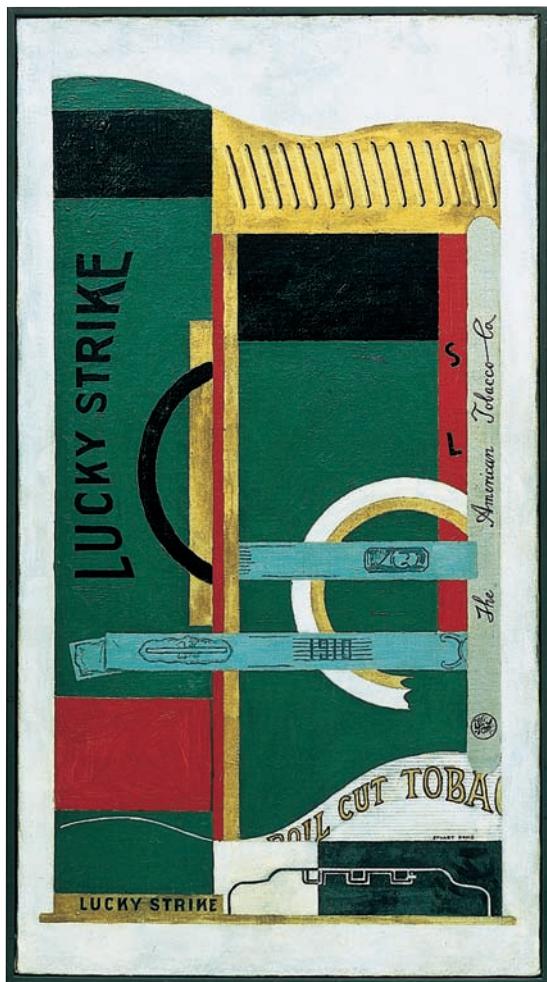
However, the roughness of the unpolished bronze at the top of the head in figure 27.16b, which contrasts with the polish of the face, creates an impression of hair. In the detachment of *Mademoiselle Pogany*’s hands and head from her torso, she becomes a partial body image that is characteristic of Brancusi’s human figures and reflects the influence of Rodin, with whom Brancusi studied briefly in Paris. The partial aspect of Brancusi’s sculptures is related to his search for a truthful, Platonic “essence” of nature, rather than a literal depiction.

### Stuart Davis

The Armory Show, which traveled to Chicago and Boston, had a lasting impact on American art. The American artist Stuart Davis (1894–1964), for example, had exhibited several watercolors in the Armory Show while still an art student. Later, in 1921, he painted *Lucky Strike* (fig. 27.17), in which the flattened cigarette box was clearly influenced by collage. The colorful, unmodeled shapes are reminiscent of Synthetic Cubism, while the words and numbers recall early newspaper collages. The subject itself reflects American consumerism, which advertises a product by its package; the painting was thus an important early forerunner of Pop Art (see Chapter 30).



See figure 1.2. Constantin Brancusi, *Bird in Space*, 1928.



**27.17** Stuart Davis, *Lucky Strike*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 33½ × 18 in. (84.5 × 45.7 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York (Gift of American Tobacco Company, Inc.). Davis designed the first abstract postage stamp for the United States in 1964. He gravitated to abstract forms from objects such as eggbeaters and electric fans. As a lifelong smoker, Davis had a particular fondness for the imagery of smoking.

## Aaron Douglas and the Harlem Renaissance

The African American painter Aaron Douglas (1898–1979) used the principles of Synthetic Cubism to depict the history of his people. Douglas was a leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. Centered in Harlem, a district of New York City, this was a significant Black American cultural movement. It was primarily a literary movement, but it also included philosophers, performers, political activists, and photographers, as well as painters and sculptors.

Douglas was born in Kansas and studied art in Paris, where he was exposed to the avant-garde. He became interested in the affinities between Cubism and African art and combined these concerns with the Black experience in America. In 1934 Douglas painted four murals, titled *Aspects of Negro Life*, for the New York Public Library. The second in the series—*From Slavery through Reconstruction* (fig. 27.18)—depicts three events following the American Civil War. At the right, there is rejoicing at the news of the Emancipation Proclamation (January 1, 1863), which freed the slaves. The man on the soapbox in the center represents the success of the black man, whose voice is now being heard. In the background, the Union army leaves the South, and Reconstruction with its anti-Black backlash follows.

The exuberance of the figures recalls the dynamic energy of jazz, which also appealed to Matisse. Music appears in the subject matter of the mural—the trumpet and the drums—as well as in the rhythms of its design. The main colors are variations on rose, while concentric circles of yellow suggest sound traveling through space. At the same time, the unmodeled character of the color allies the work with Synthetic Cubism. The green-and-white cotton plants in the foreground refer to the work of the American slaves and create an additional pattern superimposed over the light reds.



**27.18** Aaron Douglas, *From Slavery through Reconstruction* (from the series *Aspects of Negro Life*), 1934. Oil on canvas, 5 ft. × 10 ft. 8 in. (1.50 × 3.25 m). Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

## Kazimir Malevich: Suprematism

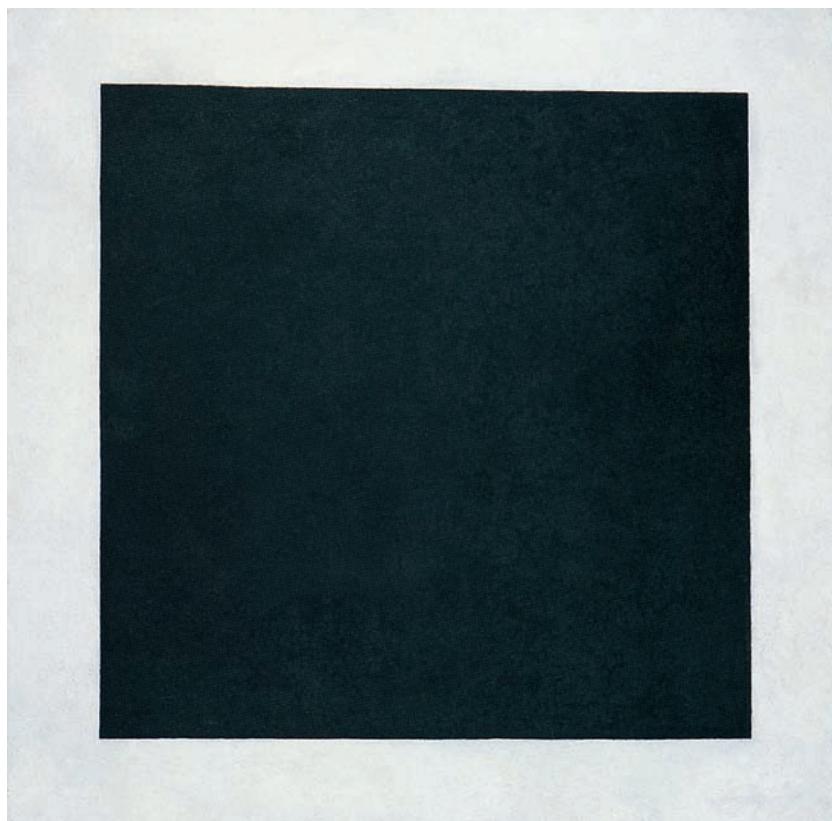
One of the most geometric developments that grew out of Cubism took place in Russia. Kazimir Malevich (1878–1933) was born in Kiev, and in 1904 he went to Moscow to study art. Although as a student he did not travel outside Russia, he was exposed to the European avant-garde through important collections in Moscow, and in 1908 he saw works exhibited by Cézanne, Gauguin, Matisse, and Braque. As a mature artist, Malevich combined Cubism with Futurism. He considered the proto-Cubism of Cézanne to have been rooted in village life, whereas the later development of the style was urban in character. For Malevich, it was Futurism that expressed the fast pace of city life.

Following his Cubist-Futurist phase, Malevich created the style he called Suprematism. His first Suprematist painting, exhibited in 1915 in St. Petersburg, Russia, consisted of a black square centered in a white background. The original became damaged, and he subsequently made several additional versions (fig. 27.19). According to Malevich, the black square was an expression of the cosmic, of pure feeling, and the white was the void beyond feeling. His aim was to achieve the mystical through pure form, which embodied pure feeling, instead of depicting what is visible and natural. In his book *The Non-objective World*, Malevich summed up his philosophy of Suprematism as follows:

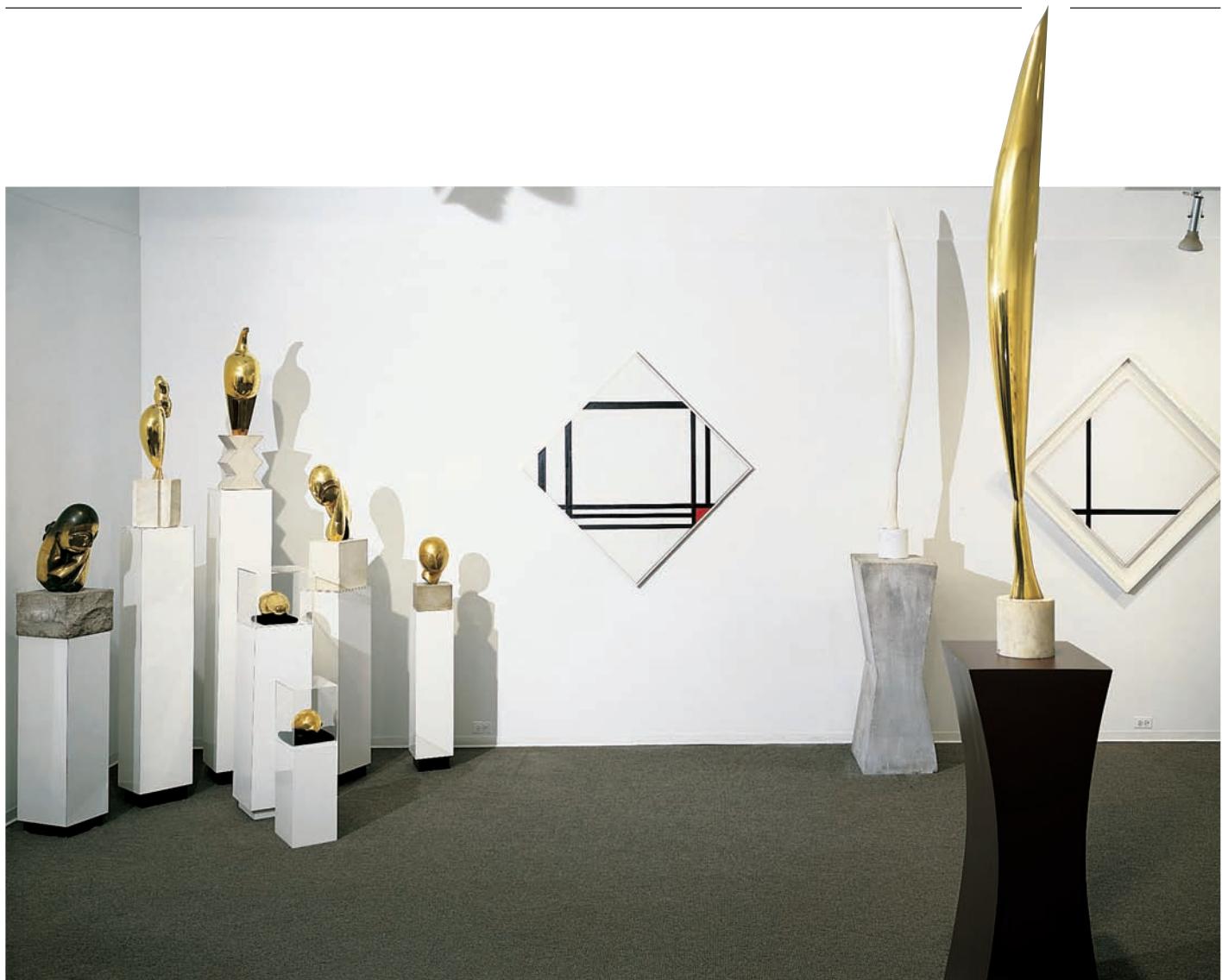
Artists have always been partial to the use of the human face in their representations, for they have seen in it (the versatile, mobile, expressive mimic) the best vehicle with which to convey their feelings. The Suprematists have nevertheless abandoned the representation of the human face (and of natural objects in general) and have found new symbols with which to render direct feelings (rather than externalized reflections of feelings), for the Suprematist does not observe and does not touch—he feels.<sup>5</sup>

After the Communist Revolution of 1917, Malevich was appointed Commissar for the Preservation of Monuments and Antiquities. By the late 1920s, the Soviet government under Stalin (died 1953) was suppressing avant-garde art and asserting state control over all the arts. Sensing that further oppression was to come, Malevich traveled in 1927 to Poland and Germany, where the Bauhaus (see p. 496) published his book in German. In 1930 he was arrested by the Soviets for artistic “deviation.”

When Malevich died, his white coffin was decorated with one black circle and one black square, and a white cube with a black square on it marked the place where his ashes were buried. In 1936 the Soviets confiscated his remaining pictures; they were not shown publicly again until 1977.



**27.19** Kazimir Malevich, *Black Square*, 1929. Oil on canvas,  $31\frac{1}{4} \times 31\frac{1}{4}$  in. (79.4 × 79.4 cm). State Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia.



**27.20** Installation view, “Brancusi + Mondrian” exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, December 1982–January 1983. Painting on left: Piet Mondrian, *Lozenge Composition with 8 lines and Red/Picture No. III*, 1938. Oil on canvas, diagonal measurement 55½ in. (140 cm). Painting on right: Piet Mondrian, *Lozenge Composition with 2 lines*, 1931. Oil on canvas, diagonal measurement 44⅜ in. (112 cm). Photo courtesy of Carroll Janis, New York. © 2010 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust c/o HCR International, Virginia, USA. © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. The art critic Sidney Geist wrote of this show, “If the century’s Modernist struggle seems to have been called in question by recent developments, ‘Brancusi + Mondrian’ banished all doubt. . . . We have to do here with two saintly figures—for whom art was a devotion. Their lives and art evolved under the sign of inevitability.”<sup>6</sup>

## Postscript

Figure 27.20, an installation photograph, shows the main space of the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York during a landmark exhibition titled “Brancusi + Mondrian” in the early 1980s. Mounted nearly seventy years after the Armory Show and more than fifty years after Malevich’s detention for so-called deviant art, the Janis exhibition conveyed the importance of the avant-garde. It also emphasized the formal and historical relationship between Brancusi and Mondrian. In the left corner, a group of highly polished bronzes

by Brancusi includes two versions of *Mademoiselle Pogany*. Flanked by Mondrians are a marble and a bronze version of *Bird in Space*. Brancusi’s “essences,” here composed of graceful curves and rounded, volumetric shapes, are contrasted with Mondrian’s pure verticals and horizontals on a flat surface. In this juxtaposition, the viewer confronts the work of two major early-twentieth-century artists. Despite their apparent differences, these artists have a remarkable affinity in their pursuit of an “idea,” which they render in modern, abstract form.



**27.21** Frank Lloyd Wright, Robie House, Chicago, 1909. Wright's insistence on creating a total environment inspired him, sometimes against the wishes of his clients, to design the furniture and interior fixtures of his houses. In the case of the Robie House, Wright designed outfits for Mrs. Robie to wear on formal occasions so that she would blend with his architecture.

## Architecture

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the most innovative developments in architecture took place in the United States. Following Louis Sullivan, who developed the skyscraper, the next major American architect was Frank Lloyd Wright (1869–1959). Wright had worked in Chicago as Sullivan's assistant before building private houses, mainly in Illinois, in the 1890s and early 1900s. But whereas Sullivan's skyscrapers addressed the urban need to provide offices and apartment blocks on relatively small areas of land, Wright launched the Prairie Style, which sought to integrate architecture with the natural landscape.

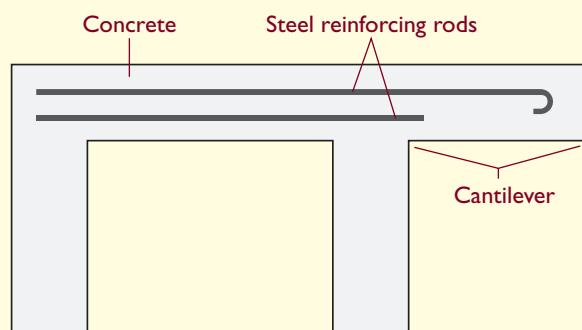
### Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie Style

The best-known example of Wright's early Prairie Style is the Robie House of 1909 (fig. 27.21) in South Chicago. Its horizontal emphasis, low-pitched roofs with large overhangs, and low boundary walls are related to the flat prairie landscape of the American West and Middle West. At the same time, the predominance of rectangular shapes and shifting, asymmetrically arranged horizontal planes is reminiscent of the Cubist aesthetic.

#### ARCHITECTURE

##### Cantilever

The system of **cantilever construction** (fig. 27.22) is one in which a horizontal architectural element, projected in space, has vertical support at one end only. Equilibrium is maintained by a support and counterbalancing weight inside the building. The cantilever requires materials with considerable tensile strength. Wright pioneered the use of **reinforced concrete** and steel girders for cantilever construction in large buildings. In a small house, wooden beams provide adequate support.



**27.22** Cantilever construction.



**27.23** Frank Lloyd Wright, Fallingwater, Bear Run, Pennsylvania, 1936.

In 1936, on a wooded site in Bear Run, Pennsylvania, Wright built a weekend house (fig. 27.23) for the Edgar Kaufmann family. This house was a synthesis of the International Style (see below) and the Prairie Style; it is called Fallingwater because it is perched over a small waterfall. As in the Robie House, there is a large central core, composed here of local masonry. Fallingwater is surrounded by reinforced concrete terraces, which are related to the International Style. Their beige color attempts to blend with the landscape, and their cantilevered horizontals (see Box) repeat the horizontals of the rocky ledges below. Although the smooth texture and light hue of the terraces contrast with the darker natural colors of the woods, the natural stone of the chimneys resembles the rocks in the surrounding landscape. In keeping with the Prairie Style, parts of the house are integrated with the landscape and seem to “grow” from it. Glass walls, which make nature a constant visible presence inside the house, further reinforce the association of architecture with landscape. To some extent, therefore, Fallingwater fulfills Wright’s pursuit of “organic” architecture.

## The International Style

From the end of World War I, a new architectural style developed in Western Europe. Since it apparently originated in several countries at about the same time, it is known as the International Style.

### Holland: De Stijl

In Holland, the International Style of architecture began as the De Stijl (The Style) movement, of which Mondrian was a founder. The primary leader, however, was the artist Theo van Doesburg (1883–1931), whose transformation of a cow into abstract geometric shapes is illustrated in figure 2.12. Several Dutch architects, attracted by Frank Lloyd Wright’s work, joined Mondrian and van Doesburg in the De Stijl movement. They were idealists searching for a universal style that would satisfy human needs through mass production. The spiritual goal of world peace, they believed, would also be fostered by the “equilibrium of opposites” that was part of De Stijl’s credo.



**27.24** Gerrit Rietveld, Schroeder House, Utrecht, Netherlands, 1923–24. Alfred Barr, Jr., curator of New York's Museum of Modern Art, defined the International Style as follows: “. . . emphasis upon volume . . . thin planes . . . as opposed to . . . mass and solidity; . . . regularity as opposed to symmetry . . . and . . . dependence upon the intrinsic elegance of materials, perfection, and fine proportions, as opposed to applied ornament.” These goals are fulfilled in the Schroeder House.

Typical of this new architecture is the Schroeder House in Utrecht (fig. 27.24), designed by Gerrit Rietveld (1888–1964). The flat roof and cantilevered balconies are similar to those in Wright’s private houses. Whereas Wright emphasized horizontals, however, Rietveld preferred oppositions of horizontals and verticals derived from Cubism, which he integrated with a **skeletal construction**. There is no surface decoration interrupting the exterior simplicity of the building. The many windows and balconies, with attached rectangular panels that seem to float in midair, create a sense of tension paradoxically combined with weightlessness. Composed of predominantly white flat planes and right angles, the Schroeder House is reminiscent of Mondrian’s paintings.

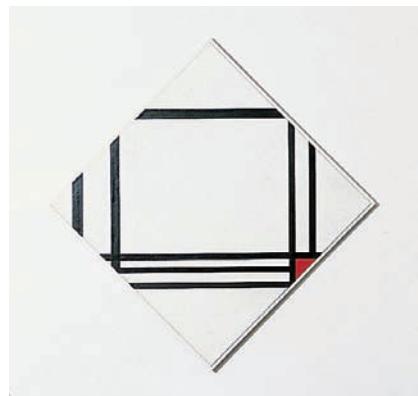
## Germany: The Bauhaus

The German version of the International Style centered on the Bauhaus. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the Deutscher Werkbund (German Craft Association) was formed. Its aim was to improve the aesthetic quality of manufactured goods and industrial architecture, to produce them more cheaply, and to make them more widely available. This produced a number of important architects and designers who had enormous international influence through the 1960s. Many who had worked together in Europe later emigrated to the United States during World War II.

The leader of this community was Walter Gropius (1883–1969), who in 1919 became the first director of the Bauhaus, in Weimar. The Bauhaus (from the German *Bau*, “structure” or “building,” and *Haus*, “house”) combined an arts and crafts college with a school of fine arts. Gropius believed in the integration of art and industry. With that in mind, he set out to create a new institution that would offer courses in design, architecture, and industry.

Vassily Kandinsky was a prominent member of the Bauhaus faculty from 1922, and he remained until 1933, when the Bauhaus was closed by the Nazis. His paintings of that period reflect the geometric angularity he espoused as part of the Russian avant-garde in Moscow at the beginning of World War I. Such forms, which were also characteristic of the Bauhaus aesthetic, can be seen, for example, in *Composition 8* (fig. 27.25). Compared with the exuberant curvilinear forms of his Expressionist *Panel for Edwin R. Campbell No. 4* (see fig. 26.7), this painting is measured, constructed, and dominated by dynamic diagonal planes. While he was at the Bauhaus, Kandinsky published a textbook on composition, *Point and Line to Plane: Contribution to the Analysis of the Pictorial Elements* (1926), in which he combined spirituality and mysticism with strict **formal analysis**.

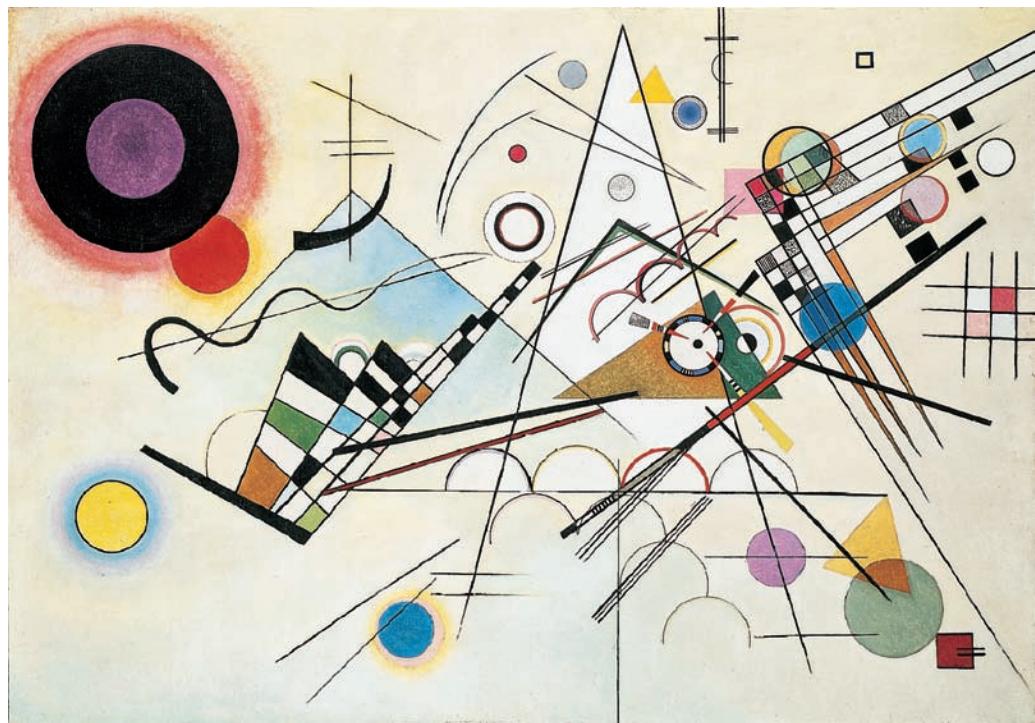
In 1926 Gropius relocated the Bauhaus from Weimar to Dessau, planning its new quarters according to International Style philosophy. The workshop wing of the Bauhaus (fig. 27.26) is entirely rectilinear, with verticals and horizontals meeting at right angles. The primary material is



Piet Mondrian, *Lozenge Composition with 8 Lines and Red/Picture No. III*, 1938. Oil on canvas, diagonal measurement 55½ in. (140 cm). Photo courtesy of Carroll Janis, New York. © 2010 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust, c/o HCR International, Virginia, USA.

**CONNECTIONS**

**See figure 26.7.** Vassily Kandinsky, *Panel for Edwin R. Campbell No. 4* (formerly *Painting Number 201, Winter*), 1914.



**27.25** Vassily Kandinsky, *Composition 8*, 1923. Oil on canvas,  $55\frac{1}{8}$  in.  $\times$   $79\frac{1}{8}$  in. ( $140 \times 200$  cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (Gift, 1937).



**27.26** Walter Gropius, Bauhaus workshop wing, 1925–26.



**27.27** Le Corbusier, Villa Savoye, Poissy-sur-Seine, France, 1928–30. Le Corbusier believed that houses should be mass-produced. To this end, he reduced architectural components to simple forms—concrete slabs for floors, concrete pillars for vertical support, stairs linking the floors, and a flat roof. In *Towards a New Architecture* (1931), Le Corbusier wrote, “If we eliminate from our hearts and minds all dead concepts in regard to houses . . . we shall arrive at the ‘House-Machine,’ the mass-production house, healthy (and morally so too) and beautiful in the same way that the working tools and instruments which accompany our existence are beautiful.”

reinforced concrete, but, apart from two thin white bands at the top and bottom, the viewers see only sheet-glass walls from the outside. Structurally, this was a logical extension of the steel-skeleton system of construction, which, as in the Wainwright Building (see fig. 23.22), relieves the outer walls of any support function. Formal affinities with Cubism are inescapable, although Gropius, like the members of De Stijl, was motivated primarily by a philosophy of simplicity and harmony intended to integrate art and architecture with society. The Bauhaus exteriors, devoid of any regional identity, were an international concept translated into architectural form.

### France: Le Corbusier

The best-known exponent of the International Style in France during the 1920s and early 1930s was the Swiss-born architect Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, known as Le Corbusier (1887–1969). The Villa Savoye (fig. 27.27), a weekend residence built from 1928 to 1930 at Poissy, near Paris, is the last in a series of International Style houses by Le Corbusier. It is regarded as his masterpiece.

The Villa Savoye is a grand version of what Le Corbusier described as a “machine for living.” It rests on very slender

reinforced concrete pillars, which divide the second-floor windows. The second floor contains the main living area, and it is connected to the ground floor and the open terrace on the third floor by a staircase and a ramp. The driveway extends under the house and ends in a three-car carport. This part of the ground floor is deeply recessed under the second-floor overhang and contains an entrance hall and servants’ quarters. All four elevations of the house are virtually identical, each having the same ribbon windows running the length of the wall.

### The United States

The architectural principles of the International Style were brought to the United States by Bauhaus artists who were forced to leave Germany in the late 1930s. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969), the director of the Bauhaus from 1930, designed the glass and steel Lake Shore Drive Apartment Houses in Chicago (fig. 27.28) with the principles of **functionalism** in mind. The influence of Cubism in their geometric repetitions is inescapable. These vertical, cubic structures, which are reminiscent of Mondrian’s late paintings, inspired many similar skyscrapers throughout America’s large cities.



**27.28** Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Lake Shore Drive Apartment Houses, Chicago, 1950–52.

c. 1900

c. 1950

CUBISM, FUTURISM, AND RELATED 20TH-CENTURY STYLES



(27.2)

Futurist  
Manifesto  
(1909)



(27.5)

De Stijl  
movement  
in the  
Netherlands  
(1910–20)



(27.12)

World War I  
(1914–18)



(27.16a)

James Joyce,  
*Ulysses*  
(1922)



(27.23)

Harlem  
Renaissance  
(1920s)



(27.26)

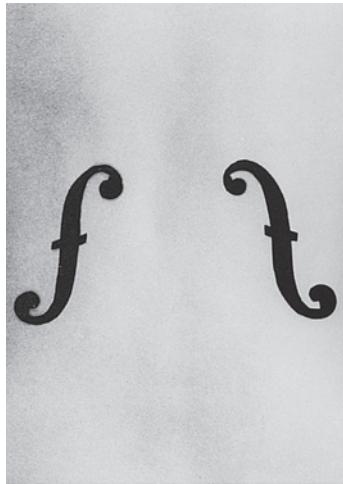
Bauhaus  
artists  
emigrate  
to the U.S.  
(late 1930s)



(27.28)

Spanish  
Civil War  
(1936–39)

World War II  
(1939–45)



# 28

## Dada, Surrealism, Social Realism, Regionalism, and Abstraction

The devastation of World War I affected the arts as well as other aspects of Western civilization. For the first time in history, armies used trench warfare, barbed wire, machine guns firing along fixed lines, and chemical weapons. After treating the victims of gassing and shell shock in World War I, Freud and other medical researchers published accounts of the long-term psychological traumas of the new warfare. “The lost generation,” a phrase coined by Gertrude Stein, captured the overwhelming sense of desolation experienced by the post-World War I intellectuals. In the visual arts of that era, the same pessimism and despair emerged as Dada.

### Dada

The term *Dada* refers to an international artistic and literary movement that began during World War I in the relative safety of neutral Switzerland. Artists, writers, and performers gathered at the Cabaret Voltaire, a café in Zurich, for discussion, entertainment, and creative exploration. Dada was thus not an artistic style in the sense of shared formal qualities that are easily recognized. Rather, it was an idea, a kind of “antiart,” predicated on a nihilist (from the Latin word *nihil*, meaning “nothing”) philosophy of negation. By 1916 the term *Dada* had appeared in print—a new addition to the parade of aesthetic “manifestos” that developed in the nineteenth century. Dada lasted as a cohesive European movement until about 1920. It also achieved a foothold in New York, where it flourished from about 1915 to 1923.

According to the 1916 Manifesto, *Dada* is French for a child’s wooden horse. *Da-da* are also the first two syllables spoken by children learning to talk, and thus suggest a regression to early childhood. The implication was that artists wished to “start life over.” Likewise, Dada’s iconoclastic force challenged traditional assumptions about art and had an enormous impact on later twentieth-century **conceptual art**. Despite the despair that gave rise to Dada, however, a taste for the playful and the experimental was an important, creative, and ultimately hopeful aspect of the

movement. This, in turn, is reflected in the Russian meaning of *da, da*, which is “yes, yes.”

### Marcel Duchamp

One of the major proponents of Dada was Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), whose *Nude Descending a Staircase* (see fig. 27.15) had caused a sensation at the 1913 Armory Show. He shared the Dadaists’ taste for wordplay and punning, which he combined with visual images. Delighting, like a child, in nonsensical repetition, Duchamp entitled his art magazine *Wrong Rong*. The most famous instance of visual and verbal punning in Duchamp’s work is *L.H.O.O.Q.* (fig. 28.1), whose title is a bilingual pun. Read phonetically in English, the title sounds like “look,” which, on one level, is the artist’s command to the viewer. If each letter is pronounced according to its individual sound in French, the title reads “Elle (*L*) a ch (*H*) aud (*O*) au (*O*) cul (*Q*),” meaning in English “She has a hot ass.” Read backward, on the other hand, “look” spells “kool,” which counters the forward message.

When viewers do, in fact, look, they see that Duchamp has penciled a beard and mustache onto a reproduction of Leonardo’s *Mona Lisa* (see fig. 16.13), turning her into a bearded lady. One might ask whether Duchamp has “defaced” the *Mona Lisa*—perhaps a prefiguration of graffiti art (see p. 564)—or merely “touched her up.” This question plays with the sometimes fine line between creation and destruction. (The modern expression “You have to break eggs to make an omelet” illustrates the connection between creating and destroying that is made explicit by the Dada movement.)

Duchamp called the kind of work exemplified by *L.H.O.O.Q.* a “ready-made aided.” When he merely added a title to an object, he called the result a “ready-made.” Duchamp’s most outrageous ready-made was a urinal (fig. 28.2) that he submitted as a sculpture to a New York exhibition mounted by the Society of Independent Artists in 1917. He turned it upside down, signed it “R. Mutt,” and called it *Fountain*. The work was rejected by the society, and Duchamp resigned his membership.

**CONNECTIONS**

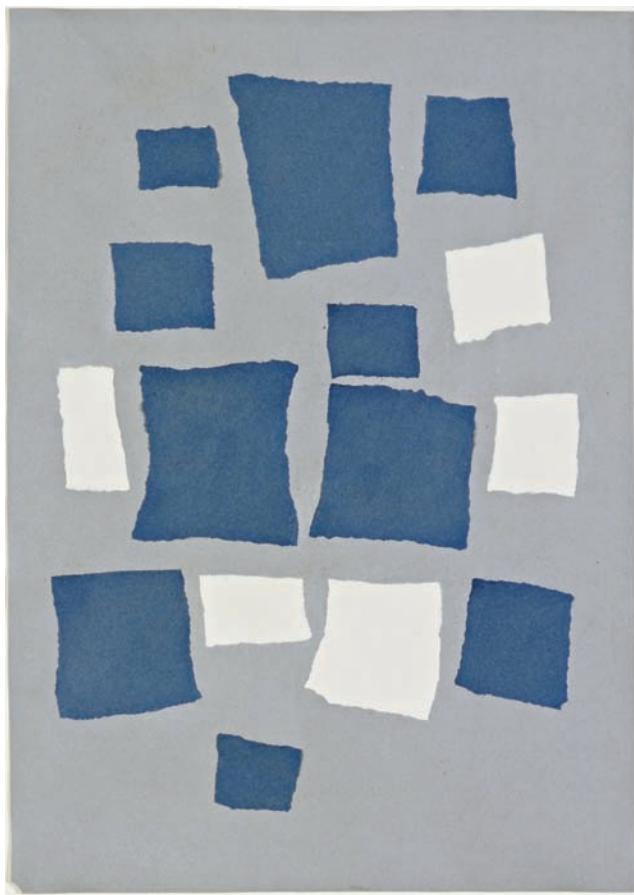
**See figure 16.13.**  
Leonardo da Vinci,  
*Mona Lisa*, c. 1503–5.



**28.1** Marcel Duchamp, replica of *LH.O.O.Q.*, from “Boîte-en-Valise,” 1919. Color reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* altered with a pencil,  $7\frac{3}{4} \times 5$  in. (19.7  $\times$  12.7 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art (Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection). Duchamp was born in Blainville, France, the third of three sons who were all artists. In 1915 he moved to New York, and in 1955 he became an American citizen. After painting only twenty works, Duchamp announced his retirement in 1923 in order to devote the rest of his life to chess.



**28.2** Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain (Urinal)*, 1917. “Ready-made,” 24 in. (61 cm) high. Photo courtesy of Carroll Janis, New York. Duchamp declared that it was the artist’s conscious choice that made a “ready-made” into a work of art. In 1915 he bought a shovel in a New York hardware store and wrote on it “In advance of a broken arm.” “It was around that time,” he said, “that the word ‘ready-made’ came to my mind. . . . Since the tubes of paint used by an artist are manufactured and ready-made products, we must conclude that all the paintings in the world are ready-made aided.”<sup>1</sup>



**28.3** Jean (Hans) Arp, *Collage Arranged According to the Laws of Chance*, 1916–17. Torn and pasted paper,  $19\frac{1}{8} \times 13\frac{5}{8}$  in. (48.6 x 34.6 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York (purchase).

### Jean (Hans) Arp

A quality of playfulness pervades the work of the Swiss artist Jean Arp (1887–1966), who was one of the founders of European Dada. In 1916–17, in a famous act of Dada “chance,” Arp cut up rectangles of blue, white, and gray paper and dropped them onto a surface. He claimed to have pasted them where they fell and called the result *Collage Arranged According to the Laws of Chance* (fig. 28.3). In fact, however, as the title indicates he arranged the papers so as not to overlap. By tilting the rectangles slightly and leaving the edges ragged, Arp animated the image and created the impression that the shapes are trying to arrange themselves.

Arp’s cord collage titled *The Dancer* of 1928 (fig. 28.4) was created by arranging a string on a flat surface. The string is equivalent to the draftsman’s “line”—it defines the form and its character. By moving the string to achieve the desired shapes, Arp “played” creatively and arrived at a humorous image—a small head on a bulky torso with a circle in the center. The figure’s slight tilt, the position of its left leg, and the upward curve of the right leg create a convincing impression of forward motion. The dancer literally

seems to “kick up her heel,” which, together with the flowing hair evoked by a single strand of string, conveys an impression of movement through space.

In moving the string, Arp also engaged in a form of visual free association, which was part of Dada and appealed to its interest in the spontaneous quality of chance. Dada artists and writers attempted a creative process designed to minimize the overlay of tradition and conscious control. Instead, they emphasized the expression of unconscious material through play, chance, and rapid execution. This approach was used in wordplay as well as in visual punning. The connection of both with unconscious processes had been explicated in Freud’s 1911 publication *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*.



**28.4** Jean Arp, *The Dancer*, 1928. Cord collage,  $20 \times 15\frac{1}{2}$  in. (50.8 x 39.4 cm). Photo courtesy of Carroll Janis, New York.

### Surrealism

Many members of the Dada movement also became interested in the Surrealist style that supplanted it. The writer André Breton bridged the gap between Dada and Surrealism with his First Surrealist Manifesto of 1924. He advocated art and literature based on Freud’s psychoanalytic technique of free association as a means of exploring the imagination and entering the world of myth, fear, fantasy, and dream. The very term *surreal* connotes a higher reality—a state of being that is more real than mere appearance.

**28.5** Man Ray, *Le Violon d'Ingres*, 1924. Photograph, reworked with pencil and ink. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France. The artist's real name was Emanuel Rudnitsky (1890–1976). His choice of the name Man Ray, although derived from his real name, illustrates the fondness for punning and word games that he shared with other Dada artists. He reportedly chose "Man" because he was male and "Ray" because of his interest in light.

### CONNECTIONS

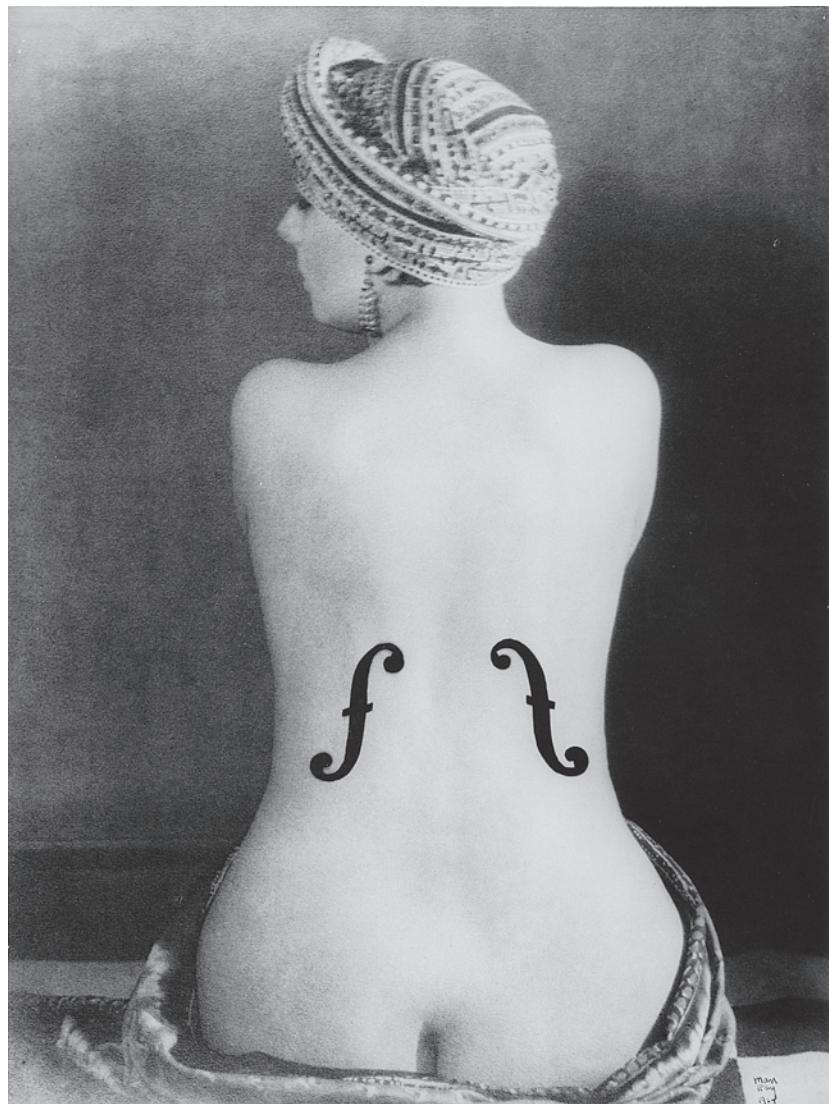
See figure 21.8. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Grande Odalisque*, 1814.



Breton had studied medicine and, like Freud, had encountered the traumas experienced by victims of shell shock in World War I. This led both Breton and Freud to recognize the power that trauma had over logical, conscious thinking. As a result, Breton wished to gain access to the unconscious mind, where, he believed, the source of creativity lay. He recommended writing in a state of free-floating association in order to achieve spontaneous, unedited expression. This "automatic writing" influenced European Abstract Surrealists and later, in the 1940s, had a significant impact on the Abstract Expressionists in New York City (see Chapter 29). The Surrealists' interest in gaining access to unconscious phenomena led to images that seem unreal or unlikely, as dream images often are, and to odd juxtapositions of time, place, and iconography.

### Man Ray

Among the Surrealists who had also been part of the Dada movement was Man Ray (1890–1976). In 1921 he moved to Paris, where he showed his paintings in the first Surrealist exhibition of 1925. He worked as a fashion and portrait photographer and an avant-garde filmmaker. His experiments with photographic techniques included the **Rayograph**, made without a camera by placing objects on light-sensitive paper. Man Ray's most famous photograph, *Le Violon d'Ingres* (fig. 28.5), combines Dada wordplay with Surrealist imagery. The nude recalls the



odalisques of Ingres (see fig. 21.8), while the title refers to Ingres' hobby—playing the violin (which led to the French phrase *violon d'Ingres*, meaning "hobby"). By adding sound holes, Man Ray puns on the similarity between the nude's back and the shape of a violin. The combination of the nude and the holes exemplifies the dreamlike imagery of Surrealism.

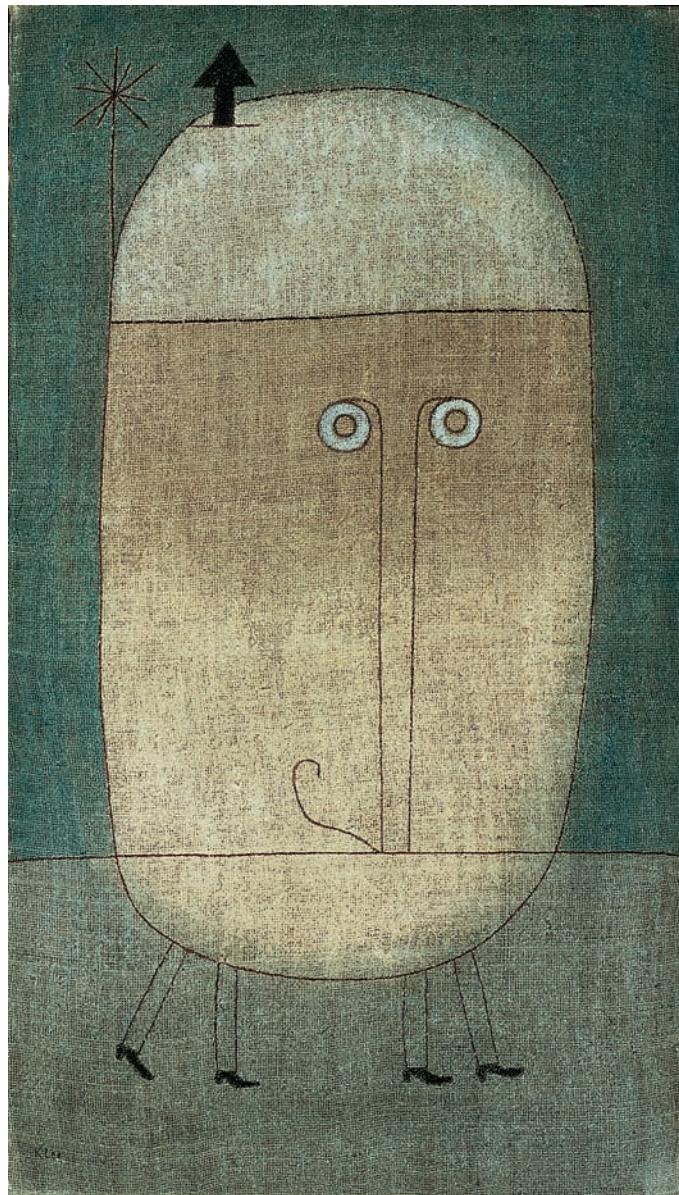
Man Ray defended the art of photography and argued against those unwilling to treat it as an art form. In "Photography Can Be Art," he wrote:

When the automobile arrived, there were those that declared the horse to be the most perfect form of locomotion. All these attitudes result from a fear that the one will replace the other. Nothing of the kind has happened. We have simply increased our vocabulary. I see no one trying to abolish the automobile because we have the airplane.<sup>2</sup>

In characteristic Dada fashion, Man Ray also published *Photography Is Not Art and Art Is Not Photography*.

## Paul Klee

Fantasy characterizes the Surrealism of the Swiss artist Paul Klee (1879–1940), who had been a member of The Blue Rider. He made many pencil drawings that reveal his attraction to linear, childlike imagery, as well as the influence of Surrealist “automatic writing.” His *Mask of Fear* of 1932 (fig. 28.6) reflects all these qualities, including the recollection of a painted wooden sculpture by the Zuni carvers of the American Southwest (fig. 28.7). Such allusions



**28.6** Paul Klee, *Mask of Fear*, 1932. Oil on burlap, 3 ft. 3½ in. x 1 ft. 10½ in. (1.0 x 0.57 m). Museum of Modern Art, New York (Nelson A. Rockefeller Fund). Klee described the creative process as follows: “Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible.”<sup>3</sup> Klee himself was enormously productive, recording a total of nearly nine thousand works.

**28.7** Zuni war god from Arizona or New Mexico. Painted wood and mixed media, 30½ in. (77.5 cm) high. Museum für Volkerkunde, Berlin, Germany.



exemplify the Surrealists’ search for new sources of imagery, especially those with dreamlike and mythological content. As a young man, Klee visited the folk-art museum in Berlin, which had acquired the Zuni statue in 1880. In addition to formal correspondences, it is also possible that there are iconographic parallels. The Zuni figure represents a war god and thus might have been associated in Klee’s mind with Nazi storm troopers. They, too, wore zigzag insignia reminiscent of lightning, and they aroused fear of the kind suggested by the men behind the mask.

In any event, Klee has transformed the Zuni sculpture into an image that plays with the boundaries between two- and three-dimensionality. The horizontal line defining the tip of the mask’s nose is also the horizon line of the painting. Two pairs of legs either support the mask, whose size does not correspond naturally to theirs, or walk behind it. As a result, the viewer is somewhat startled by unlikely juxtapositions.

**28.8** Salvador Dalí, *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 9½ × 13 in. (24 × 33 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York (given anonymously).

### Salvador Dalí

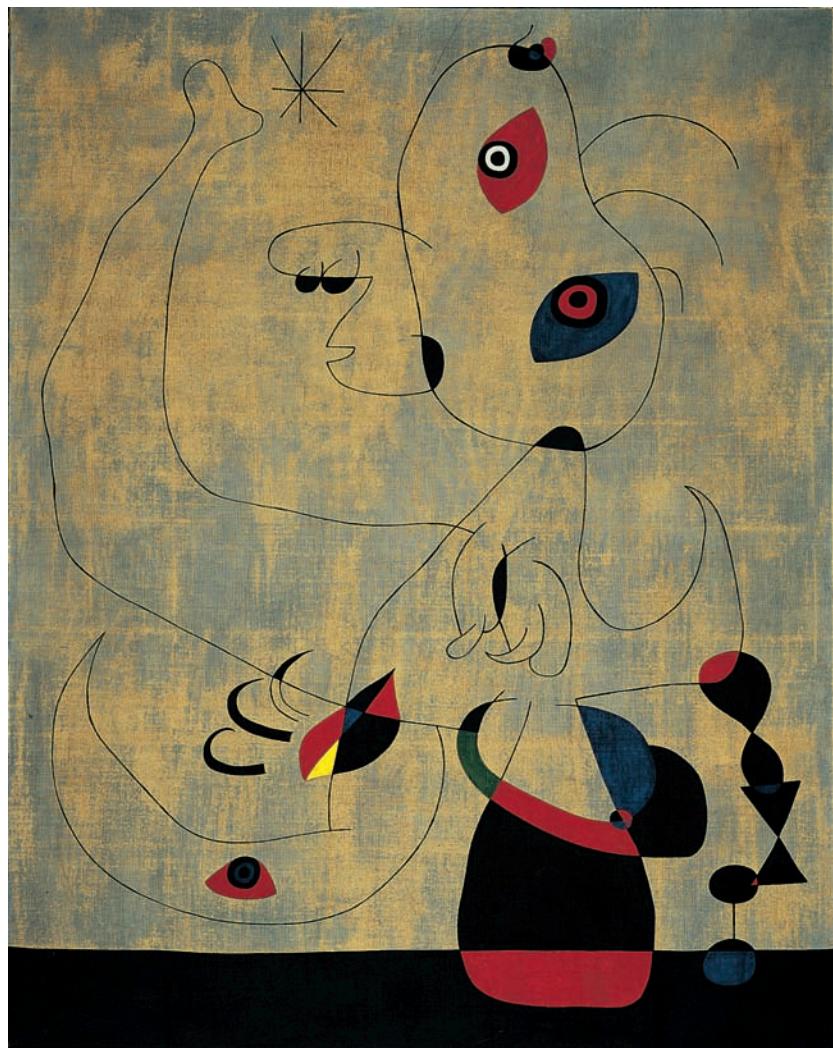
Salvador Dalí's (1904–89) famous "melting clocks" in *The Persistence of Memory* (fig. 28.8) portray the uncanny quality of certain dreams. In a stark, oddly illuminated landscape, a number of elements referring to time—watches, eggs, a dead fish, a dead tree—are juxtaposed with a single living fly and swarming ants. Displaced from an unidentified location onto the eerie landscape are the two rectangular platforms at the left. The one in the foreground impossibly supports a tree, just as an impossible system of lighting produces strange color combinations.



### Joan Miró

The Surrealist pictures of Joan Miró (1893–1983) are composed of imaginary motifs that are often reminiscent of childhood. In that way, they too are about the "persistence of memory." His paintings of the 1940s are characterized by biomorphic, sexually suggestive abstract forms as well as primary colors, vigorous linear movement, and complex design.

Miró's *Spanish Dancer* of 1945 (fig. 28.9), for example, captures the rapid rhythms of Spanish dancing by juxtaposing thin curves, diagonal planes, and flat shapes that shift abruptly from one color to another. The red-and-green curve on the red-and-black shape at the lower right seems to turn in space like a dancer's torso. Two legs kick energetically to the left, while a hand is poised above the torso. Surrounding the hand is a shape with two curved points—one black, one red—which resemble breasts. At the top, the large head tilts upward as a nose and mouth (two black eyes hang from the nose) project from it to the left. Two eyes—one red, one blue, each with two black circles within it—also occupy the large head. A corresponding eye shape is lodged in the lower leg. The exuberance of Miró's dancing figure and the illusion of speed created by curved lines and shifting planes reflect his interest in Surrealist "automatic writing."



**28.9** Joan Miró, *Spanish Dancer*, 1945. Oil on canvas, 4 ft. 9½ in. × 3 ft. 8¾ in. (1.46 × 1.14 m). Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Switzerland.



**28.10** René Magritte, *Time Transfixed (La Durée poignardée)*, 1938. Oil on canvas, 4 ft. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. × 3 ft. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (1.46 × 0.98 m). Art Institute of Chicago (Joseph Winterbotham Collection). Freud's observation that time does not exist in the unconscious accounts for certain unlikely condensations in dreams. The uncanniness of temporal condensation contributes to the eerie quality of this painting, as does the impossible juxtaposition of objects that appear realistic.

### René Magritte

The Belgian artist René Magritte (1898–1967) painted Surrealist images of a more veristic kind. Individually they are realistic, often to the point of creating an illusion. However, their context, their size, or the juxtaposition of objects is unrealistic or possible only in a world of dreams.

In *Time Transfixed (La Durée poignardée)* in French) of 1938 (fig. 28.10), Magritte juxtaposed two familiar objects in order to evoke the unfamiliar. Various motifs in this work are clearly depicted and easily identifiable, but their relation to each other is odd, and they convey an impression of immobility and timelessness. The clock is fixed at a specific hour, and the candlesticks are empty. The cold, sterile room, composed entirely of rectangular forms, is devoid of human figures. A steam engine has burst through the fireplace, but without disrupting the wall. A shadow cast by the train is unexplained because there is no light source to account for it. The smoke, which indicates that the train is moving although it looks static, disappears up the chimney. *Poignardée* in the French title, literally meaning “stabbed” with a dagger or sword, expresses the “transfixed,” frozen quality of both the train and the time.

## Sculpture Derived from Surrealism

Surrealism influenced sculptors as well as painters and photographers in Europe and America. The Surrealist interest in depicting dream images contributed to the twentieth-century break with certain traditional forms and techniques.

### Max Ernst

Max Ernst (1891–1976) began his artistic career in Germany as a Dadaist. He moved to France after World War I and eventually settled in the United States. *The King Playing with the Queen* (fig. 28.11) of 1944 combines Surrealism with Cubism, a knowledge of Freud's theories, and the playful qualities of Picasso and Duchamp. A geometric king looms up from a chessboard, which is also a table. His horns are related to the role of the bull as a symbol of male fertility and kingship. He dominates the board by his large size and extended arms. The king is a player sitting at the table, as well as a chess piece on the board. He literally “plays” with the queen, who is represented as a smaller geometric construction at the left. On the right, a few tiny chess pieces seem detached from whatever “game” is taking place between the king and queen.

**28.11** Max Ernst,  
*The King Playing with  
the Queen*, 1944.  
Bronze (cast 1954,  
from original plaster),  
38 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (97.8 cm) high;  
18 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 20 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (47.7 ×  
52.1 cm) at the base.  
Museum of Modern  
Art, New York (Gift  
of D. and J. de Menil).



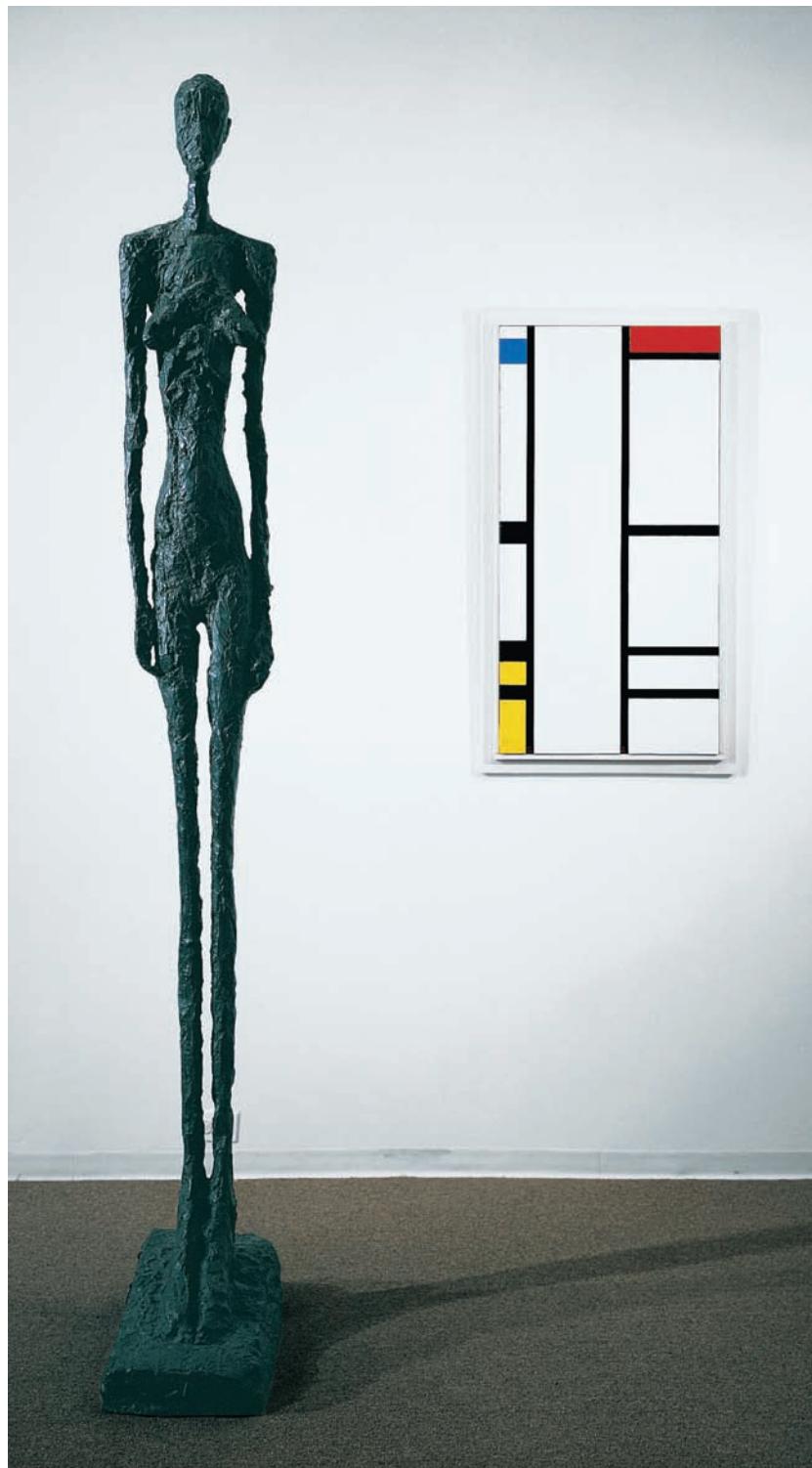
## Alberto Giacometti

In the 1930s Alberto Giacometti (1901–66) had been involved with the Surrealists in Paris, and from the 1940s he began exploring the paradoxical power of the emaciated human form. The tall, thin, anti-Classical proportions of *Large Standing Woman III* (fig. 28.12), one of his most imposing works, hark back to the rigid standing royal figures of ancient Egypt (see fig. 5.16), which exerted a significant influence on Giacometti's development as a sculptor. In figures such as this, whether large or small, Giacometti explores the idea of extinction. His obsession with existence and nonexistence is evident in the fact that he made these sculptures as thin as they can be without collapsing. Ironically, the thinner they become, the more their presence is felt. By confronting the observer with the potential for disappearance, Giacometti evokes existential anxiety and takes the viewer to the very threshold of being. The sculpture is shown here as installed at the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York. On the wall is Mondrian's *Composition A (No. 1)/Composition with Blue, Red, and Yellow* of 1935–42; the juxtaposition shows the relationship of both artists to the avant-garde.

### CONNECTIONS



**See figure 5.16.**  
Statue of Hatshepsut  
as pharaoh, c. 1473–  
1458 B.C.



**28.12** Alberto Giacometti, *Large Standing Woman III*, 1960, and Piet Mondrian, *Composition A (No. 1)/Composition with Blue, Red, and Yellow*, 1935–42, from the 1989 exhibition “40th Anniversary of Sidney Janis Gallery,” curated by Carroll Janis. Giacometti: bronze, 7 ft. 8½ in. (2.35 m) high. © 2011 Succession Giacometti/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP. Mondrian: oil on canvas, 3 ft. 3¼ in. x 1 ft. 8¼ in. (0.99 × 0.51 m). Photo courtesy of Carroll Janis, New York. © 2010 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust c/o HCR International, Virginia, USA. Born in Switzerland, Giacometti spent a formative period in the 1930s as a Surrealist. He met the Futurists in Italy and the Cubists in Paris and finally developed a distinctive way of representing the human figure that has become his trademark.

## Henry Moore

In contrast to Giacometti, the British sculptor Henry Moore (1898–1986) was drawn to massive biomorphic forms. The traditional motif of the reclining figure was one of his favorite subjects. Moore himself related the image to the “mother earth” theme and to his fascination with the mysterious holes of nature. From the 1930s Moore began making sculptures with hollowed-out spaces and openings, thereby playing with the transition between inside and outside, interior and exterior. Many of his reclining figures are intended as outdoor landscape sculptures and are related to the traditional theme of the reclining Venus (cf. fig. 16.29). Their holes permit viewers to see through the work as well as around it, and thus to include the surrounding landscape in their experience of the sculpture.

*Reclining Figure*, in front of the main UNESCO building in Paris (fig. 28.13), is in an architectural setting. Its curvilinear masses and open spaces contrast with the stark rectangularity of the wall. The white marble, with its pronounced grain, gleams in the natural outdoor light. Moore

considered the mountainous quality of the forms and the majestic character of the upright head and torso a fitting metaphor for the noble aims of the United Nations.

## CONNECTIONS

See figure 16.29. Giorgione, *Sleeping Venus*, c. 1509.



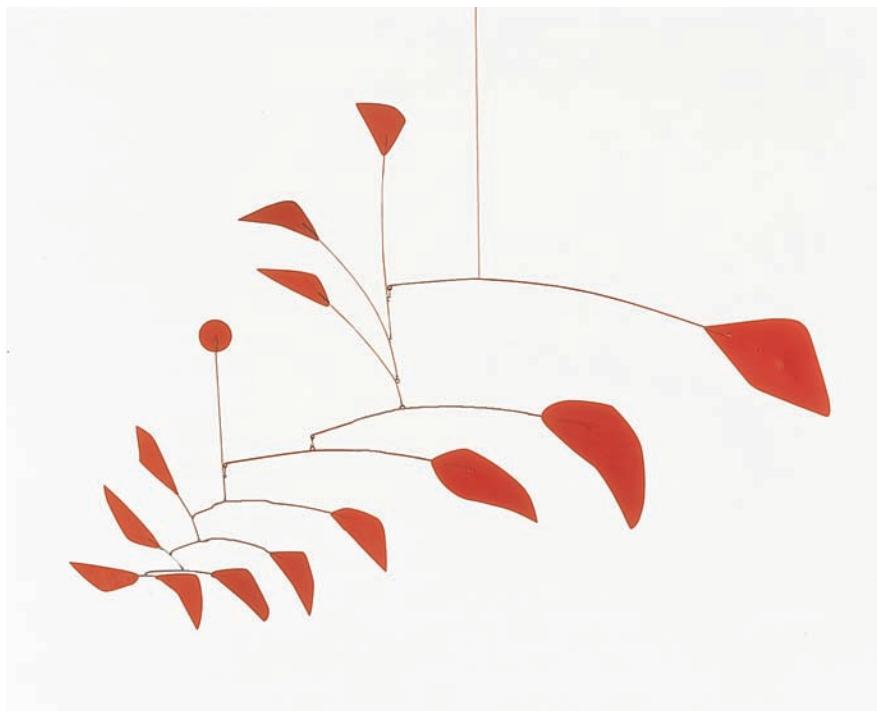
**28.13** Henry Moore, *Reclining Figure*, 1957–58. Roman travertine, 16 ft. 8 in. (5.08 m) long. UNESCO Building, Paris, France. Moore’s habit of collecting the chance objects of nature, such as dried wood, bone, and smooth stones from beaches, recalls the use of “found objects” in collage and assemblage. Unlike Dada and Surrealist artists, however, he used found objects as his inspiration rather than his medium, preferring the more traditional media of stone, wood, and bronze.

## Alexander Calder

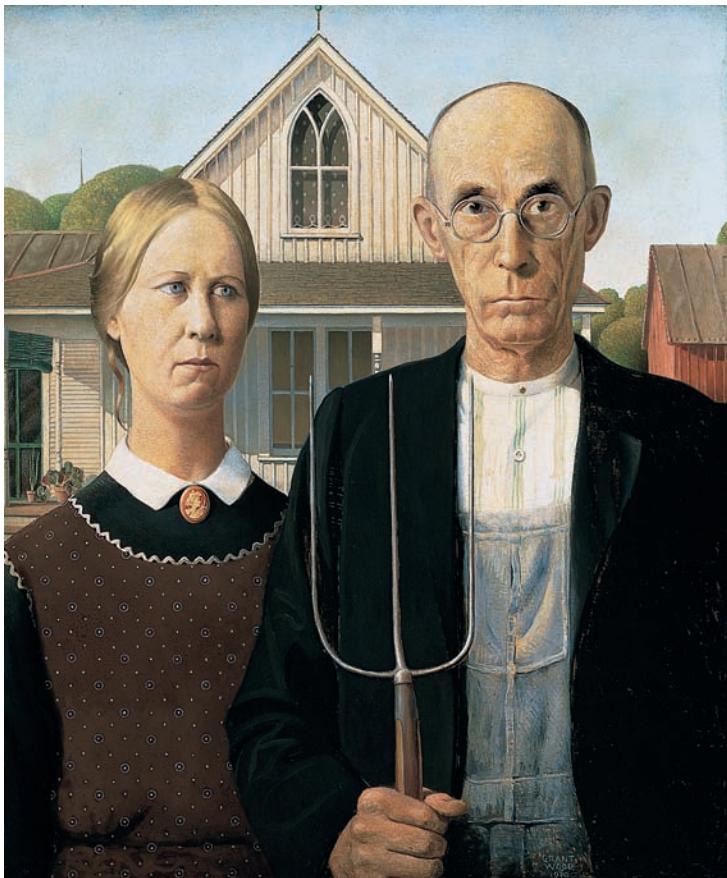
From the 1930s, the American artist Alexander Calder (1898–1976) developed **mobiles**, hanging sculptures set in motion by air currents. The catalyst for these works came from experiments with kinetic sculpture in Paris in the late 1920s and early 1930s. *Big Red* of 1959 (fig. 28.14) is made from a series of curved wires arranged in a sequence of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal planes. Flat, red metal shapes are attached to the wires. Because they hang from the ceiling, mobiles challenge the traditional viewpoint of sculpture. Their playful quality and the chance nature of air currents are reminiscent of Dada and Surrealism, although Calder is more abstract (in the nonfigurative sense) than many Dada and Surrealist artists. On the role of the color red in his sculpture, Calder is quoted as saying, “I love red so much that I almost want to paint everything red.”<sup>4</sup>

## The United States: Regionalism and Social Realism

In spite of the variety of expression produced by the European avant-garde and exhibited at the 1913 Armory Show, painting in the United States of the 1920s and 1930s was, above all, affected by economic and political events, particularly the Depression and the rise of Fascism in Europe. Two different types of response to the times—responses that had political overtones of their own—can be seen in the work of American Regionalists and Social Realists.



**28.14** Alexander Calder, *Big Red*, 1959. Painted sheet metal and steel wire, 6 ft. 1 in. × 9 ft. 6 in. (1.88 × 2.9 m). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (Purchase).



**28.15** Grant Wood, *American Gothic*, 1930. Oil on beaverboard, 29½ × 24½ in. (74.3 × 62.4 cm). Art Institute of Chicago (Friends of American Art Collection). Wood studied in Europe but returned to his native Iowa to paint the region with which he was most familiar. In this work, the two sober paragons of the American work ethic depicted as Iowa farmers are actually the artist's sister and dentist.

### Grant Wood

American Gothic (fig. 28.15) by Grant Wood (1892–1942) reflects the Regionalists' interest in provincial America and their isolation from the European avant-garde. Although the influence of Gothic is evident in the vertical planes and the pointed arch of the farmhouse window (see fig. 13.16), the figures and their environment are unmistakably those of the American Midwest. Wood's meticulous attention to detail and the linear quality of his forms recall the early-fifteenth-century Flemish painters. All such European references, however, are subordinated to a distinctly regional American character.

### Jacob Lawrence

The African American artist Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000), who was influenced by the Harlem Renaissance, dealt with issues of racial inequality and social injustice. Figure 28.16 reveals the influence of European Expressionist and Cubist trends, although the subject and theme are purely American. By a combination of flattened planes and abrupt foreshortening, Lawrence creates a powerful image of the abolitionist Harriet Tubman sawing a log. Tubman's



**See figure 13.16.**  
Door jamb statues,  
west façade,  
Chartres Cathedral,  
c. 1145–70.

single-minded concentration engages the observer directly in her activity. The geometric abstraction of certain forms, such as her raised right shoulder, contrasts with three-dimensional forms—the shaded left sleeve, for example—to produce shifts in tension. The result of such shifts is a formal instability that is stabilized psychologically by Tubman's determination.



**28.16** Jacob Lawrence, *Harriet Tubman Series*, No. 7, 1939–40. Casein tempera on hardboard, 17½ × 12 in. (43.5 × 30.5 cm). Hampton University Museum, Hampton, Virginia. From the age of ten, Lawrence lived in Harlem; in 1990 he was awarded the National Medal of Arts. This painting is from his 1939–40 series celebrating Harriet Tubman (c. 1820–1913). She was an active abolitionist and champion of women's rights who helped southern slaves to escape. From 1850 to 1860, as a "conductor" on the "underground railroad," she freed more than three hundred slaves.

**28.17** Edward Hopper, *Gas*, 1940. Oil on canvas, 2 ft. 2¼ in. × 3 ft. 4¼ in. (0.67 × 1.02 m). Museum of Modern Art, New York (Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund).



## Edward Hopper

Edward Hopper (1882–1967), also a painter of the American scene, cannot be identified strictly as either a Regionalist or a Social Realist. His work combines aspects of both styles, to which he adds a sense of psychological isolation and loneliness. His settings, whether urban or rural, are uniquely American, often containing self-absorbed human figures whose interior focus matches the still, timeless quality of their surroundings. In *Gas* of 1940 (fig. 28.17), a lone figure stands by a gas pump, the form of which echoes his own. The road, for Hopper a symbol of travel and time, seems to continue beyond the frame. Juxtaposed with the road are the figure and station that “go nowhere,” as if frozen within the space of the picture.

## James VanDerZee

Photography served the aims of social documentation in America as well as in Europe. The Harlem Renaissance photographer James VanDerZee (1886–1983) took pictures in his Lenox Avenue studio and also recorded African American life in New York City. His *Portrait of Couple, Man with Walking Stick* of 1929 (fig. 28.18) was taken in the studio against a landscape backdrop. The figures seem self-consciously well-dressed in an urban style that is slightly at odds with the scenery. Their attire places them in the 1920s, and their poses convey a sense of self-assurance.

**28.18** James VanDerZee, *Portrait of Couple, Man with Walking Stick*, 1929. Silver print. James VanDerZee Collection. © Donna M. VanDerZee.





**28.19** Dorothea Lange,  
*Migratory Cotton Picker, Eloy, Arizona*, 1940. Gelatin-silver print,  $10\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$  in. (26.8  $\times$  34.3 cm). The Dorothea Lange Collection, Oakland Museum of California, City of Oakland. Gift of Paul S. Taylor.

## Dorothea Lange

During the Depression, Dorothea Lange (1895–1965) took pictures for the Resettlement Administration—later the Farm Security Administration (FSA). This organization hired photographers to illustrate rural poverty. Lange was herself committed to conveying the desired social message. Her *Migratory Cotton Picker* of 1940 (fig. 28.19) is typical of the way she ennobled the poor and the working class. The man is physically worn by laboring in the fields and toughened by the hot sun. The earth clings to his hands, and the lines and veins of the hands create abstract patterns by virtue of the close-up view. Arizona's arid climate is reflected in the clear, crisp sky and the precise outlines of the worker. In such images, Lange succeeded in evoking sympathy for, and identification with, her subjects, thereby achieving her political goals.

## Mexico

### Diego Rivera

Another approach to social concerns can be seen in the murals of the Mexican artist Diego Rivera (1886–1957). From 1909 to 1921 he lived in Europe, where he painted

in a Cubist style. On returning to Mexico, however, he renounced the avant-garde in favor of Mexican nationalism. The government commissioned him to create a series of large murals for the National Palace, which he used as a vehicle for depicting Mexican history. In this approach Rivera was influenced by Socialist Realism.

Figure 28.20 shows the first mural in the series. At the left, the Spanish conquerors fight the native population, who perform ancient ceremonies at the far right. References to Quetzalcoatl, the pre-Columbian feathered-serpent god, appear on either side of the sun, which is above a Mesoamerican pyramid. The seated figure in front of the pyramid resembles Lenin, leaving no doubt about Rivera's political message. Rivera has thus combined a kind of historical imperative with contemporary issues; and even though he has diverged from the avant-garde, there are unmistakable Cubist forms in his imagery.

### Frida Kahlo

Diego Rivera's third wife, Frida Kahlo (1907–54), shared her husband's Marxist sentiments and his Surrealist style. She joined the Communist party in the 1940s to fight Hitler and befriended Leon Trotsky, the Russian revolutionary exiled to Mexico and later assassinated.

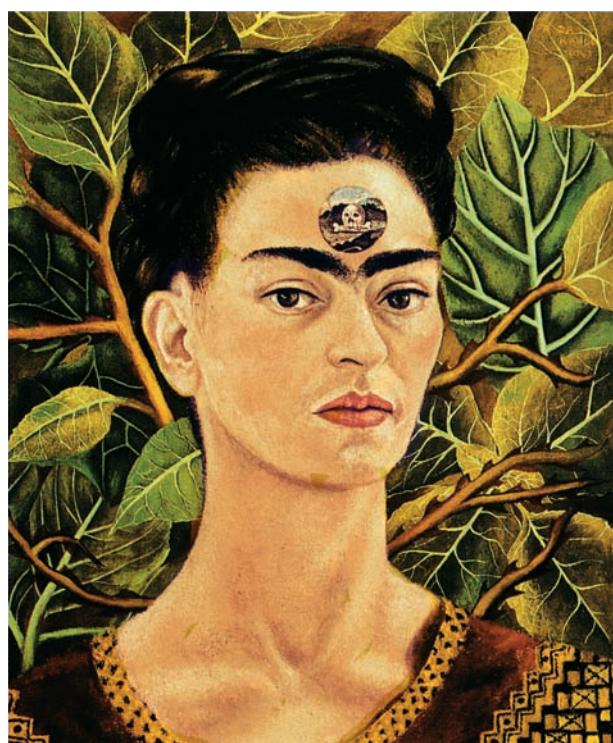
**28.20** Diego Rivera, *Ancient Mexico*, from the *History of Mexico* fresco murals, 1929–35. National Palace, Mexico City.



Despite a turbulent marriage, Kahlo remained in love with Rivera until her death. She shared the Surrealist interest in childhood memory and in using imagery to reveal the unconscious mind. Having suffered a serious accident as an adolescent that required repeated surgery and forced her to wear an uncomfortable back brace, Kahlo was in constant pain. This she depicted in many of her paintings, but she also portrayed the mental suffering caused by her relationship with Rivera.

In figure 28.21, Kahlo uses the Surrealist technique of painting thoughts and ideas. She depicts herself against a background of green and yellowing leaves and thorns that seem about to engulf her. The abundance of foliage, juxtaposed with the death's head in the landscape tondo on Kahlo's forehead, alludes to Mexican mythology in which life and death are seen as integral aspects of nature's continuum.

**28.21** Frida Kahlo, *Thinking about Death*, 1943. Oil on canvas, mounted on Masonite, 17½ × 14½ in. (44.5 × 36.3 cm). Private collection.



## Toward American Abstraction

Countering the Regional and Social Realist currents of American art between the wars was the influence of the European avant-garde. A few private New York galleries, run by dealers who understood the significance of the new styles, began to exhibit “modern” art. In 1905 the American photographer Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) opened the 291 Art Gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue in New York, where he exhibited work by Rodin, Cézanne, the Cubists, and Brancusi, along with work by progressive American artists. The Museum of Modern Art, under the direction of Alfred Barr, Jr., opened in 1929, the year of the stock market crash. In 1930, Stieglitz opened the American Place Gallery to exhibit abstract art. Also during this period, government support for the arts was provided by the Federal Arts Project, which operated under the aegis of Franklin Roosevelt’s social programs. The Arts Project employed thousands of artists and in so doing granted some measure of official status to abstract art.

### Alfred Stieglitz

Alfred Stieglitz’s photographs straddle the concerns of American Social Realism and avant-garde abstraction. Many of his pictures document contemporary society, while others are formal studies in abstraction. In 1922 he began a series of abstract photographs titled *Equivalent*

(fig. 28.22), in which cloud formations create various moods and textures. Stieglitz believed in what is called “straight photography,” as opposed to unusual visual effects achieved, among other means, by the manipulation of negatives and chemicals.

### Georgia O’Keeffe

Georgia O’Keeffe (1887–1986), who was married to Stieglitz, is difficult to place within a specific stylistic category. But it is clear that she was influenced by photography and early-twentieth-century abstraction, as well as by the landscape of the American Southwest. She, along with other abstractionists, had exhibited at Stieglitz’s 291 in the 1920s. Her *Black and White* of 1930 (fig. 28.23) is an abstract depiction of various textures, motion, and form, without any reference to recognizable objects. By eliminating color, O’Keeffe further distances the image from nature and makes use of the same tonal range that is available to the black-and-white photographer.

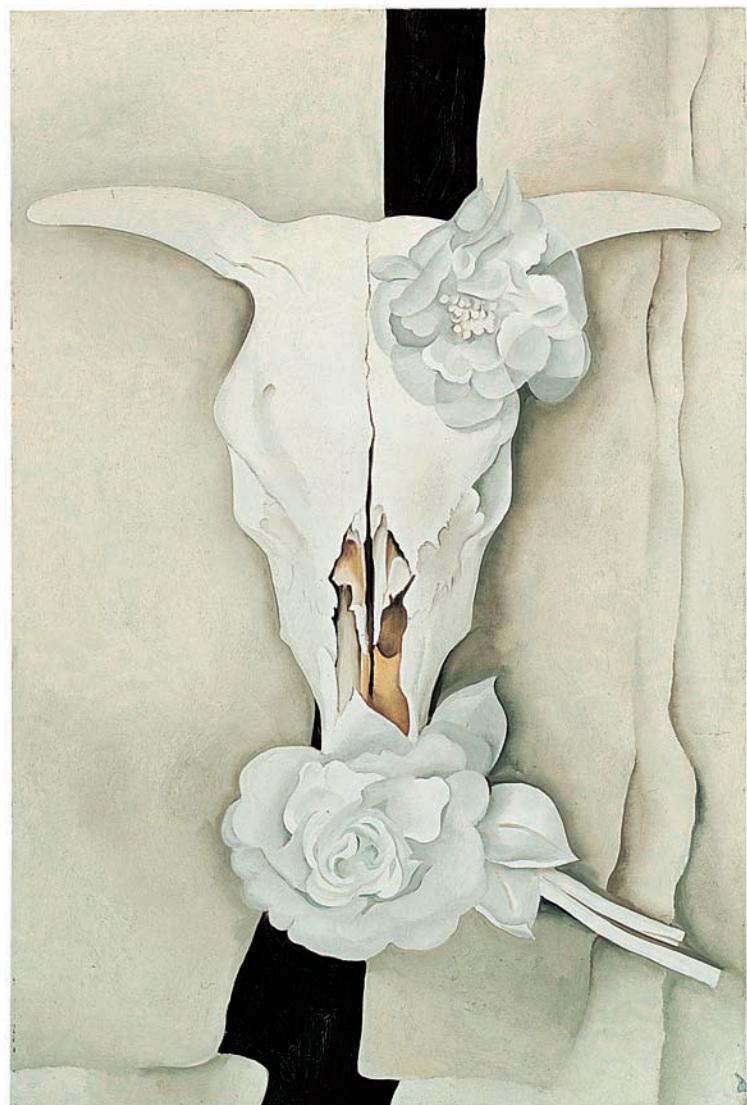
In her *Cow’s Skull with Calico Roses* of 1931 (fig. 28.24), O’Keeffe depicts one of the desiccated skulls found in the deserts of Arizona and New Mexico. The close-up view abstracts the forms. With the accent of the black vertical and the horizontal of the horns, the image evokes the Crucifixion. At the same time, the death content of O’Keeffe’s subject is softened by the roses, which are still alive. This juxtaposition of living and dead forms recalls the death and resurrection themes of Christian art, as well as being a feature of the desert itself. It also has a Surrealist quality.



**28.22** Alfred Stieglitz, *Equivalent*, 1923. Chloride print, 4 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 3 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (11.8 x 9.2 cm). Art Institute of Chicago (Alfred Stieglitz Collection). Stieglitz was born in Hoboken, New Jersey. He organized the 1902 exhibition that led to Photo-Secession, an informal group that held exhibitions all over the world and whose objective was to gain the status of a fine art for pictorial photography. In 1903 he founded the quarterly journal *Camera Work*, which encouraged modern aesthetic principles in photography.



**28.23** (Left) Georgia O'Keeffe, *Black and White*, 1930. Oil on canvas, 36 × 24 in. (91.4 × 61.0 cm). Collection, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (Gift of Mr. and Mrs. R. Crosby Kemper). O'Keeffe was born in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. In 1917 Stieglitz gave O'Keeffe her first one-woman show at "291." She married Stieglitz in 1924, and after his death moved permanently to New Mexico, where desert objects—animal bones, rocks, flowers—became favorite motifs in her work.



**28.24** (Right) Georgia O'Keeffe, *Cow's Skull with Calico Roses*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 36½ × 24½ in. (92.2 × 61.3 cm). Art Institute of Chicago (Gift of Georgia O'Keeffe). In July 1931, O'Keeffe wrote from New Mexico to the art critic Henry McBride: "Attempting to paint landscape—I must think it important or I wouldn't work so hard at it—Then I see that the end of my studio is a large pile of bones—a horse's head—a cow's head—a calf's head—long bones—all sorts of funny little bones and big ones too—a beautiful ram's head has the center of the table—with a stone with a cross on it and an extra curly horn."<sup>5</sup>



# 29

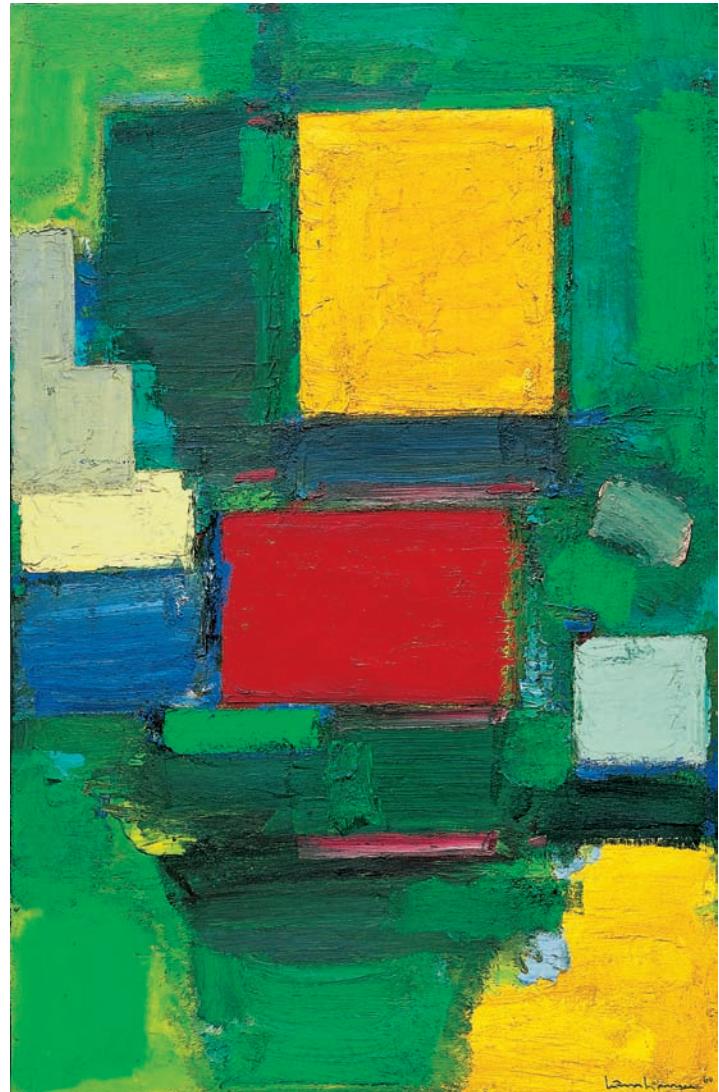
## Mid-Century American Abstraction

**B**y the middle of the 1930s, American abstraction had, paradoxically, emerged from the background of Regionalism and Social Realism. Equally influential, however, was the influx of artists and intellectuals from Europe. By 1940, when Paris fell to the Nazis, the center of the art world had shifted to New York, whose cultural life was enriched by émigré artists. Among the dealers and collectors who fled Europe was Peggy Guggenheim, who, in 1942, opened the Art of This Century Gallery in New York, which exhibited avant-garde work.

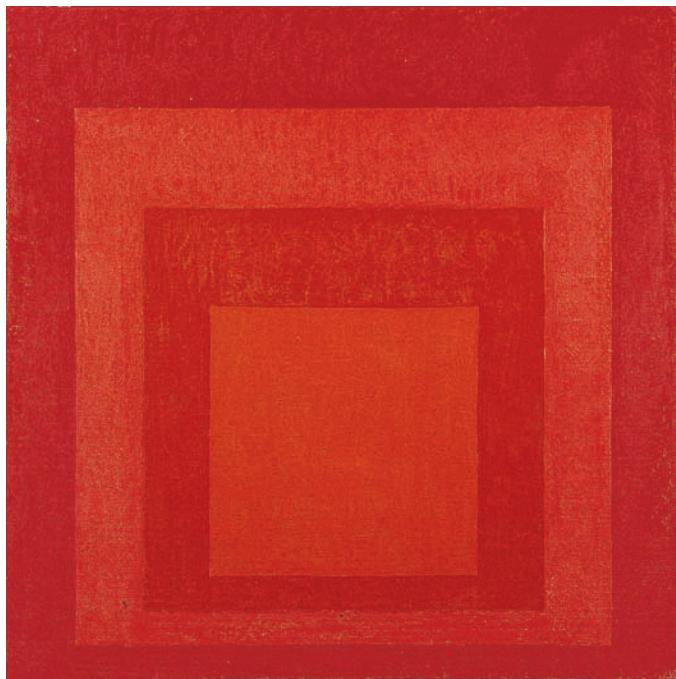
### The Teachers: Hans Hofmann and Josef Albers

Two of the most influential emigrants from Germany were Hans Hofmann (1880–1966) and Josef Albers (1888–1976). They taught at the Art Students League in New York and at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, respectively, and from 1950 to 1960 Albers chaired the Department of Architecture and Design at Yale. Both Hofmann and Albers influenced a generation of American painters.

Hofmann's *Gate* (fig. 29.1) is an architectural construction in paint. The intense, thickly applied color is arranged in squares and rectangles. It ranges from relatively pure hues, such as the yellow and red, to more muted greens and blues. For Hofmann, as for the Impressionists, it was the color in a picture that created light. In nature, the reverse is true; light makes color visible. In *The Gate*, edges vary from precise to textured. Everywhere, the paint is structured, combining bold, expressive color with the **tectonic** qualities of Cubism and related styles.



**29.1** Hans Hofmann, *The Gate*, 1959–60. Oil on canvas, 6 ft. 3½ in. × 4 ft. ½ in. (1.90 × 1.23 m). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. For Hofmann, nature was the source of inspiration, and the artist's mind transformed nature into a new creation. "To me," he said, "a work is finished when all parts involved communicate themselves, so that they don't need me."<sup>1</sup>



**29.2** Josef Albers, *Study for Homage to the Square*, 1968. Oil on Masonite, 32 × 32 in. (81.3 × 81.3 cm). Photo courtesy of Carroll Janis, New York.

Albers's series of paintings titled *Homage to the Square* (fig. 29.2) also explores color and geometry. But his surfaces are smooth, and the medium is subordinate to the color relationships among the squares. In his investigation of light and color perception, Albers concentrated on the square because he believed that it was the shape furthest removed from nature. "Art," he said, "should not represent, but present."<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract Expressionism

### The New York School

Abstract Expressionism was a term used in 1929 by Alfred Barr Jr. to refer to Kandinsky's nonfigurative, nonrepresentational paintings. The style was to put the United States on the map of the international art world. In the 1950s it was generally used to categorize the New York school of painters, which, despite its name, actually comprised artists from many parts of the United States and Europe.

Nearly all the Abstract Expressionists had passed through a Surrealist phase. From this they had absorbed an interest in myths and dreams, and in the effect of the unconscious on creativity. From Expressionism they inherited an affinity for the expressive qualities of paint. This aspect emerged particularly in the so-called action or gesture painters of Abstract Expressionism.

### Arshile Gorky

The Abstract Expressionist painter who was most instrumental in creating a transition from European Abstract Surrealism to American Abstract Expressionism was the Armenian Arshile Gorky (1904–48). After absorbing several European styles, including Impressionism and Surrealism, he developed his own pictorial "voice" in the 1940s.

Sometime between about 1926 and 1936, Gorky painted his famous work *The Artist and His Mother* (fig. 29.3). The slightly geometric character of the faces suggests the influence of early Cubism. Flattened planes of color—the mother's lap, for example—and visible brushstrokes reveal affinities with Fauvism and Expressionism. To the left stands the rather wistful young Gorky. His more dominant mother recalls the mythic enthroned mother goddesses of antiquity.



**29.3** Arshile Gorky, *The Artist and His Mother*, c. 1926–36. Oil on canvas, 5 ft. × 4 ft. 2 in. (1.52 × 1.27 m). Collection, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (Gift of Julien Levy for Maro and Natasha Gorky). Gorky was born Vosdanig Manoog Adoian in Turkish Armenia and emigrated to the United States in 1920. At the height of his career, a series of misfortunes—a fire that burned most of his recent work, a cancer operation, a car crash that fractured his neck—led to his suicide in 1948. This painting was based on an old photograph.



**29.4** Arshile Gorky, *Garden in Sochi*, c. 1943. Oil on canvas, 31 × 39 in. (78.7 × 99.0 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York (Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest). Gorky related this series to a garden at Sochi on the Black Sea. He recalled porcupines and carrots, and a blue rock buried in black earth with moss patches resembling fallen clouds. Village women rubbed their breasts on the rock—probably a fertility rite. Passersby tied colorful strips of clothing to a leafless tree. The strips blew in the wind like banners and rustled like leaves.

Entirely different in form, though it shares the nostalgic quality of *The Artist and His Mother*, is *Garden in Sochi* of about 1943 (fig. 29.4). The third of a series depicting childhood recollections, this painting exemplifies Gorky's most characteristic innovations. Paint is applied thinly, and colorful shapes are bounded by delicate curvilinear outlines, which create a sense of fluid motion.

Both the title and the abstract biomorphic shapes suggest natural, organic protozoan or vegetable life. Gorky studied nature closely, sketching flowers, leaves, and grass from life before transforming the drawings into abstract forms. The suggestive, elusive identity of Gorky's shapes is reminiscent of Miró, who had influenced Gorky's Surrealist phase.

## THEORY

### Critics and the Avant-Garde

Harold Rosenberg (1906–78) and Clement Greenberg (1909–94) were the two leading critics most closely associated with American Abstract Expressionism. In 1952 Rosenberg coined the term *action painting* to describe the new techniques of applying paint. For American artists, he said, the canvas became “an arena in which to act—rather than . . . a space in which to reproduce. . . . What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event.” Rather than begin a painting with a preconceived image, the Abstract Expressionists approached their canvases with the idea of doing something to it. “The image,” wrote Rosenberg, “would be the result of this encounter.”<sup>3</sup>

Greenberg took issue with Rosenberg’s assessment on the grounds that painting thus became a private myth. Because such work did not resonate with a larger cultural audience, according to Greenberg, it could not be considered art. But he was nevertheless a staunch defender of abstraction, noting

that subject matter had nothing to do with intrinsic value. “The explicit comment on a historical event offered in Picasso’s *Guerilla*,” he wrote in 1961, “does not make it necessarily a better or richer work than an utterly ‘non-objective’ painting by Mondrian.”<sup>4</sup>

Greenberg described the shift in the artists’ view of pictorial space as having “lost its ‘inside’ and become all ‘outside.’” He surveyed this shift from the fourteenth century as follows:

From Giotto to Courbet, the painter’s first task had been to hollow out an illusion of three-dimensional space on a flat surface. One looked through this surface as through a proscenium into a stage. Modernism has rendered this stage shallower and shallower until now its backdrop has become the same as its curtain, which has now become all that the painter has left to work on.<sup>5</sup>

## Action Painting

Just as brushstrokes are a significant aspect of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, so the action painters developed characteristic methods of applying paint. They dripped, splattered, sprayed, rolled, and threw paint onto their canvases, with the result that the final image reflects the artist's activity in the creative process.

### Jackson Pollock

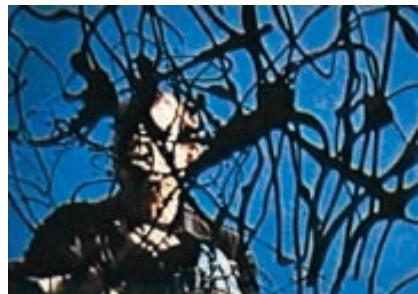
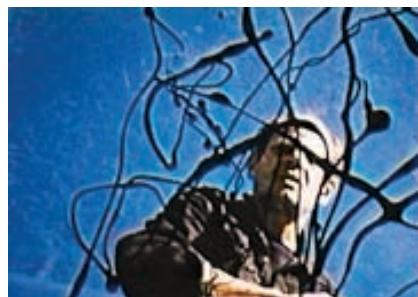
Of the “action” or “gesture” painters who were part of the New York school, the best known is Jackson Pollock (1912–56). He began as a Regionalist and turned to Surrealism in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

From 1947 onward, Pollock used a **drip technique** to produce his most celebrated pictures, in which he engaged

his whole body in the act of painting. From cans of commercial housepainter’s paint, enamel, and aluminum, Pollock dripped paint from the end of a stick or brush directly onto a canvas spread on the ground. In so doing, he achieved some of the chance effects sought by the Dada and Surrealist artists. At the same time, however, he controlled the placement of the drips and splatters through the motion of his arm and body (fig. 29.5). He described this process as follows: “On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be *in* the painting. This is akin to the Indian sand painters of the West” (see Box, p. 522). Pollock also declared that, when actually painting, he was unaware of his actions: “When I am *in* my painting, I’m not aware of what I’m doing . . . because the painting has a life of its own.”<sup>6</sup>



**29.5a** Hans Namuth, *Jackson Pollock*, 1950. Photograph. Courtesy Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona.



**29.5b** Hans Namuth, *Jackson Pollock*, 1950. Three color stills from a film strip. Courtesy Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, East Hampton, NY.

## MEDIA AND TECHNIQUE

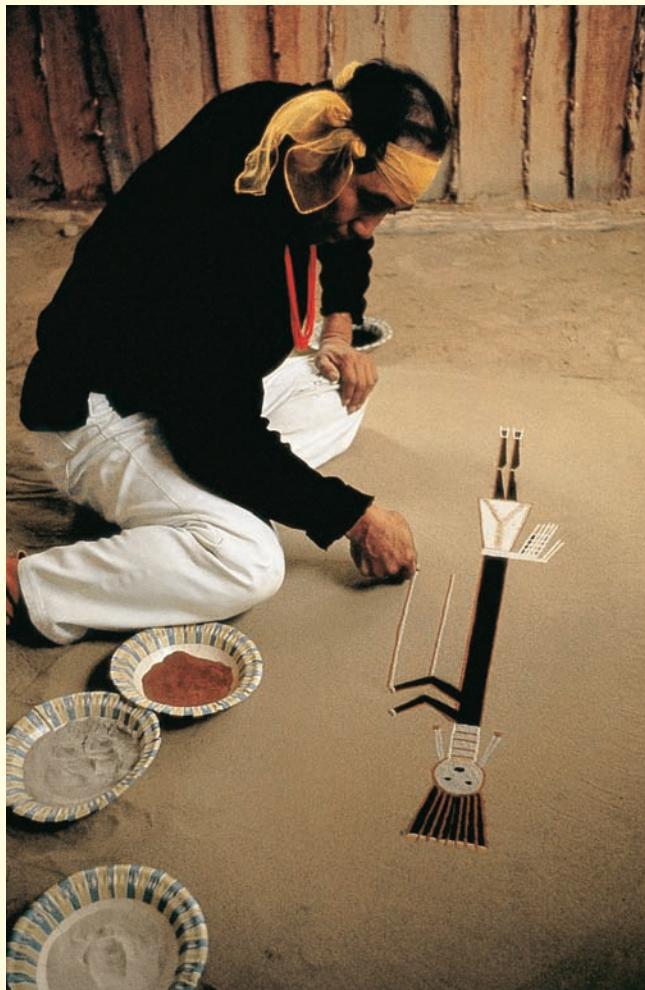
### Navajo Sand Painting

Pollock's "Indian sand painters" were the Navajo, who led a nomadic existence in the American Southwest. They made paintings out of crushed colored rocks, which were ground to the consistency of sand. These were the sacred products of a medicine man, or shaman, who created images in order to exorcise the evil spirits of disease from a sick person. He continued to make the pictures until the patient either died or recovered. Then the image was destroyed, usually at night, and its effect dissipated.

According to Navajo belief, humans had been preceded by Holy People who created sacred images in nature. These images became a medium of communication between the human and spirit worlds. For the Navajo, sand paintings provide a means of summoning the assistance of the Holy People in order to restore the spiritual and physical balance of a sick

person. Typically the patient sits inside the painting and faces east, the direction from which the Holy People enter the image. As a result, the Navajo refer to sand paintings as *iikaah*, or "the place to which gods come and from which they go."

Figure 29.6a shows a modern sand painter at work, his image not yet complete. Figure 29.6b is a sand painting of a *yei* god (a lesser Navajo deity). Its frontal stance, stylized, figurative character, geometric forms, and clear outlines are unlike anything in Pollock's work. Figure 29.6a also differs from Pollock's all-over drips in its flattened perspective and discrete zones of color. His interest was in energetic execution and the artist's movement around the image on the ground. It is also likely that Pollock was drawn to the shamanistic character of the medicine man, and that he identified with the notion that images have curative power.



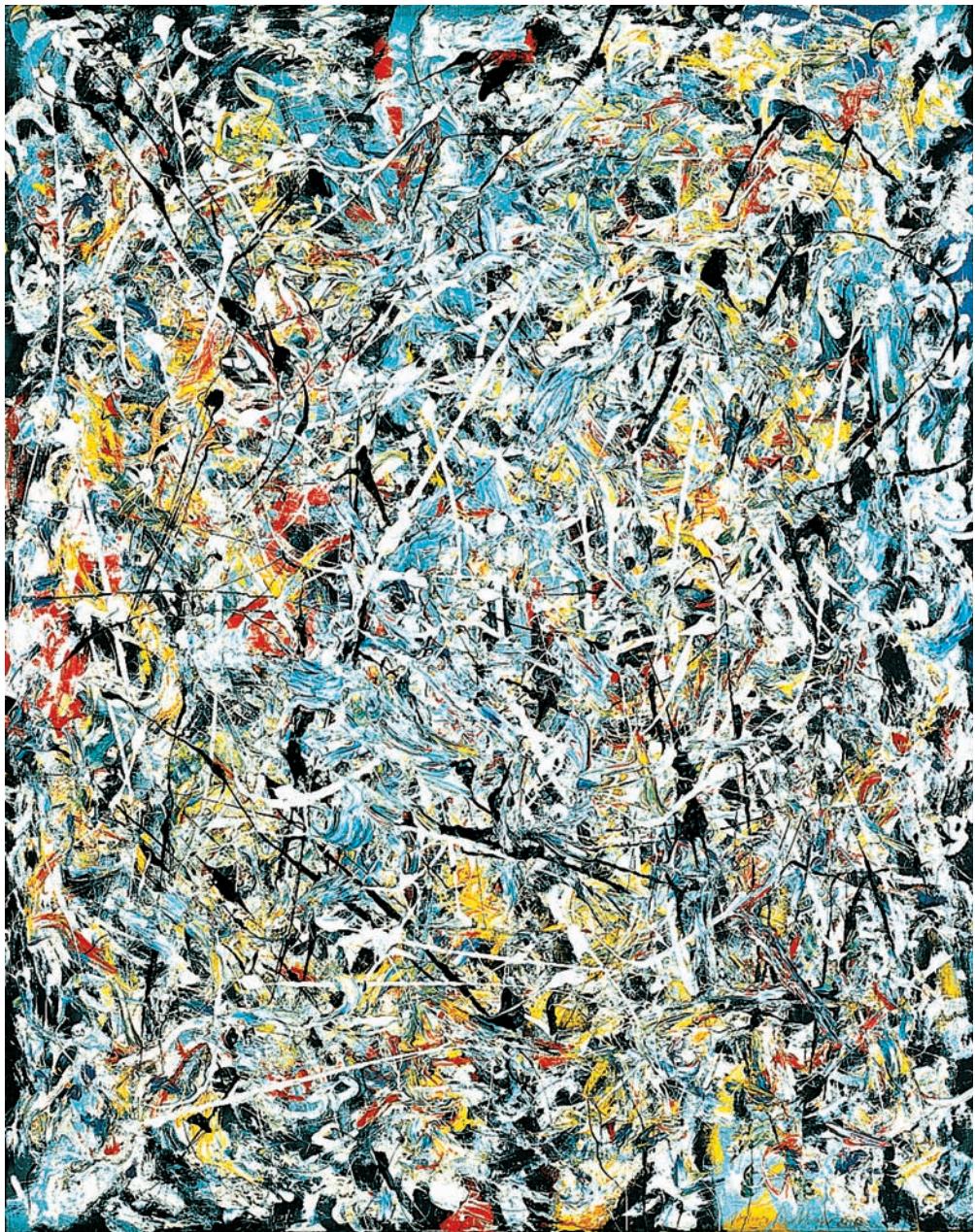
**29.6a** Michael Heron, *Navajo Crafts*, creating a sand painting.



**29.6b** Yei god, sand painting, 20th century. Navajo Indian Reservation, western New Mexico.

Pollock's *White Light* of 1954 (fig. 29.7) eliminates all reference to recognizable objects. Lines of different widths and textures swirl through the picture space and are slashed diagonally at various points. There is an underlying chromatic organization of yellows and oranges blending with, and crisscrossed by, thick blacks and whites.

The white, as indicated by the title, is what predominates, and the intensity of Pollock's light is everywhere present. His habit of trimming finished canvases enhances their dynamic quality, for the lines appear to move rhythmically in and out of the picture plane, unbound by either an edge or a frame, as if self-propelled.



**29.7** Jackson Pollock, *White Light*, 1954. Oil, enamel, and aluminum paint on canvas,  $48\frac{1}{4} \times 38\frac{1}{4}$  in. (122.4 x 96.9 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York (Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection). Pollock was born in Wyoming and moved to New York in 1929. He worked for the Federal Arts Project and had his first one-man show in 1943 at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century Gallery. Pollock first exhibited paintings such as this in 1948 to a shocked public. A critic for *Time* magazine dubbed him "Jack the Dripper," but avant-garde critics came to his defense. Within a few years of his death, he was the most widely exhibited of all the artists of the New York school.



**29.8** Franz Kline, *Mahoning*, 1956. Oil and paper collage on canvas, 6 ft. 8 in. × 8 ft. 4 in. (2.03 × 2.54 m). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (Purchase, funds from friends of Whitney Museum of American Art).

## Franz Kline

The dynamic energy of Pollock's monumental drip paintings is virtually unmatched, even among the Abstract Expressionist action painters. But Franz Kline (1910–62) achieved dynamic imagery through thick, bold strokes of paint slashing across the picture plane. He had his first one-man show in New York in 1950, by which time he had renounced figuration and begun working on his

characteristic black-and-white canvases. *Mahoning* of 1956 (fig. 29.8) is a typical example. Strong black diagonals are created by the wide brush of a housepainter and form a kind of "structured" calligraphy. The edges are too rough and the blacks too angular for Classical calligraphy, while the architectural appearance tilts, as if beams are about to collapse. Drips and splatters enhance the textured quality of the surface.



## Willem de Kooning

Willem de Kooning (1904–97) used action painting in the service of explicit aggression. This is particularly true of the series of pictures of women that de Kooning painted in the early 1950s. Unlike Pollock and Kline, de Kooning only partially eliminated recognizable subject matter from his iconography until late in his career. *Woman and Bicycle* of 1952–53 (fig. 29.9), for example, combines the frontal image of a large, frightening woman with violent brushstrokes tearing through the figure’s outline. The anxiety created by the woman’s appearance—huge staring eyes, a double set of menacing teeth, and platform-like breasts, which reveal the influence of Cubist geometry—matches the frenzy of the brushstrokes. The assault on the figure, which seems to disintegrate into unformed paint, is also an attack on the idealized Classical image of female beauty.

**29.9** Willem de Kooning, *Woman and Bicycle*, 1952–53. Oil on canvas, 6 ft. 4 1/2 in. x 4 ft. 1 in. (1.94 x 1.25 m). Collection, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (Purchase). De Kooning was born in the Dutch port of Rotterdam and emigrated to the United States in 1926, but did not have his first one-man show until 1948. He described his relationship to 20th-century art as follows: “Of all movements, I like Cubism most. It had that wonderful unsure atmosphere of reflection. . . . And then there is that one-man movement: Marcel Duchamp—for me a truly modern movement because it implies that each artist can do what he thinks he ought to—a movement for each person and open for everybody.”<sup>7</sup>

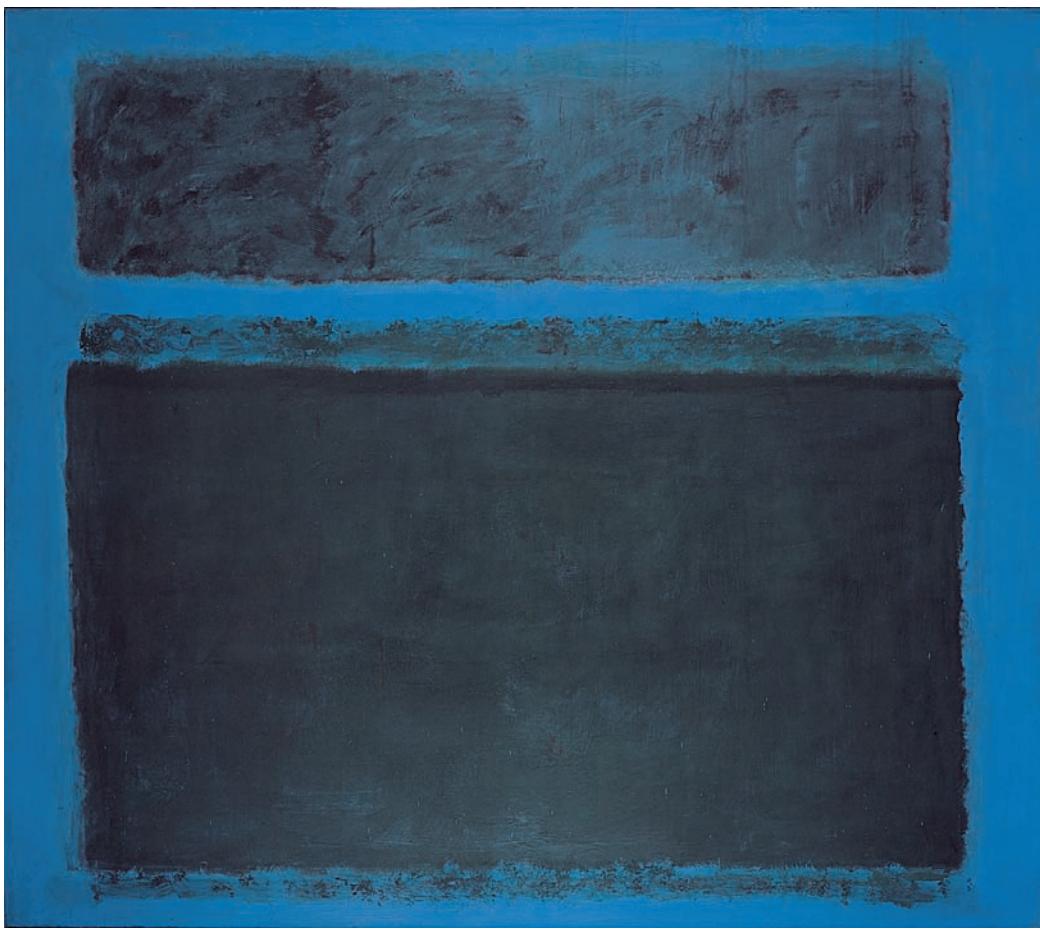
## Mark Rothko

One of the most important Abstract Expressionist artists was Mark Rothko (1903–70). Like Pollock, he had gone through a Surrealist period and was engaged in the search for universal symbols, which he believed were accessible through myths and dreams. By the 1950s, Rothko had developed his most original style. Nonfigurative and nonrepresentational, Rothko's paintings are images of rectangles hovering in fields of color.

In *Number 15* of 1957 (fig. 29.10), two black-green rectangles occupy an intense, vibrant blue. Above and below the larger rectangle is a thinner bar of green. The blue background appears to be suffused into the greens and blacks, producing a shimmering, textured quality that infiltrates the overall impression of darkness. By muting the colors and blurring the edges of the rectangles, Rothko softens

the potential contrast between them. He likewise mutes the observer's attention to the "process" of painting by virtually eliminating the presence of the artist's hand.

By eliminating references to the natural world as well as to the creative process, Rothko attempted to transcend material reality. His pictures seem to have no context in time or space. The weightless quality of his rectangles is enhanced by their blurred edges and thin textures, which allow the underlying blue to filter through them. Whereas Pollock's light moves exuberantly across the picture plane, weaving in and out of the colors in the form of white drips, Rothko's light is luminescent. It flickers at the edges of the rectangles and shifts mysteriously from behind and in front of them. His large canvases, with their broad fields of color, can be seen as a kind of transition to Color Field painting.



**29.10** Mark Rothko, *Number 15*, 1957. Oil on canvas, 8 ft. 7 in. × 9 ft. 8½ in. (2.62 × 2.96 m). Collection of Christopher Rothko. Rothko was born in Latvia. In 1913 his family emigrated to Portland, Oregon, and in 1923 he moved to New York. Rothko suffered from depression and committed suicide in 1970. He expressed his alienation from society as follows: "The unfriendliness of society to his [the artist's] activity is difficult . . . to accept. Yet this very hostility can act as a lever for true liberation. . . . The sense of community and of security depends on the familiar. Free of them, transcendental experiences become possible."<sup>78</sup> Rothko's striving for freedom from the familiar is evident in the absence of recognizable forms in paintings such as this one.

## Color Field Painting

At the opposite pole from the action painters are the artists who applied paint in a more traditional way. This has been variously referred to as “Chromatic Abstraction” and “Color Field painting.” The latter term refers to the preference for expanses of color applied to a flat surface in contrast to the domination of line in action painting. The imagery of action painting is more in tune with Picasso and Expressionism. Color Field painters, by contrast, were influenced by Matisse’s broad planes of color. Compared with action paintings, Color Field imagery is typically calm and inwardly directed, and is capable of evoking a meditative, even spiritual, response.

### Helen Frankenthaler

Helen Frankenthaler (born 1928) used synthetic media (see Box) to “stain” her canvas by pouring paint directly onto it. In 1952 she visited Pollock in his studio in the Springs section of eastern Long Island. There she saw the effect of Pollock’s paint on unprimed canvas, which revealed the staining process—a method that is basic to Color Field painting. *The Bay* of 1963 (fig. 29.11) is made of thinned paint poured onto the canvas in layers of color, engulfing the picture plane. The colors are delicate and, for the most part, pastel. The blue expands over the canvas, like water filling the recess in the yellow and green areas of color. We seem to be looking down on a body of water in a landscape.

#### MEDIA AND TECHNIQUE

##### Acrylic

One of the most popular of the modern synthetic media is **acrylic**, a water-based paint. Acrylic comes in bright colors, dries quickly, and does not fade. It can be applied to paper, canvas, and board with either traditional brushes or **airbrushes**. It can be poured, dripped, and splattered. When thick, acrylic approaches the texture of oils. When thinned, it is fluid like water paint. However, in contrast to water paint, which mixes when more than one wet color is applied, acrylic can be applied in layers that do not blend even when wet. It is possible to build up several layers of paint which retain their individual hues, and thus to create a structure of pure color—as Frankenthaler does in *The Bay* (see fig. 29.11).



**29.11** Helen Frankenthaler, *The Bay*, 1963. Acrylic on canvas, 6 ft. 8¾ in. × 6 ft. 9¾ in. (2.05 × 2.08 m). Detroit Institute of Arts (Founders Society Purchase with funds from Dr. and Mrs. Hilbert H. DeLawter).

## Frank Stella

Frank Stella (born 1936) was trained in art during the heyday of the New York school of Abstract Expressionism, but he paints with a new vision of color and form. His early pictures are somber and largely monochrome. They are fitted into triangular, star-shaped, zigzag, and open rectangular frames. By varying the shape of the canvas, Stella focused on the quality of a picture as an object in itself. Within the picture, he painted stripes of flat color, separated from each other and bordered by a precise edge. This technique is sometimes referred to as Hard-Edge painting.

*Tahkt-i-Sulayman I* of 1967 (fig. 29.12) belongs to Stella's "Protractor Series," in which arcs intersect as if drawn with a compass. Here, a central circle is divided into two semicircles, which are repeated symmetrically on either side by flanking semicircles. These forms are related by sweeping curves, which interlace with all three sections in a continuous, interlocking motion. The intense, bright color strips in Stella's paintings of the 1960s combine dynamic exuberance with geometric control. Since the 1960s, Stella has continued to expand his formal repertoire, evolving from reductive clarity to complex, often highly colorful three-dimensional wall sculptures of varying textures and materials.

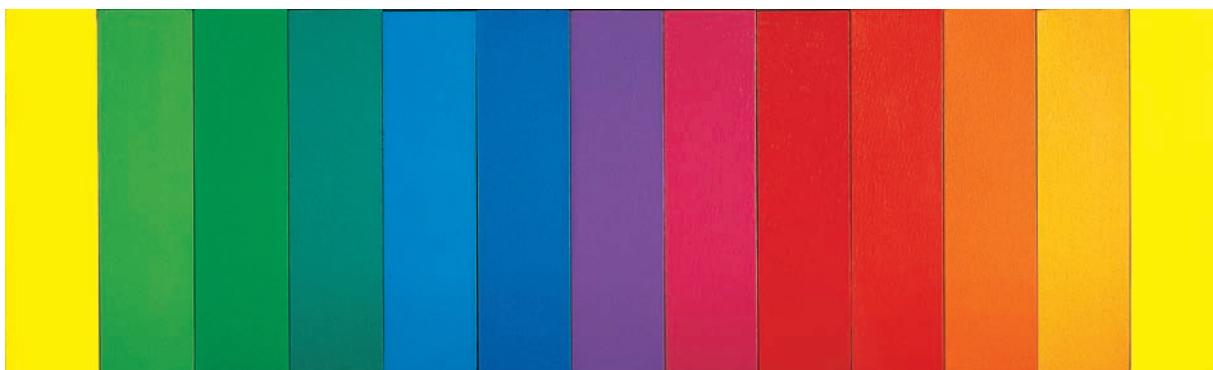


**29.12** Frank Stella, *Tahkt-i-Sulayman I*, 1967. Polymer and fluorescent paint on canvas, 10 ft. ¼ in. × 20 ft. 2¼ in. (3.05 × 6.15 m). Menil Collection, Houston, Texas. Stella has lived and worked in New York since 1958. The Near Eastern title of this painting indicates his interest in colorful Islamic patterns (which also influenced Matisse). The interlaced color strips reflect his study of Hiberno-Saxon designs (see fig. 11.6).

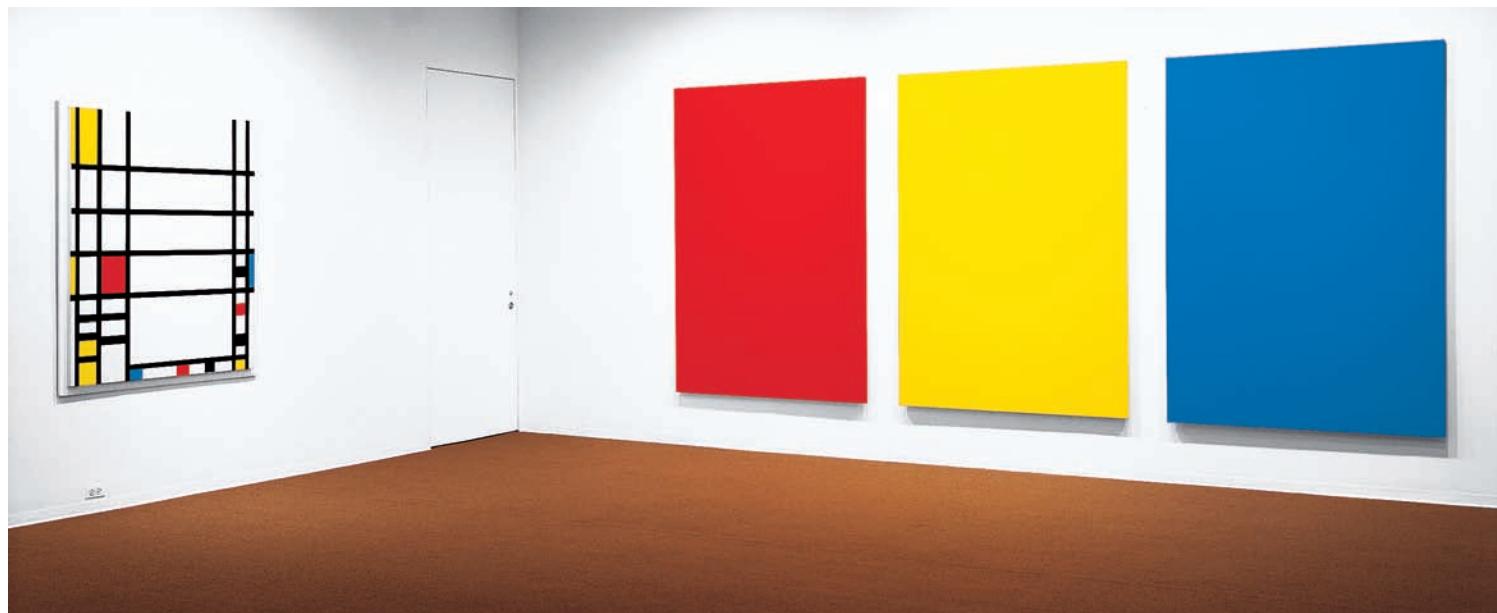
## Ellsworth Kelly

Ellsworth Kelly (born 1923) is another leading Hard-Edge Color Field painter, who works in the tradition of Josef Albers. His color is vibrant and arranged in large, flattened planes that sometimes seem to expand organically. In other instances—as in *Spectrum III* (fig. 29.13)—bands of color create a temporal sequence of visual movement through the spectrum. By aligning the colors in this way, Kelly produces a tactile effect, despite the absence of modeling. The sequential arrangement of the rich hues causes a buildup of tension that proceeds through a progression of color.

In 1990 the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York mounted an exhibition titled “Classic Modernism: Six Generations.” Figure 29.14 is a view of the installation with Mondrian’s *Trafalgar Square* of 1939–43 on the left and Ellsworth Kelly’s *Red, Yellow, Blue* of 1965 on the right. This juxtaposition illustrates the relationship between Kelly’s pure primary colors, unframed and juxtaposed with Mondrian’s rectangles of color bounded by firm black verticals and horizontals. Kelly has enlarged the rectangles by comparison with Mondrian and has liberated the color from Mondrian’s black “frames.” By organizing the two paintings in this way, the installation shows Mondrian’s historical role as a link between Cubism and Color Field painting.



**29.13** (Above) Ellsworth Kelly, *Spectrum III*, 1967. Oil on canvas, in 13 parts, 2 ft. 9 1/4 in. × 9 ft. 3 1/8 in. (0.84 × 2.76 m). Private collection.



**29.14** Installation view of “Classic Modernism: Six Generations.” On right: Ellsworth Kelly, *Red, Yellow, Blue*, 1965. Oil on canvas, 6 ft. 10 in. × 15 ft. 5 in. (2.08 × 4.70 m). On left: Piet Mondrian, *Trafalgar Square*, 1939–43. Oil on canvas, 4 ft. 9 1/4 in. × 3 ft. 1 1/4 in. (1.45 × 1.20 m). Exhibition held Nov. 15–Dec. 29, 1990, at the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, curated by Carroll Janis. Photo courtesy of Carroll Janis, New York. © Ellsworth Kelly. © 2010 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust c/o HCR International, Virginia, USA.



# 30

## Pop Art, Op Art, Minimalism, and Conceptualism

In the late 1950s and 1960s, a reaction against the non-figurative and seemingly subjective character of Abstract Expressionism took the form of a return to the object. The most prominent style to emerge in America in the 1960s was “Pop,” although the origins of the style are to be found in England in the 1950s. The imagery of Pop Art was derived from commercial sources, the mass media, and everyday life. In contrast to Abstract Expressionism—which viewed works of art as revelations of the artist’s inner, unconscious mind—the Pop artists strove for “objectivity” embodied by an imagery of objects. The impact of Pop Art was enhanced by the mundane character of the objects selected. As a result, Pop Art was regarded by many as an assault on accepted conventions and aesthetic standards.

Despite the 1960s emphasis on the objective “here and now,” however, the artists of that period were not completely detached from historical influences or psychological expression. The elevation of everyday objects to the status of artistic imagery can be traced to the early-twentieth-century taste for “found objects” and assemblage. Likewise, the widespread incorporation of letters and numbers into the new iconography of Pop Art reflects the influence of the newspaper collages produced by Picasso and Braque.

Another artistic expression of the 1960s, the so-called **happenings**, probably derived from the Dada performances at the Café Voltaire in Zurich during World War I. Happenings, in which many Pop artists participated, were multimedia events that took place in specially created environments. They included painting, assemblage, television, radio, film, and artificial lighting. Improvisation and audience participation encouraged a spontaneous, ahistorical atmosphere that called for self-expression in the here and now. Happenings were also a response to consumerism and the fact that works of art were valued as commodities. In a Happening, there is no commodity, for nothing about it—unless it is recorded or videotaped—is permanent.

Additional art movements that developed during the 1960s, which are discussed in this chapter include Op Art, which explored the kinetic effects of optical illusion; Minimalism, which attempted to eliminate the presence of the

artist and focus on pure form and industrial materials; and Conceptualism, in which the idea (the concept) is theoretically more important than the work itself.

### Pop Art in England: Richard Hamilton

The small collage *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?* (fig. 30.1), by the English artist Richard Hamilton (born 1922), was originally intended for reproduction on a poster. It can be considered a visual manifesto of what was to become the Pop Art movement. First exhibited in London in a 1956 show titled “This Is Tomorrow,” Hamilton’s collage inspired an English critic to coin the term “Pop.”

The muscleman in the middle of the room is a conflation of the Classical *Spear Bearer* (see fig. 7.14) by Polykleitos and the *Medici Venus* (see fig. 15.15). The giant Tootsie Pop directed toward the woman on the couch is at once a sexual, visual, and verbal pun. Advertising images occur in the sign pointing to the vacuum hose, the Ford car emblem, and the label on the tin of ham. Mass-media imagery is explicit in the tape recorder, television set, newspaper, and movie theater. The framed cover of *Young Romance* magazine reflects popular teenage reading of the 1950s.

Despite the iconographic insistence on what was contemporary, however, Hamilton’s collage contains traditional historical references. The image of a white-gloved Al Jolson on the billboard advertising *The Jazz Singer* recalls an earlier era of American entertainment. The old-fashioned portrait on the wall evokes an artistic past, and the silicon pinup on the couch is a plasticized version of the traditional reclining nude. Hamilton’s detailed attention to the depiction of objects, especially those associated with domestic interiors, reveals his respect for fifteenth-century Flemish painters, as well as his stated admiration for Duchamp.



**30.1** Richard Hamilton, *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?* 1956. Collage on paper, 10½ × 9¼ in. (26.0 × 23.5 cm). Kunsthalle, Tübingen, Germany (Collection Zundel). As a guide for subsequent Pop artists, Hamilton compiled a checklist of Pop Art subject matter: “Popular (designed for a mass audience), transient (short-term solution), expendable (easily forgotten), low-cost, mass-produced, young (aimed at youth), witty, sexy, gimmicky, glamorous, big business.”

#### CONNECTIONS



**See figure 7.14.**  
Polykleitos, *Doryphoros* (*Spear Bearer*), c. 440 B.C.



**See figure 15.15.**  
Medici Venus,  
1st century A.D.

**30.2** Jasper Johns, *Three Flags*, 1958. Encaustic on canvas,  $30\frac{1}{2} \times 45\frac{1}{2} \times 5$  in. ( $78.4 \times 115.6 \times 12.7$  cm). Collection, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (50th Anniversary Gift of Gilman Foundation, Lauder Foundation, A. Alfred Taubman, anonymous donor, purchase).



## Pop Art in the United States

Although Pop Art made its debut in London in 1956 and continued in England throughout the 1960s, it reached its fullest development in New York. In 1962 an exhibition of the New Realists at the Sidney Janis Gallery gave Pop artists official status in the New York art world. Pop Art, however, was never a homogeneous style, and within this classification are many artists whose imagery and technique differ significantly. The first two artists discussed here—Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg—are actually transitional between Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art, for they combine textured, painterly brushwork with a return to the object.

### Jasper Johns

One of the constant themes of Jasper Johns (born 1930) is the boundary between everyday objects and the work of art. In the late 1950s he chose a number of objects whose representation he explored in different ways, including the map and flag of the United States, targets, and stenciled numbers and words. In *Three Flags* of 1958 (fig. 30.2), Johns depicts a popular image that is also a national emblem. His flags are built up with superimposed canvas strips covered with wax **encaustic**—a combination that creates a pronounced sense of surface texture. “Using the design of the American flag,” Johns has been quoted as saying, “took care of a great deal for me because I didn’t have to design it.” The flag is abstract insofar as it consists of pure geometric shapes (stars and rectangles), but it is also an instantly recognizable, familiar object. The American flag

has its own history, and the encaustic medium that Johns used to paint it dates back to antiquity (see Chapter 7). It thus combines the painterly qualities of Abstract Expressionism with the representation of a well-known and popular object. One question raised by Johns’s treatment of this subject is: “When does the flag cease to be a patriotic sign or symbol and become an artistic image?”

In Johns’s painted bronze casts of cans of Ballantine Ale (fig. 30.3), he retains the painterly texture of the *Three Flags*. As a Pop artist, Johns deals with themes of commercialism and repeated imagery versus the unique work of art. In this case, he draws commercial objects into the realm of art but, in contrast to Duchamp (see Chapter 28), Johns makes the artist’s presence visible in the artistic process. In repeating the ale cans, Johns has created an imposing pair of cylinders. The more we look at them, the more we have the impression that they are standing up and looking back at us.



**30.3** Jasper Johns, *Painted Bronze (Ale Cans)*, 1960. Painted bronze,  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 8 \times 4\frac{1}{4}$  in. ( $14.0 \times 20.3 \times 12.1$  cm). Museum Ludwig, Cologne. Photo: Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, ML 1439.

**30.4** Robert Rauschenberg, *Black Market*, 1961. Canvas, wood, metal, and oil paint,  $59\frac{3}{4} \times 50 \times 4$  in. ( $152 \times 127 \times 10$  cm). Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany. Photo: Reinisches Bildarchiv Köln, rba\_c007677.



## Robert Rauschenberg

Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) was as liberal in his choice of imagery as Johns was frugal. His sculptures and “combines”—descendants of Duchamp’s ready-mades and Picasso’s assemblages—include stuffed animals, quilts, pillows, and rubber tires. His paintings contain images from a wide variety of sources, such as newspapers, television, billboards, and old masters.

The combine titled *Black Market* of 1961 (fig. 30.4) combines elements of painting, photography, and sculpture. A canvas hanging on the wall is attached by a cord to a wooden box marked “OPEN” on the floor. The canvas contains a variety of objects, as well as thickly painted brushstrokes. Dominating the center are four notebooks with metal covers, and above them a slightly diagonal “ONE WAY” sign points to the cord, leading our gaze to the box on the floor. An upside-down Ohio license plate tilts in the lower left and a photograph of the U.S. capitol dome is visible under the right notebook. The iconography of this combine points to features of American travel, while the technique and media combine collage with assemblage. On the one hand, Rauschenberg’s brushwork is related to Abstract Expressionist gesture painting and, on the other, his use of everyday objects is a feature of Pop Art.

**30.5** Robert Rauschenberg, *Retroactive I*, 1963. Silk-screen print with oil on canvas,  $7 \times 5$  ft. ( $2.13 \times 1.52$  m). Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut (Gift of Susan Morse Hilles).

The silk-screen print of 1964, *Retroactive I* (fig. 30.5), is an arrangement of cutouts resembling a collage. It illustrates the artist’s expressed wish to “unfocus” the mind of the viewer by presenting simultaneous images that are open to multiple interpretations. The newspaper imagery evokes current events, reflecting the contemporary emphasis of Pop Art. A returning astronaut parachutes to earth in the upper left frame, while in the center President Kennedy, who had been assassinated the previous year, extends his finger as if to underline a point. The frame at the lower right reveals a historical thread behind Rauschenberg’s “current events” iconography. It contains a blowup of a stroboscopic photograph of a takeoff on Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase* (see fig. 27.15).

Despite the presence of media images in this print, Rauschenberg seems to have covered it with a thin veil of paint. Brushstrokes and drips running down the picture’s surface are particularly apparent at the top. The dripping motion of paint parallels the fall of the astronaut, while one drip lands humorously in a glass of liquid embedded in the green patch on the right. More hidden, or “veiled,” is the iconographic parallel between the falling paint, the astronaut, and the “Fall of Man.”



## Andy Warhol

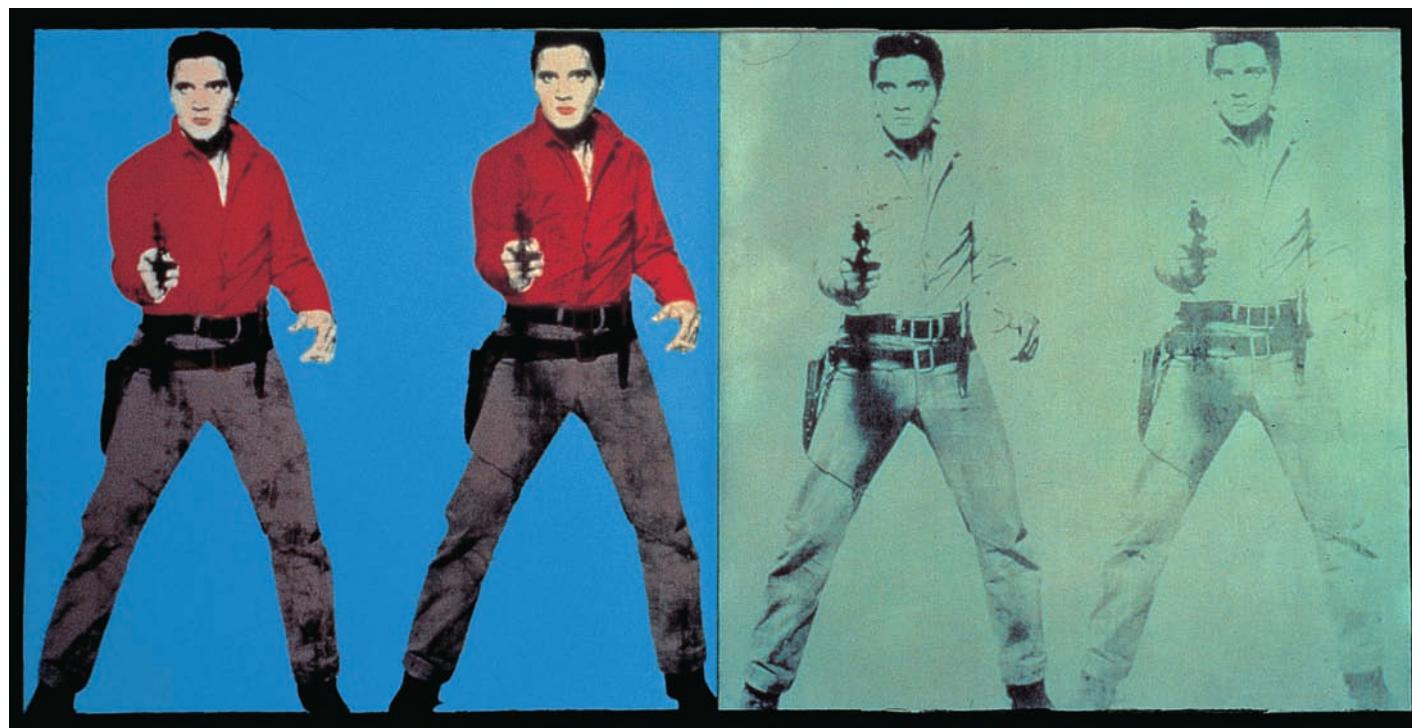
Andy Warhol (1928–87) was the chief example of the Pop Art lifestyle, as well as the creator of highly individual works of art. With his flair for multimedia events and self-promotion, Warhol turned himself into a work of Pop Art and became the central figure of a controversial cult. One of his most characteristic works, *Campbell's Soup I (Tomato)* of 1968 (fig. 30.6), illustrates his taste for commercial images. The clear precision of his forms and the absence of any visible reference to paint texture intensify the confrontation with the object represented—with the object as object. Warhol's famous assertion "I want to be a machine" expresses his obsession with mass production and his personal identification with the mechanical, mindless, repetitive qualities of mass consumption.

Warhol's iconography is wide-ranging. In addition to labels advertising products, he created works that monumentalize commercial American icons. These include Coca-Cola bottles, Brillo and Heinz boxes, comic books, matchbook covers, green stamps, dollar bills, and so forth. He also produced portraits of iconic American heroes and heroines—John F. Kennedy, Jackie Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Elizabeth Taylor, Marlon Brando, and Troy Donahue. Icons have a mythic quality, and Warhol did a myth series that included Superman, Howdy Doody, Mickey Mouse, Uncle Sam, Dracula, and the Wicked Witch of Oz.

**30.6** Andy Warhol, *Campbell's Soup (Tomato)*. 1968. One from a portfolio of screenprints on paper, 35 x 23 in. (88.9 x 59.4 cm). The Andy Warhol Foundation, Inc./Art Resource, NY. © 2011 Andy Warhol Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/Trademarks, Campbell's Soup Company. All rights reserved.



In *Elvis I & II* (fig. 30.7), Warhol depicts an icon of American pop culture in the traditional diptych format. He juxtaposes a black-and-white pair of images with a colored pair, creating the impression of photographic repetition. Elvis himself is shown in an aggressive stance with gun drawn, transforming the conventional cowboy image into that of a pop star.



**30.7** Andy Warhol, *Elvis I & II*, 1964. Two panels. Synthetic polymer paint and silk-screen ink on canvas, aluminum paint and silk-screen ink on canvas, each panel 6 ft. 10 in. x 6 ft. 10 in. (2.10 x 2.10 m). The Andy Warhol Foundation, Inc./Art Resource, NY. © 2011 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



30.8 Roy Lichtenstein, *Torpedo . . . Los!* 1963. Oil on canvas, 5 ft. 8 in. x 6 ft. 8 in. (1.73 x 2.03 m). © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein.

### Roy Lichtenstein

Comic books provided the source for some of the best-known images by Roy Lichtenstein (1923–97). He monumentalized the flat, clear comic-book drawings with “balloons” containing dialogue. *Torpedo . . . Los!* (fig. 30.8) is a blowup inspired by a war comic, illustrating a U-boat captain launching a torpedo. The impression of violence is enhanced by the close-up of the figure’s open mouth and scarred cheek. The absence of shading, except for some rudimentary hatching, and the clear, outlined forms replicate the character of comic-book imagery.

### Tom Wesselmann

The Great American Nude series by Tom Wesselmann (1931–2004) combines Hollywood pinups with the traditional reclining nude. In No. 57 (fig. 30.9) the nude is a symbol of American vulgarity. She lies on a leopard-skin couch, and two stars on the back wall evoke the American flag. She is faceless except for her open mouth, and her body bears the suntan traces of a bikini. Her pose is related to traditional reclining nudes such as Giorgione’s *Sleeping Venus* (see fig. 16.29), but Wesselmann’s surfaces are unmodeled, although they still appear to have volume. The partly drawn curtain reveals a distant landscape, and the oranges and flowers refer to the woman’s traditional role as a fertile earth goddess. This metaphor is reinforced by the formal parallels between the mouth, the nipples, and the interior of the flowers. In this work, Wesselmann combines three-dimensional forms with flattened geometric abstraction, the interior bedroom with exterior landscape, and specificity with universal themes.

### Wayne Thiebaud

The West Coast artist Wayne Thiebaud (born 1920) arranges objects in a self-consciously ordered manner. Although identified with Pop Art, he emphasizes the texture of paint. In the 1960s Thiebaud focused on cafeteria-style food arrangements, but his content in the following decades includes a wide range of objects, portraits, and atmospheric images of cloud formations and landscape.

His *Thirteen Books* of 1992 (fig. 30.10) depicts a neat pile of books, which has a constructed, architectural quality that is enhanced by the oblique angle. Each book functions

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### CONNECTIONS

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See figure 16.29. Giorgione, *Sleeping Venus*, c. 1509.

30.9 Tom Wesselmann, *Great American Nude* No. 57, 1964. Synthetic polymer on composition board, 4 ft. x 5 ft. 5 in. (1.22 x 1.65 m). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (Purchase).

as an individual structural element that nevertheless contributes to the effect of the whole. The textured edges of the books and the bright colors of their spines contrast with the stark, white background. The titles are blurred and unreadable, thereby suggesting the hidden, secret content of the proverbial “closed book.”

To the right of the stack, there is no distinction between the surface supporting the books and the background space. This leaves the viewer uncertain of their exact placement in space—they seem to float in a plane of white. At the left, on the other hand, the books cast a gray, trapezoidal shadow edged in orange, which identifies a source of light and confirms the presence of a supporting surface. The predominance of white is characteristic of the artist’s paintings of objects. White was of particular interest to Thiebaud because it combines all colors while simultaneously absorbing and reflecting light.

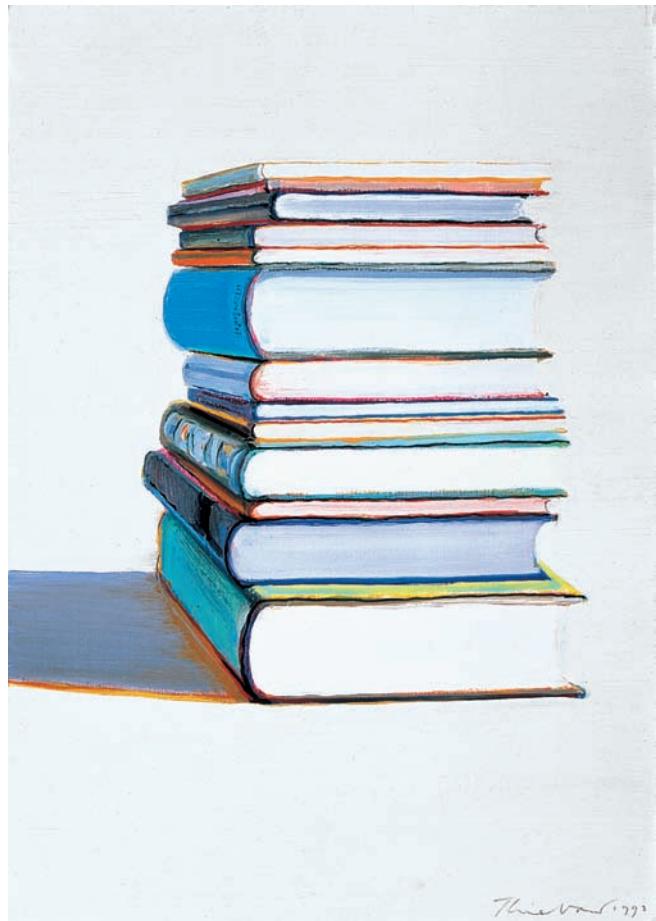
## Sculpture

Generally included among the leading New York Pop artists are the sculptors Claes Oldenburg (born 1929) and George Segal (1924–2000). Although both can be considered Pop artists in the sense that their subject matter is derived from everyday objects and the media, their work is distinctive in maintaining a sense of the textural reality of their materials.

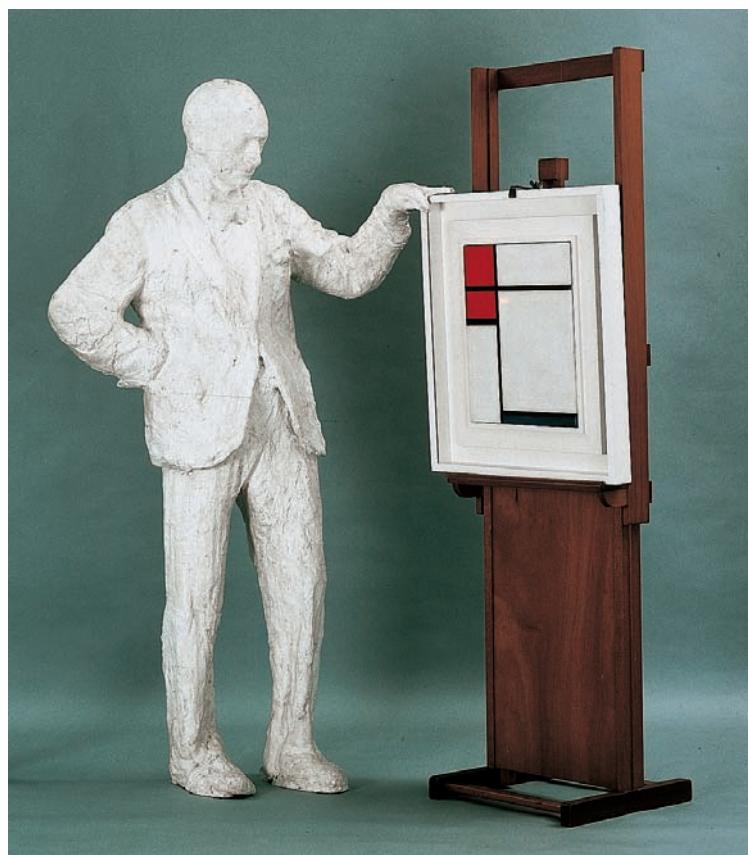
### George Segal

The sculptures of George Segal are literally “figurative.” Segal creates environments in which he sets figures, singly or in groups, that appear isolated and self-absorbed. He also uses his technique of “wrapping” living people in plaster for portraiture. His *Portrait of Sidney Janis with Mondrian Painting* (fig. 30.11) is about looking and seeing, as well as the development of twentieth-century abstraction. His own figuration is combined with the nonfigural, geometric abstraction of Mondrian. Segal has described Janis’s gesture as a caress, expressing his kinship with the Mondrian. In 1932, before becoming an art dealer, Janis bought the painting for seventy-five dollars for his private collection. Thirty years later, when Segal did the portrait, he suggested including the Mondrian, which is

**30.11** George Segal, *Portrait of Sidney Janis with Mondrian Painting*, 1967. Plaster figure with Mondrian’s *Composition*, 1933, on an easel. Figure: 66 in. (167.6 cm) high; easel: 67 in. (170 cm) high; overall: 69 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 56 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 27 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (177.5 × 142.9 × 69.2 cm). The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection (653.1967.a–b). Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2010 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust c/o HCR International, Virginia, USA. Art © The George and Helen Segal Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Janis was Segal’s dealer and a champion of the avant-garde. He mounted exhibitions of Duchamp, Mondrian, Brancusi, and the Abstract Expressionists before the “New Realists” show of 1962.



**30.10** (Above) Wayne Thiebaud, *Thirteen Books*, 1992. Oil on panel, 13 × 10 in. (33.0 × 25.4 cm). Allan Stone Gallery, New York.



removable and has been exhibited separately. In contemplating the Mondrian, Janis symbolically gazes on the art of the past, on the work of a seminal artist of the twentieth century, while also participating in Segal's expression of the contemporary.

### Claes Oldenburg

Like Warhol, Claes Oldenburg has produced an enormous, innovative body of imagery, ranging from clothing, light switches, food displays, and furniture sets to tea bags. His giant *Clothespin* of 1976 in Philadelphia (fig. 30.12) illustrates his enlargement of objects that are small in everyday experience. *Clothespin* has an anthropomorphic quality.

It resembles a tall man, standing with his legs apart, as if striding forward. The wire spring suggests an arm, and the curved top with its two semicircular openings, a head and face. Despite the hard texture of this work, Oldenburg manages to arouse a tactile response by association with actual clothespins. Pressing together the "legs," for example, would cause the spring to open up the spaces at the center of the "head." The tactile urge aroused by the clothespin, together with its anthropomorphic character, reflects Oldenburg's talent for conveying paradox and metaphor. The clothespin thus assumes the quality of a visual pun, which is reminiscent of Picasso's *Bull's Head* (see fig. 27.8) and of the unlikely, surprising juxtapositions of the Surrealist aesthetic that were calculated to raise the consciousness of the viewer.



**30.12** Claes Oldenburg, *Clothespin*, Central Square, Philadelphia, 1976. COR-TEN and stainless steel, 45 ft. x 6 ft. 3 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. x 4 ft. 4 in. (13.7 x 1.92 x 1.32 m). This is one of several "projects for colossal monuments," based on everyday objects, that Oldenburg proposed for various cities. Others include a giant *Teddy Bear* for New York, a *Drainpipe* for Toronto, and a *Lipstick* for London (presented to Yale University in 1969). Oldenburg says that he has always been "fascinated by the values attached to size."

## Niki de Saint-Phalle

Niki de Saint-Phalle (1930–2002) was born in Paris, grew up in New York, and returned to Paris in 1951. There she began painting and making combinations of reliefs and assemblages, using toys as a primary medium. She was originally part of the French *nouveaux réalistes*, a group of artists that was formed in 1960. In New York, these artists were termed the New Realists, which was also the title of the exhibition held in 1962 at the Sidney Janis Gallery.

De Saint-Phalle's most characteristic works are her so-called *Nanas*, which are polyester sculptures of large women. Generally, as with her *Black Venus* of 1965–67 (fig. 30.13), the *Nanas* are painted in bright, unshaded colors that are reminiscent of folk imagery. The torso of this figure looks inflated, ironically even more so than the beach ball, which seems to be losing its air. De Saint-Phalle's *Venus* shares exaggerated breasts and hips with the Paleolithic *Venus of Willendorf* (see fig. 3.1), but the head is small by comparison, a device that has a Mannerist quality. The figure seems engaged in an energetic dance movement, which, together with its “blackness,” allies it with the exuberance and modernism of jazz.

### CONNECTIONS

**See figure 3.1.**  
*Venus of Willendorf*,  
c. 25,000–21,000 B.C.



**30.13** Niki de Saint-Phalle, *Black Venus*, 1965–67. Painted polyester, 110 × 35 × 24 in. (279.0 × 88.5 × 61.0 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (Gift of Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation).



## Marisol Escobar

Marisol Escobar's (born 1930) brand of Pop Art combines Cubist-inspired blocks of wood with figuration. In her monumental sculptural **installation** of *The Last Supper* (fig. 30.14), she re-creates Leonardo's fresco (see fig. 16.10) in a modern idiom. The architectural setting replicates the Leonardo, with four rectangular panels on either side that recede toward a back wall, a triple window, and a curved pediment. The apostles, like Leonardo's, are arranged in four groups of three, with corresponding poses. An image of Marisol herself sits opposite the scene, playing the role of viewer as well as artist. As viewer, Marisol contemplates the past, which she appropriates.

### CONNECTIONS



See figure 16.10. Leonardo da Vinci,  
*Last Supper*, c. 1495–98.

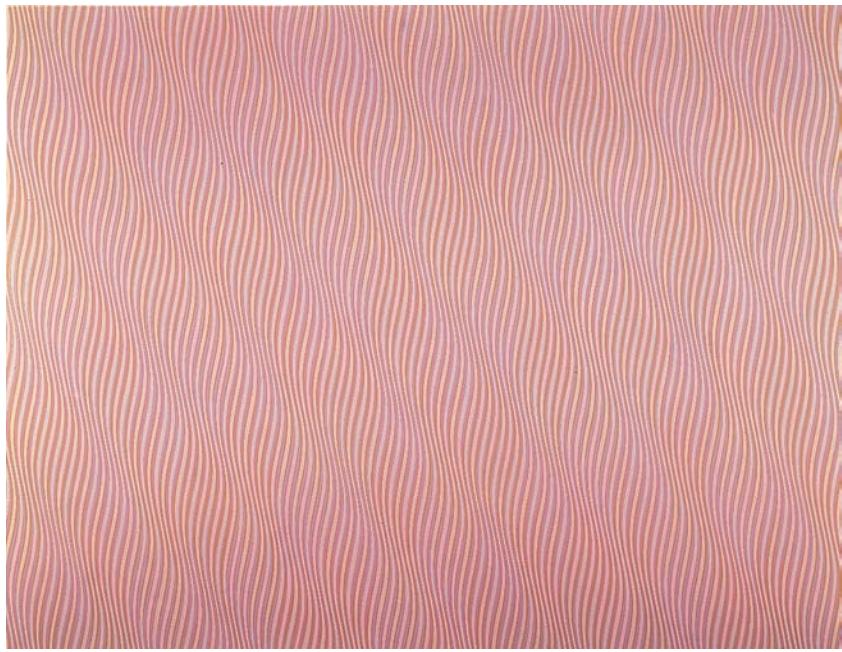
## Op Art

Another artistic movement that flourished during the 1960s has been called Optical, or Op, Art. In 1965 the Museum of Modern Art contributed to the vogue for the style by including it in an exhibition titled "The Responsive Eye." But Op Art is akin to Pop Art in rhyme only, for the recognizable object is totally eliminated from Op Art in favor of geometric abstraction, and the experience is exclusively retinal. The Op artists produced kinetic effects using arrangements of color, lines, and shapes, or some combination of these elements.

In *Aubade (Dawn)* of 1975 (fig. 30.15), by the British painter Bridget Riley (born 1931), there are evident affinities with Albers and the Color Field painters. Riley has arranged pinks, greens, and blues in undulating vertical curves of varying widths, evoking the vibrancy of dawn itself. The changing width of each line, combined with the changing hues, makes her picture plane pulsate with movement.



**30.14** Marisol Escobar, *The Last Supper* (installed at the Sidney Janis Gallery), 1982. Wood, brownstone, plaster, paint, and charcoal, 10 ft. 1 in. x 29 ft. 10 in. x 5 ft. 7 in. (3.07 x 9.09 x 1.70 m). Photo courtesy of Carroll Janis, New York. Art © Marisol Escobar / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



**30.15** (Left) Bridget Riley, *Aubade (Dawn)*, 1975. Acrylic on linen, 6 ft. 10 in. × 8 ft. 1½ in. (2.08 × 2.73 m). Private collection. © Bridget Riley 2010. All rights reserved. Courtesy Karsten Schubert, London. Riley's work generally relies on two effects—producing a hallucinatory illusion of movement (as here) or encouraging the viewer to focus on a particular area before using secondary shapes and patterns to intrude and disturb the original perception. Riley's early Op Art pictures were in black and white and shades of gray. In the mid-1960s she turned to color compositions such as this one.

## Minimalism

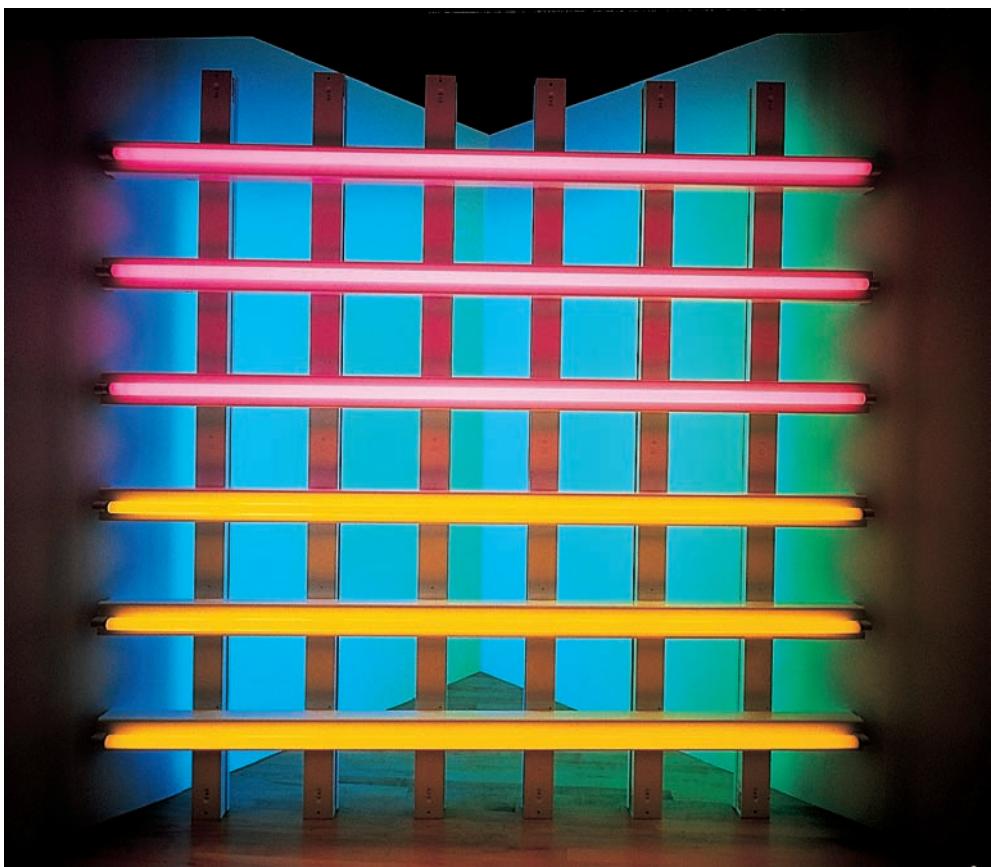
Sculptures of the 1960s “objectless” movement were called “minimal,” or “primary,” structures because they were direct statements of solid geometric form. In contrast to the personalized process of Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, like Color Field painting, tries to eliminate all sense of the artist’s role in the work, leaving only the medium for viewers to contemplate. There is no reference to narrative or to nature, and no content beyond the medium itself. The impersonal character of Minimalist sculptures is intended to convey the idea that a work of art is a pure object having only shape and texture in relation to space.

### Donald Judd

*Untitled* (fig. 30.16) by Donald Judd (1928–94) is a set of rectangular “boxes” derived from the solid geometric shapes of David Smith’s *Cubi* series (see fig. 29.17). Judd’s boxes, however, do not stand on a pedestal. Instead, they hang from the wall. They are made of galvanized iron and painted with green lacquer, reflecting the Minimalist preference for industrial materials. Judd has arranged the boxes vertically, with each one placed exactly above another at regular intervals, to create a harmonious balance. The shadows cast on the wall, which vary according to the interior lighting, participate in the design. They break the monotony of the repeated modules by forming trapezoids between boxes and between the lowest box and the floor. The shadows also emphasize the vertical character of the boxes by linking them visually and creating an impression of a nonstructural pilaster.

**30.16** Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1967. Green lacquer on galvanized iron, each unit 9 × 40 × 31 in. (23 × 102 × 79 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York (Helen Achen Bequest and gift of Joseph A. Helman).





**30.17** Dan Flavin, *Untitled (in Honor of Harold Joachim)*, 3, 1977. Pink, yellow, blue, and green fluorescent light, 8 ft. (2.44 m) square across a corner. Photo: Florian Holzherr. Courtesy Dia Art Foundation. Collection Dia Art Foundation, New York.

### Dan Flavin

Light is the primary medium of the Minimalist fluorescent sculptures of Dan Flavin (1933–96). As store-bought objects transformed into “art” by virtue of the artist’s intervention, they can be related to Duchamp’s ready-mades. Flavin defines interior architectural spaces with tubes of fluorescent lights arranged in geometric patterns or shapes. Light spreads from the tubes and infiltrates the environment. The technological character of the medium and its impersonal geometry are typical of the Minimalist aesthetic. Sometimes, as in *Untitled (in Honor of Harold Joachim)* (fig. 30.17), the color combinations are unexpected. Flavin’s merging of light and color, dependent as it is on technology and twentieth-century nonrepresentation, nevertheless has a spiritual quality that, ironically, allies his work with stained-glass windows and the play of light and color inside Gothic cathedrals (see fig. 13.21).

Flavin described this work as a “corner installation . . . intended to be beautiful, to produce the color mix of a lovely illusion. . . . [He] did not expect the change from the slightly blue daylight tint on the red rose pink near the paired tubes to the light yellow midway between tubes and the wall juncture to yellow amber over the corner itself.”<sup>1</sup>

### CONNECTIONS



**See figure 13.21.**  
Nave, Reims Cathedral,  
1211–c. 1290.

### Agnes Martin

The early work of Agnes Martin (1912–2004) was an inspiration to the Minimalists, but she developed in a more painterly direction. She was born in Saskatchewan, Canada, and moved to the United States in the 1930s. Her first one-woman show was held at the Betty Parsons Gallery in New York City. Martin’s early all-over grid paintings consisted of grids penciled by hand that crisscrossed the canvas, which appeared, like Minimalist sculpture, to “minimalize” the presence of the artist. In contrast to the Minimalists, however, Martin filled the picture plane with glowing color that seems to radiate from an inner mental landscape projected beneath the material surface of the work. In so doing, she revealed affinities with the vast—because they were conceptually vast—pictorial spaces of Mark Rothko.

From 1967 to 1974, Martin took a “sabbatical” from painting and traveled through Canada and the American West, finally settling into an isolated existence in New Mexico. When she returned to painting in the 1970s, her work had changed, progressing even further beyond the material world—possibly influenced by her interest in Far Eastern philosophy. *Untitled #9* (fig. 30.18) is an example

of her work in 1990. The all-over grid has been replaced by gray horizontal bands that potentially extend beyond the confines of the frame. Their geometry and the fact that the grays lighten as they rise present an image that combines the structure of architecture with the changing, cyclical quality of nature.

The following are excerpts from Martin's writings that were selected to accompany her exhibition of 1992–93 at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York:

I didn't paint the plane  
I just drew this horizontal line  
Then I found out about all the other lines  
But I realized what I liked was the horizontal  
line  
  
Art restimulates inspirations and awakens  
sensibilities  
That's the function of art  
  
Any thing is a mirror.  
There are two endless directions. In and out.<sup>2</sup>



**30.18** (Above) Agnes Martin, *Untitled #9*, 1990. Synthetic polymer and graphite on canvas, 6 x 6 ft. (1.83 x 1.83 m). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (Gift of the American Art Foundation 92.60).



**30.19** Eva Hesse, *Metronomic Irregularity I*, 1966. Painted wood, Sculp-Metal, and cotton-covered wire, 12 x 18 x 1 in. (30.5 x 45.7 x 2.5 cm). Museum Wiesbaden, Germany. © The Estate of Eva Hesse. Hauser & Wirth Zürich London. Hesse was born a Jew in Hamburg, Germany, and was taken to Amsterdam to escape Nazi persecution. After a few traumatic years, she went with her family to New York, where her mother committed suicide. Hesse's psychological difficulties and sense of abandonment found expression in an art that was rooted in the forms and materials of Minimalism. She studied at the Yale School of Art, where she came under the influence of Josef Albers, and after graduation returned to Germany. She had her first solo exhibition in Düsseldorf in 1965, and, by the time of her own early death at the age of thirty-four, she had produced an influential body of work.

## Eva Hesse

The American sculptor Eva Hesse (1936–70) took Minimalism in a new direction by consciously “writing” her autobiography into her work. As a result, she is sometimes referred to as a Post-Minimalist. Hesse’s *Metronomic Irregularity I* of 1966 (fig. 30.19), the first in a series of three, explores the relationship of line to plane in a literal way. The surfaces of the rectangles are inscribed with a grid pattern; there is a small hole in the corner of each square of the grid. White cotton-covered wires are threaded from holes in one rectangle through holes in another. Formally, Hesse has juxtaposed actual, three-dimensional lines (the threads) with the flat planes of the two vertical plaques. The space between them participates in the image, creating a nonrepresentational triptych in which medium and content converge. From an autobiographical point of view, one can read the threads as attachments, binding together the plaques across a space, as a metaphor for Hesse’s fear of separation and abandonment, and also as links between her two identities, German and American. Her lifelong sense of anxiety is perhaps reflected in the frantic, though lyrical, quality of the connecting threads.