

# Review

The first week of class we reviewed a little of the history of western art and learned about Modernism, Dada and Surrealism.

Look back at lecture 2 from last week to review the importance of Dada and Surrealism as the earlier movements will factor into most other ones we discuss as we move on.

Ideas related to Surrealism show up in the artwork of the New York artists after WWII and Dada influences almost all artwork produced after the 1970s, even until now.

**It is important to remember that Duchamp wanted art to make people think (including to rethink the role of the artist).**

**The Surrealists wanted art that explored the subconscious mind.**



MARCEL DUCHAMP, Fountain, (second version), 1950 (original version produced 1917). Ready-made glazed sanitary china with black paint, 12" high. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia (purchased with proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned works of art).

## Week 2 Lecture part 1

**The Surrealist direction that came to influence American Art after WWII was the Automatic (unconscious) one.**

When WWII was advancing in Europe, artists were displaced as the Nazi army advanced on Paris and other European cities.

They found solace in New York City (and Mexico).

New York became the center of the art world as ideas and artists came flooding into the city from European cities.

But let's look at some other influences.



ANRE MASSON, *Pasiphae*, 1924

This automatic drawing by Andre Masson shows Masson using a drip technique as a way of accessing his subconscious mind. Masson also titled the painting *Pasiphae*, a female deity in Greek mythology.

***Class 2: The New York School***

**Week 2 Lecture part 1**

**War had been raging in Europe since 1939 when the U.S. entered with troops in 1941.**

The Nazi's branded Modern artists and writers as degenerates. Many were rounded up and sent to camps. If possible, they escaped, finding solace in New York City and Mexico (Mexico is another story).

When Modern artists and their ideas landed in New York, they influenced the next generation of American artists who had been working in other directions up until then.



JACKSON POLLOCK, *Pasiphaë*, 1943 (click link below to read more)  
*Notice the title of this painting by Pollock and the previous one by Masson is the same. Both are based on a Greek myth.*

<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/482518>

***Class 2: The New York School***



# Week 2 Lecture part 1

**In the U.S. before the Europeans arrived the most influential artists were called The American Regionalists.**

Regionalism refers to the work of a number of rural artists, mostly from the Midwest, who came to prominence in the 1930s.

Not being part of a coordinated movement, Regionalist artists often had an idiosyncratic style or point of view. What they shared, among themselves was a humble, anti-modernist style and desire to depict scenes of everyday life, even as that rural life was disappearing in America.



THOMAS HART BENTON, *Arts of the West*, 1932

*Benton titled this painting “Arts” to highlight the kind of ‘down home’ things that could be considered ‘ART’ in America, distancing us from European Modern artists like the Surrealists.*

## *Class 2: The New York School*

**Week 2 Lecture part 1**

**The other group of artists most popular before the war were working in more Urban areas.**

The Social Realist political movement and artistic explorations flourished primarily during the 1920s and 1930s, a time of global economic depression, heightened racial conflict, the rise of fascist regimes internationally, and great optimism after both the Mexican and Russian revolutions.



BEN SHAHN, Handball, 1939

*Social Realists envisioned themselves to be workers and laborers, similar to those who toiled in the fields and factories. Often clad in overalls to symbolize unity with the working classes, the artists believed they were critical members of the whole of society, rather than elites living on the margins and working for the upper crust.*

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Week 2 Lecture part 1

**Social Realists** created figurative and realistic images of the "masses," a term that encompassed the lower and working classes, labor unionists, and the politically disenfranchised.

American artists became dissatisfied with the French avant-garde and their own isolation from greater society, which led them to search for a new vocabulary and a **new social importance**; they found their purpose in the belief that art was a weapon that could **fight the capitalist exploitation of workers** and stem the advance of international fascism.



JACOB LAWRENCE, IRONERS, 1943

*Lawrence was an African-American artist who painted images of working class people, mostly of African descent.*

***Class 2: The New York School***



Week 2 Lecture part 1

**The New York School** grew out of the **European Modernist** ideas of **Surrealism** and **Cubism** and the work of Jackson Pollock and William deKooning has come to exemplify **the New York School** or **Abstract Expressionist** movement.

Pollock was a student and friend of Thomas Hart Benton. Born in Cody, Wyoming, Pollock was influenced by a number of things swirling around in America during the 1930s and 40s.

Not the least of which for everyone living during and after the war was...



STAC students on a trip to Moma standing in front of a Jackson Pollock painting.

*Class 2: The New York School*

Week 2 Lecture part 1

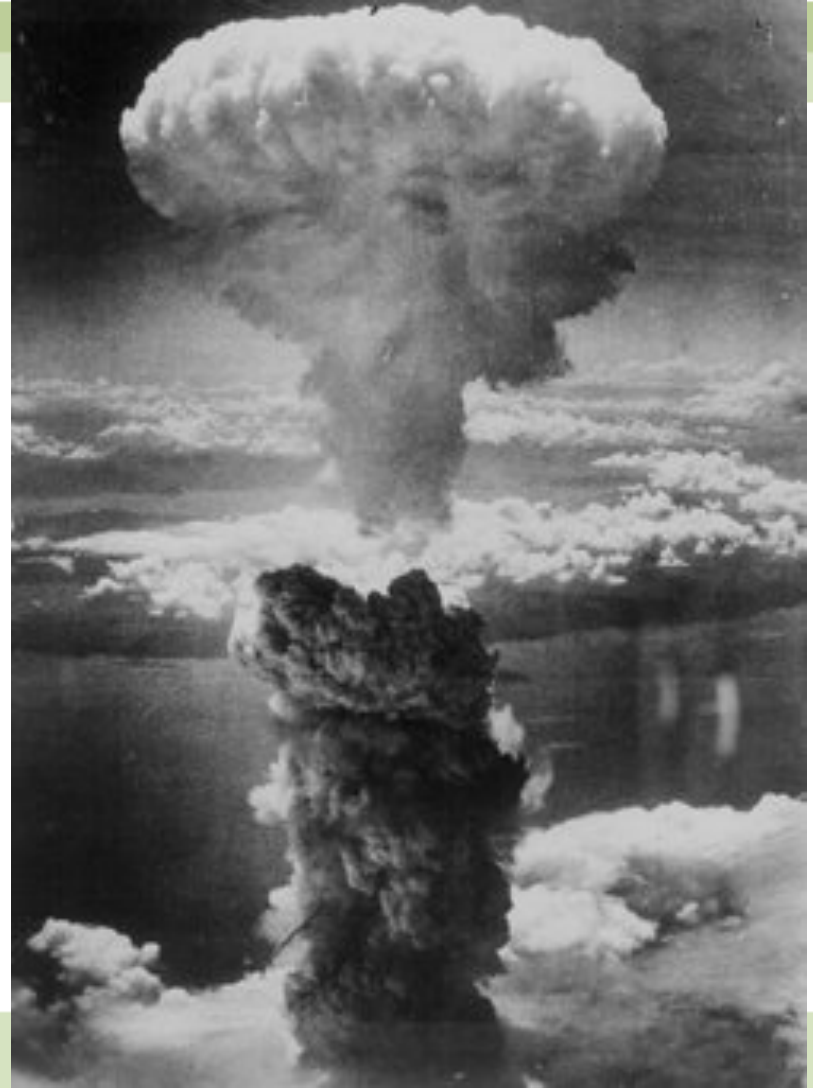
## The Atom Bombs

dropped at Hiroshima and  
Nagasaki, Japan, August 6, 1945 and  
August 9, 1945 respectively.

Watch this 3 minute history lesson.

<https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/bombing-of-hiroshima-and-nagasaki>

It is essential you understand the  
reality of this power.



*Class 2: The New York School*



Week 2 Lecture part 1

But there were many other things influencing the artists developing what would be called, **The New York School**.

1. MOMA began showing retrospectives of European Modernist artists in the 1930s  
In particular, *Guernica*, by Picasso which stayed there until the late 70s

2. Fascism and Nazism sent artists out of Europe in the 1940s. Many found a new home in New York.



*Guernica*, by Picasso (1939) stayed at MOMA in New York until the late 70s.

I saw it myself as a young art student before it was sent back to Spain.

Week 2 Lecture part 1

But there were many other things influencing the artists developing what would be called, The New York School.

3. Mexican Social Realists influenced young artists by stressing the importance of socialism, a political art for the masses and experimental techniques and materials. Their large public murals provided a model for scale.

4. Surrealist interest in the subconscious that could be accessed through automatic processes.

5. Interest in ideas of Carl Jung concerning the power of myth and the universal unconscious proliferated in popular media.



DIEGO RIVERA, *Man at the Crossroads*, 1933, mural for Rockefeller Center (destroyed).

Read this Kahn Academy article for more about this famous mural.

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-1010/art-between-wars/latin-american-modernism1/a/diego-rivera-man-at-the-crossroads>

***Class 2: The New York School***

At this time there was great interest in **myth** as a source of the universals of the human psyche.

Artists were looking to Greek literature and “primitive” cultures for more authentic connection with the underlying forces of nature.

The theories of **Carl Jung** postulated archetypes in the individual unconscious belonging to the collective unconscious...thus connecting all humans.

**Myths of rebirth and renewal** had particular attraction.

Also, the art market was growing with other things in U.S. economy.

Along with it, art critics, the gallery system, magazines, grew.



## Week 2 Lecture part 1

**The WPA (The Works Project Administration) developed the Federal Arts Project and many artists came from all over the U.S. to work in the program.**

One of those artists was Jackson Pollock.

Beginning his art career studying with Thomas Hart Benton and working for the FAP in the studio of the Mexican Muralist, David Siqueiros, Pollock's leanings at this time were influenced by them.

But depression took him to therapy with a Jungian analyst, beginning a lifelong interest in Mythology, and fueling an interest in Native American art and imagery.



An early drawing by Pollock, entitled, "War" shows the influence of images seen in popular media as well as Cubist and Surrealist styles.

## Week 2 Lecture part 1

**Pollock had** grown up in the West so he knew about Native American Culture and also the Natural History Museum recently installed a new wing dedicated to arts of the ‘**Americas**’.

### Native American Artifacts from the Natural History Museum



Early Painting by Jackson Pollock obviously based on Native American images and styles.

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## Week 2 Lecture part 1

Pollock, having moved to NYC quickly absorbed all the outside influences while combining them with his personal interests.

In *Male and Female*, it is evident that he was influenced by both Jungian psychoanalysis and Southwest culture, such as Navajo rugs and Indian sand paintings.

But it was Surrealist Automatic Drawing processes that influenced his famous drip paintings of the early 1950s.



*Male and Female*, 1942



Week 2 Lecture part 1

Large scale non-objective paintings like **Number One**, were done by splattering paint layer by layer to create a dense, meditative surface. The painting became evidence of his process of painting as you can see each layer and splatter.



*Detail--Number One,  
1950 (Lavender Mist)  
1947 and 1950*



*Number One, 1950 (Lavender Mist) 1947 and 1950*

Painted in an old barn-turned-studio next to a small house on the East End of Long Island

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## Week 2 Lecture part 1

In *Life Magazine*, his works had already been introduced to a million public and, in a traveling exhibition from the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in 1955, which had purchased Pollock's *Number 1* in 1950 and, two years later, *Full Fathom Five*, exhibited in major cities across half of Europe.

Initially, however, the path to fame not only proved to be rocky for Pollock and his colleagues; during the first years of their careers, it seemed virtually unpassable.



In 1949, an article ran in *Life Magazine* asking the question, “Is he the greatest living painter in the United States?”

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## Week 2 Lecture part 1

In 1951 Pollock underwent a shift in emphasis as he abandoned non-objective imagery in favor of abstracted references to human and animal forms.

"When you're working out of your unconscious," he explained, "figures are bound to emerge."

By, 1955 he stopped painting. The following year, was killed while driving drunk.



*Portrait and a Dream*—1953, Oil and enamel on canvas,  
58 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 134 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.



## Week 2 Lecture part 1

Unlike Pollock, Willem De Kooning never let go completely of the figure as a subject. His work shows more evidence of Cubism.

He grew up in Northern Europe but worked with the FAP after moving to New York.



De Kooning, *Excavation*, 1950, 81x100 in



Queen of Hearts, 1943-6



## Week 2 Lecture part 1

His working process where dozen different paintings became superimposed on one another, the figure comes into focus and out again, like a flash, a painting in perpetual state of redefinition.

His influences ranged from advertisements in magazines to Ancient Syrian and Mesopotamian Art.



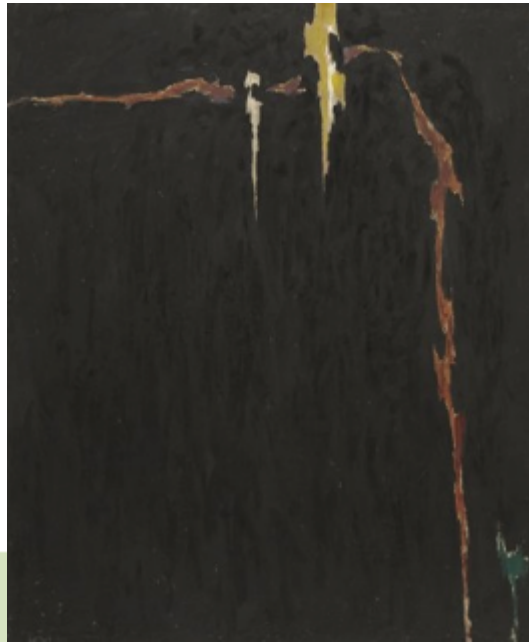
Seated statuette of Urnanshe, from the Ishtar temple at Mari (modern Tell Hariri), Syria, ca. 2600–2500 BCE. Gypsum inlaid with shell and lapis lazuli, 10 1/4" high. National Museum, Damascus.



Queen of Hearts, 1943-6



*A number of artists were associated with the New York School and (Abstract Expressionist) styles. De Kooning, Pollock, Andrew Gotlib, Lee Krasner, Clifford Still and Franz Kline to name a few.*

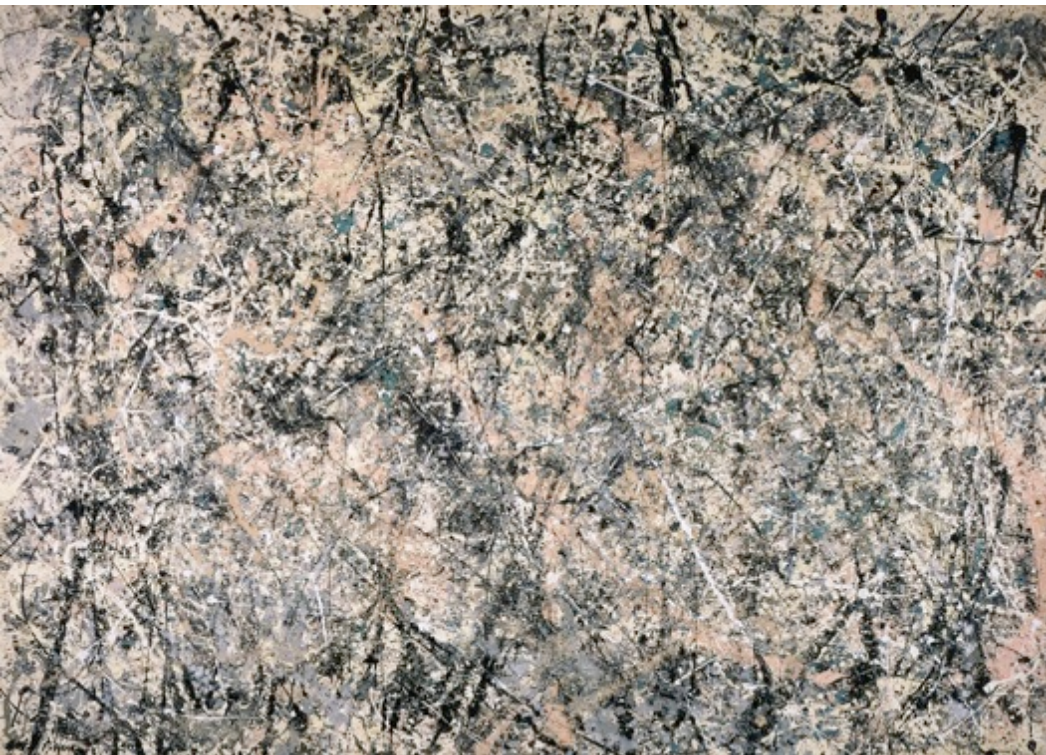


*It became an international movement.*





The New York School was comprised of many different artists but two main directions were taken: **Action Painting (Abstract Expressionism)** and **Color Field Painting**.



Jackson Pollock, *Number 1 (Lavender Mist)*—example of Action painting



Mark Rothko, *Orange and Yellow*, 1956— example of color field painting



Week 2 Lecture part 1

**Mark Rothko**

Having worked for the FAP, his early work was socially motivated

*Untitled Subway*, 1937



He was also interested in myths.

This style was influenced by philosophy of Nietzsche, especially the idea that mythology could address, "the growth of a child's mind and – to a mature man his life and struggles".

*Greek Tragedy*, 1941-42



## Week 2 Lecture part 1

### Mark Rothko

Rothko's soft, luminous colors are layered in thin washes, dark over light, then light over dark to create a contemplative surface.

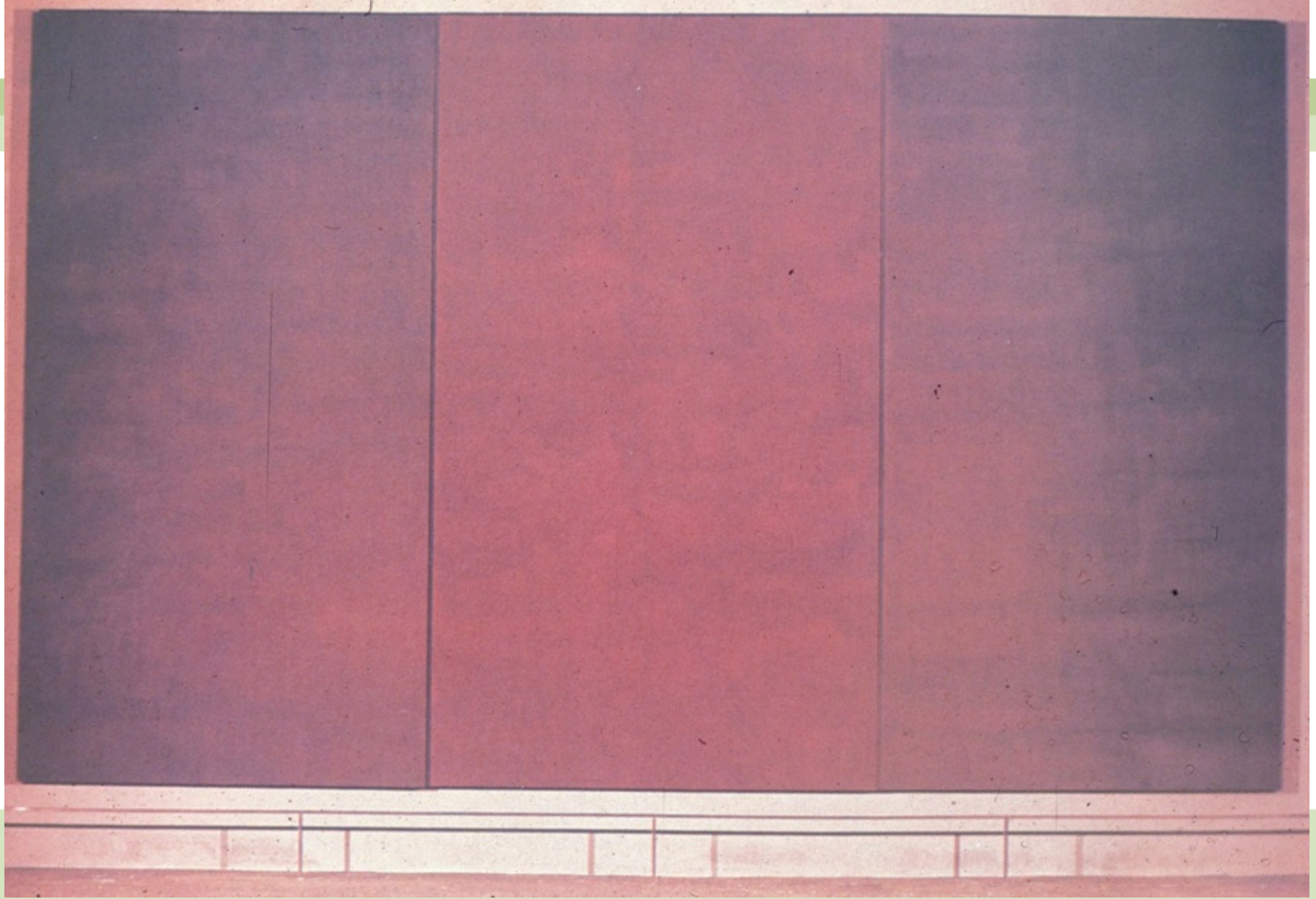
His work indicates a preoccupation with death.  
For him all art deals with intimidations or death.

Less interested in expressing his own inner emotions, he wanted to create a transcendent, spiritual experience for the viewer.



*Orange and Yellow, 1956*

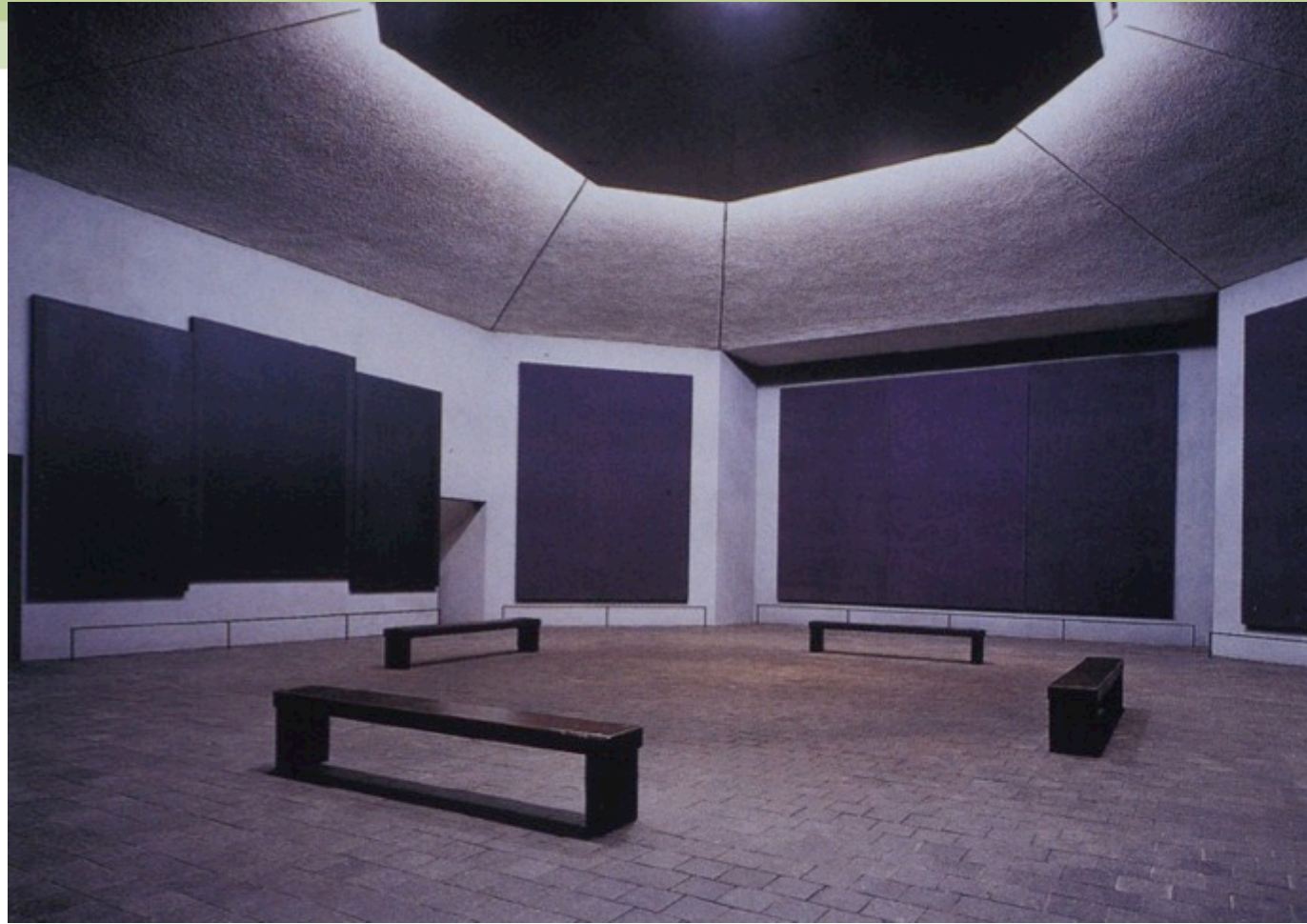




Rather than a picture of an experience...he wanted his paintings to be an experience.  
Meant to be an interaction with the viewer.

In 1971, *The Rothko Chapel* was constructed in Houston. The paintings, thin layers of color over color until they look almost black, were begun in 1964.

The mission of *the Rothko Chapel* is to inspire people to action through art and contemplation, to nurture reverence for the highest aspirations of humanity, and to provide a forum for global concerns.



On February 25, 1970, Rothko's assistant, found the artist in his kitchen, lying dead on the floor in front of the sink, covered in blood. He had sliced his arms with a razor found lying at his side. The autopsy revealed that he had also overdosed on anti-depressants. He was sixty-six years old.



## In the 1950s there were also cultural circumstances that contextualize this artwork:

The general interest by artists and critics of the post war period in Existentialism made it meaningful to be meaningless and tragic. For the politically uncertain times of the cold war and nuclear power, Existentialism's emphasis on the development of the individual human being who was trying to live fully in an absurd world, fueled nationalistic ideals.

At the same time, the Modern Man subject which reinforced models of self as essentially autonomous, integral, rational, and effectual (*think of John Wayne in the movies*) was actually faltering under pressure from political and social conflict and change.



**Civil rights, the women's movement, and the war in Vietnam among other things, began to challenge these ideas creating an even more desperate attempt to hold on to them as we move to the 1960s and 70s.**



## Week 2 Lecture part 1

This is where we will begin next week.



Here's Mr. Showmanship himself—Carl B. Magnuson Big Picture TV at home with his

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things which makes many American  
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