

## **Expressionism**

### Idea:

- Art was now meant to come forth from within the artist, rather than from a depiction of the external visual world
- Not rational thought but feelings, particularly that of anxiety

### Characteristics:

- Swirling, swaying, and exaggeratedly executed brushstrokes convey the turgid emotional state of the artist reacting to the anxieties of the modern world.

## **Abstract expressionism**

### Idea:

- Emphasized the active process of creating art -- energy, action, kineticism, freneticism - the act of painting
- act & process of painting become the subject & content of a work
- AUTOMATISM: Use of highly gestural full-body painting movements for liberation of inner spirituality and emotions
- CHANCE: Work intuitively and randomly without planning, depending on serendipity and coincidences for outcome

### Characteristics:

- Used wide/broad & rhythmic sweeps
- ‘Entered’ the canvas, swung & dripped paint
- ‘All-over’ character developed:
- Made use of the flatness of the picture plane & varying qualities of colors to create an ambiguous spatial relationship.
- Physical action of the artist became an end & means to directly express his internal unconscious being.
- Painting = A process of self-discovery

## Jackson Pollock

Who	<p>Abstract Expressionist (uniquely American painting movement)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Artist as a shaman, engaging with this collective unconsciousness + disclosing universal myths and symbols -&gt; almost heroic role of artist; elevating importance</li> </ul>
What	<p>Influences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picasso - fragmented, distorted forms</li> <li>• Mexican Muralists (Diego Rivera) - unconventional art materials (sand, lacquers, spray guns)</li> <li>• Automatism(surrealism) - spontaneous and accidental</li> </ul> <p>Earlier works were more figurative and semi-abstract (not yet a departure from the recognisable)</p> <p>Mature works - Drip period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• utilised gestures, lines, textures and composition</li> <li>• pure painting with no subject matter or preconceived ideas</li> </ul> <p>Monumental, immersive abstract paintings consisting entirely of paint drips</p>
How	<p>Medium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enamel paint, applied with a variety of implements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ poured from a can, flung from a stick, used trowels, knives, etc</li> <li>◦ mixed into the paint sand, glass, wall paint, cigarette butts, coins</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Painted on the floor/wall</li> </ul> <p>All-over style</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowed him to move <i>within the canvas</i> and become a part of the painting in the process of production</li> <li>• Tightly disciplined, harmonious and rhythmic paint splatters</li> <li>• Abandoned the idea of composition (foreground, background, etc)</li> <li>• Yet intersections and overlaps create mysterious depth</li> <li>• created a dense network of fluid, interlacing lines</li> <li>• final canvas cut to suit the image</li> </ul> <p>Size is so massive because the painting is supposed to embody a psychic state</p> <p>Colour of paint -&gt; highly emotionally charged</p>
Why	<p>'Action painting': redefining the relationship between an artist and his painting by pioneering a new process of painting</p> <p>"The gesture on the canvas was a gesture of liberation from value—political, aesthetic, moral" – Harold Rosenberg</p> <p>Key Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Totality of conception</li> <li>• Dynamic rhythm (no focus, no boundaries) -&gt; harmony</li> <li>• Action/mobility, emphasis on process rather than product</li> <li>• express &gt; illustrate</li> </ul> <p>Liberation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• liberation from aesthetic value</li> <li>• Free the line from its function of representing objects in the real world, as well as its task of describing or bounding shapes or figures onto the surface of the canvas</li> <li>• Liberation of painting canvas from the need to <i>represent</i>: painting as <i>paint itself</i>, emphasis on the textural quality of paint</li> </ul> <p>Named his works with generic, uninformative numbers - to prevent the viewers from searching for (nonexistent!) figurative elements</p> <p>Inner reflection - explosions of unconscious imagery (Pollock himself was depressive and aggressive)</p>
So what	<p>Impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redefined what art is (liberated artists of that era)</li> <li>• brought together cubism, surrealism and impressionism</li> </ul> <p>Possible influence of psychic automatism from Surrealists</p>



Lavender Mist by Jackson Pollock

- lyrical colour web (balanced and harmonious)
- keeps eyes continually eager
- overwhelming scale





Full Fathom Five by Jackson Pollock

- canvas completely obscured by labyrinthine like webs of paint, colours give depth, sea green recedes as it is obscured by brighter whites
- assortment of cigarette butts, coins, keys, and thumbtacks contribute to sense surface and texture \
- character of lines track the actions of the artist

## Willem de Kooning

Who	<p>German Expressionist painter, later American action painting/abstract expressionism (although he resisted categorisation and included figure painting in his works)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- as one of the leading artists in the New York group of American modernists, which included Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko.</li> <li>- famous for works on women</li> </ul>
What	<p>Human figures, particularly female figure, portrayed controversially</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- variety of styles and subject matters in his early work - period of experimentation, with a large variety of styles and different subject matters</li> <li>- wanted to employ figuration, so declined to become an official member of the American Abstract Artists (AAA)</li> <li>- Between 1947 and 1950, de Kooning began a series of abstract compositions in black and white, such as <i>Orestes</i>, <i>Painting</i> and <i>Black Friday</i>.</li> <li>- Limited colour range was partly due to his limited funds – black paint was less costly</li> <li>- analytic abstraction – he oscillated between figuration and abstraction in his compositions e.g. <i>Excavation</i>, with strong contours of line and graphic element</li> </ul>
How	<p>Vigorous, gestural and abstract paintings - combined styles of Cubism, Surrealism and Expressionism</p> <p>Slash-like brushstrokes rupturing pictorial space</p> <p>Early works: strong contours of line and graphic elements (1940s-50s)</p> <p>Later: Dominance of colour</p> <p>Increasingly less representational in nature, more abstract and atmospheric</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- famous for constantly reworking his canvases - implied desire for perfection</li> <li>- however, paintings were often left with a sense of dynamic incompleteness</li> <li>- works could be said to exemplify 'action painting'</li> <li>- gave his artwork careful thought - not truly spontaneous or unplanned.</li> <li>- had extensive knowledge about the techniques of master artists, drew inspiration from various sources which appear to be unrelated</li> <li>- e.g. surrealism and ancient art and artists such as Mondrian and Picasso.</li> </ul> <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- used mainly oil paint on canvas</li> <li>- also used enamel and a method of newspaper transfer</li> <li>- known for using unconventional materials for paintings – regularly mixed house paint, safflower cooking oil, water, egg and even mayonnaise with paints in order to attain a certain effect</li> </ul>
Why	<p>Dynamic incompleteness (Left canvases unfinished)</p> <p>Complex ambiguity of pictorial space; little attempt to</p> <p>"It is disastrous to name ourselves."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- was strongly against the idea of being restricted by the naming of movements</li> <li>- despite being renowned as an Abstract Expressionist artist, he never fully abandoned traditional subjects</li> <li>- blending of gestural abstraction and figuration - set him apart from other Abstract Expressionists</li> </ul> <p>"You have to change to stay the same."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- never settled into a single style, constantly reinvented himself.</li> <li>- described himself as an "eclectic painter" who was always susceptible to inspiration from reproductions of art, regardless of the era</li> </ul>
So what	<p>Blended Cubism, Expressionism and Surrealism</p> <p>Borrowing from Picasso's tradition to present un-idealised, unbeautiful images</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- his works became less relevant as artists moved away from modernism and into a movement which was a reaction against Abstract Expressionism.</li> <li>- Despite all that, de Kooning has a great influence on painters who are attracted to gestural styles and remains important till this day.</li> </ul>





Painting (1948) by Willem de Kooning

- unsure if title is accurate
- black & white; monochrome
  - broad and energetic gestures
  - gave the impression of violent encounters with the canvas.



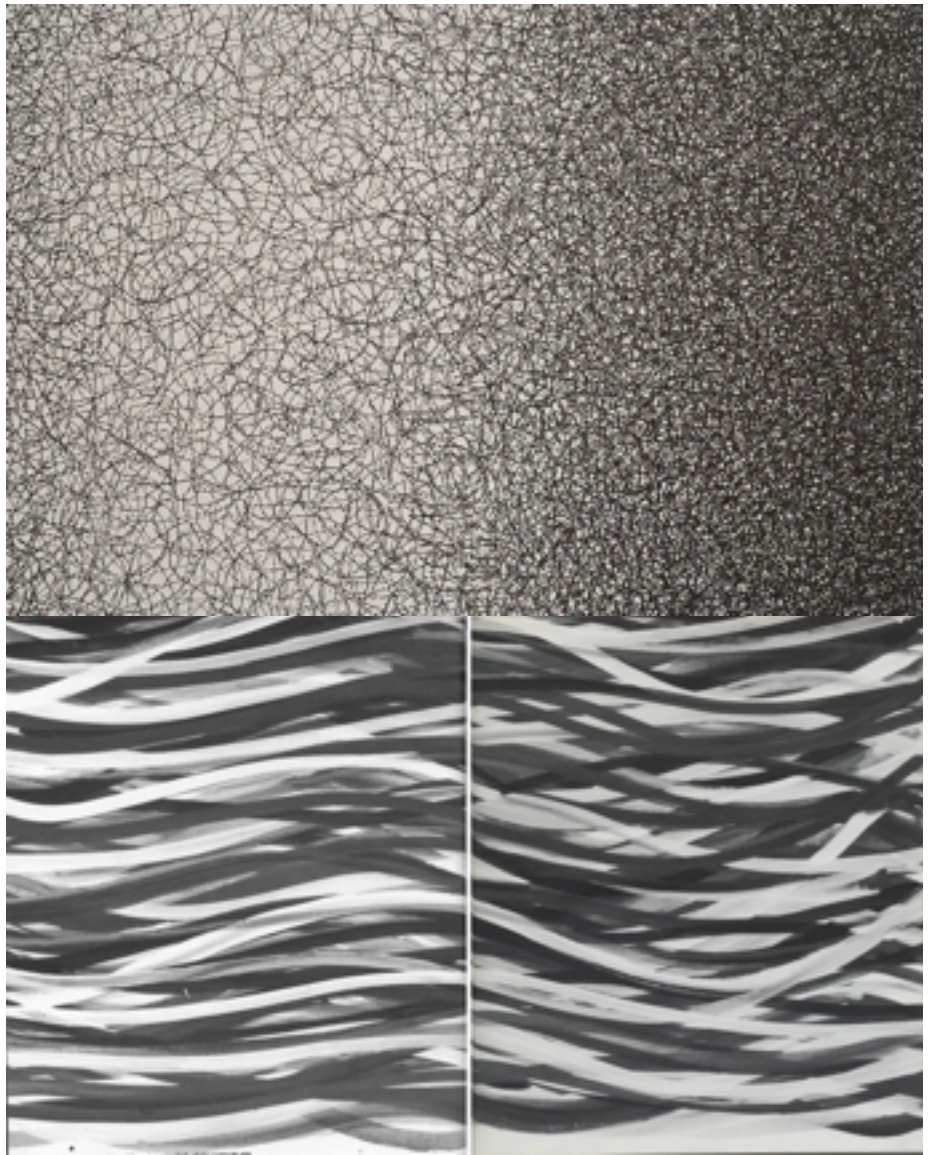
### Paul-Émile Borduas

- spent the first period of his career working primarily as a church decorator and teacher. As a child, he had developed an early appreciation for the work of Ozias Leduc in the church at Ste-Hilaire, and apprenticed with him beginning in 1921, at the age of sixteen. Over the next seven years, Borduas continued to assist Leduc in church decoration while attending classes in Montreal at the École Technique and École des Beaux-Arts.



## Sol Lewitt

- believed *the idea* itself could be the work of art
- maintained that an artist should be able to conceive of a work and then either delegate its actual production to others or perhaps even never make it at all
- conceptual pieces often did take on at least basic material form, although not necessarily at his own hands
- In the spirit of the medieval workshop in which the master conceives of a work and apprentices carry out his instructions based on preliminary drawings, LeWitt would provide an assistant or a group of assistants with directions for producing a work of art.
- Instructions for these works, whether large-scale wall drawings or outdoor sculptures, were deliberately vague so that the end result was not completely controlled by the artist that conceived the work.
- In this way, LeWitt challenged some very fundamental beliefs about art, including the authority of the artist in the production of a work. His emphasis is most often on process and materials (or the lack thereof in the case of the latter) rather than on imbuing a work with a specific message or narrative. Art, for LeWitt, could exist for its own sake. Meaning was not a requirement.







### Janine Antoni

- Transforming everyday activities such as eating, bathing, and sleeping into ways of making art - primary tool for making sculpture has always been her own body

Used unconventional material - blurs the distinction between performance art and sculpture (artist body as art material)

- chiseled cubes of lard and chocolate with her teeth
- washed away the faces of soap busts made in her own likeness
- used the brainwave signals recorded while she dreamed at night as a pattern for weaving a blanket the following morning

Amongst other works

### Loving Care (1993)

- used hair to mop floor - hair soaked with hair dye.
- "I mopped the floor with my hair...The reason I'm so interested in taking my body to those extreme places is that that's a place where I learn, where I feel most in my body. I'm really interested in the repetition, the discipline, and what happens to me psychologically when I put my body to that extreme place."